THE ETERNALLY FLOURISHING STRONGHOLD:
AN ICONOGRAPHIC STUDY
OF THE BUDDHIST SCULPTURE
OF THE FOWAN AND RELATED SITES AT
BEISHAN, DAZU CA. 892-1155

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
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By

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ABSTRACT

The religious sculpture of Sichuan has become increasingly recognized as an important resource for the study of the development of Buddhist sculpture in China. One of the most important centers of Buddhist sculpture in Sichuan is the area of Dazu 大足 County where there are dozens of cliff sculpture sites. This dissertation focuses on the sculpture of Beishan 北山 (North Hill), which is one of the two primary sites with Buddhist sculpture in Dazu and the site with the longest chronology in the local area. The principal location for cliff sculpture at Beishan is an approximately quarter mile long sandstone cliff near the summit of Beishan, which is known as the Fowan 佛湾 (Buddha Cove). The cliff sculpture at this site consists of some two-hundred seventy odd image niches and small excavated caves that were carved over a period of roughly two-hundred sixty years from the late ninth to mid twelfth centuries.

In this dissertation an attempt is made to provide an iconographical analysis of the Buddhist imagery found at the Fowan site and to show their significance within the developments in Chinese Buddhist art and the Buddhist art of the region, as well as to reveal something of the local society and Buddhist practices that underpinned the sponsorship of this imagery.
The most significant iconographic subject matter that occurs at the Fowan site is discussed under the broad categories of Esoteric and Pure Land Buddhism. These include many conventionalized Buddhist iconographies from the Tang and Song Dynasties, but also feature a number of unique iconographic variations. Accordingly, the iconography of the imagery at the site is presented in light of scriptural sources, historical documents, and related imagery elsewhere, particularly within the region. The general history and chronology of the site is discussed in relation to the historical setting of the Sichuan Basin and its broader cultural environment. Description and interpretive accounts of each niche/cave, as well as transcriptions and translations of a significant portion of the relevant epigraphy found at the site are also provided.
Dedicated to Guey-meei
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“The road to Shu is more difficult than ascending to heaven.” Just as this famous line written by the poet Li Bo (701-762) describes the difficult journey over the Daba mountains into Sichuan, the writing of this dissertation has been a long journey, which at times seemed insurmountable except for the kind assistance of a number of individuals who directly or indirectly contributed to its completion. At Ohio State, I was fortunate to have studied with a number of exceptional scholars and teachers. In particular, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my primary advisor Professor John C. Huntington for his guidance, encouragement, and help throughout the various stages of my research. His knowledge and understanding of Buddhist art in its many manifestations have greatly contributed to my scholarship. My gratitude also goes to Professor Susan L. Huntington and Professor Julia F. Andrews for their encouragement, support, and suggestions. I have also learned a great deal from my colleagues in the Asian art history program at Ohio State and benefited from their enthusiasm and good cheer.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The research topic and purpose of the study

The study of Chinese Buddhist art subsequent to the Buddhist repression in the Huichang 会昌 era (CE 841-846) of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and the Mongol conquest of the Southern Song in 1279 has been, until quite recently, a largely neglected area of study.¹ An apparent scarcity of surviving Buddhist material culture from the period and a general perception that Buddhism in China after the destruction of the Anlushan 安禄山 rebellion (CE 755-763) was a decaying religious institution void of philosophical vigor with inconsequential cultural value to Chinese society as a whole have combined to curb interest in this area of study. Further, the evident tendencies toward popularization and syncretism in Buddhist

¹ In modern scholarship, the short lived Buddhist suppression of the Huichang era under emperor Wuzong 武宗 (r. 841-46) has traditionally been seen as the watermark for Buddhism and Buddhist art in China, which delivered a "fatal blow from which they never fully recovered"; see H.A. Van Oort, The Iconography of Chinese Buddhism in Traditional China, vol. 1, Iconography of Religions XII, 5, I (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986), 17. The forces behind this suppression, largely economic, are described by Kenneth Ch’en, "The Economic Background of the Hui-ch’ang Persecution," Harvard Journal of Asian Studies 19 (1956): 67-105. More recent scholarship has begun to question the extent of the damage to Buddhist institutions outside the Tang capital, since the Tang state at that time was largely under the control of military commanders, some of whom supported Buddhism and ignored implementation of the anti-Buddhist edicts; see Stanley Weinstein, Buddhism under the Tang (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 133.
religious practice of the period have been primarily viewed as evidence of the
inferiority of Buddhism to its past rather than as indicators of its vitality.²
More recent scholarship in art history and in the cognate fields of social
history and religious studies have begun to overturn this negative perception
of Buddhism in China after the Tang by showing that it was still a cultural
force within Chinese society and that its intellectual and artistic products
need not always be cast in the after glow of the achievements of the Tang
Dynasty.³ The emerging picture of the period, however, is still somewhat
myopic in its emphasis on the elite society of the political centers, and more
substantive questions about the period, beyond a mere elevation of the status
of Chinese Buddhist culture, need to be addressed. This thesis that discusses
the iconography of Buddhist imagery at an important but lesser known cliff
²Notions about the decline of Chinese Buddhism in scholarship and alternative perspectives
on the development of Chinese religion and Buddhist art are found in Marsha Weidner’s
introduction to the exhibition catalog of the Latter Days of the Law. See Marsha Weidner
ed., Latter Days of the Law (Lawrence Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, University of
Kansas, 1994), 37-47.
³A recent important study of Buddhism during the Song Dynasty was published in 1999;
see Peter Gregory and Daniel A. Getz Jr., eds., Buddhism in the Sung (Honolulu: University
of Hawaii Press, 1999). One of the editors of that book, Peter Gregory, argues in the
introduction to reclaim the period of the Song Dynasty as the "golden age" of Chinese
Buddhism. Reevaluation of the Buddhist art of the period was first brought up by Laurence
Sickman in the mid 1950s, albeit with some reservations; see Laurence Sickman and
Alexander Soper, The Art and Architecture of China, 3rd ed. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex
the Law (1994), edited by Marsha Weidner, has done much to bring greater awareness to
post Tang Buddhist art in China. However, besides the work of Angela F. Howard cited
later in this paper, most of the important work on the Buddhist art of the post-Tang period
of Dynastic China has been more focused on the periods subsequent to the Song and the art
of non-Han Chinese peoples, such as Marilyn Leidig Gridley’s reevaluation of the art of the
Jin and Liao in northern China; see Marilyn Leidig Gridley Chinese Buddhist Sculpture
under the Liao: Free Standing Works In Situ and Selected Examples from Public Collections
(Ph.D. Diss., University of Kansas, 1985). The only comprehensive study of the Buddhist
art of the Five Dynasties period is Songeun Choe’s Buddhist Sculpture of Wu Yueh, 907-978:
Chinese Sculpture of the Tenth Century (Ph.D. Diss., University of Illinois, 1991), which is
largely a stylistic study. Five Dynasties Buddhist imagery are also discussed by Matsubara
Saburo 松原三朗, Chugoku Bukkyo chokokushi kenkyu 中国佛教調刻史研究 (Tokyo:
Yohikawa Kôbunkan, 1966), 189-209, and in several articles published in Bijutsu
kenkyu in the 1950s and 1960s.
sculpture site in a more marginal region of China and the social-religious matrix that produced the art of the site is intended as a step in this direction to bring attention to and help further clarify the Buddhist art of the period.

One area that has great potential for furthering the knowledge of Buddhist art during the period in question is found in the region of the Sichuan Basin (Sichuan Pendi 四川盆地), also known as the Red Basin, located in southwest China (see Map 1). This basin forms the core area of the present political province of Sichuan, sometimes spelled as Szechwan or Szechuan, and the newly created administrative district of Chongqing (see Maps 2 and 3), which roughly conform to the historical areas known as Shu 蜀 and Ba 巴.4 Surrounded on all sides by mountainous terrain, this region consists of a vast hilly inland basin, which was formed from an ancient sea in the later Paleozoic era (BCE 550 million - 225 million). The basin has an area of about 200,000 sq. km and is drained by a large network of rivers that run across the basin and flow into the Yangtze River (Changjiang 长江).5 Since the Han dynasty (206 BCE- 220 CE), this fertile and densely populated region has been known by the epithet “Kingdom of Heaven’s Storehouse”

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4 The modern political area of Sichuan Province includes a large area of the Eastern Tibetan Plateau that traditionally was not part of ethnic Han China. In 1955 that area, formerly part of Xikang 西康 Province, was incorporated into Sichuan, which approximately doubled the size of the province.

5 According to popular understanding the name of Sichuan (which means “four rivers”) is derived from the four tributaries of the Yangtze river that flow through the region: the Jialing 嘉陵, Fu 涪, Tuo 泸, and Min 岷 rivers. However, in actuality the name is derived from the four larger political units, or circuits called lu 路, under which the region was administered during the Song Dynasty and does not occur before that time. See Meng Mo 蒙默, et al., Sichuan gudai shigao 四川古代史稿 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmen chubanshe, 1989), 234.
(tianfuzhiguo 天府之国) for its abundant natural resources—mineral and agricultural—and the wealth and economic productivity of its inhabitants.\(^6\)

Though isolated and surrounded by foreboding topography, this region, with its well endowed resources, was viewed with great importance throughout the history of dynastic China as being pivotal in the balance of power.\(^7\)

Economically self sufficient and self contained, Sichuan also served as a refuge in times of political turmoil, and its strong regional culture was reinvigorated by successive waves of refugees from the northern political centers, which provided the region with a wealth of human capital. Since the Han Dynasty Sichuan was also one of the great mercantile centers of China and an important hub for communications and trade.

In recent decades Sichuan has also become known as a rich storehouse of cultural and archeological materials. The archeological findings in the Han tombs of the region and the stunning bronze artifacts unearthed at the early bronze age site of Sanxingdui 三星堆 (ca. 1300 BCE) have drawn great attention and acclaim.\(^8\) In addition to these findings, the region has a wealth of Buddhist artifacts, including the earliest known Buddhist images in China, dating to the Eastern Han Dynasty (CE 25-220) found in the cliff tombs of the

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\(^6\) This name is first found in the Huayang guo zhi 华阳国志, a fourth-century text of miscellanea about the region compiled by Chang Qu 常璩. For a study of this text see S.H. Fong, "Hua Yang Kuo Chih," Journal of the West China Border Research Society, 12 (1940): 225-233.


\(^8\) A major exhibition of the Sanxingdui materials and the art of the Warring States and Han periods in Sichuan was recently exhibited in America and Canada. The exhibition catalog provides a concise overview of the arts of these periods from Sichuan and their distinctive characteristics. See Robert Bagley, ed., Ancient Sichuan Treasures from a Lost Civilization (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum and Princeton University Press, 2001).
modern area of Leshan 乐山.\textsuperscript{9} Equally well known to the scholarship of Chinese Buddhist art history are the important early examples of Buddhist stele and stone statuary from the period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (Nan Bei Chao 南北朝, CE 420-589) found at the Wanfosi 万佛寺 temple site and other places around the city of Chengdu 成都, the traditional political and cultural center of Sichuan.\textsuperscript{10} Other important resources in Sichuan that have not received sufficient attention for the study of Buddhist art are Sichuan’s cliff sculpture sites, which are found scattered throughout the region at some four hundred different cliff sculpture and temple sites.\textsuperscript{11} These sites, for the most part, are relatively well preserved and provide a rich body of in situ carvings for study. Included among the imagery are a diverse array of iconographic forms and large numbers of devotional inscriptions from the Tang and later periods. Many of these sites have only just begun to be studied in China and have not yet been fully subject to rigorous study in the literature of art history outside of China.

The greatest density of cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan is found in the southeastern portion of the central Sichuan basin centering on the counties of

\textsuperscript{9} An overview of these materials is provided in Wu Zhuo 吴焯, "Sichuan zaoqi fojiao yiwu ji qi niandai yu chuanbo tujing de kaocha 四川早期佛教遗物及其年代与传播途径的考察," WW 11 (1992): 40-50.

\textsuperscript{10} For an overview of the Wanfosi materials see Liu Zhiyuan 刘志远 and Liu Tingbi 刘廷壁 eds., Chengdu Wanfosi shike yishu 成都万佛寺石刻艺术 (Beijing: Zhongguo gudian yishu chubanshe, 1959).

\textsuperscript{11} A comprehensive list of cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan is provided in two multi-page tables in Liu Changjiu 刘长玖 ed., Zhongguo xinan shiku yishu 中国西南石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 97-110, 140-143. A broad survey of Buddhist and Daoist cliff sculpture sites is provided in Hu Wenhe 胡文和, Sichuan Daojiao Fojiao shiku yishu 四川道教佛教石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1994).
Dazu 大足 and Anyue 安岳 (Map 4). In the area of Dazu County alone there are some seventy different sites with rock carvings. In contrast to northern China, where most of the well known cliff sculpture were excavated before the Middle Tang period (781-848), the most dynamic period for cliff sculpture occurs in these areas during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). At many of these sites Buddhist imagery predominates, but there are also a good number of sites in the area with Daoist imagery and images related to the religious trend of the "Unification of the Three Teaching" (Sanjiaoheyi 三教合一), or the Three Teachings (Sanjiao 三教), which advocates the equivalency and joint worship of the teachings of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. This imagery provides a diverse range of iconographic content and artistic means of representation. The sheer number of these cliff sculpture sites indicates a

12 Of these sites, half have imagery dating to the Song Dynasty and earlier. A list of these sites is provided in the recent edition of the Dazu county gazetteer (Dazu xianzhi 大足县志 hereafter DX); see Dazuxian xianzhi bianxiu weiyuanhui 大足县县志编修委员会, Dazu xianzhi 大足县志 (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 1996), 804-6. A comprehensive list including other sites in the Chongqing area is also given by Liu Changjiu (1998), 140-143.

flourishing culture of religious patronage, primarily Buddhist, at a time when
the patronage of similar sites became increasingly less common in the
Chinese heartland. Historical documents provide little or no mention of
these sites; however, the significance of the artistic production of the Sichuan
region as a whole is well established by contemporary literary accounts, such
as the famous account of the painters of Chengdu in Huang Xiufu's *Famous

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The excavation of large-scale caves/images has been used by a number of historians as a
barometer to gauge the rise and decline of Buddhist devotion and practice. For an example
of this; see Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society an Economic History from the
Fifth to the Tenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 232. It should
also be qualified that although no new projects were initiated on the grand scale of the Tang
Dynasty, the Liao did carry out large-scale restoration projects at Yungang. Also according
to one contemporary source the Song emperor, Zhenzong (998-1022), provided for the
restoration of some 17,000 images at Longmen. This, however, was probably an
exaggeration. See Lui Mingyuan 刘铭元, "Longmen shiku santi 龙门石窟三题," in *Longmen
shiku yanjiu lunwenxuan*, ed. *Longmen shiku yanjiusuo 龙门石窟研究所得* (Shanghai:
Longmen shiku yanjiusuo bian, 1993), 523-4. Only two areas outside of Sichuan have
substantial numbers of cliff sculpture sites that date to after the Tang Dynasty. These are
found in the area of Hangzhou in Southeastern China and in Shaanxi in the general vicinity
of Yannan. For a survey of sites in Shaanxi; see Li Song 李泓, *Shanxi fojiao yishu 陕西佛教
艺术, Fojiao meishu quanji 佛教美术全集*, vol. 9. (Taipei: Yishujia, 1999); and Han Wei 韩
primary site in Hangzhou, Felaifeng, and its relation to the introduction of Tibetan
Buddhism in China during the thirteenth century; see Paula Stewart, "Buddhist Sculpture of
Fei lai Feng, a Confrontation of Two Traditions," *Orientations* 18, no. 12 (December 1987):
54-61.
Painters of Sichuan (Yizhou minghua lu 益州名画录, hereafter referred to as YZMHL), and indirectly by Buddhist ephemera recovered from the Mogao grottoes, Dunhuang, in western China.\textsuperscript{15}

In recent years, the importance of these sites for their historical and cultural value have become increasingly noticed by scholars worldwide, but still research in this area lags behind other areas. Even in China, it is only within the last two decades that scholars have begun to systematically study these materials. This thesis is an attempt to further knowledge of this area by investigating one of the most significant sites in the region, which is located on Beishan 北山, or Mount Bei, in Dazu County (Dazuxian 大足县) an area now part of the Special Administrative Region of Chongqing City (Chongqing zhixiashi 重庆直辖市),\textsuperscript{16} as a case study of regional Buddhist

\textsuperscript{15} The Yizhou minghua lu 益州名画录 (hereafter YZMHL), (preface dated 1006), attributed to Huang Xiufu 黄休复, describes artists and their works in Chengdu during the Late Tang and Five Dynasties period. A recent annotated version with notes and modern Chinese translations is provided in Pan Yungao 潘运告 ed., Songren huaping 宋人画评 (Changsha: Hunan Meishu chubanshe, 1999), 114-211. Affinities between materials at Dunhuang and Sichuan have been noted by a number of scholars. An important trade/communications route called the Henandao 河南道 ("South of the river route") linked the area of Dunhuang with Sichuan during periods when access to north central China was blocked, Li Sisheng 李巳生 (personal conversation, May 2001); also see Li Sisheng ed., Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji 7: Dazu 中国石窟雕塑全集, 7: 大足 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999), 30 n. 8. Routes between the two regions are described in Chen Zuolong 陈作龙, "Zhongshi Dunhuang yu Chengdu zhijian de jiaotong luxian 中世敦煌与成都之间的交通路," Dunhuang xue 1 (July 1974).

\textsuperscript{16} This administrative jurisdiction was created in 1997, joining the municipalities of Beijing 北京, Shanghai 上海, and Tianjin 天津 with this special status that bypasses the provincial level of administration to be directly under the central government.
iconography in Sichuan during the late 9th through mid 12th centuries. It focuses on the primary cliff sculpture site located on Beishan, known as the Fowan 佛湾 (Buddha Cove).¹⁷

In brief, this study is intended to contribute to the understanding of the particulars about the Fowan site, its relation to other cliff sculpture sites around the area of Dazu, and the social historical circumstances in which it was created. It sets out to describe and analyze the iconography of the Fowan site in the belief that it is of interest both in itself and because of the important information it can share about the Buddhist art of the region, as well as the greater clarification it can provide of the local artistic and social-religious activities as an aggregate of the larger cultural shifts of the Late Tang to Song periods. For nearly three hundred years, beginning in the waning years of the Tang Dynasty and lasting well into the Southern Song Dynasty, the sculptural record at the Fowan site indicates that it was a vibrant local center of Buddhist devotional activity and patronage. The large number of image niches and caves excavated at the Fowan and related sites at Beishan are a reflection of the religious aspirations and support of the local community toward Buddhism.

Beishan 北山, translated literally as North hill, represents one of the most important Buddhist archeological sites in China, dating to the historical

¹⁷ The Fowan site is often referred to as Beishan. In this study the term Beishan is used in an overarching sense to refer to the hill in its entirety as a topographic location and archeological site to include all the cliff sculpture sites and architectural elements located on it in addition to the Fowan site.
period known as the Tang-Song transition. Since 1961 Beishan has been on the list of China’s protected national heritage monuments by the state council of the Peoples Republic of China; more recently in December, 1999, it was given protected status as part of the Dazu World Heritage Site. Besides providing important historical information and material documentation of Buddhist devotional activities of the Late Tang (848-907) through the Song Dynasty (960-1279) for an area that is essentially a blank page in the annals of Chinese history, the site contains arguably some of the finest extant examples of in situ Late Tang and Song Dynasty stone sculpture. The site contains some four hundred fifty numbered niches/caves, over one hundred donor and visitor inscriptions, and several in situ stelae. These materials are primarily located in the area of the Fowan 佛灣 and around the area of a twelfth century brick pagoda called the Duobaota 多宝塔, or Prabhūtaratna stūpa (Map 5). There are also several other smaller cliff sculpture sites on the hill that contain fewer carvings and, for the most part, are badly damaged by natural erosion and human factors. Besides the Tang and Song materials, the site also contains some imagery and inscriptions that date to the later dynastic periods, which will not be a formal part of my study.

The Tang-Song transition refers to the period from the Late Tang after the Anlushan rebellion (755-63) to the Yuan dynasty. Since the seminal work of Naitō Konan in the 1920s this period is understood by many historians to represent the major divide between early imperial and late imperial China. See Chikusa Masaaki 竺沙雅章, ”Introduction to the Study of Five Dynasties and Sung History,” trans. Kenneth Chase, in Research Tools for the Study of Sung History 2nd edition, Peter K. Bol (Albany, New York: Journal of Sung Yuan Studies, 1996), 105-6.
1.2. Overview of the Beishan site and its historical setting

Beishan, or Mount Bei, is a 560 meter (1,837 ft.) high hill, formerly known as “Dragon-mound hill” (Longgangshan 龙岗山), situated in present-day Dazu County, part of the area of southeastern Sichuan province (Sichuan sheng 四川省) recently put under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Chongqing (Chongqing zhixiashi 重庆市) in Southwest China. The name Beishan has come to be used as a general designation for both the hill and the historical archeological sites it encompasses, which include most notably a large Buddhist cliff sculpture site known as the Fowan 佛湾. In addition to the Fowan, there are five other smaller cliff sculpture sites and several architectural structures located on the hill. The latter include an eight-story brick pagoda, the remnants of a small temple, and portions of stone walls from a stronghold that was once located on the hill.

Located directly north of Longgang 龙岗 township, the Dazu County seat, Beishan is part of a cluster of hills situated between the counties of Dazu and Anyue, which form a dividing line for the watersheds of the lower Tuo 泜 and Fu 涪 rivers. Like much of the hilly karstic topography of the Sichuan Basin, many of the hills in this area are lined with sandstone cliffs and limestone rock formations that proved to be suitable for the carving of

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19 Dazu county, an administrative area since the Tang Dynasty, is located in the southeastern portion of the Sichuan Basin, approximately 150 kilometers west of the municipality of Chongqing (重庆) at the confluence of the Jialing (Jialing jiang 嘉陵江) and Yangtze (Changjiang 长江) rivers, and around 250 kilometers east of the provincial capital of Sichuan, Chengdu (成都). In the Tang Dynasty, Dazu was part of the prefecture of Changzhou 昌州, which included the four counties of Dazu 大足, Jingnan 静南, Changyuan 昌元, and Yongchuan 永川. DX, 65.
Among these hills, the physical features Mount Bei are not exceptionally remarkable compared to other hills in the area. Its significance, however, is its close proximity to the town of Dazu (Longang 龙岗 township), the political and social center of the area from the Tang Dynasty, located along the upper reaches of the Laixi River (Laixi he 濑溪河), a small tributary of the Tuo River (Tuo jiang 沱江). The closeness of Mount Bei to the town of Dazu lent the hill its strategic importance and facilitated access for sustained support from local elites for the patronage of religious imagery over a longer span than most other sites in the area.

Situated in the southeastern corner of the Sichuan Basin between the lower reaches of the Tuo 沱 and Jialing (Jialing jiang 嘉陵江) rivers, the present area of Dazu County in Tang and Song times was a border region between the more developed area of Shu 蜀, centered on the Min River (Min jiang 岷江) in the Chengdu Plain, and the sparsely populated, economically backward area of eastern Sichuan, traditionally called Ba 巴, roughly centered

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20 Many hills with cliff sculpture sites also functioned as fortified hills. In the area of Dazu and Anyue there are at least seven other fortified hilltops that have carvings; see Henrik H. Sorensen, “Buddhist Sculptures from the Song Dynasty at Mingshan Temple in Anyue, Sichuan,” *Artibus Asiae* 50, 3/4 (1995): 282. The effectiveness of these hilltops as military installations is attested by the famous site of Diaoyushan 钓鱼山 in Hechuan 合川, not far from Dazu where Song forces resisted the Mongols for some thirty years. This site also had the numinous protection of several Buddhist rock carvings. The native people who inhabited the area traditionally lived in fortified villages on tops of hills; see Von Glahn (1987), 31-2. Possibly some of the Buddhist cliff sculpture sites in the area may have been selected because they had some symbolic significance with indigenous tribes.
in the area between the Jialing and Qu (Qu jiang 渠江) rivers. Since the Qin dynasty (BCE 221-206) the area of Dazu has fallen under the jurisdiction of the larger administrative units that have ruled the area of the eastern Sichuan Basin. In the time period with which this study is concerned, roughly the late ninth through mid-twelfth centuries, the name Dazu referred to an administrative unit subordinate to the prefecture of Chang (Changzhou 昌州). The area of Changzhou more or less conforms to the present borders of Dazu County, which covers an area of one-thousand four-hundred square kilometers (Map 6). This area appears not to have been fully settled by ethnic Han people until the mid-eighth century when the administrative unit of Dazu was created, in 758, under the prefecture of Changzhou. Little information is known about the early history of the Dazu before the Tang Dynasty. Prior to the Tang Dynasty, the area of the eastern Sichuan Basin

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21 Shu and Ba are the names of Warring States (BCE 475-221) kingdoms located in the Sichuan Basin. The term “Ba” is also used to refer to the Ba people, an ethnic group that inhabited the eastern portion of the Sichuan region.

