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Amitabha and the Pure Land

FLORE  SOLEIL

Author Wen Jun is a researcher of the
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field is particularly in the art of buddhism.

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Amitabha and the Pure Land

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Amitabha is the master of the Pure Land, which is a school of Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty. This school is looking for an ideal world like paradise.

The Pure Land is a fantasy about a perfect world. It is a paradise where harmonize the life of Buddha and the nature. All human beings can be Buddha if they would have the Buddha's values. These values can be found in the Sutras of Amitayus. Seeking a good life is always as human wishes, this is the value of the Sutras of pure land. In today's world, the concept of Pure Land offers an ideal imagination on coexistence between man and nature. This book presents Sutras and wishes of Amitayus Buddha for the Buddhist ideal: Pure Land and its cradle Xiangji Temple in Xi'an.

Author Wen Jun is a researcher on the art of Chinese Buddhism in the History Museum of Shaanxi. This research is carried out during her studies in the places of temples of Pure Land, in particular, Xiangji temple.

Editions FloreSoleil presents the work of Wen Jun for showing a human thoughts in the history and the concept of Pure Land from Buddhism for offering an ideal idea for a perfect life and world.

Editor Dr. Juan Shen

Buddhism originated in an ancient city, Kapilavastu (near present-day Tilaurakot in south Nepal), in the fifth to sixth century B.C. Buddhism's founder, Gautama Siddhartha, had been the prince of that city and was deemed a saint of the Sakya Tribe, thus explaining the name Sakyamuni. He attained enlightenment at age 35 and spread Buddhism until he died at the age of 80. Buddhism before Sakyamuni's death is generally termed 'original Buddhism'. After his death, Buddhism separated into two sections, Hinayana and Mahayana, and continued to propagate the Buddhist ideological system. Sakyamuni intended to release individuals from distress and confusion in real life, so that they might feel physically and mentally blissful.

As Chinese Buddhism developed, another Buddhist section emerged during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) that espoused a Pure Land where people live with well-being and happiness. Amitabha is in charge of that world where all can be reborn by repeating the name of Amitabha. Known as Pure Land Buddhism, it was founded by Shandao (613-681). Advocating the repetition of the simple mantra, Amitabha, Pure Land Buddhism deeply impacted society.

Theoretically, Pure Land belief embraces three beliefs: Maitreya Pure Land, Bhaisajyaguru Pure Land, and Amitabha Pure Land. Each of the three beliefs separately occupied the main position of Pure Land belief in Chinese history. Finally, Amitabha belief dominated, and developed into a dominant branch of Chinese Buddhism. Shandao's name has been integrated into Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. In order to remember his contribution, his disciples constructed a grand temple after he died, and built a 13-story pagoda to enshrine his relics – Xiangji Temple. It is located in the south of Xi'an, the capital city of Shaanxi Province, at the feet of the Zhongnan Mountains.

Construction of Xiangji Temple represents the extraordinary contribution of Shandao. Xiangji is not an individual sect monastery - it fuses Shandao and Pure Land Buddhism. The history of Xiangji Temple also reflects the rise and fall of Chinese Buddhism. The author tends to exhibit an unusual achievement of an ordinary monk and provides substantial documentation about Chinese Buddhist history for researchers and others in order to allow more people to better understand why Amitabha is so often chanted and why Avalokitesvara is enshrined.

Wen Jun
November 2013 in Xi'an City

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Lotus

Chapter I

Amitabha and Pure Land Buddhism

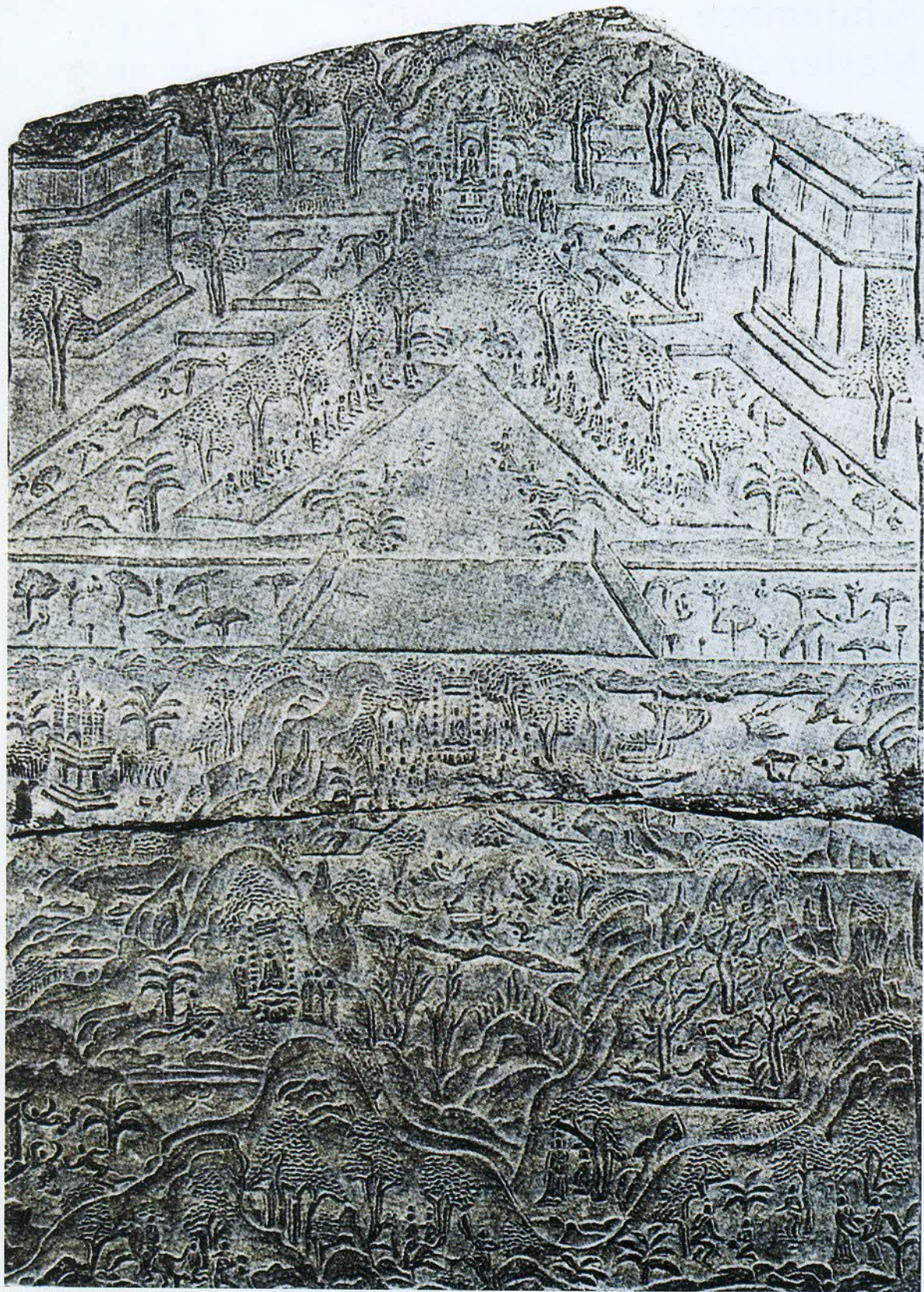
Amitabha is a well-known, simple and direct mantra. Followers of Pure Land Buddhism advise repeating and venerating this mantra, rather than studying complex classics. The three sutras - Amitayus, View of Amitayus, and Amitabha - are critical in Pure Land Buddhism and comprise the entire story of Buddhism. Amitayus Sutra says that a monk named Fazang made 48 wishes and tried to actualize them in order to build Pure Land. Finally, he was successful. This monk is Amitabha and those 48 wishes are the original powerful and reliable vows of Amitabha.

The image of the pure Land

Amitabha Sutra

Amitabha Sutra describes the Pure Land in detail: it is warm, solemn, features singing and dancing, is devoid of suffering, and is full of joy. Those who have doubts may listen to Wei Tixi, who witnessed Pure Land with the help of the Buddha. An encouraging ending proposed in View of Amitayus Sutra tells that relying on your own power is not enough - only believing in Buddha brings relief.

As the second of the three sutras in the Pure Land Buddhism, Amitabha Sutra, also known as Little Amitayus Sutra, is short and elegant, and compulsory reading for Pure Land Buddhism believers. The famous Chinese transcriptions contain one by Kumarajiva (AD 344-413) and one by Xuanzang (602-664).



The carving stone of the Western Pure Land of Northern Dynasty unearthed at Wanfo Temple in Chengdu, Sichuan

Amitabha

Master of the Pure Land

This sutra states that heading west from our world; one reaches a Pure Land where Amitabha Buddha teaches Buddhism. Everyone in that land lives in utter joy. Buildings there are made of seven precious materials - gold, silver, glaze, and so on. Pools made of those seven materials are everywhere. Water in these pools has eight functions that relieve and calm. Bottoms of these ponds are filled with gold, blooming lotuses as big as wheels. Trees sway following the rhythm of the breeze and make beautiful sounds.

As master of the Pure Land, Amitabha is luminous and shines everywhere. Because Amitabha and individuals in his land have limitless life, Amitabha is also known as Amitayus 'Infinite Life Span'.



The buddha statue in the Grottoes of Yungang

The pure land and Forty-eight Wishes

The beginning of the three sutras of Pure Land Buddhism, Amitayus Sutra, is the longest. Popular in Gandhara, northern India, around the first and the second century AD, it spread through such Asian countries as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. During the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), Amitayus Sutra was already translated into Chinese. The translation by Kang Sengkai (third century AD) was the most prevalent. In the ninth century AD, during the Tang Dynasty, the Japanese monk Yuanren (ninth century AD) brought this sutra to Japan.

Long ago, a Buddha came and spread Buddhism in the world. At that time, King Shirao heard the theory from that Buddha and achieved physical and mental liberation. He was so happy that he resolved to find true wisdom in Buddhism. Abandoning his kingdom and family, he became a monk - Fazang. As the most intelligent monk with great stamina at that time, he was the one who best understood and believed in Buddhist theory. He went to see that Buddha again and asked for another teaching. Impressed by Fazang's determination, the Buddha described the Pure Land and allowed him to see that beautiful land. Fazang was astounded and made 48 wishes in order to build a Pure Land by himself. If all of the wishes were fulfilled, then he would become a Buddha. Finally, he did so, providing a promise and a guarantee that his Pure Land does exist.



Buddha of Ming Dynasty, private collection

1. If, when I attain Buddhahood, there should be in my land a hell, a realm of hungry spirits or a realm of animals, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
2. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should after death fall again into three evil realms, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
3. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not all be the color of pure gold, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
4. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not all be of one appearance, and should there be any difference in beauty, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
5. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not remember all their previous lives, not knowing even the events which occurred during the previous hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of kalpas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
6. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not possess the divine eye of seeing even a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of the Buddha-lands, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
7. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not possess the divine ear of hearing the teachings of at least a hundred thousand kotis of nayutas of Buddhas and should not remember all of them, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.



The Amitabha statue constructed by Liu Xuanyi at Longmen Grottoes.

Around the period when Shandao supervised to build the Fengxian Temple Buddha statue at Longmen, a great number of niche statues related to the Pure Land belief were built at Longmen Grottoes.



Views of the Pure World on the side wall of the Leshan Giant Buddha statue, Tang Dynasty

15. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should have limited lifespan, except when they wish to shorten them in accordance with their original vows, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
16. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should even hear of any wrongdoing, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
17. If, when I attain Buddhahood, innumerable Buddhas in the land of the ten quarters should not praise and glorify my Name, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
18. If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name, even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five greatest offenses, abuse the right Dharma.
19. If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters, who awaken aspiration for Enlightenment, do meritorious deeds and sincerely desire to be born in my land, should not, at their death, see me appear before them surrounded by multitude of sages, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
20. If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of ten quarters who, having heard my Name, concentrate their thoughts on my land, do various meritorious deeds and sincerely transfer the merits towards my land with a desire to be born there, should not eventually fulfill their aspiration, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.





The Buddha statue of ample gown and loose girdle at Longmen Grottoes.

21. If, when I attain Buddhahood, human and devas in my land should not all be endowed with the 32 physical characteristics of a Great Man, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
22. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the Buddha-lands of other quarters who visit my land should not ultimately and unfailingly reach the Stage of Becoming a Buddha after one more life, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excepted are those who wish to teach and guide sentient beings in accordance with their original vows. For they wear the armor of great vows, accumulate merits, deliver all beings from birth-and-death, visit Buddha-lands to perform the Bodhisattva practices, make offerings to Buddhas, Tathagatas, throughout the ten quarters, enlighten uncountable sentient beings as numerous as the sands of the River Ganges, and establish them in the highest, perfect Enlightenment. Such Bodhisattvas transcend the course of practice of the ordinary Bodhisattva stages, manifest the practices of all the Bodhisattva stages and actually cultivate the virtues of Samantabhadra.
23. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land, in order to make offerings to buddhas through my transcendent power, should not be able to reach immeasurable and innumerable kotis of nayuta of Buddha-lands in as short a time as it takes to eat a meal, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
24. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land should not be able, as they wish, to perform meritorious acts of worshipping the buddhas with the offerings of their choice, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.



Figure de sutra de l'Amitayous, Grotte n° 18 des Grottes de l'Anyue dans la montagne de Muyu

Cette Niche est de la hauteur de 260 cm, de la largeur 350 cm, de la profondeur 160 cm. Le groupe des statues dans la montagne Muyu se situe à 36 kilomètres au sud du comté Anyue, elles sont créées dans la dynastie des Tang, avec 23 niches et des 540 statues. La niche de n°18 présente des pavillons du monde de la Terre pure de la dynastie des Tang, en fait, c'est précisément le genre d'image du magnifique temple de la dynastie Tang.

25. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land should not be able to expound the Dharma with the all-knowing wisdom, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
26. If, when I attain Buddhahood, there should be any bodhisattva in my land not endowed with the body of the Vajra-god, Narayana, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
27. If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings should be able, even with the divine eye, to distinguish by Name and calculate by number all the myriads of manifestations provided for the humans and devas in my land, which are glorious and resplendent and have exquisite details beyond description, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
28. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land, even those with little store of merits, should not be able to see the Bodhi-tree which has countless colors and is four million li in height, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
29. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land should not acquire eloquence and wisdom in upholding sutras and reciting and expounding them, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
30. If, when I attain Buddhahood, the wisdom and eloquence of Bodhisattvas in my land should be limited, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
31. If, when I attain Buddhahood, my land should not be resplendent, revealing in its light all the immeasurable, innumerable and inconceivable Buddha-lands, like images reflected in a clear mirror, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
32. If, when I attain Buddhahood, all the myriads of manifestations in my land, from the ground to the sky, such as palaces, pavilions, ponds, streams and trees, should not be composed of both countless treasures, which surpass in supreme excellence anything in the worlds of human and devas, and of a hundred thousand kinds of aromatic wood, whose fragrance pervades all the worlds of the ten quarters, causing all bodhisattvas who sense it to perform Buddhist practice, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.



The Amitayus statue of Zhongshan Grottoes in Zichang, Shaanxi, Northern Song Dynasty.

Amitayus with the gesture of highest of the highest stage, surrounded by the Buddha, disciple, and warrior, thousand Buddha carved on niche wall. A classic statue among grottoes in Shaanxi.



The image of three honored ones coming to greet, including Amitabha and two Bodhisattvas

38. If, when I attain Buddhahood, humans and devas in my land should not obtain clothing, as soon as such a desire arises in their minds, and if the fine robes as prescribed and praised by the buddhas should not be spontaneously provided for them to wear, and if these clothes should need sewing, bleaching, dyeing or washing, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
39. If, when I attain Buddhahood, human and devas in my land should not enjoy happiness and pleasure comparable to that of a monk who has exhausted all the positions, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
40. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in my land who wish to see the immeasurable glorious Buddha-lands of the ten quarters, should not be able to view all of them reflected in the jeweled trees, just as one sees one's face reflected in a clear mirror, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
41. If, when I attain Buddhahood, bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should, at any time before becoming buddhas, have impaired, inferior or incomplete sense organs, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
42. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not all attain the samadhi called 'pure emancipation' and, while dwelling therein, without losing concentration, should not be able to make offerings in one instant to immeasurable and inconceivable Buddhas, World Honored One, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
43. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not be reborn into noble families after their death, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.



Guiding Bodhisattva of Dunhuang murals, Tang Dynasty

44. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not rejoice so greatly as to dance and perform the Bodhisattva practices and should not acquire stores of merits, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
45. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not all attain the samadhi called 'universal equality' and, while dwelling therein, should not always be able to see all the immeasurable and inconceivable Tathagatas until those Bodhisattvas, too become Buddhas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
46. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in my land should not be able to hear spontaneously whatever teachings they may wish, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
47. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not instantly reach the Stage of Non-retrogression, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.
48. If, when I attain Buddhahood, Bodhisattvas in the lands of the other quarters who hear my Name should not instantly gain the first, second and third insights into the nature of Dharmas and firmly abide in the Truths realized by all the Buddhas, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment.



The statue of Water Moon Avalokitesvara of No. 19
Avalokitesvara scripture cave of Pilu cave at Anyue Grottoes,
Song Dynasty

C as an important classic in Mahayana Buddhism, Amitayus Sutra differs from the ideal of Hinayana Buddhism, which suggests individual practice and individual relief, and proposes to bring relief to all persons through his practice. Amitayus Sutra provides six methods to practitioners:

First, sincerely recite the name of Amitabha.

Second, reciting Amitabha ten times just before death allows one to go to the Pure Land.

Third, recite, write, and enshrine classics of Pure Land Buddhism.

Fourth, spend all you have to help others.

Fifth, follow these ten rules: no killing, no stealing, no lust, no lying, no flattery, no coarse words, no gossiping, no greed, no anger, and no delusion.

Sixth, one who could not become a monk should try to live without lust, anger, and envy; be loyal to one's country; and care for one's parents.



The Nirvana diagram of Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing.

The Nirvana diagram has various forms in China such as paintings in addition to grottoes carvings. Most people call Nirvana Buddha as Reclining Buddha, or sleeping Buddha.

View of Amitayus Sutra

16 views of the Pure Land

View of Amitayus Sutra is the last sutra and suggests that believers visualize 16 views of the Pure Land in order to go there after death. The beginning of this sutra tells a story set in the

Rajagaha Kingdom in ancient India. The Prince of Rajagaha shut his father in a backroom with the intention of starving him to death. His mother, Queen Wei Tixi, anointed her body with oil and hid grape juice in her crown, and went to help the king. Finishing the last drop of grape juice, the king promised to follow the Eight Commandments. After 20 days, the king was still alive and became stronger.

One day, the Prince of Rajagaha discovered this secret and wanted to kill his mother. Astute ministers stopped him but he still imprisoned his mother. Queen Wei Tixi was so sad about her son that she prayed to the Buddha for help. Hearing her prayer, the Buddha came to her and revealed the sixteen views of the Pure Land.



Carving stone of the Western Pure Land, Xiangtangshan Grottoes of Hebei of the Northern Qi Dynasty, Freer Gallery of Art Collection U.S.



Niche de l'image de Vue de Sutra de l'Amitayous au cave n° 245
à la fin des Tang à la montagne de Nord de Dazu, Chongqing



The Pure Land is for the Buddha, as compared to the polluted land of humans. Millions of Buddha exists in Mahayana thus, accordingly, there should be millions of pure lands. Nevertheless, Hinayana commonly relates stories of Shakyamuni. A century after Shakyamuni's death, original Buddhism split into several branches and Shakyamuni was deified. He supposedly was bodhisattvas in previous lives and became animals or humans to teach people, even at the cost of his own life. For example, a story about a prince (Shakyamuni) who gives his own life to help seven hungry tigers is frequently depicted in Buddhist art. Similar stories often appear in Hinayana classics.



The image of sacrificing live to feed tiger of Dunhuang frescoes, Tang Dynasty.

The Source of Amitabha Belief

The popularity of sutras and icons of Maitreya provided a foundation for Pure Land belief. The fading of Maitreya belief aided the expansion of Amitabha belief.

