Transcending History: (Re)Building Longchang Monastery of Mount Baohua in the Seventeenth Century

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the roles architectural renovation played in the revival of Longchang Monastery of Mount Baohua (Jiangsu), a major Chinese monastery of the Vinaya School and an ordination center in Late Imperial China. Based on temple gazetteers, monastic memoirs, and modern documentation of monastic architecture and life by Prip-Møller, the author reveals the formation of a spatial system that centered at the threefold ordination rituals. It took the entire seventeenth century for the system to take form under the supervision of a Chan monk-architect Miaofeng and three successive Vinaya abbots, Sanmei, Jianyue, and Ding’an. The spatial practices, comprising a series of reconstructions, reorientations, redesigns, re-demarcations, and refurbishments, have not only reconciled fractures and defects in the monastic architecture but also built a history for the rising institute. This article examines the construction of and the narratives around three centers of the Monastery, namely, the Open-Air Platform Unit where Miaofeng erected a copper hall, the Main Courtyard where Sanmei reoriented the monastic layout to follow the Vinaya tradition, the Ordination Platform Unit where Jianyue rebuilt a stone ordination platform, and again the Open-Air Platform Unit that Ding’an had refurbished and reunited with the later centers. The forces that have driven this seemingly non-progressive history, as the author argues, are not only the consistent efforts to counteract the natural course of material decay, but also the ambition of making a living history without beginning or end.

Keywords: Longchang Monastery; Mount Baohua; the Nanshan Lineage of the Vinaya School; Johannes Prip-Møller; ordination platform; threefold ordination rituals; architectural renovation

These pages are intended to make more vivid the picture of a monastery as an organism living in the present but with its roots deep in the past.

Every monastery is a living organism which survives only through constant modification.

1. Introduction

The constant modification in Buddhist monasteries is a major challenge for historians of Chinese architecture. As is often the case, even when a monastery is alleged to have an ancient origin, the buildings in it might be built or rebuilt just decades ago. As one may wonder upon confronting such a monastery, what kind of history do the “repaired” buildings carry?

The practices of “restoration”, traditionally referred to as chongxiu 重修, range from refurbishment of worn surfaces, reconstruction of lost structures, renovation (which often involves modification), and redesignation of orientation, center, and borders. The restoration of most monasteries in China does not exclude creativity. Such creativity can harm the coherency of the original design, and that is why historians of Chinese architecture are often annoyed by restoration that is destructive of historical monuments. In some lucky
instances, however, creativity may well lead to a better realization of an ideal that has been attempted since the remote past.

Longchang Monastery (Longchang si 隆昌寺, The Monastery of Prosperity) of Mount Baohua (Baohua shan 寶華山, The Mountain of Precious Flower) is such a case; restoration has been essential to the survival of the Monastery as a living organism. The Monastery, located about twenty miles east of an old capital city Nanjing (in present-day Jiangsu province), has thrived under the charge of eminent monks and imperial recognition as well as suffered from turmoil resulting from dynastic changes. Mount Baohua, according to the gazetteer of the mountain monastery, Baohua shanzhi 寶華山志 (Gazetteer of Mount Baohua, hereafter “BHSZ”), compiled by Liu Mingfang 劉名芳 (a. 1751) in 1785–95, was inhabited by an eminent Chan monk Baozhi 寶志 (418–514) in as early as 502 CE. Yet the earliest known buildings there were constructed by another group of Chan monks in the late-Ming dynasty (1368–1644). The rise of the monastery as a Buddhist ordination center with a Vinaya (Lü 律) specialization during the seventeenth century stimulated building expansions as well as spatial shifts from the pre-existing Chan establishments. Most timber-structured halls had been burnt down more than once during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the following reconstructions stubbornly adhered to an irregularly concentric layout as displayed in a wood-block print illustration from the mid-eighteenth century (Figure 1). Having undergone many hard times, the Monastery resumed its functionality and vigorousness as soon as the same space was reframed by buildings—even just in a modest style. This Vinaya monastery gradually thrived as “the Foremost Ordination Platform under the Heaven” (tianxia diyi jietan 天下第一戒壇) during the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and the Republican era (1911–1949) (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 14, p. 606; Wen 2004, p. 41). The monastic architecture is testimony to the constant restorative practices that have in effect extended the “life” of the monastery.

Figure 1. The picture of Longchang Monastery of Mount Baohua. Chinese, wood-block print, book illustration, the eighteenth century (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 197, Figure 237; BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 1).

So is Longchang Monastery “a persistent architectural frame around an unchanging religious culture” (Prip-Møller 1937, “Preface”)? Perhaps for the defenders of the progressiveness of Chinese architecture, this statement, made by the first modern investigator of the Monastery’s building history, may sound derogatory. But a reexamination will reveal that the seemingly non-progressive architecture resulted from a dynamic process of altering the core areas of the Monastery. In the process, a series of renovations were the catalyst
of spatial and institutional fractures as well as the reconciliation of them. Commissioned by three successive abbots during the seventeenth century, the almost rebuilt Monastery eventually framed an architectural and spatial system that centered around the threefold ordination, the core activity of the Vinaya center. In addition, the renovation practices helped to build a history for the rising institute. The institutional history “written” in the buildings is a collective work of the Chan monks who laid a keystone, the three Vinaya abbots who decisively reshaped it, and the modern visitors who empathetically translated it. This case study takes architectural renovation as essentially a spatial practice—a non-verbal means of communication, negotiation, and expression. Renovation serves as a collective design in the long durée by means of reconciling fractures and defects in the prototype or the preexisting structures. From this lens, we will see how the mentality underlying restorative practice has defined a transcending history of Chinese architecture.

2. Longchang Monastery: From Miaofeng to the Twentieth Century

A stream that runs a long course must have come from a remote source. Longchang Monastery is no exception to this Chinese belief. As the continuous prosperity of the Monastery in the Late Imperial period proves, the buildings have worked effectively in sustaining a monastic community. What restores the memory of the past is the later reconstructions that seem to comply with the earlier spatial settings. Not only do the reconstructions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries follow the eighteenth-century layout, but the eighteenth-century layout also, as will be discussed in the next section, resembles an archaic type of monastery layout in China. The literary inspiration of this layout can even be traced back to the Indian prototype of the Buddha’s time. Almost all buildings were claimed by those who commissioned them to be reconstruction of some older versions. Indeed, from a historical perspective, a compliance with the tradition legitimates the following generations’ actions.

2.1. Miaofeng: Founding the Open-Air Platform Unit

In this context, buildings recognized as “original construction”, as opposed to a reconstruction, indicate a watershed in history. The construction of the Open-Air Platform Unit (Figure 2)—the only instance of this sort—planted a seed of spirituality and prestige at Mount Baohua. On a stone platform that would later become the summit of the Monastery, a Chan monk-architect Miaofeng 妙峰 (1540–1612) “founded” (chuangjian 创建) a west-facing architectural triad for the Three Great Bodhisattvas in 1605 (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 3, p. 101). Originally, a double-eave copper hall dedicated to the Guanyin 觀音 (Skt: Avalokiteśvara) Bodhisattva stood on a raised stone platform in the rear center of the courtyard. The two stone vaulted halls, known as “the Beamless Halls” (wuliang dian 无梁殿), were respectively dedicated to Wenshu 文殊 (Skt: Mañjuśrī) and Puxian 普賢 (Skt: Samantabhadra) Bodhisattvas. Miaofeng initially planned to dedicate the images and halls to three Famous Buddhist Mountains that were believed to be the abodes of the respective bodhisattvas, namely, Mounts Putuo, Wutai, and Emei. The two projects at Mts. Emei and Wutai were successfully executed. At Xiantong Monastery (Xiantong si 显通寺) of Mt. Wutai, a triad of a central copper hall and two flanking stone halls still stands (Figure 3). However, the Guanyin image could not be distributed due to pirates around the Southern Sea in which this island is located. Thus, after divination, Miaofeng decided to distribute it to Mount Baohua, which was closer to the Southern Capital City Nanjing of the Ming Empire. The copper hall Miaofeng designed for Mount Baohua was almost identical to those of Mounts Wutai and Emei (J. Zhang 2015, p. 297). Sponsored by the Shen Emperor of Ming (r. 1572–1620) and the Cisheng Empress Dowager as well as officials and local communities in Central China, the projects also indicated imperial recognition and support of the statewide Buddhist centers. In other words, the Guanyin image and the Copper Hall won Mount Baohua a special position in the Buddhist landscape of Late-Imperial China.
2.2. Inevitable Material Decay and Human Counteraction