22 In the Tang Dynasty, the area of Dazu in the eastern Sichuan Basin was governed as part of Jiannan Dongchuan 剑南东川 circuit (dao 道). In the Song Dynasty, it was part of the Zizhoulu 梓州路 until 1117 when the Tongchuan fulu 潼川府 路 was created. See DX, 65.

23 The name Dazu, which can be read as “Great Bounty” or “Giant Foot,” is believed to refer to the former name of the Laixi river (Laixi he 濑溪河), a small tributary of the Tuo River that has its source in Dazu County. According to a local legend circulating since at least the Ming Dynasty the name is thought to refer to a set of stone footprints of the Buddha found in a pond in front of the Shengshousi 圣寿寺 temple at the Baodingshan site. See DX, 59-60.

24 DX, 56. In the Dazu area, one group known as the Liao 僚 is noted for leading several uprisings as late as the mid-tenth century; see Yang Weili, Qianshu Houshu shi 前蜀后蜀史 (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1986), 167-170.
was largely populated by non-Han ethnic tribal groups. Through the course of the Tang Dynasty and earlier, these peoples slowly dispersed to more remote mountainous areas or assimilated into Han Chinese culture.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite being physically remote from the political and social centers of the time, Dazu profited from its close proximity to the crossroads of inter-regional routes that connected the regional center, Chengdu, with the Yangtze gorges (\textit{sanxia 三峡}) to the east and routes that led to the Han river valley north of Sichuan.\textsuperscript{26} The prosperity of the area is especially evident from the eleventh century on, when Sichuan became more fully integrated into the Song national economy. In the Song, Dazu (Changzhou) was rated as a superior prefecture, and many fortified towns in the area from the Tang became flourishing market centers. Fluctuations in the scale and quality of niches at the cliff sculpture sites at Beishan seem to have a good correlation with generally known social and economic turns for the region.

The primary site at Beishan is the Fowan 佛湾, which has almost three hundred numbered niches, caves, and stele inscriptions, is by far the largest and best preserved site at Beishan. Modest in scale compared to the famous cliff sculpture sites of Northern China like Yungang 云岗 or Longmen 龙门, the niches and caves of the Fowan vary from less than a meter to four meters

\textsuperscript{25} A thirteenth century geographic compendium called the \textit{Yudi jisheng} 輿地紀勝 notes that the customs of the local people in Dazu reflected both Han Chinese traditions and those of the native Liao; see \textit{DX}, 3.

\textsuperscript{26} An important inter-regional route, called the Xiaochuandongdao 小川東道, which connected Zizhou 柘州 (modern Santai 三台), the political center of eastern Sichuan, with Chongqing, passed through Dazu. Another route called the Eastern Great Road (Dongdadao 东大道) passed through the present southern portion of Dazu county at Youtingpu 邕亭铺; see \textit{DX} 417.
in height. These niches and caves are carved on two large sections of a cup-shaped, western facing, sandstone cliff that is located below the primary summit of the hill. The niches and caves are carved in a somewhat random pattern and are primarily located at the base of the cliff, with most the niches no more than five or six meters above ground level. The full length of the cliff is approximately four-hundred eighty meters long (about 1/4 mile) and seven to ten meters high, and it falls roughly on a north-south axis (Diagrams 1.1-1.13). Most the carvings are located on the two ends of the cliff, which form two distinct sections separated by a space of about forty meters where there is only a limited amount of exposed rock. The southern section is smaller, only about forty meters long. The earliest carvings at the site are primarily located on this end of the cliff, where most the carvings date from the Late Tang (ca. 848-907) and Five Dynasties (907-960) periods. Some of the more spectacular images at the site are located in the longer northern section of the cliff, which is about three hundred meters long. The carvings in this section ostensibly date to the Song Dynasty with some Late Tang and Five Dynasties niches located on the northern-most extreme end.

All told, the niches/caves of the Fowan contain approximately four thousand single images with over twenty different major iconographic types represented. The rich variety of imagery at the site provides a literal gallery of the major Buddhist iconographic forms characteristic of the region for this period, and attest to the eclectic nature of popular Buddhism in Sichuan during the Late Tang though Song periods. Most of the imagery at the site falls into the realm of Pure Land soteriology, with images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in a multitude of different forms predominating. The site also
includes a large number of images related to esoteric Buddhism, and a few non-specifically Buddhist images and stele inscriptions. Also on the hill are several other smaller cliff sculpture sites with fewer carvings, which for the most part are more significantly damaged by weather and human factors. Three of these sites, Foeryan 佛耳岩 (“Buddha-ear cliff”), Guanyinpo 观音坡 (“Guanyin hill”), and Yingpanpo 营盘坡 (“Military camp hill”), are located within a two kilometer radius of the Fowan and are primarily composed of carvings that are contemporary with those at the Fowan site. Despite being largely overlooked and left in a state of utter disrepair, these sites contain some valuable materials complimentary to those at the Fowan and can help further an understanding of the history of the site.

On the top of a rock formation opposite the Fowan is the “Many Jeweled Pagoda” (Duobaota 多宝塔), named after the famous Prabhutaratna stūpa of the Lotus sūtra. This pagoda, also known as the Beita 北塔, was erected in the mid-twelfth century with funds collected from locals and a sizable donation by an important regional official. The Duobaota pagoda is an eight-sided brick structure with an exterior facade of twelve levels and seven interior floors. Niches on the walls of the interior contain a total of seventy-three small stone sculptures and reliefs, many of which are accompanied by donor or votive inscriptions. Approximately fifty additional

27 A fourth site, known as Yiwan-shui 一碗水 and also referred to as Guanyinge 观音阁, appears to be a more recent development. This site is located in a small saddle between the Beita and Guanyin hills west of the Fowan and alongside the road that runs to the top of the hill opposite the main parking lot to the site. There are several groups of carvings here, most of which seem to be recent creations. One image of Avalokiteśvara could possibly have a Song or earlier date, but it is too heavily covered with paint and plaster to be accessible for study. For these reasons, that site is not included in this study.
images are located in niches on the exterior of the pagoda and are not directly accessible. The site also includes the remnants of a small temple now used as a temporary residence for the guards of the pagoda. In addition to these architectural structures, there is a large pair of seated Buddhas carved out of the southern cliff face directly below the pagoda.

The carving of Buddhist imagery into the sandstone rock formations at Mount Bei is believed to have been initiated during the Late Tang Dynasty by an obscure but apparently powerful local figure named Wei Junjing, who used the hill as a military stronghold in the late ninth century. Knowledge of Wei Junjing and his relationship to the site is limited to a commemorative stele, known as the Stele of Wei Junjing (Wei Junjing bei 韦君靖碑), which is inscribed on the southern most section of the Fowan site. Dated to 895, this stele describes Wei’s activities in the tumultuous last decades of the ninth century and is a rare and important historical document that provides a glimpse of the devolution of power in the Late Tang period. According to the stele, in the fragmentation of political power during the Huangchao 黄巢 rebellion (CE 874- 884), Wei organized prominent local

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28 To my knowledge, the images on the exterior have not been numbered nor has there been published a description of this imagery. Some of the images are visible from the base of the pagoda.

29 This area is known as the Buddha Pair (Shuangfoxiang 双佛象) or “Below the Pagoda” (Beita xia 北塔下).

30 This is niche number 2 at the site. The stele is also accompanied by an image of Wei Junjing (niche 1), which was a later addition. A translation of the main text of the stele is given in Appendix C of this study, and it is based on the transcription in Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 ed., Dazu shike mingwen lu (hereafter MWL) 大足石刻铭文录 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999), 37-43.
families and their retainers into a military network of local defense units, called *yijun* 义军 or “Righteous Militias,” to preserve social stability in the area and to protect against bandits and roaming brigands.  

On the lower portion of the stele, some one hundred forty names of his first line followers are also listed and organized into four groups of military officials.  

From this list it appears that Wei’s base of control was rooted in the modern areas of Dazu and Hechuan counties, then referred to as Changzhou昌州 and Hezhou合州。It is believed that by adopting retainers who held important positions in his militia in fictive bonds of filial kinship, Wei was able to create a cohesive militia force of some thirty militia units clustered around the fortified towns of the area.  

Because the jurisdiction of Wei’s military network was near the three gorges area of the Yangtze river, which was the region’s main east-west trade artery and access route for tribute from the dwindling number of imperial controlled southern provinces, Wei’s efforts

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32 See Masuo Kurihara, 4.

33 Hino Kaisaburo, 770.

34 For the forging of bonds of kinship; see Masuo Kurihara, 10. Also see Von Glahn, 43.
received some measure of official sanction. After assisting in the suppression of a local rebellion and intervening in a regional conflict, Wei was given an elaborate series of titles and promoted to serve as the military and administrative commander of the surrounding prefectures of Chang 昌, Pu 普, Yu 渝, and He 合。35 These titles merely added official acknowledgment to what was probably already a well entrenched base of power.

Following the lead of the Tang emperor Xizong, who was forced out of the Tang capital by the Huangchao rebels in 874 to take up residence in Chengdu for a decade, many northerners migrated to Sichuan to escape the turmoil of the northern centers. However, the situation in Sichuan during the late ninth century was far from stable, with various political factions grasping for power in the region in the growing vacuum of central authority. The stele informs us that not long after Wei received official recognition, in 892 he selected Beishan, then called Mt. Dragon Ridge (Longangshan 龙岗山), to build a stronghold, which he named “The Eternally Flourishing Stronghold” (Yongchang zhai 永昌寨), to weather the ongoing conflicts. Strategically located, the stronghold, which had a circumference of several kilometers, became the linchpin of Wei’s defense network. The hill was fortified with stone walls and provisioned to endure a lengthy siege. Ruined portions of the

35 These represent, respectively, the modern counties of Dazu, Anyue, Chongqing, and Hechuan.
stone walls erected by Wei can still be found on the hill.\textsuperscript{36} The stele further informs us that Wei Junjing, besides being an astute military leader, was also a devout Buddhist who set aside funds from his own salary for the establishment of a temple pagoda (futu 浮图) at the site and that “the sounds of bells and clappers could be heard from dawn to dusk and the clamor of chants would reach near and far of those who made the so-called vow to the fine gate of wisdom to seek enlightenment.\textsuperscript{37} In addition, Wei also had at least one Buddhist image carved on the sandstone rock formations within his enclosure. Several of the niches at the Fowan in close proximity to the Wei Junjing stele could possibly have been sponsored by Wei Junjing or his followers.

A year after the stele was inscribed in 895, Wang Jian 王建, the military governor of western Sichuan, was able to grasp control over the area of eastern Sichuan by defeating the governor of eastern Sichuan, Gu Yanhui 顾彦晖, which eventually led to his founding the kingdom of the Former Shu

\textsuperscript{36} Remnants of the remaining wall and other architectural artifacts of the site are discussed in an article by Zhang Hua 张和 and Liu Shuyi 刘蜀仪, "You guan Wei Junjing bei zhong de jige yidian qianxi 有关韦君靖碑中的几个疑点浅析," *SW* 1 (1986): 32-35. Zhang and Liu document two extant remaining sections of the wall at the site: (1) a section of the wall at the Zhaimenwan, made of cut sandstone, 82 meters long and, 2.8 meters high; (2) a section at Laoyingzui 75 meters long and 2.5 meters high. The latter is thought by the authors to be the western walls of the fortress described in the stele. Other extant remnants of the fortress include part of the citadel, which was located near the Duobaota pagoda.

\textsuperscript{37} Transcription based on \textit{MWL}, 38 number 1, lines 46-47.
After the fall of the Tang government, the Wei Junjing stele was written just prior to any confrontation that Wei’s military network may have had with forces loyal to Wang Jian, it does not provide an explanation of the ultimate fate of Wei Junjing and his military network.

After the end of the Tang Dynasty the military function of the site appears to have diminished. However, during the subsequent Five Dynasties period, inscriptions and imagery at the Fowan indicate that it still remained an active center of Buddhist devotional activity. The fifty odd years of the Five Dynasties period was numerically the most productive period of carving at the site, representing around half the total number of carvings done there. This imagery provides one of the largest concentrations of Buddhist imagery dating to the Five Dynasties period in China. However, the scale and quality of the carvings are somewhat diminished compared to the earlier carvings of the Late Tang at the site and those that date to the Song Dynasty.

Wang Jian’s rise to power from a petty criminal to military commander, and the complicated political situation at the end of the Tang Dynasty in Sichuan, are described by Yang Weili in his authoritative study of Sichuan during the Five Dynasties period. See especially chapter one in Yang Weili 杨伟立 (1986), 15-49. A biography of Wang Jian written in the Song Dynasty is found in the Xin Wudai shi 新五代史, juan 64. Also see Klaus-Peter Tietze, Ssuch’uan Vom 7. Bis 10. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen Zur Frühen Geschichte Einer Chinesischen Provinz (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1980).

There are no references to military activity here after the Wei Junjing stele, although several military officials are noted as donors in later periods, and the site may still have functioned as a refuge in troubled times such as at the end of the tenth century.


Liu Changjiu (1999), 31. There are other sites in Sichuan with imagery dating to the Five Dynasties in Sichuan, but the imagery is not as numerous. Dunhuang and Hangzhou are the only two other areas with sizable numbers of Buddhist imagery from the Five Dynasties period.
By the founding of the Song Dynasty in 960 and the defeat of the last autonomous kingdom that ruled Sichuan in 964, carving at the site seems to have slowed to a virtual stop for the first hundred years of the Song Dynasty. One indication of this slowdown is the lack of new donor inscriptions at the site for the 123 years between 955 and 1078. This in part may be explained by economic reasons, since Sichuan suffered greatly in the first decades of Song rule from internal revolts, such as the Li Shun 李顺 and Wang Xiaopo 王小婆 uprisings of the late tenth century, and the policies of the central government of the Song that intentionally slowed the economic integration of the region into the broader political entity, especially through the use of separate monetary policies for the region. The period when imagery becomes abundant again more-or-less corresponds with economic shifts that made the region more important to the Song state particularly in the early thirteenth century when the tax base of Sichuan became a financial cornerstone for the Song state to support the conflict with the Jurchen.

Following this lacuna of activity at the site in the early Northern Song Dynasty, a second surge in activity at the site occurred in the early to mid

42 There is also a general lacuna at other sites in the area for this period. The only dated materials from the first half of the eleventh century in Dazu come from a group of stone images recovered from the former site of a Chan temple in the western part of the county. See Deng Zhijin 邓之金, "Dazu xian Dazhongsi Songdai yuandiao shike yizhidiaocha 大足县大钟寺宋代圆雕石刻遗址调查," SW 5 (1989): 48-58. A similar break in activity occurs in neighboring Anyue county; see Zeng Deren 曾德仁, “Sichuan Anyue shiku de niandai yu fenqi 四川安岳石窟的年代与分期,” SW 2 (2001: 53-59): 57. At the Fowan there are several inscriptions for the redecoration of images at the site dating to the late 10th and early eleventh century, but no new donor inscriptions; see Appendix B, numbers 1.54, 1.56, 1.58, 1.64, and 1.66.

43 In the first fifty years of rule by the Song, Sichuan experienced eleven uprisings by peasants and mutinous armies; see Winston W. Lo, 24. The Northern Song monetary policy regarding Sichuan is described in Richard Von Glahn, Fountain of Fortune (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996), 49.
twelfth century. Most of the larger carvings at the site date to this time, which corresponds to the period when the Song state was in direct conflict with the Jurchens (Jin 金, 1115-1234), who took control of northern China with the capture of the Song capital of Bian 汴 (modern Kaifeng 开封) in 1127. This phase of activity at the site lasts until the mid-twelfth century and stopped around a decade after the conflict with the Jin was curtailed with the negotiated peace treaty of 1141 (shaoxing heyi 绍兴和议). The erection of the Duobaota pagoda on a rocky promontory west of the Fowan during the shaoxing 绍兴 era (1131-1163), approximately from 1147 to 1155, marks the end of active sponsorship of Buddhist imagery at the site. After that time the only materials found at the site that date from the latter half of the twelfth century to the end of the Song Dynasty are only a few intrusive visitor inscriptions.

Improved economic factors may have driven the renewed activity at the site in the twelfth century. Some of the activity at the site may also have been fostered by Feng Ji 冯楫 (1074-1053), a noted statesman and well known Buddhist lay devotee who studied with the noted Chan master Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163) and founded a famous Pure Land association.44 Imagery at a number of other cliff sculpture sites in the area was also carved around

44 From 1143-1152 Feng Ji was the civil and military overseer of the Tongchuan circuit, the larger administrative district of the eastern portion of the Sichuan Basin, which included Dazu. His tenor in office overlaps with most of the donor inscriptions at the Duobaota pagoda, and he is also associated with Miaogaoshan; see Zhao Huizhi 赵辉志, "Feng Ji yu Dazu shike Miaogaoshan Sanjiao zaoxiang kaoshu 冯楫与大足石刻妙高山三教造像考述," SW (1999): 43-46. Feng Ji’s Buddhist activities are documented in the Fozu tongji 佛祖统记, fascicle 28, T.49.2035.283, and in the Shishi qitu lue 释氏稽图略, T.49.2073.892a.
the same time that saw a resurgence of activity at Beishan, which may in part have been given incentive by the positive attitudes of local elites and officials like Feng Ji toward Buddhism.

Following the mid-twelfth century, artistic activity here seems to have come to a halt, shortly prior to the time that the nearby large temple/cliff sculpture complex of Baodingshan 宝顶山 was just being initiated by Zhao Zhifeng 赵智风 (b.1159) fifteen kilometers to the northwest of this site.

However, the drawn out Mongol conquest of Sichuan, lasting for much of the thirteenth century, would eventually bring activity there to an apparent halt as well. The disastrous effects of the Mongol invasion resulted in a depopulation of the area, and the administrative unit of Dazu was temporarily dissolved during the Yuan Dynasty. Few carvings in the region date to the Yuan Dynasty, but in the Ming period carving was resumed at a number of sites. In Dazu county these later dynastic sites are quite numerous. However, at the Fowan site most the space on cliff walls had

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45 The unfinished images in niche 22 at the Dafowan 大佛湾, Baodingshan are taken by some as evidence that carving was abandoned in face of the Mongol onslaught.

46 The Mongol invasion took a heavy toll on Sichuan, which in part explains the relative absence of cliff sculpture in the area during the Yuan period. In the early Southern Song the population of Sichuan was estimated at some 2,600,000 households (户) but in the early Yuan Dynasty that number had decreased to some 1,000,000 households, Gu Daquan 贾大全, "Sichuan zai Song dai de di wei 四川在宋代的地位," in Sichuan lishi yanjiu wenji, ed. Gu Daquan (Chengdu: Sichuan shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1987), 84. The immediate effects of the Mongol onslaught in Dazu are recorded on a stele dated 1247 at Nanshan, which records that the common people of the area fled elsewhere and scholar-officials took to seclusion from serving in the government; see MWL, 300-1, number 11; Li Fangyin 黎方银, Dazu shiku yishu 大足石窟艺术, 2d ed. (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999), 246-250.
already been filled with carving in the Song, and besides the addition of few small intrusive niches, restorations, and inscriptions, the carving of images does not appear to have been continued.

The time frame in which the primary artistic activity occurred at Beishan, from the late ninth to mid-twelfth centuries, spans a period of dynamic social and political upheaval in China that resulted in the emergence of new social, economic, and demographic structures. The overarching period that encompasses this time frame is often referred to as the “Tang-Song transition” and is widely recognized as a critical juncture in Chinese history. Emerging from the power struggle of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties period, the Song state was able to achieve an unprecedented level of economic integration to stem the preceding tide of political fragmentation. It was, in many ways, a period comparable to the medieval agricultural revolution of Europe that facilitated many parallel social, economic, intellectual, and artistic developments. The period is characterized by rapid population growth, urbanization, expanded production, and commerce. Many of the institutions characteristic of later dynastic China were formulated in this period and set the foundations for the development of modern China.

On both ends, however, the Tang-Song transition is a period defined by turmoil. The period began with the breakdown of the central authority of the Tang state, collapse of the equal field system and the development of large manorial estates. Following the Anlushan rebellion of the mid-eighth


48 Social-economic factors that contributed to new modes of artistic production in the period are discussed by Heping Liu, *Painting and Commerce in Northern Song Dynasty China, 960-1126* (Diss., Yale University, 1997).
century, the Tang empire slowly disintegrated into a number of autonomous regional kingdoms and warring military factions, which finally resulted in the fall of the Tang Dynasty in 907. Following the Tang Dynasty, the short lived Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period, which last approximately from 907 to 960, has traditionally been seen as a dark age of incessant warfare marked by a decline in culture due to military tyranny. However, a number of states in the South, such as the Southern Tang (Nan Tang 南唐), Wuyue 吴越 kingdom, and the two kingdoms of Shu in Sichuan, were able to carry forward cultural traditions of the Tang as well as provide innovations that were further carried out by the Song. During the Late Tang, the power struggle in the north had caused large numbers of refugees to flee to the south, which initiated a southward demographic shift in China from the nuclear area of north-central China to the Yangtze river valley. Prior to the Song period the southern areas of China were considered peripheral to the northern heartland of China where the political, economic, and population centers had been located, but in the Song they became the economic bulwark of the state.

When unification was finally achieved with the founding of the Song Dynasty (960-1279) in 960, a restructuring of the bureaucracy forced the old ruling elite, hereditary clans (menfa 门阀), to compete with landed scholar-officials or gentry and the nouveau rich for political power. Under this new bureaucratic structure, a new emphasis on learning as a means of maintaining and advancing social status, facilitated in part by the expanded development of wood block printing, resulted in the wider dissemination of knowledge. It was also an era of an unprecedented level of literary activities in secular and religious circles. A great many technological advancements
were made, and the Song experienced a sort of medieval commercial revolution with the spread of a monetary economy.⁴⁹ New and improved methods of agriculture, such as the use of early-ripening Champa rice and double cropping, helped sustain a burgeoning population, while improved transportation and communications supported the development of an integrated market system.⁵⁰

The period also saw the blossoming of intellectual life in which in part stemmed from the creation of a civil bureaucracy to replace the aristocratic structure of Tang institutions where status had been determined by right of birth.⁵¹ The implementation of a civil service at an unprecedented level allowed for the recruitment of talented individuals to serve the government, but also created an elite class that was more easily controlled by the Song emperor than the aristocratic elite of the Tang. This served to bolster the power of the emperor and helped to ameliorate earlier separatist tendencies.⁵² Members of the new political elite, Confucian literati, entrenched their world view in the ancient past and overtly sought to distinguish their "civil" government from the "militarism" of the institutions that toppled the Tang

⁴⁹ On the technological innovations of the Song, primarily related to agriculture; see Elvin, 113-115.

⁵⁰ Elvin, 115. The Song road system at 90,000 li (miles) was almost twice that of the Tang; see Lo (1982), 100.

⁵¹ Prior to the Song the number of offices held by scholar officials (shidafu 士大夫) was more limited. In the Tang there was an annual average of around 30 to 40 Metropolitan graduates, but in the Song this yearly average increased to around 500; see Pan Guiming 潘桂明, Zhongguo jushi fojiaoshi 中国居士佛教史, vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2000), 483. However, the right of birth through the yin 隱 privilege was a loophole used by 40% of civil and military office holders; see Mark Robert Halperin, Pieties and Responsibilities: Buddhism and the Chinese Literati, 780-1280 (Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 9.