Based on the number of grottos and various documents, belief in Pure Land occupied the major part of Chinese Buddhism. In the beginning, Maitreya Pure Land belief was the most powerful, the second was Amitabha, and the last was the Medicine Buddha, Bhaisajyaguru. For most people at that time, these three beliefs could hardly be separated. They were all deemed Pure Land. With the spread of Maitreya Pure Land belief, more people came in contact with the idea of Pure Land. After the decline of Maitreya belief, Pure Land faith was still disseminated and formed an individual sect - Pure Land Buddhism.



The image of Buddha in 1-2 Century in India

Six sutras tell the entire story of Maitreya. The three most famous are known as the Maitreya three sutras. Before becoming a monk, Maitreya was the son of a Brahman. He died before Shakyamuni's death, and then went to the Pure Land expounding the Buddhist doctrine as a Bodhisattva. After 4,000 years, equivalent to 5.6 billion years in the human world, he will reincarnate as a Buddha under a tree named Mesuna. Maitreya images could be a Bodhisattva exhibiting his appearance in the Pure Land and also a Buddha symbolizing his reincarnation in the future.

The Future Buddha, Maitreya, was relative to the Buddha of the Past. The sutras about the latter frequently appeared around the third century BC and documented that six buddhas preceded Shakyamuni - seven past buddhas in total. The idea about the past was included in Mahayana and as a component, the future was also formed.

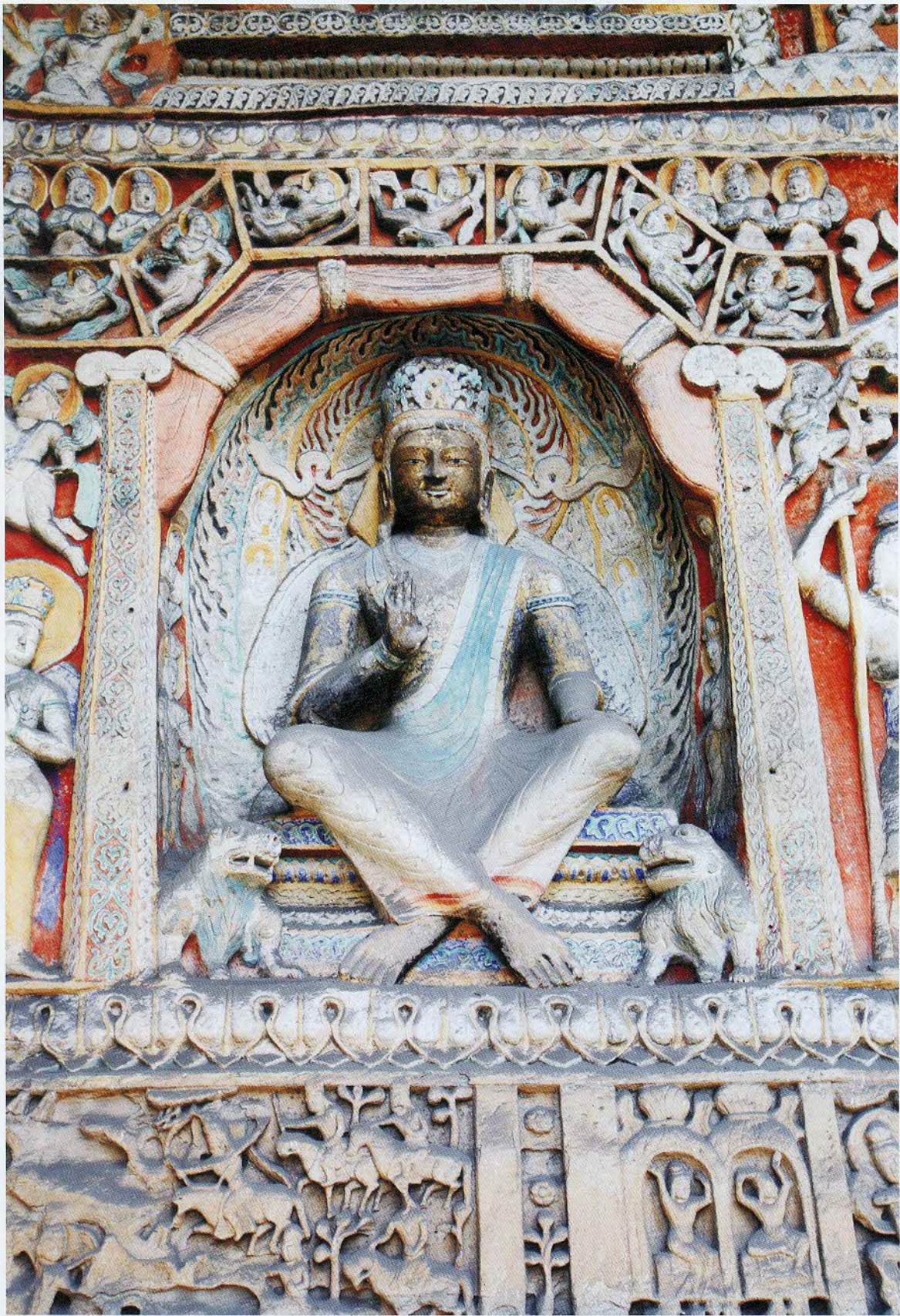
The entire Buddhist system involving the past and future was based on the concept of time: if there was a past, there was a future. Except for borrowing the Buddha of the Past from Hinayana, Mahayana constructed its own version, Dipankara, replacing the seven past buddhas. Afterwards, Dipankara, Shakyamuni, and Maitreya structured three vertical buddhas representing the past, present and future, respectively.



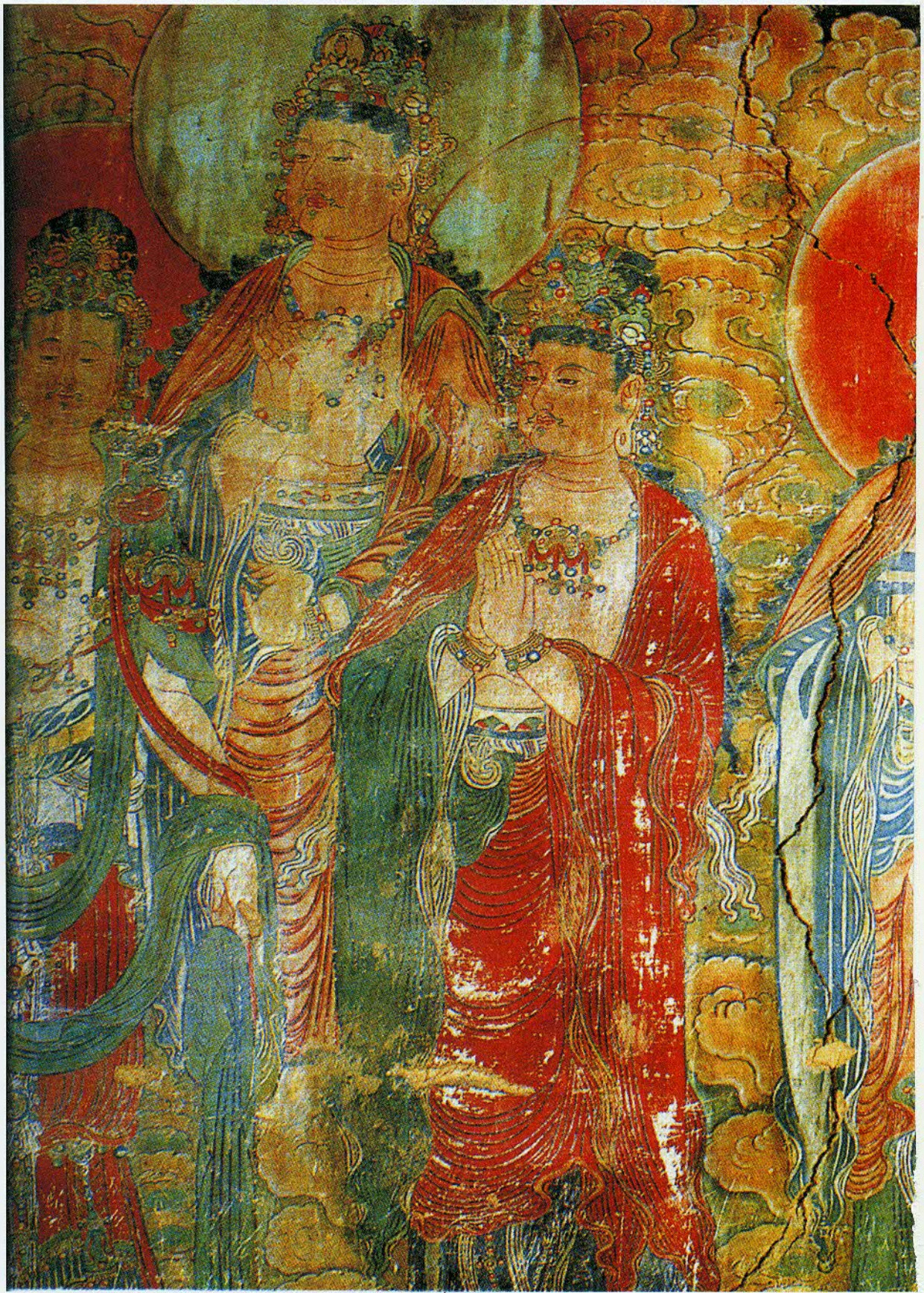
Stone made the statue of Maitreya Buddha sitting with crossed feet. Collected by Xi'an stele forest museum. This stone made Maitreya has been deemed as the symbol of the Maitreya belief flourish in Changan.

We can easily find Maitreya in grottos, individual sculptures, and so on. Maitreya images were most popular in the Wei Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties around 220-589, and declined after the Tang Dynasty, replaced by an image with a fat belly.

Since Maitreya will be reborn some day and will change the world to a new land, rebels utilized this idea and represented themselves as Maitreya to oppose the government. Such rebellions happened through the North Wei Dynasty (368-534) to the Sui Dynasty (581-618). For instance, in 515, a monk calling himself 'the new Buddha of the world' led 50,000 followers against the authorities. During the Sui Dynasty, some Maitreya believers plotted to kill the emperor. All the rebellions were eventually suppressed and accompanied by efforts to suppress Maitreya belief.

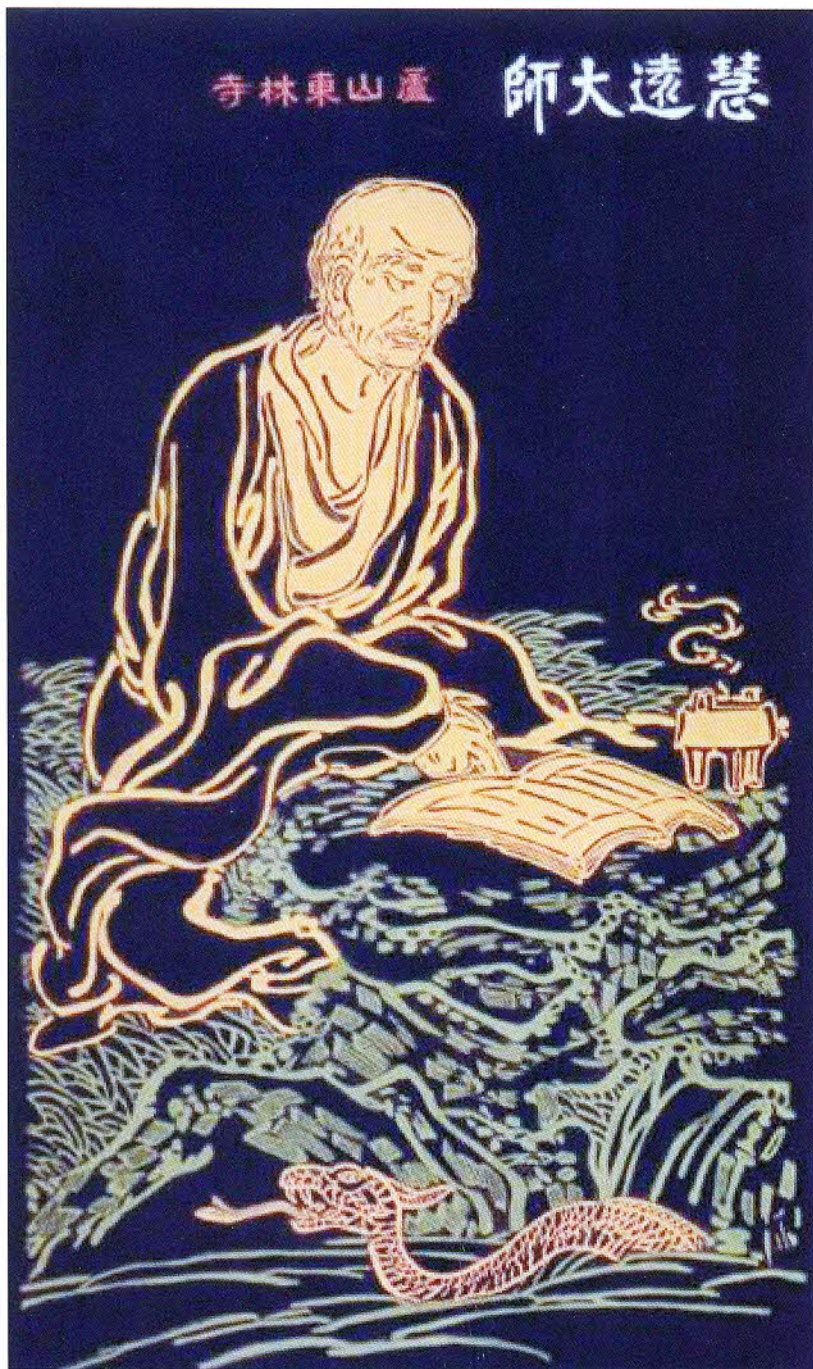


Cross legged Maitreya of Yungang Grottoes. Northern Wei.



Buddhas on the north wall of Guangsheng Pilu Temple





Huiyuan's statue, Eastern Jin.

Huiyuan, the founder of Donglin Temple in Lushan Mount., organized the Lotus Association in the temple. He was the first monk who advocated assemblies and jointly reborn in Western Pure Land.

Chapter II

Pure Land Buddhism's Formation and Development

Unlike Amitabha belief, Maitreya belief centers on faith in a future Buddha, Maitreya, who built a pure land to which believers reincarnate after they die. Furthermore, he will come to the real world someday, saving people and constructing a pure land in man's world. In contrast, Amitabha belief has faith in Western Amitabha's Pure Land, which does not exist in man's world.

The difference between the two is theoretical. Practically, the two beliefs developed in combination. As Maitreya belief became increasingly entwined with politics, it was suppressed by the authorities. Meanwhile, Amitabha belief was far from the secular world and began to flourish.

Pioneers of Pure Land Buddhism

Hui Yuan (334-416) formed an association in Donglin Temple in Lushan Mountain. Yun Luan (476-542 or 554), from Xuanzhong Temple, Shanxi Province, organized thousands of people to chant the name of Amitabha in a valley to spread Pure Land Buddhism. Dao Chuo (562-645) designed a new method by chanting Amitabha while counting prayer beads. They are the pioneers of Pure Land Buddhism.

In his early years, Hui Yuan, a monk from Lushan Mountain, was fascinated by Chinese traditional classics, especially Lao-tzu and Zhuangzi. However, when he was 21, he attended a speech given at Hengshan Mountain by the famous monk, Dao'an, and was completely persuaded by Buddhist ideas. He then became a monk and a disciple of Daoyuan. When he was 24, Hui Yuan began to expound on the sutras, using contexts from Lao-tzu and Zhuangzi with which he was familiar. This approach was helpful. His instructor, Dao'an, allowed him to read whatever he pleased. In 373, their temple was involved in a battle, and Dao'an was brought to the capital city, Xi'an. Hui Yuan then left for the south and decided to settle on Lushan Mountain where he lived in Donglin Temple. For more than thirty years, he spread Buddhism by translating and writing books, collecting sutras, enshrining buddhas, and teaching ordinary people. In 402, he established an organization that included 18 members named Bailian 'white lotus flower'. They enshrined the Buddha and the flower together and hoped to go to the Pure Land.



The earliest statue of the Three Saints of the West in China
The statue is located at the 169th cave of Bingling Temple Grottoes. It was carved in Western Qin period, and existed before Shandao founded the Pure Land Buddhism.

Tanluan was born in Shanxi Province near Wutai Mountain, surrounded by Buddhist temples. One day, while travelling on that mountain, he felt so pleasant while visiting the temples that he decided to become a monk. Afterwards, he focused on the Buddhist classics. Later, he became ill and traveled, searching for a cure for his disease. When he was nearly dead, a light from the sky suddenly shone on him, and he rapidly recovered. He then concluded that life is very fragile, and a way to live longer should be found before studying Buddhism.

When the India monk, Bodhiruci, was at Baima Temple, Tanluan went to visit him and showed him a Daoist book about immortals. Surprisingly, Bodhiruci spat on the floor, tossed the book aside, and said, "What are you talking about? How can you compare Buddhism with Taoism? There is no way to achieve great longevity in this world and, even if there is, one might only live a little longer, but will finally enter the endless cycle of death and birth." Bodhiruci then gave Tanluan View of Amitayus Sutra and said, "This book could eventually let your spirit rest." Tanluan was astounded by Bodhiruci's contention, but felt it was meaningful and reasonable. Henceforth, Tanluan began learning the View of Amitayus Sutra and also spread ideas to others that encouraged the diffusion of Pure Land Buddhism.



Tanluan and his disciples

Emperor Xiaojing of the Dongwei Dynasty (534-550) greatly respected Tanluan and ordered him to live in Shanxi Province. Afterwards, Tanluan moved to Xuanzhong Temple, which was built on a cliff, and continued his study of Pure Land Buddhism.

Several key ideas proposed by Tanluan include:

Difficult and easy ways: Tanluan's most representative theory is that of the countless ways to practice Buddhism, some are difficult, and others are easy. Tanluan deemed that believing in Amitabha and Pure Land was the only easier way and that the other ways were all difficult.

Relying on others' power: Others' power comes from the 48 promises of Amitabha. Relief comes with the help of the power from Amitabha's original promises.

Approaches to prayer: According to Hinayana there are four approaches to prayer, including observing Buddha images, visualizing Buddha, reciting the names of Buddha, and enacting Buddhism through daily activities. Tanluan suggested prayer by reciting the name of Amitabha and visualizing the Pure Land.



The grotto exhibits stories in the View of Amitayus, No. 15 cave at Anyue Grottoes. Tang Dynasty.

The niche is 250 cm tall, 300 cm wide and 60 cm deep. The height of statue is 190 cm. The statue of Qianfoya, located at Gaoshenxiangtian Village in southeast of Anyue County in Sichuan and created in Tang Dynasty, stores 21 niche and 365 statues. The niche is based on the View of Amitayus. The Three Saints of the West and two disciples, surrounded by Buddha, Bodhisattva, disciples, flying musicians and so on, are carved in the center of the niche. They are also decorated by pavilions, pagodas and rails. Canopy is carved on the head of the Amitayus. There are eight squares carved on the two columns of the niche respectively, which shows incarcerated Mrs. Wei Tixi meditates sixteen views to get released.

Amitabha is Samboghakaya: Tanluan contended that Amitabha is Samboghakaya, who emits light everywhere, including in man's world. Ordinary people are somewhat blind - the light shines on us, but we are not conscious of it.

Reborn in the Pure Land: The easier way takes one to rebirth in the Pure Land. Tanluan believed that the core of becoming a Buddha was the heart, not the body. He also believed that everyone, except those who defamed Buddhism, could go to the Pure Land, including the underclass.

One day Tanluan perceived that he would die soon. He then convened all of his 300 disciples, gave them a last teaching on the value of strenuous practice, and had them recite the name of Amitabha. He faced the west, and died at the age of 80 as music emanated from the western sky. All his disciples and some ordinary people recalled this beautiful, elegant music which gradually diminished in the west.



The Amitabha statue of Dafo Temple in Bin County, Shaanxi.

Dafo Temple, built in Tang Dynasty, stores more than 1,000 statues, most of which are from Tang Dynasty. The Three Saints of the West is worshiped at the main cave. The original height of the main Amitabha statue was 27 m, and now it is 19 m. This is why the temple was named as Dafo Temple.

