

Special Issue Reprint

Space for Worship in East Asia

Edited by
Shuishan Yu and Aibin Yan

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Contents

About the Editors vii

Preface ix

Huizhong Bin
Dual-Axis Worship Space of Buddha, Dharma, and Ancestors in Huayansi, Western Capital:
The Liao Dynasty’s Political and Diplomatic Context (10th–11th Centuries)
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 1043, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091043> 1

Zhu Xu
Consecrating the Peripheral: On the Ritual, Iconographic, and Spatial Construction of Sui-Tang
Buddhist Corridors
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 399, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040399> 27

Siqi Tang and Huasong Mao
The Humanistic Process and Spatial Practice of Chinese Zhenshan 鎮山 Worship
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 368, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030368> 63

Weiqiao Wang
Food and Monastic Space: From Routine Dining to Sacred Worship—Comparative Review of
Han Buddhist and Cistercian Monasteries Using Guoqing Si and Poblet Monastery as Detailed
Case Studies
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 217, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15020217> 86

Nan Wang, Zhuonan Wang and Hongyu Zheng
Round Heaven and Square Earth, the Unity of the Pagoda and Statues—A Study on the
Geometric Proportions of the Architectural Space, Statues, and Murals in Ying Xian Fogong
Si Shijia Ta 應縣佛宮寺釋迦塔 (Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County) †
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 802, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070802> 123

Yu Ding, Yuqing Cai and Jie Liu
Reconstruction of Single-Bay Buddhist Architecture Based on Stylistic Comparisons in
Northeast Fujian, the Core Hinterland of the Changxi River Basin—Using Gonghoulong Temple
as an Example
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 474, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040474> 181

Xuan Chen
Constructing Heaven: Ceilings of the Stone Tombs in Northeast Asia (1st to 7th Century CE)
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2023, 14, 1455, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14121455> 201

Muping Bao
The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia from the 16th to the 17th Century: The Spatial
Formation of the World Heritage Site Erdene Zuu Monastery
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 843, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070843> 214

Hui Song, Qingwen Meng and Chenyang Wang
Spatial Distribution Characteristics and the Evolution of Buddhist Monasteries in Xi’an City
Area
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2023, 14, 1084, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091084> 236

Yan Zhou, Hong Jiang, Tianyang Lu and Xinjie Shen
Formation of a Sacred Urban Landscape: Study on the Spatial Distribution of Pagodas in
Mrauk-U, Myanmar
Reprinted from: *Religions* 2024, 15, 719, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060719> 264

Rui Li and Jiang Feng Chan, Garden, and Poetry: The Tidal Sounds in the Changshou Monastery Garden of Canton in the Qing Dynasty Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 664, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15060664	284
Zhouzi Ge and Yongqin Guo Spatio-Temporal Process of the Linji School of Chan Buddhism in the 10th and 11th Centuries Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2023 , <i>14</i> , 1334, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101334	301
Weiqiao Wang and Aibin Yan Body, Scale, and Space: Study on the Spatial Construction of Mogao Cave 254 Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2023 , <i>14</i> , 953, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070953	323
Bo Sun Niches and Sculptures of the Imaginary Realm—Revisiting the Fowan Rock Carvings, Beishan, Dazu Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 50, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15010050	340
Zhenru Zhou and Luke Li Vision and Site: Revisiting a Pure Land Cave of Dunhuang Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 329, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030329	359
Jie Zhou The Establishment of Religious Landscapes and Local Social Life in Nanshan and Beishan, Dazu District, in the Song Dynasty Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2025 , <i>16</i> , 355, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030355	393
Yifeng Xie From Pagoda to Pavilion: The Transition of Spatial Logic and Visual Experience of Multi-Story Buddhist Buildings in Medieval China Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 371, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030371	422
Zhaoquan He and Xiaorong Meng Ritual, Daoist Temple, and Geography: Spatial Interpretation of Wang Lingguan’s Belief Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 305, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030305	447
Shuaiqi Zhang and Hongyu Sun Mobility to Other Locations: A Study on the Spread of the Cult of Lord Yan from Jiangxi to Hubei in the Ming–Qing Era Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2023 , <i>14</i> , 593, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050593	469
Jinghua Huang, Chujing Yang and Si Chen Spatial Imagination in Sacred Narratives of Mountain Communities in Western Yunnan, China Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2024 , <i>15</i> , 382, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030382	489
Gege Yu, Haoge Gan and Yongqin Guo Location and Fortune: An Exploration of the Buddhism and Daoism Roles of Geomancy in the Song Dynasty Reprinted from: <i>Religions</i> 2023 , <i>14</i> , 859, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14070859	517

About the Editors

Shuishan Yu

Shuishan Yu (associate professor of architecture, Northeastern University) focuses on Chinese architecture, literati arts, and Buddhist architecture in East Asia. His book *Chang'an Avenue and the Modernization of Chinese Architecture* was published in both English (2012) and Chinese (2016). His forthcoming book *Ritual Space and the Operation of Power—A New Perspective on Global Architectural History* will be published in 2025. He has also published articles, book chapters, and exhibition catalogs and presented conference papers on the city and architecture of Beijing, guqin music, Tibetan architecture, Buddhist architecture, Chinese literati art, Chinese gardens, and modern architectural historiography. Yu's research projects are mostly case studies aiming to demystify a specific historical site, issue, or phenomenon, highlighting the significance, nature, and problem of cross-cultural translation of architectural forms, practices, and theories. At Northeastern University, Prof. Yu has taught Architecture and Global Cultures, History of Chinese Architecture, and the Modernization of Chinese Architecture. He has taught Chinese Architecture, Buddhist Art, Chinese Art, Japanese Art, and Asian Art Survey at Oakland University and the University of Washington. Yu is also a distinguished qin musician and the current chair of the North America Mei'an Guqin Society. He has been invited to perform, teach, and lecture on qin music in the US and internationally. His groundbreaking book *Yu Shuishan Guqin Etudes* was published in 2018. Yu's current research projects include case studies of historic streets in China, literati gardens of the Ming-Qing dynasties, and the fingering motif concept of guqin performance and its application in the study, analysis, and composition of guqin music. He is a key contributor to the Global Architectural History Teaching Collaboration, integrating global architectural history and developing new pedagogical strategies in teaching.

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Preface

Among various human activities, worshiping is the one that has brought the greatest transformations to their living environments, being it for their deceased ancestors through folk beliefs or holy divinities in institutionalized religions. In traditional East Asian settlements, the center of a village was often a clan shrine, and to honor Gods and Buddhas, mountains were carved, and cities reshaped. The religious histories of East Asia are rich and complicated, intertwined with local cultures, engaged with global events, and have created worship spaces that have become a significant part of the world heritage in the built environments.

Articles in this volume represent new scholarships on East Asian worshiping space in various areas and from many different religious backgrounds. Architecture is a comprehensive expression of, and the most visible contributor to, the identity of a place, religious, cultural, and regional, deeply rooted in a specific historicity and locality. The subject's focus on the space for worship allows authors to investigate a sacred site from both Buddhist and Daoist religious backgrounds, analyze a folk cult again the ancestor worship tradition in a Confucian society, and search for common spirituality shared between Buddhism and Christianity. The focus on worshiping space also allows authors to choose a wide range of scales, perspectives, disciplinary lenses, and methodological approaches for their topic. Space for worship can be physical, including architecture, the formal, structural, functional, and ritual aspects associated with it, and representational, literary, social, conceptual, and psychological. Included in this collection are discussions on an entire system of sacred mountains as well as a single building, a detailed visual analysis of a cave as well as the spreading of a vernacular cult traced mainly through literary sources, formal study illustrated with professional survey drawings as well as comparative research using anthropological field method. Together, this anthology features case studies on the space for worship in East Asia with both broadness and depth.

For the convenience of the readers, the twenty-one articles are grouped into five thematic sections, each with four or five chapters. The first section is titled "Space for Worship and Political Rituality," focusing on the ritual aspects of the worshiping space in East Asia. In this section, Huizhong Bin's article explores the dual-axis worship space in the Buddhist monastery Huayansi as a result of the Liao dynasty's domestic governance and diplomatic policy of the 10th to 11th centuries; Zhu Xu's article analyzes the relationship between the transformation of Buddhist temples' peripheral corridors into symmetrical image halls in the 7th to 11th centuries and the religious, ritual, and political shifts from the Sui-Tang to the Song periods; the article by Siqi Tang and Huasong Mao explores the history and development of the *Zhenshan* mountain system and its relationship to the power structure embedded in the Confucian rites; and Weiqiao Wang's article compares the dining spaces between Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries and uncovers the sacred ritual dimensions in routine monastic lives.

The second part is titled "The Symbolic Design in Worshiping Space", highlighting the design aspects of the space for worship. In this part, the article by Nan Wang, Zhuonan Wang and Hongyu Zheng analyzes not only the plan, section, and elevation drawings but also the dimensions of the statues in the Yingxian pagoda and argues for a holistic design method in sacred buildings based on the traditional East Asian philosophy and symbolism about the square and circle geometries; the article by Yu Ding, Yuqing Cai and Jie Liu offers a groundbreaking study on the design and structure of the single-bay Buddhist temples in northeastern Fujian, an architectural type that has long evaded the attention of academic scholarship; Xuan Chen's article explores the shared motifs in the ceiling design of the stone tombs in Northeast Asia against the historical backgrounds of the diffusion of

Buddhist and Daoist beliefs in the 1st to 7th centuries; and Muping Bao's article traces the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongolian regions through the study of the origins and development of spatial formation in the Erdene Zuu Monastery.

The third section is titled "The Evolvement of Religious Sites and the Dynamic Urban Space", focusing on the planning aspects of where the space for worship impacted the urban scale. In this section, the article by Hui Song, Qingwen Meng, and Chenyang Wang explores the impacts worshiping space had played in the formation and evolvement of Xi'an city's urban fabric during the Song to Qing dynasties using a modern analytical method (KDE); the article by Yan Zhou, Hong Jiang, Tianyang Lu, and Xinjie Shen analyzes the relationships between the spatial distribution of pagodas in Myanmar's Mrauk-U city and the urban structure using the GIS platform, highlighting the role worshiping space had played in the shaping of human settlements; the article by Rui Li and Jiang Feng demonstrates the merging of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in Chan practice with the architectural case of the Changshou Monastery garden in Canton from the Qing dynasty; and the article by Zhouzi Ge and Yongqin Guo investigates the spreading of the Linji School Chan Buddhism in the 10th to 11th centuries and its spatial-temporal relationship to the power center of the Northern Song court.

The fourth part is titled "Visuality and Imagination in the Space for Worship", highlighting the psychological aspects of the worshiping space. In this section, the article by Weiqiao Wang and Aibin Yan offers a spatial analysis of a Mogao cave in Dunhuang that integrates the design, construction, and use phases and explores the relationship between body, scale, and architecture; Bo Sun's article investigates the Fowan rock carvings of the Dazu Grottoes, revealing the historical contexts behind their subject changes and formal designs; the article by Zhenru Zhou and Luke Li provides a visual analysis of the Pure Land paintings in Mogao Cave 172 and argues that strategies of spatial presentation in both the painting and architectural space help to create a transformative experience of utopian imagination; Jie Zhou's article explores the secularization of religious space from the Tang dynasty to the Song periods through a detailed analysis of changes in themes and patronage of the Dazu carvings; and Yifeng Xie's article compares the visual experiences in pagodas and the ge-pavilions, arguing that the latter accommodate a more powerful worshiping space due to its perspectival richness and flexibility.

The last section is titled "Locality and the Folk Cults", showcasing space for worship tied to specific regions and locations. In this section, the article by Zhaoquan He and Xiaorong Meng contextualizes the origin, patronage, and development of the Wang Lingguan cult in the Daoist folk ritual system of the Ming-Qing period; the article by Shuaiqi Zhang and Hongyu Sun explores the spread of Lord Yan cult in Jiangxi and Hubei in the Ming-Qing era, highlighting its connection with the local power structure in the social milieu of migration, cross-regional economic activities, and governmental participation; the article by Jinghua Huang, Chujiang Yang, and Si Chen provides a case study of the natural landscape and space in western Yunnan reshaped by mythologies tied to specific local environments; the article by Gege Yu, Haoqin Gan, and Yongqin Guo explores the roles Buddhism and Daoism played in *fengshui* practice of the Song dynasty, offering a theoretical context for the generation of meaning and symbolism in a given location.

The contributing authors are from diversified academic backgrounds, producing a colorful anthology of fresh angles, new perspectives, and innovative approaches. We thank all contributors for their excellent work and willingness to share research through such a venue. Thanks to all external manuscript reviewers and the editorial board members for their selfless support and for safeguarding academic quality and vigor. Thanks to Violet Li, Candice Nie, Jaya Liu, Gloria Qi, Heather Liang, and Wohler Huang for their time and expertise during various stages of this volume's

development. Special thanks to Managing Editor Kiki Zhang for her excellent work and steadfast support throughout the entire publication process. We hope readers find in this volume both valuable information and inspiring discoveries on the space for worship in East Asia.

Shuishan Yu and Aibin Yan

Guest Editors

Article

Dual-Axis Worship Space of Buddha, Dharma, and Ancestors in Huayansi, Western Capital: The Liao Dynasty's Political and Diplomatic Context (10th–11th Centuries)

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Abstract: The Huayansi 華嚴寺, situated at the frontier stronghold of the Liao Dynasty in the Western Capital, is a significant royal temple that preserves two main halls from the Liao and Jin Dynasties to this day. Through a systematic examination of the *Liaoshi* 《遼史》 and the related literature, this study offers a novel interpretation of the east–west dual-axial layout of the Huayansi and its historical significance. It further discusses the integral artistic space of the Buddha and the Dharma within the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall 薄伽教藏殿, which shapes the spiritual realm of the Western Pure Land, thereby repositioning and enhancing the historical value of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall. The article elucidates the political and cultural core elements embedded within the formation of the parallel axes of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and the Mahavira Hall, which are closely associated with three pivotal years in the Liao Dynasty: 1038, 1044, and 1062. This not only reflects the grand historical context of the Liao Dynasty's domestic governance and foreign policy during the 10th and 11th centuries but also encapsulates the rich and diverse religious beliefs and cultural traits of the Khitan 契丹 people. The axis space of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, constructed earlier during the reign of Xingzong 興宗 to house the *Liao Canon* 《遼藏》, along with the architectural complex of the Huayansi—named and commissioned by Emperor Daozong 道宗 24 years later—collectively establishes a dual-axial worship space at the Grand Huayansi, sanctified by the triad of the Buddha 佛, the Dharma 法, and the Ancestors 祖. This underscores the Liao Dynasty's political objectives of deterring hostile states and ensuring national security within the framework of Buddhist veneration and ancestor worship.

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Keywords: dual-axis worship space; Buddha, Dharma, and Ancestors; Huayansi in the Western Capital; the 10th–11th centuries; political and diplomatic framework of the Liao Dynasty; Bhagavata Scriptures Hall; Yurong Hall; *Liao Canon*; sutra cabinet; Western Pure Land

1. Introduction

Huayansi¹, the imperial temple of the Liao Dynasty, was located in the southwestern corner of the old city area and adjacent to the western city wall of Datong, Shanxi Province 山西省, the Western Capital of the Liao Dynasty. Unlike traditional Chinese temples, which typically face south, Huayansi extends along an east–west axis. Situated in a gently sloping area with the western side higher than the eastern side, the main halls face east. The two important halls, Mahavira Hali (Daxiong Baodian 大雄寶殿) and the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (Boqie Jiaozang Dian 薄伽教藏殿) are located on separate parallel axes within the temple and are situated on elevated platforms. Each hall leads the layout of the other buildings along their respective axes, forming two sets of parallel courtyards running east to west. This arrangement contrasts with the typical spatial pattern of traditional Chinese temple complexes, which are usually organized around a central axis (Figure 1).

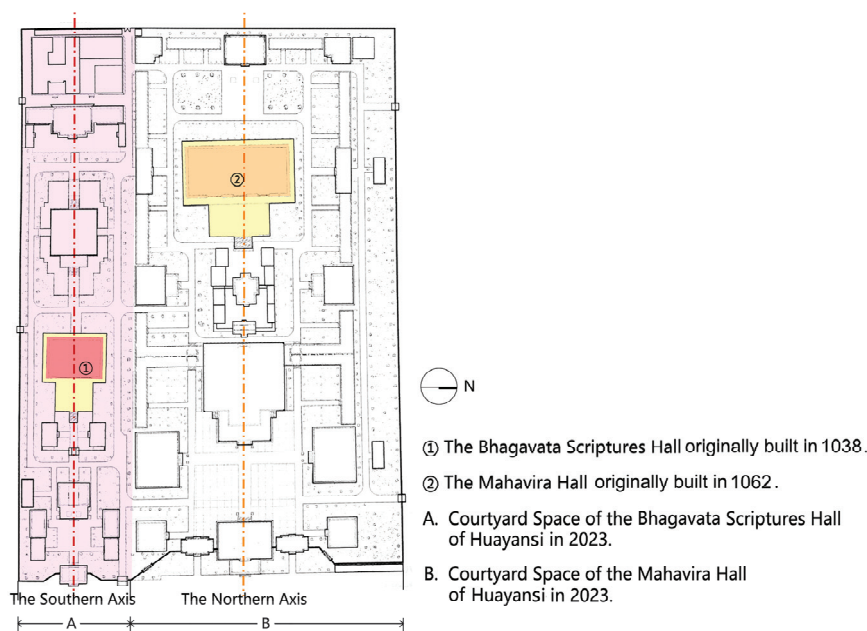


Figure 1. Overall plan of the current dual-axis alignment at Huayansi (drawing by the author's research team², reference map: (H. Liu 2023, p. 9, *Huayansi pingmian shiyitu*)).

Academic studies on Huayansi have predominantly focused on the wooden structural systems of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and the Mahavira Hall. Representative research works include Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen's paper "Datong Gujianzhu Diaocha Baogao" (Liang and Liu 2006, pp. 1–76); Qi Ping, Chai Zejun, Zhang Wu'an, and Ren Yimin's book *Datong Huayansi (Shangsi)* (Qi et al. 2008, pp. 101–68); Liu Xiangyu's doctoral dissertation *Datong Huayansi Ji Boqie Jiaozang Dian Yanjiu* (X. Liu 2015, pp. 119–309); and Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt's book *Liao Architecture* (Steinhardt 1997, pp. 123–40). No specialized studies have been conducted on the axial space of Huayansi. Based on a comprehensive review and textual research of the *Liaoshi* 《辽史》 and the related literature, this study innovatively proposes a new interpretation and historical significance of the east-west dual-axis layout of Huayansi.

Huayansi, established by imperial decree during the Liao Dynasty, received its name from the same. Historical documents, inscriptions, and field investigations reveal that the main halls along the dual axes of Huayansi were constructed in different periods. The Mahavira Hall, located along the northern axis, was originally erected in the eighth year of the Qingning 清寧 period of the Liao Dynasty (1062). During the second year of the Baoda 保大 period of the Liao Dynasty (1122), the Jin 金 army invaded and took control of the western capital, leading to significant destruction at Huayansi. The current structure of the Mahavira Hall was reconstructed by monks who raised funds from the public between the third and fourth years of the Tianjuan 天眷 period (1140–1144) of the Jin Dynasty³. This hall stands as a wooden architectural masterpiece. On the southern axis, the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall was established in the seventh year of the Zhongxi 重熙 period of the Liao Dynasty (1038), 24 years before Huayansi was named. It was built to accommodate the imperial block-printed Tripitaka of the Liao Dynasty, known as the *Liao Canon* 《辽藏》 (*Liaozang*). Since its initial construction, the hall's spatial arrangement has been preserved exceptionally well, including the wooden sutra cabinets and painted clay sculptures dating back to the Zhongxi period.

The two main halls of the extant Huayansi were constructed at different times and served distinct functions, with the original appearance of those built during the Liao Dynasty differing accordingly. This study examines the political and diplomatic systems of the Liao Dynasty from the 10th to 11th centuries, uncovering the political and cultural core elements embedded in the formation of the dual parallel axes. It elucidates the historical events that occurred in three pivotal years—1038, 1044, and 1062—and underscores their close association with the construction process of Huayansi in the Western Capital. Building upon this, the study delves into the religious and cultural content and the spatial arrangements for worship rituals at Huayansi, tracing the original intentions of the Liao Dynasty's royal family in establishing the temple. It interprets the historical significance and political appeals inherent in the dual-axis worship space sanctified by the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Ancestors. Furthermore, it presents the religious beliefs, political intentions, and ambitions for state governance embodied in the temple's worship spaces by the Liao Dynasty (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The Bhagavata Scriptures Hall retains its overall artistic appearance from the Zhongxi period of the Liao Dynasty (photos by the author).

2. The Rise of Western Capital in the Liao Dynasty: Political and Diplomatic Strategies from the 10th to the 11th Centuries

The Liao Dynasty established its Western Capital in 1044, with the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall constructed in 1038 and the Mahavira Hall of Huayansi built in 1062. These three pivotal years are intricately linked to significant historical events, including the completion of the *Liao Canon*, which was carved and printed during the reigns of Emperors Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong. This period also saw complex political, diplomatic, and military interactions between the Liao Dynasty and its neighbors, such as the Bohai State 渤海國, Xi State 奚國, Goryeo 高麗, Western Xia 西夏, and the Song Dynasty 宋. Furthermore, this era was characterized by shifts in territorial boundaries, the establishment of the Five Capitals, the continuation of religious worship and ceremonial practices, and urban development following the designation of Yunzhou as the Western Capital.

2.1. The Five Capitals System of the Liao Dynasty and Diplomatic Relations with Neighboring States in the 10th and 11th Centuries

The nomadic traits of the Khitan (Qidan 契丹) pastoralists are evident in the 219-year imperial lifestyle of the Liao Dynasty. This is exemplified by the administrative system of the Five Capitals (Wujing 五京) (Figure 3) in the Liao Dynasty, where the emperor and his extensive court officials did not reside permanently in any of the Five Capitals—the Supreme Capital 上京 (Shangjing), the Eastern Capital (Dongjing 東京), the Southern Capital (Nanjing 南京), the Central Capital (Zhongjing 中京), and the Western Capital (Xijing 西京). Instead, they lived a nomadic lifestyle, conducting year-round inspection tours, sacrificial ceremonies, and hunting, moving with the four seasons and setting

up temporary encampments known as “Nabo” (nabo 捺鉢) (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 423–26). Volume 68 of the *Liaoshi* documents the unique lifestyle of the Liao emperors, including their daily governance, inspection tours, sacrificial rituals, and hunting activities around the Nabo and the Five Capitals. The principal adversaries of the Liao Dynasty during the 10th and 11th centuries were primarily the Central Plains dynasties that emerged and declined around the Five Dynasties period, along with neighboring countries such as the Song Dynasty, Western Xia, Goryeo, the Bohai Kingdom, and the Xi State. The establishment of the Five Capitals was also a result of the Liao Dynasty’s political diplomacy, warfare, and territorial integration with neighboring states and tribes.

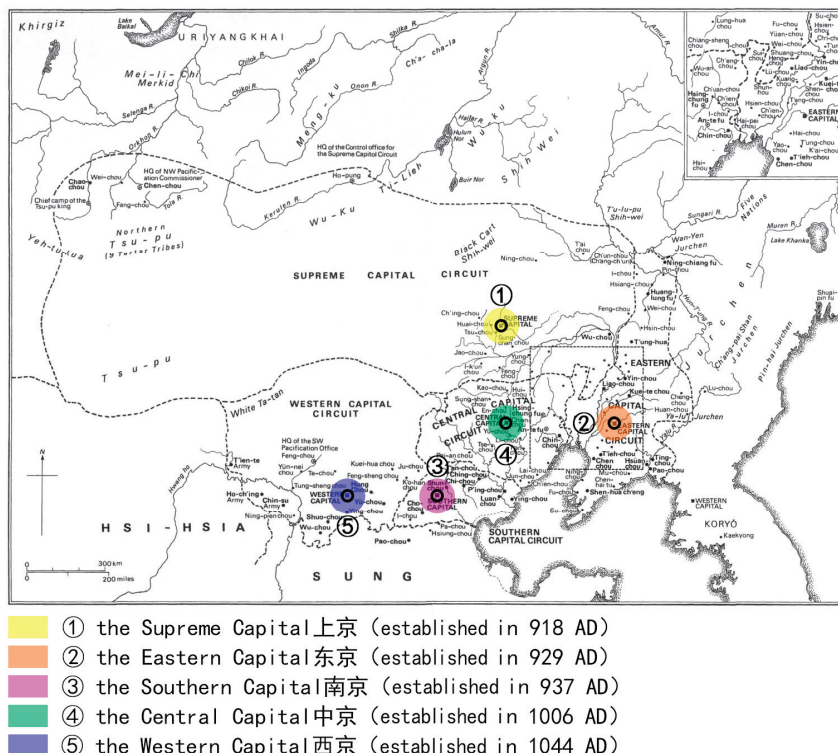


Figure 3. Distribution map of the Five Capitals of the Liao Dynasty in the 10th–11th centuries (drawing by the author’s research team, reference map: (Franke and Twitchett 2008, p. 119, Map 7. *The Liao empire, Ca. 1045*)).

From the establishment of the Supreme Capital (Linhuang 臨潢, now Boroo city 波羅城 in Mongolia) in the third year of the Shence 神冊 period of Liao Taizu 遼太祖 (918) to the establishment of the fifth capital, the Western Capital, in the thirteenth year of the Zhongxi 興宗 period of Emperor Xingzong 興宗 (1044), it took 126 years to complete the administrative division of the Five Capitals and Five Circuits (Wudao 五道). This was closely related to the political diplomacy of the Liao Dynasty, especially with the states engaged in wars during the 10th and 11th centuries, including the Song Dynasty, Western Xia, Goryeo, Bohai State, and Xi State. In the first year of the Tianxian 天顯 period (926), Liao Taizu conquered the Bohai State within two months (Toqto’a 2017, p. 450), renaming it the “East Dan State” (Dongdan Guo 東丹國) and making it a vassal state of the Liao Dynasty. In 929 AD, the capital of the East Dan State was relocated to Dongping 東平, serving as the Southern Capital of the Liao Dynasty. In 937 AD, Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭, the puppet king of Later Jin (Houjin 後晉), acknowledged Liao Taizu as his father and pledged allegiance to

the Khitan, offering sixteen prefectures from Yunzhou 雲州 to Youzhou 幽州 to Liao Taizu. Consequently, Yunzhou (now Datong 大同) became part of the Liao Dynasty's territory, with Youzhou designated as the Southern Capital of the Liao Dynasty (now Beijing 北京), while the original Southern Capital, Dongping, was renamed the Eastern Capital (now Liaoyang 遼陽). From the military campaigns of Liao Taizu to the administrative reforms of Emperor Shengzong 聖宗, the state ruled by the Xi State king was fully integrated into the Liao Dynasty as its vassal state in 997 AD. In 1006 AD, the former capital of the Xi State was designated as the Central Capital of the Liao Dynasty (now Tianyi Town 天義, Ningcheng County 寧城, Chifeng City 赤峰, becoming the second most important capital after the Supreme Capital. Thus, the Liao Dynasty had four capitals (Franke and Twitchett 2008, pp. 63–78).

2.2. Two Key Events in the Mid-11th Century: The Liao-Western Xia Confrontation (1038) and the Founding of the Western Capital (1044)

In the early 11th century, the Liao Dynasty had already annexed Bohai State and Xi State and had established long-term peaceful relations with Goryeo and the Song Dynasty through various means. By the mid-reign of Emperor Shengzong (982–1031), the emphasis on external relations had shifted to the rising power of Western Xia, which was growing increasingly influential in the southwest. The Tanguts 黨項 founded the Western Xia state in 963, and by the early 11th century, they had submitted to both the Song and Liao Dynasties, paying tribute to both. During Emperor Shengzong's reign, in the years 997 and 1004, respectively, Li Jiqian 李繼遷 and Li Deming 李德明, rulers of Western Xia, were granted the titles of Prince of Xiping 西平王, and their governance operated under a semi-autonomous model within the suzerainty of the dominant states (Toqto'a 2017, pp. 161, 173). Western Xia's diplomatic strategy was inconsistent; it not only manipulated the relationships between the Liao and Song but also continuously engaged in localized conflicts with both allied states, expanding its territory in multiple directions. Additionally, it invested significant effort in competing with the Liao Dynasty for dominance over the western region inhabited by the Uyghurs (Huihu 回鶻). Its objectives were not only territorial acquisition but also the control of economic trade routes extending westward to the European continent.

In 1038, Li Yuanhao 李元昊, the king of Western Xia, declared himself the Emperor of Great Xia, usurping the imperial title and changing his surname to "Weiming" 嵬名 and first name to "Nangxiao" 曩霄, thereby completely severing ties with the Liao and Song. This action initiated the "Three-Power Stalemate" period among the Song, Liao, and Western Xia dynasties. Western Xia boldly sought equal diplomatic status with the Liao and Song, similar to the Treaty of Chanyuan 澶淵之盟 (Chanyuan Zhimeng), leading to dissatisfaction from the Liao court and a rapid deterioration of political relations (Franke and Twitchett 2008, pp. 120–22).

Also in 1038, another political event occurred that angered the Liao court: In the autumn of 1031, Emperor Xingzong ascended the throne and immediately began to fulfill the promise made during the Shengzong 聖宗 period to arrange a wedding for Li Yuanhao, the son of the Prince of Xiping Li Deming. In the twelfth month of the same year, Princess Xingping 興平公主 was married off to Li Yuanhao as his consort, and Li Yuanhao was titled Duke of Xia State (Xia Guowang 夏國公) and Imperial Son-in-law Commander (Fuma Duwei 駙馬都尉). Later, he was further titled King of Xia State (Xia Guowang 夏國王). In 1038, Princess Xingping passed away mysteriously. At that time, Li Yuanhao was preoccupied with his imperial ambitions and did not formally notify the Liao court of the proper imperial rites. Xingzong was furious and dispatched envoys carrying an imperial decree to "question the reason" (jie qigu 詰其故) (Toqto'a 2017, pp. 241, 248), leading to a further falling out between the Liao Dynasty and Western Xia.

The eventful seventh year of Zhongxi (1038) coincided with the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, where inscriptions indicating the year of construction were made under its beam. The development of these political events is inevitably intertwined with the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and its monastery complexes,

indicating an inseparable internal connection. In the first month of the sixth year of Zhongxi (1037), Xingzong “went on a westward inspection tour” (xixing 西幸) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 246). Although the specific location of his tour was not mentioned, it is reasonable to assume that the destination included the major western stronghold of Yunzhou. It can be inferred that this westward inspection tour was aimed directly at countering the expansion ambitions of the neighboring Western Xia. Therefore, the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall complex could be considered part of the overall defensive layout of the western border regions of the Liao Dynasty.

In 1044, several tribes from the western territories of the Liao defected to Western Xia, prompting Li Yuanhao to support the rebels. That same year, Western Xia signed a treaty with the Song. In the tenth month of the thirteenth year of the Zhongxi period (1044), Xingzong mobilized a large army and invaded Western Xia through three routes, citing this as a pretext. In the eleventh month, “Xingzong was defeated by Li Yuanhao, with a narrow escape on his own” (Xingzong baiyu Li Yuanhao ye, danji tuchu, ji budetuo) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 1629, 興宗敗於李元昊也，單騎突出，幾不得脫). The Battle of Hequ 河曲之戰 resulted in a major defeat, forcing Xingzong to retreat from Yunzhou back to the Liao territory. Yunzhou, situated at the intersection of the territories of the Liao, Western Xia, and Song, was a crucial stronghold in the southwest guarded by the Liao. Four days after returning from the western campaign in the eleventh month, Xingzong declared that Yunzhou would be renamed the Western Capital as one of Liao’s auxiliary capitals and established the Western Capital Circuit (Xijing Dao 西京道) with the capital at Datong Prefecture (Toqto’a 2017, p. 264), thus completing the local administrative system of the Liao Dynasty with the Five Capitals as its center and Five Circuits established around them.

The campaign to invade Western Xia having failed, Xingzong was frustrated. He immediately embarked on an inspection tour westward in the twelfth month of the year (Toqto’a 2017, p. 264), personally overseeing the enhancement of urban facilities and military defenses in the Western Capital. “Thus constructing the Western Capital with enemy monitoring towers and wooden watchtowers, extending over twenty li, with gates named Yingchun 迎春 to the east, Chaoyang 朝陽 to the south, Dingxi 定西 to the west, and Gongji 拱極 to the north. Only princes were allowed to control this important area” (Yinjian Xijing, Dilou, Penglu ju, guangmao ershili, men, dongyue Yingchun, nanyue Chaoyang, Xiyue Dingxi, beiyue Gongji.....yongwei zhongdi, fei qingwang bude zhuzhi 因建西京，敵樓、棚櫓具，廣袤二十裏，門，東曰迎春，南曰朝陽，西曰定西，北曰拱極。.....用爲重地，非親王不得主之) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 578). This transformed it into an impregnable stronghold on the western border, intended for long-term defense against both the Song and Western Xia, and prepared thoroughly for the next expedition against Western Xia and further expansion. The naming of the western city gate as “Dingxi Gate” (Dingxi men 定西門, the gate of pacifying the west) indicates the determination of the Liao court to pacify Western Xia and subdue Li Yuanhao, compelling him to once again submit to their authority.

From the completion of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall in 1038 to the grand inauguration of the Huayansi, which was bestowed its name by imperial decree in 1062, this imperial temple of the Liao Dynasty was never confined to a singular model of Buddhist worship space. Instead, it was imbued with the protective powers of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Ancestors to counteract the expansionist ambitions of neighboring states and safeguard the tranquility of the Liao Dynasty’s borderlands. Its establishment was closely linked to the political exchanges and conflicts between the Liao Dynasty and neighboring entities such as the Bohai State, Xi State, Goryeo, the Song Dynasty, and Western Xia, as well as the various tribes of Zubu and Nüzhen. Particularly after the mid-11th century, efforts were directed towards mitigating the threat posed by the rise of Western Xia in the southwestern region. The historical events in Liao foreign relations and domestic affairs during the Xingzong period in 1038 and 1044 were intricately intertwined with the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, the establishment of the Western Capital, and the imperial decree to construct the Huayansi during the Daozong period in 1062.

3. Initial Construction (1038) and Merger (1062): Integration of Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and Huayansi in the Western Capital

3.1. 1038: Establishment of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall for the Liao Canon

3.1.1. 1038: A Historical Milestone in the Printing History of the Liao Canon

Since its completion in the seventh year of the Liao Dynasty's Zhongxi period (1038), the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall has stood for 986 years until now, making it one of the only eight major wooden constructions from the Liao Dynasty that remain in China today (Steinhardt 1997, pp. 58, 59). The original Liao-era structure of the main hall featured a large wooden load-bearing system, the three main Buddha statues and their accompanying Bodhisattva groups, the caisson ceiling (Zaojin 藻井) and the checkered ceiling (Pingqi 平棋), as well as sutra cabinets for storing the *Liao Canon* (Zhang 1991, p. 108) along the four walls of the hall (Figure 4). These elements were adorned with colorful paintings and gilding, complemented by bracket sets and various types of wooden sculptural decorations. This comprehensive preservation of the artistry, combining large woodwork, small wood components, and sculpture from the Liao period, maintains the integrity of its original artistic form, making it a uniquely characteristic cultural heritage building among the great Liao structures.

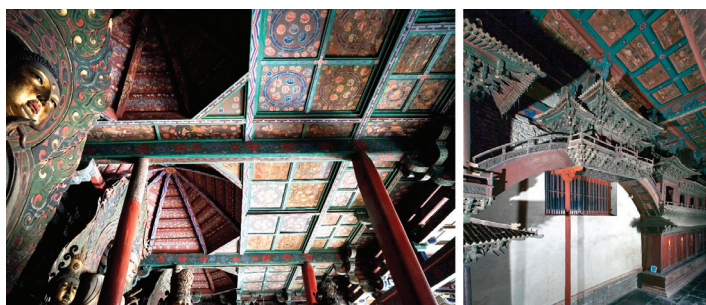


Figure 4. Left: Colorful paintings and gilding on the caisson ceilings and checkered ceilings in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall. Right: Sutra cabinets for storing the *Liao Canon* along the four walls of the hall (photos by the author).

Interpreting the name “Bhagavata Scriptures Hall”, “Bhagavata” is derived from the Sanskrit word “भगवत्” (Bhagavat), meaning “the Blessed One”, which is one of the ten titles of Shakyamuni Buddha. “Scriptures Hall” refers to a repository for Buddhist scriptures. Therefore, it can be surmised that the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall is a place for storing Buddhist scriptures, specifically designated for housing the *Liao Canon*, a comprehensive Buddhist canon printed with woodblocks commissioned by the Liao Dynasty. The plaque hanging in the center of the main hall, inscribed with “Bhagavata Scriptures Hall” (Figure 5), carries the special significance of preserving both the worship of Buddha and Buddhist scriptures.



Figure 5. Plaque of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (photo by the author).

The initial construction and related information of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall were not recorded in historical documents from the Liao, Jin, and Yuan dynasties. Only a few later inscriptions from restoration efforts mention it. The exact completion date of the seventh year of the Zhongxi period of the Liao Dynasty (1038) is derived from an inscription on the southern side of the main hall, on the bottom of the rafters: “Built on the fifteenth day of the ninth month of the seventh year of the Zhongxi period, at noon” (Wei Chongxi qinian suici Wuyin jiuyue Jiawu shuo shiwuri Wushen wushi jian 維重熙七年歲次戊寅玖月甲午朔十五日戊申午時建). Along the four walls of the hall, two-storey-high double-eaved scripture cabinets, approximately 5.5 m tall, were constructed, which were named “Bizang and Tiangong Louge” 壁藏與天宮樓閣. The lower level is the Bizang (the sutra storage cabinet 壁藏), which was used to store scriptures, while the upper level served as a Buddha niche, connecting all the Tiangong Louge (heavenly palace tower-pavilions 天宮樓閣) (Steinhardt 2019, p. 142) by the Xinglang (corridor 行廊), mimicking the form of a large palace complex. In the middle of the west wall, a Feihongqiao (rainbow bridge 飛虹橋) and Tiangong Louge spanned the space, enclosing groups of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues, presenting an exquisitely decorated space for worship (Figure 6). The Bhagavata Scriptures Hall was built specifically to house the *Liao Canon*. The year 1038, as the clear construction date, has become one of the important historical landmarks for verifying the version and carving time of the *Liao Canon*.

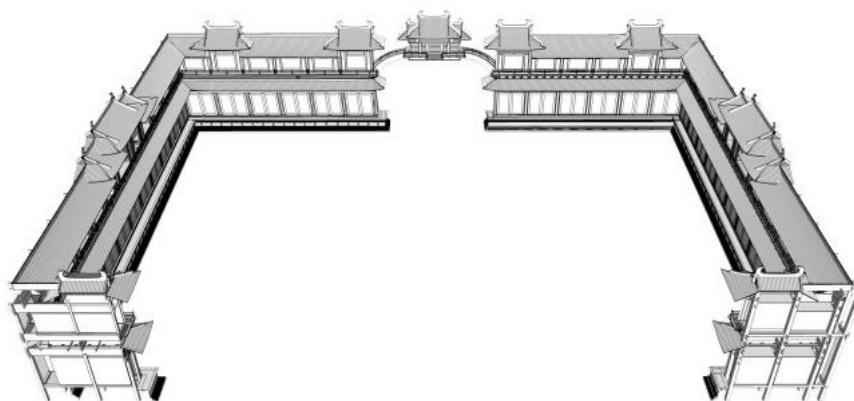


Figure 6. Overview of the sutra cabinets in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall: Bizang and Tiangong Louge mimicking the style of a large palace complex (drawing by the author’s research team).

3.1.2. The Multi-Edition Liao Canon: Carved during the Reigns of Emperors Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong

For a long time, no surviving scriptures of the *Liao Canon* were known, and historical records about it were scarce. It was not until July 1974 that parts of the original scrolls of the *Liao Canon* were discovered inside the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha on the fourth level of the Fogongsi Shakyamuni Pagoda (Fogongsi Shijia Ta 佛宮寺釋迦塔) in Yingxian County 應縣, Shanxi Province. This marked the first time in centuries that the lost *Liao Canon* appeared before the public in the form of woodblock-printed paper scriptures. This discovery confirmed the existence of different versions of the *Liao Canon*, carved during the reigns of Emperor Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong, and it finally revealed the comprehensive work of the Liao court in collecting, organizing, and printing the Buddhist scriptures (Figure 7).

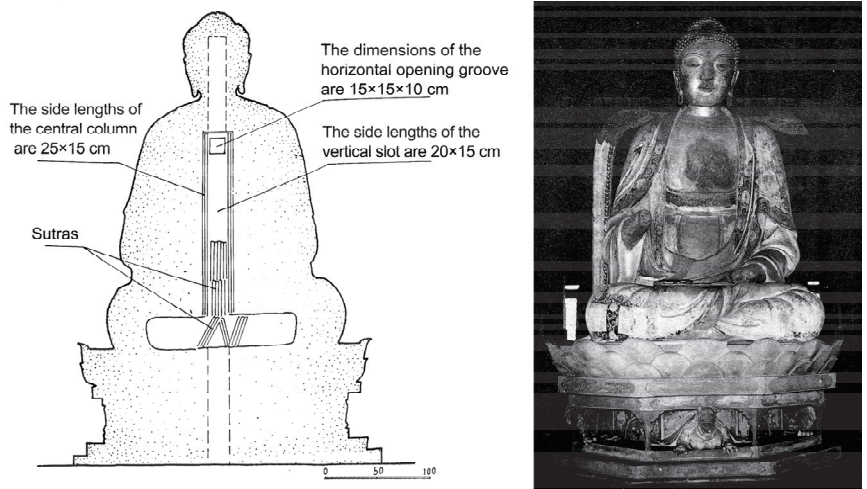


Figure 7. Schematic diagram of the hidden space containing the *Liao canon* inside the Shakyamuni Buddha statue on the fourth floor of the Fogongsi Shakyamuni Pagoda (drawing created by the author's research team, reference figure: Shanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Bureau and Museum of Chinese History 1991, p. 10, Figures 1 and 2).

The academic community refers to the Tripitaka produced during the Tonghe period of Emperor Shengzong (983–1012), known as the “Shengzong Edition”, which was in scroll format, totaling 505 sets (zhi 帙) and 5,314 volumes (juan 卷) (Luo 1988, p. 73), preserving the format of ancient Chinese Buddhist scriptures. The Tripitaka produced during the Zhongxi period of Emperor Xingzong (1032–1055) to the Xianyong 鹹雍 period of Emperor Daozong (1065–1075) is known as the “Zhongxi-Xianyong Edition”, which includes an additional 74 sets compared to the “Shengzong Edition”, totaling 579 sets (Luo 1993, p. 59) and approximately 6000 volumes (Hu et al. 2021, p. 93). This edition is available in two different woodblock printing formats: large-character scroll editions and small-character booklet editions (Chen 1989, pp. 78–91).

According to the *Liaoshi*, in the second month of the fourth year of the Xianyong period (1068), the *Yuzhi Huayanjing Zan* 禦制華嚴經贊 was promulgated (Toqto'a 2017, p. 302), signifying the official historical record of the carving and promulgation of the “Zhongxi-Xianyong Edition” of the *Liao Canon*. Concurrently, the inscription on *Yangtai Shan Qingshui Yuan Chuangzao Cangjing Ji* 陽臺山清水院創造藏經記 in Dajuesi 大覺寺, located in the West Mountain of Beijing and dated to the fourth year of Daozong's Xianyong period (1068), records that “the imprint of the Tripitaka consists of a total of 579 sets, establishing both internal and external collections and placing them in niches” (ying Dazangjing fan wubaiqishijiu zhi, chuang neiwai zang er kancuo zhi 印大藏經凡五百七十九帙, 創內外藏而龜措之) (Xiang 1995, p. 332). Indicating that by 1068 at the latest, the “Zhongxi-Xianyong Edition” of the *Liao Canon* had been carved and stored in niches (Figure 8).

The construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall seems to have been a part of Emperor Xingzong's comprehensive plan for the recompilation of the *Liao Canon* (Luo 1988, p. 78). Initially, in the seventh year of Xingzong's reign (1038), the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall was built to house the “Tonghe Edition” of the *Liao Canon*, which had been written or carved gradually before the twenty-first year of Shengzong's reign (1003). Subsequently, the editing and carving of the “Zhongxi-Xianyong Edition” of the *Liao Canon* commenced, and the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall awaited the completion of this newer and more comprehensive edition to incorporate into its collection. The monk Jueyuan 覺苑, who participated in the compilation of the *Liao Canon* during the Daozong period, recorded in

the *Darijing Yishi Yanmicha* 大日經義釋演密鈔 “When our Great Liao Emperor Xingzong reigned, he had a profound interest in the teachings of Buddhism, aiming to propagate them far and wide. He ordered meticulous carving and required thorough examination. Jueyuan, entrusted with the imperial decree, humbly participated in the editorial field” (ji wo DaLiao Xingzong yuyu, zhihong zangjiao, yu ji xia'er, cijin diaosou, xvren xiangkan, Jueyuan chicheng lunzhi, tianyu jiaochang 洎我大遼興宗禦宇，志弘藏教，欲及遐邇，敕盡雕鏤，須人詳勘，覺苑持承綸旨，忝預校場) (Jueyuan 1077, p. 9).



Figure 8. Left: The appearance of heavenly palace tower-pavilions in the hall; Right: The appearance of the sutra cabinets in the hall (photos by the author).

The extant stone inscription from the second year of the Jin Dynasty's Dading 大定 period (1162), written by Duanzi Qing 段子卿, titled *Dajinguo Xijing Da Huayansi Chongxiu Boqiejiaozang Ji* 大金國西京大華嚴寺重修薄伽藏教記, mentions the following “During the Liao Dynasty's Zhongxi period, there was a further revision and verification, and it was standardized into five hundred and seventy-nine sets, as recorded in the *Ruzanglu* 《入藏錄》 (Catalog of Texts Entering the Collection) by Master Taibao 太保. Therefore, the Grand Huayansi has also possessed these scriptures since ancient times” (ji youliao Zhongxi jian, fujia jiaozheng, tongzhi wei wubaiqishijiu zhi, ze you Taibao dashi *Ruzanglu* ju zhaizhi yun, jin ci Dahuyansi congxi yilai yiyong shi jiaodian yi 及有遼重熙間，複加校證，通制為五百七十九帙，則有太保大師《入藏錄》具載之雲，今此大華嚴寺從昔以來亦有是教典矣) (Datong Liao and Jin Culture and Art Museum 2018, p. 106). These records serve as historical evidence of the collection of the newly printed “Zhongxi-Xianyong Edition” of the *Liao Canon* in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall.

3.2. 1062: Merging — The Construction and Naming of Huayansi by Imperial Decree in the Western Capital

The construction time of Huayansi is documented in various historical texts. The earliest mention of the Western Capital Circuit is found in the Geographical Records (Dili Zhi 地理志) in the *Liaoshi*: “Huayansi was built in the eighth year of the Qingning period, and imperial stone and bronze statues enshrined” (Qingnin banian jian Huayansi, feng'an zhudi shixiang, tongxiang 清寧八年建華嚴寺，奉安諸帝石像、銅像) (Toqto'a 2017, p. 578). In the thirteenth year of Emperor Xingzong's Zhongxi period (1044), Yunzhou was promoted to be the Western Capital, establishing Datong Prefecture and vigorously developing the urban construction of the Western Capital. The mention of Huayansi in the *Liaoshi* as being built in the eighth year of Qingning (1062) should be understood as an expansion rather than its initial establishment. By the seventh year of Xingzong's Zhongxi period (1038), the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, which housed the *Liao Canon*, had already been constructed, indicating that “Before Qingning period, this temple already had scripture storage, and its scale was by no means small” (shi Qingning qian, cisi yiyong jiaozang, qi guimo juefei xialou kezhi 是清寧前，此寺已有教藏，其規模絕不狹陋可知) (Liang and Liu 2006, p. 8).

The expanded function of Huayansi, undertaken in the eighth year of the Qingning period, was to “enshrine imperial stone and bronze statues”, thereby converting it into a venue for the imperial family’s ancestral worship. This enlargement not only augmented the temple’s scale and stature but also resulted in its naming as Huayansi by Emperor Daozong. The newly expanded Huayansi amalgamated with the previously built Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and its architectural ensemble, evolving into a multifunctional, large-scale imperial temple. This temple complex encompassed functions such as scripture storage, Buddhist worship, and ancestor veneration. It was commemorated as “Grand Huayansi” in inscriptions from the Jin, Yuan, and Ming dynasties.

In 1062, upon the completion of the expansion of Huayansi, Emperor Daozong “visited the Western Capital” (xing Xijing 幸西京) in the twelfth month of this year, and five days later “performed the Rebirth Ritual for the Empress Dowager” (yi huangtaihou xing zaishengli 以皇太后行再生禮) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 298).

Although the specific venue for the ceremony is not mentioned, it is stated that “In the eighth year of Qingning, Huayansi was built, and stone and bronze statues of various emperors were enshrined there”. This national grand ceremony was likely recorded in the *Liaoshi* as a result. From this, it can be inferred that the ceremonial location must have been in the newly commissioned Huayansi, where Emperor Daozong, accompanied by the Empress Dowager, conducted a grand rebirth ceremony.

This highlights the new function of Grand Huayansi in hosting significant imperial rituals, such as ancestor worship and rites of rebirth, in addition to its roles in scripture storage, Buddhist worship, and the propagation of Buddhist teachings (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The north axis of Huayansi and the Mahavira Hall reconstructed during the Jin Dynasty (photos by the author).

The inscription beneath the beam indicates that the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall occurred in the third year of the Zhongxi period (1038). This chronological point holds significant historical importance, as it is 24 years prior to the construction of the Huayansi complex in the eighth year of Emperor Daozong’s Qingning period (1062). By adhering to the architectural customs of the Khitan people, who favored an eastward orientation, and thus adopting an east-west axial system, the arrangement of Buddha statues and ceremonial spaces within the hall formed a cohesive whole. The prior completion of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall influenced and dictated the organizational structure of the Huayansi complex. The axial layout of the newly expanded Huayansi complex followed the east-west pattern of the original Bhagavata Scriptures Hall complex. These two complexes run parallel to each other, unveiling two sets of temple buildings from west to east. The spatial arrangement of the initial Bhagavata Scriptures Hall complex, intended for housing the *Liao Canon*, informed the layout of the new Huayansi complex, presenting a dual-axis layout pattern of worship space organization characterized by parallel arrangement and equal emphasis on two functions.

4. Hidden Political Intentions: The Worship Space of Huayansi Empowered by the Triple Blessings of Buddha, Dharma, and Ancestors

4.1. Dual-Axis Worship Space of Huayansi and Its Liao to Jin Dynasty Remnants

In addition to enshrining the Three Jewels of the Buddha (Fobao 佛寶), the Dharma (Fabao 法寶), and the Sangha (Sengbao 僧寶), like regular temples, the Dharma 法寶 of Huayansi are not ordinary scriptures but the imperial-made Liao Dynasty's Great Tripitaka *Liao Canon*. Huayansi also serves as an imperial ancestral shrine, creating a space that combines the functions of worshipping the Buddha, preserving scriptures, and worshipping ancestors. The unique functional organization of Huayansi, along with the dual-axis worship structure formed by the merging of the two temples, is very rare in traditional Chinese temple architecture.

The southern axis of Huayansi is a worship space where the Buddha and the Dharma intersect. Constructed in 1038, the temple complex retains just one Liao Dynasty edifice, the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, which stands as the sole surviving Liao Dynasty wooden structure within Huayansi. The main hall faces east, spanning a five-bay width of approximately 25.7 m and a depth of around 18.5 m. It features a single-eave gable and hip roof, elevated on a 3.5 m high terrace. To better support the extensive majestic sutra cabinet, only the central three bays of the east main entrance are equipped with floor-to-ceiling doors and windows, flanked by solid brick walls, and the back west facade lacks doors, offering just a small high window in the center of the inner hall (Figure 10). The structure integrates eight types of indoor and outdoor bracket sets that connect the wall columns to the roof. The exterior eave bracket sets on column heads are 5-puzuo 鋪作 with two jumps, while the intermediate bracket sets feature 4-puzuo 鋪作 with a single jump, positioned one set per bay. This overall timber framework demonstrates a clear and concise load distribution (Figure 11), accentuating the architectural style of the Liao Dynasty, which reflects the Tang Dynasty's elegance, presenting a robust and stable appearance (Liu et al. 2023, pp. 263–73).

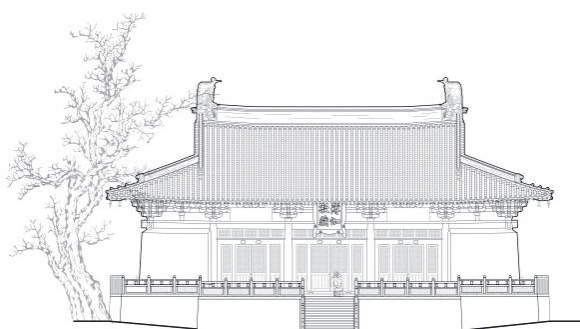


Figure 10. East facade of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (drawing by the author's research team).

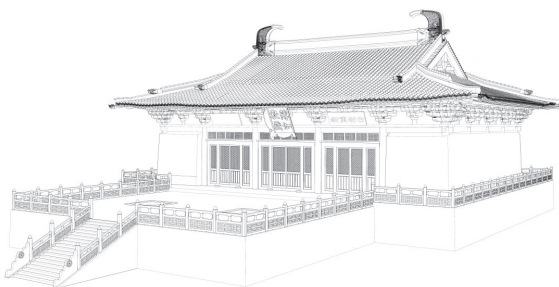


Figure 11. Perspective of the Bhagavat Scriptures Hall on the tall terrace (drawing by the author's research team).

On the Sumeru throne in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, there are three groups of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues, surrounded by sutra cabinets that once held the *Liao Canon*, forming a dual worship space that embodies the coexistence of the Buddha and the Dharma. Worshippers pass through the mountain gate and inner courtyard, ascend the steps to the platform, and from the shifting axis of the space, view the hall and statues from a distance, gradually approaching and admiring this dazzling and sacred environment. This design presents a space of reverence and awe in a gradual and impressive manner (Figure 12).



Figure 12. The sequence of spaces for worshipping Buddha along the axis of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (photos by the author).

The northern axis of Huayansi is a space dedicated to the worship of both Buddha and ancestors, expanded in 1062 and granted the imperial name Huayansi, serving as a dual-purpose worship site. Unfortunately, all the temples and structures built during the Liao Dynasty have been destroyed, and the precise location of the remnants remains uncertain, with the current buildings being later reconstructions. Historical records indicate that during the second year of the Baoda period of the Liao Dynasty (1122), when the Jin army attacked the Western Capital, Huayansi, situated within the city walls, became a major battlefield. “It marked the beginning of the Jin Dynasty. The Jin army seized the Western Capital of Liao. Huayansi was fiercely attacked and severely damaged, with only the dining hall, kitchen, pagoda, Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, and the Portrait Hall of Master Situ 司徒 remaining” (fuyu benchao dakai zhengtong, tianbin yigu, ducheng sixian, diangelouguan, ererhuizhi, wei Zhaitang, Kuchu, Baota, Jingzang jishou Shitu Dashi Yingtang cunyan 伏遇本朝大開正統，天兵一鼓，都城四陷，殿閣樓觀，俄而灰之，唯齋堂、廚庫、寶塔、經藏、泊守司徒大師影堂存焉) (Datong Liao and Jin Culture and Art Museum 2018, p. 106). The Mahavira Hall, the Yurong Hall for ancestral worship, and all significant Liao Dynasty structures along the northern axis were obliterated in this conflict. Sixty years after its expansion, Huayansi was abandoned due to the ravages of war.

It was not until the third year of the Jin Dynasty’s Tianjuan period (1140) that several eminent monks, including Master Tonglu, succeeded in raising funds to reconstruct the temple buildings, including the Mahavira Hall, on the remnants of the Liao Dynasty’s architecture. Thus, Huayansi was revived, albeit without fully restoring the complete architectural style of the Liao Dynasty on both the northern and southern axes (Figure 13). “They rebuilt Huayansi on its original site, constructing main halls with nine and seven bays, as well as the Cishi, Guanyin, and Demon-Subduing Pavilions, the Scripture Hall, Bell Tower, Temple Gate, and Side Hall, without setting a deadline, and it gradually took shape. However, the left and right chambers, surrounding corridors, and pavilions were still missing” (nai renqi jiuzhi, er tejian jiuqian, qijian zhidian, you goucehng cishi, guanyin, xiangmo zhige, ji huijing, zhonglou, sanmen, duodian, bushe riqi, weihu youcheng, qi zuoyou dongfang, simian wulang, shang queru ye 乃仍其舊址，而特建九間、七間之殿，又構成慈氏、觀音、降魔之閣，及會經、鐘樓、三門、垛殿，不設期日，巍乎有成，其左右洞房，四面廊廡，尚闕如也) (Datong Liao and Jin Culture and Art Museum 2018, p. 106).



Figure 13. Left: The southern axis of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (1038); Right: The northern axis of Huayansi Mahavira Hall (1062) (photos by the author).

The Mahavira Hall, reconstructed in 1140 during the Jin Dynasty, has been preserved through the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties to the present day, with clear ink inscriptions on the beams. The wooden board beneath the ridge beam in the central bay is inscribed with “The reconstruction was undertaken in the third year of Tianjuan (庚申年), on the twelfth day of the sixth month 甲申月, at the time of Wuchen 戊辰時, with the auspicious Qian divinatory symbols of Yuanhenglizhen” (wei Tianquan sannian suici Gengshen run liuyue Guiyou Shuo shi’er ri Jiashen Wuchen shi chongjian ji Qianyuan Hengli zhengji 維天眷三年歲次庚申閏六月癸酉朔十二日甲申戊辰時重建記乾元亨利貞吉). On the four-rafter-beam of the north second bay, there is an inscription written with a brush: “In the fourth year of Huangtong, on the fourth day of the fifth month” (wei tian Huangtong sinian wuyue siri 維天皇統四年五月四日) (Qi et al. 2008, p. 106).

These inscriptions range from the third year of the Tianjuan period (1140) to the fourth year of the Huangtong period (1144) of Emperor Xizong in the Jin Dynasty, indicating that the reconstruction of the Mahavira Hall spanned five years. This reflects the arduous task of organizing monks to raise funds from the public for the repair and reconstruction of the temple, which cannot be compared to the scale and efficiency of the Liao Dynasty’s imperial construction and organization of Huayansi.

The unique spatial layout of Huayansi, with parallel axes, merged in 1062 and gradually separated into Upper and Lower Huayansi from the Hongwu 洪武 to Xuande 宣德 periods of the Ming Dynasty, forming two independent temple complexes. This confirms the dual-axis layout of Huayansi, reflecting the historical development trajectory of two temples built successively and then merged. Based on the compilation of the literature and on-site research and the interpretation of the dual-axis layout of Huayansi, this study will further elaborate on the rich historical connotations and artistic tension presented in its worship spaces dedicated to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Ancestors.

4.2. The Western Pure Land Created by Buddha and Dharma in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall

What is meant by “the Buddha and the Dharma”? They refer to the Buddha’s treasure and the Dharma’s treasure. Shakyamuni Buddha himself, along with his statues and images, constitute the Buddha’s treasure. The teachings of Buddha represent the Dharma treasure. Buddha embodies Dharma as its essence, and Dharma relies on Buddha; thus, Buddha and Dharma are inseparable. Constructed by the Liao Dynasty royal family to enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha and the *Liao Canon*, the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall presents a unique and innovative form in the material spatial manifestation of Buddha and Dharma. This is evident from its architectural design to the arrangement of sculptures. By creating an imagined Western Pure Land through physical spatial construction, the hall establishes a new worship space that highlights the sacredness of Buddha and Dharma through masterful artistic techniques.

Within the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, 34 statues are currently preserved, of which 29 are colorfully decorated clay sculptures dating back to the seventh year of the Zhongxi era of the Liao Dynasty (1038). The statues of the Threefold Buddha (or the Three Bodies of Buddha) on the Sumeru pedestal are depicted in the posture of teaching, sitting in the lotus position with their right hand raised in front of the chest in a teaching mudra, and their left

hand either resting flat or hanging down by the knee (Figure 14). The disciples Ananda and Kasyapa, along with fourteen attendant bodhisattvas, form three “U”-shaped groups of statues with the main Buddha. These groups are relatively independent yet interconnected, taking both vertical and horizontal perspectives into account to create a dynamic spatial layout (Figure 15). The arrangement includes the three tall main Buddha statues and four medium-sized seated bodhisattvas, as well as standing bodhisattvas, Ananda, Kasyapa, and smaller-sized offering child 供養童子 statues, arranged orderly without obstructing each other. This ensures a diverse and complete composition of the worship space from various angles. Additionally, the hall is home to the *Liao Canon*, which encompasses eighty-four thousand of the Buddha’s teachings. This serves as the Dharma treasure, establishing an imagined space where the Buddha treasure and the Dharma treasure mutually reinforce each other for the propagation and protection of the Dharma. The faith in the Buddha and the Dharma thus serves as a spiritual support, stabilizing the western frontier of the Liao kingdom.



Figure 14. Three “U”-shaped groups of painted clay sculptures on the Buddha Altar in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (photos by the author).



Figure 15. Dynamic and lively spatial layout of painted clay sculptures on the Buddha Altar in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (photo by the author).

The sutra cabinets in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, which house the *Liao Canon*, are known as the “Bizang and Tiangong Louge” (Liang and Liu 2006, p. 17). Excluding the three bays with doors at the eastern entrance, the tall sutra cabinets are continuously arranged along the walls, encircling the central rectangular Sumeru throne Buddha Altar in the hall, thereby forming a complete interior loop space (Figure 16). The 5.5 m high sutra cabinets create a magnificent and exquisite celestial palace pavilion architecture, allowing worshippers to kneel before the three Buddha statues and then circumambulate the altar, surrounded by the continuous space storing the *Liao Canon*. This immersion in the solemn and grand world of the Buddha realm completes the ritual of worship within the realm where the treasures of Buddha and Dharma are harmoniously integrated.

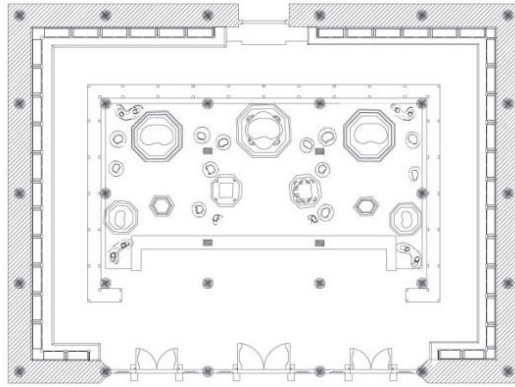


Figure 16. The majestic sutra cabinets enclosing the Buddha Altar, forming a loop worship space in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall (drawing by the author's research team).

The group of statues featuring the three main Buddhas and attendant Bodhisattvas is situated on the Buddha Altar in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, with the sutra cabinets mimicking palace-style celestial palace pavilion architecture as a backdrop. The overall spatial arrangement aims to depict the grand scene of Buddha preaching and expounding the Dharma in the Western Pure Land, offering worshippers a new, immersive Buddhist contemplative space. The murals illustrating the transformation scenes from the Infinite Life Sutra on the eastern wall of Cave 148 in Dunhuang, the northern wall of Cave 172, the northern wall of Cave 217, and the southern wall of Cave 25 in Yulin depict the Buddha preaching in the Pure Land (Figure 17). In these scenes, Manjushri, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteshvara, and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattvas are seated on either side of the Buddha while attendant Bodhisattvas joyfully listen to the Buddha's teachings. Palaces, pavilions, gates, bridges, and rainbow bridges frame the scene from behind and on both sides while flying Apsaras musicians and auspicious clouds encircle the celestial pavilions. These murals vividly and perfectly recreate the splendid scenes of the Western Pure Land in Paradise, conveyed in a two-dimensional imaginary space. The scale proportions of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas, their U-shaped arrangement, as well as the spatial form constructed by the sutra cabinets' architectural style and decoration of the celestial pavilions are all faithfully reproduced in the real three-dimensional physical space of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall. This enriches the sacredness of the Pure Land space created by the hall and enhances the power and grandeur bestowed by the Buddha and the Dharma, thereby significantly strengthening the force of Buddhist faith (Hamar 2014, pp. 145–65) (Figure 18).



Figure 17. The transformation scenes from the Infinite Life Sutra on the northern wall of Cave 172 (left) and Cave 217 (right) in Dunhuang (Sun and Sun 2001, p. 125, Figure 111; p. 121, Figure 105).

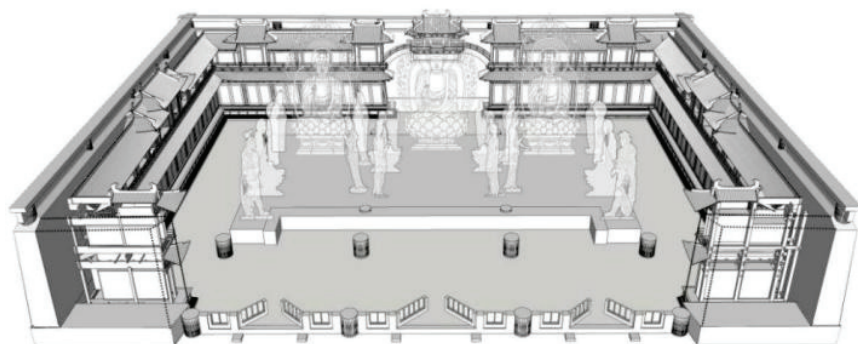


Figure 18. The Buddha and the Dharma worship space in the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, presenting the Western Pure Land depicted in Dunhuang Mural Paintings (drawing by the author's research team).

4.3. Ancestral Protection within the Yurong Worship Space at Huayansi

The *Zuozhuan* 《左傳》 states, “The major affairs of the country lie in sacrificial rituals and warfare. Sacrificial ceremonies are significant rituals for interacting with the gods” (guo zhi dashi, zai siyurong, si you zhifan, rong you shoushen, shen zhi dajie ye 國之大事，在祀與戎，祀有執膳，戎有受脤，神之大節也) (Zuo 2006, p. 141). The Liao Dynasty was deeply influenced by Han culture and governed through a combination of rituals and laws. Toqto'a wrote in the *Jin Liaoshi Biao* 《進遼史表》 that the Liao Dynasty “established the foundation of the state through warfare, governed effectively through rituals and laws, respected heaven and honored ancestors, and performed sacrificial rituals for all activities” (zaobang benxi yu gange, zhizhi nengzi yu fufu, jintian zhunzhu, er churu biji 造邦本席於干戈，致治能資於黼黻，敬天尊祖，而出入必祭) (Toqto'a 2017, p. 1714). The reverence for gods and ancestral worship were both important state ceremonies of the Liao Dynasty, where the divine spirits of heaven and earth and the imperial ancestors were crucial deities protecting the country and its people. The Liao Dynasty placed great importance on ancestor worship, developing a system of national ancestral shrines and ritual ceremonies with distinctive Khitan characteristics. Through ancestor worship activities, they served both the functions of seeking blessings and promoting moral education, ultimately serving the imperial rule.

The Liao Dynasty's ancestral shrines were classified based on their locations, including capital shrines, provincial shrines, mausoleum shrines, and Mount Muye shrines, as well as “mobile shrines” established with the imperial entourage camp. According to their types, there were imperial ancestral temples, mausoleum temples, and shrines dedicated to individual emperors. As recorded in the “Gaomiao Ceremony” (Gaomiao Yi 告廟儀) and “Yemiao Ceremony” (Yemiao Yi 謁廟儀) in the *Liaoshi* (Toqto'a 2017, p. 931), the ancestral shrines of the Liao Dynasty did not enshrine the spirit tablets of ancestors but rather imperial portraits and statues of successive emperors, unlike any other dynasty. Even in the ancestral shrine of the Khitan imperial clan in Mount Muye, they enshrined “painted sculptures of two saints and their eight divine children” (huisu ersheng bing bazi xiang 繪塑二聖並八子神像) (Toqto'a 2017, p. 504), not the spirit tablets. Therefore, the ancestral shrines of the Liao Dynasty can be regarded as “Yurong Hall” (Yurong Dian 禦容殿) enshrining imperial portraits and statues, but the places where these halls were set up were not necessarily temples. There were more Yurong Halls in terms of quantity and form, which could be worshipped in noble residences and imperial temples. Only two temples for enshrining imperial portraits and statues are recorded in the *Liaoshi*: “One built by Liao Taizu Abaoji in the Tianzan period (922–926) in the Supreme Capital, where he enshrined the imperial portrait of his father, Emperor Dezu Xuanjian” (you yu neicheng dongnanyu jian Tianxiangsi, fengan liekao xuanjian huangdi yixiang 又於內城東南隅建天雄寺，奉安烈考宣簡皇帝遺像) (Toqto'a 2017, p. 498). The other was “The Yurong Hall built during the expansion of the

Huayansi in the Western Capital in the eighth year of the Qingning period (1062), where stone and bronze statues of successive emperors of the Liao Dynasty were enshrined there” (Qingning banian jian Huayansi, fengan zhudi shixiang, tongxiang 清寧八年建華嚴寺，奉安諸帝石像、銅像) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 578).

The Liao Dynasty’s five capitals⁴, except for the Western Capital, all had ancestral shrines. The establishment of the imperial ancestral worship space in the Huayansi in 1062 was closely related to the absence of ancestral sacrificial sites following the upgrading of Yunzhou to the Western Capital. In 1044, Emperor Xingzong suffered a disastrous defeat when leading his army to invade Western Xia, riding a horse and fleeing back to Yunzhou alone. He was forced to accept the proposal of surrendering to the Liao Dynasty made by Li Yuanhao, the king of Western Xia, before the battle, temporarily restoring peace. This defeat prompted Emperor Xingzong to resolve to pacify Western Xia, upgrade Yunzhou to the Western Capital, enhance the city’s military infrastructure and ceremonial space, fortify the frontier town, and prepare for another expedition. According to the *Liaoshi* “Liyizhi. Junyi” 《遼史·禮儀制·軍儀》, the first item, the “Imperial Expedition Ceremony”, stipulates “Before setting out on a campaign, the emperor must first announce it to the ancestral shrines. The emperor dons armor and worships at the ancestral shrines of the former emperors before reviewing the troops” (Toqto’a 2017, p. 941). Setting up a place for ancestral worship in the Western Capital became an important necessity, facilitating the holding of the Gaomiao Ceremony, a state ritual, before the emperor’s expedition. However, with Li Yuanhao’s assassination in 1048, the Liao Dynasty launched several small-scale attacks on Western Xia in the following years. In 1053, Western Xia formally sought peace with the Liao Dynasty, and in 1055, Emperor Xingzong, aged 40, died suddenly in his traveling palace (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 239–83). This series of historical events likely contributed to the delay in building ancestral shrines in the Western Capital. It was not until the eighth year of the Qingning period of Emperor Daozong that, during the expansion of the Huayansi, a grand Yurong Hall was specifically established in the temple to enshrine statues of successive emperors and empresses, finally constructing an ancestral blessing and protective space in the frontier of the Western Capital.

Sixty years after the expansion of Huayansi, the temple experienced military turmoil during the chaotic Baoda period at the end of the Liao Dynasty, resulting in the destruction of all significant buildings on the northern axis. The Yurong Hall within the temple ceased to exist with the collapse of the Liao Dynasty, and its location and spatial form became unknown. The *Jinshi* 《金史》 mentions the enshrinement of statues of emperors and empresses in Huayansi in two places. One instance is recorded in the *Jinshi* “Benji”: “On Wushen day (in the sixth year of the Dading period of Emperor Sizong, 1166 AD) of the fifth month, Emperor Shizong visited Huayansi to view the bronze statues of the former emperors of the Liao Dynasty” (wuyue Wushen, xing Huayansi, guan guliao zhudi tongxiang 五月戊申，幸華嚴寺，觀故遼諸帝銅像) (Toqto’a 2020, p. 154). The second instance is mentioned in the *Jinshi* “Dilizhi”: “There are statues of the emperors and empresses of the Liao Dynasty in Huayansi” (you Liao dihou xiang zai Huayansi 有遼帝後像在華嚴寺) (Toqto’a 2020, p. 605). Until the Yuan Dynasty, these imperial statues were still preserved in Huayansi: “The bronze statues of the emperors and empresses of the Liao Dynasty that were in the Western Capital still exist today, and there is no record of any prohibition” (Song et al. 1976, p. 6708).

During the Qing Guangxu period, the *Shanxi Tongzhi* 山西通志 provided specific descriptions of these imperial portraits: “Huayansi of the Liao Dynasty was located inside the west gate of Datong Prefecture大同府. Below the Northern Pavilion of the temple, there were several stone and bronze statues, traditionally believed to be statues of the emperors and empresses of the Liao Dynasty...There were five stone statues, three male and two female; and six bronze statues, four male and two female. One bronze figure, depicting the appearance of an emperor wearing ceremonial attire and a ceremonial crown, sitting in a relaxed pose, while the others wear headgear, ordinary attire, and sit upright” (Liao Huayansi zai Datong Fuyu ximen nei, si zhongbeigei xia tongshixiang shuzun, xiangchuan

Liao dihou xiang...fan shixiang wu, nansan nv'er, tongxiang liu, nansi nv'er, neiyi tongren, gunmian diwang zhixiang, cuizu erzuo yu jie jinze changfu weizuo 遼華嚴寺在大同府域西門內，寺中北閣下銅石像數尊，相傳遼帝後像凡石像五，男三女二；銅像六，男四女二。內一銅人，袞冕帝王之象，垂足而坐，餘皆巾幘常服危坐 (Zeng et al. 2015, p. 5112). Based on the above information and in conjunction with the details of the relevant imperial statue worship ceremonies recorded in *Liaoshi* "Lizhi Yi. Ji" 《遼史》禮志一·吉儀, including "Caice Ceremony" (Caice Yi 柴冊儀), "Gaomiao Ceremony", "Yemiao Ceremony" (Toqto'a 2017, pp. 930, 931), and *Liaoshi* "Lizhi Liu. Shuishizayi" 《遼史》禮志六·歲時雜儀, which includes "Rebirth Ceremony" (Zaisheng Li 再生禮) (Toqto'a 2017, p. 976), brief speculation can be made regarding the rituals and spatial form of the Yurong Hall in Huayansi.

First, the specifications and ceremonial procedures of the "Gaomiao Ceremony" and the "Yemiao Ceremony" are different. "Gaomiao Ceremony" and "Yemiao Ceremony" are both referred to as paying respect to ancestors. "Gaomiao Ceremony" is performed before a military campaign, while "Yemiao Ceremony" is performed when visiting various capitals. Although the Yurong Hall in Huayansi is not an ancestral shrine, if the emperor were to perform ancestral worship before a military campaign, a high-standard ceremony similar to the "Gaomiao Ceremony" may be conducted here.

Second, according to the description in the *Shanxi Tongzhi* during the Qing Guangxu period, the Yurong Hall in Huayansi housed eleven imperial statues made of stone and bronze. Among these, there were seven male figures corresponding precisely to the seven emperors before Emperor Daozong. This arrangement of imperial statues, encompassing all the emperors of the Liao Dynasty within a single hall for worship, was a high-level ceremonial scene not seen in any ancestral or temple hall in the Liao Dynasty. However, only statues of four empresses remain, indicating the possible loss or damage of the other three. While the specific allocation of space for each emperor's life-size statues within the hall remains unknown, according to the "Zhaomu System" (Zhaomu Zhizhi 昭穆之制)⁵ of the imperial ancestral shrine rites, it is conceivable that seven distinct spaces were designated within the Yurong Hall, each dedicated to a single emperor, resembling individual ancestral shrines. The construction of such a grand "Yurong Hall of the Seven Ancestors" in the Western Capital reflects Emperor Daozong's fervent aspirations for the gathering of ancestral spirits to safeguard peace and stability on the western border.

Third, the worship ceremony in the Yurong Hall follows a clear spatial sequence both indoors and outdoors, unfolding along a series of architectural spaces that combine indoor and outdoor elements, including the "upper hall", exposed terraces, red terraces, and balustrades. During the worship process in the Yurong Hall, which involves multiple cycles of bowing, kneeling, and repositioning, there is a series of spatial arrangements for standing, bowing, kneeling, offering incense, and presenting offerings, following a prescribed ritual protocol. After completing the designated worship procedures, the ceremonial official "leads the group" (Yingban 引班) to usher the worshippers into the "upper hall" (Shangdia 上殿) in batches, proceeding with the offering of Yurong wine three times, then guiding their departure, marking the conclusion of the ritual (Toqto'a 2017, p. 931). Here, the "upper hall" refers to a space distinct from the area designated for the worship of imperial statues, potentially located within the same roof structure of the Yurong Hall but in a different spatial sequence. Alternatively, it could be an independent hall situated along the axis behind the Yurong Hall. The term "upper" expresses the spatial relationship of front and back.

Fourth, participation in the Yurong worship ceremony involves a large number of people, including the emperor, empress, courtiers, priests, officiating officials, and musicians, necessitating a spacious indoor area within the Yurong Hall to accommodate the gathering. Additionally, the hall is equipped with an outdoor terrace to facilitate the frequent transitions between indoor and outdoor spaces during the ritual procession. This terrace also serves as ample space for the sacrificial music ensemble to perform (Hu 2015, pp. 76–85).

Fifth, "The Emperor descends from the carriage, leading the officials from the southern and northern ministries to enter the temple, forming two lines on the left and right sides. Upon reaching the cinnabar courtyard of the temple, they merge into

a single line, and the Emperor ascends the sacrificial terrace of the temple” (huangdi jiangche, fengyin nanbei chenliao zuoyou ru, zhi Danchi ruwei, heban, huangdi sheng lutai ruwei 皇帝降車, 分引南 北臣僚左右入, 至丹墀褥位, 合班, 皇帝升露臺褥位) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 931). The spatial configuration reflected by these actions indicates that religious buildings, ancestral shrines, and imperial halls in the Liao Dynasty were often built on elevated platforms. Their architectural style should be similar to the grand elevated platforms found in extant Liao-era structures such as the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and the Mahavira Hall of the Huayansi. In the stele corridor located on the northern axis of the Huayansi, there is an inscription from the fifty-ninth year of the Qianlong period in the Qing Dynasty, which records the following: “The Huayansi in Yunzhong has a long history, and there have been repairs over the generations. However, due to the passage of time, it has unavoidably become dilapidated. Additionally, the original site of the Heavenly Kings Hall was quite elevated, and the mountain gate is steep and inaccessible” (Yunzhong Shang Huayansi youlai yijiu, daiyou xiubu, bumian yushi qingsi, qie Tianwang jiushi shenggao, shanmen yi jun er buke 雲中上華嚴寺由來已久, 代有修補, 不免逾時傾圮, 且天王舊址甚高, 山門亦峻而不可口) (Zhao and Qi 2023, p. 57). The old site of the Heavenly Kings Hall on the high platform might have been the location of the Yurong Hall with a terrace. The Jin Dynasty Stela records “It was restored to its original site, and halls with nine and seven bays were specially built” (nai renqi juzhi, er tejian jiuqian qijian zhidian 乃仍其舊址, 而特建九間、七間之殿) (Datong Liao and Jin Culture and Art Museum 2018, p. 107). The Mahavira Hall of Huayansi, with nine bays and rebuilt during the Jin Dynasty, still exists today. Originally constructed during the eighth year of the Qingning period of the Liao Dynasty (1062), it may have served as the highest-level Yurong Hall for the simultaneous worship of the seven ancestors (X. Liu 2015, pp. 79–85).

In 1062, Emperor Daozong issued a decree to establish the Yurong Hall of the Seven Ancestors in the Huayansi. This hall was chosen for expansion on the side of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall completed in 1038 for housing the *Liao Canon*. This decision allowed for the integration of blessings from the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the ancestral deities, showcasing their combined protective power. The choice to rely on the original east-west axis layout of the existing architectural complex should have been a significant influencing factor. During the Liao Dynasty, the predominant ethnic group, the Khitan people, worshipped the sun and revered the customs of the East. Historical records abound with such practices: all rituals were conducted facing east, referred to as “Rituals To The East” (Ji Dong 祭東) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 1698). The establishment of the “Sun Worship Ceremony” (Bairi Yi 拜日儀) involved conducting activities to worship the sun towards the east at the beginning and middle of each month. During imperial court assemblies to discuss state affairs, the east was regarded with reverence (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 927–76).

The emperor’s imperial tent faced eastward, with the east-west direction serving as the horizontal longitude axis and the north-south direction as the vertical latitude axis. This was in the opposite direction to the conventional longitudinal and latitudinal directions, as commonly agreed upon. Hence, the imperial tent was referred to as a “Horizontal Tent” (Hengzhang 橫帳) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 800). The Yurong Hall, one of the seven ancestral halls established in the Western Capital, was situated atop high platforms, facing west to east, in accordance with the ethnic and cultural beliefs of the Khitan people. Simultaneously, the remaining four capitals among the Five Capitals are situated to the east of the Western Capital, spanning a vast territory. The Yurong Hall of Huayansi faces west to east, positioning the statues of the seven former emperors to face the four capitals. Standing on the western frontier, they watch over and guard the territory of the Liao Dynasty. This arrangement represents the best metaphor for the worship space dedicated to the protection of ancestors.

4.4. The Liao Court’s Political Intent in Buddhist Worship: The Triple Blessings of Buddha, Dharma, and Ancestors in Border Protection

From the founding of the Liao Dynasty by Emperor Taizu in 907 AD and his adoption of the imperial title in 916 AD until its fall to the Jin Dynasty in 1125 AD, a period spanning

219 years, the reverence and belief in Buddhism by the imperial family and the court has remained integral to both the domestic governance and foreign affairs of the Liao Dynasty. The development of its religious beliefs was closely linked to the changing political landscape (Wang 2020, pp. 146–77).

Although the Liao Dynasty did not establish itself as a Buddhist state, alongside Buddhist beliefs, there existed the indigenous religious practices of the Khitan people such as nature worship, ancestor worship, and Taoist beliefs. However, successive emperors of the dynasty devoutly believed in Buddhism, regarding Avalokitesvara, Shakyamuni Buddha, and various Bodhisattvas as protective deities of the ancestors, the state, and the people. In the *Taizu Ji* 太祖紀 in the *Liaoshi* (in office from 907 to 926), it is recorded that “In the fourth year of the Shence period, he visited Buddhist temples and Taoist temples” (Shence sinian.....fen ye siguan 神冊四年.....分謁寺觀), and “In the fourth year of the Tianzan period, he visited the Anguo Temple and made offerings to the monks” (Tianzan sinian.....xing Anguosi, fanseng 天贊四年.....幸安國寺, 飯僧) (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 17, 23). Subsequent emperors, empresses, crown princes, and important ministers regularly visited and made offerings at temples, venerating the Triple Gems of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Particularly during the period of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (927–47), he visited the Great Compassion Pavilion (Dabei Ge 大悲閣) in Youzhou and brought a statue of the White-robed Avalokitesvara to Mount Muye (Muye Sha 木葉山), a sacred mountain of the Liao Dynasty, where a Bodhisattva hall was erected for worship, honoring Avalokitesvara as the guardian deity of the imperial family and clan. At the same time, the ritual of paying homage to the Bodhisattva hall was added, leading to modifications in the ceremonial procedure of the “Mountain Sacrifice Ceremony” (Jishan Yi 祭山儀), which served as a state ritual. Subsequently, the sacrificial ritual at Mount Muye began with worship at the Bodhisattva hall, followed by the mountain worship ceremony (Toqto’a 2017, p. 929). The fact that the Liao court placed the worship of Avalokitesvara before the essential ceremonies honoring ancestors and mountain deities underscores Emperor Taizong’s devoutness to Buddhism and the fervor with which he promoted widespread Buddhist beliefs among the populace.

The periods of Emperors Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong were a prosperous era in terms of socioeconomic aspects and a period of military and political prosperity in the Liao Dynasty, also marking the peak of Buddhist reverence. The adoption of Buddhist names as childhood names by the emperors and empresses offers insight into the flourishing Buddhism in the Liao Dynasty: Emperor Shengzong’s childhood name was “Wenshu Nu” 文殊奴 (Manjushri Bodhisattva’s Servant), Empress of Shengzong’s childhood name was known as “Pusa Ge” 菩薩哥 (Bodhisattva Brother, a woman’s intimate address for a man), and the Empress of Daozong’s childhood name was “Avalokitesvara” (Guanyin 觀音) (Toqto’a 2017, p. 115). During the period of Emperor Shengzong, efforts to compile and collect Buddhist scriptures began, with the woodblock printing of the *Liao Canon* commencing no later than the twenty-first year of the Tiance period (1003). This monumental project, spanning the periods of Emperor Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong, was spearheaded by the emperor and involved numerous eminent monks from various regions, culminating in its completion under full support from the court. Emperor Xingzong continued the dedication of Shengzong to Buddhism, often engaging in Buddhist debates in the palace and making offerings to monks in temples (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 250, 260). In the ninth month of 1038, the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall was completed in the strategic border territory of Datong in Yunzhou, housing the *Liao Canon* compiled from the period of Emperor Shengzong to Xingzong. Yunzhou, thus, became a holy site of Buddhism in the Liao Dynasty. Utilizing the divine power of the Buddha and the Dharma to safeguard the western border, particularly to deter the ambitious Western Xia led by Li Yuanhao, who proclaimed himself emperor in 1038, was imperative. In the same year, in the twelfth month of 1038, in the records of the *Liaoshi*, Emperor Xingzong “visited a Buddhist temple to receive precepts” (xing fosi, shoujie 幸佛寺, 受戒) (Toqto’a 2017, pp. 1174–75). This likely refers to his visit to the newly constructed Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, where the *Liao*

Canon was housed and where he received the precepts. This act by Emperor Xingzong further propelled the populace towards the path of Buddhism.

Deeply influenced by Xingzong, Emperor Daozong was also a devout Buddhist who constructed numerous temples and pagodas, with monks and nuns numbering as high as 360,000 across various regions (Toqto'a 2017, p. 319). Emperor Daozong possessed profound scholarly knowledge in Chinese studies and had a thorough understanding of Buddhist teachings. Under his leadership, the second expanded version of the *Liao Canon* was completed through woodblock printing. The *Liaoshi* records that in the eighth year of the Qingning period (1062), Emperor Daozong decreed the construction of Huayansi. In the fourth year of the Xianyong period (1068), he issued the *Yuzhi Huayanjing Zan* 禦制華嚴經贊. In the eighth year of the Xianyong period (1072), he presented the imperial inscription of *Huayan Wusong* 華嚴經五頌 to his ministers (Toqto'a 2017, pp. 303, 312). These historical facts illustrate Emperor Daozong's adherence to the Huayan sect, his study of the Huayan Sutra, his promotion of the woodblock printing of the *Liao Canon*, and his vigorous efforts to propagate Buddhism.

While fostering friendly relations with the Song Dynasty since the signing of the Treaty of Chanyuan, the Liao Dynasty also sought to rival the state's strength of the Song Dynasty. Learning that neighboring countries Goryeo and Western Xia were requesting the Tripitaka from the Song Dynasty, Emperor Daozong, shortly after the high development of Buddhism and the completion of the *Liao Canon* woodblock printing, more precisely in the twelfth month of the eighth year of Xianyong period (1072), granted one set of the *Liao Canon* to the King of Goryeo (Toqto'a 2017, p. 1674). Historical records depict the King of Goryeo personally receiving the gift with great pomp and ceremony. This event reflects the political intent of the Liao court's reverence for Buddhism, utilizing it to advance peaceful diplomacy and showcase the value of the empire's power on the international stage.

After the development during the periods of Emperor Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong, Buddhism in the Liao Dynasty gradually entered its heyday in the 10th and 11th centuries. The court, utilizing the divine protection of the Buddha and the Dharma, as well as the educational function of the Buddhist faith, employed it as a dual means in both domestic governance and foreign diplomacy. The decree by Daozong to build the Huayansi and the construction of the grand Seven Ancestors' Hall in the Western Capital were emblematic products of the Liao's political and diplomatic history in the 10th–11th centuries. The sacred spatial composition of Huayansi included Buddhist statues along the two axes in 1038 and 1062, the repository of scriptures from the Khitan and Tibetan cultures, and the ancestral worship space for the seven generations of Liao emperors. These elements combined to form a triple blessing of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Ancestors, serving as the protective stronghold of the western capital of Datong Prefecture in the Liao Dynasty, collectively bearing the political expectations bestowed by the Liao court.

5. Conclusions

The article clarifies the context of the preservation and continuation of the wooden structure hall architecture of Huayansi during the Liao and Jin dynasties. It explains that the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall was constructed in advance during the Xingzong period specifically to house the *Liao Canon*. It also discusses the spiritual realm of the Western Pure Land created by the holistic artistic space of the Buddha and the Dharma presented within the hall. Additionally, it examines how the construction of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall, with its dual-axis worship space blessed by both the Buddha and the Dharma, served as a powerful realm through which the Liao court expressed its hopes to deter neighboring countries and ensure the safety of the western frontier. This contrasts with the functions of Huayansi, which was built 24 years later during the Daozong period, and its existing Mahavira Hall, a significant Buddhist temple of the Huayan School. The article reassesses and elevates the historical significance of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall.

Simultaneously, the article systematically reviews and verifies the Liao History and the related literature to provide a comprehensive understanding, further proposing

a new connotation and historical significance of Huayansi's east-west-oriented dual-axis. The Bhagavata Scriptures Hall on the south axis was constructed in the seventh year of the Liao Zhongxi period (1038) and housed the scriptures of the *Liao Canon*, copied and printed during the reigns of Emperors Shengzong and Xingzong. In 1933, Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen demonstrated in the "Datong Gujianzhu Diaocha Baogao" that the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall and the Haihui Hall were built in the same era, as they are the preserved original structures from the Liao Dynasty (Liang and Liu 2006, p. 53). Although the Haihui Hall was destroyed in the 1950s, estimates based on the dimensions of the existing site suggest that, according to the symmetrical relationship between the Haihui Hall and the south axis, the mirrored layout of the southern auxiliary hall of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall forms a total courtyard width (Figure 19), indicating that its original scale was far greater than the courtyard scale presented by the current south axis building group (Figure 1).

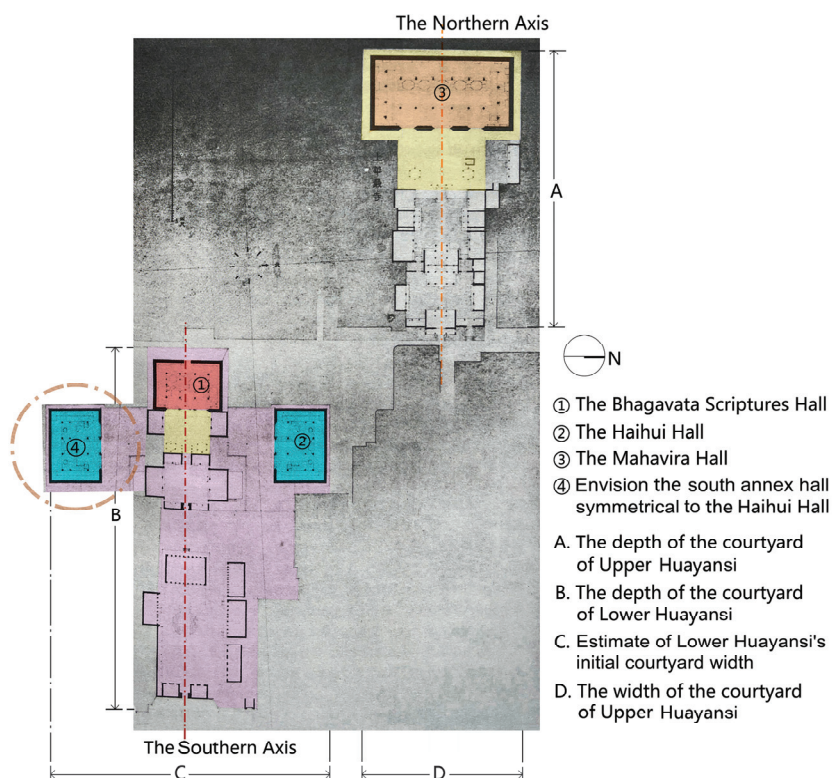


Figure 19. General plan of the Upper and Lower Huayansi in 1933: parallel dual-axis temple spaces with an initial courtyard width proposal for the Lower Huayansi (drawing created by the author's research team, reference map: (Gao et al. 2011, p. 103, Figure 6-1-3)).

The north axis is the architectural complex of Huayansi, bestowed the name of the Daozong emperor and constructed in the eighth year of the Liao Qingning period (1062), marking the beginning of Huayansi in Yunzhou. The north axis complex not only includes the grand Mahavira Hall dedicated to the worship of the Buddha in the Huayan world but also features large royal ancestral halls such as the Yuyong Hall, which houses statues of the Seven Ancestors. This fills the gap for an important ceremonial space necessary for conducting national ancestral worship rites, which became essential after Yunzhou was elevated to the status of the Western Capital in 1044.

The political and cultural core elements hidden within the dual-axis worship space of Huayansi are closely related to three significant years in *Liao history*: 1038, 1044, and 1062. The major historical events associated with these years include the completion of the entire set of *Liao Canon* through the engraving efforts during the reigns of Emperors Shengzong, Xingzong, and Daozong; the complex political diplomacy and military conflicts between the Liao state and the Bohai, Xi, Goryeo, Western Xia, and Song dynasties, which led to territorial changes in the Liao period and the successive establishment of the Five Capitals; the continuation of religious worship and sacrificial systems in the Liao state, as well as the urban construction following Yunzhou's elevation to the status of the Western Capital, among others. The rich connotation of the dual-axis worship space, oriented from west to east, not only reflects the grand historical background of internal governance and foreign policy in the Liao Dynasty during the 10th and 11th centuries but also carries the diverse religious beliefs and cultural characteristics of the Khitan people.

The architectural complex of Huayansi, oriented along an east-west dual-axis line, was formed by merging two groups of temples built in different periods and serving distinct functions, with a time difference of at least 24 years. The dual-axis design, extending from the spatial layout to architectural form, has been endowed with innovative regulations, collectively constructing a multidimensional worship space at the Great Huayansi of the Liao Dynasty, which is imbued with the triple empowerment and protection of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Ancestors. This space intersects and condenses the Liao state's internal governance philosophy of ruling through Buddhism and honoring ancestors with its military and diplomatic strategies aimed at intimidating enemy nations and safeguarding the state, all materialized within the historical context and spatial dimensions of the parallel dual-axis architectural complex of the Huayansi.

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Notes

- ¹ In the academic community, various English translations for 華嚴寺 have been used, including Huayan Temple, Huayan Monastery, Huayansi, and Huayan Si. This article, drawing upon the work of Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt in her book *Liao Architecture*, has chosen to employ the term 'Huayansi' for its expression.
- ² The images, including Figures 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, 18 and 19, were created by the author's research team. The members of the research team who participated in the surveying and drawing of the Bhagavata Scriptures Hall are: Huizhong Bin (宾慧中), Sijia Liu (刘思佳), Yu Mei (梅宇), Chaoying Pu (濮超颖), Nan Nie (聂楠), Yu Li (李钰), Min Din (丁敏), Jiahao Huang (黄家浩), Yunfan Chen (程云帆), Xinran Shi (史馨然), Sijie Chen (陈思洁), and Xinjia Huang (黄心佳).
- ³ The two precise historical dates mentioned here are derived from inscriptions found beneath the beams of the main hall of Huayansi. For further details, please refer to the quotations of these inscriptions provided in Section 4.1 of the "Dual-Axis Worship Space of Huayansi and Its Liao to Jin Dynasty Remnants".
- ⁴ According to records in the *Liaoshi*, the Capital Shrines were as follows: The Supreme Capital (Shangjing 上京) featured the ancestral shrine of Taizu (Taizumiao 太祖廟), the imperial ancestral temple (Taimiao 太廟), and the shrine of Emperor Xuanjian (Xuanjian Huangdi Miao 宣簡皇帝廟); The Eastern Capital (Dongjing 東京) housed the ancestral shrine of Taizu, the shrine of Emperor Ranguo (Ranguo Huangdi Miao 讓國皇帝廟), and the shrine of Emperor Shizong (Shizong Miao 世宗廟); The Southern Capital (Nanjing 南京) contained the ancestral shrine of Taizu, the shrine of Emperor Taizong (Taizong Miao 太宗廟), the shrine of Emperor Jingzong (Jingzong Miao 景宗廟), and the Temple of Emperor Qishou Khan (Qishou Khan Miao 奇首可汗廟); The Central Capital (Zhongjing 中京) included the ancestral shrine of Taizu, the imperial ancestral temple, and the shrine of Emperor Jingzong.

- ⁵ The Zhaomu System refers to one of the systems of ancestral temples. According to the temple system regulations, the emperor establishes seven temples, princes establish five temples, high-ranking officials establish three temples, gentlemen establish one temple, and common people are not entitled to establish temples, thereby distinguishing between different ranks and statuses.

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Article

Consecrating the Peripheral: On the Ritual, Iconographic, and Spatial Construction of Sui-Tang Buddhist Corridors

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Abstract: The corridor-enclosed cloister characterized Buddhist monasteries during the Sui and Tang periods. This architectural form was first introduced by Emperor Liang Wudi from the palace and continued to prevail until the eleventh century, when a gradual transformation occurred, resulting in the corridor evolving into a long, narrow image hall. This paper examines the ritual and pictorial programs of the Sui-Tang Buddhist corridor to gain insight into this transformation and its ceremonial significance. Specifically, it explores how the corridor was empowered by the state-sponsored maigre feast as a place of worship and how the monastic community of a particular school appropriated the space to celebrate an unbroken dharma-transmission lineage from the Buddha to a specific group of Chinese patriarchs. Lastly, the paper aims to comprehend the adaptation of the corridor into an image hall, which was influenced by political and religious shifts in the eleventh century when Buddhist monasteries were no longer designated as the ritual arena for the state-sponsored maigre feast.

Keywords: Buddhist corridor; paintings of divine monks; maigre feast; Sui and Tang

1. The Sui-Tang Buddhist Corridor: Understanding the Ritual-Architectural Transformation of the Peripheral Structure in a Medieval Chinese Monastery

In examining the architectural transformation of Buddhist monasteries between the Sui-Tang and Liao-Song periods, scholars often draw attention to the enclosing structures surrounding the courtyard compounds (Z. Xu 2020, p. 53). This is because these structures underwent a significant transition from four-sided open corridors—colonnaded arcades wrapping around a courtyard—in the 7th century to two-sided semi-open verandahs in the 11th century, which reflects a fundamental ritual shift, as the Sui-Tang courtyard-centric public ceremonies, where corridors played a crucial role, were replaced by Liao-Song indoor worship conducted within long, narrow halls beneath the eaves of verandahs (Z. Xu 2016, pp. 105–16). The corridor was initially introduced into Chinese Buddhist monasteries in the early 6th century as part of the palace architectural model, specifically designed for the emperor's grand dharma assemblies. In this context, its primary function was to accommodate the congregation of scholar monks rather than serve as a space for worship. A key research question thus arises: when and how did the ritual-architectural transformation that led to the *closing* of the corridor begin?

To address this question, we must investigate the iconography, if any, of Sui-Tang Buddhist corridors, as this could indicate the corridors' devotional function. Despite the lack of physical or visual evidence, a thorough examination of Tang and early Song textual materials provides information from twenty-three urban monasteries (Table A1). It is notable that the back walls of the Buddhist corridors served as a canvas for mural paintings depicting various Buddhist themes, the majority of which featured portraits of monks. This article aims to explore the often-overlooked spatial and ceremonial significance of Sui-Tang Buddhist corridor paintings. The discussion is organized into three sections. The first section uncovers the worship of divine monastic beings as the primary catalyst for the emergence of Buddhist corridor paintings and provides a thorough historical analysis

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of how the connection between the corridor and divine monastic beings was established within the specific ritual context of Tang imperial practices. The second section seeks to reconstruct the pictorial programs of corridor paintings in several Tang monasteries using textual records from Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Records of Famous Paintings of All Dynasties), Duan Chengshi's 段成式 *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (The Miscellany from Youyang), and the catalogues and diaries of ninth-century Japanese pilgrims. The final section delves into the monastic ritual shift and the evolving role of Buddhist monasteries within the Song state sacrificial system, shedding light on the decline of corridor paintings and the associated transformation of corridor-verandah structures.

2. Portrait Gallery: The Introduction of Wall Paintings

No evidence exists to indicate the presence of Buddhist corridor murals in the Northern and Southern dynasties. Although Emperor Liang Wudi 梁武帝 (r. 502–549), who pioneered the use of corridors in monasteries, had commissioned wall paintings by Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇 to adorn monasteries, all of the artist's known works were created inside halls rather than corridors (Zhang 2018, p. 160). This argument gains further support from the observation that Japanese monasteries constructed during the Asuka period, which were modeled after the Liang Buddhist culture, also lack corridor paintings (Uehara 2021). In textual sources, Buddhist corridor paintings from the early years of the Sui dynasty serve as the earliest examples (no. 1–5, Table A1), indicating that such a tradition emerged around a century after its initial introduction. On the other hand, early Tang writings on monastery design, such as Daoxuan's *Zhong Tianzhu Sheweiguo Qihuansi Tujing* 中天竺舍衛國祇洹寺圖經 (Illustrated Scripture of Jetavana Vihāra of Śrāvastī in Central India), imply that corridor paintings may not have been widely adopted by the mid-seventh century. This scripture, which reflects the ideal conception and actual construction of the early-Tang state monastery, does not depict the corridors of the Central Buddha Cloister 中佛院 as a place of veneration. The only example of a corridor mural found in the text is at the Cloister of Impermanence 無常院, where paintings of white bones are prepared as a special deathbed ritual for dying monks (Daoxuan 1924–1933g, 893c10–12).¹ The two sources are not contradictory, as it is reasonable for a newly emerging tradition to take several decades to fully develop and gain widespread acceptance. Nevertheless, the growing number of reports on Buddhist corridor paintings between the seventh and ninth centuries, not only in Chang'an but also in other major cities of China, provide compelling evidence of the expanding popularity of this religious art form. Reaching its peak in the early eighth century, this practice was brought to Japan by pilgrim monks and praised as an innovative, unparalleled style when employed in the reconstruction of the state monastery, Daianji 大安寺, in Nara (Uehara 2021; Wong 2018, pp. 154–61).

Remarkably, all the known Sui Buddhist corridor paintings share the subject of depicting portraits of monks. This theme continued to be prominent throughout the Tang dynasty, featuring a group of legendary, imaginary, and divine monastic figures arrayed on the long walls of corridors and variously identified as *shengseng* 聖僧 (holy monk), *gaoseng* 高僧 (eminent monk), *xiansheng* 賢聖 (sage and saint), *luohan* 羅漢 (arhat), or *zushi* 祖師 (patriarch). Understanding the Buddhist corridor as a monastic memorial space requires further examination, as the driving forces behind this practice remain unclear. This is especially intriguing, considering that portrait halls (*yingtang* 影堂) were often built in Tang monasteries for the formal commemoration and veneration of eminent monks. Why is a corridor the proper place to accommodate this ritual activity?

2.1. Windowed Corridor: The Tradition of Non-Buddhist Ceremonial Compound

However, the ceremonial adaptation of the enclosing corridor as a portrait gallery was unlikely to be derived from a pre-Tang tradition of palace, ritual, and administrative architecture. The practice of creating portraits to honor historical and contemporary personages began in the Han dynasty (Seckel 1993). Many documented cases, according to a wealth of textual information and even some original works that have been luck-

ily preserved, were painted on the walls of palace halls, governmental offices, as well as funeral offering shrines.² However, none of them were found painted in corridors or corridor-like structures.

On the other side, despite limited information from archaeological and visual materials, insights into the design of early enclosing corridor structures can be drawn from the Zhaoyang Hall 昭陽殿 compound, the main audience building of the Northern Qi palace built in 539 at Ye. A mid-Tang source describes its eastern and western corridors as having elongated windows, likely installed along the rear walls, to accommodate court musicians during ceremonies.³ The presence of windows strongly indicates that the corridors may not have significant pictorial programs. Between the late-sixth and early-seventh centuries, the extensive use of windowed corridors in religious and palatial compounds is evidenced by the creation of the term *xuanlang* 軒廊 (“windowed corridor”), coined in early Tang literature to describe this distinctive architectural element.⁴ The seventh-century Daoist monastic code, *Sandong fengdao kejie* 三洞奉道科戒 (Rules and Precepts for Worshipping the Dao), includes guidelines for monastery buildings in Section 4 *Zhiguanpin* 置觀品 (Setting Up Monasteries). It stipulates that a *xuanlang* structure should be built for passageways and circumambulation around sanctuaries, halls, pavilions, and terraces within a cloister, encircling all four sides (Kohn 2004, p. 95). Built in 605, Qianyang Hall 乾陽殿, the main audience building of Emperor Sui Yangdi’s 隋煬帝 Ziwei Palace 紫微宮 at Luoyang, along with several other significant ceremonial-sacrificial compounds within the palace, were characterized by a *xuanlang*-enclosed design (Wei and Du 2006, pp. 8–10). Arguably the best example of the *xuanlang* structure, although located outside China, is the early eighth-century corridor that encloses the western compound of Hōryūji 法隆寺 in Ikaruga prefecture, Japan (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Windowed Corridor (*xuanlang*) at Hōryūji, Ikaruga, 670–747 (the author’s photo).

2.2. The State-Sponsored Maigre Feast: Incense-Procession in the Monastic Corridor and the Cultic Worship of Divine Monastic Beings

Whereas the Sui-Tang Buddhists corridor paintings probably did not stem from a pre-existing tradition, a close examination of the corridor’s ceremonial significance would reveal an association with the cult of divine monastic beings. This association could potentially lead to the corridor’s consecration as a space appropriate for venerating holy

monks through portraits, which is the earliest and most popular kind of painting scheme in the corridor.

The cult of divine monastic beings can be traced at least as far back as Dao'an 道安 (314–85) and Huiyuan's 慧遠 (334–417) worship of the arhat Piṇḍola (Ch. 寶頭盧), by inviting him to maigre feast (*zhaihui* 齋會)—the lay-monastic assemblies for offering vegetarian meals to monks—and presenting him with food and/or a bath.⁵ From that time until the Tang dynasty, it became customary during the maigre feast to prepare an empty seat in the midst of the monastic congregation for Piṇḍola or any other divine beings about to receive food offerings. The arrangement led to a gradual yet substantial development of spatial consecration, as the location where monks sat to receive food offerings also came to be considered as a site for encountering divine monastic beings. Indeed, for medieval Chinese Buddhists, any monk invited to the maigre feast could be a hidden divine being, as the arrival of the divine was mysterious, with their presence either invisible or disguised as that of an ordinary individual. This is best illustrated by the miraculous arrival and vanishing of a mysterious monk at the imperial-patronized maigre feast for two hundred monks in 460, held at Zhongxing Monastery 中興寺 in Jiankang (Huijiao 1924–1933, 372c10–15).

In addition to setting up empty seats, Dao'an and Huiyuan also introduced the performance of *xingxiang* 行香 into the ceremonial program of the maigre feast for the worship of divine monastic beings (P. Wang 2020). *Xingxiang*, also known as incense-procession prayer, is an offering practice popular in medieval China. At the beginning of a ceremony, the patron or superintendent would circumambulate the ritual arena holding an incense burner, which is intended to invite holy and ordinary monks from all ten directions to receive alms.⁶ The practice of *xingxiang* further reinforced the connection between the space where monks gathered for feasting and the space dedicated to worshipping divine monastic beings. As a result, the increasing cultic worship of divine monastic beings led to the production of the earliest known portrait images of these beings in 470–471 by monks from the capital monasteries at Jiankang (Daoshi 1924–1933, 609c9–10).

The week-long prayer ritual of a maigre feast for the well-being of Emperor Qi Wudi 齊武帝 at 490 is arguably the most renowned divine monk worship ceremony ever recorded in the history of Southern and Northern dynasties (Daoshi 1924–1933, 609c13–20). Performed in Yanchang Hall 延昌殿, the Emperor's formal residence within the imperial palace, which temporarily served as the feast chamber (*zhaiishi* 齋室), this event featured offerings of vegetarian meals and incense, and the practice of *xingxiang* was undoubtedly employed, as evidenced by the specific mention of the censer. The Yanchang Hall feast serves as a unique and extreme example of a maigre feast, where the ceremonial space was fully dedicated to the cultic worship of the Buddha and divine monastic beings. Interestingly, its ritual program did not significantly deviate from those attended by ordinary monks. Although not explicitly recorded, the presence of portraits of divine beings likely served as visual objects of veneration within the hall, given that such practice, as previously mentioned, had emerged at Jiankang for divine monk worship decades earlier.

Emperor Liang Wudi's innovative monastery design incorporated the corridor as a “space for monks”, as evident in the ceremonial plan of the grand dharma assembly at Tongtai Monastery 同泰寺, where the corridor was designated for seating senior scholar monks. Given the significant role of the maigre feast in the grand dharma assembly and the emperor's reputation as a fervent Buddhist promoting the cultic worship of divine monastic beings⁷, one might reasonably expect an elaborate pictorial program related to divine monks within the corridor space. However, textual records are silent on this matter. A possible explanation could be that the emperor's religious and political agenda was to project imperial spatial order into the Buddhist realm. The corridor in the imperial palace compound, which served as the model for the Buddhist corridor, functioned as a space for low-ranking officials to play court music during the state rite of grand audience. Thus, the Buddhist corridor primarily functioned as a space where scholar monks received teachings from the emperor, serving as agents of imperial authority. Any consideration given to the veneration of divine monastic beings, if present at all, could not overshadow this overarching symbolism. Moreover, in the

grand dharma assembly, vegetarian meals were widely provided to all people in the capital to showcase the emperor's persona as a generous bodhisattva. In this context, the corridor—even though monks likely took their meals there—maintained its basic status as an ordinary dining zone, being part of the emperor's "universal offerings (*biangong* 遍供)", rather than a space specifically designated for anticipating the arrival of divine beings. In summary, the emphasis on the cult of divine monastic beings in the emperor's grand dharma assembly was significantly less than in earlier maigre feast practices, mainly due to its unique ritual agenda, which was closely tied to the imperial presence.

Nonetheless, the Liang imperial ceremonial plan of placing monks in the corridor space persisted, along with the widespread adaptation of the Liang monastery architectural-ceremonial model throughout China. Despite the scarcity of records from the sixth and seventh centuries, there are some details available on the Sui arrangement of the maigre feast. One example is the special event held in the imperial palace to celebrate the emperor's construction of thirty śāṛīra stūpas across China in 601 (Daoxuan 1924–1933b, 214b9–13). The maigre feast, which served as the closing ceremony of this event, took place in the eastern corridor of the main audience compound. Here, Emperor Sui Wendi 隋文帝 (r. 581–604), accompanied by all civil and military officials, partook in vegetarian meals. This event can be reasonably considered to have no fundamental difference from those staged in the Sui monastery, as this period saw the central cloister of a state monastery share many architectural characteristics with the main audience compound of the imperial palace.

During the same period, a notable change occurred as the maigre feast, which was essentially an act of offering to gain merit, once again became the central ritual in the imperial Buddhist assembly. This transformation was primarily due to the growing devotional role of imperial Buddhist practices. Unlike Emperor Liang Wudi, who had given public dharma lectures personally, very few secular rulers could do the same. Consequently, their primary role transitioned to leading the offering worship for the maigre feast. Emperor Sui Wendi was one of the most renowned practitioners, with monastic texts documenting his frequent performance of the *xingxiang* ritual, where he would hold the censer and lead the procession during the regularly held maigre feast at Daxingshan Monastery 大興善寺, the supreme state monastery of the Sui dynasty (Daoxuan 1924–1933f, 437a20–23). Naturally, the worship of divine monastic beings, which forms the devotional foundation of the medieval maigre feast, would be emphasized in Sui practice and spatially linked to the feast's location in state ceremonies, such as the corridor. This ritual-spatial connection is intriguingly reflected in a late-sixth-century Northern Qi miracle tale, which narrates a monk's visit to a divine monastery and his encounter with the arhat Piṇḍola in the western corridor of the monastery's central cloister.⁸

The last significant development, and likely the most critical factor contributing to the consecration of the corridor, was the integration of the maigre feast into the Tang state sacrificial system, for the purpose of praying for the afterlife well-being of the deceased emperors. Adding Buddhist rituals in service of national mourning dates back to 582, when Emperor Sui Wendi ordered the construction of Buddhist monasteries in four cities. On the anniversary of his father's death, these monasteries were to conduct a series of rituals, including the maigre feast, image making, perambulation (Skt. *Caṅkrama*) or circumambulation (Skt. *Pradākṣiṇā*), and repentance through observing the eight precepts (Fei 1924–1933, 107b29–c15). The Tang rulers gave this imperial practice greater emphasis. By 727, this ceremony had been enacted nationwide and was subsequently codified into the administrative law, i.e., *Tang Liu Dian* 唐六典, as a government-hosted observance (Li 1992, p. 217). Known as *guoji xingxiang* 國忌行香 (Incense-Procession Prayer Ceremony on the National Memorial Day), it was prescribed to be performed annually in official monasteries across eighty-one prefectures throughout China.⁹

For details of the Tang *guoji xingxiang* ceremony, the most meticulous account is left by the Japanese pilgrim monk Ennin 円仁, who visited China in the mid-9th century and personally encountered the ceremony taking place at the Kaiyuan Monastery 開元寺 in Yangzhou 揚州, on the anniversary of Emperor Jingzong's 唐敬宗 death in 838. Ennin reports this cer-

emony as a maigre feast for five hundred monks, with the core offering ritual—*xingxiang*—performed by the Minister of State (hereafter, Minister) and Commander-in-Chief (hereafter, Commander) on behalf of the emperor. According to the description, a theoretical reconstruction of the monastery’s ritual-architectural plan has been developed, featuring a corridor-enclosed compound with a main gate, a central gate, a Buddha hall, and a lecture hall aligned along the central axis (Figure 2). In the early morning, the five hundred monks seated themselves in rows on the northern, eastern, and western sides of the corridor¹⁰, awaiting the commencement of the ceremony. Once the Minister and Commander were prepared.

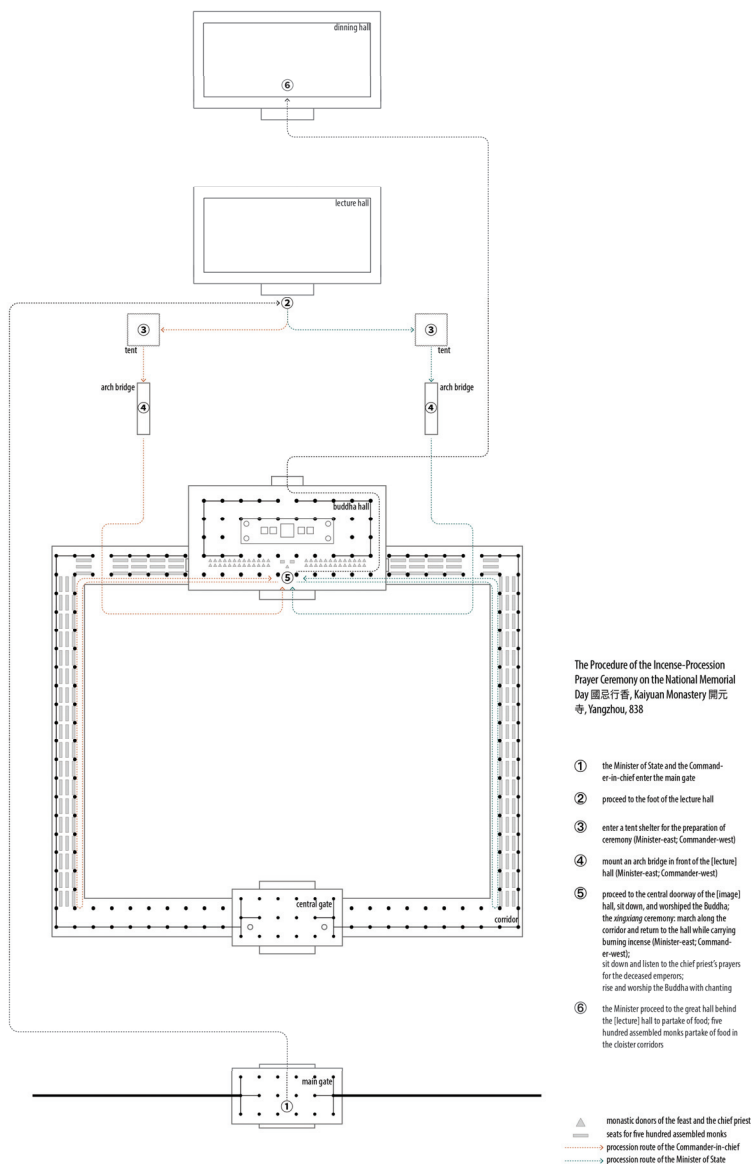


Figure 2. Kaiyuan Monastery, Yangzhou, the *guoji xingxiang* ritual performed the eighth day of the twelfth month, 838. (author’s reconstruction).

They met at the center doorway of the (Buddha) hall.¹¹ There they sat down and worshipped the Buddha; this done, several tens of monks stood in rows at the eastern and western doorways of the hall (respectively), each holding a lotus flower and a green banner. A monk struck a gong, and chanted the general formula of humility, adoration, and steadfast devotion to the Three Treasures. This being completed, the Minister and the Commander rose to their feet and took censers. The district officials ranged themselves behind them, distributing censers. Then the two lines marched to the east and west. The Minister proceeded eastward; the monks who were carrying flowers and banners led the way, chanting in unison the two-line Sanskrit *gatha*, ‘the marvelous body of the Tathāgata,’ etc. First, (after these) came an old priest of great holiness, and then the soldiers followed as bodyguards. They went to the foot of the cloister corridor eaves, and all the monks (seated in the corridor) received the incense-procession offering. This being completed, they turned around and took the same route to the hall, chanting uninterruptedly in Sanskrit. The Commander went through the incense-procession ceremony on the west with the same forms as those observed on the east. The two came back to their starting points at the same time, and at that moment, the mingling of voices in the chanting (by the group of monks) on the eastern and western doors of the hall was most wonderful. During all this, the hymn leader had not moved but stood alone, striking the gong. At a pause in the Sanskrit chanting, he again intoned the formula of adoration and steadfast devotion to the Three Treasures. The Minister and the Commander both sat down at their original places, each with two incense burners that he had received at the time of the incense ceremony. An old priest of great holiness, Yuancheng, read the prayer for the occasion. That being completed, the hymn leader intoned the stanzas praising the Eight Classes of Demi-gods. The purpose of the wording was to glorify the spirit of the late emperor. At the end of each phrase, repeat the formula of adoration and steadfast devotion to the Three Treasures. The Minister and the various civil officers rose together and worshipped the Buddha three or four times as they wished with chanting. The Minister and the rest, led by soldiers, proceeded to the great hall behind the (Buddha) hall and went inside to partake of food. The congregation of the five hundred assembled monks partook of food in the cloister corridors.¹²

Ennin’s careful record provides us with a wealth of information regarding how the Buddhist corridor was envisioned to satisfy the Tang performance of the *guoji xingxiang* ceremony. This also allows us to speculate on the Sui organization of the imperial assembly at Daxingshan Monastery. Although the corridor space primarily functioned to house the five hundred assembled monks, the processional offerings—including incense, flowers, banners, and chanting—underscore the imperial veneration of the Buddhist church and ritually mark the corridor as a space of worship. Moreover, when the Minister and the Commander proceeded along the corridor, their offerings were dedicated to not only the assembled monks but also to divine monastic beings. Ennin mentioned in his diary, from the entry for the Lantern Festival Day at 839, that monks of the Kaiyuan Monastery offered oil lamps in the corridor as a way to worship the portraits of patriarchs (*shiyīng* 師影) (Ennin 2007, p. 97). Viewed from the standing point of the procession, which was at the outermost position of the corridor, the assembled monks and the portrait paintings behind them were visually connected, blending the earthly and the divine into one community of sangha. This arrangement is likely brought about by the ritual-architectural interplay between the maigre feast and corridor under the imperial imagery of Buddhist religious space. On the one hand, the worship of divine monastic beings, integral to the maigre feast, was greatly emphasized due to the imperial practice that anticipated an increased incorporation of cultic worship. On the other hand, this cultic worship was envisioned to be staged within the corridor-enclosed central cloister of a monastery, ensuring that the grandeur and solemnity of the imperial authority were appropriately projected. Through comparison with the conventional performance of the maigre feast by non-imperial members of the laity and sangha, it becomes more evident that the *guoji xingxiang* was indeed a unique, highly imperial-style event. Our understanding of the conventional Tang maigre feast is enriched by Ennin’s account, as he himself sponsored a maigre feast in the same Kaiyuan Monastery on the anniversary of the death of Tiantai Master Zhiyi 智顗 (Ennin 2007, pp. 69–71). This ceremony, which followed almost every step of ritual activity

in line with the *guoji xingxiang*, was notably held in the dining hall rather than the corridor-enclosed central cloister.

Interestingly, the impact of state-sponsored maigre feasts on the rise of corridor paintings was not solely due to the inherent worship of divine monks but also in relation to the performance itself. The correlation is due to the fact that the practice of arranging monks seated in the corridor for lunch, under the ceremonial and political significance of these feasts, soon became iconic imagery representing the ceremony. This can be observed in several eighth- and ninth-century illustrations of the Medicine Buddha Sūtra 藥師經 and the Vimalakīrti Sūtra 維摩詰經 at Mogao Grottoes 莫高窟 (Figure 3).¹³ In fact, this particular practice had a far-reaching influence, as its application even extended beyond the Buddhist religion, creating a model for the Tang court ritual to follow. In 630, an imperial edict was issued, requiring the provision of lunch meals in the outer corridor for officials after their attendance at the daily court audience. Known later as “dining-in-corridor” (*langxiashi* 廊下食), this practice was established as a court ritual order, designated to be performed under the porch of the Deliberation Halls (*chaotang* 朝堂).¹⁴ These halls were built to serve as places for officials to discuss government affairs and await the commencement of court audiences. As long structures situated symmetrically to the west and east in front of the main gate hall in Taiji Palace 太極宮 and the main audience hall in Daming Palace 大明宮, these buildings were reminiscent of corridors in the central cloister of a monastery. While it is clearly untrue that the painted scenes of seated monks in the corridor were directly responsible for developing the corridor paintings in physical space, the fact that these scenes were singled out to represent maigre feasts hints that this particular practice was perceived as a pictorial theme in connection with the Buddhist corridor.



Figure 3. A Scene of Maigre Feast in a Buddhist Monastery, Illustration of Medicine Buddha Sūtra, ninth century, Northern Wall of Cave 12, Mogao Grottoes (Tan 1999, Figure 183).

2.3. Offerings of Performing Entertainment in the Corridor-Enclosed Courtyard

One more significant yet undiscussed ritual advancement that anticipated the corridor's consecration is the use of the monastic courtyard to stage the performance of court banquet music and diverse forms of entertainment. This celebratory ritual was by no means part of the solemn mourning of the *guoji xingxiang*, but it was a notable component of grand Tang Buddhist festivities.

Ceremonial performances of court music within a Buddhist monastery can be found in records of early Tang activities, with the earliest example being the inauguration ceremony of the imperial-sponsored Great Cí'en Monastery 大慈恩寺 in 648. In the Biography of the Tripitaka Master Xuanzang 玄奘, it is described that this grand event started with a morning procession, characterized by bejeweled chariots carrying fifty distinguished monks and numerous Buddhist images, scriptures, and sacred objects along the capital's main thoroughfare. The procession was accompanied by thousands of laity and monastics from the capital, along with civil and military officials holding incense and flowers, and chanting praises. Court bands of Nine-Part Music (*jiubu yue* 九部樂) were also present with the performance of various other forms of entertainment. When the procession reached the monastery gate, the Duke of Zhao and the Duke of Ying, together with the Chief of the Imperial Secretariat, were ordered by the emperor to receive and place the images and scriptures in the main hall, while holding censers in their hands. The bands played the Nine-Part Music, and dancers performed the Dance of Triumph (*pozhen wu* 破陣舞) and other acrobatic feats in the courtyard (Huili 1995, pp. 218–20). The Nine-Part Music is the most widely performed banquet entertaining music (*yanyue* 燕樂) of the early Tang imperial court, which consisted of nine troupes, each responsible for the performance of a particular group of music and dances. The display and performance of the Nine-Part Music in the monastic courtyard became a model for imperial Buddhist ceremonies, as evidenced by several later examples found in the Great Cí'en Monastery and other great capital monasteries during the seventh and early eighth centuries.¹⁵

In the Tang celebrations, monastic courtyards served as vibrant venues for music and dance performances, while vegetarian feasts, a prevalent offering act in medieval China, could also occur within the same cloister. This practice is seen as early as 656, when the Nine-Part Music performance and a maigre feast were organized to entertain two thousand monks at the Great Cí'en Monastery in commemoration of an imperial gift. Over time, it evolved into a tradition and was eventually incorporated into the state ritual code. In 838, the Central Secretariat (*Zhongshu sheng* 中書省) and the Chancellery (*Menxia sheng* 門下省) reported that, as part of the annual celebration of the emperor's birthday, officials stationed in the capital were required to visit great monasteries and sponsor thousand-monk feasts therein. Additionally, court music performances were to be held simultaneously to honor their offering of the incense procession ceremony (Wang 1773, p. 1470).

Entertaining performances in service of Buddhist ceremony, as evidenced by the depiction of dancing music offerings (*jiyue gongyang* 伎樂供養) in the second-century translation of *Daoxing bore jing* (Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra 道行般若經), had a long-standing tradition in India and Central Asia, and was known by the Chinese through the introduction of Buddhism. Early practices in China were seen in the mid-fifth century, first in the celebrations of the Buddha's birthday.¹⁶ During this festival, images and statues of the Buddha are paraded in chariots through the streets, accompanied by musical, dancing, and acrobatic performances.¹⁷ Several decades later, music and dances began to be staged within monasteries in early-sixth-century capital cities. For example, the Jingle Nunnery 景樂尼寺 and Wangdianyu Monastery 王典御寺 in Northern Wei Luoyang provided such performances on the six monthly fast days (*liuzhairi* 六齋日) in the courtyard in front of the Buddha hall (Yang 2000, pp. 42, 134). In the south, Emperor Liang Wudi composed a set of ten hymns called "orthodox music (*zhengyue* 正樂)", and commissioned them to be performed in the form of dances, chants, and songs during his great dharma assemblies to convey Buddhist teachings (Wei 1973, p. 305). While little is known about the spatial organization of pre-Tang musical-dancing performances in monastic courtyards, they were unlikely grand and sophisticated settings akin to those found in Tang Buddhist ceremonies. Such transformation could only occur when state ceremonial music was restructured to be appropriate for use in a Buddhist environment. During the Northern and Southern dynasties, the music and dances of Chinese court ceremonies, including those for banquet entertainment, were associated with statecraft and Confucianism. Nevertheless, the increasing popularity of foreign-style music in the same historical period provided material background for the development of a richer form of court music, and led to a groundbreaking shift in the use of non-Chinese musical instruments and

repertory for court banquet entertainment.¹⁸ Collectively, a group of music from bordering countries, consisting of five, seven, or eight parts, was further organized with Chinese music into a combinatory system from the early Sui period, and was displayed and performed in a predetermined order during the most important court banquet occasions. One notable characteristic of these foreign musics, particularly those from India and Central Asia, was their close Buddhist affiliations, as the diffusion of Buddhism in these countries was accompanied by strong influences on musical cultures. For instance, the Khotan Buddhist Song (*yutian foqu* 于闐佛曲) found in the Music of Western Liang (*Xiliang yue* 西涼樂), which is part of the Nine-Part Music repertoire, is obviously from the tradition of Buddhist originals.¹⁹

The early-Tang reorganization of Buddhist musical and dancing offerings, which projected imperial imagery into the monastic courtyard, is broadly captured in the surviving visual materials. In Dunhuang and many other cave temple sites, the portrayal of sophisticated, well-organized performances of music and dance first appeared in the early Tang period and is observed in the dharma preaching scenes of illustrations depicting the Buddhist Pure Land (Z. Wang 2018, 2019). The performance, typically occupying a large space in front of the central preaching Buddha, is depicted with two or four dancers performing on a square platform, accompanied by musicians flanking both sides and playing a variety of instruments (Figure 4). As art historians have presented convincing arguments linking these paradisaical performances to Music of Seated-Performers (*zuobuji* 坐部伎), one of two types of entertainment music played at Tang imperial banquets, it is reasonable, therefore, to consider them as visual representations of actual rituals (Zheng 2002, p. 83).²⁰



Figure 4. Music and Dance Performance in the Dharma Preaching Scene of Pure Land, Northern Wall, No. 320, Mogao Cave, High Tang (Sun and Sun 2001, Figure 108).

The display and performance of the Nine-Part Music in a Buddhist cloister not only simply injected the imagery of imperial authority but, more significantly, introduced a ritual-spatial order that envisioned the corridor as a place for venerating the sacred beings. The details of organizing the Nine-Part Music performance in court banquets were outlined in the early-eighth century state ritual code *Datang Kaiyuanli* 大唐開元禮, which mentions it as an alternative repertoire played during the New Year's Day Banquet (*yuanhui* 元會) (Xiao 2000, pp. 452–56). The banquet, as the second event of the state New Year celebration, followed the morning grand audience held at the imperial palace's main audience compound (Figure 5).²¹ Ritual music performed for the audience was provided by a musical ensemble called *gongxuan* 宮懸 (Palace Hanging Instruments), situated in the center of the main audience courtyard. This ensemble consisted of musicians standing before a rack of bronze bells and jade chimes on all four sides, forming a quadripartite band. Except for the emperor in the main audience hall, attendees were seated to the east, west, and south of the ensemble in the courtyard, organized according to their respective ranks and status. As the performance concluded and the banquet began, officials and guests above the third rank from the southern side were permitted to enter the main audience hall, while others maintained their positions. For the banquet music performance, an instruction states that if the court prefers the Nine-Part Music, the *gongxuan* ensemble should be replaced, allowing the Nine-Part musicians and dancers to assume their positions in the courtyard.²²

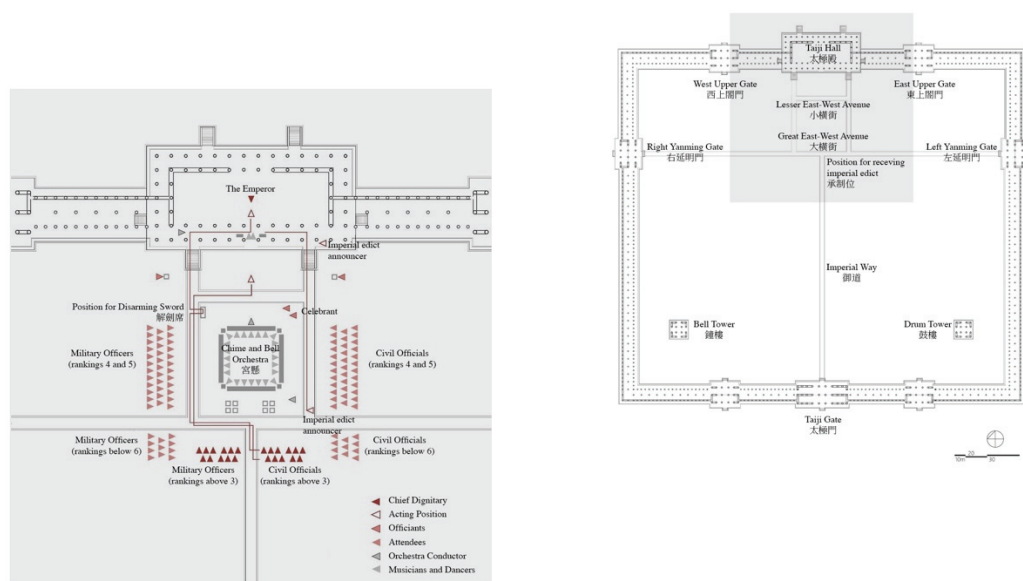


Figure 5. Ceremonial Plan of the New Year's Audience in Taiji Palace, based on the Kaiyuan Ritual Code, 7th century (Guo and Shen 2022).

In the ceremonial plan of the New Year's Day Banquet, the central Nine-Part Music ensemble provided musical and dancing entertainment to spectators on three sides of the courtyard: the emperor and high-ranking officials in the northern audience hall, along with the lower-ranking officials in the eastern and western grounds of the courtyard. When adapted into the Buddhist context, particularly for a maigre feast, which could be perceived as the monastic version of an imperial ceremonial banquet, the performance would similarly evoke the same ritual structure of a three-sided offering, envisioning the corridor as a space, albeit of lesser importance, comparable to the image hall for venerating Buddhist pantheons (Figure 6). This observation brings us to another intriguing point: the first recorded performance of the Nine-Part Music in Buddhist celebration in 648 likely coincided with its introduction into the

imperial Near Year banquet, which suggests a possible exchange and influence between the ceremonial plans of both court and monastic banquets.²³

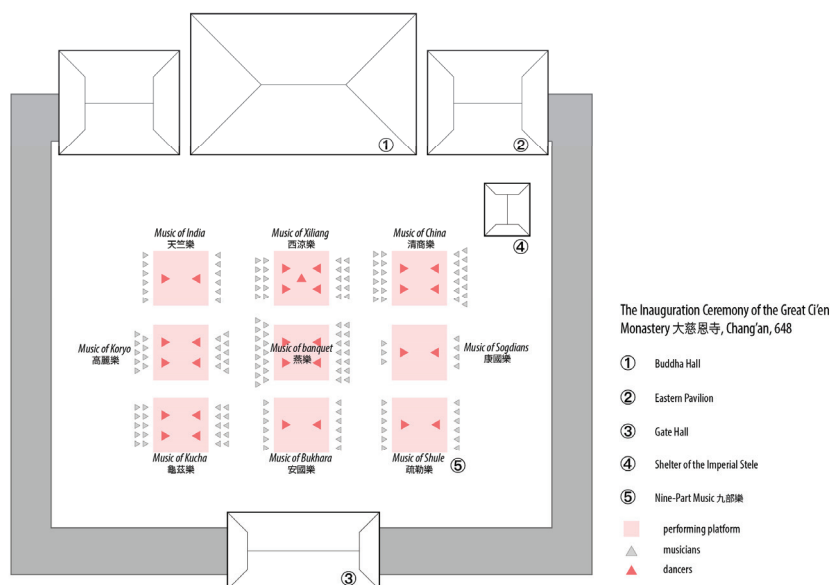


Figure 6. The Inauguration Ceremony of Great Ci'en Monastery at 648. The exact number of musicians and dancers for each band of Nine-Part Music is provided in (Zuo 2010, pp. 93–98). However, as no evidence suggests the spatial order of the nine bands, the arrangement presented here is merely the author's hypothetical reconstruction. In this reconstruction, the first band, *yanyue* 燕樂, is positioned in the center because the Dance of Triumph (*pozhen wu*), which is a part of the *yanyue* repertory, was actually performed in the 648 inauguration celebration. The other bands are arranged enumeratively, starting from the northeastern corner and proceeding counter-clockwise.

While the discussions of maigre feast, divine monk veneration, and courtyard entertainment collectively provide many plausible clues towards the consecration of corridor space and the development of corridor paintings, we must not completely disregard the potential impact from abroad, given the highly international nature of the Sui and Tang cultures. The *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, translated by Yijing 義淨 (635–713) in the early eighth century, gives a lengthy passage concerning the thoughtful design of pictorial programs at the famous Jetavana vihāra, in which the Buddha not only lists the appropriate paintings but also indicates where each kind of image is to be placed (Wut 2020). *Jātaka* stories of sacrifice offerings, body-sacrifice, or tolerance of mistreatment, he says, should be painted in the verandahs (Yijing 1924–1933a, 656b23–25; 1924–1933b, 283b4). The verandah, serving as the passageway that runs along the front of monastic cells, which, in turn, surround the quadrangular court of the vihāra, is a structure akin to the Chinese Buddhist corridor. The most vivid examples of such painted vihāra verandahs are seen in the two fifth-century Ajanta Caves (No. 1 and 2), which represent actual practices then popular in India. Drawing a direct connection between the Indian vihāra verandah and the Chinese Buddhist corridor is undoubtedly problematic due to the different functions they served. However, the idea of using wall paintings to suggest and reinforce the didactic, cultic, and ritual functions of specific spaces may have been introduced to China by pilgrims and missionary monks. For instance, *Xiuchan Yaojue* 修禪要訣 (Essentials of Cultivating Meditation), a meditation manual produced no later than the ninth century, records a recommendation made by the seventh-century Indian monk Buddhapālita 佛陀波利 that, to protect meditative practitioners from the demon Māra's disturbances, por-

traits of both divine and ordinary monks in seated meditative postures should be painted on the interior walls of meditation halls (Yuan and Li 2020).

3. Corridor in Constructing Patriarchal Lineages

Iconographically, the subject of divine monks that became prevalent during the seventh and eighth centuries was often presented as various groupings of patriarchs who protected the transmission of Buddhist teachings. Early groupings in scriptural sources include especially the list of twenty-four patriarchs given in the fifth- or sixth-century Tradition of the Causes and Conditions of the Dharma-Treasury Transmission (*Fu fazang yinyuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳) (Kivkara and Tanyao 1924–1933), and the famous sixteen great arhats given in the mid-seventh century Record of the Abiding of the Dharma spoken by the Great Arhat Nandimitra (*Skt. Nandimitrāvādāna*, *Da aluohan Nantimiduoluo suoshuo fazhu ji* 大阿羅漢難提蜜多羅所說法住記) (Xuanzang 1924–1933). This period also witnessed an increasing emphasis on linking sectarian patriarchs genealogically with the Buddha, leading scholars to trace parallel developments in visual traditions (Wong 2018, pp. 154–61). Nonetheless, given that pictorial materials only exist in a handful of cave chapels with unclear sectarian affiliations, scholarly proposals connecting them to particular schools or movements remain tentative (Wong 2018, pp. 159–60). At the level of textual description, most of the available information is associated with monk portraits adorning the corridor walls of urban monasteries. Unlike the cramped space of a cave chapel, the long and continuous corridor wall is by nature ideal to display the master-disciple sequence of dharma transmission. Although rarely did one single document take care to lay out the entire pictorial program, it is our fortune that they occasionally did. The stele inscription that records the reconstruction of Dayun Monastery 大雲寺 at Liangzhou 涼州 (present-day Wuwei city 武威) in 711, for example, provides a glimpse of the full pictorial program of the encircling corridor in the monastery's newly built subsidiary cloister, which consists of the “arhats and divine monks who transmitted the dharma 付法藏羅漢聖僧變”, the “Kāśyapa Mātanga and Dharmaratna's introduction of dharma to China 摩騰法蘭東來變”, and the “avadāna tale of the seven maidens 七女變”.²⁴ The conjoining of the Indian Buddhist saints and patriarchs with the two missionaries who marked the beginning of Chinese Buddhism clearly represents a non- or proto-sectarian approach to bridge the Sino-Indian dharmic divide. This may further suggest the development of a well-established visual tradition by the eighth century, which was seen even at the northwestern frontier. Of course, monasteries in capital cities, which were close to vital centers of various Buddhist schools and practices, were more likely the place where novel ideas could flourish. The following examination will focus on the diverse range of pictorial programs found in corridor wall paintings from several urban headquarters in Tiantai, Chan, and some other schools or movements. This analysis aims to enrich our knowledge of the Tang visual construct of sectarian patriarchal lineages.

3.1. Patriarchs for Buddhism Entering China: Ximing Monastery at Chang'an

Ximing Monastery, built by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683) in the mid-seventh century in Chang'an, stands as an example of a proto-sectarian construct of corridor wall painting. In *Lidai minghua ji*, epigraphs on the east corridor of Ximing Monastery are noted (no. 10, Table A1). The east corridor likely refers to the corridor situated on the eastern half of the monastery's central cloister, typically consisting of three sections: the northern part, which is connected to the image hall; the southern part, which is connected to the gate hall; and the intermediate eastern part, which lies between the northern and southern sections. The eastern section, numbered north-to-south, features distinct epigraphs in the first, third, and fourth bays: *Chuanfazhe tuzan* 傳法者圖贊 (Eulogy on the painting of patriarchs who transmit the Dharma) by Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (596–658) in the first bay, and eulogies of Lifang 利防 and Dharmakāla 曇柯迦羅 by Ouyang Tong 歐陽通 (625–691) in the third and fourth bays, respectively.²⁵ Despite the cursory and sporadic nature of Zhang Yanyuan's notes, driven by his interest in great calligraphy masters, the information provided is valuable as it belongs to a larger pictorial program depicting a group of patriarchs under the title of *Chuanfazhe*, the

Transmitters of the Dharma. With the *Chuanfazhe tuzan* prefacing the program in the first bay, the following bays presented portraits of patriarchs in chronological order, each of whom was deemed an important contributor to the transmission of Chinese Buddhist teachings. Lifang, described in Sui-Tang apocryphal tales as delivering sūtras to the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 221–208 BC), and Dharmakāla, known for translating China's first *vinaya* text in the third century, for example, were both Indian missionary priests traveling to China for the transmission or translation of Buddhist scriptures (Zürcher 2007, pp. 19–20, 55–56).

Notably, Zhang Yanyuan was not the sole individual who ever documented the paintings of Ximing Monastery. Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), a renowned scholar monk, was appointed the first head monk 上座 (“top seat”) of the Ximing Monastery between 658 and 664 (Fujiyoshi 2002, pp. 150–55). During his tenure, he compiled multiple records for the monastery, preserving its splendor and accomplishments. These works are found in Tang and Song catalogs, including the inventory-like *Ximingsi lu* (Record of Ximing Monastery 西明寺錄) in 659, and two textual collections of pictorial inscriptions in 660, namely, *Shengji jianzai tuzan* 聖跡見在圖贊 (Eulogy on the paintings of existing sacred sites and monuments) and *Fohua dongjian tuzan* 佛化東漸圖贊 (Eulogy on the paintings of Buddhist acculturation from India to China) (Yuanzhao 1924–1933, 764c28; 1975–1989b, 650c5–6 and a2–8; Daoxuan 1924–1933a, 282a23–24). Although the two *tuzan* appeared to be no longer known by monks in the 11th century, a recent investigation of the fragments of the Tang manuscript *Huatu zanwen* 畫圖讚文 (Eulogies for Painted Images) provided a significant clue (Dingyuan 2017). This examination reveals that the fragments, composed by combining tales of miraculous images, pagodas, and monasteries in India and China with texts quoted from *Tonglüe Jingzhuzi Jingxing famen* 統略淨住子淨行法門 (Abridged Methods of Pure Practices of the Pure Abider)—Daoxuan's recompilation of a Southern Qi Buddhist treatise—were part of the *Shengji jianzai tuzan*.

It further suggests that the *Shengji jianzai tuzan* texts were inscriptions gathered from wall paintings of Ximing Monastery, serving a propagational purpose in regulating human moral behavior. From the 9th century or even earlier, the original title of *Shengji jianzai tuzan* had fallen out of use. Instead, it was amalgamated with another unknown work for painting inscriptions of Ximing Monastery under a new title, either *Zhufa tuzan* 住法圖贊 (Eulogies for the Paintings of Who Preserved the Dharma) in (Yuanzhao 1975–1989b, 650a8–9) or *Ximing tuzan* 西明圖讚 (Eulogies on the Paintings of Ximing Monastery) in (Jingxiao 1975–1989, 70d1).

It is not difficult to recognize that the unknown work of painting inscription collection in the *Zhufa tuzan*, which has not been discussed in the existing examination of the *Huatu zanwen* manuscript, should be the *Fohua dongjian tuzan*. This is known by the fact that *Zhufa tuzan* remained complete during the Southern Song dynasty, and its texts were frequently referenced in commentaries on Daoxuan's *vinaya* writings between the 10th and 12th centuries. A search of these excerpts from the *Zhufa tuzan* (occasionally titled *Ximing tuzan* 西明圖贊) reveals a wide range of themes, including:

1. The sixteen arhats: Piṇḍola 賓頭盧, Kanakavatsa 迦諾迦伐蹉, Kanaka Bhāradvāja 迦諾跋梨墮闍, Subinda 蘇頻陀, Nakula 諾矩羅, Bhadra 跋陀羅, Kālīka 迦理迦, Vajriputra 伐闍羅弗多羅, Gopaka 戍博迦, Panthaka 半托迦, Rāhula 羅怱羅, Nāgasena 那伽犀那, Aṅgaja 因揭陀, Vanavāsin 伐那婆斯, Ajita 阿氏多, and Kṣudrapanthaka 注荼半托迦—*Lizong xinxue minju* 律宗新學名句, compiled in 1094, (Weixian 1975–1989, 695b14–18);
2. The lineage of the twenty-five patriarchs: the Buddha as the founding teacher and the succession of twenty-four masters from Kāśyapa 迦葉 to Śimha 師子 who transmitted the teachings—*Sifenlü xingshichao zichiji* 四分律行事鈔資持記, compiled in 1078–1116, (Yuanzhao 1975–1989a, 161a9–11);
3. The arrangement of three high seats in a cave for the first Buddhist council: one for Kāśyapa who presided over the council, one for Ānanda 阿難 and Upali 優波離 who recited the Buddha's teachings, and one for the scriptures transcribed on palm leaves following an unanimous decision among the council members—*Sifenlü xingshichao jianzhengji* 四分律行事鈔簡正記, compiled in the early 10th century (Jingxiao 1975–1989, 13c20–21);

4. Ānanda's encounter with young ladies and the formulation of a monastic dress code—*Yibo mingyizhang* 衣鉢名義章, compiled between 1042–61, (Yunkan 1975–1989, 601a9–13);
5. A quote from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* introducing people to the four stages of awakening: sotāpanna, sakadāgāmi, anāgāmi, and arhat—*Shimen guijingyi tongzhenji* 釋門歸敬儀通真記, compiled in the first half of the 12th century, (Liaoran 1975–1989, 485a22–b2);
6. The shape of the Jambudvīpa continent—*Sifenlü xingshichao jianzhengji*, (Jingxiao 1975–1989, 127b5–7);
7. Explanation of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—*Shimen guijingyi tongzhenji*, (Liaoran 1975–1989, 462b15–23);
8. Several significant anti-Buddhist and pro-Buddhist events from the historical periods of the Great Xia (407–431), Northern Wei (386–535), and Northern Zhou (557–581) dynasties—*Shimen guijingyi hufaji* 釋門歸敬儀護法記, compiled in 1150, X59, (Yanqi 1975–1989, 446b1–12).

Excerpts 7 and 8, as identified in the previous examination, are sourced from *Shengji jianzai tuzan*. It is likely that the geographic information of Jambudvīpa (excerpt 6) also comes from the same text, given its strong association with sacred sites. However, the subjects of the sixteen arhats (excerpt 1), the twenty-four patriarchs (excerpt 2), and those pertaining to the deeds of these patriarchs and enlightened beings (excerpts 3, 4, and 5), are distinct in their close connection to the theme of Indian sainthood in the protection and transmission of Buddhist teachings. This immediately brings to mind Daoxuan's *Fohua dongjian tuzan*, as the title itself implies a related subject matter. Additionally, it is worth noting that *Fohua dongjian tuzan* is the only other painting inscription work compiled by Daoxuan in conjunction with *Shengji jianzai tuzan* in the year 660.

Despite the absence of concrete evidence, it is plausible that the *Fohua dongjian tuzan* documents corridor paintings at Ximing Monastery, mainly because *Chufazhe tu*, the pictorial program in the east corridor depicting Indian missionaries in China for dharma transmission, aligns perfectly with the subject matter of *Fohua dongjian*. This enables us to reconstruct a comprehensive program: the western corridor features the sixteen arhats as the dharma-protector and the twenty-four patriarchs as the transmitters of dharma in India proper; meanwhile, the eastern corridor showcases a group of Indian missionaries responsible for transmitting the dharma from India to China (Figure 7). Jointly, these patriarch portraits constructed a narrative of dharma transmission that bridged the Sino-Indian divide, potentially serving as an influential model throughout China, as demonstrated by the earlier mentioned Dayun Monastery example.

From its founding in 658 until the early reign of Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), Ximing Monastery was indisputably the epicenter of Buddhist academic teachings, attracting a number of foreign pilgrims who traveled to China to study Buddhism. The significance of Ximing Monastery extended to Japan in the Tenpyō period (729–749), as Daianji 大安寺, the state monastery at Heijōkyō 平城京, was reportedly modeled after Ximing Monastery while it was reconstructed between 729 and 742 under the supervision of Dōji 道慈, a Japanese pilgrim monk studying at Chang'an between 702 and 718 (Wong 2018, pp. 154–61). Although modern scholars remain cautious about the extent to which Dōji's reconstruction followed the Chinese model, recent studies have highlighted the double-sided corridor and the arhat paintings in Daianji's central cloister, suggesting that these novel art and architectural ideas were brought back from the continent (Uehara 2021; Wong 2018, pp. 154–61). The record of arhat portraits, from the Daianji inventory of its property assets compiled in 747, lists ninety-four images of *luohan*, completed in 736, in the monastery's eastern and western corridors (Ōta 1977, p. 53).

Considering Daoxuan's collection and compilation of pictorial inscriptions from Ximing Monastery, I aim to expand upon the established Ximingsi-Daianji connection by suggesting that their corridor paintings not only have a common theme of divine monks but also likely adopt similar iconographic content of "patriarchs for Buddhism entering China." Unlike later visual and textual materials claimed to be Dōji's records, Daoxuan's work on the pictorial inscriptions of Ximing Monastery gained recognition in Japan no later than the ninth century. This is known from the text titled *Ximingsi tuzan* 西明寺圖贊 found in a bibliography compiled

in 891 for documenting the imperial collection of books (Fujiwara 1966, p. 44). The manuscript has been recognized as being the same as the aforementioned *Zhufu tuzan* or *Ximing tuzan*, comprising both the *Fohua dongjian tuzan* and the *Shengji jianzai tuzan* (Dingyuan 2017). The historical details of the manuscript's return to Japan are unclear, however; Dōji could be a plausible candidate, considering his exposure to Daoxuan's scholarship during his time in Chang'an (Wong 2018, p. 161). Moreover, the manuscript, which is not found in other pilgrim monks' catalogs, could have been accessible for Dōji to copy from the rich collection housed in the repository of Ximing Monastery. Taking into account the images of ninety-four arhats in the Daiaiji inventory and the established Ximingsi-Daianji connection, it is reasonable to speculate that there were fifty-four *Chuanfazhe* figures standing in the east corridor of Ximing Monastery's central cloister.

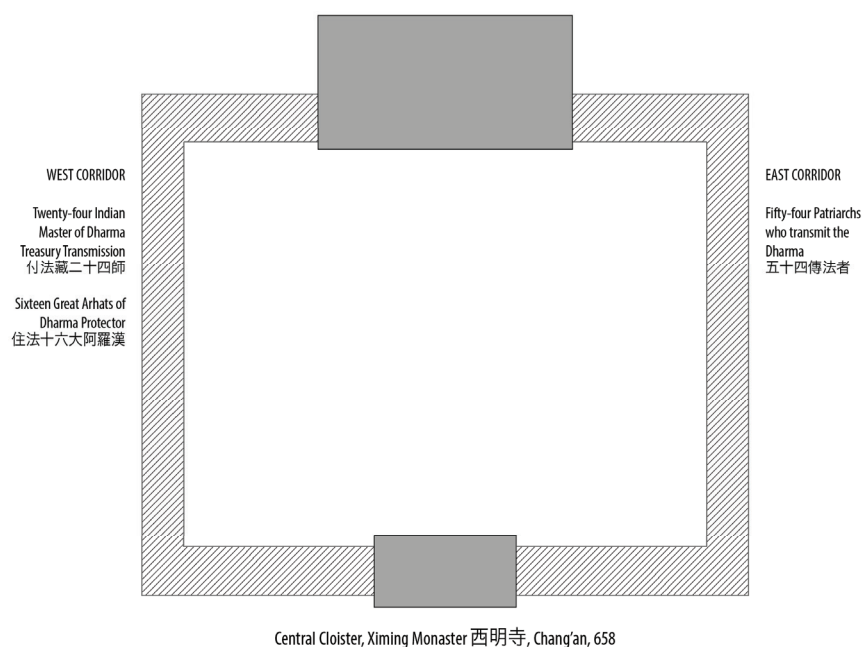


Figure 7. A theoretical illustration of the pictorial program of the central cloister's corridors, Ximing Monastery, Chang'an (author's reconstruction).

Regarding the origin of the *Fohua dongjian tu*, although Daoxuan is recognized as the compiler of the pictorial inscription document, which serves as the primary source for our information about the corridor paintings, the actual authorship should be attributed to another individual. The precise date of the paintings remains unknown, but they must have been created no later than 655. This is because Chu Suiliang, the calligrapher responsible for *Chuanfazhe tuzan*, was demoted by Emperor Gaozong and sent away from Chang'an in the late autumn of that year. He never returned to the capital until his death in 658.²⁶ Hence, the creation of the paintings fell within the period between 652, when the monastery was initially established by converting a deceased prince's residence, and 656, when Emperor Gaozong bestowed the title of Ximing upon the monastery and initiated the grand reconstruction (Zhanru 2022, pp. 53–61). This period coincided with the early reign of Emperor Gaozong, during which Xuanzang, the *de facto* leader of Chang'an Buddhism, enjoyed great honor from the imperial family. It is highly plausible that Xuanzang was the individual responsible for the work, particularly given that a few years later, the emperor appointed him to inspect the monastery site before the commencement of the reconstruction. In contrast, Daoxuan, who joined Xuanzang's translation team between 646 and 658, did not actively engage

with the imperial religious projects until he was appointed as the head monk of the Ximing Monastery in 658 (Fujiyoshi 2002, pp. 145–62). A comparable strategy in designing iconography programs can be seen decades later by one of Xuanzang's close disciples, which may provide further evidence for the hypothesis on authorship. After Xuanzang's death in 664, Jingmai 靖邁, who followed Xuanzang for twenty years, commissioned paintings on the interior walls of the translation hall in the Great Cí'en Monastery to honor his master. These paintings featured a group of one hundred and twelve translators, ranging chronologically from Kāśyapa Mātanga to Xuanzang (Liu 2017). While Jingmai's work differed from the corridor pictorial program, as it included not only monastic but also layman translators, they shared similar concepts.

The corridor paintings at Ximing Monastery hold a significant place in the history of Chinese Buddhist art. Firstly, as the earliest visual representation to bridge the Sino-Indian dharmic divide, these paintings diverge from the typical sectarian approach of connecting genealogies of Indian and Chinese masters, which was first seen in the writings of Tiantai luminary Guanding 灌頂 (561–632) half a century earlier (Young 2015, pp. 67–69). Distinctively, the corridor paintings sought to embody the subject not by forming master-disciple lineages but rather by embracing a diverse group of prominent monastic missionaries and translators, who were well known by the Chinese through the Sui and early-Tang historiographies of Buddhism. Secondly, the presence of the sixteen arhats is notable, as it is the first known attempt to visualize this novel subject in China following the translation of Nandimitrāvadāna in 654, and was conceived by Xuanzang, the translator himself. This discovery sheds new light on the scholarly investigation of the early development of *luohan* iconography in China.²⁷

3.2. The Forty-Two Xiansheng and Monks Copying-Reciting Lotus Sūtra: Tiantai Corridor Paintings

The Tiantai School, as one of the earliest local Chinese Buddhist traditions to form a coherent and distinct movement, witnessed its advocates undertaking the unprecedented endeavor to establish genealogical connections between Indian and Chinese masters (Young 2015, pp. 125–30). This sectarian effort was represented in the form of visual arts along the Buddhist corridor, exemplified by the Forty-two *Xiansheng* 四十二賢聖 images painted in the Baoying Guanyin Cloister 寶應觀音院 of Zisheng Monastery 資聖寺 at Chang'an (no. 18, Table A1). In a previous scholarly study, the Forty-two *Xiansheng* at Zisheng Monastery was identified as representing the forty-two stages of the bodhisattva path, as enumerated in the fifth-century *Pusa Yingluo Benye Jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (Sūtra of the Diadem of the Primary Activities of the Bodhisattvas). These stages signify the spiritual progression from the initial aspiration to the ultimate attainment of Buddhahood (Liu 2013). However, this identification is mistaken, as *Youyang zazu* gives a clear account of Nāgārjuna 龍樹 and Śāṇavāsa 商那和修 as members of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* (Duan 2015, p. 1925), which serves as compelling evidence that the Tiantai pictorial program was not concerned with personifying Bodhisattva stages. The inclusion of Nāgārjuna and Śāṇavāsa suggests that the twenty-four patriarchs from the Dharma-Treasury Transmission could be part of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* program, as it is the only known grouping containing both Indian masters. In addition, Ennin's catalog submission to the Japanese court reveals that during his 840–845 stay at Zisheng Monastery, he reproduced mural texts and compiled them into a single-volume manuscript titled "Eulogies from Portrait Paintings of Nanyue, Tiantai, and others on the walls of Baoyin Guanyin Cloister at Zisheng Monastery 長安資聖寺寶應觀音院壁上南岳天台等真影讚 (Ennin 1924–1933, 1084a23–25)." This strongly implies the presence of Master Huisi of Nanyue 南岳慧思 and Master Zhiyi of Tiantai 天台智顗, who are regarded as the key founding patriarchs of the Tiantai School.²⁸

The inclusion of Huisi and Zhiyi immediately draws our attention to Tiantai master Jingxi Zhanran's (711–782) 荆溪湛然 ritual work *Qing Sishier Xiansheng Yi* 請四十二賢聖儀 (Rites of Inviting the Forty-two Saints).²⁹ Zhanran, accredited with his substantial contributions to the revival of the Tiantai tradition, held a pivotal role in the formation of the sectarian ideology (Tang 2008, pp. 132–35). Zhanran's influence on the Tiantai lineage extends

beyond providing a list of five successive patriarchs as lineal descendants of Zhiyi. He also re-emphasized the link of Zhiyi, Huisi, and Huiwen 慧文 (active in the 550s) with the Dharma Treasury Transmission lineage, first claimed by Guanding in his introduction to the *Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Calming and Contemplation) (Young 2015, p. 135; Lin 2006). This connection is not established through direct master-disciple transmission but through Nāgārjuna's *Da Zhidu Lun* 大智度論 (Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise) (Zhiyi 1924–1933, 1a13–b8). By grouping the Indian monastic divinities with the three masters of latter-day China, the making of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* and its offering ritual were doubtless an effort to propagate the superiority of Tiantai traditions, as demonstrated by Ennin's account of witnessing the performance of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* offering at a monastery in Yangzhou (Ennin 2007, pp. 97–98).

Aside from the Indian dharma-transmission patriarchs and Chinese Tiantai masters, the remaining figures could number either fifteen or sixteen.³⁰ There is limited information about these unidentified beings; however, they are unlikely to be associated with the five Tiantai masters after Zhiyi due to the numerical discrepancy. Nonetheless, the number sixteen brings to mind the well-known grouping of the sixteen great arhats, especially when considering the established practice of combining them with the Dharma-Treasury Transmission lineage, as seen in Ximing Monastery, which was located alongside Zisheng Monastery in the same Chang'an city. Should this hypothesis prove valid, the Forty-two *Xiansheng* might intriguingly represent a Tiantai adaptation of Daoxuan's *Fohua dongjian tu*, thereby forming a pictorial program characterized as—borrowing the phrase from the 711 Dayun Monastery stele inscription—“arhats and divine monks who transmitted the dharma”.

A further examination of the Guanyin Cloister in Zisheng Monastery, where the portraits of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* were painted, may uncover its previously unexplored connection to the Tiantai tradition. Textual materials, though somewhat ambiguous, suggest that the Guanyin Cloister may have had a circular pagoda at its courtyard center, leading to its alternative name, Circular Pagoda Cloister (*yuantayuan* 圓塔院).³¹ In Duan Chengshi's record of Zisheng Monastery, both Guanyin Cloister and Circular Pagoda Cloister are present, which would typically refer to two separate compounds. However, the description of the Guanyin Cloister and its corridor paintings by forty-two *Xiansheng* is uncharacteristically embedded within the paragraph discussing the Circular Pagoda Cloister. Moreover, it is notable that the north hall of the Circular Pagoda Cloister, likely its main image shrine due to the location, housed a three-*zhang* (approximately nine-meter) tall iron Guanyin statue (Duan 2015, p. 1925). The colossal image of Guanyin, being the principal focus of devotion alongside the circular pagoda within the same cloister, also brings us to mind the name of the Guanyin Cloister.

Exploring Zisheng Monastery's history and its link to Tiantai practice would be helpful to clarify the dual naming phenomenon. Originally founded in 663, the monastery suffered a devastating fire in 703 but was promptly reconstructed (Ono 1989, p. 67). Following the restoration, it rose to prominence as a notable center for Buddhist teachings in Chang'an until the mid-ninth century when anti-Buddhist persecution occurred. The construction date of the Guanyin Cloister is not specified in any available sources. However, given that the artists responsible for the circular pagoda and corridor paintings were active during the reigns of Emperor Daizong 代宗 (r. 762–779) and Dezong 德宗 (r. 779–805), the compound was likely either built or underwent renovations during that period.³² The time frame is concurrent with the Tiantai monks' activities at Zisheng Monastery. Daguang (736–805) 大光, renowned for his Lotus Sūtra chanting, was appointed abbot of both Qianfu Monastery 千福寺—the Tiantai headquarter in Chang'an—and Zisheng Monastery by Emperor Suzong 肅宗 between 761 and 762 (W. Xu 2003). Later, Tiantai scholar-monk Daoye 道液, who stayed in Zisheng Monastery during the reigns of Emperors Daizong and Dezong, Daoye, became influential in Japan for his exegetical writings (Sato 2013). The confluence of active Tiantai monks in Zisheng Monastery and the production of artworks in the Guanyin Cloister during the latter half of the eighth century provides compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that the cloister experienced a significant renovation during this period, which, potentially including

the erection of a circular pagoda and the repainting of corridors, was likely facilitated by the monastery's Tiantai community, leading to the new name "Circular Pagoda Cloister."

The iconographic representation of the Forty-two *Xiansheng* at Zisheng Monastery is arguably the earliest endeavor to employ a Buddhist corridor for celebrating the sectarian pre-eminence of Tiantai tradition. This presumption becomes apparent when compared with the Western Pagoda Cloister 西塔院 (also known as the Lotus Cloister 法華院 or Lotus Ritual Arena 法華道場) of Qianfu Monastery, the Tiantai headquarters in Chang'an. Built by Tiantai master Chujin 楚金 (698–759) between 742 and 745, with the generous patronage of Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), the Western Pagoda Cloister was a corridor-enclosed compound featuring a portrait hall in the northern end and a Prabhutaratna Pagoda 多寶塔 at the courtyard center.³³ The Prabhutaratna Pagoda was a sacred structure embodying the teachings of the Lotus Sūtra, and Chujin enshrined thousands of śāriṃ relics, his self-portrait engraved on a stone, a thousand copies of the Lotus Sūtra, and thirty-six golden-lettered copies of the same scripture under the ground of its foundation. In the latter half of the eighth century, Chujin's Prabhutaratna Pagoda became an influential model for many Tiantai monasteries at Chang'an to emulate.³⁴ The Circular Pagoda in Zisheng Monastery, which adopted the similar practice of burying a thousand copies of the Lotus Sūtra, stood out as a notable example (Duan 2015, p. 1925). The close connection between the two Prabhutaratna Pagodas does not necessarily suggest a complete replication of the entire compound, as the veneration programs within their main halls and corridors exhibit significant differences. The north hall of the West Pagoda Cloister served as a memorial space for worshipping Huisi, Zhiyi, and the other seven unidentified Tiantai patriarchs and their disciples.³⁵ In contrast, the north hall of the Circular Pagoda Cloister, likely predating the compound's conversion for Tiantai purposes, functioned as a conventional image hall housing a giant Guanyin statue. Regarding the corridors, the Western Pagoda Cloister, although not fully recorded, displays a collection of loosely connected images with diverse themes, such as a portrait of *Tianshi* 天師 (Celestial Master), a portrait of Chujin, and a scene of Maitreya's descent to this world 彌勒下生變 (no. 14, Table A1).³⁶ Conversely, the Forty-two *Xiansheng* in the Circular Pagoda Cloister showcases a careful design, wherein the entire corridor space was taken into consideration. Considering that Zhanran, the author of the Forty-two *Xiansheng*, immersed himself in the study of Tiantai teachings in Zhejiang several decades after the construction of the Western Pagoda Cloister (Chen 1999), it appears that the Tiantai sectarian insight given to the corridor's visual significance remained undeveloped by the mid-eighth century.

Another Tiantai practice of grouping, not for patriarchal lineage but rather for the subject of miraculous responses (*ganyin* 感應), is observed in the ninth-century Longxing Monastery 龍興寺 in Yangzhou (no. 22, Table A1). Within the monastery, a compound known as Lotus Cloister 法華院 or Lotus Ritual Arena 法華道場 was dedicated to the practice of Tiantai School. Ennin, during his stay in Yangzhou, visited the cloister and recorded in his diary that the south corridor of the cloister housed portraits of Master Huisi, Master Zhiyi, and over twenty monks who "received miraculous responses by hand-copying and reciting the Lotus Sūtra (Ennin 2007, pp. 90–91)."³⁷ Although the multitude of paintings proved too numerous for Ennin to fully replicate, he successfully copied portraits of the two masters and created ten sketch drawings from the selection of over twenty monks. The titles of these sketches are preserved in Ennin's catalog (Table 1).³⁸ Even a cursory examination could show that these monks were featured in Tang-dynasty tales promoting the belief of the Lotus Sūtra as the central scripture of the Tiantai teachings. The early eighth-century *Hongzan Fahua Zhuan* 弘贊法華傳 (Accounts of Glorifying the Lotus Sūtra), arguably the first collection of its kind, contains short biographies of these monks, detailing their experiences with various miraculous responses received as meditators, memorized chanters, intonated reciters, and hand-copyers of the Lotus Sūtra (Li 2014). Apart from the ten figures documented by Ennin, the *Hongzan Fahua Zhuan* includes thirty-nine monastic priests whose stories align with the criteria of "hand-copying and reciting the Sūtra." As a result, they are likely the subjects of the over ten unrecorded portraits painted on the corridor of the Lotus Cloister. Han Gan (706–783) 韓幹, who created the two masters' portraits, was erroneously attributed by Ennin as a painter from the Liang period (502–557).

In fact, he was a court artist active in Chang'an during the rule of Xuanzong (r. 712–756). No records exist regarding Han Gan's whereabouts after the Anshi Rebellion. Nevertheless, it is most reasonable to date the corridor paintings to the latter half of the eighth century.

Table 1. Textual Materials for the Portrait Paintings of Monks who “received miraculous responses by hand-copying and reciting the Lotus Sūtra” at Longxing Monastery, Yangzhou.

<i>Nittō Shin Gu Shōgyō Mokuroku</i> 入唐新求聖教目錄 (Ennin 1924–1933, 1087a27–b10)	<i>Hongzan Fahua Zhuan</i> 弘贊法華傳
scene of venerable Huisi of Nanyue unearthing relics from his previous life 南岳思大和尚示先生骨影	Chen-dynasty monk Shi Huisi from Nanyue 陳南岳釋慧思, chapter of meditator (<i>xiuguan</i> 修觀), (Huixiang 1924–1933, 21c12–22b16)
scene of Tiantai Master receiving a miraculous image 天台大師感得聖像影	Sui-dynasty monk Shi Zhiyi from Mt. Tiantai 隋天台山釋智顗, chapter of meditator, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 22b17–23a20)
scene of dhyāna master Shandeng beholding gold and silver hall by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 山登禪師誦法花感金銀殿影	Liang-dynasty monk Shi Zhideng from Mt. Lu 梁匡山釋智登, chapter of memorized chanter (<i>songchi</i> 誦持), (Huixiang 1924–1933, 30a20–b20)
scene of an aranya bhikkhu beholding Samantabhadra in the air 阿蘭若比丘見空中普賢影	foreign aranya bhikkhu 外國蘭若比丘, chapter of intonated reciter (<i>zhuandu</i> 轉讀), (Huixiang 1924–1933, 40b25–c5)
scene of dhyāna master Ying drawing audience of benevolent deities by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 映禪師誦法花善神來聽經影	Sui-dynasty monk Shi Sengying from Yongqi Monastery at Jiangyang 隋江陽永齊寺釋僧映, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 33b3–12)
scene of the deceased dhyāna master Huixiang's auspicious retribution of lotus blossom and spontaneous sūtra recitations in his grave by (the merit of) his chanting of the Lotus Sūtra during lifetime 惠向禪師誦法花滅後墓上生蓮花及墓裏常有誦經聲影	Sui-dynasty monk Shi Huixiang from Jiangdu county 隋江都縣釋慧向, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 32c28–33a12)
scene of venerable monk Fahui chanting the Lotus Sūtra before Yama 法惠和上閻王前誦法花影	Liang-dynasty Ping Fahui beholding a monk in the underworld 梁憑法慧冥道見僧, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 31a26–b4)
scene of dhyāna master Huibing attracting the worship of heavenly beings by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 惠斌禪師誦法花神人來拜影	Sui-dynasty monk Shi Huibing from Chanju Monastery 隋禪居道場釋慧斌, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 33c6–20)
scene of dhyāna master Ding receiving offerings from heavenly boy by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 定禪師誦法花天童給事影	Liang-dynasty monk Shi Sengding from Chanzhong Monastery 梁禪眾寺釋僧定, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 30a13–20)
scene of dhyāna master Daochao learning the rebirth place of his untimely-dead disciple by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 道超禪師誦法花感二世弟子生處影	the deceased disciple of Northern Qi monk Shi Daochao's 北齊釋道超故弟子, chapter of hand-copy scriptures (<i>shuxie</i> 書寫), (Huixiang 1924–1933, 42c26–43b9)
scene of an elderly monk from Qin prefecture instructing a disciple and receiving a dream that unveils the cause from the disciple's previous life 秦郡老僧教弟子感夢示宿因影	Monastic novice from East Monastery at Qin prefecture 秦郡東寺沙彌, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 28c20–29a6)
scene of dhyāna master Fahui emitting a radiant light from his mouth and illuminating the room by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 法惠禪師誦法花口放光照室宇影	Chen-dynasty monk Shi Fahui from Qushui Monastery at Shouchun 陳壽春曲水寺釋法慧, chapter of memorized chanter, (Huixiang 1924–1933, 32b11–15)

3.3. Patriarchs Conferring Monastic Vestments: The Chan Vision of Corridor Paintings

The Chan Buddhist school, which emphasizes direct dharma transmission through masters, has been known to use corridors to promote patriarchal lineage since the eighth or ninth century. This practice is evident in the Dunhuang manuscript of the Platform Sūtra, the earliest extant version of the foundational guide for the Southern Chan school. Within the text, Huineng recounted his pursuit of dharma from Hongren 弘忍 (601–674), the Fifth Patriarch of Chan School, at East Fengmao Mountain 東馮茂山 in Qizhou 蘄州. Hongren, in order to de-

termine a fitting successor to carry on the teachings, proposed a poem contest among disciples. Concurrently, Hongren sought to create a visual testament to the dharma conferral for posterity. To achieve this, he commissioned a court artist to produce two works: an illustration of the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra 楞伽變 and a portrait of Hongren himself bestowing the dharma transmission robe 五祖大師傳授衣法. These artworks were displayed on a three-bay-wide wall within the south corridor, situated in front of the Grand Master hall (Fahai 1924–1933, 337b17–20, and 337c3–4). Owing to the well-known sectarian ideology of the Platform Sūtra and its rewriting of history, the historical accuracy of Hongren's corridor art project cannot be confirmed without additional sources (Kinugawa 2016). More plausible is to consider this account as an interpretation shaped by practices seen in the mid-to-late Tang Chan monastic institutions. Nevertheless, the presence of Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra illustration may partially mirror a visual tradition of earlier origins, as this scripture, central to the early Chan movement, was later displaced by the Diamond Sūtra in Huineng's teachings.

In the Platform Sūtra narrative, the Grand Master hall served as a site for dharma transmission, where Hongren imparted secret teachings and transferred his monastic vestment to Huineng (Fahai 1924–1933, 338a14–17). The narrative implying the Grand Master hall as essentially a dharma hall (*fatang* 法堂) is likely a retrospective interpretation of a seventh-century "Chan" monastery from an eighth-ninth century perspective because the architectural practice of "erecting no Buddha hall and only a dharma hall" for Chan monasteries was introduced more than a century later by master Huaihai 怀海 (749–814). This enables us to perceive the cloister where the Grand Master Hall stood, equivalent to the central cloister of a monastery, and to examine the positional significance of the south corridor in the early sectarian construct of patriarchal lineage. The south-facing tradition of Chinese architecture determines that the east and west sides of a cloister are usually more suitable for a continuous pictorial program than the north and south sides, which are interrupted by buildings along the central axis. In a non-sectarian monastery with east and west corridors featuring the sixteen great arhats and twenty-four dharma-treasury transmission masters, the south corridor became ideal for adding portraits of sectarian patriarchs when the monastery was converted to house a specific school. This location, extending from the east and west corridors, allowed for a spatial presentation of the sectarian patriarchs as a continuation of the existing lineage of Indian masters. The visual-spatial conception transcends sectarian boundaries, as demonstrated by the portraits of Tiantai masters and miraculous monks from the south corridor of the Lotus Cloister at Longxing Monastery.

The examination and discussion of iconographic programs sheds light on the diverse and dynamic ways in which the Tang Buddhist corridor was utilized to construct Sino-Indian connections and Chinese Buddhist patriarchal lineages. Naturally, these examples represent only a small fraction of what existed during the Tang dynasty. For instance, the late-Tang Dunhuang manuscript P. 2971 documents twenty-three figures of divine monks painted on the east corridor wall of a monastery, featuring a diverse array of groupings. These include six from the Buddha's ten disciples (Subhūti 須菩提, Pūrṇa 富樓那, Kātyāyana 迦旃延, Aniruddha 阿那律, Upāli 優波離, and Rāhula 羅睺羅), five from the Dharma-Treasury Transmission lineage (Jayata 闍夜多, Vasubandhu 婆修盤陁, Manorhita 摩奴羅, Haklenayashas 鶴勒那夜奢, and Āryasimha 師子比丘), the six Chan patriarchs (Bodhidharma 達摩, Huìkē 惠可, Sengcan 僧璨, Daoxin 道信, Hongren, and Huineng), Indian scholar-monks (Asaṅga 無著 and Vasubandhu 世親), Indian missionaries (Kumārajīva 羅什 and Fotudeng 佛圖澄), and Chinese monks (Liu Sahe 劉薩訶 and Huiyuan 惠遠) (M. Yang 2018). This unique combination is not found in other textual sources, indicating a highly flexible approach to composing the pictorial program of the corridor space. As demonstrated in the earlier discussion, the flexibility in many sectarian programs was achieved by incorporating additional Chinese patriarchs to expand upon the pre-existing paintings of Indian masters, such as the twenty-four dharma-transmission patriarchs, the sixteen arhats, and so on.

In Tang Buddhist monasteries, portrait halls built to honor deceased eminent monks served as a prominent location for murals of patriarch portraits, but these spaces primarily functioned as solemn memorial sites intended for the monastic community (Sharf and Foulk

1993; Yu 2019). In contrast, the corridor was selected as a portrait gallery for sectarian propagation, not only due to its association with divine monks but also because of its publicity, which offered easier access for lay visitors.

4. From Walking to Seated: Towards Static Worship and the Closure of Corridor

Regardless of the potential diversity of functional use, a corridor, with its elongated, narrow, and encircling space, is fundamentally a passageway anticipating non-static activities. The Buddhist corridors retained this characteristic even after being consecrated in Sui-Tang ritual reform, offering an unconventional worship space in motion. Beyond housing audience seating and incense processions in grand public assemblies, the corridor was also designated for the practice of *jingxing* 經行 (perambulation) and was ideal for individuals appreciating murals.³⁹

Clearly, all these activities were performed through the action of walking.⁴⁰ This brings us to an interesting observation, as *xingseng* 行僧 (monks in perambulation), a type of iconography depicting monks in walking posture and the most popular style of divine monk portrait, first emerged in the corridor during the early Tang era, or even earlier. When portraits of divine monks were first produced in the late fifth century, the figures were portrayed in seated positions (Daoshi 1924–1933, 609c9–10). In previous scholarship, the earliest examples of *xingseng* images date to the Zhenguan era (627–650) at the Shengguang Monastery 勝光寺 in Chang'an (Yu 2011; Kim 2020). In the northwest cloister of the monastery, these images adorned the side doors on the south façade of the modest hall (Zhang 2018, p. 84). This particular location is noteworthy because Tang-dynasty image halls often featured a one-bay deep portico at the front, connecting to flanking corridors and forming a four-sided colonnaded quadrangle (Z. Xu 2020). In this context, the front portico can be reasonably considered as part of the corridor system, making the doors of the modest hall, which also served as the back of the portico, equivalent to the walls of the corridor. Another case potentially predating the Shengguang Monastery is found at Zhaojinggong Monastery 趙景公寺. Here, the eastern corridor displays a *xingseng* who “turns his eyes to look at viewers” (no. 2, Table A1). As Zhaojinggong Monastery was built in 583, its *xingseng* image might be a work from the Sui dynasty.

By analyzing the placement of the *xingseng* images, we can collect further evidence to reinforce the theoretical link between the movement-oriented nature of the corridor and the rise of the *xingseng* image. The survey of documented instances reveals that the *xingseng* images were predominantly depicted on the walls of corridors and corridor-equivalent spaces, such as the doors of the image hall and gate hall (Yu 2011). On rare occasions, they were found on the interior walls of image halls, with the earliest examples from Chang'an at the eighth-century Jianfu Monastery 薦福寺 and Dayun Monastery 大雲寺 (Zhang 2018, pp. 72, 93).⁴¹ It is worth noting that the image halls featuring *xingseng* murals on their interior walls were all situated in subsidiary cloisters, which were intended for monastic use rather than public ceremonies. As pragmatic monastic compounds, these cloisters likely prioritized the ritual significance of the interior space, specifically the ambulatory of a hall, where circumambulation, or the practice of walking in a clockwise direction around the central icons, occurred. Zhang Yanyuan's report of the *xingseng* image in the image hall of the Pure Land Cloister 淨土院 at Dayun Monastery accurately captures this subtle distinction, referring to it as *raodianseng* 繞殿僧 or monks circumambulating the hall. In summary, the manifestation of the *xingseng* image within the interior may be contingent upon the diminished prominence of the corridor as a ritual locus.

The critical transformation of portraiture, driven by ritual-spatial shifts, also bears witness in pictorial materials from cave chapels. Visual representations of patriarchs are found in Dazhusheng Cave 大住聖窟 at Baoshan 寶山 (589) and in Leigutai 擂鼓臺 central cave at Longmen 龍門 (690–2), both illustrating the patriarchal lineage of Dharma-Treasury Transmission (Wong 2018, pp. 156–60). The Dazhushengku engraved small figures of patriarchs in seated posture on the inner face of the entrance wall, distributed in horizontal registers. In contrast, the Leigutai central cave assigns a prominent role to the patriarchs, who are dis-

played in human-scale walking poses, covering the lower half of the north, east, and west walls around the cave (Figure 8). With its original main icon in the center, the Leigutai central cave purposefully organized the layout of patriarch figures to model after a contemporary urban monastery, where paintings of walking monks decorated corridor walls around the cloister.

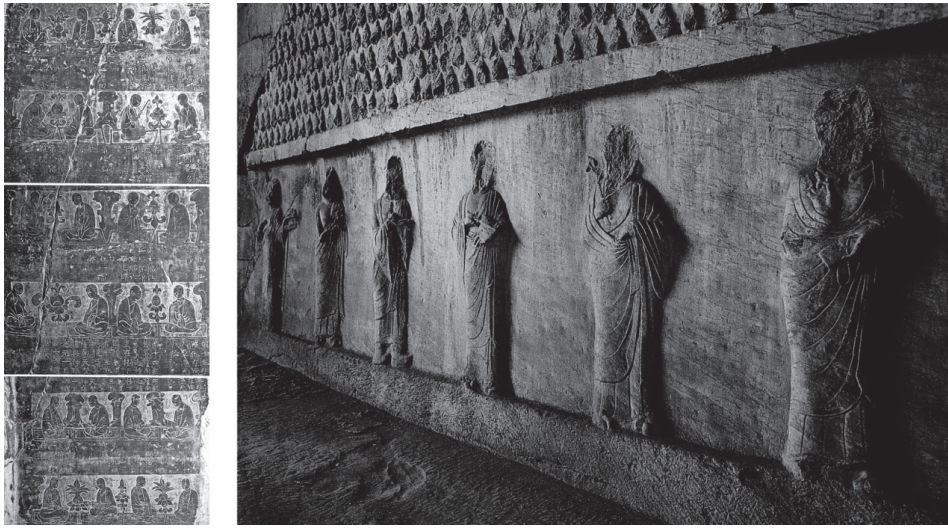


Figure 8. Patriarchs who transmit the dharma: left, Dazhushengku 大住聖窟, Baoshan 寶山, Anyang, 589, after (Chen and Ding 1989, pl. 215); right, Leigutai 擂鼓臺 Central Cave, Longmen, 690–2, after (Xia and Sui 1992, pl. 258).

Beyond the monastic portrait, the corridor's mobile nature necessitates that other subjects, although occasionally chosen for display in such an area, exhibit similar characteristics. This was particularly true during the Sui and early Tang periods, when the practice of corridor wall paintings was still a novel concept. The earliest example is a Sui painting of Western Pure Land and the sixteen ways of meditation, undoubtedly illustrating the Visualization Sūtra, from the west corridor of the Sanjie Cloister 三階院 at Zhangjिंगgong Monastery (no. 2, Table A1). While Zhang Yanyuan's text does not provide more details on the painting's composition, research on Tang Buddhist art indicates that it likely featured a horizontal narrative scene, as exemplified by an early Tang artwork at Mogao Cave 431 (Shi 2002, pp. 89–90). This scene would sequentially depict Prince Ajatasatru's usurpation and the Buddha's discourse to Queen Vaidehi about rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land. Other early examples, including the early-seventh century hell scenes from Baocha Monastery 寶刹寺 (no. 8, Table A1) and the illustrations of Sūryagarbha and Candragarbha Sūtras 日藏月藏經變, as well as the scenes of various karmic rewards 業報差別變 from Jing'ai Monastery 敬愛寺 (dated to 722, no. 12, Table A1), all fall under the category of narrative paintings.⁴² The iconic frontal representation of dharma preaching assemblies, encouraging viewers to stop and contemplate, appeared sporadically in Buddhist corridors by the eighth century. The earliest known example is the illustration of the Diamond Sūtra 金剛經變, painted on the south corridor wall of the Pure Land Cloister 淨土院 in Xingtang Monastery 興唐寺 (dated to 723, no. 16, Table A1).⁴³

As the sporadic cases of iconic sūtra illustrations may suggest, the ritual pattern of Buddhist corridors during the middle and late Tang periods experienced a tendency towards immobilization, favoring a more static form of worship. Ennin's account of the monastic celebration of the Lantern Festival in 839 at Kaiyuan Monastery offers a brief glimpse into this transformation. On that night, he recorded: "Monks in the monastery lit lamps and offered them to the Buddha, as well as paying reverence to the portraits of patriarchs. Laymen did

likewise. A lamp tower was erected in front of the Buddha hall. In the courtyard and along the sides of the corridors, they burned oil lamps that were too numerous to count.⁴⁴ This text seems to follow an order, first mentioning the enshrined image and then the enshrining space, which suggests that oil lamps were burned in front of each patriarch portrait in the corridor as worship. Moreover, when an offering ritual dedicated to the Forty-two *Xiansheng* 四十二賢聖 was performed in the same cloister two days after the festival, a more intricate form of this worship was given: "In front of the Buddha hall lay out forty-two portraits of *Xiansheng* and all sorts of rare colored silks beyond count. As for the countenances of the *Xiansheng*, some were concentrating with closed eyes, others with faces uplifted were gazing into the distance, others looking to the side seemed to be speaking, and others with lowered visages regarded the ground. The forty-two pictures had forty-two different types of countenances. As for the differences in their sitting postures for meditation, some sat in the full cross-legged position and others in the half cross-legged position. Their postures thus differed. Besides the Forty-two *Xiansheng*, there were paintings of Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra and of Jīvamjīvaka and Kalavinka birds. At sunset, they lit lamps and offered them to the paintings of the saints. At night, they chanted praises, worshiped Buddha, and recited Sanskrit hymns of praise. The monks reciting Sanskrit came in together, some of them holding golden lotuses and jeweled banners, and sat in a row in front of [the pictures of] the saints and intoned together Sanskrit hymns of praise. They went through the night without resting, lighting a cup lamp in front of each saint (Reischauer 1955, pp. 72–73)".

The static nature of the postures of the priests, the offering objects, and the figure postures within the paintings characterized the Forty-two *Xiansheng* ritual. It is reasonable to assume that the participants in the Lantern festival celebration envisioned this static pattern when making offerings to the patriarch paintings in the corridor. Nevertheless, we should not overlook the incense-procession ceremony that occurred in the very same corridor (Figure 2). The Kaiyuan Monastery, extensively reconstructed in the seventh century and serving as the official Buddhist institution of the prefecture, undoubtedly had architecture designed primarily for state ceremonies.⁴⁵ While monastic architecture continued to host ceremonies of mai-gre feast and incense procession for centuries, religious practices developed, introducing new ideas to challenge the existing pattern of ritual-spatial use. The Forty-two *Xiansheng* offering ritual, as previously mentioned, was established by Tiantai master Zhanran during the latter half of the eighth century. As evident from Ennin's account, the performance of this ritual diverged significantly from the incense procession and transformed the manner in which patriarchs in the corridor were worshipped during non-state ceremony occasions. The use of corridors for both mobile and static ritual performances reflects a dualistic approach during the late Tang period, marking it as a transitional period in the history of Buddhist religion and architecture.

The transition that occurred in the late eighth to ninth centuries foreshadowed a significant change in post-Tang Buddhist architecture. As many studies have highlighted, a universal phenomenon in monasteries from the eleventh and twelfth centuries was the closure of the four-sided open corridors and their transformation into semi-open verandahs flanking the main image hall (G. Wang 2016, pp. 1470–71). A closer examination of monasteries built during the Khitan Liao (916–1125) and Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) dynasties further reveals that these verandah structures were actually long chambers, with narrow pillared walkways at the front, housing rows of arhat statuettes for worship (Figure 9) (Z. Xu 2016, pp. 105–16). Consequently, they are typically known as *luohan dong* 羅漢洞 (arhat grotto) in various epigraphic documents. The architectural transformation can be attributed to a variety of complex factors, which may include paradigm shifts in social, cultural, and ideological spheres during the transition between the Tang and Song dynasties, as well as the aftermath of the anti-Buddhist persecutions. However, one of the primary driving forces behind this change was likely the declining role of Buddhist religion in state rituals.

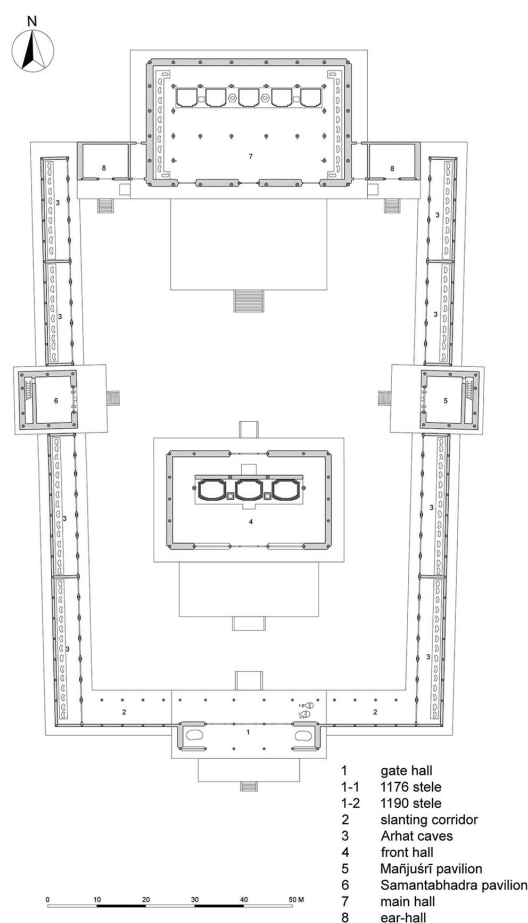


Figure 9. Reconstruction plan of Shanhua Monastery in 1143 (Z. Xu 2016, Figures 2–19).

The eleventh-century reform of *guoji xingxiang* by the Song imperial court perfectly mirrored the changing role of Buddhist monasteries in the state ritual system. In the post-Tang period, Buddhism managed to survive nationwide persecutions and continued to serve the state. *Da Song sengshi lue* 大宋僧史略 (Abridged History of Sangha under the Song), an official history of monasticism compiled in 987, offers concise yet substantial evidence for the continuous performance of *guoji xingxiang* in Buddhist monasteries throughout the ninth and tenth centuries (Zanning 1924–1933, 241b26–242a14). However, Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022), renowned for his Taoist beliefs, commissioned the construction of Jingling Palace 景靈宮 at Qufu 曲阜 in 1012. Building this state sacrificial site was one of the emperor's efforts to restructure the Tang model and redirect the service of national mourning away from the Buddhist church. Scholars suggest that between 1032 and 1082, when holy portraits of the late emperors and empresses were transferred to Jingling Palace, the Song imperial court designated this site as the exclusive venue for *guoji xingxiang* ceremonies (J. Yang 2021; M. Wang 2016).

As Buddhist monasteries ceased to be state platforms of ceremony, their architectural spaces, which had previously been envisioned to manifest imperial authority and solemnity, gained the freedom to develop according to the needs of the monastic community and the public. In particular, the corridor and the courtyard it defined, which were used for incense processions and grand musical-dance celebrations, respectively, transitioned away from these programs that represented the imperial presence. Consequently, these spaces were no longer

perceived as places with ritual significance. Textual accounts of the Song monastic rituals mainly come from *Chanyuan qinggui* 禪苑清規 (Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery), a Chan monastic code compiled in 1103 that gives a comprehensive set of rules for virtually every aspect of life in large public monasteries of eleventh-century China.⁴⁶ The text details the procedure for organizing a maigre feast, prescribing several designated venues, including a storage hall, a lecture hall, and a dining hall. The performance of the incense procession remained a part of the ceremony and was carried out by patrons holding a censer and circumambulating the hall where invited monks were seated (Zongze 1975–1989, 538c19–539a19). The other occasion that involves an incense procession in the *Chanyuan Qinggui* is the reading of the sūtra, which is performed within the lecture hall or library hall (Zongze 1975–1989, 538b24–c18). When the maigre feast fell outside of the intended program of the Buddhist corridor, the structure served solely as a functional passageway connecting various grand halls and as a sanctuary for worship and veneration of divine monks. As a result, closing the inner part of a corridor became essential to separate the mobile, non-ceremonial passageway from the static, cultic sanctuary. This is particularly true because the Song-dynasty individual performance of worship, marked by prostration while holding burning incense, was as static as the Forty-two *Xiansheng* offering ritual observed by Ennin in 839.⁴⁷

5. Conclusions: Seeing Medieval Chinese Monastery through the Peripheral Structure

Corridors are widely recognized as a key element that characterized the architectural landscape of Tang Buddhist monasteries. This study, by foregrounding ceremonial programs as a useful tool in revealing ideas of spatial design, unfolds a series of intricate ritual-architectural interplays that transformed the Buddhist corridor from an auditorium backed by mullioned windows into a shrine for worshipping divine monks, a portrait gallery for constructing sectarian patriarchal lineage, and a platform for manifesting imperial authority. It illustrates how the inherent mobile nature of the corridor function could give rise to the new iconography of walking monk imagery. Moreover, this study strengthens the scholarly proposal linking the decline of walking monk imagery with the disuse of corridors between the 10th and 12th centuries by providing a comprehensive ritual context for the transformation (Yu 2016). It could further offer a compelling argument that the decline of iconography was not a discontinuation but rather a continuum of the old tradition as the art-architectural form transitioned from the Tang corridor paintings of walking monks to the Liao-Song verandah “caves” featuring enshrined seated *luohan* statues.

The significance of studying the Buddhist corridor lies not only in understanding the art and architectural transformation within the religion itself but also in throwing light on some previously unnoticed influence of Buddhist ideas on medieval Chinese temple architecture. In contrast to Buddhist monasteries, Chinese temple architecture has a longer history of using corridors, with the earliest textual record from the second-century Sangong Shrine 三公祠 in Yuanshi County 元氏縣 (in present-day Shijiazhuang).⁴⁸ There is no evidence to suggest that these early non-Buddhist corridors contained murals for worship. A study of Confucian temples indicates that such transformation likely occurred much later than in their Buddhist counterparts, as it highlights a significant spatial shift in Confucian temples between the Tang and Song dynasties, where the area for venerating Confucius’ seventy disciples moved from the main sacrificial hall to the flanking verandahs (Shen 2015, p. 219).