⁵² Lo (1982), 47.
Dynasty. At the same time, normative Buddhist traditions, conversely, sought to fortify their identification with their patriarchs from the "glory years" of the Tang in their restoration attempts following the Huichang disaster. A rise in local popular religions forced the established monastic traditions of Buddhism and Daoism to expand their institutional scope while competing with one another for privileged status. During the span of the period, there was also a revival of Confucian ideals, which became the guiding principles of the scholar-bureaucrats. Confucian intellectuals of the Song reformulated Confucian principles of ethical behavior to include a metaphysical perspective by borrowing elements of Buddhist and Daoist cosmology. Known as Neo-Confucianism or Daoxue 道学, this synthesis became the political ideology for the rest of dynastic China. Many intellectuals and elites during the Song also openly engaged in Buddhist activities and studied Buddhism.\(^53\)

The intellectual and social landscape of the period was further complicated by the coeval rise of powerful northern steppe kingdoms--Khitan (Liao 辽, 907-1125), Jurchen (Jin 金, 1115-1234 ), Tangut (Xixia 西夏, 1038-1227)-- and the Dali kingdom 大理 (937-1253) in the southwest. Bordering on the Song, these states provided constant external threats that forced the Song State into what has been described as a perpetual "wartime economy."\(^54\) In

\(^53\) Activities of scholar-officials who studied Chan and participated in Pure Land societies are described by Pan Guiming, vol 2, 475-633.

\(^54\) Smith, 8. According to Smith, defense consumed over eighty percent of government funds, and almost half the yearly income of the state.
the end, despite fielding what Mark Elvin called "the most formidable military machine that the world had yet seen,"\textsuperscript{55} the Song state could not survive the threats of its northern neighbors.

How much did the Sichuan region participate in these developments? In what ways was the region unique? The mountainous topography that defines Sichuan has always imposed a physical barrier to hinder its integration with the social-political centers of China. That same topography also presents a contrasting picture of a well-protected region of wealth and natural abundance--mineral and agricultural--as well as human resources, which made Sichuan one of the great commercial centers of traditional China. The region as a whole, was a leading participant in innovative commercial activity that became one of the hallmarks of the Tang-Song transition. However, its isolated location separate from the heartland of China, by the difficult to pass Qinling 秦岭 and Daba 大巴 mountains to the north and the rugged Wushan 巫山 mountains to the east, also made it very much a far flung region on the periphery of the Han Chinese cultural world in close proximity to other ethnic groups such as the Man 蛮 and Qiang 羌--the so-called Southern and Tibetan tribes of Chinese histories--and other groups who inhabited the surrounding montane region and maintained a precarious, and often adversarial, relationship with the Chinese state.

1.3. Current and previous scholarship

Although somewhat familiar to the specialist of Chinese Buddhist art, Beishan and other cliff sculpture sites in the surrounding area of Dazu are not \textsuperscript{55} Elvin, 84.
well known to the general scholarly community and have only recently begun
to receive more critical attention. A significant step in this direction has
been the very recent publication of a book by Angela F. Howard on
Baodingshan 宝顶山, the largest cliff sculpture in Dazu. Howard's study is the
first full monograph in a western language about the Dazu area. The
publication of her book on Baodingshan has also been joined by a dissertation
on Baodingshan recently completed by Karil Kucera at the University of
Kansas. These works join only a handful of studies concerning the religious sculpture of Sichuan, and the Dazu-Anyue area in particular, which have been published in the last several decades in the west. Leading the research in this area have been Angela Howard and Henrich Sorenson, who have published several studies on the Buddhist sculpture of Sichuan that have begun to shed light on the "forgotten" art of this region. However, up to the present most of the research on the area has been conducted by Chinese scholars who have investigated these sites since the mid 1940s. The scope and content of their work is primarily limited to site documentation, descriptive analysis, strict iconographic identification, and the general appraisal of the artistic and historical value of the cliff carvings in the area.

The first known mention of the carvings and epigraphy of the cliff sculpture sites of Dazu is limited to a few terse remarks in geographical compendiums like the *Yudi jisheng* 興地紀勝 and *Shuzhong mingsheng ji* 蜀中名勝記 of the Song and Ming periods respectively. However, the significance

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59 Their publications are listed in the bibliography. In addition to Howard's and Sorenson's work a number of English language books on Dazu have been published in China most of which are of limited scholarly value except as introductory works and contain more or less the same often reproduced images.

of the Buddhist art of the area was overlooked by scholarship until the early 19th century when the county magistrate of Dazu County, named Zhang Shu 张澍 (1776-1847), a native of Wuwei 武威 in Gansu, visited a number of important sites in the area and studied the important epigraphy found at those sites, which he published along with several essays in a collection called the *Dazu jinshi lu* 大足金石录 in 1818.\(^1\) Although he was primarily interested in stele inscriptions, Zhang is looked upon as the founding father of the study of the cliff sculpture of Dazu. His work was largely unnoticed until the 1940s, when the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek (1875-1972) made the nearby city of Chongqing 重庆 its wartime capital during the Japanese invasion of China. At that time, while living in Chongqing, the historian Yang Jialuo 杨家骆 came across literary references to the area of Dazu County, and in the spring of 1945 he led a team of fourteen researchers to Dazu County to investigate and document the sites in the area.\(^2\) Their documentary work at Beishan included the first official numbering of the primary sites, initial

\(^1\) A brief biographical account of Zhang Shu is given in *DX*, 162-3. While serving in Dazu for six months in 1818 Zhang Shu wrote a number of letters and poems about Dazu for a draft revision of the county gazetteer.

\(^2\) The background of the formation of this research group under Yang Jialuo’s direction in 1945 is retold by him in a small pamphlet style book published in 1968; see Yang Jialuo, *Zhonghua minguo sanshisi nian Dazu Tang Song shike liuqian erbai shiliu qu de fajian* 中华民国三十四年大足唐宋石刻六躯的发掘 (Taipei: Zhonghua xueshu yuan zhong guo xueshi yanjiusuo, 1968). The war with Japan in China ended on the eighth month of 1945 and Yang Jialuo left Sichuan for Shanghai then followed the Nationalist government to Taiwan. According to Yang many photographs taken by the team were lost.
content identification, and compilation of the epigraphic materials. The result of their work was published in a subsidiary section in an edition of the Dazu County Gazetteer published in Shanghai one year later called the *Dazu shike tuzheng chubian* 大足石刻图征初编.

After the founding of the Peoples Republic of China an official unit was created to oversee the cliff sculpture sites in the area in 1952, and steps were taken to better preserve some of the major sites like Beishan and Baodingshan. This unit later evolved into the present Chongqing Dazu Shike Yishu Bowuguan 重庆大足石刻艺术博物馆 (Museum of the Stone Carving Art of Dazu, Chongqing), which is charged with overseeing the study and conservation of these sites. The initial research begun in 1945 was continued in the fifties by Chen Xishan 陈习删, the director of the Dazu County Cultural Relics Preservation Office, who worked on a revision of the Dazu County Gazetteer for 1950-59, published in 1962, and wrote an extensive and detailed overview of the cliff sculpture sites and epigraphy of the Dazu area titled *Dazu shike zhilue* 大足石刻志略, “A Recorded Sketch of the Stone Carvings of Dazu,” which was printed in a limited number of mimeograph

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63 In their initial survey of the Fowan, they numbered 252 niches and recorded 3,606 images. In 1952 the site was renumbered to include 290 niches, which represents the current numbering of the site with a few additional niches added in 1982 as attachments to numbered niches. Most of the later are small, empty or severely damaged niches; see Li Fangyin 黎方银 and Wang Xixiang 王熙祥, 45 n.1.

64 *Minguo xinxiu Dazu xianzhi* 民国新修大足县志. I was not able to obtain a copy of this edition of the gazetteer. A list of its contents is given in the bibliography of published research on Dazu in *DSY*, 175.
This text lays out much of the factual information known about the history of the cliff sculpture sites in Dazu with commentary on the initial research done since the forties. It also includes content analysis of inscriptions and imagery of the area and is still a useful text to consult. In addition to this important contribution by Chen, several other articles and monographs were published in China up through the early sixties, but, because of the political circumstances, these did not receive great attention outside of China.

During the turbulent years of the cultural revolution, scholarship in China was placed subordinate to politics in all academic fields of endeavor, and little important research was published on Dazu until the more open atmosphere of the early 1980s. At that time a renewed interest in the study

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65 Only some eighty copies were printed. Chen Xishan 陈习娴, *Dazu shike zhilue* 大足石刻志略 (Dazu: Dazu xian renmin zhengfu, 1955). A revised edition of this manuscript was published as part of a compilation of articles and research on Dazu published in 1985 with notes added by Hu Wenhe and Liu Changjiu; see Chen Xishan et al., “Dazu shike zhilue jiaozhu 大足石刻志略校注,” in *Dazu shike yanjiu* 大足石刻研究 (hereafter *DSY*), ed. Liu Changjiu 刘长久 et al., (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan shubanshe, 1985), 183-356. Chen Xishan passed away in 1963 and his remains were interred in the north section of the Fowan site.

66 A list of articles and publications on Dazu from 1946 to 1984 is given in *DSY* with the exclusion of some Taiwanese publications; see *DSY*, 175-182. It should be noted that since 1957 a number of books have been published in China under the title Dazu Shike 大足石刻 most of these have little scholarly value, and are directed a more general audience. The most significant of these publications is *Dazu shike*, which was published in 1962 under the direction of the sculpture department of the Sichuan Fine Arts Academy includes a good introductory overview and over 200 black and white plates including some of the lesser reproduced images; see Sichuan meishu xueyuan 四川美术学院, *Dazu shike* 大足石刻 (Beijing: Chaohua meishu chubanshe, 1962). Part of the text written by Li Sisheng 李巳生 is also reprinted in *DSY*, 1-13.

67 There has been a conscious effort to promote the art of Dazu since 1979, when a film was produced about the cliff sculpture of Dazu. In 1985-86 an exhibition of photos traveled to several cities in China, and a number of books directed at a popular audience where published since the mid-eighties, some with English and Japanese text.
of Dazu surfaced parallel to the opening of the area to the outside world for the first time in the spring of 1980. A significant development at this time was a conference held on Dazu in December 1982, which later led way to the publication of one of the most significant books for research on the carvings of Dazu titled *Dazu shike yanjiu* 大足石刻研究 (Collected Works of Research on Dazu Stone Carvings), cited earlier as *DSY*, published in 1985. Almost two decades later, this text still serves as the primary reference source for factual information about the area and has been an valuable source of information for this dissertation. Intended as a summation of previous research done about Dazu in China up to that time, the text is comprised of three parts: a collection of earlier published articles about the art and epigraphical record of Dazu, an updated version of Chen Xishan’s *Dazu shike zhilue* with notes, and a comprehensive inventory of the contents of all the major cliff sculpture sites in Dazu County titled *Dazu shike neirong zonglu* 大足石刻内容总录 or “Comprehensive Record of Stone Carvings in Dazu,” (hereafter referred to as *NRZL*). The latter provides a somewhat reliable account of each niche at sites in Dazu and establishes the iconography and dating for most the niches/caves at these sites. However, this inventory does have some lapses and incorrect attributions. A number of amendments and corrections are suggested for information concerning the Fowan. These are given in the appendices and discussed in other portions of this study.

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68 The *NRZL* was also published as a separate volume; see Sichuan sheng shehui kexue yuans 四川省社会科学院, et al., *Dazu shike neirong zong lu* 大足石刻内容总录 (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1985). It is based on earlier materials and reexamination of the sites conducted over an eight month period in 1984. All page references to the *NRZL* in this study refer to the version in *DSY.*
Since and concurrent to the publication of *DSY*, Chinese scholars have continued to produce numerous articles and several monographs about the art of the area. Many articles are found in the journal *Sichuan wenwu* (hereafter *SW*), which published a special issue on cliff sculpture in 1986, and in other Chinese journals such as *Wenwu* (hereafter *WW*) and Dunhuang Yanjiu (hereafter *DHY*). Additionally, papers given at the national conference on Dazu since 1982 have been compiled in separate volumes. As well, a number of overviews of Dazu have been published for general readers in western languages.

The more significant monographs on the area include the twelfth volume of the *Zhongguo meishu quanji diaosu pian* series edited by Li Sisheng 李巳生 published in 1988, which provides full page color reproductions of important images found in Sichuan with a concise

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69 The special issue of *SW* published at the end of 1986 includes twenty-six articles. All but four specifically address some aspect of the art of Dazu.

70 Conferences have been held in 1982, 1986, 1992, and 1995. Materials from the first conference are compiled in the *Dazu shike tong yanjiu tongxun* 1 (1983) and those from 1986 in *Dazu shike tong yanjiu tongxun* 2, 3 (1986). Papers from the third annual conference, held in 1992, are compiled in Chen Mingguang 陈明光. ed., *Dazu shike yanjiu wenxuan* 大足石刻研究文选 (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995); papers from the fourth conference held in 1995 are compiled in Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 ed., *Dazu shike yanjiu wenji* 2 大足石刻研究文集 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997). Another compilation of articles is found in the *Dazu shike yanjiu wenji* 大足石刻研究文集 (Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe, 1994).

71 There are any number of these surveys with photographs. Most contain roughly the same information and reproduce the same images. One of the more recent publications of this type with a fairly concise English introduction to Dazu is Wang Qingyu ed., *Dazu Rock Carvings of China* (Hong Kong: Wan Li Book Co. and Chongqing Press, 1991). Also see Bai Ziran 白自然, ed, *Dazu Grottoes* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984).
introductory overview of the history of Buddhist/Daoist sculpture of Sichuan.\textsuperscript{72} Li Fangyin's 黎方银 Dazu shike yishu 大足石窟艺术, first published in 1990 and now in its second edition, is a useful and reader-friendly introduction to the study of the art of Dazu, providing an overview of the major sites, iconographic forms, and important inscriptions from the area. A comprehensive overview of the cliff sculpture of Sichuan is given in Hu Wenhe's 胡文和 Sichuan daojiao, fojiao shiku yishu 四川道教佛教石窟艺术 (1994), which is organized in two parts. The first section provides overviews of all the major carving sites in Sichuan and is organized according to geographic location using the major rivers of Sichuan as reference points. The second half is organized according to content and discusses the periodization of the sites in the region.\textsuperscript{73} His more recent Anyue-Dazu fo diao 安岳大足佛雕 (1999) is a more focused survey the art of Anyue and Dazu, which are often discussed separately in Chinese scholarship although they share a great deal of affinity.\textsuperscript{74} In this work he situates the sites in Dazu in relation to sites in Anyue County, known in Tang and Song times as Puzhou 普州, located to the northwest of Dazu.

\textsuperscript{72} Li Sisheng 李巳生 ed., Zhongguo meishu quanjì, diaosu pian, 12: Sichuan shiku diaosu 中国美术全集, 雕塑篇, 12: 四川石窟雕塑 (Beijing: Renmen meishu chubanshe, 1988).

\textsuperscript{73} Hu Wenhe 胡文和, Sichuan daojiao fojiao shiku yishu 四川道教佛教石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1994). The weakness of this study is the iconographic sections, which rely heavily on outdated texts such as Alice Getty, The Gods of Northern Buddhism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928).

\textsuperscript{74} Hu Wenhe 胡文和, Anyue Dazu fo diao 安岳大足佛雕, Fojiao meishu quanjì 佛教美术全集 vol.10 (Taipei: Yishujia, 1999).
In addition to these works already cited, in the last few years a number of surveys of the cliff sculpture of Sichuan, and on the Dazu area in particular, have appeared. These include Liu Changjiu’s Zhongguo xinan shiku yishu 中国西南石窟艺术 (1998), which is a useful overview that includes transcriptions of inscriptions found in Sichuan and surveys materials in Guangxi and Yunnan in addition to Sichuan.\textsuperscript{75} Other sets of books include volumes number 7 and 8 of the Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji 中国石窟雕塑全集 series,\textsuperscript{76} and the recent four volume set of the Dazu shike diaosu quanji 大足雕塑全集, with one volume dedicated to Beishan, published in 1999 and edited by Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 and Li Fangyin 黎方银.\textsuperscript{77} These volumes provide introductory essays, and large numbers of full page color reproductions. However, many of these unfortunately include often-reproduced images and exclude many images that would be of interest but that are not readily viewable or are off limits to photography by visitors.

One of the most significant contributions in recent years to the study of Dazu has been the the publication of the Dazu mingwen lu (hereafter MWL)

\textsuperscript{75} Liu Changjiu 刘长久 ed., Zhongguo xinan shiku yishu 中国西南石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan Renmin Chubanshe, 1998).

\textsuperscript{76} Li Sisheng 李世生 ed., Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji 中国石窟雕塑全集, 7: 大足 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999); Liu Changjiu 刘长久 ed., Zhongguo shiku diaosu quanji: 8 Sichuan, Chongqing 中国石窟雕塑全集, 8: 四川，重庆 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999).

\textsuperscript{77} Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 and Li Fangyin 黎方银 ed., Dazu shike diaosu quanji 1: Beishan shiku juan 大足石刻雕塑全集：北山石窟卷 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999). A smaller box set of these books under the same title, which includes the same photographs but at about 1/6 size and with only a brief introductory text repeated in all four of the volumes, has also been published.
大足石刻铭文录, “Record of the Epigraphy in Dazu,” published in 2000, which provides a comprehensive compilation and transcription of all the epigraphic materials at sites in Dazu county.\textsuperscript{78} The MWL is a remarkable work of scholarship that took the better part of a decade to complete and corrects many of the earlier mistakes in the NRZL and the earlier DSZJ. My dissertation relies extensively on this text for transcriptions of inscriptions at Beishan. During two field research trips I was only able to transcribe a limited number inscriptions myself; however, when possible I did compare the transcriptions in the MWL with originals at the site and found no significant errors in legible inscriptions.\textsuperscript{79}

Almost every study of the area makes reference to the Beishan; however, the scholarship devoted exclusively to the Beishan is fairly limited.\textsuperscript{80} To date, Beishan has not been the focused subject of a single scholarly monograph or in-depth journal article in a western language. The site has been more thoroughly published in Chinese; however, with the exception of a few articles, most publications about the site are little more than ad hoc summaries that simply restate known facts, without significantly reassessing

\textsuperscript{78} Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 ed., \textit{Dazu shike mingwen lu} 大足石刻铭文录 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999).

\textsuperscript{79} The only incorrect transcription I found was one missing character from an inscription in niche number 1 at Guanyinyan, which is noted in appendix B, number 2.1. However, my comparison was not exhaustive.

\textsuperscript{80} Until the more recent discovery of images dated to the Early Tang at Jianshanzi 尖山子 near the Anyue county line in 1987, imagery at Beishan was considered the oldest site in the county. Jianshanzi and the nearby site of Shengshuizi are reported in Chen Mingguang 陈明光, “Dazu Jianshanzi, Shengshuizi moya zaoxiang diaocha jianbao 大足尖山子圣水寺摩崖造像调查简报,” in \textit{Dazu shike kaogu yu yanjiu}, edited by Chen Mingguang, 140-155, (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2001).
the work of earlier scholars or broadening the horizons of our understanding of these materials. Most studies of Beishan offer overviews of the site or have focused more on the important stele inscriptions found at the site. Among the former, Yan Wenru's brief but concise overview of the Fowan is particularly useful.\(^{81}\) Unlike other studies that discuss the periodization of the Beishan site according to the political subdivisions of the Late Tang (896-906), Five Dynasties (907-960), and Song (960-1162) periods, Yan adopted a two part scheme that groups the Late Tang and Five Dynasties together as one period and the Song as a separate period. A more recent article by Liu Xiaoping and Yin Jianhua attempts to sort out the imagery at the Fowan dating to the Five Dynasties period.\(^{82}\) They see the Five Dynasties imagery at the site as being transitional between the Tang and Song periods,\(^{83}\) but somewhat over-generalize the characteristics of the period at the site.

The most significant research on the site has been done by Li Fangyin, the current assistant director of the Dazu Research Institute, who has published several articles about various aspects of the site and has co-edited the aforementioned Beishan volume of the *Dazu shike diaosu quanji* series, which incorporates the main themes of his previous articles. The first of these articles, "Periodization of the Fowan Caves at Beishan, Dazu," written with Wang Xixiang and published in the journal *Wenwu* in 1988, is concerned

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83 Liu Xiaoping 刘笑平 and Yin Jianhua 尹建华, 38.
primarily with determining the occurrence of image types and the morphology of niches over the time span of the site. A second more recent article on Beishan by Li Fangyin, "Dazu Beishan shiku gongyangren tiji" (Donor Inscriptions at Dazu’s Beishan Caves), is an extensive overview of dedicatory inscriptions at Beishan. Both articles provide a useful breakdown of factual information about the site into concise categories; however, the deficiency of both these articles, and one that can be cited for much work in the area, is that they do not attempt to interpret the significance of the findings beyond a reification of the generic historical construct of each period or explore fully the relationship of the imagery of the site to other imagery in the region and elsewhere. Moreover, to date, no study has focused on the iconography of the Fowan beyond providing the rudimentary identification of the subject matter of imagery.

The Fowan represents an unique regional monument with many important insights into local culture, religion, and art. To contribute to the understanding of the site, this dissertation provides a comprehensive account of the iconography of the Buddhist imagery at the site. It goes further than earlier studies by establishing the relationship of the imagery at the Fowan with other imagery in the region and the social-historical context of the site. This study further clarifies the imagery at the Fowan site and makes a number of amendments to previously unidentified or misidentified imagery found there. Up to this point the study of the site has been primarily limited


85 Li Fangyin 黎方银, “Dazu Beishan shiku gongyangren tiji 大足北山石窟供养人题记,” in Dazu shike yanjiu wenji 2, edited by Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997).
to general overviews and has been accessible only to readers of Chinese. As such, this dissertation represents the first formal account of the site in western literature. It sheds light on the significance of the sculpture at the Fowan site and its uniqueness as a Buddhist monument that reflects a matrix of popular Buddhist beliefs and practices flourishing in the local area and region from the ninth through the mid-twelfth centuries.

1.4. Outline of the study

This thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter two provides a survey of the Buddhist carvings of Beishan and the historical setting of the Dazu area in the late ninth through mid-twelfth centuries. The second chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the development of cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan to situate the Buddhist art of Beishan in relation to regional developments. This is followed by a sketch of the history of Beishan in general and a survey of the sites located there. Special attention is given to the Fowan, which is the primary cliff sculpture site at Beishan and the focus of this study. The sequential developments at the Fowan site are discussed in relation to the historical setting of the Sichuan Basin and its broader cultural environment.

The next two chapters, chapters three and four, focus on the iconography of the imagery found at the Fowan site and their relation to images at other sites in Sichuan. To provide a framework to discuss these iconographies they are organized under the broad categories of Esoteric and Pure Land imagery. Consideration is given to illuminate the relationships between the imagery in these two categories in terms of doctrine and praxis,
as well as the shared religious aspirations that underpinned the sponsorship of this imagery. Chapter three and four, begin respectively with a sketch of the religious concepts and historical development of Chinese Esoteric and Pure Land Buddhism. The iconographic forms discussed in these two chapters focuses on one or several important image(s) at the Fowan site, but also discusses, or make reference to, other related images at the site and, when relevant, those located elsewhere. The images discussed are chosen for their art historical importance as being the most representative and artistically the most outstanding or unique, but are not intended to be all inclusive.

Chapter three discusses the iconographies of ten different deities associated with Chinese Esoteric Buddhism (mijiao 密教) including three different iconographic forms of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Other iconographies that are discussed include Vaiśravaṇa, Tejaprabha, Marici, Hāriti, Mahāmayūri, Acalanātha, and Buddhoshniśavijaya dhāraṇī pillars. My approach in discussing these iconographies is not only to relate given iconographic forms with their textual source, but to situate them within the given social-historical context of the site and, when relevant, to describe the symbolic relationship between different imagery at the site.

Following the same scheme from the previous chapter, chapter four examines popular Pure Land (jingtu 净土) iconographic themes found at the site. After a brief introductory section, it discusses the iconographies of Buddhas and Buddhist paradises found at the site, in particular those related to the Buddhas Amitābha, Maitreya, and Bhaisajyaguru. It then examines the iconographies of the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and
Kṣitigarbha. Four different iconographies of Avalokiteśvara are addressed. These include the popular Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara, the theme of ten Avalokiteśvara, and the pairing of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. A separate section discusses imagery of the semi-divine monk Sengqie 僧伽, who was considered a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara and was widely worshipped in Late Tang and Song times.