Daochuo, another pioneer of Pure Land Buddhism, was famous at an early age for his humility and for respecting the elderly. He became a monk at the age of fourteen. When Tanluan was practicing Pure Land Buddhism at Yuanzhong Temple, a wealth of strange phenomena appeared. These phenomena were recorded on a stele to commemorate Tanluan. Sixty years after Tanluan's death, Daochuo visited Xuanzhong Temple and was touched by reading the stories on that stele. He decided to be a disciple of Tanluan and follow the idea of Pure Land. Afterwards, Daochuo lived at Yuanzhong Temple and studied the classics of Pure Land Buddhism. He recited the name of Amitabha 70,000 times as a daily duty. His teachings were vivid and clear, and attracted people. During teachings, every audience member held prayer beads and chanted, following Daochuo. Initially, he advocated counting the number of Buddha names recited by putting beans in a bowl, which led the common people to keep many beans. Then he taught people to string beads on thread, which was the start of widespread prayer bead use in China. Soon, even seven-year-old children could chant Amitabha in Shanxi. Daochuo was extraordinarily influential at that time. Once, when Empress Wende became ill, Emperor Tang Taizong (559-649) went to Yuanzhong Temple to pray for his wife.

There is much folklore about Daochuo. Once, Daochuo was asked to insert lotuses in the ground. Amazingly, those lotus flowers lived on dry land for a long time. At the age of 71, Daochuo grew new teeth and became healthier. He died in 654 at the age of 84. Unlike the theory of Tanluan, the theory of Daochuo emphasized the classics in addition to the Pure Land sutras. Daochuo also believed that Amitabha was Samboghakaya Buddha and that individuals could only find relief with the help of Pure Land Buddhism.



The Amitabha statue of Zhongshan Grottoes in Zichang, Shaanxi, Northern Song Dynasty.

Amitabha with the gesture of highest of the highest stage, surrounded by the Buddha, disciple, and warrior, thousand Buddha carved on niche wall. A classic statue among grottoes in Shaanxi.

S Although many had spread the theory of Pure Land Buddhism, Shandao, who lived during the Tang Dynasty, is widely recognized as the founder of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism.

Born in Anhui Province (some say Shandong Province), he became a monk at the age of ten and took the name Shandao. His original family name was Zhu. At that time, he was too young to achieve clear direction in Buddhist theory, therefore, he concentrated on a comprehensive grounding in the classics.

As he grew older, he wanted to follow a certain Buddhist sect, rather than learning superficially and blindly. One day, he went to the Buddhist scriptures storage area, prayed, and randomly picked up a sutra, which was the View of Amitayus Sutra. After reading it, he was enchanted by that Pure Land and decided to follow Pure Land Buddhism.

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The image of Shandao

Among the Buddhist images sculptured in Qing Dynasty, Shandao was respected as one of the two leaders, which represent the order of the founders in the Pure Land Buddhism, and the other is deemed as the original founder, Huiyuan in Lushan Mountain. Here, in contrast with general Buddhist images with plump faces, the appearance of Shandao is a slim monk living in the mountain, in accord with the expression in The Biographies of Eminent Monks.

In the year of Shandao, Donglin Temple, built by Huiyuan, was prominent and was the depository of the largest number of Buddhist classics in the country. Shandao visited that temple and experienced the practice life of Huiyuan there.

In 614, Shandao learned that Daochuo would lecture about the theory of Pure Land Buddhism at Xuanzhong Temple. Shandao then traveled thousands of kilometers to go there, ignoring the harsh winter. Deeply moved, Daochuo told Shandao his interpretation of the View of Amitayus Sutra and the method of practice. At that time, Daochuo was 80 and Shandao was just 29. One day, Daochuo asked Shandao, "If I chant, can I be reborn in the Pure Land?" Shandao said, "You can pick a lotus flower and consecrate it to the Buddha. If the flower does not wither after seven days, you can be reborn in the Pure Land." According to Shandao's answer, Daokuo consecrated a lotus to the Buddha and prayed. After seven days, the lotus was still fresh and in bloom.

After several years of travel, Shandao chose Wuzhen Temple in Xi'an to settle. It was Wuzhen Temple where legend holds that Kasyapa Buddha lived before Shakyamuni died. Shandao became the leader of Wuzhen Temple and made it even more well-known. Wuzhen Temple is currently famous for its wall reliefs and is known as 'the Second Dunhuang'.

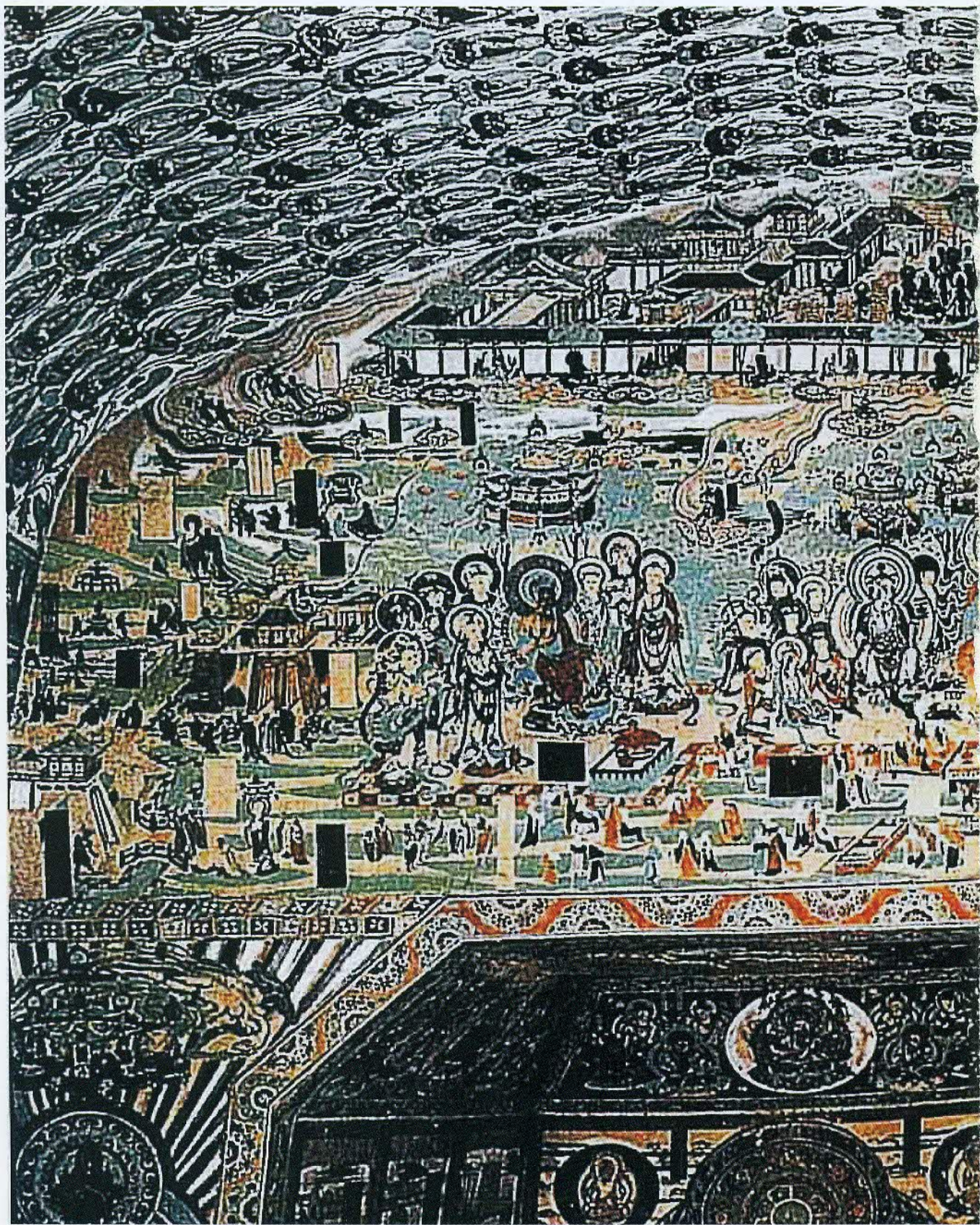
Later, Shandao went to Chang'an City, and lived in Guangming Temple. During that time, he contacted the upper class, supervised that construction of Longmen Grottoes, cultivated disciples, painted murals, and transcribed sutras. Because of him, numerous Pure Land Buddhist temples were built in Chang'an, such as Jianfu Temple, Dayun Temple, and Shiji Temple. Pure Land Buddhism was accepted by almost all of the classes and had numerous devotees.



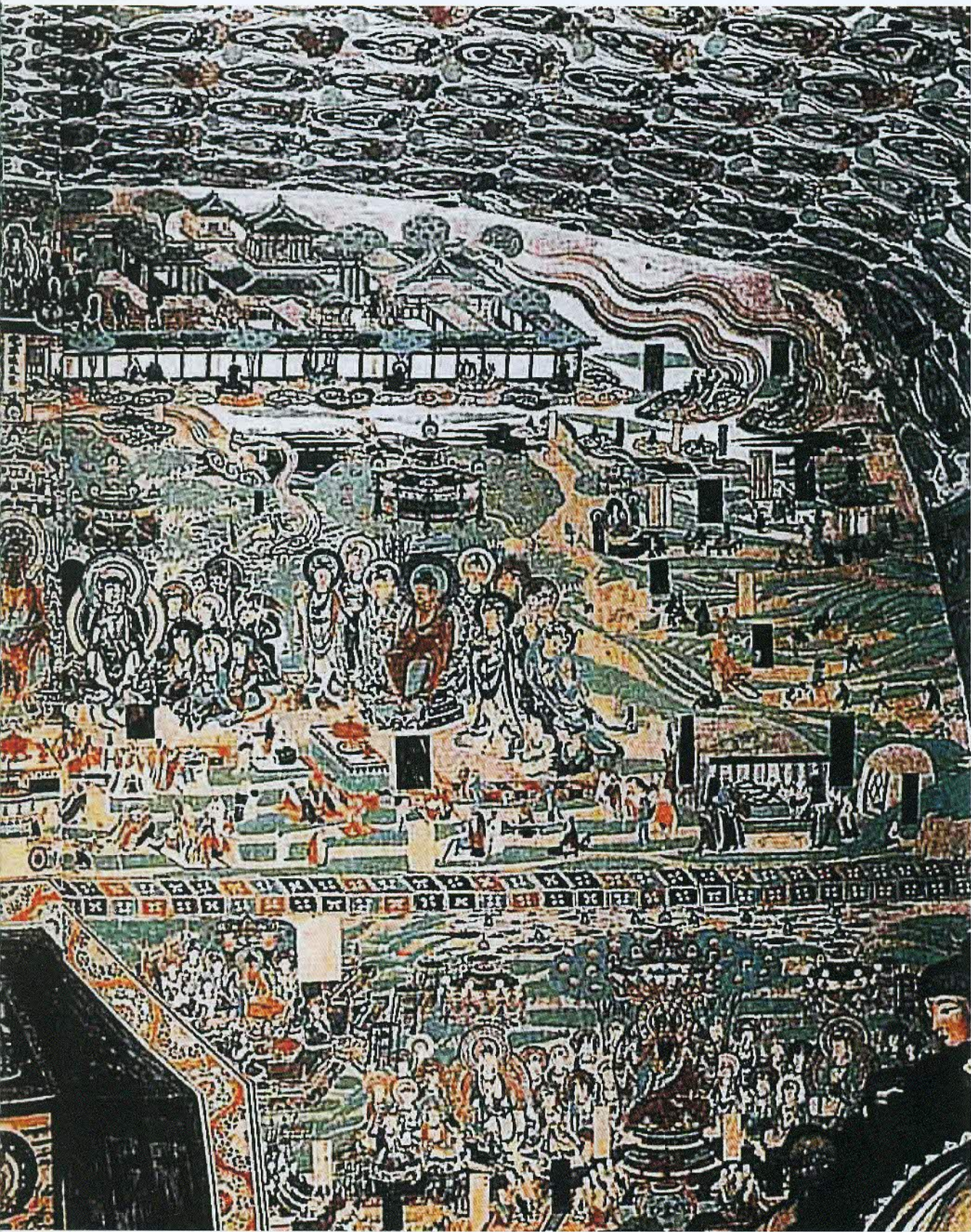


Vairocana Buddha at Longmen Grottoes, Tang dynasty.

Appointed by the royalty, Shandao supervised the construction of the grand Vairocana Buddha and the close-by Fengxian temple. Shandao died six years after the complement of this construction.



The scripture mural of Maitreya of Cave 148, Dunhuang





A figured stele of the Maitreya Pure Land and the Amitabha Pure Land. Tang Dynasty. Unearthed in Yanchang, Shaanxi province.

Chapter. III Temple Xiangji

Ancestor Court is where the originators of Buddhism lived, thought, and debated. There are three ancestor courts of Pure Land Buddhism in China - Donglin Temple in Jiangxi, Xuan Zhong Temple in Shanxi, and Xiangji Temple in Shaanxi. The leading exponents of this school of Buddhism in the three temples are Huiyuan, from AD 334 to AD 416 (Eastern Jin Dynasty); Tanluan, from AD 476 to AD 542 (Northern and Southern Dynasties); and Shandao from AD 613 to AD 681 (Tang Dynasty), respectively.

Shandao visited Huiyuan and identified Tanluan as his tutor. After Tanluan died in 641, Shandao went to the capital city, Chang'an, and began to spread the idea of Pure Land Buddhism and, finally, a theoretical structure of Pure Land Buddhism. Shandao died in 681. His stupa was in the south of Chang'an. To commemorate this extraordinary Buddhist teacher, one of his disciple, Huaiyun, built a magnificent temple, named Xiangji, around the stupa of Shandao.

There are two arguments in academia regarding the start of Xiangji Temple construction. Certain historical documents state that construction began in 681, the year Shandao died, while other records suggest that temple construction began in 706. An ancient stele discovered in Xiangji Temple sheds light on this argument. This stele records details about the life of Huaiyun, progress of temple construction, and Buddhist activities held in Xiangji. The stele inscription suggests that the construction leader was Huaiyun, who died in 701. It is thus impossible for Huaiyun to have built the temple in 706. I speculate that 706 is the year of completion. This stele is now on display in the Forest of Stone Steles Museum in Shaanxi.



The pagoda of Xiangji temple in 21st Century.

At first, the pagoda of Xiangji Temple was called 13-storey-stupa. As time passed by, people confusing the pagoda with the one enshrining relics of Shandao called the pagoda Chongling, which means enshrining the spirit of Shandao. Then, under the reputation of Xiangji temple, the pagoda has a name, Xiangji. Those two names are still used today.

The temple's name, Xiangji, follows the name of a Buddha who was documented by the classic Buddhist scripture, Vimalakirti Nirdeś Sutra. In fact, few Buddhist temples used Buddha names, thus Xiangji Temple stands out.

Vimalakirti Nirdeś Sutra was translated into Chinese by an Indian Buddhist, Kumarajiva, who was invited by the emperor during the Later Qin Dynasty (384-417) to translate and disseminate Buddhist classics in China.

In brief, this book tells the story of Vimalakirti, an erudite Indian Upasaka, famous for his extraordinary wisdom. In the cause of spreading Buddhism to his visitors, he pretended to be ill to attract attention. Millions visited him, including the emperor, ministers, princes, and scholars. All then began to accept his view and to follow Buddhism. Meanwhile, omniscient Shakyamuni dispatched his disciples to visit Vimalakirti. However, almost all of his disciples, including Sariputta, Mahakasyapa, and Maitreya were afraid of debating Vimalakirti. The most intelligent disciple, Manjushri, was finally assigned this task. Because the debate would be between two wise and well-informed men, nobody wanted to miss it.



Verdant Mountains in front of the Xiangji Temple

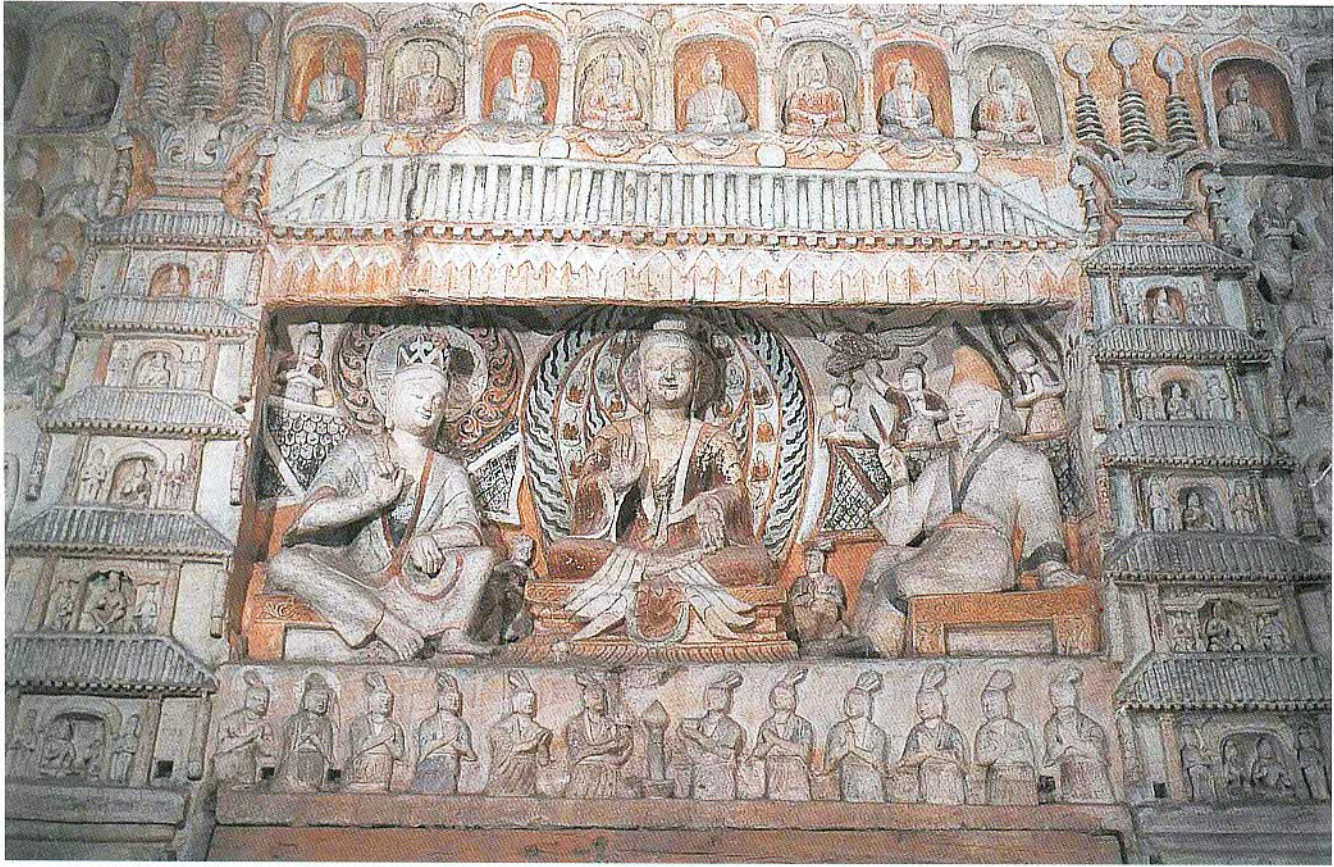
The discussion centered on whether liberation was possible only through living in a temple and becoming a traditional Buddhist. Vimalakirti supported the idea that self-improvement was more important than other superficial limitations.

The debate lasted for a long time. Sariputta was afraid because noon was approaching and everyone would be hungry. Vimalakirti perceived his concern, and conjured a Budhisattava to a fragrant pure land in Xiangji Buddha's charge. Soon, the Budhisattava returned with an alms bowl filled with appetizing food. Vimalakirti shared the food. Amazingly, this small bowl contained enough food to feed all present. After enjoying this wonderful food, people felt full of well-being and emitted a sweet fragrance.

Kumarajiva published his translation. The novel views involved in the Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sūtra spread widespread and sent shock waves through Chinese Buddhism, especially ideas that clearly argued believers could improve themselves at home rather than becoming professional Buddhists.

The construction of Xiangji witnessed the ascendancy of the Tang Dynasty. The decline of Xiangji was followed by the waning of the Tang Dynasty. This process also mirrors the rise and fall of Buddhism in China.

Since the Tang emperors declared themselves to be descendant of Lao-tzu, Buddhism was at first unable to play the dominant role in religious affairs. During Tang Taizong's reign (627-649), disputes between Buddhists and Taoists were frequent. In 640, Shi Falin, a Buddhist, was accused of slandering the royalty by a Daoist, Qin Shiyong, and was jailed. "As your book states that reciting Avalokitesvara can protect against injury, I will let you recite and then kill you seven days later," said Taizong. Seven days later, Taizong went to see Falin, and asked whether the mantra had worked. Falin said ironically, "I have been reciting your name these days instead of Avalokitesvara." Finally, Taizong spared him.



