

Introduction

Traveling around the Buddhist sacred range of Mount Wutai 五臺山 in northern China in 2005 (fig. 0.1), I used as my guide a scaled-down photocopy of a map from a museum in Helsinki (see fig. 4.1).¹ The map, a hand-colored print from a woodblock panel carved in 1846 by a Mongol lama residing at Mount Wutai's Cifu Temple 慈福寺 (Benevolent Virtues Temple), is a panorama of some 150 sites in a mountain range filled with pilgrims, festivities, flora and fauna, and cloud-borne deities, accompanied by parallel inscriptions in Mongolian, Chinese, and Tibetan. The map led me not only to monasteries, villages, and other landmarks but also into lively conversations with groups of Tibetan monks traveling or residing on the mountain. Without fail, the monks' eyes lit up when they saw the map. Despite never having seen the image before, they expressed reverence, delight, and the resolve to scrutinize its every detail (fig. 0.2). It was clear they recognized in the map a kindred vision of the mountain as an important place for Tibetan Buddhism. Although this vision had been physically erased from the mountain itself after more than a century, the map pictorialized and materialized what the monks had learned through a rich textual and oral tradition that had attracted them to Mount Wutai in the first place. Interspersing every corner of the map are depictions of miracle tales, saintly biographies, and ritual festivities that appeared familiar to the monks. The overwhelming demand for the map, as a way to "remember" what was no longer readily discernable on the mountain, prompted me to return the following summer to bring additional photocopies to the Tibetan monks residing at Mount Wutai. Soon thereafter, new footpaths formed to several remote and forgotten sites depicted on the map.

DETAIL OF FIG. 0.6

The map from Helsinki was one among a rich trove of objects that were created by Inner Asians, including Manchus, Tibetans, Mongols, and Monguors,² during the Qing



FIG. 0.1. View from Central Terrace, Mount Wutai, Shanxi Province, China. Photograph by author, 2005.



FIG. 0.2. Monks from Amdo, Eastern Tibet, examining a map of Mount Wutai at the Shifang Hall, Mount Wutai. Photograph by author, 2005.

dynasty (1644–1912), when the millennium-old Buddhist sacred mountain of northern China was transformed into a vital center of Tibetan Buddhism. Owing much to this history, the site continues to be one of the only places in China proper to attract large numbers of Tibetan pilgrims today. This book recovers the dynamic history of Qing Mount Wutai through objects in multiple languages, genres, and media from this period. It examines the spatial, textual, and material means by which Inner Asian rulers and monks reimagined the age-old tradition of the sacred mountain cult on their own terms. Examples include sculptural and architectural imitations of Mount Wutai's iconic images and temples, translations of pilgrimage guidebooks, eulogistic portrayals of saintly figures, and panoramic mappings of the mountain. By examining these objects as instruments of devotion and as representations of identity and statecraft, I place them at the center of a pivotal but unacknowledged history of artistic and intellectual exchange between the different religious, linguistic, and cultural traditions of China and Inner Asia. *Mount Wutai* explores the many ways in which the objects reshaped the site's physical environment and conceptual landscape, mediated new formulations of Buddhist history and geography, and redefined Inner Asia's relations with China.

Mount Wutai literally means “the Five-Terraced Mountains.” Located in the present-day Xin Prefecture (Xinzhou 忻州) of Shanxi province (map 1), it comprises a cluster of hills at the northern end of the Taihang 太行 mountain range, between Datong 大同 and Taiyuan 太原. The Yamen 雁門 Pass of the Great Wall lies not far to its north, which traditionally demarcated China's northern frontier. A sprawling expanse rather than a single peak, it is nonetheless referred to as a “mountain” for the historically unitary concept of the site. This area centers around its namesake, the five terraces or plateaued summits, which are respectively referred to as the Northern, Eastern, Southern, Western, and Central Terraces. The exact precinct of Mount Wutai shifted over time, as did the designation of the five terraces.³ The broader region within and beyond the five terraces—referred to respectively as “inside” and “outside” the terraces (*tainei* 臺內 and *taiwai* 臺外)—covers an area of around 1,100 square miles. It is home to some of the most important monasteries and well-preserved timber architecture in China.⁴ The central area inside the terraces alone, an area of roughly 130 square miles, still houses over one hundred temples today.⁵

