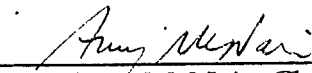


Cliff Notes:
Text and Image at Baodingshan

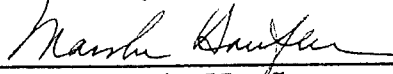
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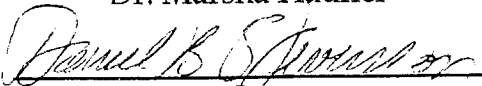
Submitted to the Department of History of Art and
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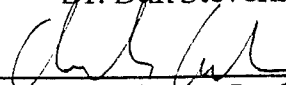
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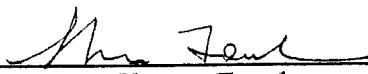
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To Daniel

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

DZSKDSQJ	<u><i>Dazu shi ke diao su quan ji</i></u>
DZSKMWL	<u><i>Dazu shi ke ming wen lu</i></u>
DZSKYJ	<u><i>Dazu shi ke yan jiu</i></u>
SCDJFJSKYS	<u><i>Sichuan Dao jiao Fo jiao shi ku yi shu</i></u>

INTRODUCTION

Upon first encountering the Buddhist imagery of Sichuan's Baodingshan 宝顶山 grotto in 1992, I was immediately struck by the many marked differences in not only the artistic mode of representation, but also in the subject matter. Here was a site that stood in stark contrast to everything that I had previously learned about Buddhist art in China. This was no honeycombed cliff of Buddha images; rather, it appeared as a cohesive whole, a well-thought out mile and a half of hillside carving reminiscent of the earlier individual cave programs of Dunhuang, Yungang, and Longmen. Baodingshan was like a cave turned inside-out, its subject matter eclectic, and its mode of representation not truly akin to earlier carved or painted precedents [fig. 1]. Thus I began to search for the underlying motivation for such a large-scale and unique work of art. Some areas of this quest have borne fruit, with some paths still remaining to be explored. While the Baodingshan site is composed of many very disparate elements, my main goal here is to consider the tableaux that form one section of Baodingshan's Great Buddha Bend grotto within the context of the narrative mode of

representation, and how it is utilized to best serve Song dynasty societal beliefs and concerns.¹

Thanks to the rise in printing during the Song dynasty, much more information is available on this period than for earlier times. Sichuan province was home to several large and well-known printing houses, and China overall was experiencing a transformation largely creditable to rising literacy rates and access to published information.² The area surrounding Baodingshan was located within one of the furthest flung circuits of the empire, and from data available through gazetteers, it becomes clear that this region of China was booming. The population soared, and intra-urban trade increased.³ In the eyes of Song dynasty officials, however, the region was “still very much a frontier area”, implying a freedom from government strictures found elsewhere in the more metropolitan areas of the land.⁴ The pilgrimage site constructed at Baodingshan must therefore be considered in light of this somewhat unique social context.

¹This differs from a brief earlier attempt at analyzing the overall structure of the grotto as a form of three-dimensional mandala. See Ernst Ostertag, Der Grottenzyklus von Dazu: ein Buddhistischer Initiationsweg [Vienna: Octopus Verlag, 1988].

²Peter J. Golas, “Rural China in the Song”, Journal of Asian Studies vol. 39, no. 2 [February 1980]: 291.

³Ibid., 294. Golas notes that in the nearby Kuizhou circuit, population increased over 1000% between 742 and 1078 CE.

⁴Ibid., 295. Winston Lo, 25, effectively argues that Sichuan during the Song dynasty remained a politically sensitive area, with special regulations in force regarding placement of civil service personnel in the region continuing up until the demise of the dynasty. During the Southern Song, Sichuan minted its own currency and was the first area to develop paper money in China. See Lo, Szechwan in Sung China: A Case Study in the Political Integration of the Chinese Empire [Taipei: University of Chinese Culture Press, 1982].

The Buddhist site of Baodingshan consists of a monastic complex and two grotto areas, Little Buddha Bend 小佛灣 and Great Buddha Bend 大佛灣[fig. 2].⁵ Located on a remote, rocky outcropping at an elevation of approximately 500 meters, fifteen kilometers north of Dazu City in Sichuan Province, Baodingshan, literally translated as “Precious Summit Mountain”, was an active pilgrimage site into at least the late Ming dynasty [1368-1644 CE].⁶ Primary construction at the site dates from the Southern Song period [1127-1270 CE], and it is in large part due to the lateness of its construction that the Baodingshan complex has received limited attention from modern-day art historians. Buddhist sculpture produced after the Tang dynasty [618-907 CE] has only recently been considered as a subject of study because most earlier art historical scholarship perceived the Tang as the high point of the

⁵It must be noted that contemporaneous sources do not designate the Baodingshan site as being composed of Great Buddha Bend and Little Buddha Bend. This is a modern convention that I adhere to solely for the sake of clarity.

⁶There is some question as to when Baodingshan was last in active use. Photos taken of the site during the excavations carried out in the 1940s would seem to suggest that at least parts of the site were in use during the Qing dynasty. Liu Chanjiu, ed., *Dazu shi ke yan jiu* [Research on the Dazu Rock Carvings] [Chengdu: Sichuan sheng she hui ke xue yuan chu ban she, 1985] [hereafter DZSKY]: 494-495, provides evidence for continued carving activity in the dating of reliefs numbered 23 through 26 to the Qing dynasty, with relief 25 being added as late as 1915.

Chinese sculptural tradition, with all later works viewed as derivative or inferior.⁷

The Baodingshan grotto complex is fundamentally different from earlier pilgrimage sites in China in its construction and layout. Even within Sichuan's local tradition, the creators of Buddhist cavesites tended to favor traditional niche-based iconography, in which a central iconic figure or grouping is enclosed within a distinct and limiting framework [fig. 3].⁸ At Baodingshan's Great Buddha Bend, however, the majority of the carved works flow from one tableau into another - large, deeply-cut reliefs reaching dimensions as great as eight meters high by twenty meters wide. Of the twenty-seven numbered original images in Great Buddha Bend, at least six are narrative reliefs.⁹ These large, almost three-dimensional tableaux contain

⁷Victor Segalen echoed the sentiments of many art historians when he stated "The T'ang dynasty is definitely the pinnacle of the crest line....The works of the Sung dynasty disfigured those of the T'ang. The Ming ran out of inventiveness. And, finally, the Ch'ing consummated the decadence." See The Great Statuary of China, trans. Eleanor LeVieux [Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978]: 26.

⁸Patricia Karetzky, Early Buddhist Narrative Art [Lanham, New York: University of America Press, 2000]: 138-9, notes that "The unimportance of narratives at other sites of the Northern Dynasties - Gongxian, Longmen, and Xiangtangxiang - is significant in establishing the falling off of interest in scenes of the life of the Buddha."

⁹There are thirty-one reliefs found at Great Buddha Bend, including four carvings which were added in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and thus cannot be considered to have been part of the original conception of the site. The numbering system was implemented by the Chinese archaeologist Yang Jialuo during his work at Baodingshan in the 1940s. See Yang's write-up of the work in The Discovery (1945) of 6216 Statues Carved on Rocks During the T'ang and Sung Dynasties at Ta Tsu [Taipei: Encyclopedia Sinica Institute, 1968].

not only extensive carved inscriptions of Buddhist texts, but also depict significant aspects of these religious writings in sculpted form [fig. 4].¹⁰

These six tableaux represent apocryphal scriptures created in China in order to accommodate various indigenous Chinese beliefs within the Buddhist faith; preceding the narrative reliefs are iconic tableaux in which a singular deity or grouping of deities is the focus of the work.

Baodingshan further differs from other Chinese Buddhist religious sites in that it lacks the type of dedicatory inscriptions attributing karmic merit to the benefactor or his family as is seen at other Buddhist pilgrimage sites.¹¹ The majority of Song inscriptions at Baodingshan are scriptural in content, and the narrative tableaux are a clear combination of text and image. This absence of standard dedicatory inscriptions at Baodingshan suggests a different approach to the underlying conception and function of the site. This

¹⁰For a complete list of the tableaux found at both Great Buddha Bend and Little Buddha Bend, see Appendix A.

¹¹For examples of Yungang inscriptions, see James Caswell, Written and Unwritten: A New History of the Buddhist Caves at Yungang [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988]: 21-39. For Longmen, one of the most comprehensive sources for inscriptions is Liu Jinglong and Li Yukun, Longmen shi ku bei ke ti ji, 2 vols. [Beijing: Zhong guo da bai ke quan shu chu ban she, 1998]. The over 7000 inscriptions from Dunhuang can be found in several sources; see Paul Pelliot, Grottes de Touen-houang: carnet de notes de Paul Pelliot: inscriptions et peintures murales, 4 vols. [Lanzhou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1993], and Catalogue des manuscrits chinois de Touen-houang, 5 vols. [Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale 1970]. Also Roderick Whitfield, The Art of Central Asia: the Stein Collection in the British Museum [Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982], and Makita Tairyō, Tonko to Chugoku Bukkyō [Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1984].

would be in keeping with the evolved state of the Buddhist monastic establishment under the Song dynasty, where “the major monasteries were not forbidden cloisters but grand and open public institutions...with much of the teaching of Buddhist monks directed towards the laity rather than toward fellow monastics alone.”¹²

Unique to Baodingshan in a fashion which may serve to explain its very idiosyncratic character is the fact that one man is purported to have been largely responsible for the site’s layout and overall execution: the monk Zhao Zhifeng 趙智風[~1160-1240].¹³ Whereas work carried out at other Chinese cavesites was a product of centuries of accretion, with many patrons and many artistic hands, it is widely accepted that Baodingshan was the concept of one many, created over a relatively short period of time. Little evidence is available to enable us to flesh out Zhao’s lifestory; however, firmly establishing the existence of Zhao Zhifeng is vital, since the following

¹²Robert M. Gimello, “Marga and Culture: Learning, Letters, and Liberation in Northern Sung Ch’an” in Paths to Liberation, Robert M. Gimello and Robert E. Buswell, Jr., eds., 371-438, Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism no. 7 [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992]: 379. Gimello, 414-415, argues that the monastic community exerted more influence than ever before over Chinese culture during the Song era, contrary to scholarly beliefs that Buddhism fell into decline after the persecutions of the Tang.

¹³It is known that Zhao was born in Dazu County in the twenty-ninth year of the *shao xing* era of the reign of Emperor Gaozong -1160 CE – and is said to have lived 80 years. See Dazu xian zhi: Sichuan sheng [Dazu County Gazetteer: Sichuan Province] [Taipei: Cheng wen chu ban she, 1976]: 498.

argument will focus on how the site was conceived of and created, and ultimately, what impetus may lie behind its unique configuration.

The scant remaining documentation proves a monk by the last name Zhao was active at the site during the Southern Song dynasty. Several pieces of evidence exist, two in the form of inscriptions carved at the Baodingshan site itself, while the third appears as a brief passage in a Song dynasty text, *Yu di ji sheng* 輿地紀勝 [The Scenery of the World Recorded]. One of the Song period inscriptions is found on a stele within Great Buddha Bend [fig. 5]. The final segment of the inscription is partially effaced, but what remains legible gives the name Yuwen Ji as the author, and states:

Near to the clouds, the ingenious pleases all eyes,
the scriptures appearing to encircle this divine
place, and [one] sees the transformation city.¹⁴
Such great filialness is unalterable!

Throughout the four seasons [one hears] first the
sound of pipes and bells overlapping.¹⁵ The

¹⁴ The transcribers of the text in DZSKYJ put an unknown character here, instead of what I read as 'fu', "near to". See R. H. Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, 17th edition [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993]: #1948a. The term "transformation city" may be a reference to the Flower Ornament Scripture. See *Fo xue da ci dian* [Encyclopedia of Buddhist Studies], vol. 1 [Taipei: Tian hua chu ban she, 1984]: 736b.

¹⁵ The specific Chinese term inscribed here is "lin jia" often used as a compound to refer to the scales of fish. I have followed a secondary meaning in translating 'lin' as

Precious Summit's distinguished Zhao Zhi carved the stone, in it tracing out the worthiness of his filial heart.

By completing this stanza of four lines, I establish in every mountain and stream such things as pipes and bells rippling like a Su Dongpo poem, the meaning of which is called 'divine wondrous merit'.¹⁶

Carved at the base of the Seven Buddha wall found within the environs of Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan is the second inscription which specifically refers to an individual named Zhao being involved in the site's creation. 105 characters in length, this text was written in the *jia xi* era during the reign of Emperor Lizong, 1237-1240 CE.¹⁷ Its author, whose name is partially abraded in the inscription, is an official by the name of Cheng Zhi, whose title is listed as "Gentleman for Fostering Uprightness, Changzhou Administrative Assistant of Military Affairs".¹⁸ The accompanying text reads as follows:

'overlapping' or 'rippling', and "*jia*" as 'first' or 'chief'. The overall meaning of the passage is to create a sense of the sights and sounds of temple life.

¹⁶Poem written by Song scholar Yuwen Ji on stele found at Baodingshan, Dazu County, Sichuan. DZSKYJ, 265.

¹⁷Art Museum of Dazu Stone Carvings of Chongqing and the Institute of Dazu Stone Carvings Art of Sichuan Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, *Dazu shi ke ming wen lu* [The Collected Inscriptions from the Dazu Stone Carvings] [Chongqing: Chongqing chu ban she, 1999] [hereafter DZSKMWL]: 211.

¹⁸Ibid. "*Cheng zhi lang*" according to Hucker, 126, was a prestige title accorded to officials of ranks 6a-8b in the Sung, 6a alone in the Yuan and Ming. "*Pan guan*", re Hucker, 363, is described as being "from Sung through Yuan, a very common title at all levels of government with status seldom higher than rank 6, normally prefixed with the appropriate agency name and sometimes with a functional responsibility also indicated."

Reverend Master Zhao, named Zhifeng, was born in the *shao xing kang chen* year to a rice commissioner from Shaqi.¹⁹ At five *sui*, he entered the mountains to grasp the meaning of the sutras, swearing an oath to do so. At 16 *sui*, Zhao departed to the west, returning to this mountain to cultivate morality by constructing the revered master's temple in order to transmit the teaching of Reverend Master Liu's law. For this reason, the name of this mountain then came to be known as "Precious Summit".²⁰ [Zhao] offered up his ear, and refined by fire the top of his head in order to recompense his parents, distributing charms along with the Law. Those people [whom he had] saved handed down this warning, saying of his offering, "A red-hot iron wheel turned over the flesh, shaking [one] up like a fierce fire within a stove."²¹

This rather lengthy inscription pinpoints Zhao as the main protagonist behind the creation of Baodingshan, as well as one of the main spiritual benefactors for the region as a whole. This text, when combined with the following brief mention of Baodingshan in the thirteenth-century treatise *Yu di ji sheng* [The Scenery of the World Recorded], solidifies Zhao's presence and participation at the grotto site both in time and place. The *Yu*

¹⁹The *kang chen* cyclical year for the *shao xing* era of the reign of Emperor Gaozong or 1160 CE.

²⁰Here written as "*Bao feng*" rather than "*Bao ding*".

²¹DZSKMWL, 211.

di ji sheng mentions Zhao within the context of Baofengshan, 寶峰山 an alternate name for Baodingshan in the Song dynasty.²² The entry reads as follows:

Baofengshan is 30 *li* to the east in Dazu County; there is a shrine in the hillside. The Master of the Way Zhao Zhifeng cultivated morality at this place.²³

This fairly specific piece of geographical evidence provided by the author of *Yu di ji sheng* correlates quite well with what we know of the present position of Baodingshan. It also is quite significant in its connection of Zhao Zhifeng specifically to the Baodingshan site. From these sources, it becomes apparent that among his contemporaries Zhao was credited as the creator of Baodingshan, and would continue to be lauded for his work in later discussions of the site.

There are, however, detractors, the principle one being a Chinese scholar, Li Zhengxin.²⁴ His is an argument that bears some consideration as

²² Wang Xiangzhi, *Yu di ji sheng* [The Scenery of the World Recorded] vol. 2 [chuan 161, section 4] reprint [Taipei: Wen hai chu ban she, 1962]: 806. 'Baofengshan' also translates as "Precious Summit Mountain". See Mathews, # 1878 for 'feng'.

²³The Chinese measurement of a *li* is equal to approximately one-half kilometer. With Baodingshan's present position being 15 kilometers from Dazu City, the historical center of Dazu County, this would then equal the 30 *li* referred to by Wang Xiangzhi.

²⁴Li Zhengxin, "Ye tan Baodingshan mo ya zao xiang de nian dai wen ti" ["Further Discussion of the Question of Dating the Cliff Sculptures at Baodingshan"], *Wen wu* no. 8 [1981]: 85.

the repercussions play out within the realm of artistic control as well as within the sphere of dating and production. In brief, Li argues that not only is Zhao not the author of the Baodingshan complex, but also that the complex itself dates to the Tang dynasty, not the much later Southern Song.

Li's dating argument is partially accurate; he begins by noting that the Baodingshan site is not entirely Song dynasty in construction, citing the very concrete evidence of taboo characters found within Little Buddha Bend.²⁵ The use of taboo characters within some of the carved inscriptions, according to Li, dates the area's construction to the period of Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang dynasty.²⁶ Furthermore, Li notes that the two large characters 'fu' 福 ['good fortune'] and 'shou' 壽 ['longevity'] found on the north side of Great Buddha Bend beneath the tableau dedicated to the layman Liu are accompanied by an inscription written by a Northern Song official [fig. 6].²⁷ It

²⁵Taboo characters' were Chinese characters that were to be avoided in writing because they were included in names of respected individuals or were considered to be abhorrent. Both institutionalized and private taboos existed, the most common being the taboo on using characters found in the personal names of Chinese emperors along with those of their immediate ancestors, and sometimes the extended imperial family. For further reading on taboo characters, and their rise and fall in popularity, see Susan Cherniack, "Book Culture and Textual Transmission in Sung China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies vol. 54 no. 1 [June 1994]: 106-108

²⁶Li, 85.

²⁷Ibid. The official in question is one Chen Xiyi. Li does not quote his source on this point. The compilers of DZSKYJ, 494, date the 'fu' and 'shou' characters to a Qing dynasty individual of the same name.

is also pointed out that there are stele at various other sites on the mountain which date to earlier than the Southern Song. Most notable to Li is one inscription which dates to Tang Xuanzong's era, circa 856 CE.²⁸

Li would not be the first person to accord authorship of the Baodingshan site to someone other than Zhao Zhifeng. In the Ming dynasty work, *Shu zhong ming sheng ji*, 蜀中名胜紀 [Record of Famous Sites in Shu],

Cao Xuequan refers to Baodingshan as follows:

The county record states that at the Eastern Meditation Temple there is a stele inscribed by [Emperor] Song Huizong. The Western Meditation Temple was constructed in the Jin *yunguo* period [345-356 CE]. At Precious Summit Temple, the Tang revered monk Liu studied Wu Daozi's brush style, and numerous miles of the encircling cliffs are chiseled with Buddhist statues of strange and uncanny things, the likes of which have never been seen again in either ancient or modern times.²⁹

Like Cao Xuequan, other Ming and Qing dynasty sources which refer to Baodingshan seem to cast doubt not necessarily upon the date of

²⁸Li, 86. It must be noted that Baodingshan as a religious area is quite extensive, and not simply limited to the grotto areas of Great Buddha Bend and Little Buddha Bend.

²⁹Cao Xuequan, *Shu zhong ming sheng ji* [Record of the Famous Sites in Shu], fascicle 17 [Reprint. Shanghai: Shang wu yin shu guan, 1936]: 15-16.

construction, but rather upon the site's conceptual author. The name most commonly raised in these sources is Revered Master Liu.

The rationale for the confusion becomes apparent when one grasps to whom Cao is referring. "The Tang revered monk Liu" undoubtedly makes the connection between a local Sichuan layperson, Liu, often referred to using the honorific 'benzun' 本尊 or "Revered Master", who became the focus of worship at a number of places within the area. Liu's image is seen in more than one carved tableaux at Baodingshan, and is in fact the centerpiece of one very large work, tableau number 21, which depicts the various austerities he inflicted upon himself in order to obtain enlightenment [fig. 7]. Although touted as a spiritual mentor at the Baodingshan site, there exists no written evidence actually placing Liu there, or indicating that he had an actual hand in the Tang dynasty works which still exist in Little Buddha Bend. To further comprehend the error of authorship, it is important to note that there is a record found on a stele in Little Buddha Bend that the temple site was originally sponsored out of respect for Liu.³⁰ Traveling during the later Ming dynasty, Cao simply conflated the imagery of the man, Master Liu, with the

³⁰ This is contained in a Song dynasty stele in Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan. See DZSKMWL, 207-209.

place, Baodingshan. By making the two contemporaneous, Cao confused Liu, who is immortalized in stone at Great Buddha Bend, with his spiritual progeny, Zhao Zhifeng, who actually later created the site in his honor.

To my knowledge, no one refutes the notion that there was Buddhist activity at the Baodingshan site prior to its development by Zhao Zhifeng in the late Song dynasty. Yet Li alone postulates that major carving activity occurred within the Great Buddha Bend grotto area prior to this time.³¹ Clearly the Northern Song inscription and characters found on the north side of the grotto need to be considered; yet their appearance does not in any way contribute to the overall program of the site. In fact, their anomalous nature and placement within the grotto reinforces the argument that they were not part of a larger concept.

The lack of any truly substantive contradictory evidence, coupled with the presence of specific information regarding Zhao's activities at the site, allows for a discussion of Great Buddha Bend as the vision of one man, Zhao Zhifeng. Since most comparable Chinese Buddhist sites are the result of a build up of imagery resulting from devotional activities taking place over hundreds of years, Baodingshan affords a unique opportunity to explore how

³¹Li, 86, sees the Tang works as encompassing the Guardians of the Law, the "stories of the Buddha", and the Hell Scenes. Five Dynasties and Northern Song works include only the tableau to Master Liu while the Southern Song works are those that are Chan and Tantric.

one major Buddhist grotto site was conceived and constructed, serving as a reflection of late Song dynasty monastic and societal concerns. Among the principal Buddhist pilgrimage sites in China, none can claim to be the vision of one man, completed within the relatively finite space of one lifetime. Issues of overall thematic conception and mode of presentation coupled with relevance to religious function can therefore be considered within a fairly confined socio-historical timeframe.³²

Sources

Previous scholarship on Baodingshan has focused either on archaeologically cataloguing the entire site, or on discussing the religious significance of various images found within the site. No work has attempted an overall synthesis of any one grouping of the works at Great Buddha Bend, and little has been done to place the site within a religious or social framework. Comparative work has focused on the cave paintings of the Mogao Grottoes, near Dunhuang in Gansu Province. Throughout my analysis of the Great Buddha Bend tableaux, I will discuss those earlier

³²One grouping of images at Great Buddha Bend was in fact never completed; several of the images within the Radiant Kings [*ming wang*] remain simply blocked out, the local legend attributing their incomplete state to the local invasion of the Mongols in 1243 CE. See Li Fangyin, ed., *Dazu shi ke yi shu* [*The Art of the Dazu Rock Carvings*] [Chongqing: Chongqing chu ban she, 1990]: 287. Jacques Gernet notes that the Mongols had completed their takeover of Sichuan by 1253, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, trans. J. R. Foster [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993]: 716.

studies in which I consider comparison to Dunhuang to have been appropriately used as well as cite examples where such comparison is less applicable.³³

The most comprehensive compilation of material on Dazu County sites, including Baodingshan, is the 1985 publication edited by Liu Changjiu, *Dazu shi ke yan jiu* 大足石刻研究[Research on Dazu Rock Carvings]. This 573-page book reprints all Chinese writings on the rock carvings of Dazu County, Sichuan Province, published between 1945 and 1985 as well as descriptions of the imagery and transcriptions of most of the inscriptions found at the various sites. A 1999 publication, *Dazu shi ke ming wen lu* 大足石刻銘文錄[The Collected Inscriptions from the Dazu Stone Carvings], provides more complete transcriptions from the Dazu area in a very usable chronological framework. Individual scholarship pertaining to Baodingshan can be found in works published by Hu Wenhe, Li Fangyin, Ning Qiang, the Art Museum of Dazu Stone Carvings of Chongqing, and the Institute of Dazu Stone Carvings Art of Sichuan Provincial Academy of Social Sciences. Although

³³“Theories of origin” or “source analysis” are questionable with regard to this type of study, largely because Sichuan is at quite a remove from the one source most often cited, i.e., Dunhuang. Generally speaking, my choice of comparison will not be the wall paintings of Dunhuang, but rather the transportable imagery found at Dunhuang, i.e., scrolls and

several have been published in book format, the majority are to be found in *Sichuan wen wu* 四川文物 or *Dunhuang yan jiu*, 敦煌研究 two prominent Chinese archaeological/art historical journals.

Western literature on Sichuan's Buddhist art, and Baodingshan in particular, has been fairly limited. Two scholars, Angela Falco Howard and Henrik Sørensen, have published works on Sichuan, with Sørensen alone having published on Baodingshan specifically.³⁴ Along with these two colleagues in the field, my own work related to the hell tableau at Baodingshan comprises the majority of Western scholarship on Sichuan Buddhist art in general.³⁵

Methodology

In order to best illustrate a number of points, the six narrative tableaux have been subdivided into three groups of two, an arrangement linked in large part to their positioning within the grotto. I contend that the placement of the six tableaux reflects a greater purpose within the context of the site, with each of the tableaux conceptually sharing space with its neighbors. No study outside of the archaeological transcripts found in the *Dazu shi ke yan jiu*

books. It is my contention that the general concepts found in these more portable objects make for more appropriate comparison with the Sichuan sites.

³⁴ Henrik Sørensen, "A Study of the 'Ox-Herding Theme' as Sculptures at Mt. Baoding in Dazu County, Sichuan", *Artibus Asiae* no. 2 [1991]: 207-241.

³⁵ Karil Kucera, "Lessons in Stone: Baodingshan and its Hell Imagery", *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* no. 67 [1995]: 80-157.

has systematically analyzed the tableaux at Great Buddha Bend, and the information provided within the archaeological portion of this work is sketchy at best, oft-times leaving out mention of imagery that the compilers felt to be non-essential.

Prior to delving into the specifics surrounding these six narrative works, I will begin by considering issues of narrative. Defining parameters for narrative within a Buddhist construct will be the goal of the first chapter, in order to set up the analyses which follow each of the three central chapters devoted to the pairings of the Great Buddha Bend tableaux. Within each of those core chapters, formal analysis will be combined with a close reading of the inscribed scriptural passages to approach a clearer understanding of the inherent function and significance of the tableaux within a larger Chinese framework. All three chapters will conclude with theoretical analyses of the tableaux pairings, and their relationship to traditional Chinese concerns.

Chapter two, entitled “Filial Responsibilities: Owing Mother, Repaying Father”, looks at a conscious combining of two scriptures, one devoted to a son’s eternal indebtedness to his mother, the other demonstrating the great effort expended by the historical Buddha in order to repay his filial debts, often times depicting both of his parents, but with the main focus clearly on Shakyamuni’s father [figs. 8 and 9]. In analyzing the tableaux, I contend that the Southern Song monastic community desired to maintain a precarious balance between the uterine and paternal concerns of both the laity and the monks who utilized Great Buddha Bend.³⁶ This first pairing also sets the

³⁶I use the term “uterine” as coined by Margery Wolf, Women and Family in Rural Taiwan [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972], and utilized by Alan Cole in his analysis of the mother-son bond created within Chinese Buddhist monastic practice. Cole’s

stage with themes which will re-occur within the later groupings - Zhao Zhifeng's apparent desire to address traditional Chinese concerns through the use of select Buddhist texts and images, particularly those of filial piety and worries about the fate of deceased ancestors.³⁷

Chapter three moves further along within the grotto and discusses the next two narrative works: the The Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life tableau with its representations of the 16 Visualizations, and the hell tableau adjacent to it, featuring Dizang Bodhisattva and the Ten Kings of Hell along with eighteen hell scenes and a grouping of admonitions [figs. 10 and 11].³⁸ The pairing of these two works continues the theme of filial piety which began with the earlier two tableaux. Concerns for the recently deceased are the driving force behind both the Visualization Scripture imagery and the nearby hell scenes. The overarching theme of filial responsibility is reiterated in these two works, asking not what one could do to be saved from the torments of hell, but what one should do to ensure the safe journey of parents and ancestors to the Pure Land.

Chapter four, "In Praise of Spiritual Ancestors", looks not only at the manifestations of the previous two themes, but also considers the issue of lineage inherent within the last two narrative tableaux found within Great Buddha Bend. The tableaux discussed depict the austerities performed by the

work, Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998] will be discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁷I am not the first to argue for strong Confucian overtones at Great Buddha Bend – both Hu Wenhe and Ning Qiang note the strong filial aspects present in the first two tableaux. My earlier work on the hell tableau at Great Buddha Bend also incorporated issues of filial piety and indigenous Chinese ritual and traditions. However, this is the first study to look beyond individual works toward the site as a whole in considering traditional Chinese concerns.

³⁸Hereafter referred to as the Visualization Scripture and the hell tableau.

layman Liu, who would come to be worshipped in Sichuan as an incarnation of Vairocana, and the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, which ends with a depiction of a monk in meditation [figs. 12 and 13]. These two narrative works can on one level be seen to reinforce the promise of enlightenment for all, both the lay and the monastic community. On another level, they also represent the ultimate filial act, that of reaching enlightenment, an action which benefited not only one's self, but previous and future generations as well. The narratives presented in these works further reinforce the dynamic between the Confucian ideal of the learned lay person and the Buddhist monk ideal seen in vignettes elsewhere in earlier tableaux.

The fifth chapter, "Text/Image", will then assess the various tableaux with regard to the relevance of text in itself as image within Great Buddha Bend grotto. Much has been done with regard to considerations of text as image within the realm of Chinese calligraphy, but in the case of the textual inscriptions at Great Buddha Bend grotto, I will be arguing not for a stylistic assessment of text as image, but rather for a theoretical consideration of this concept. This is in response to the large blocks of text which dominate the narrative tableaux, and could not have been ignored by the viewing public [fig. 14].

In addition to this theoretical treatment of textual imagery, various socio-historic rationale will also be discussed in order to come to an understanding of the import of such copious amounts of text being included in the program at Great Buddha Bend. Besides pedagogical and ritual concerns, consideration will be given to transformations taking place within Song China. One aspect to be deliberated will be the specific changes taking

place within Sichuan during the construction of the Baodingshan complex, with the upheaval accompanying the demise of the Southern Song dynasty seen as one potential impetus for the numerous inscribed textual passages.

Two issues will remain fundamental throughout my analysis of these works: one, the issue of narrative versus iconic imagery, and what constitutes “narrative” within Great Buddha Bend; and two, a consideration of how text and image were combined at the site to serve different purposes. Because these two issues are so fundamental to the overall discussion, I will begin by introducing some of the models to be considered in the later discussion with regard to the issue of narrative versus iconic in order to set the stage for later critical analysis. A theoretical analysis of text and image at Baodingshan will follow the three core chapters, thereby creating a bookend effect, with the issue of narrative versus iconic opening up the beginning of the discussion while text and image closes it.

CHAPTER ONE

NARRATIVE/ICONIC

Within the field of Chinese art history, several attempts have been made to quantify and qualify the term “narrative”. Some have been more successful than others, but all have been hindered by the lack of an analogous categorization per se within indigenous Chinese art-historical texts, which are arranged with regard to subject matter rather than mode of presentation.¹ Even the briefest foray into narrative within the context of Chinese art serves to underline the inadequacies and inconsistencies of the term’s usage in the Asian art-historical field.² Relying on contemporary literary theory, recent scholarship presents new thoughts and terminology with which to move the narrative debate forward by drawing analogies between the oral format of a story and its visual representation.³

Following a brief clarification of the term “iconic”, the goal of this chapter will be to consider the applicability to Chinese art history of narrative as it is understood within Western literary traditions. This discussion will be followed by an examination of narrative specific to Chinese Buddhist art and

¹This was also the case with regard to traditional Chinese literature. See Andrew H. Plaks’ discussion of narrative within the literary realm in “Towards a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative”, Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays, Andrew Plaks, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977): 310.

²Julia Murray has done a wonderful job of synthesizing and critiquing all the various constructs used within the Chinese art historical field over the past twenty-odd years in her article “What is Chinese Narrative Illustration?”, Art Bulletin vol. LXXX no.4 (Dec. 1998): 602-615.

practice. Although in general I refrain from imposing Western theory on Asian subject matter, in this instance I must concur with Julia Murray's observation that in doing so one does not supercede or detract from indigenous Chinese theories regarding narrative since none existed prior to the present.⁴ Employing Western parameters allows for an analysis of the subject of narrative in a constructive and consistent manner, creating a new dialogue with regard to objects which in the past may have been largely overlooked due to their unusual or unwieldy mode of representation.

The subsequent discussion of narrative within a Buddhist construct will begin with an overview of the storytelling tradition within the realm of Buddhist discourse and the impact oral presentation had upon the development of visual imagery within the monastic community. The scope will then be narrowed to focus more specifically on China and Chinese Buddhist practices involving narrative imagery. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with a look at the audience for the imagery created at Great Buddha Bend at Baodingshan, and their role in the use of the narrative format.

Modes of Representation: Narrative in Theory

Before launching into a thorough discussion of narrative within a pictorial context, a brief explanation of the term "iconic" is in order. For this I defer to Wu Hung, whose work on both Confucian and Buddhist subject

³Ibid. Murray has also published an earlier work, "Buddhism and Early Narrative Illustration in China" *Archives of Asian Art* vol. 48 (1995): 17-31, which will be considered within the later discussion of narrative and Buddhist practice.

⁴Murray, "What is Chinese Narrative Illustration?", 605.

matter allows for an expansive vision of the term “iconic”.⁵ In his project on the carved tableaux found at the Wu Liang shrine, Wu Hung separates the imagery into either iconic or episodic.⁶ “Iconic” is defined as frontal and symmetrical; “episodic” as asymmetrical, presenting a profile or 3/4 view as well as an action and a reaction, i.e., the episodic works are narrative in content. From a purely formalistic frame of reference, the works at Great Buddha Bend can all be seen to incorporate large-scale iconic imagery.

Functionally, the icon is perceived by Wu as transcending time, facing outward and interacting with the viewer.⁷ Episodic works do not engage the viewer in Wu’s opinion, the viewer acting in the role of witness to the scene rather than as participant:

The picture formed by such interacting humans describes a narrative. This type of composition is, thus, self-contained; the significance of the representation is realized in its own pictorial context. In contrast to an iconic representation, the viewer is a witness, not a participant.⁸

Outwardly Wu’s distinction of the two formats makes for an easy rule of thumb to follow, yet I will argue that Wu’s viewer versus participant dichotomy does not hold true for the six tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. The works at Baodingshan are largely composed of tableaux in which narrative vignettes are closely linked to iconic imagery, all existing within one larger

⁵Ibid., 604, notes that Wu Hung’s purpose in creating a rather open-ended definition of narrative is to highlight the new iconic mode brought into China with Buddhism in the second century CE.

⁶Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989): 132-141.

⁷Ibid., 133.

⁸Ibid.

overall sculptural program. I do not deny that the iconic imagery at Baodingshan was designed to interact with the viewer as an object of reverence and devotion; however, I will attempt to demonstrate that the dominant icons, which are components of the six tableaux to be discussed, also draw the worshipper into a given tableau. In this fashion, the iconic imagery prompts the viewer to participate not only in a discourse with the Buddha, for example, but also in a sympathetic exchange with the various individuals in the separate stories surrounding the central iconic image. Although it is important to keep “iconic” and “episodic” as endpoints, the following chapters will discuss how many of the images found at Great Buddha Bend should not be defined in such black and white terms, but rather as one of the varying shades of gray found somewhere in between.

Turning now more specifically to a consideration of narrative, Julia Murray’s recent article outlines the underlying differences between several Western theorists’ positions with regard to the defining fundamentals of narrative.⁹ Citing “action which produces change” and “time” as the two keys to pictorial narrative, Murray proceeds to construct her own set of criteria based upon these two aspects. The three tenets she arrives at, content, function, and mode of presentation, are little more than a synthesis of art-historical ideology applied specifically to narrative. The last of these, mode of presentation, incorporates the formalistic variables of format, composition,

⁹Murray, “What is Chinese Narrative Illustration?”, 605.

and conceptual approach.¹⁰ In Murray's view, what differentiates a narrative from other types of imagery is content ("something happens bringing change in a condition to a specific character") and function ("narrative illustrations record, affirm, instruct, indoctrinate, proselytize, propagandize, or even entertain the viewer"). For Murray, mode of presentation is extremely varied, from singular compositions in which a narrative is summarized, referred to as "emblematic monoscenes", to fully sequenced narratives.¹¹

The tableaux under consideration at Baodingshan all fit within these two basic defining parameters. All six involve a change in a condition of a specific character, and all have content that functions to serve at least one of the identified purposes cited above. Each of the tableaux, however, shows a markedly different approach in mode of representation. The six works at Great Buddha Bend to be discussed contain iconic imagery with narrative episodes variously arranged around the iconic figures like so many individual diamonds in a crown. Only one of the six, the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, can be regarded as solely narrative, and even that distinction remains open to question.

Vidya Dehejia's¹² study of early Indian Buddhist narrative sculpture also allows for a useful theoretical crossover to the sculpted works found at Baodingshan. Dehejia equates the range of visual narrative to that found in

¹⁰Ibid., 608.

¹¹Ibid., and Murray, "The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration in China after 850" in The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850, ed. Marsha Weidner, 125-150 (University of Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994): 126.

¹²Vidya Dehejia, "On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art", Art Bulletin vol. 72 no. 3 (September 1990): 374-392.

oral narrative, defining three major components as crucial: having a protagonist, utilizing a consideration of space, and incorporating the critical element of time.¹³ There are only two aspects to visual narrative according to Dehejia: the story and its expression.¹⁴ Variations on how these two aspects are wed are termed “modes”, with five different combinations outlined: monoscenic, continuous, synoptic, conflated, and linear.¹⁵ All of these terms will be utilized and further defined as the various types of imagery are encountered within the works at Great Buddha Bend.

Dehejia is quick to point out that several types of modes can easily coexist within one area, perhaps in response to space restrictions.¹⁶ She also creates an über-mode of sorts, termed “narrative network”, which attempts to define possible overarching movements in time and space based on elusive relationships, the two examples given being those of geographical and thematic relationships.¹⁷ Large-scale programs exist at Baodingshan similar to those that necessitated Dehejia’s positing of the narrative network theory. Therefore, an assessment will be made of how the individual components of the six tableaux at Great Buddha Bend work together as well as how they can be viewed within the larger framework of the whole site. Dehejia’s various modes will be discussed within the context of the individual Baodingshan works, dependent upon their applicability.

¹³Dehejia, 374.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 378-388.

¹⁶Ibid., 375.

¹⁷Ibid., 388-390.

Since time is a factor deemed highly relevant to narrative, historical Chinese views on time need to be briefly addressed.¹⁸ From as early as the second century BCE, the Chinese had a very clearly defined concept of time, as seen in the term “*yu zhou*”. *Yu zhou* is often translated loosely as “universe”, but a more accurate term would be “space-time”. Needham translates the definition of *yu zhou* from an early Daoist work, the 120 BCE text *Huai nan zi* (Master Huainan), “All the time that has passed from antiquity until now is called *zhou*; all the space in every direction above and below is called *yu*.”¹⁹ Another early text, *Mo zi* (Mozi) furthers this definition by noting that “movement in space requires duration.”²⁰ As a corollary to this, the Chinese from very early on conceived of time as compartmentalized. Granet notes that time for the ancient Chinese was divided similarly to space, time existing insofar as it reflected specific circumstances, duties, or opportunities.²¹ This compartmentalization of time with regard to the actions of people within a continuous chronological framework is also seen in the approach taken by the Chinese to history writing, an early form of narrative. Materials were loosely linked by common features, not by temporal order, and in this sense the earliest texts could be seen to be associative rather than

¹⁸For a very readable overview of time and narrative within the Western literary tradition, see Paul Ricoeur, “Narrative Time” in *On Narrative*, 165-186, W.J.T. Mitchell, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

¹⁹Joseph Needham, *Time and Eastern Man*, Royal Anthropological Institute Occasional Paper no. 21 (Glasgow: The University Press, 1965): 1.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 2.

²¹Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1934): 88.

chronological.²² A Song dynasty form of history writing, considered by literary scholars to be one of the most highly evolved forms of the genre, still continued to compartmentalize history into separate topics which were then followed through from beginning to end.²³

Such a compartmentalization can be seen at Baodingshan. In an effort to make the “story” intelligible to the Chinese viewer, Zhao Zhifeng had to order and arrange the tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. The works are systematically arranged by theme, i.e., the works relating to mother and father coming first, followed by heaven and hell, with the two works related to lineage coming last. Granted this arrangement may have been necessitated by Buddhist rituals involving the use of the tableaux in a given order, but with the exception of the heaven and hell works, there is no evidence to support this assumption. It is just as likely that Zhao placed the works in order to loosely link material with certain common features, a system with which he and his public would have been familiar because that was the approach utilized by scholars to record historical events.

Within the works themselves chronology is more closely adhered to when it is necessary, as seen in the Kindness of Parents tableau which follows the child from birth to old age, or the self-immolations of Master Liu which are placed in correct time-sequence as they progress from minor to major acts of self-sacrifice. This is also in keeping with the Song dynasty approach to

²²Jaroslav Prusek, “History and Epics in China and the West,” Diogenes 42 (Summer 1963): 22-23.

²³Needham, 13-14.

historical narrative as first written by Yuan Xu in 1190 CE, in which separate individual topics were given equal treatment from beginning to end.²⁴ Thus, although the tableaux are thematically grouped, be it due to ritual or secular rationale, within each of the works another dimension of time is at work, that of continuous time, which allows for a chronological reading of the carvings. As the viewer moves through the grotto, he or she would be confronted by this compartmentalization of time and space, at the same time as he or she would be participating in the “space time” or universal aspect of the stories being told.

Narrative in Buddhist Practice

Buddhism has a long-standing tradition of oral narration, which must be taken into consideration when addressing issues of narrative within a pictorial context. The prefatory phrase, “Thus have I heard”, followed by a thorough description of the situational context surrounding the historical Buddha’s preaching of a given text, forms the prologue to the large majority of Buddhist scriptures. This type of oral quality frames the narrative as a dialogue between the Buddha and one of his major disciples, providing a pretext for the Buddha to tell a story or an extended parable. Such a format was one of the earliest genres found within the Pali Buddhist literature, and as the works were translated into Chinese, the narrative component was

²⁴Ibid.

maintained, with the texts “continuing to find (their) authority in the voice of the Buddha.”²⁵ An example of this type of narrative format can be found at Great Buddha Bend in the tableau depicting The Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness.²⁶

Another genre of narrative with very early roots within the Indic oral storytelling tradition is that of jataka tales. Unlike the format discussed above, the protagonist of the jataka tale, the Buddha in one of his 547 previous lives, maintains an internal discourse on the rationale for the action being taken. In this case, the audience “is privileged to overhear, as it were, the thoughts of the Buddha.”²⁷ Examples of this type of storytelling also can be found at Great Buddha Bend, forming sub-components of the larger narrative of the dialogue seen in the Scripture on Repaying Kindness tableau mentioned above.

Lastly, a format of Buddhist narrative that is illustrated at the Great Buddha Bend grotto is the “parable” or *avadana*, literally “heroic act or tale”. The parable differs from the earlier jataka tale in that the narrative does not involve the Buddha as the main protagonist, but rather other beings meant to symbolically represent complex Buddhist beliefs.²⁸ The most obvious example of this type of narrative found at Baodingshan is that of the buffalo

²⁵Judith A. Berling, “Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yu-lu* as a Buddhist Genre”, History of Religions (1987): 65. For a comparison of various redactions of Pali and Chinese texts and their utilization of the dialogue format, see Sylvain Levi, “Sur la récitation primitive des textes bouddhiques,” Journal asiatique (Mai-Juin 1915): 401-447.

²⁶Hereafter referred to as the Scripture on Repaying Kindness.

²⁷Berling, 64.

and herdsman in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, with the duo exemplifying man's struggle for enlightenment. Yet several other tableaux at Great Buddha Bend need also be considered "parables", namely the mother and son imagery found in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, and the souls depicted within the heaven and hell tableaux.

Buddhism had the effect of elevating and expanding the appreciation for and production of narrative within the upper classes of Chinese society, so that by the Song dynasty narrative was a highly evolved literary form.²⁹ One of the most common features of medieval vernacular narrative was the use of illustrated handscrolls as a popular form of entertainment.³⁰ Alongside these vernacular works could be found modified versions of sutras, referenced by their vernacular counterpart as "transformation texts" or *bian wen*, which were specifically designed to propagate the Buddhist faith to the uneducated.³¹ *Bian wen* were for the most part textual rather than pictorial in

²⁸Helmut Brinker, Zen in the Art of Painting, trans. George Campbell (London and New York: Routledge, 1987): 103-104.

²⁹Kenneth DeWoskin, "On Narrative Revolutions", *CLEAR* 5, no.1 (July 1983): 44. In this article, DeWoskin argues that narrative arose from indigenous Chinese sources, and can be found in China prior to Buddhism's arrival. Elsewhere others have argued that narrative and narrative illustration was a product of a need among the Chinese to come to grips with a large body of unfamiliar stories, which came into China with Buddhism. See Murray, "Buddhism and Early Narrative Illustration in China," 19, and Victor Mair's lengthy discussion in Painting and Performance: Chinese Recitation and its Indian Genesis (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988). I will not pursue this discussion here as it is not relevant to the study at hand.

³⁰Victor Mair, Painting and Performance : Chinese Recitation and its Indian Genesis (Honolulu : University of Hawaii Press, 1988): 1.

³¹Kenneth K.S. Chen, The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1973): 251-2. For two different approaches to the intricacies of the term *bian*, see Mair's T'ang Transformation Texts, Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series, no. 28 (Cambridge and London : Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1989): 37-49, and Wu Hung's article "What is *Bianxiang*?". In this work, Wu Hung also gives a detailed analysis of specifically the term *bian xiang* versus the use of the term within the context of *bian wen*.

emphasis. Two tables showing the recovered *bian wen* texts as well as *bian xiang* relevant to the following discussion of the Great Buddha Bend tableaux has been prepared in an effort to highlight the wide variety of recensions this type of format included (fig. 15a and b).³²

Transformation texts composed mainly of illustrations were known as “transformation tableaux” or *bian xiang*.³³ These existed in a variety of media, including paper, silk, and wall paintings. *Bian xiang* could also refer to sculpted works.³⁴ Both *bian wen* and *bian xiang* were considered to be essential for spreading the Buddha’s message, and both appear to date from the late Tang and Five Dynasties period.³⁵ Although Murray argues that *bian xiang* were “grand iconic tableaux...reflect(ing) the importance of contemplation and visualization rituals”. But not all of the *bian xiang* imagery was fully iconic in content.³⁶ A wall painting from Kizil depicts King Ajatasatru being educated in Buddhism by his minister who uses a painted cloth depicting various scenes from the life of the Buddha. This work is considered early evidence for *bian xiang* in the form of mobile painted

³²Victor Mair notes that the number of extant *bian wen* is relatively few – 200 at most – although some sources list as many as 8000. According to Mair, the inflated numbers are the result of a lumping of sutra lecture texts (*jiang jing wen*) and seat-settling texts (*ya zuo wen*) in to the *bian wen* category. See Mair’s article “Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: an Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts,” Chinoperl Papers 10 (1981): 5-96.

³³Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 252.

³⁴Victor Mair, “Records of Transformation Tableaux,” Toung Pao, 72 no. 1-3 (1986): 3. For a listing of the *bian xiang* that are extant at Dunhuang, see Tonko Bakuko kutsu 3:177 and 4:174.

³⁵Victor Mair, Painting and Performance, 1. In this work, Mair traces the *bian wen* tradition back to its roots in India and Southeast Asia.

³⁶Murray, “The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration”, 129.

works,³⁷ and for our purposes, highlights the narrative possibilities of the *bian xiang* genre (fig. 16). Elsewhere I have argued for a reading of the narrative tableaux at Great Buddha Bend as examples of carved *bian xiang*.³⁸

Both *bian wen* and *bian xiang* would appear to have lost popularity at some point during the Song dynasty, although “storytelling with pictures persisted under other names.”³⁹ Several extant Southern Song dynasty texts provide evidence for professional storytellers serving as narrators of Buddhist works, their specific function being described as “discussing the scriptures, which means the unfolding and narrating of Buddhist books.”⁴⁰ These texts enumerate the storytellers by name and category of storytelling, but provide little more information. Many of the names of the narrators of Buddhist texts have a distinctly Buddhist tone to them, and these individuals

³⁷Robert Jera-Bézar and Monique Maillard, “Le rôle des bannières et des peintures mobiles dans les rituels du bouddhisme d’Asie centrale,” *Arts Asiatiques* 49 (1989): 57. Evidence for oral transformation performances taking place in Sichuan province occur as far back as the eighth century. See Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts*, 216, in which he refers to passages found in the 8th-century text *Tan bin lu*, compiled by Li Fang in *Tai bing guang ji*, ch. 269, 2109.

³⁸Kucera, 56-66.

³⁹Mair, *T’ang Transformation Texts*, 3. For more on the early traditions of Buddhist storytelling in China and the development of oral prosimetric form for sutra recitation see V. Hrdlickova, “The First Translations of Buddhist Sutras in Chinese Literature and Their Place in the Development of Storytelling,” *Archiv orientální* 26 (1958): 114-144.

⁴⁰Jaroslav Prusek, “The Narrators of Buddhist Scriptures and Religious Tales in the Sung Period,” *Archiv orientální* 11 (1938): 376. The texts cited by Prusek include the 1235 CE work *Du cheng ji sheng* along with the later *Meng liang lu* and *Wu lin qiu shi*, which Prusek sees as copies of the former. Such storytellers were not new to the Song dynasty per se, but had existed earlier in the Tang in the form of those monks who gave popular sermons in which they “read and sang sutras” as alluded to in the *Gaoseng zhuan* chapter on *Chang dao*, fascicle 13, p. 78. See V. Hrdlickova, 135-139, for more on this early trend in popular Buddhism in China.

were most likely affiliated with monasteries, with some even referred to as *he shang* or “monk”.⁴¹

These storytellers, be they monks, nuns or lay people, had to ensure that their stories were understood by a fairly broad-based public. Eugene Eoyang notes that most narratives found within both the secular and religious traditions can best be described as repetitive, with an elasticity of structure that allowed the various components of any story to stand by themselves as well as be strung together to create a larger unit.⁴² This was done in order to accommodate the comings and goings of the listeners, a facet of public erudition that could not be avoided.⁴³ Hence, the compartmentalization of time mentioned earlier as a mainstay of Chinese thought and history-writing also manifested itself in the oral narrative tradition, with stories being parceled out into individualized vignettes, which were still logical and coherent if heard out of order or out of context.⁴⁴

Clearly the oral tradition of utilizing pictures to preach to the public did not die out in China, but continued to evolve over time.⁴⁵ An early

⁴¹Ibid., 377. It should be noted that a number of women’s names were also recorded, and it would appear that the storyteller profession was a hereditary one similar to other guilds active in China at the time.

⁴²Eugene Eoyang, “A Taste of Apricots” in Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays, Andrew Plaks, ed., 53-69 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977): 60.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴It must be noted that the compartmentalization of narrative is not unique to Chinese oral traditions. India, for example, utilizes the repetitive, compartmentalizing technique within oral performances of such epics as the Ramayana in order to allow for viewers to come and go without losing the overall thread.

⁴⁵Drège convincingly argues that it was during the latter part of the Song dynasty that the “eye” came to take precedence over the “ear” in reading as rote memorization of texts through oral repetition was replaced by silent reading among the literate class. This new approach to the pedagogy of reading was based on Chan Buddhist models,

twentieth-century description of a performance using pictures may help in visualizing how a medieval event would appear to the viewer:

The pictures were large colored paintings on cloth that could be rolled up for easy transportation. The performer would hang them on the outer wall of a building facing the street and point to relevant spots on them as he told his tale. The most common paintings depicted the various tortures of hell. These could be used in conjunction with virtually any of the *pao-chuan* to show what happens to those who go against the moral lessons they proffered. The paintings were not divided by lines into sections, but did portray a continuous sequence of narrative events.⁴⁶

In this description, the conjunction of oral narrative and visual imagery becomes obvious, and the theatrical quality inherent in many a proselytizing effort, apparent.⁴⁷

Whether or not one wishes to apply the term “*bian xiang*” to the works carved at Baodingshan, it is important to assess the various ways in which text and image function within the narrative tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. It may seem that my own definition of narrative presented earlier was fairly unrestricted. This was done intentionally in order to maintain flexibility while

promulgated by the Neo-Confucian Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE). See Jean-Pierre Drège, “La lecture et l’écriture en Chine et la xylographie,” *Études chinoises*, vol. X no. 1-2 (1991): 94-103.

⁴⁶Mair, *Painting and Performance*, 9. “*Pao-chuan*” refers to the recitation of precious scrolls, considered by Mair to be the product of earlier *bian wen* works.

⁴⁷For studies of the convergence of religion and entertainment in China, see David Johnson, “Mu-lien in Pao-chüan: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the Yü-ming Pao-ch’uan” in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion* Chinese Popular Culture Project 3 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1995): 55-103, and Barbara Ward, “Not Merely Players: Drama, Art and Ritual in Traditional China”, *Man* n.s. 14.1 (1979): 18-39. One commonly cited example of the conjoining of the two are the references to theatrical productions dating back to the Tang dynasty (618-906 CE) which were based on the Buddhist story of Mulian saving his mother from the tortures of hell. Mulian’s popularity as

still highlighting the differences between narrative and iconic imagery found at Baodingshan. For example, one could argue that the core section of the Great Buddha Bend, which is centered on the large reclining Buddha image, comprises a narrative sequence unto itself (fig. 17). Beginning with the two images to the left of the *parinirvana* tableau, the viewer is confronted with the Buddha's life story in sequence. First, the bathing of the young Shakyamuni by the dragons descending from the sky, which is followed by the small grouping of the young Shakyamuni with his mother and sister, a reminder of the sacrifice of home and family undertaken by the Buddha on behalf of all. These small vignettes are then followed by the monumental representation of his extinction, placed next to a largely eroded representation of men and devas bearing witness to the event. The entire sequence ends with a pagoda, a clear reference to the Buddha Shakyamuni as relic, the final page in his life story.

Although this grouping of imagery within the horseshoe-bend could be considered narrative in composition, it will not be discussed here due to lack of original accompanying textual inscriptions. In this respect, I have consciously chosen to look at narrative within a somewhat narrower framework, asking how the narrative at Baodingshan functions in relationship to both text and image. While it is possible that a twelfth-century worshipper would "read" the Parinirvana grouping as a continuous narrative, the works lack the evidence for narrative of the sort found in the

a subject for live entertainment did not diminish with time. See Berthold Laufer, [Oriental](#)

inscribed passages accompanying the six tableaux which will be discussed. Although clearly “action which produces change” has taken place in this sequence, and there is an element of “time” incorporated into the grouping as the young Shakyamuni passes onto enlightenment and sacred relic, proof that these were “read” as a narrative, and not as separate iconic images, is unavailable. As Peter J. Holliday points out, “An image becomes a visual narrative, i.e., an object of narrative reading, only when the intention of such a reading exists”. With regard to this particular sequence of images at Great Buddha Bend, there is no way of knowing the audience’s actual or artist’s intended reading.⁴⁸

Yet when image is combined with text, ascertaining the artist’s intended reading and an audience’s actual reading of a work becomes more conceivable. “Language can specify, images cannot.”⁴⁹ Pictures inevitably must be made intelligible in words; they cannot be read in the same way as, or as fully as, texts.⁵⁰ It is in this sense that my analysis will focus on the conjoining of the two at Great Buddha Bend, i.e. how did the texts work with the images in order to allow for the narrative works to be understood and utilized. When text is combined with imagery, the inherent meaning of both is changed. Text totalizes, manages, or restrains the symbolic receptive aspects of the visual components of the tableau; it also subjects the imagery to

Theatricals (Chicago : Field Museum of Natural History, 1923).