Marvelous as it was, the Copper Hall was subject to material decay without exception. As soon as it was erected, historical beholders knew the monument would follow the circle of form and deform. And they saw the only way out to be diligently practicing the faith. In a stele text about the construction of the Copper Hall (chijian Baohua shan huguo shenghua si guanyin pusa tongdian bei (勒建寶華山護國聖化隆昌寺觀音普薩銅殿碑, BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, p. 208), a literatus-official Jiao Hong (焦竑 (1540–1620) commented after praising the splendid appearance of the hall:

> However, the method of action is essentially relenting. Like carved ice and engraved snow, it will eventually return to non-being. Forming results in being, and being results in deforming. Who knows that something indestructible lies in the process of forming and deforming? [That is,] bowing to the Great Compassionate One, and vowing to safe sentient beings as many as the sand in the Ganges River. May them all attain the diamond body, which is indestructible in a period as long as ten thousand eons.

Figure 2. A detailed image of the copper hall and Beamless Halls of Longchang Monastery: (a) Copper Hall; (b) Wenshu Hall; (c) Puxian; (d) Incense Pavilion; (e) Ordination Platform Unit. (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vols. 1, 5).

Figure 3. The copper hall and beamless halls of Xiantong Monastery at Mount Wutai, photograph by Jianwei Zhang in 2009 (J. Zhang 2015, p. 305, Figure 8).
The first half of Jiao’s comment was almost a prophecy to the Copper Hall’s deformation. The copper and stone monuments were refurbished some eighty years later (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, pp. 245–47), as will be discussed in more detail. The Copper Hall eventually perished in the turmoil caused by the Taiping Revolt (1850–1864) and was replaced by a brick-and-wood hall (Figure 4). The second half, meanwhile, although more of an aspiration than a statement of fact, would find echo in the continuing worship of Guanyin—the bodhisattva of Great Compassion—at the site.

![Figure 4. Photograph of the Open-Air Platform, with the Surrounding Buildings (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 249, Figure 275).](image)

In the 1930s, the copper hall had been replaced and the stone halls repurposed as the abodes of elderly monks. Nevertheless, residents and pilgrims at the Monastery still “believed that their prayers to Guanyin are more likely to be heard if uttered there (i.e., the Open-Air Platform Unit)” (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 254). The pilgrims believed that the spiritual quality of the Unit was invulnerable to material decay and social reforms. The surviving monuments represent not just the refinement of masonry in seventeenth-century China but also the revival of the Monastery in the subsequence decades and centuries.

2.3. Three Vinaya Abbots: Decisive Roles in Revising the Monastery

If the architectural monuments erected by Miaofeng mark the eve of the revival campaign, then the substantial works have been conducted by the first three abbots of the Monastery from the Nanshan Tradition (Nanshan zong 南山宗) of the Vinaya School. The three Vinaya abbots, Sanmei Jiguang 三昧寂光 (1580–1645), Jianyue Duti 見月護體 (1601–1679), and Ding’an 定庵 (aka. Deji 德基, 1634–1700), are disciple and successor of one another.

Institutionalization—in this case, the set-up of a Buddhist monastic order—is not a given thing from the beginning. During Miaofeng’s time, a monastic community of considerable scale and communal life seemed not yet to have been established. Miaofeng has left no dharmic heir. The other eminent monk Xuelang 雪浪 (1545–1608) had preached at one of the peaks of Mount Baohua but has no recorded interaction with Miaofeng, despite the fact that they were contemporary Chan monks and known for their expertise in temple construction. Neither Miaofeng, nor Xuelang, nor other contemporary monks whose names we know such as Nanzong 南宗, Tiankong 天空, and Zishan 芝山, were...
called “abbot” of any monastery. There were teachers and students, but a formed institute that functioned like a community is not known to have existed at Mount Baohua before the seventeenth century.

The Monastery—the framework of an institutionalized community—took three generations to build. Numerous image halls, meditation halls, corridors, and minor units enclose a squarish Main Courtyard in two to three concentric layers. As the sequence has been sorted out (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 281–96, Figure 5), the first Vinaya abbot Sanmei commissioned the innermost ring around the Main Courtyard, including most important ritual buildings and monks’ chambers. Then, Sanmei’s successor Jianyue commissioned buildings on the second and third outer rings of the concentric layout. Small cloisters of more independent function, such as the Courtyard of the Abbot, the Courtyard of the Ordination Platform, a courtyard of the Dining Hall, and various kinds of workshops were built. Afterwards, Jianyue’s successor Ding’an completed the outermost ring and even renovated the architectural heritage from Miaofeng’s days. The difficulty of this transformation is indicated by the irregularity of the layout. For instance, the orthogonal and concentric layout is complicated by a minor unit known as “the Open-Air Platform Unit.” Shifting some 45 degrees away from other parts in the Monastery, the unit is connected directly to the main entrance of the Monastery by a relative independent route (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Building history of Longchang Monastery (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 283, Figure 303).
After all, the three Vinaya abbots have played decisive roles in the layout of Longchang Monastery as it exists nowadays. They together have determined the orientation of the Monastery, erected the ritual and auxiliary buildings, instituted a paradigm of monastic life, and restored the religious and spiritual pasts for the present.

2.4. Prip-Møller: Recognizing the Extending-Life Phenomenon

The first modern scholar who noticed the “life-extending” phenomenon and the architectural value of Longchang Monastery is Johannes Prip-Møller (Aishuhua 艾術華, 1889–1943). A professional architect, self-trained anthropologist, and Christian missionary, he is among the very few pioneers who conducted extensive architectural and ethnographical surveys on Chinese Buddhist monasteries in the early-twentieth century. Prip-Møller received formal architecture training in the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and Columbia University. Upon arrival in China in 1921, he studied the Chinese language in Beijing and working as an architect in Shenyang in Northeast China for five years. With familial and social ties to the Christian missions in China, Prip-Møller deepened a sympathetic interest in the building practices that have sustained yet another long-lived religious culture—Chinese Buddhism. He decided to study the still functioning Buddhist monasteries, which spread across mountains and towns all over China, yet were concentrated around the Lower Yangzi River Delta. Under the sponsorship of the Carlsburg and the Ny Carlsburg Foundations, Prip-Møller traveled in eleven of the eighteen provinces of China in 1929–1931 and surveyed numerous Buddhist monasteries that were still in practice. He documented the layouts, iconographies, and rituals of the monasteries, among which Longchang Monastery enjoys the most detailed observation. The fieldwork’s summative outcome is a monumental monograph titled Chinese Buddhist Monasteries: Their Plan and Its Function as a Setting for Buddhist Monastic Life, published in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1937. The account of Longchang Monastery in the book preserves the most comprehensive picture of any Buddhist monastery in China thus far. It comprises systematic documentation of not only the architecture and building history but also the rituals and monastic lives.

It has been well acknowledged that the documentary work in Chinese Buddhist Monasteries is invaluable and non-retrievable, especially by historians of Chinese religions (Welch 1967). But Prip-Møller’s scholarly approach was largely ignored by the mainstream architectural historians of the time. His interest in the monasteries deviated from most Japanese and European scholars in China as well as the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture (Yingzao xueshe 建造學社). When others were competing to discover historical remains of as early as possible a date, as well as the lost knowledge of the timber-construction system, Prip-Møller looked at contemporary practices and the built environment around him. Prip-Møller self-consciously chose to study the lately built or rebuilt monasteries that were unstudied by others, but the method and value of his work received serious criticism. Pioneering architectural historian Liang Sicheng (1901–1972), though recognizing a few instances of architectural studies, doubted the relevance of ordi-

![Figure 6. Section of Longchang Monastery, showing the Main Gate, the Ordination Platform Unit and the Open-Air Platform (Prip-Møller 1937, Pl. 4).](image-url)
nation ritual and socio-religious history to the discipline of architecture. Liang regretted that Chinese Buddhist Monasteries is a result of "ignoring one’s own field but cultivating other’s" (Liang 1940, p. 428). Even after three decades, when the book was republished, a pre-eminent art historian Alexander C. Soper (1904–1993) still did not apprehend its relevance to the studies of ancient architecture (Soper 1969, p. 88). German scholar Ernst Boerschmann (1873–1949), whose work had inspired Prip-Møller’s, was among the very few scholars who shared the latter’s belief in a history-transcending architecture (Boerschmann 1939, p. 294), but he was not well received by the mainstream either. The problem about what significance lies in a non-progressive history lingers on.

