

The Landscape of the Longmen Grottoes:
Practices, Repentance, Jeweled Buddhas, and Burials under
Emperor Wu Zhao (r. 690–705 CE)

By
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Abstract

This dissertation adopts a spatial-analysis and gender-studies approach to study the Buddhist visual culture of the Longmen Grottoes, where 2,345 cave-shrines were carved into the limestone cliffs on both sides of the River Yi (*Yihe* 伊河) from the fifth to the tenth centuries. Focusing on the seventh and eighth centuries, I examine the affective relationship between the constructed landscape of Longmen and people's activities within the environment. Previous scholarship has engaged in discussions on the style, iconography, and patronage of Longmen sculptures. I make use of newly excavated archaeological material to investigate the site from the new and holistic perspective of landscape. I believe it is through interaction with the constructed landscape that medieval Buddhists experienced the power of the images and were motivated to participate by sponsoring a statue or a cave-shrine. To this end, I address two interconnected questions: how did the landscape take form? And how did the constructed sacred space answer the aspirations of its visitors? My goal is to reconstruct the landscape of Longmen as a matter of temporal, embodied experience. I argue that the lived experience of medieval Buddhists in Tang China (618–907) transformed the landscape of Longmen into the shape that we know of today. For the devoted Buddhists, the entire landscape was an affective space wherein one may attain the Huayan vision of enlightenment and release. At the same time, general visitors also understood the constructed landscape as a support for the claim of Wu Zhao (r. 690–705 CE), the only female monarch in Chinese history, as the sagely *cakravartin*, or universal ruler.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written in the pandemic, during which I grew to believe that we are defined by our relationship with the world. I picture my own existence as a knot on a living, interconnected net. In the same way that the net draws its strength and liveliness from the individuals it connects, this dissertation is indebted to those individuals whose lives have touched me. This is my attempt to say how much I am grateful for their help and company.

My advisor Amy McNair has been my source of inspirations. Her scholarship on the Longmen Grottoes and her methods of research shape my way of thinking; her diligence, I can only aspire to model after. My other committee members have taught me everything I know in their respective fields of research. Sherry Fowler's research on Murōji and on Kannon opened my eyes to the importance of gender in Buddhist art. She also encouraged me to step out of my shell, overcoming my shy self. Maya Stiller keeps me from the path of blindly applying Buddhist doctrines to visual arts, a path from which I am still trying to stay away. Her passion on maps resonates with my own and her book on Kūmgangsan shows me how one commits enthusiasm to hard work. Daniel Stevenson guided my entry into the study of Huayan Buddhism and endured many ignorant questions of mine. His research on ritual performance is what I rely on in this dissertation, and the metaphor of a Buddhist well that he taught me is what I turn to during difficult phases of research. I became interested ancient manuscripts because of the research on the Houma Covenant texts by Crispin Williams, who also gave me the tools to dissect difficult passages of classical Chinese, teaching me to fish so to speak. I have truly fond memories from his early morning classes.

Beyond Kansas, Amanda Goodman from the University of Toronto gave me substantial, constructive suggestions at the time when I was stranded, not knowing how to make sense of the

burial caves of Longmen. Kate Lingley from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa sent me her discussion on the burial activities of Longmen. Chen Chaoyang, formerly from the Longmen Research Institute and now at Luoyang Institute of Science and Technology, invited me to participate in her translation of Amy’s book *Donors of Longmen*, took tremendous care of me during my field research in 2019, and helped me to collect information on the archaeological excavation in Wanfogou. Li Lan from McMaster University also shared with me her first-hand knowledge and photos of the excavation in Wanfogou, before the multi-volume official reports were finally published in October 2021. My last chapter would not have been possible without their help. Yang Xiao who graduated from Heidelberg University in 2021 shared with me her entire dissertation and photos of the numerous grottoes in northern Sichuan. She assured me that it is possible to finish such an expansive project.

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My parents, my mom most outspokenly, Madam Zhang Yunhua, urged me to complete the dissertation by May 2022. Her reason is that she is going to retire on May 5 after thirty-seven years of working. In her mind, it is my turn to work next. As unreasonable as this request seemed to me, it works out miraculously.

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Introduction

Nowadays, to get to the famous Longmen Grottoes cannot be easier. Once a suburb outside the city of Luoyang, the Longmen Grottoes have grown to be the biggest tourist attraction for the city in the past decade. The 2010s was also the decade when the high-speed railway network sprawled from eastern China to the central and northwestern regions. Existing railway lines were updated while new ones were added to connect inland cities to the economically more developed coastal regions. In 2010, a high-speed railway station began to operate in Luoyang. As the city's only access point to this sprawling railway network, the new station, named Luoyang Longmen Station, was established in the new Luolong district, which had only been incorporated into Luoyang in 2000, away from the old city center on the northern bank of the River Luo (Luohe 洛河). From this station, visitors only need to ride another four miles along the brand-new, six-lane Longmen Avenue to begin their experience of the centuries-old Longmen Grottoes.

But no cabs will drive directly to the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, the most eye-catching spot at Longmen. Visitors may get off the cars in either the northeastern or the northwestern parking lot. Most people choose the northwestern lot, as from there they could either pay to ride an electric shuttle or walk for another thirty minutes to reach the densely packed cliff west of the River Yi. There, since most of the cave-shrines open directly to the passageway, tourists may walk up close to inspect the inside from the fenced opening. In summer days, they sweat in the unforgiving sunshine and the humid air. After a while, they finally arrive at the foot of the long flight of staircase leading to the Vairocana shrine. Climbing up the steep stairs, they see the head of the compelling Buddha, then its shoulder, the ruined torso, and the flanking deities. Catching a breath atop the stairs, they can walk around the

platform in front of the Buddha, take photos, turn back to admire the view of willow-lined River Yi, and descend the stairs. If enough physical strength or willpower remains, some visitors choose to climb up the gallery roads installed on the exposed cliff on the southern end of the western cliff. Most people, however, simply walk across the concrete bridge at the southern end, mindlessly passing the other cave-shrines on the eastern side of the river, to exit through the northeastern gate. Alternatively, preferring a less exhaustive route, some may choose to bid farewell to Longmen at the bottom of the Vairocana shrine, taking a public ferry across the river. As the ferry moves away from the riverbank, the crowded cliff façade slowly recedes in distance whilst water gradually catches the entire reflection of the majestic Buddha Vairocana.

How did donors and visitors in the Tang period experience Longmen? The famous poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) toured the limestone cliffs and stayed overnight at Fengxian Monastery (Fengxiansi 奉先寺), to the south of the grottoes, where he listened to the sounds among mountain valleys, immersed himself in the moonlight, observed the skyline of Longmen’s cliffs, and felt the chill in the air.¹ Another great poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), who wrote numerous poems about his time at Longmen, told that once he and his guests rode on horses on the western bank, boarded a boat, and enjoyed sightseeing on the River Yi where lotus leaves were turning brown whilst waterweeds were still green; on this boat, they drank alcohol until the next dawn.² Young men and women also came here during the Qingming Festival in the spring, roaming through the land, playing music, and writing poems.³ Unlike the literary works, the numerous

¹ Full translation in Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 157.

² Lu Chaolin 路朝霖 (fl. 1876), ed., *Luoyang Longmen zhi* 洛陽龍門志, first published 1887 and 1898 (Reprint, Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2006), 243-244. Citing Bai Juyi, *Qiuri yu Zhang binke shu zhuzuo tongyou Longmen zuizhong kuangge*, 秋日與張賓客舒著作同遊龍門醉中狂歌.

³ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 159.

cave-shrines and sculptures at Longmen silently convey the experience and activities of their medieval donors and visitors. The goal of this dissertation is to analyze the relationship between these cave-shrines and the medieval experience among the Buddhists in Tang China.

Taskscape

To articulate the affective relationship between the landscape of Longmen and people's activities within the environment is to reclaim the landscape as a matter of temporal, embodied experience, instead of reducing it to visual representation.⁴ The cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold, a seminal figure in this intellectual movement, argues that the landscape needs be studied as a testimony of people's taskscape, a concept and methodology first raised by Ingold and widely applied to recent studies of archaeology and cultural geography. Ingold defined taskscape as an ensemble of practical and mutually engaging activities that people carried out in an environment. Defined as such, taskscape provides a cornerstone to a critical understanding of the landscape, in Ingold's word, as "the taskscape in its embodied form," or "the congealed form of the taskscape."⁵ When the landscape is defined in relation to people's activities, scholars have an opportunity to deconstruct the previously assumed dichotomy between the set of pre-given disembodied symbolism and the physical land, e.g. the stone carved in the likeness of the Buddhas.⁶ Instead of downplaying the landscape into a representation, onto which symbols and

⁴ John Wylie, "5 Landscape phenomenology," in *Landscape*, 139-186 (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), 27.

⁵ Tim Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," *World Archaeology* 25 (1993), no. 2: 152, 158, 162. Ingold argues that while the landscape seems to be *seen*, people's activities, suspended in the movement of time, are captured by aural and tactile perceptions (p. 162-163). In the studies of art history, this shifting of intellectual interest to the embodied, multi-sensory experiences is captured by the so-called "sensory turn/return." See Jenni Lauwrens, "Welcome to the revolution: The sensory turn and art history," *Journal of Art Historiography* (2012), no. 7: 1-17. At the foundation of this group of scholarship is the philosophy of phenomenology.

⁶ Cultural geographers inspired by phenomenology trace such a rigid divide between mind and matter, mind and body, subject and object, observer and observed as constructs of Cartesian philosophy. See Wylie, *Landscape*, 157 and 182.

values are inscribed, Ingold argues that it is during people's activities that meanings arose and were subsequently incorporated into the landscape.⁷

In this dissertation, I approach the constructed landscape of Longmen in light of its taskscape. To do so, I retrace the practices and activities of the early-Tang visitors and donors to Longmen via their dedicated niches and statues. I argue that these dedications suggest donors' participation in a number of interrelated activities, namely death-bed intervention and medical treatment offered by monks at Longmen, repentance performance, and practices on the bodhisattva path. All these activities constituted the taskscape of medieval Longmen, which transformed the landscape into an enduring testimony of the temporal activities and practices.

The Epistemic Function of the Landscape

Approaching Buddhist sculptures and cave-shrines as the indexes to donors' embodied activities also sheds light on a fundamental and enduring paradox in the study of Buddhist visual cultures, namely the centrality of image worship to Buddhism and the discourse of emptiness that renders images as illusionary. Among the scholarship on Chinese Buddhist cave-shrines, this paradox leads to a critical question: do images in Buddhist cave-shrines serve any function for the attainment of awakening? Recent studies in art history assume a positive answer to this question and thus advocate for the examination of Buddhist art in its ritual context. Challenging this methodological interest, Robert Sharf, the scholar of Buddhist Studies, argues against the assumption that one can deduce the ritual function of a cave-shrine based on its architectural design and iconographic programs, because, primarily, the interiors are too dark for visitors to see the designs.⁸ The case of the Longmen Grottoes shows, however, that medieval donors

⁷ Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," 162.

⁸ Robert H. Sharf, "Art in the Dark: The Ritual Context of Buddhist Caves in Western China," in *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and its Conservation: Proceedings of the Buddhist Art Forum 2012*, eds. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo, and Sharon Cather (London: Archetype Publications, 2013), 38–65.

engaged with Buddhist paintings and sculptures in multiple sensory modalities, e.g. light, sound, and smell. Visitors to Longmen interacted with the sculptures within their spatial and ritual contexts. In this light, Buddhist paintings and sculptures provided more than optical stimuli; they were a part of the active environment that formed people's knowledge about the world where they lived and dwelled.

My research emphasizes that when visitors mingled inside the landscape of Longmen, the transformative impact of large-scale cave-shrines affected how they experienced and understood the landscape. In the process of people's engaging with the landscape and with one another, adding new niches, and writing about their experiences, symbols and cultural values arose and were incorporated into the limestone landmass made in the likeness of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. I offer a reading of the religious value embodied in the Longmen landscape, which I consider to have been a lesson on the interdependent nature of the phenomenal world. Visitors to Longmen did not come to understand this lesson through reading or conceptually dissecting abstract concepts. Rather, I argue that the landscape of Longmen was an active medium that made it possible for medieval visitors to embrace the vision of Huayan school of Buddhism through somatic engagement.

At the center of this awakening experience is the monumental Great Vairocana Image Shrine (*Da Lushena xiangkan* 大盧舍那像龕) (Cave 1180), which occupies the most dominant space of the entire site (Fig. 1.1). Initiated by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683), the grand project was completed in 676 with the personal funds of Empress Wu Zhao 武曌 (r. 690–705).⁹ I argue that the compelling sculpture signified the Huayan vision of an interdependent universe. As visitors walked in the landscape, they envisioned their own bodies as a part of the

⁹ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 111-122.

interconnected phenomenal world, thereby attaining the ultimate awakening of the Buddha. As a result, the landscape of Longmen became an affective space wherein one may attain the Huayan vision of enlightenment.

Buddhist Propaganda

It is in this affective landscape that Wu Zhao's strategies of Buddhist propaganda became most effective among her audience. Borrowing Alan Cole's definition of "Buddhist propaganda" as "reproductions" of Buddhist ideologies, I maintain that although Wu Zhao was likely a devout Buddhist, her repeated public declaration of the belief had a powerful propagandist effect.¹⁰ As the only female emperor in Chinese history, Wu Zhao is famous for using Buddhism to draw support for her claim to the throne.¹¹ Records of her patronage for Buddhist establishments are bountiful, although relatively less material evidences survive to testify. The famous *tiantang* 天堂, or "Heavenly Tower," which she built in the capital city Luoyang to house a colossal Buddha image, was destroyed by hurricane and fire in 695.¹² Among the imperial monasteries she established, Guangzhai Monastery in Chang'an survives only in fragmentary forms in the reliefs of the *qibaotai*, "the Tower of Seven Jewels", patronized by her ministers in 703.¹³ I argue that the icon of jeweled and crowned Buddha at Longmen is material evidence of Wu Zhao's Buddhist propaganda. They symbolized the offering of imperial regalia from Wu Zhao to the Buddhist community, which supports Wu's claim of herself as the sagely cakravartin, or

¹⁰ Alan Cole, *Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 1.

¹¹ For example, see Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century: Inquiry into the Nature, authors and Function of Dunhuang Document S.6502 Followed by an Annotated Translation* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2005).

¹² Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu* (Rome and Paris: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente and École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1988), 61-64.

¹³ Yen Chuan-Ying, "The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels: The Style, Patronage and Iconography of the Monument" (PhD diss. Harvard University, 1986), 3 & 7.

universal ruler. Through collective rituals, interpolated with performance of miraculous events, such a gesture of offering was made known to the audience across Tang China.

Literature Review

As one of the most famous sites of cave-shrines in the Buddhist world, Longmen has attracted considerable international scholarship in both premodern and modern times. In the Qing period (1648–1911), scholars came to Longmen to study and document its inscriptions for epigraphy study. The scholar and painter Huang Yi 黃易 (1744–1802) produced an album of paintings that includes a scenery of Longmen; his painting also portrays visitors making ink rubbings of the inscriptions.¹⁴ The regional governor Lu Chaolin 路朝霖 (fl. 1876) compiled *The Gazetteer or Luoyang Longmen* (Luoyang Longmen zhi 洛陽龍門志), in which the steles of Longmen were catalogued by their titles.¹⁵ In the early twentieth century, the interest in the rich epigraphic material of Longmen continued among Chinese scholars. In 1935, after he visited the site in the 1920s and 1930s, Guan Baiyi 關百益 (1882–1956) published a two-volume book dedicated to the Longmen inscriptions with a few photographs. In the early Japanese and Euro-American scholarship, the interest in the inscriptions was also observable. The Japanese art historian Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖 (1867–1927) devoted a portion of his 1915 book *The History of Chinese Art History: Sculptures* (*Shina bijutsu shi chōso hen* 支那美術史: 彫塑篇) to the transcriptions of Longmen inscriptions, in addition to black-and-white photographs of the

¹⁴ Huang Yi, “Song Luo fangbei tu 嵩洛訪碑圖,” The National Palace Museum of Art.

¹⁵ Lu Chaolin 路朝霖 (fl. 1876), ed., *Luoyang Longmen zhi* 洛陽龍門志 (First published 1887 and 1898, reprint, Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2006).

sculptures.¹⁶ Building on Ōmura's compilation, the American art historian Alexander Soper (1904–1993) analyzed the inscriptions to address the questions of patronage.¹⁷

Early photographs from the beginning of the twentieth century provide much needed material to study the Longmen sculptures. The photographs in the Freer Gallery Archives, Washington, D.C. were taken by the photographer Utai who traveled with Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919) to Longmen in 1910.¹⁸ Two Japanese scholars, the architecture historian Sekino Tadashi 關野貞 (1868–1935) visited Longmen in 1906 and 1918, followed by the historian of Buddhism Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 (1870–1945), who came to Longmen in 1920. The works from their visits are combined in the twelve-volume *Historic Sites of Culture in China* (*Shina bunka shiseki* 支那文化史蹟) and the four-volume *Historic Sites of Buddhism in China* (*Shina Bukkyō shiseki* 支那仏教史蹟).¹⁹ Subsequently, Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 (1905–1971) and Nagahiro Toshio 長廣敏雄 (1905–1990) surveyed the site in 1936 and produced a detailed archaeological report in the three-volume *The Research on the Longmen Grottoes* (*Ryūmon sekkutsu no kenkyū* 龍門石窟の研究).²⁰

¹⁶ Ōmura, Seigai 大村西崖, *Shina bijutsu shi chōso hen* 支那美術史:彫塑篇, 2 vols (Tōkyō: Kokusho kankokai, 1915).

¹⁷ Alexander Coburn Soper, “Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China,” *Artibus Asiae. Supplementum* 19 (1959): 1-296.

¹⁸ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 1.

¹⁹ Tokiwa, Daijō 常盤大定 and Sekino Tadashi 關野貞. *Shina bunka shiseki* 支那文化史蹟, 12 vols. (Tokyo: Hōzōkan, 1939-1941); *Shina Bukkyō shiseki* 支那仏教史蹟, 4 vols. (Tokyo: Bukkyō Shiseki Kenkyūkai, 1925-1931).

²⁰ Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio 長廣敏雄, ed., *Ryūmon sekkutsu no kenkyū* 龍門石窟の研究, 3 vols (Tokyo: Zauhō kankōkai, 1941, reprinted Kyoto: Dohosha, 1980).

Building on the foundational documentations and their personal visits to the site, subsequent scholars contributed to a diverse scholarship on Longmen, focusing on the chronology, iconography, style, patronage of its sculptures, and the modern receptions of the site. Sofukawa Hiroshi categorized Tang-dynasty grottos at Longmen by their time periods, surveyed their iconographic programs, and tackled the conflated iconographies of Amitabha and Śākyamuni Buddhas.²¹ Gong Dazhong, Wen Yucheng, and Okada Ken contributed to a debate on the patronage of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, whether the monumental Vairocana statue was a portrait of Wu Zhao, and how it might advance her political position.²² In the first book-length English study on Longmen, from which this dissertation draws substantially, Amy McNair demonstrates the complexity of its patronage from the perspectives of gender, politics, and faith.²³ In 2020, Dong Wang studied the changing perceptions of Longmen sculptures in the twentieth century and the social changes that took place at Longmen after the site was added to the World Heritage List in 2001.²⁴

The most recent scholarship highlights the cave-shrines in the Eastern Hills of Longmen. Between March 23 and August 8, 2008, in cooperation with Beijing University, the Longmen Research Academy conducted an archaeological excavation on Leigutai, or “Drum-Beating Platform,” discovering a stone-paved platform in front of the cave-shrines, staircases, fragments of sculptures, burial chambers, and stone inscriptions left by tourists from the Northern Song period (960–1127). The results from the excavation were published in the six-volume

²¹ Sofukawa Hiroshi, “Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoxiang de yanjiu: shangpian,” trans. Yen Chuan-ying, *Yishu xue*, no. 7 (1992): 163-267 and “Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoxiang de yanjiu: xiapian,” trans. Yen Chuan-ying, *Yishuxue*, no. 8 (1992): 99-163.

²² Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981); Wen Yucheng, “Lüetan Longmen Fengxiansi de jige wenti,” *Zhongyuan wenwu*, no. 2(1984): 53-57; Okada Ken, “Ryūmon sekkutsu sho-tō zōzō ron — sono san,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 196 (May 1991): 93-119.

²³ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*.

²⁴ Dong Wang, *Longmen's Stone Buddhas and Cultural Heritage: When Antiquity Met Modernity in China* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), 201-207.

archaeological report in 2018.²⁵ Subsequently, the Academy also surveyed Wanfogou, or “Valley of Ten-thousand Buddhas,” to the north of Leigutai, recording twenty-four major cave-shrines and multiple small niches excavated in the mountain valley. The latter project was published in 2021 in the three-volume archaeological report.²⁶ Prior to these organized excavations, Zhang Naizhu surveyed the iconographic programs of cave-shrines in the Eastern Hills and compared their inscriptions with historical documents.²⁷ Chang Qing argued that the Eastern Hills exhibit distinctive sculptures that are the early examples of the so-named esoteric images.²⁸ Jiao Jianhui conducted initial research on the relationship between the visual programs in Leigutai Central Grotto and Buddhist repentance rites.²⁹

From the new and holistic perspective of landscape, this dissertation makes use of the newly excavated archaeological material and brings it in conversation with the cave-shrines on the western cliff. I show that it is through interaction with the entire space that medieval Buddhists experienced the power of the images and were motivated to participate by sponsoring a niche or cave-shrine. I highlight the interactions between medieval visitors and these ancient monuments, how visitors achieved spiritual goals via somatic experience of the sculptures and the space, and how their gender and social background impacted their reaction to the power of the landscape.

Dissertation Outline

²⁵ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan, and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo, eds., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, 6 vols (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe; Longmen shuju, 2018).

²⁶ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, ed., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan Wanfogou qu*, 3 vols (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2021).

²⁷ Zhang Naizhu, “Longmen shiku leigutai sanku kaocha baogao,” *Luoyang daxue xuebao* 10, no. 3 (1995): 53-59.

²⁸ Chang Qing, “Shilun Longmen chu Tang mijiao diaoke,” *Kaogu xuebao* (2001), no. 3: 335-360, pls. 1-2.

²⁹ Jiao Jianhui, “Longmen dongshan leigutaiqu disi ku xiangguan wenti tantao,” *Shiku si yanjiu*, no. 3 (2012): 212-223.

My dissertation consists of six chapters, each devoted to one aspect of the experience of embodiment. Chapter One, “The Taskscape of Great Vairocana Image Shrine,” investigates the performative implications of its iconography in relation to smaller-scale shrines constructed around the same time. I show that the medieval taskscape of Longmen consisted of seeking medical treatment and death-bed intervention offered by monks at Longmen, participating in repentance performance, and practicing on the bodhisattva path. I argue that these popular activities in the mid-seventh century motivated the design of the Vairocana shrine which encapsulated the experience of these donors.

Chapter Two, “Embodied Experience of Indra’s Net,” examines how medieval donors understood the lesson of Huayan Buddhism via their somatic engagement in the landscape. I analyze the Vairocana shrine as the socially constructed landscape, into which power relations and values were continuously incorporated. Most scholarship has assumed this, although few explicitly acknowledge it. Many agree that the grandeur of the shrine projects a political message, although the nature of this message is a topic of debate. By contrast, I argue that the Vairocana shrine transformed the Huayan doctrine of interdependence into relatable experiences for medieval patrons and visitors, making it possible for people to pick up the teachings via physical interactions with the landscape. The monumental sculpture simultaneously signified an array of Huayan visionary imageries, namely the Lotus Store World Ocean of Buddha Vairocana, the ornamented tower of Vairocana visited by Sudhana at the end of his spiritual journey, and King Indra’s jeweled net. All these imageries evoked the same teaching, the interdependent nature of the phenomenal world. This teaching was grasped by a group of donors who wrote about their own experience of the landscape in the same way that *The Flower*

Garland Sutra described Sudhana's vision. In their experiences, these donors' bodies became a part of the landscape, and their own presence became a jewel on King Indra's net.

This embodied engagement was also realized, as I demonstrate in Chapters Three and Four, by the repentance and visualization rituals conducted inside Wanfo (the 670s) and Leigutai Central (689-695) Grottoes. The repentance rituals refer to the kind of performance that requires practitioners to confess in accordance with a set of prescribed rubrics. The purpose of the performance is to amend one's transgressions or bad karma. During the repentance rituals, participants aspired to achieve certain visions as confirmation that their karmic transgressions were extinguished. Chapter Three, "Modular Constructions for Repentance and Visualization: Wanfo Grotto," argues that the grotto was built as a functional space for collective penance. Inside this space, chanting Buddha names for repentance and creating karmic ties with the deities to trigger divine responses were the two primary goals of the ritual performance.

This chapter also addresses the purpose of Indian styles and icons at Longmen. The most famous examples include King Udayana's image of Śākyamuni and the so-named Amitabha and Fifty-two bodhisattvas. Previous research shows that the imagined Indian icons were created or modified in Central Asia or China. I investigate these icons in relation to the rhetoric of *ganying*, which has a dual meaning of "stimulus and response" and "sympathetic resonance." I argue that the alleged Indian connections allowed Longmen sculptors to establish the rhetoric of verisimilitude and the indexical connections between their sculptures and the deities, which served to maximize the efficacy of the ritual performance in obtaining divine responses.

Chapter Four, "Modular Constructions for Repentance and Visualization: Leigutai Central Grotto," argues that the interior of Leigutai Central Grotto was designed as a multi-functional space that could accommodate both earlier repentance rituals that highlight chanting

Buddha names and the emerging esoteric ritual of dhāraṇī chanting. I show that while Wanfo Grotto seems to be an early experiment to combine several iconographic modules into a semantically meaningful entity, Leigutai Central Grotto is a successful example wherein the same modules were combined to create a cohesive visual space. Inside, the visitors experienced the space in its entirety, since the iconographic combination is cognitively comprehensible, and the visual distinctions among each module are diminished. In both types of ritual performance, the stone sculptures and visual programs guided participants to visualize the legendary patriarchs as their companions and the myriad Buddhas who responded to their prayers. I argue that the design of Leigutai Central Grotto adapted to the ever-changing repentance and visualization practices in the seventh and eighth centuries.

The last two chapters discuss the effect of the embodied experience in political propaganda and personal release. In Chapter Five “Experiencing the Jeweled Buddhas in Space and Time,” I focus on the Buddhist identities and political functions of three unusual freestanding stone statues of Buddha at Longmen, which are adorned with interlocking necklaces and crowns. Prior to the seventh century, jewelry never appeared on representations of Buddhas in China because they were modeled on monks who had renounced all worldly wealth. While previous scholarship focuses on the transmission of this unconventional iconography from Afghanistan to East Asia, I believe that the three jeweled Buddha statues should be examined in their original physical and political contexts. Regarding their Buddhist identities, I suggest that they represented the union of Śākyamuni and Vairocana, because their immediate physical context, LGT South Grotto, likely recreated the Lotus Store World Ocean of Vairocana. However, an earlier representation of this union is the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, which did not employ jewelry in the iconography. I argue that the jewelry and crowns were added because

of the three statues' function in political propaganda. Tang viewers in the 690s understood the jewelry on the statues as the offering of royal regalia from Wu Zhao to the Buddhist communities during the state ceremony of *pañcavārṣika* (*wuzhehui* 無遮會, or “The Great Quinquennial Festival”), during which Wu Zhao reaffirmed her position as the sagely cakravartin, or universal ruler. As a result, the three statues could evoke not only a distant past when Śākyamuni attained enlightenment, in the faraway land of India, but also propagated the virtue of Wu Zhao's sovereignty which enabled the experience of the Buddha in the present time and on the tangible space of Tang China.

The final chapter, “Burial Space at Longmen: A Gendered Karmic Community,” discusses the cliff-carved burial caves and cineraria, as well as nearby underground tombs. I argue that the constructed landscape of Longmen was attractive to women in the seventh and eighth centuries who aspired to attain final release in the afterlife. By having one's remains buried in or near to the cave-shrines, thereby literally inserting the body into the landmass of Longmen, these women wished to be separated from their husband's family and to remain close to the Buddha and Buddhist masters. I argue that because canonical texts project a daunting prospect of women's awakening, aspiring female Buddhists pursued such intimate connections with revered practitioners and the Buddha, in the hope that their spiritual attainment would be improved in the afterlife. For these women, Longmen was an efficacious realm, constructed by its sculptures and rituals, in which one could have access to the Buddha and bodhisattvas and be connected to an imaginary karmic community.

Chapter 1: The Taskscape of Great Vairocana Image Shrine

1.1. Landscape and Taskscape

Among the 2,345 cave-shrines of the Longmen Grottoes, the monumental Great Vairocana Image Shrine (*Da Lushena xiangkan* 大盧舍那像龕) (Cave 1180) occupies the most dominant space of the entire site (Fig. 1.1). Its impact, exceeding beyond visual perception, extended to the ways in which people behaved and understood the space. Initiated by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683), the grand project was completed in 676 with the personal funds of Empress Wu Zhao 武曌 (r. 690–705).³⁰ Much like their modern peers, medieval visitors ascended the tall stairway to worship Buddha Vairocana and continued to feel his penetrating gaze as they spent time on the River Yi or walking on the other shore. They approached the Vairocana shrine with the knowledge that they had acquired from their physical engagement in the space, intentionally or unintentionally. Subsequently when donors sponsored new dedications, they did so after a fresh somatic encounter of the great Buddha. All these bodily practices, recurring and habitual, sustained a collective recollection among Longmen visitors.³¹ The testimonies of these bodily behaviors are, as I argue, the cave-shrines of smaller scale that were dedicated around 676 at the base of the western cliff (Fig. 1.2). The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the relationships between the Great Vairocana Image Shrine and these dedications, and what these relationships convey in terms of the lived experience of visitors and donors from the mid-seventh to the mid-eighth centuries.

³⁰ Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 111-122.

³¹ This collective recollection is what Paul Connerton termed as “social memory.” Connerton argues that social memory is both enacted in commemorative ceremonies and “sedimented” in the body. It was through bodily performance that social memory was shaped and remembered. See Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge, 1989), 7 and 72-104.

To these two ends, I approach the Vairocana shrine as a part of the constructed landscape, which had an impact on people's behaviors within the environment. To do so, I retrace the practices and activities of the seventh-century visitors and donors to Longmen via their dedicated niches and statues. Bringing these dedications into conversation with the iconography of the Vairocana shrine, I aim to offer an interpretation of how the activities of medieval donors changed the landscape. It is my argument that these embodied acts ultimately became the landscape of Longmen, an enduring testimony of the temporal activities and practices.

Recent cultural geographers argue that the landscape should be studied as a matter of temporal, embodied experience, instead of being reduced to visual representation.³² For example, the cultural anthropologist Tim Ingold argues that the landscape is a testimony of people's taskscape, defined as an ensemble of practical and mutually engaging activities that people carried out in an environment. In Ingold's word, the landscape is "the taskscape in its embodied form," or "the congealed form of the taskscape."³³ When the landscape is defined in relation to taskscape, scholars have an opportunity to deconstruct the previously assumed dichotomy between the set of pre-given disembodied symbolism and the physical land, e.g. the stone carved in the likeness of the Buddhas.³⁴ Instead of downplaying the landscape into a representation, onto

³² John Wylie, "5 Landscape phenomenology," in *Landscape*, 139-186 (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Christopher Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), 27.

³³ Tim Ingold, "The temporality of the landscape," *World Archaeology* 25 (1993), no. 2: 152, 158, 162. Ingold argues that while the landscape seems to be *seen*, people's activities, suspended in the movement of time, are captured by aural and tactile perceptions (p. 162-163). In the studies of art history, this shifting of intellectual interest to the embodied, multi-sensory experiences is captured by the so-called "sensory turn/return." See Jenni Lauwrens, "Welcome to the revolution: The sensory turn and art history," *Journal of Art Historiography* (2012), no. 7: 1-17. At the foundation of this group of scholarship is the philosophy of phenomenology.

³⁴ Cultural geographers inspired by phenomenology trace such a rigid divide between mind and matter, mind and body, subject and object, observer and observed as constructs of Cartesian philosophy. See Wylie, *Landscape*, 157 and 182.

which symbols and values are inscribed, Ingold argues that it is during people's activities that meaning arose and were subsequently incorporated into the landscape.³⁵

By applying the concept of taskscape, I aim to highlight that the activities taking place at Longmen were integral parts of the daily lives of its donors. Recently, Wendi L Adamek also found the concept of taskscape applicable to her study of Baoshan 寶山 caves (Henan province) and adapted the term to “practicescape” to incorporate the Buddhist notion of Bodhimaṇḍa, or place of Buddhist practices. Whereas Adamek's use of practicescape highlights the gap between the activities in “the ordinary world” and those practices that employed “the techniques of transcendence of the body” in Baoshan, I argue that donors of Longmen were drawn to the repentance rituals in search for medical cures and funerary arrangements, two necessities of every household.³⁶ Some did pursue spiritual cultivations, but they did so exactly through somatic engagement with the environment, not by transcending, or rejecting, the body. Therefore, in my case study, the taskscape refers to the daily, mundane activities that donors and visitors carried out in the landscape of Longmen.

In what follows, I start with an overview of the iconography of the Vairocana shrine. In order to understand why this particular iconography was chosen, I analyze the performative implications of the scripture on which the iconography was based. Bringing in smaller-scale shrines immediately preceding and postdating the construction of the Vairocana shrine, I show that the most typical of them prayed that the living beneficiaries may escape afflictions or

³⁵ Ingold, “The temporality of the landscape,” 162.

³⁶ Wendi L. Adamek, *Practicescapes and the Buddhists of Baoshan* (Bochum/Freiburg: projekt verlag, 2021), 24. As my following chapters will show, two major elements discussed in her book are also the foci of my research on Longmen: repentance rituals and the burial space of women. In her own words, “Buddhist ‘practicescapes’ entail escape from worldly ways of living and ultimately from the cycle of birth and death itself. In the activities inscribed at Baoshan we see bodily cultivation of the techniques of transcendence of the body, the sculpting of a landscape into a necropolis... and maintenance of a dwelling-place intentionally removed from the ordinary world.”

recover from illness, that the deceased ones may avoid the three evil paths of rebirth or attain a rebirth in a pure land, and that all sentient beings may attain awakening together. As common as these phrases are, none specifies how these wishes would come to realization and what exactly these donors did to ensure the merit would be transferred. I argue that these dedications suggest donors' participation in a number of interrelated activities offered by monks at Longmen, namely death-bed intervention, medical treatment, and repentance performance. All three exemplified the ideal practices on the bodhisattva path. These activities, constituting the taskscape of medieval Longmen, was encapsulated in the iconography of the Vairocana shrine. I argue that these popular activities in the mid-seventh century motivated the design of the Vairocana shrine that transformed the entire landscape of Longmen.

1.2. The Great Vairocana Image Shrine

Art historians have interpreted the iconography of the great Buddha at Longmen as a union of Buddha Vairocana and the innumerable Śākyamuni Buddhas on the lotus throne from *Brahmā's Net Sūtra* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經, T 1484). The identification of Buddha Vairocana is based on a record that was reengraved sometime between 683 and 723 on the northern side of the ruined throne, which preserves the heavily damaged original dedicatory inscription on the southern side.³⁷ The record documents the completion of the “Great Vairocana Image Shrine” in 676. Yet because the choice of Vairocana was unusual at Longmen, it is unknown whether

³⁷ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 115-116, note 11 on pp. 201-202; *Tiji*, nos. 1635 and 1637, v. 2, p. 379-381; another abbreviated record was engraved in the empty Cave no. 1480/3, see *Tiji*, no. 2534, v. 2, p. 547; *Zonglu*, v. 10, text, p. 15. Li Yukun made a difference between Lushena (Rocana) and Pilushena (Vairocana). See Li Yukun, “Longmen shiku yanjiu juwu,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1983), no 3: 69. The only major objection is raised by Peter Swann, who speculated that the great Buddha was built as an Amitabha in the beginning and identified as Vairocana afterwards, because one of the religious advisors, listed in the inscription, was Shandao 善導 (613-681), a major advocate of Pure Land school. Peter C Swann, *Chinese Monumental Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 105-107, as cited in McNair, “The Fengxiansi Shrine and Longmen in the 670s,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, Stockholm 68 (1996): 343, note 96. For an example of how Buddhist devotees combined the identities of Vairocana and Amitabha, see Evan S. Ingram, “Chōgen’s Vision of Tōdaiji’s Great Buddha as Both Mahāvairocana and Amitābha,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 46 (2019), no. 2: 173-192.

Vairocana was Gaozong's initial choice when he started the project.³⁸ Nevertheless, the surviving part of the lotus throne shows that each of the lotus petals contains a silhouette of a small Buddha (Fig. 1.3). As Sofukawa Hiroshi and McNair argue, this iconographic detail confirms the identity of the Buddha, because such a union of Buddha Vairocana and numerous images of Śākyamunis in the lotus petals is described in the influential *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*. They cited the opening prose section of the second fascicle, which sets the scene of the following lectures of the scripture. It reads "I am now Vairocana, seated on a lotus-flower throne, and surrounding me on a thousand petals are manifest a thousand Śākyamunis. Each petal (also) holds ten billion lands, and each land a single Śākyamuni. Each sits under a bodhi tree, and in a single moment each attains enlightenment. Thus, these thousand and these ten billion are the original body of Vairocana, while the thousand and the ten billion Śākyamunis each receive countless sentient beings."³⁹

Although there are different opinions regarding the meaning of this iconography, none convincingly rule out the significance of *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*.⁴⁰ An apocryphal scripture attributed to Kumārajīva (344–413), *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* consists of two fascicles that were circulated separately. The first fascicle addresses forty stages of bodhisattva practices, and the second is about the bodhisattva precepts, including ten grave sins and forty-eight minor offences.⁴¹ Despite their likely different authorship and purposes, the two fascicles share the

³⁸ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 119-120.

³⁹ The translation is by McNair, *Ibid.*, 116. It is based on T 1484, vol. 24, 1003c29-1004a05: 我今盧舍那，方坐蓮花臺。周匝千花上，復現千釋迦。一花百億國，一國一釋迦。各坐菩提樹，一時成佛道。如是千百億，盧舍那本身。千百億釋迦，各接微塵衆。

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, note 16 on p. 202.

⁴¹ A. Charles Muller and Kenneth K. Tanaka, "Translators' introduction," in *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, xvii-xxi (California: BDK America, Inc., 2017), xviii.

same overall setting, wherein Vairocana was seated on a lotus throne from which innumerable Śākyamunis emanated.⁴²

From the perspective of iconography, the choice of Buddha Vairocana was highly unconventional. Among the several thousand sculptures at Longmen, only three other sculptures were identified as Vairocana, dated to 662, 677, and 691 (Fig. 1.4) respectively.⁴³ Yet all three provided few clues to understand why the image of Buddha Vairocana was chosen for the monumental project. The shrines of 677 and 691 were both sponsored after the Great Vairocana Image Shrine was completed in 676. If the latter project took over a decade to complete, then the piece of 662 was commissioned close to the starting date of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine.⁴⁴ In addition, none of the three Vairocana statues refer to *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* in any form.

Despite the unusual choice of Vairocana, the kind of practices that were advocated by the iconography of the Vairocana shrine align well with the popular activities conducted by Longmen donors in the seventh century, including seeking medical treatment from monks, inviting them to take care of funerals, performing repentance rituals, and cultivating oneself on the bodhisattva path. As I will show, visual indexes to such a taskscape, sponsored by donors with or without ties to the imperial court, were found among medium-scale cave-shrines and small niches on the western cliff (Fig. 1.5).

1.3. Taskscape: Medical Treatment from Buddhist Monks

⁴² For the setting of the first fascicle, see T 1484, vol. 24, 0997c05-c14.

⁴³ One is Cave no. 714, catalogued in *Zonglu*, v. 5, text, p. 50; *Tiji*, no. 1197, v. 2, p. 277. The other one is in Cave no. 1394, Niche no. N2, catalogued in *Zonglu*, v. 8, text p. 95, pl. 465; however, in *Tiji*, the dedicated statue for this niche is Amitabha, see no. 1789, v. 2, p. 422. The third one is in Laolong Grotto, Niche 204, see *Tiji*, no. 953, v.1, p. 217. *Zonglu*, v. 4, text, p. 103; plate, pl. 666. The first two are also discussed in Li Yukun, “Longmen beike yanjiu,” in *Longmen shiku yanjiu lunwen xuan*, ed., Longmen shiku yanjiu suo (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993), 239.

⁴⁴ McNair argues for an inauguration date around 660 for the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. See McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 120.

Among the forty-eight minor precepts laid down in *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, providing medical care and treatment was one that was widely practiced at Longmen. Rule no. 9 of the scripture states that,

“My disciples, if you see someone who is ill, you should always make offerings to them, no differently than you would for the Buddha. Among the eight fields of merit, that of caring for the ill is foremost. If your father or mother, teacher, fellow monk, or disciple is ill, handicapped, or suffering from any kind of ailment, he or she should be cared for until their illness is removed. If a bodhisattva with malicious intent sees an ill person in the confines of a monastery, in a city, in an open field, or on a forest pathway and does not help that ailing person, this is a minor transgression of the precepts.”⁴⁵

若佛子。見一切疾病人。常應供養如佛無異。八福田中看病福田第一福田。若父母師僧弟子疾病。諸根不具百種病苦惱。皆養令差。而菩薩以惡心瞋恨。不至僧房中城邑曠野山林道路中。見病不救者犯輕垢罪。⁴⁶

The scripture recognizes medical practice as a part of the bodhisattva practice that a Buddhist disciple should follow. Popular tales of miraculous events confirm that such a rule was well-received among elite monks. For example, monk Xinxing 信行 (540–594), the founder of “Three Levels Teaching” (*Sanjie jiao* 三階教), was said to have prescribed medicines to sick persons.⁴⁷ This aspect of his practice was noted in *Mingbao ji* (冥報記, *Records of Retribution from the Unseen Realm*), compiled in the 650s by Tang Lin 唐臨 (600–659), a high-level government official who dedicated a statue of Amitabha (Cave 291, Fig. 1.6) above Jingshansi Grotto 敬善寺洞 in 657 for the emperor, empress, and his own late parents.⁴⁸ The same source also records a monk named Sengche 僧徹 from Jiangzhou 絳州 (Shanxi province) teaching the *Lotus Sutra*, sentence by sentence, to someone afflicted with leprosy. The more this person learned, the more he recovered; by the time he could chant the entire sutra, he had fully recovered and acquired the

⁴⁵ Translation from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 51.

⁴⁶ *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1005c8-c13.

⁴⁷ *Tiji*, no. 318, v. 1, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Tang Lin 唐臨 (600–659), *Mingbao ji* 冥報記, T 2082, vol.51, 0788b11-b12, 當病授藥.

ability to treat illness for others. When Tang Lin suffered from swelling bodily parts, Sengche sent this person to chant spells for him. After this treatment, Tang Lin documented his own recovery.⁴⁹ This first-person testimony of Tang Lin circulated widely, as the miraculous treatment performed by Sengche was repeated twice by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) and again in a compilation of miracles related to the *Lotus Sutra* (*Fahua jing* 法華經).⁵⁰

The lengthy medicinal recipes in Yaofang Grotto 藥方洞 (“Medical Recipes Grotto,” Cave 1387, Fig. 1.7) have led scholars to believe that monks at Longmen played a role in distributing medical knowledge or even treatment among the ordinary people. Yaofang Grotto is located right next to the bottom of the staircase that leads to the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. The earliest niches inside date to the 530s, whereas philological analysis suggests that the medical recipes were carved between 650 and 653.⁵¹ Partial copies of the recipes appear in Dunhuang manuscripts (P. 3596 and S. 3347), and highly similar ones circulated in the works of known doctors such as Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343) and Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581–682). The Japanese physician Tanba Yasuyori 丹波康賴 (912–995) also cited *Ryūmon-hō* 龍門方, or “prescriptions from Longmen,” in the compilation *Essentials of Medical Treatment* (*Ishinpō* 醫心方). As a result, scholars believe that the recipes in Yaofang Grotto were widely circulated in

⁴⁹ Ibid., T 2082, vol.51, 0788c25- 0789a17.

⁵⁰ Daoxuan, *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄, T 2106, vol. 52, 0428b22-b27; Daoxuan, *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 T 2149, vol. 55, 0340b14-b19; Anonymous, *Fahua chuanji* 法華傳記, T 2068, vol. 51, 0068a18- a23.

⁵¹ Zhang Ruixian, Wang Jiakui, and Michael Stanley-Baker, “Clinical Medicine Texts: The Earliest Stone Medical Inscription,” in *Imagining Chinese Medicine*, eds., Vivienne Lo and Penelope Barrett, 373-388 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 382-385.

the medieval world.⁵² Studies find that the recipes in Yaofang Grotto refer to the locations for needling and moxibustion by their places on bodily parts, such as “below the large toenail,” instead of their specialized medical names, such as *xingjianxue* 行間穴 (“walking in-between” acupuncture point). Also, the required substances were mostly commonly available. Therefore, scholars believe that the recipes did not demand specialized knowledge or methods.⁵³

The observation of the recipes in Yaofang Grotto confirms the study by Taiwanese historian Shu-fen Liu, who argued that Buddhist monasteries in the Tang provided medical treatment to people who had no access to the government medical resources. With a detailed analysis of historical documents, Liu shows that the number of government-certified official doctors did not meet the needs of the entire nation in the Tang; the scarce medical resources were concentrated among the elite – the imperium, government officials, and military staff – and in the two capital areas of Xi’an and Luoyang. One person in this official medical system, Wu Jifu 吳吉甫 who served as the attending physician of royal princes 皇子侍醫, made two dedications in Laolong Grotto, including one “stone statue” for his ancestors of seven generations, parents, and the entire family on the twentieth day of the fourth month in 661.⁵⁴ Beyond the capital areas, *Tang Liudian* 唐六典 (Administrative Rules of the Six Departments under Tang) specifies that only one medical doctor was assigned in each of the Governor’s Palaces (*dudu fu* 都督府),

⁵² Michael Stanley-Baker and Dolly Yang, “Dung, hair, and mungbeans: Household Remedies in the Longmen Recipes,” in *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources*, ed., C. Pierce Salguero, 454-477 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 455. Stanley-Baker and Yang conducted an annotated translation of the complete recipe. Also discussed in Ding Mingde, “Luoyang Longmen Yaofangdong de shike yaofang,” *Henan wenbo tongxun* (1979), no. 2: 27-33. Reprinted in Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, ed., *Longmen shiku yanjiu lunwen xuan*, pp. 276-289. For Tanba Yasuyori’s compilation, see Katja Triplett, “Using the Golden Needle: Nāgārjuna Bodhisattva’s Ophthalmological Treatise and Other Sources in the *Essentials of Medical Treatment*,” in *Buddhism and Medicine*, 543-548; and Zhang Ruixian, Wang binsheng, Li Guokun, Li He, Xian Jing, “Guanyu yixinfang suoyin Longmenfang de kaozheng,” *Tianjing zhongyi xueyuan xuebao* (1999), no. 2: 42-43.

⁵³ Zhang et al., “Clinical Medicine Texts,” 374-375; Stanley-Baker and Yang, “Dung, hair, and mungbeans,” 455; Ding, “Luoyang Longmen Yaofangdong de shike yaofang,” 28-29.

⁵⁴ *Tiji*, nos. 951 and 1055, v. 1, pp. 216-217 and 241.

together with an assistant and some medical students whose number ranged from ten to twenty.⁵⁵ A medical student needed to go through two to seven years of training, and yet would not be assigned a post in the government office after graduation. Instead, they traded their medical skills for a living. For the unranked ordinary people or those outside the capitals, official doctors were recorded to be dispatched during plagues and among teams of soldiers and laborers. To provide medical relief to a larger population, Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) was recorded to have compiled and distributed medical recipes to the regions away from the capitals in 723, and yet only in 746 did officials post a few important recipes from the compilation to billboards on major roads.⁵⁶ In contrast to the scarcity of government medical resources among the common people, as Liu argues, Buddhist monks provided much more accessible medical treatments in the Tang period. Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649) even forbade any monk or nun to profit from medical service, suggesting that their medical practice was quite popular.⁵⁷

The epigraphic evidence also suggests that ordinary donors indeed came to Longmen in seek of medical treatment, although it is not clear whether they were treated by the Buddhist monks or the karmic merit earned from their dedications were considered sufficient to heal them. I calculate thirty-six dedicatory inscriptions that are explicitly related to medical concerns (Table 1).

⁵⁵ As cited in Shu-fen Liu, “Cong Yaofang dong dao huimin ju: Sengren, guojia he yiliao de guanxi,” in *Cong yiliao kan zhongguo shi*, ed., Li Jianmin, 145–202 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 2005), 163–164.

⁵⁶ Liu, “Cong Yaofang dong dao huimin ju,” 164, 166, 168–169.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 175, citing *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載, T2036, vol.49, 0569b22-c03.

Table 1 Dedications related to medical concerns at Longmen.

Cave no.	Inscription no.	Donor	Date	Statue	Condition
Cave 159	190	楊福陽			
Cave 403 敬善寺洞	331	盧永吉		Amitabha	
Cave 403 敬善寺洞	474	索靜妻		Guanyin	pregnant
Cave 522 雙窯南	542	崔??	675	Buddha	
Cave 522 雙窯南	545	甘囉	691	2 Buddhas	
Cave 543 萬佛洞	603	玄照	680	Guanyin	
Cave 543 萬佛洞	642	妻張		2 Guanyin	
Cave 543 萬佛洞	659	?州?兵		2 Dizang	
Cave 555	667	雍州萬年縣張元福	688		
Cave 555	668	雍州萬年縣張元福	691		
Cave 555	674	景福寺比丘尼		Guanyin, Dizang	
Cave 557 清明寺洞	714	雍州萬年縣張元福	690	Amitabha, 2 bodhisattvas	
Cave 557 清明寺洞	705	弟子劉大獎妻姚	690	Amitabha	
Cave 597	899	弟子杜十四娘	715	Guanyin	
Cave 649	928	佛弟子段		stone Buddha	
Cave 669 老龍洞	1056	霍三娘		6 yedao xiang	
Cave 669 老龍洞	1111			yedao xiang	“wind”
Cave 732	1028	孔思義	696	Maitreya	
Cave 785	1212	費貞		Amitabha	“wind”
Cave 787 彌勒北二洞	1218	張四娘		Guanyin	
Cave 883 石牛溪	1364	楊大娘			
Cave 883 石牛溪	1371	郭九娘		2 Buddha	pregnant
Cave 1181 魏字洞	1527	乾靈寺比丘尼智空	526		
Cave 1192 唐字洞	1552	陳婆		Guanyin	
Cave 1192 唐字洞	1601	石行果妻王		Amitabha	
Cave 1387 藥方洞	1680	王倫妻陳女婆	651	Guanyin, sutra	
Cave 1394 黨屈蜀洞	1791	齊州山莊縣劉寶最妻 范	678	Yaoshi	pregnant
Cave 1394 黨屈蜀洞	1794	清信女趙二娘		Amitabha	
Cave 1410 北市香行社	1801	弟子崔十四娘	702	Amitabha	
Cave 1410 北市香行社	1802	佛弟子姚仁惠及妻王 氏		Guanyin	
Cave 1410 北市香行社	1804	弟子元允迪元九娘		2 bodhisattvas	
Cave 1443 古陽洞	2252	比丘惠鑒			
Cave 1508	2561	弟子辛六娘	706	2 bodhisattvas	
Cave 1508	2563	弟子孫弘		Dizang	
Cave 2070	2782	弟子王宣利			
Cave 2144 高平郡王洞	2817	?慶	728	renovate	

These niches were found in most of the medium-sized grottoes by the roadside on the western cliff. Twenty-five of them were north of the Vairocana shrine and nine were in the southern section. Only two dedications took place in the Eastern Hills, including one in Cave 2070 and one for renovating the unfinished Cave 2144 (Prince of Gaoping Commandery Grotto 高平郡王洞). Most did not specify the illness, two were for those who were “ailed by the Wind Element” (*huanfeng* 患風), and three were for pregnant women.⁵⁸ The identified donors include sixteen lay women, two nuns, sixteen lay men, and one monk. The earliest dedication dates to 526 and the latest to 728; all other dated ones were from the 650s to the 710s. The dedicated statues include Amitâbha (7), Maitreya (1), Avalokitêsvara (10), Kṣitigarbha (3), Bhaiṣajya-guru (1), and what they refer to as (Fig. 1.8) *yedao xiang* 業道像 (7), or literally “images of karmic path.” Ten were dedicated before the beneficiaries were cured, implying that it was hoped the dedications would help with the recovery, and eight were sponsored after the patients recovered.

Medical needs also drove donors back to Longmen after their initial dedications. A man named Zhang Yuanfu 張元福 from Wannian County 萬年縣, Yongzhou 雍州 (present-day Xi’an) visited three times in 688, 690, and 691, during which he sponsored two statues in Cave 555 and an Amitabha triad in Qingmingsi Grotto 清明寺洞 (Cave 557). Each time, he left an inscription reporting that he dedicated the statue(s) because he had recovered from illness.⁵⁹ Zhang’s insistence on returning to Longmen after his recovery suggests that he either vowed to

⁵⁸ *Feng* 風, or Wind, is one of the three defects (Skt., *tridoṣa*) that are caused by the Four Elements (i.e., Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind) according to Indian medical thought. Daoshi explained in *Fayuan zhulin*, chapter 95, that Wind was one of the three Great Maladies, apart from Phlegm and Cold, and that Wind malady should be treated with ghee. T 2122, vol. 53, 986b3-6. For an annotated translation of chapter 95 of *Fayuan zhulin*, see Alexander O. Hsu, “Curing/Curating Illness: Selections from the Chapter on the ‘Sufferings of Illness’ from A Grove of Pearls from the Garden of Dharma,” in *Buddhism and Medicine*, 20-29, especially pp. 25-26.

⁵⁹ *Tiji*, nos. 667, 668, and 714, v. 1, p. 154 and 164-5.

create a statue when he was still ill, or that he received treatment of a chronic illness from the monks of Longmen.

The material on Longmen donors' medical needs also shows that once a donor established a connection via sponsoring a shrine, other members from the family tended to return for other dedications. The statue of Bhaiṣajya-guru in Cave 1394 was sponsored in 678 by a pregnant woman, née Fan 范, who was the wife of Liu Baozui 劉寶最 from Shanchi County 山茌縣, Qizhou 齊州 (Shandong province). One year prior to this dedication, this man had sponsored two other niches for another wife, the deceased Zhao 趙.⁶⁰ All three were carved on the north wall of Cave 1394. I speculate that Fan was able to seek Buddhist protection for her pregnancy at Longmen because Liu had established a connection with the monks for Zhao's funeral.

1.4. Taskscape: Caring for the Deceased

In addition to medical treatment, the concern for the benefit of the deceased is also encapsulated in the symbolism of the Vairocana shrine. As observed by the religion scholar Alan Cole, two of the forty-eight monastic rules propounded by the Buddha in *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* urge Buddhist disciples to assist with the funerals of their parents, siblings, and Buddhist teachers. The first, Rule no. 20, states that a monk should chant bodhisattva vows to increase the chance of a good rebirth for the deceased:

On the day of the death of your father, mother, or elder or younger siblings you should request a Dharma teacher to deliver a lecture from the *Bodhisattva Vinaya Sutra* in order to convey blessings on the deceased that they may attain a vision of the buddhas and be reborn as a human being or as a celestial. If you fail to do this, you are committing a minor transgression of the precepts.⁶¹

⁶⁰ The two niches for the late Zhang contain a Vairocana (or Amitabh) and seven Buddhas, *Zonglu*, v. 8, text p. 95, pls. 465-469. As discussed in the previous note no. 12, *Tiji* records that one of the dedicated statues by Liu is Amitabha, see no. 1789, v. 2, p. 422, whereas *Zonglu* documents it as Amitabha.

⁶¹ Translation from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 55.

若父母兄弟死亡之日，應請法師講菩薩戒經，福資亡者，得見諸佛，生人天上。若不爾者，犯輕垢罪。⁶²

Then again, Rule no. 39 enumerates several circumstances when monks should recite the text, including the funerary days of their parents, brothers, and teachers. It reads,

For the winter and summer meditation retreats they should set up places for meditation and all kinds of facilities for the cultivation of the Way. Bodhisattvas should lecture on the Great Vehicle vinayas and sutras for all sentient beings, even when they are ill, or when there is national instability, or when beset by brigands. On funeral days and on the twenty-first and forty-ninth days after the passing of parents, siblings, teachers, or preceptors, you should also chant and lecture on the Great Vehicle vinayas and sutras, praying for the merit [of those who have recently departed] at these assemblies. For the well-being of those who are traveling, those who are threatened by wildfires, those who are adrift at sea, those whose ships are tossed about in violent storms, those for whom the great rivers and seas are plagued by ogres—you should also chant and lecture on the vinayas and sutras. Also, for those who are incurring the three kinds of retribution for their past misdeeds, such as the seven heinous acts or the eight difficult circumstances; whose bodies are bound with cuffs, shackles, pillories, and waist chains; who have much lust, anger, and stupidity, and who suffer from disease—you should chant and lecture on the vinayas and sutras for all of them. If a newly initiated bodhisattva does not do this, it constitutes a minor transgression of the precepts.⁶³

冬夏安居坐禪處所，一切行道處，皆應立之。而菩薩應為一切衆生講說大乘經律。若疾病國難賊難，父母兄弟和上阿闍梨亡滅之日，及三七日乃至七七日。亦應讀誦講說大乘經律。齋會求福行來治生。大火所燒大水所漂。黑風所吹船舫。江河大海羅刹之難。亦應讀誦講說此經律。乃至一切罪報三報七逆八難。桎械枷鎖繫縛其身。多婬多瞋多愚癡多疾病。皆應讀誦講說此經律。而新學菩薩若不爾者。犯輕垢罪。⁶⁴

While requesting monks to chant the text for funerals, the Buddha also prohibited monks from participating in trade in coffins. The text specifies that

My disciples, [you should not] intentionally engage in buying and selling people, slaves, or the six kinds of animals. Nor should you engage in the trade of wood for constructing coffins for the dead.⁶⁵

⁶² *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1006b16-18.

⁶³ Translation from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 66-67.

⁶⁴ *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1008 b09-19.

⁶⁵ Translation slightly adapted from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 52.

若佛子。故販賣良人奴婢六畜。市易棺材板木盛死之具。⁶⁶

Cole argues that the existence of such rules shows that monasteries in the fifth century were commonly involved in commercial activities related to funerals, such as the trade in coffins and funeral equipment.⁶⁷

In the early seventh century, Buddhist monks and monasteries indeed participated in lay devotees' funerary rituals. In the Sui and early Tang periods, eminent monks such as Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597), Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), Daoshi 道世 (c. 603–c. 683), and Shandao 善導 (613–681) all had writings on how to conduct death-bed rituals.⁶⁸ Among these texts, Daoshi's writing sheds lights on the religious context of Longmen in the late seventh century. A student and colleague of Daoxuan, Daoshi was known as a Vinaya specialist whose contribution to the Vinaya tradition in China established the legitimacy of Chinese Buddhism.⁶⁹ He also had multiple ties to Longmen and its donors. Not only was he a native of Yique (a variant name for Longmen), he spent most of his years in imperially sponsored monasteries in Chang'an, including Ximing Monastery 西明寺 established by Emperor Gaozong and Wu Zhao for their ailing son.⁷⁰ Daoshi innovated previous burial codes by advocating for three practices: moving the dying to a Hall of Impermanence 無常院 on monastery grounds, showing the dying persons Buddhist images and sutras to prevent the rise of evil thoughts, and chanting Buddhas names in order to enter samādhi at one's death-bed.⁷¹ In the ninety-fifth volume of his *Dharma Treasure*

⁶⁶ *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1005c24-25.

⁶⁷ Alan Cole, "Upside down/Right Side up: A Revisionist History of Buddhist Funerals in China," *History of Religions* 35 (1996), no. 4: 322.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 323-327.

⁶⁹ John R. McRae, "Daoxuan's Vision of Jetavana: The ordination platform movement in medieval Chinese Buddhism," in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya, Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein*, ed. William M. Bodiford (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 68.

⁷⁰ According to a later text, Zanning 贊寧 (919–1001), *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, T 2061, vol. 50, 0726c06- 0726c16.

⁷¹ Cole, "Upside down/Right Side up," 324-325.

Grove (*Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林), Daoshi elaborated on how monks should take care of the dying. Quoting from Mahāsāṃghika vinaya, he wrote that when visitors came to visit the patient, monks need to burn incense, light candles, and sprinkle fragrant water on the ground. As to treating the patients themselves, this text cited *Illustrated Sutra of the Jetavana Monastery in Śrāvastī, Central India* (*Zhongtianzhu sheweiguo zhiyuan si tujing* 中天竺舍衛國祇洹寺圖經, hereafter *Illustrated Sutra of Jetavana*), written by Daoxuan in 667, in which it is stated that a Hall of Impermanence was established in the northwest corner of Jetavana Monastery to house the dying. Adding to what is in *Illustrated Sutra of Jetavana*, Daoshi added a detailed instruction on the death-bed ritual in the Hall of Impermanence:

The hall is titled as Impermanence since many grew disillusioned with afflictions here. Among the vast amount of people who were sent there, only a few returned. Inside the hall a standing image was enshrined, gilded in gold and facing to the east. The sick person should be placed seated in front of the image. For those who had no strength, [one should] let them lie down and face to the west to observe the special marks of the Buddha. A five-colored banner was tied to one hand of the image. [One should] make the sick person hold one end of the banner and contemplate a rebirth in a pure land. Even though the sitting place has a toilet, the World-Honored One does not consider it evil. It is because even if the land was defiled, [he] still sent his spirit down to treat sentient beings. Now [the sick people] gave [their] lives to the Buddha, how could he abandon them? Depending on which land the sick person took delight in, [the World-Honored One] took the forms of Amitabha, Maitreya, Aksobhya, Avalokitesvara, etc. [Monks should] enshrine [the image] as said before, burn incense, sprinkle flowers, and provide endless offerings, to bring forth wholesome states of the mind in the sick person.

堂號無常多生厭背。去者極眾。還唯一二。其堂內安一立像金色塗者。面向東方。當置病人在像前坐。若無力者。令病人臥面向西方觀佛相好。其像手中繫一五色綵幡。令病人手執幡脚作往生淨土之意。坐處雖有便利。世尊不以為惡。原其此土本是雜穢之處。猶降靈俯接下類群生。況今將命投佛。寧相棄捨。隨病人所樂何境。或作彌陀彌勒阿閼觀音等形。如前安置。燒香散華。供養不絕。生病者善心。⁷²

⁷² Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, v.53, 0987a11- a20.

As evidenced by Daoshi's writing, death-bed intervention by Buddhist monks was advocated by writers like Daoshi as a necessary step to ensure the deceased person would attain rebirth in a pure land, which was a popular aspiration in the seventh century.

Dedicatory inscriptions at Longmen testify that onsite monasteries participated in the deathbed rituals of their lay donors. The most direct evidence comes from the inscription of Cave 440, the burial cave of Ms. Lou which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six. The inscription stated that for Lou's funeral, her husband "called forth monks and invited the Buddha [image], established a dharma platform to release the soul of the deceased. Offerings were set up and incense were presented. [The service] lasted without interruption for the forty-nine-day period." 延僧請佛，度建法壇。設拱陳香，累七不絕。 In addition, inscription no. 1423 from Zhao Keshi Grotto 趙客師洞 (Cave 1038) on the western cliff also states that the wife to a man named Yang Junzhi 楊君植 passed away on the temple grounds of Jingshan Monastery 敬善寺 at Longmen. Afterwards, Yang Junzhi commissioned a statue of Amitabha in Zhao Keshi Grotto for his late wife.⁷³ In these two cases, lay people either invited monks to their homes for funerary rites or moved the ailing persons to the monastery grounds for deathbed rituals. At the end of both, image shrines were commissioned at these monasteries for the post-mortem merit of the deceased. For these donors, the practice of chanting *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* on the death day of the deceased and during the forty-nine-day mourning periods may also be familiar.

⁷³ The transcription in *Tiji* is different from Zhang Naizhu's record. It was only in Zhang's transcription that this information is found. See *Tiji*, no. 1423, v. 2, p. 322. Zhang Naizhu, "Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao," in *Longmen shiku yanjiu lunwen xuan*, ed. Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, 241-275 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993), 253.

1.4.1 Jingshan Monastery

In the 650s and 660s, before the Vairocana shrine was completed, the monastery that had jurisdiction over many cave-shrines and may be the source of the many services available to Longmen donors was Jingshan Monastery 敬善寺.⁷⁴ Jingshan Monastery was in the Eastern Hills of Longmen. Evidence comes from an episode in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive records of the Taiping era), which stated that in 827 there was a Jingshan Monastery on Xiangshan 香山, the mountain east of the River Yi.⁷⁵ The tomb epitaph of An Pu 安菩 (sa 薩) and his wife Lady He 何 discovered in northeast Longmen in 1981 also states that they were reburied east of Jingshan Monastery.⁷⁶ Yet the name of this monastery also appears for seven times in the cave-shrines on the western cliff, spanning from Binyang South Grotto 賓陽南洞 (Cave 159) to Tangzi Grotto 唐字洞 (Cave 1192) located next to the bottom of the Vairocana shrine.⁷⁷ Inside Laolong Grotto (Fig. 1.9), two niches from the 650s mention the name of Jingshan Monastery in their dedicatory inscriptions. One of them, Niche no. 178 (Fig. 1.10), is found on the uppermost register of the north wall.⁷⁸ Dated to the twentieth day of the fifth month of 650 (June 24, 650), it was commissioned by monk Zhishan 智山 who identified himself as a

⁷⁴ *Jing* and *shan* may be translated as “respectful” and “kind,” which are two virtues attributed to a married woman, who was described as “[having the] internal virtue of being respectful and kind” 敬善內敷, in a dedication of 530 in Yaofang Grotto. This woman dedicated a shrine of Śākyamuni in the hope that her husband would be appreciated by the emperor. See *Tiji*, no. 1712, v. 2, p. 399. The inscription is translated in Zhang et al., “Clinical Medicine Texts,” 376, but I think they mistook the donor for the husband.

⁷⁵ Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) et al., “Qi Junfang” 齊君房, in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, vol. 388, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961, reprint in 1995), 3091–3093. Cited by Wen Yucheng, “Tangdai Longmen shisi kaocha,” in v. 2 of *Longmen shiku*, eds., Longmen wenwu baoguan suo and Beijing daxue kaogu xi, 217–232 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), 230. Xiangshan will be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁷⁶ Zhao Lisheng and Wen Yucheng, “Yitong yu Tang shi, zhongya shi youguan de xin chutu muzhi,” *Xibei shidi* (1986), no. 3: 19–21; reprint in Zhao Lisheng, *Zhao Lisheng wenji*, v. 2 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2002), 400–402. For objects found in the tomb, see Jan Van Alphen, ed., *The Buddha in the Dragon Gate: Buddhist Sculpture of the 5th-9th Centuries from Longmen, China* (Antwerpen: Etnografisch Museum Antwerpen, 2001), cats. 46–54 om pp. 153–161.

⁷⁷ *Tiji*, no. 235, v. 1, p. 55; no. 1604, v. 2, p. 368–9.