⁴⁸Peter J. Holliday, ed., Narrative and Event in Ancient Art (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 3.

⁴⁹E. H. Gombrich, “Image and Word in 20th Century Art”, Word and Image vol. 1 no. 3 (July-September 1985): 220.

certain linear analytic processes, with viewing proceeding in sequences similar to reading or hearing.

No longer is the audience simply privy to the Buddha's inner thoughts within the jataka tales, they are physically present to witness his actions. With regard to the dialogue construct, the audience is now present at the conversation, eavesdropping as it were, and then joining in with the ahistorical masses to hear the Buddha tell his story. The dimension of narrative can be manipulated by the artist or the patron by consciously choosing which moment or moments of the story to depict in two or three-dimensional form. With this in mind, the possibility of the stylistic disparities between the various tableaux as having been deliberately chosen on the part of Zhao Zhifeng in order to convey moral or didactic messages to the worshipper needs to be discussed in conjunction with each work.

Lastly, yet most importantly, the audience for the texts and images found within the Great Buddha Bend grotto at Baodingshan must be taken into consideration. Who was the viewing public for these works? Gombrich notes that "There is no such thing as 'an innocent eye', all perception occurring within the context of memory and expectation."⁵¹ If such is the case for the human condition, within what context did the twelfth-century worshipper encounter the monumental carved tableaux at Great Buddha Bend? What, if any, information exists to help the 21st-century scholar

⁵⁰ Lawrence C. Duggan, "Was Art Really the 'Book of the Illiterate'?", Word and Image vol. 5 (1987): 244.

⁵¹Gombrich, 221.

understand how these works may have been perceived and utilized within their own time?

Outside of the copious inscribed scriptural texts found at Great Buddha Bend, there are seven extant Song dynasty inscriptions.⁵² Of the seven found in the grotto proper, all can be effectively dated to the Southern Song period (1127-1278 CE), either by an included date, or by a date arrived at based on time-specific usage of place names or characters within the inscriptions. Six of the seven are works in which the author's name and office is at least partially extant. Of the seven, six of the inscriptions can be classified as designatory placards, i.e., large character inscriptions that simply name a given area within the Great Buddha Bend grotto. The seventh is a free-standing stele whose inscription documents activities at the grotto, and which is placed between the three looming figures of the Huayan school found adjacent to the entrance to the grotto. A translation of the text of this stele was utilized in the introductory chapter to substantiate Zhao Zhifeng's presence at the site.⁵³

In response to the question of "who" the audience for the Great Buddha Bend tableaux was, it should be noted that five of the six authors of these inscriptions come from Sichuan province; hence the appellation "local gentry" so commonly used when discussing the audience and supporters of

⁵²Furthermore, Little Buddha Bend has two stone stele that also date to the Song dynasty. DZSKMWL, 230-234 and 207-211 respectively. The Little Buddha Bend works will be discussed in the fourth chapter with regard to Zhao Zhifeng's presence at Baodingshan and his lineage claims to Reverend Master Liu's religious mantle.

⁵³See page 7 and Appendix B for a complete translation of this stele's text.

the Baodingshan site.⁵⁴ The most prominent individual among these is Wei Liaoweng, whose dates of 1178-1237 CE make his life virtually parallel with the period of the site's construction.⁵⁵ Wei is fairly well represented by a posthumous body of works, including a group of collected writings as well as mention in the *Song shi*.⁵⁶

The text accompanying all six inscriptions is non-canonical and extremely brief, effectively listing the author's positions and titles and ending with "...X wrote this."⁵⁷ Wei is the only individual having more than one inscription at the site, perhaps in response to monastic demands for calligraphy that was certain to be of benefit to the community at large (figs. 18 and 19). Mark Halperin notes that "even scholars of the time noticed that the monks, no matter how 'rustic', still knew the importance of acquiring an inscription for their cloister."⁵⁸ The overall generic quality seen in the style of

⁵⁴Most of the English language sources use the term "local gentry". See Zhang Jiaqi's article "The Splendour of the Grotto Arts of the Later Period in China," *Oriental Art* n.s., 35 (Spring 1989): 7-10, for one example.

⁵⁵DZSKMWL, 230-231 and DZSKYJ, 320, n. 76.

⁵⁶Conrad Schirokauer in his article "Neo-Confucians Under Attack" notes that Wei succeeded in the imperial exam of 1199 CE, during what was the height of the anti-*wei-xue* ("spurious teachings") campaign at court. See Schirokauer's contribution to *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, 163-198, John Winthrop Haeger, ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975): 193.

⁵⁷DZSKMWL, 230-231. For transcribed Chinese texts of the literati inscriptions see Appendix C.

⁵⁸Mark R. Halperin, "Pieties and Responsibilities: Buddhism and the Chinese Literati, 780-1280," Ph.D. diss. (University of California: Berkeley, 1997): 29. Halperin, 30-32, points out that some literati were paid for their inscriptions, although very little is known about the overall process and whether or not a person could or would refuse to accommodate a Buddhist institution's request. Even within the Buddhist clergy, it was often difficult to say no to a request for a piece of writing. In his biography of the noted Tang Buddhist master Zongmi, Peter Gregory points out that during his exile in Sichuan, Zongmi wrote a commentary to the *Yulanben Scripture* after having conducted rituals involving the text, largely in response to his fears of offending those local clergymen who had made the request. See Peter N. Gregory, *Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991): 89. Stevenson, personal correspondence 02/01/02, notes

the Baodingshan inscriptions as well as their very generalized content is in keeping with most of the inscribed works produced within the Song period found at Buddhist sites.⁵⁹

The most prominent and most widely reproduced textual image at Great Buddha Bend was inscribed by Du Xiaoyan (fig. 20). The oft-photographed name placard of “Baodingshan” sits at the entrance to the grotto from the river below. Du’s dates are unknown, although he and Wei Liaoweng both achieved *jinshi* status in 1199.⁶⁰ Du Xiaoyan’s brief inscription, carved to the left of the final character “*shan*”, is typical of the inscriptions at Great Buddha Bend in that it is a listing of titles and offices held by Du, finishing off with the ubiquitous “Du Xiaoyan wrote this.” Alongside the large-character placard reading “Baodingshan”, Du’s inscription reads as follows:

Grand Master for Closing Court, with the authority of minister, Director of the Bureau of Military Appointments, concurrently Associate State Historiographer, concurrently Recorder for the Bureau of Army Activities, the official litterateur Du Xiaoyan inscribed this.⁶¹

Were Du Xiaoyan and Wei Liaoweng firm adherents of Buddhism?

Not necessarily. According to two recent studies done on literati activity

that “the monks were not always so venal in their request for literati inscriptions. Many such examples bespeak conditional respect, and the connection between the literatus, the monk initiating the request, and the community as a whole.”

⁵⁹Halperin, 30-32.

⁶⁰DZSKMWL, 231. Both men were also active within the Ministry of Rites.

⁶¹Ibid. Du is listed in the *Song shi* as the compiler of *Wenzhou su ji* (Supplementary Record of Wenzhou) (*Song shi*, vol. 15, fascicle 204, 5162) as well as being listed as one of a

during the Song, making major contributions of money, land or commemorative steles by the local elite was simply a conventional way to show one's community-mindedness.⁶² Such an act also had the added benefits of prestige and posterity. For many of the elite, contributing to communal enterprises like the building of a Buddhist site was one means by which their names and achievements could be inscribed in stone, thereby creating a permanent record to pass down to future generations.⁶³

Halperin describes the Song dynasty culture of stele inscriptions as that of well-educated individuals on "outings to view relics, and monasteries featured readings of inscriptional works, and visitors would scrutinize their script, literary style, organization, and historical veracity. In effect, stele functioned as props in very public displays of erudition, memory, and connoisseurship."⁶⁴ Baodingshan was visited by literary-minded individuals right up until its "rediscovery" in the 1940s.⁶⁵ Records indicate that the site's

group of illustrious Song scholars, including several who were charged during the anti-*wei-xue* campaigns (*Song shi*, vol. 36, fascicle 430, 12788. See also Schirokauer, 185).

⁶²Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986): 179-182, and Mark Halperin, 35-38 and 184.

⁶³Halperin, 29. Halperin, 102, stylistically differentiates earlier Tang inscribed works from later Song ones based upon the length and detail of their content. Earlier works are brief and less likely to concern themselves with the temple itself whereas later Song works are apt to supply more of a portrait of the people and the place. In this respect, the generic inscribed designatory placards can be considered "old-fashioned" or traditional, while the stele carved with Yuwen Ji's lengthy prose inscription outlining the activities taking place at the grotto is more in keeping with Song stylistic trends for commemorative inscriptions.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 23. Monks almost always had local literati sponsors and donors who were quite actively involved with the religious communities. Generally in the Song dynasty, the appointment to and ratification of the post of abbot required just such a connection. No information regarding whether or not Zhao Zhifeng was sponsored by any of the Song officials who visited the site has yet been found, although such a scenario would seem highly probable.

⁶⁵DZSKMWL, 207-270, lists all of the later Ming, Qing, and Republican era inscriptions found at the site.

highest-ranking visitor was Prince Xian of Shu (1371-1423 CE), in whose honor the pagoda above the grotto was built in the early Ming dynasty.⁶⁶

From the available information, one could preclude that Baodingshan was the playground of the elite, the only evidence for any audience being these steles carved from calligraphy provided by men who all belonged to the upper echelon of society. Norman Bryson tells a cautionary tale of the hubris involved in reconstructing reception, and with respect to the issues he has raised, it is necessary to immediately follow this detailing of the educated elite presence at Baodingshan with a rejoinder.⁶⁷ What may at first glance appear to be a very strong and overt presence on the part of the literati at Baodingshan does not preclude the presence and participation of many other classes of society. Clearly the members of the literati class would have been best prepared to utilize the inscribed textual works which accompany the imagery at Great Buddha Bend to their fullest advantage; however, given the

⁶⁶The Prince of Shu, Zhu Chun, took up residence in Chengdu in 1391, being designated Prince Xian of Shu in 1378. His mother was a concubine of Zhu Yuanzhang, the first Ming emperor, and he was the 11th of the emperor's 36 sons and 16 daughters. The prince was best known for his literary and learned leanings. His life is discussed primarily within the biography of the Neo-Confucian thinker and statesman Fang Xiaoru. The young prince and Fang regularly traveled to famous scenic spots in Sichuan, among which Mt. Emei and Du Fu's "thatched cottage" in Chengdu are specifically cited in the histories. While in Sichuan, both the prince and Fang were at an equal remove from the capital, and as such the two were kindred souls. Extant correspondence between them shows a dynamic of Confucian scholar/mentor toward his young devoted student. Fang reminded the prince of his Confucian responsibilities, earning for himself a reputation as a man of principle, which eventually led him back to the capital and the court. This can be seen as a fortunate, albeit in the end unfortunate, change in events, one that would lead to Fang's martyrdom along with the execution of his entire extended family. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoyang Fang, eds., Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644, 2 vols. (London and New York: Columbia University Press, 1976): 426-432.

⁶⁷Norman Bryson, "Art in Context" in Studies in Historical Change, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992): 31-38.

evidence at hand, this representative sample of audience participation is by default incomplete and extremely small.

Fortuitous circumstances are in fact the only reason for such a sample being skewed in the literati class' favor. The monastic complex at Baodingshan burned at some point during the Yuan dynasty, an event that destroyed all documentation at the site not carved in stone.⁶⁸ Drawing from evidence found at other sites in Dazu County, it is safe to assume that the images at Great Buddha Bend grotto were viewed by men and women alike, rich as well as middle-class, layperson alongside monk.⁶⁹ This assumption would appear to be further supported by the wide breadth of imagery depicted at Great Buddha Bend as well as by the inclusion of both text and image.⁷⁰ These aspects of the site and their effect on the utilization of Great Buddha Bend by a varied audience will be considered within the final analyses of each of the chapters to follow.

⁶⁸*Dazu xian zhi: Sichuan sheng*, 498-99.

⁶⁹The number of inscriptions found at the numerous other sites in Dazu County and neighboring Anyue County attest to a prolific Buddhist community with a diverse body of patrons. See Hu Wenhe, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao* (Taipei: Mei shu chu ban she, 1999) for more on the connections between both the artists and patrons of these two areas within Sichuan province, and DZSKMWL for transcriptions and rubbings of the extant inscriptions within Dazu County, the number of which easily runs into the hundreds .

⁷⁰Some scholars disagree that the site was used by all levels of society. Stephen F. Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory" in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, 115-45 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993): 127, states that the placement of the Great Buddha Bend imagery at eye-level denotes an illiterate or semi-literate audience for the works. Clearly Teiser does not take into consideration the physical evidence left behind by highly-literate individuals like Wei Liaoweng and Du Xiaoyan.

CHAPTER TWO

FILIAL RESPONSIBILITIES : OWING MOTHER, REPAYING FATHER

I have chosen to proceed through the works at Great Buddha Bend as one does today, beginning with the first narrative tableau one encounters, the depiction of scenes from the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents and moving onto The Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness.¹ In keeping with ritual *pradakshina* of holy objects, this places the narratives off the right shoulder, moving counterclockwise in a circumambulatory fashion. Because there is no longer a central pillar, icon, or relic pagoda present within the lush green at the center of the grotto, and there is no indication that there ever was one, viewing the Great Buddha Bend works in this manner is a case of expedient means rather than one of prescribed ritual activity. There is in fact every reason to believe that monks entering from the temple complex above and visitors coming up from the river below would have proceeded in either direction.

¹Hereafter referred to as the Repayment of Kindness Scripture. The Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness (*Da fang bian bao en jing*) is the title inscribed at Baodingshan, and is found within the *Da fang bian fo bao en jing*, volume 3, fascicle 156 of the Taisho shinshu daizokyo, 59 vols. (Tokyo: Taisho shinshu daizokyo kankokai, 1988-). The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents or *Fu mu en zhong jing* can be found in Taisho volume 85, fascicle 2887. *Da fang bian fo bao en jing* is sometimes translated as the "Returning Favors Sutra". See Hu Wenhe, "Dazu Baoding he Dunhuang de *Da fang bian (Fo) bao en jing zhi bi jiao yan jiu*" ("A Comparative Study of Returning Favors Sutra Stories in the Baoding Shan of the Dazu Grottoes and the Dunhuang Grottoes"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 1 (1996): 35.

The first two narrative tableaux, related to the Kindness of Parents and the Repayment of Kindness scriptures, present distinct challenges with regard to applicable theoretical approaches. Both contain large-scale iconic imagery, yet the primary focus of the works is the narrative elements (figs. 21 and 22). Where this combination of narrative and iconic imagery arises from, and how such works were viewed and utilized, are questions that will be considered in the following pages, beginning first with detailed descriptions of the two tableaux. A discussion of appropriate theoretical narrative models along with issues concerning the function of text and image within the tableaux can only take place after a comprehensive understanding of both the images and the accompanying texts.

The mother figure is central to the imagery in the tableau depicting the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents; therefore, I have entitled this section “Owing Mother”, with the inscriptions as well as the imagery making clear that the job of raising and nurturing the young child to adulthood fell largely to the mother. The tableau immediately adjacent to the “Owing Mother” work highlights the historical Buddha’s debt to his own father, and various filial acts he undertook in both his present and past incarnations in order to repay his filial dues. This being the case, the second section is entitled “Repaying Father”.

Owing Mother

Tableau number fifteen, a depiction of a miscellany of scriptural selections, the majority from the apocryphal Scripture on the Kindness of Parents, can best be described as two-tiered, with a lower ground-level tier never having been heavily carved, and now largely eroded away.² The two dominant horizontal levels reaching to a height of 6.9 meters above the pathway are divided quite plainly between the enlightened versus earthly worlds. The enlightened world features seven looming Buddha figures, six with halos behind their heads, referring to each Buddha's enlightened state, while the seventh figure, clothed in priestly garb and furthest to the right, has no nimbus. Scholars have postulated that this grouping represents the seven Buddhas of the past and present periods, the last unadorned Buddha figure to the right meant to demarcate the Buddha of the present kalpa, Shakyamuni.³

²The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents as depicted and inscribed at Baodingshan is not solely from any one extant work, but rather appears to be a composite of several works, the works most commonly cited being the aforementioned *Fu mu en zhong jing* (Taisho vol. 85 fascicle 2887) as well as *Fo shuo fu mu en zhong nan bao jing* (The Buddha Preaches the Sutra on the Weightiness of One's Parents' Kindness and the Difficulty in Repaying It), *Fo shuo qi fo jing* (The Buddha Preaches the Sutra on the Seven Buddhas) (Taisho vol. 16 fascicle 684) and *Shi en de* (The Ten Kindnesses and Virtues), a non-canonical listing found also within the Dunhuang cache. For thorough comparisons of these scriptures and the components of each found within the tableau at Great Buddha Bend, see Hu Liangxue, "Baoding Dafowan di 15 hao kan keshi zhi guanjian" ("My Opinion on the Rockcarvings of Baoding's Great Buddha Bend Niche Number 15"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 4 (1998): 38-46, and Sun Xinshen, "Dazu Baoding yu Dunhuang Mogao ku Fo shou fu mu en zhong jing bianxiang de bi jiao yan jiu" ("A Comparative Study of the Buddha Expounds the Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents Transformation Tableaux in the Mogao Caves and Baodingshan"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 1 (1997): 57-68.

³ The seven include: Vipasyin, Sikhin, Visvabhu, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa Buddha, and the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. DZSKYJ, 476. According to Jan Nattier, this series of seven Buddhas of the Past appears in Chinese translations of a Pali text, the *Dirghagama* (T. 1 fascicle 1) and the *Ekkotarikagama* (T. 125 fascicle 48). See Nattier's work

Beneath this realm lies a world familiar to all – the world of the family and the demands of childrearing. The central section of this tier focuses the worshipper’s attention on a man and a woman in the act of making an incense offering (figs. 23a and b). Clad in the attire of a well-to-do Song couple, they solemnly lean towards each other, as the woman places the incense into the censer stretched forward by the man. Beneath them is an extensive inscription entitled “Praying to the Buddha for a Child”:

Great Master Cijue,⁴ who received the imperial bestowal of the purple robe, X (spoke) Zongze(‘s) verse saying:

Before the Buddha of old had yet taken birth, seemingly there (had always been) the perfect totality of a single mark;⁵ (but) if Shakyamuni had (not) yet convened (the holy) assembly (to actually teach the Dharma), how could Kasyapa ever receive transmission of the Dharma?

The father and mother together offer fragrant incense, praying to give birth to a filial and agreeable child in order to take precaution against their old age, when their rising and sitting will require (a child’s) support. (His) father and mother all will attain Buddhahood bound (to one

Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991): 19, footnote 17. The following translations of the inscribed passages from the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents are based on various elements found in the transcriptions provided by these three texts: DZSKYJ, 476, Hu Wenhe, Sichuan Dao jiao Fo jiao shi ke yi shu (hereafter SDJFJSKYS) (Chengdu: Sichuan Ren min chu ban she, 1994): 284, and Li Fangyin, Dazu shi ke yi shu (Chongqing: Chongqing chu ban she, 1990): 72.

⁴Master Cijue, whose name and honorific appear connected to at least seven of the eleven vignettes represented in The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, was a Song dynasty monk from Sichuan province. Cijue studied within the Linzhi school of Chan under Wolung Po’an Zuxian, a Sichuanese monk who died in 1211 CE (Xu zang jing (Hong Kong: Longmen shu tian, 1968): vol. 142, 768a). For a brief biography of Master Cijue, see Zengaku daijiten (Tokyo: Taishukan shoten, 1978): 417.

⁵An allusion to the transcendent reality of ‘suchness’. I thank Dan Stevenson for helping me with editing the following translations. See Appendix B for complete translations of the texts discussed here and in the following chapters.

another) through the suchness of the Dharmadhatu. At that time their heart's prayer will be fulfilled, and only then will they realize the final nirvana of no-remainder. If there is (a notion of something to) attain, then it is not (true) attainment. Only when there is no (idea of personal) merit (to be sought) can it begin to be considered (true) merit. Originally this is the style of our old house.⁶

Flanking this scene on the right and left and stretching over an area of 14.5 meters are depictions of the *Shi en de* or Ten Kindnesses and Virtues, an indigenous Chinese text whose central theme highlights the heavy debt which children owe to their parents.⁷ Rather than reading the tableau's main components from right to left as would have been the correct textual order in Song dynasty China, the ten kindnesses fan out from the central image of the parents' supplicating the Buddha for a child, moving first to the right, then left, continuing in such a fashion so as to be symmetrical in overall design. In order to avoid any confusion on the part of the worshipper as to the proper sequence, the inscriptions accompanying the ten vignettes are titled and numbered one through ten.⁸

⁶This line would seem to allude back to the "Chan-style" reading of "merit as no merit", and the possible references of transmission between Shakyamuni and Kasyapa. Stevenson, personal correspondence, 4/8/01.

⁷Cole, 132, and Ma Shizhang, "<Fu mu en zhong jing> xie ben yu bian xiang" ("Paintings and Transformation Tableaux of the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents") in Dunhuang shi ku yan jiu guo ji tao lun hui wen ji: Shi ku kao gu bian, 314-335, vol. 2 (Liaoning: Liaoning mei shu chu ban she, 1987): 333.

⁸The question may arise as to how we know that the numbers attached to the inscriptions are contemporaneous and not later additions. My response would be to say that what remains legible of the numbering appears to be in a similar *kai shu* calligraphic style to that of the accompanying inscription, and that the fact that all of the inscriptions appear to have suffered a similar degree of erosion and environmental degradation to that of the tableau as a whole would seem to indicate a comparable age.

The first of the Ten Kindnesses is entitled “The First Kindness - The Kindness of Caring during Pregnancy”.

The honorable Buddhist monk spoke thus in praise:

The kind mother, from the beginning of her pregnancy, her entire body feels as heavy as if leaden, and her face is sallow as if she is ill. She moves only with great difficulty.⁹

In the accompanying image, the mother is shown seated, legs somewhat splayed as her robe hangs heavily over her stout body (fig. 24). She gestures to a small serving girl who holds forth a bowl, presumably containing nourishment. The mother-to-be’s face is fuller, her hair quite plainly arranged.

“The Second Kindness - The Kindness of Suffering the Pains of Childbirth” is found immediately to the left of the central image, balancing the first kindness to the right. The inscription reads,

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

The tribulations of father and mother bring tears to one’s eyes. (You) will know the weightiness of (your obligations to) their kindness when a child is born from (your own) womb. The loving father hears the birth taking place and, filled with anxiety, he is unable to control himself. (He realizes that his own) birth (on the part of his parents) is impossible to repay. His two eyebrows crease (in worry) from head to ear.¹⁰

⁹DZSKYJ, 476, Hu, 285, and Li, 73.

¹⁰Ibid.

Standing supported by another female figure who grabs her under the arms, the expectant mother is depicted as clearly having reached the moment of delivering the child, her hand resting on her full, round belly as if to accentuate this fact (fig. 25). Before the mother kneels another woman who rolls up her right sleeve with her left hand; she looks up at the mother-in-labor in anticipation. Behind the kneeling woman stands the father, clutching an ancestral tablet. Some scholars have noted that this vignette represents rare documentary evidence for the practice of standing parturition.¹¹

Returning once again to the right side of the tableau, the worshipper sees the third kindness, that of “Selfless Care for the Child”.

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

When first they see their infant’s face, both parents smile a little. Before there were feelings of worry and anxiety; now there has arrived a moment of rest.¹²

Standing again facing one another, the husband and wife share a tender moment with their son, the husband reaching out to touch his wife’s arm as she holds up the child (fig. 26). She has lost weight, her garments hanging loosely at her sides, and the boy sits upright on his own, signifying

¹¹Zhang Hua, “A Survey of Dazu Stone Carvings” in *Ming ren yu Dazu shi ke*, ed. Tong Dengjin and Li Chuanshou (Chengdu: Sichuan mei shu chu ban she, 1999): 103. Earlier printed Buddhist works also show women in labor, such as the image found in a 9th-century illustrated copy of the Lotus Sutra recovered from Dunhuang of a seated woman in labor being attended to by her maidservant. See Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 124.

¹²DZSKYJ, 476, Hu, 285, and Li, 74.

that time has passed. The background is a simple, curling blue-gray cloud motif, which will remain constant for most of this second tier.¹³

Balancing this scene on the left side of the tableau are two of the ten kindnesses carved in such a way that at first glance they appear to be one vignette rather than two (fig. 27). Immediately adjacent to the father figure present at the birthing is a frontally-seated woman holding a child on her lap. Gazing up at his mother, the child clutches a round item, perhaps a steamed bun or a piece of fruit. This mother-son duo represents the fourth kindness, the “Kindness of Swallowing the Bitter while Spitting Out the Sweet”.

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

(The kind mother) gives the sweet to the child to eat, the bitter keeping to herself to eat. If in this life one’s sense of the kindness (of parents) is superficial or meager, at other times, it will be difficult to repay such virtues.¹⁴

Next to the seated woman with child sits another woman who is in actuality the same woman being represented at a different time. This illustration of a mother’s sixth kindness, that of feeding and rearing the child, depicts the mother with her hair up, blouse open to reveal her full breasts, allowing a son of walking age to suckle. The mother’s left hand gestures toward the earlier fourth kindness, her head inclined in that direction as well. The son climbs on her, his mouth to her left breast as he squeezes the nipple

¹³Similar treatment of this motif is also seen in Song-dynasty woodblock print works, and occurs in a somewhat less stylized manner in Song religious paintings.

¹⁴DZSKYJ, 477, Hu, 285, and Li, 74. The second sentence is based on the premise that the transcribers have mistaken the character *bu*, for *ci*, making for a more plausible

of her right. The sixth kindness, “The Kindness of Being Fed and Reared” reads,

The verses of Zongze, the Chan master Cijue spoke:

(The kind mother) breast feeds without ceasing; in the cherished thoughts of her breast, how could she ever feel a moment of separation? Never worrying should the fat and flesh (of her body) be used up, fearing instead that her small child should be hungry.¹⁵

Parallel to these two kindnesses over on the right side of the tableau is the intimate portrait of a mother and child lounging on a raised, carved wooden bed (fig. 28). This is a depiction of the fifth kindness, that of a mother who gives the dry place on the bed to her child.

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

The dry place (she) gives to the child to sleep in, her own body sleeping in the damp. Reverently extrapolate from the loving mothers’ unconditional and selfless love the larger idea of the Buddha’s perfect compassion. What self-centered preference could the Buddhas possibly show?¹⁶

Lying on her side, her left knee pulled up slightly, the mother in all of her kindness gazes fondly down at her bare-bottomed son, whose exposed genitals signal what has occurred.

reading of this line. I thank Dan Stevenson for bringing this orthographic error to my attention.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

At the end of the bed is what remains of the seventh kindness, the Kindness of Endless Washing and Cleaning.

The Great Master Cijue praised thus:

The small child incessantly soils his swaddling clothes, and the child's bodily organs are also soiled. (The kind mother) washes and cleans without end.¹⁷

The now heavily-eroded torso of a woman can still be made out as she reaches her hand down into a bucket of washing (fig. 29). Next to her stands a young child holding a toy aloft, behind her another greatly-eroded figure appears to be that of a woman, most likely a repetition of the same woman as was seen in vignettes four and six, holding a struggling child with one hand while her free hand attempts to wash him.

Even though kindness number eight, the "Kindness of Creating the Best Opportunity for the Child", would seem to speak to a joint parental concern, the carved rendition at Great Buddha Bend's once again highlights the mother's actions over those of the father (fig. 30).

The verse of an ancient worthy says:¹⁸

Once the child that one is raising finally grows up, it is natural to marry him off. At the wedding banquet, many animals are slaughtered, yet to whom will this evil (karma) redound?¹⁹

¹⁷DZSKYJ, 477, and Hu, 285.

¹⁸Ibid. Stevenson, personal correspondence, notes that the term *gu de* - "ancient worthy" - is one frequently used in Chan texts.

¹⁹DZSKYJ, 477, Hu, 285-6, and Li, 75.

The son stands central behind a feasting table, the front of which has been inscribed with the text of the eighth kindness. He is flanked by two male figures, most likely his father and future father-in-law, and the table is set with plates and bowls. To the right of this scene, the worshipper sees the true kindness of a mother towards her son. She stands behind a boiling pot, a pig at the ready, with the butcher, club in hand, aiming to do the deed. Rather than allow her son to be sullied with evil karma, she accepts it unto herself on his behalf.

In the vignettes depicting kindnesses nine and ten, time continues to march on, and the worshipper is reminded of the fact that a child's debt to his parents is never-ending, just as the parents' kindness to him will extend across time and place. Kindness number nine, that of "Missing the Child When He is Gone on a Long Journey", shows the father now leaning on a bamboo staff, clutching his wife's arm (fig. 31). The mother looks over her shoulder back at him. Below and in front of them stands a young man dressed in traveling attire, feet planted squarely forward, his belongings bundled up and slung over his shoulder.²⁰ The inscription reads,

(X)(X) (Master Cijue) spoke thus in praise:

X (The parents) think of the child daily, even after being apart for three years. (Although) as much as 1000 *li* distant, (they) put forth great mindfulness to tell the son to be careful when he is away."²¹

²⁰It is clear from available photographs that there have been repairs done to this vignette, having broken up possibly as a result of an earthquake, or some other large-scale shifting of the earth. Similar damage is seen in nearby works of the hell tableau.

On the far left side of the tableau, the last of the ten kindnesses is inscribed and depicted, that of “Having Empathy for Whatever Outcome”. The son, now older, kneels before his aged mother and father (fig. 32). Both are seated, the mother’s hair now covered. She sits smiling slightly as the father instructs the son, finger raised to make his point. He is now rendered with a beard, and both husband and wife show the more chiseled features of old age. As the Chinese saying goes, “As long as his parents are alive a son is always a boy”.²² The accompanying inscription reads as follows,

Spoken in praise:

100 years old and still they only think of (their) 80-year-old son; unable to let him go, they become ghosts and still they yearn for him. A son should pay attention to his parents' moods, be they happy or angry, and try not to offend them. It is not easy, and that is why we call all phenomena troublesome.²³

Having passed through the ten kindnesses of the worshipper’s earthly existence, one cannot neglect the lowest level, no matter how minimal its treatment, since its import to the narrative of the entire tableau is quite considerable. Little remains of the lowest tier, a backdrop of swirling clouds or smoke still evident. Placed within this smoky background, two carved figures greet the worshipper at eye-level. One is a man dressed in robes and placed directly beneath the first vignette showing the burdens of pregnancy

²¹DZSKYJ, 477, Hu, 286, and Li, 75.

²²Wu Hung, “Private Love and Public Duty: Images of Children in Early Chinese Art “ in Chinese Views of Childhood, 79-110, Anne Behnke Kinney, ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995): 99.

²³DZSKYJ, 477, Hu, 286, and Li, 75-6.

(fig. 33).²⁴ The other is a ghoulish figure found lounging beneath the mother and butcher figures seen in the eighth kindness, a figure similar in bearing and attire to those denizens of hell so visible in the nearby Hell tableau (fig. 34). Between these two, and directly beneath the central pairing making their offerings to the Buddha, is the following inscription:

The Buddha spoke regarding (X) children and how it could be that after attaining manhood (they should) overturn (the order of things) becoming unfilial, insulting their father's brothers, hitting and cursing their own brothers, and bringing shame upon their parents. No longer carrying out the rites, (they) do not honor their teacher's example. Those who do not follow the Law in the end will certainly fall into Avici Hell.²⁵

Based on this inscription, one can surmise that Avici Hell, the lowest and most feared of all the hells, once reserved for the likes of murderers, had now been opened up to accommodate the unfilial child. The presentation of such a powerful statement to the passing worshipper inscribed at eye-level reinforces the filial message present throughout the tableau's carved imagery. A mother's milk can never be replenished; therefore, the debt incurred was enormous indeed.

²⁴I am uncertain as to exactly how many images were originally placed in hell. A recently encountered photo shows a number of free-standing sculptures, all apparently men, with one possible headless female standing amongst the six male figures. During my two most recent visits to Baodingshan, these works were not in this position at the site. Regardless of the actual original number of images, such a preponderance of sons represented as sentenced to hell for their unfilial behavior does not weaken my argument, but would appear to reinforce it. See figures 21 and 33 for comparison.

²⁵DZSKYJ, 6, Hu, SCDIFISKYS, 286, and Li, 76. There are actually seven inscriptions found on this lowest level of hell, all reiterating the sentiments of the one I have translated. For the complete series, see Hu Liangxue, "*Baoding Dafowan di 15 hao kan ke shi zhi guan jian*" ("My Opinion on the Rockcarvings of Baoding's Great Buddha Bend Niche

One feature of the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau touched upon by Alan Cole in his work Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism is the underlying erotic aspect of many of the early Buddhist scriptures formulated in China.²⁶ Seldom mentioned in the recent Chinese literature on Great Buddha Bend, the imagery presented in the sixth kindness is clearly meant to highlight the literal connection between mother and son, a filial piety played up, as Cole notes, to reinforce the maternal links of succession over the traditional Chinese paternal lines.²⁷ The father is physically present in only half of the ten vignettes, and then only in a perfunctory fashion, as the mother tends to the child.²⁸

The entire tableau is dedicated to representing a mother's pain in both childbirth and childrearing, yet only in the image of the mother providing for her son her breastmilk, is the viewer given a realistic depiction of the female anatomy. Only in rare depictions of Hariti, the demon mother forced to acquiesce to the power of Buddhism when the Buddha traps one of her children under his begging bowl, do we see similar examples of bare-breasted women.²⁹ Despite the fact that a woman's breasts should be swollen during

Number 15"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 4 (1998): 42. Hu is the only author to discuss all of the texts in their entirety.

²⁶Alan Cole, Mothers and Sons in Chinese Buddhism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

²⁷Cole, 2, writes, "Buddhist writers challenged this arrangement (the son's adherence to the Confucian standard of patrilineal descent) by redefining filial piety so that it reflected the importance of the mother-son relationship."

²⁸It is interesting to note that images of the father are also conspicuously absent in Han funerary monuments with regard to rearing sons. See Wu Hung, "Private Love and Public Duty: Images of Children in Early Chinese Art", 96.

²⁹Bare-breasted women do appear on occasion in the secular arts; for example, in the Song-dynasty work entitled Knickknack Peddler, the artist Li Sung depicts a woman with a baby at her breast as her other children scramble for the peddler's toys. All of the Buddhist

the final stages of pregnancy, the image presented in this vignette remains largely unchanged from that of the woman praying for a child to the aged mother watching her son leave home. Emphasizing the importance of the transaction taking place, the depictions of the breasts themselves become markers for a debt that could not be repaid.

The Buddha, however, was a filial son successful in his quest to repay both of his parents. The adjacent work, which depicts stories from the Repayment of Kindness scripture, demonstrates the various ways, both mundane and extraordinary, by which such a daunting task can be accomplished.

Repaying Father

Just past the small tableau representing the indigenous gods of cloud, wind, thunder and lightning,³⁰ the worshipper encounters a large tableau depicting another Chinese sutra compilation, The Buddha Preaches the

examples I am aware of showing Hariti in this fashion were seen in Sichuan province, at various sites around Dazu. Recent Han tomb excavations at Deyang in Sichuan province have also yielded a ceramic figure of a woman breast-feeding her child. See Robert Bagley, ed., Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 328. These examples may indicate a local willingness to depict frontal female nudity. Female nudity is also encountered within the Hell tableau at Great Buddha Bend, and, although I have already touched upon the implications of nudity as a form of punishment within Song society in my article (Kucera, 92), I will be considering it at a later date in conjunction with the imagery seen in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau as well as the erotic imagery seen in several other areas of Great Buddha Bend.

³⁰One could question whether or not these nature deities lie solely within the realm of indigenous gods of China. One need only look at the famous Buddhist debate between the monk Sariputra and the heretic Raudraksa in which Sariputra brings in the 'god of wind' to help clear out the competition.

Mahayana Scripture on Repaying Kindness.³¹ Reaching to 7.1 meters above the pathway, the various groupings of figures at first glance appear scattered over the 14.7 meters area around a central Buddha icon, who stands with his left hand palm up in front of his chest balancing a begging bowl, his right hand held up in a gesture of admonishment.³² Rays of light emanate from his *urna* as he opens his mouth to preach (figs. 35a and b). Carved at eye-level on the front of the Buddha icon is a lengthy tract related to three previous emperors, the sides of which are flanked by the statement “There are only the golden bones of our master that survive, and (although) having been refined by fire 100 times, the colors are still fresh.”³³

Unlike the earlier narrative work in which the ten kindnesses of a mother were clearly numbered, the large textual inscriptions found within the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau are not. This lack of direction on the part of the artist or the conceptual director, Zhao Zhifeng,

³¹I use the title given to the work within the context of the Buddha's discussion with Ananda, located in the inscription carved on the central Buddha's left flank. Alan Cole's translation of the title of this work is Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means of the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness. Chinese scholars tend to prefer the translation “Mahopaya Buddha” for *Da fang bian fo*, and “Requital of Kindness Scripture” for *bao en jing*. Hu in his article “*Dazu Baoding he Dunhuang de Da fang bian (Fo) bao en jing zhi bi jiao yan jiu*” (“A Comparative Study of Returning Favors Sutra Stories in the Baoding Shan of the Dazu Grottoes and the Dunhuang Grottoes”), 41, argues for inclusion of the *bian wen* text Shuang en ji (Record of Double Kindness) as one of the sources for the imagery found at Great Buddha Bend.

³²The closest iconographic similarity traceable for this gesture is to the *tarjani* gesture, not specifically classified as a mudra, in which the hand makes a “threatening gesture”. See Robert Beer, The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs (Boston: Shambala Press, 1999): 156.

³³DZSKYJ, 274-275. “Golden bones” is a reference to *sarira*, or Buddhist relics. Local legend has it that Zhao Zhifeng under the auspices of Emperor Ningzong (r. 1195-1225 CE) brought famous relics to Baodingshan, and constructed a pagoda for their placement. What eventually happened to the relics is unknown because the temple complex burned down during the Mongol occupation, but reference to the relics is made in an inscription found on

may well have been intentional; by leaving the vignettes unnumbered, the artist gives more freedom to the viewer, who in turn does not feel compelled to read and absorb each of the twelve stories relating Shakyamuni's filial acts in both his present and previous incarnations.

The scholar Ning Qiang has arranged the narratives in this tableau in order beginning with the lower right and circling around to the lower left, noting that "to put them in order with regard to the stories' placement within the sutra, some of which are not to be found therein, is to put them into confusion."³⁴ In order to make some sense of the rationale behind such a large work, it is imperative that a brief survey be made of the critical components. For complete translations of the inscriptions accompanying the individual vignettes, please see Appendix B.

Following the order set out by Ning Qiang, the first vignette is by far the most dynamic, and sets the tone for the entire tableau (fig. 36). The inscription, easily viewed by the worshipper since it fills the entire lower left flank of the central Buddha image, is entitled "The Buddha of the Great Repository Preaches the Mahayana Sutra for Repaying Kindness."³⁵ Beginning with the incontrovertible phrase, "Thus I have heard", the inscription tells the story of Ananda's encounter with a filial man caring for

the back of the *daochang* in Little Buddha Bend. See DZSKYJ, 275-276. Chapter three will include further discussion of the content of the central inscription found here.

³⁴Ning Qiang, "Dazu shi ke zhong de hui hua xing yin su shi xi" ("The Pictorial Elements in the Dazu Stone Carvings"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 1 (1987): 23.

³⁵"Da zang fo shuo *Da fang bian bao en jing*." For the translations provided here, the transcriptions can be found in Hu Wenhe's work, SDJFJSKYS (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin chu ban she, 1994): 297-301; the compilers of DZSKYJ did not provide more than an introductory sentence for each.

his parents, and their subsequent meeting with six heretics, who deride the Buddha Shakyamuni as being unfilial, having abandoned his parents in the city in order to preach in the mountains. The doubt raised within Ananda causes him to raise the issue of filial piety upon his return to the Buddha, who at the time is preaching to an assembly of his followers. The Buddha's response to Ananda reaches out to all, including the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, in the form of rays. He then preaches the need to be filial and to care for one's parents, citing the notion that in the past all the myriad beings were parents, and without them no being could exist.³⁶

Clearly unable to depict all of the various moments and venues of this narrative, the artist chose to highlight the encounter between Ananda and the filial son, who the worshipper sees at ground level carrying his weak, old parents in baskets suspended from a pole straddling his shoulders, and the six heretics. The heretics are shown joyfully prancing by, pointing and laughing at them, slandering the Buddha while a solemn Ananda listens (fig. 37). Directly adjacent to the carved inscription stands Ananda, his head bowed slightly, hands clasped together as he prays on behalf of the filial son and his parents. Next to Ananda, the worshipper sees the son shouldering his father and mother, leaning forward slightly from the burden (fig. 38a). The parents are depicted as small and wizened seated in the baskets, the

³⁶Hu, *SDJFJSKYS*, 299.

father's mouth open as his hand clutches what might possibly be the 'better' food given to him by his son, as is noted in the inscription.³⁷

Immediately to the right of this grouping stands the first of the six "Masters of the Other Law", who points toward Ananda and the familial grouping while looking back over his shoulder to his five compatriots (fig. 38b).³⁸ Above the six heretics is an inscribed caption that reads, "The Six Masters of the Other Law Vilify the Buddha as Unfilial".³⁹ The first two heretics, Purana-Kasyapa and Maskarin, are rather straight-laced depictions of non-Han men, while the last four "barbarian" heretics are shown as if in a festive mood.⁴⁰ The third heretic, Ajita-Kesa Kambalin, keeps time on a set of clappers, his right foot raised up to tap out the beat, displaying a curl-toed Persian-slipper style shoe. He looks back over his shoulder, mouth open as if to shout encouragement to the fourth heretic, Sanjayin, who is in full singing and dancing mode. Sleeves swirling about him, bearded mouth wide open, the downward curve of his head echoes the raised movement of his left leg as he dances. Above him is the sole female heretic, Cinca-Manaviki, depicted as a woman bent over her flute, and behind Sanjayin is the last of the six

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Hu Wenhe, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao* (Taipei: Mei shu chu ban she, 1999): 96-97.

³⁹"Other Law" or "Outside Law" (*wai dao*) here clearly a reference to heterodox, heretical or non-Buddhist law.

⁴⁰The list of the six heretics as seen at Baodingshan is not entirely accurate, and since the heretics are not named in the accompanying inscription, open to some conjecture. The sutra itself also leaves out specific identification of the heretics, only stating that "six heretics" vilified the Buddha Shakyamuni. The female heretic, Cinca-Manaviki, is not one of any original list of the six. See *Fo xue da ci dian* vol. 1 (Taipei: Tian hua chu ban she, 1984): 649. The correct sixth heretic should be Nirgantha, as stated by Soothill, 134b. Cinca-Manaviki is instead the woman who falsely accused the Buddha of adultery with her. See Soothill, 326a. Further information on the six heretics can be found in *The Teachings of the Six Heretics* by Claus Vogel (Wiesbaden: Deutsche Morgenlandische Gesellschaft, 1970).

heretics, Kakuda-Katyayana, a figure now largely eroded, but apparently carrying yet another musical instrument, and wearing yet another unusual foreign hat.⁴¹

Integral to the vignette and the tableau as a whole is the central Buddha figure - the image of Ananda being positioned in such a way as to connect the two seemingly disparate elements of an "iconic" Buddha image with the nearby narrative protagonists. Faced toward the inscription, Ananda appears to listen as he pays homage to the Buddha. The Buddha, in turn, raises his hand to preach, his lips slightly parted to speak, a ray of light emanating up and outward. These rays represent his words reaching up to the Buddhas in the heavens, along with all the myriad beings dispersed around the Buddha figure's head like so many flames in a nimbus - a hungry ghost being fed by a monk, domesticated animals, humans, asuras, and a denizen of hell with his vat of boiling oil (fig. 39). The inscription reads:

The World-Honored One let out a little smile,
emitting a five-colored light which reached all of
the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. The
bodhisattvas of that land together intoned, "What
causes this radiance?" The Buddhas of those lands
replied,

⁴¹The female heretic is identified specifically as Cinca-Manaviki by Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 97. It is interesting that for many Chinese authors the female heretic playing her flute has been idealized; this stems from a gross misunderstanding of her role at the site, and a common trend within modern Chinese scholarship to romanticize the pastoral lifestyle. See for example the statement in *Dazu Grottoes*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984): 8, where the figure is described as "an attractive girl playing an instrument which looks like a flute." Flute playing as an erotic image can be traced back to folk stories from the latter Han dynasty. See "chui di" as discussed within the *Pei wen yun fu* vol. 5 fascicle 101 (Seoul: Han guo xue zheng xing yuan, 1985): 4022.

“In the Saha realm there is a Buddha named Shakyamuni who to the multitude expounds The Mahayana Sutra for Repaying Kindness, desiring to cause all creatures to be filial and caring for their fathers and mothers; as such he releases this radiance....”⁴²

The worshipper is thus drawn into the other eleven vignettes as stories that the Buddha preached to all beings across time and place in order to demonstrate his own filial piety.⁴³

Set up in an almost perfect call-and-response style, and the last of the twelve vignettes as arranged by Ning Qiang, the grouping viewed to the left of the central Buddha figure at ground level seems to answer to the heretics' allegations, whose images mirror them on the right side of the tableau. A processional of six figures stretches out as it marches away from the central Buddha figure, on whose right flank is inscribed the accompanying inscription (fig. 40). Immediately recognizable to the worshipper is the Buddha Shakyamuni, clad in monk's robe, hair shorn to close snail-shell curls, rays emanating from his forehead. As seen in the six heretics' vignette, the key features are captioned; between the rays of light emanating from the Buddha we read “The Great Filial Shakyamuni Buddha Respectfully Shoulders His Father the King's Coffin”. His father's coffin is inscribed with the characters *wang guan yu* - “Sedan Bearing the Coffin of the King” - and

⁴²Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 299.

⁴³Most of the vignettes within this tableau can be seen as examples of the bodhisattva cultivation of perfection (*paramita*), specifically the perfection of generosity (*dana*). Reiko Ohnuma has discussed the connection between the gift of the body as a form of *dana* and the Buddha's gift of the *dharma* in an article based on her dissertation entitled “The Gift of the Body and the Gift of Dharma” in History of Religions vol. 37 no. 4 (May 1998): 323-359.

his final resting place labeled “The Relic Pagoda of the Great King Suddhodhana.”⁴⁴

Leading the processional is Sundarananda, the younger brother of Shakyamuni.⁴⁵ Head covered and bowed, he looks back over his shoulder to his brother, who leads the group of pallbearers. As is written in the inscription, Sundarananda waves a censer, waiting for Shakyamuni to take it from him when they reach the coffin’s final resting place. Two strong men, perhaps meant to represent the heavenly kings also mentioned in the inscription who honor the Buddha by transforming themselves into human form so as to assist him, stand with their backs to the worshipper. A pole connects these three figures to the coffin perched above. Behind the coffin, two figures stand face forward, hands clasped in reverence; they are Ananda, Shakyamuni’s cousin, and Rahula, Shakyamuni’s son.⁴⁶ Their presence is explained in the inscription by their repeated request to Shakyamuni that they be allowed to bear the king’s coffin.⁴⁷

This representation of the Buddha’s response to his critics is extremely dramatic. Shakyamuni has returned to attend to worldly concerns as the inscription notes since “it would not be filial for the multitude to arrange for the cremation of the king.” With this act, Shakyamuni himself highlights Buddhism’s flexible nature with regard to societal mores - there is no need to

⁴⁴Suddhodhana, “The Great King of the Pure Rice”, refers to Shakyamuni’s father in this, his last, incarnation.

⁴⁵DZSKYJ, 479, and Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 37.

⁴⁶Ibid., and Soothill, 294a and 472a respectively.

⁴⁷Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 301.

wholly abandon the family and tradition on behalf of one's beliefs. Further on in the inscription the heavenly kings lament that the Buddha respectfully shoulders this burden "for those children in the future who are not filial".⁴⁸ Thus, besides effectively silencing his critics with regard to his own filial duties, this depiction of the Buddha expands Buddhist righteousness vis-à-vis the protagonist heretics by using his own actions as an example for future generations to emulate, thereby demonstrating how the Buddha cares not only for those of the present, but for future generations as well.

These stage-setting episodes of the Repayment of Kindness narrative have been consciously placed closest to the viewer; from this lowest tier, the eyes then can move up, around, inward and outward, perusing the various displays of the Buddha's filial piety as time allowed and as need warranted. As Ning Qiang noted, there is no apparent order to the chaos, so perhaps we should consider alternate possibilities - that in fact, more relevant or popular imagery was kept closer to the worshipper while more fantastic, less realistic stories were placed further away. This theory being posited, it is necessary to look more closely at the second tier of the tableau. It is interesting to note at this point the once-again symmetrical quality of the tableau as a whole, the central Buddha icon flanked by six vignettes on each side, arranged in inverted pyramidal fashion with each side having one episode on the lowest tier, two episodes each in the second tier, and three in the third tier.

⁴⁸Ibid.

The vignettes on the second tier of the tableau bear out this hypothesis. Placed directly above the two eaves outlining the relic pagoda of Shakyamuni's father Suddhodhana is a narrative depiction of Shakyamuni attending to his dying father (fig. 41). The rays emanating from the pallbearer figure of Shakyamuni on the first tier aid the viewer in making the connection between these two episodes as they waft upwards to underline the father-son scene. The story itself is quite simple - the dying king has but one regret, that he has not seen his son one last time before he dies. The omniscient Buddha, a true filial son, informs Ananda that he will go to see his father as "it is befitting that I call on him who raised and nurtured me to pay my debt of gratitude".⁴⁹ The Buddha's radiance soothes the dying man, and he asks his son to lay his hands upon him in order that he be at peace and all pain and regret will be eliminated.

What is depicted at Great Buddha Bend are the final moments of the dying king's life, where as the inscription relates,

The Buddha then with his hand touched his father the king on the forehead, 'King, you should be joyful, you should not be vexed or worried, as you have always attentively contemplated the methods and significance of the scriptures.' When the king heard this, the happiness he himself could not bear, so he grasped the Buddha's hand and touched it to his heart. Whereupon as the king lay, he joined his palms together in reverence, and his life ended, his last breath cut off.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Ibid.

On the left, leaning gently over his father, stands Shakyamuni, his right hand resting on his father's forehead, his left being pressed to his father's heart as his father puts his palms together in prayer. Behind him stands a praying monk figure, perhaps Ananda, to whom the Buddha had earlier explained his need to be present at his father's bedside. The father's body emits a wafting form of a curled lotus leaf opening, a visual representation of the escape of the king's life breath, and the transformation of the king's being from the mundane world to his rebirth into the "Five Heavens of Purity".⁵¹ At the foot of the king's bed stands another attentive male figure; dressed in worldly garb, he is possibly meant to represent one of the many doctors whose various treatments who were unable to cure the king.

To the right of this touching scene is another vignette, which at first glance has very little to do with anything filial. A caption in the middle of the scene reads "The Great Youth of the Himalayas casts off his whole body for half of a verse: Birth and death do not cease. With cessation, there is Happiness"(fig. 42).⁵² The inscription itself, found immediately off the central Buddha's right shoulder, is entitled "Shakyamuni while in the Causal Stages

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Soothill, 357b. It is interesting to note that within the context of the entire tableau the "Five Heavens of Purity" shows up twice – once as captioned in the image of the heavens above the head of the Buddha, to whom the Buddha preaches his sermon along with the other realms of existence, and then again in the inscription related to the death of the Buddha's father. In a sense, the viewer could literally envision the soul of the Buddha's father rising up to the palaces of the Five Heavens of Purity as depicted above the central Buddha icon's head.

⁵²This is sometimes referred to as the "Sacrifice for a Stanza" parable.

(of Bodhisattva-hood) Cultivates the Act of Abandoning One's Body in Search of the Law".⁵³

The gist of this narrative is quite straight-forward - the Buddha is confronted by a hungry *raksa* demon while trying to achieve the perfected bodhi mind.⁵⁴ The demon is "hungry and vexed", and responds to the Buddha's query regarding demon cuisine, saying, "I eat the warm meat and hot blood of people." The young Shakyamuni in a previous incarnation, having just come to the realization that the cycle of endless life and death can be stopped, and that joy will result from this extinguishing, is quick to offer up his own body in exchange for a chant known to the *raksa* demon which will bring him bodhi knowledge because "as a bodhisattva, I cast off this unfirm body for *bodhi*, and will obtain an adamantine body. The demon then utters the chant, "Life and death is extinguished; only such extinguishing brings joy." Having achieved his purpose and owing his body to the demon, Shakyamuni then proceeds to undertake his own extinguishing by climbing a tall tree and jumping off of it. However, before he hits the ground, the demon is transformed back into its true form, the god Indra, who catches the plummeting Shakyamuni. Indra, Brahma and all the heavens prostrate themselves in praise of Shakyamuni, recognizing him as the Thus-Come-One.

⁵³Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 300.

⁵⁴Berling, 65, points out that the formula of a bodhisattva being tested by the gods or by an evil adversary is used to demonstrate his devotion to the Buddhist path, and becomes a pretext for teaching the Dharma. The *raksa* demon in this case is simply the god Indra in disguise.

Depicting such a complex scene in a worthwhile fashion given such limited space required the artist to use one singular image of Shakyamuni as the pivot point for the various moments within the storyline, thereby conflating the scene.⁵⁵ To the left of the caption the worshipper sees what can easily be identified as the *raksa* demon, hair standing on end in flame-like fashion, ears long and pointed, face a grotesque cluster of lumps and bulging eyes. The demon speaks with mouth open, looking down and gesturing to the kneeling figure below him. The kneeling figure is clearly the “Great Youth of the Himalayas”, who is shown with his back turned toward his antagonist. He gestures with his right hand upward toward the figure furthest to the right. Badly damaged, the larger size and swirling clothes implicate this figure as that of the transformed *raksa* demon in his new identity as Indra. It is difficult to say with great certainty due to the poor condition of the cliff-face, but there appears to be a small sprig of branch carved directly above the kneeling figure’s head hinting at this as being a representation of the moment when Indra transforms himself in order to catch the falling Shakyamuni.

How does a story replete with demons and miraculous events fulfill the requirements of an hypothesis based on relevance and popularity? Given the context of the vignettes in the immediate vicinity, this narrative depiction of an appropriate method to achieve the end of all the pains of life and death was clearly pertinent and desirable. Although the story overtly appears to be

⁵⁵Murray, “What is Chinese Narrative Illustration?”, 608, notes that the use of

quite dramatic, the opening lines inform us that the young Shakyamuni is passing his time in meditation and study of the scriptures; his daring attempt to actually physically extinguish his life is thwarted, as the heavenly beings acknowledge the depth of his understanding when witnessing the sincerity of his actions. The message conveyed is that to aid not only one's self, but also to ease the pains of all those around you, the most expedient method is to take up meditation and study, i.e., follow in the footsteps of the Buddha himself, and become a monk or nun. Placed next to the image of the sage Shakyamuni comforting his father's beleaguered soul, and aiding in his achievement of heaven, this vignette highlights the redeeming qualities of a son renouncing this world for a monastic existence. As such, this small grouping can be seen as vindicating a vocation long cited by the Confucianists as being anti-family and anti-Chinese.

On the second tier of the right side of the central Buddha figure are two vignettes which echo this sentiment of self-sacrifice on behalf of one's parents - the well-known tale of the Buddha in a previous incarnation sacrificing himself to aid a tigress, and the lesser-known story of the Buddha cutting his own flesh in a previous life to nourish his father and mother (fig. 43). Although the tigress vignette would appear at first glance to be related to self-sacrifice on behalf of the salvation of all beings, the portion inscribed and depicted at Great Buddha Bend concerns itself with the effect of such a

conflated imagery in Chinese narrative depiction is rare.

sacrifice on the Buddha's then-parents, not on the more dramatic earlier self-sacrifice episode.