3. Sanmei: (Re)Building the Main Courtyard to Establish a Vinaya Monastery

In order to locate the dynamics in this seeming changelessness, it is necessary to revisit the most crucial period in the building history of Longchang Monastery—that is, the seventeenth century under the first three abbots of the Vinaya monastery. The weak state of the institution did not change until Sanmei, the first abbot, took charge. Invited by officials and clergy in Nanjing, Sanmei, as an established monastery founder, accepted the mission of reviving the site. According to a biography written by a literatus-official Chen Danzhong (陈丹衷 (/?–17th century) (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 13, pp. 230–31), Sanmei was trained under Xuelang and received teachings from Chan and Pure Land masters in his early career, before he was fully ordained under the thirteenth Vinaya patriarch Guxin (古心 (1540–1615). Sanmei deployed several strategies, including allusion to classical models and ordination rituals, to establish a vigorous institute.

Sanmei’s foremost mission was the large-scale construction of an independent system. He set up a main hall on another ground below the Open-Air Platform Unit. The Main Hall, far larger than the copper hall, became the most public ritual building of the Monastery. Furthermore, Sanmei carefully planned the layout of the Main Courtyard surrounding the Main Hall, making the new cloister face the northwest direction instead of the west. The innovations, nevertheless, are not without precedents in the history of Buddhist monasteries.

3.1. Archaic Layout

The core area of Longchang Monastery established by Sanmei comprises a single main courtyard surrounded by several buildings and units. This design does not follow the paradigmatic layout of the Ming and Qing dynasties: the paradigm features a prolonged central axis along which multiple courtyards and major ritual buildings are laid out (Figure 7). Pragmatic buildings, such as the living zone for the monks, would be placed on the lateral sides of the main axis. But Longchang Monastery has neither a prolonged layout nor a main path; instead, most following expansions center around the main courtyard ever since its establishment. What may have helped Sanmei envision this design?

Formally speaking, the layout in which a main courtyard is surrounded by minor courtyards reminds historians of Chinese architecture of the paradigm of monastery layouts in the Tang (618–907). This paradigm follows the ideal monastery prescribed by a scholar-monk Daoshan 道山 (596–667), who was the First Patriarch of the Nanshan Lineage of the Vinaya School. According to Daoshan’s Illustrated Scripture of Jetavana Vihara of Sravasti in Central India (Zhong Tianzhu shewei guo qihuan si tujing 中天竺捨衛國祇洹寺圖經), Jetavana Monastery is formed around the Central Buddha Cloister. The Buddha cloister, which is a four-sided enclosure preserved for the Buddha and larger than any other units in the building complex, is surrounded by the monks’ cloisters. In the outer areas are located a multitude of cloisters for Buddhist education and miscellaneous affairs (Figure 8). As architectural historian Puay-peng Ho points out, this ideal monastery under the name of a holy site in India has effected a spatial symbolism of the Vinaya practices and established a spatial paradigm for Buddhist monasteries in China (Ho 1995). Although no monastery from Daoshan’s time still stands in its primary layout, various historical materials bear witness to the prevalence of this paradigm in Tang China.
The Longchang layout (Figure 9) displays a striking similarity to Daoxuan’s ideal monastery. The Main Hall, which stands for the presence of the Buddha, is located at the rear center of the Main Courtyard. The Main Courtyard is flanked on the lateral sides by the “Board Halls” (bantang 板堂), which are meditation and living quarters for monks in the Vinaya tradition. Further outward one finds the Cloister of the Abbot, dining halls and kitchens, guests’ quarters, and workshops. The only significant difference is the peripheral location of the Monastery Gate (Shanmen 山門) and the northwest-facing orientation of the monastery. Yet these decisions were not so much a challenge to the paradigm as a response to the topography.
Figure 8. Schematic plan of Jetavana monastery based on Daουxuan’s description, reconstruction by Puay-peng Ho (drawing by author, after Ho 1995, p. 6, Figure 2).

Figure 9. First floor plan of Longchang Monastery in 1930 (Prip-Møller 1937, Pl. 1).
Sanmei has not explicitly addressed the connection between the archaic layout he adopted and the ideal monastery Daoxuan described. It seems natural for the Main Courtyard to echo the topography of the main peak, which is surrounded by many minor peaks. However, it is not unreasonable to consider the archaic layout as an homage Sanmei, a follower of the Nanshan Lineage of the Vinaya School, paid to the first patriarch of his lineage, who represents the remote source of wisdom and authority. Sanmei’s followers would soon recognize the historical allusion.

3.2. Experiential Space

Apart from the layout, Sanmei put much effort in creating an adorned and orderly space for believers to experience. The architectural strategies feature four points: the placement of images and instruments, symbolism through the arrangement of functional spaces, an orientation shift, and the erection of an ordination platform.

Firstly, the largest buildings and the major Buddhist images are located at the rear and front centers of the main courtyard. They constitute a central axis that keeps worshippers in a solemn mood (Figure 10). The central icon in the main hall is an image of the Cosmic Buddha Vairocana, who represents the essential body (Chn: fashen 法身; Skt: dharmakāya) of the Historical Buddha Shakyamuni. The buddha icon, as Prip-Møller observed, was a physical and spiritual locus during the morning and evening recitations as well as the annual ordination ritual (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 309-10). In the opposite side of the courtyard, a Hall of Weituo enshrines the images of Guanyin, Wenshu, and Puxian Bodhisattvas. As mentioned above, the Three Great Bodhisattvas is the main iconography in the Open-Air Platform Unit, yet in the main courtyard the iconography occupies a subordinate position to Vairocana. The hierarchy thus hints at the peerless position of the Main Hall in the monastery. The Main Courtyard is equipped with major sounding instruments used for monastic rituals. The big bell and big drum are placed in the Hall of Weituo, whereas two wooden fish, an inverted bell beaten with a wooden stick (qing 磬), and a smaller set of bell and drum are in the main hall. The sounding instruments signify monastic time and schedules. They add an acoustic dimension to the visual order and a temporal dimension to the spatial layout.

![Figure 10. Section of Longchang Monastery, Showing the Main Hall, the Main Courtyard and the Hall of Weituo (Prip-Møller 1937, Pl. 4).](image_url)

Secondly, the main courtyard accommodates novices and newly ordained monks as a prelude to the ordination rituals. The life and training that happened there helped them prepare for a communal life in a monastery. The buildings surrounding the Main courtyard include the Sutra Pavilion and the Cloister of the Abbot on two sides of the Main Hall, as well as the Board Halls on the lateral sides of the main courtyard connected by long corridors. The former represents the Three Jewels, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, whereas the latter connects those in need with the sources of Buddhist teachings and regulations. If the former is symbolic, then the latter is functional. The two aspects constitute a solemn and lively “place for awakening” (Chn: daochang 道場; Skt: bodhimañḍa).
Thirdly, the main courtyard shifts orientation about 45 degrees clockwise compared to the Open-Air Platform Unit, and all later constructions followed the inter-cardinal orientation. Yet, because of the orthogonal layout in the new area, beholders would not easily recognize the natural orientation. Locations in the monastery are sensed in a relative reference system. In accordance with the southwest-facing Main Hall, the northwest-southeast running axis was conceptualized as a south-north-running one. By convention, the northeast becomes “the west” or “the left”, the southwest is regarded as “the east” or “the right” (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 206). A beholder following the relative orientation system would naturally take the Main Hall as the reference point in his or her mental map.