The image of a story of the Vimaiakirti scripture, Yungang Grottoes Cave No. 6, North Wei Dynasty. The mural expresses a discussion between Vimaiakirti and Manjusri Buddisattva when Manjusri Buddisattva visited Vimaiakirti's home. Sakyamun is in the middle of the graph. Vimaiakirti waving a feather fan became his classical signature.

Nevertheless, the following emperors - Gaozong, Zhongzong, Ruizong, and Empress Wu Zetian - were Buddhist supporters. When Gaozong was prince, he appreciated Xuanzhuang and wrote a preface for Xuanzhuang's sutra translation.

Furthermore, Empress Wu Zetian had been a nun after her husband, Taizong's, death, and highly regarded Buddhism during her reign. Buddhism reached its peak throughout this period.

The most serious challenge to the Tang Dynasty, the An Lushan-Shi Siming Rebellion in 775, resulted in the Emperor expelled from Chang'an by rebels. Xiangji Temple was used as barracks for defenders and also was a scene of conflict. Later, separatist regimes became powerful. In 782, four governors allied with the Governor of Huaixi, who was named Li Xilie, rebelled. Xiangji Temple was greatly damaged during this battle.

Chinese Buddhism did not experience plain sailing. The Four Buddhist calamities supported by four emperors, respectively in history, were: Taiwu (408-452) during the Northern Wei Dynasty, Wudi (543-578) during the Northern Zhou Dynasty, Wuzong (814-846) during the Tang Dynasty, and Shizhong (921-959) during the Latter Zhou Dynasty. The difficult time during the Wuzong reign was called the Huichang Calamity. This was the greatest catastrophe for Chinese Buddhists, which also resulted in great destruction for Xiangji Temple. On the one hand, as a Taoist believer, Wuzong appointed Taoists to attack Buddhism. On the other hand, Buddhists were powerful during the Tang Dynasty and compromised economy development. They held huge tracts of land and were eligible for tax-free status. During that time, almost 4,600 temples in China were damaged; temple property was confiscated, and about 260,000 Buddhists were forced to return to secular life. Subsequently, temples in famous places used to enshrine relics by the royalty were fading away.



Two heavenly Kings discovered in the temple Xiangji

The Stupa and the Pagoda

Predictably, under such a ruthless order, Xiangji Temple found it difficult to survive. Scanning historical documents in subsequent dynasties reveals regular mention of Xiangji Temple, but only regret and sympathy. We feel the feeble breath of Xiangji, which has never been forgotten by history.

After Shakyamuni's death, relics were placed in stupas - tombs in India - and probably symbolized Mount Meru, the sacred mountain of the Buddhist universe. With Buddhist development, stupas were not only for Shakyamuni but also for important Buddhist saints. Furthermore, pagodas were built to enshrine stupas and, as such, became key objects of worship.

Of the two primary pagoda styles during the Tang Dynasty, the earlier one – the pavilion style – physically resembles the Chinese pavilion, which is similar to the Xuanzhuang Pagoda in Xingjiao Temple (Xi'an, Shaanxi), and the pagoda in Huayan Temple (Xi'an, Shaanxi). The other style features an arc outline and the bottom stories are much higher than those at the top, e.g., the Small Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an. Furthermore, the number of stories is less inside than the outside, which means that this kind of pagoda has sometimes nine or more stories which do not have real windows, known as fake stories, if you look outside. In contrast, the stories which you can climb to the top are called real stories. If you want to climb to the top of the pagoda using the steps inside, you will find that the distance between the fake stories are closer when you climb higher. One real story comprises two or more fake stories when counted from outside.



The pagoda of Xuanzhuang in Xingjiao temple.
Located in Changan district, Xi'an, since Tang dynasty, this
pagoda has been enshrining the relics of Xuanzhuang.

Pagodas and Buddha

Although the ancient Xiangji Temple was destroyed long ago, ruins of the two pagodas have remained for centuries. The stele informs us that after construction of Shandao's stupa, Huaiyun began building the Chonglin Pagoda and moved the stupa inside. This pagoda has 13 stories with a gradually diminishing square cross section. In addition, each side features a window and reached more than 33 meters high. Visitors reach the top by climbing the interior stairs. It is also the symbol of Xiangji Temple. People generally used the term 'Xiangji Temple Pagoda' (or 'Shandao Pagoda') instead of 'Chonglin Pagoda'. The smaller one, built in 725 for Jingye, the first abbot of Xiangji Temple, was a five-story pavilion style pagoda and 14.7 meters high.

The Xiangji pagodas are made of brick; however, in earlier times, wood pagodas were common, e.g., the Yingxian Wood Pagoda built during the Liao Dynasty (907-1125) in Shanxi. Since wood easily rots, bricks were turned to, which are more stable and more easily allow architects to achieve their designs. Meanwhile, we can still locate colored drawing and sculptures decorating the Xiangji pagodas.



No. 3 stupa in Sanchi, India.

“Cui Du Po” is the earliest Chinese name of stupas, which means tomb, the place enshrining relics of Buddha and representing the nirvana. No. 3 stupa in Sanchi represents the original form of pagodas, which is a hemisphere with a square as well as a rode in the top. There is a balustrade around the stupa with four doors in four directions.

The Relics

After disseminating Buddhism for 45 years, Shakyamuni had become an extremely influential religious leader in north India, and died under two sal trees in Kushinagar. The Mallas in Kushinagar wanted to keep his relics, as did seven others who struggled to keep these holy relics. While, "We are all educated by Shakyamuni, but now we war over his relics. Your behavior violates Shakyamuni's spirit," a Brahman persuaded. Then, the Brahman shared relics among the eight countries and settled the conflict. During that period, the relics themselves – though actually meaningless - represented Shakyamuni. Afterwards, they became key holy objects and were worshiped by believers. The original advocate was King Ashoka (BC 304-232).

One morning, Shakyamuni and Ananda were begging for alms in Rajagaha and met two children playing in some sand. One child scooped up a handful of sand, put it into Shakyamuni's bowl, and said, "Here is flour I give to you." Shakyamuni smiled in response. "Why are you smiling?" asked Ananda. "Two hundred years after my death, this child will reincarnate as a powerful king named Ashoka. He will unify the country, spread my teachings, and distribute my relics," the Buddha said. As predicted, Ashoka consolidated ancient India by force, but later regretted his ruthlessness. He then began to support Buddhism, and again divided the relics that had been contained in eight stupas into 84,000 parts, sharing them with millions of places, supposedly including places in China. Afterwards, relics became increasingly important. It was even believed that people could see the relics in different colors which suggested their fate.



The image of Nirvana, Shanxi Provincial Museum of Art. The image of Nirvana is from the Nirvana stele in Wu Zetian period.

In China, relic worship flourished during the Tang Dynasty. In 631, when Emperor Tang Taizong made sacrifices to relics in Famen Temple, which was recognized as the most famous imperial Buddhist activity during this period, a Buddhist monk named Xuanzhuang arrived in India and began his decade-long study in the oldest Buddhist University, Nalanda. Fourteen years later, in 645, Xuanzhuang returned to China with many Sanskrit Buddhist scriptures and 105 relics. Later, in 671, another monk, Yijing, left for India by sea and, 20 years later, brought around 200 relics back to China.

In fact, the relics were deemed to be so mysterious that they were even off limits to royalty. A famous Tang Dynasty minister, Li Linfu (683-752), was so crafty that he rewarded Buddhists with his personal belongings. He once summoned a monk to chant and gave him a present rolled in a beautiful handkerchief. The monk was initially appreciative, but disappointed when he discovered that it was a rusted nail. When he took the nail to an international market, and tried to sell it, he was surprised when an ethnic merchant was willing to pay a million liang of gold. Finally, the rusted nail turned out to be a relic.

Xiangji stele inscriptions tell us that Xiangji Temple was also a place for imperial relic worship. Emperor Gaozong (628-683) of Tang and also, perhaps his wife, Wu Zetian, enshrined thousands of relics in Xiangji Temple, demonstrating the imperial status of Xiangji Temple.



A hemisphere stupa in ancient India.
Sanchi, India.

The Layout of the Complex

The evolution of the Buddhist-building complex layout is regarded as a process of Buddhism gradually absorbed by Chinese culture. In the early phase, the pagoda occupied the center of the complex, as in the layout style in India. The earliest recorded Buddhist monastery is White Horse Temple (Luoyang, Henan Province.) during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). The builder copied the layout in India, putting the pagoda in the center and arranging Buddha Halls on the sides. This style continued until the Jin and the Southern and Northern dynasties (220-589). In the wake of advocating Buddhism by the regime during the Northern Wei Dynasty (368-534), Buddhist architecture underwent a fascinating transformation. It became fashionable for people to give their own houses as temples as acts of charity. Such houses enshrined the figure of Buddha in the main building, with no room for pagodas or for placing the Buddha figure in a special yard.

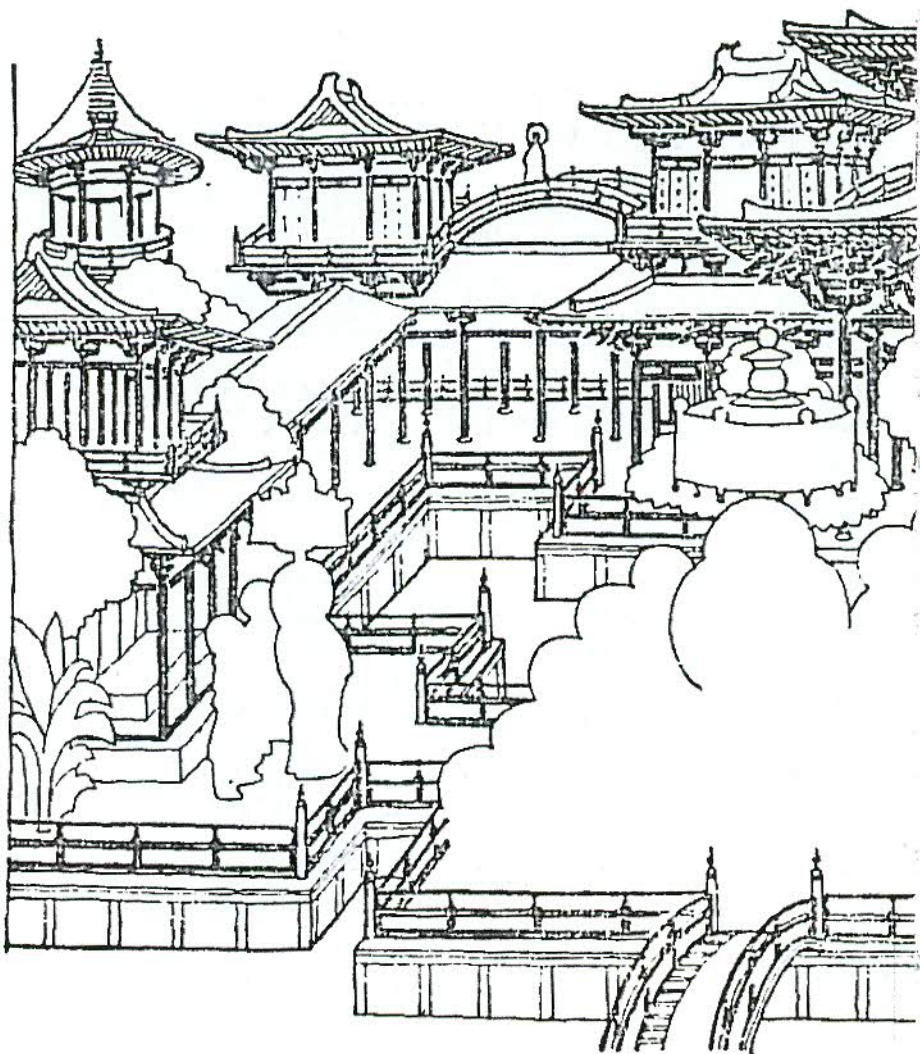
This layout style continued during the Tang Dynasty. As a prime example, the pagoda in Xiangji Temple (now named Xiangji Temple Pagoda) complex was designed to be on the border; while the Buddha hall replaced the pagoda and occupies the most significant role in the overall arrangement of the complex.

Xiangji Temple has been ruined for centuries. I tried to discover the real extent of this complex with archaeologists. However, because there are various buildings nearby, it was very challenging to achieve my plan.

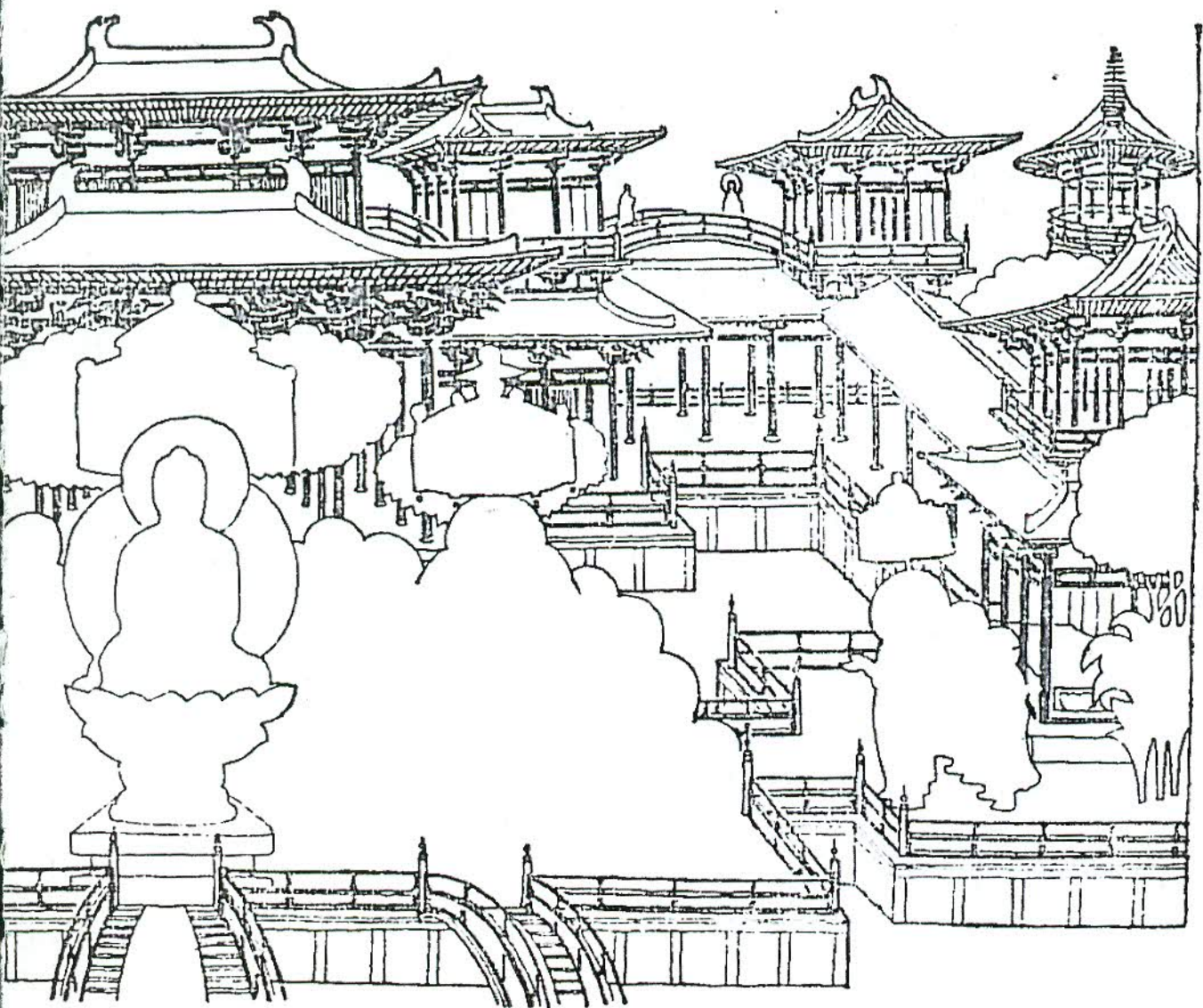


Small towers in the temple garden Xiangji

Architectural Features



Developed from Chinese traditional courtyard-style buildings, Chinese temples are usually built in two forms: the Palace Buddha hall type and the Attic Buddha hall type. Xiangji Temple belongs to the former. Generally, the Palace Buddha hall type is the same as an emperor's palace or official mansion in terms of architectural features, because many officials donated their mansions to temples to gain merit from the Tang Dynasty. In the Palace Buddha hall type, the Buddha Hall is evolved from the palace lobby while the palace's rear area was the monks' living quarters. The one-floor rectangular courtyard is suitable for the layout of statue. The attic Buddha hall type is built to enshrine a huge statue. The most famous one in Shaanxi is Dafo Temple in Bin County.



The mural about the Buddhist temple in Tang Dynasty, Grotto No. 148, Dunhuang, Gansu.

Temple Murals

In terms of historical heritage, paintings and sculptures played the major role in Pure Land Buddhism art, especially murals depicting stories in Pure Land scriptures, sculptures of three saints of the West, single statues of Amitabha and Avalokitesvara Buddhisattva. Most of such artwork can be found in Chinese grottos, such as Dunhuang, Yungang, Longmen, Guanyuan, and Zhongshan.

Temple murals are painted in monasteries and mostly depict scripture stories, Buddhist stories, famous monks, temples, and pagodas. Tang Dynasty murals in ancient Chang'an were commonly created by prestigious period painters such as Wu Daozi and Yang Yanguang.

Murals by Shandao were originally more concerned with a religious worldview. These murals are splendid from an artistic standpoint. Even after Shandao's death, development of temple murals never stopped. The best successor of Shandao, Wu Daozi, a Tang Dynasty painter famous for religious character paintings, created more than 300 temple murals that were not limited in exhibiting Pure Land Buddhist stories, but extended to show temples during that period.



The image of Bodhisattva by Wu Daozi



Murals in Jianfu and Anguo temples were created by Wu Daozi and based on the Vimalakirti sutra. The former temple – during the Tang Dynasty – covered an area of 99,900 square meters and was home to more than 200 monks. It is located in the south part of Xi'an, adjacent to the Small Wild Goose Pagoda. Anguo Temple, built in AD 701, was famous in Chang'an, and flourished during the mid-Tang Dynasty. Emperor Ruizong of Tang (662-716) proposed the construction of this temple. Ruizong was known as Anguo before he became Emperor. Besides, the center of the Vimalakirti sutra was expressed by an argument between Manjusri Bodhisattva and Vimalakirti about whether people could only find relief through strict practice in a monastery. Vimalakirti won that debate with the claim that practice in a monastery is not the only way; moreover, living free in the ordinary world could also be deemed as an approach to practice.