To support the arguments made in this study and to provide a comprehensive account of the Fowan site, three appendix sections are included. The first section provides an inventory of the imagery of all the numbered niches/caves at the site. The second and third provide transcriptions and translations of a major portion of the epigraphy found at the site.
CHAPTER 2


Abstract

This chapter discusses the history and periodization of Beishan and the Fowan site. My intention is to provide an overview of the physical layout of the site and investigate its development with respect to the history of the region and local area. This investigation shows that political and economic conditions were important factors in the development of the site over time. The three phases of activity at the Fowan site are analyzed to demonstrate the sequential development of the site and the typological characteristics of its imagery.

This chapter provides an overview of the Buddhist carvings at Beishan by describing the history, layout, typology, and general chronology of activity at the site. In order to situate the site in its proper art historical context, it is necessary to first provide a brief historical sketch of the history of Buddhist art, in particular cliff sculpture, in the region of Sichuan up to the Late Tang period, when the first images were carved at Beishan. Following that historical sketch of the development of Buddhist art in the region, the history of the Beishan site from its founding through the Song Dynasty and the general contextual information extrinsic to the local history will be discussed. I will then focus on the carvings and inscriptions at the site by providing a survey of the contents of the Fowan and secondary sites at Beishan. My discussion will then specifically address the periodization of the sculpture at
the Fowan and provide an overview of the iconographic subject matter, stylistic typology, and epigraphy found at the site for each of the three general phases of artistic activity that occurred there.

2.1 The Buddhist sculpture of Sichuan

Before the first Buddhist images were carved in the sandstone cliffs of Beishan in the late ninth century, the region of Sichuan had already developed a rich legacy of Buddhist stone sculpture, which can be traced to the earliest substratum of Chinese Buddhist imagery in the funerary art of the Later Han Dynasty (25-220 CE). During the Six Dynasties period (220-581 CE), when Buddhism took root in China, Yizhou 益州 (modern Chengdu), the regional center of Sichuan, became one of the leading centers of Buddhism in southern China. Only a few examples of cliff sculpture in the region date to that period; however, a large number of free standing stone statuary have been recovered from several different former temple sites, especially in the vicinity of Chengdu. During the Tang Dynasty (618-907), great numbers of Buddhist imagery were carved at cliff sites near local centers in northern Sichuan, most importantly in Bazhong and Guangyuan counties, and in the western and central portions of the Sichuan Basin, such as in Qionglai, Pujiang, Danleng 丹棱, Jiajiang 夹江, Zizhong 资中, and Anyue 安岳 counties (see Map 7). By the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the major center of activity had shifted

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to sites in the central and eastern portion of the basin, especially in the counties of Dazu 大足 and Anyue 安岳, which represent the most prolific areas of cliff sculpture in China during that period.

Throughout this history, the Buddhist imagery in Sichuan is characterized by both external influences, most prominently from the northern political centers of China, and distinctive regional elements, which were a product of the artistic traditions and social-cultural environment unique to the region. Although Sichuan has a wealth of cliff sculpture compared to other areas of China, the region’s extant Buddhist imagery in the form of free standing stone statuary and cliff sculpture from the Song and earlier periods represents only one aspect of the Buddhist art that was produced in this economically vibrant region through the largess of its wealthy inhabitants. A larger body of material representing murals and sculpted images in clay and metal were located in temples and monasteries that have long since vanished. According to various historical sources some of the most resplendent Buddhist temples of the Tang Dynasty, were found in the area of Chengdu. The largest of these temples was the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺(也 referred to as the Shengcisi 圣慈寺 or Dacisi 大慈寺) temple, which reportedly had ninety-six precincts (yuan 院) and 8,500 chambers that were filled with murals and sculpted imagery by many preeminent artisans of the Later Tang
and Five Dynasties periods. In the Late Tang through Song periods, with which this study is concerned, the art of this and other temples in Chengdu undoubtedly influenced the content and representational mode of the Buddhist imagery at Sichuan’s cliff sculpture sites. The wealth of the Buddhist art in the region during the Tang Dynasty was in part spurred by the Tang emperors Xizong (r. 873-888) and Xuanzong (r. 712-755) who fled to the region in wake of the Anshan and Huangchao rebellions.

These emperors were followed by a large entourage that included monks and artists, many of whom specialized in religious painting and provided a wealth of styles and models. The earliest Buddhist imagery found in Sichuan dates to slightly before or during the Sanguo (Three Kingdoms) Period (220-280 CE). This imagery, which includes relief carvings and bronze objects such as money...

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5 Accounts of works in this temple are found in several historical texts. The most important of these texts are the YZMHL and the Tuhua jianwenzi 图画见文志 (hereafter TJZ). The general description of the temple and the art it contains is given by Li Zhichun 李之纯 of the Song in his Dashengcisi hua ji 大圣慈寺画记 (Record of the Paintings in the Great Compassion Temple). According to the YZMHL, a particularly active period for temple painting was during the dazhong (847-59) and qianfu (874-9) reign eras, when two hundred sections of wall painting were repainted in several of Chengdu’s major temples. See Matsubara Saburo 松原三朗, “Shō Tō chokoku ikō no tenkai 盛唐雕刻以降の展開,” Bijutsu kenkyu 231 (1968: 11-30): 28.

3 According to Yang Xuezheng 杨学政, the imagery of the Dashengcisi temple was also influential to the Buddhist art of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdoms in Yunnan and provided the primary source for the iconography of much of the imagery in the famous Long Scroll of Buddhist images; see Yang Xuezheng 杨学政, Yunnan Zongjiaoshi 云南宗教史. (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1999), 75-77.

4 See the preface to the Yizhou minghua lu 益州名画录, written by Li Tian 李畋 by in 1006.

5 For an overview of the famous painters of the region in Late Tang through Song times, see Gu Quanda 贾大全, "Songdai Sichuan huihua 宋代四川绘画," SW 2 (1986):31-34.
trees (qianshu 钱树), has been found exclusively in the mortuary context, where Buddhist imagery is mixed with depictions of mythical beings and other indigenous funerary imagery. For this reason, many scholars believe that this imagery reflects not Buddhist beliefs, but rather the appropriation of Buddhist imagery to serve an apotropaic function before the religious and philosophical principles of the religion were fully understood. Similar “Buddhist” mortuary imagery occurs throughout southern China, especially along the Yangtze river basin. The placement of Buddhist images in tombs may have been modeled after the tomb of Emperor Ming (r. 58-76 CE) of the Han, which reportedly contained Buddhist imagery, including an image of a Buddha. The most well known example from Sichuan, which may also be the earliest extant Buddha image in China, is found in Mahao 坟浩 tomb 1, not far from the base of the ninth century Dafo 大佛 (Giant Buddha) of Leshan.

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6 For an overview of this imagery and different proposed routes of transmission, see Ruan Rongchun 阮荣春, 《佛教南传之路》 (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2000).


8 See Luoyang qielan ji 洛阳伽蓝记, 198, T.51.2092.1014b; Wu Hung, Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 133. Emperor Ming is credited with the founding of the first Buddhist temple in China. Given the relative opulence of the tombs of Sichuan it would not be a far stretch to imagine that wealthy inhabitants of the region would have tried to emulate the tombs of the Han court. However, besides the literary reference to emperor Ming’s tomb, similar Buddhist or Buddha-like objects have yet to be found in the numerous tombs that have been excavated in northern China.
乐山，the largest stone Buddha image carved in traditional China.\(^9\) The tomb is dated to approximately the late second century CE and represents a type of horizontal shaft tomb popular in the region from the Han Dynasty. A small Buddha seated in the lotus position (\textit{padmāsana}) and making the \textit{abhaya} and \textit{urna mudrās} is depicted in low relief on the lintel above the tomb shaft in the fore chamber of the tomb (Figure 2.1).\(^{10}\) The prominent placement of the image in the tomb is evidence that Buddhism had already made inroads into the beliefs of the local elites in the region during the second century CE.

Chinese scholars have postulated that the model for this imagery could have been imported into the region via trade routes that extended from the regional center of Yizhou (modern Chengdu), through Yunnan, and into Burma and Eastern India.\(^{11}\) Although there is some literary evidence for the

\(^9\)Legend has the first Buddha image appearing in China in 64-75 CE. This legend is described in the preface of the famous \textit{Scripture in Forty-two Sections}, T.17.784.722. However, not until the second century are there more reliable historical sources recording the worship of Buddhist imagery in China.

\(^{10}\)Not far away, two similar images of Buddhas are carved on the wall of a tomb 1 at Shiziwon 柿子湾, also in Leshan.

\(^{11}\)This route is variously called the Southwest Silk Road, the Yunnan-Burma Road (\textit{Dianmian dao} 滇缅道), and the Sichuan-India Road (\textit{Shu Shendu dao} 蜀身毒道). It has recently come under more attention, but its importance is contested. For an overview see Jiang Yuxiang 江玉祥, ed., \textit{Gudai xinan sichou zhi lu yanjiu} 古代西南丝绸之路研究 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1995); Deng Tingliang 邓廷良, \textit{Silu wenhua: Xinan juan} 丝路文化: 西南卷 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1995).
existence of these routes, there is insufficient information to confirm their vitality and their impact on the region in economic and cultural terms. The style of the Buddha in the Mahao tomb and other examples in Sichuan point to northwestern China as a route of transmission during the formative stages of Buddhism in China. Later, in the fourth to sixth centuries, a number of Central Asian monks are recorded to have reached Sichuan from Gansu, and the same route could have been used earlier when this imagery first appeared in the region. The routes connecting Sichuan with Gansu and the Hexi corridor remained important in later periods as the two regions maintained contact with each other during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods, as evidenced by documents found at the Mogao cave site in Dunhuang.

From Sichuan, this early “Buddhist” funerary imagery appears to have spread along the Yangtze river into eastern China where similar imagery appears on mortuary artifacts, notably on so-called spirit vases (hunping) and bronze mirrors, though the fourth century.

During the Six Dynasties period, the regional center of Sichuan, Yizhou (modern Chengdu), became one of the major Buddhist centers in south China, rivaling Jiankang 建康 (modern Nanjing, Jiangsu), the political and cultural center of the south. In this period, numerous monks are associated with the

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12 The first and most famous account of this route is given in the 123rd chapter of Simaqian’s Shiji 史记 (ca.90 B.C.E), which records that emperor Wu of the Han, having learned of the existence of a trade between India and Sichuan from the emissary Zhang Qian 张骞, dispatched a military force to open the route, but it had difficulty making headway with the indigenous population of Yunnan.

13 The routes and evidence of communications between Dunhuang and Sichuan are discussed by Chen Zuolong 陈祚龙, “Zhongshi Dunhuang yu Chengdu zhijian de jiaotong luxian 中世敦煌与成都之间的交通路线,” Dunhuang xue 1 (July 1974): 79-85.
region and the regional center of Chengdu. These include a number of direct disciples of famous masters, such as Daoan 道安, Huiyuan 慧远, and Fotuteng 佛图澄. Historical and epigraphical evidence of the period indicates that Buddhism received the support of local rulers. Lay devotional organizations called yiyi 邑义 that were popular in the northern China were also found in Sichuan during this time. The earliest dated Buddhist imagery in the region from this period dates to the early fifth century and is primarily found in the general vicinity of Chengdu at former temple sites. The most well known images come from a horde of stone statuary and stele found at the former site of the Wanfosi 万佛寺 temple in Chengdu, which were buried in the mid 9th

14 Evidence of Buddhist activity in Sichuan is provided by the Biographies of Eminent Monks (Gaosengzhuan 高僧传) of Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554), T.50.2059, which mentions about twenty different monks associated with Sichuan and the Chengdu area between the fourth and sixth centuries. Dorothy Wang, The Beginnings of the Buddhist Stele Tradition in China (Diss., Harvard University, 1995), 135.


16 This is evident from an inscription on an image of Śākyamuni dated 529 from the Wanfosi that identifies the sponsor as the Commandant of Yizhou. Also, Daowang and Huichi received the support of the governor and magistrate of Chengdu; see Zürcher, 211, 395 n. 154.

Several of the images in this horde are datable to the Nan Bei Chao period (420-479), when Sichuan was ruled from Nanjing by the Southern Dynasties (Song 宋, Qi 齊, and Liang 梁) until the region was fully annexed by the Western Wei 西魏 and Bei Zhou 北周 in 556. Since little ephemera survives from the southern political centers, this imagery forms the main body of materials for discussing the so-called “southern style” of Buddhist art, which they are believed to exemplify. Many of these images are superbly carved and represent a distinctive representational mode that is more plastic and less rigid than the dominant trends of northern Buddhist sculpture during the period. A characteristic of this imagery and others found in the region that date to the fifth and sixth centuries is the prominence of Pure Land subject matter, such as depictions of the Buddhas Amitābha and Maitreya. Such subject matter may reflect of the missionary efforts of the disciples of Huiyuan and Daoming, early proponents of Pure Land beliefs, who

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18 For an overview of the Wanfosi materials see Liu Zhiyuan 刘志远 and Liu Tingbi 刘廷壁 eds., Chengdu Wanfosi shike yishu 成都万佛寺石刻艺术 (Beijing: Zhongguo gudian yishu chubanshe, 1959). There are also a large number of more recent articles published in Japanese and Chinese publications on the materials from this and other sites in the area. For a recent recent study see Yagi Haruo 八木春生, "Buddhist Sculpture Production in the Chengdu Region, China 中国成都地方の佛教造像について," Ars Buddhica 260 (January 2002): 33-60. Many of the atatuary from the Fowansi and other sites around Chengdu are kept in the Sichuan Provinicial Museum in Chengdu.

were patronized by the region’s elites. In later periods, Sichuan remained an important center of Pure Land devotion, and imagery related to Pure Land beliefs remained a dominant theme at the region’s cliff sculpture sites.

The first significant Buddhist cliff sculpture sites in the region date to the sixth century after Sichuan became a satellite of the Northern Dynasties. The earliest of these sites are located in the strategically important area of Guangyuan 广元 in northern Sichuan, where free-standing imagery dating to the Northern Wei period has also been found. Guangyuan, known as Lizhou 利州 in ancient times, has traditionally been seen as the northern entry point into the Sichuan Basin. The important routes over the Daba mountains to the political centers of the Zhongyuan 中原 (Central Plain) in the north and the Hexi corridor to the northwest passed through Guangyuan before reaching the fertile area of the Chengdu Plain. Reconstructed remnants of the famous ancient plank road (zhandao 栈道) of the ancient Jinniudao 金牛道, which hangs precariously on the sides of

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21 This part of Sichuan came under the influence of the Northern Dynasties before Chengdu. On recently discovered images; see Guangyuanshi wenwu baoguanlisuo 光元市文物保护理所, "Guangyuan xin faxian de fojiao zaoxiang 光元新发现的佛教造像," *WW* 6 (1990): 30-33.
cliffs and lead into Sichuan over the formidable Daba mountains that form Sichuan’s northern border, are located only a short distance north of the city (Figure 2.2). Near the city center of Guangyuan, several small excavated caves, located at the Huangzhesi 皇泽寺 and Qianfoya 千佛崖 sites on opposite sides of the Jialing River, can be dated to the sixth century. In general, these caves display a strong affinity to contemporary northern sites reflecting the Western Wei and Bei Zhou styles of imagery and cave morphology, but carried out on a smaller scale with more provincial mannerisms.

It is not until the Tang Dynasty that Buddhist cliff sculpture became prevalent in the region, especially after the mid-eighth century. Cliff sculpture sites dating to the Tang are found scattered throughout the region. The most important sites dating to the Early to Mid Tang periods are located in northern Sichuan and in the proximity of the Chengdu Plain. However, smaller sites with imagery dating to the seventh century are found as far southeast as the present area of Dazu county. The larger more important sites were located in close proximity to inter-regional centers often on the major routes leading to the regional center of Chengdu. During the Early to High Tang periods (618-848), cliff sculpture sites in Guangyuan were increasingly active. This activity may have been given additional impetus by

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22 The earliest excavated cave at these sites may be the Dafodong at the Qianfoya, which Li Shisheng 李巳生 dates to around 509. See Li Shisheng, Zhongguo meishu quanji, diaosu pian, 12: Sichuan shiku diaosu 中国美术全集, 雕塑篇, 12: 四川石窟雕塑 (Beijing: Renmen meishu chubanshe, 1988), 5.

the city’s strategic importance and its location as the birthplace of Wu Zetian 武则天 (627-704), the first female ruler of China and a strong proponent of Buddhism. One of the largest niches carved in Guangyuan in the early Tang is niche 28 at the Huangzesi site, which depicts a large Amitābha Buddha teaching assembly and can be dated stylistically to the seventh century (Figure 2.3).\(^\text{24}\) An interesting feature of this niche is the inclusion of a group of attendant deities, known as the “Demigods of the Eight Quarters” (Tianlong babu 天龙八部) on the back of the niche.

behind the primary images (Figure 2.4). This detail is a popular motif in Tang imagery in Sichuan but is not readily seen at cliff sculpture sites elsewhere in China. At the nearby Qianfoya site many Tang caves feature Buddha teaching assemblies with the *Tianlong babu* and trees carved in low relief forming an ornate openwork stone screen behind the central assembly (Figure 2.5). In general, the Tang imagery at Guangyuan follows the figurative conventions of the classic Tang style with well-proportioned and softly rounded forms. For example, the image of the attendant bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in niche 2 at the Qianfoya site (Figure 2.6) is representative of the High Tang style of sculpture and reflects the quality of sculpture at the site as well as the affinity of imagery at the site with that of the political centers of the north.

Not far from Guangyuan, one of the most important early centers of cliff carving in Sichuan during the Tang Dynasty was the area of Bazhong, a small valley located on the *Mizang dao* 米仓道, the route used for the shipment of

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25 The *Tianlong babu* represent the eight categories of demi-gods or supernatural beings of the Indic world, which include *devas (tian zhong* 天众), *nāgas (long zhong* 龙众), *yakṣas (yecha* 夜叉), *asuras (axiuluo* 阿修罗), *garudas (ganlouluo* 迦楼罗), *maharagas (mahoulouga* 摩喉罗迦), *gandhavaras (gantapo* 迦闼婆), and *kinnaras (jinnaluo* 綿耶罗). As a group these demi-gods have no specific role but serve as protectors of the Buddhist teachings. They are frequently mentioned in Buddhist *sūtras* as part of teaching assemblies.
grains to the political centers of the north.\textsuperscript{26} Cliff sculpture at Bazing is dated as early as the Sui Dynasty, but most of the sites in the area were most active during the Early to Mid Tang periods. The major impetus for cliff sculpture at sites in Bazing was the arrival of a group of Tang princes who were exiled to the area by empress Wu Zetian. It is believed that the representational mode of the Buddhist imagery at sites in the area is a reflection of popular themes of the Tang capital, as the exiled princess tried to recreate the environment of their former lives there.\textsuperscript{27} However, the resulting imagery is quite different from those of a similar date at sites like Longmen near the northern political centers. One of the unique characteristics of Tang imagery in Bazing is the ornate decoration of the exterior of niches, such as in Figure 2.7, which are carved to emulate palace architecture. This intricate level of

\textsuperscript{26} On this route, see Liang Tingbo 梁廷保, "Gu Micangdao kao 古米倉道考," \textit{SW} 3 (2001): 22-23.

\textsuperscript{27} See Angela F.Howard (1988), 32.
niche ornamentation is unique to Bazhong and adjacent areas, with comparable imagery rarely found at other sites in the region. However, the ornamental surface treatment is a characteristic that is shared to varying degrees by Sichuan’s Buddhist sculpture in general, which tends to have a richer depiction of surfaces than contemporary images from northern China.

In addition to these sites in northern Sichuan, a number of Tang cliff sculpture sites are located in and around the area of the Chengdu Plain, traditionally the most culturally and economically developed area of the region. Many of these sites were in the proximity of Chengdu’s famous temples, such as the Dashengcisi, which had thousands of murals, many by famous artists sponsored by the court. The grandeur of this and other temples was undoubtedly influential to the content and representational mode of cliff sculpture sites in the surrounding areas. A number of the important themes in the imagery attributed to these temples are also shared with cliff sculpture sites. Several of the more important Tang sites in this area include Zhengshan in Danleng, Feixiange in Pujiang, Qianfoyan in Jiajiang, and Shisunshan in

Figure 2.8: Niches 28 and 29, Shisunshan, Qionglai. Photo by author, 1999.
Qionglai. The carvings at these sites were initiated by local officials, gentry, monks, and occasionally higher ranking officials. A rich variety of iconographical subject matter is found at these sites with most of the carvings on a human scale or smaller. One of the most impressive of these sites is Shisunshan 石笋山 (“stone bamboo shoot mountain”), which is located in the mountains on the western edge of the Chengdu Plain (Figure 2.8). Less successful as a work of art but overly impressive in scale is the giant Buddha of Leshan (c. 60 meters high), representing the future Buddha Maitreya, which was completed through the patronage of a provincial governor in the ninth century (Figure 2.9). This image inspired a number of similar large-scale images of Maitreya at other sites in the region, such as at sites in Renshou 仁寿 and Rongxian 荣县.

Another center of carving that emerged in the Tang was the area of

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Anyue 安岳, called Puzhou 普州 in Tang time, which continued to be an important center of Buddhist sculpture in the Song period. Anyue owed its prosperity to its location on trading routes between eastern Sichuan and Chengdu. Since Anyue is located in close proximity to Dazu, the Tang carvings there were influential to the development of cliff sculpture in Dazu. However, the most refined and accomplished carving in the area of Anyue does not occur until the Song Dynasty, with the most representative sites clustered in the area of Shiyang township (Shiyangzhen 石羊镇) in the southwest corner of the county adjacent to the modern border with Dazu county. The earliest site in Anyue is the Wofoyuan 卧佛院 (Reclining Buddha Temple), which is named after a large relief (25 meters wide) depicting the Parinirvāna of Śākyamuni.

Figure 2.10: Niche 3, Wofoyuan, Anyue. Photo by author, 2001.

Buddha, and dated to the early eighth century (Figure 2.10). Directly opposite the reclining Buddha at the base of the opposite cliff are a number of small excavated caves that have several hundred Buddhist sūtras engraved on their interior walls. These sūtras were engraved in stone as a means to insure the continuity and preservation of Buddhist teachings in the predicted future decline of the Dharma, which was a common belief among Buddhists of Sui and Tang times. Associated with this site is a local monk named Xuanying 玄应, who is also mentioned in inscriptions at several other Tang cliff sculpture sites in Anyue, but about whom little else is known.

Two other important Tang Buddhist cliff sculpture sites in Anyue are Yuanjuedong 圓覺洞 and Qianfozhai 千佛寨, which are located on hill tops that overlook the county seat of Anyue. The Qianfozhai (“Thousand Buddha Fortress”) site, like Beishan, is also believed to have been a fortified hill. At

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33 Similar more large scale projects were undertaken in northern China, such as the famous site of Yunjusi 云居寺 on mount Fangshan 房山, Hebei, and in the caves of Lingquansi (Mt. Bao) and Xiangtangshan. For a study of the latter, see Katherine R. Tsiang Mino, Bodies of Buddhas and Princes at the Xiangtangshan Caves: Image, Text, and Stūpa in Buddhist Art of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577) (Diss., University of Chicago, 1996), 153-201.


35 The name dates to the later Dynastic periods. The site was originally called Xiyansi 栖岩寺 after a temple on top the hill. For an overview of this site, see Tang Chengyi 唐承义, "Qianfo zhai moya zaoxiang 千佛寨摩崖造象," SW 2 (1989): 35-38.
the site, Buddhist images are carved along a south facing cliff just below the summit of the hill and consist of approximately one-hundred numbered niches that date to the Tang through Song Dynasties, with the earliest imagery dated to the eighth century. Most of the carvings at the site are in a poor state of preservation, but several images toward the top of the cliff are better preserved. Some of the Tang niches at the site, such as the Buddha niches in Figure 2.11, are related to representational modes at sites in northern Sichuan that include depictions of dvarapālas figures, pairs of trees, and the Tianlong babu. Similar to the Fowan site, the larger more “monumental” carvings at the site were added in the Song Dynasty. The Yuanjuedong located on a hilltop on the opposite side of the town of Anyue was the site of a

Figure 2.11: Upper row of niches, Qianfozhai, Anyue. Photo by author, 1999.