Lastly and most importantly, an ordination platform was erected for performing the ordination ritual, shoujie 授 戒, or “giving the [monastic] precepts.” The ordination platform, which seems to be the only new architectural element that Sanmei introduced, was a careful choice. An ordination platform is the identifying characteristic of any major Vinaya monastery, which Sanmei presumably aspired to found. The ordination platform Sanmei commissioned was a single-level wood platform, and possibly located somewhere in the southeast part of the Main Courtyard. The ordination platform and the main courtyard together compose the stage for the most elaborate set of rituals at Longchang Monastery, namely, the Three-Platform Great Ordination (santan da jie 三壇大戒). The threefold ordination includes three precepts-giving rituals that are performed on separate days. The precepts are respectively called “the Srīmanera Precepts” (shami jie 沙彌戒), “the Bhikkhu Precepts” (biqiu jie 比丘戒), and “the Bodhisattva Precepts/Vows” (pusa jie 菩薩戒), following the increasing spirituality of the three kinds of beings, Srīmanera or the novice monk, bhikkhu or the fully ordained monk, and bodhisattva or the enlightened sentient being. The first two precepts are formal ordination rituals and the last one is a repentance and vow-making ritual. At the time when Prip-Møller visited the Monastery, the first and the third precepts were given in the Main Courtyard, whereas the second and most crucial ritual took place in the Ordination Platform Unit, where an ordination platform, albeit not identical with the one built by Sanmei, was located.

### 3.3. The Main Courtyard as the New Center

In these ways, Sanmei made the main courtyard a new center that met both ritual, symbolic, and pragmatic needs. His fundamental work was well recognized by the following generations. Sanmei was eulogized as one of the three founding patriarchs of the Monastery in a stele erected by Ding’an under the title “Brief Biographies of the Three Great Masters Miaofeng, Sanmei, and Jianyue Who Constructed Longchang Monastery of Mount Baohua” (jianzao Baohua Longchang si Miaofeng Sanmei Jianyue san dashi xinglue 建造寶華隆昌寺妙峰三昧見月三大師形略). The stele text remarks that one of Sanmei’s accomplishments was to “select the auspicious [location] and move the orientation” (xuanji qianxiang 選吉遷向) (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, pp. 13–18; Y. Liu, forthcoming, p. 102; Wen 2004, pp. 40–41). Concurrently, Sanmei created a problem for his successors; he initiated the tension between the Open-Air Platform Unit—the spiritual core established prior to the institutionalization of Mount Baohua—and the Main Courtyard—the central zone of the newly established institute. He could not control, either, whether the many monks whom he ordained would become supporters or opponents of the order he envisioned and furthered by his favorite disciple and successor Jianyue.

### 4. Jianyue: Reconstructing the Ordination Platform to Recenter the Vinaya Monastery

Jianyue had been involved in Sanmei’s construction projects since the beginning. As a helpful assistant, he was appointed as Monastery Superintendent (jiansi 监寺) when Sanmei became the Abbot of Longchang Monastery. Since being appointed the second abbot, Jianyue greatly advanced the mission of reviving Longchang Monastery as a Vinaya monastery that Sanmei founded. Compared with his predecessor, Jianyue was a more
pronounced adherent to monastic regulations and order—which are particularly valued in the Vinaya tradition. When further completing the layout Sanmei initiated by adding layers and pinpoints, Jianyue’s new vision for the Monastery centered around the ordination platform. Through reconstruction, relocation, and demarcation, he promoted the platform as another spiritual center of the Monastery. In the process, his tough measures intensified the tension between the old and new built environments. The reconstruction of the ordination platform witnessed both the mission and the tension.

4.1. Self-Conscious Reference to Daoxuan

Compared with Sanmei’s ambiguity, Jianyue took a more self-conscious approach of following the ideal monastery layout of Daoxuan. Jianyue explicated that the placement of the Ordination Platform to the southeast outside of the Main Courtyard (Figure 11) was modeled after the first ordination platform in Buddhist history. Daoxuan describes the prototypical ordination platform in another writing entitled Illustrated Scripture Concerning the Erection of the Ordination Platform in the Guanzhong Region (Guanzhong chuangli jietan tujing 關中創立戒壇圖經) (T no. 1892, 45). The scripture indicates that Shakyamuni “placed an ordination platform in the south of the east gate of the outer courtyard for the bhikkhu-to-be to receive the precepts” (T no. 1892, 45: 0807c08). To proclaim the history and significance of the ordination platform he renovated, Jianyue erected a commemorative stele that bears “the Inscription about the Ordination Platform of Longchang Monastery of Mount Baohua Constructed under Imperial Edict” (chijian Baohua shan Longchang si jietan ming 敕建寶華山隆昌寺戒壇銘) (Appendix A.1, BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, pp. 12–13; Y. Liu, forthcoming, p. 95; Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 287–88). The inscription begins by accounting the origin of the ordination platform. It traces back to the aforementioned event in which Shakyamuni Buddha “placed an ordination platform in the southeast of the outer courtyard of the [Jetavana] Vinara” of Sravasti in Central India. In effect, Jianyue ambitiously established a conceptual connection between the Ordination Platform of Longchang Monastery and the divine prototype, “the Ordination Platform Made by the Buddha” (fozhi jietan 佛製戒壇) as described by Daoxuan.

4.2. Three Steps to Promote the Ordination Platform

Jianyue upgraded the Ordination Platform in three steps, namely, rebuilding the old wood platform, rebuilding it again with white marble, and demarcating the Monastery’s inner, middle, and outer boundaries. Through these steps, the Ordination Platform was transformed into the most spiritual and secluded place in the Monastery.

The first step was to rebuild the old wooden platform made by Sanmei. According to “the Inscription about the Ordination Platform” (Appendix A.1, Lines 1–2),

Having inherited his master’s mission and been told to promote and transmit it, [Jianyue] diligently practiced in person and rectified [the errs]. Starting on the third day of the fourth month of Dinghai, which is the fourth year of Shunzhi era of the current (i.e., Qing) dynasty (1647), … [Jianyue] constructed a boundary and erected a platform, imitating the past and renewing it in the present … Therefore his primary goal to revitalizing the Monastery under his arms, at that moment was half-accomplished.  

From this text, we learn that Jianyue set out to continue the monastery-reviving work of Sanmei and that the Ordination Platform was the first project he commissioned. In 1647, Jianyue made a new wooden platform based on the pre-existing model, i.e., the wooden platform erected by Sanmei. The platform might have corrected some defects in Sanmei’s version, yet there seemed to be an error in the stairways. Indeed, “imitating the past” is only the first half of revitalization and more work is needed to be done.
Subsequently, Jianyue decided to take a second step to rebuild the platform again. The design updates, as well as the political and religious implications of this event, are thoroughly discussed in the following quote from the aforementioned inscription (Appendix A.1, Lines 3–6),

On the sixteenth day of the third month of a Guimao year, which was the second year of Kangxi era (1663), on the sound of the board, a communal meeting took place. An unoccupied place in the southeast outside of the Main Courtyard was selected. The old [Ordination Platform] was dismantled and a new one was constructed. The [new designation of] boundary was not constrained by any [conventional] pattern. The stone platform had clearly distinguished upper and lower levels. In the early evening of the twentieth day of that month, clouds and rain dimmed the sky, and mountains and hills were obscured in mist. Suddenly, the Hall of the Ordination Platform radiated lights of five colors which broke through the cloudy sky. The mountain peaks revealed emerald green and ten thousand pine trees embraced the site. The building complex was brilliantly shone as if by the sun in the daytime. Not after a while did the luminosity started to dissolve. The assembly joyfully watched this, and in a single voice praised the wonderful [event]. In the long period since the Vinaya came to exist, an auspicious omen as such is indeed a rare thing in the world of Five Turbidities!

From the quote we know that, in 1663, Jianyue had “the old [Ordination Platform] dismantled and a new one constructed.” In the second renovation, significant revisions were made: a white marble material replaced the wood, it was clearly a double-level platform; and meticulous ornamentation was added. The white marble platform (Figure 12) has a dignified appearance clearly distinguishable from the previous version. According to Prip-Møller, this white marble platform likely corrected a design error in the stairs previously made by

Figure 11. Second floor plan of Longchang Monastery (Prip-Møller 1937, Pl. 2).
Jianyue himself in his first reconstruction from sixteen years ago (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 284). The white marble is a precious material, like copper, only applied to imperial buildings or imperially recognized monasteries. This instance demonstrates that reconstruction could be a good opportunity to optimize the design. The dignified design and the enduring material properly expressed that the ordination platform was both a crucial stage for the threefold ordination rituals and a display of the imperial recognition of a prestigious monastery.36

Figure 12. Photograph of the Ordination Platform (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 243, Figure 270).