Geologically speaking, the flat tops of the terraces are physical features that demonstrate their age. Mount Wutai is one of the oldest lands to surface above water some 26 billion years ago, and possesses the highest altitude in northern China, with

the highest peak (Northern Terrace) reaching over three thousand meters.⁶ The elevated terraces, perennially cold and wind-swept, are aptly described by the mountain's more ancient name, Clear and Cool Mountains (Qingliang Shan 清凉山), which continues to be used as an alternative name for the site. Other earlier names, such as Purple Palace (Zifu 紫府), allude to Mount Wutai's pre-Buddhist past as a place for immortals and spirits.⁷ In Tibetan, Mount Wutai is referred to both as Riwo Tsenga (Ri bo rtse lnga, the Mountain of Five Peaks) and as Riwo Dangsil (Ri bo dwangs bsil, the Mountain of Clear and Cool). The Tibetan nomenclature suggests a slight shift in meaning, where the topographically descriptive "terrace" is replaced with the more conventional "peak," and where the "clear and cool" could also refer to the "pure and cool."



MAP 1. Qing China, circa 1820. Map by Chelsea Gross.

MAP DETAIL. Area around Beijing.



These subtle nuances are important, as Mount Wutai becomes conceptualized in Tibet as a “pure land” (Tibetan: *zhing mchog*), a paradise or celestial realm of a Buddhist deity. The Mongolian name is generally a transliteration of the Chinese (Utai Shan), although in official accounts it is called Serüün Tunggalag Agula—literally, Cold and Clear Mountain.⁸ Reference to Mount Wutai in Manchu is likewise a direct transliteration rather than translation. For sake of simplicity, I refer to the site as Mount Wutai unless the specific discussion requires a use of one of its other names.

Buddhist images and scriptures first arrived in China in the second and third centuries from India via the network of trade routes on the Eurasian continent known as the Silk Road. It may be as early as the fifth century that Mount Wutai was recognized as the earthly residence of the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, one of the most important deities of Mahāyāna Buddhism (“the Great Vehicle,” referring largely to the Buddhist traditions of East Asia and the Himalayas today) and a figure who is regarded as the embodiment of wisdom. From the sixth to the eighth centuries, accounts of visionary encounters with the deity at Mount Wutai, combined with scriptural authorities that prophesized Mañjuśrī’s presence there, legitimized the northern Chinese site as a new cultic center of Buddhism away from the religion’s origins in India.⁹ An element of this recentring is reflected in the name of the earliest and most prominent summit in the range. It was called the Numinous Vulture Peak (Chinese: Lingjiu Feng 靈鷲峰) after the India site of the same name (Sanskrit: *Ḡṛdhrakūṭa*) where the Buddha gave many sermons.¹⁰ In time, this eastward move became both spatial and temporal. Mañjuśrī was articulated as a successor to the Buddha Śākyamuni after the latter passes into nirvana,¹¹ and Mount Wutai the place in this world where the dharma continues to prevail.¹² No other deity had been so firmly associated with a single site by different groups of Buddhists all over Asia from such an early period onward, and been so continuously venerated up to the present day. Mañjuśrī was, as he still is today, believed to appear to worthy pilgrims in marvelous and unexpected ways. His manifestations were assiduously recounted in texts and pictures that serve to affirm the scriptures, the past encounters, and the potential for future ones.¹³ Pilgrims subsequently went to Mount Wutai precisely in the hopes of gaining their own direct experiences of Mañjuśrī.¹⁴ The mountain’s claim for sacrality, in other words, rests chiefly on its promise of revelatory encounters in the present and future, rather than on the possession of relics or other physical traces of the historical Buddha.¹⁵ By the early eighth century, Mount Wutai rose to prominence as a center for monastic learning, royal patronage, and Pan-Asian international pilgrimage. The mountain that was once promoted by local monks and rulers as a substitute for Buddhist India became itself a site to be substituted. Surrogate “Mount Wutais” in far-flung places, such as the monumental wall paintings in the desert oasis of Dunhuang and temple replicas in Japan, bear witness to the ambition to simulate, and even to supersede, the original.¹⁶

The first well-documented Inner Asian presence at Mount Wutai took place during the Yuan 元 dynasty (1279–1368), when Mongol emperors invited Buddhist ritual masters from Tibet to the mountain.¹⁷ The Mongol rulers were reenacting what numerous rulers of reigning dynasties in China have done by enlisting Mañjuśrī as the protector of their nation and by seeking to reinforce legitimacy for their reign through an alignment with bodhisattva’s earthly abode.¹⁸ But unlike the earlier rulers, their preference for Tibetan Buddhism led to the establishment of Tibetan monasteries, the appointment of official Tibetan monks to preside over religious affairs of the mountain, and