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36 Liu Changjiu (1999), 30, refers to the imagery of Anyue as a further elaboration of the High Tang art of Bazhong. Similar to Beishan, carvings at the Qianfozhai span through the Song with the last dated imagery from the late twelfth century.
temple called the Lingjusi 灵居寺. The carvings there include 103 numbered niches that date to the Tang, Five Dynasties, and Northern Song Periods, which are carved on two sides of a large rock outcropping at the summit of the hill. The more monumental carvings at the site date to the Northern Song period and are located on the main, north facing side of the site. Those dating to the Tang and Five Dynasties periods are found on the southern facing side of the site. Several inscriptions found at the site dating to Tang Dynasty indicate that a local Buddhist lay association sponsored some of the imagery under the leadership of Zhao Yihe 赵仪和, a local military official. Although formal lay organizations are not noted in inscriptions at Beishan or other sites in Dazu, similar social mechanisms could have orchestrated the sponsorship of imagery at cliff sculpture sites led by dominate local officials and supported by local monks.

In the areas neighboring Anyue, there are a number of sites with Tang imagery. One of the largest and most important sites is that of Chonglongshan in Zizhong, which was largely carved in the Mid Tang period. Like many of the other sites discussed above there is little historical


38 The earliest dated inscription at this site is dated to the kaiyuan reign era (732). For a study of this site, see Henrik H. Sorensen, The Buddhist Sculptures at Yuanjuedong in Anyue: The History and Art of a Buddhist Sanctuary in Central Sichuan Province (Copenhagen: Seminar for Buddhist Studies, 1999).


40 This site was active in the Mid Tang to Five Dynasties period. Most of the large niches date before the mid-ninth century. For a survey of this site, see Wang Xixiang 王熙祥 and Zeng Deren 曾德仁, “Sichuan Zizhong Chonglongshan moya zaoxiang” 四川资中重龙山摩崖造像. WW 8 (1988: 19-30).
documentation to fully contextualize the site. The most impressive niche at this site is number 113 (c. 4 x 4 meters), which has a large image of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.12).41 The primary image of this niche is somewhat awkward, but lavish attention has been given to the depiction of the twenty-eight groups of attendants carved in low relief. This subject matter was very popular in Sichuan, and almost every major site in the region with Mid and Late Tang imagery features at least one image of this deity.42

41 A large reproduction of this image is also found in Janet Baker ed. The Flowering of a Foreign Faith: New Studies in Chinese Buddhist Art. (Mumbai, India: Marg Publications, 1998), 16-17. Also see Figure 9 in Wang Xixiang and Ceng Deren, 21, 24.

In the current area of Dazu County, two cliff sculpture sites predate the carvings at the Fowan site.\(^{43}\) However, when imagery was carved at these sites they were located within the borders of Puzhou (modern Anyue county), not Dazu. These sites are small and were only recently discovered in the 1980s. Both are located in the same general vicinity in the hills of the eastern portion of Dazu county. The earliest of these two sites, Jianshansi 尖山寺, has an inscription dated 666, which predates the creation of Dazu as an administrative area by almost one hundred years.\(^{44}\) There are nine niches at this site that are not well preserved but represent popular themes seen elsewhere in Sichuan. At the nearby site of Shengshuisi 圣水寺 are ten niches located on the northwest facing side of a large rock cropping at the top of a hill, several of which have been dated to the Mid Tang period on stylistic grounds. The largest niche at this site, number 3 (c. 2 x 2.4 meters), depicts the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (figure 2.13). The imagery of the

\(^{43}\) These sites are discussed in Chen Mingguang 陈明光 and Guo Xiangying 郭相颖, “Dazu Jianshanzi, Shengshuizi moya zaoxiang diaocha jianbao 大足尖山寺圣水寺摩崖造像调查简报,” WW 2 (1994): 30-37.

\(^{44}\) The political area of Dazu was created in 758. See Chen Mingguang 陈明光 and Li Fangyin 黎方银, “Dazu Jianshanzi faxian chu Tang shike zaoxiang 大足尖山子发现初唐石刻造像,” SW 4 (1988): 28-30.
niche is more simplified than niche 113 at Chonglongshan but includes the major deities of the bodhisattvas retinue. These sites indicate that before Beishan was founded the tradition of carving cliff sculptures was already established in the area, but on a limited scale compared to more developed areas to the north and west of Dazu. Significantly, these sites are both located in the western part of Dazu count in the former area of Jingnan, the home county of Wei Junjing, who initiated the Buddhist carving at the Fowan site on Mount Bei. It was not until the Late Tang period when Dazu became a local administrative center that cliff sculpture would begin to fully flourish.

In the next section the development of Dazu as a center of cliff sculpture will be examined through the history of Beishan from the Late Tang period. During this period Dazu became the de facto political-military center of the surrounding area in the wake of the devolution of regional governmental authority and subsequently developed as a flourishing market center that provided the economic means for the patronage of large numbers of cliff sculpture.

2.2 The history of the Beishan site and its historical setting

Based on epigraphical evidence, the history of the carving of Buddhist images at the Fowan and other sites on Mount Bei spans a period of roughly 262 years (892-1155). As sketched in chapter one, the first images

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45 The last dated donor inscription at one of the cliff sculpture sites on the hill is dated 1154 and is found in niche no.1 at Guanyinpo, see Appendix B, 2.1; MWL, 35 number 48. The last dated donor inscription in the Duobaota is dated 1155 and is located in niche number 55; see MWL, 449 number 12.
carved at the site are attributed to the last decade of the ninth century when Wei Junjing 韦君靖, the organizer of a powerful local militia network, established a stronghold on the hill during the first year of the jingfu 景福 reign era (892). This stronghold presumably fell to forces dispatched to the area of the eastern Sichuan in 896 by the loyalist Tang general Wang Jian 王建 (847-918), who later founded the Former Shu (Qian shu 前蜀) Kingdom (907-925). The events surrounding the founding of the site as a military stronghold are described in a stele inscribed on the southernmost rock face of the Fowan site, known as the Wei Junjing Stele (hereafter referred to as the Wei Stele), see Figure 2.14. The Wei Stele was inscribed in 895, one year before forces loyal to Wang Jian took control of the area. 46 Besides the information contained in the stele, little other historical information concerning the site and the surrounding area is available for this period of time, which corresponds with the final collapse of the Tang state.

46 A translation of the main text of the stele is given in Appendix C, number 2.
During the second half of the ninth century, the formation of local militias or defense forces, usually led by a prominent local landowner, became a widespread phenomena in many parts of the Tang empire, as local communities independent of the Tang government tried to maintain local order and protect themselves from banditry and other threats in the growing absence of central governmental authority. Some of these local militias consolidated to form larger defense systems centered around garrison towns (zhen 鎮) with units stationed in each town known as “Militias of Righteousness” (yijun 义军). The size of each unit could range from several hundred to several thousand men, many of whom were often recruited from the personal retainers of landlords who organized and served as the militia’s leaders. At its height, the militia force organized under Wei Junjing reached an estimated strength of some forty to fifty thousand men, forming some thirty different military units with four major strongholds. The names and


48 The formation of large militias became officially sanctioned during the reign of emperor Xizong (r.873-888) but remained separate from provincial armies. See Twitchet (1979), 751-52. The term yi 义 (righteousness) embodies the traditional ideal of the Chinese knight-errant as the righter of social injustice; see Winston W. Lo, “The Self Image of the Chinese Military in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of Asian History* 31 (1997): 11-12.


50 Hino Kaisaburo, 780. In addition to the Yongchang stronghold which served as Wei’s personal stronghold, the others include the Jinyun 进云, Gexian 葛仙, and Lingyun 凌云 strongholds. Next to Wei’s personal stronghold, the Jinyun stronghold appears to have been the most important since it was controlled by Wei’s relatives; see Masuo Kurihara 栗田益男, "Tömatsu no dōguteki zaichi shiryoku ni tsuite 唐末の土豪的在地勢力についてについて,“ *Rekishi gaku kenkyu* 7, 243 (July 1960): 5.
titles of 145 of Wei’s officers are listed on the Wei Stele. Many of the key positions were held by officers with the family name Wei, and a number of his officers had the title suishen 随身 (personal follower) added to their titles, indicating they held a “fictive” bond of filial kinship to Wei.51

The Yongchang stronghold (Yongchang zhai 永昌寨), founded in 892 on Beishan, became the hub of Wei’s military operations, which, according to the Wei Stele, had expanded to include four prefectures from his initial power base in the area of modern Dazu and Hechuan counties, formerly called Changzhou and Hezhou in Tang time. The stronghold is described in the stele as being virtually impregnable, with a defensive wall of two-thousand units in length and over one-hundred defensive towers, which added to the formidable natural defenses of the site. Only a few fragmented sections of the outer wall and inner wall of the keep of the stronghold remain.52 Based on the rugged appearance of the hill, which is ringed by steep cliffs, and its relative height, which provides a strategic overlook of the surrounding area, it is easy to understand why this site was chosen.

For a period of several years in the 890s the Yongchang stronghold became the military and political center of the surrounding area. It was during that time that the first images were carved in the rock formation in the area now known as the Fowan, which was then situated within the expansive


52 Remnants of the stronghold are discussed by Zhang Hua 张划 and Liu Shuyi 刘蜀仪, “You guan Wei Junjing bei zhong de jige yidian qianxi 有关韦君靖碑中的几个疑点浅析,” SW 1 (1986): 32-35. A sketch-map of the fortress is provided in the recent Dazu County Gazetteer, see DX, 744.
outer walls of the stronghold. This area may have been chosen for the carving of imagery because of its relative location near the precipice of the hill and its proximity to the primary entrance to the stronghold at the south base of the hill. In the final few lines of the Wei Stele, after a lengthy description of Wei Junjing’s ancestry, military accomplishments, and the events leading up to the selection of Mount Longgang (Beishan) for his stronghold, the inscription informs us that after the stronghold was completed, stockpiled with grain, and stationed with troops, an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara (Qianshou guanyin 千手观音) was carved out of a cliff in the western interior of the stronghold. The pertinent passage is given below:

“Moreover, his honor [Wei Junjing] by the western interior of the stronghold [...9 missing characters...] on the emerald walls chiseled out a golden immortal revealing the mighty spirit with one thousand hands-and-eyes (Sahasrabhuja-sahasraneta Avalokiteśvara) complete with all the eighty kinds of lucky signs (laksana-vañjana) 公又于寨内西 □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ 翠壁凿出千手眼之威神具八十种之相好施.”

The emerald walls mentioned in the inscription refer to the Fowan cliff, and the “golden immortal” is undoubtedly referring to a large image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in niche number 9 (Figure 2.15), situated a

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53 See MWL, 38 number 1, lines 44-45. The “lucky signs” are the characteristics or marks (laksana) of the body of a divine person, which were used to divine a person’s future. For a Buddha these are described as 32 major and 80 minor marks. For a study of these, see Alex Wayman, “Contributions Regarding the Thirty-two Characteristics of the Great Person,” *Sino-Indian Studies* 5, (1957): 243-260.
few feet from the Wei Stele. The Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara was a popular subject matter in Sichuan, especially during the Mid Tang to Five Dynasties periods. Images of this deity are found at many Tang cliff sculpture sites in the region, including, as mentioned earlier, the site of Shengshuisi in the northwest part of Dazu county, which has an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara dating to the Mid Tang period (705-848), (Figure 2.13). Given the prominence of depictions of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara in the region, it is not surprising that Wei Junjing would have carved an image of this deity, which may have functioned as a protective icon especially suited to battle against the demonic forces of chaos that his militia organization tried to hold in check.

Figure 2.16: Vaiśravaṇa, niche 5 Fowan, Beishan. Photo by author, 1999.

54 Because the Fowan area is actually located in the eastern portion of the stronghold, others have proposed that this inscription may refer to a carving at the Foeryan grotto, specifically number 13. According to the Yudi jisheng, fascicle 161, a famous place called Xiyan 西岩, was located 2 li (miles) north of Dazu township. That site is not described but could have referred to the Fowan. See Zhang Hua 张和 and Liu Shuyi 刘蜀仪, 33.


56 This image is niche number 3 at the site. See Chen Mingguang 陈明光 and Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 (1994), 30-7.
Although only one image is specified in the stele, several other niches including niches 5 (Figure 2.16) and 10 (Figure 2.17) directly adjacent to niche 9 are also believed to date to the initial phase of activity at the site under the sponsorship of Wei Junjing and his officers. The dating of these niches, however, can only be generally inferred from their stylistic characteristics, subject matter, and, most significantly, their physical size and location in relation to niche 9 and the Wei Stele. In comparison to other pre-Song niches at the site these niches are all of substantial size, about 3 to 2.5 meters high and wide, which may reflect that they were carved when there was a relative concentration of wealth and human resources on the hill.

Besides this group of three niches at the far southern end of the Fowan cliff, one other large niche was carved at about the same time. This niche, identified as a Sukhāvati transformation tableau, number 245, is located in the northern section of the Fowan some distance from the

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Sichuan meishu xueyuan diaosu xi 四川美术学院雕塑系, Dazu shike 大足石刻 (Beijing: Chaohua meishu chubanshe, 1962), 2.
other carvings (Figure 2.18). Although remote from the cluster of other niches at the south end of the site, this niche can be securely dated to the late Tang based on an inscription in a small intrusive niche, number 240, on the south exterior wall of niche 245. This niche is dated 896, a year later than the date of the Wei Stele. Thus, the larger niche was created sometime before 896, but probably not before 892 because there are no inscriptions datable before the *qianning* 乾宁 reign era (894-898) found at the site.

There is no evidence, historical or epigraphical, to suggest that any of the carvings or religious activities at the site predate the year 892 when Wei selected the hill for his stronghold. It is significant that the Wei Stele also records that Wei Junjing provided funds for the building of a *futu* (stupa) on the hill, which suggests that a Buddhist community was established at the site under the patronage of Wei and his followers. Unfortunately, the stele provides no further information about this, but the presence of a religious community is evidenced by several brief votive inscriptions by monks and nuns during the *qianning* reign era at the site. The religious community along with artisans may have been brought from other areas under Wei’s jurisdiction out of a personal conviction to Buddhism, but also to enhance his

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58 MWL, 12 number 4. See Appendix B, number 1.49.

59 These are found on inscriptions at the Fowan in niche 240 (see Appendix B, 1.49; MWL, 12 number 4), Fowan niche 50 (see Appendix B, 1.12; MWL, 12-13 number 5), and Yingpanpo niche number 6 (see Appendix B, 5.1; MWL, 16 number 15), which mentions monks participating in dedicatory ceremonies. Also, several inscriptions mention an “adjacent temple” (jiu yuan 就院) that appears to have been responsible for the carving of some niches, but there are no details. Other inferences to monks at the site are found in inscriptions of the Song Dynasty. One inscription identifies a monk named Zhiceng 志诚 who is referred to as “the Monk who dwells on the cliff;” see Appendix B, number 1.27. The Wujin Laoren 无尽老 stele also implies that monks or a monk oversaw the site; see Appendix c, number 3.
status and provide spiritual protection for his stronghold. In the end, the religious significance of the site would far outlast its military significance, which was short lived.

Wei Junjing founded the stronghold during an ongoing power struggle in the region that pitted the military governors of East and West Jiannan, the two Tang administrative districts of the Sichuan Basin against one another. In this power struggle, the governor of West Jiannan, Wang Jian prevailed, gaining control over the entire region and leading to his establishment of the Kingdom of Shu in 908. Based on the account given in the Wei Stele, Wei Junjing had apparently aligned himself with the loser of this conflict, Gu Yanlang 顾彦郎, the military governor of East Jiannan whose brother, Yanhui 彦晖, capitulated to Wang Jian in 898, three years after the Wei Stele was inscribed and six years after the Yongchang stronghold was established on the hill. Because the final resolution of this conflict occurred after the Wei Stele was inscribed, it can only be used to infer Wei’s involvement and learn how its outcome affected his status.

In general, the Wei Stele accords with recorded historical events, but Wei’s involvement in these events cannot be fully verified by other historical documents. According to the events described in the stele, Wei’s rise to power was incremental and supported by the government. During this period, a number of internal revolts occurred in the region. These revolts were not directly connected with the larger Huang Chao 黄巢 Rebellion (875-85) of the

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60 For a comprehensive study of the stele and the historical events described in it see Liu Xiangchuan 刘豫川, “Wei Junjing bei kao bian 韦君靖碑考辨,” in WJ, ed. by Guo Xiangyin (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 369-385.
period, but were the result of the collapse of governmental authority as local figures organized revolts for their own benefit and to take power away from corrupt governmental officials. The most significant of these revolts was led by a Tang officer named Qian Neng 钱能 in western Sichuan. It was put down by the regional army in 882 after nearly one year of fighting.\(^61\) Another revolt, led by a low ranking official named Han Xiusheng 韩秀升, occurred in the same year in eastern Sichuan, in the area of modern Chongqing on the Yangtze river, and presented the serious threat of blocking the arrival of tribute from the remaining southern areas loyal to the Tang state.\(^62\) According to the stele, Wei Junjing’s militia helped a governmental force dispatched to the area squash Han’s rebellion, for which Wei was made prefect of Puzhou (modern Anyue). Shortly thereafter, eastern Sichuan again erupted in rebellion, this time led by the military commander of eastern Sichuan, Yang Shili 杨师立. Again Wei assisted in the defeat of the rebels by retaking the area of Hezhou (modern Hechuan), which led to his appointment as prefect of that area.\(^63\) Subsequently, in a third incident, Wei assisted the governor of eastern Sichuan Gu Yanlang 郭彦朗 fend off an attack by Shan Xingzhang 山行章. In this military engagement the stele inscription records that he led 20,000

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\(^62\) On Han’s revolt, see Yang Weili 杨伟立, *Qianzhu Houshu shi* 前蜀后蜀史 (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1986), 8-9.

\(^63\) Gao Renhou 高仁厚, the Subordinate of Chen Jingxuan 陈敬瑄 whom Wei supported militarily in the suppression of both revolts, was made the military commander of eastern Sichuan, replacing Yang Shili, but was shortly thereafter murdered by Chen Jingxuan in 886.
troops and captured twenty-seven rebel strongholds. For this he was awarded the position of prefect and military commander of the four prefectures of Wenzhou 文州, which represented the approximate territorial boundaries of his militia network. The only inferences about how Wei governed these areas can be drawn from the praises of the peaceful prosperity experienced in the area found in the Wei Stele inscription and from a brief account of a governmental official who passed through Yuzhou in 893. The official praised the conduct of a local militia leader named Zhao Shiru 赵师汝, whose name does not appear on the Wei Stele but who may have been affiliated with Wei’s militia network.

The rebellion and civil strife in the region that allowed Wei Junjing to gain increasing power also facilitated the rise to power of Wang Jian, who, by 901 had became the defacto ruler of the greater region of Sichuan, and who would found his own kingdom six years later. Wang Jian, a former petty thief turned soldier, arrived in the region in 886 as commander of the emperor’s vanguard. Building on an initial base of power in northern Sichuan, he was able to defeat the once-powerful rebellious governor of western Sichuan, Chen Jingxuan 陈敬瑄. After taking Chengdu in 891 and consolidating his power

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64 The jurisdiction of Wenzhou included the four zhou of Chang, Pu, Yu and He. This corresponds to the area of modern Dazu, Anyue, Hechuan and Chongqing. Since the gorges area was an important artery for tribute, the position over Yu must have been significant. However, none of Wei’s appointments can be verified by other historical documents.

65 This account and possible relationship to Wei’s militia network is discussed by Richard Von Glahn (1987), 43.

66 One of Wei’s followers named on the stele is Zhao Shike 赵师格, the fifty-sixth official listed on the stele, may have been a relative of this man. Von Glahn (1987), 43. Zhao Shike’s name also occurs as a patron in an inscription in niche 58 at the Fowan; see Appendix B, number 1.18; MWL, 12 number 3.2.
over western Sichuan, Wang’s attention then turned toward the eastern portion of the region. In 897, Wang Jian dispatched fifty thousand troops under the command of the general Hua Hong (also known by the name Wang Zongdi 王宗濬) to attack the area of eastern Sichuan, which was then controlled by the governor Gu Yanhui, who had replaced his brother, Yanlang, in 890. The relevant passage below is from the biography of Gu Yanlang in the Xintang shu 新唐书 (New Tang History), fascicle, 189:

“In the fourth year of the Qianning era (897) Hua Hong commanded a force of fifty-thousand soldiers to attack Yanhui. Capturing the three prefectures of Yu, Chang, and Pu, [he then] laid siege to the prefecture of Zi (Zizhou, modern Santai). Facing southward he defeated Yanhui’s army, and captured eight-hundred armored horses. All total fifty battles had to be fought to surround and pin down [Yanhui].”

The passage describing the attack on eastern Sichuan and the final defeat of Gu Yanhui highlights the capture of the three prefectures of Yu, Chang, and Pu, which correspond to the territory of Wei’s militia network, with Chang being the equivalent of modern Dazu county where Wei’s Yongchang stronghold was located. According to the Wei Junjing stele, written two years before this event, Wei had been promoted as the prefect of these three areas in the 880s. Thus, it is generally assumed that Wei’s militia was defeated in battle or surrendered. However, other historical documents do not describe any battles that were fought in opposition to Wang Jian’s forces in these areas nor is there any other evidence to indicate that a battle was fought at Wei’s stronghold. Moreover, the defeat of Yanhui also

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does not mention the prefecture of Hezhou, where a large number of Wei’s militia units were based.

There is a possibility that Wei may have switched sides and aided Wang Jian in the conflict before or after his forces were defeated. This possibility is based on the content of several donor inscriptions at the Fowan site dating from 896 to 899 with name of the patron Wang Zongjing 王宗靖 prefaced with the title of Prefect. Several Chinese scholars, beginning with He Sui 何遂 and Yang Jialuo 杨家骆 during the initial research of Beishan in the 1940s, have theorized that the name Wang Zongjing mentioned in these donor inscriptions was actually a pseudonym for Wei Junjing, which Wei may have adopted as a show of allegiance after submitting to Wang Jian. The practice of forming alliances through symbolic adoption and name changing was a widespread practice at the time. Wang Jian reportedly had some one-hundred twenty adopted sons who held important positions in his military apparatus, including Hua Hong who led forces against the areas controlled by Wei. In the case of Wei, this can not be confirmed, because neither his name nor that of his possible pseudonym Wang Zongjing are recorded in historical documents. However, an incident described in Sima Guang’s 司馬光 (1019-86)

68 These are found in niches number 51, 58. See Appendix B, numbers 1.13 and 1.17.

69 Chen Xishan did not concur with this idea, see DSZJ, 216.

70 It became a common practice of underlings to adopt the first name of their patron and the generational marker 宗 “zong.”

71 Several of Wang Jian’s adopted sons, such as Wang Zongben and Wang Zongyuan, were adopted after he took control of western Sichuan; see Yang Weili, 44; and Yan Wenru (1986), 35 n. 2.
Zizhi tongjian 资治通鉴 involving Wang Jian and other local defense forces in western Sichuan that occurred a number of years prior to the defeat of Gu Yanhui provides a parallel to suggest the possibility that Wei may have been persuaded to switch sides. In 888, after taking the city of Xindu 薪都, Wang Jian dispatched one of his followers, Wang Zongyao 王宗瑶, to persuade several local landowners in the areas of Mian 绵 and Zhu 竹, who had formed self defense forces consisting of several thousands of men, to join him.72 When these landowners submitted, they provided Wang Jian with supplies and reinvigorated his army, which allowed him to seize control of Chengdu two years later. Given the success of that previous encounter with local defense forces it would seem possible that a similar strategy could have been used with Wei Junjing.73

Whatever the fate of Wei Junjing, not long after Wang Jian consolidated the region, the area of Changzhou (modern Dazu), where Wei governed from the Yongchang stronghold, was removed as the local political center and made subordinate to the military prefecture of Suizhou 遂州, established in 899.74 Throughout the Five Dynasties period, Changzhou

72 Zizhi tongjian 资治通鉴, fascicle 257. Hino Kaisaburo, 779.

73 It should also be noted that the geographical compilations, the Yuanfeng Jiuyuzhi 元丰九域志 and Yudijisheng 舆地纪胜, do not mention anyone with the surname Wei in the prefectures of Changzhou and Hezhou, where Wei’s main base of power was located. This would seem strange since there are twenty names with the surname Wei listed on the stele with many in important positions. The surname Wang, on the other hand, is somewhat common in these documents. See Hino Kaisaburo, 777.