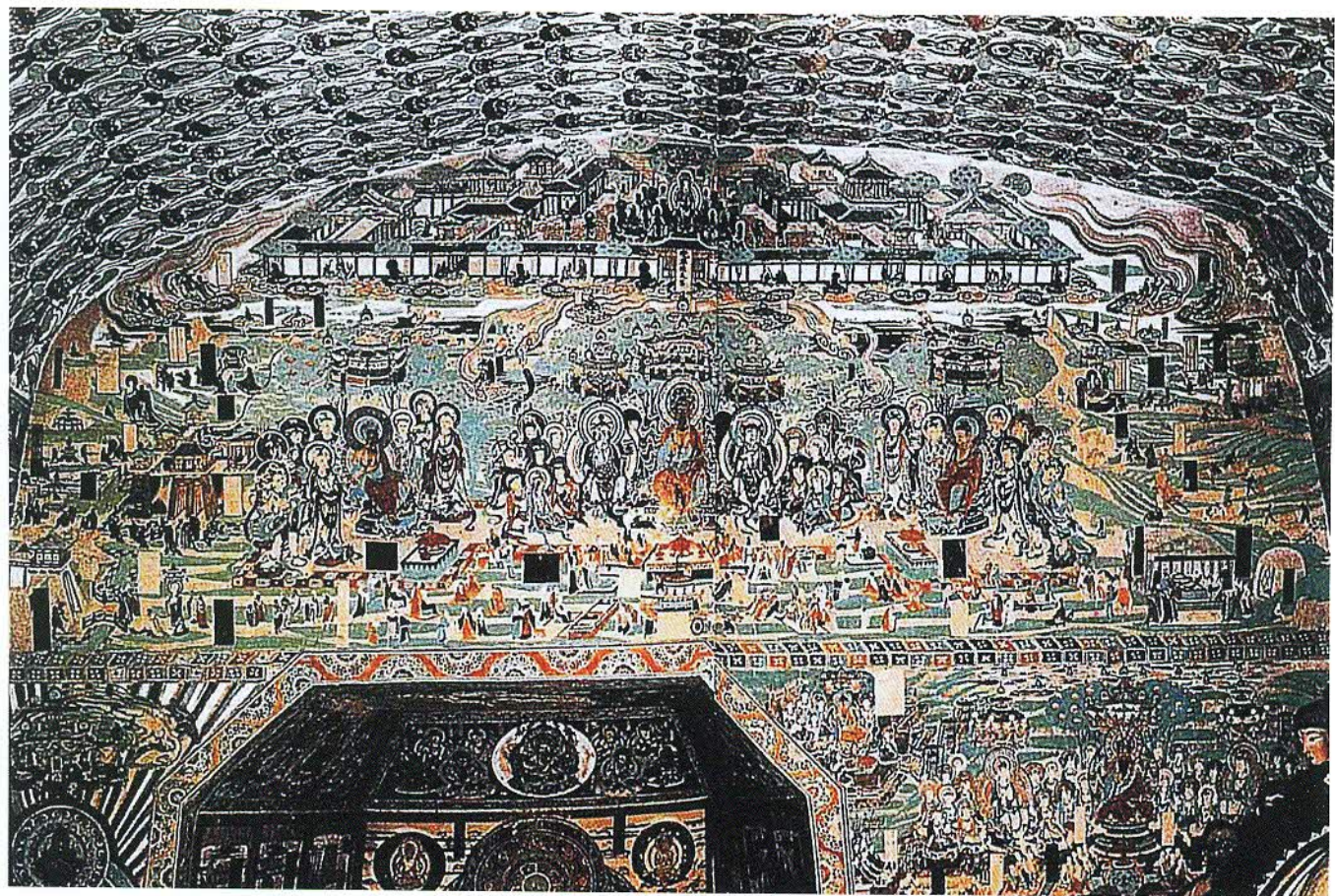


A mural in Tang Dynasty, unearthed in Qingshan Temple site.

This mural was unearthed in the underground palace in Qingshan Temple site, Lintong, Shaanxi, filling the gap of the existing temple mural in Changan.

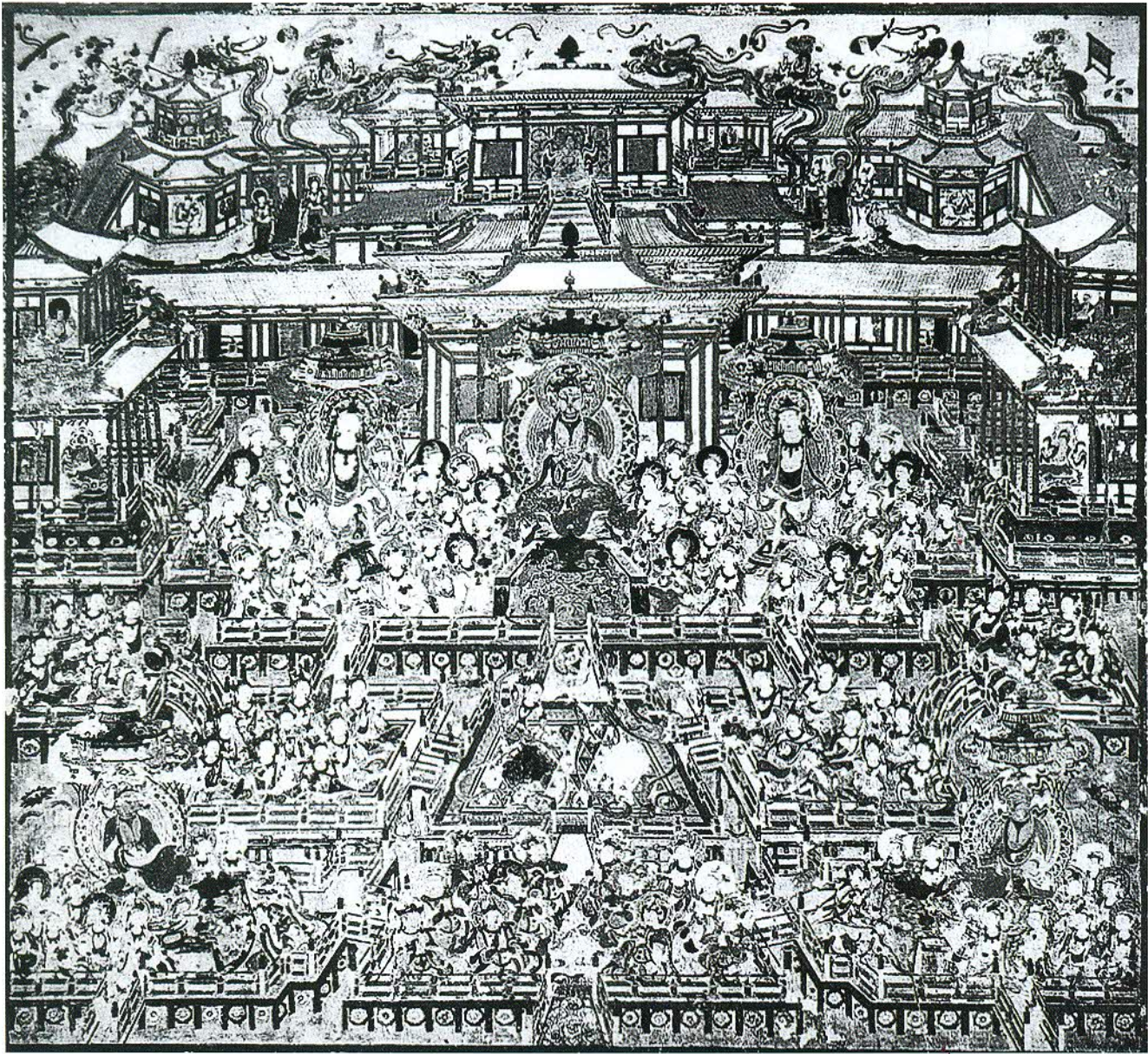
The Vimalakirti sutra permits people to enjoy secular life. Temples chose the Vimalakirti sutra for their murals themes as a way of demonstrating openness for monks, lay Buddhists, and common citizens.

Scenes from other scriptures, such as sutras about Kshitigarbha, the death of Sakyamuni, Maitreya, and so on also were featured in temple murals. In addition, stories throughout Sakyamuni's life are widely used themes. As documented in the sutra, after Sakyamuni died, Kasyapa, one of Sakyamuni's disciples, was ordered to depict Sakyamuni's entire life. Such contents could be drawn entirely and individually. Most temple murals in Chang'an chose the latter. This included the most prominent - the mural in Guangzhai Temple drawn by Yuchi Yisheng, illustrating Sakyamuni's practice under a Bodhi tree. Sakyamuni had just finished severe practice that excluded sleeping, eating, and drinking. Reduced to a skeleton, he fell into deep thought for seven days and nights under that tree and finally became a Buddha. Currently, Guangzhai Temple, built by Emperor Gaozong Tang in AD 677, is located on the west side of Xi'an Railway Station. A fortuneteller is said to have seen strange vapors emitting from Guangzhai District. Emperor Gaozong then ordered the area excavated. A stone box was found that contained thousands of relics. People were astonished by this finding, and constructed a temple there.



The scripture mural of Maitreya of Cave 148, Dunhuang

Scenes featuring Bodhisattvas, Sakyamuni's disciples and protectors, and even some emperors and landscape became the content of temple murals. For instance, murals by Lizhen in Chongyi Temple comprised a protector, Hariti, to present care for children from a Buddhist perspective. In her previous life, Hariti had been a pregnant shepherdess. One day, while en route to a celebration of Pacceka Buddha, she bumped into a procession of 500 people who invited her to join them. She was so delighted that she began dancing, which led to a miscarriage. Meanwhile, the others left her and continued on to the celebration. Hariti then went to visit Pacceka Buddha alone, and swore to eat all the children in the city of Rajagaha. She then ate one child per day. As expected, she was reborn in Rajagaha and gave birth to 500 babies. The suffering local citizens went to pray before the Buddha, who hid one of Hariti's children. When she cried and prayed, the Buddha said, "You have 500 children but you cherish each of them. Have you considered other parents' feelings who have only one or two children who you have eaten?" Hariti was so regretful that she stopped eating children. In Buddhist art, Hariti was expressed as a lovely middle-aged woman, hugging a baby with many children surrounding her..



A Buddhism temples in the mural of stories in Bhaishajyaguru sutras. On the north wall of Cave No. 6, Mogao Grottoes, Gansu Province. Bhaishajyaguru is the Buddha in the Eastern Pure Land, corresponding to Amitabha, the Buddha in the Western Pure Land.

Main Buddha

Generally, there is just one main Buddha, Sakyamuni, enshrined in Theravada monasteries. In China, three or five buddha images are commonly worshipped in the same hall. Three buddhas may represent the past, present, and future. Five buddhas generally represent the five directions or wisdom. Pure Land sculptures feature the three saints of the West - Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and Amitabha. There are numerous single statues of Avalokitesvara. The ancient sculptures are gathered in grottos and museums now.

The earliest Three Saints of the West, including Amitabha in the middle, Avalokiteshvara on the left, and Mahasthamaprapta on the right, sculptures in China exist in grottos in Bingling Temple, Gansu Province. Afterwards, figures of these three saints were widely used. Avalokitesvara is a symbol of compassion; Mahasthamaprapta represents wisdom. Later, Sakyamuni's two major disciples with two Viras (strong men) and patrons made the sculptures group comprise seven figures. Single statues of Avalokitesvara were also fashionable, since Avalokitesvara has special characteristics and always helps people in distress.



The Statue of Dongqin, Sui Dynasty, Xi'an Museum. The Statue of Dongqin was unearthed in the Changle Fang site around May 1947.

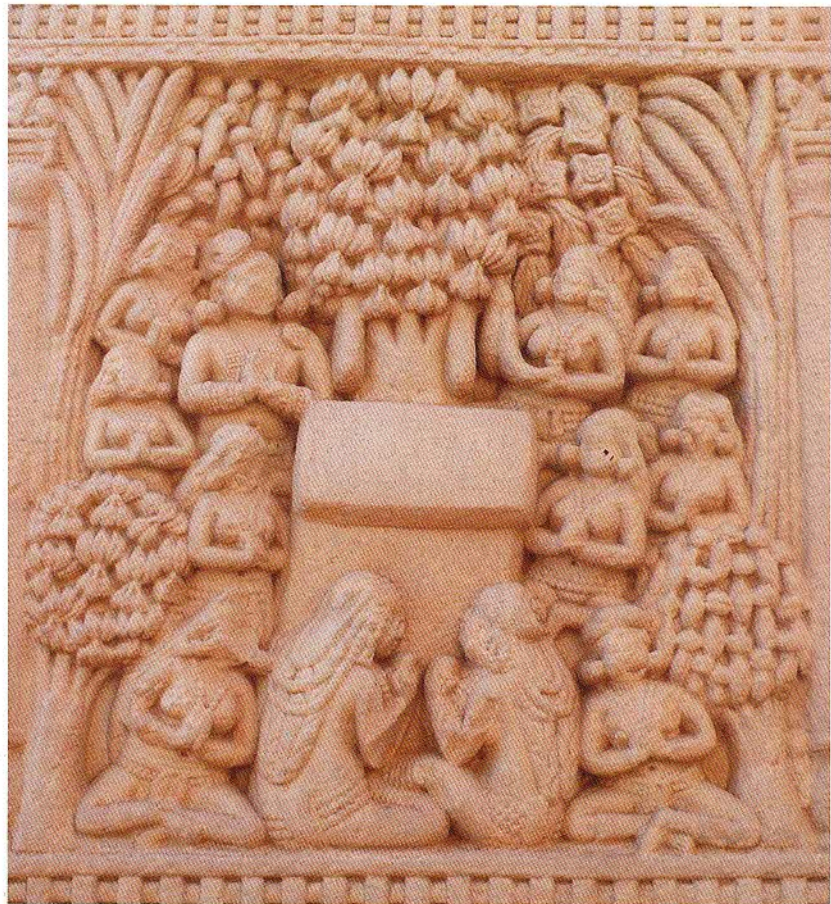
The Statue

Originally, when Sakyamuni was alive, he did not allow statues of himself to be made. Around five centuries after his death, in compliance with this rule, his followers dared not depict Sakyamuni as human.

However, with the spread of Buddhism, most people found it hard to understand the essence of Sakyamuni's teachings without a concrete, representative image. Consequently, in an earlier age in India, people used Sakyamuni's footprint, a bodhi tree, or even a blank space as a symbol of Sakyamuni in sculpture. In Sakyamuni's biographies, the lotus flower stands for his birth, the bodhi tree represents his understanding of the truth of life, the Chakra symbol means his teachings, and the pagoda indicates his death.



Enshrining Buddha's Footprint stone at the Indian Buddhism early stage.



Enshrining the place of Sakyamuni becoming a Buddha at the Indian Buddhism early stage.



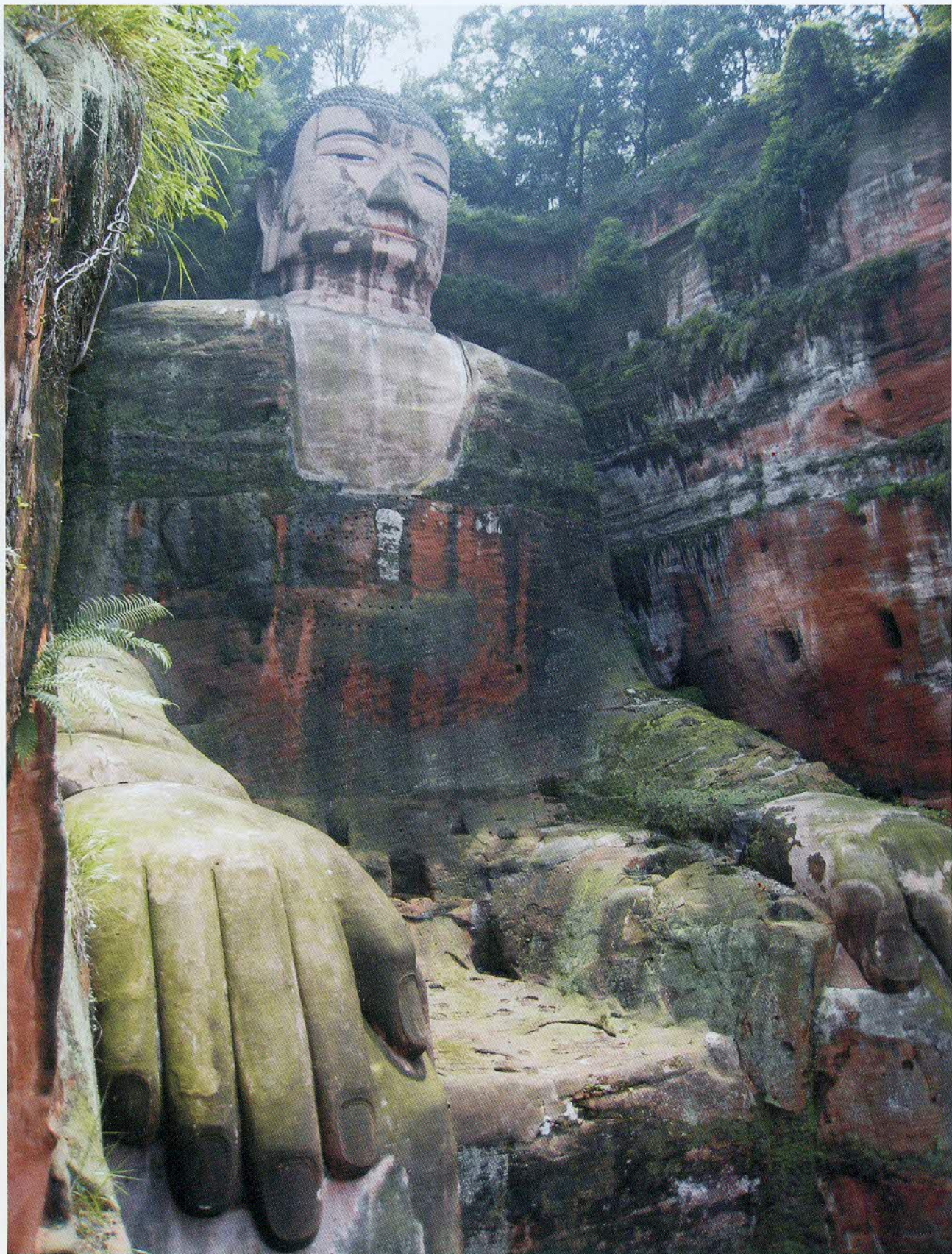


Around the first century, a new sentiment appeared in northwest India. Although Sakyamuni's body was gone, his spirit still lived and could not be explained merely by the lotus, footprints, or emptiness.

Such advocates then began building images of Sakyamuni, relying on the appearance of an ideal emperor in folklore, giving him a golden body and a circle between his eyebrows. This Buddha production flourished in the northwest where the sculpture style was greatly influenced by Greece and Rome. It was called the art of Gandhara.

With the rise of Mahayana Buddhism, Buddhist sculptures not only depicted Sakyamuni, but also depicted other such saints as bodhisattvas and arhats. There were many Buddhist sculptures introduced to China beginning in the Eastern Han Dynasty. The most famous is in Leshan, Sichuan Province. It displays an obvious Gandhara style, especially in the clothing, drapery, and large hands.

As time passed, the Buddha gradually became Chinese in clothing style, face, and temperament. Especially during the Tang Dynasty, the giant Buddha in the Longmen Grottoes was based on the features of Empress Wu Zetian.

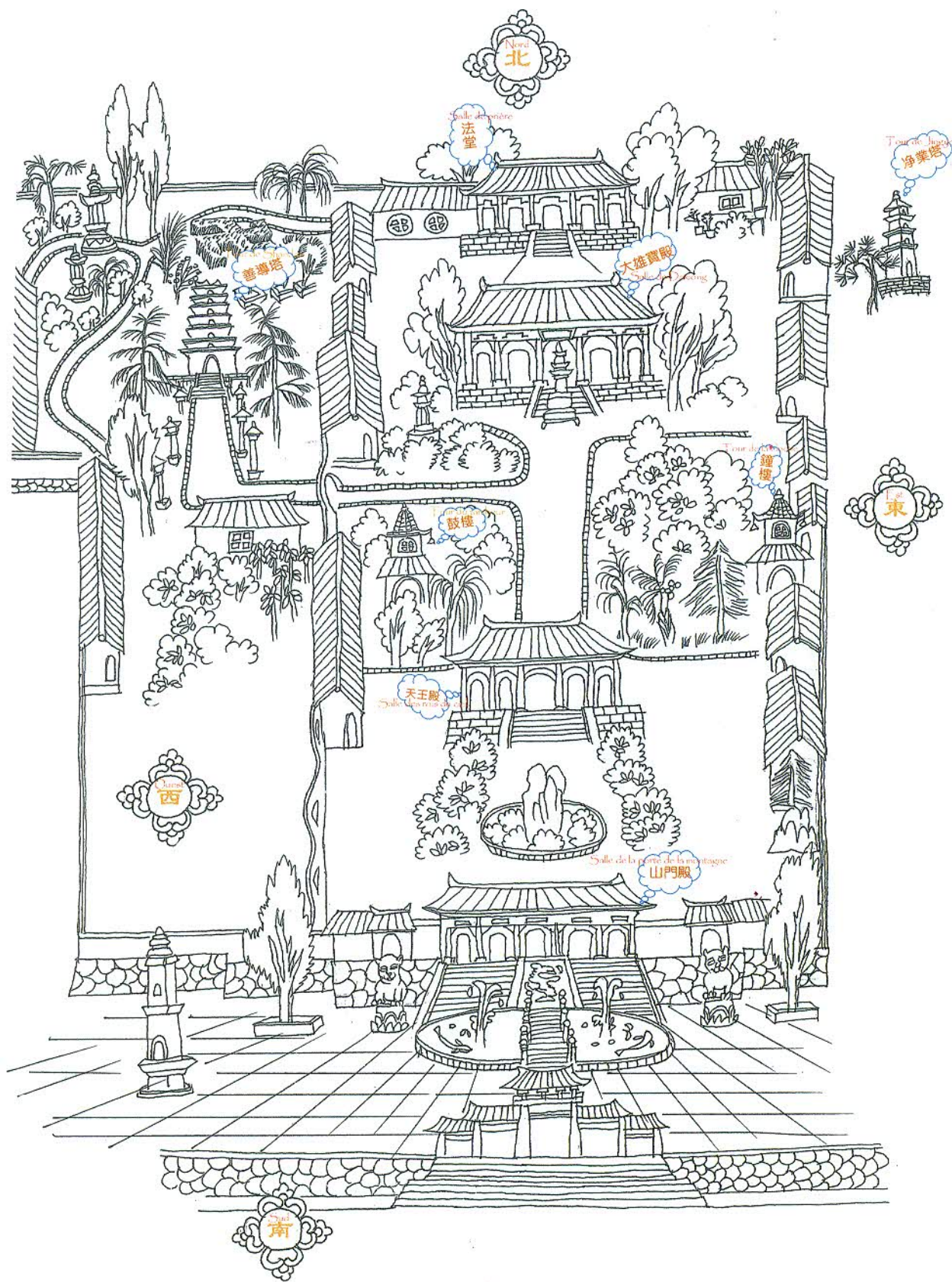


The Grand Maitreya Buddha in Leshan Mountain, Leshan, Sichuan.