FIG. 0.3. View of Taihuai village with the Great White Stupa. Photograph by author, 2009.

the introduction of a new literary and visual culture to the mountain. The Sakyapa Lama Pakpa (Chos rgyal 'Phags pa; Chinese: Basiba 八思巴; 1235–1280), who was later appointed by Khubilai Khan (1215–1294, r. 1260–1294) as the Yuan imperial preceptor, spent three months on the mountain in 1257 en route to the imperial capital. His poetry of the mountain composed during his stay at Mount Wutai incorporated the mountain into the Tibetan Buddhist cosmography, astrology, and aesthetics.¹⁹ The Yuan imperial government ordered the construction of both Chinese and Tibetan monasteries, including the Great White Stupa by the Nepalese artist Anige 阿尼哥 (1245–1306).²⁰ Its striking new Himalayan architectural form proclaims a distinct Mongol Yuan imperial authority. Towering over the entire Taihuai 臺懷 valley town between the five terraces, it remains the most iconic monument of the mountain today (fig. 0.3; and see appendix A, no. 57). The ensuing centuries witnessed a steady increase of Inner Asians on the mountain. But up until the seventeenth century, there was little exchange between the Tibetan and the Chinese canonical discourses of the mountain. The Mount Wutai that existed in Tibetan art and literature up until this time emphasized instead a primordial vision of the mountain, a vision preserved well into the later period. Examples can be found on the illuminated manuscripts of the *White Beryl*, a Tibetan astrological text authored by Regent Sanggyé Gyatso (1653–1705), and in the wall paintings of the Samye Monastery (figs. 0.4 and 0.5).²¹ Five symmetrically configured peaks, each topped with a manifestation of Mañjuśrī, preside over an enchanted Buddhist paradise filled with blossoming trees, frolicking animals, and gushing waterfalls impervious to temporal transformation.

It was only during the Qing dynasty that the practice of writing and pictorializing the mountain became a full-fledged multilingual and multimedia endeavor.²² For the first time, Inner Asians were authoring the mountain's canonical history and imagining Mañjuśrī's presence from their own vantage points while engaging with the history and historiography of the mountain. The instigators were the Qing Manchu emperors²³—having come to rule China from outside the Great Wall in northeast Asia, they fashioned themselves in the role of *cakravartin* (literally, wheel-turning king, referring to an Indian ideal of a universal and enlightened ruler who turns the wheels of law, whose reign brings peace and justice) and emanation of Mañjuśrī, a double assumption of religious kingship famously pictorialized in *thangka* paintings (Tibetan-style hanging scrolls) featuring the Qianlong 乾隆 emperor (1711–1799, r. 1736–1795) as the wheel-turning bodhisattva emperor emanating out of his mountain abode (figs. 0.6 and 0.7).²⁴ The Qing promoted the cult of Mount Wutai especially through



FIG. 0.4. Mount Wutai in the Illustrated White Beryl Elemental Divination Manuscript, Central Tibet, mid-18th century. Pigment on cloth. Rubin Museum of Art, New York. C2015.7.4-6.

their sponsorship of Gelukpa institutions of the Dalai Lamas. The Shunzhi 順治 emperor (1638–1661, r. 1644–1661) established monasteries in the Gelukpa tradition at each of the important locations on the mountain and installed monks from Tibet and Mongolia in them.²⁵ He also created the official appointment of Gelukpa “*jasagh* lamas” to preside over all (Chinese and Tibetan) Buddhist affairs at Mount Wutai, an administrative post that eventually became appointed directly by the Dalai Lamas from a pool of Gelukpa lamas trained in Central Tibet.²⁶ Other important lamas, most notably the Mongour reincarnate lama Changkya Rölpe Dorjé (Lcang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1717–1786;



FIG. 0.5. Mural of Mount Wutai, east-facing side of the outermost corridor, first floor of the main assembly hall, Samye Monastery, Central Tibet. Photograph by author, 2007.

FIG. 0.6. (overleaf left) The Mañjuḥṣa Emperor, 18th century. Thangka. Ink and colors on silk. 111 × 64.7 cm. Formerly in the Trashi Lhünpo at Chengde. Palace Museum, Beijing.