74 The Suizhou prefecture included the area formerly governed over by Wei Junjing and two additional zhou. See DX, 65.
would remain a subordinate prefecture, and little historical information concerning the area has survived. After Wei Junjing there is no indication that Beishan had maintained the military significance accorded to it in the Wei Stele, and it appears to have been abandoned in favor of the town at the base of the hill, which later became a flourishing market center in the Song Dynasty. However, the patronage of religious imagery at the cliff sites on the hill continued into the subsequent period with not a few of the patrons bearing military titles.

In the intervening years between the collapse of the Tang and the reunification of China under the Song, Sichuan was ruled as an independent kingdom by two sets of father-and-son rulers, except for seven years in which the region was annexed by the Later Tang (923-936). After declaring himself independent ruler of Sichuan in 907, Wang Jian and his less competent son Wang Yan 王衍 governed the region for a total seventeen years before being defeated by the Later Tang in 926. The Later Tang rule over Sichuan was cut short when the appointed military supervisor of western Sichuan, Meng Zhixiang 孟知祥 revolted and took control over the entire region for himself as emperor in 934. Zhixiang's brief rule lasted just seven months before being succeeded by his son Meng Chang 孟昶 (r. 935-964), who ruled the region until he was forced to surrender to the Song in 964. During this period of fifty-seven years the area of Sichuan was relatively stable and spared, for the most part, from the turmoil that swept up north central China. These rulers took

55 Meng Chang, like Wang Yan before him, a son a military figure, is not looked upon highly in Chinese histories. He is depicted as a dilettante more interested in personal pleasure than matters of government.
advantage of the region’s natural wealth and human capital, provided by refugees who had fled the north at the end of the Tang Dynasty, to make the political center of Yizhou (modern Chengdu) one of the great cultural and artistic centers of the time. Wang Yan and Meng Chang are not highly regarded in Chinese histories as competent rulers, but are particularly noted for their interest in the arts and other extravagances that distracted them from their duties of governance. One of the important contributions to the arts was the creation of the first court painting academy under the reign of Meng Chang. Many of the best court painters who served Meng Chang’s court, such as Huang Quan 黄筌, Huang Jucai 黄居寀, and Shi Ke 石恪, followed their deposed ruler to the Song court in Kaifeng and formed the foundations for the famous painting academy of the Song.

Although the activities and intrigues of the rulers of Sichuan and the opulence of their capital are well documented in Chinese histories, there is a dearth of historical information about the region outside the regional capital. Hardly anything is known about the situation in the Dazu area during this period.76

A number of brief inscriptions dating to this period are found at sites on Beishan, but none have very substantive information concerning the social and economic situation in the area at that time. However, the apparent large number of niches at the site that date to this period, suggest that these times fostered fervent religious beliefs. Elsewhere in Sichuan, there are few other cliff sculpture sites with substantial numbers of imagery dating to the Five

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76 One of the few references to Changzhou (Dazu) is a revolt by native (Liao 契) people in 958 with the murder of a military official. DX, 746.
Dynasties period. Those at the Fowan represent the largest number of cliff carvings done anywhere in China during that time period.\textsuperscript{77} Despite the significance of the numbers, the scale, the repetitiousness, and the general quality of the carvings indicate that the patronage at the site was continued, but in a diminished capacity. Many of the carvings are clustered around the larger niches carved in the late Tang period. The absence of larger niches dating to this period may have been the result of a lack of financial resources and/or talent to provide the will to initiate larger projects, but not a lack of religious conviction on the part of the patrons. Since there is a general decline in cliff sculpture throughout the region it may be symptomatic of the prosperity of the regional center, which came at the expense of the surrounding countryside. Talented artisans may also have been attracted out of more peripheral area like Dazu, or to other projects, such as providing art for temples that have not survived.

If economic factors stifled cliff sculpture in the Five Dynasties period, the situation became more severe in the early rule of the Song in Sichuan. The Song invasion of Sichuan was quick and decisive; however, afterward the region was rocked by a series of rebellions that put considerable stress on the Song government.\textsuperscript{78} The region’s economy was also harmed by Song monetary policies that devalued iron currency, which had been used as fiducial standard by the two Shu Kingdoms.\textsuperscript{79} This caused the region to be more slowly integrated into the broader political entity and probably had a stifling effect

\textsuperscript{77} Liu Changjiu (1999), 31.

\textsuperscript{78} See Lo (1982), 24. One inscription at the Fowan dated 1001 makes reference to an uprising in the area; see Appendix B, number 1.58.

\textsuperscript{79} Von Glahn (1996), 49.
on the region’s economy. After these problems were solved, Sichuan became one of the most prosperous regions in the Song empire and critical to its stability.\footnote{Records for the year \textit{jiading} 16 (1224) indicate that Sichuan supplied 1/3 of military grains and accounted for 20% of the entire population of the Song empire. See Hu Liangxue 胡良学, “Shilun Sichuan mijiao zaoxiang chengyin 试论四川密教造像的成因,” In WX, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 276.}

By the mid-eleventh century, cliff sculpture again flourished in parts of the region, especially in eastern Sichuan. The major center for this activity in eastern Sichuan centered around the counties of Dazu and Anyue. At sites on Beishan there is a relative absence of donor inscriptions and imagery dating before the late twelfth century. Undoubtedly a number of undated or mis-dated images could have been carved during this time, but the lack of new donor inscriptions does indicate a decline in activity at the site. In the Dazu area, the only inscriptions from the early part of the eleventh century come from a few broken stone images from the site of a former temple in the eastern part of the county.\footnote{On these artifacts, see Deng Zhijin 邓之金, ”Dazu xian Dazhongsi Songdai yuandiao shike yizhi diaocha 大足县大钟寺宋代圆雕石刻遗址调查,” \textit{SW} 5 (1989): 48-58.} As well, few inscriptions are found in the neighboring area of Anyue and other parts of Sichuan during the early Northern Song period.\footnote{Zeng Deren (2001), 57.}

In the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries this situation changed, with a number niches and caves being carved at cliff sites at several locations around Dazu and in neighboring counties. The early to mid-twelfth century marks the most flourishing period for sculpture at Beishan with the addition of a number of large to medium sized niches and caves, as well as a large body
of stone sculpture used to decorate the brick pagoda that was built on the hill in the mid-twelfth century.

Religious sentiments motived this artistic activity, but political and economic factors provided the conditions for this activity to thrive in the area.\textsuperscript{83} It is not a coincidence that the flowering of this activity occurred more or less corollary with the economic development of the Sichuan Basin becoming one of the most productive regions in Song China. Dazu became a flourishing market center adjacent to the most productive centers of salt mining, which was one of the most important commercial commodities in the region. In the Song, Changzhou (modern Dazu) was rated as a superior prefecture (shangzhou 上州) for the amount of funds provided to the court, which exceeded that of the neighboring area of Yuzhou (modern Chongqing).\textsuperscript{84} Dazu also assumed increased political importance as the Tongchuan circuit was created to govern the eastern Sichuan Basin and became a center for provincial civil service exams, as well as the location of the office of the Fiscal Commissioner of the Tongchuan circuit in the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{85} The local gentry and elites who became affluent in this prosperous environment supported the patronage of religious sites in the area, Buddhist and Daoist.

At Beishan, a number of the patrons noted in donor inscriptions indicate that they held official titles of varying degrees of importance. The most important patron of the site at this time was an important official


\textsuperscript{84} See \textit{MWL}, 3.

\textsuperscript{85} DX, 65.
named Feng Ji (1074-1153), who is the only known sponsor mentioned in inscriptions at Beishan and noted in other historical documents. Feng Ji helped fund the building of the pagoda on the hill and was a devout Buddhist lay person who participated in a number of Buddhist activities. In about 1131, he organized his own Pure Land society called the Xinian hui ("Connected Recital Society") that met monthly. Although there is no direct evidence that the Pure Land Society founded by Feng Ji was active in Dazu, it is possible that certain unnamed members of the same organization, or similar informal groups of notable locals, could have participated in the sponsorship of larger niches and caves at the site. Given the close proximity to the town center, the site could have become a focal point of local pride as notables competed with each other to fund more impressive imagery with religious intent, but also to display their wealth and virtues to the community at large.

At the end of the middle twelfth century, much of the space of the Fowan cliff was filled with imagery, leaving only few spaces on the main body of the cliff uncarved. Because of this reason or for some other cause, carving at the site was essentially abated at that time. Although there are numerous sources:

86 Feng Ji's Buddhist activities are recorded in the Fozu tongji 佛祖统纪, T.49.2035.283c, 426b, and 892a, and in the Shishi qitu lue 释氏稽古略, fascicle 4, T.49.2073.892a. On Feng Ji's political activities and life, see Chen Dian 陈典, "Feng Ji kao 冯楫考," in WX, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 163-169. Also see Von Glahn (1987), 123-4; Zhao Huizhi 赵辉志, "Feng Ji yu Dazu shike Miaogaoshan Sanjiao zaoxiang kaoshu 冯楫与大足石刻妙高山三教造像考述," SW (1999): 43-46.

other cliffs on the hill, none seem to have been suitable for carvings, and the smaller sites were not elaborated upon. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth century a number of inscriptions are left by visitors indicating a continued interest in visiting the site, but few are devotional in nature. Although there is no evidence that new imagery was added to the site after the mid-eleventh century, one visitor inscription dated 1198 indicates that monks still oversaw the upkeep of the site. The last dated Song Dynasty inscription at the site records the visit of three locals in the summer of 1219. Since the Baodingshan complex was begun about two decades after the last datable votive inscriptions at Beishan, it may be that local resources, financial and talent, were attracted away from Beishan to that site.

2.3 A Survey of the Fowan and secondary sites at Beishan

The preceding section outlined the general history of the site from its founding through the Song Dynasty and discussed the general contextual information extrinsic to the local history. My discussion will now focus on the carvings and inscriptions at the site by providing a survey of the contents of the Fowan and secondary sites at Beishan. Since the Fowan is the primary

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88 Several of these indicate that the cliff site was used as a kind of summer retreat where local elites would spend the day to escape the summer heat. For example, in niche 176 an inscription dated 1177 reads, “Lu Yuanxi together with his younger brother Yuanmu have come here numerous times to escape the summer heat. We have spent the whole day cooking cakes, brewing tea, playing chess, and composing poetry. [Recorded on] the summer of the youding year of the chunxi reign era (1177) 为终曰留熙熙丁酉夏.” MWL 62-3 number 7.

89 Located on the right wall of niche 288, this inscription states that “During the third month of the maowu year (1198) Li Jisheng and Sheng Deju have come to this cliff of images [made] anew by the head monk’s diligence 戊午春初李季升德举来岩像一新知主僧之用心也.” MWL 65-6 number 11.

90 See MWL 66-7 number 13.
and largest site at Beishan, I will first focus my attention on that site. I will then turn toward the smaller sites of Yingpano, Foeryan, and Guanyinpo, which have significantly fewer carvings and, for the most part, are less well preserved. I will then finish by discussing the Duobaota pagoda and its imagery.

**The Fowan cliff sculpture site**

The Fowan site is composed of a sandstone outcropping located on the western face of Beishan about 100 meters below its western-most summit and faces directly opposite the peak known as Beitapo hill (Figures 2.19 and 2.20). It can be reached directly by steps from the base of the hill through the Beishan Park, or from a parking lot just below the site. From the ticket office one climbs a flight of stairs to enter the site from the southern end, which is, appropriately, the oldest section of the site and the location of the Wei Stele. The sandstone outcropping of the site forms a broken cliff that is aligned on a roughly north and south axis (see Diagram 1). Its full

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91 In Song and earlier times the cliff may have been referred to as the “western cliff” (xiyan 西岩) as mentioned in the *Yudijisheng 與地紀胜*, fascicle 161. Zhang Hua and Liu Shuyi, 33.

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Figure 2.19: Beishan, view from the west. Photo by author, 2001.
length end-to-end is approximately a quarter mile, with an average height of about seven to ten meters. The line of the cliff forms a slightly concave shape with two separate sections of cliff surface on each end separated by a gap of about ninety meters where the cliff recedes into the hill. The southern section of the cliff is approximately forty meters long and more fissured than the northern section, which is approximately 300 meters long. To protect the carvings from the elements, the two sections of the site have been completely enclosed by a pair of open air tile-roofed pavilions with metal bars to secure the site at night (Figure 2.21). A metal handrail that runs the entire length of the two sections of the cliff was installed to help prevent accidental damage to the lower images on the cliff by visitors.\(^{92}\)

The sandstone of the site is fairly soft, which made it suitable for carving, as well as, unfortunately, susceptible to the effects of erosion in the moisture laden environment of eastern Sichuan. Many of the smaller, shallowly carved niches, especially those located on the upper portions of the cliff, have been severely damaged by erosion. Others also appear to have been

\(^{92}\) The roofed enclosures were added in 1952 and the handrail was installed in 1986. These and other conservation efforts such as the placement of protective bars for cave 136, and water control ditches are discussed in the DX, 887-8.
damaged by human factors, with a large number of figures having their heads lopped off. However, the site was spared from the wrath of the Red Guards in the Cultural Revolution, and very few images have been blatantly vandalized. Overall, despite constant exposure to Sichuan’s wet and humid weather for several hundred years, a surprising number of the images are still in a good state of preservation with only minor damage considering the antiquity of the site. There are officially 290 numbered niches/caves and stele inscriptions at the site, which are numbered sequentially from the southern end of the site to the northern end. Of these, fifteen represent stele inscriptions, several of which date to the Ming, Qing, and Republican periods. With a few exceptions the niches/caves of the site date to the late ninth through mid-twelfth century. Among these, fewer than ten could be classified as caves in the sense that they are excavated deeply enough for a person to enter. All of the caves have open fronts, and the largest has a depth of about

93 The initial survey of the site in 1945 numbered 255 caves. In 1952 the numbering was expanded to include 290 caves, which served as the foundation of the current numbering based on a third survey in 1982. See Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang, “Dazu Beishan Fowan shiku de fenqi 大足北山佛湾石窟的分期,” WW 8 (1988): 45 n. 1. All the niches are individually described in Appendix A of this study.
seven meters and a height of about four meters. These are all located in the northern section of the site. In addition to these excavated caves, there are a number of large to medium size niches on both ends of the site with the largest measuring just under five meters in height. However, the majority of niches range on average from less than one meter to two meters in height and width, and a quarter meter in depth. Only around fifteen percent of the total number of niches/caves are accompanied by full or partially legible votive inscriptions.\footnote{Transcriptions and translations of all the votive inscriptions at the site are provided in Appendix B, numbers 1.1 to 1.70.}

The southern section of the site has ninety-eight numbered niches (numbers 1 through 98).\footnote{See Appendix A, cave/niche numbers 1-98. In addition to these, several small niches have irregular numbers (9-1 and 55-1) and several severely damaged and empty niches unnumbered.} The rock outcropping in this section of the cliff is fissured into six major parts and includes a large outcropping separate from the main wall of the cliff, which creates a small partially enclosed area behind the main face of the cliff. The focal point of this section of the cliff is at the far southern end where the largest niches in this section are located, and the only section of the entire cliff where images have been carved on all sides of the

Figure 2.22: Fowan, southern section, facing the south entrance. Photo by author, 2001.
rock face (Figure 2.22). The niches fan out northward from the southern end of this section of the site. Most of the niches are clustered here, becoming reduced in scale and quality as as height of the cliff diminishes toward the northern end (Figure 2.23). The majority of niches in this section date to the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods. The larger niches on the far southern end are attributed to the Late Tang when the site was founded. The carving at this section of the site appears to have developed from these larger niches as smaller niches were filled in the area around them. Only fifteen of the ninety-eight niches in this section contain donor inscriptions. All of these are clustered around the area near the southern end. Among them, thirteen include years and reign titles with dates that range from 896 to 941. According to the results of my field research, of the ninety-eight niches, the subject matter of twenty are too damaged to be identified and another twenty-eight can only be identified tentatively by general designations such as Buddha or bodhisattva. The subject matter of this section of the site is

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96 Roughly eleven niches are datable to the Late Tang, fifty-two are datable to the Five Dynasties period, two can be dated to the Song, and thirty two niches are too damaged to date.

97 The NRZL leaves about twice this many (forty-three) unidentified and provides only generic designations for another eighteen niches.
dominated by images of the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, and the Buddha Amitābha, which also occur in large numbers in the far northern section of the site. Subject matter unique to this section of the site includes images of Vaiśravaṇa, Buddha triads, Acala, and an adorned Buddha.

The northern section of the Fowan is over four times the span of the southern section, with some one-hundred eighty-five numbered niches/caves (numbers 105 to 290). The rock outcropping on this section of the cliff is generally higher and less fissured than the southern section and forms a nearly contiguous cliff wall. This section of the site can be divided into three somewhat distinct parts based on the typology and topology of the carvings in each. The first part, located on the southern end of this section, is comprised of niches 105 to 125. These niches for the most part are approximately the same size and located in a row about two meters above the base of the cliff (Figures 2.24 and 2.25). With the exception of a few small intrusive niches and an empty cave near the top of the cliff, these niches are medium size and can be dated to the Song Dynasty based on their style. The

Figure 2.24: Fowan, south end of the northern section. Photo by author, 2001.

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98 See Appendix A, cave/niche numbers 105-290.
orderly layout of these niches, with only a few small intrusive niches among them, makes them appear almost like a gallery of images that were carved at about the same time, but among them there is only one partially legible donor inscription, and there are no clues to explain the sequence in which these niches were carved. The second, middle part of the northern section of the site includes niches 124 to 184 and is distinguished by having the only excavated caves at the site located in it (Figure 2.26). This part of the northern section spans the area between the somewhat orderly southern part of this section and the far northern end, with a guard room between niches 123 and 128 being the arbitrary demarcation of the southern and middle parts. It includes eight caves, several dozen medium to small size niches, and eight stele inscriptions. The caves are all located at the base of the cliff and the smaller niches surrounding them. The majority of this imagery can be dated to the Song Dynasty. Beginning with the excavation of cave 180 in 1116, the order in which the niches/caves were carved appears to have radiated out from the north to south in a rough sequence over a span of

Figure 2.25: Overview niches 120-123, northern section, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

99 The one inscription is found in niche 110 and records the offering of the niche by a husband and wife; see Appendix B, number 1.19.
about thirty years. Inscriptions in this area indicate that many were carved in the last years of the Northern Song Dynasty and shortly after the fall of the Song capital of Kaifeng to the Jin in 1126.

The third part of the northern section of the site is located at the far northern end and includes niches numbered 185 to 290. The niches in this part of the cliff primarily date to the Five Dynasties period with a few Late Tang and Song niches included among them. The appearance of this area is much more unorganized, with many small niches lining the walls of the cliff almost from top to bottom (Figure 2.27). The center piece of this area is the largest niche at the site, number 245 (4.7 x 2.58 x 1.18 meters), which is dated to the Late Tang period. Similar to the southern section, the carving in this area appears to have progressed outward from niche 245, which was probably the first niche carved in this area during the Late Tang period, with subsequent smaller niches clustered around it.

100 All of the large cave-niches at the Fowan that have dates indicate that they were created somewhere between 1116 to 1128, except for the sūtra repository cave, number 136, which dates to the 1140s.

101 Unless otherwise noted, the measurements for imagery at the site included in this chapter are based on those given in the NRZL.
In general, the carvings in the northern section of the site are in a better state of preservation than the majority of those found in the southern section. The subject matter of many of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties niches is the same as that of the southern section of the site with many small images of Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, and Amitābha. One type of subject matter introduced in the Five Dynasties period at the site unique to the northern section are dhāraṇī pillars, which are found exclusively in the far northern part of the site, such as in niches 260 and 262 (Figure 2.28). The inscriptions on the northern section of the site are more numerous than those found on the southern section. These include forty-three donor inscriptions, eight inscriptions for repairs or renovations of niches, eight visitor inscriptions, four dhāraṇī.

Figure 2.27: Niches 206-222, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 2.28: Niches 260 and 262, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

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102 According to the results of my field research, of the one-hundred eight-five niches, the subject matter of thirty are too damaged to be identified and another thirteen can only be identified tentatively by general designations such as Buddha or bodhisattva. The NRZL leaves over twice this many (one hundred and six) unidentified.
inscriptions, and three artists inscriptions. There are also several stele engraved in the cliff in the middle part of the northern section, which includes an engraved copy of a mural from a local Song Dynasty temple depicting the famous debate between the Buddhist layman Vimalakirti and the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī (Figures 2.29, 2.30), number 137.

Between the enclosed southern and northern sections of the site there is a paved stone walkway lined with trees. About midway between the two sections, a flight of stairs leads up to the administrative office of the site. Two small

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103 See Appendix B, number 1.19-1.70.
undated niches containing Chinese style mortuary caityas are carved on a small exposed portion of the cliff adjacent to the stairs (Figure 2.31). Several other carvings are located on a rock outcropping just outside the enclosed northern section of the site. The most significant of these is a large stele niche, given two separate numbers (103 and 104) and located beneath its own separate octagonal pavilion (Figure 2.32). This niche contains a copy of a spirit road stele of a Northern Song official from Shaanxi province named Zhao Zhan 赵瞻 (d.1091), which is framed by a full length inscription of the ancient text version of the Sūtra of Filial Piety (Guxiaojing 古孝经).

These non-Buddhist stele do not include dates but are believed to have been engraved at the site in the mid- to late-twelfth century during the reign of emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1163-1194), a proponent of Confucian virtues and the “Unity of the Three Teachings” or “Three Teachings-as-One” (Sanjiao heyi 三教和一) religious ideology, which

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104 See Appendix A, cave/niche numbers 103-104.
became a popular religious trend in the Song Dynasty.\textsuperscript{105} The inclusion of Confucian subject matter and imagery related to the “Three Teachings-as-One” religious ideology is found at a number of Song sites in Dazu, such as at Shizhuanshan and Miaogaoshan.\textsuperscript{106} No explanation is provided in the stele inscription for why it was carved at the Fowan amid the Buddhist imagery. However, it in no way contradicts the general nature of the devotional activity at the site expressed though votive inscriptions throughout the history of the site, which are dominated by concerns for the welfare of parents, deceased relatives, future descendants, and occasionally the state.\textsuperscript{107} These types of concerns reflect the virtues expressed in this Confucian moralistic tract. Possibly the niche could have been created by descendants of Zhao Zhan, who may have not been able to return to their ancestral home in Shaanxi because of the war with the Jin, as a surrogate shrine to fulfill their filial obligations.

\textsuperscript{105} On this religious trend, see Ren Jiyu 任继愈 (1980), 1-6; and Timothy Brook (1993), 32-46.

\textsuperscript{106} Sites in Dazu contain the earliest and largest number of images related to the “Three Teachings-as-One” religious trend; see Hu Qiwei 胡齐畏 (1995), 80. For a study of this imagery, see Hu Liangxue 胡良学 (1995), 68-78; and Hu Qiwei 胡齐畏 (1995), 76-87.

\textsuperscript{107} In general the nature and substance of the votive inscriptions found at the site are by no means extraordinary from votive inscriptions found elsewhere in China. As standard devotional practice, many of these inscriptions indicate that the basic reason for the pious sponsorship of carvings was for the attainment of punya (fude 福德, “blessings” or “merit”) and for the transfer of the merit (parināmanā, huixiang 回向) generated by a good deed to others, most frequently deceased relatives. In the case of the lay sponsors, the known intentions of the sponsors were primarily directed at the benefit of other family members or the welfare of the state. Votive inscriptions by clergy indicate the beneficiaries of their pious acts as alms givers (shizhu 施主), which may be understood as acts of reciprocity to their lay supporters. Many of the votive inscriptions at the site include the offering of a vegetarian feast, upōsadha (zhai 餐), which may have been given as part of the payment to monks for overseeing the carving of the niche and its consecration. For a study of the inscriptions at the site, see Li Fangyin 黎方银, “Dazu Beishan shiku gongyangren tiji 北山石窟供养人题记,” in WJ, ed.Guo Xiangying (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 308-350.
while taking advantage of the numinous blessing that the site would provide. If the assumed dating of the stele is correct, it may represent the last significant monument carved at the Fowan site and possibly post-date all the major Song Buddhist carvings at the site.