In addition, the erection of the stele and the recording of the miraculous correspondence (ganying 感應) played an important role in the promotion of the status of the stone platform. If the communal meeting, as well as the siting and boundary-making activities, improved the Sangha’s knowledge of the ordination platform, which is normally hidden from public view, then the auspicious omen of the five-color light furthered the mythic efficacy of it. By promoting this anecdote, Jianyue tried to convince others of the divine quality of the stone ordination platform, which, upon completion, emitted five-colored brilliant lights into the night sky through layers of clouds. The implied message was that the ordination platform received not only imperial endorsement but also celestial approval.

The third strategy was a threefold demarcation. The Ordination Platform Unit (Figure 13), in which the marble Ordination Platform was permanently retained, was located in the east, outside of the Main Courtyard, and in the north, below the Open-Air Platform Unit. Like the Main Courtyard, the Ordination Platform Unit faces northwest. Because of its content, the Ordination Platform Unit became the third and the newest locus of the Monastery. Compared with the previous two, the Ordination Platform Unit was made even more sacred through the strict control of accessibility, and more central through the redesignation of the Monastery’s boundaries.

On the one hand, the Unit could only be accessed during the second and most crucial stage of the threefold ordination ritual. Once a year, every novice monk who wished to enter monkhood passed the narrow corridor at night, ascended the platform in line, and took the Bhikkhu Precepts before the seats of the abbot and other senior monks. The Sangha shared their personal memory of the spot that lay at the very foundation of their career as a fully-ordained monk.
On the other hand, Jianyue once gave a sermon to the Sangha, in which he set three concentric layers of boundaries centering at the Ordination Platform. Although it is hard to know how effective the sermon was at that time, its lasting influence is detectable in a stele which was erected seventy-eight years after the sermon had happened. The inscription of this stele, “The Bounds of the Monastery” (Jiexiang zhunze 界相準則) dated 1741, has recorded Jianyue’s sermon in 1663 as follows (Appendix A.2, Y. Liu, forthcoming, pp. 106–7; Prip-Møller 1937, p. 296):

First to be declared is the method of constructing the Field of Ordination Ritual (shoujie chang 受戒場). Its southeastern side is marked by the wall of the Place of Screened-off Teachings (Pingjiao suo 屏教所). Its southwestern side is marked by the wall of the right-side gable wall of the Ordination Platform Hall. Its northwestern side is marked by the wall of the left-side gable wall of the Hall. Its northeastern side is marked by the outer side of the surrounding wall of the Hall. These are the four-sided outer boundaries of the Field of Ordination Ritual.

Second to be declared is the construction of the Inner Extent of the Larger Boundary. Its southeastern side is marked at two feet (Chinese) from the wall of the Place of Screened-off Teachings. Its southwestern side is marked at two feet (Chinese) from the wall of the right-side gable wall of this Ordination Platform Hall. Its northwestern side is marked at two feet (Chinese) from the wall of the left-side gable wall of this Hall. Its northeastern side is marked at two feet (Chinese) from the [surrounding] wall of this Hall. These are the four-sided inner extent of the Larger Boundary.

Third to be declared is the construction of the Outer Extent of the Larger Boundary. Its southeastern corner is marked at the crossroad on the further side of the Main Mountain (Zhushan 主山). Its southwestern corner is marked at the crossroad at the foot of the Dragon’s Back Mountain (Longbei shan 龍背山). Its northwestern corner is marked at the summit of the West Flower Mountain (Xihuashan 西華山). Its northeastern corner is marked at the chestnut tree at the foot of the Bliss Mountain Range (Huanxi ling 歡喜領). This is the outer extent of the Larger Boundary.

Beyond the boundaries [marked by] tied cloth there is no other extent of boundary. Precisely adhering to the demonstration, construct up to the outer extend of the Larger Boundary.

According to the record, Jianyue defined the boundaries of the Monastery in relation to the Ordination Platform Unit: the innermost boundary encloses the courtyard and halls of the Unit, the middle one is slightly set off from the innermost boundary, and the outermost boundary drastically increases to cover the overall monastic property surrounded by the mountains (Figure 14). As if to emphasize the decisiveness and comprehensiveness of this demarcation, Jianyue uttered that beyond these boundaries there was no other boundary. This historical conception of zoning is surprisingly different from a modern researcher’s view that takes the main courtyard to be the core of the Monastery and the smaller units to be the subordinate. Instead, Jianyue constructed a systematic conception of religious space by means of symbolic objects, ritualistic demarcation, and the Monastery’s main functionality as a field of ordination.

![Image of three boundaries of the Monastery](image)

**Figure 14.** A diagram showing the three boundaries of the Monastery according to Jianyue’s sermon (drawing by author, base map: Figure 13 & BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 1, pp. 3, 6).

4.3. **Aftermath**

Jianyue’s bold activities and speech left a hazardous impact on building a monastic community. When he was promoting this new centerpiece of the Monastery and reframing the spatial hierarchy, just like the three potential loci confronting one another, differentiation emerged from within the Sangha. Some elder monks were even competing for the position of the Abbot. Although opinions are not settled on whether Jianyue intended to leave or was expelled from the Monastery by some monks unsatisfied with his over-activity, the fact was that, shortly after the second platform reconstruction and the demarcation sermon, he left the Monastery for multiple years because of the conflicts between factions. Jianyue did not enter Mount Baohua once again until the literatus-official Chen Danzhong, acting as mediator, invited him to return as an abbot. Perhaps in order to balance the unsettled forces, Jianyue’s last wish was to refurbish the old Open-Air Platform Unit, although he had to leave the unfinished task to his successor Ding’an.

5. **Ding’an: Refurbishing the Open-Air Platform Unit to Reunite the Three Centers**

Ding’an deeply remembered what Jianyue once signed to him with emotion in old age. Jianyue commented that a human’s lifespan is shorter than those of metal and stone, yet even the copper hall and stone platform are also subject to disintegration, and he saw the words “all that has form definitely deforms” in both humans and architecture (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, p. 245). To counteract the natural process of material decay and
to balance the human forces that may deform the institution, Ding’an took the opportunity to refurbish the Open-Air Platform. Ding’an fashioned himself as a faithful follower of Jianyue without the latter’s strong characteristics. He consciously took the role of compiling guidelines and historical accounts, rather than that of a chief architect. Through issuing new placatory rules, Ding’an consolidated the tensions among the monastic sections. During the refurbishment projects, he valued the works of the lay Buddhists and literati in fulfilling the revival mission. He even wrote twelve volumes about the Monastery’s settings and institutional history, which became the basis of Liu Mingfang’s fifteen-volume gazetteer BHSZ. Through resuming solidarity among the monastic and lay communities, the ultimate goal was to reunite the Monastery that had an old center and the two new centers.

5.1. Renewing Placatory Rules

To counteract the separatist thread that had surfaced during Jianyue’s time, Ding’an issued “the Rules for the Brotherhood” (gongzhu guiyue 共住規約) and had the rules inscribed on a stele in 1683 (Y. Liu, forthcoming, pp. 97–99; Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 288–91). “The Rules” starts by reasserting the importance of the monastic regulations established by Jianyue. Based on Jianyue’s version, the rules Ding’an issued “particularly establish some chapters and check erroneous ideas at the outset.” The preventive measures particularly address that nobody should be permitted or forced “to separate himself from the community”. The twelve chapters in the Rules cover all aspects about communal life in a monastery, including places for living, clothing, dining, lodging, traveling, and tonsure. The guidelines reflected Ding’an’s vision for an inclusive community, which was also applicable in regard to monastery construction.