FIG. 0.7. (overleaf right) The Mañjuḥṣa Emperor, 18th century. Thangka. Ink and colors on silk. 113.5 × 64 cm. The Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Purchased by anonymous donor and with Museum funds, F2000.4.

hereafter, Rölpe Dorjé), who was the religious teacher and advisor of Qianlong, regularly retreated to Mount Wutai. Their presence attracted large followings. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sheer number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and pilgrims from Tibet, Mongolia, as well as China proper had transformed the mountain into, in the words of the Jiaqing 嘉慶 emperor (1760–1820, r. 1796–1820), “China’s Tibet” (Chinese: *Zhonghua weizang* 中華衛藏; literally, China’s Ü-tsang).²⁷ This liminality was further reflected in the taxation status of the land itself. The Gelukpa monasteries of Mount Wutai, which owned the entire Taihai valley and more, were considered by Qing regulations to be an extension of Tibet and Mongolia in Shanxi province.²⁸ As Mount Wutai became a vibrant center of economic trade and religious devotion for Manchus, Tibetans, and Mongols above all,²⁹ it subsequently enjoyed its distinction in the expanding Qing empire as the only shared place of devotion among Chinese and Inner Asian Buddhists that was not monopolized by imperial patronage or that of any other group.³⁰ Within China proper, Mount Wutai became well known, starting in the fifteenth century, as one of the four famous mountains (*sida mingshan* 四大名山), a quadriad of sacred sites each associated with a chief bodhisattva.³¹ None of the other three mountains, however, had been the site of prominent Tibetan Buddhist establishments.³²

For the new influx of Inner Asians on Mount Wutai, who otherwise shared little affinity for Chinese language and history, the promise of encountering Mañjuśrī on the mountain, which had been largely sustained by accounts of past encounters in canonical Chinese writings and images, required a linguistic and cultural translation. The desire for unmediated access to Mañjuśrī led both the Manchu emperors and Inner Asian monks to reimagine the mountain in their languages and through the lenses of their own traditions. Their efforts—in the very different media of temples, icons, guidebooks, poetry, painting, and maps—also included collaborations with court officials, translators, artists, merchants, and lay pilgrims. Each attempt represents an interest in bridging the divide between the history and geography of the site and its Inner Asian imagination.

The promise of a sound linguistic translation—at once preserving the truthfulness of the original language and rendering it intelligible to its intended audience in another language—however impossible to achieve, encapsulates in a metaphoric sense the Qing Inner Asian engagement with Mount Wutai. The case studies in the pages to follow treat the objects of translations as active agents of the process by which Inner Asians and their collaborators came to terms with and reinvented Mount Wutai; they speak of how the mountain was perceived by their makers and users, and how that





perception was continuously asserted within different spheres. To be sure, the desire for scriptural, visual, and spatial translations underpins the history of Mount Wutai from the inception of its fame. Similarly, the closely related linguistic and material translations underlay almost every aspect of the Qing imperial self-fashioning, both within the Buddhist context and beyond it to the empire's expanding global reach.³³ Situated within these two larger histories, the Qing-period translation of Mount Wutai is in every way intensified by the overlapping interest in the process.

Employing the concept of translation as a unifying lens through which to view the plethora of materials does not however unify the visions themselves. I show instead that the process of translation gave rise to a permeable conception of the mountain. When examined in relation to one another, the various objects exhibit a shared capacity to acknowledge histories and outlooks of the mountain other than the perspective expressed by the given object itself. In contrast to holy sites such as Jerusalem, which are defined by contested ownership of history and competitive claims of certain truths over others, Qing Mount Wutai presents a case of diverse yet mutually inclusive views. The concept of truth, in other words, appears to be broad and expansive. These objects were created within a religiopolitical pilgrimage cult for the purpose of proclaiming an authentic vision of the mountain, yet they maintain an openness to alternative vistas. Whether they recount the miraculous tales of medieval Chan (Zen) meditation masters at Mount Wutai or map a lineage of Indo-Tibetan deities onto the mountain landscape, for example, these objects portray a holy mountain whose efficacy is strengthened by the coexistence of multiple ways of seeing the mountain.³⁴