⁷⁸ *Tiji*, no. 0946, v. 1, p. 215.

monk from Jingshan Monastery. The other one is Niche no. 65 (Fig. 1.11), dedicated by Yang Zhenzang 楊真藏 in 658. Even though Yang might not have direct affiliation with the monastery, he or she explicitly stated that the dedication was lying to the southwest of Jingshan Monastery at Longmen.⁷⁹ In addition, Niche no. 151 by a certain Ms. Liu also suggests that the monks from Jingshan Monastery advised on the dedications in Laolong Grotto. Liu's inscription states that,

At night, [she] suddenly dreamed [she was] at Yique (Longmen), on the eastern side of the stream, [where she] ascended the hill and walked on the cliff.

夜忽夢於闕峽水東，升山履壁。⁸⁰

After waking up, as her inscription tells, Liu feared that making a small statue of the thousand-Buddha icon was not as good as making one statue of Amitabha. Although she did not specify what changed her mind, it was possible that she went to Jingshan Monastery to continue the repentance from her dream and learned of the benefits of dedicating the Amitabha statue. Additionally, another reference to the monastery is found in an incomplete dedication by a Mr. Yang 楊 on the north wall of Zhao Keshi Grotto, located at the foot of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine.⁸¹ The inscription states that the donor dedicated the Amitabha and two Guanyin statues near Longmen Jingshan Monastery.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Tiji*, no. 1035, v. 1, p. 236. 於洛州龍門敬善寺之西南頰。

⁸⁰ *Tiji*, no. 0997, v. 1, p. 227. In *Zonglu*, this inscription is ascribed to Niche no. 68. But I think it is more likely to have belonged to Niche no. 65. See *Zonglu*, v. 4, text p. 85; plate no. 547.

⁸¹ The name of the grotto is derived from an inscription inside, dated to 660. However, the cave was initiated much earlier since the earliest inscription is dated to 533. Dedicated only one year prior to Emperor Xiaowu's flight from Luoyang, and the move of the capital city to Ye 鄴 by Gao Huan 高歡 (496–547), this initial dedication remained the only niche inside Cave no. 1038 for the next century. No other niches are dated to the sixth century or show any of the period styles. The main Buddha triad and the many intrusive shrines inside Cave no. 1038 are from the Tang dynasty. Five donors dated their dedication to 660, and at least two more dedications are dated to the Xianqing reign (656–661) of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang. In total, there are about fifty-six intrusive shrines inside and on the façade of Cave no. 1038. See *Tiji* no. 1432, v. 2, p. 324–325.

⁸² *Tiji*, no. 1423, v. 2, p. 322.

I believe that a reference to the monastery in dedicatory inscriptions is indicative that the monastery offered advice on the dedications. The intrusive shrines added to Zhao Keshi Grotto demonstrate strong visual similarities with Jingshansi Grotto 敬善寺洞 (Cave 403). The latter cave was constructed around the 650s and located in the northern end of the western cliff, south of the Binyang trio (Fig. 1.5). This cave is named Jingshansi Grotto because the title of its dedicatory inscription refers to the statue as “the Stone Image of Jingshan Monastery 敬善寺石像.” Next to it is Cave 401 which bears a stone stele that names itself “Jingshan Monastery stone niche” 敬善寺石龕.⁸³ Although Jingshan Monastery was in the Eastern Hills, Caves 403 and 401 must have had some connection with the monastery. The choice of subject matters in Zhao Keshi Grotto is the same as that of Jingshansi Grotto during the 650s and 660s, including statues of King Udayana’s Buddha image, Amitabha Buddha, and Guanyin. In addition, a man named Wang Xingbao 王行寶, who was the Commandant of the Guard 典衛 in the establishment of Prince of Ji 紀 (628–689), dedicated a shrine of Guanyin on the south wall.⁸⁴ Not coincidentally, the mother of the Prince of Ji, Lady Wei 韋, was the principal donor of Jingshansi Grotto and may also have been the patron of the monastery.⁸⁵ Given the connections between Jingshansi Grotto and Zhao Keshi Grotto, I believe the reference to Jingshan Monastery inside Zhao Keshi Grotto should not be a coincidence. Rather, in the 650s and the 660s, Jingshan Monastery may have advised on many more dedications north of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, and possibly provided service to their donors.

1.5. Taskscape: Repentance and Bodhisattva Path

⁸³ *Tiji*, no. 464, v. 1, 100-101.

⁸⁴ *Tiji*, no. 1426, v. 2, p. 322-3.

⁸⁵ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 107.

In addition to the practical matters of medical treatment and funerary service, the fundamental lesson of performance in *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* is on the practice of repentance and bodhisattva path. According to *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, if one sought to receive the ordination from a preceptor but had broken one of the ten precepts, an “auspicious sign” was also required to confirm the success of repentance. These practitioners, according to *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, should also recite the ten grave sins and forty-eight minor offenses and prostrate themselves before the thousand Buddhas of the three periods of time. As a sign that their sins were eliminated, they would see a Buddha touching their head, halos, or other spectacular signs. They could not receive the precepts until seeing such signs.⁸⁶

In addition to the ordination by a Dharma master, the scripture also provides scriptural justification for self-ordination via repentance. Exactly because of this lesson on self-ordination, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* occupies an important position in the writings on how Buddhism was adapted in China.⁸⁷ The text states that if no Dharma master was available, a devotee may seek self-ordination by chanting the precepts in front of a statue of Buddha or bodhisattvas. As a confirmation that one was ready to be ordained with the bodhisattva precepts, one would see the “auspicious signs.”⁸⁸ A well-known episode of self-ordination is recorded in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks (Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳, T 2059, compiled around 530)*, in which monk Daojin

⁸⁶ *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1008c13-18. 若有犯十戒者，應教懺悔。在佛菩薩形像前，日夜六時誦十重四十八輕戒。若到禮三世千佛得見好相，若一七日二三日乃至一年，要見好相。好相者，佛來摩頂，見光見華種種異相，便得滅罪。Fully translated by Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 69.

⁸⁷ Bodiford, “Introduction” to *Going Forth*, 5.

⁸⁸ Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “Visionary repentance and visionary ordination in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*,” in *Going Forth*, 17–39. Citing and translating a passage from the second volume of *Fanwang jing* on pp. 18-19, Chinese text is from T 1484, vol. 24, 1006c5-18. 若佛子！佛滅度後，欲心好心受菩薩戒時，於佛菩薩形像前自誓受戒，當七日佛前懺悔，得見好相便得戒。若不得好相，應二七三七乃至一年，要得好相。得好相已，便得佛菩薩形像前受戒。若不得好相，雖佛像前受戒，不得戒。若現前先受菩薩戒，法師前受戒時，不須要見好相。何以故？以是法師師相授故，不須好相。是以法師前受戒即得戒，以生重心故便得戒。若千里內無能授戒師，得佛菩薩形像前受戒，而要見好相。若法師自倚解經律大乘學戒，與國王太子百官以為善友。而新學菩薩來問若經義律義，輕心惡心慢心，不一一好答問者，犯輕垢罪。

道進 practiced repentance and saw in his meditation that Śākyamuni gave him the precepts; afterwards, Dharmakṣema 曇無讖 (385–433) who had denied Daojin the bodhisattva precepts earlier authenticated them for him in front of a Buddha statue.⁸⁹

1.5.1. Repentance

The kind of practice that amends one’s transgressions or bad karma is known in Chinese Buddhist taxonomy as *chanhui* 懺悔, a compound usually translated as repentance or confession. The hybrid term combines a Sanskrit term with a Chinese word: *chan* is a transliteration for *kṣāma*, meaning “to repent,” whereas *hui* is a Chinese term, meaning “to regret.” Bruce Williams, who is a scholar of Buddhist Studies, proposes that “repentance” is a less confusing translation than “confession” because the latter is also used to translate another Chinese transliteration of a Sanskrit term: *falou* 發露 (Skr. pratideśanā).⁹⁰ According to Williams, such human intervention into karma, which he calls “karmic repentance,” is to be distinguished from “vinaya confession” which stipulates the recitation of the monastic code of conduct.⁹¹ Karmic repentance is rarely about actual transgressions but requires practitioners to confess in accordance with a set of prescribed rubrics.⁹² A typical framework of karmic repentance ritual includes stating that one is taking refuge in the Three Jewels, reciting the names of various Buddhas as a way of venerating these Buddhas, repenting offenses one committed, and transferring of merit. All these segments are scripted oral performance. In particular, when

⁸⁹ As cited and translated in Yamabe, “Visionary repentance and visionary ordination in the Brahmā Net Sūtra,” 19-20.

⁹⁰ Bruce Charles Williams, “Mea Maxima Vikalpa: Repentance, Meditation, and the Dynamics of Liberation in Medieval Chinese Buddhism, 500–650 CE,” PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2002), 7-8. Eric Greene, *Chan Before Chan: Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2021), 159. Also see De Hong, “The Development of Buddhist repentance in Early Medieval China,” PhD diss., (University of the West, 2014), 6, notes 19 and 20.

⁹¹ Williams, “Mea Maxima Vikalpa,” 17; Greene, *Chan Before Chan*, 163.

⁹² Williams, “Mea Maxima Vikalpa,” 8.

repenting offenses, one is required to identify and confess universal sins one may have committed as a sentient being. The common categories of offenses are all-encompassing, including the five heinous offenses (*wuni*, 五逆), the four *pārājikas* for monastic members (*si boluoyi*, 四波羅夷), ten unvirtuous actions (*shi'e*, 十惡), and the six sense fields (*liugen*, 六根).⁹³ Moreover, while “vinaya confession” is performed by individuals who violated the monastic codes, the kind of repentance practiced in China was part of the public rituals that released the deceased from suffering.⁹⁴

Repentance was also one of the common methods used to treat the sick both in premodern and some contemporary contexts.⁹⁵ Predating the coming of Buddhist practice to China, Daoist practitioners had already used repentance rituals to heal disease.⁹⁶ In Buddhist practice, repentance was one among a variety of healing methods, including medicines, meditation, talismans, dhārāni spells, etc. The de facto founder of Tiantai-school of Buddhism Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597), for example, organized various Indian and Chinese medical and religious treatments for illness in a text known as *The Shorter [Treatise on] Śamatha and Vipāśyanā* (*Xiuxi zhiguan zuochan fayao* 修習止觀坐禪法要, also known as *Xiao zhiguan* 小止觀). In this text, Zhiyi categorized three causes of illness, each of which required a different healing method: illness caused by the Four Elements (*Sida* 四大, i.e., Earth, Water, Fire, and Wind) and Five Viscera (*Wuzang* 五臟, i.e., Heart, Lungs, Liver, Spleen, and Kidneys), “demonic illness,” (*Guibing* 鬼病) and “karmic illness” (*Yebing* 業病). According to Zhiyi, the two methods of

⁹³ Ibid., 31–39.

⁹⁴ William M. Bodiford, “Introduction” to *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya. Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein*. Edited by William M. Bodiford, 1–16 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005). 6.

⁹⁵ Liu, “Cong Yaofang dong dao huimin ju,” 161–162.

⁹⁶ Shu-Wei Hsieh, “Shouguo yu chanhui: Zhongguo shiqi zuigan wenhua zhi tantao,” *Qinghua xuebao* 40 (2010), no. 4: 735–764.

meditation, *samatha* and *vipāśyanā*, can be employed to cure any illness caused by the Four Elements and Five Viscera, incantations will treat the illness caused by spirits, and merit-making activities and repentance will relieve people of afflictions caused by past karma.⁹⁷

Dedications at Longmen encompass all three types of afflictions categorized by Zhiyi. The first group, those illnesses caused by the Four Elements and Five Viscera, were mostly covered in the medical recipes in Yaofang Grotto. Cave 353, near Jingshan Grotto, enshrines an Amitabha statue dedicated by a lay man and a lay woman who claimed that “ghosts and spirits at our home are not peaceful.”⁹⁸ As for “karmic illness,” while most of the dedications assisted with the beneficiaries’ karma, one niche inside Yaofang Grotto, dated to 651, specified that the illness was caused by sinful karma. As her remedy, the donor sponsored another woman or women to become nun(s) on her behalf, in addition to dedicating a statue of Guanyin and a sutra.⁹⁹

1.5.2. Bodhisattva Precepts

Apart from the practical need of healing, the performance of repentance rituals was a key step to take the bodhisattva precepts and enter the bodhisattva path, a point that was articulated in *The Brahmā’s Net Sūtra*. The scripture provided detailed instructions on the proper practices for the conferral of bodhisattva precepts and during the regular meditation retreats in winter and summer. In the scripture, the Buddha instructs that,

My disciples, you should always practice austerities (*dhūta*) at the two designated times, in the winter and summer intensive meditation training periods. When you go to the summer retreat you should bring your monastic requisites: willow twigs (for use as a toothbrush), soap, the three garments (robes), a water container, a bowl, a meditation mat, a walking staff, a censer, a water filter, a hand towel, a knife, a flintstone, tweezers, a

⁹⁷ Following the terms and translations by C. Pierce Salguero, “‘Treating Illness’: Translation of a Chapter from a Medieval Chinese Buddhist Meditation Manual by Zhiyi (538–597),” *Asian Medicine* 7 (2012), no. 2: 461–473.

⁹⁸ *Tiji*, no. 395, v. 1, p. 86–87. 家内鬼神不安。

⁹⁹ *Tiji*, no. 1680, v. 2, p. 393.

folding seat, sutras, vinayas, a buddha image, and a bodhisattva image...*Dhūta* should be practiced from the fifteenth of the first month up to the fifteenth of the third month, and from the fifteenth of the eighth month up to the fifteenth of the tenth month...

On the days of *poṣadha* (precepts confession), the newly initiated bodhisattva monks will do *poṣadha* in biweekly installments. When they chant the ten grave and forty-eight minor precepts, they should offer their confession before images of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. If there is only one person doing *poṣadha*, there should be one person chanting. If there are two, three, or even a hundred thousand people doing *poṣadha*, there should also be one person chanting. The reciter should sit on the high seat with the listeners sitting below, each dressed in either a nine-panel, seven-panel, or five-panel robe. At the commencement of the summer retreat, each item of protocol should be followed according to the rules.¹⁰⁰

冬夏坐禪、結夏安居。常用楊枝澡豆、三衣瓶鉢坐具錫杖、香爐澆水囊、手巾刀子、火燧鑷子、繩床、經律、佛像菩薩形像……頭陀者從正月十五日至三月十五日，八月十五日至十月十五日……

若布薩日，新學菩薩半月半月布薩誦十重四十八輕戒。時於諸佛菩薩形像前，一人布薩即一人誦。若二人三人乃至百千人，亦一人誦。誦者高座，聽者下坐。各各披九條、七條、五條袈裟。結夏安居一一如法。¹⁰¹

The text describes statues of the Buddha and bodhisattvas as a necessary ritual paraphernalia for repentance conducted both for the conferral of bodhisattva precepts and the practice of a bodhisattva career. The study by the Buddhist Studies scholar Eric Greene also tells that as a preparation for taking the bodhisattva precept, one needs to go through long-term practices and repentance, which clean their “karmic obstructions” 業障 and prepare them for receiving the precept.¹⁰²

Taking the precepts was a part of the practices of the bodhisattva path. Mahāyāna Buddhists, despite their different cultic orientations, shared the same foundational teaching of the bodhisattva path, the idea that one should practice as a bodhisattva to attain Buddhahood. The

¹⁰⁰ Translation from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 65.

¹⁰¹ *Fanwang jing*, T 1484, vol. 24, 1008a13-25.

¹⁰² Greene, *Chan Before Chan*, 111–112. Also see Shengkai, “Tangdai lüzong de chanhui sixiang,” in *Zhongguo fojiao chanfa yanjiu*, 287-306 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2004), 290-292.

dedications in Laolong Grotto, as will be discussed, specifically refer to a series of ten stages, or *bhūmis*, a standard list in various Mahāyāna accounts, of the bodhisattva path. In particular, the ten stages are elaborated in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (Scripture of the Ten Stages, *Shidi jing* 十地經 T 287), which both circulated on its own and was incorporated into the influential *Flower Garland Sutra* (*Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, *Huayan jing* 華嚴經) in which the bodhisattva path includes fifty-two stages. In particular, *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* stipulates that receiving the precepts was necessary before a devotee could progress to the second stage of the bodhisattva path.¹⁰³ A commentary on *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, known as *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* 十地經論 (Explanation of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, T 1522) was attributed to the famous Vasubandhu (fl. fifth century, CH: Shiqin 世親) and translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci 菩提流支 (d. 527).¹⁰⁴ It became the basis of *Dilun zong* 地論宗, “School of Dilun Exegetes,” which was formed in China in the Northern Wei (386–534) period and became the forerunner of the Huayan School of Buddhism.¹⁰⁵

1.5.3. Festival Dedications in the “Satellite Grottoes”

While few traces can be located within the current physical boundary of the Vairocana shrine to confirm the practice of repentance and bodhisattva path, abundant evidence can be found in what McNair calls the “satellite grottoes.” The “satellite grottoes” were among the most visible early-Tang cave-shrines, excavated during the construction of the Great Vairocana Image

¹⁰³ T 1522, vol. 26, 145c15–23. 自體淨者，有三種戒：一、離戒淨；二、攝善法戒淨；三、利益眾生戒淨。離戒淨者，謂十善業道，從離殺生乃至正見，亦名受戒淨。攝善法戒淨者，於離戒淨為上，從菩薩作是思惟：眾生墮諸惡道，皆由十不善業道集因緣，乃至是故我應等行十善業道，一切種清淨故。利益眾生戒淨者，於攝善法戒為上，從菩薩復作是念：我遠離十不善業道，樂行法行乃至生尊心等。

¹⁰⁴ Two famous Indian monks are known by the name Bodhiruci. The one who translated Vasubandhu’s commentary and *Foshuo fomingjing* (as discussed in Chapter 3) arrived in Luoyang in 508. The other one (d. 727) was active in the court of Empress Wu Zhao. See Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 133–134.

¹⁰⁵ Buswell and Lopez, *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, 220.

Shrine (Fig. 1.5). By McNair's categorization, they include the Paired Grottoes 雙窟 (Caves 521 and 522), Huijian's Grotto 惠簡洞 (Cave 565), the Qingmingsi Grotto, Wanfo Grotto 萬佛洞 (Cave 543), and several smaller shrines. These dedications were all related to Wu Zhao or the Vairocana shrine via patronage, dedicatory texts that list Wu Zhao among the beneficiaries, or the close stylistic resemblance between the dedicated Buddha and the face of the Vairocana. Citing Fazang's phrase "The net of Indra, where principal and satellites reflect one another" as the epigraph, McNair posits an understanding of the interrelated relationship between these grottos and the Vairocana shrine.¹⁰⁶ This observation is confirmed when I consider the repentance practice signified by the intrusive or added shrines inside these "satellite grottoes." From this perspective of repentance practice, I will also add Laolong Grotto 老龍洞 (Cave 669) to this group.

At the foot of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, these medium-scale cave-shrines show that dedications proliferated when communal repentance was conducted or when festival offerings were made to ancestors. Among these dedications, six periods are exceptionally popular, namely the Lunar New Year in the first month, the Qingming-Hanshi Festivals in the second and third months, Śākyamuni's birthday on the eighth of the fourth month, the Duanwu Festival in the fifth month, the Yulanpen Ghost Festival on the fifteenth of the seventh month, and the Winter Solstice in the eleventh month. In Laolong Grotto, Śākyamuni's birthday was the most popular event, attracting six dedications on the day and two more dedications on the two preceding days. On the day of the Yulanpen Festival, when both the court and commoners conducted rituals and sacrifices to their ancestors and the ancestors of seven previous lives, four

¹⁰⁶ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 123-142.

dated dedications appeared in Laolong Grotto.¹⁰⁷ Not far away from Laolong Grotto, Qingmingsi Grotto exhibits eleven dedications in the second and the third months, during the Hanshi and the subsequent Qingming Festivals. Further north, Wanfo Grotto contains four dedications on Yulanpen Ghost festival day, four on Śākyamuni's birthday, three in the months of the Hanshi-Qingming Festivals, and nine in the month of the Winter Solstice. Next to it, in the Paired Grottoes, four niches were dedicated on Śākyamuni's birthday in addition to one on the Ghost festival, and three during the Hanshi-Qingming Festivals.

Among these festivals, Yulanpen Ghost festival and the Buddha's birthday, as McNair observes, brought the most dedications in the early Tang period.¹⁰⁸ At the end of Buddhist monks' ninety-day summer retreat, during which they engaged in strenuous study and practice, monks were required to conduct repentance rituals in front of their fellow Buddhists. At this ending moment, which falls precisely on the fifteenth of the seventh month, or Yulanpen Festival, the power accumulated from the retreat were "released" through the repentance.¹⁰⁹ An account of this event is described in the diary of Japanese monk Ennin 圓仁 (794-864). On his pilgrimage to Mt. Wutai (Wutaishan 五臺山), Ennin observed that in the twilight of the fifteenth day, monks conducted "self-repentance" (*zizi* 自恣). Subsequently, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth, the residents from the entire city seemed to pour into metropolitan monasteries, making grand offerings and visiting monumental golden statues.¹¹⁰ In addition, on the Buddha's birthday and, as *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* tells, on the fifteenth of each month, collective

¹⁰⁷ Steven F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 4-5.

¹⁰⁸ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 141.

¹⁰⁹ Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 205.

¹¹⁰ Ennin 圓仁 (794-864), *Nittō guhō junrei kōki* 入唐求法巡礼行記, B 0095, vol. 18, 0080a12-15. Also cited and translated in Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 3-4.

repentance also was conducted.¹¹¹ The following discussions on Laolong Grotto and on Wanfo Grotto in the next chapter all show the popularity of these dates for new dedications. Some of the dedications bear explicit reference to repentance manuals and some appear generic. Yet regardless of their subject matter, the dedications on these days of communal repentance seemed to have allowed lay donors to partake in the benefits generated from repentance rites.

Besides Yulanpen Ghost festival and the Buddha's birthday, Qingming-Hanshi, Duanwu, and Winter Solstice belong to a group of festivals known as *jie* 節 (“nodes”) and *qi* 氣 (“breath”) that divide each year into 24 climatic periods. Because of the various calendars used in the Tang, they are not fixed on the same day of a year. Yet all these festivals are recognized public festivals in the Tang. According to *Tang Liudian* 唐六典, which was presented to Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762) in 739, slaves and servants were given three-day breaks on the winter solstice and Qingming festival.¹¹² Those who served in the government bureaucracy were on breaks for four days on Hanshi-Qingming festivals, for seven days on the winter solstice, and for one day on Śākyamuni's birthday and the Yulan Ghost festival respectively. In the fifth month of the Duanwu festival, they were on breaks not only on the fifth day, but also for fifteen days to work in the field.¹¹³

On all these festivals, during which sacrifices to ancestors were the principal or the secondary customary activities, Longmen was one of the destinations for trips to conduct ancestral offerings. During the Hanshi festival, as is evidenced from the miraculous tale that will

¹¹¹ Daniel B. Stevenson, “The Ties That Bind: Chinese Buddhist Rites for Securing Rebirth in the Pure Land,” *Hōrin: vergleichende studien zur japanischen kulture* 15 (2008): 152.

¹¹² Li Linfu 李林甫 (683–753) et al., eds., *Tang Liudian* 唐六典, ed., Chen Zhongfu, vol. 6 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 194. 官戶、奴婢，元日、冬至、寒食放三日假。

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 35. 元正、冬至各給假七日，寒食通清明四日，八月十五日、夏至及臘各三日。正月七日·十五日、晦日、春·秋二社、二月八日、三月三日、四月八日、五月五日、三伏日、七月七日·十五日、九月九日、十月一日、立春、春分、立秋、秋分、立夏、立冬、每旬，並給休假一日。五月給田假…

be discussed in Chapter Six, Luoyang residents visited the tombs of their parents. Additionally, the Yulanpen Ghost festival, as Stephen Teiser's book-length study demonstrates, was the crucial time for living descendants to make offerings to their ancestors and the ancestors from seven previous lives. On the day, the Tang court also regularly conducted ancestral offerings and sent out Yulanpen offerings to monasteries in the capital.¹¹⁴ In 692, Wu Zhao was recorded to have sent offerings to Buddhist temples in Luoyang, and personally observed the events with officials at the southern gate of the city.¹¹⁵ On the Winter Solstice, the imperium performed sacrifices to the Supreme Thearch of Boundless Heaven (*Haotian shangdi* 昊天上帝) at the circular terraced altar to the south of the capital city, known as "Circular Mound" (*Yuanqiu* 圓丘 or 圜丘).¹¹⁶ On the next day, according to *Tang Liudian*, the imperial family and court officials should also make offering at the imperial ancestral temple (*Taimiao* 太廟).¹¹⁷ When the Tang capital was in Luoyang, the "Circular Mound" altar was set up outside the southern Dingdingmen (the Gate of the Establishment of the Ding Vessel/ the Capital 定鼎門), to the south of the Wuqiao (the Noon Bridge 午橋).¹¹⁸ Given the physical proximity between the "Circular Mound" altar and Longmen, it is unsurprising that the imperial sacrifice on the Winter Solstice also brought the court affiliates and officials to visit Longmen for the benefits of their own ancestors.

1.6. The Taskcape in Laolong Grotto (Cave 669)

¹¹⁴ For example, see Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 78-85.

¹¹⁵ Liu Xu 刘昫 (887-946) et al., *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, vol. 190 (shang), (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981), 5003; and Yang Jiong 楊炯, "Yulanpen fu" 孟蘭盆賦, in *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, eds., Li Fang et al., vol. 125, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), p. 573b-574b.

¹¹⁶ Li Linfu et al., eds., *Tang Liudian*, vol. 4, 120. The translation of *haotian shangdi* is from Stephan N. Kory, "A remarkably Resonant and Resilient Tang-Dynasty Augural Stone: Empress Wu's Baotu," *T'ang Studies* (2008), no. 26: 101.

¹¹⁷ Li Linfu et al., eds., *Tang Liudian*, vol. 4, 113-114. 凡元正、冬至大會之明日，百官、朝集使皆詣東宮，為皇太子獻壽…訖，皆拜太廟。

¹¹⁸ Wang Zhongshu, "Lun Tang Chang'an cheng Yuanqiu dui Riben jiaoye Yuanqiu de yingxiang," *Kaogu* (2004), no. 10: 72.

Among the myriad dispersed dedications related to repentance and the bodhisattva path, Laolong Grotto 老龍洞 (Cave 669, Fig. 1.9) shows a concentrated cluster. Laolong Grotto is located by the roadside between the Binyang trio and Zhao Keshi Grotto, next to the staircase that leads to Lianhua Grotto 蓮花洞 (Cave 712). The inside of Laolong Grotto is a hodgepodge of over 200 shrines of varying sizes from different periods of the Tang dynasty. Although it is only a medium-sized grotto, measuring about 640 cm in width, 920 cm in depth, and 800 cm in height, its wall surfaces are occupied by 270 shrines, according to the count by the Longmen Research Institute.¹¹⁹ As for the dates, while the earliest niche is from 638, most of the dated inscriptions are from the 650s and the 660s.¹²⁰

Curiously, even though Laolong Grotto seems to have been initiated in the late 630s, the insertions from the late 680s onward are found in the most eye-catching space on the west and the north walls. The largest shrine at the center of the west wall, niche 164, is a pentad of seated Amitabha Buddha, two standing disciples, and two standing bodhisattvas. It contains a dedicatory inscription by someone named Wang Junyi 王君意 who dedicated a shrine of Amitabha for Emperor Gaozong, Empress Wu, and his own parents, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Yulanpen festival, in 686.¹²¹ In addition, an even larger Amitabha pentad, niche 240, occupies about one-third of the entire width on the north wall.¹²² The niche includes an inscription by an anonymous mother for her late daughter, the Eighth Daughter (*Baniang* 八

¹¹⁹ *Zonglu*, v. 4, p. 76.

¹²⁰ In addition, three intrusive shrines were respectively dated to 647, 676 and 686, six were from the 690s, and five were from the 700s and 710s.

¹²¹ *Zonglu*, v. 4, p. 98.

¹²² *Ibid.*, v. 4, p. 108.

娘), which was dated to the twelfth month of 697.¹²³ Between niches 164 and 240 is another Buddha pentad, numbered as niche 201. It also contains a dedication from 714, by a layman named Ren Linghuan 任令環 for the late Second Daughter (*Erniang* 二娘) of Ren.¹²⁴

Since it is not clear if all these three inscriptions were for the niches per se, or for intrusive shrines inside them, there are three possible scenarios for the construction of Laolong Grotto. If niches 164, 240, and 201 were indeed excavated in the 680s, 690s, and 710s, then the constructions in the 650s and 660s must have left some empty space in the middle section of the two walls. In other words, there were plans for the space but never carried out until the 680s. In a less likely scenario, the later constructions completely erased all previous carvings to make space for their own. In my view, the most likely scenario is that these later dedications are for the small intrusive shrines inside the three niches, in which case, donors from the 680s onward added their statues in the most prominent shrines that already existed in Laolong Grotto.

If the last scenario is true, the hodgepodge configuration of Laolong Grotto can be explained by its dispersed patronage pattern. No principal patron is identified. Instead, the huge number of individual niches are arranged in horizontal registers, a pattern that is highly reminiscent of the Guyang Grotto (古陽洞 Cave 1443) from the Northern Wei period. Just like Guyang Grotto that was initiated from the upper registers, I think the excavation of Laolong Grotto also began with the ceiling, because shrines of relatively large scale are found in the upper and middle register whereas the miniature ones occupy the bottom. It seems likely that as commissions came in, available space on the already excavated horizontal registers were utilized

¹²³ The date of this niche is a bit problematic because it claims to be made in the second year of Wansui tongtian reign. However, the second year of Wansui tongtian reign ends in the ninth month, and the twelfth month of this year is named as Shengong reign.

¹²⁴ *Zonglu*, v. 4, p. 102-103.

first before new registers were excavated. When all wall space is exhausted, intrusive shrines were added inside pre-existing niches. In all likelihood, no single source of authority monitored the use of the space in the early Tang period, although some monasteries may have introduced donors to the space.

1.6.1. Numerology of repentance manuals

Inside Laolong Grotto, two niches show explicit iconographies that have their origins in repentance manuals. One of them is Niche no. 178 dedicated by monk Zhishan 智山. Its inscription lists a montage of seven Buddhas of the past, Buddhas of the ten directions, twenty-five Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, fifty-three Buddhas, and 100,000 Buddhas. In its realization, eight rows of 132 Buddhas in total are carved in the niche; each appears to be identical (Fig. 1.10).¹²⁵ Beneath them, to the left, is another niche of seven Buddhas, numbered as Niche no. 179. Dated to the second day of the sixth month of 650 (July 5, 650), the niche is dedicated by monk Zhixu 智旭 and its inscription identifies the program as the seven Buddhas of the past, starting with Vipasyin Buddha.¹²⁶

These numbers of Buddhas, namely seven, ten, twenty-five, thirty-five, and fifty-three, frequently appear in manuals of repentance rites from the seventh to the ninth centuries. In Daoshi's encyclopedic *Dharma Treasure Grove*, he cited various sutras to support the instruction that one should pay obeisance to Buddhas of ten directions, twenty-five Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, fifty-three Buddhas, 1,000 Buddhas, and 15,000 Buddhas during the repentance rites.¹²⁷ The almost identical list is also repeated in three extant contemporaneous texts, including the compilation of repentance rites *Ji zhujing lichan yi* 集諸經禮懺儀 (Compilation of Worship

¹²⁵ *Tiji*, no. 0946, v. 1, p. 215; *Zonglu*, v. 4, text p. 99, plate pl. 644.

¹²⁶ *Tiji*, no. 0996, v. 1, p. 226; *Zonglu*, v. 4, text p. 99–100, plate pl. 645.

¹²⁷ Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, v.53, 0433a27-29.

and Repentance Rituals in Various Sutras, T1982) by Zhisheng 智昇 (active 730s), *Yuanjue jing daochang xiuzheng yi* 圓覺經道場修證儀 (A Manual of Procedures for the Cultivation and Realization of Ritual Practice according to the Scripture of Perfect Enlightenment, X1475) by Zongmi 宗密 (780-841), and a liturgical script for a repentance rite from 955 that was found at Dunhuang (T2854).¹²⁸ These texts are also preserved in inscribed scriptures from the Sui dynasty (581–618), in a niche discovered in Bahuisi 八會寺, Quyang, Hebei, which was inscribed between 593 and 607, and in the famous Leiyin Cave at Yunju Monastery, Beijing, directed by Jingwan 靜琬 (d. 639) between 600 and 617.¹²⁹

Prior to Longmen, the numerology had been visualized in Dazhusheng Cave in Anyang, Baoshan, initiated by Lingyu 靈裕 (518-605). The façade of Dazhusheng Cave is carved with an liturgical manual known as *Lüe lifo chanhui wen* 略禮佛懺悔文 (the Abridged Manual on Venerating the Buddha and Repentance), featuring seven Buddhas of the past, fifty-three Buddhas, Buddhas of the ten directions, and a thousand Buddhas of the present *kalpa*.¹³⁰ Next to and above the manual are inscribed names of the Buddhas of the ten directions and fifty-three Buddhas from the *Guan Yaowang Yaoshang er pusa jing* 觀藥王藥上二菩薩經 (Sutra on contemplating the two bodhisattvas Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata, T1161), thirty-five Buddhas from the *Jueding pini jing* 決定毘尼經 (*Upāliparipṛcchā*, T325), and twenty-five Buddhas from the *Foshuo Foming jing* 佛說佛名經 (Buddha-Name Scripture as Chanted by the

¹²⁸ Zhisheng 智昇 (active 730s), *Ji zhujing lichan yi* 集諸經禮懺儀 T 1982, vol. 47, 0456b26- c04; Zongmi 宗密 (780-841), *Yuanjue jing daochao xiuzheng yi* 圓覺經道場修證儀, X 1475, vol. 74, 380a19-b1; for a brief discussion on Zongmi's repentance manual, see Peter N. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 321; T 2854, vol.85, 1303b29- c08.

¹²⁹ As cited in Li Yumin, "Baoshan dazhusheng ku chutan," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 16 (1998), no 2: 22.

¹³⁰ Luo Zhao, "Baoshan dazhusheng ku kejing zhong de beifang lichan xitong," *Shikusi yanjiu* (2010), no. 1: 164, 174.

Buddha, T440).¹³¹ Inside Dazhushang Cave (Figs. 1.12-14), three Buddha triads are enshrined on the three walls, all of which are identified by the inscribed names of the Buddhas next to the sculptures: Vairocana on the main (north) wall, Amitabha on the western wall, and Maitreya on the eastern wall. Flanking each triad are two columns of seven niches (Fig. 1.12) of seated Buddha, amounting to forty-two in total. Their accompany inscriptions and the overall dedicatory inscription on the façade of Dazhusheng Cave indicate that these niches represent thirty-five Buddhas from the *Jueding pini jing* and the seven Buddhas of the past.¹³² Based on these visual programs, Li Yumin argues that Dazhusheng Cave was a space for Buddhist practice: the repentance manual on the façade reminds devotees to repent sins before entering the cave, and the interior programs allow people to visualize the images of various Buddhas in accordance with contemporaneous liturgical manuals, circumambulate, and continue to repent in front of each Buddha triad.¹³³

1.6.2. *Gaowang Guanshiyin Jing* in Repentance Rites

The dedication of a *Guanshiyin jing* 觀世音經 (Guanshiyin Sutra) in Laolong Grotto provides another indication of lay participation in repentance activities at Longmen. On the south wall of Laolong Grotto are a fragment of an inscribed scripture titled *Guanshiyin jing* and a niche of statues (Niche no. 96, Fig. 1.15), both commissioned by a lay person surnamed Liu 劉 on the fifteenth day of the fifth month of 651 (June 8, 651).¹³⁴ Whereas the statue is eroded now, I argue that the dedication underneath the shrine preserves a partial copy of the famous *Gaowang Guanshiyin jing* 高王觀世音經 (King Gao's Guanshiyin Sutra).¹³⁵ According to the research by

¹³¹ Wendi L. Adamek, *Practicescapes and the Buddhists of Baoshan*, 73.

¹³² Li "Baoshan dazhusheng ku chutan," 8, 12, 27.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³⁴ *Tiji*, no. 1029, v. 1, p. 234. *Zonglu*, v. 10, p. 89.

¹³⁵ The identification is by me. The most decisive identifying passage contains the names of six Buddhas of six directions recounted in the sutra.

the religion scholar Chün-fang Yü, only five other versions of the sutra still exist, the earliest of which are from Lei Yin Cave (Cave 5) of Yunju Monastery, dated to 616, and from Cave 3 of the same site, carved from 665 to 669.¹³⁶ This short sutra enumerates the names of various Buddhas which are faithfully copied in Laolong Grotto, followed by the seven Buddhas of the past, the thousand Buddhas of future, 1,500 hundred Buddhas, 500 Buddhas, and six Buddhas of six directions (one from each cardinal direction, from above, and from beneath).¹³⁷ In the two copies from Yunju Monastery, the names of the last group of six Buddhas are:

From the east, the kingly Buddha of the Moon Hall of jeweled light, as marvelous as the moon, with marvelous voice.

From the south, the Buddha as the root of trees and the king of flowers.

From the west, the kingly Buddha of supernation cognition and beautiful flowers.

From the north, the Buddha as pure as the Moon Hall.

From above, the Buddha of numerous diligences and jeweled head.

From beneath, the kingly Buddha of perfect tranquility and the sound from moon.

東方寶光月殿月妙尊音王佛。

南方樹根華王佛。

西方造王神通艷華王佛。

北方月殿清淨佛。

上方無數精進寶首佛。

下方善寂月音王佛。¹³⁸

In comparison, a part of the fragmentary excerpt in Laolong Grotto reads:

From the east, the kingly Buddha of the...Hall...with marvelous voice.

From the south, the Buddha... trees and the king....

From the west, the kingly Buddha of supernation cognition and... light.

From the north, the Buddha as pure....

From above, ... numerous....

東方□□殿□尊音王佛。

¹³⁶ Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 111.

¹³⁷ For the ink rubbings of the two copies from Yunju Monastery, see Zhongguo fojiao xiehui and Zhongguo fojiao tushu wenwu guan, eds., *Fangshan Yunju si shijing* 房山雲居寺石經 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1978), v. 1, 118; v. 2, 373.

¹³⁸ Since both the copies at Yunju Monastery are not completely legible, I use the Dunhuang version as the base of this transcription, and change the variant characters based on the two Yunju copies. For the Dunhuang version, see T2898, vol. 85, 1425b19-22.

南方口樹口王佛。
 西方造王神通口光佛。
 北方口口清淨佛。
 土無數口口百勝口口口口口口口¹³⁹

Since the inscribed scripture in Laolong Grotto compares closely with the two copies from Yunju Monastery, I identify the former as an excerpt from *Gaowang Guanshiyin jing*.

An indigenous scripture created in China, *Gaowang Guanshiyin jing* was most famous for the miracle that accounts for its origin. The miracle takes three variant forms and features different protagonists. One version of the miracle is found in *Beishi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties), which was written in 659 but was based on a lost original from *Weishu* 魏書 (History of Wei) from 555. The story is set in Jinyang (present-day Taiyuan) and accredits Lu Jingyu 盧景裕 (?–542) and another anonymous person as the receiver of the *Gaowang guanshiyin jing*. An earlier version is recorded in *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the Liu Song Dynasty) from 487, in which the general Wang Xuanmo 王玄謨 (388–468) was able to escape a death sentence by chanting a *Guanyin Sutra* (*Guanyin jing* 觀音經) a thousand times. Even though the title *Guanyin Sutra* could refer to the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, the later author of *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Collection for Imperial Viewing of the Taiping Era), which is an encyclopedic reference book from the late tenth century, reported that the *Guanyin Sutra* Wang Xuanmo recited was only ten sentences long.¹⁴⁰ The version that was most familiar to Longmen audience in the seventh century, however, might be the one that was repeated by Daoxuan in four

¹³⁹ The transcription is based on *Tiji*, no. 1029, v. 1, p. 234. The transcription in *Tiji* is not always accurate. But the majority of the six titles agree with the versions in the Yunju Monastery.

¹⁴⁰ As cited in Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 99, 114. On p. 114, the source for the ten-sentence *Guanyin Sutra* should be *Taiping yulan* instead. Li Fang 李昉 et al., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1975), vol. 654, p. 3053-1.

different compilations from 649 to 664. The story's protagonist is a certain Sun Jingde 孫敬德, a conscripted soldier stationed in Dingzhou (present-day Hebei province) from the Tianping reign (534–537) of the Northern Wei dynasty.¹⁴¹ It is said that he created a statue of Guanyin and offered prayers to the statue. Later when he was imprisoned in the capital and sentenced to death, he conducted a confession ritual the night before. Falling asleep during the confession, he dreamed that a monk taught him a *Guanyin Sutra* which contained various Buddha names and instructed him to chant the sutra a thousand times to avoid suffering. After Sun woke up, he was able to chant a hundred times before arriving at the execution ground and managed to finish the thousandth time by the moment of execution. Then as the sword fell on him, it broke by itself into three pieces while Sun remained unharmed. Even though they changed several knives, none could hurt him. When the miracle was reported to Gao Huan 高歡, who was the Counselor-in-chief (*Chengxiang* 丞相) of the time, Gao pardoned Sun's crime. From then on, as Daoxuan stated, this statue was known as *Gaowang Guanshiyin* and the sutra started to circulate. When Sun returned home, he found three knife marks on the statue's neck.¹⁴²

In addition to miraculous stories that popularized this sutra, the extant versions of *Gaowang guanshiyin jing* also contain passages that indicate its usage in repentance rites and rituals. As Yu demonstrates, by the sixth century, various sutras of Buddha's names, *Gaowang*

¹⁴¹ Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 115-116, citing Daoxuan, *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳, T2060, vol. 50, 692c23-693a9. 昔元魏天平定州募士孫敬德。於防所造觀音像。及年滿還。常加禮事。後為劫賊所引。禁在京獄。不勝拷掠。遂妄承罪。並處極刑。明旦將決。心既切至。淚如雨下。便自誓曰。今被枉酷。當是過去曾枉他來。願償債畢了。又願一切眾生所有禍橫。弟子代受言已少時依條如睡。夢一沙門教誦觀世音救生經。經有佛名。令誦千遍。得免死厄。德既覺已。緣夢中經。了無謬誤。比至平明已滿百遍。有司執縛向市。且行且誦。臨欲加刑誦滿千遍。執刀下斫。折為三段。三換其刀。皮肉不損。怪以奏聞。丞相高歡。表請免刑。仍勅傳寫被之於世。今所謂高王觀世音是也。德既放還。觀在防時所造像項。有三刀迹。悲感之深慟發鄉邑。 Daoxuan repeated the story in *Shijia fangzhi* 釋迦方志, T2088, vol. 51, 972b18-26; in *Datang neidianlu* 大唐內典錄, T 2149, vol. 55, 339a17-27; and twice in *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, vol. 52, 420a19-b5, and 427a20-b2, in which the first mention celebrates the miraculous power of the statue and the second time honors the power of the scripture.

¹⁴² For a complete translation of a variant of the story, see Yü, *Kuan-yin*, 115-116.

guanshiyin jing included, share an emphasis on confession and repentance.¹⁴³ Internal textual evidence also supports this observation. In the Yunju Monastery version, such repentance function is highlighted in the line that comes after the title, reading “Chanting [the sutra] one thousand times would ferry [one] over sufferings and eliminate the sins of life and death.”¹⁴⁴ Similarly, in the undated version preserved in Dunhuang, now in the collection of The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (IOM) of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg (Дx.00531), it is added that if one “upholds and chants [the sutra] a thousand times, [one] would be released from life and death.”¹⁴⁵ In the version preserved in the Taishō Tripitaka, also undated, the text prescribes that devotees should recite the sutra day and night, “to be able to exterminate the suffering of living and death and to quell poison.”¹⁴⁶

The dedication in Laolong Grotto provided a lived example of lay donors’ use of *Gaowang guanshiyin jing* and raises more questions about the function of images in repentance rites. The dedicative inscription stated that the donor commissioned both a scroll of “□□ Guanyin jing 觀音經,” which must refer to the carved *Gaowang guanshi yin jing*, and a statue of Śākyamuni. Then it goes on to claim that the donor chanted the text twenty times- not a thousand times as requested by the previous versions of the sutra- so that “the Buddha’s Dharma may be forever transmitted; the wheel of Dharma may turn in perpetuity; may the four kinds of... be quiet and pure; and may warfare always be pacified.”¹⁴⁷ The passage that might have stated the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 111.

¹⁴⁴ 讀誦千遍得度苦難，拔出生死罪。In the stone slab preserved in Cave 5, see Zhongguo fojiao xiehui et al., eds., *Fangshan Yunju si shijing*, v. 1, 118.

¹⁴⁵ 讀誦千遍得度苦難，拔除生死。L.N. Menshikov and Qian Bochong, eds., *Eluosi ke xue yuan dong fang yan jiu suo Sheng Bide bao fen suo cang Dunhuang wen xian* 俄羅斯科學院東方研究所聖彼得堡分所藏敦煌文獻 [Dunhuang manuscript in Russian collections], v. 6, p. 346. Also cited in Li Xiaorong, “Gaowang Guanshiyin jing kaoxi” 《高王觀世音經》考析,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 77 (2003), no. 1: 105.

¹⁴⁶ 能滅生死苦。消伏於毒害。 *Gaowang Guanshiyin jing*, T 2898, v. 85, 1425b26.

¹⁴⁷ 佛[法永]流，法輪常轉，四□寧淨，兵駕永息。The character *jing* 淨 should probably be *jing* 靜 instead. *Tiji*, no. 1029, v. 1, p. 234.

personal benefits of the dedication does not survive, and thus it is not known if the donor was faced with a life-threatening situation. Yet the inclusion of a Śākyamuni statue in the dedication is not seen in the two carved versions of the same text at Yunju Monastery. Nor is it a stated requirement in any of the miraculous origin of the sutra.

1.6.3. Single Statue for Repentance

I argue that lay persons might have sponsored single statues in Laolong Grotto to participate in repentance. One supportive example is found beneath the largest shrine in this cave, Niche no. 164 (Fig. 1.16), where several single-row intrusive shrines were added. One of them, whose inscription is numbered no. 1011, tells that a lay person named Hu Yuanqing 胡元慶 dedicated “one body (*yiqu* 一軀)” of the thousand Buddha icon, on the fifteenth day of the fifth month in 690 (June 26, 690).¹⁴⁸ In other words, even though a thousand Buddhas are prescribed in repentance texts, it sufficed for this Hu Yuanqing to create only one statue. On a sixth-century stele that employs the motif of thousand Buddhas which was collectively commissioned by lay donors, Dorothy Wong argues that each of the Buddha images was sponsored by one individual donor. As a result, the one Buddha, among the many others on the dedicated stele, established a karmic bond with its donor in the community.¹⁴⁹ Hu’s dedication may well establish his karmic bond with the entire cave-shrine and the Buddhas at Longmen. Yet more examples in Laolong Grotto suggest a concern with the bodhisattva path.

The stated rationale that one Buddha statue could stand for a multitude of Buddhas indicates lay people’s familiarity with various teachings of bodhisattva path. An explicit account

¹⁴⁸ *Tiji*, no. 1011, v. 1, p. 231.

¹⁴⁹ Dorothy Wong, “What is in a Buddha’s name: Case study of a sixth-century Chinese Buddhist stele from the Shaolin Monastery,” in *Treasures Rediscovered: Chinese Stone Sculpture from the Sackler Collections at Columbia University*, eds., Leopold Swergold and Eileen Hsiang-ling Hsu, 17–26 (New York City: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University in the City of New York, 2008), 24.

of this rationale is found in Niche no. 151 on the west wall (Fig. 1.17), which contains a pentad atop a row containing an incense burner, donor figures, and lions. Since the inscription is immediately beneath the row and well aligned with the censer and the central Buddha, I believe it is meant to accompany the pentad. The inscription records that a laywoman née Liu 劉 commissioned an Amitabha statue in 650 after she had a nightmare of herself climbing in the eastern hills. It states that “in her dream, [Liu] became uncertain and confused. [Yet after] making [one image of the] thousand Buddhas, [she] was enlightened and started to meditate... [Thereafter] her mind was open, pure and full of joy.” After waking up, she went ahead to create statues as she did in the dream. However, concerned that the tiny image of the thousand-Buddha motif would be destroyed over time, she created an Amitabha statue instead because, as she added in her inscription, “the Sutras say that the one body of the Buddha can be transformed into multiples and the multiple bodies are one.”¹⁵⁰ The ability to multiply the body is described in *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* and the *Flower Garland Sutra* as a sign of the spiritual attainment of advanced bodhisattvas on the bodhisattva path. In *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, it is said that

Bodhisattvas [who have entered the third *bhūmi*] receive [the ability to] employ endless earth-shaking supernatural transformations. A single body [of the bodhisattva] can be transformed into multiples and multiple bodies are the same as the single body. [The bodies] may manifest or be concealed, move swiftly without impediment, and even penetrate walls and mountains as if [these bodies] were walking in the midair. In a lotus position in the midair, [they] depart as if they were flying birds. [They] emerge from the ground as if from water and [they] walk on water as if walking on the ground. Flames emit from the bodies as if they were a great fire. Water springs out from the bodies as if they were a great cloud. As for the sun and the moon in this *bhūmi*, [the bodhisattvas] possess such great virtues and great power that [they can] touch them with their hands. [They] attain the unimpeded power of transformation in the Brahmā world.

菩薩受用無量諸神變事震動大地，一身為多身、多身為一身，或顯、或隱，迅疾無礙，牆壁山嶂皆能徹過如行於空，於虛空中跏趺而去猶如飛鳥，出沒於地猶若水

¹⁵⁰ 夢中惶耗，造千佛。悟便思惟，心開清悅……經言佛一身為多，多身為一。 *Tiji*, no. 0997, v. 1, p. 227.

中，履水如地，身出煙焰如火聚，從身注水喻如大雲，此之日月，有大神德有大威勢，以手捫摸，乃至梵世轉身自在。¹⁵¹

As *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* was incorporated in the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the same passage also appears in the latter text, including both the sixty-fascicle and the eighty-fascicle versions, and the various Tang commentaries on the *Flower Garland Sutra*.¹⁵²

The early Tang donors of Laolong Grotto seemed to prefer Amitabha statues as their connection to the bodhisattva path. Another lay woman, Changfeng 常奉, dedicated an Amitabha statue for her deceased parents, in the hope that her parents would be reborn in the pure land and that they would “together with sentient beings in the dharma world, practice the bodhisattva path, and reach the shore of pariniravana.”¹⁵³ Similarly, the dedication by Yang Zhenzang in 658 (Niche no. 65, Fig. 1.11, inscription no. 1035) also suggests that lay donors dedicated Amitabha statues to practice the bodhisattva path.¹⁵⁴ In the dedicatory inscription, the donor prayed that his ancestors of seven generations would “attain the highest level of rebirth in the various Buddha-lands, hear the sutra and attain enlightenment.” In addition, he also prayed that “the merit from this [triad] would be offered to all sentient beings. [May they] enter the sarvajñatā ocean.”¹⁵⁵ The Japanese scholar of Huayan Buddhism, Aramaki Noritoshi, translates

¹⁵¹ *Foshuo shidi jing* 佛說十地經, fascicle 3. T 287, vol. 10, 546a20–26.

¹⁵² The phrase is repeated in the commentary titled *Da fangguang fo Huayan jing suishu yanyi chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經隨疏演義鈔 by Chengguan 澄觀 (737-838) and a summary of the *Flower Garland Sutra* that is titled *Da fangguang fo Huayan jing yuanxing guanmen gumu* 大方廣佛華嚴經願行觀門骨目 by 湛然 (711-782). In *金剛頂經毘盧遮那一百八尊法身契印*, translated by Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735) and Yixing 一行 (683-727), which teaches the contemplation of the 108 signs of Vairocana, the ability to multiply bodies is a power of Buddha Vairocana.

¹⁵³ 共法界蒼生修菩薩行，登涅槃岸。 *Tiji*, no. 1007, v. 1, p. 230.

¹⁵⁴ In *Zonglu*, Yang’s inscription is attributed to a miniature Niche no. 68 which only contains one Buddha, whereas the inscription lists two bodhisattvas in addition to an Amitabha statue. Given the discrepancy, I think Niche 65 is a more possible candidate, because its row of censer, lions, and guardians sits directly above the inscription and its axis aligns well with the inscription. In addition, its large scale also matches with the other dedication related to Jingshan Monastery. *Zonglu*, v. 10, p. 85.

¹⁵⁵ 上品往生諸佛國土，聞經悟道……以此功得，普施蒼生，入薩婆苦[若]海。 *Tiji*, no. 1035, v. 1, p. 236.

Sarvajñatā as “the receptivity of omniscient wisdom,” referring to the highest level of spiritual capacity of on the bodhisattva path outlined in the *Renwang banre boluomi jing* (仁王般若波羅蜜經, T 245), an apocryphal text that was a likely basis for the later *Brahmā’s Net Sūtra*.¹⁵⁶ The term also commonly appears in different paradigms of bodhisattva path, such as the forty-two stages of *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩瓔珞本業經 (T 1485) and the fifty-two stages in the various versions of the *Flower Garland Sutra*. In Fazang’s *Jin shizi zhang*, those who attained awakening would travel in the sarvajñatā ocean before they finally enter parinirvana.¹⁵⁷ Yang’s inscription suggests that the dedication of an Amitabha statue was believed to fulfill two goals: to attain a rebirth in various Buddha-lands, not specifically the Western Pure Land, and to bring sentient beings onto the bodhisattva path.

1.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I show that the activities conducted by the donors of Longmen in the second half of the seventh century all agreed with the kind of practices afforded by the symbolism of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. Donors came to Longmen in search of medical treatment, invited monks from monasteries at Longmen to deal with the funerals of deceased family members, participated in repentance rituals on the days of festivals, and sponsored niches that signified their participation on the bodhisattva path. Via these activities, the donors engaged with the landscape and their dedicated niches in the “satellite grottoes” are the traces left behind from these activities. Inscribing the lived religious experience onto the sculpted stone, these dedications continuously formed and reshaped the landscape of Longmen. In this light, the

¹⁵⁶ Aramaki Noritoshi, “The Huayan tradition in its earliest period,” in *Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism*, ed., Imre Hamar, 169-187 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007), 176. For a discussion on the pronunciation of 般若, see its entry in DDB.

¹⁵⁷ T 1880, v. 45, 663c4-5, and 666b23.

completion of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine did not overshadow these donors' cave-shrines; rather it crystalized, magnified, and embodied the activities and lived experience of these donors.

Chapter 2: Embodied Experience of Indra's Net

2.1. Great Vairocana Image Shrine as Landscape

This chapter analyzes the Great Vairocana Image Shrine as the landscape, defined as a socially constructed space into which power relations and cultural values are continuously incorporated.¹⁵⁸ After the monumental Vairocana shrine was completed in 676, its presence transformed the entire landscape. Prior to the 670s, larger onsite projects included Huoshao Cave 火燒洞 (Cave 1578, south of Guyang Cave), the famous Guyang Cave, Poyao 破窯 (Cave 1069, between Zhao Keshi and Weizi Grottoes), Lianhua Cave, Laolong Grotto, Tangzi Cave 唐字洞 (Cave 1192), and the Binyang trio which had recently been finished after their initial excavation in the Northern Wei dynasty (Fig. 1.5). All excavated on the western cliff, they extend from the northern end of the cliff to the middle section. Even though their sizes vary, they created a relatively even visual impact for visitors who walked along the western cliff, a balance that was disrupted by the initiation of the Great Vairocana Shrine. Connected to the ground via a staircase of about twenty meters, the seventeen-meter-high Vairocana dwarfs all other cave-shrines on the western cliff.¹⁵⁹ Once it was completed, more medium-to-small-sized cave-shrines were added on the lower cliff space to its south, and new excavations began to spring up across the River Yi in the Eastern Hills. As a result, the Vairocana shrine not only exceeds all previous hierarchy of scale at Longmen, but also became the unparalleled center of all cave-shrines and statues of the entire site. Diagrams of Longmen, as are frequently reproduced and adapted in onsite signposts, tickets, and academic publications, never fail to capture its visual dominance by positioning the

¹⁵⁸ For a summary of this approach to landscape, see Wylie, “3 Ways of seeing,” and “4 Cultures of landscape,” in *Landscape*, 55-137.

¹⁵⁹ Wen Yucheng, “Lüetan Longmen Fengxiansi de jige wenti,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1984), no. 2: 54. For how a Tang visitor might have seen the Vairocana, see McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 111-115.

shrine at the center of the composition or exaggerating its ratio to other medium-scale shrines (Figs. 2.1 and 2.2).

When visitors mingled inside the landscape, the transformative impact of the monumental shrine also affected how they experienced and understood the landscape. In the process of people engaging with the landscape and with one another, adding new niches, and writing about their experiences, symbols and cultural values arose and were incorporated into the limestone landmass made in the likeness of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. This chapter analyzes these embodied values of the landscape of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine.

Most scholarship that analyzes the Great Vairocana Image Shrine in relation to history has assumed this, although few explicitly acknowledge it. Many scholars agree that the grandeur of the shrine projects a political message, yet the nature of this message is a topic of debate. Focusing on Wu Zhao's contribution to the shrine, several Chinese and Japanese scholars, such as Gong Dazhong, Li Yukun, Zhang Naizhu, and Okada Ken, argued that the project was a part of her decades-long scheme of power usurpation and self-deification.¹⁶⁰ Antonino Forte (1940–2006), the former director of the Italian School of East Asian Studies in Tokyo, noticed that the other name of the shrine, Fengxiansi 奉先寺, comes from the Confucian classic *Shangshu* 尚書, meaning “honoring ancestors.” He argued that Wu Zhao established the Vairocana shrine to honor her ancestors.¹⁶¹ Stressing the role of Emperor Gaozong as the initial donor, Wen

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion and summary of previous scholarship, see McNair, “The Fengxiansi shrine and Longmen in the 670s,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm* 68 (1996): 325-392; and McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 117-118. Citing Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), 138-142; Li Yukun, “Longmen zakao,” *Wenwu* (1980), no. 1: 25, and “Cong Longmen zaoxiang mingji kan Tangdai fojiao,” *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* (1985), no. 3: 34-39; Zhang Naizhu, “Cong Longmen zaoxiang shiji kan Wu Zetian yu Tangdai fojiao zhi guanxi,” *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* (1989), no. 1: 41-53; Okada Ken, “Ryūmon sekkutsu sho-Tō zōzō ron — sono san,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 196 (1991): 107-108.

¹⁶¹ 奉先思孝 from Kong Anguo 孔安國 (active 2nd century B. C), “Taijia zhong” 太甲中 in *Shangshu zhushu ji buzheng*, annotated by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574-648) and Lu Xuanxu 盧宣旬 (574-648) (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963), p. 18. As cited in Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, 1976), 96-98, note 116.

Yucheng, the archaeologist and former director of Longmen Grottoes Research Institute, suggested that the shrine was sponsored for the posthumous merit of Emperor Taizong instead.¹⁶² Considering Wu Zhao's other Buddhist dedications. McNair argued that Wu's participation in her husband's dedication was a public posture of support to the ruling Emperor.¹⁶³ This body of scholarship reads the Great Vairocana Image Shrine as a semiotic symbol that signifies political power or the social value of filial piety, whilst treating the landscape as performative and as a process by focusing on the acts and relations of dedications.¹⁶⁴

By contrast, I offer a reading of the religious value embodied in the Longmen landscape, which I consider to have been a lesson on the interdependent nature of the phenomenal world. I argue that the landscape was an active medium that made it possible for medieval visitors to embrace the Huayan vision. In what follows, I analyze three interrelated metaphors evoked by the iconography of the Vairocana Shrine: 1) the Lotus Store World Ocean of Vairocana; 2) King Indra's net; and 3) the ornamented tower of Vairocana visited by the pilgrim Sudhana. Analyzing the metaphor with the writings by the Huayan patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643–712), who also served as the religious advisor to Wu Zhao, I propose that the visual symbols of the Vairocana shrine signified the most profound teaching of the Buddha that was advocated by the Huayan patriarch. Such symbolism also defined an embodied way to understand the entire landscape, which, as writings by contemporary donors and essayists testify, were known and experienced by the visitors to Longmen. As a result, I argue that the Vairocana shrine transformed the Huayan doctrine of interdependence into relatable experiences for medieval patrons and visitors, making it possible for people to receive the teaching via bodily interactions with the landscape.

¹⁶² Wen Yucheng, "Lüetan Longmen Fengxiansi de jige wenti," *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1984), no. 2: 54.

¹⁶³ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 118-120.

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion on "the performative turn," see Wylie, *Landscape*, 162-166.

2.2. Seeing the Lotus Store World Ocean of Vairocana

Standing in front of the great Vairocana on the lotus throne of a thousand petals, a visitor of the late seventh and early eighth century, as I propose, might understand the statue as Buddha Vairocana in his abode, the Lotus Store World Ocean.¹⁶⁵ The equation between the Lotus Store World Ocean and the thousand-petal lotus was already articulated in *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*. In the first fascicle of, Vairocana told that,

Sons of the Buddha, listen carefully, think and practice well. I have cultivated the mind-ground for the duration of one hundred incalculably long eons (*kalpas*) in the past. With this as cause, I first cast off mundane folly and achieved perfect enlightenment under the name of Rocana. I dwelled in the Lotus Flower Platform Store World Ocean, which was surrounded by a thousand [lotus] petals, each petal holding one world, which became a thousand worlds. I transformed these into a thousand Śākyamunis overseeing a thousand worlds.¹⁶⁶

是諸佛子！諦聽，善思修行。我已百阿僧祇劫修行心地，以之為因，初捨凡夫成等正覺，號為盧舍那，住蓮花臺藏世界海。其臺周遍有千葉，一葉一世界為千世界，我化為千釋迦據千世界。¹⁶⁷

The scripture described the Lotus Flower Store World Ocean of Vairocana as a platform, surrounded by a thousand petals.¹⁶⁸ In first lunar month of 689, on the occasion of a public lecture on Huayan Buddhism, Empress Wu Zhao composed the poem *Ting Huayan shi bingxu* 聽華嚴詩並序 (Preface and Poem on attending the Huayan [lectures]), wherein she evoked the

¹⁶⁵ Huayan devotees aspired to enter the lotus womb world. According to Fazang's biographer, Fazang told his disciples that he would be reborn in a pure land first, and then reach the lotus womb world. See Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 61, note 119.

¹⁶⁶ Translation adapted from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 5-6. Whereas Muller and Tanaka translated 葉 as leaf, I render them as lotus petal.

¹⁶⁷ T 1484, vol. 24, 997c3-8.

¹⁶⁸ T 1484, vol. 24, 1003c29. I choose to translate the term *qianye* 千葉 as "a thousand [lotus] petal," as opposed to "a thousand leaves," because the imagery of a thousand-petal lotus flower was so popular in the Tang that an additional imagery consisting of a thousand leaves seems unlikely.

imagery of a lotus throne with a thousand petals.¹⁶⁹ In a poem written about the lotus seat in Foshouji Monastery 佛授記寺 in Luoyang, Wu Zhao's nephew Wu Sansi 武三思(?–707) wrote that “the jeweled seat opens into a thousand petals.”¹⁷⁰ The government official and essayist Cui Rong 崔融 (653–706) reported that he planted several “thousand-petal lotus” at home and that they bloomed one after another.¹⁷¹ Sometime after the ninth month of 691, Cui Rong composed another letter on behalf of other officials that thanked Wu Zhao for gifting them the “thousand-petal auspicious lotus.” (*Qianye ruilian* 千葉瑞蓮) On this occasion, Cui recalled that “according to the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the lotus world was the country where Vairocana attained enlightenment. In each lotus flower there are billions of countries.”¹⁷² If one mere plant of lotus could evoke the Lotus World of Vairocana to Cui Rong and the other officials, visitors who were absorbed by the monumental Vairocana shrine of Longmen would be unlikely to miss the symbolism.

2.3. King Indra's Net

¹⁶⁹ 座分千葉華，香引六銖煙。“The throne sprawled into flowers of a thousand petals; the incense emitted smoke (as light as) six *zhu*.” Reproduced in *Huayanjing chuanji* 華嚴經傳記, T 2073, vol. 51, 0164b04-5, as cited in Chen Jinhua, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician: The Many Lives of Fazang (643–712)* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 244. The translation is modified after Chen.

¹⁷⁰ 寶座開千葉, from Wu Sansi, “Wuyan he Bolun shi deng Foshouji ge yishou,” 五言和波崙師登佛授記閣一首, in v.7 of Xushi 續拾, in *Quan Tang shi bubian* 全唐詩補編, ed., Chen Shangjun, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 746-7. The volume cites a manuscript of copies of Tang poems, edited by Osaka City Museum of Fine Arts. Text accessed via Institute of History and Philology and Academia Sinica, ed., *Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliao ku*, accessed Jan. 23, 2022. The entire poem reads: 帝宅開金地，神州列寶坊。龍宮橫霧術，鴈塔亘霞莊。窈窕分千仞，參差聳百常。繡櫺懸疊檻，畫拱映雕梁。寶座開千葉，金繩下八行。青龍浮剎柱，白馬對祠場。樹踊金銀色，蓮開日月光。東西分閤廡，左右控池隍。瑞葉擎朝露，祥花送晚香。天衣隨劫拂，仙梵逐風揚。忽有三空士，來宣七覺芳。銀函承寶帙，玉札下瑠章。闢牖青雲外，披軒紫口傍。山川橫地軸，辰象麗天□。□□□□□，□繩待慈航。

¹⁷¹ Cui Rong also wrote the epitaph for nun Huideng's 惠燈 (650–731) burial chamber at Longmen, as will be discussed in Chapter Six. Cui Rong 崔融 (653–706), “Hehua tie,” 荷華帖 in *Quan Tang wen: Tang wen shiyi* 全唐文: 唐文拾遺, v. 16, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 10541.2.

¹⁷² 按華嚴經云。蓮花世界是盧舍那佛成道之國。一蓮花有百億國。Cui Rong, “Wei baiguan he qianye ruilian biao,” 為百官賀千葉瑞蓮表 in *Quan Tang wen*, v. 218, 2206.2-2207.1. The letter refers to Wu Zhao as *Tiance jinlun shengshen Huangdi* 天冊金輪聖神皇帝, a title that Wu Zhao assumed after the ninth month of 691, according to Liu Xu, *Jiu Tang shu*, v. 6, 124.

A more devoted Buddhist of the seventh century would recognize the Vairocana statue as a deified symbolism for the intertwined cosmic net of Huayan Buddhism. As the bedrock of the iconography of the Vairocana statue, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra* is named after a cosmic net, which grew into a key metaphor of Huayan Buddhism in the seventh and eighth centuries. This metaphor is briefly articulated in the second fascicle of the scripture. It reads,

At this time the Buddha observed the net of the king of Brahmā Heaven, and was motivated to say:
Innumerable worlds are just like the (jewels in the) eyelets in this net. Each and every world is different from the other and the differences are innumerable. It is the same with the Buddha's teachings.¹⁷³

時佛觀諸大梵天王網羅幢，因為說無量世界猶如網孔，一一世界各各不同別異無量，佛教門亦復如是。¹⁷⁴

The scripture uses a net to symbolize the inter-connected universe and the very content of the Buddha's teaching. Although it is named as Brahmā's net in this scripture, medieval Buddhists in China likely did not differentiate it from a similar yet more famous net known as "Indra's net" (*Yintuoluo wang* 因陀羅網) in Huayan writings. In the latter writings, Indra's net was a metaphor that explains the inter-dependence of the universe, or more specifically, the Huayan vision of the *dharmadhātu*.¹⁷⁵ The metaphor compares the entire cosmos to a net of interlocking strings of pearls that hangs in King Indra's heaven. Each pearl reflects one another, reflects its own reflection in other pearls, and reflects the entire net; similarly, every part of the universe is dependent upon the existence of other parts and of the entire universe.¹⁷⁶ Fazang argues that as two metaphors, Brahmā's net highlights the distinctive quality of each eyelet, whereas Indra's

¹⁷³ Translation adapted from Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, 40.