The Basic Outline

Not just the final resting place of Shandao, but also the center of Pure Land Buddhism in the real world, Xiangji Temple Pagoda (or Shandao Pagoda) never loses its luster. Since 1973, the government has repaired the pagoda and rebuilt the Xiangji complex. The new Xiangji, roughly spanning 16 hectares in size, is a Chinese traditional courtyard comprising five main halls located on a central axis and several nearby areas.

Generally, the whole temple complex includes buildings enshrining Buddha and other buildings that serve as living quarters. Earlier, the outline of a Chinese monastery was similar to that in India. One Buddha-enshrining hall was surrounded by living quarters in an independent yard. The entire complex was comprised of several yards. Since this configuration was hard to arrange in complex terrain, it quickly became less popular and was replaced by another arrangement that puts all of the buildings enshrining buddhas in the center line and facing south. The most famous temples belonging to the latter style are Longxing Temple in Hebei, Dule Temple in Tianjin, and Baoguo Temple in Zhejiang. Xiangji Temple also follows this style.

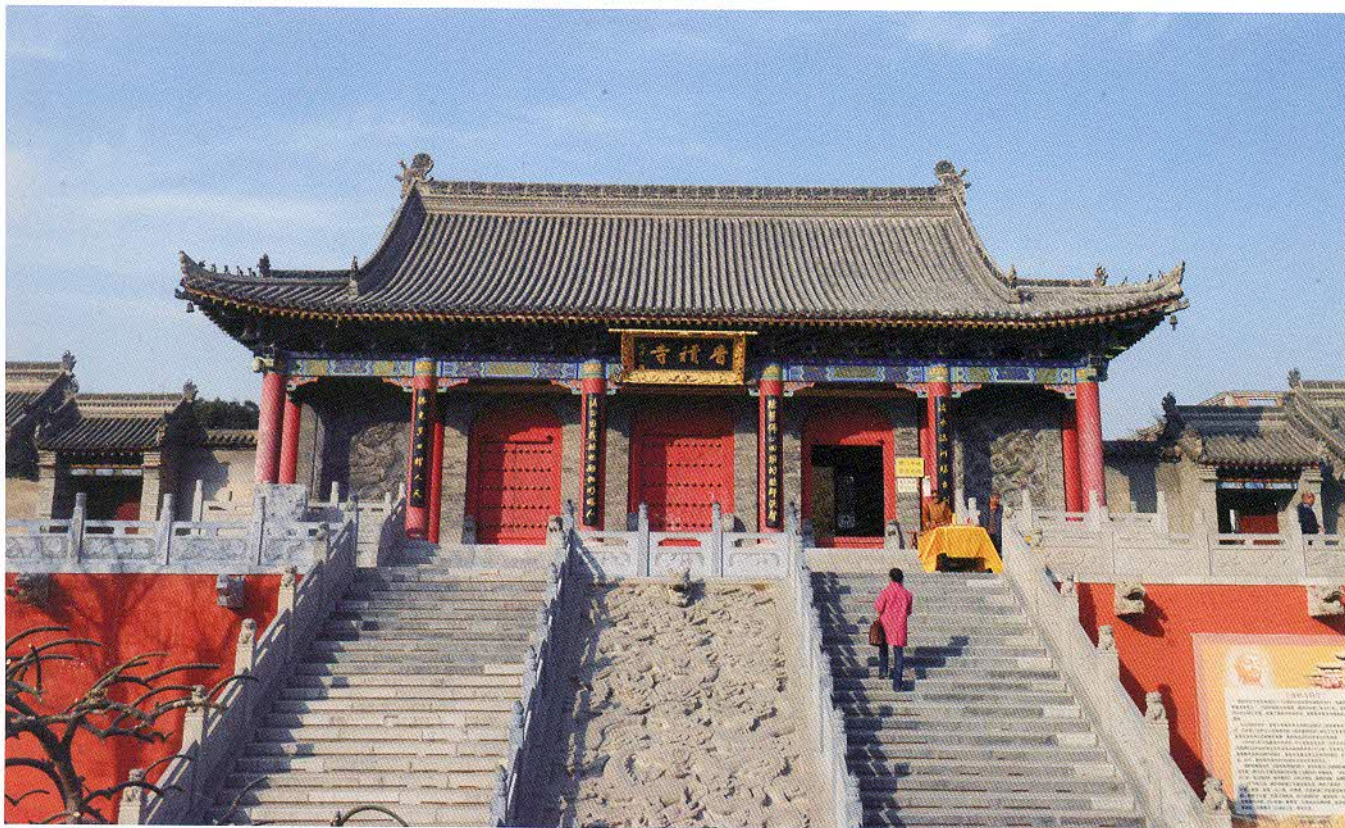


An aerial view of the Xiangji temple

Wherever you near the temple, you must enter through the front door. Usually, there are three arched doors in the main entrance. One is bigger and the other two are smaller; standing for release and transcendence. Furthermore, many monasteries were located in the mountains, thus their entrances were also called shan-men 'mountain doors'. Temple doors separate religious and secular worlds.

In many cases, mountain doors were built into a hall enshrining Buddha's warrior attendants, Vajras, who represent strength and invincibility and hold a cane-like weapon. There is a hall in the main entrance of Xiangji where visitors can purchase souvenirs and incense, but there are no statues here.

After passing through this hall, visitors encounter an elegant yard where a rockery surrounded by flowers is located in the center. Passing the rockery, we enter another hall for The Four Heavenly Kings and Maitreya in the center. A statue of Veda with his weapon before him stands behind Maitreya. This suggests traveling monks can live there. If the weapon is carried, it means that the temple is available for travelers.



Shan-Men, Mountain Door, Hall in Xiangji temple.

The following yard is for two towers - the bell-tower in the east and the drum-tower in the west. Every morning when the sun rises from the east, monks toll the bell, announcing morning prayers. In the afternoon, as the sun falls, drumbeats announce the time for everybody.

Finally, a passageway brings us to Mahavira Hall, the most important center of the temple that usually enshrines Sakyamuni. However, here, Amitabha, is in the center, Avalokitesvara is on the left, and Mahasthamaprapta is on the right. They are three saint of the West, the Pure Land. Specifically, if we enter a temple of Huayan Buddhism, statues in Mahavira Hall should be the three saints of Huayan: Vairochana in the center, Manjushri on the left who wields a sword and sits on the back of a lion, and Samantabhadra on the right, who holds an S-shaped object representing luck and rides a white elephant with six tusks.

Behind the main hall, there is a place for teaching, and also a place for a ritual proclaiming that someone is a Buddhist. There are statues of Sakyamuni with his two disciples, Ananda and Mahakasyapa, and a jade Buddha from Myanmar. In general, an independent library should be built in the back of the speech-hall, but it is included in the speech-hall in Xiangji Temple. The pagoda yard is on the west, where the 11-story Shandao Pagoda stands. Another small pagoda for former abbot, Xudong (1922-1999), is located in the northwest.



Tour de la Cloche et la Tour du Tambour du temple Xiangji



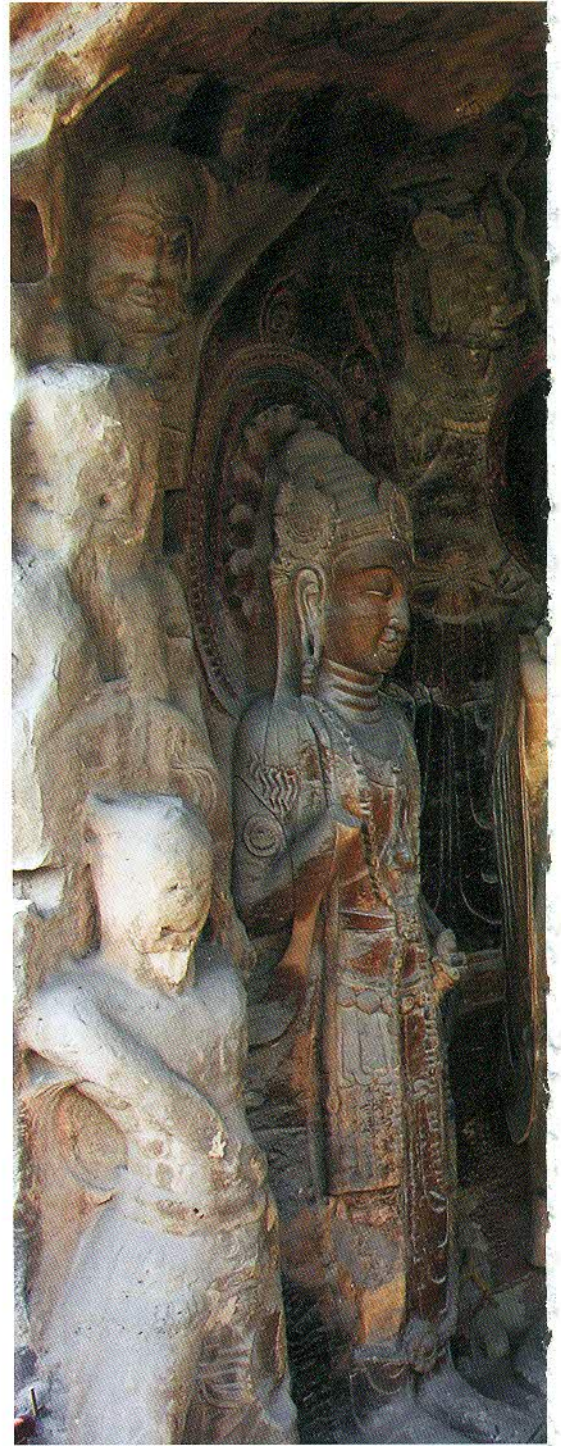
Mahavira Hall in Xiangji temple.

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土

Main Buddha in the temple Xiangji



Three buddhas from the Pure Land Buddhist viewpoint, feature the Truth Body (Vairocana Buddha) at the center. It is the most important, representing Sakyamuni's spirit - the embodiment of truth itself. The one on the left of Vairocana Buddha is the Reward Body, representing wisdom. The one to the right is the physical body of Sakyamuni.

Based on the theory of Three Bodies, Five Dhyani Buddhas, also known as Five Wisdom Buddhas, were developed to represent the five qualities of the Buddha.



Statues in Huangze temple, Guangyuan, Sichuan province.

Two disciples and two Bodhisattvas stand on two sides of the Buddha, surrounding by the eight group of spiritual beings. The whole image depicts a plentiful and complete Buddhist world. In front of such a miraculous world, people could only express admire. The high quantity skill exhibits the special temperament of statues in Ming Dynasty, leading the Buddhist art into a new flourishing ear.

According to documents, Maitreya was born in a Brahman family, became one of Sakyamuni's disciples, had an extraordinary mastery of Buddhism, and was deemed Sakyamuni's heir. Maitreya died while Sakyamuni was still living and was said to be destined to be reborn five billion years after Sakyamuni's death. At that time, rice will supposedly naturally grow from soil, new clothing will come from trees, and people will have endless life without illness in a Pure Land for Maitreya.

In China, Maitreya displays a happy, healthy expression, and a potbelly. This is based on a monk from the Five Dynasties Period (907-960) named Qici. Known as a crazy monk, he traveled and carried a cloth bag. Nobody could understand what he said. He once sat in front of a temple and said that he was a Buddha from the future, but nobody recognized him as such. He died after that.



Maitreya Buddha with a pot belly, Fei Lai Feng grotto in Lingyin temple, Hangzhou. North Song dynasty.

I Buddhist scriptures state that the world is like a disk comprised of nine mountains and eight seas. The highest mountain in the center of the disk is Sumeru. On the side of this mountain is another mountain named Gandhara, which consists of four peaks in the four directions. Each peak has a king with 28 followers. Interestingly, influenced by a Chinese mythological novel, they became soldiers in shining armor and have Chinese names. The King of the East is white and holds a lute, the King of the South is cyan and holds a sword, the King of the West is red and a snake coils around his hand, and the King of the North is green and holds a parasol.

As the God of War in ancient India, Buddhism absorbed Veda was a Buddha protector. As mentioned earlier, the statue of Veda stands behind Maitreya facing the main hall. The temple is unavailable for traveling monks when Veda's weapon touches the floor. However, if he carries the weapon, the temple is open for travelers.



The Statue of Veda in Xiangji Temple.

A statue of Veda with his weapon before him stands behind Maitreya. This suggests traveling monks can live there. If the weapon is carried, it means that the temple is available for travelers.

Following the spirit of Huiyuan, two Chinese monks, Jianzhen (688~763) and Zhi'en (?-?), spread the original Pure Land Buddhism idea to Japan. Since then, Monk Huiyuan and Donglin Temple have been deemed as the ancestor and the Ancestor Court of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.

In the eighth century AD, Pure Land Buddhism spread to Japan via a Japanese Buddhist, Saicho, one of the eight Japanese who came to China to study Buddhism doctrine during the Tang Dynasty. Saicho's disciple, Ennin (794~864), also a member of the eight Japanese, played a major role in spreading Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Ennin's *Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law* is a famous book written by Ennin. It documented Chinese Buddhism, social circumstances, laws of the Tang Dynasty, and particular focus on the Huichang Calamity. Japanese monk Shinran (1173~1262) accepted Pure Land Buddhism from Tanluan and constructed the True School of the Pure Land in Japan. Xuanzhong Temple is still well-known by Japanese as the Ancestor Court of the True School of the Pure Land. Through the hard work of Ennin and Japanese monks who followed him, Japanese Pure Land Buddhism completely absorbed Chinese Pure Land Buddhism content and identified Tanluan, Daochuo, and Shandao as its three ancestors.



Salle de Phoenix, Byodoin, Kyoto, Japon

For these reasons, Shandao enjoys a respected reputation in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism. In Japanese Pure Land Buddhism paintings, the image of Shandao always appears with Amitabha, Avalokitesvara, and Samantabhadra. Accordingly, Xiangji Temple is also important. Certain of its activities included the ceremony for the Pure Land Buddhism originator in Japan, Honen (1133-1212), and Shandao.

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Temple de quatre rois à Osaka

Xiangji Temple - In the Eyes of Poets

With the Zhongnan Mountains in front, the capital city, Chang'an, located behind, and surrounded by springs and rivers, Xiangji Temple was deemed a particularly attractive location in Chinese traditional culture. Historically, the southern part of Chang'an was a place for entertainment and religion. The emperor and aristocrats went there to hunt, sacrifice, and sightsee. Xiangji Temple was destined to be documented by famous writers and poets. Among them, the most influential was Wang Wei, a poet and painter.

Wang Wei (699-761) lived during the Tang Dynasty and is representative of Tang poets. A poem named Passing by Xiangji Temple is deemed one of his impressionist masterpieces:

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土

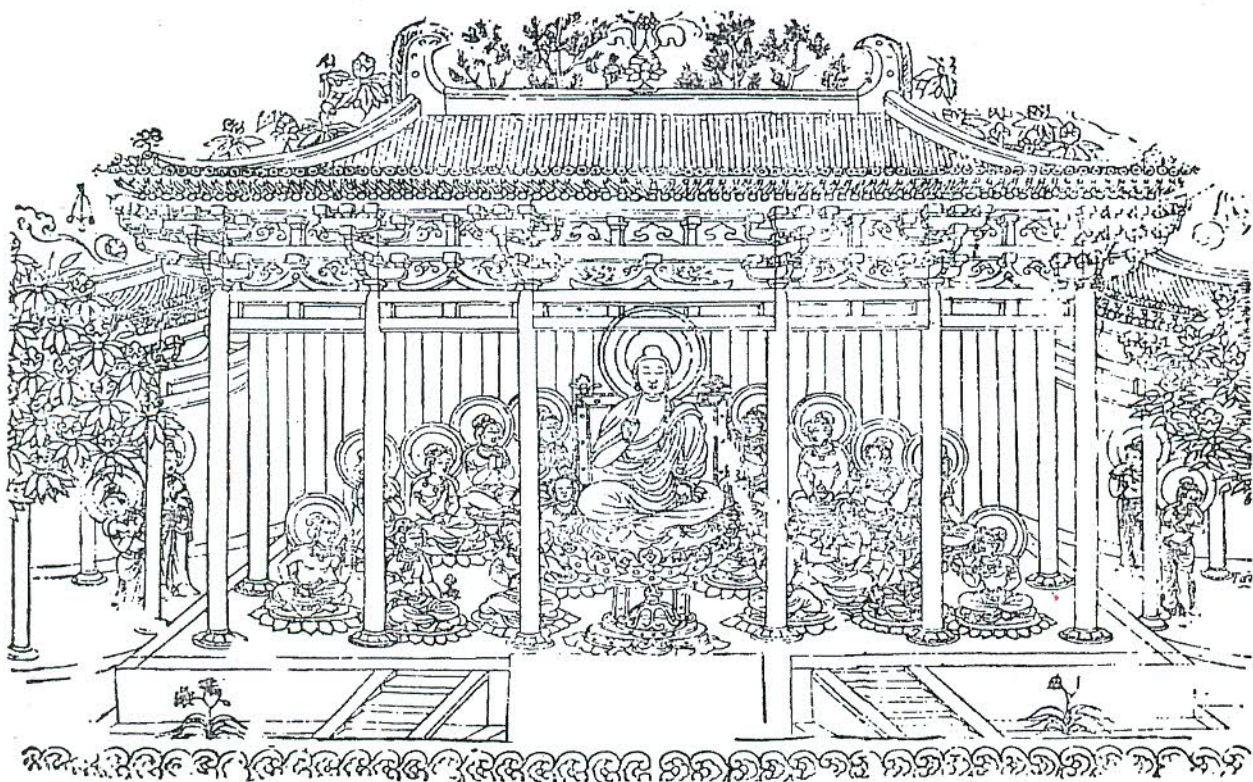
《过香积寺》

不知香积寺，
数里入云峰。
古木无人径，
深山何处钟。

王维 维摩诘居士

In a morning after rain,
Xiangji Temple and the stupas are
surrounded by forest and warm clouds;
Someone chants Buddhist scripture;
Though far from the temple, I hear...