Parallel to the scene of the Buddha Shakyamuni providing solace to his dying father, the tigress narrative provides a perfect symmetrical counterpart (fig. 44). The parents are shown grieving over the body of their deceased son, now nothing more than a skeleton. To the right the father strokes his head; to the left his mother touches his feet. As the inscription states,

With his divine eye, (the prince) saw before him his former parents grieving, unduly weeping and wailing, perhaps even to the point of losing their own lives!...Forthwith, he came down from heaven, floating in the air, uttering various statements of explanation as well as a remonstrance to his father and mother.⁵⁶

Depicted standing between the parental pair is the Prince Mahasattva, now a bodhisattva, swirling clouds of blue and his diminutive size connotating the distance between the earth and the void. Mahasattva informs the parents that "you should know that whatever is (composed of) existents must cease to exist", thereby explaining his self-sacrifice and subsequent transformation into a bodhisattva. Having come to understand this, he notes, they too shall be awakened. The parents then praise him, after which Mahasattva chanted verses "declaring his thanks to his parents, thus enabling them in obtaining enlightenment". Should any of the worshippers have difficulty identifying this story from the images of father, mother, bodhisattva and skeletal remains alone, the artist has included a life-size, albeit somewhat

⁵⁶Hu, *SDJFJSKYS*, 298.

cartoonish, image of the tale's ultimate protagonist, the tigress, crouching just off to the right side of the father.⁵⁷

Next to this scene, and adjacent to the central Buddha figure is the narrative entitled "Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), Cuts His Own Flesh to Nourish His Father and Mother" (fig. 45).⁵⁸ This seemingly fantastic vignette depicting the feeding of the Buddha's parents with his own flesh in fact has a more concrete filial value when considered in conjunction with its accompanying inscription.

The story goes that the Buddha in a previous life was a young prince named "Jati".⁵⁹ Due to betrayal, the king and his wife are forced to flee their homeland with nothing other than their young son. Noticing that his parents are starving, the young Jati encourages his father to make "one hundred cuts" on his princely body in order to feed himself and his wife.⁶⁰ Jati then goes on to proclaim that "in the event that a fiery iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, it would not be painful, and thereby retreat from the Way.," noting that

⁵⁷It is interesting to note that of the images juxtaposed on this second tier, two of them are also found in proximity on another Buddhist work located in Japan. The Tamamushi shrine, located in the Treasure House of Horyu-ji, Nara, Japan, has both the 'Sacrifice to the Hungry Tigress' scene and the 'Sacrifice for a Stanza' scene.

⁵⁸Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 298. This work is similar to parable number two in the *Za bao zang jing*, first dated to 472 CE, and compiled by the Northern Wei monk Tanyao comprised of 121 *avadana*. *Taisho* vol. 4, no. 203. See Charles Willemen, *The Storehouse of Sundry Valuables*, BDK English Tripitaka series 10-I (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1994): 9-11, for a translation. The Baodingshan inscriptions would appear to be a variation on this *avadana*.

⁵⁹Soothill, 463b.

⁶⁰Stories relating the virtues of flesh cutting on behalf of sickly parents are in no short supply within the Buddhist canon; several relate specifically to Avalokitesvara. See Chun-fang Yu's translation of both *Guan yin jing zhou ling gan hui yao*, 424, and *Gu jin tu shu ji cheng*, 398:10b, in *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. DeBary and Irene Bloom, 532-534 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

his body “will be healed as good as new” would be twice as strong from such an event.

What the artist has chosen to depict from the story is the scene in which the father offers a slice of the son’s flesh to his wife, Jati’s mother. The mother stands to the left of the trio, hair piled high behind a royal tiara; to her left stands the king, holding the young prince Jati cradled in his left arm. The king’s right hand holds forth the piece of flesh toward the queen. To clarify the situation for the viewer, the artist has purposely carved a deep gash in the bare upper arm of the youth as well as another gash in his lower forearm. Between the two adults leans a long sword, which the worshipper comes to identify as the blade used to commit the gruesome deed.

The inscription notes that the young prince’s sores will heal because he does not falter in his belief in the Way; however, if he “took advantage with lies and falsehoods, (his) bodily sores would not close.” Hence, he is only able to provide for his parents because of his strong Buddhist beliefs, once again affirming filial deeds as well as extolling the virtues of the Buddhist way of life. The two central flanking images, “Sacrifice for a Stanza” and “Cutting His Own Flesh to Nourish His Father and Mother”, can both be seen as being related to affirming beliefs in Buddhism, while simultaneously demonstrating how such beliefs can be viewed as filial acts not only to one’s immediate ancestors but to all generations.

Also important with regard to this vignette is the phrase, “Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, I would not because of this

suffering, consider it painful and thereby retreat from the Way". This phrase is carved at various places throughout the Baodingshan complex: once on the stone Sutra List Pagoda in Little Buddha Bend, and five times within the Great Buddha Bend itself. It appears twice within the tableau under discussion here illustrating the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness, as well as within the Hell tableau, on a pagoda next to the Parinirvana image, and lastly, as the second to last inscription found in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau.⁶¹

This vignette is therefore the source of what will be a series of repetitions of the phrase throughout the Baodingshan complex extolling the virtues of perseverance and the Buddhist ideal of self-sacrifice. Worshippers would have identified this chant with a tableau in which the Buddha admonishes his critics by proffering at least twelve instances in this and past lives in which his filial piety knew no bounds as well as with a vignette depicting a child saving his parents' lives by utilizing the most dire means. As if to reinforce the link between the two, the phrase has been inscribed not only in the text immediately adjacent to the "Cutting His Own Flesh to Nourish His Father and Mother" vignette, but also in oversized carved characters, which hang above the entire tableau on either side of the central

⁶¹Li Zhengxin, "Baodingshan you Zhao Zhifeng zi zao xiang ma?" ("Did Zhao Zhifeng Create Portraits of Himself at Baodingshan?") *Chongqing she hui ke xue* no. 2 (1988): 98-100, notes seven places within Great Buddha Bend and three within Little Buddha Bend where this inscription is found. Although he mentions specific tableaux, I have not been able to verify his claims, and thereby presently maintain that there are only six places rather than ten where the phrase appears. Given the preponderance of the number ten at the site, and the ritual usage of such a number, it is highly likely that the phrase does exist in ten different places within the site.

Buddha figure's head like a banner proclaiming the connection between the two (fig. 46).

The top tier of the tableau continues the symmetrical aspect seen in the lower two tiers, with three vignettes off each side of the central Buddha figure's shoulders. They are also somewhat balanced in content, with the furthest vignette to the right on both sides relating a story with a bird as the protagonist, while the central groupings involve extraordinary physical feats, one to gain enlightenment, the other a cure. All of the episodes again relate to the Buddha's past demonstrations of appropriate filial conduct.

As hypothesized earlier, the higher one looks within the tableau, the more fantastic or miraculous the narratives become. The third tier episodes largely bear this theory out. Two involve magical birds, two involve bodhisattvas, one of whom transforms himself into human form, and two involve stories of cutting and gouging far beyond the scope of what was seen in the lower two levels. Blindness also figures prominently in this top tier, blind parents being involved in three of the six vignettes, while a fourth depiction involves self-inflicted blindness on the father's behalf. It is also interesting to note that this highest tier appears to broaden the scope of filial duty.

The least overtly demonstrative with regard to filial acts is the vignette numbered six by Ning Qiang, and located directly to the right of the main Buddha figure on the top tier. Entitled "Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), Cultivates Filial Piety and Realizes the 32 Marks

(of a Great Being)”, this narrative relates the story of the Buddha explaining to Manjusri how he achieved his special 32 minor marks and 80 auspicious signs through the “virtue of filial piety”.⁶² The artist executes this scene in a rather interesting fashion (fig. 47). Kneeling before two figures, one dressed in scholarly attire, the other a monk in meditation, is Manjusri, depicted as a youth also dressed in scholarly clothing.⁶³ Behind him sits a bodhisattva as is described in the inscription.

What makes this depiction fascinating is the inclusion of the extra scholarly figure who gestures with his right hand, as if to point out the Buddha’s 32 minor marks one by one. Manjusri gazes up at the speaker with rapt attention, as the Buddha sits smilingly facing forward. Some scholars have identified this Buddha image as being a portrait of Zhao Zhifeng, the founder of the Baodingshan complex, based on visual comparisons with other purported Zhao Zhifeng images at Baodingshan.⁶⁴ Although the image may have been based upon a portrait of the site’s founder, according to the inscription, the seated monk figure is meant to represent the enlightened Shakyamuni.

Shakyamuni concludes his speech to Manjusri by extolling him to “look upon all the myriad creatures as (you would) your father or king”, noting that “unexcelled complete enlightenment” can be acquired “by being

⁶²Hu, *SDJFJSKYS*, 297.

⁶³Soothill, 153b, notes that one of Manjusri’s common representations is that of an eternal youth.

⁶⁴Yang Jialuo, “*Dazu Baoding qu shi ke ji lu*” in *DZSKYJ*, 26-27, and Wu Xianqi, “*Jie shao Dazu shi ke ji qi wen hua ping jia*” in *DZSKYJ*, 33, among others. Further discussion of

filial and virtuous". Once again highlighting the need to be filial, this episode expands the practice of filial piety outward, extending it to include both father and king. Two of the other narratives depicted on this third tier include in their inscriptions ways in which kings can repay such filial acts; a third shows how a king can himself find enlightenment. Clearly the emphasis in these works has turned away from the "giver" toward the "receiver", and the responsibilities incumbent upon those who are the recipients of filial good deeds.

The first of the two vignettes to deal with kingly repayments of filial acts is found immediately to the right of the seated Buddha figure depicted in the narrative relating the Buddha's 32 minor marks. On the left we see the king, hampered by a serious illness according to the inscription, who reaches out to a doctor who kneels before him feeling for his pulse (fig. 48). This is the vignette depicting Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), Performed the Filial Act of Gouging Out His Eyes and Marrow for the Sake of a Cure. When asked what manner of medicine will cure him, the king replies, "It is the eyes and marrow of a person who does not anger." Immediately to the right of this, we see the sequel, that of his virtuous and filial son, seated, offering up his eyes and marrow. The artist has chosen to depict this precious gift of the son's bodily parts as a gelatinous, amorphous shape, being placed in a serving dish held aloft by a kneeling servant; the individual responsible for the cutting stands behind the pair of

Zhao Zhifeng being represented at Baodingshan can be found in the analysis of Chapter

smaller figures. Because of this act, “the prince’s life was at an end”; in order to acknowledge this supreme act of filial sacrifice, “they raised a pagoda for his bones and made an offering.” Hence, one appropriate method of repayment for filial piety is building Buddhist monuments in offering and remembrance.

The other method of repayment is for the king to extol the virtues of the Buddhist faith to his people. This is the penance given to the king by the bodhisattva-turned-man Samaka, in the “Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), Practices Filial Piety as Prince Samaka” vignette.⁶⁵ In this story, Samaka is accidentally slain by the king while filially seeking food for his blind parents (fig. 49). The cries of the parents that their son was ‘extremely filial’, and therefore did not deserve to die, are heard by the god Indra, who comes down to earth to revive the dead Samaka. The artist depicts this aspect of the narrative in a manner echoing components of both the scene of the Buddha Shakyamuni comforting his dying father, and that of the parents grieving for their dead son in the tigress vignette. Here we see Samaka lain out, his mother cradling his head in her hands, his father clutching the arrow protruding from his chest. It is the moment when Indra has appeared, and he is shown standing behind the prone figure of Samaka. To the immediate right of the inscription and Indra stands the guilt-ridden

Four.

⁶⁵Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 299. Interestingly enough the story of Samaka is also seen in the *Za bao zang jing*, as the second half of the story relating the filial act of slicing one’s own body to feed one’s parents (Willemen, 11-13). However, at Baodingshan, these works are not positioned near each other as one might expect if the artist were working from that text.

king, dressed in hunting attire, a quiver at his left side, his bow clutched to his right side as he holds his hands together in reverence.

Upon being brought back to life, Samaka enjoins the king to be “One who desires blessings comforts his people. You should lead them to achieve perfection.” Samaka’s filial indebtedness therefore is not only being repaid to his parents by his own actions – his parents are subsequently enlightened by his near-death experience - but also by the king, who must atone for having slain Samaka in the first place. Since he did not intentionally kill Samaka, and regretted his act almost immediately, the king’s penance must be seen as recompense for, and recognition of, Samaka’s filialness, not solely as repayment of a karmic wrong.

The third vignette in the tableau which can be seen to relate to kingly duties is entitled “Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), Cuts His Own Flesh”, and is placed to the right of the last vignette described, that of Prince Samaka’s death and miraculous recovery (fig. 50).⁶⁶ In the inscription, the worshipper is told the story of a king who sought to understand the Buddha’s law. Upon at last finding a master who would expound the law to him, the king invites him to sit in his palace and instruct him in the Way. However, the master will only do so with the provision that the king “make 1000 cuts” upon his body, and “burn lanterns in offering”. The king therefore begins to search among his family and court for someone to aid him in making the 1000 cuts on his body, but there are no

⁶⁶Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 299-300.

takers for this rather unusual offer. At last, a man named Candala steps forward agreeing to the task.⁶⁷ The king is overjoyed, and once the 1000 cuts have been made, he pours oil into them, inserting coarse fabric wicks and lighting them, thereby making his own body serve as the necessary offering of lanterns. The king is thus able to achieve enlightenment, rejoining his people to “remember to uphold the law”. The king is declared a *chakravartin* king, and is noted to have been the Buddha Shakyamuni in a previous life.⁶⁸

The depiction of this narrative is conflated around the central image of the king. To his left and behind him, the worshipper sees Candala, bent over with arm raised to strike one of the 1000 blows. In front of him and to his right is the seated figure of the Buddhist master, right hand raised in instruction, left hand posed on his knee. The king is depicted as nude to the waist, kneeling before his seated teacher, hands folded in prayer. Behind him are the remains of his flaming mandorla, representing his kingly body being used as an offering lamp as well as a signal of his release from this worldly existence.

There is nothing overtly filial about this work, unless one takes into account that the inscription ends with “Of the gathering of the multitudes, all aroused the aspiration for the Way, and left happily”, in which case the king is reaching out to all past and present, his living as well as deceased

⁶⁷Soothill, 326a, translates Candala as “an outcast, a man of the lowest and most despised of the mixed class”, and further notes that converts from this class were admitted to Buddhist ordination.

⁶⁸“Wheel turning” king. Soothill, 445a, defines *chakravartin* as “a ruler the wheels of whose chariot roll everywhere without obstruction; an emperor, a sovereign of the world, a supreme ruler”.

ancestors. Rather than take the filial aspect to an extreme, it is perhaps better to view this vignette in the context of the whole tableau, as simply demonstrating what extraordinary reverence for the Buddhist faith implies when seen in a king - that such a king is enlightened, and knows how to take care of his people even at his own expense. Such a king is clearly no ordinary ruler, but a *chakravartin* king, a model of what true sovereign should be.

The last two narratives depicted within this tableau both have birds as important components to their storylines; they both, therefore, fit well into the hypothesis that less-worldly and more fantastic imagery was placed further away from the viewer. The first vignette to be discussed is carved between the narrative of the *chakravartin* king and the main central Buddha icon; it is entitled "Shakyamuni and the Goose (upon which) One Writes and Notifies the Prince".⁶⁹ This is the story of the goose who notifies the prince, the Buddha in a previous life, that his parents have so worried in his absence that they have lost their eyesight (fig. 51). Upon receiving this news, the prince returns with the only "treasure" he has gathered on his expedition, a cintamani pearl, emblematic of Buddhist enlightenment. With this pearl, the prince restores his parents' eyesight, a clear demonstration of his desire to rectify his unfilial behavior in which he abandoned his parents.

The artist shows the king and queen seated rather stiffly behind a table on whose front is carved the text of the inscription. Both mother and father are solemn and withdrawn as their son kneels before them making his wish

⁶⁹Hu, SDJFJSKYS, 300.

while holding up the cintamani pearl. It is the moment before their visual enlightenment, as they are not yet demonstrating unbounded joy. Faintly visible still above and to the left of the king's head is the outline of a wing in flight, the remnants of the white goose messenger sent to notify the prince of his parents' ill-health.

Finally, the last vignette of the third tier concerns a filial parrot, and differs from all of the other vignettes in that it demonstrates animals having human-like capacities and qualities. It is also interesting in that it shows how the benevolence of one individual, in this case a landowner, can benefit many. The scene depicted is quite minimal - a man holding a bird in his left hand while apparently scolding it with his right (fig. 52). The accompanying inscription reads "Shakyamuni, while in the Causal Stages (of Bodhisattvahood), as a Parrot Performed Filial Acts".⁷⁰

The story is highly reminiscent of that of Prince Samaka, which is depicted in a parallel position on the opposite side of the tableau creating a bookend effect. Like Prince Samaka, who was shot to death with an arrow while in search of food for his blind parents, the parrot is in the field gathering grain when he is seized by the angry landowner. The artist has chosen to depict the penultimate moment within the narrative, when the landowner has grabbed the bird. The parrot reminds him of a pledge he once made that "Whatever crop I plant, I will give to the myriad creatures in charitable offering" and queries "Why is it that today upon seeing me you

⁷⁰Hu, *SDJFJSKYS*, 298.

seize me?" The landowner explains his anger at the parrot gathering his hard-earned grain, but is delighted when he hears the rationale for it: "My parents are blind; I desire to offer this food to them." The landowner then releases the parrot, and the inscription ends with Shakyamuni extolling the filial qualities of the parrot, appointing all to emulate him and "provide for your two parents".⁷¹

This Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau presents the repayment of one's parents as a variety of processes: feeding them, taking care of them when they are ill and old, revering them when they die. Underlying many of these filial acts, however, is the ultimate device for complete requital of one's filial dues: leading your parents to enlightenment. Shakyamuni assists his father in this manner, making certain that he is reborn in the Pure Land, the devas and men do so on behalf of the parents of the deceased Mahasattva in the tigress jataka tale, and Samaka does likewise in the deer-hunting jataka vignette. More importantly, many of the inscriptions accompanying the vignettes note that it is by being filial that one can achieve eventual Buddhahood. The Buddha in previous lives was practicing filial piety during the causal stages of the bodhisattva path. Self-sacrifice is noted more than once as an acceptable form of filial behavior, thus reinforcing the idea that abandoning the family, or even this life, is preferable, and in the end more successful, as a means to honor and repay one's parents and ancestors. In this way, filial deeds are presented as being beneficial to all concerned.

⁷¹This parable is also in the *Za bao zang jing*, Willemen, 13-14.

Owing Mother, Repaying Father: A Conceptual Approach

Having at last attained a visual understanding of the layouts of the two tableaux, a clearer conceptual framework for this pairing can be created. From this an underlying rationale can be broached as to why Zhao Zhifeng, the conceptual director of *Great Buddha Bend*, chose to present them as such.⁷²

As noted earlier, these two tableaux differ in content as well as in format. Does the mode of representation reflect the content in some way? Both are symmetrical in overall arrangement, and one could argue that the tripartite layering of the tableau devoted to a mother's kindness is also an element in the tableau devoted to filial repayment. In the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau, the first level is this-worldly, the historical Buddha's actions in his last incarnation as Siddhartha being presented. The second and third move away from the present to previous incarnations of the historical Buddha, showing prior deeds performed on his way down the bodhisattva path. Similarly, the works depicted in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents move from the hellish to the mundane to the enlightened realms. They also move the viewer chronologically - downward from past as represented in the Buddhas of the past six generations, to present as

⁷²Further evidence to support my contention that these two works were always meant to be paired exists in *Little Buddha Bend*. Here the two scriptures are depicted one above the other on one wall of a small cave. See *Dazu shi ke diao su quan ji* (*The Complete Collection of Dazu Stone Sculptures*) vol. 2. (Chongqing: Chongqing chu ban she, 1999): 75, for a recently published image of this cave tableau. This cave is not open to public viewing, and as such, was not made available to this scholar for further study.

represented by the mother caring for her child, to possible future, a hellish fate for those who are unfilial.

Where the two differ is in their use of captioning and their positioning of the iconic imagery within the tableau framework. But is this really as clear as it first appears to be? Using the terminology presented by Vidya Dehejia, the two would both appear to be narratives presented in the 'continuous' mode, meaning "successive episodes of a story within a single frame, repeating the figure of the protagonist in the course of the narrative."⁷³ Some may argue that in neither of the two works under discussion is this the case; however, I believe this to be the most effective definition of the two, given a broader interpretation of the terms 'story' and 'protagonist'.

Let us consider first the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents. One must accept that the story is a universal one, the protagonists every mother and every son. Does this fact lessen the narrative element of the story? I would argue that it does not; mundane day-to-day events are the stuff that many stories are made of. Murray would argue that the expository nature of the text excludes such a work from being afforded a truly narrative label.⁷⁴ Again, I would argue that exposition is largely narrative in style, using the anecdote or the parable to teach by example. They are in fact now symbols, not icons, but symbols, as Wu Hung states with regard to imagery found on

⁷³Dehejia, 385.

⁷⁴Murray, 612, vacillates somewhat on this point, noting that some embedded narratives within an expository text may fit her definition of narrative illustration, even though the work as a whole does not.

Han funerary monuments, “a particular that represents the more general”.⁷⁵ What the Kindness of Parents tableau presents to the worshipper is a coming-of-age story of one unidentified woman and her son, consciously made anonymous so as to easily afford worshippers the ability to identify and empathize with either or both.

The tableau depicting the requital of the Buddha’s kindness is also a continuous narrative in the sense that it shows various episodes related to the Buddha. What makes it harder to read, and perhaps explains the use of captions with each inscription, is the changing face and reality of the main protagonist, i.e., the Buddha in his various prior incarnations as a bodhisattva. Almost all of the vignettes end with variations on the statement uttered by the historical Buddha, “That was I in a previous life”, or clearly show Shakyamuni engaging in filial acts, such as burying his father.⁷⁶

Each vignette does indeed depict successive episodes from one extremely long and complex story; however, since the story is the result of an amalgamation of many, one could also argue that it is necessary to consider most of the twelve vignettes as being monoscenic in narrative quality rather than continuous. Within the larger framework of the whole, this theory works quite well. Dehejia defines monoscenic as being static (“being in a state versus being in action”), and “generally present(ing) a single,

⁷⁵Wu Hung, 105.

⁷⁶Only four vignettes do not adhere to this formula. Three are related to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni performing filial acts, and therefore do not require a clarifying statement on behalf of the protagonist. The fourth has as its protagonist a parrot, the Buddha in a previous life as seen in the translation by Willemen, 11-13. For reasons one

culminating episode of a story and focus(ing) thematically on the wisdom and presence of the Buddha."⁷⁷ Each vignette is a story unto itself as well as belonging to the larger narrative, and within each, the artist has chosen to highlight a critical moment within the narrative scenario when the issue of filial piety is being raised - Ananda being harangued by the heretics, Shakyamuni comforting his dying father, Indra comforting the bereaved parents of Samaka, the landlord seizing the filial parrot. What is critical to the monoscenic mode according to Dehejia is that the imagery contain "sufficient narrative content to stimulate the viewer's recognition of the story" which would then allow the viewer to narrate the story to him or herself.⁷⁸

As noted above, the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau is confusing, and it is not clear whether a twelfth-century viewer could successfully untangle the various stories being presented, nor gather the overall significance of the work. Hence the need for the accompanying inscribed texts complete with very specific titles. This type of captioning would have served as visual aids for the literate worshipper as well as for the literate monk guiding illiterate or semi-literate worshippers through the grotto site.

Dehejia notes that the use of captioning appeared early on in Buddhist imagery, giving as examples the inscriptions found at the first-century BCE site of Bharhut, but then posits that the captions became fewer within the

can only conjecture upon, this is the only vignette not to include the identifying "That was I in a previous life" statement.

⁷⁷Dehejia, 374.

history of Indian Buddhist art as the stories became more familiar or were committed to writing, until eventually they no longer appeared at all.⁷⁹ Although elsewhere it has been conjectured that the captions found on Buddhist works at Chinese cavesites were by and large not meant to be read, I have previously argued that, given Great Buddha Bend's unusual outdoor setting and the relatively readable font of the inscriptions, this is one possible rationale for such fastidious labeling and numbering on the part of the Baodingshan's conceptual director.⁸⁰

Similar to Dehejia's analysis concerning the presence of inscriptions at Bharhut in order to familiarize worshippers with the various stories, one could argue that works such as the Kindness of Parents and Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableaux included stories which may have been unfamiliar to the populace as a whole, and thereby necessitated textual substantiation. Aside from the Baodingshan grotto, these sutras have not been found elsewhere rendered in stone. They do exist in written format, in both illustrated and non-illustrated scrolls as well as among several cave paintings found at Dunhuang.⁸¹ However, as Hu Wenhe has noted, the

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Dehejia, 378. Gombrich, 223, argues that throughout the history of Western imagery, the use of captions and titles served to encourage one "to find the link between image and idea".

⁸⁰Wu Hung argues against captions being actively read at Dunhuang in his work "What is Bianxiang?," 132-134, while I posit that the open-air nature of the Baodingshan tableaux precludes any of the problems inherent in Wu Hung's assessment of painted cave tableaux. See Kucera, 94-97.

⁸¹An inventory of the Dunhuang manuscripts finds 30 copies of variations on the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents and at least three copies of the Ten Kindnesses and Virtues, which forms one component of the Great Buddha Bend tableau. Text versions of the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness are not as numerous, with only three being extant. Several of the scenes found within the Buddha Preaches the

differences between the imagery found at the two cavesites is quite extensive, with not only differing modes of representation but also differing content.⁸²

While Hu's work has focused on the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau, other authors have noted the differences between the Ten Kindnesses as presented at Great Buddha Bend when compared to textual handscrolls and image-oriented hanging scrolls found at Dunhuang.⁸³ Most authors agree that the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents was only one source utilized to create the tableau, and as such, the images may have required the text as a means of explanation.

Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness can be found individually represented at Dunhuang, but the collection of images as seen in this tableau at Great Buddha Bend does not exist within one cave at the Gansu site. See Choice Serial Murals in Dunhuang (*Dunhuang lian huan bi hua jing pin*) (Lanzhou: Gansu xiao nian er jing chu ban she, 1993), pages 44-45 regarding the story of Mahasattva, of which 16 versions are found at Dunhuang. The parallel story at Baodingshan, that of sacrificing one's self for a stanza, is also painted at Dunhuang in three different places, 80. A different version of the Prince Kalyanamitra story found at Baodingshan exists at six sites within Dunhuang. See Choice Serial Murals, 60. The story of the Prince Jati is also found at Dunhuang, at 34 different spots according to Choice Serial Murals, 72. Lastly, the tragic story of Prince Samaka is found within six different caves at Dunhuang, 77. I have created two tables (see fig. 15) – one of the Dunhuang manuscripts, the other of the narratives found painted within the Dunhuang caves – in order to emphasize how comparatively weak the relationship is between the overall content and construction of the Dunhuang and the Baodingshan narrative sequences.

⁸²Hu Wenhe, “*Dazu Baoding he Dunhuang de Da fang bian (Fo) bao en jing zhi bi jiao yan jiu*” (“A Comparative Study of Returning Favors Sutra Stories in the Baoding Shan of the Dazu Grottoes and the Dunhuang Grottoes”), 39-42. In contrast, Ning Qiang favorably compares the Baodingshan works to Dunhuang, maintaining that from a distance, the images on the surface seem to fuse into one, and therefore resemble a painting on a rock wall. See Ning's article, 21. Ning further supports this argument by stating that all Chinese sculptors were first trained as painters, 25.

⁸³Long Hui, “*Dazu fo jiao shi ke “Fu mu en zhong jing bian xiang” ba*” (“Dazu's Buddhist Rockcarvings of the Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents Transformation Tableaux - A Postscript”) *Shi jie song jiao yan jiu* no. 3 (1983): 16-26, and Sun Xinshen, “*Dazu Baoding yu Dunhuang Mogao ku Fo shou fu mu en zhong jing bianxiang de bi jiao yan jiu*” (“A Comparative Study of the Buddha Expounds the Sutra on the Profound Kindness of Parents Transformation Tableaux in the Mogao Caves and Baodingshan”) *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 1 (1997): 57-68. Also see Qin Mingzhi, “*Bei Song <Bao fu mu en zhong jing bian> hua*” (“A Northern Song Painting of the Sutra on the Kindness of Parents”) *Wen wu* no.12 (1982): 36-38, for an analysis of one Northern Song hanging scroll specifically related to the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents, but which is markedly different from the tableau seen at Great Buddha Bend in terms of both content and mode of representation.

This leads to a third possibility for the text found within the tableaux—that in fact the representation of text was as important as that of image. This initial pairing of tableaux allows for analysis into the two different levels at which text functions at Great Buddha Bend. The first level of use is that of the inscribed text describing what is visually being represented to the worshipper. Good examples of this occur in both tableaux, but in differing forms. In the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, the worshipper views basically the exact image as is described in the accompanying inscription, i.e., the pregnant mother vignette is accompanied by text detailing her condition in fairly explicit terms:

The kind mother, from the beginning of her pregnancy, her entire body feels as heavy as if leaden, and her face is sallow as if she is ill. She moves only with great difficulty.

In the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau, however, the inscriptions are not as brief, and considerably more information is presented in the carved texts than could feasibly be depicted. Overwhelmingly, the situation in this tableau points to the conscious decision on the part of Zhao Zhifeng to choose the "highlight" of the story, the portion of the text that was to be emphasized. One interesting example of this is seen in the tigress jataka vignette depicted on the second tier. Instead of portraying the more exciting and well-known portion of the scripture in which the Buddha makes his sacrifice on behalf of the starving tigress, Zhao chose instead to depict the parents mourning over their son, and the subsequent arrival of a bodhisattva

in the skies above them, who aids them in achieving enlightenment, thereby emphasizing instead how self-sacrifice can also be seen as a filial act.

The Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau also presents the second way in which text functions at Great Buddha Bend, and that is in conjunction with ritual. Evidence for text being involved in rituals being performed at Great Buddha Bend is found in the banner of large scale characters that stretches to the right and left of the central Buddha's head, almost as if this was a thought that Shakyamuni wanted to broadcast in all directions. As noted earlier, the chant reads as follows:

Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of
my head, I would not, because of this suffering,
give up the mind of enlightenment.

The term “chant” has been consciously chosen here, my contention being that this inscription was meant to be repeated. I base this upon the fact that this same verse appears periodically carved at various intervals throughout the Baodingshan complex. Although it is not known exactly which ritual this chant would accompany, it is clear that the verse was meant to be encountered at various intervals as one moved through the site. Other examples of ritual use being connected to the inscribed text will be seen in the upcoming chapter on the two tableaux related to the heavens of the Pure Land and the horrors of hell.

These initial two tableaux set the stage for the pair of sculpted works that follow. They make the worshipper acutely aware of not only his extreme indebtedness to his mother, but also of Shakyamuni Buddha's extraordinary

approaches to repaying his filial debts. As demonstrated by the Buddha in previous incarnations, clearly no price can be too high nor any sacrifice too great on behalf of one's parents. In the following two tableaux, the Buddhist establishment will provide the filial son with one method of repayment, as well as a gruesome reminder of the repercussions any failure to repay his debt can bring.

CHAPTER THREE

HOPING FOR HEAVEN, LANDING IN HELL

As the worshipper would proceed around the grotto from the works related to the repaying of filial debt seen in the Kindness of Parents and Repayment of Kindness tableaux, he or she would encounter first a largely iconic work devoted to the Pure Land. Located on the far end of the north side of Great Buddha Bend, the relief depicting the Pure Land is juxtaposed with the relief depicting hell.¹ Of the thirty-one numbered sculpted works at Great Buddha Bend, these two are numbered eighteen and twenty, with the small relief numbered nineteen joining them (figs. 53-55).² As with the two preceding tableaux, there is an inherent logic to considering these two works as a pair – the most obvious being the ritual context surrounding attempts to alleviate the suffering of the deceased by appeasing the Ten Kings, thereby speeding them onto rebirth in the heavens of the Pure Land.³

The whole theory behind the Ten Kings revolves around the premise that every soul passes in front of each of the kings at ten predetermined

¹This placement of the Pure Land tableau on the north side of the grotto follows along with similar imagery found painted as north wall backdrops in Song dynasty Pure Land halls.

²This numbering system was put in place by a team of archaeologists headed by Yang Jialuo. See The Discovery (1945) of 6216 Statues Carved on Rocks During the T'ang and Sung Dynasties at Ta-Tsu (Taipei: Encyclopedia Sinica Institute, 1968).

³Stephen Teiser has been very thorough in his discussions regarding the various rituals related to hell in Chinese Buddhist practice. His main works include The Ghost Festival in Medieval China (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) as well as The Scripture on the Ten Kings (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994) and “The Growth of Purgatory” in Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China, eds. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Peter N. Gregory, 115-45 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993). During the Song

points over a three-year duration. These ten dates correspond to the “seven-sevens” - 7, 14, 21, 28, 35, 42, and 49 - designating the days after one is deceased, plus the 100th day, one year and three year anniversaries. On these days, offerings need to be made to each of the Ten Kings. This numbering system appears to be standard within both the longer and shorter versions of the Scripture on the Ten Kings.⁴ The idea of interim stages is a Buddhist concept that was given a Chinese twist by the addition of judges in the guise of the Ten Kings. In India, there were rites connected to passing from one existence to the next; however, the Chinese added a bureaucratic format, perhaps drawing on Daoist precedents.⁵ Bureaucratic blunders and inordinate amounts of paperwork existed in the afterlife much as they did in this life, and therefore, souls moved slowly through the courts, much as they would have in the actual Song legal system.⁶

dynasty, rites involving offerings to the Ten Kings while alive in an effort to alleviate later suffering were also used.

⁴See Yongwu Huang, ed., *Dunhuang bao zang*, 140 vols. (Taipei: Xin wen feng chu ban she, 1981-1986), vol. 23 - 574a-b, vol. 36 - 475a, vol. 45 - 143b, and vol. 109 - 434b.

⁵Teiser, “The Growth of Purgatory,” 117. Teiser points to the early Daoist notion of heaven periodically taking stock of man’s actions and recording them for posterity, to be used regularly in judging one’s lifespan. Myron Cohen points out that not all of the hellish underworld was confined to a bureaucratic model, with the notion of Guanyin as escort of the redeemed into the Pure Land being one example of a non-bureaucratic Buddhist twist. See Cohen, “Soul and Salvation: Conflicting Themes in Chinese Popular Religion” in Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China, 180-202. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988): 185.

⁶Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 1 and 5. Brian E. McKnight in Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 184 notes that miscarriages of justice were common enough in the Song era, an example being that of innocent farmers accused of banditry, bound and flogged. This comparison to the Chinese judicial system was not unique to the Song, but continued up to at least the nineteenth century, wherein C.F. Gordon Cumming remarked that the “the four hundred millions of China believe practically that the departed roam at large in a realm where devils and demons rule, and where they are as entirely dependent on the gifts of their friends as are the captives in a Chinese prison.” See Cumming, Wanderings in China (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1888): 217. Laufer describes later theatrical

Less obvious in inherent logic with regard to the placement of these two tableaux is the fear factor. The worshipper will first be shown the beauties and wonders of the Pure Land only to then be presented with the horrors of hell. Such a powerful contrast would most likely have had an edifying effect, and it is for this reason that I have titled the following Pure Land tableau discussion “Hoping for Heaven”, while the more likely scenario of encountering the Ten Kings of Hell and the eighteen hells below is titled “Landing in Hell”. The obverse is also true albeit less common – that one might imagine themselves or their loved ones as being among the select few who pass directly from judgement in hell into the bliss of the Pure Land. Both scenarios incurred a certain amount of doubt among the faithful, thereby prompting them to insure the more pleasant fate by performing the necessary rituals.

Similar to the two works discussed in the preceding chapter, both of these tableaux contain large-scale iconic imagery while at the same time incorporating narrative elements to which the worshipper is drawn (figs. 56 and 57). Continuing with the format found in the first chapter, I will begin with detailed descriptions of the two tableaux, and conclude with a discussion of appropriate theoretical narrative models along with an analysis of the utilization of text and image.

depictions of an innocent being tortured by being ground under a pestle, only to be saved by the appearance of a lotus blossoming forth from his chest. See Berthold Laufer, Oriental Theatricals (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1923), 13.

Hoping for Heaven

The images which confront the worshipper in the tableau depicting the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life (*Guan wu liang shou fo jing*) cover an area of approximately 160 square meters and are for the most part iconic. Three large sculptures of the Buddha Amitayus flanked by two bodhisattva figures loom over the faithful, all three equally awe-inspiring in scale (fig. 58).⁷ To Amitayus' right is Avalokitesvara, her bejeweled crown bearing the identifying small Amitabha figure. Guanyin, as Avalokitesvara is known in China, carries here a flywhisk in her right hand, a bowl cradled in her left palm. This is in keeping with the iconography of the bowl as representative of the Buddhist Law with the flywhisk highlighting Guanyin's compassion toward all living creatures. To Amitayus' left is Mahastamaprapta, who is also depicted resplendently, left hand extended palm up and bearing what appears to be a lotus leaf. This triad is flanked by two double-storied palaces – the left one inscribed as the *Zhu lou* or “Pearl Tower”, with the *Da bao lou ge* or “Great Jewel Pavilion” to the right.

Between these three figures are two smaller bodhisattva figures backed by flaming mandorlas, Padmapani holding his lotus attribute to the right, Vajrasattva, with a small Buddha in his headdress, to the left. Rising above them and scattered throughout the tableau are the palaces of the Pure Land paradise peopled with heavenly beings. Below this are several smaller iconic

⁷Amitayus is a variation on Amitabha, meaning "of immeasurable life span" versus Amitabha's "of immeasurable radiance".

arrangements that represent the various levels of rebirth in a uniform fashion. Aside from the group positioned directly below the central Buddha, all of the peripheral sculptural groupings are triads with a Buddha figure either standing or seated, flanked by two bodhisattvas. The central grouping is comprised of four standing bodhisattvas bearing offerings to pay homage to the Buddha. All of the imagery is accompanied by large flat spaces filled with lengthy textual descriptions, which are in turn augmented by text inscribed within the confines of the lower balustrade. Within this tableau, text was clearly as important as image.⁸

Although the central icons are meant to focus the worshipper, what draws the eye are the multiple small figures in various states of rebirth: some popping out of lotuses, others holding up their hands in reverence, still others crawling along the balustrade, all young at heart in their new life in the Pure Land (fig. 59). These newborn souls demonstrate how the layperson can be reborn into paradise, and reinforce the identification of the tableau as being partially based on the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite

⁸The large text portions of this tableau have not been translated because they appear to adhere roughly to extant versions of the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life, and were not considered vital to an understanding of the narrative scenes which flank the central iconic imagery. Hu, "A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes", China Art and Archaeology vol. 1 no. 2 (1996): 14, points out that the inscriptions found carved within the Great Buddha Bend Pure Land tableau come from various versions of the Scripture on the Buddha of Infinite Life. For two current translated variations on the scripture, see Inagaki Hisao, The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitayus. California: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995, and Meiji Yamada, ed., The Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life as Expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1984). An earlier translation can be found in J. Takakusu, "The Sutra of the Meditation on Amitayus" in Buddhist Mahayana Texts, ed. E. B. Cowell (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 1969): 159-203. Further discussion of the text and its history can be found in Julian F. Pas, "The Kuan-wu-liang-shou Fo-ching: Its Origin and Literary Criticism" in Buddhist Thought and Asian Civilization, ed. Leslie S. Kawamura and Keith Scott (Emeryville, CA: Dharma Press, 1977).

Life.⁹ This is a busy tableau, with the narrative portions found on the right and left sides, largely subservient to the play of souls and saintly beings that hold center stage. The overtly narrative components of the tableau are monoscenic in nature, and show the Sixteen Visualizations found within the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life. Luis Gomez has noted that this scripture is “most likely not an Indian text at all”,¹⁰ and we are therefore confronted with yet another apocryphal Chinese Buddhist text being represented at Baodingshan.

Baodingshan's representation of the Pure Land of Amitayus differs markedly from those seen in other areas of China, including earlier works within Sichuan province itself (fig. 60).¹¹ At other sites, the emphasis is largely on the palatial qualities of the Pure Land, and the lotus ponds into which the souls are reborn accompanied by the sound of music played by musicians near at hand. With the Pure Land framed by the surrounding niche, the worshipper is placed at a remove from the paradisiacal scene. At Great Buddha Bend, however, the worshipper senses Amitayus and his bodhisattva attendants as having descended to earth, making the work more of a three-dimensional depiction of a *raigo*, or welcoming to the Pure Land,

⁹Shi Pingting, “A Brief Discussion on the *Jingbian* Buddhist Illustrations at Dunhuang”, Orientations vol. 53 (May 1992): 61, points out that illustrations of episodes from the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life showing lay people being reborn into lotuses were usually included in depictions from the Scripture on Amitabha, with Dunhuang depictions of the two showing the Scripture on Amitabha when depicted alone showing only the Western Paradise.

¹⁰Luis O. Gomez, The Land of Bliss (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996): 128.

¹¹Hu, “A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes”, 7-8, notes that there are a total of 63 works focused on Amitabha and 85 related to the Guan wu liang shou fo jing, ranging in date from the Tang to the Song dynasty, found at the Mogao grottoes in Dunhuang. Ning Qiang, 27, notes that of the imagery found at Dunhuang, none are the same in content or style to the tableau carved at Great Buddha Bend.

than that of a paradisiacal place.¹² This *raigo* aspect is also in accordance with known Song dynasty Pure Land practice, in which imagery served to aid the worshippers in “imagining themselves to be standing directly before the all-seeing Buddha and his legions” prior to engaging in ritual chanting and purification practices.¹³ Hu Wenhe sees the dominance of the Amitayus triad in the Great Buddha Bend tableau as being a move away from the self-reliance practiced and preached in earlier eras. This would seem to be in direct contradiction to the presence of a song promoting chanting inscribed at eye-level.¹⁴

The scripture itself specifically mentions “ten moments of single-minded and sustained recitation of Buddha’s name”, and as such the inscribed texts located within the tableau at Great Buddha Bend can be regarded as ritual in function.¹⁵ The practice promoted by Zunshi (964-1032 CE) is offered as both a daily meditation and a rehearsal for possible deathbed confessions.¹⁶ These “ten moments” fit well within the context of the site as a whole, in which the number ten figures prominently: Ten

¹²I employ the Japanese term *raigo* here since it most succinctly describes a depiction of Amitabha and bodhisattvas descending to earth to welcome the recently deceased into the Pure Land.

¹³Daniel B. Stevenson, “Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China” in *Buddhism in Practice*, 359-379, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995): 364.

¹⁴Hu, “A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes”, 16.

¹⁵Stevenson, 365, 375-377. Stevenson discusses and translates Zunshi’s “Procedure for Mindful Recollection of the Buddha”, written in 1017 CE, noting that this procedure enjoyed widespread circulation in Song China. The ritual veneration and repentance which comprises the first portion of Zunshi’s procedure also may be seen to complement the rituals connected to the recitation of the precepts found in the lower right hand corner of the nearby Hell tableau.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

Kindnesses, Ten Kings, and Ten Austerities to name three.¹⁷ Further evidence for ritual use of the Visualization tableau is found in the aforementioned hymn inscribed beneath the central iconic grouping – a “Song Urging the Chanting of the Buddha’s Name” (*Quan nian fo ge*).¹⁸ One could argue that this type of ritual use involving Pure Land imagery may have consisted of sutra lectures similar to what had taken place earlier throughout China, in which worshippers were urged to repeatedly invoke the names of the Buddha and bodhisattvas.¹⁹ The carved lotus altar placed before the central Amitayus figure is yet another indication of ritual activities being performed involving the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life tableau.²⁰

As mentioned earlier, the dominant narrative component of this work rests within the Sixteen Visualizations of the tableau. These visualizations as depicted at Great Buddha Bend were all originally “captioned” in a fashion similar to what has already been seen in the The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness. One example of a caption that accompanies one of the Sixteen Visualizations is that found next to the Water Visualization:

The meditative mind is clear as calm water, as
steadfast as frozen ice, one invariably peaceful and

¹⁷The fourth “ten” found among the narrative tableaux at Great Buddha Bend can be seen in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo work.

¹⁸Hu, “A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes”, 14. For a complete transcription of the song, see DZSKYJ, 290.

¹⁹Wu Hung, “Reborn in Paradise: A Case Study of Dunhuang *Sutra* Painting and its Religious, Ritual and Artistic Context”, Orientalism vol. 53 (May 1992): 56. Wu refers specifically to a text entitled “Lecture on the *Amitabha Sutra*” from the Stein collection, S. 6551.

²⁰Stevenson, 364, notes that rituals related to Pure Land practice were performed in areas with either an altar, a sanctuary, or at least a sanctified place of Buddhist practice.

quiet, (whose) rays of light truly transforms all beings.

Most of the inscriptions no longer remain visible to the naked eye, but have been transcribed via earlier rubbings taken at the site.²¹

The original Sixteen Visualizations as found within the scripture centered on Queen Vaidehi, the protagonist in a story relating one of Buddhism's most notorious examples of an unfilial son. In brief, the story is as follows. After first failing in his attempt to kill his father the king, Prince Agatasatru turns to the person responsible for keeping his father alive, the virtuous Queen Vaidehi, who has secretly been feeding her husband by anointing her body with pastes for him to eat. After first ordering his servants to kill her, the prince is stopped in this supreme unfilial act by a minister who cautions that even among the most wicked of earlier kings, none had ever killed his mother. The minister then refuses to cooperate in Agatasatru's scheme. Scared by his minister's reluctance, Agatasatru orders Queen Vaidehi to be placed under housearrest, and it is within that space that the sixteen visualizations occur. The visualizations demonstrate the Buddha's response to Queen Vaidehi's request for succor, appearing in the form of visits from various bodhisattvas who help her remain strong in her convictions during her unjust incarceration.

The Sixteen Visualizations as depicted in earlier works are "dynamically composed and overtly narrative (with the) small scenes having a clear order for viewing, in contrast to the timeless stasis of the central

²¹DZSKYJ, 480-483.

icon.”²² Although originally all Sixteen Visualizations were represented at Great Buddha Bend, the present state of the Pure Land tableau is missing one of the eight original vignettes from the left side of the work, making the total extant images fifteen.²³ This placement of the narrative illustrations of the Sixteen Visualizations at Baodingshan follows earlier patterns of placing the imagery in two series running up and down the sides of the central iconic imagery.²⁴ The use of cartouches to label the individual visualization is also in keeping with earlier approaches to representing Queen Vaidehi’s spiritual journey toward visualizing enlightenment.²⁵

Differing from earlier works as well as other works within the Sichuan region was the decision by Zhao Zhifeng to represent the visualizations within the Great Buddha Bend tableau using images of individuals drawn from all quarters of Song dynasty Chinese society instead of centering the imagery around the character of Queen Vaidehi.²⁶ While “images of everyday Chinese livelihood” may figure into earlier Pure Land works,²⁷

²²Murray, “The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration in China after 850”, 129.

²³Hu Liangxue, “*Dazu Baoding Dafowan xi fang jing tu bian xiang*” (“The Western Paradise Transformation Tableau at Great Buddha Bend, Baoding, Dazu”), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 2 (1997): 29.

²⁴Murray, “The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration in China after 850”, 129. The story of Queen Vaidehi and the 16 Visualizations seen in the Sutra on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life is also found at Dunhuang, painted in eight different caves. See Choice Serial Murals, 88.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Hu, “A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes”, 14. In his discussion, Hu gives a comprehensive listing and analysis of numerous sites in Sichuan containing Pure Land imagery.

²⁷Murray, “The Evolution of Buddhist Narrative Illustration in China after 850”, 129. Secular aspects depicted within the Pure Land do exist elsewhere. Eugene Wang points out that the depiction of the celestial realm in Cave 217 at Dunhuang is peopled not with *apsarases* or bodhisattvas, but rather with people *sans* halos and clad in secular attire. Wang links this radically different type of imagery to the demands of the patrons of the Dunhuang cave. See “Whose Paradise is It, Anyway? The *Lotus Sutra* Tableau in Dunhuang’s Cave 217 Revisited”, Orientations vol. 57 (Nov. 1996): 45.

none encountered go so far as to replace the protagonist herself with everyday people. The protagonists in the Great Buddha Bend tableau vary in subject matter from several images of monks in meditation to a general on guard to a young woman as well as an official (figs. 61-65). At least one scholar has postulated that this was consciously done in order to cater to people from all levels of society, and should be viewed as a continuation of the 'popularizing' tendencies found elsewhere within the Buddhist monastic community in Song China.²⁸

The Sixteen Visualizations also point toward another aspect of activity taking place at Great Buddha Bend, the fundamental purpose of aiding the worshipper toward a visualization of the Pure Land. In this context, the Sixteen Visualizations were tools utilized in a meditative process in which the practitioner worked from the tangible imagery toward a mind's eye vision of the same image. Wu Hung points out the quandary that creation and use of images of the Buddha had in a very real sense for the Buddhist faithful. On the one hand, true images of the Buddha and the Pure Land can only really be seen in the mind's eye while on the other hand, fabricated imagery was considered necessary and appropriate in order to lead one to that visualization.²⁹ These distinctions were created as early as the Tang dynasty in Shandao's "rough-seeing" (*cu jian*) versus "mind's eye" (*xin yan*) found in his discussion of methods to be used in visualizing practice.³⁰

²⁸Hu, "A Comparative Study of the Paradise Bianxiang in the Sichuan and Dunhuang Grottoes", 14.

²⁹Wu Hung, "Reborn in Paradise", 57.

³⁰Ibid. See T. 1959.22-30 for Shandao's Methods for the Merit of Samadhi by Visualizing the Image of Amitayus-Amitabha (*Guan nian Amitofo xiang hui san mei gong de fa men*).

Landing in Hell

From the images of rebirth in the Pure Land, one proceeds physically downward to view the hell tableau (fig 66).³¹ Joined to the depiction of the Pure Land by the small work numbered nineteen and entitled “Binding the Six Vices”, the relief depicting Dizang Bodhisattva and the eighteen realms of hell along with the Ten Kings who preside over them can be divided into four different registers with relative ease. The uppermost register, approximately 13.8 meters above the pathway, depicts a line of ten Buddhas, referred to as the Buddhas of the Ten Directions (fig. 67).³² Each is seated frontally in the lotus position within a shell-like niche. The effects of time have eroded away much of their facial features, yet each Buddha appears to be distinctly garbed as well as differentiated by his particular mudra or attribute.³³ The painted rays of the niches mimic the effect produced by the central figure of the second level, that of Dizang Bodhisattva, the only figure within the tableau to cross over two strata.

The cult of Dizang enjoyed increasing popularity in China from the sixth century on. Dizang as monk was but one of the popular representations of Dizang in China, the other being the Bodhisattva Dizang depicted as

³¹Historically, a worshipper may have been able to continue directly over to the second tier and have encountered the first ten of the hell scenes up close, but this avenue of approach is no longer available to the modern-day visitor as the cliff-face has given way in some parts.

³²DZSKYJ, 485.

³³Stephen Teiser gives a correlation between ten Buddhas and the Ten Kings in The Scripture on the Ten Kings, appendix nine. There does not appear to be a correlation between the images described by Teiser and those present at Great Buddha Bend.

overseer of hell with the Ten Kings in attendance.³⁴ Although the second level is devoted mainly to the Ten Kings and their assistants, the image of Dizang dominates, his ribboned garment carrying over above his head to form the outline of his radiant aureole (fig. 68). This ribboning continues across his folded legs, serving to link him to the arenas of suffering below. The gold still glistens on his bejeweled crown and necklace, recalling Dizang's status as bodhisattva.³⁵ His position, seated on a lotus throne and central among the Ten Kings, yet linked to the heavens, reminds the devotee of Dizang's vow to save the damned. He is capable of releasing loved ones from their torments if their descendants perform the necessary rituals.³⁶ Dizang in resplendent princely attire is also found at several other sites within Sichuan, although the layout of the tableaux varies greatly with regard to the Ten Kings and how they and the hells are represented.³⁷ This is also

³⁴Only two representative types are presented here, Dizang as monk and Dizang with the Ten Kings of Hell. For a more thorough overview of at least those works found in the Pelliot collection in Paris, see Nicole Vandier-Nicholas' study Bannières et Peintures de Touen-houang Conservées au Musée Guimet, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1974): plates 105-120. See also Françoise Wang-Toutain, Le bodhisattva Ksitigarbha en Chine du Ve au XIII siècle Monograph no. 185 (Paris: Presses de l'école française d'extrême-orient, 1998).

³⁵In the search for liturgical precedents to explain iconographic elements, it must be said that Dizang's depiction at Baodingshan does not correlate to the rules laid out in the non-apocryphal Tantric work, Ritual Protocols on the Bodhisattva Dizang (Dizang Pu sa yi gui), which date to the early 8th century. Marinus Willem de Visser, The Bodhisattva Tisang (Jizo) in China and Japan (Berlin: Oesterheld and Co., 1914): 45.

³⁶Chapter seven of the Sutra on the Origins of Dizang Bodhisattva is devoted to the explanation of blessings received by the living who have masses said for the dead, make images of Dizang, or who but for one moment take refuge in Dizang. DeVisser, 7-10.

³⁷Good reproductions of Dizang and the Ten Kings as they are carved in nearby Anyue County at Yuanjue Cave, and in Dazu County's own Shizhuanshan can be found in Hu Wenhe's article, "Sichuan shi ku zhong "Di yu bian xiang" tu de yan jiu" ("Research into the Hell Scene Transformation Tableaux in Sichuan's Rock Caves") Mei shu xue no. 3 (1998): 68-69.

the most common sculpted form for Dizang as seen at other earlier cavesites.³⁸

Flanking Dizang Bodhisattva are two figures that remain largely unidentified in the main body of literature regarding this site (fig. 69).³⁹ As I have noted in an earlier study, several possibilities arise if one studies the iconography of the two more closely.⁴⁰ Seen outside of the entire tableau's context, they could be viewed simply as acolytes. Another possibility exists, however, when the tableau as a whole is viewed as a representation of the Ten Kings and the underworld.

The clean-shaven acolyte holding the monk's staff could be either another manifestation of Dizang Bodhisattva represented in monk's garb or the well-known disciple of the Buddha, Mulian.⁴¹ In notes describing an illustrated scripture no longer extant, Mulian is said to appear at the Hell of the Iron Bed, where he converts the jailer and succeeds in freeing his mother.⁴² Given the importance placed upon "repaying mother" seen in the first narrative tableau, one could argue that Mulian is presented here as an exemplar for all sons to follow. The Hell of the Iron Bed is one of the hells depicted on the first tier below the Ten Kings at Baodingshan.

³⁸I thank Dr. Amy McNair for information regarding Dizang's representation as a prince at Longmen and other Tang dynasty sites in Gansu and Ningxia. Personal correspondence, 3/14/01.

³⁹DZSKYJ, 485. This work identifies the two simply as monk and nun attendants to Dizang Bodhisattva.

⁴⁰Kucera, 84-86.

⁴¹Soothill, 199. Mulian's Sanskrit name is Maudgalyayana, "one of the ten chief disciple of Sakyamuni, specially noted for miraculous powers." Chen gives the source of the Mulian story as the Syama jataka. See Kenneth Chen, The Chinese Transformation of Buddhism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973): 24. This jataka is also represented at Great Buddha Bend within the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau.

⁴²Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 179.