¹⁷⁴ T 1484, vol. 24, 1003c14-c16

¹⁷⁵ Indra's net is a trope metaphor in the forty-fascicle (T 0293), sixty-fascicle (T 0278), and eighty-fascicle (T 0279) versions of the *Huayan Sutra*.

¹⁷⁶ Francis Cook, *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 1-19, particularly pp. 2 and 13.

net emphasizes the mutually reflective quality of its jewels.¹⁷⁷ Yet such doctrinal differences were not represented in any visual materials. The fact that Fazang had to explain the minute difference suggests to me that his audience did not distinguish between the two metaphors. In what follows, I will refer to this cosmic net as Indra's net because it was only when the Huayan school took form as a systemized school of thought in the seventh century that this metaphor gradually became well-known.

2.3.1. Contemplating Vairocana and Indra's Net

The correlation between Vairocana and Indra's net is explicitly addressed in the treatise *Xiu Huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan guan* ("Cultivation of Contemplation of the Inner Meaning of the Huayan: The Ending of Delusion and Return to the Source," 修華嚴奧旨妄盡還源觀, T 1876), written by Fazang who was later recognized as the third patriarch of the Huayan school of Buddhism because of his systematization of its teaching.¹⁷⁸ In the treatise, Fazang juxtaposed six contemplations, the last two of which are the contemplation of Vairocana's many manifested bodies and the contemplation of Indra's net. It reads,

Fifth is the contemplation of the images of many bodies in one mirror. This is the dharmadhātu of *shishiwu'ai*, or unobstructed interrelation of each and every phenomenon. This means that the ten bodies of Vairocana act together without interference or obstruction. [The Huayan] Scripture says, 'Sometimes with his own body [the advanced bodhisattva] manifest into the body of sentient beings, the body of lands (*kṣetrakāya*), the body of rewards of karma, śrāvaka body (*śrāvakakāya*), pratyekabuddha body (*pratyekabuddhakāya*), bodhisattva body (*bodhisattvakāya*), tathagata body (*tathāgatakāya*), wisdom body (*jñānakāya*), Dharma body (*dharmakāya*), and body of absolute space.' Any one of the ten bodies hold the other nine bodies. Thus, it is called the contemplation of the reflections of multiple bodies entering one mirror.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Fazang, *Fanwang jing pusa jieben shu* 梵網經菩薩戒本疏, T 1813, vol. 40, 604c4-8. 問此中梵網與華嚴中因陀羅網何別。答彼是帝釋網。此是梵王網。彼網在殿。此網在幢。喻意亦別。彼取寶珠成網互相影現。辨重重無盡。此取網孔差別不同義故為異也。

¹⁷⁸ Peter N. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 13.

¹⁷⁹ The translation is adapted from Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Huayan Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 167; and *shishen* 十身 in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*.

五者、多身入一鏡像觀。即事事無礙法界也。謂毘盧遮那十身互用，無有障礙也。《經》云：「或以自身作眾生身、國土身、業報身、聲聞身、緣覺身、菩薩身、如來身、智身、法身、虛空身。」如是十身隨舉一身攝餘九身，故曰多身入一鏡像觀。¹⁸⁰

Following the contemplation of Vairocana's ten manifested bodies is the sixth contemplation on Indra's net, reading

Sixth is the contemplation of the net of Indra, where principal and satellites reflect one another. This means that with self as principal, one looks to others as satellites or companions; or else one thing or principle is taken as principal, and all things or principles become satellites or companions; or one body is taken as principal and all bodies become satellites. Any one of the things or principles encompass both principal and satellite, multiplying infinitely- this represents the nature of things manifesting reflections multiplied and remultiplied in all phenomena, all infinitely. This is also the infinite doubling and redoubling of compassion and wisdom.¹⁸¹

六者、主伴互現帝網觀。謂以自為主、望他為伴，或以一法為主、一切法為伴，或以一身為主、一切身為伴，隨舉一法即主伴齊收，重重無盡，此表法性重重影現，一切事中皆悉無盡，亦是悲智重重無盡也。¹⁸²

After articulating all six contemplations, Fazang summarized that,

Of the above said six gates of contemplations, when one is raised as principal, other five become satellites or companions- there is no before or after; beginning to end they are all equal. Whichever gate one enters, it completely includes the dharmadhātu.

This principle is like a round jewel pierced with six holes; whichever hole is strung, immediately the whole jewel is taken. In the very same way, there are six gates of [contemplation]. Whichever one is entered, it contains completely the principle of the perfect and complete teaching of dharmadhātu, because the Dharma is naturally so.¹⁸³

此上所述六重觀門，舉一為主、餘五為伴，無有前後始終俱齊，隨入一門即全收法界。此理喻如圓珠穿為六孔，隨入一孔之中，即全收珠盡。此亦如是，開為六門，隨入一門即全收法界圓滿教理，法自爾故。¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Fazang, *Xiu Huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan guan* 修華嚴奧旨妄盡還源觀, T 1876, vol. 45, 640b12-17.

¹⁸¹ Translation adapted from Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable*, 168. As cited in McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 119.

¹⁸² Fazang, *Xiu Huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan guan*, T 1876, vol. 45, 640b27-c3.

¹⁸³ Translation adapted from Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable*, 168.

¹⁸⁴ Fazang, *Xiu Huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan guan*, T 1876, vol. 45, 640c13-18.

In other words, to contemplate the unity of Vairocana and his many manifested bodies is the same as to contemplate Indra's net. Both of which would lead one to understand the perfect teaching of Huayan. In this world of metaphor, Buddha Vairocana embodies the entirety of Indra's net, and he manifested into myriad Śākyamuni Buddhas who were comparable to the pearls on this net. In this sense, the visual union of Vairocana and Śākyamunis at Longmen served as a deified embodiment of King Indra's jeweled net.

In the intellectual framework of Fazang, Indra's net is one of the two imageries that symbolize the essence of Huayan teaching, the most profound teaching of the Buddha. According to the detailed textual study of Huayan scriptures by the religion scholar David L. McMahan, the use of visionary imageries is a crucial method in Huayan text that evokes non-conceptual awareness free from the mediation of language.¹⁸⁵ Fazang's writing also agrees with this method. Following his teacher and predecessor Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668), Fazang classified Huayan teaching as the most superior among others, the so-called "perfect teaching" 圓教: it was taught by Vairocana under the bodhi tree, whilst the Buddha was absorbed in the moment of awakening; it was so profound that it was only taught to the advanced bodhisattvas.¹⁸⁶ The content of the perfect teaching, as Fazang described, can be captured by two imageries: the samādhi of oceanic reflection (*haiyin sanmei* 海印三昧) and Indra's jeweled net. Fazang wrote in *Huayan youxin fajie ji* 華嚴游心法界記 (Reflections on the dharmadhātu, T 1877) that Huayan teaching is the same as the samādhi of oceanic reflection, which the Buddha entered at the moment of awakening. The samādhi is like

the reflection of the four divisions [of a great army] on a vast ocean. Although the reflected images differ in kind, they appear simultaneously on [the surface of] the ocean

¹⁸⁵ David L. McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahayana Buddhism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 5, 111.

¹⁸⁶ Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 130-131.

in their proper order. Even though the appearance of the images is manifold, the water [that reflects them] remains undisturbed. The images are indistinguishable from the water, and yet [the water] is calm and clear; the water is indistinguishable from the images, and yet [the images] are multifarious... the myriad diverse kinds [of images] penetrate each other without obstruction. The one and the many are reflected in one another without opposing each other...¹⁸⁷

This imagery of oceanic reflection portrays the vision of an inter-related phenomenal world, wherein each phenomenon is different and yet contingent upon each other. Following the articulation on the samādhi of oceanic reflection, Fazang further explained that “to enter this samādhi, there are more than one expedient means; yet to grasp them all, they are nothing more than the two gates: understanding and practicing.”¹⁸⁸ The gate of understanding, Fazang continued, is to envision the jeweled net of Indra.

Similarly, Indra’s net is again used by Fazang to describe the perfect teaching in his *Treatises on the Five Teachings* (*Wujiao zhang* 五教章, also known as *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* 華嚴一乘教義分齊章, T1866), wherein Fazang classified the levels of teachings.¹⁸⁹

According to Fazang, the visions of oceanic reflection and Indra’s jeweled net lead to the realization of *shishi wu'ai* 事事無礙, or the “unobstructed interrelation of each and every phenomenon,” and *fajie yuanqi* 法界緣起, or the “conditioned origination of the dharmadhātu.” Both capture the essence of the perfect teaching of the Buddha. Reading the Great Vairocana Image Shrine against the writings by Fazang, a medieval Buddhist intellect would recognize the visual symbolism carried of the cave-shrine, one that signifies the ultimate Huayan vision of the interdependent universe.

¹⁸⁷ Translated by Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 155, citing *Huayan youxin fajie ji*, T 1877, vol. 45, 646b25-c6.

¹⁸⁸ Fazang, *Huayan youxin fajie ji*, T 1877, vol. 45, 646c15-16. 將欲入此三昧方便非一。總而言之不過二門。一者解。二者行。This translation is mine.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 156. Citing Fazang, *Huayan yicheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* 華嚴一乘教義分齊章, T1866, vol 45, 506a12-14.

2.3.2. Wu Zhao

Wu Zhao was likely highly educated in the significance of Indra's net, when she sponsored the new design that deified the colossal Buddha image as Vairocana. Wu Zhao had been interested in Huayan ideas before making acquaintance with Fazang; in his biography of Fazang, Chen Jinhua argued that the Daoist pharmacist Sun Simiao had introduced the *Flower Garland Sutra* (Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra, Huayan jing 華嚴經) to Emperor Gaozong in the late 650s.¹⁹⁰ Yet when Wu Zhao offered her funds to the Great Vairocana Image Shrine in 673, she likely took advice from Fazang, who, between 670 and 671, entered the newly converted Taiyuan Monastery 太原寺 that was dedicated to the posthumous benefit of Wu Zhao's late mother, née Yang 楊 (579–670).¹⁹¹ During his time at Taiyuan Monastery, Wu Zhao also presented him with a set of monastic robes for a Duanwu 端午 festival.¹⁹² He was also believed to taught his most succinct treatise on Huayan, *Treatise on the Golden Lion* (*Jin shizi zhang* 金師子章, T 1881) to Empress Wu Zhao after she ruled in her own name.¹⁹³ In the later document

¹⁹⁰ Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 242 and note 4. Citing Fazang, *Huayanjing chuanji* 華嚴經傳記 T 2073, vol. 51, 0171b24-c19, and Fazang, *Huayanjing ganyingzhuan* 華嚴經感應傳, T 2074, vol. 51, 0178a15-b09. Medicinal recipes attributed to Sun Simiao were copied in Yaofang Cave at Longmen. See Michael Stanley-Baker and Dolly Yang, “Dung, Hair, and Mungbeans: Household Remedies in the Longmen Recipes,” in *Buddhism and Medicine: An Anthology of Premodern Sources*, ed., C. Pierce Salguero, 454-477 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 455.

¹⁹¹ Citing Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), McNair and Yen Chüan-ying argue that Taiyuan Monastery was in Luoyang. However, Chen Jinhua believes there are two twin Taiyuan Monasteries, in Chang'an and Luoyang respectively. The one that Fazang was affiliated with was in Chang'an. See McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, endnote no. 34 on p. 202; Yen, “The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels: The Style, Patronage and Iconography of the Monument” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1986), 21–22. Citing Wang Pu, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要, vol. 48, p. 848. Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 36, 97-98.

¹⁹² McNair supports that Fazang had a major influence behind Wu Zhao's choice of the iconography of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. See McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 119. Chen Jinhua clarifies the common misconception that Fazang was appointed as the abbot of Taiyuan Temple. Instead, he shows that monk Huili 慧立 (615–?), the biographer of Xuanzang, was the abbot at Taiyuan Temple in 671. He also discredits the many Song records that claimed Empress Wu Zhao bestowed the honorific title Xianshou 賢首 or Xianshou guoshi 賢首國師 to Fazang in 674. See Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 125-126, and note 33; 94-101.

¹⁹³ The earliest source that suggests Fazang taught *Jin shizi zhang* to Wu Zhao was by Zongmi 宗密 (780–841). This statement was then elaborated by later writers. As cited in Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 177.

Song Biographies of Eminent Monks (*Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, T 2061), Fazang was said to have arranged ten mirrors around an illuminated Buddha image for Empress Wu Zhao; the infinite reflection of the Buddha in mirrors helped Wu Zhao to envision the conditioned origination of the *dharmadhātu*.¹⁹⁴

2.3.3. Fazang and Longmen

Fazang also sponsored statues at Longmen that might have been the focus of repentance ritual performance. Fazang's name appears as the donor for three statues of King Udayana's image of Śākyamuni in Cave 176, a wide continuous shrine with five arched openings (Fig. 2.3).¹⁹⁵ The grotto sits above the monumental Yique Buddha Shrine Stele, south of Binyang Central Grotto. Currently, five statues and one empty seat remain inside. In addition, Fazang was also listed outside Cave no. 676, among a group of donors for two King Udayana shrines north of Laolong Grotto, although the statues cannot be found today.¹⁹⁶ As will be discussed in the next chapter, devotees in the area near Luoyang used King Udayana's image of Śākyamuni during repentance rituals. Evidence at Longmen also suggests that the use of King Udayana's image of Śākyamuni in repentance was popular here. Thus, Fazang's multiple dedications suggest that he also participated in repentance rituals at Longmen. Admittedly, none of Fazang's Udayana statues were dated. This particular type of Udayana statue appeared at Longmen between the 650s and 680s, and another dedication by Fazang of an Amitabha pentad in Weizi

¹⁹⁴ As cited in Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism*, 156-157.

¹⁹⁵ See Chapter Three of this dissertation for a discussion on King Udayana's image of Śākyamuni.

¹⁹⁶ Summarized in McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, endnote no. 37, pp. 202-203. For Fazang's dedication in Cave no. 176, see *Tiji*, nos. 245, 255, and 256, v. 1, p. 57-58. *Zonglu*, v. 2, text, p. 4; plate, pls. 34-39. For his dedication outside Cave no. 676, see *Tiji*, nos. 1120-1121, v. 2, pp.253-254. *Zonglu*, v. 5, text, p. 3; plate, pls. 17 and 20.

Grotto (魏字洞 Cave 1181) was dated to 667.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, it is unknown if his Udayana statues were constructed before or after the Great Vairocana Image Shrine was completed. Regardless, when Fazang recommended that his imperial donor, Wu Zhao, complete the grand project, he was invested in both the metaphysical symbolism and the performative aspect of *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*. If he continued to sponsor images of King Udayana's Buddha statue after 676, then both his dedications and his participation in repentance performance could be seen as affirmative acts that responded to the Great Vairocana Image Shrine.

2.4. Longmen as a Whole: Embodied Experience

After the Vairocana shrine was finished in 676, visitors seemed to acquire a new experience of the landscape which allowed them to envision themselves as Sudhana who entered the abode of Buddha Vairocana, experiencing the miracle of duplicated visions and attaining the highest awakening. The philosophy scholar Mathias Obert argued that in Huayan writings, the metaphor of Indra's net aimed less to offer a metaphysical view than to give instructions for contemplation.¹⁹⁸ At Longmen, after worshipping the monumental Buddha, medieval visitors may continue to feel his penetrating gaze as they walked on the eastern side of the river or

¹⁹⁷ *Tiji*, no. 1521, v. 2, p. 349. More than one monk from the seventh century was known by the name Fazang. Chen Jinhua agrees that the dedication inside Weizi Grotto was by the Huayan master. However, no identifying evidence exists for the donors of the other Udayana statues. Another donor named Fazang was found on a four-tiered stone pagoda, unearthed at Longmen and collected by the Research Institute in the 1970s. The front side of the pagoda is carved a seated Amitabha, flanked by two donors. One side is carved with a prose titled *Dazhou futu ming bing xu* 大周浮圖銘並序 (Inscription and preface to the pagoda of the Great Zhou), followed with a dedication of 703 from An Sitai 安思泰 (date unknown). The back of the pagoda is carved with an inscription that records the location of the ancestor tomb and the death date of the parents of five Kang brothers, including one named Fazang. Their surname Kang indicates they were of Sogdian descent. Chen Jinhua closely compared the dates of this Kang Fazang with the Huayan patriarch and argued that they were different persons. See Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician*, 74-77; Wen Yucheng, "Huayan zong sanzhu Fazang shenshi de xin ziliao: Jianshu Longmen shiku Zhong de waiguoren zaoliang," *Fayin* (1984), no. 2: 35-36. For a complete description of the stone pagoda, see Zhang Naizhu, "Luoyang Jingjiao jingchuang yu Tang dongdu 'gandexiang' de huren juluo," *Zhongyuan wenwu* (2009), no. 2: 100.

¹⁹⁸ As cited on pp. 6-7 in Joerg Plassen, "Huayan Studies in the West: Some Remarks Focusing on Works Concerning the Early History of the Tradition," in *Reflecting Mirrors*, 1-28. Mathias Obert, *Sinndeutung und Zeitlichkeit. Zur Hermeneutik des Huayan-Buddhismus* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), p. 127f.

enjoyed sightseeing on a boat on the river. I argue that this holistic experience of the landscape encouraged visitors to contemplate on the symbolism of the Vairocana shrine.

2.4.1. The Experience of Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–737)

Two writings that revolve around the scholar and Buddhist devotee Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–737) offer descriptive accounts of the wonder of seeing myriad manifestations and being a part of the duplication inside the landscape of Longmen. Su Ting became known for literary talent at a young age and served Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762) for over two decades. After Su passed away, Xuanzong held a memorial service for him at the southern gate of Luoyang, suspended court for two days, and granted him the honorific posthumous title of Right Chancellor in the Department of State Affairs (rank 2b).¹⁹⁹ Su Ting also actively participated in the circle of Buddhist scholars. He wrote *Tang Henan Longmen Tianzhusi bei* (唐河南龍門天竺寺碑, *Stele to Tianzhu Monastery*), which commemorates the establishment of Tianzhu Monastery (literally, India Monastery) by the famous Kashmiri Tantric master Manicintana (?–721, CH: 寶思惟) in the Eastern Hills of Longmen.²⁰⁰ In addition, Su was listed among the scholars who proofread the translation project led by monk Yijing 義淨 (635–713) of a vinaya text, *Mūlasarvāstivāda-nidāna-māṭṛkā* (T 1452, CH: 根本說一切有部尼陀那目得迦).²⁰¹ Beyond his intellectual interest in Buddhism, Su was himself a devoted Buddhist. Reportedly, upon the death of his nephew Zheng Muqing 鄭牧卿 (fl. 713–741) from the famous Zheng

¹⁹⁹ Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tangshu*, vol. 88, p. 2882. Su's title was 尚書右丞相.

²⁰⁰ “Tang Henan Longmen Tianzhu si bei,” in Li Fang et al., *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華, v. 856 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 4518-4519. I learned of this source from Zhang Naizhu, “Longmen shiku Tianzhusi shiji,” *Shikusi yanjiu* 4 (2013): 153-154.

²⁰¹ T 1452, v. 24, 419b10-11.

family of Xingyang 滎陽, Su dreamed of a lotus blooming in a jeweled pond, on which his nephew was seated.²⁰²

One of the writings related to the experience of Longmen is the paean written by the famous essayist Zhang Yue 張說 (663–730) about a statue of Guanyin on the western cliff of Longmen, sponsored by a group of residents of Luoyang for Su Ting.²⁰³ Although Zhang Yue’s text is recorded, the actual dedication is not preserved among extant inscriptions at Longmen. The relation between Zhang Yue and Su Ting was recorded in *Taiping guangji*, in which it is said that when Zhang Yue was in exile, he sent some poems to Su Ting, reminding Su of Zhang’s friendship with Su Ting’s father. The poems touched Su Ting, who was then mourning for the passing of his father; as a result, Su recommended Zhang to Xuanzong.²⁰⁴

Zhang Yue’s paean started with an extensive praise of Su Ting’s virtue and, stated that, “[Su Ting] then invited miraculous craftsmen. They appreciated the efficacious peak, carved [the deity who emanated] the blazing light from a mirror, dug and chiseled [the cliff struck by] lightning bolts.”²⁰⁵

乃購奇匠。倣靈峰。追琢鏡光。鑿鑿電燄。

As is common in other Longmen dedicatory inscriptions, Zhang highlights the divine power imbued in the process of carving. The work of the sculptors was understood not as the creation of an artificial representation of the deity, but rather as the revelation of the light-emulating deity

²⁰² Zhipan 志磐 (1220–1275), *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統記, T 2035, v. 49, 285a2-5.

²⁰³ Zhang Yue 張說 (663–730), “Longmen xikan Su Hegong dengshen Guanshiyin pusa xiang song” 龍門西龕蘇合宮等身觀世音菩薩像頌, in v. 7 of *Zhang Yan gong wenji* 張燕公文集, p. 12-1-14-2. *Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliao ku*. The paean was composed at the occasion when Su Ting had just been moved from a previous post to the position of Supervising Censor 給事中, a relatively low rank status (5a).

²⁰⁴ Li Fang et al., *Taiping guangji*, 1803, citing an earlier text *Minghuang zalu* 明皇雜錄 (Miscellaneous records of Emperor Minghuang).

²⁰⁵ Both mirror light and lightning bolts may refer to the light that emanates from the deity. The term *Jingguang* 鏡光 is used in other Buddhist texts to describe the reflections of the Buddha’s bodies. See Wōnhyo 元曉 (617–686), vol. 1 of *Dacheng qixin lun bieji* 大乘起信論別記, T 1845, vol. 44, 234c11-12: 如鏡中像鏡光所照。是故此像不離鏡光。以不離故。即是鏡光。Changshui Zixuan 長水子璿 (965–1037), vol. 14 of *Qixin lun shubi xueji* 起信論疏筆削記, T 1848, vol. 44, p. 371b2-3: 謂佛身有異相。爾如鏡光是一像異由形也。

from the landmass. Then, presumably after seeing the statue of Guanyin dedicated to Su Ting at Longmen, Zhang described its appearance:

[When they were finished, the carved Guanyin] stood against the tall cliff and looked over the overhanging pass; standing on lotus bases of stone, its hair like jade. Obscured by rising clouds, [the figure] stood graceful and fair, its bearing modeled on a magistrate and manifested the auspicious signs of a wheel-turning king.

倚高壁。臨懸關。蹈石葑。戴珉鬢。縹緲雲聳。嬋娟玉立。模宰官之形儀。現輪王之相好。

Following this detailed description of the marvelous appearance of the statues on a tall cliff, Zhang offered what appears to be a first-person, close-up impression of the statue:

[If one] respectfully gazes up at it, [the Guanyin] seems about to smile; [if one] concentrates the mind to listen, [the robe of the Guanyin] seems to make sounds.

諦視瞻仰。將莞爾而微笑。攝心傾聽。疑僊然而有聲。

The statue is no longer static in these lines. Rather, Zhang described the moment of Guanyin's smile and the sound of his movement. Subsequently, this close perspective was quickly replaced with an imaginary bird's-eye view:

To the left and right [of the Guanyin], it was the grove of a blessed field and the foundation of Fragrant City (the abode of bodhisattva Dharmôdgata in the *Diamond Sutra*). The Buddha to the front and the Buddha at the back, the large body and the small body, all look to each other over the lofty peaks, filling the empty air in countless amount.

其左右則福地園林。香城基址。前佛後佛。大身小身。亘岑嶺而相望。遍虛空而無數。

Zhang contextualized the statue of Guanyin in the blessed land of Longmen, wherein countless Buddhas, large and small, looked to each other in midair. Guanyin and the many Buddhas became both the spectators and the view for each other. The readers of the text assumed the same position as the multiple deities, looking over to the myriad manifestations of Buddhas and Guanyin. Yet soon, in the next lines, this switching of the viewpoint completely changed the

spectatorship in this space. Whereas viewers gazed up at the statue in earlier lines, they received the gaze of the deity in the following section:

Without moving, this body [of the Guanyin] contemplates sentient beings on the great earth. Where did the Buddha come from? [He] was manifested in [as many] worlds [as] the sands in the Ganges.

此身不動。觀大地之眾生。彼佛何來。見河沙之世界。²⁰⁶

In the last two lines, the sentient beings evoke the viewers inside the landscape of Longmen. They became the objects of contemplation by the unmoving body of Guanyin, and the many manifestations of the Buddhas.

The other writing by Su Ting also conveyed the sense that he and the myriad carved Buddhas contemplated each other. In the literary collection of Tang texts, there is a dedicatory text that records Su Ting's sponsorship of a Buddhist shrine in Lizhou 利州, modern-day Guangyuan in Sichuan.²⁰⁷ Presently, Niche 211 (Fig. 2.4) at the Qianfoya Grottoes of Guanyuan is known as Su Ting's Grotto (*Su Ting ku* 蘇頌窟) because it has the title and name of Su Ting inscribed. Possibly constructed around 720, Niche 211 is an open grotto on the cliff face, containing a seated Buddha with pendent legs and two standing bodhisattvas.²⁰⁸ Scholars suggest that this niche at Qianfoya Grottoes may be the one recorded in the dedicatory text of Su Ting.²⁰⁹ Titled *Lizhou bei ti foka n ji* 利州北題佛龕記 (Record of inscribing a Buddha shrine in northern

²⁰⁶ Zhang Yue, "Longmen xikan Su Hegong dengshen Guanshiyin pusa xiang song."

²⁰⁷ Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–737), "Lizhou bei ti foka n ji" 利州北題佛龕記, in *Wenyuan yinghua*, v. 818 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), p. 4319-1.

²⁰⁸ See Yagi Haruo, "Sichuan Guangyuan Qianfoya Wu Zhou zhi Kaiyuan shiqi fojiao zaoxiang yanjiu," trans. Yao Yao, *Dunhuang yanjiu* (2020), no. 2: 41-42.

²⁰⁹ Yang Xiao, "Local Monuments, Local Narratives: The Emergence and Development of Buddhist Rock Carvings in Northern Sichuan, 618-907 CE," (PhD diss., Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 2021) 82, footnote 194, and fig. 2.22 on p. 288. Yang also cites Wu Mingxian, "Su Ting ru shu kao," *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 33, no.1 (2006): 58-62.

Lizhou), the text starts with a description of what Su saw on the site: continuous hills, shimmering lights on flowing water, and dangerous mountain path. Then Su wrote,

I again saw the dharma of semblance [as reflected in a mirror] abide in the world, on the side of the mountain cliff. Hundreds, thousands, myriads, and millions, [the carved Buddhas] looked over to one another and to me. Though [the statues are] carved and sculpted, I am not different.

吾又見像法住世於巖之阿。百千萬億兮相觀我。載琢載追兮吾匪他。²¹⁰

It appears that Su Ting and Zhang Yue shared a same set of vocabulary in writing about Buddhist statues carved from living rocks. They both pictured themselves among the stone cliffs, looking at whilst being subsumed in the gaze from the myriad carved Buddhas. The dedications at Longmen and in Lizhou, much like the niches dedicate by other donors of the seventh century, became the enduring testimony of their donor's presence and embodied experience of the landscape of cave-shrines.

2.4.2. Experience Indra's Net in the Landscape

The experience of Su Ting as a part of the entire landscape evokes the vision of the pilgrim Sudhana who saw himself within the multiplied towers of Vairocana. In the *Flower Garland Sutra*, Sudhana is a pilgrim who visited fifty-three spiritual teachers as he progressed through fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva path of Huayan. The vision of Sudhana was elaborated by Fazang as he explained the contemplation of Indra's net. In the *Cultivation of Contemplation of the Inner Meaning of the Huayan*, Fazang wrote that,

As [is said in the *Flower Garland Sutra*], when the boy Sudhana gradually traveled south from the Jeta grove until he reached the great tower of Vairocana's ornaments. For a while he concentrated, then said to Maitreya, 'Great Sage, please open the door of the tower and let me enter.' Maitreya snapped his fingers and the door opened. When Sudhana had entered, it closed as before. He saw that inside the tower were hundreds and thousands of towers, and in front of each tower was a Maitreya Bodhisattva, and before

²¹⁰ Su Ting, "Lizhou bei ti fokan ji," in *Wenyuan yinghua*, v. 818, p. 4319-1. For a discussion on the perception of the semblance dharma at Longmen, see McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 89-110.

each Maitreya Bodhisattva was a boy Sudhana, each Sudhana joining his palms before Maitreya. This represents the multiple levels of the dharmadhātu, like the endless net of Indra. This [passage] clarifies that Sudhana followed the Huayan principle of dharmadhātu, practiced and reached the ultimate level- the sudden awakening to the dharmadhātu. In this, one tower is taken as principal and all other towers became satellites. Thus, it is called the contemplation of Indra's net, principal and satellites reflecting each other. This is also the contemplation of unobstructed interrelation of each and every phenomenon.²¹¹

如“善財童子，從祇桓林中漸次南行，至毘盧遮那莊嚴大樓閣前，暫時歛念，白彌勒菩薩言：‘唯願大聖，開樓閣門令我得入。’彌勒彈指其門即開。善財入已，還閉如故。見樓閣中有百千樓閣，一一樓閣前各有彌勒菩薩，一一彌勒菩薩前各有善財童子，一一善財童子皆悉合掌在彌勒前。”以表法界重重猶如帝網無盡也。此明善財童子依此華嚴法界之理，修行位極頓證法界也。此舉一樓閣為主，一切樓閣為伴也，故云主伴互現帝網觀，亦是事事無礙觀也。²¹²

In front of the tower of Vairocana, Sudhana was both the spectator who saw the towers and deities, and the very object that was seen by himself. He became a part of the multiplied world of Buddha Vairocana. According to the *Flower Garland Sutra*, when Sudhana reached the palace of Maitreya, he had already walked through the first fifty stages. At the last and the highest two stages of the path, advanced bodhisattvas achieved the wisdom and power that are equal to those of a Buddha, and yet they chose to continue the bodhisattva path. Therefore, what Sudhana realized in Maitreya's palace, the multiplication of towers, Maitreyas, and Sudhanas, was the culmination of all his previous practice and the ultimate achievement in Huayan system. This highest realization is articulated by Fazang as the same as the contemplation of Indra's net. When a medieval visitor stood in the presence of the monumental Vairocana Buddha at Longmen, like the legendary Sudhana, this visitor became one of the many Sudhanas in the world of Vairocana.

²¹¹ Translation adapted from Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable*, 168.

²¹² Fazang, *Xiu Huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan guan*, T 1876, vol. 45, 640c3-13.

The aspiration for self-cultivation as Sudhana had already been voiced by a monk from Jingshan Monastery in 650. As discussed in the previous chapter, monk Zhishan dedicated in Laolong Grotto a program of 100,000 Buddhas, seven Buddhas of the past, twenty-five Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, and fifty-three Buddhas (Fig. 1.10). In the prayer that follows the dedication, Zhishan wrote that,

May that I, from [now] in my current body to [the time that I attain the body of a Buddha], constantly obtain [the rebirth of] a youth who would go forth [to enter a monastic life], follow good teachers, hear the true dharma, and be absorbed in contemplation on the cultivation of [the Buddha].

願山從今身至佛身，恆得童子，出家依善知識，聽聞正法，繫念思惟□之修行。²¹³

Zhishan's prayer described a gradual cultivation across rebirths. In each rebirth, he wished to be reborn as a youth (*tongzi* 童子, *kumāra*), who would follow good teachers to study the true teaching. Not only does the term *tongzi* recall Sudhana, who was also referred to with this title, the gradual practices from various teachers also evoke Sudhana's learning from the fifty-three teachers.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the visual union of Vairocana and Śākyamunis, seen at the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, served as a deified embodiment of the highest form of Huayan teaching. The monumental sculpture simultaneously signified an array of Huayan visionary imageries, namely the Lotus Store World Ocean of Vairocana, King Indra's jeweled net, and the ornamented tower of Vairocana visited by Sudhana at the end of his spiritual journey. All these imageries evoked the same teaching, the interdependent nature of the phenomenal world. In particular, Sudhana's vision in the tower of Vairocana was echoed by Su Ting and Zhang Yue

²¹³ *Tiji*, no. 946, v. 1, p. 215.

who wrote about their own experience of the landscape of cliff-carved Buddhist statues. In their words, their own bodies became a part of the landscape, and their own presence became a jewel on King Indra's net. In the next three chapters, I will show that the experience of embodiment was also realized by the repentance and visualization rituals conducted inside Wanfo and Leigutai Central Grottoes. It extended even to having one's remains buried in or near to the cave-shrines, thereby literally inserting the body into the physical landmass of Longmen.

Chapter 3: Modular Constructions for Repentance and Visualization: Wanfo Grotto

3.1. Introduction

Evidence for the performance of repentance rituals, a part of the taskscape of Longmen, are ample throughout the western cliffs and the Eastern Hills. The previous chapter shows that inscriptional evidence links many dedicated sculptures to repentance rites. Typical examples from the early-Tang dedicatory inscriptions at Longmen include the groups of seven, twenty-five, thirty-five, fifty-three, and fifteen thousand Buddhas, all of which have their origins in repentance manuals from the seventh to the ninth centuries. In addition, while many dedications by lay donors do not show a direct link to the repentance manuals, they are still aimed to repent past karmic hindrances. Both types of dedications are found in Cave 543, known as Wanfo Grotto 萬佛洞 today. Located midway between the Binyang trio and the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, Wanfo Grotto was likely initiated between 674 and 676.²¹⁴ This grotto creatively combines three major pictorial programs, namely fifteen thousand Buddhas, the icon of King Udayana's image of the Buddha, and the so-named icon of Amitabha and Fifty-Two Bodhisattvas (Figs. 3.1–3). Although seemingly unrelated, they were all used in relation to repentance rites in the early-Tang texts. I argue that the visual programs inside Wanfo Grotto demonstrate a concerted effort to incorporate multiple focuses of repentance rites in one functional space.

In what follows, I propose the ritual function of Wanfo Grotto from their pictorial programs, using both textual source and material evidence to connect the visual materials to repentance rituals. The evidence provides an account of the participants, motivations, and the sensorial experience of a repentance ritual in the early Tang, and yet most of the textual accounts

²¹⁴ McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, and Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 135.

do not articulate the function of image in rituals. To that end, I present the discourse of *ganying* (感應), translated as “stimulus and response” or “sympathetic resonance,” which enables me to show that images played a key role in stimulating divine responses that would fulfill participants’ karmic and spiritual needs. Beyond this universal function of images, I compare the modular systems underlying the spatial designs of Wanfo Grotto and other cave-shrines of similar iconographic program. My purpose is to show that Wanfo Grotto was intentionally designed to be a functional space to accommodate repentance rituals.

3.2. 15,000 Buddhas

Inside Wanfo Grotto, the most obvious repentance-related iconography is the program of 15,000 Buddhas, which is identified by two dedicatory inscriptions. One is found on the northern side of the doorway, reading “Śramana Zhiyun, in offering to the Celestial Emperor, the Celestial Empress, the heir apparent, and all the princes, reverently makes one shrine of fifteen thousand honorable images.”²¹⁵ The other inscription, marking the completion of the project, is carved on the ceiling, in the rim of the central lotus roundel. It reads, “Director Yao Shenbiao and Meditation Master (Zhi)yun of the Palace Chapel completed the Fifteen Thousand Honorable Images Shrine on the thirtieth day of the eleventh month of the inaugural year of the Yonglong era of the Great Tang (December 26, 680).”²¹⁶ In realization, the design consists of rows of seated Buddha statues in low relief, the so-called “thousand Buddha” motif, occupying most of the space on the north and south walls. According to the account of Longmen Research Institute, 7,361 such statues are carved on the north wall and 7,929 on the south wall, amounting to a total of 15,290.²¹⁷ Although several mudras alternate among the statues, their uniform size and

²¹⁵ The translation is by McNair, *Ibid.*, 135. 沙門智運奉為天皇天后太子諸王敬造一萬五千尊像一龕。

²¹⁶ The translation is by McNair, *Ibid.*, 138. 大唐永隆元年十一月卅日成大監姚神表內道場運禪師一萬五千尊像龕。

²¹⁷ *Zonglu*, v. 3, text, 72, 74.

horizontal alignment communicate a visual consistency. Such consistency extends to the east wall, where rows of small Buddhas also fill in four disconnected empty surfaces on the two sides of the exit wall. The Longmen Research Institute counts 979, 145, 565, and 67 statues respectively.²¹⁸ Since the spacing of the rows is the same as the ones on the north and south walls, all these miniature Buddha statues must have been carved around the same time.²¹⁹

3.2.1. A Northern Repentance Tradition

The number of 15,000 is indicative of the cave-shrine's religious function because scholars share the consensus that 15,000 Buddhas was related to repentance rituals. Sofukawa Hiroshi shows that the group of 15,000 Buddhas appears in a group of Chinese-language documents known as “Seven-Roster Buddha-name” 七階佛名, a type of Buddha-nāman (*Foming* 佛名) texts used in repentance rites that highlight chanting Buddha-names.²²⁰ In Japanese scholarship, the literature associated with Seven-Roster Buddha-name are often studied as a ritual of the influential Three Level School (*Sanjie jiao* 三階教), founded by monk Xinxing 信行 (540–594). Two manuals of this title is attributed to Xinxing in *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄, the catalogue submitted by monk Zhisheng 智昇 (668–740) to Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685–762) and designated as “orthodox” in 730.²²¹ Variant copies of the repentance manuals

²¹⁸ *Zonglu*, v. 3, text, 75–78.

²¹⁹ According to McNair, the figures on the exit walls are slightly different from those on the north and south walls, suggesting that a team of sculptors were involved. It is highly possible as the joints between the exit and north and south walls have some empty space where additional niches were carved.

²²⁰ Sofukawa Hiroshi 曾布川寛, “Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoliang de yanjiu: shangpian,” translated by Yen Chuan-ying. *Yishu xue*, no. 7 (1992), 225; “Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoliang de yanjiu: xiapian,” translated by Yen Chuan-ying. *Yishu xue*, no. 8 (1992): 115. Citing Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* 三階教の研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1927); and Hirokawa Gyōbin (Takatoshi) 広川堯敏, “Tonkō shutsudo *Shichigai butsumyō kyō ni tsuite* 敦煌出土七階仏名經について—三階教と浄土教との交渉,” *Shūkyō kenkyū* 宗教研究 55 (March 1982): pp. 71(585)–105(619).

²²¹ T 2154, vol. 55, 0678c24–0678c27.

were discovered at Dunhuang.²²² Yet the study by Jamie Hubbard also demonstrates that texts attributed to Three Level School are largely drawn from what had been agreed upon among the larger Buddhist contexts.²²³ Similarly, Sofukawa rightly cautions that its repentance method closely resembles other repentance rituals.²²⁴

Using detailed textual analysis of the surviving ritual manuals, both Hirokawa Gyōbin and Daniel Stevenson show that the methods prescribed in texts of Seven-Roster Buddha-name were common among Buddhists of different cultic orientations. Hirokawa successfully demonstrates that the so-called *Qijie foming jing* 七階佛名經 (Seven-Roster Buddha-name Sutras) share similar structures with the varying repentance rites centered on bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, Maitreya, and the “Twelve Light Buddha-name” 十二光佛名 of Buddha Amitabha.²²⁵ Stevenson shows that the content of *Seven-Roster Buddha-name Sutra* was also similar to the repentance manual used by Zhiyi 智顓 (538–597) of the Tiantai school, and *Shifang foming li* 十方佛名[禮] (Rite for Veneration of the Buddhas of the ten Directions) included in Zhisheng’s “orthodox” catalogue. The latter was compiled after the many imperial suppressions of Xinxing’s teaching and writings between 600 and 725. In other words, the genre of Buddha-nāman texts was circulated in North China before Xinxing’s school gained momentum and was still widely used and copied after his teaching was banned.²²⁶ Therefore, both Hirokawa and Stevenson convincingly argue that the Seven-Roster Buddha-name was never perceived as a rite exclusive to the Three Level School.

²²² Hubbard, *Absolute Delusion*, p. 22 and footnote no. 75.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 22–24.

²²⁴ Sofukawa, “Tangdai Longmen shiku zaixiang de yanjiu: shangpian,” 225.

²²⁵ Hirokawa, “Tonkō shutsudo *Shichigai butsumyō kyō ni tsuite*” 86–87.

²²⁶ Daniel B. Stevenson, “The Ties That Bind: Chinese Buddhist Rites for Securing Rebirth in the Pure Land,” *Hōrin: vergleichende studien zur japanischen kultur* 15 (2009): 166–167.

More recent scholarship on Chinese cave-shrines argues that the appearance of 15,000 Buddha-names does not necessarily indicate the involvement of Three Level School but confirm that such common repentance practices circulated in northern China before the seventh century. Both Jiao Jianhui from Longmen Research Institute and Luo Zhao from Chinese Academy of Social Science show that various repentance texts feature 15,000 Buddhas.²²⁷ Moreover, Luo believes that the program was originated from the northern repentance tradition initiated by Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605) at Dazhusheng Cave, Baoshan. In Luo’s interpretation, the group of 15,000 Buddhas was expanded from Bodhiruci’s (d. 527) translation of *Foshuo Foming jing* 佛說佛名經 (Buddha-Name Scripture as Expounded by the Buddha, T440), in which 11,093 Buddha names (or 13,300 in a variant copy) are listed. Since Bodhiruci’s text required devotees to spend a significantly longer time in chanting the names, it effectively leads people into a state of piety requested by repentance rites and rituals. This distinctive repentance tradition, as Luo argues, was prevalent in northern China from the sixth to the seventh centuries.²²⁸ The significance of the numerology of 15,000 Buddhas suggests that the program of Wanfo Grotto was related to the northern repentance tradition.

3.2.2. Modular Construction

The iconography of 15,000 Buddhas is realized with the visual module of the thousand-Buddha motif, regularly seen in early-Tang cave-shrines at Longmen. Some niches, such as Cave 963 (Figs.3.4–6) and Cave 1948 (Fig. 3.7) at the southern end of the western cliff, are dedicated exclusively for this icon.²²⁹ More commonly, the thousand-Buddha motif is used to surround an

²²⁷ Jiao Jianhui, “Longmen dongshan Leigutai qu di 4 ku xiangguan wenti tantao,” *Shikusi yanjiu* (2012), no. 3: 215–216, footnote no. 4,

²²⁸ Luo Zhao, “Baoshan dazhusheng ku kejing zhong de beifang lichan xitong,” *Shikusi yanjiu* (2010), no. 1: 164, 168–169, and 173–175.

²²⁹ Cave no. 963 is in *Zonglu*, v. 6, text, p. 38; plate, pls. 177–179. Cave no. 1948 is in *Zonglu*, v. 11, text, p. 85; plate, pls 674–676.

embedded central niche. An inexhaustive list of such design at Longmen include Caves 585 (Fig. 3.8), 1008 (Fig. 3.9), 1009 (Fig. 3.10), 1017 (Fig. 3.11), 1224 (Fig. 3.12) and 1231 (Figs. 3.13–14).²³⁰ This design was in use as early as the Northern dynasties, an example of which is Cave 1104 (Fig. 3.15).²³¹ Some cave-shrines use the thousand-Buddha icon to fill the side walls, flanking the central deity on the main wall, such as the South cave of the Paired Grottoes (Cave 522, Fig. 3.16), Caves 331 (dated to 661, Fig. 3.17), 378 (Figs. 3.18–19), 382 (Figs. 3.20–21), 439 (Fig. 3.22), and 539 (Fig. 3.23).²³²

Among these cave-shrines filled with thousand-Buddha icon, Wanfo Grotto is an ambitious execution, not only because it expands the number to 15,000, but also because it used the limited space to accommodate three different programs. The overall design of its north and south walls includes two niches of seated Buddhas that intersect the visual uniformity of the 15,000 Buddhas. Each niche takes up sixteen rows and fourteen columns of the small Buddhas. Around both niches, a square frame is delineated on which the dedicatory inscriptions are carved. Next to the vertical sides of the frame, columns of standing Buddhas separate the frames from the surrounding seated Buddhas. The arrangement indicates that the two niches did not interfere with any original carving and that they must have been included in the original plan. In addition, as is typical in other early Tang cave-shrines, a Buddha pentad is installed on the west wall. However, the two bodhisattvas on the edge of the main pentad seem to be squeezed in the width afforded by the main wall, so that they would not intrude into the wall space for the 15,000 Buddhas.

²³⁰ Cave 585 is in *Zonglu*, v. 4, text p. 48; plate, pls. 318–321. Cave nos. 1008, 1009, and 1017 are listed in *Zonglu*, v. 6, text pp. 49–50, and 52; plate, pls. 256–261, and 269. Cave nos. 1224 and 1231 are in *Zonglu*, v. 8, text pp. 9–10, 11–12; plate, pls. 64, 80–86.

²³¹ *Zonglu*, v. 7, text p. 30; plate, pls. 255–262.

²³² Cave no. 522 is in *Zonglu*, v. 3, text pp. 47–62; plate, pls. 399–426. Cave nos. 331 and 378 are in *Zonglu*, v. 2, text, p. 57, 84–85; plate, pls. 348–352, 535–549. Cave nos. 382, 439, and 539 are in *Zonglu*, v. 3, text, p. 2–3, 30, 67–68; plate, pls. 9–16, 264–268, 449–452.

Additionally, cave-shrines built around the time of Wanfo Grotto usually choose only one of the two programs to fill the wall space unoccupied by the main icon: the homogenous thousand-Buddha icon in grids, and the unframed high-relief bodhisattvas that sits in various positions. Three examples of the latter motif are: Caves 363 (Figs. 3.24–25), 394 (Fig. 3.26) and Jingshansi Grotto (Cave 403, Fig. 3.27).²³³ Wanfo Grotto is the first cave-shrine at Longmen to pack both programs in one space, leading to an obvious visual distinction between the main wall and the side walls. Since the dedicatory inscriptions for the 15,000 Buddhas do not mention the program on the west wall, the latter may have been commissioned by a separate group of patrons. However, the fact that the two programs do not intrude one another suggests that an agreement was made before the cave-shrine was completed.

3.3. King Udayana's Image of Śākyamuni

Each niche on the side walls of Wanfo Grotto enshrines a seated Buddha on a square throne with legs pendant and dressed in a tight thin robe. This type of statues is identified by inscriptions at Longmen as King Udayana's Buddha, referring to the statue of Buddha Śākyamuni that was carved with King Udayana's order (Figs. 3.28–29). On the creation of this famous image, several textual documents of varying details circulated by the time of the early Tang, including the collection of translated scriptures *Zengyi ahan jing* (增一阿含經 *Increased by One Āgama Sūtras*, T125) and the apocryphal scripture *Foshuo guanfo sanmei hai jing* (佛說觀佛三昧海經, *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi of the Visualization of Expounded by the Buddha*, thereafter *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi*, T643).²³⁴ Both sources were cited in the Chinese scriptural compilation by Senghao 僧豪 and Baochang 寶唱 (502–557) in *Jinglü*

²³³ Cave no. 363 is in *Zonglu* v. 2, text, pp. 77–78; plate pls. 476–511. Cave nos. 394 and 403 are in *Zonglu*, v. 3, text, pp. 6–7, 10–13; plate, pls. 50–54, 77–172.

²³⁴ *Zengyi ahan jing*, T125, vol. 2, 706a5-18; *Foshuo guanfo sanmei hai jing*, T643, vol. 15, 678b7-14.

yixiang 經律異相 (T2121).²³⁵ In addition, the legend was repeatedly recounted in the writings by Chinese monks, including the travelogues by the pilgrims Faxian 法顯 (d. 418–423) and Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664). and the exegesis by Kuiji 窺基 (632–682).²³⁶ To sum up, it is said that when Buddha Śākyamuni was preaching to his mother Queen Maya in the Trayastrimās Heaven, King Udayana missed the Buddha so much that he sent artisans to the heaven to create a statue and enshrined the latter for worship. When Śākyamuni descended to this world, he also acknowledged this image.²³⁷ In her book, McNair elaborates on the popularity of this icon in China, which was perceived as the “veritable icon” of the Buddha. In Buddhist ideology, King Udayana’s image justifies not only the practice of image-making but also royal patronage of images. Its wide circulation in China since the fourth century was also perceived as a sign of legitimization- as certified by Śākyamuni—that Buddhism was transmitted and prospered on this land.²³⁸

3.3.1. Defining the Longmen-Gongxian Type

Current scholarship defines this type of Udayana statue that is mostly found in Henan area. Its most distinctive iconography includes the seated posture with two pendant legs, the robe that is delineated only by the brief hem lines on the chest and at ankles, and the exposed right shoulder. The hand gestures and Gupta-style throne are also in its iconographic parameters. The hands of most statues are ruined, but the extant ones (e.g., Longmen Caves 312 and 440) show

²³⁵ Senghao 僧豪 and Baochang 寶唱 (502–557), *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 T2121, vol. 53, 29c10-30a5.

²³⁶ Faxian 法顯 (d. 418–423), *Gaoseng Faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, T 2085, vol. 51, 860b18-22; Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), *Datang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記, T2087, vol. 51, 898a6-16; Kuiji 窺基 (632–682), *Dacheng fayuan yilin zhang* 大乘法苑義林章, T1861, vol. 45, p. 344a25-28.

²³⁷ Analysis of the various textual traditions of the legend, see Soper, “Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China,” p. 260–265. The cited primary texts are collected in the modern anthology *Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho* 大日本仏教全書, v. 114, *Yūhōden sōsho daini* 遊方伝叢書第二 (Tokyo: Daihōrinkaku, 2007), 310–319.

²³⁸ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 100.

the same *dharmacakra* mudra.²³⁹ The seat is always square, although some (e.g. Longmen Caves nos. 192, 231, 306, 356, 411, 440, etc.) features throne backs of various elaborate patterns etched in the back wall.²⁴⁰ The patterns include the so-called *liulianhu* 六連弧, or “six connected scallops,” on the top of the back, and the two mystical animals called *vyāḷaka* and *makara* on the side.²⁴¹

The majority of the known Udayana statues of this type are seen at Longmen and Gongxian Grottoes in Henan province. In total, about 100 such statues are found throughout Longmen, fourteen of which still bear dedicatory inscriptions. Most are of larger size—about one meter high—and are concentrated in the open-air niches to the north of Wanfo Grotto, near Binyang trio and Jingshansi Grotto (Cave 403).²⁴² About 80 kilometers to the northeast of Longmen, at Gongxian Grottoes, one such Udayana statue (Figs. 3.30–32), dedicated by monk Sicha 思察 between 666 and 668, is still in-situ, in the so-called *Qianfo kan*, or “Thousand-Buddha niche,” to the east of Cave no. 5. In addition, three more were found after the sedimentary soil between Caves 2 and 3 were cleared in 1977, including a freestanding piece co-commissioned by monk Facheng 法禪, monk Sicha and others in 660 (numbered as no. 60, Fig. 3.33), another one by Facheng alone in 670 (no. 137), and a marble statue that bears no inscription. According to Henan Institute of Cultural Relics, the 670 piece and the marble statue

²³⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁴⁰ Jiao Jianhui, “Longmen dongshan Leigutai qu di 4 ku xiangguan wenti tantao,” 215.

²⁴¹ For discussions on the throne, see McNair, 127; Inamoto Yasuo, “Utenō zō tōden kō — Chūgoku sho-Tōki o chūshin ni,” *Tōhō gaku* 69 (1997): 374–377.

²⁴² McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 99; Gao Junping, “Shilun Longmen shiku Youtianwang zaoxiang,” *Sichou zhilu* 227 (2012), no. 10: 28–29.

are heavily damaged. Probably for this reason, only the one from 660 has been published so far.²⁴³

Outside Henan area, only two discoveries of Udayana statues have been reported. In 2013, in the cliff carvings in Jinshan, in the outskirts of Guilin, Guangxi province, a niche (numbered as Niche no. 5, Fig. 3.34) is found to contain a statue, produced around 672, that shows all the iconography of Longmen's Udayana image.²⁴⁴ According to Wen Yucheng, another Udayana statue of the same iconography appears on the stone stele, dated to 689, inside monk Faru's 法如 (637–689) burial pagoda near Shaolin Monastery (Shaolinsi 少林寺) on Mt. Song (Songshan 嵩山).²⁴⁵ The stele is famous in the studies of Chan Buddhism since it claims Faru as the sixth patriarch of Chan after Hongren 弘忍 (601–675). The inscription also identifies the image on the stele as an Udayana image, although the only ink rubbing that I could find, from *Lidai shufa beitie jicheng* database, only reproduces few protruding parts of the image relief that does not allow one to study the image itself (Fig. 3.35).²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), 225, 232, 233, plate 8. For the ones discovered in 1977, see p. 282, no. 60, and p. 311 for its ink rubbing no. 31; p. 289, no. 137. On p. 232, the donor for statue no. 60 was mistaken as Han Wandu because Han's name is also included in the inscription. But Han's dedication is the image of Śāriputra carved above the Buddha. A color photo of statue no. 60 is reproduced in Hida Romi 肥田路美, *Yunxiang ruixiang: Chutang fojiao meishu yanjiu*, trans. Yen Chuan-ying, et al., (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2018), 149, color plate 1–62. Hida follows Okada Ken who in the 1980s refers to the museum as the Luoyang Guanlin shike yishuguan. But the official names of this museum were Luoyang bowuguan from 1958 to 1966, after which the museum was moved out of Guanlin. From 1979 to the present, Luoyang gudai yishuguan was established at Guanlin, as an affiliate institution of Luoyang bowuguan, which was reopened to the public in a modern new building in 2011. The statue from Gongxian, as I speculate, is probably transferred to Luoyang bowuguan, since at least two freestanding Tang niches, still seen in Guanlin in 2007, are now on view in Luoyang bowuguan. The current Luoyang gudai yishu bowuguan at Guanlin exhibits underground tombs excavated in Luoyang. For institutional change of the museum at Guanlin, see Guo Tingcai ed., *Luoyang Guanlin zhi* 洛陽關林志 (Xi'an: Sanqin chuban she, 2009), 235–236.

²⁴⁴ Liu Yong, “Guangxi Guilin guojia senlin gongyuan moya zaoxiang diaochao jianbao,” *Sichuan wenwu* 217 (2021), no. 3: 19–20.

²⁴⁵ Reprinted in Wen Yucheng, “du ‘chanzong dashi Faru bei’ shu hou,” in *Zhongguo fojiao yu kaogu: Zhongguo fojiao xuezhe wenji*, 179–181 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 2009), 179. Reported to have been first published in 1981 in the journal *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* (1981), no. 1: 34–?, but the journal issue does not have the article.

²⁴⁶ “Tang zhongyue shamen shi Faru chanshi xingzhuang bei 唐中岳沙門釋法如禪師行狀碑,” *Lidai shufa beitie jicheng: Quantie ku* 歷代書法碑帖集成: 全帖庫. Accessed November 4, 2021.

3.3.2. The Debate on the Xuanzang Legacy

As has been widely acknowledged, the Longmen type of Udayana image contrasts with the other famous Udayana statue preserved in Seiryōji, Japan, which is a standing figure with a torso fully covered with rippling folds (Fig. 3.36). On why the two modes are disparate, some scholars believe that the latter follows a tradition of Udayana image that had been popular in China since the fourth century.²⁴⁷ Yet the debate remains unsolved. In 1985, Li Wensheng published on the Udayana statues of Longmen in 1985 and proposed that they followed one of the seven statues brought back by Xuanzang in 645 from his trip to India.²⁴⁸ His textual reference comes from *Da Tang Da Ci'en si Sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳 (Biography of the Tripiṭaka Master of Dacien Monastery of the Great Tang), the biography of Xuanzang by Huili 慧立 (615–?) and Yancong 彥悰 (active mid seventh century) in 688 [Thereafter, the *Biography of Xuanzang*]. Its sixth volume lists the seven Buddha statues brought back by Xuanzang, the third of which is a copy of the sandalwood statue of Śākyamuni ordered by King Udayana of Kauśāmbī (Ch. Jiaoshangmi guo 憍賞彌國).²⁴⁹ Li observes that Udayana's image never appeared in stone-carved cave-shrines prior to Xuanzang's triumphant return, and yet the earliest dated piece at Longmen was from 655, only ten years later. In other words, although

²⁴⁷ As summarized in McNair, 100–101, citing Carter, *The Mystery of the Udayana Buddha*; Caswell, *Written and Unwritten*, p. 41; Gregory Henderson and Leon Hurvitz, “The Buddha of Seiryōji: New Finds and New Theory,” *Artibus Asiae* 19 (1956), no. 1: 5–55; Hsieh Shihying, “Longmen shiku de Youtianwang zaoxiang — bie yu Riben Qingliangsi zhi Youtianwang zaoxiang,” *Lishi wenwu* 6, no. 2 (April 1996): 26–39.

²⁴⁸ Li Wensheng, “Woguo shiku zhong de Youtianwang zaoxiang: Longmen shiku Youtianwang zaoxiang zhi zao zhi duo wei quanguo shiku zhi zui,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1985), no. 4: 103–104.

²⁴⁹ Huili 慧立 (615–?) and Yancong 彥悰 (active mid seventh century), *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan* 大唐大慈恩寺三藏法師傳, T2053, v. 50, 0252b22–c04. English translation by Samuel Beal, *The Life of Hiuen-Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li: With an introduction containing an account of the works of I-tsing* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1911, and reprint in 1914).

Udayana's image had been circulating in China, Luoyang in particular, its popularity only gained momentum after Xuanzang returned from India.²⁵⁰

Whereas Li's theory is supported by Sofukawa Hiroshi, in the 1980s, Hida Romi argued that Xuanzang's statue cannot be the prototype for Longmen.²⁵¹ Hida advises that the list from the *Biography of Xuanzang* contains several erroneous details and thus is not as reliable as the slightly different list in *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Record of Travels to Western Lands), written by Xuanzang in 646.²⁵² In the twelfth volume of the latter source, she found an urban legend in the city of Phema in Kustana (Khotan) where a standing sandalwood statue was worshipped. The legend claimed that this statue was none other than the one made by King Udayana of Kauśāmbī.²⁵³ Since this excerpt clearly states that Xuanzang saw a standing statue made by King Udayana, Hida argues that the copy he brought back to China cannot be a seated figure like the ones at Longmen and Gongxian. Additionally, she found it curious that none of the Udayana statues from Longmen or Gongxian credits Xuanzang with introducing the image. In contrast, all other well-circulated textual traditions celebrate their protagonists for the transmission of Udayana's image, namely Emperor Ming of the Later Han, Kumārajīva (344–

²⁵⁰ Li, "Woguo shiku zhong de Youtianwang zaixiang," 103 and 106.

²⁵¹ Li, *Ibid.*, Sofukawa Hiroshi 曾布川寛, "Ryūmon sekkutsu ni okeru Tōdai zōzō no kenkyū," 龍門石窟における唐代造像の研究 *Tōhō gakuhō* 60 (1988): 251. Hida Romi first made the argument in 1986 and reaffirmed it in 2018. See Hida, "Sho-Tō jidai ni okeru Utenō-zō," 81–94; *Yunxiang ruixiang*, 153–154; Okada Ken 岡田健, "Ryūmon sekkutsu sho-Tō zōzō ron — sono ni," 龍門石窟初唐造像論 ——その二 *Bukkyō geijutsu* 186 (1989): 108.

²⁵² Hida Romi, "Butsu kōbo to Genjō sanzō no shōrai butszō: shichi ku no Shakazō no imi o megutte," 仏蹟仰慕と玄奘三蔵の将来仏像——七軀の釈迦像の意味をめぐって *Waseda Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka kiyō* 48 (2002), no. 3: 154–155; *Yunxiang ruixiang: Chutang fojiao meishu yanjiu*, trans. Yen Chuan-ying, et al., (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2018), 22–23. For the list of the statues, see Xuanzang, *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Record of Travels to Western Lands), T 2087, v. 51, 0946c03–0946c15. English translation by Samuel Beal, *Si-yu-ki. Buddhist records of the Western World: Translated from the Chinese of Hiuen Tsiang (A.D. 629)* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1884).

²⁵³ T2087, v.51, 0945b06–0945b11. Cited in Hida, "Butsu kōbo to Genjō sanzō no shōrai butszō," 156–157; *Yunxiang ruixiang*, 28–29.

413), and Emperor Wu (r. 502–549) of the Liang dynasty (502–557). Adding to the unlikeliness for the role of Xuanzang at Longmen and Gongxian, the new translations of Buddhist classics spearheaded by Xuanzang also received little acceptance among devotees. Both phenomena suggest to Hida that the statue brought back by Xuanzang had limited influence, making it an impossible candidate as the prototype of the popular Udayana statue in Luoyang area.²⁵⁴

Agreeing with Hida's main argument, Okada Ken adds a few supportive opinions. He notices that an Udayana statue at Longmen was dedicated together with an excerpt from the *Diamond Sutra*, translated by Kumārajīva. He speculates that if the image had been a copy of Xuanzang's statue, the patron should also choose Xuanzang's translation of the same scripture in the dedication. Additionally, since Xuanzang came to Luoyang between 657 and 658, postdating the first dated Udayana statue at Longmen (d. 655), he thinks that copies of Xuanzang's statue could not take place before Xuanzang's personal visit to Luoyang.

Instead, Okada argues that the style of the figure came from Southeast Asia. He cites one copper statue from the Bangkok National Museum, Thailand, which shows a Buddha dressed in a tight robe with minimum folds and seated on a square throne with legendary beasts on two sides. He insists that even though the statue may have been created from the seventh to the ninth centuries, later than the Longmen and Gongxian examples, it still suggests that a tradition of such style had existed in Southeast Asia. Since Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, as historical records show, once received Indian sandalwood statues from a Southeast Asian envoy, it was also possible that more Indian statues were introduced in the early Tang via Southeast Asia, after

²⁵⁴ Hida, *Yunxiang ruixiang*, 28, 153–4.

which the Chinese audience linked it to the legend of Udayana.²⁵⁵ Similarly, Rhie also held that although the style of the figure was indebted to the Sanarth style, its direct model seemed to be the sculptures from Southeast Asia from the sixth and seventh centuries.²⁵⁶

In response, Hamada Tamami offers two other Tang texts as the potential scriptural basis for the special style of Udayana image seen at Longmen and Gongxian.²⁵⁷ The first one is the version of *Mingxiang ji* 冥祥記 (*Signs from the Unseen Realm*) that is preserved in Daoxuan's 道宣 (596–667)'s *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 (*Collected Records of Penetrating Sensitivity of the Three Jewels in the Divine State*), which clearly states that the Udayana statue received by Emperor Ming of the Later Han was a “*yixiang*” 倚像 (leaning image) of Śākyamuni.²⁵⁸ The second is *Gao sengzhuān* 高僧傳 (The Biographies of Eminent Monks), which also states that a *yixiang* of Śākyamuni made by King Udayana's craftsmen was brought by Emperor Ming's envoy.²⁵⁹ Yet she also acknowledges that whereas the modern usage of *yixiang* refers to a seated statue with two legs pendent, it does not necessarily mean the same thing in medieval text.

At the core of Hida and Hamada's disagreement is the classic question in studies of art history, namely why images do not match literary sources. Whereas the primary text describes

²⁵⁵ Okada Ken 岡田健, “Ryūmon sekkutsu sho-Tō zōzō ron — sono ni,” 龍門石窟初唐造像論 —— その二 *Bukkyō geijutsu* 186 (1989): 108; “Guanyu Youtianwang zaixiang de ruogan baogao---- taolun dongnan ya dui Zhongguo Tangdai fojiao zaixiang de yingxiang,” in *Longmen shiku yiqian wubai zhounian guoji xueshu taolun hui lunwen ji*, ed., Longmen shiku yanjiu suo (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993), 146–149.

²⁵⁶ Marilyn M. Rhie, “Interrelationships Between the Buddhist Art of China and the Art of India and Central Asia from 618–755 A.D.,” *Annali dell'Istituto orientale di Napoli, Supplemento* 48, no. 54, fasc. 1 (1988): 42–43, pls. XXX–XXXII, figs. 62–66.

²⁵⁷ Hamada Tamami 濱田瑞美, “Chūgoku Sho-Tō jidai no Rakuyō shūhen ni okeru Utenō zō ni tsuite,” 中国初唐時代の洛陽周辺における優填王像について *Bukkyō geijutsu* 287 (2006): 52–53; “Qianfo tuxiang yu Youtianwang xiang,” in *Longmen shiku yiqian wubai zhounian guoji xueshu taolun hui lunwen ji*, ed., Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, 259–268 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 260.

²⁵⁸ Daoxuan, *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, v. 52, 0413c08.

²⁵⁹ Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554), *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, T 2059, v. 50, 0323a16–0323a17.

the statue as standing, abundant visual materials show the figure in a seated position. So pivotal is this question to art history that an answer is found in the foundational writings by Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), on iconology in specific. In studies of images, after motifs are identified, iconology asks why such motif is chosen in its cultural context and how the prevailing style informed the ways in which such motif is represented.²⁶⁰ An iconographical analysis of Udayana imagery, as these scholars have done, presupposes that the patrons, artists, and viewers of the sculptures were familiar with the literary sources that circulate the stories of Udayana. It, however, could not assume that the sculpture would indiscriminately take on all elements from the literary sources, much like an illustration. To address why the artists made the Udayana statues in a style that is different from the textual descriptions, one needs to search for other acceptable ways of representing the same subject. In other words, what were the India-originated images of Śākyamuni available to the medieval viewers in China, and what do they look like?

These lines of iconological inquiries are taken up to three directions by Inamoto Yasuo, Amy McNair, and Hamada Tamami respectively. Inamoto observes that the Udayana statues at Longmen show various features of the hybrid style seen in or near Sarnath during the end of the fourth and the fifth centuries, ranging from pieces that were excavated from the ancient Kauśāmbī and Bodh Gaya, to ones that were introduced from Mathura during the Kushan period (c. 30–375). He believes that these Indian styles was more likely to arrive in China via Xuanzang, who not only documented these sites in detail but also had a strong influence with the royal patrons of cave-shrines at Longmen. On why Xuanzang wrote about the standing Udayana statue that flew to Khotan in the *Record of Travels to Western Lands*, Inamoto highlights its textual context which introduces the local customs of the various kingdoms that was different

²⁶⁰ Erwin Panofsky, “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art.” In *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*. 26–40. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 35–38.

from the ones from his native land. He argues that although Xuanzang chose to document the foreign legend, he did not necessarily believe the story.²⁶¹

Turning attention to the issue of patronage, McNair notices that the Udayana statue was popular among a group of related donors at Longmen. Several of the donors were identified by dedicatory inscriptions as dependents of others, and some shared the same family name. Some chose to commission the same Udayana statue multiple times. As a result, eighteen donors were responsible for twenty-nine identified Udayana statues.²⁶² This observation is supported by the patronage pattern of the Gongxian pieces. Of the four surviving Udayana statues at Gongxian, monk Sicha and monk Facheng each commissioned one on their own, and jointly sponsored a third piece. Additionally, historical epigraphic documents also accredit Facheng for sponsoring another Udayana piece on his own, although the statue is not extant today.²⁶³

The focus on donors and their dedicatory inscriptions leads both McNair and Hamada to address the motivation for commissioning Udayana statues. Focusing on a pairing of Udayana statue and Amitabha Buddha in a shrine commissioned by a Wang brothers in 659, McNair highlights the connection between making Udayana statues and attaining rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land, a topic that was only briefly touched on by Inamoto.²⁶⁴ Bringing the Udayana image on Faru's stele from Mt. Song into the discussion, Hamada argues that elite monks on Mt. Song produced it to emphasize that the Buddhism they inherited was orthodox, whereas others used it

²⁶¹ Inamoto Yasuo 稻本泰生, "Utenō zōtōden kō – Chūgoku Sho Tōki wo chūshin ni," 優填王像東傳考—中國初唐期を中心に *Tōhō gakuhō* 69 (1997): 386–387; for stylistic comparison with Indian pieces, see 369–376.