In the existing discourse of Chinese architectural history, only a few studies draw attention to the issues of space and ritual. The persistent mismatch between surviving buildings and textual accounts could be an excuse for the limited focus; however, there are still plenty of fields, such as the Buddhist corridor, where materials pertinent to spatial, ceremonial, and pictorial programs are available, allowing for an in-depth examination. More than half a century ago, Japanese architectural historian Mitsuo Inoue carried out a study of Asuka and Nara period monasteries, with a keen emphasis on the dialogue between human activity and spatial construction. From this analysis, he addressed a critical transformation of the corridor (Japanese: *kairō*) and its shift in spatial connotation from a mere fence to an auditorium (Inoue 1969, pp. 61–73, 90–106). Professor Inoue’s groundbreaking research serves as a foundational

influence for this article, and we aspire to establish a trajectory for subsequent scholarly works in this field.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Corridor Murals at the Sui-Tang Buddhist Monasteries.

Monastery	Mural Location and Program	Dates of the Mural	Source
1. Puti Monastery 菩提寺, Chang'an 長安	Eastern Corridor	582 AD ¹	(Duan 2015, p. 1840)
2. Zhaojinggong Monastery 趙景公寺, Chang'an	Southern bays of the Eastern Corridor [of the Main Cloister] Walking monks 行僧	583–8th c.	(Zhang 2018, p. 77)
	The Southern Corridor [of the Main Cloister]	Early 8th century ²	
	Western Corridor of the Sanjie Cloister 三階院 Illustration of Western Pure Land and the Sixteen Ways of Meditation 西方變及十六對事	mid-seventh century ³	(Duan 2015, p. 1791)
3. Yongtai Monastery 永泰寺, Chang'an	Western Corridor Holy monks 聖僧	584 AD ⁴	(Zhang 2018, p. 87)
4. Jingyu Monastery 靜域寺, Chang'an	Eastern Corridor of Dhyana Cloister 禪院 Trees, rocks, and eminent monks 高僧	585 AD ⁵	(Duan 2015, p. 1893)
5. Linghua Monastery 靈華寺, Chang'an	Western Corridor Sixteen standing eminent monks 高僧, which may be accompanied by the Ten Great Disciples [of the Buddha] 十大弟子 ⁶	586–742 AD ⁷	(Duan 2015, p. 1803)
6. Cien Monastery 慈恩寺, Chang'an	The two Corridors of the First Cloister counting from the north off the eastern corridor of the Main Cloister	648 AD ⁸	(Zhang 2018, p. 73)
	The Western Corridor of the First Cloister counting from the north off the eastern corridor of the Main Cloister Walking monks 行僧	742–756 AD ⁹	
7. Yide Monastery 懿德寺, Chang'an	Eastern side of the Corridor to the west of the Gate Hall Landscape 山水	Early 7th century ¹⁰	(Zhang 2018, p. 83)
8. Baocha Monastery 寶刹寺, Chang'an	Western Corridor Hell scenes 地獄變	Early 7th century ¹¹	(Zhang 2018, p. 75)
9. Shengguang Monastery 勝光寺, Chang'an	Southern Corridor	650–683 AD ¹²	(Zhang 2018, p. 84)
10. Ximing Monastery 西明寺, Chang'an	Eastern Corridor Transmitters' Portraits of the Dharma 傳法者圖 including Lifang 利防 and Dharmakāla 曇柯迦羅	656 AD ¹³	(Zhang 2018, p. 84)
11. Zhaofu Monastery 招福寺, Chang'an	Long corridor Peculiar-styled Paintings	667 AD ¹⁴	(Duan 2015, p. 1910)

Table A1. Cont.

Monastery	Mural Location and Program	Dates of the Mural	Source
12. Jing'ai Monastery 敬愛寺, Luoyang 洛陽	Eastern and Western Gauze Corridors 紗廊 of the Main Cloister 大院 Walking monks 行僧 including Tang Sanzang 唐三藏, i.e., Xuanzang	690–705 AD	(Zhang 2018, p. 92)
	Western Corridor of Dhayana Cloister 禪院 Scenes from Sūryagarbha and Candragarbha Sūtras 日藏月藏經變, and scenes showing the different rewards of karma 業報差別變	722 AD	(Zhang 2018, p. 91)
13. Dayun Monastery 大雲寺, Wuwei 武威	Encircling Corridors 迴廊 of the Southern Dhyanā Cloister 南禪院 Portraits of Arhats and Divine Monks as the Dharma Transmitters 付法藏羅漢聖僧變, Scenes of Kāśyapa Mātanga and Dharmaratna's introduction of Dharma to the East 摩騰法(蘭)東來變, The Scene of Seven Maidens Avadāna tale 七女變.	711 AD	(Zhang 2006)
14. Qianfu Monastery 千福寺, Chang'an	Western Corridor of the Western Pagoda Cloister 西塔院 The portrait of the Celestial Master 天師, the portrait of the Venerable Master Chu Jin 楚金, and the scene of Maitreya's descent to this world 彌勒下生變	745 AD ¹⁵	(Zhang 2018, pp. 80–81)
15. Jianfu Monastery 薦福寺, Chang'an	Northern Corridor of the <i>Vinaya</i> Cloister 律院	Early 8th century ¹⁶	(Zhang 2018, p. 72)
	Corridor of the Southwestern Cloister Walking monks 行僧	Early 8th century ¹⁷	
16. Xingtang Monastery 興唐寺, Chang'an	The Southern Corridor of the Pure Land Cloister 淨土院 A scene from the Diamond Sūtra 金剛經變 and the Story of Empress Chi 卍后 ¹⁸ and so forth	732 AD ¹⁹	(Zhang 2018, pp. 75–76)
17. Anguo Monastery 安國寺, Chang'an	Five walls at the Corridor to the west of the Gate Hall of the Eastern Dhyanā Cloister 東禪院 Eight Legions of Indra and Brahmā 釋梵八部	710 AD ²⁰	(Duan 2015, p. 1774)
18. Zisheng Monastery 資聖寺, Chang'an	Northern Corner of the Western Corridor Portrait of Heavenly Maidens approaching pagoda 近塔天女	Early 8th century ²¹	(Duan 2015, p. 1925)
	Eastern and Western Corridors of the Guanyin Cloister 觀音院 Forty-two Holy Monks 四十二賢聖 including Nāgārjuna 龍樹 and Śāṇavāsa 商那和修	763–777 AD ²²	
19. Xuanfa Monastery 玄法寺, Chang'an	Western Corridor A pair of pine trees 雙松	756–762 AD ²³	(Duan 2015, p. 1826)
	Eastern Corridor of Mañjuśrī Cloister 曼殊院 Elephants, horses, and congregation in the courtyard 廷下象馬人物	~772 AD	
20. Great Shengci Monastery 大聖慈寺, Chengdu 成都	Eastern and Western Corridors [of the Front Main Cloister] Portraits of Eminent Monks in Walking Postures 行道高僧, including Aśvaghōṣa 馬鳴 and Āryadeva 提婆	758 AD	(Huang 1963, p. 5)

Table A1. Cont.

Monastery	Mural Location and Program	Dates of the Mural	Source
20. Great Shengci Monastery 大聖慈寺, Chengdu 成都	Southern Corridor of the Front Main Cloister 前寺 Twenty-eight Patriarchs in Walking Posture 行道二十八祖	826 AD ²⁴	(Huang 1963, p. 8)
	Northern Corridor of the Front Main Cloister 前寺 Over sixty arhats 行道羅漢 in walking posture		
	Western Corridor of the Ultimate Bliss Cloister 極樂院	826 AD ²⁵	
	Scenes from the proof of Diamond Sūtra’s efficacy 金剛經驗 and Scenes from the Golden Light Sutra 金光明經變		
	Southern Corridor [of an Unknown Cloister] Seventeen Protective Deities 十七護神 including Yakṣa Generals 藥叉大將, Nāga King Vāsuki 和修吉龍王, Hārītī 鬼子母, and Heavenly Maiden 天女.	847–879 AD ²⁶	(Huang 1963, p. 3)
21. Baoying Monastery 寶應寺, Chang’an	Northern bays of the Western Corridor Demons and Divinities 鬼神	769 AD ²⁷	(Duan 2015, p. 1816)
22. Longxing Monastery 龍興寺, Yangzhou 揚州	Southern Corridor of the Lotus Cloister 法花院 Portraits of Master Nanyue 南岳大師 and over twenty monks who received miraculous responses by hand-copying and reciting the Lotus Sūtra	Late 8th century ²⁸	(Ennin 2007, pp. 90–91)
23. Kaiyuan Monastery 開元寺, Yangzhou	Corridors of the Central Cloister Portraits of the Patriarchs 師影	Between 593 and 839 AD ²⁹	(Ennin 2007, p. 96)

¹ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Zheng Fashi 鄭法士 (Sui dynasty). ² The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Wu Daozi (685–758) 吳道子. ³ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Fan Changshou 范長壽 (during the reign of Emperor Gao-zong). ⁴ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Li Ya 李雅 (Sui dynasty). ⁵ The date is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery. ⁶ The monastery is also referred to as Yunhua Monastery 雲花寺, (Ono 1989, p. 155). In Enchin’s catalogue, there is a work titled “Eulogy of the Ten Great Disciples from the Yunhua Monastery in Upper Capital 上都雲花寺十大弟子贊”. This document is related to the painting of the Buddha’s disciples at Yunhua Monastery and is likely associated with the same corridor space mentioned in Duan Chengshi’s text. See (Enchin 1924–1933, 1094c23). ⁷ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the re-installation date of the mural. ⁸ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Yan Liben 閻立本 (601–673). ⁹ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Li Guonu 李果奴. ¹⁰ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Chen Jingyan 陳靜眼. ¹¹ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Chen Jingyan. ¹² The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Yin Lin 尹琳. ¹³ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery. ¹⁴ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery. ¹⁵ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the Western Pagoda Precinct, which is given in Yan Zhenqing’s Duobao Pagoda Stele in 752. ¹⁶ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Zhang Zao 張瑒 and Bi Hong 畢宏. ¹⁷ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Wu Daozi. ¹⁸ This is very likely to be a narrative scene depicting Emperor Wudi’s salvation of his deceased wife, Lady Chi, who was reborn as a python after her death. See (Fang 2021). ¹⁹ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Wu Daozi. ²⁰ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter monk Sidao 思道. ²¹ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Yang Tan 楊坦. ²² The dating of the painting is determined by considering the signature of Yuan Zai (713–777), the author of the painting eulogy, who signed as Zhongshu 中書. This indicates that the painting was created between 763 and 777 during his tenure in the government position. ²³ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Liu Zheng 劉整. ²⁴ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Zuo Quan 左全. ²⁵ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Zuo Quan. ²⁶ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Fan Qiong 范瓊. ²⁷ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the active period of the painter Yang Xiuzhi 楊岫之. ²⁸ The dating is determined by considering the active period of the painter Han Gan (706–783) 韓幹. ²⁹ The dating is determined by considering the construction date of the monastery and the time of Ennin’s record.

Notes

¹ For related discussions, see (Greene 2013).

- 2 Prominent examples of palace halls with portrait paintings include the Qilin Pavilion麒麟閣 of Weiyang Palace 未央宮 (dated to 51 BCE, as mentioned in *Hanshu* 漢書, fascicle 54), the Lingguang Hall 靈光殿 (with portraits dating back to the early Eastern Han, as mentioned in Wang Yanshou's *Rhapsody on Lingguang Hall of Lu Kingdom*), and the Jingfu Hall 景福殿 of Xuchang Palace 許昌宮 (dated to 232–3 AD, as mentioned in He Yan's *Rhapsody on Jinfu Hall* 景福殿賦). For governmental offices, the Eastern Han ritual text *Hanguan dianzhi yishi xuanyong* 漢官典職儀式選用 (Han officials' administrative ceremonials selected for use) documents that portraits of historical heroes were painted on the walls of the Department of State Affairs 尚書省 at Chang'an, the capital city of Western Han (see *Chuxue ji* 初學記, fascicles 11 and 24). Additionally, the Eastern Han work *Hanguan Yi* 漢官儀 (Ceremonials for Han Offices) documents the tradition of displaying portraits of senior officials on the walls of the audience halls of regional government offices. For tombs and shrines, best known and preserved is the Wuliang Shrine (built in 151 AD) in Shandong. For more extensive examination of Han mural paintings, see (Lian 2022, pp. 21–79).
- 3 This information is derived from a quotation purportedly originating from the fourth-century text *Yezhong ji* 鄭中記 (A Record of Ye), as cited in (Cui 1522, p. 605). S Given that the described edifice dates back to a sixth-century palace, and the *Yezhong ji* has only been preserved in fragmentary form, including several passages from the mid-Tang work *Yedu gushi* (Tales from the Capital of Ye 鄭都故事), it is posited that the latter text, *Yedu gushi*, serves as the veritable source for this information.
- 4 In medieval Chinese literature, the character *xuan* 軒 embodies a multitude of meanings, encompassing a style of chariot, a type of architecture, or an architectural element. Li Shan 李善 (630–689), an early Tang scholar, provided an elucidation of the term *xuanlang* in his commentary on *Wenxuan* 文選, characterizing it as an elongated corridor furnished with windows, or alternatively, a corridor featuring windows.
- 5 For the comprehensive study of the divine monk cult in medieval China, see (Liu 2013).
- 6 A seventh century stipulation is given in *Fayuan zhulin*, see (Daoshi 1924–1933, 610b27–c3).
- 7 Emperor Liang Wudi is known for ordering the compilation of Manual for Offering Food to Divine Monks (*Fan shengseng fa* 飯聖僧法) and composing eulogies on divine monk portraits, see (Liu 2013).
- 8 This tale is reported by Daoxuan in three separate works, including (Daoxuan 1924–1933c, 424a1–b14; 1924–1933e, 879b28–c4; 1924–1933f, 647c22–649a15). The story details are slightly different.
- 9 For the study of *guoji xingxiang*, see (P. Wang 2020; Nie 2015).
- 10 In ninth-century Chinese and Japanese literature, the term *xiang* (Japanese. *hisashi*) 廂 has two distinct interpretations. It may refer to the narrow, aisle-like interior space that surrounds the core of a building or to the long corridor that encircles a courtyard. If the “eastern, northern, and western *xiang*” were to indicate the three sides of aisles within a hall, this area should be large enough to house a congregation of five hundred monks. Based on general observations and common sense, the minimal size for an adult individual sitting on the floor is around 0.5 square meters. Therefore, it is estimated that the space needed to accommodate 500 monks would be no less than 250 square meters. The eastern hall of Foguang monastery 佛光寺 at Mt. Wutai 五臺山, which is always considered a medium-scale Tang Buddhist hall, has a usable area of 229 square meters in the three side aisles, which would be extremely crowded if five hundred monks were to sit there (The measurement of this building is found in (Zhang and Li 2010)). Moreover, studies indicate that a popular practice of *guoji xingxiang* in Tang capital monasteries involved hosting the thousand-monk-feast (*qianseng zhai* 千僧齋) (P. Wang 2020). Housing this congregation would require at least 460 square meters. Even the largest existing Buddhist hall, the Liao-dynasty main hall of Fengguo monastery 奉國寺 at Yixian 義縣, is unable to meet this requirement (The measurement of this building is found in (Jianzhu Wenhua Kaohazu 2008)). Finally, as Ennin explicitly states that the assembled monks took their food in the corridor, if they were initially seated within a building, it would indeed be quite challenging to explain when and why they left the building and relocated to the corridor. Such a noticeable movement would likely not have been overlooked by Ennin or excluded from his detailed report. In conclusion, the most plausible interpretation of the term *xiang* in this context is the corridor of the monastery.
- 11 In Ennin's diary, it is not explicitly stated whether the hall mentioned was the Buddha hall or the lecture hall. One may lean towards identifying it as the lecture hall because the Minister of State and Commander-in-Chief met in front of it earlier in the account. However, a recent study presents a convincing argument that the lecture hall of a Tang monastery typically did not house a Buddha image. As a result, it is more plausible to consider this structure as the Buddha hall. See (Hara 2020).
- 12 This is based on Alexander Soper's English translation, with several slight modifications by the author. See (Soper 1978, pp. 305–6).
- 13 Both the Medicine Buddha Sūtra and the Vimalakīrti Sūtra mention the practice of offering food to a group of monks and nuns, and the maigre feast scenes in the sūtra illustrations typically depict monks seated in a row within the corridor of a monastic cloister. For the maigre feast scene at Dunhuang, see (Tan 1999, pp. 191–92).
- 14 The study of *langxiashi* is given by (Bai 1996), and for the court audience and palace architecture of the Sui and Tang periods, see (Chen and Yi 2008).
- 15 There are three additional recorded events that featured the Nine-Part Music performance: the celebration of the emperor's gift of a memorial stele at the Great C'i'en Monastery in 656; the inauguration ceremony of Ximing Monastery in 658; the celebration of the emperor's gift of Buddhist images at the Zhaofu Monastery in 702. The first two events are recorded in (Huili and Yancong 1924–1933, 269a6–20 and 275c8–9), while the last event is recorded in (Duan 2015, p. 1904).

- 16 The earliest performance on record is found in *Gaosengzhuan*, which includes a biography of Shaoshuo 邵碩, a divine monk active during the Liu Song (420–479) period in Sichuan. He is documented to have performed a crouching lion during the image-procession celebration of Buddha's birthday in Chengdu, (Huijiao 1924–1933, 392c25–393a7).
- 17 Accounts of Jingming Monastery 景明寺, Zongsheng Monastery 宗聖寺, Changqiu Monastery 長秋寺, and Jingxing Nunnery 景興尼寺 in *Luoyang qielan ji* reveals various entertainment forms performed during the image procession ceremony for Buddha's birthday celebrations. See (Yang 2000, pp. 35–36, 59, 64, 99).
- 18 For a general introduction of Chinese court music history, see (Wang and Sun 2004).
- 19 For the details of the Nine-Part Music repertory, see (Zuo 2010, pp. 93–98).
- 20 Given the limitation of paintable area, however, the painter was unable to faithfully depict the entire program of the Nine-part Music performance and could only represent one band.
- 21 For the study of the ceremonial plan of Tang-dynasty New Year audience, see (Guo and Shen 2022).
- 22 For the study of the role of the Nine-Part Music in the New Year banquet, see (Zhou 2023).
- 23 As Zhou Jing indicates, the use of the Nine-Part Music in the New Year banquet had been an established tradition by 651. See (Zhou 2023).
- 24 For the study of pictorial programs of the Dayun monastery, see (Zhang 2006).
- 25 Chu Suiliang and Ouyang Tong were both famed calligraphers and court officials active during the early Tang period, the short biographies of whom are found in the mid-Tang calligraphy critique *Shuduan* 書斷 (Judgments on Calligraphies).
- 26 The presence of Chu Suiliang's work in Ximing Monastery is peculiar, as the politician faced demotion due to his opposition to Emperor Gaozong's proposal to make Wu Zetian 武則天 the Empress (Liu 2009). Given that the purpose of establishing Ximing Monastery in 656 was to celebrate the installation of Wu Zetian's son as the heir apparent, it remains a mystery why Emperor Gaozong and Wu Zetian (Empress Wu) would preserve Chu's calligraphic work in this monastery. This intriguing aspect lacks any scholarly insight and warrants further in-depth historical research.
- 27 Existing scholarship suggests that the earliest instance of the sixteen arhats iconography, dating roughly between 586 and 742, is the portrayal of sixteen standing eminent monks on the west corridor of Linghua Monastery in Chang'an. See (Li 2010; H. Wang 1993).
- 28 In Annen's catalog, compiled in 885 to include Buddhist texts and objects brought back by the eight great Japanese pilgrims, there is a painting listed from Enchin's 円珍 (814–891) collection titled "Portraits of Master Nanyue and Master Tiantai Giving a Lecture to Twenty Disciples, Collected from the Walls of Zisheng Monastery at Chang'an 長安資聖寺壁上南岳大師與天台大師等二十弟子說法影 (Annen 1924–1933, 1132b14–15)." However, this artwork is not mentioned in the catalog that Enchin submitted to the court. Enchin's diary, *Gyōrekishō* 行歷抄, also suggests that the portraits of Master Nanyue and Tiantai he collected in Chang'an were actually from Qianfu Monastery 千福寺. One possible explanation for the confusion in Annen's record could be a mistake resulting from the conflation of Ennin and Enchin's records.
- 29 This is known from the *Dengyō daishi shōrai daishūroku* (Saichō's Taizhou catalogue 傳教大師將來台州錄), compiled by the Japanese pilgrim Saichō (767–822) 最澄 in 804 to document Buddhist texts he collected from the Tiantai headquarter in Guoqing Monastery 國清寺 (Saichō 1924–1933, 1056a13).
- 30 In Guanding's introduction to the *Mohe zhiguan*, the Dharma-Treasury Transmission lineage of twenty-three masters from Kāśyapa to Śīrha could also be reinterpreted by including Madhyāntika 末田地 as the third patriarch, resulting in a new total of twenty-four masters (Zhiyi 1924–1933, 1a13-b8).
- 31 In certain manuscripts, the term *quanta* is also transcribed as *tuanta* 團塔 (Duan 2015, p. 1926).
- 32 According to the *Youyang zazu*, the corridor paintings were produced by Han Gan (706–783), with accompanying eulogy texts by Yuan Zai 元載 (713–777). Yuan Zai's signature, identified as *Zhongshu* 中書, suggests that the paintings were created between 763 and 777, during the time he held the government position of *Zhongshu shilang* 中書侍郎 under the reign of Emperor Daizong. In addition, the same source reveals that the circular pagoda features paintings of bodhisattvas by Li Zhen 李真 and paintings of flowers and birds by Bian Luan 邊鸞 (Duan 2015, p. 1925). Both artists were active during Zhenyuan period (785–805). The *Lidai minghua ji* additionally refers to Yin Lin's 尹琳 involvement in the creation of bodhisattva paintings (Zhang 2018, p. 75). Yin Lin, an artist active during Emperor Gaozong's reign, preceded Li Zhen by more than a century, making it implausible for the two to have collaborated. Nevertheless, Li Zhen was regarded as a disciple of Yin Lin and was known to mimic Yin's artistic style, which may explain their joint mention in the text (Duan 2015, p. 1908).
- 33 Details of the Western Cloister Pagoda are found in (Zhang 2018, pp. 81–82) and two epigraphical sources, i.e., Ceng Xun's 岑勛 *Xijing Qianfusi Duobao fota Ganying bei* 西京千福寺多寶佛塔感應碑 (Stele of Commemorating Duobao Pagoda of Qianfu Monastery in the Western Capital [i.e., Chang'an]) and Feixi's 飛錫 *Tang guoshi Qianfusi Duobaota yuan gu fahua chujin chanshi bei* 唐國師千福寺多寶塔院故法華楚金禪師碑 (Stele for the deceased dhyana master Fahua Chujin, the state preceptor of Tang, from Duobao Pagoda Cloister at Qianfu Monastery) (*Quan Tang wen*, juan 916).
- 34 Feixi's inscription of *Tang guoshi Qianfusi Duobaota yuan gu fahua chujin chanshi bei* mentions several Prabhutaratna Pagodas were constructed by Chujin's close disciples, leading to the building of Duobao Pagodas at Wanshan Nunnery 萬善尼寺 and Zijing Nunnery 資敬尼寺.

- 35 The seven Tiantai patriarchs in the Western Pagoda Cloister must differ from the genealogical list given by Zhanran, because Xuanlang 玄朗 (673–754), the seventh patriarch in Zhanran’s list, was still alive when the Cloister was completed. However, the records of Chujin’s teacher and his understanding of the Tiantai lineage are unavailable, making it impossible to ascertain the details of the visual program.
- 36 Although the display of Chujin’s portrait, the founding abbot of the Western Pagoda Cloister, is understandable, the presence of *Tianshi*, or Zhang Daoling 張道陵, an Eastern Han leader of Daoism, is rather confusing. This anomaly could potentially be linked to Xuanzong’s personal belief in Daoism. Scholarly research has highlighted that imperial veneration of Zhang Daoling received greater enthusiasm during Xuanzong’s Tianbao era (Meyer 2006, p. 25).
- 37 For the location of the over twenty monk portraits, different versions of manuscripts diverge, giving two possibilities: “*menglang* (gate-corridor 門廊)” and “the same corridor (*tonglang* 同廊).” However, it is likely that both terms suggest the same location, referring to corridors on the southern side of the cloister that are connected to the gate.
- 38 The collective title of the ten sketches is given in Annen’s catalogue, composed in 885 (Annen 1924–1933, 1132b16–27). It is described as “scenes of dhyaṇa masters receiving miraculous responses by chanting the Lotus Sūtra 誦法華諸禪師靈異影”, which perfectly corresponds with the text in Ennin’s diary.
- 39 Several monastic codes for what is forbidden during the practice of *jingxing* in corridors are given in Daoxuan’s *Xinjie xinxue biqiu xinghu liuyi* 教誡新學比丘行護律儀 (Daoxuan 1924–1933d). A similar tradition is also seen in medieval Indian monasticism, (Wut 2020).
- 40 For example, the early eighth-century story *Lanting shimoji* 蘭亭始末記 recounts that when an official visited an eastern Zhejiang monastery during the Zhenguan era (627–650), “he walked along the corridor to contemplate its murals.”
- 41 The *xingseng* image at Dayun monastery was painted by Zhou Fang 周昉, an artist active during the second half of the eighth century, see (Zhu 1985, p. 6).
- 42 For the study of the pictorial program at Jing’ai Monastery, see (H. Wang 2006).
- 43 The illustrations of the Diamond Sūtra discovered in Dunhuang, with the earliest example dating back to the High Tang period (704–786), depict a frontal iconic representation of the Buddha’s dharma assembly. See (He 2016, pp. 99–100).
- 44 This is based on Edwin Reischauer’s English translation with several slight modifications by the author. See (Reischauer 1955, p. 71).
- 45 The reconstruction occurred after the sack of the monastery in 623. For the history of Kaiyuan monastery, see (Daoxuan 1924–1933f, 695a6–b25).
- 46 For the translation and study of *Chanyuan qinggui*, see (Yifa 2009).
- 47 This practice of worship is called *shaoxiang* (burning incense 燒香) in (Zongze 1975–1989, 527b22–c2 and 534a5–7).
- 48 The architecture of Sangong shrine is described in Sun Gai’s *Sangongshan xia shenci fu* 三公山下神祠賦 (Rhapsody for the Shrine under the Sangong Mountain), see (Yan 1958, pp. 1276–77). Another textual account of pre-Sui corridor-enclosed temple compound is Xiao Gang’s *Zhaozhenguan bei* 招真館碑 (Stele of Zhaozhen Taoist Monastery), which depicts a sixth-century Taoist monastery at Changshu (Yan 1958, pp. 3029–30).

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Article

The Humanistic Process and Spatial Practice of Chinese Zhenshan 鎮山 Worship

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Abstract: The “Zhenshan” 鎮山 (which means a mountain that guards a certain territory) system is based on the traditional Chinese view of nature, which formed and developed through a long period of Confucian humanistic construction. It is the typical representation of China’s nature-oriented worship space, and it has unique spatial order and spatial significance in the world’s sacred mountain worship. The excavation of the spatial characteristics of Zhenshan worship and its network of humanistic meanings is an important part of research that aims to discover the traditional Chinese values of nature, religious views, and Chinese worship space. Based on the analysis of graphic historical materials and a digital chronicle literature review, this paper quantitatively analyzes the historical information of Zhenshan and summarizes the process of change from the birth of the concept of Zhenshan in the Zhou dynasty to the formation of the sacrificial system in the Han dynasty and its gradual localization after the Tang and Song dynasties with an analysis of its spatial pattern and characteristics of worship. The results show that Zhenshan is one of the typical cultural symbols of the transformation of Chinese mountain worship into the unity of government and religion. And it is a typical product of Confucianism, in which the worship of nature in China is integrated into the political system, and its worship space is rooted in the national, regional, and urban spaces at multiple levels. The Zhenshan system, in the course of its dynamic development, has formed two types of worship space: temple sacrificial and metaphorical constraint, constructing a Chinese worship space based on the order of nature, which is distinctly different from the inward-looking religious space of the West and the sacred mountain worship space formed around the religion of the “supreme god”.

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1. Introduction

The veneration of nature is the most ancient kind of religious awareness among humans, and nearly all religious doctrines are connected to it, making it a fundamental origin of religious development. Feuerbach remarked that “nature is the initial and most primitive object of religion, which is fully proven by the history of all religions and ethnic groups” (Feuerbach 1959). When confronted with incomprehensible natural phenomena, humanity can only venerate them by attributing them to divine qualities. The worship of nature and the belief in nature were prevalent in the beginning stages of the cultural creation of all peoples of the world. In any religion, some places are viewed as particularly favorable for establishing contact with supernatural powers (Naquin and Yu 1992). The worship of mountains is one of the most fundamental and common varieties (Wang 2004).

The natural characteristics of mountains are the objective basis for the association of divinity. In the primitive stage, various ethnic groups around the world generally regarded mountains as sacred themselves or as intermediaries for consecration, using non-logical thinking to achieve an understanding of divine intentions and endowing them with the “supreme” sacredness. Religious historian Mircha Iliad summarized the reasons for the sanctity of mountains: firstly, it stems from the transcendent symbolic space generated

by altitude, which corresponds to “towering” and “supreme”; the second reason is that natural weather conditions such as thunderstorms, clouds, and rain formed by the high-altitude climate were regarded by the ancestors as signs of divine intervention, so they also regarded the mountains as the dwelling places of gods (Eliade and Yan 2008). In the West, Mount Olympus, the highest mountain in Greece, was believed by the Greek ancestors to be located in the center of Greece and the center of the Earth. It was the place where the Greek god Zeus and the gods lived and ruled over all things in Greek mythology (Burkhart 2008). In Balinese mythology, the gods use mountains as their divine seats. Balinese people consider Mount Agon to be the “center of the world”. In the Bible, the high places are referred to as “bamot” in Hebrew, which refers to places marked by altars, stone tablets, or wooden pillars, indicating a close connection between high mountains and activities such as divine worship. In the Chinese *Book of Rites—Sacrificial Rites* 《禮記·祭法》, it is said that “mountains, forests, rivers, valleys, and hills can produce clouds, which is called wind and rain. When monsters are seen, they are all called gods”, “山林川穀丘陵，能出雲，為風雨，見怪物，皆曰神”. In mythology, Kunlun Mountain 崑崙山 “corresponds to the sky and is most centered”, “應於天，最居中”, and as the dwelling place of a hundred gods, it is “the root of heaven and earth, the handle of ten thousand degrees”, “天地之根紐，萬度之綱柄”. At the same time, the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins, the birthplace of Chinese civilization, are based on agricultural civilization. China’s natural worship has a strong agricultural expectation. The *Erya Commentary* 《爾雅注疏》 explains this expectation as “Mountain, production”, “山，產也”. Therefore, Chinese ancestors worshipped mountains even more due to their abundant natural resources and control over the weather.

As society has progressed, sacred mountains have increasingly intertwined with politics and religion, becoming revered locations that serve as the focal point of worship. The sacredness of natural mountains in mainstream religions such as Christianity and Islam is mostly attributed to the lives and journeys of God and saints. Within the Hebrew Bible, sacred locations are classified into two distinct categories: (1) where God lives; and (2) the holy place where God came to Earth. There are four prominent holy mountains in the Jewish Christian region of the Middle East: Ararat is located in eastern Turkey and is traditionally believed to be the landing site of Noah’s Ark. Mount Moses, located in the Sinai Peninsula, served as the elevated summit where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Mount Zion in Israel is the place where God created the world. The temple was built on this mountain, thus making Mount Zion an important cosmic mountain (Zhang 2016). Mount Tabor in Israel is the site of Jesus’ Transfiguration. The sanctity of all four mountain ranges is associated with God. Western faiths are often linked to ethnic, political, and power conflicts. In addition, several sacred mountains also function as strongholds of spiritual devotion, national awareness, territorial consciousness, and identity affirmation. For instance, many religious groups frequently assert their territorial authority and cultural superiority by demolishing and reconstructing temples, using Mount Zion as a symbolic representation of the ever-evolving political environment in the Middle East. Nevertheless, throughout the later evolution of religious beliefs, mountains did not assume the role of being worshipped, with God remaining the exclusive object of adoration. Early Christians had the freedom to worship God in various locations, including fields, underground tombs, riverbanks, and residences. Mountains have ceased to serve as a medium for sacred spaces due to the progress and transformations that have taken place. The determination of sacrifice rituals has led to the establishment of six ritual elements in Christianity, including gatherings, activities, congregations, choirs, baptisms, and sacrificial tables. Architecture offers a superior spatial setting for worship, with the church being the paramount venue for religious worship. The church did not combine with the mountain to form a fixed spatial paradigm for worship. In Islam, mountains serve as a platform for comprehending the divine intention of Allah or God. The Mount of Mercy in Mecca is currently regarded as a sacred location by followers of Islam, as it is the site where Muhammad delivered his final sermon (Bernbaum 1997). The prophet Muhammad sought spiritual solace in

the caves of Mount Hira and received a revelation from God, the Qur'an, delivered by the angel Gabriel on the Night of Glory. However, Islam does not treat mountains as objects and places of worship. Its primary worship space is a mosque, constructed in highly populated and heavily trafficked regions. The construction direction of these buildings is determined only by religious principles, rather than being influenced by geography or the calendar. It is designed to have a unified architectural orientation, facing toward the holy land of Islam—Mecca. Thus, it may be inferred that these sacred mountains, which have strong connections to established beliefs, have served to reinforce belief and foster unity among followers (Du and Han 2019), but have not evolved into objects of veneration or sites of worship.

However, as early as the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, Chinese religion had already eliminated the pure “divine rule” and focused on human affairs. Undoubtedly, the sacred and worship spaces of Buddhist and Taoist holy mountains in China are mostly formed by the worship of religious saints and relics, forming holy sites. However, in specific contexts, the significance of mainstream religious mountains in China is mostly dominated by humanities, rather than relying solely on the derivation of Buddhism and Taoism (Du and Han 2019). In China, the idea of sacred mountains goes back to the dawn of history, long before the introduction of Buddhism and the emergence of religious Taoism (Naquin and Yu 1992). In worship space with mountains as the main body, the Zhenshan system, which is dominated by Confucianism, the third largest traditional Chinese religion, is a unique cultural phenomenon in China's traditional worship space, with special cultural roots, spatial order, and spatial significance, and thus is more representative of China's worship space. Gu Hongming 辜鴻銘 once mentioned the difference between Confucianism, Christianity, and Buddhism: Christianity and Buddhism are human religions or church religions, while Confucianism is a social or national religion. The true greatness of Confucianism lies in giving people the correct national philosophy and elevating this philosophy into a religion. Therefore, in terms of the social functions it creates, Confucianism is the same as religion, no different from Christianity and Buddhism, and can be regarded as a broad religion (Gu 2018). The Zhenshan system, constructed through Confucianism and based on the traditional Chinese view of nature, has had a more far-reaching influence on the construction of the Chinese belief system, the geospatial system of the land, and even the urban and rural spatial system in the course of China's long-term historical development. The Zhenshan system is an indispensable research content in the study of Chinese worship space, and an important breakthrough in exploring the deep cultural connotations of traditional Chinese natural views, religious concepts, and educational methods. Based on the uniqueness of Zhenshan in the world's worship space and its representativeness in China's worship space, this article summarizes the spatial characteristics and significance of Zhenshan worship in the light of the formation and change process of the Zhenshan system. Moreover, this paper summarizes the process of the formation of the uniqueness of Zhenshan in the process of cultural construction.

2. The Foundation of the Formation of Zhenshan—The Continuation of Natural Divinity

In primitive societies, nature worship was prevalent in various civilizations around the world. However, after the end of primitive society, nature worship underwent completely different changes in the process of the development of Chinese and Western civilizations; however, the divinity of nature continued in China. In contrast, the divinity of nature in the West disappeared with the birth of religion. This is the fundamental reason for the special nature of Chinese mountain worship.

There are different paths of rational transformation of the supreme god in Chinese and Western religions, which is the direct reason for the differentiated development of nature worship in China and the West. After experiencing rational thinking, Western nature underwent a separation of gods and objects, dividing nature into mechanical nature (non-humanistic nature in the eyes of Greeks) and natural gods. At the same time, the heroes of

the human world combined with the natural gods to ascend to the upper realm to form the supreme God, constructing a creation myth in which God creates, delivers, and governs all things in the world, and a religious transcendence exists between God and humankind (Wu 2004). And God granted humans the right to govern all things in nature, thus forming anthropocentrism and influencing the relationship between humans and nature. As Joseph Needham pointed out, Western thought swings between two worlds in dealing with the issue of nature: one is the world seen as an automaton, which is a silent world, a rigid and passive nature, and its behavior is like an automaton. Once it is programmed, it runs continuously according to the rules described in the program, and in this sense, humans are isolated from nature; another is that God governs the theological world of the universe, and nature operates according to God's will (Needham 1975). Therefore, in the rational transformation process of nature worship, nature has lost its primitive divinity in Western philosophical concepts. The reason there are still holy mountains and holy realms is that they are associated with the divinity of the supreme God. Mountains are just special places for believers to commemorate and worship God, with a mysterious environment and a noble atmosphere.

Compared with Western culture, ancient China lacked a creation myth that could support a fixed image as the supreme god, and the spiritual theme was also dedication rather than redemption. The gods in creation myths ultimately belonged to nature. The supreme deity in China is based on the comprehension of nature and the universe (Wang 2002). Unlike the concept of "God" in the West, at least from as early as the Xia, Yin, and Zhou dynasties, Chinese rulers believed that they received a mandate from heaven 天 to rule over the world (Sun and Kistemaker 1997). China's "heaven" 天 is "unknown, unknown to people", "inclusive of everything, and interconnected by rules", "無聲無臭", "無容無則", emphasizing more the power and laws of nature rather than absolute religious deities. China's gods and humans are a unified but loose relationship. The supreme deity in China is not elevated to the realm of gods and then looks down on the human world, but infiltrates into nature and the human world, that is, the unity tendency of the fusion of ontology and phenomena, the upper and lower realms (Zou 1999). The deity lies in nature, and it can also be said that the deity is nature. Calling nature a deity gives one a sense of kinship and a sense of being with nature (Hu 2013). Therefore, China's natural worship continues and shows a tendency toward worshipping pan-natural deities. Mountains are one of the more prominent types of worship, continuing and developing from the primitive ideas of mountain worship, forming a rational natural worship activity for mountains and mountain deities. The worship space it forms revolves around the reverence, gratitude, and worship of the mountain itself, which has fundamentally differed from the worship space of Western holy mountains.

Sacrifice 祭祀 is the study of the principles of things 格物 and realization and gratitude toward nature (Hu 2013), and the continuation of sacrificial activities is the main manifestation of the continuation of natural divinity. The development of mountain worship in ancient China has never ceased, and through sacrificial activities, the spiritual relationship between humans and gods, as well as between humans and nature has deepened. In China, superhuman, conscious, and personalized mountain deities emerged in the later stages of primitive society. In the face of incomprehensible and irresistible natural phenomena and disasters, the ancestors personified these phenomena and offered sacrifices in exchange for the help of gods. With the development of tribal alliance social forms, their sacrificial goals gradually shifted from agricultural production needs, such as seeking rain and harvest, to social goals, such as treating diseases, judging between right and wrong, and punishing evil. The gods of mountains also transformed from natural gods to clan or tribal leaders, gradually combining ancestor gods with mountain deities. This is a manifestation of the Chinese concept of nature's affinity with nature, laying the foundation for the deepening development of Chinese mountain worship toward social functions.

3. The Formation and Evolution of the Zhenshan Worship System

3.1. The Birth of Zhenshan—The Integration of Mountain Worship and Politics

After the end of primitive society, China's ancestors led the worship of mountains. However, mountain worship not only lies in the worship of the natural divinity of the mountains; with the development of society, the worship of mountains and politics gradually united, thus extending to the worship of the political and humanistic significance of mountains. The combination of mountain worship and politics is highlighted by the following three points: first, the continuous combination of mountain worship and political legitimacy; second, mountains became imagery and symbols of territories and states; and third, mountains gradually became a tool for constructing and strengthening the political order. The formal combination of mountain worship and politics eventually led to the birth of the concept of Zhenshan.

The combination of mountain worship and political legitimacy began during the tribal alliance period and was ultimately established as the mountain became a place to offer sacrifices to heaven. The changes in the subject of natural sacrificial activities had a significant impact on the origin of the ancient Chinese monarchy (Liao 2008). In the process of evolving toward early states, the upper echelons of the tribe gradually seized the public power of worship, which connected the heavens and gods. The transfer of power from witchcraft to tribal leaders resulted in the institutionalization and normalization of worship. As early civilizations developed, tribal leaders were replaced by monarchs, who made sacrificial offerings a privilege of the monarchy, elevating them to significant events for the country. The earliest mountain and river sacrificial activities with national significance are recorded in *Shang Shu*, "Shun Dian" 《尚書 舜典》 (Wang 2018). The text describes how Shun 舜 accepted Yao's 堯 abdication edict and reported to heaven to demonstrate that he had obtained the highest authority and that performing mountain sacrifices was an important part of this authority. It can be seen that as early as the period of tribal alliances, mountain sacrifices were already associated with the legitimacy of the regime. During the Shang 商 dynasty, mountain sacrifice became a common political ritual. There were two types of mountain worship rituals: Ji 卨 (personally going to worship) and Wang 望 (looking from afar to worship). Ji was a mountain sacrifice ritual presided over by the monarch. Oracle bone inscriptions verify that the sacrificial rituals often corresponded to Hua 華 and Yue 嶽, with "Yue" being the most commonly worshipped. Some scholars believe that the term Yue refers to a general large mountain, while others believe it refers to a specific mountain, such as Tai Yue Mountain (also known as Hua Mountain or Tai Mountain), Song Mountain 嵩山, Hua Mountain 華山, etc. (Wang 2022). During the Shang dynasty, Hua, Yue, and other mountains were selected as national mountain sacrificial sites for the monarch to preside over.

In the Xia and Shang dynasties, with the emergence of the concept of "heaven" 天, high mountains were closest to the "material heaven", and the concept of "heaven" was formed with the help of the concept of "mountain", just as "The high mountains are where all things were created by the heavens", "天作高山". In the Xia dynasty, with the deepening of the "Material Heaven" into the "Ruling Heaven and Destiny Heaven" (Wang 1999), the position of the "Heavenly Emperor" as the supreme god was gradually established. The *Zuo Zhuan* 《左傳》 (Zuo n.d.) states that "Yu and his lords gathered at Tu Mountain with jade and silk from all nations", "禹合諸侯於塗山, 執玉帛者萬國". Specific mountains gradually became places where rulers sacrificed to the heavens. Until the Zhou dynasty, the consciousness of "royal power bestowed by heaven" was officially established, and the Chinese civilization's concept of destiny gradually entered a period of depersonalization of the heavenly Dao 天道. The heavenly world and the human world were gradually differentiated, and in this process of differentiation, the figurations of the heavenly world appeared in the image of Zhou Tianzi 周天子. The monarch combines religious and political power. Religious worship based on nature worship gradually became a tool for maintaining royal rule, eventually negating the possibility of divine power politics that emerged in the Zhou dynasty and later generations (Zhang 1994). The highest mountain in the terri-

tory is regarded as the best medium for reaching heaven and Earth and officially becomes a place of “heaven” sacrifices. It is a symbol of the complete transformation of mountain worship from natural attributes to social attributes, and also the main reason mountains have symbolic significance for political legitimacy. The sacrificial activities in the mountains further highlight the close relationship between the Zhou emperor and the heavens. The Zhou emperor sought to use mountain worship to demonstrate his unique power as an emperor, to ingrain the idea of divine authority in the hearts of the people, and to demonstrate the legitimacy of the ruling power bestowed on humankind by heaven through the medium of the mountains. This also led to the establishment of a ceremony that carried on the mandate of heaven and followed the will of the people, known as “ascending to Heaven through famous mountains”, “因天事天，因地事地，因名山升中於天”. Although the term “Fengshan” 封禪 had not yet been coined in the Zhou dynasty, activities with the same purpose and connotation had already emerged, and mountain sacrifice continued into later generations, becoming the most important form of heavenly sacrifice. Emperor Zhou’s “Fengchan” activity was mainly carried out on Mount Taishan and Mount Song, and with the gradual strengthening of the awareness of “mountains and rivers ruling the country” 國主山川 and the connection between heaven and humankind, mountains as a geographical phenomenon in people’s perception became linked to national destiny. Thus, mountains became a clear symbol of national stability in people’s minds.

The association of mountains with territorial and national imagery stems from the combination of the geographical perception of mountains and rivers with the feudal system. It is common, indeed rational, to think of mountains as symbols of stability (Robson 2009). The ancient people’s understanding of China’s geographical space was shaped by the mountains, and before the formation of class society in China, due to the flooding of rivers, the ancient people often lived on small islands called “states” 州. The *Shang Shu*, “Shun Dian” 《尚書·舜典》 (Wang 2018), states that “there were originally twelve states, among which twelve mountains were worshipped”, “肇十有二州，封十有二山”, with high mountains as the symbol of the twelve states. In the era of Xia 夏, under the guidance of the establishment of the national system and the political consciousness of national unity, the country’s borders were further integrated, and the “Twelve States and Twelve Mountains” 十二州十二山 became the “Nine States and Nine Mountains” 九州九山. In the *Shang Shu*, “Yu Gong” 《尚書·禹貢》 (Wang 2018), it is stated that “Yu separates the boundaries of the land, walks high mountains and cuts down trees as signposts, and lays down boundaries with high mountains and big rivers”, “（禹）敷土，隨山刊木，奠高山大川”. During the process of water control, Yu 禹 measured the entire geography of the country, worshipped mountains and rivers, and delineated boundaries. During the Tang dynasty, Cai Shen 蔡沈 said, “The high mountains and rivers within a certain geographical boundary provide a coordinate system for people to use as a natural boundary for regional division”, forming a concise and clear geographical spatial pattern for complex geographical situations. In addition, the “Yu Gong” in the *Shang Shu* 《尚書·禹貢》 (Wang 2018) states that “the Nine States were unified as a result...all nine mountain ranges were now accessible through logging and road construction”, “九州攸同.....九山刊旅”. The connotation of the mountains and geographical territories also formed a further combination, reflecting the symbolic significance of the Nine Mountains and the unity of territory and country.

The establishment of the Nine Mountains in nine states reflects the differentiation of the status of the Nine Mountains and other mountains and determines the political hierarchy of the mountains with the final establishment of the patriarchal system. As early as the Yu and Shun periods, the *Shang Shu*, “Shun Dian” 《尚書·舜典》 (Wang 2018), states that Shun arrived at Mount Tai and held *chai* sacrifices, “至於岱宗，柴，望秩於山川”, reflecting the political status of Mount Tai above other mountains. For other mountains, sacrifices were held according to their status, which is the germ of the hierarchical order of mountain sacrifices. In the Shang dynasty, the division of the two kinds of mountain sacrifice methods, namely “Ji” 卽 and “Wang” 望, also further promoted the hierarchical differentiation of mountains; moreover, “Hua” 華 and “Yue” 嶽 in ritual practices, and also as the

objects of sacrifice, such as the Ten Mountains, Nine Mountains, Five Mountains, Three Mountains, and Two Mountains, were different from other mountains in the geography.

The Zhou dynasty built a patriarchal system with the emperor of Zhou as the patriarch, and mountain sacrifice was also an important means of maintaining the patriarchal system, which led to the integration of national famous mountains in geographical space, formed the attachment of famous mountain hierarchy to territorial symbolic significance, and built a sacrificial system dominated by the patriarchal sacrificial system. The emperor of the Zhou dynasty was at the first level, while the princes were at the second level. The emperor could offer sacrifices to famous mountains all over the world, while the princes could only offer sacrifices to the mountains in their fiefs, so the mountains in each fief gradually became the symbol of the fiefs. Under the influence of the idea of great unity, the *Rites of Zhou*, “Zhi Fang Shi” 《周禮·職方氏》 (Zheng 2010), further identified the respective mountains of nine states, namely Kuaiji Mountain in Yangzhou 揚州會稽山, Hengshan in Jingzhou 荊州衡山, Huashan in Yuzhou 豫州華山, Yishan in Qingzhou 青州沂山, Daishan in Yanzhou 兗州岱山, Yueshan in Yongzhou 雍州嶽山, Yiwulu in Youzhou 幽州醫巫閭, Huoshan in Jizhou 冀州霍山, and Hengshan in Bingzhou 並州恒山. At the same time, in order to demonstrate that they owned the lands of the nation and consolidate their rule, the rulers hunted around, made symbolic sacrifices to the famous mountains of various princes, constantly affirmed and reaffirmed the privileges of the king, affirmed that the king was the hub of the unity of heaven and humankind, and took the mountain as the geographical and cultural symbol to control the princes. Therefore, the mountains in each state were also called “Zhen” 鎮, and the concept of “Zhenshan” 鎮山 was born. The *Shuowen* 《說文》 states that “Zhen, to exert pressure”, “鎮, 博壓也”. The original meaning is to exert pressure on an object, which can be extended to mean suppression, restriction by force, and subduction. The *Guangya* 《廣雅》 states that “Zhen, stable”, “鎮, 安也”, meaning stability and comfort. In the *Records of the Grand Historian* (Sima 2019), the declaration “To govern the country and pacify the people”, “鎮國家, 撫百姓”, is made. Therefore, stability is the intention of “Zhen” 鎮 and deterrence is the means of “Zhen” 鎮. With “Zhen” 鎮 as a vivid verb, the dual humanistic connotation of integrating civil and military elements is explained. The word “Zhenshan” 鎮山 was used to refer to the mountains in each state, and the corresponding Zhenshan sacrificial system was established, which put forward the political intention of the mountains to deter and stabilize one side. At the same time, the Nine Zhenshan of the nine states combined together is no longer a purely natural geographical concept, but also a grand and well-conceived program of political geography, reflecting the high degree of “great unity” of the cultural identity of the national political and cultural order of the “six contractual winds, the common thread of the nine states”, “六合同風, 九州共貫”, which the people of that time were seeking. Thus, Zhenshan is a typical symbol of the complete transformation of the natural attributes of mountain worship into social attributes.

3.2. Construction of the National Mountain Sacrifice System—Establishment of Political Order in the Mountain Geographical Space

Based on the Zhou dynasty’s philosophy of governance, Confucianism upholds the concept of the unity of politics and indoctrination and uses politics to unify indoctrination and indoctrination to promote politics. Furthermore, Confucianism did not abandon and scorn the role of indoctrination by making politics extremely legalistic and instrumental, as Legalism did, nor did it give indoctrination a strong religious flavor, as Taoism and Buddhism did, while remaining indifferent to politics (Jin 2017). The political significance symbolized by mountain sacrifices in Chinese feudal society has always been the basis for guiding national policies and promoting politics. Since the Qin and Han dynasties, China’s mountain sacrifice rituals have been closely integrated with national laws and regulations. The mountain sacrifice system has become an important part of the religious and spiritual life of China’s feudal society and has been passed down throughout feudal society. At the same time, through the establishment of the national mountain sacrifice system, the

geographical and political order of the country's territory and mountains was established, and concepts such as "middle" were continuously consolidated, thereby strengthening the unity of political thought and social education.

The "Nine States and Nine Zhenshan" identified by Zhenshan in the *Rites of Zhou* laid the foundation for the establishment of the national sacrificial ritual system in later times. Emperor Qin Shi Huang of the Qin dynasty combined the famous mountains handed down from ancient times to the Zhou dynasty with the various mountains in the "Yong" region 雍地 to form first-class mountains and established the twelve famous mountain worship system of the seven famous mountains in Guanzhong and the five famous mountains in Guandong. The mountain and river sacrifice pattern established by Qin was the first complete mountain sacrifice system in the history of the unified empire of China. In the Han dynasty, Emperor Wu of Han, guided by Confucianism, officially established the national system of offering sacrifices to the Five Sacred Mountains. In the Han dynasty, Emperor Wu of Han, guided by Confucianism, officially established the national system of offering sacrifices to the Five Sacred Mountains. As stated in the *Book of Rites* 《禮記》, "The emperor worships the famous mountains and rivers of the world: the Five Sacred Mountains regard the three dukes, and the Four Sacrifices regard the feudal lords. The lords sacrificed to the great mountains in their respective territories", "天子祭天下名山大川: 五嶽視三公, 四瀆視諸侯。諸侯祭名山大川之在其地者". Furthermore, the emperor established the sacrificial methods of offering sacrifices such as Fengshan 封禪, paying respects to Yue temples 親謁嶽廟, offering sacrifices in the suburbs 郊祀, offering sacrifices at the site 望祀, and sending envoys 遣使祭祀, as well as the corresponding clear sacrificial places and rituals. This system has lasted for thousands of years, making Hua Mountain, Tai Mountain, Heng Mountain, Song Mountain, and Heng Mountain among the Nine Zhenshan walk out of the ritual book and officially enter the national sacrifice, with Tai Mountain as the most respected. In the following era, the Five Sacred Mountains 五嶽 gradually took shape and took the lead in entering the national sacrifice ceremony as an independent identity, becoming a separate category of famous mountain series highly respected by the country. During the separation of Yueshan 嶽山 and Zhenshan, the relationship between Yueshan and Zhenshan underwent a sharp change. Yueshan began to surpass Zhenshan in etiquette and concepts, creating a situation where the Five Sacred Mountains were revered alone.

In the later period of the Northern and Southern dynasties, with the strengthening trend of national unity, the Zhenshan sacrificial ceremony also began to develop, and the main driving force for this new development was the improvement in the national mountain and river sacrificial system. The "Yizhen" 沂鎮, "Kuaiji zhen" 會稽鎮, and "Yiwulv zhen" 醫巫閭鎮 sacrificial ceremonies appeared in the Northern Qi dynasty and Northern Zhou dynasty. This trend of development continued in the Sui dynasty, which promoted the pioneering changes of Zhenshan on the basis of previous dynasties, formed the four major Zhenshan theories of the Sui dynasty, and created a complete national mountain sacrificial system. According to the "Annals of Rites" in the *Book of Sui* 《隋書-禮儀志》, in the 14th year of Kaihuang (開皇十四年 594 AD), "an edict was issued to Yi Mountain as Eastern Zhen, Kuaiji Mountain as Southern Zhen, Yiwulv Mountain as Northern Zhen, and Huoshan as Jizhou Zhen", "詔東鎮沂山, 南鎮會稽山, 北鎮醫巫閭山, 冀州鎮霍山, 並就山立祠". In addition to the Five Sacred Mountains system, the other four Zhenshan of the Nine Zhenshan of the *Rites of Zhou* were reincorporated, and the Four Zhenshan system was established. Zhenshan began to rise to the level of a national ritual system, and the injection of related sacrificial rituals such as temple construction and ritual gave Zhenshan a whole new appearance. During the Tianbao 天寶 period of the Tang dynasty, the gods of the mountains and rivers were enfeoffed, and Huoshan was also included, achieving a position equal to the four major Zhenshan and developing the Zhenshan pattern. Until the Song dynasty, Huoshan was officially included in the national ritual system, and the Zhenshan sacrificial system was referred to as the Five Zhenshan. For example, the "Five Zhen" were recorded in the *Zhenghe Xinyi* 《政和新儀》, and the completeness and institutionalization of the Zhenshan sacrificial rituals directly constructed the spiritual core of the

five major Zhenshan patterns, eventually forming a complete system of national Zhenshan sacrificial rituals (Zhang 2012). During the Tang dynasty, the sacrificial level of the Five Zhen was also determined. In the second year of Yonghui (永徽二年 651 A), “Yue Zhen Hai Du” 嶽鎮海瀆 was clearly designated as the midsacrifice level in the Yonghui Decree, and this position remained unchanged throughout history (Figure 1).

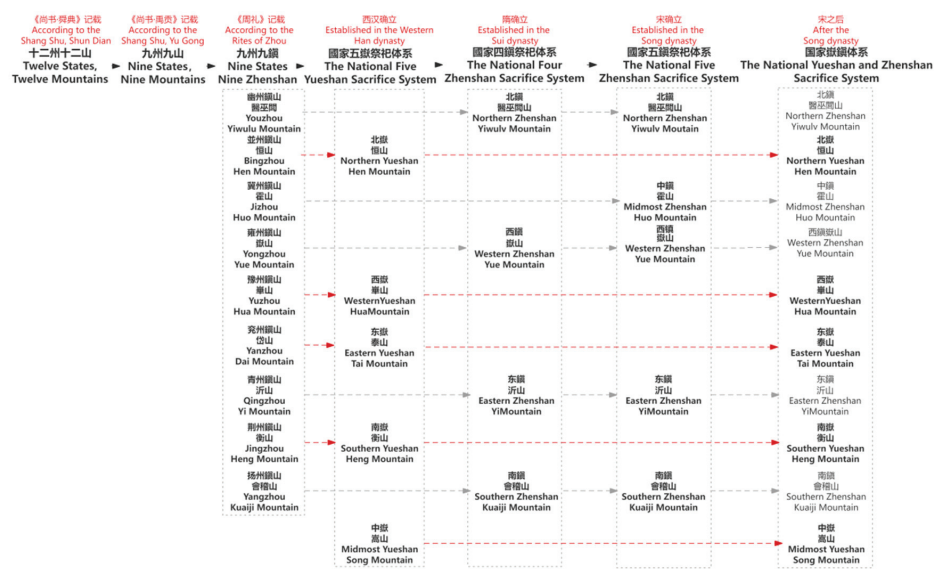


Figure 1. The Historical Evolution of Yueshan and Zhenshan.

In addition, from the beginning of the Han dynasty when “the five mountains regarded the three dukes” 五嶽視三公, the five mountains began to have a humanized image of the gods. Among them Mount Taishan was the Mount Taishan Prefecture Duke 泰山府君, the north was the north Yueshan Prefecture Duke 北嶽府君, and the south, north, and middle Yueshan were all dukes. Since then, the deity images of various Yue and Zhen have been continuously integrated and developed by folk legends and Taoist thought. It was not until the Tang dynasty that the gods of Yue and Zhen were gradually given titles since in the mid-Tang dynasty the deity image of the Zhenshan deity was officially established. After the Tang dynasty, various dynasties continued to use their own images of mountain deities and titles. In the Tang dynasty, there were only two levels of kings and dukes, while in the Song dynasty, higher emperors and kings appeared. In the Ming dynasty, various Yue and Zhen were directly referred to as gods. The image of the deity of each Yuezhen was determined after the Tang dynasty, it also signifies that the emperors before the Tang dynasty still regarded the god of the Zhenshan as a deity above themselves. However, with the development of history, the gods of Zhenshan accepted the titles of the earthly emperors and began to be reduced to “officials in feudal court”, so that religious worship was unified under the state power, and the “enlist enemy by offering amnesty” of the gods of the mountains was completed, which embodied the supernatural power to serve the earthly purpose and functioned as an extension of the earthly power system (Table 1).

Table 1. List of titles for Yueshan and Zhenshan in previous dynasties.

Dynasty	Mountain Names	Titles	Mountain Names	Titles
After the Han dynasty	Tai Mountain 泰山	Duke/Mount Taishan Prefecture Duke 泰山府君		
	Southern Yueshan 南嶽	Duke		
	Northern Yueshan 北嶽	Duke/North Yueshan Prefecture Duke 北嶽府君		
	Western Yueshan 西嶽	Duke		
	Medium Yueshan 中嶽	Duke		
Tang dynasty	Eastern Yueshan Tai Mountain 東嶽泰山	King of Qi 齊天王	Eastern Zhenshan Yi Mountain 東鎮沂山	Duke of Dong'an 東安公
	Southern Yueshan Heng Mountain 南嶽衡山	King of Si 司天王	Southern Zhenshan Kuaiji Mountain 南鎮會稽山	Duke of Yongxing 永興公
	Western Yueshan Hua Mountain 西嶽華山	King of Jin 金天王	Western Zhenshan Wu Mountain 西鎮吳山	Duke of Chengde 成德公
	Medium Yueshan Song Mountain 中嶽嵩山	King of Zhong 中天王	Medium Zhenshan Huo Mountain 中鎮霍山	Duke of Yingsheng 應聖公
	Northern Yueshan Heng Mountain 北嶽恒山	King of An 安天王	Northern Zhenshan Yilulv Mountain 北鎮醫巫閭山	Duke of Guangning 廣寧公
Song dynasty	Eastern Yueshan Tai Mountain 東嶽泰山	King of Rensheng Tianqi 仁聖天齊王 Emperor of Tianqi Rensheng 天齊仁聖帝	Eastern Zhenshan Yi Mountain 東鎮沂山	King of Dong'an 東安王
	Southern Yueshan Heng Mountain 南嶽衡山	Emperor of Sitian Zhaosheng 司天昭聖帝	Southern Zhenshan Kuaiji Mountain 南鎮會稽山	King of Yongji 永濟王
	Western Yueshan Hua Mountain 西嶽華山	King of Shunsheng jin 順聖金天王 Emperor of Jin tian shun 金天順聖帝	Western Zhenshan Wu Mountain 西鎮吳山	King of Chengde 成德王
	Medium Yueshan Song Mountain 中嶽嵩山	Emperor of Zhongtian Chongsheng 中天崇聖帝	Medium Zhenshan Huo Mountain 中鎮霍山	King of Yingling 應靈王
	Northern Yueshan Heng Mountain 北嶽恒山	Emperor of Antian Yuansheng 安天元聖帝	Northern Zhenshan Yilulv Mountain 北鎮醫巫閭山	King of Guangning 廣寧王

Table 1. Cont.

Dynasty	Mountain Names	Titles	Mountain Names	Titles
Yuan dynasty	Eastern Yueshan Tai Mountain 東嶽泰山	Emperor of Qitian Dasheng Rensheng 齊天大生仁聖帝	Eastern Zhenshan Yi Mountain 東鎮沂山	King of Dong'an 東安王
	Southern Yueshan Heng Mountain 南嶽衡山	Emperor of Sitian Dahua Zhaosheng 司天大化昭聖帝	Southern Zhenshan Kuaiji Mountain 南鎮會稽山	Duke of Yongxing 永興王
	Western Yueshan Hua Mountain 西嶽華山	Emperor of Jin Tian Da Li Shun Sheng 金天大利順聖帝	Western Zhenshan Wu Mountain 西鎮吳山	King of Chengde 成德王
	Medium Yueshan Song Mountain 中嶽嵩山	Emperor of An Tian Da Zhen Yuan Sheng 安天大貞元聖帝	Medium Zhenshan Huo Mountain 中鎮霍山	King of Yingling 應靈王
	Northern Yueshan Heng Mountain 北嶽恒山	Emperor of Zhongtian Daning Chongsheng 中天大寧崇聖帝 Emperor of An Tian Da Zhen Yuan 安天大貞元皇帝	Northern Zhenshan Yilulv Mountain 北鎮醫巫閭山	廣寧王 King of Guangning
Ming dynasty	Eastern Yueshan Tai Mountain 東嶽泰山	The God of Eastern Yueshan Tai Mountain 東嶽泰山之神	Eastern Zhenshan Yi Mountain 東鎮沂山	The God of Eastern Zhenshan Yi Mountain 東鎮沂山之神
	Southern Yueshan Heng Mountain 南嶽衡山	The God of Southern Yueshan Heng Mountain 南嶽衡山之神	Southern Zhenshan Kuaiji Mountain 南鎮會稽山	The God of Southern Zhenshan Kuaiji Mountain 南鎮會稽山之神
	Western Yueshan Hua Mountain 西嶽華山	The God of Western Yueshan Hua Mountain 西嶽華山之神	Western Zhenshan Wu Mountain 西鎮吳山	The God of Western Zhenshan Wu Mountain 西鎮吳山之神
	Medium Yueshan Song Mountain 中嶽嵩山	The God of Midmost Yueshan Song Mountain 中嶽嵩山之神	Medium Zhenshan Huo Mountain 中鎮霍山	The God of Midmost Zhenshan Huo Mountain 中鎮霍山之神
	Northern Yueshan Heng Mountain 北嶽恒山	The God of Northern Yueshan Heng Mountain 北嶽恒山之神	Northern Zhenshan Yilulv Mountain 北鎮醫巫閭山	The God of Northern Zhenshan Yilulv Mountain 北鎮醫巫閭山之神

3.3. Evolution of Zhenshan Locality—Manifestation of Confucian Education in Local Space

While the national Zhenshan sacrificial system was becoming established, Zhenshan underwent changes in imagery in the process of humanistic education guided by Confucianism, reinforcing the differentiation between Yueshan and Zhenshan. With the ritualization, folklorization, and secularization of feng shui 風水, local Zhenshan gradually formed, and the number of Zhenshan gradually increased, affecting the development of local urban and rural beliefs and spatial construction. Ultimately, a system of national Zhenshan and local Zhenshan coexisting was established, forming a multi-scale and multi-level system of the country, region, and city in space.

The connotation of Zhenshan continued to enrich and develop. With the establishment of the Five Sacred Rites system in the Han dynasty, Yueshan was differentiated into a more important Zhenshan in terms of national etiquette and people’s national concept. It replaced the Nine Zhenshan as the political propaganda significance for national unity.

In the process of the differentiation of Yueshan and Zhenshan, the connotation of Zhenshan gradually shifted from Confucian political propaganda to Confucian political education. By the time of the Eastern Han dynasty, the ruling structure had gradually been established, and the emperor's control over local administrative means was further institutionalized. As a result, the purpose of Zhenshan rituals began to return to the hope that the mountains would be a blessing to the people and country. The purpose of the Zhenshan rituals began to return to praying for the blessing of the mountains and rivers for the people and the well-being of the country. Therefore, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 of the Eastern Han dynasty annotated the *Rites of Zhou* 周禮 (Zheng 2010) and wrote about "Using famous mountains to showcase and stabilize the land morality", "鎮, 名山安地德者也". Whether it is the practical significance of agricultural production, which promotes the prosperity of the land, or the political and educational significance of "land morality" 地德, the connotation of the Zhenshan is closely related to the people. The strong propaganda significance of Zhenshan for political power was replaced by Yueshan. And with the gradual extension of Tang dynasty rituals to prefectures and counties, civil society began to actively accept and absorb the national mountain deities under the influence of the national mountain worship and gradually localized them. After the Tang dynasty, Zhenshan gradually became a psychological symbol to safeguard the lives of the people in the region, embodying their desire for a peaceful, prosperous, and beautiful life. The Yuan Chengzong Imperial Edict Stele 元成宗聖旨碑 erected in the second year of the Yuan dynasty's Dade era 元大德二年 in the Eastern Zhen Temple provides a clear interpretation of Zhenshan: "Since three generations ago, Zhenshan has been present in all nine provinces, so the people's livelihood is peaceful", "三代以降,九州皆有鎮山,所以阜民生安地德也".

Although the status of the sacrificial ritual system in Zhenshan was lower than that of Yueshan, Zhenshan still had the representativeness of royal power and the symbolic nature of ethical and hierarchical constraints; moreover, it had a metaphorical meaning of education in space. The formation of local Zhenshan 地方鎮山 and the cognition of their benefits to people's livelihoods largely stem from the combination of the Tang and Song dynasties' ritualization, folklorization, and secularization of feng shui with the concept of national Zhenshan sacrifice. In the construction of ancient cities, the observation of mountains was the primary principle of using feng shui theory to build cities. In the theory of feng shui, "dragon" 龍 refers to a winding mountain range, usually a mountain where qi 氣 flows through it. In the end, it forms the backing mountain 靠山, main mountain 主山, and parent mountain 父母山 of the feng shui land, and in some places, it is also called "Zhenshan" (Chen and Liu 1995). The combination of the Feng Shui dragon and Zhenshan concept is precisely because people expect to have a mountain within their living area that, like a national Zhenshan, can guard the stability of the city and the surrounding area, and ensure favorable weather conditions and seasonal resources. In feng shui, the main mountain is often tall and majestic, with a dominant position and aura. The psychological pattern reflected by feng shui overlaps with people's expectations of the main mountain, thus forming a close combination of the two. This reflects the ideological consciousness of the vitality of mountains and waters and the compatibility with the political ethics, etiquette, and moral cultivation represented by Zhenshan. As a result, the humanization of natural mountains and waters is achieved in feng shui theory, and an effective set of norms and guidelines is established in urban landscape construction (Wu 2016).

In the process of the localization of Zhenshan, regional Zhenshan and urban Zhenshan were gradually generated, and the national ritual system of Zhenshan and local Zhenshan were constructed in parallel, building a multi-level and multi-scale geospatial system comprising the national Zhenshan 國家鎮山, regional Zhenshan 區域鎮山, and urban Zhenshan 城市鎮山 at three levels. National Zhenshan refers to the ten Zhenshan included in the sacrificial system (Figure 2). In addition, Song Mountain 嵩山 is the middle mountain in the country, so it is often called the national Zhenshan by later generations, and together with Tai Mountain, it is called "Songdai" 嵩岱, which is often regarded as the national Zhenshan and the representative of the orthodox regime in the Central Plains of China.

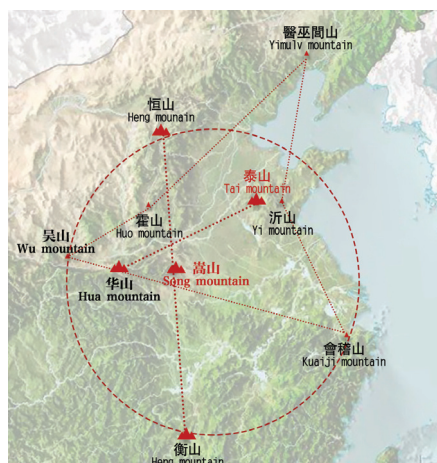


Figure 2. The geographical pattern of national Zhenshan.

Regional Zhenshan has two types. Firstly, the Zhenshan of each state is the regional Zhenshan that stabilizes the defense of Dehua within the nine states of the *Rites of Zhou*. Secondly, in the bottom-up identification of regional Zhenshan, various regions have spontaneously identified regional Zhenshan in certain areas based on dimensions such as geographical perception of local mountain ranges, observation of feng shui, cultural value, and status of mountains. Examples of regional Zhenshan include Tianmu Mountain 天目山 being the regional Zhenshan in Zhejiang Province, and Mengshan being the regional Zhenshan in Qi-Lu region 齊魯地區. At the same time, there has also been a phenomenon of multiple cities jointly designating the same mountain as a regional Zhenshan, such as the Qilian Mountains being the regional Zhenshan of four cities: Xining 西寧, Liangzhou 涼州, Ganzhou 甘州, and Suzhou 肅州.

Urban Zhenshan are the most direct manifestation of the formation of local Zhenshan—they are the mountains that guard one side within the scope of urban space. According to existing local chronicles, a total of 299 cities from the Song dynasty to the Qing dynasty had their own urban Zhenshan. After the Song dynasty, Zhenshan in local cities became a common phenomenon throughout the country, becoming the main spatial element for building local collective memory and local identity. During the Song and Yuan dynasties, records of urban Zhenshan began to appear in the Jiangnan region. In the Ming dynasty, the concept of urban Zhenshan broke through the Jiangnan region and began to appear throughout the country. On this basis, the Qing dynasty continued to develop, not only expanding the breadth of the region, but also beginning to have records of urban Zhenshan in the capital city, forming a three-level administrative system of “capital city 都城–prefectural city 州府城–county town 縣城”. (Figure 3). Under different levels and scales, Zhenshan have political status differences. Local urban Zhenshan are mostly located in the tributaries of the national territory mountain range, while national Zhenshan and regional Zhenshan are mostly located on the main trunk of the national territory mountain range. Tracing upward, they ultimately belong to Kunlun Mountain, overlapping the ancient Chinese understanding of mountain ranges and their fractal structure.

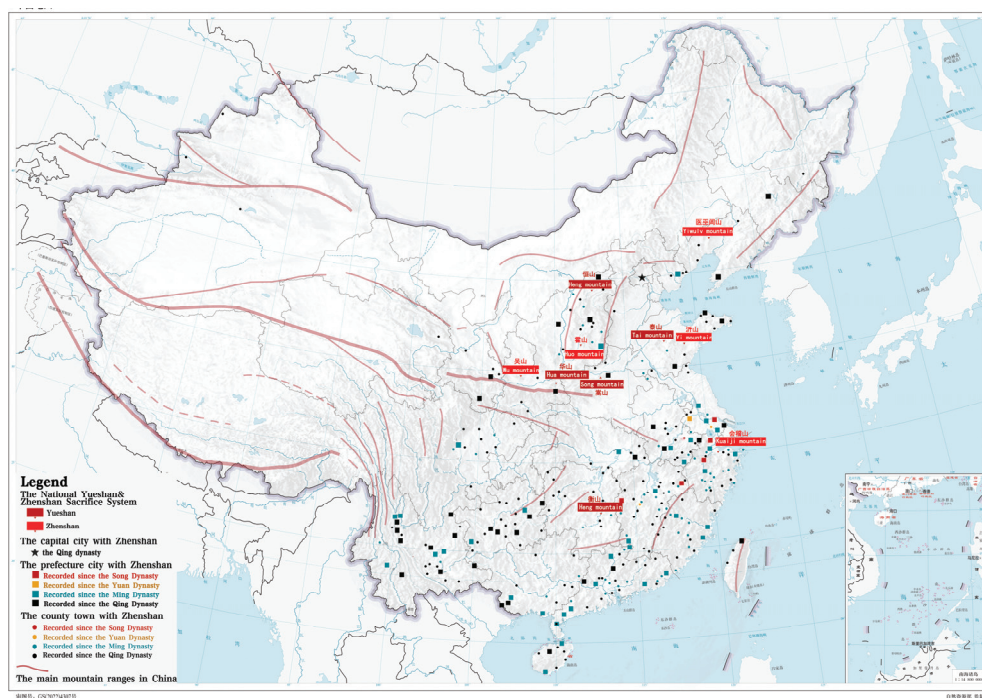


Figure 3. Geographical distribution map of urban Zhenshan in China.

4. Types and Characteristics of Worship Spaces of Zhenshan

The Zhenshan Worship Space is a typical Confucian outgrowth. It integrates Chinese natural worship into the political system and urban life, and its worship space is written in various levels of national territory. The worship of Zhenshan can be divided into the worship of its “deities” and the worship of its “forms”. The worship of its “deities” refers to the worship of the corresponding mountain deities by the Zhenshan in the national sacrificial system, thus constructing a worship space centered on temple worship. The worship of its “form” refers to the close integration of local Zhenshan with the symbols of “stability” and “guarding” due to its morphological characteristics, becoming a symbol of Confucian education and thus forming a metaphorical and restrictive worship space.

4.1. The Worship Space of Temple Sacrificial Type

Worship space based on deity worship and sacrificial liturgy is the universal form of worship space in the world’s religious cultures. The mountain deities are the main objects of worship in Chinese Zhenshan sacrifice. And with the fixation and institutionalization of worship ceremonies, the corresponding worship space also becomes more rational, and temples are the basic element and main support of sacrificial worship space.

The worship space of Zhenshan under the national Zhenshan sacrificial system is based on mountain sacrificial rituals. It took the mountain as a place of worship, with religious buildings such as temples and altars as the main elements, and combined it with the mountain environment to construct a sacred temple sacrificial type of worship space. The establishment of temples is a symbol of national or folk recognition of deities. As a fixed place of worship, temples provide necessary material support for the further standardization of deity worship rituals. There are certain differences in the organization and spatial patterns of worship spaces between Yueshan and Zhenshan. According to their temple type, they can be divided into Yue temple 嶽廟 worship spaces and Zhen temple 鎮廟 worship spaces. The spatial patterns between them and the mountains can be sum-

marized as two types: worshipping the mountain in a distant place 望祀山嶽 and building a temple on the mountain 依山立祠.

The establishment of the Yue temple concept occurred earlier than that of the Zhen temple, of which Mount Tai, which has the highest status among the five mountains, is the earliest mountain to be established as a Yue temple. Emperor Qin Shi Huang established a fixed temple as a place of worship, changing the nonfixed method of the sacrificial altar in the pre-Qin era. The practice of establishing temples on the five mountains to worship the mountain deities was followed by later generations (Yang 2011). The official record and fixed location of the Dai Temple 岱廟 in Mount Taishan originated from the Han dynasty. In addition, the Western Yue Temple in Hua Mountain was first built during the Western Han dynasty; the Medium Yue Temple in Song Mountain was first built before the Han dynasty, and was relocated to its current location during the Northern Wei dynasty; the Northern Yue Temple of Mount Hengshan was first built during the Northern Wei dynasty; and the Southern Yue Temple in Heng Mountain can be traced back to the Jin dynasty and was first built during the Sui dynasty. The ritual hierarchy and architectural regulations of the Five Yue Temples are very high, and the temples are also grand and spectacular in base and scale.

The Zhen Temple was first established in the Sui dynasty. According to the *History of Sui* 《隋史》, in the leap month of the 14th year of Emperor Wen's reign, 開皇十四年 594 A, the emperor ordered the construction of Zhen temples on each Zhenshan. The establishment of Zhen temples in the Sui dynasty greatly enhanced the status of Zhenshan in national sacrifice. The Five Zhen Temples were all built during the Tang and Song dynasties: the Eastern Zhen Temple of Yi Mountain 沂山, the Western Zhen Temple of Wu Mountain 吳山, and the Southern Zhen Temple of Kuaiji Mountain 會稽山 were all built during the Sui dynasty; the Medium Zhen Temple in Huo Mountain 霍山 and the Northern Zhen Temple in Yiwulv Mountain 醫巫閭山 were first built in the Tang dynasty.

Although the emergence of Zhenshan sacrifice occurred later than that of Yue Shan, the development of Zhenshan and Yueshan in terms of sacrificial procedures and the shape of temple buildings has a certain synchronous relationship. When the concept of the Zhen temple appeared, the architectural form of the Yue temple was still immature, so the form of Zhen temples was not a simple imitation of Yue temples. Although the scale of a Zhen temple is smaller than that of a Yue temple, their construction is similar due to the universal ritual of "riding the public opinion to enter the temple gate, descending the public opinion, washing hands, descending incense, and entering the main hall" recorded in the *Kaiyuan Rites of the Tang Dynasty* 《大唐開元禮》, *New Rites of Zhenghe Five Rites* 《政和五禮新儀》, and *Ming Huidian* 《明會典》.

Unlike Western worship spaces dominated by gods and spirits, China's Yue and Zhen temples are not only spaces for the worship of gods and spirits but also spaces to worship the form and trend of the mountain itself. The construction of a Zhen temple combines geographic and humanistic information to observe the mountain ranges, forming such cultural phenomena as the Wuyue Zhenxing map 五嶽真形圖 under the guidance of Taoist aesthetics. In terms of spatial order between temples and mountains, there are significant differences between Yue and Zhen temples. The setting of the Five Yue Temples and their relationship with the various mountains mainly depend on the effect of "observing and worshipping from a distance" 望祀 (Yang 2011). Ancient people worshipped the gods of the five mountains at the Yue temples, and the main peaks of the mountains became the focus of their worship. Except for the Northern Yue Temple built on the main peak, each temple is located at a certain distance from the mountain, highlighting the towering and sacred nature of the mountain with an appropriate height-to-distance ratio, forming a worship space pattern of looking at the mountain from afar and offering sacrifices. Moreover, the main peak of the mountain is often the endpoint of the central axis of each temple, forming a dignified spatial order of "mountain to temple" (Figure 4).

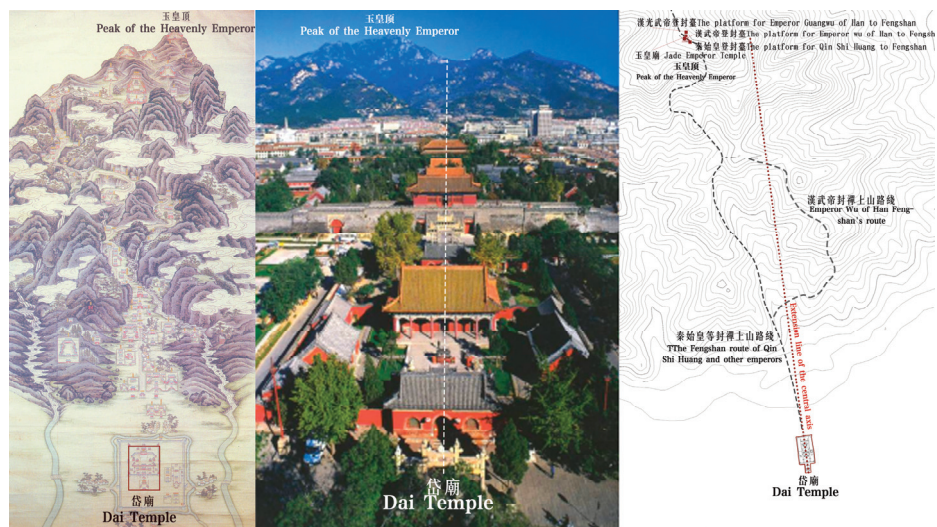


Figure 4. Dai Temple and Mount Taishan’s worship space for “looking at sacrificial mountains from afar” (望祀山嶽).

The Zhen temples and their respective mountains form a worship space pattern of “build a temple on the mountain”. The Zhen temples are mostly built at the foot or top of each mountain and are chosen to be built in areas that are sandwiched by the remaining veins of the mountain and have a sense of divinity, creating a mysterious and sacred environmental atmosphere. (Figure 5) Based on the difference in ceremonial status, there is no clear axial correspondence between the Zhen temple and the main peak of the Zhenshan Mountain range. The orientation of some Zhen temples is parallel to the overall trend of the mountain. In the construction of the spatial angle relationship between the building and the main peak, a continuous and barrier-like landscape effect is formed. In addition, compared with Yue temples, the worship space of Zhen temples pays more attention to the connection with water elements (Shen et al. 2015). Except for the Northern Zhen Temple, the other four Zhen temples use the river parallel to the mountain path as the guide for mountain worship, and the front of the temple is reached by going upstream against the current. The Eastern Zhen Temple, Western Zhen Temple, and Medium Zhen Temple are all facing water, while the Southern Zhen Temple is facing the mountain, creating a more blended “mountain to temple” worship space atmosphere (Table 2).

Table 2. Sorting out the spatial pattern of worship in Yue temples and Zhen temples.

Mountain Name	Name of Temple	The Dynasty that Initially Established the Temple	The Spatial Relationship between Temples and Mountains	Worship Spatial Pattern
Tai Mountain	Dai Temple	Western Han dynasty	The axis corresponds to mountain peaks	Looking at sacrificial mountains from afar 望祀山嶽
Hua Mountain	Western Yue Temple	Western Han dynasty	The axis corresponds to the main peak of Mount Hua	
Song Mountain	Medium Yue Temple	Built before the Han dynasty and relocated to its current location during the Northern Wei dynasty	The axis corresponds to mountain peaks	
Heng Mountain	Southern Yue Temple	Sui dynasty	The central axis extends shallowly backward to Zhurong Peak	

Table 2. Cont.

Mountain Name	Name of Temple	The Dynasty that Initially Established the Temple	The Spatial Relationship between Temples and Mountains	Worship Spatial Pattern
Heng Mountain	Northern Yue Temple	Northern Wei dynasty	Built in the mountains	Standing temples along the mountains 依山立祠
Yi Mountain	Eastern Zhen Temple	Sui dynasty	Built on the mountaintop, north of Fenghuang Ridge, facing Bijia Mountain	
Wu Mountain	Western Zhen Temple	Sui dynasty	Built at the foot of the mountain, facing Bijia Mountain to the north and overlooking Xizhen Peak to the north	
Huo Mountain	Medium Zhen Temple	Tang dynasty	Built at the western foot of Huoshan Mountain, facing Zhongzhen Peak on the side	
Yiwulu Mountain	Northern Zhen Temple	Tang dynasty	Yiwulu Mountain, surrounds the North Zhen Temple, opposite Wanghai Peak on the side	
Kuaiji Mountain	Southern Zhen Temple	Sui dynasty	Built at the northern foot of Kuaiji Mountain, facing Xianglu Peak on the side	

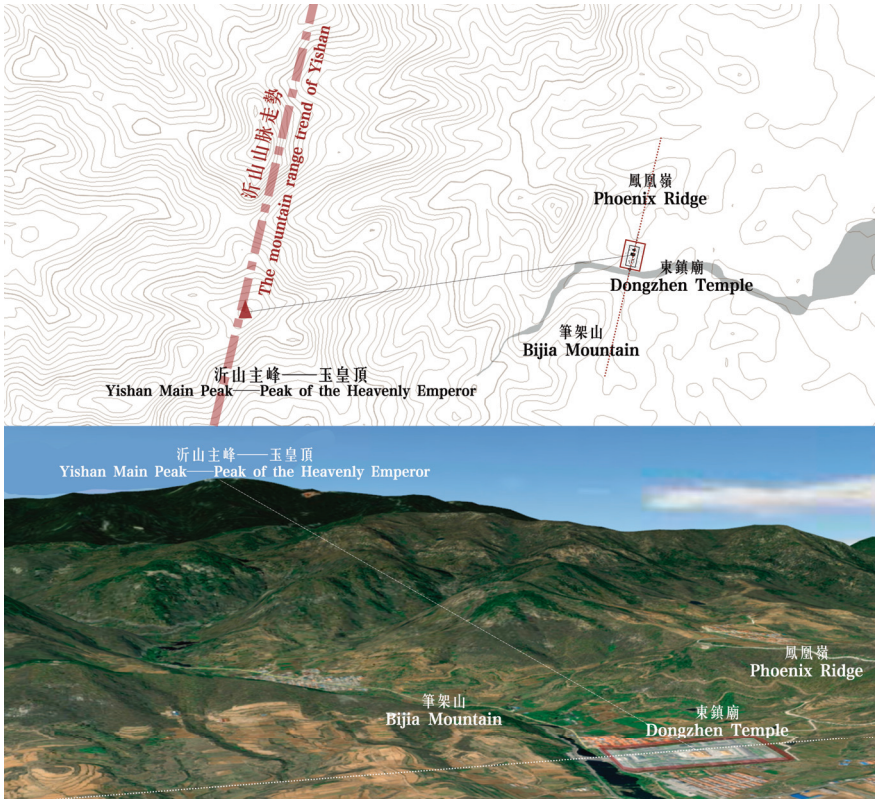


Figure 5. Eastern Zhen Temple and Yi Mountain’s worship space for “standing temples along the mountains” (依山立祠).

4.2. The Worship Space of Metaphorical Constraint Type

In the process of generating the Zhenshan system, the metaphorical constraint type of worship space, based on nature worship and Confucian indoctrination, shaped political sanctity, status orthodoxy, and imagery symbols such as hierarchy, geomancy, stability, and morality to the mountain. Based on these imagery symbols, the corresponding aesthetics were extended to identify Zhenshan. And through the study of the Zhenshan system, it can be found that Zhenshan has a close relationship with the city site selection and the construction of urban spatial order, and the ancients paid attention to strengthening the association between Zhenshan and pavilions and other scenic elements. Thus, Zhenshan forms the interpretation of space for the legitimacy of the regime and forms a metaphorical space with the meaning of order, ethics, and hierarchical constraints for the people.

At the scale of national territory, the legitimacy of political power was demonstrated through the “seeking a central position” model of selecting the location of the capital city among the Nine Zhenshan, constituting a metaphorically constrained cultic spatial system in which the capital city dynamically seeks a central location among multiple Zhenshan at the geospatial scale of the national territory. According to *Lǚ Shì Chūn Qiū* “Shen Shi”, 《吕氏春秋·慎势》, the ancient king chose the center of the world to establish his country, “古之王者，擇天下之中而立國”. This idea stems from the primitive worship of the center as a place for gods, the culture of seeking doctrine of the mean, and the aesthetics of mediocrity and harmony, as well as a series of concepts. The Yue Zhen Hai Du 嶽鎮海瀆 system, which gradually matured on the national territory scale after the Han dynasty, constructed spatial criteria that centered the national capital around the relative central position of spatial layout. With the migration of the national capital, the Yue Zhen Hai Du system on the national territory scale was also undergoing changes (Mao and Cheng 2020). Among them, Zhenshan is a relatively stable system in the Yue Zhen Hai Du system. The national capital takes the geographical center opposite to the national Zhenshan to represent the center of the territory, laying the foundation for the location selection method of taking the national Zhenshan as the capital and forming a spatial order of “being in the center” of the national geography. At the same time, the spatial metaphor of strengthening the legitimacy of political power is achieved by elevating the political status close to the capital city of Zhenshan. During the Tang dynasty and Northern Song dynasty, Song Mountain 嵩山 was revered as the highest of the Five Sacred Mountains due to its proximity to the eastern capitals of Luoyang and Bianjing. During the Southern Song dynasty, due to the relocation of the capital to the south, emphasis was placed on Heng Mountain. After the Ming dynasty, Beijing became the political center, and Northern Zhenshan Yiwulv Mountain held a higher status than other Zhenshan. This phenomenon reflects the dependence of the geographic political center on Zhenshan. Seeking the center in Zhenshan is a political system product of the “rule of law” society constructed by the coercive force centered on the will of the monarch, forming a geographical metaphor for the complete control of local areas by centralized and authoritarian monarchs, and consolidating the unified political order of the country (Figure 6).

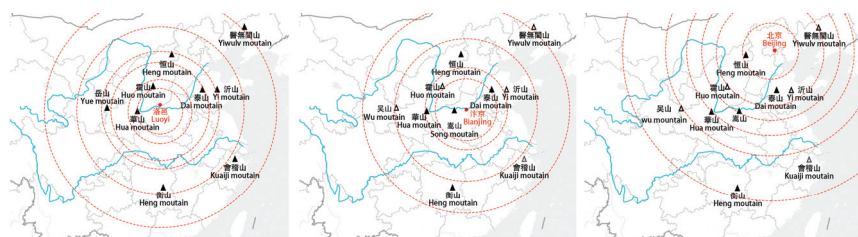


Figure 6. Seeking a central position for the capital in the Zhenshan.

The urban Zhenshan is identified based on Confucian education, the superposition of the aesthetic of mountains and rivers, and is a worship of “form” based on the Confucian

connotation and imagery of Zhenshan. By integrating Zhenshan with the construction of urban site selection and urban axis, and strengthening it through scenic elements such as pavilions, it becomes an important spatial coordinate for the organization of urban landscape spatial order. At the same time, urban Zhenshan serves as cultural sustenance for urban stability, prosperity, and governance, integrating local space and human life to form constraints on daily etiquette and becoming the spiritual coordinates of the city, thus forming a metaphorical constraint type of worship space.

In the identification of Zhenshan, the observation of “momentum” 勢, consideration of “form” 形, and selection of “direction” 向 are the three most basic requirements. Based on the theory of feng shui, through systematic observation of the mountain terrain and dragon veins, people generally choose peaks in the strong and connected mountain ranges as Zhenshan. Subsequently, based on visual and spatial perception, tall and well-shaped mountains with lush trees are chosen, and mountains resembling barriers, pen holders, and animals are favored to stimulate the spirituality of the city and mountains. In the selection of directions, based on the characteristics of China’s geographical climate, the best directions for Zhenshan are north, west, and northwest. The mountains in these three directions are used as supports and barriers. If there are no mountains in the northwest and north of the Zhenshan, Zhenshan will be selected from the corresponding direction of the city to fill the gap in psychological space.

In the construction of Zhenshan and urban metaphorical constrained worship space, urban site selection and urban axis shaping are two main approaches based on the Zhenshan system. In terms of urban site selection, some cities imitate the national five Yueshan and four Zhenshan, selecting one Zhenshan from each of the city’s multiple directions, forming a phenomenon of multiple Zhenshan. The city site selection is surrounded by the Zhenshan, strengthening the political metaphor of “seeking correction in the middle” and “connecting the god in the middle”. For example, Huizhou prefecture 徽州府 and its counties are all attached to the Huang Mountains 黄山, and most of them are in a multi-Zhenshan pattern. In Huizhou prefecture, Xiuning County 休寧縣, Yi County 黟縣, and Qimen County 祁門縣, each city is located in the relative center of the multi-Zhenshan, forming a spatial pattern of “city–mountain” worship built by the multi-Zhenshan (Figure 7).

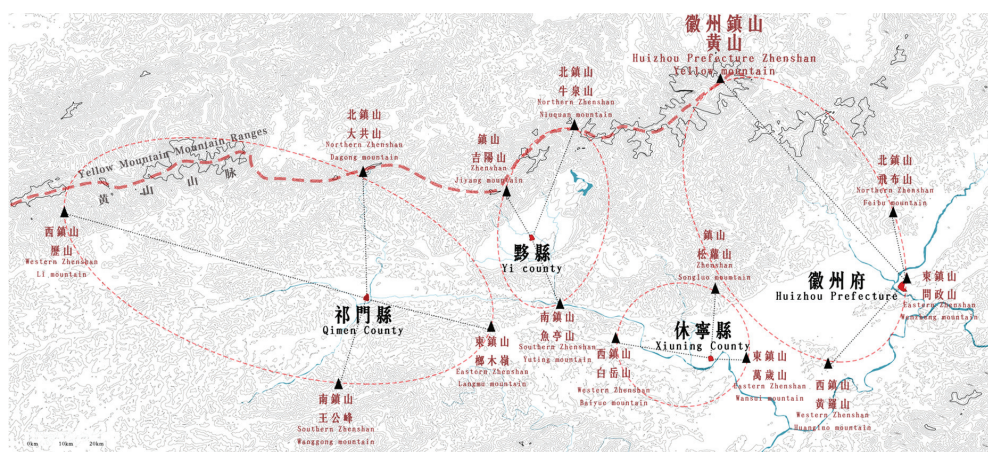


Figure 7. The spatial model of the “seeking a central position” model in the multi-Zhenshan of Huizhou prefecture.

The shaping of the urban axis imitated the model of observing and worshipping the axis of the main peak and temple in Zhenshan. By connecting urban administrative, cultural, and educational buildings with the axis, the line of sight of Zhenshan, a specific pattern is formed in space to internalize the external spatial order into the internal moral

order and self-restraint, thereby making the government's governance and education of people more sustainable and effective. Among them, Zhenshan are located in the northern part of the city, which is the most common "city-mountain" pattern. The northern Zhenshan are mostly the northern barriers and backers of the city, and the city's political and administrative center relies on the Zhenshan, symbolizing the rule of etiquette. The northern Zhenshan form the starting point of the axis connecting mountains and cities, and form a connection in the spatial sequence of ritual governance with urban elements such as government offices, drum towers 鼓樓, Qiao towers 譙樓, and main roads. Therefore, cities with no mountains to rely on in the north often stack artificial Zhenshan in the inner city or the northern part of the sub-city 子城, such as the Wansui Mountain 萬歲山 in the northern part of the Ming dynasty Beijing Imperial City and the Wudan Mountain 武擔山 in Chengdu as Zhenshan. Zhenshan, located in the southern part of the city, also play a certain role in the formation of the urban axis structure. In the Ming dynasty, Nanjing city used Niushou Mountain 牛首山 as its "Heavenly Gate" 天關, integrating the southern end of the city axis into nature. In Lu'an County 六安縣, since there are no mountains in the northern part of Lu'an and thus it can only rely on the mountains in the southern part of the city as a marking position for the spatial order of the city, Fan Shan 番山, as the landscape facing the political and administrative center of the city, guides the composition of the city axis, forming a composite of the functions and connotations of the Zhenshan and anshan 案山. In Xihuangshan 西嶺山, Mayang County, Hunan Province, "county schools face it, and it is called zhenshan", 縣學皆面之, 為邑鎮山. In Dongguan County, Guangdong Province, Wenbi Peak 文筆峰 is called Zhenshan, located in the southern part of the city, "Faced with county school" 邑學面之. These Zhenshan, located in the southern part of the city, serve as the backdrop for county schools, playing a driving role in shaping the urban cultural axis.

In reinforcement of urban metaphorical constraint worship space, the strengthening of the pattern of pavilions and towers is an important means of shaping the psychological field in feng shui theory to achieve spatial metaphor. At the same time, pavilions and other scenic elements of Zhenshan also provide local residents with scenic spots for climbing and sightseeing, embodying the spirit of urban mountains and forests, to enhance their love for mountains and their identification with the place. For example, the halls and pavilions of Wolong Mountain 臥龍山 in Shaoxing 紹興 are built on the basis of Zhenshan; on the Wulong Mountain 烏龍山 in Zhenshan, Yanzhou 嚴州, there are pavilions such as Yuquan Pavilion 玉泉亭, Liushang Pavilion 流觴亭, Xunyou Pavilion 尋幽亭, Jingxiu Pavilion 競秀亭, and Gaofeng Pavilion 高風亭. Furthermore, like the construction of pavilions in Jinshan 金山, Zhenshan of Chaozhou 潮州, as recorded in the *Records of Jinshan Pavilions* 《金亭山記》, "Xumi is the zhenshan of the world. Dai, Hua, Heng, and Heng are the zhenshan of China. Jinshan is the zhenshan of Chaojun. There are also pavilions and pavilions in Jinshan, where people have vitality...the three pavilions are called Ningyuan, Chengqu, and Piyun...Without pavilions, bamboo and wood, there would be no atmosphere like Jinshan, which is the atmosphere of Chaozhou", "須彌, 天下之鎮也。岱、華、衡、恒, 中國之鎮也。金山, 潮郡之鎮也。郡有鎮山, 猶人有元氣,即山之陽, 為亭者三, 曰凝遠、曰成趣、曰披雲...非亭樹竹木, 無以為金山之氣象, 實潮之氣象也". Through the construction of pavilions on Jinshan, the "atmosphere of Chaozhou" and "the harvest of agriculture and the prosperity of official transportation" are strengthened (Mao 2015).

5. The Dissemination of the Zhenshan System

The worship of mountains in neighboring overseas vassal states and the enfeoffment of overseas Zhenshan during the Ming dynasty were the main reasons for the influence of Chinese mountain worship overseas and the spread of the Zhenshan system in Asia. *History of Ming Dynasty*, "The Book of Rites" 《明史·禮志》, records the history of Emperor Taizu sending officials to offer sacrifices to various vassal states such as Annam 安南, Goryeo 高麗, Champa 占城, Ryukyu 琉球, Zhenla 真臘, Siam 暹羅, Suoli 鎖裏, Sanfoqi 三佛齊, Juava 爪哇, Japan, and Boni 渤泥. "According to the officials, the moun-

ains and rivers in each province face south from the center, while foreign mountains seeking a central position worshipped together on the same altar. The worship of his kingdom's mountains and rivers was stipulated in the 13th year of the Hongwu reign", "又從禮官言，各省山川居中南向，外國山川東西向，同壇共祀。其王國山川之祀，洪武十三年定制". And the system of mountain and river worship was extended overseas. During Zheng He's 鄭和 voyages to the Western Seas, he bestowed upon the various overseas vassal states the title of Zhenshan: Mount Xishan was enfeoffed as the Zhenshan of Man Ci Jia 滿刺加國, Mount Changning 長寧 was enfeoffed as the Zhenshan of Bohai 渤泥國, Mount in Kezhi 柯枝 was enfeoffed as the Zhenshan of Kezhi 柯枝, and Mount Shouan 壽安山 was enfeoffed as the Zhenshan of Japan.

The enshrinement of the overseas Zhenguo Mountain reflects the Ming dynasty's sense of unity among the feudal lords. At the same time, Zhenshan has political and military deterrence. And some of the weaker states took the initiative to ask to be enshrined in order to obtain the protection and support of the Ming dynasty. The enshrinement of the overseas Zhenguo Mountain not only facilitated the implementation of the Ming dynasty's tribute policy, it also promoted the stability and social and cultural development of countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia (He 1997). The awarding of calendars, crowns, costumes, rituals, and imperial examination systems to the enshrinement of the Zhenshan Kingdom, as well as the gift of books, musical instruments, and weights and measures, as well as the permission for tribute trade with China, reflect the historical tradition and foreign policy of "The selfless contribution of the king to the outside world is a manifestation of Wang's morality", "王者無外，王德之體", and thus create a magnificent situation of "All nations are all guests, and the world will be peaceful", "萬國鹹賓天下治平", in a prosperous imperial dynasty. This embodies the Chinese civilization's expectation for the world to be unified in harmony, with no boundaries between the inside and outside, regarded as one, and to be renowned far and wide in Suining.

At the same time, enshrining the overseas Zhenshan also had a certain impact on the vassal states. In addition to the Zhenshan enshrined by the Ming dynasty, other countries also developed their own local Zhenshan, which influenced the spatial construction of the city to a certain extent. Essentially, the local Zhenshan of other countries were similar to China's metaphorically constrained worship space, relying on the political imagery of Zhenshan to play a role in spatial indoctrination. Among them, the country of Korea had the most profound and extensive influence. The *Records of the Four Barbarians* (《四夷廣記》) and *Korean Annals* (《朝鮮志》) extensively record the cities and towns of Korea, such as "Songyue is the zhenshan of Kaesongfu", "開城府是為京畿道設留守官松嶽其鎮山也"; "Tianma mountain is the zhenshan of dingzhou", "定州其鎮山為天馬山"; "Tianshan county's zhenshan is xionggu mountain", "鐵山郡其鎮山為熊骨山"; "Sanjiao mountain is zhenshan of the capital city", "三角山實京城之鎮山也"; and "Longgu Mountain, also known as Longhu Mountain, is the zhenshan located in Dongbali Town, Longchuan County, Ping'an Road", "龍骨山，一名龍虎山在平安道龍川郡東八裏鎮山". The naming method, description of the situation, and relationship with the order of the city of Zhenshan are very similar to those of the Chinese city of Zhenshan. In addition, according to Vietnam's *Revised Vietnam Illustrated Book* (《重訂越南圖說》), "Mount Bonan is located within the territory of the newly established Nanpan Kingdom. The mountain is very high and serves as zhenshan". In the *Annals of the Ryukyu Islands* (《使琉球紀》) there are also records of local Zhenshan, which shows the impact of enshrining overseas mountain worship on the country's own Zhenshan worship system.

6. Conclusions

Chinese worship space constructed on the basis of natural order incorporates the relationship between humans, gods, and nature into a unified picture of harmonious existence, of which Zhenshan is a typical representative. In the process of the generation and development of Zhenshan, the continuity of natural divinity across primitive societies was its basic premise. In the late period of tribal alliances, mountain worship was com-

bined with politics. With the unification of national geography and the establishment of national systems, mountain worship gradually attached itself to symbols of hierarchy, territory, and national stability, culminating in the formation of the concept of Zhenshan in the Zhou dynasty. In the historical development process dominated by Confucianism as the political concept, the Zhenshan concept was finally officially integrated into the national mountain worship system and the Zhenshan worship system was established. At the same time, with the gradual stabilization of the national governance structure, the imagery of Zhenshan was strengthened toward the direction of indoctrination and was gradually integrated into local beliefs and combined with feng shui theory, landing in local spatial practice. Ultimately, corresponding to the national mountain worship system and the local “city–mountain” system, the worship space of Zhenshan forms two types, temple sacrifice type and metaphorical constraint type. Among them, the metaphorical constraint type of worship space has the uniqueness of the Chinese mountain worship space. Based on the fixed imagery of Zhenshan, it plays a role in education through site selection and urban spatial order construction. Finally, based on the political means of sending officials to worship the mountains and rivers of their vassals, Zhenshan generated overseas dissemination and had a certain influence on mountain worship practices and mountain worship space in East Asian countries.

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Article

Food and Monastic Space: From Routine Dining to Sacred Worship—Comparative Review of Han Buddhist and Cistercian Monasteries Using Guoqing Si and Poblet Monastery as Detailed Case Studies

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Abstract: Through an exploration of meal regulations, dining rituals, and monastic rules of Han Buddhist and Cistercian monks, this article discusses how food affects space formation, layout organization, and site selection in monastic venues using Guoqing Si and Poblet Monastery as detailed case studies. The dining rituals, such as guotang and the Refectory, transform daily routines into acts of worship and practice, particularly within the palace-like dining spaces. Monastic rules and the concept of cleanliness influence the layout of monastic spaces, effectively distinguishing between sacred and secular areas. The types of food, influenced by self-sufficiency and food taboos, impact the formation of monasteries in the surrounding landscape, while the diligent labor of monks in cultivating the wilderness contributes to the sanctity of the venues. By employing anthropology as a tool for field observation and considering architectural design as a holistic mindset, this article concludes that due to the self-sufficiency of monastic lives, monks establish a sustainable agri-food space system. This ensures that food production, waste management, water utilization, food processing, and meal consumption can be sustainable practices. Food taboos are determined by the understanding of purity in both religions, leading to the establishment of a distinct spatial order for food between the sacred and secular realms. Ultimately, ordinary meals are consumed within extraordinary dining spaces, providing monks with a silent and sacred eating atmosphere. Under the overall influence of food, both monasteries have developed their own food spatial systems, and the act of dining has transformed from a daily routine to a sacred worship.

Keywords: monastic space; self-sufficiency; purity; agri-food space system; food spatial order; unusual dining space

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1. Introduction

1.1. Study Background and Objectives

“Though eating is essential to continued life, both the use of food and intentional abstention from it are cultural practices revealed as the means of expression of powerful emotions”. (Mintz 1996, p. 69)

Food holds paramount importance for human beings, and the significance of meals is universally evident across various cultures, particularly in religious contexts. Numerous anthropologists specializing in food studies have extensively researched this aspect, dedicated to exploring how we connect to the world through our food. Given that research on food is mainly approached from the perspectives of social history, ethnography, and anthropology, exploring the social and cultural significance of food, British anthropologist Goody (1982) summarized the study of food anthropology into three major tendencies: the functional approach (emphasizing the socializing functions of food), the structural approach (seeking underlying structures behind food), and cultural approaches (unearthing cultural codes within society). Representative works include “Land, Labour and Meal

in Northern Rhodesia” by Richards and Institute (1939), “The Raw and the Cooked” by Lévi-Strauss et al. (1969), and “Purity and Danger” by Douglas (1966). Peng and Xiao (2011) summarized the anthropological study of food into the following four aspects: basic functions, spiritual attributes, cultural identity, and relationship with the ecological environment.

Even though disciplines like anthropology and sociology have extensively examined various aspects of food in society, there seems to be a lack of comprehensive consideration regarding how food influences the spaces in which it is consumed, particularly in religious contexts. Scholars researching religious food tend to focus on specific aspects, such as sacrifice (Smith 1889), taboo (Frazer 1890), purity (Douglas 1966), origins (Visser 1991), and dining rituals (Shi 2020), without thoroughly exploring how these practices impact the spatial arrangements of religious sites. This limited approach hinders a holistic understanding of the relationship between food and space within religious settings. On the other hand, architectural researchers studying monastic dining spaces tend to prioritize the examination of the architecture itself (Wolfgang 1980), neglecting a broader exploration of the spatial aspects of food from an anthropological perspective. This oversight means that the influence of food on the internal dynamics of religious venues remains underexplored in architectural research.

To address these gaps, there is a need for interdisciplinary research that bridges the fields of anthropology, sociology, and architecture. By combining insights from these disciplines, one can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how food practices and beliefs shape the spatial arrangements of religious venues. This holistic approach would shed light on the intricate relationship between food and the monastic built environment, enriching our understanding of how monks interact with and respond to food within their spaces. For example, how do monks transform their approach to meals from the mundane to the spiritual? Is it through concepts, precepts, or rituals? Since a meal serves as an important component of religious life, what impact does it have on the formation of religious space? Apart from dedicated dining spaces, in what other ways does a meal influence the formation and layout of the environment for spiritual practice? This study tries to explore the spatial structure of food, specifically how its influence on religious life is reflected tangibly and intangibly in the space formation, layout organization, and even site selection of monastic venues.

Before delving into the elaboration of this research, it is necessary to provide an explanation regarding the selection of research objects, research methods, and scope.

1.2. Research Objects, Methods, and Scope

1.2.1. Selection of Research Objects

The selection of Han Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries as the primary research objects is based on the following three reasons:

1. Similarity in monastic life and spatial correspondence: choosing these two as research objects is motivated by their similar monastic practices and spatial correspondences (Wang 2023). The similarities in their way of life and spatial arrangements provide a comparative basis for understanding the influence of food on the formation of religious venues.
2. Emphasis on self-sufficient religious lives: both Han Buddhist and Cistercian monks place a high emphasis on self-sufficiency in their religious lives, particularly in essential elements such as water (Wang and Feng 2023) and food, which can be handled and cultivated by the monks themselves. The ability to achieve food self-sufficiency is crucial for the sustainability of their way of life.
3. Comparative analysis as the analytical framework: comparative research serves as the fundamental structure of this study, allowing for the identification of universal principles. The author has already discussed this analytical approach in detail in another article (Wang 2021), and it will not be further elaborated upon here.

These reasons support the selection of Han Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries as research objects and provide a foundation for understanding the impact of food on space formation, layout organization, and site selection.

Furthermore, Guoqing Si and Poblet Monastery will serve as exemplary cases for studying the relationship between food and space. It should be noted that as important architectural cultural heritage, they have evolved continuously over a long historical period, evident in their architectural scale and specific spatial arrangements. Given that previous scholars have provided detailed records of the history and architectural evolution of both monasteries (Finestres y de Monsalvo and Guitert i Fontseré 1947; Altisent 1974; Guandín *n.d.*; Ding 1995), and the author has conducted in-depth analyses of their spatial layout and the ideal plans referenced (Wang 2021, 2023), this article will not repeat the discussion. On the other hand, for this study, the correspondence between life and space is the main research focus. Due to the stable influence of religious regulations, this correspondence possesses permanence, serving as a core principle that withstands the test of history. Therefore, analyses and theoretical models can be established from the perspectives of space formation, layout organization, and site selection. This spatial theoretical model will not undergo significant changes over time, especially when viewed from the perspective of human dietary habits. Despite significant technological and societal changes, human needs for food maintain a relatively simple relationship with nature.

Therefore, this study aims to establish a spatial model of food in monasteries, depicting the complete relationship between the cognition of food and the formation of monastic space and analyzing how dining is transformed from daily routine to sacred worship.

1.2.2. Research Methods

(1) Using anthropology as a tool for field observation

As meals hold a crucial role in religious life, adopting an anthropological approach is necessary to observe its significance throughout the entire chain. The monks' attitudes toward food influence how it is obtained, handled, and utilized in their daily lives. Furthermore, the monastic space is intricately linked to the behavioral activities of the monks. In addition to its functional aspect, the religious teachings and cultural symbolism associated with food are manifested in various monastic rituals, which, in turn, are connected to the importance of space. Out of consideration for the sacred and secular aspects of space, food also influences the monastic layout. Ultimately, food is a fundamental necessity upon which human life depends. The availability of water and food is intertwined with the monks' diligent efforts and is embedded within the potential of the surrounding environment where the monastery is located. Conversely, the selection of specific types of food required for religious practices influences the formation of the landscape surrounding the monastery. Therefore, the correspondence between space and life (time) requires anthropological involvement for observation and interpretation.

(2) Viewing architecture design with a holistic mindset

Architectural design thinking functions as an invisible hand, guiding and regulating the site selection, layout organization, and space formation in religious venues. Architecture acts as a medium that bridges the gap between the natural environment and us. Adopting an architectural design approach with a holistic mindset in research involves considering various factors such as human experiences, environmental constructions, behavioral habits, rules and regulations, religious symbolism, and construction methods. It transcends a superficial understanding of individual elements and places them within a broader context, observing them from a comprehensive spatial dimension. This holistic approach aids in understanding the overall relationships between food and space. It enables a comprehensive comprehension of the interconnections between form, function, environment, and human experience.

1.2.3. Research Scope

Through an anthropological perspective and viewing architecture design with a holistic mindset, a deep examination of the role of food in the daily and spiritual lives of monasteries leads to the development of a unique spatial model specific to monastic food practices. The objective of this study is to integrate existing foundations of food anthropology research and studies on monastic dining spaces, with the aim of proposing a research paradigm for the study of the spatial structure of food.

2. From Routine to Worship

“He does not eat meat or take intoxicating drinks”, “nor vegetables of the five kinds of astringent smell” [including garlic, leeks, onions]. Hence, no unpleasant smell comes about [on the breath]. He is always respected and given offerings, honoured and praised by gods and humans. (T12n0374 2007, p. 160)

For Han Buddhists, according to The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra (大般涅槃经, written around 420–479), *“One who eats meat kills the seed of great compassion”* (T12n0374 2007, p. 52). Adhering to a vegetarian meal is considered an expression of compassion. However, not all types of vegetarian food are permissible; the consumption of the “five acrid and strong-smelling vegetables”, which include garlic, asafoetida, shallot, leek, and allium, is prohibited due to their strong odor. Monks are one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and symbolize the embodiment of the Buddha’s teachings in the world. Avoiding these strongly aromatic foods is important to maintain the appropriate image of monks.

In addition, when it comes to beverages, alcoholic drinks are strictly prohibited. This is because they have the potential to arouse sexual desires or create temptations in the hearts of monks.

“My disciples, if you intentionally drink alcohol, there is no limit to the mistakes and violations you will make. If with your own hand you pass the wine bottle to another, you will be born without hands for five hundred lifetimes—how much worse if you drink the wine yourself? You should not encourage any person to drink, nor any sentient being to do so; how much worse if you yourself drink alcohol yourself? If you intentionally drink, or encourage someone else to do so, you have committed a minor transgression of the precepts”. (T1484 2017, pp. 48–49)

Very similar to Han Buddhists, according to the Rule of St. Benedict—set by an Italian abbot, Benedict of Nursia, in the sixth century—while still fundamental in monks’ daily life, Cistercian monks also adhere to a simple lifestyle to prevent their hearts from becoming *“weighted down with surfeiting”* (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931).

“And let all abstain entirely from the eating of the flesh of quadrupeds, altogether excepting from this rule the weak and the sick ... neither surfeiting nor drunkenness creep in” (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931). Therefore, vegetarian food becomes their primary choice to restrain their desires. However, for weak or sick monks, meat is allowed as a means to supplement nutrition and aid in their recovery. *“let the eating of flesh meat be conceded to the sick and especially to those who are weak, for their recuperation; but when they shall have got better let them all abstain from flesh meat as usual”* (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931). Although monks were permitted to drink wine, moderation was always emphasized. It was important not to overindulge or misuse alcohol. Because *“Wine makes even the wise to fall away”* (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931).

In addition to the regulations on food, there are also detailed guidelines about at what hours the brethren ought to have their meals. These guidelines regarding mealtimes align with the principles of working at sunrise and resting at sunset, reflecting the agricultural society of the time. The Rule of St. Benedict specifies, *“From holy Easter until Pentecost, let the brethren dine at the sixth hour and sup about sunset ... And indeed on all occasions let the hour,*

whether of supper or dinner, be so suitably arranged that everything be done by daylight” (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931).

Based on the regulations formulated by both religions, the food choices they make have several common characteristics: (1) Self-Sufficiency: both religions emphasize a self-sufficient lifestyle, where monks rely on their own labor to obtain food relatively easily. (2) Clean and Healthful: the selected food is clean and healthful, ensuring that it has no negative impact on the body and the image of the monks. (3) Moderation: there is an emphasis on the quantification of meals and avoiding excessive eating, which helps monks maintain self-discipline and reduces the likelihood of succumbing to lustful desires. (4) Mealtime Routine: the timing of meals is set as a routine closely related to the daily work schedule of the monks. This structured approach to mealtime ensures a disciplined lifestyle and facilitates the synchronization of their spiritual practices and daily responsibilities.

Overall, these commonalities in food regulations reflect the shared values of simplicity, discipline, and mindfulness in the monastic lives of both Han Buddhist and Cistercian monks. In addition to regulations regarding food, ensuring a solemn and orderly dining process is also of great importance in both religions. Both Han Buddhist and Cistercian traditions have specific guidelines and procedures for their dining rituals, which are closely related to the characteristics of the dining spaces themselves. The cases of the Zhaitang of Guoqing Si and the Refectory of the Poblet Monastery are going to be discussed below.

2.1. Ritual and Worship Space

2.1.1. Zhaitang and Refectory

“Thus fountains became receptacles of living water, darters became chambers of sleep, chapter-houses enshrined the gravity and solemnity of chapter-sittings, and refectories the importance ascribed to the common meal in the regimen of ascetics. The meagre fare was eaten in princely dining-halls, which sometimes rivalled churches in their size and magnificence”. (Wolfgang 1980, p. 97).

Although both Han Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries adopt rectangular floor plans for their dining spaces, similar to their worship spaces (Wang 2021), there are differences in the entrance approach between them. In Han Buddhist monasteries, the emphasis is on the horizontal extension of the space, where one enters from the long side of the building. On the other hand, in Cistercian monasteries, the entrance is from the short side, emphasizing the vertical depth of the space. In terms of architectural composition, both types of buildings can be categorized into two types: standalone structures (Figures 1 and 2) or buildings with functional spaces on the upper levels (Figures 3 and 4). While standalone buildings and composite structures may differ in the perception of internal space ambiance, their floor plans exhibit similarities due to the pursuit of practicality and operational ritual requirements.



Figure 1. Zhaitang as standalone building in Tiantong Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 2. Refectory as standalone building in the Monastery of Huerta. Photo by the author.



Figure 3. Zhaitang with upper floor in Qita Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 4. Refectory with upper floor in Oliva Monastery. Image cited from Monasterio de la Oliva, <https://www.monasteriodelaoliva.org/nuestra-vida/>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

In Guoqing Si, the monks' dining hall is called Juxian Ge (聚贤阁), which translates to "Hall of Gathering Virtuous Beings". This name signifies that the hall is meant to host all the saints or virtuous individuals. In other monasteries, a similar dining hall may be referred to as Wuguan Tang (五观堂), which means the Hall of the Five Contemplations. It refers to a specific hall or space in a monastery where monks gather to recite and practice the Five Contemplations before and after meals. Or it may be referred to as the Zhaitang (斋堂), which means the place for vegetarian meals in the monastery. Zhai, according to the research by Yan (2007, pp. 296–310), can be referred to as vegetarian meals, dining rituals, practice precepts, and Buddhist vegetarian feasts. In this article, the dining space in Han Buddhist monasteries is uniformly referred to as the Zhaitang.

The Zhaitang is situated on the first east axis of Guoqing Si, perpendicular to the central axis where the main temples for Buddha worship are located (Figure 5). It has two floors and five bays (Figure 6). The first floor serves as a dining hall for monks, while the second floor is used for storage, known as Kufang (库房). It measures 24 m in length and 11 m in width, with three doors on the south wall (Figure 7). The interior layout is closely related to the rituals of dining. Monks are divided into two groups, called Dongxu (东序) and Xixu (西序), sitting and eating face to face (Figure 8). The Abbot sits in the central place, in front of which there is a Buddha statue with six futons for pilgrims to offer their adorations (Figure 9). In the south of the Zhaitang, there is a wide corridor with two large stone basins for monks to wash their hands and clean their mouths before and after meals (Figure 10). The spacious courtyard in the south also serves as a space for monks to walk around after meals and is also used for drying rice.



Figure 5. Aerial view of Guoqing Si, with the red box indicating the Zhaitang. Photo by the author.

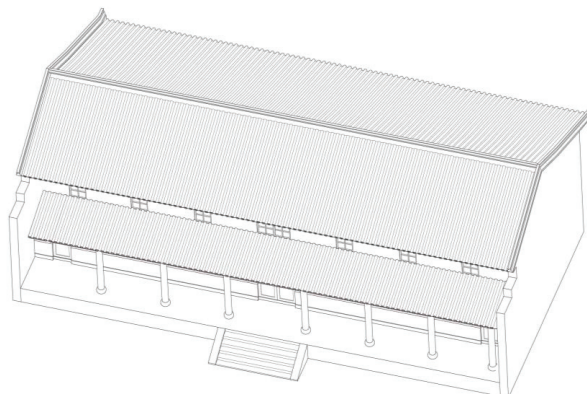


Figure 6. Axonometric view of Zhaitang. Drawn by the author.

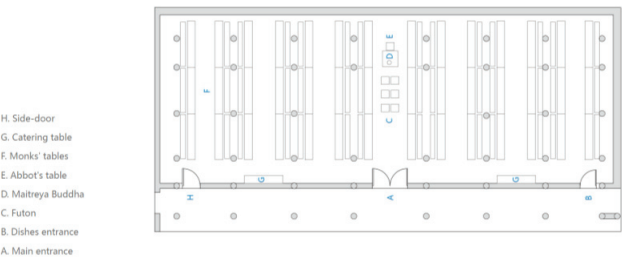


Figure 7. Plan of the Zhaitang. Drawn by the author.

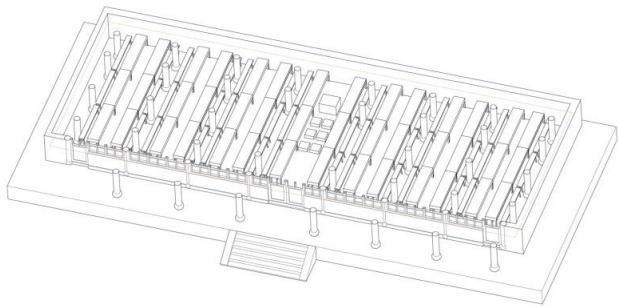


Figure 8. Axonometric section of the Zhaitang. Drawn by the author.



Figure 9. The interior of Zhaitang. Photo by the author.



Figure 10. The courtyard in front of Zhaitang. Photo by the author.

The Refectory is located on the north gallery of the Cloister of Poblet Monastery (Figure 11). Its floor is rectangular, measuring 36 m in length by 12 m in width (Figure 12). Apart from the church, the Refectory is the most splendid building in the Cloister (Figure 13). The great chamber is covered by a slightly pointed stone barrel vault (Figure 14), indicating its original construction date around the 12th century, close to the Romanesque style. Three sturdy ribbed arches are sustained by plain capitals, which leave a spacious and pillar-free interior. Just in front of the Refectory, there is a fountain pavilion constructed at the same time as the Refectory (Figure 15), where monks used to wash their hands before entering the Refectory after working in the fields. The sense of spaciousness in the interior is further emphasized by placing monks' dining tables along the three walls. It is understandable that the abbot's seat is once again located in the center of the north wall, under the Cross of Jesus, directly opposite the entrance to the Refectory. A pulpit is built into the thick east wall, where a monk on duty can access the high platform through a narrow stair hidden in the wall and read sacred books, history, hagiographies (lives of saints), and biographies, while the rest of the community eats in silence (Figure 16).



Figure 11. Aerial view of Poblet Monastery, with the red box indicating the Refectory. Photo by the author.

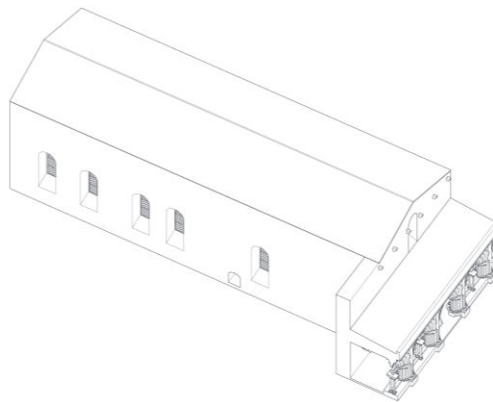


Figure 12. Axonometric view of the Refectory. Drawn by the author.

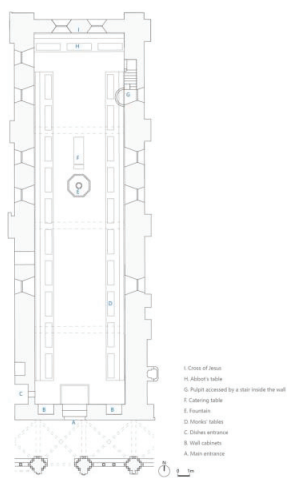


Figure 13. Plan of the Refectory. Drawn by the author.

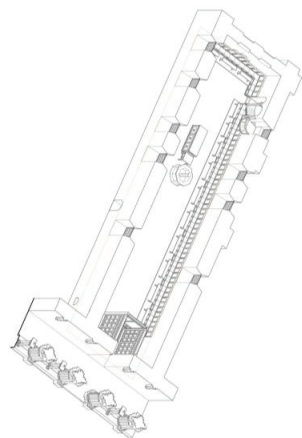


Figure 14. Axonometric section of the Refectory. Drawn by the author.

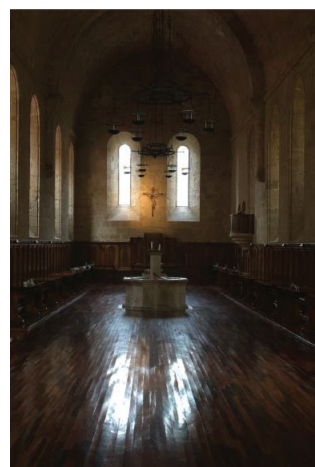


Figure 15. Interior setting of the Refectory. Photo by the author.



Figure 16. Pulpit of the Refectory. Photo by the author.

Both the Zhaitang and the Refectory adopt the dining form of a divided meal system, with tables placed symmetrically in two rows. This ritual act of dividing the meal system is in line with the spatial form of the building, which is symmetrical in the central axis and accentuates the centrality of the building. In the center are the abbot and the prior, and in front or above them are the statues of Maitreya and Jesus on the Cross. Clearly, in a space like the dining hall, the distinction between the sacred and secular order is also evident, with the sacred elements occupying the central and highest positions. Next in importance are the abbot and the monks on both sides.

In China, the divided meal system is also a deeply traditional practice. An example can be found in the Main Chamber of Cave 61 in the Mogao Grottoes, where the lower section of the mural from the Five Dynasties period (A.D. 907–960) depicts fifteen panels illustrating Buddhist stories of secular life. The thirteenth panel, “The Marriage of the Crown Prince” (Figure 17), portrays a feast for guests, with two rows of people sitting facing each other and the host seated in the middle. For Cistercians, we can observe a similar arrangement in the printmaking of the Refectory at Port-Royal des Champs (Figure 18), where nuns are shown having their meals in the Refectory, seated in two rows.



Figure 17. The Marriage of the Crown Prince in the Cave 61 in the Mogao Grottoes. Cited from Digital Dunhuang, <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0061>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.



Figure 18. Horthemels, Louise-Magdeleine (1686–1767). Réfectoire de Port-Royal des Champs [Image fixe]: [estampe]/Magd Horthemels sculp. (1709–1710). Cited from <https://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb44485244r>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

The advantage of the divided meal system is that it keeps distance among monks and avoids unnecessary conversations and physical contact. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the sacredness of the central space. The Refectory is intended to be a sacred and solemn space, not meant for traditional lively feasts or gatherings. Instead, it is more like the interior arrangement of a court (Figure 19), resembling a solemn parliament where monks listen to the voice of the Lord, express gratitude, reflect, and repent. The monks sit against two walls, leaving an empty space in the middle. In contrast, during gatherings, the food occupies the central position (Figure 20), surrounded by people, with pathways for passage and service. In fact, only during specific rituals, such as offering to the heavens (Figure 21) or the distribution of the Eucharist (Figure 22), does the food offered to the Buddha and the food representing the flesh and blood of God occupy the central position. It is often the peak moment of food consumption in the monasteries during these occasions.

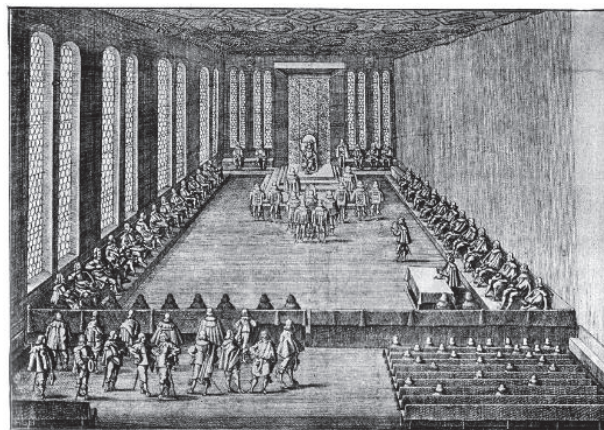


Figure 19. Meeting of the Perpetual Imperial Diet in Regensburg in 1640, after an engraving by Matthäus Merian. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_Count. Accessed on 17 July 2023.



Figure 20. Gala dinner on the occasion of a coronation feast in the historic Roemer building in Frankfurt am Main. Cited from <https://www.abebooks.com/art-prints/%C2%84Kostbares-Tractament-welches-Ihro-R%C3%B6m-Kayserl/31539509644/bd>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.



Figure 21. Offering to the heavens in Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 22. Distribution of the Eucharist in the Oliva Monastery. Cited from the Monastery of Oliva, <https://www.monasteriodelaoliva.org/nuestra-vida/>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

2.1.2. Guotang and Refectory

Both in Han Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries, dining spaces are exclusively dedicated and independent, and their importance in terms of space is second only to worship space. Although the food is usual, the way of obtaining a meal is an unusual event in the monk’s daily life. Just as Wolfgang (1980) said, “meagre fare was eaten in princely dinning-halls”. Therefore, in both monasteries, the dining hall serves as another crucial place to realize religious practice instead of being merely a canteen.

“The dining ritual is not only a meal ceremony but also a Dharma event. Firstly, there are offerings to the Buddha and offerings to all sentient beings, followed by the dining of monks. The entire process appears very solemn and serene”. (Shi 2020, p. 86)

In Han Buddhist monasteries, the process of monks' dining is referred to as “guotang” (过堂). The term “guotang” encompasses the entire process of monks entering the dining hall, taking their seats, eating, and leaving after finishing their meals (Figure 23). In detail, when the wooden Bang (big wooden fish) and the cloud board (cloud-shaped iron plate) hanging in front of the Zhaitang are struck, monks lined up in two rows and entered the Zhaitang. If there are pilgrims, then monks have to walk in front, and pilgrims follow behind. Further, male and female pilgrims have to be separated. Once entering the Zhaitang, monks sit on two sides, while the abbot sits in the center, behind the statue of Maitreya Buddha. In the same way that traditional Chinese rituals begin with offering sacrifices and then proceeding to the feast, from the contents of the Ritual of Midday and Noon Meals (二時臨齋儀), it can be understood that before offering the morning and noon meals, the first step is to make offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Then, food is offered to sentient beings in the hungry ghost realm. Following that, offerings are made to the Sangha (the community of monks and nuns) and other practitioners. Finally, at the conclusion of the ritual, the merits generated from the offerings are dedicated through the Dharma (teachings) to those who have provided alms and food as acts of generosity.



Figure 23. Process of guotang in the Buddhist monastery. Photo by the author.

During the dining, Wuguan is closely related to monastic religious discipline, which means monks have to practice the Five Contemplations during eating. In short, monks have to be grateful for the hard-won food, reflect on one's own merits; one's virtue and cultivation; whether one can bear the food and treat the food equally; prevent the three thoughts of greed, hatred, and ignorance; and have righteous thoughts about the food. Usually, food is considered good medicine for curing physical hunger, and eating helps to prolong life and is good for practice.¹ Generally, there is a couplet in the Zhaitang, “If you have Dharma in your heart when you eat, even gold can be digested; otherwise, a drop of water will be difficult to swallow (五观若明金易化, 三心未了水难消)”.

Monks must uphold righteous thoughts when eating so that distracting thought will not dominate their hearts. For them, the symbolic meaning of food has exceeded its deliciousness. Corresponding to this is a set of rigorous rituals. The signal to eat is sent by the

instrument. For Buddhist monks, eating is a simple and quick issue that usually lasts less than 15 min, which means the meal is quite simple (Figure 24). During the dining, if monks have any requirement for food, they have to express their needs through gestures instead of speaking (Figure 25). Once the meal is over, monks have to recite again and walk in two rows to leave the Zhaitang. According to Buddhist precepts, there are only two meals a day, in the morning and at noon, and no more food is consumed after noon. Based on this, Han Buddhists also adhere to the requirements of vegetarianism. However, due to the self-sustaining life in the monastery, some monks who work as laborers still need a meal at night to supplement their physical strength. This dinner is called “medicinal food” and is eaten purely to maintain good health.



Figure 24. Simple vegetarian meal. Photo by the author.

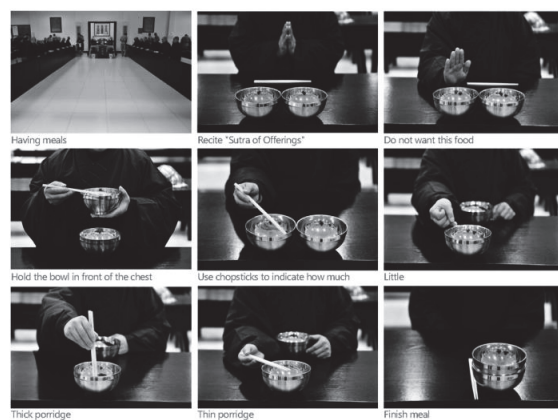


Figure 25. Gestures to express food requests in Han Buddhist monasteries. Cited from the journal of Ren Shi Jian 人世间, by Monk Yunxiang. <http://www.oliannnews.com/xsjl/2018/09-21/244199.shtml>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

“Let the deepest silence be maintained that no whispering or voice be heard except that of the reader alone. But let the brethren so help each other to what is needed for eating and drinking, that no one need ask for anything. If, however, anything should be wanted, let it be asked for by means of a sign of any kind rather than a sound. And that no one presume to ask any questions there, either about the book or anything else, in order that no cause to speak be given [to the devil] (Eph 4:27; 1 Tm 5:14), unless, perchance, the Superior wisheth to say a few words for edification”. (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931)

In Cistercian monasteries, the process of monks eating is referred to as “refectory”. It is a communal meal that monks eat in silence and humility, during which a monk reads from the Bible or other spiritual texts. Monks are not allowed to talk during the meal since this practice is meant to encourage self-reflection and a deeper connection with God. The meals served in the Refectory are typically simple and vegetarian, reflecting the monks’ commitment to living a life of simplicity and austerity. The Refectory is not only a time for nourishing the body but also the soul, as the monks strive to deepen their spiritual connection while partaking in their meals. Vegetarian food (Figure 26) is preferred by Cistercian monks, except “the very weak and the sick abstain altogether from eating the flesh of four-footed animals”. Monks’ daily life is full of gravity and rituals, and eating is no exception. The Rule of St. Benedict regulates the quantity of food and drink that a monk should take and sets the rule in detail on how to proceed with the process of eating.



Figure 26. Types of meals in Cistercian monasteries.

In the Poblet Monastery, breakfast is served buffet-style, allowing monks to choose the food they want. The meal typically includes soup, muesli, bread, fruit, cheese, coffee, milk, yogurt, and other items. After breakfast, everyone washes their own dishes. Breakfast is simple and typically lasts for 15 minutes, from 8:45 to 9:00. The Abbot gives a brief speech, mainly for the blessing of the food, and then rings a bell on the table to signal the start of the meal. Lunch is a more formal affair and lasts for half an hour, from 13:15 to 13:45. Monks take turns working in the kitchen, with two monks preparing the food, two serving the plates, and one reading from a spiritual text. After lunch, another two monks wash the dishes. Before lunch, the Abbot gives a short speech of around two minutes, mainly for the blessing of the food. Then, a monk on duty can access the high platform through a narrow stair hidden in the wall and read for around five minutes from a religious text or a book about Christian life. The rest of the monks sit in their assigned seats, waiting for the food to be served, listening, and eating. When they finish lunch, the Abbot gives thanks, and the monks raise their voices in agreement by saying “Amen”. Lunch usually consists of three courses, with the first being soup, macaroni, salad, or potatoes; the second being fish or meat; and the third being dessert, fruit, or flan. At each table, there is a bottle of wine for three monks, although they typically only drink a small amount. Dinner is similar to lunch and also lasts for half an hour, from 20:30 to 21:00. However, during the entire mealtime, monks are not allowed to speak. If they need anything regarding their food, they express it through gestures (Figure 27).



Figure 27. Gestures to express food requests in Cistercian monasteries. Cited from the book *The Cistercian sign language: A study in non-verbal communication* by Robert A. Barakat (1975).

Both for Han Buddhist and Cistercian monks, the regulation of dining serves the purpose of emphasizing the internal order of the religious community. Group living requires the establishment of order to ensure effective organization. We can imagine that in a monastery where more than 100 monks live, if everyone eats and talks freely, then the mealtime is as chaotic as a vegetable market. The rituals effectively control the pace of dining, with the monks starting and ending their meals at the same time. The detailed regulations regarding food also indicate that the monks do not have the freedom to choose food arbitrarily. Instead, they can only select the type and quantity of food within the prescribed guidelines. Therefore, the whole process of dining is a regulated and ritualistic one considered part of their spiritual practice.

2.1.3. Daily Routine and Daylight

Even though the Zhaitang and the Refectory have the same function, the way they organize the interior layout is quite different. The light of the Zhaitang only comes from the south facade, so in this scenario, the Buddha statue is fully illuminated from the front, while the monks are illuminated from the side. This is similar to the Mahavira Hall, where the scale of the Buddha and humans are distinguished through the organization of lighting. In the Zhaitang, the southern window fully illuminates the space. The height of the window is higher than the seated eye level, preventing monks from looking outside or being disturbed by passersby.

"The Cistercians made an innovation in the placing of their refectory. It was built at right angles to the cloister, probably less for the commonly asserted reason of giving it more light, than to leave room for a kitchen between the refectory and the house of the conversi".
(Wolfgang 1980, p. 76)

Windows on the façade of Cistercian monasteries are also attached with importance. This is not only for aesthetics but also for lighting the interior for monks to proceed with the rituals of the Refectory: *"they will not need lamp-light during their meal; but let everything be finished whilst it is still day. But at all times let the hour of meals, whether for dinner or for supper, be so arranged that everything is done by daylight"* (Clarke and Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1931). Therefore, the Refectory is generally set in the north–south orientation and arranged perpendicular to the church, which satisfies the need for lighting and avoids

the impact of noise and smell on the church as much as possible. In the Refectory, there are high windows on all four walls to ensure that everyone's face is illuminated. Light is considered a symbol of God, under which monks receive their food. It is worth noting that the integrity of the space and the division of sacredness and secularity are again limited by the position of the window.

In both cases, the windows are higher than the monks' heads, suggesting the space of divinity (Figures 28 and 29). Monks are not expected to communicate with the exterior through the windows. In other words, the windows in both cases serve more for illumination and ventilation, allowing monks to concentrate on their dining rituals without being distracted.



Figure 28. Windows are higher than the seated eye level in the Zhaitang. Photo by the author.



Figure 29. Windows are higher than the seated eye level in the Refectory. Photo by the author.

In the ideal plan (Figure 30), the earliest surviving plan of a complete Benedictine monastery drawn in 816, the Refectory is parallel to the church, and above it is the vestiary (cloister), closely connected to the dormitory (Wang 2023). However, in later evolution, the Refectory gradually became the tallest building in the monastery, second only to the church. It became a large, single-story space, further emphasizing that it is a solemn, dignified, and serene space.

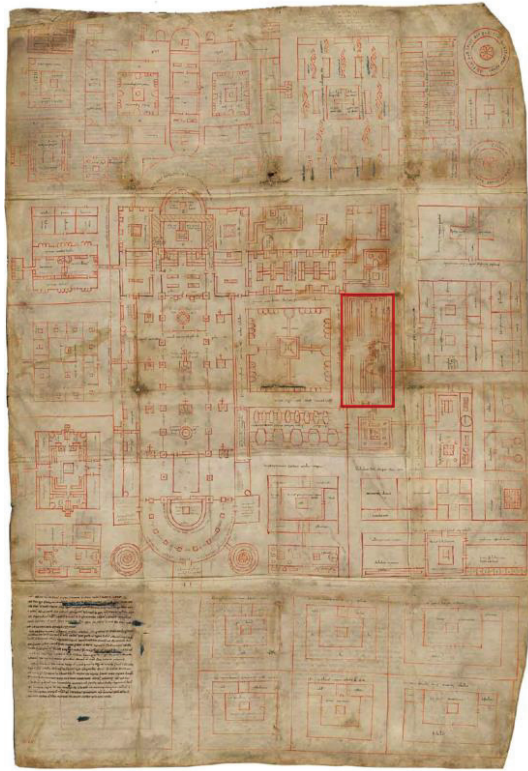


Figure 30. Plan of St. Gall, with the red box indicating the refectory. Image cited from the collection of St. Gall Manuscripts, UCLA Library Digital Collections with title St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Codex 1092, <https://digital.library.ucla.edu/catalog/ark:/21198/zz002kp2b7>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

In both Han Buddhist and Cistercian monasteries, monks strive for a self-sufficient lifestyle that aligns with their spiritual practice. Such pursuit leads them to select food that is suitable for their monastic life and reinforce it as a daily routine through rules, scriptures, and disciplinary regulations. They typically opt for vegetarian meals to minimize harm to living beings and cultivate compassion. The selection of food is guided by the principles of non-violence and non-attachment to worldly desires. To ensure adherence to their practices, monks follow strict rules and regulations governing their meals and establish a dining routine that finally supports them in both nourishment and spirituality. This intentional approach to food helps monks maintain focus on their spiritual path and reinforces their commitment to a self-sufficient way of life. *“Regulation of meals entailed appropriate architecture”* (Wolfgang 1980, p. 79). The dining spaces in both monasteries are not treated as casual areas; rather, they are carefully designed with proper layouts and a sacred atmosphere. *“Religious piety and beliefs are not only the source of Western morality but also the force that supports Western behavioral norms”* (Fei 1992, p. 72). Prescribed ceremonies and daily ceremonial education play a significant role in cultivating a sense of awe and conviction among monks. The combination of simple and sober food, an austere and aesthetic space, and a solemn and silent dining process ensures that monks partake in their meals in a structured and disciplined manner. These daily ceremonial practices become an integral part of their spiritual journey, providing opportunities for reflection, gratitude, and the deepening of their connection to their faith.

2.2. Purity and Food Layout

2.2.1. Convenience and Safety

Eating is a daily routine for monks, and work related to eating has to be efficient and convenient. The divided meal system is adopted in both dining halls. In both buildings, monks enter through the central door while servants of the kitchen enter through the side door. After monks sit down, a few monks on duty in the kitchen are responsible for distributing food. To maintain the holiness of the dining, itineraries have to be well coordinated so that monks and the servants of the kitchen will not interrupt each other.

In Guoqing Si, the large old kitchen is located in the eastern part of the Zhaitang's courtyard, next to the Monks' Dining Hall and Workers' Dining Hall (Figure 31). In order to prepare meals for more than 100 monks, a spacious courtyard is necessary for washing and preparing vegetables (Figure 32). Guoqing Si still uses traditional firewood to cook meals (Figure 33), and the firewood comes from the mountains where the monastery is located. Once the food is cooked, it is ladled into wooden barrels and carried into the Zhaitang through the east side door, while monks enter the Zhaitang through the central door.



Figure 31. Aerial view of the Zhaitang of Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 32. Kitchen courtyard in Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 33. Old kitchen in Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.

The Cistercian Refectory is typically located perpendicular to the cloister, which is different from the Benedictine layout. This positioning offers several advantages. Firstly, only one kitchen needs to be constructed between the Refectory of the lay brothers and that of the monks (Figure 34), which ensures that both refectories can maintain the same dining rituals. Additionally, this layout is more flexible, as it allows for the Refectory to be easily expanded or rebuilt to accommodate a growing community. Keeping the kitchen, pantries, and warming room nearby is also more practical. Furthermore, this layout provides better lighting as windows can be placed on two or three sides. To ensure that the monks are served their food in a timely manner, especially during the cold winter months, a hole is typically pierced in the south wall of the Refectory near the main entrance (Figure 35). Today, the old kitchen is no longer in use and is only open to tourists. A wooden door (Figure 36) has been added to the center of the south wall to connect the Refectory to the new kitchen (Figure 37). This arrangement for passing food also helps to maintain the silence of the cloister.



Figure 34. Aerial view of the Refectory of Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.



Figure 35. Hole for passing food between the Refectory and the old kitchen of Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.



Figure 36. Wooden door toward the new kitchen of Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.

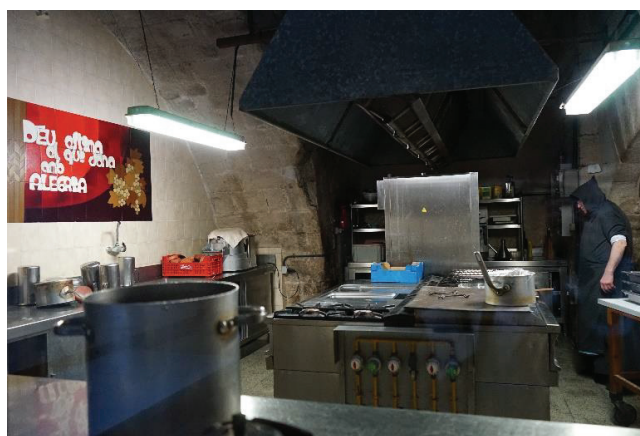


Figure 37. New kitchen of Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.

In addition to valuing the efficiency of the dining process, efficient collaboration among different spaces of the logistics system is also fundamental in maintaining an orderly monastic life. In both monasteries, the logistics system space is closely connected to the logistics entrance of the monastery, making it convenient for monks to communicate with the outside world on a daily basis while also being far away from the space for worship so as to minimize any potential disruptions.

In the Poblet Monastery, the kitchen, Refectory, fountain pavilion (lavabo), and warming room are arranged together (Figure 38) to enhance energy efficiency, as well as to provide better service for the sacred Refectory. The conversi were the historical predecessors of the Cistercian Lay Brothers. On the one hand, the Lay Brothers sought to lead a life as close as possible to the monastic practices of the Cistercian Order, distancing themselves from secular life. On the other hand, they took on a significant amount of physical labor, assisting the Cistercian monks in their pursuit of self-sufficiency. Consequently, their relationship with the monks was both cooperative and distinct. By strategically placing the kitchen between the Refectory and the converts' Refectory, the architecture effectively planned their relationship, keeping them separated yet connected and maintaining a corresponding rhythm during mealtimes. In Guoqing Si, the Zhaitang (Monks' Dining Hall), Workers' Dining Hall, kitchen, and storage room (Granary) are arranged in a cluster near the logistics gate (Figure 39). This makes sure that the big old kitchen can serve the three dining halls at the same time.

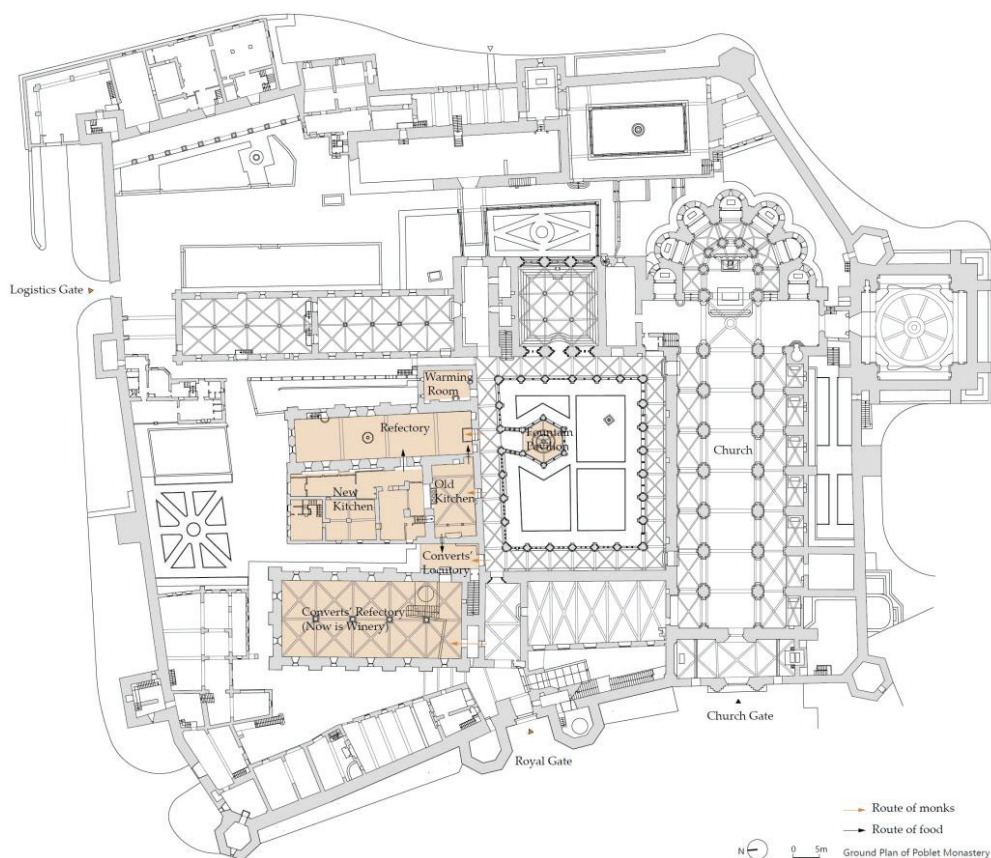


Figure 38. Logistics space system in Poblet Monastery. Drawn by the author.

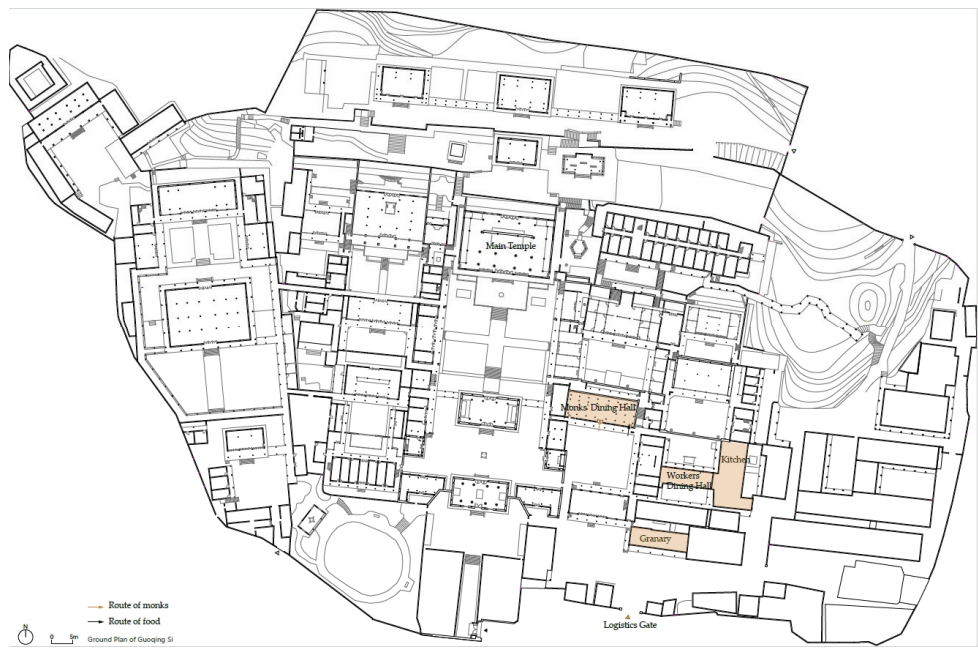


Figure 39. Logistics space system in Guoqing Si. Drawn by the author.

Regarding the location of the storage room in both monasteries, which serves as a prerequisite for ensuring safety, it observes the following arrangement principles: (1) Food is hidden in a location near a secondary entrance, away from the axis of worship (main entrances or the entrance of the church), but close to the residential area and the entrance/exit, making it closer to the fields where the harvest takes place. They are typically concealed behind solid walls with inconspicuous entrances. Even those residing in the living quarters can easily access the storage space. Paradoxically, the more public and prominent the location, the more secure it becomes. (2) Food (like rice) storage areas are placed in relatively dry or elevated locations, far from water and moisture, which is beneficial for preserving the food. (3) They are situated near the kitchen and dining hall, facilitating easy access for daily use. By following these guidelines, the storage of food in monasteries ensures both safety and convenience. It is worth mentioning that Guoqing Si mainly relies on rice as a staple food. Through the stairs to the second floor, new rice is poured into the granary, and then a small hole is opened at the bottom of the granary to retrieve the aged rice, which can effectively preserve the rice (Figure 40).



Figure 40. Rice storage room in Guoqing Si.

2.2.2. Cleanliness and Taboos

In both monasteries, the most sacred spaces are the main temple and the church, while the busiest daily spaces are undoubtedly the kitchen and dining areas. The latter spaces generate smoke, noise, food residue, and even odors in daily activities. Clearly, it is not dignified to hear sounds or smell food from the kitchen during prayers or religious ceremonies in the sacred halls. Therefore, it is necessary for the kitchen and dining areas to maintain a certain distance from the main temple or church to preserve the sanctity of the religious spaces.

Cistercian monasteries typically organize their spaces using a cloistered courtyard, with the Refectory situated opposite the church in a vertical arrangement. Although the Refectory's significance in the overall layout of the monastery is not as prominent as the main halls that it serves as a reference for the spatial arrangement (Wang 2021), the Refectory system is meticulous in its positioning within the logistical spaces and influences the specific layout of the area. The Refectory and kitchen are a fixed combination, but they are separate and independent structures. By maintaining this spatial arrangement, the monastery preserves the sanctity of the main halls while ensuring that the kitchen and dining areas can function efficiently without disturbing the religious practices conducted in the sacred spaces.

On the other hand, we can observe that vegetarian food, compared to meat, fish, and shellfish, tends to be cleaner in terms of food handling, less prone to producing unpleasant odors, and the eating process is simpler and easier to digest. From a deeper logical perspective, religious food taboos give a tangible spatial manifestation to the concept of sanctity. This manifestation is not only reflected in the interior design of dining spaces but also in their relationship with the overall architectural layout of the monastery. Religious food taboos reflect the belief in purity and holiness, and as a result, they influence the organization and arrangement of spaces within the sacred premises. The careful consideration given to the handling and consumption of food, particularly in relation to vegetarian options, highlights the significance of cleanliness and simplicity in the spiritual practice.

The importance of the purity and food layout is reflected in the following aspects: (1) Independence: having an independent dining space allows for focused food preparation and service, minimizing the risk of cross-contamination from other areas. It also provides a controlled environment where hygiene standards can be maintained effectively. (2) Complete Space: a well-designed logistics space system encompasses all the necessary facilities for food storage, preparation, cooking, and dining. This complete space ensures that every step of the food process can be performed hygienically and efficiently. (3) Order: the dining system promotes orderliness in the food service process. It includes organized serving areas, designated seating arrangements, and clear pathways for flow and movement. This not only enhances efficiency but also contributes to maintaining cleanliness by preventing overcrowding and confusion. By incorporating these principles into the food layout, purity is emphasized, leading to a silent and sacred daily practice through the act of eating.

2.3. Food Structure and Monastic Landscape

2.3.1. Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency is an integral aspect of the monastic lifestyle, as monks seek to reduce their dependence on external resources and cultivate a sense of independence and simplicity. This means that they rely on their own labor to obtain ample supplies of water and food. By engaging in various activities such as farming, gardening, livestock rearing, and other forms of manual labor, monks aim to fulfill their basic needs directly from the resources available within their immediate surroundings. Obtaining sufficient sources of water (Wang and Feng 2023), whether from wells, springs, or other means, is crucial for their daily needs, such as drinking, cooking, and sanitation. Similarly, cultivating crops, tending to gardens, and raising animals provide them with a sustainable food source. Through self-sufficiency, monks develop a deeper connection with the natural world, foster a sense of gratitude for the provisions it offers, and embrace a humble and mindful existence. This

is not only a practical approach to sustaining their physical well-being but also an integral part of their spiritual journey.

In Guoqing Si, monks still maintain the tradition of self-sufficiency by growing their own grains and vegetables (Figure 41). However, they also rent out surplus land to farmers for cultivation. Additionally, they keep some cows to help plow the fields. It is worth mentioning that during harvest season, monks dry the rice in the courtyard (Figure 42). From this, we can see the importance of the courtyard in the agricultural era and its influence on the overall layout of the monastery. In the case of the Poblet Monastery, monks used to farm themselves (Figure 43). However, nowadays, they only keep a small part of the farms inside the monastery, with the rest outside the monastery being owned by farmers from surrounding villages. Before, the cultivated lands for monks included forests, vineyards, agricultural farms, fishing farms, and farms for livestock such as sheep, cattle, and horses. These farms may be located around the monastery or within a certain distance that can be reached in a day's walk.



Figure 41. Monks of Guoqing Si work in the field. Photo by the author.



Figure 42. Monks dry the rice in the courtyard. Photo by the author.



Figure 43. Cistercians at work in a detail from the Life of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Illustrated by Jörg Breu the Elder in 1500, cited from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J%C3%B6rg_Breu_d._%C3%84_.002.jpg. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

2.3.2. Wilderness Sanctuary

Both the Han Buddhist and the Cistercian lean toward a vegetarian meal. Although the Han Buddhists initially did not prohibit the consumption of clean meat, and the Cistercian still allows weak or sick monks to consume fish, overall, a vegetarian meal is more suitable for the monastery environment. It can contribute to a quiet atmosphere in meal preparation and dining spaces, as well as a serene and expansive surrounding environment.

In the case of Guoqing Si, located at the foot of the Bagui Peak (Figure 44), the monastery utilizes the open flat land on the southern side of the monastery to cultivate rice paddies (previously a release pond) (Figure 45) while developing vegetable gardens and fruit trees on the terraced fields on the western side of the monastery. This creates a picturesque scene of green rice paddies against the backdrop of the surrounding mountains when viewed from the foot of the mountain. At the Poblet Monastery, grapevines are predominantly cultivated around the monastery (Figure 46), with fields located within the monastery grounds (Figure 47). One can imagine that if the main food source for the monastery were poultry, pigs, or livestock, the environment would be filled with animal enclosures, the sounds of their calls, and the smell of their excrement, which would detract from the tranquility of the surroundings.



Figure 44. Surrounding environment of Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 45. Rice paddies on the southern side of Guoqing Si. Photo by the author.



Figure 46. Environment surrounding Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.



Figure 47. Grapevine fields inside Poblet Monastery. Photo by the author.

Therefore, it can even be said that the choice of food determines the nature of the surrounding environment. The emphasis on a vegetarian meal in these sacred spaces aligns with the principles of compassion, mindfulness, and harmony with nature, creating an environment that fosters peace and serenity.

“It was within such untilled islets, which had emerged in the middle of irrigated fields, on uneven terrain, on mountains, in valleys, or on hillsides, that most of the monasteries were established ... in most cases, the original kernel of the monastic lands was constituted from mountainous or hilly terrains”. (Gernet 1995, p. 117)

On the other hand, we also need to recognize that the picturesque locations where monasteries are situated today were not always so beautiful in the past. For monks, their land is typically acquired through donations. If they were to forcibly occupy land belonging to farmers, it would be difficult to obtain institutional protection. This means that they can only turn to uncultivated lands outside the existing land system. Therefore,

“contrary to peasant properties that were all devoted to the cultivation of arable crops, the monastic estates-like those of the wealthy laity-were distinguished by the diversity of their farming: woods, copses, pastures, mountain gardens, and orchards there occupied a place of far greater importance than in the peasant economy”. (Gernet 1995, p. 117).

In Cistercian monasteries, things are similar. For the last period of reconquest, the Poblet Monastery was established for two purposes: religious expansion and regional repopulation. In that turbulent time, the establishment of the Cistercian monasteries had a very important role in stabilizing the lost land that had just been recovered from the Moorish. Poblet, situated in the frontier of reconquest, the west border of Barcelona, was expected to serve as an important point for attracting more population. Therefore, the Poblet Monastery, along with the Monastery of Santes Creus and Monastery of Vallbona de les Monges, are known as the Cistercian triangle (Figure 48), which helped consolidate power in Catalonia in the 12th century after the crown of Aragon was set.

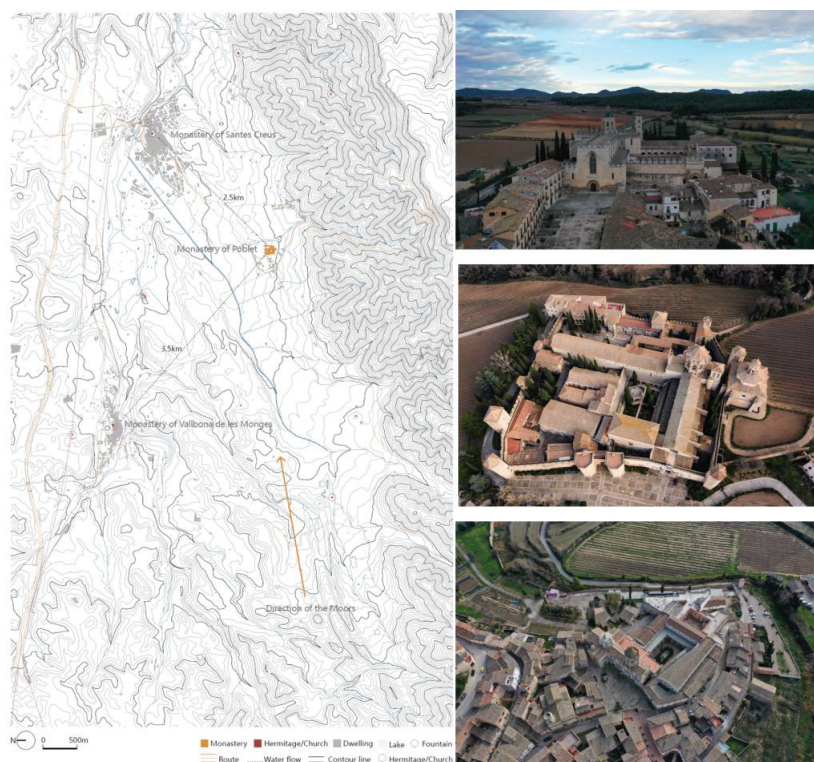


Figure 48. Cistercian Triangle in Catalonia. Drawn and photographed by the author.

The monks' pursuit of a self-sufficient monastic life and their choices of food based on monastic rules have ultimately influenced the formation of the surrounding landscape of the monastery. The plant- and tree-dominated environment has created a serene atmosphere for the monastery, ultimately transforming the once-barren wilderness into a sacred and picturesque sanctuary.

3. Discussion: Spatial Model of Food in Monasteries

After a detailed analysis of how food affects space formation, layout organization, and site selection, this study attempts to extract a spatial model of food in monasteries.

3.1. Sustainable Agri-Food Space System

The sustainable agri-food space system refers to a system that promotes sustainable agricultural practices and ensures the availability and accessibility of safe, nutritious, and sufficient food for all. It takes into account the environmental, economic, monastic lives, and spatial factors surrounding the monastery to ensure the long-term viability of the agricultural industry while minimizing negative impacts on the site's environment. It aims to minimize external dependencies and create a closed loop where food production, processing, and consumption are interconnected.

In the research by Goody (1982), he defined "the study of the process of providing and transforming food covers four main areas, that of growing allocating, cooking and eating, which represent the phases of production, distribution, preparation and consumption". Regarding cenobitic monastic life, a sustainable agri-food space system may include: (1) Food Production: both monasteries incorporate various methods of food production, such as cultivating vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, herb gardens, and aquaculture, as we can see from the ideal layout in Figures 49 and 50. (2) Waste Management: both of them emphasize efficient waste management, including composting organic waste and recycling food scraps to nourish the soil and enhance agricultural productivity. This closed-loop approach reduces waste and supports the sustainability of the food production cycle, as shown in the ideal layout where the toilet is located near the vegetable gardens. (3) Water Management: water conservation and management play a crucial role in the sustainability of agri-food space systems. Strategies such as rainwater harvesting, water recycling, and efficient irrigation techniques ensure that water resources are used efficiently and sustainably, as analyzed in another article (Wang and Feng 2023). (4) Food Processing: facilities for food processing, including warehouses for food storage, kitchens for food preparation, and dining areas for food consumption. The clean, efficient, and safe flow between them ensures the normal operation of the monastic space and distinguishes the sacred from the secular. (5) Meal-taking ritual: the sustainable agri-food space system promotes mindful and sustainable eating habits among monks in both monasteries.

By implementing a sustainable agri-food space system, monasteries can achieve greater self-sufficiency, reduce their ecological footprint, and foster a deeper connection with nature and the principles of sustainability. Indeed, upon seeing the ideal layouts of the food spatial system, some might say that it resembles the food processing methods in traditional villages, where food residue becomes fertilizer for the fields. It is true that in the Middle Ages, both Eastern and Western monks lived in agrarian societies. Monasteries functioned as small communal settlements, embodying the complete food-processing cycle and the industriousness that characterized human agricultural civilization.

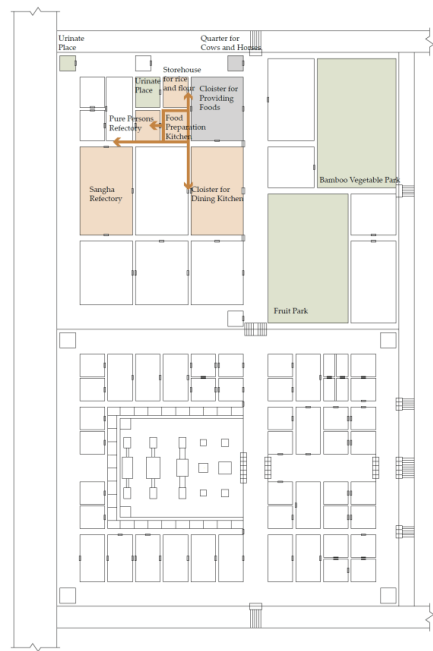


Figure 49. Agri-food space system for monks in the ideal layout of The Plan of Illustrated Scripture. Redrawn by the author.

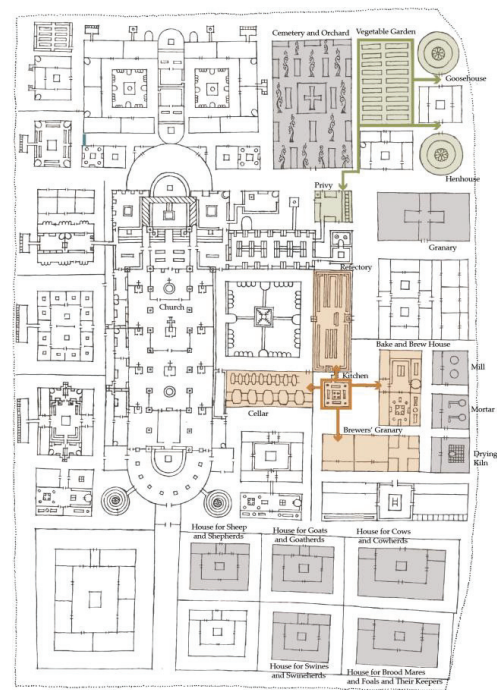


Figure 50. Agri-food space system for monks in the ideal layout of St. Gall Plan. Redrawn by the author.

3.2. A Distinct Food Spatial Order between the Sacred and the Secular Realms

“If the proposed interpretation of the forbidden animals is correct, the dietary laws would have been like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal. Observance of the food rules would thus have been a meaningful part of the great liturgical act of recognition and worship which culminated in the sacrifice in the Temple”. (Douglas 1966, p. 58)

In Han Buddhist monasteries, food achieves its most sacred and symbolic meaning when it is placed in the center of the empty platform in front of the main hall (Figure 21). At this moment, it is not merely food, but it is intended for all sentient beings in the three realms of water, land, and air. Through the offering to the heavens ceremony, the original form of offering sacrifice expresses the respect of the sangha for the Buddha and the compassion for all sentient beings. The unity of food, the main hall, and the ceremony is the most thorough manifestation of the sangha’s practice of Buddhism, and through this, they transcend the limitations of time and space. All six realms of sentient beings (heavenly, asura, human, animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms) are able to attend the vegetarian feast and obtain liberation, wisdom, and perfection.

“The Christian Eucharist (Eucharist means “thanksgiving”) was born directly from the Jewish Passover sacrifices ... In this ritual, Christ, who is for believers both God and human, enters not only into the minds but into the bodies of the congregation; the people present at the table eat God. No animal and no new death is needed, no bridges required: God enters directly. The Eucharist is the ritual perpetuation of the incarnational relationship with humankind which God initiated through Christ (the word “incarnation” means “becoming flesh”). (Visser 1991, p. 36)

In Cistercian monasteries, food, unleavened bread and wine, are the main components of the Catholic sacrament of Holy Communion (Figure 22). The establishment of the sacrament originated from Jesus breaking bread with his disciples during the Last Supper (a Jewish dietary tradition) and saying, “This is my body” and “This is my blood” when he passed around the wine. When pilgrims partake in unleavened bread and wine, they think of Jesus Christ being crucified for their sins and sacrificing himself for them. The sacrament ceremony, held in the church, is the climax of the food in the monastery, and its origin lies in its symbolism.

As discussed above, the spatial location and presentation of food in both monasteries are highly consistent with the distribution of the sacred and the secular in the monastic layout (Wang 2021). The combination of food and space presents the difference between the sacred and the secular through the role of the ritual. Visser (1991, p. 36) said,

“The ceremony uses every psychological device defined by scholars of ritual. These include notions such as entrainment, formalization, synchronization, tuning and cognitive structuring, as well as spatial organization and focusing, and perfected ordinary action. Distances both temporal and spatial are collapsed, as ritual contact is made with past, present, and future at once, and as “this place” is united with “everywhere else”, including the realm of the supernatural”.

Apart from the symbolic meaning of food, the spatial order of dining within a monastery is intricately linked to the distribution and structure of the sacred and secular spaces. The most sacred space, often the church or main hall, should not be disturbed by factors such as noise, smells, or water associated with food. Therefore, there is typically a distance and segregation maintained between the food system and sacred spaces. The dining area is not a standalone building but part of a comprehensive food processing system that includes storage, preparation, delivery, and consumption. This integrated system has logistical entrances, storage spaces, kitchens, serving corridors, and dining halls. The kitchen is where the basic daily functions of food provision begin, and then the food is consumed in a meditative manner in the dining hall. Finally, in the most important space, the main hall, the

food is offered as a form of worship. The spatial arrangement ensures that the reverence and sanctity of the monastery are preserved while also meeting the practical needs of food provision for the community, as Figures 51 and 52 show.

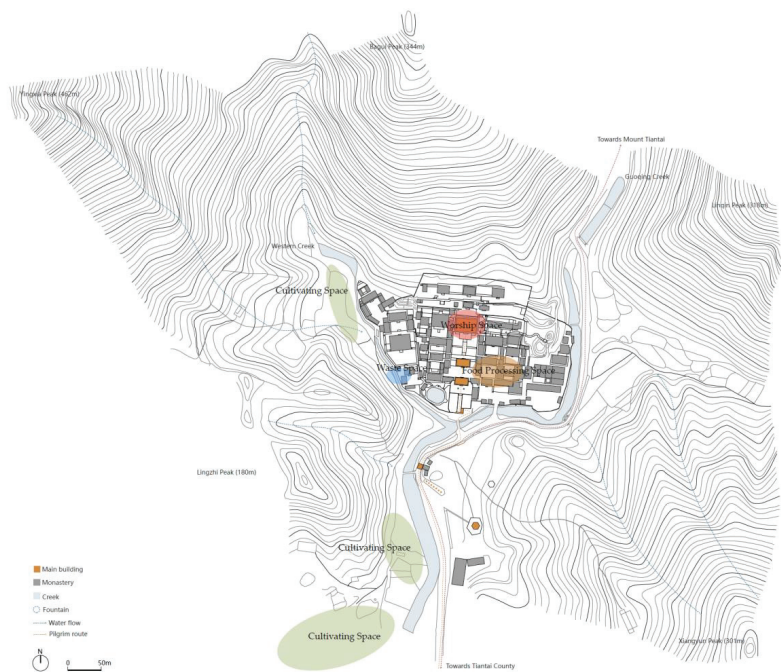


Figure 51. Food space layout of Guoqing Si. Drawn by the author.



Figure 52. Food space layout of Poblet Monastery. Drawn by the author.

3.3. Unusual Dining Space and Usual Meal

In monasteries, the daily dining space may deviate from conventional norms, reflecting unique practices and food restrictions. These spaces are designed to accommodate the specific requirements and routines of monks, characterized by simplicity, mindfulness, and adherence to religious or spiritual principles.

The unusual aspects of daily dining spaces in such settings are mainly reflected in the following aspects: (1) Silent space: silence should be observed during meals to foster a sense of reflection and mindfulness. This practice allows individuals to focus on the act of eating and cultivate gratitude for the nourishment provided. Indeed, spacious and lofty spaces can amplify even the softest whispers and hushed conversations among individuals, including monks. The acoustics of large spaces can allow sound to travel further and linger, potentially disrupting the intended atmosphere of tranquility and contemplation. Both monasteries aim to create interior space that promotes silence and mindfulness to facilitate introspection, meditation, and spiritual practice. On the other hand, spacious environments can amplify the sound of prayers, especially when monks are reciting sacred texts or chanting during offerings. The reverberation of sound in such spaces can enhance the sense of sacredness during the dining process. The acoustics of large spaces can create a unique ambiance where the sound of prayers resonates and fills the air, creating a captivating and immersive experience for those present. The echoes and reverberations can add a spiritual dimension to the act of dining, deepening the connection between the individuals and their religious or contemplative practices. By amplifying the sound of prayers, these spacious environments can contribute to the overall spiritual ambiance, fostering a deeper engagement and connection with religious rituals and practices. (2) Ritualistic layout: the indoor layout and furniture arrangement of the Zhaitang and Refectory are prepared to create a sacred dining ritual. By utilizing the centrality of the architecture to arrange the position of the statues and the abbot and arranging the seats of the monks using the symmetrical spaces on both sides of the building, the importance of the central location is further emphasized, and the sacredness of the space is highlighted. In addition, by planning the food delivery route to come from the side door and the monks to enter from the main door, the sense of ritual in dining is further strengthened. The sacredness of the dining process is further elevated as individuals participate in communal recitation or chanting, creating a profound and meaningful experience for the community.

These spiritual and symbolic spaces are created to foster a deeper connection between individuals and their food, as well as their spiritual practices. They provide an environment where monks can engage in introspection, express gratitude, and cultivate a sense of mindfulness while partaking in nourishment. These spaces are designed to facilitate a heightened spiritual experience during the act of eating. The space envelops individuals and their food, while the overhead space is filled with sounds and light, further enhancing the sensory experience. The interplay of light, sound, and the surrounding environment creates an atmosphere conducive to spiritual reflection and inner growth. The concept of space in this context goes beyond physical dimensions and architecture. It encompasses the creation of a sacred atmosphere that transcends the mere consumption of food and invites individuals to connect with the divine, express gratitude, and deepen their spiritual journey. Through the thoughtful design and arrangement of these spiritual and symbolic spaces, the act of dining becomes a transformative experience, elevating the physical act to a profound spiritual encounter.

4. Conclusions

Food holds multifaceted meanings within different cultures and religions. It is not merely sustenance but also carries symbolic value, representing concepts such as nourishment, communion, sacrifice, and divine blessings. The act of dining within a monastic space becomes a profound expression of these symbolic meanings, connecting individuals with their religious beliefs, traditions, and practices. The symbolism and meaning of food play a crucial role in shaping the design and arrangement of spaces. The sound of

chanting, the use of light, and the overall ambiance all contribute to the creation of a sacred atmosphere that enhances the symbolic and spiritual dimensions of the dining experience. Additionally, cultural and religious practices influence the rituals and symbolism associated with dining in sacred spaces. These practices often prescribe specific behaviors, gestures, prayers, or blessings that further imbue the act of eating with profound meaning. The collective participation in these rituals fosters a sense of community, shared values, and a deep connection to the divine. The transformation of food from the mundane to the sacred within monastic spaces is a testament to the intricate interplay between culture, religion, and space. It underscores the significance of food as a vehicle for spiritual expression, cultural identity, and communal cohesion. Through this complex interrelationship, dining becomes a powerful medium through which monks engage with their religious beliefs, express devotion, and embody the core values and symbols of their faith.

The key difference between the Zhaitang or Refectory and a typical restaurant lies in the fact that their focus is not solely on making food the centerpiece of the dining experience. Instead, they aim to integrate the elements of food, body and mind, and ritual into a cohesive experience. Such high consistency of worship spaces can also be sensed in the caves with Buddhist motifs (Wang and Yan 2023). In the Zhaitang or Refectory, the act of dining goes beyond mere sustenance and becomes a holistic experience. It encompasses the spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of the individuals partaking in the meal. The emphasis is on creating a harmonious and balanced experience that nourishes not only the body but also the mind and spirit. This approach is often rooted in religious or monastic traditions, where the act of eating is viewed as an opportunity for reflection, gratitude, and connection with the divine. It is seen as a way to cultivate mindfulness, discipline, and a deeper understanding of oneself and one's relationship with the world.

"The power resting within outside meaning sets terms for the creation of inside, or symbolic, meaning ... Objects, ideas, and persons take on a patterned structural unity in the creation of ritual". (Mintz 1996, pp. 30–31)

As Mintz (1996) described, the structural power of food in religious spaces transcends its everyday materiality and possesses symbolic significance, particularly within the context of religious and cultural meanings. To understand this outcome, we cannot overlook the restraining effect of religious precepts on monks, which, though constraints, transform into habits and become daily practices that reinforce the worship of God.

The impact of dining on space is reflected in space formation, layout organization, and site selection for spiritual practice, as well as the specific construction and arrangement of dining halls. These efforts aim to ensure the practicality of food, enhance the sacred experience of dining, and portray the religious imagery embedded in the act of eating. Under the guidance of a self-sufficient religious lifestyle, monks' food choices, influenced by the notions of purity and impurity in their religious beliefs, impact the types of food grown in the vicinity of the monastery. This, in turn, shapes the surrounding landscape, including orchards, rice fields, wheat fields, olive trees, grapevines, and water ponds. transforming it from wilderness into a sacred site and contributing to the overall impression of the spiritual venues.

"Granted that its (purity) root means separateness, the next idea that emerges is of the Holy as Wholeness and completeness". (Douglas 1966, p. 52)

Ultimately, monks are constantly engaged in their spiritual practices, and the highest level is achieved when the act of eating, the ritual of worship, the discipline of spiritual practice, and the dining space seamlessly merge into one. The daily and spiritual aspects become inseparable, and through the influence of food, the transition from the mundane to the sacred is realized within the space.

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Note

- ¹ “七食須觀門五別。一計功多少。量彼來處。二自付己德行全缺多減。三防心顯過不過三毒。四正事良藥取濟形若。五為成道業世報非意” (T40n1804 1988, p. 115). 但后人多沿用宋·黃庭堅所著[士大夫食時五觀]:“一、計功多少, 量彼來處。二、付己德行, 全缺應供。三、防心離過, 貪等為宗。四、正是良藥, 為療形苦。五、為成道業, 故受此食”。宋山谷黃庭堅著, 明梅墟周履靖校《讀北山酒經客談》卷二, 〈士大夫食時五觀〉。

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Article

Round Heaven and Square Earth, the Unity of the Pagoda and Statues—A Study on the Geometric Proportions of the Architectural Space, Statues, and Murals in Ying Xian Fogong Si Shijia Ta 應縣佛宮寺釋迦塔 (Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County)[†]

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Abstract: In Ying Xian Fogong Si Shijia Ta 應縣佛宮寺釋迦塔 (Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County), Shanxi, there are statues set on each floor, and 26 exist in total, with six murals painted on the first floor. The pagoda was designed as a vertically rising Buddhist temple, and the interior space of each floor was customized for the statues. Based on previous research and through surveying and mapping of the architecture and statuary (including the murals on the first floor) combined with geometric design analysis, this paper proposes the following: First, there exists a clear geometric proportion among the interior space and statues on each floor of the pagoda. Second, clear proportional relationships also exist among the statues on each floor, and each of the 26 statues has ‘classical’ proportion rules. Third, the height of the giant Buddha statue on the first floor is the module for not only the height of the statues on each floor but also the construction of the whole pagoda such that the height of the statue on the first floor is 1/6 of the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base). And the ratio of the pagoda’s total height to the first floor’s diameter, the ratio of the total height to the top-story height under the column capital, and all the other geometric proportions are closely related to the architectural modeling. And finally, in the construction of the pagoda, statues, and murals, the scale is deduced to be 1 *chi* 尺 (Chinese foot) = 29.5 cm. These values give clear scale logics not only to the construction but also to the details of the statues. Accordingly, the most frequently used proportions in the architectural space, statues, and murals of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple are $\sqrt{2}$, 3:2, 5:3 (or 8:5), and 9:5, which are imbued with cultural messages, like *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*), *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*), the ancient Chinese world view—*tian yuan di fang* 天圓地方 (the dome-shaped heaven and the flat, square earth) reflected from “*yuan fang tu* 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)” and “*fang yuan tu* 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)”, ancient Chinese ideas that “*san tian liang di er yi shu* 參天兩地而倚數 (‘three’ is the number of the heaven and ‘two’ is the number of the earth, and all numbers are based on them)” and “*jiu wu zhi zun* 九五之尊 (nine and five are the numbers of the honorable central position)”, and most probably

related to the “mandala” of Esoteric Buddhism and to the Western “Golden Ratio”, which all need further research in depth.

Keywords: pagoda of Fogong Temple; architectural space; statue; mural; proportion; construction scale

1. Introduction

The Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County, Shanxi Province, also recognized as the Timber Pagoda in Ying County, was constructed in the second year of Qingning during the Liao Dynasty (1056). This remarkable structure stands as the sole surviving ancient pagoda with a pure timber framework in China, holding the distinction of being the world’s largest wooden pagoda. Its architectural significance is unparalleled in its historical context.

Notably commendable is the pagoda’s unique architectural feature known as the five “ming ceng 明層 (bright layers)”. These layers, interspersed with “an ceng 暗層 (hidden layers)” give the structure the form of “wai wu nei jiu 外五內九 (outside five inside nine)”.¹ Each of these layers, referred to as “nei cao 內槽 (inner troughs)”, houses meticulously preserved statues, totaling 26 in number. This arrangement imparts a semblance of a three-dimensional Buddhist temple, enabling devotees to ascend the pagoda’s steps, worshipping Buddha floor by floor. Consequently, the pagoda unfolds as a vertically layered, three-dimensional Buddhist temple.

Liang Sicheng, in his inaugural paper “Wo Men Suo Zhi Dao De Tang Dai Fo Si Yu Gong Dian 我們所知道的唐代佛寺與宮殿 (Buddhist Temples and Palaces in the Tang Dynasty Known to Us)”, published in *Zhongguo Yingzao Xueshe Huikan* 中國營造學社彙刊 (*the Bulletin of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture*) (1932), pointed out that “the Buddhist Hall is the Buddha’s residence...” (Liang 1932, No. 1). Following Liang’s point, enshrining and worshipping Buddha is the core function of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. This aligns with the pagoda’s original name, “shijia ta 釋迦塔 (Sakyamuni Pagoda)”, emphasizing its purpose as a vertical Buddhist hall. The intricate interior space is tailored for the statues on each floor, creating a visual and spatial experience that resonates solemnity and harmony.

Building upon prior study on the Pagoda of Fogong Temple, this paper meticulously measures the architecture and statues (including the mural on the first floor),² conducting a comprehensive surveying and mapping of the structure. The findings reveal clear geometric proportions within the interior space and statue complex on each floor. These proportions are particularly evident in the relationships between the height of stories and statues and between the giant Buddha statue and the murals on the first floor. The geometric relationships also extend to each statue’s and mural’s proportions. The statue on the first floor is assumed to have a pivotal role, serving as the module for both subsequent statues and the overall architectural design. The construction scale of the pagoda, statues, and murals is speculated as 1 *chi* = 29.5 cm. From this, the proportional relationships among the height of the pagoda, the base, each story, the pagoda-top finial, and each statue and mural can be inferred. The construction of the pagoda as a whole also has its “classical” ratio control.

The subsequent sections will provide a brief overview of the existing literature, followed by a detailed analysis of the geometric proportions inherent in the pagoda’s interior space and statue complex and the deduction of the scale of construction. This paper will conclude by summarizing various classical geometric proportions adopted in the construction of the architectural space, the statues, and the murals, including $\sqrt{2}$, 3:2, 5:3, 8:5, and 9:5, underscoring their cultural significance such as “tian yuan di fang 天圓地方 (a dome-shaped heaven and a flat, square earth)”, “san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)”, “jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊 (the numbers nine and

five as denoting an honorable position)", and even concepts like the "Golden Ratio" and "Esoteric Buddhist mandala".

2. Literature Review

The pioneering investigation of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple and the statues was undertaken by Liang Sicheng 梁思成 and Mo Zongjiang 莫宗江. Their collaborative efforts encompassed a comprehensive examination, yielding a series of pagoda surveys and official sections, visually representing both architectural features and statues (see Figures 1 and 2). Liang Sicheng's paper, "*Shanxi Yingxian Fogong Si Liao Shijia Muta* 山西應縣佛宮寺遼釋迦木塔 (*Liao Sakya Timber Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County, Shanxi*)" (completed in 1936), provides detailed insights. In this work, Liang highlighted the measured values, such as the approximately 12.30 m height of the Buddha on the first floor, the 4 m height of the two-story Buddha and its base, and the approximately 4.85 m height of the four-story Buddha.

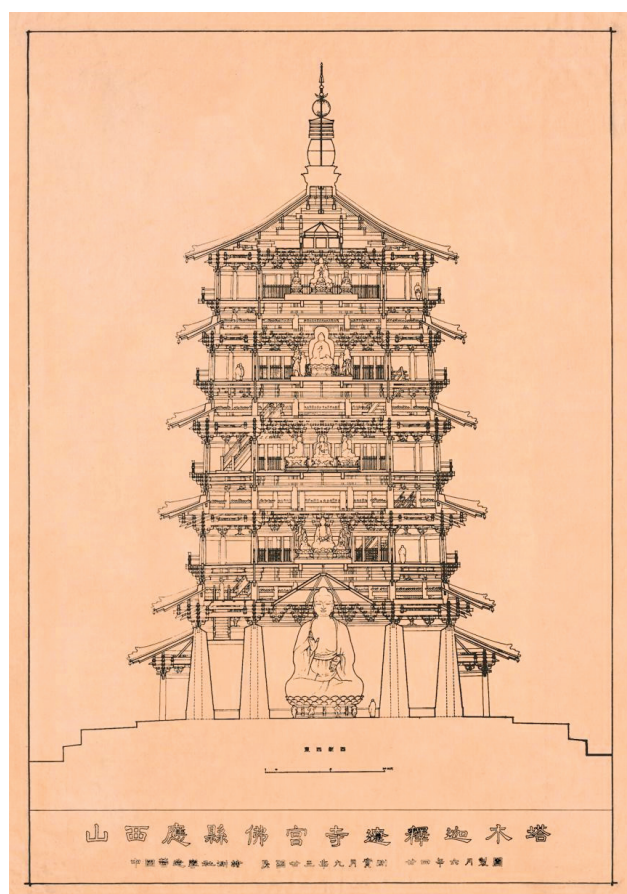


Figure 1. Section of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Source: China Academy of Cultural Heritage. (The Chinese character in the figure says: Sakya Timber Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County, Shanxi, mapped in September 1934 and drawn in June 1935 by the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture. The authors have obtained the copyright of the figure).

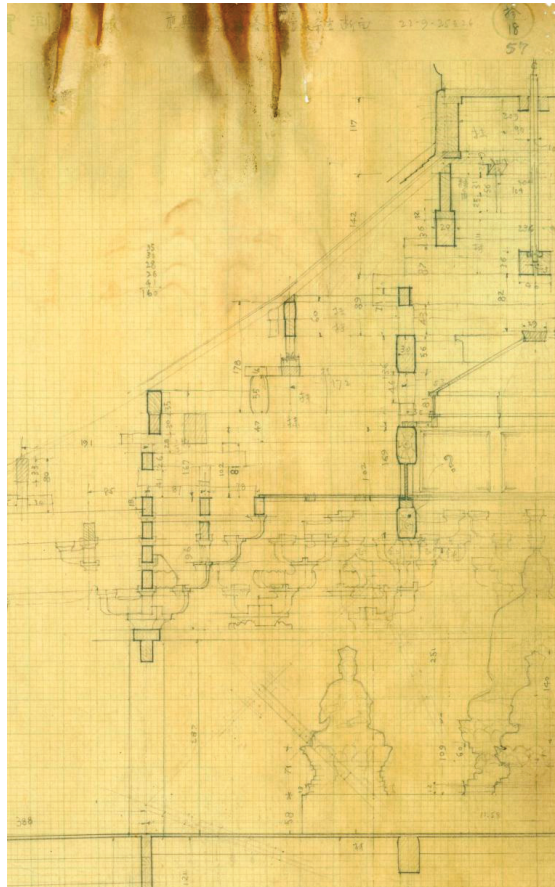


Figure 2. Surveying draft of the fifth floor and support platform of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Source: Memorial Collection of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, School of Architecture, Tsinghua University. The authors have obtained the copyright of the figure.

The surveying and mapping drafts (1933) by Liang and Mo, collected in Tsinghua University Archive, have measurements of all statues except the giant Buddha statue on the first floor, which was too big to measure at that time (Chen 2001, p. 113; 2002a, pp. 551–53).³ Beyond the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple, Liang Sicheng extended his survey and cartographic endeavors to other Buddhist structures, including the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery in Ji County, the Three Bodhisattvas Hall of Guangji Monastery in Baodi, the Hall of the Three Sages, Samantabhadra (Puxian) Pavilion, and Mahāvira Treasure Hall of Shanhua Monastery in Datong, the Bhagavat Sutra Hall of Huayan Lower Monastery in Datong, and the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery in Mount Wutai. The survey reports authored by Liang often incorporated a dedicated section addressing the aspect of “statues”.

Building upon the preceding research, Chen Mingda 陳明達 conducted a comprehensive examination of the geometric proportions of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple, analyzing the construction from a holistic and detailed perspective, creating a paradigm in the study of the design methodology employed in ancient Chinese timber structures. In his seminal work, *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*) (1966), Chen specified that the first floor of the pagoda reached a height of approximately 11 m. Extending the methodology of Liang and Mo, the section maps in the book depicted the statue complex

collectively. Furthermore, Chen also conducted a preliminary exploration of the interior spatial composition of each floor (Chen 2001, p. 58)⁴ (Figure 3).

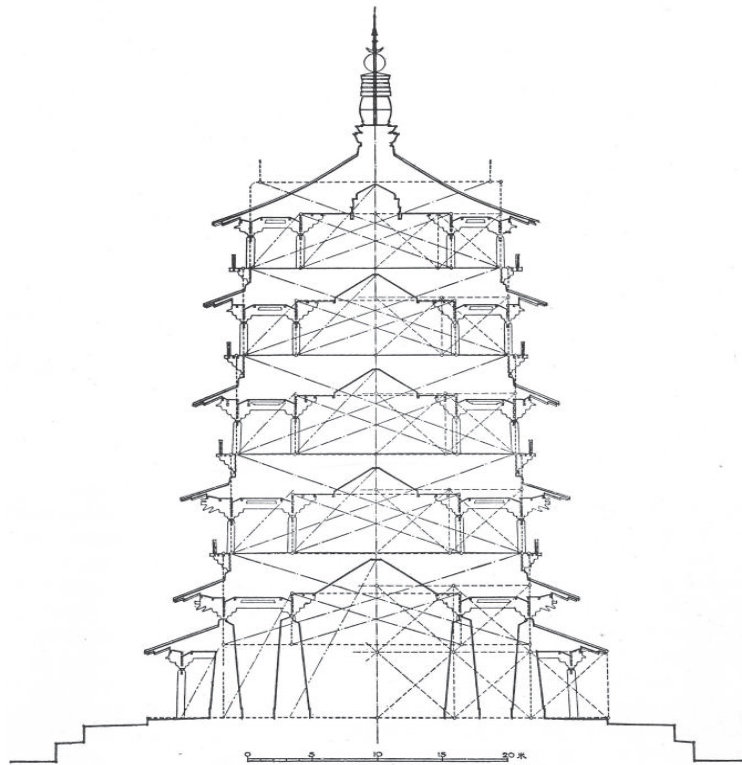


Figure 3. Composition analysis of Chen Mingda’s sectional drawing of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Source: (Chen 2001). The Chinese character 米 means meter, The authors have obtained the copyright of the figure.

In the subsequent “*Yingxian Muta Duhou Zhaji* 《應縣木塔》讀後札記 (Book Review of Timber Pagoda in Ying County)” (penned shortly after 1980), Mo Zongjiang remarked on the potential influence of Buddhist belief on the interior of the Timber Pagoda (Mo 2002, pp. 89–92). Mo suggested a parallel with Sutra illustrations and urged a more profound exploration of the “religious functional requirement”, indicating an early awareness of the relationship between interior space, statue layout, and religious function. The archaeologist Su Bai 宿白 later echoed this sentiment, proposing that the Pagoda of Fogong Temple mirrored “the mandala of Mahāvairocana”, inspiring subsequent researchers, which would be expatiated later in the article.

Mo Zongjiang and Chen Mingda’s attention to spatial design and geometric proportions extended to their joint paper “*Gongxian Shiku Si Diaoke de Fengge ji Jiqiao* 鞏縣石窟雕刻的風格及技巧 (Style and Technique of Carving in Gongxian Cave Temple)” (Mo and Chen 1989), focusing on grottoes. The paper underscored deliberate design considerations in cave carving, detailing aspects such as the shape, scale, facade, inner wall, central column, ceiling, and ground. Moreover, it expounded on the geometric proportions of statues in Gongxian Grottoes, exemplified by ratios such as 1:4 and 1:3.5 for the head height to total height in seated Buddha statues, 1:5.5 to 1:6 for the standing Buddha, Disciples, and Bodhisattvas, 1:4.5 to 1:5 for the Vajra, and 1:6 to 1:6.5 for the head height to total height in the side-standing statue featured in the relief sculpture “*li fo tu* 立佛圖 (Standing Buddha)”.