**Subsidiary cliff sculpture sites at Beishan**

In addition to the Fowan, there are four other rock outcroppings on the hill where images have been carved (Map 5). These sites have much fewer images than the Fowan and for the most part have been more ravished by nature. The carvings at these sites, with the exception of those found in the small area called Yiwanshui 一碗水, are contemporaneous with those at the Fowan, with the majority of carvings dating to the Five Dynasties period. These sites include many small to medium size niches, which feature much of the same subject matter depicted at the Fowan and include only a few subjects that are not depicted there. Several inscriptions have been found at these sites offering additional information about the history and devotional practices at the site. Unlike the Fowan site, which is open to the public and well staffed by a team of watchmen, maintenance staff, guides, and ticket takers, and at times having several hundred visitors in a single day, these smaller cliff sculpture sites, which are not well marked and somewhat difficult to find, receive little monitoring and are rarely visited. Most are in a bleak state of disrepair and continue to experience the effects of the damp local weather. In addition to the damage wrought by nature, carvings at several of the sites have been obscured with plaster and bright enamel paint by local devotees who have sought with good intentions to improve their worn
appearances without considering the antiquity of these objects. One local farmer who happened upon me at one of these sites was proud to point out the image he had refurbished. Though not distant from the Fowan, their more rural and secluded settings impart them with a certain charm and authenticity that is lost in the more museum-like setting of the Fowan with its occasional hustle and bustle of visitors.

**Yingpanpo**

The best cared for of the four subsidiary cliff sculpture sites at Beishan is Yingpanpo 营盘坡, meaning literally “Military Camp Hill,” which has a permanent resident watchman and a loud, vicious mongrel to oversee the site. The Yingpanpo site is located a little over one kilometer to the northeast of the Fowan site, below a ridge line on the opposite side of the hill that faces roughly northeast. The site is not open to the general public and there is no marked trail leading to the site. It can be reached after about a twenty minute walk from the exit of the Fowan site. The small site is located below the crescent of a ridge line behind the farm house of the site’s caretaker. This area is believed to have been part of Wei Junjing’s stronghold and may have served as one of the garrisons of the stronghold that are mentioned in the Wei stele. The carvings are located at the base of a sandstone cliff that faces northeast. A portion of the site was covered by a landslide in the past, and an excavation of the earth at the base of the cliff in 1995 revealed several previously unknown additional niches and images located outside the main
One of the niches uncovered contains the small, nicely crafted image of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara shown in Figure 2.33. If the dating attributed to it is correct, it is one of the earliest extent images of that form of Avalokiteśvara, which became especially popular in the Song Dynasty.\(^\text{109}\)

The main part of the cliff has around a dozen small- to medium-sized niches with the largest measuring less than two meters in height. These niches are concentrated in a small area of the cliff, about ten meters wide and three meters high, which is now enclosed in a make-shift stone shed (Figure 2.34). The leaky tile roof of the structure does little to protect the images from more of the significant erosion damage that almost all the carvings have already suffered (Figure 2.35). In addition to the erosion damage, a large number of the niches have been “refurbished” with fresh coats of bright enamel paint and crudely carved replacement figures that further obscure the original appearance of the niches. For this reason many of the carvings at the site have a folkish quality. The subject matter for the most part is similar to imagery of the Fowan, dating to the Late Tang

\(^{108}\) In 1994 the number of niches was increased to a total of seventeen. In the NRZL only ten niches are listed. The current numbering system at the site doesn’t correspond with the numbering in the NRZL.

\(^{109}\) This niche is dated to the Tang by Li Fangyin, DSDS I, 7, but it more likely dates to the Five Dynasties period.
and Five Dynasties period
with many niches
representing Buddha
teaching assemblies. One
of the larger niches at the
site is a deeply cut
medium size square niche
(c. 1.2 x 1.8 x 1.5 meters)
dated to the late Tang
that features an image of
the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.36).110 The most unique niche
at the site is currently numbered niche 9 (corresponding to NRZL number 5),
which depicts the
bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra
seated on lotus
pedestals, with their
respective animal
mounts depicted in low
relief on the side walls of

110 This image differs from most Late Tang images of this form of Avalokiteśvara in Sichuan,
which are typically depicted seated in pralambapādāsana (pendant legs posture). The lotus
posture (padmāśana) is more commonly seen in Mid Tang images of the Thousand-handed
Avalokiteśvara in Sichuan.
the niche (Figure 2.37).\textsuperscript{111}

Although the depiction of bodhisattva pairs is common subject matter at the Fowan, none of the niches there depict these two bodhisattvas together as the primary images of a niche.\textsuperscript{112}

Only four barely legible donor inscriptions have been found at the site.\textsuperscript{113} Two of these are dated to the qianning reign era (894-896).\textsuperscript{114} Little other information can be gleaned from these inscriptions. However, these inscriptions indicate that the carving activity here was initiated at around the

\textsuperscript{111} This niche is undated. The NRZL suggests that it should be dated to the Late Tang or Song; see NRZL, 431. On the side walls of the niche there are around forty-seven small figures seated in clouds carved in low relief. The carving of the animal mounts in relief on the back side walls of the niche is unusual and may have been a later additions. The figure identified as Samantabhadra has a small Buddha in its crown, which suggests that the figure may have been intended as Avalokiteśvara.

\textsuperscript{112} The pair is depicted in a small niche, number 5, at Shizhuanshan in southeast Dazu, which is dated to the Song Dynasty. There the two bodhisattvas are depicted in usual fashion, seated on their respective mounts. See Hu Liangxue 胡良学 and Chen Jing 陈静, “Dazu Shizhuanshan, Miaogaoshan moyan zaoxiang de diaocha yanjiu 大足石篆山妙高山摩岩造像的调查研究,” SW 1 (1998): 43-4.

\textsuperscript{113} See Appendix B, 5.1-4.

\textsuperscript{114} See MWL, 16.
same time as the Fowan site. Perhaps the commander of the garrison who watched over this part of the stronghold tried duplicating the projects initiated by Wei Junjing at the larger Fowan.

Figure 2.37: Niche 9 (5), Yingpanpo, Beishan. Photo by author, 2001.

**Foeryan**

Foeryan (佛耳岩), literally “Buddha’s Ear Cliff,” also called Ganchangpo (赶场坡), is located about half way up the western peak of Beishan, on the western side of the Zhoujiawan 周家湾 ravine opposite Beishan Park and about one kilometer north of Dazu city. The site can be seen from the ledge in front of the Duobaota Pagoda by looking to the southwest. From this vantage point, it appears on the distant hillside as a desolate small shed near a clump of trees just below the ridge line where it begins to curve westward and out of view (Figure 2.38). The site is located on a small segment of a sandstone ridge about half way up the hill that rings most of Beishan. Reportedly in the past an ancient temple of uncertain date called the “Temple of Prolonging Mercy” (Yanensi 延恩寺), was located in front of the site, which was still extant in the Song Dynasty, but no traces of it remain.\(^\text{115}\) Currently

\(^{115}\) See NRZL, 459. The source is not given. The DX, 812, states that the temple’s name comes from a tomb stele dated to the shaoxing reign era.
the main portion of the
carvings at the site are
enclosed in a three-sided
ramshackle brick and
stone structure with a
lean-to tile roof, which
has been left to ruin
(Figure 3.39). The
enclosed section of the
cliff wall is about four
meters high and about thirteen meters wide (Figures 3.40 and 3.41). At the
base of the cliff, a cleft in the rock forms a small natural pool that is used by
local farmers as a source of drinking water when working in the nearby fields
that surround the slope. This water source may have initially brought
people’s interest to this
site, which otherwise
has no exceptional
natural features.
Although the site is run-
down, it is still used by
locals as a place of
worship. Inside the
structure a number of
brightly painted, plaster

![Figure 2.38: View looking south from the Duobaota. Photo by author, 2001.](image1)

![Figure 2.39: Foeryan site, view from the south. Photo by author, 2001.](image2)

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116 The NRZL describes the cliff as being 17 by 33 meters, which seems too large unless the portion of the cliff above the structure is included.
images of popular Chinese deities have been arranged around the sides of the room and on stone tables in front of the cliff at the back of the structure. On the cliff wall are around twenty-five niches arranged randomly and numbered from north to south.\textsuperscript{117} Outside on both sides of the structure, several additional small niches are carved on smaller rock outcroppings.\textsuperscript{118} As well, around twenty sculptures in-the-round have been found in the vicinity in recent years.\textsuperscript{119}

Overall, the niches at the Foeryan are in a poor state of preservation, and the site has obviously not

\textsuperscript{117} When I visited the site, the numbers were no longer visible. The NRZL lists 25 niches.

\textsuperscript{118} Four niches are located on a rock directly adjacent to the south side of the structure. Two small niches are located on an overhang a few meters north of the structure.

\textsuperscript{119} See \textit{DX}, 812.
been cleaned for some time. Fortunately, however, unlike the Yingpanpo site where almost all the niches have been “refurbished,” only one image has undergone such treatment. In general the scale of the niches is smaller than Yingpanpo, with the largest niches not measuring much more than two meters in width or height. In the NRZL most the niches are dated to the Song of Five Dynasties period.\textsuperscript{120} However, only one dated inscription has been found at this site.\textsuperscript{121}

Much of the same subject matter that occurs in Five Dynasties niches at the Fowan is depicted at this site. These include several niches with images of the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru (niches 9 and 12), the Sixteen Arhats (niche 22), Vaiśravaṇa (niche 10), the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (niche 13), and the pairing of Kṣitigarbha with Avalokiteśvara (niches 1 and 4), which are all poorly preserved. There are also a number of damaged depictions of Buddha triads and Buddha teaching assemblies, including a depiction of Amitābha with forty-eight bodhisattvas, a subject matter popular in Sichuan in the Tang Dynasty.\textsuperscript{122} The most unique niche at the site is number 19, a deeply cut rectangular niche located on the upper south corner of the cliff wall about three meters above the base, which contains a central image of a seated Buddha and images of Laozi and Confucius facing opposite

\textsuperscript{120} See NRZL, 459-465.

\textsuperscript{121} This inscription, dated 1085, gives the name of a local military official and is located in niche 12; see Appendix B, number 4.2 It is one of only two inscriptions found at the site.

\textsuperscript{122} This is found in niche 6, which is badly damaged and identified in the NRZL, 460 as a depiction of the Buddhas of the Three Realms (Sanshīfò 三世佛). For a study of this iconography, see Li Sisheng 李巳生, “Yifowushipusa he pusazhuangfo 一佛五十菩萨和菩萨装 佛,” DHY 2 (1991): 49-58. An early example of this iconography is found at the Jianshanzi site in Dazu and is dated to the seventh century.
each other (Figure 3.41, upper left corner). This niche, dated to the Song Dynasty, is the only clear example of imagery related to the “Unity of the Three Teachings” religious doctrine found at Beishan although other examples are known elsewhere in Dazu. This religious doctrine sought to place the philosophic doctrines of these religions as equal. However, the central position of the Buddha indicates that Buddhism was accorded by the donors of the niche more importance than the other two religions.

Guanyinpo

Guanyinpo 观音坡, literally “Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) hill,” or Guanyinyan 观音岩, “Guanyin cliff,” is about one kilometer west of the Fowan site. This site is located on a south-facing cliff beneath the summit of a hill of the same name, opposite Beita hill, and a few minutes walk from the area of Yiwanshui, which forms a saddle between the two hilltops. Reportedly there are forty-two numbered niches at the site, which are numbered from west to east. The carvings cover an area of the cliff that is about thirty-four meters long and six meters high (Figure 3.42). A significant portion of the cliffside where the carvings are located has collapsed. On two visits to the site in the summer of 2001, I was only able to identify a small portion of the numbered niches described in the NRZL. The area directly below the cliff is being used for agriculture, and no attempt has been made to enclose the site. Only a few of the painted numbers are still faintly visible. Of all the sites at Beishan, the images here are most severely damaged; almost all the extant niches

123 See NRZL, 451-59. Just to the west of the cliff are two large tumuli, but I am unsure of their age.
remain in fragments, and the cliff face, where it has not fractured or collapsed, is overgrown with vines. The condition of the site is quite unfortunate since some of the fragments give an indication that the quality of some of the carvings was originally very good (Figure 3.43). Like the other subsidiary sites there are no large scale niches or caves here, with most the niches measuring a square meter or less and the largest not much more than two meters in height and width.

According to the NRZL all the niches at the site date to the Song Dynasty. However, I suspect that some of the imagery dates to the Five Dynasties period or Late Tang based on the

\footnote{Niche number 24, reproduced in Figure 2.43, which has fallen off the cliff face except for the upper lintel, appears to have been a fairly large niche over two meters high and wide.}

\footnote{See NRZL, 451-459. The DX, 812, states that the site includes Five Dynasties and Song niches.}
appearances of extant imagery. Four inscriptions have been found at the site, all of which are dated to the Song Dynasty. However, only one inscription has a fixed date. This inscription, located in niche number one, is dated shaoxing 绍兴 year 24 (1154), which makes it the latest dated Song Dynasty donor inscription found at Beishan’s cliff sculpture sites. The patrons of this niche, He Zhengyan 何正言 and his wife née Yang 杨氏, also donated images in the Duobaota pagoda and are mentioned in a donor inscription at the Daoist site of Nanshan 南山 on the hill directly opposite Beishan. Several of the names of patrons listed in other inscriptions at the site are also found in inscriptions at other sites on Beishan.

The fragmented condition of the imagery at the site prevents a thorough discussion of it. The imagery features a number of Buddha teaching assemblies and single bodhisattva niches, including a small image of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (niche 27), similar to those found at the Fowan. The most interesting niche at the site is niche number one, which

126 See MWL, 35-6 numbers 48-51.

127 See Appendix B, number 2.1; MWL, 35 number 48.

128 The Nanshan inscription is located in the primary cave at the site called the “Cave of Three Purities.” The inscription records that He Zhengyan and his wife “donated the land to open the mountain to generate merit,” see MWL, 289 number 1. The He family seems to have been a prominent local family, since a number of niches from the Late Tang through Song Dynasty include donors with the family name He, and a number of Wei Junjing’ followers also had this family name.

129 A partially-legible inscription (MWL, 35 number 49) in niche 30 gives the name Wen Zhi 文志, who is also identified in inscriptions in numbers 168 and 137 at the Fowan, respectively dated to 1128 and 1134; see Appendix B, numbers 1.26 and 1.40. Another inscription in niche 40 at Guanyinpo (MWL, 35-36 number 50) identifies the donor as a certain Liu Kui 刘揆, who is identified as the intended beneficiary of an image in niche 7 in the Duobaota, dated 1148, that was sponsored by his son; See MWL, 445 number 4.
depicts Kṣitigarbha with the Bodhisattva Who Guides the Way (Yinlu pusa 引路菩萨), which some scholars identify as a form of Avalokiteśvara. Unfortunately, the images in this niche are almost totally eroded (Figure 2.44); however, the remaining outlines of the figures are similar to a number of painted images of this subject on banners from the Mogao caves, Dunhuang.  

The Duobaota pagoda and related imagery

Beitapo 北塔坡, literally “north pagoda hill,” is a rocky promontory located about five hundred meters east of the Fowan site (Figure 2.45). The promontory is named after a twelve story brick pagoda located on its summit, known locally as the “North Pagoda” (Beita 北塔), or as the “White Pagoda” (Baita 白塔) for its plastered and white painted surface. The pagoda’s official

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130 See Chün-fang Yü, Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 225-228. This iconography is related to the popular pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha in niches seen at the Fowan, which is discussed in the fourth chapter of this study.

131 For examples of similar imagery found at Dunhuang, see Roderick Whitfield, The Art of Central Asia: The Stein Collection in the British Museum, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Kondansha International Ltd., 1982), plates 9, 10.

132 The area of this promontory is believed to have served as the central citadel of Wei Junjing’s Yongchang stronghold. The remnants of the fortress in this area are discussed by Zhang Hua and Liu Shuyi, 33. Also see the diagram of the site in DX, 744.
and historical name is the Duobaota 多宝塔 (“Many Jeweled Pagoda”), which is named after the famous stūpa of the Buddha Prabhūtaratna that occurs in the Lotus Sūtra.  

The pagoda is located at the site of a former temple now called the Beitasi 北塔寺. The temple was largely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. The only remaining hall of the temple, which is located directly to the north of the pagoda, is in a poor state of preservation and is now used as a temporary residence for guards who monitor the site. In front of this hall, a makeshift stone structure has been built to protect three large seated Buddha images (approximately 4.3 meters high) of uncertain antiquity that where located in the former main hall of the temple. The date of the founding of the temple is uncertain. According to a stele it was repaired in 1668 during the reign of the Emperor Kangxi, perhaps when the three

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133 This Buddha and his pagoda are the subject of a famous chapter in the Saddharmapundarika sūtra (Miaofa lianhua jing 妙法莲华经), T.9.262. For an English translation see Leon Hurvitz, trans., Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

134 The Buddha represents the three Buddha bodies with a central image of Vairocana, and depictions of Amitābha, and Śākyamuni to his sides, see NRZL, 465. The NRZL, 465, suggests that these figures date to the Ming or Qing Dynasties. Also behind the temple is a small eight sided stone pond with a small carving of a dragon, which is not dated.
large Buddha images were added. The temple was undoubtedly in place before the erection of the Duobaota pagoda in the mid-twelfth century.

Possibly the site is the location of the *futu* 浮图 (*stūpa*) that was built by Wei Junjing mentioned in the Wei Stele, though none of the present structures date to that time. Monks are mentioned in inscriptions found at several of Beishan’s sites dating throughout the active period of these sites from the Late Tang through Song Dynasty. The temple at this site is probably where many of these monks resided and possibly oversaw the carving at the nearby sites and the construction of the pagoda.

Inscriptions in the interior and exterior of the pagoda indicate that it was built during the *shaoxing* 绍兴 reign era (1131-1163), roughly between 1147 and 1155. These inscriptions also indicate that the pagoda was built as a communal project, with donations given by individuals, local families, and officials, and alms collected by monks and laity. The actual initiator of the project is not known. However, the pagoda is most closely connected with the Buddhist layman Feng Ji 冯楫, who served as the Civil and Military and Overseer (*bingmadulinghai* 兵马都钤辖) of the Tongchuan 潼川 Circuit (*fulu* 府路), a larger political unit that included the Dazu area during the Song

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135 Earlier Chinese scholars were mislead in believing that the current pagoda represented the *stūpa* founded by Wei Junjing. This view first came from the Qing scholar Zhang Shu and was later elaborated on in Fu Zhenlun 傅振伦, “Dazu Nan Bei shan shike zhi tifan 大足南北山石刻之体范,” in *DSY*, ed. Liu Changjiu, et al. (Chengdu: Sichuan sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1985), 18. Li Fangyin (1999), 263.
Dynasty, in 1143 to 1152, at about the same time the pagoda was built.\footnote{136}{According to a story in the \textit{Sichuan tongzhi} \text{四川通志} (compiled in the Ming Dynasty), Feng Ji donated a pagoda for his parents who orphaned him as a baby; see Chen Xishan et al., 236-240. This legend is summarized in Li Fangyin (1999), 263-265. In it Feng Ji is said to have been orphaned by his poor parents. After Feng Ji became a successful scholar he tried in vain to locate his true parents. On his fiftieth birthday his parents arrived at his door. and were able to identify him by a birth scar. Later Feng Ji cured his mother’s blindness and donated money to build a pagoda. Li Fangyin believes that the legend does not refer to the Duobaota at Beishan, but a pagoda from elsewhere in Sichuan.}

The Duobaota was one of several pagodas built in the area during Feng Ji’s tenure as the chief official of the Tongchuan circuit.\footnote{137}{Another temple, similar in design to the Duobaota is the \textit{Baoenta} 报恩塔 (“Requital of Kindness Pagoda”) in Luzhou 江州, a city on the Yangtze river about 150 kilometers south of Dazu. This area was unstable and experienced a number of revolts by native peoples during the time Feng Ji held office. Inscriptions in the Duobaota include as part of his title “Southern Lu(zhou) Border Pacification Commissioner.” It is quite conceivable that, with Feng Ji’s predilection for Buddhism, the Luzhou pagoda was built as a satellite of the Beishan pagoda to bring the spiritual power of Buddhism to bear on that troubled border area. To my knowledge a full description of the contents of the Baoenta have not been published. The imagery was severely damaged during the Cultural Revolution, but they are reported to be similar to those in the Duobaota, see Liang Xuzhong 梁旭仲 ed., \textit{Sichuan wenwu lansheng} \text{四川文物揽胜} (Chengdu: Sichuan meishu chubanshe, 1999), 195-6.}

There are multiple inscriptions inside the Duobaota that record Feng Ji as a sponsor of images, providing relics, and benefactor to the building of the sixth level of the pagoda.\footnote{138}{See Appendix B, number 3.6; \textit{MWL},455-6 number 6, 457 numbers 41, 43. Feng Ji is identified as the donor of images of Amitābha in niche 39, Samantabhadra in niche 41, Mañjuśrī in niche 45, and Śākyamuni in niche 47. Feng Ji is also associated with the site of Miaogaoshan where he was mentioned in an inscription in niche 5 and was reportedly buried at a Pure Land temple located at that site. See Zhao Huizhi (1991), 43.}

However, Feng Ji was not alone in his donations; funds and materials were donated by others including Pang Shangming 庞上明, a county commissioner who donated 500 strings of cash;\footnote{139}{See \textit{MWL}, 447 number 9.} Liu Jie 刘杰, a blacksmith who donated labor and steel cable;\footnote{140}{See Appendix B, number 3.9; \textit{MWL}, 447-448 number 10.1.} and another local personage named...
Wang Tang 王堂, who collected donations from local families for construction materials. The stone statuary in the pagoda was sponsored by separate local donors, such as He Zhengyan 何正言, noted earlier at the Guanyinpo site, and Xing Xindao 邢信道 who sponsored some twenty different reliefs. The construction appears to have been supervised at least in part by a local monk named Renliang 任亮, but there are no details.

Architecturally, the pagoda is an eight-sided brick structure that stands thirty-three meters high and has a diameter of slightly under nine meters, with each of the eight walls of the pagoda about 3.6 meters wide (Figure 2.46). The exterior of the pagoda has

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141 see MLW, 447 number 7.

142 Li Fangyin (1999), 265, believes that construction of the Pagoda was supervised by Xing Xindao 邢信道, who is called “brick pagoda person of the way (qieta daoren 砌塔道人)” in inscriptions, but not specifically identified as the builder of the pagoda.

143 Li Fangyin (1999), 265, calls him Bai Liang 白亮 and identifies him as the chief alms collector. In a donor inscription written by Renliang, his name is preceded by the title “Head Monk of Building the Pagoda (Jian ta huashou 建塔化首).” See MLW, 456 number 6.

144 The Song Dynasty was a high point for pagoda construction in China. The majority of extent pagodas from the Song Dynasty are eight-sided and made of brick. For an overview of Song pagodas, see Zhang Yuhuan 张驭寰, Zhongguo ta 中国塔 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2000), 24-34. For a list of 114 pagodas from the Five Dynasties and Song Dynasty, see Jiang Huaiying 姜怀英 and Qiu Xuanchong 丘宣充 eds., Dali Chongshengsi san ta 大理崇圣寺三塔 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1998), 41-49.
twelve distinct levels that become successively smaller towards the top of the pagoda, which is surmounted by a brick finial with a central metal spire. Separating each of the different levels is a decorative band of brickwork and overhanging brick eaves. Every other level of the pagoda is further decorated with brick work simulating the *dougong* 斗侖 bracketing of Chinese wooden architecture.