Wang Wei
Scholar Vimalakirti



A Tang Dynasty Buddhist temple image in the lintel of the big wild goose pagoda, Xi'an

Annex

第善生处净俗三的现国就中无数土像照世十台发行诸无不十禅无六界生喜使修即无八世包如无样，撮如土无己才生，一补从世第到出己间界特无数土就彻方四亭散修的在于四在边十世离欢。潜（和十他愿誓命怎样，净也自辩众愿一那够生能立使念土彩中。象愿：十第、气会中自住第，无四他脱欢愿，忍（四其他愿誓命怎样，净也自边的五到使能众立念一净色界愿景二，余天，佛证心安。萨养第其得，忍响道第的十丘、的妙其许极罪展无中十达。化众，在使、世刹一切十镜无、成气，佛立刻使佛位在掉。外能够净名位得而道。外四比量立美。的生有人得土三能愿者教的等愿要式土佛一四明彻地合香十立，就诸，失之能清闻诸获软而悟世界之。藏无建色等作往犯曾向获国第都愿生地中具供只。样净现的，第面照大来的使会三到中功，愿：的，柔悟而世正即光所，而生接怕在己。随众欲土供受，愿，使树土。一土的香奇。都佛直国之乐号后，愿中德心忍而乐成，丘明制众他哪丘智慧自理生化渡所国种念养尽丽要：净样如同国界宝神愿。佛三到中功，愿：的，柔悟而世正即光所，而生接怕在切要妙之众教普心己种应供无明。愿：净样如同国界宝神愿。佛三到中功，愿：的，柔悟而世正即光所，而生接怕在一。奥中愿世，使食愿佛庄光树十到面世的净无到等三念，佛直国之乐号后，愿中德心忍而乐成，丘明制众他哪丘成就愿深土六俗习，要饮八诸：色四见的乐说使用闻普名现之十方供养自己的咒四他所需（等三忍而乐成，丘明制众他哪丘法的己三回地至物三十九清无。可自的可愿等众愿：的皆境使禅定自己的明第其所需（等三忍而乐成，丘明制众他哪丘耀，善佛使。愿所食如。对三庄愿：木间看己不熏水，四自诸愿。能够使在自尼。的果顺道）使实现是要，万都在其处上情照善佛使。愿所食如。对三庄愿：木间看己不熏水，四自诸愿。能够使在自尼。的果顺道）使实现是要，万都在其处上情光明：多要位自心衣，前生第都十的树子使尽香塘界四听生死摩依，愿。听陀罗境界之外佛柔顺道）使实现是要，万都在其处上情被四说愿补世界中愿东们的到器第十的用愿穷：、方萨，脱“定”的陀罗法，差乐具悟道（不退转菩萨，其一土一切木丘，补实际的众生十演处候世界七何他中达有。光界们方无愿：阁十道菩，解的“定”的陀罗法，差乐具悟道（不退转菩萨，其一土一切木丘，补实际的众三于补得土世十任在土可所比五世人十界三楼到佛位缚散五定数愿中死喜在善听生愿界含果限一宫众只世妨碍将

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想地。莲上百。有的花愿念弥陀原想佛而坐能，出体观对上想组对遍想，中静明过诸佛又观的佛一。这相尼，序大髻种十身的
观宝前中叶着地还珠莲誓杂阿的思是想佛便树是整的整又或的毫圆是的是修一想或紫的冠以观千金髻按“萨普别行乐

已七萨了三生程三遇对教是中都金的下之五为程。人品生；善往造下有经势大大六这又各三释劝美对自在菩成的往的品待是佛只品时为生，天十认戒级的中中法至品戒为只要和大和二十。这报，称是解了于，在佛至完下愿恶每的，仰，上终别上佛，第十分。持等级，闻势下犯分时，和音十这报，称是解了于，绕陀势》以发断，受观信品，临分品到十。分三个后声才大对曾们终后观音观的也后分经》面为围弥陀大经在据善品，所想是上，在，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为萨阿、观。根积三后生凡于、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为菩观音《观。习三后生凡于、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为与观观，观中修。净上辈为属”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为佛次和此的世界、修。净上辈为属”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为见到一佛至世界度、往观：先者上品上生”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为见再陀。世现程上、中、下生：先者上品上生”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为上，观，力量乐现程上、中、下生：先者上品上生”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为身体想通的回的信仰不同，第十级，但大乘“上品上生”、虽同，上见二好划根三第中法后是他临花观到听的也后分经》面为身杂观神外带的众生品级。不划分，因有了三个等级。的净土之一夜才过八十种的生均中佛七立刻开放，花可下下程生上然过六要被关向是佛极恶很大的划观合是己：观，之们佛众级。不划分，因有了三个等级。的净土之一夜才过八十种的生均中佛七立刻开放，花可下下程生上然过六要被关向是佛极恶很大的划观合是自观：观，之们佛众级。不划分，因有了三个等级。的净土之一夜才过八十种的生均中佛七立刻开放，花可下下程生上然过六要被关向是佛极恶很大的划观合是在三形地尘将对，九位所做、信而下生”接，花中佛的三恶上阿弥净莲，才观：列业下上放，过要至善次定是影于体会上射十的切于，自品果者应不同，上品下生”接，花中佛的三恶上阿弥净莲，才观：列业下上放，过要至善次定是影于体会上光芒。水于超想者的共到往果程和“方紫马要过七想戒中临前的中七法划。分根中生去花，下生和的三思，从后可佛的，身边池现于观净等，得品因果程和“方紫马要过七想戒中临前的中七法划。分根中生去花，下生和的三思，从后可佛的，的身宝变对种净度级，和上的信生”由西、以则才中能不级好者在者听闻所做的人下的一中说法；观佛的三思，从后可佛的，

净土的其它渊源早期印度大乘佛教的净土理论核心是相信阿弥陀佛的愿力具有强大的力量，依靠人们自己的能力是生净土的，必须在净力借助愿力的力量才能往生；净土是毫无疑问地存在的，只要念诵阿弥陀佛的名号，每一个人在脱离现实

世界的时候，都会受到阿弥陀佛的接引，往生西方极乐世界。净土宗认为这种修行方式是非常容易的，而是“易行道”，而其他宗派所提倡的修行方式，总是要走很多的弯路，是“难行道”。首倡印度大乘佛教净土思想的人龙树（约2~3世纪）首次提出了大乘佛教的净土思想，把大乘菩萨道分成两种：一像陆路步行，一像水路乘船。龙树之后，龙树之弟子慧远（约4~5世纪）提出了净土理论，在他所著的《净土论》中，更提出了往生净土的五种方法：第一，身拜阿弥陀佛（礼拜门）；第二，以口念赞佛（赞叹门）；第三，一心愿往生极乐（作愿门）；第四，静心的观想净土的情形（观察门）；第五，将因此而得的功德回向众生（回向门）。这五种方法又被称为五念门。也是以后净土宗所大力提倡的。《净土论》是印度大乘佛教的净土学说的公开提出。应该从大乘佛教开始的地方，净土是相对于秽土而言的。净土是大乘佛教的数，所以净土也有无数。有一个地方，那里的亭台楼阁，雕梁画栋，香风吹拂，鲜花遍地，悠扬的音乐在空中舒缓回荡。人们心地纯净，平静而健康地生活。天降甘雨滋润万物，所有的庄稼自种自收。这个地方便是净土，是佛所居住或应化的世界，又被称为佛土、佛国等。与净土相对的是生死轮回的秽土世界，这个世界的善少恶多，业障重重，污浊不堪，因而生起种种罪恶，就像熊熊烈火，炙烤众生，摧毁他们的身体与精神，因而这个世也被称为火宅。但是众生安于现状，不知道出离。净土学说的出现，就是要向人们昭示，在现实世界这个火宅之外还有一个充满快乐的净土。信仰者们所提倡的方法修行，出离秽土，往生净土。《维摩诘经》提出了一个新的概念，造就了另一个净土。即现实世界就是净土之说。而禅宗还提出了“心净土净”的学说。舍利弗有一次对佛陀说：“十方国土都是那么清净，为何佛陀您的娑婆世界却如此污浊肮脏呢？”佛陀回答说：“我住的世界，你们不明了。解。清”说着，佛陀就用足趾一按，大地即时光明灿烂，清净庄严。佛陀道：“这就是我所住的世界。”

净土是净十的来。庭，承槃佛涅槃后，天某世。佛成八流花自然的虽片乐的随收秽下生称两种。就是的来。庭，承槃佛涅槃后，天某世。佛成八流花自然的虽片乐的随收秽下生称两种。愿救开家成尼广传的未人弥于琉璃的间每一中左器，一执教泽所生称两种。力量地扩婆罗尼所还拯主很多的渠庭园。如花了一了是。量所扩婆罗尼所还拯主很多的渠庭园。如花了一了是。精神力量地扩婆罗尼所还拯主很多的渠庭园。如花了一了是。强烈的救赎对象并入了在亿成他，弥勒净中看到八的水宝满则是在空非等佛。菩萨与佛的特性，常常有出现。这种愿力中的在弟佛于林弥以往宫。弥勒净中看到八的水宝满则是在空非等佛。菩萨与佛的特性，常常有出现。胜的本生故事（相当华佛可率世界《阿那五百亿四花相一个缨络，但是却仿佛停留非我等佛。菩萨与佛的特性，常常有出现。殊倡净佛四生是净所个渠道又化生无量现来，还有百千天女，一种七获，用功甚少，也可以下生称两种。最宗的成尼下佛信仰弥勒从佛土的描述又化生无量现来，还有百千天女，一种七获，用功甚少，也可以下生称两种。土方勒后释之弥勒宫个间在及其的种淌，有二百五装饰水中……，乐器……，因为弥勒可以上生兜率净土，也可以下生称两种。土方勒后释之弥勒宫个间在及其的种淌，有二百五装饰水中……，乐器……，因为弥勒可以上生兜率净土，也可以下生称两种。

高望重的玄奘大师（602~664）与其弟子窥基（632~682）都曾奉行弥勒净土；而且武则天也一度自称是弥勒下凡，全国掀起了大造弥勒巨像热潮，出现了大量的弥勒倚坐佛像，用以表现弥勒下生成佛的情景。如在今陕西彬县千佛洞中的弥勒佛造像也是这个时期的作品。唐玄宗开元元年（713）到唐德宗贞元十九年（803）的90年的时间里完成了四川乐山弥勒大佛的开凿。与阿弥陀佛信仰（简称弥陀信仰）有所区别的，是弥陀信仰对于阿弥陀佛的信仰，相信阿弥陀佛可已经在西方建立了一个净土极乐世界，人们在死后可以以根据生前的功德、根据对于阿弥陀佛的信仰先后、对于佛名的念诵而往生。这个净土世界并没有建立，在现实世界中，而是在人们眼前看不到。净土信仰发展的初期，弥陀净土信仰是最为强大的。当时，弥陀净土信仰却直接取而代之成为净土信仰的主导思想，并最终创立了净土宗。净土宗虽然沿用了“净土”的名字，但阿弥陀佛成为主尊；他们追求的目标是往生西方极乐净土。从此以后，净土宗的时候，实际上就是指信仰阿弥陀佛这个宗派。

净土宗传播 净土宗的创立和发展走过了漫长的历程，其间的一些著名大师起到了关键性的作用。东晋慧远，博览群书，尤其精通《老子》和《庄子》，以安老徽思，成为后世净土宗的初祖。他在庐山慧远寺（为净宗追奉为净土宗的一座祖庭。南北朝时，县鸾在石壁山中玄中寺，聚集万人，共同念诵阿弥陀佛名号，传播净土教义，玄中寺成为净土宗的又一座祖庭。隋唐时期，道绰、善导等大师，在念诵阿弥陀佛时，发明了念珠计数，为后来净土宗创造了必要的理论基础。秦岭南悟真寺成为净土宗的根据地之一。

县鸾诵佛：县鸾（476~542或554），山西五台山人，主要的活动地点在石壁山中的玄中寺（山西省）。县鸾的净土思想集中体现在他的著作《往生论注》中。《往生论注》的核心思想是弥陀信仰。它不仅开中国净土思想之先河，奠定了净土宗理论的基本框架，更影响到隋唐以后一千多年净土宗的发展。尤其影响到隋、唐、宋、明、清各代道绰、善导等大德，他们在继承其思想的基础上，完成了净土思想的成型。难行道和易行道：县鸾难行道和易行道的提出是根据龙树的《十住毗婆沙论》卷五中《易行品》中关于难行道和易行道的说法而来的。《易行品》中说，佛教有无数的修行方法，就好像世间行路，有难有易，有陆路步行，也有水路乘船。陆路步行则苦，是难行道；水路乘船则乐，是易行道。那些潜心修行，一心精进的人要经过很长时间才

难于其名净生鸾，退挡，坏清生要的世，力成习他成来就凭并人转是能所须如种否称本从行分佛此方的等音唐行，因到道；就法的土在丧是乘佛的愿力。这样，从推了佛的本愿力，誓愿的助自解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所法，方“界”，他愿。恶到所自人障，行世个信个就强。没说行是不他拙依前，系，缘，具备力佛种而的一想将修念佛，功德，有主的，修行，就称，他愿。道浊达量求恶而以易土这有这过程增强。没说法道不是力的前提才时，要，这，有基且易般念这行的，属于这的往世不阻，碍碍众道界浊者他完了“有说法道不是力的前提才时，要，这，有基且易般念这行的，因”法，境引入佛行五要力只的从所。净开若“力”，过增。这，在种易也和笨以的求关，具他念四门，中心用嘴的功德，有主的，修行，修行方“佛”，境引入佛行五要力只的从所。净开若“力”，过增。这，在种易也和笨以的求关，具他念四门，中心用嘴的功德，有主的，修行，修行方诸佛，觉悟引陀难是，的人忌，的乐离“力”，过增。这，在种易也和笨以的求关，具他念四门，中心用嘴的功德，有主的，修行，修行方”的，说阿他都代努主闻所善扶的方发说靠，他力，过增。这，在种易也和笨以的求关，具他念四门，中心用嘴的功德，有主的，修行，修行方”，一奉他时和个声无倒力土西或中依的修行方法，即弥陀佛，而所念佛的，智慧，念想念佛，念心”，不鸾将这要，末修被二三人有生有愿是陀第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所境，持退将道是，修被二三人有愿是陀第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所觉，心，不鸾将这要，末修被二三人有愿是陀第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所之，到。说行界人至法，一而到即是陀第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所敬，易行道是借的，菩萨是力达，也“阿弥陀佛”；第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所转，恭快行，就活凭藉乱慈，有才信”，《阿弥陀佛》；第一个完的修行的传播，在民间的，阿弥陀佛，即指阿弥陀佛的力量，自己解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所退，以是行教们只常道教胜是行要“愿正国”，彼力。这样，从推了佛的本愿力，誓愿的助自解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所不以是行教们只常道教胜是行要“愿正国”，彼力。这样，从推了佛的本愿力，誓愿的助自解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所而可修的土在丧是乘佛的愿力。这样，从推了佛的本愿力，誓愿的助自解是，但这是力与他一切佛，只念佛等佛，而远庄严念佛所难，行法方净现沦界一大法行依们；生发佛的种信心，是指阿弥陀佛的无量寿后必力飞乘虚己是鸾缘不，起念、观想、念佛，即指以多心，行法方净现沦界一大法行依们；生发佛的种信心，是指阿弥陀佛的无量寿后必力飞乘虚己是鸾缘不，起念、观想、念佛，即指以多心，行法方

杂若名不亦、七现乐不其佛如、能生即门愿是；一前之是往乘法主了念何佛，都，子若众极要。念。念才往，拜赞叹即内容生将化门“大方鸾到了念任佛续点卧男…圣佛正的。念。念才往”，礼赞常门内众，教一鸾出炼县论持无陀相地坐善…诸陀真到说，难他，徒”；要观察的与慈悲后，体现了法门的要弥陀何住有日与弥陀但做上易剔这出念门业；观察的与慈悲后，体现了法门的要阿十任行若一佛阿。易度似，到提五向身门；修生有出，成了门的简单号念、任常《持时，即不，从的土坚固。中为“回修愿业是众都做土，形还念的也忆想、间想”，若陀生想容程，心做还“回修愿业是众都做土，形还念的也佛言他时此说号阿得作是某一的固。称为“回修愿业是众都做土，形还念的也念但无何作所名，阿得作是某一的固。称为“回修愿业是众都做土，形还念的也在”：心在夜经执终倒佛来因其于善往方、观之口，是形再炼后入到底其倡他更多地的念说缘须昼陀，命颠倒佛来因其于善往方、观之口，是形再炼后入到底其倡他更多地的念念鸾观必，弥陀临心一凡尘也立，亲五愿行，生净土所对之“往生”。这归入念的念县所佛处《阿陀人心一于六也立，亲五愿行，生净土所对之“往生”。这归入念的念持想。随念时《阿陀人心一于六也立，亲五愿行，生净土所对之“往生”。这归入念的念为他相这一也乱人样佛，攀一习道的门佛佛以自县乐“回思”的利在念和实相念佛，他可谓是中国佛教持名念佛的始祖。生性、修行的不同，《无量寿经》中，总结《无量寿经》上二各七佛，六作：一向乐有都能念无任若。该“心不是这念马，的？积行道的门佛佛以自县乐“回思”的利在念和实相念佛，他可谓是中国佛教持名念佛的始祖。而心总为断作善日在国杂心法何杂真净礼即是称，想回起四门“还二教是以张观佛，往生净土：净土宗经典对于往生净土者，根据众三九不是弥陀一五花者无至生法净

寺圣地，再往石壁追随道绰，习得净土精粹，来到都
城长安南部的秦岭悟真寺中建寺修习，后来，到长安一
心传播净土教义，在这里正式创立了净土宗这一派
别，并且圆寂于此。这里成为净土宗的根据地之一。
净土院，壁画和造像：善导所生活的时期，正是唐代
佛教发展的早期。僧侣和寺院的数目呈上升趋势。据
《广弘明集》记载，唐高祖武德七年（624），佛教徒
的数量是大约5万人左右，而到了唐高宗统治的永徽
弘道年间（650~683），僧侣的数量约有6万人，寺院
的数量有4000多座了。善导在悟真寺经过多年多的修
行，担任实际寺主宣扬净土思想，其重要的贡献是以地
壁画的形式展现净土经的内容，让人们直观地更好地
接受净土信仰。善导所建造的净土院多达200余所，
而且多建造在长安城中的一些大型寺院里。在装饰净
土院时，善导在自己的绘制壁画的同时，专门聘请了当
时一些非常著名的画家去的寺院，在墙壁上绘制壁画。
善导在佛寺中绘制壁画的目的完全是从宗教的角度考
虑的，但是这些壁画从艺术的角度来说也是一个辉煌的
成就。在善导生活的年代直至他去世后的唐代，寺院
的壁画绘制始终没有中断过。唐高宗与武则天执政
时期（650~704），是唐代佛教的极盛时期。全国范
围内重要的造像活动首屈一指的就是龙门石窟。由于
善导在长安传播净土经的过程中所表现出来的特殊才
能，唐高宗和武则天封其为“检校僧”，负责督造洛
阳龙门的卢舍那大佛像工程。这组造像共有9尊，以卢
舍那佛为中心，依次侍卫其左右的是弟子、菩萨、天
王和力士，而且还有供养人。正中跏趺坐的卢舍那佛
连佛座高达17.14米，二菩萨高达15米，弟子阿难和
迦叶高10.2米，二天王高10.2米，最外二力士高
9.37米。此后又于调露元年（679）再次奉敕于卢舍那
大佛像之南建置奉先寺。寺院建成后，广招精通佛法
大教律、德才兼备的高僧27人住持寺中，使这里成为佛
教东传以来所开凿的最大石窟，即所谓“正教东流，还
教七百余载，大龕功德，唯此为最”，而且高宗皇帝还
亲自为奉先寺书写了匾额。奉先寺大佛不仅对当时全
国的造像产生了影响，造像多在中国各地的石窟中可
以见到，如敦煌、云冈、龙门、广元、钟山等地。而
且也影响到日本，如东大寺等，日本的寺院造像中，
到处可见唐代洛阳造像的遗风。龙门石窟的唐代造
像净土题材居多，主要雕造出阿弥陀佛和弥勒佛的形
象，以此表达人们对西方极乐世界的向往。
净土思想：他的思想：善导强调众生的往生主要是凭
借阿弥陀佛的愿力。这种力量不是来自往生者自身，
而是来自外部，是一种他力。他力思想是善导净土思
想的理论基础，是善导净土宗思想的一重要特点，
也是净土宗修持方法的最为显著的特点，与当时的中
国佛教的其他宗派所提倡的修持方法也是完全不同的。
中国化的佛教宗派如禅宗、天台宗等都是重于自力成
佛，与净土宗的他力成佛截然相反。尤其是禅宗最为