Chen Mingda's posthumous manuscript, "Dule Si Guanyin Ge, Shanmen de Damuzuo Zhidu 獨樂寺觀音閣、山門的大木作制度 (The System of Large Wooden Works at the Guanyin Pavilion and the Mountain Gate of Dule Monastery)" (finalized in 1990), marked an early exploration of the geometric relationship between statues and architecture. Notably, he employed an equilateral triangle in the longitudinal sectional analysis for viewing the Avalokitesvara statue of Guanyin Pavilion, contributing to the evolving discourse on the intersection of geometry and giant artistry.

In his 1998 paper titled "Zhongguo Zaoqi Fojiao Jianshu Buju Yanbian ji Diannei Xiangshe de Buzhi 中國早期佛教建築佈局演變及殿內像設的佈置 (The Evolution of Layout in Early Chinese Buddhist Architecture and Statues)", Fu Xinian 傅熹年 observed that the establishment of the Buddhist hall, the pagoda, and entire temple serves the purpose of venerating Buddha, providing monks and devotees spaces for meditation and worship. Beyond the architectural layout of Buddhist temples and the external facades of pagodas and halls, the strategic arrangement of statues assumes a crucial role in enhancing the presence of the Buddha statues, constituting a vital aspect of Buddhist architectural art (Fu 1998, pp. 136–46). This study analyzes the sight elevation angle associated with the "li fo 禮佛 (Buddha worshipping)" concept in various locations, such as Cave 004 of the Grottoes of Mount Maiji, the Great Hall of Nanchan Monastery, the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery, the Pagoda of Fogong Temple, and the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery. The findings indicate that the elevation angle of the line of sight between the second to fifth floors of the pagoda typically ranges between 23 and 25°. ⁵ (Figure 4).

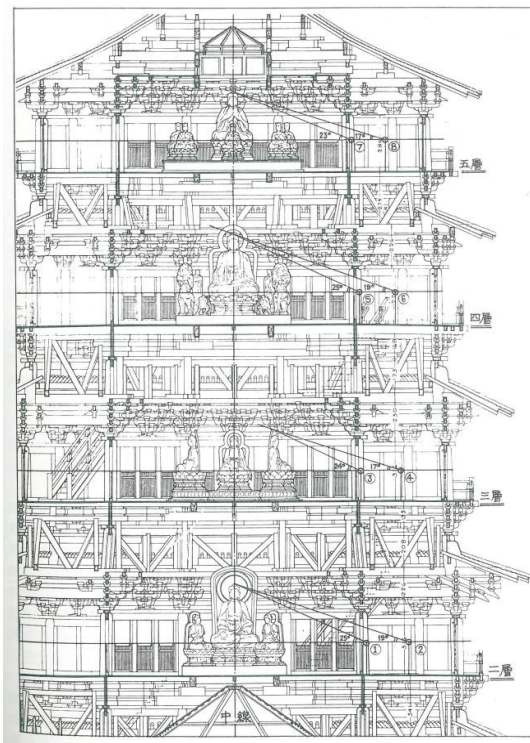


Figure 4. Analysis of Fu Xinian's line of sight of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Source: (Fu 1998). The Chinese character 二層, 三層, 四層, 五層 means the second third fourth and fifth floor. The authors have obtained the copyright of the figure.

In the paper *Yixian Fengguo Si Daxiong Dian Diaocha Baogao* 義縣奉國寺大雄殿調查報告 (Investigation Report on the Mahāvīra Hall of Fengguo Monastery in Yi County, Liaoning), Ding Yao 丁焱 and Cheng Li 成麗 conducted a preliminary examination of the scale of seven statues through 3D laser scanning and mapping of the statue complex within the Mahāvīra Hall (Ding and Cheng 2008, pp. 25–42). Similarly, in 2012 *Shanxi Pingyao Zhengguo Si Wanfo Dian yu Tianwang Dian Jingxi Cehui* 山西平遙鎮國寺萬佛殿與天王殿精細測繪報告 (Report on Fine Surveying and Mapping of the 10,000 Buddhas Hall and the Celestial Kings Hall of Zhengguo Monastery in Pingyao, Shanxi), Liu Chang 劉暢 et al. employed 3D laser scanning and color mapping techniques to analyze the standing and seated Attendant Bodhisattva statues situated on the east side of the 10,000 Buddhas Hall and the Celestial Kings Hall of Zhengguo Monastery. The study also briefly discusses the geometric proportions observed among the myriad Buddhas depicted in the mural (Liu et al. 2012, pp. 155–72).

The author conducts an investigation of the geometric proportions linking architecture, interior space, and statues together. The study also encompasses diverse examples, including the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery in Mount Wutai, the Guanyin Pavilion, and the Mountain Gate of Dule Monastery in Ji County, the Mahāvīra Hall of Fengguo Monastery in Yi County, the Mahāvīra Treasure Hall, and the Haihui Hall of Shanhua Monastery in Datong, the Bhagavat Sutra Hall of Huayan Lower Monastery in Datong, and the Dasheng Pavilion of Puning Monastery in Chengde. Notably, the examination focuses on ratios related to $\sqrt{2}$ and $\sqrt{3}/2$ derived from the squared-circle map. This paper will introduce and elaborate on the design methodology termed “duo xiang gou wu 度像構屋”, which means designing the interior space of Buddhist architecture—such as halls, pavilions, and pagodas—in accordance with the principal statues (N. Wang 2017, pp. 29–36; 2018a, pp. 103–25; 2018b, pp. 216, 256; 2018c) (Figure 5).

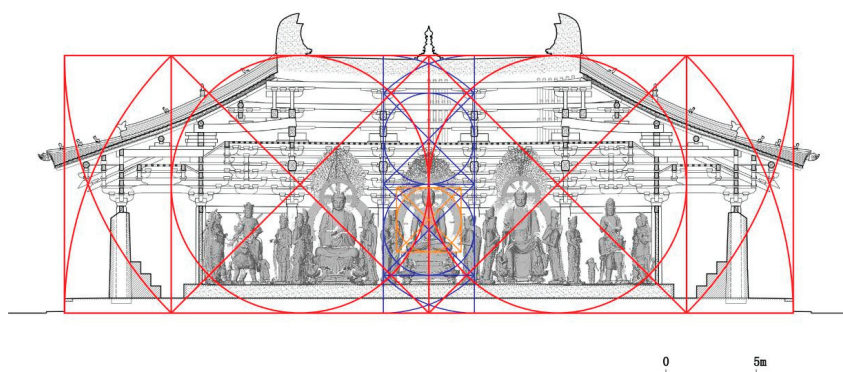


Figure 5. Design concept analysis diagram of the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery. Source of the base map: According to the actual map (statue) of the Survey and Research Report of the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery (2011) by the School of Architecture of Tianjin University. Diagrammed by Wang Nan.

In the article *Duo Mian Wei Fan Die Fo Hua Ta—Fogong Si Shijia Ta Yi Ti Hua She Ji Mo Shi ji Ying Zao Li Nian Tan Xi* 度面為範 疊佛化塔——佛宮寺釋迦塔一體化設計模式及營造理念探析 (Using Buddha Statue’s Facial Length as Modular Measurement and ‘Stacking Buddha Statues’ to Construct the Pagoda: An Exploration of the Integrated Design Model and Building Philosophy for the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple), Chen Siliang 陳斯亮 et al. defined the temple, the pagoda, and the statues of Fogong Temple as a unity and took the facial length of the giant Buddha statue on the ground floor as the modular measurement (1.473 m, equivalent to 5 Liao-dynasty chi) (Chen et al. 2023, pp. 65–76).

In addition to the aforementioned investigations, insights into Buddhist statues are gleaned from ancient literature. Notably, *Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing* 佛說造像量度經

(*Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*), translated from Tibetan to Chinese in 1742 during the seventh year of Qianlong in the Qing Dynasty by Gongbu Chabu 工布查布, stands out for its focus on Tibetan Buddhist statue regulations. Furthermore, Wang Shixiang 王世襄's *Compilation of Qingdai Jiangzuo Zeli Huibian: Fozuo, Menshenzuo* 清代匠作則例彙編: 佛作、門神作 (*Handicraft Regulations and Precedents of Qing Dynasty: Buddha and Door God*) (2001) provides a compilation addressing the geometric proportions of Buddhist statues in the Qing Dynasty, a subject that will be explored subsequently.

However, in stark contrast to the wealth of Buddhist statues in China, there is a desperate lack of historical documentation, especially monographs on Buddhist statues from the Song, Liao, and Jin Dynasties. Hence, a comprehensive surveying and mapping of extant Buddhist architecture and the statues inside is an indispensable prerequisite for further study. Fu Xinian underscores this need, expressing that due to the limited preservation of original statues and the scarcity of accurate measurements alongside temple structures, it is imperative to conduct detailed surveys of existing Buddhist architecture. Fu contends that only a few of the original statues in the existing Buddhist halls have survived intact and been accurately measured. Still, the layout of statues could be seen as carefully designed, especially in the Tang and Liao Dynasties, when the design techniques were similar. He advocates for expanded surveys and research on Buddhist halls to enhance our comprehension of the architectural achievements in Buddhist culture (Fu 1998, pp. 136–46).⁶

Prior scholars have provided initial insights indicating the integration of architecture and interior statues within the design of Buddhist structures, including temples, pavilions, and pagodas, showcasing meticulously arranged proportional relationships between the two. Taking the Pagoda of Fogong Temple as an example, this paper seeks to use survey and mapping techniques to deeply explore the proportional relationships in the construction of Buddhist structures, by analyzing their architectural space, with a particular emphasis on their interior space, statues, and murals located on each floor.

3. Geometric Proportion of the Interior Space and Statue Complex of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple

In the pagoda, there are presently 26 statues distributed across its floors, including 1 on the first floor, 5 on the second floor, 4 on the third floor, 7 on the fourth floor, and 9 on the fifth floor (see Figures 6 and 7). Historical documentation from 1933, when Liang Sicheng and Mo Zongjiang conducted a survey and mapping of the pagoda, indicates that there were 11 statues on the fourth floor at that time, suggesting a total of 30 statues within the entire pagoda (Liang 2007, vol. 10, pp. 113–17).⁷ Liang Sicheng posits that while the statues underwent modifications in subsequent periods, they generally adhere to the original form. The most recent restoration occurred in the winter of the 18th year of the Republic of China (Liang 2007, vol. 10, p. 114). Fu Xinian concurs, asserting that the Buddha statues on each floor are original Liao Dynasty artifacts, albeit subject to later repainting. The discovery of significant relics from the Liao and Northern Song Dynasties on the second and fourth floors during the 1960s and 1970s provides additional evidence, supporting the dating of some statues to the late Liao and early Jin Dynasties (Institute of Antiquities Preservation Sciences and Techniques of National Cultural Heritage Administration et al. 1982, pp. 1–8, 97–101).

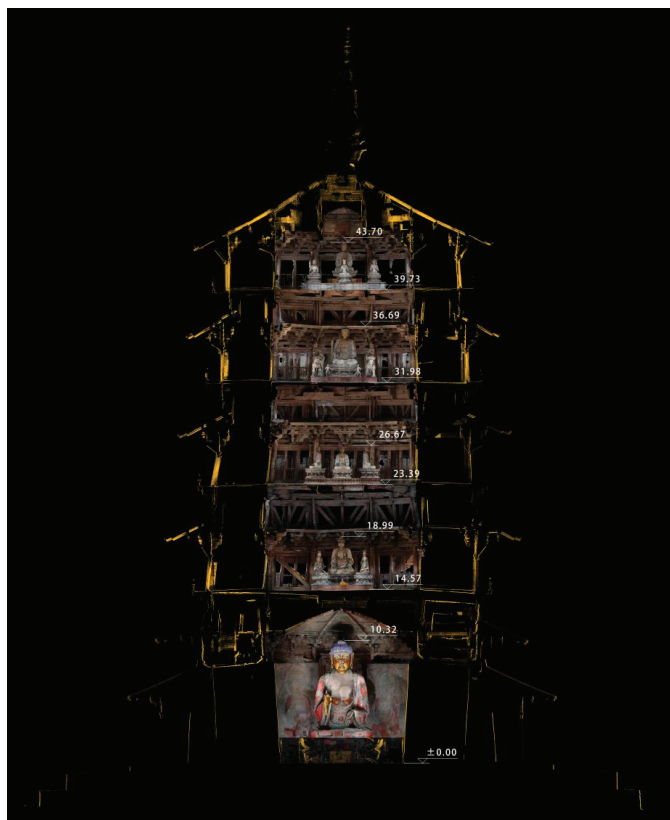


Figure 6. Section of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Diagramed by Wang Zhuonan.

To repeat, the primary aim of this paper is to discern the distinctive proportional relationships through a comprehensive analysis of the geometric proportions within the interior space and the present state of its statue complex. However, this paper will leave for further discussion the extent to which these proportional relationships accurately reflect the “original state” of the pagoda and statues during the Liao Dynasty, depending on the precise historical epochs and restoration conditions of the 26 sculptures across various dynasties.

The following is the analysis of the geometric proportions of the interior space and the statues on each floor, which is divided into three parts for discussion: first, the proportional relationships between the interior space (especially the inner trough) and the statues; second, the proportional relationships among the statues within the complex; and third, the geometric proportions of each individual statue.

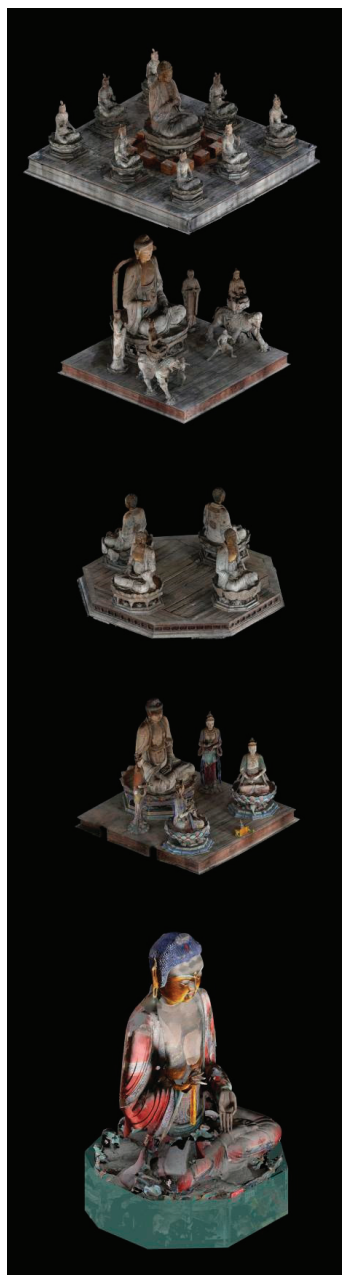


Figure 7. Three-dimensional model of the statues on each floor of the pagoda. Diagramed by Wang Zhuonan.

3.1. Analysis of the First-Floor Space and Statues

The first-floor statue within the pagoda depicts a cross-legged seated Buddha, in a sense of solitary and upright grace. Liang Sicheng indicated that the whole body posture and style of the pleated drapery overhang exemplify a high artistic standard (see Figure 8). The base of the Buddha features a Sumeru seat and a three-layered lotus. Notably, the

lower two layers are painted with orb patterns, while the top layer has a cross-legged seated Buddha on each petal.

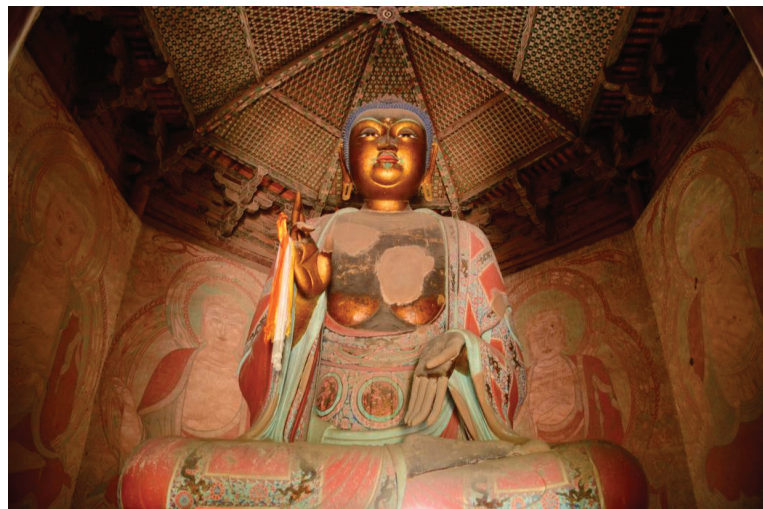


Figure 8. Giant Buddha on the first floor of the pagoda. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

Besides the giant Buddha statue, on the first floor, the wall of the pagoda’s central chamber has doors on the south and north sides, and the remaining six walls are fully covered by murals depicting cross-legged seated Buddhas, creating a majestic composition of six Buddhas surrounding the central statue. Liang Sicheng suggested that the six Buddha murals belonged to the same era as the statue in the center. The collective imagery of the six Buddha murals and the central Buddha statue creates a seven-Buddha pattern, reminiscent of the Mahāvīra Hall at Fengguo Monastery in Yi County during the Liao Dynasty, where seven Buddha statues align.

According to surveying and mapping data, from 2021, the dimensions of the six statues and murals on the first floor are as follows (see Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions of the giant Buddha on the first floor and the six Buddhas in the murals in the central chamber of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (unit: m).

Name	Top Height	Total Height	Total Width of the Base	Clear Height	Clear Width	Height of Head
Giant Buddha	10.32	10.32	6.955	8.478	5.537	2.625
Southwest Wall Buddha	7.366	6.374	4.691	5.07	3.597	1.473
Western Wall Buddha	7.421	6.429	4.37	5.126	3.644	1.491
Northwest Wall Buddha	7.4	6.408	4.728	5.17	3.682	1.493
Northeast Wall Buddha	7.076	6.11	4.731	4.714	3.326	1.311
Eastern Wall Buddha	7.169	6.203	4.246	4.668	3.323	1.296
Southeast Wall Buddha	7.247	6.281	4.619	4.894	3.747	1.344
Average of the Six Buddha Murals	7.28	6.301	4.564	4.94	3.553	1.401

Within the scope of this article, the term “top height” delineates the vertical measurement from the apex of the statue or mural to the ground. The concept of “total height” encompasses the aggregate of the statue’s height and its base. “clear height” specifically pertains to the statue’s height, excluding the dimensions of its base. The term “total width of the base” denotes the broadest section of the base, typically determined by the maximum inner diameter of the lotus situated atop the Sumeru seat. Lastly, “clear width” denotes the horizontal span measured between the knees of a cross-legged seated Buddha/Bodhisattva or between the elbows of a stood Buddha/Bodhisattva.

The following conclusions can be drawn through the geometric mapping and data analysis of the detailed surveying and mapping of the pagoda’s first-floor space, statues, and murals.

3.1.1. Analysis of the Proportional Relationships between the Space, the Statues, and the Murals

(1) Height of the First Story (14.57 m)⁸/Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m) = $1.412 \approx \sqrt{2}$ (99.8% coincidence).

(2) Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m)/Top Height of the Six Buddhas in the Mural (average 7.28 m) = $1.418 \approx \sqrt{2}$ (99.7% coincidence). Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m)/Total Height of the Six Buddhas in the Mural (average 6.301 m) = $1.638 \approx 5:3$ (98.3% coincidence).

(3) Height of the First Story (14.57 m)/Top Height of the Six Buddhas in the Mural (average 7.28 m) = $2.001 \approx 2$ (99.9% coincidence).

(4) Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m)/Inner Diameter of the Central Chamber (10.244 m at the foundation of the wall)⁹ = $1.007 \approx 1$ (99.3% coincidence).

(5) The Distance from the Top of the Octagonal Caisson Ceiling to the Ground (12.825 m)/Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m) = $1.243 \approx 5:4$ (99.4% coincidence).

To sum up,

The Height of the First Story/Total Height of the Giant Buddha (equal to the inner diameter of the Central Chamber)/Top Height of the Six Buddhas in the Mural is $\approx 2: \sqrt{2}:1$. Therefore, the space on the first floor (especially the central chamber), the giant Buddha statue, and the six Buddha murals are designed as a whole and have a perfect geometric proportion (Figures 9 and 10).

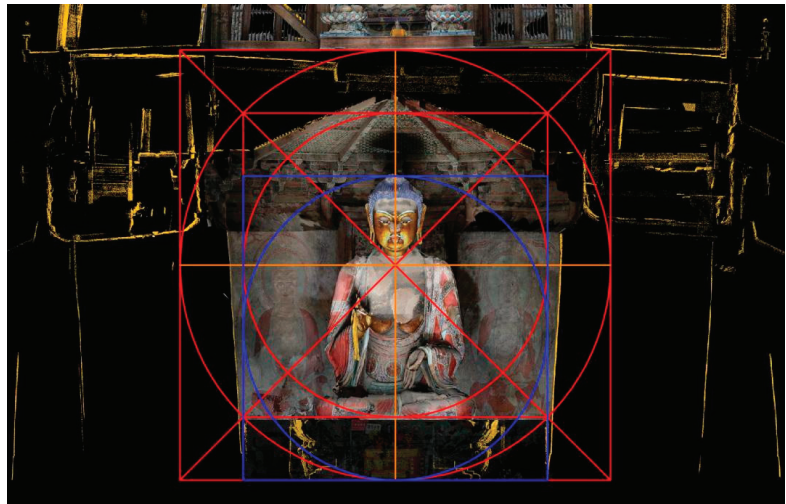


Figure 9. Proportional analysis of the interior space, the statues, and the murals on the first floor. Diagramed by the author.

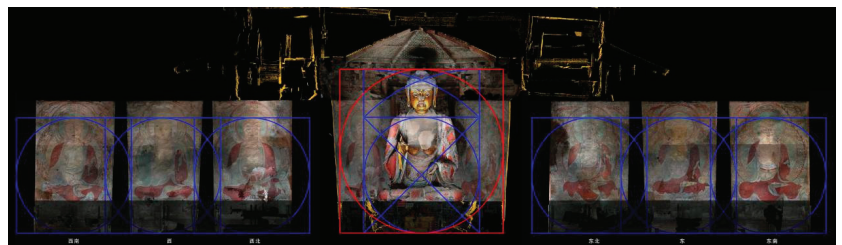


Figure 10. Proportional analysis of the giant Buddha and six Buddhas in the mural on the first floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.1.2. Proportional Analysis of the Statues and the Murals

The following can be seen from Table 2:

Table 2. Proportional analysis of the giant Buddha on the first floor of the pagoda and the six Buddhas in murals.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
Giant Buddha	1.484 3:2 (98.9%)	1.531 3:2 (98%)	1.217 6:5 (98.6%)	3.23
Average of the Six Buddha Murals	1.381 7:5 (98.6%)	1.39 7:5 (99.3%)	1.276 9:7 (99.2%)	3.526 3.5 (99.3%)
Name	Total Height: Total Width of the Base	Clear Height: Clear Width	Total Height: Clear Height	Clear Height: Height of Head
Southwest Wall Buddha	1.359	1.41	1.257	3.442
Western Wall Buddha	1.471	1.407	1.254	3.438
Northwest Wall Buddha	1.355	1.404	1.239	3.463
Northeast Wall Buddha	1.291	1.417	1.296	3.596
Eastern Wall Buddha	1.461	1.405	1.329	3.602
Southeast Wall Buddha	1.36	1.306	1.283	3.641

(1) The clear height-to-width ratio of the giant Buddha statue is about equal to the total height-to-width ratio (that is, the ratio of the total height to the total width of the base, the same below), both of which are about 3:2, forming a partial and overall harmony of the sculpture of the Giant Buddha shape (Figure 11).

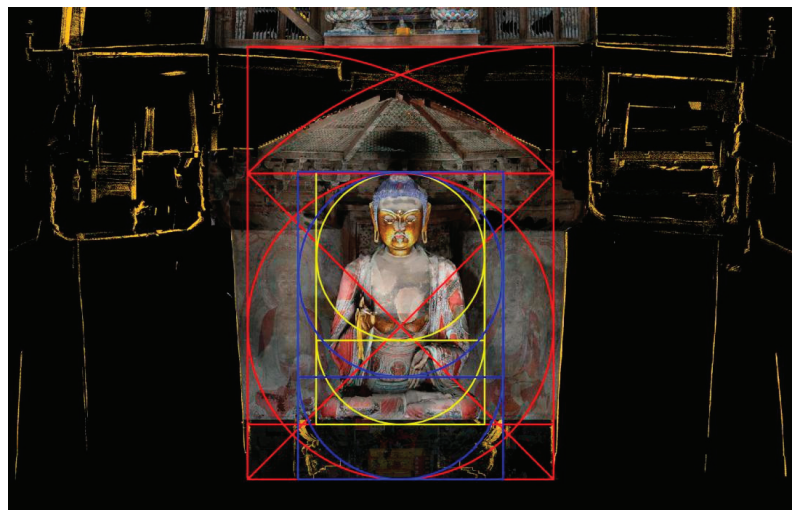


Figure 11. Geometric proportional analysis of the giant Buddha on the first floor. Diagramed by the author.

(2) Except for the Southeast Wall Buddha, the clear height-to-width ratio of the other five Buddhas is close to 7:5, that is, “fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)”

(close to $\sqrt{2}$);¹⁰ (Figure 12). The average value of the total height-to-width ratio of the six Buddhas is close to 7:5, but there is a large difference among them; in contrast, the clear-height-to-width ratios are more unified.¹¹

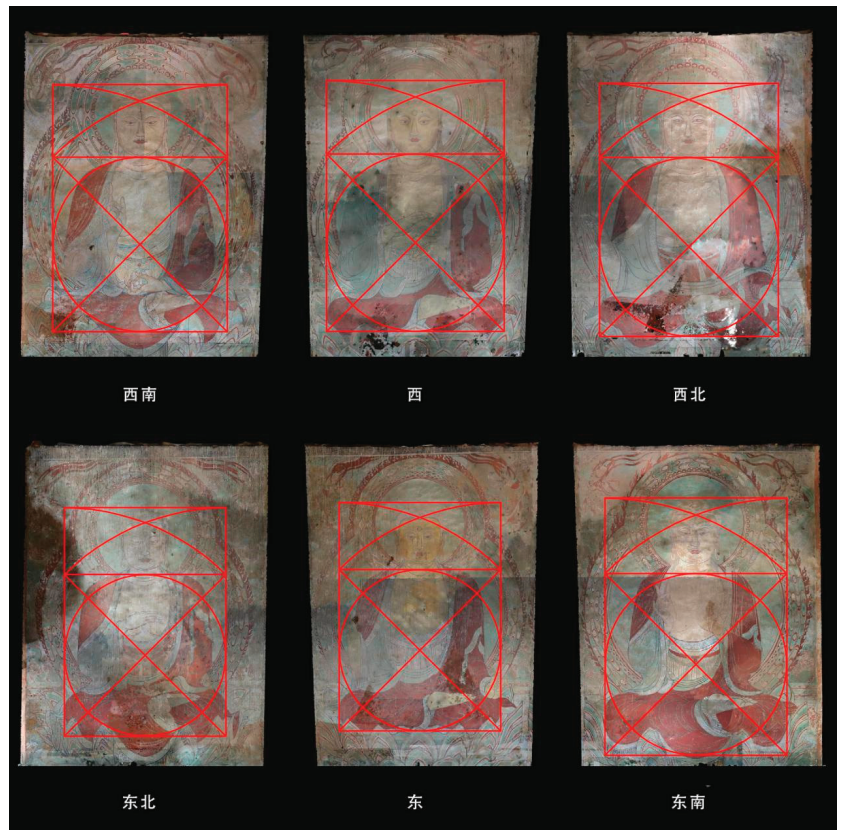


Figure 12. Geometric proportional analysis of the six Buddhas in the murals on the first floor Diagramed by the author.

(3) The head-to-body ratio of the six Buddhas in the murals is close to 1:3.5, which conforms to the craftsman's formula of "li qi zuo wu pan san ban 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting crossed-legged)". The Six Buddhas' clear height/height below the head $\approx 3.5:2.5 = 7:5$, that is, "fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)". (S. Wang 2001)¹²

(4) The proportion of the head of the giant Buddha statue is significantly higher than that of the six Buddhas in the mural.

3.2. Analysis of the Second-Floor Space and Statues

A square wooden Buddha altar is placed at the center of the second floor. On the altar, the Sakyamuni is sitting cross-legged at the center to the north, with two Attendant Bodhisattvas standing on both sides. The two Bodhisattvas sitting cross-legged on the two sides of the altar are Manjusri and Samantabhadra, respectively (which can be distinguished by the lion and elephant sculptures at the waist of the Sumeru seats) (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Statue complex on the second floor. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

According to the 2021 surveying and mapping data, the dimensions of the statues on the second floor are as follows (see Table 3).

Table 3. Dimensions of the statues on the second floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (unit: m).

Name	Top Height	Total Height	Total Width of the Base	Clear Height	Clear Width	Height of Head
Sakyamun	4.42	4.052	2.667	3.126	2.051	0.876
Attendant				2.726		0.499
Bodhisattva	3.26	2.892	0.856	2.598 (Bun not included)	0.793	0.37 (Bun not included)
in the northwest						
Attendant				2.809		0.603
Bodhisattva	3.348	2.98	0.81	2.558 (Bun not included)	0.799	0.364 (Bun not included)
in the northeast						
Bodhisattva				1.838		0.602
Manjusri	3.007	2.639	1.595	1.67 (Bun not included)	1.135	0.421 (Bun not included)
Bodhisattva				1.802		0.56
Samantabhadra	2.985	2.617	1.607	1.671 (Bun not included)	1.066	0.399 (Bun not included)

The following results can be obtained through the geometric mapping and data analysis of the measured drawings of the space and statues on the second floor.

3.2.1. Analysis of the Proportional Relationship between the Space and the Statue Complex

(1) The Height of the Second Story (8.82 m)/the Top Height of the Buddha (4.42 m) = 1.995 ≈ 2 (99.8% coincidence).

(2) The Height of the Second Story (8.82 m)¹³/the Width of the Buddha Altar (5.29 m) = 1.667 ≈ 5:3 (100% coincidence).

(3) The Width of the Buddha Altar (5.29 m)/the Width of Each Façade of the Inner Trough (average 5.305 m)¹⁴ = 0.997 ≈ 1 (99.7% coincidence).

To sum up,

The second-floor height/the width of the Buddha altar (that is, the width of every side of the inner trough)/the height of the Buddha ≈ 10:6:5. Therefore, the space of the inner

trough, the Buddha altar, and the statues on the second floor form an overall design, with obvious and basic proportions (Figure 14).

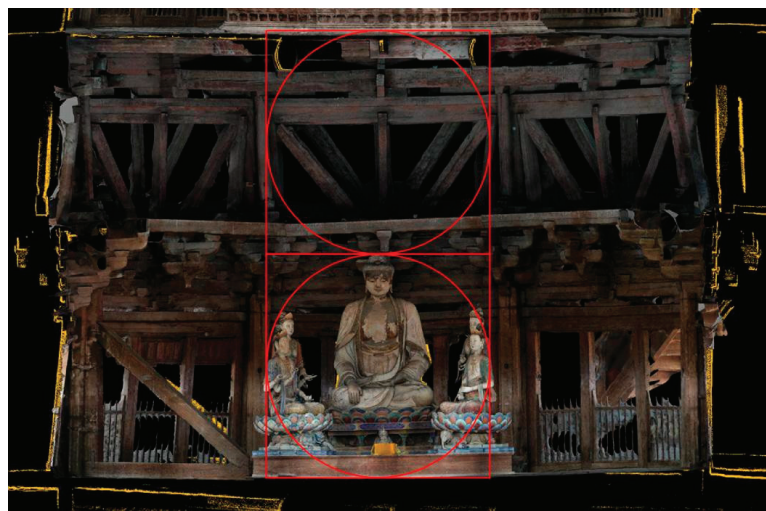


Figure 14. Proportional analysis of interior space and statues on the second floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.2.2. Proportional Analysis of Statue Complex

(1) The Total Height of Buddha (4.052 m)/the Total Height of Attendant Bodhisattva (average 2.936 m) = 1.38 \approx 7:5 (98.6% coincidence, that is, “fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)”).

(2) The Total Height of the Attendant Bodhisattva (average 2.936 m)/the Total Height of the Manjusri Bodhisattva (average 2.628 m) = 1.117 \approx 10:9 (99.5% coincidence).

To sum up,

The total height of Buddha/the total height of the Attendant Bodhisattva/the total height of the Manjusri Bodhisattva \approx 14:10:9. Therefore, the statue complex on the second floor has a clear proportional relationship in elevation design (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Proportional analysis of the statue complex on the second floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.2.3. Proportional Analysis of the Statues

As can be seen from Table 4,

Table 4. Proportional analysis of the statues on the second floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height (Bun Not Included)/Height of Head (Bun Not Included) Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
Sakyamun	1.519 3:2 (98.7%)	1.524 3:2 (98.4%)	1.296 13:10 (99.7%)	3.568 3.5 (98%)	
Attendant Bodhisattva in the northwest	1.655 5:3 (99.3%)	1.619 8:5 (98.8%)	1.436 10:7 (99.5%)	3.053 3 (98.2%)	3.967 4 (99.2%)
Attendant Bodhisattva in the northeast	1.629 8:5 (98.2%)	1.69 5:3 (98.6%)	1.452 10:7 (98.3%)	3.218	4.053 4 (98.7%)
Bodhisattva Manjusri	3.379	3.438 3.5 (98.2%)	1.061	5.463 5.5 (99.3%)	7.022 7 (99.7%)
Bodhisattva Samantabhadra	3.679	3.516 3.5 (99.4%)	1.061	4.658	7.027 7 (99.6%)

A: Buddha Statue

- (1) The height-to-width ratio (including the clear height-to-width ratio and the total height-to-width ratio) of the Buddha on the second floor is about 3:2, which is the same as the ratio of the Buddha on the first floor.
- (2) The head-to-body ratio of the Buddha is about 1:3.5, which is in line with “li qi zuo wu pan san ban 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)”. The clear height of the Buddha statue/the height below the head $\approx 3.5:2.5 = 7:5$, that is, “fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)”. All the ratios above are the same as the statues on the first floor (Figures 16 and 17).



Figure 16. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the second floor (1). Diagramed by the author.



Figure 17. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the second floor (2). Diagramed by the author.

B: Manjusri, Samantabhadra

(1) The clear height-to-width ratio and the total height-to-width ratio of Manjusri and Samantabhadra are about 8:5 or 5:3, both of which are close to the Western “Golden Ratio” (about 1.618).

(2) The ratio of Manjusri’s and Samantabhadra’s total height to their total height is about 10:7, that is, the craftsman’s formula “fang qi xie shi 方七斜十 (square seven, oblique ten)”, which is also the approximate value of $\sqrt{2}$.

(3) The head-to-body ratio (excluding the bun) of Manjusri and Samantabhadra is close to 1:4; Manjusri’s head-to-body ratio (including the bun) is about 1:3. By contrast, Samantabhadra’s head-to-body ratio is slightly smaller (Figures 18–21).



Figure 18. Geometric proportional analysis of the Manjusri Bodhisattva on the second floor (1). Diagramed by the author.

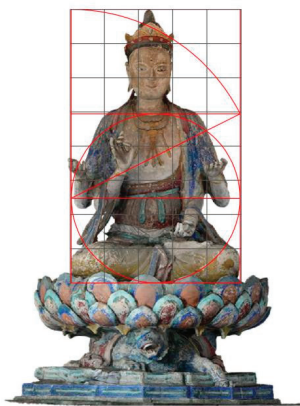


Figure 19. Geometric proportional analysis of the Manjusri Bodhisattva on the second floor (2). Diagramed by the author.

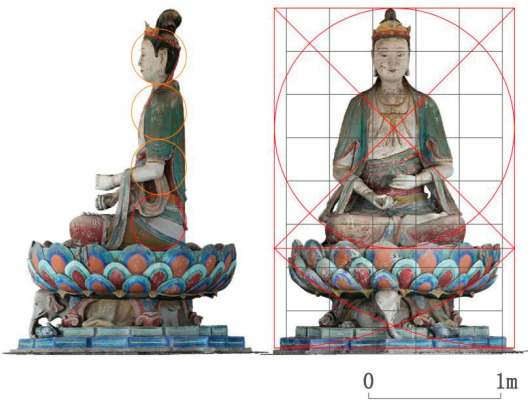


Figure 20. Geometric proportional analysis of the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on the second floor (1). Diagramed by the author.

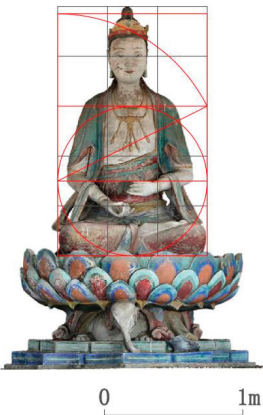


Figure 21. Geometric proportional analysis of the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on the second floor (2). Diagramed by the author.

C: Two Attendant Bodhisattvas

(1) The clear height to clear width ratio of two Attendant Bodhisattvas (the clear width is from elbow to elbow) is close to 3.5 (that is, 7:2).

(2) The head-to-body ratio of two Attendant Bodhisattvas (excluding the bun) is about 1:7 (that is, the so-called seven-heads tall), which also conforms to the “li qi zuo wu pan san ban 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)”. And the golden section of the two Bodhisattvas’ clear height is located near the elbow when the arm is naturally sagging (that is, close to the navel), indicating the proficiency of the craftsman in human body proportions at that time (Figures 22 and 23).

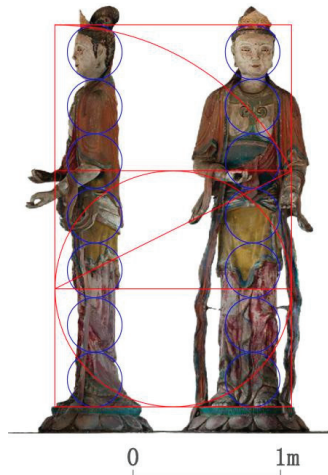


Figure 22. Geometric proportional analysis of the Attendant Bodhisattva in the northwest on the second floor. Diagramed by the author.

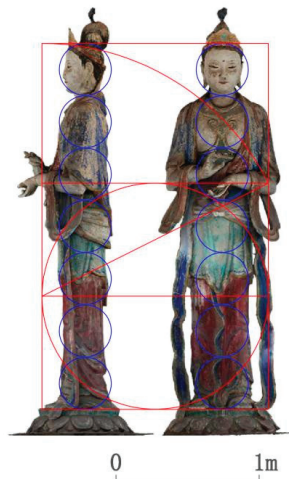


Figure 23. Geometric proportional analysis of the Attendant Bodhisattva in the northeast on the second floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.3. Analysis of the Third-Floor Space and Statues

The central Buddha altar on the third floor of the pagoda is octagonal, and four seated Buddhas are set on the altar, facing east, south, west, and north, respectively, generally considered to represent the Four Guardian Warriors (namely, the Eastern Akshobhya Buddha, the Southern Ratnasambhava Buddha, the Western Amitabha Buddha, and the Northern Amoghasiddhi Buddha).

Although the size of the four Buddha statues is roughly the same, their mudras are different, and the Sumeru seats under the statues on the north and the south are different from the Sumeru seats under the statues on the east and the west. Under the south and north Buddhas, the seat bottoms are two-layer-corbelled octagons, above which should have been the waist. However, the south Sumeru seat has an eight-horse sculpture (representing the steed of Ratnasambhava) instead of the waist, while the north Sumeru seat has an eight-bird sculpture (representing the steed of Amoghasiddhi: Garuda, the King Golden-winged Birds). Above each sculpture is a four-layer lotus throne supporting the Buddha, and the front petal is covered by the Buddha's clothes. The east and the west Sumeru seats have two-layer-corbelled octagons at both the top and the bottom. The waist part of the east Sumeru seat is an eight-elephant sculpture (representing the steed of Akshobhya), and that of the west one is an eight-bird sculpture (representing the steed of Amitabha: the peacock). Above each sculpture, a lotus throne stands on the top corbelled octagon, supporting the Buddha (not covered by the Buddha's clothes) (Figure 24).



Figure 24. The Four Guardian Warriors on the third floor. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

According to the 2021 surveying and mapping data, the dimensions of the statues on the third floor are as follows (see Table 5).

3.3.1. Analysis of the Proportional Relationship between the Space and Statue Complex

(1) The Height of the Third Story¹⁵ (8.59 m)/the Total Height of Each Buddha (average 2.729 m) = $3.148 \approx \pi$ (99.8% coincidence).

(2) The Total Height of Each Buddha (average 2.729 m)/the side Length of the Altar (average 2.756 m)¹⁶ = $0.99 \approx 1$ (99% coincidence).

Table 5. Dimensions of the statues on the third floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (unit: m).

Name	Top Height	Total Height	Total Width of the Base	Clear Height	Clear Width	Height of Head
The Southern Ratnasambhava Buddha	3.313	2.746	1.699	1.969	1.304	0.591
The Western Amitabha Buddha	3.279	2.712	1.842	1.945	1.332	0.533
The Eastern Akshobhya Buddha	3.348	2.781	1.789	1.98	1.372	0.599
The Northern Amoghasiddhi Buddha	3.245	2.678	1.84	1.954	1.345	0.576
The average value of Buddhas	3.296	2.729	1.793	1.962	1.338	0.575

To sum up,
The height of the third story and the total height of the four Buddhas (equal to the length of the octagonal Buddha altar) are in a unified design. In particular, the height of the third story/the sum of the total height of the four Buddhas $\approx \pi:4$ (that is, the ratio between the perimeters of a circle and its circumscribing square). Drawing a square with the total height of the four Buddhas (which is also equal to the side length of the octagonal Buddha altar) as the side length, the height of the third floor is exactly equal to the circumference of its inscribed circle. This composition is very similar to the “mandala” of Esoteric Buddhism, corresponding to the statues’ layout on the third floor of the Four Guardian Warriors of Esoteric Buddhism (Figure 25).

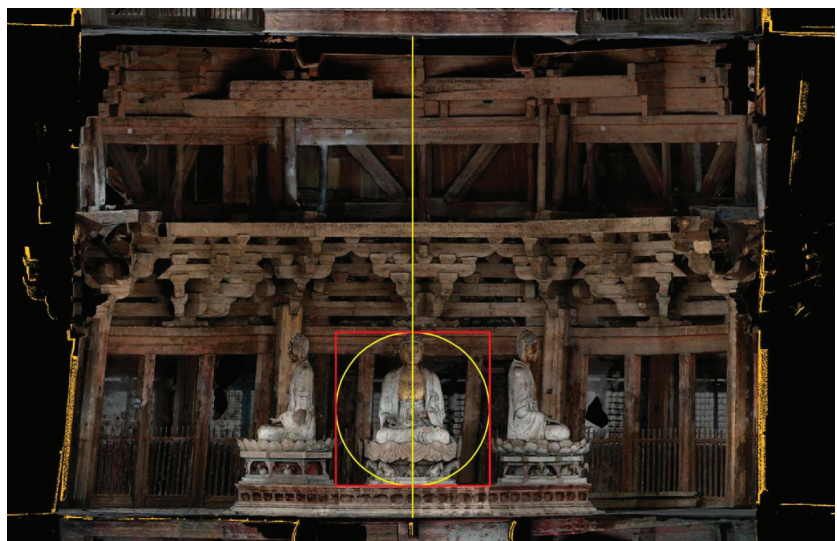


Figure 25. Proportional analysis of the interior space and statues on the third floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.3.2. Proportional Analysis of the Statues

As can be seen from Table 6, by taking the average value of the data of the four Buddhas, we can obtain the following:

Table 6. Proportional analysis of the statues on the third floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
The average value of Buddhas	1.522 3:2 (98.5%)	1.466 3:2 (97.8%)	1.391 7:5 (99.4%)	3.412 3.5 (97.5%)
Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base	Clear Height/Clear Width	Total Height/Clear Height	Clear Height/Height of Head
The Southern Ratnasambhava Buddha	1.616	1.51	1.395	3.332
The Western Amitabha Buddha	1.472	1.46	1.394	3.649
The Eastern Akshobhya Buddha	1.554	1.443	1.405	3.306
The Northern Amoghasiddhi Buddha	1.455	1.453	1.371	3.392

- (1) The height-to-width ratio of each Buddha is close to 3:2, equal to the ratio of the statues on the first and the second floors.
- (2) The ratio of the total height to the clear height of each Buddha is about 7:5, that is, the “fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)”, which is approximately $\sqrt{2}$.
- (3) The head-to-body ratio of each Buddha is close to 1:3.5, equal to the ratio of the statues on the second floor (Figures 26 and 27).

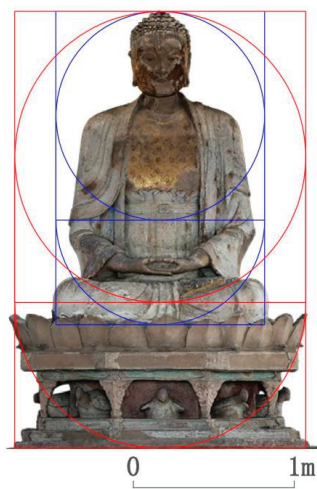


Figure 26. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the third floor (1). Diagrammed by the author.

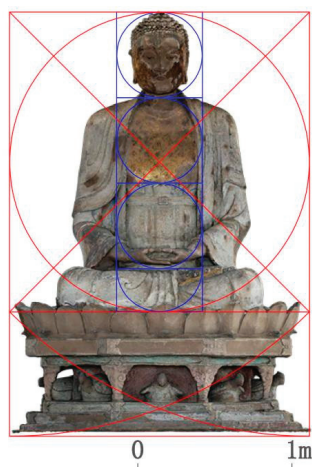


Figure 27. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the third floor (2). Diagrammed by the author.

3.4. Analysis of the Fourth-Floor Space and Statues

The layout of the statues on the fourth floor, according to Liang Sicheng, is “the most dramatic one in the pagoda”—the sitting Buddha in the center, with two disciples on either side, Kayah and Ananda. In front of each disciple are, respectively, Manjusri and Samantabhadra Bodhisattvas. Their lion and elephant are standing statues, walking and carrying the Bodhisattvas on lotus thrones, and the Bodhisattvas are all shaped with one foot drooping and one foot sitting cross-legged. In the 1930s, there were also four sculptures of kumara and two sculptures of foreigners on the altar, all in dance poses. In the 1960s, they no longer existed and were replaced by new sculptures of a lion slave and an elephant slave, which survived to the present. From Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), we can see that the head of Manjusri in the 1960s was absent, so the head of Manjusri in the present situation was restored later. The drooping foot of the Samantabhadra was also remolded (Figure 28).



Figure 28. Statues on the fourth floor. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

According to the 2021 surveying and mapping data, the dimensions of the statues on the second floor are as follows (see Table 7):

Table 7. Dimensions of the statues on the fourth floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (unit: m).

Name	Top Height	Total Height	Total Width of the Base	Clear Height (Bun Not Included)	Clear Width	Height of Head (Bun Not Included)	Remarks
Buddha	4.71	4.274	2.798	3.235	2.115	0.935	
The disciple on the northwest	2.754	2.318	0.732	2.136	0.689	0.299	
The disciple on the northeast	2.738	2.302	0.703	2.12	0.676	0.309	
Bodhisattva Manjusri	3.248	2.812	0.77	1.435/1.329		0.375/0.27	The head was remolded later
Bodhisattva Samantabhadra	3.278	2.842	0.788	1.438/1.34		0.372/0.273	The feet were remolded later
Lion	1.499	1.063		1.063		0.184	Remolded in Modern times
Elephant	1.522	1.086		1.086		0.192	Remolded in Modern times

3.4.1. Analysis of the Proportional Relationship between the Space and the Statue Complex

(1) The Height of the Fourth Story (7.75 m)¹⁷/the Top Height of the Buddha (4.71 m) = 1.645 ≈ 5:3 (98.7% coincidence).

(2) The Top Height of the Buddha (4.71 m)/the Width of the Buddha Altar (5.646 m)¹⁸ = 0.834 ≈ 5:6 (99.9% coincidence).

In summary, the height of the fourth story, the Buddha altar, and the Buddha are in a holistic design.¹⁹ (Figure 29).

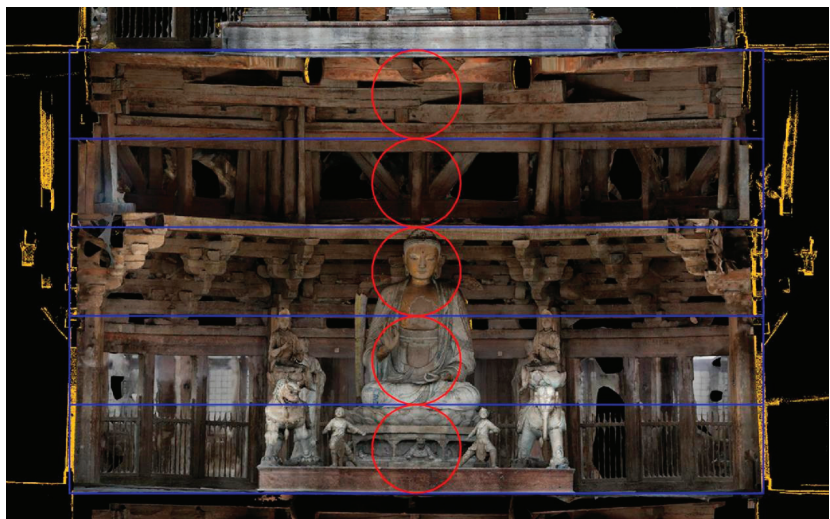


Figure 29. Proportional analysis of the interior space and the statues on the fourth floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.4.2. Proportional Analysis of the Statue Complex

- (1) The Total Height of Buddha (4.274 m)/the Total Height of Samantabhadra (2.842 m) = 1.504 ≈ 3:2 (99.7%). The Total Height of Buddha (4.274 m)/the Total Height of Manjusri (2.812 m) = 1.52 ≈ 3:2 (98.7% coincidence).
- (2) The Total Height of Buddha (4.274 m)/the Clear Height of the Two Disciples (average, 2.128 m) = 2.008 ≈ 2 (99.6% coincidence).
- (3) The Total Height of Buddha (4.274 m)/the Total Height of the Lion and Elephant (average, 1.075 m) = 3.976 ≈ 4 (99.4% coincidence).

To sum up,

The total height of Buddha/the total height of Bodhisattva/the clear height of the two disciples/the total height of the lion and elephant ≈ 12:8:6:3. Although Manjusri’s head and the lion and elephant are restored or reshaped, there is still a clear proportional relationship between the statues on the fourth floor (Figure 30).



Figure 30. Proportional analysis of the statue complex on the fourth floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.4.3. Proportional Analysis of the Statues

As can be seen from Table 8,

Table 8. Proportional analysis of the statues on the fourth floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
Buddha	1.528 3:2 (98.2%)	1.53 3:2 (98%)	1.321 4:3 (99.1%)	3.46 3.5 (98.9%)
The disciple on the northwest	3.167	3.1	1.085	7.144 7 (97.9%)
The disciple on the northeast	3.275	3.136	1.086	6.861 7 (98%)
Bodhisattva Manjusri	3.652		1.96 2 (98%)	4.922 (Bun not included) 5 (98.4%)
Bodhisattva Samantabhadra	3.607		1.976 2 (98.8%)	4.908 (Bun not included) 5 (98.2%)

- (1) The height-to-width ratio (3:2) and head-to-body ratio (1:3.5) of the Buddha statue on the fourth floor are the same as those of the Buddha statues on the third floor.
- (2) Each of the two disciples is about seven heads tall, and each of the two Bodhisattvas is about five heads tall (excluding the bun). If the bun is included, the height of Manjusri

and Samantabhadra above the base is about three times the height of the head, which is the same as the layout of Manjusri Bodhisattva sitting cross-legged on the second floor. The two disciples standing on the fourth floor, the two Bodhisattvas, Manjusri and Samantabhadra sitting on one foot, and the giant Buddha sitting cross-legged, exactly constitute the proportion of “*li qi zuo wu pan san ban* 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)”, which is consistent with the crafter’s formula. In addition, the lion and elephant remolded in modern times have a moving posture about six heads tall.

(3) The clear height of the Manjusri and Samantabhadra statues is about half of the total height (Figure 31).

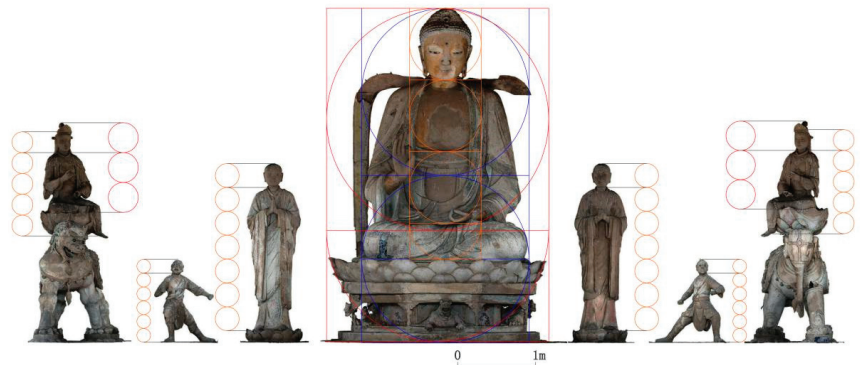


Figure 31. Proportional analysis of the statues on the fourth floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.5. Analysis of the Fifth-Floor Space and Statues

The layout of the statues on the fifth floor is the most solemn and clear. The Buddha altar is nearly square, and at the center is the seated statue of the Dari Tathagata Buddha (also known as the Piluchana Buddha). Liang Sicheng believes that “the head of this Buddha statue seems to be more ancient than statues on the lower floors”. The remaining four sides and four corners set up a total of eight Bodhisattvas’ sitting statues, in an octagonal shape around the central main Buddha. Many scholars believe that this layout reflects the “*Foding Zunsheng Mantuoluo* 佛頂尊聖曼陀羅” (or “nine-mandala”, “eight Bodhisattvas Mandala”, etc.), that is, according to the “*foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yigui fa* 佛頂尊聖陀羅尼唵誦儀軌法” (translated into Chinese by Bukong不空 in the Tang Dynasty) (Liang 2007, vol. 10, pp. 20–21),²⁰ the Piluchana Buddha and the eight Bodhisattvas formed a “nine-orientation” statues system (Luo 2010, pp. 189–216; Cheng 2017, pp. 81–109; Guo 2007, pp. 45–63; Xi 2014, pp. 41–48; You 2013, pp. 27–32). Among them, the Piluchana Buddha is at the center, the Sarvanivāraṇaviskambhin and Ākāśagarbha to its south and its north seat, respectively, the Vajrapani and Avalokitesvara (also known as the Guan Zizai Bodhisattva) to the east and the west seat, respectively, the Manjusri and the Ksitigarbha to the southeast and the southwest seat, respectively, and the Samantabhadra and the Maitreya (also known as the Cishi Bodhisattva) to the northeast and the northwest, respectively. The eight Bodhisattvas are headed by the Avalokiteshvara, arranged clockwise around the main statue in turn, ending with Ksitigarbha (Figure 32).



Figure 32. The statue complex on the fifth floor presented as the pattern of “nine mandala”. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

From the old photos in Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), it can be seen that in the 1960s, most of the crowns and buns of the heads of the eight Bodhisattvas were incomplete, and all the hands were incomplete; only the crowns and buns of the Sarvanivāraṇaṣkambhin in the south and the Ksitigarbha in the southwest were more complete. The current ones were mostly remolded later.

According to the 2021 surveying and mapping data, the dimensions of the statues on the fifth floor are as follows (see Table 9):

Table 9. Dimensions of the statues on the fifth floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (unit: m).

Name	Top Height	Total Height	Total Width of the Base	Clear Height	Clear Width	Height of Head
Piluchana Buddha (South)	3.97	3.414	2.242	2.398	1.59	0.784
Sarvanivāraṇaṣkambhin (Southwest)	2.508	1.952	1.162	1.305	0.844	0.416
Ksitigarbha (West)	2.514	1.958	1.188	1.294	0.828	0.431
Avalokitesvara (Northwest)	2.588	2.032	1.173	1.379	0.891	0.463
Maitreya (North)	2.574	2.018	1.2	1.372	0.837	0.442
Ākāśagarbha (Northeast)	2.602	2.046	1.18	1.412	0.855	0.483
Samantabhadra (East)	2.563	2.007	1.193	1.372	0.849	0.438
Vajrapani (Southeast)	2.557	2.001	1.194	1.348	0.850	0.439
Manjusri	2.607	2.051	1.162	1.371	0.861	0.463
Average of eight bodhisattvas	2.564	2.008	1.182	1.357	0.852	0.447

3.5.1. Analysis of the Proportional Relationship between the Space and the Statue Complex

- (1) The Height of the Fifth Story (from caisson to the ground, 7.109 m)/the Top Height of the Buddha (3.97 m) = 1.791 \approx 9:5 (99.5% coincidence).
- (2) The Height of the Fifth Story (7.109 m)/the Width of the Lower Buddha Altar (7.111 m)²¹ = 0.9997 \approx 1 (100% coincidence).
- (3) The Height of the Fifth Story (7.109 m)/the Height of the Ceiling (4.938 m) = 1.44 \approx $\sqrt{2}$ (98.2% coincidence).

(4) The Height of the Fifth Story (7.109 m)/the Top Height of Each Bodhisattva (average 2.564 m) = 2.773 \approx 2 $\sqrt{2}$ (98% coincidence).

In summary, it can be seen that the foundation, the ceiling, the statue complex, and the Buddha altar are all unified in design, and the proportion is perfect.²² (Figure 33).

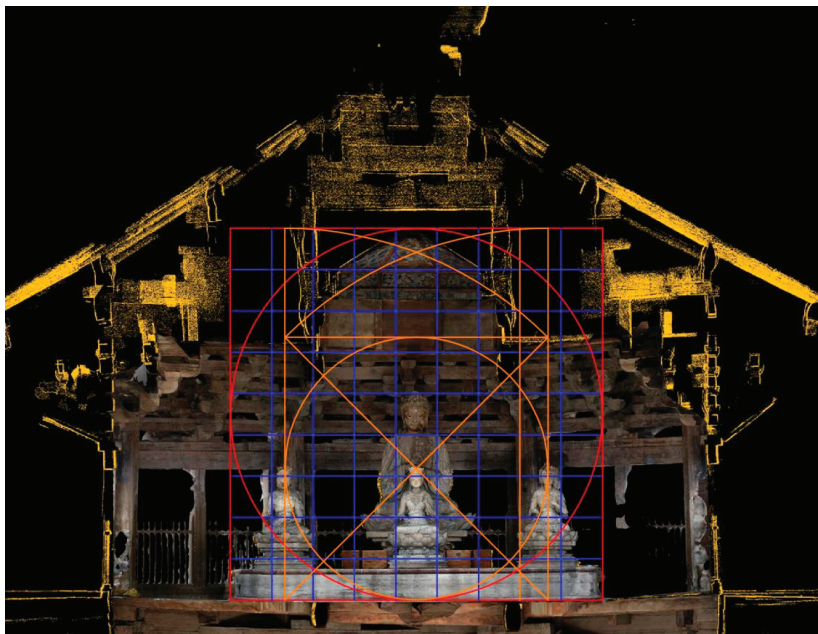


Figure 33. Proportional analysis of the interior space and the statues on the fifth floor. Diagramed by the author.

3.5.2. Proportional Analysis of the Statue Complex

The Total Height of the Buddha (3.414 m)/the Total Height of the Bodhisattva (average, 2.008 m) = 1.7 \approx 5:3 (98% coincidence).

3.5.3. Proportional Analysis of the Statues

The following can be seen from Table 10:

Table 10. Proportional analysis of the statues on the fifth floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
Piluchana Buddha	1.523	1.508	1.424	3.059
Average of eight Bodhisattvas	3:2 (98.5%) 1.699 5:3 (98.1%)	3:2 (99.5%) 1.593 8:5 (99.5%)	$\sqrt{2}$:1 (99.3%) 1.48 3:2 (98.6%)	3:1 (98%) 3.036 3:1 (98.8%)
Name	Total Height: Total Width of the Base	Clear Height: Clear Width	Total Height: Clear Height	Clear Height: Height of Head
(South) Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkambhin	1.68	1.546	1.496	3.137
(Southwest) Ksitigarbha	1.648	1.563	1.513	3.002

Table 10. Cont.

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
(West) Avalokitesvara	1.732	1.548	1.474	2.978
(Northwest) Maitreya	1.682	1.639	1.471	3.104
(North) Ākāśagarbha	1.734	1.651	1.449	2.923
(Northeast) Samantabhadra	1.682	1.616	1.463	3.132
(East) Vajrapani	1.676	1.586	1.484	3.071
(Southeast) Manjusri	1.765	1.592	1.496	2.961

(1) The height-to-width ratio (3:2) of the Buddha statues on the fifth floor is the same as that on the first to fourth floors; the ratio of the total height to the clear height ($\sqrt{2}$) is the same as that of the Buddha statues on the third floor (Figures 34 and 35).

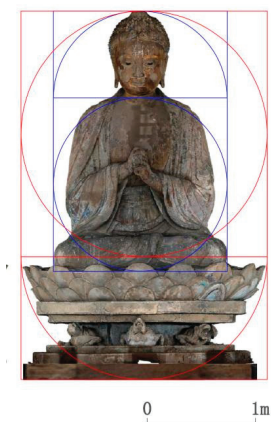


Figure 34. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the fifth floor (1). Diagramed by the author.



Figure 35. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on the fifth floor (2). Diagramed by the author.

(2) The height-to-width ratio of each Bodhisattva (including the clear height-to-width ratio and the total height-to-width ratio, taking the average value) is between 8:5 and 5:3 (close to the Golden Ratio); the head-to-body ratio (including bun) is about 1:3, and the head-to-body ratio without bun is about 1:4. All aspects above are close to the geometric proportion of Manjusri and Samantabhadra on the second floor (Figures 36 and 37).

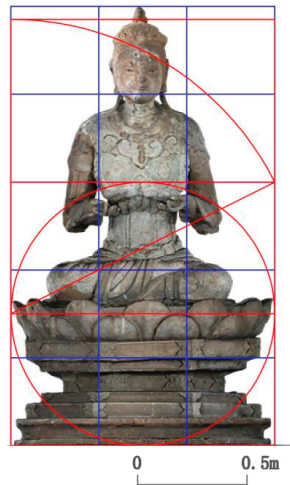


Figure 36. Geometric proportional analysis of the Bodhisattvas on the fifth floor (1). Diagramed by the author.

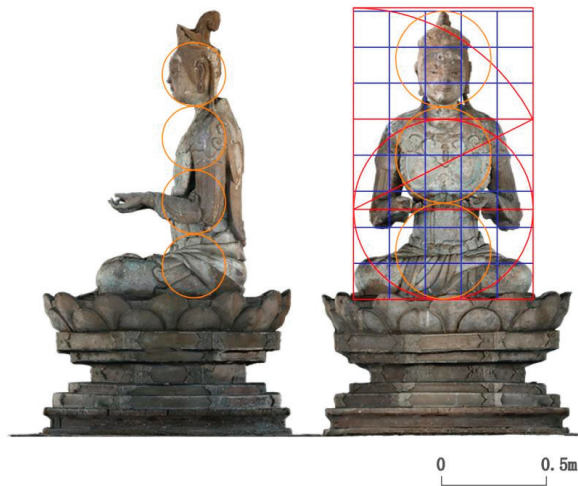


Figure 37. Geometric proportional analysis of the Bodhisattvas on the fifth floor (2). Diagramed by the author.

3.6. Proportional Relationship between the Buddha Statues on Each Floor

In addition to the proportional relationship between the interior space of each floor and the statue complex mentioned above, there are also proportional relationships among the Buddha statues (the main statues) on each floor of the pagoda.

3.6.1. Comparison of the Geometric Proportion of Statues on Each Floor

First of all, there are many similar techniques in the composition ratio of the statues on each floor of the pagoda, as shown in Table 11:

Table 11. Proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on each floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (A).

Name	Total Height/Total Width of the Base Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Clear Width Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Total Height/Clear Height Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)	Clear Height/Height of Head Measured Value Ideal Value (Coincidence Degree)
The giant Buddha on the first floor	1.484 3:2 (98.9%)	1.531 3:2 (98%)	1.217 6:5 (98.6%)	3.23 10:3 (96.9%)
The Buddha on the second floor	1.519 3:2 (98.7%)	1.524 3:2 (98.4%)	1.296 13:10 (99.7%)	3.568 3.5 (98%)
Four Buddhas on the third floor (average)	1.522 3:2 (98.5%)	1.466 3:2 (97.8%)	1.391 $\sqrt{2}$:1 (98.4%)	3.412 3.5 (97.5%)
The Buddha on the fourth floor	1.528 3:2 (98.2%)	1.53 3:2 (98%)	1.321 4:3 (99.1%)	3.46 3.5 (98.9%)
The Buddha on the fifth floor	1.523 3:2 (98.5%)	1.508 3:2 (99.5%)	1.424 $\sqrt{2}$:1 (99.3%)	3.059 3:1 (98%)

The following can be seen from the above table:

- (1) The height-to-width ratio (including the clear height-to-width ratio and the total height-to-width ratio) of the Buddha statues on each floor of the pagoda is close to 3:2 (the coincidence degree of most data is higher than 98%, and only the coincidence degree of the clear height-to-width ratio of the Buddha statue on the third floor [taking the average value of the four Buddhas] is 97.8%). The ratio 3:2 is the most common modeling technique for the Buddha statues in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.
- (2) The ratio of the total height to clear height of the four Buddhas on the third floor and the Buddha on the fifth floor is $\sqrt{2}$:1 (this ratio also exists on the two seated Bodhisattvas on the second floor, namely Manjusri and Samantabhadra). The ratio of the total height to the clear height of the Buddha statues on the first, second, and fourth floors is also a relatively simple integer ratio.
- (3) The head-body ratio of the Buddha statues on the second, third, and fifth floor is close to 1:3.5 (that is, “pan san ban 盤三半 (three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)”, and the six Buddhas in the mural on the first floor also adopt this ratio). The head-body ratio of the Buddhas on the first and the fifth floor is larger, and that of the Buddha on the fifth floor is the largest, with the head occupying one-third of the clear height.

3.6.2. The Total Height Ratio of the Buddha Statues on Each Floor

Secondly, there is a subtler proportion arrangement between the Buddhas on each floor, and it is most likely designed with the giant Buddha on the first floor as the basic module (that is, the modulus). See Table 12:

As can be seen from the above table, if the total height of the Buddha on the first floor is 100, the sum of the total height of the Buddhas on the second and the fourth floors is about 80, and the sum of total height of Buddhas on the third and the fifth floors is about 60, the proportion of the above three is 5:4:3, that is, “gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五, the Pythagorean theorem”.

Table 12. Proportional analysis of the Buddha statues on each floor of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (B).

Name	Total Height (unit: m)	Percentage of the Total Height of the Giant Buddha on the First Floor
The giant Buddha on the first floor	10.32	100%
The Buddha on the second floor	4.052	39.26%
Four Buddhas on the third floor (average)	2.729	26.44%
The Buddha on the fourth floor	4.274	41.41%
The Buddha on the fifth floor	3.414	33.08%
The sum of Buddhas on the third and the fifth floor	6.143	59.53% (≈60%, coincidence degree 99.2%)
The sum of Buddhas on the second and the fourth floor	8.326	80.68% (≈80%, coincidence degree 98.9%)
The sum of four Buddhas on the second to fifth floor	14.469	140.20% (≈140%, coincidence degree 99.9%)

Is this ratio a coincidence? If we carefully consider the Buddhist doctrine and discipline behind the layout of statues on each floor of the pagoda, we will find that this proportional relationship is probably the result of careful arrangement: the themes of the second and the fourth floors of the pagoda belong to Exoteric Buddhism (the second floor is possibly Huayan Sect). The third floor is dedicated to the Four Guardian Warriors, and the fifth floor is dedicated to the so-called “fo ding zun sheng man tuo luo 佛頂尊聖曼陀羅”, all belonging to the Esoteric Buddhism. Each lotus petal on the top of the giant Buddha’s Sumeru seat on the first floor is painted with a small Buddha, which is similar to the Sumeru seat of the Vairocana Buddha in Fengxian Temple of Luoyang Longmen Grottoes and the Tōdai-ji Temple in Nara, Japan (Nara National Museum et al. 2002, pp. 22–26)²³ and may also belong to the Huayan Sect. The layout of statues on each floor together constitutes a religious system, which combined Exoteric Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism, and some scholars have pointed out that this was an important feature of Buddhism in the Liao Dynasty (You 2013, pp. 27–32). Therefore, the statues on the second and the fourth floors (Exoteric Buddhism) are regarded as a group, and their total height is 4/5 of that of the giant Buddha on the first floor; the statues on the third and fifth floors (Esoteric Buddhism) are regarded as a group, and their total height is 3/5 of that of the giant Buddha on the first floor. On the one hand, this layout conforms to the corresponding Buddhist doctrine and discipline of each floor; on the other hand, it presents the proportional relationships between the Buddha statues on each floor clearly.

Further, the sum of the total height of the Buddha statues on the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors (taking the average of the four Buddhas on the third floor) is just 1.4 times the total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor, approximately $\sqrt{2}$, and almost equal to the height of the first story of the pagoda (the sum of the total height of the Buddha statues is 14.469 m, and the height of the first story is 14.57 m, in which the coincidence is 99.3%). If we imagine that the Buddha statues on the second to fifth floors are stacked together, the total height is exactly equal to the height of the first story (and is equal to twice the distance between the head of the Buddha on the first floor’s mural); this should also be the result of careful design (Figure 38).

3.6.3. Ratio of the Height of the Pagoda to the Total Height of the Giant Buddha on the First Floor

Finally, it is particularly necessary to point out that the total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor is likely not only the module of the total height of the Buddha statues on each floor but also one of the important modules of the pagoda. According to our measured data in 2021, the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 61.99 m. It follows that

The Total Height of the Pagoda (excluding the base, 61.99 m)/the Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.32 m) = 6.007 ≈ 6 (99.9% coincidence). (N. Wang 2018b, pp. 216, 256; 2018c).²⁴

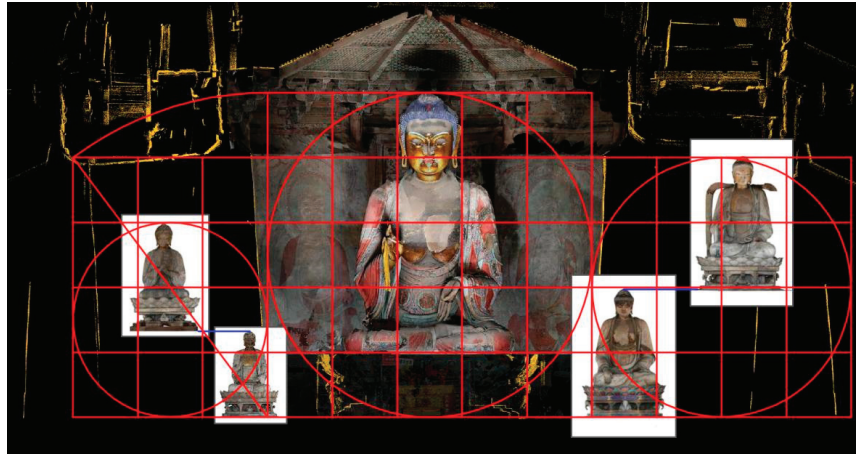


Figure 38. Analysis of the proportional relationship between Buddha statues on different floors of the pagoda. Diagramed by the author.

According to the measured data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the total height of the pagoda is 65.88 m, and the height of the base (average) is 3.667 m, so the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 62.213 m. The total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor is about 10.2 m. It follows that

The Total Height of the Pagoda (excluding the base, 62.213 m)/the Total Height of the Giant Buddha (10.2 m) = $6.099 \approx 6$ (98.3% coincidence).

According to the measured data of the China Academy of Cultural Heritage in 2011, the total height of the pagoda is 65.838 m, (Hou et al. 2016, p. 18) and the height of the base (the average value from the terrace to the top on each side) is 3.572 m,²⁵ so the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 62.266 m. The total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor is about 10.375 m. It follows that

The Total Height of the Pagoda (excluding the base, 62.266 m)/the Height of the Giant Buddha (10.375 m) = $6.002 \approx 6$ (the coincidence is close to 100%).

In summary, through the analysis of the measured data from surveying and mapping in 1991, 2011, and 2021, there is a clear proportional relationship between the total height of the pagoda (above the base) and the total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor (6:1).²⁶ (Figure 39). If the total height of the giant Buddha is H , then the total height of the pagoda (above the base) is $6H$, and the sum of the total height of four Buddhas on the second to fifth floors is $1.4H$, so the sum of the total height of Buddha statues on each floor (the average value of the four Buddhas on the third floor) is $2.4H$. The ratio of the sum of the total height of the Buddha statues on each floor to the total height of the pagoda ($6H$) is 2:5.

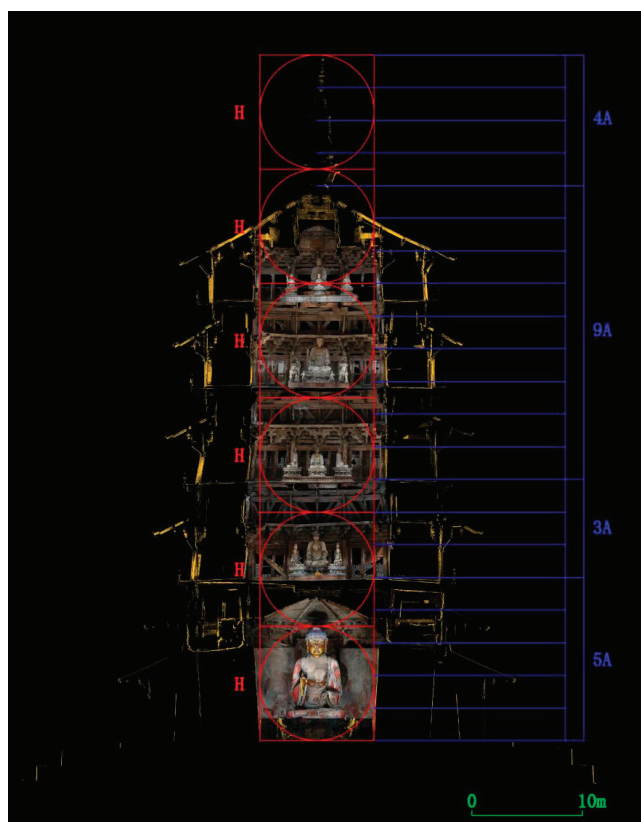


Figure 39. The total height of the pagoda (without the base) is six times the height of the giant Buddha on the first floor (H). Among them, the height of the first floor, the height of the second floor, the sum of the height of the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors, and the height of the pagoda-top finial are 5A, 3A, 9A, 4A; $H = 3.5A$; $A = 2.952$ m. Diagramed by the author.

4. The Construction Scale and Design Methodology Employed in the Architectural Space, the Statue Complex, and the Murals of the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple

4.1. Proportion of the Height of Each Section in the Vertical Direction of the Pagoda

We can further explore that if the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is evenly divided into 21 sections, and each is set as A, then $A = 61.99/21 = 2.952$ m. It follows that

The height of the first story (14.57 m) = $4.936A \approx 5A$ (98.7% coincidence);

The height of the second story (8.82 m) = $2.988A \approx 3A$ (99.6% coincidence);

The height of the pagoda-top finial (11.571 m) = $3.92A \approx 4A$ (98% coincidence);

The sum of the story height of the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors (the height of the fifth story is calculated until the bottom of the finial) = $9.156A \approx 9A$ (98.3% coincidence). It can be seen that the average height of the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors is 3A, equal to the height of the second story).

The height of the giant Buddha on the first floor (10.32 m) = $3.496A \approx 3.5A$ (99.9% coincidence).

In summary, the layout of the pagoda (above the base) is divided into four parts vertically aligned—the height of the first story/the height of the second story/the sum of the story height of the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors/the height of the pagoda-top finial $\approx 5:3:9:4$. Among them, the height of the second story, the pagoda-top finial, and the

first story are in the proportion of “gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五, the Pythagorean theorem”, which is quite similar to the proportional relationships between the height of the Buddha statues.

4.2. The Deduction of the Construction Scale and the Major Scales Employed in the Pagoda, the Statues, and the Murals

According to the above, A = 2.952 m is the construction module of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. Significantly, these data are highly probably related to the construction scale.

Fu Xinian deduced that the construction scale used in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple is 1 *chi* = 29.4 cm (and took this as the performance of the Liao scale followed by Tang). Hence, the major scales on each floor are mainly in full numbers, especially the front width of the third floor (30 *chi*, equal to the column height on the first floor), which is an important module used in the pagoda’s elevation design (Li et al. 2021, pp. 56–70). Zhang Shiqing 張十慶 also holds the view that the “Liao scale is not supposed to be far from Tang scale”, and he deduces that in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple, 1 *chi* = 29.46 cm, and 1.5 *chi* is a primary module employed in the design of the plan and section of the pagoda (Zhang 2004, pp. 92–105). Xiao Min 肖旻, (Xiao 2006, pp. 56–58) Zhang Yijie 張毅捷, (Zhang et al. 2018b, pp. 80–85) Chen Siliang, (Chen et al. 2023, pp. 65–76), and other scholars took numbers between 29.4 cm and 29.5 cm as the pagoda’s construction scale for related studies.

Besides the views mentioned above, Chen Mingda employed the Song scale, 1 *chi* = 32.9 cm, to adjust the measured data of the wooden materials used in the pagoda (Chen et al. 2023, pp. 44–45). Xiao Min tried the possibility of 1 *chi* = 29.4 cm, 30.7 cm, and 31.5 cm (Xiao 2006, pp. 56–58). The team of Liu Chang took 1 *chi* = 30.6 cm as the construction scale for further study of floor designs (Li et al. 2021, pp. 56–70; Li et al. 2022, pp. 36–53; Liu et al. 2022, pp. 126–35).

Even though, there are different opinions on the value of the construction scale, the module that A = 2.952 m explored by the team of author could provide a new angle and a solid example for further discussion of the pagoda’s construction scale—module A (2.952 m) is very close to 10 times of the construction scale found by Fu Xinian, Zhang Shiqing, and other scholars (between 29.4 and 29.5 cm), possibly the length of 1 *chi* in Liao Dynasty.

Hypothetically, given the construction scale used in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple is 1 *chi* = 29.5 cm, the major scales of the architectural space, the statues, and the murals could all be converted into full numbers (only a few exceptions but also with order), described in Table 13:

Table 13. Measured values and deduced values (in *chi*) of the architecture, statues, and the murals of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple.

Section (Floors)	Measured Object	Measured Value (Unit: Meter)	Deduced Value in <i>Chi</i> (1 <i>chi</i> = 29.5 cm)	Coincidence of Deduced to Measured Values	Note
First Floor	Story Height	14.57	50	98.8%	
	Central Chamber				
	Inner Diameter	10.244	35	99.2%	
	Outer Chamber				
	Inner Diameter	20.76	70	99.5%	data from (Chen 2002b)
					data from (Chen 2002b)
	Outer Trough				The diameter including the colonnade is 30 m ≈ 100 <i>chi</i>
	Diameter (excluding the colonnade)	23.36	80	99%	(98.3% coincidence)

Table 13. Cont.

Section (Floors)	Measured Object	Measured Value (Unit: Meter)	Deduced Value in <i>Chi</i> (1 <i>chi</i> = 29.5 cm)	Coincidence of Deduced to Measured Values	Note
Second Floor	Front Width of Each Facade	9.68	33	99.4%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Total Height of Giant Buddha	10.32	35	99.95%	
	Top Height of Xix Buddha Murals (average)	7.28	25	98.7%	
	Total Height of Six Buddha Murals (average)	6.301	21	98.3%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Story Height	8.82	30	99.7%	
	Outer Trough Diameter	22.34	76	99.6%	
	Front Width of Each Facade	9.27	31.5	99.8%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Top Height of Sakyamuni	4.42	15	99.9%	
	Width of Buddha Altar	5.29	18	99.6%	
	Total Height of Sakyamuni	4.052	14	98.1%	equal to front width of each side of inner chamber (average)
	Total Height of Attendant Bodhisattva (average)	2.936	10	99.5%	
	Total Height of Bodhisattva Manjusri and Samantabhadra (average)	2.628	9	99%	
Third Floor	Story Height	8.59	29	99.6%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Outer Trough Diameter	21.3	72	99.7%	
	Front Width of Each Facade	8.83	30	99.8%	
	Top Height of Four Buddha (average)	2.729	9.3	99.5%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Width of Buddha Altar	2.756	9.3	99.6%	
	Story Height	7.75	26	99%	
Fourth Floor	Outer Trough Diameter	20.4	69	99.8%	data from (Chen 2002b)
	Front Width of Each Facade	8.42	28.5	99.9%	
	Top Height of Buddha	4.71	16	99.8%	

Table 13. Cont.

Section (Floors)	Measured Object	Measured Value (Unit: Meter)	Deduced Value in <i>Chi</i> (1 <i>chi</i> = 29.5 cm)	Coincidence of Deduced to Measured Values	Note
Fifth Floor	Width of Buddha Altar	5.646	19	99.3%	data from (Chen 2002b) data from (Chen 2002b)
	Total Height of Buddha	4.274	14.4	99.4%	
	Total Height of Bodhisattva Manjusri and Samantabhadra (average)	2.827	9.6	99.8%	
	Clear Height of Two Disciples (average)	2.128	7.2	99.8%	
	Total Height of Lion Slave and Elephant Slave (average)	1.075	3.6	98.8%	
	Story Height (from floor to the ceiling)	7.109	24	99.6%	
	Outer Trough Diameter	19.22	65	99.8%	
	Front Width of Each Facade	7.98	27	99.8%	
	Top Height of Buddha	3.97	13.5	99.7%	
	Width of Buddha Altar	7.111	24	99.6%	
	Total Height of Buddha	3.414	11.5	99.4%	
	Total Height of Eight Bodhisattvas (average)	2.008	6.9	98.6%	
	Pagoda-Top Finial Height	11.571	40	98.1%	
	Total Height (from south terrace to the top of base) ²⁷	4.4	15	99.4%	
Base	Side Length of Lower Square Base (average)	40.65	140	98.4%	side length of upper octagon base is 50 <i>chi</i>
	Inner Diameter of Upper Octagon Base	35.47	120	99.8%	
	Total Height of the Pagoda (excluding the base)	61.99	210	99.9%	
Second and Fourth Floor	Total Height of Buddha	8.326	28	99.2%	total height (including the base) is 225 <i>chi</i>
Third and Fifth Floor	Total Height of Buddha (take average of four Buddha on the third floor)	6.143	21	99.2%	

Except the noted data, all measured values are collected from the field research in 2021 by the author's team.

According to the data above, the following apply:

- (1) From the bottom to the top, the height of the base, each story, and the finial are all in full numbers, the total height is 225 *chi*, and the total height (excluding the base) is 210 *chi*.
- (2) “30 *chi*” is a major module employed in the design of the pagoda: the front width of each facade on the third floor, the height of the second story, and the average height of the third, the fourth and the fifth stories (including the roof to the fifth story height) are all 30 *chi*; the total height of the pagoda is 225 *chi*, 7.5 times 30 *chi*; and the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 210 *chi*, 7 times 30 *chi*. Additionally, Fu Xinian, Zhang Shiqing, and other scholars have noted that the first story column height is 8.85 m, equal to 30 *chi*.
- (3) “15 *chi*” is another major module: the base is 15 *chi* high; the total height of the pagoda is 225 *chi*, 15 times 15 *chi*; and the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 210 *chi*, 14 times 15 *chi*. Additionally, Fu Xinian, Zhang Shiqing, and other scholars have noted that the front width of the central bay on the first floor is 4.42 m, and the colonnade columns are 4.43 m high, both equal to 15 *chi*.
- (4) There is regularity in the diameter of the outer trough and the front width of each facade on each floor. Zhang Shiqing indicated that the front width of each facade on each floor is (from the bottom to the top) 33, 31.5, 30, 28.5, and 27 *chi*, while taking “30 *chi*” as a module, and the width is decreased by 1.5 *chi* floor by floor (from the bottom to the top).
- (5) The design of the first story’s architectural space, the giant Buddha, and the pagoda base is in a clear proportional relationship; the central chamber’s inner diameter is 35 *chi*, the outer chamber’s inner diameter is 70 *chi*, and the side length of the lower square base (average) is 140 *chi*, and hence, the ratio between them is $1:\sqrt{2}:2$. The side length of the upper octagon base is 50 *chi*, equal to the height of the first story. The outer trough diameter (excluding the colonnade) is 80 *chi*, equal to the sum of the first and second stories’ height; including the colonnade, the outer trough diameter is 100 *chi*, which presents a proportional relationship with the outer chamber’s inner diameter (70 *chi*), and the side length of the lower square base (140 *chi*) as $1:\sqrt{2}:2$.
- (6) As mentioned above, the total height of the giant Buddha is 35 *chi* (equal to the inner diameter of the central chamber), which is also a major module such that the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 210 *chi*, 6 times 35 *chi*. Additionally, the sum of the Buddha’s total heights on the third and the fifth floors is 21 *chi*, and the sum of the Buddha’s total heights on the second and fourth floors is 28 *chi*, which present a proportional relationship with the giant Buddha in 3:4:5 (勾三股四弦五, the Pythagorean theorem).
- (7) The top height and total height of the Buddhas on the first and the second floors (including the murals on the first floor) are in integral numbers (in *chi*); the total height of the four Buddhas on the third floor (in average) is 9.3 *chi*, not in integral number, but could present a ratio to the third-story height (29 *chi*) as $1:\pi$. The statues on the fourth floor employ “1.2 *chi*” as the module, presenting a 12:8:6:3 ratio. The central Buddha on the fifth floor is 11.5 *chi* high in total, and the total height of the Bodhisattvas (in average) is 6.9 *chi*, presenting a 5:3 ratio. The scale and proportional relationships of the statues on each floor are clear.
- (8) Last but not least, the geometric proportions employed in the construction are made obvious by reverting the measured values to the original construction scale: the total height of the pagoda is 225 *chi*, and the inner diameter of the first-floor outer trough (excluding the colonnade) is 80 *chi*, which present the ratio $2.8125 \approx 2\sqrt{2}$ (99.5% coincidence). Moreover, according to the geometric construction, the ratio of the total height of the pagoda and the height from the fifth floor’s column capital to the ground is $\sqrt{2}:1$ (see Figure 40). Additionally, the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 210 *chi*, 6 times the total height of the giant Buddha on the first floor (35 *chi*), the side length of the lower square base (average) is 140 *chi*, 4 times the total height

of the giant Buddha, and the geometric proportion is 3:2, which also emphasizes the importance of the total height of the giant Buddha, as a module not only in vertical height but also in floor planning.

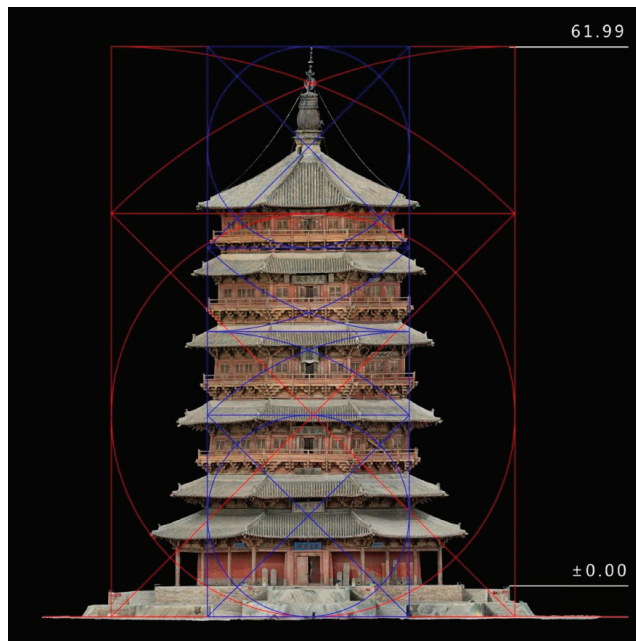


Figure 40. Proportional analysis of the facade. Diagramed by the author.

4.3. Analysis of the Overall Design Methodology of the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple

Based on our analysis, we draw the following conclusions:

Firstly, the design of the whole architectural space starts with the giant Buddha on the first floor such that the height of the Buddha is 35 *chi*, and the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is 210 *chi* (6 times the height of the giant Buddha); the first story height is 50 *chi* (the ratio of which to the height of the giant Buddha is 10:7 or $\sqrt{2}:1$), and the second-story height is 30 *chi*, while the average of the third-, the fourth- and the fifth-story heights is also 30 *chi*, and the height of the pagoda-top finial is 40 *chi*. Then, the height of the base is determined to be 15 *chi*, the same as half of the second-story height (also half of the average height of the third to fifth floors). Consequently, the total height of the pagoda is settled to be 225 *chi*. The major modules are 35 *chi*, 30 *chi*, and 15 *chi*, constantly appearing in the dominant dimensions.

Secondly, the inner diameter of the central chamber on the first floor is determined to be 35 *chi* (equal to the total height of the giant Buddha). Based on this module, on the same floor, the inner diameter of the outer chamber is determined to be twice the module (70 *chi*), and the side length of the lower square base is 4 times (140 *chi*). Then, the side length of the upper octagon base is settled to be 50 *chi* (equal to the first-story height), and the diameter of the outer trough (excluding the colonnade) is 80 *chi*, which presents a classical ratio to the total height of the pagoda as $1:2\sqrt{2}$ (its cultural context will be amplified later in the article). Therefore, the front width of each facade is 33 *chi*. The diameter of the outer trough including the colonnade is 100 *chi*, presenting a $1:\sqrt{2}$ ratio with the side length of the lower square base (140 *chi*).

Thirdly, the floor plan scale on each floor is determined—the front width of each facade (from the bottom to the top) is 33, 31.5, 30, 28.5, and 27 *chi*, so the building tapers from

base to top. Combined with the design of the story heights, the basic plan and section design are established.

Then, the total height and the layout of the Buddha statues on each floor can be determined, based on the height of the giant Buddha and the proportional relationships between the statues and also because the statues on the second and fourth floors belong to Exoteric Buddhism and the statues on the third and the fifth floors belong to Esoteric Buddhism. The proportional relationship between the top height of the Buddha and the story height on each floor can be further corrected by adjusting altar height (so the altar heights from the second to the fifth floor have no obvious logic). The top height of the Buddhas in the murals on the first floor is 25 *chi*, $1/\sqrt{2}$ of the giant Buddha, and $1/2$ of the first-story height.

Afterward, the proportional relationships between the Buddhas and other attendant statues on each floor can be determined in detail.

Finally, each statue should be shaped according to its own geometric proportion.

Therefore, all the statues and murals are designed as a whole and present harmonious proportions with the architectural space, especially the inner chamber space on each floor. The architectural space, the statues, and the murals are well designed with clear proportions and modulus relations.

5. Conclusions: Classical Proportion and Its Cultural Messages

Through the above analysis of the proportion of the interior space of the pagoda and the composition of the statue complex, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn as follows:

First, there is a very clear proportional relationship between the height of each floor and the top height of the Buddha statue: the first floor is $\sqrt{2}:1$, the second floor is $2:1$, the fourth floor is $5:3$, and the fifth floor is $9:5$. In addition, the ratio of the average height of the third floor to the average value of the four Buddhas' total height is $\pi:1$. The proportional relationship between the height of each story and the top height (or the total height) of the Buddha statue is one of the most basic geometric proportions between the interior space and statues and is also one of the most important design tools for the coordination between the statues and the interior space of each floor to jointly create the religious atmosphere of "praying to Buddha" and "worshipping Buddha".²⁸ In addition, the diameter of the inner wall of the central chamber on the first floor of the pagoda is equal to the height of the giant Buddha; the height of the ceiling is approximately 1.25 times that of the giant Buddha, and the top height of the six Buddhas in the mural is half the height of the first floor, etc. These proportional relations reflect a more elaborate design technique. The Buddha altars on each of the second to fifth floors are also integrated with the interior space and statue complex. The above aspects all prove that the interior space of the pagoda, the Buddha altar and the statue complex, and the murals are unified and carefully designed.

Second, the statues on each floor of the pagoda have clear and simple geometric proportions. Although the first floor has only a single giant Buddha, the total height of the giant Buddha is in relation to the top height of the six Buddhas in the murals surrounding the giant Buddha $\sqrt{2}:1$. The total height of the main Buddhas, the two attendants, and the Manjusri is related as $14:10:9$ (the first two are approximate values of $\sqrt{2}:1$). The dimensions of the Buddhas on the third and the fourth floors are the same. The height of the four main Buddhas, Manjusri, Samantabhadra, Anangaye, and the two beasts (taking the clear height of the Anangaye and the total height of the rest) is in a ratio of $12:8:6:3$. The total height of the five main Buddhas and the eight Bodhisattvas is $5:3$.

Third, the 26 statues of the pagoda each have a clear geometric proportion and, according to different types, have obvious logics. The height-to-width ratio of the Buddhas on each floor (8 in total) is close to $3:2$, and the technique is consistent. The height-to-width ratio of the Bodhisattva sitting statues on the second and fifth floor (10 in total) is close to $5:3$ or $8:5$, which is close to the "Golden Ratio (approximately $1:1.618$)". The two standing Attendant Bodhisattva statues on the second floor and the two disciples on the fourth floor are all seven heads tall. The Manjusri and the two Bodhisattvas sitting on one foot on the

fourth floor are all five heads tall (not including buns), and the Buddhas on the second, third, and fifth floors (6 in total) are close to 1:3.5. The above head-body ratios are in line with the craftsman's formula of "li qi zuo wu pan san ban 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)". Of course, there are exceptions, such as the Buddhas on the first and fourth floor, whose head-to-body ratio is between 1:3 and 1:3.25. The ratio of the total height and the clear height of each sitting statue also has a clear proportional relationship, which is most commonly $\sqrt{2}$:1 (including the Buddhas on the third and the fifth floor, and Manjusri and Samantabhadra on the second floor) and 3:2 (including the eight Bodhisattvas on the fifth floor). Of course, there are also cases where the ratio of total height to clear height is 6:5 (the Buddha on the first floor), 13:10 (the Buddha on the second floor), and 4:3 (the Buddha on the fourth floor).

Fourth, the height of the Buddhas on each floor may take the height of the giant Buddha on the first floor as the module: the sum of the total height of the Buddhas on the second and fourth floors (Exoteric Buddhism) is 4/5 of the total height of the Buddha on the first floor, the sum of the total height of Buddhas on the third and fifth floors (Esoteric Buddhism) is 3/5 of the total height of the Buddha on the first floor, the sum of the total height of Buddhas on the second to fifth floors is 1.4 times (about $\sqrt{2}$ times) that of the total height of the Buddha on the first floor. It can be seen that the Buddha on each floor of the pagoda is likely to be a unified design and reflects the harmony of Exoteric Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism.

Fifth, the total height of the pagoda (excluding the base) is about six times the height of the Buddha on the first floor; it can be seen that the Buddha on the first floor may not only be the module of the Buddhas on each floor but also the module of the architecture. The construction of the entire pagoda can be described as "duo xiang gou ta 度像構塔 ("designing the interior space of the pagoda, according to the main statues)".

Sixth, the construction scale is probably 1 *chi* = 29.5 cm, from which the major scales of the building, the statues, and the murals are in clear and reasonable integral numbers, providing essential clues for the design methodology. The total height of the pagoda is 225 *chi*, and the total height excluding the base is 210 *chi*. In the construction, the major modules are 35 *chi* (the total height of the giant Buddha and the inner diameter of the central chamber on the first floor), 30 *chi* (the second-story height, the average height of the third, fourth, and fifth floors, the height of the first-story column, and the front width of each facade on the third floor), and 15 *chi* (the total height of the base, the height of the first-story colonnade column, and the front width of the first-story central bay of the outer trough). The geometric proportion of the total height of the pagoda (225 *chi*) to the diameter of the first-story outer trough (80 *chi*) is $2\sqrt{2}$:1.

From the above conclusions, we can sum up several classic ratios that are frequently employed in the design of the interior space and the statues of the pagoda, namely $\sqrt{2}$ (or 7:5, 10:7), 3:2, 5:3 (or 8:5), and 9:5. Here is a brief discussion of the rich cultural messages behind these classic ratios.

5.1. $\sqrt{2}$ and the Rules of Square and Circle

In addition to appearing in the interior space of the pagoda and the geometric proportion of the statue, the proportion of $\sqrt{2}$ also appears in the architectural design of the pagoda, for example, the ratio of the total height of the pagoda to the outer trough diameter (excluding the colonnade) is about $2\sqrt{2}$: 1; the ratio of the total height of the pagoda to the distance between the column capital on the fifth floor and the ground below the pagoda is about $\sqrt{2}$: 1 (N. Wang 2018b, pp. 216, 256). In addition, according to the author's research, in the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery in Mount Wutai of the Tang Dynasty and Avalokitesvara Pavilion in the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery of the Liao Dynasty, the proportion of $\sqrt{2}$ applies to the architectural design and the geometric proportion of the interior space and statues (complex), showing the design technique of "duo xiang gou wu 度像構屋 (designing the interior space of Buddhist architecture accord-

ing to the main statues)” just like the Pagoda of Fogong Temple (N. Wang 2017, pp. 29–36; 2018a, pp. 103–25).

One of the earliest scholars to explore the $\sqrt{2}$ ratio embedded in ancient Chinese architectural design was Wang Guixiang 王貴祥; in his papers $\sqrt{2}$ Yu Tang Song Jianzhu Zhu Yan Guanxi $\sqrt{2}$ 與唐宋建築柱簷關係 ($\sqrt{2}$ Relationship with Columns and Eaves of Tang and Song Dynasties) (G. Wang 1984), *Tang Song Dan Yan Mugou Jianzhu Pingmian yu Limian Bili Guilv de Tantai* 唐宋單簷木構建築平面與立面比例規律的探討 (*A Study on Rules of Proportion in Plans and Facades of Single-Eaved Buildings of Tang-Song Periods*) (G. Wang 1989), and *Tang Song Dan Yan Mugou Jianzhu Bili Tanxi* 唐宋單簷木構建築比例探析 (*A Study on Rules of Proportion of Tang—Song Periods*) (G. Wang 1998), he argued that this compositional ratio can be widely applied to more building types and longer historical periods than the single-eave wooden buildings of the Tang and Song dynasties, as well as to the relationship between building groups and the scale of courtyards, which needs to be explored in depth. In addition, Zhang Shixing further explored the $\sqrt{2}$ ratio contained in the “caifen system” of the Northern Song *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*) and the “doukou system” of the Qing Dynasty *Gongcheng zuofa* 工程做法 (*Construction Practices*) (Zhang 2013). Based on relevant works by Wang Guixiang, Feng Shi 馮時, Sun Dazhang 孫大章, Zhang Shiqing, and other scholars (G. Wang 1984, pp. 137–44; 1989, pp. 49–70; 1998, pp. 226–47; Feng 1993, No. 1; 2006, 2010; Sun 2008; Zhang 2013, pp. 9–14), the author takes $\sqrt{2}$ as one of the most common classical proportions in the planning of ancient Chinese capital cities, the layout of architectural groups, and the design of individual buildings, which has been used in various types of cases over five thousand years (N. Wang 2018c).

More importantly, the first “pattern” in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*) in the Northern Song Dynasty is the Yuan Fang Fang Yuan Tu 圓方方圓圖 (rounded-square and squared-circle map) (Figure 41). It is evident that these drawings are illustrated as the “yuan fang tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)” and “fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)” from *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*) quoted by Li Jie (Figure 42). The “kan xiang 看詳 (Definition)” of *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*), “square and straight” quoted in the *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經, said,

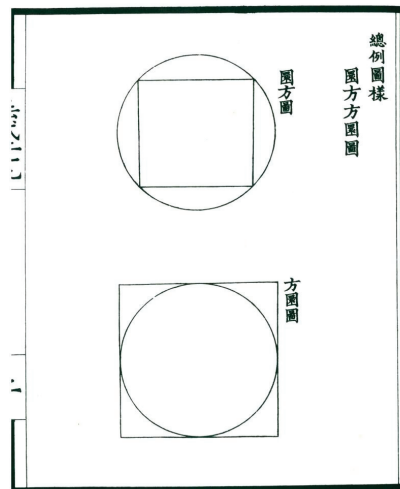


Figure 41. “Yuan Fang Fang Yuan Tu 圓方方圓圖 (Rounded-Square and Squared-Circle Map)” in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*). Source: (Li 2006). 總例圖樣 (diagrams), 圓方圖 (Rounded-Square map), 方圓圖 (Squared-Circle Map).

“The law of number comes from the square and circle. The circle comes from the square, the square from the rectangle, and the rectangle from ninety-eight and one”.

“To realize that the world can be square and circle, producers must use rules to make goods”.

The ratio of $\sqrt{2}$ is clear and unmistakable in the “yuan fang tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)” and “fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)” in *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*) and *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*).²⁹ The drawing technique of the Rule of Square and Circle is a fundamental method in ancient Chinese urban planning, architectural layout, architectural design, and even interior statue layout and statue modeling design in Buddhist architecture. Behind it is the ancient Chinese world view of tian yuan di fang 天圓地方 (a dome-shaped heaven and a flat, square earth) [*Zhou Bi Suan Jing* said “square belongs to the earth, the circle belongs to heaven, the dome-shaped heaven and the flat, square earth”] and the cultural concept that pursues the harmony of heaven, earth, and humans.

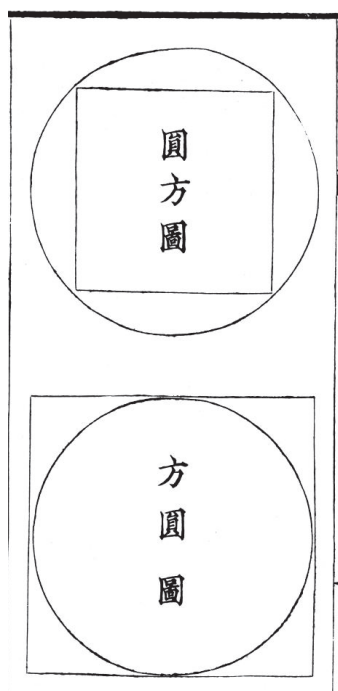


Figure 42. “Yuan fang tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)” and “fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)” in *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*). Source: (Suan Jing Liu Zhong in Song Dynasty 1981).

If the “yuan fang tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)” more intuitively reflects the proportion of $\sqrt{2}$ (the ratio of the side length of the square to the diameter of the outer circle is $1:\sqrt{2}$), then the “fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)” reflects the ratio of the circumference of the square to the diameter of the inscribed circle as $4:\pi$. This is the proportional relationship between the sum of the height of the three floors (the total height of four Buddhas) and the height of the pagoda. Therefore, the ratio of the height of the first floor to the total height of the giant Buddha ($\sqrt{2}:1$) and the ratio of the height of the third floor to the total height of the four Buddhas ($\pi:4$) is exactly corresponding to the “yuan fang

tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)" and "fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)" of the *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*).

Further extended, because the ancient people's approximate algorithm for π is "zhou san jing yi 週三徑一 (circumference three, diameter one)", that is, π is about equal to 3, the "fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)" has the ratio of 3:4. Therefore, *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*), after discussing "the law of number comes from the square and circle. The circle comes from the square, the square from the rectangle, and the rectangle from ninety-eight and one", immediately points out, "In a right triangle where one side is equal to 3 and the other side is equal to 4, the hypotenuse is equal to 5. Half of the square is the rectangle, and it loops around to form 3, 4, and 5. The two rectangles have a total length of 25, which is called the *ji ju* 積矩 (product-moment). Therefore, the reason why Yu 禹 ruled the world is the source of the numbers".

Zhao Shuang 趙爽, a mathematician in the Three Kingdoms Period, said, "A circle has a diameter of 1 and a circumference of 3, and a square has a diameter of 1 and a circumference of 4. With the circumference of the circle as the *gou* (勾), with the circumference of the square as the *gu* (股), forming a right angle, exactly forming the hypotenuse 5. This is the law of numbers that comes from the square and circle. Therefore, 'the law of number comes from the square'. Circle and square are the shape of heaven and earth, the number of Yin and Yang" (Cheng and Wen 2012, pp. 1–2).

It can be seen that *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*) is based on the relation of 3:4 contained in the "square map", with 3 (circumference) as the *gou* (勾) and 4 (square circumference) as the *gu* (股), and further uses the "product moment method" to deduce the Pythagorean theorem (with "gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五" as an example) to interpret the idea that "the method of number derives from the circle square". The sum of the height of the Buddha statues on the third and fifth floors of the pagoda mentioned above, the sum of the height of Buddha statues on the second and the fourth floors, and the height of the first floor just meet the ratio of 3:4:5, that is, "gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五". Based on the above analysis of the relationship between the proportion of the pagoda and the ratio, the relationship of the "gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五" among the Buddha statues on various floors (including the proportion of the second floor and the height of the pagoda-top finial and the first floor) seems to be more than a coincidence.

To sum up, the interior space of each floor of the pagoda and the Buddha statue completely and ingeniously interprets the ratio "yuan fang tu 圓方圖 (rounded-square map)", "fang yuan tu 方圓圖 (squared-circle map)", and "gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五" in the "*Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*)"; the original book of the *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 had the three combined as "gou gu yuan fang tu 勾股圓方圖 (Pythagorean Rounded-square Map)", but unfortunately lost, Zhao Shuang made up the "xian tu 弦圖 (Hypotenuse Map)" accordingly (Cheng and Wen 2012, pp. 13–17) (Figure 43).

It is particularly worth noting that, according to the book *Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing* 佛說造像量度經 (*Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*), which focuses on the rules of Tibetan Buddhism, the clear height of the cross-legged seated Buddha portrait in Tibetan Buddhism is 70 "zhi 指 (finger)" and the clear width is 50 "zhi" (Gongbu 2016),³⁰ which is exactly the ratio of "fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)", which is close to the ratio of $\sqrt{2}$ (Figure 44). The most used proportion of the clear height-to-width ratio of the six Buddhas sitting cross-legged in the mural on the first floor is $\sqrt{2}$ (only the giant Buddha on the southeast wall is different), which can be regarded as an early example of the geometric technique recorded in the *Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing* 佛說造像量度經 (*Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*). An earlier example than the pagoda is the Buddha sitting cross-legged in the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery in Mount Wutai, with a clear height-to-width ratio of $\sqrt{2}$, which is also an important representative of this composition in the statue (N. Wang 2017, pp. 29–36)³¹ (Figure 45).

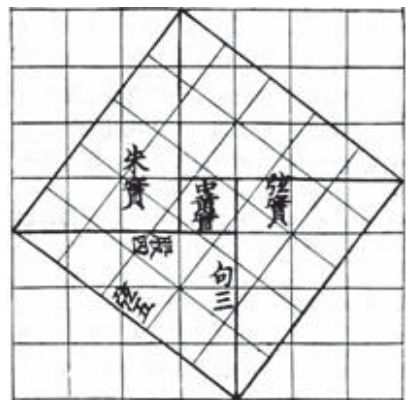


Figure 43. “Xian Tu” of Zhou Bi Suan Jing 周髀算經 (The mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument) by Zhao Shuang. Source: (Cheng and Wen 2012).The Chinese character in the figure is used to prove the Pythagorean theorem.

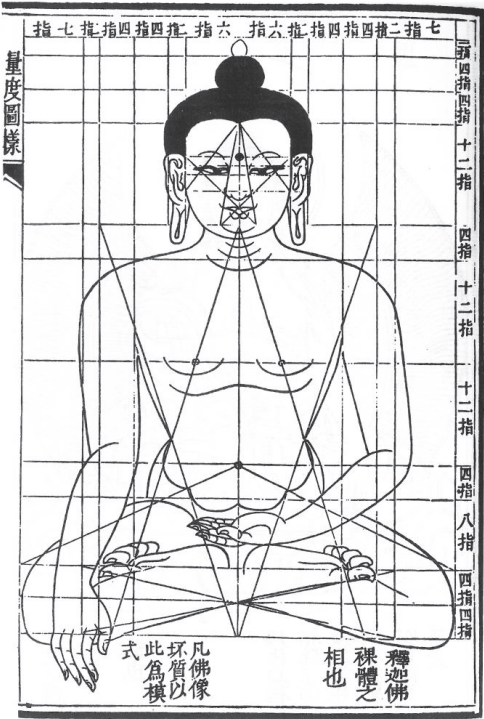


Figure 44. Illustration of the Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing 佛說造像量度經 (Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra). Source: (Gongbu 2016). The Chinese character in the figure use zhi 指 (finger) to measure the Buddha. 二指 means two fingers, 四指 means four fingers, 六指 means six fingers, 七指 means seven fingers, 八指 means eight fingers, 十二指 means twelve fingers, the sentence blow 釋迦佛裸體之相也, 凡佛像壞質以此為模 means this is a standard figure of Buddha, all the Buddha Statue should take this as example.

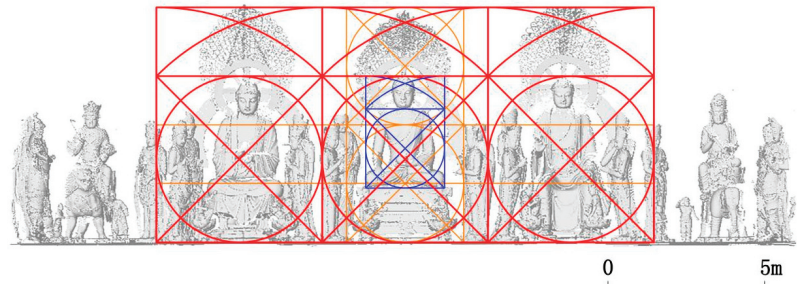


Figure 45. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues in the East Main Hall of Foguang Temple on Wutai Mountain. Source: (N. Wang 2017, pp. 29–36).

The large number of the ratio of $\sqrt{2}$ in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple is not only a long-standing tradition in the construction activities in ancient China but also similar to the Buddhist Tantra Mandala schema (which also makes large use of the composition of the Rules of Square and Circle)³² (G. Wang 1998, pp. 226–47). It is worthy of further exploration whether the ratio of $\sqrt{2}$, which appears in the architectural design of pagodas and the proportion of interior space and statue composition, is the result of the integration of the above two cultural connotations.

5.2. *San Tian Liang Di* 參天兩地 and 3:2 “(Three as the Heavenly Number and Two as the Earthly Number)”

The ratio 3:2 appears in the height-to-width ratio of the Buddha on each floor of the pagoda, which should be the basic technique of the pagoda’s Buddha modeling.³³ Similarly, the height-to-width ratio of the seven giant Buddhas in the Mahāvīra Hall of Fengguo Monastery in Yi County, another Liao Dynasty giant structure (built in 1020, the ninth year of Kaitai in the Liao Dynasty), is also close to 3:2 (specifically, the height-to-width ratio of the central giant Buddha is the closest to 3:2, and the ratio of the two Buddhas at the end is almost 8:5), and the ratio of the total height of the central giant Buddha to the width of the central bay of the Mahāvīra Hall is 3:2 (Wang 2018a, pp. 103–25) (Figure 46).

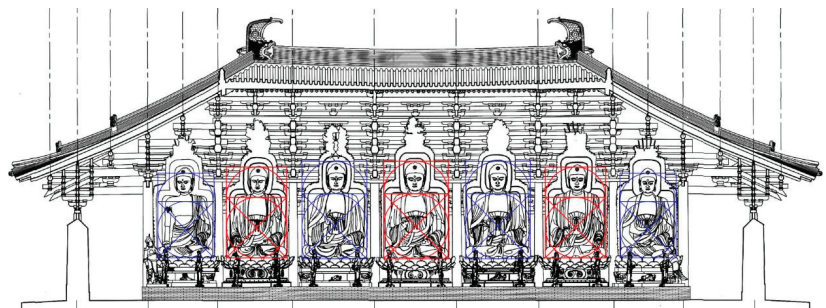


Figure 46. Geometric proportional analysis of the Buddha statues in the Daxiong Hall of Fengguo Temple at Yixian. Diagramed by Wang Nan.

Similar to the ratio of $\sqrt{2}$, 3:2 is also a classic ratio commonly used in urban planning and architectural design in ancient China. It is particularly important that the ratio of “the height of cai” (15 分°) to “the width of cai” (10 分°) of structural carpentry stipulated in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*) is 3:2.³⁴ According to the book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*) by Chen Mingda, the wood used for pagodas is 25.5 × 17 cm, and the ratio of breadth to thickness is 3:2. In addition, there is no shortage of the 3:2 ratio in the content of “Bai

Gong Zhi Qi 百工制器 (Craftsmen Making Utensils) “, mentioned in the *Zhouli Kaogongji* 周禮·考工記 (*The Ritual of Zhou—Records of Artificers*).

Wang Qiheng 王其亨 extensively discussed the cultural connotation of the classic ratio of 3:2 in combination with the twelve frequencies of ancient China and especially pointed out its connection with the philosophical concepts of “san tian liang di er yi shu 參天兩地而倚數 (‘three’ is the number of the heaven and ‘two’ is the number of the earth, and all numbers are based on them)” in *Zhouyi—Shuo Gua* 周易·說卦 (Zhou’s [book of] *Changes—Shuo Gua*), which is very enlightening (Q. Wang 1990, pp. 50–54; 2014; Shi and Zhang 2013, pp. 58–75). In discussing the $\sqrt{2}$ -ratio relationship between the diameter of the three-ring stone altar at the Liaoning Niuheliang Hongshan Culture “Circular Mound” site, Feng Shi also pointed out that it is closely related to the thought of “san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)” in *Zhouyi* (Feng 2018, pp. 615–24). Wang Jun further explored and discussed the connotation of “san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)”, especially its different interpretations (J. Wang 2022a).³⁵ The interpretation of “san tian liang di er yi shu 參天兩地而倚數 (‘three’ is the number of the heaven and ‘two’ is the number of the earth, and all numbers are based on them)” in *Zhouyi Ben Yi* 周易本義 (Zhou’s [book of] *Changes Ben Yi*) by Zhu Xi 朱熹 is as follows:

“The dome-shaped heaven and the flat, square earth. The circle has a diameter of one and a circumference of three, and three is an odd number, so ‘three’ is the number of the heaven; the square has a diameter of one and a circumference of four, which is obtained by adding two numbers of two earth, so ‘two’ is the number of the earth, and all numbers are based on them”.³⁶

This is based on the ancient π of the “zhou san jing yi 週三徑一 (circumference three, diameter one)” to explain “san tian 參天 (three as the heavenly number)”, the mathematical relationship of the square “yi er wei si 一而圍四 (diameter one, circumference four)” and “er er de si 二二得四 (two and two add up to four)” to explain “liang di 兩地 (two as the earthly number)”. All squares and circles begin with one, the circle is “yi er wei sa 一而圍三 (diameter one and circumference three)”, and three is “the heaven (san tian 參天)”; the Square is “yi er wei si 一而圍四 (diameter one, circumference four)”, which is the sum of two numbers of two earth, that is “two earth (兩地)”. This interpretation links the idea of “san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)” in the ratio of 3:2 with the idea of “tian yuan di fang 天圓地方 (a dome-shaped heaven and a flat, square earth)”.³⁷

5.3. “Golden Section”, 5:3, and 8:5

The ratio of 5:3 (or 8:5) appears frequently in the ratio of the statues of Buddha sitting cross-legged in the pagoda. Compared with the ratio of 3:2 commonly employed in Buddha statues, it appears slenderer, which is close to the so-called golden section ratio (about 1.618) in the West. The ratio of the Buddha’s total height to the eight Bodhisattvas’ total height on the fifth floor, the ratio of the fourth floor’s height to the Buddha’s top height on the fourth floor, the ratio of second floor’s height to the Buddhist altar’s width (width of each side of the inner trough), the ratio of the front width of the central bay on the first floor to the secondary bay, and the ratio of the first-story height (5 *chi*) to the second-story height (3 *chi*) are all 5:3, which shows that the ratio of 5:3 is widely used in the design of the pagoda.

This ratio is also quite common in ancient Chinese architecture, with typical examples that the height-to-width ratio of the Shenwu Gate, the Donghua Gate, and the Xihua Gate of the Forbidden City is 3:5. First of all, the 5:3 ratio is the ratio of “xian 弦” and “gou 勾” in the “gou 3 gu 4 xian 5 勾三股四弦五” in the *Zhou Bi Suan Jing* 周髀算經 (*The Mathematical classic of the Zhou shadow-gauging instrument*), and then, it is likely to be related to the connotation of the so-called “san wu yi bian, cuo zong qi shu 參伍以變，錯綜其數 (explore the changes of three and five, intricately deduce their mathematics)” in *Zhouyi-Xi Ci Shang* 周易·係辭上 (Zhou’s [book of] *Changes—Xi Ci vol.1*), which needs to be further explored. (Yang and

Zhang 2011, p. 589) What is interesting is the close relationship between the ratio of 5:3 (or 8:5) and the Golden Ratio, especially when it is used in sculpture art, how it is related to the technique of using the Golden Ratio in Western sculpture art, and whether it has influenced Chinese Buddhist art with the introduction of Buddhism into China (such as the influence brought by Gandhara art, etc.). These topics are also worth exploring in depth. In the early study of ancient Chinese sculptors using the geometric proportion of 5:3, we can at least find Cave 18 of the Yungang Grottoes in the Northern Wei Dynasty (belonging to the first phase of Yungang) as a typical example: the ratio of the height between the central main Buddha and the Attendant Bodhisattva is 5:3, while the ratio between the central main Buddha, the Attendant Bodhisattva, and the Attendant Bodhisattva is about 10:6:5. This shows that the geometric technique, which gives the statues of different levels in the statue complex a clear proportional relationship, has been used in the Yungang Grottoes (Figure 47).

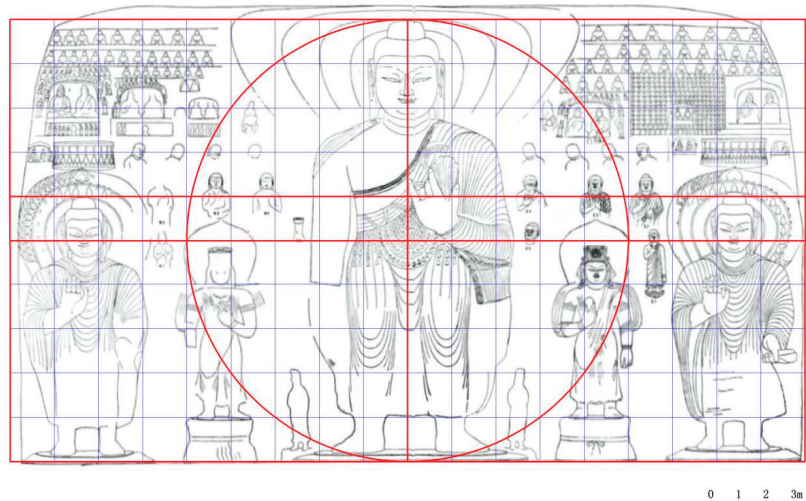


Figure 47. Geometric proportional analysis of the statue complex in Cave 18 of Yungang Grottoes in Datong. Source: (Seiichi et al. 2016, vol. 12).

5.4. Jiu Wu Zhi Zun 九五之尊 and 9:5 (Nine and Five Are the Numbers of the Honorable Central Position)

The ratio of 9:5 appears less frequently in the pagoda than the previous ones, but it appears in more important places: first, the ratio of the octagonal caisson ceiling's height to the Buddha's top height is 9:5, and the nine statues on the fifth floor (presented as the "nine-mandala"), which contain the connotation of the numbers 9 and 5 from the proportion, adhere to the spatial pattern;³⁸ second, the ratio of the octagonal side length to the "outer trough" and the "inner trough" on the first floor is 9:5 (according to the measured data of the China Academy of Cultural Heritage, the width of the outer trough of the first floor (average 9.561 m)/the width of the inner trough (average 5.319 m)³⁹ = 1.798 ≈ 9:5 (the coincidence is 99.9%)); third, as mentioned above, the ratio of the total height of the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors of the pagoda to the height of the first floor is 9:5. In addition, the Pagoda of Fogong Temple has five layers on the outside and four hidden layers inside, showing a pattern of "wai wu nei jiu 外五内九 (outside-five, inside-nine)", which also contains the numbers 9 and 5.

In the construction of ancient Chinese cities and architecture, the numbers 9 and 5 are frequently used to symbolize the so-called "jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊 (nine and five are the numbers of the honorable central position)" (J. Wang 2022b).⁴⁰ In particular, qian gua jiu wu yao ci 乾卦九五爻辞 (the lines on hexagram 9–5 of the trigrams of the

Qian Gua) in *Zhouyi* 周易 (Zhou's [book of] Changes) says “fei long zai tian, li jian da ren 飛龍在天，利見大人 (Dragon appears in the sky. It furthers one to see the great person)”, which further makes the “jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊 (nine and five are the numbers of the honorable central position)” a substitute name for the throne. Previous scholars have proved the Pagoda of Fogong Temple as a royal project in the Liao dynasty, (Chen 2001; Su 1985, pp. 32–48), which makes the symbolic meaning of “jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊” here reasonable.

It is worth mentioning that the association between the pagoda and the thought of *Zhouyi* 周易 is not only implied in 9:5 (symbolizing “jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊”) or a series of 3:2 (symbolizing “san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)”) but also directly appears in the facade and the interior space of the pagoda: the most prominent ones are the stone Bagua Tu 八卦圖 (Eight Diagrams) on the front of the base of the pagoda (Figure 48) and the painted Bagua Tu 八卦圖 in the center of the octagonal caisson ceiling of the pagoda's fifth floor (Figure 49). In addition, the pattern in the center of the octagonal caisson ceiling of the pagoda's first floor is similar to the “Taiji Tu 太極圖 (Taiji Diagram)” of the Song Dynasty Neo-Confucianism master Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (derived from the “shui huo kuang huo tu 水火匡廓圖” and “san wu zhi jing tu 三五至精圖”). It is also related to the connotation of *Zhouyi* 周易 and Bagua Tu 八卦圖 (Feng 2010, pp. 486–88) (Figures 50 and 51). Interestingly, the two caisson ceilings individually having Eight Diagrams or “Taiji Diagram” of the pagoda are, respectively, on the fifth floor and the first floor, which is precisely where the 9:5 ratio relationship occurs.⁴¹

The above are some findings concerning the proportion of the architectural space, the statues, and the murals in the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. This article tries to preliminarily explore the cultural message behind the proportional relationship and points out some directions worth further exploration in the future. With the gradual deepening of the research, it is further revealed that the importance of proportion to the study of ancient Chinese cities, buildings, and even statues and murals should not be underestimated.

In the Qing Dynasty, Gongbu Chabu, the translator of the Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing 佛說造像量度經 (Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra), wrote *Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing Yi* 造像量度經引 (Introduction of Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra), “The Sutra says that if the statue is imprecise, then the right God does not dwell. How can craftsmen change the proportion of Buddha statues at will? Proper proportion is what matters”.



Figure 48. The Bagua Tu 八卦圖 (Eight Diagrams) stone carvings embedded in the front of the base of the pagoda (the three characters of “Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism” above the Eight Diagram). Source: Memorial Collection of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, School of Architecture, Tsinghua University.



Figure 49. Bagua Tu 八卦圖 drawn in the center of the Douba 鬥八 (octagonal) Caisson Ceiling on the fifth floor. Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

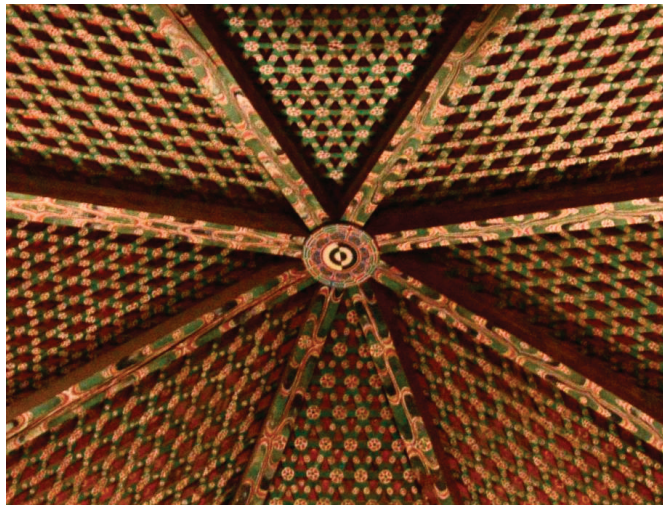


Figure 50. Zhou Dunyi's "tai ji tu 太極圖 (Taiji Diagram)" in the center of the Douba Caisson Ceiling on the first floor (can be compared with Figure 51). Source: Photo by Wang Nan.

Gongbu Chabu realized the importance of the proportion and scale of Buddhist statues by translating *Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing* 佛說造像量度經 (*Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*). However, if we want to understand the composition and proportion of those Buddhist statues earlier than the *Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*, we can only find the law by surveying more early examples and analyzing them. This is exactly the main goal of this article.

This article is written on the 120th anniversary of the birth of Mr. Liang Sicheng. I would like to conclude with a comment in Liang's article *Shuo Jianzhu Ping Jingshen zhi Suozai* 說建築品格精神之所在 (*Talk about the character and spirit of architecture*, 1943)⁴² to commemorate this date:

“Proportion: This is the most fundamental issue in all creation of art. Everything in a piece of art comes down in the end to the question of proportion, that is, the proportion of the arranged relations between the parts... The issue of beauty is resolved if the proportion is appropriate”.

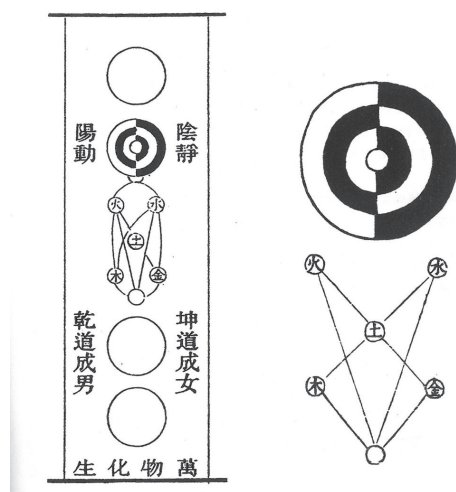


Figure 51. “Taiji Tu 太極圖 (Taiji Diagram) and “shui huo kuang huo tu 水火匡廓圖” Source: (Feng 2010, p. 487). The Chinese characters in the figure show how wu xing 五行 and Yinyang 阴阳 works.

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Notes

- ¹ The Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Ying County exhibits an octagonal plane, featuring three rooms on each side across its five floors. The initial floor incorporates a covered corridor encircling the hall, contributing to the pagoda’s overall aesthetic of six eaves. Beyond the first floor, each subsequent level comprises a support platform, housing body, and eaves, characterized by layered indentations. The crowning element is an octagonal pyramidal roof, culminating with an iron pagoda-top finial on the uppermost floor. Positioned atop a dual stone foundation, each floor is delineated by inner and outer columns, totaling 24 outer columns and 8 inner columns. Furthermore, the first floor integrates auxiliary columns into its wall structure.

- 2 The research team, comprising scholars from the School of Architecture at Tsinghua University and the School of Architecture at Inner Mongolia University of Technology, conducted an on-site investigation of the Pagoda of Fogong Temple in January 2021. The scope of data collection encompassed the architectural features, statues, and select murals on the first floor. Employing a multifaceted approach, the team utilized three-dimensional laser scanning, UAV oblique photogrammetry, camera close-range photography, and total station measurement methods to procure comprehensive data. For architectural data acquisition, a combination of long- and short-distance 3D laser scanners and a total station facilitated the creation of an accurate point cloud model, with the overall model precision controlled within 10 mm. The acquisition of statue and mural data involved the amalgamation of handheld 3D laser scanning and close-range photogrammetry to produce a color model. To enhance model accuracy, the collected datasets underwent mutual verification. Challenges arose during the data acquisition of the Buddha statues and murals on the first floor due to their considerable height, limited surrounding space, and the presence of protective glass baffles in the lower section. Despite these challenges, the team rigorously maintained data quality. Key contributors within the team included Liu Chang 劉暢, Wang Nan 王南, and Wang Zhuonan 王卓男 in the preliminary planning phase, while Wang Zhuonan, Zheng Hongyu 鄭虹玉, Zhou Jiang 周江, Wang Zhiming 王志明, Cao Min 曹敏, Han Qi 韓琪, Yue Qi 岳祺, Yu Shihao 于世豪, and Zhao Zeyi 趙澤毅 were instrumental in field data collection, post-processing, and mapping. The analysis diagram drawing for this paper was executed by Wang Nan.
- 3 Based on Liang Sicheng and Mo Zongjiang's 1933 survey draft, the Buddha statue's total height with its base on the fifth floor was 3.6 m, clear height 2.51 m, and Sumeru seat 1.09 m. Comparing this to our 2021 survey data (total height 3.414 m, clear height 2.398 m, Sumeru seat height 1.016 m), the disparity is within 20 cm. Liang Sicheng's work on Fogong Temple in Ying County, Shanxi, notes the fourth-floor Buddha's height as 4.85 m, but considering the kāyaprabhā, the 1933 data, which include this, gain significance due to today's kāyaprabhā damage. Additionally, the 1933 survey reveals Manjusri Bodhishava's total height on the fourth floor as 2.9 m and the west disciple's height as 2.33 m, closely aligning with 2021 data (2.812 m and 2.318 m, respectively). Liang Sicheng also mentioned a 4 m total height for the Buddha on the second floor, closely mirrored in the 2021 survey (4.052 m). However, the giant Buddha on the first floor stands out with a height discrepancy (12.3 m in historical records, 10.32 m in 2021), potentially due to historical estimations. Chen Mingda's 1966 book, alongside 1960s surveys, suggests a 70 cm gap in the first-floor giant Buddha's height compared to 2021. Constraints in the indoor space hindered accurate measurements, justified by the difficulty even with modern technologies. A 1991 survey by Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture aligns with 2021 data, while the 2011 section drawing from the China Academy of Cultural Heritage closely matches the 2021 measured height of 10.32 m, indicating reliability.
- 4 The omission of drawings for the two Bodhisattva statues on the second floor remains unexplained. Furthermore, the "Supplementary Note" accompanying the 1978 publication on *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), as highlighted by Chen Mingda, elucidates that the internal spatial configuration of the pagoda adheres to specific principles. Notably, the height ratio between the inner and outer troughs is governed by the viewing angle.
- 5 Fu Xinian emphasizes that in the Grottoes of Mount Maiji Cave 004, the Great Hall of Nanchan Monastery, and the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery, a deliberate and prevalent design pattern ensures a comfortable viewing angle for the central point of Buddha worship, approximately at 30°. This intentional arrangement, deemed non-coincidental by Fu, reflects a systematic approach characteristic of the era (Fu 1998, pp. 136–46). Furthermore, Zhang Rong 張榮 and colleagues, in their 2018 paper "Fo Guang Si Dong Da Dian Jian Zhi Yan Ge Yan Jiu 佛光寺東大殿建置沿革研究 (Research on the Construction History of the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery)", meticulously validate and extend Fu's analysis of the Buddha worship line of sight, particularly in the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery and its statue complex, through detailed surveying and mapping techniques (Zhang et al. 2018b, pp. 31–52).
- 6 Furthermore, Su Bai advocates for a comprehensive investigation into the proportions of Buddhist statues through precise surveying and mapping methodologies.
- 7 In addition, from the old photos of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture, it can be seen that there is a tiny Buddha statue and a Buddhist pilgrim statue on the second floor of the Buddha altar. The height of these two statues is only slightly higher than the Sumeru seat of Manjusri and Samantabhadra, and they no longer exist today. If you count these two small statues, there were 32 statues in 1933.
- 8 In this paper, the "height" value of each floor from the first to the fourth floor takes the distance from the upper floor of the inner trough to the ground of this floor (average value), and the distance from the top of the octagonal caisson ceiling to the ground is taken from the top of the fifth floor. According to the data of Chen Mingda's book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the height of the first floor is 14.65 m. According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the height of the first floor is 14.678 m, which is relatively close to our surveying data in 2021.
- 9 According to the data of Chen Mingda's book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the inner diameter of the central chamber is 10.25 m, which is basically the same as the surveying data in 2021.
- 10 "Fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)", "Square seven, oblique ten (方七斜十)" and so on are the ancient craftsmen's formula, similar to $\sqrt{2}$ ratio.
- 11 The pedestal of the giant Buddha in each mural is partially shielded by the glass plate used for protection on the first floor of the pagoda, so the surveying effect is not ideal, and the total aspect ratio is only for reference.

- 12 “Li qi zuo wu pan san ban 立七坐五盤三半 (seven-heads tall when standing, five-heads tall when sitting, three and a half heads tall when sitting cross-legged)” is the craftsman’s formula that is still in use today, meaning that the head and body ratio of a standing statue is 1:7, that of a seated statue is 1:5, and that of a statue sitting cross-legged (結跏趺坐) is 1:3.5. Wang Shixiang compiled the *Qingdai Jiangzuo Zeli Huibian: Fozuo, Menshenzuo* 清代匠作則例彙編: 佛作、門神作 (*Handicraft Regulations and Precedents of Qing Dynasty: Buddha and Door God*), which says, “The statue of Han walks seven-heads tall, sits five-heads tall, squats three and a half heads tall. The statue of foreigner sits five-heads tall, hangs seven-heads tall, stands nine-heads tall”. In addition, there are formulas for calculating the surface area of the statue: “Walk seven, sit five, Nirvana three(行七坐五涅槃三)” and so on.
- 13 According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the height of the second floor is 8.84 m. According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the height of the second floor (take the average value of the inner trough) is 8.779 m. All of them are similar to the survey data of 2021.
- 14 The width of the Buddha altar and the width of the inner trough are taken from the values in the survey draft of Liang Sicheng and Mo Zongjiang in 1933. According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the width of the inner trough is 5.36 m, and the width of the Buddha altar is 5.28 m. According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the width of the inner trough is 5.231 m, and the width of the Buddha altar is 5.199 m. The above conclusions remain unchanged after verification.
- 15 According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the height of the third floor is 8.85 m. According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the height of the third floor (take the average value) is 8.631 m. The 1991 and 2021 survey data are more similar.
- 16 According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the Buddha altar side length is 2.75 m; according to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the Buddha altar side length (take the average value) is 2.68 m. The above conclusions remain unchanged after verification, and the coincidence is above 98%.
- 17 According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the height of the fourth floor is 7.83 m; according to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the height of the fourth floor (take the average value of the inner trough) is 7.765 m. The 1991 and 2021 survey data are more similar.
- 18 According to the data of Chen Mingda’s book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), the width of the Buddha altar is 5.8 m. According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the width of the Buddha altar is 5.588 m. The 1991 and 2021 survey data are more similar.
- 19 In addition, the width of each side of the outer trough on the fourth floor (8.47 m); the width of each side of the inner trough on the fourth floor (5.09 m) = $1.664 \approx 5:3$ (99.8% coincidence), which is equal to the ratio of the height of the fourth floor to the top height of the Buddha.
- 20 The original Dhanari Columu building in the north of the pagoda (1194, 4th year of in the Jin Dading) is still visible in the old photos of the Society for Research in Chinese Architecture. According to our field investigation, the column is now broken in a number of pieces, scattered throughout the Fogong Temple, in urgent need of restoration and protection. The relationship between the column and the layout of the pagoda is worth further study.
- 21 According to the data of Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture in 1991, the width of the Buddha altar is 6.995 m. The above conclusion remains unchanged after verification.
- 22 Chen Mingda once pointed out in his book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*) that “It is impossible to find out how the caisson’s height is determined”. At least we know that the height of the caisson is equal to the width of the Buddha altar and, at the same time, forms a ratio of 9:5 to the height of the Buddha’s top, a ratio of $\sqrt{2}$ to the ceiling, a ratio of $2\sqrt{2}$ to the height of the Bodhisattva’s top, and so on.
- 23 The little Buddha patterns painted in the lotus petal of the giant Buddha should symbolize the so-called “World of the Lotus Sanctuary” in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.
- 24 In the past, the author calculated the ratio between the total height of the pagoda and the height of the giant Buddha based on the height of the giant Buddha in the book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*) by Chen Mingda. Since the height of the giant Buddha in this book (more than 11 m) is higher than the true value, the conclusion was obviously wrong. This paper corrected it with the latest measured data, hereby explained.
- 25 The data is taken from the first floor’s north–south section of the pagoda.
- 26 In particular, it should be pointed out that due to the tilt of the pagoda, the total height should be slightly less than the original height before its tilt. Through the examination of the pagoda’s tilting condition, numerous in-depth studies still need to be conducted in order to estimate the pagoda’s original height before tilting.
- 27 The total height of the base here is taken from Chen Mingda’s *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), from the ground under the southern platform to the top of the base. The height of the base measured by Beijing Institute of Civil Engineering and Architecture and Chinese Academy of Cultural Heritage is different from the above, which is caused by the different location of the ground.

- In the book *Ying Xian Mu Ta* 應縣木塔 (*Timber Pagoda in Ying County*), Chen Mingda tried to restore the caisson and ceiling on second, third and fourth floor. Regardless of whether the second, third, and fourth floors had caisson or ceiling in the past, from the proportional relationship between the height of the story and the height of the Buddha at present, the pagoda also shows a clearer design intention even if there is no caisson or ceiling.
- Li Jie even put forward the integer ratios of 141:100 and 100:71 in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*), which are more accurate and closer to $\sqrt{2}$ than the craftsman's formula of "fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)". He wrote in the item "qu jing wei 取徑圍 (Taking the Diameter and Circumference)" in "kan xiang 看詳 (Definition)": "Today's work has created objects and systems based on the diameter and circumference. If you want to know the size of a circle, you have to find the diameter from the circumference, or the circumference from the diameter. If we follow the old rules and take 'zhou san jing yi, fang wu xie qi 週三徑一, 方五斜七 (circumference three, diameter one; square five, oblique seven)' as the basis, it will be much simpler. This article is hereby amended according to the *Jiu Zhang Suan Jing* and the approximate diagonal length. A circle with a diameter of 7 has a circumference of 22; A square has a circumference of 100 and a diagonal length of 141; ... If you take a square inside the diameter of the circle, you get 71 out of 100".
- According to *Foshuo Zaoxiang Liangdu Jing* 佛說造像量度經 (*Buddhist Statue Measurement Sutra*), "zhi zhi (finger)" is one of the basic modules of statue making, such as the height of the vertical Buddha is 120 fingers tall, the height of the Buddha sitting cross-legged is 70 fingers tall, and the dimensions of all parts of the body of the statue are based on "finger". In addition, it is stipulated that twelve fingers are the length of the Zhe 搥, double the length of the Zhe 搥 is the length of the zhou 肘 (elbow), and four elbows are the length of the Xun 尋.
- In addition, the main Buddha in the Great East Hall of Foguang Monastery in Mount Wutai is $\sqrt{2}$ times the total height of Attendant Bodhisattvas on both sides.
- Wang Guixiang once pointed out, "In Chinese Esoteric Buddhism, especially in Tibetan Buddhism, the mysterious schema "mandala", is a figure composed of square and circle with cosmic symbolic significance. Its basic concept is "fang yuan xiang han 方圓相涵 (square and circle contain each other)", the Tibetan esoteric Chengde Pule Monastery with the round hall and square city of the huge mandala-style architecture, is a typical example. It still needs to be further studied and analyzed whether the relationship between square and circle is also used in the proportion of its architecture. However, in the shape concept, the meaning of creating some cosmic symbol with the form of square and circle is similar to the proportion problem of Tang and Song architectures analyzed by us".
- In addition, the ratio of the total height to the clear height of the eight Bodhisattvas on the fifth floor is also about 3:2.
- In addition, Zhang Shiqing's research pointed out that the ratio of the width of zucai (21 *fen*) and the width of dancai (15 *fen*) is 7:5 in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 (*Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards*), in line with the "fang wu xie qi 方五斜七 (square five, oblique seven)" ratio (Zhang 2013, pp. 9–14). It can be seen that the scale of "cai" in *Ying Zao Fa Shi* 營造法式 is the result of the comprehensive application of 7:5 ($\sqrt{2}$) and 3:2.
- Wang Jun 王軍 further pointed out that the three doors of the south wall and the two doors of the north wall of the Yuan Dadu also have the meaning of "tian nan di bei 天南地北 (the sky is in the south, and the earth is in the north)" and "san tian liang di 參天兩地 (three as the heavenly number and two as the earthly number)".
- [Song] Zhu Xi 朱熹: *Zhou Yi Ben Yi* 周易本義 Volume 4 "Shuogua Zhuan 說卦傳 the Biography of Shuogua", page 261.
- In addition, the height of the first floor (14.57 m)/the height of the second floor (8.82 m) = 1.652 \approx 5:3 (99.1% coincidence).
- In the "nine-mandala" schema on the top floor of the pagoda, there is both the "si fang wu wei 四方五位 (the four directions and five positions)" relationship between the main Buddha and the four Bodhisattvas of the east, west, south, and north and the "ba fang jiu gong 八方九宮 (the eight directions and nine palaces)" relationship between the main Buddha and the eight Bodhisattvas. The discussion of "si fang wu wei 四方五位" and "ba fang jiu gong 八方九宮" can be found in the first chapter of the reference *Zhong Guo Gu Dai de Tian Wen yu Ren Wen* 中國古代的天文與人文 *Astronomy and Humanity in Ancient China* (Feng 2006).
- The data are cited from the reference *Ying Xian Mu Ta Bao Hu Yan Jiu* 應縣木塔保護研究 (*Study on the Protection of the Timber Pagoda in Ying County*) (Hou et al. 2016, p. 40).
- According to Wang Jun's research, "Zhouyi 周易 (*the Book of Change*) uses 9 and 6 to represent the Yin 陰 and Yang 陽 attributes of the Yao 爻, Yang is 9 and Yin is 6; sixty-four hexagrams are formed by two trigrams, from the bottom to the top of the six lines' position are called the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, upper, the center line of the upper hexagrams is fifth. If it is Yang line, it is called the 9 and 5; in the six lines, the odd sequence position is Yang, the even sequence position is Yin. The 9 and 5 lines are Yang lines in the Yang position, as well as the center line of the upper hexagrams, that is, the right position in the middle, the ancients regard the middle as the respect, which is the 'jiu wu zhi zun 九五之尊 (nine and five are the numbers of the honorable central position)'".
- It remains to be further studied when these three ba gua tu 八卦圖 (Eight Diagrams) or tai ji tu 太極圖 (Taiji Diagrams) appeared in the pagoda.
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Article

Reconstruction of Single-Bay Buddhist Architecture Based on Stylistic Comparisons in Northeast Fujian, the Core Hinterland of the Changxi River Basin—Using Gonghoulou Temple as an Example

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Abstract: In the Changxi River Basin in eastern Fujian, a few stone elements remain and Buddhist buildings with one bay in width and three bays in depth have been preserved dating from the timespan of the Tang to the Song dynasty. These features are characterized by a regional form of early Buddhist architecture seldom seen in Chinese history. The article focuses on the reconstruction of a Song dynasty Buddhist building at the Gonghoulou Temple site in Huotong Town, Jiaocheng District, Ningde City, and aims to analyze the potential characteristics and rules of single-bay Buddhist architecture. From the styles of the remaining stone columns, the direction of the lotus carving at the column base, and the mortises of the plinth stone, a spatial arrangement is indicated that includes an open front corridor and a closed rear section. A “reconstruction” of the ruler used in the original building reveals the possibility that a local Fujian ruler was used, shorter than the standard measurement device employed elsewhere. The analysis of the frame construction indicates that this hip-gable roof-covered Buddhist hall utilizes the horizontally layered logic of multi-storied palatial-style halls. Key elements include its gentle roof slope, restraint from the practice of shortening the roof ridge, use of the traditional *chui* method, and the interior columns use of internal longitudinal architraves secured to beam supporting brackets. This research brings to light a unique architectural type that has disappeared in the course of history and was previously unknown to the academic community. It holds significant importance and value for deepening the understanding of the history of timber frame architecture technology in Fujian.

Keywords: Changxi River Basin; one-bay; palatial hall; construction ruler; reconstruction

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1. Introduction

In a previous article published by the research team of authors in Religions, a particular style of Buddhist temples popular in the region from the 9th to 12th centuries AD was revealed through analysis of architectural and stone column remains in the Changxi River Basin. In this style, the eave columns usually used two rows of pumpkin-shaped circular stone columns 瓜楞石柱 to form a longitudinal rectangular space of “one bay in width and multiple bays in depth” with no columns in the interior and adopting a hip-gable roof 歇山顶. The formation and later evolution of this one-bay Buddhist temple have been discussed (Liu et al. 2021). According to current incomplete statistics, there are seven examples of stone column remains of single-bay Buddhist architecture with the above characteristics in the Changxi River Basin and its bordering areas. In addition, there are four suspected cases that may reflect single-bay rules (Table 1). In this paper, research and reconstruction will be conducted on a Song Dynasty Buddhist temple site in Huotong Town 霍童镇, Jiaocheng District 蕉城区, Ningde City 宁德市. The purpose of the reconstruction is through present evidence and clues to deeply explore the possible formal characteristics and rules of this one-bay Buddhist temple. On this basis, the distinctive construction

system in the Changxi River Basin, including the ground plan pattern, construction rulers 营造尺 utilized, and timber frame construction techniques, will be discussed.

Table 1. Remains of single-bay buddhist architecture in the Changxi River Basin and its border areas.

	No.	Name	Location	Construction Time	Source	Stone Column Remains
Stone Column Remains of Single-bay Buddhist Architecture	1	Chanji Temple 禅寂寺	Huotong Town 霍童镇, Jiaocheng District 蕉城区	The 5th year of Xiantong 咸通五年 (864)	Ningde County Annals of Jiajing period 嘉靖《宁德县志》	2 × 3 ○
	2	Guoxing Temple 国兴寺	Taimushan Town 太姥山镇, Fuding City 福鼎市	The 4th year of Qianfu 乾符四年 (877)	Taimu Mountain Annals of Wanli period 万历《太姥山志》	2 × 4 □
	3	Chanjini Temple 禅寂尼寺	Gantang Town 甘棠镇, Fu'an City 福安市	Qianhua period 乾化年间 (911–913)		2 × 3 □
	4	Xingqing Temple 兴庆寺	Xitan Town 溪潭镇, Fu'an City 福安市	Kaibao period 开宝年间 (968–976)		2 × 3 ○
	5	Bao'en Temple 报恩寺	Xibing Town 溪柄镇, Fu'an City 福安市	Yuanfu period 元符年间 (1098–1100)	Fu'an County Annals of Wanli period 万历《福安县志》	2 × 2 ○
	6	Suoquan Temple 锁泉寺	Xiaoyang Town 晓阳镇, Fu'an City 福安市	Yuanfu period 元符年间 (1098–1100)		2 × 2 ○
	7	Sanbao Temple 三宝寺	Chengnan Sub-district 城南街道, Fu'an City 福安市	The 5th year of Chunyou 淳祐五年 (1245)		2 × 4 ○
Cases Reflect Single-bay Clues	1	Jinbei Temple 金郎寺	Jinhan Township 金涵乡, Jiaocheng District 蕉城区	The 8th year of Dazhong 大中八年 (854)	Ningde County Annals of Jiajing period 嘉靖《宁德县志》	2 × 3 ○
	2	Shifeng Temple 狮峰寺	Xibing Town 溪柄镇, Fu'an City 福安市	The 4th year of Qianfu 乾符四年 (877)	Fu'an County Annals of Wanli period 万历《福安县志》	2 × 4 □
	3	Jinfeng Temple 金峰寺	Yangzhong Town 洋中镇, Jiaocheng District 蕉城区	The 5th year of Chunhua 淳化五年 (994)	Ningde County Annals of Jiajing period 嘉靖《宁德县志》	2 × 2 ○
	4	Xingyun Temple 兴云寺	Xibing Town 溪柄镇, Fu'an City 福安市	Yuanfu period 元符年间 (1098–1100)	Fu'an County Annals of Wanli period 万历《福安县志》	2 × 2 ○

The figures in the last column refer to the number of stone columns in the direction of longitude and latitude. □ represents a square stone column, while ○ represents a pumpkin-shaped circular stone column.

1.1. Purpose of the Conceptual Reconstruction and Approach

The architectural reconstruction examined the remains of a Song Dynasty Buddhist temple (name of the cultural relics protection unit: Site of Gonghoulong Temple 宫后垄寺遗址) in Huotong Town, Jiaocheng District, Ningde City, as an example. The reconstruction is based on the relics of the local Buddhist temples of the Song Dynasty and the remains of stone columns, as well as later wooden architecture that evolved from the one-bay form. The first step of the reconstruction research is to summarize the characteristics of the site and model the construction ruler originally used through on-site measurement. Secondly, the characteristics of the spatial form are analyzed by interpreting the information of the remains on stone columns. Finally, the reconstruction design can be carried out through frames based on the early wooden architecture in the Changxi River Basin and the East Fujian area.

It should be noted that the local remaining wooden architecture, which is the basis for reconstruction, was frequently renovated or altered in past dynasties. Wooden components replaced original Song Dynasty materials, and some construction does not reflect Song Dynasty styles, thus creating difficulties for study. As a result, the research focuses

on the form of the frame, an architectural characteristic that is least likely to be disturbed, and traces its historical evolution in order to understand the characteristics and rules of corresponding forms. In addition, for items such as small wooden doors, windows, and roof tiles for which evidence is seldom available, we could only concentrate on stylistic reconstruction according to the Song-style historical records. While history cannot be repeated, its underlying patterns can be traced. The proposed reconstruction plan, based on the above principles, represents an attempt in the form of personal interpretation. Its significance lies in unearthing a unique architectural typology that disappeared in the course of history and was previously unknown to the academic community, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the history of wooden construction techniques.

1.2. Overview of the Site History

The Gonghoulong Temple Site is located in Xiaoshi Village 小石村, Huotong Town 霍童镇, and is currently listed as a cultural relics protection unit in Jiaocheng District 蕉城区, Ningde City 宁德市. Huotong has been a sacred Buddhist site on the southeastern coast since Wuyue Kingdom 吴越国 (907–978). The Zhiti Mountain 支提山 in the territory is known by the praise of “Without reaching Zhiti Mountain, one’s journey as a monk would be in vain 不到支提枉为僧”. During the Ming Dynasty, it was described by Emperor Yongle as “the best mountain in the world 天下第一山”, which shows the prosperity of Buddhism in this area.

The historical information of the temple where the site is located is very limited, and there is no clear literature providing the exact name or historical timeline of the temple. There are three remaining inscriptions on stone tablets, i.e., “住持沙門崇岳誌 (recorded by Sramana Chongyan)”, “住山比丘慧舟重造 (reconstructed by Bhikkhu Huizhou)”, and “宋元豐四年辛酉歲十月日誌 (recorded on the day of October in the 4th year of Yuanfeng period of the Song Dynasty)”. The claim that the temple was established in the 4th year of Yuanfeng (1081), as mentioned in *An Atlas of Chinese Cultural Relics: Fujian Volume* 中国文物地图集福建分册, is based on the stone inscription (National Cultural Heritage Administration 2007, p. 734). According to the *Ningde County Annals* 宁德县志 of the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, “禅寂寺, 在十三都, 唐咸通五年建 (Chanji Temple, built in the 5th year of Xiantong period of the Tang Dynasty, is located in the 13th County.)”. Xiaoshiling, where the site is located, was within the jurisdiction of the 13th County during the Ming Dynasty, which may have some connection with the temple.

There are currently eight stone columns, a Sumeru stone podium (symbolic of Buddhist Mount Sumeru) 须弥座, as well as stone grooves, stone tablets, and remaining stone architectural elements at the site. The features and carving techniques of the stone columns and Sumeru platform are consistent with other Buddhist temple remains from the Song Dynasty in the Changxi River Basin (Liu 2018). They are well preserved and located in their original positions without changes throughout the ages, indicating the feasibility of architectural reconstruction.

2. Analysis of Clues for the Main Hall Reconstruction

2.1. Site Characteristics and Ruling Principles

The eight stone columns remaining in the main hall are positioned from the northwest to the southeast, arranged in two columns with four rows, forming a layout of one-bay wide and three-bay deep. The concave-shaped Sumeru platform is located in the middle of the last two bays in a depth-wide direction (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Aerial photo of the site. Photography by Jiangling Liu.

Through on-site measurement, the plan composition of the column network of the main hall is as follows:

Width: 7027 mm

Depth: $3547 + 3546 + 3541 = 10,634$ mm

We used the Fujian local ruler 闽乡尺 measuring about 270 mm to serve as the lower limit per unit, and a Qing Dynasty official ruler 清官尺 measuring 320 mm as the upper limit of unit measurement (Li 2014). With incremental lengths of 1 mm, the units used by the main hall construction ruler were calculated according to the design principle of integer lengths between columns 整数尺柱间制.¹

When the ruler length was tested at 294 mm, the width and depth of the main hall were close to whole numbers, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Reconstruction of the main hall construction ruler of Gonghoulong Temple Site (1 *chi* 尺 = 294 mm).

	Total Width	The First Bay of the Depth	The Second Bay of the Depth	The Third Bay of the Depth	Total Depth
mm	7027	3547	3546	3541	10,634
<i>chi</i>	23.901	12.065	12.044	12.010	36.170
Round up	24	12	12	12	36
Rate of coincidence	99.59%	99.46%	99.49%	99.63%	99.53%

According to the above table, the main hall construction ruler length is 294 mm, shorter than the Song official ruler 宋官尺 (about 310 mm), which should be because of the use of a Fujian local ruler, as detailed in the analysis below. In this way, the plan composition of the column network can be converted as follows:

Width: 24 *chi*
Depth: 12 + 12 + 12 = 36 *chi*

At this time, the depth of each bay is divided into two step frames 二步架, thus making the total depth six step frames 六步架. Each frame length 平长 is 36/6 = 6 *chi*, which is precisely in accordance with the rafter specifications 用椽之制 outlined in Volume Five of the Song Dynasty’s architectural standard *Yingzao Fashi* 营造法式 (Wang 2023, p. 520).

2.2. Stone Columns Features and Spatial Form of the Main Hall

Each stone column at the site is about 3520 mm high and is composed of two parts: The column base 柱础 and the column shaft 柱身 (Figure 2). The plan of the column stone is about 1080 mm square, with a central protruding basin stone 覆盆 that is about 100 mm high. It has a mortise for installing a plinth stone 石地袱, and the surface of the protruding basin is also carved with lotus patterns, which is similar to the lotus style “铺地莲华” described in *Yingzao Fashi* (Figure 3). The column shaft can be divided into the pedestal 磴 and the body. The pedestal is approximately 140 mm high with a diameter of about 550 mm. The surface of the body is carved like a pumpkin shape. The middle part of the body has a diameter of about 496 mm, tapering to approximately 455 mm at the top. There is a mortise at the top of the column for installing longitudinal architraves (*lan’e* 阑额), measuring approximately 370 mm in height and 140 mm in width. Four corner columns have cross-shaped mortises, while the other four columns have line-shaped mortises, indicating the longitudinal architraves were installed in a circle at the column tops.

The carving pattern of lotus petals on the protruding basin stone and the orientation of the mortises are closely related to the spatial form of the main hall.

These eight stone columns have a special carving style on the protruding basin stone. While two front eave columns are entirely carved with lotuses, the other six columns combine lotus carving with plain surfaces. As shown in Figure 4, three types of lotus carvings are used for covered basin stones: Full lotus, three-quarter lotus, and half lotus. Among them, the two front eave columns (W1, E1) have a full lotus without mortises for plinth stone. The west and east front columns (W2, E2) and the two rear eave columns (W4, E4) have a three-quarter lotus with mortises opening at a 90-degree angle between the lotus and the plain surface. The west and east rear columns (W3, E3) have a half lotus with mortises positioned opposite each other.

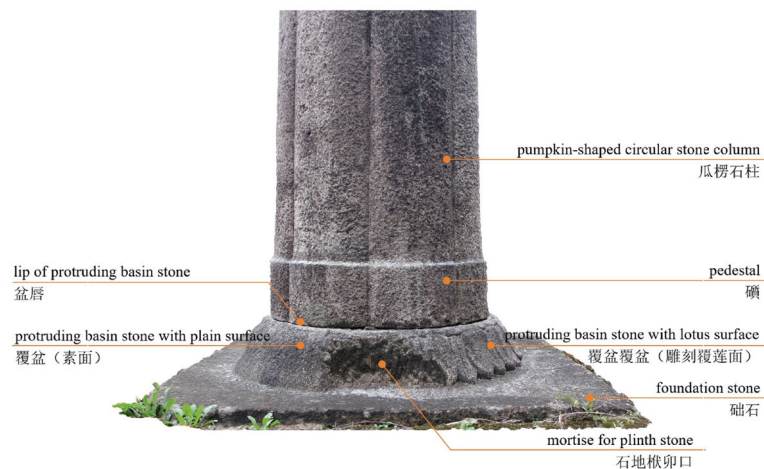


Figure 2. The base and foot of the remaining stone column (north elevation of W2). Drawing by authors.

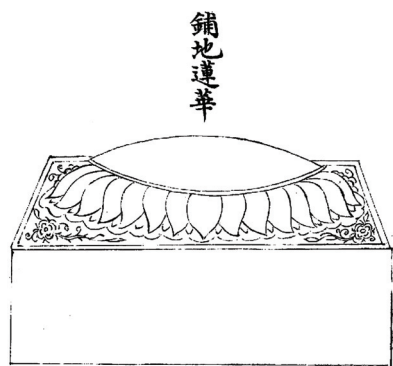


Figure 3. The pattern of lotus flower column base paving “鋪地蓮華” recorded in Volume Twenty-Nine of *Yingzao Fashi*.

The range of lotus carving and orientation of the mortises for plinth stone have a clear directionality towards the enclosing form of the main hall space. Six stone columns enclose a hall space with a width of one bay and a depth of two bays, while the two front eave columns (W1, E1) without plinth mortises indicate that the main hall features an open front corridor with a depth of one bay. The range of lotus carving refers to the differences between the interior and exterior of the main hall, i.e., the exterior of the column base is decorated with lotus carvings, while the interior of the hall remains unadorned.

In fact, it was common during the Tang and Song dynasties, particularly popular in the regions of Jiangnan and Fujian, to use the form of a Buddhist temple with an open front corridor and show the differences between interior and exterior spaces through different architectural decorations. Through the investigation of historical traces of the main hall of Baoguo Temple in Ningbo 宁波保国寺大殿, Zhang Shiqing discovered that the phenomenon of different forms of pumpkin-shaped circular columns also points to the original spatial layout of the hall with an open-fronted corridor (S. Zhang 2012a). The architectural design and intention reflected in the Gonghoulong Temple align completely with the main hall in Baoguo Temple, only with differences in the means of expression on the column bases or shafts.

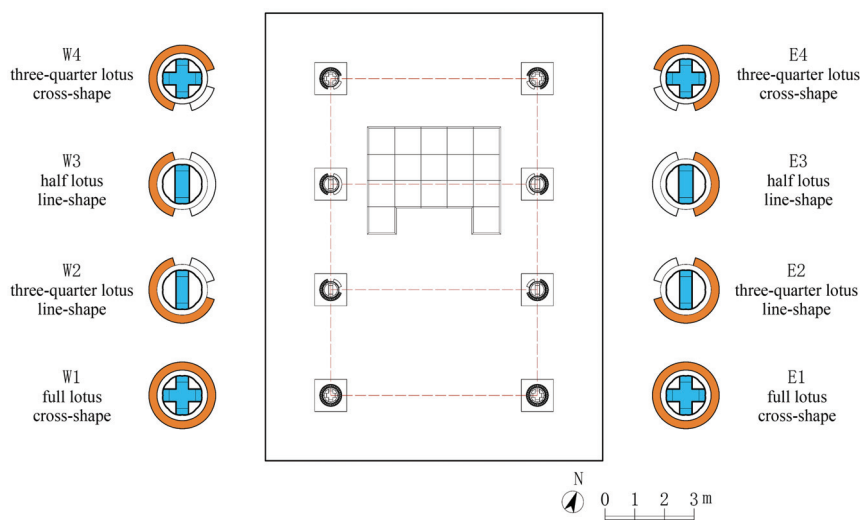


Figure 4. Diagram of the distribution of different styles of stone columns. Drawing by authors.

3. Analysis of the Characteristics of the Timber Frame Construction

There are no remaining single-bay Buddhist architecture remains in the Changxi River Basin. Due to this situation, the Buddhist architecture of the same period in eastern Fujian and neighboring areas are important references for the reconstruction of the timber frame construction of the main hall, such as the main hall of Hualin Temple in Fuzhou 福州华林寺大殿, the main hall of Chen Taiwei Palace in Luoyuan 罗源陈太尉宫正殿, architectural complex of Ganlu Temple in Taining 泰宁甘露庵建筑群, etc. Architecture rebuilt in later generations using stone columns from the Song Dynasty also has value as references, such as the main hall of Sanbao Temple in Fu'an 福安三宝寺大殿, the main hall of Shifeng Temple in Fu'an 福安狮峰寺大殿, and the Zushi hall of Mingshanshi in Yongtai 永泰名山室祖师殿.

3.1. Speculation on the Dimension of the Cai Module

The official construction book of the Song dynasty, *Yingzao Fashi*, recorded the design principle of adopting the *cai-fen* system 材分制 to control the size and proportionality of the building components on different scales. It clearly defined the cross-sectional dimensions of the eight grades of *cai* 材, with the height of *cai* determined as 15 *fen* 分, the thickness of *cai* 10 *fen*, and the height of *zhi* 梁 6 *fen* (Guo 1999, pp. 75–82; Feng 2012, p. 33). The *cai-fen* system in *Yingzao Fashi* actually represents the ancient Chinese modular system. It specifies the scale of buildings by employing eight grades of *cai* and then controls the dimensions of various components using the basic unit of *cai-fen*. This creates concise proportional relationships, transforming complex architectural design and component processing into standardized and systematized practices. Therefore, converting actual dimensions into *cai-fen* units and determining the grade of *cai* to control the scale of the building components takes priority in the reconstruction of timber frame construction.

Focusing on the timber frame architecture from the Five Dynasties to the Southern Song Dynasty in Fujian, the height-to-depth ratio of the *cai* and the height ratio of *cai* and *zhi* both average around 2:1 (Table 3). *Yingzao Fashi* records the height of the *cai* module as 15 *fen* 分, its depth as 10 *fen*, and the height of the *zhi* as 6 *fen*. This produces a height-to-depth ratio of 3:2 and the height ratio of *cai* and *zhi* of 5:3. Consequently, the early timber frame architecture in Fujian exhibits a significant deviation from the measurements in the *Yingzao Fashi*, i.e., the cross-section of *cai* is more vertically elongated, and the height difference between bracket arm 栱 and tie beam 枋 is smaller, which shows distinct regional

characteristics. Based on the above, the reconstruction height-thickness ratio of *cai* and the height ratio of *cai* and *zhi* are both determined to be 2:1.

Table 3. The dimensions of *cai* and *zhi* of early timber frame buildings in Fujian.

	Height of <i>Cai</i> (mm)	Thickness of <i>Cai</i> (mm)	Height-Thickness Ratio of <i>Cai</i>	Height of <i>Zhi</i> (mm)	Height Ratio of <i>Cai</i> to <i>Zhi</i>	Data Source
The main hall of Hualin Temple	307.5	163.6	1.88:1	140.8	2.18:1	(Sun 2012, p. 75)
The Shen Pavilion of Ganlu Temple	185	85	2.18:1	100	1.85:1	(B. Zhang 1982, pp. 118–43)
The main hall of Chen Taiwei Palace	190	90	2.11:1	85	2.24:1	(Ruan 2016, pp. 230–34)

The determination of the actual dimensions of the *cai* involves two sets of data that serve as crucial references. One is the dimensions of the mortises in the column tops used to install the longitudinal architrave, and the other is the diameter of the columns. By converting the corresponding component dimensions into *cai-fen* values according to *Yingzao Fashi*, the reasonableness of the reconstructed dimensions of the *cai* module values can be assessed.²

When the calculation is based on the dimensions of mortises of the longitudinal architrave:

By converting the recorded dimensions of the longitudinal architrave in *Yingzao Fashi* into *cai-fen* values, the height is 30 *fen* and the depth is 20 *fen* (Pan and He 2005, pp. 71–72). The measured height and width of the mortise of the longitudinal architrave at the top of the columns are approximately 370 mm and 140 mm, resulting in a height-to-width ratio of about 2.64. It is slightly larger than the proportions in *Yingzao Fashi*. If the dimensional height of the longitudinal architrave, 370 mm, is converted to 30 *fen*, the dimensions of a *cai* would be 185 mm × 92.5 mm or 247 mm × 123 mm, which resemble the dimensions of the sixth-grade *cai* 六等材 and second-grade *cai* 二等材 in *Yingzao Fashi*. The sixth-grade *cai* is on the smaller size, and is typically used for pavilions or small halls, with the Shen Pavilion of Ganlu Temple 甘露庵厝阁 forming the only matching example. The second-grade *cai*, suitable for five to seven-bay halls with double-eaved roofs, appear oversized (Wang 2023, pp. 356–57). If the width of the longitudinal architrave, 140 mm, corresponds to 20 *fen*, the resulting dimensions are even smaller than the sixth-grade *cai*. Hence, it can be ruled out. Therefore, using the dimensions of the mortises of the longitudinal architrave as a reference for the reconstruction is unreasonable.

When the calculation is based on the diameter of the columns:

It is recorded in *Yingzao Fashi* that column diameters for *diange* 殿阁 range from 42 *fen* to 45 *fen* and for halls of *tingtang* 厅堂 is 36 *fen* (Pan and He 2005, pp. 66–67). It can be presumed that the main hall should be a *diange*-style structure 殿阁式构架 with stone columns of the same height and large diameters. Assuming a central diameter of 496 mm corresponds to 45 *fen*, the dimensions of *cai* are 165 mm × 83 mm or 220 mm × 110 mm. The former is slightly undersized and thus unsuitable. The latter corresponds to the dimension of the fourth-grade *cai* 四等材 in *Yingzao Fashi* and is suitable for a three-bay palatial-style hall (Wang 2023, pp. 356–57). The main hall of Baoguo temple has a similar scale to the site and also uses fourth-grade *cai* (S. Zhang 2012b, pp. 111–15). Therefore, the fourth-grade *cai* is more reasonable.

In conclusion, the dimensions used for the reconstruction of the main hall are 220 mm × 110 mm, approximate to the fourth-grade *cai* in *Yingzao Fashi*.

3.2. Characteristics of the Timber Frame

3.2.1. Horizontal Layered Logic of the Palatial Hall

The patterns recorded in Volume Thirty-One of *Yingzao Fashi* (Wang 2023, pp. 1872–93) point to two types of timber frame structures prevalent during the Song Dynasty, namely *diange*-style structure 殿阁式构架 and *tingtang*-style structure 厅堂式构架.³ Since Liang Sicheng's annotations on *Yingzao Fashi*, research on the characteristics and differences of these two types of structures has been one of the central topics in the discussion of ancient Chinese architectural history. Scholars such as Chen Mingda (Chen 1981, pp. 107–17), Fu Xinian (Fu 2008, pp. 453–59), and Pan Guxi (Pan and He 2005, pp. 23–29) have extensively discussed this matter. Zhang Shiqing (S. Zhang 2012a, p. 119), combining previous research, provides three key indicators for distinguishing between these two types of structures: Firstly, in terms of structural logic, *diange*-style structure and *tingtang*-style structure are characterized by horizontal layering and vertical framing connections, respectively. Secondly, in terms of the relationship between cross beams 梁楹 and *puzuo* (i.e., bracket sets) 铺作, *diange*-style structure uses two sets of cross beams: the upper layer of rough (i.e., unfinished) structural framework (concealed by a ceiling) 草栿梁架 is pressed on the bracket sets, and the lower layer of exposed beam framework (not concealed by a ceiling) 明栿梁架 is hauled into bracket sets. On the other hand, a *tingtang*-style structure only uses an exposed beam framework. Thirdly, in terms of the connection between beams and columns, in *diange*-style structure, columns and beams are indirectly connected through bracket sets, while in *tingtang*-style structure, internal columns are raised, beam tails are inserted into the columns, and beams and columns are directly tied together. These three indicators are essential for distinguishing between typical *diange*-style structure and *tingtang*-style structure.

Based on the above indicators, it can be determined that for Buddhist architecture with eave columns of equal heights and without additional interior columns, adopting a *diange*-style structure with a horizontal layered logic is the most reasonable choice. The early timber frame architecture in Fujian, such as the front corridor of the main hall of Hualin Temple and the columns of equal height in the main hall of Chen Taiwei Palace, especially the common feature of beams hauling in into bracket sets and supporting the ceiling, provides clues to the possible existence of *diange*-style structure in Fujian (Figure 5) (Xie 2016, pp. 23–24).



Figure 5. Clues for the form of palatial hall frames in eastern Fujian: beams intertwine with bracket sets to support the ceiling: (a) The front corridor of the main hall in Hualin temple; (b) the Song structure of Chen Taiwei Palace. Photography by authors.

Buddhist architecture one bay in width and multiple bays in depth in eastern Fujian display a clear and distinct horizontal layered logic. Above the longitudinal architraves,

the frame construction consists of a multi-layered bracket set with exposed beam frameworks and rough structural frameworks. The bracket layer formed by placing uniformly sized bracket sets above the longitudinal architrave, which ties together the cross beams, and supports horizontal components such as different types of tie beams 枋. The visible beams below the ceiling are finely crafted and decorated, while the beams above the ceiling support upper-level purlins and rafters with an unfinished structural framework. The rough structural frame uses the *chuandou* (column-and-tie-beam structure) 穿斗式构架, as seen in structures like Mingshan Hall in Yongtai, Sanbao Temple in Fu'an, and the main hall of the Shifeng Temple. These structures employ a simplified and lightweight roof truss through the method of connecting and linking columns with tie beams between rough structural frameworks and support the purlins directly by columns.

The rough structural frame of *chuandou* is a common form used in *diange*-style structures in the south. The earliest remaining examples can be traced back to the Southern Song Dynasty, observed in the Sanqing Hall of Xuanmiao Temple in Suzhou 苏州玄妙观三清殿. It became prevalent in the south during the Ming and Qing periods, as seen in the main hall of Shisi Temple in Jingning 景宁时思寺大殿, the Dacheng Hall of Confucius Temple in Zhangpu 漳浦县文庙大成殿, the Dacheng Hall of Confucius Temple in Quanzhou 泉州府文庙大成殿, and the main hall of the Kaiyuan Temple in Quanzhou 泉州开元寺大殿, etc. Even in cases of local official architecture, such as the main hall of the Bao'en Temple in Pingwu 平武报恩寺大殿, and the Yuantong Hall of Puji Temple on Mount Putuo 普陀山普济寺圆通殿, adopt this method, illustrating its longstanding regional significance in southern areas (Long 2013, pp. 33–36).

On the other hand, the front corridors of both the main hall of Hualin Temple and Baoguo Temple are decorated with ceilings that exhibit the high-grade characteristics of *diange*-style structure. However, the interior spaces containing Buddha statues still utilize the typical *tingtang*-style structure. Regarding this, is it possible for the restored main hall to adopt this form? Since there are no columns inside the hall, for the hip-gable roof commonly used with such frameworks in this region, the main beams of the two gables need to be supported internally. Given the depth of the main hall, the span of the main beams reaches nearly ten meters, posing significant challenges in terms of materials and construction. However, even if feasible, the installation of continuous longitudinal beams will make the framework of the main hall similar to the practice of the main hall of the Nanchan Temple in Wutai Mountain. On this basis, non-grounded columns varying in height according to the slope of the roof can be installed, but this practice does not seem to have been observed in local actual cases. At the same time, installing continuous longitudinal beams would eliminate the distinction between the front corridor and the Buddhist statue space, erasing the original intention of differentiated spatial design. However, separating the rough structural framework by installing ceilings can both reduce the roof load and present a more integrated interior space. For the reconstruction plan, this is a logical choice.

3.2.2. Type and Slope of the Roof

In the Changxi River Basin and even in Fujian, early Buddhist architecture is speculated to have had hip-gable roofs. Summarily, there are two distinctive features of the hip-gable roof technology in this region, i.e., the minimal or non-existent use of the *shoushan* 收山 technique for shortening the roof-ridge, and the adoption of *chuji* 出际 technique for extending the rafters beyond the edge of the gable wall. The latter approach involves supporting the gable eave rafters by either a system of gable beams or through a *chuandou* column-and-tie-beam structure that serves to extend the starting point of *chuji*.⁴

Having minimal or no *shoushan* is the most particular characteristic of the hip-gable roofs in the Changxi River Basin and even in Fujian (Lin 2014, pp. 124–25). In early wooden structures such as the main hall of Hualin Temple and the Shen Pavilion of Ganlu Temple, there is noticeable use of *shoushan*. However, there is no *shoushan* in the Chen Taiwei Palace

in Luoyuan, the upper hall, the Nan'an Hall, or the Guanying of Ganlu Temple. Additionally, there is minimal *shoushan* in the Zushi Hall in Mingshan Temple in Yongtai.

In the main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace, specifically its section from the Song Dynasty, two additional frames were positioned in the range of the original single bay, and the space between intercolumnar bracket sets 补间铺作 near the two gables. Then frames on two gables were set to extend the starting point of the *chuiji*. The original location of the bargeboard was outside the axis of the outer row of columns. The roof truss was enlarged through subsequent renovations, which resulted in the original Song's gable frame and bargeboard being concealed within the massive roof truss. The rough structural framework over the middle bracket sets supports two eave rafters, simultaneously extending the bargeboard beyond the original Song structure, forming the roof and the massive bargeboard to cover the entire frame (Figure 6).

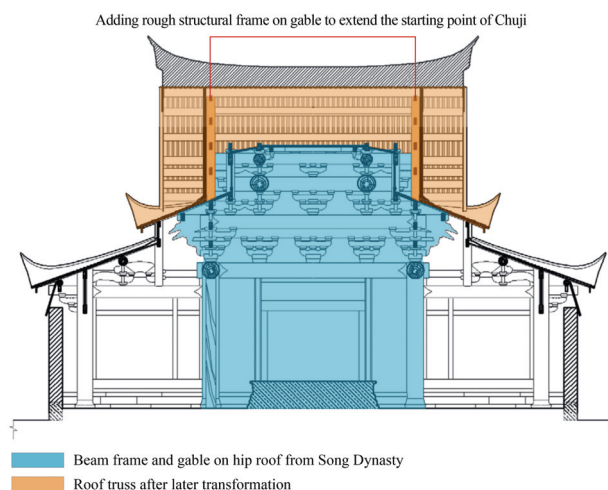


Figure 6. The frame of hip-gable roof in the main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace. Drawing by authors and the base plan cited from (Ruan 2016, p. 234).

The rough structural framework of *chuandou* with a hip-gable roof and *chuiji* in Buddhist architecture in the Changxi River Basin share a similar logic of transformation as seen in the main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace. Examples include the main halls of Sanbao Temple and Shifeng Temple in Fu'an, both of which have *chuiji* at the position of the edges of the eave columns supported by *chuandou* structures. Consequently, the tails of the rafters from the two gables are connected at the tie beams of the *chuandou* structure. Due to limited extension, the lower part of the gable only has a frame of one-rafter but maintains the traditional approach of *chuiji*.

Regarding the slope of the roof, among early wooden structures in Fujian and a few wooden Buddhist architectures in the Changxi River Basin, the ratio between the rise in the eave and the distance between the center of the front and rear eaves purlins 前后檐枋心距 is below 1:4.0 (Table 4). Although there seems to have been an increase during the Ming and Qing periods, this ratio is still significantly different from the 1:3 specified in Volume Five of *Yingzao Fashi* (Wang 2023, p. 537). Therefore, the roof slope tends to be more flat with a minimal depression, forming a gently curved roofline. This retains the distinct regional construction characteristics of Fujian.

Table 4. The example data of roof slope of wooden architectures in Fujian.

	Height of Eave H (mm)	Distance between the Center of the Front and Rear Eaves Purlins D (mm)	H/D	Data Source
The main hall of Hualin Temple	4578	18,727	1:4.1	(Sun 2012, p. 86)
The Shen Pavilion of Ganlu Temple	—	—	1:4.4	(B. Zhang 1982, pp. 118–43)
The Upper Hall of Ganlu Temple	—	—	1:4.4	
The main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace (speculation of Song Dynasty)	3115	13,109	1:4.2	(Ruan 2016, pp. 230–4)
The main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace (current situation)	4078	16,688	1:4.1	
The main hall of Sanbao Temple in Fu'an	3107	12,544	1:4.0	Measuring on site
The main hall of Shifeng Temple in Fu'an	3610	14,320	1:4.0	Protection Plan of Shifeng Temple

3.3. The Configuration and Type of Bracket Sets

The configuration of the two intercolumnar bracket sets in the central bay is similar both to that recorded in *Yingzao Fashi* (Pan and He 2005, pp. 81–83), as well as to the front eave of the main hall of Hualin Temple in Fuzhou and the upper hall of the Ganlu Temple in Taining. Additionally, the Zushi Hall of Mingshan Temple in Yongtai exemplifies the architectural style of Song Dynasty structures in Fujian. In these cases, there are two intercolumnar bracket sets in the front and rear eaves. Based on the preceding analysis and the results of the main hall’s reconstruction, the main hall has a central bay width of 24 *chi* and a depth of three bays, each measuring 12 *chi*. Thus, there should have been two intercolumnar bracket sets in the central bay in the longitudinal direction, and one intercolumnar bracket set in each bay in the transverse direction.

Regarding the bracket sets type, the main hall of Hualin Temple in Fuzhou and the Sanqing Hall of Yuanmiao Temple in Putian exhibit the highest level, utilizing the seven-tiered bracket sets 七铺作. The second highest level can be seen in the main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace in Luoyuan, employing a six-level-tiered bracket set 六铺作. While the use of *xia’ang* 下昂 (downward cantilever) should be considered in conjunction with the building grade, materials, and the era in which it was constructed. High-level grade buildings with larger-sized *cai* from the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty adopted real *xia’ang*, while the main hall of the Chen Taiwei Palace in the Southern Song Dynasty as a smaller-scale regional temple utilized *cha’ang* 插昂 (S. Zhang 1999). As for the small-scale temples such as the architectural complex of Ganlu Temple in Taining and Zushi Hall of Mingshan Temple in Yongtai, the use of *ang* is no longer observed. In the cases where the *xia’ang* extension of brackets was used, the “mocking head” *shatou* 耍头 were processed in the form of the *xia’ang*.

It is noteworthy that this approach seems to have elevated the architectural rank of the structure. In these cases, *linggong* (shorter arms) 令拱 are used at the location of the upper *ang* to support tie beams, thus lowering the height of the eaves extension. The simple bracket arm and tie beams overlap to form a wall supporting bracket arm 扶壁拱. The large size of the *ludou* 栌斗 and the practice of using three-lobed curves at the apex of *ang* are all distinctive regional characteristics found in eastern Fujian and even in Fujian as a whole.

Taking into account the aforementioned hierarchical relationships and the scale of the bracket sets in the main hall, it is proposed to adapt a five-tiered bracket set 五铺作.

3.4. *Nei'e* (Internal Longitudinal Architraves) and Connected Beam Bearing Bracket Technology

For the one-bay main hall with hip-gable roof, the special feature lies in the form and position of the beam frame. The reconstruction shows that there are no columns inside the main hall, so except for the front and rear eaves, the remaining four columns in the east-west direction must have internal longitudinal architraves to support the upper ceiling, and the rough structural framework is supported by the intercolumnar bracket sets on the architrave. However, based on the actual situation, these four columns lack east-west mortises for installing architraves. Thus, it is inferred that architraves are actually connected with bracket sets on top of the columns, which extend outward to serve as bracket arms supporting the eaves, as can be seen in the central column in the Zushi Hall of Mingshan Temple in Yongtai. The *ludou* above the two central columns supports a moon-shaped beam 月梁 that spans the width. Two bracket sets are on the longitudinal columns, and the forward and rear bracket sets center each have a *huagong* bracket arm 华拱. The top of the brackets then supports the cross and tie beams (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Internal longitudinal architrave connected with bracket sets to bear the beams in the Zushi Hall of Mingshan Temple in Yongtai. Photography by Xiaobin Li.

This approach is a crucial technical aspect in the reconstruction of a one-bay Buddhist building, addressing the challenges of beam intersection and support without internal columns. The internal architrave not only needs to be as long as the entire width of the structure but also needs to bear the loads from the central overhead bracket sets, beams, and the rough structural frame. Consequently, its cross-section must be large enough.

While there are no early architectural remains reflecting this technique in the Changxi River Basin or even in Fujian, similar cases of using massive internal longitudinal architraves to support upper structures can be widely found in the mansion halls of residential houses from the Ming Dynasty in eastern Fujian. Locally, internal longitudinal architraves are referred to as *kangliang* 扛梁 (Figure 8) (Ruan 2016, pp. 104–8), possibly indicating the continuity and evolution of corresponding beam-bearing techniques in the region.



Figure 8. The examples of *kangliang* in residential buildings in eastern Fujian: (a) The Zheng’s residential building in Longyuan, Cangshan district, Fuzhou city; (b) the hall in Qianlong, Lidun, Zhouning county, Ningde city. Photography by authors.

4. The Conceptual Reconstruction Plan

Combining the analysis of construction rulers, early wooden construction characteristics, and the actual conditions of the site, the main hall was reconstructed (Figures 9–13).

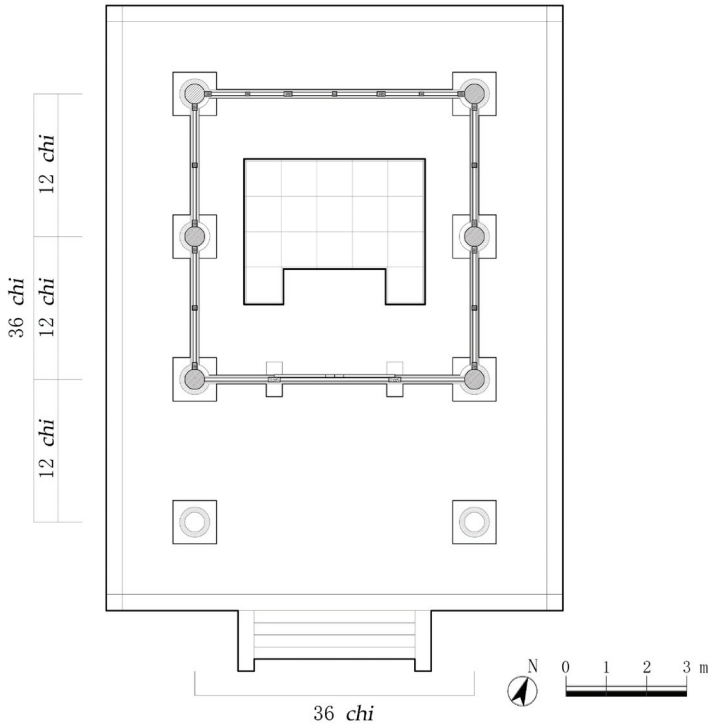


Figure 9. Master plan of the main hall reconstruction. Drawing by authors.

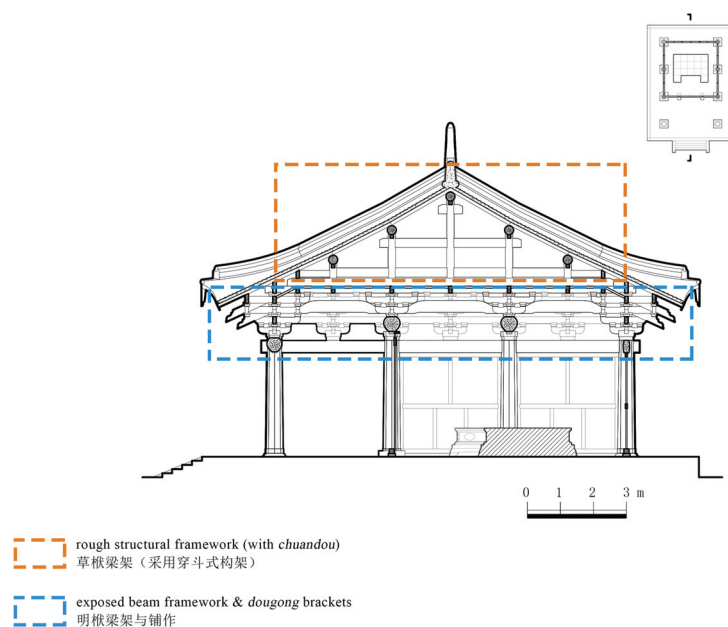


Figure 10. Transverse section of the main hall reconstruction. Drawing by authors.

Taking 294 mm as the basic unit of the construction ruler, the main hall has a one-bay width of 24 *chi*, a depth of three bays, each measuring 12 *chi*, a six-purlin-rafter 六架椽, with each purlin measuring 6 *chi*, and a hip-gable roof. The main hall has a palatial hall frame with a front open corridor and an enclosed rear corridor. Above the pumpkin-shaped circular stone column, the longitudinal architrave supports the bracket layer. Two intercolumnar bracket sets are located in the front and rear eaves, and each bay in the transverse direction has one intercolumnar bracket set.

The second and third rows of columns use internal architraves to support the beam. The massive, rounded architraves connect to the brackets on top of the columns, and two intercolumnar bracket sets rest above them. In the transverse direction of each bay, the rounded moon-shaped beams are used to connect the front and rear bracket sets, support the upper ceiling, and create a harmonious and dignified interior space. Above the ceiling, the rough structural framework *chuandou* is used as the roof truss. The gable beam frame employs two rafters. The tail of the upper rafter is connected at the location where the rough structural frame passes through the tie beam. The tail ends of the eave rafters on the gable side are arranged outside this beam frame to extend the position of the starting point of *chuji*, so that the bargeboard is able to be placed along the column axes at the eastern and western eaves without *shoushan*.

Original materials such as tiles and small woodworking 小木作 components from the Song Dynasty in Fujian are almost non-existent. In light of this, the reconstruction plan's imagery for the *chiwen* 鸱吻 is referenced from the precious physical objects of Southern Song found in the Shen Pavilion of the Ganlu Temple in Taining (B. Zhang 1982, p. 128). While the door and window styles tentatively adopt common Song Dynasty patterns, which are shown in *Yingzao Fashi* (Pan and He 2005, pp. 110–19).

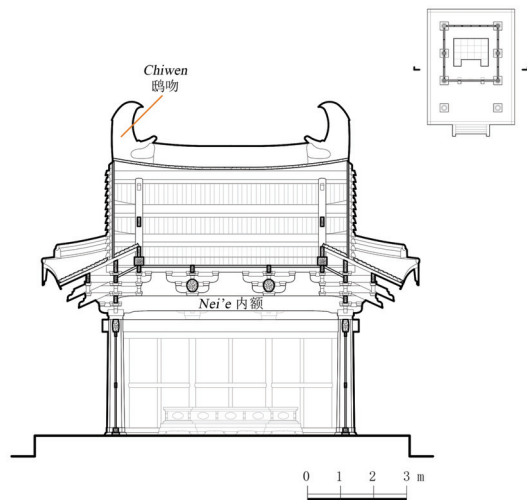


Figure 11. Longitudinal section of the main hall reconstruction. Drawing by authors.

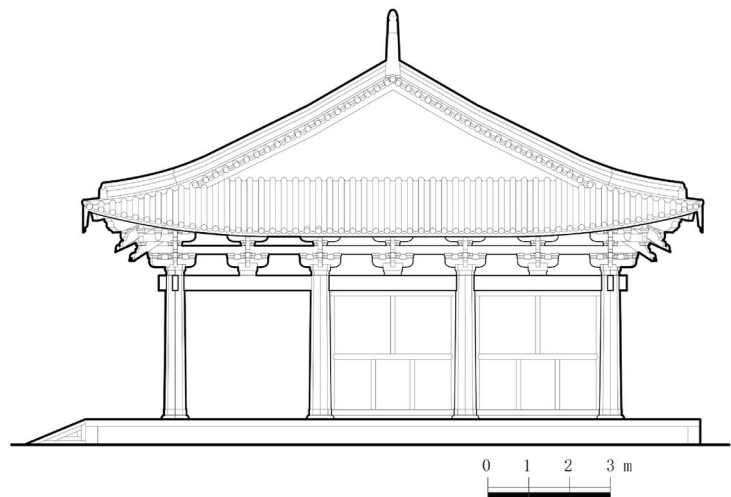


Figure 12. East side elevation of the main hall reconstruction. Drawing by authors.

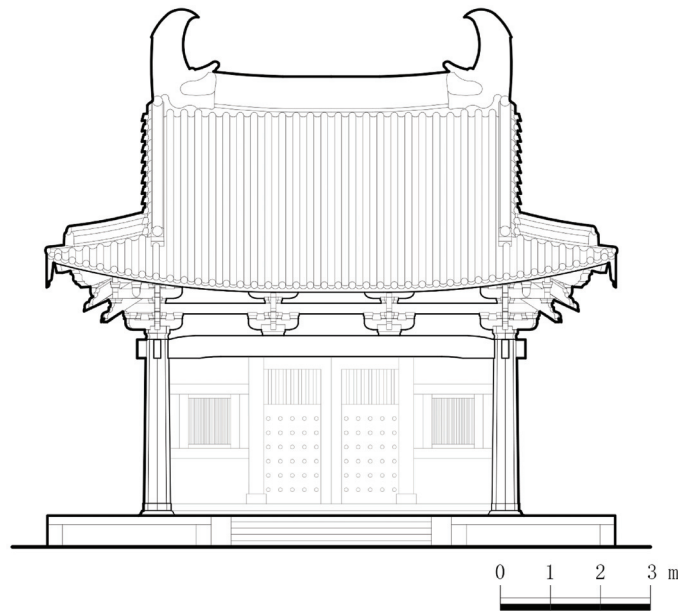


Figure 13. Front elevation of the main hall reconstruction. Drawing by authors.

5. Conclusions: The Unique Construction System in Changxi River Basin

Buddhist architecture, one bay in width and multiple bays in depth, is a unique architectural type in the Changxi River Basin of eastern Fujian, prevalent during the Tang and Song dynasties and limited to a relatively enclosed geographic unit. Using the site of the Gonghoulou Temple in Huotong Town as the subject of the reconstruction study and through an examination of early surviving architecture and regionally significant examples, a distinctive construction system can be derived for the Changxi River Basin, one that encompasses a layout of the ground plan, modular units of the construction ruler utilized, and timber frame construction techniques.

This Buddhist architecture adopts a longitudinal rectangular ground plan, one-bay in width and three bays in depth. Based on the form of the remaining stone columns, carvings at their bases indicate the spatial enclosure of the main hall. Specifically, the first bay is an open front corridor, while the subsequent two bays form a closed square Buddhist space, aligning with the common spatial arrangement of Buddhist halls in the Tang and Song Dynasties (Steinhardt 2022, p. 183). Considering the scale of the concave-shaped Sumeru podium, the main hall had few Buddha statues, likely featuring only the principal Buddha with attendant bodhisattvas positioned on two sides, and no additional statues surrounding the space, creating a small and appropriate spatial arrangement. The use of a square Buddhist space with a concave-shaped Sumeru pedestal was common in early periods, as seen in Cave 205 (Early Tang), Cave 196 (Late Tang), and Cave 55 (Northern Song) in the Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, as well as the main hall of the Nanchan Temple in Wutai Mountain, Shanxi (Tang), and the Yuhua Palace in Yongshou Temple, Yuci (Northern Song) (Huang 2013, p. 57). Scholars have pointed out that the reason for early Buddhist architecture providing only the principal Buddha as opposed to later periods is related to the development of Buddhist Pure Land beliefs (Ding et al. 2021). During the Five Dynasties and Northern Song period in the Jiangnan and Southeast regions, statues of Arhats were often independently placed alongside other Buddha sculptures separate from the principal Buddha. However, by the Ming and Qing periods, with the widespread prosperity of Pure Land Buddhism, the Arhat statues were placed around or on both sides of the principal Buddha. In this period, the addition of eaves in small Buddhist architecture in the

Jiangnan and Southeast regions can be seen as a response to this development (Zuo 2019, pp. 119–30). Therefore, although Zen Buddhism was prevalent in this region during the Song Dynasty, which might have influenced the stylistic features of the Buddhist temples, elements such as the Sumeru stone podium, lotus-shaped column bases, and open front corridor suggest proximity to the practices of Pure Land Buddhism. After all, Ningbo's Baoguo Temple, which shares common spatial characteristics, serves as evidence. Its affiliation with the Tiantai Sect also incorporates the beliefs of Pure Land Buddhism. The Pure Land pool in front of the Baoguo Temple main hall was also constructed in the early Southern Song Dynasty (Ding et al. 2021).