²⁶² McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 102–103.

²⁶³ Henan shen wenwu yanjiu suo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si*, p. 282, no. 60; p. 287, no. 114; p. 289, no. 137; p. 289, no. 136 (the lost piece by Facheng).

²⁶⁴ Inamoto, "Utenō zōtōden kō," 388–389. McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 103–104.

as the focus of devotion during repentance rites.²⁶⁵ In 2006, she expanded the discussion with epigraphic materials from Laolong Cave at Longmen, Dazhusheng Cave at Baoshan, and Shaolin Monastery, highlighting the orthodox symbolism of Udayana statue to elite monks on Mt. Song and to Wu Zhao.²⁶⁶ Responding to Hamada's study, Hida Romi adds a brief support to the repentance function of Udayana's image but questions her choice to highlight the image's symbolism of orthodox lineage.²⁶⁷

3.3.3. Textual Evidence

To continue this discussion on the religious motivation of making Udayana image, I add the following textual and visual evidence to support the use of Udayana statues in repentance activities. In the famous repentance manual *Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法 (The Repentance Ritual in the Altar of Compassion), attributed to Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, the golden and the sandalwood statues of King Udayana is listed among a group of famous icons, followed by the copper statue of King Aśoka, the stone statue of Wuzhong area, the jade image of Simhaladvipa, and ten images of precious materials from various Buddha lands. The manual instructs devotees to take refuge in these famous icons, in addition to Maitreya Buddha, seven Buddhas, ten Buddhas, 35 Buddhas, 53 Buddhas, 170 Buddhas, and the thousand Buddhas, in order to avoid suffering in the hells.²⁶⁸

A further support comes from *Foshuo Youtianwang jing* 佛說優填王經 (*Udayanavatsarājaparipṛcchā*, T 332, the Sutra on King Udayana as Expounded by the

²⁶⁵ Hamada Tamami 濱田瑞美, "Qianfo tuxiang yu Youtianwang xiang," in *Longmen shiku yiqian wubai zhounian guoji xueshu taolun hui lunwen ji*, ed., Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, 259–268 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996). For the former function, see pp. 263–264; for the latter, see pp. 264–266.

²⁶⁶ Hamada, "Chūgoku Sho-Tō jidai no Rakuyō shūhen ni okeru Utenō zō ni tsuite," 54–62.

²⁶⁷ Hida, Yunxiang ruixiang, 156.

²⁶⁸ T1909, vol. 45, 940c10–20.

Buddha), a translation attributed to monk Faju 法炬 in Luoyang during the Western Jin dynasty (265–316).²⁶⁹ The scripture narrates the transgressions committed by King Udayana and his repentance in front of the Buddha. It is said that a brāhmaṇa from Kauśāmbī married his daughter to King Udayana as his concubine, after the Buddha, understanding female attractions as contamination, turned down the marriage offer from the brāhmaṇa. Since the daughter was jealous of the empress, she persuaded King Udayana to shoot arrows at the empress. Yet the empress had attained the path of the srotāpanna, in other words on the path to attain awakening for herself. As she concentrated her mind on the Buddha, all the arrows flew around her three times and returned in front of the king. The frightened king then came to the Buddha and confessed that he intended to hurt a Buddhist. Afterward, the Buddha gave him a lecture on the four common evil doings a man could commit because they fell for the seduction of women. This scripture was known to the early Tang audience since it was included in many Tang catalogues, among which the one titled *Gujin yijing tuji* 古今譯經圖記 by Jingmai 靖邁 (active 627–649) was even illustrated in the murals of the Great Ci'en Monastery (Da Ci'en si 大慈恩寺) established by Emperor Taizong for Xuanzang.²⁷⁰ Thus, in the mind of Tang Buddhists, the statue made by King Udayana was not only an “original” image of the Buddha, but also a reminder of the persona of Udayana who yielded to worldly desires and yet was able to return to the path of awakening via repentance.

Among the many kinds of visualization advocated in *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi*, the Udayana statue was also an object of visualization that would eliminate evil

²⁶⁹ Erik Zürcher suggests that later attributions might have misassigned to Faju some works by another monk Fali 法立. See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 70. Also, DDB renders the name of Faju as Dharmalokā.

²⁷⁰ According to Zhisheng 智昇, *Xu Guji yijing tuji* 續古今譯經圖記, T 2152, vol. 55, 0367c26–c28. For the listing of *Youtianwang jing* in Jingmai's *Gujing yijing tuji*, see T2151, vol. 55, 0355b11.

deeds.²⁷¹ Attributed to Buddhahadra (358–429), *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi* was likely an apocryphal text compiled in Central Asia that had a huge influence on writings by later monastics from China, Korea, and Japan. As Yamabe Nobuyoshi’s study of its textual history shows, the text was cited in the *Cibei daochang chanfa* attributed to Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty, by the Tiantai master Zhiyi, scholars of Pure Land Buddhism like Daochuo 道綽 (562–645), Shandao 善導 (613–681), and Huaigan 懷感 (fl. seventh century), in the encyclopedia *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (*A Grove of Pearls in the Garden of the Dharma*) by Daoshi 道世 (d. 683), by the Korean master Wōnhyo 元曉 (617–686), and by Genshin 源信 (942–1017) from Japan.²⁷²

In the sixth fascicle of *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi*, the legend of Udayana’s statue is cited to support the teaching that a correct visualization of the Buddha’s four types of deportment (walking, standing, sitting, reclining) would help one to eliminate past sins. The visualization of Udayana’s statue follows the story of an elderly woman who refused to convert even after seeing Śākyamuni manifested into Buddhas of ten directions and walking in midair. Śākyamuni explained that because of the woman’s deeply rooted sin, she did not have any causal connections 緣 with the Buddha; instead, her cause lies with Rāhula. Yet seeing the Buddha’s walking eliminated her sins, making her receptive to the guidance of Rāhula who manifested himself as a cakravartin king. Guided by Rāhula, the woman was led to see the body of the Buddha, repented her previous sins in front of the Buddha, received the precepts from Rāhula, and became a nun. Śākyamuni then told that if someone with an evil mind could attain such

²⁷¹ 除却千劫極重惡業 T15, vol. 643, p. 678b22.

²⁷² Yamabe Nobuyoshi, “The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi of the Visualization of the Buddha: The Interfusion of the Chinese and Indian Cultures in Central Asia as Reflected in a Fifth Century Apocryphal Sutra” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999), 35–37. For a summary for the entire scripture, see p. 25–28.

merit after seeing Buddha's walking, those who visualize the walking of both the Buddha and a statue would attain even greater merit. It is here that the legend of Śākyamuni's lecture to Queen Maya and King Udayana's making of a statue is introduced. Regarding the statue, Śākyamuni told Ananda that,

After the extinction of the Buddha, all Buddhist disciples understood that when the Tathagata descended from the Trāyastriṃśa and saw the image of the Buddha [made by King Udayana], it eliminated his severe evil deeds from a thousand kalpas. If one visualizes this way, it is a correct visualization. If one visualizes in a different way, it is a corrupt visualization.

佛滅度後佛諸弟子，知佛如來下忉利天及見佛像，除却千劫極重惡業。如是觀者名為正觀，若異觀者名為邪觀。²⁷³

The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi also provides a plausible textual reference for the unusual iconographic combination of Udayana's statue with the thousand-Buddha icon. Longmen and Gongxian Grottoes are the only two places where the two iconographies are integrated into one cohesive plan. None of the dedicatory inscriptions explain the combination. However, in the passage of *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi*, the thousand Buddhas are part of the visualization of Udayana's statue. The highly detailed description reads,

When King Udayana, who out of his admiration for the World-Honored One had cast a statue from gold, heard that the Buddha was about to descend from the Trāyastriṃśa, he put the statue on an elephant to welcome the World-Honored One.

Bhikṣuṇī Utpalavarṇā manifested on a crystal hill, seated in a lotus position inside the cave, [and provided] countless offerings to welcome the World-Honored One.

At that time, the golden statue ascended and descended from the elephant as if it were the living Buddha, walking in midair with flowers springing up under his feet and light emanating from him to welcome the World-Honored One.

Then the cast-gold statue pressed his palms together with the middle fingers crossing each other to pay obeisance to the Buddha.

²⁷³ T 0643, vol.15, 0678b20–0678b23.

Then the World-Honored One also kneeled down and pressed his palms together towards the statue. At that moment, hundreds and thousands of transformation Buddhas also kneeled down and joined hands towards the statue.

時優填王，戀慕世尊鑄金為像，聞佛當下，象載金像來迎世尊！
 蓮華色比丘尼化作瑠璃山，結加趺坐在山窟中，無量供具奉迎世尊！
 爾時金像，從象上下猶如生佛，足步虛空足下雨華，亦放光明來迎世尊！
 時鑄金像，合掌叉手為佛作禮。
 爾時世尊，亦復長跪合掌向像，時虛空中百千化佛，亦皆合掌長跪向像。²⁷⁴

Among the many early reiterations of the Udayana legend, *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi* is the only one that claims the Buddha, along with his many manifestations, paid obeisance to the statue.²⁷⁵ Not only does this addition heighten the importance of the image, but it also introduces the “transformation Buddhas” 化佛 to the scene centered on Udayana’s statue. The term “transformation Buddhas” is a common trope throughout the scripture. It appears in the miraculous light emanating from parts of the Buddha’s body. From a doctrinal perspective, “transformation Buddhas” are not the same Buddhas whose names were enumerated in the repentance manuals. Yet *the Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi* also informs, in the same fascicle that includes Udayana’s image, that a view of the transformation Buddhas eliminated the sins for the elderly woman and prepared her for the teaching of Rāhula. Therefore, these transformation Buddhas served the similar function of repentance as the Buddhas in the repentance manuals.

3.3.4. Evidence from Gongxian

At Gongxian’s *Qianfo kan*, the combination of an Udayana statue, the thousand-Buddha icon, an excerpt from Bodhiruci’s *Foshuo foming jing*, and eight bodhisattvas strongly suggests the performance of repentance ritual. The combination is part of the original plan of an early-Tang shallow niche. At its bottom is a narrow, plain pedestal that occupies the lower register of

²⁷⁴ T 0643, vol.15, 0678b07–0678b14

²⁷⁵ For a compilation of various versions of the legend, see *Dai Nihon Bukkyō Zensho*, v. 114, Yūhōden sōsho daini, 310–312.

all three sides. The outer corners of the shrine are guarded by two heavenly kings who stand on squatting monsters that represent the subservient demigods.²⁷⁶ Next to each of the heavenly kings, there are four niches of standing bodhisattvas, stacked on one another. The rest of the wall space is filled with the thousand-Buddha motif, neatly arranged in rows, and the seated Udayana statue embedded in the center, taking up space for seven columns of the thousand-Buddha. By the account of An Jinhui and Jia E from, researchers at the Henan Ancient Archaeology Institute, 999 thousand-Buddhas are in the niche.²⁷⁷ Underneath the seated Udayana statue, a square surface was planed smooth for the dedicatory inscription.

The inscription consists of a scripture quotation and a formulaic dedication. The quotation comes from the ending section of Bodhiruci's twelve-volume *Foshuo foming jing*, reading

The Buddha told Śāriputra that, 'if there are good sons, good women, bhikṣus, bhikṣuṅīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās who can receive, contemplate, and chant this [scripture] of various names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, ultimately [they] would not fall into the evil paths, [but] be reborn among devas and men, and meet various Buddhas in perpetuality. [After the Buddha enumerated] these Buddha names, the wise Śāriputra, bhikṣu Mahānāman, all bhikṣus and bhikṣuṅīs, upāsakas and upāsikās, nagas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, mahôragas, kiṃnaras, and various bodhisattvas and mahāsattvas, all with great joy, received [the teaching] respectfully and reverently followed [the instruction].

佛告舍利弗。若有善男子善女人。比丘比丘尼。優婆塞優婆夷。能受持讀誦此諸佛菩薩名者。終不墮惡道生天人中。恆值諸。²⁷⁸佛說此佛名。²⁷⁹慧命舍利弗及摩訶男

²⁷⁶ The complete pantheon of heavenly kings (lokapāla) amounts to four, each ruling over two classes of demigods. Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the east rules over the gandharva and pūtana, Virūdhaka in the south rules over the Kumbhāṇḍ and preta, Virūpākṣa in the west rules over the nāga and piśāca, and Vaiśravaṇa in the north rules over the yakṣa and rākṣasa. See "lokapāla" in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 480.

²⁷⁷ An Jinhui and Jia E, "Gongxian shiku zongxu," in *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si*, 中國石窟：鞏縣石窟寺 Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, ed., 225–234 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), 231.

²⁷⁸ Following the 1989 version of *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si*, inscription no. 114 on p. 287. The passage is transcribed with slight variation in the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, T0440, 14.0184a04– 14.0184a11. In SAT version, 恆 is 常, and 諸 is missing. The next line (a07) from SAT is missing from Gongxian inscription: 菩薩善知識。遠離諸煩惱乃至得大菩提。

²⁷⁹ SAT has an additional character yi 已 at the end.

比丘。諸²⁸⁰比丘尼。優婆塞優婆夷。天龍夜叉乾闥婆阿修羅迦樓羅²⁸¹摩睺羅伽人非人。及諸菩薩摩訶薩。皆大歡喜頂受奉行。

Immediately after the scriptural excerpt, the dedicatory inscription ends,

In the Qianfeng reign-period (666–668) ...on the sixth day, bhikṣu Sicha respectfully [made] a [shrine] with a single King Udayana image and a thousand-Buddhas... first . . . for the emperor, then for my ancestors in seven generations. May sentient beings in the Dharma-realm all initiate [the thought of] enlightenment and attain the unsurpassed way.

大唐乾封□□□□□
 六日比丘僧思察敬□
 優填王像一區千佛□
 遼上□□□□□□□
 皇帝下為七代父母
 法界蒼生俱發菩
 提成無上道

As discussed above, *Foshuo foming jing* exemplifies the repentance tradition that was prevalent in northern China in the sixth and seventh centuries. Its appearance in a dedication of an Udayana statue and the thousand-Buddhas icons impels one to consider the function of liturgical manuals and images and in a repentance ritual.

Evidence for the use of *Foshuo foming jing* in repentance rites is embedded within the liturgical manual itself, which both defines the individual and universal needs for confession and prescribes detailed instructions on how to conduct repentance. The main body of the scripture is a list of 11,093 or 13,300 names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. It starts with a description of Śākyamuni lecturing among all classes of sentient beings at the Jetavana Monastery, a common textual device that serves to accredit the scripture to Śākyamuni himself. After announcing that he would call out the names of various Buddhas from the past, future, and present, Śākyamuni promised that whoever could receive, contemplate (受持), and chant these names would be free

²⁸⁰ SAT has an additional character 及 before *zhu* 諸 and the phrase *biqiu* 比丘 after.

²⁸¹ SAT has an additional class of beings *jinnaluo* 緊那羅 (*kiṃnara*) here.

of sufferings and eliminate all sins in this life, and attain the ultimate awakening in a future life. In the next twelve volumes, repeated promises and detailed instructions are interpolated into the long enumeration of Buddha names. The choice of omitting the long list of chanted names from the carving suggests that participants either memorized the names or had a copy of the scripture on more perishable material during the ritual. Yet the last section of the text, inscribed and preserved in stone, serves as a tangible affirmation of the karmic benefits promised in the scripture and a lasting reminder of the repentance ritual performance that once took place at Gongxian.

The last essential element in the visual program, the eight bodhisattvas, also served a repentance function. The earliest textual evidence for the group of eight bodhisattvas, or *aṣṭamahopaputra* in Sanskrit, is Zhi Qian's translation of *Aṣṭabuddhakasūtra* (*Foshuo ba jixiangshen zhoujing* 佛說八吉祥神呪經) from the third century.²⁸² The scripture lists the names of eight Buddhas and eight bodhisattvas, promising that those who heard and chanted their names would attain various worldly benefits.²⁸³ Visual representations of the group are seen in India, China, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, among others. The scholarship on Chinese examples of the eight bodhisattvas is concentrated in Mogao Grottoes and the nearby Yulin Grottoes (榆林), where the group is a popular subject for silk paintings and murals created during the Tibetan occupation period (786–848).²⁸⁴ Michelle Wang conducted an extensive study on the Maṇḍala of Eight Great Bodhisattvas in Tibet in the eighth and ninth centuries, and in Dunhuang during the

²⁸² Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr., *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 73.

²⁸³ T 0427, vol. 14, 0072b04–0073a28.

²⁸⁴ For example, see Guo Youmeng, “Dunhuang shiku ‘Lushena fo bing bada pusa mantuluo’ chutan,” *Dunhuang xue jikan* (2007), no. 1: 45–63; Liu Yongzeng, “Dunhuang shiku bada pusa mantuluo tuoxiang jieshuo (shang),” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 116 (2009), no. 4: 12–23, 122, plates 1–6; Chen Suyu, “Yulin 25 ku yi fo ba pusa tu yanjiu,” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 145 (2009), no. 5: 56–82, 159.

Tibetan period.²⁸⁵ However, the earliest example of this popular genre from Dunhuang is a silk painting (Fig. 3.37), now in the British Museum, estimated to date to around the early ninth century. Thus the reliefs at Gongxian from the 660s are among the earliest visual evidence for the group of eight bodhisattvas.

The severe weathering on the eight bodhisattvas at Gongxian makes it difficult to recognize the objects or hand gestures of each bodhisattva. On the eastern side of the niche, one bodhisattva seems to hold a lotus stem in one hand, and two below him raise one hand in front of the chest. Since the identity of the eight bodhisattvas varies in different scriptures, it is also impossible to decide which group of eight is represented at Gongxian.²⁸⁶ Likely for these reasons, no one to my knowledge has discussed the group of eight bodhisattvas at Gongxian.

Near and in Luoyang during the seventh century, the group of eight bodhisattvas also appeared in the popular repentance practices that focus on *King Gao's Guanshiyin Sutra*. As discussed in Chapter One, a part of the sutra was transcribed in Laolong Grotto of Longmen in the year 651. Complete versions of the scripture conclude with a group of eight great bodhisattvas, promising that “[whoever] chanted [these bodhisattvas’ names] a thousand times would eliminate all severe sins.”²⁸⁷ In the collection of miraculous tales in *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, a story similar to the tales associated with *King Gao's Guanshiyin Sutra* also relates to the group of eight bodhisattvas. It recounts a story from the Zhenguan period (627–649), in which a scholar-official named Dong Xiong 董雄 was imprisoned for someone else’s crime. He chanted the “Universal Gate” chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* three thousand times. At night, when he

²⁸⁵ Michelle Wang, *Maṇḍalas in the Making: The Visual Culture of Esoteric Buddhism at Dunhuang* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 52–121; “Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China: Ritual and the Role of Image,” 205–206.

²⁸⁶ For a compiled table of comparison, see Guo, “Dunhuang shiku ‘Lushena fo bing bada pusa mantuluo’ chutan,” 46.

²⁸⁷ T2898, vol. 85, 1426a6–7. 誦滿一千遍，重罪皆消滅。

was still chanting, his shackles suddenly fell on the ground. In the meanwhile, his cell mate Wang Xin 王忻 chanted the names of eight bodhisattvas for 30,000 times and was also miraculously released from his shackles.²⁸⁸ In my interpretation, the element of imprisoning, the chanting of the *Universal Gate Chapter of the Lotus Sutra*, and the eight bodhisattvas all appear to be appropriated from the earlier legend in *King Gao's Guanshiyin Sutra*.

3.3.5. Evidence from the Longmen Grottoes

Inside Wanfo Grotto, one of the donors for the Udayana statue on the north wall also commissioned another program with an explicit goal of eliminating sins. The dedicatory inscription for the Udayana statue on the north wall, dated to 680, lists several donors who sponsored the statue for a Buddhist teacher. One of them, named Hu Chuzhen 胡處貞 commissioned or participated in at least six projects inside the grotto and on its façade between 680 and 681, two of which were dated to the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the year 680, the day when monks concluded the summer retreat and were required to conduct repentance rites, releasing the power accumulated from the ninety-day retreat.²⁸⁹ Two months afterwards, Hu added one more dedication, a program of 500 Maitreya statues inside the doorway of Wanfo Grotto (Fig. 3.38). In the dedicatory inscription, Hu states that

[I], Chuzhen, respectfully made five hundred images of Maitreya. [I] pray that no evil ever arises, and karmic sins be eliminated. May all living beings in the Dharma-realm forever break free from resentment. From this life to the life when one attains Buddhahood, [may we] be universal company on each other's [path to] awakening.

²⁸⁸ T 2106, v. 52, 0429c06–c21. 貞觀中。河東董雄為大理丞。少來信敬。蔬食十數年。十四年中。坐連李仙童事。上大怒。使侍御韋悰鞠問甚急。囚禁數十人大理丞李敬玄與直王忻同連此坐。雄與同屋囚鎖。專念普門品。日得三千遍。夜坐誦經鎖忽自解落地。雄驚告忻玄。忻玄共視。鎖堅全在地。而鈎鎖相離數尺。即告守者。其夜監察御史張守一宿直。命吏開鎖火燭之。見鎖不開而相離甚怪。又重鎖紙封書上而去。雄如常誦經五更中鎖又解落有聲。雄又告忻玄等。至明告守一。守一來視之。封題如故。而鎖自相離。敬玄素不信佛法。其妻讀經。常謂曰。何為胡神所媚而讀此書耶及見雄此事。乃深悟不信之咎。方知佛為大聖也。時忻亦誦八菩薩名。滿三萬遍。晝鎖解落。視之如雄不異。其事臺中內外具皆聞見。不久俱脫云云。

²⁸⁹ Teiser, *Ghost Festival*, 205.

[We] vow to help each other for deliverance. [May we] encounter spiritual teachers, leave home, and work toward enlightenment. [May we] cross [to the other] shore [to awakenment] for eternity and be free from afflictions. [May our minds] be clear without acquiring [defilements].

處貞敬造彌勒像五百區，願無始惡，業罪消滅，法界四生，永斷怨憎，從今生至成佛以來，普作菩提眷屬，誓相度脫，逢善知識出家修道，永度脫纏，晤無所得。²⁹⁰

The inscription speaks about helping one another. It could suggest that Hu was a part of a Buddhist community, since Hu joined the group of people in sponsoring the Udayana statue. But it could also indicate that Hu participated in a gathering, which is a requirement for the performance of repentance ritual. Since the first two stated wishes following the dedication of the image were to eliminate sins and karmic deeds, it is more likely that Hu participated in a collective penance.

In addition to Wanfo Grotto, as Hamada Tamami shows, the combination of Udayana statues and the program of thousand Buddhas also appear at Longmen at least in three other places:

1. Niche no. N 289 at the bottom register of the northern wall of Guyang Grotto (Fig. 3.39).
2. a niche (likely Niche no. S16) on the southern wall of Huoshao Grotto (Cave 1519, Fig. 3.40).
3. Cave 305 near Jingshansi Grotto (Fig. 3.41).²⁹¹

In each case, a statue of Udayana's Śākyamuni is carved in high relief against a back wall covered with the thousand-Buddha motif, inside a deeply recessed niche. In the former two cases, each niche has a lotus-flower ceiling. In addition, in Cave 231 (Fig. 3.41) on the southern side of the forecourt of Binyang Grottoes, an Udayana statue was dedicated in combination with

²⁹⁰ *Tiji*, no. 0605, v. 1, p. 139–140.

²⁹¹ Cave no. 1443 is in *Zonglu*, v. 9, text p. 72, plate pls. 535–542. Cave no. 1519 is in *Zonglu*, v. 10, text p. 46, plate pl. 266. Cave 305 is in *Zonglu*, v. 2, text p. 44, plate pls. 254–256. Also discussed in Hamada, “Chūgoku Sho-Tō jidai no Rakuyō shūhen ni okeru Utenō zō ni tsuite,” 49; Hamada, “Qianfo tuxiang yu Youtianwang xiang,” 260–261.

53 Buddhas, 25 Buddhas, 35 Buddhas, seven Buddhas, and Buddhas of the ten directions.²⁹²

Dedicated in 656 by an unnamed lay person, the niche is only six years later than Niche no. 178 in Laolong Grotto, dedicated by monk Zhishan from Jingshan Monastery that contain the same numbers of Buddhas found in repentance manuals.²⁹³

Several other niches may also show the same iconographic combination. Huoshao Grotto may have two other niches of the same program on its south wall (Niche nos. S4 and S9, Fig. 3.40), both of which enshrine a seated Buddha with two legs pendant and feature thousand Buddhas and a lotus flower in the ceiling.²⁹⁴ But because the niches are high above the ground, current reproductions of the two heavily damaged statues are not sufficient to determine if they were Udayana statues or Maitreya statues that commonly adopt a similar posture at Longmen. In addition, an inscriptional record states that in a niche (Cave 1386, Fig. 42) next to the northern side of the opening of Yaofang Cave (Cave 1387), someone named Zhang Shizheng 張師政 dedicated “a thousand stone statues from the good kalpa” 賢劫千石像 inside a shrine of Udayana statue.²⁹⁵ The term *xianjie* 賢劫, or good kalpa, refers to the Indian idea that the cosmos evolves in different kalpas, or eons of time.²⁹⁶ The good kalpa, according to *The Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, is the eon when Śākyamuni manifested himself from the Lotus Store World

²⁹² Cave 231 is in *Zonglu*, v. 2, text p. 20, plate pls. 130–134. This example also has the special throne.

²⁹³ *Tiji*, no. 0946, v. 1, p. 215; *Zonglu*, v. 4, text p. 99, plate pl. 644.

²⁹⁴ *Zonglu*, v. 10, text p. 45, plate pls. 262–263.

²⁹⁵ *Tiji*, no. 1658, v. 2, p. 389. However, *Zonglu* does not include any inscription for Cave no. 1386, nor any statue of King Udayana's statue. See *Zonglu*, v. 8, p. 63. The heir-apparent Li Chengqian 李承乾 (618–645) was reported to have hired an assassin named Zhang Shizheng to kill his brother Li Tai 李泰 (620–653). But Wen Yucheng believes there is no way to confirm the assassin was the donor of Cave no. 1386. See Wen Yucheng, “Longmen suojian liang *Tangshu* zhong renwu zaoxiang gaishuo 龍門所見兩唐書中人物造像概說.” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1993), no. 4: 12.,

²⁹⁶ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 92.

of Vairocana on Jambudvīpa.²⁹⁷ Therefore, the world and time that we know of correspond to the good kalpa and Śākyamuni was one of the thousand Buddhas from the good kalpa.

3.4. Amitabha and the Fifty-Two bodhisattvas

The main wall of Wanfo Grotto is occupied by a Buddha pentad, two pairs of donor figures, and a total of fifty-two bodhisattvas that sit in various relaxed postures and connected to one another via the vines stemming from their lotus seat. Most recent scholarship agrees that the group represents a variant of the program of Amitabha and the Fifty bodhisattvas, a famous icon group that was popular in Henan, Sichuan, and Dunhuang.²⁹⁸ The earliest textual resource for this iconography comes from the dedicatory inscription from Cave no. 3 of Wolongshan, Sichuan, dated to 634 (Fig. 43). Three decades later in 664, the text was copied by Daoxuan in *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*. The first half of the text concerns the origin miracle of the iconography, which is translated and published by McNair.²⁹⁹ The second half of the dedicatory inscription from Sichuan constructs a history of its transmission from India to China, and its circulation from Han to the Tang periods. Recent attempts of translating the entire inscription were made by Anne Feng and Yang Xiao in their respective doctoral dissertations.³⁰⁰

A less cited textual resource, also written by Daoxuan, however, shows the use of the image for repentance ritual. It is found in the biography of monk Huihai 慧海 from the Northern

²⁹⁷ *Fanwang jing*, T1484, vol. 24, 1003c07-c10.

²⁹⁸ Li Sisheng, “Yi fo wushi pusa he pusa zhuang fo,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* (1991), no. 2: 50. McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 137; Inamoto, “Utenō zōtōden kō,” 388–389; Hamada, “Qianfo tuxiang yu Youtianwang xiang,” 266; Zhu Tianshu, “‘Yi fo wushi pusa tu’ xin tan,” *Sichou zhilu yanjiu jikan* 3 (2018): 109–121. Although Kuno Miki recently offered a slightly different reading, see Kuno Miki 久野美樹, *Tōdai Ryūmon Sekkutsu no kenkyū: zōkei no shisōteki haikai ni tsuite* 唐代龍門石窟の研究 — 造形の思想的背景について (Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Bijutsu Shuppan, 2011), 277–304.

²⁹⁹ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 105.

³⁰⁰ Anne Ning Feng, “Water, Ice, Lapis Lazuli: The Metamorphosis of Pure Land Art in Tang China,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2018), 228–229; Yang Xiao, “Local Monuments, Local Narratives: The Emergence and Development of Buddhist Rock Carvings in Northern Sichuan, 618–907 CE,” (PhD diss., Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 2021), Appendix 1, 213–215.

Zhou period (557–581) in *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (The Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks). The passage reads

Suddenly a monk named Daoquan from Qizhou offered up a painted image of Amitâyus, saying that it was the holy image that the bodhisattva of the five supernatural powers at Kukkutārāma Monastery in India flew to Sukhāvātī to draw. Having quietly understood the past circumstances, [Huihai] made obeisance and repented with deep thoughts. Then [Huihai] witnessed bright divine light. Feeling his good fortune [in seeing the image], [Huihai] diligently copied the image and concentrated on the thought to be reborn in the land of [Amitâyus] for the rest of his life.

忽有齊州僧道詮。齋畫無量壽像來云。是天竺雞頭摩寺五通菩薩。乘空往彼安樂世界圖寫尊儀。既冥會素情。深懷禮懺。乃覩神光炤爍。慶所希幸。於是模寫懇苦。願生彼土。沒齒為念。³⁰¹

The biography tells of an actual practice of repentance that was inspired by a view of the image of Amitabha and the Fifty bodhisattvas. Hamada interprets the text as evidence that the image group was the focus of devotion during the repentance ritual, as were the stone reliefs in Wanfo Grotto.³⁰² But this interpretation raises more questions: Was the painting brought by Daoquan available for Huihai during his personal repentance? What is the function of the image? Why did Huihai copy the image after obtaining a confirmative vision of the divine light? Regarding the program in Wanfo Grotto, which is a stone copy, was it made in preparation for repentance or was it copied afterwards like the copies made by Huihai?

In my interpretation, Daoxuan himself offered an answer to these questions by considering images as the stimuli that would inspire repentance and trigger divine responses. His appropriation of the origin miracle in *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* suggests his stance. Since the text in *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* shows only slight variations from the Sichuan inscription, previous scholarship treats them as the same text. But a close comparison conveys a

³⁰¹ T 2060, vol. 50, 0515c06–0516a06. The reference to the image of Amitabha and the fifty bodhisattvas is 0515c14–c19.

³⁰² Hamada, “Qianfo tuxiang yu Youtianwang xiang,” 266.

key insertion from Daoxuan. Since McNair's translation incorporates both the Sichuan inscription and the text from *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, I am quoting her passage here,

The image of Amitābha and the Fifty Bodhisattvas is an auspicious image from the western regions. The tradition says, at Kukkutārāma Monastery in India, a bodhisattva possessed of the five supernatural powers went to the World of Joy and said to Amitābha Buddha, 'World-Honored One, all sentient beings of the Sahā World pray to be reborn in the Pure Land, but without an image of the Buddha's form, their prayers and entreaties lack a cause. Please let it fall and descend to that place.' The Buddha said, 'Before you leave here, it will be instantly manifested there.' By the time the bodhisattva had returned (to the monastery), the image was already there. It consisted of one Buddha and fifty bodhisattvas, each seated on a lotus flower, (as if) on the leaves of a tree.³⁰³

In this origin miracle, an image of Amitabha Buddha is considered a "cause" (*you* 由) for rebirth in the Pure Land. The term only appears in Daoxuan's version and not in the Wolongshan inscription. Since the entire *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* is dedicated to miracles about images, texts, and pagodas that functioned as the "cause" to one's awakening, the insertion makes it clear that Daoxuan believed in and propagated the same function for the image of Amitabh and the Fifty bodhisattvas.

I believe that Daoxuan's interpretation of image as "cause" stems from the principle of *ganying*, translated as "stimulus and response" or "sympathetic resonance." In studies of Chinese rituals, scholars show that *ganying* is the fundamental principle in all the early rituals, Buddhist or pre-Buddhist. In a study devoted to early Buddhist rituals in China, Daniel Stevenson shows that a third element is added in Buddhist discourse on ritual efficacy, namely the "opportune condition" or "causal connection." (*ji* 機 and *jiyuan* 機緣) Ritual participants establish an opportune condition with the object of devotion, which stimulates or stirs (*gan*) the divine power and causes a response (*ying*).³⁰⁴

³⁰³ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 105.

³⁰⁴ Stevenson, "The Ties that Bind," 152, 156.

In this prevalent discourse of ritual efficacy, the experience of *seeing* a famous icon like Amitabha and the Fifty bodhisattvas is one of the “opportune conditions” that would trigger the flow of *gan* and *ying* in a ritual of repentance. When Amitabha Buddha made the image requested by the bodhisattva available for sentient beings of the Sahā World, he made it possible for people to see the image, establish “causal connection or condition” (*jiyuan*) with Amitabha Buddha that stimulates (*gan*) and causes response (*ying*) from the Buddha. The copies made by Huihai, and the stone copies at Wanfo Grotto, did not just generate karmic merits but also made the fortunate “causal condition” available for all visitors to the cave-shrine.

The pre-Buddhist root of the concept of *ganying* leads Robert Sharf to translate the term as “sympathetic resonance,” a reference to “sympathetic magic.” He explains that the discourse of *ganying* refers to the resonance that spontaneously takes place between two things of the same nature, like strings on a zither resonate. For example, the early Daoist ritual of rainmaking made use of objects related to dragons and water since by Daoist cosmology they all belong to the category of *yin*. By using objects that belong to the same category, the potency of receiving divine response was maximized.³⁰⁵

I argue that the working of “sympathetic resonance” explains the enthusiasm for the “true,” authentic images of the Buddha among Longmen donors. Such enthusiasm is shown in the popularity of Udayana’s statue at Longmen, which claimed to be the first image of Śākyamuni, made during his lifetime, which faithfully copied the auspicious marks on his body. In a slightly different but similar vein, the icon of Amitabha and the Fifty bodhisattvas, which both Li Sisheng and McNair agree also shows up in Jingshansi Grotto (Fig. 3.27), is supposed to

³⁰⁵ Robert Sharf, *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism: A Reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2002), 82–88.

be a creation made possible by Buddha Amitabha himself.³⁰⁶ I propose that such literary trope implies that an unmediated, indexical connection between the image and Amitabha Buddha was guaranteed by the lack of human intervention. Within the ritual discourse of “sympathetic resonance,” the rhetoric of verisimilitude and indexical connections serves to equate the image with the divinity, and thereby maximizing the efficacy of the ritual performance in obtaining divine response.

3.5. A Functional Space

The instructions from *Foshuo foming jing* convey a likely scenario of the ritual performance of repentance, a multi-sensory sensorial experience of beautiful images, chanting sound, and sophisticated incense smells. In the eighth volume, Śākyamuni instructs those who broke the precepts and desired to confess that

“[they] should bathe ones’ body, put on new and clean clothes, abstain from eating meat and the spicy. [They] should set up a clean room in a quiet place, adorn the place of practice with floral banners, apply fragrant incense on murals, hang forty-nine banners, ornament the seat of the Buddha, and install an image of the Buddha. [Then they should] burn various incense: sandalwood, agarwood, resin of boswellia thurifera, tagara, sugandha, among other powdered incense and incense for rubbing. Burn these excellent incenses and sprinkle various flowers.”

當淨洗浴、著新淨衣、不食葷辛；當在靜處修治室內，以諸幡華莊嚴道場，香泥塗畫，懸四十九枚幡，莊嚴佛座，安置佛像；燒種種香，栴檀、沈水、薰陸、多伽羅、蘇犍陀，種種末香、塗香，燒如是等種種妙香，散種種華。³⁰⁷

Listed in this passage are the preparatory steps and paraphernalia for a typical ritual performance. Before the participants enter the proper sanctuary, they are required to conduct ritual purification- cleansing one’s body and clothes. Meat and spicy food are prohibited as their smells would offend the deities. A space is arranged and adorned with splendid utensils as the

³⁰⁶ Li Sisheng, “Yi fo wushi pusa he pusa zhuang fo,” 50. McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 105.

³⁰⁷ T 0440, vol. 14, 0158c21–c26.

altar space, which is then purified with “fragrant clay.” Within the set boundary, the Buddhas and other deities will be invited and accessible to participants. After the ritual purification is completed, incense and flowers are offered to the Three Jewels (Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha) to initiate the proper ritual performance.³⁰⁸ The many types of incense detailed in this passage suggest a highly distinctive smellscape that lasts throughout the ritual performance.

Most of the listed examples of Udayana niches are too small to even accommodate these preparatory works. At Longmen, both Niche N289 in Guyang Grotto (Fig. 3.39) and Niche S16 in Huoshao Grotto (Fig. 3.40) are added projects to a larger shrine. While each is deep enough to create an enclosed space on its own, neither is large enough for a devotee to enter. *Qianfo kan* at Gongxian is a shallow niche, measuring only 1.5 meter high and 2.12 meters wide (Figs. 3.30 and 3.31). Since *Qianfo kan* is next to five much larger, and enclosed Northern-Wei cave-shrines that are easy to enter, I think it is unlikely that *Qianfo kan*'s patron and designer would consider its size appropriate for the actual ritual performance. Therefore, I believe they were miniature duplicates of a functional space wherein ritual repentance was conducted.³⁰⁹ While neither the smell nor the vocal enumeration of the long list of Buddha names from the seventh century could be recorded, the visual repetition of the thousand-Buddha relief evokes the experience and perseverance of the ritual performance.

Slightly larger cave-shrines, such as Cave 305 at Longmen (Fig. 3.28), might host the daily confessions that did not require a witness, since it is only 143 cm high, 120 cm wide, and

³⁰⁸ Stevenson, “Ties that bind,” 176–177.

³⁰⁹ Miniaturization has implications in a mortuary context, but I don't find sufficient evidence that these small shrines of Gongxian and Longmen were for mortuary use. Recently, Neil Schmid from the Dunhuang Academy also discussed what he called “miniature caves” from Dunhuang in two online lectures, arguing that they might serve mortuary functions at sites of cave-shrines. “Dunhuang Caves and the Aesthetics of Scale,” The BuddhistRoad, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, October 8, 2021; and “The Quick and the Dead: Miniaturization and the Great Boundary among Ninth and Tenth Century Dunhuang Grottoes,” Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference 2022, March 27, 2022.

120 cm deep.³¹⁰ At best, one person could sit in the front of the Udayana statue. According to *Foshuo fomingjing*, one who aspired to attain awakenment should conduct daily confessions in six intervals of a day. In the text, Śākyamuni told Śāriputra that if one was to chant these Buddha names, one should

in the early part, middle part, and later part of the daylight hours, as well as in every one of the three parts of the night, sit upright, bare one's right shoulder, put the right knee on the ground, single-mindedly chant these Buddha names, provide offerings, venerate and prostrate [to the Buddha], and say this verse, "the Buddhas of the ten directions known to the Tathāgata, I now venerate."

於晝日初分時、中分時、後分時，夜亦三時，從坐起，偏袒右肩，右膝著地，一心稱是佛名，供養禮拜，作如是言：『如來所知十方諸佛，我今敬禮。』³¹¹

Wanfo Grotto seems to be the among the earliest cave-shrines built as a functional space for collective repentance. The performance of repentance is required among two types of participants: those who aspired to attain awakenment, and those who had ritually vowed to take precepts but broke the rules. Intense periods of penance are required among the second group, including the full bhikṣu and bhikṣuṇī, śikṣamāṇā, novice monk and nun who took the "going forth" (*pravrajyā*, *chujia* 出家) ordination, and upāsaka and upāsikā who took the precepts for laymen and lay women. In *Foshuo Fomingjing*, Śākyamuni provided instructions for three groups of people:

If a bhikṣu is to confess any violation of the four pārajikā prohibitions, for forty-nine days and nights, [he] should pledge to reveal the sins that he committed in front of eight purified bhikṣus. Every seven days, [the bhikṣu should] pledge to reveal the sins in front of [the group]. With a sincere and grave mind, [the bhikṣu should] regret what [he] had committed before. Single-mindedly he [should] take refuge in the Buddhas of the ten directions, chant the names, venerate, and prostrate, in accordance with his capability. With such a sincere mind, at the end of the forty-nine days, [his] sins will be eliminated...

³¹⁰ *Zonglu*, v. 2, text p. 44.

³¹¹ T 0440, vol. 14, 0167c15–c18.

若比丘懺四重罪，如是晝夜四十九日，當對八清淨比丘發露所犯罪，七日一對發露，至心慙重，悔昔所作，一心歸命十方諸佛，稱名禮拜，隨力隨分，如是至心，滿四十九日，罪必除滅……

If a bhikṣuṇī is to repent the violation of the eight pārājikās, [she] should follow the method prescribed for bhikṣu for forty-nine days. [Then she] will attain the purified state and eliminate the insincere mind. If a śikṣamāṇā, novice monk, or novice nun is to repent the grave sins of pārājikās, [they] should face four purified bhikṣu or bhikṣuṇī to practice the aforementioned method for twenty-one days. [Then they] will attain the purified state and eliminate the insincere mind.

比丘尼懺悔八重罪者，當如比丘法，滿足四十九日，當得清淨，除不至心。若式叉摩那、沙彌、沙彌尼懺悔根本重罪，當對四清淨比丘、比丘尼，如上法滿二十一日，當知清淨，除不至心。

If a upāsaka or upāsikā is to confess any serious transgression of lay precepts, [they] should venerate the Three Jewels with a sincere mind. When meeting monks or nuns, [they should] respectfully venerate and prostrate, and initiate the thought that [the Tathāgata] is difficult to encounter. [They] should ask to visit the ritual place and set up various offerings. [They] should invite a bhikṣu whom they respect from the heart, and pledge to reveal the sins they committed, repent with a sincere mind, single-mindedly take refuge in Buddhas of the ten directions, chant the names, venerate and prostrate. Doing so for seven days, [they] surely will attain a pure statue and eliminate the insincere mind.

若優婆塞、優婆夷懺悔重戒罪，應當至心恭敬三寶，若見沙門，恭敬禮拜，生難遭想，當請詣道場，設種種供養，當請一比丘，心敬重者，就其發露所犯諸罪，至心懺悔，一心歸命十方諸佛，稱名禮拜，如是滿足七日，必得清淨，除不至心。³¹²

Regardless of the types of precepts, simply chanting the names and taking refuge in the Buddha of the ten directions are no longer enough for those who had vowed to take precepts. They all need one or more “purified” (that is, qualified), clerics to witness and assist the repentance. In another section of *Foshuo foming jing*, it is also promised that whoever hears the names would be free from karmic hindrances.³¹³ In other words, a repentance for those who broke the precepts is a collective event, benefiting not only those who confessed and chanted the names, but also those in the audience.

³¹² T 0440, vol. 14, 0159a01–a22.

³¹³ T 0440, vol.14, 0121a14, 得聞是諸佛名者，永離業障。

3.6. Audience

Longmen donors and visitors were likely familiar with the miracle stories behind the icons featured in Wanfo Grotto, since these famous icons were all reported to be present in Luoyang at varying times. Daoxuan's three-volume *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* is dedicated to the miraculous happenings surrounding pagodas, images, monasteries, and scriptures. Its second volume collects fifty tales of Buddhist images, among which are the legend of King Udayana's statue and Amitabha and Fifty bodhisattvas. The latter icon started to circulate in Luoyang, according to Daoxuan, in tandem with the introduction of Buddhism to China. Daoxuan informs that after Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty (r. 57–75 CE) dreamed of the Buddha and sent envoys to seek Buddhism, Kāśyapa Mātāṅga (first century CE) came to Luoyang, followed by his nephew who brought with him this “auspicious image” (*ruixiang* 瑞像). Yet when the nephew returned to the West, he also took the image with him and thus it was not widely circulated in China. When the famous painter Cao Zhongda 曹仲達 of the Northern Qi period (550–577) made a copy on the mural of a monastery, as Daoxuan reported, all in the capital (Yecheng 鄴城, in present-day Hebei province) knew of this image.³¹⁴

Similarly, the legend of Udayana was also tied to Emperor Ming of the Han and to the city of Luoyang. This connection is explicitly shown in one statue at Gongxian Grottoes. Among the three fragmentary freestanding Udayana statues discovered in 1977 from the sedimentary soil between Caves nos. 2 and 3 of Gongxian Grottoes, two have inscriptions. Only one has been published so far (Fig. 3.33).³¹⁵ Partially broken, the published statue closely follows the

³¹⁴ Daoxuan, *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, vol. 52, 0421a17–b03.

³¹⁵ An Jinhui and Jia E, “Gongxian shiku si zongxu,” in *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si* 中國石窟：鞏縣石窟寺, ed., Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, 225–234 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe; Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989), 232, plate 8 on p. 233.

iconography popular at Longmen, including minimal lines that indicate the thin fabric across the chest, the waistline, and the skirt hem, and a square throne that shows mythical animals on the side. At the back of the statue are three dedicatory inscriptions, two of which refer to the commission of an Udayana image. One is brief, reading,

“Shangguan Shao donated the stone to make an image of King Udayana’s [Śākyamuni]. [May] the body [of Shangguan] continue to make offerings in perpetuity.”

上官紹施石造優填王像，永身供養。

The other one references one of the many origin legends of Udayana image in China. It reads,

“I have heard that the brightness [of a wise man] cannot be measured, and the profound wisdom is difficult to know. Therefore, the virtuous sage hung the mirror, not to fool. It is probably for this reason. When standing on the lotus footprint [of Śākyamuni], one is filled with determination. When looking up to the Moon Hall, one empties the heart-mind. [Since we] admire the cause of extinction, [we] carve the image of the Buddha. On the second day of the eighth month, in the fifth year (September 11, 660) of the Xianqing reign-period (656–661) of the Great Tang.

Bhikṣus Facheng and Sicha, District Magistrate Liu Shangke, Commandant Murong Ji, Commandant Tending the Western Frontier³¹⁶ Jia Cai, Shangguan Shao, and a lay society of elderly scholars from the county, among others, respectfully made an image of Udayana’s [Śākyamuni]. First we pray for the stable succession of the imperial house, then that all living creatures prosper, and all attain the right and true [enlightenment]. [We] carve [the following ode] here as a paean of praise. [By] Zhang Xingren.

竊聞高明不測，幽昧難知，蓋聖德懸鑒非愚，抑度是以。企蓮蹤而沖志，望月殿而虛心，崇寂滅之因，刻尊儀之相，遂於大唐顯慶五年歲次庚申八月己巳朔二日庚午。

³¹⁶ According to Hucker’s dictionary, xiaowei 校尉 is “prestige title (sanguan) or merit title (hsun) for military officers, commonly in ranks 6 or 7; peirong (xiao)wei 陪戎(校)尉 is a “prestige title (sanguan) for military officers of the 9th rank.” Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 238, no. 2456; p. 374, no. 4554.

比丘僧法稱、思察，縣令³¹⁷劉尚容、校尉慕容基³¹⁸、陪戎尉賈才、尚官紹、鄉城老宿等³¹⁹，敬造優填王像，上願 皇帝固業，下冀群生克隆，俱獲正真，勒茲徽頌，張行仁。

The dream of the golden figure [by Emperor Ming of the Han dynasty] gave rise to the sculpting and modeling [of the Buddha's image].

The jade palace is lofty and embellished, and the adornment bright.

Flying celestials crowd together, and transformed women soared into sky.

In this rich and lively pavilion, may virtuous qualities proliferate.”

金人感夢³²⁰，雕素是興。

瓊宮崇麗，寶飾含融。

飛仙集衛，化女騰空。

紛華綺閣，茂質彌隆。³²¹

The line 金人感夢 refers to the legend of Buddhism's initial transmission to China, featuring Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty who saw a golden man in his dream and learned afterward that the deity's name was *Fo* 佛. Among the many versions of the story, its tie to the Udayana image was first established in *Mingxiang ji*, a compendium of miraculous responses that was written in the late fifth century by Wang Yan 王琰 (active 460s–490s), which only survives in part in later anthologies.³²² Among them are Daoxuan's *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* compiled in 664 and the encyclopedic *Fayuan zhulin* by Daoshi. Both anthologies state that the Emperor sent Cai Yin 蔡愔 (active 67 CE) as the envoy to the Western Regions to obtain the painting of Śākyamuni created by King Udayana; when the painting was brought back, it was the

³¹⁷ It is 今 in the catalogue but I think it should be 令.

³¹⁸ He might be the same person named Murong Deji 慕容德基 in Inscription no. 73, Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si*, p. 283.

³¹⁹ 鄉城老宿 might refer to a lay society of elderly because at Longmen there is also a dedication (Cave no. 118), dated to 638, sponsored by the elderly from Luozhou (洛州城鄉老人) who seemed to form a lay society. See *Tiji*, no. 48, vol. 1, p. 13-14; and Li Yukun, “Longmen zakao,” *Wenwu* (1980), no. 1: 27-28.

³²⁰ Same reference in inscription no. 79, Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si*, p. 284

³²¹ Inscription no. 60, *ibid.*, p. 282. The inscription for an unpublished Udayana's statue is no. 137 on p. 289.

³²² For an annotated translation of the tale, see Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the Unseen Realm: Buddhist Miracle Tales from Early Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2012), 68–71.

same as what the Emperor saw in his dream.³²³ Hida Romi observes that among the early texts, Wang Yan's is the earliest to superimpose the Udayana story onto the origin legend of Buddhism in China.³²⁴ Since the original text by Wang did not survive outside the two Tang anthologies, Daoxuan and Daoshi, in the process of selecting and copying the manuscript, may also have a role in this narrative invention. Thus this miraculous legend, as the historian of Chinese religions Robert Campany reminds, not only reflects the understanding among Tang audiences, but also how monastic elites like Daoshi and Daoxuan actively justified the sacred value of the Udayana image.³²⁵

In addition to Udayana's statue of Śākyamuni and Amitabha and Fifty bodhisattvas, Daoxuan's *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* collects two more miracles of statues related to Luoyang, both of which made their way to the Longmen Grottoes. One is the so-called King Gao's statue of Guanyin. As discussed in Chapter 2, a copy of *King Gao's Guanyin Sutra* was carved in Laolong Grotto, accompanied with a statue of Śākyamuni. It is my speculation that the many early-Tang donors of Guanyin statues at Longmen associated their statues with this legend, although their dedicatory inscriptions do not specify.

The other Luoyang-related statue in *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* is the so-called Aśoka statue. The narrative behind Aśoka statue is still an unresolved mystery, but to Daoxuan, it referred to a golden standing statue of the Buddha allegedly created by the fourth daughter of King Aśoka. Accordingly, the statue only entered Luoyang when the Sui army took over the Kingdom of Chen (557–589) in the south. After obtaining the statue, Emperor Wen of the Sui

³²³ 乃遣畫工圖之數本。於南宮清涼臺及高陽門顯節壽陵上供養。又於白馬寺壁。畫千乘萬騎繞塔三匝之像。如諸傳備載。 Daoxuan, *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, vol. 52, 0413c09–c11.

³²⁴ Hida Romi 肥田路美, "Sho-Tō jidai ni okeru Utenō-zō: Genjō no Shaka zō shōrai to sono juyō no ichi sō," 初唐時代における優填王像——玄奘の釈迦像請来とその受容の一相 *Bijutsushi* 120 (1986): 83.

³²⁵ Campany, "Preface," in *Signs from the Unseen Realm*, xiv.

Dynasty (541–604) ordered his office to make a seated statue of the same appearance, claiming that he could not bear to stand for a long time. Initially the statue was enshrined in the inner court of the Sui emperor, and one of the two, probably the seated version, was moved to Da Xingshan Monastery 大興善寺, where it manifested its lifelike power and refused to be installed in the north. For this miracle, the statue became famous.³²⁶

At Longmen, only one statue was identified by inscription as the Aśoka statue, but many more share the similar iconography. The identified piece (Niche W39) is sponsored by a nun Jingming 淨命 from Jingfu Convent, possibly in the early eighth century, inside Tangzi Cave (Cave 1192) (Figs. 3.44 and 3.45).³²⁷ In their study on Aśoka statues excavated in Chengdu, Wang Jianping and Lei Yuhua propose that other statues at Longmen that exhibit the similar style could also be Aśoka statues. The identifying iconographic features include a tall uṣṇīṣa, a robe that covers both shoulders, U-shaped folds on the robe, and a hand that grabs a corner of the skirt. The two standing figures in Cave 585 are believed to be the examples (Fig. 3.46).³²⁸ This proposition is not conclusive since similar figures at Longmen can be identified differently. But it is more likely if one donor sponsored an Aśoka statue, others commissioned similar statues. I believe that since the legend associated with this icon, as well as the stories of the other three icons, was collected in *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, it must have been circulated widely among early Tang Buddhists in Luoyang. Thus, when they sponsored or saw them in a cave-shrine like Wanfo Grotto, they were well prepared to recognize the icons and knowledgeable of the miraculous responses the icons were capable of.

³²⁶ Daoxuan, *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, vol. 52, 0414a26–c18.

³²⁷ Zhang Chengyu and his co-authors inform that inscription no. 1574 in *Tiji* mistook *Ayuwang* 阿育王 for *Youtianwang* 優填王. Zhang Chengyu, Zhang Naizhu, and Zhang Chengdai, “Lüe lun Longmen shiku xin faxian de Ayuwang zaoxiang,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 66 (2000), no. 4: 21.

³²⁸ Wang Jianping and Lei Yuhua, “Ayuwang de chubu kaocha,” *Xinan minzu daxue xuebao* 193 (2007), no. 9: 68–69.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that Wanfo Grotto was a functional space where repentance rituals were conducted to prepare the participants for higher spiritual attainment or worldly benefits. In my interpretation, the design of Wanfo Grotto was an unprecedented experiment which utilized well-established pictorial modules at Longmen and creatively combined them into one space. Inside this new space, chanting Buddha names for repentance and creating ties with the divinity to trigger divine response were the two primary goals of ritual performance. Over one decade later, when Leigutai Central Grotto was constructed in the Eastern Hills, as will be discussed in the next chapter, not only did its interior design created a more cohesive space, but it also used moveable elements to accommodate emerging new ritual methods that focus on the use of dhāraṇīs.

Chapter 4: Modular Constructions for Repentance and Visualization: Leigutai Central Grotto

4.1. Introduction

Tang visitors who walked from the western side of the River Yi to the eastern bank would find themselves in a different environment. The half-exposed, densely packed cave-shrines on the western cliffs vary in scale and style, since they were built over several centuries, from the Wei to the Tang periods. However, when they reached the Eastern Hills, all the cave-shrines were either brand new or incomplete, built between the last decade of the seventh century and the first half of the eighth century. The majority were more distanced from the riverfront than those on the western side. In the humid summer of Luoyang, climbing up to visit these shrines in the Eastern Hills required considerable determination and perseverance. At the northern end of the eastern bank are three large-scale cave-shrines of similar scale, nowadays known as the Grotto of Four Geese (*Siyān dong* 四雁洞) and Paired Lotus Grottoes (*Erlianhua dong* 二蓮花洞). Next to them is the half-completed Sutra-Reading Grotto (*Kanjingsi dong* 看经寺洞), the largest cave-shrine on the entire site. Further south is the “Ten Thousand Buddha Valley” (*Wanfogou* 萬佛沟), in which countless small niches were excavated next to the arduous pass on the hill. On the southmost end of the eastern bank is the focus of this chapter, Leigutai Central Grotto (*Leigutai zhong dong* 擂鼓台中洞, hereafter, LGT Central, Fig. 4.1), on what is now known as “Drum-Beating Terrace” (*Leigutai* 擂鼓台). The grotto was numbered as Cave 2055 prior to the 2005 excavation and relabeled as Leigutai Cave 4 afterward.

This chapter argues that the interior of LGT Central was designed as a multipurpose space that could accommodate both earlier repentance rituals that highlight chanting Buddha names and the emerging esoteric ritual of *dhāraṇī* chanting. I show that while Wanfo Grotto (Fig.

3.1) on the western side is an early experiment to combine several iconographic modules into a semantically meaningful entity, LGT Central is a successful example wherein the same modules were combined to create a cohesive visual space. Inside, the visitors experienced the space in its entirety. Not only is the iconographic combination cognitively comprehensible, but the visual distinctions among each module are also diminished. In both types of ritual performance, the stone visual programs guided participants to visualize the legendary patriarchs as their companions and the myriad Buddhas who responded to their prayers.

This chapter also aims to demonstrate how repentance is connected to visualization practices. Studies show that repentance is a common constituent of other Buddhist practices such as meditation and visualization. For example, Eric Greene’s research on meditation theories and practices from the fifth to the seventh century shows that repentance was both a practical and a theological prerequisite for any mental cultivation. Moreover, when “meditative imagination(s)” (*xiang* 想) brought about visions, such visions were interpreted as confirmations of the level of one’s mental achievement, or indications that one needs to conduct further repentance.³²⁹ In this chapter, I compare the spatial design of LGT Central with that of Wanfo Grotto to show that the two cave-shrines employ the same group of modular elements but organize them differently in the space; the cohesive spatial design in LGT Central was developed and modified from the earlier Wanfo Grotto. The varying spatial configurations were partly a result of different patronage patterns: Wanfo Grotto has multiple groups of patrons whereas the lack of dedicatory

³²⁹ Eric Greene, *Chan Before Chan: Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience in Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2021), 161 and 58. Greene also argues that the confirmatory visions, at least in the fifth-century scripture *The Five Gates* (T. 619), are not equal to visualizations of prescribed images. In most cases, students of meditation reported unexpected visions. In the few cases where the meditation master instructed students to “visualize” an image, unanticipated transformations usually took place to the prescribed image. For example, when a student was instructed to contemplate the navel of a buddha, one saw “light emerging from the buddha’s navel.” See p. 79–80.

inscription suggests LGT Central was commissioned by one unified group or one single patron. However, a comparison between the two caves also conveys a process through which patrons and sculptors at Longmen reorganized the cave-shrines space to generate different meanings. As a result of the spatial modification, LGT Central conveys an emphasis on visualization and visions that accommodate both the established rituals of repentance and the emerging esoteric ritual traditions. I argue that the cohesive space design of LGT Central adapted to the ever-changing repentance and visualization practices among the Buddhists of the seventh and eighth centuries.

4.2. Date

Constructed in the early years of Wu Zhao's 武曌 (r. 690–705) reign, Leigutai was probably the site of the earliest constructions in the Eastern Hills. On the two sides of LGT Central are Leigutai South Grotto (*Leigutai nandong* 擂鼓台南洞, LGT South, hereafter) and Leigutai North Grotto (*Leigutai beidong* 擂鼓台北洞, LGT North, hereafter) (Fig. 4.2).³³⁰ Since the north wall of LGT Central warps inward, making space for the south wall of LGT North, the latter grotto must have been constructed earlier.³³¹ Judging from the exterior of LGT Central and LGT South, researchers from Longmen Research Academy believe that the main room of LGT Central was excavated earlier than LGT South, and yet its exterior façade was only finished after the façade of LGT South was completed.³³² The inscriptions inside LGT Central suggest it was excavated between 689 and 695, because they make use of the characters invented by Empress Wu, in particular, the special characters for *yue* 月 and *guo* 國. The one used for *yue* 月 was

³³⁰ In the new numbering system after the archaeological excavation of the Eastern Hills, Leigutai South is LGT Cave 3, Leigutai Central becomes LGT Cave 4, and Leigutai North is LGT Cave 5.

³³¹ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, 128.

³³² *Ibid.*, 102.

coined in 689 but abandoned in 695. The special character for *guo* 國 first appeared in 695 but was quickly out of use.³³³ This hypothesis is further supported by an added niche outside its antechamber which bears an inscription dated to 699.³³⁴ Thus both LGT Central and LGT South were dated to the time between 689 and 695. Overall, LGT North was probably excavated first, followed by LGT Central and LGT South. All other dated grottoes in the Eastern Hills are later than 695.

4.3. Patronage

The recent archaeological discoveries suggest the patronage of elite monks from Luoyang. A fragment was discovered in 2008 which probably belongs to the stele that once stood to the right of LGT Central. It is inscribed with *Taiping si seng* 太平寺僧 “monks from Taiping Monastery.”³³⁵ *Tongdian* 通典, a historical document from the ninth century, records that Wu Zhao’s daughter, Taiping Princess 太平公主 (665–713), established a Taiping Shrine 太平觀.³³⁶ *Henan zhi* 河南志, a Song (960–1276) or Yuan (1271–1368) geographic text claims that the Taiping Monastery in Luoyang was established by Taiping Princess in 686.³³⁷ As a result, Li Chongfeng from Beijing University argues that LGT Central was collectively commissioned by monks from Taiping Monastery.³³⁸ From a stele found in 1941 in Yishi 猗氏 (in present Linyi 臨

³³³ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan, and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo, eds., vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe; Longmen shuju, 2018), 105–106. Citing Wang San-Ching, “Lun Wuhou xinzi de chuangzhi yu xingfei: jianlun wenzi de zhengsu wenti 論武后新字的創製與興廢——兼論文字的正俗問題” *Chengda zhongwen xuebao* 成大中文學報 (2005), no. 13: 95–120. And Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Henan sheng Luoyang diqu wenguanchu, *Qian tang zhi zhai cang zhi* 千唐志齋藏志 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989).

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 105–106.

³³⁵ Li, “Yinyan jieyou yu lingyan gouyu,” p. 47, note 1.

³³⁶ Du You 杜佑 (735–812), *Tongdian*, vol. 7, *Shihuo qi: lidai shengshuang hukou* (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1963), p. 40c.

³³⁷ Xu Song 徐松 (1781–1848), ed., *Henan zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994).

³³⁸ Li Chongfeng, “Yinyan jieyou yu lingyan gouyu: Zhongyin shikusi waiguan chutai,” in *Shikusi yanjiu* 8 (2018): 1–52.

猗, Shanxi), titled “Stele for the Multi-Story Maitreya Pavilion of the Dayun Monastery”

(Dayunsi Mile chongge bei 大雲寺彌勒重閣碑), Chen Jinhua noticed the monk in charge of constructing the Maitreya Pavilion was the Rector (shangzuo 上座) from Taiping Monastery in Luoyang, named Yitong 義通 (d. after 691).³³⁹ Chen convincingly argued that this Maitreya Pagoda was a part of the propaganda effort to depict Wu Zhao as the Maitreya reincarnate.³⁴⁰ Therefore, this stele not only confirms that a Taiping Monastery was indeed established in Luoyang, but it also suggests that monks from this monastery were involved in other Buddhist building projects that helped with Wu Zhao’s political propaganda.

The inscribed scriptures inside LGT Central also indicate the involvement of monks who were closely connected to the imperial family. The friezes on the west wall, flanking the exit, are inscribed with texts from five sutras (Figs. 4.3–4). Among these texts, *Dhāraṇī of the Six Gates* (*Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī* 六門陀羅尼經, T 1360), translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), was known to be endorsed by Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (628–683). In a memorial submitted to the throne in 648, Xuanzang twice mentioned that Emperor Gaozong personally copied *Ṣaṇmukhī-*

³³⁹ The Maitreya Pavilion was built in a monastery in Yishi, which was originally named Renshou Monastery (Renshou 仁壽寺), renamed as Dayun Monastery (Dayunsi 大雲寺) in January of 691, and again changed to Renshou Monastery in December of the same year. The stele is now in Shanxi Provincial Museum. See Jinhua Chen, “Śarīra and Scepter. Empress Wu’s Political Use of Buddhist Relics,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25 (2002), nos. 1-2: 63-64, 66. Although the stele was discovered in 1941, its inscription had been recorded in Hu Pinzhi 胡聘之 (1840–1912), vol. 5 of *Shanyou shike congbian* 山右石刻叢編, 40 vols., first print 1901, The inscription is also reproduced in Wu Gang ed., *Quan Tangwen buyi* 全唐文補遺, vol. 7 (Xi’an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1999), p. 15-16. Also, see Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Hibino Takeo 日比野丈夫, *Sansai koseki-shi* 山西古蹟志 (Kyoto: Nakamura insatsu kabushiki gaisha, 1956), pp. 153-54; and Cui Ya’nan, “‘Dayunsi Mile chongge bei’ yanjiu,” *Meishu xuebao* (2018), no. 1: 63-73.

³⁴⁰ Chen Jinhua also noticed that the octagonal pagoda dedicated to Divākara at Xiangshan Monastery of Longmen was also called “chongge” by Fazang, suggesting that this pagoda was the same type of structure as the Maitreya Pagoda. Chen, “Śarīra and Scepter,” 69.

dhāraṇī and some other scriptures.³⁴¹ In addition, the *Heart Sutra* (*Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra* 摩訶般若波羅蜜多心經, T 251) translated by Xuanzang was also carved in LGT Central. In a memorial that celebrated the hundredth day of the birth of Prince Zhou, Li Xian 李顯 (656–710, ruled as Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 in 683–684, 705–710), Xuanzang presented several gifts, including a volume of the *Heart Sutra*.³⁴²

Moreover, the inscribed texts include *Scripture of the Superlative Dhāraṇī of the Buddha's Crown* (*Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經, T 967), allegedly translated by the Northern Indian monk Buddhapāla (also known as Buddhapālita, active 670s–680s). The accessibility to this text seemed to be limited outside the imperial court at the time of LGT Central's dedication. Buddhapāla was said to have brought the Sanskrit manuscript of this *dhāraṇī* text to Emperor Gaozong who ordered Du Xingyi 杜行顓 (active 676–679) and Divākara (613–687) to translate it into Chinese. The date of the introduction is a topic of debate, but the first translation was probably finished in 679, followed by four or six subsequent versions by Buddhapāla, Divākara, and Yijing 義淨 (635–713).³⁴³ The authorship of the Buddhapāla version is also problematic. According to the preface written by monk Zhijing 志靜 (active 687–689) to the translation attributed to Buddhapāla, Du and Divākara's version was finished in 683, after which Emperor Gaozong forbade the return of the Sanskrit original. Buddhapāla had to plead with the emperor to allow the scripture to circulate. After Gaozong finally returned the Sanskrit

³⁴¹ *Si shamen Xuanzang shangbiao ji* 寺沙門玄奘上表記, T 2119, vol. 52, 0820c10–0820c14. I learned of this source from Pietro De Laurentis, *Protecting the Dharma through Calligraphy in Tang China: A Study of the Ji Wang shengjiao xu* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 134.

³⁴² T 2119, vol. 52, 0825a16–17.