5.2. Refurbishment of the Open-Air Platform

In 1680–1691, Ding’an commissioned a series of small and delicate stone structures for the refurbishment of the Open-Air Platform. Upon the completion of the refurbishment, Ding’an compiled “A Record of the Renovation of the Copper Pavilion, the Incense Pavilion, and the Stone Platform” (chongxiu tongdian xiangting shitai ji 重修銅殿香亭石台記, BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, pp. 247–48). The record began by addressing Jianyue’s last vow and the merits of several lay artists and sponsors who participated in the projects. Among them, a layman Dajing 大茎 decorated the Copper Hall with the assistance of a Head of the Hall Xingbai 省白. The landscape images on the railings were painted by two artists Julai 巨來 and Zhilai 支來, disciples of a famous painter Gong Xian 龔賢 (1618–1689). The projects were sponsored by “dharma protectors of the Ten Quarters.” Ding’an did not assert his leadership and authorship; instead, he humbly wrote that what he was doing was “documenting the events, recording the merits, and passing down for future generations”. Nonetheless, it is hard to believe that the decade-long, comprehensive refurbishments were without a planner, who could have been only Ding’an. Under his supervision, an incense-offering shrine known as “the Stone Incense Pavilion” (shixiang ting 石香亭) was erected in front of the copper hall when the latter was refurbished. A commemorative stele in memory of Miaofeng, Sanmei, and Jianyue was erected on a lower platform outside the Open-Air Platform Unit. In addition, the platform was widened, repaired, decorated with bas-relief friezes, and equipped with a white marble balustrade (Figure 15). In general, platforms of the sumeru-throne (xumi zuo 須彌座) type were only applied to esteemed buildings such as the base of the main hall in imperial palaces or ancestral temples (Figure 16). In Longchang Monastery, this type of platform had been applied only to the Ordination Platform. The refurbishment of the Open-Air Platform must have been a careful design. While the stone platform may be studied as a work of architectural decoration, this study situates it in the larger context of place-making and history-framing of the Monastery.
Figure 15. Rendering of the Open-Air Platform (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 236, Figure 291).

Figure 16. A corner of the white marble base of the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden Palace, Beijing, China, seventeenth century (Photo by author, 15 October 2021).

5.2.1. Incorporating into the Ordination Rituals

For one thing, Ding’an and others modified the Miaofeng-era monument for the sake of better incorporating it into the spatial system that centered at the threefold ordination rituals. The main stair and two side stairs all point to the newly added Stone Incense Pavilion, which better facilitates the prayer to the Copper Hall (Figures 4 and 17). According to Ding’an’s, this project not only fulfilled the last will of Jianyue, but also concerned the ordination ritual. At the end of the Renovation Record, he wrote (BHSH [1795] 1975, vol. 6, p. 23):

The precious hall, pavilion, and platform are solemn and splendid. Together with our gem-like Precepts, they shine between heaven and earth and will never exhaust!

寶殿亭臺，莊嚴端麗，與吾戒珠並煇爛于天地間而無窮盡也，其庶幾乎！
Only when being inspired by collective efforts of reviving the faith, one dared to vow that the architecture and the “gem-like Precepts” (jiezhū 戒珠) eternally coexist. Although the platform no longer formally carried any function in the threefold ordination rituals when Prip-Møller visited, he assumed that the platform had once been associated with ordination (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 294). The Copper Hall, which enshrined a Guanyin image, was believed to connect with the bodhisattva. Hence, it would well suit the third stage when Prip-Møller visited, he assumed that the platform had once been associated with the bodhisattva. Hence, it would well suit the third stage of the threefold ordination, during which the newly ordained monks need to utter the Bodhisattva Vow. Till the modern time, the Copper Hall and the Stone Incense Pavilion were still the “first place after the Great Hall to which the newly ordained monks go to prostrate themselves in thankfulness before the Guanyin image” (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 254).

![Figure 17. Detail of the third floor plan of Longchang Monastery, showing the Open-Air Platform Unit in the upper half, the Roofs of the Ordination Platform Unit in the bottom-left, and the roofs of a corner of the Main Courtyard in the bottom right (Prip-Møller 1937, Pl. 3).](image)

5.2.2. Alluding to the Ordination Platform

For another, the decoration of the Open-Air Platform was designed to allude to the Ordination Platform. Through some shared visual language, the spiritual core of the past and that of the current constitute a coherent architectural landscape. The two platforms resemble each other’s proportions, circulation, and dimensions. The Open-Air Platform sizes are 14.95 m (L.) by 11.27 m (W.) by 2.10 m (H.), whereas the Ordination Platform sizes are ca. 12.8 m (L.) by 11.52 m (W.) by 1.50 m (H.). Besides, the ornate frieze of the open-air platform covers only about half of its total height (ca. 1 m vs. 2.10 m). The design approximates to the height of either tier of the Ordination Platform (66.5 cm and 83.5 cm). By means of this design, the single-level Open-Air Platform is subdivided into two levels—a decorated upper level and an undecorated lower level. Thus, the façade proportion of the two platforms becomes closer to each other. Furthermore, the frieze design of the Open-Air Platform subtly echoes the carvings on the lower tier of the ordination platform. The narrowed waist is flanked above and below by stylized lotus-petal decorations, and both the relief “feet” of the frieze and those of the ordination platform are decorated with pairs of spiral clouds. The cloud-and-thunder pattern on the railings of the ordination platform reoccurs on the narrowed waist of the frieze, showing similar double-lined edges, layering treatments, and configuration of spirals (Figure 18). Upon seeing the Open-Air
Platform, a monastic beholder would probably recall the Ordination Platform, on which he received the Bhikkhu Precepts during the second ordination ritual.

![Ordination Platform](Image)

**Figure 18.** A comparison between the Open-Air Platform (left) and the Ordination Platform (right), with author’s annotations (drawing by author, based on Prip-Møller 1937).

5.3. The Union of the Two Platforms and a Collapse of History

In short, as the final stage of the collective design, the two platforms were united as a coherent setting for the threefold ordination; the main courtyard and the two units, respectively, accommodated the three stages (Figure 19). The tensions among them were raised, intensified, and finally resolved through the accumulation of drastic and subtle adjustments. The Open-Air Platform Unit resumed its spirituality as if it had never changed.

The union of space fed a belief in the correlation of various periods in the history of Mount Baohua. The emerging belief is evident in “the Prose of the Ordination Platform” (jietan fu 戒壇賦, BHISZ [1795] 1795, vol. 10, pp. 409–12) compiled by an artist-scholar Wang Gai 王聚 (aka. Wang Anjie 王安節, 1645–1707), who was another student of Gong Xian and in the social circle of Ding’an. The prose traced the tradition of the Longchang Ordination Platform to a time prior to Daoxuan. Presumably informed by the monks or their abbot directly, Wang associated the Ordination Platform’s prototype with an ancient diagram that was allegedly made by the fifth-century Chan monk Baozhi. The fabricated narrative also perfectly connected Ding’an with all the masters prior to him: it suggested that the diagram was discovered by Xuelang, copied and preserved by Guxin, primarily constructed by Sanmei, perfected by Jianyue, and its story transmitted by Ding’an. Whether the ordination platform began with Baozhi or Daoxuan did not really matter in the believers’ eyes. What they looked for was a story without a beginning and, hence, without an end.
Figure 19. A diagram showing a coherent spatial system in which the main courtyard, the Open-Air Platform Unit, and the Ordination Platform Unit are associated with the prelude and the three stages of the threefold ordination rituals (Drawing by author, base map: Figure 1).

6. Coda: A Methodological Reflection

Through the eyes of Prip-Møller, we see how exactly the repaired monuments have connected the past and the present. That Prip-Møller chose to render the side view of the Open-Air Platform in a meticulous way (Figure 15) is not without any reason: The represented platform was designed to allude to the stone Ordination Platform, which improved twice what it replaced. Moreover, the side view is identical with what one sees in front of one of the beamless halls designed by Miaofeng (Figure 20), and from there an elderly monk living in the beamless hall often came out to guide the modern visitors to Longchang Monastery.