A third possibility exists, involving yet another individual and yet another textual source. This is the prospect that the figure holding the begging bowl is Daoming, an individual taken to the underworld in a case of mistaken identity.⁴³ Yet another figure portraying a monk appears in the hell tableau. Placed underneath a small-scale pagoda, this work has been tentatively identified as an additional rendering of Zhao Zhifeng (fig. 70).⁴⁴

Zhao's presence in the depths of hell, rather than a depiction of one of the more illustrious figures discussed above, points toward a changing usage of these religious works of art as well as an elevation in the status of Zhao Zhifeng. Aside from his role as creator of the grotto site, Zhao is now also portrayed as a savior figure, the law he preaches enabling those who listen and follow its precepts to avoid endless suffering. While Mulian or Daoming or Dizang Bodhisattva may have enormous clout in the netherworld, they are intangibles when compared to a very real and present "this-worldly" monk, such as is here portrayed in the very bowels of hell. As such, worshippers may have felt their salvation more readily at hand, more easily obtainable with just such a monk's aid.

⁴³Ibid., 66. According to Stephen Teiser, Daoming makes his first appearance in Dunhuang manuscripts in a story of unknown date entitled The Record of the Returned Soul. Annemarie von Gabain also discusses Daoming's importance in relationship to Chinese and Uighur manuscripts dating from the 11th through the 13th century, and which are thought to be based upon an earlier 8th-century work in "The Purgatory of the Buddhist Uighurs: Book Illustrations from Turfan," in Mahayanist Art after A.D. 900, ed. William Watson, Colloquies on Art and Archaeology in Asia, no. 2 (London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, and the Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1972): 26.

⁴⁴Dazu xian zhi (Taipei: Cheng wen chu ban she, 1976): np, and Hu Wenhe, "Lun di yu bian xiang tu," ("A Discussion of Hell Transformation Tableau Imagery") Sichuan wen wu 2 (1988): 25. Further discussion of Zhao's physical presence within the tableaux at Great Buddha Bend can be found in Chapter Four.

The Ten Kings

By the late Song dynasty, dissemination of the Scripture on the Ten Kings was widespread.⁴⁵ Copying the text or carving related images is a large part of the emphasis of the scripture; thus, the cultivation of merit can be viewed as at least one factor leading to the work done at Great Buddha Bend. The question is, merit on whose behalf? From what is known vis-à-vis rituals related to the Ten Kings as well as the annual Ghost Festival rites, the merit being produced is often for those already deceased. While the living can be pressured into trying to prepare for their own future rebirths, they are constantly being reminded of the tortures that their recently deceased loved-ones may be suffering. The emphasis is on filial action in order to ensure that the ancestors smoothly pass through the courts of the Ten Kings, and into a better existence.

Whenever the Ten Kings are seen in conjunction with Dizang Bodhisattva, they are presented standing.⁴⁶ Each king and magistrate is fronted by a table over which is hung a piece of blue cloth, on which are inscribed his titles and a corresponding hymn. Overall, the Ten Kings are not depicted so much as sacred entities, but as men of justice, and although the kings' placement within the Great Buddha Bend work concurs with that seen in The Scripture on the Ten Kings, the hymns inscribed under the kings at Baodingshan do not. Also notably absent from the carved inscriptions is any

⁴⁵I base this statement on the prevalence of earlier medieval Chinese Ten Kings worship as discussed by Stephen Teiser in his body of work devoted to the Ghost Festival and the Scripture on the Ten Kings.

⁴⁶DeVisser, 29.

reference to celebrating the days of fast associated with each king at set weekly and yearly intervals.

Traditionally, royal attendants are present in pairs or not present at all; however, within the Great Buddha Bend grotto, each king would appear to have only one attendant perhaps due to space restrictions. These attendants, sometimes referred to as clerks, carry the ledgers of merit and demerit by which the Ten Kings will pass judgement on the deceased. The attendants are for the most part male, with the exception of two female figures who flank King Yama and the King of Transformations. The presence of these women coincides with the female donor figures appearing within the Ten Kings' handscrolls, although at Great Buddha Bend these women appear to be holding ledgers rather than offerings, similar to the male royal attendants on this tier.

Introduced by the Officer of Immediate Retribution (fig. 71), the Ten Kings follow the standard order of placement as given in the scripture, beginning with King Guang of Qin at the far right (fig. 72).⁴⁷ The inscriptions accompanying this officer and King Guang set the tone for the tableau as a whole, explaining first how one ends up in hell, and then, how a soul can be released from hell through merit cultivation. Underneath the Officer of Immediate Retribution is inscribed the following verse:

If one desires peace and happiness and to
reside amongst men and gods, one must
immediately stop taking money belonging
to the Three Jewels.⁴⁸ Once you fall into the

⁴⁷At Baodingshan, written as *Xian bao si guan*. This personage exists under the name *Si Lu*, "Officer of Records" in The Scripture on the Ten Kings.

⁴⁸The Buddha, the Sangha, and the Law.

hells within the dark regions of the underworld, there, amongst the clamor, you will receive punishment for untold years.

The verse accompanying King Guang of Qin reads as follows:

The various kings (of hell) dispatch messengers to inspect the deceased in order to see what merit these men and women have cultivated. Depending on one's name, one can be released from the hells of the three paths,⁴⁹ and escape passing through the dark regions, there encountering suffering and grief.

It becomes evident from the first inscription that the surest way to hell is to "take money belonging to the Three Jewels", i.e., the Buddhist establishment. This is the most heinous of crimes, being the original sin promulgated by Mulian's mother, Qingti, who, rather than use the money given to her by her son in order to feed the itinerant monks, decided instead to keep it. Her wicked ways landed Qingti in the very depths of hell, where even the great Mulian could not find her.

The inscription accompanying King Guang highlights how one circumvents such an odious end. Doing good Buddhist works while alive would enable the deceased and their descendants to rest assured that hell would be passed through in a timely manner. Specific numbers regarding the amount of meritorious works necessary to insure this end result are avoided throughout the Scripture on the Ten Kings. This lack of detail could only serve to create doubt within the hearts and minds of the deceased's

⁴⁹Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 211.

descendants, insuring that they would continue to perform the necessary “seven-sevens” rites as a precautionary measure.

A good rebirth, fortuitous to the family as a whole, is hinted at in the inscription accompanying the King of the First River (fig. 73). No introduction is given as to what specifically has been done to create such a favorable outcome, but evidently not enough meritorious actions have been undertaken to avoid rebirth altogether:

Wrongdoings are like mountains, their peaks as numerous as the sands of the Ganges; blessings are like fine grains of dust, their numbers also few.⁵⁰ Yet the good spirits protect you, so you can be reborn into a powerful, rich and devout family.

The King of the First River should play a vital role iconographically. In handscroll and hanging depictions of this hell, the “River Nai” or River of No Recourse is a prominent theme, and it is unusual that there is no representation of the river among the hells at Baodingshan. Given the clever channeling of runoff water seen in other parts of the grotto (fig. 74), such a depiction would have seemed not only possible, but desirable. Other images popular to hell iconography are also absent at Great Buddha Bend, most notably the black horseman who serves as messenger to the kings, and who is accorded a verse in the scripture itself.

The fourth hell is ruled over by the Sovereign King of Song (fig. 75).⁵¹ It is in this hell that those who have been found guilty by King Guang of Qin

⁵⁰Soothill, 302.

⁵¹Little is known regarding the origins of this title.

are sent to be scalded and roasted by hot water and flame.⁵² This corresponds well with the Boiling Cauldron Hell carved directly below. The idea of karmic retribution is further reinforced by the text of the hymn:

Actions of sin and suffering within the three paths are completed with ease;⁵³ they are all conditioned by killing living beings in order to sacrifice to the gods. You should aspire to wield the diamond sword of true wisdom, using it to cut off all of Mara's clan, and to awaken (to the truth of) the non-arising (of all phenomena)."⁵⁴

The cooking of sacrificial offerings, particularly with regard to ancestor worship, was a traditional practice in China that continues up through the present day.⁵⁵ Here the Buddhist institution takes a stand against the taking of life, as well as against established Chinese tradition, offering instead a new approach toward salvation for one's ancestors. Implicit in this message is also the fact that evil will be avoided and good attained if such sacrificial offerings are foregone for more self-sacrificing methods.

The head of the fourth court, the King of the Five Offices (fig. 76), is considered to be the overseer of the hell in which the guilty have their hearts torn out and their bellies cut open.⁵⁶ At Great Buddha Bend, this king

⁵²DeVisser, 31.

⁵³Soothill, 62. The three roads, the three unhappy ways of the six *gati*.

⁵⁴*Wu sheng* is a technical term for *anutpattikadharmaksanti*. Many thanks to Dan Stevenson, 5/15/01 for clarifying this.

⁵⁵For more on the importance of food and ancestor worship, see Stuart E. Thompson, "Death, Food, and Fertility" in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*, ed. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): 71-108.

⁵⁶Soper traces the origins of this sovereign to the *Bhaisajyaguru Sutra*, in which there is mention of King Yama entrusting the "Five Officials" with keeping records of those who have committed the five deadly sins. He also notes that as early as the late Zhou Dynasty, the five highest officials at court were referred to as such as well as being linked to the five senses. See Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae, 1959): 176.

appears to watch over the damned in the Freezing Hell, the Balance of Karmic Deeds separating the two. The suggestion of karmic retribution as described above is reflected in the inscribed verse, which refers quite pointedly to those who kill animals:

Breaking the fast and violating the precepts, you slaughter chickens and pigs. Illumined clearly in the mirror of actions, retribution will come without fail. If one commissions this scripture together with the painting of images, King Yama will issue a judgement that you be released and that your sins be eliminated.

One might expect to find the hells related to the punishments for raising and slaughtering animals to be placed directly below the fourth court, but in fact they are located in the very lowest level of the tableau to left of center. Furthermore, this verse in The Scripture on the Ten Kings places the Mirror of Karmic Deeds in the King of the Five Offices court, which makes the presence of the Balance of Karmic Deeds questionable here. Illustrated scriptures often place the mirror in King Yama's court, while later printed works show the mirror in the first court.⁵⁷

This is the first inscription to cite a specific method to aid one in avoiding the tortures of hell. By commissioning scriptures and having images painted, a soul can be given absolution for his or her various sins associated with breaking the fast and killing animals. Again, as if in a nod to the imagery seen earlier in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents, the sin of slaughtering chickens and pigs, presumably for consumption, is highlighted

⁵⁷Regarding the jurisdiction of the various hells, I have tried to present variations in placement of the hells as they occur, based mainly on the works done by DeVisser and Teiser.

here, a sin that a mother willingly takes on during the marriage feasts on behalf of her son, and which a filial son would need to repay.

The fifth and sixth kings differ in that both are depicted in imperial garb.⁵⁸ King Yama crosses both continental and ideological boundaries. He is the original father of the afterlife in the Vedic tradition.⁵⁹ In China, King Yama came to be ruler of the underworld in both Buddhist and Daoist cosmologies.⁶⁰ No longer a revered god in his country of origin, Yama was quickly adopted by the Chinese, and just as quickly sinicized.⁶¹ The name “King Yama” came to be synonymous with any of the Ten Kings, the term often being used plurally, as in the “Ten Yamas.”

Yama is always represented in imperial attire, wearing a flat-board cap from which beads hang down to hide the royal visage, and has a dark face to symbolize his non-Chinese origins (fig. 77). Originally king of the first hell and head of the underworld, King Yama was demoted due to his compassionate nature, and like all the beings in hell, must undergo tortures until his eventual rebirth. He is further differentiated from the other kings by

⁵⁸Their imperial regalia dates back to the late Qin - early Han dynasties. For an overview of the various specifics of this style of dress, see 5,000 Years of Chinese Costumes (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, Ltd., 1984): 34. This type of dress can also be seen in depictions of the emperors, such as Yan Liben's Thirteen Emperors, and in nobility presented in wall paintings found at Dunhuang.

⁵⁹The Mahavastu, trans. by J. Jones. Sacred Books of the Buddhists, vol. 16 (London and Boston: R. & K. Paul for the Pali Text Society, 1949-1956): 11.

⁶⁰In the Daoist faith, Yanluo Tianzi is said to rule the nether regions from his palace at Fengdu. See John Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History (New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1987): 225, as well as references to the imperial encounter with Yanluo Tianzi, as mentioned in Wu Zhengen's Journey to the West, trans. W.J.F. Jenner, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986): 198.

⁶¹Michel Soymié, “Les dix jours de jeûne de Ksitigarbha,” in Contributions aux Études sur Touen-houang, vol. 1, ed. Michel Soymié. Centre de Recherches d'Histoire et de Philologie de la IVe Section de l'École pratique des Hautes Études, Hautes Études Orientales (Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1979): 148.

his title, "Son of Heaven" (*Tian zi*), as opposed to "Great King" (*Da wang*).

The accompanying verse reads:

Compassionately (seeking to) augment universal conversion (to the good), he displays an awe-inspiring majesty. Revolution through the six paths (of incarnation) goes on unceasingly. Although his instruction is painful, he thinks only of (bringing creatures to) contentment and joy. Hence, he manifests himself in the form of the god Yama, Son of Heaven.

At Baodingshan, King Yama is placed immediately to Dizang Bodhisattva's left. Although this is one possible placement in scriptural illustrations, he is not always honored in such a fashion.

Moving to the left side of the hell tableau, it is not clear as to why the sixth king, the King of Transformations (fig. 78), is also attired in imperial garb, except perhaps in response to aesthetic demands of symmetry in the Great Buddha Bend tableau.⁶² The more appropriate sovereign to enjoy such treatment would be the King of Mount Tai, as he was already ranked highly as the head of the underworld within the Daoist pantheon. Yet within the tableau the King of Mount Tai is placed seventh in the series of Ten Kings, two removed from the central Dizang triad, and thereby not parallel to the imperially-attired King Yama.

In literary sources, the damned are beaten and placed in cangues under the King of Transformation's jurisdiction, similar to what occurs in the actual depictions of the hells below him. The inscribed verse reads as follows:

⁶²The King of Transformations Chinese name is *Bian cheng Da wang*. Pelliot suggests that *bian cheng* comes from *shi ba bian cheng*, the 18 transformations. See Paul Pelliot, "Bibliographie," *Toung Pao* 28 (1931): 389.

If one truly believes that the Law is inconceivable, and copies the scriptures, aspiring to listen to them, receiving and upholding them, then upon giving up this life, one will instantly release himself from the three evil paths, and in this body he will forever avoid falling into Avici Hell.

Although one would expect Avici Hell to be placed within the geographical jurisdiction below the King of Transformation, in fact it is placed to the right of center on the lowest level of the tableau. As is the case with most of the inscriptions connected to the Ten Kings and the placement of the hells related to them, this disjuncture forces the worshipper to search the tableau for the appropriate image, no doubt creating a moment of confusion and panic similar to what one would expect a soul to experience in its journey through hell.

Continuing with a description of the remaining kings, one next encounters the King of Mount Tai, an entity of the early Chinese pantheon who was quickly absorbed into the Buddhism (fig. 79). Theories vary as to what effect Daoism did or did not have on the formulation of the Ten Kings, with some scholars stating unequivocally that the Daoists were responsible for the final number of kings standing at ten, having added one judge to their already extant cosmology of nine, while others maintain that the Daoists only later appropriated the set of kings from Buddhism, using their notoriety to popularize their own set of deities.⁶³ The King of Mount Tai was later absorbed into Daoist cosmology in his new capacity of “Bodhisattva Emperor

⁶³Henri Maspero, “The Mythology of Modern China” in *Asiatic Mythology*, ed. J. Hackin, 252-384 (New York: Thomas J. Crowell, 1932): 364, and Teiser, *The Scripture on the Ten Kings*, 29.

of the Eastern Peak.”⁶⁴ At Great Buddha Bend, this king continues to reiterate preparedness as a method to avoid spending time in hell:

A single life is fragile like a lantern in the wind;
two rats creep up, gnawing at a vine in the well. If
one does not cultivate a precious raft to ferry one
over the bitter sea of life, then what can one
depend on to attain deliverance?

The eighth hell of the Impartial King (fig. 80) is where the souls are weighed, their good and bad deeds affect the suffering they must further undergo.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the placement of the karmic balance has been switched with the karmic mirror within the tableau. It is not clear whether this was an oversight in planning the work, a misinterpretation of the scripture, or whether a different recension of the scripture was being used as the artistic source. The Impartial King is accompanied by the following verse:

At that time the Buddha put forth a ray of light
that filled the great chilocosm; dragons and preta
assembled with humans and gods. Indra, Brahma,
the various gods, and the hidden multitude of the
underworld all came to prostrate themselves in
front of the World-honored One.

The second to last of the Ten Kings is the King of the Capital (fig. 81). The text accompanying this king specifically cites efforts in providing for

⁶⁴DeVisser, 30. DeVisser, 35, discusses other later works which link the two philosophies, one of the most noteworthy being the Calendar of Jade or Yu li, which is recognized as having been written sometime in the later Song Dynasty. For illustrations taken from a contemporary calendar, and other more modern depictions of hell, see Wolfram Eberhard, Guilt and Sin in Traditional China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967): 51-55.

⁶⁵At Great Buddha Bend, he is referred to as *Ping zheng Da wang*. This deity is also known under the title *Ping deng wang*. Teiser points out that Tang dynasty Tantric texts portray the Impartial King as another manifestation of Dizang Bodhisattva. Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 177.

“feasts” – most likely for the members of the sangha – and “meritorious deeds” as ways to expunge the innumerable sins accrued in a lifetime. With no clear protagonist cited, the “feasts” and “deeds” become possible post-mortem solutions for descendants of the deceased. The accompanying inscribed verse reads as follows:

Each birth on the Six Paths contains suffering without limit; the Ten Evils and the Three Paths are not easy to bear. If all efforts are put forth to establish the feasts and complete meritorious deeds, then sins as numerous as the sands of the Ganges will disappear of themselves.

Like the King of Mount Tai, the King of the Capital would appear to have direct connections to indigenous gods and beliefs. As his name implies, the King of the Capital may simply be a further extension of the City God. It is the City God, along with the God of Moats, who is responsible for bringing dead souls to justice in popular Chinese mythology.⁶⁶ The formulation of such a deity may have been in direct response to these popularly held beliefs. Pelliot posits that his true title is “King of the Market of the Capital”, the market area being the natural place for a prison, as it was there that public executions took place.⁶⁷ This correlation may be seen as once again bridging the gap between the earthly and afterlife existences.

Aside from the officers, who are clearly identified by their caps, only three of the ten figures vary in iconography: King Yama, the King of

⁶⁶Maspero, 373.

⁶⁷Pelliot, 389.

Transformations, and the King who Turns the Wheel .⁶⁸ The King who Turns the Wheel is dressed in martial attire, and his militaristic attire would appear to link him to previous military men found in earlier Tantric texts (fig. 82).⁶⁹ Attending this last king is a standard-bearer, characteristic of the King who Turns the Wheel's soldier-of-fortune attendants.

Like the first king, whose job it is to start the dead on their journeys through the various hells, the King who Turns the Wheel does not control a particular environ of hell. His job is to appoint the souls to their respective paths of transmigration, based on the judgements of the previous courts. These possible transmigrations are known as the Six Paths of Being.⁷⁰ It must be noted that the position of the Ten Kings and the Hell tableau is one of being across the grotto from the visual representation of these Six Paths, seen in the Wheel of Transmigration (fig. 83). This representation of the wheel would easily be visible while standing in front of the hell scenes. Aside from the jailers tormenting the damned, the King who Turns the Wheel is the only figure depicted with a militaristic aspect. His accompanying inscribed verse reads as follows:

⁶⁸Unlike the illustrated scriptures and most printed works, the kings depicted at Great Buddha Bend do not have the word "king" (*wang*) inscribed on their caps. Although the figures themselves appear not to have been altered, the pieces of blue draped cloth and the inscriptions have been restored.

⁶⁹Teiser mentions the eighth century appearance of *Wu dao jiang jun wang*, or the General King of the Five Paths, in his discussion of The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 178. Arthur Waley also mentions this personage as being part of a text devoted to the worship of Yanluo Wang, known as the Manual of the Procedure for Making Offerings to King Yama.

⁷⁰Soothill, 139. Dizang Bodhisattva is closely associated with the Six Paths of Being, in which he is transformed into six separate entities to aid all beings in their struggle for salvation.

For the last three, where they pass is an important crossing.⁷¹ Good and evil depend only on felicitous actions as a cause. The unvirtuous will yet continue to suffer grief for a full one thousand days. They will be reborn into a womb only to die in birth, or to die at a young age.⁷²

In this verse, the pressure is being placed on the descendants of the deceased to insure that proper rituals are undertaken at the appropriate times “for the full one thousand days”. This in turn contributed to a steady flow of goods and capital into the Buddhist establishment as people died on a regular basis, and rites were necessary for at least three years thereafter.

The King who Turns the Wheel is the last major figure on the left end of the relief. The final figure is yet another second-level functionary, the Officer of Rapid Recompense (fig. 84).⁷³ He gives the worshipper his final word of warning:

Not constructing a boat or bridge is man’s folly;
meeting with danger, you will at last begin to
understand. If you awaken to the fact that one
hundred years will pass like a snap of the fingers,
(then) one must surely not delay in observing days
of fast and listening to the Law.⁷⁴

The Ten Kings and their attendants stretch across the cliff face in an orderly fashion, mirroring the symmetry of the meditating Buddhas above

⁷¹The last three here refers to the last three periods in the cycle of the 10 feasts required of family of the deceased in order to insure their safe passage - i.e. seven times seven or forty-nine days, the 100 day feast and the 1000 day or three-year feast. According to Teiser, precedence for the ‘seven-seven’ practice can be found in the fifth-century Consecration Scripture (*Guan ding jing*). Teiser, “The Growth of Purgatory,” 118.

⁷²Teiser, 215.

⁷³At Great Buddha Bend written as *Su bao si guan*. In The Scripture on the Ten Kings, this position is filled by *Si Ming*, “Officer of Life Spans.” He helps to record the rulings of the ten judges, and keeps track of future rebirths for each individual.

⁷⁴Teiser, 219.

them. Below them the viewer finds the hell scenes which appear systematic in the layout of the register carved directly below the Ten Kings, but which digress into chaos by the time eye-level is reached. The disoriented viewer is thus himself or herself placed in the very bowels of hell, face to face with hungry ghosts and the eternally damned.

The Eighteen Hells Seen at Baodingshan⁷⁵

Di yu or “earth-prison” is the Chinese term for hell. Prison is an interesting metaphor for hell, and one first used by the Chinese.⁷⁶ As seen earlier within the discussion of the Ten Kings' iconography, links to the real world were fundamental to hell imagery. The penal ideology of the day reflected a combination of rewards and punishments that served as effective means for changing behavior.⁷⁷ Such was the case within Buddhist ideology as well; an individual was not damned for all eternity, but upon repaying his karmic mistakes, would automatically be freed into a new existence, capable of starting anew. Like the Song dynasty penal codes, however, one did not pass from a state of guilt to one of innocence without paying a price. Methods of torture employed by earthly jailers were thought to be far harsher in practice than they were on paper. Rituals related to the “seven-sevens”

⁷⁵For an overall picture of the placement of the eighteen hells within the Great Buddha Bend tableau, please see figure 11.

⁷⁶This statement is based on the Chinese definition of the Sanskrit term *naraka* or “hell” as “earth-prison” as provided by Soothill, 207.

⁷⁷Brian E. McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 8.

easily correlate with real-life bribes paid to jailers at regular intervals in order to ensure the jailed individual's wellbeing and hoped-for eventual release.⁷⁸

Visual images of hell far exceeded literary descriptions of hell in both their variety and their detail. Gabain notes that, "Anxiety for the dead might have stimulated the fancy to more than the text contained."⁷⁹ While the Ten Kings listed above mirror to a large degree the arrangement found within the Scripture on the Ten Kings, the hells at Baodingshan number eighteen in all, and they do not appear to follow any one specific text.⁸⁰ Some, although not all, appear to have as a source the apocryphal text Da fang guang Huayen shi e pin jing (The Mahayana Expansive Flower Ornament Sutra on the Ten Evils).⁸¹ More interestingly, although the grotto's hell tableau is regarded by many as a representation based on the Scripture on the Ten Kings, no hells are actually described in that work, the majority of the text being devoted to the Ten Kings and their worship.⁸²

⁷⁸Ibid., 330.

⁷⁹Annemarie von Gabain, 26.

⁸⁰Some of the hells are similar to those described in Journey to the West, 202-206. Some similarities can also be seen in the hells described in the Mahavastu, 13-21. For a general listing of the descriptions of hell to be found in the Pali canon, see Bimala Charan Law's Heaven and Hell in Buddhist Perspective (Varanasi : Bhartiya Publishing, 1973): 94-111. For a discussion of hell specific to the Yogacara school of Buddhism, see Daigan and Alicia Matsunaga's work The Buddhist Concept of Hell (New York: Philosophical Library, 1972): 60-72.

⁸¹The following hells – Hell of the Iron Bed, Hell of Cutting and Grinding, Avici Hell, Hungry Ghost Hell, Boiling Cauldron Hell, Feces and Filth Hell, Hell of the Iron Wheel as well as the evils of alcohol - are all found described within the Sutra on the Ten Evils, complete with the cause for each punishment. None of the chants accompanying the first tier of hells is found within this text, and many of the aforementioned inscribed texts are similar but not identical to what is written in the sutra. See T. 2875. I'd like to thank Henrik Sørensen for helping me trace the source of this imagery. At least one written example of the Sutra on the Ten Evils is found within the Dunhuang collection, see Stein no. 132 as listed in Victor Mair, "Lay Students and the Making of Written Vernacular Narrative: an Inventory of Tun-huang Manuscripts", 5-96.

⁸²Consistent with the notion of worship, references to hell found in extant portions of the Scripture on the Ten Kings focus on how not to enter hell, or what one has done to arrive there, not on actual descriptions of the hells. See Dunhuang bao zang, vol. 109, 432b-434a.

Such anomalies were not unusual in Buddhist imagery, with the majority of hell scrolls maintaining common themes while differing considerably in detail.⁸³ Since the hells were not literally described, how the artist iconographically depicted the hells was largely subject to individual discretion. Both earlier and later period works can be found which are consistent in their usage of the Ten Kings and their courts, while varying greatly in the tortures shown. One explanation for such discrepancies may be the changing realities of punishment and torture seen at various places and times within China; yet another explanation may lie in the vividness of the imagination of any given image's author. The possibility of "sourcing" any given hell scene's tradition seems unlikely, since hell, along with its ghosts and demons, was a subject matter which allowed for considerable latitude on the part of the image's producer and patron.

As one's eye travels down the tableau at Great Buddha Bend, it moves from the meditative calm of the heavens of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions, through the orderliness and symmetry of the Ten Kings and Dizang Bodhisattva, to the first level of hell, where the worshipper encounters the sensation of disorder that will serve as a precursor to the chaos still to come. Still arranged along a horizontal register, the ten hells depicted on this level do not, however, fit neatly below the Ten Kings above, nor do they correlate to the occasional hell mentioned in the inscriptions accompanying these same Ten Kings.⁸⁴

⁸³Teiser, 62, and Gabain, 26.

⁸⁴Some of the deities invoked do correspond to the kings located above them vis-à-vis the deities connected to the ten feasts in Buddhism as outlined by Teiser, "The Growth of Purgatory", Appendix 4.3. These correspondences will be duly noted within the discussion of the hells.

The discussion of this first level of hell will start at the far right, proceeding to the left as one would move when performing rituals related to the Ten Kings. This is a case of expedient means rather than known reality – a worshipper might just as easily have worked through the hell vignettes in any number of ways, another logical approach being that of beginning with the monk figure standing and preaching on the lowest level, and from there allowing the eye to proceed upward. Since any number of approaches to the hell scenes is plausible, expediency will serve to direct us through the hells, and from there into the grouping of admonitions located largely in the lower right-hand corner of the tableau.

Knife Mountain Hell is the first hell encountered when progressing through the tableau in this fashion (fig. 85). Like all of the hell scenes, this narrative is presented in monoscenic format, the protagonists being the anonymous sinner or sinners pitted against the gleeful denizens of hell. To the left of a stylized mountain mass on which an arc of knifeblades is clearly visible, stands a jailer, clad in military attire. As I have noted elsewhere, the jailers at Great Buddha Bend can be seen as an example of art imitating life.⁸⁵ During the Song dynasty, the military became increasingly involved in executions and punishment, with many soldiers making their living by forcing inmates to pay them for leniency or freedom.⁸⁶ It is not then surprising that at Baodingshan these purveyors of punishment should wear cuirasses, boots, and helmets. The fact that many of the soldiers were also themselves convicts, forced into conscription in order to serve out their

⁸⁵Kucera, 91.

⁸⁶McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China, 71-72 and 375.

sentence, is another aspect to be considered with regard to the pleasure these individuals seem to derive from causing pain as shown in the Baodingshan imagery.⁸⁷ Furthermore, many of the jailers depicted within the hell scenes are grotesque, reflecting Chinese penal policy of scarring or mutilating interred criminals, many of which in turn would become jailers.⁸⁸

The jailer in Knife Mountain Hell points up, seemingly at the soul already skewered on the Knife Mountain, directing another soul to join him. Another possible reading of these two souls seen in this one vignette is that in fact it is only one damned individual, and the suggestion of the infinite number of times a soul must encounter the same torture is being made by the jailer who gestures upward, as if to say "Again!" Watching this process is one of the souls who apparently roam somewhat freely within the hell realms, a woman in a cangue. Cangues appear on four different individuals scattered throughout the two levels of hell in the tableau, and were perhaps the most visible form of punishment in Song China (fig. 86).⁸⁹ Cangues were used to transport criminals, to torture innocent individuals in order to gain information, and to publicly humiliate the incarcerated.⁹⁰

The inscription accompanying the Knife Mountain Hell vignette reads:

If once a month one chants the name of the
Dipamkara Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall
into the Knife Mountain Hell.⁹¹ The hymn says:

⁸⁷Ibid., 396.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Although size, weight, and construction were explicit in the penal code, officials often were accused of using injurious cangues, such as the "four-layer cangue" in which wrought iron and uncured rawhide were attached to raw wood, the resulting effect being one of shrinking and squeezing as the rawhide dried. McKnight, 345-6.

⁹⁰Ibid., 344-347.

⁹¹Dipamkara Buddha. Teiser, appendix 4.3. This is the first feast to be celebrated, and is the first of the ten deities to be invoked at Great Buddha Bend. I would like to take

“Hearing tell of Knife Mountain yet unable to climb it, the outlines of its rocky hills, lofty and precipitous, causing the heart to swoon. Assiduously cultivating blessings when the days of fast occur, one avoids becoming victim of the drag of evil karma on the path ahead.”⁹²

The hells are neither captioned nor numbered on this level. They do all, however, begin with the phrase: “If daily one chants the name of such-and-such a Buddha”, which, given that ten different Buddhas are named, may correlate with the badly eroded Buddha figures in the niches high above. This phrase is then followed by the name of the particular hell, and the following text often does provide specific directions as to how to avoid a certain hellish fate, as we see here with the warning to “assiduously cultivat(e) blessings when the days of fast occur”.⁹³

The second hell on this level has as its focal point a large cauldron in which the damned are barely visible as their heads bob up and down amidst the boiling water (fig. 87). This awful brew is being stirred by one of the horsefaced jailers seen in the tableau. Horsehead and Oxhead were already seen as guards in earlier Indian sources.⁹⁴ They also would appear to have been a part of Chinese lore prior to the rise in the popularity of hell, and are found in both the Buddhist and Daoist pantheons. The depictions of Oxhead

this opportunity to thank Dr. Stevenson for his astute editing of the following hell translations.

⁹²The format of this, and many of the hymns to follow, mirrors those described by Michel Soymié in “Les dix jours de jeûne de Ksitigarbha” in *Contributions aux Études sur Touen-houang*, ed. Michel Soymié, 135-59. vol. 1 (Centre de Recherches d’Histoire et de Philologie de la IVe Section de l’École pratique des Hautes Études, Hautes Études Orientales. Geneva and Paris: Librairie Droz, 1979): 137.

⁹³Although the format of these hymns may reflect those discussed by Michel Soymié, the texts are not similar and the translations included here are by this author.

and Horsehead at Great Buddha Bend are interesting in that, given that fact the artisans could easily create life-like animals in stone, as seen in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo relief across the grotto from the hell scenes, Oxhead and Horsehead remain caricatures of animals. Their cartoon-like appearance may further substantiate the argument that the artisans were working from popular imagery, such as illustrated handscrolls or theatrical productions.

It is important to note the difference in scale that becomes apparent within the hells. Like the kings above, who stand taller than their assistants, the jailers in these monoscenic narratives clearly dominate the damned within the hell regions. The jailers in hell are tall and brawny, emphasizing the shirking, insignificant souls at their feet. Aiding Horsehead's endeavors within the Boiling Cauldron Hell is one particularly ecstatic assistant, monkey-faced with hair flaming upward, who stokes the fires below the cauldron, the flames carved curling up around the lip of the giant cauldron. Behind the cauldron, another damned soul cowers, eyes covered, as a second jailer raises his hammer to strike a floating soul back down into the boiling brew. The accompanying text reads as follows:

If daily one chants the name of the Buddha of
Medicine 1000 times, one will not fall into Boiling
Cauldron Hell.⁹⁵ (The hymn says:)

⁹⁴ Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 212.

⁹⁵ "Buddha Master of Medicine Lapis Lazuli Radiance", Stevenson, personal correspondence, 06/18/01. This is the second of the ten feasts to be celebrated, Teiser, appendix 4.3, and is appropriately the second deity to be invoked at Great Buddha Bend.

“Exhort the ruler to strive to be mindful of the Lord Master of Medicine, and escape from enduring the suffering of the boiling cauldron. Fallen into the waves, wondering when one will get out, early cultivation of the Pure Land helps to escape perishing.”

This inscription is interesting on two counts. One, it implicates the ruler and his actions in the fate of the souls of the deceased; should the ruler fail to be swayed to follow the Buddhist path, his subjects, by extension, will be doomed to suffer in this hell. Two, by directing the worshipper to engage in “early cultivation of the Pure Land”, this vignette helps to reinforce the hypothesis that the hell tableau and its neighboring Pure Land tableau were ritually linked. Furthermore, the admonition to engage in “cultivation of the Pure Land” can be interpreted as a reference to the practice of chanting, an activity promoted in each of the ten hells depicted on this level.

The third hell is the Freezing Hell, and is aptly represented by two huddled, crouching and clearly shivering souls (fig. 88). Arms hugging their knees to their bony chests, they are naked. The inscribed verse gives a good description of their plight:

If daily one chants the names of the One Thousand Buddhas of the Present Kalpa 1000 times, one will not fall into the Freezing Hell.⁹⁶ (The hymn says:) “The worst of sufferings to be found therein are its cold and ice (where one), with eyes covered, (is) naked and exposed to the gods. Merely chant to the various Buddhas seeking merit, and evil karma will be eliminated, and one will be reborn in a good place.”

⁹⁶Soothill, 444. This is the third of the ten feasts to be celebrated, Teiser, appendix 4.3, and is the third deity to be invoked at Great Buddha Bend.

Eberhard notes that fear of freezing, to the point that it is devoted its own hell, was more common to Tibetan and Mongolian systems of hell than to those of the Chinese.⁹⁷ Given the proximity of the Baodingshan site to the Tibetan plateau, it is not unlikely that Tibetan beliefs and practices would influence this Sichuanese site. International trade routes, which skirted the Tibetan plateau to the south, flowed through Sichuan, and merchants historically were responsible for many instances of iconographic exchange within the Buddhist world.⁹⁸ In addition, the latitude and elevation of the Great Buddha Bend grotto can result in winter snows, and as such fear of freezing would have been a very real concern for both the local lay and monastic communities.

The fourth hell is largely destroyed, and large portions of the hymn are missing, due to what appears to be a shifting of the earth, possibly an earthquake (fig. 89). Whatever the cause, Sword Tree Hell, which is now blocked up in order to provide additional support for the level above it, was mostly destroyed. The remaining legible portion of the verse is as follows:

(If daily one chants the name of (Amitabha)) 1000
times, one will not fall into Sword Tree Hell.⁹⁹ The
hymn says:

⁹⁷Wolfram Eberhard, Guilt and Sin in Traditional China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967): 25.

⁹⁸ For more on the various routes moving in and out of Sichuan, see Angela Falco Howard, "Buddhist Sculpture of Pujiang, Sichuan: A Mirror of the Direct Link Between Southwest China and India in High Tang" Archives of Asian Art no. 42 (1989): 49-61.

⁹⁹The compilers of DZSKMWL, 143, cite "Amitabha" as the Buddha invoked here, although their own accompanying inscription shows this portion of the text as missing. No explanation is provided as to how they ascertained which Buddha was being named. In most

“(I have heard tell that the blessings of Amitabha are most) powerful. (Upon touching) the deadly sword trees, death occurs automatically. (Whatever) one invites upon oneself, one brings (in retribution) upon oneself. (This retribution) is not something that depends upon (affliction by another).”¹⁰⁰

Tongue extraction is the mode of torture inflicted in the fifth hell (fig. 90). The narrative shows a figure kneeling, head thrown back as a jailer, probably another Horsehead or Oxhead figure based upon what remains of the head, places a knee on the sinner’s chest. With his left hand, he grasps the soul’s tongue, and is depicted in the act of pulling it out. Behind the stake to which the damned soul is bound can be seen another figure in a cangue. Tucked back into the very recesses of the natural rock cliff-face, this image with bound hands is a silent and unwilling observer to the pains of the soul before him. The accompanying verse points out that it is not telling falsehoods which leads one to this fate, but the apparently innocent act of tilling the soil. It reads as follows:

If daily one chants the name of Tathagatha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Tongue Extraction Hell.¹⁰¹ The hymn says :
 “The Hell of Tongue-Extraction is caused by sending the ox out with the iron plow; all types of grasping does not still it for even one moment. If one desires to avoid personal interrogation by King Yama, recite the name of Dizang 1000 times.”

other instances involving the hell inscriptions, DZSKMWL is a superior, more complete source than the earlier compilation DZSKYJ.

¹⁰⁰Dan Stevenson, 06/18/01 personal correspondence, provided this probable reconstruction of the largely effaced text of this inscription.

¹⁰¹The feast associated with this king by Teiser, appendix 4.3, should be that of the deity Avalokitesvara.

Stephen Teiser notes that in at least one copy of The Scripture on the Ten Kings there is a colophon in which the person commissioning the work asks to have the scripture copied for his plowing ox's merit.¹⁰² A plowing ox would need someone to create merit on his behalf, as the animal itself is unlikely to know to do so. Furthermore, since the ox is forced to till the soil, and inherently kill other sentient beings by doing so - either immediately while in the act of plowing, or due to the fruits of his labors, which will then be used to fatten livestock for slaughter - the individual responsible for the ox's actions gains bad karma. Another point of interest with regard to the Tongue Extraction Hell is its placement underneath Dizang Bodhisattva, who is specifically cited only in this verse. This further supports the theory that the Ten Buddhas above are linked to the hells below.

The Hell of Poisonous Snakes appears immediately next to Tongue Extraction Hell, the carved snakes themselves forming a motif similar to a lotus unfolding as the cobra hoods rise up from their twisted snake bodies to "support" the accompanying inscription (fig. 91). It reads:

If daily one chants the name of the Tathagatha Wisdom of Great Power 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Poisonous Snakes.¹⁰³ The hymn says:
 "The compassion of the bodhisattvas is vast and plentiful; they deliver one from suffering and provide constant instruction, drawing one out from the river of desire.¹⁰⁴ The lotus blossoms of the nine grades (of being) each have their share of

¹⁰²Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 136.

¹⁰³Soothill, 85.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 401.

the dew.¹⁰⁵ What can cause one to be sent through
the poisonous snakes?"

The snakes and their accompanying pains are not as explicitly shown within this vignette, the visual focus being rather the domineering jailer, mace in hand, who forces the damned souls back into the snakes' midst. Bent and contorted, the sinners shrink before the dual onslaught of the jailer's brutal punishment and the awaiting serpentine affliction. Outlines of snakes carved into the rock are still faintly visible underneath one shirking soul, as another snake curls up around his torso.

Yet another moment captured from within this larger, repetitive narrative context, the Hell of Cutting and Grinding is more obvious in its torture than the Hell of the Poisonous Snakes imagery (fig. 92). The grinding aspect of this hell is vividly portrayed with a very prominent pestle, the crosspiece of which is being clutched by a particularly happy and hideous jailer, who applies his weight to the mechanism by a now-shattered left leg. He is also aided in his endeavors by a small, monkey-faced creature, while behind the pestle a figure, possibly that of a woman, cowers and covers her eyes with one hand rather than watch the torture occurring before her.

Next to this vignette is another scene from this especially bloody hell; here Oxhead gleefully cuts a damned soul in half, from the crotch up, with the aid of yet another impish assistant (fig. 93). Legs splayed apart with head

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 16. The nine grades of incarnation, i.e. everyone.

down, the soul is clearly suffering an anguishing fate. The inscription for both reads as follows:

If daily one chants the name of the Bodhisattva who Regards the World's Cries 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Cutting and Grinding.¹⁰⁶ The hymn says:

"Chopping up bodies, cutting and grinding, no time for repose; all here performed evil deeds, not cultivating and maintaining good. Avalokitesvara grieves for the suffering of all sentient beings, revealing her mercy and compassion, she aids all to escape from hell."¹⁰⁷

Although no specifics are given regarding the "evil deeds" performed that would land one in this particularly gruesome hell, clear mention is made of how one escapes such a fate, i.e., by beseeching the all-compassionate Avalokitesvara.

The Hell of Being Sawed into Pieces works well in terms of shared imagery with the Hells of Cutting and Grinding. Placed immediately to the left of these two, a bearded jailer can be seen skewering and slicing open a crouching sinner. The Buddha invoked here is Vairocana, and no specific cause is given as to how one comes to arrive at such a painful fate. The verse reads:

¹⁰⁶Avalokitesvara. Soothill, 489. In DZSKYJ, 487, it is noted that, on the pestle being used to grind the poor souls, the phrase "Thus the Buddha spoke a scripture from the canon" is inscribed. From photos, it would appear that an additional two-line inscription runs the length of the pestle, along with words being engraved on the pestle's crossbar. It must be noted that the transcriptions provided by the compilers of the *Dazu shi ke yan jiu*, while helpful, are not entirely accurate nor are they complete. Care should be taken when using this text as numerous discrepancies and omissions occur.

¹⁰⁷I have chosen to refer to Avalokitesvara in the feminine here since this deity appears mainly in female form at this and earlier sites within Dazu County.

If daily one chants the name of Vairocana Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Being Sawn into Pieces. (The hymn says:)

“The Tathagata's merits are vast and perfect radiance, which follows like a bright moon coming out among the myriad stars. Merely by chanting (his name) one is able to eliminate all manner of sins. Only a sovereign presumes to saw into pieces without cause.”

With yet another reference to worldly realities, this chant points out that only rulers can mete out punishment, and likewise grant pardons. Mutilation existed as a punishment in China as far back as the Qin, when common practices included the amputation of feet and hands or the cutting off of the nose.¹⁰⁸ Death by slicing, while an irregular punishment, was nonetheless condoned with regard to violent criminals, in order to serve as a warning to all evildoers.¹⁰⁹ Similar practices included beheading and being cut in two at the waist (fig. 94).

The Hell of the Iron Bed and the Hell of Darkness complete the third register of the tableau, but do not spell the end of the hells, with eight more clustered on the lowest level of the work (figs. 95 and 96). The inscription accompanying the Hell of the Iron Bed reads as follows, and helps to decipher the imagery:

If daily one chants the names of the Bodhisattvas
Medicine King and Medicine Excellence 1000

¹⁰⁸McKnight, 331. McKnight also gives evidence for punishment by cutting off limbs dating as far back as the Shang dynasty, with oracle bone script depicting one man with one leg shorter than the other, and a saw placed next to the shorter leg.

¹⁰⁹Brian E. McKnight, “Sung Justice: Death by Slicing,” American Oriental Society 93 (1973): 359.

times, one will not fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed.¹¹⁰ (The hymn says:)

“The Bodhisattvas true names are those of Healing Kings, and they can dissolve the flames of the iron bed. They have mercy on those who created evil karma as heavy as a mountain, and by merely chanting their true names all living creatures can avoid such calamities.”

Adjacent to the soul being gutted in the Hell of Being Sawed into Pieces is an impish hell demon working in the Hell of the Iron Bed. Tube in hand and pressed up to his mouth, he blows air to stoke the flames below the iron bed carved behind him. The figure on the bed writhes in pain, his arm unnaturally bent behind him. To their left, another monkey-faced jailer raises his mace to club a flailing soul, clutching the damned by the hair. This is undoubtedly another candidate for the burning iron bed. The use of clubs to inflict harm upon the damned was another common form of corporal punishment in Song China, with various-sized rods being used to mete out the appropriate punishment.¹¹¹

To their left can be seen a chasm, reaching back into the face of the cliff; it is now shored up with bricks to serve as support for the tableau's upper registers. Two figures grope their way out of this dark place, and the inscribed text gives adequate advice on how to avoid this hell, with Amitabha Buddha being the deity capable of brightening the darkness, again a clear reference to the neighboring Pure Land tableau:

¹¹⁰*Bhaisajyasamudgata* and *Bhaisajya-rajā*. Soothill, 472. This is the ninth of the ten feasts to be celebrated, Teiser, appendix 4.3, and is the ninth deity to be invoked at Great Buddha Bend.

If daily one chants the name of Sakyamuni Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Darkness.¹¹² The hymn says:

“Keeping the fast-days, serving the Buddha, and taking delight in reciting the scriptures, one accumulates good (deeds), and the inspectors of the netherworld inscribe one’s name (in the registers of merit). Additionally reciting the name of Amitabha 1000 times, naturally the darkness will manifest brightness.”¹¹³

Having completed this third tier of the hell tableau, the final eight hells will be addressed as if one then continued down and around into the lowest reaches of hell. Rather than being written in verse format, the inscriptions connected to these hells on the lowest level are more narrative in construct, perhaps an effort by the clergy to make them more readily available to be read to a larger audience, perhaps also to provide a text not for chanting aloud, but rather to be read internally.

The first hell encountered in this fashion is the Hell of Feces and Filth (fig. 97). This hell is presided over by a grotesque, fanged jailer who, with a mace in each hand, proceeds to beat back down the damned bobbing up out of the square vat of boiling feces. The vat itself juts down and out so as to allow the worshiper the opportunity to see the struggling souls, two with faces up, as they gasp for air. One soul floats face down, an arm raised in

¹¹¹McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China, 82. Size was combined with number of blows under what was called the traditional Five Punishments (*wu xing*).

¹¹²This is the tenth of the ten feasts to be celebrated, Teiser, appendix 4.3, and is the tenth deity to be invoked at Great Buddha Bend. Of the ten feasts and deities invoked in rituals related to the Ten Kings listed by Teiser, only five show a correspondence to the works at Great Buddha Bend.

¹¹³Of what remains of the inscriptions carved alongside the imagery in the Hell scenes, those areas with the term “the hymn says” all utilize the phrase *zan yue*, literally “to speak in praise”, whereas the earlier discussed textual inscriptions describing the Ten Kindness in the Kindness of Parents tableau all utilize the phrase *song yue*, “to praise”.

supplication. The carved flames that encircle the sides of the vat increase the aura of noxious fumes suffocating the damned within. The inscription reads:

The scripture states that Kasyapa asked the Buddha, "Those who eat meat fall into which hell?"

The Buddha informed Kasyapa, "Those who eat meat fall into the Hell of Feces and Filth. Therein one finds feces and filth 10,000 'feet' deep, the meat eater is thrown into this hell, and repeatedly he goes through the cycle of immersion and exit. When he goes through the first cycle, myriads of spikes situated all around him stab and rupture this body, and serrate his limbs. This is the great torment (of this hell). For five million lifetimes, he knows no release."¹¹⁴

The accompanying inscription is not found directly above and to the left of the Hell of Feces and Filth, but rather carved on the front of a table depicting two men seated with plates in front of them, clearly meant to be a reference to a feast at which meat was consumed. As if to confirm this fact, beside the two seated guests a butcher can be seen straddling his block, upon which is placed an animal head already severed from the carcass (fig. 98).

Located directly below this trio of sinners, the second hell on this lowest level is the Halberd Hell. As noted in the inscription which flanks the preaching monk figure nearby, this hell is for "people who kill living creatures", and thus can be seen to reflect the punishment for the butcher placed above. As seen in the Halberd Hell (fig. 99), spears were also used by

¹¹⁴The complete transcription of this text can be found in SDJFJSKY, 313.

Song authorities.¹¹⁵ Halberd in hand, Horsehead is positioned virtually at eye-level with the worshipper in the act of literally skewering a hapless soul. Naked to the waist, the soul's hands are bound, his arms wrapped around a sturdy stake as Horsehead gleefully runs him through.

Adjacent to this hell is the gruesome Hell of the Iron Wheel, for "people who seize upon others" (fig. 100).¹¹⁶ The most visible of the two such hells at Great Buddha Bend being placed at viewer eye-level, the iron wheel as instrument of torture dominates the vignette as it runs back and forth over the crushed body of a soul, whose head and legs peek out from under its weight. With its jagged teeth and two side-by-side handles, the iron wheel resembles a primitive thresher. The operator of this contraption is yet another grotesque hell-demon.

The Hell of the Iron Wheel actually exists in two places within the tableau, with the other variation placed high and on the right side of the pagoda (fig. 101). In this hell, the iron wheels are smaller, and run under the soul's armpits, who is once again tied and bound to a stake. Horsehead holds open the mouth of the damned into which he ladles molten copper. According to the inscription, this is the punishment wrought on those who eat medicine meant for their father or mother, or who eat during the days of fast:

The Buddha said,
 "(If one) eats (food) or if (one) prepares food and
 serves it to parents, (teachers, elders), friends,

¹¹⁵ McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China, 183.

¹¹⁶This text is also a portion of the inscription near the pagoda.

wife, children, and family, then in future lives they will fall into Iron Wheel Hell.¹¹⁷ There in the armpit on the right side (x), (x) copper is poured (x), suffer for eating during the days of fast (x), likewise it is thus."¹¹⁸

Directly above and to the right of the larger Hell of the Iron Wheel is a second Boiling Cauldron Hell (fig. 102). This hell flanks the left side of the pagoda found on the lowest level of the hell scenes. This is also a repeat image, as a boiling cauldron also figures in the set of ten hells situated on the tier above. Here Oxhead presides over the boiling of souls who “cook meat”, and the inscription clearly describes a scene much more complex than could be depicted within the confines of the tableau. In a frozen moment, Oxhead has grabbed one the frenzied souls by the leg and hair, and readies to launch him into the vat of boiling water to his left. The accompanying inscription reads :

The Buddha spoke,
“(x) (x) (x) (x) create bad karma, the Buddha is all compassionate. The body which falls into the Three Paths meets with pain and suffering; those who believe in one truth bring together ones’ own knowledge.”

The Buddha then informed Kasyapa,

“Those who seize upon others fall into Iron Wheel Hell. Those who cook meat of any living creature fall into the Boiling Cauldron. There in the midst of water, with a fire below they are kept stewing until they burst. Also boiled are those who urge others to

¹¹⁷Large portions of this inscription are no longer legible due to weathering. I present what has been transcribed.

¹¹⁸This inscription is actually inscribed on the same tablet and to the left of the admonition against feeding chickens, which is depicted just below it.

cook meat; they enter this hell and endure its great torments.

People who broil meat fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed. Those who cut and chop meat fall into the Hell of Cutting and Grinding while those who kill living creatures fall into Halberd Hell, wherein an iron-faced (halberd) is used during the daytime, with a copper-iron (halberd) being employed during the evening. The halberd's body has a blade the length of 4 feet. Facing (the damned), it is run through (his or her) chest, coming out his back. For those who kill living creatures it is so. Consequently, to expound the dharma is to explain it to all living creatures."

Although vaguely alluded to in the inscriptions above, the causes of certain hellish punishments are at last explicitly stated. It is interesting to reflect on societal roles with regard to who will eventually be punished in this particular series of hells. Two different classes of individuals come to mind: butchers – who by all accounts were lower class citizens – and women. Given that the barbecue as a man's domain is a twentieth-century construct, who but wives and mothers will be cutting and chopping, or broiling and boiling, meat? This links the worshipper back to the indebtedness owed to mothers seen in the first tableau, and hopefully inspired sons to offer greater sacrifices on her behalf. For not only did the mother engender her son's gratitude through the very act of physically nurturing him, she also created bad karma for herself with virtually every meal she prepared.

Tending the various household flocks and herds more likely than not would also have been woman's work in twelfth-century China, as women were bound by tradition to stay home while the men were employed away

from the home. As such, the punishment meted out to those who raised animals, in this instance specifically chickens, would have been directed more towards women than men. The imagery accompanying the Admonition against Raising Animals is often reproduced, with many a commentator unaware of the grimness of the vignette (fig. 103). Rhapsodizing on the lovely pastoral quality of the young woman who tends her hen and chicks, they fail to realize that the fate that awaits her for just such an innocent act is not a pleasant one. Largely effaced, the gist of the inscription reads as follows:

The Buddha told Kasyapa,
 “All sentient beings who raise chickens, enter into
 hell...”¹¹⁹

Carved on the lowest level below the second and smaller Iron Wheel Hell and the Admonition against Raising Animals is Knife Boat Hell, with the following brief inscription:

Receiving the penalty for one's own sins, it is not a
 case of heaven meting out punishment to
 humans.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹There is some irony in this admonition against raising animals. Shih Heng-ching, The Syncretism of Ch’an and Pure Land Buddhism (New York: P. Lang, 1992): 12, notes that “strictly speaking, the Chinese monastic tradition of farm cultivation violates the *vinaya*, yet it is one of the factors that contributed to the acceptance and survival of Buddhism in China. In not only was a means of self-support, but also became a means of spiritual discipline.”

¹²⁰Dan Stevenson, personal correspondence, 6/19/01. The inscription for this scene can be found on a small stele placed above the souls in the boat. It is letter ‘C’ in the diagram.

Two male figures, again naked to the waist, are seated side by side in a dinghy up out of which curved knife blades rise, cutting at their bodies (fig. 104). The curling waves at the bottom of the boat represent the rough seas on which they must endure this torture, their faces contorted as they wail in pain.

To the right of Knife Boat Hell, and directly behind the remains of what appears to be a large lotus-shaped altar, is Hungry Ghost Hell (fig. 105). The reincarnation of Mulian's mother as a hungry ghost prompted the Buddha's preaching of the Yulanben Scripture, and the subsequent celebration of the yearly Ghost Festival.¹²¹ The presence of the lotus altar directly in front of the Hungry Ghost Hell may point to a ritual use for this aspect of the tableau, possibly in conjunction with yearly lay and monastic combined assemblies devoted to helping the hungry ghosts and the denizens of hell be reborn in the Pure Land.¹²² Another possible use for the lotus altar would have been the Flaming Mouths Ritual, this inference being made based upon the existence of the inscribed text of Jiu ba yan kou nearby. The accompanying inscription reads as follows:

¹²¹ Teiser, Ghost Festival, 107, claims a Tantric precedence for the Ghost Festival rituals, citing the Scripture of Dharanis for Saving Hungry Ghosts with Burning Mouths (Jiu ba yan kou e gui tuo le ni jing), T. 1313, 21: 464b-65b as a possible precursor. See The Ghost Festival in Medieval China for more history on the hungry ghosts and their accompanying rituals. Charles Orzech agrees, noting that large plenary masses for the dead, which evolved out of esoteric rites begun in the Tang dynasty but which had been defunct by the Five Dynasties period, were renewed and performed during the Song dynasty. See Orzech, "Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China" in The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition, ed. Henrik Sørensen (Copenhagen: Aarhus, 1994): 56.

¹²²This is still one of the largest and most important yearly religious gatherings for the Buddhist community. See Miriam Levering, "Scripture and Its Reception: A Buddhist Case" in Rethinking Scripture, 58-101. Miriam Levering, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989): 79.