³⁴³ For the date of the first translation, see Li Shu, “Xinjian shengli ernian foshuo foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing chuang de wenxian jiazhi,” *Wenxian* (2017), no. 5: 74. While Li believes there are only five translations of the text, Shu-fen Liu lists eight versions. See Shu-fen Liu, *Miezui yu duwang: Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing chuang zhi yanjiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 12.

original, Buddhapāla found help from the Chinese monk Shunzhen 順貞 (active 683–689) to translate it again.³⁴⁴ According to this preface, Gaozong also summoned monks to help with Buddhapāla and Shunzhen’s work, and thus Buddhapāla’s translation should have been initiated prior to the death of Gaozong in 683. However, both Antonino Forte and Chen Jinhua argue that the Northern India monk named Buddhapāla left China in or shortly after 677, and thus the entire chronology in the preface seems to be fabricated.³⁴⁵ Regardless of the authorship, the version attributed to Buddhapāla was not widely known until 730, when it was included in Zhisheng’s 智昇 (active 730s) catalogue Record of the Buddhist Teachings compiled in the Kaiyuan Era (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄).³⁴⁶ Therefore, by the time Buddhapāla’s translation was transcribed on the wall of LGT Central, sometime between 689 and 695, the text had only been produced for about a decade and had not yet been in popular circulation beyond its immediate circle.

In addition to the monastic circle close to the imperial family, members from Wu Zhao’s maternal family may also have been involved. At the northern end of Leigutai platform is a two-tiered shrine, Grotto no. 2093/Cave 6. The upper tier has an intrusive shrine dated to 692 and thus must be excavated before 692, and the lower level was dug afterwards, possibly together with LGT Central.³⁴⁷ In the antechamber of the upper shrine, there is one dedication of Buddha Amitabha by a woman who called herself Xiangli Po 相里婆 (date unknown).³⁴⁸ This woman

³⁴⁴ T 0967, vol. 19, 0349b03–c19.

³⁴⁵ Chen Jinhua, “Śarīra and Scepter: Empress Wu’s Political Use of Buddhist Relics,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25 (2002):109. Antonino Forte, “The Preface to the So-Called Buddhapālita Chinese Version of the Buddhosnīna Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra,” unpublished manuscript, as cited in Copp, *The Body Incantatory: Spells and the Ritual Imagination in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 162, note 54.

³⁴⁶ Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 162.

³⁴⁷ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan et al., eds., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, vol. 1, p. 172.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.

may belong to the same Xiangli family of Wu Shiyue's 武士獲 (559–635) first wife, who gave birth to Wu Yuanshuang 武元爽 (?–666) and Wu Yuanqing 武元慶 (date unknown).³⁴⁹ Both the brothers were sent to exile by Wu Zhao because they were rude to Wu Zhao's birth mother, née Yang 楊氏, and yet their sons, Wu Chengsi 武承嗣 (649–698) and Wu Sansi 武三思 (?–707), still attained significant political power during Wu Zhao's reign.³⁵⁰

Three more intrusive niches (Cave 2071/Cave 5-23, Cave 2074/Cave 5-13, and Cave 2076/Cave 5-6, Figs. 4.5–7) to the north of Leigutai Central suggest that the patrons of Leigutai Grottoes were related to the imperial family. Dedicated in the year 701, they all listed the heir apparent as a beneficiary of the merits, in addition to the emperor, princes, masters, monks, parents, and the ancestors of seven reincarnations.³⁵¹ During the reign of Wu Zhao, who would be the heir apparent was always an issue of violent competition. In 691, only one year after Wu Zhao's enthronement, a group of Luoyang officials petitioned to establish her nephew, Wu Chengsi, as the heir apparent. Wu Zhao did not grant this request. Accordingly, it was because Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (630–700) advised that no nephew would present sacrifice to the aunt in the ancestral temple.³⁵² In 693, a group of court officials visited Li Dan 李旦 (662–716, ruled as Emperor Ruizong 睿宗 in 684–690, and 710–712) in private, which caused Wu Zhao's suspicion of their loyalty. At last, one of the officials, An Jinzang 安金藏 (?–711) who would later bury his

³⁴⁹ The family name 相里 is documented in Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162), *Tongzhi* 通志, vol. 28 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, 1987), 469-2. “相里氏，咎繇之，後為理氏。商末理微，孫仲師。遭難，去王為里，至晉大夫里克，為惠公所戮，克妻司城氏，攜少子季連逃居相城，因為相里氏。季連元孫勤見，莊子韓子云：相里子，古賢人也。著書七篇。漢有河隄謁者，相里平又持書御史，相里虎濟陰太守，相里祉始居西河，前趙錄偏將軍相里覽，梁有相里，係孫本仕，索虜東平王侍郎大通二年歸化。

³⁵⁰ Liu Xu 刘昫 (887–946) et al., “Wu Chengsi 武承嗣,” in *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, vol. 183, 4727-4728.

³⁵¹ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al. eds. *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, vol. 1, pp. 139, 144, 155.

³⁵² Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, pp. 6474–6475.

father An Pu(sa) 安菩(薩) (601–664) and mother Lady He 何 (622–704) east of Jingshan Monastery at Longmen in 705, stabbed his own chest to testify that Li Dan was not plotting a revolt.³⁵³ In 698, Wu Zhao finally decided on Li Xian and sheltered him temporarily at Longmen before the announcement of his selection was made at court.³⁵⁴ Yet the tension between the Li and the Wu was so serious that in 699, Wu Zhao had the newly appointed heir apparent change his surname to Wu, and she ordered his two sons and Taiping Princess to establish a vow with members of the Wu family.³⁵⁵ Even so, in 700, the princes of Wu family was still able to banish the Prime Minister Ji Xu 吉瓊 (active 690s) for his support to the heir apparent.³⁵⁶ In this context, the three inscriptions at Longmen not only dedicated merits to the heir apparent Li Xian, but also picked a side. If the dedications would not bring any political benefits to their patrons, these patrons probably did not have to take the risk.

4.4. Modular Construction Adapted for New Practices

The pairing of LGT Central and LGT South (Fig. 4.8) seems to offer spacious room to accommodate the compressed modular compound from Wanfo Grotto. In LGT Central, the thousand-Buddha motifs seamlessly fill all the wall and ceiling space unoccupied by pictorial programs (Fig. 4.9). The high-relief bodhisattvas that are connected via lotus vines, as seen in the program of Amitabha and the Fifty-Two bodhisattvas in Wanfo Grotto, are reproduced in LGT South, where they are neatly aligned to occupy the entirety of the wall space (Fig. 4.10). The

³⁵³ Ibid., vol. 7, p. 6490.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., vol. 7, p. 6528.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., vol. 7, p. 6540.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., vol. 7, p. 6544.

repeating appearance of the two motifs suggest that there was a repertoire of modular designs known to and transmitted among Longmen stonemasons.³⁵⁷

While LGT Central is designed with the same visual programs from Wanfo Grotto, the spatial design of the former accommodated new emerging ritual practices that were later identified as the “esoteric” practices. In the written history of esoteric Buddhism in China, the end of the seventh century is considered a transitional period. In modern Japanese scholarship, this period witnessed the transition from the so-called “miscellaneous” Esotericism to “pure” Esotericism, the latter of which was marked by the translations of several key sutras by Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏, 637–735), Vajrabodhi (Jin’gangzhi, 金剛智 669–741), and Amoghavajra (Bukong Jingang 不空金剛, 705–774).³⁵⁸ Longmen has always been part of this history of esoteric Buddhism in China, because both Śubhakarasiṃha and Vajrabodhi were buried on its monastic grounds.³⁵⁹ In studies of esoteric rituals, scholars believe that although the so-called Esoteric Buddhism did not take form until the tenth century, a distinctive ritual tradition—later recognized as esoteric—took shape in the sixth and seventh centuries.³⁶⁰ The formation of this esoteric ritual tradition encompasses the process in which mental visualization is introduced and instituted as a necessary constituent. In the earlier iteration of esoteric ritual, spells or dhāraṇī were repeatedly chanted, and a tangible image functioned to produce miracles that confirm the success of the ritual and inform the subsequent mental visions among

³⁵⁷ In 1985, Li Wensheng reported four fragmented statues of Udayana’s Śākyamuni inside LGT Central, and yet they are not seen today. There does not seem to be any available wall space for the statues either. I speculate they might be freestanding statues that are still in the collection of Longmen Research Academy. See “Woguo shiku zhong de Youtianwang zaoxiang,” *Zhongyuan wenwu*, 104.

³⁵⁸ The terms of “miscellaneous” Esotericism and “pure” Esotericism were not used in Chinese canon but used in Japanese Shingon Buddhism, probably as late as the Edo period (1603–1867). See Charles D. Orzech, “The ‘Great Teaching of Yoga,’ the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 34 (2006): 32–33.

³⁵⁹ *Tiji*, v. 1, p. 44.

³⁶⁰ Shinohara Koichi, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas: Tracing the Evolution of Esoteric Buddhist Rituals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), xi–xii, xviii. Wang, *Mandalas in the Making*, 17.

participants. However, in what is considered a more developed and thus distinctive esoteric ritual tradition, the so-called maṇḍala ceremonies in a demarcated altar space, mental visualizations served to aid the participant to identify oneself with the evoked deity.³⁶¹ I will show that the unconventional plan of LGT Central provides a rare example of the conflated ritual use of space in a transitional period, during which visual programs were carved to guide visualization and a demarcated altar space was introduced. I argue that LGT Central was designed to accommodate both traditional repentance practice centered on chanting Buddha names and the new emerging esoteric practice of dhāraṇī chanting.

4.5. 15,000 Buddhas

LGT Central consists of a shallow antechamber, a short doorway, and a main room. The antechamber, partially collapsed, measures 533 cm in height and 589 cm in width. Approximately 70 cm of its south wall and 40 cm of the north wall remain, covered by small seated Buddhas dressed in plain monastic robes.³⁶² The same motif extends to the main (east) wall of the antechamber, the 85-cm deep doorway, and the façade outside the antechamber (Fig. 4.11). A dvārapāla, or guardian deity, stands to the right (south) of the entrance, and a ruined stele with a turtle base is still visible in front of the exterior façade. Above the entrance to the main room is a flattened square surface, inscribed with the grotto's original title: *dawan wuqian fokan* 大萬伍仟佛龕 “The Great Fifteen Thousand Buddhas Shrine.” But the last two characters in the second column, *fokan* 佛龕, are difficult to read now (Figs 4.12–13).

³⁶¹ In this developed form of esoteric ritual, the function of tangible images became a topic of debate. See Shinohara, *Spells, Images, and Mandalas*, xv–xvii; Charles D. Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism in the Tang: From Atikūta to Amoghavajra (651–780),” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, Charles Orzech and Henrik Sørensen, Richard Payne, eds, 263–285 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 264. Michelle Wang, “Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China: Ritual and the Role of Images,” *Material Religion* 9 (2013), no. 2: 186–217.

³⁶² Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, 67.

The main chamber of LGT Central measures 580 cm high, 643 cm wide, and 648 cm deep, making it the second largest cave-shrine. Virtually every inch of the wall surface among the inscriptions and the main altar is covered, with 1,060 reliefs remaining on the east wall, 2,006 on the south wall, 2,159 on the north wall, 932 on the west wall, and 4,316 on the ceiling. Additionally, beneath the throne of the main Buddha, three rows of 164 seated Buddhas separate the altar from the bottom register, which spans the four walls.³⁶³ In total, 10,637 seated Buddhas still remain inside LGT Central. With the extant 919 Buddhas in the antechamber, the entire number adds up to 11,556. It is highly possible that the original program indeed included 15,000 reliefs, as is proclaimed in the stone plaque above the entrance.³⁶⁴

What sets the program of 15,000 Buddhas in LGT Central apart from the one in Wanfo Grotto is the addition of the Buddhas of the ten directions. The main room has a dome that is supported over the square space through four pendentives. On the ceiling, a lotus flower crowns the center, surrounded by six rotating incised characters that reads *shangfang yiqie zhufu*, 上方壹切諸佛, “all Buddhas from the upper country.”³⁶⁵ (Figs. 4.14–15) Each character is incised in a planed square, among which images of asparas, a flying stupa, musical instruments, clouds, and birds alternate. On the four pendentives and the north, east, and south walls, there are seven square plaques that signify “all Buddhas of the ten countries.”³⁶⁶

³⁶³ Ibid., 75–76, 81–83.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 67–68.

³⁶⁵ According to Gu Yanfang, Li Wensheng, and Zhang Naizhu, in both LGT Central and LGT South, there is a place in the center of the lotus for hanging a lamp. See Gu Yanfang and Li Wensheng, “Longmen shiku zhuyao Tang ku zongxu,” in *Zhongguo shiku: Longmen shiku II*, eds., Longmen wenwu baoguan suo and Beijing daxue kaogu xi, 254–274 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), 273; Zhang Naizhu, “Longmen Leigutai sanku kaocha baogao,” *Luoyang daxue xuebao* 10 (1995), no. 3: 54.

³⁶⁶ Each plaque is carved with one inscription. On the north wall: *beifang yiqie zhufu*, 北方壹切諸佛; on the south wall: *nanfang yiqie zhufu*, 南方壹切諸佛; on the east wall, above the Buddha’s halo: *dongfang yiqie zhufu*, 東方壹切諸佛; between the north and west walls: *xibeifang yiqie fo*, 西北方壹切佛; between the south and west walls: *xinanfang yiqie fo*, 西南方壹切佛; between the north and east walls: *dongbeifang yiqie fo*, 東北方壹切佛; between the south and east walls: *dongnanfang yiqie fo*, 東南方壹切佛.

Previous scholarship has noticed the connection between 15,000 Buddhas and repentance rituals. In addition to the scholarship cited for Wanfo Grotto, new research focuses on LGT Central in specific. In 2012, Jiao Jianhui advances the argument by speculating that Wu Zhao, out of her personal remorse, ordered monks to excavate LGT Central for repentance rituals that would legitimize her political power. He believes that Wu Zhao was personally concerned with her sins from the many political coups, and as a result she also conducted a Daoist repentance ritual, as evidenced by a golden plaque discovered in 1982 on top of Mt. Song (Fig. 4.16).³⁶⁷ Yet according to the historian Wang Yucheng, placing the plaque on mountaintop is a common constituent of the Daoist rituals that communicate with the deities in charge of the sky, earth, and water. The repentance element on the plaque, reading “eliminating the sins of Wu Zhao,” was aimed instead to prolong life for Wu Zhao.³⁶⁸

I argue that the added program of Buddhas of ten directions suggests the use of LGT Central for individual confessions and collective performance of repentance ritual. Buddhas of ten directions are common motifs in Mahayana scriptures and manuals of repentance rituals, such as *The Repentance Ritual in the Altar of Compassion* (*Cibei daochang chanfa* 慈悲道場懺法, T 1909), *The Sutra on the Ocean-Like Samadhi of the Visualization of Expounded by the Buddha* (*Foshuo sanmei hai jing* 佛說三昧海經, T 15), and *Buddha-Name Scripture as Expounded by the Buddha* (*Foshuo Foming jing* 佛說佛名經, T 440). Among them, *Foshuo foming jing* elaborates on the relation between a vision of the Buddhas of the ten directions and repentance rites and rituals, reading

³⁶⁷ Jiao, “Longmen dongshan Leigutai qu di 4 ku xiangguan wenti tantao,” 212–223. A photo reproduction of the golden plaque and the translation of the inscription are in James C. Y Watt and Prudence Oliver Harper, eds., *China: Dawn of a Golden Age, 200–750 AD* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 297.

³⁶⁸ Wang Yucheng, “Kaogu suojian daojiang jian du kaoshu,” *Kaogu xuebao* (2003), no. 4: 501–503.

[After conducting repentance,] when one obtained a purified [mind], there would be manifestations of signs. In samādhi, as if in dreams, [one] sees Buddhas of ten countries assuring one's future to Buddhahood, or bodhisattvas assuring one's future to Buddhahood; [both foretell that they] would arrive at the place of enlightenment as [one's] companion. Or [one sees the Buddha] laying the hand on one's head to show the sign that sins are eliminated. Or [one sees] oneself in a grand assembly, sitting in the crowd. Or [one] sees oneself lecturing on the Dharma to the crowd. Or [one] sees various masters and purified śramaṇa who would visit the place of enlightenment to view various Buddhas. "Śāriputra," [Śākyamuni said,] "if a bhikṣu sees such signs during his repentance, [one] should know that this person's sins have been eliminated, and the insincere mind has been removed."

是人得清淨時當有相現，若於覺中、若於夢中，見十方諸佛與其記別，或見菩薩與其記別，將詣道場共為己伴；或與摩頂示滅罪相；或自見身入大會中，處在眾次；或自見身處眾說法；或見諸師淨行沙門，將詣道場示其諸佛。“舍利弗！若比丘懺悔罪時，若見如是相者，當知是人罪垢得滅，除不至心。”³⁶⁹

The scripture lists over 11,000 names for chanting, and yet the Buddhas of the ten directions are highlighted for visualization. A sight of them is a confirmation that one's repentance was successful. In addition to a view of the Buddhas of the ten directions, other confirmative visions from *Foshuo foming jing* are also manifest in LGT Central, namely the Maitreya Buddha and purified Buddhist masters.

4.6. Triad on the Main (East) Wall

Inside LGT Central, a narrow long altar is carved from its back (east) wall, where one finds a seated Buddha with two legs pendant and two flanking standing bodhisattvas (Fig. 4.9). The Buddha's left hand touches the knee, but the right hand and the right knee are ruined. Since the broken arm is connected to the lap, it might have shown the varada mudra (wish-granting). The Buddha figure is dressed in a monastic robe that covers both shoulders. Incised concentric lines delineate stylized folds on the chest and between legs. To the sides, two flanking bodhisattvas stand on a lotus flower that stems from behind the Buddha's throne. The

³⁶⁹ T 0440, vol. 14, 0159a05–a12.

bodhisattva to the south has the right arm raised, but the hand is damaged; his left hand holds a long-neck bottle. The northern bodhisattva raises a vase with willowy leaves inside, but his right hand, hanging loosely by the side, is also damaged.³⁷⁰

The head of the Buddha, now in the collection of Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, employs a signature design of Longmen: instead of forming the common snail shell curls, strands of hair are braided into three circular seashells, two on the forehead and one on the *uṣṇīṣa* (Fig. 4.17). Additionally, the halo shows a circular lotus flower and seven seated Buddhas. The same style of the *uṣṇīṣa* and the iconography of seven Buddhas in halo are also seen in the Buddhas of many early-Tang cave-shrines at Longmen, including the Great Vairocana Image Shrine (Fig. 4.18), Wanfo Grotto (Fig. 3.1), Huijian Grotto (Cave 565, Fig. 4.19), Qianxisi Grotto (Cave 20, Fig. 4.20), the North Grotto of the Paired Grottoes (Fig. 4.21), among others.

The throne of the Buddha is the same type commonly seen in statues of King Udayana's Śākyamuni. It has a back screen which is square and latticed at the bottom and triangular at the top (Fig. 4.22). Both sides of the back screen are decorated with a makara beast with an elephant's trunk, a leonine creature *vyālaka* with a rider, and a lion with a rider. Incised next to the halo are two disks, symbolizing the sun and the moon, and horizontal lines that are likely references to landscape elements.³⁷¹ Seven flying asparases in two lines plummet down from the top of the triangle, echoing the scalloped frame. The same throne is also seen in Huijian Grotto,

³⁷⁰ Several statues at Longmen self-identify as *jiuku guanyin* 救苦觀音, or "Save-from suffering Guanyin," which show a single bodhisattva holding both the willow branch and the bottle. The two bodhisattvas in LGT Central probably split the two attributes of *jiuku guanyin*. McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 130; Chün-fang Yü, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 537, n. 15. Sofukawa argues that although the two bodhisattvas in LGT Central share the attributes of Guanyin, they cannot suggest the main Buddha as Amitabha. The entire environment of the grotto, as I discuss next, makes it impossible to have Buddha Amitabh as the central deity. Sofukawa, "Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoxiang de yanjiu: xiapian," 113-114.

³⁷¹ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 127.

behind an identified Maitreya statue dated to 673, as well as in Cave nos. 1807, 1931, 2003, and 2223.³⁷²

The identity of the main Buddha in LGT Central is a topic of minor debate, but I believe it represents Buddha Maitreya. Gong Dazhong, Wen Yucheng, and Sofukawa Hiroshi agree with the Maitreya identification because the throne back and posture of the Buddha in LGT Central are similar to the main Buddha in Huijian Grotto (Fig. 4.23). In the latter grotto, the dedicatory inscription explicitly identifies the statue as Maitreya.³⁷³ To my knowledge, Yuan Deling from Dunhuang Research Institute is the only one who holds a different opinion. He believes the main Buddha is Śākyamuni and his strongest support is the inscribed scripture and the patriarch procession inside LGT Central from the *Tradition of the Causes and Conditions of the Dharma-Treasury Transmission* (*Fu fazang yinyuan zhuan* 付法藏因緣傳, hereafter *Dharma-Treasury Transmission*), in which, as I will discuss later, Śākyamuni was the beginning of a long lineage of transmission.³⁷⁴ However, as Kuno Miki shows, the same seated posture with pendant legs is consistent among all extant early Tang Maitreya statues at Longmen that are identified by inscriptions.³⁷⁵ Additionally, according to a survey conducted by Henan Museum in 2003, at least four stone steles discovered in Henan area, dated to the Northern Qi period (550–577), show the same pendant-legged figure with bodhisattvas' accoutrements and their inscriptions explicitly identify the statue as Maitreya (Figs. 4.24–27). Researchers at Henan Museum believe that the popular iconography of Maitreya in Henan area experienced a shift from the cross-legged bodhisattva in the Northern Wei, to pendant-legged bodhisattva in the Northern Qi, and to

³⁷² Jiao Jianhui, "Longmen dongshan Leigutai qu di 4 ku xiangguan wenti tantao," 215.

³⁷³ Wen Yucheng, "Shilun Wu Zetian yu Longmen shiku," *Dunhuang xue jikan* 15 (1989), no. 1: 119–127; Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), 161. Sofukawa, "Tangdai Longmen shiku zaoxiang de yanjiu: xiapian," 113.

³⁷⁴ Yuan Deling, "Longmen shiku Leigutai zhongdong zhi yanjiu," *Dunhuang yanjiu* 80 (2003), no. 4: 28.

³⁷⁵ Kuno, Tōdai Ryūmon Sekkutsu no kenkyū, 136–156

the pendant-legged Buddha in the Tang.³⁷⁶ Therefore, the pendant-legged Buddha in LGT Central is highly likely to be a Buddha Maitreya.

On the motivation for the selection of Maitreya as the main icon in LGT Central, a speculation is related to the political propaganda of Wu Zhao. Jiao Jianhui, for example, argues the statue of Maitreya was part of the propaganda program to justify Wu Zhao's rulership as a woman. The Buddhist propaganda centering on Maitreya starts with the *Commentary on Great Cloud Sutra* (*Dayun jing shu* 大雲經疏) in 689 by monk Huaiyi 懷義 (fl. 686–695), which claims Wu Zhao to be a reincarnate of Maitreya.³⁷⁷ The subsequent propaganda campaign culminated in late 694, when Wu Zhao added Maitreya to her title. However, she quickly abandoned the title a few months later. The allure of this interpretation is that the time span of LGT Central construction, from 689 to 695, coincides with Wu's Maitreya-focused propaganda. In addition, since the patrons of LGT Central may well be connected Wu Zhao's maternal family, it is tempting to speculate on the political motivation behind the construction of LGT Central. However, no direct evidence can support the speculation. More importantly, Maitreya was a common subject at Longmen before Wu's ascension to power, among donors whose life did not encompass with Wu Zhao.³⁷⁸

Considering the iconographic context inside LGT Central, as well as the overall repentance associations in Longmen's early-Tang cave-shrines, I argue that the Maitreya statue served the needs of repentance rituals. Maitreya was incorporated in numerous liturgical manuals in the seventh and eighth centuries, as the object of visions, the object of obeisance, and as the

³⁷⁶ Wang Jingquan, ed., *Henan fojiao shike zaixiang* 河南佛教石刻造像 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2009), Fig. 16, p. 244–249; Fig. 18, p. 254–259; Fig. 25, p. 289–293; Fig. 28, p. 305–309. Yet Fig. 3 on p. 387, dated to 583, contains a dedicatory inscription that identifies a same pendant-legged Buddha as Xiangji Buddha 香積佛.

³⁷⁷ Jiao Jianhui, "Longmen dongshan Leigutai qu di 4 ku xiangguan wenti tantao," 216.

³⁷⁸ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 129–130.

witness to the purification of one's karmic hindrance. In *Foshuo fomingjing*, the Buddha promised that those who receive, memorize, and chant the names of the thousand Buddhas of the good kalpa will surely see Maitreya and Rudita Buddha. In the good kalpa, Maitreya was the fifth Buddha and Rudita was the last Buddha.³⁷⁹ In the encyclopedic *Fayuan zhulin*, Daoshi 道世 (d. 683) cited Sutra of Contemplating Maitreya Bodhisattva's Ascension to Tuṣita Heaven (*Guan Mile pusa shangsheng doushuaitian jing* 觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經, T 452) to address the benefits of paying obeisance to Maitreya:

According to *Guan Mile pusa shangsheng doushuaitian jing*, if there is one who pays obeisance to Buddha Maitreya, the sins accumulated in saṃsāra will be eliminated. When it comes to the next rebirth, [one] will be able to meet the Buddha underneath the Dragon Flower tree.

又上生經云。若有禮敬彌勒佛者。除却百億生死之罪。乃至來世龍華樹下亦得見佛。

It is also said that after I [Śākyamuni] am extinct, if the four groups (monks, nuns, lay men, and lay women) and eightfold beings can hear the name and worship [the Maitreya Buddha], at the end of [their] lives [they] will be reborn in Tuṣita Heaven.

又云。我滅度後四眾八部聞名禮拜。命終往生兜率天中。

If there are men or women who violated various precepts and created evil karmic deeds, [if they] hear the name of the bodhisattva Great Compassion, prostrate themselves and repent with a sincere mind, all evil deeds will be quickly purified.

若有男女犯諸禁戒造眾惡業。聞是菩薩大悲名字。五體投地誠心懺悔。一切惡業速得清淨。

If someone takes refuge in Bodhisattva Maitreya, let it be known that this person attains the stage of non-regression [on the bodhisattva path]. When Maitreya attains Buddhahood and [one] sees the illumination of the Buddha, [one] will receive assurance.

若有歸依彌勒菩薩。當知是人得不退轉。彌勒成佛見佛光明即得受記。³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ 若善男子、善女人，能受持、讀誦是賢劫千佛名者，必見彌勒世尊，及見盧至，遠離諸難。T0440, vol.14, 0134a02–a03.

³⁸⁰ Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin*, T2122, vol.53, 0404b09–b16.

In this passage, Daoshi summarized from the scripture four circumstances of rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven. This paraphrase is inserted in the longer section that quotes various scriptures about the benefits of paying obeisance to Buddhas, specifically fifty-three Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, twenty-five Buddhas, and Buddha Maitreya. In all these quotations, confessing one's sins is a necessary step of worshipping the Buddhas.

Similarly, in the *Compilation of Worship and Repentance Rituals in Various Sutras* (*Ji zhujing lichan yi* 集諸經禮懺儀, T1982) compiled by Zhisheng, two liturgical texts included Maitreya as the object of obeisance and as the witness respectively. One instructs to pay obeisance to a long list of Buddhas before repentance, in which Maitreya is listed after Śākyamuni and before the Buddhas of the ten directions, 1,000 Buddhas, 1,500 Buddhas, 500 Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, fifty-three Buddhas, and the Buddhas of three time periods.³⁸¹ Another piece of liturgy included in the compilation requests that after one repented by chanting the names of 15,000 Buddhas, one would receive assurance (*shouji* 受記) in front of the seat of Maitreya as a confirmation that one's sins are eliminated.³⁸² Both these early-Tang compilations group Maitreya with twenty-five Buddhas, thirty-five Buddhas, fifty-three Buddhas, and the Buddhas of the ten directions as the object of repentance and worship. The pictorial combination of Maitreya and the 15,000 Buddhas in LGT Central seems to be a realization of the textual synthesis carried out by these monastic scholars.

4.7. Procession of Patriarchs

³⁸¹ Zhisheng, *Ji zhujing lichan yi*, T1982, vol.47, 0457b29–c15.

³⁸² 彌勒坐前分明受記。Ibid., T1982, vol.47, 0458b18

The bottom register of the main chamber shows twenty-five monks who were credited with transmitting Buddha Śākyamuni's teaching after his parinirvana (Figs. 4.28–29). The monks are carved in the continuous frieze on the north, east, and south walls, each holding something in his hand, such as a palm-leaf manuscript, a walking staff, a rosary, and a flying whisk (Fig. 4.30). Each is also accompanied with an incised inscription to one side, which are adapted excerpts from the *Dharma-Treasury Transmission*, allegedly translated by Kivkara (吉迦夜, also written as Kiṅkara, active c. 472) and Tanyao 曇曜 (active 440s–470s). But a close comparison reveals that the inscription does not follow the exact lineage outlined in other versions of the same sutra.³⁸³ More importantly, the selection of the excerpts in LGT Central only narrates the transmission of the Dharma from one to the next, and the figures' biographical accounts. Detailed stories of sermons are not included. The emphasis of the excerpt is clearly on the continuous transmission among the patriarchs.

To date, most studies have interpreted the reliefs of patriarchs in LGT Central as a propagation of the Buddhist lineage by Chinese Buddhists.³⁸⁴ However, according to *The Dharma-Treasury Transmission*, the transmission of Śākyamuni's Dharma stopped with Dharmakṣema (385–433), who was assassinated by the king Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜 (368–433). While several Buddhist schools in China built their lineage based on *the Dharma-Treasury Transmission*, claiming that their patriarchs received the Dharma from one of the twenty-five, the pictorial programs inside LGT Central made no effort to justify how the lineage was revived in China. Instead, Stuart H Young argues that the Indian patriarchs were promoted in China from the sixth to the eighth centuries as both objects of veneration and ideal models to emulate. Their

³⁸³ Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1981), 166–167.

³⁸⁴ For example, Karil Kucera, "Recontextualizing Kanjingsi: Finding Meaning in the Emptiness at Longmen," *Archives of Asian Art* 56 (2006): 61–80.

presence allowed Chinese scholar-monks to “redefine China as a center of Buddhist civilization.”³⁸⁵

Since the reliefs of patriarchs in LGT Central are part of the larger spatial plan that highlights 15,000 Buddhas, I propose to understand the image of patriarchs in relation to repentance rituals. In repentance manuals, the participation of monks is required to ensure a successful performance of repentance ritual. The passage from *Foshuo foming jing*, translated above, lists the views of Buddhas of ten directions and purified monks and masters as a confirmation that the sins have been eliminated.³⁸⁶ In a different passage, it also requires the presence of senior monks as witnesses during the performance of repentance ritual.³⁸⁷ According to the scholar of Buddhist Studies, Daniel Stevenson, the manual for the *fangdeng* rite of the contemporaneous Three Level School also required that the practitioners summoned “good spiritual friends” before conducting the confession. The “good spiritual friends” include one who would attend to the practical needs during the rite, one companion who would provide “a sympathetic heart” and guidance, and one wise instructor.³⁸⁸ It also advises that no more than ten practitioners should participate at the same time, which suggests that it was supposed to be a communal activity.³⁸⁹

I argue that the relief of the patriarchs’ procession, whilst representing the Dharma lineage, functioned to provide a visual confirmation of the success of confessional rituals that took place inside the cave. According to *The Dharma-Treasury Transmission*, the transmission of the lineage starts with Buddha Śākyamuni himself. However, in the LGT Central relief,

³⁸⁵ Stuart H Young, *Conceiving the Indian Buddhist Patriarchs in China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015), 115, 240-242.

³⁸⁶ T 0440, vol. 14, 0159a05–a12.

³⁸⁷ T 0440, vol. 14, 0159a01–a22.

³⁸⁸ Daniel Bruce Stevenson, “The t’ien-t’ai Four Forms of Samādi and late North-South Dynasties, Sui, and Early T’ang Buddhist Devotionalism,” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1987), 546–547.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 553.

instead of Śākyamuni, two smaller figures carrying a board (Fig. 4.31) precedes the first patriarch, identified by the inscription as Mahākāśyapa. Since the relief is heavily eroded, the Longmen Research Academy simply identifies them as two children, *tongzi* 童子, who are lifting a tabletop.³⁹⁰ With the added two figures, the patriarch relief in LGT Central stands in stark contrast to the often-cited Dazhusheng Cave, Baoshan, Henan, which also combines the patriarchs and repentance-related texts (Fig. 4.32). As discussed in Chapter Three, the principal monastic advisor to Dazhusheng project, Lingyu 靈裕 (518–605), carved *Abridged Liturgy on Venerating Buddhas and Repentance* (*Lüe lifo chanhui wen* 略禮佛懺悔文) inside the cave, which enumerates seven Buddhas of the past, fifty-three Buddhas, Buddhas of the ten directions, and a thousand Buddhas of the good *kalpa*.³⁹¹ While the carving at Dazhusheng Cave illustrates a similar list of twenty-four patriarchs, no irrelevant figures are included before Mahākāśyapa. Dated to 589, this early example depicts the patriarchs seated in pairs, in a simplified manner comparable to a diagram. In contrast, the Longmen example from about a century later shows the standing patriarchs in high relief, each holding an attribute and turning their heads to the side. The compositional difference suggests that the relief at Longmen depicts a procession in an event, rather than a diagram of Dharma transmission. Therefore, it should be considered in the larger pictorial program that encourages confirmative visualizations during a repentance ritual.

4.8. Inscribed Scriptures

Between the north wall and the exit is engraved an incomplete passage from *The Shorter Sukhāvataīvyūha Sutra*, translated into Chinese by Kumārajīva (344–413). Next to it are several

³⁹⁰ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, 85. Karil Kucera suggests they might be servants who are lifting a jeweled lotus, a motif that possibly symbolized the Buddha's Law in the Dazhusheng Cave relief. Karil, Kucera, "Recontextualizing Kanjingsi: Finding Meaning in the Emptiness at Longmen," *Archives of Asian Art* 56 (2006): 65–66.

³⁹¹ Luo Zhao, "Baoshan dazhusheng ku kejing zhong de beifang lichan xitong," *Shikusi yanjiu* (2010), no. 1: 164, 174.

lines from *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*, ostensibly translated by the Northern Indian monk; the main body of the text is lost with the damaged wall.³⁹² Inscribed between the south wall and the exit is *The Diamond Sutra* (*Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* 金剛般若波羅蜜經, T 236) translated by Bodhiruci in 509. The text is written from the left and its beginning section does not survive. Following the *Diamond Sutra* are complete transcriptions of two sutras translated by Xuanzang: *Ṣaṅmukhī-dhāraṇī* and the *Heart Sutra*. Among them, the three scriptures translated by Buddhapāla and Xuanzang were new texts that only became available prior to the initiation of LGT Central, and the other two were classics that were still popular in the Tang. Because of the syncretic nature of the selection, no one has suggested why these texts were grouped together in LGT Central. I will argue they are all texts for performance, among which the theme of repentance is a constant.

4.8.1. The Two Texts of Dhāraṇī

Dhāraṇīs in general were performative texts, intended to be memorized, chanted, and engaged with devotees' somatic activities. As Paul Copp's study shows, the term dhāraṇī in Chinese textual traditions has a confusing array of referents. It can refer to "mnemonic devices and textual objects used in contemplative practices, qualities (or 'adornment,' *zhuangyan*) of bodhisattvas, and even deities in their own rights, as well as important philosophical concepts." Underlying all these different referents is the sense of "grasp," including to physically "hold" something in mind or on body, and to develop the mental capacity to understand something. To "grasp" a dhāraṇī, one might start with memorizing the teachings verbatim, although memorization is not necessary for the attaining or accepting its spiritual teaching.³⁹³

³⁹² Paul Copp translates the title as the *Incantation of the Glory of the Buddha's Crown* and dedicates a chapter on its material and ritual practices. See Copp, "Dust, Shadow, and the Incantation of Glory," in 141–196 of *The Body Incantatory*, 142.

³⁹³ Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 11–14.

The entire *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* advocates that chanting the dhāraṇī will eliminate one's karmic transgressions, ensure one's escape from undesirable rebirths, and prolong life. It starts with a deva named Shanzhu 善住 who, whilst absorbed in the enjoyment of women in the Heaven of Trāyastriṃśa, learned of a prophecy that he would die in seven days, be reborn in the paths of animals and hells, and then be reborn as a poor and disabled human. The frightened Shanzhu asked King Indra for help and King Indra turned to Śākyamuni, who then taught Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī to Shanzhu. Śākyamuni explained Shanzhu's wrongdoings in a previous life and promised that a meeting with Śākyamuni will allow Shanzhu to repent. Afterwards, Shanzhu should chant the dhāraṇī for six days and nights, so that all karmic hindrances could be eliminated, and he would be released from the evil paths.

Similarly, *Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī* also instructs on daily chanting to eliminate karmic transgressions. The short text accounts a lecture of six vows from the World Honored One to bodhisattvas, advising the latter to receive and teach the dhāraṇī to help lay men and women eliminate their karmic hindrances. For example, one who aspires to follow the bodhisattva path should vow that all he had suffered in the circle of life and death would not be experienced by others, and all his wealth and pleasure should be shared among sentient beings; if one's evil doings were not confessed, one could not claim to attain the ultimate awakening. At last, the World Honored One instructs that if a good son or a good woman can chant the dhāraṇī at the six intervals in the daylight and at night, all his or her karmic hindrances will be eliminated.³⁹⁴ The inscription at Longmen is one of the earliest surviving copies of *Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī*. Other early versions include the carved scripture in Cave 33 at Wofoyuan (the Grove of the Reclining Buddha) in Sichuan, the three copies inscribed at Yunju Monastery in Fangshan, and the six

³⁹⁴ T1360, vol.21, 0878a04–27.

manuscripts preserved in Dunhuang. Among these different versions, the earliest is dated to 694, found in Cave 8 of Fangshan.³⁹⁵

I believe that the two dhāraṇīs inscribed in LGT Central functioned differently from later usages of dhāraṇī texts. Paul Copp outlines three stages in which the distinct functions of written dhāraṇī as talisman were developed. In this scheme, earlier dhāraṇī texts were copied, memorized, and chanted in the same way sutras were treated. Beginning in the seventh century, a new popular practice inserted dhāraṇī spells or scriptures into miniature stūpas or clay tablets as the “dharma relics.” In this practice, short dhāraṇī spells were believed to epitomize the entire teaching of the longer text from which the spells were taken. As “dharma relics,” the spells and scriptures were worshipped as the presence of the Buddha. The record by Xuanzang is widely cited evidence, in which Xuanzang reported to have witnessed such Indian practices as inserting written scriptures in small stūpas and called them “dharma relics.”³⁹⁶ Slightly after the second stage, written dhāraṇī began to take up the new function as talisman. Materials inscribed with the incantations, such as the knotted strings known as “incantation cords,” silk, paper, and stone, were worn on the body as charms.³⁹⁷ The earliest extant examples of the third function of written dhāraṇī are all tentatively dated to the mid-eighth century.³⁹⁸ Lines of the dhāraṇī spells in this group are arranged in different orientations around the central image. Therefore, they seem not to

³⁹⁵ Manuel Sassmann and Claudia Wenzel, “The Dhāraṇī Sutra of the Six Gates Spoken by the Buddha,” in *Buddhist Stone Sutras in China, Sichuan Province 2*, eds., Suey-ling Tsai and Hua Sun, 38–44 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2015), 39. The entire scripture is translated on pp. 42–44.

³⁹⁶ 印度之法香末爲泥。作小窠堵波高五六寸。書寫經文以置其中。謂之法舍利也。數漸盈積建大窠堵波。總聚於內常修供養。Xuanzang, *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T 2087, v. 51, 920a21–a24. As cited in Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 34–35; Dorothy Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, ca. 645-770* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018), 28–39; Hsueh-man Shen, *Authentic Replicas: Buddhist Art in Medieval China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2019), 108 and 118.

³⁹⁷ Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 39–40.

³⁹⁸ The earliest extant amulet sheet inscribed with *Mahāpratisarā dhāraṇī* (the Incantations of Wish Fulfillment), as discussed by Copp, is now in the collection of Yale University Art Gallery. See Copp, *The Body Incantatory*, 75 and Figs. 2.3 and 2.4 on pp. 76–77. For another example, see An Jiayao, and Feng Xiaotang, “Xi’an Fengxi chutu de Tang yinben fanwen tuoluoni jingzhou,” *Kaogu* (1998), no. 5: 86–92, plate 8.

relate to the two inscribed dhāraṇīs in LGT Central. Instead, since the latter includes both the narrative sections and the dhāraṇī proper, and they are sandwiched between three Mahāyāna sutras, the two dhāraṇīs seem to be treated no differently from other scriptures, which is the first function of written dhāraṇīs defined by Copp.

4.8.2. The Heart Sutra

A hugely popular scripture in East Asia, the 260-character *Heart Sutra* translated by Xuanzang was and is still chanted today.³⁹⁹ Since it concisely epitomizes the whole discourse of prajñāpāramitā philosophy and it was intended to be memorized, scholars argue that it was similar to, or perhaps adopted from, a dhāraṇī.⁴⁰⁰ The miraculous benefits of chanting the *Heart Sutra* were first propagated as a part of the narrative of Xuanzang’s journey to the West. According to that story, Xuanzang received the scripture from a sick man in Sichuan. Later when Xuanzang was surrounded by evil ghosts, even concentration on Guanyin could not help. Yet when he chanted the *Heart Sutra*, all ghosts dispersed.⁴⁰¹

The scripture was popular among early-Tang aristocrats who chanted, copied, and carved the text. The Prince Li Yuanxiang 李元祥 (626–680) and his wife were said to have conducted repentance rituals and received the precepts from a monk named Xuanbi 玄璧 in Suzhou, who advised them to chant the *Heart Sutra*. The story was recorded in *Hongzan Fahua zhuan* 弘贊法華傳, a compilation of miracle stories related to the dissemination of the *Lotus Sutra* composed

³⁹⁹ T0251, vol. 8, 0848c04–22.

⁴⁰⁰ Jan Nattier, “The Heart Sūtra: A Chinese Apocryphal Text?” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 15 (1992), no.2: 175–177, note 47 on p. 210 Citing Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅, *Hannya shingyō no rekishiteki kenkyū* 般若心經の歴史的研究 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1987), and John R McRae, “Ch’an Commentaries on the Heart Sūtra: Preliminary Inferences on the Permutation of Chinese Buddhism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11 (1988), no. 2: 87–115. For a detailed discussion on its use in Indian and Tibetan context, see Donald S. Lopez Jr., *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sūtra* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁴⁰¹ Huili, *Da Tang da Ci’en si sanzang fashi zhuan*, T2053, vol.50, 0224b08–b13.

in 706 by monk Huixiang 慧祥.⁴⁰² In addition, the calligrapher Zheng Wanjun 鄭萬鈞 (date unknown), who was the husband to Princess Daiguo 代國 (689–734), the daughter of Li Dan, was said to copy the *Heart Sutra* for thousands of times and carved it into stone.⁴⁰³

4.8.3. The Diamond Sutra

Chanting the *Diamond sutra* was a constituent of repentance ritual in the seventh and eighth centuries. As testified by the abundant miraculous legends reporting the benefits of chanting the *Diamond sutra*, the scripture was widely popular since it was believed to cure disease, protect one from robbery or imprisonment, prolong life, among others. The miraculous legends were compiled, as cited by Hida Romi, by the early Tang officials Xiao Yu 蕭瑀 (575–648) and Tang Lin 唐臨 (600–659), and by the painter Lang Yuling 郎餘令 (active early seventh century). These legends were collected and recompiled by Meng Xianzhong 孟獻忠 (date unknown) in 718 in *Jin 'gang bore jing ji yanji* 金剛般若經集驗記 (Collected records of response of the Diamond Sutra).⁴⁰⁴ In the 718 compilation, the entire third chapter is dedicated to the use of the *Diamond Sutra* in repentance. Some of the episodes were also repeated by Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667). One of them, for example, reports that an official named Li Siyi 李思一 died and was resurrected in 646. Li told monk Xuantong 玄通 that he was interrogated by a judge in purgatory for killing someone at the age of nineteen, when he was studying with a Buddhist master. Since the judge cannot prove his killing, he was released. Hearing the

⁴⁰² Huixiang, *Hongzan Fahua zhuan*, T2067, vol.51, 0020b14–c21.

⁴⁰³ Fazang, *Bore boluomi xinjing lüeshu* 般若波羅蜜多心經略疏, prefaced by Zhang Yue 張說 (667–731), T1712, vol. 33, 0555a18–a22, and 0555b04–b05.

⁴⁰⁴ As cited in Hida, *Yunxiang ruixiang*, 155.

experience, Xuanton conducted repentance for Li to receive the precepts, and advised him to turn a wheel written with the *Diamond Sutra* for 5,000 times.⁴⁰⁵

Nuns from Jingfu Convent 景福寺 also participated in the creation of repentance miracles concerning the *Diamond Sutra*. In *Jingang bore jing ji yanji*, it is reported that a servant girl to nun Xiuxing 修行 at Jingfu Convent suffered in the Hell of Knife Forest, where seven broken knives pieced through her flesh, because she used to consume meat in the convent. To relieve her from suffering, her elder sister donated her clothes to a monk at Jingtuo Monastery 淨土寺 who then copied the *Diamond Sutra* for her. Each time a volume was finished, one knife was released from her flesh.⁴⁰⁶ Jingfu Convent was established in Luoyang in 635 and demolished between 841 and 845.⁴⁰⁷ Lingjue and Huideng as discussed in Chapter Six of this

⁴⁰⁵ 太廟丞趙郡李思一者。以貞觀二十年正月八日失瘡。至十三日死。經日乃蘇。自言備見冥官云。年十九時嘗害生命。思一乃悟之曰。所害之時。在安州旻法師下聽涅槃。何緣於彼相害。官追旻法師有。答云。旻生金粟界不可追。且放還家。家近清禪寺。僧玄通素與往來。俄見其活又說冥事。因為懺悔受戒。并勸轉金剛般若五千遍。至日晚又死。明日還蘇。自云。見大官。遙見便大喜曰。還家大作福德。復見二僧。證云。旻法師遣來。官見驚懼迎之。僧曰思一昔時聽講。又不殺害。何緣妄錄耶。冥官曰。即放還僧。至家日淨心修善因遂活云云。In Daoxuan, *Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T2106, vol.52, 0429b05–17; Daoxuan, *Da Tang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄, T2149, vol.55, 0341a23–b06. The legend is also in Meng Xianzhong, *Jingang bore jing ji yanji*, in *Manji Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō* 新纂大日本續藏經, v. 87, no. 1629 (Tokyo: Kokushokankōkai, 1975–1989), 454b5–19.

⁴⁰⁶ 又曰。龍朔元年。洛州景福寺比丘尼修行。房中有一供侍童女任五娘死。修行為立靈座。經於月餘。其姊及妹弟於夜中忽聞靈座上呻吟。其弟初甚恐懼。後乃問之。答曰。我生時於寺中食肉。坐此大受苦痛。我體上有瘡。恐汗床席。汝可多將灰置床上也。弟依其言。置灰後看床上。大有膿血。語弟曰。姊患不能縫衣。汝大襪縷。宜將布來。我為汝作衫及襪(音袜)。弟置布於靈床上。經宿即成。又語其姊曰。兒小時患染。遂殺一螃蟹取汁。塗瘡得差。今入刀林地獄。肉中見有折刀七枚。願姊慈流。為作功德救助。知姊煎迫。卒不濟辨。但隨身衣服。無益死者。今並未壞。請以用之。姊未報。問乃曰。兒取去。良久又曰。衣服已來。見在床上。其姊試往視之。乃是所斂之服也。姊遂送至淨土寺寶獻師處。憑寫金剛般若經。每寫一卷了。即報云。已出一刀。凡寫七卷了。乃云。七刀並得出。訖今蒙福助。即往託生。與姊及弟哭別而去(吳興沈玄法說。與淨土寺僧智整所說亦同)。Meng Xianzhong, *Jingang bore jing ji yanji*, in *Manji Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō*, v. 87, no. 1629, 457b22–c13. Presently, a Jingtuo si exists to the south of Longmen Grotto, which claims itself to be the very Jingtuo si where Xuanzang “went forth.” See *Da Tang gu sanzang Xuanzang fashu xingzhuang*, T 2052, vol. 50, 0214a20. The present-day Gongxian Grotto was also called Jingtuo Monastery no later than 802. See Henan sheng wenwu yanjiu suo, ed. *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shiku si* 中國石窟: 鞏縣石窟寺. Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989, 191–192. It makes sense that the sister in the legend went to a monk for repentance as one or more “purified” monks were required as the witness.

⁴⁰⁷ As cited in Zhang Naizhu, “Ji Longmen diqu jindai chutu de sijian zongjiao shike,” *Foxue yanjiu* (2004), no. 13: 184, notes 7 and 8.

dissertation either passed away in or was a member of the convent; both were buried at Longmen. As discussed in the previous chapter, near Huideng's burial cave, the nun Jingming from Jingfu Convent sponsored the only so-called Aśoka's statue of Śākyamuni at Longmen, possibly for the posthumous merit of Huideng.⁴⁰⁸ In addition, nun Jiuniang 九娘 from Jingfu Convent sponsored a niche in Cave 555, near Wanfo Grotto.⁴⁰⁹ Another nun Jingyi 净意 co-sponsored an octagonal pillar inscribed with Buddhapāla's *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* in 749, which was excavated in the Longmen hills in the 1970s.⁴¹⁰ In light of the members of Jingfu Convent's activities at Longmen, I believe their use of the *Diamond Sutra* was comparable to the function of the inscribed scripture at Longmen.

4.8.4. The Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra

Extant early texts of the *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra*, i.e., manuscripts from Dunhuang and inscribed stone scriptures from Fangshan, frequently include incantations and liturgy.⁴¹¹ Since the ending section of the inscribed passage in LGT Central is destroyed with the ruin of the wall, the extant inscription only accounts for about 70% of the entire text. It is unknown if this version included the additional incantations. In Dunhuang manuscripts, forty pieces of two types of incantations were copied after *The Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra*. Most of them were the so-called *Amituo fo shuo zhou* (阿彌陀佛說呪 Dhāraṇī Spoken by Buddha Amitabha). The earliest of them is manuscript S. 1910, dated to the year 720. After the incantation, the liturgy reads,

The dhāraṇī to the right had been translated and circulated. In the morning, [one should] purify mouth by sprinkling water with the willow branch, scatter flowers, and burn incense. Kneel in the foreign way with hands in anjali mudra in the front of a Buddha

⁴⁰⁸ *Tiji*, no. 1574 and 1578, v. 2, p. 363. Zhang Chengyu et al., “Lüe lun Longmen shiku xin faxian de Ayuwang zaoliang,” 21.

⁴⁰⁹ *Tiji*, no. 674, v. 1, p. 155.

⁴¹⁰ Zhang, “Ji Longmen diqu jindai chutu de sijian zongjiao shike,” 184.

⁴¹¹ Hirokawa Gyōbin 広川堯敏, “Tonkō shutsudō Jōdo sanbu kyō koshahon ni tsuite,” 敦煌出土浄土三部經古写本について *Bukkyōbunka kenkyū* (1981), no. 27: 72.

statue. Chant daily seven times. If [one chants] for twenty-seven or thirty-seven times, karmic sins from the four grave and the five heinous crimes will be extinguished. The present body would not be afflicted by various disasters. At the end of this life, [one will be] reborn in the Land of Amitâyus, freed from the female body for eternity.

右呪先已翻出流行。晨朝楊枝淨口、散華、燒香。佛像前胡跪合掌，日誦七遍，若二七，三七遍，滅四重五逆等罪。現身不爲諸橫所惱，命終生無量壽國，永離女身。

Now [I] again proofread [the dhāraṇī] against the Sanskrit version, and converse with Brahmin monks about the vinaya and the saṃgha, knowing the unmeasurable power of the dhāraṇī. The commentary says “three times a day, [one should] chant [the dhāraṇī] a hundred times. [If so,] [karmic sins from] the four grave and the five heinous crimes will be extinguished, all roots of transgressions will be eliminated, and [one will] be reborn in the West. If, with ultimate sincerity, [one’s chanting] reaches 200,000 times, the sprout of awakening will grow, attaining [the stage of] non-retrogression [on the bodhisattva path]. [Chanting for] 300,000 times, [one will] meet Buddha Amitabha in person and surely attain a rebirth in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

今更重勘梵本，並對問婆羅門僧毗尼、佛陀僧伽等，知呪威力不可思議。議云：“旦暮午時，各誦一百遍，滅四重五逆，拔一切罪根，生西方。若能精誠滿廿萬遍，則菩提牙生，得不退轉。諸卅萬遍，則面見阿彌陀佛，決定得生安樂淨土。⁴¹²

The Dunhuang manuscript was probably based on the second volume of the lost three-volume *Jingtu wuhui nianfo songjing guan xingyi juan* 淨土五會念佛誦經觀行儀卷 written by monk Fazhao 法照 (747-821), who was later recognized as the fourth patriarch of Pure Land school.⁴¹³ In *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*, Fazhao’s liturgy is followed with an instruction that the dhāraṇī and the benefit of chanting need not be chanted during the ritual performance; chanting the *Shorter Sukhāvātīvyūha Sutra* alone was already the act of repentance.⁴¹⁴ If such repentance was conducted inside LGT Central, then the two flanking bodhisattvas with the willow branch and vase in hands could also signify the practice of purifying mouth among participants. Moreover,

⁴¹² Chen Lin, “Dunhuang ben Amituo jing xieben kao,” MA thesis (Zhejiang Normal University, 2015), 114 and 121. Also transcribed in Hirokawa, “Tonkō shutsudō Jōdo sanbu kyō koshahon ni tsuite,” 94.

⁴¹³ Chen, “Dunhuang ben Amituo jing xieben kao,” 111-112, and T 2827, vol. 85, 1244a22- b02.

⁴¹⁴ T 2827, vol. 85, 1244b02-b03: 此陀羅尼及功德能作法事時。不須誦之。The incantation and liturgy also circulated on its own in Daoshi, *Fayuan Zhulin*, T 2122, vol. 53, 735b27-c18.

in a manuscript copy of the scripture, the dedicatory postscript states that the donors copied a hundred volumes of the scripture, dedicated to a monastery, in the hope that karmic deeds will be purified, and sins eliminated.⁴¹⁵ These manuscript suggests that the *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sutra*, even without the incantation and liturgy, was a performative text for chanting and copying; such acts were part of the confessional rite that will lead to other karmic merit.

4.8.5. Function of Inscribed Scriptures

Understanding the function of inscribed sutras inside cave-shrines is always contingent upon the context. The internal evidence from the scriptures and contextual materials in LGT Central demonstrate that all the inscribed texts were performative, not meant to be closely read in the darkest corners of a cave-shrine.⁴¹⁶ The two most prominent themes in LGT Central, and in early Tang cave-shrines at Longmen in general, are the preservation of Śākyamuni’s Dharma and repentance practices.⁴¹⁷ I have already shown how these texts are related to repentance rituals, but a performance of the rituals does not necessarily require physical copies of the scriptures. I propose that the scriptures in LGT Central were inscribed to be duplicated, possibly via ink rubbings, making the method of repentance available to a limited group of visitors.

As texts that preserve Śākyamuni’s teaching, the scriptures and dhāraṇī texts in LGT Central are comparable to the *Stone Classics*, a state-sponsored selection of Confucian classics that was carved in stone steles between 175 and 183 and installed in front of the Imperial Academy of Luoyang. The installment of the *Stone Classics* was said to have stirred a great

⁴¹⁵ As cited in Hirokawa, “Tonkō shutsudō Jōdo sanbu kyō koshahon ni tsuite,” 71.

⁴¹⁶ I agree with Sharf that some cave-shrines are too dark to read inscribed text inside, but I believe that the stone statues are still clearly visible. Robert H. Sharf, “Art in the Dark: The Ritual Context of Buddhist Caves in Western China,” in *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and its Conservation: Proceedings of the Buddhist Art Forum 2012*, eds. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo, and Sharon Cather (London: Archetype Publications, 2013), 38–65.

⁴¹⁷ For the first theme, see McNair, “Chapter Five: Cīnasthāna Preserves the Dharma,” in *Donors of Longmen*, 89–110.

excitement; so many people came to see, “copied, and wrote” the texts from the stele that each day, a thousand carts blocked the traffic.⁴¹⁸ How they could “copy and write” from the *Stone Classics* is not explicitly recorded in the dynastic history, but the time-honored technology of ink rubbing was the most probable candidate. After the collapse of the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), regional officials broke the steles into pieces and repurposed them as construction materials for Buddhist monasteries, pagodas, and tombs.⁴¹⁹ Based on a stylistic analysis of the calligraphy, the art historian Huiwen Lu believes that the fragments from the *Stone Classics* were available to calligraphers and stonemasons who executed the dedicatory inscriptions at Longmen in the Northern Wei period.⁴²⁰ According to a ninth-century document, *Shangshu gushi* 尚書故實, a new building construction in the Tang led to accidental discovery of a large number of fragments from the *Stone Classics*. Afterwards, regular households in Luoyang commonly had such pieces.⁴²¹

This comparison suggests a shared experience of duplicating text from stone among ordinary residents of Luoyang and visitors to the capital, despite different levels of visibility between LGT Central and the *Stone Classics*. The stele format of the latter and its setting in front of the Imperial Academy of Luoyang suggest that the inscribed *Stone Classics* were intended to be presented to the crowd, to propagate the imperially sanctioned orthodoxy and to broadcast the

⁴¹⁸及碑始立，其觀視及摹寫者，車乘日千餘兩，填塞街陌。Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) and Sima Biao 司馬彪 (240–306), *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, vol. 60 B, p. 1990 (Taipei: Dingwen shuju, 1981). Also see Robert E. Harrist, *The Landscape of Words: Stone Inscriptions from Early and Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 233.

⁴¹⁹ Duan Pengqi, “Han Wei Luoyang gucheng taixue yizhi xin chutu de Han shijing canshi,” *Kaogu* (1982), no. 4: 387.

⁴²⁰ Huiwen Lu, “Calligraphy of Stone Engravings in Northern Wei Loyang,” in *Character & Context in Chinese Calligraphy*, eds., Cary Y. Liu, Dora C.Y. Ching, and Judith G. Smith, 78–103 (New Jersey: Princeton University Art Museum, 1999), 96.

⁴²¹ 東都頃千剏造防秋館，穿掘多得蔡邕鴻都學所書石經，後洛中人家往往有之。Li Chuo 李綽 (?–862), *Shangshu gushi* 尚書故實, in *Baoyan tang miji* 寶顏堂秘笈, ed., Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558–1639), 1606–1620 first print, 1965 reprint (Taipei: Yiwen yinshu guan, 1965). I learned of this source in Duan, “Han Wei Luoyang gucheng taixue yizhi xin chutu de Han shijing canshi,” endnote no. 2.

ruling emperor's commitment to Confucian teaching.⁴²² In contrast, the Tang scriptures were carved inside a cave-shrine, on the exit walls. Visitors outside the cave-shrine cannot see the texts and those who entered might only notice the carvings on their way out. Nevertheless, the tradition of using stone for the preservation of didactic texts still connects the *Stone Classics* and the inscribed scriptures in LGT Central. Given the limited access to the *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* and the royal endorsement of *Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī* and the *Heart Sutra*, I speculate that the five inscribed scriptures in LGT Central was intended to provide visitors with access to these texts.

4.9. Central Dais

A freestanding dais about half the height of the monk reliefs used to stand in the center of LGT Central, making the grotto the first of the only two cave-shrines at Longmen that contain a central dais (Fig. 4.28). It was removed in 2001 for unspecified reason.⁴²³ Four raised ridges around a protruding square are still visible on the ground of LGT Central, possibly for securing the stone dais to the ground. Outlining a 430 cm by 337 cm rectangular base, these remains on the ground suggest that the original plan included a platform of similar size.⁴²⁴ Earlier cave-shrines at Longmen have either an attached altar on the main wall, or a continuous pedestal that runs around the three sides. After the first appearance of a central dais in LGT Central, the same

⁴²² Harrist, *The Landscape of Word*, 233.

⁴²³ 2001 was the year when Longmen was added to the World Heritage List, and the news was officially announced in November 2000. From 1999 to 2000, large-scale campaigns relocated residents, factories, railways, and highways within the precinct of Longmen, and demolished an entertainment complex known as “the Chinese dragon palace.” See Dong Wang, *Longmen's Stone Buddhas and Cultural Heritage: When Antiquity Met Modernity in China* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), 201-207.

⁴²⁴ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, 83.

plan was only employed again in Kanjingsi Grotto, which imitates the elements of LGT Central in many aspects.⁴²⁵

The unconventional design of the central dais at Longmen seems to fit the description of the actual altar in *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*, a core text that was later transformed into various manuals for mandala visualizations.⁴²⁶ In it, Śākyamuni instructs that,

The method to chant this dhāraṇī. Outline a purified land in front of the Buddha, make an altar that accords with its size, and make it with four square corners. Scatter various types of flowers on the altar and burn various exquisite incenses. Touch the right knee to the ground in the barbarian fashion and concentrate all thoughts on the Buddha. Make the mudra of dhāraṇī by bending [one's] index finger to the thumb. Bring the hands together, in front of the heart. Chant the dhāraṇī 108 times. Then [you will see] flowers rain down inside the altar from the clouds, enough for offerings to 880 million Buddhas, or as many as the sands in the Ganges.⁴²⁷

若誦此陀羅尼法。於其佛前先取淨土。作壇隨其大小。方四角作。以種種草華散於壇上。燒衆名香。右膝著地胡跪。⁴²⁸心常念佛。作慕陀羅尼印。屈其頭指以大母指。押合掌。當其心上。誦此陀羅尼一百八遍訖。於其壇中如雲王雨華。能遍供養八十八俱胝殑伽沙那庾多百千諸佛。⁴²⁹

Not only does the instruction on making a square altar agree with LGT Central's freestanding dais, the countless number of Buddhas evoked in the ritual chanting of the dhāraṇī also seems to be represented by the program of 15,000 Buddhas that fill the ceiling and wall space of LGT Central. Michelle Wang argues that the focus of the practices related to *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*

⁴²⁵ For an overview of the spatial plans for all Tang cave-shrines at Longmen, see Li Chongfeng, "Longmen shiku Tangdai kukan fenqi shilun: Yi daxing kukan weili," in *Fojiao kaogu: Cong yindu dao zhongguo II*, 441–528 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 446–447. According to footnote no. 7, the current altar in Kanjingsi Grotto is a reconstruction from 2001, but a square protrusion on the ground suggests an altar was installed in the original plan. Li Chongfeng also believes that LGT South has a central dais, but the latest archaeological report suggests the otherwise. LGT South has a continuous low-rising pedestal that connects all three walls. See Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al., eds., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, vol. 1, p. 119.

⁴²⁶ For the visualization mandala developed from *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*, see Koichi Shinohara, "Zunsheng foding tuoluoni tanfa," *Hualin guoji foxue xuekan* 1 (2018), no. 2: 166–198.

⁴²⁷ I consulted the translation by Michelle Wang, see Wang, "Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China: Ritual and the Role of Images," *Material Religion* 9 (2013), no. 2: 191.

⁴²⁸ In *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, hugui 胡跪 is translated as "genuflect in foreign fashion," implying that only one knee touches the ground while the other raised off the ground. See p. 363.

⁴²⁹ T 0967, v. 19, 0351c28–0352a05.

shifted in the mid-Tang period, from chanting the *dhāraṇī* on an actual altar— called a “mandala altar” in certain Tang texts— to visualizing the placement of deities on a painted image known as *mandala*.⁴³⁰ It seems that the central dais in LGT Central was fitting as an altar for *dhāraṇī*-chanting and the early practices of visualization.

More specifically, Buddhas of the ten directions, which are represented in LGT Central, were also evoked in different versions of *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*. In the translations by Buddhapāla (T 967) and Divākara (T 969 and 970), after Indra told Śākyamuni of Shanzhu’s fate, it is said that “various kinds of lights emanate from the crown of the head of the Tathagata, illuminating all the worlds in the ten directions. The light then returned, circumambulated thrice around the Buddha, and entered the Buddha’s mouth.”⁴³¹ Afterwards, Śākyamuni started to teach the *dhāraṇī*. In one edition translated by Divākara (T 969), after setting up the square altar and scattering incenses and flowers inside, participants were required to “concentrate single-mindedly and without discrimination on various Buddhas of ten directions” before chanting the *dhāraṇī*.⁴³² In other words, LGT Central not only supplied the square altar required in ritual chanting of *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*, but also represented the myriad Buddhas that were visualized during the ritual.

4.10. Conclusion

Considering the entire design of LGT Central, I argue that its interior was designed as a multi-functional space that could accommodate both earlier repentance rituals that highlight

⁴³⁰ Wang, “Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China: Ritual and the Role of Images,” 198–201.

⁴³¹ My translation is based on Buddha-pāla’s text, see T 0967, vol. 19, 0350b01–b02. 爾時如來頂上放種種光。遍滿十方一切世界已。其光還來繞佛三匝。從佛口入。For Divākara’s version, see T 0969, vol. 19, 0355c23–c25 頂放種種雜色光明。流照十方一切世界。照已還至佛世尊所。右繞三匝從佛口入。And T 0970, vol.19, 0358b07–b10. 爾時世尊從於頂上放大光明。流照十方一切佛界。其光五色青赤黃白黑互相紛映右旋宛轉。還至佛所繞佛三匝。從佛口入。

⁴³² T0969, vol.19, 0357a04. 一心普念十方諸佛。

chanting Buddha names and the emerging esoteric ritual of dhāraṇī chanting. Modular elements from earlier cave-shrines were taken and reorganized, suggesting the continuation of the name-chanting repentance practice in LGT Central. At the same time, the space could easily be converted to perform ritual chanting of dhāraṇī, since a central dais was introduced. In both types of ritual performance, the stone sculptures and carvings created a cohesive space that guided participants to visualize the legendary patriarchs as their companions and the myriad Buddhas who responded to their prayers.

Chapter 5: Experiencing the Jeweled Buddhas in Space and Time

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on three freestanding limestone Buddha statues, which are adorned with carved interlocking necklaces, armlets, and tall crowns, displaying the earth-touching mudra. Found in the cave-shrines on Leigutai in the twentieth century, these spectacular sculptures are larger than life size, demonstrating a visual contrast between the smooth, exposed flesh and the elaborate, intricate jewelry. Although the original locations of these movable pieces are not documented, stylistic analysis suggests that they were all made together with the sculptural reliefs on Leigutai. Among the sculptures created at Longmen from the fifth to the tenth centuries, they stand out for two reasons: 1) whereas carving reliefs directly from the living cliff had been common practice, the three pieces were produced on detached limestones; 2) they were among the earliest sculptures that show Buddha with jewelry and crowns, both in China and in the medieval Buddhist world in general.

The bejeweled and crowned Buddha icon has been a topic of fervent scholarly discussion and disagreement since the 1920s. Such icon is unconventional because images of Buddha are usually modeled after monks who had renounced all worldly possessions. The princely accessories of jewelry and headdresses are commonly found on images of bodhisattvas. One scholarly consensus is that the icon originated in Afghanistan in the seventh and the eighth centuries and was quickly transmitted to the Greater Kashmir region.⁴³³ Almost around the same time, a similar icon made an appearance in the heartland of China, as evidenced by the examples at Longmen. From the late seventh to the ninth century, the icon was also found elsewhere in China, in as well as in South, East, and Southeast Asia. Although the origin and transmission of

⁴³³ Dorothy Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission*, 90-94.

the bejeweled Buddhas are less debated, their identity draws much disagreement. In Chinese language, whereas modern scholarship uses the term “Buddhas of jeweled crown” (*baoguan fo* 寶冠佛) as a direct reference, medieval inscriptions refer to such icons as “Bodhi auspicious image” (*puti ruixiang* 菩提瑞像), or “auspicious image” (*ruixiang* 瑞像). As I show in this chapter, the two medieval terms created more confusion. Regarding the identities of the early examples at Longmen, no consensus has been reached.