The construction ruler used for this Buddhist architecture was determined by the study to be 294 mm, slightly smaller than the official Northern Song ruler of 310 mm. However, it aligns with the tradition in eastern Fujian of using local rulers. The Southern Song's *San Shan Zhi* describes the situation during the Wuyue Kingdom, where one local ruler was equivalent to eight *chi* and seven *cun* 寸 of the official ruler, when they built the road around West Lake in Fuzhou. (Today it is estimated that a single *chi* of this local ruler equals 270–274 mm.) The length of the Southern Song wooden ruler excavated from Huang Sheng's tomb in Fuzhou, Fujian Provincial Museum, is 283 mm. Scholars have also reconstructed the construction ruler of the main hall of Hualin Temple, determining it to be 289 mm, showing the possibility of a distinct and smaller local ruler in eastern Fujian (Sun 2012, pp. 71–72). The main hall was reconstructed based on a width of 24 *chi* and a depth of 36 *chi*, with each bay measuring 12 *chi*. The ratio of width to depth is 2:3, closely matching the proportions found in the Song Dynasty Buddhist architecture site of Guoxing Temple at the Taimu mountain in Xiapu County. The column system at the site is also one bay in width and three bays in depth, with a restored construction ruler determined to be 292 mm per 1 *chi* (Appendix A). The question of whether this is representative of a more widespread relationship during this period should be further studied.

In terms of the timber frame construction of the main hall, it is different from the square, three-bay lattice-shaped structure in the Jiangnan region (S. Zhang 2015). In the Changxi River Basin in eastern Fujian, the frame construction of the one-bay palatial hall with a large dimension and hip-gable roof truss presented significant challenges in the area of timber construction. The use of internal architrave for bearing beams in the hall is crucial for transferring the upper beam loads and forming the hip-gable roof truss under the condition of no interior columns. This reflects an ancient logic of longitudinal framing. While the proposed reconstruction plan is subjective, it is likely the most suitable choice for one-bay Buddhist architecture because of the comparison with related timber frame construction and the use of the *kangliang* in later residential buildings in eastern Fujian.

The regional characteristics of the construction system are derived from the comparative analysis with existing wooden architectural remains in Fujian, timber frame construction in the Tang and Song Dynasties, and *Yingzao Fashi*. It reflects the regional and temporal nature of one-bay Buddhist architecture in the Changxi River Basin during the Song Dynasty. These features continued to evolve and be inherited in local Buddhist architecture during the Ming and Qing periods. The reconstruction of the Gonghoulou Temple provides a valuable sample of early Buddhist architecture in the Changxi River Basin in eastern Fujian, offering important insight into the exploration of timber frame construction technology and its historical development in Fujian.

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Appendix A

Table A1. The Restored Construction Ruler of the Main Hall of Guoxing Temple in Taimu Mountain (1 *chi* = 292 mm).

	Total Width	The First Bay of the Depth	The Second Bay of the Depth	The Third Bay of the Depth	Total Depth
mm	7051	3504	3506	3509	10,519
<i>chi</i>	24.147	12.0	12.006	12.017	36.024
Round up	24	12	12	12	36
Rate of Coincidence	99.39%	100%	99.94%	99.86%	99.93%

Data source: Measured on site by authors.

- Notes**
- ¹ In ancient Chinese architecture, the width of bays generally adheres to the principle of integer lengths between columns, which means that the width of the central bay and secondary bays is based on integer *chi*, half *chi*, and occasionally 1/4 *chi*, allowing for clear dimensions of architectural components, which facilitates estimation, design, and construction. This principle can be observed in architectures from the Tang Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. The principle serves as the theoretical basis for the reconstruction of construction rulers.
- ² The height-to-thickness ratio of *cai* is 2:1 in the early wooden structures in Fujian, thus it raises the question of how to correspond the *cai* module according to *Yingzao Fashi*. Specifically, it is necessary to first calculate the *fen* value and then to respectively correspond dimensions of *cai*, i.e., 15 *fen* × 7.5 *fen* or 20 *fen* × *cai* thickness of 10 *fen*.
- ³ Modern architectural historians have named the two main types of wooden frame structures in China as “*tailiang*” 抬梁 and “*chuandou*” 穿斗, which are modern terms. While “*diange*” and “*tingtang*” are historical terms defined in the Song Dynasty’s *Yingzao Fashi*, and they classify one type of *tailiang* structure. The corresponding frame structures can be called *diange*-style structure and *tingtang*-style structure.
- ⁴ “*Chuji*” and “*Shoushan*” are two common construction methods for the gable on hip roof. “*Chuji*” refers to protruding beyond the edge of a gable wall. “*Shoushan*” involves pulling the bargeboard inward by a certain distance, preventing the roof from becoming overly massive.

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Article

Constructing Heaven: Ceilings of the Stone Tombs in Northeast Asia (1st to 7th Century CE)

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Abstract: This paper discusses the spread of several special techniques for tomb ceiling construction in Northeast Asia from the 2nd to the 5th centuries and the mixed beliefs of Buddhism and the cult of the Queen Mother of the West (*Xiwangmu* 西王母) that were embedded in the design of these ceilings. In the 2nd century, stone tombs with ceilings formed by stepped layers of stone slabs flourished in Shandong and northern Jiangsu. These tombs are usually believed to be the prototypes of the stone tombs with more complicated stepped ceilings that appeared in the Goguryeo Kingdom on the Korean Peninsula in the 4th century. However, the way in which the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE) stone tombs in eastern China influenced the Goguryeo tombs over relatively long distances in the following centuries is open for discussion. This paper argues that Youzhou 幽州, i.e., the Province of You 幽 ruling the areas including Beijing, northern Hebei, Liaoning, and the northwest of the Korean Peninsula, was a crucial area for the dissemination of these special ceilings of stone tombs. The officials of the Province of You were keen to introduce highly developed masonry craftsmanship from Shandong to construct their ideal shelters for an afterlife in an age full of regional wars and unexpected deaths. Newly introduced Buddhism and traditional beliefs in the immortal land of the Queen Mother of the West were potential driving forces for the dissemination and popularity of these stone ceilings as spaces for worship.

Keywords: Northeast Asia; Goguryeo; stepped ceiling; stone tomb; Buddhism; Queen Mother of the West

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1. Introduction

In total, about 120 stone tombs with paintings that are dated to the period of the rule by the Goguryeo Kingdom (37 BCE–668 CE), more specifically, from the 4th to 7th century CE, have been found and reported in areas around Ji'an 集安 in the Jilin 吉林 Province of China and Pyongyang on the Korean Peninsula, the capitals of the kingdom (Tongbuga yokscha chae'dan 2010; Chon 2004, pp. 91–92) (Figure 1). The ceiling structure is a defining feature of Goguryeo stone tomb construction. Most of the tombs have ceilings that consist of multiple layers of stone slabs, each of diminishing dimensions rising from the wall from the lowest to the highest. In profile, the space between the ceiling and the walls is in the shape of a pyramid. The prototypes of these ceilings are the ceilings of the stone tombs of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 CE) in Shandong 山東 and northern Jiangsu 江蘇 in East China (Steinhardt 2002; C. Li 2014).

Generally, Goguryeo stone tombs are viewed as being influenced by the Eastern Han funerary culture and a part of the Northeast Asian cultural sphere. In the Goguryeo stone tombs, Han funerary structures and symbols were selected and reinterpreted in the immediate post-Han centuries. The ceiling structure is crucial to the depiction of heaven and is therefore important for understanding the beliefs shared by the Eastern Han and the Goguryeo Kingdom. As will be discussed in the following sections, the introduction of the stone ceiling structure to the stone tombs of the Eastern Han Dynasty was closely related to the belief in the cult of the Queen Mother of the West, who was the goddess of the world of immortality, and the newly imported religion of Buddhism. Why and how such

a combination of an architectural structure and specific religious beliefs was brought from one culture to another over long distances and time will be explored in this paper. There is a long distance between Shandong and northern Jiangsu in East China and the Korean Peninsula. The route for the dissemination of the stone ceiling is open for discussion. In this paper, the two areas are considered part of a Northeast Asian cultural sphere, in which Youzhou 幽州, i.e., the Province of You 幽 ruling the vast areas including Beijing, northern Hebei 河北, Liaoning 遼寧, and the northwest Korean Peninsula, played an important role.



Figure 1. Map of Northeast China and the Korean Peninsula, showing the historical location of the Province of You and modern towns with major tomb sites discussed.

2. The Eastern Han Stone Ceilings

Stone ceilings consisting of multiple layers of stone slabs appeared in Shandong and northern Jiangsu in East China in the 1st century CE and were used to adapt the stone chamber tombs that just became popular among the upper social class. Before the 1st century CE, most of the tombs in China were in the form of box-shaped containers made of wood that were placed in burial pits (Huang 2003, pp. 90–93). There was a significant change in both the architectural material and the burial form: the architectural material transformed from timber to stone, while the burial form changed from a box-shaped container to a house-like structure (Wu 1995, pp. 154–83; Rawson 2010, pp. 79–88; Campbell 2010). Traditional Chinese architecture was built with timber. Consequently, tomb builders faced the technical challenge of using an unfamiliar material to build subterranean architecture imitating the residences of the living.

The ceiling structure is crucial to funerary architecture, with a heavy burial mound over the roof and a significant increase in span. One solution is to stagger multiple layers of stone slabs that rise from the walls of the tomb chamber and diminish in size. In profile, the space between the ceiling and the walls is in the shape of a pyramid. Such ceilings can be further divided into two types: the lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling (Figure 2). The lantern ceiling is formed by multiple layers of triangular stone slabs. Each layer is

in the shape of a square well formed by four triangular stone slabs, superimposed by additional layers of squares, and each rotates 45 degrees and decreases in size. Alexander Soper identified this kind of ceiling as a lantern ceiling, one of the forms of the “dome of heaven” (Soper 1947). When discussing the origin of the lantern structure in early China, Jing Xie associates the structure with skylights and windows (Xie 2023). The stepped ceiling is formed by multiple layers of stone bars parallel to the walls, each of diminishing dimensions from the lowest to the highest. In profile, the four slopes of the ceiling are in the shape of steps.

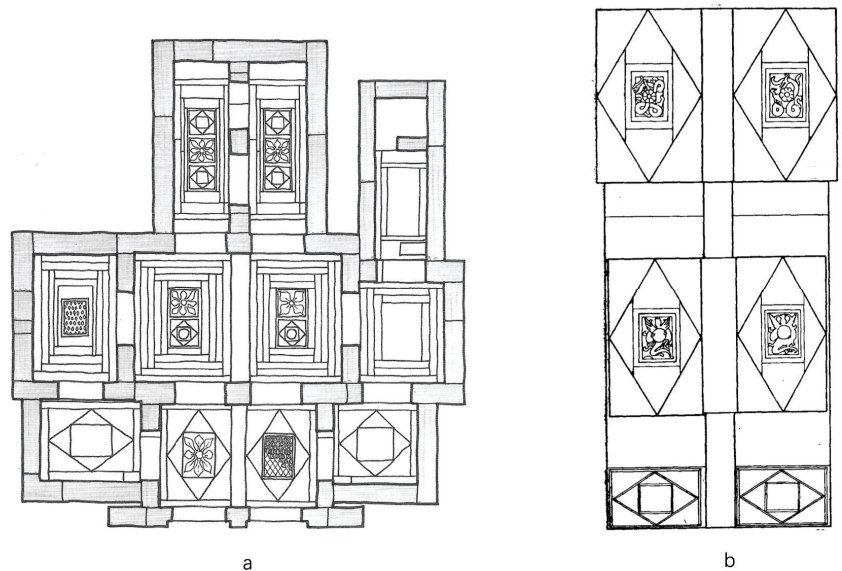


Figure 2. The lantern ceilings and the stepped ceilings of the Eastern Han tombs. (a) Upward view of the Yi'nan tomb in Shandong. After Luo (2020, fig. 9.3). (b) Upward view of the tomb at the Reservoir of Changli in Jiangsu. After Nanjing bowuyuan (1957, fig. 3).

Both types of ceilings appeared in the stone tombs in East China in the Eastern Han Dynasty in well-developed forms, showing no processes of development. Thus, it is assumed that these ceilings were borrowed from areas where stone architecture had a long tradition. The prototype of stone lantern ceilings can be found in stone tombs on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea in Bulgaria and Turkey that are dated to the 4th to 3rd century BCE (Luo 2020) (Figure 3). The prototype of the stepped ceilings can be found in a Scythian stone tomb dated to the 4th century BCE in Kerch on the Crimean Peninsula on the northern coast of the Black Sea (C. Li 2017). The development of each prototype and the following development of each prototype in China were rooted in different cultural backgrounds.

The lantern ceilings of the stone tombs on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea were built to increase the monumentality of the royal tombs, which were usually built as above-ground monuments for people to view. From the outside, the lantern roofs resembling a pyramid were awe-inspiring (Fedak 1990, p. 171). Such stone ceilings were modeled after prototypes in wooden architecture in Central Asia, where it is extremely hot in summer. The wooden lantern ceiling in the form of an open ceiling that allows the flow of air and lets in natural light could cool off the building. Such wooden lantern ceilings were widely used in both the reception rooms of the royal palaces and the vernacular architecture, for example, the Old Nisa Castle, the Palace of the Parthian Empire dated to the 2nd century CE, and the villager's house in the Pamir Mountains in Pakistan that Aurel Stein visited during his expeditions to Xinjiang in the early 20th century (Figure 4). Wooden lantern ceilings with an opening were usually built above a central fireplace, symbolizing a source

of light and the high-ranking status of the reception room in the residence (Luo 2020). Although no early wooden lantern ceiling in Central Asia survived due to the vulnerable nature of wood, the general continuity of the local architectural tradition ensured that the lantern ceiling structure exerted its influence on both ceilings in the Mediterranean and the Eastern Han.

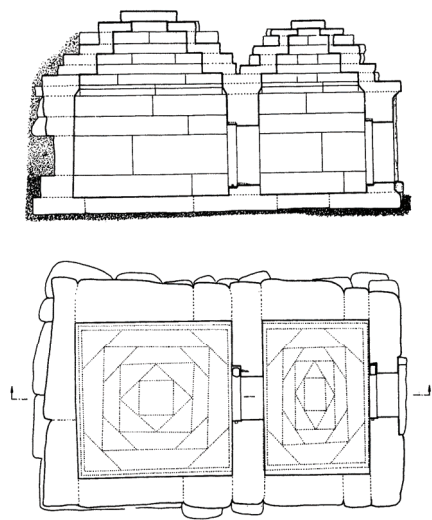


Figure 3. Side view and upward view of the tomb at Gordion in Ankara in Turkey. After Young (1956, fig. 4).

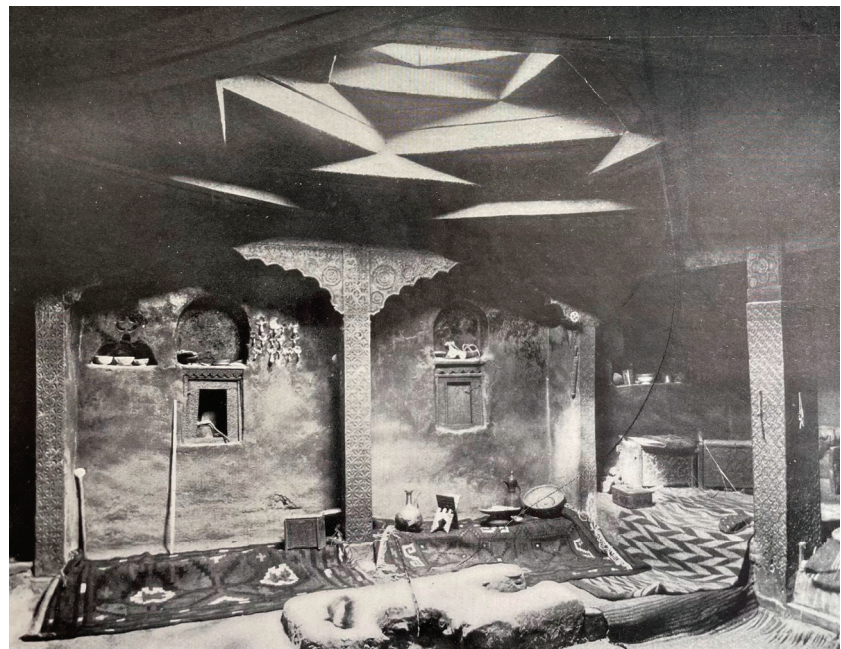


Figure 4. Lantern ceiling of an early 20th century wooden building in Pakistan. After Stein (1921, fig. 16).

The wooden lantern ceiling was used in the palace that was originally built by Liu Yu, the son of Emperor Jing (r. 156–141 BCE) of the Western Han in the district of Lu in Shandong. Archaeological discoveries at the site of the Han Dynasty Palace in Lu suggest that the palace of Liu Yu might have survived wars in the fall of the Western Han and was renovated in the reign of Emperor Guangwu (r. 25 CE–157 CE) of the Eastern Han (Shandong sheng wenwu kaogusuo 1982, pp. 202–4; Miao 2021, pp. 304–9). The palace is described in detail in “Rhapsody on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu” composed by Wang Yanshou 王延壽 in the Eastern Han:

And then,
Suspended purlins tied to the sloping roof,
Sky windows with figured filigree:
In a round pool on the square well,
Invertly planted are lotus
Bursting with florescence, erupting in bloom,
Their green pods and purple fruits,
Bulging and bloated like dangling pearls. (Xiao 1998, p. 78)¹

According to the description by Wang Yanshou, who might have visited the palace after the renovation in person, the wooden lantern ceiling was carved to imitate a round pool with a square frame and was planted with lotuses. Although the ceiling did not survive, stone carvings imitating such wooden ceilings are widely found in the Eastern Han cliff tombs in Sichuan 四川. For example, many cliff tombs in Santai 三台 have ceilings that are carved with a round pattern with a square frame and various plants and animals related to water, including the lotus (Erickson 2003).

The stepped ceilings of the stone tombs originated from the Scythian world in the north of the Hellenized areas in northern Anatolia, Thrace, and the northern coast of the Black Sea. Such a ceiling is essentially a corbel vault consisting of stone slabs that narrows gradually from the four sides in an overlapping fashion until the opening can be easily closed; for example, this can be seen in the stepped ceiling of Melek-Cesme kourgan in southern Russia (Fedak 1990, pp. 167–70). Compared with the stone lantern ceiling, whose prototype is the wooden ceiling with a skylight in the center, the stone stepped ceiling was seemingly not intended to be a window. In addition, the structure of a lantern ceiling requires a square ceiling that contains multiple layers of squares, and each rotates 45 degrees to form a dome. The stepped ceiling, in contrast, can either be square or rectangular. For example, the stepped ceilings in the Eastern Han tomb in Yí’nan 沂南 in Shandong and the tomb at Baiji 白集 in Xuzhou 徐州 in northern Jiangsu are rectangular, while the stepped ceilings of the tombs at Lalishan 拉犁山 in Xuzhou are square.

Since the lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling had different shapes, different illustrations of heaven were illustrated on them. The rectangular cover stone of the stepped ceiling provided a place for the traditional depiction of the journey of the tomb occupant to the immortal land in which the Queen Mother of the West and her cult resided. The depiction of heaven is rectangular, with the sun and moon on the two ends. A crow with three legs and a toad, two components of the cult of the Queen Mother of the West, reside in the sun and the moon, respectively. Such an illustration of heaven first appeared on the rectangular cover stones of the trapezoid ceilings of the brick chamber tombs in Luoyang 洛陽 in Henan 河南 in the 1st century BCE, the formative years of the chamber tombs (Luoyang bowuguan 1977). Such a ceiling, consisting of two trapezoid sloping sides supporting a long and narrow cover stone, was at the primitive stage of the development of subterranean ceilings.

In contrast, a central image, which is a lotus with Buddhist implications in many cases, is needed for the square cover stone of the lantern ceiling. For example, the lantern ceiling of one of the front chambers of the tomb at Yí’nan is carved with a lotus. Notably, the tomb dated to the late Eastern Han was found to have images related to both Buddhism

and the belief in the Queen Mother of the West, exhibiting the early adaptation of a foreign belief to the local belief (Zeng 1956). There are also cases in which two lantern ceilings carved with the sun and the moon are built side by side to form a traditional depiction of a rectangular heaven in which the Queen Mother of the West resides; for example, the two lantern ceilings of the rear chambers of the tomb at the Reservoir of Changli 昌黎 in northern Jiangsu are carved with the sun held by the God Fuxi 伏羲 and the moon held by the Goddess Nüwa 女媧 (Nanjing bowuyuan 1957).

The lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling symbolizing either the Buddhist heaven or the heaven of the Queen Mother of the West exhibited how beliefs were embedded in their material presence. The Buddha and the Queen Mother of the West were both gods originating from the West, which was a distant land of immortality in the understanding of the Han Dynasty people. To become a resident of this immortal land after death, it was necessary to use the building material and techniques introduced from this immortal land to construct a tomb. Gandhara, the birthplace of Buddha in Hellenized Central Asia, provided the newly born religion with a well-developed stone architectural tradition. The Hellenistic world in Anatolia, a primary source of the images of the Goddess from the West, the Queen Mother of the West, was also an area in which stone chamber tombs with monumental ceilings were prevalent.² Consequently, stone became a building material that symbolized immortality, and the stone ceilings became the material presence of heaven.

Notably, the lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling were used exclusively in certain areas in East China (Chen 2023). Lantern ceilings were used in the district of Lu in central and southern Shandong. The abovementioned “Rhapsody on the Hall of Numinous Brilliance in Lu” further confirms the popularity of such ceilings in this area. The stepped ceilings only appeared in the areas around Xuzhou in northern Jiangsu. The exception is the tomb at Yínan in Shandong, where both the lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling are used. Considering that the tomb is dated to the end of the Eastern Han in the early 3rd century CE (Zeng 1956), it is likely that there was communication between the workshops for tomb construction in the district of Lu and Xuzhou on the construction of stone ceilings later on.

3. Goguryeo Stone Ceilings

After the early 3rd century CE, after the fall of the Eastern Han, stone tombs with lantern ceilings or stepped ceilings were not built until the middle of the 4th century CE, the time to which the stone tomb of Dong Shou 冬壽 in Anak 安岳 near Pyongyang is dated. According to the inscriptions in the tomb and relative records in the historical records of the Jin 晉 Dynasty, Dong Shou was born and held various official positions in the Former Yan on the Liaodong Peninsula in Northeast China. During the civil war of the Former Yan (337 CE–370 CE), Dong Shou fled to the Goguryeo Kingdom, where he spent the rest of his life and died in 357 CE (Su 1952). The tomb contains three main chambers and two side chambers, all with ceilings combining the structures of the stepped ceiling and the lantern ceiling. Each ceiling consists of several layers parallel to the wall at the base and several layers, each of which rotates 45 degrees on the top. Such a combination is very popular among the Goguryeo stone tombs between the 4th century and the 7th century (Steinhardt 2002). Both the lantern ceiling and the stepped ceiling appeared in well-developed forms in the Goguryeo tombs and evolved into more intricate new forms, which suggests a direct borrowing of the stone ceiling from the Eastern Han.

To date, about 120 Goguryeo stone tombs with paintings have been reported briefly or with detailed descriptions. About 40 are located in Ji'an, at the border between Jilin Province and North Korea, the capital of the Goguryeo Kingdom before 427 CE. About 80 are located in Pyongyang, the capital of Goguryeo after 427 CE (Tongbuga yoksa chaedan 2010; Chon 2004, pp. 91–92). Most of the ceilings of these tombs are stone ceilings consisting of multiple layers of stone slabs, which mainly fall into five categories (Figure 5). Ceilings in the first category are constructed with multiple layers of stone slabs to form a dome; the ceilings of the Tomb of the Dancers and Tomb of the Wrestlers in Ji'an are ex-

amples of this (Geng 2008, p. 47). The second category of ceilings is similar to the stepped ceilings prevalent in the Eastern Han, with more layers of stone slabs, and in some cases, covering the top of a domed construction or reinforced by triangular stone slabs in the four corners; examples include the ceilings of Tokhungri 德興里 Tomb and the Tomb of the City of Liaodong 遼東 near Pyongyang and the ceiling of Changchuan 長川 Tomb No. 1 in Ji'an (Geng 2008, pp. 60, 71, 78–79). The third category is lantern ceilings similar to those of the Eastern Han, such as Wukuifen 五盞墳 Tomb No. 4 in Ji'an (Geng 2008, p. 50). The fourth category combines the stepped ceiling and the lantern ceiling and includes the ceilings of Anak Tomb No. 3 near Pyongyang and the ceiling of Tomb JSM1408 in Ji'an (Geng 2008, pp. 84, 57). The fifth category is in the shape of an octagon formed by multiple layers of stone slabs; examples include the ceilings of Tokhwa-ri 德花里 Tomb No. 1 and No. 2 near Pyongyang (Geng 2008, pp. 80–81).

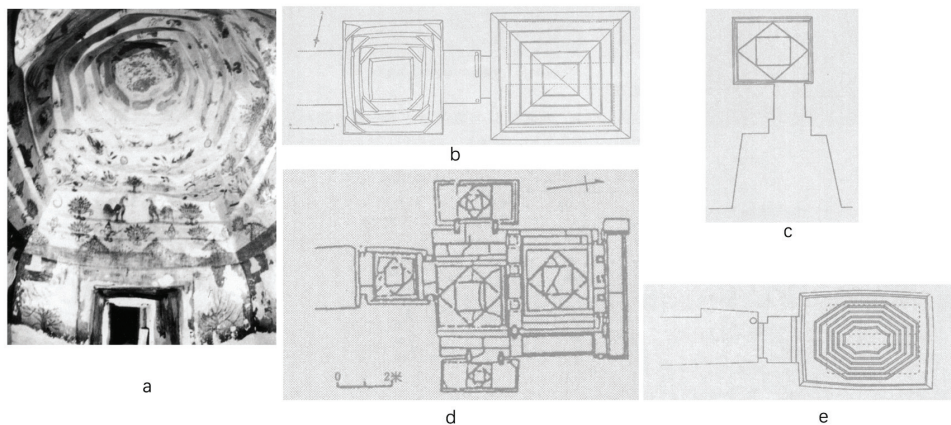


Figure 5. Five categories of Goguryeo stone ceilings. (a) Ceiling of Tomb of the Dancers in Ji'an. After Steinhardt (2002, fig. 32). (b) Upward view of Changchuan Tomb No. 1 in Ji'an. After Geng (2008, fig. 3.26). (c) Upward view of Wukuifen Tomb No. 4 in Ji'an. After Geng (2008, fig. 3.9). (d) Upward view of Anak Tomb No. 3 in Pyongyang. After Geng (2008, fig. 3.74). (e) Upward view of Tokhwa-ri Tomb No. 1 in Pyongyang. After (Geng 2008, fig. 3.26).

Geographically, except for the domed ceilings found exclusively in Ji'an and the octagonal ceilings found exclusively near Pyongyang, all these types of ceilings were used both in Ji'an and Pyongyang. Chronologically, the tombs with domed ceilings are dated to the earliest period, from the middle of the 3rd century to the middle of the 4th century (Yang 1958); the tombs with octagonal ceilings are dated to the 5th century (Kim 1980); and the tombs with the other three types of ceilings were prevalent throughout the period from the 4th century to the 7th century (Geng 2008, pp. 99, 109). The general idea of the design of these various types of ceilings was to make the ceiling a dome of heaven. The cover stone usually depicts a round lotus or the sun and the moon. The design is very similar to that of the stone ceilings in the Eastern Han, suggesting a similar understanding of heaven for the deceased. Notably, aside from the cover stone, the multiple layers of stone slabs that form the base of the ceiling of the Goguryeo tombs are also richly decorated with images related to heaven. Each rectangular side facing the interior of the tomb forms an individual decorative unit, which works with other rectangular sides to construct a more complicated narrative scene.

Each layer of the base of the ceiling is usually constructed with four stone slabs, which work together to illustrate a specific subject. The four spirits symbolizing the cardinal directions are a popular subject. Examples include the Tomb of the Dancers, Tomb of Lotuses, and Changchuan Tomb No. 1 in Ji'an (Figure 6). The green dragon representing

the east, the white tiger representing the west, the red bird representing the south, and the turtle with an intertwined snake representing the north are depicted on the four stone slabs that form one of the multiple layers of the base of the ceiling, so the dome of heaven represented by the ceiling is placed on a well-defined axis of the universe. The journey to paradise is another popular subject. It has been mentioned previously that in some Han Dynasty tombs with rectangular ceilings, the sun and the moon are illustrated on the two ends of the ceiling, with traveling spirits and immortals depicted in between. In some Goguryeo tombs, for example, Wukuifen Tombs No. 4 and 5 in Ji'an, the sun and the moon are pictured alternately on the stone slabs that form one of the layers of the base of the stone ceiling, with traveling immortals painted on the stone slabs in between (Figure 7).

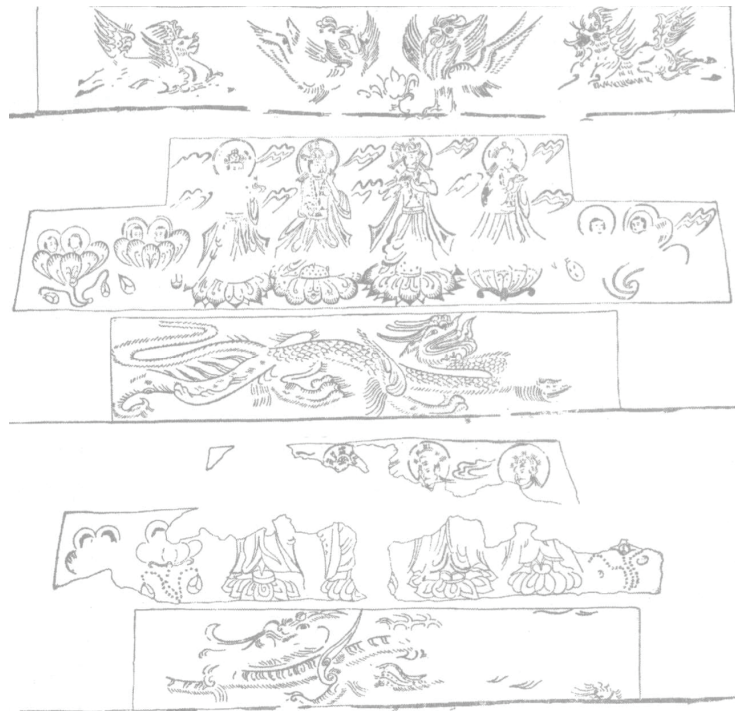


Figure 6. Spirits symbolizing the cardinal directions depicted on the stepped ceiling of Changchuan Tomb No. 1 in Ji'an. After Geng (2008, fig. 6.56).

Most of the subjects depicted on the base of the ceiling have their prototypes in the Han Dynasty tombs, reflecting a mixed belief in both Buddhism and the immortal world in the afterlife. In Changchuan Tomb No. 1, flying figurines with nimbuses are depicted on the stone slabs that form the base of the stepped ceiling (Steinhardt 2002). In addition to lotuses that appear frequently and are attributed to Buddhist domes, the nimbuses in Changchuan Tomb No. 1 reinforce the connection of the ceiling of the tomb with Buddhist heaven. In the Eastern Han, nimbuses with Buddhist implications had already appeared in tombs, although not on the ceiling. For example, in the Yi'nan tomb in Shandong, two figures with nimbuses are carved on the central column in the middle chamber together with the Queen Mother of the West and figures with Buddhist gestures (Zeng 1956). Notably, all the ceilings of the Yi'nan tomb were constructed with stepped stone slabs, either in the form of a lantern ceiling or in the form of a stepped ceiling, which are regarded as prototypes of the ceilings of the Goguryeo tombs.

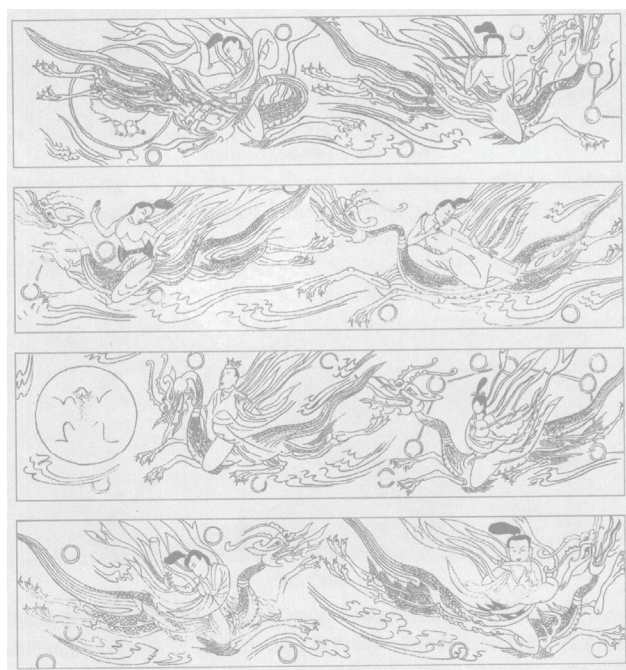


Figure 7. The sun, the moon, and traveling immortals painted on the ceiling of Wukuifen Tomb No. 5 in Ji'an. After Geng (2008, fig. 6.20).

The cult of the Queen Mother of the West is a major subject of the depictions of the immortal world on the base of the stepped ceiling of the Goguryeo tombs. According to pictorial stones from Eastern Han tombs, the members of the cult include a three-legged crow, a rabbit pounding herbal medicine in a mortar, a toad, a fox with nine tails, and occasionally, a bird with a human head. In the Goguryeo tombs, the three-legged crow and the toad usually appear in the sun and the moon, respectively, as in their Eastern Han prototypes; this can be seen, for example, in Wukuifen Tombs No. 4 and 5 in Ji'an, as mentioned previously. In Changchuan Tomb No. 1, the toad and the rabbit pounding herbal medicine are illustrated together in the moon. The bird with a human head is believed to be an incarnation of the King Father of the East, the spouse of the Queen Mother of the West. On Eastern Han pictorial stones, the bird with a human head or the King Father of the East usually appears at the side of the Queen Mother of the West, especially in stone tombs in Shandong. In the Goguryeo tombs, for example, the Tomb of the Dancers in Ji'an and Tokhungri Tomb in Pyongyang, the bird with a human head is depicted between the sun containing the three-legged crow and the moon containing the toad on one of the layers that form the base of the ceiling (Geng 2008, pp. 203–4).

4. From the Eastern Han to the Goguryeo Kingdom

From Shandong to Goguryeo, there seems to be a gap in the development of stone ceilings. Namely, between the two areas, in Beijing, northern Hebei, and southern Liaoning, there is no trace of such ceilings being popular. However, these areas, along with the areas around Pyongyang, the later capital of the Goguryeo Kingdom, form the Province of You, one of the major provinces of the Eastern Han and the following dynasties in North China. The Province of You not only shared a border with the Goguryeo Kingdom but also had frequent communication with the Goguryeo Kingdom, as implied by many contemporary tomb inscriptions, which gives us an important clue for tracing the spread of the stepped ceiling from Shandong through the Province of You to the Goguryeo Kingdom.

In Pyongyang, there are three Goguryeo stone tombs with inscriptions that suggest a close relationship between the tomb occupants and the Province of You. The first tomb, which is also the earliest, is Anak Tomb No. 3, which is dated to 357 CE according to the tomb inscription (Su 1952). In one of the side chambers of the tomb, a paragraph containing 68 characters is written with ink on the wall, recording the brief biography of the tomb occupant Dong Shou, who was born in Liaodong 遼東 and took administrative and military positions in Lelang 樂浪, Changli 昌黎, Xuantu 玄菟, and Daifang 帶方. All the places in the inscription are counties of the Province of You. In the record of *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of Jin), Dong Shou used to serve the imperial court of Murong 慕容 in North China and fled to Goguryeo after a civil war (Fang 1974, pp. 2815–16). The second tomb is Tokhungri Tomb, dated to 408 CE according to the tomb inscription, which records the biography of the tomb occupant (Liu 1983). The tomb contains a mural depicting the governors of the 13 counties of the Province of You, showing respect to the tomb occupant, who used to hold the position of the Inspector of the Province of You. Each governor in the mural is tagged with an inscription of the name of his county.³ The third tomb is the Tomb of the City of Liaodong, which was named by archaeologists after a mural in the tomb illustrating the city of Liaodong with an ink inscription recording the name of the city (Dao 1960). Notably, the county of Liaodong was one of the counties of the Province of You, located in today's Liaoning Province. Although it is located in Pyongyang, compared with the surrounding Goguryeo tombs, the structure of the Tomb of the City of Liaodong is more similar to the structure of the stone tomb found at Sandaohao 三道壕 in Liaoyang 遼陽, Liaoning Province, an area under the administration of the County of Liaodong (W. Li 1955). Such similarity and the illustration of the City of Liaodong in the tomb suggest that there was communication between the County of Liaodong and the Goguryeo Kingdom. Consequently, it is not surprising that a stone tomb with a lantern ceiling dated to the 4th century would be found at the Village of Shangwangjia 上王家村 in Liaoyang (Q. Li 1959).

South of Liaoyang, in northern Hebei and Beijing, no stone tombs with stepped ceilings have been found. However, in the western suburban area of Beijing, an Eastern Han funerary stone column with a lantern roof has been found, and the inscription found at the cemetery site shows that the column was carved by master masons from Shandong in 105 CE and that the tomb occupant, Qin Jun 秦君, was an Accessory Clerk for Documents in the Province of You (Beijing shi wenwu gongzuodui 1964) (Figure 8). Thus, a route for the spread of the stepped ceiling for the stone tombs from Shandong to the Province of You can be established. Although it is located near the southern boundary of the Province of You, Beijing, known as Ji 薊 at the time, was the seat of the Inspector of the Province of You. In this sense, the funerary culture in Beijing can be regarded as influential within the political boundary of the Province of You. In particular, funerals in the Eastern Han were not only a practice for family members but also a social event to exhibit the filial piety of the host to the public, especially local officials, to gain a better impression in the selection of bureaucrats. The cemetery and the funerary constructions were thus crucial to impress the attendants of the funeral. This explains why Qin Jun, a low-level clerk, could enjoy a funerary monument built by the hands of the most appreciated masons who were invited, at great cost, from Shandong, an area that was well known for its stone funerary construction and hundreds of miles away. It can further be assumed that the high expense of hiring master masons from Shandong was not rare but a fashion among middle-class families like the family of Qin Jun in Beijing. Consequently, the lantern ceiling, as a characteristic style of stone tombs in Shandong, spread in the capital city of the Province of You.

The quality and scale of the funerary monument of Qin Jun is comparable to that of the director of the bureau he served, the Inspector of the Province of You, Feng Huan 馮煥, an Inspector of the Province of You who died in 121 CE, 16 years after the death of Qin Jun, was possibly a successor to Qin Jun's boss. His exquisitely carved funerary column was found in the County of Qu 渠 in Sichuan, being inscribed with his name and official position (Chongqing shi wenhuaju and Chongqing shi bowuguan 1992, p. 39). It is notable that a brief biography of Feng Huan can be found in *Hou han shu* 後漢書 (Historical Records

of the Later Han); it states that he led the governors of the counties of Xuantu and Liaodong, two of the counties under the government of the Province of You, to resist the attack of the army of the Goguryeo Kingdom from the border in 121 CE (Fan 1965, p. 2814). A similar organization of the counties of the Province of You in regional wars with Goguryeo on the border can frequently be found in historical records, which implies the importance of the Province of You as a political union in communication with Goguryeo. The previously mentioned mural depicting the scene of governors of the 13 counties of the Province of You visiting the tomb occupant as the Inspector in Tokhungri Tomb exhibits how the tomb occupant valued his cultural belonging to the Province of You and how the funerary culture was influenced by the administrative division.



Figure 8. Upward view of the ceiling of a stone column at the cemetery of Qin Jun in Beijing. Photo by the author.

In the centuries following the fall of the Eastern Han, tombs in Beijing, i.e., Ji, continued to exhibit a sense of cultural belonging to the Province of You and mixed feelings of emotional attachment with the Goguryeo culture. A long inscription containing 1630 characters recording the biography of Wang Jun 王浚, the former Inspector of the Province of You, and his wife, Hua Fang 華芳, the occupant of the tomb, was found in a Western Jin tomb dated to 307 CE in Beijing (Beijing shi wenwu gongzuodui 1965). A few years after the death of his wife, Wang Jun fled to the County of Lelang in Pyongyang, a shelter for many ruling classes who failed in the political wrestling in northern China. Immigrants also moved from the County of Lelang to Beijing. A tomb of an immigrant from Lelang dated to 539 CE was found in the District of Daxing 大興 in Beijing (Shang 2019). The name and hometown of the tomb occupant and the dating of the tomb are inscribed on one of

the tomb bricks. Notably, the ceiling of the tomb was constructed of stepped bricks in the shape of a truncated pyramid, which is a distinctive feature of the Goguryeo tombs.

5. Conclusions

Stepped ceilings in stone tombs flourished in North China and the Goguryeo Kingdom throughout centuries full of turmoil and wars. Tombs were the final shelters for the restless souls of immigrants and refugees. In particular, the ceilings of the tombs depicted heaven according to the belief systems of the tomb occupants, who were from various cultural backgrounds. However, these tomb occupants shared and valued their cultural belonging to the Province of You, which covered areas including Beijing, northern Hebei, Liaoning, and the northwest Korean Peninsula, which was both a cultural concept and a political ruling unit with constantly changing subdivisions and governing forces. This partly explains the route of the spread of this characteristic ceiling from Shandong to the northwest Korean Peninsula. Originating from the east of the Mediterranean world, stone stepped ceilings were received and reinvented in Shandong in East China and spread to North China and the northwest Korean Peninsula in the following centuries. The forces driving the dissemination and popularity of these ceilings included both the newly introduced Buddhism belief system and traditional beliefs in the immortal land of the Queen Mother of the West. In the spaces of worship constructed of stepped stone slabs, which were originally foreign and represent multiple beliefs, people of Han Chinese origin, nomads from various tribes in North China, and descendants of the Goguryeo Kingdom could all identify their own cultural belongings and beliefs.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ English translation from Knechtges (1982, p. 271).
- ² For the Queen Mother of the West as a shaman, see Cahill (1993, pp. 17, 23). Dubs compares the shamanism in the cult of the Queen Mother of the West to the orgies of the cult of Dionysos in the Hellenistic world, and he notes that such shamanism was brought to Daosim (Dubs 1942).
- ³ English translation of the official titles from Bielenstein (1980).

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Article

The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia from the 16th to the 17th Century: The Spatial Formation of the World Heritage Site Erdene Zuu Monastery

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Abstract: Erdene Zuu is the oldest extant Buddhist temple in the country of Mongolia, founded following the reintroduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Inner Mongolia in the sixteenth century. The subject of this paper is the building activities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly of the complex centering on Gurban Zuu (Three Temples), which are the main buildings of Erdene Zuu. The author first confirms Gurban Zuu's ground plan based on measurements, and then interprets the "black-ink inscription" discovered on the ridge purlin of the Central Buddha Hall. This complex is then compared with Inner Mongolian Buddhist temples of the same period. Finally, the author studies whether or not the spatial structure of the temple architecture of the Mongolian Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was continued at Erdene Zuu, and analyzes the position that Erdene Zuu occupied in the Tibetan Buddhist sphere. This comparative study investigates the origins of Erdene Zuu's architectural spatial composition within East Asia.

Keywords: Tibetan Buddhism; architectural history; World Heritage Site; Erdene Zuu monastery; Karakorum; Inner Mongolia; Hohhot; Hwang yong sa

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1. Introduction

Erdene Zuu, which is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the oldest extant Buddhist temple in the country of Mongolia, founded following the reintroduction of Tibetan Buddhism to Inner Mongolia in 1578¹. Yekhe Zuu was the first temple of this reintroduction, founded by Altan Khan in 1579 in Hohhot. The statue of the twelve-year-old Śākyamuni has been enshrined inside Yekhe Zuu ever since its construction. In the biography of Altan Khan, Yekhe Zuu is described as *juu sikamuni süm-e*². The word *juu*(*zuu*) here comes from Tibetan and refers to the Śākyamuni statue, and *süm-e* comes from the pronunciation of the Chinese character *si* 寺 (temple). Today in Inner Mongolia, *zuu* 召 means Buddha, Buddha hall or monastery and refers especially to Tibetan Buddhist temples, distinguishing them from Han Buddhist temples which are signified by the character *si* 寺. In my Chinese thesis of 2013 (Bao 2013, p. 173), I translated *erdene* as *bao* 宝 in Chinese. This *bao* 宝 is a Buddhist term used in the Chinese character cultural sphere (including Japan and the Korean Peninsula), referring to the Three Treasures of Buddhism, the Buddha 佛, the teachings (Dharma) 法 and the Buddhist community 僧. In the present context, *bao* 宝 cannot be understood as "precious," which is its broader, popular meaning.

Buildings at Erdene Zuu were constructed from 1586 through to the twentieth century. The subject of this paper is the building activities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly the complex of Gurban Zuu, the oldest buildings of Erdene Zuu. I will first confirm the ground plan of the complex of Gurban Zuu, based on measurements I took there in 2010–2013, and then interpret the "black-ink inscription" discovered on the ridge purlin of Gol Zuu (Central Buddha Hall). Next, I will compare this complex with Inner Mongolian Buddhist temples of the same period. Specifically, I will compare Erdene Zuu, built by the clan of Abadai Khan (1554–1588), with Yekhe Zuu (Great Temple, Ch. Dazhao

大召), Shireetu Zuu (Ch. Xilituzhao 席力图召) and Maidari Zuu (Ch. Meidaizhao 美岱召), built by Altan Khan (1507–1582) of the Tümed tribe and his family at around the same time, in order to clarify the role of Inner Mongolia in the spread of Tibetan Buddhism to Khalkha Mongolia (Bao 2005). Finally, I will examine whether or not the spatial structure of the temple architecture of the Mongolian Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was continued at Erdene Zuu, and analyze the position that Erdene Zuu occupied in the Tibetan Buddhist sphere. This comparative study investigates the origins of Erdene Zuu's architectural spatial composition within East Asia.

This paper compares Erdene Zuu and the other temples in the following respects: First, it compares their Buddha halls in terms of their plans and their outer appearances. Regarding their plans, they draw attention to the ratio between the measurements of the widths and depths of the bays of the Buddha halls, and to whether or not there are circumambulation corridors surrounding the plans of the Buddha halls. Next, it compares the spatial compositions—that is, the layouts—of the temple complexes as a whole. An extremely prominent feature of the Gurban Zuu complex of Erdene Zuu is its layout of three multi-storied Buddha Halls placed side-by-side in a straight line. Here, this layout is called the “Three-Kondo Typology 三金堂式”, borrowing from the Japanese term used in architectural history (*Kondo* 金堂, literally “Golden Hall”, refers to the main Buddha hall of a Buddhist temple). Other elements for comparison are the stupas and the walls marking the boundary between the secular and the sacred spaces.

This architectural study of Erdene Zuu was based on surveys conducted during the period from 2009 to 2011 for the joint Mongolian–Japanese project on Erdene-Zuu³, of which I was a team member specializing in architectural history. My research on the architectural design of Erdene Zuu was first presented at the international conference “Erdene-zuu: Past, Present, and Future”, held in September 2011 (Bao 2011, pp. 128–45)⁴. The revised paper, written in Chinese, was published in the *Journal of Chinese Architecture History* in 2013 (Bao 2013, pp. 172–98). Through comparing the ground plans of the three Buddha Halls and the walls, and analyzing historical documents concerning the construction activities of the Altan Khan family, I concluded that the circumambulation corridors of the three Buddha Halls were influenced by the tradition of the Sakyapa school of the Mongol Empire.

My study of the architectural design of Erdene Zuu contributed to Isabelle Charleux's arguments about the origins of the prototype of Gurban Zuu (Charleux 2017). First, she speculated that the origin of the idea of introducing a circumambulation corridor may have been influenced by the JoKhang temple in Lhasa. Second, the plan of the three Buddha Halls, which I have termed the “Three-Kondo Typology”, may have originated in Mongolian encampment traditions, where the yurt (*ger*) of the family head was placed in the center, and those of elder and younger brothers on each side. Third, she concluded that the architecture of Erdene Zuu was modeled after that of Maidari Zuu.

In this paper, I further examine the origin of the “Three-Kondo Typology” and the circumambulation corridor. Further, I discuss whether Maidari Zuu was built by Altan Khan before his construction of the walled city of Hohhot and Yekhe Zuu, and further question the relationship between Maidari Zuu and Erdene Zuu.

2. The Ground Plan of Erdene Zuu and the “Black-Ink Inscription”

2.1. The Layout of the Gurban Zuu Complex

Figure 1a shows the ground plan of the Gurban Zuu complex. It faces southeast, with the ratio between the breadth and depth of the site being roughly 3:2, and is rectangular, with a long frontage and short depth. The first courtyard contains three entrance gates, two side halls and two stupas (Figure 1b). The right-hand stupa is the tomb of Abadai Khan and the left-hand stupa is that of his grandson, Tüshet Khan Gombodorj.

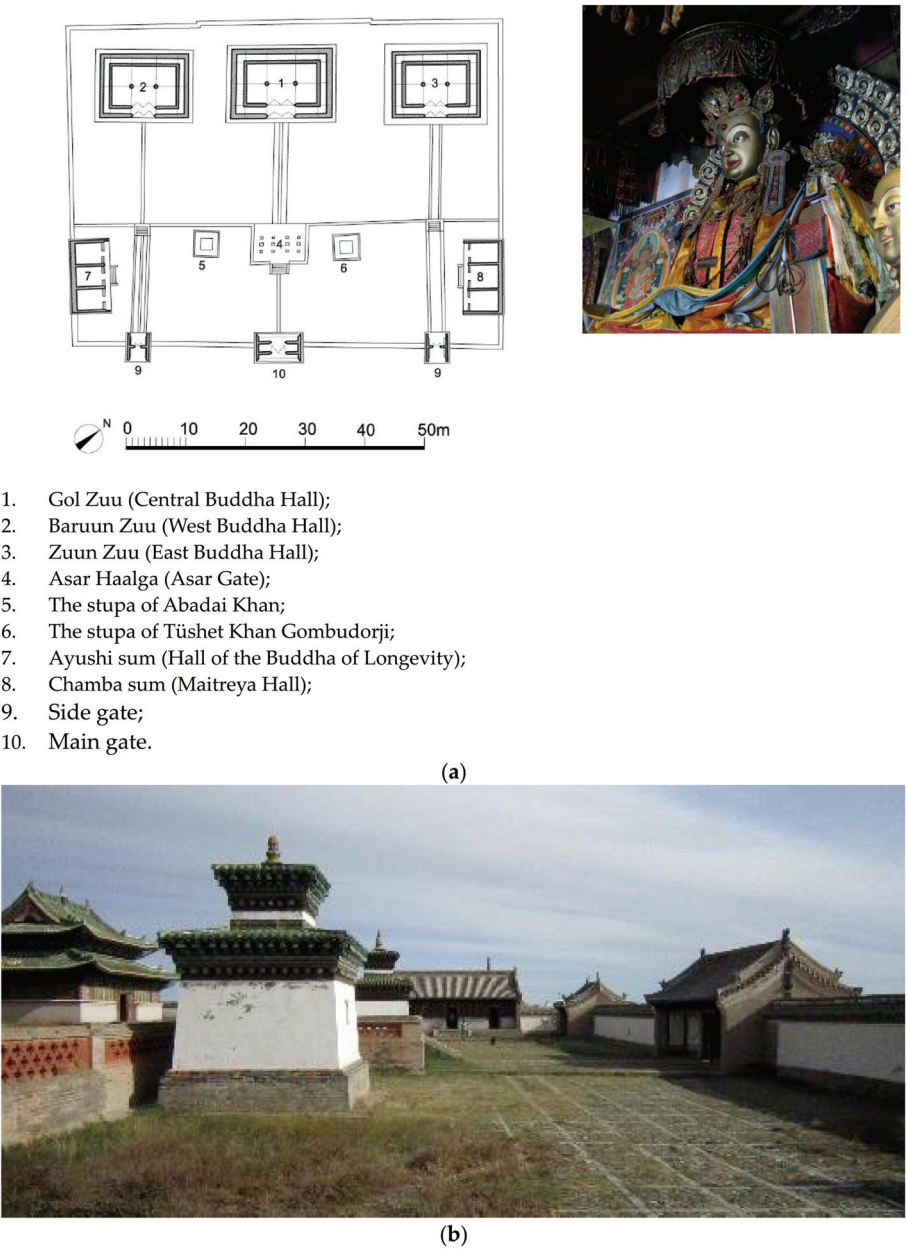


Figure 1. Cont.



(c)

Figure 1. (a) Plan of the Gurban Zuu complex, Erdene Zuu. Source: drawing by Bao Muping based on survey (2010); the photo is of the Śākyamuni statue in Gol Zuu, photo by Bao Muping. (b) The view of two stupas in the Gurban Zuu complex, photo by Bao Muping. (c) The view of the three Buddha Halls (Gurban Zuu), photo by Bao Muping.

Beyond the first courtyard is a second courtyard erected on a platform about 1.4 m high. A gate (*Asar Haalga*) used to stand at the center of the front of the elevated area, but now only the base stones upon which the pillars once stood remain⁵. Behind it, three Buddha Halls stand side-by-side in a row, which I term the “Three-Kondo Typology” (Figure 1c). The central hall is called Gol Zuu (central temple) in Mongolian. On its right is Baruun Zuu (West Buddha Hall) and on its left is Zuun Zuu (East Buddha Hall)⁶. At first glance, these three monumental halls look to be the same, but in fact they differ in terms of architectural style, the central hall being a multi-storied pavilion (Ch. *louge* 楼阁) and the left and right halls being double-eaved (Ch. *chongyan* 重檐) pavilions. Specifically, Gol Zuu is a two-storied *louge*, but without a balcony (Ch. *pingzuo* 平座), and its roofs are of the gable-and-hip type (Ch. *xieshan* 歇山). The eastern and western halls are one-storied, with a double-eaved version of the gable-and-hip roof (Ch. *chongyan xieshan* 重檐歇山).

Formerly, there were two halls directly in front of Gol Zuu (Figure 2a) to the left and right. The hall on the right was Maidar Zuu, enshrining Maitreya, and the one on the left was Janraiseg Zuu, enshrining Avalokiteshvara. These two halls were built in the same period as the stupas, in the early seventeenth century. There were also buildings corresponding to gates in front of Baruun Zuu and Zuun Zuu. They were destroyed in 1937, but excavations in 2001 and 2003 have confirmed their positions, as shown in Figure 2b⁷.



Figure 2. (a) The view of Gol Zuu, photo by Bao Muping. (b) The restoration plan of the Gurban Zuu complex, source: Gutschow and Brandt (2005 [2006], p. 354).

The newly-discovered black-ink inscription makes it clear that the building of Gol Zuu was begun in 1586 and completed the following year. There are various theories about when the other two halls were built—Baruun Zuu may have been built in 1587, 1595 or 1600, and Zuun Zuu in 1588, 1610 or 1630. There is no firm proof for any of these datings. It is also said that Baruun Zuu was built by Ereghi Mergen Khan, son of Abadai Khan, his wife, and his son Labdar Darhan Noyan, and that Zuun Zuu was built by Mergen Khan's eldest son Tüshet Khan Gombodorji and his wife (Ochir 2005, pp. 218–19). Thus, Baruun Zuu was built before Zuun Zuu.

Although the origin of Erdene Zuu remains mysterious, the lama scholar Zava Damdin (1867–1937) in his Tibetan book entitled *History of Mongolian Buddhism* proposed that it was founded in the Uighur era and restored by Ögedei Khan in the thirteenth century, with the current monastery being restored by Abadai Khan in the sixteenth century (Matsukawa 2010a, p. 4). Recent archaeological findings at Erdene Zuu imply that Gurban Zuu may have been built over an ancient plan of the Uighur or the Mongol Empire era.

Sometimes, out of a respect for history, a new construction might be built over the remains of a former structure. A contemporary case is the reconstruction of the Buddha Hall, the Chūkondō 中金堂, of the temple Kōfukuji 興福寺 in Nara, Japan. The new hall was built on its 1300-year-old plan and completed in 2018 (see Bao 2014, pp. 42–58). I do not deny the possibility of Zava Damdin's theory, that Erdene Zuu was constructed utilizing an old site, but this can only apply in terms of the planar layout, since, as I argue below, the existing above-ground buildings are structurally from no earlier than the sixteenth century. An architectural study of the bracket (Ch. *dougong* 斗拱) system on top of the pillars allows us to distinguish the period of building to some extent. After the fifteenth century, bracket systems were not connected to tie beams, other than under the eaves of the roof (Liang 2005, p. 103). The framework of the three Buddha Halls does not employ bracket systems at all, other than under the eaves, and thus there is a strong possibility that they do not date from any earlier than the sixteenth century. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the layout of the three Buddha Halls displays an influence from ancient times.

2.2. Interpretation of the Black-Ink Inscription

The black-ink inscription in Mongolian and Chinese is written on the ridge purlin of Gol Zuu (Figure 3). Based on the clear photograph of the ink calligraphy received from Matsukawa Takashi⁸, my analysis of the details of the inscription is as follows:

The Chinese inscription reads:

Shun yi wang (a) la ba ti diao (b) xiu zao er nian ci liao

順義王 (a) 喇叭提吊 (b) 修造二年次了

Da ming Wan li 14 nian sui ci bing xu xia jia wu 5 yue 15 ri qi gai fo miao

大明萬曆十四年歲次丙戌夏甲午五月十五日起蓋佛廟

mu jiang zuo tou (c) chang jin zhong deng ba ming
木匠作頭(c)常進忠等八名

(a) “Shun Yi Wang” (順義王)

Shun Yi Wang (King Shun Yi, 順義王) is the regal title conferred by the Ming court in 1571 on Altan Khan, who was active in the Tümed grasslands and was the most powerful Khan in Inner Mongolia at that time. He died in 1582⁹ and his eldest son Dügüreng Šengge Qung Tayiji succeeded him to the title the same year. Šengge died in 1585 and his eldest son Namutai Sečen Qung Tayiji succeeded him as Khan in 1586 (Wuyunbilige 2009). He was awarded the regal title of the third Shun Yi Wang by a proclamation from the Ming court in the third month of 1587¹⁰. According to the date of the inscription, the Shun Yi Wang referred to appears to be—not the first of that title, Altan Khan, who had already died—his son Šengge, the second.



Figure 3. The black-ink inscription in Mongolian and Chinese. Photo by Matsukawa Takashi.

According to the black-ink inscription, it was the lama of King Shun Yi who supervised the construction of the temple. A lama's affiliation to a particular Khan was fixed. From the perspective of a building's construction, I would like to emphasize that any project on the scale of Gol Zuu must have taken years of preparation. Before construction began in 1586, the lama may have spent years selecting the site, designing the architecture and sourcing materials and Buddha statues, etc. In other words, the lama had to have arrived earlier than the date when construction started. Asaravči neret teüke wrote in 1677 that, right before his death, Altan Khan sent his lama Sgomang nangso to Abatai Khan (1554–1588) at the latter's request. Abatai Khan was 28 years old at that time¹¹. Although it is hard to verify that Sgomang nangso was the lama mentioned in the inscription, King Shun Yi could therefore well have been Altan Khan, who died at the advanced age of 75¹².

(b) “Laba tidiao” (喇叭提吊)

There is no doubt that *Laba* 喇叭 means lama 喇嘛. *Tidiao* 提吊 can be a verb meaning “raise up”, but the Mongolian inscription on the same ridge purlin corresponding to the Chinese phrase is “tendün-i lam-a”¹³. This tells us that *tidiao* is not a verb but a noun. However, we do not know the meaning of *tidiao* as a noun in terms of modern Chinese. What might it mean?

I have found a word of the same pronunciation but using different characters (*tidiao* 提调) in various historical records of the Yuan Dynasty. An entry in the *Yuandai huasuiji* 元代画塑记 (Paintings and Sculptures of the Yuan Dynasty) says: “On the 16th day of the eighth month of Huangqing 2 (1313), the [Yuan] emperor Renzong (Ayurbarwada Buyantu Khan) sent an edict to the official (*yuanshi* 院史) Yena, ordering him to have Asengge *tidao* make Buddha statues for the Five-bay Hall and the Octagonal Hall of the Wan'an temple (Da Shengshou Wan'ansi 大圣寿万安寺)”¹⁴. According to the *Yuanshi* (History of the Yuan Dynasty), *juan* 203, Asengge was the son of Anige. Anige (1244–1306) was a famous Nepalese artisan and artist who had been brought to the court in Khanbaliq (Ch. Dadu, modern Beijing). He is said to have been responsible for the majority of the Buddhist statues made in Khanbaliq and Zanadu (上都 Shangdu, in modern Inner Mongolia). He was made supervisor-in-chief of the bureau of all classes of artisans (*renjiang zongguan* 人匠总管) in 1273. In 1278, he was appointed head of the Imperial Manufactories Bureau (*jiang zuo yuan* 将作院)¹⁵ and promoted to the rank of *dasitu* 大司徒¹⁶. His most famous work was the 51m tall White Stupa (Baita 白塔), built in 1279 at the Wan'an temple (now known as Miaoyingsi 妙应寺). It still towers over Beijing.

In the *Yuanshi*, Asengge's final rank was given as *dasitu*; we can surmise he inherited his father's rank. As we have seen, according to the *Yuandai huasuiji*, in 1313 Asengge's rank was *tidao*. The same work speaks of the costs of food and drink for the *tidao jianzao gongjiang* (提调监造工匠)¹⁷. We may therefore assume that *tidao* was the title given to the top-ranking official who supervised building work and the making of Buddhist statues. Further, in the “new collection” of the *Yuandianzhang* 元典章 (Edicts of the Yuan Dynasty), it says: “*tidao* officials (提调官) in each district should (at the time of the accession of the emperor) as always pay special attention to carrying out (their duties).”¹⁸ Here, *tidao* clearly refers to a supervisory post.

What kind of post was *tidao* in the Yuan Dynasty and what ranking did it have? One of the Yuan bureaus was the *tijusi* (提举司), headed by a commissioner, *tiju* (提举) who was an official of the deputy fifth grade. There were also posts called *tidian* (提点), of the deputy fifth grade and *tiling* (提领), of the deputy seventh grade. However, there is no mention of *tidiao* (提调). It is suggestive that a late Qing example calls the person responsible for setting up new systems *tidiao*. The importance of the post depended on the scale of the project. For example, in the nineteenth century, when China set up an arsenal using western technology, its manager was called *tidiao*.

In actual fact, in sixteenth and seventeenth century Mongolia, there are many examples of Chinese characters being used incorrectly in the case of homophones in inscriptions. Thus, we may conclude that the *tidiao* 提吊 of the inscription has the same meaning as its homophone 提调 and refers to the chief supervisor of a construction project. If this is cor-

rect, then we can surmise that the Yuan system of craftsmen was preserved in the realm of King Shun Yi. Also, since Asengge *tidiao* was a lama and responsible for making Buddhist statues and building Buddhist temples we can assume that the role of the *Lama tidiao* of Gol Zuu was to supervise statue production and temple plans.

(c) “Mu jiang zuo tou” (木匠作頭)

The whole sentence reads, “[Beginning] from the 15th of the fifth month, 1586, eight craftsmen, beginning with the leader of the carpenters, Chang Jinzhong, constructed the Buddhist temple.”. Here, I would like to examine the phrase *mu jiang zuo tou* a little further. *Zuo* 作 is a post supervising production, or a designation indicating a stage of construction. For example, the Yuan court had a bureau called Tiju you bazuosi 提舉右八作司, which managed the workshops that produced the utensils used by the imperial house and the palace¹⁹. The specific terms applied to the various types of architectural work include carpentry (*muzuo* 木作), brick and tile masonry (*zhuanzuo* 磚作) and painted decoration (*youqizuo* 油漆作). Work on such items as cross beams, pillars and bracket complexes that formed part of the main structure was called “major carpentry” (*damuzuo* 大木作), while woodwork on the interior, such as doors, windows, partitions, ceilings and so on was called “minor carpentry” (*xiaomuzuo* 小木作). Craftsmen working on the various *zuo* were organized into groups and the manager of the work was termed *zuo tou* (leader of the *zuo*).

In a situation where one piece of construction entailed many different kinds of work, the head of carpentry occupied the position of supervisor of all the *zuo*. There is no question that Chang Jinzhong was the chief manager on the construction of Gol Zuu. However, though I have confirmed the names of artisans who were active in the building of the capital and of temples during the time of Altan Khan, I have not come across the name of Chang Jinzhong.²⁰ In general, historical records written in Chinese tend not to record the names of craftsmen. Therefore, the record of the carpenter Chang Jinzhong in Erdene Zuu’s black-ink inscription is an extremely valuable historical record.

During the time of Altan Khan and later, artisans connected with temple construction were not just Mongolian but also included people from Shanxi 山西, Ningxia 宁夏, Gansu 甘肅, Kokonor 青海, Tibet and Nepal. Of the Chinese, a large number were from Shanxi. During the construction of temples and walled cities, Altan Khan often requested artisans and pigments from the Shanxi governor²¹. Special features of the architecture of Gol Zuu are the laying of the *liuli* 琉璃 tiles and the style of the bracket system; there is a strong resemblance here to the Luilidian 琉璃殿 of Maidari Zuu 美岱召 in Inner Mongolia. Since Gol Zuu also resembles the architecture of the Shanxi region, it is possible that Chang Jinzhong came from there.

The Mongolian text is slightly different from that in the Chinese inscription. According to (Matsukawa 2010b), it reads: “Včirai Khan (Abadai Khan) ordered the building of the temple in the Year of the Dog. The project was supervised by Tendün Lama and built by Craftsman Chang on the 15th of the fifth month in the Year of the Dog. May everlasting peace be given the Khan, the Queen and all living beings. Written by the Buddha disciple, successor to the Dharma.”²²

If we consider the parallel inscription in Chinese and Mongolian, *lama tidiao* (that is, *tendün-i lam-a*) refers to the person who pulls together the entire construction project, including Buddhist statues and the building work, while Chang Jinzhong (Chang Darhan) is the person responsible for the woodwork on the building.

Just prior to the construction of Erdene Zuu, Abadai Khan went to Hohhot to meet the Dalai Lama, who conferred on him the title Včirai Khan. He returned, taking with him lamas, artisans and Buddhist statues²³. The black-ink inscription supports these historical facts.

3. Connections with the Temples of Inner Mongolia

It is stated widely that after Abadai Khan returned from Hohhot with the artisans, he built Erdene Zuu according to the architectural style of Yekhe Zuu (Great Temple, 大召) in Hohhot (Jin 1982; Čoyiji 1985, 2007). But was that indeed the case?

3.1. A Comparison with Yekhe Zuu 大召 at Hohhot

The earliest record of Altan Khan's constructing a Buddhist temple is dated at 1572²⁴. Some scholars believe this to be the Liulidian (Glazed Tile Hall 琉璃殿) of Maidari Zuu (美岱召), but there is no proof.

Yekhe Zuu (Figure 4a) in Hohhot was built by Altan Khan in 1579 after his return from Kokonor (in present Qinghai province). The silver statue of Sakyamuni was made by a Nepalese craftsman. The temple was enlarged in 1640, and in 1698 the tiling of the main Buddha Hall was renewed using yellow *liuli* tiles (Erdencang 1991, p. 65).

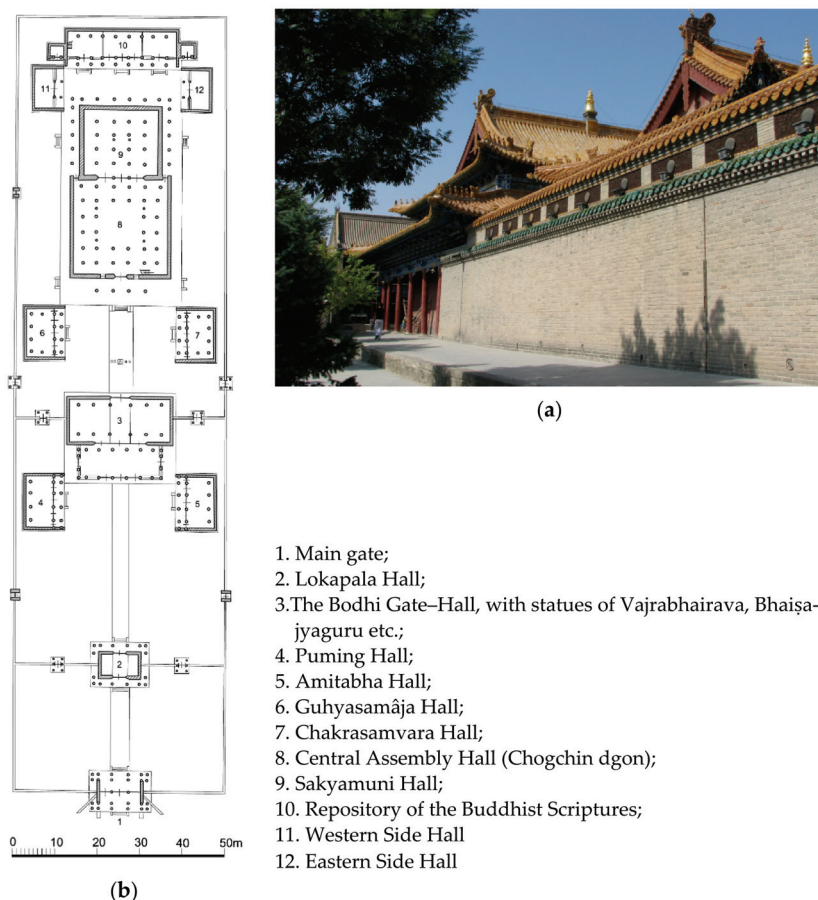


Figure 4. (a) The side view of the Central Assembly Hall and Buddha Hall, Yekhe Zuu, photo by Bao Muping. (b) Plan of Yekhe Zuu. Source: survey and drawing by Bao Muping. Gajin Nagao (1947, p. 233), nos. 6 and 7 are reversed.

Figure 4b shows the layout of the temple complex of Yekhe Zuu. It differs from the plan of Gurban Zuu, with its three halls side-by-side, emphasizing instead a vertical axis. However, its main gate, its Hall of the Heavenly Kings and its Da zang jing ku (Repository of the Buddhist Scriptures) are thought to date from the time of its enlargement in the 1640s.

What Yekhe Zuu and Gurban Zuu have in common is the placement of the funerary stupas. In 1587, a blue hall was erected to the right of the Sakyamuni Hall (now the main Buddha Hall of Yekhe Zuu), and a stupa for Altan Khan was placed there²⁵. A stupa for the third Dalai Lama (1543–1588) was built in 1588 north of the Sakyamuni Hall. In the Gurban Zuu complex, there are two stupas in the courtyard beneath the elevated area of

Gol Zuu, belonging to Abadai Khan and his grandson Tüshet Khan Gombodorj. Although the planar arrangement of stupas is different between the two temples, they share a similarity in that stupas have been built for the Khans and the Dalai Lama. Going further back in time, we find memorial halls²⁶ for Kublai Khan and his son Yuzong 裕宗²⁷ built to the west and east respectively of the main hall of Da sheng shou wan an si 大圣寿万安寺 in Khanbalic (Dadu, now Beijing). In this sense, both Yekhe Zuu and Erdene Zuu continued the tradition of the Mongol Khans, who were followers of Tibetan Buddhism, of placing halls or stupas to memorialize themselves around the Buddha halls they had built.

Funerary stupas were found not only at Yekhe Zuu and Erdene Zuu but also at Maidari Zuu. There were three such stupas at Maidari Zuu: two white stupas in front of the Luilidian (Glazed Tile Hall) and a sandalwood stupa inside the Temple of the Empress Dowager (Taihou miao 太后庙). Due to the similarity in the spatial arrangement of the funerary stupas, Charleux concluded that Erdene Zuu has more influence from Maidari Zuu than from Yekhe Zuu (Charleux 2017, p. 359).

However, a study of the owners of the funerary stupas suggests a closer relationship between Erdene Zuu and Yekhe Zuu. At Yekhe Zuu, the two stupas were the tombs of Altan Khan and the third Dalai Lama; in Erdene Zuu, the two square stupas were the tombs of Aadai Khan and his grandson, respectively. The third Dalai Lama and Abadai Khan both died in the same year, 1588. Their funerary stupas would have been constructed in the same period. The four deceased had the same political status in that they all propagated Tibetan Buddhism. However, the owners of the funerary stupas in front of Maidari Zuu's Liulidian remain unknown because both stupas were destroyed and no records were left. The most significant stupa in the Maidari Zuu was the 3 m high sandalwood stupa of the Queen Mother, which was placed at the center of the Temple of the Empress Dowager 太后庙. This stupa, together with two boxes of funerary objects, were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution in 1966 (Wang et al. 2009, p. 46). Although the identity of the Queen Mother is yet to be solved, the death years of Altan Khan's third wife (1612) and his granddaughter-in-law (1626) indicate that the Temple of the Dowager was built between those years (Bao 2013, p. 191).

The central halls of Gurban Zuu and Yekhe Zuu are very different. Gol Zuu (Figure 5) is a single Buddha hall, with no assembly hall attached. It is also different in the 3:2 ratio of its rectangular shape. By contrast, the central hall of Yekhe Zuu is constructed in the amalgamated form of an assembly hall in front and a Buddha hall behind (Figure 6). The ratio between the breadth and length of the building is 1:2. The Buddha hall itself is square in shape.

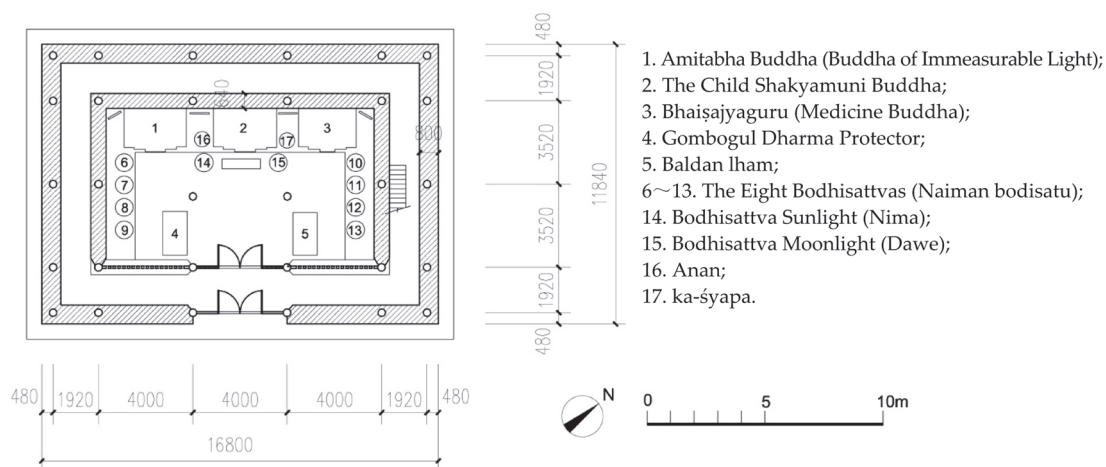


Figure 5. The survey plan of Gol Zuu, Erdene Zuu. Source: survey and drawing by Bao Muping.

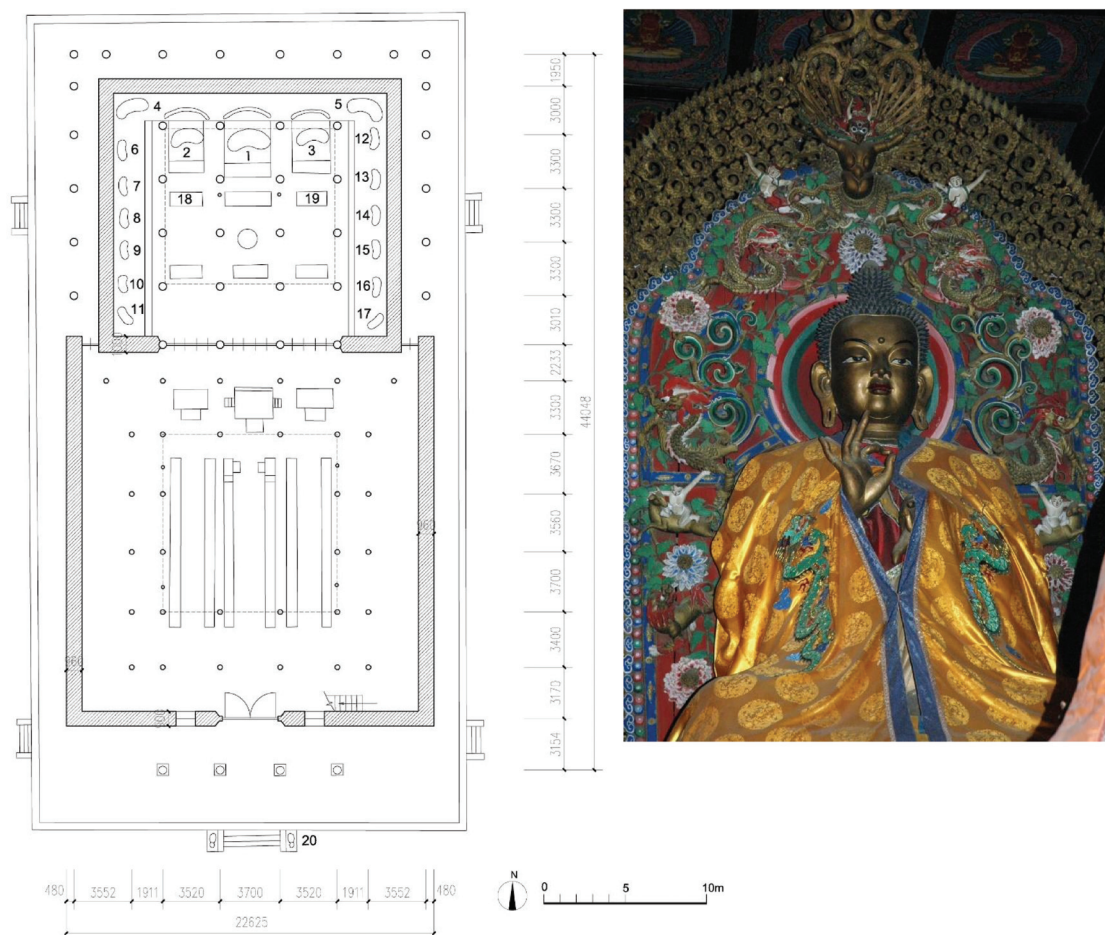
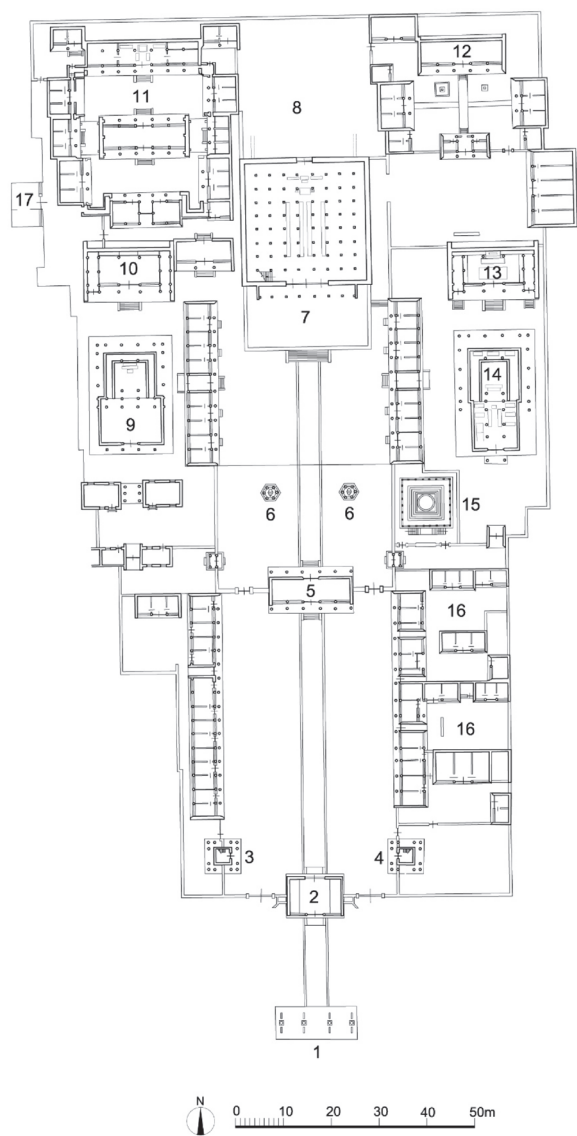


Figure 6. The survey plan of the Central Assembly Hall and the Buddha Hall, Yekhe Zuu. Source: survey and drawing by Bao Muping. On the right is the Shakyamuni Statue, photo by Bao Muping.

3.2. A Comparison with Shireetu Zuu and Maidari Zuu

I would next like to compare Gurban Zuu with Shireetu Zuu (席力图召, 1585) in Hohhot (Figure 7). The oldest of Shireetu Zuu's halls is now called the "Ancient Buddha Hall" 古佛殿 and it has been renovated. Figure 8 is a reconstruction of the ground plan that I made based on the theory of archaeologist Su Bai (Su 1994). It is the same as the ground plan of the ambulatory of Gol Zuu at Erdene Zuu (Bao 2011).



1. Pailou (built in 1859);

2. Main gate;

3. Drum Pavilion;

4. Belfry Pavilion;

5. Arhat Hall;

6. Pavilion of the Stone Monument;

7. Central Assembly Hall (rebuilt in 1859, Buddha hall was burnt in 1940s);

8. Site of the Buddha Hall;

9. Ancient Assembly and Buddha Halls;
10. Ancient Buddha Hall;

11. Labrang of Shreet Hutukhtu;

12. Labrang of DarKhan Corzi Hutukhtu;

13. Tanjur Hall;

14. Nechung (Pehar) Hall;

15. White stupa (1851–1861);

16. Lamas’ residence;

17. Stable.

Figure 7. Plan of Shireetu Zuu. Source: redrawn by Bao Muping.

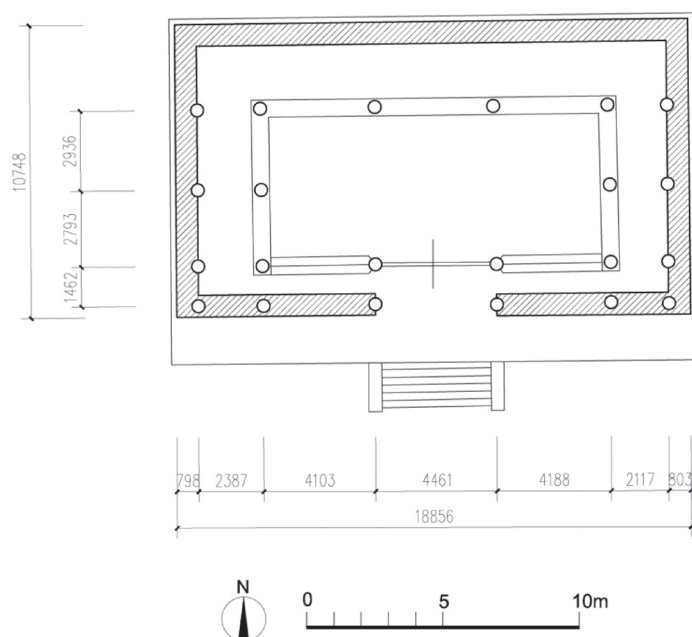
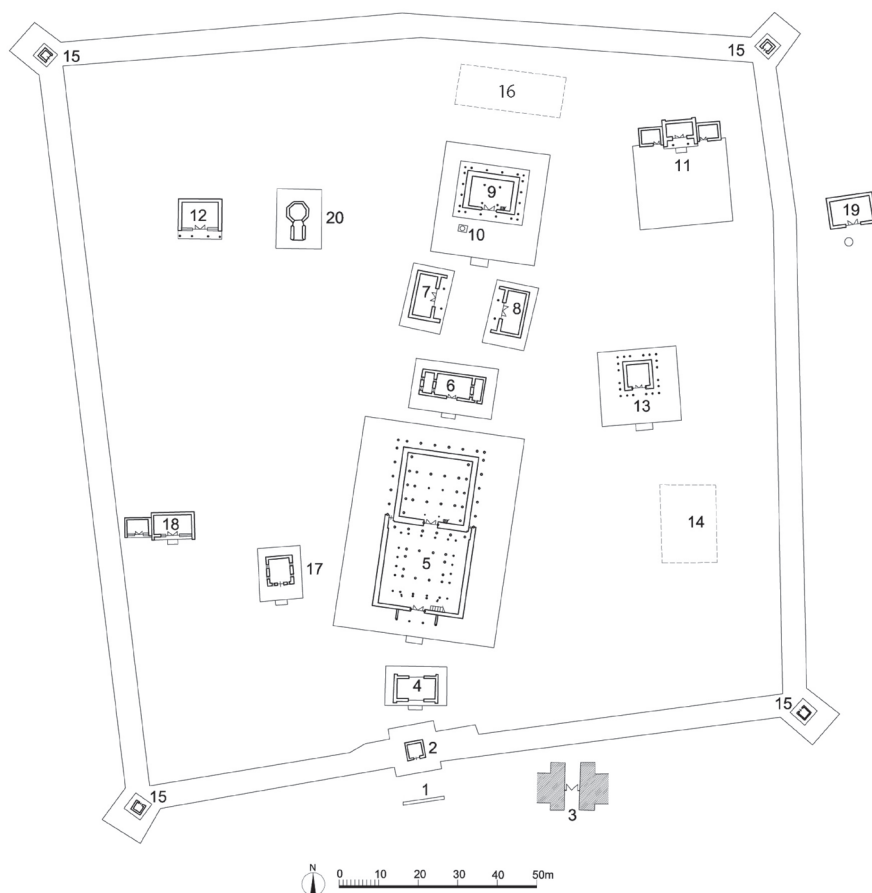


Figure 8. Restoration plan of the Ancient Buddha Hall (No. 10 in Figure 7) at Shireetu Zuu. Source: redrawn by Bao Muping.

Maidari Zuu (Figure 9) lies about 100 km west of Hohhot. It resembles Erdene Zuu closely in that it is surrounded by an irregular square wall a little under 200 m in length. It is also similar in that the main halls are aligned on an axis quite different to that of the wall. There are a large number of buildings within the wall—the central hall (an assembly hall in front and a Buddha hall behind), the three-storied Liuli dian (Glazed Tile Hall 琉璃殿), the temple of the Empress Dowager 太后庙, temples of the ten thousand Buddhas 万佛殿 to the east and the west—but there is no positive proof as to when each was constructed (Zhang 2010). We know only that the tower of the main gate 城门 was built in 1606 (from an inscription in Chinese characters on a stone tablet)²⁸. According to the *Erdeni-yin tobči*, the wife of Dayičing eji, who built the gate, had a statue of Maitreya (Mong. Maidari) made in 1606 (Hidehiro Okada 2004, p. 298). However, it is not clear whether or not she was responsible for the construction of the building in which the statue was enshrined—the main hall that combined the Assembly Hall and the Buddha Hall. The four walls of this building are uniformly decorated with wall paintings; particularly famous is one on the west wall of the family of Altan Khan revering the Buddha.

Behind the main hall of Maidari Zuu is the three-storied Liuli dian 琉璃殿 with its green-glazed tiles (Figure 10). It no longer contains any Buddhist statues but originally it had clay statues of the Buddhas of the Three Realms. Seen in terms of the structural remains of Buddhist temples in Inner Mongolia, this building resembles most closely Gol Zuu at Erdene Zuu. A comparative study of both buildings should be undertaken in the future.

The descendants of King Shun yi (Altan Khan) lived here until the beginning of the twentieth century. It is reported that the ancestral graves of the family lie on the west side of the mountain behind the temple (Wang and Yao 2003, pp. 75–79). Li Yiyun (Li 1983, pp. 215–19) therefore hypothesizes that Maidari Zuu, which is surrounded by walls, is Altan Khan's Da ban sheng cheng 大板升城, while Wang Leiye proposes that the Liuli dian is Altan Khan's palace (Wang and Yao 2003, pp. 75–79).



1. Zhaobi (destroyed);
2. Gate Belvedere (1606);
3. Plan of Gate Belvedere;
4. Lokapala Hall (destroyed);
5. Central Assembly and Buddha Halls;
6. Namsle (Vaiśravaṇa) Hall (ruined);
7. Avalokiteśvara Hall;
8. Hall of the 8 Arhats;
9. Liuli dian (Glazed Tile Hall);
10. Stupa (destroyed, its base remains);
11. Hall of the Dalai Lama;
12. Western Hall of the Ten Thousand Buddhas;
13. Temple of the Dowager Empress (Taihou miao);
14. Dajiwa dian (destroyed);
15. The Angle Towers;
16. Residence of the descendants of Altan Khan (Gongyefu, not extant);
17. Hall of Nechung (or Pehar);
18. Residence of the hutukhtu;
19. Eastern Hall of the Ten Thousand Buddhas;
20. Octagon Pavilion.

Figure 9. Plan of Maidari Zuu. Source: based on Jin (1984, p. 27) and measured by Bao Muping.



Figure 10. Liuli dian, Maidari Zuu. Source: photo by Bao Muping.

Although the site of Maidari Zuu belonged to the Altan Khan family, it can be argued that it was the walled city of Da ban sheng cheng 大板升城 built by Altan Khan in 1557 and the Liuli dian 琉璃殿 was the palace built by Altan Khan in 1565 (Bao 2013). I demonstrated in my doctoral dissertation of 2003 that Da ban sheng cheng was the predecessor of Hohhot (Bao 2003, pp. 39–56). After Altan Khan signed the Longqing Treaty (Long qing yi he 隆慶議和) with the Ming court in 1571, he built Hohhot as his capital to commemorate the lost Dadu (later known as Beijing). The square-shaped walled city of Hohhot was completed in 1575. It is reasonable to believe that Altan Khan's palace was inside Hohhot. During his trip to Hohhot, Abadai Khan would have visited Yekhe Zuu and the walled city of Hohhot. It is worth mentioning that Maidari Zuu was one of many walled cities at that time.

From the comparisons made above, we can say that in its earliest form, Erdene Zuu was not built as a direct imitation of Yekhe Zuu but used as a model of the many temples in the Tümed region centering on Hohhot, especially those built by the family of Altan Khan.

4. The Perspective of Buddhist Temple Architecture in East Asia

Here, I would like to extend my comparative view both regionally and chronologically. Specifically, I want to consider Erdene Zuu in terms of East Asia as a whole, and over a period extending down from the time of the Mongol Empire of the thirteenth century. For my present purposes, I define East Asia as including Tibet, Kokonor 青海, the historic territory of Xixia 西夏故地, China proper 中国内地 and Korea.

4.1. Connections with Temples in the Period of the Mongolian Empire

The three Buddha Halls of Gurban Zuu at Erdene Zuu were laterally aligned. This unique layout has no resemblance to existing temples in Tibet (Chen 2007), Kokonor (Jiang and Liu 1996) and Inner Mongolia. However, the layout of three Buddha halls in one courtyard can be found in the temple Asukadera 飛鳥寺, the first full-scale Buddhist temple in Japan. The plan of this temple built in the sixth century is called “one pagoda and three

kondō” (Asuka Shiryōkan 2013, p. 18). Kondō 金堂 is the Japanese term for Buddha halls built between the Asuka 飛鳥 and early Heian 平安 periods (6th to 12th century). Hence, I have coined the term “Three-Kondo Typology 三金堂式” for the unique layout of Gurban Zuu.

The “Three-Kondo Typology” layout cannot be found in temples existing today in Tibet, Kokonor or Inner Mongolia. The lateral placement of temple buildings is a particular feature of temple layout in the earliest period. Where did it come from?

A very early example can be found at Hwang yong sa (Imperial Dragon Temple) in the Korean Peninsula (Figure 11). Here we find a “one pagoda and three kondo” layout, with the Eastern Buddha Hall, Central Buddha Hall and Western Buddha Hall side-by-side. In front of the Central Buddha Hall, there is a nine-storied pagoda 80 m (225 *chi*) high that was built in 1096. The temple and its pagoda were burned down by Mongol forces in 1238 (Yun 2003, pp. 185–86). Following this, a pagoda (興元閣 Xing yuan ge, Pavilion of the Rise of the Yuan) 90 m (300 *chi*) tall was suddenly built in Karakorum (Bao 2018, pp. 343–56). According to an inscription, this pagoda was completed at a date later than the attack on Hwang yong sa. Further, Hwang yong sa was a very important building, in the sense that the Korean Peninsula was first united and ruled over as a result of its construction.

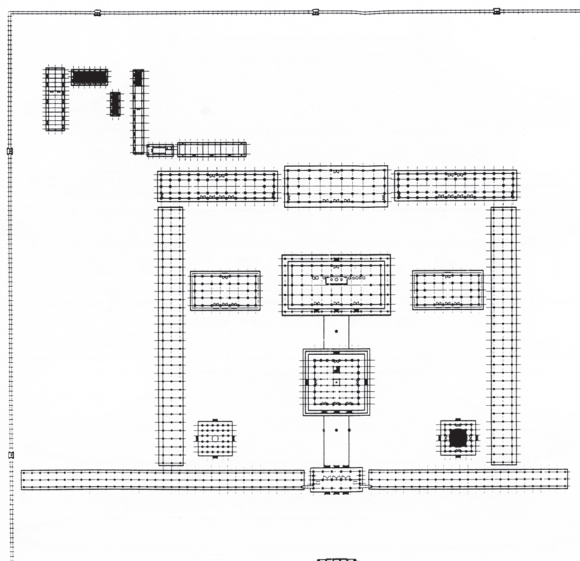


Figure 11. Plan of Hwang yong sa, Korea. Source: Yun Chang-sōp (2003, p. 185).

It was customary for the Mongols to take artisans from the territories they had conquered back to Mongolia. Building a pagoda 90 m high could not in itself have been conceived in the grasslands without some kind of stimulus. The tallest existing wooden Buddhist pagoda in the world is in Shanxi in China. The Sakyamuni pagoda, built in 1056 during the Liao (Khitan) Dynasty, is 67 m tall with an octagonal plan. Compared with this, the wooden pagoda of Hwang yong sa in Korea resembles the Xing yuan ge in Karakorum more closely, both in shape and height.

If we assume that the Xing yuan ge was influenced by Hwang yong sa, then it is also possible that it received the temple layout in terms of the “Three-Kondo Typology” from there as well. This plan can be seen in other temples in Khanbaliq (Dadu, now Beijing), such as the Wan an temple 萬安寺 (1272), Pu qing temple 普慶寺 (1300–1320) and Hu sheng temple 護聖寺 (1329). The fact that the halls to the left and right of the Central Buddha Hall of the Hu sheng temple are called the West and East Halls is a point of similarity with Erdene’s Gurban Zuu.

Thus, in view of the fact that the “Three-Kondo Typology” layout of Gurban Zuu cannot be found in Inner Mongolia, Tibet or Kokonor, we must, at the present point of time, consider the likelihood of there having been the influence at Erdene Zuu of the temple layout of the period of the Mongolian Empire.

The “Three-Kondo Typology” was revived in the sixteenth century after a time lapse of more than two hundred years. It may have been due to a desire to revive an ancient classical form at that time. The urban planning of the Yuan Dadu 元大都 was modeled after the grid theory set out in the *Zhou li kao gong ji* 周礼考工记, published 1400 years ago; the court of Altan Khan adopted the official title of *Tidiao* that had been established in the Yuan Dynasty. The practice of building over the remaining structure could be another answer to the revitalization of the “Three-Kondo Typology”. The remains in the former Mongol capital city were considered to be sacred sites for building new temples.

4.2. The Circumambulation Path of Buddha Halls

There is one further feature of the plan of Gurban Zuu: the plan of the Buddha Hall in each of the three buildings is surrounded by an ambulatory. This is called *golne zam* (circumambulation path) in Mongolian. It is a space for lamas and believers to circumambulate the temple clockwise as part of their worship, and cannot be found in temples in China proper; rather, it is a special development within Tibetan Buddhist temples.

The earliest example of an ambulatory is found at the Samye monastery 桑耶寺 in Tibet, attached to the main temple (*utse*, 乌策大殿) built in the second half of the eighth century (Su 1996, p. 190). At the Ramoche (小召) temple in Lhasa, an internal ambulatory was added in the twelfth century. In fourteenth century Tibet, an ambulatory attached to the Buddha hall and the assembly hall was very popular, but by the sixteenth century, it appears that the ambulatory had been discontinued. Eventually, only the Karma Kagyu sect retained it.

Small temples of the Gelug sect were built to a plan of a rectangular Buddha hall with an attached ambulatory, though this plan was not peculiar to that sect, but is considerably older, for the central halls of the Gandan monastery 甘丹寺, the Drepung monastery 哲蚌寺 and the Sera monastery 色拉寺 do not have a rectangular plan but rather a square one, and there are no ambulatories attached to their walls. On the contrary, it can be confirmed that even before the Gelug sect was formed, there were already Buddha halls following the rectangular plan, for example the Buddha Hall of Khara-Khoto 黑城, built before 1380 in the area of the former Xixia 西夏 Kingdom under the Mongolian Empire,²⁹ and the Qu tan dian (1392) of the Qu tan temple 瞿昙寺, the first Tibetan Buddhist temple in Kokonor. Later examples include the Wan sui dian 万岁殿 (1427) of the Miao yin temple 妙因寺 in Lian cheng 连城, Gansu 甘肃 (Zhao 1994, p. 19) and the Ancient Buddha Hall (1585) at Shireetu Zuu in Hohhot. It was a descendant of Togon 脱欢 who had received the title of An ding wang 安定王 (King An ding) from the Yuan (Dai Өn ulus) who established Lian cheng as his capital (Zhao 1994). Ledu 乐都, the location of the Qu tan temple, was also part of the territory of this Mongol ruler.

As we can see from the above, rectangular Buddha halls with an attached ambulatory can be seen in regions ruled by the Mongol Empire, as well as in Kokonor, ruled by a Mongol Khan after the fall of the Mongol Empire, the Gansu and Xixia regions and Inner Mongolia. These historical facts tell us that the rectangular hall with an ambulatory found at Erdene Zuu was not a style introduced contemporaneously from Tibet but was a legacy of the time of the Mongolian Empire.

5. Conclusions

The building of Erdene Zuu between the end of the sixteenth century and the first part of the seventeenth can be called a reconstruction in the former territory of the Mongolian Empire in accord with accumulated wisdom. By “Mongolian Empire”, I mean in a narrow sense the capital Karakorum, but in the broader sense the Korean peninsula, China proper (Beijing etc.), the land of Xixia 西夏, Tibet and Kokonor 青海. The “Three-Kondo Typology”

layout of the Buddha halls, the internal worship corridors surrounding the Buddha halls, and walls at the boundary of Erdene Zuu monastery to differentiate sacred and secular (Figure 12) can be considered to have inherited the traditions of the Mongol Empire.



Figure 12. The wall of Erdene Zuu monastery, photo by Bao Muping.

The plan of city walls with towers can also be seen in Hohhot (1572–1575) and at Maidari Zuu. The ground plan of Maidari Zuu closely resembles that of Erdene Zuu. Although recent archaeological excavations have discovered the foundation of a thirteenth-century wall under the Erdene Zuu wall that was constructed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the thirteenth-century wall no longer existed at the end of the sixteenth century, so the direct influence for Erdene Zuu building a monastery wall must have come from Inner Mongolia, which Abatai Khan had visited. Also, the spatial layout of the stupas of the temple founders at Gurban Zuu was influenced by Yekhe Zuu in Hohhot.

The wooden timber structural techniques employed at Erdene Zuu came from Inner Mongolia. Of great importance were the *tidiao lama* and artisans like carpenters who came from Hohhot bringing architectural techniques with them. The skill to build multi-storied buildings, brought from Shanxi in China via Hohhot, was utilized in the construction of the Buddha halls at Gurban Zuu. Existing examples of such architecture older than Gurban Zuu include the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Hall 观音阁 in the Du le temple 独乐寺 in Liao 辽, and the Hall of the Ten Thousand Buddhas 万佛阁 (1443) in the Ming 明 period Zhi hua temple 智化寺 in Beijing. However, Erdene Zuu is the only example where three multi-story Buddha halls are arranged side-by-side. Gurban Zuu harmonized elements rooted in its location on the site of the Mongol capital of Karakorum with newly introduced elements.

In summary, when Mongols introduced Tibetan Buddhist architecture to Mongolia from the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, they did not simply reproduce Tibetan or Chinese buildings. Instead, whether in the layout of temples or the construction of individual buildings, they created unique spatial patterns for Mongolian Tibetan Buddhist temples based on blending local traditions with wooden construction technology borrowed from mainland China.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ The Chinese names “Nei Menggu” 内蒙古 (Inner Mongolia, Mon. *Öbür Moŋɣol*) and “Wai Menggu” 外蒙古 (Outer Mongolia, Mon. *Khalkha Mongolia*) were applied in 1691 by the Qing court. For convenience, “Mongolia” is used here to refer to both the historical Khalkha Mongolia and Inner Mongolia regions, even though this paper also discusses the pre-1691 situation. I use “country of Mongolia” when referring to the modern state.
- ² *Biography of Altan Khan*, manuscript held by the Inner Mongolia Academy of Social Sciences Library, Section 337; (Yoshida, Jun ichi et al. 1998, p. 94).
- ³ Principal investigator: Takashi Matsukawa 松川節 2009–2011. *The Comprehensive Research on the Monastery Erdene Zuu, UNESCO’s World Cultural Heritage Site: From the Restoration of the Past to the Preservation for the Future*, JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP21242022.
- ⁴ Unfortunately, the illustrations, which were elaborately created by the author and constituted the core content of the paper, were rendered almost impossible to understand due to poor printing.
- ⁵ According to A · Ma · Bozudenieyefu (1989) (Volume 1, pp. 471–72), this gate (Ch. Pailou 牌楼) was built in 1796 with donations from craftsmen who came from Hohhot and undertook the restoration work in Erdene Zuu.
- ⁶ Directly translated, “Zuun zuu” means “left-hand temple”, but since this designation customarily refers to the east, this hall is usually called the “east temple”. However, since Gurban zuu faces southeast (the line of axis of the temple leans 112° to the east from the true north), this is not its actual direction. It is therefore more accurate to describe the “left-hand temple” as being southwest of the central temple. The “right-hand temple”, that is the “west temple”, lies to the northeast.
- ⁷ Gutschow and Brandt (2006): “Die Baugeschichte der Klosteranlage von Erdeni Joo (Erdene zuu)”, in Claudius Müller, ed. *Dschingis Khan und seine Erben*, Bonn: 2005; (Turkish translation) “Erdene zuu (Erdeni Joo) Manastiri Kompleksinin inşaa öyküsü”, *Cengiz Han ve Mirasçıları—Büyük Moğol İmparatorluğu*, Istanbul: Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi, pp. 537–42.
- ⁸ For details see Matsukawa Takashi, “Mongoru bukkyōshi ni okeru Erudeni zū jiin” (Erdene zuu in Mongolian Buddhist history), research report, Spring 2010. Conference of the Japan Association for Mongolian Studies, Oberlin University, Japan, Tokyo, pp. 1–4.
- ⁹ According to the biography of Altan Khan, he died on the 19th day of the twelfth month of Xin si according to the lunar calendar (辛巳十二月十九日). This corresponds to February 1582 in the Gregorian calendar.
- ¹⁰ *Wan li wu gong lu* 萬曆武功錄, *juan* 8 卷八. *Chelike lie zhuan* 扯力克列傳. *Mingdai menggu hanji shiliao huibian* 明代蒙古漢籍史料匯編. di 4 ji 第4輯. p. 125.
- ¹¹ *Asaravči neretü teüke*, Chinese trans. p. 133. Also Tetsuo Morikawa (2007, p. 282).
- ¹² Altan Khan is a grandson of Dayan Khan (1474–1517), the son of Dayan Khan’s third son. Abatai Khan is a great-grandson of Dayan Khan, a grandson of Dayan Khan’s eleventh son. Altan Khan and Abatai Khan are thus in an uncle-nephew relationship.
- ¹³ Wuyunbilige (2016) presents the view that the word Matsukawa transcribed as “Tendün Lama” should rather be transcribed as “qatun-i lama”, which means “(jōnggen qatun, the third wife of Altan Khan) queen’s lama”. The author believes that the Chinese 喇叭提吊 corresponds with the Mongolian “Tendün Lama”. It will be necessary in the future to study the Mongolian rendering of 提調官(提调官) in Yuan period historical documents.
- ¹⁴ *Yuan dai hua su ji* 元代畫塑記: p. 9. 仁宗皇帝皇慶二年八月十六日、勅院史也訥、大聖壽萬安寺內五間殿、八角樓四座、令阿僧哥提調其佛像 [ren zong huang di huang qing 2 nian 8 yue 16 ri, chi yuan shi ye na, das heng shou wan an si nei 5 jian dian 8 jiao lou 4 zuo, ling Asengge ti diao qi fo xiang].
- ¹⁵ According to the History of Yuan 元史 (zhi zhi no. 37, bai guan 百官 3), the Jiang zuo yuan was the bureau that supervised the production of arts and crafts using metal, precious stones, weaving, etc. The rank of its head was regular second grade (zheng 2 pin 正二品) according to the Nine Rank System.
- ¹⁶ The official ranking system used by the Yuan court was expressed as grades (pin 品). There were nine grades, the highest being the first and the lowest the ninth. Each grade had further subdivisions (for example, zheng yi pin 正一品, “regular first grade”,

- cong yi pin 从一品, “deputy first grade”, zheng 2 pin, cong 2 pin, and so on). Da si tu 大司徒 was the title of one ranked “regular first grade”.
- 17 Yuandai huasuiji 元代畫塑記: p. 2. 英宗皇帝至治三年十二月十一日……合用物及提調監造工匠飲食移文省部應付 [ying zong huang di zhi zhi 3 nian 12 yue 11ri……he yong wu ji ti diao jian zao gong jiang yin shi yi wen sheng bu ying fu].
- 18 (Yuan) Da yuan sheng zheng guo chao dian zhang 60 juan mulu 1 juan fu xin ji 大元聖政國朝典章60卷目錄1卷附新集. Xin ji新集. Zhao ling詔令. jin shang huang di deng bao wei zhao今上皇帝登寶位詔: 仰各處提調官,常切加意 [yang ge chu ti diao guan, chang qie jia yi].
- 19 According to the History of Yuan 元史, vol. 85, zhi 志 35, baiguan 百官 1.
- 20 Ming, Wan li wu gong lu 萬曆武功錄, Vols 7–14. Hagiwara, Junpei 萩原淳平 1980. *Mindai Mōkoshi kenkyū* (A Study of the History of the Mongols during the Ming). Oriental Research Series No. 32, Kyoto: Dōhōsha, etc.
- 21 (Ming) Zheng, Luo 鄭洛. Fu yi ji lüe 撫夷紀略. Mingdai Menggu Hanji shiliao huibian 明代蒙古漢籍史料汇编, Vol. 2. Hohhot: Neimenggu daxue chubanshe, 2006.
- 22 Matsukawa transcribed the Mongolian inscription to Roman character phonetic writing and the author translated it into English.
- 23 This is recorded in various places, such as the *Altan Qayan u Tuγuji* (Biography of Altan Khan), the biography of the third Dalai Lama, the *Erdeni-yin tobči* (Ch. 蒙古源流, “A History Called Maitreya”, etc. but there are inconsistencies among them in the dating.
- 24 Ming, Wan li wu gong lu 萬曆武功錄, juan 8. Anda lie zhuan 俺答列傳. Ming Dai Meng Gu Han Ji Shi Liao Hui Bian. Di 4 Ji, p. 97.
- 25 Yoshida, Jun’ichi et al. trans with notes 1998. *Altan Haan-den yakuchū* (Annotated translation of the Erdeni Tunumal Sudur orusiba), p. 191.
- 26 Called yingtang 影堂, these halls memorialized the deceased Mongol Khans. Woven silk portraits were hung in the center of the hall.
- 27 Yuzong was the “temple name” of Činkim (1243–1286), Kublai Khan’s chosen heir.
- 28 The stone plaque (shibian 石匾) is now in the collection of the Baotou City Museum. The one on the walled-city gate is a replica. 上款: 元後勅封順義王俺答阿嫡孫欽陞龍虎將軍天成台吉妻七慶大義好五蘭妣吉哲願虔誠敬賴三宝選擇吉地寶豐山起蓋靈覺寺泰和門不滿一月工城圓備神力助祐非人所為也。中央: 皇圖鞏固、帝道咸寧、萬民樂業、四海澄清。下款: 大明金國丙午年戊戌月己巳日庚午時建木作溫伸石匠郭江。
- 29 See Y2 site of Figure 1b in Hei cheng chu tu wen shu 黑城出土文書. Su (1996, pp. 252–53).

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Article

Spatial Distribution Characteristics and the Evolution of Buddhist Monasteries in Xi'an City Area

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Abstract: Buddhist monasteries have played important roles in the development of both the culture of and urban planning in ancient Chinese cities. In this paper, the Buddhist monasteries in the city of Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, during the Song (宋), Yuan (元), Ming (明), and Qing (清) dynasties are collated from historical documents. The characteristics of the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries are analyzed by using kernel density estimation (KDE), and the evolution of that spatial distribution is explored by documentary analysis. The results show that Buddhist monasteries are closely surrounded by cultural buildings and warehouses, discretely surrounded by administrative buildings. The spatial distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries has evolved evenly during the expansion of the Xi'an city area, through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. This study provides a reference for the preservation of Buddhist monastery spaces in the historical context of Xi'an city area.

Keywords: Buddhist monasteries; spatial distribution and evolution; Xi'an city area

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1. Introduction

Cultures around the world are experiencing rapid changes, and traditional cultures are being increasingly protected. China, whose civilization is over 5000 years old, is also facing the general trend of globalization and multi-cultural development, and the need for the preservation of its traditional culture is becoming more and more evident. The country has attached great importance to the preservation and renewal of historical heritage for almost 40 years. In 1985, China joined the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,¹ which aims to protect natural and cultural heritage around the world. The country's implementation of its Code of the Conservation Planning for Historical and Cultural Cities (历史文化名城保护规划)² and the proposal of a "cultural confidence" (文化自信) policy show that the protection of the country's traditional culture has moved from the public realm into that of policy. The historical Xi'an city area (Chang'an 长安 in the Tang dynasty) was the capital city of thirteen dynasties and thus possessed an extremely rich historical and cultural heritage. In recent years, Xi'an city area has been strengthening its strategy for preserving and renewing its historical and cultural heritage. Significant to the area's history is the Buddhist monastery. Buddhist monasteries have long been deeply interwoven into the lives of the people in the area, in terms of politics, economics, and culture. The study of these monasteries contributes to the exploration of the changing patterns of city space and the direction of urban planning that is based on research about the history of Xi'an city area for the conservation and renewal of the city's heritage.

A Buddhist monastery is an important carrier of Buddhist religion and culture. The architectural type that evolved in China, which adopted aspects of traditional Chinese architecture, differs from the "stūpa" form in India. The stūpa originated in India and initially referred to the structure in which the Buddha's relics were buried after death, which was the earliest form of Buddhist architecture. It was introduced to China during the Han

dynasty and combined with Chinese architecture to form a pagoda with Chinese characteristics; the pagoda often appears within monasteries (Pan 2008, pp. 154–55).

There are numerous studies related to Chinese Buddhist monasteries, especially on those in Xi'an city area. In 1910, George Ernest Morrison embarked on a six-month expedition to examine the ancient architecture of western China, including the Xi'an area. He created visual records of what he saw and compiled them into an album called "Views of China" (Morrison and Lun 2008). In 1901, Itō Chūta was one of the first Japanese scholars to conduct fieldwork in China. His book *History of Chinese Architecture* describes some important Buddhist monasteries of various historical periods. The collection of Chūta's manuscripts records in detail C'en Temple (慈恩寺)³ and Jianfu Temple (荐福寺)⁴ in the Xi'an area (Chūta 2018). Ernst Boerschmann was the first German architect to conduct, between 1906–1909, a comprehensive survey of ancient Chinese architecture. This included a number of Buddhist monasteries and pagodas in the Xi'an area, such as the Dayan Pagoda (大雁塔)⁵ and Jianfu Temple (Boerschmann 2010). The work of these three scholars, the first to research China's Buddhist monasteries, contains the earliest photographic records of some of the Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an area and provides a good idea of what they looked like in the first half of the twentieth century.

Since then, Chinese scholars have studied Chinese Buddhist monasteries more comprehensively. In the 1960s, Liang Sicheng provided a systematic description of the development and evolution of Chinese Buddhist monasteries, constructing a macroscopic and systematic analysis in his books *Buddhist Architecture in China* 中国的佛教建筑 and *A History of Pictorial Chinese Architecture* 图像中国建筑史. His research also included monasteries in the Xi'an city area (Liang 1961, pp. 53–54). Liu Dunzhen, in his book *The History of Ancient Chinese Architecture* 中国古代建筑史, published in 1984, discusses in detail the Buddhist monasteries and pagodas in this area that date to the Sui and Tang dynasties (Liu 1984). In more recent years, Gong Guoqiang used historical archaeology to systematically integrate the documentary records of Buddhist monasteries in Chang'an City (长安城, the name of Xi'an city area in the Tang dynasty), and discussed the distribution pattern of Buddhist monasteries of Chang'an City in different periods. The interrelationship between Buddhist monasteries and city space is explored in his publication of 2006, *Study on Chang'an Buddhist Monasteries in Sui and Tang Dynasties* 隋唐长安城佛寺研究 (Gong 2006). Buddhism and the development of Buddhist monasteries in northwest China is the subject of Jie Yongqiang's work, with a particular focus on the development of Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an city area. In his study of 2014, he presents an overview of Buddhist monasteries in Chang'an City of the Tang dynasty, including their distribution, types, and layout (Jie 2014, pp. 1–6). Wang Guixiang describes the history of the development of Chinese Buddhist monasteries in the book *The History of Chinese Han Buddhist Architecture* 中国汉传佛教建筑史. In his discussion of the development of Buddhist monasteries during the Sui and Tang dynasties, he takes the Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an city area as a typical example for the examination of the construction, historical evolution, and spatial layout of monasteries (G. Wang 2016). This collection of research over the last hundred years provides us with a basic overview of the ancient Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an area.

In addition to in-depth studies of Buddhist monasteries, scholars have studied the spaces occupied by Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an city area because monasteries are affected by the development of the city or the change in the city's axis. Wang Shusheng, in his 2004 study of the evolution of the city's layout in the early Ming dynasty, found that the central axis of the most important building group of the Ming period was located at the midpoint of the horizontal distance between the Dayan Pagoda and the Xiaoyan Pagoda (小雁塔) (S. Wang 2004). From the perspective of the landscape, Gu Yuxin and Gong Bi analyzed the characteristics of garden space in Buddhist monasteries in the area (Gu and Gong 2013, pp. 215–19). However, relatively few studies have examined how the spaces occupied by Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an interact with city spaces and urban planning. Among the existing studies are those on the relationship between Buddhist monastery space and urban planning or city space in other regions. There is a study on

how religious space was planned in Chinese cities (Abramson 2011, pp. 67–88), a comparative one on the influence of different religions on city space (W. Wang 2021, p. 972), and a study on the influence of Buddhist monastery space on the development of the political axes of cities (Xie 2021, p. 984). These research ideas and methods help to fill the gap of related studies in Xi'an city area.

However, these studies do not identify spatial distribution characteristics that relate to the evolution of Buddhist monasteries in the same area across time and through different historical periods. The way Buddhist monasteries are distributed reveals the interaction between their space and the historical context of the old Xi'an city as well as the way space has evolved in this area. An examination of the spatial distribution and evolution of Buddhist monasteries is thus an important step in compensating for the absence of any planning for Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area.

This research explores the relationship between urban spaces occupied by Buddhist monasteries and urban planning, with the intent to clarify the influence religious space has on the evolution of urban space. In this paper, certain Buddhist monasteries within old Xi'an ("Xi'an city area") during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties are selected to explore their spatial distribution and evolution characteristics. A map of the distribution of Buddhist monasteries and the spatial relationship between these monasteries and urban planning is examined by using kernel density estimation (KDE) to perceive the historical context of the city. In addition, the evolution of the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries over the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties is explored by the documentary analysis method to discern the historical and cultural development in Xi'an city area. The term "Xi'an city area" defines the scope of the study: different area within the city walls of Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasty. This is different from the concept of Xi'an, which includes not only the area within the city walls of each dynasty but also the area beyond—the surrounding suburbs that developed from the Song dynasty to the Qing.

As this study will show, the evolution of Buddhist monastic space is closely tied to the evolution and development of urban space. Therefore, this study systematically compares the number, location, and founding dates of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, it also provides a logical overview of that information. The spatial distribution characteristics and evolution of Buddhist monasteries are expressed in digital and visualized ways. This study considers the Buddhist monastic space as part of the composition of cultural space from the urban spatial perspective. By examining the city's religious space as a continuum, this study contributes to the continuity and development of the world's civilization. From the perspective of urban space, this study is an in-depth exploration of the spatial evolution and development of the "Historical and cultural city", such as the Xi'an city area, providing basic data for architectural heritage conservation.

2. The Historical Development of Buddhism in Xi'an City Area

Buddhist culture came to China from India and specifically to Xi'an, the capital of the country and its political, economic, and cultural center. Xi'an was thus the first site of Buddhist culture in China. It is generally accepted that Buddhism was introduced to Xi'an, and China, during the reign of Emperor Ai of the Western Han (西汉哀帝) dynasty (6 BC–1 BC), when emissaries from the Dayuezhi Kingdom (大月氏) in Central Asia came to Xi'an and taught the Fudo Sutra (浮屠经) (Wu 1991; Gong 2006).

2.1. General Development of Buddhism

In the Northern Zhou (北周) dynasty, the development of Buddhism was inhibited by a policy to suppress the rise of Buddhism, which involved the demolition of Buddhist monasteries, reducing the number of monks, and burning large amounts of scriptures (H. Shi 1983). The rulers of the next dynasty, the Sui, changed this policy and made great efforts to revive Buddhism. They established Daxing City (大兴城, the name of Xi'an city area in the Sui dynasty) as their capital and encouraged Buddhism in the city (Gong 2006),

building monasteries and relocating the Da Xing Shan Temple (大兴善寺) there. Since the Sui dynasty had unified the north and south of China, the Buddhist cultures of the north and south also merged. Groups of southern monks went north to Daxing City and then formed a new Buddhist cultural system in Daxing City, and city area once again it became China's center of Buddhism.

Buddhism continued to grow during the Tang dynasty, which followed the Sui. Monasteries were built throughout Chang'an City (长安城, the name of Xi'an city area in the Tang dynasty) according to a system. They appeared on both sides of Zhuque Street (the main north–south line of the Tang Chang'an City, the central axis of the city), giving Buddhist monasteries a central role in the layout of Chang'an City. Several famous monasteries were established there during this period, such as Ci'en Temple (慈恩寺), Qinglong Temple (青龙寺), and Jianfu Temple (荐福寺) (Tang 2008).

Chang'an City was also the main birthplace of six of the eight major Chinese Buddhist sects (宗),⁶ the exceptions being Tiantai (天台宗) and Chan (禅宗). The development of Buddhism in Chang'an city also had a direct impact on the life of the common people, with the increase in Buddhist activities, including sermons in the monasteries during festivals, the production of literature based on Buddhist scriptures, and the creation of Buddhist paintings, sculptures, music, architecture, and ornaments (Song 1891). The Tang dynasty attached great importance to foreign diplomatic activities, so the Buddhist culture in Chang'an City also had a direct influence on neighboring countries. The ambassadors to the Tang court (遣唐使) from Japan and Korea studied Buddhism in Chang'an City and brought it back to their home countries, where Buddhism further developed (Luo 1985). The rise of Buddhism in Chang'an City during the Sui and Tang dynasties was the period of the greatest development in the history of Buddhist culture in China.

After the Tang dynasty, Xi'an lost its role as the political, economic, and cultural capital of the country, and Buddhism in the area also began to decline. During the Five Period (五代) that followed, from 907 to 960,⁷ the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within the Xi'an city area gradually reverted to a self-determining pattern. When the Song dynasty began, the Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area had been restored and protected to a certain extent, due to the relatively stable social development, and a number of Buddhist monasteries were rebuilt (Zan 1999). One is Xi Wutai Temple, built in the Song dynasty upon a high platform dating to the Tang dynasty (Figure 1). However, during the period of Emperor Huizong (宋徽宗) of the Song dynasty, the prevalence of Daoism (道教)⁸ caused Buddhism and its monasteries to suffer catastrophes again. In the Yuan dynasty, which followed the Song, because of the ruler's eclectic attitude toward various religions, Buddhism continued to lose its dominant position in traditional Chinese religious culture (Bi 1784). Therefore, there was little growth in Buddhist culture in the Xi'an city area at this time. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Buddhism received more attention than it had in the previous dynasties (Guo et al. 2020). Because the Qing dynasty's emperor, Kangxi (康熙皇帝), preferred Tibetan Buddhism, GuangRen Lama Temple (广仁寺) was built, the only Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Xi'an city area (Figure 2). The revival at this time mostly took the form of the restoration and preservation of ancient monasteries. The development of Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area gradually stabilized, allowing the preservation of the monasteries that we see today.

2.2. Historic Context for the Distribution of Buddhist Monasteries

The Buddhist monasteries in this study were selected from those four periods following the end of the Tang dynasty when Buddhism was active in China—the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. After summarizing the different spatial distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries in the four dynasties, it is then possible to propose the concept of spatial distribution evolution. During and before the Tang dynasty, the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries were influenced by the planning of the rulers, which made the distribution orderly.



Figure 1. Xi Wutai Temple.



Figure 2. GuangRen Lama Temple.

In the Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439) period, Chang'an was already the center of Buddhist culture in the north, the site of numerous monasteries. In 581, in the first year of his ascension, Emperor Wen of Sui began to build more monasteries. He also vigorously promoted the restoration of the monasteries in Chang'an that had been destroyed in the reign of Emperor Wu (543–578) of the Northern Zhou dynasty as part of his actions on Buddhism extermination. At the same time, to promote the revitalization of Buddhist monasteries, Emperor Wen of Sui also conceived of the idea to erect hundreds of Buddhist monastery tablets, urging architects to take the tablets to build Buddhist monasteries. It is recorded in "Chang'an Zhi" (《长安志》) that when Emperor Wen first moved to the capital, he issued one hundred and twenty temple plaques in the imperial court and established a strategy to promote the growth of Buddhism: Anyone who can repair and build will be allowed to take them (文帝初移都, 便出寺额一百二十枚于朝堂, 下制云: 有能修造, 便任取之). Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty was also fond of Buddhism, and he attached great importance to the Buddhist doctrinal classics. The "Guanghongming Ji" (《广弘明集》) contains a "BaoTaiJingZang Yuanwen" (《宝台经藏愿文》) that Emperor Yang wrote, in which he specifically mentions his concern about the destruction of Buddhist monasteries caused by warfare at the end of the Northern and Southern dynasties and his commitment to the collection and arrangement of Buddhist scripture collections. He also went to great lengths to build Buddhist monasteries. It is recorded in Chang'an Zhi (《长安志》) that Emperor Yang had built a Buddhist monastery in the southeast corner of Daxing City before he became emperor: "When Emperor Yang was the king of Jin, he built a temple in the first year of Renshou and recruited famous monks to live there" (隋炀帝为晋王, 仁寿元年施营第材所造, 因广招名僧以居之). At the beginning of Daye (605), Emperor Yang also built a very grand temple in Daxing City, which was called the Dachanding Temple (later called the

Dazongchi Temple, 隋称大禅定寺, 唐称大总持寺), adjacent to the Chanding Temple (later called the Dazhuangyan Temple, 隋称禅定寺, 唐称大庄严寺) built by Emperor Wen of Sui.

The period from the Tang dynasty's Wu Zhou (唐武周时期, 690–705) to Zhongzong (唐中宗时期, 705–710) was the most significant for the emergence of Buddhist monasteries in the Tang dynasty. In the first year of Yongchang (永昌元年, 689), Wu Zetian (武则天) ordered the construction of a Da Yun Temple (大云寺) in all provinces, which caused a frenzy of monastery construction, resulting in a particularly large number of monasteries named Dayun Temple in the Tang dynasty; many monasteries today are still named Dayun Temple. After Emperor Zhongzong of Tang (唐中宗) ascended to the throne, he inherited some of Wu Zetian's practices regarding Buddhist monasteries. He issued an edict to instruct all provinces of the country to build Zhongxing temples (中兴寺). Although his reign lasted only five years, he not only revitalized Buddhist culture but also personally participated in the construction of Buddhist monasteries. For example, it was recorded in the Song Yue Temple Monument (嵩岳寺碑) that he built a thirteen-story pagoda on the terrace at the top of the south side of the mountain (南有辅山者, 古之灵台也。中宗孝和皇帝诏于其顶, 追为大通秀禅师造十三级浮图).

In the late Tang period, during the reign of Emperor Wu Zong Hui Chang (唐武宗会昌年间, 841–846), the state's finances were in the doldrums and the Buddhist monastic economy was over extended, severely damaging the state treasury's income and also conflicting with ordinary landowners. The ruler of the period ordered the demolition of a number of Buddhist monasteries for economic purposes, and initiatives such as the surrender of gold and silver Buddha statues to the state treasury were implemented (Song 1891). The destruction of Buddhist monasteries during this period was extremely harsh. Not only were all the Buddhist monasteries built during the centuries of the Sui and Tang dynasties destroyed, but also sculptures, stone carvings, scriptures, inscriptions, and other artworks accumulated over the centuries. According to the "Quan Tang Wen" (《全唐文》), there was a policy requiring the demolition of Buddhist monasteries during the Hui Chang period of the Tang dynasty. Whatever was not completely destroyed was severely damaged, leaving nothing left. The central government sent commissioners to inspect each locality. Provinces and cities were so afraid that they ensured the policy was followed in their jurisdictions by burying the destroyed objects (会昌中, 有诏大除佛寺。凡鎔塑绘刻, 堂阁殿宇, 关于佛祠者, 焚灭销破, 一无遗余。遣御史覆视之。州县震畏, 至于碑幢铭楼赞述之类, 亦皆毁拆瘞藏之).

The campaign to exterminate Buddhism during the Huichang period of the Tang dynasty was devastating for the development of Buddhism in China. Only a few of the hundreds of Buddhist monasteries that had been built in Chang'an city remained, serving only to embellish the city. The wars and turmoil at the end of the Tang dynasty further inhibited the growth of Buddhism. As a result, the development of Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries, which was very active from the Northern and Southern dynasties to the Sui to near the end of the Tang, came to an abrupt end. The Sui-Tang city of Chang'an, once lined with pagodas and monasteries, was nearly in ruins. After the Tang dynasty, during the Later Zhou period of the Five Dynasties (五代后周时期, 955), the rulers overhauled Buddhism again. The emperor Zhou Shizong (周世宗) did not hold Buddhism in high esteem. From the time he ascended to the throne, he began to further eliminate and restrict Buddhism and Buddhist monasteries. Zhou Shizong introduced the policy of restricting Buddhism, largely because of economics. The reasons for the extermination of Buddhism by Zhou Shizong were recorded in the "History of the Old Five Dynasties" (《旧五代史》): the massive expansion of Buddhist monasteries, mentioned in many documents reported from various regions, resulted in the construction of Buddhist monasteries that encroached on state land and embezzled from the state treasury (近览诸州奏闻, 继有缁徒犯法, 盖无科禁, 遂至尤违。私度僧尼, 日增猥杂。创修寺院, 渐至繁多, 乡村之中, 其弊转甚). Therefore, according to the "History of the New Five Dynasties" (《新五代史》), the ruler began to destroy Buddhist monasteries on a massive scale in the second year of Xiande of the Hou Zhou dynasty (后周显德二年, 955), and for-

bade people to become monks or to privately serve monks and nuns (大毀佛寺，禁民亲无侍养而为僧尼及私自度者). In the same year, Zhou Shizong ordered the abolition of 3336 Buddhist monasteries throughout the country. Because of the shortage of money, the state ordered the recasting of bronze Buddha statues into coins (即位之明年，废天下佛寺三千三百三十六。是时中国乏钱，乃诏悉毁天下铜佛像以铸钱). From this, it can be seen that the main reason Zhou Shizong suppressed the development of Buddhism was the economic depression caused by years of war. These two successive campaigns to destroy Buddhism led to an overall decline in the development of Buddhism in China (H. Shi 1983). The growth of Buddhism was no longer valued by the rulers, and monasteries gradually became less common among the ruling class and social level. As a result, the establishment of Buddhist monasteries shifted from planned to spontaneous. The distribution of Buddhist monasteries lost its policy guidance; subsequently, this distribution in an urban space such as Xi'an evolved characteristics that became an important part of the spatial evolution of the city.

3. Methodology

In this paper, kernel density estimation was used to study the characteristics of the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area, and three patterns of aggregation of Buddhist monasteries distribution were obtained. The documentary analysis method was used to explore the spatial distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area, and the evolution of Buddhist monasteries were obtained.

3.1. Kernel Density Estimation

Kernel density estimation (KDE), a way to estimate the density of points plotted on a graph, is used to analyze the distribution of Buddhist monasteries and urban patterns in Xian city area over the ages. The monasteries are treated as points of data on a grid, to reveal their relative proximity. KDE is useful because it smooths fundamental data by which inferences about a population can be made, based on a finite data sample. This method establishes a specific point as the center, and the capture range is set within a specified threshold (a circle with radius h). The measured point has the highest density at the central position. At the same time, the density decays with the elongation of the position from the center point until the density at the limit distance is 0. The method visualizes the decay pattern of the distance between the study object points. The closer the distance between the study object points, the greater the weight considered in the calculation. Because KDE derives a continuous smooth spatial density variation that is represented in a visual image, the resulting visualization invites intuitiveness suitable for analyzing the characteristics of the spatial distribution of the study object data (Wikipedia 2022).

Therefore, the problem of discovering the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries is defined as

$$f_x = \frac{1}{nh} \sum_{i=1}^n k\left(\frac{x - x_i}{h}\right) \quad (1)$$

where f_x is the kernel density relationship of the distribution of Buddhist monasteries; x_i is the location of the estimated element point; x is the position of any element point in the threshold range; h means bandwidth, which can be interpreted as a smoothing parameter for the kernel density measurement band from a visualization perspective ($h > 0$); n represents the number of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area; and k is the Gaussian kernel function, $(x - x_i)$ representing the distance between any two Buddhist monasteries. The results of the kernel density estimation indicate that the closer the Buddhist monasteries were to the aggregation center, the higher the density in the region; the further the Buddhist monasteries were from the aggregation center, the closer the density of Buddhist monasteries in the region was to zero.

The selection of kernel density function (K) and bandwidth (h) are important factors in determining the results of kernel density analysis. Therefore, we must first to clarify

the selection of the kernel function K . The kernel function K is a weight function. The two most commonly used kernel functions are Uniform and Gaussian

Uniform:

$$\frac{1}{2}I(|t| \leq 1)$$

Gaussian:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}}\exp\left\{-\frac{1}{2}t^2\right\}\frac{n_i}{nh}$$

where the Uniform kernel function as a density function can be used to estimate the value of $f(x)$ only when the absolute value of $\frac{x-x_i}{h}$ is less than 1 (or a point whose distance from x is less than the bandwidth h). In addition, for the Gaussian kernel function, it can be seen from $f(x)$ that if x_i is closer to x , the closer $\frac{x-x_i}{h}$ is to 0, the larger the density value would be then. Since the value domain of the normal density is the entire real axis, all data are used to measure the value of $f(x)$, and the closer the point x is to the measurement, the greater the impact. For the subject of this research, any Buddhist monastery and its neighboring Buddhist monasteries will have a clustering effect, increasing the density of Buddhist monasteries in the region, which means that all the Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area have a clustering effect on each other. Therefore, it is more reasonable to choose the Gaussian kernel function for the kernel density estimation, which is also the most popular choice in the literature on spatial distribution.

When conducting KDE calculations, the visualization results of the distribution density of Buddhist monasteries will appear smooth and flat as the bandwidth increases abruptly and uneven as the bandwidth h decreases. In the case of this research, the determination of the h value determines the intuitiveness of its visualization results directly. Determining the value of h , which is the search radius of a single Buddhist monastery point, is given by

$$S_R = 0.9n^{-0.2}\min(S_D, D_m)\sqrt{\frac{1}{\ln 2}}$$

where the S_R is search radius, n represents the number of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area, S_D is the standard distance, and D_m is the median distance. In the calculation of the KDE in this research, h was chosen in combination with the calculation of the formula and considering the intuitiveness of the expression of the visualization results. Taking all factors into consideration, h (the search radius) is chosen as 2 km^2 .

In this paper, the calculation using KDE is divided into three steps. First, the spatial scope of the calculation (within Xi'an city area in each period) is established, and the corresponding distribution points of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area in different periods are marked. Second, the spatial scope and distribution points of the calculation are entered into KDE. Finally, KDE selects the object points and spatial extent into the computational model, and the results are calculated and illustrated in images showing the distribution points of Buddhist monasteries. The KDE calculation transforms the regional density of the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries into visualizations, which helps to reveal the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area.

3.2. Documentary Analysis

The documentary analysis method refers to the collation and summary of the collected literature. The documentary analysis method consists of collecting the original literature, picking up useful information, and making summaries according to certain principles or logic.

This study integrates the historical records of Xi'an city area, county annals, and other ancient literature. Information about Buddhist monasteries built in Xi'an city area during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties have been itemized from historical documentary sources and analyzed. As Table A1 (see Appendix A) shows, the itemized information includes the date of foundation, the location, and any records of reconstruction or alteration. For example, the two Buddhist monasteries in Jingzhaofu (the name of Xi'an City in

the Song dynasty), Anzhong Temple (安众寺) and Bao'en Temple (报恩寺), were originally private residences of nobles that were rebuilt as Buddhist monasteries.

To begin, a map of Xi'an city area was drawn based on the historical literature, and the distribution of Buddhist monasteries inherited from previous dynasties and new Buddhist monasteries built during the current dynasty were marked in different colors on the map of the city area. On this basis, the city area was divided into east–west and south–north quadrants along the central axis of each period, and the number of Buddhist monasteries in the divided areas was counted. The statistics were derived in three steps. First, the number of older Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasty is counted in the city area of a certain dynasty and the ratio was calculated according to the divided area, to determine the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries in that dynasty when there were no new Buddhist monasteries. Next, the distribution quantities of new Buddhist monasteries built in this dynasty were substituted into the overall distribution quantities of Buddhist monasteries and the ratio calculated by area. Finally, the ratio of the two was compared and summarized, and the general distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries in the city area could then be derived after the new Buddhist monasteries were built in this dynasty.

By superimposing the results of the regional ratio calculations of the distribution of Buddhist monasteries in the dynasties of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, two trends in the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area can be concluded.

4. Spatial Distribution Characteristics of Buddhist Monasteries in Xi'an City Area

During the Song to Qing dynasties, when Xi'an city area lost its status as the political, economic, and cultural center of the country, the Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area also lost any mandated protection they had, resulting in a decline in their construction. The distribution of new monasteries was no longer planned and became spontaneous instead, forming unique distribution characteristics of aggregation around what I call core buildings: buildings that played a functionally dominant role in the area where Buddhist monasteries aggregated. For example, in the Qing dynasty, the core buildings in the aggregation area, dominated by warehousing buildings, were the two granaries of Changping Cang (常平仓) and Yongfeng Cang (永丰仓). These two granaries defined the warehousing function of the area in the city, and were also the main reason for the distribution of Buddhist monasteries. This section thus explores the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties with the help of the KDE method, and derives their distribution characteristics of different city areas in different periods.

Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area during the Ming and Qing dynasties also showed an aggregation in the East Outer City—the area outside the eastern city walls of the Song and Yuan dynasties. This area was established in the early Ming dynasty and did not exist in the Song and Yuan dynasties. Most of the Buddhist monasteries in this area were built during the Tang and Yuan dynasties; there was no significant evolution in the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The monasteries in the East Outer City were dedicated to Buddhist activities for the local people and were not connected to the scope of Buddhist activities of the people in the main city. This aggregation was influenced by historical factors and did not have the characteristics of spontaneous distribution, so it is excluded from the scope of this chapter.

4.1. Spatial Distribution Characteristic: Dominated by Cultural Buildings

The visualization of the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries was obtained after importing the scope of Xi'an city area and the points of Buddhist monasteries into the KDE over the dynasties. Figure 3 presents the distribution characteristic of Buddhist monasteries aggregated around cultural buildings during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. The aggregation of Buddhist monasteries was in the southeast of the city area in the Song dynasty. These include the Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺), the Shangnan Temple

(善感禅院), the Longquan Temple (龙泉院), and the Xinglong Temple (兴龙寺), confirmed in historical records. A number of other Buddhist monasteries were erected in the area, along with Taibai Temple (Taoist building) and the Jingzhaofuxue (京兆府学, Confucian building). In the Yuan dynasty, the aggregation of Buddhist monasteries still occurred near Taoist buildings and Confucian buildings in the southeast area of the city. In addition to the Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasty, the area also included the Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺) and Wolong Temple (卧龙寺). There were Taoist buildings, such as the Taibai Temple and the Sanhuang Temple, and Confucian buildings, such as the Official School established by the government.

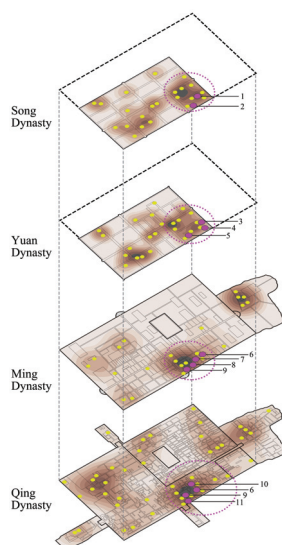


Figure 3. Buddhist Monasteries Aggregation around the Cultural Buildings. 1 Taibai Temple (Song); 2 Jingzhaofuxue; 3 Taibai Temple (Yuan); 4 Sanhuang Temple; 5 Official School (Yuan); 6 Confucious Temple (Ming and Qing); 7 Xi'an Official School; 8 Chang'an Official School; 9 Guanzhong Academy (Ming and Qing); 10 Forest of Steles; 11 Official School.

In the Ming dynasty, although the scale of the city area expanded, the aggregation of Buddhist monasteries, Taoist buildings, and Confucian buildings did not change geographical location. Buddhist monasteries were still located near Confucian buildings, such as the Confucious Temple, the Xi'an Official School, Chang'an Official School, and Guanzhong Academy. These construction of Buddhist monasteries continued to expand from the previous dynasty, and included Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺) and Qingliang Temple (清凉寺). In the Qing dynasty, this culture-based aggregation area was perpetuated. Buddhist monasteries were located near such Confucian buildings as the Forest of Steles, Confucius Temple, Guanzhong Academy, and Official School. The area contained Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasties as well as new ones built during the current dynasty, such as Huguo Temple (护国寺) and Fushou Temple (福寿寺).

This became an area of cultural aggregation. It is the area where, from the Song dynasty to the Qing, many cultural buildings, such as Buddhist monasteries, Taoist temples, and official academies, were built in the eastern part of the South City Gate. The construction of cultural buildings in this area never stopped during this period, giving the area a strong cultural character from a historical point of view. This cultural aggregation area, formed by Buddhist monasteries together with Taoist and Confucian buildings, has never changed its geographical location since its origin in the Song dynasty. This aggregation area was developed by the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, giving the Buddhist monas-

teries within Xi'an city area the distribution characteristic of being dominated by cultural buildings.

The reason for this proximity of cultural buildings was the new concept of "Integration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism (儒、释、道一体化)" in traditional Chinese religious concepts since the Song dynasty. During the Song dynasty, such concept restricted Buddhism but promoted Daoism and Confucianism. As a result, the focus of religion was directed toward the development of Neo Confucianism (理学), the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Under the influence of this religious concept, the Buddhist monasteries in Jingzhaofu city (京兆府, the name of Xi'an city area in the Song dynasty) began to have a tendency to be distributed together with Taoist buildings and Confucian buildings, gradually forming the cultural aggregation area within Xi'an city area. Because of the nature of this cultural aggregation, the area experienced a huge flow of people—believers of various religions, students from all over the city area, and literary enthusiasts. These factors led to the preservation of this area as a cultural aggregation area over the dynasties. During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, Buddhist monasteries, Taoist temples, and Confucian schools continued to be added to this area of cultural aggregation.

Because the geographical location of the cultural aggregation area did not change, the growth of new Buddhist monasteries in this area was relatively stable. This area on the southern side of Xi'an city area was preserved and allowed to develop, although the city area had expanded in the early Ming dynasty. This distribution model of cultural aggregation area in the south of the city area has influenced the urban planning of Xi'an city area in the present day. For example, not only was the aggregation of Buddhist monasteries inherited from the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties well preserved, but it also laid the foundation for the pattern of cultural buildings that appear in the south of Xi'an city area today. In view of the uninterrupted cultural attributes of the area, the Xi'an Municipal Government pronounced the area a historical and cultural district in December 2020, publishing the plan of it online (Figure 4).

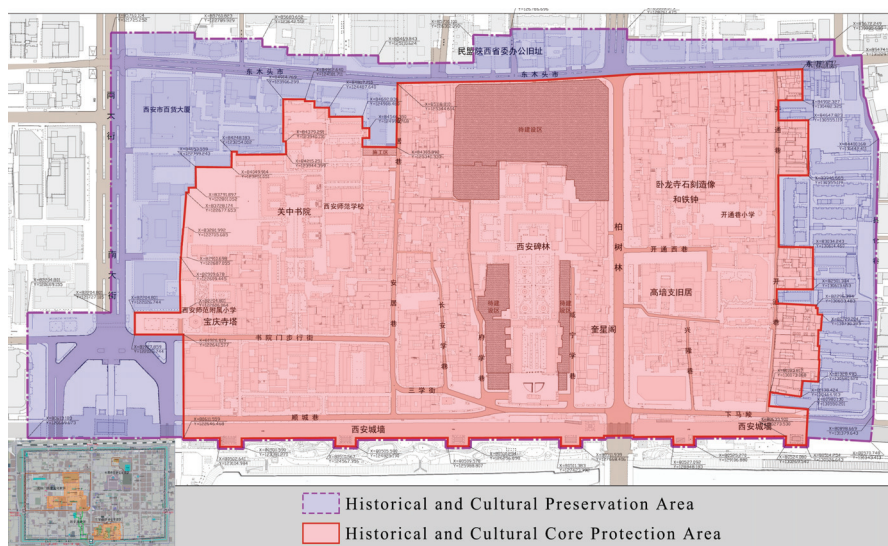


Figure 4. Xi'an Sanxue Street Conservation Planning Scope Public Announcement (Creative Commons: <http://www.xa.gov.cn/gk/ghjh/cxgh/ghglpqgs/5fe5794af8fd1c5966575fe6.html> (accessed on 1 November 2022)).

4.2. Spatial Distribution Characteristic: Dominated by Warehousing Buildings

The distribution of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area was characterized by their proximity to warehousing buildings in Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, located primarily around the Qiansi Warehouse (千斯仓)⁹ and the Post Station (马站) on the southwest side of Xian city area of the Yuan dynasty (Figure 5). Thus, the earliest distribution characteristic of Buddhist monasteries is that of being in an area dominated by warehouses. These include Xiangyan Temple (香严禅寺), Guangjiao Temple (广教禅寺), Kaifu Temple (开福寺), built in the Song dynasty, and Xi Kaifusi Temple (西开福寺), built in the Yuan dynasty. During the Ming dynasty, the location of warehouses within Xi'an city area had moved northward, and the area for new Buddhist monasteries were also moved, distributed instead around the Changping Warehouse (常平仓) and Yongfeng Warehouse (永丰仓).¹⁰ The monasteries already in that area included Anzhong Temple (安众寺) and Xiwutai Temple (西五台寺), built in the Song dynasty, and the Ming added Lianchi Temple (莲池寺) and Yuanjue Temple (圆觉寺). The Qing dynasty inherited this warehouse area and the number of Buddhist monasteries around the warehouses increased. The large number of new Buddhist monasteries included Guangren Temple (广仁寺) and Shuifo Temple (睡佛殿) and some smaller temples, such as Shuiyue Temple (水月庵) and Yonghe Temple (永和庵). The aggregation of monasteries around warehouses that had begun during the Yuan and continued in the Ming finished during the Qing.

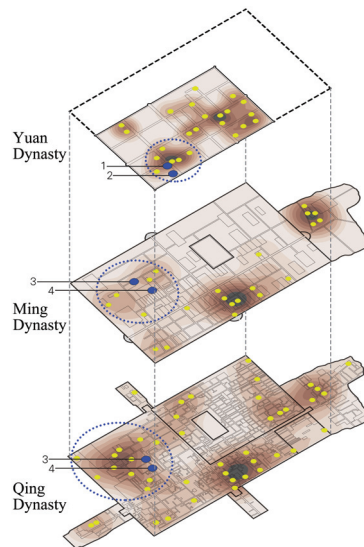


Figure 5. Buddhist Monasteries Aggregation around the Warehousing buildings. 1 Qiansi Warehouse; 2 Post Station; 3 Changping Warehouse (Ming and Qing); 4 Yongfeng Warehouse (Ming and Qing).

The reason Buddhist monasteries were distributed in an area dominated by warehouses is that the warehousing of grain was a vital lifeline for not only people's survival but also the survival of the administration in ancient Chinese society. Because of the limitations of transportation and the vagaries of climate, grain warehousing was significant for dynasties, and grain warehouses played an important role in every Chinese ancient city. In the traditional Chinese religion, paying homage to Buddha included praying for peace and blessings in life. No mistakes can be made in the process of grain storage and transportation, therefore many Buddhist monasteries were thus located in that area where they could protect the safety of the harvest. During the Yuan dynasty, although Fengyuanlu City (奉元路, the name of Xi'an city area in the Yuan dynasty) was not the political and

economic center of ancient China, it was the most significant military city in the north-western region of the country. The warehouses there were thus highly significant, and this was when the distribution characteristic of Buddhist monasteries being dominated by warehousing buildings first formed.

During the Ming dynasty, Xi'an city area expanded, and its internal structure changed. The original warehousing area in the southwestern of Fengyuanlu City was moved towards the northwest. The relocation of the warehousing area had no effect on the distribution characteristic of Buddhist monasteries being located around warehouses. Yongfeng Warehouse (永丰仓), located at the center of the warehousing area, was established in the early Ming dynasty. As a granary for storing grain taxes, regulating market prices, and providing disaster relief, it was an important warehouse by which the rulers maintained social stability and was used until the end of the Qing dynasty, in the 10th year of Guangxu. There were five Buddhist monasteries in this area during the Ming dynasty, two of which were inherited from the Song dynasty, and two, Lianchi Temple and Yuanjue Temple, were built after the Yongfeng Warehouse. This construction history, of first building temples, then warehouses, then temples again, demonstrates the aggregation pattern of Buddhist monasteries around warehouses, while the warehouses depended on the monasteries. In the Qing dynasty, many new small monasteries were built in the area, which further supports this finding. Through the development of the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the Buddhist monasteries were surrounded by the warehouses had been accomplished.

4.3. Spatial Distribution Characteristic: Dominated by Administrative Buildings

The relationship between the distribution of Buddhist monasteries and administrative buildings formed a characteristic that developed over the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Figure 6). For this characteristic, monasteries are distributed around administrative buildings, but discretely rather than in close proximity. In the Yuan dynasty, monasteries were located around administrative buildings such as the Liwensuo (理问所),¹¹ Wenjinju (纹锦局),¹² with the Jingzhaofu City Government at the center. The monasteries include Taiping Xingguo Temple (太平兴国寺), Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺), and Guanyin Temple (观音寺), all built in the Tang dynasty. They were deliberately built at a distance from the administrative buildings. In the Ming dynasty, Buddhist monasteries were also located around administrative buildings but also at more of a distance from them. These include Baoen Temple (报恩寺), built in the Tang dynasty, and the Xi Kaifusi Temple (西开福寺), built in the Song dynasty. Most Buddhist monasteries in the west part of Xi'an city area were located around Xi'an's city government, military, and civilian offices. Again, all were kept at some distance from those administrative buildings. In the Qing dynasty, the administrative center within Xi'an city area was relocated to the northeast region and was known as Man City. Monasteries were located around the Manchu Army Station and the Eight Banners Drill Ground (八旗教场)¹³ at the center of Man City (满城)¹⁴, which was located in the northeastern of Xi'an city area. Most of these were small monasteries, such as Jile Temple (极乐庵) and Ciyun Temple (慈云庵). There were only two large monasteries, Huazang Temple (华藏寺), from the Tang dynasty, and Xiemo Temple (蝎魔寺), from the Ming.

The reason for this distribution characteristic is that, in ancient Chinese urban planning, the placement of every functional building discretely, separate and at some distance from the administrative buildings, was according to a particular distribution of urban space (Figure 7). In the *Zhouli Kaogongji* (《周礼·考工记》), the layout is described in some detail: "The city was built by craftsmen, eighteen kilometers long and eighteen kilometers wide, with three gates on each of the four walls of the city. There were nine north-south avenues and nine east-west avenues in the city. Each avenue could accommodate nine carriages in parallel. The royal palace was in the center, with the temple on the east side of the main road and the altar of heaven on the west side. The administration was set up on the south side of the palace and the marketplace on the north side. Each administration was separated from the marketplace by a hundred paces" (匠人营国，方九里，旁三门。国中

九经九纬，经涂九轨，左祖右社，面朝后市，市朝一夫). According to this plan, the imperial palace was in the center of the city, while the rest of the functional buildings, such as markets and monasteries, were arranged around the palace. At the same time, administrative buildings were high in rank, large scale, and high security, and were often clustered together. Religious buildings and other functional buildings were not allowed to be built near higher-ranking administrative buildings. As a result, the Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area were located at a distance from administrative buildings. Although the orientation of the administrative area in Xi'an city area changed during the period from the Yuan dynasty to the Qing dynasty, the distribution characteristic of Buddhist monasteries discretely surrounding administrative buildings remained the same.

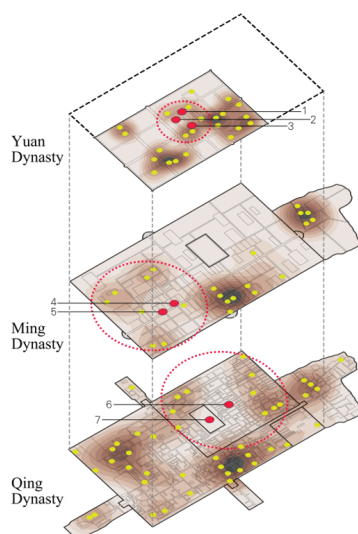


Figure 6. Buddhist Monasteries Distribution around the Administrative Buildings. 1 Liwensuo; 2 Wenjinju; 3 Jingzhaofu City Government; 4 Xi'an City Government; 5 Military and Civilian Office; 6 Manchu Army Station/Man City; 7 Eight Banners Drill Ground.

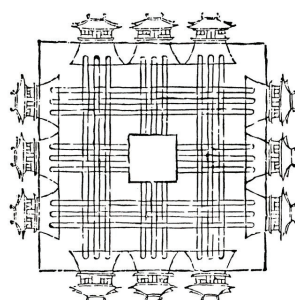


Figure 7. Illustration of urban planning from *Zhouli Kaogongji* (《周礼·考工记》, He.).

The Buddhist monasteries within the Xi'an city area developed their spontaneous pattern through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, forming the three characteristics of being distributed around core buildings, in close proximity to them, or discretely away from yet surrounding them. These three different patterns of aggregation existed independently of each other and did not have any influence on or correlation with each other. From the Song dynasty to the Qing, Buddhist monasteries in areas dominated by cultural buildings were never relocated, and the distribution pattern of Buddhist monasteries remained unchanged. Although the location changed of areas dominated by warehouses

and administrative buildings, around which monasteries were built, the actual distribution of monasteries in this layout was not affected.

5. Spatial Distribution Evolution of Buddhist Monasteries in Xi'an City Area

As has been shown, during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area began to appear spontaneously, without official planning. In this study, the spatial distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries refers to the changes in the location of areas of the city proper where these monasteries aggregated, changes that accompanied changes in the city structure that resulted from the succession of dynasties. Meanwhile, after the end of the Tang dynasty, when the distribution of Buddhist monasteries was no longer planned but spontaneous because Buddhist monasteries had lost their leading position in the religious culture of ancient China, the choice of their location depended more on the requirements of a monastery's builders and worshippers in terms of the coverage of a monastery's services. This section explores the spatial distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area by the methods of documentary analysis.

Table A1 shows the distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area, which includes the outer city, in the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. During this long period, the city was divided into different areas by its axis. For example, in the Song Dynasty, the city was divided by the north–south axis into eastern and western areas. Ten Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasties were located in the eastern area and two in the western area. After new Buddhist monasteries were added in the Song dynasty, there were eleven monasteries in the eastern area, while the number rose to seven in the western area. In the same way, the east–west axis divided the city into southern and northern areas. The southern area contained ten monasteries from the previous dynasties and the northern area contained two. Including the new Buddhist monasteries built during the Song dynasty, the number of Buddhist monasteries in the southern area was fourteen, while the number in the northern area rose to four. The method of dividing the Xi'an city area and the statistics of the distribution of Buddhist monasteries in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties followed that of the Song dynasty.

A ratio of the number of Buddhist monasteries between the east with the west area and the south with the north area is also evident in Table 1. When the ratio between the two areas tended closer to 1:1, the distribution of Buddhist monasteries between the two areas tended to be more balanced. Without taking into account the new Buddhist monasteries built in the Song dynasty, however, Buddhist monasteries were concentrated in the east and south of the city, with the ratios of east–west and south–north of 5. After counting the newly built Buddhist monasteries, the ratio decreased to 1.57 and 3.5, which means that the new Buddhist monasteries built in the Song dynasty were intentionally built towards the west and north areas, achieving a evolution of Buddhist monastery space that was balanced throughout Xi'an city area. The same evolution also persisted in the Yuan Dynasty. When only the Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasties are included, the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries still had a tendency to be more to the east and south of the city. After taking into account the new Buddhist monasteries in the Yuan Dynasty, the ratio between the eastern and the western area decreased from 1.83 to 1.57. This means that the difference in quantity between the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries in the eastern and western areas had decreased over time in Xi'an city area. In the Ming Dynasty, the same pattern of evolution persisted. The ratio of Buddhist monasteries of east–west of 2.2 and north–south of 1.29 shows that the distribution of Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasties was relatively more balanced. After the newly built Buddhist monasteries are included into the count, the ratio of the east–west distribution of Buddhist monasteries decreased to 1.71, while the ratio of the north–south decreased to 0.9. The distribution of the Buddhist monasteries changed from being mostly located in the south to north area. During the Qing Dynasty, the spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries in all areas in Xi'an city area continued to evolve

in a balanced way, attaining a balanced distribution. The statistical charts in Table 1 were drawn based on the number of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area. The lines gradually become smoother from the Song Dynasty to the Qing, another indicator that the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area had a balanced evolution.

Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area formed this balanced spatial distribution evolution during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties because, beginning with the Song dynasty, the social structure within Xi'an city area entered a stable stage of development compared to previous dynasties. During the Xining years of Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty (1068–1077, 宋神宗熙宁年间), the city contained millions of households, and the market was full of stores, merchants, and businesses, making it the most important economic capital in the northwest (N. Shi 1996). There was no longer a clear separation of the city's functional areas—administrative, commercial, and residential. These areas were interspersed with marketplaces, and large-scale handicraft production, commerce, and residences appeared in the west and north of the city. The service coverage of monasteries from previous dynasties could no longer meet the needs of Buddhist believers in the city. New Buddhist monasteries were therefore built in the west and north of the city in the Song dynasty, achieving a relatively stable and balanced distribution in all areas of the city. This evolution improved the service coverage of Buddhist monasteries and met the needs of the people. The Yuan, being similar to the Song, also allowed a stable evolution of the Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area, and the distribution of Buddhist monasteries further evolved toward a balance.

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the distribution evolution of Buddhist monasteries continued toward a balanced development. However, the reasons were different from those in the Song and Yuan dynasties. There were more Buddhist monasteries in the northern area and fewer in the southern area because of the expansion of the city and the change in the city structure in the Ming dynasty. The expansion of the city and the construction of outer cities brought some Buddhist monasteries built in the former dynasties into the city area, especially from the East Outer City, which had the largest quantity of Buddhist monasteries from former dynasties. The main residential areas in the East Outer City were to the north of the city axis, so many monasteries were also located in the north. The Man City construction had cut off the city space, and the space in which monasteries could grow was also simultaneously blocked by its walls. Many new Buddhist monasteries were built within Man City, at an architectural scale that was far smaller than the traditional ancient monasteries and were intended only to serve the military and political organs. It is for these reasons that the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area evolved from being mostly located in the south and less in the north to being located more in the north and less in the south.

In summary, the evolution of the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within the Xi'an city area was influenced by two factors: the distribution of Buddhist monasteries from previous dynasties and changes to the scale and structure of the city. The distribution of Buddhist monasteries inherited from the previous dynasties was the basis for the selection of sites for Buddhist monasteries built in new dynasties. The changes in the scale and structure of the city changed the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries within the city area. The expansion of the city encompassed those Buddhist monasteries that were originally placed outside the city, while changes to the city structure led to the interruption of city space, such as the construction of the Qin Palace in the Ming dynasty and Man City in the Qing dynasty. The Buddhist monasteries outside the Man City retained an evolution toward the balanced development of the previous dynasties, while the Buddhist monasteries in the Man City were newly built around the administrative buildings and had different distribution characteristics from the outer city areas, contributing to a balanced spatial distribution evolution.

Table 1. The Distribution Evolution of Buddhist Monasteries in Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties.

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6. Discussion

This investigation rectifies the absence of studies about the spatial distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries and their evolution across dynasties in the same region. It also reveals the frequency with which these monasteries were constructed in Xian city area during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. There is a strong connection between the spatial development of Buddhist monasteries and the evolution of the spatial pattern of the Xi'an city area in different historical periods from the city space perspective. This connection is significant for directing the spatial arrangement of Buddhist monasteries in the Xi'an city area at present.

Due to the unfamiliarity with spatial technology and the limited scope of data collection, there are many shortcomings in this study. First, the original data collection of Buddhist monasteries has limitations. Buddhist monasteries that are recorded in historical materials but have no specific location are not included. This absence implies there may be inaccuracies in the identification of distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries in the conclusion. Second, in the process of dating individual Buddhist temples, there are cases in which the dates of their founding cannot be confirmed. Finally, the kernel density analysis method is one of many spatial analysis methods. In this research, only the mean geometric center and discrete distance are used as the measure to discern the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries, which entails some errors. In future research, we would attempt to expand the collection of more literary and historical data, and use different spatial distribution research methods to make the conclusions more specific and accurate.

7. Conclusions

In this paper, the distribution of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area was drawn by first examining documents from the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties. Then, the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries within Xian city area were explored by the KDE method. The evolution of this spatial distribution was then explored by using documentary analysis and mathematical statistics methods. The connection between the spatial development of Buddhist monasteries and urban planning within Xi'an city area was explored.

The establishment of Buddhist monasteries within Xi'an city area through the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties has several characteristics of distribution. After the end of the Tang dynasty, the declining importance attached to Buddhism by the rulers and the loss of Buddhism's related religious policies eventually led to a loss of planning and order in the construction of Buddhist temples after the Song dynasty. From this period onward, the distribution of Buddhist monasteries shifted to a trend of spontaneous distribution.

Then, during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, the distribution of Buddhist monasteries gradually developed the characteristic of being located in close or discrete locations around core buildings. The distribution pattern of some Buddhist monasteries around cultural buildings was based on the high concentration of other cultural attributes of such areas. The clustering in one area of Buddhist monasteries, Taoist and Confucian buildings, and various schools constitutes a strong cultural attribute of that space.

The formation of a distribution area of other Buddhist monasteries with warehousing buildings as the core was based on the importance of warehouses under the ancient Chinese administrative system. In Xi'an, warehouses served the entire northwest region and were key to the rulers' efforts to maintain social stability. Therefore, the Buddhist monasteries, where people gathered to pray for peace and happiness, were erected around the warehouses to meet the worshipping needs of the staff managing the warehouse. This conclusion is supported by the timing of the mutual construction of Buddhist monasteries and storage buildings.

Finally, the discrete distribution of Buddhist monasteries around administrative buildings was a pattern formed by concepts of urban planning prevalent at the time. In ancient China, administrative buildings had to be located in the center of the city, and the rest

of the functional buildings had to be spaced out and surrounded by the rest of the city. Buddhist monasteries were places frequently visited by officials and nobles, thus forming a discrete yet encompassing distribution pattern of monasteries on the periphery of the administrative class.

This research connects case studies of Buddhist monasteries and then explores their distribution characteristics in detail, with the aim of revealing the patterns of evolution of religious space in an urban area. There are few studies about Buddhist monasteries similar to this paper, and explore of the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries in both time and space in one urban context is limited. Therefore, the approach and method of research demonstrated in this study provides a model for the study of the distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries and other religious buildings in other historical cities. The conclusions of this paper provide detailed basic data and information on the spatial evolution of urban history and the spatial distribution pattern of Buddhist monasteries, and offer research ideas for the study of the spatial distribution of the same type in Xi'an.

The spatial distribution of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area had gradually evolved toward balance since the Song Dynasty, when the decisions about where to site monasteries moved away from official policy. This tendency toward a balanced distribution of monasteries across the city was the result of stable social development, city expansion, and changes in city structure. The stability of the social situation resulted in an increase in people and thus in the demand for Buddhist activities. The service area of the existing Buddhist monasteries could not meet this rapid increase in demand, so a number of new Buddhist monasteries were built in areas not previously covered. The expansion of the city boundary had annexed the land outside the city, encompassing areas that included many historical Buddhist monasteries. This expansion and annexation toward the east and north broke the original concentration of Buddhist monasteries in the south, one of the primary reasons for the evolution of Buddhist monasteries toward a balanced distribution. The establishment of Man City in Xi'an city area during the Qing Dynasty broke the original urban structure but at the same time contributed to the evolutionary dynamics of the Buddhist monasteries toward balance. The establishment of a number of small Buddhist monasteries in Man City for the official and aristocratic classes weakened the original distribution of Buddhist monasteries in the southern part of the city, and strengthened the balanced distribution of Buddhist monasteries in Xi'an city area.

Buddhism was introduced to China two thousand years ago, and it has long been an important part of Chinese religious culture. An architectural expression of Buddhist culture, Buddhist monasteries combined with certain characteristics of classical Chinese architecture and became a reflection of the historical and cultural lineage of ancient Chinese cities, playing an influential role in ancient Chinese urban spaces. Buddhist monastery space carries the architectural information of a city's history and cultural evolution. It is regrettable that only four Buddhist monasteries and one pagoda have been preserved within the city walls of Xi'an today, which is not comparable to the development of Buddhist monasteries in any period of history. The spatial distribution characteristics of Buddhist monasteries, from an urban perspective, are an important part of the development and evolution of the city's heritage and should be reasonably protected and planned for. For Xi'an city and other similar historical cities, it is important to ensure that the spontaneous patterns of various historical architectures are not destroyed, but that their value is acknowledged and the buildings preserved as part of the city's heritage.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Buddhist Monasteries in Xi'an City Area during the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Song				
1	West Wutai Temple (西五台寺)	Song	Located in the northwest corner of the city, its building pedestals were first built in the Tang. The building was constructed in the Song and rebuilt in the Ming.	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
2	Anzhong Zen Temple (安众禅院)	Song	Located on Yeting Street. Originally a royal garden, it was later transformed into a Buddhist temple.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
3	Qingshou Temple (庆寿寺)	Unknown	Located on Penglaifang Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
4	Tianning Temple (天宁寺)	Unknown	Located on the north side of Zhihui East Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
5	Taiping Xingguo Temple (太平兴国寺)	Tianyou period in Tang	Located on Eastern Street.	Chang'an Annals-Chang'an Drawing Record 《长安志·长安图志》
6	Renwang Temple (仁王院)	Tang	Located on the north side of Jingfeng Street, it was the lower court of Jianfu Temple (荐福寺).	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
7	Guangjiao Zen Temple (广教禅寺)	Song	Located on Zhihui West Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
8	Kaifu Temple (开福寺)	Song	Located on the west side of Hanguang Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
9	Bao'en Temple (报恩寺)	Reign of Tang Emperor Zhongzong	Located in the south of the county. It was built during the reign of Emperor Zhongzong in the Tang to pray for Prince Yide. In the mid-Yuan period, it was given the name of Daxingguo Bao'en Temple (大兴国报恩寺), which was changed to Bao'en Temple (报恩寺) in the Ming. The building was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongzhi period of the Ming. (明弘治二年)	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
10	Xiangyan Zen Temple (香严禅寺)	Song	Located on Shuichi Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
11	Miaoguoni Temple (妙果尼寺)	Tang	Located in the southwest of the Xian city area. It was originally used as the Censorate in the Tang, which can be verified by the Inscription of The Censorate Vihara (《御史台精舍碑》) written by Cui Shi. It was reconstructed into Miaoguoni Temple (妙果尼寺) during the Kaibao period in the Song.	Chang'an Annals-Chang'an Drawing Record 《长安志·长安图志》
12	Chongsheng Temple (崇圣禅院)	Unknown	Located on Shuichi Street, it was commonly known as Jingta Temple (经塔寺).	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
13	Guanyin Temple (观音寺)	Second year of the Tianbao period in the Tang	Located in Guangji Fang of Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Song				
14	Baoqing Temple (保庆寺)	Middle of the Jinglong period in the Tang	Located in Tongzheng Fang, in the north of Wannian County.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
15	Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺)	Kaiyuan period in Tang	Located on the north side of Caochang Street and the south side of Jingfeng Street in Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
16	Fuchang Pagoda Temple (福昌宝塔院)	Tang	Located on the east side of Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺).	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
17	Erlong Temple (二龙寺)	Song	Located in Yongning Fang.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
18	Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺)	Reign of Sui Emperor Wen	Located in the southeast of Xian city area (Shuyuan Gate).	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
19	Shangan Zen Temple (善感禅院)	Jin	Located on Caochang Street in Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
20	Xingguo Temple (兴国院)	Unknown	Located on the south side of Jingfeng Street.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
21	Longquan Temple (龙泉院)	During the reign of Han Emperor Ling	Located on Caochang Street in Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
22	Xinglong Temple (兴龙寺)	Han	Located in Xiaoyi Li.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
Yuan				
1	West Wutai Temple (西五台寺)	Song	Located in the northwest corner of the city, its building pedestals were first built in the Tang. The building was constructed in the Song and rebuilt in the Ming.	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
2	Anzhong Zen Temple (安众禅院)	Song	Located on Yeting Street. Originally a royal garden, it was later transformed into a Buddhist temple.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
3	Taiping Xingguo Temple (太平兴国寺)	Tianyou period in Tang	Located on Jiuyao Street in Xian city area. It was commonly known as Jiuyao Temple (九耀寺).	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
4	Qingshou Temple (庆寿寺)	Unknown	Located on Penglaifang Street.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
5	Tianning Temple (天宁寺)	Unknown	Located on north side of Zhihui East Street.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
6	Renwang Temple (仁王院)	Tang and before Tang	Located on north side of Jingfeng Street. It was the lower court of Jianfu Temple (荐福寺).	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
7	West Kaifu Temple (西开福寺)	Yuan	Located in Hanguang Fang of Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
8	Kaifu Temple (开福寺)	Song	Located on the west side of Hanguang Street. It was rebuilt in the tenth year of the Yuan.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
9	Guangjiao Zen Temple (广教禅寺)	Song	Located on Zhihui West Street.	Class compilation of Changan Records (类编长安志)
10	Bao'en Temple (报恩寺)	Reign of Tang Emperor Zhongzong	Located in the south of the county. It was built during the reign of Emperor Zhongzong of Tang to pray for Prince Yide. In the mid-Yuan period, it was given the name of Daxingguo Bao'en Temple (大兴国报恩寺), which was changed to Bao'en Temple (报恩寺) in the Ming. The building was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongzhi period in the Ming. (明弘治二年)	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Yuan				
11	Xiangyan Zen Temple (香严禅寺)	Song	Located on Shuichi Street.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
12	Chongsheng Temple (崇圣禅院)	Unknown	Located on Shuichi Street, it was commonly known as Jingta Temple (经塔寺).	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
13	Guanyin Temple (观音寺)	Second year of the Tianbao period in Tang	Located in the Guangji Fang of Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
14	Baoqing Temple (保庆寺)	Middle of the Jinglong period in Tang	Located in Tongzheng Fang, in the north of Wannian County.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
15	Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺)	Kaiyuan period in Tang	Located on the north side of Caochang Street and the south side of Jingfeng Street in Xian city area.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
16	Taiping Xingguo Temple	Tianyou period in Tang	Also known as Jiuyao Temple.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
17	Erlong Temple (二龙寺)	Song	Located in the Yongning Fang.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
18	Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺)	Reign of Sui Emperor Wen	Located in the southeast of Xian city area (Shuyuan Gate).	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
19	Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺)	Jin	Located on Caochang Street in the Xian city area, it was known as Shanghan Zen Temple (善感禅院) in the Song.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
20	Xinglong Temple (兴龙寺)	Han	Located in the Xiaoyi Alley.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
21	Wolong Temple (卧龙寺)	Reign of Han Emperor Ling	Located on Caochang Street in Xian city area, it was known as Longquan Temple (龙泉院) in the Song.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
22	Zisheng Temple (资圣院)	Unknown	Located on the south side of Jingfeng Street. It was originally called Xingguo Temple (兴国院) and was renamed Zisheng Temple (资圣院) during the Jin Empire.	Class compilation of Changan Records 《类编长安志》
23	Taiping Xingguo Temple (太平兴国寺)	Tianyou period in Tang	Located on Eastern Street.	Chang'an Annals·Chang'an Drawing Record 《长安志·长安图志》
Ming				
1	Anzhong Temple (安众寺)	Song	Located in the northwest of Xian city area. Originally the residence of Kou Zhun in the Song, it was later transformed into a Buddhist temple. It was recorded as Anquan Temple (安泉寺) in the Atlas.	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
2	West Wutai Temple (西五台寺)	Song	Located in the northwest corner of the city, its building pedestals were first built in the Tang. The building was constructed in the Song and rebuilt in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
3	North Wutai Temple (北五台)	Unknown	Located in the vicinity of the lotus pond in the northwest of Xian city area.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
4	Lotus Pond Temple (莲池寺)	Eighth year of the Chongzhen period in the Ming	Located in the vicinity of the lotus pond in the northwest of Xian city area, it was a tourist attraction for nobles in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
5	Yuanjue Temple (圆觉寺)	Second year of the Yongle period in the Ming	Located north of the government office in the Ming. It was rebuilt in the tenth year of the Shunzhi period in the Qing.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
6	Xiemo Temple (蝎魔寺)	Ming	Located in Dachai Market, in the east of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Ming				
7	Bao'en Temple (报恩寺)	Reign of Tang Emperor Zhongzong	Located in the south of the county. It was built during the reign of Emperor Zhongzong in the Tang to pray for Prince Yide. In the mid-Yuan period, it was given the name of Daxingguo Bao'en Temple (大兴国报恩寺), which was changed to Bao'en Temple (报恩寺) in the Ming. The building was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongzhi period in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
8	Guanyin Temple (观音寺)	Second year of the Tianbao period in the Tang	Located in Guangji Alley of the Xian city area. It was rebuilt in the fifteenth year of Zhengde period in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
9	West Kaifu Temple (西开福寺)	Yuan	Located in the Hanguang Fang of the Xian city area. It was rebuilt during the reign of Ming Emperor Jiajing and in the first year of the Wanli period in the Ming, respectively.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
10	Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺)	Fourth year of the Kaiyuan period in the Tang	Located in the east of Xian city area. There was a Xuanzong Imperial Pagoda (玄宗御塔) in the Back Hall.	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
11	Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺)	Reign of Sui Emperor Wen	Located in the southeast of Xian city area (Shuyuan Gate). Only the Five-color Pagoda (五色塔) was built in the Ming.	Ming—Wanli 39th year “Shaanxi General Records” (明万历三十九年·《陕西通志》)
12	Huata Temple (花塔寺)	Unknown	Located in the southeast of the Xian city area. It was known as Huata Temple (华塔寺) in the Qing.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
13	Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺)	Jin	Located in the southeast of the city. It was known as Guangfu Zen Temple (广福禅院) in the Later Zhou and was given the name of Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺) during the reign of Song Emperor Renzong. It underwent several periods of construction in the Yuan.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
14	Wolong Temple (卧龙寺)	During the reign of Han Emperor Ling	Located in the north side of the Confucious Temple which is in the southeast of the city. Originally given the name of Guanyin Temple (观音寺), which was changed to Wolong Temple (卧龙寺) in the Song. It was rebuilt in the sixteenth year of Zhengde period in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
15	Qingliang Temple (清凉寺)	Unknown	Located in the southeast of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
16	Xinglong Temple (兴龙寺)	Han	Located in Xiaoyi Li.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
17	Erlong Temple (二龙寺)	Song	Located in Yongning Fang.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
18	Yuantong Temple (圆通寺)	Eleventh year of the Zhizheng period in the Yuan	Located in Eastern Outer City.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
19	Wuji Temple (无极寺)	Unknown		The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
20	Hongfu Temple (洪福寺)	Eighth year of the Zhenguan period in the Tang	Located in the Eastern Outer City. It was built as Hongfu Temple (弘福寺) under the order of Tang Emperor Taizong to pray for Empress Mu and was renamed Xingfu Temple (兴福寺) during the Shenlong period. In the fourth year of the Dading period in the Jin, the name was changed to Hongfu Temple (洪福寺). It was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongwu period in the Ming.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Ming				
21	Wangji Temple (罔极寺)	First year of the Shenlong period in the Tang	Located outside the Eastern Gate and inside the Yingxuan Gate.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
22	Anguo Temple (安国寺)	First year of the Jingyun period in the Tang	Located inside the Yingxuan Gate. It was originally used as the residence of Tang Emperor Ruizong.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
Qing				
1	GuangRen Lama Temple (广仁寺)	Forty-fourth year of the Kangxi period in the Qing	Located beside the drill ground of Xihe Garden. It was built by order of Qing Emperor Shengzu in the forty-fourth year of the Kangxi period. The text “Compassion like clouds, sheltering the West”(慈云西荫) on the four-character plaque was written by the emperor and then engraved on a tablet during the emperor’s travel to the west.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” (雍正《陕西通志》)
2	Shuiyue Nunnery (水月庵)	Unknown	Located in the west of the city. It is a Buddhist nunnery.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
3	Bodhisattva Temple (菩萨庙)	Unknown	Located in the vicinity of Longevity Palace (万寿宫) in the northwest of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
4	Yonghe Nunnery (永和庵)	Unknown	Located in the west of the city. It is a Buddhist nunnery.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
5	Hongji Temple (宏济庵)	Unknown	Located in the west of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
6	Lotus Pond Temple (莲池寺)	Eighth year of the Chongzhen period in the Ming	Located in the vicinity of the lotus pond in the northwest of Xian city area. It was a tourist attraction for nobles in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
7	Rushi Temple (如是庵)	Unknown	Located in the west of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
8	Yuanjue Temple (圆觉寺)	Second year of the Yongle period in the Ming	Located north of the government office in the Ming. It was rebuilt in the tenth year of Shunzhi period in the Qing.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
9	West Wutai Temple (西五台寺)	Song	Located in the northwest corner of the city, its building pedestals were first built in the Tang. The building was constructed in the Song and rebuilt in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
10	Anzhong Temple (安众寺)	Song	Located in the northwest of Xian city area. Originally the residence of Kou Zhun in the Song, it was later transformed into a Buddhist temple.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
11	Sleeping Buddha Hall (睡佛殿)	First year of Shunzhi period in the Qing	Located in West Wutai Xiangmi Garden.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
12	Shanqing Temple (善庆寺)	Unknown	Located west of the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
13	Yuantong Temple (圆通庵)	Unknown	Located in the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
14	Jile Temple (极乐庵)	Unknown	Located in the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
15	Hongqing Temple (宏庆庵)	Unknown	Located in the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
16	Kaifu Temple (开福寺)	Unknown	Located in the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
17	Ciyun Temple (慈云庵)	Unknown	Located in the northeast corner of the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Qing				
18	Huazang Temple (华藏寺)	Ninth year of the Tianbao period in the Tang	Located in Dexin Alley. It was given the name of Baoshou Temple (保寿寺) in the Tang, which was changed into Huazang Temple (华藏寺) because Monk Xingfang wrote his Sutra here.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
19	Xiemo Temple (蝎魔寺)	Ming	Located south of the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi’an (《西安历史地图集》)
20	Ciyun Temple (慈云庵)	Unknown	Located southeast of the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi’an (《西安历史地图集》)
21	Guanyin Temple (观音庵)	Unknown	Located in the imperial city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi’an (《西安历史地图集》)
22	Bao’en Temple (报恩寺)	Reign of Tang Emperor Zhongzong	Located in the south of the county. It was built during the reign of Emperor Zhongzong in the Tang to pray for Prince Yide. In the mid-Yuan period, it was given the name of Daxingguo Bao’en Temple (大兴国报恩寺), which was changed to Bao’en Temple (报恩寺) in the Ming. The building was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongzhi period in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
23	Wanqing Temple (万清寺)	Thirty-fifth year of the Kangxi period in the Qing	Located in Shuichi Alley.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
24	Guanyin Temple (观音寺)	The second year of the Tianbao period in the Tang	Located in Guangji Fang of Xian city area. It was rebuilt in the fifteenth year of Zhengde period in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
25	West Kaifu Temple (西开福寺)	Song	Located in Hanguang Alley of Xian city area. It was rebuilt during the reign of Ming Emperor Jiajing and then in the first year of the Wanli period in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
26	Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺)	Kaiyuan period in the Tang	Located in the east of the county. It was rebuilt in the fourth year of the Jianlong period in the Song, the twelfth year of Jiajing period in the Ming, and the thirtieth year of the Kangxi period in the Qing.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
27	Huata Temple (华塔寺)	Unknown	Located in the southeast of the city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi’an (《西安历史地图集》)
28	Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺)	Jin	Located beside the government bank of the city, it was known as Guangfu Zen Temple (广福禅院) in the Later Zhou and was given the name of Xiangcheng Temple (香城寺) during the reign of Song Emperor Renzong. It underwent several periods of construction in the Yuan.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
29	Wolong Temple (卧龙寺)	Reign of Han Emperor Ling	Located on the north side of the Confucious Temple, in the southeast of the city. Originally given the name of Guanyin Temple (观音寺), it was changed to Wolong Temple (卧龙寺) in the Song. It was rebuilt in the sixteenth year of Zhengde period in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
30	Xinglong Temple (兴龙寺)	Han	Located in the Xiaoyi Alley.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
31	Fushou Temple (福寿寺)	Unknown	Located in the southeast of the city, near the southern city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi’an (《西安历史地图集》)

Table A1. Cont.

NO.	Name	Dynasties of Construction	Descriptions	References
Qing				
32	Qingliang Temple (清凉寺)	Second year of Dading period in Jin	Located in the south of the city. It was adjacent to the southern city.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
33	Guanghui Temple (广惠寺)	Unknown	Located in the southern city.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
34	Baoqing Temple (宝庆寺)	Renshou period in the Sui	Located in Anren Fang (Shuyuan Gate). It was rebuilt in the second year of Jingtai period in the Ming and then the first year of the Yongzheng period in the Qing.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
35	Erlong Temple (二龙寺)	Song	Located in Yongning Alley.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
36	Huguo Temple (护国寺)	Shunzhi period in the Qing	Located in the city.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
37	Jile Temple (极乐庵)	Unknown	Located in the Northern Outer City.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
38	Anqing Temple (安庆寺)	Tang	Located in the Western Outer City.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
39	Hongshen Temple (洪神寺)	Unknown	Located in the Western Outer City.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
40	Hongfu Temple (洪福寺)	Eighth year of the Zhenguan period in the Tang	Located in the Eastern Outer City. It was built as Hongfu Temple (弘福寺) under the order of Tang Emperor Taizong to pray for Empress Mu and was renamed Xingfu Temple (兴福寺) during the Shenlong period. In the fourth year of Dading period in the Jin, the name was changed to Hongfu Temple (洪福寺). It was rebuilt in the second year of the Hongwu period in the Ming.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
41	Yuantong Temple (圆通寺)	Eleventh year of the Zhizheng period in the Yuan	Located in he Jinhua Fang in the eastern suburbs. It was rebuilt in the fifty-third year of Kangxi period in the Qing.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
42	Wangji Temple (罔极寺)	First year of the Shenlong period in the Tang	Located outside the Eastern Gate and inside the Yingxuan Gate.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)
43	Wanling Temple (万灵庵)	Unknown	Located in the East Outer Dity and close to the Eastern Gate.	The Historical Atlas of Xi'an (《西安历史地图集》)
44	Anguo Temple (安国寺)	First year of the Jingyun period in the Tang	Located inside the Yingxuan Gate. It was originally used as the residence of Tang Emperor Ruizong.	Yongzheng “Shaanxi General Records” of the Yongzheng Period (雍正《陕西通志》)

Notes

¹ The Convention mainly defines cultural and natural heritage and the national protection and international protection measures for cultural and natural heritage.

² China’s Code of the Conservation Planning for Historical and Cultural Cities is designed to protect the historical and cultural city, coordinate its protection and construction development, and propose protection measures as the main content for the special planning design in urban planning. It is updated in real-time, with the most recent version for Xi’an City updated in 2018.

- 3 Ci'en Temple was built in the twenty-second year of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty (648, 唐太宗贞观二十二年). The monk Xuanzang once presided over the monastery and used it as a Buddhist scripture translation site.
- 4 Jianfu Temple was built in the first year of Emperor Ruizong of Tang (684, 唐睿宗文明元年). It was one of the most famous Buddhist monasteries in Chang'an City of the Tang Dynasty.
- 5 Dayan Pagoda was located in the Ci'en Temple. In the third year of Yong Hui of Tang Dynasty (652, 唐永徽三年), Xuan Zang presided over the construction of Dayan Pagoda to preserve the sutra scrolls and Buddha statues brought back to Chang'an from Tintu (an ancient Chinese generic term for present-day India) through the Silk Road.
- 6 The sects were different approaches to the pursuit of a common purpose in Buddhist culture.
- 7 The Five Period (907–960) was not a particular dynasty but a special historical period between the Tang and Song dynasties.
- 8 A religious practice that originated in China's homeland, Daoism had a profound impact on ancient Chinese politics, economy, and culture. Daoism was one of the three spiritual pillars—the others being Buddhism and Confucianism—of the ruling class.
- 9 Qiansi Warehouse was the most important granary in the Fengyuanlu (奉元路) City.
- 10 Changping Warehouse and Yongfeng Warehouse were the most important granaries in Ming and Qing Xi'an City.
- 11 Liwen office was the institution responsible for handling judicial affairs in the Yuan dynasty.
- 12 Wenjin situation was the agency responsible for managing textiles in the Yuan dynasty.
- 13 Eight Banners Drill Ground was where the Manchu military soldiers would drill and review.
- 14 Man City was set up in Qing Xi'an City by the Qing rulers to strengthen the management of the northwest region. It was exclusively for the Manchu rulers to live and work.

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Article

Formation of a Sacred Urban Landscape: Study on the Spatial Distribution of Pagodas in Mrauk-U, Myanmar

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Abstract: Studying the correlation between religions and cities is conducive to understanding the role of worship in shaping human settlements. Mrauk-U, the capital of the Arakan Kingdom in Southeast Asia during the 15th–18th centuries, was once a regional Buddhist center, and the pagodas distributed throughout this city demonstrate the visible influence of Buddhism. The purpose of this study is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of Buddhism in Mrauk-U by exploring the correlation between the pagodas and the urban space. Based on first-hand spatial data, historical maps, and archaeological studies, the spatial distribution characteristics of the pagodas in Mrauk-U were analyzed using the methods of spatial and literature analysis. Their relationships with the urban structure, mountains, water systems, and open space were visualized and examined using the GIS platform; then, the hidden historical mechanisms were investigated. This study concludes that Mrauk-U's pagodas, as urban images, have shaped its sacred urban landscape system, revealing that Buddhism played an important role in shaping Mrauk-U's physical space and social and cultural characteristics.

Keywords: Buddhism; pagodas; spatial distribution; urban landscape; Mrauk-U

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Under the pressure of material and spiritual demands for living space, humans have been eager to imbue the material world with religious meaning (Heidegger 1971; Rykwert 1976) and infuse the city with sanctity (Meyer 1976; Fritz 1986). Religion, as a system of human spiritual beliefs and practices, has long been symbolically and materially associated with cities (Goh and van der Veer 2016). In different regions of the world, the diversity of religions affects urban spatial layouts and forms. For example, some Buddhist cities in ancient Asia used the symbolic image of a “mandala”¹ as a blueprint for the construction of cities or temples. The downtown areas of cities in medieval Europe were often occupied by churches, and their environs served as important public spaces. Islamic cities have mosques as the center of neighborhood units. Sacred buildings such as temples, churches, or mosques are often incorporated into the urban structure through city planning, rather than existing as independent entities (Kostof 1992, p. 86). Studying the correlation between religions and the material environment is important in order to understand the role of religion in the formation of human residential space.

Buddhism has had a presence in the region of modern-day Myanmar since the 6th century BCE, and the kingdoms occupying much of present-day Myanmar adopted Buddhism as the state religion as far back as the 10th and 11th centuries CE. In the 11th century, King Anawrahta of the Bagan Dynasty undertook religious reform and announced Theravada Buddhism as a state religion, and it became a religious system for people of all ethnic

groups in the Bagan Dynasty. Since then, Theravada Buddhism has become dominant in Myanmar and has gradually developed local characteristics. Theravada Buddhism (Pali: “Way of the Elders”) is one of the branches of Buddhism that utilizes Pali as its canonical language. It spread from India southward to Sri Lanka and then to Southeast Asia. The ideal of Theravada Buddhism is the arhat (Pali: arahant), or perfected saint, who attains enlightenment through their own efforts (Source: Britannica). In countries that adhere to Theravada Buddhism, people often seek guidance from the Buddha. In addition to the Buddhist altars at home, pagodas and temples are prominent sites for religious activities (Yang 2004, p. 154). Constructing pagodas is a significant way to express religious devotion and develop one’s spiritual worth (He 1991, p. 101), which is highly regarded in Myanmar.

The Arakan Kingdom, located in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, was also deeply influenced by Buddhism. According to legend, Buddhism was introduced into Arakan by the Buddha in the 6th century BCE. In the Christian era, Buddhism in Arakan developed rapidly under the guidance of local kings (Raymond 1999, p. 92). The “Fat Monk” image built around the beginning of the Christian era is the earliest known Buddhist relic in Rakhine (San Thu Aung 1979, p. 15).² After the 10th century, with the strong influence of the Bagan, Inwa, Pegu, and other regimes, as well as frequent exchanges with Sri Lanka and other regions, Theravada Buddhism gradually occupied a dominant position in Arakan (Gutman 2001, pp. 9–15). From the 15th century, as the kingdom grew in prosperity, it began to have frequent exchanges with Sri Lanka, the center of Theravada Buddhism. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Buddhist culture flourished in Arakan; it had a continuing impact on this region and was significantly reflected in the city’s physical space.

1.2. Overview of Study Area

Mrauk-U was an important capital of the Arakan Kingdom in the 15th–18th centuries (Figure 1). During the golden days of Mrauk-U (the 16th and 17th centuries), when there were frequent Buddhist activities, it not only further integrated the achievements of regional Buddhist culture³ but also became the key support for Buddhist rejuvenation in Sri Lanka⁴ and the center of regional Buddhism (Collis 1973, p. 205).



Figure 1. Location of Mrauk-U. Source: the author.

Mrauk-U is situated in the Kaladan River Plain on the western side of the Rakhine Mountains. Its urban space is unique because of the natural terrain. The city is located between hills and mountains, and the city walls are composed of natural mountains and artificial walls (Jiang and Zhou 2023, p. 718). The palace stands at the city center, serving as the central hub from which the main roads radiate outward. The city is also densely

covered with water systems, which are mainly composed of natural rivers, artificial lakes, and water storage tanks.

A remarkable correlation between Buddhism and the material space of Mrauk-U lies in the wide distribution of pagodas in the city (Figures 2 and 3). In the 15th to 17th centuries, the construction of Buddhist buildings in Arakan reached its peak. According to a local saying, “Pagodas are as many as orchids in Rakhine” (Shwe Zan et al. 1984, p. 35), which indicates the large number of pagodas in Rakhine. “Pagoda” is sourced from “stupa” in Sanskrit and serves as a representative architectural work of Buddhism. “Stupa” originally meant “towering” and indicated Buddha’s Nirvana (Funo 2009, p. 75). It was first a hemispherical mound housing the relics of the Buddha (Shrotriya 2023, p. 276). The pagodas in Myanmar were developed based on the architectural form of Indian stupas (ibid.). A pagoda in Mrauk-U is composed of three parts: the Base, Body, and Thata, mainly built of stone or red brick. As informed by the archaeological team from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar, more than 3000 Buddhist architectural works were built in the 15th–18th centuries.



Figure 2. View of Mrauk-U in the XVII century: the first plan for the Portuguese settlement. Source: (Wouter Schouten 1676, *Oost-Indische Voyagie*, p. 148), Wikipedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_de_Mrauk-U,_ou_Arrakan_\(cidade_de_Arrac%C3%A3o\)_no_primeiro_plano_o_bairro_portugu%C3%AAs.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vista_de_Mrauk-U,_ou_Arrakan_(cidade_de_Arrac%C3%A3o)_no_primeiro_plano_o_bairro_portugu%C3%AAs.jpg), accessed on 11 November 2023.

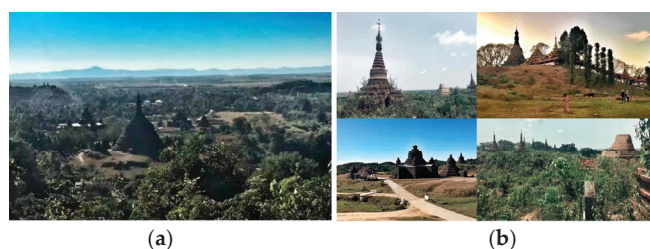


Figure 3. Photographs of Mrauk-U. Source: the author. (a) urban landscape in Mrauk-U; (b) photographs of pagodas in Mrauk-U.

It is worth noting that the pagodas in Mrauk-U have many connotations beyond their primary religious function. The construction of pagodas in Mrauk-U was correlated with major historical events or figures. For example, Lemyathna Temple is a monument built by the founding king Ming Saw Mon at the beginning of the city’s establishment in 1430 (Shwe Zan 1997, p. 70). U Mra Wa Pagoda was built to commemorate the heroic sacrifice of U Mra Wa for the city (p. 106). Shittaung Temple was built to celebrate the conquest of Bangladesh by King Min Ba Gyi and to show its power to other neighboring countries. Htukkant Thein Temple was built by King Min Phalaung to stabilize the country (p. 63).

In terms of spatial distribution, the pagodas are closely connected to open spaces, as well as to the mountains and water system. Thus, there are clearly intentional building strategies behind the pagodas, which need to be further investigated. What kind of influence do these Buddhist symbols have on the urban space? What kind of cultural meaning do they bear in Mrauk-U? These are the main questions addressed in this study.

1.3. Literature Review

There have been recent studies on the relationship between religious architecture and cities. For example, Gil-Mastalerczyk (2016) presented religious architecture's influence on the development of the urban structure and layout of Kielce, Poland by analyzing sacred objects and the associated functional environment; Liu and Wan (2022) highlighted the interactions between Buddhist temples and socio-political factors in Hangzhou by combining spatial analysis on a GIS platform with the reading of literal materials; Zhao et al. (2022) revealed the correlation between the religious landscape and the rulers' ideologies in the Northern Wei Dynasty and Tang Dynasty by comprehensively analyzing the spatial relationship between the two temples, nearby capitals, and topographical elements. It is pointed out in these studies that religious architecture plays an important role in cities. However, for Mrauk-U, the studies in this regard are insufficient. At the end of the 20th century, some local scholars (Tun Shwe Khine (M.A) 1992; Shwe Zan 1997) preliminarily sorted out the individual forms and construction history of Buddhist buildings based on the archaeological activities that have taken place there since the end of the 19th century (Forchhammer 1891). Since then, studies on individual buildings have emerged gradually, including the division of architectural styles and their related historical evolution (Gutman 2001), building construction features and protection methods (Li 2019), and forms and functions of specific types of buildings (Hudson 2023). There are also studies on the relationship between Mrauk-U's urban space and religions, such as the guiding role of astrology in city site selection (Tun Shwe Khine (M.A) 1992), the correlation between the royal palace and the "Tavatimsa" picture (the celestial realm where Indra or Shakra was believed to live) in Buddhism (Gutman 2001), and the influence of Mandala thought on the inner-city layout (Wang 2019). However, the abovementioned research perspectives are confined to individual buildings or city levels. In recent years, scholars have begun to pay attention to the role of the pagodas in Mrauk-U from a wider perspective. For example, Bob Hudson (2020) discussed a list of pagodas proposed by astrologers and argued that the pagodas were expected to exert sympathetic magic to ward off the kingdom's enemies, through special layouts combined with specific hills, water tanks, and trees. The potential relationship between pagodas in Mrauk-U and urban space requires further exploration and explanation.