The scripture states:

Kasyapa Bodhisattva then addressed the Buddha saying, "Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into which hell?" The Buddha informed Kasyapa, "Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into Hungry Ghost Hell...."¹²³

Although the hungry ghosts are depicted as inhabiting hell, and in fact the accompanying inscribed caption clearly states as such, punishment in the form of a hungry ghost was in fact not a hell per se, but rather an alternate state of existence among the six paths found within the Wheel of Transmigration. Hungry ghosts were actually considered to co-exist amongst the humans of this world; the very famous contemporaneous Japanese work, *Gaki zoshi*, which depicts the hungry ghosts quite explicitly engaging in wholly gruesome and unpleasant activities right alongside completely unaware human beings, may have existed in a similar handscroll form in China as well.¹²⁴ While such Chinese works are no longer extant, the placement of the mournful hungry ghost at eye-level within the hell scenes at Great Buddha Bend could not help but reinforce this idea of coexistence to some degree.

To the right of the begging hungry ghost is what remains of the backside of another figure, most likely another hungry ghost. Below them

¹²³See SDJFJSKY, 312, for the complete transcription of this inscription.

¹²⁴ An interesting take on the increased prevalence of hungry ghosts within the Buddhist community during the medieval period is discussed by William R. LaFleur, "Hungry Ghosts and Hungry People: Somaticity and Rationality in Medieval Japan" in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher, Ramona Naddaff, and Nadia Tazi, 270-303 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

sits another of the random individuals wearing a cangue; these cangue-wearing individuals are scattered throughout the tableau much as one would expect to find them within any given medieval Chinese city, being mobile but unable to feed themselves or take care of their physical needs. To the right of this grouping a large gash in the tableau indicates where the rockface has shifted, a feature already seen in the Sword Tree Hell above. What remains of the sculpture of this area is the head of a furry creature with large eyes (fig. 106). None of the previous scholarship makes note of this image, much less bothers at identification. I will venture to state that what remains is the head of a lion, an animal more commonly associated with Manjusri, but, as noted by Francoise Wang-Toutain, also often seen in the company of Dizang Bodhisattva.¹²⁵

The inscription regarding Avici Hell does not accompany an image per se, but could be argued to serve as a transition between the earlier hell scenes and the final grouping of admonitions, which are directed at the monastic community. Entrance to Avici Hell here focuses on the monk or nun who has not followed the four precepts which cause a member of the monastic community to be immediately expelled from the order.¹²⁶ The inscription reads as follows:

The Buddha told Kasyapa,

¹²⁵Francoise Wang-Toutain, Le bodhisattva Ksitigarbha en Chine du Ve au XIII siecle, Monographie no. 185 (Paris: Presses de l'école française d'extrême-orient, 1998). In at least one of the two hell scenes found in Anyue County, Dizang's lion mount is still visible. See Hu Wenhe, "*Sichuan shi ku zhong "Di yu bian xiang" tu de yan jiu*", 68.

¹²⁶For particulars on the monastic code in India, see Charles S. Prebish's work Buddhist Monastic Discipline (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1975).

“If a mendicant here puts on my dharma robe,¹²⁷
 (he or she must) one, abstain from drinking
 alcohol, two, abstain from eating meat, three,
 abstain from envying the good at heart, four,
 abstain from engaging in ignoble or impure
 deeds.¹²⁸ Those who do not do so fall into Avici
 Hell...”¹²⁹

Just below and to the right of the Avici Hell inscription is a figure that arguably could be seen as one of this hell’s inhabitants (fig. 107). The second of two female figures depicted at Great Buddha Bend with her breasts uncovered, this mournful creature sits at ground level, her mouth open, feet planted, hands clutched into tight fists placed in her lap. Unlike the bare-breasted mother figure seen in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents, this image is not meant to represent the timeless connection between mother and son, but rather a soul utterly humiliated. At Baodingshan, nakedness is the primary form of depiction for the damned, adding an extra dimension to the horrors expressed there for the Song dynasty worshipper. As Chinese custom at the time called for entire coverage of the body with the exception of hands and face, in the real world only individuals who were being punished would be subjected to forced public nakedness.¹³⁰

While one possible reading for this figure is that of a damned individual suffering the eternity of Avici Hell, a more likely source for this image is found in the inscription accompanying the Admonition against Alcohol:

¹²⁷Soothill, 270.

¹²⁸Soothill, 107.

¹²⁹The inscription continues with a physical description of Avici Hell.

A person such as the girl who buys and sells alcohol, will die and fall into hell. When receipt of her punishment is concluded, she will be (reborn with) a body three feet high, two ears blocked shut, a face without two eyes, likewise without nostrils, underneath the lips, a gaping mouth, hands without ten fingers, legs without two feet.¹³¹

A close examination of the carved image shows that her mouth is not open per se but lipless, a gaping hole. Her hands are not clenched into fists, but altogether lacking in fingers, and her legs end in stubs, without feet entirely. The horrific implication of such an image was intended to aid the members of the monastic community in their efforts to remain faithful to the precepts, which stridently enforced a "zero-tolerance" policy toward alcohol consumption as well as to provide a stiff rejoinder to the laity not to entice people with drink. In the inscription carved above this hapless soul in hell a worshipper would read the following:

The sutra states:

At that time, the World-honored One informed all Buddhist monks:

"If someone receives the Five Precepts and the 250 Precepts,¹³² and the full range of rules of proper deportment,¹³³ and yet does not abstain from drinking alcohol, then he or she has violated the 250 Precepts with regard to right conduct. If you

¹³⁰Gabain, 30-1.

¹³¹Dr. Stevenson, 6/19/01, rightly points out that the physical impairments suffered in this hell mirror in many ways the deadening effects alcohol in real life.

¹³²Soothill, 239. The rules of the *vinaya*. The Sanskrit term is *pratimokosa*. Soothill, 266. This "list of rules" is literally a statement of values for the Buddhist monastic community, explicitly denoting allowable behavior and forbidden behavior.

¹³³Mathews, #1047.

transgress as such you will accordingly enter hell."¹³⁴

Bernard Faure argues that the rationale behind the regular discussion of the code of conduct was an attempt to avoid misconduct on the part of a singular monk or nun as such an act would in effect breach the identity of the group as the whole.¹³⁵ He further notes that the regular recitation of such a list of incongruous behavior could have produced a variety of effects, running the full gamut from edification to titillation.¹³⁶ Faure posits,

One could argue that early Buddhist monks, in their attempt to understand reality "as it is," did not avert their gaze from sexuality but rather confronted head on the "facts of life", in the same way as they dwelt on the "contemplation of impurity" during their meditation. But it may also be argued that Vinaya commentators show a rather unhealthy fascination for the trivial and defiling aspects of human existence. Even before being threatened by external accommodations, the rule is already shaped from within by narrativity. The Vinaya is not only a juridical corpus, it is a mine of spicy anecdotes.¹³⁷

Although Chinese and Japanese approaches to the precepts were more abstracted and less prone to the detail found in the Indian versions of the Vinaya, biweekly recitation of the *pratimokosa* as was the case in earlier Indian

¹³⁴For a lengthy in-depth discussion of the sexual aspects of the 250 Rules of Conduct, see Bernard Faure, The Red Thread (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 64-97.

¹³⁵Ibid., 82.

¹³⁶Ibid., 67.

¹³⁷Ibid.

Buddhist monastic tradition continued to be practiced in East Asia.¹³⁸ The use of images of buddhas and bodhisattvas by the monastic community within the context of this ritual may account for the presence of this inscription at Great Buddha Bend.¹³⁹

The Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees creates a further connection between the lowest levels of hell depicted at Great Buddha Bend and the admonitions directed at the monastic community (fig. 108).¹⁴⁰ Prominently placed to the right of the figure depicting the final dharma form of the girl who buys and sells alcohol, this image is gruesomely realistic in its depiction of a very common Song dynasty torture, that of cutting a prisoner up, limbs first. The accompanying inscription reads as follows, and points out quite succinctly how one acquires such an unfortunate fate:

In addition to people who drink, those who press alcohol on a monk will fall into the Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees, within which a strong man (jailer) with his sword will brutally cut the damned's two knees. Those who press alcohol on a monk will receive such suffering as this."

Central to the vignette is a damned soul whose arms are bound behind him. He is seated, naked, his mouth open as he readies a scream in pain; his legs are held down by a flame-haired demon who wields a sword in his right

¹³⁸This confessional ritual was referred to as *posadha*. Faure, 64–69 and 89–94. Miriam Levering notes in her study of recent Buddhist monastic practice that “the morning daily office begins with a recitation of the *Surangama Mantra*, which has the specific purpose of dispelling sexual temptations”, highlighting a continuing concern among the Buddhist community regarding sexual transgression. See Levering, 77.

¹³⁹Ibid., 94.

hand high above his head, readying to strike the legs off his victim's legs at the knees.

Not only are eighteen hells depicted at Baodingshan, but also an additional four admonitions are included. These include the aforementioned Admonition against Raising Animals along with the Admonition against Alcohol combined with the Evils of Selling Alcohol and the Admonition against Speaking Falsehoods (fig. 109). These have all been prominently positioned at eye-level with the worshipper. With the carved images clad in contemporary Song attire and realistically painted, the vignettes accorded to alcohol consumption must have been highly effective deterrents to over-indulgence. The inscription related to speaking falsehoods as well as the relief depicting a woman feeding chickens can be viewed as delineating the broad scope of the Buddhist precepts, emphasizing how seemingly innocent activities do not go unpunished.

Directly above the Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees and the naked female figure seated in mute despair is a depiction of a monk, now without a head, being offered a bowl of wine by a merchant, behind whom stands a young woman, hair up in braids, holding a vessel of wine (fig. 110). Thus as a narrative construct, the viewer's eye is forced to go up and down (earthly existence as wine purveyors; hellish existence below) as well as back and forth in a diagonal manner. They serve as the impetus for the story

¹⁴⁰The inscriptions for this hell are actually split between a small stele placed behind the demon wielding the sword and the cangue worn by the prisoner to his right. They are notated as letters 'A' and 'B' on the diagram.

carved immediately to the right. Once again the inscription provides the viewer with more information than could feasibly be depicted; the edifying story being told reads as follows:

Kasyapa addressed the Buddha saying,

“Liquor does not involve living victims. For what reason does the Tathagatha prohibit alcohol (as something that) causes suffering?”

The Buddha replied to Kasyapa,

“Listen carefully. In the kingdom of Sravasti there was Angulimala;¹⁴¹ the action of drinking alcohol caused stupidity and confusion, causing the son to violate his own mother, and to kill his own father. The mother accordingly took a lover, and together bearing a knife (they) did harm. This is the reason today the precepts say alcohol causes suffering.”

Although the inscribed storyline includes evil actions done by a mother as well as her son, the only images shown relate to the son’s deeds, which were performed in a drunken state. The first carved image would seem to be unique in Chinese Buddhist art as well as being extremely unusual when seen within the Chinese artistic tradition as a whole. It depicts an incestuous moment, in which the drunken Angulimala reaches into his mother’s shirt to fondle her breast (figs. 111a and b). This is a clear violation of his mother, although not as extreme as the inscription would seem to imply. Below this erotic scene is an equally disturbing image: Angulimala

¹⁴¹Akanuma Chizen, *Indo Bukkyo koyu mei shi jiten*, 39-41. Angulimala is a murderer who eventually repents and is converted to Buddhism.

killing his own father. The son leans over his sleeping father with a halberd raised in his hands as if to choke him with the weapon's wooden handle.¹⁴²

Recent scholarship refers to this portion of the tableau as “belie(ing) the extremity of the social transgression and Oedipal fantasy they act out”, but this is not entirely accurate.¹⁴³ Freudian analysis would have it that all men want to kill their fathers and sleep with their mothers. I contend that rather than viewing this vignette as Oedipal in nature, one should view it within its own Chinese framework, solely as demonstrating the height of unfilial transgression. The inscription clearly states that Angulimala is confused and stupid due to his drunkenness, and therefore is not aware of his own actions. It is not a case of subliminal desires being brought to the fore, but a clear statement on the evils of alcohol, a substance from which one is led into a state of being so blind that even the most dear and revered individuals are no longer known to the imbiber.

Heightening the edifying effect of Angulimala's story are the images carved next to these two depictions which include the two vignettes above of a husband not recognizing his wife and a father not recognizing his son (figs. 112a and b). Below these two are an older sister not knowing her younger sister, placed to the left of an older brother failing to recognize his younger brother (figs. 113a and b). The accompanying inscription reads as follows:

¹⁴²One of the five major offenses put forward in the *pratimokosa* is the murder of one's father or mother. See Faure, 72.

¹⁴³Robert L. Thorp and Richard Ellis Vinograd, Chinese Art and Culture (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001): 269.

The Sutra on Brilliant Freshness Preached by the Buddha from the Great Canon:

At that time Buddha announced to Kasyapa:¹⁴⁴
 “Those who drink alcohol do not know their own families. Among those who drink alcohol, there are cases where fathers do not recognize their sons, or sons do not recognize their fathers; elder brothers do not recognize younger brothers, or younger brothers do not recognize elder brothers; husbands do not recognize their wives, or wives do not recognize their husbands; elder sisters do not recognize younger sisters, or younger sisters do not recognize elder sisters; or they do not recognize their inner or outer kin. Good sons (of the Buddha) in this current life become utterly confused; how much moreso in future (lives to come). Any sentient being who foregoes drinking wine and eating meat will be able to arouse the resolve to (seek and achieve) the perfected bodhi mind.”

With the exception of the vignette of the older sister not recognizing her younger sister, the Admonition against Alcohol depicts the drunken as slovenly souls, their shirts open to expose sagging breasts and paunchy stomachs. Since other forms of nudity present at Great Buddha Bend are found mainly among the naked souls of hell, it is not inappropriate to view these individuals as already among the damned, their drunken state in essence a living hell on earth.

Bringing together the entire hell tableau is the life-size figure of a monk carved directly beneath a pagoda almost central within the lowest level of hell. His left hand raised as if pointing to the images that surround him,

¹⁴⁴The text breaks here as a large portion of the actual inscription has been broken away.

his right hand clutches a bound sutra (fig. 114). On his right and left flank are carved the following inscriptions:

Heaven's halls are vast and broad, yet hell is also vast; not believing in the Buddha's word, then how the heart suffers!

My Way is to seek pleasure in the midst of suffering, but all sentient beings (being confused) seek pain in the midst of pleasure.¹⁴⁵

In the pagoda above the preaching monk is yet again inscribed the “red-hot iron wheel” chant first seen stretched above the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness,¹⁴⁶ and it is intriguing to note that the monk himself is placed among several hells in which iron wheels figure prominently. His presence in the depths of hell can be seen to highlight the pedagogical function that may be one rationale for the large amounts of text found at Great Buddha Bend. A number of scholars argue that this monk figure is meant to be a portrait of Zhao Zhifeng, an issue which shall be discussed shortly.

One final grouping exists within the lower levels of the hell tableau, although it is arguable whether it is meant to be viewed as part of the work. This is the trio entitled “Mother and Father Feeding their Child” (fig. 115), located just below and to the left of the Feces and Filth Hell. The carving consists of a seated father figure with his son standing at his knee. The mother kneels to the right, presenting to the boy two bowls with varying contents, from which the child indicates his choice with his right hand.

¹⁴⁵These inscriptions are letters ‘D’ and ‘E’ in the diagram.

The text accompanying the image is carved next to that of the Hell of Feces and Filth, which previously I have argued could have been placed as such for purposes of expediency, or for lack of a better flat surface.¹⁴⁷ In revisiting the hell tableau, and viewing this grouping within the context of Great Buddha Bend as a whole, I now believe it works as yet another edifying image. What remains of the inscribed text, somewhat abraded, reads as follows:

Kasyapa addressed the Buddha saying, “When you preach the *dharma* to sentient beings, do they accept it or not?”

The Buddha then told Kasyapa,

“(It is analogous to) a person whose years having reached the age of 80, (remains) poor, poverty-stricken, and forlorn. A ruler bears a single son. (Filled) with the utmost pity and compassion (for his son), he holds gold in one hand and food in the other, offering both at the same time (to the child). The child being ignorant does not recognize the gold, but grasps the food.

For all sentient beings, even rulers, it is so. I (the Buddha) take pity on sentient beings (and preach the *dharma*) in the same way as just as kind as that loving father (offered the gold). Yet all the sentient beings cast it aside, do (not) pay reverence to it, take it to heart, nor put it into practice.”

The inscription tells a simple parable to highlight that faith and practice are as valuable as gold, but that to realize such a fact is in no way obvious. A child does not differentiate between what adults value and what it needs to survive, but must in the end be guided toward that end. As the

¹⁴⁶This inscription is letter ‘F’ in the diagram.

closing remarks note, likewise all worshippers need guidance to look beyond their physical day-to-day needs and wants, to the gold that awaits them when they embrace the Buddhist path. The father figure in this vignette is then analogous to the Buddha, and the filial aspect seen in these works is now extended to the debt owed by all to the Buddha himself as provider of the True Law.

This is clearly also a rejoinder to parents to allow their sons the opportunity to devote their lives to Buddhism. Monks would have seen their avocation as justified, their choice of the “gold” over the “meal” a testament to a wisdom beyond their years. This vignette can conversely be viewed as a reminder to be thankful to those parents who allowed their sons to pursue Buddhist worship and study. Without their willingness to present both the gold alongside the food, a choice would never have had to have been made. Once again traditional family values are stressed, the son here indebted to the father, the community at large to the Buddha and those who work to achieve his ideal.

Heaven and Hell: A Conceptual Approach

As was seen in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, the protagonist in the hell scenes is a universal character, every man or woman’s mother or father. The souls are presented not as individuals but rather as

¹⁴⁷Kucera, 109.

gendered anonymous people, with enough textual or visual differentiation provided so as to affirm for the worshipper that such a fate is non-specific, embracing both men and women, afflicting wealthy and poor alike. As was also the case earlier in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, these images can be seen as symbols, particulars representing a more general whole.

The narrative quality of the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life can be seen to function on two different levels, and is therefore also similar to other tableaux at the grotto. The first level is within the cosmic realm, the heavens of the Pure Land. Within this realm the narrative aspect picks up where the hell scenes leave off. The story of the "universal soul" protagonist encountered in the hell scenes is continued in the numerous representations of souls at various stages of rebirth in the neighboring Pure Land.

The second narrative component follows along similar lines, but is manifested in a more concrete fashion. The sixteen visualizations as encountered by Queen Vaidehi again incorporate the "Everyman and Everywoman" aspect by literally choosing to remove the now distant Indian queen, and replace her with Chinese protagonists from all walks of life. In this respect, the audience of the Great Buddha Bend work could easily visualize themselves replicating the queen's actions, and likewise see themselves as achieving enlightenment. With each step as the worshipper worked through the Sixteen Visualizations at Baodingshan, he or she

encountered familiar faces and occupations, the emblematic monoscenes being peopled with individuals from a world known to them. Functionally, such real-world imagery must have had a strong edifying impact.

When compared to the other five narrative tableaux found at the grotto, the hell scenes are presented to the viewer as chaotic. Unlike the series of images depicting a mother's ten kindnesses, which are clearly numbered, the hells and the Ten Kings who reign over them are captioned in a fashion akin to what is seen in the neighboring Pure Land tableau as well as in the work depicting the Buddha Preaching the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness. This points to a differing intention in these works' production – i.e., that the images are meant to be understood in a logical yet not necessarily chronological fashion.

This analysis of the function of text within the Great Buddha Bend tableau depicting the hell scenes differs from that of the captioned cave-paintings found at Dunhuang, where the images are also jumbled. Wu Hung has argued that the Dunhuang murals were not meant to be viewed in a didactic sense and, if actually used as such, necessitated prior knowledge of the storyline on the part of the viewer in order to be understood.¹⁴⁸

At Baodingshan, several of the narrative tableaux under discussion may not have been designed to be viewed necessarily as one continuous narrative. Instead, similar to the Chinese tradition of oral and historical narration, they are composed of discrete units linked together by a common

¹⁴⁸Wu Hung, "What is Bianxiang?", 136-37.

theme. In terms of didactic function, works such as the Repayment of Kindness and hell tableaux were perhaps more effective because the significance of the entire work was encapsulated within each individual vignette, which was then repeated throughout the tableau. This then allowed the worshipper and the clergy to move through the works more quickly if necessary without compromising the overall message.

Integral to understanding the ritual relationship between the two tableaux is the small work, numbered nineteen within the grotto, titled Locking up the Six Vices (fig. 116). The only individual discussion of this tableau is an article published in 1996 by Deng Zhijin.¹⁴⁹ Deng's discussion can be divided into two parts – the first a thorough overview of the sculptural works in the tableau along with transcriptions of the numerous inscriptions which accompany them; the second, a debate over who is being represented as the central figure of the piece. This second issue of portraiture shall be addressed at greater length within chapter four. In his study, Deng gives no real analysis as to the work's overall function, or a rationale for its placement between the heavens of the Pure Land and the hell scenes beside them.

The size of the Six Vices tableau is significantly smaller than the two adjoining works. However, as Deng notes, “within this niche there are fourteen figures, eight animals, and 30 separate inscriptions, carved in a stone

¹⁴⁹ Deng Zhijin, “Dazu Baodingshan Da fo wan liu hao tu kan diao cha” (“An examination of the *liuhaotu* niche at the Great Buddha Grotto, Baodingshan, Dazu”) Sichuan wen wu no. 1 (1996): 23-32.

area covering only 1015 square centimeters, and containing 687 characters."¹⁵⁰ The work is divided into three registers by Deng, thus mirroring in format other nearby carved works.

The uppermost portion of the work is "captioned" in characters considerably larger than those seen elsewhere in the carving, and reads "Binding Tight the Monkey of the Mind and Locking Up the Vices of the Six Senses". To the right of this inscription one then reads "The Transformation Body of Maitreya", and to the left, "Made by Great Master Fu". Below this segment, and in the middle portion of the tableau, is the central figure, identified by Deng as a "curly-haired person."¹⁵¹ From this figure's forehead emanates a ray upward to encompass a Buddha seated, hands held in a variant of the meditation mudra. Dressed in monk's attire, the central figure holds a reclining monkey in his lap, a metaphor for the human mind.

On each side of the figure are two symmetrical series of inscriptions. Immediately to the right of the figure's head is the caption "Heaven's halls and hell", which is completed on the left side, "with one stroke are by the mind created". In order to elaborate on this point, two rays emanate outward to the left and right from the central figure's heart, like ribbons draped over the monkey image. Each ray leads out to a seed character of sorts, which will form the basis of a series of inscriptions flanking the central figure. These are larger characters set off in circles; on the right one reads "good (*shan*)" which flows upward to the character "good fortune (*fu*)",

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 23.

which in turn leads to “happiness (*le*)”. To the left the seed character is “evil (*e*)”, which flows into “misfortune (*huo*)”, which eventually leads to “suffering (*ku*)”.

One can view these characters and the interspersed brief inscriptions that connect them as a schematic – the eye is guided upward from either the “good” or “evil” character by engraved rays, through captions of the various rewards and punishments accorded each chosen path, arriving eventually at small figures meant to represent these various states of rebirth – hungry ghost, hell denizen, humans, animals or conversely, rebirths into various paradisiacal settings. In this sense, the tableau mirrors imagery seen in the Wheel of Transmigration on the south side of the grotto. The sets of rays are completely symmetrical, and frame the Buddha image that rises above the central figure’s head.

Directly below the central meditative figure cradling the monkey is a short inscription known as a “hell-breaking” verse:

"If a person would wish to know all the Buddhas
of the three periods, just discern that the
Dharmadhatu is by nature generated entirely from
the mind."¹⁵²

This short verse is in effect placed directly between good and evil, and their ultimate rewards. Moreover, this verse can be seen to link the hell

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²*Dharmadhatu* (*fa shi*) translates as the "name for "things" in general, noumenal or phenomenal; for the physical universe, or any portion or phase of it. It is the unifying underlying spiritual reality regarded as the ground or cause of all things, the absolute from which all proceeds." (Soothill, 271a). Many thanks to Dr. Stevenson, personal

tableau to the worshipper's left with the Pure Land work on his or her right, a sensation which is reinforced by the two emanations of 'good' and 'evil', which flank their respective recompense. 'Good' leads the worshipper's eye to the glories of the Pure Land; 'evil' connects the individual with the sufferings of the damned. Used within a ritual context, the hell-breaking verse represents a way to pass from one existence to the next.¹⁵³

The tableau's overall message is reiterated in the location of the verse between the central seated monk figure, and the animal representations of the six vices, linked to the six senses, which extend outward below it. The six animals, which represent the enemies of human enlightenment, are arrayed below the lotus pedestal of the central figure, and have small inscriptions attached to them, but are not captioned per se. The animal sculptures are very eroded, so identification is tentative. To the left can be seen a wild cat, a fish, and a horse. On the right, one encounters a dog, a crow, and a snake. Underneath these carved images is a lengthy inscription outlining the meaning of the six vices, and equating them with the six senses. Bind up the monkey that is your sensual reality, and you will break free of suffering and hell.¹⁵⁴

correspondence 11/14/00, for pointing out the importance of this portion of the tableau to me.

¹⁵³Cohen, 187, notes that "there were other rituals carried out by Buddhist clergy which were aimed at helping the deceased to "pass over" to the Western Paradise; while some were linked to the funeral itself, others were performed periodically (i.e. on a person's death anniversary), thus reinforcing the belief that the dead remained in the underworld."

¹⁵⁴Deng, 25. The six animals, which represent the enemies of human enlightenment, are arrayed below the lotus pedestal of the central figure, and have small inscriptions attached to them but are not 'captioned' per se. The animal sculptures are very eroded, so identification is tentative. To the left can be seen a wild cat, a fish, and a horse. On the right,

Thus the small Six Vices tableau functions similarly to that of its towering neighbors: text is used largely in a ritual context, but with some text also being used in conjunction with imagery to highlight the essential components of the work's message. Yet this work is critical for its role in connecting the hell tableau with the images of the Pure Land next door. One can surmise that, although the work receives little in the way of scholarly attention today, in twelfth-century China, the Six Vices inscriptions and images were utilized and revered not only for their inherent salvational properties, but also for the quite clearly represented schemata which lead the worshipper towards either good or evil. It is ironic indeed that centuries later this small but integral tableau remains largely overshadowed by its more showy neighbors within the various studies related to the Baodingshan complex.

Moving beyond the beauties of the Pure Land and the horrors of hell, the worshipper encountered the final pairing of tableaux, and yet another set of rejoinders vis-à-vis sacrifices being made on behalf of faith and family.

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CHAPTER FOUR

IN PRAISE OF SPIRITUAL ANCESTORS

Continuing the theme of traditional Chinese concerns being represented at Great Buddha Bend, the last two tableaux portray alternative paths not only for self-salvation, but also for aiding one's ancestors. In the first of the two works to be encountered moving away from the hell scenes and further along within the grotto, the worshipper is faced with a work in which the emphasis is clearly on how a layperson can reach enlightenment. Similar to the earlier, widely popularized story of the Indian householder Vimalakirti, the lifestory of reverend Master Liu was well known within Sichuan. Performing ten austerities in his search for the truth while selflessly aiding others, Liu's life highlighted one path to enlightenment (fig. 117). In Liu's personal saga, it becomes apparent that an individual could remain true to raising a family and being a productive member of society while still being a good Buddhist.

Located across the grotto from the Asceticism of Master Liu tableau, the last narrative, the Taming of the Wild Buffalo, points to self-enlightenment while salvation for all beings is implied but not overtly stated (fig. 118). This work is unique among similar series of the ox-herding theme in its inclusion of an additional scene in which a monk in meditation is depicted. The monk ideal is stressed, the monk ideal as specifically

represented by the grotto's conceptual creator, Zhao Zhifeng (fig. 119).¹ The positioning of Zhao's image within the grotto directly across from that of Master Liu serves to further reaffirm the contention that traditional concerns are being addressed throughout the narrative works at Great Buddha Bend, and it is for this reason that I have titled this chapter "In Praise of Spiritual Ancestors". In these last two tableaux these concerns are manifested in two fashions: one, as issues of lineage - Zhao was touted as Liu's spiritual heir; and two, as issues of variant acceptable modes to enlightenment - both the layman and the monk are depicted as fully enlightened beings capable of bringing others to enlightenment.

The Asceticism of Layman Liu

Tableau twenty-one, sometimes referred to as the "Asceticism of Master Liu", sometimes as the "Transformation of Master Liu", is the last large-scale work on the north side of Great Buddha Bend before one heads down to the river below or across the bridge to the Cave of Complete Enlightenment and the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau. Like the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau and the hell scenes, this work, which covers an area of approximately 15 by 25 meters, has a central iconic figure as its focal point. Unlike these earlier works, however,

¹Henrik Sørensen. "A Study of the 'Ox-Herding Theme' as Sculptures at Mt. Baoding in Dazu County, Sichuan", Artibus Asiae no. 2 (1991): 227. Sørensen sees the

the central figure is neither a buddha nor a bodhisattva, but the figure of a layman, Master Liu, transformed into the cosmic Buddha, Vairocana. Liu is a historically documented figure, his life spanning the latter part of the Tang Dynasty from 843-907 CE.² A native of Sichuan Province, Liu evolved into a local subject of veneration, eventually being ascribed the title of “Superintendent of the Yogacara Sect of the Tang Dynasty”.³ It is Liu’s lineage that Zhao Zhifeng purported to lay claim to, even though historical reality did not allow for a direct transmission of the Yogacara mantle.⁴

Aside from the central iconic figure of Liu, it is easy to draw parallels with other tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. Across the top of the work stretches a band of moon-shaped niches, nine total, composed of four bodhisattvas and five buddhas (fig. 120). These are the five dhyani Buddhas who accompany Vairocana, seen manifested in the figure of Liu at the center of the tableau as well as in the central Buddha figure in the moon niche above

sculptures of Zhao occurring in at least five groupings at Baodingshan. See also DZSKYJ 470, 472, 490, and 500, and Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 114-116.

²Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 25. See also *Dazu xian zhi*, fascicle 1, 48-51. DZSKYJ, 294-298 presents a transcription of Liu’s memorial stele as found in Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan.

³A monk named Zu Jue from Zhongyan Temple in Qingshenxian, Meizhou, compiled the information found on the stele. The text states that he was a practitioner of Huayan Buddhism and also of Chan. See DZSKMWL, 209. Sichuan appears to have been a stronghold for the Chan and Huayan schools, even after the Tang persecutions. See Gregory, 295. Liu may have been granted this title in 906 CE after performing rituals for the King of Shu. For more on Liu’s practice of Yogacara, a branch of Esoteric Buddhism, see Wang Jiashi’s article “*Liu Benzun yu mi jiao*” in DZSKYJ, 169-174.

⁴Images of Zhao Zhifeng and Liu Benzun co-exist on what is sometimes referred to as “The Founder’s Pagoda” in Little Buddha Bend, a stone pagoda carved on all four sides with images and sutra titles as well as the ubiquitous verse regarding “a red-hot iron wheel” seen elsewhere at Baodingshan. See DZSKYJ, 8.

him.⁵ Two bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri, flank the pentad to the west, with two more, Samantabhadra and Mahastamaprapta, to the east. Although the contents vary, these moon niches echo those seen above the neighboring hell scenes, with both in turn restating the much smaller moon niches patterning the background of the images of the Three Huayan Saints in tableau five (fig. 121). This imagery reappears throughout the Baodingshan complex, perhaps meant to formulate a visual chant for the viewer.⁶

Similar to the episodes in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, the vignettes narrating the ten austerities of Liu are numbered, following a largely chronological order. Also similar is the symmetrical placement of the episodes, with the eye of the worshipper being forced to go back and forth across the tableau. However, whereas in the Kindness of Parents tableau the narratives fanned out and away from the central image, the vignettes begin on the outside in the Liu transformation tableau forcing the viewer's eye inward until it rests upon the central icon of Liu. The depiction of Liu throughout the tableau is that of a sagacious layman, dressed in scholarly rather than religious attire, sporting a scholar's cap and a long,

⁵Soothill 306b and 120a-b. The five Dhyani-buddhas generally accepted as standard include Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi. The five Dhyani-Bodhisattvas are Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Avalokitesvara, and Visvapani, although there are variations on this grouping. Here it would appear the bodhisattvas Mahastamaprapta and Manjusri are substituting for two of the standard five, and only four of the five are shown. Each Buddha manifests itself in both a wrathful and benevolent form, which is perhaps one explanation for the Radiant Kings depicted below the narrative portion of this tableau.

⁶For more on the issue of imagery and its function with regard to chanting, see France Pepper, "The Thousand Buddha Motif: A Visual Chant in Cave-Temples Along the Silk Road" in Oriental Art (Winter 1999): 39-45.

pointed beard (fig. 122).⁷ Depicting twenty years of intermittent activity, the narrative episodes encompass the self-sacrificing austerities of layman Liu, ending with his ultimate ‘transformation’, mirroring the Buddha’s own Parinirvana carved at the opposite end of the grotto.⁸

The tableau can then be read in a funnel-like manner, the central conduit being the large figure of Liu as he transforms into the Buddha Vairocana. Like the image of Dizang Bodhisattva in the neighboring hell scenes tableau, the iconic representation of Liu as Vairocana reaches across time and place, up to the heavens of the Buddhas as well as down through his own worldly existence, and lastly further down toward that of his followers and converts. Not perhaps coincidentally, the Parinirvana scene carved at the

⁷This differs from the rendition of Liu’s ten austerities found in neighboring Anyue County at Pilu Cave, where Liu in his transformed state of Vairocana is represented as a Buddha-like figure wearing an elaborate openwork crown (fig. 123). See Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 208-209. Sørensen notes that the Pilu Cave figure successfully unifies attributes of the *dharmakaya* (“essential bodhi; purity”, Soothill, 63b) and *nirmanakaya* (“practical bodhi; transformations”, Soothill, 63b) of Vairocana. See Sørensen, *A Survey of the Religious Sculptures of Anyue* (Copenhagen: East Asian Institute, University of Copenhagen, 1989). For a more in-depth definition of the *trikaya*, or threefold body of a Buddha, see Soothill’s lengthy explanation, 77b and 78a.

The Anyue County Pilu Cave work dates to the Northern Song dynasty (ca. 936-944 CE), and the quality of the carvings is considerably higher than those found at Baodingshan. Unlike the tableau at Great Buddha Bend, the carvings at Pilu Cave were commissioned by Liu’s descendants according to an inscription found at the site. See Hu, “Anyue, Dazu ‘Liu Benzun shi lian tu’ ti ke he Song li <Tang Liu ju shi chuan> bei de yan jiu” (“Research into the Carved Inscriptions of the Liu Benzun 10 Austerities Tableaux in Anyue and Dazu and the Song Stele <The Legend of the Tang Layman Liu>”), *Sichuan wen wu* no. 3 (1991): 42-47.

The image of Liu as Vairocana found in Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan can perhaps be best understood as an interim stage between the Anyue works and the Liu figure carved in Great Buddha Bend (fig. 124). In this image, Vairocana still wears a crown, as was the case in the earlier Anyue work, but the crown now bears a small image of Liu in his layman’s attire. A similar composition is also seen in the half-figure of Vairocana placed near the west end of the grotto, directly opposite from the Liu tableau (fig. 125).

⁸Similar extreme ascetic acts are outlined in another apocryphal text, the Book of Brahma’s Net, *Fanwang jing*, composed in China during the latter half of the fifth century CE (Buswell, 19). In this text, ascetic acts including self-immolation were extolled at the same time that certain bad behaviors such as the sale or consumption of alcohol were condemned.

far end of the grotto also incorporates these three cosmic levels of existence. Below these three levels in the Ten Austerities tableau, the viewer encounters the Ten Radiant Kings, messengers of Vairocana, manifestations of his wrath against evil spirits (fig. 126).⁹ Given their possible connection to Vairocana, these ferocious deities must be considered as integral to the Liu tableau, not separate from it as the archaeological numbering system in place at Great Buddha Bend would seem to imply.¹⁰

The narrative scenes of the Liu tableau are also presented in this funnel-like fashion, thereby differentiating this tableau in format from the other narrative tableaux seen at Great Buddha Bend.¹¹ In the earlier discussed tableaux, the vignettes were presented as snapshot groupings, for the most part relatively easy to be “read” individually by the viewer. The Ten Austerities tableau presents the events of Liu’s life in an orderly fashion, but the participants in these events are not grouped per se, but rather hierarchically lined-up, the witnesses physically placed above or behind Liu as he performs his fiery deeds, while those on whose behalf he is doing so stand below (fig. 128). Since most of the witnesses are enlightened beings, their appearance in the heavens above is represented differently from those of

See J.J. M. deGroot's study, Le Code du Mahayana en Chine. Reprint. (New York and London: Garland Publishing Co., 1980): 67-69 and commentary on pages 213-244.

⁹Soothill, 263a. Stevenson, 02/01/02, notes that the *Vidyaraja* or Radiant Kings can also be seen as protectors of *dharani*, in which case the connection to Vairocana would not be so obvious.

¹⁰Only eight of the ten Radiant Kings are carved in the representation of Liu's ten austerities found within Baodingshan's Little Buddha Bend (fig. 127), and are not included at all in the nearby Pilu Cave carved version of the same theme which dates to the Northern Song dynasty. See Hu, Anyue Dazu Fo diao, 118 and 208-213.

the this-world individuals on whose behalf Liu is performing his acts. As previously seen with regard to the bodhisattva figure in the tigress jataka vignette within the Repayment of Kindness tableau, the witnesses to Liu's ten deeds are considerably smaller in size than the figure of Liu, which helps to create the illusion of distance. Yet not all of the involved parties are depicted, nor are they captioned in any fashion as has been seen elsewhere at Great Buddha Bend.¹²

Presented as they have been, these narratives necessitate explanation, and probably did so even to the literate twelfth-century worshipper. Beginning furthest to the left with 'Number One - Refining a Finger by Fire' and then proceeding to the vignette furthest to the right, 'Number Two - Staying in Snow', the viewer's eye continues inward back and forth to end up at numbers nine and ten which flank the central image of Liu as Vairocana. The austerities performed by Liu can be seen as examples of what James Benn terms "apocryphal practice", indigenous (non-Buddhist) practices which come

¹¹To a certain degree, one could argue that at least a portion of the hell tableau is set up in a 'funnel-like' fashion, but this organization breaks down within the lowest realms of hell.

¹²This differs from both the Little Buddha Bend and Pilu Cave renditions of the same theme. Carved on the inside of the stone *daochang* at Little Buddha Bend (an overall area of 2.9 x 1.6 meters versus 14.6 x 24.8 meters for the Great Buddha Bend tableau), space restrictions were perhaps responsible for the change in arrangement seen in Little Buddha Bend. In the *daochang* carvings, Liu's ten austerities are split five to each side on the two walls flanking the central Vairocana image on the back wall of the small stone structure (fig. 137). The arrangement is pyramidal, two austerities above and three below on each side. The heavenly witnesses, like the images of Liu, are depicted in circular moon-niches, with those of the witnesses being smaller than those of Liu. In the Pilu Cave tableau, the images are similarly arranged, but the groupings are not as easy to read due to a change in the overall format of the work – a grouping of five austerities on each side set up in a three-two, two-tiered, inverted pyramid fashion. The overall area of this work is 6.6 x 14 meters, considerably smaller than the Great Buddha Bend rendition of the same theme. Hu, SCDJFJSK, 330, notes that the inscriptions are the same at both the Anyue County and

to be codified in apocryphal texts such as the *Fan wang jing* (Book of Brahma's Net) and the *Shou leng'yan jing* (Book of the Heroic-march Absorption).¹³

The first austerity, dated to the second year of the *guang qi* reign era of Tang Xizong – 886 CE, is quite literally depicted, with Liu in the layman's attire he is shown wearing in most of the vignettes, seated in meditation, and holding up the second finger of his left hand from which a gilded flame arises (fig. 129). To Liu's right on the rock face which frames the left edge of the tableau stands the "Virtuous Sage" Shakyamuni, who, the inscription states, "was moved by this, and assisted Liu in transmitting the Way."¹⁴ Between the two figures stands a bodhisattva not identified in the inscription, yet undoubtedly an attendant to the Buddha and another witness to Liu's act. Below Liu are three figures, again not specifically named in the inscription, but men of varying age and discipline. These are perhaps representatives of the "many people sick with an epidemic" that Liu "accidentally happened across", and for whom Liu burnt himself in an attempt to aid their cause.¹⁵

On the far right side of the tableau is a seated Buddha-like figure. This image represents the second act performed by layman Liu, that of staying in the snow (fig. 130). The inscription is extremely specific with regard to the time and place of this event: it occurred in the eleventh moon of 886 CE on Emeishan, where Liu and his followers had gone in order to "honor the

Baodingshan sites. The Little Buddha Bend work does not include carved text next to the images per se, but it can be found incorporated into Liu's life story on a stele nearby.

¹³James A. Benn, "Where Text meets Flesh: Burning the Body as an Apocryphal Practice in Chinese Buddhism" in *History of Religions* vol. 37 no. 4 (May 1998): 295-297.

¹⁴DZSKYJ, 490. For complete translations of the inscribed texts see Appendix B.

¹⁵Ibid.

image of Samantabhadra".¹⁶ They encounter a blizzard en route, which leaves the mountains "white-white". Liu forces himself to the summit, where for two weeks the layman "sat upright in meditation...following the example of Shakyamuni who for six years performed Buddhist acts on a snowy mountain in order to achieve the Way."¹⁷ In order to further the association between Liu and the historical Buddha, Liu is not depicted in his scholar's hat, but rather with the short-cropped hair of the historical Buddha. In acknowledgement of Liu's deed, Samantabhadra manifests himself, and is to be seen carved directly above the inscription, which is not on the face of the large rock tableau, but actually carved on the flanking edge.

Returning again to the left side of the tableau, "Refining an Ankle by Fire" is the third austerity performed by Liu sixteen years later in "the first moon of 902 CE", and carved immediately adjacent to the image of him burning his finger (fig. 131). Done on behalf of the suffering masses, perhaps represented by the two female images carved below, Liu is shown once again in meditation with two gilt flames arising from his ankles, even though the inscription specifically states that he had in fact only burned the ankle of his left leg in order to make his offering to all the Buddhas.¹⁸ To Liu's right are two unidentified figures, possibly representing the messenger and edict bearer of the king, who, it is noted, certified Liu's actions after four days.

¹⁶Ibid., 491.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

Austerity number four involves a bit of treachery, which Liu with his enlightened mind foresaw, using the event to convert one Lord Zhou. According to the accompanying inscribed text, in 904 CE Lord Zhou sent a messenger to Liu asking for one of his eyes under the guise that it was necessary for a medicinal cure. Liu immediately recognized that this was simply a ploy to see if Liu was truly sincere in his Buddhist belief; he therefore grabbed a knife, gouged out his eye, and handed it over to the reluctant messenger. The messenger then took the eye to Lord Zhou, who confessed his sin and converted to Buddhism.¹⁹

The artist has chosen to depict the very moment after Liu has gouged out his eye. Knife still in hand as it lies across his chest, Liu's right eye appears puffy and closed. From his outstretched left hand rolls the white ball of his eye downward into a tray being held up by a crouching servant figure (fig. 132). Below these two figures is the figure of Lord Zhou's messenger, reaching up as if to take the eye. He stands frontally with his head turned sideways and up as if to regard Liu and his extreme act of piety. Clad in non-Han attire, the messenger clutches a box into which he presumably will place his precious cargo.²⁰ Off Liu's left shoulder is the bodhisattva Vajragarbha, who, the inscription notes, has manifested himself in order to witness Liu's sacrifice. To the right of the messenger figure stands another unidentified man dressed in scholarly attire. He may portray the converted Lord Zhou,

¹⁹Ibid.

but more likely than not he is connected to the second austerity carved immediately to the right of austerity number four, and represents one of the multitude that traveled to Emeishan with Liu in order to make offerings to the image of Samantabhadra.

Austerity number five represents the only chronological disparity seen within the Liu tableau. Whereas the fourth austerity ostensibly took place in the seventh lunar month of 904 CE, the fifth is dated to the second lunar month of the same year, and as such, the positioning of these two vignettes should have been reversed. One possible explanation for the reversal may be orthographic error; another may be a simple lack of concern, as both events took place within the same year.²¹ Both are plausible, although it is important to note that throughout the rest of the carvings within the tableau, including the three which all occurred within the year 905 CE, chronological order is the norm.

What is depicted in austerity number five is Liu cutting off his left ear (fig. 133). Liu is shown clutching a knife in his right hand, which he holds up to his left ear. His left hand holds the ear in place for the cut. Again seated in meditation, the inscription states that Liu's act "to convert people and to relieve sickness" was witnessed by "great worthies" who manifested themselves on a floating hill. These worthies are represented by the three figures carved off Liu's right shoulder, blue clouds curling under their feet.

²⁰Representing the messenger in more Central Asian attire may have been done by the artisan in an effort to evoke images of the Tang era during which Liu had lived and performed his austerities.

Below Liu are again the two female converts, representing here those that Liu has swayed with his “golden wisdom” (fig. 134).²² Austerities four and five are two of only three in which there is the cutting of a body part, versus burning which is seen in the other six. The second austerity is the only act of the ten austerities performed by Liu in which no apparent self-inflicted physical violence was performed on his body.

The vignette depicting austerity number six is one of two images of Liu prone, lying propped up against a bolster. Head to the east, feet pointing inward toward the central Liu/Vairocana icon, the master lays bare-chested, right leg bent, a gilt flame rising from the center of his torso as he proceeds to burn the area over his heart (fig. 135). Above him hovers *Dalun mingwang*, the Great Wheel Radiant King, Destroyer of Delusion,²³ who has manifested himself in order to witness Liu’s act. Dated specifically to the third day of the seventh moon of 905 CE, Liu’s austerity was undertaken on behalf of all the myriad creatures, so that they might “forever cease in their worries”.²⁴ They are represented as the two Buddhist nuns below, one carrying a lotus, the other a stylized mountain, images evoking the Buddhist law.

According to the inscription, austerity number seven, “Refining the Crown of the Head by Fire” took place on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon of 905 CE, hence only 12 days after Liu's previous sacrifice of

²¹DZSKYJ, 491.

²²Ibid.

²³Soothill, 96a.

²⁴DZSKYJ, 491.

immolating the area over his heart.²⁵ Here again the worshipper is told that Liu “followed the example of Shakyamuni Buddha who allowed a magpie to nest on top of his head”.²⁶ Liu is once again depicted by the artist in Shakyamuni-fashion, seated in a meditation pose with palms joined in reverence; on top of Liu's close-cropped hair a gilt flame burns prominently (fig. 136). Standing just off his left shoulder is the bodhisattva Manjusri, who has appeared as Liu's witness.

The inscription reads that “the Great Light Radiant King gave up his hair and gave alms.”²⁷ This is perhaps the scene that is depicted below vignette number seven, a series of three figures moving from right to left. The first figure is a ferocious commander - the Radiant King - with his sword drawn and his face glowering in a fearsome growl. To his right, stands another man, clad in simple clothes, his left hand clutching his hat to his head while in his right he balances a sword on his shoulder - readying to cut his hair off. On this figure's right stands a young man in short pigtailed - the Radiant King now depicted as a young novice - hands clasped and head

²⁵This is also the first day of the Ghost Festival, and the day in which the monks break from their summer meditation retreat. On this day, offerings were made not only at Buddhist and Daoist shrines, but also ‘national offerings’ (*guo jia gong yang*) were made, with the merit accrued benefiting everyone's ancestors. See Stephen Teiser, “The Ritual Behind the Opera: A Fragmentary Ethnography of the Ghost Festival, A.D. 400-1900” in Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion, David Johnson, ed., 191-223. Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project no. 3. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Publications, 1995): 196.

²⁶DZSKYJ, 491. The burning of various areas of the head is an offering still practiced by Buddhist devotees. See Miriam Levering's description of this practice as carried out in a Taiwanese temple in “Scripture and Its Reception: A Buddhist Case” in Rethinking Scripture, 99. Miriam Levering, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Benn also notes that as late as 1983 this practice was frowned upon by Chinese authorities, who used it's non-Buddhist origins as a rationale for abolishing it. Benn, 295, footnote 1.

²⁷Ibid.

bowed in prayer. Similar depictions of a repeated protagonist occur in the vignettes of the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau.

Austerity number eight is listed as having occurred in 905 CE, with no specific date given. Seated next to the reclining figure of Liu burning his chest, this image of Liu once again wields a sword in his right hand, held up over his shoulder as he readies himself for another cut, eventually totaling 48 in all (fig. 137). The inscription informs us that with each cut Liu “utters an oath to aid the masses, thereby echoing Amitabha Buddha’s 48 vows”.²⁸ Amitabha Buddha appears off Liu’s left shoulder, and to his left can be seen the drums and cymbals used by the clerk Xie Gong to “memorialize the event by performing music for all to hear”.²⁹

Below is another military figure, perhaps Wang Jian, the commander who greatly admired and respected Liu, and within whose *daochang*³⁰ Liu performed this austerity (fig. 138).³¹ This figure parallels the military figure seen on the other side of the Liu icon, and from here inward to the central

²⁸DZSKYJ, 491.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰*Daochang* is the Chinese term for *bodhimanda*, “a place or method for attaining to Buddha-truth...A place for teaching, learning, or practicing religion.” Soothill, 416a.

³¹DZSKYJ, 364. Wang Jian was active in Sichuan during the Tang dynasty, with his adversary, Wei Junjing, being responsible for the building of the Beishan Buddhist complex originally as a fortress to defend against Wang Jian. Wei is described as “an untitled but influential landowner in the sparsely settled hills between the Tuo and Fu river valley”, who organized local notables in opposition to an attempted local uprising and was rewarded with various prefectural assignments in the region. See Von Glahn, The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times, Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 123 (Cambridge and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1987): 42-43. It is interesting to note the similarities between the imagery found within the Anyue Master Liu tableau and Wang Jian’s tomb. Both contain carved half-images of strong men. In Anyue, they carry the lotus pedestal upon which Liu transformed into Vairocana sits; in Chengdu, they carry Wang Jian’s sarcophagus. This may indicate a sharing of artisans within the workshops of Anyue County

image, the figures are mirrored on both sides: military commander, official, woman bearing Liu's offerings. The overall impression of the Liu tableau is one of symmetry, which leads one to understand why all of the participants could not be shown since such a balanced final product would have been much harder to achieve if more figures had been added.

Liu's sacrifice performed in austerity number nine is one that surely shocked the twelfth-century worshipper, forcing him or her to realize the depth of Liu's Buddhist belief. The inscription states that on the fifteenth day of the intercalary twelfth moon of 905 CE, Liu "used a candle and some cloth to bind his penis. Throughout one day and night it burnt, thereupon cutting off Liu's desire."³² Clearly a difficult scene to portray even in today's liberal climate, the artist has effectively given the viewer a sense of the action while refraining from being explicit. Mirroring the image of Liu refining his heart, Liu here is represented right leg up to shield his private parts, fully clothed as he reclines backward against a bolster (fig. 139). A gilt flame arising from behind his upraised knee is the only indication of his extreme act. Stretching outward above this figure of Liu are the precious canopies which the heavens showered down upon him in admiration.

Liu would only have undertaken such an extraordinary act in response to equally extreme circumstances. The inscription reveals to the worshipper the rationale behind Liu's deed. Liu performed this austerity in order to

and Chengdu, which may explain to some degree the higher quality workmanship seen at the Anyue site as compared to the carvings found at Baodingshan.

³²Ibid.

resurrect a certain “Qiu Shao of Horse Head Lane”, who had already been dead three days when his family came to beseech Liu. The entire family pledged to enter into service to Liu (and by extension into the service of the Buddhist faith) if Qiu Shao could once again be granted life. Liu successfully revives him by “sprinkling fragrant water” upon his corpse. In thanks, Qiu, his wife, and two household women all come to fulfill their obligation to Liu and the Buddha. Liu then proceeds to emasculate himself in thanks to all the Buddhas, taking his own ability to give life as payment for restoring life to Qiu Shao.

The King of Shu “exclaimed his admiration”, issuing an edict to honor Liu. It is unclear if the unidentified scholar official depicted below austerity number nine is meant to represent Qiu Shao or the king’s memorial bearer (fig. 140). Most scholars agree, however, that the two women flanking the central Liu icon bearing Liu’s bodily offerings are meant to be images of the two female Qiu household members who exchanged their householder status to serve Liu and the Buddha so that Qiu might be resurrected.³³ The female figure to the left holds the ear removed by Liu in austerity number five (fig. 141). On the right, the female servant bears the hand cut off by Liu in austerity number eight (fig. 142). A cloud bearing a small seated Buddha figure emanates from each of their foreheads, signifying that through their commitment to Liu they have achieved the bodhi mind.³⁴

³³Hu, SCDJFJSKYS, 332.

³⁴It is easier to see these offerings in the Anyue tableau, since the female acolytes are on ground level, and Liu's offerings are rendered quite explicitly.

Liu dies in 907 CE. The last of Liu's ten austerities takes place a year earlier in the first moon of 906 CE, and is performed by Liu in order to relieve the suffering of the multitudes, and in response to questions of faith raised by the King of Shu.³⁵ In this final episode Liu is once again shown in seated meditation, his right hand held up (fig. 143). On his two knees the worshipper can clearly see the gilt flames rising as Liu immolates his two knees. Off of his left shoulder stands an unidentified Buddha figure as witness; below him stands another official clutching a tablet to his chest. Also unidentified, this may be the official who delivered the King of Shu's imperial missive to Liu as is indicated in the inscription.

Layman Liu's passing did not signify the end of his story. Liu was in essence kept alive through the carvings representing his legendary acts located at various places within Sichuan province. Clearly the magnitude of his sacrifice had lost little of its luster even 250 years after his death, thereby explaining the decision reached by Zhao Zhifeng to make Liu his spiritual mentor. An exemplar of virtuous enlightenment, Liu continued to be revered within the region, and his legacy carried with it considerable clout for the man who claimed to have received his mantle.³⁶

³⁵ DZSKYJ, 492.

³⁶Liu was not the first to utilize self-immolation as a means to "seal a vow". Benn, 308-309, notes Buddhist clergymen, including Zhide (1235-1322) and Zunshi (964-1032), also burned body parts as a means of achieving a specific religious end.

Taming the Wild Buffalo and the Monk Ideal

The Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is the last of the narrative tableaux found at Great Buddha Bend, and is the only work that sublimates the text to the image (fig. 144). This tableau also can be said to be more outwardly “narrative” in its perspective, the story of a herdsman trying to bring his wayward water buffalo under control. The work is not depicting a “pastoral” scene as is so often the glossy picture book description, but rather a fierce struggle between man and the elusive concept of Buddha-nature.³⁷ As such, I have chosen to refer to this grouping as incorporating wild buffalo rather than oxen, in the hopes of highlighting this struggle and setting this type of imagery apart from other Song dynasty works which truly utilize oxen, not water buffalo.³⁸

In his work on the relationship between the ox-herding sequence at Great Buddha Bend and extant printed versions of the same topic, Henrik Sørensen outlines the probable sources employed by the artistic directors at

³⁷The “glossy picture books” are not alone in describing the works in this tableau as pastoral. Ann Paludan, “Enlightenment in stone: The buffalo carvings of Baodingshan” in *Apollo* (February 1994): 11, describes the images as “recreat(ing) scenes of rural life in eleventh-century China” and being unusual in that “the entire subject matter is drawn from local country life.” Paludan goes on to say that because the sculptors were themselves peasants, they drew upon their fellow men as prototypes for the works. No information is available on the sculptors at Baodingshan, but nearby Beishan records indicate an active carving guild of professional carvers, not peasants. See Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 39-43.

³⁸In her article on the ox as a motif in Song period painting, Scarlett Jang states, “When the ox is presented in Ch’an paintings, it is usually a water buffalo, rather than another kind of ox such as the yellow ox (*Bos Taurus*), i.e., domestic cattle.” See Scarlett Jang, “Oxherding Painting in the Sung Dynasty”, *Artibus Asiae* vol. 52 no.1/2 (1992): 70. According to Richard Von Glahn, oxen were also enshrined throughout Sichuan province in connection with sacrifices to both Li Bing, a famous 3rd c. BCE tamer of floods, and the mythic tamer of floods, the Great Yu. See Von Glahn, 14.