Even though the long history of Mount Wutai is, like any other important religious site, rife with contested power dynamics, the fact that its fame from the beginning of its history is defined by divergent apparitions of a deity in unexpected forms lends a sense of openness to diverse perceptions of the mountain. The idea that Mañjuśrī can appear in any form on the mountain to guide sentient beings accords with the Pan-Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of skillful means (*upāya*), which argues that Buddhist teachings can be delivered by whatever means necessary, depending on the capacity of the hearer. The flexible expectation of Mañjuśrī's appearance was subsequently amplified in the Inner Asian appropriation of a mountain. The Qing imperial projection of Buddhist kingship, the introduction of Tibetan tantric Buddhism's vast iconographic pantheon of deity manifestations, its mandalic cosmologies of the sacred mountain as an abode for an assembly of deities, and an ontology that emphasizes the interconnection between place and being, as well as the mutual indistinguishability between deities and persons, teachers and disciples, all contributed to an inclusive mapping of deities, emanations, and past encounters with Mañjuśrī from Indo-Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, and Chinese Buddhist traditions. In guidebooks, praise poems, and hagiographies by Inner Asian authors, the varied manifestations of Mañjuśrī were explicated as the "literal interpretations" (*drang don*) under the doxographical scheme that a scriptural work can have two meanings, literal and definitive (*nges don*). What is implicit is the two-truths doctrine—the understanding of reality as having an ultimate truth (only to be perceived by the enlightened) and a corresponding ordinary one (as experienced by the unenlightened according to the person's capacity). The bilevel understanding of meaning and reality was mobilized by the Qing Qianlong emperor in his replicas of the mountain, reformulated through the Tibetan-language translation of a Chinese gazetteer, visualized in the portrayal of figures who were considered Mañjuśrī's worldly

incarnations, and propagated through widely disseminated pilgrimage maps. Through these different media of translation, the landscape of Mount Wutai came to subsume all beings, places, emanations, and encounters with Mañjuśrī. The objects of translation examined in this book mediate this all-encompassing conception of the mountain as a place for the manifold manifestations of Mañjuśrī.

This book grew out of an attempt to grapple with the slippery yet expansive notion of a sacred site at an important juncture of cultural and religious transformation. There has been a surge of publications dedicated to Mount Wutai in the last few years, with the majority of them focusing on the first millennium of its Buddhist activities.³⁵ Whether they trace the developments of the site itself, or its cult and copies across Asia, they largely view Mount Wutai, the original one anyway, as a paradigmatic Chinese mountain vis-à-vis Buddhist India, a site whose cult “Buddhicized” China as it “Sinicized” Buddhism.³⁶ However, Mount Wutai’s location near the northern frontier of China proper meant it had existed for much of its history as a culturally and linguistically diverse site. By all available accounts, it was under the patronage of the non-Han Chinese rulers of the Northern Wei (386–534) that the mountain first became a Buddhist site.³⁷ Under the sponsorship of many non-Han rulers of the Five Dynasties (907–960), Tangut Xixia 西夏 (1038–1227), Khitan Liao 遼 (907–1125), Jurchen Jin 金 (1115–1234), and Mongol Yuan 元 (1279–1368), Mount Wutai’s monasteries had continued to thrive even throughout periods of war and unrest.³⁸ It is beyond the scope of this book to adequately account for the complexities of the preceding centuries. Nonetheless, by exploring the Inner Asian engagement with Mount Wutai in the Qing, my work aims to provide an alternative, decentered perspective of the mountain that can also create new paths of inquiry for Mount Wutai’s earlier history.

Most indispensable to my study is Isabelle Charleux’s recent monograph, which reconstructs the on-the-ground experience of Mongol pilgrims from every walk of life—the social, economic, and religious motivations for their journeys and what they did and saw on their travels. Through scrupulous mining of wide-ranging sources, most notably her comprehensive field survey of donative stele inscriptions, Charleux revives a significant but hitherto little-known popular culture of pilgrimage and trade. It is this larger context that I draw from in my study of the production and circulation of individual objects. Unlike the approach taken by Charleux with regard to Mongols on Mount Wutai, my work does not attempt to explicate every experience of Inner Asian pilgrims at Mount Wutai, nor survey the long history of Tibetan Buddhism at Mount Wutai. Instead, I have chosen to focus on objects (and communities who made them) that bridged the divide between the site’s layered history and geography on the one hand, and its early modern Inner Asian Buddhist imagination on the other. Each act of reimagining the mountain represents an original synthesis of the two. As a result, my study considers the histories and historiographies of the preceding centuries through the lens of the Qing Inner Asian engagement, the same lens that also refracts the creativity of Qing imperial self-fashioning, the popular cult of miraculous images in the eighteenth century, the dexterity of Qing Gelukpa scholasticism, the temporal and spatial expansiveness of Tibetan Buddhist hagiography, and the pictorial density of nineteenth-century cartography.