I propose to interpret the three bejeweled Buddhas at Longmen from two perspectives: their Buddhist identities and their function in political propaganda. Regarding their identity, I suggest that they represented the union of Śākyamuni and Vairocana based on the visual program of LGT South Grotto, one of the original locations for the freestanding jeweled Buddhas. Yet the jeweled Buddhas differ from an earlier representation of the union of Śākyamuni and Vairocana, the Great Vairocana Image Shrine on the western cliff of Longmen. I argue that the jewelry and crowns were added because of the function of the three statues in political propaganda. The three were likely copies of the statues that were used in the state ceremony of *pañcavārṣika* (*wuzhehui*, 無遮會, or “The Great Quinquennial Festival”), during which Wu Zhao offered her royal regalia to the Buddhist communities and reaffirmed her position as the sagely cakravartin, or universal ruler.⁴³⁴ Adopting contemporary designs of metalsmith and textile, the statues made such a gesture of offering known to the Tang audience who visited Longmen.

By highlighting the temporal experience of the icon in a physical space by Tang Buddhists, I engage the analytical framework of “chronotope” which the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) applied to literary studies. Bakhtin argued that certain types of

⁴³⁴ The translation of *wuzhehui* is taken from John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 91-97.

monuments were meant to be experienced as a spatial-temporal construct.⁴³⁵ Regarding the design of the three freestanding sculptures, I believe that the Tang artists intentionally brought the temporal dimension into the design, thereby creating a contemporary experience among the viewers of the statues. As a result, the Tang viewers engaged with the three unprecedented jeweled Buddhas as three different sets of time-space: 1) as Buddha Vairocana at the center of the Lotus Store World Ocean (*lianhuazang shijie hai* 蓮華藏世界海, also written as Lotus Store World, *lianhuazang shijie* 蓮華藏世界); 2) as the historical Buddha attaining awakening under the bodhi tree, in a distant past in India; 3) as Buddha Śākyamuni in the present time, in the land of Tang China, to whom Wu Zhao offered her royal regalia.

In what follows, I first examine the stylistic details of the three sculptures and argue that although they were removed from Leigutai to the storage of Longmen Research Institute in the last century, their original location was indeed Leigutai. Examining the current debate on the bejeweled Buddhas, I show that these icons assumed a range of identities in different contexts in China. As a result, the three Longmen pieces need to be examined in their immediate physical context- the LGT South Grotto in the Eastern Hills. The interior of the LGT South Grotto created an immersive environment where one may attain a vision of Vairocana's Lotus Store World Ocean. This immediate context allows me to suggest a Buddhist identity for the three statues. The entire Eastern Hills also established a localized version of the distant mountain known as the Gandha-mādana, where immortals were believed to reside. The building of a Buddhist sacred space outside Luoyang, as I analyze, was part of the political campaign that promoted Wu Zhao as the universal ruler of Buddhism. Placing the freestanding jeweled Buddhas in the latter

⁴³⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, Michael Holquist, ed., 84-258 (Austin, TX, 1981); "Aesthetic Visualizing of Time/Space: The Chronotope," in *The Bakhtin Reader*, ed. Pam Morris (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), pp. 180 – 187.

context, I propose that when they were first created, they may have been copies of the statues used during state ceremonies of *pañcavārṣika* sponsored by Wu Zhao. This proposition may be supported by the contemporary design of jewelry and textile seen on the statues. Since the ritual reaffirmed the role of Wu Zhao, the stone copies spread the propaganda message to the audience at Longmen.

5.2. Three Freestanding Jeweled Buddhas

All three statues of jeweled Buddhas were found on Leigutai at some time, but none retains any direct evidence of their original location during the Tang. Based on their location in the early twentieth century, I refer to the three as the LGT Central Jeweled Buddha, the LGT South Jeweled Buddha, and the Liuqing Jeweled Buddha. The LGT Central Jeweled Buddha measures 280 cm high in total, with his right hand showing the earth-touching mudra and the left hand resting on the lap.⁴³⁶ In the 1915 publication by the art historian Ōmura Seigai (1868–1927), it was photographed on the central dais inside LGT Central, seated on a square throne and flanked by two seated Buddhas in the plain monastic robes (Fig. 5.1).⁴³⁷ Facing to the west, the jeweled Buddha lost the part above his hairline, but the head and torso were still in good shape, dressed in a one-shoulder monastic robe that exposes the broad chest. The complete triad was also captured by the photographer who worked for Charles Lang Freer in 1910 (Fig. 5.2).⁴³⁸ Yet when Tokiwa Daijō and Sekino Tadashi visited in 1920, they chose to photograph the two flanking Buddhas and omitted the bejeweled statue in the center (Fig. 5.3).⁴³⁹ In 1936, a close-up

⁴³⁶ Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, *Longmen shiku diaoke cuibian: Fo* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1995), pl. 156.

⁴³⁷ Ōmura Seigai, *Shina bijutsu shi chōso hen* (Tōkyō: Kokusho kankokai, 1915), vol. 2, p. 315, fig. 754. The north-facing Buddha raises the right hand, gesturing the *abhaya* mudra. The one facing to the south might have displayed the *dharmachakra* mudra, even though both hands are cut off.

⁴³⁸ Freer/Sackler Gallery of Art Archives, FS-FSA_A.1_12.5.GN.160.

⁴³⁹ Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 and Sekino Tadashi 關野貞, *Shina bunka shiseki* 支那文化史蹟, v. 2 (Tokyo: Hōzōkan, 1939-1941), pl. 73, text p. 49.

view of the bust was captured by the Japanese archaeologists Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, showing a filigreed collar necklace and a diamond-shaped armlet (Fig. 5.4). In this volume, neither of the two flanking Buddhas had their heads, suggesting that the two statues were damaged between 1920 and 1936 (Figs. 5.5 and 5.6).⁴⁴⁰ Subsequently, the statue was also featured in the 1988 publication by the art historian Marilyn M. Rhie (1937-2020); the photograph was taken inside Leigutai Central Grotto, probably in 1975 (Fig. 5.7).⁴⁴¹

Piecemeal accounts offer little information concerning the whereabouts of the LGT Central jeweled Buddha. According to the Chinese scholar Gong Dazhong, a stonemason from the nearby Liuqing Village 劉井村 reported that the statue had been transferred from elsewhere to LGT Central prior to 1949.⁴⁴² Similarly, the Longmen Research Institute states that the statue triad was moved to LGT Central at the end of the Qing dynasty, from an unidentified monastery near Longmen, and was again relocated in 1982 to the covered corridor on Leigutai.⁴⁴³ Three scholars, Li Wensheng, Chang Qing, and Li Yumin, confirmed that the statue was still on display in the corridor in 1991, 1996 and 2006 respectively.⁴⁴⁴ Presumably, when the corridor was demolished between May and June 2008, the statue was relocated again.⁴⁴⁵ Curiously, this statue

⁴⁴⁰ Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio 長廣敏雄, *Ryūmon sekkutsu no kenkyū* 龍門石窟の研究, plates (Tokyo: Zauhō kankōkai, 1941, reprinted Kyoto: Dohosha, 1980), p. 98. By 1995, a new head and a crown had been made for the south-facing Buddha.

⁴⁴¹ Marilyn M. Rhie, “Interrelationships Between the Buddhist Art of China and the Art of India and Central Asia from 618–755 A.D.,” *Annali dell’Istituto orientale di Napoli, Supplemento* 48, no. 54, fasc. 1 (1988): footnote no. 1 on p. 1, and fig. 27 on pl. XIV.

⁴⁴² Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu*, 161.

⁴⁴³ Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, *Longmen shiku diaoke cuibian: Fo*, pls. 156, 157, 159.

⁴⁴⁴ Li Wensheng, “Tangdai Longmen mizong zaoxiang,” *Wenwu* (1991), no. 2: 63, fig. 4. Chang Qing, “Shilun Longmen chu Tang mijiao diaoke,” *Kaogu xuebao* (2001), no. 3: 354; Li Yumin, “Shi lun Tang dai xiang mo cheng dao shi zhuang shi fo,” *National Palace Museum periodicals* 23, no. 3 (2006 Spring): 80, fig. 5.

⁴⁴⁵ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al., eds., vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, p. 9.

was not included in the 2013 compilation of select sculptures of Longmen Research Institute, which featured both the other jeweled Buddhas.⁴⁴⁶

The LGT South jeweled Buddha is the best preserved and the most well-known among the three. The statue has a tall crown and shows the same mudra as the LGT Central Jeweled Buddha, as well as a highly detailed necklace and armband. It was photographed inside LGT South by the Japanese architect Tsukamoto Yasushi 塚本靖 in 1906 and included in the publication by Ōmura (Fig. 5.8).⁴⁴⁷ Between 1906 and 1920, the statue appeared to have been in use for a while (Figs. 5.9); its half-broken throne was poorly mended and painted, decorative patterns of textile were drawn on the robe, the face was painted, and something appeared to be added to the Buddha's proper left hand. The renovated statue was photographed in 1920 by Tokiwa Daijō and Sekino Tadashi, with several bowls scattered on the ground.⁴⁴⁸ Both Gong Dazhong and Longmen Research Institute reported that it was moved to LGT South from some other monastery (Fig. 5.10).⁴⁴⁹ In the last two decades, the statue was exhibited internationally, first at Miho Museum in Japan in 2001, followed by the Metropolitan Museum of Art between 2004 and 2005, and Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Italy, in 2008.⁴⁵⁰

The last piece of the three also has an uncertain connection with Leigutai. With the same earth-touching mudra, this statue still retains the bottom part of the crown and wears a necklace and an octafoil armband (Fig. 5.11). It was exhibited together with the LGT South Jeweled

⁴⁴⁶ Liu Jinglong, ed., *Longmen shiku yanjiuyuan wenwu cangpin ji* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2013), cat. nos., 4 and 5, on pp. 36-45.

⁴⁴⁷ Ōmura, *Shina bijutsu shi chōso hen*, pl. 753, on p. 314.

⁴⁴⁸ Tokiwa and Sekino, *Shina bunka shiseki*, v. 2, pl. 72.

⁴⁴⁹ Gong, Longmen shiku yishu, 177; Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, Longmen shiku diaoke cuibian: Fo, pl. 150.

⁴⁵⁰ China: Dawn of a Golden Age (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), cat. no. 192. Sabrina Rastelli, ed., *China at the Court of the Emperors: Unknown Masterpieces from Han Tradition to Tang Elegance (25-907)* (Florence: Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, 2008), cat. 26 on p. 135.

Buddha at Miho Museum in 2001 (Fig. 5.12), during which it was reported to have come from the Leigutai platform.⁴⁵¹ Prior to this occasion, the statue was only reproduced thrice, once in 1982 (Fig. 5.13) and twice in small black-and-white photos in 1991 (Fig. 5.14) and 1995 (Fig. 5.15) respectively. According to the latter two publications, the statue was moved to Leigutai in 1969 from Liujing Village, the place where the stonemason reported about the move of LGT Central Jeweled Buddha.⁴⁵² Since Liujing Village is only 5.5 km east of the Longmen Grottoes, the information cannot determine if the statue was not at Longmen in the Tang, although it might explain why it did not appear in any of the photographs from the early twentieth century. Hereafter I refer to this statue as Liujing Jeweled Buddha.

5.3. Locations and Dates

The Liujing Jeweled Buddha was almost certainly made by the artists who were responsible for the carving inside the grottoes on Leigutai. Among the highly detailed ornaments on the three jeweled Buddhas, the necklace worn by the Liujing figure is identical to those on the figures found in situ on Leigutai. The necklace (Fig. 5.13) consists of a flat plate that has a pointed tip in the center, a pendant, and a twisted cord of connected beads and plain rope. On the flat surface of the necklace are lunette-shaped plates with two curled corners; the cusped lower edge of each plate is linked with a ball in the middle. Every two neighboring plates are joined together with a narrow band at the corners. In the center of the necklace is a large, circular-shaped jewel, edged with smaller granules and connected to the smaller pendant of the same design. The design was replicated on the central jeweled Buddha inside what is now labelled as

⁴⁵¹ Miho Museum, *Ryūmon sekkutsu/Longmen Caves* (Shiga-ken: Miho Museum, 2001), pl. 35 on pp. 70-73.

⁴⁵² Li, "Tangdai Longmen mizong zaoxiang," p. 63, fig. 5. Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, *Longmen shiku diaoke cuibian: Fo*, pl. 155. The line drawing from this source was reproduced by Chang Qing. See Chang, "Shilun Longmen chu Tang mijiao diaoke," 354.

Leigutai Cave 6B (Fig. 5.16) and on the bodhisattvas in LGT Central Grotto (Fig. 5.17). In addition, one bodhisattva excavated from Leigutai (Fig. 5.18) and two from the ruin of Fengxian Monastery (Figs. 5.19 and 5.20) also incorporate the highly similar design.

A comparison among the Liujing Jeweled Buddha and the figures from Longmen conveys a process of gradual schematization, which suggests to me that the Liujing Jeweled Buddha was carved first and that its design was copied on the other pieces. The details of the necklace of the Liujing figure, such as the twists of plain rope and beaded chain, and the joining parts between lunettes, are clearly articulated. The supporting elements, such as the curls and balls on the lunette and the beads around the central medallion, are of balanced proportions to the main design. In comparison, the carvings of the necklaces on the in-situ statues (Fig. 5.16, the jeweled Buddha in Leigutai Cave 6 B and Fig. 5.17, the bodhisattva in LGT Central Grotto) are more stylized, since they show little differentiation between the main design and the supporting details. The carvings of the necklace on the three excavated bodhisattvas (Figs. 5.18-20) only outline the contour of each unit, omitting the refined details on the joining parts of the lunettes. Therefore, I propose to date the Liujing piece around the terminus post quem of LGT Central Grotto, the year of 689.

Both LGT Central Jeweled Buddha and LGT South Jeweled Buddha can be connected to Leigutai by stylistic comparison. Both feature a broad shoulder that is smoothly connected to the half-exposed chest and tubular upper arm. At the place where the upper arm and the chest is separated, a circular line is carved to indicate the protrusion of flesh, paralleling the hem of the robe that drapes diagonally across the chest. Miki Kuno observes that the style of LGT South Jeweled Buddha compares closely with the reliefs of jeweled Buddhas in LGT South Grotto

(Fig. 5.21), suggesting that the freestanding statue was created for the grotto.⁴⁵³ In addition, the rendering of the half-exposed chest is also the same as the central jeweled Buddha in Leigutai Cave 6B (Fig. 5.16). The central Buddha in LGT North Grotto (Fig. 5.22), adorned with the jeweled armband and neckband, is heavily eroded but still preserves a plump chest outlined by a carved line above the drape hem. Since Chinese archaeologists believe LGT North was initiated before LGT Central, I suggest that these two freestanding statues should be dated to around 689 as well, around the same time as the Liujiing piece.⁴⁵⁴

Overall, I believe that the three jeweled Buddhas were made by the same group of sculptors who carved the grottoes on Leigutai. Since they either share the same decorative details or sculptural style with the in-situ jeweled Buddhas on Leigutai, the three freestanding Buddhas may have been made for Leigutai grottoes and relocated to nearby monasteries later.

5.4. *Puti Xiang* or “Bodhi Image”

5.4.1. The Legend of the Mahabodhi Monastery Buddha

Focusing on the textual documents written by Tang Chinese pilgrims, some scholars argue that the jeweled Buddhas with earth-touching mudra in China are likely derived from the famous Indian icon from Mahabodhi Monastery in Bodhgaya. The strongest evidence in support of a Mahabodhi origin is found in Cave 366 in Qianfoya, Sichuan, where the dedicatory inscription of one jeweled Buddha with earth-touching mudra survives (Fig. 5.23). Written between 710 and 712, the inscription recounts the miraculous story of Maitreya creating an image of Śākyamuni Buddha with earth-touching mudra at Mahabodhi Monastery. The text

⁴⁵³ Miki Kuno, “Longmen shiku Leigutai nandong, zhongdong shilun,” trans., Li Ru and Zhao Shengliang, *Dunhuang yanjiu* (2009), no. 3: 8.

⁴⁵⁴ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao*, 128.

names the statue as *puti ruixiang* (菩提瑞像), or “Bodhi auspicious image.”⁴⁵⁵ According to Xuanzang’s record, Maitreya created the statue at the Mahabodhi Monastery, which was constructed on the spot of the Bodhi tree where Śākyamuni attained awakening. The statue displayed the earth-touching mudra, which signified the very spot under the Bodhi tree and the moment when Prince Siddhartha called on the earth goddess to testify his right to sit on that spot and to witness his feat of Mara.⁴⁵⁶ A variant version of the legend is also found in *Fayuan zhulin*, which recounted the travel record of Wang Xuance 王玄策 (fl. 640s–650s), the Tang imperial envoy to India. Wang’s account reported that ever since the original statue at Mahabodhi Monastery was created, all attempts to copy it failed; only after the Tang embassy invited all monks and other envoys at the place to walk, circumambulate, and repent, artisans were able to make the copies. Wang Xuance’s artisan, named Song Fazhi 宋法智, made copies and brought them back to China, attracting people in the capitals to make further duplicates.⁴⁵⁷ In addition to Xuanzang and Wang Xuance, monk Xuanzhao 玄照 (fl. 627–680s.) also venerated the statue created by Maitreya at Mahabodhi Monastery in person. According to Yijing 義淨 (635–713), who wrote biographies of Tang pilgrim monks to India, Xuanzhao escorted the Wencheng princess 文成公主 (628–680) to Tibet and continued to reach India, where he stayed for four

⁴⁵⁵ Luo Shiping, “Guangyuan Qianfoya puti ruixiang kao,” *Meishu yanjiu* 61, no.1 (1991): 51-57; and Luo Shiping, “Qianfoya Lizhou Bigong ji zaoxiang niandai kao,” *Wenwu* (1990), no. 6: 34.

⁴⁵⁶ Xuanzang, *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T 2087, vol. 51, 916b1-6. 垂右手者，昔如來之將證佛果，天魔來嬈，地神告至，其一先出，助佛降魔，如來告曰：“汝勿憂怖，吾以忍力，降彼必矣。”魔王曰：“誰為明證？”如來乃垂手指地，言：“此有證。”是時第二地神踊出作證，故今像手做昔下垂。

⁴⁵⁷ As cited in Luo, “Guangyuan Qianfoya puti ruixiang kao,” p. 53. Daoshi, *Fayuan zhulin*, T 2122, vol. 53, 503a7-12. 其像自彌勒造成已來。一切道俗規模圖寫。聖變難定。未有寫得。王使至彼請諸僧眾。及此諸使人至誠殷請累日行道懺悔兼申來意。方得圖畫。髣髴周盡。直為此像。出其經本。向有十卷。將傳此地。其匠宋法智等。巧窮聖容圖寫聖顏。來到京都道俗競摸。

summers at Mahabodhi Monastery before moving to Nalanda Monastery. Xuanzhao was able to return to China between 664 and 665 after Wang Xuance reported his deeds to the court.⁴⁵⁸

Both Wang Xuance and Xuanzhao dedicated shrines at Longmen. Wang sponsored a Maitreya image in 665 in Binyang South Grotto (Cave no. 159), only a few years after he returned to China in 661 and reported Xuanzhao's achievement.⁴⁵⁹ In 680, before Xuanzhao was about to embark on his second journey to India, in search for the "herb of longevity" for Emperor Gaozong, Xuanzhao dedicated a shrine of Avalokitêśvara outside of Wanfo Grotto (Fig. 5.24).⁴⁶⁰ The activities of Wang Xuance and Xuanzhao at Longmen suggest that fame of the Mahabodhi Monastery was probably known among sculptors and local donors. However, neither of the two chose to dedicate a copy of the Mahabodhi statue at Longmen.

5.4.2. The Problem of Jewelry

The most troubling problem with this interpretation is that neither the legend nor other surviving copies found in India, Tibet, Indonesia, and Korea suggest that the original Mahabodhi statue was adorned with jewels. The art historian Sun-ah Choi proposes that since the legend stated that people decorated the unfinished details on the statue with jewels, Chinese audiences were confused during the copying process and incorporated the accessories into the carving.⁴⁶¹ A key piece of evidence that puts this hypothesis in question comes from an intrusive shrine to the north of LGT Central (Cave 2085 or 2071/ Niche 5-32), in which a small plain-robed buddha, flanked by two bodhisattvas and two disciples and dated to the eighth of the third month in 701,

⁴⁵⁸ Yijing 義淨 (635–713), *Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan* 大唐西域求法高僧傳, T2066, vol. 51, 1b26-2a22.

⁴⁵⁹ The image does not survive but the inscription is still visible. See McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, p. 95-96. *Tiji* no. 145, vol. 1, p. 36. Niche W20 in Cave 159, in *Zonglu*, vol. 1, text p. 49.

⁴⁶⁰ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, p. 141-142. *Tiji*, no. 603, vol. 1, p. 139. Niche W7 on the gate of Wanfo Grotto, in *Zonglu*, vol., 3, text p. 81.

⁴⁶¹ For example, see Sun-ah Choi, "Zhenrong to Ruixiang: The Medieval Chinese Reception of the Mahabodhi Buddha Statue," *The Art Bulletin* 97 (Dec 2015), no. 4: 364-387.

is identified by its dedicatory inscription as a “bodhi image” (Fig. 5.25).⁴⁶² The statue of 701 shows that copies of the “bodhi image” was known to the audience at Longmen, and yet they did not associate them with jeweled accessories either.

The Longmen pieces likely predate all other jeweled Buddhas found in China. Among the bejeweled Buddha statues found in Sichuan, one of the earliest examples in the earth-touching mudra is found on the side wall of Cave 535 at Qianfoya, Sichuan (Fig. 5.26). Although the statue itself is unidentified and undated, an intrusive shrine inside Cave 535 has an inscription that dates to 696 or 697.⁴⁶³ Two more cave-shrines from Sichuan have inscriptions that describe the images as “*puti* 菩提,” or “Bodhi.” One is from Cave 26 of Shisunshan 石笋山, Qionglai 邛崃, which is identified as “*puti Shijia*” or “Bodhi Śākyaṃuni” and dated to 768.⁴⁶⁴ Another shrine (Cave 26, Fig. 5.27) of crowned and bejeweled Buddha from Kunfo 瞋佛 (Sleeping Buddha) Monastery, Maluo 馬鑼 Town, Leizhi 樂至 County, is also described by its inscription as “*puti kan* 菩提龕,” or “bodhi shrine.” Its style suggests an eighth-century date.⁴⁶⁵ The only Sichuan example contemporaneous to the Longmen pieces is found in Cave 60 (Fig. 5.28) at Feixiange 飛仙閣, Pujiang 蒲江, which I will discuss shortly.⁴⁶⁶ In the Western Capital, Chang’an, the nine bejeweled Buddhas from Qibaotai (“Tower of Seven Treasures”), Baoqing Monastery, postdate the establishment of Qibaotai in 703 (Fig. 5.29).⁴⁶⁷ Farther away in Dunhuang, the painted examples on murals and silk (Fig. 5.30) are from the eighth and ninth

⁴⁶² Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al. eds., vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, 155.

⁴⁶³ Sichuan sheng wenwu guanli ju et al., *Guangyuan shiku neirong zonglu: Qianfoya juan*, vol. 2 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2014), 141.

⁴⁶⁴ Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, “Shilun Sichuan de puti ruixiang,” *Sichuan wenwu* (2004), no. 1: 85-91.

⁴⁶⁵ Lei Yuhua, Luo Chunxiao, Wang Jianping, *Chuanbei fojiao shiku he moya zaoxiang yanjiu* (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2016), 401.

⁴⁶⁶ Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, “Shilun Sichuan de puti ruixiang,” 85.

⁴⁶⁷ Yen Chuan-Ying, “The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels: The Style, Patronage and Iconography of the Monument,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1996): 3, 84-97.

centuries, which will be discussed later.⁴⁶⁸ Longmen sculptors may have been the pioneers in Tang China who created or used the design of jeweled buddha with earth-touching mudra.

5.4.3. What Does a “Bodhi Image” Signify?

The Chinese term *puti*, or “Bodhi,” was applied to a range of images among which neither jewelry nor the earth-touching mudra was a shared attribute. The Chinese term of “*puti xiang*” may signify the place, the moment, and the very content of Śākyamuni’s awakening under the Bodhi tree. When applied to statues, however, an imaged titled “*puti xiang*” does not necessarily evoke the awakening of Śākyamuni. Thus, I suspect there were a homogeneous tradition of copies after the Mahabodhi original in China.

When the “bodhi image” is mentioned in Tang pilgrims’ records, it always refers to the statue at Mahabodhi Monastery. According to Xuanzang’s biography, when Xuanzang foresaw his own death, he asked the same Song Fazhi who copied the Mahabodhi statue at the order of Wang Xuance to establish a “bodhi image.” The image was a part of the preparations he made before passing away, including donating his clothes and possessions for image-making, inviting monks to walk and circumambulate, and offering vegetarian feasts.⁴⁶⁹ Yijing also told that he venerated the statue at Mahabodhi Monastery and paid obeisance to the “bodhi image” on behalf of another monk named Andao 安道 from Caozhou 曹州.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ For discussion on the Dunhuang pieces, see for example: Choi, “From Zhenrong to Ruixiang”. Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, “Zailun Sichuan de puti ruixiang,” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* (2005) no. 6: 145. Alexander Coburn Soper, “Representations of Famous Images at Tun-Huang,” *Artibus Asiae* 27 (1964-1965), no. 4: fig. 1 on p. 353 and p. 362.

⁴⁶⁹ The statue that Song Fazhi made for Xuanzang was a “*puti xianggu*” 菩提像骨, probably referring to an armature of a statue. See *Da Tang Da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan*, T. 2053, vol. 50, 277a7-16. The service of Song Fazhi to Xuanzang was not included in other contemporaneous documents about Xuanzang but was copied again around 800 in the *Zhenyuan Revised List of Canonical Buddhist Texts* (*Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄), compiled by monk Yuanzhao 圓照 (date unknown). See T 2157, vol. 55, 861a9-24.

⁴⁷⁰ Yijing, *Da Tang xiyou qiufa gaoseng zhuan*, T2066, vol. 51, T51, no. 2066, 8b1-14.

In contrast to the textual evidence, extant “Bodhi images” in China display variant mudras. The aforementioned crowned and jeweled statue from Kunfo Monastery (Fig. 5.27) is identified by inscription as a “bodhi shrine” and yet, according to the archaeologist Lei Yuhua and her co-researchers in Sichuan, makes the meditation (*dhyana*) mudra. The same meditation mudra is also employed by the main Buddha in Cave 1 from Tuoshan 駝山, Qingzhou 青州 (Shandong province), which is adorned with a multi-pointed collar and an armband with a floral centerpiece. Lei and her colleagues suggest that if a “Bodhi image” does not have to display the earth-touching mudra, like the case of Kunfo Monastery, then the piece from Tuoshan can also be considered as a “Bodhi image.”⁴⁷¹

The “Bodhi image” was also included in early esoteric practices. In Divākara’s translation of *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* (T. 0970), in a repentance ritual that precedes the making of the altar, Śākyamuni instructs that the participants should face east and use a “Bodhi image.” It reads,

The Buddha told Indra that humans were born with the sins of committing ten evil deeds, five wicked crimes, and four grave offenses (*pārājika*). Since they only rely on the bad karma, after death [they] will certainly fall into *Avīci* hell and suffer various great afflictions. For many kalpas, when each kalpa has been exhausted, they will be reborn again. If they fall into the paths of animals, or any types of birds or beasts, they will repeat [sufferings] in these evil paths and find no rescue. On the fifteenth day of the month, such a person should be [positioned] in front of a Bodhi image, use a golden or silver vessel that could hold one *sheng*, fill it with purified water and place it inside the altar. Receiving the bodhisattva precepts, upholding abstinence, and remaining in a purified state, [a person should situate himself] on the western side of the altar and face east towards an image. Burn incense, pay obeisance, fall on one’s right knee, and continuously chant. With utmost sincerity, begin the ceremony by chanting this *dhāraṇī* 1,008 times without interruptions. Then sprinkle the water [placed inside the altar] to the four directions, the above, and the below. Make a vow that all will attain the purified state. After finishing this ritual, the person would be released from the bad karma that would lead to the paths of hells, animals, and hungry ghosts. All sinful deeds will be eliminated.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Lei Yuhua et al., *Chuanbei fojiao shiku he moya zaoxiang yanjiu*, 401-402.

⁴⁷² I consulted Michelle Wang’s translation. See Wang, “Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China,” 193.

佛告天帝若人生來具造十惡五逆四重根本等罪。自惟乘此惡業。命終之後必定當墮阿鼻地獄受諸大苦。經于多劫劫盡更生。若墮畜生雜類禽獸。循環惡道無復救護。是人應當白月十五日在菩提像前。以金銀器可受一升。盛好淨水安置壇內。受菩薩戒持齋潔淨。於壇西畔面東向像。燒香禮拜右跪繫念。至誠啓白誦此陀羅尼呪滿一千八遍。於其中間不得間斷。而以是水散灑四方及以上下。願令一切同得清淨。作是法已如上惡業應入地獄畜生餓鬼便得解脫。一切罪報悉皆消滅。⁴⁷³

Drawing from this passage, Michelle Wang assumed that the freestanding LGT South Jeweled Buddha represented the “Bodhi image” mentioned by Divākara.⁴⁷⁴ While rituals centering on *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī* could well have been performed inside LGT Central and South, the appearance of the “Bodhi image” cannot be determined, given the diverse range of images the term can signify.⁴⁷⁵

These examples show that the “Bodhi image” in medieval textual accounts refer to different icons. In this light, although the inscription of Qianfoya, composed between 710 and 712, identified a jeweled Buddha with earth touching mudra as both a “Bodhi image” and a copy after the Mahabodhi original, not all jeweled Buddhas in China should be considered in the same two categories.⁴⁷⁶ I propose that the three freestanding statues at Longmen were among the earliest jeweled Buddhas in China; after the invention of the icon at Longmen, the associations with the Mahabodhi legend and with the title of “Bodhi image” were established during the spread and duplication of the icon in China.

5.5. Mahāvairocana or Uṣṇīṣavijayā

⁴⁷³ T0970, vol. 19, 0361a13–a24.

⁴⁷⁴ Wang, *Maṇḍalas in the Making*, 38; “Changing Conceptions of Mandala in Tang China,” 195.

⁴⁷⁵ LGT Central and South Grottoes are among the first excavated in the Eastern Hills of Longmen and, unlike later cave-shrines in Wanfogou 萬佛溝, they open to the west. As a result, when one enters inside the grottoes and looks at the main Buddha on the western wall, one would automatically face to the east, fitting to the requirement of chanting *Uṣṇīṣa-vijaya-dhāraṇī*.

⁴⁷⁶ The statue in Cave 366 of Qianfoya is the only piece that bears an explicit reference to the Mahabodhi original. See Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al. eds. *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, vol. 1, p. 105.

5.5.1. Comparisons with Scriptures

A second theory regarding the identity of bejeweled Buddhas with earth-touching mudra in medieval China argues that they represented Mahāvairocana (*Bilu zhe'na*, 毘盧遮那), or his variant form known as the Buddha-Corona, or Uṣṇīṣavijayā (*Foding* 佛頂). Quite a few historians of art, including Angela Howard, Henrik H. Sørensen, Chang Qing, Li Wensheng, and Gong Dazhong support categorizing the LGT South jeweled Buddha as either the Buddha-Corona or Mahāvairocana.⁴⁷⁷ Yet among them, only Howard attempted at a brief analysis on such identification, by citing the *Sutra on the Collection of Dhāraṇī* (*Tuoluoni jijing* 陀羅尼集經, T 0901), translated by Atikūṭa (Adiquduo 阿地瞿多, fl. seventh century) in 654, in which an image of the Buddha-Corona is described as wearing jewelry. However, she did not explain the identity of the so-named Buddha-Corona.⁴⁷⁸

The most detailed analysis on the relationship between jeweled Buddhas, the Buddha-Corona, and Mahāvairocana comes from Luo Shiping. Regarding the renovation of the jeweled Buddha from Cave 366 of Qianfoya, Luo noticed that an inscription of 924 called the statue Mahāvairocana, a name that was not in popular use when the statue was first made between 710 and 712. Trying to understand the reason behind this tenth-century identification, Luo argued that the jeweled Buddha of Qianfoya represented the Buddha-Corona, or Uṣṇīṣavijayā, at the beginning and was perceived as Mahāvairocana after the latter title became popular.⁴⁷⁹ Before 710, the title of the Buddha-Corona, as Luo proposed, had already been used in the *Sutra on the*

⁴⁷⁷ Angela Howard, “Buddha Vairocana,” in *China: dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD*, eds., James C. Y. Watt and Prudence Oliver Harper (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 300. Henrik H. Sørensen, “Esoteric Buddhist Art Under the Tang,” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, Charles D. Orzech et al. eds., 402–403. Chang Qing, “Shilun Longmen chu Tang mijiao diaoke,” 335–360. Li Wensheng, “Longmen Tang dai mizong zaoxiang,” *Wenwu* (1991), no. 1: 61–64. Gong Dazhong, *Longmen shiku yishu*, 176–177.

⁴⁷⁸ Howard, “Buddha Vairocana,” in *China: dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD*, 300.

⁴⁷⁹ Luo, “Guangyuan Qianfoya puti ruixiang kao,” 54–56.

Collection of Dhāraṇī. The passage that both Howard and Luo referred to gives a detailed description of the Buddha-Corona, reading:

At that time, the Buddha, the World Honored One, preached the Dharma of Uṣṇīṣavijayā for all present at the assembly. “This Dharma was taught by all Buddhas from ten directions of three time period. I now again preach this Dharma for all.

If one was to practice [this Dharma], install a statue of the Buddha-Corona in a purified room. As for the method of making the statue, [the statue] sits in a lotus position on a lotus of seven jewels. At the bottom of the lotus seat there are two lions, each seated on a lotus. [To make] the Buddha’s right hand, extend the arm and place the hand on the right knee with the palm facing upward. Fingers should point downward, placed upon the lotus. [To make] its left hand, bend the arm, keep the palm facing upward, and place it horizontally beneath the navel. Each of the two arms of the Buddha wears three seven-jeweled bracelets. The Buddha’s neck also wears seven-jeweled necklaces. The Buddha’s head wears a seven-jeweled heavenly crown. The Buddha’s body is in true gold color, wearing an ochre kāṣāya.

To the Buddha’s right, install an Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva, with the right arm bended upwards, holding a white fan, and the left arm extending downward, holding a water jar. In the opening of the jar, put a lotus flower. The top of the flower is as tall as the bodhisattva’s head, close to his forehead.

To the Buddha’s left, install an image of Vajragarbha Bodhisattva. Its right arm is bended towards the shoulder, with the hand holding a white fan. In the palm of its left hand, install a vajra. One end [of the vajra] stands on the arm, facing outward.

時佛世尊爲諸會衆說佛頂法。廣此法是十方三世一切諸佛所說。我今亦復廣爲一切說如是法。

若欲行者。於淨室中安置佛頂像。其作像法。於七寶華上結加趺坐。其華座底戴二師子。其二師子坐蓮華上。其佛右手者。申臂仰掌當右脚膝上。指頭垂下到於華上。其左手者。屈臂仰掌。向臍下橫著。其佛左右兩手臂上。各著三箇七寶瓔珞。其佛頸中亦著七寶瓔珞。其佛頭頂上作七寶天冠。其佛身形作真金色。被赤袈裟。

其佛右邊作觀自在菩薩，右手屈臂向上把白拂，左手申臂向下把澡罐。其罐口中置於蓮華，其華端直至菩薩頂，臨於額前。其佛左邊作金剛藏菩薩像，像右手屈臂向肩上，手執白拂，左手掌中立金剛杵，其一端者從臂上向外立著。⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ T 0901, vol. 18, 0785c15–786a1.

Luo observed that the textual description compares closely to the jeweled Buddha of Qianfoya and the reliefs from Qibaotai. These statues not only display the same hand gesture, necklace, and crown, but are also flanked by two bodhisattvas.⁴⁸¹ However, this interpretation is challenged by Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, who surveyed the jeweled Buddha in Sichuan area and argued that the combination of the Buddha-Corona and Avalokitêśvara and Vajragarbha is not found in any of the Sichuan examples.⁴⁸²

As for the transition from the Buddha-Corona to Mahāvairocana, Luo's article from 1991 cited a text ascribed to Śubhakarasiṃha (Shanwuwei 善無畏, 637–735), the *Foding zunshengsin podiyu zhuan yezhang chusanjie bimi san shen fogue san xidi chenyan yigui* (佛頂尊勝心破地獄轉業障出三界祕密三身佛果三種悉地真言儀軌, T 906) in which Uṣṇīṣavijayā was interpreted as the body of Mahāvairocana.⁴⁸³ In 1998, however, a study by the historian Chen Jinhua showed that the text ascribed to Śubhakarasiṃha was likely a Japanese fabrication. He argued that the text was written in Japan to legitimize the lineage of Saichō.⁴⁸⁴ This view is further supported by Charles D. Orzech who added that the text was not included in Chinese catalogues or in the Dunhuang documents.⁴⁸⁵ This later discovery cast further doubt to Luo's earlier interpretation.

Regarding the jeweled Buddha on Leigutai, the Taiwanese art historian Li Yumin also disagreed with interpreting them as Mahāvairocana or the Buddha-Corona. Li insists that the iconography of the LGT South jeweled Buddha does not comply with the description in

⁴⁸¹ Luo, "Guangyuan Qianfoya puti ruixiang kao," 54-56.

⁴⁸² Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, "Zailun Sichuan de puti ruixiang," 147.

⁴⁸³ Luo, "Guangyuan Qianfoya puti ruixiang kao," 56. Citing T 906, vol. 18, 913c26-27. 由此當知，尊勝佛頂者，即是毘盧遮那如來身，即是三部佛頂身。My romanization of the title of T 906 follows Charles D. Orzech, "After Amoghavajra: Esoteric Buddhism in the Late Tang," in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, Charles D. Orzech et al. eds., 326.

⁴⁸⁴ Jinhua Chen, "The Construction of Early Tendai Esoteric Buddhism: The Japanese Provenance of Saichō's Transmission Documents and Three Esoteric Buddhist Apocrypha Attributed to Śubhakarasiṃha." *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* (1998), no. 21: 21–76.

⁴⁸⁵ Orzech, "After Amoghavajra: Esoteric Buddhism in the Late Tang," 327.

Atikūṭa's *Sutra on the Collection of Dhāraṇī*. According to Li, the hand of LGT South jeweled Buddha should turn the palm inward, since it is in the earth-touching mudra. In contrast, the text requests that the palm of the Buddha's right hand should "face upward." In addition, Li also observes that the flanking bodhisattvas, who are required in the text, are absent from the freestanding jeweled Buddhas at Longmen.⁴⁸⁶

5.5.2. Later Visual Examples

While none of these arguments can be settled, scholars are still drawn to the interpretation of Mahāvairocana, probably because Mahāvairocana was represented with jewelry in the visual materials after the eighth century. Among the reliquary caskets found in the crypt of Famen Monastery outside Xi'an is a golden box (Fig. 5.31), dated by the inscription on the bottom to the sixteenth of the tenth month in 871 (December 1, 871). Each visible side of the box is decorated with one of the five *dhyāni* Buddhas (i.e., Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, Amitābha, and Akṣobhya).⁴⁸⁷ All five Buddhas are represented with jeweled armlets, displaying variant mudras. Nevertheless, Mahāvairocana (Fig. 5.32) is represented on the lid, showing the "wisdom-fist" mudra (bodhyaṅgīmudrā, *zhiquan yin* 智拳印) and the jeweled Buddha on the side that displaying the earth-touching mudra should be identified as Akṣobhya (Fig. 5.31).⁴⁸⁸ A partial assembly of the five *dhyāni* Buddhas was again represented in bejeweled forms on a rounded stone base (Fig. 5.33) excavated from the ruin of the Xiangji Monastery 香積寺 in Xi'an, possibly made in the second half of the eighth century. The base shows four of the five *dhyāni* Buddhas, including a crowned Buddha with necklace, showing the "wisdom-fist"

⁴⁸⁶ Li Yumin, "Shi lun Tang dai xiang mo cheng dao shi zhuang shi fo," 62-63.

⁴⁸⁷ Henrik H. Sørensen, "Esoteric Buddhist Art Under the Tang," 406.

⁴⁸⁸ Wu Limin and Han Jinke, *Famensi digong Tangmi mantuoluo zhi yanjiu* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo fojiao wenhua chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1998), p. 218-221.

mudra.⁴⁸⁹ However, these examples from the eighth and ninth centuries cannot support the interpretation of the bejeweled Buddhas with earth-touching mudra from the late seventh century as Mahāvairocana.⁴⁹⁰

5.6. Crowned Buddhas from Central Asia

5.6.1. Reliefs in LGT South Grotto

In addition to the statue of Śākyamuni at Mahabodhi Monastery, the crowned Buddhas from Central Asia is another iconographic source for the three Jeweled Buddhas at Longmen. Dorothy Wong argues that the bejeweled Buddhas in China were a conflation of the famed Mahabodhi statue, and the crowned and caped Buddha that was popular in Afghanistan and the Greater Kashmir region in the seventh and the eighth centuries.⁴⁹¹ The evidence for Longmen stonemasons' knowledge of the Central Asia icon is found among the wall reliefs of jeweled Buddhas in LGT South Grotto (Fig. 5.34), one of the original locations for the freestanding jeweled Buddhas.⁴⁹² However, a close comparison between the wall reliefs and freestanding jeweled Buddhas show that whereas the former group simplified their Central Asian prototypes, the latter added highly distinctive details that were familiar to their contemporary audience in Tang China.

Measuring 8.13 m across, 6.15 cm deep, and 6.12 m high, LGT South Grotto features a lotus flower, now mostly ruined, in the ceiling, and about 746 small (34-36 cm) reliefs of

⁴⁸⁹ Rastelli ed., *China at the Court of the Emperors*, cat. 41 on p. 147 and p. 278.

⁴⁹⁰ Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping hold the same opinion. See Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, "Zailun Sichuan de puti ruixiang," *Gugong boquyuan yuankan* (2005), no. 6: 147-148.

⁴⁹¹ Dorothy Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission*, 90-94.

⁴⁹² Miki Kuno also supports that LGT South Grotto was the original location for Leigutai South Jeweled Buddha. See Kuno, "Longmen shiku Leigutai nandong, zhongdong shilun," 16.

jeweled seated Buddha on the walls. In the center of the floor is a shallow depression, 480 cm by 416 cm, where a stone platform has been placed.⁴⁹³

Some of the wall reliefs of jeweled Buddhas in LGT South Grotto compare closely to the contemporaneous icons from Central Asia. These reliefs of Buddhas (Fig. 5.35) either wear the single-shoulder robes with jeweled necklaces and armbands, or the distinctive three-or-four-pointed cape known as *chamail* that originated in Central Asia. Prior to the seventh century, the *chamail* cape also appears on men, women, and dancers in mural paintings from Ajanta and Bagh Caves, and on images of donors from Gandhara region and Xinjiang. According to the archaeologist and art historian Matteo Compareti, these early images of figures in the *chamail* cape likely represent Sogdians or Bactrians.⁴⁹⁴ Between the sixth and the seventh centuries, the *chamail* cape was found on Buddhist images; the examples include the mural of Bāmiyān (Fig. 5.36), a clay statue from Fondukistān (Fig. 5.37), and bronze and stone statues from Kashmir (Fig. 3.38).⁴⁹⁵ In the eighth century, the *chamail* cape was also represented at Panjikent, suggesting that it was known in Sogdiana in the eighth century.⁴⁹⁶

The appearance of the jeweled Buddhas with the *chamail* cape at Longmen was concurrent with the popularity of the icon in Central Asia. Although the exact dates of the Buddhist sites in the Hindu Kush are not known, the earliest projects were probably from the

⁴⁹³ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan, and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo, eds., vol. 1 of *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu, Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe; Longmen shuju, 2018), 35.

⁴⁹⁴ Matteo Compareti, "Some examples of Central Asian decorative elements in Ajanta and Bagh Indian Paintings," *The Silk Road* 12 (2014): 40-41. Also see Rebecca L. Twist, "Images of the Crowned Buddha along the Silk Road: Iconography and Ideology," *Humanities* 7 (2018), no. 4: 92-122.

⁴⁹⁵ Although there is no record of Chinese monks visiting Fondukistān Monastery, the Fondukistān bust is highly similar to the crowned Buddha statues from the Greater Kashmir region. The former is supported by two figures (only one survives) that emerge from beneath. Similar figures are also seen in the brass statue of crowned Buddha in Asia Society. For the crowned Buddha in the Greater Kashmir region, see Rob Linrothe, *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies* (New York and Evanston: Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University and Rubin Museum of Art, 2014), 31-63.

⁴⁹⁶ Compareti, "Some examples of Central Asian decorative elements in Ajanta and Bagh Indian Paintings," 40-41.

seventh century. The sites where images of crowned Buddha with the *chamail* cape were found, e.g., the fifty-five-meter Buddha Niche, Niche I, Niche E, and Cave S of Bāmiyān, Folādi, and Fondukistān, were probably from the second half of the seventh century and the eighth century. Specifically, a funerary urn was discovered beneath a niche of statues at the monastery of Fondukistān; among the coins discovered in the funerary urn, the latest was dated to 689. As a result, the famous bust of jeweled Buddha from Fondukistān was also dated after 689, probably around 700.⁴⁹⁷ The relief at Longmen was created almost at the same time, between 689 and 695. Among the crowned Buddhas from the Greater Kashmir area, two bronze pieces bear inscriptions that tell their dates of creation; both were made in April 714. The two became the points of reference for other similar pieces.⁴⁹⁸ When the reliefs of jeweled Buddhas were carved in LGT South Grotto at Longmen between 689 and 695, the similar iconography was produced in large numbers in the Hindu Kush and Kashmir region.

In theory, Longmen artists could have known of this *chamail* cape via the Sogdian community active in the area or via copies brought back by pilgrim monks, yet the former is less likely.⁴⁹⁹ Although the reliefs in LGT South Grotto outline the three-pointed shape that is characteristic of the *chamail* cape, the sculptors decorated the hem with connected balls that are the same as the chained necklace on the same statue. In contrast, the examples from Bāmiyān and Fondukistān clearly articulate the tassels attached to the cape. It appears that Longmen

⁴⁹⁷ Deborah Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmiyān: Buddhist Art and Culture of the Hindu Kush* (Naples, Rome: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, 1989), pp. 78, 82, and 86. Also see Susanne Novotny, “The Buddhist Monastery of Fondukistān, Afghanistan- A Reconstruction,” *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 2 (2007): 31-37.

⁴⁹⁸ Rob Linrothe, “What They Saw: Kāśmīra in the Eyes of Western Himalayans,” in *Collecting Paradise: Buddhist Art of Kashmir and Its Legacies*, 29-107 (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2015), 56.

⁴⁹⁹ For the Sogdian community at Longmen in the Tang, see Zhang Naizhu and Zheng Yaofeng, “Wenhua renlei xue shiyu xia yiluo he yan’an de Tangdai huren buluo: yi Longmen shiku xin faxian de Jingjiao yiku wei yuanqi (shang),” *Shikusi yanjiu* (2015), no.5: 154-174; and Zhang Naizhu and Zheng Yaofeng, “Wenhua renlei xue shiyu xia yiluo he yan’an de Tangdai huren buluo: yi Longmen shiku xin faxian de Jingjiao yiku wei yuanqi (xia),” *Shikusi yanjiu* (2016), no. 6: 255-299.

carvers mistook the tassels, which are evenly distributed along the hem in the Central Asian examples, for the jewels. A likely scenario is that they only saw a painting or a diagram, rather than the actual *chamail* cape.

5.6.2. Tang pilgrims to Central Asia

Tang pilgrims indeed visited the Hindu Kush and the Greater Kashmir region (present-day Srinagar and its immediate north), where the jeweled Buddhas with the *chamail* cape were popular in the seventh and eighth centuries.⁵⁰⁰ According to the art historian Deborah Klimburg-Salter, pilgrimage activities across the Hindu Kush took place as early as the 550s.⁵⁰¹ Xuanzang visited the famous site of Bāmiyān in 632 (CH: *fanyanna guo* 梵衍那國), followed by the kingdoms of Kāpiśa (CH: *bijia shijing guo*, 迦畢試境國, currently outside of Kabul, Afghanistan), Lampāka (CH: *lanbo guo*, 濫波國), and Nagarahāra (CH: *najie luohe guo*, 那揭羅喝國, currently Jalalabad, Afghanistan).⁵⁰² Although no subsequent pilgrims are reported to have visited Bāmiyān, except in 727 by the Silla monk Hyecho (CH: 慧超 or 惠超, 704–787), several monks trekked through other regions in the Hindu Kush and the Greater Kashmir region.⁵⁰³ In the biographical accounts of Tang pilgrims written by Yijing, while the majority took the maritime itineraries via Southeast Asia to reach India, three anonymous Tang pilgrims took the so-called “Northern Route” (*beidao* 北道) and reached Udyāna (also written as Uḍḍiyāna, CH:

⁵⁰⁰ Claudine Bautze-Picron, *The Jewelled Buddha from India to Burma* (New Delhi: Sanctum Book, 2010).

⁵⁰¹ Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmiyān*, p. 12.

⁵⁰² Huili and Yancong, *Da Tang da Ci'en si sanzang fashi zhuan*, T2053, vol., 50, 228c01-229b11. In addition to Xuanzang, the Silla monk Hyecho (704–787) offered the only other eyewitness account of Bāmiyān. See Yün-hua Jan, “South India in the VIII Century: Hui-Ch’ao’s Description Re-Examined,” *Oriens Extremus* 15, no. 2 (1968): 169–77; Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Hyecho’s Journey: The World of Buddhism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁵⁰³ Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmiyān*, p. 12; for the Silla monk Hyecho, see Yün-hua Jan, “South India in the VIII Century: Hui-Ch’ao’s Description Re-Examined,” *Oriens Extremus* 15, no. 2 (1968): 169–77; Donald S. Lopez Jr. *Hyecho’s Journey: The World of Buddhism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

烏長那國, in the Swat Valley in northwestern Pakistan). This “Northern Route” was described by Daoxuan as one of the three overland itineraries between China and India.⁵⁰⁴ Written as *Uttarā-patha* in Sanskrit, the “Northern Route” in Buddhist literature loosely referred to the area from Rajasthan and the Punjab to Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. Epigraphic evidence, including rock edicts, pillar inscriptions, and petroglyphs, attest that this “Northern Route” consisted of a flexible group of interrelated pathways that were populated by residents and travelers. From the fourth to the seventh centuries, a diverse range of languages appeared on the “Northern Route,” including varieties of Brāhmī, Middle Iranian languages, Chinese, Tibetan, Hebrew, and Syriac.⁵⁰⁵ In addition to the three anonymous monks, two Tang pilgrims made their ways to the Hindu Kush after reaching India first, including Daolin 道琳 who visited Kāśmīra (CH: 羯濕彌羅, the Valley of Kashmir), Udyāna, and Kāpiśa, and Zhihong 智弘 who visited Kāśmīra with Daolin.⁵⁰⁶ Beyond the few names recorded in Chinese hagiographies, many more travelers may have travelled between the Tang capitals and Central Asia.⁵⁰⁷

5.7. LGT South Grotto

5.7.1. A Universe from *the Flower Garland Sutra*

Regarding the religious identity of the reliefs of bejeweled Buddhas in LGT South Grotto, I propose that they represented the Huayan view of the Lotus Store World Ocean, the

⁵⁰⁴ The other two are the “Eastern route” (*dongdao* 東道) and “Central route” (*zhongdao* 中道). Daoxuan, *Shijia fangzhi*, T 2088, vol. 51, 950c09-952b21.

⁵⁰⁵ Jason Neelis, “Overland Shortcuts for the Transmission of Buddhism,” in *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World*, eds., Susan E. Alcock, John Bodel, and Richard J. A. Talbert, 12-31 (Chichester; New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 13-14, and 18.

⁵⁰⁶ The transliterations of the names of these countries are based on Wang Bangwei’s annotation. Yijing, *Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan jiaozhu*, ed., Wang Bangwei (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988). For a summary of the routes, see pp. 247-252.

⁵⁰⁷ Zürcher, Erik, “Buddhism Across Boundaries: The Foreign Input,” in *Collection of Essays 1993: Buddhism Across Boundaries – Chinese Buddhism and the Western Regions*, eds., J. McRae and J. Nattier, 1-59 (Taipei: Fo Guang Shan Foundation, 1999), 18.

dwelling of Buddha Vairocana as articulated in various scriptures related to Huayan Buddhism, including the *Flower Garland Sutra* and the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*. Unlike the Central Grotto, which employed the undecorated small Buddhas on its wall surface, the South Grotto is covered with bejeweled Buddhas instead. Miki Kuno argued that these relief jeweled Buddhas represent the setting in the *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, which also inspired the iconography of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. She also cited another art historian Akira Miyaji's opinion that the unconnected lotus seats, upon which the relief jeweled Buddhas sit, represents the lotus flowers that emanate from light, as described in Mahayana scriptures such as *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* (如來藏經, T 666 and T 667) and *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (大智度論, T 1509).⁵⁰⁸ I agree with both interpretations that the small Buddhas were manifestations from a central deity. Yet they cannot explain why an unprecedented iconography of jeweled Buddhas was employed to articulate these classical texts, when an established iconography, i.e., the one of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, had already been installed at Longmen. In her dissertation, Yen Chuan-Ying briefly suggested that the wall reliefs of numerous Buddhas in Leigutai grottoes represent the cosmos of the *Flower Garland Sutra*.⁵⁰⁹ With a close examination of this more recent scripture, I propose that it indeed provided the textual basis of the relief jeweled Buddhas in LGT South Grotto.

In the earlier *Brahmā's Net Sūtra*, the dimension of time was not emphasized. The scripture named the world of Vairocana as the Lotus Platform Store World (*lianhua tai zang shijie* 蓮花臺藏世界). Inside, billions of Śākyamunis listened to Vairocana's preaching,

⁵⁰⁸ Kuno, "Longmen shiku Leigutai nandong, zhongdong shilun," 9. Citing Akira Miyaji, "Uchūnushi to shitenō Shaka-butsu: Indo kara Chūō-Ajia, Chūgoku he," in *Mandara to rinne: Sono shisō to bijutsu*, ed., Musashi Tachikawa, 235-269 (Tokyo: Kōsei Shuppan, 1993).

⁵⁰⁹ Yen, "The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels," 94. Yen also argues that the bejeweled Buddha at Longmen and from Xi'an represent the transformation of Śākyamuni into Vairocana, pp. 92-95.

emanated light, rose from their seats, offered flowers to Vairocana, and went to deliver lectures under the Bodhi tree and other ten different places.⁵¹⁰ The text is not clear as to whether the lectures took place in succession or at the same time. In contrast, in the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the concurrence of the lectures was repeatedly highlighted.

The *Flower Garland Sutra* constructs a comprehensive worldview that encompasses multiple temporal-spatial units. The entire sutra enumerates nine (or eight in the sixty-fascicle version) simultaneous lectures given by, or with the power of, Buddha Vairocana at the time of his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. While the nine assemblies took place at the same time, their locations include seven different places, starting with two earthly realms: the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya and the so-called Hall of Universal Light (Pu guangming dian 普光明殿) in Magadha. They are followed by four heavens of the Realm of Desire: Trāyastriṃśa, the adorned hall in the Heaven of the god Yāma, Tusita Heaven, and Para-nirmita Heaven. The last assembly returned to the earthly realm, to the lecture hall of Jetavana Anāthapiṇḍada-ārāma. Accordingly, Vairocana Buddha visited all these places without leaving the Bodhi tree.

In the universe constructed by the *Flower Garland Sutra*, Vairocana was present in the Lotus Store World Ocean and under the Bodhi tree at the same time. The literary device that conveyed the coterminous nature of the two realms was a certain “King of the Wish-granting Jewel” (*moni baowang* 摩尼寶王). In the eighty-fascicle versions of the *Flower Garland Sutra*, the King of the Wish-granting Jewel first appeared in the beginning of the first assembly, when the Buddha just attained awakening on the indestructible earth of Bodhi-site in Bodhgaya, under the lofty Bodhi tree of jeweled trunk and branches. The scripture says that on the Buddha’s

⁵¹⁰ The lectures by the manifested Śākyamunis started under the Bodhi tree, followed by the Hall of Wonderful Light 妙光堂, five of the heavens of the desire realm (i.e., Trāyastriṃśa, the Yāma Heaven, the Tusita Heaven, Nir māṇa-rati Heaven, and the Para-nirmita Heaven), and ended at the four meditation heavens in the realm of form. T 1484, vol., 24, 1003b10-c7.

seat, the King of the Wish-granting Jewel created a net. The dust of the net was shaken when the Buddha emanated radiant light like the rising sun; from each dust, countless Buddhas appeared. With the divine power of the various Buddhas, the illuminated net of the King of the Wish-granting Jewel reflected the entirety of the *dharmadhātu*.⁵¹¹ At the same moment, the Bodhi tree also emanated lights, and from the lights rained wish-granting jewels. Various bodhisattvas resided in the wish-granting jewels, and many more congregated around the Buddha.⁵¹² As the light emanated from the Buddha illuminated the one hundred million Buddha lands and the myriad world-ocean of ten directions, bodhisattvas of these world-oceans were able to see the sublime Lotus Store World Ocean, where a huge lotus flower made of jewels and gold suddenly appeared in front of the Buddha.⁵¹³ The magnificent lotus flower manifested the miraculous appearance of various Buddhas, with “King of the Wish-granting Jewel being manifested in their bodies.”⁵¹⁴ The ability to be manifested in various Buddha bodies indicates that the “King of the Wish-granting Jewel” refers to a Buddha, not a secondary deity.⁵¹⁵

In addition to this deified presence of wish-granting jewels, the *Flower Garland Sutra* also imagined the entire Lotus Store World Ocean as a net of the very same jewels. According to

⁵¹¹ T279, v. 10, 1c15-25. 摩尼寶王而為其網……摩尼光雲，互相照耀；十方諸佛，化現珠玉……復以諸佛威神所持，演說如來廣大境界，妙音遐暢，無處不及。

⁵¹² T279, v. 10, 1c4-9. 其菩提樹高顯殊特：金剛為身，瑠璃為幹；眾雜妙寶以為枝條；寶葉扶踈，垂蔭如雲；寶華雜色，分枝布影，復以摩尼而為其果，含輝發焰，與華間列。其樹周圍咸放光明，於光明中雨摩尼寶，摩尼寶內，有諸菩薩，其眾如雲，俱時出現。

⁵¹³ T279, v. 10, 29c14-22. 爾時，佛前有大蓮華，忽然出現。其華具有十種莊嚴，一切蓮華所不能及。所謂：眾寶間錯以為其莖；摩尼寶王以為其藏；法界眾寶普作其葉；諸香摩尼而作其鬚；閻浮檀金莊瑩其臺；妙網覆上，光色清淨；於一念中，示現無邊諸佛神變；普能發起一切音聲；摩尼寶王影現佛身；於音聲中，普能演說一切菩薩所修行願。

⁵¹⁴ T279, v. 10, 29c20-21. 摩尼寶王影現佛身

⁵¹⁵ In the sixty-fascicle transition, while the king of mani jewels did not appear in the scene of Buddha's enlightenment, a certain king of jewels (baowang, 寶王) placed the net above the magnificent lotus flower in the Lotus Store World Ocean. See T 278, vol. 9, 407c26-408a6. 爾時，世尊欲令一切菩薩大眾，知佛無量無邊境界自在法門故，放眉間白毫相一切寶色燈明雲光，名一切菩薩慧光觀察照十方藏。此光遍照一切佛刹，於一念中，皆悉普照一切法界；於一切世界，雨一切佛諸大願雲，顯現普賢菩薩，示大眾已，還從足下相輪中入於彼。復有大蓮華生，以眾寶為莖，一切寶王為莊嚴藏，其葉遍覆一切法界；一切寶香莊嚴其鬚，閻浮檀金以為其臺。

the scripture, the Lotus Store World Ocean consists of eleven “wind-wheels” 風輪 on its vertical axis. Horizontally, it is encircled by a Cakravāla 輪圍山, the double concentric mountains.

Within the mountain range, there are fragrant oceans that are spread around like a net of wish-granting jewels. At the bottom of the central fragrant ocean is a banner topped with a wish-granting jewel, from which all bodhisattvas manifest their forms.⁵¹⁶ This view of a splendid world filled with jewels and their reflections seemed to be represented by the numerous jeweled Buddha reliefs in LGT South Grotto.

Beyond the many bejeweled Buddhas on the wall, the domed ceiling of a lotus flower in LGT South was also a part of the representation of the Lotus Store World Ocean (Fig. 5.43). Whereas the lotus ceiling is common in Longmen, in LGT South, visual separation of between the ceiling and wall space was eliminated. The visual effect was achieved by the pendentives that connect the four walls to the ceiling, which allowed the reliefs of jeweled Buddha to spread from the walls to the ceiling. As a result, visitors experienced the space in its entirety. A similarly immersive experience is documented in Fazang’s *Huayan jing chuanji*, in which an account from the year of 680 described a dream travel to a majestic space that appeared highly similar to the interior of LGT South Grotto. It tells that a monk Facheng 法誠 constructed a Huayan Hall (Huayang tang 華嚴堂) with donated paintings from a lay donor. The paintings were made because the donor spent a night at the place of an apothecary in Luoyang and dreamed of being

⁵¹⁶ From the banner rises a huge lotus flower. Above the lotus there are twenty layers of worlds. The first layer has one *buddha-kṣetra* 佛刹, the second layer has two, and the topmost layer has twenty *buddha-kṣetra*. Surrounding this great lotus flower are ten more second fragrant oceans, each containing twenty layers filled with *buddha-kṣetra*. Outside of this circle, there are another ten more circles, each containing ten fragrant oceans. The ten fragrant oceans most adjacent to the Cakravāla are the world of Vajraketu 金剛幢世界 and the world of saḥā 娑婆世界. See T 279, v. 10, 39a16-44a1.

guided to a room which was so big that the walls could not be seen. The text describes how, in the dream, that,

[the donor] looked up and saw the decorated coffered ceiling with a hanging lotus flower [emerging from] a rounded spring. It was exceptionally beautiful, adorned with golden flowers and square mirrors. On the banners were various images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. From midair came a voice, saying that ‘this is the site of Huayan practice.

仰視但見漪井垂蓮。圓泉覆海。金花方鏡。殊勝莊嚴。幡上皆有諸佛菩薩形像。聞空中有聲曰。此是花嚴道場也。⁵¹⁷

After waking up, the lay donor vowed to recreate what he saw in the dream. He invited painters and used fragrant water to purify all the pigments.⁵¹⁸ When a visitor stands in the middle of LGT South Grotto and looks up, the ceiling is indeed occupied with the carved lotus flower, as if one was looking at an upside-down lotus pond. Since this dream was also reported to have taken place in Luoyang, donors of Leigutai may have found inspiration in this tale.

When Longmen donors and monastic advisers from the late seventh century placed the freestanding jeweled Buddha on the central altar of LGT South Grotto, the space bore a close connection with the description of the Lotus Store World Ocean in the *Flower Garland Sutra*. The emanated Buddha from the great lotus flower, reflecting the shape of the “King of the Wish-granting Jewel” are represented by the reliefs of jeweled Buddhas on the wall. The Buddha who was both under the bodhi tree and at the center of billions of Buddha lands was represented by the freestanding jeweled Buddha. Together, the reliefs and freestanding jeweled Buddha seemed to recreate the majestic Lotus Store World Ocean. In this light, I propose that the three freestanding figures represent Buddha Vairocana as articulated in the *Flower Garland Sutra*, who, in the same moment, attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree, ascended various

⁵¹⁷ Fazang, *Huayan jing chuanji*, T 2073, vol. 51, 172c19-21.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., T 2073, vol. 51, 172c15-28. This passage is a supplementary note to an earlier passage. Both recount the same story but with different number of details. The earlier passage is on pp. 171a20-b3.

celestial palaces to deliver lectures to advanced bodhisattvas, and maintained his presence in the Lotus Store World Ocean.

5.7.2. The Renewed Interest in *The Flower Garland Sutra*

When constructions of LGT South Grotto were in progress between 689 and 695, Luoyang witnessed a new surge of interest in the *Flower Garland Sutra*, upon which the Huayan School of Buddhism is built. While the sixty-fascicle translation of the sutra by Buddhahadra (359–429) was still in circulation, people like Fazang believed it to be incomplete. New excerpts of the *Flower Garland Sutra* were brought to Chinese capitals in the 680s, followed by the comprehensive translation project led by Śikṣānanda (652–710) from 695 to 699, in which Fazang also participated. Carried out in Luoyang, the latter project occupied the most elite monks in both Luoyang and Chang’an. It produced the eighty-fascicle version of the *Flower Garland Sutra* that is still in use today. To this translation, Wu Zhao herself penned the preface.

In the minds of Chinese Buddhists in the late seventh century, the *Flower Garland Sutra* was compiled by bodhisattva Manjusri, who received the teaching from the assembly in the Lotus Store World Ocean. After the Buddha’s extinction, the sutra was then hidden in the nāga king’s palace because non-Buddhists drove sages of the Great Vehicle into reclusion during this early post-Buddha age.⁵¹⁹ While the geographical texts of the Tang do not offer a consistent view of the location of the palace, or whether there was more than one palace, Xuanzang reported that one nāga king dwelled in the lake of Anavatapta to the south of Gandha-mādana.⁵²⁰ Six hundred years later, accordingly, Nāgārjuna (c. second century CE) saw it in nāga king’s palace, memorized it, and spread it to the realm of human beings. This Nāgārjuna legend was first

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., T 2073, vol. 51, 153b19-22. 佛初去後賢聖隨隱。異道競興。乏大乘器攝此經。在海龍王宮。六百餘年未傳於世。龍樹菩薩入龍宮。日見此淵府。誦之在心。將出傳授。

⁵²⁰ Xuanzang, *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T 2087, vol., 51, 869b7-11.

circulated by the Sui-dynasty monk Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) and cited both by Fazang and by Empress Wu in her preface to the eighty-fascicle translation.⁵²¹

Just as the new mode of jeweled representation was also introduced from Central Asia, the fragments of the *Flower Garland Sutra* were introduced to China from Central Asia. Modern scholars agree that the *Flower Garland Sutra* is a compilation of a number of separate sutras, most, if not all, brought to China from Khotan. In Fazang's time, new Sanskrit manuscripts were also emerging from Central Asia, leading to the translation project in Luoyang. Fazang recounted that Huayan manuscripts were enshrined by the king of Pañcāla, about 2000 *li* southeast to Khotan, and stored in a mountain twenty miles from that country.⁵²² Two monks with royal support were said to bring more passages of the sutra to Luoyang. In 680s, Divākara, who was born in Central India and had lived and studied in Mahabodhi and Nalanda Monasteries, offered the text of the sutra's eighth lecture assembly to Fazang, which was absent from Buddhahadra's translation.⁵²³ In 695, Śikṣānanda brought a Sanskrit version of the Huayan Sutra from Khotan to Empress Wu's court, after which the eighty-fascicle translation project was initiated. When Śikṣānanda gave a Huayan lecture in Great Biankong Monastery in Luoyang, Empress Wu was said to visit. In the next four years, the most prominent monks in Empress Wu's capital came to

⁵²¹ Imre Hamar, "The History of the Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra: Shorter and Larger Texts," in *Reflecting Mirrors: Perspectives on Huayan Buddhism*, Imre Hamar, ed., 139-167 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 152, and note 7.