Baodingshan in the creation of the tableau.³⁹ Sørensen notes that the origins of the ox-herding theme as a metaphor for spiritual training can be traced back to Indic roots, with the earliest references found within the Pali canon circa 3rd century BCE.⁴⁰ The use of this theme within China is equally long-standing, attributed to scriptures first translated by Kumarajiva in the 4th century CE.⁴¹ Yet it was not until the mid-eleventh century that the “circle-symbols”, which comprise the last vignette within the narrative sequence at Great Buddha Bend, appear.⁴² Sørensen also points out that the Buddhist school most involved in the use of the circle-symbol imagery is the Chan or Meditation school.⁴³

The presence of Chan imagery within such close proximity to works such as the Pure Land tableau and the hell scenes that adjoin them should not be considered idiosyncratic. By the Song dynasty, several schools including Chan and Tiantai had begun to assimilate Pure Land beliefs and practices, leading to a syncretic popular Buddhism that differs greatly from twentieth-

³⁹Sørensen, 211-230. The extant printed works to which Sørensen compares the Baodingshan tableau date from the Japanese Muromachi period (1338-1573), but are said to be based on earlier Chinese prototypes. Sørensen, 211-230. It is interesting to note that the printed Puming version of the series includes the phrase “The Chan master Puming speaks in praise” at the beginning of each of the ten textual sections. This is very similar to what is seen carved within the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, but is not included in the texts accompanying the Taming of the Wild Buffalo work.

⁴⁰Ibid., 210.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Brinker, Zen in the Art of Painting, trans. George Campbell (London and New York: Rutledge, 1987): 104. Brinker notes that the Chinese Chan master Kuoan Zhiyuan circa 1150 CE first promulgated a series of “Oxherding Pictures” which included accompanying text. A recension of this text may have served as the source for the Baodingshan tableau.

⁴³Ibid., 211.

century notions of Chan or Pure Land.⁴⁴ According to Heng-ching Shih, “The Chan – Pure Land syncretism provided an egalitarian salvation for the religious populace regardless of their spiritual capabilities.”⁴⁵ Since few art historians have addressed more than one or two of the Great Buddha Bend tableaux at a time, the issue of syncretism within the images found at the site has not been adequately addressed. One plausible explanation for the potpourri of imagery carved at Baodingshan is that because of the increasing syncretism of Buddhism, the public expected a diverse spectrum of Buddhist activities to be accommodated. Another would be that the Buddhist monastic community desired to represent a broad range of imagery for reasons of either pedagogy or posterity or both, an issue to be discussed in chapter five. Any rationale offered would be in keeping with the Buddhist theorem that the various schools simply represent differing approaches to an ultimate singular truth. Such an unconditional vision allowed for greater artistic expression while at the same time requiring a certain amount of foresight on the part of the monastic community.

Unlike the tableaux encountered earlier within Great Buddha Bend, in order to “read” the Taming of the Wild Buffalo narrative in its proper sequence, the worshipper would have needed to approach it from the opposite direction, i.e., keeping the work off of one’s left shoulder, not the

⁴⁴Stevenson, 366. According to Peter Gregory, the Chan tradition as practiced in Sichuan in the Tang dynasty was especially important since it developed and spread as the orthodox Chan tradition of the Song dynasty. See Gregory, Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

⁴⁵Shih, 6.

right as was the case in the previous five tableaux discussed. This fact alone helps to support a different vision of the Great Buddha Bend as it functioned in Song dynasty times. From the layout of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau as it stretches at only 4.5 meters in height for a distance of 27 meters, it becomes apparent that no connecting bridge existed between the two ends of the grotto in the twelfth-century. Had that been the case, the tableau would have been carved inversely to its present configuration. As the story now unfolds, a bridge would not have been desirable because it places the worshipper at the end, rather than the beginning, of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo story. Furthermore, since there is no indication that circumambulation was being performed at the grotto, such a bridge would not have been ritually necessitated.

From the placement of the tableau, it also becomes apparent that the Taming of the Wild Buffalo work was designed with the monastic community in mind. Evidence for this lies in the positioning of the tableau directly adjacent to the entrance to the grotto from the Buddhist center above. Monks entering the grotto would have immediately encountered this work, proceeding from this narrative dedicated to personal enlightenment to the Cave of Complete Enlightenment, in which a bodhisattva demonstrates how even enlightened beings reverence and learn from the Buddha.⁴⁶ Further supporting the theory that this particular work was directed at the monastic

⁴⁶Both works can also be seen to reflect the "perfect or integrated" path to enlightenment, the Cave of Complete Enlightenment including in its imagery small vignettes of the pilgrimage of Sudhana on his quest for the truth.

community more than the laity is the placement of the first inscription immediately to the left side of the entrance from the temple complex above (fig. 145).⁴⁷

The Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is composed of eleven rather than the standard ten vignettes, and curves around the southwest end of the grotto. The carvings were produced from the living rock with separate cut-rock pieces being attached in an additive process utilizing pegs which fit into holes cut into the portion of the figure carved into the cliff-face (fig. 146). This allows the figures to project out from the rock, affording them a more three-dimensional quality than is seen elsewhere at Great Buddha Bend.⁴⁸ Stretching for 27 meters, all of the eleven scenes are a combination of text and image as is the case within the earlier five narrative tableaux; however, the text is not as overtly placed within the work, but integrated in such a fashion as to allow the images to dominate the viewer's attention.⁴⁹

The first vignette entails the story of the herdsman attempting to rein in his disobedient water buffalo (fig. 147). Standing with legs splayed to the right of the recalcitrant beast, the herdsman tugs mightily on his tether, an act that causes the buffalo to barely acknowledge his presence! The accompanying text reads as follows:

Broken out of his cowpen, there is nothing you can
do! If (the ox) is not tied with a rope, he does as he

⁴⁷Sørensen, 214.

⁴⁸Paludan, 12.

⁴⁹Only seven of the remaining eleven texts accompanying the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau are legible. The incorporated segments of translations were done by Henrik Sørensen, and are duly footnoted.

pleases. (Although) you pull with the utmost of your efforts, you cannot make him turn his head. What else can you do but go along with him?⁵⁰

This grouping is significant for setting up the theme of humans coming to terms with the elusive nature of enlightenment. The herdsman here represents humankind, a grouping of individuals largely unable to comprehend the Buddhist teachings. The buffalo (or ox as he is sometimes referred to) stands for the intangible Buddha-nature. The metaphor is straightforward – it is only through a long and on-going struggle that humans gradually come to enlightenment. Rein in your animal, and you will at last come to a full realization of the Buddha's word.

The second vignette shows some progress being made by the herdsman as he tries to bring his water buffalo to heel. Clearly unable to use brute force, he entices the animal with grass, a symbol of the Buddhist's teachings.⁵¹ The man's success can be gauged by the animal's response – head bent backwards across his body, he gratefully munches on the proffered greens from the herdsman, now depicted wearing a broad-brimmed hat which hangs down across his back (fig. 148). The text highlights the on-going struggle of the man to control the beast:

As the fragrant grass is endless, you must have faith in yourself. If you do not drag him (away), he simply will not turn his head. Although the ox is aware of the man's intentions, if you let him go, he will run here and there, and will not easily be brought under control.⁵²

⁵⁰Sørensen, 224. The transcription of the original text can be found in DZSKYJ, 499.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid., 225. DZSKYJ, 499.

The inscriptions for the third, fourth and fifth vignettes are no longer legible, but the images themselves allow for an analysis of how the story continues to unfold. Taking another tack, the herdsman in the third scene employs the “big stick” approach, having failed to get the buffalo to obey him with his green grass delights (fig. 149). Arm raised above him, he wields a whip in his left hand as he continues to tug at the buffalo with his right. The buffalo appears to be turning towards him, although the herdsman’s success is difficult to gauge due to the loss of the attached head and upper body portion of the buffalo figure. Immediately adjacent to the damaged buffalo image is the fourth vignette in which the buffalo has at long last been brought under control by the herdsman (fig. 150). Once again wearing his broad-brimmed hat, the herdsman now leads the buffalo towards him, as a monkey playfully looks on from above.

The fifth vignette portrays not one herdsman and his buffalo but two, who share a laugh now that they have successfully tamed their respective animal charges (fig. 151). This is the most often reproduced image from the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau. Lounging back, arms wrapped around each other’s shoulders, the herdsman look relaxed and happy, content in their achievement. The camaraderie of the two men perhaps meant to signify the joys of a Buddhist brotherhood in which desire has been vanquished.

The sixth vignette demonstrates how far the herdsman and his buffalo have come since their contentious beginnings. The herdsman stands with the tether rope at his side, the buffalo standing above him as he leans down to

drink from the stream also seen in the previous vignette (fig. 152). Like the third buffalo depicted, this image is also missing the added on portions of his head and upper body. The accompanying inscription notes that the buffalo can now be counted on to follow his master, without any form of coercion being required:

Having harnessed the ox by the nose, it will obey (even if) the nose has no cord. ... He will follow you on his own account. At the stream below the mountain's shade, there is no need to keep him restrained. Morning or evening he does not escape,....⁵³

As seen previously within the hell tableau, the herdsman in this vignette stands pointing at the inscribed textual portion of the work, as if to guide the viewer's attention to the importance of this statement. He once again has changed attire, this time depicted as a younger, heavier man with short hair worn in two topknots.

Vignette number seven in the Great Buddha Bend's eleven-part series continues the story of the herdsman and the buffalo, but the focus has now shifted from their mutual antagonism to their peaceful coexistence. As Sørensen notes, this is the scene "where the herdsman, i.e., the Chan adept, no longer cares about cultivation or non-cultivation. He is allowing things to follow their natural course."⁵⁴

The myriad shapes are forgotten, with nothing from which they can be born the body of the ox is completely white...appearing and disappearing.⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid. See Li Fangyin, *Dazu shi ku yi shu*, 51, for the original transcription.

⁵⁴Ibid., 226.

⁵⁵Ibid. See Li, 52, for the original transcription.

The buffalo is carved head down as he grazes, his back to the herdsman, his legs used as a framing device for the carved inscription (fig. 153). The herdsman stares out at the worshipper, kneeling as he leans against a rock with a complacent smile on his face. Given that the figures were undoubtedly originally brightly painted as evidenced by the paint remaining on statues in other areas within the grotto, one could conjecture that the buffalo imagery would have been painted white from this vignette onward, rather than their more natural black, the white signifying the Chan practitioner nearing an understanding of his own Buddha-nature.

The eighth scene is also lacking in a legible inscription.⁵⁶ Both the eighth and ninth vignettes within the tableau illustrate the bliss that awaits the herdsman who has successfully brought his wild buffalo under control. In the first of the two, the herdsman is shown playing his flute, dressed in a raincoat with his hair once again in a topknot (fig. 154). Due to the crane depicted at the herdsman's side and his coat of leaves, Sørensen interprets this as the Chan adept à la Daoist immortal, which is certainly one possible reading of the iconography.⁵⁷ Yet it is also possible given the variety of body types and attires in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau that it is simply meant to represent another variation on time, the herdsman during the rainy season. This reading of the imagery is supported by an inscription from the

⁵⁶Sørensen has attempted a reconstruction of what remains of the inscription accompanying the eighth vignette, but I do not include it here as it does not illuminate a reading of the sculptural grouping. Sørensen, 226.

⁵⁷Ibid., 226.

thirteenth century which accompanies a similar two-dimensional image, and reads as follows, "The herd boy wears a hemp-fiber cape and a bamboo-leaf hat; he shows his dignity to whomever he meets. Leading an ox, he plays the flute; after ploughing, he rests beside the field."⁵⁸ More importantly, it represents the power of the mind over matter: oblivious to the rain, the herdsman sits and plays a tune while his buffalo wanders off. Indeed, within the tableau the buffalo is quite removed from his keeper; placed several meters away off of the figure's left, the beast nonchalantly raises his head up as he tugs at a tasty morsel. What remains of the square surface of the carved inscription is balanced above the low-slung back of the buffalo.

The ninth vignette also shows the pleasures of controlling one's animal – here the herdsman lies in perfect abandonment, his bare stomach and chest revealed as he lounges with his hands behind his head (fig. 155). Even the impish monkey whose attempts to provoke him appear to be unsuccessful in disturbing his bliss. His water buffalo charge has wandered some distance, and like his master lies resting on his bent knees, his head up, eyes staring out as he perhaps reminisces about his last tasty meal. Sørensen has conjectured that the recumbent beast is perhaps staring at the moon, representative of pure enlightenment, which figures prominently in the final vignette carved around the corner from him.⁵⁹ The vignette's accompanying inscription is located directly above the lounging herdsman's upraised knee,

⁵⁸Ibid., 241.

⁵⁹Ibid.

and the viewer's eye is thus drawn to it in a fashion similar to the pointing hand seen earlier on within the tableau.⁶⁰

The tenth vignette is integral to an understanding of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau within the greater context of the Great Buddha Bend, the sheer simplicity of its construction belying its importance. Composed of a monk seated in meditation on a short rocky dais, this figure seems out of place within the Wild Buffalo sequence because it includes no buffalo or herdsman, the protagonists of the earlier vignettes (fig. 156). Carved above the monk in meditation is the following verse:

The ox has disappeared, and the man is at ease by himself, (with) nothing to dwell upon, and nothing to depend upon. His nature is spontaneously vast, and it is clear that he is an adept. In the cold mountains, he gathers bamboo (for fuel), and spring water.⁶¹

Sørensen surmises that this verse was part of an original eleven-part text used at Baodingshan for the construction of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, rather than the now-extant ten-part printed and painted texts.⁶² It is a version unique to Baodingshan in having an eleventh component. Sørensen's research into later versions of the ox-herding theme also found no similar monk image, and he concludes that the entire construct was most likely inserted into the ten-part sequence by members of the

⁶⁰Little remains of this inscription. Sørensen, 227.

⁶¹Ibid. DZSKYJ, 500.

⁶²Ibid., 228.

Buddhist community at Baodingshan. He goes on to assert that the image itself is a portrait of Zhao Zhifeng, Baodingshan's conceptual director.⁶³

Sørensen's assertion regarding such a specific identification of the monk as Zhao is based on the similarity between this image and several others found carved among the various other tableau at Great Buddha Bend, and is supported by the majority of researchers who have worked extensively on Baodingshan (figs. 157a-d).⁶⁴ The major detractor regarding the Zhao identification is Li Zhengxin, who argues that the "curly-haired" individual is in fact none other than the Buddha Shakyamuni himself, the curly quality of his hair being a stylized version of the close-cropped snail-shell hairstyle he is usually depicted wearing.⁶⁵

Although this is outwardly a plausible argument, it becomes untenable when one looks closely at the numerous representations of Shakyamuni found elsewhere at Baodingshan. Why differentiate the Buddha in only a handful of carvings?⁶⁶ In the majority of imagery at the site, Shakyamuni is

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Some authors claim more than 40 images of Zhao Zhifeng can be found at Baodingshan (Wu Xianqi, "*Dazu shi ke kao cha tuan ri ji*" ("Notes on the Group Investigation of the Rock Carvings at Dazu") np. Deng Zhijin ("*Dazu Baodingshan Da fo wan liu hao tu kan diao cha*", 28-30) includes Wu's analysis of the 'curly-haired man' figure at Baodingshan in his overview study of this image at the site. In his survey of 13 different authors working on Baodingshan, Deng notes that only three do not recognize this figure as Zhao: one recognizing the work as a generic 'monk', one as an alternate representation of Liu Benzun, and the last seeing the work as an alternate representation of the Buddha. Deng himself argues for 53 curly-haired figures – 14 within Great Buddha Bend, and 39 within Little Buddha Bend, the majority of which are found within the 1000 Buddha motif.

⁶⁵Li Zhengxin, "*Baodingshan you Zhao Zhifeng zi zao xiang ma?*" ("Did Zhao Zhifeng Create Portraits of Himself at Baodingshan?"), *Chongqing she hui ke xue* no. 2 (1988): 98-100.

⁶⁶Li contends that there are images within Great Buddha Bend at only seven places which really constitute the 'curly haired' man, and uses Wu's extreme example of 40 such images to discredit the possibility of any of the works representing Zhao Zhifeng. Li's seven places include: the three sages in the pagoda above the Baodingshan inscription by the Song

depicted sporting a tight snailshell curl hairstyle (figs. 158a and b). For pedagogical purposes, consistency in representing an image as important as the Buddha would seem to be logical. This image of the curly-haired monk, along with the various other similar images found scattered throughout the carvings at Baodingshan, is quite different in appearance from the Buddha imagery, and clearly is meant to reference a specific individual. The only two other prominent individuals mentioned at the Baodingshan site are the revered Master Liu, and the Chan master Cijue, whose presence at the site is seen in the inscriptions accompanying the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents.

If these images are not of Zhao Zhifeng, they are also unquestionably not representations of Master Liu. The various images of Liu found at Baodingshan as well as in neighboring Anyue County uniformly depict the layman in scholarly attire with a short pointed beard, not as a curly-haired monk. The Chan master Cijue remains another possibility as a source for the image, but other Chan masters are mentioned as well, i.e. the teachings of Shan Hui seen in the Six Vices tableau, and Cijue's role at Baodingshan is unclear and undocumented. In contrast, Zhao Zhifeng is clearly linked to the creation of the site, and Zhao's devotion to the development of Buddhism in the area clearly embodies the monk ideal. It is therefore more likely that he would be used as the "face" of monastic enlightenment at Great Buddha

literatus Du Xiaoyan; the monk central to the Wheel of Transmigration; the man attending the Parinirvana; the monk image in the vignette on the 32 Minor Marks of Filial Conduct in the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness; the central monk image in

Bend, and one can safely assume that it is indeed Zhao's portrait interpolated into the tenth vignette.⁶⁷

More interesting with regard to the Great Buddha Bend as a whole is the short inscription found to the left of the seated monk figure:

Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, I will not, because of this suffering, give up the mind of enlightenment.⁶⁸

This inscription echoes the inscribed verse seen elsewhere at the site, and can be seen as a conscious effort made on the part of the site's conceptual director to link the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau with various other works within the site. Sørensen postulates that this is Zhao's "spiritual signature", meant to demonstrate his dedication to the Buddhist faith.⁶⁹ If that is indeed the case, then Zhao is not only present in physical form at respective points throughout the site vis-à-vis his image being used, but also in spiritual form. This "spiritual signature" first appears textually in the tableau relating the extreme filial piety of the Buddha in his past and previous incarnations, The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness; therefore, the purpose of the quote's placement here is to affiliate Zhao with the Buddha in

the Six Vices tableau; the monk in the hell scenes, and the monk in the Taming the Wild Buffalo narrative.

⁶⁷Immortalizing monks in stone appears to have been common in China during the Song dynasty, and as such, Zhao's portrait appearing at Baodingshan would not have been surprising to the worshipper. See Zhen Zhangan, "Luoyang chu tu Sizhou da sheng shi diao xiang" ("Excavation at Luoyang of a Carved Stone Statue of the Great Sage of Sizhou") *Zhongyuan wen wu* no. 2 (1997): 93-95, wherein he cites at least five examples of carved images of a Tang dynasty Buddhist master being found throughout the greater Shanghai region.

⁶⁸Ibid., 227. DZSKYJ, 500.

⁶⁹Ibid., 227. Sørensen is not the first to make a connection between Zhao and this phrase as being a type of 'spiritual signature'. See also Yang Jialuo, *Baoding meng you* (Taipei: np, 1966): 6.

his efforts to not only reach enlightenment, as would seem to be indicated by the content of the quote itself, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to be regarded as a filial son, a message framed within the context of the repeated use of this quote within the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau.

The last image of the tableau, vignette number eleven, is composed mainly of a textual inscription rising out of an open lotus form, above which hovers a full moon (fig. 159). The inscription reads:

Everything is accomplished, yet nothing is (really) accomplished! What mind can there be? With an accomplished mind, and the mind accomplished, there is nothing to dwell upon. The perfect lamp has no partiality, it illumines both old and new. The man and the ox are no longer seen, they are gone without a trace. The bright moon shines cold on the ten thousand empty shapes. If you ask me the meaning of this then behold the wild flowers, and the fragrant plants that naturally grow together.⁷⁰

This verse is considerably longer than the others inscribed within the tableau. Evoking the moon which hangs above it in the Great Buddha Bend depiction, this text concludes the Taming of the Wild Buffalo narrative, and is similar in this respect to two-dimensional versions of the ox-herding theme analyzed by Sørensen and Jang. The length of the inscription is noteworthy, however, in that it does not correspond to other editions of this theme, and one can only conclude that the changes must have been made by someone at Baodingshan. Sørensen postulates that this inscription and the tenth vignette

⁷⁰Ibid., 228. DZSKYJ, 500.

depicting Zhao are local additions, with the theme of the work based upon a two-dimensional earlier version.⁷¹

An inscription at the very beginning of the tableau cites the source of the carvings as being a production composed by Yang Jie, an eleventh-century Buddhist layman and well known court official. The complete inscription reads “The Ox-herding Pictures of Attaining the Way by the Court Official, the Magistrate of Runzhou, the Gentleman Yang, Bearer of the Goldfish Purse”.⁷² Since the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is carved well after Yang’s death, although the two-dimensional work served as the tableau’s source, it would not have been difficult for those involved with the construction of the Baodingshan work to have incorporated certain characteristics related to Zhao Zhifeng, thereby altering the work in order to suit their own religious needs.

In Praise of Spiritual Ancestors: A Conceptual Approach

The positioning of the image of Zhao Zhifeng within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau directly across from the Master Liu tableau reaffirms the assertion that traditional Chinese concerns underlie all of the narrative works at Great Buddha Bend. Two fundamental issues need to be examined. One

⁷¹Ibid., 229.

⁷²Ibid., 214. Sørensen cites various historical sources for Yang including the *Song shi* and the *Ju shi chuan*. Yang Jie was also responsible for a preface written to the *Yangqi Fanghui he shang yu lu* (*Recorded sayings of monk Yangqi Fanghui*), T. 1995, vol. 47, 646, which was published in 1088, and presents the sayings of an eminent Chan master. See Judith A.

issue expressed is that of lineage - Zhao was touted as Liu's spiritual heir. The other implied issue is that of variant acceptable modes to enlightenment – both layman and monk ideals are achieved within the confines of Chinese family and society. I will first consider the two paths to enlightenment, and the benefits to be accrued by both lay and monastic means.

At virtually any and all points within Chinese history, one of the preferable modes to enlightenment was that achieved by the learned layperson, depicted at Great Buddha Bend in the Austerities of Master Liu tableau. As previously mentioned, the story of the sagacious Indian layman Vimalakirti was taken up very early on after Buddhism's arrival in China by the Chinese literati as an example to be emulated.⁷³ As a householder, Vimalakirti fit well within the Chinese desire to maintain the family structure. Monks who left the home did not perpetuate the family line, thus creating a possible rupture within the ancestor worship framework.⁷⁴ With no heirs to appease their post-mortem demands, the ancestors would eventually be bereft in the afterlife. This was a situation most often deemed intolerable, and

Berling, "Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yu-lu* as a Buddhist Genre", History of Religions (1987): 79.

⁷³For a recent iconographic study of Vimalakirti imagery, see Laura Gardner Heyrman's 1994 dissertation entitled, "The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri: Chinese Innovation in Buddhist Iconography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1994). There are various good translations of the sutra available in English, see Robert A. F. Thurman, Vimalakirti: A Mahayana Scripture (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) and Charles Luk, The Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra (Berkeley: Shambala Press, 1972).

⁷⁴The term most often used as a euphemism for 'becoming a monk', i.e., *chu jia*, literally translates as "to leave the family".

sons were therefore not generally encouraged to pursue a monastic vocation.⁷⁵

To non-believers, the monk lifestyle epitomized the most non-Chinese quality of the Buddhist faith. To the faithful, the monk ideal was rather the penultimate display of the Chinese virtue of filial piety, as the monk or nun sacrifices his life and loves in order to achieve enlightenment not only for himself, but also for his parents and deceased ancestors as well.⁷⁶ Chun-fang Yu succinctly synthesizes the thirteenth-century Chan Master Zhongfeng Mingben's rationale for the filial aspects of a son taking up the monastic path as follows:

Mingben at first plays on the homophones of *xiao*, which can mean either filiality or imitation. Filiality is essentially imitation. Since our parents nurture and love us, we in turn should nurture and love them. But to nurture one's parents' physical body and to practice "love with form" is the filiality appropriate for a householder, while a monk shows his filial piety by nurturing the parents' *dharma*-nature and by practice of "formless love". The former, mundane type of filiality has a time limit, for we can love and serve our parents this way only when they are alive, whereas by leading a pure and disciplined life, by serious and sustained effort at meditation, and

⁷⁵Although the focus at Great Buddha Bend would appear to be directed toward monks, it is important to note that since Buddhism's very earliest presence in China nuns were also considering the sisterhood as an alternative form of filial piety. Arthur F. Wright translates the story of one early female convert to Buddhism, and her master's plea to her parents as to why she should be allowed to enter the order, in "Biography of the Nun An-ling-shou" from the *Lives of Nuns (Bi qiu ni)* in *Studies in Chinese Buddhism* ed. Robert M. Somers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983): 69-72. The master Fotudeng (d. 349 CE) counters An-ling-shou's parents reluctance to allow her to pursue her calling with the following statement, "If you consent to her plan, she will raise her relatives to glory and bring you wealth and honor. As to the great sea of suffering of births and deaths, she will direct you toward attaining its farther shore."

⁷⁶Shih, 13, quotes a common Chinese proverb, "When one son from a family becomes a monk, nine generations of his ancestors will be born in heaven."

finally by achieving enlightenment, a monk can fulfill the requirements of filiality on the basis of the Buddhist principle of the “transference of merit,” by which a son applies the merits of a sanctified life to benefit his parents spiritually, whether they are alive or dead.⁷⁷

Here the power of the monk to augment the benefits received by his deceased ancestors derives largely from the energy created through his ascetic activities. Coincidentally, this energy was at its greatest at exactly the same time that the major religious festival related to ancestral fate was commencing.⁷⁸ Monks were returning from their three month meditation retreat at the same time that the Ghost Festival was getting underway, and they would then turn their attentions to aiding the laity in the salvation of their loved ones from the various undesirable stages of rebirth. Having a monk as a son to serve as an intermediary for the entire family during this time was undoubtedly desirable.

In the stories of the filial bodhisattva Mulian, Mulian is reminded by the Buddha that “freedom from suffering can only be attained by relying on the power of the Sangha,” with the Buddha assuring Mulian that those filial sons who make offerings to the monastic community at this time will have the merit they accrue transferred to their deceased relatives.⁷⁹ Mulian is the

⁷⁷Chun-fang Yu, “Zhongfeng Mingben: Admonition on Filiality” in Sources of Chinese Tradition, 529-531, Wm. Theodore DeBary and Irene Bloom, eds., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 529-530.

⁷⁸Teiser, “The Ritual Behind the Opera”, 192.

⁷⁹Ibid.

filial son par excellence, a son who will literally go to any lengths (and depths!) to aid his deceased and unworthy mother.⁸⁰

At Great Buddha Bend the ideology of monks as perfect sons is represented not only in the image of Shakyamuni himself, and the possible reference to Mulian seen in the hell tableau, but also in the site's creator, Zhao Zhifeng, a man whose entire life was devoted to the monk ideal. Purportedly sent away in early childhood to a Buddhist monastery in hopes of aiding his ill mother, Zhao returned to establish not only Baodingshan, but also various other religious complexes around Dazu County.⁸¹ Fact or fiction, this version of Zhao's lifestory appeared in local gazetteers within 150 years of his death, and the legend soon became reality. Baodingshan continued to be a religious site up until the early twentieth century, and one could therefore argue that both the legend and the site apparently served its edifying purpose.⁸²

⁸⁰Mulian's search for his mother in hell, after he discovered that his father alone went to heaven, became the stuff of theater and oral legend in China. For translations of various stories found within the Dunhuang cache of texts, see Arthur Waley, Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960). For a discussion of this as a popular theater production see also Berthold Laufer, Oriental Theatricals (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1923), and more recently David Johnson, "Mu-lien in Pao-chüan: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the Yu-ming Pao-ch'uan" in Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion, David Johnson, ed., 55-103. Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project no. 3 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Publications, 1995).

⁸¹DZSKYJ, 261. A stele carved during the Ming era and placed within Little Buddha Bend gives the lifestory/legend of Zhao Zhifeng's upbringing, stating that Zhao was sent away to a Buddhist monastery when his mother became ill, with some accounts saying Zhao was sent to Hangzhou to study, while others pointing to the possibility that he was sent somewhere much closer to home within Sichuan province. Dazu xian zhi, 498-499, details Zhao's return to Dazu and his establishment of Baodingshan while also working on 13 other sites within the region. The gazetteer also notes that Zhao's work was predicated on an oath that he took to disperse the Buddhist Law to all and to protect the region from calamity.

⁸²For inscriptional evidence related to Baodingshan's continued use, see DZSKMWL, 205-206, 211-230, 235-270.

Filial activities with regard to the practice of Buddhist monks and nuns were certainly not unique to Baodingshan; the majority of the inscriptions found at other Chinese Buddhist cavesites involve dedications of merit on behalf of deceased parents or ancestors, and many of these were produced on behalf of members of the monastic community. Nor is such filiality unique to Chinese practice. Gregory Schopen has effectively shown that even within the earliest recorded Indian Buddhist donor inscriptions concern for deceased ancestors was the focal point of Buddhist artistic production.⁸³ At places such as the second-century BCE stupa complex of Bharhut, almost half of the inscriptions record donations that were made by a monk or nun on behalf of loved ones.⁸⁴ Schopen notes that given the preponderance of inscriptions created for the parents of monks and nuns that “not only was the concern for one’s parents – both living and dead - a major preoccupation among our monk-donors, *but it was perhaps a special concern of this group...*(italics Schopen)”.⁸⁵

Buddhist “family trees” were by the late twelfth century common within both the Chan and Pure Land Buddhist schools, two philosophies with an overt presence at Great Buddha Bend, and lineage is the second issue related to traditional Chinese concerns represented within the last two

⁸³Gregory Schopen, “Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism” *Toung Pao* LXX (1984): 110-126.

⁸⁴Ibid., 119.

⁸⁵Ibid., 123.

narrative tableaux.⁸⁶ The clearest statement to this effect is the conscious connection made between the site's conceptual director, Zhao Zhifeng, and his spiritual mentor, Master Liu. Hundreds of years apart in time, these two have been drawn together at Baodingshan for the express purpose of continuing an illustrious lineage.⁸⁷ Zhao inherits from Liu the Yogacara line, a story found carved in stone within the Little Buddha Bend. Images of both are thought to be included on the Sutra List Pagoda also located in Little Buddha Bend, and sometimes referred to as the "Founder's Pagoda".⁸⁸

The connection between Liu and Zhao is further reinforced by the two images carved facing each other within Great Buddha Bend. The image of Liu in his transformation as Vairocana central to the Asceticism of Master Liu tableau gazes across a ravine, which at one time was certain to have been less over-grown, toward his protégé, Zhao Zhifeng. Zhao, at the end of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, represents another being in a transformed state. Time and space have been compressed as Zhao Zhifeng,

⁸⁶There are a variety of sources one can go to related to Chan and Pure Land lineage issues. Specifically dealing with the Song dynasty, see for example T. Griffith. Foulk, "Sung Controversies Concerning the "Separate Transmission" of Ch'an" in Buddhism in the Sung, Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., 220-294, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), as well as Daniel A. Getz, Jr., "T'ien-t'ai Pure Land Societies and the Creation of the Pure Land Patriarchate" also in Buddhism in the Sung, Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., 477-523, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

⁸⁷Shih, 143, points out that such indirect lineage relationships were also found within the Pure Land patriarchy, with almost 200 years separating the first patriarch, Huiyuan, and the second patriarch, Shandao, with no direct master-disciple relationships found between any of the other patriarchs in the Pure Land patriarchal lineage either.

⁸⁸DZSKYJ, 8. Similar identifications of Liu and Zhao have been made with regard to images elsewhere in Little Buddha Bend as well as within Great Buddha Bend. I hesitate to go so far here due to two factors: one, extensive restoration has been done on one of the major identified pairings at Great Buddha Bend, that of Liu and Zhao at the Buddha's Parinirvana; and two, limited access to the images at Little Buddha Bend has afforded no real opportunity to study the purported Liu and Zhao imagery.

in the figure of a meditating monk, stares across the emptiness central to the grotto back toward his spiritual mentor Master Liu. Although their paths of existence did not cross within the worldly realm, the two men now share a common ground, immortalized for eternity in stone at Great Buddha Bend. Since Liu in his transformed state in effect mirrors the historical Buddha Shakyamuni entering nirvana at the far end of the grotto, the three men now share common ground, an enlightened state arrived at via three different avenues. The imagery in this case functions much like the repeated inscribed chant, as a visual repetition of the various paths to enlightenment.

Lineage is also hinted at through various scattered references within Great Buddha Bend. One example is seen in the depictions of the Buddhas of the Seven Periods, carved on the uppermost tier of the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau.⁸⁹ Here the lineage is celestial, not mundane – with the historical Buddha Shakyamuni being linked to his illustrious forebears. Another example can be found in the inscription occurring on the inscription carved on the front of the main Buddha icon in The Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness.

This inscription comprises three tributes to the Buddhist faith, ostensibly copied from a stele text originally found at Mt. Lu's Qianming

⁸⁹Hu Liangxue, "Dazu Baoding Da fo wan xi fang jing tu bian xiang" ("The Western Paradise Transformation Tableau at Great Buddha Bend, Baoding, Dazu"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 2 (1997): 31-32, repeats the lifestory of Zhao Zhifeng, and notes that Zhao's creation of the Western Paradise relief at Baodingshan can therefore be seen as a filial act.

Temple.⁹⁰ Each tribute follows one of three lengthy statements extolling the virtues of first Emperor Song Taizong (976-997 CE), then Song Zhenzong (998-1022 CE), and lastly Song Renzong (1023-1063).⁹¹ Although this ends the lineage sequence 100 years earlier than construction at Great Buddha Bend, some Chinese authors contend that Shengshou Temple, which sits above the site, was originally constructed during the Xining era under the auspices of Emperor Shenzong (1068-1077 CE).⁹² If indeed that is the case, Zhao Zhifeng may have been trying to create a lineage for the site itself, reminding the worshipper of Baodingshan's earlier imperially-sanctioned origins.

A third less subtle reference to lineage can be found in the tableau joining the heavens of the Pure Land with the horrors of hell – i.e., within the ritually based Six Vices relief. It is here necessary to discuss not the content of the work or how it functions within the grotto as a whole, but rather the authorship of the inscribed text and its relationship to the central figure of the tableau. The source for the work can be found in texts written by the fifth-century meditation master Shan Hui (497-569 CE).⁹³ Shan Hui is also known by the name Fu Xi, hence the large inscription “Made by Great Master Fu” that headlines the tableau. Since his life clearly did not coincide with the construction of any aspect of the Baodingshan site, Shan Hui himself did not

⁹⁰DZSKYJ, 275. All three of the texts associated with the emperors extol the virtues of Shakyamuni Buddha.

⁹¹Ibid., 274-275. Only Emperor Yingzong (r. 1064-1068 CE), whose reign was extremely short-lived, separates Shenzong from the earlier list of three.

⁹²Li Chuanshou and Tong Dengjin, eds., *Ming ren yu Dazu shi ke* (Chengdu: Sichuan mei shu chu ban she, 1999): 174. The authors do not give a source for this statement, and I have as yet to find supporting evidence for the Xining construction date.

⁹³Deng Zhijin, 26-27.

have any part in inscribing the “Six Vices” texts. Although some of the textual passages carved at Great Buddha Bend are similar to those found in Shan Hui’s essay entitled *Xin wang ming* (Inscription on the Realm of the Mind), they are not identical.⁹⁴ Both works, however, focus on the importance of gaining control over the sensual aspects of the mind.

The creators of Great Buddha Bend thus consciously chose to create an association between Shan Hui and the site. Deng Zhijin argues for an even greater connection, maintaining that Zhao Zhifeng is the source for the image of the carved seated monk figure central to the Six Vices tableau. This follows a line of reasoning pursued by others with regard to similar imagery at Baodingshan – that the “curly-haired person” is a portrait of the site’s founder, Zhao Zhifeng. As mentioned earlier, most scholars are willing to view the enlightened “monk ideal” within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau as being based on an image of Zhao. According to Deng, this type of “curly-haired” individual occurs fifty-three times within the larger context of the grotto; others have argued for far fewer such figures.⁹⁵ With an overview of numerous scholars to back him up in this identification, Deng pushes for Zhao as the mystery “curly-haired monk”.⁹⁶ As noted earlier within this chapter, the “curly-haired monk” does not coincide with known images of

⁹⁴Ibid. For the original Shan Hui texts, see *Liu zu fa bao tan jing*, fascicle 3, “Shan Hui da shi lu” (Gaoxiang: Fo guang chu ban she, 1994): 146-149.

⁹⁵A curly-haired individual appears in the Sutra List Pagoda in Little Buddha Bend, and can be seen in various tableaux throughout Great Buddha Bend, for our purposes, notably in The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau, where such an image is used to represent the Buddha in a previous life, as well as within the hell tableau, among the 16 Visualizations of the Pure Land work, and as the second to last figure within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau.

either Liu or the historical Buddha at Great Buddha Bend, leading one to conclude that Zhao may indeed have been the source for this unique carved image.

If one accepts this argument, then the implication is that Zhao Zhifeng not only is placed central to the composition, but he is also linked to yet another great master, Shan Hui, in what could be viewed as yet another attempt to create a solid lineage for the site's founder.⁹⁷ If that is the case, one must ask why Zhao would choose to do so. Zhao was already making a very overt connection between himself and the Yogacara master Liu, a layman who was respected and revered throughout most of Sichuan. Why at the same time choose to affiliate with a master from a different school, long since passed off the mortal coil? Two rationales present themselves. First, Liu's lineage was in fact geographically limited. Liu was known in Sichuan, but nowhere else in China were his self-sacrificing deeds touted. For worshippers coming to Baodingshan from outside the province, Liu was an unknown, and his lineage therefore carried little weight.

Shan Hui, on the other hand, came from the more metropolitan areas of China, wrote extensively and his reputation was well established. A connection to Shan Hui would definitely bring legitimacy to Zhao Zhifeng, in addition to allowing Zhao to plug into yet another separate philosophical

⁹⁶Deng, 29-31.

⁹⁷For the ritual purposes of the tableau, Zhao would be seen as the gatekeeper, providing passage between heaven and hell. Given the historic function of the Buddhist establishment as mediators between the living and the dead, between this incarnation and the next, such a strategic placement is quite appropriate, and, from the viewpoint of the worshipper, desirable.

Buddhist family, i.e., the meditative Chan school versus the esoteric Yogacara promoted by Liu. Lastly, not only does Zhao strengthen himself geographically by embracing Shan Hui as a spiritual mentor, but he also reinforces himself historically by pushing his pedigree further back in time. Whereas Liu is a Tang dynasty product, Shan Hui lived and wrote during the even earlier Sui dynasty (581-601 CE). Thus by incorporating Zhao visually into this work written by Shan Hui, the architects of Great Buddha Bend clearly broadened Zhao Zhifeng's audience appeal.

CHAPTER FIVE

TEXT/IMAGE

The previous three chapters focused on the imagery at Great Buddha Bend and included analysis of the function of the inscribed texts as found within the six narrative tableaux. First considered was how text was utilized in conjunction with the carved images, i.e., text and image. Two main approaches to text and image were discovered. The first, a utilization of the text to simply describe what was also being depicted three-dimensionally; and the second, the use of an inscribed text to provide information above and beyond what was sculpturally portrayed. This latter approach allows for a reading of the images themselves as a kind of hyper-text, best illustrated in the conscious decision to sculpturally emphasize one particular episode over another within a given inscribed storyline. In her survey of Buddhist scripture, Levering outlines four basic modes of reception for text: informative mode, transactive mode, transformative mode, and symbolic mode.¹ The above two utilizations of text at Baodingshan would be categorized as falling into her “informative mode”, texts which shape one’s understanding of a tradition.²

Apart from this understanding of the text as a counterpart to the imagery is the awareness that not all of the text at the site worked within this

¹Levering, 59.

construct. Ritual use of text is hinted at by repetitive placement of at least one inscribed phrase, "Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, I would not, because of this suffering, give up the mind of enlightenment" as previously discussed in Chapter 2. Levering would place ritual use of text within the "transactive" and "transformative" modes of reception, meaning to use words "to act in the power of the ultimate, to encounter the Other, or to transform the self."³ Ritual use in turn belies a third possibility for the extensive use of text at Great Buddha Bend – text as image. This is the fourth mode of textual reception conceived of by Levering, the "symbolic mode". The symbolic mode of reception "find(s) that word or text can be itself a symbol of the ultimate."⁴

In the following section, I will consider text as image not within the rubric of aesthetics, but as a socio-historical concern which predicated the need for the extensive amounts of text found inscribed at Baodingshan. Beginning with a brief theoretical discussion of text as image within both aesthetic and religious realms, I will then put forward rationale as to how the political climate of twelfth-century Sichuan coupled with religious precedence predisposed Zhao Zhifeng to incorporate such copious amounts of textual imagery into the design of the site.

²Ibid., 60.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Text as Image in Theory

Historically, writing and authority in China have been inextricably intertwined. From the very earliest times, written texts have been perceived with a mixture of awe and fear by the illiterate, those who demonstrated a mastery of text being viewed as magicians in charge of divine intervention. "Writing was known by all to be significant, but its significance was known only to the few."⁵ As time passed and literacy grew, some of this magical quality diminished, but reverence for the power of the written word clearly did not. The Chinese received Buddhist texts within an established tradition of placing great value upon and preserving the written classics, from which the term *jing* was taken to stand for the Buddhist Sanskrit term "*sutra*" translated here as "scripture", denoting such works in effect as Buddhist written classics.⁶ The carving of Buddhist scriptures over the centuries in large letters on smoothed-off cliff-faces, in a direct link between the humans below and the heavens above, is yet another example of the enduring mystical aura of the written word.⁷

Analysis of the written word within the field of Chinese art history has focused largely on the aesthetics of the text, be it the random thoughts of a scholar in exile scrawled in ink on paper, or an imperial edict inscribed in

⁵Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999): 3.

⁶J.W. De Jong, *Buddha's Word in China* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1968).

⁷Tsien Tsuen-hsuei, *Written on Bamboo and Silk* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1962): 72.

stone.⁸ At Baodingshan the artistic quality of the inscribed text is not the issue. No one calligrapher is credited with the inscribed scriptural works, and therefore, we can postulate that the aesthetic of the individual characteristics of the textual inscriptions was not an important factor to Zhao Zhifeng for mitigating the inclusion of text at Great Buddha Bend. The texts are carved *intaglio* in very readable *kai shu* or standard calligraphic script, a style preferable for the two predominant activities at the site: pedagogy and prayer.⁹ Rather than discuss the textual imagery at Great Buddha Bend from the theoretical juncture of aesthetics on a calligraphic level, it is more relevant to consider the aesthetics of the inscribed scriptures as a whole: as blocks of text whose presence within the tableaux should be equated with the pictorially carved imagery.

Text is a major component within all of the six narrative tableaux previously discussed (fig. 160). One has only to watch the modern-day foreign tourist poring over the site to see how the eye is constantly drawn to the large blocks of text, regardless of whether or not they are comprehensible to the viewer. Murray notes,

Because writing has held high prestige in China from ancient times onward, the juxtaposition of the written word was not considered a distraction from the

⁸Within the realm of Western language studies of Chinese calligraphy, numerous examples can be cited. The most recent work is the catalogue *The Embodied Image*, Robert E. Harrist Jr. and Wen Fong eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁹Chaves, 210, quotes a Qing dynasty writer, You Tong (1618-1704 CE) as stating the belief that standard script should be the norm for Buddhist texts because other calligraphic styles were inappropriate, being considered too “playful” for such serious matters. There are only a few exceptions to the standard script at Baodingshan, most notably within the large character inscriptions found in connection with the Cave of Complete Enlightenment and the Vairocana niche.

pictorial image. In fact, the presence of writing would have elevated the merely pictorial by bringing it firmly into alignment with the high cultural tradition.¹⁰

In their very arrangement within the sculpted narrative works, the inscribed scriptures and captions demand the viewer's attention. In many ways, the inscriptions at Great Buddha Bend display not the beauty of the line of an individual Chinese character, but rather the beauty of the blank page with even lines of script dancing across it. They cannot be ignored, the power of their presence contributing to a type of visual patterning or rhythm within each of the carved tableaux.¹¹

Given that this textual imagery was part of Zhao Zhifeng's original plan for the grotto, the engraved scriptures at Great Buddha Bend need to be viewed as equals to the carvings that surround them. As such, the inscribed texts become sacred objects unto themselves, not merely textual clarification for the more obvious icons. As Judith Berling notes in her analysis of genre writing within the Hinayana and Mahayana traditions, "Another feature of the Mahayana sutras is the stress they place on the merit of the sutra itself."¹² Mahayana being the form of Buddhism dominant in China, Berling cites the

¹⁰Murray, "Buddhism and Early Narrative Illustration in China", 19.

¹¹The inscriptions at Great Buddha Bend were clearly part of Zhao Zhifeng's original design. This type of incorporation of text is not unique to the site – most other Buddhist sites incorporate text in the form of dedicatory inscriptions – nor is it unique to China. John Sparrow in *Visible Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969): 58, elaborates on European architects including inscriptions in their original designs as early as the 15th century. Among other sites in China where carved texts are present, Xiangtangshan is the only site where the use of text as image within an overall sculptural program has been found. Even so, only a very few caves at the Xiangtangshan site reflect a coherent synthesis of the two, as noted by Mino, 177-180, and none are truly narrative in construct.

Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma as just one example of this new Chinese emphasis on the text itself. It is propounded in the Lotus that since the scripture is in fact the very “body” of the Buddha those who revere the Buddhist scriptures will be duly rewarded; likewise, any who dare to sully or defame the sacred text will suffer dire consequences.¹³ Moreover, a sutra itself can become a character within a narrative’s dramatic structure, thereby shifting the power of the Buddhist law from the actual personage of the Buddha to the texts he passed along.¹⁴ Levering supports this contention by pointing out that in these early scriptures, “there is an extraordinary emphasis on the importance and status of the sutra, tending toward an orientation toward the text that can be termed ‘iconic’.”¹⁵

By extension, scriptural works could be seen as embodiments of the Buddha himself as reflected in the practice of inserting texts into the body cavities of iconic imagery, in effect equating the text with the relic bones of the Buddha. In her work on the Northern Qi cave complex at Xiangtangshan, Mino furthers this inherent correlation between Buddhist texts and Buddhist relics. Mino points to scriptures being enshrined in or inscribed on reliquaries rather than only on or inside iconic imagery throughout China.¹⁶

¹²Berling, 66.

¹³Ibid. Campany devotes an entire section of his article to the inviolability of Buddhist texts, and the horrible punishments that await those who do so transgress. See Robert F. Campany, “Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of Sutra Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies” in The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies vol. 14 no. 1 (1991): 40-43.

¹⁴Berling, 67.

¹⁵Levering, 61.

¹⁶Mino, 191-197.

Mino then utilizes this aspect of the text as sacred object to further her argument that the Xiangtangshan caves need to be viewed as reliquaries.¹⁷

The significance of the text as relic and object of veneration is important within the Baodingshan site as well, although there is no reason to view the site as one large reliquary. Numerous images of pagodas, the Chinese version of the Indian *stupa* utilized as the original reliquary of the historical Buddha's remains, grace both Great Buddha Bend and Little Buddha Bend, with one pagoda image placed immediately to the left of the large tableau depicting the bodhisattvas of the Huayan Sutra inscribed with the epitaph, "Holy Relic Pagoda". Other pagoda images appear to the left of the 1000-armed Guanyin image, and within the hell tableau at Great Buddha Bend, not to mention the relic pagoda erected for the Buddha's father included in the tableau depicting the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness. The cult of the relic was clearly alive and well in twelfth-century Sichuan, evidence of relic worship being the inscription found in Little Buddha Bend describing the arrival of a famous Buddha bone at Baodingshan.¹⁸ Although any actual physical remains appear to be long gone from the Baodingshan site, the textual relics remain as testament to the enduring power of the word over the object. In this sense, the metaphysical relics of the Buddha supercede the physical ones.

¹⁷Ibid., 202-256.

¹⁸See DZSKYJ, 275-276 for the original text of the inscribed passage, and pages 60 - 62 of chapter two of this work for discussion of this text within the larger context of Baodingshan. References to *sarira* or relics are also carved front and center within the Repayment of Kindness tableau, placed directly behind the area where one would place

Within the Lotus and the Perfection of Wisdom Scripture the reader is in effect told that the scriptural texts or metaphysical relics are *more* worthy of offerings and reverence than the actual physical relics of the Buddha, since the truth these texts propound and the ritual training they outline is the source from which all Buddhas come.¹⁹ This can be seen as well in the miraculous tales of the survival of scriptural works regardless of natural or man-made disaster, the texts themselves embodying the superior power of the Buddhist doctrine.²⁰ This belief in the miraculous qualities of texts came to be taken quite literally, as in the case quoted by Jonathan Chaves in which eleventh-century Chinese worshippers to a Buddhist temple scraped off bits of the painted scriptures in the belief that ingesting the ink could cure them.²¹

The mere presence of Buddhist texts was sufficient to merit their worship. Rarely are the protagonists in the numerous stories surrounding the scriptures described as reading them or engaged in practices involving their content.²² Rightful possession of Buddhist texts further guaranteed posthumous rewards, again regardless of any actual use of the text.²³ At Great Buddha Bend, the sutras are not family treasures such as those described by Campany, but public ones. Like their private counterparts, they

offerings. The inscribed text reads, "Only my master has golden bones, and (although) having been refined by fire 100 times, the colors are still fresh."

¹⁹Leon Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976): 288, and Edward Conze, The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary (Bollingen: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973): 266-267.

²⁰Campany, 43.

²¹Chaves, 210.

²²Campany, 35.

were worthy of worship and reverence. Since the display of sacred texts alone was considered an avenue for gaining merit, the inscribed texts at Great Buddha Bend need also be viewed as perpetual sources of good karma for the visiting worshippers and resident monastic community alike, their display being an eternal and permanent one, differing in this respect from the more fragile privately-owned scriptural works of paper or silk.

Clearly the texts envisioned in these examples go beyond an understanding of the sutras as simply representing the sacred words of the *dharma*. The texts are instead perceived and utilized as one would a sacred image. Robert Campany notes that even in the pre-Tang era, copies of sacred texts were viewed as variant manifestations of the Buddha, with believers making offerings to the texts that ranged from simple reverence to bodily mutilation.²⁴ This phenomenon was not relegated to only the early stages of Buddhist belief in China. In his study on Song dynasty Buddhist commemorative stele, Mark Halperin observes that:

scripture also remained an object of veneration in some Sung accounts. Although “not setting up written works” ranked among the best-known of Ch’an slogans, and the semi-vernacular ‘lamp histories’ and recorded sayings’ literature became prime sources of Buddhist learning, monasteries continued to build sutra treasuries, and the word of Buddha never lost its pride of place.²⁵

²³Campany quoting from Michel Strickmann, “The Mao Shan Revelations: Taoism and the Aristocracy,” *Toung Pao* vol. 63 (1977): 28-30.

²⁴Campany, 35.

²⁵Halperin, 114 -115.

Over the centuries a tension would be expressed by various sects over the relative importance of “words” as well as images within the Buddhist faith, with some sects arguing for the sanctity of the written *dharma* while others viewed words as equally insufficient in expressing the ultimate Buddhist “truth”.²⁶ Yet given the melding of both text and image within the grotto at Great Buddha Bend, this issue does not appear to have been a concern for Zhao Zhifeng and those involved in the design and construction of the Baodingshan site.

If in the mind’s eye of the worshipper the written scriptural word carried at least the same weight as the carved Buddhist image, then an entirely new vision of the tableaux at Great Buddha Bend emerges. In order to envision what import this equating of the scriptural text with the Buddha himself had in the mindset of a twelfth-century worshipper, I have replaced the textual portions of the six tableaux at Baodingshan with iconic images of a seated Buddha in meditation taken from elsewhere at Great Buddha Bend (fig. 161).²⁷ The visual impression this creates is quite striking. Still symmetrically arranged, the figure of the Buddha *as text* now dominates each tableau. In this new understanding, the interchangeability of text and image makes them clearly equals, the imagery no longer dominating the text, the

²⁶Levering, 63.

²⁷This is a case of expedient means since in the field of art history, we have an “image bias”, tending to look at the image first, and then the text. The surrounding carved imagery could just as easily have been replaced with text in order to demonstrate the importance of the textual presence at Great Buddha Bend.

text not subservient to the image. The two are in essence one and the same, representations of the Buddha.

Text as Image in Twelfth-Century Sichuan

One could easily argue that Great Buddha Bend's unique combination of text and image were a result of the site's position in time and place. The long-standing belief was that Sichuan, being at a far-remove from more metropolitan areas, and the later Song dynasty construction dates, being post-Tang dynasty, long touted as the high point of Buddhist activity in China, were responsible for Baodingshan's idiosyncratic artistic style.²⁸ I believe a consideration of time and place is indeed essential to an understanding of the unique aspects of the Baodingshan site, but rather than view the site through a very wide-angle lens which incorporates all of China, it is more useful to focus in on the situation taking place specifically in Sichuan province and Dazu County prior to and during the construction of the grotto. Aside from the individual benefits to be accrued from the use of the Baodingshan site, what religious impetus could there have been for having a set iconographic program with such large amounts of textual imagery? One factor may have been the loss of the northern half of China to the Jurchen in 1125 CE, and the

²⁸I here reiterate the sentiments so succinctly put forward by Victor Segalen at the turn of the twentieth century. See *The Great Statuary of China*, trans. Eleanor LeVieux (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).

following incursions of marauding bands of first the Jurchen, and then the Mongols, into Sichuan province beginning as early as 1131 CE.²⁹

There are two components to this portion of the equation. One is that the Mongols were perceived as vicious, destructive “barbarians”, and within the Southern Song mindset, the end of the world as they knew it appeared to be at hand.³⁰ Although the Mongols under the subsequent Yuan dynasty came to be known as great admirers of Buddhism and of the written word, little was known about them by the Chinese people prior to their takeover of the empire as a whole. The literature that survives from the Song describes a distinct distrust of this unlettered, nomadic people who still engaged in shamanic rituals.³¹ Some Southern Song scholars presciently noted that perhaps it would be better to continue to pay tribute to a known enemy, the Jurchen, than to delve into the unknown with a war allying the Mongols and the Chinese against the Jurchen.³²

²⁹Winston W. Lo, *Szechwan in Sung China: A Case Study in the Political Integration of the Chinese Empire*, (Taipei: University of Chinese Culture Press, 1982): 37-38. It must be remembered that the construction dates given for Baodingshan are approximately 1179-1249 CE.

³⁰For an overview of Southern Song sentiments regarding the Mongols as described in the personal memoirs of various Southern Song officials, see Charles A. Peterson, “First Sung Reaction to the Mongol Invasion of the North, 1211-17” in *Crisis and Prosperity in Sung China*, 215-254. John Winthrop Haeger, ed. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1975).

³¹Thomas Francis Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China*, revised by L. Carrington Goodrich (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1955): 88, discusses how it was only after the Yuan dynasty was firmly established that Chinghis Khan employed scholars to turn the spoken Uighur language into writing.

³²Peterson, 250, notes that scholars’ feelings were mixed with regard to using the Mongols to rid the Song of paying tribute to the Jurchen, “the satisfaction at seeing an ancient enemy (the Jurchen) come under attack (by the Mongols) did not equal the anxiety felt over whether the chaos might lead.” In 1234 CE, the Southern Song court allied with the Mongols to rid the north of China of the Jurchen. See Jennifer Jay, *A Change in Dynasties* (Bellingham, WA: Western Washington Press, 1991) for an extensive overview of the events leading up to the eventual takeover of China by the Mongols.