The built environment of Longchang Monastery successfully maintained a dynamism and eventually a balance in the process of constant and sometimes contradictory modifications. During a crucial period of establishing an institution, the three abbots of the Vinaya lineage consciously relocated the spiritual core of the monastery from the Open-Air Platform to the Main Courtyard, then to the Ordination Platform, eventually creating a coherent spatial system. They achieved this by means of modifying the masonry structures and the multi-layered boundaries. Sammei moved the main monastic activities around the Main Courtyard, which was set up as a new, functional center as opposed to the old, symbolic unit established by Miaofeng. Jianyue redesigned and reconstructed an ordination ritual altar and promoted it as the new spiritual center. In this way, the supreme status of the old one designed by Miaofeng was further eliminated. Eventually, Ding’an reunited the three centers by refurbishing the old Open-Air Platform, alluding to the Ordination Platform, and related both to the Main Courtyard through staging the threefold ordination. Therefore, the monk-architect and the three abbots together designed a spatial system of unprecedented spiritual symbolism.
Through cultural and constructional practices, the “life” of the monastery has been extended in two directions along the timeline. The repeated accounts of its remote origin drive the memory of it into the past, and the practices of persistent renewal promise its existence in the future. Through human efforts, the monastic architecture as a whole is emancipated from a tangible beginning and a predictable ending. The apparatus of immortality is precisely located in the contemporary reenactment of historical prototypes: it shapes the social memory, uncovers forgotten pasts, and sustains communal life.

In the current century, the field has adopted a more tolerant attitude toward Prip-Møller’s interdisciplinary approach to architecture. Inspired by scholars of social and religious histories, architectural historians joined the blooming studies of the “living” religious landscapes.\(^\text{41}\) Scholars observe the socio-political forces that drove the developments of sacred mountains and urban monasteries. In ways echoing Prip-Møller’s, they fruitfully recognize the built environment as a carrier of the local history.\(^\text{42}\) In retrospect, some even raise Prip-Møller to the historical position of “representing a modern, international perspective of ‘earth-timber/construction’” (J. Wang 2018). Recent scholars have revived the interests Prip-Møller showed in the stone monuments and environmental design of Longchang Monastery (J. Zhang 2015; Wang and Tur 2016). Notably, architectural historian Yan Liu has recognized the methodological significance of Prip-Møller’s work for architectural anthropology, conducted a large amount of archival research and field work, translated Chinese Buddhist Monasteries into Chinese (Y. Liu, forthcoming), and reintroduced this work to the field.\(^\text{43}\)

This case study furthers our understanding of Prip-Møller by adopting his unique view of history. A historian normally seeks to sort things in temporal sequence, whereas Prip-Møller seeks the instances when the sorting loses efficacy.\(^\text{44}\) This is because, in Prip-Møller’s view, persistent religious and building practices can cross the unbridgeable gap between

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**Figure 20.** Viewing the Open-Air Platform from the doorway of one of the Beamless Halls, showing the West Side Stair and part of the Stone Incense Pavilion (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 249, Figure 276).
modern and pre-modern times. Every contemporary monastery that deeply intrigues him is “an organism living in the present but with its roots deep in the past” (Prip-Møller 1937, “preface”). The architecture of Chinese Buddhist monasteries hence is “the frames around a religion which has endured without any fundamental change as a strong spiritual force in the country ever since the days of its introduction there” (ibid.). This view, as I believe, has the potential to resolve an enduring problem—i.e., the so-called “non-historical” character of Chinese architecture. This problem of style has provoked studies about the evolution of layout and building technology. The abovementioned discourse about the dynamics of cultural production is yet another way of arguing for a history more progressive than stationary. But Prip-Møller’s solution is different in nature; he finds historical value in the common practices that made Chinese architecture seemingly non-progressive. Through this lens, we see the repaired monasteries not as an architecture that loses traces of the past, but as one that attempts to transcend history.

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Appendix A. Excerpts of Chinese Texts

Appendix A.1. 故建寶華山隆昌寺戒壇銘

既承師命，委圖以弘傳，密不躬行而匪正。始於國朝順治四年歳次丁亥四月三日，……結界立壇，仿古更今。……由是復興於中懷之初志，今遂乎半。……又於康熙二年歲在癸卯三月十六日，鳴椎共議，擇院外東南隅處，開舊結新，界相無文系。石壇層級上下分明，於是月廿日初夜分，陰雨暗暝，山嵐迷障。驟然壇殿交光五色，直沖雲霄，峰巒顯翠，萬松環抱，群樓朗如白晝，經時始散。一衆瞻欣，同聲贊美。毗尼久住，瑞兆若斯，誠五濁之希有也。

Appendix A.2. 界相準則

先明結受戒場法：東南角至屏教所壇標，西南角在本戒場右山壇標，西北角至本戒場左壇標，東北角至本戒場圍壇外標。此是受戒場四方外相一周誌。

次明結大界內相：東南角離屏教所壇二尺標，西南角離戒場右山壇二尺標，西北角離戒場左山壇二尺標，東北角離戒場[圍]壇二尺標。此是大界四方內相一周誌。

後明結大界外相：東南角至主山後分路標，西南角至龍脊山下分路標，西北角至西華山頂標，東北角至歡喜嶺下栗樹標。此是大界外相一周誌。

其攝衣界更無別相，表顯即準大界外相結之。

Notes

1 This version is a substantial revision of an earlier version compiled by Ding’an in 1690. For the circulation history of the BHSZ, see Zhu (2018).

2 The Chan Meditation or Intuitional School received its name from the meditative practice that was understood to be its basis. Developed gradually in China since the fifth century, the school thrived in the eighth century and in the subsequent centuries.
made its own quasi-historical accounts about a lineage of patriarchs. The school disregarded ritual and sūtras and depended upon the inner light and personal influence. The Vinaya School is a precept-centered branch of Buddhist studies that specializes in the study and practice of the rules of discipline for the clergy, or Vinaya in Sanskrit. It developed during the early periods of transmission of Buddhism in East Asia, and the most influential tradition of the school is the Nanshan zong (Southern Mountain School).

3 This study considers the relationship between space and social practices and the various kinds of space which have been discussed in (Lefebvre [1974] 1991).

4 The temple gazetteer records that, for instance, the Guests’ Hall and the Busa Hall were “rebuilt” by Sanmei, the main hall and the Hall of Great Compassion were “rebuilt” by Jianyue, and the Hall of Abbot and the Sutra Storing Pavilion were “rebuilt” “after the Old Mode” (zhao jiushi 照旧式). (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 3, pp. 101–14).

5 Because of its completeness and exquisite design, the Xiantong triad has been well studied from the perspectives of building prototype, construction technologies, imperial, and communal patronage (Boerschmann 1925, pp. 38–39; Bodolec 2005, pp. 170–75; J. Zhang 2015, pp. 289–322).


7 Before Miaofeng’s arrival, two generations of local monks had been involved in construction work, but neither their names nor their works have been preserved.


9 For the biography and architectural work of Prip-Møller in China, see (Faber 1989; L. Zhang 2012, pp. 40–54). For the architectural surveys, see Madsen (2003).

10 Both Beijing and Shenyang had been capital cities of the former Qing dynasty (1644–1911) and the latter was a thriving center of modern architecture and urbanism in the early years of the Republican era before it fell into Japanese colonization in 1932.

11 Prip-Møller was born in a Christian family of and befriended Christian missionaries in Hong Kong and mainland China. For his manifesto about how architecture should serve religion, see Prip-Møller (1939). For his historical interests in the exchanges between Christian and Buddhist architecture in China, see Prip-Møller (1935).

12 For his keen interest in the Chinese temples, see Prip-Møller (1931). For a case study of this kind of functioning monastery, see Prip-Møller (1936).

13 The provinces and cities cover from Beijing and Shanxi province in Central North China to Guangdong and Yunnan provinces in the south, and from Jiangsu province in the East to the old Tibetan borders in the West. Prip-Møller (1937), “preface”.

14 Prip-Møller refers to the monastery as “Hui Chu Ssu 慧居寺” (Huiju Monastery), by which name it was known at that time.

15 Before this book was published, Prip-Møller also published several case studies of Buddhist monasteries near Hangzhou and Nanjing (Prip-Møller 1935, 1936).