My study is equally indebted to a conference on Qing Mount Wutai organized by Gray Tuttle and Johan Elverskog and held at the Rubin Museum of Art in 2007.³⁹ As many conference participants have demonstrated, the case of Qing Mount Wutai

challenges any easy definition of “Chinese” or “Tibetan” Buddhism in extant discourse of Qing history.⁴⁰ The Qing imperial promotion of Mount Wutai transcends the binary narratives of political instrumentation and religious aspiration, as well as static notions of any other ethnic and religious identity. This book begins with a response to this thread of inquiry by showing that the chief interest of the Manchu emperors, especially Qianlong, was to derive and formulate a tradition of imperial Buddhism through association with (and proximity to) Mount Wutai vis-à-vis his multicultural subjects. I argue that Qianlong’s appropriation of a millennium-old vision cult from diverse sources and traditions perfected, from the point of view of the emperor, a universal Manchu imperial mountain. In the context of the Qing court’s multifaceted and versatile employment of histories and traditions,⁴¹ Mount Wutai proved to be a site of enormous potential for the Qing reenactment of universal kingship. Yet the imperial vision had no monopoly on the mountain. My second claim is that the Qing rulers were not the sole agents of cultural and religious transformation in Mount Wutai and Inner Asia, as has been the tacit assumption behind many recent works that emphasize the technologies and taxonomies of Manchu statecraft.⁴² On the one hand, Mount Wutai served as an ideal ground for the manifestation of Buddhist kingship by the Manchu rulers; on the other hand, it was equally ideal as a site where the Buddhist Tibetans and Mongols could reinvent their own religious genealogies vis-à-vis the empire. This book demonstrates that the Inner Asian remaking of Mount Wutai was an ongoing, fluid, and collaborative process that involved the intersection of many narratives and visions.

A cross-cultural study of Mount Wutai makes transparent that every notion, beginning with that of the sacred mountain, is contextual and dynamic. That the language of discourse—in this case, English—is also a translation, engages it in yet another kind of cross-cultural conversation. Ever since Émile Durkheim postulated a universal definition of the sacred (or the religious) as a collective transcendence of everyday life,⁴³ and Mircea Eliade subsequently formulated a definition of the sacred mountain as a manifestation of the sacred in the ordinary,⁴⁴ much work has been done to dissolve or problematize the dichotomous definition of the sacred vis-à-vis the profane,⁴⁵ and to reveal instead “pluralistic” and “many-faceted” understandings of sacred sites.⁴⁶ Especially useful have been localized definitions of pilgrimage and sacred geography through native narratives and terminologies in Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese contexts. In them, the sacred mountain is perceived as a container for something powerful. It is also microcosmically and macrocosmically contingent on a network of other sites with correspondences to political geography.⁴⁷ I come to the ongoing discussion about the nature of sacred mountains through an abundance of noncanonical sources in multiple media and genres from late imperial China. Beyond textual and ethnographic sources, this book shows that built-environment, sculptural, and visual objects reveal changing conceptions of the mountain through a material and formal language of their own. My approach is to interpret and analyze their diverse languages as particular instances and manifestations of the mountain; it is to study these objects’ varied spatial, visual, and verbal strategies as articulations of the cosmopolitan nature of this discourse. I have chosen materials that exemplify the creativity of transcultural engagements that were contingent upon a shared devotion to Mañjuśrī by Chinese and Inner Asian Buddhists, and that were therefore possible only at Mount Wutai.

As a site-based study, this book participates in a growing interdisciplinary discussion about the multidimensional significance of space(s) and place(s).⁴⁸ Place, whether it

is of a mountain or a city, is understood to encompass multiple temporalities and spatialities. It constitutes, as Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie put it, “sites of presence, futurity, imagination, power, and knowing.”⁴⁹ My exploration of the multiple conceptions of Mount Wutai as well as the interdependence between place and person exemplifies this fluid understanding of place. Similarly, notions of the revelatory and the miraculous, and of the extraordinary vis-à-vis the ordinary, vary from one cultural context to another and from one medium or genre to another. By focusing on objects that embody the transitions and expansions of meaning of the preceding concepts, I view the sacred mountain as a dynamic and interactive process in the making, rather than as something that is static, concrete, or absolute.⁵⁰ Centered on the notions and mechanisms of replication, literary translation, lineage, revelatory visions, and divine kingship, my study offers a new and accessible framework for the understanding of Buddhist sacred geography.