To the people of China, no distinction was made between the various bands of invaders. The vast majority of literature fails to differentiate between the Jurchen and the Mongols, and the most commonly used term appears to have been the generic “barbarian”.³³ In 1196 CE, well before the 1221 CE first official contact between the Chinese court and a Mongolian emissary, concerns were being raised by Chinese officials that the Mongol attacks on the Jurchen borders to the north belied an intention to continue their conquest down into what remained of the Chinese empire.³⁴ Jay notes that anxiety brought about by the continued barbarian presence on the northern borders was seen as one rationale for why men of merit were reluctant to commit themselves to positions with the state during the Southern Song, with requests by officials to retire from public service at an all-time high.³⁵

The 1179-1249 CE construction dates of Baodingshan’s Great Buddha Bend fall well within these uncertain times; in fact, by 1235 the Mongols had entered Dazu County, and by 1259 they had seized control of Sichuan’s ten major cities.³⁶ A stele dated to 1247 CE and preserved at the Buddhist site of Nanshan in Dazu County recounts the atmosphere which prevailed among those Chinese who remained in the area after the Mongols arrival:

³³Peterson, 223.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Jay, 25.

³⁶With regard to the 1259 date, see Richard L. Davis, *Wind Against the Mountain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 34. For more on the Mongol occupation of Sichuan, see Chen Shisong, *Menggu ding Shu shi gao (Historical Texts on the Mongol Settlement of Shu)* (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shi hui ke xue yuan chu ban she, 1985).

Those living (in Dazu County) turned and moved on to another place. The scholars withdrew from state and local governance, not only indifferent but also (somewhat) approving. (The Mongols) encircled us for 1000 *li* like so many thorny trees!³⁷

From this contemporary account, it becomes apparent that the sentiments of the local populace ran largely toward hopelessness and desperation. The scholars and any form of local governance had abandoned them, with those that could escaping the area prior to the Mongol takeover. For the unfortunate individuals who remained behind, the sense of urgency and ultimate doom had to be assuaged, and the Buddhist monastic communities were undoubtedly one source of relief for the Chinese populace.

The second aspect of this equation is connected to what must be seen as a conscious decision on the part of Zhao Zhifeng to carve, and thereby preserve, Buddhist texts in stone. Within the Buddhist realm, a time of chaos and destruction was scheduled to occur 2500 years after the Buddha's death, and the notion of the "latter days of the law" or *mofa* permeated Buddhist practice at various points throughout its history in China.³⁸ This is based on the Buddhist scripture *Mahasamnipata*, which foretells of the eventual decline of the Buddha's teachings, marked by five stages of 500 years each.³⁹ The last

³⁷Li Fangyin, *Dazu shi ke yi shu* (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1990): 287 and DZSKMWL, 300.

³⁸*Mofa* translates literally to "end-dharma" or "final dharma". This term is not found in the texts relating the periodization of the Buddhist teachings, but rather is a product of Chinese commentaries and spurious sutras appearing around the 5th century CE. See Nattier, 90—99. The term *mo shi* or "final age" appears more frequently than *mofa* in translated Chinese works, Nattier 101-102. Nattier, 103, deems *mofa* "an "apocryphal word": a term created in China with no Indian antecedent."

³⁹Taisho volume 13 fascicle 397. An excellent discussion of Buddhist theories of time as well as theories of decline of the *dharma* can be found in Jan Nattier's work Once Upon a

stage would be an extremely troubled and chaotic time, with the final destruction of the Buddhist law occurring. At this time, the world would collapse into total ignorance of the Buddha's teachings. This chronology obviously lent itself to wide-ranging interpretation.⁴⁰ In Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan, an inscription accompanying a Song dynasty stele devoted to the arrival of a relic of the historical Buddha, dates Shakyamuni's *parinirvana* to 2282 years earlier, effectively placing the construction of the site within the last of the five stages of the final days of the law.⁴¹

Such a time of cosmic chaos and uncertainty easily mirrored the real events occurring in the surrounding Sichuan countryside. In 1127 CE, the principal trade route connecting Sichuan with the rest of the empire was severed, a situation that again would last up until the Mongol takeover of China.⁴² Lo points out that between 1131 and the eventual Mongol takeover of China, local Sichuanese strongmen often had to save the day, or throw

Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991). Nattier, 28-42, notes that the earliest formulations for survival of the Buddhist teachings after the death of the historical Buddha were only 500 years in duration, this number reached in large part based upon the admittance of women into the monastic community. The number gradually grew to 2500 years as time passed, and appear to have gone through successive stages of 500 year increments within the Mahayana school, growing to a total of 10,000 years at one point in time. Nattier, 46-62. Nattier, 54-55, notes that the *Candragarbha* scripture contained a 2500-year plan, which was subsequently "read back" into the *Diamond* and *Lotus* scriptures by Chinese commentators, further perpetuating the 2500 year cycle, and by the sixth century, consensus on the duration of the Buddhist teachings had disappeared.

⁴⁰This is but one of several permutations appearing in several different Buddhist scriptures regarding the timing of the latter days of the law. These is one computation of three periods, the first 300 years, the second 1000, while the last is 10,000, and another of again three periods - 500, 1000, and 4 separate periods of 500 years each. I chose the five stages of five, since regardless of which formula is utilized, the author of the Song dynasty stele at Baodingshan would have known that he was living within the final period connected to the period of the decline of the Buddhist teachings.

⁴¹This stele is dated to 1218 CE. DZSKMWL, 192.

⁴²Von Glahn, 7.

their allegiance to the invading conqueror. Such was the case in 1207, when Wu Xi allied himself with the Jurchen emperor, thereby creating an autonomous state within Sichuan which lasted until 1231 when the Song court finally albeit briefly regained control of the province.⁴³

One formulation of earlier efforts to perpetuate the Buddha's teachings during times thought to be those of the "latter days of the law" was to launch extensive carving campaigns to "preserve the canon". As noted in a 572 CE inscription found at Xiangtangshan in Hebei province, stone was considered ideal for such an enterprise, "as silk scrolls can be spoiled, bamboo documents do not last, metal tablets are difficult to preserve, and parchment and paper are easily destroyed...."⁴⁴ The most elaborate attempt at preserving the Buddhist canon in stone was the immense project undertaken at Fangshan, located 75 kilometers southwest of Beijing, between the years 600 and 1100 CE.⁴⁵ Here more than 7145 stone steles were engraved with scriptures from the Buddhist canon (fig. 162).⁴⁶

Similar to the works found at Great Buddha Bend, not all of the scriptures carved at Fangshan are inscribed in their entirety. Unlike the Great

⁴³Lo, 37-38.

⁴⁴Mino, 156.

⁴⁵Although Fangshan represents the most extensive attempt to preserve Buddhist texts by carving them in stone, other sites have been identified within the same region and of the same era as also having extensive amounts of carved Buddhist works. See Zhongguo shu fa jia xie hui Shandong fen ji, *Bei chao mo yai ke jing yan jiu* (Jinan: Qi lu shu she, 1991).

⁴⁶For a complete history of the Fangshan works, see Lewis R. Lancaster, "The Rock Cut Canon in China: Findings at Fang-Shan" in *The Buddhist Heritage*, 143-156, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski. (Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1989). A more recent art historical study of the site has been conducted by Lothar Ledderose, "Changing the Audience", unpublished paper. I would like to thank Dr. Ledderose for his help in providing me with a copy of his paper, and for leads to more information about the rock-cut canon tradition in China.

Buddha Bend inscriptions, the majority of the Fangshan texts were carved on movable, freestanding stele, the majority of which were eventually cached. The major exception to this rule is the program of scriptures carved inside the Leiyingdong (“Thunder Sound Cave”).⁴⁷ From historical inscriptions dating to the mid-seventh century also found at the Fangshan site, it is known that the original purpose of the project was to preserve the canon for posterity, the cleric in charge fearing an upcoming decline of the Buddhist law.⁴⁸ Outside of Fangshan, other early Buddhist sites also were thought to have incorporated copious inscribed texts due to feelings of anxiety over an approaching decline in Buddhism. Mino argues that Xiangtangshan is another example of a site where fears over the imminent collapse of the Northern Wei dynasty led to increased pressure to carve Buddhist texts at the site in order to preserve the faith.⁴⁹

The scriptures were all important to surviving such a disastrous time. Since Buddhist texts are in effect sourced back to the words of the historical Buddha and document his method of transforming the world, his teachings are the texts, and without the texts there would be no teaching, and therefore, no transformation, or enlightenment, could take place.⁵⁰ The Buddhist scriptures themselves emphasize that without their transmission, no future

⁴⁷Ledderose, 2.

⁴⁸Ledderose, 3-8. Numerous dedicatory inscriptions dating to later periods point to a more traditional merit-making rationale as well. See Lancaster, 148-149.

⁴⁹Mino, 189-190.

⁵⁰Levering, 64.

Buddhas would arise.⁵¹ In effect, Zhao Zhifeng, along with both the lay and monastic communities who participated in activities at Baodingshan, had a very dire imperative to ensure that the Mongol invaders did not succeed. A wholesale destruction of the Buddhist teachings would eliminate what was the very essence of their own possibility for enlightenment and subsequent salvation. Without texts there could be no teachings, and as such the inscribed texts at Great Buddha Bend became much more symbolically valuable than the carved images.

The sites of Fangshan and Xiangtangshan are at quite a physical as well as temporal remove from Baodingshan, and therefore can serve only as examples of the rock-cut sutra tradition as a whole. Yet in Sichuan Buddhist texts were also inscribed in stone, the best documented case being the works found at the Tang dynasty site of Wofo Yuan (“Temple of the Reclining Buddha”), in neighboring Anyue County (fig. 163).⁵² The Wofo Yuan, known for its large Parinirvana scene, includes at least one instance where text and image is combined within a niche, although the text at Wofo Yuan does not appear to be as closely conjoined in content to the images as is the case at

⁵¹See Hurvitz’s translation of the Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 178-179.

⁵²See Hu Wenhe and Li Guanzhi, “Anyue Wofo gou Tang dai shi jing” (“The Tang Dynasty Rock Sutras of Anyue’s Wofo Ravine”) Sichuan wen wu no. 2 (1986): 20-25. Hu also footnotes at least one other area within the province, Lingyanshan in Guan County, with rock-cut sutras there also dating to the Tang dynasty. See Hu, “Guan xian Ling yan shan Tang dai shi jing” (The Tang Dynasty Rock Sutras of Guan County’s Lingyanshan”) Sichuan wen wu no. 2 (1984): 33-35. For more on sutra inscriptions dating to the Tang and found in areas outside of Sichuan province, see Chang Qing’s Binxian Da fo si zao xiang yi shu (Iconic Art of the Great Buddha Temple in Binxian) (Beijing: Xian dai chu ban she, 1998) and Ding Mingyi’s article “Gongxian Tianlong Xiangtang Anyang shu chu shi ku si” (“The Numerous Rock Cave Temples of Tianlong, Xiangtang, and Anyang in Gong County”) in Zhong guo mei shu quan ji diao su bian, vol. 13 (Beijing: Zhongguo mei shu chu ban she, 1985): 26-51.

Great Buddha Bend.⁵³ The texts at Wofu Yuan are mainly inscribed sutras, some of which are similar to those found at Great Buddha Bend (fig. 164).⁵⁴ Approximately 45 separate inscribed texts are found carved in 15 different niches scattered throughout the Wofu Yuan site, with multiple sutras being carved in any one given niche. The two sutras which are also found inscribed at Great Buddha Bend include the Scripture on the Repayment of the Kindness of Parents, which is found in sections in three different niches at Wofu Yuan, and the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents, which is found in only one niche.⁵⁵ What connects these texts at Wofu Yuan with preservation of the canon efforts such as that seen at Fangshan is the presence of a carved list of sutras or sutra catalogue at the Wofu Yuan site.⁵⁶ This sutra catalogue can be found in cave number 46, along with a preface to the Tang Buddhist canon which dates to the seventh century.⁵⁷

Like Wofu Yuan, Baodingshan also has an inscribed sutra catalogue, carved around the four sides of the lowest level of the “Founder’s Pagoda” located in Little Buddha Bend (fig. 165).⁵⁸ Baodingshan’s sutra catalogue is

⁵³The example in question is the Wofu Yuan niche in which the Usnisavijaya Sutra is inscribed. Many thanks to Dr. Sørensen, 9/02/01 personal correspondence, for this information.

⁵⁴See Hu et al, 21-23. Dedicatory inscriptions are also found carved at the Wofu Yuan site.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Henrik Sørensen, A Survey of the Religious Sculptures of Anyue (Copenhagen: East Asian Institute, University of Copenhagen, 1989): 8. The titles of the sutras did not always appear in “lists” per se. At another Song dynasty site, that of the Peacock King Cave in nearby Anyue County, the roundel ends of the stone beams of the pagoda are carved with only titles of scriptures from the canon, perhaps implying the ritual use of the names alone. I’d like to thank Dr. Sørensen for sharing this information with me via personal correspondence, April 2001.

⁵⁷SCDJFJSKS, 63-64, with a table of all of the inscribed sutras on pages 66-69.

⁵⁸DZSKMWL, 170-184.

comprised of a list of 510 scriptures, beginning on the north side with the title “The Buddha Preached the 12 Divisions of the Canon”, (*“Fo shuo shi er bu da zang jing”*), and continuing around the base of the pagoda and onto the upper three tiers with a consecutive listing of sutras by name only (fig. 166).⁵⁹

The notion of carving the “twelve divisions”, or in essence the entire Buddhist canon, is also mentioned in the Fangshan historical inscriptions.⁶⁰ What is thought to have been the rationale behind this original vow was not to carve the works in their entirety, but rather to choose representative portions of each to carve. Ledderose notes that although a representative sample may have been the original intention of Jingwan, the cleric in charge of the work at Fangshan, the idea of engraving the “twelve divisions” began to be implemented quite literally when subsequent clerics took over the work being done there.⁶¹ This had effectively been the original concept at the Northern Qi site of Xiangtangshan as well, where passages from representative works of the twelve divisions of the canon were inscribed.⁶²

⁵⁹Art Museum of Dazu Stone Carvings of Chongqing and the Institute of Dazu Stone Carvings Art of Sichuan Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, *“Dazu Baodingshan Xiao fo wan zu shi fa shen jing mu ta kan cha bao gao”* (“An Investigation of the Pagoda with Founder Figures of a Buddhist Sect and Buddhist Sutras List inscribed at Little Buddha Bend in Baoding Mount of Dazu County”), *Wen wu* no. 2 (1994): 8, 26-37.

⁶⁰Ledderose, 13. According to Soothill, 44a, the twelve divisions of the canon are comprised of 1) *sutras* or the sermons of the Buddha; 2) *geya*, prosimetric pieces; 3) *gatha*, chants or poems; 4) *nidana*, sutras written because of a request or because certain precepts were violated; 5) *itivrtka*, or narratives; 6) *jataka*, stories of former lives of the Buddha; 7) *abhidharma*, *sastra* or tracts on Buddhist philosophy or metaphysics (Soothill, 288b); 8) *avadana*, or parables; 9) *upadesa*, discourses by question and answer; 10) *udana*, impromptu or unsolicited addresses; 11) *vaipulya*, or expanded *sutras*; 12) *vyakarana*, prophecies.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 14.

⁶²Mino, 158. Mino, 158, footnote 9, quotes Akira Hirakawa as tracing the twelve divisions back to the Sarvastivadin tradition. The laity was also familiar with the importance of the twelve divisions of the canon, as demonstrated in these comments provided by the famous 8th-century poet Bo Juyi, “I have heard that the power of one earnest wish and the

At Baodingshan as at Wofo Yuan, the sutras found inscribed within the site are also listed in the sutra catalogue. Although some of the titles of the works directly correlate to modern-day identifications of the narrative tableaux, such as the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, others point to the possibility of the text and imagery of the tableaux being pieced together from various known and revered scriptures. For example, there is no listing for the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness, but there are several specific works listed related to the vignettes found within this tableau.⁶³ These include The Scripture on the Causal Grounds for the Pious Act of Sacrificing One's Body to Aid a Hungry Tiger, The Scripture on the Causal Grounds with regard to Prince Samaka's Filial Conduct, and The Parrot Scripture.⁶⁴

Several of the scriptures listed in the sutra catalogue make mention of mothers, but only the Scripture on the Difficulty in Repaying the Kindness of Parents can be said to relate specifically to the texts and images at Great Buddha Bend. Vis-à-vis hell and the Ten Kings, several cited works revolve around Mulian, the bodhisattva who is largely credited with helping create the Ghost Festival; also cited are a number of works related to the hungry

merit of (reciting) one verse will never be lost; how much greater then is the merit accruing from a thousand mouths uttering the twelve divisions of the canon? Moreover, how much greater also when hundreds of thousands of ears are listening to myriads of *sutras*?" See Peter N. Gregory, "The Teaching of Men and Gods: The Doctrinal and Social Basis of Lay Buddhist Practice in the Hua-yen Tradition," in Robert M. Gimello and Peter N. Gregory, ed., Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984): 292-293.

⁶³It must be noted that areas of the sutra catalogue are no longer legible, so the possibility does exist that some of the missing titles were once included but are no longer extant.

⁶⁴DZSKMWL, 172-174.

ghosts.⁶⁵ Moreover, there are works listed directed at both monk and nun, as well as at men and women of the laity.⁶⁶

It is clear from the sutra catalogue that Zhao was fully aware of a large variety of texts. His decision to inscribe certain texts more fully within the confines of Great Buddha Bend can be seen to reflect his beliefs that these texts were necessary for the continuation of the Buddhist *dharma* as a whole. As Mino notes, "The preservation of specific *sutras* or passages of scripture in monumental form indicates that they were an established part of a canon and that an important process of selection and editing had already been undertaken...."⁶⁷ It is interesting that Zhao's selection of texts to portray and inscribe within the grotto represents a cross-section of beliefs, related to both the individual as well as the family, presenting the possibilities for the future by relying on examples from the past. Zhao in essence chooses to exalt a number of texts that in previous eras would have been considered secondary works, almost all of them apocryphal or local works, rather than inscribe the better-known texts that could accompany the Huayan triad or the Vairocana imagery.⁶⁸ Perhaps Zhao was aware of these texts being inscribed elsewhere, or chose texts he felt would best serve his congregation in the turbulent times to come.

⁶⁵Ibid., 174 -176 and 183.

⁶⁶Sutras related to the iconic imagery found within Great Buddha Bend are also included in the catalogue, such as numerous scriptures related to the worship of 1000-Armed Guanyin and the Peacock King (DZSKMWL, 174), as well as the Eight Guardians, the Ten Radiant Kings, and Vairocana.

⁶⁷Mino, 199.

Rock/Paper

While no factual data exists linking Zhao Zhifeng's inscribing of vast quantities of sutras at Baodingshan to the impending takeover by the Mongols and fears of “*mofa*”, the presence of the sutra catalogue combined with the increasingly chaotic state of affairs in Sichuan point to an effort by Zhao to try to preserve in stone what could all too easily have been destroyed were it constructed of plaster or paper. It was known already by the late 11th-century that the nomadic interlopers were likely to leave stone inscriptions found at Buddhist sites untouched, while pursuing a definite find-and-destroy agenda with regard to similar works placed in Chinese government offices or on private property.⁶⁹

The carving of scriptural texts with the intent of preserving the Buddhist teachings appears to have fallen by the wayside in favor of commemorative carvings during the late Tang and subsequent Song eras, yet one cannot conclude that this was a blanket reality throughout the empire.⁷⁰ Even though woodblock printing rose to be the dominant means of textual production after the tenth century, it did not subsume stone inscription carving, but rather the two continued along parallel lines of existence.⁷¹

⁶⁸Mino notes that within Cave I within the Southern Group at Xiangtangshan almost the entire text of the *Huayan jing* is inscribed. *Ibid.*, 175. No text accompanies the imagery related to the Huayan sutra at Baodingshan.

⁶⁹Halperin, 25, quoting from writings of the Song official Ceng Gong (1019-1083 CE).

⁷⁰Halperin, 24.

⁷¹Carter, 24.

Moreover, Zhao Zhifeng may have been trying to evoke earlier times by utilizing the rock-cut tradition that had so effectively preserved the Buddhist faith at nearby Wofo Yuan through the difficult times of the late Tang dynasty. Philosophical considerations on a variety of levels may have been key to the texts being etched permanently in stone. On one level, the texts embody not just the Buddha's teachings, but the Buddha himself. On another, preservation of the faith in all its forms was of paramount concern for the monastic community. How best to do so was up to the discretion of the individual in charge of Baodingshan's construction, but arguably Zhao Zhifeng had to have seen with his own eyes the effective means by which works from the Tang dynasty at nearby Wofo Yuan had survived the devastation of internal Buddhist persecutions. Nearby stone cliff carvings remained, while wooden temples dating to the same period did not fare as well. In a time similarly rife with calamity and chaos, the late Tang dynasty Master Liu had pledged to aid all sentient beings.⁷² Following in the footsteps of his spiritual master, Zhao likewise dedicated the creation of Baodingshan to "freeing the surrounding countryside from calamity, and bringing harmony to the region."⁷³ The eternal quality of stone was a factor surely not lost upon Great Buddha Bend's designers.

As was the case at Fangshan, Xiangtangshan and Wofo Yuan, Zhao did not set out to inscribe the entire Buddhist canon in stone. One could view the textual images of Great Buddha Bend as his choice of representative

⁷²DZSKMWL, 207.

works from the twelve-divisions of the canon. It has often been noted that the site is eclectic in its spiritual program, an effect perhaps due to Zhao's desire to incorporate very disparate elements from the Buddhist faith into one faith-preserving site.

Textual imagery as described by Levering involves the texts themselves actually functioning in all four modes of reception at the same time, existing as "dimensions of the same reality".⁷⁴ The deep connection between the symbolic mode and the other three modes is obvious when it is deconstructed. The scripture becomes a symbol of the transcendent, an icon of the sacred, *because* of the ways in which it is used. "Thus symbolic reception depends upon the other modes of reception, and vice versa."⁷⁵ In this regard, one could also then view the presence of sculpted imagery at Great Buddha Bend as serving to solidify the presence of the textual imagery at the site, the use of the sculpted imagery aiding the faithful in eventually arriving at an understanding of the true importance of the nearby textual works. Had he wanted to spread the Buddhist faith, Zhao Zhifeng could have mass-produced works more quickly and efficiently in woodblock print. Instead, his decision to inscribe large portions of text as part of the imagery found carved in stone at Great Buddha Bend makes it evident that the turmoil of the times was prompting just as much of an effort at textual preservation as

⁷³*Dazu xian zhi*, 499.

⁷⁴Levering, 63.

⁷⁵Levering, 87. The importance of textual imagery continues into the present-day as witnessed by Levering in her research at Taiwanese Buddhist monasteries and convents. Within each of these communities, a copy of the *Da zang jing*, or complete Buddhist writings, was kept as a precious possession, rarely if ever used, its importance largely symbolic.

at edification. Clearly, depending upon one's level of education and enlightenment, the narrative reliefs at Baodingshan functioned in a multivalent fashion.

CONCLUSIONS

This study began with a consideration of narrative as a form of visual expression. Narrative imagery as it differed from iconic imagery within the tableaux at Baodingshan was found to be a problematic construct. A number of the narrative tableaux within Great Buddha Bend incorporated iconic imagery into their storylines, while similarly several of the more apparently iconic works could also be read as narrative. In order to better assess the imagery found at Great Buddha Bend, and to limit somewhat the scope of this study, the defining parameters of narrative were narrowed to include only those works which incorporated text, citing the presence of text as a valid indication of audience reception of the works in question as narrative.

Narrative was further defined as incorporating two basic elements - action that produces change, and time. The narrative works at Great Buddha Bend were then carefully analyzed with regard to the various methods in which text and image were combined within each tableau. Mode of representation was considered within each large relief, as well as within the relationship of the six works to each other within the grotto as a whole. From this analysis, it was determined that the individual reliefs actually were related pairs, dependent not so much on mode of representation, but rather on subject matter, and in essence formed a very broadly defined narrative network.

Within these pairs, time was represented on a variety of levels, resulting in the imagery being compartmentalized, much as was the tradition in Chinese oral and historical narration. The protagonists involved in "action that produces change" were also found to vary from tableau to tableau, with several utilizing a universal man or woman as the key player in the central drama, while others involved very specifically named individuals. These varying aspects of the changing subject matter of the narratives led to a closer consideration of the meaning inherent in each pairing.

The numerous components within each tableau demonstrated that mode of representation affected meaning, with some works clearly stating their intent with inscribed texts that paralleled the images, while other works left much more open to interpretation. These latter works, in which specific imagery was selected to represent a much more elaborate inscribed narrative, were considered within the context of having been consciously chosen by Zhao Zhifeng to highlight what was important to the overall textual narrative of the tableau.

Captioning and numbering was used with great effectiveness within all six of the tableaux in order to move the literate viewer through the works. For the illiterate, visual cues were provided in the form of symmetrical placement of the individual vignettes within a given tableau; once clued in to the order of things, he or she could easily move through a work, using the carved imagery as impetus for re-creating the story from memory, if the story were known. Clearly some of the stories may not have been known to the

Song dynasty worshipper venturing to Baodingshan for the first time, leading to several of the tableaux being ordered in such a way as to make an overall understanding of the work less vital than a comprehension of at least a portion of the work's singular components. Such a loose organization of the details also allowed for more flexibility on the part of the monk lecturers, who could selectively choose a part of a work to focus on, yet not lose the sum of the whole.

Working back and forth from big picture to small, I argued that the overall placement of the pairs of tableaux was due to a logic based on ceremonial practice as well as on traditional Chinese concerns for family. The first pairing - the Kindness of Parents tableau and the adjacent Repayment of Kindness tableau - clearly represented the filial debt which permeated all layers of society, and the difficulties encountered in attempting to repay a karmic reckoning which essentially could never be adequately recompensed. Even the Buddha himself was burdened with such a debt, and his many and heroic attempts at repayment only served to highlight how insignificant were the average soul's efforts. In true Chinese Buddhist fashion, Shakyamuni is set up as an example of the truly filial son, a position at first glance seemingly at odds with his choice of the monastic vocation. This argument is quickly and easily rebutted when it is made known how instrumental Shakyamuni in this as well as his previous incarnations had been in helping his parents achieve enlightenment, the ultimate in filial acts.

The second pairing - the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and the Scripture on the Ten Kings coupled with the hell tableau - reiterated the urgency of the first, further deepening the anxiety of the worshipper with promises of heaven as well as extensive descriptions of hell. A formula for relieving one's immediate filial debt was provided for in the form of ritual activities involving the Ten Kings of Hell as well as name recitation with regard to the Pure Land. Yet at the same time the message of indebtedness portrayed in these two works was broadened to additionally include the well being of previous and future generations.

The last pairing - the Asceticism of Layman Liu and the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableaux - provided the worshipper with two very different Buddhist paths to follow, and also provided a lineage of spiritual ancestors for those endeavoring to reach enlightenment at Baodingshan. Representing two non-canonical texts, these works demonstrated how both layperson and monk alike could utilize self-sacrifice as a means to reach enlightenment. On a deeper level, the two tableaux address the traditional Chinese concern for lineage, defining Zhao Zhifeng within the parameters of his spiritual mentors Shan Hui and Master Liu. All those who followed in Zhao's footsteps at Baodingshan could then look to Zhao as their link to a lengthy and illustrious spiritual past.

The final chapter moved away from the more obvious sculpted imagery to focus more closely on the other half of the narrative works at Great Buddha Bend, the textual imagery. Here the discussion delved more

into meaning than mode of representation, away from an aesthetic appreciation of the texts inscribed at Baodingshan, and toward an historical and religious understanding of its import. What was discovered was that the textual imagery at Great Buddha Bend served a series of aims on behalf of the monastic community. The most obvious of these were ritual and pedagogical, with the monastic community being able to accommodate people from all walks of life at Baodingshan through the use of these large illustrated texts. As noted above, monks could walk the worshippers through the Great Buddha Bend complex, utilizing the inscribed texts to preach stories related to filial piety, ancestor worship, and the illustrious lineage of the site's creator, Zhao Zhifeng. Both the lay and monastic community could further utilize the texts in the form of ceremonial verses, which were incorporated into many of the tableaux. These verses were related to self-sacrifice and the accumulation of good merit, and allowed for a utilization of the Great Buddha Bend works on behalf of oneself and one's deceased ancestors.

The less obvious rationale for the textual imagery was that of preservation of the Buddhist faith within a time of chaos, a situation perhaps felt more urgently in Sichuan at this time than elsewhere in the Southern Song empire. Evidence for a program of preservation of the canon taking place at Baodingshan was found with the presence of the inscribed sutra catalogue in Little Buddha Bend. Since many more titles of scriptures are carved in the list than are found within the grotto below, the texts inscribed amongst the tableaux at Great Buddha Bend were argued to be exemplars of

the various methods to enlightenment which Zhao Zhifeng hoped to preserve for future generations. I postulate that mere survival of the Buddhist law after the age of *mofa* was perhaps not all that Zhao was after, preferring instead to continue to see the faith practiced rather than only preserved. As such, Zhao chose to incorporate a selection of texts within the larger sculptural program at Great Buddha Bend, ensuring that should one survive and not the other, the Buddhist faith would continue to be spread. Thus the combined text and image carved stone works at Great Buddha Bend can be seen as functioning on behalf of the people of the region on two distinct levels, edifying as well as safeguarding, for time eternal. That was what Zhao Zhifeng swore an oath to do, and given the status of Baodingshan almost 1000 years later, his efforts would appear to not have been in vain.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LIST OF SCULPTURAL GROUPINGS FOUND AT
GREAT BUDDHA BEND

This list follows the numbering system put in place by the archaeologist Yang Jialuo in the late 1940s. The sculpted tableaux are thus numbered one through thirty-one. Although I do not feel that it represents the most logical system, I nonetheless have chosen to adhere to it, so as not to confuse the reader who may wish to look at primary source materials.

- 1) Carving of a fierce tiger
- 2) Guardians of the Law
- 3) Revolving Wheel of the Six Paths
- 4) Pavilion of Great Treasure¹
- 5) Three Saints of the Huayan School
- 6) Precious Holy Relic Pavilion
- 7) Engraved stele dedicated to Vairocana
- 8) 1,000-armed Avalokitesvara
- 9) Holy Relic Pagoda
- 10) Final Gathering of Men and Devas
- 11) Parinirvana of Sakyamuni Buddha
- 12) Birth of the Buddha
- 13) Peacock King²
- 14) Cave of Vairocana
- 15) Depictions from the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents
- 16) Gods of Cloud, Wind, Thunder, and Lightening

¹The name "Baodingshan" is inscribed here, along with three sculptural representations of Zhao Zhifeng, the site's founder.

²According to Soothill, 148, this is a former reincarnation of Sakyamuni.

- 17) Depictions of the Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness
- 18) Depictions from the Scripture on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life
- 19) Six Vices
- 20) Dizang Bodhisattva with the Ten Kings of Hell and depictions of hell
- 21) Asceticism of Master Liu
- 22) Ten Radiant Kings
- 23) Shrine to the Three Pure Ones³
- 24) Shrine of the Taoist Sages
- 25) Shrine to the Jade Emperor and the Earth Goddess⁴
- 26) Series of engraved steles⁵
- 27) Statue of Vairocana Buddha
- 28) Carving of a lion
- 29) Cave of Complete Enlightenment
- 30) Taming the Wild Buffalo
- 31) Statue of the Old Woman "Su Die"

³DZSKYJ, 494, dates this relief as Qing dynasty, along with reliefs numbered 24 and 26.

⁴DZSKYJ, 495, gives a 1915 date for the carving of this relief.

⁵Numerous steles are arranged here, with the largest one bearing the name "Baodingshan" once again.

APPENDIX B

What follows are the complete texts of the inscriptions found carved within the narrative tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. They are presented here in the order in which they are discussed, beginning with The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents and ending with the texts accompanying the Asceticism of Master Liu tableau. The texts accompanying the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau have not been included because they can be found elsewhere, accompanying an article by Henrik Sørensen dealing with this relief.¹ The captions accompanying the texts as inscribed at Great Buddha Bend are indicated by " ", and have been underlined in order to separate the various portions of text making them compatible with how they appear within the tableaux. As previously noted, 'X' refers to illegible or missing characters; additional words have been placed in parentheses to enhance the readability of the text. The transcriptions used are from Dazu shi ke ming wen lu and Dazu shi ke yi shu for The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, Dazu shi ke ming wen lu and Dazu shi ke yan jiu for the hell scenes and Asceticism of Master Liu reliefs, and Sichuan Dao jiao Fo jiao shi ku yi shu for The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness work .

I. The Scripture on the Kindness of Parents

Second Tier

Central Section - "Parents Praying to the Buddha for a Child"

Great Master Cijue, who received the imperial bestowal of the purple robe, X Zongze[‘s] verse says:

Before the Buddha of old had yet taken birth, seemingly there [had always been] the perfect totality of a single mark;² [but] if Sakyamuni had [not] yet convened [the holy] assembly [to actually teach the Dharma], how could Kasyapa ever receive transmission of the Dharma?

The father and mother together offer fragrant incense, prayed to give birth to a filial and agreeable child in order to take precaution against their old age, when their rising and sitting will require [a child’s] support. [His] father and mother all will attain Buddhahood bound [to one another] through the suchness of the Dharmadhatu. At that time their heart’s prayer will be fulfilled, and only then will they realize the final nirvana of no-remainder. If there is [a notion of something to] attain, then it is not [true] attainment. Only when there is no [idea of personal] merit [to be sought] can it begin to be

²An allusion to the transcendent reality of ‘suchness’. I thank Dan Stevenson for helping me with editing all of the following translations.

considered [true] merit. Originally this is the style
of our old house.³

賜紫慈覺大師」□宗蹟頌曰」古佛未生前」疑然一相圓」釋迦猶□會」迦叶豈能傳」
父母同香火」求生孝順兒」提防年老日」起坐要扶持」父母皆成佛」綿綿法界如」
爾時心願足」方乃証无余」有得非為得」无功始是功」一轮千圣外」元是旧家风」。

Number One - "The Kindness of Caring During Pregnancy"

The honorable Buddhist monk spoke thus in
praise:

The kind mother, from the beginning of her
pregnancy, her entire body feels as heavy as if
leaden, and her face is sallow as if she is ill. She
moves only with great difficulty.

第一」怀担(胎)守护恩」禅师颂曰」慈母怀胎日」令身重若□」母黄如有病」动转亦身难」。

“慈母怀胎且」全身重如铁」面黄如有病」动转亦艰难」。”

Number Two - "The Kindness of Suffering the Pains of Childbirth"

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

The tribulations of father and mother bring tears
to one's eyes. [You] will know the weightiness of
[your obligations to] their kindness when a child is
born from [your own] womb. The loving father
hears the birth taking place and, filled with

³This line would seem to allude back to the "Chan-style" reading of "merit as no merit", and the possible references of transmission between Śakyamuni and Kasyapa. Dan Stevenson, personal correspondence, 4/8/01.

anxiety, he is unable to control himself. [He realizes that his own] birth [on the part of his parents] is impossible to repay.

第二「临产受苦恩」慈觉颂曰「□□慈亲苦」□人眼泪□」□知恩力重」
〔能〕取出胎时」慈父闻 将产」空惶不自持」□生都未〔报〕」头耳皱双眉」。

Number Three - "The Kindness of Selfless Care for the Child"

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

When first they see their infant's face, both parents smile a little. Before there were feelings of worry and anxiety; now there has arrived a moment of rest.

第三「生子忘忧恩」慈觉颂曰「初见婴儿面」
双亲笑点头」从前忧苦事」到此一时休」。

Number Four - "The Kindness of Swallowing the Bitter While Spitting Out the Sweet"

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

[The kind mother] gives the sweet to the child to eat, the bitter keeping to herself to eat. If in this life one's sense of the kindness [of parents] is superficial or meager, at other times, it will be difficult to repay such virtues.⁴

⁴The second sentence is based on the premise that the transcribers have mistaken the character *bu*, for *ci*, making for a more plausible reading of this line. Ibid.

第四」咽苦吐甘恩」慈觉颂曰」□□儿子
吃」□□自家餐」不□知恩少」他时报德难」

“甘 让儿子食」, 苦 留自家吃」。不世知恩少」, 他时报德难」。”

Number Five - “The Kindness of Giving the Dry Place to the Child”

Master Cijue spoke thus in praise:

The dry place [she] gives to the child to sleep in, her own body sleeping in the damp. Reverently extrapolate from the loving mothers' unconditional and selfless love the larger idea of the Buddha's perfect compassion. What self-centered preference could the Buddhas possibly show?

第五」推干就湿恩」慈觉颂曰」干〔处让〕儿卧」
儿身熟□睡」仰推慈母〔为〕」诸佛亦何偏」。

Number Six - “The Kindness of Being Fed and Reared”

“The verses of Zongze, the Chan master Cijue spoke:

[The kind mother] breast feeds without ceasing; in the cherished thoughts of her breast, how could she ever feel a moment of separation? Never worrying should the fat and flesh [of her body] be used up, fearing instead that her small child should be hungry.

第六」乳哺养育恩」慈觉禅师」宗贇颂
曰」乳哺无时节」怀中岂暂立」不愁脂肉
尽」惟恐小儿饥」

Number Seven - "The Kindness of Endless Washing and Cleaning"

The great Master Cijue praised thus:

The small child incessantly soils his swaddling clothes, and the child's bodily organs are also soiled. [The kind mother] washes and cleans without end.

“第七 □ (洗) □□□ (不净恩) 。□ (慈) 觉大师颂, □ (小) 儿□□□ (多龌龊), □ (襁) 褓□ (无) 时干。……儿身多□□ (脏污), 洗□□□□ (濯不净时) 。…… (下略) ”。此像中父亲与小儿肩部以上残。

Number Eight - "The Kindness of Creating the Best Opportunity"

The verse of an ancient worthy⁵ says:

Once the child that one is raising finally grows up, it is natural to marry him off. At the wedding banquet, many animals are slaughtered, yet to whom will this evil [karma] redound?

第八]为造恶业恩]古德颂曰]养儿方长大]婚嫁是寻常]筵会多杀害]罪业使谁当]

Number Nine - "The Kindness of Missing the Child when He is Gone on a Long Journey"

XX [Master Cijue] spoke thus in praise:

X[The parents] think of the child daily, even after being apart for three years. [Although] even 1000

⁵Ibid. Stevenson notes that the term *gude* is one frequently used in Chan texts.

li distant, [they] put forth great mindfulness to tell the son to be careful when he is away.

第九「远行忆念恩」慈觉颂曰「乳下为儿时」
三年岂离位」如何千里外」□家不回□」□□
□□□」出必□□□」恐依门庐望」归来莫太迟」。

“□下为儿日」，三年岂离后」。□何千里远」，出外多小心」。
思倚门二老」，归来莫太迟」。”

Number Ten - “The Kindness of Having Empathy for [Whatever] Outcome”

The verse reads:

100 years old and still they only think of [their] 80-year-old son; unable to let him go, they become ghosts and still they yearn for him. A son should pay attention to his parents' moods, be they happy or angry, and try not to offend them. It is not easy, and that is why we call all phenomena troublesome.

究竟怜悯恩△颂曰」百岁△惟忧八十儿」不舍
△作鬼也忧之」观喜怒常不犯慈颜」非容易从
来谓色难」

Lower Tier

The Buddha spoke regarding X children and how it could be that after attaining manhood [they should] overturn [the order of things] becoming unfilial, insulting their father's brothers, hitting and cursing their own brothers, and bringing shame upon their parents. No longer carrying out the rites, [they] do not honor their teacher's example. Those who do not follow the Law in the end will certainly fall into Avici Hell.

II. The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness

Central Inscription

14 characters flanking central inscription, larger regular script:

Only my master has golden bones, and [although]
having been refined by fire 100 times, the colors
are still fresh.

“惟有吾师金骨在，曾经百炼色长新”

Lower Tier

“The Buddha of the Great Canon expounds ‘The Mahayana Sutra on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness’”

Thus have I heard:

Once the Buddha was on Vulture Peak, with the masses all around him. At that time, Ananda entered the city to beg for food. In the city there was a man who was filial and cared for his parents; their property having been lost to them, he carried his parents on his shoulders while begging, all the good food being offered to his parents while he himself ate that which was disgusting. Ananda praised the man for supporting his parents, XX [at that] time, such a person being extremely difficult [to find].

There happened by six masters and disciples, holders of heretical ideas, who had destroyed by fire the True Law, and whose hearts harboured envy; to Ananda they said:

“Your master Shakyamuni himself speaks well of the great merit and virtue of charity, only his is a

hollow name without a true reality; he has set aside his parents to leave the city, not knowing the kindness [they have] shared. This is not a filial person."

When Ananda heard this, in his heart he felt ashamed, returning to the Buddha he asked, "Within the Buddha's Law isn't there considerable filial support for parents?" The Buddha replied, "Who instructed you to ask this?" Ananda said, "While begging for food, I came upon six masters and disciples, and saw them slandering by such as I have stated above."

The World-Honored One let out a little smile, emitting a five-colored light which reached all of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. That [Buddha] land's bodhisattvas together intoned, "What cause to have this radiance?" The Buddha of that [Buddha] land replied:

There is a Buddha in this world named Shakyamuni who to the multitude expounds 'The Mahayana Sutra on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness', desiring to order all creatures to be filial and care for their fathers and mothers; as such he releases this radiance.

At that time, upon the Buddha's body appeared the five forms of reincarnation, and one-by-one within these forms appeared limitless small worlds, so numerous that their forms and characteristics were beyond thought or description, one body corresponding to [each of] the myriad beings with enough so that all receives a body. It is because of the receiving of a body, that all the myriad creatures were once a Buddha's parents, and moreover, all the myriad beings were once our parents. Therefore, constantly cultivate that which is difficult to achieve, accomplishing through strenuous effort that which is difficult, and it can be set aside. Diligently cultivate skillful progress through all 10,000 acts, not stopping and not resting, and your heart will be without weariness.

Because we teach caring for one's father and mother, by means of being so filial and virtuous, we more quickly become bodhisattvas in heaven.

“大藏佛说《大方便报恩经》

如是我闻，一时佛在耆闍崛山中，大众围绕。时阿难入城乞食。城中有一男子，孝养父母，家口荡尽，担父母行乞，好者奉亲，恶者自食。阿难偈赞男子供养父母，□时难及。有六师徒，执着邪论，残灭正法，心怀嫉妒，语阿难曰：汝师释种，自言善好，有大功德，唯有空名，而无实行，舍父母出城，不知恩分，是不孝人。阿难闻已，心怀惭愧，诣佛白言：佛法中颇有孝养父母不？佛言：谁教汝问？阿难言：乞食逢六师徒，见毁骂辱，如上所陈。世尊微笑，放五色光，至十方如来所。彼国菩萨同音‘何缘有此光明’？彼国佛言：有娑婆界佛号释迦，为大众说《大方便佛报恩经》，欲令众生孝养父母，故放斯光明。尔时，如来身中现五趣身，一一身中现无量微尘数不思议形相，一切众生具足受身。以受身故，一切众生曾为如来父母，如来亦曾为众生作父母。故常修难行、苦行、难舍、能舍，勤修精进，具足万行，不休不息，心无疲倦。为教养父母故，令得速成天上菩萨，由孝德也。”

“Shakyamuni Buddha comes to this World with Myriad Beings in order to Arrange the Transformation of the King Resulting in Him Shouldering his

Father the King's Coffin”

10 characters in the middle of the tableau :

The Great Filial Sakyamuni Buddha
Respectfully Shoulders his Father the King's
Coffin

“大孝释迦佛亲担父王棺”

8 characters carved in front of Ananda :

The Relic Pagoda of the Great King of the Pure Rice

“净饭大王舍利宝塔”

The Buddha said, "When my father the king's life was at an end, I arrived at the funeral pyre together with Ananda and others. Mourning, I respectfully bowed my head in front of him, standing reverently."

Ananda and Rahula stood behind the funeral pyre. Ananda to the Buddha said, "My only desire is to be allowed to bear [your] father the king's coffin." Rahula also said, "My only desire is to be allowed to bear my grandfather the king's coffin."

The World-Honored One consolingly said, "Howsoever people have come into this world, only the fierce and brutal do not repay the kindness of their father and mother who have nurtured and raised them. Because of this, it would not be filial for the multitude to arrange for the transformation of the king; therefore, the Thus-Come One himself desires to carry his father the king's coffin."

Forthwith the world [felt] six kinds of quakes, all of the heavenly beings at one time willingly coming to attend the funeral. The four heavenly kings and the multitude all shared participated at the funeral, then saying to the Buddha, For children in the future who are not filial, the Buddha with his own body respectfully carries the coffin of his father the king. We are all disciples of the Buddha, from the Buddha we have heard the Law and obtained entrance into the stream of holy living. It is for this reason that we [feel it is] appropriate to honor him by carrying his father the king's coffin. The [heavenly beings] then took human forms.

Among the entire populace, there was no one who was not weeping aloud and sobbing as the World-Honored One personally with his own hands carried the incense burner at the front [of the processional], walking to the site of the king's grave, commanding 1000 lohans who held all manner of aromatic flavors burning with fire.

At that time, all the heavenly kings [present] gathered the bones, and put them into gold and diamond reliquaries, fitting them together to erect a

pagoda, and which was then consecrated. The vast multitude of people performed ceremonies and maintained offerings there.

“释迦牟尼佛

为来世众生设化王 故担父王棺 大藏佛言：父王终已，至阇维时，佛共难陀等，丧头前肃恭而立。阿难、罗云在丧足后。阿难白佛言：惟愿听我担父王棺。罗云复言：惟愿听我担祖王棺。世尊慰言：当来世人，皆凶暴不报父母养育之恩，为是不孝众生设化王，故如来躬欲担父王棺。即时世界六种震动，一时诸天意神，皆来赴丧。四天王众皆共举丧，而白佛言：佛为当来不孝父母者故，以自身亲担父王棺。我等是佛弟子，从佛闻法，得须陀洹，是故我曹宜担父王棺，即变为人。一切人民，莫不啼泣，世尊躬自手执香炉在前，行于墓所，令千罗汉，取种种香末，以火焚之。尔时诸王收骨置金刚函，便共起塔，而为供养。大众人民，作礼奉持”

Middle Tier

“Shakyamuni Arrives at the Place Where His Father the King is to See His Sickness”

The Buddha was at Rajagrha on Vulture Peak, as radiant as the day. At that time, the Pure Rice King was being killed by the four great elements. His being such that he was unable to catch his breath, while those without the law [who thought they should be] able to heal him,[employed] various treatments. Informing all those around him, the king said, “Although today I pass away, I am not saddened; however, I regret that I have not seen all of my sons.” The Thus-Come One then knew of his father the king’s desire before death, that of wanting to see all of his sons.

Informing Ananda he said, “The Pure Rice King is my honorable father, who was able to bear a divine son who has benefited the world; now it is befitting that I call on him who raised and nurtured me to pay my debt of gratitude.” The World-Honored One released a great radiance, the light illuminating the king’s body, and the suffering [king] had peace. The king said, “This

radiance being cast off is my son finally coming!" The king seeing the Buddha coming said, "I only hope that his hand touches my body, commanding me to be at peace. Today I must see the World-Honored One, and all detestable things will be eliminated."

The Buddha then with his hand touched his father the king on the forehead, "King, you should be joyful, you should not be vexed or worried, as you have always attentively contemplated the righteous scriptures of the Law."

When the king heard this, the happiness he himself could not bear, so with his hand he grasped the Buddha's hand and touched it to his heart. Whereupon as the king lay, he joined his palms together in reverence, and his life ended, his last breath cut off.

The Buddha declared to the multitude, "My father the King of Pure Rice having abandoned this body has been born into the Five Heavens of Purity." Upon hearing this, the assembled multitude then eliminating the poison of worry, beyond all thought or description.

“释迦牟尼佛诣父王所看病 佛在王舍城耆闍崛山中，光明如日。时净饭王四大俱被残害。其体喘息不定，种种医治，无法能愈者。告诸王曰：我今虽逝，不以为苦，但恨不见我子悉达。如来已知父王欲终，要见诸子，告难陀曰：净饭王者是我曹父，能生圣子，利益世间，今宜往诣，报育养恩。世尊放大光明，光照王身，患者得安。王言：是何光也，脱是我子悉达来也。王见佛来，惟愿手触我身，令我得安，我今得见世尊，痛恨即除。佛即以手着父王额：王应欢喜，不宜烦恼，常谛思念诸经法义。时王闻已，喜不自胜，即以手捉佛手着手心上。王于卧处合掌作礼，命尽气绝。佛告众言：父王净饭，舍此身已，生净居天。众会闻已，即舍愁毒，不可思议。”

"Shakyamuni Gives the Causes for Cultivating the Act of Abandoning One's Body in Search of the Law"

19 characters written within the tableau :

The Great Youth of the Himalayas Abandons His Entire Body to Search for the Meaning of the Half-

Chant, 'Endless Life and Death Silently are
Extinguished, Making Joy'

“雪山童子舍全身而求半偈，生灭不已，寂灭为乐”

The Buddha said, “In the past, the World-Honored One cultivated Bodhi acts, having the capability to understand all outside doctrines and theories. He silently cultivated extinguishing acts, his practice not destroyed by these outside doctrines. Consistently joyful, he purified himself, seeking to study the greater vehicle [Mahayana].”

On the Snowy Mountain, he sat in meditation through endless years, and did not hear that the Thus-Come One had entered the world, or know the names of the greater vehicle's scriptures. At that time, he practiced painful acts. Indra to all the heavens said, chanting to the assembly in whose hearts were born fear, “On the Snowy Mountain, a great master seeks Bodhisattva[hood]. The people of the world are reborn into it; those who do good die, eliminating death through physical strength, with a flame burning their worries. Although in reality this is difficult to believe, I now will test him to see if he can accomplish the bodhi task.”

[Indra] then appeared as a Raksa demon form, coming down to the Snowy Mountain, half-chanting, “All actions are impermanent; this is the law of reincarnation.” The youth heard this half-chant, and in his heart joy was born. “Who is capable of uttering this half-chant, awakening my heart? If this half-chant, XXXX is from all the Buddhas of the past, the future and the present, I am on the correct path.”

The Raksa replied, “Ask me for the meaning. I have had no food for many days, hungry and vexed my heart is in disorder. This runs counter to what I feel in my heart, begging for food and not obtaining any, for this reason I have made this statement.”

The Buddha asked the demon, "What [kind of] creatures do you eat?" He replied, "I eat people's warm meat and hot blood."

Then the Buddha said "If you tell me the meaning of this chant, I will offer my body to you. I will abandon this body since in the end it has no use. As a bodhisattva, I will not be abandoning my steadfast body, but acquiring a gold and diamond body. Please tell me what I wish to know, and I will obtain much."

The demon then said, "Life and death is extinguished; alone such extinguishing brings joy." Announcing the chant, the demon then XXX [climbed a] wall, XXX [and throwing himself] from the top of a tall tree, he abandoned his life. Not yet having reached the bottom, the demon transformed back into Indra, and was caught by the bodhisattvas.

Indra and Brahma and all of the heavens prostrated themselves in homage and in praise saying, "You are truly a bodhisattva, doing good and benefiting all the myriad beings. Without lightness and dark within, burning the torch of the Great Law; we on this account [acknowledge] the Thus-Come One of the Great Law. As a consequence [of your actions] all worries are relieved; desiring to listen to our confessions, you assuredly have achieved unexcelled complete enlightenment, and your desire to see carries you over to the other land."

Indra and all those in the heavens circled around the bodhisattva on foot, prostrated themselves before him and then left.

“释迦因地修行舍身求法 大藏佛言：过去世尊修菩萨行，能通达一切外道经论。修寂灭行，不为外道破坏受持，常乐我净，求学大乘。雪山坐禅，经无量岁，亦不闻如来出世，大乘经名。我修如是苦行时，帝释诸天，心生惊怖，集会说偈：雪山大士，惟求菩提，世人当来世中，作善逝者，除灭力量，炽燃烦恼，实为难信，我今试之，堪任菩提重担不？即现罗刹形，下至雪山，说半偈云：诸行无常，是生灭法。我闻半偈，心生欢喜，谁能说是半偈，启悟我心。如是半偈，□□□□是过去未来现在诸佛之正道也。罗刹答曰：问我是义，我不食多日，饥恼心乱，非我本心所为，求食不得，故说是语。我问罗刹：所食何物？答曰：我食人暖肉热血。但为我说偈竟，我当以此身供养。我设命终，此身无用，我为菩提舍不坚身，得金刚身。愿为我说，今得具足。罗刹即说：生灭灭已，寂灭为乐。我若□□壁道□□□上高树舍生，以报偈赞。未至地时，罗刹复帝释，接取菩萨。释梵诸天，稽首赞曰：真是菩萨，利益众生。无明暗中，燃大法炬，我爱如来大法，故相焯恼，□愿听忏悔，汝必定成阿耨菩提，愿见济度。时帝释诸天，绕菩萨足，顶礼而去。”

“The Buddha Gives the Causal Grounds for the Pious Act of Sacrificing His Body to Aid a Tiger”

The Great Canon states:

Prince Sattva sacrificed his body to aid a tiger; when his parents heard this, they hastened to the place of his spent body. By that time, the tiger had eaten the flesh, and the skeletal remains alone were scattered about on the ground. His father and mother stroked his head and feet, crying piteously in extremely low spirits. The prince's life was at an end, and he was born into Tushita Heaven.

The deva eye saw before him the parents grieving, unduly weeping and wailing, perhaps even to the point of losing their own lives. “I should remonstrate them.” Forthwith, he came down from heaven, staying within the void, uttering various statements of explanation as well as remonstrance to the father and mother.

The parents looking up queried, “You are a god, yes?” The heavenly being replied, “I am Mahasattva. I [existed] in order to help the tiger, then was born into Tushita Heaven; as my parents you should know that by having the Law, all life must cease to exist; why are you not yourselves aware of this?”

The parents said, “You conduct yourself with great kindness, a kindness reaching all.” As a result, all devas and men replied with a song of praise declaring their thanks to parents, making them obtain enlightenment. All encompassing is the Thus Come One's divine wisdom and understanding; it is beyond thought or description. At that time, the Prince Sattva was namely I, [Shakyamuni].

“佛因地修行舍身济虎 大藏经言：萨埵太子舍身济虎，父母闻已，奔至舍身之处，时虎食肉已，惟有骸骨，狼藉在地。父母抚其头足，哀号闷绝。太子命终，生兜率天，天眼见前父母悲悼，啼哭过甚，或丧身命，我当往谏。即从天下，住于空中，种种言词，解谏父母。父母仰问：是何神耶？天曰：我是太子摩诃萨埵，我由济虎，生兜率天，父母当知，有法归无，生必有终，何不自觉。父母言：汝行大慈，恩及一切。于是天人，复以偈句，报谢父母，令得醒悟。皆是如来神智通达，不可思议。时萨埵太子，即我是也。”

“Shakyamuni Gives the Causal Grounds for Cutting One’s Own Flesh to Nourish One’s Father and Mother”

The Great Canon states:

The Buddha told Ananda that in the past there was born to a king a prince who was called “Jati”, his body a golden yellow color. Then the evil Rahu betrayed the king; the king embraced the frightened prince and fled to a neighboring country. The grain all gone, and the land still distant, starving and thirsty [they pressed forward] urgently.

The prince than said, “Just on my princely body, daily I will cut three ‘jin’ of meat, and divide it into three parts; I offer two to you my father and mother, and one portion I shall eat myself.” His parents listened and obeyed, cutting then eating, following the road.

The prince again said, “In the event that a fiery iron wheel on the top of my head should spin, in the end it would not be painful because I do not retreat from the highest Way. If I took advantage with lies and falsehoods, my bodily sores would not close. However, those not like that will be cured as before. Forthwith, my body is twice as upright and proper.”

The Buddha told Ananda, “Those parents are my parents now. The prince at that time was namely I.”