Therefore, this study aims to go beyond the individual scale and understand the significance of pagodas as a whole in the city. It analyzes the spatial distribution characteristics of pagodas in Mrauk-U, explains how pagodas interact with the urban space, and discusses their cultural meanings from a city-scale perspective to further understand how religion can provide an ideological tool for city building and how the creation of sacred spaces was adapted to the kingdom's developmental needs.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Objects

Pagodas often appear in two forms in Mrauk-U (Table 1). One is the individual pagoda (pagoda standing alone). Some of them have a solid structure, while others have small niches or internal spaces. Their spatial forms adhere to strict architectural forms, and most of them are round, square, or polygonal in their central symmetry.

Table 1. Individual pagodas and pagoda temples in Mrauk-U.

Type	Name	Detail	Photo
Individual pagodas	Thin Kyi Taung	Constructed by King Min Saw Mon in 1430	
	Yadanarsan Ye	Constructed by King Narabu in 1446	
	Ratana Theinkha Shwegu	Constructed by King Min Yan Aung in 1482	
	Shwe Kyar Thein	Constructed by King Min Phalaung in 1591	
	Pann Thee Taung Ceti	Constructed by King Sanda Thudhamma Razar in 1658	
Pagoda temples	Lemyathna Temple	Constructed by King Min Saw Mon in 1430	
	Anndaw Thein Temple	Constructed by King Min Khaung Razar in 1521	
	Ratanabon Temple	Constructed by King Min Khamoung in 1612	
	Htukkant Thein Temple	Constructed by King Min Phalaung in 1571	

Source: the authors.

The other is the pagoda associated with a Buddhist temple, which is also called pagoda temple. In a pagoda temple, the pagoda serves as the main part and forms a group layout with other ancillary buildings. The core pagoda is relatively large and has an internal entry space in which the Buddha statue is enshrined, surrounded by small pagodas, enclosed by courtyards, or integrated with corridor houses.

In terms of function, the individual pagodas assume the function of worshipping Buddha, and some of the ones on elevated terrain serve as watchtowers and beacons for defense. In addition to the function of individual pagodas, pagoda temples also assume the functions of festival activities and daily practice for Buddhists. This study identified 313 pago-

das, comprising 290 individual pagodas and 23 temples with a large pagoda as the core (Figure 4).

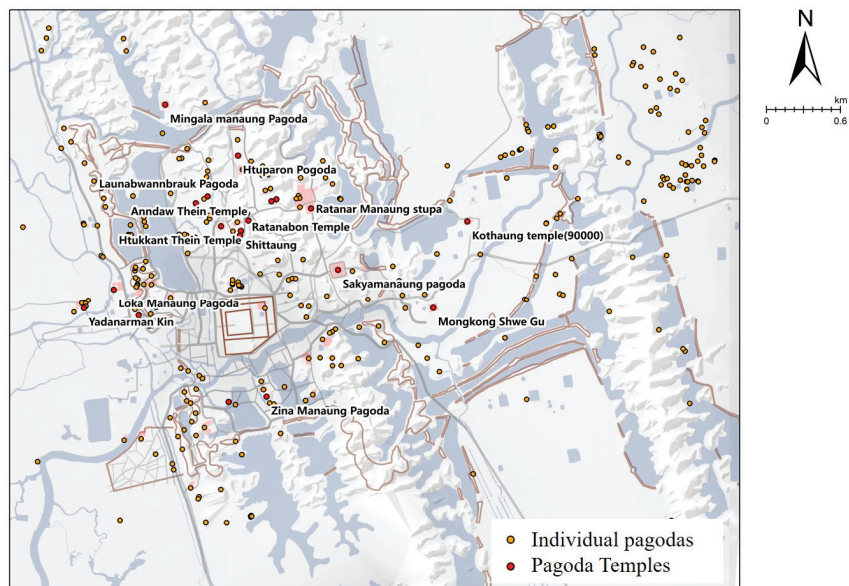


Figure 4. Pagodas in Mrauk-U. Source: the author.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on the theory of landscape to analyze the pagodas' distribution characteristics and intrinsic significance. A landscape is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human factors (Council of Europe 2000), becoming a clue to culture (Lewis 1979) and a historical record of human values and ideologies (Hoskins 1955; Taylor 2009). The pagoda is a kind of man-made creation placed in nature by human intention. This artificial element, combining the natural environment and human spirituality, has been built in large numbers within a certain period of time and in a certain area, thus combining physical space, natural background, and spiritual significance into a system and presenting an urban landscape with religious qualities. Therefore, this paper will reveal how this artificial element and the system it constructed have shaped the landscape characteristics. This study focuses on analyzing the relationship between pagodas and the natural environment and other artificial systems and exploring their building motivations and ideas based on the social and cultural context of the time.

2.3. Materials and Methods

In this study, based on the archaeological literature, contemporary studies, and field investigations, we sorted out the history and spatial information of Mrauk-U. Maps and historical information about the religion and the city of Mrauk-U were mainly obtained by referring to Emanuel Forchhammer's archaeological report on Arakan (Forchhammer 1891)⁵, relevant studies on the travel notes of previous Western travelers such as Manrique and Schouten (Manrique 1927; Raymond 2002), and the historical research literature from local (San Thu Aung 1979; Tun Shwe Khine (M.A) 1992; Shwe Zan 1997) and international sources (Gutman 2002; Hudson 2020). By using the method of literature analysis, we grasped the religious background and the construction of religious architecture in Mrauk-U, which laid a foundation for thinking about the influence of Buddhism on urban construction.

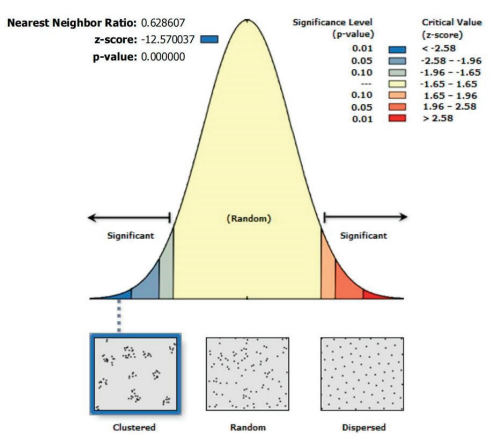
The spatial data of Mrauk-U were mainly based on several field surveys conducted in January, February, November, and December 2017 and May 2018. The digital elevation model (DEM) data of the city were collected using light detection and ranging (LIDAR) as the raw data of the 3D city model. The orthoimages of Mrauk-U's historical urban areas were collected by fixed-wing drone mapping to determine the urban spatial elements. Through on-site visits and photographs, attribute information such as the form and use of pagodas were obtained as a basis for pagoda classification.

The spatial data obtained from the field investigation were validated with historical maps and the archaeological literature and further digitized. A historical spatial information database of Mrauk-U's urban space was then established using a geographic information system (GIS). The spatial elements, including Mrauk-U's terrain, pagodas, palaces, city walls, historical water systems, and paths (the water systems and paths in the Mrauk-U Period), were integrated into ArcMap and ArcScene (Part of the ArcGIS 10.8 software suite, the former provides 2D views and the latter provides 3D views) as the foundation for the spatial analysis of urban elements. This study inferred and redrew historical water systems, such as the Alezi River, Aungdat River, and the large artificial lakes, Laksaykan and Anomakan, through an examination of historical maps and by referencing current river systems. Additionally, the space syntax was used to analyze the accessibility of the paths.

This study examines the distribution of pagodas in urban spaces to identify their spatial distribution patterns. The spatial relationships between the pagodas and other urban elements, including the urban structure (the city's overall layout), mountain range, water system (rivers, lakes, and water tanks), and open space (the city's main roads and paths), are explored and visualized with the aid of the following analytical tools.

(1) Kernel Density tool

The Kernel Density tool in ArcGIS can calculate the density of point features around each output raster cell, aiming to identify areas of concentration and variations in density (ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) 2021). It builds on the principle of a heat map distribution between core areas (kernels) and surrounding neighborhoods (Bonnier et al. 2019). To ensure its validity, Average Nearest Neighbor (ANN) analysis is required. The ANN analysis can determine whether the data are dispersed, clustered, or distributed randomly by calculating the average distance between all data and their nearest data points (Liu and Wan 2022). According to the outcome (Figure 5), we can claim that the pagodas are significantly clustered, requiring further analysis to reveal where they concentrate. In this study, the Kernel Density was conducted with the default cell size (16.33 km²) and a blank search radius.



Given the z-score of -12.5700368456, there is a less than 1% likelihood that this clustered pattern could be the result of random chance.

Figure 5. Result of ANN analysis. Source: the author.

(2) Buffer tool

The Buffer tool in ArcGIS creates buffer polygons with a specified distance around input features. Since pagodas in a certain range of the water system can have a visual connection with people on or near the water, buffer zones are created around the water system to identify these pagodas. The buffer zone distances are determined by taking into account the viewing behavior of people when using different types of waters, with reference to the modulus of exterior space proposed by Yoshinobu Ashihara (1971)⁶. The buffer distance along the rivers is designated as 100 m since people moving along the rivers have dynamic viewpoints and tend to roughly view the pagoda as a volume. The buffer distance around the lakes and tanks is 50 m since the people using the water on the banks of the lakes and tanks are relatively still around certain spots, meaning that their observation of the pagodas is more detailed.

(3) Space Syntax

Space syntax is a geometric representation of spatial elements based on the analysis of configurational relationships (Bafna 2003). It can abstract the urban spaces into a connection diagram represented by an axis that allows a topological analysis of the spatial integration (Hillier and Hanson 1984). The integration reflects the degree of aggregation or dispersion between a unit space and all other spaces in the system (Chen and Liu 2021). In this study, higher integration means more intersection with other paths, which means more accessibility and potential people gathering (Yun et al. 2021), indirectly revealing the path's spatial significance among the urban structures. This study analyzes the integration of the network of historical roads and paths on Depthmap 10.14 and identifies the main roads.

From the results of the spatial analysis, we identify the multi-level views of the landscape from nearby-view, mid-distance-view, and distant-view levels based on the principle of urban design (Ashihara 1971) and summarize the landscape system constructed by the pagodas. Furthermore, we discuss the landscape-shaping ideas and reveal the role and significance of pagodas in the city from material and social perspectives.

3. Distribution of the Pagodas in the Urban Space

3.1. Relationship between the Pagodas and the Urban Structure

The analysis of the overall distribution of the pagodas reveals their extensive presence throughout the city. The wide distribution of the pagodas ensures that they are highly visible in most of the settlement areas in or around the city and, more importantly, in nearly all directions from the palace. Furthermore, they also have the distinctive feature of being agglomerated in specific regions.

Firstly, the densest distribution is concentrated on the western side of the city (Figure 6). As many as 30 pagodas are gathered in a cluster at the western boundary. The western side, facing the ocean across the plain and neighboring the Daingripet foreigner community, is a significant gateway area of Mrauk-U. The construction of pagodas in this location could more effectively showcase the kingdom's Buddhist culture and symbolize a strong financial and ruling power, thereby yielding greater advantages.

Secondly, the pagoda temples in Mrauk-U are obviously concentrated to the north of the palace (Figure 7). A total of 12 temples are clustered to the north of the palace, while no more than four are in any other direction. For example, the pagoda temples built in the 16th and 17th centuries such as Shittaung Temple, Anndaw Thein Temple, Ratanabon Temple, Htukkant Thein Temple, and Ratanar Manaung Temple are all located in this area. These pagoda temples were built by the kings of past dynasties and served important religious and ceremonial functions. For example, Anndaw Thein Temple was built by King Min Khaung Razar (r.1521–1531) to worship the Buddha molar relic from Sri Lanka (Shwe Zan 1997, p. 57). Shittaung Temple is the venue where the coronation ceremony of King Sandathuhamma Raza was held (Collis 1973, pp. 267–72). The gathering of pagoda temples in the northern area resulted in an increased presence of monks and more worship, festive,

and ceremonial activities, making this area a sacred center and providing an iconic spiritual destination for the city. A similar phenomenon is observed in cities such as Myanmar’s Dhanyawadi (Hudson 2005) and Pegu (Chaturawong et al. 2018) and India’s Vijayanagara (Fritz 1986).

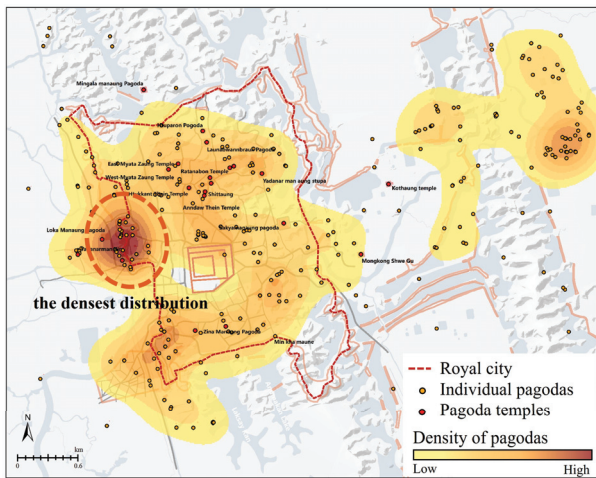


Figure 6. General distribution. Source: the author.

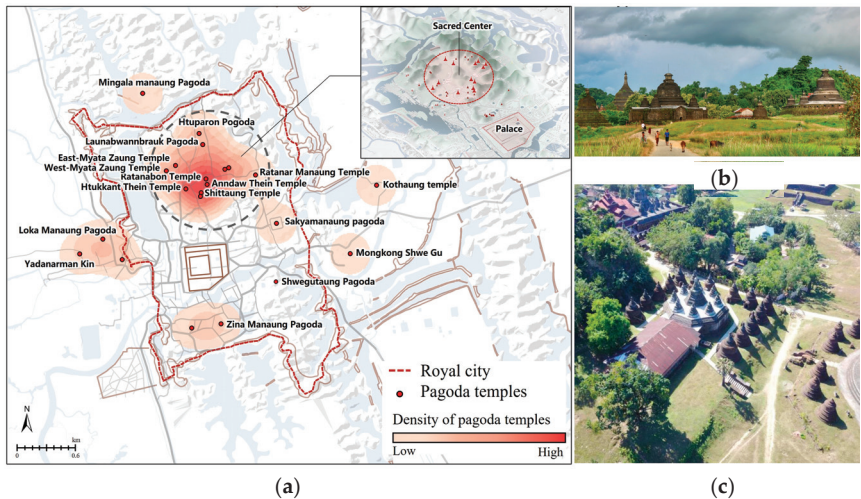


Figure 7. Distribution of pagoda temples: (a) kernel density of temples. Source: the author; (b) photograph of the religious complex to the north of the palace. Source: Arezarni (2017), Wikipedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mrauk_U_Landscape.jpg, accessed on 11 November 2023; (c) aerial view of the religious complex north of the palace. Source: the author.

It can be seen that the distribution of the pagodas is not random; it matched the kingdom’s requirements and harmonized the city’s overall layout.

3.2. Relationship between the Pagodas and the Mountains

The mountainous topography offers more possibilities for the distribution of pagodas in terms of height. The analysis shows a tendency for the pagodas in Mrauk-U to be constructed on elevated terrain. Nearly half of the pagodas (156, 49.8%) are distributed on the

mountains, with 59 located at the top of mountains (hereinafter referred to as mountaintop pagodas) and 97 located on the hillsides. They effectively utilize the topography to obtain a prominent position. For example, Shwe Gu Taung Pagoda was built on a hill lock close to the northeastern corner of the palace site so that it could be seen from the upper palace (Tun Shwe Khine (M.A) 1992, p. 32).

These pagodas are densely distributed on the city’s western side and are concentrated on both sides of the entrance position at the border (Figure 8). Pamela Gutman (2001) pointed out that the pagodas on the mountain northwest of the palace could prevent the city from being invaded due to their religious power. Aside from spiritual power, there is also the influence of explainable real-life factors. The pagodas on the mountain are highly visible, which gave the impression of a prosperous Buddhist culture, demonstrated the strength of the royal power, and provided outsiders with an initial impression of wealth and power.

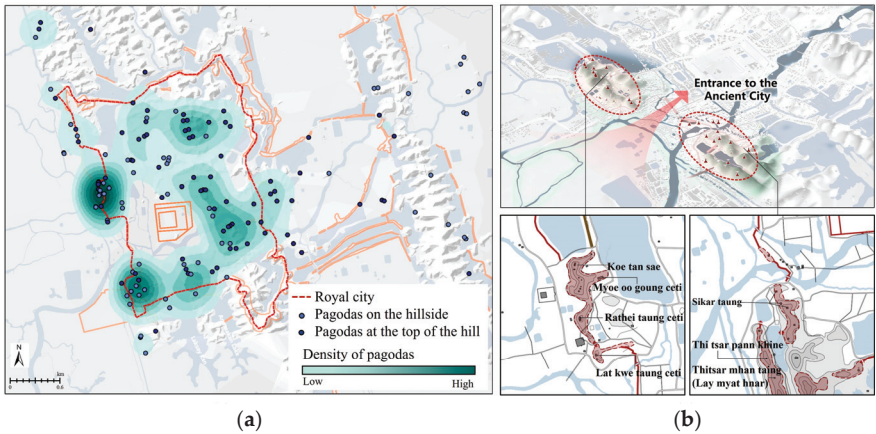


Figure 8. Relationship between pagodas and mountains. Source: the author. (a) Kernel density of the pagodas on the hills; (b) the pagodas distributed on the west side of the city.

Since the ground situated between the mountains in the west of Mrauk-U serves as one of the most crucial gateways, constructing pagodas at higher elevations increased their visibility from both the waterways and routes at the city’s entrance. This explains why the pagodas in the western mountains are more densely distributed, which was evidently intentional. The mountains increase the height and display level of the pagodas, while the pagodas provide the mountains with a greater sense of sanctity. There is an ingenious synergy between pagodas and mountains, which shapes the skyline of the sacred city.

3.3. Relationship between the Pagodas and the Historical Water Systems

It is found that many pagodas (131, 41.9%) are within 50 m of a tank or 100 m of a river, closely related to the historical water systems (Figure 9). Firstly, rivers, pagodas, and sometimes hills form a variety of waterfront landscapes along the rivers at different route segments. To an observer traveling by ship, pagodas on both sides appear repeatedly. For example, pagodas are built at regular intervals along the traffic artery of the Alezi River and Aungdat River, with a total of 49 waterfront pagodas distributed at nodes such as river turning points and waterside hills. These pagodas helped to mark the waterways and became waterfront landmarks. As measured in this study, the distance between pagodas is about 700–1000 m in the river segment outside the city and these pagodas are mostly built on one side of the river, marking the turning points of the river. In comparison, the pagodas appear more frequently inside the city, with a spacing of about 500 m. In the important gateway regions, pagodas are built in pairs by leaning on the hills on both sides of the river, strengthening the serious and solemn spatial effect. For example, Mrang Daw

Mu Pagoda and Htaung Daw Mu Pagoda, where King Min Bin worshiped the Buddha relics, face each other across the Alezi River, forming a landmark landscape at the eastern entrance of the city and providing an awe-inspiring sight for Buddhists from the eastern neighboring kingdom.

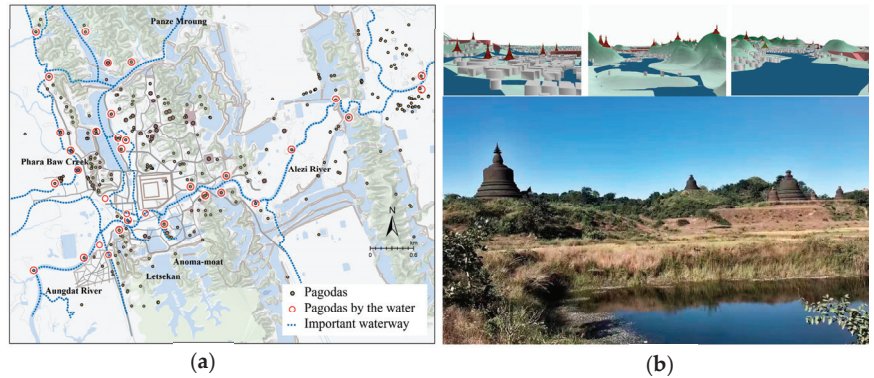
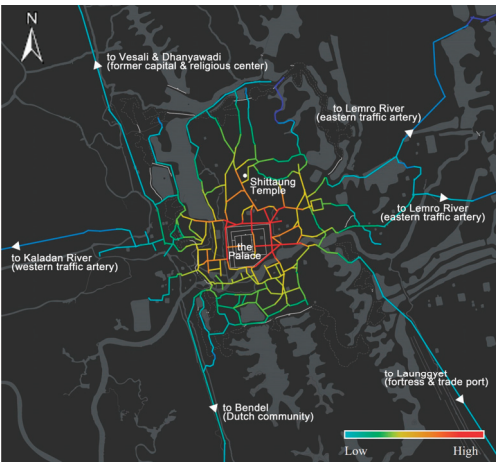


Figure 9. Relationship between pagodas and the historical water system. Source: the author. (a) Map of the distribution of pagodas by the water; (b) typical waterfront landscapes.

Secondly, a number of pagodas are located alongside water tanks. A total of 54 pagodas are distributed within 50 m of a water tank. The combination of a pagoda and a water tank intensifies the sacredness of the water tank as a daily living space, strengthening the daily atmosphere dominated by Buddhism. At the same time, some water tanks were built with pagodas. According to the archaeological report of Forchhammer, if the king wanted to destroy an enemy, he would build a pagoda on the mountain symbolizing the enemy, excavate a water tank in a specific direction, and place special objects on the water tank (Forchhammer 1891, pp. 10–11). This mysterious ceremony granted the pagoda and water tank magic power to destroy the enemy, giving special significance to their combination. Pagodas were built alongside the city's rivers, lakes, and tanks, forming an impressive and distinctive waterfront landscape interface.

3.4. Relationship between the Pagodas and the Open Space

The roads in Mrauk-U adapted to the topographic features, forming a cobweb-like irregular shape. The main roads extend radially beyond the city walls from the palace, connecting the city and other major towns in the region, and the paths enrich the space inside the city wall. The main roads with strong accessibility in Mrauk-U (indicated by a warm color in Figure 10) were identified using space syntax analysis. These roads extend along the direction of the palace's outer walls and form an essential open space in the city. In particular, the route connecting the palace and Shittaung Temple was considered as "a Spirit Road" for the king's coronation parade (Collis 1973, p. 269). According to immemorial custom, the route was carpeted throughout its length with sheets of colored cotton, and absolute silence was preserved by everybody, contrasting with the festive atmosphere during the procession of the prince (ibid.). Along the Spirit Road with special meanings, the pagodas closely interact with the surrounding open spaces by structuring and sanctifying them (Figure 11).



The warmer the color, the higher the integration, the higher the accessibility of the road.

Figure 10. Overall integration of Mrauk-U’s street space in the 17th century. Source: the author.

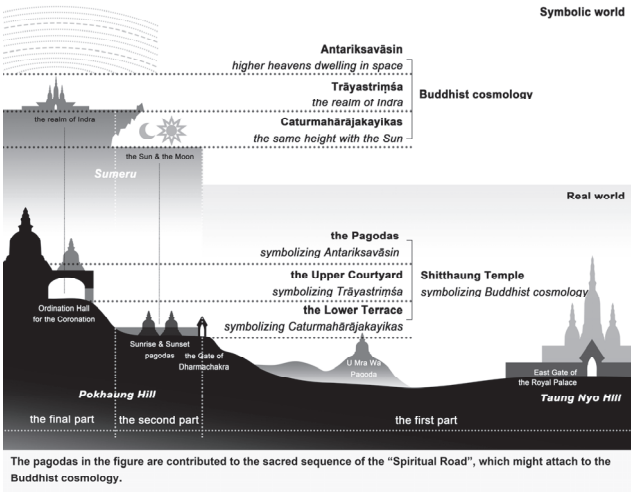


Figure 11. The pagodas along the “Spiritual Road” and their spatial relationship. Source: The author.

From the east gate of the palace to the coronation venue, the mountaintop pagodas, including U Mra Wa Pagoda which commemorates the heroes of the city, were built alongside to emphasize the turning points of the path through visual images. They served as monuments to urge people to remember their history and strengthened the solemn atmosphere of the spiritual road.

As the main venue of the coronation ceremony, at the end of the path, Shittaung Temple was deliberately built on Pokhaung Hill. The temple is 46 feet above the road and is separated by the gate called the Wheel of the Law⁷ and a fence, creating an exclusive space for kings and senior monks (ibid., p. 270). Passing through the gate symbolizes the king turning the wheel of dharma by emulating the Buddha, which means that the king provides his subjects with the means to enlightenment and thus justifies his own rule (Gutman 2001, p. 102). Inside the gate, the two small pagodas “Sunrise” and “Sunset” are located on the lower terrace⁸. Thirty feet upward is the upper courtyard and the Ordination Hall, covered by surmounting domes and subsidiary pagodas, where the king

was crowned. The upper courtyard symbolizes Trāyastriṃśa, where Indra lives, while the surmounting dome and subsidiary pagodas symbolize the higher Antariksavāsin above Trāyastriṃśa (ibid.). This spatial relationship emphasizes the king’s noble status as the incarnation of Indra beyond the movement of the sun and the moon⁹. The pagodas, serving as focal points and landmarks along the way, created a sacred spatial sequence for this “Spirit Road” and legitimized the kingship by attaching Buddhist cosmology.

The pagodas have also formed various spatial relationships with the road networks throughout the entire city area. Pagodas, located on the mountains for greater visibility, have become important landmarks that can be seen or reached through the main roads.

Firstly, there are pagodas located at the end of the road, forming the scenery at road ends. For example, Mrang Daw Mu Pagoda on Nan-U Hill (Shwe Zan 1997, p. 107) and Sikar Taung Pagoda on Mraung-wann Hill (ibid., p. 118) create a pair of views at opposite ends of the road, which runs east–west southeast of the palace. The literal meaning of Mrang Daw Mu Pagoda is “from where the palace is seen” (Shwe Zan 1997, p. 107), which clarifies its corresponding relationship with the palace (Figure 12a). Secondly, there are pagodas occupying the intersection of multiple roads or the viewpoints along the roads. For example, Mrang Daw Mu Pagoda and Htaung Daw Mu Pagoda (the holy sternum and rib relic pagodas), worshiped by King Min Bin for their Buddha relics, were built on the east side of the palace, overlooking the open space formed by the intersection of multiple main roads in front of the east gate of the court (Collis 1973, p. 253) and demonstrating the achievements of the king in worshipping the Buddha treasures (Figure 12b). Thirdly, there are pagodas located at the turning point of a road. For example, Shwe Gu Taung Pagoda marks the turning point of the road in the northeast corner of the palace (Figure 12c). Finally, there are pagodas located at the accessible endpoint of a road. Sakya Man Aung Pagoda is situated at the end of the road in the northeast corner of the palace (Figure 12d).

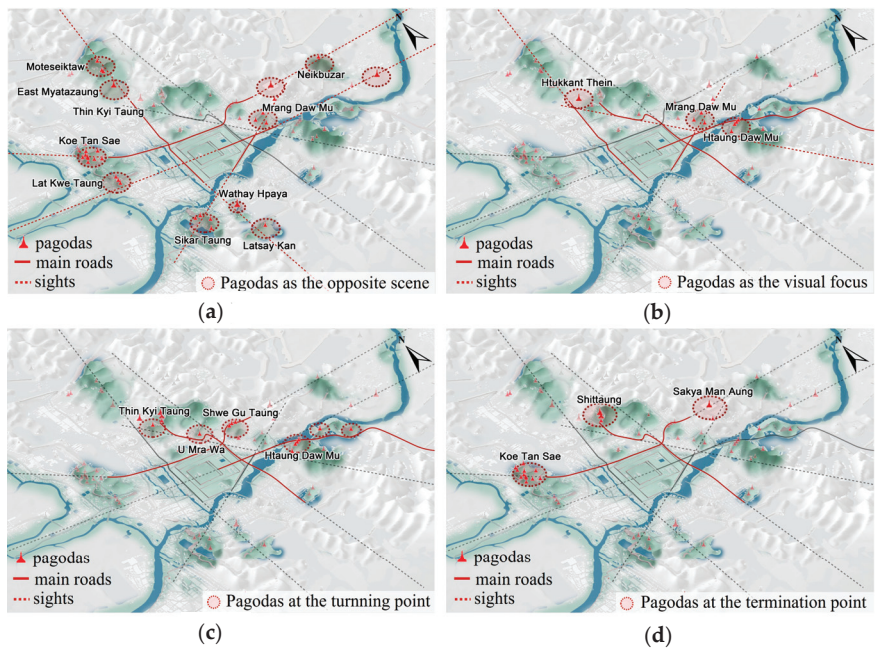


Figure 12. Relationship between pagodas and paths. Source: the author. (a) The pagodas as contrast settings; (b) the pagodas as a visual focus; (c) the pagodas at turning points; (d) the pagodas at termination points.

Aside from their religious function, the pagodas play a landmark role in guiding traffic and sight. By constructing a visual focus (the point within a scene or an environment that attracts the most attention), pagodas constitute a landmark landscape of the city, highlighting and strengthening the pattern of its public spaces.

4. Discussion

4.1. Formation of a Sacred Urban Landscape

According to the characteristics of the relationship between pagodas and urban spatial elements, including the mountain range, water system, and open space, we realize that the pagodas were intentionally combined with urban spaces in many ways. As a core element, the pagodas have participated in shaping a sacred landscape for Mrauk-U, forming a harmonious landscape system at the following levels.

At the nearby-view level (a close perspective between observers and objects), pagodas serve as landmarks along waterways and paths (Figure 13). (1) The pagodas concentrated on the mountain on both sides of the water and land passage entering the city on the west side created distinctive landscapes of the gateway regions. (2) The pagodas built along city paths, particularly the thoroughfare leading to the northern sacred center, played an important role in establishing a sacred landscape sequence. The “Spiritual Road” from the palace to the Shittaung Temple is a prime illustration of this. (3) The pagodas along the river or by the water tanks combine with the water to form a sacred landscape interface. Pagodas appear repeatedly in the ground space, becoming important landmarks of the city. Thus, the impact of Buddhism on people’s lives can be envisioned.

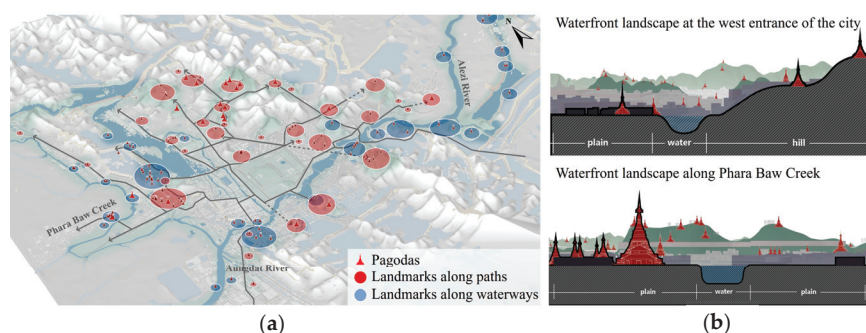


Figure 13. Diagram of the sacred urban landscape at the nearby-view level. Source: the author. (a) Landmarks along paths or waterways; (b) waterfront landscape interface.

At the mid-distance-view level (a perspective that is further than the nearby view and closer than the distant view), the pagoda and the palace have multiple visual connections (Figure 14). (1) The pagodas around the city and the central palace form a contrasting relationship, emphasizing a centripetal urban structure centered on the palace. (2) The palace and the sacred center in the north serve as views opposite each other, symbolizing the combination of royal authority and religious influence. (3) From the city’s main roads that extend outward along the palace, one can observe pagodas majestically perched on the distant hills. These pagodas form the scenery opposite the palace through the city’s main roads, which constitute the city’s main landscape view corridors.

At the distant-view level (a distant perspective between observers and objects), pagodas were built on the mountains to form skylines with outstanding characteristics, especially the western landscape viewed outside the city, the landscape viewed from the palace, and the landscape viewed from the west entrance to the city (Figure 15). The mountain-top pagodas harmonize with the glittering spire of the palace to strengthen the sacred scenery¹⁰, as well as with the city’s defense system to form the impression that the city is easy to defend and difficult to attack.¹¹ These skylines were repeatedly described by

Schouten (the Dutch traveler) and Morrison (a Brigadier General of the British Expeditionary Force) (See notes 10 and 11). The skylines composed of pagodas and mountains not only demonstrated the cultural identity of the Arakan Kingdom’s championing of Buddhism but also displayed its strong royal power. Such distant-view shaping would give outsiders an impression of the wealth and power of Mrauk-U, which was especially important for the Arakan Kingdom as it highly valued foreign trade and defense (Tun Shwe Khine (M.A) 1992, pp. 10, 32). The spatial effect of the distant view catered to the ruler’s intention and served the kingdom as a spatial tool.

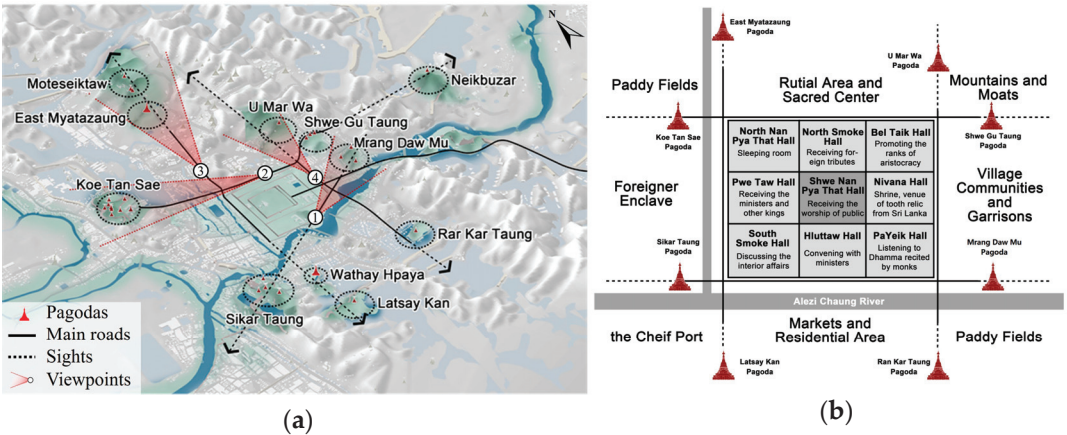


Figure 14. Diagram of the sacred urban landscape at the mid-distance-view level. Source: the author. (a) Contrast setting system; (b) the centripetal urban structure centered on the palace.

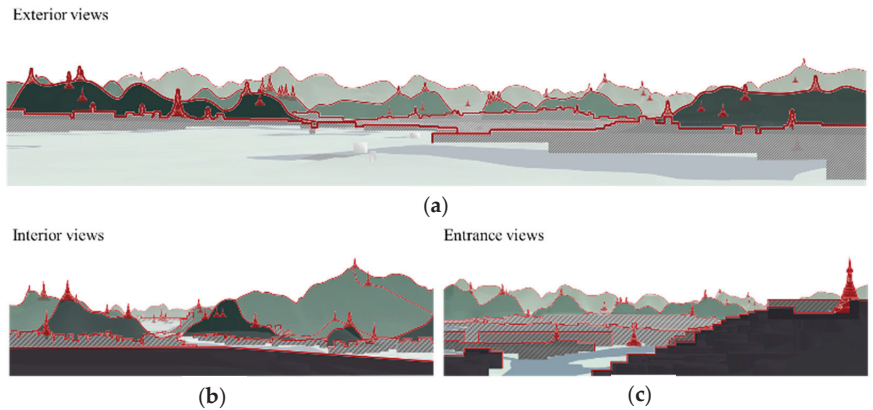


Figure 15. Diagram of the sacred urban landscape at the distant-view level. Source: the author. (a) The west landscape viewed outside the city; (b) the landscape viewed from the palace; (c) the landscape viewed from the west entrance to the city.

4.2. Landscape-Shaping Ideas and Cultural Meaning

By examining the sacred urban landscape system, we can further understand the ideas and cultural meaning of Mrauk-U’s city building. The pagodas and the urban environment form a harmonious and distinctive urban landscape, which implies conscious spatial design. Several separate but complementary construction strategies have been developed for the site selection and distribution of pagodas.

Firstly, pagodas were used to shape the city's key area. Through the concentration of large-scale and high-grade pagoda temples, the sacred center was shaped and the urban area was differentiated. Secondly, pagodas were used to create the city's external image. In the gateway area facing the ocean, the pagodas were built on an elevated position by taking advantage of the topography, so that they can be seen from a distance. The skyline composed of pagodas and mountains helped to highlight the gateway region and portray the image of a powerful kingdom, which was crucial for this trading and military city. Lastly, pagodas were used to construct the city's symbology. They were positioned either individually or in clusters along the main waterways or pathways, serving as prominent visual focal points and landmarks within open spaces. The dynamic landscape sequence was created by integrating pagodas and routes, while the waterfront interface of "pagoda–water (–mountain)" was created by combining pagodas with water features and sometimes mountains.

The systematic utilization of pagodas in the construction of key areas, exterior images, and an overall symbol system in Mrauk-U implies a holistic spatial form design for the city. The pagoda was likely to have been considered an important element of urban space construction in the past. The combination of pagodas, the overall environment, and the spiritual significance created a unique picture of religious cities, reflecting the urban design concept of environmental integrity. Today, pagodas have become an important vessel of "ancient" urban design thought and wisdom.

On the other hand, the sacred landscapes created by pagodas reflected the political characteristics of the Theravada kingship in the Arakan Kingdom and the social and cultural aspects under its governance, producing a unique cultural meaning. These landscapes served the kingship ruling the Arakan Kingdom based on Theravada Buddhism. The establishment of the sacred center, the strengthening of the gateway image, and the formation of the sacred skyline were conducive to promoting the merits and divinity of the kings and might express the ideal social order of the rulers while constructing the image of the kingdom that the rulers wanted to display. Through the close combination of pagodas with the city's travel path sequence and landscape, the image and influence of Buddhism penetrate daily personal and social life, which reflects the rulers' emphasis on Buddhism as a tool of thought. In short, the rulers of the Arakan Kingdom created a sacred city image by organically integrating religious space and urban space, strengthened the legitimacy of their kingship, consolidated people's religious beliefs, presented a coherent image of the capital, and achieved the political purpose of maintaining the kingship.

4.3. Limitations and Insights for Future Research

The limitations of this study need to be recognized. Firstly, the limited historical records on pagodas and urban construction bring constraints and challenges to the research. Mrauk-U chronicles record the initiator (kings) and the dates of the construction of certain pagodas, without further details. Therefore, the study mainly relies on a field survey, the existing archaeological documents, and the contemporary literature to discuss the cultural significance behind the urban landscape system constructed by the pagodas. The motivations and intentions of the construction of the pagodas remain to be further explored. In future studies, efforts should be made to obtain information about the king's views on the construction of pagodas by examining the inscriptions on pagodas.

Secondly, as the information currently available is on royal pagoda construction, the research mainly focuses on the influence of royal power on pagoda construction and the significance of religious landscapes for the kingdom. More historical information and evidence needs to be found to explore the involvement of other parties, such as the community, in the construction of the pagodas, so as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of pagodas for the city.

Thirdly, there are deficiencies in the detailed presentation of pagoda appearances. As this study is concerned with overall characteristics, it does not focus on the details of the pagodas at the architectural level. The study classifies their forms and schematically rep-

resents them in the Figures. Future studies can sort out and draw the specific sizes and shapes of the pagodas for a more tangible landscape presentation at a close-up level.

5. Conclusions

By analyzing the distribution of pagodas, this study discusses their significance for Mrauk-U's urban space from a broader perspective. It is found that pagodas, as an urban image, shaped the urban landscape of Mrauk-U and played an important role in shaping the city's spatial characteristics, which partially embodied local social and cultural characteristics.

The pagodas were organically integrated with urban space to create a sacred and systematic urban landscape beyond the individual scale, observing the profound influence of Buddhism on Mrauk-U's visible space. The remains of pagodas in the city have become an important part of the historical urban landscape in Mrauk-U. Meanwhile, the pagodas have transcended their original functions to become a key urban design element. Driven by political and religious purposes, pagodas were purposely built in physical spaces that were entirely integrated with the city, developing a series of pagoda site selection strategies and holistic urban design thinking. The systematic use of this religious element has also made religion deeply penetrate the ideas of human settlement construction.

What is more, the image of the kingdom was vigorously displayed through this sacred urban landscape with high visibility. Under the political system in which state and religion were united and kingship was superior, the rulers of the Arakan Kingdom regarded religion as a ruling tool and raised the visibility of this royal and religious power through the spatial means of extensively building pagodas, allowing their sacred kingship image to penetrate into all of Mrauk-U society, strengthening their legitimacy, maintaining social stability, and highlighting the kingdom's image. Religion provided a source of ideas and a means of expression for state crafting. Because of its tangible and stable material properties, the urban landscape, constructed with the pagodas as a key element, is often easily perceived and long-lasting. Through the visible landscape, the political intentions of the rulers and the religious forces supporting them can be powerfully, steadily, and continuously presented. Mrauk-U's urban landscape reflects the control and shaping of the visible elements in the material world by royal power and provides a visual window into the unique political and cultural characteristics of the Arakan Kingdom.

This study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the significance of Buddhism for Mrauk-U in the past by revealing a sacred urban landscape in the city based on the rich multi-layered correlations between pagodas and urban space. The sacred urban landscape in Mrauk-U presents a mode of interaction between the city and its religion, with distinctive regional characteristics, and highlights Mrauk-U's urban identity and spiritual connotations; its cultural values should be fully recognized and incorporated into future city development.

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Notes

- ¹ Mandala (Sanskrit for ‘sacred circle’) is a Hindu-Buddhist religious diagram, which derives from ancient Indian beliefs in cosmic power entering the figure at the center of a sacred space (Dellios 2003). It also represents a cosmogram that related to cosmic order (Rykwert 1976, p. 173).
- ² A small stone image of a Fat Monk, which can be dated to around the beginning of the Christian era, was found about three miles east of the old Vesali site in 1922 (San Thu Aung 1979, p. 15).
- ³ Arakan reached the height of its power in the Bay of Bengal, as the Arakanese fleet conquered Pegu or Hanthawaddy, the royal capital of the Burmese empire under the Toungoo dynasty in the year 1600 (Chan 2012, p. 11). The cultural heritages of the Mon, Thai, and Burmese, including four White Elephants, filtered through into the Arakanese civilization (Collis 1973, p. 185; Okkantha 1990, p. 195; Chan 2012, p. 11).
- ⁴ Due to the continuous interactions between Sri Lanka and Arakan in the 16th and 17th centuries, the performance of religious ceremonies and higher ordinations was preserved abroad, which crucially contributed to the re-establishment and restoration of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka (Raymond 1999, p. 98; Okkantha 1990, p. 197).
- ⁵ Emanuel Forchhammer (1851–1890) was a pioneer in Burmese Archaeology. He was a Swiss Indologist, Pali specialist, orientalist and the first professor of Pali in Rangoon College. In 1882, he became an Archaeological Inspector for British Burma, engaging in excavations and the decipherment of ancient inscriptions in Pali, Mon, and Burmese, particularly in the ancient cities of Arakan and Pagan.
- ⁶ According to Yoshinobu Ashihara’s “*Exterior Design in Architecture*”, the basic scale of urban exterior space is 20–25 m. Based on this, 48–60 m is a suitable distance to observe architectural details such as facade texture, and the building volume becomes the dominant element in the visual landscape observed from 120 m away (Ashihara 1971).
- ⁷ We believe that the Wheel of the Law likely refers to the dharmachakra, considering the Buddhism cultural identity of Arakan kingdom. The dharmachakra points to the central Indian idea of “Dharma”, which refers to the eternal cosmic law, universal moral order (Issitt and Main 2014, p. 186). The Buddha is said to have set the dharmachakra (wheel of dharma) in motion when he delivered his first sermon (Pal 1986, p. 42). Buddhism adopted the wheel as a symbol from the Indian mythical idea of the ideal king, called a chakravartin (“wheel-turner”, or “universal monarch”) (Beer 2003, p. 14; Pal 1986, p. 42).
- ⁸ The Shitthaung Pagoda includes a lower terrace and an upper courtyard. The lower terrace stands sixteen feet above the level of the road, with the main gate, called the Wheel of the Law. The upper courtyard is thirty feet higher, where the main dome stands (Collis 1973, pp. 269–71). According to Shwe Zan, the Sunrise and Sunset temples are on the lower terrace, indicating that those two small temples are thirty feet lower than the main dome, where the coronation took place (Shwe Zan 1997, p. 35).
- ⁹ This spatial relationship conforms to the spatial imagination that Indra lived on the top of Mount Meru above the sun and the moon in the Buddhist cosmology.
- ¹⁰ Watching from the ridge between the capital and Bandel, the gilded spires and roofs of the capital were shining in the sunlight, which greatly impressed Schouten and his companions in 1725 (Raymond 2002, pp. 187–88).
- ¹¹ As Brigadier General Morrison described in 1825, Mrauk-U’s defenses were carefully designed, including a series of high conical hills, deep intrenchments and a broad river. The high conical hills, surmounted by pagodas, and surrounded by entrenchments, served as numerous citadels. (Wilson 1827, p. 130).

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Article

Chan, Garden, and Poetry: The Tidal Sounds in the Changshou Monastery Garden of Canton in the Qing Dynasty

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Abstract: The Caodong School (曹洞宗) advocates the integration of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (三教會通) and interprets Chan through the *I Ching* (以易釋禪). During the transition from the Ming to the Qing Dynasty, there was extensive interaction and mobility between the Ming loyalists (遺民) and Chan monks. This accelerated the secularization of monks and promoted the construction of temple gardens, which were expressed and preserved through literary Chan poetry. This study explores the relationship between Buddhist concepts and garden construction through a specific case, the Changshou Monastery Garden (長壽寺花園) in Canton (now Guangzhou) during the Qing Dynasty. This study examines how the Chan master Shilian Dashan 石濂大汕 (1633–1705), who journeyed to Dang Trong (Cochinchina 廣南) to spread Buddhist teachings, shaped the design and layout of the temple garden, reflecting Buddhist ideals and Caodong principles. This study analyzes the changes in landscape at the Changshou Monastery Garden, according to “the sound of tides” (潮音) from a Buddhist perspective. It also reveals how Dashan, as both a monk and a literati, blended Chan and Chinese philosophy in making the garden. The cultural resonance of tides within religious and literati traditions furnishes novel insights and prospects for the development of garden spaces.

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Keywords: Changshou Monastery Garden; tides; Brahma’s sound; Caodong; poetry; Chan enlightenment; garden making

1. Introduction

During the Qing Dynasty, garden construction in Canton witnessed a remarkable flourishing, fueled by social and economic progress. Due to the convenience of water transportation and access to water sources, many gardens were strategically built along the Pearl River and its tributaries, which experienced regular ebb and flow. Consequently, the design, construction, and landscapes of these gardens were profoundly influenced by the tides (Feng and Li 2023).

In the early Qing Dynasty, Canton had the “Five Major Monasteries¹,” among which Changshou Monastery (長壽寺, known as the “Temple of Longevity” in Western accounts), stood out for its exquisite tidal garden. Caodong master Shilian Dashan 石濂大汕 (1633–1705), abbot of Changshou Monastery, not only developed methods for garden making and appreciating gardens adapted to the tides but also creatively expressed Chan’s principles through both garden design and his poetry. This profoundly influenced subsequent literati gatherings and garden design activities. Unfortunately, due to a combination of Sino-Western conflicts, political struggles, and disputes between temple monks and the local gentry, the Changshou Monastery was confiscated and demolished in 1905 (S. Huang 2018). Despite vanishing over a

century ago, the ingenious design of Changshou Monastery Garden remains a subject worthy of exploration.

In Buddhist scriptures, there are detailed depictions of gardens in the portrayal of the cosmic world and ideal spaces. The teachings of the Buddha are expressed through the description of garden scenery, inspiring the hearts and minds of practitioners. In East Asia, Chan Buddhism is the most thoroughly Sinicized and widely influential Buddhist sect. Current studies on temple gardens generally assert that, from the Song Dynasty onwards, the integration of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism led to the secularization of Chan temple gardens, aligning them with literati gardens (Ren 1994; Zhou 2008; Zhao 2016).

During the transition from the Ming to the Qing Dynasty, along with social upheavals, the mobility between the literati (the educated elites, also known as the scholar-officials) and monks from different social strata was significant. To evade the political and psychological challenges posed by the Qing Dynasty, many literati sought refuge in temples, giving rise to the trend known as “escaping into Chan Buddhism” (*taochan* 逃禪). In Lingnan (the South of the Five Ridges 嶺南), there was an intimate interaction between Chan monks and the literati. The influx of scholars into temples and the ensuing interactions between local elites and the literati who migrated southward facilitated an exchange between religious and secular cultures within Lingnan Chan monasteries. This exchange manifested as a secularization of Southern Chan Buddhism, blurring the lines between spiritual and worldly aspects (Jiang 1999, p. 583).

Unlike other temples that are famous for their long history or grand scale, Changshou Monastery is renowned both domestically and internationally due to the spread of Chan Buddhism to Dang Trong (Cochinchina 廣南) by Dashan and the creatively designed garden of the monastery in response to the tides labeled as “ingenious thoughts” (*qiaosi* 巧思, S. Wang 1968, p. 6). Dashan embodied the thought of Caodong School through garden making. Influenced by renowned loyalist poets, he developed his own unique blend of poetic and Chan concepts. His overseas experiences not only provided funding for the renovation of Changshou Monastery and its garden but also influenced his garden-making methods. Primary sources suggest that Dashan prioritized the garden’s construction, building it before the main monastery buildings, and devoted significant attention to its management. The tidal nature of the location became a prominent feature when he returned from Dang Trong to Canton to renovate the garden. Compared to other temples in the same period, which focused on constructing main halls, Dashan’s approach was clearly unconventional. Therefore, the complex life experiences of Dashan and the secularization of the temple garden drew criticism from his contemporary society.

Previous studies have investigated various aspects of Dashan’s life and work, including his early life experiences (Jiang 1999; J. Li 2023), Chan concepts, artistic accomplishments in poetry, “zither” (*qin* 琴) playing, and painting (Jiang 1999, 2007; Dang 2019). They have also examined his role in organizing the poetry society and literati gatherings at Changshou Monastery Garden (Jiang 1999, 2007; R. Li 2011), his Dharma propagation experiences in Dang Trong and related writings (Sun 2017; Wheeler 2007), the reasons behind the monastery’s demolition (S. Huang 2018), and the inscriptions and transmission of Changshou Monastery’s drawings (R. Li 2011). However, a crucial link remains unexplored: the connection between Dashan’s life experiences, the process of constructing Changshou Monastery and its garden, and the literati gathering held in its garden. Consequently, further investigation is warranted to illuminate the potential influence of Caodong School concepts and literati aesthetics on the design and character of Changshou Monastery Garden.

Building upon previous research, this study explores the following questions: Why did Dashan attach such importance to the creation of the garden? What did the garden signify for Dashan and the Chan tradition? and Why was establishing “a connection to tidal water” (*tongchao* 通潮) crucial?

Since the physical space of Changshou Monastery Garden has vanished, it is necessary to rely on textual and visual materials to understand the garden’s spatial layout and

its connotations. This study introduces the concept of “traces” (遺痕) as a method that involves focusing on the relationships and differences between various materials within the historical context (Feng and Li 2023). By adopting this approach, this study aims to uncover the garden’s evolving character rather than treating it as a static entity, delve into the metaphorical and symbolic layers embedded within poetry, move beyond mere historical documentation of the garden space, and shed light on the activities and spatial relationships that unfolded during literati gatherings at the garden.

This study draws upon a wide array of primary sources, including poetry, prose, diaries, and local gazetteers, to establish a comprehensive understanding of the Changshou Monastery Garden. Dashan’s poetry collections, such as *Liliu Tang Ji* (離六堂集) and *Liliu Tang Jingao* (離六堂近稿), and his prose works *Haivai Jishi* (海外紀事), as well as writings by eyewitnesses of the Changshou Monastery Garden, such as *Guangzhou Youlan Xiaozhi* (廣州遊覽小志), *Dulu Tang Shiwen Ji* (獨澗堂詩文集), and *Gengshen Xiuxi Ji* (庚申修禊集) offer invaluable insights into the garden’s spatial layout, the Chan philosophy, Dashan’s personal experiences, the literati gatherings, and the broader geographical context of Canton.

To fully grasp the complexities of Dashan’s perspective and the Chan Buddhist concepts alluded to in these primary sources, it is essential to consult secondary literature focused on Dashan and the Caodong School. These secondary works provide a deeper understanding of the intellectual and spiritual environment that influenced Dashan’s interaction with the garden.

Visual sources include woodblock prints, late Qing dynasty maps, literati paintings, and historical photographs. Woodblock prints depict the ideal Buddhist world of Chinese monks and literati perceptions of immortal mountains. Late Qing dynasty maps illustrate the positions and directions of Changshou Monastery and the surrounding waterways, revealing the garden’s integration into the hydrological network. Literati paintings, inspired by gatherings in the garden, provide a window into the spatial relationships between activities and key scenery. However, to accurately determine the spatial dimensions of these scenes, an architectural approach is required for analyzing late Qing Dynasty historical photographs.

This study comprises three main sections. Section 2 examines Dashan’s life and experiences propagating Chan Buddhism overseas, the construction process of Changshou Monastery Garden, and the influence of Caodong School concepts on the garden’s spatial design. Section 3 focuses on the symbolic significance of tides in Chan Buddhism and how Dashan incorporated tide-related elements into the garden’s landscaping, fostering a connection between Chan philosophy and the garden experience. Section 4 explains how monks and literati engaged in a dialogue on the theme of “tides” through poetry and literati gatherings.

Based on this analysis, the study argues that Chan Buddhism secularized in its relationship with the literati, and both together influenced the garden. Caodong monk Dashan, drawing upon his understanding of Chan Buddhism, the behaviors of literati, and his experiences from travels at home and abroad, utilized the characteristics of tides to shape the unique spatial layout of Changshou Monastery Garden. Tides, serving as a medium, interconnected the realms of Chan, garden, and poetry. Throughout this process, tides, with their cultural significance in religion and literati traditions, offered new opportunities and insights for the creation of garden spaces.

2. Chan Encounters: Dashan and the Construction of Garden

2.1. The Life Experiences of Dashan and His Chan Buddhist Concepts

Dashan, also known as Shilian (石濂) and Shitoutuo (石頭陀), was originally from Jiaping but was raised in Zhejiang Province and was renowned for his proficiency in poetry and painting (Jiang 1999, p. 44). Born into modest circumstances, Dashan demonstrated remarkable intelligence from an early age. At the age of sixteen (in 1649), he had already taken refuge in the Caodong School under the esteemed monk Juelang Daosheng

覺浪道盛 (1592–1659)² from Tianjie Temple (天界寺) in Jinling (now Nanjing). Before the age of twenty, he had begun spreading Caodong teachings in Jiangnan.

After the fall of the Ming Dynasty in 1644, Dashan adopted the identity of an itinerant monk and traveled to the Five Sacred Mountains. During this period, he established extensive connections with the remnants of the Ming loyalists. In 1662, the Southern Ming Dynasty came to an end, and Dashan relocated to Canton the following year. Subsequently, he gained the patronage of the Ming loyalists Qu Dajun 屈大均 (1630–1696)³ and Liang Peilan 梁佩蘭 (1630–1705)⁴. Through the former, he established a relationship with Jin Guang 金光 (1609–1676), an aide of the King of Pingnan (平南王) Shang Kexi 尚可喜 (1604–1676). After being recommended by Jinguang and serving as the abbot of the Great Buddha Temple (*Dafo Si* 大佛寺) for 9 years, Dashan left and traveled north to Zhongzhou (now Henan), the capital (now Beijing), and Wumen (now Suzhou). In 1678, Dashan returned to Canton and was invited to be the abbot of Changshou Monastery (Jiang 1999, p. 69).

After Kangxi's abolition of feudal domains and the execution of Shang Zhixin 尚之信, the son of the King of Pinnan, Dashan, through interactions with loyalists and aides, found new patrons: the Governors-General of Guangdong and Guangxi (兩廣總督), Wu Xingzuo 吳興祚 (1632–1697), and Shi Lin 石琳 (1638–1702). After the calming of maritime tensions and the opening of foreign trade, Dashan was invited by Lord Nguyen Phuc Chu 阮福週 (1692–1725) to spread Buddhism in Dang Trong in 1695, and he returned to Canton the following year (Dashan 2007, p. 433).

Through the overseas spread of Buddhism and trade with Southeast Asia and Japan, Dashan obtained funds and resources for the continued construction of Changshou Monastery, the renovation of its gardens, and its daily operation (Wheeler 2007). Compared to the ways in which other temples survived at that time, Dashan made a distinctive choice.

Dashan was regarded as a “diplomatic” monk and was considered to be someone who was unconventional in their adherence to Buddhist precepts by being actively involved in political discussions and contemporary affairs, socially versatile, and proficient in poetry, art, and various crafts.

In general, although Dashan held the identity of a monk, his actions resembled literati. He actively supported and assisted the Ming loyalists, showed concern for political matters, and maintained close ties with the authorities in Canton. He led a refined life, excelling in poetry and painting, and demonstrated skills in furniture design and garden making. His overseas experiences also indicate that he possessed a keen business sense. Furthermore, Dashan inherited the concept of the integration of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (*sanjiao huitong* 三教會通) and innovated a new approach to poetry and Chan (*jishi yan-chan* 即詩言禪). Drawing inspiration from the Caodong School's “interpretation of Chan through the *I Ching*” (*yiyi shichan* 以易釋禪), Dashan incorporated concepts like the “Two-Fold Li Hexagram” (*chongli liuyao* 重離六爻) and the “interplay between appearance and essence” (*pianzheng huihu* 偏正回互) to design the Changshou Monastery Garden.

2.2. The Construction of the Changshou Monastery and Its Garden

Changshou Monastery was initially established in the Wanli era of the Ming Dynasty (F. Huang 1994, p. 561). It was situated outside the west wall of the Canton city, at the end of the Shang Xiguan Creek (上西關涌). The prominent Southern Buddhist monk Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) complemented its site selection, describing it as “backed by mountains and facing the sea, an excellent area for a Buddhist temple”. Originally, the land belonged to the local Pan family before the completion of Changshou, and its layout was as follows:

The upper and lower halls, along with the flanking abbot's quarters, the vegetarian kitchen, and the meditation room, are meticulously arranged, adorned with cinnabar, and maintained through regular renovations ... Therefore, though this hermitage may be small, it can encompass the Dharma realm, embrace sunyata (emptiness or nothingness). Morning bells and evening chants, the illusion of the moon on water, the gentle breeze in the pines, all manifest the eternal sounds of Dharma.

上下殿堂，兩翼方丈，齋廚禪室，輪稱連棧，丹雘煥然。……是則此庵雖小，可以含法界，包虛空，晨鐘夕梵，水月松風，皆演無盡法音。

(Hanshan 2005, pp. 423–24)

Since it was considered a “Pure Land”, with peoples’ belief in “Eternal Life”, it was named “Longevity” (*Changshou* 長壽). Twenty-six years later (1606), the imperial envoy Shen Zhenglong 沈正隆 expanded the old site and constructed the Cidu Pavilion (慈渡閣) to enshrine the Guanyin, and the Miaozheng Hall (妙證堂) and Linyi Pavilion (臨漪亭) were built on the remaining site, with fully equipped meditation rooms on both sides, covering an area of eight acres (Qiu 1993, p. 260).

When Dashan returned to Canton and took up residence in Changshou Monastery in the winter of 1678, the temple was half-ruined. Initially, near the abbot’s quarters, there should have been the Bamboo Waves Study (*Zhulang Zhai* 竹浪齋) and a bamboo garden (*Xiuzhu Yuan* 修竹園). Later, Dashan constructed Twelve Scenic Spots (十二觀), including Liliu Hall (離六堂), Half-Sail Pavilion (半帆亭), Drawing Sunyata Pavilion (繪空軒), Cloud-Half Pavilion (雲半閣), Recruiting Hermits Hall (招隱堂), Tower of Nostalgia (懷古樓), Settling Heart Pavilion (澱心亭), Mu Mo (木末), Terrace for Strolling under the Moon (月步臺), Gallery of Echoing Spring (響泉廊), Old Banyan Tree (老榕園), and Chi Mu Bridge (尺木橋). In 1685, Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634–1711), the Sacrificial Official of the Imperial College, visited Changshou Monastery after performing rituals in Nanhai Temple. He recorded the experience in the *Brief Records of Touring Guangzhou* (*Guangzhou Youlan Xiaozhi* 廣州遊覽小志):

... Dashan exhibits prowess in both poetry and painting, showcasing creativity in construction. On the secluded west side of the temple, a pond connects to the Pearl River, its water level fluctuating with the tides. North of the pond lies the Half-Sail Pavilion. Continuing along the winding gallery eastward brings one to the Drawing Sunyata Pavilion. Before the pavilion, a precious Buddha statue is nestled amidst diverse blossoms, crafting a picturesque tableau. South of the pond, and parallel to it, is a path bordered by lychee and longan trees. To the south of the pond, the Tower of Nostalgia offers a commanding and unobstructed vista. Nestled beneath it, the Liliu Hall is cradled by clear waters and verdant foliage, evoking the ambiance of temples in the Wu and Yue regions. Within, a sculpture of Shakyamuni holding a flower, adorned with gold, pearls, chalcedony, agate, and other exquisite materials, exudes a majestic and resplendent presence. Furthermore, there are bronze statues, believed to date back to the Tang Dynasty.

汕能詩畫，營造有巧思。寺西偏有池，通珠江水，增減應潮汐。池北為半帆，循廊曲折而東，為繪空軒。軒前佛桑寶相，諸花叢萃可愛。由半帆竝而南，緣岸皆荔支龍目。池之南為懷古樓，高明洞豁，其下為離六堂，水木清華，房廊幽竊，如吳越間寺。有拈花釋迦像，飾以黃金、珠玉、碑礪、瑪瑙、琴瑟之屬，莊嚴妙好，又有銅像雲是唐鑄也。(S. Wang 1968, p. 6)

After obtaining alms from Dang Trong and returning to Canton, Dashan proceeded to construct Mahavira Hall (大雄寶殿) and the Scripture Repository (經閣 or 藏龍閣). The records indicate that Dashan constructed the temple garden before concentrating financial resources on the main temple structures (Dashan 2007, p. 441; Jiang 1999, p. 21). According to the map from the late Qing Dynasty (Figure 1), Changshou Monastery was oriented westward while being situated to the east. The garden was located on the northwest side, with the pond’s water source originating from Shang Xiguan Creek.

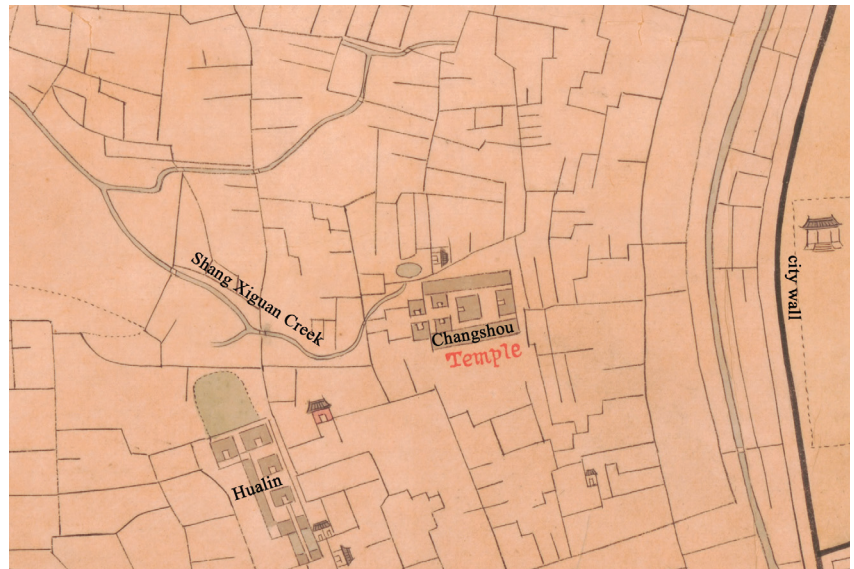


Figure 1. Vrooman, D., Cartographer. *Map of the city and entire suburbs of Canton*. [Canton: Rev. D. Vrooman, Canton City: For sale by Lee Mun Une, Painter, 1855] Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019588123/> (accessed on 30 November 2022). (The black text in the figure was added by the author).

Huang Deng 黃登, in *Poetry Selection of the Five Dynasties in Lingnan (Lingnan Wuchao Shixuan 嶺南五朝詩選)*, expressed that the Changshou Temple garden provided a suitable place for discussing Buddhist scriptures and engaging in meditation.

*Ponds and flower gardens envelop, while tidal waters flow around.
In the leisure of meditation, poetic inspiration is found.
Monks convene on platforms, engrossed in discourse,
Not a seat vacant throughout the course.
Occasionally, lofty themes are raised,
Enlightening minds, words flowing like cascading streams,
Each word laden with intent and significance.
Listeners silently resonate, no need for forceful shouts to seize opportunities.*

池塘花圃，潮水周通，禪余放參，興到吟和。諸上台公暇，每聆講論，日無虛座。間或舉揚宗旨，啟迪諸方，下筆如流，千言立就。凡有聞見，莫不默然融洽，不區區棒喝機緣。(Jiang 1999, p. 20)

If Wang Shizhen's description leans more towards a straightforward presentation depicting the basic layout of the Changshou Monastery Garden, then Huang Deng's approach implies a greater emphasis on the timing in the context of the garden scenery and the Caodong School. The phrase "forceful shouts to seize opportunities" (*banghe jiyuan* 棒喝機緣) echoes the relatively more aggressive enlightenment methods associated with the Linji School (臨濟宗), revealing the gentle and articulated practices of the Caodong School. Insights were triggered by the garden scenery, and poetry played a crucial role in this school.

2.3. Interprets Chan through the I Ching: The Caodong Concept in Garden Making

The Caodong School stands out within Buddhist theoretical frameworks for its distinctive approach: it prioritizes interpreting Chan teachings independent of extensive reliance on written scriptures. Instead, it derives inspiration from the *I Ching* 易經, a classic in

both Taoist and Confucian traditions, to elaborate on Chan's philosophy. It is considered the most philosophically inclined among the various Chan traditions. "Non-established written teachings" (*buli wenzi* 不立文字) refers to the avoidance or minimize the use of concepts derived from Buddhist scriptures translated from Indian languages when discussing Chan principles and experiences. In this context, how did Dashan, adhering to the principle of *buli wenzi*, evoke people's attention to the teachings of Chan Buddhism through spatial design?

Throughout its history, successive generations of Chan masters in the Caodong School have followed the practice of *yi yi shichan*, establishing a unique and unified approach to Chan teachings based on the *I Ching* (J. Chen 2015). Dashan inherited this abovementioned tradition and method. In the preface of *Liliu Tang Ji* 離六堂集, he elucidated *chongli liuyao*, *pianzheng huihu*, and "venerating fire as the essence" (*yihuo weizong* 以火為宗).

Six represents water, from water to attain fire, from the moon to attain the sun, from the mind to attain nature. Therefore, the Dao esteems li. Our former master consistently elucidated the principle of venerating fire, as in the sky it is represented by the sun, in individuals it manifests as nature, and in hexagrams it symbolizes li.

蓋六為水，離水所以得火，離月所以得日，離心所以得性，故道貴乎離。先師浪杖人常著論尊火為宗，火在天為日，在人為性，在卦為離。(Dashan 2007, p. 19)

Dashan built "Liliu Hall" to the south of the Half-Sail Pond, absorbing the concept of *liliu* (離六) from the *I Ching*, where one and six represent water. In the teachings of the Caodong School, *liliu* symbolizes fire, and *li* implies "intense brightness". Additionally, the hexagram *li* (離卦) in *I Ching* is associated with the south. The *pianzheng* emphasizes the positional relationship between "appearance" and "essence", embodying the realm of "harmonious integration of principle and matter" (理事圓通的境界). At the same time, *huihu* focuses on the mutual dependence and interaction between appearance and essence, grasping the essence without overlooking the differences between phenomena (Wu 1999; J. Chen 2015). The Half-Sail Pond (related to water) is located to the north (*pian* 偏), and the Liliu Hall (related to fire) is situated to the south (*zheng* 正), thus spatially realizing the intention of *pianzheng*.

From Chen Gongyin's 陳恭尹 (1631–1700) poem, one may envision the imagery of Liliu Hall: "Twelve railings, fashioned in jade hue, encircle as water winds its course. Mimicking an ascent to a pavilion amidst sea mirages of clouds and delving into pearls beneath the dragon's jaw" (十二欄杆砌碧瑜，四周流水入縈紆。似登海蜃煙中閣，同探驪龍領下珠) (G. Chen 2015, p. 492). The first line suggests that Liliu Hall was likely surrounded by the waters of the Half-Sail Pond, indicating a *huihu* concept. The second line leads to the upper level of the Hall, referred to as the Tower of Nostalgia, a place for contemplating ancient times. The hall and the pond occupied the most important positions in the garden, serving as spatial manifestations of Dashan's comprehension of the Caodong School.

3. The Sensory Garden: Manifestation and Significance of Tides

3.1. Metaphorically Represents the Sea: Half-Sail and Echoing Spring

According to Wang Shizhen's records, situated to the west of the temple lay a sizable pond. Its waters streamed through a stone water outlet, intricately linked to Shang Xiguan Creek, ultimately converging with a tidal river—the Pearl River (F. Huang 1994, p. 562). The water level in the pond experienced daily fluctuations due to the ebb and flow of the tides. In the northern part of the pond, there was a structure known as the "Half-Sail Pavilion". Despite being referred to as a pavilion, it comprised a hall-type structure intended for receptions, residence, and leisure, serving as the focal point within the temple garden. The adjacent pond was dubbed "Half-Sail Pond" in reference to this significant edifice.

In 1815, many years after Dashan's passing, during the Double Third Festival (上巳節), the Office of the Governor-General of Guangzhou Zeng Yu 曾燠 (1759–1831) and eleven others gathered at the Half-Sail Pavilion in Changshou Monastery for a purification ceremony (Figure 2). The main structures in the painting are arranged in the shape of the

Chinese character “品”. At the focal point stands the main building, where one person is playing the Guqin while two others listen attentively nearby. Another person leans against the railing, gazing at the artificial rocks in the pond. According to the inscription, this building is none other than the Half-Sail Pavilion:

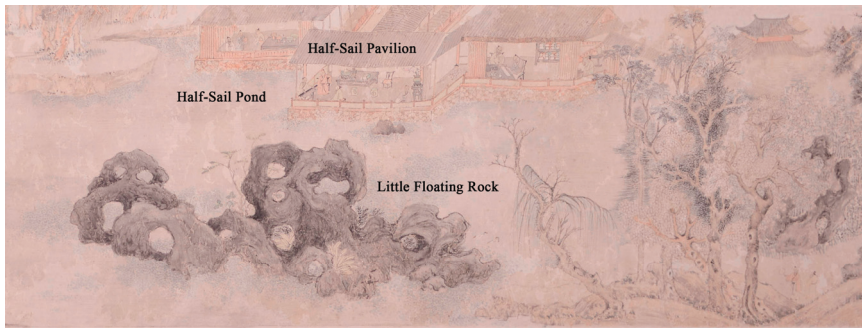


Figure 2. The Half-Sail Pavilion and the Little Floating Rock, *the Ritual Cleansing at the Rear Pond of Changshou Temple* 曾實谷先生長壽寺後池修禪圖 (Jiang 2007). (The black text in the figure was added by the author).

Half-Sail Pavilion rises high, eager to take flight with the wind (to the north of the pond there is house called Half-Sail). Stacked peaks standing aloof, the tide recedes and settles again (there is a Little Floating Rock in the pond) ... Guests assemble, tapping the gate of Chan, wild delicacies and fragrant wines arranged, seated beneath the sail, as if navigating a lofty boat, soaring over vast seas to face the Three Sacred Mountains. Flowers and trees intermingle, their reflections shimmer in the mirror; suddenly, wind and rain arrive, the body floats in the sky ... Amidst the boundless bitter sea, what awaits beyond? With the merciful ferry sailing steadfastly, the Half-Sail beckons.

半帆高展，風動欲飛（池北有屋曰半帆）。疊嶂孤浮，潮迴仍定（池中有小浮山）。……乃會賓履，敏禪關，芳尊野蔌，列座於帆下，宛然駕樓船，凌渤澥而對三神山焉。花樹相錯，影搖鏡中；風雨忽來，身浮天上。……苦海蒼茫，何為彼岸？慈航安穩，乃有半帆。（Jiang 2007）

Using the Half-Sail as a symbol of a merciful ferry, with the tides representing the sea and the Little Floating Rock symbolizing the sacred mountains, these served as the transitional points from the garden scenery to the traditional Three Sacred Mountains [Penglai 蓬萊, Fangzhang 方丈, Yingzhou 瀛洲]. Finally, this was sublimated into the Buddhist ideology of a merciful ferry breaking free from the sea of suffering.

Wonderful sound, Perceiver of the World's Sounds,

Brahma sound, the sea tide sound—

they surpass those sounds of the world;

therefore you should constantly think on them

from thought to thought never entertaining doubt!

妙音觀世音，梵音海潮音，勝彼世間音，是故須常念，念念勿生疑。

This passage from the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* (妙法蓮華經) (Watson 2002, p. 347) describes the blessings of Bodhisattva Guanyin, Perceiver of the World's Sounds. As the sea tide arrives punctually, and its sound is grand, its sound metaphorizes the timely and opportune preaching of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The sea and mountains are essential components of the cosmic world centered around Mount Sumeru (須彌山), forming the overall pattern of “nine mountains, eight seas, and four major continents (九山八海四大洲)”. In the Longer Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra (無量壽經), the Pure Land world (淨土世界) was described

as having seven jewel ponds (七寶池) and eight meritorious waters (八功德水). Water symbolizes the sea, and the water in the ponds constantly changes according to the mental state of those who enter (Bodhisattvas and monastic disciples who comprehend the teachings by hearing them 聲聞眾). There is a legend that under the protection of Guanyin (觀音, in Chinese, the name “Guanyin” means “Observing the Sounds” or “Perceiver of the World’s Sounds”), the incoming tidewater can be transformed into the Brahma’s voice and vanishes.

The sound of sea tides in Buddhism symbolizes the timely propagation of the Dharma. Above the water outlet of the pond in Changshou Monastery was a gallery called “Echoing Spring” (*xiangquan* 響泉). From Chen Gongyin’s poem, it is evident that the changes in tidal water levels in the pond of Changshou Monastery were metaphorically extended to sea tides, and the sounds that they evoked were appreciated by the literati and harmonized with the Guqin melodies of the literati gatherings:

The sea tides contend in their comings and goings, singing ceaselessly even when not stirred.

Perched upon a modest couch through the night, the sound of the waterfall reverberates in the secluded mountains.

Attuned to the distant whispers of nature, weaving them into a pristine melody upon the jade Guqin.

It’s not about attaining perfection akin to Master Chenglian; who could discern the stirring of my soul?

海潮爭出入，不激亦長鳴。小榻坐終夜，空山聞瀑聲。聽從天籟遠，譜作玉琴音。不是成連子，安知移我情？(G. Chen 2015, p. 539)

The character “Chenglian zi” (成連子) in the poem is inspired by the well-known literary allusion “Chenglian into the Sea” (成連入海). Master Chenglian 成連 is the teacher of Boya 伯牙, a famous qin player and musician from the Spring and Autumn period. Master Chenglian once led Boya to the mythical Penglai in the Eastern Sea and left him alone on the island. Boya, stretching his neck to gaze into the distance, found that there was no one on the island, only hearing the sound of the surging sea tide and feeling the mysterious silence of the mountains and forests. In the end, he attained enlightenment through the sounds of the tide.

Chen Gongyin, using the sea tide sounds from Changshou Monastery and drawing inspiration from the literary classic, implied that he had already attained the “enlightenment” of literati—a sense of empathy and sunyata, akin to Boya.

Moreover, in the Ming Dynasty, Penglai emerged as a transcendent realm, breaking free from the Three Sacred Mountains, symbolizing a mystical paradise accessible only by crossing the boundless sea by boat. In many instances, Penglai often appeared in the writings of literati as a mountain in the sea, visible but unreachable.

3.2. Ideal World: Little Floating Rock in the Tidal Water

During the Ming Wanli era, the Chan master Renchao 仁潮 visualized the Buddhist cosmology in *An Illustrated [Guide to] the Established Order of the Dharma-realm* (*Fa Jie An Li Tu* 法界安立圖). The book depicts “Four Great Continents” (四大部洲) and “Nine Mountains and Eight Seas” (九山八海), the structure of the Dharma Realm, a concept in Mahayana Buddhism that classifies the entire cosmos. The diagrams illustrate the arrangement of realms, mountains, and seas within this Buddhist cosmology. Mount Sumeru (須彌山 or 蘇彌盧山) is situated in the center, surrounded by the Fragrance Ocean (香水海), with the outermost being the Great Iron Enclosing Mountain (鐵圍山 or 斫迦羅山) (as shown in Figure 3a). The 16th-century Chinese encyclopedia (*Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會) shows how literati in the late Ming era perceived Penglai (Figure 3b). In this image, Mount Penglai is depicted as a mountain rising from the sea, with a larger top and a smaller bottom. Mount Sumeru and Mount Penglai share the image of the sacred mountain from ancient Chinese legends. The *Fa Jie An Li Tu* reflects the Sinicization of Buddhist cosmology in the late Ming era, integrating it with traditional Chinese geography and mythology (see Fang 1997).

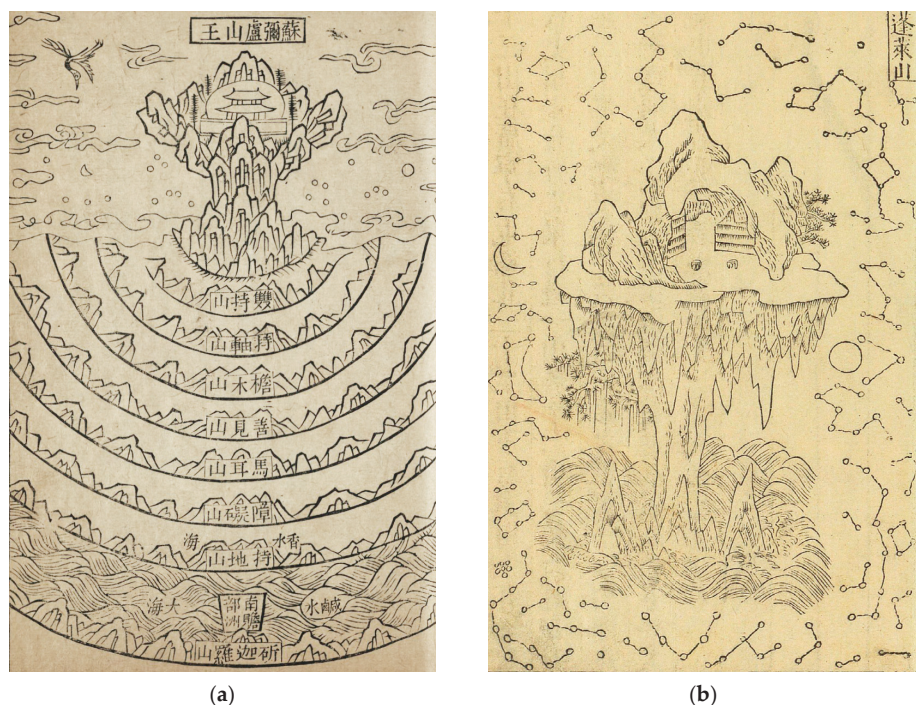


Figure 3. (a) Illustration of Nine Mountains and Eight Seas 九山八海圖 in *Fa Jie An Li Tu* 法界安立圖 (Renchao 1607, xia.10a). (b) Illustration of Mount Penglai 蓬萊山圖 in *Sancai Tuhui* 三才圖會 (Wang and Wang 1609, dili8.17a).

In the Half-Sail Pond of Changshou Monastery, one can observe Dashan's idealization through the arrangement of the temple garden. By combining local characteristics and traditional Chinese mythology with the *sanjiao huitong* philosophy of the Caodong School, a unique Buddhist world is presented. This intention was gradually realized through the transformation of the garden scenery.

During the early days of Dashan living in Changshou Monastery, although the west pond was influenced by the tides, there was no mention of the "Little Floating Rock". In the poem *Xi Shuichi Xiaoque Luo Cheng* (西水池小却落成), the reference to "the sound of tides" (*chaoyin* 潮音) is present, but the poem still focuses on planting and pastoral imagery, reflecting a strong yearning for a secluded life, characteristic of the literati who sought refuge (Dashan 2007, p. 127). At this point, despite the pond being affected by the tides and featuring the resonant sounds of the tide in the context of the temple, it had not yet formed a direct connection with the ideal cosmological diagram in Buddhism. The sea symbolism was more commonly associated with the act of climbing the Tower of Nostalgia for a panoramic view of Pearl River. Only a single strange rock was placed near the side pond of the Liliu Hall, and observers still interpreted this "strange rock" (*qishi* 奇石) based on traditional criteria, such as its color, texture, and patterns⁵ (for aesthetic discussions on strange rocks, see Yang 2003, pp. 91–137). The full integration of tidal elements and the significance of the Little Floating Rock into the religious and cosmological context seemed to be a later development in the evolution of the temple garden's scenery.

After receiving offerings from Lord Nguye and returning to Canton, Dashan reorganized the temple garden, dredged the west pond (Half-Sail Pond), and gained new insight into the garden landscape and Buddhist teachings. Apart from financial considerations, this approach was likely influenced by his maritime experiences, the Dang Trong geographical environment he encountered, and the tidal temple gardens he visited. In his

Overseas Records (Haiwai Jishi 海外紀事), he wrote: “The land of Dang Trong is one continuous mountain range rising and falling amidst the vast ocean ... The temple is located on flat land, surrounded by water on three sides, with mudflats just a hundred steps outside the gate ... There is a square pond surrounding the temple, which rise and fall with the tides” (蓋大越國土，總是一山曲折起伏於巨洋中。……寺處平壤，三面臨水，門外百步即淤塗。……有方池環繞殿外，與潮汐消長) (Dashan 2007, pp. 408–9). Moreover, he took great pride in his Dharma propagation experiences and his status as the “National Teacher” appointed by Lord Nguyen.

He took advantage of tides (*chenchao* 趁潮) to transport Ying rocks (*yingshi* 英石). These stones originated in Yingde 英德 and had a rough texture. They were often used in Lingnan gardens for rockery making, and they were stacked to make the Little Floating Rock in the middle of the pond, facing the Half-Sail Pavilion.

Cracked and porous Ying rocks, carried by the shifting tide. Peaks and ridges acquired effortlessly, flowers and trees planted in their rightful seasons. Climbing the winding path to the summit, lotus blossoms unfold before me. The aged monk, unable to articulate, simply nods in silent acknowledgment.

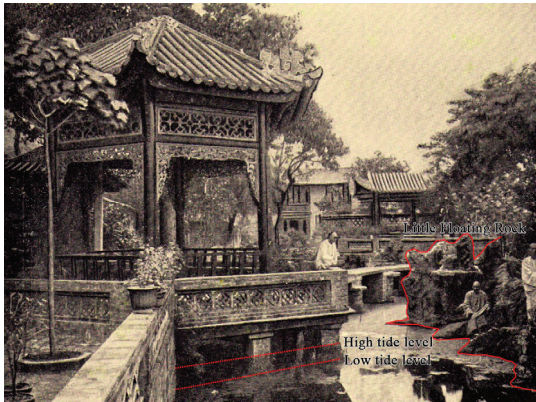
漏透英州石，乘潮運載回。峰巒隨意得，花木逐時栽。蹬道盤空上，蓮花觀面開。老僧無法說，孤負點頭來。 (Dashan 2007, p. 316)

Dashan skillfully used the tidal changes in the pond to metaphorically represent the ideal Buddhist cosmology of the sea and the mountain. Elements such as the Great Wilderness 大荒 and Floating Mountain from the piece of classical Chinese literature the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhai Jing 山海經)* were transformed into Dashan’s solemn Buddhist realm through the imagery of the Half-Sail Pond and the Little Floating Rock. Furthermore, to the northeast of Canton lies Luofu Mountain (羅浮山), famous as a Taoist mountain, which Dashan once visited. Legend has it that Fu Mountain (浮山) was originally a part of Penglai, later drifting across the sea to merge with Luoshan (羅山). In the *Little Floating Rock Ode (Xiao Fushan Fu 小浮山賦)* from the *Recent Notes of the Liliu Hall (Liliu Tang Jingao 離六堂近稿)*, Dashan described his contemplation of constructing the Little Floating Rock in the Half-Sail Pond, which was inspired by the traces of the great Floating Mountain (大浮山), during his leisure due to illness. He expressed the idea that beyond the Great Wilderness (*dahuang* 大荒), there existed the Floating Mountain, albeit as a remote and unreachable destination. He emphasized the significance of tides in shaping the ideal space of the sea and the Floating Mountain.

In the Little Floating Rock Ode, Dashan described the key elements for realizing his intent: “mountain standing on water” (山立水上), “water connecting with the Pearl River” (水通珠江), and “tides surrounding” (潮汐環繞). First, the idea of a “mountain standing on water” laid the foundation for inspiring the imagination of a sea mountain. Second, “water connecting with the Pearl River” and “tides surrounding” were crucial means of the illusion of a sea in the pond. In the ode, Dashan described the Half-Sail Pond as “spacious and clear, with shimmering waves and a vast expanse,” yet, the historical map indicates that the pond was not very large. The rise and fall of the tides provided conditions for imagining a sea, ultimately creating an image of “stacked mountains and layered rocks, akin to floating islands adrift in a boundless ocean” (愛壘山與疊石，像浮島乎巨洋) (Dashan 2007, pp. 301–3).

Photographs of the Changshou Monastery Garden taken in the 1870s show this scene. On the left side of Figure 4a, a hexagonal pavilion with an upturned eave (which may be the Pavilion for Moon-Waiting and Tide-Listening 待月聽潮亭) is shown, half-elevated above the water and half-connected to the pond shore. A zigzag stone bridge extends from the pavilion’s side to the artificial rock. On the right side of the photograph is the “Little Floating Rock” made of Ying rocks. The tide is receding, revealing the muddy bottom of the pond. The brick and stone foundations of the Little Floating Rock are fully visible. The depth of the pond is about three feet. From the watermarks, it can be inferred that the tide rises and falls by less than two feet. At this moment, the Little Floating Rock appears to be

on land. In the photograph, one person is standing outside the pavilion, while two others are seated on the stones around the artificial rock and by the edge of the pond. Figure 4b illustrates the landscape during high tide from another perspective, showing that the Little Floating Rock has transformed into a small island. The fluctuation of the water levels in the pond due to tidal effects metaphorically represents the sea in the Buddhist cosmological world. When the tide recedes, it symbolizes a mountain, while it becomes a shoal or island as the tide rises, and the stacked rocks become a Floating Mountain.



(a)



(b)

Figure 4. (a) The Half-Sail Pond at low tide; provided by Zhou Junrong 周俊榮. (b) The Half-Sail Pond at high tide (Worswick 1982). (The black text and red lines in the figure were added by the author).

4. The Concept of Chan Poetry of the Caodong School and the Literati Gathering in the Garden

4.1. The Concept of “Understanding Chan through Improvised Poems” in Chan Poetry and Its Integration with the Garden Scene

The Chan tradition emphasizes the concept of *buli wenzi*. Chan masters often find themselves in a dilemma: they cannot speak directly, yet they cannot remain silent. Therefore, they resort to expedient means of using certain things or objects as inducements for “skillful guidance” (*fangbian kaishi* 方便開示).

On the other hand, the secularization of the monastic system in Ming and Qing Chan Buddhism, with abbots engaging in diverse studies outside of Buddhism, led to a gradual transformation. There emerged a phenomenon in which “through the melodies of the Guqin and verses, the resonance of Buddhist activities is evoked. Brushwork and painting become the subjects of Chan discourse, where worldly learning transcends worldly phenomena” (以琴韻詩詞為聲音佛事，以臨書描畫為禪關話頭，雖世間學，即超世間法也) (R. Wang 2019, pp. 79–80). Chan Buddhism, through direct intuitive contemplation of natural scenery itself, attains the realization of the true nature of the universe (D. Wang 2014, pp. 231–32).

Building upon Caodong tradition’s emphasis on *chongli liuyao* and *pianzheng huihu*, Dashan further developed the concept of *jishi yanchan* (Dang 2019). He advocated poetry as the primary medium and asserted, “Through poetry, one may delve into the depths of Chan, departing from poetry to expound on Chan, one loses the essence of poetry, and even more so, the essence of Chan becomes elusive!” (在詩言詩，便可即詩言禪；離詩言禪，不可以言詩，愈不可以言禪而言詩耶！) (Dashan 2007, p. 381).

In the Changshou Monastery Garden, Chan’s enlightenment was realized through the garden scene, a theme prominently featured in the poems of Dashan and the literati gatherings. An example is Dashan’s *Planting Trees Ode* (*Zhongshu Xing* 種樹行):

Changshou, graced by water nourishing the western pond,

*A terrace beside it, known as Strolling under the Moon.
 Encircled by walls, devoid of stairs,
 A narrow path meanders through the woods.
 Halting around half a mu,⁶
 Elevated yet unpretentious, humble yet unsullied.*

...

Who truly understands this Samadhi?

I do not rush into worldly matters, nor do I heed the urgency of others.

長壽有水注西池，池邊築台名月步。四圍壁立無階梯，林下微通一線路。約略方停半畝間，高不至亢下不污。……此中三昧誰得知？我不從人急世務。

(Dashan 2007, p. 310)

Evidently, Dashan interpreted Buddhist teachings through the concept of “entering the world” (*rushi* 入世), gaining insights into the Dharma through the process of garden making, daily life in the garden, and interactions with the literati during gatherings. In the Changshou Monastery Garden, the scenery was commonly associated with Buddhism, such as the bamboo grove, Bamboo Waves Study, and Bodhi trees. The bamboo symbolized the site where Gautama Buddha preached and propagated Buddhism, and the Bodhi trees signified enlightenment. The garden also featured a Shakyamuni statue, a Buddhist allusion to picking up a flower and smiling (*nianhua yixiao*, 拈花一笑). According to the *Compendium of the Five Lamps* (*Wudeng Huiyuan* 五燈會元), Shakyamuni Buddha held up a flower that only Mahākāśyapa understood and responded with a subtle smile. In response, the Buddha passed on the Dharma to him. Here, the Buddha skillfully used the flower and the action of holding it to achieve *fangbian kaishi*.

What made the Changshou Monastery Garden unique was its utilization of the tidal scenery, connecting it to the Buddhist concept of the sound of the tide. As mentioned above, the Gallery of the Echoing Spring was associated with the sounds of the tide, and poet Xu Qiu 徐鉉 (1636–1709) expressed this connection with his poem, “Fragrant streams enter gently, departing clouds leave no trace behind. In leisure, leaning on the rail, I drift and grasp the essence of Chan’s sound” (香浦細泉入，雲歸無處尋。閒來時倚仗，流之悟禪音) (Jiang 1999, p. 215). This poem links the insights gained from the flowing water scenery with the sound of Chan Buddhism.

4.2. From the Literati Gatherings amongst the Tide Sounds to the Construction of the Pavilion for Moon-Waiting and Tide-Listening 待月聽潮亭

For the literati who lived in Canton for a long time, the sounds of tides and oars signified the beginning of literati gatherings in the garden. Xie Lansheng’s diary of literati gatherings recorded the scenes of the incoming and outgoing water in the wide creek (Xie 2014). Through numerous gatherings spanning over a hundred years, the connection between “tides” and “Chan” in the Changshou Monastery Garden was continuously reinforced. The “tides” served as a common theme in these gatherings, facilitating connections between contemporary individuals and their predecessors, bridging the worlds of literati and monks.

The continuity of the local literati regarding this theme lies in establishing a connection between them and their predecessors, prominent figures of the past. While the temple monks utilized the theme to maintain their relational network, they consistently associated the regular changes of tides with the causal conditions in Buddhist teachings. The monk Zaoan 早安 reflected this connection: “Being and extinction, they are mirrored in the pond’s ebb and flow. Morning tides naturally come, and evening tides naturally go” (因生因滅，可以池喻。朝潮自來，夕汐自去) (Jiang 2007).

In the Changshou Monastery Garden, there were three significant literati gatherings.

In the spring of 1685, Dashan gathered with Wang Shizhen and others in the Tower of Nostalgia for a literary gathering. Wang Shizhen left the following couplet: “The red

mansion mirrors the midnight sea under the moonlight, while the stone water outlet links with the river, encountering dual tidal currents” (F. Huang 1994, p. 562).

In the Double Third Festival of 1815, Zeng Yu organized a purification ceremony with 11 people at Half-Sail Pond, and this scene was depicted in a painting of a purification ceremony (Figure 3). In this gathering, tides and the Half-Sail Pavilion were mentioned by most participants.

In the Double Third Festival of 1860, Luo Tianchi 羅天池 (1805–1866) gathered six people, and in August, Li Changrong 李長榮 gathered several scholars for a purification ceremony at the Half-Sail Pavilion (Figure 5). Based on the records from the *Gengshen Xiuxi Ji* (庚申修禊集), these two gatherings at the Changshou Monastery Garden were part of several literati gatherings held in various gardens (C. Li 2015, pp. 427–72). At this time, the Pavilion for Moon-Waiting and Tide-Listening (待月听潮亭) was built in the Changshou Monastery Garden.

Tides, initially just a natural phenomenon, took on new significance when they were introduced into the garden by Master Dashan to shape the garden scenery. As monks and literati continued their gatherings, the religious and historical meanings of the tides were consistently being discovered and reinforced. In response, a new structure was built, and new garden scenery emerged.

5. Conclusions

During the transition from the Ming to the Qing Dynasty, there was widespread interaction between Chan monks and the literati. Meanwhile, the secularization of Chan Buddhism facilitated the construction of Chan temple gardens. The historical records of Master Dashan’s management of the Changshou Monastery Garden illustrate that Chan Buddhist concepts and life experiences influenced the cultivation of essential garden scenery.

Chan Buddhism not only influenced the artistic conception of garden-making but also shaped the spatial layout of temple gardens through its specific religious beliefs. Dashan chose spaces and perceptual mediums that could resonate with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, such as the Floating Mountain and tides, connecting the ideal Buddhist world, traditional Chinese sacred mountains, and the general understanding of the contemporary literati. Dashan organized the garden space based on the aforementioned connections, expressing the ideals of the Caodong School through the depiction of garden aesthetics in poetry. Successors inherited the tradition established by Dashan. Through poems composed at literati gatherings, they continuously reinforced the imagery linking the garden and Buddhist themes. This practice solidified their connection with their predecessors through the shared experience of the garden and its ever-changing tidal scenery.

In summary, it can be observed that tides served as a medium connecting Chan, garden, and poetry (Figure 5). Tides were able to alter the garden scenery and trigger garden imagination, while the garden itself provided a space to accommodate the tides. Tides inspired poetic composition, simultaneously pointing to the transcendent sounds within Chan Buddhism. Through the medium of tides, poetry expressed the ideals of Chan, with Chan forming the core of garden poetry. The garden offered a place for the enlightenment of Chan Buddhism, facilitated by gatherings of literati within the garden, leading to the promotion and dissemination of Chan principles. The garden provided an aura for poetry creation, and poetry injected Chan into the garden scenery.

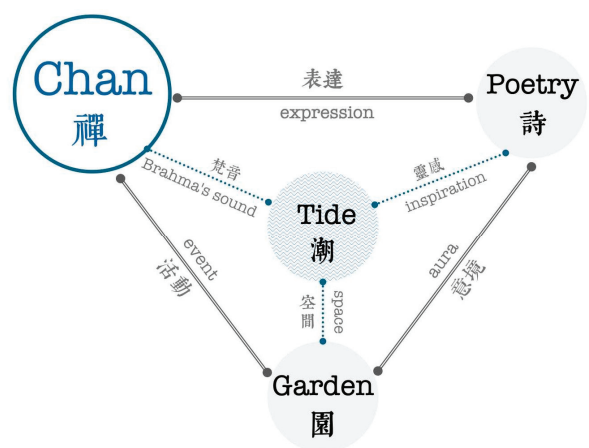


Figure 5. The connections between the tide, garden, Chan, and poetry. Drawn by the author.

These findings cast new light on the “secularization” within Chinese Chan Buddhist temple gardens. Furthermore, they encourage further exploration of the relationship between the creation of garden spaces in East Asian temples and Buddhism in the context of missionary activities and networks.

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Notes

¹ Hualin Monastery (華林寺, “Temple of the Five Hundred Gods” in Western accounts), Changshou Monastery, and Haichuang Monastery (海幢寺, “Honam Temple” in Western accounts) were located outside the Canton city and were well-known to Westerners during the late Qing period. In contrast, Guangxiao Monastery (光孝寺, literal meaning Bright Filial Piety Temple) and Dafo Monastery were both located within the Canton city, which was surrounded by walls.

² Juelang Daosheng, a native of Pucheng in Fujian, is commonly known as Zhang Lian 張琰, with the courtesy name Juelang 覺浪 and the alias Zhangren 杖人. Daosheng was highly accomplished in Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, and his expertise extended into these three major teachings. In his Chan practice, he emphasized a straightforward approach to the Dharma and sought to reconcile the teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. He demonstrated a strong concern for the interplay between politics and religion.

³ Qu Dajun was a Ming loyalist from the Lingnan region and a renowned poet. He briefly became a monk, claiming to be a disciple of Juelang Daosheng, but later returned to secular life. Throughout his life, he devoted himself to the cause of opposing the Qing Dynasty and restoring the Ming Dynasty.

⁴ Qu Dajun, Liang Peilan, and Chen Gongyin 陳恭尹 are collectively known as the Three Masters of Lingnan (嶺南三大家).

- ⁵ In *Fen Gan Yu Hua* (分甘餘話), Wang Shizhen said: “Its color is yellow like steamed chestnuts, lustrous like honeyed amber, with slight wrinkles, and its height is about three or four feet. Truly a strange object (真奇物也)”.
- ⁶ Mu, a traditional Chinese unit of land area, is roughly equivalent to 667 square meters. In poetry and literature, half a mu (banmu) often serves as a metaphor for a small piece of land.

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Article

Spatio-Temporal Process of the Linji School of Chan Buddhism in the 10th and 11th Centuries

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Abstract: From the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127), the Linji School became the main branch of the Southern Chan Buddhism. Understanding the historical significance of the Linji School is crucial for comprehending the origins and development of Chan Buddhism in China and East Asia. This article adheres to the academic approach of studying Chan in its historical context, using GIS (Geographic Information System) tools to include in the research all seven generations of Linji monks, from the fourth to the tenth Linji generation, and reconstructing the spatial and temporal process of Linji's transmission in the 10th and 11th centuries. The study found that the Linji monastic group maintained a tenuous relationship with secular power in their ideology during the Northern Song Dynasty, with their preaching distribution center far from the power center (the capital), located to the south of the Yangtze River. This situation allowed the Linji monastic group to avoid extinction during the transition between the Song and Jin Dynasties, and the monastic group later became a unique and thriving force.

Keywords: Chan Buddhism; Linji School; Northern Song Dynasty; spatial and temporal processes; GIS

1. Introduction

After the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127), the Linji School (臨濟宗) became the dominant school of Southern Chan Buddhism (禪宗). To this day, it occupies a major part of the Buddhist Chan in China (Huang and Ju 2011). How the Linji School's status was formed historically is a key issue in understanding the origins of the origins of Chinese Chan Buddhism.

The traditional study of the history of Chan Buddhism takes Chan thought as its root. This research approach necessitates the selection of representative Chan masters for study (Yan 2006, p. 8; Tsuchiya 2008, pp. 141–48). However, the identification of representative Chan masters is a rather subjective matter. Generally speaking, certain Chan masters who are well documented and have many descendants in the Lamp History (燈錄) are the main examples of such studies. While it is generally true that the more records of a Chan master that existed, the greater the influence he had, it is important not to overlook the lag in the formation of the Lamp History, which is often mixed with deliberate exaggerations of the images of masters by later disciples. Like the Yunmen (雲門) monastic order of the Northern Song dynasty, the mainstream Linji (臨濟) monastic order was constantly changing. This change was accompanied by a reshaping of the image after “the master was manifested by his disciples”. The history of the Linji monastic order, as recounted in the Lamp History, deviates from historical reality (Ge 2023). Selecting only a few “important” Chan masters in each generation, while omitting the numerous monks who actually carried out the generation transmission, cannot accurately reflect the entire picture of the monastic community's transmission of the sermons.¹

This paper adheres to the approach of “studying Chan in its historical context” (Hu 1991) and includes all seven generations of Linji Chan masters, from the fourth to the tenth

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Linji generation, in order to recover the spatial and temporal process of the transmission of the Linji monastic order in the 10th and 11th centuries after the Linji Buddhist school revived during the Five Dynasties (907–979). Yanagida Seizan questions whether Chan dialogue materials had really conveyed Chan thoughts in the Lamp History (Yanagida 1978). Influenced by this query, John R. McRae believed that scholars should distinguish four types of Chan materials: history, legendary, Chan law, and propagandists' rationalizations (McRae 1986, pp. 10–11). Mixing up the types will lead to serious distortions in understanding Chan history, mistaking legends for history and promotional slogans for the true expression of Chan thoughts. Albert Welter have reversed the priority normally ceded to *Yulu* style materials in Lamp History compilations in favor of the historical details provided regarding associations between Chan monks and secular rulers and literati officials, appointments of Chan monks to different monasteries, the honors bestowed on them, and so on (Albert 2006, p. 5).

This paper compares the number of Chan masters from the fourth to the tenth generations of Linji in the Lamp History and other relevant documents, and processes spatial information on the transmission by these Chan masters to create a thematic map for spatial analysis. Jason Protass has already attempted this method and achieved important results, but there are still some methodological issues (Protass 2016).

1. He did not conduct a comprehensive examination of the Lamp History over the Middle Ages. The most systematic genealogical source for recording the generation and number of Chan masters is the Lamp History. During the Northern Song period, the government compiled three versions of the Lamp History: the *Jingde Chuandenglū* (景德傳燈錄, hereinafter referred to as the *Chuandenglū*), the *Tiansheng Guangdenglū* (天聖廣燈錄, hereinafter referred to as the *Guangdenglū*), and the *Jianzhong Jingguo Xudenglū* (建中靖國續燈錄, hereinafter referred to as the *Xudenglū*), which provided a general picture of the size of the Chan group from the Five Dynasties to the Northern Song period. However, these three versions of the Lamp History did not cover all the Chan masters of the same period as the book was being compiled, due to the time limit on the collection of materials. Thus, simply adding up the number of Linji Chan masters listed in these three versions does not yield the full number of Linji Chan masters. Additionally, there are errors in the generation and the number of successors recorded in the existing Lamp History (Ge 2016, pp. 19–20).

2. The cross-section is displaced according to different periods. In the Lamp History, a considerable number of Chan Masters have only scattered records, or only records of their sayings, but their generation and the information about their abode are complete. If only selecting Chan Masters with verifiable biographical information as the data sample, the same problem of choosing “representative” Chan Masters exists as in previous studies. If Chan Masters with incomplete personal information are randomly located in the map layer, this can easily cause displacement of the sites.

3. The circle overlaps in the map. On Protass's maps, each master is represented by a single circle, with the size of each circle (its radius) indicating the number of disciples listed in the Lamp History. Due to the map limitation and some Chan masters' abodes being at the same temple locations, it is even more likely that the points overlap, making it difficult to clearly display their distribution on the map.

4. In Song Dynasty, Chan temples were promoted as the official template for the Shifang (十方, or “ten directions” monasteries, means public monasteries) reform, and the mobility of the abbot greatly increased (Morten 2008, pp. 34–49). However, Protass's approach is to locate the temple associated with a Chan Master in the entry header of the Lamp History, without considering that Chan Masters may have lived in multiple temples (especially those far apart) and that geographical diffusion of their disciples may have occurred. This means that each temple where the Chan Master served as abbot will show circles representing multiple centers that may be far apart, and the number of disciples in each circle may also undergo significant changes.

This article makes significant adjustments compared to the above research:

1. We select the *Xu Chuandenglu* (續傳燈錄, also translated as “The Sequel to the Lamp History”) as the basic source for examining the fourth to the tenth generations of Linji Chan masters, which is the most comprehensive collection of Chan masters and the nearest to the Northern Song Dynasty in terms of compilation time. It was edited by the Ming Dynasty monk Yuanji Juding (圓極居頂, ?–1404). In addition to compiling a comprehensive record of the Northern Song period’s Chan masters, it also includes important information that was missing from previous editions (Ge 2017).

The related studies show that only a Chan master who becomes an abbot can complete the qualification of a monastic member. Moreover, only an abbot can bestow the qualification on his inheritance disciple (also dharma heir 法嗣, a monk who inherits the mantle of his master and then becomes an abbot of Chan monastery). This indicates that the abbot is the crucial link in the Chan lineage.² Therefore, except for a small number of laypeople, the vast majority are renounced Chan masters who spread the dharma.³ Therefore, we compile only the records of Chan monks who have a clear lineage relationship with Chan masters outside the Lamp History, and we supplement these records into the Chan monk database.

2. This paper takes each generation of Chan masters in the same generation as the map layer. According to the extant historical data, the year when the last of the Chan masters of the same generation came into existence (when he became an abbot of a monastery) and the year when the first abbot retired (when he ceased to be an abbot of a monastery) is taken as the time interval for the Dharma missions of the Chan masters of that generation, aiming to obtain a synchronous transmission cross-section layer for the Chan masters of that generation.

3. When illustrating the geographical distribution of a Chan master’s Dharma transmissions on a map, if a Chan master lived in more than one monastery, the monastery is generally taken as the one indicated in the Lamp History catalog. In this paper, the thematic map demonstrates a kernel density plot to depict the trend of transmission of dharma by various generations of Linji monks. Due to the large sample size, the random flow of individual monks can be ignored in determining the transmission centers. The geographical location of the monastery is determined primarily by Suzuki Tetsuo’s (2006) *A Dictionary of the Names of Chinese Chan Temples and Mountains* (中國禪宗寺名山名辭典, 2006) and geo-referenced according to the coordinates. If the location of the monastery is unclear, the prefectural seat of the monastery is used for the location on the map. The coordinates of the seats for the temple were taken from the CHGIS (<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~chgis/>, accessed on 1 January 2021) layer.

4. In the Song Dynasty, the selection of abbots was largely controlled by the official authorities. For monks to obtain the qualification of preaching and expand their influence, they had to establish good relationships with scholars (Albert 2006, p. 5). To better understand the relationship between the Linji Monastery’s transmission of Buddhism and the political powers, this article chooses the administrative map as the base map, which is sourced from CHGIS (“Hartwell China HGIS”, CHGIS V5 (2010), Harvard Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Fudan University Center for Historical Geography).

2. Resurgence of the Linji Monastic Order

2.1. The Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Generations of Linji

The only three remaining Linji monks of the fourth generation who are recorded in the Lamp History are Fengxue Yanzhao (風穴延沼, 896–973), Ying Qiaoan (穎橋安), the inheritance disciple of Huixiang (慧顥) of the Southern Academy, and Xinyang Shanjing (興陽山靜), the inheritance disciple of Siming (思明) of the Western Academy. The number of Linji monks fell to its lowest level after the Patriarch Yixuan (義玄) in the fourth Linji generation. There were four monks in the fifth generation of Linji, who were all disciples of Fengxue Yanzhao, as seen in the Lamp History. The original Linji monastic order had nearly died out by the time it was passed on to Fengxue Yanzhao, and the Linji monastic

order that was later revived was entirely the result of the re-establishment of the Fengxue Yanzhao generation.

The most important of the Fengxue Yanzhao disciples was Shoushan Shengnian (首山省念, 927–993).⁴ It is recorded in the *Lamp History* that all fifteen of the six generations of Linji disciples were descended from Shoushan. When he first ascended to the role of abbot and began to transmit Dharma at Shoushan Mountain (首山) in Ruzhou (汝州), he said, “The Dharma has been entrusted to kings, ministers, and capable sponsors, so that the Dharma generation will not stop and will continue from generation to generation until today (佛法付與國王、大臣、有力檀那, 令法不絕, 燈燈相續, 至於今日)” (Li 1975b). It is evident that the Linji monks, after a long period of political turmoil, learned how to keep the Dharma alive. The high status of Shoushan in the Linji monastic order meant that his words greatly influenced the style of Linji monks in later generations. The inheritance disciples of Shoushan, through their efforts, made it possible that the “Chan of Shoushan swept over the world (道被天下)” (Huihong 1975h). The distribution of the Dharma is shown in Figure 1.⁵

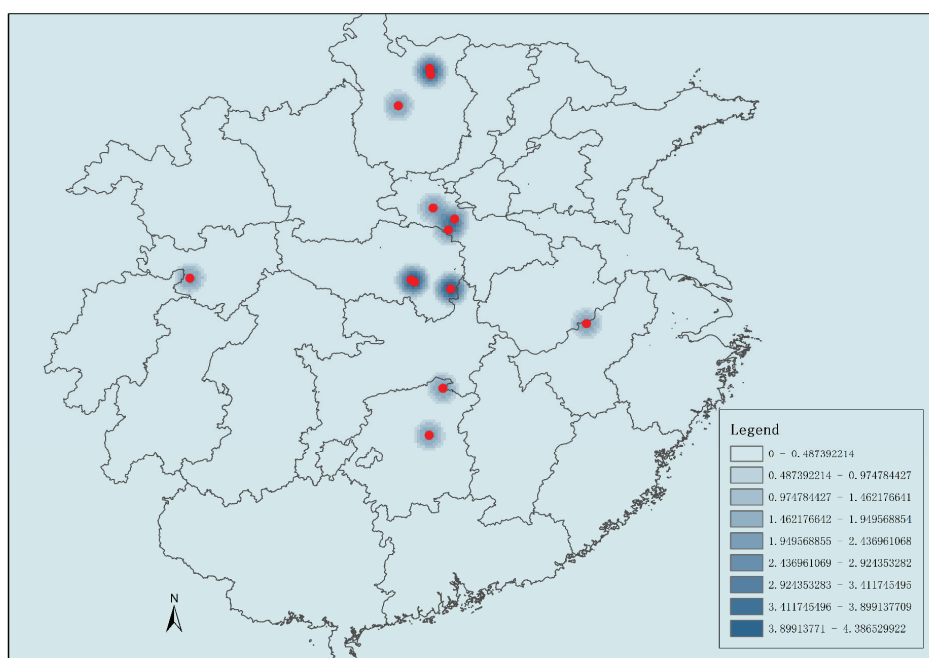


Figure 1. Illustration of the distribution of the sixth Linji generation in the year of 1006.

Official support was essential to the rapid rise of Shoushan’s disciples. Li Zunxu (李遵勗, 988–1038), the Emperor Taizong’s son-in-law, and Yang Yi (楊億, 974–1020), a Minister of Works, were all lay disciples of Shoushan.⁶ These officials and noblemen were close to Shoushan’s disciples and helped to promote this school (Refer to (Abe 1991)).⁷ Important evidence of this can be seen in the fact that as many as five of Shoushan’s disciples were given the purple kasaya (a patchwork outer vestment worn by a Buddhist monk, which designates a special honor).⁸

Apart from the consolidation of the original Zhongyuan (中原) area (for example, Shoushan Huaizhi (首山懷志), Guanghui Yuanlian (廣慧元璉), and Yexian Guisheng (葉縣歸省), all transmitted their doctrines from master to disciple in Ruzhou (汝州). An important movement of the Shoushan disciples was southward. This southern advance was toward Xiangyang (襄陽) and Dengzhou (鄧州). When Fenyang Shanzhao (汾陽善昭) traveled between Xiang

River (湘水) and Heng Mountain (衡山), Zhang Maozong (張茂宗), the prefect of Tanzhou (潭州), invited Shanzhao to choose one of the four famous temples in which to serve as abbot. Shanzhao traveled north to Mianzhou (沔州), Xiangzhou (襄州), where he stayed at the Baima Temple. Liu Changyan (劉昌言), the prefect of Xiangzhou, heard of his arrival and went to visit him. At the time, the abbotships of Dongshan (洞山) Temple and Guyin (谷隱) Temple were vacant, and it was discussed that the abbotship of both should be given to Shanzhao. Liu Changyan asked Shanzhao to choose one; “Although he was asked eight times, Shanzhao eventually refused” (Huihong 1975d).

Although Shanzhao did not accede to the requests of the local officials, he was based at Baima Mountain (白馬山) for a considerable period until he left for the Princely Dazhong Temple Cloister (大中寺太子禪院) in Fenzhou (汾州) in 994 (Chuyuan 2014). Another disciple of Shoushan, Guyin Yuncong (谷隱蘊聰), managed to establish himself in Xiangzhou and Dengzhou later on. In 1006, the prefect Zha Dao (955–1018) asked Guyin Yuncong to stay at Shimen Mountain (石門山). In 1020, the prefect Xia Song (985–1051) invited Guyin Yuncong again to stay at the Taiping Xingguo Cloister (太平興國禪院) on Guyin Mountain (谷隱山) in this area (Li 1975d).

According to the “Inscription on the Pagoda of Commemorated Chan Master Cizhaocong (先慈照聰禪師塔銘)” written by Li Zunxu, “The Huxi and Fenghuang temples of Xiangyang gathered thousands of monks and disciples. After 24 years, the people of the world looked up to him with reverence (襄陽虎溪、鳳凰兩山聚千徒。歷二紀，天下仰之) (Li 1975c)”. The Shoushan Shengnian inheritance disciple, represented by Guyin Yuncong, expanded the influence of the Linji monastic order to Xiangzhou and Dengzhou. In the sixth Linji generation, Jionghan (迥罕) lived in Zhimen Temple (智門寺) in Suizhou (隋州), and Huizhao (惠昭) lived in Lumen Temple (鹿門寺) in Xiangzhou.

Another group of Shoushan inheritance disciples reached out to Jinghu Nanlu (荊湖南路, Jinghu South Circuit), represented by Shending Hongyin (神鼎洪諱). However, Hongyin was “not yet in his prime when he attained enlightenment, and lived in seclusion in Heng Mountain for twenty years before he took up the duties of abbot, and it was another twenty years before he started to give sermons” (Huihong 1975i). Therefore, at the time when the *Tiansheng Guangdenglu* was written, the influence of Shending Hongyin was limited, and he was not even qualified to enter the Lamp History.

2.2. The Seventh Generation of Linji

The records in the *Xu Chuandenglu*, the *Guangdenglu*, and the *Xu Denglu* have been combined to arrive at a total of 81 persons in the seventh generation of Linji. Excluding four lay disciples, namely, Yang Yi, a lay disciple of Guanghui Yuanlian, and Li Zunxu, Xia Song, and Wang Shu, disciples of Guyin Yuncong, as well as six duplicates and mistaken entries, the total number of Linji’s seventh generation Chan masters recorded is 71. The distribution of the Dharma transmission is shown in Figure 2.⁹

According to Figure 2, in addition to the further consolidation of the Central Plains (中原) (five people) and the Xiangzhou and Dengzhou in Middle Yangzi (襄鄧) (eight people), two new directions of Dharma transmission emerged. The first was the intensive movement south-eastwards, with Liangzhelu (兩浙路, Liangzhe Circuit, modern Zhejiang or Lower Yangzi) becoming the main area of Linji monastic orders (19 people); the second was a further movement southwards from the Xiang-deng area into the Lianghu (兩湖, Hunan and Hubei) (11 people).

The movement of Guyin Yuncong’s inheritance disciples to the Wu-Yue region is most evident (Figure 3). The best known of these disciples is Jinshan Tanying (金山曇穎). After attaining enlightenment in the Shimen Mountain (石門山), Tanying, who was originally from Hangzhou (杭州), went to the capital Kaifeng to live in the garden of Li Zunxu’s son. At one time, many nobles visited and heard his lectures. It is clear that Tanying’s success could not have been achieved without his teacher Yuncong’s contacts in the upper echelons of the court and aristocracy. Afterward, Tanying traveled east and stayed at the Shuzhou Xianglu Peak (舒州香爐峰), Runzhou Insheng Temple (潤州因聖寺), Taipingzhou Yinjing

Temple (太平州隱靜寺), Mingzhou Xuedou Temple (明州雪竇寺), and Runzhou Jinshan Longyou Temple (潤州金山龍遊寺) (Huihong 1975g). The temples he stayed at were all located in southeast China.

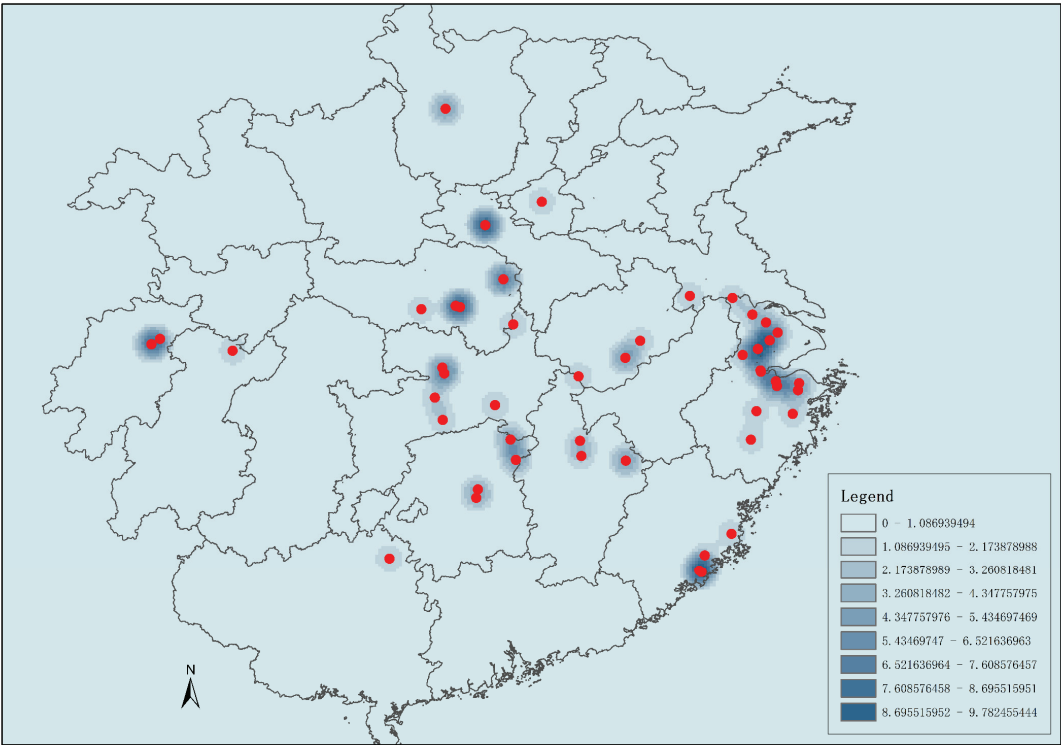


Figure 2. Illustration of the distribution of the Linji’s seventh generation in the year of 1030.

The two branches that developed the fastest around Hu’nan and Hubei were Fenyang Shanzhao and Shending Hongyin. Shending Hongyin originally started in Hunan, so this generation spread around Tanzhou (潭州). The inheritance disciples of Fenyang traveled a long way south, and the process was more complex, as in the case of Shishang Chuyuan (石霜楚圓). After becoming a monk, Chuyuan traveled between Xianzhou (襄州) and Mianzhou (沔州) and then went to Luoyang (洛陽) with Shouzhi (守芝) and Guquan (谷泉). When he heard of the high reputation of Fenyang Shanzhao, he decided to join him. Later, he joined Sanjiao Zhisong (三交智嵩), who recommended Chuyuan to Yang Yi (楊億) in Kaifeng (開封, namely the capital). Yang Yi praised him highly and recommended him to Li Zunxu. Chuyuan’s association with Yang Yi and Li Zunxu, two high-ranking officials, laid the foundation for transmitting the Dharma. Chuyuan left his post as abbot of Nanyuan Temple (南原寺) in Yuanzhou (袁州) and went to Hu’nan to join the disciples of Shending Hongyin. Hongyin was the abbot for 30 years, and his disciples were distributed everywhere and were very influential, making him an important promoter of Chuyuan in the passing on of the doctrines from master to disciple. Chuyuan also held successive abbey positions at Shishuang Temple (石霜寺) and Xinghua Temple (興化寺) and eventually became a great master of high prestige. When Li Zunxu was on his deathbed, he sent an envoy to invite Chuyuan to the capital to meet with him. This was an opportunity for Chuyuan to have a direct dialogue with Emperor Renzong (r. 1022–1063) (Huihong 1975b). However, the fact that Renzong did not retain Chuyuan despite his interest in Chan Buddhism, considering that the royal selection of the abbot of the Jinyin Chan Monastery at

the time fell to the Yunmen monastic order, seems to suggest that the Linji Chan masters represented by Chuyuan had not yet won the heart of the supreme ruler.

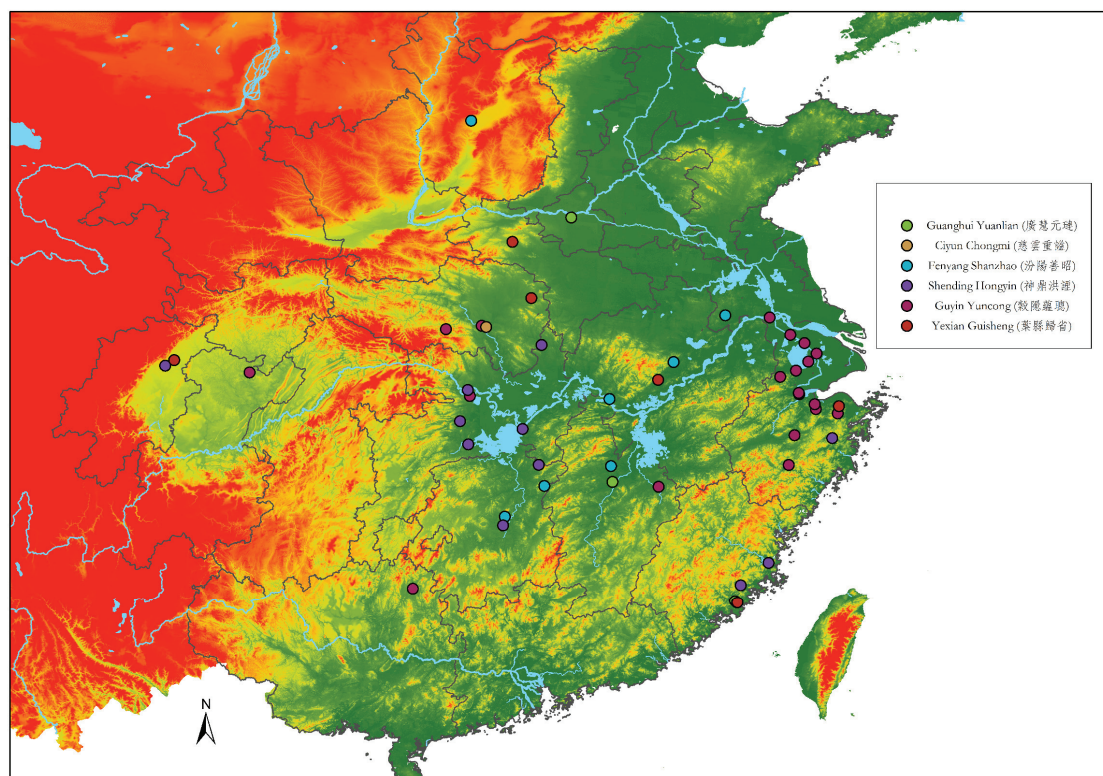


Figure 3. Illustration of the spreading the Dharma transmission of the seventh Linji generation.

3. The Southward Movement of the Eighth Linji Generation and Ideological Divergence

In the *Xu Chuandenglü*, it is recorded that there were 176 monks of the eighth generation of Linji, but there is no mention of the inheritance disciples of Shishang Chuyuan, that is, Guquan Dadao (谷泉大道) and Jian'an Chongyan (建安崇儼). They are now supplemented by the *Xudenglü* and *Taiping Xingguo Chanyuan Shifang Zhuichiji* (太平興國禪院十方住持記, also translated as the Record of the Abbots in Taiping Xingguo Cloister) by Li Gou (Li 2011). It can also be noted that Gutian Shan (古田善), inheritance disciple of Shishang Chuyuan, is the same person as Gutianxian Zifu Haishan (古田縣資福海善), and that Ganlu Fayuan (甘露法眼), inheritance disciple of Fushan Fayuan (浮山法遠), is the same person as Ganlu Qingyu (甘露慶餘) in the *Xu Chuandenglü*. The eighth generation of the Linji Chan masters totals 173 persons, with the exclusion of the lay disciples. The distribution of their Buddhist area is shown in Figure 4.¹⁰

As can be seen in Figure 4, the center of the eighth-generation Linji preachment was pushed southwards to the Yangtze River, with a dense distribution along the middle and lower reaches of the river. As many as 101 people transmitted the Dharma in Liangzhe Lu (兩浙路), Jiangnan Donglu (江南東路, Jiangnan East Circuit), Huainan Xilu (淮南西路, Huainan West Circuit), and Huainan Donglu (淮南東路, Huainan East Circuit), so it is clear that the areas downstream of the Yangtze River were the most important areas of propagation during the eighth generation of Linji. For example, Xinghua Renyue (興化仁嶽), inheritance disciple of Fushan Fayuan, transmitted the Dharma in Shuzhou (舒州) and

Luzhou (廬州) and was once described as “the most prominent Chan in the Jianghuai (江淮) area” (Weibai 1975i). In addition to the consolidation and expansion of the southeastern region, Chan development was particularly rapid in the Jiangnan Xilu (江南西路, Jiangnan West Circuit), Jinghu Nanlu (荆湖南路, Jinghu South Circuit), and Jinghu Beilu (荆湖北路, Jinghu North Circuit) areas. In the seventh generation of Linji, only 14 people appeared in the aforementioned regions, but by the eighth generation, the number of people here had risen to 47. In the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, the above-mentioned three regions were the main bases of the Yunmen monastic order. Among the fourth generation of Chan masters in Yunmen, 57 had been converted to Chan Buddhism in these regions. Since the eighth Chan master of Linji started to spread the influence of Chan on a large scale, they inevitably came into conflict with the Yunmen monks. In the Northern Song Dynasty, Hui Hong (惠洪), a scholarly monk, described the development of Chan Buddhism at that time and stated that “the two schools of Yunmen and Linji were especially flourishing in the world, particularly in Hunan. The descendants of Yunmen were all self-appointed by their tenets and denigrated each other” (Huihong 1975j). The conflict focused on the question of who represented the orthodoxy of Chan Buddhism. By the time of the fifth Chan master Yunmen’s preaching, 68 out of 205 people had opened the Dharma in these three areas, and although the number had increased compared to the fourth generation (Protass 2016, map 3), the momentum of development had fallen back compared with the Linji monastic order, indirectly confirming the growth of the Linji monastic order here. For instance, the number of Yunmen disciples grew from 57 (fourth generation) to 68 (fifth generation), while in Linji’s case, the number rose dramatically from 14 (seventh generation) to 47 (eighth generation) in Jiangnan Xilu, Jinhu Nanlu, and Jinghu Beilu.

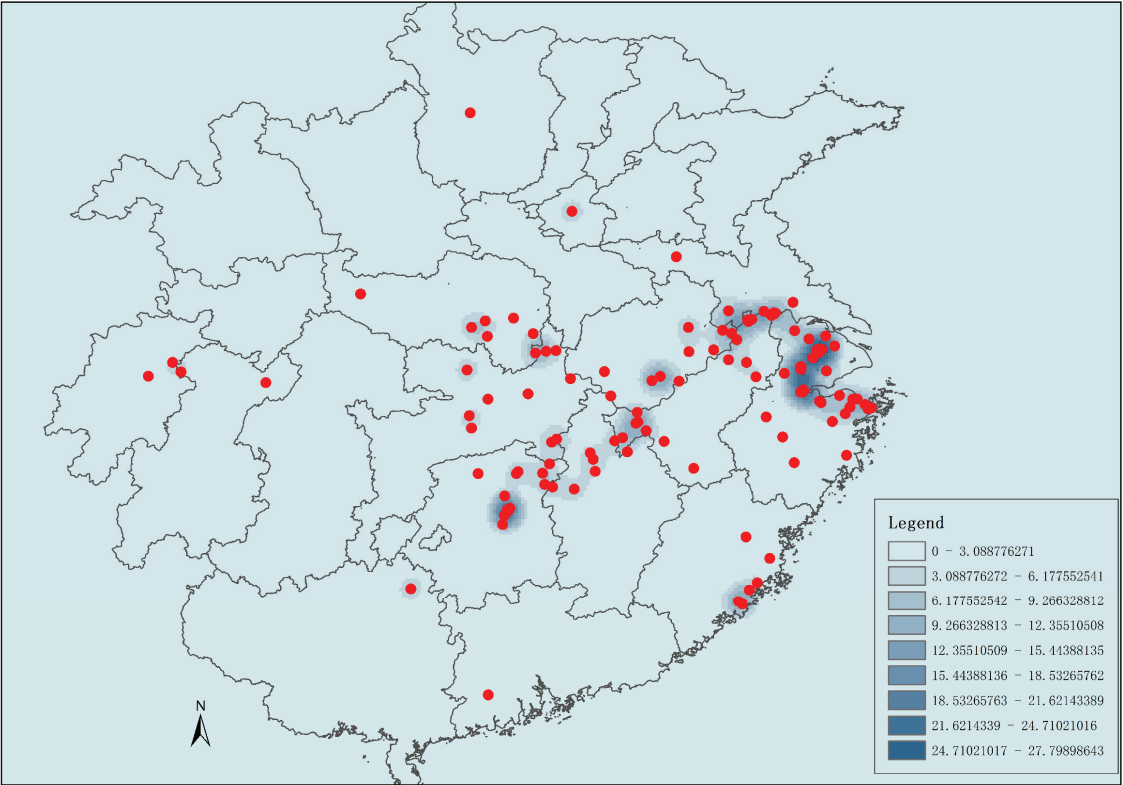


Figure 4. Illustration of the distribution of the eighth Linji generation in the year of 1060.

The disciples of Shishuang Chuyuan, Jinshan Tanying, and Langya Huijue (瑯邪慧覺), of the seventh generation of Linji spread more widely in the southeast of the dynastic territory (Figure 5). Their inheritance disciples were often supported by officials. One example was Jiangshan Zanyuan (蔣山贊元), the inheritance disciple of Chuyuan. Zanyuan became the abbot in Sutai Temple, Tianfeng Temple, Longhua Temple, and Baiyun Temple. Wang Anshi, the chancellor, invited him to abide in Zhigong Daochang, and he was highly esteemed by all (Weibai 1975g). According to the *Biographies of the Chan Monks* (禪林僧寶傳), Zanyuan succeeded as the abbot of Jiangshan Temple, and at the time, Wang Anshi read the scriptures on the mountain and traveled with Zanyuan as if he were a brother. At the beginning of the Xining period (1068), Wang Anshi entered the capital and was promoted by the emperor to become a powerful and famous person. Zanyuan's friendship with Wang Anshi thus led to his rise in status. Furthermore, it was recorded that there was a case of a madman killing a monk in Zanyuan Temple. According to Song dynasty law, murders had to be reported to the authorities. Zanyuan's silence, in this case, was a sign of his influence, as he was able to eliminate the impact of the murder case (Huihong 1975f). In addition, Linji's influence also expanded in Fujian Lu (福建路, Fujian Circuit). After Bailu Xianduan's (白鹿顯端) enlightenment, the inheritance disciple of Huijue "returned to Fujian and was ordered to live in Dizang, and his preachments spread widely (歸止甌閩, 命住地藏, 道行大播)". Cai Xiang (蔡襄), the prefect of Fuzhou, heard of him and invited him to abide in Bailu Temple (Weibai 1975c).

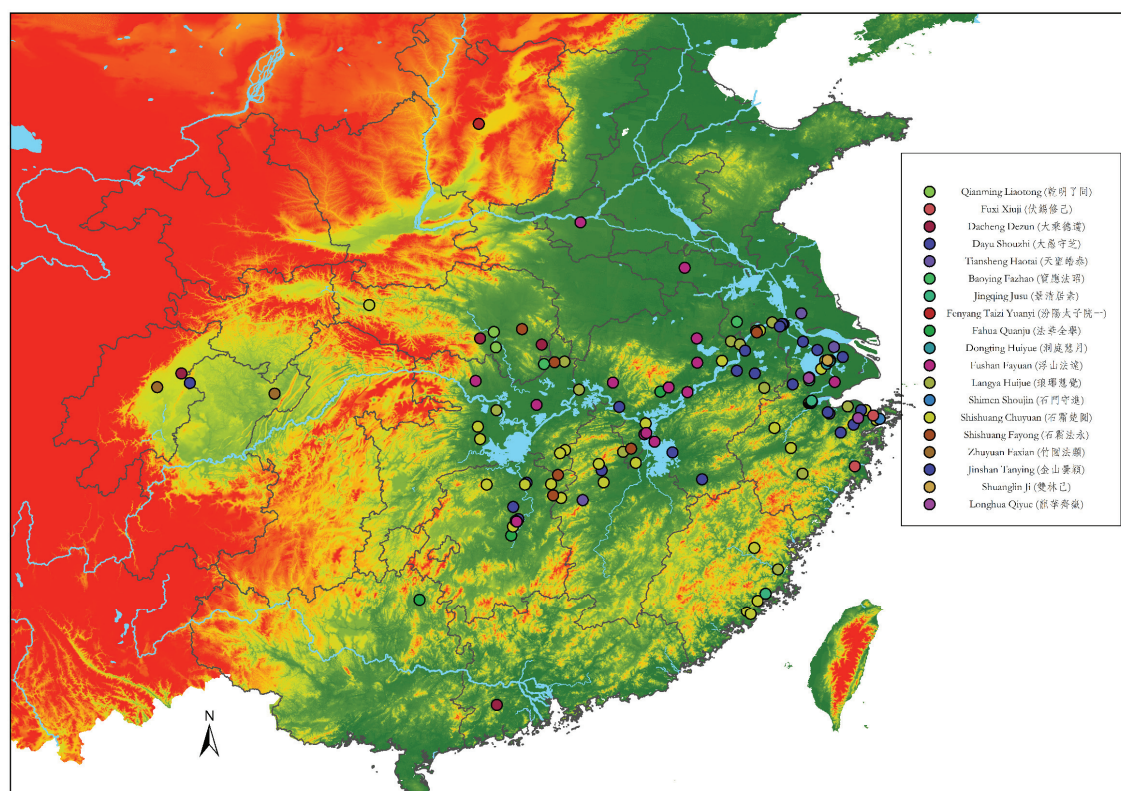


Figure 5. Illustration of the Linji's eighth generation.

The rapid expansion of Linji's eighth generation into the middle reaches of the Yangtze River was largely the result of the expansion of the disciples under Chuyuan (Huihong 2012a). This first contributed to the influence of Chuyuan in the Hu'nán area. To illustrate

Chuyuan's influence, there was even the case in which Guquan Dadao (谷泉大道) changed his affiliation from that of a disciple of Fenyang Shanzhao's (汾陽善昭) to that of a disciple of Chuyuan (Ge 2017). The large number of inheritance disciples created an abundance of talent among Chuyuan's disciples. The Lamp History states that Huanglong Huinan (黃龍慧南) and Yangqi Fanghui (楊岐方會), inheritance disciples of Chuyuan, made the branches of Linji flourish and "the impact of the Linji increased greatly" (Weibai 1975e, 1975k).

It is worth noting the tendency that some Linji Chan masters began to show from the eighth generation of Linji to dissociate themselves from secular power. Jinshan Huaixian (金山懷賢), an inheritance disciple of Jinshan Tanying, is one example. When he was a student of Tuanying, Huaixian asked, "As the master of all sentient beings, why should I be involved in worldly affairs when I should only care about the Dharma transmission?" At the beginning of Huangyou (c. 1049), Wang Qi (王琪), the prefect of Runzhou (潤州), heard of Huaixian's great reputation and asked him to preach at Ganlu Monastery (甘露寺) in Runzhou. At the same time, Fanchang County (繁昌) in the Taiping prefecture (太平州) also invited Huaixian to preach at the Yinjing Monastery (隱靜寺). He responded positively to opening a monastery in Fanchang in the Taiping prefecture, because "Ganlu Monastery is close to the city while the Yinjing Monastery is secluded in the mountains". Seven years later, when Wang Qi became the prefect of the Jiangning prefecture (江寧府), he asked Huaixian again to become the abbot of Qingliang Temple. This time, he excused himself and did not take up the post. When Tanying died at Jinshan Temple, the monks and laymen of Runzhou wrote to the prefect of Runzhou asking for Huaixian to succeed him as abbot of Jinshan Temple. Although Huaixian agreed to take up this post, his intention to leave soon became apparent. In 1068, Huaixian retired to Jinniu Mountain (dozens of miles from Danyang County, off the beaten track). Afterward, the affairs of the temple were entrusted to his disciple Juecheng (覺澄), who did not participate in them. Throughout his life, Huaixian was torn between entering and leaving the world. For example, "Huaixian was invited ten times to become abbot, and four times he complied with the arrangement, going to the most famous mountains and temples in the world. He had just resigned when he began to preach the Dharma, and although the prefects tried to retain him, they were unable to do so" (Qin 1994b).

Although there is no record that Xiyu Jingduan (西余淨端), the disciple of Longhua Qiyue (龍華齊嶽), had interacted with Huaixian, he had a very similar demeanor. Jingduan discussed the Dharma with famous ministers, such as Wang Anshi, Lü Yijian (呂夷簡), and Zhang Dun (章惇), without humility or condescension, and he moved freely and easily, refusing to appear meek and subservient for the sake of fame and status. Zhang Dun was in power at the time and wanted to take him to the capital. When Jingduan heard of this, he left without notice (Shijiao 1975). He then became abbot of the monasteries at Shousheng Temple, Xiyu Temple, Xiaogan Temple, Zhangfa Temple, etc. and left each when he was no longer comfortable. Many people tried to keep him, but he did not turn back. Because Jingduan was free from worldly constraints, he was ridiculed by Yuanzhao Zongben (圓照宗本), who came from the sixth generation of the Yunmen School and had a strong official background. *The Biographies of the Chan Monks* records a conversation between Jingduan and the Yunmen patriarch Yuanzhao Zongben, who had retired from Huilin Temple in the capital and returned to Suzhou to meet Jingduan in the early years of the Yuanyou period (1086–1094) (Huihong 1975k). The terms "village" (村里) and "imperial palace" (帝王宮) in the dialogue refer to two orientations: the former one refers to stay away from the court, and the latter one means to remain in the court. Jingduan, in turn, boldly ridiculed Zongben, who was saluted by Emperor Shenzong and honored by Emperor Zhezong, because, in Jingduan's view, it was better to remain true to oneself than to lose oneself to the government.

4. The Flourishing of the Linji Monastic Order and Founding of Huanglong School

4.1. The Ninth Generation of Linji

The *Xu Chuandenglou* records that there were 176 people in the ninth generation of Linji. Among them, the so-called Shangfang Xiyuan (上方希元), the inheritance disciple of Xinghua Renyue, was actually the inheritance disciple of Jinshan Tanying, of the seventh generation of Linji, and Shigu Dongzhu (石鼓洞珠), the inheritance disciple of Cuiyan Kezhen (翠岩可真), was actually the inheritance disciple of Huanglong Huinan. Xuedu Faya (雪竇法雅), the inheritance disciple of Jiangshan Zanyuan, shares the same character *ya* with the name Shimen Ya (石門雅), so it is likely that they are the same person.¹¹

The total number of members of Linji's ninth generation has been calculated to be 172. Excluding the Pan Qingyi, the inheritance disciples of the lay Buddhists, the total number of the ninth-generation Chan masters was 169, and the distribution of their preachments is shown in Figure 6.¹²

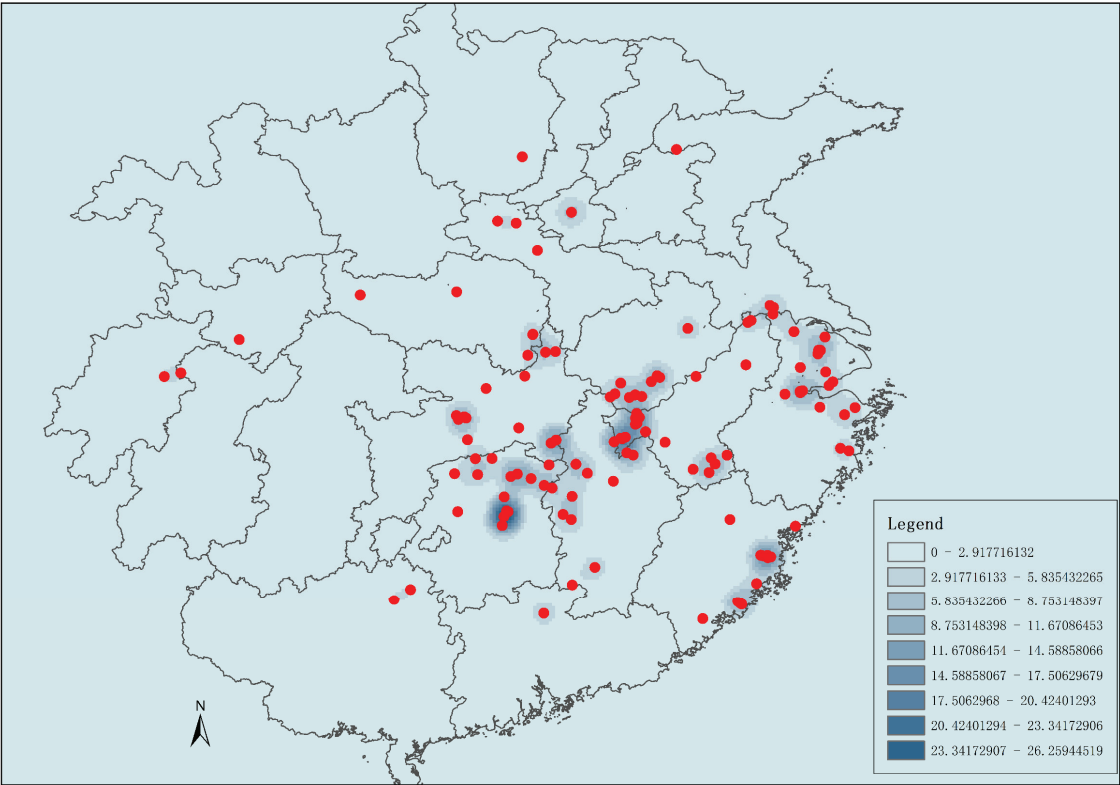


Figure 6. Illustration of the distribution of the ninth Linji generation in the year of 1072.

Comparing the distribution pattern of the ninth Linji generation with that of the eighth Linji generation, there are two noteworthy differences. First, the center of the monastic order moved further south, toward both the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. Not only did the distribution density of the Jinghu Nanlu and Jiangnan Xilu of the monastic order increase, but it also reached as far south as the Nanling Mountains. Second, the increase in the number of monks who began to transmit the Dharma north of the Huai River and the frequent access of Linji monks to the national capital greatly enhanced the monastic community.

As some of the eighth Linji generation began to transmit the Dharma in the capital, their inheritance disciples gained access to the world (Weibai 1975a). Xiangyan Dongfu (香嚴洞敷), the inheritance disciple of Jingin Daozhen (淨因道臻), is the most obvious example. Once the eighth generation of Linji monks had retired to the Capital Cloister (京師禪院), the ninth generation of Linji monks was quickly replenished. Muzhe, the inheritance disciple of Cuiyan Kezhen, was ordered by imperial decree to come to the Capital Zhihai Cloister (東京智海禪院) in the first year of Shaosheng (1094), making it almost impossible for the Linji monks to stop spreading the Dharma in the capital (Huihong 1975c; Weibai 1975b).

Fujianlu became a new key area for the transmission of the preachments during the ninth generation of Linji. Xiangyan Dongfu had “returned to his hometown and was invited to the three temples in the upper reaches of Fujian, there [was] no way of knowing how many more would follow” (Weibai 1975a). Shaocheng (紹登), disciple of Yuquan Weifang (玉泉謂芳), received the Dharma, and when “the honorable prefect Ding admired his morals and invited him to abbot in the Talingta Cloister (陀嶺塔院), he came dressed in frugal clothes to show his respect ... His Excellency Sun admired Shaocheng, who was then abbot in Wenshu Temple ... then he moved to become the abbot of Shengquan Temple (聖泉寺). The master (Shaocheng) once was the abbot of three monasteries, so he always intended to reform” (Weibai 1975d).

Huanglong Huinan (黃龍慧南), the eighth generation of Linji, was once involved in the case of the prince pretence, and was imprisoned. After he was released, he began to transmit the Dharma again, and his style of preaching soon gained nationwide recognition (Huihong 1975e). For more than 10 years, he was an abbot of Huangbo Temple (黃蘗寺) and Huanglong Temple (黃龍寺), and “capable disciples gathered like ants in admiration of him” (Huihong 1975a). The *Jitai Pudenglu* records 23 of Huinan’s important inheritance disciples, while the *Xu Chuandenglu* lists as many as 83 of Huinan’s inheritance disciples.

The emergence of Huinan’s successor caused a short-term disruption to the power balance within Chan Buddhism. They were centralized around Jiangnan Xilu, mainly in the two monasteries of Huanglong Temple and Huangbo Temple (Figure 7). These strongholds stirred up the hinterland of the Yunmen monastic order (which is not shown in Figure 7) and won space for the spread of the Linji generation.

The ninth Linji Chan master’s oscillation between the attitudes of “out of the world” and “in the world” was more apparent than that of the eighth Linji Chan master. According to the *Chanlin Senbaozhuan*, Dawei Muzhe (大滄慕喆) “hated disturbances (畏煩鬧)”. In 1094, Emperor Zhezong (1085–1100) ordered him to be abbot of Zhihai Cloister (智海禪院), but the Chan monks thought that Muzhe would not comply with the order. However, Muzhe unexpectedly accepted the order to establish the temple in the capital. When the temple was overcrowded during his ceremony, Muzhe surprisingly set no limit on the number of people who could attend, contrary to his own desire for tranquility (Huihong 1975c). These contradictory attitudes of avoiding secular affairs and yet obeying the nobility, of living in seclusion and yet vigorously promoting the Dharma, broke out among Huanglong Huinan’s disciples. Many Chan masters had different attitudes about whether to begin to transmit the Dharma or not, and it is not difficult to perceive the anxiety that plagued them. The fact that Donglin Changzong and Yungai Shouzhi were forced to submit to official pressure against their wills shows that Buddhism was already involved in the secular political system.

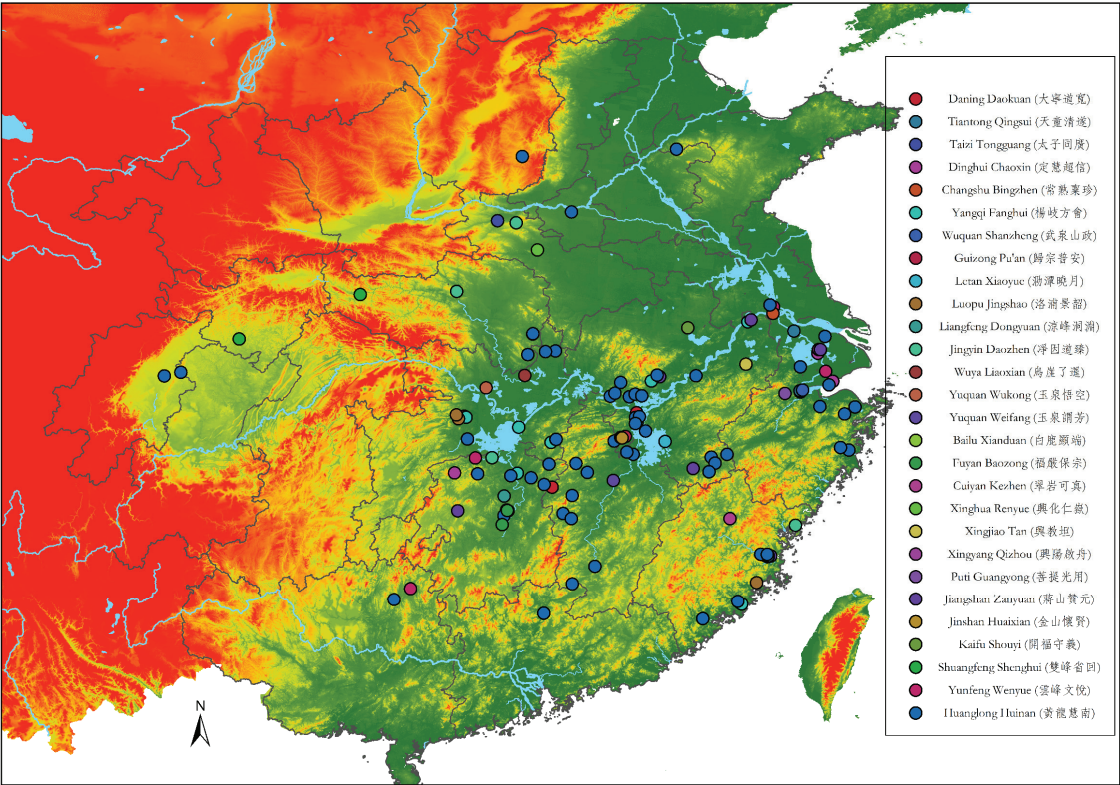


Figure 7. Illustration of the ninth Linji generation.

4.2. The 10th Generation of Linji

The *Xu Chuandenglü* records 375 people in the 10th generation of Linji. In this case, Taiping Chuqing (太平處清), the inheritance disciple of Baiyun Shouduan (白雲守端), was exactly the same person as the inheritance disciple of Fayan (法演), who belonged to Linji's 10th generation. Tiesuo Zongshanzhu (鐵索忠山主), the inheritance disciple of Baoning Rengyong (保寧仁勇), is listed among the unspecified inheritance disciples in *Jiatai Pu-denglü* (嘉泰普燈錄). Tianchang Chongjiao (天場崇教) and Huili Chongjiao (慧力崇教). The inheritance disciples of Yunyu Yuanyou (雲居元祐) are reprinted (Zhengshou 1975a). According to the "Preface to the Discourses of the Great Patriarch of Linji Huizhao Xuangong (臨濟慧照玄公大宗師語錄序, hereinafter referred to as the Preface)", "Letan Yue was the inheritance disciple of Langya Jue, Piling Zhen was the inheritance disciple of Yue, Baishui Bai was the inheritance disciple of Zhen, and Tianning Dang was the inheritance disciple of Bai (琅琊覺傳泐潭月, 月傳毗陵真, 真傳白水白, 白傳天寧黨)". The so-called Baishui Zhongbai (白水白) in the *Xu Chuandenglü* is actually Baishui Bai (白水白), and he is re-defined as part of the 10th generation of Linji, according to the Preface. The *Xu Chuandenglü* records two inheritance disciples of Baishui Zhongbai, Tianning Yan (天寧演), and Dacheng Dang (大乘黨), who, according to the Preface, must have been the same person as Tianning Dang (天寧黨).

In addition, excluding 16 lay disciples, there were a total of 355 Chan masters in the 10th generation of Linji, of which as many as 294 people are the inheritance disciples of Huanglong Huinan, accounting for more than four-fifths of the number of monks. The distribution of their locations is shown in Figure 8.¹³

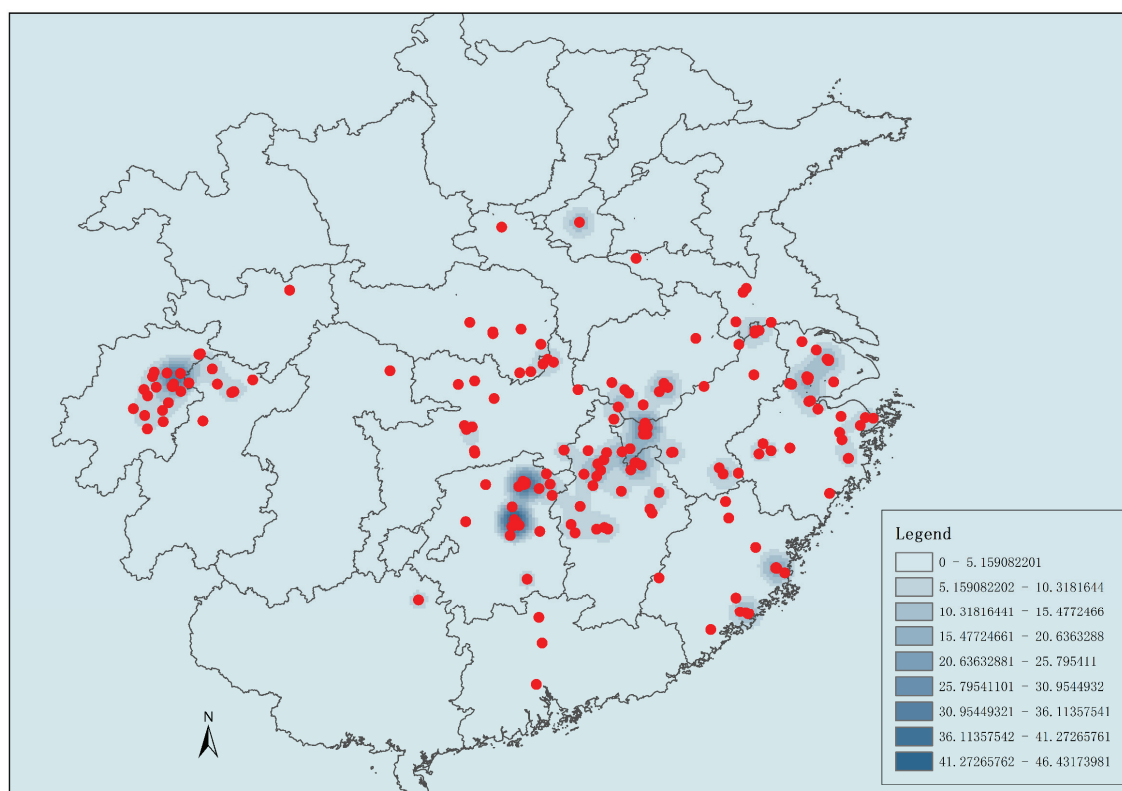


Figure 8. Illustration of the distribution of the 10th Linji generation in the year of 1100.

According to Figure 8, the 10th generation of Linji maintained the distribution pattern of the transmission of the ninth Linji and was considerably denser in distribution than the ninth Linji. The disciples of Huanglong Huinan covered almost all the areas of the 10th generation of Linji Chan masters. It is true that, as Zhang Shangying said, “The Huanglong School was seen everywhere in the country”.¹⁴

It is worth noting that there were two subtle changes in Linji’s area of Buddhist transmission during this period. One was that the distribution of preachments in the north of the Yangtze River changed from that which had prevailed previously. This area was formerly the sphere of influence of the Yunmen monastic order. According to the “Inscription on the Pagoda of Chan Master Qing (慶禪師塔銘)”, Jianlong Zhaoqing (建隆昭慶) was the only one to break into the area north of the Yangtze River during the ninth generation of Linji, where he was surrounded by the Yunmen monks (Qin 1994a). This shows that the Yunmen monastic order was strong in this area. Certainly, Jianlong Zhaoqing’s mission to the north of the Yangtze River was already beginning to bear fruit. “Narrative of the Discourses of Chan Master Qing (慶禪師語錄敘)” recorded: “What a great number of high officials from the whole country came to participate in the discussion of Buddhism and to be edified by it” (Zou 2004). During the 10th generation of Linji, Tangquan Chan (湯泉禪), Jianlong Weiqing (建隆惟慶), and Gushan Xiaojin (龜山曉津) came to transmit the Dharma here.

Second, the 10th generation of Linji showed a trend of intensive distribution of the preachment in the Chengdu Plain (in modern Sichuan) in the southwest. After Huanglong gave Chan’s sermon, many monks from Sichuan came to visit. Jiuxian Qifu (九仙齊輔), the inheritance disciple of Baizhang Yuansu (百丈元肅), who was a native in Sichuan, “be-

come a monk at the age of 24 and studied at Chengdu. The Chan master, Huizhen Juesheng (會真覺勝), discussed with him and instructed him to travel south”. He then left the Yangtze River Gorges during the Yuanfeng period and traveled to the places where his ancestor had started his preachments. “Later, he became the disciple of the Huanglong School” (Zhengshou 1975d). The fact that some of these monks returned to Sichuan to begin transmitting the Dharma after studying in Sichuan is related to the fact that Huanbo Weisheng (黃蘗惟勝), the ninth generation of Linji, entered Sichuan to transmit the Dharma. Weisheng was a native of Zhongjiang County, Zizhou, Sichuan, and moved to Sichuan from Huangbiao County in Junzhou. He died on Yunding Mountain (雲頂山) (Weibai 1975h). The presence of Waisheng in Sichuan greatly supported the development of his inheritance disciples in the region (Juding 1924). Observe the specific state of transmission of the generation of the ninth Linji Chan master (Figure 9).

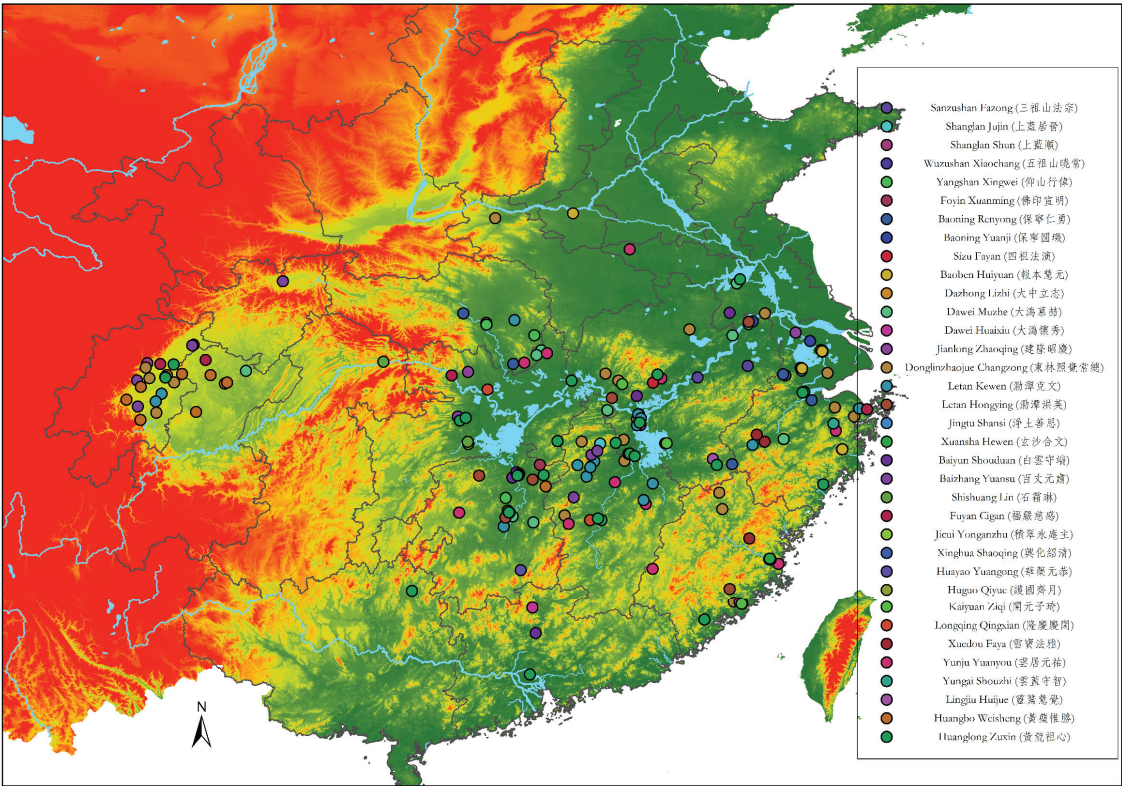


Figure 9. Illustration of the 10th Linji generation.

In addition to the Huanglong Huinan generation, the generations succeeding Cuiyan Kezhen and Yangqi Fanghui of the eighth generation of Linji remained vigorous. The most influential people succeeding Cuiyan Kezhen and Yangqi Fanghui were the ninth generation masters Linji Dawei Muzhe, Baiyun Shouduan, and Baoning Renyong.

The influence of Linji increased greatly during the 10th generation, with, for example, Letan Yingqian, the inheritance disciple in Shimen. At that time, people said, “the Dharma of the Donglin flourished in Shimen, Hongzhou (洪州). During the Yuanyou period, many people were converting to Buddhism” (Huihong 2012d). During this period, many Linji Chan masters maintained close relations with government officials and were commended by them.

Despite their growing cooperation with officials, the 10th Linji Chan masters remained as self-reflective as their predecessors (Weibai 1975j). In an era of increasing corruption in the Chan school, both Letan Wenzhun (潞潭文准) and Huayao Xingying (花藥行英) adhered to the path of puritanical practice. Influenced by purification (Huihong 2012b, 2012c), the contradiction between the aloofness and worldliness practices of the 10th Linji Chan masters continued.

In contrast to the Linji Chan masters, the Yunmen Chan masters were highly active in their enthusiasm for secular affairs. Fuchang Zhixin (福昌知信), who was of the sixth generation of Yunmen and who was an abbot in Fuchang Temple for 21 years, reconstructed the dilapidated houses into a large temple and worked tirelessly for decades (Huang 2001).

In contrast to Zhixin, Yuelu Zhihai (岳麓智海), of Linji's 10th generation, remained calm and collected even when the temple was set on fire, and it was said that "people only saw him rebuilding the temple day by day, without knowing that he was doing it with leisure" (Huihong 2012e).

5. Conclusions

The history of the early Linji monastic order preserved in numerous Chan texts was altered by the disciples of Fengxue Yanzhao, Linji's fourth generation, and deviates significantly from historical reality. What is certain is that the Linji monastic order was in decline when the Song dynasty was newly established. Through the production and transformation of the "Weiyang father and son" (滄仰父子) prophecy, the Linji monks gained legitimacy within the school to enter the Wuyue region and spread the Dharma. Shoushan Shengnian, an inheritance disciple of Yanzhao and a key figure in the rise of the Linji, espoused the literal meaning of the statement "The Dharma has been entrusted to kings, ministers, and capable sponsors so that the Dharma generation will not be cut off and will continue from generation to generation until today". His inheritance disciples put his ideas into practice by befriending several officials and gaining support in order to spread the Dharma in multiple regions (Li 1975b). While the branches of Linji flourished, the mainstream of Linji Buddhism began to vacillate between "out of the world" and "into the world".

After the secular powers seized the right to appoint the abbots of the Chan Buddhist temples, Chan Buddhism had no independence. The relationship between two supposedly parallel worlds—inside the temple and outside the temple—became unequal. For the Chan masters, to be appointed to transmit the Dharma meant acknowledging the existence of this unequal relationship. This was something they did not want. However, faced with the official selection of the abbots, they realized that not going out into the world to transmit the Dharma would lead to a break in their generation, which was unacceptable to them. A sentence from *Wudeng Huiyuan* (五燈會元) records that Muan Daoqiong (木庵道瓊), the 11th generation of Linji generation, held the motivation for his monastic preaching to be "for the sake of the school". (Puji 1984b). In the midst of this dilemma between staying inside and going outside the temple, the Linji monastic order carefully maintained its generation of the school, including its relationship with the secular regime, and remained independent and stable south of the Huai River from the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty. This enabled the Linji monastic order to avoid being too controlled by the Jin regime. They succeeded in avoiding the fate of the Yunmen sect, which suffered a major loss from the Jurchen invasion and the fall of the Northern Song.

In the Yuan Dynasty, the Linji monastic order gained momentum (Noguchi 2005). Linji's 16th Haiyunjian (海雲簡), who preached north of the Huai River, "was able to rectify the Dharma, and Buddhism flourished again from then on". The Emperor Kublai Khan came to visit many times out of respect and asked for advice on the Dharma. Liu Bingzhong (劉秉忠), the disciple of Haiyunjian's disciple, followed Kublai Khan and was an important official who gave the emperor advice on occupying the whole of China. In 1295, Emperor Chengzong (1294–1307) issued an edict to invite another disciple of Haiyunjian, Xiyun'an (西雲安), to be abbot in the Daqingshou Temple (大慶壽寺) in Dadu (Beijing), and therefore,

the way of Linji was expanded (Zhao and Qian 2012, pp. 202–3). In 1309, Zhao Mengfu was commissioned to write the Stele to the Linji School (臨濟正宗之碑): “Since Huineng (慧能), Chan Buddhism has been divided into five schools, but only Linji Yixuan has been the authentic school” (Zhao and Qian 2012, p. 202). This orthodox status of Linji was confirmed by the imperial court.

Linji’s momentum declined slightly thereafter (Chen 2014). However, with the succession of Emperor Yuan Wenzong (r. 1328–1329, 1329–1332), the influence of the Linji monastic order in the south spread to the north. In 1328, the emperor’s former residence before his enthronement in Jinling (金陵潛邸) was reconstructed to become the Dalongxiang Jiqing Temple (大龍翔集慶寺), and Linji’s 16th Xiaoyin Daxi (笑隱大訢, 1284–1344) was ordered to abide there as the first generation of the temple. After this, Xiaoyin’s status in the Chan school was even greater, and he was “given the title of Patriarch of Sakyamuni” (Yu 2007).

By this time, the trend toward the dominance of Linji was irreversible.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Notes

- 1 Faure claims that “Buddhist historiographers should perhaps stop searching for ‘eminent monks’ and writing their ‘biographies.’ The biographies that exist have literary but not historical value”. See Faure (1986).
- 2 In the “Chan Garden Regulations” Volume 7 “Regulation for Abbot”, it is stated: “To represent the Buddha in giving sermons and manifesting extraordinary knowledge, this is called ‘transmitting the Dharma’; to continue the Buddha’s wisdom and life in various places, this is called ‘abiding in the Dharma’. The first turning of the Dharma wheel is life-changing; with an authentic lineage, one is called a ‘transmitter of the lamp’ (代佛揚化, 表異知事, 故雲傳法; 各處一方, 續佛慧命, 斯曰住持。初轉法輪, 命為出世; 師承有據, 乃號傳燈)” (Zong and Liu 2020).
- 3 The phenomenon of the first seat entering the Lamp History is strange, and Schlütter is also puzzled by this. One possible speculation is that these first seats who entered the Lamp History later became the abbots. For example, Daoqiong (道瓊), the inheritance disciple of 10th generation Letan Jingxiang (泐潭景祥), became the first abbot of Chaohe Temple (超化寺) in Xinzhou after it was reformed into a Chan temple in 1140. See (Zhengshou 1975c).
- 4 The *Xu Chuandenglu* lists Qicong (契聰) as Shoushan’s inheritance disciple, based on the *Wudeng Huiyuan*, which recorded that when Shoushan passed away and the monks and laypeople of Xihe County dispatched a monk, Qicong, to greet Fenyang Shanzhao as the abbot, he said, “The Chan master Fengxue Yanzhao was afraid that the bad prophecies would be fulfilled, and was worried that the tenets of our school would be lost. Fortunately, his late master, Shoushan Shengnian, came out to be the abbot of the school and espoused the sermons” (Puji 1984a).
- 5 The *Xu Chuandenglu* lists Chengxiang Wangsui (丞相王隨) as a member of the inheritance disciples of the Shoushan Shengnian, but he is not responsible for spreading the Dharma transmission. The *Xu Chuandenglu* also lists Chan Master Fusheng Shantao (福聖善瑫) as the inheritance disciple of Shoushan Shengnian, but it lacks geographic information. The map actually shows the distribution of the 13 inheritance disciples of the Shoushan. The mutual preaching interval of the Linji sixth generation is 1006–1023. For the presumed time of propagation of the Linji sixth Chan masters, see Ge, Zhouzi, “Spatial Flows of Chan Generation in Jiangnan during the Five Dynasties and Northern Song Dynasty (五代北宋時期江南地區禪宗法脈的空間流動)”, Ph.D. dissertation, Fudan University: Shanghai, 2016, p. 177.
- 6 According to the catalogue of the *Tiansheng Guangdenglu*, Li Zunxu and Yang Yi were both of the third generation of Shoushan and studied under Guyin Yuncong and Guanghui Yuanlian, respectively. On the relationship between Li Zunxu and his son and the development of Chan Buddhism, see (Huang 1997).
- 7 This is especially represented by Guyin Yuncong. Volume 1 of *Zimen Jingxun* (緇門警訓) records that Zhadao (查道, 955–1018) said of himself: “In spring, there was a disciple of Yuncong’s (蘊聰), named Huiguo (慧果), who came to Kaifeng and showed me

- Yuncong's letter". The *Tiansheng Guangdenglu*, vol. 18, *Jueyuan Shangzuo* (覺圓上座), records that Jueyuan, a disciple of Yuncong, traveled from Guyin Mountain to the capital city with a letter "to the residence of Li Zunxu, the prince consort of the emperor" (Rujin 1924; Li 1975a).
- 8 According to the catalogue of *Tiansheng Guangdenglu*, four disciples of Shoushan were given the purple kasaya. According to the Inscription on the Pagoda of Commemorated Chan Master Cizhaocong (with preface) (先慈照聰禪師塔銘(并序)) written by Li, Zunxu, Guyin Yuncong was also given the purple kasaya.
- 9 The inheritance disciple Monk Puzhao (普照) of Guyin Yuncong and the inheritance disciple Monk Lingyan Wenzhi (靈岩文智) of Shending Hongjian lack geographic information, and the map actually shows 69 people. The mutual preaching period of the seventh Linji Chan masters is from 1025 to 1039. For the process of determining the time of the seventh Linji Chan masters' propagation, see (Ge 2016, pp. 179–180).
- 10 The geographical information on the prefectures of the four inheritance disciples of Shishang Chuyuan, namely Yongle Yue (永樂悅), Jianfu Cen (蔣福岑), Puzhao Xiuji (普照修戒), Yongshang Zuo (永上座), and the inheritance disciple of Langya Huijue, namely Yuquan Wuben (玉泉務本), are missing. The chart actually shows the distribution of the 168 people who passed on the Dharma. The common transmission time interval of the eighth Linji Chan Masters is 1049–1062. For the process of deducing the time of propagation of the eighth Linji Chan masters, see (Ge 2016, pp. 182–183).
- 11 In the book written in the Northern Song Dynasty, "Six Inheritance Disciples of Jiangshan Juehai Chan Master, Jinling Prefecture (金陵蔣山覺海)" the catalog of *Jianzhong Jingguo Xudenglu Zhangzhi* lists Shimen Ya (Weibai 1975f). *Jitai Pudenglu*, written in the Southern Song Dynasty, Chapter 4, "Two Inheritance Disciples of Jiangshan Zanyuan Chan Master", lists Xuedou Faya as one of the two inheritance disciples (Zhengshou 1975b). This is because Faya first lived in Shimen, Quzhou Prefecture, and then moved to Xuedu, Mingzhou Prefecture.
- 12 The geographic information on the prefectures where the five people of Yunfeng Wenyue (雲峰文悅)'s inheritance disciple Guo Shanlin (郭山霖), Jinyin Daozhen's inheritance disciple Jinyuan (淨圓), and Huanglong Huinan's inheritance disciples Taiping Yao (太平瑤), Zhangjiang Yuan (章江元), and Xingguo Qing (興國傾) were located is missing and cannot be shown on the map. Therefore, the map actually shows the distribution of 164 Chan masters. Linji ninth Chan masters do not have a mutual preaching interval; it is set as about 1070. See (Ge 2016, pp. 190–191).
- 13 Dawei Muzhe's inheritance disciple, Jiayou Bian (嘉祐辯), Baizhang Yuansu's inheritance disciple, Lu Yuanye (鹿苑業), Donglin Changzong's inheritance disciple, Qianming Zaichang (乾明載昌), Huangbo Weisheng's inheritance disciple, Mazu Huayan (馬祖懷懺), Huanglong Zuxin's inheritance disciples, Xinghua Yan (興化演), Wuwei Weicong (無為維琮), Xifeng Su (西峰素), Chanlin Xiguang (禪林希廣), and Yichan Shangzuo (意禪上座), Jianlong Zhaocheng's inheritance disciple, Liqian Chu'an (澧泉處安), Letan Hongying's inheritance disciple, Baoxiang Yong (寶相湧), Baoning Renyong's inheritance disciple, Xitang Xian (西堂顯), Yunju Yuanyou's inheritance disciple, Xingde Xian (興得賢), Yungai Shouzhi's inheritance disciple, Daning Ji (大寧紀), Sanzushan Fazong's (三祖山法宗) inheritance disciple, Dongshan Yuan (洞山淵), Fayan's (fourth Chan master) inheritance disciple, Nanchan Chang (南禪暢), and Yousheng Faju's (祐聖法居) inheritance disciples Zhidu Yi (智度一) and Ruiyan Zhi (瑞岩智) totaled 18 Chan masters, whose geographical information is missing. Therefore, the map actually shows the distribution of the 337 Linji 10th Chan masters. The dates of the opening of the Dharma of the 10th Linji Chan masters range from about 1080 to 1115, a difference of one generation. Therefore, it is impossible to know the actual time of the 10th Linji Chan masters. The common preaching time of the 10th Rinza is set at the end of the Northern Song Dynasty; see (Ge 2016, p. 196).
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Article

Body, Scale, and Space: Study on the Spatial Construction of Mogao Cave 254

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Abstract: This article focuses on the relationship between body, scale, and space, as revealed in Mogao Cave 254 in Gansu Province. Three topics, namely, body scale, pilgrim behavior, and time–space perception, are discussed. A space model based on mapping and measurement by former scholars is created to facilitate and visualize the analysis of the body scale of the cave space; the restriction of body scale suggests certain pilgrim behavior in the cave, whereas the occurrence of body behavior results in perception in the dimension of time. How time and space are related must be understood to comprehend the motif of Buddhist expression. This study is an architectural approach to spatial analysis that integrates the design, construction, and use phases through the scale, behavior, and perception dimensions. It is dedicated to broadening and enriching the cognitive dimensions of the space value of Mogao caves to reveal the original value of caves as religious spaces and completely preserve their material and invisible cultural heritage.

Keywords: Mogao Cave 254; space; body scale; pilgrim behavior; time–space perception

1. Introduction

The Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes, which are called *Mogaoku* in Chinese, are one of the most important man-made grottoes and world heritage sites. These sites are located in a small, long, and narrow oasis in northwestern Gansu Province in China, approximately 25 km southeast of Dunhuang City. The caves face east of Sanwei Mountain and stretch north and south for approximately 1600 m at the foot of the Mingsha Mountains. During the 4th–14th centuries, it witnessed changes spanning more than 10 dynasties. A total of 735 caves were built, 492 of which were decorated with paintings and sculptures. Caves have six fundamental forms: meditation cave, central-pillared cave, assembly hall, huge image cave, nirvana cave, and residential cave. In the Northern Wei (445–534), the cave style in Dunhuang is in a period of formation. The central-pillared cave is the main type, illustrating the transformation from the India Chaitya cave style to the Chinese style. Cave 254, which is situated near the center of the cliff, is the earliest central-pillared cave among 10 caves built during the Northern Wei.

After the Dunhuang Library Cave was discovered in 1900, it was first visited and investigated by Aurel Stein in 1907 (Stein 1980). Inspired by Stein, many scholars have devoted their time and lives to investigating, numbering, recording, depicting, analyzing, and protecting the grottoes in Dunhuang. Cave 254 has been extensively studied by former scholars and has been studied in various aspects: mapping the cave to present its original size (Shi 1996), discussing the historical background and its central-pillared style from the view of cave construction (Wang 2013), analyzing Buddha's life tales from the perspective of arts (Li 2000), and investigating on the Thousand Buddha and the meaning of statues from the background of Buddhist studies in the Northern Wei Dynasty (Ning and Hu 1986, pp. 22–36). Considering the whole study on the cave, Abe (1989) conducted

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a thesis on Cave 254 from a global standpoint, “a case study—an intensive, contextual examination of a single case ... an attempt to illuminate the intricate interplay of local circumstances in the decisions reached and ultimately to understand Cave 254 in terms of these choices”. Recently, Chen and Chen (2017) conducted detailed and vivid research on the paintings of Cave 254 (Chen and Chen 2017). Wu (2022) experimented with a new way to research and understand the art of Dunhuang, revealing that the concept of “space” is used as an entry point to treat the Mogao Caves as historical places and sites that can be physically approached and entered and touched with the eye. Furthermore, he summarized his approach to the “spatial analysis of caves” in five levels: (1) multiethnic and cross-cultural historical sites; (2) religious art as a whole; (3) internal spaces containing architecture, sculpture, and frescoes and ritual sites where religious events were held and historical memory was preserved; (4) spatial interaction of frescoes, sculpture, and architecture in caves; and (5) virtual space–time guided by pictorial space (Wu 2022).

Sculptures and murals in caves are important and express the historical, cultural, and religious situation of the time. However, this study emphasizes the role of space as the bearer of its narrative motifs, which deserves more attention. First, cave space provides a specific spatial context for sculptures and murals. The spatial layout and surrounding elements can enhance or reinforce the intended narrative, cultural symbolism, or religious significance of the artwork. Second, the arrangement of space helps realize religious ritual and cultural practices. By examining spatial organization and its relationship to narrative motifs, we can gain insights into the ritualistic and symbolic aspects of a particular culture or religious tradition. Third, space, together with sculptures and paintings, is integrated as a whole and becomes an intrinsic part of the spatial design, serving functional and symbolic purposes. The spatial relationship between the artwork and the surrounding architecture can offer insights into the broader cultural and religious intentions behind the construction and use of the space.

To understand the religious language revealed by the spatial ontology and its original spatial value, the article uses the body scale as a medium. On the basis of the studies of former scholars, we try to understand the cave for its original function, i.e., a sacred space, and its relationship with the body. The space of the cave is composed of architecture, murals, and sculptures. The body could be comprehended from three aspects: craftsmen, pilgrims, and Buddhas. The relationship between body and space is categorized as body scale, pilgrim behavior, and time–space perception.

As discussed by Wu (2022) in the conclusion of *Spatial Dunhuang, approaching the Mogao caves*, Dunhuang is a comprehensive treasure trove that can be studied and explored from the perspectives of art history, religious history, archaeology, architectural history, etc. However, we also see Dunhuang as a man-made object that can be explored more from the space itself. In contrast to the “spatial analysis of caves” discussed by Wu Hong, this study is an architectural approach to spatial analysis that integrates the design, construction, and use phases through scale, behavior, and perception dimensions.

2. Body Scale and Cave Construction

Cave 254 is a large, almost rectangular excavation with a central pillar extending from floor to ceiling in the rear section. It occupies an area of approximately 64 square meters (9.5 m deep and 6.7 m wide). It shares a similar layout with India Chaitya in that the central pillar is the symbol of a stupa, whereas the surrounding space is intended for pilgrims to admire and revolve around the Buddha. The ceiling is divided into a flat ceiling in the rear around the central pillar and a gabled ceiling in the front, which is influenced by traditional Han-style architecture. Except for the floor, all the surfaces of the cave are covered by sculptures and paintings.

As a Buddhist cave, the body scale plays an important role in the relationship between Buddha and the pilgrims. In particular, the dimension of Buddha statues and murals, as well as their positions, may deeply affect viewers’ perspectives, which ultimately work on their perception of the motif of Buddhism. When pilgrims enter Cave 254, they feel like

they are entering the world of Buddhas. The forms of caves contain meaning and symbols of heaven and earth, which further express the relationship between pilgrims and Buddhas. Sculptures of Buddhas and Buddhist murals are the main visual subjects for pilgrims, and their forms, scales, and positions are fundamental when referring to their influence on pilgrims' perceptions.

Scholars have investigated the viewing angle of adoring Buddha and its effect on pilgrims. Fu (1988) noted that 15–30 degrees is the best viewing angle in the vertical direction when pilgrims look up at the face of Buddha sculptures. If the viewing angle exceeds 45 degrees, they will feel the sense of the sublime from the sculptures of Buddhas. If it exceeds 60 degrees, they may feel majestic (Fu 1988). On the basis of Mogao Cave 172, Wu (1992) analyzed how the paintings on both murals exemplified a pictorial formula of Buddhas during the Tang Dynasty and how the composition of the painting required a particular perspective from the viewer outside the picture, leading the viewer from rough seeing (*cujian*) to the "mind's eye" (*xinjian*), i.e., the creation of religious images (Wu 1992). In Cave 254, even though sculptures of Buddhas share a similar size with pilgrims, their position in high places easily makes pilgrims look up and pay respect, as depicted by Hu and Hu (2005, p. 53). Fu (2009) analyzed the importance of an angle of 30 degrees and its high frequency of being applied in the organization of architectural interior space and sculptures of Buddhas. In his article about the evolution of the layout of Buddhist architecture and the organization of sculptures of Buddhas inside the temples in early China (*Zhong Guo Zao Qi Fo Jiao Jian Zhu Bu Ju Yan Bian ji Dian Nei Xiang She de Bu Zhi* [中國早期佛教建築布局演變及殿內像設的布置]), he mentioned that pilgrims can adore the face of Buddhas with the view field within a 30-degree elevation angle from far to near. Based on the cases of Cave 4 in Maijishan built in the Northern Zhou Dynasty, the Nanchansi Temple, and the Eastern Hall of Foguang Si (Buddha Light Temple) built in the Tang Dynasty, the viewing angles from the door of the building to the top of the backlight of Buddha and from in front of the Buddha to the ushnisha on the head of Buddha are 30 degrees. This angle is not only good for comfortable viewing but also good for pilgrims concentrating on adoring Buddha without looking up and down (Fu 2009).

Regarding cave construction, scholars have performed much work on mapping caves. Xie (1955) recorded the whole dimension, as well as detailed data on all the sculptures inside the Dunhuang caves. In the book *"Dunhuang Yi Shu Xv Lu"* (敦煌藝術叙錄), he measured the length in Chi (尺), a traditional Chinese measuring unit used in the late Qing Dynasty (equal to 0.35 m). In terms of accuracy, he mentioned that there might be some mistakes because he performed the measurement within a short period, and he reorganized it 13 years later (Xie 1955, p. 1). Shi (1996) was the first to draw the plans, facades, and sections of the Mogao Caves in 1942. In his book *"Mogao Ku Xing"* (莫高窟形) (Shi 1996), the main data of the cave are presented. Later, a scaled detailed drawing of the plan and section (Peng 1982, p. 208) was completed by Sun Rujian of the Dunhuang Research Institute. It was published in the book *"Dunhuang Mogao Cave"* (敦煌莫高窟) in 1982. Additionally, Ning and Hu 1986, pp. 22–23) focused on the Thousand Buddha and measured mainly the inside facades (Ning and Hu 1986, pp. 22–43). Their measurements on Cave 254 are shown in Table 1 below:

(1) Measured by Xie Zhiliu in 1942 and was published in his book *"Dunhuang Yi Shu Xv Lu"* (敦煌藝術叙錄) in 1955.

(2) Measured by Shi Zhangru in 1942 and was published in his book *"Mogao Ku Xing"* (莫高窟形) in 1955.

(3) Measured by Sun Rujian and was published in the book *"Dunhuang Mogao Cave"* (敦煌莫高窟) in 1982.

(4) Measured by Ning Qiang and Hu Tongqing and was published in the article *"Dunhuang Mogao Ku Di 254 Ku Qian Fo Hua Yan Jiu"* (敦煌莫高窟第254窟千佛画研究) in 1986.

Table 1. Measurements on Cave 254.

	1		2		3		4	
	Length (m)	Max. Height (m)	Length (m)	Max. Height (m)	Length (m)	Max. Height (m)	Length (m)	Max. Height (m)
East wall	9.87	4.36	6.8	4.0	6.89	4.00	6.90	4.00
South wall	10.08	4.36	9.5	4.7	9.51	4.68	9.80	5.00
West wall	9.87	4.36	6.7	4.1	6.62	4.10	6.65	4.10
North wall	10.08	4.36	9.6	4.7	9.58	4.70	9.50	5.00

Notes: The accuracy of decimal measurements can vary depending on the precision of the measurement method and the tools used by each scholar. In addition, according to the answer of Sun Yihua, daughter of Sun Rujian, before the emergence of the 3D laser measurement tool, given that the caves are not custom made, each surveyor will have deviations due to the position they stand in and the direction they measure.

Table 1 reveals that Shi Zhangru and Sun Rujian’s measurements are similar to each other and are more consistent with the main dimensions of the cave. By contrast, Xie Zhiliu, Ning Qiang, and Hu Tongqing highlighted the details of Buddha statues, murals, and the Thousand Buddha, and the data on them are more precise than their measurements on the main dimensions of the cave. Thus, the space model is constructed on the basis of the drawing by Sun Rujian, the main data by Shi Zhangru, and the detailed data of the Buddhas by Xie Zhiliu, as shown in Figures 1 and 2.

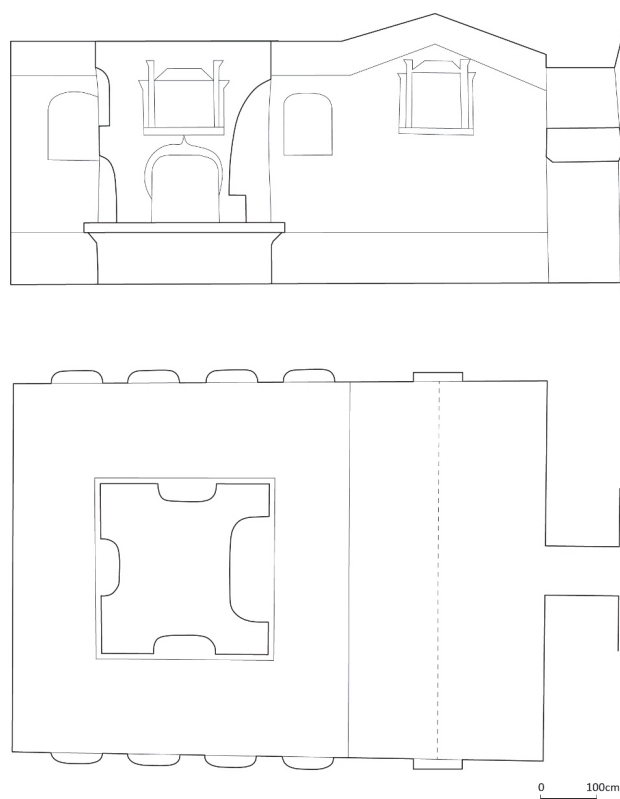


Figure 1. Plan and section of Cave 254.

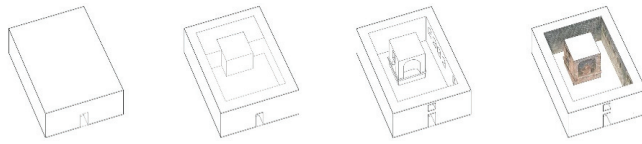


Figure 2. Construction process of Cave 254.

2.1. Craftsmen and Cave Construction

Craftsmen refer to the constructors of the Dunhuang Grottoes, as well as the first group of people who experienced the grotto space, and their importance cannot be ignored. According to the record on the construction process of the Dunhuang Grottoes (*Yin Ku Gao* [營窟稿]) (Ma 1997, p. 16) written at the beginning of the 10 century, recruiting excellent craftsmen is the second most important work next to choosing the best rock. The first thing to do for the success of cave construction is to provide a suitable workplace for craftsmen. On the one hand, the excavation scale should be large enough to meet the craftsmen's needs for workplaces. On the other hand, a certain correspondence exists between the size of the grotto and the body of the craftsmen.

The construction procedure is complicated for the following reasons: First, in contrast to the India Chaitya, which is composed of stone, engraving too much in Mogao Cave is not suitable because the cave is formed by the deposition of sand and pebble precipitation. Rock with looseness is better for painting than carving (Dunhuang Yan Jiu Yuan and Gansu Sheng Wen Wu Ju 2012). The minimal temperature changes in the caves ensure the excellent preservation of murals and sculptures. Therefore, according to Ma De, several kinds of craftsmen are needed during the delicate construction process: cave engravers, mud craftsmen (泥工), putty craftsmen (灰工), carpenters, sculptors, and painters (Ma 1997, pp. 17–22). Given the intricate procedure, the craftsmen group, which is a hugely complex system, is organized to enter the cave in order.

The construction process of Cave 254, as shown in Figure 2, can be summarized in four steps: (1) A gate hole 2.1 m high and 1.4 m wide was dug out so that two craftsmen and excavation tools could get through at the same time. (2) A gabled ceiling and a flat ceiling were made around the central pillar by digging upward. Digging the cave in a top-down approach is more convenient and safer for the craftsmen because scaffolds are not required (Sun and Sun 2003). The spacious front chamber, which is 6.8 m wide and 4.4 m deep, allows more craftsmen to work simultaneously. The corridor around the central pillar is 1.57–1.7 m wide, thus enabling two craftsmen to dig together and two painters or carpenters to work back to back simultaneously. (3) After digging out the whole cave space with the scaffolds, craftsmen who are responsible for wall trimming and mud touching must smooth the surfaces of the cave. (4) Painters and sculptors enter the cave and visualize the Buddhist motif. During all these procedures, the body of the craftsmen is an efficient tool for examining the spatial scale of the cave.

2.2. Buddha Scale

Sculptures of Buddhas and Buddhist murals are protagonists of the space, where scale is important for the perception of pilgrims. Given that sculptures are three-dimensional objects, their size and interrelationship may affect the distance perceived by pilgrims. To a great extent, pilgrims' perception of Buddha is affected by its volume. For murals, the distance between the pilgrims and the image is blurry. The scenes, scales, and drawing techniques may either exclude the pilgrims from the paintings or include them so that they feel like they are inside the painting, which has been pointed out as pictorial space (Wu 2022). Therefore, research on the scale of sculptures and paintings of Buddhas can lay a solid foundation for the analysis of pilgrim behavior in the next section.

In Cave 254, more than 1300 Buddhas are expressed through sculptures and murals. A total of 20 Buddhas are presented on a large scale: seven Buddha statues on the central pillar, five on the north and south walls, and three in the murals. They can be understood as

three kinds of Buddhas: cross-legged Maitreya bodhisattva, dhyana Buddha, and preaching Buddha. All four walls, as well as the four sides of the central pillar, are divided into three registers. The upper register is about Apsaras, bodhisattvas, figurines, and heavenly musicians. The middle register focuses on Maitreya bodhisattva, dhyana Buddha, preaching Buddha, and the Thousand Buddha. The lower register is only about yakshas. Table 2 explains their layout, as well as the original height of each Buddha, based on the measurement by Xie 1955, pp. 326–29) in 1942.

With regard to the data shown above, several principles on the scale can be drawn from the layout of Buddha and the measurements of height. (1) Space itself is completely center-symmetrical; thus, Buddha statues corresponding to the north and south walls share the same scale. (2) The scale of the Buddha statues in the central pillar is larger than that of the Buddhas on the walls in the corresponding position. (3) The space in Cave 254 is separated into two chambers: the front chamber is mainly about Maitreya worship, whereas the central-pillared space focuses on preaching and meditation. Thus, the scale of Buddha statues, to a large extent, is affected by the motif. Maitreya bodhisattva is relatively larger than the preaching Buddha and dhyana Buddha. (4) Although it is the Buddha that is shaped and visualized, we find that the construction of Buddha statues follows the scale of the human body.

A few documents on the instructions for molding the figures of Buddha have been published. Existing documents, such as “*Zao Xiang Liang Du Jing* (造像量度經),” (Gongbuchabu 1874) were retranslated into Chinese from the Tibetan edition by Gongbuchabu in 1742 during the Qing Dynasty. Wang (2002) also discussed sculptures of Buddhas in the Qing Dynasty in his book “*Qing Dai Jiang Zuo Ze Li Hui Bian: Fo Zuo, Men Shen Zuo* (清代匠作則例彙編: 佛作, 門神作)” (Wang 2002). In reference to research on the shape and proportion of statues in the Northern Wei Dynasty, the article “*Bei Wei Luo Yang de Fo Jiao Shi Ku yu Yong Ning Si Zao Xiang* (北魏洛陽的佛教石窟與永寧寺造像)” written by Qian (2006) can be regarded as a more representative study. Based on Buddha statues in grottoes and the Yongning Temple, a more detailed study of their shape characteristics is conducted. In the Northern Wei Dynasty, for a sitting Buddha, the ratio of the height of its head to body is 1:4, and for a standing Buddha, the ratio is 1:6. The bodhisattva statue is slightly different. For the standing bodhisattva, the ratio is 1:5.5 or 1:6 (Qian 2006). These data basically match the proportion of the grotto statues in Dunhuang during the Northern Dynasties. According to the Archaeological Report of Cave 266–275 in Mogao Grottoes (*Mo Gao Ku Di 266–275 Ku Kao Gu Bao Gao* [莫高窟第266–275窟考古報告]), which collects the most accurate data on the Buddha statues in Mogao grottoes during the era of the northern dynasties, for standing Buddha, the ratio of the height of its head to body is 1:6, whereas for sitting Buddha, it is 1:4. For standing bodhisattva, the ratio is 1:5.5, whereas, for sitting bodhisattva, it is 1:3 to 1:3.5 (Dunhuang Yan Jiu Yuan 2011). The application of body proportion contributes to achieving the integrity of Buddha’s space. Table 3 explains how the body scale is used in shaping two chambers, as well as the relationship between Buddha statues and pilgrims when the height of Buddha is converted to standing height.