Qing Mount Wutai is likely not the only site that can be characterized by an open notion of space. It provides instead a model for thinking about the spatialized instantiation of an inclusive idea of truth that can also be found elsewhere. Various modes of cumulative or inclusive practice proposed by scholars of East and South Asia have helped me formulate a model of plurality. Outside the Buddhist context, Prasenjit Duará’s definition of “superscription” to refer to the appropriation, rather than erasure, of symbolic meaning by one group over another,⁵¹ modified by Paul Katz as “cogeneration” and “reverberation,”⁵² is one useful way to understand the fortifying nature of the layering of experiences and subjectivities. Sheldon Pollock’s use of the term “Sanskrit cosmopolis” to characterize the cohesiveness of a vast cultural domain provides yet another model for understanding the ways in which different groups from Tibet, Mongolia, and China proper related to a Pan-Gelukpa Buddhist narrative.⁵³ Within Buddhist traditions, the premodern Japanese concept of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (literally, “original ground and manifest traces”), in which native gods were identified as emanations of nonnative Buddhist ones, and vice versa, provides a well-articulated model for the incorporation of indigenous deities and practices into a new tradition, and indeed for the shifting form of appearance that is fundamental to the Buddhist perception of the world.⁵⁴ Like the preceding concepts that emphasize the accretive and fluid nature of meaning, plural visions of the mountain remain just as they are—diverse, varied, and open. In China, Chün-fang Yü has reflected on the ecumenical notion of emanations of deities as an indication of their skillful means, particularly with respect to the different local manifestations of the bodhisattva Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara).⁵⁵ In the case of Mañjuśrī at Mount Wutai, this flexible notion of emanation not only defines the conception of the Buddhist deity itself but also enhances the perceived authenticity of the deity’s residential abode on the mountain for its multilingual and multicultural pilgrims from Inner Asia. I argue that this spatialized, site-specific understanding of emanations thrived as a result of a new wave of Inner Asian tantric Buddhist translation of the mountain, in which all deities, emanations, and past encounters with Mañjuśrī were collectively present.

The inclusiveness of multiple perspectives is both a historical reality and the most useful paradigm to use to access this history. The organization of this book reflects the plurality that underlies the very way the space of Mount Wutai was understood. Beginning with a consideration of the Qing courtly vision of Mount Wutai that instigated the Inner Asian transformation, chapter 1 examines the construction of three monasteries in and around Beijing during the eighteenth century. Commissioned by the Qianlong emperor, the monasteries were designed as “copies” of famous temples and miraculous icons

from Mount Wutai. The creative process of replication, or spatial translation, serves as a prism through which to see how Qianlong conceived of, mobilized, and re-created the mountain and its history of apparitions, and to what ends. Probing archival, visual, architectural, sculptural, epigraphic, travel, and cartographic evidence surrounding the making of these monasteries, I show that the design of these replicas in effect staged an apparition of Mañjuśrī in the emperor himself. Through the Indo-Tibetan tantric ritual language of transformation, Qianlong embodied the most highly celebrated apparition of Mañjuśrī at Mount Wutai—a miraculous icon of the deity that had followers throughout Inner and East Asia. The building of the three monasteries illustrates the gradual translation and transformation of Mount Wutai into a field of enlightened activities for the Qianlong emperor himself as Mañjuśrī, and an increasingly defined imperial Buddhist identity based on this understanding. This identity, realized through ritual, architectural, iconic, and conceptual translations of Mount Wutai, at once asserts the importance of the Qing empire within the larger Buddhist cosmology and reinforces the universal, all-encompassing nature of Qing Buddhist kingship.

Qing imperial tours of Mount Wutai ended with Qianlong's son the Jiaqing emperor in the early nineteenth century. With the waning of imperial support, monasteries of Mount Wutai found donors elsewhere. As wealth poured in from Inner Asia, especially Mongolia, Mount Wutai emerged as a thriving pilgrimage center for an unprecedentedly large number of Mongols, Monguors, Tibetans, Manchus, and Han Chinese, as well as foreign visitors from all sectors of society, fueling a large trade network linking Mongolia, Amdo (northeastern Tibet), Central Tibet, China proper, and Europe during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Chapter 2 addresses the flourishing of multilingual guidebooks during this period by examining the most authoritative Tibetan guidebook to Mount Wutai generated after the waning of imperial support at the end of the eighteenth century. Written by monk-scholars of the Tibetan Gelukpa sect residing on Mount Wutai and issued bilingually in Tibetan and Mongolian, the text is, as I have discovered, an adaptation of a Chinese mountain gazetteer (a literary subgenre that chronicles a locale) into a Tibetan pilgrimage guidebook. It demonstrates a great urgency to access, interpret, and transmit Mount Wutai's Chinese-language history to a Tibetan- and Mongolian-reading audience. I trace both the unwitting and the deliberate transformations of the content, genre, and style of the Chinese source in the process of translation. This chapter asserts that past encounters with Mañjuśrī, whether by a Chan Buddhist master or an early Daoist deity, came to constitute an integral part of the Inner Asian understanding of the mountain. The result is a bridging of two textual traditions of Buddhist history and geography. The translation of terminologies reveals the instability of every category, beginning with the very notion of Mañjuśrī's apparitions. By mapping the changing conceptions of the miraculous and the extraordinary, this chapter is as much about the expansion of Mount Wutai's sacred geography as it is about the forging of new meanings and ideas in the process of translation.