⁵²² Fazang, vol. 1 of *Huayan jing chuanji*, T 2073, vol. 51, 153b23-c5, citing *Kaihuang sanbao lu* from 597. 開皇三寶錄云。昔于闐東南二千餘里。有遮拘槃國。彼王歷葉敬重大乘。諸國名僧入其境者。竝皆試練…又此國東南。可二十餘里有山甚嶮。其內置華嚴，大集，方等，寶積，楞伽，方廣，舍利弗陀羅尼，華聚陀羅尼，都薩羅藏，摩訶般若大雲等。凡一十二部。皆十萬偈。國法相傳。防護守掌。

⁵²³ *Ibid*, T 2073, vol. 51, 154c18-21. 時有賢首法師。先以華嚴為業。每慨斯經闕而未備。往就問之云。齋第八會文。今來至此。賢首遂與三藏對校。

his aid, including Bodhiruci (562–727) from South India, Yijing, and Fazang. The imperial-sponsored project was completed in 699, on the eighth day of the tenth month.⁵²⁴

5.7.3. Rebirth in the Lotus Store World Ocean

I argue that the overall design of LGT South was intended to facilitate the visualization of the Lotus Store World Ocean. Its wall reliefs create a unified vision, consisting of simply the jeweled Buddha and the lotus ceiling. The immersive design allowed visitors to envision themselves as a part of the space inhabited by the numerous Buddhas that emanated from Vairocana. Just as obtaining a vision of Buddhas in LGT Central Grotto provided confirmation that the repentance ritual was successful, a vision of the Lotus Store World before the moment of death also assured that one would be reborn in that realm.

As a measure to promote Huayan Buddhism, Fazang compiled many tales of miraculous events in which learned monks aspired to be reborn in the Lotus Store World Ocean. All documented in *Huayan jing chuanji*, one of them was contemporary to Fazang, told by monk Baochen 薄塵 (d. after 687), who recommended the ordination of Fazang.⁵²⁵ According to Baochen, a certain Kuo Shenliang 廓神亮 from Yongzhou 雍州 said that he previously died of disease but revived. Before he came back to life, he was led to pay obeisance to Maitreya in Tusita Heaven, where one bodhisattva asked why he did not learn Huayan. After Kuo replied that no one taught him, the bodhisattva affirmed that there were teachers who could teach Huayan. Presumably, after he came back to life, Kuo came to Baochen or Fazang to seek

⁵²⁴ *Ibid*, T 2073, vol. 51, 155a12-19. 天后明揚佛日。敬重大乘。以華嚴舊經處會未備。遠聞于闐有斯梵本。發使求訪。并請譯人。實叉與經。同臻帝闕。以天后證聖元年乙未。於東都大內遍空寺。譯華嚴經。天后親臨法座。煥發序文。自運仙毫。首題名品。南印度沙門菩提流志。沙門義淨。同宣梵文。後付沙門復禮法藏等。於佛授記寺。譯至聖曆二年己亥功畢。

⁵²⁵ For a discussion on the mentorship of Baochen, see Jinhua Chen, *Philosopher, Practitioner, Politician: The Many Lives of Fazang (643-712)* (Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 81-83.

teaching on Huayan.⁵²⁶ Since this Kuo Shenliang went to Tusita Heaven but did not pass away, the tale implied that he would later aspire to be reborn in the Lotus Store World Ocean.

Another tale, concerning monk Linggan 靈幹 (535–612), also propagated the view that a rebirth in Tusita Heaven cannot guarantee a release from the cycle of rebirth, and thus the Lotus Store World should be the ultimate destination. It is said that at the age of seventeen, Linggan recovered from a coma and reported that he had visited Tusita Heaven. In Tusita, two Buddhist teachers, seated on lotus platform, proclaimed that Linggan would be reborn there later.⁵²⁷ At the age of eighteen, he learned of the ten stages (bhūmis) of the bodhisattva path. Afterwards, he often contemplated the Lotus Store World Ocean and Tusita Heaven. Towards the end of his life, he told his disciple that an envoy “led me to Tusita Heaven. But since the joys of heaven would not be permanent, [one reborn there] would finally fall back into the cycle of rebirth. It is the Lotus Store that I desire.” ...引至兜率天宮，而天樂非久，終墜輪迴。蓮華藏是所圖也。 Soon, his breath paused for a while, before coming back to consciousness. “What did you see?” the disciple asked. Linggan replied that “I saw a vast body of water that filled [the space], and a lotus flower as huge as a cartwheel. I sat on the wheel, and my prayer was fulfilled.” 見大水遍滿，華如車輪，幹坐其上，所願足矣。 After finishing this speech, Linggan passed away.⁵²⁸ Beyond propagating the Lotus Store World as the superior destination, Linggan’s episode also emphasized the need to obtain a vision of the realm before the moment of death.

A figurative view of the Lotus Store World, as opposed to an abstract idea, was also propagated by Fazang’s teacher Zhiyan 智儼 (602–668), who was also a Huayan master. In his

⁵²⁶ Chen Jinhua believes the tale was intended to highlight Fazang’s ability in preaching the *Flower Garland Sutra*. Ibid., p. 19.

⁵²⁷ One of the two teachers was monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) and the other is referred to by the name Xiu 休.

⁵²⁸ Fazang, *Huayan jing chuanji*, T 2073, vol. 51, 161b1-22.

own writing, Zhiyan preached that the rebirths in Amitabha's Pure Land or Maitreya's Tusita Heaven were only temporary. In the Pure Land, Amitabha would lead the reborn into the Lotus Store World.⁵²⁹ Fazang further informed that before Zhiyan passed away, he told his disciples that "now I will go to the Pure Land temporarily and tour the Lotus Store World afterwards. You all should follow me and share this aspiration." 今當暫往淨方。後遊蓮華藏世界。汝等隨我。亦同此志。 In Zhiyan's view, the Lotus Store World could be represented, since Fazang also told that Zhiyan "created a diagram of painting of the assembly in the Lotus Store World. To the east of the river [Yellow River], such a thing had never been heard of, from the ancient to the present." 造蓮華藏世界圖一鋪。蓋河之左。古今未聞者也。 Since no information is provided on the river or the image, I speculate that this image looked somewhat similar to the aforementioned vision of Linggan that was also reported by Fazang.⁵³⁰ Much like the diagram of painting made by Zhiyan, the interior design in LGT South Grotto provided a tangible view of the Lotus Store World of Vairocana that would facilitate with a desirable rebirth propagated by Huayan masters.

Placed in LGT South Grotto, the three freestanding figures could represent Buddha Vairocana from the *Flower Garland Sutra*, who, in the same moment, attained enlightenment under the bodhi tree as Śākyamuni and maintained his presence in the Lotus Store World Ocean. However, a visual representation of the Śākyamuni-Vairocana union had already existed at Longmen- the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, which did not employ the element of jewelry. I propose that the new mode of jeweled representation of the Śākyamuni-Vairocana union was a

⁵²⁹ Yen Chuan-Ying, "The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels," p. 78. Citing Zhiyan, vol. 4 of *Huayan jing neizhangmen deng zakong muzhang* 華嚴經內章門等雜孔目章, T 1870, vol. 45, 576c14-16 and 577c4-6. 往生有二處。一是西方。二生彌勒處。若欲斷煩惱者。引生西方。不斷煩惱者。引生彌勒佛前...從此已後。展轉增勝。生無邊佛土。至普賢界。還來入彼蓮華藏世界海。成起化之用。此據極終入宅之言。

⁵³⁰ Fazang, *Huayan jing chuanji*, T2073, vol., 51, 163c22-164a3.

result of the three freestanding statues' function in Wu Zhao's political propaganda using Buddhist rhetoric and materials.

5.9. Buddhist Propaganda for Political Power

Between 689 and 695, when the jeweled buddhas at Longmen were made, Wu Zhao was at the height of her power and had successfully employed Buddhist rhetoric to celebrate her governance. I argue that both the establishment of the Xiangshan Monastery in the Eastern Hills and the freestanding jeweled Buddhas supported Wu Zhao's claim as an ideal ruler of the entire Buddhist world. I show that Wu Zhao's propaganda campaign employed multiple rhetoric related to the legend of Indian King Aśoka (r. c. 269 BCE–232 BCE) to cast her as the Cakravartin of Golden Wheel, a universal ruler of the Buddhist world that was superior to King Aśoka. When building activities of cave-shrines and monasteries took place in the Eastern Hills, they successfully constructed the hills of Longmen as the sacred mountain Gandha-mādana in the Buddhist universe. Created during Wu Zhao's propaganda campaign, the freestanding jeweled Buddhas at Longmen were possibly copies of lacquer or metal statues to which Wu Zhao offered her royal regalia during state ritual performances. The copies retained the jewelry to propagate Wu Zhao's compassionate offerings to the audiences at Longmen, which confirmed Wu Zhao's claimed as the Cakravartin of Golden Wheel.

5.9.1. Exceeding Aśoka: Wu Zhao as the Cakravartin of the Buddhist World

While King Aśoka was a subject of popular imagination in the seventh century, the rhetoric employed by Wu Zhao often cast her as a more superior Buddhist monarch than Aśoka. In 693, Wu Zhao assumed the title of Cakravartin of the Golden Wheel (*jinlun* 金輪), the wheel-turning sagely king who has Buddha's enlightenment and was enthroned by a heavenly deity. The myth of the Cakravartin king dates to pre-Buddhist time in India, at least to the tenth century

BCE. King Aśoka famously assumed the title of Cakravartin; more specifically, in the Chinese translation, his title was “a king of the Iron Wheel ruling over Jambū-dvīpa.”⁵³¹ The scheme of categorizing different types of Cakravartin king was found in multiple Buddhist texts. The four-fold system of golden-wheeled, silver-wheeled, copper-wheeled, and iron-wheeled Cakravartin was found in Vasubandhu’s (Shiqin 世親, fl.450 CE) *Abhidharmalośa*, translated into Chinese by Paramārtha (Zhendi 真諦, 499-569, *Apidamo jushe lun* 阿毘達磨俱舍釋論 T 1559) and Xuanzang (T 1558). In this hierarchical scheme, the Cakravartin of Iron Wheel ruled Jambū-dvīpa whereas the Cakravartin of Golden Wheel ruled all four continents in the classic Indian universe. The former ruled “by the sword,” or warfare, while the latter conquered the four continents simply by means of his own “going forth.”⁵³²

Whereas King Aśoka was known to Chinese as “a king of the Iron Wheel ruling over the Jambūdīvīpa,” Wu Zhao assumed the latter which evoked the complete ideal of cakravartin who conquered the cosmos without recourse to war or weapons.⁵³³ Not satisfied with a mere title, Wu Zhao was said to have a golden wheel and the rest of the seven treasures of a cakravartin presented at the court at every court assembly.⁵³⁴ This brief statement in the historical document is suggestive, as the seven “royal (cakravartin) treasures” include “the golden wheel, elephants, dark swift horses, the divine pearl,” “able ministers of the Treasury, precious maidens”, and “loyal generals.”⁵³⁵ In other words, not only did Wu Zhao deify herself as the cakravartin king, but she also made her court women, ministers, and generals who attended the court into some of the seven treasures.

⁵³¹ Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, pp. 48-50.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 51-55.

⁵³³ For Aśoka title in Chinese sources, see *Ibid.*, p. 50, note 34.

⁵³⁴ Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, p. 6492.

⁵³⁵ For these symbols, see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, p. 46, note 21.

In addition to the Indian ideal of cakravartin, Wu Zhao also capitalized on the Aśoka legend of relic distribution, which allowed her not only to legitimate her own sovereignty and to propagate herself as a universal ruler in the entire Buddhist world. In 677, a stone casket filled with relics was discovered underground in the imperial garden in the Guangzhai ward (Guangzhaifang 光宅坊) in Chang'an. Pleased with the discovery, Wu Zhao established Guangzhai Monastery (Guangzhaisi 光宅寺) on the site and distributed the relics in pagodas across the country.⁵³⁶ As Chen Jinhua observed, whereas King Aśoka was known to have built 84,000 reliquary pagodas to store the distributed relics, Wu Zhao claimed to build as many as 8,040,000 (*babai siwan* 八百四萬) pagodas for the miraculously discovered relics at Guangzhai Monastery in Chang'an.⁵³⁷ Monks and officials from outside the capital also reported miracles that supported Wu Zhao's claim on distributing the relics. In 1964, a reliquary was discovered in Jingchuan 涇川, Gansu province, which belonged to the Dayun Monastery (Dayunsi 大雲寺) of Jingzhou 涇州, one of the many Dayun Monasteries that Wu Zhao ordered to be established in the two capitals and every prefecture in 690 to store the *Dayun jing* 大雲經 (*Mahāmegha sutra*, T 387, translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433)).⁵³⁸ The inscription on the stone reliquary informed that the monks Chufa 出法 of the monastery saw rays of light from the building foundation and claimed it to be one of the locations where King Aśoka's relic was located. With the help of local officials, he excavated fourteen relics from the site, reburied them on the fifteenth day of the seventh month in 694 under the building of the monastery.⁵³⁹ Chen argues

⁵³⁶ Yen Chuan-Ying, "The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels," P. 35 and 208, note 5.

⁵³⁷ Jinhua Chen, "Sarira and Scepter: Empress Wu's Political Use of Buddhist Relics," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25, no. 1-2 (2002): 62, note 66. Citing Huaiyi's 懷義 (662-694, S 6502) commentary on *Dayun jing* 大雲經, T 387. For Aśoka's pagodas, see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, p. 109-119.

⁵³⁸ *Zizhi tongjian*, vol. 204, p. 6469; *Jiu Tangshu*, vol. 6, p. 121.

⁵³⁹ Jinhua Chen, "Sarira and Scepter," 71-72.

that the two reports of miraculous discovery of relics from Guangzhai Monastery and Dayun Monastery supported Wu Zhao's claim as a cakravartin king whose benign rule conquered the entire Buddhist world, an ideology that Forte termed "international Buddhism" or "Buddhist Pacificism."⁵⁴⁰ In other words, as a Cakravartin of Golden Wheel, Wu Zhao propagated herself as an ideal ruler not only in China but also in the entire Buddhist world.

5.9.2. Xiangshan in Tang China

When Longmen sculptors adapted the bejeweled Buddhas from Central Asia that were brought back to Tang China by pilgrims, they also supported, as I argue, Wu Zhao's propaganda campaign for a universal Buddhist ruler. More specifically, I propose that the new icon of jeweled Buddha with the *chamail* cape was a visual strategy to construct the legendary Gandha-mādana, or Xiangshan (Incense Mountain), in the Eastern Hills of Longmen. By the late seventh century, Longmen visitors had already heard or read about the Gandha-mādana from Tang pilgrims, who reported that this mountain was north of the Himālayas. Some famous monks of the time located the Gandha-mādana in relation to the familiar geography of Tang China. The sculptors at Longmen possibly understood the Central Asian bejeweled Buddha as icons that originated from the Gandha-mādana. By carving them inside LGT South Grotto, the donors and sculptors of Tang China contributed to construct the hill outside their capital city as as efficacious as the Gandha-mādana. When Wu Zhao periodically held court at the Xiangshan Monastery, she would indeed rule from the sacred mountain of the Buddhist world.⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 78; and Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo

Oriente, Series Orientale Roma, vol. LIX; and Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient (Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient, vol. CXLV, 1988), 232-233.

⁵⁴¹ As cited in Li Chongfeng, "Dipo heluo, xiangshan si yu 'shixiang qikan'," in *Fojiao kaogu: cong yindu dao zhongguo* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), vol. 2, p. 533.

5.9.3. Xiangshan Monastery

The 2018 excavation report suggests that the caves on Leigutai were possibly under the jurisdiction of Xiangshan Monastery (Xiangshan si 香山寺). The most suggestive evidence is a dharanī pillar, dated to 907, which was unearthed next to the stairway in front of LGT Central Grotto (Figs. 5.40 and 41). Its inscription shows that the donors included thirty-four monks from Xiangshan Monastery, starting with monk Lingbiao 令表 whose title was “Fully-ordained Bhadanta” (lintan dade 臨壇大德) and monk Xuzong 緒宗 from the Sutra-Reading Cloister (Kanjing yuan, 看經院) of the same monastery.⁵⁴² In addition, an inscription outside LGT Cave 9 was inscribed in the year 818 by the Henan governor named Xin Mi 辛秘 (757–820); the Song catalogue *Mochi bian* 墨池編 (Ink pond compilation), in which the calligrapher and critic Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098) compiled nearly one thousand stone steles from previous catalogues, documented that an inscription by the same Xin Mi was at Xiangshan Monastery.⁵⁴³ A less explicit but related piece of evidence is a limestone fragment (labeled as T3 (5): 17 in the 2018 report), which is incised with the typical floral pattern of the Tang period and the character *xiang* 香.⁵⁴⁴

Findings from this archaeological excavation also suggest that the stone chambers on Leigutai had timber structures in the front. A paved stone terrace and two stone staircases that lead to Leigutai Central and South Grottoes are found. Some of the square holes on the terrace align with the ones on the façade of Leigutai Central. These findings lead the archaeologist Li

⁵⁴² Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, vol. 3, p. 366.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 227. Citing Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098), *Mochi bian* 墨池編, vol. 6, in *Siku quanshu: zibu yishulei* 四庫全書: 子部藝術類. For the previous catalogues that Zhu Changwen used, see Chen Zhiping, “‘Mochi bian’ wenxian lai yuan ji xiangguan wenti kaoshu,” *Shufa yanjiu* (2020), no. 2: 68-92, especially 89-92.

⁵⁴⁴ Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, et al., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, vol. 3, p. 245.

Chongfeng to believe that the original plan of Leigutai Central included a wooden forecourt, and that the paved stone terrace and staircases were intended to imitate the stone foundation of a timber monastic building. He argues that the combination of a wooden forecourt and a stone back chamber on Leigutai mimicked the design of a multi-courtyard complex, which was popular among new monasteries in the two capitals due to the popularity of Daoxuan's writing on the complex of Jetavana Monastery in the early Tang.⁵⁴⁵

Xiangshan Monastery was probably established in the early sixth century and reinvigorated, i.e., received an active living community, after 687.⁵⁴⁶ The early history of the monastery is obscure, since all available early textual sources postdate the eleventh century. A Southern Song (1127–1279) chronicle of the poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) claimed that Xiangshan Monastery was established in the year 516.⁵⁴⁷ The Chan text *The Records of the Transmission of the Lamp up to the Jingde reign period* (1004–1007 CE) (*Jingde chuandeng lu*, 景德傳燈錄, T 2076) states that the famous monk Huike 慧可 (487–593) was ordained at Xiangshan Monastery of Longmen before 526.⁵⁴⁸ The subsequent history of Xiangshan Monastery is documented in *The Record of the Transmission of the Flower Garland Sutra*

⁵⁴⁵ Li Chongfeng, “Yinyan jieyou yu linyan gouyu,” 45–50. A potential counterpoint is visual connotation of tombs on the façade of earlier cave-shrines on the western side, and the presence of corpses and cremated remains in some niches. I argue that these niches embodied, either rhetorically or literally, the deceased. Therefore, the niches signify the presence of the deceased in the landscape, analogous to the many Sudhanas in the Hall of Vairocana. By choosing to insert their bodies inside the land of Longmen, the deceased made themselves into Sudhanas. See the last chapter on the burials of Longmen.

⁵⁴⁶ Another Xiangshan Monastery was built in Xiangzhou 襄州, by a certain Liu Qingzhi 柳慶之 from the Northern Zhou period (557–581). See Falin 法琳 (572–640), *Bian zheng lun* 辯正論, T 2110, vol. 52, 518a24–29.

⁵⁴⁷ 記寺在龍門山，後魏熙平元年建。Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (1179–1262), ed., *Bai shi Wengong nianpu* 白氏文公年譜, vol. 11 of *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan*, ed., Beijing tushu guan, 371–440 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 413.

⁵⁴⁸ 慧可……抵洛陽龍門香山。依寶靜禪師出家受具。Daoyuan (date unknown), *Jingde chuandeng lu*, T 2076, vol. 51, 220c2–3. Both the two sources are cited by Wen Yucheng, but he mistook *Jingde chuandeng lu* with *Xu Gaoseng zhuan*. See “Tangdai Longmen shisi kaocha,” in *Zhongguo shiku: Longmen shiku*, vol. 2, eds., Longmen wenwu baoguan suo and Beijing daxue kaogu xi (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992), p. 218, note 1. Citing

(*Huayan jing chuanji* 華嚴經傳記, T 2073) by Fazang. It tells that after the Indian monk-translator Divākara (613–687) passed away in Luoyang in 687, his disciples buried him in the Eastern Hills of Longmen and built a temple nearby to continue providing offerings. Sometime between 690 and 705, Wu Sansi petitioned the throne to assign it the name Xiangshan si, or “Incense Mountain Monastery,” and build a living monastery at the burial site of Divākara, consisting of towering buildings, seven shrines of stone images, and an octagonal pagoda.⁵⁴⁹ The exact locations of these structures are unknown, but Li Chongfeng speculated that seven large-scale cave-shrines in the Eastern Hills could have been the “seven shrines” built for Divākara, including the LGT trio, the Prince of Gaoping Commandery Grotto, Kanjingsi Grotto, and the Paired Lotus Grottoes.⁵⁵⁰

Archaeologists believe that the main buildings of Xiangshan Monastery were located to the southeast of Leigutai, on a three-level terrace (Fig. 5.42). The earliest trial trench was dug in 1965, unearthing a rectangular building foundation, an entrance ramp of brick, walls of rammed earth, and brick drains on all sides. Inside the foundations were fragments of columns, stone blocks, and a lotus pedestal – possibly that of a statue. In 1984, archaeologists at Longmen discovered two more terraces above the 1965 site; flights of steps connect the middle terrace to the lower terrace. Found on each of the two upper terraces is a building foundation of rammed earth; both align on the same north-south axis.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁹ Fazang, *Huayan jing chuanji*, T 2073, vol. 51, pp. 154c-155a. Because the text refers to Wu Sansi as Liangwang, the Duke of Liang, a title which he held from 690 to 705, the petition was likely submitted during this time period.

⁵⁵⁰ Li Chongfeng, “Dipoheluo, Xiangshansi yu ‘shixiang qikan’,” in *Fojiao kaogu: Cong yindu dao zhongguo*, vol. 2, 529-558, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 536.

⁵⁵¹ Marco Guglielminotti Trivel, “Archaeological Evidence from the ‘Buddhist Period’ in the Longmen Area,” *Annali dell’ Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”* 66 (2006): 151-154; Luoyang shi Longmen wenwu baoguan suo, “Luoyang Longmen Xiangshansi yizhi de diaocha yu shijue,” *Kaogu* (1986), no.1: 40-43.

In the recent years, when two underground chambers were discovered on the site, which could have belonged to the burial pagodas of monks or nuns, archaeologists speculated that one of them was the burial pagoda of Divākara. In 2016, one of the underground chambers (1.6 meters by 1.2 meters) was found on the lowest terrace, to the southeast of the building foundation.⁵⁵² The latest excavation in 2017 unearthed the other underground chamber, which is about 45 cm beneath the ground level, measuring 8.1 meters wide and 0.85 meters deep. Located on the eastern part of the highest terrace, the chamber contains a stone box that is missing its cover, suggesting that the chamber had been disturbed before the excavation.⁵⁵³

5.9.4. Xiangshan in imagined geography

The Chinese name of Xiangshan 香山 refers to the mountain of Gandha-mādana. It appears in numerous scriptures and commentaries, in which it was said to be located north of the Himālayas.⁵⁵⁴ Prior to the 690s, Xuanzang had already informed his audience in China of the location of the Gandha-mādana in the Buddhist universe. He wrote that the land ruled by Śākyamuni belonged to the world of saḥā (*suohe* 索訶, a variant transliteration of *suopo* 娑婆), in which four continents surrounded Mount Sumeru; the southern continent was Jambū-dvīpa. At the center of Jambū-dvīpa is the lake of Anavatapta (*Anapodaduo chi*, 阿那婆答多池), located to the south of Gandha-mādana and to the north of the Himālayas (*Xueshan*, 雪山). The lake

⁵⁵² Lu Wei, Li Xinglong, Piao Nanxun, and Wei Zheng, “Luoyang Longmen shiku dongshan Tangdai Xiangshansi yizhi,” *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* (2017):337-339. The archaeological report of this year speculated that this underground chamber was the burial pagoda of Divākara but no evidence is cited.

⁵⁵³ Lu Wei, Wei Zheng, Li Xinglong, and Piao Nanxun, “Luoyang shi Longmen shiku Tangdai Xiangshansi yizhi,” *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* (2018): 313-314.

⁵⁵⁴ For example, see *Chang ahan jing* (*Longer Āgama-sūtra*, 長阿含經), T 1, vol. 1, 117a14-16. 佛告比丘: 雪山右面有城, 名毗舍離, 其城北有七黑山, 七黑山北有香山, 其山常有歌唱伎樂音樂之聲。

supplied water to all four great rivers on Jambū-dvīpa: the Ganges, the Indus, the Oxus, and the Śītā.⁵⁵⁵

A different opinion held that the lake of Anavatapta was on the mountaintop of Gandhamādana. This view of the two places had been expressed in a version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (*Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T 374) translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433?), which was also shared by Fazang and the Silla monk Daehyeon 大賢 (8th century). The

Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra told that “inside the Gandhamādana, there was a spring water, named as Anavatapta,” and that “because of the lake (Anavatapta), there are four great rivers, known as the Ganges, the Indus, the Śītā, and the Oxus.”⁵⁵⁶ Fazang wrote a similar description of the Anavatapta on the Gandhamādana, adding that the head to the Ganges was the “golden elephant mouth,” the one to the Indus was the “silver ox mouth,” the one to the Śītā was the “lapis lazuli horse mouth,” and the one to the Oxus was the “glass lion mouth.”⁵⁵⁷ Daehyeon also told that the Ganges were originated from the lake of Anavatapta on the Gandhamādana. Since the

⁵⁵⁵ Xuanzang, *Da Tang xiyu ji*, T 2087, vol. 51, 869a20-b19. Xuanzang also claimed that the water of the Śītā submerged underground and resurfaced from Jishi Hill 積石山, or the Hill of Sedimentary Rocks. Jishi Hill should refer to a place in Tang China. Its name came from the legend of Yu the Great, who was believed to have cleared the sedimentary rocks 積石 in the channel of the Yellow River to control the flood. There were multiple places along the Yellow River that were believed to be place where Yu cleared the sedimentary rocks, including multiple places known by the name Longmen, or Dragon Gate. Wang Bangwei also supports that there are multiple hills named as Jishi 積石 or Qishi 積石 in Tang China. See Yijing, *Da Tang xiyu qiufa gaoseng zhuan jiaozhu*, ed., Wang Bangwei, p. 30, note 45.

⁵⁵⁶ Vol. 24 of *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, vol. 12, 509b29-c1. 如香山中有一泉水，名阿那婆踏多；and Vol. 25 of *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, vol. 12, 511c9-11. 如香山中，有阿那婆踏多池水，由是池故，有四大河，所謂恒河、辛頭、私陀、博叉。

⁵⁵⁷ Fazang, *Huayan jing tanxuan ji*, vol.14, T 1733, vol. 35, 377c23-28. 據根本說。謂此池在香山頂。東面有金象口。出恒伽河。南面銀牛口出辛頭河。西面瑠璃馬口出悉陀河。北面頗梨師子口出博叉河。此四河各出池。四十里外各分為四河。遶池一匝。各於本方流入大海。

headwater was hidden in the mountain, the popular opinion of the time believed that the Ganges came from the heavenly mansions (*tiantang* 天堂).⁵⁵⁸

Among the writings of Tang monks, there are ambivalent opinions as to whether the Gandha-mādana was a legendary land or connected to their tangible world. Daoshi, who never personally traveled to India, imagined the Gandha-mādana as a land of immortals. In his *Compilations of Essentials from Various Scriptures* (*Zhujing yaoji* 諸經要集, T 2123), Daoshi addressed the Gandha-mādana twice, firstly as a place where “in the past, immortals dwelled,” and again as a place where birds could fetch both good and poisonous fruits.⁵⁵⁹ In both cases, the Gandha-mādana served as the setting of didactic stories that warn readers of the delusion of emotions and sensory experiences. In contrast, in one Vinaya text, the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda-vinaya-vibhaṅga* (*Genben shuoyiqie youbu pinaiye*, 根本說一切有部毘奈耶, T 1442) translated

⁵⁵⁸ Daehyeon, *Fanwangjing guji ji*, T 1815, vol. 40, 699a22-26. 恒河者。香山頂無熱惱池流出四河。此東河。水寬四十餘里。梵語應言殞伽。無別正翻。義天堂來。河源山頂人所不見。如俱舍云。無通不能至。但見彼水高澗而下。時俗遂言天堂來也。Tiantang, or heavenly mansions, refer to the mansions of the devas. See Charles Muller, “tiantang,” 天堂 in *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, citing William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: With Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index*. (London: Routledge, 1996 and 2003).

⁵⁵⁹ Daoshi, vols. 8 and 12 of *Zhujing yaoji*, T 2123, vol., 54, 72b4-c4, and 110b1-16. In the first instance, Daoshi recounted a fight between a monkey and a turtle in a lake on the Gandha-mādana. In the story, a monkey urinated into the open mouth of a sleeping turtle, and the latter grabbed the monkey in water, almost drowning the monkey. When the monkey called on the immortals in the Gandha-mādana for help, the immortals made it known that in a previous life, the turtle was Kāśyapa (Jiaye 迦葉), and the monkey was Kauṇḍinya (Jiaochenru 橋陳如), and asked the two to stop this causal condition (*yinyuan* 因緣) to return to their own places. In the second instance, Daoshi retold the revenge of a mother bird. The bird regularly fetched good and fragrant fruits from the Gandha-mādana to feed its children. Once, a fruit fell on the ground, was picked by the gardener, and offered to the king. A prince ate the fruit and was obsessed with its fragrance and taste. Subsequently, whenever the bird brought the fruits back again, the gardener seized them for the prince. The bird was so angry that one day, she picked up a poisonous fruit from the Gandha-mādana. Soon after eating it, the prince suffered from rotten flesh and died.

into Chinese by Yijing, the Buddha assured his disciples that the rivers they encountered in their daily lives were indeed coming from the Anavatapta.⁵⁶⁰

Some Chinese monks also projected the Gandha-mādana to their own land or places that they read about from pilgrims' accounts. A participant in Xuanzang's translation team, Daoxuan made a considerable effort to connect the geography of Jambū-dvīpa to familiar places in Tang China. In his *Records of the Region of Buddhism* (*Shijia fangzhi* 釋迦方志, T 2088), Daoxuan cited extensively from whilst adding invented details to the *Record of Travels to Western Lands* by Xuanzang.⁵⁶¹ In Daoxuan's imagination, the lake of Anavatapta was 5,000 *li* away from the Bodhi tree where Śākyamuni attained enlightenment. The latter was considered by him to be the exact center of Jambū-dvīpa. The lake of Anavatapta also had a mountain that was none other than Mount Kunlun. Citing various texts on historical geography, Daoxuan asserted that Mount Kunlun was close to the region of Jiuquan 酒泉 in northwestern China, and only 5,000 *li* west of Shenzhou 神州, also known as Chixian 赤縣.⁵⁶² According to *Tongdian* 通典, a text on the institutional history of China compiled in 801, Chixian, or the Red Counties, refer to the counties that were under the jurisdiction of the capital.⁵⁶³ Zhang Yue stated that there were two Chixian in his time, administrated by Luoyang and Chang'an respectively.⁵⁶⁴ In other words, for Daoxuan,

⁵⁶⁰ T 1442, vol. 23, 679c22-680a2. It is said after a group of monks received a meal of congee made with "purified meat" (*jingrou* 淨肉) and ample ghee, they found a hot spring to wash their greasy alms bowls. A young monk wondered where the hot water came from, to which Maudgalyāyana replied that it came from the lake of Anavatapta. Hearing this, Upananda challenged Maudgalyāyana by citing a scripture where it is said that the water from Anavatapta was cold. When this dispute was brought to the Buddha, the Buddha responded that the water was indeed cold in Anavatapta, and yet since the water also ran a long way from its origin, it turned warm."

⁵⁶¹ Wang Bangwei, "Yetan 'Da Tang xiyu ji' de 'quewen' wenti," *Wenshi* (2021), no. 2: 273-280.

⁵⁶² Daoxuan, *Shijia fangzhi*, T 2088, vol. 51, 948b26-27; 948c10-18; 949a8-10; 949b06-950a3.

⁵⁶³ Du You, *Tongdian*, vol. 33, *Zhiguan shiwu*, p. 191a.

⁵⁶⁴ Zhang Yue, "Longmen xikan Su Hegong dengshen Guanshiyin pusa xiang song", in v. 222 of *Quan Tang wen*, 2238.1.

Gandha-mādana was a part of the tangible world, located north of the Himâlayas that previous pilgrims had passed through.

5.9.5. Recreating Gandha-mādana at Longmen

When the monastery in southeastern Longmen assumed the name of Xiangshan, the name seemed to celebrate two physical qualities of Longmen that were comparable to the Gandha-mādana: its herbs and spring water. In his poem “Travelling to the ‘Spring of Incense Mountain’ at Longmen,” the Tang poet Wei Yingwu 韋應物 (737-791) praised the fragrant “efficacious herb” (*lingcao* 靈草) of Xiangshan, and the “celestial source” (*xianyuan* 仙源) of the spring.⁵⁶⁵ The poem suggests that in the early eighth century, both the springs and the herbs in Xiangshan, Longmen, were believed to have celestial origins and curative power.

5.9.5.a. Herbs

In multiple legends, Gandha-mādana was considered as a sacred space where divine medicines were available. In the famous tale of the five hundred bandits, included in Dharmakṣema’s translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, it is said that after the eyes of the five hundred bandits were gouged out, the sound of their crying was heard by the Buddha in Jetavana. Out of his compassion, the Buddha caused a cooling breeze which blew “various fragrant medicines” from Gandha-mādana to heal their eyes. Subsequently, the preaching of the Buddha

⁵⁶⁵ Lu Chaolin, ed., *Luoyang Longmen zhi*, 45b: 《遊龍門香山泉》山水本自佳，遊人已忘慮。碧泉更幽絕，賞愛未能去。潺湲寫幽磴，繚繞帶嘉樹。激轉忽殊流，歸泓又同注。羽觴自成翫，永日亦延趣。靈草有時香，仙源不知處。還當候圓月，攜手重遊寓。

also converted the five hundred bandits to Buddhism.⁵⁶⁶ In a different example found in *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (*Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, T 1509) attributed to Nāgārjuna 龍樹 (2nd–3rd century), it is said that in a previous reincarnation, Śākyamuni was in the form of a bird and encountered someone who was trapped by the river god’s underwater grass. Then the bird fetched a medicinal herb from Gandha-mādana, laid it over the trap of the river god, which immediately disintegrated the water grass, and released the dying person.⁵⁶⁷ Since the story was repeated again by Daoshi, it must have been familiar to Tang monastic intellectuals.⁵⁶⁸ In both legends, the “fragrant medicines” and the “medicinal herb” from Gandha-mādana seemed to serve as the metaphors for the teaching of the Buddha. Just as the former healed physical illness or released one from tangible traps, the teaching of the Buddha cured people from the delusion. In addition to being the medicine to physical illness, the herbs from Gandha-mādana were also described as a reward for compassionate offerings. In a text translated by Xuanzang between 656 and 659, when an ailing monk was in need of meat soup as a medicine, a lay woman modeled

⁵⁶⁶ Vol. 16 of *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, vol. 12, 458b21-c4. 憍薩羅國有諸群賊，其數五百，群黨抄劫，為害滋甚。波斯匿王患其縱暴，遣兵伺捕，得已挑目，遂著黑闇叢林之下。是諸群賊，已於先佛殖眾德本，既失目已，受大苦惱，各作是言：『南無佛陀南無佛陀，我等今者無有救護。』啼哭號咷。我時住在祇洹精舍，聞其音聲，即生慈心，時有涼風，吹香山中種種香藥，滿其眼眶，尋還得眼，如本不異。諸賊聞眼，即見如來，住立其前而為說法。賊聞法已，發阿耨多羅三藐三菩提心。善男子！我於爾時實不作風，吹香山中種種香藥，住其人前而為說法。善男子！當知皆是慈善根力，令彼群賊見如是事。The legend was also cited in Senghao 僧豪 and Baochang 寶唱 (502–557), *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相, T2121, vol. 53, 23a27-b5, and was a popular topic of paintings, such as the mural in Cave 285 of Mogao Caves at Dunhuang.

⁵⁶⁷ Vol. 33 of *Da Zhidu lun*, T 1509, vol. 25, 307c28-308a3. 又昔菩薩作一鳥身，在林中住，見有一人入於深水非人行處，為水神所罾。水神罾法，著不可解；鳥知解法，至香山中取一藥草，著其罾上，繩即爛壞，人得脫去。

⁵⁶⁸ Daoshi, vol. 8 of *Zhujing yaoji*, T 2123, vol. 54, 71c22-25. 又有菩薩。作一鳥身在林中住。見有一人入於深水。非人行處。為水神所罾著不可解。若能至香山。取一藥草。著其罾上。繩即爛壞人得脫去。菩薩宿世作如是等。無量本生多有所濟。名本生經。Also in the same volume is the famous story of the nine-colored deer, which is illustrated in Dunhuang.

herself after bodhisattva Śākyamuni and offered her own flesh. Knowing of her pain, Śākyamuni used his magical power to retrieve medicines from Gandha-mādāna that cured her wound.⁵⁶⁹

The perceived geographic connection between the Gandha-mādāna and Tang China also led Yijing to praise the medicines and treatment practiced in China. After addressing the ways of taking medicines, Yijing commented that “as to the curing by acupuncture and the method of pulse diagnosis, none on Jambū-dvīpa can compare [with China]. The medicine of longevity is only (found) in the Eastern Xia (China), because it is connected to the mountain range of the snowy mountains (the Himālayas) and the incense mountain (the Gandha-mādāna).”⁵⁷⁰

When the monastery in the Eastern Hills assumed the title of Xiangshan Monastery, Longmen perhaps already had a reputation as a source for miraculous medicines. It offered the lengthy medicinal recipes in the “Medical Recipes Grotto,” and onsite monasteries may also have offered medical treatment to their visitors. Beyond the treatment of physical illness, the popular performance of repentance rituals on Leigutai, and at Longmen in general, also allowed its visitors to metaphorically cure their spiritual illness and follow the bodhisattva path.

5.9.5.b. Spring water

Apart from medicinal recipes and repentance rituals, Longmen was also known for its spring water, which was believed to be another source of the healing power of Gandha-mādāna. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* also propagated the belief that the water from the Gandha-mādāna can heal illness, eliminate sins, and enable enlightenment. The scripture declared that whoever drank from the spring of Anavatapta in the Gandha-mādāna would be released from all kinds of

⁵⁶⁹ Treatise of the Great Commentary on the Abhidharma (Abhidharma-mahā-vibhāṣā-sāstra, 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論), T 1545, vol. 27, 429c18-430a26.

⁵⁷⁰ Yijing, vol. 3 of *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳, T 2125, vol. 54, 224c12-14. 針灸之醫、診脈之術，贍部洲中無以加也。長年之藥唯東夏焉，良以連岡雪嶺接嶺香山。

illness. The spring was compared to the diamond-like samādhi (*jingang sanmei*, 金剛三昧) that was the achievement of the highest stage of the bodhisattva path. In other words, attaining the ultimate achievement along the bodhisattva path was like drinking from the spring of Anavatapta; both would free devotees from all afflictions and grave illness. In addition, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* also told that all those who bathed in the four rivers that originated from Anavatapta would also eliminate their offenses.⁵⁷¹

Running underground springs are found on both sides of Longmen. The 1887 gazetteer documented seven springs, including *kanjian* 龕澗 (“Cave Stream”), *Shipen quan* 石盆泉 (“Spring of Stone Basin”), *Xiangshan quan* 香山泉 (“Spring of Incense Mountain”), *Di Liang gong quan* 狄梁公泉 (“Spring of Lords Di and Liang”), *Luogu dong* 鑼鼓洞 (“Grottoes of Gongs and Drums”), *Yuwang chi* 禹王池 (“the Pond of King Yu”), and *Siliu xi* 澗流谿 (“Running Stream”).⁵⁷² In 1935, Guan Baiyi recorded three spring waters at Longmen, including two inside the “Grottoes of Gongs and Drums,” which are north of the Paired Grottoes, and another spring called *Laolong wo* 老龍窩, or “the Dwelling of Old Dragon,” next to the Laolong Grotto. Guan also reported the belief that a dragon, or nāgā, once dwelled inside the spring of *Laolong wo*.⁵⁷³ In 2012, a hydrogeological and engineering geological team calculated seven exposed springs at Longmen: “the Spring of King Yu”, *Qianxi quan* 潛溪泉 (“the Spring of Submerged Creek”), “the Spring of Gongs and Drums” 鑼鼓泉), *Zhenzhu quan* (“the Spring of

⁵⁷¹ Vol. 24 of *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, vol. 12, 509b29-c4. 如香山中有一泉水，名阿那婆踏多，其泉具足八味之水，有人飲之無諸病苦。金剛三昧亦復如是，具八正道，菩薩修習，斷諸煩惱、瘡疣重病。And vol. 25 of *Da banniepan jing*, T 374, vol. 12, 511c9-12. 如香山中，有阿那婆踏多池水，由是池故，有四大河，所謂恒河、辛頭、私陀、博叉。世間眾生常作是言：“若有罪者，浴此四河，眾罪得滅。”

⁵⁷² Lu Chaolin 路朝霖 (fl. 1876), ed., *Luoyang Longmen zhi* (First printed in 1887), 55a-56a.

⁵⁷³ Guan Baiyi, *Yique shike tubiao: shang* (reprint Beijing: Zhongguo shudian, 1980; first printed in 1935), p. 2a, 2b, 3a.

Pearls” 珍珠泉), *Lianhua dong quan* (“the Spring of Lotus Flower Grotto” 蓮花洞泉) and two more unidentified springs.⁵⁷⁴ Earlier, the Longmen Research Institute surveyed twenty-one springs distributed on two sides of Longmen, including some that had run dry or are hidden from views.⁵⁷⁵

5.10. The *abhiṣeka* and *pañcavārsika* rituals

Created for a part of the Xiangshan Monastery in the middle of Wu Zhao’s political campaign, the freestanding jeweled Buddha was likely used during a public ritual performance. Regarding the crowned Buddha in the Hindu Kush and the Greater Kashmir region, Klimburg-Salter suggested that they may have been used in the *abhiṣeka* ritual (consecration by lustration, *guanding* 灌頂), a coronation of “the Buddha-to-be Śākyamuni in Tuṣita Heaven.” She found the scriptural basis in the *Mahāvastu* (“Great Chapter”), possibly the earliest Sanskrit biography of the Buddha.⁵⁷⁶ The text offers a view of Buddhism by the Lokottaravāda, who were affiliated with the Mahāsāṃghika school.⁵⁷⁷ Klimburg-Salter argues that the crowned Buddha represents the consecration of the Buddha-to-be when he completed the highest stage (*bhūmi*) of practice towards the Buddhahood in Tuṣita Heaven.⁵⁷⁸ In the seventh century, ritual texts on *abhiṣeka* also appeared in China, categorized as the texts of esoteric rites. The goal of this ritual performance was to allow devotees to identify themselves with the enlightened Buddha in the universe.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁴ Liu Yuzhong and Yang Degui, “Henan sheng Longmen shiku quanqun duanliu yuanyin tantao,” *Nanshui beidiao yu shuili keji* 10 (2012), no. 6: 70-73, 82.

⁵⁷⁵ Liu Jinglong, *Longmen shiku baohu* (Beijing: Zhongguo kexue jishu chubanshe, 1993), 194.

⁵⁷⁶ Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmiyān*, pp. 99-101.

⁵⁷⁷ “Mahāvastu,” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 512.

⁵⁷⁸ Klimburg-Salter, *The Kingdom of Bāmiyān*, pp. 98-101.

⁵⁷⁹ Charles D. Orzech, “Esoteric Buddhism in the Tang: From Atikūṭa to Amoghavajra (651-780),” in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, Charles D. Orzech et al. eds., 264.

Citing Klimburg-Salter, Dorothy Wong further connected the bejeweled and crowned Buddha from Central Asia with the state ceremony known as *pañcavārṣika* (*wuzhehui*, 無遮會, or “The Great Quinquennial Festival”), which both Xuanzang and Faxian 法顯 (337–422) witnessed in Central Asia.⁵⁸⁰ While the exact content of the *pañcavārṣika* rituals is debatable, the essential elements of the rituals, as performed by King Aśoka (r. c. 269 BCE –232 BCE) and other Buddhist monarchs, was to allow the king to “outdo himself at *dāna* (compassionate offering),” by offering jewelry, clothes, and even his kingdom to monks and monasteries.⁵⁸¹ Yijing, the Chinese pilgrim to India and the leader of Wu Zhao’s translation team, claimed to have seen an image of King Aśoka in monk’s robe.⁵⁸² The monastic robe could suggest the Buddhist identity of King Aśoka, but it could also represent the moment when King Aśoka had given his royal attire and clothed himself in a monk’s robe during the *pañcavārṣika* ritual. In China, this ritual also involved repentance rites, relic veneration, expensive donations, physical self-sacrifice as an act of piety, and the appearance of auspicious signs.⁵⁸³

The purpose of the *pañcavārṣika* ritual is two-fold. It allowed the Buddhist monarchs to model themselves after Prince Siddhartha’s divestment of princely clothes and ornaments after the Great Departure. Yet at the end of the ritual, as Xuanzang reported about the *pañcavārṣika* ritual held by the North-Indian king Harṣa in the seventh century, “the eighteen vassal kings

⁵⁸⁰ The translation of *wuzhehui* is taken from John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 91-97. Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission*, pp. 80-81. Wong attributed this argument to Klimburg-Salter’s 1989 publication. But I do not find Klimburg-Salter directly connected the crowned Buddha in Central Asia with the *pañcavārṣika* ritual.

⁵⁸¹ Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, pp.17 and 93.

⁵⁸² Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, p. 14, footnote 38, citing from Junjiro Takakusu, tr. *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671–694)* (org. pub., 1896; rpt., Delhi: Munshiran Manoharlal, 1966), p. 73.

⁵⁸³ Dorothy Wong, *Buddhist Pilgrim-Monks as Agents of Cultural and Artistic Transmission: The International Buddhist Art Style in East Asia, ca. 645-770* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2018), pp. 90-94; Jinhua Chen, “*Pañcavārṣika*” Assemblies in Liang Wudi’s Buddhist Palace Chapel,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 66, no. 1 (June 2006), p. 45.

gathered afresh precious things and large sums from among the peoples of their realms, redeemed the rich necklace, the carbuncle and the royal garments given in alms by King Harṣa, brought them back and gave them to him once more.” The ritualized requisition of the royal ornaments had also been practiced by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty in China. This performance suggests that the purpose of pañcavārṣika is also to reaffirm his role as the Buddhist monarch, or the cakravartin.⁵⁸⁴

5.10.1. The Pañcavārṣika Ritual of Wu Zhao

On the fifteenth of the fifth month of the first year of Zhengsheng reign (July 1, 695), Wu Zhao held a pañcavārṣika ritual organized by Huaiyi 懷義 (662–694), the powerful monk with whom Wu Zhao entrusted the most lavish project and possibly Wu Zhao’s lover.⁵⁸⁵ The Confucian historian Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) condemned that every time Huaiyi produced a pañcavārṣika, he would spend ten thousand strings of money.⁵⁸⁶ Although Sima Guang’s account may have been exaggerated, pañcavārṣika was surely an extravagant event as it was intended to show off exorbitant offerings. The account of the pañcavārṣika ritual in 694 firstly appeared in *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載 by Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 (658–730), which was later cited in *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 and the reference book *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記.⁵⁸⁷ Since

⁵⁸⁴ Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, pp. 92-96.

⁵⁸⁵ Also discussed in Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, p. 232. Forte gave the date December 7, 694 (the fifteenth of the first month of Zhengzheng 1) for the event. I think he misread his source *Zizhi tongjian* (Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, pp. 6498-6499) because the original document of *Chaoye qianzai*, as discussed later, clearly dated this event to the fifteenth of the fifth month of the same year. I believe that Forte mistook *yiwei* 乙未 in *Zizhi Tongjian* as the reference to the day. The fifteenth of the first month of Zhengsheng 1 was indeed the day of *yiwei*. However, the year of Zhengsheng 1 was also the year of *yiwei*.

⁵⁸⁶ Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, pp. 6498.

⁵⁸⁷ Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, pp. 6498-6499. Neither *Xin Tangshu* nor *Jiu Tangshu* included this event. 鑿地為坑，深五丈，結綵為宮殿，佛像皆於坑中引出之，雲自地湧出。又殺牛取血，畫大像首，高二百尺，雲懷義刺膝血為之。丙申，張像於天津橋南，設齋。Li Fang, et al., eds., *Taiping Guangji*, vol. 288 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961, reprint in 1995), p. 2294-2294.

Zhang was contemporaneous to this event, I consider this account to be plausible. According to Zhang,

In the first year of Zhengsheng reign of the Zhou dynasty, Master Xue, Huayi by name, constructed a Hall of Merit about a thousand *chi* north of the Mingtang [the Luminous Hall].⁵⁸⁸ The great statue inside was nine hundred *chi* high. Its nose was like a thousand *hu* (59,440 liter) ship. Its [little finger] had room for several tens of persons sitting in a row. Hemp was inserted [the statue] in order to apply lacquer.

周證聖元年，薛師名懷義造功德堂一千尺於明堂北。其中大像高九百尺，鼻如千斛船，[小指]⁵⁸⁹中容數十人並坐，夾紵以漆之。

On the fifteenth of the fifth month, the pañcavārsika assembly was held at the Mingtang.⁵⁹⁰ [Huayi] dug a pit in the ground, measuring five *zhang* in depth. Multi-colored silk was tied to make the palaces and terraces. Bamboo was bent to build the structure, and [silk] was spread to cover the heads of pillars.

五月十五，起無遮大會於朝堂。掘地深五丈，以亂綵為宮殿臺閣，屈竹為胎，張施為楨蓋。

[Huaiyi] also created the great statue's Jin'gang (vajra-warriors), all being pulled up from the pit. It is lied that [the statues] 'sprung from the ground.'

又為大像金剛，並坑中引上，詐稱從地湧出。

[Huaiyi] also pricked an ox to [use] its blood to paint the head of the great statue. The head of the statue was 200 *chi* high. The lie said that the blood from Master Xue's knee was used to paint it. Those who came to see it filled the city. Gentlemen and women came together. [From the] inner court, money was thrown at [the great statue]. [The crowd] stepped on each other [to reach for the money]. Among the elderly and the young, more than one was dead. On the sixteenth day, the statue was set on display south of Tianjin Bridge. Vegetarian feast was set up.

又刺牛血畫作大像頭，頭高二百尺，誑言薛師膝上血作之，觀者填城溢郭，士女雲會。內載錢拋之，更相踏藉，老少死者非一。至十六日，張像於天津橋南，設齋。

From nine to eleven in the evening, fire emerged in the Hall of Merit and extended to the Mingtang. Soaring flames reached to the sky. The city of Luo (Luoyang) was as bright as

⁵⁸⁸ For an explanation of the religious and political significance of Mingtang, see Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, 13-14, 141-199. I also consult Forte's translation for the first paragraph of this quotation, see p. 86.

⁵⁸⁹ Xiaozhi 小指 only appeared in the *Zizhi tongjian* and *Taiping guangji* versions.

⁵⁹⁰ I agree with Forte that the *chaotang* here might refer to the Mingtang. See Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, p.202 and 232.

the day. The construction of the hall had not been finished, measuring over seventy *chi* high. [The fire] then extended to the Vault of Gold and Silver, causing liquid iron to cover the ground. Those who did not know and entered were burned immediately. The Halls were burned down with not a piece of wood left.

二更，功德堂火起，延及明堂，飛焰衝天，洛城光如晝日。其堂作仍未半，已高七十餘尺，又延燒金銀庫，鐵汁流液，平地尺餘，人不知錯入者，便即焦爛。其堂煨燼，尺木無遺。

At the dawn, the pañcavārṣika assembly was set up again. Windstorm suddenly rose, breaking the blood-painted statue into hundreds of pieces. Fuxiuzi (Zhang Zhuo) said, “When Emperor Wu of the Liang offered his body to Tongtai Monastery, officials exhausted the state storage to bring him back. [Today], lightning stroke at night, and wind and rain [made the day] dark. Temples, pagodas, and halls were destroyed all at once. This is not accord with *li*. Isn’t this the intention of the Tathāgata.”

至曉，乃更設會，暴風欵起，裂血像為數百段。浮休子曰：梁武帝捨身同泰寺，百官傾庫物以贖之。其夜欵電霹靂，風雨晦冥，寺浮圖佛殿一時盪盡。非理之事，豈如來本意哉！⁵⁹¹

Zhang Zhuo gave a detailed account of the pañcavārṣika ritual in Luoyang. During the assembly, a palace-like structure was made with polychrome silk, from which images of Jin’gang, which I interpret to be vajra-warriors, were staged as if they appeared miraculously. In the backdrop of the assembly is the large-scale lacquer statue, possibly a Buddha. Since the statue was so large, it is hard to imagine it could be moved across the River Luo to the south of Tianjin Bridge on the second day.⁵⁹² Maybe a painted copy was made, for which the oxblood was used. For this copy, Huaiyi claimed to have offered his own blood. At the very night that the vegetarian feast was offered in front of the painted image, the hall that Huaiyi built caught fire. Yet the next dawn, the pañcavārṣika ritual continued, with the blood-painted image still on display. Since this detail

⁵⁹¹ Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 (658–730), *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載, vol. 5, annotated by Zhao Shouyan (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979, reprint in 1997), p. 115-116.

⁵⁹² Tianjin Bridge is on the River Luo. See Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814) ed., *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* 元和郡縣圖志, vol. 5, ed., Yan Guan 嚴觀 (fl. 18th century) (Nanjing: Jinling shuju, 1880-1882), p. 3-2. 天津橋在縣北四里，隋煬帝大業元年初，造此橋以架洛水，用大纜維舟，皆以鐵鎖鉤連之，南北夾路，對起四樓，其樓為日月表勝之象，然洛水溢，浮橋輒壞，貞觀十四年更令石工，累方石為腳，爾雅箕斗之間，為天漢之津，故取名焉。

suggested that the pañcavārṣika ritual included multiple venues, including both the Mingtang and an area south of Tianjin Bridge, it further confirmed that copies of the great statue were made for display at the latter location. The pañcavārṣika ritual south of Tianjin Bridge only ended when a windstorm destroyed the image into pieces.

5.10.2. Ruixiang or “auspicious image”

In Tang texts, the miraculous appearance of Buddhist images without external mundane power, as Huaiyi attempted to fabricate, were called *ruixiang* 瑞像 or “auspicious image.” Their miracles range from Śākyamuni Buddha’s biographic episodes to indigenous legends of images’ supernatural power.⁵⁹³ Five examples of jeweled Buddhas with earth-touching were identified by their inscriptions as *ruixiang*. Two come from Sichuan, including the aforementioned Cave 366 in Qianfoya (Fig. 5.23) and Cave 60 of Feixiange, Pujiang (Fig. 5.28). The latter’s inscription identifies the image as a *ruixiang*, not a *puti ruixiang*.⁵⁹⁴ The omission of the two characters *puti* in this inscription from 689 suggests the potential affiliation with Mahabodhi image was not its donors’ attention. What concerned them is the image’s divine origin. The other three all come from Dunhuang. One is on the famous silk painting from Dunhuang, now in the collection of National Museum, New Delhi (Fig. 5.30).⁵⁹⁵ The cartouche to the upper right side of the bejeweled Buddha with earth-touching mudra identifies the image as the “light-emanating auspicious image from Magadha kingdom” (... *mojiatuo guo fangguang ruixiang*, ... 摩伽阇國放光瑞像).⁵⁹⁶ Another is on the ceilings of Caves 237 and 231 of Mogao Grottoes, both

⁵⁹³ Choi, “Zhenrong to Ruixiang,” 379; For miracles of *ruixiang* at Dunhuang, see Ning Qiang, *Art, Religion, and Politics in Medieval China: the Dunhuang Cave of the Zhai Family* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 82-102.

⁵⁹⁴ Lei Yuhua and Wang Jianping, “Shilun Sichuan de puti ruixiang,” 85.

⁵⁹⁵ See Alexander Coburn Soper, “Representations of Famous Images at Tun-Huang,” *Artibus Asiae* 27 (1964-1965), no. 4: fig. 1 on p. 353 and p. 362.

⁵⁹⁶ Li Yumin, “Shi lun Tang dai xiang mo cheng dao shi zhuang shi fo,” 45-46.

identified by cartouches as the “light-emanating auspicious image from Magadha kingdom.”⁵⁹⁷

Although the prevalent opinion is to assume the Dunhuang examples as copies of the Mahabodhi statue of Śākyamuni, the relation between the two is still unresolved.⁵⁹⁸

Several scholars have argued that the concept of *ruixiang* incorporates the ancient belief of *xiangrui* 祥瑞, or “auspicious omen.”⁵⁹⁹ For example, when a stone bearing the prophecy of the coming of a sagely female emperor miraculously emerged from the River Luo in 688, it was called a *ruishi* 瑞石, “auspicious stone.”⁶⁰⁰ In 701, there was also discussion among officials of *ruixue* 瑞雪, “auspicious snow,” and *ruilei* 瑞雷, “auspicious thunder.”⁶⁰¹ Therefore, when referred to as *ruixiang* during this time period, the image could also be considered as a good omen.

At multiple occasions, authors of the Tang dynastic histories inform that Wu Zhao showed favors to those who presented *furui* 符瑞 or “auspicious omens” to her.⁶⁰² Li Ren 李仁 (646–706), a grandson of Emperor Taizaong, also used this as self-protection strategy. It is said that after 690, when most of the male members of the Li lineage were eliminated, Li Ren survived because he presented auspicious omens multiple times.⁶⁰³ The legend of Mahabodhi image has the same supernatural quality since the image was created by Maitreya bodhisattva. It is also possible that when Xuanzang and Wang Xuance composed their travelogues, like their

⁵⁹⁷ Zhang Xiaogang, “Zaitan Dunhuang Mojiatuo guo fanguang ruixiang yu puti ruixiang,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* (2009), no. 1: 21-25, 115-116, 120-123.

⁵⁹⁸ See Li Yumin, “Shi lun Tang dai xiang mo cheng dao shi zhuang shi fo,” 46. Zhang Xiaogang, “Zaitan Dunhuang Mojiatuo guo fanguang ruixiang yu puti ruixiang,” 21-25. Wang Jingfen, “Chudi zhuangshi fo zai zhongguo de xingcheng yu chuanbo,” in *Jao Tsung-I jiaoshou baisui huadan guoji xueshu yantao hui huiyi lunwen ji III*, 1064-1087 (Hong Kong: Zijing chubanshe, 2016), 1082.

⁵⁹⁹ For example, see Choi, “Zhenrong to Ruixiang,” 379 and 386, note 95; Ning Qiang, *Art, Religion, and Politics in Medieval China*, 82.

⁶⁰⁰ Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tangshu*, vol. 6.

⁶⁰¹ Sima Guang, *Zizhi Tongjian*, vol. 7, pp. 6554-6555.

⁶⁰² Liu Xu et al., *Jiu Tangshu*, vol. 89.

⁶⁰³ Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, vol. 80.

peers who wrote similar legends, they were fully aware of the auspicious connotations and willingly incorporated them in the writing.

5.11. Contemporary events signified by the freestanding statues

I propose that the freestanding jeweled Buddhas at Longmen were made as stone copies of other statues made of more perishable material, such as lacquer or metal, that were performed during a pañcavārṣika ritual. Forte held the suspicion that although only the pañcavārṣika ritual of 695 was documented, there must have been other pañcavārṣika assemblies during the reign of Wu Zhao.⁶⁰⁴ It is possible that during one such assembly, Wu Zhao offered jewelry to lacquer of metal statues of plain-robed Buddha, after which officials paid substantial donations to buy them back, as the officials of King Aśoka and Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty did. The performance allowed Wu Zhao to publicly reaffirm her sovereignty as the Cakravartin of Golden Wheel. During or after the ritual, stone copies were made, representing the moment when the Buddha still wore the donated jewelry. These stone sculptures were made moveable so that they could be taken to other venues of the same pañcavārṣika ritual, possibly a vegetarian feast at Longmen, to announce to a larger audience Wu Zhao's enthusiastic donation.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias*, 232.

⁶⁰⁵ Prior to the three freestanding bejeweled Buddha, the only moveable statues made at Longmen are King Udayana's statues of Śākyamuni, some of which were made separately and attached to the seats that were carved in situ. Zhang Naizhu noticed that a detachable statue of King Udayana's Śākyamuni was supposed to exist in a burial Cave (Cave 440, discussed in Chapter Six). In the empty grotto nowadays, only two shallow square daises remain on the main (western) wall, separated from one another by a narrow space. An incised square screen with scalloped top above the two daises suggests that only one statue was meant to be installed. Similar unfinished square daises are seen outside Bingyang South. Moreover, a group of unfinished or ruined King Udayana statues to the south of Jing'aisi Cave show similar structures with narrower space in-between. These ruins show that while the thrones were directly carved from the cliff, the King Udayana statues were made separately and inserted in the empty space on the throne. Both the remains outside Bingyang South and Jing'aisi Cave suggest that the two separated daises inside Cave 440 were carved as the throne of a detached King Udayana image. The throne was finished by the time of dedication since the back screen is also complete. But for reasons that I do not know, the statue seemed never to have been installed. The missing statue from Cave 440 is briefly discussed in Zhang Naizhu, "Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao," in *Longmen shiku yanjiu lunwen xuan*, ed. Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, 241-275 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993), 242.

The proposition is supported by the exquisite and contemporaneous decorations on the three figures, including the necklaces and armlets. In contrast to the simplified representation on the relief jeweled Buddhas, the jewelry on the freestanding figures adapted the contemporary designs of jewelry and textiles. They evoked the pieces of jewelry Wu Zhao might have offered to a Buddha statue during the pañcavārṣika ritual. At the same time, they also created a sense of immediacy which persuaded their viewers in the seventh and eighth centuries to recognize them as Buddhas who dwelled in Tang China

The necklace on the Liujing Jeweled Buddha consists of multiple lunette-shaped nephrite pieces that was part of a pendant set (Fig. 5.13).⁶⁰⁶ Similar pieces are found in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1994.605.111a-e, Fig. 5.44) and from the archaeological excavations of an anonymous Tang-period tomb at the Xianyang International Airport in Xi'an in 2009 (Fig. 5.45) and the tomb of Li Chui 李惲 (711–736) that was excavated between 2001 and 2002 (Fig. 5.46).⁶⁰⁷ Multiple units of the nephrite are repurposed and connected to decorate the necklace. Moreover, the center jewel and the pendant are edged with a line of balls, which is also seen in the necklace that was discovered from the tomb of Li Jingxun 李靜訓 (599–608) in Xi'an (Fig. 5.47). The origin of the latter is still unresolved. The historian Victor Xiong and art

⁶⁰⁶ Marilyn Rhie referred to this pattern as “comma-shaped motif.” She also shows that a stone statue of Siva from Pandrethan, Kashmir, now in Sri Pratap Singh Museum, Srinagar, wears a necklace that is almost identical to LGT Central Jeweled Buddha. But the date of the Siva piece is unknown. See “Interrelationships Between the Buddhist Art of China and the Art of India and Central Asia from 618–755 A.D.,” p. 26 and plate XIV, fig. 28.

⁶⁰⁷ For the tomb at the airport, see Zhang Yongjian et al., “Xianyang guoji jichang chutu Tangdai zu yupei shinei qingli, fenxi he fuyuan,” *Wenwu baohu yu kaogu kexue* 30 (2018), no. 4: 104–109. Two sets of the jade pendant are found from Li Chui’s tomb, excavated on a new campus of Xi’an Technology University. See Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu yuan, “Tang Li Chui mu fajue jianbao,” *Kaogu yu wenwu* (2015), no. 6: 3–22, figs. 34–35 and fig. 53.

historian Ellen Johnston Laing propose that the material of gemstone and the goldsmith techniques point to North India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran as possible origins.⁶⁰⁸

Cross-media comparison further suggests that whereas the concept of bejeweled Buddha from Central Asia appeared new to Longmen viewers, their decorative details were a familiar part of the contemporary visual culture. The armlet of the Liuqing statue is in the shape of an eight-petaled rosette, which appears different from the pair of armlets from the tomb of Li Jingxun (Fig. 5.48) and the three pairs excavated from the crypt of Famen Monastery (Fig. 5.49), possibly offered by Emperor Xizong 僖宗 of Tang (862-888).⁶⁰⁹ However, the shape is also found in a unit (Fig. 5.50), made of gold and turquoise, from a larger set of pendants that were hung on the lower body (Fig. 5.51), found in the tomb of Li Chui.⁶¹⁰ As evidence of the popularity of the eight-petaled rosette, the pattern also showed in the painted robe of a male donor on the tenth-to-eleventh-century mural of Cave 20 of Bāzāklik, Xinjiang, now in the collection of Museum für Asiatische Kunst (accession number: III 6876 a, Fig. 5.52). In the latter case, the outline of the eight-petaled rosette was transformed into a diamond shape.

In addition, the necklace of the LGT South jeweled Buddha (Fig. 5.53) employs the multi-layered floral medallion known as *baohua*, or “jeweled flower,” which originated in textile design, but was applied across various media in the Tang period. The medallion, as shown on the centerpiece of the necklace, consists of a flower in the middle, encircled by six connected

⁶⁰⁸ Xiong Cunrui, “Sui Li Jingxun mu chutu jin xianglian, jin shouzhuo de chandi wenti,” *Wenwu* (1987), no. 10: 77-79. James C. Y Watt and Prudence Oliver Harper eds., *China: dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD*, cat. 114 on p. 207. Victor Cunrui Xiong and Ellen Johnston Laing, “Foreign Jewelry in Ancient China,” *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 5 (1991), New Series: 163-173.

⁶⁰⁹ Not sure if it was made by his court workshop. For the armlets from Li Jingxun’s tomb, see Li Jian ed., *The Glory of the Silk Road: Art from Ancient China* (Ohio: The Dayton Art Institute, 2003), cat. 115 on p. 207. For the armlets from Famen Monastery crypt, see Wu Limin and Han Jinke, *Famensi digong Tangmi mantuoluo zhi yanjiu* (Hong Kong: Zhongguo fojiao wenhua chuban youxian gongsi, 1998), p. 440-441.

⁶¹⁰ For the entire set after conservation treatment, see Zhongguo Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu yuan and Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, *Tang Li Chui mu: Kaogu fajue, baohu xiufu yanjiu baogao* (Beijing: Kexue chuban she, 2018), fig. 91 on p. 60.

lunette-shaped pieces, which imitates a further layer of petals. A variant form of the same design is employed on the necklace of the LGT Central jeweled Buddha (Fig. 5.4), although the latter replaced the central flower with a beaded roundel and shows less refined details. The same pattern from the LGT South jeweled Buddha was embroidered on a sock (Fig. 5.54) that was excavated at the Reshui site in Dulan, Qinghai, from the seventh to the eighth centuries.⁶¹¹ It is also seen on the painted skirt of a clay bodhisattva in Mogao Cave 159 (Fig. 5.55). From this relatively simple pattern, the design developed into more elaborate forms that have multiple layers of petals. It became increasingly popular in the Tang period across different media, such as ceramics (Fig. 5.56) and metalware (Fig. 5.57).