Table 2. Figures on each surface of Cave 254.

The figures on the central pillar				
	East	South	West	North
Upper register	Apsaras and bodhisattvas	Figurines	Figurines	Figurines
Middle register	A cross-legged Maitreya Buddha (2.03 m)	A cross-legged bodhisattva (0.91 m)	A dhyana Buddha (0.875 m)	A cross-ankled bodhisattva (0.91 m)
Lower register		A dhyana Buddha (1.085 m)	A dhyana Buddha (1.19 m)	A dhyana Buddha (1.085 m)
	Ten yakshas	Eight yakshas	Six yakshas	Six yakshas
The figures on East wall				
Upper register	heavenly musicians			
Middle register	Thousand Buddha motifs		window	Thousand Buddha motifs
Lower register	Guardian warriors		door	Guardian warriors
The figures on West wall				
Upper register	Eighteen heavenly apsaras			
	Thousand Buddha motifs			
Middle register	Thousand Buddha motifs	A white-robed Buddha in Dharmachakra mudra (1.12 m)		Thousand Buddha motifs
Lower register	Seventeen yakshas			
The figures on South wall				
	Under the gabled ceiling		Under the flat ceiling	
Upper register	Nine heavenly musicians		Seventeen heavenly musicians	
	Thousand Buddha motifs	A cross-legged bodhisattva (1.33 m)	A preaching Buddha (0.805 m)	A dhyana Buddha (0.805 m)
Middle register	Illustration of Defeating Mara/Sakyamuni sits under the bodhi tree with his hands in Bhumyakramana mudra (0.77 m)	The tale of the Sattva Jataka	Thousand Buddha motifs	Thousand Buddha motifs

Table 2. Cont.

Lower register	Twenty-five yakshas				
The figures on North wall					
Under the gabled ceiling			Under the flat ceiling		
Upper register	Nine heavenly musicians		Eighteen heavenly musicians		
Middle register	Two apsaras	A seated Buddha	Two apsaras	A preaching Buddha (0.805 m)	A dhyana Buddha (0.805 m)
	Thousand Buddha motifs	A cross-legged bodhisattva (1.33 m)	Thousand Buddha motifs		
	The karma story of Nanda/Sakyamuni sits preaching (0.77 m)		The Sibi Jataka tale (0.77 m)	Thousand Buddha motifs	Thousand Buddha motifs
			A preaching scene of the white-robed Buddha		
Lower register	Twenty-five yakshas				

Table 3. Dimension of height of Buddha statues in Cave 254.

		Under Gabled Ceiling			Under Flat Ceiling				
		South Wall	Central Pillar	North Wall	South Wall	Central Pillar			North Wall
						South	West	North	
Original height (m)	up	1.33		1.33	0.805	0.91	0.875	0.91	0.805
	down		2.03			1.085	1.19	1.085	
Converted to standing height(m)	up	2.00		2.00	1.21	1.67	1.31	1.67	1.21
	down		3.19			1.63	1.79	1.63	

As shown in Table 3, the largest statue in Cave 254 is situated in the central pillar, where the cross-legged bodhisattva with a standing height of 3.19 m is on the east side and the dhyana Buddhas with a standing height of 2.00 m are on the south and north sides of the central pillar. Then, a dhyana Buddha on the west side, which is 1.79 m in standing height, ranks third. Even though their cross-legged and meditating posture would reduce their height, the lower register, which is 0.9 m in height, ensures that the Buddha statues still look higher than the pilgrims. The height of the rest of the Buddha statues ranges from 1.21 m to 1.67 m, which is similar to the average height of the pilgrims (1.674 m). However, being situated in niches, which are approximately 2.4 m from the ground, makes them look much taller.

The application of the scale of the Buddha statues is conducive to the formation of the two Buddha spaces: Maitreya bodhisattva space and meditating space. Seemingly, Maitreya was held at a higher level of importance than Sakyamuni during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Thus, the integrity of the space leads pilgrims to comprehend the Buddhist motif well.

2.3. Pilgrim Scale

The pilgrim scale is mainly affected by two aspects: the available space in the cave and the relative relationship between the pilgrim scale and the Buddha scale. In this regard, the reasonableness of the spatial scale has been tested with the craftsmen’s bodies during the excavation of the cave. The real body scale perceived by pilgrims depends on the further decoration of the cave.

The front chamber under the gabled ceiling, which is 4.7 m high, 6.8 m wide, and 4.4 m deep, serves as a relatively spacious reception for pilgrims to stay and conduct pilgrim activities. The corridor around the central pillar is 1.57 m to 1.7 m wide, which is relatively narrow and high, allowing only one to two pilgrims to revolve around the Buddhas at the same time.

Additionally, the comfort of the body scale is affected by the scale of Buddha statues and the dimensions of murals. The discussion on the Buddha scale reveals that the dimension of the Buddha statues is larger than that of the pilgrim, and their position is higher than that of the pilgrims, making the pilgrims feel that Buddha statues are much larger than their actual size. In addition, murals are references for pilgrims to perceive their scale. The average height of the population during the Northern Wei Dynasty is 1.674 m (Zhang and Du 2008), which means that the position of their eyes is approximately 1.6 m above the ground. Usually, 20 and 36 degrees are comfortable viewing angles in the vertical and horizontal directions, respectively, ensuring a good visual presence without getting tired from the frequent rotation of the eyeball. The view field within 30 degrees of the view point, called the central view field, is good for observation (Zhao and Yang 2013). When the pilgrims stand in front of the central pillar, under the beam of the gabled ceiling, the dimension of the image on the wall that can be seen comfortably is 1.2 m high and 2.2 m wide, as shown in Figure 3. As shown in Table 4, the dimension of murals mostly satisfies the visual scale of pilgrims. In addition, given the below register of yakshas, the height of the center of the mural is approximately 1.67 m, which is the same as the average height of

the pilgrims’ eye level. They could enjoy a better sight of it, including stepping forward to appreciate the details. In addition, the height of the eye level of Buddha in the illustration of Buddha’s Vanquishing Maras and the Pravajana of Nanda is approximately 2 m, which is slightly higher than the pilgrim’s eye level, making the pilgrims look up. Such a relationship on the scale is not a coincidence, and we can speculate that painters may decide the dimension of the murals with reference to their body scale and perception. By contrast, the narrow corridor around the central pillar is not expected to be comfortable for pilgrims to observe the whole mural. It leads pilgrims to focus more on their inner peace, revolving around the central pillar with a glance at the details of the Thousand Buddhas.

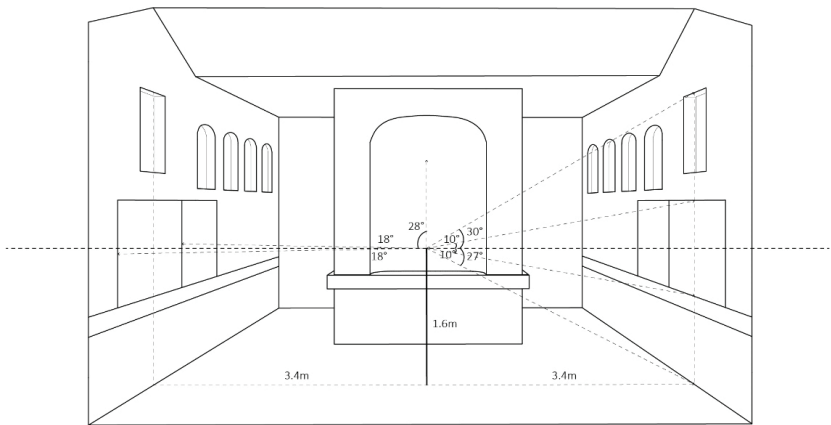


Figure 3. Analysis of the visual field in Cave 254.

Table 4. Dimension of murals (and the height of Buddha).

	South Wall		North Wall		West Wall
	Illustration of Buddha’s Vanquishing Maras	Jataka of Mahāsattva with Seven Episodes	Jataka of Sivika with Five Episodes	Pravajana of Nanda	A Preaching Scene of a White-Robed BUDDHA
Width (m)	1.785 (0.875)	2.7825	1.75	2.8 (0.875)	1.19
Height (m)	1.54 (0.77)	1.54	1.575	1.575 (0.77)	1.12
Distance to the Ground (m)	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9

3. Body Behavior and Worship Liturgy

“As both created and creator, a religious building manifests the aspirations and intentions of its builders, yet the meaning of a building ‘not occasionally, but always’ surpasses those original intentions.” (Jones 1993)

Although the body scale of the craftsmen, Buddha statue, and pilgrim is the initial standard to measure the feasibility of the cave size, according to Jones (1993), the meaning of the space is far beyond the original intention of the creator, and the behavior and rituals evoke feelings and ideas that far exceed the spatial arrangement of the cave. By contrast, today’s Mogao Cave has become a dead cultural relic, i.e., without rituals and pilgrims. In addition, talking about the possible religious rituals of the past dynasties, including the different changes in the rituals, is difficult. According to the analysis of Jinci, the sacred Chinese ritual architecture by Miller (2007), pious pilgrims will be lost without rituals, and the objects of worship may also change because of this.

“Su You indicates with this inscription that the presence of the divine and the sincerity of the devotee were lost when the building in which the ritual took place was not main-

tained. Facing the loss of his residence and, as a consequence, the impossibility of patrons' performing a sincere ritual for invoking the spirit, Shu Yu would no longer descend and would be unable to help 'transform' the local people." (Miller 2007)

Therefore, the following analysis of behavior and rituals is deduced more from the perspective of the spatial arrangement itself. However, as Jones (1993) said, in the dialog between the little boy and the statue, the details of such behavior and spatial relationship are beyond our imagination:

"And so, while this meticulously choreographed mass with music, vestments, scriptural readings, and holy sacraments was being performed for hundreds of people in the congregation, this little boy spent the hour in the side aisle involved in a very animated conversation with this same-sized stone angel. He greeted her nose-to-nose, put his hands all over her, interrogated her, and then stepped back fully expectant, so it seemed, of a response." (Jones 1993)

Even though ritual itself is not static and always the same, analysis of the "interaction of architecture and ceremony in sacred places for its sacred value" (Wescoat and Ousterhout 2014) is necessary. This article tends to start with elements that can be measured and judged at the spatial level. The body scale of Cave 254 ensures that certain behaviors occur in space. On the one hand, it meets the needs of the Northern Wei Dynasty, that is, Maitreya worship and meditation are mainstream in admiring Buddha; on the other hand, it encourages pilgrims to enter and understand the realm of Buddha through corresponding behavior. Therefore, the cave space has two main sections: the former space under the gabled ceiling and the central-pillared space under the flat ceiling. It provides space for monks and pilgrims to gather and enables them to revolve around the Buddha in the rear (Xiao 1989). Regarding subjects in different grottoes according to different periods, Duan et al. (1995) pointed out that *"In the early grottoes (during the Sixteen States [304–439] and the North Dynasty [439–534]), much expression was given to the attainment of Buddhahood through the practice of satparamita and cetana. The Dunhuang artists put special emphasis upon subjects concerning vipasyana, dhyana, and samadhi."* (Duan et al. 1995). Thus, the Buddhist motif expressed in Cave 254 and the way of organizing the space were influenced by mainstream beliefs. Finally, pilgrims' behaviors in caves are greatly affected by spatial scales, statues, and murals.

3.1. Worshipping the Maitreya Bodhisattva

The symmetry of the cave stresses the importance of the central area. When pilgrims enter the cave through the door, they first encounter a cross-legged Maitreya bodhisattva in the central pillar (Figure 4), which is lit from the window and the diffuse light from the floor. Naturally, pilgrims would look up and worship the bodhisattva.

Then, they may look around in the front chamber where cross-legged Maitreya bodhisattvas are set in the upper niches on the walls, as well as the central pillar, which is the symbol of living in the Tusita Temple (兜率天宫). According to the Maitreya sutra *Mi Le Xia Sheng Jing* (弥勒下生经), which was translated by Kumarajiva (鸠摩罗什), Maitreya Bodhisattva is the future Buddha, who is entrusted to the care of hope for the pilgrims. The Tusita Temple is extremely wonderful that if they could practice Buddhism devoutly and meditate, they could enter the Elysium afterlife (Peng 1982, p. 167). Therefore, Buddha's life stories and preaching and meditating scenes are shown on the murals, which are the best examples for the pilgrims.



Figure 4. Entrance view of Cave 254, image cited from Digital Dunhuang, <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0254>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

3.2. *Watching Buddha's Life Stories*

After worshipping the Bodhisattva, pilgrims may stand in the center under the gabled ceiling space, where pilgrims feel comfortable appreciating the whole murals on both walls (Figure 5). The Buddhas' virtue is illustrated vividly by the mural for the pilgrims. Under the gabled ceiling, Jataka tales and Buddha's life stories are illustrated on the wall, whereas the dimension gives enough space for watching and observing the drawings. After worshipping the Buddha, pilgrims can turn around to appreciate the murals. The contents of the murals are full of dynamic sections. For example, Mahasattva Jataka on the south wall illustrates Prince Sattva offering himself to a starving tigress and her cubs. The scene consists of seven episodes within a single rectangular space: finding the tigress, piercing his neck, jumping from the cliff, feeding the tigress, remains being found by the family, crying on the remains, and building the stupa. This drawing has had many interpretations, but the pilgrims watch the dynamic stories of the mural in a still manner.



Figure 5. View of the central pillar from the corner under the gable ceiling space of Cave 254, image cited from Digital Dunhuang, <https://www.e-dunhuang.com/cave/10.0001/0001.0001.0254.2.3>. Accessed on 17 July 2023.

The space around the central pillar is dominated by revolving around the Buddha. Four Buddha statues are carved in the pillar, and two cross-legged bodhisattvas are carved

on the north and south surfaces. To obtain a whole view of all the Buddhas, pilgrims must inevitably walk around the pillar. The narrow corridor, which is only 1.57 m wide, is not comfortable enough for pilgrims to view the murals on the wall. Therefore, the scenes of hell at the bottom and heaven at the top are out of a suitable viewing angle, which is perceived from the pilgrims' peripheral vision. The central-pillared space is mainly about preaching and meditation. The four walls are adorned by the Thousand Buddha motif: the Buddhas of the past, present, and future ages, which together form a great scene of preaching and meditation. This space, even without pilgrims, is complete. The Buddhas, who have six supernormal cognitive abilities, could sense limitlessness in a second, which is not restricted by the distance and the viewing angle. Pilgrims simply revolve around the Buddhas, and even though the murals of the Thousand Buddhas and the sculptures are still, pilgrims admire the still images in a dynamic way. It finally transforms the still image into a dynamic and continuous horizontal scroll, on which time and space have a magic influence, expressing the time–space value of the reincarnation of Buddhism.

4. Perception, Time, and Space

“Like a condensed journey through time and space, the vast expanse of time and space is arranged in an orderly manner in a cave of less than 65 square metres, and the Buddhist cosmology and worldview they embody is still clear and thought-provoking to today’s viewers.” (Chen and Chen 2017, p. 81.)

The construction of the cave is a kind of vivid visualization of the world of Buddhas, which intends to raise resonance from the inner spiritual space of the pilgrims. The intention of becoming Buddha is not something newly created. However, it is the root that embeds in each one's mind, which they used to have and now forget. To some extent, the perception of space serves as the foundation for the pilgrims to cover thoughts on time, which finally opens the door to the realm of Buddhas for them.

4.1. Space Perception

Defining space itself is difficult, and we normally rely on reference points to depict the limit of the space. Architectures, murals, and sculptures are tangible references to space. The relationship between the reference and the body could be sensibly understood as perception while being rationally understood as scale. Usually, perception and behavior result in certain behavior in the space. The perception of comfort depends on the relationship between the dimension of space and the human body. Spacious and bright chamber spaces make people feel relatively relaxed, whereas the dim and narrow corridor around the central pillar leads pilgrims to focus more on their inner peace.

Regarding Cave 254, the six inside surfaces are vital references for pilgrims to perceive the border of the space. Most of the murals, sculptures, and construction details are expressed in the four facades, as well as the ceiling, to draw more attention upward. Simply looking up is not enough to understand the Buddha space fully. To understand it fully, pilgrims must observe the murals in the correct order, beginning with the depiction of hell, then to Buddha's life story, on to a flying apsaras in heaven, and ending on the ceiling with a symbol of reincarnation. The wall is a powerful medium for gaining space perception. Accompanied by murals and sculptures, a rigorous and orderly level of spatial perception could be created. With the process of looking up, pilgrims could fully comprehend the content expressed by the layers of the picture ascendingly.

Light is an intangible reference to space. Entities, such as walls, are objective factors making up space, whereas light is the determinant of the degree to which space is perceived. The bright and open lobby space contrasts with the dim and suppressed central-pillared space, which adds to the mystique of the cave motif. With the original trapezoidal perspective of the space, the space behind the center pillar seems to disappear.

Although walls could be the strong border for perception, light plays an important role in dominating pilgrims' perceptions and subjective emotions. The former space of Cave 254 is lit up by the window and door in the east wall where the Maitreya Buddha

is sacred and bright for pilgrims to admire. In addition, the bright and spacious chamber under the gabled ceiling allows pilgrims to stop in front of the grottoes and observe the details of the depiction. By contrast, the gloomy space around the central pillar gives one a feeling of mystery, which is good for meditation.

4.2. Time Perception

How to express unlimited time based on limited space is a challenging theme. Time itself is intangible, whereas space is expected to serve as a reference for pilgrims to perceive the track of time. In addition, behavior is an effective catalyst for participating in the operation of time, and pilgrims eventually obtain the perception of time in practice.

Space is the reference for time. The murals and sculptural expressions at Cave 254 provide pilgrims with the possibility of a multidirectional perception of time. In the front chamber, pilgrims can perceive the temporal and spatial changes in the picture. Worshipping the Buddhas and viewing the murals are similar to observing static images in a still manner. In the central-pillared space, pilgrims revolving around the Buddhas according to the central pillar is a kind of dynamic behavior compared to the still Thousand Buddhas and sculptures of Buddhas in the niches.

Buddhism's perception of space is not measured by material reference but by the description of time to show the understanding of space, such as the six realms of existence and reincarnation. In Cave 254, the space from the gabled ceiling to the central pillared forms a fixed sequence for pilgrims to go to the core space through instruction space. It is the space for Buddhas to meditate but not for pilgrims. Thus, it is impressive when pilgrims enter the mind palace of Buddhas.

Behavior is the catalyst for awareness. How can an unlimited timeline be perceived through limited space? The moving body is the carrier of perception. Usually, the dimension of time is realized through the motion of a body in space (Lou 1999, p. 165). When pilgrims revolve around the central pillar, the 1235 Buddhas on the four inside walls perform as a time belt, where the Buddhas of the past and future ages are set in clockwise order (Ning and Hu 1986, p. 30), leading pilgrims to walk around the central pillar clockwise to experience the time scale and to understand that the past, the present, and the future are a cycle.

According to Chen and Chen (2017), "the designers of Cave 54 have made all the Buddhas appear simultaneously, and as the faithful circumambulate the central pillar, they witness the thousand Buddhas of the past, present and future one by one, and people bound to a finite life receive the eternal blessing of the entire universe." (Chen and Chen 2017, p. 203)

In the course of the continuous circuit of Buddhas, the cave is dotted with images of Buddhas and beings as if they were reincarnated into the world from the past, present, and future, with the larger-scale images being the focal point of vision. By contrast, mural paintings, such as Prince Sattva Jataka, Shibi Jataka, Story of Nanda, and Vanquishing Mara, draw us into the specific details of Buddhahood and practice, in what can be described as a journey through time and space to the broadest and to the most subtle.

5. Conclusions

The grottoes' excavation and emphasis on meditation were important characteristics of Buddhist belief during the Northern Wei Dynasty (Tang 1997). Buddhist grotto arts went through from no image to a great image of Buddha; it not only satisfied the requirements of the public but also became a compulsory course on Vipassana (meditation) for monks. The early caves mainly focused on viewing sculptures of Buddhas. From the perspective of the existing grotto arts, viewing sculptures of Buddhas inside the caves and the Maitreya beliefs were even more prosperous during the Northern Wei Dynasty. Therefore, the size, scale, position, and style of the Buddha image are crucial to the pilgrims' perception. The spatial construction of Mogao Cave 254 depicts an all-encompassing world of Buddhism, with more than 1300 images and sculptures of Buddhas on different scales. It illustrates

well the relationship between body and space. Through this case study, we learn that the interrelationship between humans' and Buddha's scale is fundamental in affecting the pilgrims' perception of the Buddhist motif. In addition, architecture, murals, and sculptures play important roles in spontaneous pilgrim behavior, leading them to understand the paradise of Buddhas and the way of achieving inner peace. As Jones (1993) said, *"Religious buildings arise as human creations, but they persist as life-altering environments; they are, at once, expressions and sources of religious experience."*

Regarding Cave 254 as an overall architectural space from the perspective of body scale and spatial relationship is good for understanding the outstanding universal value of the entire historical scene. Based on the analysis of detailed mapping data, this article tries to reveal the construction purpose and restore a real construction scene of architectural heritage. Understanding the Buddha's life stories and observing Buddha sculptures help us learn vivid historic, artistic, and religious scenes. However, to comprehend fully the space of Cave 254 and its meaning in the Northern Wei Dynasty, one must step into the cave. Pilgrims use their body scale to measure the size of space, revolving around the central pillar to worship the Buddha and immerse themselves in the Buddhist atmosphere.

"The ultimate goal of conservation as a whole is not to conserve the paper, but to retain or improve the meaning it has for people." (Muñoz Viñas 2005)

When it comes to protecting the Mogao Caves, it is crucial to implement measures that effectively address major threats such as unstable rock structures, wind and sand hazards, water-related issues, and tourism pressures. The primary objective is to ensure that the caves are preserved with minimal alterations. The preservation of the Mogao Caves extends beyond safeguarding a physical site; it aims to preserve and present a relatively intact spiritual space for both current and future generations. In addition to mitigating the impact of visitation on the site's conservation, it is essential to convey the authentic and complete significance of the grottoes to visitors in a more specific manner. Presently, the Mogao Caves are open to the public, allowing access to certain caves on designated days. However, can the experience of the Mogao Caves be enhanced by adhering to specific behavioral rituals as it was in the past? By doing so, the human-created space of the grottoes could enable visitors to deeply immerse themselves in the profound atmosphere, even in this new era of digital heritage presentation.

Currently, a significant focus of the Dunhuang Academy's work is on digitization. The digitization project initiated by the Dunhuang Research Academy in 2006 serves not only long-term conservation and research purposes but also helps alleviate the conflict between tourism demands and heritage protection, to some extent. Ideally, through digital presentation, viewers can fully grasp the profound significance of the caves. However, the Digital Dunhuang project primarily provides a basic representation of the grotto spaces, presenting the interior situations of the caves in a uniform manner. Based on the analysis, it is possible to further enhance the presentation of specific caves, such as Cave 254 in the Mogao Caves, by offering a distinct perspective that allows visitors to comprehend the cave from multiple dimensions. Understanding the overall spatial scale of Cave 254 is crucial in recognizing the complete artistic value of its engineering-oriented practice in the spatial context. The methodology employed in this study can be applied to investigate caves from different time periods, thus aiding in understanding the evolving relationship between pilgrims and Buddhas over time. Visitors are guided to experience the grotto from a concrete viewpoint, even if it is through the use of 3D visual effects, providing a simulated visitation experience.

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Article

Niches and Sculptures of the Imaginary Realm—Revisiting the Fowan Rock Carvings, Beishan, Dazu

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Abstract: The Fowan Cliff Carvings are a key part of the Dazu Grottoes. Formed in a southern and northern stretch, the 290 individual niches at Fowan were mostly sculpted from the Late Tang to the Southern Song. Previous research by archaeologists and art historians has used typological and iconographic methods to periodize these niches and debate the themes behind particular niche sculptures. This essay employs niche inscriptions in a discussion of typical Fowan niche contents, matching lay feasting activities onto the period background behind their construction. These individual case studies grant an understanding of the overall atmosphere at Fowan through the shared inclinations or connections between niches, also reflecting specific niche sculptures via holistic analysis. This method, repeatedly examining the relationship between the niches and site from the perspective of “venue”, helps us restore a sense of situatedness when facing different eras of Fowan and to understand the choice in statue content, changes in niche content, and the design underlying niche form.

Keywords: cliff sculpture; lay feasting and ceremonies; (religious) venue

1. Introduction

The Dazu Rock Carvings, in Chongqing, southwest China, are home to more than 70 carved statues, considered classics of the swansong period of Chinese grotto art and included in the site’s listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999. The focal point of this essay, the Beishan 北山 (North Mountain) cliff sculptures, are of a larger scale and considered of somewhat higher academic value than other sites, with rather significant clusters at Baodingshan 寶頂山, Nanshan 南山, Shizhuanshan 石篆山, and Shimenshan 石門山 (Figure 1). Despite their final presentation, the history behind the construction and composition methods of each sculpture differed fundamentally in each case. Sculptures at Baodingshan, 15 km northeast of the Dazu District, were first opened in 1179, sponsored by Zhao Zhifeng 趙智鳳, an eminent monk of the times. The Dafowan 大佛灣 Sculptures carved out from a saddle-shaped cliff-face in a valley cul-de-sac, which stand out, especially for their great height and unusual form, were likely the product of Zhao’s holistic planning (J. Li 2016). The Nanshan Sculptures lie at the peak of Nanshan (South Mountain), 2 km to the south of Dazu District. A mere five niches, they belong to a Daoist cluster carved out during the Shaoxing reign period (1131–1162) of the Southern Song. Shizhuanshan’s statuary is spread out over several enormous rockfaces on the outskirts of Fohui Village 佛會村, 20 km southwest of Dazu District. Shizhuanshan was excavated from 1082–1096. Over ten niches each convey different subject material. The most up-to-date research indicates that Shizhuanshan served as a site for Buddhist rites set up in his private estate by the landlord Yan Sun 嚴遜, deities at each shrine being individually invoked in sutra readings for the deceased (Hou 2013; Wei 2020).

The Beishan Fowan Sculptures are the most complex of any case. The full construction project lasted from the Late Tang to the Southern Song. Across these two-and-a-half centuries, Fowan’s donors constructed close to 300 niches spread out over more than 200 m of sheer cliff. Beginning with dated sculptures, scholars have employed a typological methodology to provide a periodization of these sculptures (Li and Wang 1988). Iconographic

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techniques have determined what materials were used in the vast majority of Fowan's sculptures and analyzed the Buddhist school of thought behind many different niches. Li Fangyin's "Collected Carvings of the Dazu Sculptures–Beishan Grottoes" presents the above research in a concentrated manner (F. Li 1999). Li's essay follows a chronological narrative framework, taking us through the niches constructed in each period, as well as the materials used and salient artistic points. Indeed, Li's narrative technique helps the reader form an understanding of the overall cluster, though it comes up short on historical reality. To be specific, on the one hand, the reader may receive the mistaken impression that the entire process of excavating the Beishan carvings was no more than a continuous accretion of different sculpture styles at different times. In fact, the primary sponsor or devotee behind any one sculpture had their own understanding and ability to exploit the cliff face. Looked at in a broader light, the cluster when considered overall experienced subtle changes in different period atmospheres—changes that are absent from Li's narrative. On the other hand, the purpose of such an iconographic framework seems only to organize popular sculpture themes of different periods, overlooking the individual selection of the donor behind a variety of subject matter. Put another way, these donors should not be lumped together as some middle- or lower-level population: Their individual emotions or political expressions, situated within their specific historical backgrounds, merit their own explanation. The "revisiting" intended by this essay involves re-examining the major overall background for this period, the interactions between the Fowan arena and its specific sculptures as a means to establishing a new understanding and means of narrating cliff sculpture.

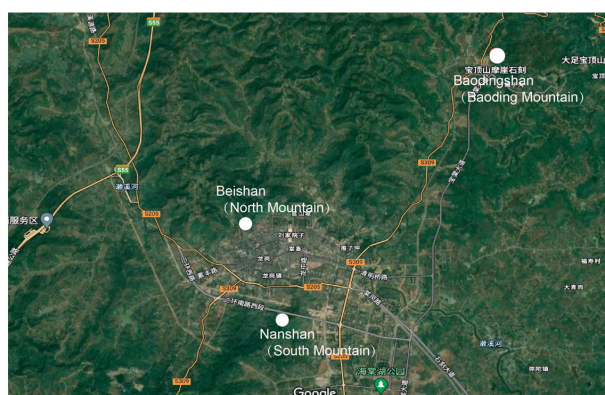


Figure 1. Distribution of Tang–Song Rock Carvings at Three Major Sites around Dazu City.

2. From Military Subspace to Public Sculpture Space

In the late ninth century, with its frontier commands pursuing a separatist line during the final throes of the dynasty, the central Tang government lost any pretense of local control. This was exacerbated by the nationwide Huang Chao 黃巢 Rebellion from 878–884, which placed the Empire on the brink of collapse. It was against this background that Wei Junjing 韋君靖, a warlord of eastern Sichuan, began to accrue power, emerging as Regional Commander 節度使 (jiedushi) of the Jingnan Army 靖南軍 in command of Chang 昌, Pu 普, Yu 渝, and He 合 Prefectures. Dazu itself served as the administrative capital of Chang Prefecture. In 892, aiming to consolidate this separatist stance, Wei elected Longgangshan 龍崗山 (Longgang Mountain) at the northwest corner of the city as the place to construct Yongchang Fort 永昌寨, his pretext being “lack of a fortified city perimeter”. Yongchang was both a military bulwark and a site of refuge for the population from the Prefecture and surrounding area. This Longgang redoubt shadowed the mountains, making it well protected and quite impenetrable, with additional proximity to the city (only 1.5 km from modern Dazu)—all geographical advantages. The military installation featured over 100

watchtowers and 2000 stretches of city wall. Enough grains were in storage to provide for a population of several ten thousand for over a decade (DSML 1999, p. 38). Comparatively speaking, the sculptures at Fowan in Beishan occupied no more than a subsidiary space within this enormous and comprehensive military operation (Figures 2–4).

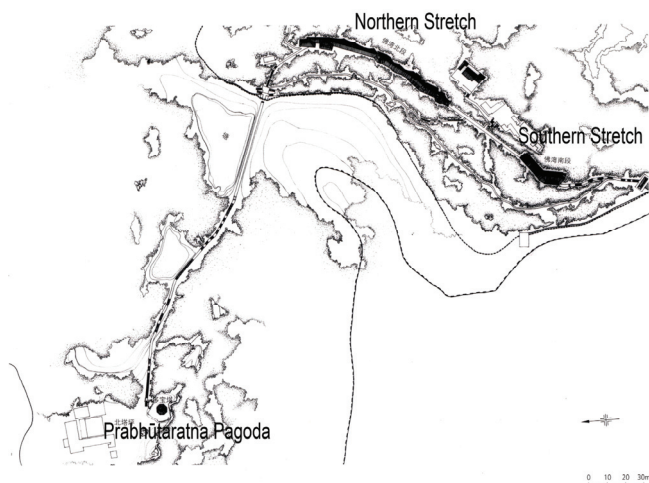


Figure 2. Plan of Fowan at Beishan.

During this period, two groups of public niches were constructed at Fowan in Beishan, providing the initial spark for niche and sculpture carving. (In this article, a niche refers to a cliff-side sculptural space that is inaccessible to people or was not intended for human entry and use. On the other hand, a cave refers to a sculptural space where various ritual activities related to the sculptures can be conducted within its interior.) The first group consists of Niches 2, 5, 9, and 10 in the south of Fowan (Figure 5). Niche 2 bears a lengthy inscription which constitutes the most important document in the early history of Beishan (DSML 1999, pp. 37–43). In its first section, the Wei Junjing Stele describes the deeds of Wei Junjing, the construction of the Longgang Fort, and the content of the sculpture. In its second part, the text enumerates 145 military officers. The contents of the statues mentioned in the inscription correspond to Niche No. 9 for the Thousand-Hand Guanyin and Niche 10 for Sakyamuni Buddha. Niche 5 features a sculpture of the Vaiśravaṇa Heavenly King, a subject which is, however, absent in the Wei Junjing Stele, though previous research has amply demonstrated Vaiśravaṇa's appearance in a contemporary Sichuan sculpture as a God of War for the military or a local Protector God, suggesting possible connections to the embattled state of Sichuan in Wei's times (Lei 2011). Combining niche form and sculpture style, we infer that No. 5, 9, and 10 would have been designed wholistically by the leadership of the military fortress and completed around the same period of time. Both the Thousand-Hand Guanyin and Vaiśravaṇa satisfied contemporary calls for salvation or protection under the same fortress.

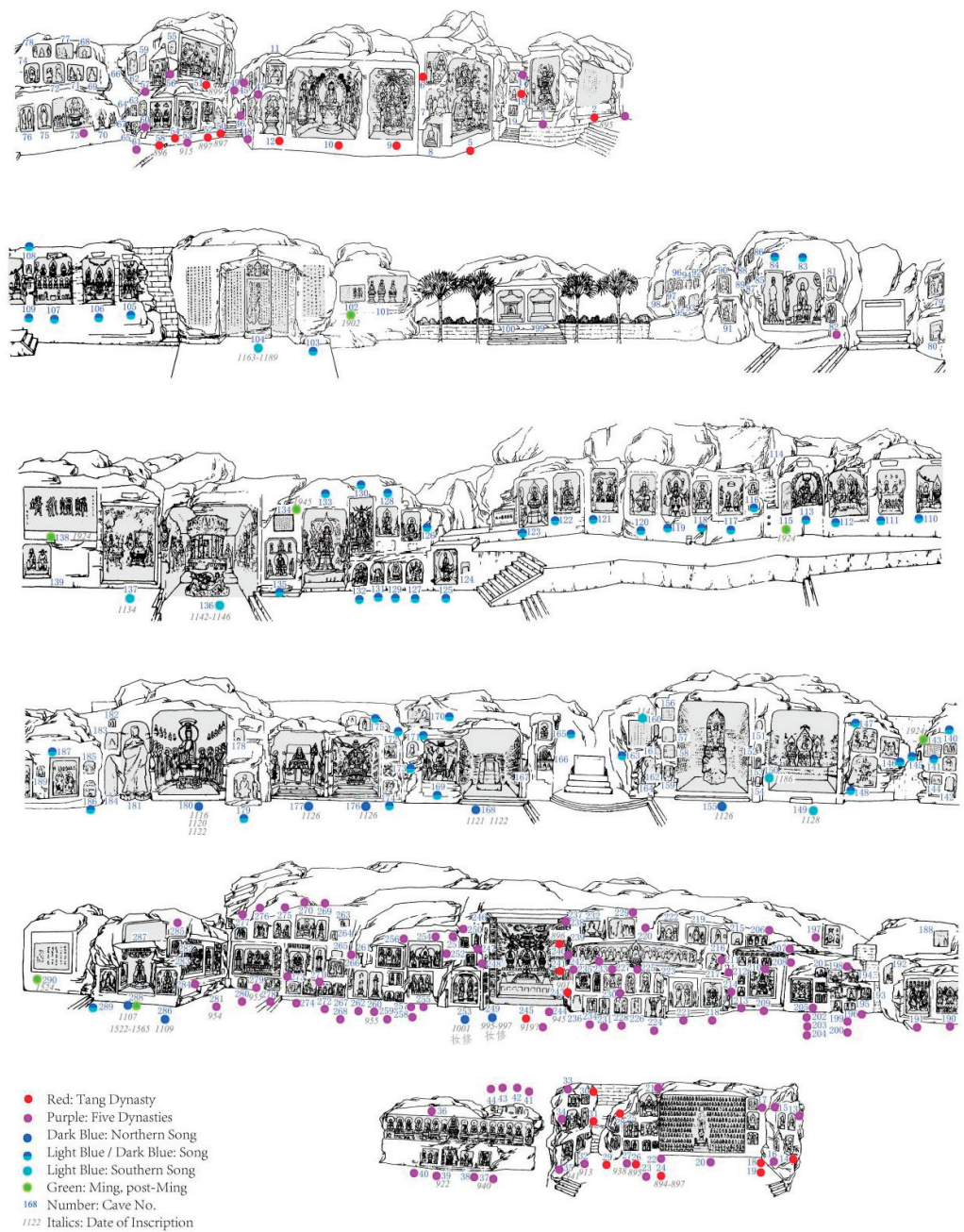


Figure 3. Continuous Frontal View of the Dazu Beishan Niches and Caves (Drawn by Xiangying Guo, Chronology by Song Li).

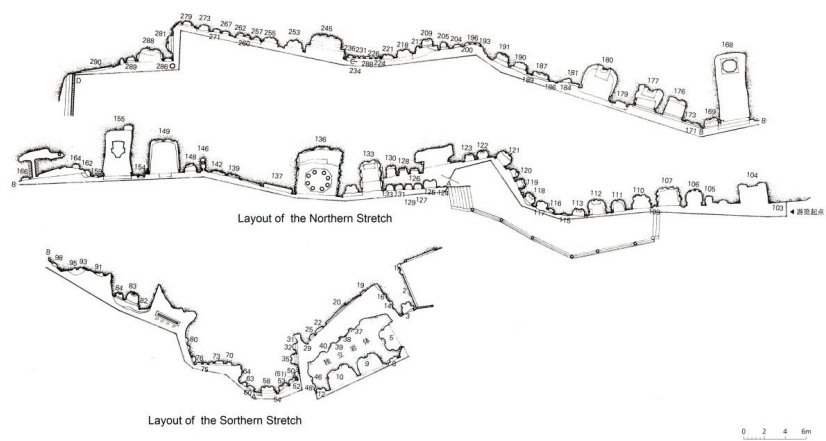


Figure 4. Layout of the Fowan Niches and Caves, Beishan.

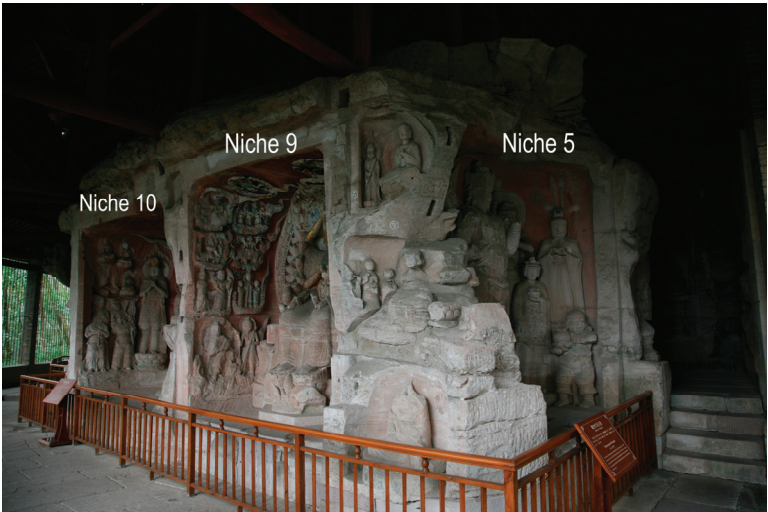


Figure 5. Niches 5, 9, 10 (Late Tang) (photo taken by author).

The second public niche group centers on the large Late Tang Niche 245 (Figure 6). A total of 4.7 m high and 2.58 m wide, this niche depicts the transformations of the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra, one of the most popular Tang Buddhist transformation sutras. The niche is located centrally between Niches 193 and 280 in the north stretch of Fowan. Later niches were carved out on the flanks but at some distance from the central sculpture. Precise dates survive for Niche 240 (896) and Niche 243 (901), situated on the right and closely hewing to Niche 245. Examining their respective placement, the construction of Niche 245 must have preceded the year 896. Four rows of donors line up between Niche 248 and 249, situated on the left, with the upper three rows split between male and female donors (28 male, 12 female), the lowest level having been broken by Niche 249 before construction was finished. All donors face Niche 245, having, it is clear, originally belonged to the latter. Between the second and third rows of donors, we happen to find a surviving passage from a record of the sculpting, with the characters “Foremen Liu Jingyi 劉淨意, Chen Jingxi 陳靜喜 and Devotee Li Sculpted the Western Niches” still distinguishable. This indicates that a group financed by Liu was responsible for the niche’s construction. Since Liu’s name is absent

from the “Stele of Wei Junjing” and he himself lacks an official title, it seems most likely Liu was some powerful local figure. This in turn suggests that commoners retained the ability and rights to have niches constructed on Beishan even during Longgang’s period as a military bulwark. For some unknown reason, however, the manufacture of images in Niche 245 came to a halt sometime prior to 901. This we infer from the unfinished fourth row of donors.



Figure 6. Niche 245 and Surrounding Niches (photo taken by author).

In short, the two separate groups of public niches represent two orientations during Fowan’s Late Tang tenure as a military town. One group of sculptures was made by the military leadership with content suitable for bolstering military confidence and identity—a space for belief related to the military fortress itself. The second group was sculpted by wealthy laypeople and intended to address the ultimate question of the afterlife. In the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra*’s conception, by practicing the sixteen kinds of visualizations illustrated on either side of the niches, people could ensure rebirth in the Pure Land (Jones 2019). More importantly, such a large, group-financed niche, itself much like a non-religious commemorative stele, hailed the beginning of more than six decades of statue-making activities in Fowan, in particular, the pre- and post-Shu periods (902–965), when 91 new niches were added around Niche 245 alone, a number far exceeding the three new niches added during the Late Tang, almost filling out the entire face of the cliff between Niche 190 and Niche 285. Almost all niches were family-funded and constructed, meaning we can regard them as a kind of family religious space. Given the characteristics of cliff sculptures, it would prove nearly impossible to transform old niches into new ones, unlike the transformation of the lower, earlier caves at Mogao into the large family caves from the Five Dynasties period. The ratio of currently visible niches from the Late Tang Dynasty against pre-Shu and post-Shu niches largely reflects this difference in the degree of layperson use of the cliff face. Clearly, once Wei’s secessionist regime disintegrates and we arrive in the pre- and post-Shu periods, the cliff space was considerably liberated. In 14 surviving sculpture records carrying donor information, we find four military officers, two government officials, six civilians, one monk, and one nun for this Late Tang through Five Dynasties period, with women and one military figure among the civilians. Niche size shows a general positive correlation with donor rank, reflecting his or her economic power.

The popular subject matter on Five Dynasties merit shrines at Fowan included the Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha (Hida 2007), Bhaiṣajyaguru (Medicine Buddha), Cintāmaṇicakra, and *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* (Liu 2008). These themes are not drastically different from contemporary Buddhist imagery on silk scrolls uncovered at the Dunhuang caves (Gies 1995–1996). Given the chance to systematically examine the niches from the Five Dynasties at Fowan, it becomes apparent that the overwhelming majority lack distinctiveness, constituting mere repetitions or combinations of the aforementioned themes. What constitutes a degree of local flavor is the variety of groups and matching statuary depending on the needs of the devotee. Niches 279 and 281 feature rich construction records and boast a unique assemblage, which makes them a rare individual case study (Figure 7). Niche 281 was completed in 954, followed by Niche 279 the following year—placing construction a mere decade after the Northern Song conquest of Later Shu. The shrines are thematically more-or-less identical. In Niche 281 we find a Medicine Buddha with attendants, the Seven Past Buddhas, the Trikaya Buddhas, the Amitābha Buddha, the *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* Pillar, and three Kṣitigarbha sculptures. Niche 279 features all of these, apart from the Medicine Buddha (though a dedication invokes “reciting a copy of the *Medicine Buddha Sutra*”) and the Trikaya Buddhas, and contains only a single Kṣitigarbha. Yao Chongxin, discussing these two niche assemblages, makes the point that similar designs were unprecedented in sutras, instead designed as a comprehensive solution for the donor aiming to satisfy the hopes and prayers of family members and the deceased in life and the afterlife. Specifically, the function of Amitābha was to guide the deceased to the Pure Land of the West, the Medicine Buddha to satisfy secular aspiration as well as guide the deceased, and the *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* and Kṣitigarbha to guard the newly deceased from making the descent into hell. The above themes and niche vows for “a pure and contented body, long and prosperous life, peace for family and dependents, high rank and emolument, for progeny to share in the same fortune,” largely match. Put simply, the combination was a double-insurance policy good for both life and the afterlife (Yao 2013). The donors at niche 281 belonged to the family Liu Gong 刘恭. He, “bailiff at the city, presiding over Yamen affairs” 都押衙、知衙務, in the confidence of the highest officials at Chang Prefecture, could also enjoy a well-off family, with two wives and three children. Niche 279 was used for offerings by the family of Wang Chengxiu 王承秀, tongyinguan 通引官, a yamen runner subordinate to Liu Gong. The two niches are situated adjacent to each other, suggesting a good personal relationship between the two officials and that craftsmen were hired from the same workshop. Later Shu was one of the less war-stricken of the Five Dynasties, yet the multiple Kṣitigarbhas sculpted at each niche reflect a fear of uncertainty against the prevailing zeitgeist.

In short, Niche 245 was originally a public niche funded by commoners. This pattern of group-funding, whereby a crowd of offerants was depicted in the lower register of the statue, had already appeared in some grottoes of the Northern Dynasties grottoes as well as sculptures in urban settings. The Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra in this niche, though, catered to a universal desire of the common people to enter the Western Pure Land after death, and subsequent Five Dynasties donors saw the huge niche as a public monument, which they would consciously augment by way of flanking sculptures—these carvings slowly emerging as a visual center. By contrast, with the founding of the Former and Later Shu polities, Longgang fortress fell apart as a military space, that first group of publicly funded and carved niches serving Longgang neither visually corresponded to nor otherwise connected with later statuary of the Five Dynasties.



Figure 7. The Liu Gong Family Shrine, Niche 281, and the Wang Chengxiu Family Shrine, Niche 279 (photo taken by author).

3. Prayers for the Deceased and Buddhist Lay Feasts

It is possible that the unusually crowded rock face of Niche 245 can be ascribed to the completion of sculpting only at the termination of the Five Dynasties. Judging from those niches with a chronological date, the opening of new niches at Fowan essentially came to a halt for a period of over a century from 960–1077. The sole activity seems to have been some “refurbishing” of selected Five Dynasties niches by family groups in the early Northern Song. Discussions of Niche 253 suggest this in practice involved “re-using” dated niches (DSD 1999, p. 35, Plates and Explanations). Niche 253 is a small niche at 1.57 m in height and being 1.22 m wide (Figure 6). It is close neighbors with Niche 245 and contains a Guanyin, Kṣitigarbha, and Ten Kings of Hell (X. Li 2019). The surviving inscription, however, dates to the Northern Song. The inscription refers to a rebellion around the year 994. Scholars have investigated this event and believe the rebellion was connected with peasant uprisings under Wang Xiaobo 王小波 and Li Shun 李順 which impacted a relatively wide swathe of territory (Deng 1995). Seven years later, Chen Shaoxun 陳紹珣, Office Manager for the Commander 都知兵馬使—the highest-ranking local position—together with his wife from the Huang clan, employed the space for the Shui-Lu Feast 水陸齋, praying for a harmonious household (DSML 1999, pp. 72–73). One can imagine the huge impact of these uprisings on the Chen family and the accompanying psychological trauma.

My question is, why would Chen choose this niche alone as a site for the Shui-Lu Rite? This can be explained from two levels—the niche through its statues and the niche as a ceremonial space. From the former perspective, Niche 253 was initially carved to accommodate the “Lay Feast for the Ten Kings of Hell 十王齋” (Teiser 1994). When Chen and his family created a space for the Shui-Lu Feast, they were putting the ritual space to a fundamentally different use. The Shui-Lu Feast Ceremony emerged as late as the late Tang Dynasty and was extremely widespread by the Song Dynasty. Su Shi 蘇軾, a great Northern Song literatus, used this ritual to mourn his late wife, hence the later name of the ceremony—“Meishan Shui-Lu” 眉山水陸—after Su’s hometown region. The main difference between the Ten Kings of Hell and Shui-Lu Feasts was that the former could release the dead from purgatory and “deposit” blessings for the afterlife (“pre-cultivation” 預修) through a relatively abbreviated ceremony, whilst the latter involved invocations of a great number of deities and Buddhas (including the Ten Kings) and was renowned for the complexity of the ritual. The Shui-Lu Ceremony began as an expiation ritual like the Ten Kings Ceremony but later became multifunctional, with prayers for the avoidance of disaster and general

blessings. Expiation of the dead is the theme common to both and must have been a primary reason the Chens borrowed this niche space. On the other hand, we should consider the atmosphere surrounding the niche. In the area between Niches 190–285, we can distinguish as many as 22 Kṣitigarbha statues and 8 *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* pillars. Both served to prevent the deceased from descending into hell. As stated above, these sculptures responded to the fear of warfare during the Five Dynasties. Judging from Niches 279 and 281, it was less expiation for “former spirits and distant progeny to share in the same fortune”. Yet the *Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra* pillars and Kṣitigarbha statues, which densely appeared in the northern stretches of Fowan, could easily have been misread by Song contemporaries as a specialized space for preventing the deceased from descending into hell. The misunderstanding was repeated by many others outside of Chen Shaouxun.

With the full benefit of hindsight, the re-use of Niche 253 can be interpreted as a transitional act in the spatial shift from a merit shrine to a lay feasting space. While the term for “lay feasting” 修齋 appears frequently in Late Tang and Five Dynasties Buddhist inscriptions from Sichuan, the term is usually associated with the phrase “as an expression of celebration”; i.e., the “lay feasting” in this context was a simple celebratory ritual honoring the shrine’s completion, not in any way harmonized with the shrine content. Rephrased, the very act of constructing a shrine was what brought the devotee the bulk of his merit, while the lay feast was merely the concluding event. By Song times, though, the connotations of “lay feast” 齋 underwent fundamental changes. The Southern Song eminent monk Zhipan’s edited *Comprehensive Records of Buddhist Ancestors* 佛祖統紀—a renowned complete history of Buddhism—provided summaries of more than ten individual lay feasting or dedicatory events, among them including Offerings for the Arhats 羅漢供, Lay feasting on the Death Anniversary of Śākyamuni 佛祖忌齋, Three Extended Fasts 三長齋, Lay feasting in Premortem Rituals 預修齋, Dedications to the Twenty-Four Protective Heavenly Deities 供天, Ghost Festival Dedications 盂蘭盆供, Shui-Lu Ceremony Lay Feasting, Food for Hungry Ghosts 六道斛, and Dedications to the Ten Kings of Hell 十王供 (Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–1936, T.49:319a–322a)—a display of the variety and complexity of Song lay feasting ceremonies.

Fowan’s Song niches adjusted their form to meet this new trend. Between Nos. 105 and 123, we find 14 medium-sized Song niches of similar form (Figure 8). Compared with Late Tang Five Dynasties niches, these exhibit the following shared features: (1) a significant increase in niche depth, with statues laid out on the front, left, and right walls, with the niche base subsequently forming a platform large enough to place offerings; (2) niches constructed at approximately the same height, appropriate for worshipers to make offerings directly facing the niche. Such rules for variation niche structure are applicable to most other Song niches in Sichuan (Hu and Chen 1986). In addition, 6 of 14 niches contain traces of an inscription tablet 匾額 in a square- or fan-shape. These inscriptions may have conveyed information about the family or lineage behind the niche. This implies that the use of niches by such groups was periodical: Family or lineage members would frequent niches for lay feasting or rituals during specific festivals. Precious visual records of such a scene and related shifts in niche form are depicted in Zhou Jichang’s 周季常 *Pictures of the Five-Hundred Arhats* (Figure 9), dating to the Southern Song. Seen up close, a monk leads a family through the ritual of lay feasting and offering. The group faces an offerings table on which an incense burner and vase have been arranged. In the upper-right, from a long perspective, a small group of handymen busy themselves arranging lay feasting rice on a table for offerings placed in front of an Arhat statue in hanging-scroll format (Bloom 2016). Both types of offerings—flowers and the lay feasting rice—were appropriate at different parts of the ceremony. My supposition is that in order to facilitate the placement and substitution of offerings and to accommodate the increasingly routinized lay feasting ritual, Song craftsmen based in Sichuan designed a new type of niche for the wealthier families or lineages, which involved eliminating the non-portable wooden offerings table and altar. As this new niche form spread, all forms of Buddhist niches were transformed regardless of any actual use for lay feasting ceremonies. To better understand the traits of different niche

forms through time at Fowan, I refer to the smaller, shallow niches from the Late Tang and Five Dynasties as “merit niches” and the new, deeper niches of the Song Dynasty as “feast shrines”, reflecting the historical transition from statue-centered to lay feasting-oriented niches, and the newer, deeper-bayed Song niche as a “lay feasting niche”. This embodies the historical transformation from sculpture-centric niches towards those oriented towards lay feasting ceremonies. The line separating these two, however, was never absolute.



Figure 8. Niches 106–112, Song Dynasty (photo taken by author).



Figure 9. Scene of “Presenting Offerings for Arahats” from *Pictures of the Five Hundred Arahats* at the Temple of Daitoku-ji. Drawn by Zhou Jichang circa. 1178–1188.

Ultimately only a minimal number of merit shrines could bear the burden of providing for family fasts and dedications; these belonged to the local elites. Construction inscriptions inform us that such niches were usually put together by officials and wealthy households from Dazu, as well as local worthies and landlords from beyond the city walls. Meanwhile, others continued to put up small-scale family merit shrines or group-financed larger shrines, all in the former style. Group-financed shrines of the Song period had their own profound and persevering attributes. Niche 168, built between 1121–1122, is 7.1 m deep, 3.3 m high, and 3.14 m wide, giving it a capacious interior that merits the term

“grotto”. Carvings of the Five Hundred Arhats fill the interior walls and provide an obvious purpose for construction—the “Dedication to the Five Hundred Arhats” theme. This lay feasting event originated in Tiantai, Zhejiang, during the Northern Song, spreading out across all of China. The lay feast accommodated readings for the deceased and the distribution of alms to hungry ghosts (Liu 2015). The survival of the statue inscriptions suggests that at least five families were involved in the collection of funds for Cave 168. Because of their different places of residence, it is highly likely that one monk took the lead in collecting funds.

Aside from the increase in depth when compared to the crowd-funded niches of the Late Tang, Song niches featured fewer donor statues, with the donor instead adopting a particular sculpture as a display of merit. Cave 180, built between 1116 and 1122, features a centrally placed Guanyin statue, accompanied by 12 Bodhisattvas, 3 of which bear inscriptions in the space above the crown. These inscriptions indicate the respective contribution to each statue by the main donor. Cave 136 was built in 1142 through similar fundraising, with the craftsmen creatively carving a rotating sutra-cabinet 轉輪藏 in imitation of the regular wooden kind (Yu 2020). Those turning or circumambulating the cabinet acquired the same merit as when reciting sutras.

Among the five large group-funded Niches 180, 177, and 176 and Caves 155 and 168, similar in size (2–4 m wide, see Figures 3 and 4) and situated nearby, we see a noteworthy chronological feature: Most were completed within the short span of a decade, from 1116 to 1126, with three finished in 1126 alone. Inscriptions indicate these three niches came from the workshop of Fu Yuanjun 伏元俊. The craftsmen behind Cave 168 likewise hailed from the Fu Yuanjun workshop. Interestingly, each of the five niches contains a different subject matter. The Guanyin in Niche 180 is primarily responsible for relief from suffering; the primary statue in Niche 177, the “Great Sage of Sizhou” Sengjia 僧伽 (628–710), a guide to the Pure Land; Niche 176 depicts the Transformations of the Maitreya-vyākaraṇa, reflecting Maitreyan Pure Land beliefs popular in the Northern Song; Cave 155’s Mahāmāyūrī functions as a defender of the state. The fact that these themes overlap is not accidental and was most likely part of the overall planning by the Sangha community responsible for fundraising. This overall planning likely included the construction of Cave 136, dating as late as the Southern Song Dynasty. Supporting evidence can be found in the inscription at Cave 137, dated 1134. Here, the “monk Zhicheng, residing in the cliff 住岩僧志誠” mentioned in the inscription (DSML 1999, p. 30) was likely some kind of administrator at early Southern Song Fowan. We can further hypothesize that despite individual statues in these niches being claimed by individual devotees, as a whole, these niches were public. The presiding officer grouped the niches together, each with their different subjects into groups that satisfied multiple claims of the faithful at Fowan. For the wider community who lacked the financial means to build niches, worshipping here fulfilled a need to pray to Buddha and other Buddhist deities. If designers and fund-raisers were resident in a nearby temple, this temple played a leading role in the construction and management of Fowan from the Northern Song to the early Southern Song.

4. A Latent Ground for Discourse

Shi Cangyong 石藏用, Major General of the Right Royal Guard in the final years of the Tang, commented with regards to Sichuan: “Great changes are due to take place across the Empire, yet Shu 蜀 will be the safest sanctuary (Tuotuo 1971, p. 9929)”. It was a prophecy that repeatedly rang true. *The Song History’s* “Treatise on Food and Money” recorded “Campaign south on the Man 蠻 and Liao 獠, aid for You 幽 and Yan 燕 in the north, daily riots in border matters at Shaanxi and northern Sichuan, bandits and robbers rose up without warning. Income from the annual land taxes was limited... most rich people in Shanxi abandoned their property and headed to Sichuan (Tuotuo 1971, p. 4362)”. Following the Jingkang Incident, Jin troops occupied the Central Plains. Refugee soldiers from Shaanxi, Gansu, and Henan flooded the Sichuan region, and the government temporarily established checkpoints at Dasan Pass 大散關 in southwest Baoji to stem the flow of routed

soldiers and the destitute. Renewed massive flows of commoners entered Sichuan in 1140. Li Shiping estimates the total number of immigrants to Sichuan in the early Southern Song at around 2.38 million people (S. Li 1987, pp. 107–29).

Although Fowan operated as a religious site during the Song and lay far from the Song–Jin frontline, war and migration still exerted a marked impact on the site. An inscription on a large group-funded niche built from 1142–1146 in the Southern Song Dynasty appears to read “Mason Xu An 胥安, Engraver from Yingchuan 潁川,” i.e., present-day Yuzhou, Henan. An, stonemason from north China, would have arrived with waves of immigrants. The majority of these refugees, as new arrivals in Shu, had less of a firm foothold and lacked the financial resources to have sculptures carved at Beishan—surviving inscriptions reveal hardly a trace of northern immigrants. A more notable impact is seen in the “modification” of tantric fashions and iconography in the choice of subject matter. Chen Yunü places the Mārīcī of Niche 130 (Figure 10) in the historical context of the Song–Jin conflicts of the early Southern Song (Y. Chen 2007). This Mārīcī is a three-faced tantric goddess who wields weapons in her eight arms. She rides a chariot pulled by boars. The Tang Dynasty monk Bukong 不空, a member of the tantric school who traveled to China from India in his translated Sutra of Thus Spoke the Buddha on Mārīcī 佛說摩利支天經 mentioned that the deity’s ability to protect believers from disasters including perils during travel, travails when lost, fires, and floods, noting the particular veneration for protection from warfare. In a new translation by the early Northern Song Dynasty Indian monk Devaśāntika 天息災, Mārīcī explicitly mentioned resisting the predations of neighboring countries (Takakusu and Watanabe 1924–1936, T.21:264c–266a). Tom Suchan notes that the difference between the Beishan Mārīcī and classic iconography lies in the eight additional multi-armed guardian deities bearing their own weapons who flank the goddess. This only increased Mārīcī’s strength as a goddess of war. Suchan even speculates that the niche might have been sponsored by local officials—an idol to boost public morale during wartime (Suchan 2003, pp. 319–25). A similar situation seems to have occurred in the immediately adjacent Niche 133. The primary object of worship, a Water–Moon Guanyin, was originally a novel style pioneered by the Late Tang artist Zhou Fang 周昉. The ingenuity of the original design lay in exploiting Guanyin’s reflection in the water as a metaphor for Buddhist emptiness, integrating Buddhist teachings into painting. Here, however, four heavily and multiply armed Divine Generals flank the Guanyin. Through changing these accompanying sculptures, the designer behind this niche increased spatial functionality to include alleviation from the suffering of war. The meaning of the primary statue shifted accordingly.

The idea behind the design of the statues in Caves 155 and 149, in contrast, derives more from the perspective of national identity. Cave 155 is 6.07 m deep and 3.22 m wide, with a primary Mahāmāyūrī deity located in the center of the cave floor (Figure 11). The layout is similar to the Central Pillar Caves popular in the Northern Dynasties, which permitted circumambulation of the main deity by worshippers. The Mahāmāyūrī is presented in female, non-wrathful manifestation. Despite none of the six surviving versions of the *Mahāmāyūrī Sutra* explicitly making reference to the deity as a “state protector”, Mahāmāyūrī was worshipped as a savior and defender of the nation (Jien 2010, pp. 207–11). The Fowan Mahāmāyūrī was completed in the first year of the Jingkang reign period (1126) by Fu Yuanjun and his son, Fu Shineng 伏世能, who belonged to a local generational family of carvers. This was one year before the fall of the Northern Song with the full-scale attack on the Song by the Jin and the conquest of Kaifeng. The population of Dazu was greatly disturbed by this rapid turn of events in the north. In all, we have six surviving Mahāmāyūrī statues at Dazu and Anyue, which date to the end of the Northern Song through the Southern Song (Suchan 2003, pp. 343–53). The historical background provided by the fall of the Northern Song and Southern Song–Jin war aptly explains the motivation behind these statues.



Figure 10. Mārīcī at Niche 130, probably early Southern Song (photo taken by author).



Figure 11. Cave 155, Mahāmāyūrī surrounded by thousand Buddas, 1126 (photo taken by author).

Cave 149 (Figure 12), immediately adjacent, was built in the second year of the Southern Song Dynasty (1128). At 3.43 m high, 3.22 m wide, and 3.46 m deep, it is the largest cave in Fowan to have been funded by a single family. Cave size is generally a visual reflection of the financial power or social status of the devotee. Not surprisingly, the devotees in this case were Ren Zongyi 任宗易, the highest-ranking military and civil official in Changzhou, and his wife, Du Huixiu 杜慧修. The inscription mentions the primary statue, Cintāmaṇicakra (a tantric variant of Guanyin) but does not mention the 41 guardian deities on either side of the statue, generally taken to be “Dharma Protectors”. These were protector deities Buddhism had integrated from Brahmanism and Indian folk beliefs. However, only two of these deities retain the multiple-arm, multi-headed form of the original Indian god. The remainder have essentially been “Sinified” as Song dynasty civil officials or generals. Whether or not these are intended to be dharmapāla, their weapons and three-row formation have the sense of a military division. The renowned historian of Chinese science, Joseph Needham, even argued that two generals in Cave 149 can be seen holding a “bombard or a handgun”, newly invented and used in the Song military (Lu et al. 1988).



Figure 12. Cave 149, a Cintāmaṇīcakra and Dharma Protectors, 1128 (photo taken by author).

Ren Zongyi had constructed this niche in the hope that it would be “forever admired and used for prayer by its devotees..... that warfare would forever come to an end (DSML 1999, p. 27)”. Its numerous martial deities seem strikingly designed as part of the prayer for this end to arms. From the very limited historical information available, we know roughly that Ren Zongyi was born in Tang’an (Chongzhou, Sichuan), that he served as an official at the end of the Northern Song and initial Southern Song, that he paid significant attention to the city’s defenses, (Xu 1957, p. 1926), and that he was a capable communicator and writer who enjoyed a good rapport with Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅, a major contemporary literatus and calligrapher (Huang 2011, p. 1011). Though a privately funded shrine, the dedicatory text and sculpture content suggest Cave 149 was built to benefit the local population, perhaps even the state, and could have guided popular sentiment as well.

Dazu’s elites, living in the violent tumult of the Five Dynasties, were compelled to pin their hopes on niches equipped with the complete array of spirits and Buddhist deities in their search for self-preservation or at the very least to soothe their anxieties. In comparison, during more than 160 years of the Northern Song rule, Dazu’s population increasingly settled down and pursued their own trades, not desiring in the least that the northern Jin would disrupt the prevailing national order. Local Dazu elites, presided over by officials, even more fervently wished to assist national heroes of the Yue Fei 岳飛 type in reclaiming lost territories in the north and pacifying the conflict, a wish they expressed through “offering strength” in religious ceremonies. Transformations in the themes at certain large shrine sculptures from the late Northern Song to the early Southern Song reflect this more proactive attitude in response to external change. The selection of subject matter for sculptures in some large shrines in this period reveals a strong sense of national identity and comes across as somewhat close to political propaganda.

As mentioned above, the large shrines built through the fundraising efforts of clergy administrators at Fowan were public in nature. These shrines allowed the general public, unable to afford their family shrines, to utilize public shrines for Buddhist rituals ranging from worship to prayers to offerings for the deceased. These large-scale gatherings probably brought people together, particularly so during certain special festivals such as the Ghost Festival (Teiser 1988), at which time residents of Chang Prefecture would spontaneously gather at Fowan. We can imagine how the sangha may have acted as ritual leaders, elucidating the function of the objects of worship, for example, the protective functions of the Mahāmāyūrī and dharmapāla. Attendees, similarly, might express or discuss their views on current affairs. In this way, a Buddhist space permitted the minutiae of exchange of political viewpoints among monks, officials, local elites, and common people. Buddhist activities may have been the primary focus of Fowan, but this complex space, in spite of itself, emerged as a public venue for debate. Certainly, relying on the existing remnants

and inscriptions, we cannot definitively confirm the occurrence of the mentioned activities in history. After all, we cannot comprehensively infer all social activities that may have taken place in this venue based solely on material evidence. Nevertheless, I am prepared to present the aforementioned speculations for readers to contemplate.

The final examples discussed in this paper are Stele 103 and 104 (Figure 13), generally considered products of the Xiaozong reign period (1187–1194) of the Southern Song. These niches are not Buddhist statues but materializations of Confucian ideological texts. Specifically, Stele 103 is a giant rock inscribed with a copy of the Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety*. In the heart of the large niche, a gable end was excavated, into which was embedded the tombstone of the famous Northern Song courtier Zhao Zhan 趙瞻, i.e., Stele 104. The nested pair makes an interesting visual combination. In its content, Stele 103 is a classic exposition of the core Confucian concept of filial piety. The latter is an official stele that concurrently communicates a symbolic meaning of filial piety. Based on this intertextuality of visual form and content, I believe the pair should be treated as a single monument with an overarching design.



Figure 13. Stele 103, 104, showing the Zhao Zhan stone tablet and Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety* Stele (photo taken by author).

In the old research paradigm, scholars from a variety of disciplines have approached the pair in different ways. Epigraphers have been endlessly excited by the discovery of the long-lost Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety*, whilst Buddhist archaeologists and art historians have almost totally ignored the two stele (Ma 1996). In my view, the presence of a Confucian in a large Buddhist space is both highly abrupt as well as puzzling. The section that follows attempts to address the purpose and mindset of the donor behind the monument.

Existing research has drawn out basic details pertaining to the stele. Commemorated is the renowned Northern Song official Zhao Zhan (1019–1090). The inscription was composed by Zhao's contemporary, the historian Fan Zuyu 範祖禹, and the calligraphy was written by Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047–1126), known as one of the four preeminent calligraphers of the Song. The stone stele and epitaph bear a high degree of similarity, both depicting the tomb occupant's achievements in gushing terms and both ultimately written on stone (Zhang 2020, pp. 121–23). The major difference is that the former looms large over the floor surface of the Spirit Path allowing it to be read upon entering the cemetery (Figure 14), while the latter was intended to be locked away in a stone casket in perpetuity and more symbolizes a kind of personnel file for the deceased. There would have been no greater honor for Zhao Zhan's son than inviting Fan and Cai (the latter's reputation intact at that time) to cooperate on the stele. Such a group of celebrities would embellish his father's life history while lending a hand in elevating the younger Zhao's reputation as a filial son. The problem was, however, that the initial stele reproduction was erected in distant Shaanxi—at the Zhao clan graveyards in Zhouzhi county rather than Dazu, which placed the stele in

its proper home. Only in the Ming would someone peruse the original stele in Zhouzhi. The Qing scholar Zhang Shu recorded that the original donor of the Beishan stele had been Zhao Fan 趙範. In the twentieth century, Chen Xishan deduced that Zhao Fan belonged to Zhao Zhan's great-grandchildren's generation. Zhao had ordered the stele re-carved in ancestral remembrance (X. Chen 1985, p. 213).



Figure 14. Burial Ground of Wang De 王德, Renowned General during the Southern Song War of Resistance against the Jin. Erected in 1155, situated in the northern districts of Nanjing, the stele, earth mound, and stone carvings together form a cemetery landscape (photo taken by Tang Dahua).

Chen's reasoning merely explains the motivation behind the stele and fails to address the simultaneous incising of the Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety*. We instead need to consider the *raison d'être* of this combined monument in the overall Fowan context. As we saw in the previous discussion, one primary function of Song Dynasty Fowan lay in ensuring expiation for the dead. Both rich and poor households arrived here to organize memorial services through either public or exclusive family niches. One social phenomenon that ran parallel to Buddhist rituals was cremation. People of Song times opted for cremation out of a variety of complex reasons, including Buddhist beliefs, economics, and the consequences of immigration (Ebrey 1990, pp. 406–28; Kuhn 2014, pp. 456–61). To staunch Song Confucian scholars, however, cremation constituted an unfilial act. Confucians firmly opposed the placement of cremated ashes in ancestral graves (Zhang 2020, pp. 110–11). Among Song tombs found in Chengdu, also in Sichuan, cremated burials from the Southern Song account for about 80% of the total, a high rate of cremation rate surely related to the large numbers of refugees moving from the north, with cremation solving issues related to their demise away from ancestral homes (J. Chen 1956). The situation around Dazu was presumably the same. Given the absence of a grave and the deceased, Buddhist expiation emerged as the preferred means of paying homage to their ancestors among cremating families. The ritual, after all, served a similar purpose to tomb and ancestral rites as advocated by Confucianism (Zhu 2020), though with a different underlying religious philosophy. The vast majority of Song scholars were not, in fact, Confucian fundamentalists. The chapter "Commentaries: Memorial and Expiations" contained in the *Encyclopedia of Five Hundred Written Gems* from the August Song 皇宋五百家播芳大全文粹 contains numerous texts on the use of Buddhist lay feasting ceremonies by Song scholars for expiations (Wei and Ye 2008). These include the Arhat Lay Feast, Water-Land Lay Feast, and Eight Bodhisattva ritual. These contain a profusion of expiation rituals, and corresponding statues are visible at Fowan.

Revisiting the combined monument with the Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety* and Zhao Yijian spirit way stele, both texts share the emphasis on filial piety, a core concept of Confucianism. In the view of Song Confucians, the older the ritual text, the more orthodox. This granted the Ancient Text Edition of *The Classic of Filial Piety* a symbolic significance in the restoration of ancient rituals. This monument emphasizing filial piety is similarly detached from the Confucian venues suitable for its placement, as in the

case of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, whose Imperial Annotated Shitai Filial Piety Scripture Tablet 御注石臺孝經碑 was originally placed in the capital city of Chang'an, in the State Scholarship Academy 國子監 (Figure 15). In terms of location, this combined monument was cut into a relatively free-standing boulder at the southernmost end of the northern cliff, virtually the only remaining undeveloped cliff face following the wave of niche opening since the Southern Song. When Zhao Zhan's descendants contemplated the construction of this unusual monument, they may have ruminated upon the matter with complex and heavy emotions. On one hand, for Zhao to return to his ancestral fields in Jin in order to pay homage was impossible: He could only employ Fowan, a venue where locals held ceremonies to guide their ancestors to the Pure Land, as a site for the establishment of a Spirit Path. On the other hand, Zhao may have hoped to use the Ancient Text Edition to expostulate his own ideas on the proper performance of filial piety. While filial piety in the genuine Confucian sense was only realizable by returning to ancestral graves and worshipping before the Spirit Path, this required literally seizing back lost territories. Fowan retains a number of inscriptions by Southern Song visitors—showing the site was already an open “tourist attraction”. Scholars who grew up becoming versed in the Confucian classics *Four Books* visited Beishan Mountain or crowds arriving to commemorate the dead in festivals. One can wonder if they comprehended Zhao Fan's original intention. When weighed with the “war party” and “pacifist party” in a constant trial of strength at the South Song court, such an expression of grassroots consciousness demonstrated the polarity of the Southern Song political situation.



Figure 15. Stone Platform Stele of *The Classic of Filial Piety* with Imperial Annotations by Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, 745. In the collections of the Xi'an Stele Forest Museum (photo taken by author).

5. Conclusions

This paper follows an overall historical narrative arc, but its goal has not been to construct a chronicle of Fowan. Instead, we have focused on a trend toward continuity across the ages. It has, for example, been difficult to establish any connection or narrative between Niche 245 from the Late Tang, Niche 281 from the Five Dynasties, Niche 177 from the Northern Song, and Stele 103 and 104 from the Southern Song if using the single niche as a unit. However, using the idea of “venue”, we find that Pure Land imagery in Niche 245 of the *Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra* was “hearkened to” and rebuilt by subsequent donors. Liu Gong, the local official who built Niche 281, regarded Niche 245 as a public monument and had craftsmen add the Dhāraṇī pillar to protect family members and ancestors from

the descent into hell. Monk administrators at Fowan pooled their funds to build the Niche of the Three Sacred Monks (Niche 177), centered on the Great Sage of Sizhou, transforming Fowan into a site for expiation of the dead, which benefited the community at large. This tendency towards a Buddhist-theme family ritual space was further strengthened during the Southern Song when the scholar Zhao Fan aimed to inspire contemporary reflection on Confucian filial piety through his designed combined monuments (Stele 103 and 104). The concepts of Pure Land, expiation, family worship, and filial piety interacted and combined. This engendered an inherent continuity in the shifting atmosphere of this venue.

The advantages of analysis of Fowan as a venue lie in inspiring a modern sympathy for historical times. Considering the collection of Five Dynasty niches focused around Niche 245, we almost automatically sense the fear and unease in Dazu society under Late Tang and Five Dynasties disorder. When we uncover the transition from niches towards lay feasting venues, images of bustling crowds, incense, prayers, and Buddhist monks chanting sutras float across the mind. Stele 103 and 104, individual expressions whose tone differs from the overall atmosphere at Fowan, are thus also brought to the fore. Thus, from these indistinct cliff faces, we get to witness the individuals who played their part in the venue of Fowan. Ultimately, the essence of the humanities is to outline past situations.

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Article

Vision and Site: Revisiting a Pure Land Cave of Dunhuang

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Abstract: Buddhist Utopian vision shaped the art of Pure Land; so did many other factors, including the actual locale. Taking Mogao Cave 172 as the main case study, this article deciphers a visual paradigm of a Pure Land painting and cave in Dunhuang (Gansu, China) from the high Tang period (710–780 CE). By analyzing the visual contents and compositions, the painting medium, the cave spaces, and the cliff site, this study investigates the ways in which the architectural images and spaces in Cave 172 helped to convey the invitation to Pure Land. A close reading of the Western Pure Land painting in Cave 172 reveals the spatial construct of the Buddhist paradise that encouraged a transformative viewing experience. A situated visual analysis of Cave 172 with its auxiliary cave and neighboring caves illustrates the historical procedure in which Pure Land imageries were further integrated with the architectural spaces of caves and cave suites. As this study demonstrates, strategies of spatial layering, self-symmetry and scaling, and plastic and multimedia practices of cave-making enhanced the situatedness of the utopian vision.

Keywords: Mogao Cave 172; Meditation Sūtra transformation tableau; architectural painting; Tang dynasty; cave grouping; open-air mural; timber-framed façade; utopian vision; situatedness

1. Introduction

Utopian vision characterizes the art of Pure Land, a major genre of East Asian Buddhist art. The Pure Land (Chn: *Jingtu* 淨土, Jpn: *Jodo*), a Buddhist paradise, denotes a set of ideas and practices based on world systems other than our own embodied earthly realms (Eltschinger 2020). For Pure Land adherents, Pure Land art is a visual aid for perceiving the possibility of rebirth in the supremely blissful buddha-fields, among which the Western Pure Land of Amitābha, the buddha of limitless life, is one of the most desirable (Wang 2003).¹ Palatial buildings rising from lotus ponds distinguish the topography of the Western Pure Land. Emerging around the fifth century in China, this imagery has been conveyed through sculptural and pictorial mediums and spatial installations and has circulated across regions of varied climates and topographies in East Asia. The largest known repository of Pure Land paintings of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) is the Mogao Caves near Dunhuang (present-day Gansu province), a major Buddhist cave site in the Gobi Desert of Northwest China. The Mogao complex consists of nearly 500 decorated caves, and nearly 100 of them display the theme of Pure Lands. During the High Tang period (710–80), scenes of the Western Pure Land were painted 25 times at the Mogao caves, becoming the most depicted subject matter and impacting the subsequent development of cave designs in Dunhuang (Wang 2001, pp. 15–16).² In a few instances like Mogao Cave 172, the cave space was even encompassed by two or more large Pure Land paintings, producing an immersive visual stimulation of the ideal Buddhist paradise.

The visual paradigm is hardly constrained by locale and time. The pictorial mediums and the embodied viewing of the Pure Land are, however, conditioned by the actual space and site. Thus, Dunhuang Pure Land caves, while containing idealized images, are part of the larger histories from which they emerged. Mogao Cave 172, a representative Pure Land cave of the High Tang period, has enhanced our knowledge of Tang-period temple

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rituals and artistic competition (Wu 1992a), monastic architecture and architectural painting (Xiao 1989, pp. 70–72, 258–62; Ho 1992, pp. 171–73; Sun and Sun 2001, p. 111), layouts of water landscape and building complexes (Liu 2009; Zhang 2019), and so forth.

Building upon these studies, the current article further asks how the architectural images and spaces in Cave 172 helped to convey the invitation to Pure Land. It not only investigates the image of Pure Land paintings, but also the painting medium and the site. The concept of site expands from the cave chamber the mural decorates to the cave suite the chamber constitutes, and the cliff section the cave suite belongs to. A close reading of the Pure Land painting in Cave 172 reveals how the Buddhist utopia was spatially constructed and made accessible to viewers. A situated visual analysis of Cave 172 with its auxiliary cave and neighboring caves illustrates how Pure Land imagery can be integrated with the architectural spaces of caves and cave suites. By exploring the practice of constructing a Pure Land at Mogao, this study aspires to shed light on the situated-ness of the utopian vision.

2. Pictorial Image of the Pure Land

The images of the Western Pure Land inside the Dunhuang caves are mostly sūtra paintings, or what specialists would call a “transformation tableaux” (*bianxiang* 變相).³ They are pictorial renditions related to three principal scriptures of Pure Land Buddhism and act as a visual aid for contemplating the Buddhist sacred realms. While none of the hundred or more Pure Land paintings from the Mogao caves are identical, the water pond and palatial architecture characterize the imaginary topography. A brief overview of the developments of these visual elements in the Dunhuang murals will illustrate a rich visual paradigm. Afterwards, this section will closely examine the architectural representation in a sūtra painting in Mogao Cave 172, revealing its correspondence with figural images and the sequential way of meditation.

2.1. Brief Overview of Pure Land Topography in Dunhuang Murals

The lotus pond is a basic topographical element throughout Pure Land paintings, whereas courtyard complexes have gradually been developed since the Tang. Since the lotus pond was believed to be a threshold of the Western Pure Land, early depictions centered on water imagery (Wong 1998/1999, p. 67; Feng 2018, pp. 196–201). An early painting of the Western Pure Land in Mogao Cave 393 from the Sui period (581–618 CE) depicts minimal environmental elements, namely, a pond of irregular shape below the lotus thrones of the Amitābha triad (Figure 1a).

Architectural elements appeared and multiplied in the Tang, partly addressing the descriptions of ornate land, terraces, and pavilions in Pure Land scriptures, and partly reflecting the developments of architecture in real life. The early Tang period (618–705) saw the emergence of large platforms and rectangular ponds. At the turn of the seventh and eighth centuries, when single buildings began to acquire as much architectonic detail as the later paintings did, the foreground was still designed relatively simply—usually a platform separated from the main platform by a stripe of a lotus pond (Figure 1b). From the High Tang period, the Pure Land paintings began to acquire a composition of multiple terraces and bridges in the foreground. The established composition was also applied to visual representations of other buddha lands such as the Eastern Pure Land of Medicine Buddha (Skt: *Bhaiṣajyaguru*). The mid-Tang period (781–848), alternatively known as the Tibetan period, saw a sharp increase in architectural elements along the central axis (Figure 1c). Sometimes, the entrance hall, colonnade, and corner towers are represented in the foreground, completing the layout of the courtyard complex. The imagery continued to flourish at the Mogao caves in the Guiyijun period (851–1036), often adorned by more ornamental pavilions (Figure 1d) (Shi 1999, p. 20; Wang 2013, pp. 82–83).

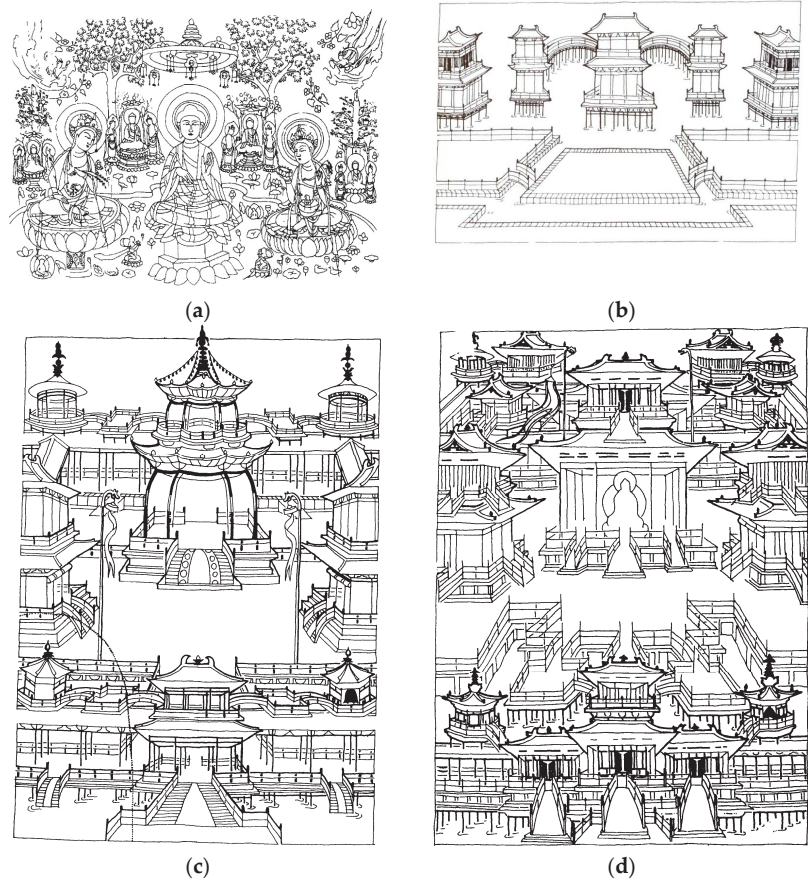


Figure 1. Representative pictorial compositions of the Pure Land transformation tableaux in Dunhuang between the sixth and twelfth centuries. Line drawings. (a) Western Pure Land, west wall, Mogao Cave 393, Sui period; (b) Western Pure Land, north wall, Mogao Cave 205, the early Tang period; (c) Eastern Pure Land, north wall, Mogao Cave 361, mid-Tang period; (d) Eastern Pure Land, north wall, Mogao Cave 146, Five Dynasties period. After Shi (1999, p. 20); Xiao (1989, pp. 65, 73, 77, figs. 28, 36, 40).

The pictorial composition is flexible for alterations in detail, but the visual logic of a transformative journey laid out in an architectural space continued to thrive from the beginning of the Tang period. Dunhuang mural painting reflects a visual paradigm that was initiated at the cultural centers of Tang China, such as Chang'an in the seventh century, and then circulated to peripheral areas such as Dunhuang. As architectural historians Xiao Mo and Puay-peng Ho suggest, the idealized palatial complex in the Pure Land image was modeled after prototypes in real life, such as urban Buddhist monasteries and imperial palaces in Tang capital cities (Xiao 1989, pp. 61–63; Ho 1995). In addition, numerous studies have acknowledged the Tang Empire's influence on Dunhuang art (Whitfield et al. 2015, p. 73). A recent study by art historian Anne N. Feng takes the Pure Land image as "a symbolic form of Tang opulence and prosperity" (Feng 2018, pp. 1–2). After the An Lushan Rebellion in 755, Dunhuang was successively ruled by the Tibetans, the Guiyijun regime, and a few other powers in the northwest (Rong 2013, pp. 37–49). Therefore, the exchanges between Dunhuang and central China were not as strong as before and local tastes were pronounced. The subsequent development of Pure Land painting in Dun-

huang was largely grounded on the Tang template and filled in more details that may or may not have been applicable in real construction (Bulling 1955, pp. 120–21). Therefore, it is generally accepted that the Pure Land topography in its maturity, as well as architectural painting, is epitomized by mural paintings made in the High Tang period.

2.2. The Central Scene of the Cave 172 Painting

One of the most frequently cited pictures of the Western Pure Land is a transformation tableau in Mogao Cave 172 (Figure 2).⁴ The two side walls of this east-facing, square-planned cave are covered by two mural paintings of an identical subject matter and similar pictorial compositions. Both paintings are based on a Pure Land Buddhist scripture titled *Sūtra of the Meditation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (Foshuo guan wuliangshou fo jing 佛說觀無量壽佛經, hereafter the *Meditation Sūtra*) (T no. 365, vol. 12), translated by Kālayaśas 晁良耶舍 (383–442) between 424 and 442 CE. In addition, both paintings feature a tripartite composition comprising a central panel depicting Amitābha's paradise and two side panels of the Ajātaśatru narrative and the sixteen meditations. The pictorial narrative, on the west side, illustrates the circumstance in which the Buddha spoke of the sūtra. The sixteen meditations, on the east side, serves as a visual guide for meditation. Due to its visual pre-eminence and confrontational representation, it is the central scene that absorbs the beholder's attention. While mirroring each other in terms of general composition, the two Pure Land tableaux have distinctive painting styles and nuances in visual details—likely the result of different artistic hands (Wu 1992a). The architectural setting of the central scene, for instance, is a courtyard complex foregrounded by a water landscape for both the north- and south-wall paintings. But the north-wall painting presents a more squarely constructed architectural space than the south-wall painting, because buildings in the former are fewer and less crowdedly positioned than in the latter, and fewer portions of the former's architectural backdrop are obscured by figures in the foreground. For the sake of concision and clarity, the following analysis focuses on the central scene of the north-wall painting.



Figure 2. *Meditation Sūtra* transformation tableau. North wall of Mogao Cave 172. High Tang period. Mural painting. 400 (w) × 270 (h) cm. Photo Courtesy of Dunhuang Academy.

Amitābha Buddha (also known as Amitāyus), depicted as the central icon in the scene, is holding an assembly of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly musicians on railed

platforms that are raised above lotus ponds and surrounded by halls, pavilions, colonnades, and corner towers—a Chinese-style palatial complex that visualizes the medieval East Asian imagination of the Western Pure Land. Transformed buddhas, attending bodhisattvas, flying *apsaras*, and self-playing musical instruments hovering in the air, along with babies reborn via lotus flowers blooming in the ponds, are all in the process of joining the assembly. The infant-like aspirants are interlocutors for us, mortals of the actual world and beholders of the pictorial paradise.⁵

According to the scriptures, the way in which one enters the Pure Land is via a rebirth fueled by a persistent practice of contemplating the step-by-step manifestation of the Pure Land—the sixteen meditations.⁶ It can take an extremely long time for one's lotus flower to blossom, depending on one's karmic debt. The *Meditation Sūtra* introduces a nine-leveled rebirth system called “the nine grades of rebirth” (*jiupin wangsheng* 九品往生) (Wang 2003, p. 693). While the rebirth system promises an all-inclusive salvation, only the lotus flowers for the aspirants of the upper four levels open immediately; aspirants of the other five levels must wait inside their lotuses for various durations. Those who belong to the lowest level of the lowest grade (*xiapin xiasheng* 下品下生), for example, must wait until twelve great *kalpas* have passed (*T* no. 365, vol. 12, p. 346, a 20–23).⁷

How could one endure the pain of not being able to reach the Pure Land while constantly contemplating one's being there? What roles did the Dunhuang cave art play in alleviating the pain of being so distanced? According to the *Meditation Sūtra*, a Pure Land practitioner may accomplish a spiritual journey by visualization, meaning “systematic building up of visual image, each as complete and precise as possible, in a sequence from the simple to the complex” (Soper 1959, p. 144).⁸ Shandao 善導 (613–81), an eminent Tang monk and influential commentator on the *Meditation Sūtra*, emphasizes the importance of visualizing the holy beings and place with the “mind's eye” (*T*, no. 1959, vol. 47). Meanwhile, he suggests that visualization must be stimulated by concrete images. Furthermore, the making of Pure Land paintings promises “absolving one's multitudinous sins accumulated over eight billion *kalpas*” (除滅八十億劫生死之罪) (*T* no. 1959, vol. 47, p. 25, a09–10), and therefore accelerates the journey to Pure Land and the lower-graded aspirants have to take. Image-based devotion has been an apparent motivation for constructing Pure Land caves and making Pure Land paintings in Dunhuang (Wu 1992a, p. 57).

For painters of the Mogao caves, the question of what image was made was no less important than why each image was made. Even if the relationship among the cave art, its visibility and ritual function, is viewed as complex and indirect (Sharf 2013, pp. 60–61; Feng 2018, pp. 66–75), ritual practices at least provide a lens to inspect the visual culture around the cult. Shandao's teachings and ritual texts used in medieval Dunhuang indicate that the Pure Land cult involved chanting the buddha's name, reading sūtras, performing eulogies, image worshipping, visual contemplation, and so forth (*T* no. 1753, vol. 37, p. 272, a, 1.28–b, 1.6, Lin 2014, p. 249). Some eulogies used in Pure Land rituals evoke a vivid image of “opening jeweled gates” and “right [at the moment] seeing” the buddha preaching (Ren 1987, pp. 573, 577).⁹ This literary imagery presents a certain way of entering and seeing Amitābha's Pure Land, inviting us to consider the nonverbal invitation a visual image might present. Analogous to the eulogy, the painting would have presented an ideal image of the Pure Land in its makers' minds in a carefully designed way. The following analysis examines the way in which the visual representation of architecture attracts viewers into the presence of the pictorial paradise. Trace-copy line drawings, analytical drawings, and digital collage images are applied to explore the visual forms and visibility of the architectural images.

2.3. An Architectural Approach: Visualizing the Pure Land in Its Entirety

The painters of Tang China pulled out all the stops to make the Pure Land look real. They applied a proto-linear perspective to suggest a visual depth; they meticulously rendered the building structures to define the coordinate axes of a pictorial space; they carefully arranged the figures and atmospheric elements to indicate the foreground, the mid-

ground, and the fields of water and air. Most strikingly, by lining up three bridges and two terraces alternatively, the painters created a central path that guides one, or one's gaze, to meet with the Buddha (Figure 3). By means of a layered composition and a structured access, the image turns the temporal distance between the defiled world of ours and the Pure Land of Amitābha's into a spatial distance. In other words, the artists invented an *architectural* approach to the Pure Land.

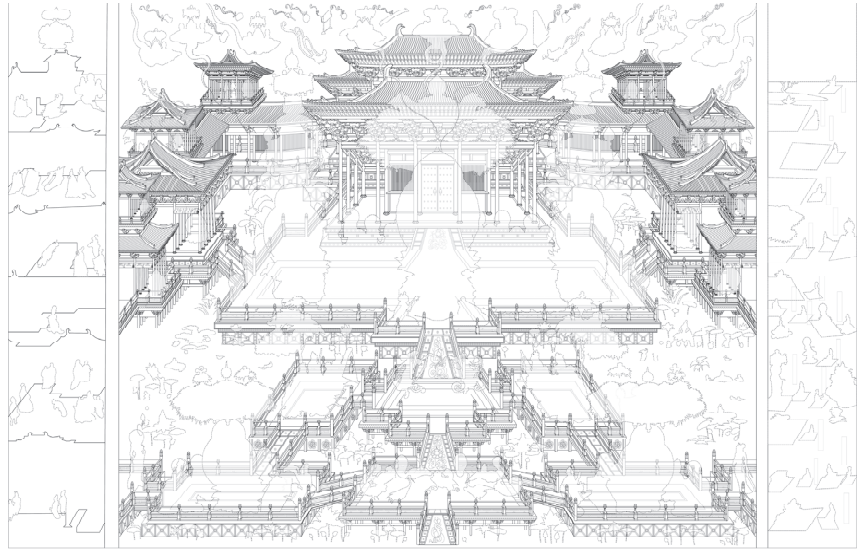


Figure 3. A trace-copy line drawing of the architectural setting in Figure 2. Drawing by Zhenru Zhou in AutoCAD.

This architectural approach carefully tailored the background to be analogous to the figure. An analysis of the pictorial composition will demonstrate the correspondence between the figural images and the architectural topography. Three circles of deities and aspirants are implied in the figures' composition (Figure 4); another three loops are revealed by the diagram of the architectural relationship (Figure 5).

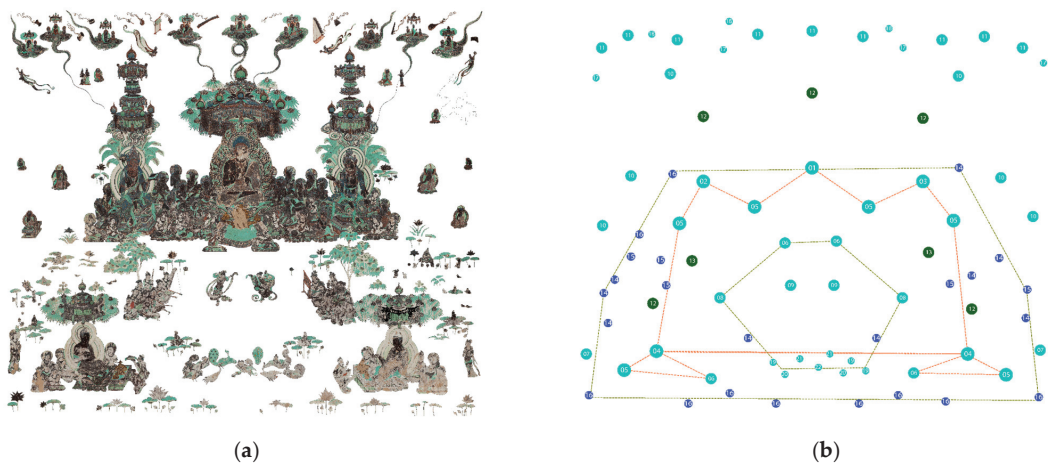
First, the *shan* 山-shaped configuration of the Amitābha triad and two attending buddhas with entourages (nos. 1–5, connected by orange lines in Figure 4b) is echoed in the pictorial composition of the main halls, the corner pavilions, and the two sets of “a hall and two pavilions” (*yidian shuanglou* 一殿雙樓) on the sides (connected by yellow lines in Figure 5). Both mountain-shaped configurations pivot around the central icon and stabilize the core combination.

Second, the large circle of aspirants who encircle the buddhas and bodhisattvas (connected by green lines in Figure 4b) is parallel to the corridors that encircle the courtyard complex (marked by green lines in Figure 5). Both configurations form an outer circle of the multilayered complex.

Third, a small loop formed by the Buddhist figures and deities (marked by green lines in Figure 4b) is topologically identical with that which is composed of the terraces in the foreground (marked by green lines in Figure 5). The overlapped inner circles highlight a joyful assembly in the presence of the superior host, Amitābha Buddha.

The double configurations of triple circles visualize the multilayered topography of the Pure Land. According to the Pure Land scriptures, the Land of Bliss has “seven layers” (*qichong* 七重) of trees, jeweled nets, railings, and jewels, in addition to countless palatial halls (T no. 365, vol. 12, p. 342, b 02–09; T no. 366, vol. 12, 346, c 14–16).¹⁰ In other words,

a visual template of Pure Land architecture has been invented to symbolize the hierarchy and emplacement of an ideal meeting with the Buddha.



Legend (selected): (01) Amitāyus Buddha; (02) Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva; (3) Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva; (04) Additional Buddhas (05) Attending Bodhisattvas; (06) Offering Bodhisattvas; (08) Musicians; (09) Dancers; (11) Transformation Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (14), (15), and (16) Reborn aspirants of the upper, middle, and lower grades; (17) *Apsaras*; (19) *Kalaviṅka*; (20) Peacock.

Figure 4. The pictorial composition of figural images in Figure 2. (a) Isolated deity figures; (b) the locations and relationships between several figures. Digital photo collage and diagram by Zhenru Zhou in Adobe Photoshop.

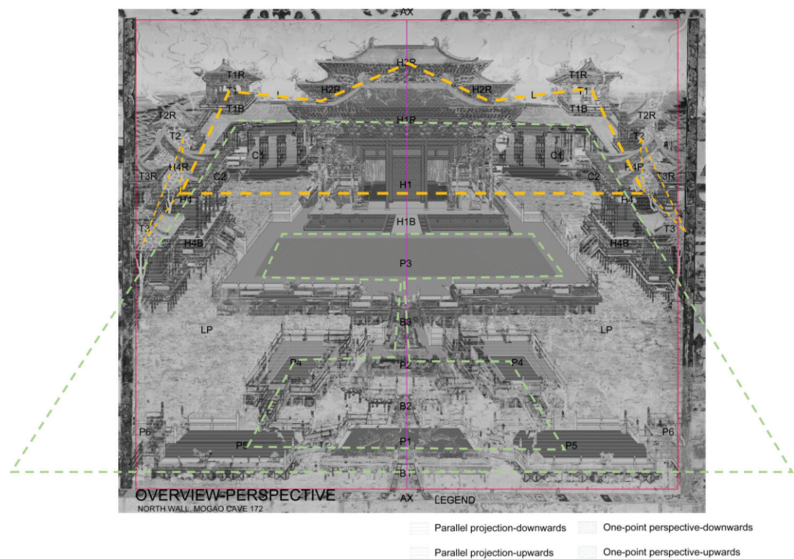


Figure 5. The pictorial composition of architectural images in Figure 2. Digital photo collage and diagram by Zhenru Zhou in Adobe Photoshop.

To better understand the historical visuality of this invention, it is necessary to provide an explanatory note about the use of perspective in premodern Chinese contexts. As often acknowledged, Chinese visual art enjoys a way of spatial representation distinctive from Western traditions (Zhang 2018, pp. 26–29). Therefore, here, perspective is broadly de-

finer as a method of representing three-dimensional forms and spaces on a pictorial plane. Formally speaking, the overall perspective of a Pure Land painting consists of two halves of isometric, oblique projection that mirror one another along a central vertical axis. At a local level, building forms are depicted from multiple viewing angles: roofs and façades seen from a frontal view (Figure 6a), eaves from below (Figure 6b), and grounds from above (Figure 6c). Because of the complexity of pictorial composition and architectural forms, no agreement has been reached about the terminology and visual logics of this hybrid manner of suggesting visual depths. The perspective is sometimes referred to as “the herring-bone perspective” because the vantage points are aligned along the central axis. Some scholars of Chinese paintings have also proposed calling it “parallel perspective” or “parallelogram perspective”, while some others call it “perspective from point to point” because of the represented buildings (Zhang 2018, pp. 320–22; Zhao 2005, pp. 114–66; Fu 1998, pp. 75–94; Xiao 2019, pp. 321–47; Chung 2004, p. 27; Wang 2019; Wang and Li 2021). In any way, it is hard to ignore this Pure Land scene’s strong allusion to a visionary space open to the viewer, an effect similar to modern “linear perspective” (Panofsky 1991, pp. 27–39; Gioseffi 1967).

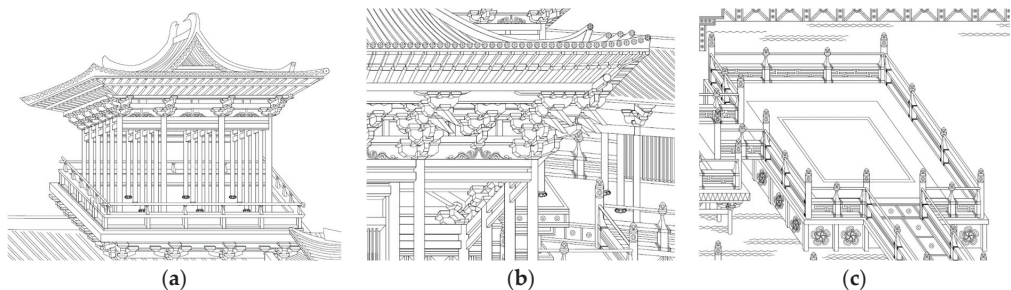


Figure 6. Details in Figure 3. (a) a corner pavilion represented in a frontal perspective; (b) the bracket sets and rafters of the main hall seen from below; (c) a terrace seen from above. Drawing by Zhenru Zhou in AutoCAD.

The conception of a painting as “a window on the world”—for which perspectival techniques were invented—pervades Western art history (Bird 2012), but it is less common in the premodern Chinese contexts. Many paintings, such as the two side panels of the Cave 172 tableau, are self-contained pictures that address the viewer as a witness rather than an active participant. According to art historian Wu Hung, the uncommon design of an iconic representation enforced by the proto-linear perspective suggests a direct relationship between the viewing subject and object. And the completion of the picture requires both that the Buddha exist within the pictorial space and that the viewer exist outside it (Wu 1992a, p. 54). Hence, the occasional suggestion of illusionist space would have been more visually striking for medieval Chinese viewers than for us, who are accustomed to post-Renaissance perspectival techniques.

An experiment of changing the architectural backdrop of the painting demonstrates specific effects of this proto-linear perspective. Assisted by digital imaging software, we replaced the original backdrop with a scientific, one-point perspective of the same building complex—the reconstruction design of which will be discussed later. The altered images display a more coherent spatial construct, but their pictorial compositions could no longer emplace the well-composed assembly. For instance, a bird’s-eye view shows the overall layout at the expense of the canopy-like effect of the triply stacked roofs of the central halls (Figure 7). A one-point perspective at eye level conveys a sense of an architecturally encircled space but fails to include the assembly in the foreground (Figure 8). Because all parallel lines point to a single vanishing point, the adapted still images can comfort the eye but can never address all features in the mentally constructed environment of the

Pure Land. By comparison, the herringbone-perspective construct of the mural—meaning multiple vanishing points exist along the vertical central axis—allows almost all desired features of the Pure Land environment to be visualized (Figure 9).

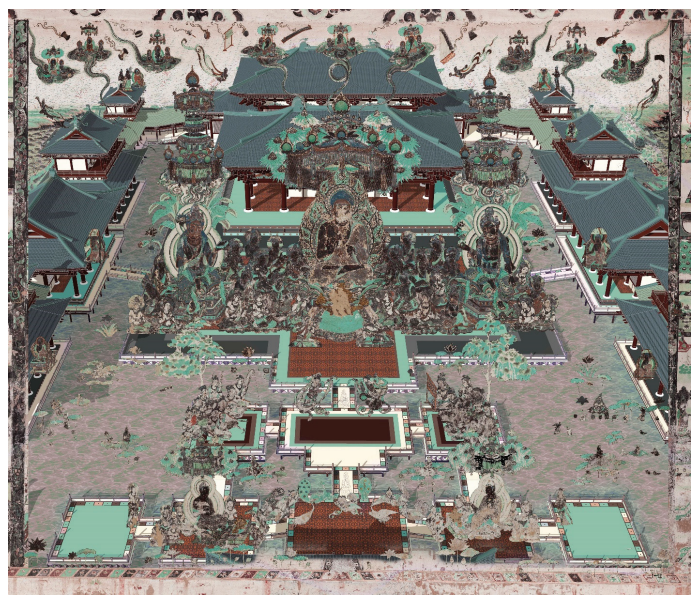


Figure 7. A bird's-eye view of the Western Pure Land: Zhenru Zhou's reconstruction design based on Figure 2. Digital photo collage by Zhenru Zhou in Sketchup and Adobe Photoshop software.



Figure 8. A one-point perspective of the Western Pure Land from a standpoint on the bridge looking toward the main terrace: Zhenru Zhou's reconstruction design based on Figure 2. Digital photo collage by Zhenru Zhou in Sketchup and Adobe Photoshop software.

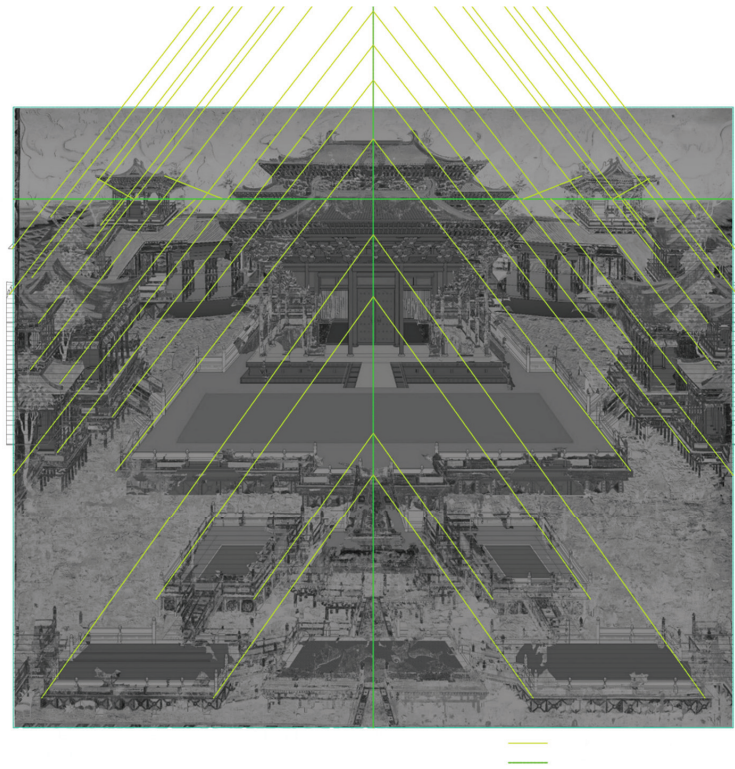


Figure 9. The herringbone-like construct of multiple “vanishing points” in Figure 2, with the architectural image completed. Diagram by Zhenru Zhou.

2.4. Sequential Viewing: An Analogy of Sixteen Meditations

The architectural approach was grounded on the notion of environment, which is crucial to the Pure Land meditation practice. Prior to visualizing the holy figures, one must evoke a vivid image of Pure Land topography. As the *Meditation Sūtra* prescribes, the sixteen topics for meditation are, successively, (1) the sun, (2) the water, (3) the ground, (4) the trees, (5) the pond of eight virtues, (6) the jeweled buildings, (7) the flower throne, (8) the image and (9) the body and light of Amitāyus Buddha, (10) Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, (11) Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, (12) comprehensive meditations related to rebirth assured, (13) miscellaneous meditations related to rebirth assured, (14) the upper levels of rebirth, (15) middle level of rebirth, and (16) lower levels of rebirth (*T* no. 365, vol. 12, p. 341, c l.29–p.346, a l.26).

Due to the sixteen topics’ foremost importance for Pure Land petitioners, they were extensively discussed by Shandao in his commentary on the *Meditation Sūtra*, titled *Methods for the merit of samādhi by visualizing the sea-like Image of Amitāyus-Amitābha* (*Guannian Amitofo xianghai sanmei gongde famen* 觀念阿彌陀佛相海三昧功德法門) (*T* no. 1959, vol. 47). According to Shandao’s commentary, the first seven topics are “dependent” rewards (*yibao* 依報) that help the meditator build up the Pure Land environment in the mind, the following six topics are “main” rewards (*zhengbao* 正報) that help the meditator envision the holy presence of the Amitābha triad, and the last three topics elaborate on the rebirth system (Feng 2018, pp. 257–60).¹¹ Simply put, visualization of the miraculous topography leads to contemplative confrontation with the holy presence.

These sixteen meditation topics were often illustrated in the *Meditation Sūtra transformation tableaux*—in this case, as the vertical panel painting accompanying the central

scene on the right-hand side (Figure 10). Following the top-to-bottom viewing sequence, a beholder's eye is naturally guided to the bottom register of the tableau, right next to the inviting architectural foreground in the central scene.



Figure 10. Sixteen meditations: *Meditation Sūtra* transformation tableau. North wall of Mogao Cave 172. High Tang period. Mural painting. Feng (2018, pp. 2–121, Figure 3–30).

The central scene, by means of its perspective construct, echoes the message the sixteen meditations panel conveys—that is, a sequential procedure of entering the Pure Land. Because the painting is too big to be grasped all at once by a worshipper in the cave, the worshipper is compelled to examine it part by part. Because multiple vanishing points exist along the vertical axis of the painting, the overall effect is similar to multiple-point perspective, which suggests the viewer's constant shift of position.¹² The viewing is accompanied by movements of an implied traveler whose steps the beholder travels to experience the visionary built environment. Based on the varied level heights of the vanishing points, we diagrammed the sixteen spatial units the imaginary traveler would traverse or see (Figure 11).

Looking at the painting at eye level or a bit downward (from a point 1–1.5 m above ground level), the worshipper naturally sees the lotus pond and terraces, from which the imaginary journey begins. To visualize the pictorial space, the worshipper first contemplates an imaginary traveler arriving at the Land of Bliss through the central-front bridge (scene 1). Then, the worshipper continuously contemplates the aspirant getting closer to the Buddha, passing through terraces and bridges one after another (scenes 2 through 5). This imaginary pilgrimage comes to a climax when the imaginary traveler arrives at the main terrace (scene 6).

As soon as the Amitābha triad manifests in front of the imaginary traveler, a transformation occurs in the worshipper's vision. Previously, the worshipper was looking down at someone else's movements, which was inferred from the high-view angles in scenes 1 through 6. Hereafter, the representation of the halls and pavilions is closer to the view at eye level, suggesting the worshipper's presence in front of the holy assembly. In addi-

tion to the direct relationship established between the viewer and the Buddha icon, the main hall behind the holy assembly looks just like what one might see when standing in front of a Buddhist temple (scenes 7 and 8). At that moment, the worshipper might even self-identify as the imaginary traveler in the pictorial space, because he or she sees what the latter would see. The worshipper has now become a witness of the Pure Land in the painting.

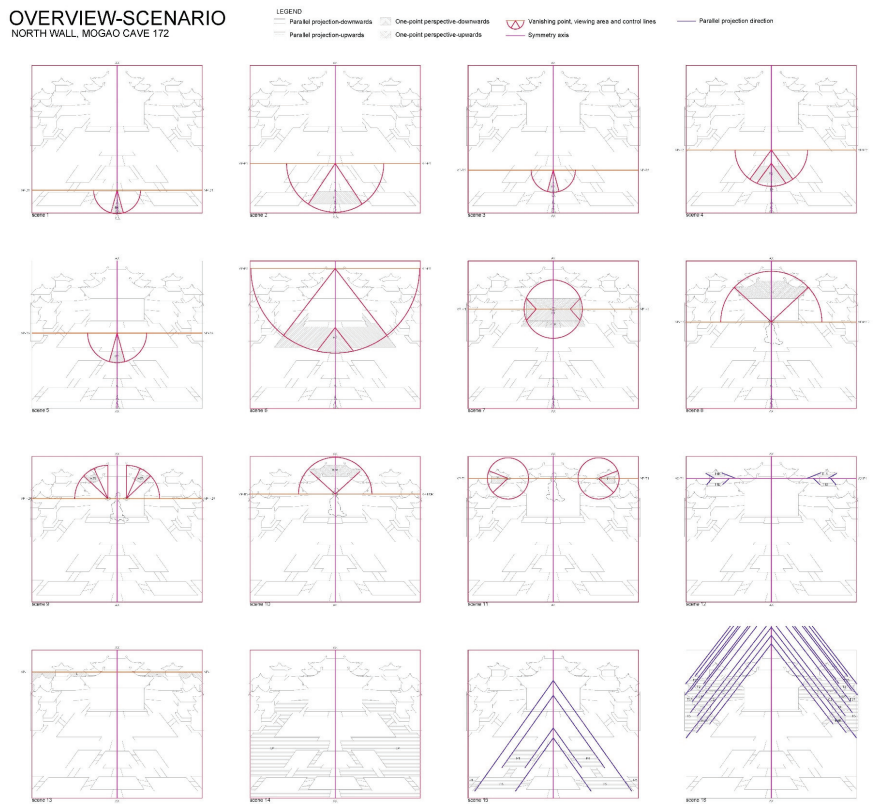


Figure 11. Sixteen steps of contemplating the pictorial space in Figure 2. Horizontal line is the level of the viewpoint of the imaginary traveler. Diagonal lines in a circle or semicircle are lines that are parallel in the pictorial space and represented as conjoining at the center of the circle (i.e., the “vanishing point”). Sets of diagonal lines mirrored along the vertical axis are in the direction of parallel projection. Diagram by Zhenru Zhou.

The subsequent scenes correspond to the worshipper’s free roaming through the main hall and the hall(s) behind (scenes 9 and 10), gazing at the distanced land from the corner pavilions (scenes 11 through 13) or being suspended in midair and overlooking the entire assembly in the side halls and pavilions, on the terraces, and in the lotus ponds (scenes 14 through 16). In a word, the viewing sequence is analogous to an imaginary and transformative journey in the pictorial space. For the sake of more vividly conveying the aforementioned experience to modern eyes, we made a walk-through animation of a digital 3D model simulating the Pure Land environment, which can be found in the Supplementary Materials. Appendix A offers a close comparison between parts of the original painting and screenshots of the key moments in that walk-through animation.

Our theoretical reconstruction of the viewing procedure corresponds with the medieval Chinese monks’ contemplation. A dreamy journey to the Pure Land is recorded in

Biographies of eminent monks compiled during the Song period (Song gaoseng zhuan 宋高僧傳) (T no. 2061, vol. 50; Li and Lü 1996, v2-2257; Theobald 2012). As the author, a tenth-century monk Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), reports, two seventh-century monks, Qifang 啟芳 and Yuanguo 圓果, dreamed of visiting the Western Pure Land during a summer retreat at Wuzhen Monastery 悟真寺 in Lantian County. In their dream, Qifang and Yuanguo saw a great lotus pond and flew into a jeweled tent that was located on the east side of the pond. In the tent, they encountered monks who had been reborn there, Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, and Amitābha Buddha himself. After Amitābha assured them of a rebirth into his land, the jeweled tent carrying the holy beings departed toward the west. Then, moving westward, the two monks passed through three jeweled terraces that carried laymen, laymen and monks, and monks (T no. 2061, vol. 50, p. 863, b21–c14).

The anecdote reconfirms the Chinese imagination of the Pure Land environment, such as a ground as flat as mirror, a great lotus pond in which multiple terraces are erected, and jeweled canopies. More importantly, it illustrates the bodily movements of the imaginary visitors, who are spirits of the worshippers, through the terraces above in order to follow the trajectory of Amitābha. Should such a dreamy experience be pictured, the Pure Land transformation tableau offers a visual template.

2.5. Reflection on the Art Medium

Vivid as the mural painting is, any art medium has its limitations. While the pictorial “window” seduces a worshipper to look out into the space of a Buddhist paradise, the image-bearing surface—in this case, the wall of a rock-cut chamber—mercilessly denies any actual entrance to it. Some cave-makers in Tang Dunhuang were aware of the problem and sought to resolve it in the ritual programs of the cave to which the mural paintings belong. Hongbian 洪辯 (d. 862), an eminent monk of Dunhuang who patronized the construction of Cave 365 in 832–34, even took the chance of cave construction to give the following sermon to his disciples: “Clay niches are not substantial, but they may exert themselves to hold [the Buddha’s teachings]. Bamboo and silk[-based artifacts] are not real, but they have the function of circulating [the teachings] (泥龕不實，而能作住持之功；竹素非真，而有流通之用).” (Zheng and Zheng 2019, 274–75)¹³ The irreconcilable contradiction between the image and the art medium drove Hongbian to admit “clay niches are not substantial” and “Bamboo and silk[-based artifacts] are not real.” Meanwhile, he and cave patrons alike did not lose faith in making caves, for that the cave provides a *real space*—to coin David Summers’s (2003) term—in which a new dimension of visual art is made possible. The next section investigates the spatial mediums that Dunhuang cave-makers applied to resolve the problem of physical inaccessibility.

3. Spatial Imagery of the Pure Land Cave

The Pure Land image was not necessarily invented by the local artists and artisans of Dunhuang, but the painting medium is inseparable from the site—in this case, the cave temples cut into the living rocks. The architectural art of visualizing the Pure Land continued to evolve in situ at the Mogao caves. It reached an unprecedented degree of comprehensiveness by the end of the tenth century. The shared interest of residents and Buddhist societies of Dunhuang to synchronize the actual locale with the Buddhist paradise conspired to the spatial sequence of a cave and the grouping of multiple caves.

3.1. Spatial Components of Cave Suite 172/173

In analogy to the layered spaces of a pictorial paradise, the cave temple consists of a few architecturally defined spaces along the transversal axis (Figure 12). The spaces for a typical Tang cave like Cave 172, from outermost to innermost, are an antechamber, a corridor leading to the main chamber, a main chamber under a truncated pyramidal ceiling, and, cut on its rear (west) wall, a wide-open buddha niche (*changkou kan* 敞口龕). A series of cave spaces indicates a sequential viewing through which the mural paintings of the Pure Land are eventually reached.

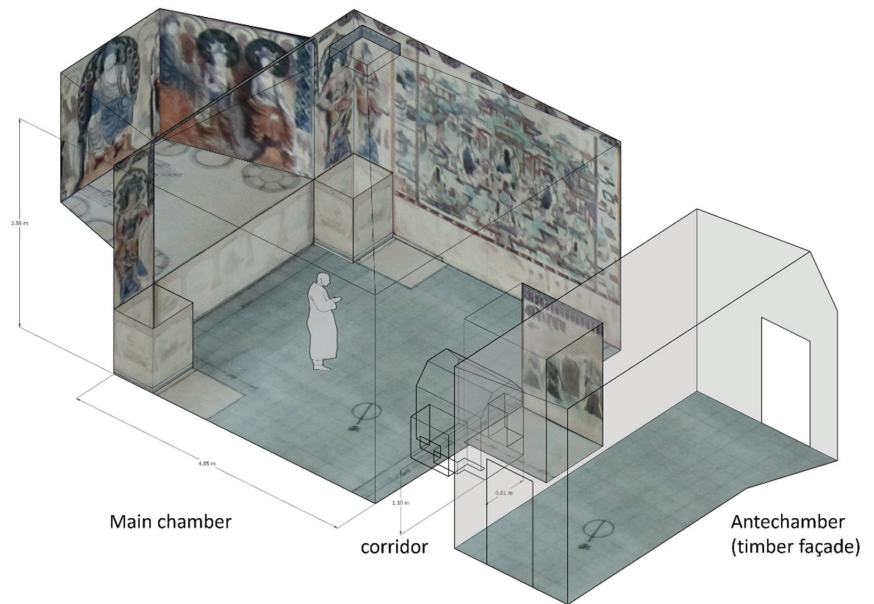


Figure 12. Isometric view of Mogao Cave 172 showing the dimensions of the main chamber wall and the ear-chamber wall. Drawing by Zhenru Zhou, texture after Sun Ruxian's rendering in Sun and Sun, *Shiku jianzhu juan*, 225.

Modifications in the subsequent periods added two significant features to this cave architecture. First, a miniature cave, numbered 173, was cut out on the south wall of the corridor of Cave 172 during a renovation in the late Tang period, circa. 851–900 (Dunhuang 1982, p. 69).¹⁴ A miniature cave is not simply a small cave; it is a miniature version of a normal-sized cave. The overall size of its main chamber is no more than 0.9 (L.) \times 1.2 m (W.) \times 1.4 m (H.), but Cave 173 has nearly all the spatial components that Cave 172 has, including corridor, niche, ceiling, and buddha altar, all decorated with mural paintings (Figure 13). Because its corridor, sized 0.58 m (H.) \times 0.3 m (W.), is not even large enough for a child to enter, the most likely possible way of construction would have been to cut out the miniature cave without a front wall, furnish and decorate it, and lastly fill the front wall while leaving a small opening. Once the corridor was refurbished, the dollhouse-like auxiliary cave became an integral part of this cave suite, enriching its spatial structure and diversifying its scales.

Second, the antechamber of Cave 172, along with those of its neighboring caves, was renovated around the tenth century (Dunhuang 1982, pp. 63–71). Two beam holes above the two upper corners of the corridor entrance indicate that Cave 172 used to have a three-bay-wide timber-framed façade (Gosudarstvennyiĭ Ėrmitazh 1997–2005, v5, pl. 1). Fragments of murals were found on the cliff face above the row of caves that Cave 172 belongs to, suggesting pictorial decoration was part of their exterior appearance (Pan 1990, p. 64). Old timber structures in the district that Cave 172 belongs to have entirely perished, but remains a few hundred meters north shed light on the common design (Figure 14). Prior to entering the antechamber, a tenth-century worshipper would have confronted the cave's exterior glorified by a timber-framed façade and an open-air mural above the pitched roof.



Figure 13. Cave 173, late Tang period, statues remade in the Qing period. Photo courtesy of the Dunhuang Academy.



Figure 14. The timber-framed façade and exterior mural of Mogao Cave 431 showing three-step bracket sets, a three-bay façade, and an overhanging roof. Dated by inscription to 980 CE; 486 cm (w) × 142 cm (d) × 320 cm (h). Wood, mud brick, polychromic pigments. Photo by Zhenru Zhou, 20 January 2022.

Despite not being constructed or refurbished at the exact same time, the rock-cut chambers, timber-framed façade, interior and open-air murals, and polychromic clay statues constitute Cave Suite 172/173, and have defined what it looked like for the most part of its life. The composite materiality allows the cave to be an extraordinarily plastic medium; it not only allows one to enter but also conveys the image in a continuously flowing man-

ner (Wright [1930] 2008, pp. 72–73).¹⁵ A visual analysis of Cave 172 with its auxiliary cave and the neighboring caves will reveal the plasticity of the cave medium.

3.2. Immersive Visual Space of the Main Cave

Above all, the main cave chamber, which is often smaller and more compact than the interior of a free-standing temple, intensifies a worshipper's confrontation with the Pure Land transformation tableaux on the north and south walls. The two paintings cover the entire width and extend from the top to about sixty centimeters above ground of the two opposite walls, which are 3.55 m tall, 4.85–4.95 m wide, and 5.1 m apart from each other (Figure 15) (Shi 1996, v2, Figure 247). For a worshipper who stands in the center of the main chamber, the painting takes up a field of view of about 87 degrees lateral by 59 degrees vertical.¹⁶ This means that only a small portion of it can be grasped by the vision of central fixation (thirty degrees), whereas much is grasped by the peripheral vision (Spector 1990). It is the immersive visual environment that awakens the haptic longing for the Pure Land palaces.¹⁷



Figure 15. Potential viewing angles of the Pure Land paintings in Cave 172 (figure's height: 1.70 m). Drawing by Zhenru Zhou, texture after Sun Ruxian's water-color renderings in Sun and Sun, *Shiku jianzhu juan*, 225.

The buddha niche and the entrance corridor of a Pure Land cave temple are often part of the simulated palaces on water. In another High Tang cave, Cave 171, which is next to Cave 172 on the south side, an immersive environment for the worshipper to meet with Amitābha Buddha is enhanced by a “lotus pond and portal” simulated by the image niche, entrance, and ground pavement (Figure 16). As Feng acutely observes, the imageries of the Pure Land are not only painted on the three walls and sculpted in the niche, but also “colonize” the cave space in the case of Cave 171 (Feng 2018, pp. 222–27). This example reveals a mutual development of the pictorial space and the actual cave space.

Amitabha Buddha (statue) and Fifty Bodhisattvas (mural)

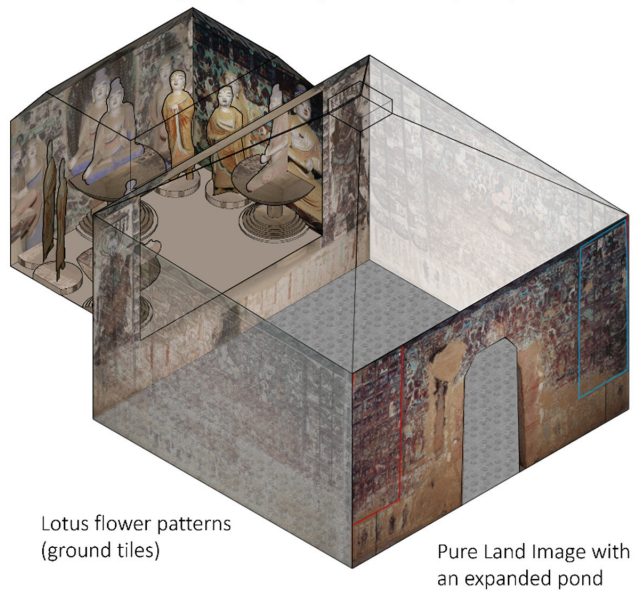


Figure 16. Isometric view of the main chamber of Cave 171 showing the subject matter of the images along the niche-entrance dimension. Drawing by Zhenru Zhou.

3.3. Visual Tricks of the Auxiliary Cave

Furthermore, the function of the miniature Cave 173 parallels that of a side hall in the Pure Land building complex. The practice of excavating an auxiliary cave shrine onto the corridor or antechamber of a pre-existing cave temple was an effective way for the cave-makers to add a new “showcase” and to show respect for their forebears while maintaining the integrity of the cave temple (Ning 2004, pp. 65–75). This practice occurred at Mogao as early as the Northern Dynasties and became popular during the Guiyijun period. Zhenru Zhou’s surveys of the Mogao caves have identified forty-three cave suites consisting of over a hundred caves (Figure 17, Appendix B).¹⁸ They account for about one-fifth of the total number of image caves at Mogao, testifying to the common practice of building up a composite cave space.¹⁹

What is special in this case is that Cave 173 looks almost like a miniaturized replica of Cave 172; within a truncated pyramidal-ceiling cave no larger than 1.5 cubic meters, the rear wall is equipped with a buddha niche, and each of the side walls bears a Pure Land transformation tableau (Figure 13). The length, width, and height of the main chamber of Cave 173 are, respectively 18%, 24%, and 26% of those of Cave 172 (Shi 1996, v2, p. 193). In comparison to two other kinds of auxiliary caves—a niche enshrining small buddha images and a shadow cave enshrining a life-size monk statue—the miniature Pure Land cave displays a stronger manipulation of space construct. Through self-similarity and scaling, the cave suite encompasses two time-spaces that are concurrently independent from and resonate with each other. Although the patrons of Caves 172 and 173 have not been identified, the prolonged visual excitement is evident to a worshipper entering the cave suite; the visual encounter with the miniature cave prepares the worshipper to confront the main cave chamber along the central axis in a similar way in which the subsidiary halls in a palatial complex prepare a visitor before entering the main hall.

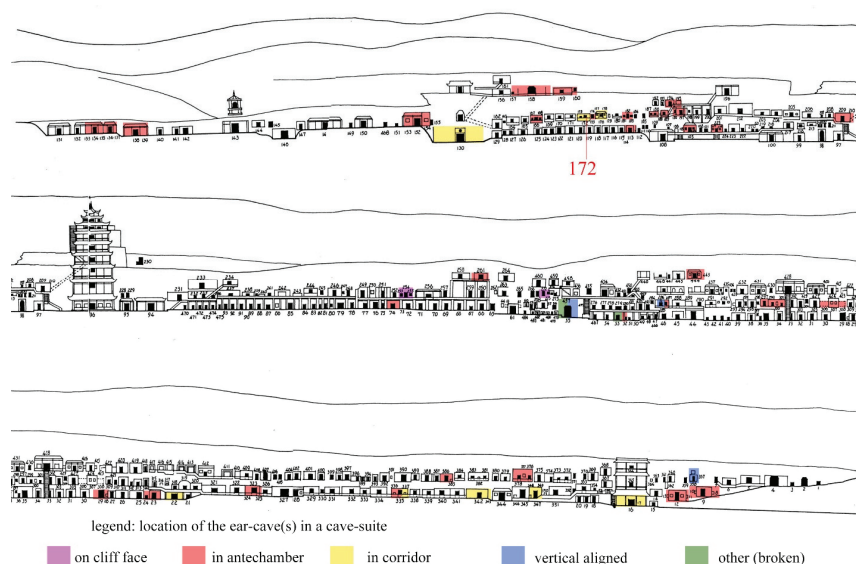


Figure 17. Distribution of cave suites at the Mogao Caves. Base map by Sun Ruxian. Annotation by Zhenru Zhou.

Before the construction of the auxiliary cave, the compositional principles of self-similarity and scaling were coded into the mural paintings inside the main chamber. All halls and pavilions represented in the Pure Land transformation tableau on the north wall share the same five-by-three-bay plan and have only two types of roofs: hipped, and hipped and gabled. It is through multiplication, scaling, rotation, and stacking the basic units that the palatial complex is composed (Figure 18). If we take the width of the main hall, which is depicted right behind Amitābha Buddha, to be 1, then the rear hall, the side halls, the corner pavilions, and the pavilions flanking the side halls are, respectively scaled by 73%, 60%, 29%, and 28%. The flanking and corner pavilions are about one-quarter of the size of the main hall. Likewise, the auxiliary cave is about one-quarter, by width and by height, of the main chamber. This is perhaps not just a coincidence. As Luke Li has discussed elsewhere, miniaturization has been an effective way of creating spatial layers in Chinese religious architecture. A Buddha Hall with its furnishing may utilize three scales—the building scale, 1/2–1/4 of it, and 1/10 of it—to assist the visual imagination of heavenly palaces (Li 2020, p. 28).

A small cave is not as simple as it appears. Although unenterable, it echoes the visual programs of the main cave and constitutes a cave suite that aligns with the compositional principles of the Pure Land painting. As Zhang Yingrun 張盈潤 (ca. 927–50), a Dunhuang layman who visited the Mogao caves in 939, recalls, “Doubly opening the rock chambers, I worshiped the thousand honored ones as if in the immortals’ realm [*chongkai shishi, li qianzun si dao Penglai* 重開石室, 禮千尊似到蓬萊]” (Dunhuang 1986, pp. 53–54).²⁰ The composite cave space which could be “doubly open[ed]” alludes to the multilayered environment of the Pure Land.

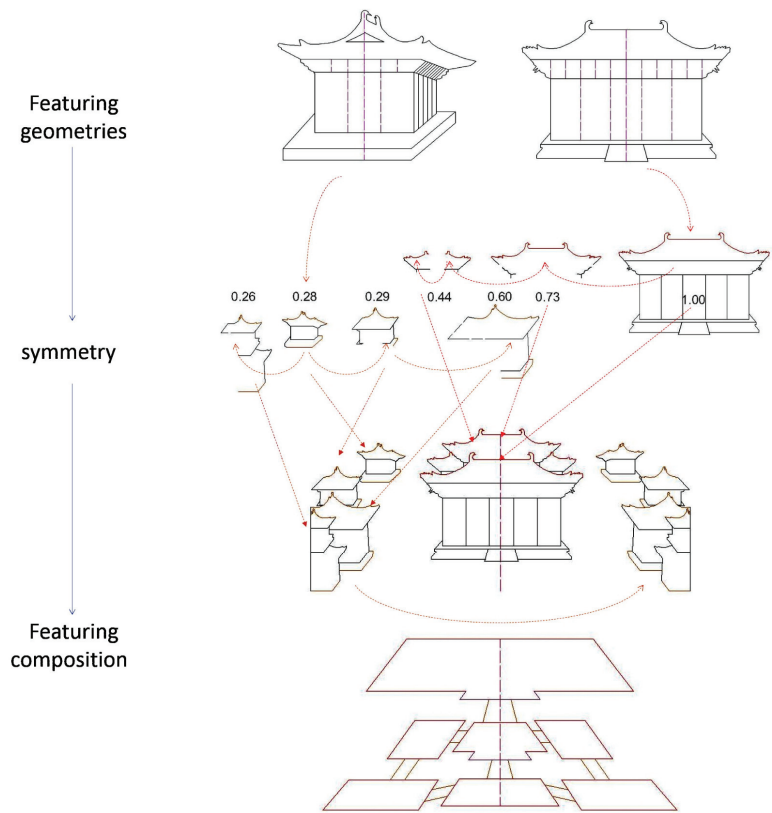
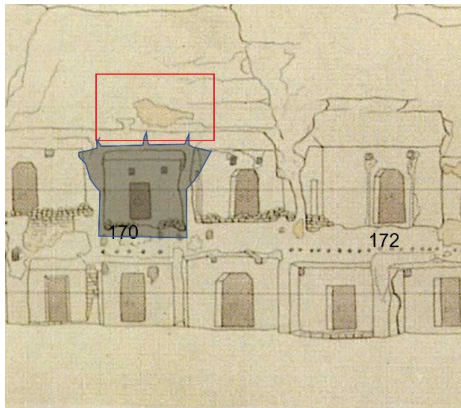


Figure 18. The building prototype and the methods of scaling and positioning for generating the architectural complex in Figure 2. Diagram by Zhenru Zhou.

3.4. Open-Air Murals

Lastly, the open-air murals and the timber-framed façades allow the image to emerge from the cliff surface. Remains of the mural on the cliff above Cave 170, a cave adjacent to Caves 171 and 172 on the south side, depict a hipped roof with flaming jewels above its side pitch and a cinnabar-colored orb encircled by a green and red ring (Figure 19). Judging from the two rectangular holes on the antechamber wall, which were made to hold beams, this pictorial roof painted around the tenth century formed a backdrop for an actual roof that was placed atop the timber beams. In other words, the composition would have closely resembled the double or triple layers of roofs above the main Buddha icon in Pure Land paintings commonly seen after the eighth century. The image of overlaid roofs may represent a set of halls arranged either one in front of another (Figure 2) or one above another (Figure 20). Unlike a mural painting or a silk painting, the composite image that emerges from the combined media of cliff murals and timber architecture is physically accessible. Just as the miniature cave on the corridor of Cave 172 refers to the main chamber, the double-roofed façade of Cave 170 is a prelude to the pictorial palace one expects to see inside the chamber.



(a)



(b)

Figure 19. Open-air mural above Cave 170. (a) Location of the mural (in red rectangular frame next to gray shade of a hypothetical façade added by Zhenru Zhou) in Oldenburg’s 1914–15 rendering (Gosudarstvennyiĭ Ėrmitazh 1997–2005, v5, pl. 1); (b) a recent photograph. Photo by Zhenru Zhou, August 2019.



Figure 20. A detail of a *Meditation Sūtra* painting showing a two-level pavilion as the backdrop of a Buddha preaching scene. Silk painting, ninth or tenth century. Discovered in Mogao Cave 17. In the collection of the Guimet Museum (MG 17673). Digitized and made available by the International Dunhuang Project, <https://idp.bl.uk/collection/F67D8E2A42102A44A2CC0D37DD4C6271/?return=/collection/?term=17673> (accessed on 26 February 2024).

Through visual alignment, liminal location, and nearly life-size images, the open-air mural mediates between the natural cliff and the built environment and between the pictorial and actual topographies. The cave complex was connected by timber-structured porches and pavilions by the end of the tenth century. In addition, a consensus is that the megastructure was decorated by a long stripe of open-air murals (Pan 1990; Ma 1996, p. 113).²¹ Although only fragmentary traces of the stripe are preserved near Caves 170 to 173, a longer section of the stripe, which is located about twenty meters north from them, gives us a sense of the close relationship between the exterior mural and the façades (Figure 21).²² The remaining murals were painted on a horizontal cliff area about 1.5 m tall right above the nonextant overhanging roofs of the second-level Caves 181 to 185, on which the beam holes are visible. The lateral connection of caves on the same level was visually

augmented by the open-air mural stripe. Such a spectacular scene must have evoked a wondrous feeling in the aforementioned Zhang Yingrun's mind. This feeling is recorded in his inscription outside the ante-hall of a cave below: "Connected with the passageways of pavilions on both sides, I visited the ten thousand images as if in the Buddhalands [*pangtong gedao, xun wanxiang rutong foguo* 傍通閣道, 巡萬像如同佛國]" (Dunhuang 1986, pp. 53–54).

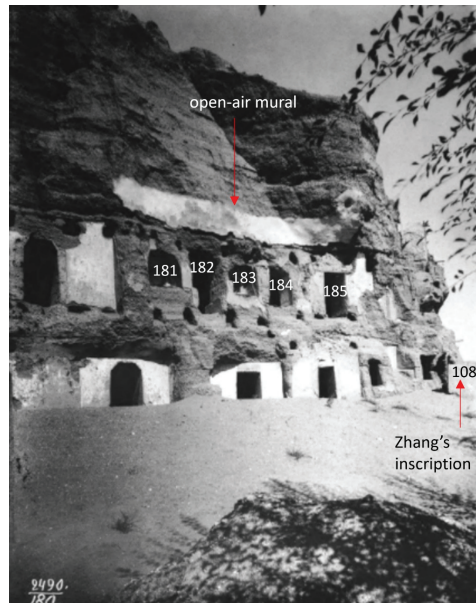


Figure 21. A stripe of open-air mural remaining above the antechambers of Mogao Caves 181–85. Photo by Oldenburg expedition team, 1914–15. After Gosudarstvennyĭ Ėrmitazh, *Eluosi guo li Ai'ermitashi bo wu guan cang Dunhuang yi shu pin*, 3:13.

4. Summary

This article has examined the historical visibility of the architectural imagery in Mogao Cave 172 and its extension in real spaces. First of all, the Tang-period visual paradigm tended to represent palatial complexes in the Pure Lands, inventing an architectural approach to bridge the distance between them and the world in which humans live. Well-composed pictures, such as the *Meditation Sūtra* transformation tableau in Cave 172, made this architectural stage look real while revealing all desirable features and a multilayered composition. The mural painting, conditioned by the picture size and cave space, was more likely to be viewed in a sequence analogous to the sixteen meditations. The spatial construct of the image made the viewing procedure transformative.

Furthermore, the article explored how the compositional principles of the Pure Land paintings could have assisted the transformation of the cave spaces and cliff site. It concerned not just the rapid development of architectural backgrounds in Pure Land scenes around the eighth century, but also the continued localization and actualization of the images at the Mogao site. This thorough transformation is inseparable from cave-making practices in the subsequent centuries, namely, the spatial intricacy of cave architecture introduced by cave suites since the ninth century, and the systematic refurbishments of the cliff face that turned it into a canvas of visionary topography in the tenth century. The iconography of the open-air murals is simpler and more generic than their counterparts inside the caves, and auxiliary caves provide multiplicity to the spatial structure. They, nonetheless, continued the theme of the pictorial image and enriched its expressive forms.

The modified Mogao Cave 172 continues to testify to the suggestive power of Pure Land art and gives the best clue to the sequential formulation of the paradisiacal image in pictorial, plastic, and architectural mediums.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/rel15030329/s1>, Video S1: Walk-through animation of a Pure Land courtyard based on a painting in Mogao Cave 172.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Z.Z. and L.L.; methodology, Z.Z.; software, Z.Z.; validation, Z.Z.; formal analysis, Z.Z.; investigation, Z.Z.; resources, Z.Z.; data curation, Z.Z.; writing—original draft preparation, Z.Z.; writing—review and editing, Z.Z.; visualization, Z.Z.; supervision, L.L.; project administration, Z.Z.; funding acquisition, L.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Appendix A. The Imaginary Journey in the Pure Land Transformation Tableau in Mogao Cave 172

The sequential viewing of the Pure Land painting is paralleled with a walk-through experience of the Pure Land architecture it represents. Since the herringbone perspective has multiple vanishing points, it suggests a viewing experience by moving through the space. For example, the vertical axis of the picture indicates that the main route is along the central axis in the pictorial space. And the shifting perspectives toward those buildings and architectural components are designated according to the perspective analysis of the painting. By adopting contemporary techniques of visualizing architectural spaces (with software such as Sketchup, AutoCAD, and Adobe Photoshop), I made a walk-through animation (Supplementary Materials: Video S1) to represent the bodily experience of the Pure Land topography in a way familiar to a present-day audience.

The diagrams paired with scenes from a walk-through animation show how the viewing experience of the painting evokes an imagination of a bodily experience into the Pure Land topography (Figure A1): A beholder arrives at the Land of Bliss through the central-front bridge (scene 1). Then, he or she goes closer to the main shrine, passing through terraces and bridges one after another (scenes 2 through 5). This imaginary pilgrimage comes to a climax when he or she stands on the main terrace (scene 6). The viewer then

looks up at the main hall and enters it (scenes 7 and 8), then passes through the main shine and similarly looks up at the hall in the rear center (scenes 9 and 10). The viewer may climb up to the corner pavilions and gaze at the distant landscape (scenes 11 through 13). He or she can also stay suspended in the air with the celestial beings attending the meeting and look from above at the subsidiary halls, the terraces, and the lotus ponds (scenes 14 through 16).

Illustration of Contemplation Sutra, North Wall, Mogao Cave 172

Walk-through Video, A theoretical reconstruction of the Western Pure Land Architecture

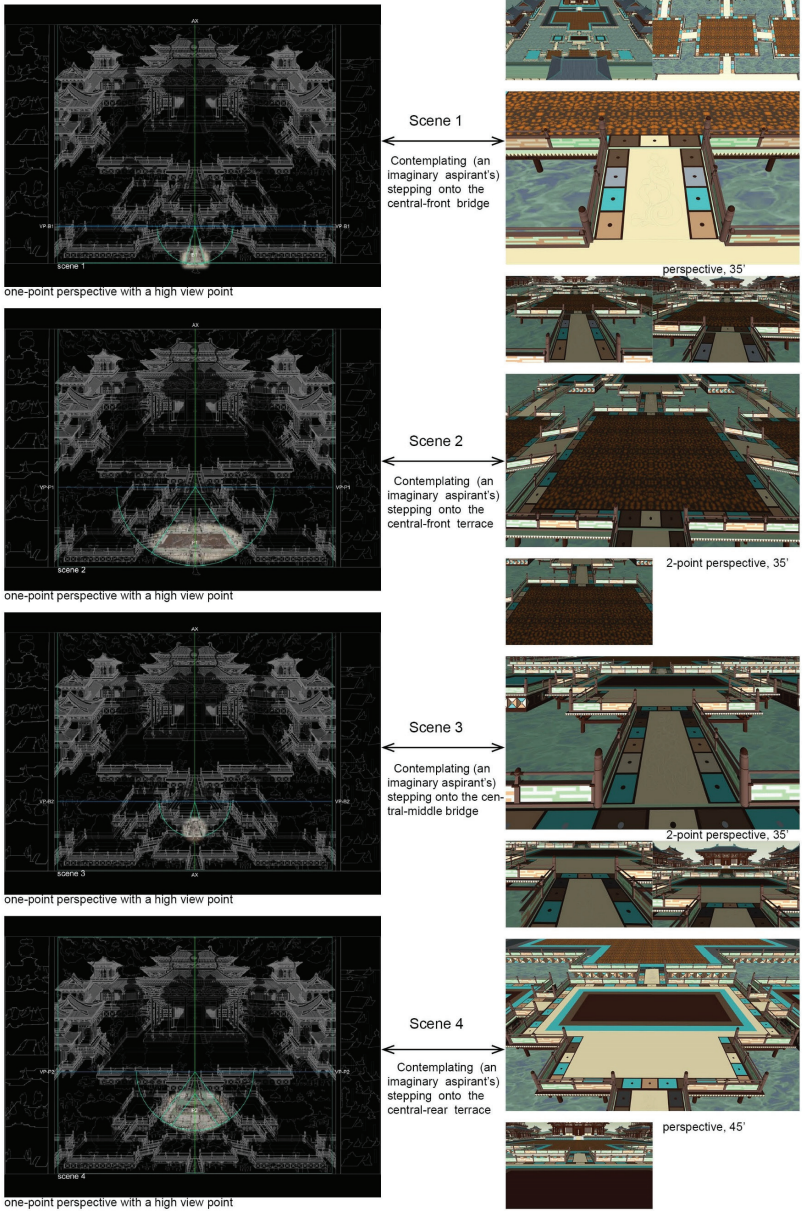


Figure A1. Cont.

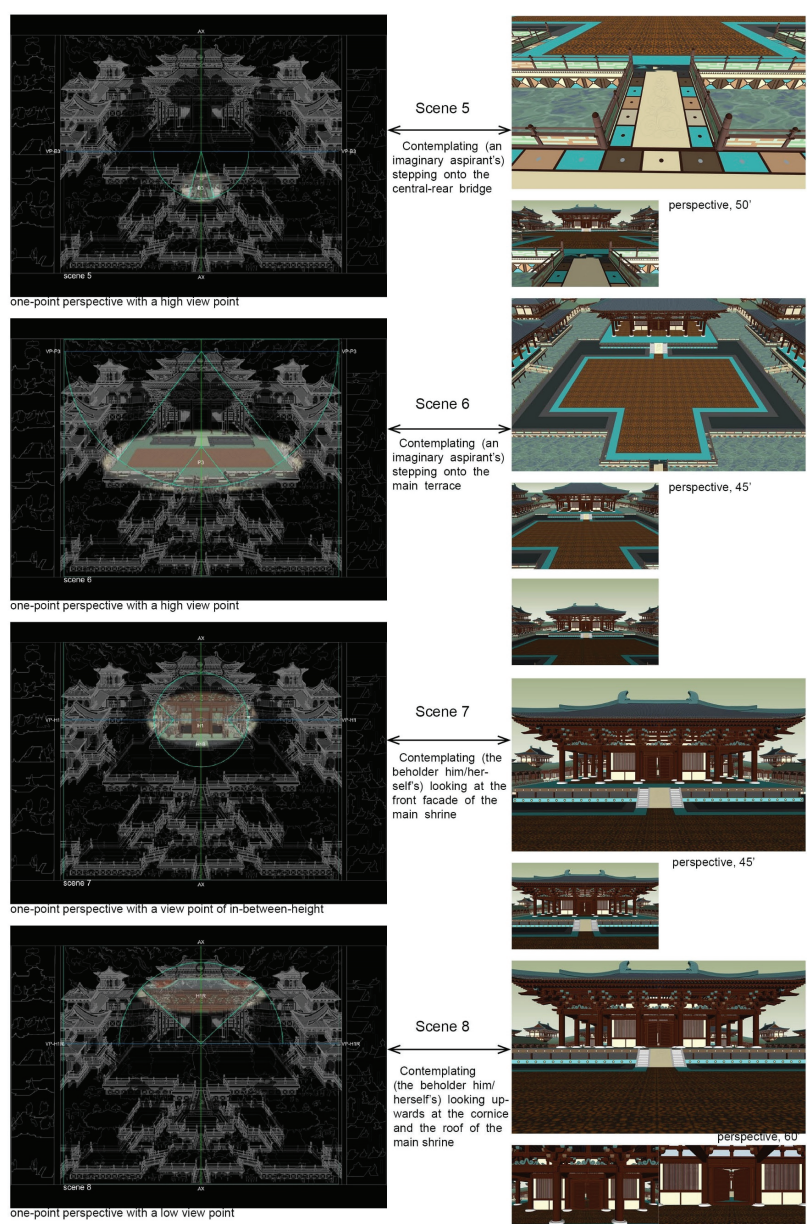


Figure A1. Cont.

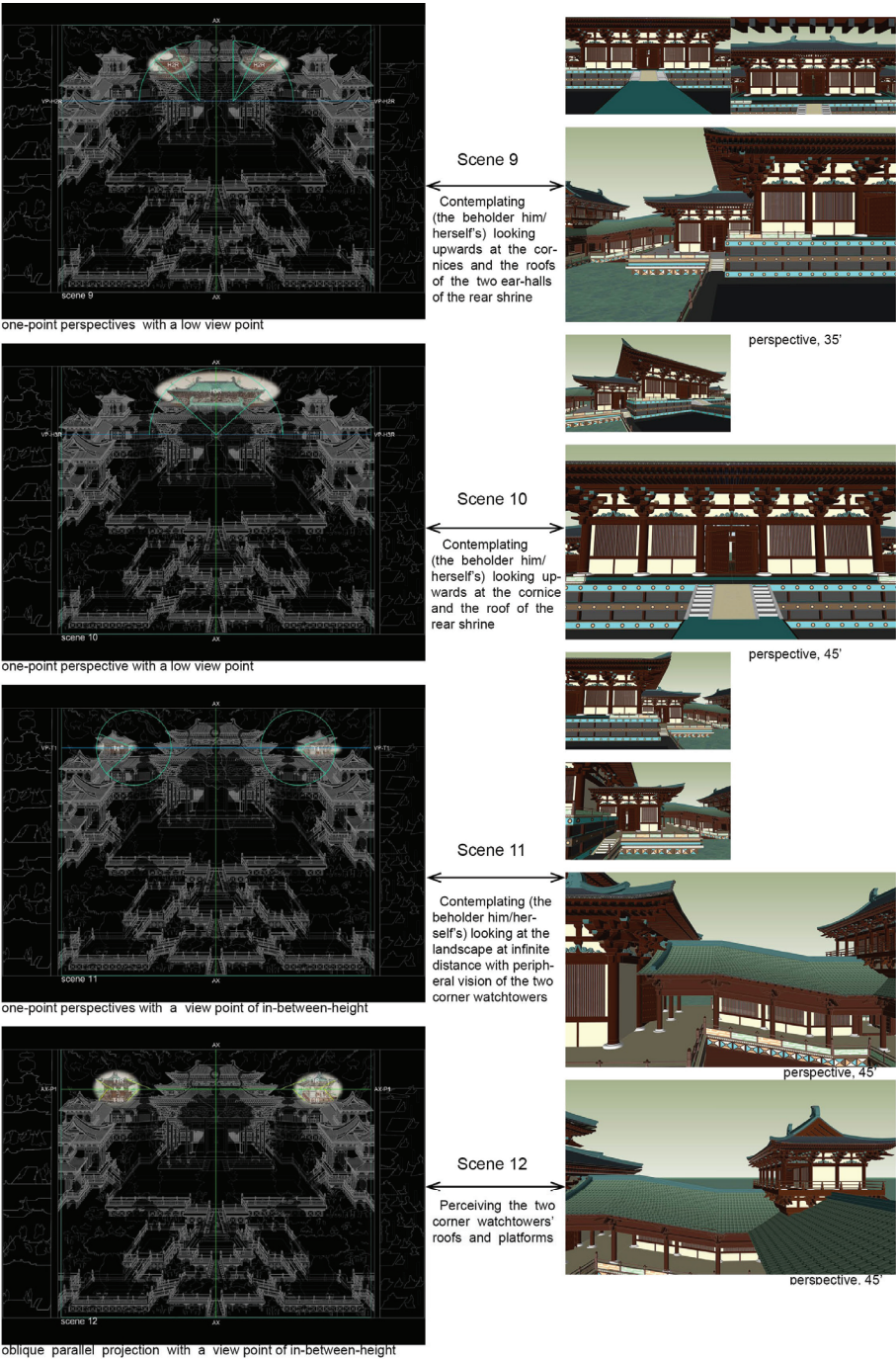


Figure A1. Cont.

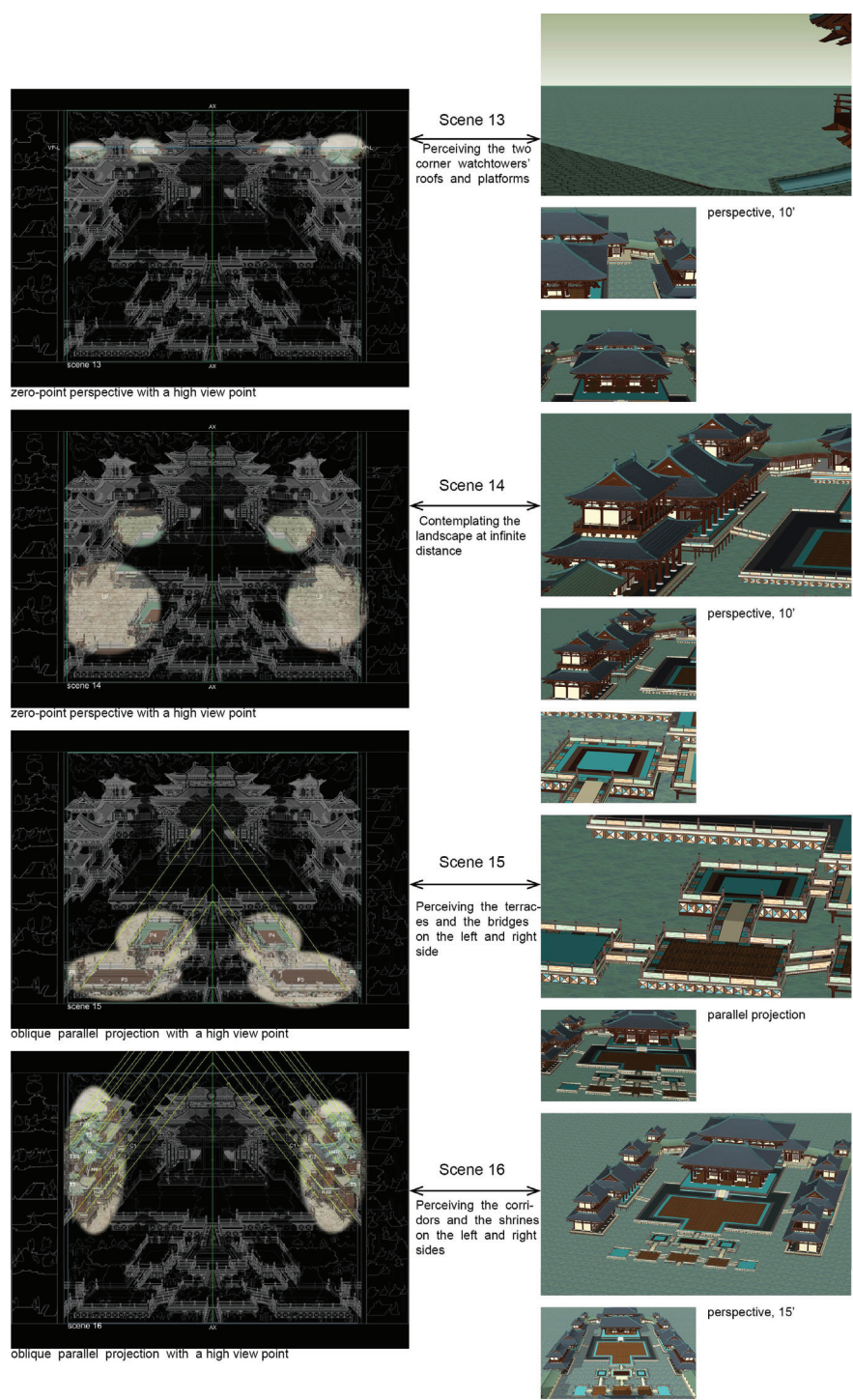


Figure A1. The sequential viewing of the Pure Land painting (left) paired with scenes from a walk-through experience (right).

Appendix B. Cave Groups at the Mogao Caves

Table A1. Cave numbers and plan drawings of cave suites at Mogao.

Set No. ¹	Cave Nos. [Main Cave(s)/Auxiliary Cave(s)]	Location of the Ear Caves or Auxiliary Caves ²	Construction Periods [Main Cave(s)+(Auxiliary Cave(s)), Renovation Periods of the Main Cave]	Brief Description of the Formation of the Cave Suite and Special Function of the Ear Cave If Applicable
1	272/(273+272a)	Cliff face	Northern Liang+(Northern Wei)	The two niches enshrining statues of meditating monks were added later.
2	254/(253+255)	Cliff face	Northern Wei+(Sui), Sui renovation	The two ear caves were added during the renovation of the corridor to the main cave.
3	285/(286+287)	Antechamber, west wall above and north	Western Wei+(Western Wei+Early Tang), mid-Tang, Song, Xixia, Yuan renovations	Cave 286 was adapted from a high window above the corridor to Cave 285 during the construction of the latter, whereas Cave 287 was added later.
4	307/(306+308)	Antechamber, south and north walls	Sui+(Sui), Five Dynasties and Xixia renovations	The three caves were made and renovated in the same periods. The niche of the main cave was added later.
5	297+299+301/300	Antechamber, west wall middle	Northern Zhou+(late Tang)	Cave 300 was added between Caves 299 and 301, which were adapted to share an antechamber.
6	209/(210+209a)	Antechamber, south and north walls	Early Tang+(early Tang), Five Dynasties renovation	The main cave and at least one of the ear caves were made at the same time. I attributed number 209a to a half-damaged cave on the south wall of the antechamber of Cave 209. It is not included in the current numbering system.
7	103/(104+105+103a)	Antechamber, south and north walls	Early Tang+(mid- through late Tang);	Caves 104 and 105 are buddha image shrines with sculpted canopy-shaped niches typical of the mid-Tang period, whereas Cave 103a was a shadow cave of which a monk statue was recorded in the early twentieth century but is no longer extant.
8	323/(324+325)	Antechamber, south and north walls	Early Tang+(Xixia+Five Dynasties), Five Dynasties and Xixia renovations	Two ear caves added, respectively, during two renovations.
9	335/(336+337)	Corridor north wall and antechamber south wall	Early Tang+(late Tang), mid-Tang and Yuan renovations	The two ear caves were added later, probably during or between the subsequent renovations of the main cave.

Table A1. Cont.

Set No. ¹	Cave Nos. [Main Cave(s)/Auxiliary Cave(s)]	Location of the Ear Caves or Auxiliary Caves ²	Construction Periods [Main Cave(s)+(Auxiliary Cave(s)), Renovation Periods of the Main Cave]	Brief Description of the Formation of the Cave Suite and Special Function of the Ear Cave If Applicable
10	342/343	Corridor, north wall	Early Tang+(late Tang), Five Dynasties renovation	Cave 343 was originally cut onto the north wall of the corridor of Cave 342, and it was concealed in the Five Dynasties period. At some point later, it was broken into from the east wall of the main chamber of Cave 342.
11	347/((348+349))	Corridor, south and north walls	High Tang+(late Tang), Five Dynasties and Xixia renovation	The two ear caves were added later than the main chamber, probably during a renovation of the main cave, and the cave suite was together refurbished in the Xixia period.
12	225/(226+227)	Antechamber, west wall	High Tang+(mid-Tang+late Tang), mid-Tang and Five Dynasties renovations;	Cave 226 was added during the first time of renovation, whereas Cave 227 was probably added during the second time of renovation.
13	166/(167+168)	Antechamber, west wall	High Tang+(late Tang), mid-Tang, Five Dynasties, Song renovations	The ear caves were added later, and Cave 167 and the main cave were renovated in the same period (Song).
14	182/(181+183)	Antechamber, west wall	High Tang+(late Tang), Song renovation	The ear caves were added later.
15	186/(187)	Antechamber, west wall south	Mid-Tang+(Five Dynasties), Five Dynasties renovation	The two caves share an antechamber.
16	172/173	Corridor, south wall	High Tang+(late Tang), Song renovation	The ear cave was added during a renovation of the main cave.
17	176/(177+178)	Corridor, south and north walls	High Tang+(late Tang); mid-Tang and Song renovations	The two ear caves were added later, and the cave suite together was renovated in the Song period.
18	175+174/(174 niche)	Antechamber, north wall	High Tang+(Song), Song renovation	The niche on the north wall of Cave 174 (i.e., the antechamber of Cave 175) functioned as a shadow cave.
19	23/24	Antechamber, south wall	High Tang+(late Tang), mid-Tang and Five Dynasties renovations	The ear cave was added during or in-between the subsequent renovations of the main cave.
20	188/189	Antechamber, north wall	High and mid-Tang+(Five Dynasties), Five Dynasties, and Song renovations	The ear cave was added and renovated during the subsequent renovations of the main cave, whose construction was initiated in High Tang and completed in the mid-Tang period.
21	194/195	Antechamber, north wall	High Tang+(late Tang), late Tang and Xixia renovations	The auxiliary cave was added during the first renovation of the main cave.
22	197/(191+190)	Antechamber, south wall	Mid-Tang+(mid-Tang+late Tang), Five Dynasties and Song renovations	Caves 197 and 191 were constructed in the same period, whereas Cave 190 was added later.

Table A1. Cont.

Set No. ¹	Cave Nos. [Main Cave(s)/Auxiliary Cave(s)]	Location of the Ear Caves or Auxiliary Caves ²	Construction Periods [Main Cave(s)+(Auxiliary Cave(s)), Renovation Periods of the Main Cave]	Brief Description of the Formation of the Cave Suite and Special Function of the Ear Cave If Applicable
23	130/(130a+130b)	Corridor, south and north walls	High Tang+(High Tang), Song renovation	Caves 130a and 130b are located on the upper part of the ground-level corridor of Cave 130, and their positions indicate the existence of a mezzanine level in the ante-hall of Cave 130.
24	74/73	Antechamber, north wall	High Tang+(Song), Five Dynasties renovation	The ear cave was added later, probably during the renovation of the main chamber. At some point later, Cave 73 was broken into from the antechamber of Cave 72.
25	134/(133+135)	Antechamber, south and north walls	Mid-Tang+(mid-Tang), late Tang and Song renovations	The three caves were made and renovated around the same periods.
26	(376+378)/377	Antechamber, west wall middle	Sui+(Song); Song renovation;	The ear cave was added during the renovation of the two main caves that were adapted to share an antechamber.
27	386/385	Antechamber, west wall north	Early Tang+(Five Dynasties); mid-Tang, Five Dynasties renovations	The ear cave was added later around the Five Dynasties renovation of the main cave, which seems to be contingently constructed from the early to mid-Tang periods.
28	358/357	Cliff face, above the entrance corridor	Mid-Tang+(mid-Tang), Five dynasties, Xixia renovation	Cave 357 enshrines a meditating monk's statue and therefore might have been adapted to serve as a shadow cave. It was likely sheltered under a roof during a renovation of the main cave.
29	53/(469+52)	Main chamber and corridor, north walls	Mid-Tang+(mid-Tang+High Tang), Five Dynasties renovation	Cave 53 was expanded in the Five Dynasties, and Cave 469 was used as a sutra storage with an inscription dated 953 CE.
30	158/(157+158a+158b)	Cliff face	Mid-Tang+(mid-Tang+unknown period), Xixia renovation	Caves 157 and 158b seem to be a pair of ear caves which were made around the same time with the main cave, whereas Cave 158a seems unfinished.
31	159/(160)	Antechamber, north wall	Mid-Tang+(late-Tang)	The ear cave was added to the main cave and was later broken into from the cliff.
32	29/(490+28)	Cliff face	Late Tang (+High Tang)	Cave 29 is inserted in between the pre-existing Caves 490 and 28 or expanded from another pre-existing cave, and Cave 29's antechamber partly destroyed Caves 490 and 28.

Table A1. Cont.

Set No. ¹	Cave Nos. [Main Cave(s)/Auxiliary Cave(s)]	Location of the Ear Caves or Auxiliary Caves ²	Construction Periods [Main Cave(s)+(Auxiliary Cave(s)), Renovation Periods of the Main Cave]	Brief Description of the Formation of the Cave Suite and Special Function of the Ear Cave If Applicable
33	16/17	Corridor, north wall	Late Tang+(late Tang), Song/Xixia renovation	The ear cave was made at the same time or slightly later than the main cave and then concealed during the renovation of the latter. Cave 17 successively served as a shadow cave and for storage.
34	12/(11+13)	Antechamber, north and south walls	Late Tang+(late Tang), Five dynasties renovation	The ear chambers were likely made at the same time as the main cave, and Cave 11, which was fully refurbished in the Qing, exhibits positional and typological features of the late-Tang shadow caves.
35	9/(8+10)	Antechamber, north and south walls	Late Tang+(late-Tang), Song and Yuan renovations	The main cave, auxiliary cave, and ear cave were made around the same time.
36	136/137	Antechamber, north wall	Late Tang+(Five Dynasties), Song and Xixia renovation	The ear cave was made at the same time or slightly later than the main cave and then half destroyed by an expansion of the antechamber of the latter. Cave 137 served as a shadow cave.
37	138/139	Antechamber, north wall	Late Tang+(late Tang), Five Dynasties and Yuan renovations	The ante-hall of Cave 138 destroyed the ground and walls of a pre-existing cave; the main cave and the ear cave were made at the same time. Cave 139 served as a shadow cave.
38	152/(153+154)	Antechamber, west wall	Song+(mid-Tang), Uighur/Xixia renovation	The main cave was inserted between two pre-existing caves and the former's antechamber partly destroyed one of the latter (Cave 154). The cave suite together was renovated later.
39	261/261a	Antechamber, south wall	Five Dynasties+(Five Dynasties)	The main cave and the ear cave were made at the same time.
40	22/22a	Corridor, south wall	Five Dynasties+(Five Dynasties)	The main cave and the ear cave were made at the same time.
41	55/(55a+56+478+two unnumbered caves)	Antechamber, west wall	Song+(Sui+mid-Tang); Song renovation	The corridor of Cave 55 was located right below Sui Cave 55a, and the ante-hall of Cave 55 leads to the destruction and concealment of Sui Cave 56 and mid-Tang Cave 478 and two un-numbered caves.
42	444/443	Antechamber, north wall	High Tang+(Song), Song renovation	The ear cave was made during the renovation of the main chamber. Cave 443 served as a shadow cave.

¹ The table follows a chronological order: the initial construction period of the earliest cave in the cave group. The periods mentioned include the Northern Liang (398–439 CE), the Northern Wei (439–535), the Western Wei (535–557), the Northern Zhou (557–581), the Sui (581–618), the early Tang (618–710), the High Tang (710–781), the mid-Tang (781–850, also known as the Tibetan (Tubo) period), the late Tang (851–907), the Five Dynasties (907–960), the [early Northern] Song (960–1036), the Tangut (Xixia) period (1036–1227), and the Yuan period (1271–1368). ² In this study, “ear cave” refers to inhabitable caves and niches, whereas “auxiliary cave” refers to caves ample enough to be entered.

Notes

- ¹ As Mahāyāna Buddhism, the form of Buddhism in East Asia, embraces the concept of myriad Buddhas, it also develops the Buddha lands of ten directions and three times. In addition to the Western Pure Land, the popular Pure Lands include the Eastern Pure Land of Bhaiṣajyaguru, the medicine Buddha, and the Pure Land of Maitreya, the future Buddha.
- ² Western Pure Land tableaux in high-Tang Dunhuang caves include 20 Meditation Sūtra tableaux in Mogao caves 45, 66, 103, 113, 116, 120, 122, 148, 171 (3 pieces), 172 (2 pieces), 176, 194, 208, 215, 217, 320, and 446, and 5 Amitābha/Amitāyus Sūtra tableaux in Mogao Caves 44, 205, 445, 66, and 225.
- ³ There is much scholarship on *bianxiang*. See, for example. Wu (1992b).
- ⁴ Discussions of this Pure Land transformation tableaux on the north wall of Mogao Cave 172 are numerous; for a recent literature review, see Feng (2018, pp. 2–29). Architectural historian Xiao Mo considers this painting to be a quintessential example of architectural painting in ancient China. Xiao, Sun Ruxian, and Sun Yihua, among others, have proposed various layouts of the courtyard complex it depicts. Art historian Wu Hung instead examines the visual modes of the tripartite picture. See Xiao (2019, pp. 76–79, 293–97); Sun and Sun (2001, pp. 116–17, 125–27); Wu (1992a).
- ⁵ An *aspirant* refers to a sentient being who is born in the blissful land of Amitābha by transformation. The age of an aspirants at the moment of the transformational rebirth is not specified in Buddhist scriptures, but medieval Chinese painters usually depict them as babies.
- ⁶ While the most general practice is “being mindful of the (Amitābha) Buddha”, a specific meditation process called the “sixteen meditations” is introduced in the *Meditation Sūtra*. A historical discussion is included in a work of the eminent Tang monk Shandao 善導’s (613–81), *Guannian Amitofo xianghai sanmei gongde famen* 觀念阿彌陀佛相海三昧功德法門 [Methods for the merit of samādhi by visualizing the sea-like Image of Amitāyus-Amitābha].
- ⁷ A *kalpa* (劫) or aeon is the immensely long period of time defining the cycle of creation and re-creation of the universe in Buddhist and Hindu cosmology.
- ⁸ In general speaking, visualization is an important means of practice in Mahāyāna Buddhist theories. A practitioner, usually assisted by visual objects, actively evokes in their mind the presence of the divine beings and their dwelling place, for the purposes of self-identification and transformation. For recent studies on Buddhist visualization techniques, see Greene (2016) and Anderl (2020).
- ⁹ “歸去來，寶門開，正見彌陀升寶座，菩薩散花稱善哉，稱善哉。” “歸去來，見彌陀，今在西方現說法，拔脫眾生出愛河，出愛河。”
- ¹⁰ “一一觀之作七重行樹想。……一一樹上有七重網。一一網間有五百億妙華宮殿。” “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。”
- ¹¹ Chinese monks Huiyuan of the Jingying Temple 淨影慧遠 (523–92), Zhiyi 智顗 (538–79), Jizang 吉藏 (549–623), and Shandao offered four kinds of categorization of the sixteen meditations. This study follows Shandao’s categorization.
- ¹² For the sake of comparison, the technique of multiple vanishing points is also found in ancient Roman art wall painting (Little 1971), although the diagonal lines do not necessarily parallel one another like in the Mogao Cave 172 Pure Land painting. Art historians invented the term “vanishing vertical axis” “fishbone” and “herringbone” to describe a central vertical axis in a painting with multiple points for the placing of diagonal lines that shows the recession of visual elements in a spatial setting (Panofsky 1991, pp. 102–5). Yet the theory of vanishing vertical axis applied in the Roman context has been contested by a recent study by Small (2019), which suggested that concentric circles, grids, or a combination were more likely used for the design of Roman painted walls. The current study investigates, rather than painting techniques, the religious meaning the perspective potentially convey.
- ¹³ Excerpt from the Wu Sengtong stele (P. 4640), the most detailed accounts of the biography and cave construction activities of a Dunhuang monk official Wu Hongbian (d. 862). The manuscript is a copy around 900 CE of a commemorative stele whose text was compiled by a local scholar Dou Liangji in around 834 CE.
- ¹⁴ The dating of the ear-chamber Cave 173, as well as other caves in this study, is after Dunhuang Academy’s dating.
- ¹⁵ While *plastic* denotes “sculptural or pliable”, my use of the term follows the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s use: “light and continuously flowing instead of the heavy ‘cut and butt’ of the usual carpenter work.”
- ¹⁶ Data is based on measurements in the digital 3D model. For a discussion of the visibility of such design and a potential context of artistic competition, see Wu (1992a, pp. 59–60).
- ¹⁷ For a discussion of the visual and bodily experience of architecture, see Pallasmaa (2005, pp. 6–80).
- ¹⁸ Previously, Zhao and Duan (2019, pp. 165–67) surveyed archaeological drawings made by Shi Zhangru and concluded that the Mogao complex contains 69 cave groups in total. The current study, which is based on in situ fieldwork and records of early international expeditions, identifies some cases that were not represented in Shi (1996) or recognized by Zhao and Duan (2019) and removes those that do not meet the authors’ criteria for a “cave group”.
- ¹⁹ Among them, there are two types of miniature shrines. The first type, comprising of six cases, are memorial cave chapels of eminent monks. The second type, accounting for the rest, are caves or niches enshrining images of Buddhist deities. Neil Schmid,

researcher at the Dunhuang Academy, is one of very few scholars currently investigating these types of caves. Scholarship on the topic is otherwise scarce.

- 20 Excerpt from Zhang Yingrun's inscription on the antechamber wall of Cave 108 dated 939 CE.
- 21 Many Dunhuang scholars believe that the Cao-family Guiyijun period, ca. 914–1036, saw a massive construction of timber façades, ante-halls, and open-air murals, although a visual analysis has seldom been attempted.
- 22 Unfortunately, the pictorial contents of the mural cannot be discerned from the monochromatic photo or from the little that remains of the mural today.

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Article

The Establishment of Religious Landscapes and Local Social Life in Nanshan and Beishan, Dazu District, in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract: As an exemplary and quintessential representation of China's late-stage religious stone-carving art, previous research on the Dazu Rock Carvings has primarily concentrated on the typical cave remains in core areas like Baoding and Beishan. These investigations have been highly adept at archeological typology and iconographic analysis. This study, based on 134 extant inscriptions, reassesses the Beishan and Nanshan stone-carving complexes from the perspective of cultural heritage integrity. Through long-term landscape analysis, we uncovered their distinctive value in the construction of religious spaces during the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties. During the Song Dynasty (Zhao Song Dynasty), Buddhism held sway in Beishan, while Nanshan developed a comprehensive Taoist pantheon system encompassing the Three Pure Ones (Sanqing) and the Six Imperial Divinities (Liuyu). Together, they formed a religious spatial pattern of "Sakyamuni in Beishan and Taoist deities in Nanshan". Furthermore, since the Shaoxing era (1131–1162), inscriptions left by Confucian scholars and officials during their visits to these two mountains have been frequently encountered. This spatial overlap phenomenon mirrors the profound integration of religious practices and secular power in the Bashu region during the Song Dynasty. This research breaks through the traditional case-study paradigm. By systematically examining the spatio-temporal evolution of the stone-carving complexes and the network of inscriptions, it reveals that the religious landscape of Dazu is, in essence, the outcome of the cumulative layering of political power, economic resources, and cultural aspirations across diverse historical periods. In particular, the transformation of Beishan and Nanshan from the merit caves of military generals in the late Tang Dynasty to the cultural spaces of the gentry class in the Song Dynasty vividly demonstrates the local practice model in the secularization process of Chinese religious art from the 10th to the 13th century.

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Keywords: Dazu Rock Carvings; cliff statues; Nanshan; Beishan; local society

1. Introduction

After its introduction to China in 3rd century AD, cave art reached its zenith twice in northern China, around 5th and 7th centuries AD. However, this art form began its decline by the mid-8th century AD, following the Tianbao Era of the Tang Dynasty. At the same time, in the Yangtze River basin, the cliff carvings in Dazu County emerged as a significant new development. The Dazu Rock Carvings, constructed from the end of the 9th century to the mid-13th century, marked another peak in the history of Chinese grotto art, extending the history of Chinese grotto art for more than 400 years (Figure 1). The

Dazu Rock Carvings also stand as the last significant monument in the history of Chinese grotto art creation.

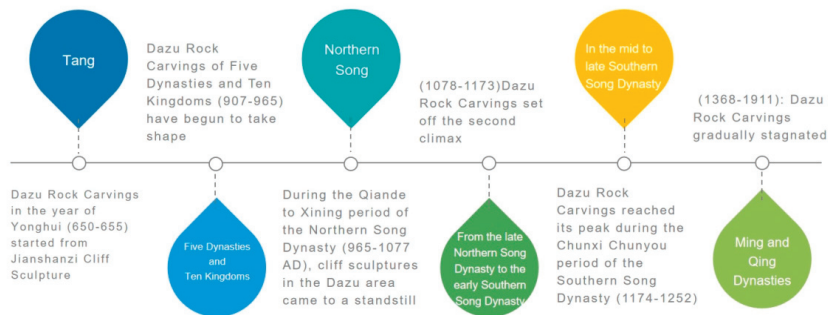


Figure 1. The main historical stages of the Dazu Rock Carvings.

The Dazu Rock Carvings, located in Dazu District, Chongqing, China, collectively comprise 141 cliff statues in the area (Figure 2). Dazu District in Chongqing is situated at the watershed of the Fulu 涪江 and Tuo rivers 沱江, the neighboring Anyue 安嶽 and Rongchang 榮昌, and the distant Yizhou 益州 and Chongqing. It was stated that “The necessities for clothing and food, essential for living, are not as good as in other counties. Although there are no oars and boats on the Fulu and Tuo rivers, there is an abundance of mulberry, hemp, and millet”¹ (Zhu 2003). Changzhou 昌州 is surrounded by mountains, with Yulong Mountain 玉龙山 to the east, which runs north–south and is a significant natural barrier dividing the boundaries of Yuzhou 渝州 and Changzhou. Its geography naturally lends itself to being a defensible city that is hard to attack. Cliff statues are an important medium for the establishment of Dazu’s material cultural heritage and religious space, which are particularly represented by the five mountains of Dazu, i.e., Baodingshan 寶頂山, Beishan 北山, Nanshan 南山, Shimenshan 石門山, and Shizhuanshan 石篆山. These mountains also host over 100 other smaller statues, with more than 50,000 individual carvings. The carvings predominantly feature Buddhist themes, with Taoism as a secondary element. In addition to the physical statues, a vast array of inscriptions on tablets and stones have been preserved.

Previous studies primarily concentrated on establishing the chronology of the Dazu Rock Carvings, identifying their distinctive styles, uncovering the excavation background of representative sites such as Beishan or Baodingshan, and examining the personal experiences of figures such as Zhao Zhifeng 趙智鳳. How to explore the relationship between the Taoist cliff statues in Dazu and the establishment of regional sacred space within an overall theoretical framework is a research topic that awaits further breakthroughs. This study regards the sacred space created by the grotto statues in Dazu as a unified entity and analyzes the establishment and transformation of religious space from a diachronic perspective. It holds that the sacred space of Dazu is not fixed; rather, it is shaped by the successive influences of various belief systems from different dynasties. Specifically, during the late Tang and Five Dynasties, the Southern Song Dynasty, Shaoxing Chunxi, and the late Southern Song Dynasty, there were different carriers of belief, such as the integration of military garrisons and Buddhist beliefs, local scenic Taoist spots that represent prayer, and the arrival of Buddhism, which, together, built the sacred space of Dazu.

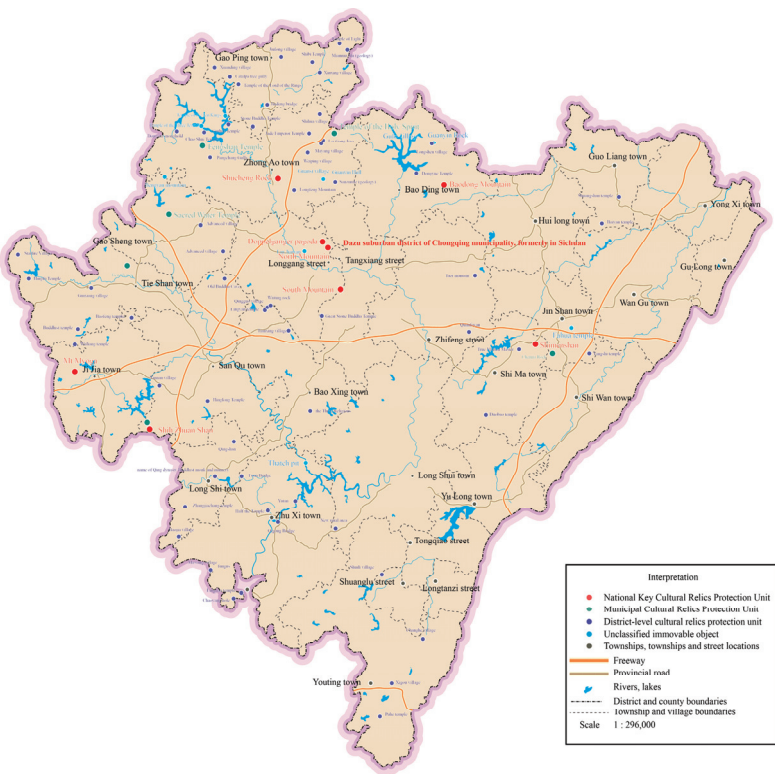


Figure 2. The distribution of the Dazhu Rock Carvings. The figure was redrawn by the authors based on the Chinese version of the map provided by the Dazhu Shike Yishu Yanjiusuo.

2. Beishan Fowan 北山佛灣: A Unique Fusion of Military Garrisons and Religious Space

Located in Dazhu County, the Jianshanzi 尖山子 site boasts the earliest dated carvings in the Dazhu area. These carvings, found in Cave 7 and featuring a dedication to the teachings of Maitreya with an inscription from the era of Emperor Gaozong of Tang (650–655), stand as the sole relics from the early Tang Dynasty in Dazhu. This region also served as the seat of state administration for Changzhou during the Tang’s Guangqi years. A century later, evidence of late Tang carvings re-emerged at the Shengshui Temple 聖水寺 in Gao-heng Township 高升鄉, at the junction of Dazhu and AnYue’s Zhongyi Township 忠義鄉 (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 9). Both of these early carving sites are geographically located in the northwestern part of Dazhu, near the border with AnYue (Chen and Deng 1994, pp. 30–37). However, due to their smaller scale and the lack of evidence of ongoing carving, the emergence of these two cliff carvings may well have been influenced by carving activities and artistic styles imported from Sichuan to the north and west, indicating that a sustained carving tradition and a substantial religious space had not yet truly taken shape here.

Among the local religious landmarks, none stand out more than the contributions of Wei Junjing 韋君靖, the county magistrate of Changzhou and the military governor of Jingnan 靖南軍, who popularized the practice that resulted in the massive Dazhu Rock Carvings at Beishan. Historically known as Longgang Mountain 龍崗山, the site’s cliff carvings were commissioned by the magistrate of Changzhou County and the Commander of the Four States of Chang, Pu 普, Yu 渝, and He 合 in the first year of Jingfu (892 AD) during

the late Tang Dynasty. This endeavor continued through the Five Dynasties period until the Shaoxing era of the Southern Song Dynasty, a span of over 250 years. The carvings at Beishan, centered around the Fowan area 佛湾, extend to locations such as Guanyin Slope 观音坡, Fo'er Rock 佛耳岩, and Yingpan Slope 营盘坡, making it one of the seminal works of late Chinese cave art.

The Beishan cliff carvings boast nearly ten thousand statues, which were predominantly funded by secular patrons for their prayers to Buddha. The subjects of these carvings encompass 51 varieties, with Tantric Buddhism forming the majority, accounting for over half of the total. Other significant sects include the Three-Stage School of Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. These subjects were extremely popular among the common people at the time, which was a product of the secularization of Buddhism, making them distinct from earlier Chinese cave temples. Renowned for their exquisite craftsmanship, artistic refinement, and esthetic elegance, the Beishan carvings illustrate the evolution and transformation of Chinese folk Buddhist beliefs and cave art styles from the late 9th century to the mid-12th century (the late Tang, the Five Dynasties, and the Song periods).

Among the Beishan cliff carvings, there are currently seven extant steles, seventeen inscribed poems and texts, and seventy-seven carved inscriptions (Table 1), all of which hold significant value for the study of historical geography, religious beliefs, cave chronology, and historical figures (Figure 3). The “Wei Junjing Stele”, inscribed by the military judge 军事判官将仕郎 and former sheriff of Jingnan County, Hu Mi 胡密, and carved in the second year of the Qianning Era of Emperor Zhaozong of Tang (895 AD), reveals that the carvings at Beishan began in the first year of the Jingfu Era of the late Tang (892 AD) and were completed by the sixteenth year of the Shaoxing Era (1146 AD), spanning over 250 years. The “Wei Junjing Stele” is included in both “Essentials of Historical Geography” 读史方輿纪要 (Gu and Shi 2005, pp. 3278–79) and “Complete Literature Works of the Tang Dynasty” 全唐文 (Chen 2005, pp. 1096–97) from the Qing Dynasty. The creation of these cliff carvings was closely related to the rise in the military governors during the late Tang period and the deep development of local armed forces. During the Qianfu Era, the Huang Chao 黄巢 rebellion occurred, and Emperor Xizong of Tang fled to Chengdu. In the Shuzhong 蜀中 region, various military governors fought for power, with many regional warlords and former military governors establishing their own territories through continuous warfare. Wei Junjing, the county governor of Changzhou and the temporary commander of four states (Dazu, Anyue, Chongqing, and Hechuan), as well as the supervisor/military governor of Jingnan, held his position in Changzhou. In seeking divine protection, he initiated the carvings at Beishan. The “Wei Junjing Stele” mainly records the construction of Yongchang Fortress 永昌寨 and the storage of grain in Dazu, as well as the carving of the Beishan Fowan in search of protection. It also mentions significant battles and the titles of military officers during the late Tang Dynasty. Scholars from Japan, due to their focus on the transformation from the Tang to the Song dynasty, explored the local society in the late Tang dynasty from the perspectives of official positions, military governors, and local militias. Scholars such as Yasuhiko Satake 佐竹靖彦, Masao Kurihara 栗原益男, and Kaisaburo Tano 日野開三郎 are representative figures in this research (Satake 1990, pp. 391–39; Kurihara 1960, pp. 1–14; Tano 1980, pp. 518–28). Thomas Suchan not only points out the neglect of past research on Wei Junjing’s support for Buddhism but also emphasizes that Dazu became the center of local administration and society after the Tang Dynasty, influencing the creation of cave carvings at Beishan (Suchan 2003, pp. 311–17). Suchan and Bei Jinyi 北进一 (Bei 1997, pp. 311–17) share similar views, suggesting that, in Sichuan, hills with carved grottoes were often used by local residents as natural military strongholds, indicating a close relationship between the grottoes and the regional society.²

Table 1. Cont.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 51	Buddhist Trinity	899	The Left Governor of the military was appointed as the commander of the Four Prefectures 四州都指挥. The military of Changzhou was led by the Silver, Green, and Glorious Grand Princes 银青光禄大夫, who were appointed as the Senior Grand Tutor, Wang Zongjing
Niche. 243	Sahasrabhuja Sahasranetra Avalokitesvara	901	Right Disciple Military Escort 右弟子军事押衙, Jian Zhijin 蹇知进
Niche. 245	Painting of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Sutra	Before the third year of Qianning	The preacher 化首 Liu Jingxi 刘净喜, disciples Li and Wen
Niche. 18		Before the second year of Guanghua	Jingnan Army

Note: This table is mainly based on the Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu (1999) and the collation of on-site surveys.

2.1. Construction on Beishan During the Tang and Five Dynasties Periods

Among the 20 statues recorded in the Shu Dynasty’s chronological records, there are two instances where the donors held specific official positions (Niche. 53 and Niche. 281), identified as the Third Commander of the Right Army 右衙第三軍散副將 and the Head of the Right Cavalry Unit in charge of official affairs 右廂都押衙知衙務, respectively. These account for 10% of the recorded donors with inscriptions. The remainder, approximately 90%, consists of individuals without official titles and general members of the public involved in the creation and dedication of the statues (Table 2). This represents a significant increase in the proportion of non-military and political officials, as well as the general public, compared with the Tang Dynasty.

Compared to the Tang Dynasty, the proportion of local officials contributing to the creation of niches in the Fowan Grottoes diminished during the Five Dynasties period. Conversely, the participation of individuals without official titles and female donors saw a notable increase. During the Five Dynasties period, Changzhou was not peaceful, experiencing numerous rebellions and conflicts. In the 53rd niche of Beishan, it is recorded that in the fifth year of Yongping (915), Xi Yan, the son of the scattered deputy general Zhong Shenneng, was killed by rebels. This illustrates the tense relationship between rebels and the local military and political authorities. The activity of creating statues was closely associated with Buddhist fasting ceremonies, as seen in Niches 39 (the Blazing Glory Buddha) and 37. During this period, representations of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha and Avalokitesvara became prominent themes in the Buddhist statues of the main deities. The Dharani Sutra, possessing the ability to “benefit the living” and “transport the deceased”, was frequently depicted along with incantations and pillar images in the Beishan grottoes of the Later Shu. This indicates that the Dharani Sutra was a significant component of Buddhist faith during the Five Dynasties period.

During the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, specifically during the reign of Emperor Taizong (990–994), the Dazu region experienced a civilian uprising. Longgang Mountain, which is located to the north, served to house the official military garrison of Changzhou prefecture. As recorded in “Geography Records of the Song Dynasty” (Tuo-tuo 1971, p. 2218), Changzhou was designated as a strategic military region.³ The towering mountains within Changzhou acted as natural barriers and vantage points for the city. During the era of Emperor Taizong, the official Lu Bin 盧斌 was assigned to quell the rebellion in Shu, and the rebels led by You Ren 任誘 had stationed their troops on this mountain. Locals mentioned that if there was a disturbance in other counties, signal fires would be

lit there⁴ (Zhu 2003, p. 1122). Local rebels were stationed within the Changzhou jurisdiction. Moreover, the earliest dated carvings from the Song Dynasty at the Beishan Fowan site are believed to be from the third year of the Daguan Era (1110)—specifically, Carving No. 286, which depicts the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. In the third year of the Qiande Era (965), Emperor Taizong centralized the elite troops from various regions in the imperial capital, forming the Imperial Guard 禁軍, while the soldiers remaining in their localities were referred to as “Barrack Troops 廂軍”. After the Xining 熙寧 Era (1068–1077), there are records of 45 counties in Sichuan organizing their own Barrack Troops, which were also known as Ke’ning Troops (Tuotuo 1971, pp. 4645, 4690, 4695). The recently discovered Cave 168 on Beishan features a statue of Arhats donated by the Commanding General and his wife, Wen Zhi, from the Ke’ning Army, dated to the fourth year of the Jianyan Era (1130). There is an inscription reading “Changzhou Ke’ning” found below the statues of the second row of Arhats on the left side of the left wall. Furthermore, the 137th niche was explicitly carved by ten Ke’ning Army generals, with the inscription positioned in the upper left corner of the wall.

Table 2. Chronological information of statues in the Beishan Fowan during the former and later Shu Dynasties.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 32	Surya-prabha candra-prabha	913	Mrs. Zhou enshrined and worshiped surya-prabha and candra-prabha for her deceased mother
Niche. 53	Amitabha Avalokiteshvara Kṣitigarbha	915	The Deputy General of the Third Army of the Right Yamen, Zhong Shenneng 種審能, for deceased son Xi Yan 希言 who was wounded by a thief
Niche. 39	Prajvalosnisah	922	Disciples Wen Mengda 溫孟达, Yu Yanzhang 于彦章, Liang Gui 梁覓, Chen Ji 陈季, Deng Zhijin 邓知进, Yang Zonghou 杨宗厚, Cheng Yanhui 程彦晖, Wang Mengyan 王孟言, Wang Dequan 王德全, and Chen Jing donated 陈敬造.
Niche. 27	Avalokiteshvara	938	
Niche. 37	Kṣitigarbha	940	Right disciples Yu Yanzhang and Deng Zhijin
Niche. 35	Sakyamuni	941	
Niche. 244	Kṣitigarbha	945	
Niche. 281	Bhaisajya Guru usnisa-vijaya-dharani Dhvaja	954	Liu Gong 刘恭, Right Disciple, and his family in the Right Chamber of the Imperial Magistracy Liu Gong
Niche. 260	usnisa vijaya dharani	955	Anonymous
Niche. 279	Bhaisajya guru vaidūrya prabhārāja	955	Wang Chengxiu 王承秀, the head of the Tongyin official line 通引官, and his female disciples.

Note: This table is mainly based on the Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu (1999).

On the initial carving day, commanders of the Changzhou Ke’ning Army, led by Wen Zhi, jointly donated three thousand large coins for the rendering of this tablet, so that it may stand firm and not be lost. On the double ninth day of the Jiaoyin year of the Song Dynasty, this was respectfully inscribed. The inscription is dedicated to the memory of Mother Xue, family Ren, and male Jinshi (Huang and Liu 2016).

Niche no. 149 niche houses a statue of Avalokitesvara sponsored by Ren Zongyi 任宗易 during the Second Year of Jianyan (1128). The purpose of constructing the image was to forever be a sight for the people to venerate and pray for an end to war. In the twelfth year of Shaoxing (1142), the military and state affairs of Changzhou requested the prosper-

ity of the nation and the well-being of the entire family. In the thirteenth year of Shaoxing (1143), Zhao Pengnian 趙彭年, who held the positions of deputy magistrate 錄事參軍 and justice 司戶司法 in Changzhou, included wishes for the stability of the barbarians and the Han, as well as the health and harmony of his family, when he initiated the carving of a statue. Analyzing the themes of the Beishan Grottoes and their donors, it becomes evident that, throughout the late Northern Song Dynasty, especially during the reign of Emperor Shenzong, the defensive military nature of the Changzhou region was paramount (Fang 2013). It was not until the sixteenth year of Shaoxing (1146), when the Beishan Grottoes were gradually completed, that this became an important religious landmark in the local area. The influence of this religious site extended beyond the Dazu region, including areas such as Puzhou and Yuzhou, with its primary radiation being centered on the Zizhou 梓州 and Tongchuanfu Roads 潼川府.

2.2. Construction on Beishan in the Song Dynasty

During the Northern Song Dynasty, the construction activities on Beishan were less documented with inscribed dedicatory tablets. At this time, the religious landscape encompassed not only Beishan but also a cluster of temples and monasteries in the northern part of the city and its surrounding areas. Dozens of portable rock carvings and sculptures were discovered, which suggests that these sculptures were largely supported by temples. Sites from the Song Dynasty, such as the Dazhong Temple 大鐘寺, Shibi Temple 石壁寺, and Yan'en Temple 延恩寺, have been identified. The Mongol–Song Wars resulted in the partial or complete destruction of many temples and religious sites in various mountains and cities.