Saintly biography plays a central role in mediating conceptions of Mount Wutai. Chapter 3 explores visual and textual portrayals of the life and previous lives of the Beijing-based reincarnate lama Rölpe Dorjé, who spent virtually every summer of the last four decades of his life in retreat at Mount Wutai. Rölpe Dorjé was the most important religious master of the Qing empire. As the Buddhist teacher and advisor to Qianlong on liturgical and political affairs of Inner Asia, he served as the main ritual consultant in the building of the monasteries explored in chapter 1; as a polymath and

court translator par excellence whose tenure at Mount Wutai attracted a network of monk-pilgrims to the site, Rölpe Dorjé was also the initial author of the guidebook examined in chapter 2. The materials I examine in chapter 3 include both eulogistic depictions of his former incarnations as Indian and Tibetan scholars and narratives of events during his own lifetime. Significantly, they are interlinked with similar representations of the Qianlong emperor (as the thirteenth incarnation of Mañjuśrī) and the Sixth Pañchen Lama Lozang Pelden Yeshé (Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes, 1738–1780), the Gelukpa hierarch who visited Beijing in 1780 with Rölpe Dorjé as a chief liaison.⁵⁶ In all of them, Mount Wutai is rendered as a foundation or support for a host of Indo-Tibetan protector deities as well as for reincarnation and transmission lineages stretching back to India via Tibet and Mongolia. It is at once a receptacle for the assembly of deities and a Buddhist paradise existing in contingent relations to other spaces. This paradoxically site- and person-specific, yet universal, quality of Mount Wutai anchored the simultaneity and interchangeability of the pantheon of figures, as well as the potential for a continuous expansion of a network of past, present, and future lives.

The concept of Mount Wutai as an open and expansive space is nowhere more clearly materialized than in the creation and dissemination of its pilgrimage maps. Chapter 4 focuses on two multilingual map images (see fig. 4.9 and figs. 4.1 through 4.5) of Mount Wutai: a late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century mural in the Inner Mongolia monastery of Badgar Choiling Süme, and the 1846 woodblock panel carved at Mount Wutai's Cifu Temple. The first map still survives intact in its location in the monastery. The second map—thirty printed impressions and later imitations that I have been able to recover from various collections—was widely printed, hand-colored, and then gifted or sold around the world. Both maps are layered images that encapsulate, on a single pictorial surface, the diverse visions and understandings of Mount Wutai. My analyses reveal that whereas the mural represents a constellation and a distillation of multiple visual worlds of early modern Mongolia, the woodblock panel (in its popular dissemination through printing, individuation through coloring, replication through tracing, and copying in other media) embodies the composite and collective nature by which “multiple mountains” continue to be generated. Through the study of these two maps, I also show that, embedded in every interpretation of the mountain, including those explored in earlier chapters, there is a dialogic tension between the ahistorical and the historical, the local and the imperial, the textual and the visual, the soteriological (as in the practice of the Buddhist path) and the political.

This book is principally concerned with Mount Wutai as a site and a source for a thriving literary, visual, and material culture of translation in the Qing. I show that, far from serving solely as a place for the derivation of political power or economic opportunity, Mount Wutai provided Qing Inner Asians a space to reinvent their own history and identity vis-à-vis the empire. Yet this promise does not end with the fall of the Qing geopolitical structure. Since the mid-1980s, Mount Wutai has once again emerged as an important site of Tibetan Buddhism in eastern China in the wake of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In spite of the very different political and religious realities, the mountain is once again at the center of cross-cultural and religious imagination. A pilgrimage to Mount Wutai in 1987 led by Khenpo Jikmé Püntsock (Jigs med phun tshogs, 1933–2004), one of the most influential Buddhist teachers of the second half of the twentieth century in Tibet, is a case in point. I end with a consideration of this pilgrimage to demonstrate the revisionist potentials of Mount Wutai.



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