Considering the familiar decorations on the three freestanding jeweled Buddhas, I argue that Tang viewers in the 690s understood the jewelry on the statues as the offering of royal regalia from Wu Zhao to the Buddhist communities during a *pañcavārṣika* ritual. Whereas the royal performance of the ritual took place somewhere else, possibly in the city of Luoyang, the stone copies could transport the message to Longmen. When the three jeweled Buddhas were placed inside LGT South Grotto, where more jeweled Buddhas in the Central Asian style filled the space, Wu Zhao's presence was also brought to the recreated sacred mountain of Gandhāmādāna. As a result, the entire space of LGT South Grotto conveyed to its contemporary visitors the repeated message of Wu Zhao's political campaign, namely that she was an ideal ruler of the Buddhist universe.

5.11. Conclusion

⁶¹¹ Zhao Feng, "Embroidered sock," in *China: dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD*, cat. 243 on p. 344. Citing *Zhongguo wenwu jinghua bianji weiyuan hui ed., Zhongguo wenwu jinghua* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), 338.

In this chapter, I analyze the three bejeweled freestanding Buddhas in terms of their Buddhist identities and their functions in political propaganda. Regarding the Buddhist identities of these statues, I propose that instead of copies of the Śākyamuni statue from Mahabodhi Monastery, they exemplified a new mode of representation that signified the union of Śākyamuni under the Bodhi tree and Vairocana in the Lotus Store World Ocean. When placed inside LGT South Grotto, they helped devotees to envision the space dwelled by Vairocana and delivered confirmative visions to those who aspired to be reborn in the Lotus Store World Ocean. As a result, they brought the spatial-temporal construct of the *Flower Garland Sutra* into the tangible land of Longmen.

During the height of Wu Zhao's propaganda campaign, the three statues also supported Wu Zhao's political claim as the Cakravartin of the Golden Wheel. Created for worship in the Eastern Hills of Longmen, they enabled an experience of the distant mountain of Gandhamādana on the tangible land of Longmen. They may also have been copies of the statues used during state ceremonies of pañcavārṣika sponsored by Wu Zhao. Retaining the royal regalia that Wu Zhao offered to the Buddhist community, the three statues announced her lavish donations to contemporary visitors to Longmen.

Chapter 6: Burial Space at Longmen: A Gendered Karmic Community

6.1. Introduction

Dispersed among the cave-shrines of Longmen is a burial space that took shape as early as the sixth century, including cliff-carved caves for corpses, niches and pagodas for cremated remains, and underground tombs in the vicinity of Longmen. Who were buried here? Why did they elect to be buried here? What did the Buddhist statues and cave-shrines mean to them? Through a close study of the dynamics between the mortuary space and the Buddhist statues, inscriptions, epitaphs, and miraculous tales, I show that at Longmen, two-thirds of all identified burials belong to women. Whereas the most typical practice in the Tang was to bury married women together with their husbands, a few women who aspired to attain final release in the afterlife chose to be buried at Longmen instead. I argue that the aesthetic experience in the constructed landscape of Longmen allowed the women to create a karmic-based imagined community.

Previous scholarship has acknowledged the presence of burial chambers at important Chinese Buddhist cave-shrines, including Mogao Grottoes, Maijishan Grottoes, Baoshan, Tianlongshan Grottoes, Xiangtangshan Grottoes, and Leshan.⁶¹² Although all located in modern-day Chinese geo-political boundary, they belong to a diverse array of cultural milieux from the Central-North Plains, the Southwest, to Central Asia. In terms of dating, whereas the earliest burial caves are those in Leshan, dating to the second and the third centuries CE, those in

⁶¹² For Baoshan, see Wendi L. Adamek, "Meeting the Inhabitants of the Necropolis at Baoshan," *Journal of Chinese Buddhist Studies* 29 (2016): 9-49. For Tianlongshan Grottoes, see Su Lingling, "Tianlongshan fojiao yizang xingshi zongshu," *Wenwu shijie* (2015), no. 1: 7-9, 32. For Xiangtangshan Grottoes, see Kate A. Lingley, "The Multivalent Donor: Zhang Yuanfei at Shuiyu Si," *Archives of Asian Art* 56 (2006): 11-30.

Dunhuang were excavated between the seventh and the eleventh centuries.⁶¹³ As a result of the regional and chronological diversities, researchers are still occupied with the fundamental tasks of identifying the mortuary spaces in Buddhist cave-shrines and comparing various methods of interment.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, since most of these burial chambers are empty, art historians dealing with mortuary visual materials are frequently drawn to the well-preserved underground tombs that made use of Buddhist motifs.⁶¹⁵ Lastly, those who aim to write a history of Chinese mortuary practices often treat burials at Buddhist cave-shrines as exceptions, under the influence of Buddhism, from the conventional underground burials.⁶¹⁶

Among the few studies that try to understand why burial spaces and Buddhist cave-shrines overlap, a common methodological thread is to consider how Chinese audiences reconciled with the foreign origin of Buddhist burials. They ask how Buddhists in China sought “their own unique style of funeral rites, and [how] such rites adapted Buddhism to traditional Chinese sensibilities.”⁶¹⁷ For example, the Taiwanese historian Shu-fen Liu compared Buddhist cave burials in China with the Indian ascetic practice of offering one’s corpse to feed wild animals in the forest of Śītavana, a cemetery for exposing corpses in Magadha. She argues that

⁶¹³ For Mogao Grottoes, see the upcoming Carmen Meinert, “Beyond Spatial and Temporal Contingencies: Tantric Rituals in Eastern Central Asia under Tangut Rule, 11th-13th C.,” in *Buddhism in Central Asia II: Practice and Rituals, Visual and Material Transfer*, ed. by Yukiyo Kasai and Henrik H. Sørensen (Brill: Leiden, 2022). For Leshan, see Sonya S. Lee, “A Landscape Fit for the Great Buddhas: On Cliff Tombs and Buddhist Cave-Temples in Leshan,” in *Refiguring East Asian Religious Art: Buddhist Devotion and Funerary Practice*, eds. Wu Hung and Paul Copp, 237-260 (Chicago: Art Media Resources, Inc., 2019).

⁶¹⁴ For comparative researches on burial chambers from different cave-shrines in China, see Ni Run’an, “Dunhuang Sui Tang yiku xingzhi de yanbian ji xiangguan wenti,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 99 (2006), no. 5: 56-62, 115; Zheng Yi, “Zhonggu gaoseng yimai kongjian de wuzhi xing,” *Zhongguo meishu* 59 (2020), no. 2: 70-77; Robert H. Sharf, “Art in the Dark: The Ritual Context of Buddhist Caves in Western China,” in *Art of Merit: Studies in Buddhist Art and its Conservation: Proceedings of the Buddhist Art Forum 2012*, eds. David Park, Kuenga Wangmo, and Sharon Cather (London: Archetype Publications, 2013), 46-52.

⁶¹⁵ For example, Annette Juliano shows that pictorial designs from Longmen cave-shrines were employed in underground tombs. See Annette Juliano, “Teng-Hsien: An Important Six Dynasties Tomb,” *Artibus Asiae. Supplementum* 37 (1980): III-83.

⁶¹⁶ For a recent study, see Yi Yang, “Death Ritual in the Tang Dynasty (618–907): A Study of Cultural Standardization and Variation in Medieval China,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2019).

⁶¹⁷ As summarized by Alan Cole, “Upside down/Right Side up: A Revisionist History of Buddhist Funerals in China,” *History of Religions* 35 (1996), no. 4: 307-310, and footnote no. 5 on p. 308.

cave burials were a Chinese compromise devised by descendants and disciples who, out of filial responsibility, could not bear to allow such cruelty to the remains of their parents and teachers.⁶¹⁸

This constructed dichotomy between the indigenous and the foreign is encapsulated by Erik Zürcher's famous metaphor, namely that Buddhism was "that tiny exotic plant flowering on the ruins of the Han empire."⁶¹⁹ Through such dichotomy, Zürcher portrayed Buddhism, as Robert Campany rightly critiques, as an organic mechanism that has the agency to assimilate and appropriate foreign elements.⁶²⁰

Diverse mortuary inscriptions at Longmen speak to the motivations and aspirations of an "imagined community."⁶²¹ I define this imagined community as a group of people who, bonded by the shared physical and aesthetic experience in the space of Longmen and yet did not necessarily know each other, chose to literally inter their bodies inside its cliff and earth.⁶²² This definition is inspired by Birgit Meyer's concept of "aesthetic formation." Addressing Emile Durkheim's classic question of how human bonds are established, Meyer argues that one key agent is the shared aesthetic experience which includes both our sensorial experience of the world and the knowledge that we derived from our sensorial capacity. She also chose the term "formation" over "community" to highlight the fluid boundary of this formed group.⁶²³ In my case study of Longmen, those who chose to be buried here did not come from any fixed social

⁶¹⁸ Shu-fen Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 246. For the discussion of Śākyamuni's offering, see, p. 186-188.

⁶¹⁹ Erik Zürcher, "A New Look at the Earliest Chinese Buddhist Texts," in *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honour of Prof. Jan Yün-Hua*, ed. Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic, 1991), 293.

⁶²⁰ Robert Ford Campany, "On the Very Idea of Religions (in the Modern West and in Early Medieval China)," *History of Religions* 42 (2003), no. 4: 294-295.

⁶²¹ It is also Campany's proposal that instead of speaking of religions as entities with agencies, it is more meaningful to discuss them as "imagined communities." *Ibid.*, 316.

⁶²² The concept of imagined communities is also defined in Benedict R. O'G Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983, reprint in 2006).

⁶²³ Birgit Meyer, "Introduction: From Imagined Communities to Aesthetic Formations: Religious Mediations, Sensational Forms, and Styles of Binding," in *Aesthetic Formations: Media, Religion, and the Senses* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6-7.

group. They belonged to different families, fell within a spectrum of social classes, and did not necessarily have a formal affiliation with onsite Buddhist institutions. Yet they all made the unconventional choice of seeking to be buried at Longmen. I argue that they were drawn to the space because the numerous Buddhist statues on the cliff compelled them to experience a personal connection with the Buddha. Faced with the impending fate of death, they aspired to maintain such connections in afterlife so that they may be released from suffering, be reborn in a Buddha's pure land, and even attain awakening. Therefore, the shared sensorial experience and understanding of the physical space bonded them into a karmic-based community.

In what follows, I start with an overview of the mortuary space at Longmen. After reviewing previous scholarship, I analyze why the dichotomy between foreign/Indian and native/Chinese practices does not capture the concerns of the people who arranged their own burials at Longmen. Instead, I show that gender played a crucial role in the choice of burials in Buddhist space. Lay women cited as their wishes to be separated from their husband's family in the afterlife and to stay close to the Buddha. For those who were devoted to Buddhist learning and nuns, they chose Longmen as their burial site in the hope that they could stay close to their Buddhist colleagues and masters. I propose that because of the perceived daunting prospect of women's awakening, aspiring female Buddhists pursued such intimate connections with revered practitioners and the Buddha, in the hope that their spiritual attainment would be improved in the afterlife. Both images and texts constructed the space of Longmen as an efficacious realm in which one can have access to the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Having experienced and understood this efficacy of the space, these people made arrangement before death to inter their bodies in its earth, hoping that they would forever be immersed in the power of the Buddha.

6.2. Burial Space Overview

By mortuary space, I refer to three kinds of physical space. The first type is dispersed among the cliff-carved image shrines, including forty-five stone chambers for the disposal of corpses and ninety-four cineraria, or smaller niches for cremated remains. All are from the Tang period.⁶²⁴ In addition, at least seventeen pagodas for cremated remains of monastic members, mostly from the seventh to the eighth centuries, are excavated from the ruined monastic grounds or documented in various textual sources.⁶²⁵ The third type is distributed within the loosely outlined vicinity of Longmen, where tomb epitaphs continue to be discovered to this day (Fig. 6.1). The excavation of these epitaphs suggests the existence of underground tombs. The earliest four epitaphs excavated so far are dated to the early sixth century, whereas the vast majority is from the seventh to the tenth centuries.⁶²⁶ The current compilation of excavated tomb epitaphs lists about 260 pieces from Longmen, but many of the early excavations were accidental or had

⁶²⁴ Wang Qufei, “Guanyu Longmen shiku de jizhong xin faxian jiqi youguan wenti,” *Wenwu cankao ziliao* (1955), no. 2: 120-127; Zhang Naizhu, “Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao,” in *Longmen shiku yanjiu lunwen xuan*, ed. Longmen shiku yanjiu suo, 241-275 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1993); Li Wensheng, “Longmen shiku fojiao yizang xingzhi de xin faxian,” *Yishuxue* 11 (1994): 7-11. (A revised version of this article was published again in 1995, see Li Wensheng and Yang Chaojie, “Longmen shiku fojiao yizang xingzhi de xinfaxian,” *Wenwu* (1995), no. 9: 71-77. Lü Jinsong and Yang Chaojie, “Longmen shiku xin faxian de liangzuo Tangdai yiku,” in *Gengyun luncun (yi)*, ed., Luoyang shi wenwu ju (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1999), 100-102; Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan, and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo, eds, *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: Dongshan leigutai qu*, 6 vols (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe; Longmen shuju, 2018); Li Xiaoxia, “Longmen shiku wanfogou xin faxian,” *Kaogu yanjiu* 163 (2019): 158-160; Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan, Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan, and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan shijie zongjiao yanjiu suo, eds., *Longmen shiku kaogu baogao: dongshan wanfogou qu*, vol. 3 (upcoming).

⁶²⁵ Wen Yucheng, “Longmen shi si kaobian,” *Zhongzhou jingu* (1983), no. 2: 30-32; (1983), no. 3: 50-53; Wen Yucheng, “Longmen Fengxiansi yizhi diaocha ji,” *Kaogu yu wenwu* (1986), no.2: 27-9; Zhang Naizhu and Ye Wansong, “Chanzong qizu Heze dashi Shenhui taming yinlun,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1991), no. 4: 61-67; Luoyang shi wenwu gongzuo dui, “Luoyang Tang Shenhui heshang shenta taji qingli,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (1992), no. 3: 64-67, 75, 106; Ye Wansong and Shang Zhitan, “Luoyang Longmen chutu Shenhui taming kaobian,” *Wenwu* (1994), no. 11:81-83, 32; Aurora Testa, “Appendix. The Fengxiansi and Other Buddhist Monasteries of Longmen,” in

Giovanni Verardi and Liu Jinglong, eds, “Report on the 1997 Excavations at Weiwang, Longmen (China),” *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli* 58 (1998): 452-59. Marco Guglielminotti Trivel, “Archaeological Evidence from the ‘Buddhist Period’ in the Longmen Area,” *Annali dell’ Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”* 66 (2006): 139-177; Lu Wei, et al, “Luoyang Longmen shiku dongshan Tangdai Xiangshansi yizhi,” *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* (2017): 337-339; Lu Wei, et al, “Luoyang shi Longmen shiku Tangdai Xiangshansi yizhi” *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* (2018): 313-314; Shi Yanyan, “Luoyang Longmen xishan beipo senglü muqun fajue jianbao,” *Wenbo* (2020) no. 3: 20-26.

⁶²⁶For the four epitaphs from the fifth century, see Zhang Naizhu, *Longmen quxi shike wencui* (Beijing: Beijing tushu chubanshe, 2011), 21, 23, 26, 29.

dubious origins.⁶²⁷ In this study, I consider sixteen tomb epitaphs whose origins from Longmen are testified by the archaeologists and researchers of Longmen.⁶²⁸

6.3. Foreign Precedent from Śītavana: Offering Flesh

On the burial caves at Longmen, previous scholars compared them with Śītavana in India. Shufen Liu, for example, referred to two Chinese apocryphal texts, *Foshuo yaoxing sheshen jing* 佛說要行捨身經 (T 2895, Sutra on Practicing Body Offering as Expounded by the Buddha) and the lost *Shiluolin jing* 屍陀林經 (Sutra on Śītavana) that cited jātakā stories of Śākyamuni to advocate for offering ones' dead bodies to feed animals in forests.⁶²⁹ Indeed, the famous monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) addressed four Indian burial practices that were known to Chinese audience, including disposing the dead in groves, in rivers, underground, and cremation.⁶³⁰

Textual evidence also suggests a degree of reluctance against adopting Śītavana burials among medieval Chinese. For example, in *Fo benxing jijing* 佛本行集經 (Sutra of the Collection of the Past Deeds of the Buddha) translated by Jñānagupta (523-600/605) in Luoyang, an ascetic spoke about the merit of leaving corpses in Śītavana, stating that the merit would ensure the dead a rebirth in the heaven. In response, Prince Siddhartha renounced such aspiration as

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ They are published in the following articles: Zhang Naizhu, “Ba Longmen shiku jincang Chang’an sannian, Dazhong liunian zhi chuangta keshi,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* (1998), no. 1: 24-29, 186-187; Zhang Naizhu and Zhang Chengyu, “Luoyang Longmen shan chutu de Tang Li Duozuo muzhi,” *Kaogu* (1999), no. 12: 77-79; Zhang Naizhu, “Ba Longmen diqu xin faxian de san jian Tangdai shike,” *Wenxian* (1991), no. 2: 245-255; Zhang Naizhu, “Ji Luoyang xin chutu de sanjian shike wenwu,” *Henan keji daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 21 (2003), no. 1: 18-21; Zhang Naizhu, “Ji Longmen diqu jindai chutu de sijian zongjiao shike,” *Foxue yanjiu* (2004), no. 13: 183-186; Zhang Naizhu, “Du Luoyang xin chutu de jifang Tangdai zongjiao shike,” *Dunhuang yanjiu* 111 (2008), no. 5: 76-80. Zhang Naizhu, “Luoyang xinji shike suojian Tangdai zhongyuan zhi fojiao,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (2008), no. 5: 81-93; Zhang Naizhu, “Luoyang Jingjiao chuangu yu Tang dongdu ‘Gande xiang’ de huren juluo,” *Zhongyuan wenwu* (2009), no. 2: 98-106.

⁶²⁹ Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui*, 294-296.

⁶³⁰ Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), *Xu gaosengzhuàn* 續高僧傳, T vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 0685b01- 0685b03. I learned this information from Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui*, 291.

delusional.⁶³¹ Additionally, the tomb epitaph of nun Fayuan 法願 (?–663) from Jidu Monastery 濟度寺 in Chang’an recounted that Fayuan left a will to offer her remains to feed animals. Yet since her sister and brother could not bear to execute the will, they excavated a chamber next to Shaolin terrace (present-day Xi’an) for her burial.⁶³² Similarly, hagiographies from the fifth to the ninth centuries in the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks* contain multiple cases in which Buddhist masters demanded to have their own corpses exposed but their disciples could not bear to follow this instruction. Therefore, Liu argues that for both sangha and laity in medieval China, burial in stone chamber was a compromise for exposing corpses in the wildness because the latter seemed too cruel for the decedents of the deceased.⁶³³

6.3.1. The Burial Chamber of Lou 婁 (d. 661) (Cave 440)

Focusing on the inscriptional evidence preserved at Longmen, I argue that ordinary lay people in China did not necessarily understand the gesture of offering in the burial at Śītavana. Among the four burial chambers with inscriptions, only the one for Ms. Lou (Cave 440, Fig. 6.2) made an intentional reference to the practice of exposing corpses in Śītavana. However, its textual context suggests that the word “Śītavana” evoked different burial practices than feeding the remains to animals. The inscription is documented in two different versions.⁶³⁴ Both state that a man named Shen Li 沈里 commissioned a statue of King Udayana’s Buddha for his deceased

⁶³¹ As cited in Liu, *Zhongguo de fojiao yu shehui*, 188.

⁶³² “Jidu si ni Fayuan muzhi 濟度寺尼法願墓誌,” in *Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編 v. 54, 27-29, as cited in Liu, *Zhongguo de fojiao yu shehui*, 259.

⁶³³ Liu, *Zhongguo de fojiao yu shehui*, 246, 258-260.

⁶³⁴ Liu Jinglong and Li Yukun, eds., *Longmen shiku beike tiji huilu*, v. 1 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1998), no. 507, pp. 113-114 [Thereafter *Tiji*]. And Zhang, “Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao,” 241-2.

wife, née Lou.⁶³⁵ Yet in the version recorded by Zhang Naizhu, it is specified that Lou's remains were transported to and interred in the limestone cliff of Longmen. Therefore, Zhang believes that Cave 440 is also her burial chamber.⁶³⁶

The inscription states that in 660, before she passed away at home, Lou asked her husband to follow her wishes and burial her in a stone chamber at Longmen. After a mourning period of forty-nine days, her remains were carried in a jeweled chariot and sent to the side of the River Yi. “[Her body] was placed on the secluded cliff, and [her] soul was concealed in desolate rocks. This was called the rule of Śītavana. This is in accordance with the Rite.” 尸陈戢崖，魂藏孤岩。实曰尸陀法，礼也。⁶³⁷ Shu-fen Liu argues that since the cave burial exposes Ms. Lou's corpse above ground, it is ultimately an act of *dāna* (*bushi* 布施), or compassionate offering. Just like Śākyamuni gave out his flesh while alive, those who chose cave burials in medieval China offered their dead bodies to hungry animals.⁶³⁸ However, the entire inscription does not bring up the topic of flesh offering at all. Rather, the “rule of Śītavana,” as Lou's inscription construes, refers to the practice of placing one's body “on the secluded cliff” and concealing one's soul “in desolate rocks.” To Lou, her burial in the stone chamber of Longmen was not a compromise but rather a faithful performance of the “rule of Śītavana.”

The passage precedes the reference to Śītavana further explains Ms. Lou's motivation for choosing a stone burial cave at Longmen. After praising Lou's devotion to Buddhist dharma, it states that “[Lou] disliked the contemporaneous funerary custom, which fills underground tombs

⁶³⁵ In this well-known legend, when the Buddha was away, King Udayana missed him so much that he sent artisans to the heaven to carve a statue of the Buddha. See McNair, ‘Chapter Five: Cīnasthāna Preserves the Dharma,’ in *Donors of Longmen*, 99-104. Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui*. For the discussion of Śākyamuni's offering, see, p. 186-188; for her discussion on Ms. Lou's burial, see p. 272.

⁶³⁶ Zhang, “Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao,” 241-2.

⁶³⁷ *Tiji*, no. 507, vol. 1, p. 113-114.

⁶³⁸ Liu, *Zhonggu de fojiao yu shehui*. 272.

with delicate carvings. Admiring the inclinations of the wise men of old, [she would] quietly allow her remains to return to the elements in the wilderness.” 鄙時俗之送終，精寶繡於泉壤。慕先哲之歸向，寂分驅於草莽。⁶³⁹In other words, her motivation was not to offer her flesh but rather to place her remains in a secluded place away from the bustle of earthly life.

The lofty placement of Lou’s chamber also corroborates this aspiration to be left undisturbed in the afterlife (Fig. 6.2). Located to the immediate north of the unfinished *Moyasango* (摩崖三佛 Cave 435, Fig. 6.3), which enshrines three large Buddhas seated in a row, the cave is situated high on the cliff, about 5 meters above the modern concrete road and immediately beneath the wooden pathway. At Longmen, small square holes on the cliff façade usually suggest that there used to be pathway installed in front of cave-shrines for pedestrians. However, no such remains exist beneath or near Cave 440. Therefore, it is highly possible that the chamber was not intended to be visited in the beginning. The placement and design of other burial chambers also suggest an intentional divide between the interior and any potential visitors to the space. At least one burial chamber, Wanfogou Cave 1, also has a pseudo-gate that was intended to seal the space (Figs. 6.4-5). In addition, Wanfogou Caves 10 (originally Cave 2157) and 14 (originally 2161, Figs. 6.6-7), and Yidaoqiaogou Cave 1 show mortises on the doorways. All these spatial designs indicate that the burial chamber was intended to be either sealed, or inaccessible to visitors.

These measures of concealment seemed to help preserve the spirit, ghost, or soul after death. In addition to Lou’s inscription, in the burial chamber for nun Huideng 惠燈 (650–731) (Cave 1336), the final wish in the dedicatory inscription was to “conceal the soul for eternity.”

⁶³⁹ *Tiji*, no. 507, vol. 1, p. 113-114.

(藏) 魂千秋萬(古)⁶⁴⁰ In the dedicatory inscription of Ms. Zhang 張 (Cave 1850), it is wished that “[her] afterlife visage would remain for eternity without decay.” 庶使幽容，長垂不朽⁶⁴¹

Such expressions are the kind of literary trope used in tomb epitaphs during the Tang period. The use of these expressions suggests, in my reading, that cave burials still followed some of the conventions of underground burials.

Such concern for the souls among Buddhists in China is observable from *The Consecration Sutra* (*Foshuo guanding jing* 佛說灌頂經, T1331), a fifth-century compilation of scriptures written in China. According to Alan Cole, the sutra was not only popular in its own time but was also cited in the sixth and seventh centuries as an “authoritative source for funeral procedures.” Thus Cole also uses this sutra to reconstruct contemporaneous mortuary practices.⁶⁴² In Chapter Six on graves, Ananda asked the Buddha whether the dead persons’ “spirits and souls 精魂” were preserved in graves or pagodas. The Buddha replied that if the deceased did not cultivate good karmic merit in their lifetimes, nor committed evils, their spirits and souls would remain inside. But if they accumulated good merit, they would be reborn in the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, or in wealthy families in the human realm. However, if they killed living beings for “heterodox sacrifices,” they would be reborn in the realm of hungry ghosts or in the hell. In the latter two cases, their spirits would not remain in the graves. On the spirits that remain in the grave, the Buddha further added that since they were derived from “the essence of five grains 五穀之精,” they would last for as long as the bones still remain; yet once the skeletons were disintegrated, the spirits would also disappear.⁶⁴³ This conversation between

⁶⁴⁰ *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 1650, p. 384-386.

⁶⁴¹ *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 2699, p. 591-592.

⁶⁴² Cole, “Upside down/Right Side up,” 317-318.

⁶⁴³ *Guanding jing* 灌頂經, T 1331, vol. 21, 0512c05- 0512c19.

Ananda and the Buddha speaks to the popular acceptance of the idea of a transmigrating soul.⁶⁴⁴ It also suggests that early Buddhists in China were concerned about the impending journey of the souls. Even though the destiny is determined by one's deeds in lifetime, in Chapter Eleven, the Buddha further expounded that several death-bed interventions were available to change the destiny. It is stated that if one wished the moribund to be reborn in the Buddha lands, one need to wash the body, dress it in clean clothes, burn incense, hung up banners, praise to the Three Jewels, explain to them the law of retributions and the emptiness of one's flesh, and instruct them to concentrate on the teaching.⁶⁴⁵ Similarly, those who chose to be buried at Longmen were also concerned with utilizing ritualistic and practical measures to better the afterlives.

6.4. A Problem of Gender

I argue that the space of Longmen provided alternatives for women's burials. While only four of the burial chambers contain identification information of its former occupants, they were all women. Before the 760s, all but one underground tomb epitaphs in the vicinity of Longmen belonged to nuns or lay women. The only exception is the tomb of Li Duo²uo 李多柞 (654-707), the man who was executed in the revolt against Empress Wei 韋 (?-710). Yet even in this case, it was Li's sister and daughter who decided to move his tomb, originally located elsewhere, to Longmen in 713.⁶⁴⁶ Thus I believe that Longmen had a special appeal as a burial place for women in the eighth century.

⁶⁴⁴ Early Buddhists in China felt the need to defend a transmigrating soul, or a self (*ātman*), in order to justify karmic retribution and reincarnations. Thus, in the fifth and sixth centuries, one witnesses the well-known debates on the immortality of souls. Probably rising in the third century, the debates occupied an extensive array of Chinese intellectuals in the fifth century whom modern scholarship would categorize as Buddhists, Confucians, and Daoists. See Michael Radich, "A 'Prehistory' to Chinese Debates on the Survival of Death by the Spirit, with a Focus on the Term Shishen 識神/Shenshi 神識," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 44 (2016), no. 2: 105-126. He also advocates for a different rendition to replace the expression "immortality of souls": "the survival of death by the spirit." He states that the tenant of this debate is on whether something survives beyond death, whereas the choice of the word "immortality" implies something would live forever. See Radich, "Ideas about Consciousness," 473.

⁶⁴⁵ Cole, "Upside down/Right Side up," 319.

⁶⁴⁶ Zhang and Zhang, "Luoyang Longmen shan chutu de Tang Li Duo²uo muzhi," 77-79.

According to the Buddhist Studies scholar Stephanie Balkwill, Mahayana texts insist that a woman had to change into a man in order to attain Buddhahood. For example, a sixth-century indigenous text, titled the *Sutra on Transforming the Female Form* (*Zhuan nüshen jing* 轉女身經, T 564), addresses this issue. The text was likely written in China in the sixth century and included in the Sui-dynasty (581-618) *Catalogue of Scriptures* 衆經目錄 as a genuine translation.⁶⁴⁷ In a catalogue compiled in 800, *Zhenyuan Revised List of Canonical Buddhist Texts* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (*Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T2157), even though it is listed as apocryphal, it is included in the *Sutra of the Buddha's Name* 佛名經 (T 441).⁶⁴⁸ Since several excerpts of the latter sutra appeared in Longmen, Longmen audience may also be familiar with the argument articulated in the *Sutra on Transforming the Female Form*. Balkwill argues that the perceived problem of the female body lies in its social gender, not the physical sex. She argues that it was difficult for even a privileged woman to attain Buddhahood because she “necessarily belongs to another person. Throughout her life, she is like a maidservant who must serve and follow a great family, also like a disciple who must venerate and serve his master.”⁶⁴⁹

Those women who chose to bury themselves at Longmen also perceived their female body, its seductive power in particular, as an obstacle to their release from suffering. One evidence is found in the inscribed scripture in Cave 1892. Excavated in 694, the grotto contains a carved sutra titled *Pusa hese yufa jing* 菩薩訶色欲法經 (*The Sutra on Bodhisattva's Denunciation of Desires of Form*, T 615), which Tang canons believed to be a translation by

⁶⁴⁷ Stephanie Balkwill, “The Sutra on Transforming the Female Form: Unpacking an Early Medieval Chinese Buddhist Text,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 44 (2016), no. 2: 127, 130-131.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 131, footnote no. 13.

⁶⁴⁹ Stephanie Balkwill, “Why Does a Woman Need to Become a Man in Order to Become a Buddha: Past Investigations, New Leads,” *Religion Compass* 12 (2018), no. 8: 4.

Kumārajīva (344–413).⁶⁵⁰ The short text expounds that the form of women is the cangue, the deadly disease, and the evil dragon in this world. As a result, women were held accountable for family conflicts and the collapse of a clan. Their destructive power was compared to a tall net that traps flocks of birds or fishes and a dark pit that traps the blinded. Therefore, it is instructed that the wise should stay away from such defilement.⁶⁵¹ Interestingly, among its donors, at least thirty lay women were listed, in addition to monks and lay men. The presence of this carved sutra at Longmen suggests that the female form was perceived as an obstacle for female devotees at the time.⁶⁵² For any women who look forward to a Buddhist release, they had to address this issue.

6.5. To Break Away from Earthly Ties

With the perceived obstacles to Buddhist release, some women chose to be buried at Longmen in order to be separated from the husbands' families in the afterlife. It was relatively common among widowed women in the Tang who became Buddhist or Daoist renunciants to be buried alone.⁶⁵³ Yet the material of Longmen shows that the space had special attractions over other more popular cemeteries.

6.5.1. The Epitaph of Pei 裴 (667–725)

One example of a widowed woman being buried alone at Longmen is Ms. Pei. Her burial location and arrangement were documented in her tomb epitaph. Accordingly, after her husband

⁶⁵⁰ *Tiji*, no. 2703, v. 2, pp. 594-596. Chen Jinhua translates this title as “The Sutra of the Boddhisattva’s Denunciation Physical Desires.” See Chen Jinhua, “Meditation Traditions in Fifth-Century Northern China: With a Special Note on a Forgotten ‘Kaśmīri’ Meditation Tradition Brought to China by Buddhahadra (359-429),” in *Buddhism Across Asia: Networks of Material, Intellectual and Cultural Exchange*, v. 1 (Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2014), 116, endnote no. 1.

⁶⁵¹ Attributed to Kumārajīva (344- 413), *Pusa hese yufa jing* 菩薩訶色欲法經, T Vol. 15, no. 615, pp. 0286a17- 0286b09.

⁶⁵² The popular Three-Level School also taught about the obstacle of female form. Similar to the case of Longmen, numerous female devotees set up pagodas for their own cremated remains next to Xinxing 信行 (540-594) the leader of the school.

⁶⁵³ For examples, see Yang, “Death Ritual in the Tang Dynasty,” 50.

died at a young age, she left the will that she should not be buried with her husband, because she had taken the precept for a lay people. Her epitaphs states that on the twenty-third day of the second month of 726 (March 31, 726), “she was buried on the rear mountain of Puti Monastery. [Such choice] revealed [her determination] to leave the dusty [world].”⁶⁵⁴ 葬於河南龍門山菩提寺之後崗，明去塵也。

6.5.2. The Burial Chamber of Zhang 張 (c. 658-c. 718) (Cave 1850)

One failed attempt to break away from one’s husband in the afterlife is found in the empty Cave no. 1850 of Longmen, where the body of a Ms. Zhang was once interred.⁶⁵⁵ Located on the southern end of the western cliff, the cave measures 175 cm in height, 239 cm in width, and 233 cm in depth. Since the four edges of its opening are designed to imitate the jambs, head, and threshold of a door frame, the space was probably designed to be closed (Fig. 6.8). Inside is a stone dais which occupies the entire length of the cave, possibly for the placement of the corpse. Other than the incised palmette and floral patterns on the vertical side of the dais, no other images exist inside the cave. Outside, to either side of the opening, there is a seated animal and a standing figure dressed in wide-sleeved robe and a cap, holding something in hand. Since the figures do not show the typical muscular and wrathful bodies of *dvārapālas*, I believe they represent civil officials that were part of the so-named “honor guard” in an underground tomb, usually placed behind the guardians.⁶⁵⁶ Above the opening is an empty arched niche with a square indent inside (Fig. 6.9), which Zhang Naizhu argues is a common feature shared by burial

⁶⁵⁴ Zhou Shaoliang and Zhao Chao, eds., *Tangdai muzhi huibian*, v. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 1992), 1313.

⁶⁵⁵ *Tiji* puts it as Cave 1852 whereas *Zonglu* documents it as Cave 1850. See *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 2699, p. 591–592; and Liu Jinglong and Yang Chaojie, eds., *Longmen shiku zonglu*, v. 11 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1999), 48. [Thereafter *Zonglu*].

⁶⁵⁶ Ye Wa, “Mortuary Practice in Medieval China: A Study of the Xingyuan Tang Cemetery,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2005), 226.

stone chambers of the time.⁶⁵⁷ Next to the southern official is a relief of stele but no text survives.

Found above the entrance in fragment, the comprehensible part of the inscription states that a woman surnamed Zhang was “carried in this efficacious shrine. It is hoped that [her] afterlife visage would remain for eternity.” It tells little about Zhang’s family background, except that she survived her late husband Xiao Yuanli 蕭元禮 (c. 647-c. 697), who received the title as the Prefect of Xiangzhou 相州刺史. Most of its text elaborates on Zhang’s understanding of Buddhism and claims that she was inclined to Buddhist teachings at a young age.⁶⁵⁸ It is stated that she passed away at the age of 61 and chose to be buried alone at Longmen.

In contrast to what is stated in the inscription, the discovery of her husband’s tomb epitaph informs that on the 22nd day of the tenth month in 718 (November 16, 718), a second burial was conducted for Ms. Zhang by her two sons. Her corpse was moved from the burial cave to her husband’s underground tomb. In 2002, Xiao Yuanli’s tomb epitaph was discovered in the nearby Zhanggoucun 張溝村, also on the western side of the River Yi (Fig. 6.1).⁶⁵⁹ In the joined tomb epitaph, Zhang was portrayed in the most common mold for an elite woman in the Tang: an educated daughter from a family of officials and a virtuous wife who dutifully served her husband and parents-in-law. The epitaph claims that she was from Dunhuang, her grandfather was Zhang Shifang 張師昉 who was the commander-in-chief 都督 in Shanzhou 鄯州 (present-day Qinghai) and her father was Zhang Bin 張斌 who served as an administrator in

⁶⁵⁷ Zhang, “Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao,” 245.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 245.

⁶⁵⁹ Zhang Naizhu, “Xin chu Tang zhi yu zhonggu Longmen jingtu chongbai de wenhua shengtai: yi Xiao Yuanli muzhi jishi wei yuanqi,” *Tang yan jiu* 16 (2010): 507.

Langzhou 閬州 (present-day Sichuan).⁶⁶⁰ Mentioning nothing about her Buddhist devotion, the epitaph cites from the *Neize* 內則 chapter in *Liji* 禮記, praising her early education, including studying weaving from a female teacher and learning about ancestral rituals.⁶⁶¹ She “composed prose at the Pan Garden [where parents resided] and served [guests] at banquets. Saddened by [her husband’s death], she did not sleep and respectfully observed [the custom] to be buried with her husband [later].” 潘園作賦，始奉長筵。杜寢興哀，敬遵合祔。 According to this epitaph, Zhang passed away at the age of sixty-one in her home at Zeshanli 擇善里 in Luoyang. Then, her sons buried their parents together on the western plateau to the south of Longmen, at or near where the tomb epitaph was discovered.⁶⁶²

Why did the sons move her mother’s body from Cave 1850 against her will? For a lay woman in the Tang, being buried alone at a Buddhist site was at least not a mainstream practice. Statistics from recent archaeological research show that the most typical practice in the Tang was to bury married women together with the husbands, either in the same coffin or in different coffins inside the same tomb.⁶⁶³ On the rhetorical level, the joint burial was considered an appropriate burial for married couples as early as the time of Confucius (551 BCE-479 BCE). This idea was further confirmed in the Tang, as evidenced by Kong Yingda’s 孔穎達 (574-648) commentary on *Yili* 儀禮 (Book of etiquette and ceremonial), a classic attributed to Confucius.⁶⁶⁴ However, having a joint burial was by no means an enforceable requirement for all married

⁶⁶⁰ For Xiao Yuanli’s epitaph, see Zhao Junping and Zhao Wencheng eds., *Heluo muke shiling*, v. 1 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2007), no 177, p. 227.

⁶⁶¹ Zhang Naizhu, “Xin chu Tang zhi yu zhonggu Longmen jingtu chongbai de wenhua shengtai,” 508.

⁶⁶² Zhao and Zhao, eds., *Heluo muke shiling*, v. 1, no. 177, p. 227.

⁶⁶³ Ping Yao, “Until Death Do Us Unite: After life Marriages in Tang China, 618-906,” *Journal of Family History* 27 (2002), no. 3: 213.

⁶⁶⁴ Man Xu, “Gender and Burial in Imperial China: An investigation of Women’s Space in Fujian Tombs of the Song Era (960-1279),” *Nan Nü* 13 (2011): 18.

women. When it came to the question of whether Empress Wu Zhao (624-705) should be buried in the tomb of her husband Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649-683), the legitimacy of the joint burial was challenged. At the occasion, joint burials were condemned as “not [a practice] from antiquity.” 合葬非古 The same phrase also appear in the epitaphs of several joint tombs, followed by various justifications.⁶⁶⁵ Thus it was probably acceptable for Ms. Zhang to choose a separate burial. But after her death, when her sons moved her tomb, they were also in compliance with the widely accepted custom of joint burials.

6.5.3. A Miraculous Legend at Longmen from *Mingbao ji* 冥报记

Why did Pei and Zhang want to be interred at Longmen in the first place? I propose that one reason lies in the popular religious environment in the early Tang, which took the idea of postmortem karmic connection seriously. Two miraculous legends that took place at Longmen give vivid accounts of such concern. The first one is found in *Mingbao ji* (*Records of Retribution from the Unseen Realm*), a compilation of contemporaneous and earlier tales created in the 650s by Tang Lin 唐臨 (600–659), a high-level government official who also dedicated a shrine at Longmen.⁶⁶⁶ As analyzed by Robert Campany, the less-studied literature genre of miracle tales offers testimonies to how medieval Chinese audience received the authority of Buddhist scriptures and teachings.⁶⁶⁷ While these stories about Buddhist karmic retributions appear legendary to the eyes of modern non-Buddhists, they were still historical in the minds of its compilers and contemporaneous readers. In this compilation, the anecdote that reportedly took place at Longmen was dated to the *daye* reign (605–618) of the Sui dynasty (581–619). It tells a

⁶⁶⁵ Wang Pu 王溥 (922-982), *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 v. 20 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 396. As cited in Yang, “Death Ritual in the Tang Dynasty,” 47-48, and footnote no. 223.

⁶⁶⁶ Li Mingjing, “Mingbao ji de guchao ben yu chuancheng,” *Wenxian jikan* (2000), no. 3: 86.

⁶⁶⁷ Robert Ford Campany, “Miracle tales as scripture reception: A case study involving the Lotus Sutra in China, 370–750 CE,” *Early Medieval China* (2018) no. 24: 26. DOI: 10.1080/15299104.2018.1493826

miraculous story heard from a certain Mr. Wang in Luoyang. Because Wang observed five Buddhist precepts for lay practitioners, he could sometimes foresee future events. One morning he proclaimed that someone would gift him a donkey; this prediction was fulfilled that very noon. The man who brought the donkey claimed the donkey to be a reincarnation of his late mother and her story reads,

[since the] father died when he was young, the mother remained a widow while raising a son and a daughter. After the daughter was married, the mother passed away. It had been over ten years since then. On the day of the Cold Food Festival, the younger sister returned home... It was the custom of Luoyang that on the day, [descendants] should offer alcohol and food to the tombs [of ancestors]. Riding the donkey, the son went. The tomb [of their parents] were to the east of the River Yi. As [the son] was about to cross the River Yi, the donkey refused to proceed. The [son] the whipped its head to bleed. Having arrived at the tomb, [he] let loose of the donkey in order to present the offerings. Soon [he found that] the donkey disappeared... On the same day, the younger sister was at the brother's home alone. Suddenly [she] saw her mother enter. Bleeding from the head and mutilated in the face, [the mother] wailed and told the daughter, 'When I was alive, I sent you five sheng of rice behind your brother's back. For this act, I was punished with sinful karma and reborn in the body of a donkey. [As a donkey] I have repaid your elder brother for five years. Today [he] wanted to cross the River Yi. Since the water is so deep, [I] was afraid of [crossing]. Your elder brother beat me with his whip, wounding my head and face. If [I] returned home, [I am] afraid that he would beat me again. [Thus] I ran to tell you: now I have paid back all my debts, why [would we still] inflict so much unreasonable suffering on each other?' Having finished her words, [the donkey] walked out and cannot be found again. [But] the daughter took note of her wounds.

Soon the brother came back. The daughter went to observe the bleeding wounds on the donkey and realized that they were the same as her mother's. Holding the donkey, she cried. The brother was surprised, asking her about the matter. The daughter told him about the situation. The brother confirmed that in the beginning, [the donkey] refused to cross the river, and that it returned after disappearing; the circumstance was the same [as what the daughter described]. Then the brother and sister held one another and cried with grief. Although the donkey also wept, it still refused to drink water or eat grass. The siblings kneeled to plead, 'If you are indeed our mother, please eat the grass.' The donkey immediately ate some grass, but then stopped again. Not knowing what to do, the siblings prepared millet and beans, and send [them with the donkey] to the place of Wujie (Mr. Wang). Only after that did [the donkey] eat and drink again. Later, when the donkey died, the sister collected [its remains] and buried it.

早丧父，其母寡，养一男一女；女嫁而母亡，亦十许年矣。寒食日，妹来归家，家有驴数年，洛下俗，以寒食日，持酒食祭奠。此人乘驴而往，墓在伊水东，欲度伊

水，驴不肯度，鞭其头面，被伤流血。既至墓所，放驴而祭，俄失其驴，还在本处。是日，妹独在兄家，忽见母入来，头面血流，形容毁瘁，号泣告女曰：“我生时，避汝兄送米五升与汝，坐此得罪报，受驴身，偿汝兄五年矣。今日欲度伊水，水深畏之，汝兄以鞭捶我，头面尽破，仍许还家，更苦打我。我走来告汝，吾今偿债垂毕，何太非理相苦也！”言讫，走出，寻之不见。女记其伤状处。

既而兄还，女先观驴头面伤破流血，如见其母伤状，女抱以号泣；兄怪问之，女以状告。兄亦言初不肯度，及既失还得之状同。于是兄妹抱持恸哭，驴亦涕泪交流，不食水草；兄妹跪请：“若是母者，愿为食草。”驴即为食草。既而复止；兄妹莫如之何，遂备粟豆，送五戒处，乃复饮食。后驴死，妹收葬焉。⁶⁶⁸

Reading the story against lay women's tomb epitaphs at Longmen, I believe the story is a

carefully orchestrated allegory of how women in the seventh century perceived their afterlives.

That the donkey refused to cross the river hints at her reluctance to revisit her joint tomb with the husband. Her refusal to eat at her son's place suggests her determination to clear the worldly debt in this life, in the hope that she would be released from suffering in the next reincarnation.

6.5.4. A Tale of Ghost at Longmen from *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記

Another Longmen-related miracle is found in *Taiping guangji* (Extensive Records of the Taipingxingguo Era) that was published in 978. In the story titled *Daodeli shusheng* 道德里書生 (A Scholar from Daode Neighborhood), it recounts a night excursion of a scholar from the city of Luoyang to Xiangshan Monastery of Longmen. The text reads,

In the eastern capital of the Tang dynasty [Luoyang], in *Daodeli*, there was a scholar. One evening, when walking to Zhongqiao, he stumbled upon an aristocratic entourage, accompanied by luxurious carts and horses. Seeing the scholar, [the aristocrats] talked to him and asked him to follow the entourage. [Inside the team] there was a princess, about 20 years old, whose beauty was unparalleled in the world. [As she] continued to converse with the scholar, the group left Changxia gate in the south [of the city], arriving at Longmen where they entered a splendid mansion filled with orchid fragrance. [The princess] summoned the scholar, bestowed him fine cuisines, and slept with him. At midnight, the scholar was awakened and saw where he was sleeping was a stone cave. In the front was a dead woman whose corpse had become swollen. In moonlight, it was unbearable to smell the stink of the corpse. The scholar then climbed on the stone and

⁶⁶⁸ Tang Lin 唐临 (600–659), *Mingbao ji* 冥报记, in *Mingbao ji guangyi ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992).

barely exited [the cave]. At dawn [he] arrived Xiangshan Monastery and told what happened to the monk there. The monk sent him back home. Several days later, he died.

唐東都道德里有一書生。日晚行至中橋。遇貴人部從。車馬甚盛。見書生。呼與語。令從後。有貴主。年二十餘。丰姿絕世。與書生語不輟。因而南去長夏門。遂至龍門。入一甲第。華堂蘭室。召書生賜珍饌。因與寢。夜過半。書生覺。見所臥處。乃石窟。前有一死婦人。身王洪漲。月光照之。穢不可聞。書生乃履危攀石。僅能出焉。曉至香山寺。為僧說之。僧送還家。數日而死。⁶⁶⁹

The anecdote supplies extremely detailed geographic information to help its readers imagine the story in their familiar physical space. Except for the name Daodeli, all other geographic information in this anecdote is accurate, including the Changxia Gate (Long Summer Gate, the eastern gate on the southern city wall of Luoyang), Zhongqiao (Middle Bridge, on the River Luo), Longmen, and Xiangshan Monastery. Thus, it is probable the legend was believed to have taken place in one of the many burial chambers that are still extant in the Eastern Hills, not far from the remains of Xiangshan Monastery.

Yet despite the spatial details, the story does not explain why the scholar died at all, which suggests that its contemporaneous audience would understand it immediately. Several stories in the same compilation include the similar element of young men's sexual encounter with deceased women. For example, in one story attributed to the Tianbao reign (742-755), a young man from a Yang family disappeared and was later discovered, alive, from the tomb of a deceased young woman. After the man was rescued, the spirit of this young lady informed her uncle, in his dream, of an upcoming betrothal from the Yang family. Subsequently, the uncle accepted the betrothal. On the scheduled day of wedding, the young man died. Afterward, the two families held an afterlife wedding ceremony and buried them in a joint tomb.⁶⁷⁰ According to the historian Ping Yao, such vernacular romance emerged as a genre because of the

⁶⁶⁹ Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013).

⁶⁷⁰ Yao, "Until Death Do Us Unite," 219.

contemporaneous practices of afterlife marriage. While such practice probably became common since as early as the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1050-235 BCE), its popularity in the Tang was confirmed by six tomb epitaphs and three biographies in dynastic histories, the latest of which was dated to 768.⁶⁷¹ I propose to interpret the miraculous story of Longmen in this context. The death of the young scholar implies that he was trapped in a netherworld union with the female spirit in the cave.

In my opinion, the two miraculous tales contextualize the justifications pronounced by lay women who chose to be buried alone at Longmen. A common dilemma faced by Buddhist lay women in the early Tang is conveyed in the stories: whereas young girls were imagined turning into seductive spirits, married women were expected to maintain her spousal and parental ties even in afterlife. In my opinion, such social pressures created the urgency for lay women in the early Tang to proclaim socially acceptable alternatives to a joint burial with their husbands.

6.6. To Stay Close to the Buddha

The space of Longmen also offered an opportunity for woman to stay close to the Buddha in the afterlife, even if attaining Buddhahood was not feasible in this lifetime. Therefore, Lou's inscription proclaims that she wanted to be buried at Longmen because she admired "the inclinations of the wise men of old [Śākyamuni]." The wish to stay close to the Buddha was realized in a literal sense when two nuns related to the imperial family were buried in chambers next to the Great Vairocana Image Shrine. The physical proximity of their remains to the monumental Buddha statue was probably perceived as a desirable condition.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

6.6.1. The Burial Chamber of the Nun Lingjue 靈覺 (c. 687–738) (Cave 887)

Among all burial space at Longmen, the ones nearest to the Great Vairocana Shrine belong to two nuns who had close associations with Empress Wu Zhao. Nun Lingjue (c. 681–c. 732) was interred in the stone chamber Cave 887 to the north of the Great Vairocana Shrine, inside a natural ravine above the “Stone Ox Stream” 石牛溪 (Fig. 6.10).⁶⁷² Its entrance has partially collapsed but the main structure remains, consisting of a long rectangular plan and a domed ceiling. The opening measures slightly more than one meter in height and about one meter in widths, but the interior is about 2.5 or 3 meters deep. According to the field research by Wang Qufei, the space becomes narrower and shorter at the deepest end of Cave 887.⁶⁷³ Based on this spatial configuration, Zhang Naizhu believes that her corpse was laid down inside the chamber.⁶⁷⁴ Since her chamber on the western cliff opens to the south, her remains would have been placed in a way that she would face in perpetuity toward the Vairocana shrine.

The incomplete dedicatory inscription suggests that Lingjue was likely a daughter of the powerful Wu Sansi 武三思 (649-707) and thus a niece of Empress Wu Zhao.⁶⁷⁵ Despite her aristocratic family background, Lingjue gave up her jewels and expensive possessions at a young age, and eventually abandoned the secular life. Such devotion received the recognition from the Empress. In terms of her Buddhist education, she observed monastic precepts and possibly received teaching from the famous Chan master Puji 普寂 (651–739) from Songshan 嵩山 who accompanied his teacher Shenxiu 神秀 (606–706) to Luoyang to meet Wu Zhao during the Jiushi

⁶⁷² For Lingjue’s inscription, see *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 1336, p. 304-305.

⁶⁷³ Wang, “Guanyu Longmen shiku de jizhong xin faxian jiqi youguan wenti,” 123.

⁶⁷⁴ Zhang, “Longmen shiku Tangdai yiku de xin faxian jiqi wenhua yiyi de tantao,” 249.

⁶⁷⁵ Wen, “Longmen suojian liang Tangshu zhong renwu zaixiang gaishuo,” 18.

reign-period (700–701).⁶⁷⁶ Before her final moment came, according to the inscription, Lingjue asked her disciples to prepare a bath, changed her clothes, and burned incense. At the age of fifty-two, she passed away at the Jingfu Convent 景福寺.⁶⁷⁷

Despite her prestigious family and educational background, her wishes for afterlife and rebirth are not so different from the common dedicatory inscriptions found in numerous Longmen image-shrines. The first aspiration mentioned in her fragmentary inscription is that she would be reborn in the “Realm of Ultimate Bliss 極樂世界,” which refers to Sukhāvātī, and attain the upmost stage of rebirth. The other goal is that “the stone will be closed in perpetuity in profound darkness, for as long as the heaven and the earth [last].” 籠石永闕幽深, 天長地久⁶⁷⁸

6.6.2. The Burial Chamber of the Nun Huideng 惠燈 (650–731) (Cave 1336)

The other burial chamber, located at the foot of the Great Vairocana Image Shrine, belongs to nun Huideng, whose corpse was interred in Cave 1336 on the eleventh day of the first month of 735 (February 8, 735) (Figs. 6.11). According to its inscription, she was summoned by Empress Wu Zhao to serve in the palace convent and won high approval from both Emperor Gaozong and the empress.⁶⁷⁹ On February 20, 731, at the age of 82, she announced to her younger sister of her upcoming death and passed away in a seated position. In the following months, worshippers paid visit to her corpse and prostrated in the front. Miraculously, even after her death, her hair and nails were still growing, and her countenance looked alive- a description

⁶⁷⁶ The inscription only contains the first character of the Chan master’s name, *pu* 普. Preceding the two-character name is the *shan* 山 character. Wen Yucheng argued that it may have been Puji. See Wen, “Longmen suojian liang Tangshu zhong renwu zaoxiang gaishuo,” 18.

⁶⁷⁷ Jingfu si is a nunnery, according to the inscription of nun Jiuniang 九娘 in Cave 555 near Wanfo Cave (Cave 543). See *Tiji*, no. 674, p. 155. Wang, “Guanyu Longmen shiku de jizhong xin faxian jiqi ta youguan wenti,” 94.

⁶⁷⁸ *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 1336, p. 304-305.

⁶⁷⁹ For an elaborate discussion on the many meanings of *neidaochang*, see Chen Jinhua, “The Tang Buddhist Palace Chapels,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 32 (2004): 101-102. For its meaning in the case of Huideng and Zhiyun, see p. 112.

that was frequently used to indicate the spiritual attainment of elite monks. Following her own will about how she would like to be buried, the daughter of the once powerful Princess Taiping 太平公主 (665–713) and her husband dedicated the shrine for her.⁶⁸⁰

6.6.3. The Tomb Epitaph of Wang Lin 王琳 (?–741)

The tomb epitaph of a lay woman named Wang Lin 王琳 (?–741) presents a view that the physical proximity to cave-shrines of Buddhist statues at Longmen was desirable. Her epitaph described the space of Longmen as radically different from the more popular burial ground at Beimang Mountains (Beimangshan 北邙山) to the north of Luoyang. It claims that,

[At Longmen,] jeweled stupas and efficacious shrines consist of the realm of ultimate bliss. The whale-shaped bell striker and the sound of striking a wooden fish constantly send the voice of the Great Compassion. Here is the peak of the Lanka Mountain, the shore of suchness and release. How could it be compared to the mounds of Beimang, or the plateau of Xiling, where white poplars whistle whilst various ghosts wail at night, in boundless mist, souls wander behind the veil of dusk?

寶塔靈龕，盡為極樂之界；鯨鐘魚梵，常送大悲之聲。即是楞伽之峰，自然解脫之岸，豈比夫北邙之壟，西陵之原，白楊蕭蕭，夜雜鬼哭；蒼煙漠漠，晝掩魂遊者乎？⁶⁸¹

Whereas Longmen only became a burial site in the sixth century, Beimang Mountains were already regarded as an ancient cemetery in the Western Jin period (266-315) because of its auspicious location.⁶⁸² Yet Wang's epitaph blatantly disregards Beimang Mountains as a ghostly place whilst praising the efficacious shrines of Longmen. In Schopen's study of Indian sacred site, he argues that since Indian Buddhists saw stupas and relics as the living presence of the

⁶⁸⁰ *Tiji*, v. 2, no. 1650, p. 384-386.

⁶⁸¹ Zhao and Zhao, eds., *Heluo muke shiling*, v. 1, no. 245, p.325.

⁶⁸² Wa Ye, "Mortuary Practice in Medieval China: A Study of the Xingyuan Tang Cemetery," (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2005), 1. From 1984 to 1993, sixty-nine Tang-tombs were excavated at Xingyuan Cemetery of Beimang Mountains. See Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Yanshi xingyuan Tang mu* (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2001).

Buddha, and they believed in the efficacy of having “direct, intimate contact with a living presence,” they chose to be buried in close proximity to the Buddha’s presence to achieve a better rebirth.⁶⁸³ Whereas Schopen’s study does not specify the gender of the devotees, women account for two-thirds of all identified burials at Longmen. It seems that the physical closeness to the statues of Buddhas was particularly attractive to women in China.

6.7. To Confirm Karmic Ties

Whereas both lay women and nuns stated that they wish to be buried close to the Buddha, some had a more concrete motivation, namely, to be buried near their Buddhist colleagues and masters. Among the latter group, some had belonged to the same convent in life whereas other did not. However, one nun and one lay woman both expressed the wish to be born near their teacher, the famous monk Yifu 義福 (658-736), whose pagoda was established at the Da Fengxiansi (the Great Fengxian Monastery, Fig. 6.1).⁶⁸⁴ Since discoveries of tomb epitaphs near Longmen still continue, the two women may be among a larger group of devotees connected to Yifu. Therefore, I propose that these people form an “imagined community” through their choice of Longmen as the burial site.

6.7.1. The Pagoda Inscriptions of Nuns from Anguo Convent 安國寺

Excavated evidence from the recent decades show that several nuns affiliated with the Anguo Convent in Luoyang came to Longmen for their burials.⁶⁸⁵ At least three nuns affiliated with the same convent are known to have been buried at Longmen. The earliest extant record

⁶⁸³ Gregory Schopen, “Burial ‘ad sanctos’ and the physical presence of the Buddha in early Indian Buddhism,” *Religion* 17, no. 3: 193-225.

⁶⁸⁴ Wen Yucheng, “Longmen Fengxiansi yizhi diaocha ji,” 27-9.

⁶⁸⁵ There is an Anguo Convent in Luoyang, and an Anguo Monastery in Chang’an, both named as Anguosi 安國寺. For the convent in Luoyang, see Zhao Qingshan, “‘Tang gu dongdu Anguo si dade ni Fazhen muzhi ming bing xu’ kaoshi,” *Dunhuang xue jikan* (2015), no. 1: 50-54.

belongs to the nun Huiying 惠隱 (659-734) from a family of officials, who died in Anguo Convent. She was cremated since a pagoda was established for her.⁶⁸⁶ The abbess in charge of precept named Chengkong 澄空 (737-793) was cremated and her pagoda was placed in a temple southwest of Longmen.⁶⁸⁷ The other one was nun Yuanjing (?-784) who was a member of Empress Wei's 韋 (664-710) family. Her tomb epitaph states that she was buried, probably in an underground tomb, southwest of Tianzhu Monastery at Longmen.⁶⁸⁸ Additionally, a fragmented dharani pillar discovered at the Puti Monastery, dated to 782, was also commissioned by a nun from Anguo Convent.⁶⁸⁹ Since discovery of new stone materials is still taking place in Luoyang, it seems likely that in the late eighth century, more monastic members affiliated with this Anguo Convent chose Longmen as their burial place.

Among these nuns from Anguo Convent, both Chengkong and Huiying expressed the wish to be buried near their Buddhist teachers at Longmen. Chengkong's pagoda was established west of the pagoda of the monk Yifu and east of the pagoda of Vajrabodhi (669-741).⁶⁹⁰ Huiying instructed in 734, right before she was about to die, that “the causal conditions of mine- teachers, monks, father, mother- are all at Longmen. [You] should put me at the same place [with them, so that I] would be in the same mountain with the Venerated One [the Buddha].” 吾师缘父母，并在龙门，可安吾于彼处，于尊者同一山也。⁶⁹¹ The latter example suggests that just as the

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., v. 2, p. 1476-7.

⁶⁸⁷ Zhou and Zhao, eds., *Tangdai muzhi huibian*, v. 2, p. 1837.

⁶⁸⁸ Robin R. Wang, *Images of Women in Chinese Thought and Culture: Writings from the Pre-Qin Period through the Song Dynasty* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2003), 313-315.

⁶⁸⁹ Marco Guglielminotti Trivel, “Archaeological Evidence from the ‘Buddhist Period’ in the Longmen Area,” 157.

⁶⁹⁰ Zhou and Zhao, eds., *Tangdai muzhi huibian*, v. 2, p. 1837.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 1476-7.

physical proximity to the Buddha of Longmen was desired, devotees also aspire to be near their Buddhist teachers after death.

6.7.2. The Pagoda Inscription of Xue 薛 (717-738)

The imagined afterlife community of Buddhist masters and disciples also extends to lay women who did not have a formal affiliation with a convent and yet still choose to be buried close to their Buddhist teachers at Longmen. One example comes from the inscription from the pagoda of a lay woman née Xue from Luoyang. Since such a pagoda was established for her, she was probably cremated. The text informs that she died in the year of 738, at the age of twenty-two. By that time, she already lost a son, but seemed unmoved by the death. Because, as the text explains, she started studying Buddhist sutras since the age of nine and then learned with the monk Yifu, she understood “the causes for a long and a short life.” 以短長有源 Before she died, she hired a ritual specialist in secret, to look for an auspicious burial place that was also close to her teacher’s resting place, in the hope that she could look over to his remains in the afterlife. Since Yifu pagoda was established at the Great Fengxian Monastery (Fig. 6.1), her site was chosen on the western ridge of Longmen.⁶⁹²

The case of Xue also explicitly addresses an assumption that inscriptions of nuns all glossed over, namely how can a female attain Buddhahood after death. Xue’s inscription predicted that she would “surely attain the enlightenment and display the miracle of presenting a jewel to the Buddha. If [she] did not transform from her female body, [she] would become a disciple who scatters flowers.”⁶⁹³ 必後成正覺，當示獻珠之奇，如未轉女身，且為散花之侶 The line makes reference to the famous episode of the Dragon King’s daughter from the *Lotus*

⁶⁹² Wen Yucheng, “Longmen Fengxiansi yizhi diaocha ji,” 27-9.

⁶⁹³ Zhou and Zhao, eds., *Tangdai muzhi huibian*, v. 2, p. 1479.

Sutra. Accordingly, in response to Sariputra's disbelief of her capacity to attain Buddhahood, the Dragon King's daughter offered a precious jewel to the Buddha who immediately accepted it. Then she said that she would attain Buddhahood even faster than Buddha's acceptance of my jewel. At the moment, she suddenly transformed into a man, accomplished all bodhisattva's path, ascended a Buddha land and attained Buddhahood.⁶⁹⁴ Considering this reference, I argue that the placement of Xue's cremated pagoda at Longmen had a two-fold purpose: to strengthen her karmic tie with her teacher Yifu and to improve her spiritual cultivations in the next rebirth.

6.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I show that Longmen was used as a burial ground in the seventh and eighth centuries. Whereas traces of both men and women were found here, before the mid-eighth century, the majority occupants of its burial space were female. For married lay women, choosing a burial at Longmen meant they would forever break away from the binding ties with their husbands' families. Both nuns and lay women aspired to be buried close to the Buddha. For those who studied with Buddhist monks and nuns, burials at Longmen strengthened their ever-binding connections with their Buddhist teachers and institutions. All these female Buddhist members were motivated to choose Longmen over other more popular burial sites because of the perceived obstacles to Buddhahood. As a result, they prepared for their own release in the afterlife by literally interring their bodies into the same earth occupied by the Buddhas of Longmen and their Buddhist teachers. Despite their different social classes and background in Buddhist teaching, an imagined community was formed that evolved around a shared experience of the physical space and a common goal of release.

⁶⁹⁴ Kumārajīva, *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, T 262, vol. 09, 09.0035c06-c26.

Conclusion

This dissertation argues that the experience of the Longmen Grottoes motivated medieval visitors and donors in China to participate in bodhisattva practices. From a practical perspective, people came to Longmen in seek of medical treatment, funerary arrangements, and repentance rituals. The niches and cave-shrines that they sponsored became the enduring testimonies of their temporal, practical activities and lived experiences. The construction of the imperially sponsored Great Vairocana Image Shrine recognized, celebrated, and magnified such activities as appropriate behaviors of a bodhisattva. Once the imperial shrine was completed, more were drawn to Longmen to participate in such bodhisattva practices.

The landscape of Longmen also attracted those who were more invested in the study of Buddhist teachings and rituals. Some, like the scholar and lay Buddhist Su Ting, understood the whole landscape, as well as their own presence within the landscape, as an integral part of interconnected phenomenal world. Instead of comprehending the worldview conceptually, they came to experience the interdependent world with their own bodies, as they walked, sailed, seated, or slept within the environment.

Some visitors probably also participated in the Buddhist rituals at Longmen. The prevalence of repentance-related visual programs suggests that some of the cave-shrines were constructed as the functional space for ritual performance, to which repentance rites were one shared constituent. Overtime, newly constructed cave-shrines, from Wanfo Grotto to Leigutai Central and South Grottoes, attempted to create a cohesive, immersive space with pre-established visual modules. The most successful designs were achieved in the two Leigutai grottoes, which allowed participants to experience the interior as a cohesive space. Inside, they could attain visions of the Buddhas and be assured of the success of repentance.

Among female devotees, the embodied experience of the Longmen landscape could have special effects. For Wu Zhao, as the first woman in Chinese history who ruled in her own name, the constructions of the Xiangshan Monastery, as well as the sculptures and cave-shrines in the Eastern Hills, supported her political propaganda in the beginning years of her reign. In this campaign, the Indian myth of the cakravartin offered Wu Zhao a powerful rhetoric, which allowed her to not only justify her legitimacy as a female ruler, but also to assume the position of the ideal ruler of the entire Buddhist world. With Buddhist images and rituals, Wu Zhao performed the role of the Cakravartin of the Golden Wheel. The sculptures and cave-shrines at Longmen made her performance known to visitors from across the Tang China.

In addition to supporting the political propaganda of a female ruler, the landscape of Longmen also attracted a few women who aspired to attain afterlife release. Although Longmen had not been a popular burial site, these women still chose to bury themselves on its cliff or in its vicinity. Among them were both married women and ordained nuns; some were from aristocratic or elite backgrounds and others seemed to have come from ordinary families. Despite their different social backgrounds, all were motivated to choose Longmen as their burial site because, as I argue, they perceived their female sex and social gender as the obstacles to Buddhahood. As a result, they prepared for their own release in the afterlife by literally interring their bodies into the same earth occupied by the Buddhas of Longmen and their Buddhist teachers.

Together, the activities of the medieval donors and visitors were remembered in the sculptures and cave-shrines of Longmen, which inspired successive Buddhists to follow the bodhisattva path. Collectively and continuously, these practices transformed the landscape of Longmen into the shape that we know of today.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

- DDB *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*.
- S Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, British Library, London.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經 from the SAT Daizōkyō Text Database.
- X *Manji Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō* 卍新纂大日本續藏經 Tokyo: Kokushokankōkai, 1975–1989.

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