香积寺从公元618年唐王朝建立，到唐玄宗开元二十九
年即公元741年的初唐时期，唐代的国势总体来说
属于上升趋势，中国佛教的发展同样也达到了一个
辉煌阶段，香积寺也正是在这个时期建造。唐永隆二
年（681），善导去世，其弟子怀恠为了缅怀先师，
选择在都城长安南面终南山下的神禾原为其建造了舍
利塔13级窣堵坡，并在塔旁构建了规模宏大的寺院，宗
利塔为香积寺。善导在舍利塔和香积寺不仅成为净土宗
的纪念性建筑，而且也是唐时名寺和净土信仰的历史
志“香积寺”的名称来源：“香积寺”的名称来源于佛
经《维摩诘经·香积佛品》，佛经中所说的“品”就
是我们现在所说的某一“章”或“篇”。香积佛是住
持众香世界的佛。以佛的名字来命名寺院的名字是佛
教中独特的方式。《维摩诘经》是印度佛教的哲学理
论著作，佛经翻译家、著名高僧鸠摩罗什（344~413，
说350~409）首译该经，共有三卷。该经译出后，对
后世影响巨大，尤其是经文中明确说明，居家之人的
必通过出家过僧人的修行生活也可以达到解脱，不理
论，对于在家人的影响更甚，使该经成为当时在家人
的必读佛经。经文中说：在古印度维摩诘居士以及成
离诸婆罗门长者，更兼诸王子及所统下属官员等成
千上万的人宣说佛法。大家向佛祖的弟子、弥勒、
萨、持世菩萨、光严童子、诸天的女说了维摩诘论
犀利和智慧第一的文殊菩萨对话，维摩诘室论佛法，
请的心中是达到解脱不一定非要过严格的出家修行
活，关键在于主观修养。所有的大众都的去聆听，包
八千位菩萨，五百声闻罗汉，成千上万的天人，维摩
诘立一个佛国世界，显示现在大家面前，这个世
众13级窣堵坡：“窣堵坡”是印度梵文的音译，意思
坟墓，佛教出现后用来称呼佛塔。香积寺的窣堵坡是
为供奉善导舍利所建造的。这座宏大的佛塔，高达一
13层，平面呈正方形，周回两百步，每层四面，各辟一
券门，塔内设置了木质楼梯，登塔仰望，日月星辰似
可伸手可及，即使是天帝和龙王的行踪，站在塔上
可能看到。观星测象、量日的科学活动也在这个塔
上进行。该塔为香积寺的标志，矗立千余年，直至今
日。现塔顶部虽然两层已毁，仅有11级，33米高的
度。香积寺塔每层塔身的四面，都隐约有地雕刻出倚
阑额和简单的斗拱等木构佛塔的一些因素，作为装饰
同时还在佛塔上方绘制出木构建筑某些特征，如门窗、
拱等，这种方生气的装饰方式，从唐代一直延续到宋
样以见到，如兴教寺的玄奘塔和华严寺的杜顺塔等。唐

香积寺从公元618年唐王朝建立，到唐玄宗开元二十九年即公元741年的初唐时期，唐代的国势总体来说属于上升趋势，中国佛教的发展同样也达到了一个辉煌阶段，香积寺也正是在这个时期建造。唐永隆二年（681），善导去世，其弟子怀恠为了缅怀先师，选择在都城长安南面终南山下的神禾原为其建造了舍利塔13级窣堵坡，并在塔旁构建了规模宏大的寺院，取名香积寺。善导在舍利塔和香积寺不仅成为净土宗的纪念性建筑，而且是唐时名寺和净土信仰的志，中国净土宗的一座最重要的祖庭。

“香积寺”的名称来源：“香积佛”的名称来源于佛经《维摩诘经·香积佛品》，佛经中所说的“品”就是我们现在所说的某一“章”或“篇”。香积佛是住持众香世界的佛。以佛的名字来命名寺院的名字是佛经中独特的方式。《维摩诘经》是印度佛教的著作，佛经翻译家、著名高僧鸠摩罗什（344~413，一说350~409）首译该经，共有三卷。该经译出后，对后世影响巨大，尤其是经文中明确说明，居家之人的修行生活也可以达到解脱的境界，对于在家人的影响更甚，使该经成为当时居住、离诸婆罗门长者，更兼诸王子以及所统下属官员等千上万的人宣说佛法。大家向佛祖的弟子、弥勒菩萨、持世菩萨、光严童子、诸天女说了维摩诘的智慧和第一的殊胜对话，维摩诘室论说佛法，问答的中心是达到解脱不一定非要过严格的出家修行，关键在于主观修养。所有的大众都的去聆听，八千位菩萨，五百声闻罗汉，成千上万的天人，立将世界，住持这个世界的是佛名叫香积佛。

13级窣堵坡：“窣堵坡”是梵文的音译，意思是坟墓，佛教出现后用来称呼佛塔。香积寺的窣堵坡是13层，平面呈正方形，周回两百步，每层四面，各辟一券门，塔内设置了木质楼梯，登塔仰望，日月星辰一似可能看到。观星测象、量日的科学活动也在这个塔上进行。该塔为香积寺的标志，矗立千余年，直到的现塔顶部虽然两层已毁，仅有11级，33米高的度。香积寺的塔每层塔身的四面都隐约有雕刻，倚柱阑额和简单的斗拱等木构佛塔装饰做了彩绘。彩绘画佛塔同时还在佛塔上方绘制出木构建筑某些特征，如门窗、佛拱等，这种方生气的装饰方式在保留至今的陕西其他一些佛塔上见到，如兴教寺的玄奘塔和华严寺的杜顺塔等。唐

典通土变经符院院变尤、保壁经，是
 经是净经，像寺寺土。像就北《经》
 的就或。时图在为净材变，就亭。这
 主这（容的制称代题经地中，寿台观。式。
 为，相内，象绘别唐现土一窟无及六定形。
 性前变的果形了分，表净窟45窟量楼六观。
 论面土典结加除，行画，表净窟45窟量楼六观。
 理家净经的更图上盛壁画莫敦煌《尊怨、十
 些大。土造成了变壁的的圣在敦。就是圣生
 这在图净造经墙想要的三仅。就三未的三
 将现相现而制些的思主方。铺。就三未的三
 制，呈变表现行这内土中西像。200余内西
 绘来或式的和忆石于石制，观200余内西
 行出图方的传播记在由和绘、土变相，画西
 进现变的佛传的制。院的像、净所绘相，画西
 经表经画于的们绘画寺图佛方净土变相，画西
 佛式的绘由经人多壁为变陀西绘净土变相，画西
 对方说以是佛合很窟成经弥的的部为净土变
 还的所是现为佛有石即土阿陀西绘净土变相，画西
 画们就出又更还或随净的唐时：中条幅《观无
 外图人）的图，画也是尊了唐时：中条幅《观无
 画用常变图变号，内壁画相其单存盛变两盛佛偶塑们象感的人象征在常以法轮表，在印的入世佛，了立王及印度影响，被印的左数佛，天牟天神，就

民间博是蒙扩单透。石宋形佛完形绣、集作的制像为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

奉阿弥佛的窟三尊、为善的渲人宝的以的代表药成就那即的。艺术就了且渗透。的仅的一把在特制像、石制像中雄宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

权。艺像有力而也形衣龙起人制像、石制像中雄宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

发展洲造具势，想的仅的一把在特制像、石制像中雄宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

民族发亚佛经窟思人不在，人的像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

数很金山铜己佛的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

少到旧鎏金的佛的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

许多得美的佛的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

于造于美（338）的佛的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

由教藏（338）的佛的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

时期，佛现。但此时出现佛像的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

国所现。但此时出现佛像的学中国，著系化，人部造像、质地、保存。佛宝殿高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

六佛教赵建。甚有。佛化中天作身。过像、塑像、脱胎像。石窟寺，另一个是严格的，规定像的高度为5.3米，坐像高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

晋佛造后代表。更也来像气将佛在化，经雕像、漆像、牙质等。石窟寺，另一个是严格的，规定像的高度为5.3米，坐像高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

魏信都一期的特像龕造代时，代表精出富，有雕像、漆像、牙质等。石窟寺，另一个是严格的，规定像的高度为5.3米，坐像高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

到都方的时造佛教时连佛清多更现丰像、牙质等。石窟寺，另一个是严格的，规定像的高度为5.3米，坐像高度为2.7米，坐像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

材治和物这古大尊到隋甚窟元象像满式像木中的高三尊。还有一尊像为1.3米左右。如果有某种特殊需要，允许将这一尺寸扩大或缩小。

观音菩萨造像：由于观音经典的影响，观音造像逐渐从西方三圣造像中独立，尤其是能够变幻不同的身相，救助危难的特性，受到人们的大力追捧，观了音独非经，不再仅仅是净土世界的一位菩萨，而是具备了丰富的神性，汉传佛教和藏传佛教中，观音造像都有两个不同的特征。一个是“观音”的特征，一个是“自在”的特征。观音的造像，在寺院建筑中，殿堂包含有供奉佛像的地方，是专供僧人日常起居、青砖瓦较较，是两僧布瓦小象的征。观音的造像，在寺院建筑中，殿堂包含有供奉佛像的地方，是专供僧人日常起居、青砖瓦较较，是两僧布瓦小象的征。观音的造像，在寺院建筑中，殿堂包含有供奉佛像的地方，是专供僧人日常起居、青砖瓦较较，是两僧布瓦小象的征。

List of mural paintings: sources and credits

- 3 Lotus
- 6 The carving stone of the Western Pure Land of Northern Dynasty unearthed at Wanfo Temple in Chengdu, Sichuan. Photograph by Wen Jun
- 8 The buddha statue in the Grottoes of Yungang
- 10 Buddha of Ming Dynasty, private collection
- 12 The Amitabha statue constructed by Liu Xuanyi at Longmen Grottoes. Image source: Institute of Longmen Grottoes: "Longmen Grottoes Carving Crafts Series - Buddha", plate 84, Relic Press, 1995.
- 14 Views of the Pure World on the side wall of the Leshan Giant Buddha statue, Tang Dynasty. Photograph by Wen Jun
- 16 The Buddha statue of ample gown and loose girdle at Longmen Grottoes.
- 18 Figure de sutra de l'Amitayous, Grotte n° 18 des Grottes de l'Anyue dans la montagne de Muyu
- 20 The Amitabha statue of Zhongshan Grottoes in Zichang, Shaanxi, Northern Song Dynasty.
- 22 The image of three honored ones coming to greet, including Amitabha and two Bodhisattvas. Image source: Buddha: The Spread of Buddhist Art in Asia P.157, NHK,1998. 13th Century
- 24 Guiding Bodhisattva of Dunhuang murals, Tang Dynasty. British Museum
- 26 The statue of Water Moon Avalokitesvara of No. 19 Avalokitesvara scripture cave of Pilu cave at Anyue Grottoes, Song Dynasty
- 28 The Nirvana diagram of Dazu Rock Carvings in Chongqing Photograph by Wen Jun

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- 32 Niche of View Sutra of Amitayus the grotto No. 245 in the late Tang to the mountain of North Dazu, Chongqing
- 34 The image of sacrificing live to feed tiger of Dunhuang frescoes, Tang Dynasty.
- 36 The image of Buddha in 1-2 Century in India. Photograph by Hou Xintian.
- 38 Stone made the statue of Maitreya Buddha sitting with crossed feet. Collected by Xi'an stele forest museum.
- 40 Cross legged Maitreya of Yungang Grottoes. Northern Wei. Photography by Liu Peng.
- 41-42 Buddhas on the north wall of Guangsheng Pilu Temple
- 43 Huiyuan's statue, Eastern Jin. Source: the website of Donglin Temple.
- 46 The earliest statue of the Three Saints of the West in China. Source: Figure 21 from Bingling Temple Grottoes in Yongjing in China.
- 48 Tanluan and his disciples. Source: The Buddhist legend, Page 87, original written by Shi Baocheng in Ming Dynasty, translated to contemporary article by Li Kehe in 2004, Yuelu Press.
- 50 The grotto exhibits stories in the View of Amitayus, No. 15 grotto at Anyue Grottoes. Tang Dynasty. Source: Liu Changjiu, April 1997, The Art of Anyue Grottoes, Page 51, Sichuan Renmin Press.
- 52 The Amitabha statue of Dafa Temple in Bin County, Shaanxi. Photograph by Yan Hong.
- 54 The Amitabha statue of Zhongshan Grottoes in Zichang, Shaanxi, Northern Song Dynasty. Photograph by Yan Hong.
- 56 The image of Shandao.
Photo Source: Yuan Zihui and Edited by Zhang Zanxi, 2006, The Imagines of Buddhist Art, Volume 2: 255. Zhejiang Ancient Books Publishing House.

58 A musician playing Pipa with her hands behind her back of grotto No.112, Dunhuang. Tang Dynasty. Image source: The Dunhuang dictionary, Ji Xianlin, 1998, Page: 30. Shanghai Dictionary Press.

60 Vairocana Buddha at Longmen Grottoes, Tang dynasty. Photograph by Yan Hong.

61-62 The scripture mural of Maitreya of grotto 148, Dunhuang. Source: Ji Xianlin, 1998, Dunhuang Dictionary, Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House

63 A figured stele of the Maitreya Pure Land and the Amitabha Pure Land. Tang Dynasty. Unearthed in Yanchang, Shaanxi province.

66 The pagoda of Xiangji temple in 21 Century. Photograph by Yan Hong.

68 Verdant Mountains in front of the Xiangji Temple. Photograph by Yan Hong.

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78 The image of Nirvana, Shanxi Provincial Museum of Art. Photography by Liu Peng.

80 A hemisphere stupa in ancient India. Sanchi, India. Photograph by Hou Xintian.

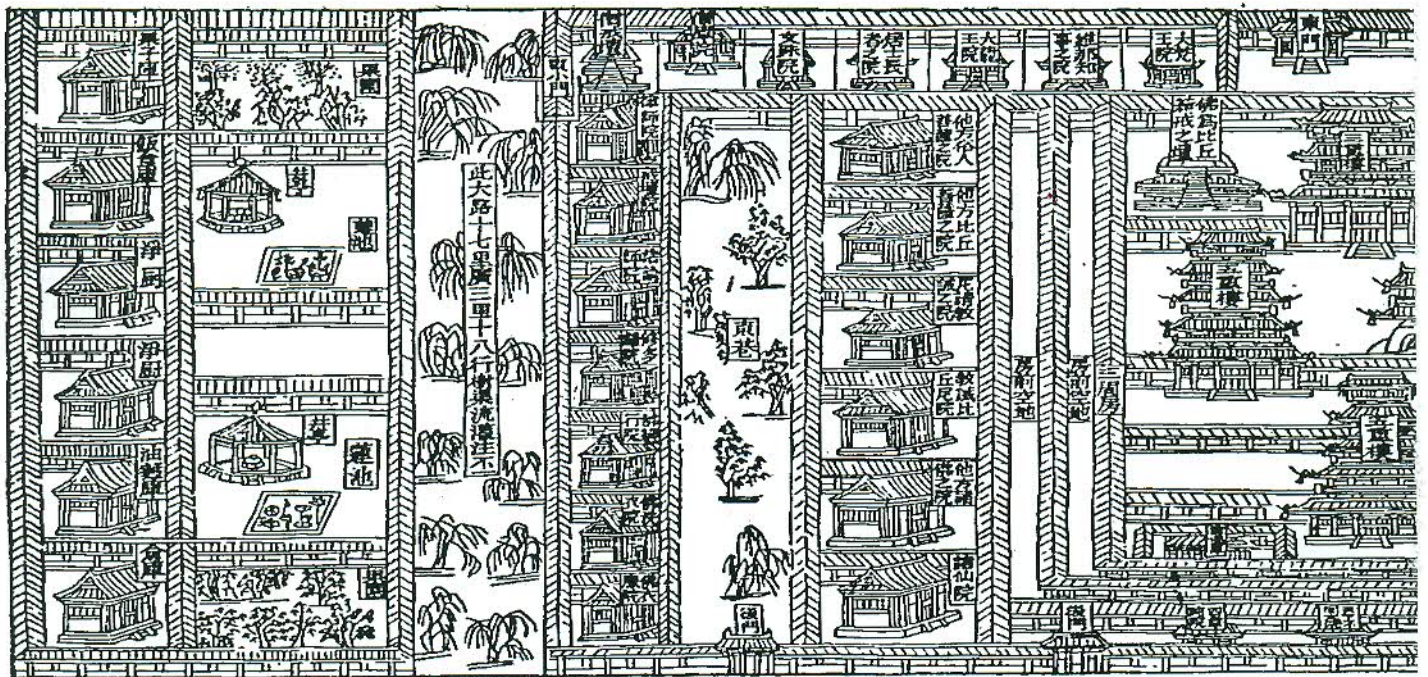
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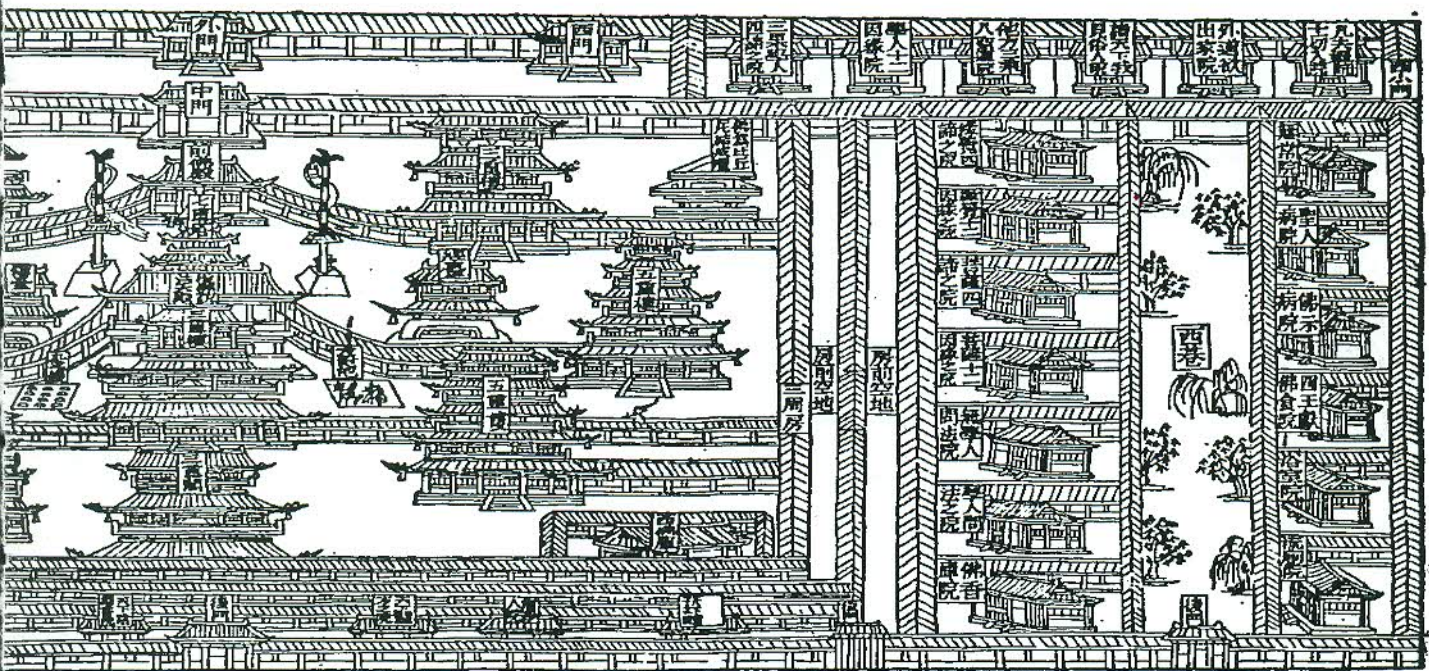
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The plan of the Tang temple according to the Tang painting Altar Sutra



唐代大诗人

白居易

(772~846)

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! ? ; . ; . ; , . ;

I, seventy-one years, no longer have to write poems.

Read sutra hurts my eyes, do something good
fatigue my body,
how to make easier the life?

When I talk, it is Amitabha,
when I walk, it is also Amitabha,
when I sit, it is still Amitabha,
even when I am very overwhelmed as an
arrow,

but I do not forget Amitabha.

The sun sets but the path is still far,
and is nearly at the end.

However my heart is still clear and pure
through prayer Amitabha.

People who know life laugh at me, Amitabha
is not all.

How we do if we know all or we do not
know all,

I suggest all buddhists and all the monks pray
together Buddha Amitabha!

-Bai Juyi (772-846) Great Tang poet



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