During the Southern Song Dynasty, local officials personally participated in sculpting activities and became the primary sponsors of representative niches and cave complexes. For instance, the Zhuanlunzang Cave on Beishan is renowned as one of the most exquisite and well-designed large cave complexes created during the Shaoxing years. Its sponsors were typically high-ranking, directly governed local officials. In the twelfth year of Shaoxing (1142), Zhang Xinmin, the military governor of Changzhou, along with the deputy magistrate of Changzhou, led their followers and provided funding for the creation of the same niches (Table 3). By the Shaoxing Era of the Southern Song Dynasty, the construction of Beishan Fowan had been completed; it had become a popular local tourist attraction and continued to be until the Qiandao Era. In the tenth year of Shaoxing (1140), Beishan had already become a famous landmark in the Changzhou area and its surrounding regions. On the right side of niche no. 137, which depicts the figure of Vimalakirti 維摩詰, there is an inscription by a person from Pu Prefecture visiting the site: “Pu Ci 普慈, Zhao Zicong 趙子充, together with his younger brother Rouwen 柔文 and his nephew Tingyan 廷彥, on the 23rd day of the fourth month of the Genshen year (1140), visited the site accompanied by the gentleman Nandeyan 男德言”. At this time, Lv Yuanxi 呂元錫, in the fourth year of the Southern Song Dynasty’s Chunxi Era (1177), came to Beishan for a summer retreat with his brothers Lv Yuanmu 呂元牧 and Lv Yuanbing 呂元丙. They cooked tea, played chess, composed poems, and left an inscription on the outside of the left wall of niche no. 288. This sacred religious site, from the era of the Southern Song Dynasty’s Shaoxing years to that of Emperor Xiaozong, served not only as a gathering place for literary figures but also as a military encampment and religious site. The religious attribute overlapped with the attribute of a local landmark, with the former appearing to gradually weaken in prominence.

Table 3. Chronological information of statues in the Beishan Fowan during the Song Dynasty.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 286	Avalokiteshvara	1110	
Niche. 180	Avalokiteshvara	1116	Deng Weiming 邓惟明, the younger brother of the gentleman in front of the county gate 县门前仕人.
		1120	Anonymous
		1122	Disciples who believe in Buddha in Dangju City, etc.
		1121	Mr. and Mrs. Li Shiming 李世明, a kind family living in Changzhou City.
Niche. 168	Arhat	1122	He Yixing 何仪兴 and his family, residents in the eastern suburbs of Yuan Township 袁乡, Dazu County, Changzhou.
			Mr. and Mrs. Miao Yi 苗以, a kind family living outside of Changzhou.
Niche. 155	Mahamayuri	1126	Fu Yuanjun 伏元俊 and son Fu Shineng 伏世能
Niche. 176	Maitreya	1126	Fu Yuanjun, a craftsman living in Honshu 本州 Era, was able to carve Maitreya and the Great Sage of Sizhou 泗州
Niche. 177	Sizhou great sage	1126	Fu Yuanjun (craftsman)
Niche. 149	Cintamanicakra Avalokitesvara	1128	Grand Official 奉直大夫 Renzongyi and his wife Woman Du
	Portrait of sponsor Ren Zongyi in left Corner of the Main Wall		Ren Zongyi 任宗易 praised himself... He painted the feet of a snake and created this stone house
Niche. 137		1134	Wen Zhi 文志 donated three strings of money
			Li Dalang's 李大郎 redecoration, Luo Fuming 罗复明, resident rock monk Zhicheng 志诚
Niche. 136	Revolving Archives Avalokiteshvara	1142	The Left Dynasty's scattered officials sent 左朝散大夫, the military governor of Changzhou Zhang Xinmin 张莘民, to dispatch him
	Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra	1143	Zhao Pengnian 赵彭年, Left engaged in Langchangzhou recruitment, military counselor, and chief justice
	Mahās-thāmaprāpta	1143	Disciple Chen and his wife Wang who live outside the city and worship kindness
	Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra	1143	Zhao Pengnian, Left engaged in Langchangzhou recruitment, military counselor, and chief justice
	Avalokiteśvara	1146	Wang Sheng 王升 and wife He, who are disciples worshiping Buddha in the city
Niche. 110	Bhaisajya Guru		Changzhou resides in Zhengdong Street, where the disciples of Buddha Zhang Hui 张辉, Liu Shi 刘氏, and their entire family reside

Note: This table is mainly based on the Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu (1999) and the collation of on-site surveys.

Information from the 42 niches with inscriptions in the Beishan Fowan indicates that the main period of statue creation was concentrated in the late Northern Song Dynasty under Emperor Huizong, in the early Southern Song Dynasty under Emperor Gaozong, and in the period of Emperor Xiaozong and most of the providers were local officials. This was also the time when the cliff carvings on Nanshan were constructed and completed. Past studies have not discussed the relationship between Nanshan and Beishan within the overall construction process of the regional religious landscape. In fact, the construction of Nanshan and the complete establishment of the religious landscape on Beishan belong to the same period, with both being completed during the Shaoxing years.

3. Nanshan: A New Local Sacred Space in the Shaoxing Period

Yu Di Ji Sheng 輿地紀勝 compiled by Wang Xiangzhi during the Southern Song Dynasty, stands as a pivotal geographical compendium. It meticulously chronicles the hierarchical administrative divisions of the sixteen southeastern provinces, prefectures, military commands, and surveillance areas following the southward shift in the Song Dynasty, boasting an extensive and rich content. In the compilation process, Wang Xiangzhi conducted meticulous scrutiny and incorporation of geographical features such as mountains, rivers, scenic spots, inscriptions, as well as poems and chants documented in diverse local chronicles and illustrated classics. Notably, he placed particular emphasis on humanistic elements, endowing this work with substantial historical value. Wang Xiangzhi of the Song Dynasty described Nanshan concisely: Nanshan is located five miles south of Dazu County. On the mountain, there are the Dragon Cave, a sacrificial altar, and a prayer hall. In the second year of Chunhua (1099), the Imperial Attendant 供奉官, Lu Bin, suppressed the remnants of the rebellion in Shu led by Ren You and others. Bin led his troops to stay at Changzhou's Nandou Mountain 南斗山, where Nanshan is the highest and the view is broad and distant. The locals said, "If there is an emergency in other counties, a signal fire is lit here" (Wang 2005, p. 4880).

In the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, Nanshan was a location that was closely associated with local civil and military activities. Lu Bin was responsible for the pacification of the Shu thieves led by Ren Yui, who were active in the area of Dazu East Longshui Town at that time. By the mid-12th century, Nanshan and Beishan had become the most representative scenic landmarks in Chongzhou county. From the perspective of Feng Shui, the geographical location of Nanshan and Beishan was crucial for the city of Dazu. The cliff carvings on Nanshan, located at the highest point of the Nandou Mountain range in Dazu, accompanied an important passage to the south of Dazu, integrating military defense, religion, and social organizational functions. The religious beliefs of the people of Dazu were brought together in this sacred space; the North Mountain was dedicated to Buddha, and the South Mountain was dedicated to Taoism, so one was dedicated to each. Previous studies concentrated on discussions of the Dazu Rock Carvings on Beishan or Baodingshan, but in the Song Dynasty, Nanshan also played a crucial role in the local society of Dazu. Additionally, Nanshan was considered a blessed place for protecting Chongzhou due to its efficacy in prayers for rain during consecutive years of droughts, attracting many famous scholars and literati to imitate the ancients, explore, and leave statues. This new sacred local space for Dazu, constructed from multiple visual landscapes of sculptures, miraculous legends, scenic mountains, and inscriptions by literati, reached its peak during the Song Dynasty's Shaoxing and Chunxi years.

3.1. The Local Elite and the Rise in the Temple Niche

During the late Northern Song Dynasty and the early Southern Song Dynasty, particularly between the Yuanfeng Era of the Northern Song Dynasty and the Shaoxing and Qian dao Eras of the Southern Song Dynasty, was a significant period of growth and prosperity for the Dazu Rock Carvings. It should be emphasized here that, according to statistics from investigations, in this period, more than twenty cliff statues remained in the territory of Dazu (confirmed). Unlike the statues of the northern royal family or military leaders, the small cliff statues in Dazu during the Song Dynasty were mostly funded by the local gentry and their families, especially during the period from the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty to the Chunxi period of the Southern Song Dynasty, and they featured a variety of themes and the coexistence of deities from multiple religions. With the exception of Shizhuanshan, which was excavated in the first year of the Yuanfeng Era (1078), and Shimenshan, which appeared in the first year of the Shaoxing Era (1094), the rest of

the statues are dated to the Shaoxing and Qiantao Eras (1131–1173) of the Southern Song Dynasty. A prominent characteristic of this period was the emergence of cliff-side statues sponsored by individuals, families, and villages. Distinct from the attributes of the military-garrison-related significance in the rock carvings of Beishan and with officials as sponsors, the Dazu Rock Carvings in the Southern Song Dynasty exhibited a more pronounced nature of spontaneous folk associations. Moreover, they became more intimately associated with the supplications for disaster avoidance in the agricultural-based society.

Translated with DeepL.com (free version), in 1082, during the Northern Song's Yuanfeng Era, Yan Xun 嚴遜, an immigrant from elsewhere, provided land for the carving of Shizhuanshan, which took several decades to complete and included fourteen niches featuring subjects from Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Chu 2014). Afterward, there were frequent instances of cliff carvings within the county, predominantly featuring Buddhist and Taoist subjects, as well as local themes such as the Holy Mother and Chuanzhu 川主 (local deities). The Shaoxing era was a particularly active time for the creation of Dazu statues, especially those related to Taoism and other religions. In 1136, during the Shaoxing Era, Fengshan Temple 峰山寺 focused on Buddhism but also included subjects such as the Three Officials and the Holy Mother. Between 1143 and 1153 (the 13th to 23rd year of the Shaoxing Era), there was activity at Shucheng Rock 舒成岩, and in 1159, Sifo Temple 石佛寺 was carved. Unlike Beishan and Baodingshan, which were organized and planned, the rest were small in scale and mainly funded by individuals. More than 40 other small- and medium-sized cliffs created during the Song Dynasty have been found in the Dazu area, of which 14 appear to have Taoist themes, namely, Nanshan, Shucheng Rock, Shizhuanshan, Miaogao Mountain 妙高山, Shimenshan, Yuhuang Temple, Fo'an Bridge 佛安橋, Fo'er Rock, Shibi Temple, Guihua Temple 桂花廟, Fengshan Temple 峰山寺, Banbian Temple 半邊廟, Laojun Temple 老君廟, and Sifo Temple.

It should be noted that, during the Shaoxing Era, an individual named He Zhengyan 何正言 dedicated land for the carving of Taoist statues on Nanshan. Among the Dazu Rock Carvings, statues with Taoist themes are the largest, most beautifully crafted, and best preserved overall. According to inscriptions, the majority of the carvings on Nanshan were completed during the Southern Song Dynasty's Shaoxing Era. Carving activities continued into the Ming Dynasty, with many additional inscriptions being added during the Qing Dynasty and throughout the Republic of China Era (Figure 4). The main cave complexes include "Three Purities 三清古洞", "Three Holy Mothers Cave 三聖母洞", and "Dragon Cave 龍洞". During the Ming Dynasty's Zhende Era, the "Zhenwu Ancestor Cave 真武祖師洞" was also carved. "Three Purities" is a representative of the Nanshan cliff carvings. The fronts of the square columns in the cave are equipped with niches that house carvings of the deities Yu Qing 玉清, Tai Qing 太清, and Shang Qing 上清. On either side of the niches are carved statues of Liu Daojun 六道君. The cave walls are adorned with 220 floating carvings of Tianzun 天尊, totaling around 500 statues (Figure 5). In front of the area containing the Nanshan cliff carvings stands Yuhuang Temple 玉皇觀, which currently includes preserved ancient architectural structures, such as the front hall, Three Qing Hall, and Tai Qing Pavilion (Figure 6). Before the Qing Dynasty, the Nanshan stone carvings were under the jurisdiction of Yuhuang Temple (Figure 7). The Nanshan cliff carvings, which are rich in content, vividly reflect the pantheon of Taoist deities during the Song Dynasty and serve as tangible historical materials for the study of Taoist history.

The layout of Three Purities on Nanshan is characterized by the following features: firstly, in terms of the niche formats, unlike the small- and medium-sized shallow niches that dominated Taoist cliff statues during the Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties periods, those of Three Purities are rectangular in plan and have a wide depth. There are passageways connecting the left and right sides of the cave to the back wall, offering ample space for

the movement of devotees and ritual participants. Secondly, there is a central pillar in the cave on which the main deities are arranged, and the layout of multiple deities in a single area, which was the main feature in the Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties, was a new style that had not appeared in Taoist statues from the previous generations. Thirdly, there is a large and orderly sequence of heavenly deities surrounding the main deity, and there are 195 sensory heavenly deities on the east, west, and north walls. Fourth, it is not only the east and west walls that are filled with statues; twelve palace statues also appear on the left and right sides of the main wall. After the Yuan Dynasty, this survived in Yongle Palace in Shanxi as a representative of mural paintings similar to those on the left and right sides of the main wall. The layout features a blue dragon and white tiger symbolizing directions, along with an orderly arrangement of figures in procession. Therefore, the ancient cave of Three Purities has a strong hall-style deity layout that gives it a characteristic image arrangement distinct from Taoist cliff statues or the single statues that emerged in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

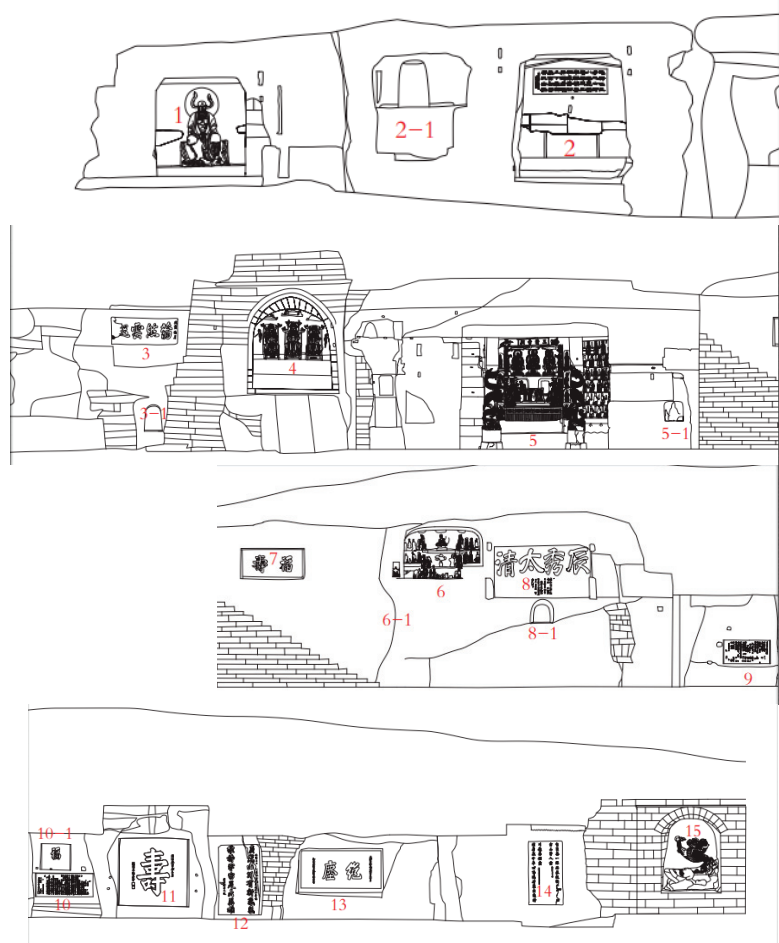


Figure 4. Elevation of the Nanshan cliff statues provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.



Figure 5. Deities on the center pillar of the Three Purities provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.

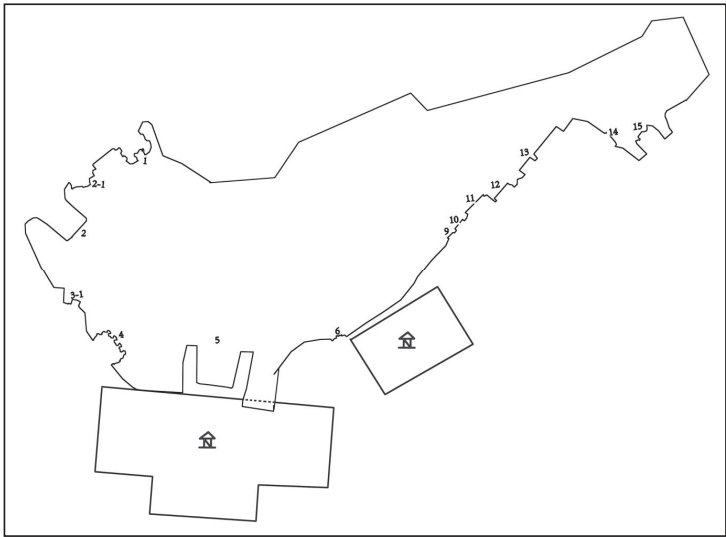


Figure 6. Drawing of the schematic plan of the Nanshan cliff statues in Dazu. The base picture was taken from Chongqing Publishing House and Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute (2019). *Dazu Shike Quanj* 大足石刻全集 (Vol. V, Part 1, p. 287, Figure 201). Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe.

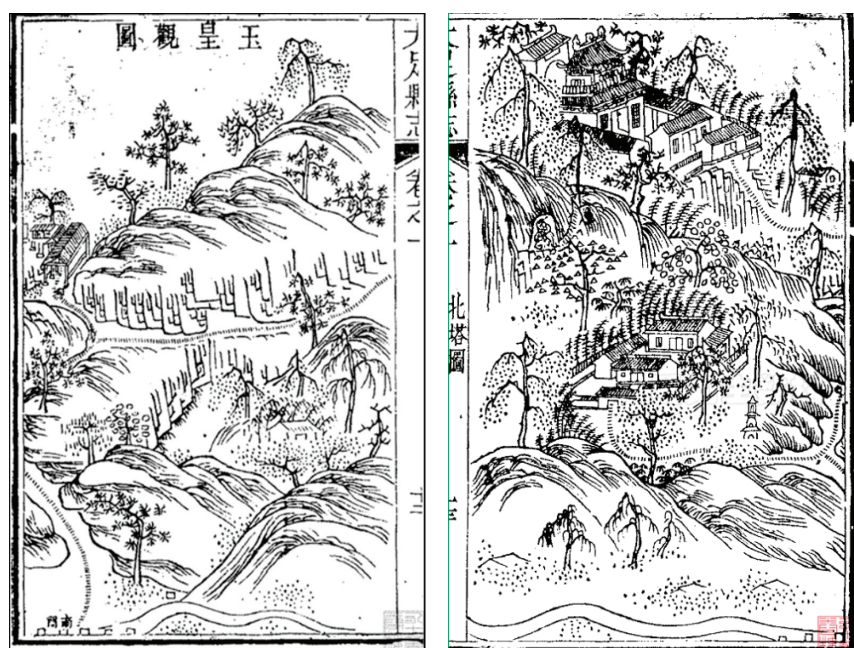


Figure 7. The panoramic view of the appearance of Jade Emperor Temple 玉皇觀 on Nanshan as depicted in the text and illustrations of the *Dazu County Annals* in the Qing Dynasty, Volume 1, pp. 12–13.

Due to the large differences from the Buddhist Center Pillar Cave in terms of time and space, the author believes that the rectangular layout of the Three Purities, the vast depth (5.58 m) of the niche, and the completion of the main body during the Song Dynasty make this cave similar to the third phase of cliff statues on Beishan. In Dazhu, Beishan was divided into the southern and northern sections of the cliff, totaling 290 niches. The construction on Beishan can be divided into three phases (Li and Wang 1988, pp. 31–45; Song 1996, pp. 64–76) that involve the southern section of the earlier excavation, in addition to the 5th cave, the 9th cave, the 10th cave niche, and the rest of the shallow niches. Since the southern section of the 83rd grotto began to appear during the Song Dynasty, the Song Dynasty statues continue into the northern section. Although the Beishan statues began to be built in the late Tang Dynasty, they demonstrate the prosperity and overall appearance of the Song Dynasty. Compared with the Late Tang Dynasty, during the Song Dynasty, more large and medium-sized grottoes appeared on Beishan, represented by the 104th grotto, the 206th–112th grottoes, and the larger-scale niches; these were more concentrated in the Southern Song Dynasty—for example, the 133rd cave, the 136th cave, the 149th cave, the 155th cave, the 168th cave, the 180th cave, the 245th cave, and the 288th cave. At this time, the most exquisite carving technology appeared; this was the most representative of the period of the “full bloom” of the Beishan cliff statues. For example, in the 138th cave of the Wheel of the Universe 轉輪經藏窟, the plan was rectangular, and the cave was 4.05 m high, 4.1 m wide, 6.79 m deep, and 1.18 m deep to provide a setting for the Wheel of the Universe; there was a central pillar to support the roof of the cave. The Wheel measured about 2.61 m in diameter, and there were eight small columns around it.

In the first year of Jingkang (1126), the 155th cave (Large Buddha Mother Peacock King Cave) was opened. It had a flat roof and rectangular plan. The cave was 3.47 m high, 3.22 m wide, and 6.07 m deep. From the mouth of the cave, there was a depth of 3.28 m

to the central column, and the column sections were fan-shaped. The main statue of the Peacock King depicted him sitting cross-legged. In the second year of Jianyan (1128), the 149th cave (Avalokiteśvara Cintamani-cakra) was constructed. It had a flat roof, and the plan was square. The cave was 3.43 m high, 3.22 m wide, and 3.26 m deep. The main statue was of Avalokiteśvara Cintamani-cakra. The left and right walls were used for the Relief of Heavenly Deities, depicted as standing on top of clouds, and each wall had a three-layer arrangement.

In the Song Dynasty, the 168th cave containing the entirety of the Beishan cliff statues was constructed. It was one of the caves with the largest size and volume. It had a flat roof and a rectangular plan. The cave was 3.3 m high, 3.14 m wide, and 7.1 m deep. The middle of an octagonal platform for the “Stupa of Western Chan Master 西域禪師坐化塔” was 4.52 m from the mouth of the cave. According to the inscription, it can be seen that there was additional repair in the seventh year of the Chongzhen Era of the Ming Dynasty (1631). There was a niche on the main wall that contained the main Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, all sitting cross-legged on a lotus platform. The main wall and the left and right walls were divided into six upper and lower layers and engraved with “Five hundred Rohan 五百羅漢”. Each layer was about 0.4 m high. The left wall depicted the following statue inscription: “Lu Cuntong, with sincere devotion, painted these sixteen arhats facing each other under multicolored clouds, in the fourth year of Xuanhe (1122)”. The following cave inscription was on the right wall: “Yang Yanxiang from Guolue and Lu Yuangeng from Shenguo came here from Dechang to seek coolness on 16 June, Chunxi Wuxu (1188)”. In addition to Beishan, similarly large niches have also been found in Shimenshan Ten-Avalokitesvara 十聖觀音窟, 8th Peacock Cave, and 10th Sanhuang Cave 三皇窟 in Dazu.

The excavation of large-scale niches continued until the Shaoxing period of the Southern Song Dynasty. In the previous section, through the analysis of the sizes and shapes of niches, it was found that, from the late Tang Dynasty, Beishan was used as a military base, and mostly individuals or small family units sponsored the construction of these niches. The scale of the niches was small, with many of the statues featuring inscriptions with prayers for peace, well-being, and aspirations. With the gradual stabilization of the local community after the Northern Song Dynasty, many niches were reimagined, and associations were formed to co-fund the excavation of engravings by local officials together with the local elite. Common donations were used to create niches of exquisite and large scales, so after the Northern Song Dynasty, large niches prefigured the emergence of the possibility of grottoes.

The layout of Three Purities is similar to that of the central stupa of early Buddhist caves (Figure 8, also known as Chaitya 支提窟). This style was traced back to the early Indian monastery stupa 窣堵波, which appeared as early as the 2nd century BC in the Ajanta Caves 阿旃陀石窟. The central pillar of these caves was important in the niches. With the spread of Buddhist statues and construction techniques to the East, the Qiuci 龜茲 region in the central pillar style appeared, although there were changes in the form of the central pillar as the core of the grottoes to provide space for the activities of believers around it to obtain blessings. Therefore, these spaces had the same function as that of the pagoda (Li 2003; Miyaji and Li 2009, p. 348; Li 2006, pp. 19–24). After entering China, such niche systems were mainly found along the northern Silk Road, from Qiuci and Dunhuang to the Hexi Corridor, and they are mostly dated between the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Sui Dynasty. From Central Asia to Xinjiang, in the first station of the Kizil Grottoes, caves with a central pillar were built for the three phases of the Subai (Su 1989, pp. 10–22). These can be divided into several important types depending on the statue. In the Hexi Corridor 河西走廊, caves with a central pillar were also abundant; they were concentrated in the east grotto of Jinta Temple 金塔寺, Thousand Buddha Cave 千佛洞 south of the second

grotto, in the area of the eighth grotto of Mati Temple 馬蹄寺, in the eighth grotto of North Temple, Thousand Buddha Cave in Wenshu Shan, and the second and fourth Changma grottoes 昌馬石窟. Most of these caves were excavated in the Five Nomadic Tribes and Sixteen States (301–439) period, and the northern Liang was the most prosperous. They also still appeared in the Yungang Grottoes, but to the east of Chang'an, Luoyang, and Handan, as well as north and south of the Central Plains—represented by the Xiangtangshan Grottoes 響堂山—such caves with a central pillar were not seen. It can also be assumed that these central-pillar caves were mainly popular in the west of the region during the Sui dynasty before the Hexi. After the Northern Zhou Dynasty, they did not appear in the south and east of the Pingcheng region. In Sichuan, only Huangze Temple 皇澤寺 in Guangyuan, which was in the style of the Song Dynasty, survived, and it showed traces of restoration during the reign of Emperor Shenzong of the Northern Song Dynasty.

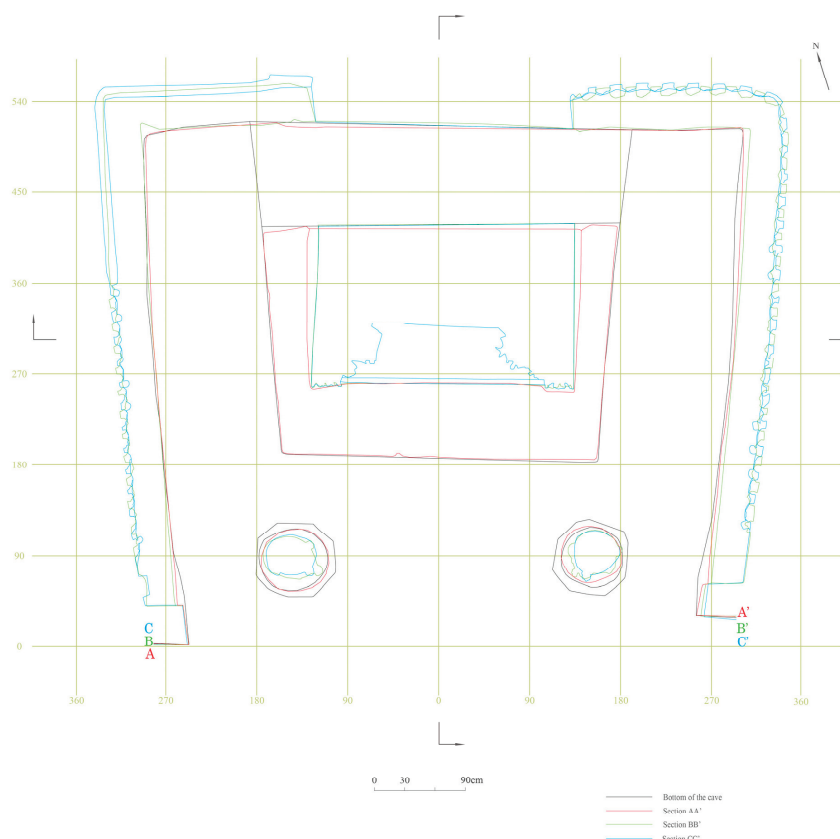


Figure 8. Layout of Nanshan's Three Purities Ancient Cave. The base picture was taken from Chongqing Publishing House and Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute (2019). *Dazu Shike Quanji* 大足石刻全集 (Vol. V, Part 1, Figure 223, p. 313), Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe.

3.2. Hall-Style Niches, Grottoes, and Visual Features of the Three Purities

Whether it was the Northern and Southern Dynasties' statue monuments and miniature shallow niches or the qualities of the Sui and Tang Dynasties' equipoise statues, groups of gods and goddesses, and Buddhist and Taoist seating, they all belonged to the stage of visual reproduction of "idolatry" in the history of Taoist statues, and they belonged to the sculpture family in the category of spatial art. Among the materials that have been seen

so far, Nanshan's Three Purities was the first example of the dual attributes of sculpture and architecture. The emergence of such an architectural space was most likely influenced by the wall paintings of temples and monasteries that flourished in the Western Sichuan region since the Tang and Fifth Dynasties. The most famous temple, Da Ci Temple in Chengdu, was not only a religious temple but also a stage for famous masters to show off their skills and for competitions, in addition to being a popular tourist attraction and a place for revelry during the four seasons of the year. Religious buildings such as Da Ci Temple provided the necessary physical space for worshippers, spectators, and ritualists, making it possible for spectators to walk around and view them. According to the characteristics of the spatial design of Sanqing Cave, it can be assumed that the guided viewing was predetermined by the cave statues through the spatial design and craftsmanship. On the one hand, this reflects the self-regulation of Taoist statues in terms of form and space in the Song Dynasty; on the other hand, it was also related to the flourishing of Taoist activities in this place in the Song Dynasty, as well as the important role played by the highly accomplished ceremonial personnel for Taoist activities in communicating between the heavenly and human beings and the holy and secular worlds. The Song Dynasty cliff statues show that Taoist sculptures were not only a medium for idolatrous worship, suspended high above the boulder cliffs to be looked at or worshiped from afar, as they were also not limited to providing Taoist insiders with statues of heavenly deities, but they also provided a friendly space for the general public to have a close-up experience and look at them. Due to the placement of the Three Purities in the center of vision, by analyzing the gaze of the deities, it was found that the central deity of the Three Purities was located in the focal point of the perspective and line of sight, and the prominence and emphasis placed on the Three Purities was in a style not seen in Taoist statues of the previous generation. When the gaze was extended, it was found that the whole cave had a high degree of design, and the visual center of the Three Purities was located on the central deity. The surrounding gods and goddesses of enlightenment all showed a closed space and visual composition (Figure 5).

As Taoist statues in architectural space, the statue motifs that appeared in the Three Purities were by far the earliest and most complete examples of the visual expression of the Taoist cosmic space. This was not only centered on the Six Gods and Three Purities but also incorporated the paid homage model, which had been popular since the Tang Dynasty, to construct a complete pilgrimage system for hundreds of heavenly deities. The composition of the Confucian Zhao–Mu System 昭穆之制 was rearranged in the Song Dynasty, and the Zodiac 黄道十二宫 was incorporated into the Taoist image system as a cosmic time sequence. This resulted in a new and fixed style of combining images of praying to the supreme heavenly deities of the Taoist religion in the Song Dynasty. The three Purities were the expression of Taoism in the Song Dynasty through the formation of the image of the universe; this can be seen in later generations of land and water paintings, as well as temple murals with the image of the “Farina” as one of the sources. Therefore, in a large number of Taoist temple murals surviving in Shanxi after the Jin and Yuan Dynasties, the continuation of the ancient cave of Sanqing can still be seen.

3.3. A Scenic Site Renowned for the Prompt Efficacy of Prayers

The earliest record of Nanshan comes from Wang Xiangzhi of the Song Dynasty, who described it concisely as follows: Nanshan is located five miles south of Dazu County. On the mountain, there are the Dragon Cave, a sacrificial altar, and a prayer hall. In the 2nd year of Chunhua (1099), the Imperial Attendant 供奉官, Lu Bin, suppressed the remnants of the rebellion in Shu led by Ren You and others. Bin led his troops to stay at Changzhou's Nandou Mountain 南斗山, where Nanshan is the highest and the view is broad and distant.

The locals said, “If there is an emergency in other counties, a signal fire is lit here⁵” (Wang 2005, p. 4880). Unlike the general notion of public merit statues, this is a cliffside statue complex that was explicitly used for rain-invoking rituals. During the Song Dynasty, the Sichuan region faced frequent droughts and floods, with a recorded 38 instances, which were particularly concentrated during the Shaoxing and Qiandao Eras.

There were five documented disasters on Tongchuanfu Road, Kuizhou Road (夔州路), and Zizhou Road, where Dazu was situated, making these areas the most frequently impacted. Droughts and floods resulted in starvation, rebellion, and the displacement of refugees. The Song Dynasty frequently intervened politically through official inspections, organized rain prayers, rent forgiveness, disaster relief, and tax reductions (Zhou 2017, pp. 39–49). By sorting through Table 4, one can find that, during the period of 1132–1136, there were consecutive severe droughts in Kui Zhou and Tongchuanfu Road. During the drought-prone period of the Southern Song Dynasty, people would pray against drought by opening caves and making statues. Thus, statues became the material medium for the prayers of civil society.

Table 4. Record of drought and flood disasters in Sichuan during the Song Dynasty.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
970	Shanxi, Bin Zhou 邠州	Summer drought	
966	Yi Zhou	It had not rained since May, and all the trees would dry up in September	
993	Liangchuan 两川	Severe drought in eastern and western Sichuan. Hungry people rioted everywhere	
995	Various roads in Sichuan and Shaanxi	Drought	The prime minister ordered subjects to pray for rain The various states in Sichuan and Shaanxi were allowed to bury the exposed corpses
1020	Li Zhou 利州 Road	Drought	
1030	Yi Zhou	There was a severe drought that year	Authorities were prepared to give people many times more millet than before
1033	Zi Zhou Road	Droughts brought disease	
1039	Liangchuan	It did not rain and the people were very hungry	
1058	Kui Zhou Road	Drought, hunger	
1060	Zi Zhou Road	No rain in the summer and autumn	
1068	Kui Zhou	Drought	Prayers for rain in the temple in the year of Renchen 壬辰
1086	All roads	Provinces, drought in spring	
1074	Yi Zhou	Qiongsu with little rain and snow	
1091	Fuling 涪陵	The winter snow was not enough, spring rain was fleeting, and in the first month of summer, drought was like burning fire	
1132	Kui Zhou Road	Severe drought in Yuzhou	

Table 4. Cont.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
1133	Tongchuan Road	No rain for a long time, all of the stars in April were red in color	
1135	Sichuan County	Severe drought	
1136	Kui, Tong, Chengdu counties and Hengzhou 衡州, Hunan	Severe drought	
1157	Sichuan	Drought damage	An Imperial Decree to inspect the drought-stricken states and counties, donate their taxes, and provide relief to the starving people.
1164–1165	Sichuan	Drought in the counties As of July in the fall, famine in the following year	
1167	Sichuan	County drought, until July and in the fall. Mainly Jianzhou, Hanzhou, and the Shiquan army were particularly badly affected.	The Department of Control was given four hundred dollars to prepare for relief.
1168	Yi Zhou	Drought	The emperor withdrew the cover of the prayer in Taiyi Palace 太乙宮 for rain. In August, there was an imperial decree promulgated by the emperor to bless the ritual dragon law in counties.
1172	Kuizhou Road, Fuzhou, Jiangnan	Water and drought followed each other	Most of the victims flowed into the north of the river in search of food
1174	Kuizhou Road. Fu 涪, Zhong 忠, Wan 萬, and other prefectures	Severe drought	
1179	Zi Zhou Road	Drought	
1181	Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Lianghuai 两淮, Jingxi 京西, Hubei, Tongchuan, Kuizhou Road	Floods and droughts one after another	Government grants to remit rents were issued, an envoy was sent to press, and people flowed into the northern part of the river, where relief was provided.
1182	Shu, Tong 潼, Li 利, Kui 夔three roads (He 合, Chang 昌, Zi 资, Qu 渠, Li, Lang 阆, Zhong, Fu, Wanzhou	There was no rain, there was drought and hunger, and thousands of people were displaced and forced to migrate.	
1182	He Zhou, Chang Zhou	Drought	
1183	He, Chang, Fu, Lu zhou 泸	Famine, refugees, and more than 3000 deaths.	
1190	Rong 榮 County, Chongqing Prefecture	Severe drought	
1191	Yuzhou, Fuzhou, Jianzhou 簡, Zi, Rongzhou	Severe drought	Renyin 壬寅 year, Zizhou, Jianzhou, Puzhou, Rongzhou, and Fushun were all supervised due to drought.

Table 4. Cont.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
1192	Tongchuan Road Jian, Zi, Pu, Rong, Xu 叙, Long 隆, and Fushun supervisors 富顺監	Long drought; the sun, moon, and stars were gas. There was no rain on Tongchuan Road, especially in Rongzhou.	
1193	Mianzhou 绵州, Jian, Zi, Pu, Qu, Hezhou, Guang'an 广安	Severe drought, death of wheat. The army was affected by drought.	
1194	Hezhou, Mianzhou, Jianzhou, Zizhou, Puzhou, Quzhou, Hezhou, Guang'an Counties	Drought	
1195	Drought in 15 counties of Tongchuan, Lizhou, and Kui zhou	Drought	Prayers to heaven and earth, the temple, and the gods. In September, due to the drought in Sichuan, there was an edict to remit people's taxes
1198		Drought	Prayers at the outskirts of the hill and the clan communities.
1201	Fifteen Shu Counties, Lizhou Road	Drought	Prayers were offered at suburban mounds and ancestral shrines. Wuchen 戊辰, the summer sacrifice, was made at the Temple of Heaven. Relief was given to the people, and their taxes were still remitted.
1202	Sichuan, Guang'an, Huai'anjun 怀安军, Tongchuanfu, Zizhou Road	Wheat shriveled and died; drought and famine	
1211	Zizhou, Puzhou, Changzhou, He Zhou	Drought	
1205	Zhongzhou, Fu Zhou, Kui Zhou	Drought	
1208	Zi, Pu, Chang, He Zhou	Drought	
1211	Drought in Zizhou, Puzhou, Changzhou, and He Zhou	starvation and death of more than 10,000 people in the Shu Shiquan army. Drought in Zizhou, Pu, Chang, and Hezhou.	
1219	Tongchuan Prefecture	Famine	
1226	Rong County	Drought	
1227	Tongchuan Road	No rain, especially in Rongzhou	
1229	Cheng du	Drought of the year	System division and supervisory division to urgently revitalize compassion while still inspecting the county by ordering diligence.
1274	Lu Zhou 庐州	Drought in Changle 长乐 and Fuqing 福清 counties	

Note: This table is mainly based on the “History of Song” and the “Continuation of Zizhi Tongjian Changbian 續資治通鑑長編”.

Dazu Shimen Mountain’s 石門山 Ten Saint Bodhisattvas Grotto 十聖觀音窟, which was excavated around the same time as Nanshan, has an inscription and a physical object related to the people’s association for statue-making in 1134. The inscription reads: “Seeing

that the sky was extremely dry and there was insufficient rain, the people, in their hardship, collected donations to initiate a pious undertaking. With the trust of people near and far, a large grotto of Bodhisattvas was built on Shimen Mountain. The Amitābha Buddha and the Ten Saint Bodhisattvas were enshrined, praying for timely rain, favorable winds, and good harvests of the five grains. The construction started in the Bing Chen year and was completed at the end of the Geng Shen year. It was hoped that the imperial territory would be eternal and the glory of the Buddha would increase”.

Whether it is Nanshan or Shimen Mountain’s Ten Saint Bodhisattvas Grotto, the statue-making activities in the Dazu region of the Southern Song Dynasty were closely related to the prayer activities in the agricultural society. Further analysis could explore how these religious practices interacted with other aspects of social and economic life in the region during that time. Among the 12 inscriptions from the Song Dynasty found in Nanshan, several officials’ poems and verses that were written in response provide significant information about Song era Nanshan, with the works of Zhang Zongyan 張宗彥 and He Gefei 何格非 being the most detailed. Zhang’s poem is fully contained in a frame measuring approximately 77 cm in height and 53 cm in width, with floral and grass patterns adorning the surrounding edges. Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 included this poem in his “Supplementary Records of Song Poems 宋詩紀事補遺”, volume fifty-seven, adding the title “Yucheng mountain Jiaotan 玉城山醮壇” and attributing it to Zhang during the Chunxi Era (1174–1189) (Lu 1997, p. 214). The full text of the inscribed poem is as follows (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, pp. 298–99):

The inscription is attributed to Zhang Zongyan⁶, a Left Palace Chancellor and the Administrator of Jianzhou State. It describes a circular altar that looms high against the boundless sky, with mountains visible in all directions, each peak esteemed as a majestic sentinel. To the east, the sound of a growling tiger can be heard from a cave, while from below, the clouds and mists obscure a mystical dragon. The stone steps are winding and intricate, etched with the marks of ancient hooves, and the cliffs are adorned with moss that streams down like liquid locks. After a long journey, the horses require three stops to catch their breath, yet the coaches carrying a thousand riders proceed with ease and grace. In times of drought or rain, fervent prayers are offered for a bountiful year.....⁷

On the right side of this stele, there is a poem by He Gefei (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 298) in response:⁸ He Gefei, Left Palace Chancellor and Governor of Chongzhou, responds:

Three-tiered desolate altars reach up to the vast sky, Perilously towering, they overshadow all the peaks. Praying for a bountiful year, rituals are extended to welcome the divine chariot, In years of drought, magical tablets are sent to awaken the dormant dragon.

Zhang Zongyan held the position of civil official of the fifth rank and served as the military and administrative governor of a state. During the Qing Dynasty, Lu Xinyuan recorded Zhang Zongyan’s inscription on Nanshan and referred to him as “the Left Palace Chancellor during the Chunxi Era, who governed Jianzhou”. Lu also added a poem titled “Yucheng Mountain Altar”, which was not originally the poem’s title (Lu 1997, p. 214). Zhang Zongyan’s political career was primarily during the years of Emperor Song Gaozong’s reign. His achievements were notable, including serving as the Governor of Pingyang 平陽尹 and participating in the “Heshangyuan Battle 和尚原之戰” led by Wu Bi 吳玠 in Shaanxi Fengxiang 鳳翔 in the first year of Gaozong’s reign (1131), which resulted in a significant victory at Sanguan Pass. This battle reversed the stalemate after the defeat at Fuping 富平 in 1128. For his contributions to the campaign against Li Cheng 李成

by assisting Yang Yizhong 楊沂中 (1102–1166), Zhang was awarded a golden belt in the third year of Gaozong's reign (1133). When Zhang Zongyan wrote his poem in Nanshan, he governed the area around today's Guangyuan Jiange 劍閣 in northern Sichuan, which was part of Lizhou Road. This region was a strategic point at the junction of Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces.

Unlike Zhang Zongyan, He Gefei was a genuine local official whose life and career were centered around the Bashu region (Li 2016, p. 60). His ancestral roots, birth, political posts, and social circles were all closely tied to this area, and related records about him often appear in county annals and other local documents. He Gefei was from Yingshan 營山, Sichuan, and he passed the imperial examination during the Yuanfu 元符 Era. In the sixth year of Emperor Xiaozong's Chunxi Era (1179), he served as the governor of Changzhou, which, at that time, included the four counties of Dazu, Yongchuan 永川, Changyuan (now Rongchang), and Jingnan. His family had migrated from Chengdu to Pengshan 蓬山. Pengshan is a historic site that has been fought over by various warring factions throughout history, and it is described in ancient texts as a place where "The peaks hang for a hundred yards, and even with wings, monkeys find it difficult to fly; the narrow path extends for a thousand stretches, and without wind, the roc also rests". It is also known for its traditional cave carvings, including Qianfo Rock 千佛岩, with its esoteric Buddhist images from the Tang Dynasty, and Transparent Rock 透明岩, which features carvings and inscriptions from the Tang to the Song periods. He Zhengyan himself was an official with a strong influence from Taoism, though he remained a Confucian at heart. He had close connections with local hermits and Taoist priests, and he even wrote biographies and prefaces for the "Twelve Immortals" of Pengshan. Among these Twelve, the most famous was the Taoist priest Jia Shanxiang 賈善翔 from Shu, who edited several important Taoist texts under the title "Deputy Supervisor 左衛都監同棄書教門公事 and Abbot of the Zhongde Wuzhen Temple 崇德悟真大師" during the late Northern Song Dynasty. These texts include "The Direct Sound Edition of the Nanhua Zhenjing 南華真經直音", "The Biographies of Taoist Priests 太上出家傳度儀", and "The YouLong Chronicles 猶龍傳", all of which were included in the Taoist Canon 道藏. Jia Shanxiang also gave lectures on the "Classic of Salvation 度人經" at Taqing Palace. The "Song Shu·Yiwen Zhi 宋書·藝文志", "Su Chu Tang Book List 遂初堂書目", and "Taoist Canon's Index of Missing Scriptures 道藏闕經目錄" all contain Jia Shanxiang's "Biographies of High Taoists 高道傳", a ten-volume work.

He Gefei and Zhang Zongyan composed songs of contentment about Nanshan, with Zhang writing, "The triple-tiered barren altar reaches the sky, towering precipitously over all the peaks. Prayer offerings extend to invite the true ride, and in years of drought, the flying tablet awakens the dormant dragon". Zhang Zongyan also described the altar as "a circular terrace towering against the vast sky (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, pp. 298–99)". The poems reflect a strong Taoist influence, allowing us to deduce the material characteristics that the "Taoist altar 道壇" on Nanshan should have had for rain-prayer rituals: it was divided into three levels, with a huge volume and a round altar. The texts frequently mention terms such as "altar 醮壇", "prayer offerings 設醮", and "prayer", indicating that Nanshan served as an important site for rain prayers during the dry years in Changzhou. It was common for officials to use religious sites, mountains, or natural landmarks for rain prayers. Cliff carvings were often located in secluded forest and wilderness areas, accompanying natural caves or sources of water, and their natural attributes were often ascribed supernatural qualities. Local officials, represented by Zhang Zongyan and He Gefei, respected the local community's prayer traditions and actively collaborated with the wealthy or local elites to maintain stability in the local society⁹. The local elite, represented by He Zhengyan, participated in the agricultural society's prayers or sponsorship activities through the donation of land for carvings. Local officials commemorated the effi-

cacy of prayers by erecting stone tablets and composing songs of contentment, enhancing the influence of Nanshan and the He family. This also served as a record of their achievements during their tenure, with both parties benefiting from their cooperative maintenance of the local social order during special periods. This privately constructed Taoist cliff carving space, which was closely involved in local social activities and strategically located as a key point in the city, stood out among many private temples and became an important site for faith and religion in the county. It was particularly revered and praised by local officials, reflecting the interactive and mutually beneficial relationship between the wealthy class and the local officials in rural society during the Song Dynasty.

4. Nanshan and Beishan and the Religious Landscape of Dazu in the Mid-12th Century

Through a meticulous analysis of the timing and content of the Nanshan inscriptions, it can be ascertained that the patron, He Zhengyan, was last documented in the inscription of the Three Purities in 1154. Specifically, over a decade later, Chen Bojiang, who was then serving as the governor of Changzhou (referred to as Dazu during that period), orchestrated a sacrificial ceremony at this site and engraved a stone inscription to commemorate the occasion. On the day of the winter solstice in 1169, in his role as the top administrator of Changzhou, Chen Bojiang opted to conduct a family memorial service at Nanshan. As documented in the Song Dynasty geographical treatise *Yu Di Ji Sheng*, Nanshan in Changzhou was a religious landscape of considerable significance in Dazu, Changzhou, and thus could not be overlooked. This was further corroborated by Deng Zao's account in the inscription of a monument in 1211. In the fourth year of the Jiajing Era (1211), Deng Zao, after reading the poetry and epigraphs of Zhang and He, left an inscription on the left outer wall of the ancient Three Purities on Nanshan: "The craftsman said: The children of the South and North Mountains are quite lacking in elegance; however, with tall bamboo and lush forests, their presence becomes even more pronounced. The abbot Wang Daoqiong personally planted the altar for the Taoist ritual, which now stands densely (Table 5). After reading the poetry of Zhang and He from the Xinyou year, I have engraved this onto the cliff to show those who appreciate such matters. Initial winter of Xinwei, Deng Zao, with Zhang Da Cheng inscribing the text¹⁰". Here, it is explicitly stated that Nanshan and Beishan were placed side by side. From this inscription, feng shui experts believed that both Nanshan and Beishan once lacked spiritual aura and that they would gain more prominence if extensively vegetated. Wang Daoqiong, the proprietor of the nunnery adjacent to Nanshan, personally planted trees around the altar in the Three Purities area to enhance the vitality and spiritual essence of Nanshan. Thus, it is reasonable to surmise that the transformation of Nanshan from private property to a local landmark was a process involving continuous optimization and construction, frequent visits by local officials, and eventually its inclusion in county annals and historical records. In the tenth year of the Chunyou Era of the Southern Song Dynasty (1250), the "Record of He Guangzhen's Farewell Banquet for the Prefect Wang Mengying 何光震餞郡守王夢應記" on Nanshan also notes: "Cultures flourish, stabilizing what is seen and heard for a long time. The character of the people includes the purity of Yang Xianliang and Wang Wenzheng, the pavilions and gardens possess the charm of Xiangfei and Jianhu, the traces of immortals feature the uniqueness of Dong and Ge, the mountains and forests exhibit the elegance of the South and North, and the produce is abundant in salt and rice¹¹". Here, it is explicitly stated that Beishan and Nanshan are the representative natural mountains and forests within the Dazu area.

Table 5. Chronological list of the inscriptions in Nanshan from the Song Dynasty.

Era	The Main Content and Activities in Inscriptions
1154	He Zhengyan donated his land and initiated the mountain-opening project for the construction of the No. 5 Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1154	He Zhengyan, along with his son He Hao and his wife, had the niche dedicated to the Holy Mother of the Earth (後土聖母龕, No. 4 niche) engraved.
1169	Chen Bojiang (陳伯彊) inscribed the “Record of the Scholarship Examination on the Winter Solstice Day (冬至日饗生考題記)” on the inner side of the right-hand door pillar of the Sanqing Cave.
1178	The family of Lv Yuanxi (呂元錫) engaged in the pursuit of immortality and tranquility at this location. The inscriptions related to them are found on the central part of the left-hand door pillar of the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1178	Lv Yuanxi composed a poem during his visit to Nanshan (South Mountain), which is inscribed on the left-hand side of the stone wall outside the niche of the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1178	There is an inscription of unknown authorship titled “Poem in Response to Lv Yuanxi (和呂元錫詩)”, located on the left-hand exterior stone wall of the Sanqing Cave.
1188	Liang Dangzhi and others engraved the “Inscription on Summer Retreat in Nanshan (避暑南山題記)”, which is positioned above the right-hand niche of the Sanqing Gudong.
1200	The inscription by Cao Weiqing (曹偉卿) reads: “The public paid a visit to Nanshan three days after the snowfall”, and it is located on the right-hand side of the pillar in the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1211	Deng Zao (鄧早) read the poems of Mr. Zhang and Mr. He, with the record stating “Witchcraft practitioners claim: North Mountain and South Mountain are of the same nature (術者雲: 南北山同)”.
1229	This inscription makes reference to the grave of Chen Jizhi (陳及之) in the province.
1235	Fan Yunji (樊允季) inscribed on the stone wall outside the right-hand side of the Sanqing Ancient Cave: “Inscription on Guiding a Guest to Escape the Summer Heat for the Entire Day (領客避暑終日題記)”
1247	He Guangzhen and others inscribed the “Tablet in Memory of Magistrate Wang Mengying”, which is located on the stone wall outside the right-hand side of the Sanqing Cave.

By the mid-12th century, Nanshan and Beishan had become the most representative scenic landmarks in Chongzhou county. From the perspective of Feng Shui, the geographical location of Nanshan and Beishan was crucial for the city of Dazu. The cliff carvings on Nanshan, located at the highest point of the Nandou Mountain Range in Dazu, marked an important passageway toward the south of Dazu, integrating military defense, religion, and social organizational functions with the remotely located North Mountain, which was dedicated to Buddhism, while Nanshan was dedicated to Taoism. These two mountains, each with their own religion, together constructed a sacred space for the religious beliefs of the people in the Dazu area. Additionally, Nanshan was considered a blessed place for protecting Chongzhou due to its efficacy in prayers for rain during consecutive years of floods and droughts (Figure 9). Local officials, such as the Southern Song Dynasty’s He Gefei, who left an inscription and held a literary gathering there, celebrated Nanshan and their own achievements with poetry and wine. Officials chose to leave poems on the relatively small Nanshan, attracting many famous scholars and literati to imitate the ancients, explore, and leave statues. This sacred local space, constructed from multiple visual landscapes of sculptures, miraculous legends, scenic mountains, and inscriptions by literati, reached its peak during the Song Dynasty’s Shaoxing and Chunxi years, drawing many literati and scholars from within and outside the county to seek refreshment and exploration at Nanshan. However, this dominant position was not maintained for long. The excavation and construction of Bao Ding Mountain were actually a contest for space for religious stone carvings and belief groups in the Dazu area. Zhao Zhifeng gathered the entire strength of Changzhou to carve Bao Ding Mountain, becoming renowned for promoting

filial piety and a large number of secularized religious images that were easily accepted by the masses. Liu Tianren 劉天人 mentioned the background of the carving in a stele inscription from the first year of Hongxi (1425): “To fulfill the great vow of wide spreading water rituals, to protect against disasters and calamities. The virtue spreads far and wide, with everyone seeking refuge. Every cave and cliff in the mountains, adorned with Buddha images, has built immeasurable merit and good fortune.”¹² (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 211).

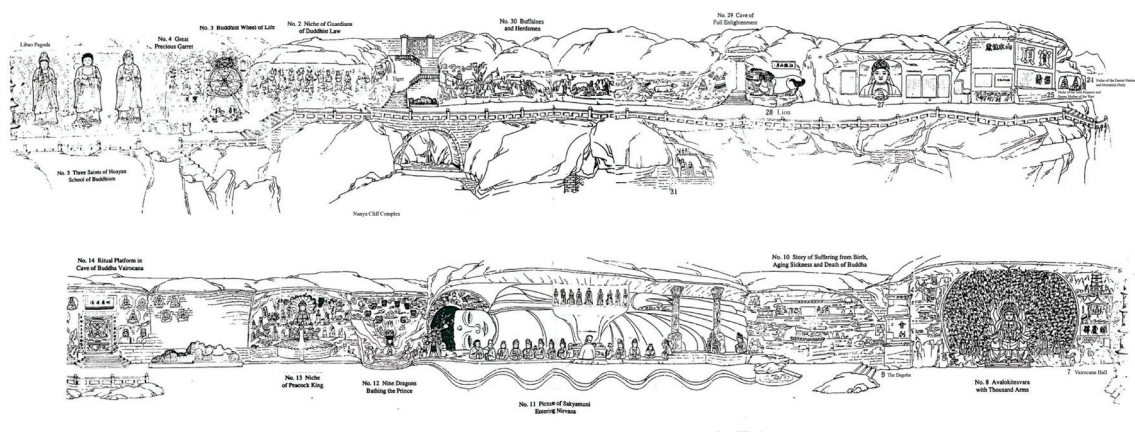


Figure 9. Sketch of the carvings at Baodingshan's Dafowan provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.

5. Conclusions

When placed within the context of the establishment and formation of religious spaces in the Dazu area during the Tang and Song dynasties, Bao Ding Mountain, which was only completed in the late Southern Song Era, did not gain significant attention as a local religious landmark until the 13th century. At the end of the 13th century, Wang Xiangzhi, in his records of Changzhou's Bao Ding Mountain, merely mentioned in passing that “there is a cave and rock where the Taoist Zhao Zhifeng practices” located thirty miles east of Dazu County. He did not speak of the carvings that now make it a magnificent site.

Prior to the completion of Bao Ding in the late 13th century, the most significant religious sites in the Dazu area were represented by the Buddhist Beishan carvings and the Taoist Nanshan carvings. The remaining small cliff-face statues were primarily funded by families, villages, or individuals.

In the late Southern Song period, due to the conflict between the Song and Yuan dynasties, Changzhou, adjacent to the front lines of war, saw its inhabitants scattered for refuge. Activities, including statue carving, came to a halt. It was not until the first year of the Hongxi reign in the Ming dynasty that the religious sites in the Dazu area, including historical records, were revitalized. Bao Ding Mountain was reopened and subsequently became the largest and most influential religious space in the surrounding areas of Dazu and Anyue, emerging as a significant religious assembly and place of faith, placing it alongside Western Sichuan's Emei Mountain in the north and Bao Ding Mountain in the south as a major religious destination.

As an exemplary model of China's late-stage grotto art, the research paradigm of the Dazu Rock Carvings has witnessed a transition from traditional viewpoints to spatial-cultural elucidations. At present, the research on the Dazu Rock Carvings has been growing profound and extensive. It is no longer restricted to the purview of grotto archeol-

ogy. An increasing number of scholars are commencing to carry out comprehensive explorations from the vantage point of cultural construction.

Since the rediscovery of the Dazu Rock Carvings by the academic community in the 1940s, scholars such as Yang Jialuo (Yang 1946, pp. 21–22), Wu Xianqi (Wu 1945, pp. 123–28), Li Sisheng (Li 2004, pp. 14–21), Guo Xiangying (Guo 2005, pp. 233–43), and Chen Mingguang (Chen 2001, pp. 8–14) have continuously debated the nature of Dafowan, generally considering it a site of Tantric Buddhism. In the 1980s, differing opinions began to emerge. For instance, Hu Wenhe (Hu 1991, pp. 42–47), through his classification of Liu Benzun statues, argued that Baodingshan was not a Tantric Buddhist site. Hou Chong (Hou 2008, pp. 66–69) straightforwardly stated that Buddhism is not simply dichotomized into Sutra and Tantra, and the relevant discussions have persisted.

Western scholars have also engaged in substantial discussions on these issues. Howard (2001) suggested that Baodingshan is a Tantric mandala dojo that incorporates both local Sichuan traditions and external influences, and its use of mandala sculptures is similar to practices that spread in the Indian–Himalayan region from the eighth century onwards. Kucera (2002, 2016), in his doctoral dissertation, also offered a highly innovative perspective on Baodingshan. He focused on the relationship between the images and scriptures of Baodingshan, reassessing the carvings through the dimensions of narrative and symbolism. In a horizontal comparison, he concluded that this construction style was influenced by the development patterns of Song Dynasty Buddhist monasteries. The religious stone carvings at this site encompass a wide range of religious elements. They include representations of the Yogacara school, symbolized by the “Ten Severe Penances 十煉” in esoteric Buddhism. There are also the largest local images of a Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara, colossal representations of the Huayan Trinity, a pastoral scene with a strong Zen influence, and an image and inscription from the pseudo-scripture “Great Convenience Sutra”, which promotes filial piety and respect for elders with Confucian overtones. Stephen F. Teiser suggests that the construction of Bao Ding Mountain exhibits a strong sense of localism, especially in the inclusion of the image of the preacher Zhao Zhifeng within the “Six Paths of Reincarnation”. The secular scenes filled with admonitions and the imagery of filial piety, along with the concise gathas, all reflect the regional characteristics of religious iconography (Teiser 2006).

From the aspects of historical origin-tracing and spatial genesis, the Dazu Rock Carvings, as a heritage system, had its inception in the construction project of Beishan during the late Tang Dynasty to the Five Dynasties period. Intrinsically, it represents a historical outcome characterized by the dual attributes of military garrison and religious domain. This paper posits that from the Shaoxing to Chunxi years of the Southern Song Dynasty (ranging from 1131 to 1189 AD), the creative activities of the Dazu Rock Carvings reached a zenith, giving rise to spatial configuration with Nanshan and Beishan as the two pivotal cores. In this regard, Nanshan, capitalizing on its strategic locational advantages, evolved into a politico-religious center, while Beishan perpetuated its sacred nature. Collectively, they constituted the geographical demarcation of the spheres of influence exerted by Buddhism and Taoism.

From the perspectives of belief mechanisms and social interactions, within the context of agricultural civilization, the efficacy of prayers emerged as the core determinant in the formation of the religious landscape. The supplicants’ quests for worldly merits exerted a direct impact on the spatial arrangement of sacred sites and their selection of religious beliefs. This mechanism not only accounts for the conspicuous status of Nanshan in historical narratives but also uncovers the profound interactive nexus between religious practices and secular exigencies.

From the perspectives of religious space and elite discourses, spanning from the Shaoxing years to the reign of Emperor Xiaozong of the Southern Song Dynasty (1163–1189 AD), the traditional pilgrimage space underwent a functional transformation and gradually metamorphosed into an assembly venue for literati. This transformation lucidly reveals the ascendance of the local elite stratum since the Song Dynasty, as well as the process of the symbolic conversion of religious space into a cultural realm, manifesting the dynamic accommodation between the belief system and the literati-official culture.

Consequently, this paper endeavored to transcend the limitations of analyzing individual statues and instead accentuated the phased contributions of Nanshan and Beishan to the formation of the religious space in Dazu prior to the flourishing of Baodingshan.

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Notes

- ¹ Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 1121), (Zhu 2003). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘凡衣食物資以養生者, 不及它郡。雖無舟楫江、沱之利, 而有桑麻稔穰之饒’.
- ² Kitashinichi’s view that the position of Vishvamitenno had a strong guardianship function to prevent enemy invasion, as well as a strong guardianship function for the builders and organizers of the cottage, was highly influential.
- ³ Tuotuo 宋史 (Song Shi, vol. 89, Geography 5, 2218), (Tuotuo 1971). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘昌元郡, 軍事’.
- ⁴ Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 1122), (Zhu 2003). The corresponding historic Chinese literature in Song Shi: ‘淳化間供奉官盧斌平蜀, 賊任誘等嘗駐兵此山。土人雲: 他郡有警, 則置烽火於此’.
- ⁵ Wang, Xianhi & Li, Yongxian, 輿地紀勝 (The Record of Scenic Spots Across the Country), (vol. 161, 4880), (Wang 2005). Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 548), (Zhu 1991). Li, Xiaoqiang. 大足道教石刻論稿 (Dazu Daojiao Shike Lungao, p. 60), (Li 2016). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘南山, 在大足縣南五裡, 上有龍洞、醮壇, 旱禱輒應。淳化二年, 供奉官盧斌平蜀餘賊任誘等, 斌率兵駐昌州男門山, 南山最高, 望眼闊遠。土人雲: 他郡有警, 則置烽火於此’.
- ⁶ The text in Chinese for the History of 宋詩紀事補遺 (Emended Text of the Record of Events on Poetry of the Song Dynasty, vol. 57, 214).
- ⁷ The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘左朝請大夫知劍州軍州事張宗彥題: 圓壇高峙對蒼穹, 四望群山萬尊峰。東直洞天聞嘯虎, 下窺雲霧隱神龍。縈紆石磴蹄跡在, 幽邃岩巒薜蘿封。鳳駕三休猶喘息, 高軒千騎更從容。雨暘豐歲嚴祈禱……’.
- ⁸ Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu, (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999). 大足石刻銘文錄 [Carved Inscriptions from Dazu]. This poem is believed to have been engraved during the Jia Tai 嘉泰 reign of Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty (1201). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘左朝請大夫知昌州軍州事何格非和。三級荒壇接昊穹, 岌然高峙壓諸峰。祈年設醮延真馭, 旱歲飛符起蟄龍’.
- ⁹ Other studies have argued that the increasing centralization of finance in the late Northern Song Dynasty led to the inability of local governments to engage in public welfare affairs, which allowed local forces to develop and rise, a phenomenon that did not impede but rather facilitated official rule at the local level.
- ¹⁰ Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu, 299–300, (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘術者雲: 南北山童, 殊乏秀氣, 有修竹茂林, 聞人益顯。庵主王道瓊手植醮壇今已森然。因閱辛酉歲張何二公詩, 磨崖以示好事者。辛未初冬鄧早跋, 張大成書丹’.
- ¹¹ The corresponding historic Chinese text in an edited record of He Guangzhen’s Farewell Banquet for the Prefect Wang Mengying by Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu in 1999. The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘文物彬彬, 久穩聞見。人品有楊賢良、王文正之清, 亭沼有香霏、鑒湖之勝, 仙跡有董、葛之異, 山林有南、北之秀, 物產有鹽米之饒’.
- ¹² Recorded and edited by Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu in 1999. The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘發弘誓願普施水法, 禦災捍患。德洽遠近, 莫不皈依。凡山之前岩後洞, 琢諸佛像, 建無量功德’.

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Article

From Pagoda to Pavilion: The Transition of Spatial Logic and Visual Experience of Multi-Story Buddhist Buildings in Medieval China

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Abstract: Pagodas and pavilions (ge 閣) are the most popular and representative multi-story buildings since Buddhism was introduced to China. While providing visitors with a new visual experience, they have also largely reshaped the urban space and skyline in medieval China. The former originated from India and Central Asia and was transformed in China, developing a unique style; The latter originated more from the creation of Chinese architects and became a model of typical Chinese-style Buddhist architecture. Briefly, the pagoda matured earlier than the pavilion, and continuously developed while maintaining its basic style; the pavilion-style Buddhist architecture gradually developed later and finally matured after the Tang and Song dynasties (618–1276), partially presenting a different spatial logic from the pagoda, and bringing a new visual experience. In my opinion, although the pavilion may not necessarily be as large as the pagoda in terms of volume and absolute height, it can provide believers with greater visual impact in the internal space for worship, due to the cross-story giant Buddhist statues; the closer integration of Buddha statues and architecture makes it replace or share the core position of the pagoda in some monasteries and even become the visual center of the entire religious space. Due to the existence of the pavilion, viewers can not only worship the Buddhist statues on a two-dimensional plane or by looking up at the statues from the bottom, but have also gained a three-dimensional perspective, to worship directly at the Buddha's shoulders, neck, and head. In the Buddhist grottoes, the layout of the early single-layer or multi-layer horizontally distribution of caves on cliff was also changed due to the excavation of the cross-layer giant statue grottoes, covered by multi-story pavilion-style buildings, providing viewers with a visual experience similar to that of the pavilions of great statues. Additionally, there is a new visual experience of worshipping the Buddha in a vertical circle, in cases such as Bamiyan and the Leshan Giant Buddha.

Keywords: pagoda; pavilion; spatial logic; visual experience; medieval China

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1. Introduction

As an important part of the Buddhist landscape, stupas or pagodas play an extremely significant role in the study of architectural history in South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia (China, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula), and even Southeast Asia, and are also one of the main ancient architectural heritages in these regions. Overall, previous research on Indian-style, Gandhara-style, and Tibetan-style stupas has mainly focused on their external forms, decorative themes, and evolutionary history. Meanwhile, the exploration is more abundant on the multi-story pagodas and dense-eave pagodas in East Asia, especially in China, and also involves architectural technology, internal structure, and even the expansion of their belief space in addition to the above aspects. Compared to the widely existing pagodas in the entire Buddhist world, the Buddhist pavilion-style architecture has obvious Han Chinese characteristics. Additionally, pavilions in other parts of East Asia (such as Japan, the Korean Peninsula, etc.) are also largely influenced by the comprehensively traditional Han Chinese architecture. Therefore, we can take the pavilion as the classic multi-story

Buddhist building with the most Chinese characteristics. The pavilions defined here are limited to Buddhist space, and do not include later more generalized pavilions, such as library pavilions, small pavilions in Chinese gardens, or pavilions on top of large buildings. Compared to the considerably abundant research on Buddhist pagodas¹, perhaps due to limitations in regional scope, the number of surviving cases, and to other factors, previous and current research on pavilions is relatively limited, mainly focusing on the aspects of structure, technology and decoration. In addition to a few systematic monographs, such as *Zhongguo Gudai de Mu Louge* 中國古代の木樓閣 (*Timber Pavilions in Ancient China*) (Ma 2007), the current research mainly focuses on case studies of some important buildings (such as the Guanyin Pavilion at Dule Monastery in Ji County)², and involves comparative analysis of *lou* 樓 (tower) and *ge* (pavilion).

In summary, there is still great potential for researchers to break the boundaries of architectural categories (such as pagodas, pavilions, and Buddhist grottoes) and materials (such as wood, bricks, stones, etc.), focusing on a systematic and detailed analysis of the spatial logic and visual experience of pagodas and pavilions in ancient China, and citing the evolution of grottoes as a reference. It should be noted that the focus of this research is not primarily on the structural analysis and technical comparison between pagodas and pavilions in the framework of the discipline of architectural history, nor on the stylistic analysis and decoration comparison of art history. Instead, this paper attempts to explore the overall spatial logic and intuitive visual experience from the perspective of designers and observers, paying more attention to their inherent differences and tensions. Briefly, the pagoda achieved earlier development of these two kinds of buildings, and was continuously updated, while continuing its overall style; the pavilion-style Buddhist architecture has gradually developed and matured since the Tang and Song dynasties (618–1276), partially presenting a different spatial logic from the pagoda, bringing a new visual experience. Both have own transition clues and transformation tracks, which are not a substitutive transition from A to B, but to some extent reflect the transformation of spatial logic and visual experience of Buddhist multi-story buildings in medieval China.³ To provide a clearer description of the different visual experiences between pagodas and pavilions, I prefer to introduce the following two key concepts. The first is the “planar visual logic”, which means viewing and worshipping Buddha statues at a relatively fixed-elevation angle on a plane; the second one is the “three-dimensional perspective”, which means viewing and worshipping Buddha statues from different heights, to obtain a different elevation or even horizontal angles.

2. The Continuation and Transition of Planar Visual Logic in Various Buddhist Pagodas and Grottoes in India, Central Asia, and China

From ancient India of the Maurya Dynasty, to Central Asia during the Kushan Empire, and to China during the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (220–589), Buddhist stupas (pagodas) presented a trend from single-story stupas to the stupas with a multi-layer base and vertical extension after entering Central Asia, and, combined with the concept of Chinese traditional *lou*-style buildings, formed a multi-story pagoda with Chinese and even East Asian characteristics. However, due to the unchanging way of worshipping the Buddha around the pagoda, the basic visual logic of the aforementioned-pagoda also presented a typical planar surrounding logic in response to the needs of this function. Although the number of stories of the pagoda varies, it was still a vertical superposition of single-layer or multi-layer planar surrounding visual logic, each layer forming a relatively independent image program, and there was no cross-layer visual spectacle composed of giant Buddha statues. In other words, whether in India, Central Asia, China, or even the East Asian world, early stupas or pagodas did not receive more attention due to their extraordinary and massive statues spanning multiple layers, but their overall grandeur and nobility were emphasized, manifested as the superposition of multi-layer planar Buddhist sacred spaces.

In my opinion, a revolutionary transformation after the pagoda (originally the stupa) entered China was the expansion of its internal space. The widely popular skills of connecting wooden-structure corridors to the earthy core in Buddhist pagodas during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (architectural examples such as the pagoda in Mount Fangshan at Datong in Shanxi Province, the Siyan Pagoda in Chaoyang in Liaoning Province, the pagoda of Yongning Monastery in Luoyang in Henan Province, the pagoda of Zhaopengcheng Buddhist Monastery and the pagoda of Da Zhuangyan Monastery in Yecheng in Hebei Province) allowed them to obtain, to certain extent, internal space. However, the internal space of these pagodas was still quite limited.⁴ What is somewhat groundbreaking is that the existence of this corridor provides people who worship at the pagoda story-by-story with a new perspective for viewing from the inside to the outside, although the visual logic of each story is still independent and vertically superimposed in a planar manner. However, during the process of climbing and overlooking, those who worship at the pagoda have gained a different visual experience from before, which is no longer limited to a single layer of flat space; they can gradually enter the upper level of flat space through stairs, experiencing the differences in visual perception brought about by the changes in three-dimensional height. In ancient China, although these multi-storied timber buildings had already existed during the Han Dynasty (BCE 202–CE 220) in the form of watchtowers, as evidenced by plenty of archaeological findings, the visual experience brought by such multi-story buildings was limited regarding personal space and limited to particular groups, like sentinels. For rulers, officials and religious groups, this visual experience was still very attractive and impactful, and was also related to the privilege of owning these buildings during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589). The rulers of empire (such as Empress Ling (?–528) in Northern Wei (386–534)) attempted to monopolize this extraordinary visual experience (Yang 2018, p. 13); some officials, such as Yang Xuanzhi (active in the early 6th century), the author of *Luoyang Qielan Ji* 洛陽伽藍記, a detailed record of the Buddhist monasteries in Luoyang, and his colleague Hu Xiaoshi (active in the early 6th century) (Yang 2018, p. 13), and later nominees for the imperial examination (after the middle period of Tang, the imperial examination system flourished, and “leaving an inscription on the Wild Goose Pagoda” became a trend) attempted to share this highly unusual visual experience in high-rise buildings, located in the planarized urban layout of medieval China. It should be noted that this visual experience was still viewed from the inside to the outside in the case of external landscapes of various heights, to obtain different angles (a visual experience of three dimensions), rather than from the outside to the inside, as in the case of the internal space of the building, to view internal Buddhist statues at different heights; this did not change the planar visual logic of early pagodas. Even the pure wooden-structure pagodas (such as the Yingxian Timber Pagoda) (Liang 2007, pp. 1–118; Chen 2001), or brick pagodas with center chambers on each story obtained larger internal space due to the cancellation of the core tower entity; with the development of construction later, the stories remained independent from one another. The layout and design were still based on the unit of the story, achieving the expansion of the belief space. Due to the presence of the mezzanine level (*pingzuo* 平座), the stories with Buddhist statues are more isolated—even during the process of ascending stairs, it is impossible to see Buddhist statues arranged in different stories at the same time. In terms of Buddhist statues, due to the height limitation of each story of the pagoda, the height of the statue is still limited to the same story height. In some cases, the main Buddha statue located in the center of the pagoda may be able to slightly encroach on the upper mezzanine level through the extended space (*zaojing* 藻井, a caisson ceiling) above, but it also fails to fundamentally penetrate the cover between the stories and to break through the visual logic of the plane surrounding each story (see Figure 1). In addition, the extensive use of precious metal materials such as gold and bronze in early Buddhist statues, as well as the position on chariots during the Statues Parade, prevented them from exceeding the general scale of the one-*zhang* 丈 and six-*chi* 尺 statue (the standard height of Buddha statues in many Buddhist texts), resulting in the emergence of large-scale single giant statues. Even the un-

paralleled imperial giant structures like the pagoda of Yongning Monastery in Luoyang, as well as the Buddhist Hall behind this huge construction, have not appeared as giant statues either in the literature records (which mainly refer to the item in the Yongning Monastery in *Luoyang Qielan Ji*) or in the archaeological evidence (Buddhist statues and fragments unearthed from Yongning Monastery) (Yang 2018, p. 12; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996), although there are also a few statues in the existing Great Buddha Hall that exceed the height limit of one *zhang* and six *chi*. Due to the limitations of a single-story structure, Buddhist monasteries generally still cannot accommodate giant statues of tens-of-meters high.

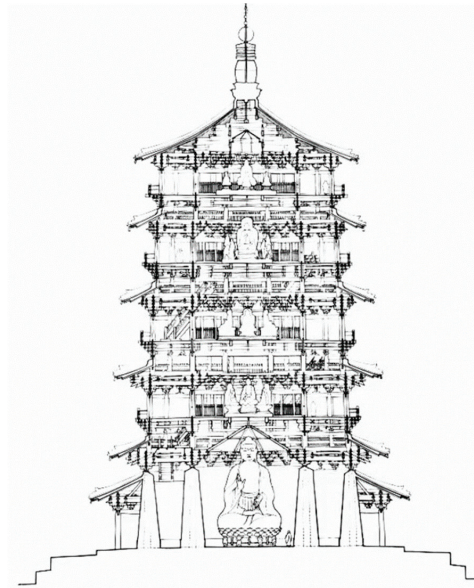


Figure 1. Line drawing of Yingxian Timber Pagoda. (See Liang 2007, p. 36, Figure D-1).

The form of early grottoes also followed the same logic as pagodas, with caves occupying the space on the cliff surface in a horizontal expansion manner—either horizontally located on the same level, or in a multi-layer parallel-distribution pattern, due to the length of the cliff surface. In the other words, there were few vertical expansion structures spanning multiple layers and large caves occupying multiple layers of the cliff surface in these grottoes. For instance, the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang were based on the “original caves” (or the so-called “three caves in Northern Liang Kingdom (397–460)”), which were the earliest constructed, and then extended horizontally to both sides and developed a few parallel caves (Wu 2022, pp. 81, 83). Even the small number of vertically distributed caves in the early Dunhuang grottoes did not make a breakthrough in terms of capacity, maintaining a spatial scale roughly equivalent to the caves on the same layer of the cliff.

If the linear horizontal extension mentioned above mainly exists in the cliff surface of the grottoes, the spatial logic of horizontal encirclement is mainly reflected in the interior of the grottoes. In the “Caitya or Chaitya” in India, the spatial pattern of horizontal worship around the stupa is applied to the interior space of caves, presenting the same visual logic (Li 2014, pp. 3–20), although the “central pagoda pillar cave” in the grottoes of the Han Chinese exhibits a multi-story composite feature on its central pillar and forms a corresponding multi-layer pattern with the four walls of the caves; fundamentally speaking, it is still arranged in a horizontal layered manner, without changing very much the basic visual logic of early Buddhist pagodas and grottoes.

Additionally, it is necessary to focus on analyzing a so-called “exception”, which are the earlier giant Buddha caves among the grottoes from the Northern Dynasty (439–581), especially the 16th to 20th Caves of the Yungang Grottoes. However, the main deity of such caves may not be on the same horizontal line as the surrounding attendants (attendant Bodhisattvas), presenting a certain degree of dislocation; according to Peng Minghao’s research, the existence of this phenomenon is due to the layered construction of the main Buddha statue (Peng 2017, pp. 66–254) (See Figure 2). Fundamentally, although the caves in this group have huge capacities, their layout still extends horizontally. Although the lighting holes in the upper part of each cave seem to present a visual perception as in the second layer, the holes still fail to change the basic visual logic of these caves in Yungang. In other words, these huge caves are only distributed on one larger level, rather than on the real two levels of the surface of cliff.

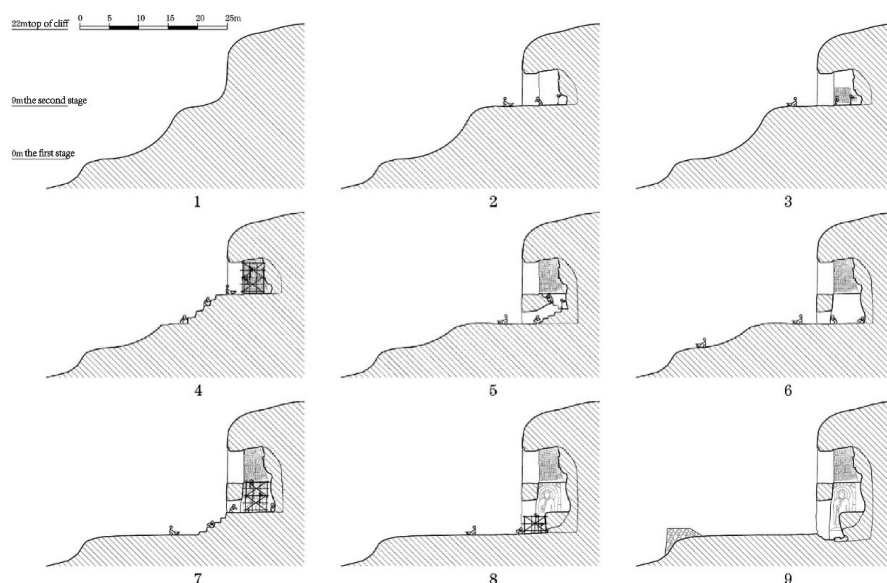


Figure 2. Schematic diagram of excavation process of Cave 17 at Yungang Grottoes. (See Peng 2017, p. 85, Figure 4.27). Numbers 1–9 represent the nine stages of cave excavation.

Based on the records in the *Weishu Shilao Zhi* 魏書·釋老志, a history of Buddhism and Daoism in Northern Wei, five heavy bronze Buddha statues (50,000 *jin* 斤, or roughly 24,000 kg corresponding to each one) are enshrined in the core pagoda of the monastery, corresponding to the five emperors of Northern Wei in the Wuji Monastery (a large imperial monastery with five layers of pagodas) in Pingcheng, the capital city of Northern Wei, now Datong in Shanxi Province (Wei 1974, p. 3036).

Considering the weight-bearing capacity of each story and the capacity of the space inside the pagoda, these bronze statues were likely arranged sequentially from bottom to top or from top to bottom, and each statue in one story corresponds to one emperor. In comparison, the “Five Caves Built by Tanyao” flatten the vertical multi-story structure to a horizontal straight line, with the west as the most prestigious position, distributing all five caves in a horizontal line on the surface of the cliff.

According to Peng Minghao’s research on the construction project of Yungang Grottoes, the creators of the Big Buddha Caves, represented by Cave 16 to 20, used existing cliff surfaces and two-story platforms to manually treat the natural cliff surface (so-called “mountain cutting”), which was layered from top to bottom, to make it more perpendicular to the ground. If so, in a position flush with the lower edge of the lighting hole on the front

surface of the Big Buddha Caves, there should be the working platform for carving the Buddha's head, shoulders, and chest. Due to the time-consuming and laborious process of carving the Buddha's head, craftsmen may have carved on this working platform for a longer period, which explains well the fact that several statues in today's cave that appear to be far from the ground inside the cave have lower edges that are flush with the platform of this previous project (used for carving the Buddha's head, shoulders, and chest) (Peng 2017, pp. 44–65). From this perspective, the craftsmen who participated in the carving of the statues or the visitors who entered the caves at this time should be able to view the upper half of the Buddha statue from a close viewpoint, obtaining a new visual experience that is different from the past. However, the visual experience above neither exists permanently nor corresponds to the creator's purpose, but rather is a phased result of the process of advancing the working platforms layer by layer. With the downward extension of the statue project, the above-mentioned working platform that was flush with the lower edge of the lighting hole eventually disappeared, and the access to this phased platform was completely blocked. After the completion of subsequent projects, viewers entering the cave can only look up and worship the statue from the bottom of the cave or view the complete statue from outside, and no longer obtain the special viewpoint and visual experience that craftsmen and supervisors once had during the construction process.

3. The Possibility of Layered Viewing and the Structural Characteristics and Visual Experience of the Pavilion of the Giant Buddhist Statue

To continue the previous discussion, although the layered-construction technology of the giant statues in Yungang Grottoes has not fundamentally changed the visual layout of its horizontal extension, it suggests a possibility of layered viewing. If this visual experience no longer disappears due to the disappearance of the working platform, but can be preserved through some external structure, this fundamentally means a breakthrough in the way of viewing and the visual logic of Buddhist statues. Therefore, the key to transforming this temporary visual experience into a completely new viewing experience and visual logic is the establishment of the architectural form that supports this viewing experience. Generally, the key structure that can provide this visual experience is comparable to the cross-story hollow structure that exists in today's large shopping malls. In medieval China, the main one capable of fulfilling this functional demand was the pavilion (*ge*). From the exterior facade, the pavilion is also a typical multi-story structure, like the pagoda. However, unlike the independent structure on each story in pagodas, the interactivity of the spaces on each story within the pavilion has greatly increased, especially with the emergence of cross-story core spaces that can accommodate giant Buddha statues. The practice of establishing multi-story pavilions in Buddhist monasteries began in the late Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589). On the one hand, there are similarities in the special structure between Buddhist monasteries and imperial or aristocratic high-ranking buildings, since many imperial and aristocratic residences were donated to Buddhism as monasteries at that time; on the other hand, the structure was also related to the way of setting up Buddhist statues (Fu 2009, p. 511). In the *Chang'an Zhi* 長安志, written by Song Minqiu (1019–1079), the basic structure of the Buddha pavilion at Baocha Monastery in Chang'an was recorded during the Northern Wei Dynasty. The description of "erecting pillars on four sides, forming an elevated space in the middle, and establishing a two-story pavilion" 四面立柱，當中虛構，起兩層閣 (Song 1990, p. 114) clearly indicates the existence of a cross-story space within the pavilion that can accommodate large Buddha statues, surrounded by pillars on four sides. Therefore, although this type of pavilion-style building often lacks the overall height and capacity of those super high-rise pagodas, it has an internal space that is more integrated and not completely horizontally separated.

By the time of the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907), there were many historical records of worshipping giant Maitreya statues in pavilions. According to the section of "*Quchi fang* 曲池坊" in *Chang'an Zhi*, Jianfu monastery "was established by the Princess of Xincheng in the third year of the Longshuo period (663). Its location was originally Tianbao Monastery in

Sui Dynasty (581–618). Inside the monastery is the Maitreya Pavilion built in Sui, which is 150 *chi* high. 龍朔三年爲新城公主所立，其地本隋天寶寺，寺內隋彌勒閣，崇一百五十尺” According to the standard of Sui, one *chi* is equivalent to 29.6 cm (Guo 2008, p. 191), and the height of the Maitreya Pavilion can reach 44.4 m. On the column of Dhāraṇī Sutra built by a Buddhist nun in the Longhua Monastery of Tang, it is also recorded that there is a Maitreya Pavilion and large Buddha statues in the pavilion of the Longhua Nuns’ Monastery in Qujiang, Chang’an (Lu 1985, p. 321). The biography of Faxing in *Song Gaoseng Zhuan* 宋高僧傳, a collective biography of eminent monks from Emperor Gaozong’ reign in the period of Tang (649–683) to Early Northern Song (960–1127), also records that there was a Maitreya Pavilion of three stories and a width of seven *jian* 間⁵ in the Foguang Monastery of Mount Wutai, which was 95 *chi* (about 28.5 m) high (Zanning 1987, p. 690). To sum up, during the Sui and Tang dynasties, the Pavilions of Giant Statues, which were 30 to 40 m high, were not uncommon in large monasteries around Chang’an and Wutai.

Since the pavilion can be accessed and its central space can be connected to various stories, visitors have a completely different visual experience. Their way of viewing giant Buddha statues is no longer limited to looking up from the front or from the bottom, but they are now able to see the upper part of the Buddha’s body, shoulders, and head through climbing the pavilion, obtaining a visual experience that was not previously available in pagodas or grottoes in the early period. While feeling the majesty of the colossal statue, viewers can also closely observe its detailed features from different angles, and even gaze directly and horizontally into the eyes of the Buddha statue. For instance, the Japanese monk Ennin (793–864) came to the Tang Empire to search for Buddhist sutras and doctrines. When he arrived at Kaiyuan Monastery in Taiyuan, he at once “climbed onto a pavilion to observe (the Buddha). Inside the pavilion, it is a statue of Maitreya Buddha, cast in iron and painted in gold. The Buddha’s body was over three *zhang* long and sat on a throne 上閣觀望。閣內有彌勒佛像，以鐵鑄造，上金色。佛身三丈餘，坐寶座上” (Ennin 2019, p. 312). Based on this record, it can be clearly stated that although the size of the Maitreya seated statue in this pavilion is not very large, it has significantly exceeded the conventional height of one *zhang* and eight *chi*, reaching about ten meters. The method of iron casting must have been very popular in Tang. According to Zheng Yan’s research, the so-called “iron cassock” located at Lingyan Monastery in Jinan, Shandong Province, is actually a partial remnant of clothes from a statue of warrior attendants. Based on the height of the fragments of the cast iron statue, it can be inferred that its original height was about 7 m. The originally complete statue was destroyed during the extermination of Buddhism in the period of Huichang (841–846) (Zheng 2006, pp. 206–14; Zheng 2022, pp. 30–36). According to hierarchical differences, as the main deity, Vairocana Buddha should be bigger, close to the height of the Maitreya statue recorded by Ennin. According to *Xijin Zhi* 析津志, cited by *Shuntianfu Zhi* 順天府志, a significant local gazetteer of Beijing in early Ming (1368–1644), Minzhong Monastery “is located in the south of the old city, with a giant pavilion dedicated to the statue of Guanyin in white, which is more than twenty *zhang* high. The head of the statue can only be seen on the third story of the pavilion in 舊城之南，有傑閣奉白衣觀音大像，高二十餘丈。閣三層始見其首。” (Xie 2017, p. 15) If this record is true, the height of the statue of Guanyin in white can reach over sixty meters. More importantly, for these pavilions which have disappeared, the visual experience of only seeing the head of the Bodhisattva when the viewers climbed to the third story is not something we can imagine today, but was faithfully recorded by the viewers at that time.

For circular Buddha statues, this design can also facilitate the viewer in circling around the back of the Buddha statue, which is also a visual experience that cannot usually be provided by Buddha statues attached to the central column of pagodas or located near the back wall of Buddhist halls. The Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) Pavilion of Dule Monastery is a representative example (see Figure 3). On the one hand, it is comparable to the Yungang Caves 16 to 20 in the two-story design and basic spatial composition created by the Guanyin statue inside, and even to the lighting setting of the two-story open windows in the Guanyin Pavilion. On the other hand, for visitors who visit this pavilion, viewing the

chest, abdomen, head, and neck of the Guanyin statue from a close distance through the inner corridor on the mezzanine level or second story is no longer a privilege for craftsmen in the process of grotto construction, nor is it a phased experience during the construction process. Instead, it has become a part of its design philosophy and visual logic. The viewing of the back of the Bodhisattva statue is a visual experience that cave craftsmen have almost never had. The other typical case is the Dabei Pavilion of Longxing Monastery in Zhengding County, Hebei Province (see Figure 4). People can also see the head, chest and abdomen of the giant Guanyin statue horizontally by climbing on the pavilion. Unfortunately, since the current Dabei Pavilion is not the original structure of Northern Song, and is not from the same time as the Guanyin statue inside the pavilion, it is still not possible to accurately analyze the visual experience of the Song people who climbed onto the pavilion and observed this statue, as in the Dule Monastery.

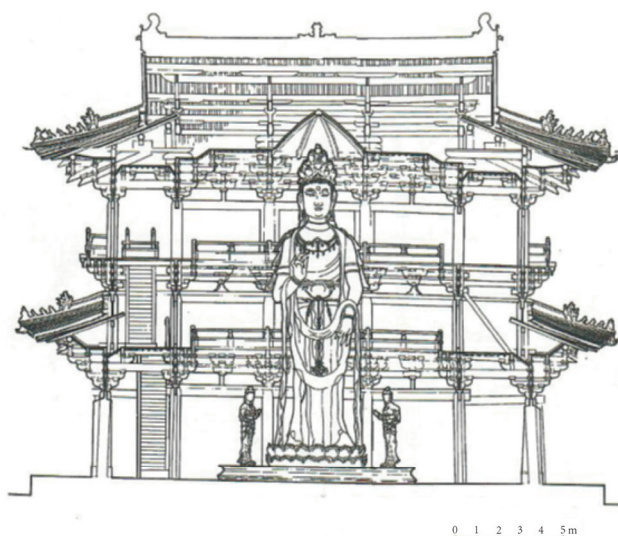


Figure 3. Vertical section of the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery. (See Guo 2009, p. 290, Figures 6–29).

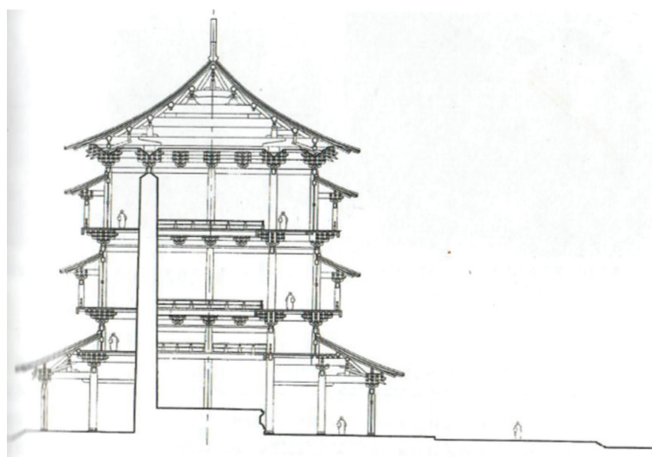


Figure 4. Section of restoration of the Dabei Pavilion in Longxing Monastery (Guo 2009, p. 373, Figures 6–214).

According to the stele in 963, there is a copper statue of Bodhisattva inside the Dabei Pavilion, which is seven *zhang* and three *chi* high. In 1316, Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) described this huge building in the so-called “Danba Stele”: “Its statue is 73 *chi* high, and a large pavilion of three stories was built to cover it. On the side are two magnificent multi-story buildings like wings, which are unparalleled in the world 其像高七十三尺，建大閣三重以覆之。旁翼之以兩樓，壯麗奇偉，世未有也。” (Wu 2019) In 1438, the other stele recorded the height of the pavilion as 13 *zhang*. According to the records in this stele and my interpretation, there are auxiliary buildings on both sides of the pavilion, each measuring seven *zhang* and three *chi* high, which is exactly equal to the height of the giant Bodhisattva statue. Chinese architectural historians speculate that the Dabei Pavilion in Song was a building with a width of seven *jian* and a depth of six *jian*, based on the existing ruins of the pillar foundations and the traces of the platform in Song. Based on the functional and structural needs, the height of the pavilion needs to be determined based on the size of the existing copper Buddha. The measured height of the copper Buddha statue is 21.3 m, the base is 2.35 m, and the total height is 23.65 m. According to these data, the Dabei Pavilion is designed as a three-story pavilion (with four eaves and three floors as the main body, which is not fundamentally contradictory to Zhao Mengfu’s description) in a reconstructed imaginary drawing. In the center of this building, there is a high space connecting four stories, surrounded by rectangle internal corridors, and the roof type of the top of the pavilion is a hip–gable roof. The total design height of the pavilion is 37 m, and with the addition of roofs it roughly matches the record which says that “the pavilion is thirteen *zhang* high 閣高三丈”, in the historical resources (Guo 2009, p. 371). Based on photos taken from the early 20th century to the 1920s and 1930s, the main structure of the pavilion was divided into three stories, with four or five eaves on the exterior.⁶ The first story had single eaves, the second story had single or double eaves, and the third story had double eaves. There was an obvious mezzanine level between each main story. From the existing buildings that are said to have been restored according to the structure in Song, the front and sides of the Guanyin statue can be viewed from the east, west, and south. Due to the presence of a back supporting wall, it is not yet possible to see its back. The inner corridors are divided into three levels, corresponding to the lower part of the mezzanine level between the first and second main stories, the upper part of the same mezzanine level and the third main story, which are flush with the legs, waist and head of the Guanyin statue. Standing on the third-level corridor, visitors can look at the head of the Bodhisattva statue and observe many details.

The Mahayana Pavilion of Puning Monastery, built in 1755, is also a three-story giant structure (with varying numbers of eaves in different directions), with a total height of 36.65 m (see Figure 5). The interior hall accommodates a giant timber statue of Guanyin that exceeds 27 m. Standing on the second and third level of internal corridors in the pavilion, visitors can almost reach and touch the open arms of the Thousand Hands and Thousand Eyes Guanyin, to closely experience the charm and carefully observe details of this statue. Because current viewers can only look up from the bottom, their visual perception of this Guanyin statue is more of a sense of oppression and authority from above. However, for the privileged group who had the opportunity to climb onto the second and third story of this pavilion at that time, the huge Guanyin statue was not only visible, but also within reach, offering a completely different visual experience. It is very interesting that this wooden carving of the Guanyin statue is made of numerous timbers, with a hollow interior divided into three layers by horizontal structures and supported by a center pillar that penetrated through the top and bottom. In the other words, there are also layered hidden spaces inside this Bodhisattva statue. Although its main structure appears to be integrated as a whole, in essence it can be seen as an unconventional multi-story building. The construction method of its main statue also testified to the technical feasibility for the giant statue in the Heavenly Hall of Empress Wu (614–705, r. 690–705), which we will discuss next.

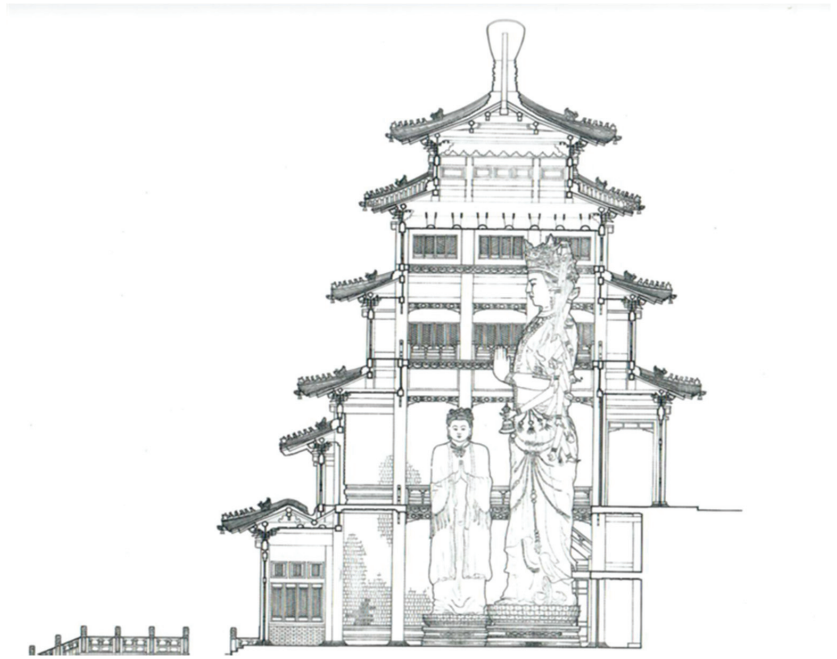


Figure 5. Cross section of the Mahayana Pavilion in Puning Monastery (Yang and Zhu 2019, p. 137).

The above-mentioned three examples are all Guanyin statues after the Liao Dynasty (907–1125) and Song Dynasty. However, the motif of this type of cross-story giant statue is clearly not limited to Guanyin in cases nowadays. It is like the Wanfu Pavilion in the Yonghe Palace (the Lama Temple in Beijing), the former residence of Emperor Yongzheng (1678–1735, r. 1722–1735), which has three stories (with two stories and three eaves on the exterior and one underground dark story on the interior). In the center hall of this pavilion, there is a giant Maitreya statue that is up to 26 m high, 18 m above ground, and 8 m underground, carved from a whole piece of sandalwood. Unlike the previous pavilions, due to the height limitation of the Wanfu Pavilion itself (which is much lower than the Maitreya statue on the interior), a considerable portion of the legs of Buddha statue extends into the underground space, and its chest is flush with the floor of the second story of the pavilion (due to the presence of underground space, it is the third story from the inside). Therefore, although the main deity of the Wanfu Pavilion in the Yonghe Palace is Maitreya rather than Guanyin, and some of it is located underground, its basic visual logic remains consistent with the aforementioned Guanyin Pavilion and Dabei Pavilion.

Beyond these existing architectural cases, the most extreme masterpiece is the Heavenly Hall built in Luoyang, the holy capital of the empire during the Wu Zhou period (690–705). According to relevant historical records and Luo Shiping's research, the Heavenly Hall (*tiantang* 天堂) was in fact the Buddha Hall, which accommodated a giant statue of Maitreya (Liu 1975, p. 865; Du 1984, p. 1228; Luo 2016, pp. 30–35). But to define it as pagoda-style architecture is at least inaccurate. The internal structure of the Heavenly Hall was relatively close to the pavilion, except that its plane was circular rather than the rectangle or octagonal shape commonly seen in existing pavilions. The internal structure of the network distribution of multi-circle pillars allowed it to meet the needs of those climbing onto the pavilion and to form a hollow structure connecting multiple stories, accommodating cross-story giant statues. Compared to the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery, which has fewer stories, the Heavenly Hall, with more stories (the exterior appears to have five stories, with four additional mezzanine levels, and is composed of nine structural stories

in total), allowed visitors to observe the Buddha's feet, body, and head in proximity, providing rich perspectives from all directions and elevations at more different heights. If in the Dabei Pavilion of Longxing Monastery in Zhengding County the inner cloisters were set at the lower and upper parts of each mezzanine level, the viewing positions at different heights in the Heavenly Hall are set at eight different layers. From the actual measurements provided by the archaeological report, the network of pillars of the Heavenly Hall is concentric in shape, with two circles of stone column foundations arranged with an inner circle of twelve and an outer circle of twenty (see Figure 6). The central part of the building has a super-large foundation composed of several large stone slabs, indicating the possibility of the existence of a huge central pillar (Luoyangshi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiuyuan 2016, pp. 26–32). However, in my opinion, if this site is indeed the site of the Heavenly Hall, there is definitely a giant Maitreya Buddha statue that spans multiple stories in it, according to historical records (Liu 1975, p. 865; Du 1984, p. 1228; Luo 2016, pp. 30–35). Nevertheless, the distance between the inner pillar network and the central pillar, at most ten meters, may not be enough to fully accommodate a giant statue that is more than 100 m high (the speculated height of Maitreya's statue is detailed later). Even if it can accommodate it, it would still cause the giant statue to be obstructed by the inner pillar network, and the height of the statue does not match the design height of the pavilion. Referring to the actual Guanyin statue in the Mahayana Pavilion of Puning Monastery, a dramatic but reasonable assumption is that this central pillar may not be the core building component that reaches the top of the Heavenly Hall, but rather a supporting central pillar wrapped inside a lightweight-design (*jiazhu* 夾紵) Buddha statue. In other words, what it wanted to support was not the Buddha Pavilion, but the giant statue. If the size of this Maitreya statue was indeed as huge as described in historical records (Liu 1975, p. 865; Zhang 1979, p. 115), it is highly likely that its interior also adopts a layered hollow structure like the Guanyin statue of Puning Monastery, with a central timber pillar connecting the horizontal layers, to support the whole structure. Due to the existence of networks composed by at least two circles of pillars in the site of the Heavenly Hall, these pillars can form a circular inner corridor and ensure that the central area is connected from top to bottom. Therefore, upon climbing onto the statue and looking inward from the internal corridors, visitors can observe and worship the feet, legs, abdomen, chest, and even head of Maitreya's statue layer by layer, from a horizontal position. As for whether the interior of the hollow Buddha statue retains a certain layered structure, and can even be climbed onto step by step, providing a visual experience like the interior of the Statue of Liberty, this is uncertain, due to the lack of historical and archaeological records. As shown in the interpretation by Luo Shiping of the giant statue in the Heavenly Hall, this Maitreya statue was in Luoyang, the capital city of the empire and played an exemplary role in the Tang Dynasty. After its completion, it strongly promoted the trend of carving Maitreya statues in capitals and even in various prefectures (such as Dunhuang and Jia Prefecture) (Luo 2016, p. 29).

Later, the Heavenly Hall was burned down; the statue of Maitreya enshrined inside was not completely destroyed, but was restored by Emperor Zhongzong (656–710, r. 683–684, 705–710) of Tang. According to *Sui Tang Jiahua* 隋唐嘉話, a book edited by Liu Su (active in the period of Emperor Xuanzong [685–762, r. 712–756]), in order to record many stories of figures in Sui (581–618) and early Tang, “During the reign of Emperor Zhongzong, in order to fulfill the wishes of Empress Wu, he cut off the Buddha (Maitreya) statue, shortened it, and established a new pavilion in the Shengshan Monastery to accommodate it 至中宗欲成武后志，乃斫像令短，建聖善寺閣以居之。”⁷ (Liu 1979, p. 38). This record indicates that the design height of heaven should match the giant Maitreya statue built earlier. Therefore, the newly built pavilion of Shengshan Monastery in the period of Emperor Zhongzong could only be accommodated by truncating the Buddha statue, due to the pavilion's insufficient vertical height, to accommodate the originally giant statue. Regarding the height of the statue of Maitreya, Li Chuo (?–862) cited the “Record of the Great Statue of Baoci Pavilion in Shengshan Monastery” in his *Shangshu Gushi* 尚書故實: “From the top to the *yong*, it is 83 *chi*, and the mercy bead is made of silver. The hole in

the forehead (*baihao* 白毫) can accommodate items weighing eight *dan* 石 (about 635 kg) 自頂至顙八十三尺，慈珠以銀鑄成，虛中盛八石。” The meaning of *yong* 顙 is quite difficult to understand here. Fortunately, the other record, *Nanbu Xinshu* 南部新書 by Qian Yi (968–1026), indicates that “the statue of the Buddha in the Baoci Pavilion of the Shengshan Monastery is 83 *chi* from the head-top to the *yi* 顙 section [...]”. Clearly, “Yi” means the chin, so it can be interpreted that the Buddha statue reaches 83 *chi* from the top of the head to the chin, which is 25 m according to the length of the standard *chi* in Tang. This distance can be roughly regarded as the height of the Buddha’s head. From existing examples, the ratio of the head to the body of the Buddha and Bodhisattva statues in Tang ranges from 1:4 to 1:6. Even considering that the proportion of the head of the statue in the Heavenly Hall is slightly increased, due to the effect of perspective, from looking up (for example, the South Giant Statue of Cave 130 in the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang), it should not be lower than 1:4. Therefore, it can be inferred that the original height of the statue of Maitreya in the Heavenly Hall should be over a hundred meters, and was an unparalleled giant statue in the world at that time. The biography of Xue Huaiyi (662–695) in *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 records the height of the Bright Hall of Wu Zhou Dynasty (*wuzhou mingtang* 武周明堂) as 300 *chi* (Liu 1975, p. 4742)⁸, and the article by “Mingtang” in *Tongdian* 通典, edited by Du You (735–812), states: “When the Bright Hall (*mingtang*) was first built, the five-story Heavenly Hall was built behind the Bright Hall. To stand on the third story, it was already possible to overlook the Bright Hall 初為明堂，於堂後又為天堂五級，至三級則俯視明堂矣。” (Du 1984, p. 1228) Based on this description, it can be inferred that the design height of the five-story Heavenly Hall should be much higher than that of the three-story Bright Hall, at about 500 *chi*, or 150 m, which is enough to accommodate a giant statue of over 100 m. In addition, according to the following record in *Jiu Tangshu Liyi Zhi*: “At that time, (Wu) Zetian built the Heavenly Hall at the location of the original Daye Hall in Sui (581–618), to the north of the Bright Hall, to accommodate the Buddha statue, which was over a hundred *chi* high 時則天又於明堂北隋大業殿處造天堂，以安佛像，高百餘尺。” (Liu 1975, p. 865) If this record was correct, the height of the Heavenly Buddha statue was only over thirty meters. In my opinion, although this information comes from official history, it appeared relatively late and was inconsistent with other data. For these reasons, I prefer not to accept these data. In addition to this overly conservative description, another overly exaggerated record is from *Chaoye Qianzai* 朝野僉載 by Zhang Zhuo (active in the period from Emperor Gaozong to Xuanzong, in Tang). According to this text, the height of the Heavenly Hall is recorded as one thousand *chi*, nearly 300 m; the height of the Buddha statue is 900 *chi*, reaching 270 m (Zhang 1979, p. 115), which is over-exaggerated and does not match the proportion of the head height of the Buddha statue recorded by Li Chuo and Qian Yi. Therefore, we also cannot accept these data. In short, both the original Heavenly Hall and the subsequent huge pavilion in the Shengshan Monastery, used to accommodate this Maitreya statue, have exemplary and benchmark significance as pavilions of giant Buddhist statues, due to their enormous size that surpasses existing examples.

We often see the words *fu* 覆 (cover) and *rong* 容 (accommodate) in historical records related to the pavilions of giant Buddhist statues. These Chinese words like *fu* and *rong* emphasize the core position of Buddha statues in the structural logic of pavilions of giant Buddha statues, and this explains the primary and secondary relationships between Buddha statues and pavilions. Firstly, it can be called covering when the giant Buddhist statue was built first and then the pavilion was constructed later. Secondly, it can be called accommodation when the Buddhist statue was the main core and the pavilion was built as the auxiliary. In other words, the design of the pavilion is subject to the internal giant statue, and its height and other parameter indicators are also set based on the size of the internal giant statue. Only when it is necessary to relocate the giant statue (such as moving the giant statue of Maitreya, originally in the Heavenly Hall, to the pavilion in the Shengshan Monastery) will there be a situation of transforming the giant statue to fit the height of the lower pavilion. Another rare possibility is that the design of the pavilion can only reach a certain limited height and number of stories, due to the type of architecture,

as in the case of the Wanfu Pavilion in the Yonghe Palace. In this situation, it is possible to search for space underground and place the bottom of the statue in a sunken space inside the pavilion, to accommodate the giant statue. In this way, higher giant statues can be placed in a relatively low space. From the overall three-dimensional design perspective, the relationship between the pavilion and its internal statues is fundamentally different from the situation in pagodas. Regardless of whether the pagoda contains Buddha statues or not, the impact of Buddha statues on its design structure can be considerably limited and will not have a fundamental impact on the shape and technical parameters of the pagoda. In this sense, the Buddha statues in the pagodas have distinct decorative and external characteristics. Even the Buddha statues in Yingxian Timber Pagoda, composed of a multi-layer mandala, still do not impact the originally designed structure of the pagoda. According to the timeline, the history of stupas or pagodas is even longer than that of Buddhist statues, and from the symbolic perspective of Li Chongfeng, “the pagoda is not only a visual symbol of Buddhist power, but also a symbol of Buddhist reverence and eternity. Moreover, it can also be seen as the embodiment of the Buddha 塔既是佛教統治的視覺標志，也是佛法尊崇和永恆的象徵。而且，它還可以被看作佛主的化身” (Li 2014, pp. 5–6). Therefore, pagodas can exist without relying on Buddha statues, which is the fundamental difference between them and the pavilions of giant statues.

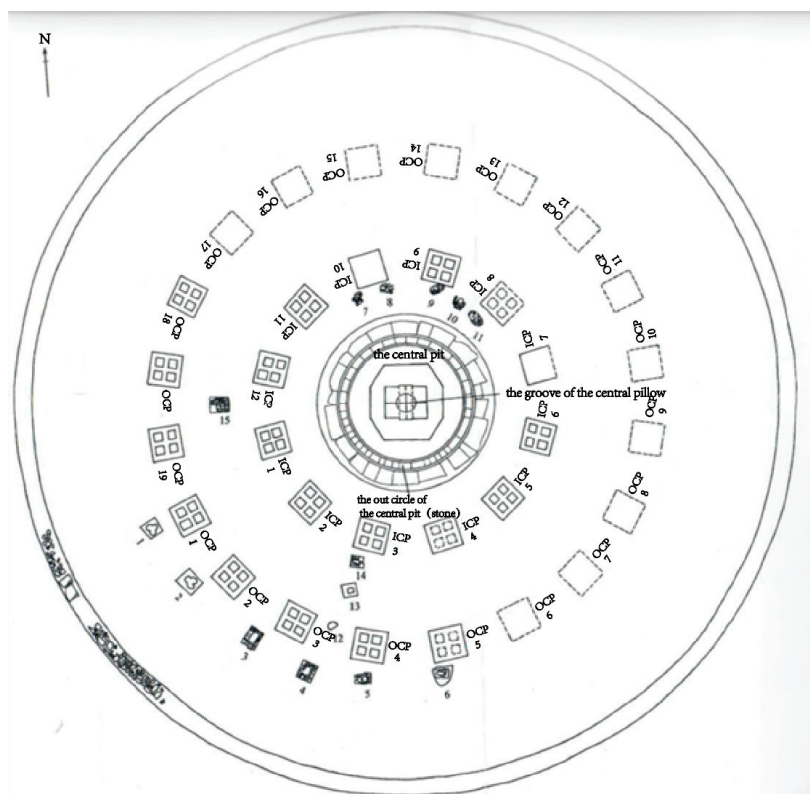


Figure 6. Plan of restoration of the round building (the Heavenly Hall) (see Luoyangshi Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiuyuan 2016, Figure 16). ICP: inner circle of pillars; OCP: outer circle of pillars.

The above section mainly discusses the three-dimensional structure and visual experience of the pavilions of giant statues. In terms of plane layout, combined with the descriptions in *Guanzhong Chuangli Jietan Tujing* and *Zhong Tianzhu Sheweiguo Zhiyuan Si Tujing* written by Daoxuan (596–667) and the accompanying drawings of the engraved version

in the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1276) (Daoxuan 2018), and according to the illustrations drawn by the modern scholars of architectural history and the existing architectural examples, the main positions of the pavilion can be divided into two types: one is located on the left and right side of the main axis in the form of accessory buildings, and the other occupies the central axis as the main building.

The pavilions classified as accessory buildings generally have only two stories and are limited in height, such as the Puxian (Samantabhadra) Pavilion of Shanhua Monastery in Datong, Shanxi, and the Cishi (Maitreya) Pavilion of Longxing Monastery in Zhengding, Hebei. In the case of the Puxian Pavilion, there is a mezzanine level to structurally connect the lower and upper main story, which is made of so-called *chazhu zao* 叉柱造 (the upper pillar is inserted on the *ludou* 櫺斗 (a near-square wooden structure used for vertical support on the top of pillars in traditional Chinese architecture) of the mezzanine level and is indented inward by half the diameter of the lower pillar), and the structures of the two main stories are relatively independent. In the case of the Cishi Pavilion, it is also a two-story structure, and uses Yongding pillars that connect the upper and lower parts as a whole structure. In the front of the statue, the method of reducing pillars is used to form a larger and leaping-stories central space. Viewers can climb up the stairs at the back of the building and stand on the inner corridor of the second story, horizontally paying respects to the treasure crown of Maitreya Bodhisattva, and obtaining a visual experience like in the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery. The internal interconnected space is enclosed by four *yongding* 永定 pillars, which are integrated pillars that connect the upper and lower stories, which is different from the hexagonal structure of the Guanyin Pavilion.

The pavilion located at the core position of the central axis is even higher and can accommodate more giant statues; these become the commanding height and visual center of the entire monastery, as in the role and position of pagodas in early Buddhist monasteries, sharing this axis with them in the later period. According to the biography of Huiyun in *Song Gaoseng Zhuan* 宋高僧傳, there was a Buddhist pavilion behind the front hall of the Xiangguo Monastery in the Bian Prefecture. It was built in 745 and named *paiyun* 排雲 (Zanning 1987, p. 660). *Can Tiantai Wutaishan Ji* 參天台五臺山記, written by Jojin (1011–1081), records that Puzhao Wang Monastery in Si Prefecture also has four-story pavilion behind the Buddha Hall, called Baoyan Pavilion (Jojin 2009, p. 246). In existing buildings, the Guanyin Pavilion of Dule Monastery in Ji Prefecture and the Dabei Pavilion of Longxing Monastery in Zhengding county both worship the giant statue of Guanyin, which is located on the central axis of the monastery. These pavilions are the core buildings in the monastery, because of their remarkable ranking and height. Additionally, there are some cases which had already disappeared but were recorded in historical texts, such as the Manjusri Hall in the monasteries of Mount Wutai and Chang'an during the Daizong period (762–779), and the Dabei Pavilion seen by Khitan rulers when they entered Yanjing (nowadays Beijing). Since there is no clear record, it must not have been a symmetrical accessory building, but a core main building on the axis of the monastery. It should be noted that the appearance of the Pavilion of Great Statues located on the axis or at the geometric center of the sacred space of Buddhist monasteries is not a simple replacement for pagodas. The relation between them is not a procedure from A (pagodas) to B (pavilions), but rather coexists within the sacred space of Buddhism. In some specific cases, such high pavilions closely related to Buddhism had broken through the limitations of Buddhist space and become the center of the capital. The Bright Hall with obvious Buddhist elements; the Heavenly Hall, where the giant statue of Maitreya was located during the Wu Zhou period; the Da'an Pavilion, the main hall to for arranging Buddhist statues in Xanadu (located about 20 km northeast of Shangdu Town, Zhenglan Banner, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region); and the Central Pavilion located in the Da Tianshou Wanning Monastery in Dadu (now Beijing) during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), which occupied the geometric center of the palace or capital city, had already become significantly political landscapes, with Buddhist characteristics.

4. Interactivity and Divergence in the Comparative Analysis of the Visual Logic of Caves of Giant Statues, Pavilions of Giant Statues and Pagodas

At almost the same time as the development of the pavilions of giant statues, caves of giant statues which occupy almost the entire cliff surface also appeared in Buddhist grottoes.⁹ Judging from several cases and existing sites, the giant Buddhas carved along the cliff are also covered by pavilion-style buildings, such as Cave 96 (North Statue) and Cave 130 (South Statue) of the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang, Leshan Giant Buddha, etc. Because Buddha statues were carved based on cliffs, without any back space, it was not possible to achieve horizontal encircling story-by-story during the vertical ascent process, like the situation in the pavilion of the giant statue. However, in terms of viewing form, these giant statues built in Tang are either located within a closed large cave with several open holes, or are covered by timber pavilions in an open or semi-open structure. They can be viewed through narrow stairs between the various stories of the pavilion-style building, as well as from a straight corridor outside the cave and a central lighting hole on each floor, to obtain various viewpoints in the ascending procedure story-by-story, horizontally worshipping the middle and upper parts of Buddha statues.

Specifically, the first case is the North Statue of the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang (Cave 96), now called the Nine-story Building. According to *Mogaoku Ji* 莫高窟記 (the records of the Mogao Grottoes) on the north wall of the front hall of Cave 15 “In the second year of the Yanzai period of the Wu Zhou Dynasty (695), Chan master Lingyin and layman Yin Zu et al. created the North Giant Statue, which was 140 *chi* high 延載二年，禪師靈隱共居士陰祖等造北大像，高一百四十尺。” According to the Stele of Zhai Huaishen (831–890)¹⁰ in the late Tang Dynasty, “I saw the North Giant Statue by the Dangquan River, which had been established for many years, but the pillars were destroyed [...] The old pavilion had four eaves and cannot match the (size of) golden body (Buddha statue); after the restoration, it has five eaves, with a suitable height 乃見宕泉北大像，建立多年，棟樑摧毀.....舊閣乃重飛四級，摩稱金身；新增而橫敞五層，高低得所。” (Rong 1993, pp. 206–16). From this, it seems that the exterior of Cave 96 must have had four eaves before the restoration led by Zhang Huaishen, and after this project five eaves must have been added. The point that the previous exterior was not suitable and that the newly built (five eaves) were just suitable, is based on whether it is proportional to the height and size of the Buddha statue, although this may be an exaggerated description that belittles the old building and praises the new building. This feature reflects well the concept of “covering” in the pavilion-style architectures, which takes Buddha statues as the core of spatial design. In 1999, archaeologists discovered a platform foundation in Tang, 24.2 m wide from north to south and 9.4 m deep from east to west, and a site of a bottom hall with a width of five *jian* and a depth of two *jian* in the front of this cave (Peng et al. 2003). This site is likely the bottom of the multi-story pavilion-style building in front of the grottoes of Tang.

In the photos taken by French sinologist Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) in 1908, the pavilion-style building outside Cave 96 was still in the form of a “five-story building”, which had five eaves. Climbing up through narrow stairs and entering through three hole passages to the interior of the second, third, fourth and fifth story, viewers can horizontally observe the upper thighs, chest, and head of the sitting Maitreya statue inside the cave. After 1935, the pavilion outside Cave 96 was built in today’s style (a nine-story building). However, from the perspective of its internal structure, there has not been a fundamental change in the viewpoints in the hole passages. Using the construction technology, such a giant statue must also be constructed in layers from top to bottom, similar to the 16th to 20th Caves of the Yungang Grottoes. Unlike the Yungang Grottoes, the viewpoints that were level with the knee, chest, chin and eyes of the Buddha statue did not disappear with the completion of the project, but were preserved through a multi-story pavilion. In Dunhuang, where there are many tourists today, it is almost impossible for the vast majority of tourists to obtain these extraordinary viewpoints through narrow stairs. But in pre modern China, it was not only possible, but also probably the intention of the designers, to observe the Buddha from different heights by climbing onto the pavilion. In addition, the Cave 130

in the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang, the so-called South Giant Statue, is covered by a three-story pavilion, which can also be accessed by narrow ladders. Therefore, its visual experience resembles that of the North Giant Statue, but with slightly fewer viewpoints because of the limitation of the number of stories.

From the spatial logic and visual experience of its construction, the core logic of this design concept is not fundamentally different from the Heavenly Hall, far away in Luoyang. Because of the existence of the cliff surface, the visual experience is changed from 360-degree surround viewing to the fixed viewpoint from the front of the Buddha statue. Wu Hung pointed out that the construction of this statue is another clear evidence of the dynasty's political influence on the construction of the Mogao Grottoes[...] The unusual political significance of this cave led the builders to introduce the form of the Giant Statue Cave that the Mogao Grottoes had never used before. The construction of the North Giant Statue not only added a massive landmark building to the Mogao Grottoes, but also changed their overall appearance and construction logic. Although there were many large-scale caves built before, they all belonged to the overall group of caves, and none had the dominant power of the giant statue in Cave 96. Its appearance immediately provided a powerful visual center for the overall cliff surface of the Mogao Grottoes (Wu 2022, pp. 86–88). Regarding the topic of this paper, if the Heavenly Hall enshrined with the giant statue of Maitreya in terms of height and size constituted another significant visual center beside the Bright Hall in Luoyang during the Wu Zhou Dynasty, the North Giant Statue of the Mogao Grottoes of Dunhuang (including the South Giant Statue built later) is an undeniable visual center on the multi-layer cliff surface composed of hundreds of caves. On the one hand, the towering Heavenly Hall had broken the tediously and monotonously two-dimensional layout of Luoyang; on the other hand, the vertically constructed giant statue caves and the huge pavilions in front of them break or even separate the horizontally spread grottoes and plank paths on the cliff surface. From this viewpoint, we not only discovered the unique spatial concepts and visual experiences conveyed by the two large statue caves in Dunhuang, but also discovered their inherent correlation and consistency in visual logic with the pavilion-style architecture represented by the Heavenly Hall that emerged during this period or earlier.

Another example is the Leshan Giant Buddha, which takes the visual experience offered by the pavilion-style building attached to the cliff wall to the extreme. According to *Wuchuan Lu* by Fan Chengda (1126–1193), “there is the Tianning Pavilion in the monastery, where the giant statue is located [...] It has thirteen stories from the head, face to feet (of the giant statue), and is the largest Buddha statue in the world, The two ears (of the statue) are made of timbers[...] The front of the Buddha Pavilion is San'e Mountain, and the other three sides are also beautiful mountains. Multiple rivers intersect in the (canyon of) mountains. It is the first time to see the grand scene when I climb (the pavilion) since I come to *xizhou* 西州 (Nowadays Sichuan and Chongqing) 寺有天寧閣，即大像所在。……爲樓十三層，自頭面以及其足，極天下佛像之大。兩耳猶以木爲之。……佛閣正面三峨，餘三面皆佳山。眾江錯流諸山間。登臨之盛，自西州來始見此耳。” (Fan 2012, pp. 60–61). According to the description by Wang Xiangzhi (1163–1230) in *Yudi Jisheng* 輿地紀勝, “the height of the statue exceeds 360 *chi* and a seven-story pavilion is built to cover it 大像逾三百六十尺，建七層閣以覆之。” (Wang 1991, p. 1038). In fact, if we consider the double-eave structure or mezzanine levels that may be used in the Pavilion of the Giant Statue, Fan Chengda's record of thirteen stories may not be fundamentally contradictory to Wang Xiangzhi's description of seven stories, either as the number of eaves or including six mezzanine levels. From the expressions of the Fan's record, such as “the two ears are made of timbers” and “the grand scene when I climb (the pavilion)”, visitors must have been able to climb onto the Buddha Pavilion and view the Buddha statue closely during the Southern Song. Since the height of the Leshan Great Buddha is much greater than that of the Northern and Southern Giant Statues of Mogao Grottoes, the number of stories of this pavilion attached to the cliff is much higher than the cases in Dunhuang. Even if the mezzanine levels are not included, the number of stories of this huge pavilion was still as many as seven. Due to the

disappearance of this huge pavilion, the specific details and tangible visual experience of the building are no longer known. However, it can be imagined that the existence of such a pavilion of giant statues makes the visual experience of the huge Leshan Giant Buddha to the viewers at that time likely quite different from today. If nowadays viewers are more impressed by the enormous size of the Buddha statue, previous viewers who could climb onto the Buddha pavilion were able to horizontally gaze at various parts of the Buddha, or stand at the foot of the statue, to feel the visual intimacy and oppression due to the constant changes in viewpoints and heights. In the procedure of climbing the stairs, as the Buddha pavilion shrank upwards, they constantly approached the giant statue, gaining an increasing sense of familiarity.

After the disappearance of the huge pavilion, we can still pass through the Nine Curved Planks Path and the Lingyun Plank Path on both sides of the statue, in clockwise direction, descending from the cliff next to the Buddha's head to the Buddha's feet near the river, and then climbing up to the other side of the Buddha's head to complete the vertical circle. The Bamiyan Buddhas, located in Afghanistan, can also provide such a vertical circular path for Buddha worship, coming close to the head of the Buddha statue through hole passages. Different from the Leshan Giant Buddha, the feet of the Bamiyan Giant Buddhas and the cliffs are separated (Liu 2021, pp. 64–69). This means that people can still follow the conventional way of circumferentially worshipping the Buddha at the bottom. To sum up, the design concepts and visual logic of grottoes of giant statues and pavilions of giant statues have strong similarity and interactivity, but they are not the same. The pavilions of giant statues also have their own characteristics.

It should be emphasized that the development of pavilions of giant statues does not necessarily mean the replacement of pagodas. The development of pagodas since Tang and Song can be roughly divided into two types: the pavilion style and the dense-eave style. Whether it is a wooden structure, brick structure, or a brick-wood mixed structure, a pavilion-style pagoda can physically separate the space on each story, making it relatively independent. In the case of Yingxian Timber Pagoda, an independent space centered around Buddhist statues can be formed on each story. However, in some extreme cases, such as the White Pagoda of Qing Prefecture in Liao, although it appears to be a typical pavilion-style pagoda, the stories remain separated, without connected stairs to climb, making it impossible to achieve a visual experience from the bottom to the top. Contrarily, the number of stories inside dense-eave pagodas cannot match the number of eaves outside, and generally, internal Buddhist statues also cannot be arranged in the upper space surrounded by dense eaves. Although the early dense-eave pagodas were accessible and even had stairs to climb (such as the Small Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an), there was not much internal space. Additionally, apart from the first story, it was impossible to gain a truly layered and independent religious space. The later dense-eave pagodas (represented by the dense-eave pagodas of the Liao style) were mostly inaccessible, returning to the visual logic of the early-Indian and Central Asian-style stupas. They could only display their religious characteristics through external forms, allowing believers to worship around them in a two-dimensional space. For instance, the Great Pagoda in the central capital (*Zhongjing* 中京) of Liao (located on the north bank of the Laoha River in Tianyi Town and Daming Town, Ningcheng County, Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region), which ranks third in height and has the largest total volume among existing Buddhist pagodas in China, is a solid, dense-eave pagoda that cannot be accessed. In a typical dense-eave pagoda of the Liao Style, the significantly elevated first story provides four or eight larger facades, allowing them to place the Four Directions Buddha, the Eight Pagodas of Sakyamunia, and other objects, forming a symbol of the Buddhist universe and time. Unlike the visual experience provided by almost contemporaneous pavilions, the Buddha statues of this type of pagoda are of shallow relief and nearly flat, unable to obtain a fully three-dimensional representation and be surrounded and worshiped as an individual statue. However, it is possible to construct a mandala pattern that combines time and space through the overall layout of the plane. Additionally, it is mainly a single-layer mandala, which is different

from the multi-layer mandala in the Yingxian Timber Pagoda (Fu 2009, p. 518; Kim 2019, pp. 53–108). The direction of observing the Buddha statue is also the external perspective in a typical open space, rather than the internal perspective in a closed space, which cannot generate a visual experience of climbing onto it and becoming close to the Buddha statue. From this perspective, the planar-surround visual logic of Buddhist pagodas after Tang maintained a considerable stability, and even greatly weakened the climbing function and internal layered sacred space of most pagodas, returning to the tradition of single-layer-surround visual logic that existed earlier, even in India.

In very few cases, people have obtained the same viewing angle as drones today through the cross-story space inside pagodas or other pagoda-style buildings, allowing them to view the base, waist, and top of the pagoda from different heights. The first case is the Feiying Pagoda in Huzhou at Zhejiang Province, known as the “pagoda in the pagoda”. This pagoda is composed of stone and timber pagodas that are nested inside and outside (See Figure 7). The inner stone pagoda is over ten meters high, built in the early Southern Song. The outer timber pagoda has a multi-layer pillar network structure, built around 1234, which not only accommodates the inner pagoda but also constructs stairs that can be climbed. Due to the existence of its internal corridor, visitors can climb up the stairs and obtain a visual experience to horizontally observe the base, body, and top of the inner pagoda, even overlooking its top. Because of the core pillar placed in the center of the upper three stories of the outer pagoda, the spanning-story space inside the pagoda does not reach the three stories above the outer pagoda, but ends at the fourth story. This characteristic is the difference between the central space of the pagoda and most pavilions of giant Buddhist statues. The second case is the Putuo Zongcheng Monastery in Chengde, Hebei Province, built in 1771. In its main building, the Great Red Terrace (*dahongtai* 大红臺), there are two octagonal nanmu pagodas located in the eastern and western compartments of the south part called the secret scenic area, with a total height of 19 m and nine stories (see Figures 8 and 9). They directly reach the platform on the top of the podium of the Great Red Terrace through the hollow space spanning the second and third floors. Unlike the pavilions of giant statues, which almost exactly accommodate Buddha statues, the height of the Great Red Terrace here is not enough to accommodate the timber twin pagodas inside. Therefore, their protruding parts have surpassed the top platform on the south side of the Great Red Terrace, covered by two small pavilions with double eaves. The two timber pagodas enshrine 2160 gilded copper Buddha statues in total, each pagoda with 1080. From the second and third floors of the southern part of the Great Red Terrace, which are adjacent to the Buddhist pagodas, as well as the side windows of the small pavilions on the top platform of the Red Terrace, viewers can see the lower, middle, and top of the timber pagodas, as well as the details of the Buddha statues enshrined on each story. To sum up, if the case in Huzhou is a pagoda within a pagoda, the case of two timber pagodas in Putuo Zongcheng Monastery are pagodas within a pavilion. In terms of visual experience, the two cases above have obvious similarities with the pavilions of giant Buddhist statues, except that the huge Buddha statues in the hollow of the building are replaced by relatively small Buddha pagodas. This special phenomenon can be seen as an example of the interaction between Buddhist pagodas and pavilions of giant statues in terms of visual experience. Of course, there are only a few pagodas that can provide such visual experiences, and they cannot change their basic visual logic based on stories.



Figure 7. Interior view of the Feiying Pagoda (author's own photo).

The high-rise buildings of Buddhism in medieval China were represented by pagodas and pavilions, each presenting different spatial logic and visual experience. However, the similarity and interactivity between the two of them is undeniable. A scholar of Chinese architecture, Fu Xinian, believes that “the Buddha pavilions and the Buddha pagodas are both multi-story buildings from a structural perspective, and there is a certain correlation between their rise and fall. Due to the use of core pillars or an earth entity in early timber pagodas, only Buddha statues can be set up around the center structure on the ground floor. Therefore, the size and quantity of Buddha statues are limited. From the late Southern and Northern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the practice of creating large statues gradually became popular, and high-rise buildings with hollow space and large statues in them obtained the key positions in Buddhist monasteries. With the development of the Buddha Pavilion, the structural style of the pagoda had also begun to change, gradually absorbing the structural characteristics of multi-story pavilions, and even resembling them in appearance.” (Fu 2009, p. 511) As there are currently no surviving timber pagodas before Tang, we cannot yet determine whether early timber pagodas can only arrange Buddhist statues around the core pillar or in the central earth entity on the ground floor. However, from the cases of several central pagoda pillar caves, Cao Tiandu Pagoda, and Zhakou White Pagoda, if they are considered as models of timber pagodas of the same period, the Buddha statues are also distributed above the second story and may not be limited to the first story. Fu Xinian noticed the possible impact of the buildings of hollow multi-story pavilion style on the structure and even appearance of the timber pagoda, which is

indeed confirmed by existing buildings such as the Yingxian Timber Pagoda. From a structural perspective, due to the existence of a double-layer pillar network, it is theoretically feasible to remove the central part of the floor slabs that divide each floor, forming a hollow space to span five floors in the case of the Yingxian Timber Pagoda. The problem is that although the structure type of the double-layer pillar network of the Yingxian Pagoda is almost equivalent to the pillar network in the high pavilions that accommodated huge statues during the same period, the way to layered planar worship of Buddhas remains unchanged in these pagodas. In other words, the similarity in structure highlights the fundamental differences in spatial logic and visual experience. Fu Xinian believed that because of the resolution of structural difficulties, there was once a peak period of construction of high-rise timber pagodas from the Five Dynasties to the Liao and Song dynasties. High-rise timber pagodas, like the Sakyamuni Pagoda in the Fogong Monastery in Ying County, which adopted the structure of palace halls, were not an accidental phenomenon at that time, and must be directly related to the development of Buddhist pavilions in the Tang Dynasty (Fu 2009, p. 512). In my opinion, the emergence of pavilions of giant statues and their prevalence in Buddhist space considerably changed the spatial logic and visual experience provided by pagodas. Although the relation between pavilion and pagoda is not substitutive but parallel, because the giant statues in pavilions can offer believers a greater visual impact, and the integration of Buddha statues with architecture becomes closer, the pavilion replaced the core position of pagodas in some monasteries during the mid-to-late Tang (Fu 2009, p. 511), or shared the visual center with pagodas, occupying the axis of the entire monastery.

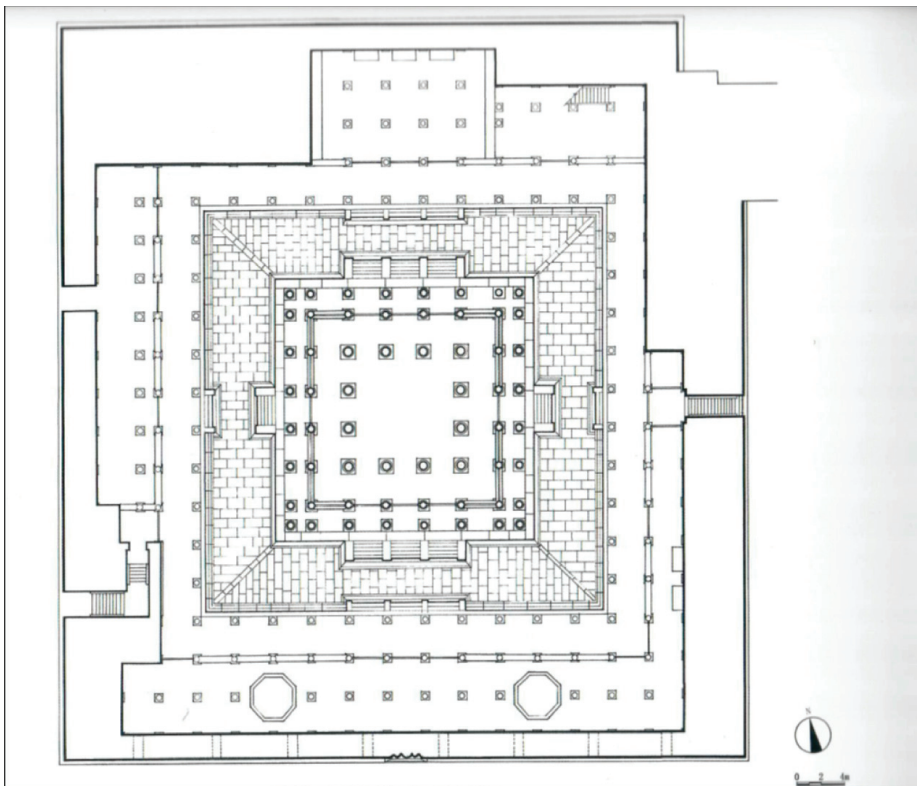


Figure 8. Plan of the first floor of buildings around the Dugang of Putuo Zongcheng Monastery (Yang and Zhu 2019, p. 196).



Figure 9. The double-timber pagoda on the southern part of the Great Red Terrace from the view-point of the second-floor corridor (author's own photo).

5. Conclusions

In summary, although the form, structure, and decorative style of stupas or pagodas and Buddhist grottoes have undergone significant transformation in the process of dissemination and development from India and Central Asia to China, their way of worship of planar detour and horizontal visual logic has not changed. Until the emergence of the pavilion, especially the development of pavilions of giant statues, viewers could not only look up at the Buddha and worship in parallel circles, but also gained a three-dimensional perspective—horizontally observing the Buddha's shoulders, neck, and head. The relationship between Buddha statues and architecture has also changed, becoming centered on Buddhist statues rather than centered on architectural structure. In Buddhist grottoes, the early distribution of single-layer or multi-layer caves horizontally on the cliff was also changed due to the excavation of the caves of giant statues spanning multi-layers, resulting in a visual experience like the pavilion of the large statue, but its viewing angle was limited to the front of the Buddha statue. The transition of spatial logic and visual experience is undoubtedly influenced by technological innovation, and is the result of development of interpretations and understandings on the Buddhism worship. The new spatial logic and visual experience, on the one hand, make the Buddha statue even higher; it can only be viewed from the bottom of the building, and it difficult to see the full view. On the other hand, viewers who climb onto it can look horizontally at the Buddha statue, to observe

its details, and even touch the fingertips of the giant statue, developing into a privilege for some believers. During this process, structural changes reshaped the logic of space. The tension between holiness and closeness, which is also bi-directional, increased in this creative visual experience, resulting in a dramatic fusion. It is precisely because of the existence of such pavilions of giant statues that the integration between the architectural structure and the sacred subject is closer, and the visual experience and spatial experience of the viewer are more abundant, compared with pagodas; the powerful religious sacredness and the approachable religious care have become possible at the same time.

The phenomenon that does not match our general common sense is the following: the towering and majestic pagodas are essentially dominated by a two-dimensional plane in terms of their religious spatial logic and visual experience, both externally and internally; however, the pavilion, which has relatively limited external height and visual impact (usually only two to three stories, up to five stories at most in the Heavenly Hall), has brought unprecedented shock to the viewer, due to its interconnectedly internal space and corresponding Buddha statue presentation, making it possible for the truly three-dimensional religious space and visual experience to constantly change with the viewer's position. From pagoda to pavilion, it is not only a transformation of the spatial logic and visual experience of high-rise Buddhist buildings for worship in medieval China, but also a visual expression of the concepts and characteristics of Sinicized Buddhism.

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Notes

- ¹ There is considerable abundant research on Chinese pagodas, and here I will only list some classic and systematic studies. See (Sirén 1930; Boerschmann 1931; Murata 1986; Zhang 2006). On the systematic research of architectural history related to pagodas in medieval China, see (Liang 1984; Steinhart 1984, 1997, 2017, 2019).
- ² On the earliest systematic research on the Guanyin Pavilion, see (Liang 2001, pp. 161–223). Original version published in 1932. For more details and pictures on this pavilion, see (Yang 2007). On the typical research of plane layout and space art of the Dule Monastery, especially the Guanyin Pavilion, see (Cao 1984, pp. 30–41; Zhang 1984, pp. 42–46).
- ³ The period started from the end of the Eastern Han (25–220) to a stage of what is labeled a transition during the Tang–Song periods, as defined by Naito Konan and Miyazaki Ichisada. See (Liu 1992, pp. 10–18, 153–241).
- ⁴ On the archaeological reports on these pagoda sites during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, see (Datongshi Bowuguan 2007, pp. 4–26; Zhang et al. 1992, pp. 29–37, 59; Liaoningsheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo, and Chaoyangshi Beita Bowuguan 2007; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo Luoyang Gongzuodui 1981, pp. 223–24; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo 1996; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, and Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo Yecheng Kaogudui 2010, pp. 31–42; Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo, and Hebeisheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo Yecheng Kaogudui 2016, pp. 563–91).
- ⁵ *jian* is the basic unit in Chinese traditional architecture. *jian* is the space surrounded by four pillars.
- ⁶ On the related photos, see “Bainianqian de Hebei Zhengding”, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1762586890977683859> (accessed on 14 March 2024).
- ⁷ The item of “Mingtang” in *Tongdian* is basically the same as this. See (Du 1984, p. 1228).
- ⁸ Its height recorded in *Tongdian* is 294 *chi*. See (Du 1984, p. 1228).
- ⁹ It is absolutely not the only trend in the spatial structure and visual representation of Buddhist grottoes. After the grottoes entered China, another trend in transformation that began during the Northern Wei Dynasty was the dilution of spatiality, emphasizing the visibility of Buddha and Bodhisattva statues on the surface of cliffs, and the openness of cliff statues, thus essentially reflecting

a landscape-oriented tendency of grotto statues. However, in the vast majority of cases, this visual landscape does not exist independently, but rather depends on related Buddhist monasteries. See (Li 2023, pp. 4–31).

- ¹⁰ The official full title of this stele is “Chi Hexi Jiedu Bingbu Shangshu Zhanggong Dezheng zhi Bei”. On its original texts, see S.3329 + S.11564 + P.2762 + S.6161 + S.6973 in Dunhuang manuscripts.

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Article

Ritual, Daoist Temple, and Geography: Spatial Interpretation of Wang Lingguan's Belief

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Abstract: Wang Lingguan is a significant deity in Chinese Daoist beliefs and folk worship. His belief's formation and proliferation are rooted in specific spatial contexts. This paper introduces a spatial perspective to provide a fresh interpretation of Wang Lingguan's belief, examining it through the lenses of ritual, temple, and geography. In Daoist rituals that bridged sacred and secular spaces, Wang Lingguan emerged as Sa Shoujian's protector, manifesting his divine power to devotees. For the purposes of ritual simplification and spatial solidification, believers constructed Daoist Temples as emblems of sacredness and reimagined Wang Lingguan as the protector of these temples in their design. The active involvement of the Ming royal family in building Daoist Temples significantly contributed to establishing regional belief centers for Wang Lingguan. During the Qing Dynasty, although Wang Lingguan's royal patronage waned, his belief spread across most of China, becoming more localized and secularized. The dynamic interplay of ritual, temple, and geographical factors illuminates the establishment, dissemination, and evolution of Wang Lingguan's belief throughout China.

Keywords: Wang Lingguan; ritual; Daoist temple; geography; spatial interpretation

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1. Introduction

Wang Lingguan 王靈官, also known as Wang Shan 王善, Wang E 王惡, Wang Tianjun (王天君 Lord Wang), and Wang Yuanshuai (王元帥 Marshal Wang), has the status of Sanwu huochuo leigong (三五火車雷公 Lord of Thunder), Yushu huofu tianjiang (玉樞火府天將 Jade Pivot Fire Mansion Heavenly General), Zhenwu dadi zuoshi (真武大帝佐使 The general of True Martial Great Emperor), Wubai Lingguan tongshuai (五百靈官統帥 Commander of the five hundred Lingguans), and other identities. In addition, he is probably better known as one of the most important protectors of Daoist temples (Figure 1). Wang Lingguan possesses a ruddy complexion, three eyes, dons armor, and wields a steel whip (Figure 2). He is tasked with judging and punishing evil, safeguarding the ordinary people between heaven and earth. Consequently, he earns admiration, with people praising him as follows: "With three eyes, he observes all affairs; with one whip, he awakens the people of the world 三眼能觀天下事，一鞭驚醒世間人".

The belief in Wang Lingguan has a long and profound history in China, exerting widespread influence as a national deity within the "Stratum Accumulation" (層累 cenglei) and secularization of Daoism. Wang Lingguan has garnered extensive attention from various scholars. Li Fengmao conducted a comparative analysis of relevant texts, unveiling the crucial characteristics of Wang Lingguan's dependence on Sa Shoujian 薩守堅, the Daoist priest of the Shenxiao Sect (神霄派 Divine Empyrean Daoism) during the Southern Song Dynasty (Li 1988, pp. 159–61). In another study, he further asserted that the ritual pairing of Ancestor Sa Shoujian and Protector Wang Lingguan could be a deliberate innovation by the newly formed Shenxiao Sect during the late Song and early Yuan Dynasties (Li 1997, p. 266). Zhang Zehong 張澤洪 offered a detailed examination of Zhou Side

周思得, a Ming Dynasty Daoist priest pivotal in promoting Wang Lingguan as a national deity (Zhang 2006, pp. 18–22). Li Lihe and Li Yuanguo further revealed the evolving relationship between the beliefs in Wang Lingguan and Daoist priests Sa Shoujian and Zhou Side (Li and Li 2021, pp. 97–111).



Figure 1. Wang Lingguan’s statue at Baopu Daoist Temple (抱朴道院 Baopu daoyuan), Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province. Photographed by the author.



Figure 2. Wang Lingguan’s statue at Guanghui Palace (廣惠宮 Guanghui gong), Nanxun District, Huzhou City, Zhejiang Province. Photographed by the author.

In addition to historical scrutiny, the religious content associated with the belief in Wang Lingguan has become a focal point of scholarly research. Florian C. Reiter paid attention to the case of the Wang Lingguan Temple at Mount Qiqu in Sichuan Province and made a detailed analysis of his identity as a protector and the characteristics of Daoist thunder spells (Reiter 1998, pp. 323–42). In addition, Yoshihiro Nijidou conducted a meticulous investigation into the category of Yuanshuai deities to which Wang Lingguan belongs (Nikaido 2006, pp. 206–16). Vincent Goossaert argued that closely related ritual techniques such as controlled spirit-possession, ritual theatre, and spirit-writing shaped the divine persona of the Wang Lingguan, and that his divine persona remained coherent in different contexts (Goossaert 2022, pp. 45–76). These discussions have laid the foundation for our research and enhanced our understanding of the beliefs surrounding Wang Lingguan. However, the method of analysis that relies solely on texts and stories leaves some important questions unresolved, such as the following:

- (1) How was the belief of Wang Lingguan as a guardian deity within Daoism accepted by the groups other than Daoists?
- (2) As a companion deity to Daoist Sa Shoujian, how did Wang Lingguan evolve into a protector deity revered by Daoist Temples nationwide?
- (3) Over the lengthy historical period of the Ming and the Qing Dynasties, how did the belief in Wang Lingguan evolve, and in what specific aspects did it change?

These inquiries collectively address a core question: How do secular individuals perceive and worship Wang Lingguan, the Daoist deity? The recording and depiction of the veneration of Wang Lingguan, coupled with its acceptance and spread among followers, essentially represent a concrete process through which Daoist deities manifest their sanctity in the secular world. Consequently, our analysis of the belief system surrounding Wang Lingguan could lead to a deeper investigation into the processes of its sacralization and secularization.

Following the “Spatial Turn”¹ in various disciplines, the spatial analysis of religion has advanced, establishing space as a pivotal concept in understanding faith. The structural elements that constitute religious space and the socio-historical backdrop essential for spatial construction have been integrated into the research trajectories of religious scholars.² However, it is important to note that scholars have conducted few comprehensive studies exploring the spatial aspects of belief for specific Chinese deities.³ As previously noted, the spatial relevance of Wang Lingguan, especially as a national guardian deity in Daoist temples and landscapes, has been underemphasized. Consequently, this article endeavors to adopt a spatial perspective, transcending the conventional narrative reliant on texts and stories. It aims to weave spatial elements that are in play in Daoist rituals, Daoist temples, and Daoist understandings of geography into the analytical framework, thereby offering a novel interpretation of Wang Lingguan’s belief within a dynamic spatial context.

2. Ritual: The Establishment of Divinity and the Manifestation of Belief

In the Daoist worldview, despite the clear distinction between the celestial realm (仙界 *xianjie*) as a sacred space and the mundane realm (凡界 *fanjie*) as a secular one, deities and mortals still manage to forge connections and interactions through a variety of means and intermediaries. Li Fengmao highlighted several modes of human–divine encounters during the Wei, Jin, Southern, and Northern Dynasties, including meditative resonance (冥通 *mingtong*), divine possession (降神 *jiangshen*), inadvertent entry (誤入 *wuru*), and purposeful quest (探訪 *tanfang*) (Li 2010, pp. 1–20).

As history has progressed, the methods facilitating communication between the sacred and secular realms have evolved into a complex array of rituals. This corpus of ritual knowledge is perpetuated among Daoist practitioners through canonical texts and ritualistic practices and is also acknowledged and replicated by lay followers in their religious pursuits. The reverence for Wang Lingguan is entrenched in such historical and religious milieus, conforming to specific doctrinal regulations and spatial hierarchies. In the forthcoming discussion, we will explore how Wang Lingguan’s role as a protective deity is

affirmed through Daoist rituals, his elevation to the sacred space, and the diverse Daoist rites through which he manifests his divine influence within the secular space.

2.1. *From the Secular to the Sacred: The Ritual Establishment of Wang Lingguan's Protector Deity*

The historical accounts of Wang Lingguan's life are somewhat ambiguous. In the Daoist "Xianjian" (Immortals' Biographies) and the folk "Soushenji" (In Search of the Supernatural), Wang Lingguan is associated with the legendary tales of the Daoist priest Sa Shoujian, albeit with minor variations in the narratives presented in these texts. Li Feng-mao posited that these discrepancies reflect the diverse origins of the legends surrounding Wang Lingguan at the time (Li 1988, p. 159). Florian C. Reiter, in his translation of Wang Lingguan's story, also advised readers to note the differing accounts of his tale (Reiter 1998, pp. 334–37). This paper does not aim to provide a detailed analysis of these narrative differences. Instead, it seeks to reveal a set of common spatial transformation regulations used in these stories. That is, a clear distinction is drawn between secular and sacred spaces, and bridging or communicating between these realms requires specific rituals. The spatial concepts and ritual order embedded in these stories are not only tied to the establishment and propagation of Wang Lingguan's veneration but also reflect his followers' consensus on the framework of their worldviews.

Before delving into the narrative of Wang Lingguan, it is crucial to elucidate the relationship between the Daoist pantheon and spatial order. Guo Wu 郭武 argues that the organization of Daoist deities primarily reflects Daoism's conception of the cosmic structure and is additionally influenced by the hierarchical system prevalent in human society, thus establishing distinct tiers of divinity. He further clarifies the dynamic interaction between the divine system and spatial order, highlighting that Daoism includes three principal spatial dimensions: heaven, earth, and the human world. Each realm has its respective class of deities, with the most venerated residing in heaven, followed by those in the underworld, and the human world being the most subordinate layer (Guo 1995, pp. 103–15).

Diverging from the conventional narratives of mortals ascending to divinity, the texts concerning Wang Lingguan primarily illustrate the ascent of Wang Shan from being a city god (城隍 chenghuang) and temple deity (廟神 miaoshen) to a celestial figure, specifically a protector within the Thunder Division (雷部 leibu) of the heavenly realm. Wang Lingguan's tale is intricately tied to the Daoist priest Sa Shoujian. To facilitate our analysis, we categorize their interaction into four prevalent scenarios. The first entails Sa Shoujian demolishing Wang Lingguan's Daoist Temple. The second depicts Wang Lingguan tracking and monitoring Sa Shoujian. The third scenario unfolds with their negotiation and conciliation by the river. The concluding sequence involves Sa Shoujian endorsing Wang Lingguan to the Jade Emperor (玉帝 Yudi), the sovereign of heaven, for the role of his protective deity.

In the initial account of temple destruction, Wang Lingguan is known as Wang Shan in various texts, identified either as a City God (Zhao 1988) or a Temple Deity (Qin 1990). According to Shi Yanfeng and Zhang Xingfa's deity classification, both roles are considered the lowest echelons of earthly deities (Shi 2008, pp. 187–88; Zhang 2001, p. 60), intimately linked with secular space and dwelling in tangible temples. Displeased with Daoist priest Sa Shoujian residing in his temple, City God Wang Shan resorts to dreams to communicate with local officials, urging them to oust Sa Shoujian, who subsequently employs Daoist magic to incinerate the temple. In a different narrative, the Temple Deity Wang Shan's abode is also set ablaze by Sa Shoujian, but this act is provoked by Wang Shan's grievous consumption of young children, a misdeed uncovered by Sa Shoujian.

The narratives underscore spatial order in two respects: firstly, Wang Shan's abode distinctly manifests as a secular space, accessible to individuals like Sa Shoujian or officials. For instance, it is noted that when the temple is set aflame, "the fire did not spread to the common people's homes" (Zhao 1988, vol. 4), signifying the temple's location within a populated area and its secular nature. Secondly, in terms of spatial norms, although

both the City God and Temple Deity are considered lower-tier terrestrial spirits with their temples situated within the secular realm, they maintain their sacred status and do not directly interact with Daoist priests or laypeople. The City God Wang Shan communicates solely through dreams to officials, and while the Temple Deity Wang Shan rebukes Sa Shoujian for the temple's arson, he does not manifest physically. These subtleties confirm that even deities associated with secular spaces observe specific spatial protocols.

In the second narrative, the City God Wang Shan appeals to the Jade Emperor (the sovereign of the sacred realm) to censure Sa Shoujian's actions and acquires the authority to investigate Sa Shoujian, as well as an axe intended for his potential punishment. Conversely, in another account, the Temple Deity Wang Shan, constrained by his own misdeeds, refrains from confronting the Jade Emperor and opts to clandestinely track Sa Shoujian, biding his time for retribution. This episode reveals that, under specific conditions, the City God can traverse from the secular to the sacred domain, present his case to the Jade Emperor, and obtain a degree of empowerment. Similarly, the Temple Deity appears to possess analogous abilities but refrains from utilizing them for personal reasons. In the tales, City God Wang Shan covertly follows Sa Shoujian for three years, and Temple Deity Wang Shan for twelve, yet neither manages to find any misdoing on Sa Shoujian's part or engages in direct interactions with him within the secular sphere.

The third episode unfolds by the river, where City God Wang Shan materializes and clarifies the genesis of his conflict with Sa Shoujian (Figure 3). Impressed by Sa Shoujian's esteemed character after careful observation and evaluation, Wang Shan expresses his readiness to comply with his directives and serve as his protective deity. The situation with Temple Deity Wang Shan slightly diverges; Sa Shoujian, having amassed considerable merit and potent divine powers, has earned a position in the celestial court of the sacred realm. Unable to exact vengeance, Temple Deity Wang Shan eventually resorts to negotiation with Sa Shoujian. Like City God Wang Shan, Temple Deity Wang Shan aspires to accompany Sa Shoujian into the sacred realm, thereby also offering to become his protective deity. In this story, the river acts as a pivotal spatial metaphor, mirroring unique presences. Thus, it is by the river that Sa Shoujian initially discerns the divine essence of Wang Shan in the mundane world and engages him directly.

In the concluding episode, Sa Shoujian presents the situation of City God Wang Shan to the Jade Emperor in the sacred realm and nominates him as his protective deity. In another narrative, due to the Temple Deity's previous misconduct, Sa Shoujian only forwards his nomination to the Jade Emperor after receiving an oath of allegiance from the Temple Deity. Notably, in this episode, the Temple Deity Wang Shan expressly states, "The true man's accomplishments are eminent, and he is appointed to the Heavenly Pivot" (Qin 1990, p. 518), which refers to a position within the celestial court of the sacred realm. Daoists, by accumulating merit and virtue through their cultivation, may ascend or be transformed to serve in the sacred realm. Sa Shoujian exemplifies this path. As recorded in the texts, both City God Wang Shan and Temple Deity Wang Shan ultimately succeed in becoming protective deities for Sa Shoujian, thereby earning their places in the sacred realm as well.

Overall, despite variations in narrative details, both the City God and the Temple Deity adhere to the stringent hierarchical order and spatial regulations amongst deities. Importantly, Wang Shan's transition from a lower-tier deity in the secular realm to an elevated protective deity in the sacred realm is significantly influenced by the endorsement of Daoist priest Sa Shoujian. This endorsement fundamentally involves Sa Shoujian conducting Daoist rituals that bridge the two realms. Within the corpus of Daoist ritualistic knowledge, Daoist priests can create ephemeral conduits to the sacred realm within secular spaces through the arrangement of altars, the crafting of talismans, the utterance of incantations, and other methods. Once established, these conduits allow the priests to write and send special petitions to the celestial court, thereby communicating their requests to the deities in the sacred realm.



Figure 3. Wang Shan and Sa Shoujian. Sanjiao Yuanliu Shengdi Foshuai Soushen Daquan.⁴

In the narrative texts about Wang Lingguan, the descriptions of communication rituals are notably succinct, only mentioning Sa Shoujian's actions of "petitioning the Jade Emperor" and "recommending as a divisional general". This conciseness is typical in discussing communication rituals because these divine biographies are more concerned with elucidating the origins and stories of the deities than detailing the complexities of Daoist rituals. There are specific Daoist texts that provide detailed accounts of these communication rituals with the sacred realm. We will delve into these rituals more comprehensively in the next section. However, before we do so, it is vital to emphasize the significance of the narrative texts pertaining to Wang Lingguan.

The aforementioned Daoist and folk narrative texts corroborate that Wang Lingguan accomplished the transition between two realms and solidified his status as a protective deity through the communication rituals led by Daoist priest Sa Shoujian. In essence, the narrative texts reveal that both the Daoist community and the lay public abide by a unified set of spatial orders and ceremonial rules. This widespread agreement establishes the fundamental logic for Wang Lingguan's subsequent manifestations of sanctity within the secular sphere.

2.2. From the Sacred to the Secular: The Ritual Manifestation of Wang Lingguan's Divine Power

As Sa Shoujian's sect spread, Wang Lingguan evolved into a prominent figure within Daoist veneration and garnered exceptional popularity among the Ming dynasty's royal family. A pivotal contributor to the widespread veneration of Wang Lingguan was the Hangzhou Daoist priest Zhou Side. The Xuande Emperor notably referenced Zhou Side and the ascent of Daoist exorcism of Lingguan (靈官法 Lingguan fa) in Imperial Inscription of the Dade Daoist Temple (御製大德觀碑 Yuzhi Dadeguan bei). This inscription details the following:

The Daoist priest Zhou Side garnered widespread fame in the capital for his profound understanding of Wang Yuanshuai's incantations. Known as Wang Lingguan, this Yuanshuai is a celebrated general of the celestial realm. Renowned for his efficacy, Wang Lingguan is universally responsive to supplicants and pos-

sesses the uncanny ability to predict disasters, with all his prophecies invariably coming true. My ancestor, Emperor Yongle, commissioned multiple verifications of these forecasts, all of which were remarkably accurate. Wang Lingguan is particularly proficient in banishing evils and eradicating plagues. Responding to his divine prowess, Emperor Yongle ordered Zhou Side to construct a Daoist Temple west of the imperial palace dedicated to Wang Lingguan. Subsequent to Emperor Yongle, the rituals and ordinances for worshiping Wang Lingguan were officially integrated into the state's codified laws. (Shen 1982, vol. 18, pp. 196–97)

According to Qingxi Mangao (青溪漫稿 *The Qingxi Manuscript*), Ni Yue 倪岳, a scholar from the Ming dynasty, elucidated that Zhou Side's Lingguan fa essentially encompasses possessing the body and responding to supplications, described as “spiritual possession and prayer response” (Ni 2019, p. 192). Specifically, Zhou Side's performance of possession rituals aligns with the “Transfiguration and Invocation of Generals” as delineated in the “Leiting Sanwu Huoche Lingguan Wangyuanshuai Mifa (雷霆三五火車靈官王元帥秘法 *Esoteric Methods of Wang Lingguan*)”.

Based on the ritual texts of Mifa, we can delineate Zhou Side's specific ritual practices. Initially, Zhou Side constructs a “Lei Tan” 雷壇, an altar essential for ritual execution. As John Lagerwey has elucidated, Daoist altars extend beyond mere tables, encompassing the entire space designated for the ritual (Lagerwey 1987, p. 25). The altar serves as an intermediary space bridging the secular and the sacred, a nexus of the two realms. Upon preparing the altar, Zhou Side employs distinctive Daoist hand gestures to connect with the divine realm. He positions his left hand before his heart with the “Yuwenjue” (玉文決 “The Yuwen Gesture”) and his right hand wields the “Jianjue” (劍決 “The Sword Gesture”) at his waist, all while chanting heavenly decrees. During these rituals, Zhou Side immerses himself in meditation, intuitively feeling the presence of the celestial deities.

Upon establishing a connection with the deities of heaven, Zhou Side proceeds to burn incense (焚香 *fenxiang*), invoking the presence of Wang Lingguan from the divine realm. The ascending smoke serves as a conduit, transmitting messages from the earthly domain to the celestial court. To prevent miscommunication with unintended deities, Zhou Side summons designated divine messengers to oversee and ensure the accuracy of the invocation. The texts include directives such as “Command the altar's marshals to swiftly open the heavenly gates” and “As the messenger of Gongcao are present, kindly convey this sincere offering of incense to the Thunder Mansion, and urgently call Wang Shan to the altar for this summoning”. The descriptions of burning incense and the summoning process vividly illustrate the demarcation between the mundane and sacred realms and the operational traces of the ritual.

Zhou Side served as a conduit, immersing himself in meditative concentration (存思 *cunsi*) and empathetic resonance (通神 *tongshen*). During the communication rituals, with the internal echo of thunder, Wang Lingguan, donned in armor and brandishing a golden whip, effectively connected with Zhou Side. To enable Wang Lingguan's descent from the divine realm into the earthly domain and to possess him, Zhou Side, besides holding the seal and articulating spells, also moved in the distinctive Daoist pattern that emulates the celestial bodies' motions (步斗踏罡 *budou tagang*) (Figure 4).

Following a sequence of intricate rituals, Wang Lingguan accomplished his sacred manifestation in the secular realm, as documented: “The marshal approaches the altar, offerings of incense and lamps are made. Briefly wielding his thunderous authority, he assumes command of the prayers” (Anonymous 1988, pp. 488–92). This passage signifies that Wang Lingguan is now prepared to answer prayers within the earthly domain. It is important to note that in invoking Wang Lingguan's divine powers for blessings or exorcisms in the mundane world, Zhou Side continues to employ incantations, talismans (including those penned in blood), and other Daoist ceremonial elements.

Analyzing the esoteric texts reveals that Zhou Side's linkage with Wang Lingguan is dependent on a series of rituals that facilitate the interplay between the divine and earthly realms, aspects often omitted in Sa Shoujian's narratives. Nonetheless, there is no funda-

mental difference between the communications of Sa Shoujian with the Jade Emperor and Zhou Side with Wang Lingguan. Both the narrative and esoteric texts, overtly or covertly, demonstrate that there are distinct demarcations between the celestial and the mortal, and these realms are governed by structured rules and order. Adherence to specific Daoist rituals is imperative for bridging and communicating across these distinct spaces. For Wang Lingguan, it is through such Daoist communication rituals that he solidifies his protective deity status and manifests his divine influence within the interplay of the secular and sacred realms. The tales of Sa Shoujian and Zhou Side underscore that these elaborate spatial communication rituals are predominantly understood and practiced by Daoists across various ages.

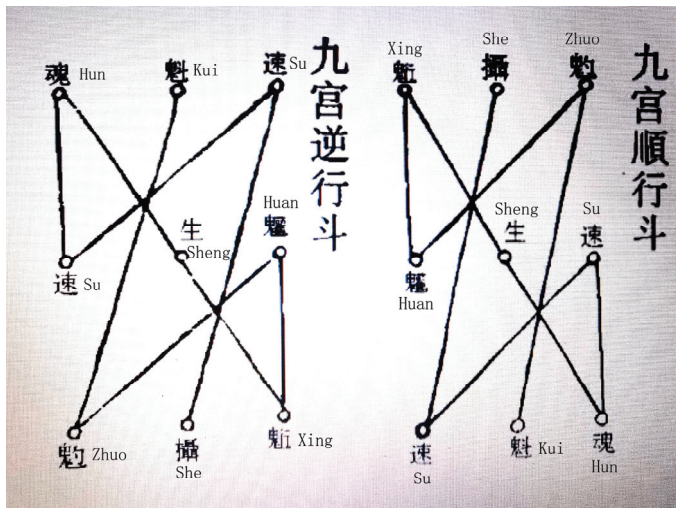


Figure 4. Daoist patterns emulating the orbit of stars and constellations, including nine palaces in sequential order dipper (九宫顺行斗 jiugong shunxing dou) and nine palaces in reverse sequence dipper (九宫逆行斗 jiugong nixing dou). Sourced from Leitong Sanwu Huoche Lingguan Wangyuan-shuai Mifa.

3. Daoist Temple: Ritual Reproduction and Imagery Shaping

Daoist Temples serve as pivotal locations for the divine presence in the secular world and as vital conduits for expressing faith. For adherents of Wang Lingguan, the architectural design of these temples represents more than just a ritualistic depiction of his origin story; it is also a significant method for evolving and reshaping the representation of their beliefs.

3.1. Ritual Simplification and Spatial Solidification

While Daoist priest Zhou Side can proficiently summon Wang Lingguan through ritualistic creation of sacred spaces, the Daoist Thunder technique necessitates considerable personal spiritual development and involves complex and specialized rituals beyond the scope of ordinary individuals. Consequently, a simplified ritual utilizing the deity’s statue has been employed to embody Wang Lingguan’s sanctity in the mundane world. Wang Lingguan’s effigy first emerged during Emperor Yongle’s campaigns in the Ming Dynasty. Yehangchuan 夜航船 (The Night Boat) details that “Emperor Yongle obtained a rattan statue of Wang Lingguan in the East Sea. He devoutly worshipped and prayed to it continuously, and it accompanied him on all military expeditions. On reaching the Jinchuan River 金川河 in one campaign, the statue grew inexplicably heavy, rendering it immovable. In a private consultation, Zhou Side informed the Emperor that the Jade Em-

peror had decreed the war's boundary, and even Wang Lingguan must adhere to this celestial limit; thus, the campaign was destined to conclude there" (Zhang 2020, vol. 14, p. 499).

Observing Emperor Yongle's devout veneration and his insistence on carrying the rattan image of Wang Lingguan during military expeditions underscores a reliance on the sacred space manifested through this venerated object. The rattan effigy as a miraculous symbol effectively manifested its scope of influence within the mundane world. The "unmovability" of the image during the Yuchuan campaign and Zhou Side's explanation that "the divine has its bounds" both highlight Wang Lingguan's delimited presence in the secular realm. While Zhou Side's possession ritual signifies a personal conduit for Wang Lingguan's transition from the divine to the earthly realm, Emperor Yongle's cherished rattan image symbolizes a material medium for such transformation. Although both methods exalt Wang Lingguan's sanctity, the latter not only facilitates ease of worship but also solidifies a more stable representation of the sacred in the spread of belief.

In his *Zhuchuang Suibi* 竹窗隨筆 (Random Notes by Bamboo Window), the late Ming Buddhist Master Lianchi 蓮池大師 recorded an instance where a soul attained liberation by "regularly venerating the image of Wang Lingguan at his bedside" (Zhu 2013, p. 20). Similarly, in Lu Can's *陸燦 Gengsi Bian* 庚巳編 (Gengsi Compilation) from the Ming era, Daoist Zhang Bixu 張碧虛 provided a remedy for villagers plagued by malevolent forces by "advising them to welcome the worshipped image of Wang Lingguan into their homes for consecration" (Lu 1987, vol. 6, p. 65). These accounts demonstrate that during the Ming dynasty, the effigy of Wang Lingguan was revered by both the clergy of Buddhism and Daoism, as well as the laity, as a miraculous object capable of creating a protective and potent sacred space. While Daoist practice involves intricate rituals and divine summoning, the simplicity and accessibility of sacred images raise the issue of ensuring their spiritual potency. In the *Collected Commentary on Gao Shang Yuhuang Ben Xing Jing* (高上玉皇本行經集註 *Gao Shang Yuhuang Ben Xing Jing Jizhu*), Quanzhen Daoist Zhou Xuanzhen 周玄貞, speaking through Wang Lingguan, introduced a chanting technique predicated on "aligning one's heart" (心合 *xinhe*) with the divine:

Why need skillful hands to depict my likeness when all I desire is for your heart to resonate with mine? When one's heart resonates with the divine, virtue and blessings proliferate, signifying the true recitation of benevolence. The remainder entails diligent scripture recitation, mindful speech, and disciplined contemplation. While long-term reverence and faith yield merits and blessings, their significance is contingent upon the extent of inherent goodness, thereby ranking secondary. (Zhou 2004, vol. 1, p. 332)

While aligning one's heart with the divine through scripture recitation safeguards faith's purity, it undeniably demands greater cultural proficiency from devotees and acknowledges the inherent limitations of individual spiritual practices. Consequently, the optimal strategy involves establishing a permanent sanctuary for the divine effigy and engaging Daoist priests in consistent scriptural chants, spiritual cultivation, and reverent incense offerings, thus ensuring the sacred space's sanctity. This method is more palatable to lay believers, leading to the widespread construction of Daoist Temples venerating Wang Lingguan across the country post the Ming dynasty.

3.2. *The Reproduction of Rituals in the Daoist Temple Layout*

As the most influential adherent among Wang Lingguan's followers during the Ming Dynasty, Emperor Yongle's devotion was evident not only through his daily worship of Wang Lingguan's statue but also in the establishment of a Daoist temple in the capital expressly for him, thereby creating a lasting sacred space for the deity. Ming Shi 明史 (The Dynastic History of the Ming) notes that during the Yongle era, attributed to Zhou Side's proficiency in transmitting the Lingguan method, Heavenly general Temple (天將廟 *Tianjiang miao*) and the Patriarch Hall (祖師殿 *Zushi dian*) were constructed west of the Forbidden City (Zhang 1974, vol. 50, p. 1309). While specific details of Tianjiang Temple's interior are not provided in the records, under the auspices of five emperors from Yongle

to Jingtai, Zhou Side led several expansions of the temple. Notably, Emperor Xuande's transformation of Tianjiang Temple into Dade Daoist Temple included extensive modifications to the architectural design, offering valuable insights into the early architectural manifestations of Wang Lingguan Daoist temples. The Imperial Inscription of the Dade Daoist Temple details the following:

Since my ascension to the throne, the divine power of Wang Lingguan has become unmistakably prominent. The capital, teeming with a vast population, witnesses people devoutly coming to worship from dawn till dusk, overwhelming the capacity of the original Daoist Temple. Consequently, I decreed the expansion and renovation of the Daoist Temple. The refurbished Daoist Temple stands resplendent and awe-inspiring, adorned with solemn and imposing divine statues. At its zenith is the Jade Emperor Pavilion, a tribute to Daoism's roots. Adjacent to it, the Patriarch Hall provides insight into the deep lineage and history of Daoism. Flanking the Daoist Temple are the clock and drum towers to the east and west, establishing a rhythmic sanctity, while dual-layered main gates at the forefront mitigate the worldly clamor. Encircled by tranquil cloisters, the Daoist Temple's grandeur exudes a peaceful aura. These architectural enhancements have transformed the abode of the divine, elevating its sanctity and reverence. Consequently, I have aptly renamed this Daoist Temple as the Dade Daoist Temple. (Shen 1982, vol. 18, p. 197)

According to its description, the Dade Daoist Temple largely retained the Tianjiang Temple's structure while introducing a new pavilion dedicated to the Jade Emperor. It effectively established a complex sacred space where the three deities—the Jade Emperor, Sa Shoujian, and Wang Lingguan—coexisted, adhering to an intrinsic logic of “sectarian lineage”. In early narratives, Sa Shoujian is depicted engaging with the Jade Emperor in the sacred realm via Daoist rituals. Following Sa Shoujian's endorsement and the Jade Emperor's sanction, Wang Lingguan underwent a pivotal transformation, culminating in his elevation as a protective deity. The architectural enhancements undertaken by Emperor Xuande thus represent a comprehensive reenactment of the entire ritual narrative chronicled in the tales of Wang Lingguan, illustrating the profound integration of ritualistic elements into the spatial configuration of the Daoist Temple.

Post-Xuande, the Dade Daoist Temple underwent two additional reconstructions during the Chenghua and Jiajing periods of the Ming Dynasty. According to *Dijing jingwulue* (帝京景物略 *Scenery of the Imperial Capital*), authored by Liu Dong 劉侗 and Yu Yizheng 于奕正, “At the onset of the Chenghua period, the emperor commanded the officials to expand the Dade Daoist Temple, renaming it the Palace of Dade Jingling 大德景靈宮, and to erect the Miro Pavilion (彌羅閣 *miluo ge*) for deity worship” (Liu and Yu 2001, vol. 4, pp. 260–61). The new Miluo Pavilion served a similar purpose to the Jade Emperor Pavilion, resulting in minimal changes to the spatial layout. During the Jiajing period, as the records of the Imperial Tablet of the Palace of Dade Jingling (御製大德景靈宮碑 *Yuzhi Dade jinglinggong bei*), new additions included the Hall of Haoji Zunming 昊极尊明殿 dedicated to the Jade Emperor's parents and the Hall of Dragon and Tiger (龙虎殿 *Longhu dian*) dedicated to Zhenwu 真武 (Shen 1982, vol. 18, pp. 197–98). Clearly, the Daoist Temple incorporated some elements not present in the original rituals. Nonetheless, the Miro Pavilion for the Jade Emperor and the Halls of Baozhen 保真殿 and Zhao de 昭德殿 dedicated to Wang Lingguan and Sa Shoujian, respectively, still preserved evident markers of ritual reproduction as depicted in the narrative texts (Figure 5).

3.3. *The Shaping of Imagery through the Daoist Temple Layout*

Distinct from reproducing textual rituals in the architectural layout of the Dade Daoist Temple, the spatial configurations of other Daoist temples played a significant role in shaping the imagery of Wang Lingguan. Notably, the positioning of the Lingguan Hall within the Daoist Temple's layout was instrumental in crafting the image of the temple guardian. In reality, beyond the Dade Daoist Temple, other Daoist temples venerating Wang Ling-

guan during the early Ming Dynasty typically lacked a dedicated area for worshipping Sa Shoujian. Instead, these Daoist temples often erected a distinct Lingguan Hall prominently at the forefront of the central axis, specifically to honor Wang Lingguan.

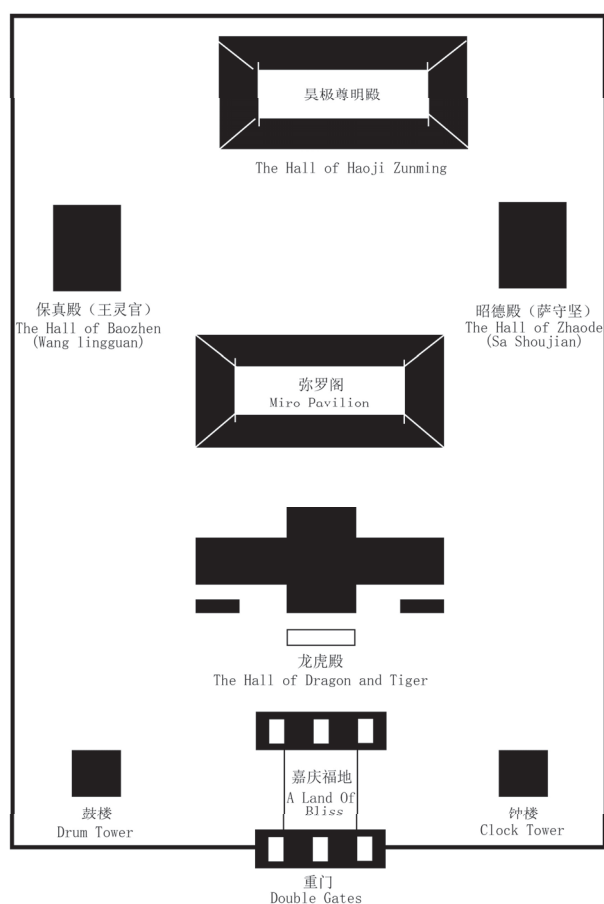


Figure 5. Wang Lingguan and Sa Shoujian were worshipped in the left and right halls, respectively. Drawn according to the text.

The architectural design of such Daoist temples was still associated with Zhou Side, renowned for his mastery of Wang Lingguan's Mifa. In the 10th year of the Zhengtong era (1445), when Zhou Side sought retirement at the age of 86, Emperor Zhengtong specifically ordered the establishment of the Taiqing Daoist Temple 太清觀 on Fenghuang Mountain⁵ to serve as his retirement abode (Xi 1998, vol. 19, pp. 175–76). According to the Encyclopedia of Beijing—Mentougou Volume (北京百科全书·门头沟卷 Beijing Baikequanshu—Mentougoujuan)—the Daoist Temple housed three main halls: the first being Lingguan Hall dedicated to the Daoist protector Wang Lingguan, the second Taiqing Hall to the Supreme Venerable Sovereign (太上老君 Taishang Laojun), and the third Fuzhi Hall 福祉殿 to Zhenwu and the emperor (Beijing Encyclopedia Editorial Committee 2001, p. 288). Notably, Taiqing lacked a hall for Sa Shoujian, placing the Lingguan Hall prominently at the Daoist Temple's forefront (Figure 6). Approximately a decade later, in 1456, Beijing's renowned Baiyun Daoist Temple 白雲觀 also established a Lingguan Hall (Li 2003, p. 72). Although Zhou Side had passed, it was his disciples who continued constructing Lingguan Halls (Koyanagi 1934, pp. 105–12). This suggests that the spatial organization of

Lingguan Hall and its role in delineating Wang Lingguan’s imagery as a Daoist protector were significantly influenced by Zhou Side and his Daoist lineage.

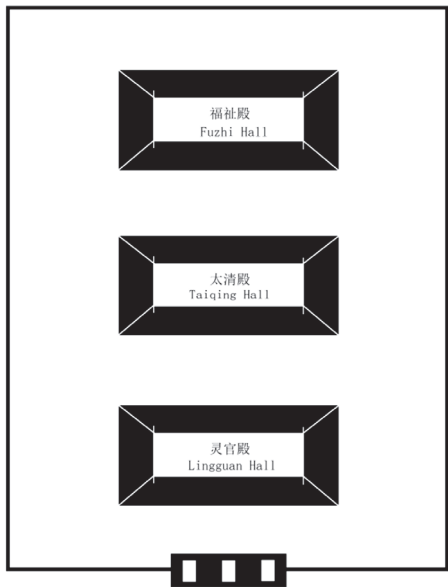


Figure 6. The spatial layout of the Taiqing Daoist Temple, with the Lingguan Hall at the forefront. Drawn according to the text.

While it is difficult to ascertain the precise number of Daoist temple layouts influenced by Zhou Side and his disciples, the image of Wang Lingguan as a Daoist temple protector became increasingly standardized in the late Ming Dynasty as the Lingguan Hall gained prominence. For example, during the Jiajing period of the Ming Dynasty, the Miaofeng Temple 妙峰庵 in the capital had only two halls, yet one was dedicated to Wang Lingguan. Similarly, the Goddess Daoist Temple (娘娘廟 Niangniang miao) constructed in Tongzhou 通州 during the same period primarily venerated the Goddess of Birth, but prominently featured the Lingguan Hall in its first courtyard. Furthermore, the Lingguan Hall had also become a critical component of the spatial layout in the Huode Zhenjun Daoist Temple (火德真君廟 the god of fire), dedicated to the god of fire, within the capital (Figure 7). These instances illustrate the pervasive influence and establishment of Wang Lingguan’s guardian role across various Daoist temples.

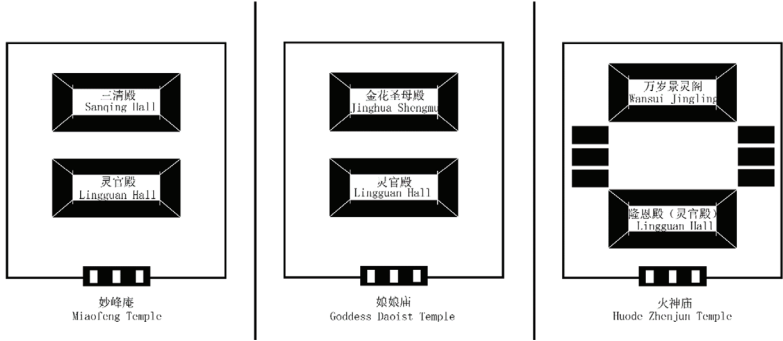


Figure 7. The Lingguan Hall is located at the forefront of the various temples. Drawn according to the text.

Turning our attention to areas far from the Ming capital, the Wudang Mountain 武当山 was renowned for the Zhenwu Daoist Temple. Shen Defu 沈德符, a prominent writer of the late Ming Dynasty, mentioned that Lingguan Hall was a ubiquitous presence throughout the Wudang Mountain (Shen 1959, vol. 4, p. 917). Similarly, Zhang Dai 張岱 recorded that the sound of Wang Lingguan's whip, akin to thunderbolts, was a common occurrence on Mount Qiyun 齊雲山 in Anhui Province (Zhang 2020, vol. 2, p. 82). Consequently, irrespective of whether the primary deities were the Jade Emperor, Zhenwu, the Goddess, the God of Fire, or others, the imagery of Wang Lingguan as the protector of Daoist temples had transcended the textual deity system and become more dependent on the representation within Lingguan Hall and its spatial positioning in the temple. Intriguingly, Pan Lun'en 潘綸恩 of the Qing Dynasty once remarked the following:

Maitreya (韋陀 Weituo) serves as the guardian of Buddhist temples, while Wang Lingguan fulfills the same role for Daoist temples. Commonly referred to as Lingguan Yuanshuai (靈官元帥 Marshal Lingguan) by the faithful, Wang Lingguan stands out as the most remarkable among all the divine marvels I've encountered. Interestingly, Mount Jiuhua 九華山, known as the spiritual center of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva (地藏菩薩 Dizang pusa), inexplicably features Wang Lingguan as the sentinel at Buddhism's threshold. This mountain is a constant hub of devotion, with a ceaseless influx of pilgrims throughout the year, and the tales of Wang Lingguan's miraculous deeds there are innumerable. (Pan 1998, vol. 12, p. 266)

The passage above demonstrates that during the Qing Dynasty, not only did Daoist temples prominently feature Wang Lingguan as their guardian, but there were also instances where Buddhist temples, such as those found at Mount Jiuhua, incorporated spatial layouts that positioned Wang Lingguan as the guardian of their mountain gates. Consequently, the adage "If you want to ascend a mountain, pay homage to Wang Lingguan first" truly reflected the widespread recognition of Wang Lingguan as the guardian of temples among the people.

4. Geography: Spatial Dissemination and Expansion of Belief

The Daoist Temple serves as Wang Lingguan's residence during his transition from the sacred to the secular space, and it also stands as a significant symbol of the dissemination of his belief within the secular community. Examining the construction of Daoist temples from a geographical perspective not only offers insights into the spatial distribution of belief propagation but also enables us to discern specific long-term changes in the dissemination of these belief.

4.1. The Core Area of Wang Lingguan's Belief in Ming Dynasty

As previously noted, the Daoist temple, serving both as a ritual simplification and a means of spatial solidification, became a pivotal mode of worship for followers of Wang Lingguan. As his cult spread, the construction of dedicated Daoist temples to Wang Lingguan proliferated within secular society. It is important to recognize that during the Ming Dynasty, the establishment of Daoist temples necessitated imperial approval to be deemed legitimate.⁶ Temples erected without such sanction not only lacked protection but also faced the imminent threat of demolition. Thus, the early Ming Dynasty's construction of Daoist temples honoring Wang Lingguan was closely intertwined with the patronage of the Ming imperial family and the intervention of influential figures.

Yongle Emperor established the Tianjiang Temple in Beijing, marking the first palace dedicated to Wang Lingguan. Successive emperors, including Xuande and Chenghua, renamed and expanded it into the Dade Daoist Temple 大德觀 and Dade Jingling Palace, respectively, heralding an era of flourishing for the Daoist temple. From its inception as the Tianjiang Temple to its evolution into the Palace of Dade Jingling, it served fundamentally as an imperial sanctuary, essentially the royal inner shrine. Xu Youzhen 徐有貞 of the Ming Dynasty highlighted that the shrine of Dade was the state's secret shrine (Xu 1987, vol. 3, p. 116). Beyond the Palace of Dade Jingling, the Jiajing Emperor also established the

Hall of Qin'an 欽安殿 within the Imperial City to honor Zhenwu. Wang Lingguan, recognized as one of the twelve Thunder Generals, was also depicted in the murals of this hall (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Mural of Wang Lingguan in the Hall of Qin'an. Located in the Forbidden City, Beijing (Tao 2015).

Fueled by the devotion of Ming emperors, their consorts, Daoist priests, eunuchs, and vassal kings intimately linked with the royal court, an early community of believers emerged, significantly bolstering the cult of Wang Lingguan. The Metropolitan Museum of Art houses a Ming Dynasty portrait of Wang Lingguan (Figure 9), wherein a line of small script documents the following: “On the first day of April in the 21st year of the Jiajing era, Imperial Consort Shen commissioned this painting 大明嘉靖壬寅歲孟夏朔旦, 皇貴妃沈氏命畫工繪施”. This inscription underscores the deep influence of Wang Lingguan’s belief even among the concubines of Emperor Jiajing.

Beyond the Xuande Emperor and his consorts endorsing Wang Lingguan’s belief, Zhou Side, the Daoist priest at the helm of the royal secret shrines, managed Daoist institutions and mentored a multitude of disciples during the Ming Dynasty. These disciples were instrumental in constructing Lingguan Halls within Daoist temples across the capital, including Taiqing Daoist Temple, Guandi Daoist Temple 關帝廟, and Huode Zhenjun Daoist Temple. Consequently, given the quantity of Daoist temples and their intimate ties with the imperial court, the capital was arguably the epicenter for constructing Wang Lingguan’s Daoist temples during the Ming Dynasty and served as the principal hub for revering Wang Lingguan.

Nanjing, another capital during the Ming Dynasty, also constructed a shrine devoted to Wang Lingguan relatively early. The Tablet Record of the Lingying Temple (靈應觀碑略 Lingyingguan beilue) notes: “In the southwest of the capital lies a mountain known as Mount Wulongtan 烏龍潭山... In the spring of the 7th year of Xuande, the grand commandant eunuch of Nanjing (南京守備太監 Nanjing shoubei taijian), Luo, erected a shrine

dedicated to Wang Lingguan on the mountain's east side" (Ge 2011, vol. 2, p. 48). The epitaph of Luo Zhi 羅智 elaborates that the emperor entrusted him with the governance of Nanjing. Known for his diligence and proficiency, especially in engineering and construction, Luo Zhi personally oversaw the building of tombs, temples, and city walls wherever needed (Zhou 1999, pp. 135–43). As a supervisory eunuch closely connected to the emperor, Luo Zhi's initiative to construct Wang Lingguan's shrine in Nanjing was essentially a manifestation of the emperor's devoutness towards Wang Lingguan.

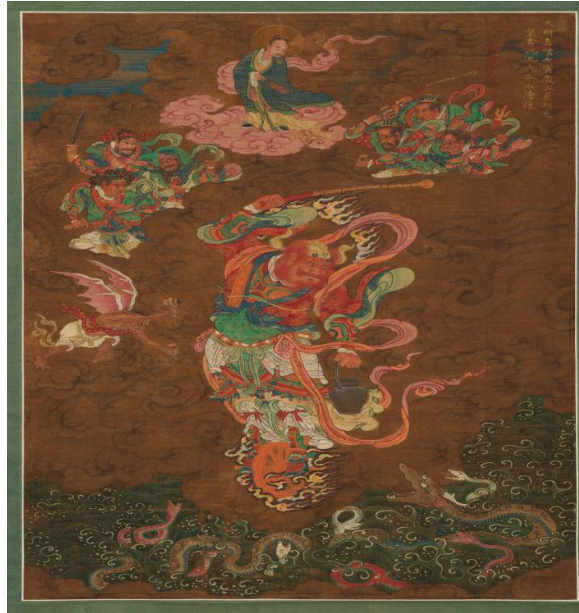


Figure 9. Wang Lingguan's portrait collected by the Metropolitan Museum of New York, USA.

The palaces in the Wudang Mountains shared a similar stature as the secret shrines in the capital and Nanjing. Influenced by the Yongle Emperor's reverence for Zhenwu and Wang Lingguan, Daoist temples constructed in the Wudang Mountains during his reign included statues of Wang Lingguan. Notably, a bronze statue crafted in the Yongle period still stands in the Yuanhe Daoist Temple 元和觀. Given its significance as a site for royal prayers and ceremonies, the Wudang Mountains garnered attention from successive Ming Dynasty emperors. Consequently, it received numerous statues and scrolls of Wang Lingguan from these emperors, establishing itself as another regional hub for the veneration of the deity.

Hangzhou, the hometown of Zhou Side, became another focal point for establishing Wang Lingguan's shrines following his retirement. As Tian Rucheng 田汝成 of the Ming Dynasty recorded, "During the Chenghua period, Zhou Side's disciple, Chang Daoheng 昌道亨, found favor with the emperor. By imperial decree, Xuanyuan Daoist Temple 玄元觀 was relocated next to Zhou Side's tomb, transforming his former residence into Baoji Daoist Temple 寶極觀" (Tian 1958, vol. 21, p. 268). The rebranded Baoji Temple featured Yousheng Hall 佑聖殿 at its center, Chong'en Hall 崇恩殿 to the left, Long'en Hall 隆恩殿 to the right, Taiqing Pavilion 太清閣 at the rear, and the Hall of the Four Generals (四聖殿 Sisheng dian) at the front (Shen 1979, vol. 11, pp. 722–23). Long'en Hall and Chong'en Hall were designated for Wang Lingguan and Sa Shoujian, evidently inspired by the Dade Daoist Temple's layout in the capital. Chang Daoheng's title as "the spiritual master of Dade Xianling" further underscores Baoji Daoist Temple's strong connection to the Palace of Dade Jingling in the capital.

During the Ming Dynasty, vassal kings were proactive in constructing Daoist temples that enshrined Wang Lingguan. Notably, the Jingjiang Prince, stationed in Guangxi Province, was a prominent vassal king who established the Lingguan Shrine on Duxiu Peak 獨秀峰 within his domain (Wang 1990, vol. 16, p. 7). This shrine, situated within the prince's residence, served as his private sanctuary, underscoring the significance of Wang Lingguan's cult to him. Moreover, owing to the Yongle Emperor's fusion of Wang Lingguan and Zhenwu beliefs, halls and statues dedicated to Wang Lingguan became staples in Zhenwu Daoist Temples. Consequently, local vassals' contributions to Zhenwu Daoist Temples often encompassed reverence for Wang Lingguan. Richard G. Wang's study indicates that there were as many as 22 Zhenwu Daoist Temples sponsored by vassal kings during the Ming Dynasty, representing the most prevalent form of Daoist Temple in their religious practices (Richard 2012, p. 84). This trend demonstrates that their devotional patterns closely mirrored those of the emperors.

With the Ming emperors' endorsement of Daoism, the worship of Wang Lingguan permeated all societal strata. The widespread folk tales about Wang Lingguan significantly accelerated this process, leading ordinary individuals to erect their own temples and shrines in his honor. The Ming Dynasty novel *The Journey to the North* (北遊記 Beiyouji), dating from the Jiajing period, recounts the mythical tale of Wang Lingguan. Initially, his temple was destroyed by Sa Shoujian, but he was later subdued by the God of Zhenwu and became one of his celestial generals (Yu 1994, pp. 208–20). Another well-known epic, *Journey to the West* (西遊記 Xiyouji), elaborates on Wang Lingguan's role as Zhenwu's envoy in a confrontation with the Monkey King at the Lingxiao Palace (Wu 2014, p. 94). Similar narratives are echoed in folk literature like *Curse of Jujube Records* (薩真人咒聚記 Sa Zhenren Zhouzaoji) (Deng 1994, pp. 83–91) and *Summary of Romantic History* (情史類略 Qingshi Leilue) (Feng 1984, vol. 9, p. 261), reflecting the extensive reach and influence of Wang Lingguan's legend across various layers of society.

The widespread portrayal of Wang Lingguan in various art forms significantly resonated with the public, propelling the establishment of Wang Lingguan's Daoist Temples across different locales. For instance, the *Gazetteer of Yuanshi County in Zhending Prefecture of the Chongzhen Era* (崇禎直隸真定府元氏縣志) mentioned "Laowanggou" 老王溝 as a place named after a local Wang Lingguan Temple (Zhao and Hu 2000, vol. 1, p. 261). Similarly, the *Records of the Newly Built Qingshan Xinggong* (新建青山行宮記 Xinjian Qingshan Xinggong Ji) from 1629 describes a newly erected temple in Cao County, Heze City, Shandong Province, featuring a Guanyin Hall (觀音殿 Mercy Goddess Hall), Fumo Daoist Temple (伏魔觀 Demon Suppression Temple), Shengdi Shrine (聖帝祠 The Shrine of the Holy Emperor), and a Wang Lingguan Hall (Chen and Pei 2004, vol. 17, pp. 482–83). Unlike in Beijing or Nanjing, the proliferation of Wang Lingguan Daoist temples in these regions was largely supported by local gentry and villagers. This expansion signifies the broadening appeal and recognition of Wang Lingguan's cult during the late Ming Dynasty, reflecting a shift in the demographic and geographic spread of his worship.

4.2. The Regional Diffusion of Wang Lingguan's Belief in Qing Dynasty

Unlike the Ming Dynasty, where the royal family, including emperors, consorts, eunuchs, and vassal kings, constituted a significant belief community centered around Wang Lingguan, the imperial families of the Qing Dynasty were less focused on venerating the deity. They did not construct Daoist Temples and palaces dedicated to him as extensively as their predecessors. However, following the widespread acceptance of Wang Lingguan in the post-Ming era, his imagery became firmly entrenched among the populace. Subsequent records in local chronicles and customs notes⁷ increasingly referenced Wang Lingguan's Daoist temples and halls (Table 1). By examining the distribution of these sacred sites, we gain insight into the geographical breadth and depth of Wang Lingguan's worship during the Qing Dynasty, indicating a continuation and evolution of his veneration beyond the confines of imperial patronage.

Table 1. Statistics of Wang Lingguan’s Palaces and Temples in Qing Dynasty.