“释迦因地

割肉供父母 大藏经言：佛告阿难，昔有国王生一太子，字曰‘闍提’，身黄金色。时罗睺恶逆王惊抱太子，出投邻国。粮尽犹远，饥渴所迫。太子白言：就子身上，日割三斤肉，分作三分，奉上父母，一份自食。父母听之，割而食之，随路而去。太子复言：假使热铁轮，于我顶上旋，终不以此苦，退于无上道。若我欺诳，身疮不合，若不尔者，平复如故。即时身体，端正倍常。佛告阿难，彼父母者，今父母是。尔时太子，即我身是。”

Upper Tier

“Shakyamuni Gives the Causal Grounds of the Filial Conduct Demonstrated in the 32 Characteristics”

The Great Canon states:

Manjusri asked the Buddha as he was seated among the Bodhisattvas seeing the Buddha's thirty-two characteristics, and [discussing] the 80 kinds of goodness, incomparably upright, "What are the causes to acquiring an image like this?"

The Buddha replied, "Over the ages, I was pleased to burn a lamp at the Buddhist temple for my teacher and parents; therefore, because of this reason my Buddha body glowed brightly, truly wondrous beyond compare. In the past when I came to serve my teacher and parents, among the four rites were food, drink, and bedding. Hence, because of this all the heavenly demons and gods, particularly all those within this world, possessed this treasure, the very best of the Buddha's thirty-two characteristics and eighty kinds of good. To manifest these two is good; it was by this means I first made my vow to become a steadfast Bodhisattva. Look upon all the myriad creatures just as [you would] your father or king. On account of these causal grounds, all kinds of beings allow me to quickly acquire unexcelled complete enlightenment by way of being filial and virtuous."

“释迦因地行孝证三十二相 大藏经云：文殊白佛言，座中菩萨见佛三十二相，八十种好，端正无比，有何因缘，得如是像？佛言：我于世世喜燃灯于佛寺及师长父母前，由是因故，佛身光明，殊妙无比。我于世世来事师长父母，四仪中饮食卧具。由是因故，诸天鬼神，普持世间所有珍宝，以顶上佛三十二相，八十种好。二相好，是由我初发心，坚固菩提，知恩报恩，是故今得无上菩提，视诸众生，犹如父王。以此因缘，得是种类，使我急得阿耨多罗三藐三菩提，由孝德也。”

“Shakyamuni Gives the Causal Grounds for Performing the Filial Act of
Gouging Out One’s Eyes and Marrow for the Sake of a Cure”

The Great Canon states:

The prince of Ksanti knew his father the king’s body was hampered by a serious illness, willing morning and night to seek a cure XXX the Law.

The prince asked, “What substance is the cure?”

The great statesman replied, “It is the eyes and marrow of a person who doesn’t anger. If this medicine is obtained, the illness should be cured.”

The prince said, “XXX take out my marrow.”

At that time, the great statesman accepted, and the medicine entered the king. It promptly made the difference in the king’s illness. The prince’s life was at an end, and because of this a cow’s head [made of] sandalwood XXX XXX brought forth the marrow to raise a pagoda as an offering. It was to acknowledge the Thus Come One’s filial conduct in repaying kindness; this kalpa XXX [has brought] extensive relief beyond thought or description.

“释迦因地行孝

剜眼出骨髓为药 大藏经言：忍辱太子知其父王身婴重病，命在旦夕，求药□法。太子问言：药是何物？大臣答曰：是不嗔人眼睛及其骨髓，若得此药，病可得救。太子言：□出骨髓。尔时大臣合药进王，王即病差。太子命终，以牛头旃檀□□生骨起塔供养。是知如来行孝报恩，□广救劫，不可思议。”

“Shakyamuni Gives the Causal Grounds with regard to Prince Samaka’s Filial Conduct”

The Buddha spoke the “Prince Samaka Sutra”.

The Buddha told Ananda that in the past there was a bodhisattva described as merciful and gracious, who filially cared for his parents and teacher. At this time, in Kapila, there was a venerable elder left without a child, his two eyes completely blind. He dreamed of going into the mountains in search of the highest wisdom. The bodhisattva remarked upon this saying, “This person [wants to] go into the mountains to study the path; as I die in old age, I will take the place of [his] child.”

The bodhisattva’s life being at an end, as such he departed to be reared at the blind father and mother’s home, being called ‘Samaka’. When Samaka was ten years old, he followed his parents into the mountains to gather fruit and draw water. At this time, there was a king who went out to hunt, and his arrow mistakenly hit Samaka in the chest, poisoning him. The king’s heart was full of horror and dread as he called upon the parents home, and informed them of the incident.

The father and mother in their anxiety ordered the king to take the two of them to where their son was. Laying on their hands to feel for Samaka’s arrow, [they] turned their faces toward heaven and cried out saying, “Samaka was extremely filial; both heaven and earth knew this. This arrow deserves to be removed.” By making this speech, [they] moved Indra, who cured Samaka, giving him more life as a consequence. When the father and mother heard this, their two eyes were completely opened, and the king was extremely happy.

Samaka said to the king, “You desire to be a blessed person; therefore, comfort your people, and order them to achieve perfection.”

The Buddha told Ananda, “That person Samaka was my body as well.”

“释迦因地为睽子行孝 大藏佛说《睽子经》云：佛告阿难，昔有菩萨，名曰慈惠，孝养父母师长。时迦夷国中，有一长者，孤无儿子，两目皆盲，心愿入山，求无上慧。菩萨念言：此人入山学道，若我寿终，当为作子。菩萨命终，即便往生育盲父母家，字曰睽子。睽子十岁，随父母入山采果汲水。时国王出猎，箭误中睽子胸，被毒命终。王心怖惧，诣子父母所，具言上事。父母令王牵我二人至于子所，扞摸睽箭，仰天呼言：睽子至孝，天地所知，箭当拔出。作是言已，感帝释□药更生故。父母闻已，两目皆开。王大欢喜。睽语王曰：欲具福者，安慰人民，当令奉成。佛告阿难，彼睽子者，我身是也。”

“Shakyamuni Give the Causal Grounds for Cutting One’s Own Flesh”

The Buddha spoke, “At that time there was a Chakravartin king who sought the Buddhist law; for this reason, he issued an order throughout the land ‘Who can explain the Buddha’s Law?’

All responses were ‘Not I’.

There was a Brahmin who understood the Buddha’s law. So the king went out to meet him, inviting him to enter the main hall of his palace, and spread out an imperial seat for him. All those before him [seeing] such great virtue desired he sit in this seat.

Then the great king saw the teacher, and upon seeing him, joined his hands together and said, ‘Great master, [you will] explain the Buddhist Law, yes?’

The master said, ‘King, you are really foolish; I studied XXX [the Buddhist] law, and for a long time suffered frequent hardships, the rationale being to obtain perfection. Great king, state why you are truly desirous to hear the Law. If you can on your kingly body make 1000 cuts, and burn lanterns in offering, then I will tell you; if not, I will go.’

The great king then thought to himself, and informed the great teacher saying, ‘Whatever offering [you] need, I will provide, and shall do so at once

without delay.’ The king then entered saying to all of his women, ‘I have sons who together will help you through your difficulties. Allow me to call upon this master, exchanging praise and support in order to not obtain bad fortune. Those who want to be filial sons do not always understand their father’s views.’

When the king visited the master’s dwelling, he sat down bolt upright, and told all of his subjects, ‘Who is able to cut me causing wounds?’

At that time there was [a certain man named] Candala. In front of the king he said, ‘You desire a person [who can] cut your body, I am capable of this.’ The king heard this, and was joyful. ‘You today will truly be the superior companion.’ Then Candala grasped a knife and cut [the king], thereafter hastily walking out. The great king then poured oil into his bodily wounds, and fetching coarse fabric, he made wicks to burn.

Upon seeing these things, the great master told the king, ‘Extreme actions such as this, although difficult to do, [you] were able to do them; cultivate them and you will accomplish such things through strenuous effort.’

Now due to this [experience], the king proclaimed in a half-chant, ‘Oh sage, having lived and died, this extinguishing creates great joy.’

Upon hearing the law, the king informed all of his people, ‘Remember to uphold the Law.’ Those who saw and heard this quickly discovered the highest Bodhi mind. Thus the great king burnt [his] lamps in offering, his brilliance illuminating the far distance. All of the gathering of the multitudes discovered the path to their Bodhi mind, and left happily. For this reason, this Chakravartin king was namely the Thus-Come One.”

“释迦因地剝肉 大藏佛言：尔时转轮圣王为求佛法，故遍处宣令‘谁解佛法’。皆云言：‘无’。有婆罗门解知佛法。时王出迎请入正殿，敷坐御座，前诸大德，愿坐此座。尔时大王见师，见已，合掌自言：大师解佛法耶？师言：王大愚也，吾学□法，久受勤苦，因乃得成，大王云何直欲得闻。若能就王身上，剝作千疮，燃灯供养，吾为汝说，不尔，吾去耳。大王即自思惟，报大师言：所需供养，当迅

及时。王入宫报诸夫人，吾有太子，今共汝别，请我诣师，相许供养，不得运错，夫为孝子，不达父意。王诣师所，端身正坐，告诸大臣，谁能剃吾令秃？时有旃陀罗，前语王言：欲剃身者，我能为之。王闻欢喜，汝今真是我无上道伴。时旃陀罗持刀剃已，驰走而去。尔时大王，于身疮灌油，取油毡为炷。尔时大师见事已，告大王言：精进如是，难为能为，修此苦行，今当为王，宣说半偈，云：夫生辄死，此灭为乐。王闻法已，告诸人民，忆持是法。其见闻者，速发无上菩提心。尔时大王燃灯供养，其明远照，一切众会，皆发道心，欢喜而去。是故转轮圣王，即是如来。”

“The Buddha expounds the The Mahayana Sutra on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness - Shakyamuni and the Goose [upon which] One Writes and Notifies the Prince”

The Buddha of the Great Canon said:

Prince Kalyanamitra put to sea to gather treasure, going to a country surrounded by the oceans. But before putting to sea, he offered to his parents one white goose. Afterwards the mother and ladies of high rank said to the white goose, “The prince in the past always was respectful to all of us. Today he has left on the great sea, and we will not know if he is dead or alive; yet now we dare not say that we miss the prince.”

The white goose thereupon declared, “You wish to look for the prince, but dare not disobey his orders.”

The ladies of rank then wrote a message [placing it around] the goose’s head, with that the goose then flew into the void, going so far as the great sea, where he saw the prince in the distance, tucking in his body he [flew down] below.

The prince received the message; discovering the envelope and opening it he read it, and realized how in missing their princely son, his father and mother had lost their sight. Immediately, [the prince] returned to his own country, and his father and mother were very joyous. [However,] the king and the

ladies of high rank with their eyes closed could not see the prince's countenance.

With their hands laid upon him, they stroked the prince, making a speech such as this, "Your father and mother missed you; worry and suffering has made us like this."

The prince then asked if daily affairs were settled, and grasping a pearl uttered this wish, "With this cintamani pearl, I order that both the eyes of my father and mother be as clear and bright as before." Upon making this wish, [their eyesight] was immediately restored.

When the father and mother saw their son, their joy was unbounded. The person Prince Kalyanamitra was likewise the Thus Come One.

“释迦因地雁书报太子图”。图中，善友太子跪于地，双手捧盘中宝作发愿状。右前方有一双男女坐像，为善友父母，上方有一大雁，颈系书信，飞于空中。图下面刻经文：“大藏佛说《大方便报恩经》释迦雁书报太子 大藏佛言，善友太子入海采宝，留滞他国，未入海时，养一白雁。时母夫人白雁言：太子昔时常共汝俱，今入大海，生死未分，汝今云何不念太子？雁即报言：欲觅太子，不敢违命。时夫人作书系在雁头，其雁飞空，至于大海，遥见太子，敛身而下。太子取书，发封披读，即知父母追念太子，两目失明。寻即归国，父母欢喜。王与夫人，目瞑不见太子形容，以手扪摸，作如是言：父母念汝，忧苦如是。太子问讯起居事讫，持珠发愿：此是如意宝者，令父母两目明净如故。作是愿已，寻即平复。父母见子，欢喜无量。时善友太子者亦□如来。”

“Shakyamuni Gives the Causal Grounds for a Parrot Performing Filial Acts”

The Great Canon states:

There was a parrot whose father and mother were completely blind, who always when gathering flowers and fruit first offered them to his parents. At this time there was a landowner, who when he began to plant his grain, made a pledge,

"No matter what kind of animal, I grant all living creatures nourishment."

The parrot was then gathering rice grains in order to nourish his parents. At the same time, the landowner in the act of sowing and reaping suddenly started to get angry, and seized the parrot.

The parrot informed him, "First [you] had a good heart, granting creatures [nourishment] without being stingy; why is it that today however upon seeing me [you] seize me?"

The landowner asked, "You are here gathering my grain, how did you expect me to react?" The parrot replied, "My parents are blind; I desire to offer this to them." The landowner was delighted [to hear this], thereupon letting him go.

At that time the World-Honored One spoke this hymn:

The excellent parrot had perfect wisdom, thus could he cherish and filially care for his parents. Because of this I henceforward give you seeds, and order you to provide for your two parents. Unlimited things like this you have made happen in the past. Always cherishing that which was abhorrent, seeking nirvana by nothing higher than the Path.

“释迦因地鹦鹉

行孝 大藏杂宝藏经云：有一鹦鹉，父母俱盲，常采花果，先奉父母。时有田主，初种谷时，而作誓言：所种之物，与众生供。时鹦鹉采取稻穗，以供父母。是时田主按行苗稼，见剪稻穗，忽生嗔怒，网捕鹦鹉。鹦鹉告言：先有好心，施物无吝，如何今日，而见网捕？田主问言：汝所取谷，意复何为？鹦鹉答言：有盲父母，愿以奉之。田主欢喜，遂舍而去。尔时世尊而说偈言：善哉鹦鹉有智慧，能怀孝养供父母。我从今日以稻施，任汝供养于二亲。如是过去无量事，无有善行为而不作。未曾有怀□厌恶，以求清净无上道”

III. The Ten Kings of Hell and the Eighteen Hells

Second Tier - The Ten Kings

"Officer of Immediate Retribution"

If one desires peace and happiness and to reside amongst men and gods, one must immediately stop taking money belonging to the Three Jewels. Once you fall into the hells within the dark regions of the underworld, there, amongst the clamor, you will receive punishment for untold years.

现报司官(额)

欲求安乐」住人天必」莫侵袭三」宝钱一落」
冥间诸地」狱喧喧受」罪不知年」

"King Guang of Qin"

The various kings [of hell] dispatch messengers to inspect the deceased in order to see what merit these men and women have cultivated. Depending on one's name, one can be released from the hells of the three paths, and escape passing through the dark regions; there encountering suffering and grief.

秦广大王(额)

诸王遣使」捡亡人男」女修何功」德因依名」
放出三涂」狱免历冥」间遭苦辛」

"King of the First River"

Wrongdoings are like mountains, their peaks as numerous as the sands of the Ganges; blessings are like fine grains of dust, their numbers also few. Yet the good spirits protect you, so you can be reborn into a powerful, rich and devout family.

初江大王(額)

罪如山岳」等恒沙福」少微尘数」未多犹得」
善神常守」护往生豪」富信心家」

"Sovereign King of Song"

Actions of sin and suffering within the three paths are completed with ease; they are all conditioned by killing living beings in order to sacrifice to the gods. You should aspire to wield the diamond sword of true wisdom, using it to cut off all of Mara's clan, and to awaken [to the truth of] the non-arising [of all phenomena].⁶

宋帝大王(額)

罪苦三涂」业易成都」缘杀命祭」神明愿执」
金剛真惠」剑斩除魔」族悟无生」

⁶*Wu sheng* is a technical term for *anutpattikadharmaksanti*. Many thanks to Dan Stevenson, 5/15/01 for clarifying this.

"King of the Five Offices"

Breaking the fast and violating the precepts, you slaughter chickens and pigs. Illumined clearly in the mirror of actions, retribution will come without fail. If one commissions this scripture together with the painting of images, King Yama will issue a judgement that you be released and that your sins be eliminated.

五官大王(额)

破斋毁戒」杀鸡猪业」镜昭然报」不虚若造」
此经兼画」像阎王判」放罪消除」

"Yama Son of Heaven"

Compassionately [seeking to] augment universal conversion [to the good], he displays an awe-inspiring majesty. Revolution through the six paths [of incarnation] goes on unceasingly. Although his instruction is painful, he thinks only of [bringing creatures to] contentment and joy. Hence, he manifests himself in the form of the god Yama, Son of Heaven.

阎罗天子(额)

悲增普化」示威灵六」道轮回不」暂停教化」
厌苦思安」乐故现阎」罗天子形」

"King of Transformations"

If one truly believes that the Law is inconceivable, and copies the scriptures, aspiring to listen to them, receiving and upholding them, then upon giving up this life, one will instantly release himself from the three evil paths, and in this body he will forever avoid falling into Avici Hell.

变成大王(额)

若人信法」不思议书」写经文听」受持舍命」
顿超三恶」道此身长」免入阿鼻」

"King of Mount Tai"

A single life is fragile like a lantern in the wind; two rats creep up, gnawing at a vine in the well.⁷ If one does not cultivate a precious raft to ferry one over the bitter sea of life, then what can one depend on to attain deliverance?

太山大王(额)

一身危脆」似风灯二」鼠侵欺啮」井藤苦海」
不修桥筏」渡欲凭何」物得超升」

⁷The two rats gnawing at a vine in a deep well is a Buddhist parable for the precariousness of pleasant existence and karmic blessing. *Sutra }*

"Impartial King"

At that time the Buddha put forth a ray of light that filled the great chiliocosm; dragons and preta assembled with humans and gods. Indra, Brahma, the various gods, and the hidden multitude of the underworld all came to prostrate themselves in front of the World-honored One.

平正大王(额)

时佛舒光」满大千普」臻龙鬼会」人天释梵」

诸天冥密」众咸来稽」首世尊前」

"King of the Capital"

Each birth on the Six Paths contains suffering without limit; the Ten Evils and the Three Paths are not easy to bear. If all efforts are put forth to establish the feasts and complete meritorious deeds, then sins as numerous as the sands of the Ganges will disappear of themselves.

都市大王」

一生六道」苦茫茫十」恶三涂不」易当努力」

设斋功德」具恒沙诸」罪自消亡」

"King who Turns the Wheel of Dharma"

For the last three, where they pass is an important crossing. Good and evil depend only on felicitous actions as a cause. The unvirtuous will yet continue to suffer grief for a full one thousand days. They will be reborn into a womb only to die in birth, or to die at a young age.

转轮圣王(额)

后王所历」是关津好」恶惟凭福」业因不善」
尚忧千日」内胎生产」死夭亡身」

"Officer of Rapid Recompense"

Not constructing a boat or bridge is man's folly; meeting with danger, you will at last begin to understand. If you awaken to the fact that one hundred years pass like a snap of the fingers, [then] one must surely not delay in observing days of fast and listening to the Law.

速报司官(额)

船桥不造」此人痴遭」险恹惶君」始知若悟」
百年弹指」过修斋听」法莫教迟」

Mid-Level Inscriptions of Hell Scenes

Knife Mountain Hell

If once a month one chants the name of Dipamkara Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Knife Mountain Hell. The hymn says:
 “Hearing tell of Knife Mountain yet unable to climb it, the outlines of its rocky hills, lofty and precipitous, causing the heart to swoon. Assiduously cultivating blessings when the days of fast occur, one avoids becoming victim of the drag of evil karma on the path ahead.”

月一日念定光佛」一千遍不墮刀山」地獄△贊曰」聞說刀山不可攀」
 嵯峨險峻使心酸」遇逢齋日勤修福」免見前程惡業牽」

Boiling Cauldron Hell

If daily one chants the name of the Buddha of Medicine 1000 times, one will not fall into Boiling Cauldron Hell. [The hymn says:]
 “Exhort the ruler to strive to be mindful of the Lord Master of Medicine, and escape from enduring the suffering of the boiling cauldron. Fallen into the waves, wondering when one will get out, early cultivation of the Pure Land helps to escape perishing.”

日念藥師琉璃光佛」千遍不墮鑊湯地獄」勸君勤念藥師尊」
 免向鑊湯受苦辛」落在波中何時出」早修淨土脫沉淪」

Freezing Hell

If daily one chants the names of the One Thousand Buddhas of the Present Kalpa 1000 times, one will not fall into the Freezing Hell. [The hymn says:]
 “The worst of the sufferings to be found therein are its cold and ice [where one], with eyes covered, [is] naked and exposed to the gods. Merely chant to the various Buddhas seeking merit, and bad karma will be eliminated, and one will be reborn in a good place.”

日念贤劫千佛一千」遍不堕寒冰地狱」就中最苦是寒冰」
 盖因裸露对神明」但念诸佛求功德」罪业消除好处生」

Swordtree Hell

[If daily one chants the name of [Amitabha]] 1000 times, one will not fall into Swordtree Hell.⁸ The hymn says:
 “[I have heard tell that the blessings of Amitabha are most] powerful. [Upon touching] the deadly sword trees, death occurs automatically. [Whatever] one invites upon oneself, one brings [in retribution] upon oneself. [This retribution] is not something that depends upon [affliction by another].”⁹

⁸The compilers of DZSKMWL, 143, cite “Amitabha” as the Buddha invoked here, although their own accompanying inscription shows this portion of the text as missing. No explanation is provided as to how they ascertained which Buddha was being named. In most other instances involving the hell inscriptions, DZSKMWL is a superior, more complete source than the earlier compilation DZSKYJ.

⁹Dan Stevenson, 06/18/01 personal correspondence, provided this probable reconstruction of the largely effaced text of this inscription.

日〔念〕」阿弥〔陀佛〕」千遍不墮」剑树地狱」赞曰」闻说弥陀」
福最强□」残剑树□」消亡自 作」自招还自」受莫待□」时手脚□」

Tongue-Extraction Hell

[If daily one chants the name of] Tathagatha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Tongue Extraction Hell. The hymn says:

“The Hell of Tongue-Extraction is caused by sending the ox out with the iron plow; all types of grasping does not still it for even one moment. If one desires to avoid personal interrogation by King Yama, recite the name of Dizang 1000 times.”

□□□□如来一千」〔遍不墮〕拔舌地狱」赞曰拔舌更使铁牛耕」
万种凌持不暂停」要免阎王亲叫 问」持念地藏一千声」

Hell of Poisonous Snakes

If daily one chants the name of the Tathagatha of Wisdom of Great Power 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Poisonous Snakes. The hymn says:

“The compassion of the bodhisattvas is vast and plentiful; they deliver one from suffering and provide constant instruction, drawing one out from the river of desire. The lotus blossoms of the nine grades [of being] each have their share of the dew. What can cause one to be sent through the poisonous snakes?”

日念大势智如来一」千遍不墮毒蛇地狱」赞曰菩萨慈悲广大多」
救苦常教出爱河」九品莲花沾 有分」毒蛇岂敢便相〔过〕」

Hell of Cutting and Grinding

If daily one chants the name of the Bodhisattva who Regards the World's Cries 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Cutting and Grinding.

The hymn says:

“Chopping up bodies, cutting and grinding, no time for repose; all here performed evil deeds, not cultivating and maintaining good. Avalokitesvara grieves for the suffering of all sentient beings, revealing her mercy and compassion, she aids all to escape from hell.”

日念观音菩萨」千遍不堕剉碓」地狱△赞 曰」斩身剉碓」
没休时都」缘造恶不」修 持观音」哀愍众生」苦免离地」
狱现慈悲」

Hell of Being Sawed into Pieces

If daily one chants the name of Vairocana Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Being Sawed into Pieces. [The hymn says:]

“The Tathagata's merits are a vast and perfect radiance, which follows like a bright moon coming out among the myriad stars. Merely by chanting [his name] one is able to eliminate all manner of sins. Only a sovereign presumes to saw into pieces without cause.”

日念卢舍那佛千遍」不堕锯解地狱」如来功德大圆明」
由如朗月出群星」但念 能除多种罪」锯解无由敢用君」

Hell of the Iron Bed

If daily one chants the names of the Bodhisattvas Medicine King and Medicine Excellence 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed. [The hymn says:]

“The Bodhisattvas true names are those of Healing Kings, and they can dissolve the flames of the iron bed. They have mercy on those who created evil karma as heavy as a mountain, and by merely chanting their true names all living creatures can avoid such calamities.”

日念药王药上菩萨」千遍不堕铁床地狱」菩萨真名号药王」
铁床更用火烧烱」直饶造业如山重」但念真名免众殃」

Hell of Darkness

If daily one chants the name of Sakyamuni Buddha 1000 times, one will not fall into the Hell of Darkness. The hymn says :

“Keeping the fast-days, serving the Buddha, and taking delight in reading the scriptures, one accumulates good [deeds], and the inspectors of the netherworld inscribe one’s name [in the registers of merit]. Additionally reciting the name of Amitabha 1000 times, naturally the darkness will manifest brightness.”

日念释迦牟尼佛一」千遍不堕黑暗地狱」赞曰」持
斋事佛好看经」积善冥司注姓名」更诵弥陀一千
遍」自然黑暗显光明」

Lower-Level Inscriptions of Hell Scenes

Hell of Feces and Filth

The scripture states that Kasyapa asked the Buddha, “Those who eat meat fall into which hell?”

The Buddha informed Kasyapa,
 “Those who eat meat fall into the Hell of Feces and Filth. Among feces and filth 10,000 ‘feet’ deep, the meat eater is thrown into this hell, and repeatedly he goes through the cycle of immersion and exit. When he goes through the first cycle, myriads of spikes situated all around him stab and rupture this body, and serrate his limbs. This is the great torment [of this hell]. For five million lifetimes he knows no release.”¹⁰

大藏经云迦叶白」佛言食肉者堕何」处地狱佛告迦叶」食肉者堕粪秽地」狱其中有粪乃深」万丈驱食肉之人」入此地狱驱出转」轴始转一匝遍体」万钉刺破此身支」过通彻是其大苦」五百万世无有出期」

Halberd Hell, Iron Wheel Hell, and Boiling Cauldron Hell

The Buddha said,
 “[If one] eats [food] or if [one] prepares food and serves it to parents, [teachers, elders], friends, wife, children, and family, then in future lives they will fall into Iron Wheel Hell.¹¹ There in the armpit on the right side [x], [x] copper is poured [x], suffer for eating during the days of fast [x], likewise it is thus.

大藏佛言若食口」食或裹幙口食与」父母兄弟师长朋」友妻子眷属未来」世中堕铁轮地狱」左腋右腴口铜灌」口若食斋者亦复」如是」。

¹⁰I thank Dan Stevenson for helping me complete this translation.

¹¹Large portions of this inscription are no longer legible due to weathering. I present what has been transcribed.

The Buddha then informed Kasyapa,

“Those who seize upon others fall into Iron Wheel Hell. Those who cook meat of any living creature fall into the Boiling Cauldron. There in the midst of water, with a fire below they are kept stewing until they burst. Also boiled are those who urge others to cook meat; they enter this hell and endure its great torments.

People who broil meat fall into the Hell of the Iron Bed. Those who cut and chop meat fall into the Hell of Cutting and Grinding while those who kill living creatures fall into Halberd Hell, wherein an iron-faced [halberd] is used during the daytime, with a copper-iron [halberd] being employed during the evening. The halberd's body has a blade the length of 4 feet. Facing [the damned], it is run through [his or her] chest, coming out his back. For those who kill living creatures it is so. Consequently, to expound the dharma is to explain it to all living creatures.”

大藏佛告迦叶抢兔之人」堕铁轮地狱方丈万钉间」无空处一切众生煮肉者」堕镬汤地狱其中有水其」下有火持火烧之溃溃乃」沸驱煮肉之人入此地狱」受其大苦炙肉之人堕铁」床地狱斩肉之人堕剉碓」地狱杀生之人堕釜戟地」狱其中铁面昼夜铜铁造」其釜戟身中一丈刃中四」尺望胸而撞背上而出杀」生之人亦复如是故说诸」法开示一切众生」

Admonition Against Raising Animals

The Buddha told Kasyapa,

“All sentient beings who raise chickens, enter into hell...”¹²

大藏经言佛告迦叶」一切众生养鸡者入」于地狱

¹²According to DZSKMWL, this inscription continues with a description of the consequences for such actions. The state of the actual inscribed text is largely abraded, and as such, I have only translated what remains legible here.

Knife Boat Hell

Receiving the penalty for one's own sins, it is not a case of heaven meting out punishment to humans.¹³

自作自受」非天与人」

Hungry Ghost Hell

The scripture states :

Kasyapa Bodhisattva then addressed the Buddha saying , “Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into which hell?” The Buddha informed Kasyapa, “Those who do not honor the days of fast fall into Hungry Ghost Hell...”¹⁴

饿鬼地狱」大藏经云迦叶菩萨而」白佛言破斋者堕何处」地狱佛告迦叶破斋者」堕饿鬼地狱

Avici Hell - Mountain Enclosed by Iron

The Buddha told Kasyapa, “If a mendicant here puts on my dharma robe, [he or she must] one, abstain from drinking alcohol, two, abstain from eating meat, three, abstain from envying the good at heart, four, abstain from engaging in ignoble or impure deeds. Those who do not do so fall into Avici Hell...”¹⁵

铁围山阿鼻地【狱】(额)

大藏经云佛告迦叶若比」丘披我法衣者一不听饮」酒二不听食肉三不听嫉」妒心四不听作不净行善」□□□□□ 堕阿鼻」狱

¹³Dan Stevenson, personal correspondence, 06/19/01. A lengthier description of Knife Boat hell is inscribed on the same flat area next to the Admonition against Raising Animals according to DZSKMWL, but much of it is effaced, so I have translated only the inscription found on a small stele placed above the souls in the boat.

¹⁴This inscription continues with a physical description of Hungry Ghost Hell. See SDJFJSKYS, 312, for the complete transcription of this inscription.

¹⁵This inscription continues with a physical description of Avici Hell.

Hell of Being Cut in Two at the Knees

Not believing in the Buddha's words, the ruler repents without benefit....
Third, is not keeping the fast-days combined with violating the precepts.
Fourth, is committing the five heinous sins¹⁶ toward father and mother,....

不信佛言」后悔无益」三为破斋并犯戒」四为五逆向爷娘」

Inscriptions Flanking the Pagoda¹⁷

Heaven's halls are vast and broad, yet hell is also vast; not believing in the Buddha's word, then how the heart suffers!

My Way is to seek pleasure in the midst of suffering, but all sentient beings [being confused] seek pain in the midst of pleasure.

天堂也广地狱也阔」不信佛言且奈心苦」
(左)吾道苦中求乐」众生乐中求苦」

Inscription Carved within the Second-Tier of the Pagoda

Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, I would not, because of this suffering, give up the mind of enlightenment.

假使热铁轮，于我顶上旋，终不以此苦，退失菩提心

¹⁶The Sanskrit term is *pancanantarya*. Soothill, 128.

¹⁷These inscriptions are letters "D" and "E" in the diagram.

Admonition against Speaking Falsehoods¹⁸

A sutra [in the Great] Canon, the Buddha spoke of protecting one's "mouth," saying, "In the dark regions, there was a hungry ghost on whose repulsive body appeared fire. Maggots came out of his mouth, with pus and blood throughout his decrepit body. His foul breath reached penetratingly everywhere, and from his limbs and joints, arose fire. Finally, he made a wailing sound. A lohan asked the ghost, 'Do you know what sinful act [you have committed] in the past to endure such suffering today?'

The ghost replied, 'In the past, I was attached to money; being miserly and greedy, I did not give alms. [I] spoke vulgar and evil things, and saw evil [everywhere]. I regarded my own reliance on bullying [as a way] to grow old and not die. [I] created immeasurable evil. Even though I now repent, it will not suffice. I would rather cut out my tongue with a sharp knife. [Henceforth] from kalpa to kalpa, I will endure unspeakable suffering with a resigned heart, and not utter a single word of slander with regard to the wholesome deeds of others. I will use my [repulsive] bodily physique as [an example] to caution and admonish all beings to guard well the faults of the mouth, and not speak falsely. I will endure this bodily form of a hungry ghost for thousands of kalpas. [At the end of this life], I will again enter into hell. XXX Evils of the mouth such as improper speech, beautiful talk, or double-tongued [talk] bring suffering such as this.¹⁹ Goodness is rewarded with good; evil is rewarded with evil."

大藏佛说护口经云有一饿魑丑恶身 出猛火口 出蛆虫脓血诸衰臭气通彻支节火起
卒声号 哭罗汉问曰汝宿何罪今 受此苦魑曰吾往恋着 资生慳贪不舍出言粗恶偏
眼恶视自恃豪强谓 长不死造无量恶业今悔勿及宁以利刃自 截其舌 竹劫至劫甘
心受苦不以一言诽谤他 善以我形状诫诸众等善护口过勿妄出言 受饿鬼身经数千
劫备受楚毒我此命终 复入地狱 妄言绮语两舌恶口受如是苦 善有善报恶有恶报

¹⁸The title of this inscription is for the most part eroded. I have chosen to refer to it as an admonition rather than a hell as it seems more appropriate given the subject matter. Although prominently placed at the right-hand of the Zhao Zhifeng statue, this inscription is not transcribed in DZSKYJ, but can be found reproduced in DZSKMWL, 151.

¹⁹Several of these lines suffer from serious water damage and are no longer legible. I thank Dan Stevenson for his help in reconstructing this passage.

Boiling Cauldron Hell

The Buddha spoke, “[xxx] [xxx] [xxx] [xxx] create bad karma, the Buddha is all compassionate.

The body which falls into the Three Paths meets with pain and suffering; those who believe in one thought bring together ones’ own knowledge.”

大藏佛言「□□□□ 造恶业」不是诸佛没慈悲」身落三涂遭痛苦」信者一念自合知」

Admonition Against Alcohol

The Sutra on Brilliant Freshness Preached by the Buddha from the Great Canon:

大藏佛说华鲜经」尔时佛告迦叶

At that time Buddha announced to Kasyapa:²⁰

“Those who drink alcohol do not know their own families. Among those who drink alcohol, there are cases where fathers do not recognize their sons, or sons do not recognize their fathers; elder brothers do not recognize younger brothers, or younger brothers do not recognize elder brothers; husbands do not recognize their wives, or wives do not recognize their husbands; elder sisters do not recognize younger sisters, or younger sisters do not recognize elder sisters; or they do not recognize their inner or outer kin. Good sons [of the Buddha] in this current life become utterly confused, how much moreso in future [lives to come]. Any sentient being who foregoes drinking wine and eating meat will be able to arouse the resolve to [seek and achieve] the perfected bodhi mind.²¹

佛告迦叶善哉哉不」饮酒者是我真子即非凡」夫若饮酒者或父不识子」或子不识父或兄不识弟」或弟不识兄或夫不识妻」或妻不识夫或姊不识妹」或妹不识姊或不识内外」眷属善男子现前颠倒何」况未来一切众生不食酒」肉者得发无上菩提之心」

²⁰The text breaks here as a large portion of the actual inscription has been broken away.

²¹ I thank Dan Stevenson for helping complete this translation.

The Alcohol Sellers

"The sutra states :

At that time, the World-honored One informed all Buddhist monks,
 "If someone receives the Five Precepts and the 250 Precepts,²² and the full range of rules of proper deportment,²³ and yet does not abstain from drinking alcohol, then he or she has violated the 250 Precepts with regard to right conduct. If you transgress as such you will accordingly enter hell."

Kasyapa addressed the Buddha saying,

"Liquor does not involve living victims. For what reason does the Tathagatha prohibit alcohol [as something that] causes suffering?"

The Buddha replied to Kasyapa,

"Listen carefully. In the kingdom of Sravasti there was Angulimala; the action of drinking alcohol caused stupidity and confusion, causing the son to violate his own mother, and to kill his own father. The mother accordingly took a lover, and together bearing a knife [they] did harm. This is the reason today the precepts say alcohol causes suffering."

A person such as the girl who buys and sells alcohol, will die and fall into hell.²⁴ When receipt of her punishment is concluded, she will be [reborn with] a body three feet high, two ears blocked shut, a face without two eyes, likewise without nostrils, underneath the lips, a gaping mouth, hands without ten fingers, legs without two feet.

²²Soothill, 239. The rules of the *vinaya*. The Sanskrit term is *pratimokosa*. Soothill, 266. This "list of rules" is literally a statement of values for the Buddhist monastic community, explicitly denoting allowable behaviour and forbidden behaviour.

²³Mathews, #1047.

²⁴This girl is specified by name in the inscriptions, but does not appear to be linked to any one Buddhist personage.

In addition to people who drink, those who press alcohol on a monk, will fall into the Hell of Being Cut at the Knees, within which a strong man [jailer] with his sword will brutally cut the damned's two knees. Those who press alcohol on a monk will receive such suffering as this."

大藏经云尔时世尊」告诸比丘若受五戒」二百五十戒威仪具」足戒不听饮酒犯波」罗提目义若犯即入」地狱迦叶白佛言酒」亦无命如来何故戒」酒为苦佛告迦叶汝」好谛听舍婆提国有」庭崛摩罗为饮酒昏」乱淫匿其母杀戮其」父母即与外人共通」担刀害之是故今日」戒酒为苦又告槃陀」女为人沽酒死墮地」狱受形法竟身长三尺」两耳闭塞复无两目」亦无鼻孔下唇褰哆」手无十指脚无两足」皆由沽酒况饮之人」若劝比丘酒者墮截」膝地狱其中力士将」其刀剑截其两膝强」劝比丘酒者受如是」苦」

Mother and Father Feeding Child

Kasyapa addressed the Buddha saying, "When you preach the *dharma* to sentient beings, do they accept it or not?"

The Buddha then told Kasyapa,

"[It is analogous to] a person whose years having reached the age of 80, [remains] poor, poverty-stricken, and forlorn. A ruler bears a single son. [Filled] with the utmost pity and compassion [for his son], he holds gold in one hand and food in the other, offering both at the same time [to the child]. The child being ignorant does not recognize the gold, but goes for the food.

For all sentient beings it is so. I [the Buddha] take pity on sentient beings [and preach the *Dharma*] in the same way as that loving father [offered the gold]. Yet all the sentient beings cast it aside, do [not] pay reverence to it, [nor] take it to heart, nor put it into practice."

迦叶白佛言如来」若说法时一切众生」为受不受佛告迦」叶譬如有人年已」八十贫穷孤老后」生一子极其怜悯」一手把金一手把」饭二团俱授如过」与子婴儿愚昧不」识其金而取其饭」一切众生亦复如是」我悯一切众生犹」如慈父众生而悉」舍去口作礼奉行」

IV. The Asceticism of Master Liu

“Number One - Refining a Finger by Fire”

In 900 CE, the founder Liu Benzun accidentally happened across many people sick with an epidemic. The founder pitied them, proceeding to swear before the Buddha, and throughout the day held a magic charm as he sat within the *daochang*. [Liu] then burnt off the first joint of the second finger on his left hand in offering to all Buddhas, swearing an oath to relieve the distress of the myriad creatures. The Virtuous Sage was moved by this, and assisted [Liu] in transmitting the Way, without speaking saying: ‘Your oath is sincere and wide-reaching; you therefore must go west, and upon arriving at Mi, you should reside there.’ [Liu] went to Han and promptly returned, proceeding to travel and perform rituals at Lingshan, eventually returning to Gui County.

第一炼指」本尊教主于光启」二年偶见人」多疫疾教」主悯之遂」盟于佛持」咒灭之在」本宅道场
中炼左手第」二指一节供养诸佛誓」救苦恼众生感圣贤摄」受通不语云汝誓愿广」大汝当西去遇弥
即住」遇汉即回遂游礼灵山」却回归县」

“Number Two - Standing in Snow”

In the eleventh moon of 900 CE, the founder Liu Benzun along with the multitude traveled to Emeishan, searching for a rite to honor the image of Samantabhadra. At this time, [Liu] encountered a blizzard which filled the air, and the one thousand mountains were white-white. For thirteen days, [Liu] forced his body to ascend to the summit; from December 7th to the 21st²⁵ [Liu] sat upright in meditation on top of the mountain, following the example of Shakyamuni who for six years performed Buddhist acts on a snowy mountain in order to achieve the Way. Moved by this, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva manifested himself as a witness [to Liu’s actions].

²⁵Matthew, #2903

第二立雪(额)

本尊教主于光启二年十」一月挈家游峨眉山瞻礼」普贤光相时遇大雪
弥漫」千山皓白十三日将身向」胜峰顶大雪中凝然端坐」以表释迦文佛雪
山六年」修行成道感」普贤菩萨现身证明」

“Number Three - Refining an Ankle by Fire”

The founder Liu Benzun was seated at a feast at Emei which had already lasted quite long when suddenly a monk saw him and called forth: ‘Lay Buddhist, why stop on this mountain? Of what benefit is it? It would be better to go to the nine regions and ten counties to relieve the suffering of the masses and cure the sick.’ Because of this, [Liu] left the mountain, and went away. On the 18th day of the first moon of 902 CE, Benzun took one then two joss sticks making one wick of them, and on the ankle of his left leg burnt them in offering to all Buddhas. [Liu] swore an oath that altogether all myriad beings, XXXX, receiving all within the *daochang*, [Liu instructed them] to never carry out evil or fawn over this place. Moved by this, after four days the king certified [Liu’s actions].

第三炼踝」本尊教主宴坐峨眉历时」已久忽睹僧谓曰居士止此」山中有何利益不如往九州」十县救
疗病苦众生便辞山」而去于天福二年正月十八日」本尊将檀香一两为一炷」于左脚踝上烧炼供养」
诸佛愿共一切众生」举足下足皆遇道场永不践」邪谄之地感」四天王为作证明」

“Number Four - Gouging Out an Eye”

The venerable sage Liu Benzun had already been in the Han region ten days; suddenly recalling former days, the sage spoke: ‘Encountering XXX I promptly stopped; after going to Han, I promptly returned. From here I will stay in the west in Mimeng.’²⁶ One day in the Han region, the prefect Lord Zhao sent a messenger who came to request an eye, lying by saying that it would be used to make medicine, desirous of trying to see if his need would be denied. Liu Benzun’s heart already was aware of this, and from a person

²⁶Site of Liu’s temple [present day Xindu].

took a knife, which he dropped as soon as he had gouged [out his eye] He gave [his eye to the messenger] who appeared to be extremely reluctant to take it. Moved by this, Vajragarbha Bodhisattva manifested himself. Upon seeing the eye, Lord Zhou was frightened and exclaimed: '[Liu] is truly good and knowledgeable.' He then converted and confessed. The time was the third day of the seventh moon of 904 CE.

第四剜眼」本尊贤圣至汉州已」经旬日忽忆往日圣」言逢弥即止遇汉即」回由此驻锡弥牟一」日汉州刺史赵君」差人来请眼睛」诈云用作药剂」欲试可本尊心已」先知人至将戒刀便剜付」与殊无难色感」金刚藏菩萨顶上现身眼至赵」君观而惊叹曰真善知识也投」诚忏悔时天福四年七月三日」也」

"Number Five - Cutting an Ear"

The virtuous sage Benzun as a novice was ordered to reside at Mimeng, bowing he went toward the golden hall, [seeking] golden wisdom²⁷ to convert people and to relieve sickness. Having one by one been to every place, [Liu] admonished his relatives to abstain, and all of the people venerated him, all returning to the true teaching. At noon on the fifteenth day of the second moon in 904 CE, [Liu] cutoff his ear in offering to all Buddhas. Moved by this act, on top of a floating hill the Great Sage²⁸ manifested himself thereby providing proof of the act.

第五割耳」本尊贤圣令徒弟住」弥牟躬往金堂金水行」化救病经历诸处亲往」戒敕诸民钦仰皆归」正教于天福四年二月」十五日午时割耳供养」诸佛感」浮丘大圣」顶上现身以为证明」

"Number Six - Refining the Heart by Fire"

The virtuous sage Benzun, on the third day of the seventh moon of 905 CE, with one length of a fragrant candle burnt [the area over] his heart in offering to all Buddhas. Discovering his bodhi mind was as vast as the phenomenal world²⁹ and that all was actually void and empty, [Liu] ordered

²⁷Soothill, 283b.

²⁸Title of a Buddha, Soothill, 93b.

²⁹Dharmadhatu, Soothill, 271a.

all the myriad creatures to forever cease in their worries. Moved by this, *Dalun mingwang*, [Destroyer of Delusion] manifested himself as proof.³⁰ All of the myriad creatures began to obtain a realization of the truth.

第六炼心」本尊贤圣于天福五年七月三」日以香腊烛一条炼心供养诸」佛发菩提心广大如法」界究竟如虚空」令一切众生」永断烦恼感」大轮明王现」身证明一切」众生悉得惺」悟」

“Number Seven - Refining the Crown of the Head by Fire”

Benzun the virtuous sage, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of 905 CE, Benzun took only one piece of the five fragrances, and, with the tray on his knees as he sat straight up, burnt the crown of his head, following the example of Shakyamuni Buddha who allowed a magpie to nest on top of his head. The Great Light Mingwang³¹ gave up his hair and gave alms. Moved by this, Manjusri Bodhisattva on head manifested himself, and because of this it was proven.

第七炼顶」本尊贤圣于天福五年七月」十五日本尊以五香捍就一条」腊烛端坐炼顶效」释迦佛鹊巢顶相大光明王」舍头布施感」文殊菩萨」顶上现身」为作证明」

“Number Eight - Cutting an Arm”

The founder Benzun in 905 in Chengdu in the *daochang* within Wang Jian’s workshop, cut into his one and only left arm, at 48 cuts ordered [himself] to stop. With each cut [Liu] uttered an oath swearing to aid the masses, thereby echoing Amitabha Buddha’s 48 vows. On the summit one hundred thousand days to the east, unlimited drumming, along with his own voice, throughout that part of the world, the clerk Xie Gong memorialized the event by performing music for all to hear. The King of Shu exclaimed that it was extraordinary, and dispatched a messenger to commend and award him.

³⁰Soothill, 96a.

³¹Soothill, 85a.

第八舍臂」本尊教主」于天福五年」在成都玉津」坊道场内」截下一」只左臂」经四十」八刀方断」刀刀发愿誓救」众生以应阿弥」陀佛四十八愿顶」上百千天乐不鼓」自鸣本界厢吏谢」洪具表奏闻蜀王」叹异遣使褒奖」

“Number Nine - Refining the Penis by Fire”

The founder Benzun, in the second ten days of the twelfth moon of 905 CE, [learned that] Qiu Shao of Horsehead Lane had fallen ill and was already dead three days, when Benzun performed a ceremony to beg for relief. The whole family uttered a pledge, that if [Qiu Shao] would again be granted life, with scissors they would cut their hair on a level equal to that of their eyebrows, and for the rest of their lives be at [Benzun's] service.

Benzun with his all great and merciful heart then sprinkled fragrant water, and Qiu Shao stood up revived. Thus Qiu Shao, husband and wife, and two women, all came to serve and repay [Liu's] kindness and virtue, not leaving left or right.

On the fifteenth day of the intercalary twelfth month, Benzun used a candle and some cloth to bind his penis. Throughout one day and night it burnt, thereupon cutting his desire off. Moved by this, the heavens showered down seven precious canopies,³² and an auspicious cloud of fog then came to carry and support him. Throughout the land arose music, and the King of Shu gasped in admiration.

第九炼阴」本尊教主天福五年前十二月」中旬马头巷丘绍得病身死」三日皈依」本尊求救合家」发愿若得再生」剪发齐眉终身」给侍本尊具大」悲心以香水洒之」丘绍立苏于是丘绍夫妇」二女俱来侍奉以报恩德」不离左右闰十二月十五日」本尊用腊布裹阴经一昼夜」烧炼以示绝欲感天降七宝」盖祥云瑞雾捧拥而来」本界腾奏」蜀王叹服」

“Number Ten - Refining the Knees by Fire”

To the virtuous sage Benzun, the King of Shu, who over the course of time had come to venerate him, by imperial edict inquired saying: ‘How

³²Soothill, 478a.

[does one] cultivate such a way, he who is called 'Revered Master'? Report what effectiveness [it has had] on saving all kinds of families?' [Liu] replied saying: 'Master, to be skilled at cultivating daily[acts of] refining oneself with fire, make an oath begging to be without the passions and their filth.'³³ [Liu] took special hold of a six wheel five section secret charm in order to relieve to a degree the [suffering] of the multitudes. On the eighteenth day of the first moon of 906 CE, [Liu] began to carve joss sticks, burning into his two knees, and burning them as an offering to all the Buddhas. Proclaiming his oath to all myriad beings, the imperial splendor after these three meetings obtained mutual insight.

第十炼膝」本尊贤圣蜀王钦仰日久」因诏问曰卿修何道自号」本尊卿稟何灵救于百姓」对曰予精修
日炼誓求无」漏无为之果专持大轮五」部秘咒救度众生于天福六年」正月十八日将印香烧炼两膝」
供养诸佛发愿与一切众生龙」华三会同得相见」

³³Soothill, 425a.

APPENDIX C

BAODINGSHAN NON-CANONICAL INSCRIPTIONS

Song Dynasty Du Xiaoyan inscription

‘Baodingshan’

Grand Master for Closing Court, with the authority of minister, Director of the Bureau of Military Appointments, concurrently Associate State Historiographer, concurrently Recorder for the Bureau of Army Activities, the official litterateur Du Xiaoyan inscribed this.

宝顶山

朝散大夫尚书兵部侍郎兼同修国史兼军录院□官修撰杜孝严书

Song Dynasty Yuwen Qi poem stele

Near to the clouds, the ingenious pleases all eyes, the scriptures appearing to encircle this divine place, and [one] sees the transformation city.¹ Such great filialness is unalterable!

Throughout the four seasons [one hears] first the sound of pipes and bells overlapping.² The Precious Summit’s distinguished Zhao Zhi carved the stone, in it tracing out the worthiness of his filial heart.

By completing this stanza of four lines, I establish in every mountain and stream such things as pipes and bells rippling like a Su Dongpo poem, the meaning of which is called ‘divine wondrous merit’.³

¹ The transcribers of the text in DZSKYJ put an unknown character here, instead of what I read as ‘*fu*’, “near to”. See R. H. Mathews, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, 17th edition [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993]: #1948a. The term “transformation city” may be a reference to the Flower Ornament Scripture. See *Fo xue da ci dian* [Encyclopedia of Buddhist Studies], vol. 1 [Taipei: Tian hua chu ban she, 1984]: 736b.

² The specific Chinese term inscribed here is “*lin jia*” often used as a compound to refer to the scales of fish. I have followed a secondary meaning in translating ‘*lin*’ as ‘overlapping’ or ‘rippling’, and “*jia*” as ‘first’ or ‘chief’. The overall meaning of the passage is to create a sense of the sights and sounds of temple life.

³ Poem written by Song scholar Yuwen Ji on stele found at Baodingshan, Dazu County, Sichuan. DZSKYJ, 265.

Gentleman for Closing Court⁴, Prefect of Changzhou, and of the affairs of Chunzhou, concurrently in charge of Inner Provisions and Farming XXX Two Rivers Yuwen Qi inscribed this.

剥云技巧欢群目，经贝周遭见化城。大孝不移神所与，笙钟鳞甲四时鸣。宝顶赵智宗刻石追孝心可取焉。以成绝句，立诸山阿。笙钟鳞甲事，见坡诗，谓为神功阿护之意也。朝散郎知昌州军州事兼管内劝农□□二江宇文纪书。

Song Dynasty Cheng Zhi inscription

Reverend Master Zhao, named Zhifeng, was born in the *shao xing kang chen* year to a rice commissioner from Shaqi.⁵ At five *sui*, he entered the mountains to grasp the meaning of the sutras, swearing an oath to do so. At 16 *sui*, Zhao departed to the west, returning to this mountain to cultivate morality by constructing the revered master's temple in order to transmit the teaching of Reverend Master Liu's law. For this reason, the name of this mountain then came to be known as "Precious Summit".⁶ [Zhao] offered up his ear, and refined by fire the top of his head in order to recompense his parents, distributing charms along with the Law. Those people [whom he had] saved handed down this warning, saying of his offering, "A red-hot iron wheel turned over the flesh, shaking [one] up like a fierce fire within a stove."⁷

Gentleman for Fostering Uprightness, Changzhou Administrative Assistant of Military Affairs Cheng Zhi X inscribed this.⁸

⁴Winston Lo, 103, notes that Emperor Shenzong implemented a new system of classification of titles, with the term "lang" or "gentleman" being standardized for lower ranking civil servants thereafter in the Song.

⁵The *kang chen* cyclical year for the *shao xing* era of the reign of Emperor Gaozong or 1160 CE.

⁶Here written as "Bao feng" rather than "Bao ding".

⁷DZSKMWL, 211.

⁸Ibid. "Cheng zhi lang" according to Hucker, 126, was a prestige title accorded to officials of ranks 6a-8b in the Sung, 6a alone in the Yuan and Ming. "Pan guan", re Hucker, 363, is described as being "from Sung through Yuan, a very common title at all levels of government with status seldom higher than rank 6, normally prefixed with the appropriate agency name and sometimes with a functional responsibility also indicated."

赵本尊名智风绍兴庚辰年生于米粮之沙溪五岁入山持念经咒十有六年西往弥牟复回山修建本尊殿传授柳本尊法旨遂名其山曰宝鼎舍耳炼顶报亲散施符法救民尝垂戒曰热铁轮里翻筋斗猛火炉中打倒悬嘉熙年间承直郎昌州军事判官席存著为之铭」

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

- Anyue 安岳
 Baodingshan 寶頂山
 Baofengshan 寶峰山
 Beishan 北山
bian cheng 變成
bian wen 變文
bian xiang 變相
 Chan 禪
 Cheng Zhi 承值
cheng zhi lang 承直郎
chui di 吹笛
 Cijue 慈覺
cu jian 粗見
da bao louge 大寶樓閣
Da fang bian fo bao en jing 大方便佛報恩經
Da fang guang Huayan shi e pin jing 大方廣華嚴十惡品經
Da fo wan 大佛彎
dao chang 道場
da wang 大王
 Dazu 大足
di yu 地獄
Dizang pu sa ben yuan jing 地藏菩薩本願經
 Du Xiaoyan 杜孝嚴
 e 惡
Fan wang jing 梵網經
Fo shuo da fang bian bao en jing 佛說大方便報恩經
Fo shuo fu mu en zhong nan bao jing 佛說父母恩重難報經
Fo shuo qi fo jing 佛說七佛經
Fo shuo shi er bu da zang jing 佛說十二部大藏經
 fu 福
 fu 傅
Fu mu en zhong jing 父母恩重經
 Fu Xi 傅翕
gu de 古德
Guan ding jing 灌頂經
Guan wu liang shou fo jing 觀無量壽佛經

he shang 和尚
huo 禍
jiang jing wen 講經文
jin shi 進士
Jiu ba yan kou e gui tuo lou ni jing 救八焰口餓鬼陀羅尼經
ku 苦
le 樂
lin jia 鱗甲
Liu Benzun 柳本尊
liu hao 六耗
ming wang 明王
mo fa 末法
mu niu tu 牧牛圖
pan guan 判官
Ping zheng da wang 平正大王
shan 善
Shan Hui 善慧
Shi ba bian cheng 十八變成
Shi en de 十恩德
Shi wang jing 十王經
shou 壽
Shu zhong ming sheng ji 蜀中名勝紀
Shuang en ji 雙恩紀
song yue 頌曰
Su bao si guan 速報司官
tian zi 天子
wang guan yu 王棺輦
Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁
Wofo Yuan 臥佛院
wu sheng 無生
Xian bao si guan 現報司官
Xiao fo wan 小佛彎
xin 心
Xin wang ming 心王銘
Xin yan 心眼
ya zuo wen 壓坐文
Yang Jie 楊傑
Yu di ji sheng 輿地紀勝
Yuwen Ji 宇文記

yu zhou 宇宙

Za bao zang jing 雜寶藏經

Zan yue 讚曰

Zhao Zhifeng 趙智風

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