16 This book consists of six chapters that respectively cover spatial, substantial, and intangible aspects of the monasteries. They respectively discuss the ordination ritual and the monastic life, picturing the apparatus of Buddhist institutions in the early years of the Republican era (1911–1949) that were somewhat continuous since earlier times. The first one third of the book discusses the typical layout of the massive monasteries he surveyed. Chapter One concerns the ritual architecture along the central axis and Chapter Two presents the auxiliary architecture in the lateral sides. The following two thirds of the book center around Longchang Monastery. Chapters Three and Four respectively deal with the built environment and building history of the Monastery, constituting an in-depth case study. Chapters Five and Six are comprehensive studies about the main dwellers in monasteries, i.e., the individual monks and the Sangha. Sangha (僧伽) refers to the Buddhist monastic community and is one of the Three Jewels in Buddhism.

17 Some representative scholarship of the mainstream of Chinese architectural studies in the first half of the twentieth century include (Tokiwa and Sekino 1924; Siren 1929; Itô 1931; Zhongguo Yingzao Xueshe 1930–1945).

18 When Prip-Møller started his survey, he was highly aware that this kind of work had been done by Japanese scholars such as Ito Chuta (1867–1954), Tokiwa Dajio (1870–1945), and Sekino Tadashi (1868–1935), and the Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture, as well as that of Ernst Boerschmann (1873–1949). Thus with self-consciousness Prip-Møller chose to study Chinese monasteries from an alternative stand and on less studied materials. Prip-Møller (1937), “preface”.

19 Soper comments: “the author . . . had only the most meagre opportunity to study early architectural history”.

20 In his book review, Boerschmann supports Prip-Møller’s conception of the Monastery by suggesting the continuity between the traditional and the current religion: “In the study of religions, Chinese religion occupies a peculiar place between historical religions, no longer wholly to be reconstructed, and current religions, too near for understanding. In China, ancient origins and rich development are in combination with a living present. There, both the former and the present cult are documented so that the religious attitude of every epoch can be understood in relation to the history of Chinese culture. Buddhist monasteries are perfect cases in point”.

21 Therefore, like most of his contemporaries and followers, Sanmei’s Buddhist practices were syncretic, infusing Chan meditation, Pure Land rituals, and Vinaya regulations.
The typical layout of the Buddhist monasteries of the Ming and Qing periods have been extensively discussed by scholars including Prip-Møller. For recent scholarship, see (Qi 2011, p. 64; G. Wang 2016, vol. 3, pp. 1777, 2047, 2082; Steinhardt 2019, p. 249).

See (T 1924–1933) (hereafter “T”) no. 1899, 45. For the biography of Daoxuan, see (Zanning 1987, pp. 323–30).

The 29 subsidiary cloisters in the south half of the monastery are associated with Buddhist education, whereas the other 19 cloisters surrounding the Central Buddha Cloister are more intimately related to the Buddha’s daily life. (Ho 1995, p. 9).

Examples of similar layouts range from the archaeological remains of a monastery site in the Tang Chang’an city to the pictorial representation of a palatial complex in Dunhuang mural paintings and textual records. For further discussions of these historical materials, see (Xi’an Tangcheng Gongzuo Dui (Working Team of the Tang City of Xi’an) 1990, pp. 46–51; Xiao 1989, pp. 61–94; Gong 2006; Qi 2011, pp. 50–51).

For detailed discussion of the Board Halls in Longchang Monastery, see (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 221–23).

For discussions of these buildings, see (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 224–49).

For discussion of these sounding instruments, see (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 204–8).

Before ordination, a novice should live in the monastery where they will receive the precepts for about two months. For the activities during this period, see (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 324).

Prip-Møller assumes that Sanmei erected a wooden ordination platform. There is no textual record of Sanmei’s ordination platform, but, since the ordination rituals had already taken place in the Longchang Monastery, a proper stage for ordination, namely, an ordination platform, presumably existed. Yan Liu also notices supporting evidence in the BHSZ. According to the record, it was because the pre-existing wooden ordination platform was used for a long time that Jianyue decided to rebuild it. It would be reasonable to suggest that the old platform was a heritage from Sanmei’s era. (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 282; Y. Liu, forthcoming, p. 90, note 7).

The process of the threefold ordination is summarized as follows: before the ceremony, the novice has to live in the ordination-giving monastery for two weeks, for the sake of learning how to live a regulated monastic life and to rehearse the ceremonies that will last from thirty to fifty days. The long process includes three stages. Each are separated from the next by intervals of 8–10 days. For a detailed explanation of the three stages of the threefold ordination, based on Prip-Møller’s observation, see (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 312–17, 324–26). For a slightly different version, based on Welch’s interviews with refugee monks once ordained at Longchang Monastery, see (Welch 1967, pp. 287–96).

The stele was still located on the lower platform below the Open-Air Platform when Yan Liu visited it in 2012. Even though he was also known for diligently practicing bozhou sanmei 般若三昧 (Skt: pratyutpannasamādhi)—a prolonged ritual during which the practitioner ceaselessly chants Amitabha Buddha’s name while walking—in his later years, he always insisted that monastic regulations were the best weapon for maintaining a monastic community and fought against his strong rivals. Unless otherwise noticed, translations are the author’s from the Chinese text.

This sentence is difficult to understand. Prip-Møller’s translation is “Its limits were clearly defined” (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 287). But in Hanyu dacidian, “Wenxi 文系” refers to the circumstance in which one’s verbal expression is constrained by the conventional rules of grammar. My tentative take is that the boundaries set by Jianyue are not constrained by conventions, meaning, they are new and unconventional. This take is supported by the following discussion of the shape of the boundaries.

Ordination platforms had been used in Chinese Buddhist practices for about a thousand years before this case, and the material remains of stone platforms in the Yangzi area can date back to the twelfth century. But not every monastery could have an ordination platform unless they were allowed by the government offices in charge of religious affairs. This rule was particularly strict in the Ming dynasty. For example, Gulin-an 吉林庵, a Vinaya monastery in Nanjing, had to receive an imperial order before they could construct an ordination platform in 1613. For Gulin-an and the examples of the extant earlier platforms, see (Prip-Møller 1937, pp. 345–51).

Prip-Møller believes that Jianyue was expelled whereas, Yan Liu gives more agency to Jianyue. In the historical accounts, Jianyue’s disciples used ambivalent words such as “rejected” (xie 謝) and “departed” (qu 去) instead of “forced to flee”, as used by Prip-Møller. For Jianyue’s own accounts, see (BHSZ [1795] 1975, vol. 6, pp. 233–34; Jianyue Duti [1675] 1978, pp. 77–78; Prip-Møller 1937, p. 285; Y. Liu, forthcoming, p. 100, note 6).

For how Liu’s work evolved from Ding’an’s work, see Zhu (2018).

The data is from (Prip-Møller 1937, p. 349).

The works tending toward the cultural history side of the spectrum include Susan Naquin’s study of the temples and city life in Beijing and James Robson’s study of the Southern Peachmount, while those more toward the art and architecture side may include Wei-Cheng Lin’s study of Mount Wutai. See (Naquin 2000; Robson 2010; Lin 2014).

These works, nevertheless, focus mainly on the major urban and mountain settings, which are more like cult centers and pilgrimage destinations, rather than more-or-less self-sustained and self-regulated entities like in the case of Longchang Monastery.
Besides, it is increasingly difficult for the current scholars to collect oral history or to observe traditional practices, since the Buddhist institutes in contemporary China have significantly changed, if they were not already during the 20th century.

Dr. Yan Liu’s Chinese translation is about to be published by Cultural Relics Press (Beijing) in 2023. All primary texts are quoted from his unpublished manuscript as of Aug 2018.

Historians of Chinese architecture have proposed various ways of periodization. For example, one of the classical periodizations is based on the styles of the timber-structured buildings and consists of “The Period of Vigor” (ca. 850–1050), “The Period of Elegance” (ca. 1000–1400), and “The Period of Rigidity” (Liang 1984). In addition, a more recent periodization is based on social developments from the Marxist perspective and consists of architecture of “the primitive society”, “the slave society”, and “the feudal society” in dynastic successes (D. Liu 1984). For a brief overview of the historiography and the contemporary challenges for the narratives, see (Steinhardt 2014).

For an early account of Chinese architecture as a “non-historical style” in a global history of architecture, see (Fletcher 1898). For how this kind of account stimulated the establishment of the subfield of architectural study in China, see (Fletcher 1910; Lai 2016).

References