Administrative Subdivision	Names of Palaces and Temples		Literature Sources
Area of provinces containing the capital city (Qing Dynasty)	①	Baiyun Daoist Temple in Beijing	① Li Yangzheng, New Chronicle of Baiyun Daoist Temple, p. 272.
	②	Tian Hou Daoist Temple in Tianjin	② A picture of a meeting at the Tianhou Palace in Tianjin. Collection of the National Museum of China.
	③	Linxiao Daoist Temple in Hebei	③ Qing Dynasty—Mu Zhanga, The Comprehensive Geography of the Great Qing Dynasty, Volume 44
Shanxi province (old term)	Zhenwu Daoist Temple in Hejin		Qing Dynasty—Stone Inscription on the Rebuilding of Lingguan Mansion in the 11th Year of the Tongzhi Era
Jilin province (old term)	The Daoist Temple of the Seven Deities in Ningguta		Qing Dynasty—Li Guilin, The Comprehensive Gazetteer of Jilin Province of the Guangxu Era, Volume 26
Jiangsu province (old term)	Wang Lingguan Temple in Jinrui County		Qing Dynasty—Pei Dazhong, Jin Gui County Gazetteer of the Guangxu Era, Volume 12
Zhejiang province (old term)	①	Linguan Temple in Huangyan County	① Qing Dynasty—Zheng Xijian, Huangyan County Gazetteer in the Guangxu Era, Volume 9
	②	Yousheng Daoist Temple in Ningbo	② ③ Qing Dynasty—Ji Zengyun, The Comprehensive Gazetteer of Zhejiang Province of the Yongzheng Era, Volume 230
	③	Qingdao Daoist Temple in Cixi County	④ Qing Dynasty—Yang Geng (Chronicle of the Xuanmiao Daoist Temple in Wulin)
	④	Xuanmiao Daoist Temple in Hangzhou	
Anhui province (old term)	①	Lingguan Hall at Mount Jiuhua	① A Chronicle of the Mount Jiuhua published by the Mount Jiuhua Editorial Board. (Mount Jiuhua Editorial Committee 1990, p. 115).
	②	The Fire God Temple in Ningguo County	② Qing Dynasty—Liang Zhongfu, Ningguo County Gazetteer of the Daoguang Era, Volume 3
	③	Lingguan Hall in Shexian County	③ Qing Dynasty—He Shaoji, The New Comprehensive Gazetteer of Anhui Province of the Guangxu Era, Volume 237
Fujian province (old term)	Wang Tianjun Hall in Fuzhou		Yang Jun, The Brief Gazetteer of Baiqiao, published in the late Qing Dynasty; Chen Wentao, Min Hua, Volume 3
Jiangxi province (old term)	①	Wang Lingguan Temple in Poyang County	① Qing Dynasty—Chen Zhipei, Poyang County Gazetteer of the Tongzhi Era, Volume 4
	②	Wang Lingguan Temple in Raozhou Prefecture	② Qing Dynasty—Xide, Raozhou Prefecture Gazetteer of the Tongzhi Era, Volume 4
Shandong province (old term)	①	Wang Lingguan Temple in Linyi County	① Qing Dynasty—Chen Honghui, Linyi County Gazetteer of the Tongzhi Era, Volume 6
	②	Wang Lingguan Temple in Yidu County	② Qing Dynasty—Chen Shihua, Yidu County Gazetteer of the Kangxi Era, Volume 3
	③	Lingguan Temple on Mount Yunmen in Yidu County	③ Qing Dynasty—Zhang Cheng Xie, Yidu County Gazetteer and Illustrations of the Guangxu Era, Volume 23
	④	Wang Lingguan Temple in Shouzhang County	④ Qing Dynasty—Liu Wenkui, Shouzhang County Gazetteer of the Guangxu Era, Volume 10

Table 1. Cont.

Administrative Subdivision	Names of Palaces and Temples		Literature Sources
He'nan province (old term)	①	Wang Lingguan's hometown in Shangshui	① Qing Dynasty—Asiha, The New Comprehensive Gazetteer of Henan Province of the Qianlong Era, Volume 20
	②	Wang Lingguan Temple in Chenzhou Prefecture	② Qing Dynasty—Cui Yingjie, Chenzhou Prefecture Gazetteer of the Qianlong Era, Volume 10
	③	Xian Ying Palace in Mi County	③ Qing Dynasty—Jinglun, Mi County Gazetteer of the Jiaqing Era, Volume 7
Hubei province (old term)	④	Changchun Daoist Temple in Wuhan	④ The Chronicle of Changchun Daoist Temple written by Li Li'an
Hunan province (old term)	①	Linguan Temple in Xiangyin County	① Qing Dynasty—Guo Songtao, Xiangyin County Gazetteer and Illustrations of the Guangxu Era, Volume 23
	②	Linguan Hall in Shaodong County	② Qing Dynasty—Lu Su Gao, Changsha Prefecture Gazetteer of the Qianlong Era, Volume 35; Qing Dynasty—Zeng Guo-Tsuen, Hunan Province Gazetteer of the Guangxu Era, Volume 16
Sichuan province (old term)	①	The Fire God Temple in Tongliang County	① Qing Dynasty—Han Qinggui, Tongliang County Gazetteer of the Guangxu Era, Volume 12
	②	Wang Lingguan Ancestral Hall in Zizhou Zhili Prefecture	② Qing Dynasty—Liu Jiong, Zizhou Direct Prefecture Gazetteer of the Guangxu Era, Volume 28
	③	Lingguan Temple in Youyang Zhili Prefecture	③ Qing Dynasty—Wang Linfei, The Revised Comprehensive Gazetteer of Youyang Direct Prefecture of the Tongzhi Era, Volume 9
Yunnan province (old term)	①	Lingguan Temple and Lingguan Hall in Teng Yue	① Qing Dynasty—Chen Zonghai, Draft Gazetteer of Tengyue Hall of the Guangxu Era, Volume 9
	②	Qinglong Temple in Dongchuan Prefecture	② Qing Dynasty—Fang Gui, Dongchuan Prefecture Gazetteer of the Qianlong Era, Volume 7
Shaanxi province (old term)		Dongyue Temple in Liquan County	Qing Dynasty—Gong Yaoliang and Chen Weiyl, Revised Gazetteer of Liquan County of the Qianlong Era, Volume 2
Gansu province (old term)		Lingguan Hall at Mount Xinglong	Qing Dynasty—Liu Yiming, Notes on Qiyun, Volume 2 and Volume 3
Qinghai province (old term)		Lingguan Hall of Beichan Temple	Qing Dynasty—Deng Chengwei, Revised Gazetteer of Xining Prefecture, Volume 3
Taiwan province (old term)		Ancestral Temple of Monopoly in the Dawulong	Qing Dynasty—Record of the Renovation and Donation of the Ancestral Temple of Monopoly in the Dawulong

The Qing Dynasty's adherence to Wang Lingguan's belief was geographically extensive, spanning from Jilin 吉林 in the northeast to Yunnan 雲南 in the southwest, and from Qinghai 青海 in the northwest to Taiwan 臺灣 in the southeast, with temples and halls dedicated to him established across the nation. This widespread veneration marks a significant departure from the Ming Dynasty, where worship was predominantly centralized in regional hubs like Beijing and Nanjing. The historical records may not fully document the rise and fall of numerous Lingguan temples within civil society, and given the common practice of housing Wang Lingguan statues within other Daoist temples, the actual territo-

rial reach of his cult is likely even broader than archival materials suggest. This expansive distribution underscores the depth and spread of Wang Lingguan's belief throughout the country during the Qing period.

After the Qing Dynasty, the belief in Wang Lingguan continued to spread widely, increasingly incorporating regional legends and narratives, thus demonstrating its localization and secularization. For instance, Tianfu Palace 天符宮 in Jianli County 監利縣, Hubei Province, was once dedicated to the Heavenly Talisman Great Emperor (天符大帝 Tianfu Dadi) and Wang Lingguan. Tianfu Dadi was one of the Jade Emperor's civil ministers, while Wang Lingguan served as a guardian deity of the Heavenly Court and a martial general of the Jade Emperor. Locally, Wang Lingguan was revered as a fusion of a Buddhist Bodhisattva and a secular king (王爺菩薩 Wangye pusa) (Xi 2015, p. 33). Another illustration is the belief in Princess of the Azure Clouds (碧霞元君 Bixia Yuanjun), prevalent in the Mount Tai 泰山 area of Shandong Province, where local legends narrate that Wang Lingguan, as the guardian deity, split the mountain with his whip to create a path for the faithful (Liang et al. 1996, p. 39). Additionally, in the Fujian region, Wang Lingguan's origin story was adapted to align with local historical and cultural contexts. As a result, in Fujian, he has been associated with various identities, including a pirate, a butcher, and even as the son of Geng Jingzhong 耿精忠, the king of Yunnan (Zhuang 2015, pp. 17–19). These adaptations highlight the diverse, localized, and secular interpretations of Wang Lingguan's identity and role in various communities post-Qing dynasty.

Generally, throughout the Qing Dynasty, the belief in Wang Lingguan across different regions increasingly exhibited typical traits of localization and secularization. This adaptability, or the characteristic of “changing with the customs,” played a crucial role in the sustained and widespread propagation of the belief, even after it ceased to receive the full endorsement of the royal family as it had previously. This adaptability reflects the dynamic nature of the belief in Wang Lingguan, allowing it to evolve and resonate with diverse communities and cultural contexts over time.

5. Conclusions

The spatial interpretation of Wang Lingguan's belief vividly demonstrates the dynamic interplay between ritual, Daoist Temple, and geography. This analysis emphasizes the role of spatial concepts and diverse communities in embodying and sustaining Daoist beliefs and divine worship. Notably, while the content of narrative and ritual texts about Wang Lingguan varies to cater to different audiences, they consistently adhere to established divine hierarchies and spatial boundaries. The Daoist priesthood, proficient in this belief system, commands specialized rituals that effectively bridge and communicate with the divine realm. Through the ritual practices conducted by Daoist priests such as Sa Shoujian and Zhou Side, Wang Lingguan established his role as a guardian deity and manifested his divine authority to the believers.

To mitigate the complexities of Daoist rituals, the community of believers led by the Ming Dynasty emperors embraced a strategy of ritual simplification and spatial solidification, which involved positioning statues of Wang Lingguan within Daoist temples. Initially, the layout of these temples was a ritualistic reproduction of Wang Lingguan's textual image. As the belief spread and temple construction increased, Wang Lingguan gradually moved beyond his textual pairing with Sa Shoujian and was singularly positioned at the front of temples. This spatial placement, functioning as a form of “welcoming and safeguarding,” reshaped Wang Lingguan's role and image, allowing him to be freely integrated into various Daoist temples of differing faiths, including those of Zhenwu, Taisang Laojun, and the Fire God. Consequently, Wang Lingguan eventually evolved into a guardian deity of Daoist temples nationwide, and formed a stereotypical image similar to that of the Buddhist Vedanta.

The geographical spread of Wang Lingguan's Daoist temples demonstrates the evolving and widespread nature of his belief across regions. Unlike the Ming Dynasty, where the royal family extensively promoted Wang Lingguan's belief, the Qing Dynasty's im-

perial family did not actively engage in fostering this faith. Consequently, the Ming Dynasty's politically influenced regional centers like Beijing, Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Wudang Mountain did not maintain their prominence during the Qing era. Instead, as belief in Wang Lingguan became ingrained in the populace, the Qing period witnessed a grassroots spread of this faith, leading to its gradual prevalence across the majority of the nation. This development highlighted the belief's adaptability, showing significant trends towards decentralization, localization, and secularization.

In conclusion, the establishment, dissemination, and evolution of Wang Lingguan's belief are more clearly illustrated through a spatial perspective composed of rituals, Daoist temples, and geography. This research reveals that there are structural factors in the interaction between religious beliefs and socio-cultural processes, the relationships between which can be further understood and utilized.

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Notes

- ¹ For studies on the spatial turn, one may refer to the following: (Warf and Arias 2008).
- ² For insights into the application and critical reflection of spatial theory, the following references may be consulted: (Knott 2005; Kilde 2014).
- ³ The following scholars have made recent academic contributions by utilizing spatial theory to analyze the phenomena of religious belief in China, which may serve as useful reference materials: such as Yiwei Pan, Weiqiao Wang and Yu Han, see (Pan and Yan 2021; Wang and Yan 2023; Han 2023).
- ⁴ Wang Shan and Sa Shoujian were negotiating and communicating by the river. Anonymous. *Sanjiao Yuanliu Shengdi Foshuai Soushen Daquan* 三教源流聖帝佛帥搜神大全 (*The Complete Collection of Holy Emperors, Buddhas, and Taoist Masters in the Origins of the Three Religions*). Xiyue tianzhuguo cangban. Published in the Qing Dynasty. <https://old.shuge.org/ebook/san-jiao-yuan-liu-sou-shen-da-quan/> accessed on 3 February 2024.
- ⁵ Scholars have different views on where the Taiqing Daoist Temple was located. Chen Wenlong 陳文龍 and Zheng Hengbi 鄭衡泌, after examining the evidence, believe that Zhou Side's Taiqing Daoist Temple was located in Beijing's Fenghuang Mountain, not Hangzhou (Chen and Zheng 2015).
- ⁶ In 1391, Hongwu Emperor of the Ming Dynasty ordered that "All nunneries and temples that did not comply with the amount previously set by the state should be demolished". Anonymous. 2005. *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 (*The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty*). Volume 2. Beijing: Xianzhuang Shuju, p. 250. Yongle Emperor and Zhengtong Emperor of the Ming Dynasty also issued similar edicts prohibiting the construction of private temples.
- ⁷ Listed in the table are some of the palaces and temples related to Wang Lingguan's beliefs that have been verified through palace remains or oral interviews on the basis of documentary records. Due to the historical changes of the palaces and temples, the lack of textual records, and the fact that folk deities were often worshipped together in the same place, the actual geographic distribution of Wang Lingguan's beliefs in the Qing Dynasty should be more extensive than the information contained in the table.

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Article

Mobility to Other Locations: A Study on the Spread of the Cult of Lord Yan from Jiangxi to Hubei in the Ming–Qing Era

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Abstract: In the Yuan Dynasty, Lord Yan 晏公 was worshipped by the people of Jiangxi 江西 as a water god, but there was no consensus on the identity of the god and the process of his deification. During the transitional period between the Yuan and Ming dynasties, the cult of Yan Gong was increasingly popular among different social groups in the Qingjiang 清江 region. Later, thanks to a combination of officials, merchants, and immigrants, its spatial scope was extended to Hubei 湖北 Province. During the Hongwu 洪武 (r. 1368–1398) period, the cult of Lord Yan in Hubei was so prevalent that multiple groups of people were enthusiastically involved in the construction of Lord Yan temples; thus, many temples shot up along lakes and the main tributaries of the Yangtze River, constituting a geographical distribution pattern with a concentration in the central and eastern parts and a scarcity in the west. The reason for this was the multidimensional interaction of migration activities, the cross-regional economic activities of merchants, and the promotion of folk beliefs by local officials since the Ming–Qing era, which encompasses the historical evolutionary features of actors competing for the cult of gods and control of regional social power.

Keywords: Ming–Qing era; cult of Lord Yan; community worship; spatial expansion

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1. Introduction

The mobility of local deities beyond their borders is a basic feature of the historical evolution of folk beliefs. “Mobility” is both a subjective choice of the people in folk beliefs and a realistic manifestation of the intended utility of the cult (Z. Zhang 2015, pp. 188–203). It has greatly enhanced the spatial influence of deities, which is indispensable for the presentation of folk culture, the communication of regional ties, and insight into social changes. Many social classes or collective organizations have different or contradictory interpretations of the deities, but they have accumulated and cross-fertilized over a long period of time to create an image of divine authority (Duara 2010, p. 112; Johnson et al. 1985, pp. 93–114).

The cult of Lord Yan is the cultural bearer of the local community’s thought in Jiangxi, as well as the “Ritual Signs” 禮儀標識, which integrate the sense of community identity and reveal the daily life of people (Faure 2016, pp. 24–27, 158). The concept of the cult of gods embedded in them is always under dynamic construction due to temporal and spatial changes or class consciousness.

The local community has an independent social order, and the ideological order is an integral part of it (Sen 2017, p. 40). Additionally, the cult of God is an element in the local social ideology order, which is the cultural connection between ideology and social groups. Therefore, the emergence, evolution, and spread of the cult of Lord Yan cannot be separated from the Jiangxi community, yet the influence of different social groups and pre-existing ideological orders are equally significant. The cult of Lord Yan originated in Qingjiang Town 清江鎮, Linjiang Prefecture 臨江府, Jiangxi Province. Later, with the

passage of time and the interweaving of multiple factors, it gradually divorced from traditional principles, crossed the original geographical and spatial boundaries of “Living in a Remote Area” 僻處一隅, and was widely worshiped as a water deity by civil society.

As the transport hub of central China, Hubei enjoys geographical privilege, with the Yangtze River running through, five streams interlocking, the Han River as the bond, and the Mountain of Heng 衡山, Lake Dongting 洞庭湖, and Marsh of Yunmeng 雲夢澤 as guards (Lv 1934, p. 1). Neighboring Jiangxi Province, with rivers and lakes intertwined, naturally became an important field for the spread of the cult of Lord Yan.

Based on previous research,¹ this paper takes the local chronicles and circulating documents of Jiangxi and Hubei provinces as the basic historical materials, trying to explain the changes in the divine character of the Jiangxi Lord Yan, the spatial layout and expansion of Lord Yan's temples in Hubei Province, and the state of the cult of Lord Yan by social groups during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Furthermore, it reveals the characteristics of the time when the state's will, regional migration flows, spatial commercial interactions, and social pluralistic groups were intermingled.

2. The Legend of Apotheosis and the Evolution of the Cult of Lord Yan

The cult of Lord Yan originated in Qingjiang County, Linjiang Circuit 臨江路, Jiangxi Province, during the Yuan Dynasty, and the local communities deified the folklore and shaped the deity of refuge.

Chu Yin Ji 樛隱集 (*Collected Works of Chuyin*),² the first private collection of documents documenting the ancestral temple of Lord Yan, was written by Hu Xingjian 胡行簡 (fl. 1354) of the Yuan dynasty. The collection contains the contents of the Inscription of Lord Yan Temple in Qingjiang Town 清江鎮晏公祠廟碑. There is a Lord Yan Temple in Qingjiang Town, which has passed through many dynasties, but the overall appearance has not changed. People visiting to offer sacrifices found the temple was narrow and shabby and wanted to demolish and renovate it, but such effort was fruitless. In 1385, countryman Peng Shikuan 彭士寬 (fl. 1385–1390) said, “Lord Yan is the protector of the local people, but the modest appearance of the temple is not enough to prove the people's devotion to Lord Yan, so isn't this a lack of ceremony?” When the people who had been blessed by Lord Yan heard his words, they donated either money or food to help renovate the temple. Therefore, the land on the side of Mount Baojin 寶金山 featured the rebuilding of new temples and corridors, which were several times larger in size and quantity than the original ones (Hu 1982, p. 154).

The contents of the inscription indicate that Lord Yan Temple existed in the Linjiang area of Jiangxi Province during the Yuan dynasty, but records of the large-scale construction of Lord Yan Temple during the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty were found in an inscription of the Yuan Dynasty and raise doubt about the authenticity of the statement that the cult of Lord Yan began in the Yuan dynasty. However, this fact was mostly recorded in prefecture and county annals of multiple regions; for example, “Yan Wuzai 晏戊仔 (the full name of Lord Yan), born in Qingjiang Town at the end of the Song Dynasty, was Head of the Hall of the Wenjin Bureau 文錦局” (Pan 1975, p. 24)—considering this, it is difficult to deny the statement. Yan Wuzai was mainly active in the late Song and early Yuan dynasties and later became a local water deity worshipped by the people of Qingjiang County. Therefore, the Cult of Lord Yan was generated no later than the end of the Yuan dynasty.³

Lord Yan's life story and deification process have had various versions since the Yuan-Ming era, and the reason for this is that the legend of the deification of folk society has diversified characteristics (Puett 2002, pp. 245–95; Ter Haar 2000, pp. 451–55).

The book *Huitu Sanjiao Yuanliu Soushen Daquan Wai Erzong* 繪圖三教源流搜神大全外二種 (*Sources and Images of the Three Religious Deities and Two Other Books*), written in the Ming Dynasty, records that Lord Yan died and became a god. At the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, Lord Yan was elected as an official due to his talent, holding office as Head of the Hall of the Wenjin Bureau. He died due to illness as soon as he boarded the boat returning to his hometown, and the subordinates put his body in the coffin as a ritual. Before the

boat arrived at his hometown, the people saw Lord Yan on his horse, galloping across the fields and wearing the same clothes as usual. A month had passed by the time Lord Yan's body finally arrived. People were shocked to hear the news that Lord Yan had died on the day they saw him. When they opened the coffin to look, there was nothing inside. Elderly people knew what that meant and set up a temple to worship him (Anonymous 2012, pp. 400–1).

However, Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 (fl. 1396) in the Ming Dynasty recorded in his *Taijian Sanbao Xiyang Ji Tongsu Yanyi* 太監三寶西洋記通俗演義 (*Eunuch Sambo's Overseas Travels*) that Lord Yan was apotheosized due to his good deeds to help the people. The Yuan government was tyrannical, and people were undergoing heavy taxation. The officials of the Wenjin Bureau were responsible for managing the supply of brocade to the court. A worker, Pu Er 濮二 (fl. 1325), who was unable to afford to weave, had to sell his son and two daughters to compensate higher officials. Lord Yan took pity on him for his experience and gave his salary to support him, but the money was insufficient, so Lord Yan sold his wife's earrings and hairpin for the rest of the money. Because of him, the Pu family was reunited and prayed for divine protection. God valued Lord Yan's integrity and honesty and, therefore, appointed him as the god of water (Luo 1985, p. 1259).

Both of the folklores use "corpse dissolution visions" as the externalized form of expressing the divinity of Lord Yan, but the latter is more likely to satisfy the people's spiritual expectation of "good deeds-reward", which is in line with the moral compliance of ancient society.

There is a common metaphor in traditional Chinese culture that "people who fulfill their filial duties become gods", which is in line with the expression of the folk system of cultivating the immortal gods—"those who want to seek immortality should be based on loyalty, filial piety, harmony and benevolence". The contents of the *Temple Tablet of Lord Yan Ancestral Temple in Qingjiang Town* recorded that "Lord Yan was born with a unique quality, taking good care of his parents and people spoke highly of his filial piety, he was born a filial son, died a bright god." (Hu 1982, p. 154.)

The official enthronement is an important part of the national legal recognition and folk society cult of local deities, but this must be based on the premise of having "righteous deeds in life" and being able to "apparitions after death" (Hamashima 2008, p. 88); *Qi Xiu Lei Gao* 七修類稿 (*A Collection of Seven Types of Literary Novels*) has a similar formulation. In the early days of the Ming Dynasty, the river bank often collapsed because "Zhu po long" 豬婆龍 was digging up the river banks. His name is pronounced in the same way as the surname of the Ming emperor, and thus, it was blamed on "Yuan" 鼃. Meanwhile, because his name has the same pronunciation as the Yuan dynasty, rulers ordered that officials catch all "Yuan". However, the river bank collapsed as before. An old fisherman passed and said, "you may use a roast pig as bait to catch it". Then, the people did as he said, but they did not have enough power to catch it. The next day, the old fisherman again said, "the Yuan uses its four feet to climb the rocks, so you should put an 'Urn' connected with fishing cord under its bottom and put it down until the 'Urn' covers its head". Then, it must use its two front feet to resist; thus, you could take control with a combined effort to get its feet up, and the advice was true. The crowd said, "it is a Yuan". The old fisherman said, "the Yuan is so huge that it can swallow people, so we nickname it the 'Zhu Po long'. You can tell the emperor and the river bank can be saved". The crowd asked for his name, and he answered, "Yan is my surname", then abruptly disappeared. After the shore was built, Ming Taizu 明太祖 (r. 1328–1398) realized and said, "it was Lord Yan who saved me from the overturned boat". So, he conferred the titles of Governor Grand Marshal of the Divine Sky Yufu to Lord Yan and ordered officials to worship him (Lang 2009, p. 128).

The statement that Lord Yan assisted in the control of the river disaster and was recalled by Ming Taizu for rescuing the overturned boats and was conferred the title of God was adopted by the Ming Dynasty's Wang Qi 王圻 (1530–1615) in *Baishi Huibian* 稗史彙編 (*A Compilation of Folklore or Old Street Stories*) (Q. Wang 1993, p. 2045), highlighting the aim of local communities to join the ruling class to realize the legitimacy of regional deities.

By the time Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) in the Qing dynasty studied the origin of Lord Yan Temple at Baiyun Ferry in Changzhou City 常州城, he had already read the *Qi xiu lei gao* to understand the story; thus, the content of Lord Yan's becoming God in his book *Gai Yu Cong Kao* 陔余叢考 (*Reading Notes on the Free Time of Supporting Parents*) mainly follows this story. Furthermore, he gave a detailed description of Lord Yan's rescuing Ming Taizu (Zhao 2007, p. 728).

However, what he later wrote in *Yan Bao Za Ji* 簪曝雜記 (*A Collection of Fragmented Records from Different Living Areas*) is slightly different from that in the previous book, "People in the past thought that the coir rope monster in the river stricken by Xu Jingyang's 許旌陽 (239–374) magical seal became God" (Zhao 1982, p. 116). Lord Yan was conferred the title of God due to his involvement in defeating the Yuan, Zhu Yuanzhang recalled of Lord Yan saving his life, but it does not mention anything about the coir rope monster. However, the saying that "the coir rope was transformed into a god" was not without origin, but probably originated from *Qi Yin* 齊音 (*Poems in Praise of Jinan Mountains, Lakes and Springs*), written by Wang Xiang Chun of the Ming Dynasty. "The folklore goes that there were two coir ropes named Zong Number One and Zong Number Two residing in the river as monsters. They could not become gods, so they were not able to receive any sacrifice. Xu Jingyang crossed the river, eating persimmons and throwing the rest into the river. The two Zongs with persimmons as eyes, approached Xu, stopped his boat, and showed up in front of him. Xu had no way to defend himself in such a sudden but took the magical seal and hit them in the forehead. The two zongs got the seal and became gods, one called Lord Yan and the other called Xiao Gong 蕭公, and receive sacrifice everywhere." (X. Wang 1993, p. 64.)

Tianhou Xiansheng Lu 天后顯聖錄 (*The Book of the Tianhou Concubine*), written by Ming people, also recorded that Lord Yan was "transformed into god", but this was achieved by Tian Fei 天妃 rather than Master Xu Jingyang. There was a river monster called "Lord Yan". As he approached, Tian Fei ordered him to cast down a rope to draw his attention and tied him up without his awareness. Lord Yan, floating on the river, began to experience fear and confessed his guilt. Tian Fei then said, "The East China Sea is full of difficulties and dangers. You are now one of the water gods in my cabinet, and you should protect the people in danger". (Anonymous 2014, pp. 359–60.) Xu Jingyang and Tian Fei lived in the Jin and Song dynasties, but the theory of the "transformation of god" was mostly created by Ming people. The statement "Lord Yan was transformed into god" is absurd, and its authenticity cannot be confirmed.

The legends of Lord Yan becoming a god, as seen in Yuan and Ming literature, vary, with "becoming a god after death", "doing good deeds to become a god", "becoming a god because of filial piety", "becoming a god for helping the emperor", and "becoming a god through enlightenment" being common in folk society, and even the identity of Lord Yan is different,⁴ which highlights the arbitrariness and complexity of the process of creating gods in ancient Chinese society.

With Lord Yan's deification process being full of mystery, the deeds listed are diverse and unreal, and the reason why the people of Qingjiang society still believe in the legend and worship Lord Yan may have something to do with the natural environment of Qingjiang County. Qingjiang County is located at the intersection of the north–south waterway, which is the only way to Guangdong and Hunan provinces (Zhang 1989, pp. 188–89). The entire area controls the upper reaches of the provincial capital and is a hinterland with dangerous waterways. "Yuan River 袁水 and Gan River 贛江 merge and converge to flow eastwards, but cannot be released, thus the river continues to wash over the western bank" (De 1970, p. 44), and regional floods are frequent, which objectively lays the environmental foundation for the generation and spread of the cult of Lord Yan. Because the cult of Lord Yan catered to the people's psychology of praying to the gods to bless the safety of waterways and quell local water hazards, the deeds of "protecting people's oars from danger" were most common in lakes and rivers.

Combined with existing historical documents, it can be considered that the Qingjiang Town of Linjiang Prefecture after the Yuan Dynasty formed the cult of Lord Yan, but the divine deeds and the title received are unknown, which may be related to the fact that Lord Yan did not yet form into a god. In the late Yuan and early Ming dynasties, Lord Yan was increasingly active in the rivers, lakes, and seas, which attracted the attention of local officials, gentries, and scholars. Additionally, the rulers repeatedly offered words of reward to provide a legal basis for Lord Yan to become the orthodox deity of the state. However, this shows that the national cult of Lord Yan as a deity was formed in the early Ming Dynasty (Yang 2022).

3. Lord Yan's Worship and the Construction of Temples in Hubei Province

According to the above discussion, the legend of Lord Yan can be traced back to the end of the Song Dynasty, but his true identity is still unknown. A more credible identity of Lord Yan is Yan Wuzai, who lived in the Song–Yuan era. Meanwhile, there is no certainty as to when Lord Yan became a god, but what is certain is that he was worshipped by social groups as a water god. Moreover, we can be sure that the cult of Lord Yan originated in Qingjiang Town, Linjiang Circuit, Jiangxi Province, during the Yuan Dynasty, and within this period, it did not spread to other areas because its influence was very limited. However, in the early Ming Dynasty, the cult of Lord Yan began to spread to other regions, driven by the combined efforts of different social groups, such as emperors, officials, gentries, merchants, and civilians (Wang 2020, pp. 105–14), and Lord Yan eventually became a nationally renowned water deity.

The process of spreading any folk beliefs to other regions is influenced to varying degrees by political, economic, cultural, and social factors (Pi 2008, pp. 208–23). At the same time, folk beliefs need the support of the rulers (emperors and officials) and inclusion in the list of state ceremonies to legally spread and perpetuate to other areas. Of course, the rulers can also benefit by better controlling the folk beliefs and maintaining the ruling order (Lian and Bian 2022, pp. 24–30).

Similarly, the cult of Lord Yan must be supported and rewarded by the ruler. This is not only the basis of its legitimacy to spread to other areas, but also an important condition for Lord Yan becoming a national god of water. Therefore, in the early Ming Dynasty, it is said that Lord Yan was crowned “The Waves-Calming Marquis” 平浪侯 for saving Ming Taizu in the water battle in Poyang Lake 鄱陽湖 (Pan 1975, p. 6). However, when we look at the history books of the Ming Dynasty, *Mingshi* 明史 (*History of Ming Dynasty*) (Zhang 1974), *Mingtaizu shilu* 明太祖實錄 (*Records of the Emperor Taizu*) (Dong et al. 1984), and *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (*Code of Great Ming Dynasty*) (Shen 1989), there is no written record of “Lord Yan being conferred a title for saving Ming Taizu”, and it is not known when and why he was conferred the title.⁵ The rumor that Lord Yan was named the “The Waves-Calming Marquis” by the Ming Dynasty (Lin 1989, p. 3539) eventually became the consensus of nationally unified history (X. Li 2017, p. 2387) and the writings of local prefectures and counties, behind which there must have been inevitable multidimensional efforts of social groups to promote Lord Yan's advancement to a national deity.

It is recorded in the Ming Dynasty's *Hongwu Jingcheng Tu Zhi* 洪武京城圖志 (*Collection of Geographical Information on Nanjing During the Hongwu Period*) that Lord Yan Temple is outside Dinghuai Gate 定淮門 (Wang 2018, p. 50), which offers a glimpse of the hidden logical connection between the cult of Lord Yan and the dynastic power system. In the early years of Hongwu, Dinghuai Gate was built and was originally named Maan Gate 馬鞍門. In 1374, the Gate was frequently flooded because of its location at a three-way intersection of the river and its facing the Qinhuai River 秦淮河. In the hope of controlling the river surface, the Gate was renamed Dinghuai (Chen 1999, p. 487). In the early Ming Dynasty, Lord Yan temple already existed in Nanjing City 南京城, although there was not yet any public construction of the temple and cult of Lord Yan at the state level, which invisibly influenced the folk society's cult of Lord Yan and the construction of temples (Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 2–50).

Lord Yan Temple in Qingjiang Town, Jiangxi Province, is the earliest ancestral temple in existence, so it is certain that the worship of Lord Yan was centered in the Qingjiang area and spread outward, as it was recorded that “the prestige of Lord Yan originated in the countryside, and became notable in Jiangxi, reaching far south to Hunan and far east to Jiangsu, so that mountains, valleys, rivers and sea all looked up to his lofty reputation, and expressed endless admirations” (Hu 1982, p. 154). Reading through the local histories of Hubei Province, we can see that most of the information on the cult of Lord Yan is scattered among the *Jianzhi zhi* 建置誌, *Cimiao zhi* 祠廟誌, and *Zazhi lei* 雜誌類. Because of the different compilation styles and content of local records, it is impossible to identify the main deities worshipped in some temples in the *Cimiao zhi*, the most common being “Shui Fu Temple” 水府廟 and “Shui Fu Shrine” 水府祠. As a result, the study focused on “Lord Yan Temple” and “Lord Yan Shrine” instead.

Along with Lord Yan’s upgraded deity status and the increasingly significant manifestation of his power in the Ming–Qing era, the scope of the cult of Lord Yan in Jiangxi Province expanded outward. The neighboring Hubei Province, the rivers and lakes of which were densely intertwined, naturally became the first region where the cult of Lord Yan spread to the outside world.

In 1375, the monk Zhiyuan 智圓 (fl. 1370–1380) built Guanyin Pavilion 觀音閣 at the top of Chibi ji 赤壁磯, northwest to Hanchuan Gate 漢川門 in Huangzhou City 黃州城, which is also used to worship Lord Yan. In 1391, the Guanyin pavilion was incorporated into the Anguo Temple 安國寺 due to the local government’s endeavor to clean up Buddhism (Lu 2017, p. 37). This shows that Lord Yan’s worship had already spread from Jiangxi to Huangzhou Prefecture in the early days of Hongwu, the first region in Hubei Province to build a Lord Yan Temple.

In 1383, Xu Zhixian 徐志先 (late Yuan and early Ming) and other elderly people in Xiang yang County 襄陽縣 rebuilt the temple of Lord Yan five miles from Fancheng 樊城 in the north of the county (Zhang 2006, p. 188). According to this, Lord Yan Temple in Xiang yang County was built no later than the middle years of Hongwu. Similar to Huangzhou Prefecture, Xiang yang was also the region of Lord Yan Temple’s early expansions in Hubei Province.

Then, the temples of Lord Yan were established one after another in Hubei Province. In 1386, Hu Xun 胡恂 (fl. 1380–1390), a citizen of Qizhou 蘄州, founded the temple of Lord Yan at the ruined site of Qianming Temple (Z. Wang 2017, p. 172). In the middle of Yongle 永樂 (r. 1403–1424), King Zhuzhen 朱楨 (1364–1424) of Chu built the temple of Lord Yan outside the south gate of Wuchang Prefecture (Y. Chen 2017, p. 436). During the Zhengtong 正統 (r. 1436–1449) period, Li Wei 李蔚 (fl. 1430–1450), the assistant of the County Magistrate in Qishui County 蘄水縣, built three Lord Yan temples in the east of Maqiao 麻橋, Lanxi 蘭溪 Town, and Bahe 巴河 Town in turn (Zhou 2017b, p. 158).

It is difficult to visualize the geographical and spatial layout of the Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province; thus, the spatial distribution of Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province during the Ming–Qing era was created based on the map of Hubei Province in the 25th year of the Qing dynasty (Figure 1).

According to the map, there were 20 temples of Lord Yan in the territory of Hubei Province in the Ming–Qing era, but the regional layout varied significantly.

The temples were mainly located in the central–eastern plain of Hubei Province, as well as in Huangzhou Prefecture and its counties.⁶ This is because the locations are not far from Jiangxi Province, and merchants moved to Eastern Hubei in the Ming–Qing era.

Jingzhou Prefecture 荊州府, Wuchang Prefecture 武昌府, Xiangyang Prefecture, Hanyang Prefecture 漢陽府, and Jingmenzhou 荊門州 in the central and western parts of Hubei Province are full of rivers and lakes; therefore, natural disasters are frequent, and the worship of water gods is active. In this case, however, the distribution of Lord Yan temples is relatively small, which seems to be due to competition within the region between many traditional water gods with similar functions and Lord Yan.⁷

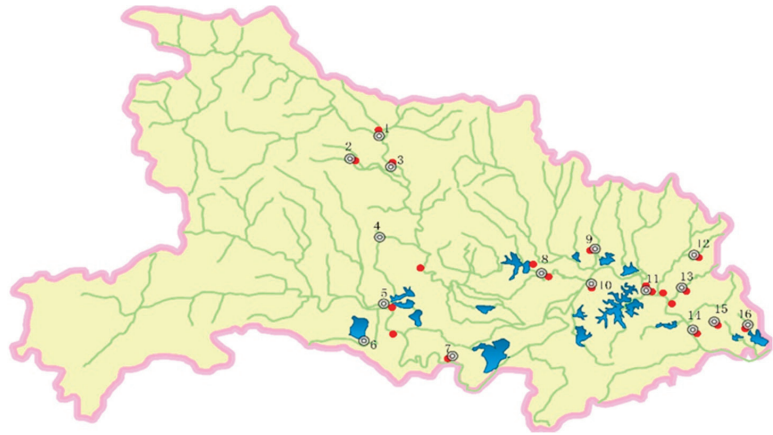


Figure 1. Spatial distribution of Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province during the Ming–Qing era. The numbers here represent the county administrative units where the Lord Yan temples are located, and the red dots represent the locations of Lord Yan temples: 1 = Xiangyang 襄陽, 2 = Nanzhang 南漳, 3 = Yicheng 宜城, 4 = Jingmenzhou 荊門州, 5 = Jiangling 江陵, 6 = Gong'an 公安, 7 = Jianli 監利, 8 = Hanchuan 漢川, 9 = Huangpi 黃陂, 10 = Jiangxia 江夏, 11 = Huanggang 黃岡, 12 = Luotian 羅田, 13 = Qishui 蘄水, 14 = Qizhou 蘄州, 15 = Guangji 廣濟, and 16 = Huangmei 黃梅.

In the western section of Hubei Province, there are no Lord Yan temples built in Shennan Prefecture 施南府 and Yichang Prefecture 宜昌府, but not because the regional community does not worship water gods. All prefectures and counties have built water temples, but people mainly worship the “Dragon King” 龍王 or “Dragon God” 龍神 (X. Wang 2017, pp. 501–2), with almost no foreign water gods.

Yunyang Prefecture 鄖陽府 worships Xiao Gong,⁸ who is one of the local water gods in Jiangxi Province, just like Lord Yan. Although the exact reason is unknown, it is related to the choice of gods made by the local gentries or Jiangxi merchants.

In addition, the counties where Lord Yan temples are located in Hubei are distributed in the Yangtze River tributaries and lake regions, along where the water traffic is developed, highlighting Lord Yan’s power of “helping with the water transport and protecting people in danger” as a water god.

Lord Yan serves as a water god in the region of rivers and lakes, and his worship, depending on the range of his powers and alternation of beliefs among other gods, could either become prosperous or decline. As a result, Lord Yan’s temples are open to transformation or collapse.

During the Zhengde 正德 (r. 1506–1521) period, the Lord Yan temple in Qizhou County was destroyed by fire, but in 1526, it was rebuilt at the same place by the local gentries and later by the transport ambassador Chen Dazhong 陳大忠 (fl. 1540) as the temple of Yu Wang 禹王 (Z. Wang 2017, p. 172). Both Yu Wang and Lord Yan were worshipped by the folk society as water gods, but the original intention of the transport envoy Chen Dazhong to replace Lord Yan with Yu Wang as the main god of the temple is not clear; the reason may be that either Lord Yan’s power manifestation was inferior, so the local community chose to replace the deity,⁹ or there was an official attempt to “standardize” (Watson 1985, pp. 292–324) the deity to suppress private worship.¹⁰

Lord Yan Temple in Yicheng County 宜城縣 was built on Guanzi Shore 灌子灘 of the Han River 漢水 twenty miles north of the county and later collapsed (Cheng 1975, p. 29). The collapse of the temple was apparently caused by years of disrepair, but the real reason may have been a decline in Han River water transport and merchant travel, or it may have been a comparable situation to Qizhou’s case. During the Zhengtong period, the Lord Yan Temple in Maqiao, Qingquan Town 清泉鎮, whose construction was presided over by

Li Wei, the assistant of the County Magistrate in Qishui County, was combined with the Guan Wang Temple 關王廟 (Zhou 2017b, p. 158). The gods have very different functions, but share the same temple; the motive for this seems inseparable from the social tradition of multiple gods and the power–game dynamics among different hidden power groups.

However, the specific circumstances of the construction of the Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province are not known, so the local histories of Hubei Province are used as a basis to summarize the situation of the Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province during the Ming–Qing era (Table 1).

Table 1. Specific situation of the Temple of Lord Yan in Hubei Province during the Ming–Qing era.

County	Quantity	Time	Location	Builders
Jiangling 江陵	1	Early years of Hongwu	Shashi 沙市	Unknown
Gongan 公安	1	9th year of Zhengtong	Ferry	Yu Yong 俞雍 (fl. 1430–1450, magistrate of a county)
Jianli 監利	1	Unknown	Southwest of the county	Unknown
Jingmen	1	Unknown	Shayang 沙洋	Unknown
Jiangxia 江夏	1	Middle of Yongle	Outside the South Gate	King Zhuzhen of Chu
Hanchuan 漢川	2	Unknown	East of the county Liu jia ge 劉家隔	Unknown
Xiangyang	1	Unknown	Five miles from Fancheng in the north of the county	Xu Zhixian; Li Renyi 李人儀 (fl. 1450–1460, magistrate of a county) reconstruction
Nanzhang 南漳	1	Unknown	Puji Bridge 普濟橋 on the east side of the county	Unknown
Yicheng	1	Unknown	North of the county 20 miles from Guanzi Shore	Merchant
Huangpi 黃陂	1	Hongwu Period	One mile west of the county	Chen Zongying 陳宗英 (fl. 1368–1400, magistrate of a county); Sun Guan 孫冠 (fl. 1450–1465, magistrate of a county) reconstruction
Huanggang 黃岡	2	8th year of Hongwu	Chibi ji	Monk Zhiyuan
		Unknown	Ruan family pavilion 阮家亭 in the city	Gentries and civilian
Huangmei 黃梅	1	48th year of Wanli 萬曆 (r. 1573–1620)	Duanjia zhou 段家洲	Wang Keshou 汪可受 (fl. 1600–1630); Wang Fangchang 汪方長 (fl. 1630–1644) reconstruction
Luotian 羅田	1	Unknown	One mile east of the county	Unknown
Qishui	3	Zhengtong period	Maqiao Lanxi Town Bahe Town	Li Wei (assistant to County Magistrate)
Qizhou	1	19th year of Hongwu	Former site of Qianming Temple 乾明寺	Hu Xun, citizen of Qizhou County); Gentries and civilian reconstruction
Guangji 廣濟	1	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

According to the table, the time of construction of Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province was generally in the early years of the Ming

Dynasty and mostly concentrated in the Hongwu period. This reveals the prevalence of Lord Yan worship in Hubei Province in the early Ming period, coinciding with the time when the local communities in Jiangxi Province joined forces to attach themselves to the ruling class to enthrone Lord Yan.

Lord Yan temples are found in most of Hubei Province, especially in the eastern Huangzhou Prefecture, highlighting that Huangzhou Prefecture is the central area of Lord Yan worship in Hubei Province. To let Lord Yan bless the local community, vassal kings, grassroots officials, local gentries, civilians, and monks were all involved in the construction and repair of temples in the Hubei Province,¹¹ demonstrating the interactive evolution of multiple group forces and a social public space.¹²

In addition, some ancient temples of other types were transformed into Lord Yan temples. Similarly, some ancient temples of Lord Yan were also transformed into other types of temples. Although it is impossible to see whether there is a connection between other types of temples and Lord Yan temples or whether there is a connection between other gods and Lord Yan, it is possible to observe the evolution of religious beliefs in the local society through this behavior. For example, the Lord Yan temple in Qizhou County was destroyed by fire, and later it was rebuilt by local people and transformed by the transport ambassador Chen Dazhong into the temple of Yu Wang (Z. Wang 2017, p. 172). This behavior can be used even further to observe dynastic religious policies and social religion habits at different times.

The regional construction and space–time layout of Lord Yan Temples in Hubei Province cannot be separated from the religious habits and different groups' choices in the local society. Actually, this choice encompasses the religious habits of different social groups. Along with social changes, some temples of Lord Yan were merged, rebuilt, or destroyed in Hubei Province. This series of actions was a manifestation of different groups in local society competing for control of the gods (Faure 2007, p. 236). Of course, the process of different social groups competing for the gods is actually a manifestation of the confrontation between different levels of power in the local society (Liu 2011, pp. 7–11). For example, the Lord Yan temple in Huanggang County was built by local officials, gentries, and civilians, but after a dozen years, there was a struggle between different groups for ownership of the Lord Yan temple (Yu 2017, p. 160). Moreover, their purpose was to try to control local folk religion ideology and further dominate the local social order through the gods (Huang 2017, pp. 12–22).

4. Belief Identity and the Cross-Region Mobility of Lord Yan

The formation of folk god beliefs and believers has a certain regional character, whose circle of beliefs overlaps with the region formed with their geographical conditions, administrative divisions, and economic exchanges (Bol 2004). Since the Song–Yuan era, Lord Yan has been worshipped by Jiangxi's regional society. Through joint promotion by the government and the people in the early Ming Dynasty, the beliefs space was increasingly expanded to the outside, and Lord Yan became a water god with national influence.

Jiangxi and Hubei provinces, both belonging to the middle reaches of the Yangtze River society and sharing similar geographical and cultural characteristics, have relatively frequent regional exchanges, so Hubei Province has become the primary area for the spread of the cult of Lord Yan to the outside world. Since the change of the Yuan–Ming era, “the migration movement from Jiangxi to Huguang” 江西填湖廣 has been in full swing,¹³ and the expansion of the foreign business and economy of “the merchant gangs of Jiangyou” 江右商幫 has been remarkable,¹⁴ both of which contributed to the frequent geographical movement of people to a large extent.

During the Ming–Qing era, Lord Yan was accepted and worshipped for catering to the interests of the officials, gentries, and scholars of Hubei Province, gradually completed

the process of localization of folk beliefs, and was finally integrated into the historical construction of the local deity system (Zhang 2021, pp. 55–65).

During the transition between the Yuan and Ming eras, the society in the middle reaches of the Yangtze River experienced wars, resulting in a sparseness of people and desolation of the fields. When the Ming Dynasty was first established, the government's decree of immigration and Jiangxi's "land being full of people" 地滿人多 served as a dual impetus for the people of Jiangxi to migrate to Hubei on a large scale. During the Hongwu period, in Hubei, out of the 980,000 immigrants from various regions, about 690,000 were Jiangxi immigrants, accounting for 70% of the total population (Ge and Cao 1997, p. 148). Huangzhou Prefecture went through wars at the end of the Yuan dynasty, resulting in a huge reduction in the local population. To improve this situation, an immigration order that residents move to Huangzhou Prefecture was released at the beginning of the year Hongwu in the Ming Dynasty (Ge and Cao 1997, p. 130). Therefore, most of these Jiangxi immigrant families resided in the Huangzhou Prefecture. Starting in the middle of the Ming Dynasty, native people in Jiangxi flowed to Hubei Province through the Ganjiang River and Poyang Lake waterway to avoid heavy taxation, which lasted until the Tianqi 天啟 (r. 1621–1627) period (Zhang 1995, pp. 16–17).

As more and more Jiangxi immigrants entered Hubei, the circle of the cult of Lord Yan expanded northward to the eastern part of Hubei Province due to the very similar physical geography of the two regions and the relatively close proximity between them.¹⁵ Lord Yan Temple in Ruanjia Pavilion, Huanggang County, was jointly built by residents of a community, with the Ruan family playing a leading role (Dai 2001, p. 104). According to a survey, the residents of this community were mostly Jiangxi immigrants who responded to the government's orders in the early Ming Dynasty (Ge and Cao 1997, p. 129), and they were later codified in the household register of Huanggang County together to form Lijia 裏甲 (Mao 2017, pp. 121–29). Lijia was a grassroots unit of the Ming government ruling a local area.

In fact, Ruanjia Pavilion was a temple used to worship the ancestors of the Ruan family and later was also used by the residents of this area to offer sacrifices to Lord Yan (Anonymous 1996). Therefore, to a certain extent, Ruanjia Pavilion had become the center of worship for Lord Yan in this community. In addition, because the residents of this community all migrated from Jiangxi Province, they hoped to unite and improve their ability to resist various unknown risks by worshipping Lord Yan together. As immigrants from Jiangxi gradually integrated into local life, Lord Yan was also known to a growing number of social groups, further promoting the spread of the cult of Lord Yan to other areas in Hubei Province. The distribution of Jiangxi immigrants in Hubei Province decreased from east to west, about 80% of which was in the east of Hubei and on the Jiangnan Plain 江漢平原, 60% in the north, and 30% in the northwest (Zhang and Mei 1991, pp. 77–109). The geographical layout of Lord Yan temples in Hubei Province was basically the same as the diffusion of Jiangxi immigrants, and they were relatively concentrated in the east of Hubei, sporadically distributed in the middle and the west. Jiangxi immigrants mainly entered Hubei Province northward along the Ganjiang River and Poyang Lake waterway and dispersed to various prefectures and counties westward and northwestward along the Yangtze and Han rivers through east Hubei (Shi and Zhang 1994, pp. 70–81). Lord Yan temples were mainly distributed along the main streams and tributaries of the Yangtze River, and the flow direction and location selection characteristics of the two obviously fit together, highlighting the intrinsic connection between Jiangxi immigrants and the flow of the cult of Lord Yan.

Due to the disturbance of the bandits at the end of the Yuan Dynasty, the Hubei indigenous people moved to Sichuan 四川 by the beginning of the Ming Dynasty. In the Ming–Qing era, Jiangxi immigrant groups became naturalized in Hubei Province, but still retained the cultural and customary traits of their original residence, so it is difficult to generalize the customs (Liu 2001, p. 29). In other words, the space of the cult of Lord Yan migrated with the people.

In the Ming–Qing era, the power of Jiangxi merchants was so huge that they could be found nationwide; as was recorded, “the land in Jiangxi is narrow and barren, even with hard work people cannot support themselves, so most of them have to go away to survive. Jiangxi is a traffic pivot where carriages and boats all come together, and people here mostly become merchants” (De 1970, p. 43). Wang Shixing 王士性 (1547–1598) in the Ming Dynasty revealed the reason for business: “The population is huge while the land is narrow in Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Fujian provinces, so people here are not able to support their families if they choose to stay at home instead of stepping out and giving full play of their skills. This situation is even more typical in Jiangxi” (Wang 1981, p. 80). People in Jiangxi had to become merchants to make a living, relying on the material basis of the increasing prosperity of handicrafts in commercial towns and the significant increase in the degree of commercialization of agriculture, thus promoting the expansion of the economic activities of Jiangxi merchants in a wider area.¹⁶

There are many merchant-led local Huiguan 會館 along the Yangtze River to the west and along the Han River to the northwest in Hubei Province (B. He 2017, pp. 60–71). The Jiangxi merchants living in Hubei Province, due to the need for friendship and industry standardization, established Jiangxi Huiguan in the prefectures and counties. At the same time, they set up local deities as spiritual models in the Huiguan for contacting fellow villagers and gathering local consciousness.

The Qingjiang area has the custom of business, so some merchants left their wives behind and walked thousands of miles to conduct business, while others settled down in other provinces, such as Guangdong 廣東, Jiangsu 江蘇, Yunnan 雲南, and Guizhou 貴州, but especially in Hubei, where most of them chose to stay (Qin 1642, p. 34). Due to these merchants originally coming from Qingjiang, residing in Hubei, and regarding Lord Yan as the hometown protection deity, their business routes often went through rivers and lakes. Therefore, some of the Jiangxi Huiguan would worship and offer sacrifices to the water God Lord Yan in the hope that he would help promote goodness in their hometown and bless the business road with safety (Oakes and Sutton 2010, pp. 260–93).

There were Jiangxi Huiguan in Jiangling County and Jianli County of Jingzhou Prefecture, in which the countryside and industry gods were worshipped (Ni 2001, pp. 58–61). Later, Jiangxi merchants were involved in presiding over the construction of Lord Yan temples in both counties. Lord Yan became the mutual spiritual support for the mutual assistance of Jiangxi merchants living in other provinces (Szonyi 2017, pp. 233–73). At the same time, local merchants also participated in the construction of Lord Yan Temples in the two counties (Ni 2001, pp. 58, 61). For example, Zhang Cheng 張誠 (fl. 1854) provided some funds during the construction of the Lord Yan Temple in Jiangling County, and Zhu Wen 朱文 (fl. 1854) provided land for the construction of Lord Yang Temple in Jianli County (Ni 1975, pp. 674, 702). To a certain extent, local merchants in Hubei were also an important group that worshipped Lord Yan.

In other words, Jiangxi merchants lived in Hubei Province to conduct business, vigorously built Jiangxi Huiguan dedicated to the local god Lord Yan, and participated in the construction of Lord Yan temples around Hubei Province, which undoubtedly made the cult of Lord Yan expand within the business region.¹⁷

It is stated in *Jiangxi tongzhi* 江西通志 (*General History of Jiangxi*) that “the worship of gods is common in all dynasties, and the temple’s appearance should frequently be repaired and renovated, while the rites and ceremonies should follow the tradition” (Xie 1989, p. 1). Ceremonies and renovation activities, in which officials, gentries, and civilians all took part, were often held in the places where officials took office for the edification of civilians and to maintain grassroots society stability.

During the Ming–Qing era, the Lord Yan cult in Jiangxi spread to Hubei and was absorbed into the local deity system by the bureaucratic gentries and the civilian groups to meet their multiple interests. During the Hongwu period, Chen Zongying, a magistrate of Huangpi County, advocated the repair of the Lord Yan temple one mile west of the city together with other people (H. Li 2017, p. 157). Then, during the Tianshun 天順 (r. 1457–

1464) period, Sun Guan, the successor magistrate of Huangpi County, rebuilt it with others (H. Li 2017, pp. 157–58).

Chen Zongying and Sun Guan always emphasized the orthodoxy of Confucianism and were more repulsed by folk beliefs, so while they were governors of Huangpi County, they demolished the temples of many unknown deities (Yang 2017, p. 352). Along with the increasing influence of the cult of Lord Yan on Huangpi society, different social groups were actively involved in the construction activities of Lord Yan Temples (Yang 2017, p. 127). Therefore, the magistrates of the two counties had to work with other local groups to build Lord Yan Temples. In this way, they attempted to integrate the cult of Lord Yan into the local cultural system and further strengthened their control over the local community. In addition, the magistrates of the two counties were from other regions, and their workplaces were highly mobile (Yang 2017, p. 351); this feature objectively provided the possibility of spreading the cult of Lord Yan in a wider range.

A number of different situations emerged in Gonggan County. In 1444, Yu Yong, magistrate of Gonggan County, built the Lord Yan temple at the Ferry with other people (Wei 2017, p. 105). During the Longqing 隆慶 (r. 1567–1572) period, Qian Kuangzhi 錢匡之 (fl. 1568), magistrate of Gonggan County, moved the Lord Yan temple to Zhongxuegang 中穴港 and transformed it into the Dongyue Temple 東嶽廟 with other people (Zhou 1975, p. 187). Dongyue temple was dedicated to the East Mountain Emperor 東嶽大帝, which is an orthodox deity in traditional Chinese society. During a flood disaster in the second year of Longqing, the East Mountain Emperor protected the gentries and civilians of Gonggan County; however, Lord Yan did not play the role of protecting the local community (Zhou 1975, p. 445).

Thus, they decided to build a temple to worship the East Mountain Emperor. At the same time, with Lord Yan's influence diminishing in this region, his temple was transformed into Dongyue Temple. This indicates that different deities with the same function have competing characteristics in a region. The worship of deities by different social groups depends on whether the deity can function or not (Hansen 1990, p. 29), but there is no more evidence to support this claim.

The government, gentries, and civilians of Hubei Province being actively involved in the construction of the Lord Yan temples shows that the localization of the cult of Lord Yan completed the historical evolution of the folk deity worship system, and Lord Yan became a local genealogical deity worshipped by multiple communities. The specific construction date of the Lord Yan temple five miles from Fancheng, north of Xiangyang County, is unknown. In 1383, the temple was rebuilt by Xu Zhixian and others. In 1459, it was rebuilt by Li Renyi and others (Zhang 2006, p. 188). Later, both Lord Yan and Xiao Gong were worshipped in this temple, and it became well-known for the gods responding to people's wishes (E. Chen 2017, p. 535).

In 1620, Wang Keshou built the Lord Yan temple at Duanjia zhou in Huangmei County, Huangzhou Prefecture 黃州府, which was later renovated by Wang Fangchang (Jia 2017, p. 50). According to Wang's genealogy, the Wang family's ancestors moved from Huizhou Prefecture 徽州府 to Huangzhou Prefecture to escape the war in the late Song Dynasty, and members of the Wang family also earned their living mainly from agriculture (Anonymous 1945). Therefore, the Wang family worshipped Lord Yan, probably hoping that Lord Yan would bless their agricultural activities.

In the Ming Dynasty, many members of the Wang family took part in the imperial examinations 科舉考試 and obtained several titles; for example, Wang Keshou acquired the status of a scholar 秀才, and Wang Fangchang acquired the status of a Gongsheng 貢生 (Anonymous 1945). In the meantime, they offered sacrifices to Lord Yan and thanked Lord Yan for helping them win the title. This shows that the connotation of Lord Yan's faith expanded. Although it is not known why the Wang family worshiped Lord Yan, the Wang family repaired the temple from generation to generation, revealing the close relationship between Lord Yan and the Wang family.

As a water god who blesses the safety of ships running between rivers, lakes, and seas, the spatial scope of Lord Yan's cult spread outward and was closely linked to water practitioners. The Lord Yan temple, built on the Guanzi shore of Han River, 20 miles north of Yicheng County, was built a long time ago, but it is not known when it was built or who built it (Hao 2001, p. 273). The Guanzi shore was a busy ferry on the Han River, where a number of merchants, sailors, and fishermen converged. By offering sacrifices to Lord Yan, they hoped to ensure the safety of water transportation and further obtain material wealth; therefore, the Lord Yan Temple was continuously repaired (Cheng 1975, p. 275).

Of course, the fishermen were mainly from Yicheng County, which is in line with the annals of Yicheng County, wherein a considerable number of local people engaged in fishing activities (Yao 1975, p. 19). However, the specific identities of the merchants and sailors cannot be known from the available information. It is certain that they played an important role in spreading Lord Yan's faith. In addition, the group of water practitioners was diverse and complex, but they all believe that Lord Yan protected the economic production of fisheries and the safety of water transportation.

The Shi family ancestors in Huanggang County moved from Jiangxi to Hubei to escape the war in the late Yuan Dynasty (Anonymous 1988). Shi Gulu 石穀祿, the ancestor of the Shi family, was an official, but resigned for some unknown reasons. After returning to his hometown, he started to engage in business activities. Once, when he went to the Jiangxi area for business, he was protected by Lord Yan when he was in danger on-board.¹⁸ After he returned home, he built a statue of Lord Yan and worshipped him in his own house. At the same time, he vowed that he would tell his descendants to worship Lord Yan forever. To a certain extent, Lord Yan had become the protector of the Shi family. With the growing number of Shi family members, they decided to jointly fund the construction of a Lord Yan temple, and the main organizers of the project were Shi Changcai 石昌才 (fl. 1552), Shi Shengfu 石勝富 (fl. 1552), Shi Shengchu 石勝楚 (fl. 1552), Shi Chengmei 石成美 (fl. 1552), Shi Chongyou 石崇又 (fl. 1552), Shi Qinghe 石慶和 (fl. 1552), and Shi JinXing 石錦興 (fl. 1552) (Anonymous 1988). At the same time, according to the Shis' genealogy, a common feature of these family members is that they were all engaged in business activities (Anonymous 1988). This seems to indicate that the Shi family evolved into a commercial family, but there is no more evidence to prove it. As a result of their commercial activities, the cult of Lord Yan was further spread to other regions. More importantly, the whole Shi family formed a cultural community centered on the cult of Lord Yan, and the Lord Yan temple also became the center of power for this family community (Freedman 1965, pp. 82–93).

The cult of Lord Yan grew among the socially diverse groups of Hubei Province; the temples were built to worship him at all major river and waterway traffic routes, which strongly promoted the spatial expansion of the cult of Lord Yan.

5. Conclusions

During the Yuan Dynasty, Lord Yan was worshipped by local communities as a regional water deity for a long time, and the beliefs space was limited to a corner of Jiangxi society. At the beginning of the Ming Dynasty, the cult of Lord Yan flowed outward due to the text construction of pluralistic groups (Han 2015, pp. 86–96, 220) and the instillation of official consciousness by the ruling class (transforming the content, incorporating the rituals, granting the name, and giving the temple title) (Zhu 2008, p. 178); Lord Yan, thus, was changed from a local water deity who sheltered the Qingjiang counties into a national water deity who was responsible for calming the wind and waves, as well as guaranteeing safe navigation.

The specific time of the cult of Lord Yan's spread from Jiangxi to Hubei cannot be confirmed, but the construction of Lord Yan temples was mostly concentrated in the Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty, which seems to indicate that the cult of Lord Yan entered and flourished in Hubei no later than the Ming Taizu period. The spatial layout of ancestral temples in Hubei Province differs significantly due to the different degrees of regional be-

liefs, which are concentrated in the eastern Huangzhou Prefecture, while the Huangzhou Prefecture is the central area of beliefs in Hubei Province. The sparse distribution of temples in the central and western regions of Hubei Province seems to be the result of the selection between gods and similar social functions in the region. At the same time, the counties with temples are all located along the tributaries of the Yangtze River and lakes with well-developed waterway traffic, highlighting the functional characteristics of the water god.

During the Ming–Qing era, the flow of immigrants from Jiangxi to Huguang; the cross-regional commerce of merchants from Jiangxi; the acceptance and worship of officials, gentries, and scholars; and the acquiescence and use of the ruling class together constituted the multidimensional motivation for the outward expansion of the cult of Lord Yan.

In the process of spreading the cult of Lord Yan in Hubei Province, the Vassal kings, officials, gentries, merchants, and civilians attempted to gain private benefits by actively participating in the rituals, temple constructions, and repair activities of Lord Yan, and the water practitioner group was especially committed to Lord Yan. They hoped that the god Lord Yan would bless the place and protect the people in danger; the process of human–god interaction can be regarded as a “gift exchange”,¹⁹ along with Lord Yan’s growing manifestation of powers. Thus, the scope of the belief’s community increasingly expanded, and they all looked up to its heroic wind on the water, prompting the spread of the cult of Lord Yan to a wider area.

The process of spreading the cult of Lord Yan in Jiangxi to Hubei is different from the flow of gods in southern China society (He and Faure 2021, pp. 181–205). Meanwhile, the change in deity status (deity birth) and the flow of specific deities across borders (religious traditions) also differ (Lu 2013, pp. 33–52). However, they all belong to a cultural-shaping process within the regional society.²⁰

The social groups construct the content of the cult of Lord Yan and try to integrate cultural consciousness in order to advance into the national ritual system, but it is not a “Ritual Signs” in the fully orthodox sense.²¹ Rather, it belongs to a structural process, in which different gods’ traditions and subjective perceptions of social groups intertwine. In short, this process concentrates on the expression of various aspects of different people’s thoughts, the characteristics of regional social life, and the identity of groups within the state during the historical period (Zhao 2018, pp. 1–11, 193).

The regions formed by the propagation of deities are based on physical geography, administrative units, and economic space, but may also break through such limits to form a larger religious region (Pi 2008, p. 253). The flow and expansion of the Yan Gong faith are more like the transfer of religious consciousness from the Qingjiang area to other places. Through the fusion of different religious beliefs afterward, it is integrated into the structure of other regional belief systems. This process would not be possible without the cooperation of multiple social groups with similar motivations to create a standardized combination of rituals within the cultural structure (Watson 2003, pp. 98–114).

By observing the spread of the cult of Lord Yan from Jiangxi to Hubei and the state of the cult of Lord Yan in Hubei, we can consider this a method of regional cultural continuity. In other words, only when the folk gods are continuously worshiped by the cult of different social groups and spread to other areas can they continue to exist in society. In the process, the connotation of the cult of Lord Yan was also integrated into some local knowledge and cultural elements (Geertz 2014, pp. 38–44), so the cult of Lord Yan is commonly recognized by different social groups or social organizations in Jiangxi and Hubei provinces. For example, after Lord Yan was spread to Hubei as the god of water in Jiangxi, it was added to the function of blessing agricultural harvests. In a deeper sense, the cultural order and social relations of grassroots society can be observed through the state of the cult of Lord Yan by different groups and regions.

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Notes

- ¹ At present, some of the research results of Lord Yan in academic circles include (Rao 2009), (Song 2014, pp. 118–23), (Tang and Zhang 2013, pp. 253–59), (Hu 2015, pp. 11–14), (Cheng 2016, pp. 127–34), and (Wang 2020, pp. 105–14).
- ² The original publication of the *Chu Yin Ji* 樗隱集 collection is no longer in circulation. Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540–1620) *Guoshi jingji zhi* 國史經籍誌 of the Ming Dynasty vigorously included the anthologies of the Yuan–Ming era, but not this one. During the Qianlong 乾隆 (1736–1795) period, the government compiled the *Si ku Quanshu* 四庫全書, collected a number of poems and articles from the *Yongle Da Dian* 永樂大典, and re-edited them into the six volumes of *Chu Yin Ji*, which were compiled into the category of other collections.
- ³ The Ming rulers themselves were adept at creating gods. “Lord Yan, who was produced in Song–Yuan era and was a local water god in Jiangxi, was made the ‘the Waves-Calming Marquis’ for blessing Zhu Yuanzhang’s victory in the battle of Poyang Lake”. The cult of Lord Yan was reinforced by Zhu Yuanzhang and worshipped nationwide, so it seems certain that it arose before the Ming Dynasty (the middle and late Yuan Dynasty) (Zhao 2017, p. 13).
- ⁴ Lord Yan’s real name is Beihai 北海, a native of Yanfang 晏坊 during the Yuanyou 元祐 (1086–1094) period of the Song Dynasty. Wherever there were locusts, floods, or droughts, the people prayed to the gods for blessings, and they were answered. The other is Yan Wuzai in Qingjiang Town, 30 miles north of Qingjiang County, Linjiang Prefecture (Tan 2006, p. 510). The two Lord Yans are worshipped by many counties today (Tan 2006, p. 510). In short, there is no uniformity in the origin story of Lord Yan, or Yan Wuzai of the Yuan Dynasty period, or Yan dunfu 晏敦復 of the Song Dynasty; additionally, there are said to be the Sunwu 孫吳 (a dynasty in China, 229–280) before people, and so on (Zong and Liu 1986, p. 356).
- ⁵ One theory is that Lord Yan was made “the Waves-Calming Marquis” in the early Hongwu period of the Ming Dynasty (Cui 2017, p. 326). Another theory is that Lord Yan was made “the Waves-Calming Marquis” in the middle of the Yongle period of the Ming Dynasty (Shi 1989, p. 459).
- ⁶ In the Ming and early Qing dynasties, Huangzhou Prefecture was under the administration of “Huguang buzhengshisi” 湖廣布政使司, and had jurisdiction over one state and eight counties. In the seventh year of Yongzheng 雍正 (1722–1735) in the Qing Dynasty, Huangpi County was transferred to the jurisdiction of Hanyang Prefecture. Therefore, Huangzhou Prefecture had jurisdiction in one state and seven counties and was transferred to the jurisdiction of “Hubei buzhengshisi” (Ying 1976, p. 3).
- ⁷ There are many water gods in the central and western regions of Hubei Province, mainly including natural water gods (for example, River Gods and Juzhang 沮漳 Gods), personified water gods (for example, Yang Hou 陽侯, Xiang Jun 湘君, Xiang Furen 湘夫人, Qu Yuan 屈原, Da Yu 大禹, Liu Yi 柳毅, Zhao Yu 趙昱, Xu Jingyang 徐景陽, Liu Qi 劉琦, Tian Fei 天妃, Xiao Gong, and Lord Yan), and mythical animal water gods (for example, Dragon Gods). Each water god is treated differently by local officials and people because of its own spirituality and different degrees of influence, and the development of the cult of the water god is geographically unbalanced (Yuan 2019, pp. 9–28).
- ⁸ Xiao Gong is a famous water god of Jiangxi in the Ming–Qing era, and his worship was formed in Xingan County 新淦縣, Jiangxi Province, during the Yuan–Ming era. The character archetype of the water god Xiao Gong mainly includes three generations of the Xiao family’s grandchildren (Xiao Boxuan 蕭伯軒, Xiao Xiangshu 蕭祥叔, and Xiao Tianren 蕭天任), and the social group gradually took Xiao Tianren as Xiao Gong (Zhou 2017a, pp. 496–97, 500).
- ⁹ Chinese folk religious traditions are mutually exclusive, and the people sought protection from many deities from different religious traditions at the same time. Additionally, their choices are determined by divine power rather than by a particular religion they belong to (Hansen 1990, p. 29).
- ¹⁰ By imposing a will or language on local deities, the state tried to intervene in local society in a cultural way (Averill 2006, p. 58).
- ¹¹ Local officials, gentries, and civilians were involved in the maintenance and management activities of the temple, which inevitably promoted the evolution of the function of beliefs space towards diversification and made the temple a site of a multidimensional power competition (Liu and Zhang 2020).
- ¹² State power and social forces present a complex pattern of competition or collaboration in local societies. In particular, different forces in local public affairs have shown great autonomy and dynamism. Multiple group forces jointly shape public space, and public space inversely influences multiple group forces (Wu 2009, p. 5).
- ¹³ Since the Ming–Qing era, local county records and private genealogies have often recorded the saying “the migration movement from Jiangxi to Huguang”, but this is not found in official political books and private national histories and is mostly referred to by folk society (Xia 2013, p. 220).

- 14 Fang Zhiyuan's 方誌遠 comprehensive discussion of the rise of "the merchant gangs of Jiangyou", the scope of activities, modes of operation, capital composition, and social composition basically forms a general overview of "the merchant gangs of Jiangyou". However, there is no unified opinion among academics on the time of the rise of "the merchant gangs of Jiangyou" (Fang 1995; S. He 2017).
- 15 Belief circles are voluntary organizations formed by regional believers, centered on the cult of a God (Lin 1990, pp. 41–104).
- 16 With Jiangxi's commercial towns and rural commodity markets, the Merchant Gangs of Jiangyou became increasingly prosperous in the mid-Qing period. At the same time, with the increasingly large commercial organization of the Merchant Gangs of Jiangyou, its geographical scope has expanded to the whole country. In addition, to a certain extent, the Merchant Gangs of Jiangyou can be considered the product of Jiangxi's exiles during the Ming–Qing Era (X. Zhang 2015).
- 17 The total number of commercial Huiguan around Hubei Province is 295, and the number of Jiangxi Huiguan is 66, accounting for about 22.4% (Zhang 1995, pp. 287–91).
- 18 Reference: 石氏建修晏公廟碑記 (Records of the Construction of the Temple of Lord Yan by Shi), author: Shi, Yaochun 石耀春 (fl. 1889–1904). It now exists in Lord Yan Temple in Sandian Town 三店鎮 (originally part of Huanggang County), Xinzhou District 新洲區, Wuhan City 武漢市.
- 19 Both gift giving and gift returning are obligatory. Diverse social groups worship Lord Yan and build temples in the hope that the gods will bless them. Lord Yan enjoys the worship of the social group, so he must exert his power to protect all the people (Maus 2016, p. 5).
- 20 The operating principle of the regional social order is not a rigid theoretical law, but the overall mobilization mechanism of how the regional society is organized, which is the historical practice of mobile and living people (Zhang 2011, pp. 171–88, 223–24).
- 21 Local liturgical practices are based on the concept of orthodoxy, and when different orthodox traditions collide, they create an overlap of rituals (Faure and Zhang 2016, pp. 21–23).

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Article

Spatial Imagination in Sacred Narratives of Mountain Communities in Western Yunnan, China

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Abstract: Various sacred narratives have different emphases on the shaping of natural space. Creation myths reveal the basic structure of natural space. Sacred narratives of mountain gods focus on how and why mountain forests are the source of life and stability for nearly all the species in the area. The myth of the hunting god and the legend of the Flower Festival have a remarkable endemicity. The consciousness of the community of life, which is fundamentally constructed in creation myths, reveals visible and sensible pictures in these two types of narratives. The literary imagination of these sacred narratives focuses on establishing and breaking through spatial boundaries. In the intertwining of an imaginative narrative and a realistic existence, the sacredness of natural spaces is established and can be experienced. Mountaineers imbue their practices with gracefulness and nobleness in the dimensions of emotion and morality through storytelling in order to shape the morphological characteristics and the life essence of natural spaces. The shaping of beautiful places and sublime realms in these narratives is a vivid expression of cosmology.

Keywords: mountain community; natural space; sacred narrative; ritualistic practices

1. Introduction

This article will discuss “the shaping of sacred natural spaces in origin narratives”. The mountain communities in Western Yunnan, China, are located on the eastern flank of the Himalayas; this is the heart of the Hengduan Mountains 横断山, where the main rivers of Asia flow southward in parallel gorges separated by high-altitude mountain ranges. The landforms of highlands and ravines are integral to local culture. For the ethnic groups living in the Yunnan region of the Hengduan Mountains, “how to understand the natural space in the mountains” is the core term in their cultural practice. This article is about topics related to sacred space, and the main examples used are the folk literature of this area.¹

1.1. Myth and Mythical Space

As far as the topic of “the sacredness of natural spaces in origin narratives” is concerned, two related concepts form the basis for this: myth and sacred space.

This article agrees that the core of myth is narrative and belief. In Alan Dundes’ view, “a myth is a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form ... For myth may constitute the highest form of truth, albeit in metaphorical guise” (Dundes 1984, p. 1). Using symbols to express the ultimate truth is the mythical narrative’s peculiarity. In other words, “the basic mythic idea—that is, the concept of an intrinsic parallelism between the real and the ideal—is in itself implicit in the very process of apprehending phenomena or attributing significance to them” (Gaster 1984, p. 114). As the core of myth, the tracing of origin is often related to human beings’ exploration and confirmation of their own ultimate existence. Therefore, whether it is about the origin of the universe, human beings, culture, or the origins of some specific customs, they all carry the task of constructing sacredness. Based on the theme of this article, the myths that will be described and discussed realize the construction of sacred space in response to the question of origin.

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In the mythical narratives of local communities, the concept of “the shaping of natural space” involves mountains, forests, and all places that appear in sacred events. These constructions of the sacredness of space are mainly found in creation myths, the sacred narrative of the mountain god, the myth of the hunting god and the legend of the “Flower Festival”. As two important types of creation myths, the myth about the separation of sky and earth and the myth describing creation through bodily dismemberment focus on narrating the origin or re-creation of natural space. In two types of myths from the Eastern Himalayas of China, the local characteristics of space are integrated into the construction of the macro-cosmic world. As genre-bending narratives that are both universal and local, sacred narratives of the mountain god tell us about the relationship between the mountains and the human world. As endemic narratives, the myth of the hunting god and the legend of the “Flower Festival” actually focus on the prosperity and decline of specific life-forms by narrating the origin of the hunting god and the origin of the Flower Festival.

It should be pointed out that the shaping of natural space can be seen not only in literary texts but also in folk rituals related to them. If we think of the construction of sacred ground in myth and ritual as “consubstantial” (Gaster 1984, p. 114), systematicness and connectivity are the essential attributes of the existing form of the myth that Gaster wished to emphasize: “for what we are really seeking is not the *reproduction* of the one in the other, but rather a *parallelism of expression* through two current media.” (Gaster 1984, p. 134). For this article, this goal will point to “a parallelism of expression”.

The natural space in the literary imagination and folk practices of mountain communities may also be called “mythical space and place” (Tuan 2001) as follows:

It is the spatial component of a world view, a conception of localized values within which people carry on their practical activities. (Tuan 2001, p. 86)

The second kind of mythical space functions as a component in a world view or cosmology. It is better articulated and more consciously held than mythical space of the first kind. World view is a people’s more or less systematic attempt to make sense of environment. To be livable, nature and society must show order and display a harmonious relationship. All people require a sense of order and fitness in their environment, but not all seek it in the elaboration of a coherent cosmic system. (Tuan 2001, p. 88)

The term “mythical space and place” represents the mutual shaping of man and environment. Thus, mythical space and place in folk narratives should be viewed within the system of a world view, and, in particular, the term should be understood within the formation and expression of a localized system. In this article’s argument for the concept, sacred space in mythological narratives is related to the spatial life and life philosophy of the specific community.

In learning how to understand the sacred space constructed by mythologies in the Eastern Himalayas of China, the term “sacred natural sites” is also instructive. The study of sacred space covered in this article overlaps with the definition of a “sacred natural site”. This concept was first introduced in 1992 at a conference at the University of Virginia. A clear definition was proposed in *Sacred Natural Sites: Guidelines for protected area managers*: “areas of land or water that have special spiritual significance for people and communities” (Robert and Christopher 2008, p. 6). In *Sacred Natural Sites (SNS): Culture and Biodiversity Conservation*, Pei Shengji defined this concept and introduced the related research and biodiversity protection in different countries (Pei 2015). Guo Jing summarized the characteristics of a SNS, and the most contributive point made was as follows: “beliefs, morals and rural rules and regulations are the main model of management of Sacred Natural Sites, and it requires the active participation of all community members.” (Guo 2004). The interactive relationship between man and nature can be expressed a “human beings and other living beings, nature and sacred things are all equal when they are in the process of change” (Guo 2004). In other words, although a “sacred natural site” has a specific geographical range, it is by no means just a static spatial concept. A sacred natural site is

managed and maintained, which means that members of the local community continue to participate in an interactive construction based on faith, morality, and emotion.

Finally, regarding the nature of nature constructed by myths and various folk activities, or the relationship between humans and nature, the term of “nature de-naturalised” proposed by Stéphane Gros, who is dedicated to the study of the Dulong people, is instructive: “If modernity naturalises nature (naturalises the natural and generates a single nature), multiplicity progressively disappears. Nature becomes a heterotopia, a context that juxtaposes several incompatible spaces” (Gros 2017). It goes without saying that Gros’s opinion works in coherence with the latest developments in anthropology².

1.2. Research Methods

This article mainly discusses the shaping of sacred spaces in mythical narratives. In the analysis of specific mythical texts, several research methods concerning mythology will be applied.

The first step is to identify the types of folk narratives based on the motif numbers in the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Thompson 1955–1958), so as to facilitate the discussion of the similarities and differences in the spatial shaping of diverse texts. It should be noted that folk narratives about sacred spaces are told in different genres, such as myths, epics, and legends. It is necessary to travel through a variety of genres of folk literature if we want to accomplish the goal of understanding local ideas about them.

Secondly, when discussing the meaning of some concrete spaces in this article, psychological analysis will be applied. The concept of the “archetype” (“Great Mother”) that Jung presented, as well as related arguments in Neumann’s research, are used to help explain the expression of images that appear repeatedly in some myths, although we do not entirely agree with the transcendentalism or heredity involved in this concept. After all, the repeated appearance of maternal images occurs across the expanse of time and culture, and this article accepts this universal fact.

Thirdly, Eliade’s way of understanding the myth, especially sacred space, will also be adopted in this article. Regarding the topic of “how the sacred space is constructed and experienced” that this article attempts to consider, “the dialectic of the sacred”, as the core concept of Eliade’s religious ideological system, is more enlightening. His research on myths and religion is considered to be influenced by phenomenology, which also implies that this article agrees with the relevant ideas of Husserl, Heidegger, and others in this regard.

In the process of analyzing the cosmology or space view in mythologies, several scholars’ similar arguments about Chinese or East Asian cosmology inspired the writing of this article, such as: “The continuity of Being” (Tu 1985) and “correlative cosmology” (Schwartz 1985). Furthermore, the term “relational being” will be the basic concept throughout this article: “The vision of relational being will invite us, then, to set aside the freedom/determinism opposition, and to consider the world in terms of relational confluence” (Gergen 2009, p. xvi, Prologue).

1.3. The Mountain Land Covered in This Article

This article’s objective is to understand how the sacredness of the natural landscape is shaped by folk narratives in the Eastern Himalayas region of China. What follows is a brief introduction to some places involved in folk literature and rituals.

As a keyword in this article, “mountain land” in some folk narratives is a realistic and testable place, mainly involving the following mountains in the Hengduan Mountains: the Gaoligong Mountains 高黎贡山, which are west of the Hengduan Mountains; the Nu Mountains 怒山, which are also a branch of the Hengduan Mountains, facing the Gaoligong Mountains across the Nujiang River 怒江 (Salween); and Wuliang Mountain 无量山, which is located in the west branch of the Yun Ling Range of the Hengduan Mountains. The mythological texts used in this article mainly come from the Lisu 傈僳, the Nu (Nung) 怒, the Drung (Dulong) 独龙, the Achang 阿昌, the Deang 德昂, and the Pumi 普米 people. It

should be noted that the distribution of the Lisu people in Yunnan is not limited to the area mentioned in this article, and the texts used in this article are mainly narrated by the Lisu living in the Gaoligong mountain range.

It should be noted that some of the texts from different ethnic groups discussed in this article are quite similar. The reasons for this phenomenon are diverse and complex, but living in large mixed communities is one of the reasons. For example, the mythical texts of the Nu and Drung have many similarities. Part of this comes from the fact that their living spaces are shared. Fugong county 福贡 and Gongshan county 贡山, on the east side of Gaoligong mountain range, are where the Nu live, and the rest are distributed in areas such as Lushui 泸水 and Weixi 维西. The Drung people mainly gather along the Drung River on the west side of the Gaoligong mountain range. As one of the starting points for crossing the Gaoligong mountain range and entering the Drung River, Gongshan is the main shared area between the Drung and the Nu peoples' living areas, making cultural exchanges and integration possible.

As far as sacred places are concerned, there are 11 sites in the local expression, as can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Eleven sacred mountains in the Nujiang River and Drung river.³

① Kvwagarpu Mountain 嘎哇嘎普神山.
② Mukemudang Mountain 木克木当山.
③ Gongdang Mountain 贡当神山.
④ The Snow Mountain, located on the west side of the first bay of the Nujiang River.
⑤ Xinjiongnaï fairy cave 信灵乃仙人洞, located on the west side of the first bay of the Nujiang River.
⑥ Pamunai fairy cave 帕姆乃仙人洞, located north of Nayiduo Village 那衣朵村.
⑦ The cliff behind Qiukedang 秋科当.
⑧ The Snow Mountain, located south of Dala village 打拉村.
⑨ Dengquenai fairy cave 登雀乃仙女洞, located on the east bank of Shimenguan 石门关.
⑩ The cliff behind Nayiduo Village 那衣朵村.
⑪ Rizong Mountain 日宗山 at the junction of Gongshan and Deqin 德钦; the mountain is regarded as the goddess of livestock and keys.

The 11 sacred grounds here are mainly located in the Gaoligong mountain range. In the telling of the myth of the mountain god, the myth of the hunting god, and the legend of the Flower Festival, these spaces and places are endowed with a sense of sacredness. Pilgrimage to these spaces is important to the continuity and operation of local people's lives. This article covers several of them, such as Kvwagarpu, Mukemudang Mountain, and several fairy caves.

2. Mythical Nature as the Existential Essence of Mountain Space

As far as the theme of “the shaping of sacred space” is concerned, the creation myth shapes the basic structure and essence of the universe and natural space. This article makes arguments for this by analyzing the myth about the separation of sky and earth and the myth describing creation through bodily dismemberment.

2.1. Beyond the Veil of Separation

The myth of the separation of sky and earth describes the basic mode of natural space. The relationship between sky and earth shaped by such myths is dynamic, and “separation” is described as one of the changing facts of the relationship between them (Table 2).

Table 2. The myths of the separation of sky and earth.

Text	The Drung	The Nu		The Lisu
	Ants Ate the Sky Ladder and Ants Evacuated the Sky Ladder ⁴	Ants Ate the Ladder to the Sky	Origin of Sky and Earth	The Separation of Sky and Earth
Characters	A man (named Mupu/Gemeng/Gamu).	A brother and sister.	A woman.	A human and the trees.
The way that sky and earth connected	Nine steps on the top of Mukemudang Mountain (Figure 1).	Wooden ladder.	Sky and earth were the same height and grew together.	Sky and earth almost overlapped.
The reason for the separation of sky and earth	① Gamu went to the sky to make gold; ② Gamu laughed at the ants; ③ The angered ants gnawed the ladder; ④ Sky and earth were separated.	① The brother and sister produced iron for people who lived in the sky; ② The brother and sister laughed at the ants; ③ The angered ants ate the ladder; ④ Sky and earth were separated.	① A woman threw a shuttle upward; ② Sky and earth were separated.	① A human and the trees were friends; ② The human cut down the trees as firewood; ③ A branch of firewood stung the sky; ④ The human blamed the sky for being so close to the earth; ⑤ The sky moved farther and farther away from people.
Separators	Ants.	Ants.	A woman.	The sky.
After the separation	Gamu asked plants on the earth for help/scattered seeds on the earth, trying to go back—but he failed.			When the sky left, the mountains also rose.

Based on the above texts, several conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly, “separation” is not the essential relationship between sky and earth. Using “separation” as the keyword, the main plot can be divided into three parts: before separation—separation—after separation. According to two texts of the Drung and the Nu, the sky and the earth, before separation, were distant but contactable. According to *How the Sky and Earth Are Divided*, the sky and earth were originally connected by a nine-step ladder. Gamu needed to go to the sky to make iron tools and travelled using the ladder to the sky. This plot aptly points out the fact that the sky and earth were interconnected in the initial stage; that is, the activity of crossing the border between them was normal. In the description of *The Separation of Sky and Earth*, the distance between the sky and earth was “only as high as a person, and a person could reach out and touch the sky” (Zuo 1999, p. 93) before the separation. In the narrative of *The Origin of Sky and Earth*, there is no distance between the sky and earth, as they “grew together” (School of Chinese Language and Literature Yunnan University 2023, p. 134). Oneness is the original characteristic of the relationship between the sky and earth. Thus, the separations these myths speak of refer to the interruption of the channels of contact.

Does separation mean that “opposition” is the dominant or only principle in the construction of grand space? Although the separators are ants, tree branches, and the sky itself, the cause of the separation is the bad temper or immoral behavior of a human. In the Drung people’s story, the occurrence of separation is closely related to the interaction between humans and other species. Gamu’s sneer and the ants’ anger caused the separa-

tion of sky and earth. There are similar plots in the Nu people's text. In the Lisu's text, the human's excessive deforestation caused the separation of sky and earth. If "separation" is a way to resolve conflicts or disputes in stories, the separation of concern in these texts has a keen sense of loss.

As it is not only a way to resolve conflicts, "separation" should be understood as another pattern in the relationship between the sky and earth, which is based on oneness. The re-establishment of the connection between the sky and earth is an important demand raised by such myths. According to *How the Sky and Earth Are Divided*, when Gamu was trying to get back to the ground, he asked for help from the plants on the earth, hoping to re-establish the connection between the sky and earth through the growth of plants. In another version⁵, this attempt is directly expressed as Gamu's scattering of the seeds of *Caryota urens* from the sky to the earth, hoping to return to the earth through their growth. It can be seen that "separation" does not mean a complete replacement of the integration of sky and earth. It is only the visible aspect of the relationship between sky and earth, while the original integration means that the connection between them is intrinsic and possible.

In addition to the pattern of "from connection to separation", the Achang's *Zhepama and Zhemima*⁶ contains a difference, as opposed to the pattern described in the above text. The encounter between sky and earth is an important plot in this text:

On a sunny morning, the earth was quiet, without any sound, and the river stopped flowing. The trees also dropped their branches and leaves, and everything was quietly waiting for the arrival of Father Sky and Mother Earth. In the center of the earth, Zhepama and Zhemima met on the Wuliang Mountain (Figure 2). They met like the sun and the moon meeting for the first time. Their meeting like stars staring at the earth, never satisfied.....Zhapama and Zhemima were married, and they settled in the center of the earth. Nine years later, Zhemima gave birth to a gourd seed, and Zhipama buried the gourd seed in the soil. (Yang et al. forthcoming, l. p. 4)

In this section, the sky and earth are quiet and sublime. It can be argued that the narrator holds high regard for joy, because all of nature exhaled candor, caress, and dawn. Although this can be interpreted as a symbolic meaning, the direct meaning of "the encounter between sky and earth" is the overlapping of space and the flow of life energy.

In addition, no matter what kinds of patterns or dynamic relationships are shown, the nature of the relationship between sky and earth is primarily about oneness in such myths. In the shaping of the literary discourse, the close proximity between sky and earth is visible, and it determines the possibility of specific forms of relationships, such as superposition, separation, encounter, and mutual stare.

Secondly, the shaping of the relationship between sky and earth shapes the basic characteristics of the earth in the myth about the separation of sky and earth. This kind of shaping has the meaning of "land-making movement".

"Separation" is the first step. It is the creation of the distance between the sky and earth that made the appearance of natural space possible, which contains mountains, canyons, rivers, flatlands, and so on. According to the description in *The Separation of Sky and Earth*, the earth before the separation was flat, but the "raising" of the sky not only created the distance between sky and earth but also created different spatial dimensions: sky, mountains, land, and ravines. It is particularly worth noting that, for people living in the mountains, the undulating ground is the background to the landscape in their living space. Additionally, the emergence of ravines was also specifically described: "the distance between sky and earth was getting farther and farther, and the mountains were getting longer and higher, leaving people in deep ravines" (Yang et al. forthcoming, l. pp. 384–85). In the narrative of *The Origin of Sky and Earth*, after the separation of the sky and the earth, the woman's "land-making" behavior focused on creating grass in the ground: "At that time, there was no grass in the fields. The woman said: 'People are idle and have nothing to do. The grass grows much more, and people have to pull it out, and there is more work'" (School of Chinese Language and Literature Yunnan University 2023, p. 134). Undoubt-

edly, the creation of the land is the origin of life on the earth, the beginning of human labor, and the initial construction of the relationship between people and plants (grass) on the earth.

In addition to the shaping of the characteristics of the land’s surface, a specific mountain is endowed with the meaning of sacred ground, which is related to the reconstruction of the cosmic order. As the only channel between the sky and earth, the ladder had a specific location that actually corresponded to a location on a map. For example, in the Drung’s myth, the ladder connecting the sky and the earth was located on Mukemudang Mountain, which is located in the lower reaches of the Drung River and is part of the Gaoligong mountain range. Coincidentally, the site where sky and earth meet in *Zhepama* and *Zhemima* also exists in reality; it is Wuliang Mountain, which was formed after the plateau was uplifted and deeply divided by the Lancang River, the Yuanjiang River, and their tributaries.

It must be admitted that the realistic placement of mythical space demonstrates at least two points. On the one hand, as a mythical belief, the unity between sky and earth can undoubtedly be regarded as the ultimate truth, and its implementation in realistic time and space undoubtedly means the manifestation of this ultimate truth as a phenomenal being. On the other hand, with the confirmation of the location of the connection or encounter between sky and earth, the mythical place and the realistic space are superimposed. This once again shows that the sacredness and secularity of the spatial being are not completely separated.

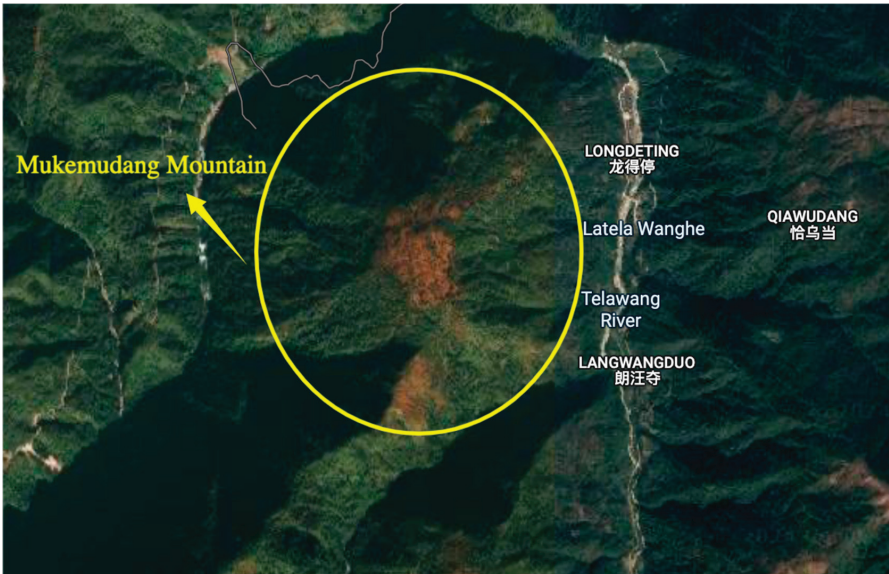


Figure 1. Cont.



Figure 1. Topographic map of Mukemudang Mountain (Google Maps)⁷. Diagram by the authors. Photograph by the authors, taken on 23 January 2023.



Figure 2. Topographic map of Wuliang Mountain (Google Maps). Diagram by the authors.

Thirdly, this type of myth is based on the belief in a “Sky Father and Earth Mother (or vice versa)”. Although it is generally spread around the world, the Drung, Nu, Lisu, Achang, and other ethnic minority groups live in the original core of this cultural idea, according to K. Numazawa:

Though I cannot specifically identify the cradle of those myths, I have been able to show that elements of matriarchal cultural spheres are found in nearly every one of them as a basic component. The cradle of such spheres is to be found on the eastern slopes of Himalayas, drained by the Ganges, the Bramaputras, the Irrawaddy, and other rivers. The district in which our myths are most densely distributed in their most typical forms approximately corresponds to the cradle of the matriarchal cultural spheres. These myths may most probably be connected with the southern Indo-Chinese Language Sphere, which has been influenced by the Austronesian Language. (Kiichi 1984, p. 192)

Regarding the spread of such myths in the Eastern Himalayan region of China, it is necessary to consider the spatial attributes of the area, which are mainly characterized by “mountain valleys”. On the one hand, the mountains are high enough to trigger the imagination and the belief that they enable communication between the sky and the earth. On the other hand, regarding “matriarchy”, it may be more inclusive to replace this with the sense of life. Behind the relationship, which is both separated and connected, between the sky and the earth, there are probably mythical thoughts about the life mechanisms of all things rather than just mechanical reflections of a certain social system. The natural life-creating ability endowed by both separating and connecting the sky and the earth is obvious. This is also a perspective that needs to be expanded on when interpreting this kind of creation myth.

2.2. *Breeding Ever Anew*

As an important type of creation myth, the core content of the myth describing creation through bodily dismemberment is that natural space is transformed from the bodies (parts) of gods, humans, animals, or plants. The characteristic of the natural space in this type of myth is that of mutual adaptability among everything in nature, which is innate and is based on their sharing of the same root. Specific to the theme of the shaping of natural space, the diverse texts are mainly divided into three types.

Firstly, the natural landscape is shaped by the dead body of a divinity, giant, or animal. This type of myth can be summarized as follows: “the general narrative is that a primordial being is killed and dismembered, and that from that being’s body the cosmos or some important aspects of it are created” (Lincoln 1986, p. 2). The shaping of natural space by such myths has the following characteristics: the creation of various aspects of nature comes from different parts of the dead body, and these two parties form a corresponding relationship. The correspondence between the natural landscape and the dead body is created by a third party. The primordial being is completely unconscious of this creation, as their participation is totally passive. Also, this shaping is carried out in one step. In this regard, the most typical mythological text of this type is “*Jinjinzu*”, a text of the Pumi people:

The red deer was dead...what to do if the stars didn’t light up? Took out the deer’s eyes to make stars. What to do if the moon was not clear? Took a deer ear and made it into a moon. What to do if the sun didn’t rise? Cut off the deer’s head to summon the sun... Jinjinzu swung his long falchion and chopped at the deer’s body. Jinjinzu dug out the deer’s eyes, and the stars blinked. Jinjinzu cut off the deer’s ears, and the moon showed a white smile. Jinjinzu cut off the deer’s head, and the sun jumped out of the mountain. Jinjinzu used the skin of a red deer to mend the broken sky corners, and Jinjinzu used the legs of a red deer to hold up the sloping earth. Jinjinzu sprinkled deer blood on all things, and the vegetation and forests became alive. Jinjinzu dug out the intestines of the red deer, and

there was gurgling water in ravines and ditches. Jinjinzu scattered deer hair on the fields, and the grains produced gold. Jinjinzu threw the deer intestines to the mountainside, and a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky. Jinjinzu distributed the venison to the people, and the people regained their strength. From then on, there was light on the earth, and colorful clouds appeared in the sky. From then on, people rebuilt their homes, and the world was filled with happiness and laughter. (Pu et al. 2009, p. 392)

This is a mythical narrative about rebuilding natural space. In the process of reorganizing nature, the performer of the creative act was the hero, Jinjinzu, and the dead body of the red deer was used as a creative material to participate in the construction of the spatial landscape. As the material that the natural space was made from, the functions of the red deer are multi-faceted; it is a raw material for making celestial landscapes, a material for patching the sky, and a source of nourishment for the resurrection of natural life. Undoubtedly, this myth established a corresponding relationship between natural space and various parts of the red deer's body. All kinds of natural scenes also constitute a homologous relationship based on the sharing of the red deer's body and the moment of creation that would last till the end. It is worth noting that, in participating in the shaping of the natural space, the inanimate body of the red deer achieves the birth of a new form of life.

Secondly, the natural space is still shaped by the bodies of gods, giants, plants, or animals, but this creation took place while they were in an animated state, which implies that the participation of the primordial being is motivated. As promoters and practitioners, they fully understood that it is a rational choice. Furthermore, there is more than one primordial being, and the shaping of natural space is a continuum rather than a one-time act. It is worth noting that, in the creation of various natural scenes, the creation of adaptability or matching between them is emphasized. In such texts, primordial beings not only created the universe with their living bodies but continued to exist after the creation ended.

A typical text of this type of myth is *Zhepama and Zhemima*. When Zhemima weaved the earth, the tools she used were different parts of her body. She used her throat as a shuttle and her own hair as threads to weave the earth. Later, when the earth and the sky were connected, she pulled out three threads that had been used to weave the earth before, thus creating mountains and dams. The hair on different parts of her face corresponded to the earth in different directions, and the blood that flowed out after plucking the hair became mountains and rivers. Her flesh and blood held up the land and separated the earth from the sea. Then, Zhepama praised the earth woven by Zhemima, while Zhemima expressed her confusion: "the mountains were high and no one cut firewood, the forests were wide and no one hunted, the fields were fertile and no one cultivated, and the oceans were deep and no one fished" (Yang et al. forthcoming, l. p. 4). Clearly, these discourses are the vivid expression of the concept of a life community. According to one variation, Zhemima gave birth to a gourd seed after their union. Zhepama buried it in the earth woven by Zhemima's hair, and it was watered by Zhepama. His sweat turned to rain, and his breath turned to wind. The sun and the moon, which shone on the growth of the gourd seeds, were placed between two mountains, which were formed by Zhepama's own breasts. The sun and moon appeared alternately around the Thoreau tree, which was also planted by Zhepama.

In the Nu people's text *LaShan and CiShan*, this connected creation of living life is also expressed very vividly. The surviving brother and sister were married after a fierce flood, then the ants, hacking knife, cloth, and so on dropped by the sister became the ancestors of different creatures. The ants became the ancestors of ghosts, were assigned to live on the Crag, and took charge of mountain animals and vegetation. The ants in this story have the same function as the hunting god (which will be described and discussed later).

Thirdly, creation through bodily dismemberment is not undertaken by a single devotee but by a community of devotees. As far as the shaping of natural space in such myths is concerned, the true meaning of "a primordial being" is the chain of life, as the logical point of the origins of the universe, although it is possible to trace creation back to this

being on the timeline. The sacredness of grand spaces mainly comes from the continuous interactions between everything in nature. Although the creator or sacrifice remains alive, they are not external or superior to natural space in such myths. This kind of interactive link can be clearly felt in the Deang's text *DaGuDaLengGeLaiBiao*, which follows:

Tea trees were from a part of the god (Padaran). The first generation of humans were transformed from tea leaves, and tea's flowers became the moon and stars, and its fruits became the sun. The rivers, lakes and seas on the earth were from man's tears. When the rivers, lakes and seas became floods, and when people had nowhere to stay, it was their brothers and sisters of the tea leaves who had the same roots and provided the assistance. After the flood, the land was thickly covered in tea leaves and finally transformed into mountains and dams. The earth was covered with flowers, plants and trees after the first generation of humans gave up parts of their skin and flesh. The second generation, who lost parts of their body, became thinner and shorter. They used the soil formed by the tea leaves, mixing with their own saliva to create birds, animals, insects, and fish.

In short, the Deang people established diverse relationships between species and the environment, as well as among multiple species, in *DaGuDaLengGeLaiBiao*. A sense of connectivity is in full flow in this myth, as Yi-Fu Tuan said: "The universe is not alien; it influences or determines the fate of human beings and is yet responsive to their needs and initiatives" (Tuan 2001, pp. 88–89). The important concept is not so much the creation of specific natural scenes but the creation of relationships among natural scenes in such myths. The mechanism that ties these relationships together is living and oriented toward the sacredness of the life of everything in nature.

Based on the texts quoted above, the shaping of natural spaces can be summarized as follows.

Such myths focus on shaping the spatial system of nature. They not only answer "what should natural space accommodate" but also provide the basic view that "natural space should have creativity and vitality". Regarding important ways in which to live, these myths regard "the construction of ecological community" as key. As for the nature of the space and the relationship among all things shaped by these narratives, Bruce Lincoln's analysis is reasonable:

Within that system, anthropogony and cosmogony were both described, the two being complementary halves of one cyclical process, a process whereby matter was recurrently transubstantiated from a microcosmic form to a macrocosmic form and thence back again, bones becoming stones becoming bones becoming stones ... world without end. The body and the universe are all forms of each other, their respective component parts subtly interrelated along the lines of the homologies I have detailed in this chapter. (Lincoln 1986, p. 4)

Regarding this theme, in addition to the correspondence, a more profound relationship is the mutual integration. The space is not empty and majestic but filled with the growth and flow of all things in the natural space, and what is revealed of the transformational chain of life is the spatial awareness of "being-in". In other words, with regard to everything in the natural space, the appropriate interrelationship among them is open and integrated in these myths, and it should be understood as "being-in": "being-in designates a constitution of being of Dasein, and is an *existential*." (Heidegger 1996, p. 50).

Secondly, for the natural space shaped by these myths, its sense of sacredness lies in the establishment of an inexhaustible experience of life. The shaping of spatial characteristic in such myths is described as "creating the time-space continuum out of a sacred body and marking and consecrating an actual space/landscape by the body parts of a divine being" (Yanchevskaya 2022). It is instructive to think of the natural space shaped by such myths as "the continuum of time-space". Judging from the myths listed above, "the continuum of time-space" undoubtedly means the growth and development of life, and natural space derives its vitality from the creation and breakthrough of a "bounded being" (Gergen 2009, p. 20). In other words, it not only creates bounded existences but also establishes connections between bounded existences as its ultimate pursuit.

3. The Mythical Mountain as the Original Home of Mountain Creatures

If it is believed that the creation myths of this region shape “relational nature” as the existential essence of mountain lands, then the narrative of the mountain god shapes the “sacred mountain” as the source of existence of mountain communities. As Gros noted, “mountain deities are of particular significance regarding people’s livelihood. They are considered to be in charge of the community’s territory and its resources and consequently can guarantee people’s prosperity in terms of an abundance of game and grain. Mountain deities therefore play a crucial role in community life” (Gros 2017). This kind of shaping is mainly seen in flood myths, which tell of the origin of the mountain gods, and folk legends, which tell of the relationship between the mountain gods and the local world.

3.1. The Cradle of Living Creatures

The mountains are recurrent themes in the flood myths found in Western Yunnan, and specific mountains are shaped as the birthplace of human beings and mountain communities. The meaning of “the original home” points to two aspects of flood myths: the survival and the development of mountain communities.

The following sections will take the Drung people’s, the Nu people’s and the Pumi people’s myths (Table 3) as examples to illustrate.

Table 3. The Flood myths of the Nu, Drung and Pumi.

Text	The Nu	The Drung	The Pumi
	Flood Myth ⁸	Flood ⁹	Pamichali
Reason	The gods sent floods to punish/eliminate evil spirits and bad people.	People and ghosts lived together. Ghosts began to harm the humans. The gods sent floods as punishment to distinguish humans from ghosts.	On the earth, demons destroyed the fruits of human labor. God sent a flood as punishment.
Characters	Siblings (a brother and a sister).	Siblings (a brother and a sister).	Three brothers.
Behavior	Collected mushrooms at the top of a mountain.	Collected mushrooms from the top of a mountain.	Received help from a white-haired old man.
Shelter during the flood	A cave on the top of the mountain.	A cave on the top of the mountain.	The three brothers were tied to the base, waist, and top of the sacred tree “BaZhaJiaChuBeng”.
After the flood	① Survived and left the cave; ② Gave birth to nine pairs of siblings.	① Survived and left the cave; ② Gave birth to nine pairs of siblings.	① The third child survived on the top of the tree. ② After the flood, the mountains arose from the ground and the canyons fell from the ground. ③ The third child married the fairy who lived in the mountains.
Mountain’s name	Neyamensilong Mountain 讷雅门四龙山	Kvwakarpu ¹⁰	Unknown
Cave’s name	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

As can be seen from the table above, mythological motif-sharing is characteristic of the regional literature. This sharing of geographical and cultural space also has something in common with the identifiable sacred mountains. Neyamensilong Mountain and Kvwakarpu, in the above-mentioned myths, are real in the minds of local people. Kvwakarpu is the main peak of the Gaoligong mountain range, with an altitude of 5128 m; its full name is “Gyangmu Kvwakarpu” 仰目嘎哇嘎普 or “Gyangmuglung” 仰目谷陇. As for the Neyamensilong Mountain mentioned in the Nu people’s flood myth, although it is difficult to determine its location, some investigators have pointed out that “in some creation myths of the Nu and Drung, Kvwakarpu is regarded as the main refuge for human beings to survive during the prehistoric period” (Yang and Yang 2024). In addition, as far as the investigation of “Mus” (mountain god, namely Mis) in Lisu is concerned, there is a record from the introduction of the Lisu people’s “Nima” (local shaman in the Lisu language) in Gongshan: “there are many Mus here. The first one is Kvwakarpu which is called ‘Kvwakarpu jiwa’ (Kvwakarpu Snow Mountain Figure 3) in Lisu language” (Yang and Yang 2024). Based on these records, it can be inferred that it is a common local concept to regard Kvwakarpu as the “first sacred mountain” in the context of the beliefs regarding mythical mountains of the Nu, Drung, and Lisu peoples in Gongshan.

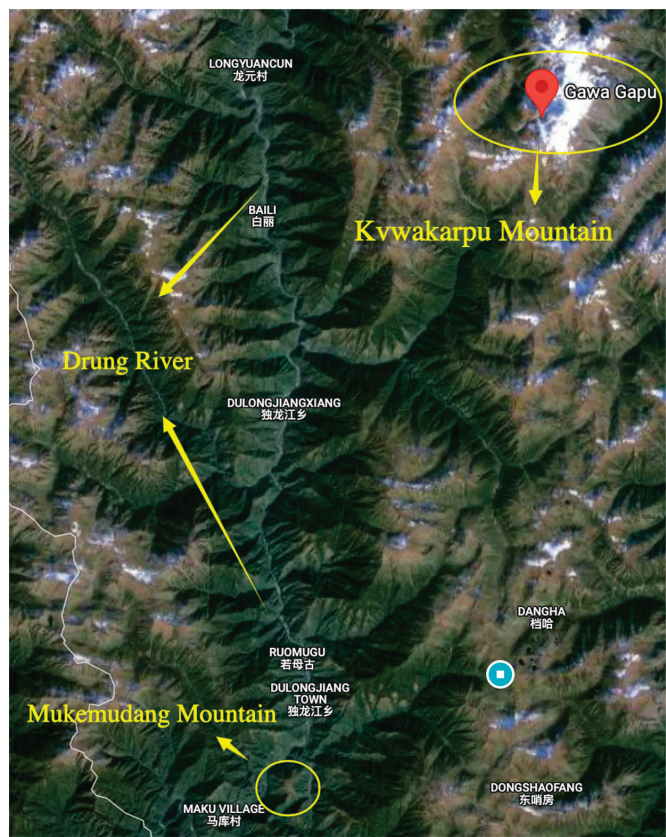


Figure 3. Topographic map of Kvwakarpu Snow Mountain (Google Maps). Diagram by the authors.

Three myths share the topics of “human’s spread”, “the beginning of local history” and the “emergence of new heaven and earth” (Witzel 2010, p. 238). In terms of the reconstruction of natural space, “this is positioned after the creation of the world and the preparation of the world for (human) habitation. It functions as an interlude in the continuing

creation of humans and of culture” (Witzel 2010, p. 238). In view of the irreconcilable contradictions between humans and ghosts, creating floods in their living space is a method of spatial segregation. The natural spaces that contributed to the survival of human beings during these floods are given significance as the birthplace of human beings and of mountain communities.

The destiny of humankind following a disaster has two turning points: survival during the flood and development after the flood. Although two transitions occur through the characters’ connection with the “mountain”, the plots in the above-mentioned three texts are different. In the myths of the Nu and the Drung, the sacredness of the “mountain” appears in the first turning point of the plot. The siblings’ daily behavior of “climbing the highest mountain to collect mushrooms” helped the brother and sister survive the flood. Mountains have always existed as refuges for ordinary humans in the flood myths of the Nu and the Drung; therefore, the sacredness of the mountains comes from their protection of all life. The “mountain” is constructed as the only place to avoid disasters; that is, the only space to preserve the roots of mankind. In the spatial setting of a disastrous event, the mountain is a preceding existence, because the specific origin of the mountain is not mentioned in the two stories in question.

The sacredness of the mountain emerges in the second turning point. The mountain enables the restoration of order after the disaster in the Pumi people’s myth. The distinctive features of mountains and canyons are very clear; concerning the canyon, it is said that “that’s where monsters live” (Pu et al. 2009, ll. p. 380). Contrastingly, the mountain is given sacredness: “the gods lived in the smoking mountains...That was the gods’ dwelling” (Pu et al. 2009, ll. p. 380). The only survivor after the flood went to the “mist-shrouded mountains” to ask the gods to help the humans boost their population. The “mountain” is constructed as the only space where human beings can be given an opportunity to develop.

According to the Nu’s and the Drung’s texts, the second turning point of the plot shapes the sanctity of the cave. In other words, the writing of spatial duality deserves attention. By climbing up the mountain, the brother and sister were able to avoid being swallowed by the flood. When they entered and then left the cave in the mountain, human beings’ development officially began. Entering and leaving the cave signifies that it is sacred, not for the survival of life but for the breeding of future generations. As the ancestors of the Drung, the brother and sister became gods of Kvwakarpu Mountain. In the Nu’s texts, when the flood receded and man left the cave, species in the cave began to diverge. While it signifies the initial establishment of human socialization, the cave in Neyamensilong Mountain also serves an important function in recreating relationships among species. In a word, the spatial combination of mountains and caves was crucial for the regeneration of species. Compared with the “realness” of the sacred mountain in the flood myth, the cave appears a generic or abstract sacred space.

It is worth noting that there is another Drung text about Kvwakarpu: *The god of snow mountains washed all things*. It also provides sanctity to the same mountain in the natural space, as follows:

The sun and the moon united and gave birth to all things, but all things were round blocks without corners, which were washed with snow water by the god of Kvwakarpu. When all things were separated, a man and a woman appeared in the snow water. (Li 2004, p. 73)

The relationship between *The god of snow mountains washed all things* and *Flood* still cannot be clarified in the current fieldwork, but there are several doubts worth noting. Firstly, are the gods of the snow mountains here the siblings in *Flood*? Secondly, is the water from the snow mountain another expression of a flood? If so, as an atypical flood myth, this story undoubtedly tells how the snowy mountains fully participated in the process of human rebirth. The events of creation in this myth describe the different stages of human origin. The emphasis on the defects of the life that was born from the sun and the moon shows that the first birth was ambiguous. The god of the snow mountain corrected

the defects of life. When using the water of the mountain, which combined naturalness and sacredness, the god of the mountain definitely participated in the construction of the “correctness” of human origins. According to *Flood*, there is the closest identity in the snow mountain and siblings, who produced offspring of their own. In sum, there is an “intimate link with the notion of fertility” (Gros 2017) between the mountain gods and the mountain communities, which we will discuss later. We should note that not only have cosmological thinking and reality been reconciled, but social order has been structurally reshaped through myth-telling.

3.2. The Earthly Life of the Mountain God

As a mountain god, what is interesting is that Kwakarpu is not only mentioned in flood myths but also in legends about the surrounding scenery.

“There was a story about the origin of Shimenguan (Figure 4). There used to be a brother and sister, who were the mountain gods in the past. The mountain on the east side of the Nujiang river in Shimenguan was the brother, Kwakarpu, and the one on the west side of the river was the sister. Their parents were out of town, and Kwakarpu later married his sister. Originally, the brother and sister planned to block the Nujiang River, but their old mother fell ill, so the younger sister went to visit her. Kwakarpu is the ‘Emperor’, so Baraosengeng’s (male) daughter married Kwakarpu when she returned home. Later, when the wife who was Kwakarpu’s younger sister came back, she went to Kwakarpu’s side to create a disturbance, so Kwakarpu scattered a handful of stones, which turned into two umbrellas at Shimenguan. The two umbrellas are still there, on the stone wall. The brother and sister’s idea of blocking the Nujiang River could not be achieved”. (Yang and Yang 2024)

Shimenguan is a famous natural scenic spot in Gongshan county. This legend about the origin of Shimenguan further clarifies several local opinions. Firstly, the brother and sister who were human ancestors in the aforementioned flood myth did become mountain gods, but Kwakarpu refers to the older brother, and the mountain of the younger sister lies opposite. Secondly, Kwakarpu, in this text, is given a more local identity than the mountain god, as the creator or the ancestor of human beings. As far as the story-line is concerned, this sense of place is reflected in the construction of the secular relationship between Kwakarpu and the ordinary local mountains. The shaping of the three-dimensional relationship among people, mountain gods, and natural space is clear and deep-rooted in the local spatial consciousness, which is based on the establishment of Kwakarpu as an intimate and perceptible image.



Figure 4. Topographic map of Shimenguan (Google Maps). Diagram by the authors. Photograph by the authors, taken on 26 September 2022.

In addition to the legend about the local scenery, the origin narratives of local rivers are also related to Kwakarpu.

In very ancient times, there was a pool on Kvwakarpu Mountain ... In a magical cave beside the pool, there lived the Snake King and Snake Mother who could change their forms... Kvwakarpu Mountain towered into the clouds, with towering ancient trees on the mountainside and white snow on the top. After a while, the Snake King and Snake Mother played all over the mountain, then they felt a little tired... One night with good weather, the Snake King discussed with the Snake Mother: "We have stayed here for a long time and it is really deserted. It is better to go out and find a wider place." After leaving the cave, the Snake King said goodbye to the Snake Mother and went southwestward alone. The Snake Mother shook its head and tail and ran southward... One day, they finally came to the vast and boundless sea. They looked for each other. Finally, they met in the middle of the sea. From then on, they lived happily together forever. The road that the Snake King walked turned into a river. The Drung people called it "Aguwang" (King), and later it was also called Nujiang River. The road that the Snake Mother walked also turned into another river. This river was called "Amaiwang" (Mother Queen) by the Drung people, and later it was also called Drung River. The children of them who followed the Snake King and Snake Mother later became small rivers flowing into these two rivers. (Liu et al. 1995, pp. 614–16)

This is a legend about the origin of important rivers in this area. When the story was published, it was noted that Kvwakarpu is located at the head of the Drung River, although this has been denied by actual geography. In terms of spatial location, Kvwakarpu is not located at the head of the Drung River. Judging from the content of this legend, it does not construct the spatial relationship between Kvwakarpu and these rivers but indicates that Kvwakarpu is the source of existence of all rivers in this area.

3.3. *Back to the Original Home*

The sacredness of mountains is not only shaped in the story worlds of these local myths but is also repeatedly emphasized in the traditional rituals of the area. The Drung's flood myth is narrated during Kaquewa, the Drung's sacrificial ceremony during the New Year celebrations. Kaquewa is held every year by different families scattered across the mountains, and it begins with the narration of the flood myth. As a family's shaman, the Namsa spends nearly an hour at the beginning of Kaquewa telling the story about their ancestral origins, which tells how people left Kvwakarpu Snow Mountain and scattered to various places. Afterwards, the Namsa starts offering sacrifices from the mountains where their family lives. Then, the Namsa chants the names of the mountains in sequence and prays for protection from the god of each mountain. The Namsa's chants start with the name of the mountain where the family in question lives. The last mountain chanted is the Kvwakarpu Snow Mountain. When they sing the praises of this mountain, the entire ceremony comes to an end. It is worth mentioning that the word "loq" (meaning "return" in the Drung language) is used to refer to the final arrival at Kvwagarpu in the narrations of the Namsa. This sacred mountain is both the starting point and the ending point, whether from the perspective of the story or of the entire ritual process.

In addition to the relationship between Kvwagarpu and the mountain community as a whole, every individual life is connected to this mountain. The traditional life-saving rite—"Soracho"—for Drung males also includes the reciting of mantras about the mountains. As a rite of passage, "Soracho" is generally held twice throughout the life of a Drung male, once when he is two years old. The ritual's purpose is to pray for protection from the mountains and to be able to grow up safely and healthily. When they experience distress during adulthood, they will hold the rite again, hoping to send the bad things away and gain the protection of the mountains again. The ritual process of "Soracho" is also the same as that of Kaquewa. Just as Gros said, "mountain deities—such as Gyangmu Kvwakarpu—are also protective divinities and may be asked to look after people and defend them against other beings that may cause all kinds of calamities" (Gros 2017). Furthermore, when an

individual re-establishes their connection with the mountains and re-travels the route of the beginning of life and the origin of the group, they will regain their connection with the mountains and return to their previous happiness. In short, the mountains in the flood myths and folk legends of this area are closely connected to adoring life. In the lives of local people, such connections are intrinsic and a matter of common practice.

4. Sacred Caves as the Source of Life for Mountain Community

As an indispensable component of “the shaping of the mountain” in sacred narratives, the life cycle of everything in natural space is a common theme, seen mainly in the myths of the hunting god and the legends of the “Flower Festival”. Both types of narratives shape concrete caves and cliffs into sacred spaces, which are related to the awareness and maintenance of the consciousness of life. As sensible physical spaces, their sacredness comes from the construction of the discourse of the origin narrative and the constant emphasis on their authority by periodic rituals.

4.1. Chasing the Endlessness of Life through Drowned Mountain Forests

According to the texts of the Nu and the Drung peoples, specific cliffs and caves are the spaces where mythical events took place. The theme of such myths is how ordinary people became gods or goddesses who are responsible for the fertility of animals, plants, and humans; that is, the guardians of life and the sources of vitality.

The description of spatial transformation reveals a functional view of the cave according to *The hunter and the goddess of hunting* and *Golden Girl*. See Table 4 below for details.

Table 4. The Myths of The Hunting god.

Text	The Nu	The Drung
	The Hunter and the Goddess of Hunting	Golden Girl
Main Character	Male hunter; a girl who lived in a tree hole.	Male hunter; a girl who lived in a cave.
Object that Disappeared	Prey.	Corn.
Male’s Behavior	Chased.	Chased.
Relationship	Married.	Married.
The Girl’s Function	Good at hunting and weaving.	Not mentioned.
Ending of Story	The wife went back to the mountain.	① The couple went back to the cave. ② Springs came out from the cave and turned into the Drung River.

After comparing the two texts, it can be clearly seen that, by focusing on the unusual experiences of the male hunter, especially through weaving a potent tale of his encounters with a girl living in a tree hole or rock cave, the point of the two stories is to believe in the existence of the goddess of hunting in the mountain forests. According to *The Hunter and the Goddess of Hunting*, the tree hole, whose width was difficult to measure, was located at the root of an ancient tree on the top of a remote mountain, and all the things in it were related to textiles (textile utensils, raw materials, and textiles) and animals. The direct manifestation of the marriage between the hunter and the owner of the tree hole was a magical way to obtain prey. According to *Golden Girl*, the magical effect of the marriage was that the springs continuously gushed out from the cave, benefiting the local people’s productive practices. Undoubtedly, the simultaneous possession of the identities of cave master and hunting god points to two stages and aspects of vitality: gestation and growth.

Concerning the dual or multiple attributes of godhood, there is another type of narrative focusing on changes in identities. During transformational events, mountains, cliffs, and especially caves are by no means just “the site of event”. This is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5. The Narratives of The Cliff God, Rock God and Cave God.

Text	The Nu	The Nu	The Drung	The Drung	The Drung	The Drung
	The Cliff God Marrying His Wife (He and He 1988)	Women’s Rock (You 2003)	Cliff Ghosts (Li 2004)	Renmuda (Li 2004)	Hunting God Akati (Ba and Ba 2010)	Duna’s Cave (Ba and Ba 2010)
Before	Two sisters.	A mother and a daughter.	Five people.	Two brothers.	An abandoned infant.	A human girl.
Turning Event	Climbed the mountain to chop wood.	Climbed the mountain to chop wood.	Climbed the mountain to go hunting.	Climbed the mountain to go hunting.	Abandoned in a cave.	Moved to a cave.
Disappearance/Death/In Hiding	The cliff god was hidden at the back of a big rock.	The daughter disappeared.	One of them disappeared on the cliff.	One of them disappeared on the cliff.	Died on the night of a red moon.	Left the cave (disappeared).
Magic Plot	They encountered the cliff god, and one of the sisters married the cliff god.	The daughter married the cliff god.	The disappeared person became a cliff ghost (“Jiublang”).	The disappeared person became a hunting god (“Renmuda”).	Hunting on a red moon night will be fruitful.	She was taken by the hunting god and lived in the hunting god’s palace.
Ritual			Offering sacrifices to cliff ghosts every year.	Offering sacrifices to Renmuda every year.	Hunting on a red moon night or on a moonless night.	Sacrificing Duna before hunting on the mountain.

The six texts mentioned above focus on the process of transformation from human to non-human and from mortal to immortal, even if the backgrounds to the stories and characters are far from ordinary life and are not all the same. In local people’s beliefs, the immortal deity is transformed from an ordinary person. Accepting this view that the main theme of these stories is the importance of disappearance or death as the catalyst of the transformation of life forms, there are more details worthy of scrutiny:

1. Although the behavioral motivations were different, all the transformations started with climbing a cliff or entering a cave. No matter what kind of combination of gods they are, their integration with the belief in vitality was based on the specific spatial support of the cave or cliff. Without this spatial entity, the transformation toward the symbol of productivity was difficult to achieve.
2. The key point to achieve transformation is “death or hiding”. The disappearance or appearance of the chief character was related to the prosperity and decline of all things. Before becoming gods, the characters in these stories all experienced the crisis of death. The cliff or cave was where death occurred and where transformation was successful. As mentioned before, cliffs are often “pronounced” at the edge; the steepness of the cliff was maybe the main cause of death. In contrast, caves were often described as spaces where the transformation or the regeneration of life took place. If there was no death on the escarpment or while hiding in the cave, it was impossible for these ordinary people to gain the special ability of being immortal. Therefore, the cave and cliff are integrated spaces in such myths; this oneness is also the main feature of the construction of sacred space in these stories.
3. In addition to death, transformations of life-forms brought about by marriage or a change of residence are also told. There are several stories related to the motif of “the cliff god marrying his wife” that are widely circulated in the mountain communities. In *Duna’s Cave*, an ordinary girl acquired the identity of the goddess of hunting through entering into the cave of the god of hunting. She was taken to live in the palace of the god of hunting. As for the echo between the cycle of life and the form

of the moon, *The Hunting God Akati* explicitly mentions that the infant abandoned by human parents grew into a magical hunter in the cave, and that the cycle of his life was closely tied to the waxing and waning of the moon.

- 4. It is worth noting the character named “Cliff Ghost”, who controls the lives of living creatures, in some stories. Naming the characters who live in cliffs or caves gods or ghosts expresses the local people’s concept of bounded space, as Eliade pointed out: “one of the outstanding characteristics of traditional societies is the opposition that they assume between their inhabited territory and the unknown and indeterminate space that surrounds it.” (Eliade 1987, p. 29). On the one hand, based on the description of these stories, the cliffs and caves in the mountain forests are indeed “a sort of ‘other world’” (Eliade 1987, p. 29), but, on the other hand, these spaces and human settlements are mutually supportive rather than isolated and antagonistic, and not entirely “a foreign, chaotic space” (Eliade 1987, p. 29).
- 5. The plot focusing on the transformation of life-forms directly leads to the legitimacy of hunting rituals, and as the designated place for the ceremony, the sacred attributes of a specific cliff or cave are established. The “cliff ghost” is sacrificed in the Drung’s “Kaquewa” and “Soracho”. In the folk beliefs of the Nu, the cliff god is not only regarded as the “mountain god” but also as the “grain god”, “rain god”, “marriage god”, and “hunting god”.

4.2. The Place of Fresh Flowers

In addition to the myth of the hunting god, legends of the “Flower Festival” also focus on specific caves as sacred spaces. Local people show their ambivalent feelings and modify their content to express their own feelings and evaluations by telling stories and engaging in folk practice.

A “Fairy Cave” is a sacred space where the Nu people practice their belief in vitality. The sacrificial space is not limited to a single location, but all of them are named “fairy caves” and can be identified and recognized. There are different names for the folk festival dedicated to the sacrifice of the cave: Fairy Festival, the Festival of Pilgrimage to the Mountain, Flower Festival, and so on. Although different, these names all clarify the activities and cultural significance of this festival. In the traditional expression of the Nu, this festival is called “Nerewa” 乃热瓦. The festival is still a core part of the experiences of native inhabitants in the multidimensional and composite space of mountainous areas. There are multiple versions of the legends related to the sacredness of these caves. Table 6 records some basic information about these legends.

Table 6. The Legends of The Flower Festival.

Text		Character	Plot	Festival	Sacred Space	Sacred Things in the Cave
The legend of Fairy Cave	Variation I	Arong, related to spider silk.	① She escaped from marriage and hid in a cave.	Flower Festival.	Fairy cave located in Shandang.	
			② She died of burning or starvation.			
			③ She became the goddess of the cave.			

Table 6. Cont.

Text	Character	Plot	Festival	Sacred Space	Sacred Things in the Cave
The legend of Fairy Cave	Variation II	Gejuemu, an outsider with a local lover.	① He was kidnapped by a python and brought into a cave. ② He became the owner of the cave and the cliff god.	Flower Festival.	Fairy cave located in Jimudeng, opposite the snow mountain pass on the other side of the Nujiang River.
	Variation III	① A young man, an outsider from Dimaluo 迪麻洛. ② A local girl, Jimudeng.	① They got married. ② They became the masters of the cave and the Gods of the cliff.		
	Variation IV	Arong; she is industrious, capable, and beautiful because she drinks the spring water from the river.	① The little river loved to be clean and hated dirt the most. ② A bride washed her clothes in the little river, which angered it, causing a drought. ③ Young men failed to search for water. ④ Arong dug a hole halfway up a cliff of the Gaoligong mountain range, and water came out of the hole. ⑤ The chieftain was jealous and hunted Arong. ⑥ Arong hid in a cave and turned into a stone statue, from which spring water gushes out.	Fairy cave located in Jimudeng at the east foot of the Gaoligong mountain range and on the west bank of the Nujiang river.	Spring water dripping from stalactites is commonly known as “fairy milk”.
	Variation V	Arong	① She helped people to dig the mountain and draw springs from the cave to irrigate the land. ② She was hunted down by the Dragon King. ③ Arong hid in the cave and became a stone statue, gurgling out mountain spring water.		

Table 6. Cont.

Text	Character	Plot	Festival	Sacred Space	Sacred Things in the Cave
Unknown ¹¹			Flower Festival	Double stone birds' cave, located in Shimenguan.	① A pair of bird-shaped stalactites. ② Spring water dripping from the stalactites in the cave.
Unknown ¹² (Lv et al. 2000)	① A beautiful and vicious woman. ② Bizhendamabo, the hero.	① Bizhendamabo was seduced and killed by a beautiful but vicious woman. ② After the woman died, she became the cave master and rock god.	There is no festival; no one worships this legend.	Xiamudayanwa cave.	

Regarding the legend of the Fairy Cave and “Nerewa”, although there are many versions, the stories with Arong as the main character account for the majority. There are three points that need to be explained.

Firstly, there is no doubt that spring and Arong are consubstantial. The Nu hold “Nerewa” to celebrate the coming of spring and honor Arong on the 15th day of the third lunar month, which is said to be the date of her death. Based on the legend of the origin of the “Flower Festival”, centered on Arong, the first thing shaped by this legend is the sacredness of the cave, which became a sanctuary. It is in the shaping of the sacredness of the fairy cave that the circle of life in the mountain is told as a fact.

According to the story or echoing the story, the relationship between Arong and the life of the mountain forests is continuously constructed in folk festivals and landscape reconstruction. The picture below (Figure 5) is an artificial landscape, based on the story of Arong, in the first bay of the Nu River. This landscape narrates several key points from the legend of Arong: her weaving skills are shown (Arong was good at weaving, and she was the inventor of the zipper), and the statue of Arong holding flowers attempts to show the goodness of life.



Figure 5. Image of Arong in the first bay of the Nu River. Photograph by the authors, taken on 25 September 2022.

Looking at this landscape, one has a strong feeling that Arong is a “presence” (Heidegger 2002, p. 20) in the natural space. The literary images and natural scenery are not discrete things, and sacred landscape appears in their interweaving. In this spa-

tial landscape, “this presence of the god is, in itself, the extension and delimitation of the precinct as something holy” (Heidegger 2002, p. 20). When the legend of Arong is carved into the earth, the natural space becomes the narrator of its own sacredness, which means that the sacred narrative and the earth mutually construct and inter-embed. As Heidegger said, “This setting forth of the earth is what the work achieves by setting itself back into the earth” (Heidegger 2002, p. 25).

Secondly, this idea that the existence of the caves could provide factual information about how local people should live their life is not only described in story but also manifested in ritualistic practice. If these stories tell how and why relationships between nature, gods, and local people were woven, the festival practices solidify the authenticity of this sense of connection. By the definitions of local scholars, “Nerewa” is “a typical activity of worshipping mountain gods”; “as the main activity of ‘Nerewa’, pilgrimage to the mountain is to worship the ‘Fairy Cave’”. In other words, worshipping the cave of the mountain god is an indispensable part of the most lively activities. According to the local custom, before worshipping the ‘Fairy Cave’, a ritual to worship the mountain god must be held first... the formation of ‘Nerewa’ and the culture of pilgrimage to the mountain is in order to build a security system through this unique way, which is the reason for pilgrimage to the mountain and the expectation of pilgrimage to the mountain. When kowtowing to the mountain god, they feel that they have gained some kind of communication with the god” (Peng 2007, pp. 139–41). Among the various activities undertaken during “Narewa”, “fetching fairy milk” is the most important:

The god of the cave of the Nu in Gongshan county is also the god of grains, and controls the growth and abundance of crops. One of the most important activities when worshipping the god during the Festival of pilgrimage to the mountain is to “fetch fairy milk” (spring water dripping from the stalactites in the cave) to soak grain seeds. It is believed that if the grain seeds are soaked in “fairy milk” and planted, there will be a bumper harvest in the coming year; otherwise, the crops will not prosper... The “fairy milk” of the god in the cave is not only believed to have the effect of curing diseases, but also believed to make women to produce breast milk. The “fairy milk” has the ability to make babies grow up healthily. Therefore, the “fairy milk” in the cave should be taken home, sharing it with family members, or giving it as a precious gift to friends and relatives. (He 1988)

As for the preciousness of “fairy milk”, the description in *Changputong Annals*¹³ reads: “such water is not available at all times. It only flows out a little during ceremony. Anyone who can drink it feels lucky to be able to.” (Chen et al. 1998, pp. 136–37). Local scholars further explained, “there is usually no water in the Fairy Cave, but only after the ritual of worshipping the mountain god” (Peng 2007, p. 146). In other words, the preciousness of “fairy milk” lies in the fact that it is a gift resulting from sincere communication between the people, the mountain gods, and the natural space. Obviously, it would indicate that, in the construction of sacred caves, the shapes of natural entities are given symbolic meanings. This refers to not only the shape of the cave but also the stalactites inside the cave; they all have an isomorphic, echoing, and even inductive relationship with the human body. “Fetching fairy milk” is a ritualistic act centered on the interaction between gods, humans, and natural matters. The cave and the objects in the cave are regarded as not only “hierophany” (Eliade 1987, p. 20) but also as specific participation in the production of life. The drinking of “fairy milk” directly realizes the connection between the sacred place and the secular world. It means that those people who consume this sacred drink are united with the god of the cave and the natural world.

Thirdly, it is worth noting that, in addition to sacred caves and memorable people, there are also corresponding descriptions of the evil woman and the forbidden cave as negative aspects that point to the end of life, whether good or evil, with regard to the metaphor of life, as Erich Neumann said:

When analytical psychology speaks of the primordial image or archetype of the Great Mother, it is referring, not to any concrete image existing in space and time, but to an inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figures of the Great Goddess represented in the myths and artistic creations of mankind. The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history, for we can demonstrate its workings in the rites, myths, symbols of early man and also in the dreams, fantasies, and creative works of the sound as well as the sick man of our own day. (Neumann 1974, p. 3)

In other words, in the shaping of sacred space, the beginning and end of life, the beauty and ugliness of life, and the diverse forms of the two are all regarded as indispensable aspects of the life system to obtain an overall construction. In this way, the legends of caves in this area can be described as narratives of life.

4.3. Mysterious Nayi

The Drung people have a sacred cave named Nayi 乃依. The “Nayi” Cave, located in the Mudang area (Figure 6), in the upper reaches of the Drung River, is currently managed by the family who used to live there.



Figure 6. Topographic map of the Mudang area (Google Maps). Diagram by the authors.

Nayi Cave is managed by inspecting it every year.¹⁴ According to local residents’¹⁵ accounts, this mysterious cave has a prophetic function. Nayi is a ghost living in the cave of “Jinmen” 斤门, a mountain by the Drung River. If no sacrifice is received, Nayi will bring disaster to the world. Nayi also has the ability to bless women with children. The cave was once partially destroyed; there was a stalactite that represented the Drung River. There were stone pillars and stone troughs, corresponding to male and female genitals, in the cave, which could be used to ask for children or to be blessed with a safe birth. The most sacred place in the cave was the room where “Nayi” lived. There were three

stone pillars lined up next to it, which had the functions of observing the rain, observing whether it would snow on the Drung River, and observing the snow on the top of the mountain (Figure 7). According to the records of Li Jinming¹⁶, every year, a grand ritual for “Nayi” is held, and he said it is as important to the Drung people as “Kaquewa” (Li 2004, pp. 45–49).

According to the brief narrative about Nayi, the spatial structure of the cave shown in Figure 7 above also emphasizes some objects of great significance to the life of the mountain forests in the overall spatial arrangement, such as the symbolic references to the Drung River and the Snow Mountain. This indicates that these caves are symbolic of the meaning of the miniature landscapes of the local geography, while the division of gender and the establishment of grain-farming areas undoubtedly emphasize the reproduction and fertility of life.

In summary, regarding the fairy cave and the Nayi cave in sacred narratives, if we take into account the theory of Mircea Eliade, the understanding of “the expression of the sacredness of natural space” will obtain a deeper dimension:

The sacred reveals absolute reality and at the same time makes orientation possible, hence it founds the world in the sense that it fixes the limits and establishes the order of the world. (Eliade 1987, pp. 29–30)

Establishment in a particular place, organizing it, inhabiting it, are acts that presuppose an existential choice of the universe that one is prepared to assume by “creating” it. Now, this universe is always the replica of the paradigmatic universe created and inhabited by the gods, hence it shares in the sanctity of the gods’ work. (Eliade 1987, p. 34)

Undoubtedly, for the mountain dwellers of Western Yunnan, the acquisition of sacredness and stability lies in their mutual integration with natural space. As Max Müller said, “yet evermore tending, under a divine control, towards the fulfillment of that inscrutable purpose for which the world was created, and man placed in it, bearing the image of God” (Müller 1856, pp. 6–7). In these localized stories, common people’s existence exhibits a unity of biological and cultural characteristics. They use themselves as tools to practice their own integrity. Within this interweaving of interactions, the sacredness of the world continues to grow through the imagination of folk literature and the practices of folk life.

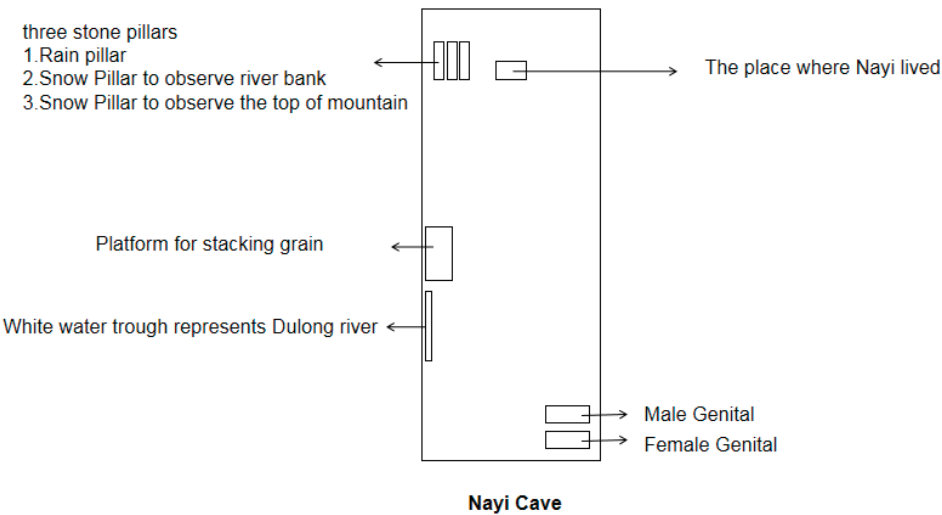


Figure 7. Flat graphic of Nayi Cave. Diagram by authors.¹⁷

5. Conclusions

Sacred narratives that take “the shaping of the mountain” as their core describe the beginning and growth of natural space in the Eastern Himalayan region of China, which is full of cosmological significance. The entanglements between the towering cliffs, green forests, blue sky, rolling hills, secluded caves, torrential rivers, and deep valleys make this mountainous area a mythical place in the imagination of folk literature. It is summarized as follows.

Firstly, different types of mythical narratives have different emphases on the shaping of natural space. When the four types of myths are juxtaposed, the shaping of natural space reveals a continuum of macro and micro, universality and locality, wholeness and details, past, present, and future, familiar and unfamiliar, sublime and tender, and great and ordinary.

The narrative focus of myths on the separation of sky and earth reveals the basic structure of the universe or the natural space by establishing the relationship between the sky and the earth. Unity and continuity are the characteristics of the original and authentic relationship between them. The vast space constructed by “separation” actually provides the possibility for the interdependence of all natural scenes. The myths describing creation through bodily dismemberment focus on the overall shaping of natural spaces. By describing the origins and essences of various scenes, such myths reveal the systematic operation of natural space. It is worth noting that this systematization takes the suitability for the survival of species, including humans, as the main criterion. Obviously, the spatial forms and spatial characteristics constructed by these two types of myths are wholeness and universal. Although some texts have localized characteristics to a certain extent, they do not affect the all-encompassing characteristic of the natural spaces constructed by myths and the sublime feeling evoked by this immensity.

In the sacred narrative of the mountain god, the overall shaping of the natural space has been completed, and the narrative focuses instead on how the mountain forests are the source of life and stability for nearly all of the species in the area. What is particularly impressive in such texts and rituals is that the construction of the sacredness of the mountain is integrated with the responsibility of life that it carries. This responsibility refers not only to humankind in general but also to specific community groups and to ordinary individuals. Therefore, as far as the texts mentioned in this article are concerned, the sense of space created by the flood myth and the legend of the mountain god is both abstract and concrete.

Compared with the above sacred narratives, the myth of the hunting god and the legend of the Flower Festival have a remarkable endemicity. The narrative perspective shifts from the grand cosmos to the familiar mountain forests, exploring the mystery of everlasting life in breaking through spatial boundaries. The sense of place, which is both intimate and alienated, helps mountain residents to establish distinctions and connections between themselves and others, and to practice friendly interactions between humans and nature with a sense of community in the mountains. The consciousness of life in the community, which is fundamentally constructed in the creation myth, creates visible and sensible pictures in the discourse and ritual behavior stemming from these two types of narrative.

Secondly, in the literary imagination of these sacred narratives, natural space not only nourishes the life of all things but is also a member of this system. These discursive texts focus on establishing and breaking through the spatial boundary based on the interactive practice among subjects in mountain communities—mountains and rivers, lakes and seas, woods and trees, animals and insects, sun and moon, sky and earth, humans and gods, humans and nature, and “us”. This kind of community contains the possibility of commensurability between different existences.

As Kenneth J. Gergen said, “from a relational standpoint we may leap this chasm of separation between the sacred and social life. We realize the artificial character of bonded and separated beings, and stand in awe of the relational process from which these very concepts draw significance. We recognize that it is out of ongoing relationship that we

have created the conception of a remote God—an identifiable and sometimes gendered being, possessed with agency, love, anger, forgiveness, omnipotence, wisdom, and other diverse attributes assigned by the various cultures of the world. We are invited, then, to view the divine as a *process* within which we exist and from which we cannot be separated. The sacred is not distinct and distant, but immanent in all human affairs” (Gergen 2009, pp. 392–93).

The enlightenment of these sacred narratives is not lost in our practices. In the form of mythological practices, we continue to build links between everything in nature, and this construction continues to appear in stories that will continue being told in the future. Only when we truly realize this connection can we truly feel, realize, and own our own wholeness.

Thirdly, in the intertwining of imaginative narratives and realistic existence, the sacredness of natural spaces is established and able to be experienced. Although the artificial construction on the physical level is not obvious, the expressions in the stories and rituals have “a determinate intention” (Husserl 2001, ll. p. 120); the meaning of “constitutive performance” (Zahavi 2003, p. 42) is also clear. Literary imagination means that the spatial community it presents is an ideal of natural space. Our entire knowledge system about the natural world was designed to facilitate the achievement of this ideal. The natural knowledge set by the sacred narrative becomes the inner guidance for the local community’s practices. When understanding this kind of knowledge through reading stories, we feel as though natural life itself seems offered to us.

The answer to what is sacred points directly to the ongoing evocation and shaping of a sense of connectedness with nature and others in folk life. Through storytelling, which shapes the morphological characteristics and life essences of natural spaces, and through narrating the “relational beings” of various things in mountain communities, mountain communities imbue their practices with gracefulness and nobleness in the dimensions of emotion and morality. The shaping of beautiful places and sublime realms in these stories is a vivid expression of cosmology.

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Notes

- ¹ Part of this article was written for the 15th Annual International Conference on Comparative Mythology: Sacred Ground: Place and Space in Mythology and Religion, Belgrade, Serbia, 7–11 June 2022.
- ² Gros’s views show the research characteristics of the ontological turn in anthropology. In his article, he also mentioned the research of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour, Philippe Descola, Tim Ingold, etc.
- ³ According to Peng Zhaoqing, a Nu scholar, the 11 sacred mountains described here are mainly located in the Gaoligong mountain range.
- ⁴ This story is clearly stated to have taken place on Mukemudang Mountain, which is a part of the Hengduan Mountains and is located in the lower reaches of the Drung River.
- ⁵ According to Jiang Liang, the inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of Nujiang Prefecture, this version was recorded on 23 January 2023 in Maku Village, Drung Township, Gongshan County.
- ⁶ In the myths of the Achang, Zhepama and Zhemima are a pair of creation gods; that is, the God of the Sky and the Mother of the Earth.
- ⁷ The location of Mukemudang Mountain on Google Maps was confirmed by Jiang Yun, a resident of Maku Village in Gongshan.

- 8 According to the compilation in *A Brief history of the literature of the Nu*; the recording location is Gongshan and the narrator is Peng Zhaoqing (You 2003, pp. 17–20).
- 9 According to the compilation in *A Brief history of the literature of the Drung* (Li 2004, pp. 73–79); this myth was named *Flood* by the compiler. The location and narrator are not specified in the book.
- 10 There is no conclusion yet on the relationship between Kwagarpu and Kawargarbo, but the two mountains are connected in terms of pronunciation and semantics, as well as via the correspondence between belief circles. This is another example of the sharing phenomenon between regional natural space and cultural space.
- 11 Further corresponding stories still need to be collected. The texts used here come from *The Nu's worship of the rock god in Gongshan* (He 1988).
- 12 See note 10 above.
- 13 Changputong is the old name for Gongshan.
- 14 According to local residents in the upper reaches of the Drung River, the chieftain of Tsavalong once arranged for subordinates to inspect this cave at fixed times every year during the Qing Dynasty. He later assigned a family from the Mudang area to manage it on his behalf, because of the great distance between his residence and the cave. To this day, managers, descended from the family that lived there, still inspect the cave at fixed times every year.
- 15 Li Fuying and Long Jianlin live in Dizhengdang Village, Drung Township, Gongshan County. Jiang Liang, Jiang Yun, Jiang Wen, and Jiang Hong live in Maku Village, Drung Township, Gongshan County.
- 16 Li Jinming is a scholar from the Siri family in Dizhengdang Village in Gonashan. His books include: *A Brief history of the literature of the Drung*, *The original customs and culture of the Drung*, and *The Drung alongside the Drung River*, among others.
- 17 This flat graphic is based on descriptions in *A Brief history of the literature of the Drung* (Li 2004, p. 45) and *The original customs and culture of the Drung* (Li 2016, p. 77).

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Article

Location and Fortune: An Exploration of the Buddhism and Daoism Roles of Geomancy in the Song Dynasty

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Abstract: The Song dynasty (960–1279) was the peak of *fengshui* development in China. During this period, *fengshui* books proliferated, and geomantic techniques spread rapidly. Thus, the population was generally inclined to consider the influence of architecture on the fate of individuals or families from a *fengshui* perspective. In addition to writing books on *fengshui*, many Buddhist monks and Daoist masters also practiced the location selection and spatial planning of Buddhist and Daoist temples, houses, and tombs. This paper first collates the *fengshui* books written by Buddhist monks and Daoists during the Song dynasty and then analyzes their spatial planning concepts according to the geomancy theory. Secondly, taking into account specific cases of Buddhist and Daoist temples, garden buildings, and residential tombs, it elaborates on the reasons and purposes behind the Buddhist monks' and Daoists' use of the geomancy theory. Lastly, the changes in the function of site selection in the urban landscape reflect the interaction between Buddhism, Daoism, and *fengshui* during the Song dynasty. An awareness of the historical origins of religious tradition is helpful in our understanding of *fengshui* architectural heritage in general.

Keywords: *fengshui*; geomancy; Buddhism; Daoism; site selection

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1. Introduction

The Song dynasty (960–1279) was a time of great cultural prosperity in Chinese history, with significant developments in culture, technology, and social customs, while the overall cultural trend was secular and commonplace. With the rapid development of engraving and printing, the proliferation of books on a wide variety of topics played a large role in the spread of culture to the lower classes. The geomancy named *fengshui* (literally, wind and water), traced by its practitioners to hoary antiquity, was surprisingly widespread in traditional Chinese society.

The bibliographic chapter (藝文志) of the Song dynastic history (宋史) recorded hundreds of *fengshui* texts, far more than the total number in previous generations. Nearly three hundred geomancy texts were recorded, including a catalog of books and journals, with more than fifty surviving texts (Yu 2022). The authors of such writings were varied and included officials, Confucian scholars, Buddhist monks, Daoists, and folk augurs, all of whom contributed to the spread of geomancy among the common people (Liao 2009, vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 1–58; Liu 2010; Pan 2018). A group of Buddhist monks and Daoists, in particular, were involved in the site selection of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples, houses, and tombs. This community was under the influence of *fengshui* in their use of geographical and spatial concepts. The absorption of geomancy by Buddhism and Daoism in the Song period and its influence on the architectural philosophy and spatial planning of that time is a worthy topic for exploration.

Although there have been a variety of discussions of *fengshui* in the Song dynasty according to regional divisions, the official method of geomancy was the “Five Sound

Surname Law” (五音姓利法), which had been popular since the Tang and Song dynasties. However, later on, this method gave rise to the main two schools, the “Forms and Circumstance” or “Forms and Configurations” school (形勢派) in Jiangxi province and the “Compass” or “Principles and Energy” school (理氣派, also translated as “Directions and Positions” school in some books) in Fujian province. The two schools were more popular in the southern region than in the north for the complexity of the terrain, so the five surnames method was mainly popular in the central area and east coast region (current He’nan and Jiangsu provinces). Although both originated from the doctrine of “Qi” (氣, the flow of the energetic pneuma), “Yiti Shouyin” (遺體受蔭, the proper burial sites for deceased parents and other ancestors, had an impact on the fate of future generations) in Guo Pu’s 郭璞 (276–324) *Zang Shu* (Burial Book) (葬書) means that if the remains of the deceased received “Qi,” it would benefit their descendants, and that the wealth and fortune of their descendants were related to the location of the grave. The former school is based on Yang Yunsong 楊筠松 of the Tang Dynasty (618–907) and was influenced by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the great master of Confucianism in the Song dynasty. It mainly focused on the topography of the area around the burial site, especially the terrain of the mountains and streams, to ensure the flow and preservation of the “Qi” in the general environment. The latter school, known as the Fujian School, applied cosmological ideas such as yin–yang and the five elements (五行) to the site selection of burials. The core concepts of *fengshui* have focused on the collation of key historical materials, such as dragons (mountain terrain), sands (flat land), waters (river course), and caves (low-lying hollow places) (Feuchtwang 1974; Bennett 1978; Rossbach 1983; Song 2003; Yu 2017; Pan 2018), but fewer have elaborated in depth on the religious connections therein.

From the 1990s onwards, researchers discussed the choices of ancient geomancy from the perspective of geographical landscapes and environmental factors (He 1990; Wang 1992; Liu 1995; Yu 1998; Madeddu and Zhang 2021). Since the 1950s, the academic community has paid attention to ancient *fengshui* techniques, using specific operating principles to solve archaeological problems, such as site selection and burial order of the Tang and Song dynasties based on the “Five Sound Surname Law” (Su 1957; Xu 1963). From the 1970s onwards, some researchers focused on the symbolic meaning of *fengshui* from the perspective of anthropology. Especially in Japan, a series of works delved into the cultural phenomenon, clans, folklore, anthropology, and natural environment of *fengshui* in East Asia (Watanabe 1990, 1994, 2001; Miura 1995, 2005; Segawa 1996). Moreover, Makio (1994) and Yoon (1989) summarized the issue of the origin and state orthodoxy of the ancient *fengshui* concept. In the 21st century, researchers have focused mainly on the study of specific ancient *fengshui* books (Miyazaki 2003; Shen 2010, vol. 8, pp. 313–36; Liu 2014; Pan 2017; Smith 2021) and others that concentrate on the time of writing and the circulation of editions of the officially compiled *fengshui* book *Dili Xinshu* (地理新書) during the Northern Song dynasty, and *Yingyuan Zonglu* (瑩原總錄, the General Record of the Tombs), which was written during the Song and Yuan dynasties (Liu 2014, vol. 1, pp. 259–72; Yu 2017; Wen 2017). Furthermore, studies have mainly focused on the overall *fengshui* literature or *fengshui* techniques of the Song dynasty (Song 2003; Yu 2017; Pan 2018).

Although these studies have revisited *fengshui* from different perspectives, the following problems exist. Firstly, monographs on religious sites in the Song dynasty have been relatively scarce. Although some detailed evidence of the siting and layout of religious buildings exists, most of the Daoist temples were Ming and Qing buildings (He 1990, pp. 130–43). Most of the Song-dynasty-related content is found in books on the subject of architectural histories, such as Guo’s review of the historical development of religious and residential buildings, which describes the layout and siting of the buildings but does not point out the relationship between their locations and *fengshui* (Guo 2009, vol. 3, pp. 255–64). Sun (2010) took the temples in Hangzhou in the Song period as examples, specifying the location and architectural philosophy without considering the geographical factors. In recent years, Zhang used the Japanese collection of *Painting of Five Mountains and Ten Temples* (五山十剎圖) to elaborate on the geographical distribution pattern of

Buddhist temples in the southern region of the Southern Song, but also did not relate it to *fengshui* (Zhang 2000). Secondly, there are few descriptions of geomancy- and *fengshui*-related religious figures. Gao listed the famous people who practiced *fengshui* during the Song and Yuan dynasties, yet only two of them were Buddhist monks, namely Monk Da 達僧 and Monk Duo 鐸長老 (Gao 2004, pp. 259–61). Liu used historical materials from Song literary collections, notebooks, and novels to collate the sources of the Song dynasty *fengshui* masters (Liu 2010, pp. 21–22). Using Song literary collections as materials, Pan collated the geographical distribution of geomancers in the Song dynasty, collecting more than Gao Youqian, but only seven of them were Buddhist monks and Daoists, mostly in the Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. The descriptions of geomancers among the Buddhist monks and Daoists mostly focused on their business without describing their *fengshui* concepts in detail (Pan 2018, pp. 296–99). This is also the case with other related works on the Song dynasty *fengshui* (Chikusa 2000). Thirdly, the examination of *fengshui* doctrines in the previous literature was mostly limited to the Forms and Configurations school doctrines of the southeast and lacks an understanding of other *fengshui* doctrines of the time. Wang (1993) examined *fengshui* activities and writings during the Song and Yuan dynasties, only focused on the views of the Forms and Configurations School and the Principles and Energy School but did not delve into the *fengshui* doctrines that were popular in other regions. The above-mentioned work by He (1990) also provided an introduction to the figures and writings of the Forms and Configurations School of the Song dynasty, as well as a study of how to improve non-ideal bases (e.g., by diverting water, opening ditches, opening lakes, planting trees, etc.). However, the examples cited are mostly of lineage halls and villages in the Southeast China (He 1990, pp. 35–129). Fourthly, there is a lack of literature on *fengshui* and architectural space in other regions during the Song dynasty, for example, the relationship between the spatial layout of the urban and *fengshui* landscape in the Song dynasty (Mao and Zhang 2016, No. 31, pp. 90–101). This paper explores the influence of *fengshui* on Buddhism and the theory of site selection in Buddhism and Daoism with Song-dynasty geomancy literature and historical sources related to the practice.

2. The Influence of *Fengshui* on the Location of Buddhist and Daoist Temples

Since its introduction in China, Buddhism has been influenced by mysticism and has absorbed many *fengshui* doctrines in the process of localization. For example, in the Buddhist literature of the Tang dynasty (618–907), there are two books related to the art of geomancy, namely *The Method of Establishing a Mandala and Site Selection* (建立曼荼羅及揀擇地法) by Monk Huilin 釋慧琳 and *Brahma Site Selection* (梵天擇地法) by Monk Bukong 不空. In addition, there were Buddhist monks, such as Yixing 一行 and Hongshi 泓師, who were skilled in the art of geomancy and produced many geomancy stories, legends, and writings during that period (Yixing wrote *Wuyin Dili*, and the book *Taiping Guangji* recorded Hongshi's legends). In the Song dynasty, Monk Jingdao 釋靜道 wrote a *fengshui* book named *The Complete Book of the Eye of the Earth* (入地眼全書), *Inquiries and Answers of the Monk Da* (達僧問答), *Monk Sima's Diqian* (司馬頭陀地鉗), and Huang Miaoying 黃妙應's *Boshan Pian* (博山篇) (Yu 2017). These writings clearly show that Chinese Buddhism was integrated with the idea of *fengshui*.

As the size of the monastic community expanded, the traditional *fengshui* theory of site selection was reflected in the construction of Buddhist temples, which is well documented. It was mainly the monks who referred to the *fengshui* theory when building their temples and rebuilding the original site. For example, as a gazetteer recorded during the Song dynasty, the Xingfu Temple 興福寺 in Changshu 常熟 county (the former name was Qinchuan 琴川, built in 1130, was located northeast of the county, as demonstrated in Figure 1. It was originally a low and humid marshy place (沮洳地), but later a monk, Wenyong 文用, who specialized in *fengshui*, suggested that the place was high on the guest hill but low on the main site, and the terrain surrounding should be changed by erecting a pagoda in chapter 10 of *Chongxiu Qinchuanzhi*. The Xingfu Temple in Yu Mountain (Figure 1) shows that such practices were undertaken. Examples such as this were common in the Song dynasty, and

there was more evidence for them in the poetry and collected works of the literati. The famous Northern Song scholar Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044–1130) recorded the selection of the site for the Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺 during the Chongning period (1102–1106). He believed that the temple should be located in a place where mountains and rivers converge and that the site for the temple was chosen through *fengshui* divination at the foot of the mountain known as “Cloud Gate” 雲門, on the southern outskirts of the city. Huang Shang visited Wanshou Temple and felt the lush atmosphere. When looking south at the double cliffs, the mountains split between the two sides of the overhanging hundred meters, much like a fairy stretching out two hands forward to hug (Huang 2006, vol. 103, pp. 2–38). Based on Huang’s description of the environment, it is clear that the choice of the temple was associated with a place with a beautiful landscape.

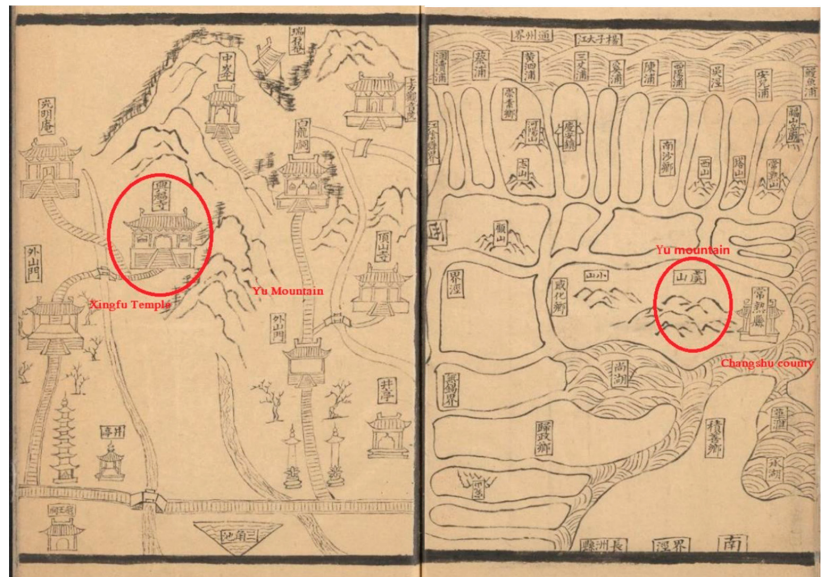


Figure 1. Sun Yingshi (Sun 1195–1201): *Chongxiu Qinchuanzhi*, chapter 15. Harvard University Collection.

During the Southern Song Dynasty, Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210) wrote a record of the construction of the Spiritual Secret Cloister 靈秘院. He stated that when one looked straight out the door, the road was straight and the plain was flat. A distant mountain was in front, with a lonely cliff and beautiful scenery filled with smoke and clouds. He wrote, “The geomancers believed that the Buddha dharma would not decline in a hundred generations and that the monks would be famous. This is the first time that the temple had been passed down, but it is so prosperous that how can it be imagined in the future?” (Lu 2015, vol. 21, p. 314). It is evident that although the Spiritual Secret Cloister is a sacred Buddhist site, in terms of the technique of site selection, its focus was on the external beauty of the scenery, and the people of the time were able to sense this.

On the other hand, Daoism, a native Chinese religion, has long incorporated numerology in its development, not least through the absorption and application of *fengshui* techniques. Geomancy is a theory derived from traditional numerology of astronomical and geographical observation so as to benefit the selection and planning of human living space. As such, some of the concepts and terminology of numerology were also used in geomancy techniques, and a number of *fengshui* masterworks were collected in the Daoist series. Historically *fengshui* texts were generally classified under the framework of the numerology category.

The early Daoist classic *Taiping Jing* (太平經) contained two chapters reflecting the geomancy of the Han Dynasty (202 BC–220 AD): chapter 45 *The Book of the Unearth* (起土出書訣), and chapter 50 *The Book of the Burial House* (葬宅訣). In *Zhengtong Daozang* (正統道藏) and *Wanli Xudaozang* (萬曆續道藏), the collection of classics included two *fengshui* texts, namely the *Huangdi Zhaijing* (黃帝宅經) and the *Rumen Chongli Zhezong Kanyu Wanxiao Lu* (儒門崇理折衷堪輿完孝錄). This shows that there is a close connection historically between Daoism and *fengshui*, although there are relatively few records of Daoist masters who were skilled in geomancy techniques or involved in writing geomancy books during the Song dynasty. However, the Daoist belief in ‘Taiyi’ (太乙) was deeply rooted in the Northern Song dynasty and was revered by the emperor, which led to the construction of Daoist palaces and the development of related ceremonies. During the Northern Song dynasty, three Taiyi palaces were built on the outskirts of the capital, in the east, west, and center, to worship the god Taiyi. For example, in 983, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities (Wufu Taiyi 五福太一) entered the southeastern Xun (巽) palace (see Figures 2 and 3), Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) ordered the construction of the East Taiyi Palace. In 1028, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities entered the southwestern Kun (坤) position (see Figures 2 and 3), Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022–1063) ordered the construction of the West Taiyi Palace. In 1071, when the Five Blessed Grand Unities were located in the Central Palace, Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) ordered the construction of the Central Taiyi Palace in the capital.

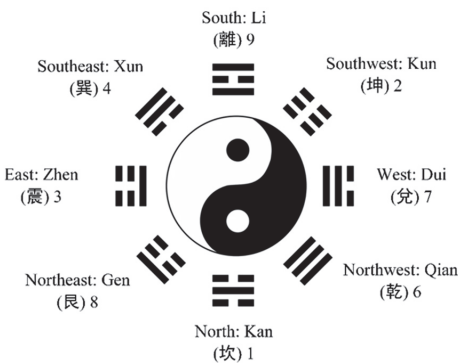


Figure 2. Eight directions of the eight trigrams (後天八卦).

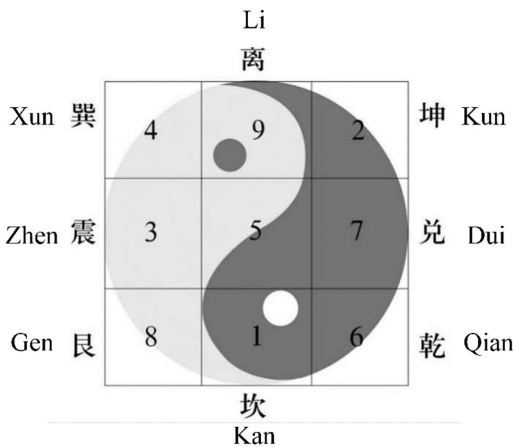


Figure 3. The classical nine palaces of the Luo Shu (洛書九宮) refer to the eight trigrams.

The imperial attitude towards Daoism can be seen in the memorial words written by Su Song 蘇頌 (1020–1101), an astronomer of the Northern Song dynasty, about Zhezong's 哲宗 (r. 997–1022) rituals to Shenzong. He wrote: “in 1090, the rituals were organized by officials of the Western Taiyi Palace, and three or seven Daoist masters were invited to open the Daoist temple at Taiyi Palace on the anniversary of the death of emperor Shenzong” (Su 1988, vol. 27, p. 373). Since the presiding officer of the Taiyi Palace ceremony was a Daoist master, the construction of the palace would necessarily follow the Daoist concept of geography. However, due to a lack of historical information, the exact method of the construction of Taiyi Palace is unknown. In the Southern Song dynasty, Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126) decreed that the Daoist master Liu Hunkang 劉混康 of Maoshan (Mao Mountain) was responsible for the construction of the Daoist temple in 1103 (Li 2013, p. 736). This fact is also revealed in the Maoshan Zhi (茅山志), where an edict from Emperor Huizong to the Daoist master Liu, mentioned that “the construction of this temple has descended to command, the start working date should be decided very soon” (Liu 1989, vol. 7, p. 278). Three years later, the palace was given the name “Yuanfu Wanning Temple” 元符萬寧宮. Its construction was mainly the responsibility of the Daoist master Liu, who would also largely adopt *fengshui* techniques.

Daoist masters not only participated in the architecture of the imperially sponsored temples but also wrote books documenting the secret techniques of each school. It is recorded that the classic geomancy book *Yusui Zhenjing* (玉髓真經 *The Classic of the Jade Marrow*) was compiled by Zhang Dongxuan, a Daoist master of the Song dynasty, who became the state preceptor (Zhang 1996, vol. 1053). In addition, the geomancy classics, such as *Jiazhu Meihuayuan Zuan* (夾竹梅花院纂), *Daofa Shuangtan* (道法雙譚), *Wugong Jiaozishu* (吳公教子書), and *Xiantian Houtian Liqi Xinyin Buzhu* (先天後天理氣心印補注), were all written by a geomancer called Wu Jingluan 吳景鸞. He assisted celebrities, such as Zhang Tao 張燾 (1092–1166) and Zhu Xi, in the burying of their ancestors. It can be inferred that Wu Jingluan lived in the Renzong period. He was an expert in *fengshui* and had been selected as the state preceptor. Wu Jingluan's father, Wu Kecheng 吳克誠, studied with Chen Tuan 陳搏 (871–989), who learned from Zeng Wenchuan 曾文迪, who was guided by Yang Yunsong 楊筠松 (834–900) (Wu n.d.). Therefore, Wu Jingluan's knowledge system was inherited from Chen Tuan, who was the representative figure of Daoism in the Inner Alchemy (*neidan*) (內丹). There was also a historical record that Guo Xian 郭顯, known as Qixiazi 棲霞子, was a Daoist. He wrote an inscription as a cliff carving on Nanxi (South Stream) Mountain 南溪山 in 1149, which reads: “The circumstance is beauty that there are gods and immortals among them. Guo Xian, who was knowledgeable and professional, divined the rock and dug a well to cultivate the fields. He was an alchemist and wandered through the forest and springs” (Guo 2006, no. 4574, vol. 206, p. 211). The site chosen by Guo was based on *fengshui* divination, and its landscape was off the beaten track. Although there were fewer records of individual Daoist masters involved in the practice of *fengshui*, there were not many examples of the construction of Daoist temples based on *fengshui* divination. One example, however, is when Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) sent his official Wang Guicong 王龜從 to build the Taiping Temple at the foot of Zhongnan Mount 終南山. Wang had just divined the location in Zhongnan town when a Daoist came down to tell him that this was the place at which to build God's palace (Li 1955, vol. 7, p. 116). At the end of the Southern Song dynasty (1253), when the Qingyuan Chongying Abbey 清源崇應觀 was built, the advice of the Sichuan Daoist masters was followed, and the land was divined according to the topography of the rivers around Wu Mount 吳山 (Qian 1986, vol. 75, p. 767).

In summary, *fengshui* books in the Song dynasty were partly written by Buddhist monks and Daoists, and religious buildings were erected based on their sitings, according to a suitable external environment. It was a popular trend at the time for both Buddhist monks and Daoists to refer to *fengshui* criteria when selecting a site for construction, which led to an aesthetic conception of the location of religious buildings. Also, the development of cartography in China led to the integration of landscape painting and geomancy. As the

Song dynasty painting treatise says, “Those who paint monasteries, temples, and Daoist temples should be located in places that embrace secluded valleys, deep rocks, and cliffs” (Han 1986, vol. 813, p. 322). This shows that the influence of *fengshui* in the construction of Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples reflected aesthetic tendencies. Indeed, the importance the Song people attributed to the natural environment around the building was the focus of the Forms and Configurations school.

3. Choosing Sites for Residences and Burials

Numerology, which was closely related to geomancy in traditional Chinese society, was popular because it helped people understand their destinies. The spread of printing in the Song dynasty contributed to the rapid spread of numerology. According to the famous bibliographer Chao Gongwu, “the most prevalent among the common people were the Zangshu (葬書 funeral books), Xiangshu (相術 the philological techniques), Wuxing (五星 the five stars), Luming (祿命 the fortunes), Liuren (六壬 divination), Dunjia (遁甲 predictology), and Xinqin (星禽 astrology)” (Chao 1990, vol. 14, p. 610). The large collection of books on numerology and geomancy written during this period also reflects increased social demand. Thus, more and more Buddhist monks and Daoists joined in spreading the *fengshui* techniques.

Geomancy can affect the descendants due to changes in their surrounding environment. The example of Chen Gongfu 陳公輔 (1081–1150) can help explain this phenomenon. A temple named Puji 普濟寺 was located in front of his house. A monk told Chen Gongfu’s father that within just one year when the temple would become a pond, the family’s heir would win first prize in the imperial civil examinations. As it turned out, the temple became a pond after it was relocated due to the low-lying terrain, and Chen Gongfu was ranked first in 1113, fulfilling the monk’s words: “Once this temple becomes a pond, the Gongyuan (貢元: ranked first in the prefectural examination) will sit at the top” (Hong 1981, Jiazhi, vol. 5, Chen Guozuo). This change reflects the auspicious correspondence between the house and the flow of water, according to the Song dynasty’s officially edited geomancy book *Dili Xinshu* (地理新書 *Geography New Book*), which states: “The ideal residence should have flowing water on the left (Azure Dragon), a long road on the right (White Tiger), a pond in front (Vermilion Bird), and a hill behind (Black Tortoise). This surrounding locates the most prestigious place the best place” (Wang 1996, No. 1054, vol. 2, p. 20). The pond in front of Chen’s house exactly matched the “most prestigious place” (最貴地) of the four symbols (四象, four emblems, representing the four Auspicious Beasts). Although the layout of this house was not made deliberately, it reflects the influence of the changing surrounding environment. This idea appears in the Dunhuang scrolls of the Tang period (such as P.2615a + P.2632v Zhu Zutui Wuxing Yinyang Dengzhai Tujing 諸雜推五姓陰陽等宅圖經, S. 5645f Monk Sima Dimai Jue 司馬頭陀地脈訣), which show the absorption and application of geomancy by Buddhist monks and Daoists. A similar example involves Yang Cunzhong (1102–1166), who built a mansion near Hongfu Bridge in Lin’an 臨安 city (Today’s Hangzhou 杭州, the capital city of the southern Song dynasty). When a monk advised that the mansion needed to be supplemented by water, Yang requested permission from Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162) to draw water from the West Lake into the mansion (Zhou 1983, vol. 4, pp. 68–9).

According to the monk’s theory, Yang Cunzhong’s 楊存中 (1102–1166) house resembled a tortoise. He was lucky if he had water and misfortune if he lived in a water-deficient area. This statement is related to the ‘Shape Method’ (喝形法), a kind of Forms and Configurations school technique. That is, the various landforms were used to judge fortune through metaphorical images that likened the physical features and relationships of the landscapes to animals (especially the mythical dragon), parts of the human body, celestial bodies, etc. As the tortoise is an aquatic animal, it must have water to survive, so the monk suggested that Yang should surround the house with lake water to make up for the shortage. Because Yang took the monk’s advice, his house remained fire-free for over a hundred years. On closer examination, Yang’s mansion was of a large scale, and as most

ancient buildings were made of wood, they were prone to fire, so perhaps drawing water into the house was also a reason to avoid fires.

The tradition of Buddhist monks and Daoists selecting burial sites in the Tang and Song dynasties, in addition to simply choosing a place to live, has been abundantly documented, such as in the literature listed in Section 2, all of which focused on the selection of burial sites. As for the participation of anonymous and even occasional monks in the choice of burial sites, there are numerous examples. For example, in the Northern Song dynasty, Su Xiangxian 蘇象先 mentioned that when his grandfather Su Song was planning the burial of his great-grandfather, he happened to meet the monk Zizhen 自真, an expert in *fengshui* who used his knowledge to obtain auspicious divination at the ideal site of Jingxian Mountain 京峴山, and the practitioners all said that the site was good (Su 1988, vol. 3, p. 1134). Apart from such auspicious sites, there were also negative effects if one did not accept the monk's advice of where to bury one's ancestors. For example, Fan Zeshan 范擇善 (1097–1148), after he obtained a good rank in the imperial civil examination, was given a teaching post in Jiangnan West Circuit 江南西路 (current Jiangxi province). His father died suddenly and was temporarily placed in a nearby temple. The head abbot, who was very attuned to *fengshui*, observed that there was a cave in the middle of the hill behind the temple that was suitable for burial, not only to save him trouble but also because it was an excellent location for *fengshui*. Fan followed this advice at first, but when he became a successful official, he planned to transfer his father's grave to his ancestral tomb instead. Thus, in his insistence on moving the grave, he ultimately did not heed the monk's advice. As a result, Fan Zeshan was immediately sanctioned by Prime Minister Qin Hui 秦檜 (1091–1155) in the official circles and was denounced for “disturbing the state and country in the name of moving the burial.” Eventually, he died of depression (Wang 2019, vol. 11, p. 220).

The main reason for the above case is that at the time, geomancy was used as a tool for commons to “avoid bad luck” and to implement it into various construction activities. People were more inclined to discuss the impact of architectural changes on the fate of individuals or families from the perspective of *fengshui*, and directly attributed the vagaries of life to the five elements (五行) of *fengshui* in the yin–yang theory (陰陽). Once the geomancy was fulfilled, it deepened the people's faith in it. Some anecdotal accounts in that time revealed this fact. In the year 1140, the scholar Zhang Yaosou 張堯叟, who was passing through Mount Lu 廬山 the year before the execution of the famous general Yue Fei 岳飛 (1103–1142), witnessed the funeral of Yue's mother, at which there was a huge crowd of onlookers and a grand ceremony. One of the bystander monks told Zhang Yaosou that although Yue Fei's mother was buried in a good place, it was in the same direction as the ancestral tomb of General Wang Shao 王韶 (1030–1081), and was subject to similar fortune and misfortune, as the mountains surrounding the tomb were the same, with the azure dragon on the left and the white tiger on the right. Thus, the descendants must suffer from misfortune before they can prosper. As foretold, Wang Shao's son (Wang Fudao, 王輔道) died in an accident, but Wang Shao's grandchildren Wang Yanbi (王炎弼) and Wang Yanrong (王彥融), were both favored by the imperial court. In a similar vein, Yue Fei's sons were persecuted to death, a fate that was reversed 30 years later, when their descendants soared to great heights.

The involvement of Daoists in the choice of residence and burial was less often mentioned in historical sources, but some examples exist, such as the ‘Tomb of Vice Minister Rong 榮侍郎墳’ (Hong 1981, vol. Zhijing, 4). During the Southern Song period, a Daoist master passing by the grave of the official Rong said that the location was originally excellent but that in recent years the prosperity had moved to another location, and thus his family's downfall would occur in the next two or three years. If he immediately selected another better location and moved the grave, he could still save half of his family, but if he ignored the situation, the family would suffer from trouble for a long time. Unfortunately, the Rong family did not heed the Daoist master's advice, and its descendants died one after another. In addition to these examples of misfortune, there are more ‘auspicious’ ones.

For example, it is recorded that the Vice Minister Gong 龔侍郎 once consulted a Daoist master because his ancestors had not been well buried. After the Daoist master divined the place, he recited a poem on the foot of Wujun Mountain 烏軍山 to the effect that the tomb should be taken care of by Master Tu and Master Fan, so that the offspring could rise in the officialdom. Later, when Gong returned home, he found that his ancestors had been buried at the bottom of Wujun Mountain and that they had been moved by the two Daoist masters, Tu and Fan, proving that “there is a time to be born and a place to die” (Wu 2019, vol. 18, p. 239).

In summary, it was a common phenomenon in the Song dynasty for religious figures, whether Buddhist monks or Daoists, princes, nobles or commoners, to intervene in the selection of burial sites through *fengshui* techniques. Many records written by literary scholars about the fortunes of descendants were affected by *fengshui*, and the mystical spirituality of these events also determined people's attitudes toward *fengshui*. The specific method to determine the luck of *fengshui* was by observing the natural environment around the house and tomb. Their accounts of the fulfillment of geomancy in Song society would also lead to a growing belief in the theory. Behind this also was the Confucian concept of filial piety and the worship of ancestors. The *Book of Rites* (禮記·祭義) states: “When flesh meat and bones vanished underneath and became wild earth, its Qi was raised up as bright light” (Zheng 2008, p. 1834). Basically, this means that when a person passes away, their body returns to the ground, while their spirit returns to heaven. The “Qi” is the flow of the energetic pneuma that connects the living world and the spiritual realm above the heaven; that is, “Humans are born with living Qi, and their death made the living Qi Reincarnate” (Wang 1990, p. 873). Folk beliefs center on the existence of ancestral spirits and their ability to influence future generations in different ways, which is why the commoners sought to gain refuge and blessings through geomancy.

4. Urban Spatial Planning and Praying

In ancient China, there existed a similar belief system regarding the site selection for both the dead and the living, so *fengshui* had a practical function in urban planning. For the good purposes of the fate of the nation or literacy luck, Buddhist monks and Daoists were involved, and the logical elements in the choice of orientation were an important part of the doctrine of *fengshui*. When the location of graves required more specific and theoretical knowledge, the Buddhist monks and Daoists trained in *fengshui* were frequently called upon to site and orient residences, villages, and even capital cities. In the Song dynasty, royal gardens and private pavilions flourished, far surpassing the previous dynasties. The gardens open at that time mostly provided public leisure and entertainment space for the subjects (Lü 1992, vol. 7, p. 93; Meng 1982, p. 102). In the late Northern Song dynasty, the capital gardens were invariably constructed with mountains, water, flowers, trees, grass, and rocks in a beautiful and tranquil environment. However, there were also gardens built according to *fengshui* concepts, and sometimes people would plan their orientation on this basis to pray for blessings and protection from harm.

The construction of the imperial garden at Wanshou Mountain 萬壽山, later renamed Gen Marchmount 艮嶽 (Gen Yue, Northeast Marchmount), began in 1117, and it was closely related to the terrain of the entire Kaifeng City 開封 (the capital city of the Northern Song empire), construction of which was based on *fengshui* theory. When Emperor Huizong ascended to the throne, he took the advice of the Daoist master Liu Hunkang 劉混康 to raise the terrain in the northeastern corner of the imperial city in order to multiply his heirs. The reason was that in “the northeast corner of the capital city, the ground is in harmony with the public opinion, but the situation is slightly lower; if the height of the low-lying terrain is elevated, the imperial descendants will multiply” (Zhang 1985, p. 1). In terms of *fengshui*, Kaifeng City had a gentle terrain, and the northeast corner is a natural pitting, where yin energy (陰氣, Yin Qi) collects. So, the emperor issued an order to fill the top with earth and increase the height from the original one, and later, the number of male children did increase. After that, the royal court was free of trouble. It can be seen that the purpose of

the construction of the artificial Gen Marchmount was to elevate the terrain in the northeast of the capital city, “the Gen direction, the position of the eight trigrams; the Yue, the general name of the mountains” (Wang 2019, vol. 2, Houlu, p. 428). This was conducive to the prosperity of the Song family’s heirs. It was named Gen Marchmount because it is in the northeast of the capital, and the name reflects its orientation. However, why is the situation in the northeast one of slightly lower ground, and why is it possible to change the fortune of the heirs by using a mound of earth to form a small mountain?

According to the theory of numerology, especially the eight trigrams (後天八卦), the northeast of the city (Gen direction. See Figures 2 and 3), is also known as the “Ghost Gate” (鬼門). According to the “Five Sound Surname Law”, the royal surname of Zhao 趙 belongs to wood, so the Gen position is the place of vitality, which could be advantageous in terms of having more descendants. All of this shows that the Gen position is vital to the rise and fall of the heirs’ destiny. According to the description of the Gen position in the classic literature: “The Gen is Ghost Gate, the Dragon’s Belly, the Blessed Sac, should be thick, heavy and auspicious, and when thinness means poverty” (Huangdi Zhaijing n.d.). As well as the *Monk Sima Dimai Jue* (司馬頭陀地脈訣 *A Pithy Formula of Site-Selection*, by Monk Sima): “If the tone of the grave occupant’s surname was in accordance with the five sound tones covering the tones of Gong (宮 Do), Shang (商 Re), Jue (角 Mi), Zhi (徵 So), and Yu (羽 La), the terrain should be high and Ghost Gate should not be flat or low” (Guan 2013, p. 481). It can be seen that the Gen position is auspicious for being high and thick, but the original actual topography in the northeast of Kaifeng City does not coincide with this statement. Therefore, for the benefit of the imperial family, the imperial court deliberately adjusted and transformed the northeast of Kaifeng, and thus Gen Marchmount obtained its *fengshui* role. Furthermore, the archaeological records show that most of the Northern Song imperial family tombs were made by the “Five Sound Surname Law” (Feng 1994; Jin 2015; Liu 2018).

In fact, before Emperor Huizong of the Song dynasty, issues relating to the topography and *fengshui* of the northeastern corner of the capital had already become a subject of concern for the court. In 1081, a minister, Hu Zongyan 胡宗炎, pointed out the importance of the capital position, arguing that Yimen Mountain 夷門山 (see Figure 4), to the northeast of the capital, was the location of the lesser yang (Shaoyang 少陽) and it should be forbidden to fill in or dig in the area. This policy was confirmed and enforced by the astronomical bureau (Li 1995, vol. 312, p. 7560). In 1082, Emperor Shenzong issued an edict to protect the area around Fanjia Hill 樊家岡 on Yimen Mountain from the spirit of the deceased buried there and to prohibit burials from then on (Li 1995, vol. 329, p. 7917). In 1086, the Kaifeng Prefecture officials submitted a petition claiming that Yimen Mountain was not to be exploited and expressly forbade the burial of ordinary people: “Those who have a grave are allowed to move to the outside, and those who do not have a grave are to follow the first decree” (Li 1995, vol. 392, p. 9540). It is clear that the Song court followed the *fengshui* theory that the northeastern direction of Yimen Mount was where the Zhao surname (the royal surname) was located and that it was important to adopt a policy of protection for the northeast terrain so that it would not be destroyed.

In the late reign of Emperor Zhezong, the official Dong Weizheng 董惟正 proposed the construction of a high building and temple on Yimen Mount to make up for the lack of a mountain, which caused much controversy in the court. In 1100, the official Cai Dao 蔡蹈 advised the emperor on this matter, arguing that Yimen Mountain was a place where the dynastic house had flourished, that he did not know what Dong Weizheng’s theory was, and that digging from the side to make up for the mountain’s shortcomings would disturb the tranquil environment and destroy the effect of *fengshui*.

Dong thought the construction of the temple with suspicious intentions, so he submitted the memorial to the throne for a second time. He cited the opinion of the official in charge of the site, who strongly opposed the construction of the temple on Yimen Mountain in the northeast of the capital. He argued that Dong Weizheng’s claim was not justified and

would affect the prosperity of the emperor. There was no benefit in building the temple and no harm in not doing so (Cai 2006, vol. 2235, No. 102, pp. 263–4).

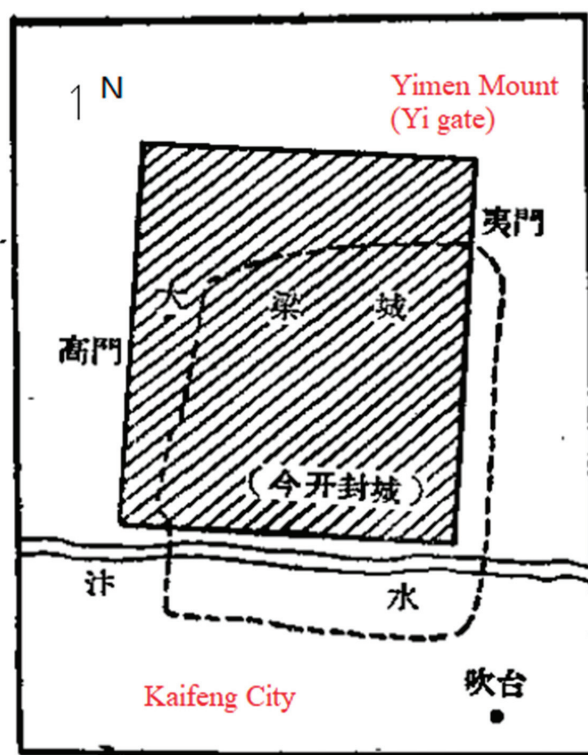


Figure 4. Overview of Kaifeng City of the Northern Song period. Source: Li (1958). *Kaifeng Lishi Dili*. p. 9.

This happened towards the end of Emperor Zhezong's reign, not long before the time when Huizong elevated the terrain in the northeast. It is clear that during the reign of Emperor Zhezong, not only was there a great increase in the number of experts skilled in the art of *fengshui*, but the concept of *fengshui* had emerged to fill the gap in the terrain, which was a serious divergence from the earlier notion that no excavation was allowed in the place where the emperor's Qi was located. Whatever Dong Weizheng's aims, what is certain is that he no longer confined himself to his predecessor's statement that no excavations should be made to the mountain and that he intended to deal with the problem of luck and misfortune through *fengshui*. The later construction of Gen Marchmount was a direct manifestation and application of this idea of repairing deficiency.

The construction of Gen Marchmount served to supplement the terrain. In addition, a look at the construction of buildings in the Song dynasty shows that *fengshui* towers served the same function as the two examples are listed below.

On the one hand, the construction of Gen Yue served to bring good fortune by supplementing the terrain from the ruler's perspective. On the other hand, the traditional Chinese cosmology system was reflected in the construction of the capital city. The yin and yang, the eight trigrams, and the five elements were applied directly to urban planning, reflecting the structural layout that was inspired by the classical nine palaces of the Luo Shu (洛書九宮). Similarly, in the construction of another type of architecture, the pagoda, we can also see the cosmology presented in the city and village.

A temple was built on the Yimen Mountain in 559. During the Song dynasty, in 970, Emperor Taizu changed its name to Kaibao Temple 開寶寺, also known as Guangjiao Temple 光教寺. It was located in the northeast of Kaifeng City (see Figure 5) and commonly called Shangfang Temple 上方寺, sitting above Yimen Mountain in the northeast of the city (Zhou 1988, p. 218; Li 1999, vol. 10).

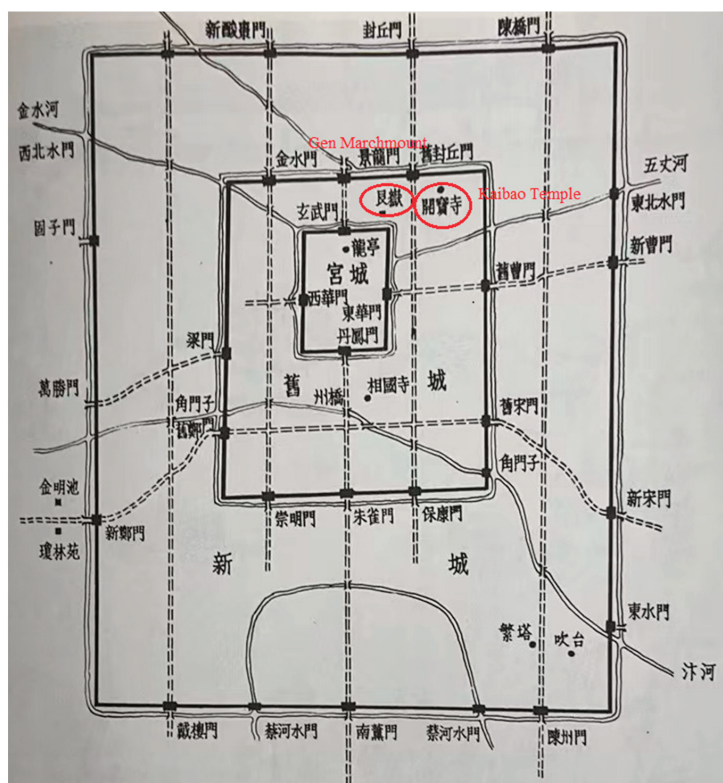


Figure 5. The map of the capital Kaifeng City. Source: Liu Dunzhen (Liu 2017). *A History of Ancient Chinese Architecture*, 2017, p. 179.

In 980, to enshrine the relics of Buddha, Emperor Taizong ordered that the pagoda in the northwest of the Kaibao Temple be built with a stupa of eleven levels, under which a heavenly palace was made to bury the sarira (Jiang 1981, vol. 43, Yu Hao Zaota 喻浩造塔). The pagoda was completed in 989 and became the highest point of the capital at that time, with an excellent and vast view (Liu 1935, vol. 8, p. 88). It sloped to the northwest, was the tallest of all the pagodas in the capital and was built by a master craftsman. When the pagoda was first built, it appeared to be tilted to the northwest and in the wrong place. It turned out that the capital was flat, without any mountains, and could resist the force of the northwest wind (Ouyang 1991, vol. 1, p. 1). Although it is not possible to know exactly why the pagoda was built to the northwest of Kaibao Temple, it is possible to deduce that the purpose of the pagoda was probably related to the concept of ‘the northwest tilting towards the sky and the southeast dropping down to the ground’ and that the pagoda was used to compensate for the imperfection of terrain, to create the ideal environment for living in the ‘Modeling of Heaven and Earth’ (法天則地). In addition, the Yuqing Zhaoying Temple 玉清昭應宮, located to the northwest of the palace, corresponds to the Qian (乾) direction of the eight trigrams (see Figures 2 and 3) and was used to pray for good fortune (Li 1995, vol. 6, p. 71).

As for the pagoda named “Literary Brush Peak” (*Wenbi feng*, Wenbi Peak 文筆峰) by the famous politician Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052) in Poyang County 鄱陽縣 (in currently Jiangxi province), it mainly serves the function of blessing. According to Poyang Legend, Fan Zhongyan saw a high pagoda in Miaoguo Cloister 妙果禪院 in the southeast of the city, representing the cultural atmosphere of the place, after he arrived in the beautiful landscape of the county. Several lakes were connected around the county, which nourished Confucian students and scholars. Fan named the pagoda “Wenbifeng” and the lake “Yanchi” (硯池 inkstone lake) and predicted that in twenty years this place would be home to the top students. Sure enough, during the Zhiping period (1064–1067), Peng Ruli 彭汝礪 of this county achieved the top rank in the imperial civil examination (Fan 2004, vol. 2, p. 855).

The Wenbifeng pagoda of the Zen temple is located in the southeast, which is related to a concept in *fengshui* theory. The high mountain was always considered to be Jupiter (“star of wood”), which is the master of cultural activities. According to the commentary in the geomancy classic *Yusui Zhenjing*, the star of wood was considered the most valuable one of the five stars, and the geomancers used wood as the honored star (尊星), the star of the year (歲星), the star of the emperor (帝星), and the star of the literati (文星) (Zhang 1996, vol. 1053). Wenbi Peak Mountain stands tall in the Xun (巽) position, exactly in line with the southeast position, representing the literati (see Figures 2 and 3, the southeast position). So, the prediction of a scholar winning the first prize in an examination was fulfilled. The rationale behind this reflects the concept of “forming an image in the sky and taking shape on earth” (在天成象, 在地成形). The southeastern part of the temple belongs to the Xun position in the eight trigrams, and also to the four southeastern palaces of the Nine Palaces of the Luo Shu, which correspond to the nine stars in the sky, also known as the Tianfu (天輔 Heavenly Assistants) Star. According to the classic *Wuxing Dayi* (五行大義), “Tianfu star is charged with literati, the Xun position is the command, and there are for the essays (天輔子文者, 巽為號令, 有文章也)” (Xiao 2001, vol. 5, p. 123). The fact that the temple is located in the southeast of the city must also have been influenced by geomancy, which explains why the southeastern part of the temple is the star of literati, the star that governs the writing of articles.

Overall, the choice of the site during the Song dynasty had significance in terms of saving the building from harm and praying for good fortune. From the early days of the doctrine of prohibition for excavation was considered to remedy misfortune, the religious activities of Buddhist monks and Daoist masters put the theory of *fengshui* into practice. In addition, buildings were placed in various settings in praying for good fortune and protection from harm. This mix of religious and *fengshui* concepts in the landscape reinforced in the absorption, adoption, and use of folk beliefs by government authority.

5. Conclusions

The Song dynasty was the heyday of *fengshui* in China in terms of incorporating its techniques and beliefs, and it had a profound impact on the development of geomancy concepts and culture for generations to come. Carrying religious symbolism for architectural structures and urban planning, *fengshui* combined natural elements, such as mountains, rivers, and lowlands, with human landscapes, such as cities, Buddhist temples, and Daoist temples, demonstrating the involvement of religious figures in the political construction of medieval China’s empire as an intellectual power. This tradition influenced the later Ming and Qing dynasties, when *fengshui* writings were formalized and made public by official publishers, with more than 220 *fengshui* works. *Fengshui* was mixed with ecology, geography, geology, and architecture. Through the Buddhist monks and Daoists, the tradition of structured layouts of spatial orientation was integrated from the bottom up into the logic of Chinese imperial governance. Through this channel, skilled geomancers brought the cosmology of the high culture down to earth. An awareness of the historical origins of this tradition is helpful in our understanding of architectural heritage in general.

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