On every level identical arched windows or niche openings are located in the middle of the wall in each of the cardinal directions. The arched niches occur on the odd levels above the first floor (levels 3, 5, 7, and 9). These niches contain stone statuary of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other deities, which are not readily visible from the base of the pagoda. Windows are located on the even levels and top three levels (levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 12). Except for the twelfth level where the windows are located in the walls of the secondary directions (southwest, northwest, northeast, southeast), all the windows of the other levels are located in the primary directions. Also on the odd levels of the exterior of the pagoda, one or two recessed niches containing stone relief sculptures are located on the side walls in the secondary directions. The lowest level has an added number of small recessed stone relief images, and

Figure 2.47: Pillar capital, southwest corner, ground level, Duobaota. Photo by author, 2001.
embedded in each of the eight corners is a stone dragon pillar topped by a seated figure that supports a lotus pedestal on its head (Figure 3.47).

From the exterior the pagoda appears to have twelve levels and a crowning finial. However, the interior of the pagoda has only seven floors above the ground floor. The upper floors of the pagoda are accessible from stairs that diagonally crisscross the center of the pagoda, with each floor above the ground floor and below the top floor having two flight of stairs, one up and one down (see floor plans in Diagrams 2 to 5). The interior floors correspond to the even numbered levels on the exterior of the pagoda, with the exception of the ground floor and the exterior eleventh level, which corresponds to the sixth floor in the interior. Above the ground floor the layout of the interior of each floor is essentially the same. A small corridor (about 1.9 meters high) with a step arch ceiling and slightly less than one meter wide follows the octagonal shape of the exterior of the pagoda. In the center of each wall in the cardinal directions is a window opening to the exterior of the pagoda. Directly opposite each of the windows on the interior wall is a small rectangular niche located at floor level. The dimensions of these niches, or chambers, are on average about one meter high, one meter deep and a half meter wide. Recessed in the back wall of each chamber is a stone image carved in high relief, with most images measuring about a meter in height. In some of these niches the interior sides walls also contain opposite facing reliefs representing attendant figures or subsidiary imagery.

145 The stairs of each level are aligned in the secondary directions with the up and down stairs staggered differently on each level. The only variant of this is the first flight of stairs, which is aligned on a northwest by southwest angle and does not pass through the center of the pagoda.
In the secondary directions on both the exterior and interior facing walls, one or two small rectangular stone relief(s) are recessed into the wall at about waist height. These reliefs are about half the size of the reliefs in the recessed wall chambers. Many of these reliefs depict scenes from the Gāndhāravyūha (Rufa jie pin 人法界品, “Entry into the dharma realm”) chapter of the Flower Garland Sūtra (Huayan jing 华严经), which were mostly donated by a single personage identified as Xing Xindao 邢信道 for the benefit of his mother with the wish that she reborn in a Buddhist paradise. All total, in the interior of the pagoda there are seventy-six numbered stone images, with only the uppermost floor not containing any images. At the time of writing this manuscript, the imagery on the exterior of the pagoda has not been numbered or identified, but includes approximately forty additional relief images.

The images in the interior of the Duobaota are numbered from the ground level up. All of this imagery appears to be contemporary with the pagoda and includes fifty donor inscriptions along with several others located on the exterior of the pagoda. Based on the inscriptions inside the pagoda, it can be inferred that patrons may have decided the subject matter for

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146 These reliefs contain inscriptions that identify the different particular scenes from the sūtra that are represented and the name of the donor. See MWL, 449-458 numbers 15, 17, 19-24, 26-28, 30-32, 34-35, 37, 39, 42, 46-48. Several examples of these are included in Appendix B, numbers 3.4 and 3.5.

147 The numbering system goes to 79 but includes four steles that were added in the Qing Dynasty. There are no images on the seventh floor. However, on the south side of the seventh floor is a niche like those on the lower floors. This niche is completely empty. Perhaps it contained an image made of a more valuable or less durable material, or was left empty for some unknown reason.

148 The inscriptions in the pagoda are transcribed in the MWL, 443-459.
individual niches on a case-by-case basis, and possibly no specific order was intended. The state of preservation of these images is varied; some images have been extensively damaged, while others are well preserved (Figure 2.48). Unfortunately, hardly any of this imagery has been published, and the pagoda is normally kept locked and not made accessible to the public.\footnote{I want to thank Li Fangyin for arranging a visit to the pagoda for me. I would also like to thank Mr. Feng Taibin 冯泰彬, who was assigned to accompany me during my three days of research in the Pagoda.}

Although some of these images are damaged and not readily identifiable, most are recognizable as Buddhist divinities that are also depicted at the Fowan and other local sites. The only clearly identifiable non-Buddhist subject matter is a pair of martial-type figures depicted in niche number 75 (Figure 2.49), which is located on the southwest wall of the sixth floor opposite the stairwell to the seventh floor. This pair of figures represents two popular Daoist deities, Marshal Wen (Wen Yuanshuai 文元师) and Tianpeng Yuanshuai 天蓬元帅 that are depicted at other sites in Dazu.\footnote{These images are incorrectly identified in the NRZL, 448, as vajrapālas (jingang, lishi 金刚力士).} On the same floor as this relief is a relief image of a fierce looking six-armed...
deity in niche number 70 (Figure 2.50). This deity is identified by Chinese scholars as Acala, but may represent a variant wrathful form of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, or possibility a Daoist deity.\textsuperscript{151}

One of the more interesting niches in the pagoda is niche number 50, which is the west-facing niche of the third floor. This niche contains an image of the lay devotee Feng Ji 冯楫 (1074-1153) attended by a monk and a nun (Figure 2.51). The placement of Feng Ji’s image in the pagoda may be due to his significant contribution to the building of the pagoda, his status as an important lay follower and organizer of a local Pure Land association, and his standing as a leading local official. Feng Ji is depicted in an official’s outfit and holding a string of prayer beads, which are associated particularly with the practice of Pure Land Buddhism in China. The image faces directly to the west toward the Pure Land of Sukhāvatī, which was the central focus of Feng Ji’s Buddhist practice and

\textsuperscript{151} Sorenson (1989) 6, relates this image to a \textit{vidyārāja} image at Yuanjuedong in Anyue, which he believes is a version of Ucchusma. In the same article Sorenson also mistakenly dates the Duobaota pagoda to ca. 1000.
much of lay devotion in the Song Dynasty. The placement of this image of a secular figure amongst all the images of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other deities agrees with the conventions in the storyline of Sudhana’s peregrinations that everyone, no matter what rank, gender, or class, not only Buddhas and bodhisattvas, can be a Buddhist teacher.

Feng Ji had studied under the Chan Master Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089-1163) who was an advocate of Huayan philosophy, so Feng Ji’s religious beliefs may have relied on aspects of Huayan philosophy, which is also expressed as a dominant theme in the imagery of the pagoda. Moreover, inscriptions in the pagoda seem to indicate that the interior niches may have functioned as family memorial

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152 According to Feng Ji’s biography in the Fozutongji, he always carried a small sandalwood image of Amitābha with the nine levels of rebirth as a personal devotional object. See T.49.2053.283. He is also identified as the donor of an image of Amitābha in niche 39 on the fourth floor of the pagoda; see MWL 456, number 36.

153 On Dahui, see Miriam Levering, “Dahui Zonggao and Zhang Shangying,” Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies 30 (2000): 114-140. Also see Zhao Huzhi (1999), 43-6, who tries to connect Feng Ji with the statesman and lay Buddhist devotee Hang Shangying. Part of the evidence for that association, according to Zhao, is the Wujin Laoren Stele at the Fowan. See Appendix C, number 3.
shrines, so that it would have been suitable for family members to place an image of Feng Ji, who may have died before the pagoda's completion, in the pagoda.\(^{154}\)

Besides the general survey of the contents of the pagoda given in the *NRZL*, the only other study of the imagery in the Pagoda was done by Li Fangyin, who published an article on the thirty-odd images depicting scenes of the *Gaṇḍhavyūha sūtra* in the interior of the pagoda, which he suggests were not arranged in a set sequence to correspond with the text.\(^{155}\) However, there is an implied organization to these reliefs and the general symbolism of the imagery in the pagoda, which is to convey the notion of shared universal Buddhahood. In niche 1 on the interior of the ground floor of the pagoda, two reliefs depicting Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī (Figure 2.52) are placed at ground level on opposite sides of an image of the Buddha Śākyamuni carved in the round, which is depicted in bhūmisparśa mudrā and faces the entrance to the pagoda (Figure 2.53). These two reliefs represent the last and first scenes in the *Gaṇḍhavyūha*, which describes the southward pilgrimage of the Buddhist prelate Sudhana to visit with fifty-three different spiritual teachers called “good friends” (*kalyāṇamitras*). At the start of his journey he is directed by the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī (Wenshu 文殊), to the first of these series of teachers, which eventually takes him to the place of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Puxian 普贤) where he completes his journey.

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\(^{154}\) There are several local precedents for the placement of images of prominent local officials who supported Buddhism at Buddhist sites, such as the image of Wei Junjing in niche 1 at the Fowan, and the image of Nie Zhen 聶真 in niche 82 (dated 941) at Yuanjuedong, Anyue.

and becomes enlightened. This physical and spiritual journey is implied metaphorically by the arrangement of the images in the pagoda. In the west-facing relief of niche 1, Sudhana is depicted prostrate on the ground to the left of his final teacher Samantabhadra. On the opposite side, Sudhana stands to the right of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, who points with his right hand over Sudhana’s head toward the south and the corridor leading to the stairs up to the next level of the pagoda and the other reliefs depicting Sudhana and his other teachers. These other reliefs are placed in chest high niches on the interior and exterior facing walls of the secondary directions on the second to fifth floors. Thus, both Sudhana and the visitor of the pagoda are sent on a spiritual journey into the pagoda beginning and ending in this niche with an image of a Buddha, which may be understood to represent the potential and
fulfillment of enlightenment, and the dual identity of Śākyamuni in an enlightened state with the dharmakāya Buddha Vairocana who is depicted in niche number 12, the south-facing niche on the second floor above this niche.

A few feet to the east of the Duobaota pagoda is a set of stairs leading to the base of the south-facing cliff below the pagoda, where a colossal pair of seated Buddhas have been hewn out of the cliff face (Diagram 6, figure 2.54). At a height of nearly ten meters, these images are the largest at Beishan, comparable in scale to imagery at the later, nearby site of Baodingshan, and representative of what Angela Howard calls a trend toward “monumentality” in the area during the Song Dynasty. The images represent the famous pairing of Śākyamuni and a Buddha of the remote past named Prabhūtaratna (Duobao 多宝), for whom the pagoda on the ledge above is named. In recent years these images have been extensively renovated, so it is hard to gauge their original form. Though there is no inscriptional evidence, it is generally believed that these images were created during the

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156 See Angela Howard, Summit of Treasures: Buddhist cave art of Dazu, China. (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 2001), 147-163.

157 The images have undergone several restorations, with the most recent in 1998. see Li Fangyin, “Dazu Beishan shiku 大足北山窟,” in Dazu shike diaosu quanji 1: Beishan shiku juan, ed. Guo Xiangying and Li Fangyin (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999), 16 n. 8.
Song Dynasty, possibly as part of the symbolic plan of the pagoda to form a literal conceptualization of the well-known eleventh chapter of the *Lotus sūtra* (*Fahua jing* 法华经), which describes the appearance of Prabhūtaratna’s pagoda and his meeting with Śākyamuni. The pair of Buddhas are also represented inside the pagoda in niche number 57, the south-facing niche on the sixth floor (Figure 2.55). In that niche Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna are depicted seated in *padmāsana* (lotus posture) on a single raised platform, a positioning that corresponds to the text of the

The central message of this chapter is to convey the universal potential of Buddhahood and the transcendental nature of Śākyamuni. See T.9.262:32b-34b: Leon Hurvitz, 183-194.
Lotus sūtra, which says that they were seated together on one seat with their legs crossed (padmāsana) “high up and far aloft” in Prabhūtaratna’s stūpa.\textsuperscript{159} The images in that interior niche may have been intended as a reification of the two larger Buddhas, symbolizing the non-duality of Buddhahood and further symbolically linking the pagoda and the giant pair of Buddhas.

2.4. Characteristics and periodization of the imagery of the Fowan site

The preceding section provided an overview of the sites at Beishan by describing the general layout, imagery, epigraphy, and chronology of each site. From that background, this section will specifically address the typological characteristics and periodization of the sculpture at the Fowan, the primary cliff sculpture site at Beishan. This will be done through the analysis of the site that examines the iconographic subject matter and stylistic typology of imagery at the site for each of the three general phases of artistic activity, which form the standard periodization of the site adopted by Chinese scholars.\textsuperscript{160} The first or foundational phase is the briefest and lasts for around a dozen years (roughly 895-907) at the end of the Late Tang period (848-907). The second phase represents the imagery created at the site during the Five Dynasties period (907-960), and the third phase represents the imagery created under the Song Dynasty (960-1278), primarily during the first half of

\textsuperscript{159} See T.9.262.33c; Leon Hurvitz, 186.

\textsuperscript{160} The only scholar who gives a variant version of this periodization is Yan Wenru 阮文儒, “Dazu longgangshan shiku 足龙岗山石窟,” SW, Shike yanjiu zhuanji 石刻研究专辑 (1986): 31-41, who adopts a two part scheme that groups the Late Tang and Five Dynasties together as one period and the Song as a separate period.
the twelfth century. Although the adoption of this tripartite periodization based on the political subdivisions that overlap the history of the site is somewhat arbitrary, the following discussion will show that the site experienced three somewhat distinct phases of activity, distinguishable in appearance and content, which fall roughly into these temporal parameters.

Among the 278 numbered image niches/caves at the Fowan only slightly more than half, 154 niches/caves can be roughly identified and dated based on inscriptions, style, and topography.\textsuperscript{161} From the total number, only about thirteen niches (five percent of the total) can be approximately dated to the Late Tang period, and about 124 niches (forty-five percent of the total) can be dated to the Five Dynasties period, and roughly seventy niches (twenty-five percent of the total) can be dated to the Song Dynasty. The number of these niches that have inscriptions with hard dates is much smaller, only thirty niches/caves (eleven percent of the total), but there is a sufficient amount of these dated niches/caves and evident typological characteristics to reveal the site’s general sequential development. Since a full detailed discussion of the periodization of the site is beyond the scope of this study, I will present only a summary of the imagery and general characteristics of each of the three periods that form the periodization of the site.

**Characteristics of Late Tang niches at the Fowan site**

This phase of activity corresponds to the brief span of time between Wei Junjing’s founding of the site during the jingfu reign era (892-893) and the establishment of the Former Shu Kingdom in 907. Most of the images

\textsuperscript{161} See Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang (1988), 31.
that belong to this phase of activity are datable to the *qianning* (894-898). These niches are located in two groups. One group of ten niches (numbers 5, 9, 10, 12, 50, 51, 52, 54, and 58) is located at the southern end of the site and centered around a core group of four larger niches (numbers 5, 9, 10, and 12). A second smaller group of three niches (numbers 240, 243, and 245) is located at the northern end of the site and centered around niche number 245 (see Diagram 7). There may be an additional number of small niches that date to this period, but that are too damaged to identify or are otherwise indistinguishable from niches dating to the early Five Dynasties period. Estimates of niches dating to this period given by Chinese scholars are slightly higher, averaging about twenty niches. Their estimates include several small niches (numbers 24, 25, 26, 29, 31, 240, and 248), which I believe should be dated to either the Five Dynasties period based on their relative topology in relation to dated niches and stylistic considerations, or are otherwise too damaged to be conclusively dated to either period.

In the southern section of the site, the niches that can be dated to the Late Tang period include four larger niches, numbers 5, 9, 10, and 12, which respectively contain imagery of

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162 Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang (1988), 32, identify nineteen niches (numbers 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 24, 26, 27, 29, 31, 50, 51, 52, 57, 58, 240, 245, and 248) that they believe are datable to the Late Tang period, while the *NRZL* dates twenty-one niches (numbers 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 50, 51, 52, 58, 240, 241, and 245) to that period.

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Figure 2.56: Niche 12, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
Vaiśravaṇa (see Figure 2.16), the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara (see Figure 2.15), the Buddha Amitābha (see Figure 2.17), and an Adorned or Jeweled Buddha representing Śākyamuni/Vairocana (Figure 2.56). The subject matter of this imagery was popular in Sichuan during the Tang Dynasty, and related examples can be found elsewhere in the region. In close proximity to these niches are six smaller niches, numbers 6, 50, 51, 52, 54, and 58, which date to the first phase of activity at the sites. The identifiable subject matter of these niches includes imagery of the Buddha Amitābha (niche 52, figure 2.57), Avalokiteśvara paired with Kṣitigarbha (niche 58, Figure 2.58), Cintāmanicakra Avalokiteśvara (niche 50, Figure 2.59), and the Buddhas of the Three Realms (niche 51, Figure 2.60). Among these niches, only niches, 50, 51, 52, and 58, haved dated inscriptions. They are dated, respectively, to 897, 899, 897, and 896.163

In the northern section of the site are three niches, 240, 243, and 245 (Figure 2.18), datable to the Late Tang period. The former two niches are small intrusive niches carved directly adjacent to niche 245 on a north-facing

163 See Appendix B, numbers 1.12-1.14, 1.17, and 1.18.
sliver of the cliff wall that was created by the excavation of niche 245. Niche 240 (Figure 2.61) features a pair of images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and has a donor inscription dated 896. Below niche 240, niche 243 (Figure 2.62) features a seated image of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara and has a donor inscription dated 901. The dated inscriptions in these two niches help to place the date of niche 245.

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164 See Appendix B, number 1.49; MWL, 12 number 4.
165 See Appendix B, number 1.50; MWL, 15 number 9.
to the Late Tang period, on or before 896, since it does not have a clearly dated inscription. The subject matter of niche 245 represents an elaborate depiction of the Buddha Amitābha in his western paradise along with scenes derived from one of his primary sūtras, the Guanwuliangshou jing 观无量寿经 (Sūtra on Contemplating the Buddha of Measureless Life), discussed in the fourth chapter of this study. At a height of nearly five meters, niche 245 is the largest and most elaborate of the Late Tang niches at the Fowan site. This niche is the focal point of the northern end of the site, with subsequent smaller niches filled in around it during the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods.

166 There are two inscriptions associated with this niche and both are only partially legible. One inscription (Appendix B, number 1.53; MWL, 17-19 number 19) was a later addition and is dated 919.
Stylistic features and characteristics of Late Tang imagery

The imagery of the niches dating to the Late Tang period displays a number of shared characteristics in regard to niche morphology, compositional arrangement, and manner of figurative representation. Many of these characteristics are also shared with the successive Five Dynasties imagery at the site. However, some general distinctions can be made between the characteristics of imagery in niches that date to these two periods.

The morphology of Late Tang niches follows conventions seen at several other sites in Sichuan with Mid Tang and Late Tang niches, such as at the Qianfoyan (Jiajiang) and sites in Zizhong. The niches are characteristically squarish in shape and are surrounded on three or four sides by a narrow border similar to a rectangular picture frame (see type I in Diagram 8), such as in niche 52 (Figure 2.57). Except for niche 245, which has relief images carved in the border, the borders of other niches are undecorated. Another characteristic feature is the inclusion of triangular shapes or “brackets” in the upper interior corners of the border (see type I, 1-3 in Diagram 8). In some niches these triangular shapes are slightly rounded and serve as a transition between the square exterior frame of the niche and its arched interior, as if they were an unintentional part of the design of the niche. However, in a number of niches they are very clearly delineated as decorative elements, such as in niches 9, 245, and 51 (Figure 2.60). Typically the interior concave part of the niche has either a rounded or squared base and sides that are flat or arched inward to the top of the niche. Larger, deeper cut niches

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feature flat interior overhead linings while shallower niches have more of an arched shape at the top with less surface area. In many niches, the transition from the outer border to the interior of the niche is smooth, while others have the appearance of a post and lintel frame with side figures tucked slightly behind the vertical sides of the outer border of the niche.

There are only two Late Tang niches with variant versions of this niche morphology. One is niche 50 (Figure 2.59), which has an arched border placed in a rectangular outline (see type II, 2 in Diagram 8). The other is niche 51, which is distinctive in that the lower portion of the niche has a stepped or cutaway bottom, a feature that is also seen on niche 6 (Figure 2.63) at Yingpanpo (dated 896); otherwise the primary images are located on a flat plain even with the base of the niche.

The composition of Late Tang niches is generally confined to the interior portion of the niche. Occasionally, as in niche 52 (Figure 2.57), part of the imagery, typically in the form of decorative elements like clouds and ribbons, may expand out of the interior recessed part of the niche onto the borders of the niche. Images of dvarapālas (guardians figures), a common feature of High Tang and Mid Tang imagery on the exterior of niches at earlier sites in Sichuan, are more the exception than the norm. Standard decorative elements include the carving of intricate circular canopies above Buddhas and...
apsarasas (celestial musicians) with thin, willowy bodies and long trailing ribbons. The head and body aureoles of Buddhas and bodhisattvas almost all conform to a single type that consists of a plain round head aureole and/or a round or ovoid shaped body aureole that have outer decorative bands with flame motifs that rise to a point to give the aureole a tear-drop or lotus petal shaped appearance. The flame motifs of the aureole are typically rendered with wavy, elongated U-shaped incisions, with the lower portion sometimes hollowed out to form inverted crescent shapes. Other decorative elements include the schematic depiction of trees and foliage behind the primary images in several niches, which follows from conventions popular in earlier Tang art in northern Sichuan, and the depiction of musical instruments attached to long fluttery ribbons in shallow relief on the top interior of two niches, numbers 245 and 51.\footnote{For a comparative analysis of the musical instruments represented in niche 245 with similar imagery found at Dunhuang, see Qin Fangyu 泰方瑜, “Beishan shike leqi kaolu 北山石刻乐器考略,”in WX, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 406-410.}

The manner of figurative representation found in Late Tang niches is fairly consistent with minor variations between niches, perhaps the result of the work of different hands working in one stylistic mode. The body types are slightly elongated with narrow, rounded, droopy shoulders and proportionally large heads, with little sense of the voluptuous proportions of the classic Tang figurative idiom. The figures are typically represented in stiff, rigid, vertical poses, often with the arms held close to the body. Only a few images have an indication of a subtle impression of weight-shift or twist in the torso to convey a sense of mass; otherwise, they appear in a general frontal manner. The
seated image of Amitābha Buddha in niche 52 (dated 897) is representative of the figurative type of Buddha images of this period at the site (Figure 2.57). The garments are rendered without extensive modeling and loosely conform to the contours of the body. Folds in the garments are represented with simple incised parallel linear striations with little evidence of the idealized naturalism of garments in High Tang figurative imagery. Two modes for depicting the hairdo of Buddhas occur in Late Tang Buddha images at the site. Most follow the Tang convention of delineating a distinct large bulging knot of hair (uṣṇiṣa) on the top of the head with stylized rows of pearl-like circular protrusions representing the curls of the Buddha’s hair. The other mode seen on the Buddha in niche 52 is less common and features a distinctive turban-like coiffure with rounded wavy parallel grooves to represent the Buddha’s hair.

Bodhisattvas are rendered in the same figurative mode as Buddhas, with slightly elongated bodies and large heads. A comparison between the large attendant figure of Avalokiteśvara (c. 1.8 meters high) in niche 10 (Figure 2.64) and a much smaller image of Avalokiteśvara (c. .7 meters high) in niche 240.
(Figure 2.65) reveals the relative consistency of this manner of representation. Both bodhisattvas stand in rigid frontal poses and hold the stem of a large lotus with both hands. The body type is essentially the same for both figures, with the smaller image in niche 240 slightly more elongated. The garments of both figures conform to the contours of the body, with gouged parallel striations representing the folds in the garments. A standard feature of Late Tang bodhisattva images at the site are long trailing scarves that are draped across the forearms and hang down the sides. In some images, such as in niche 240, these are more accentuated with undulating curves. The bodhisattvas also reflect a trend toward decorative embellishment seen in earlier Tang imagery in Sichuan with intricately carved garlands of pearls and linked jewel necklaces that cover the frontal portion of the figure. Typically the head adornments of bodhisattvas dating to the Late Tang period are roughly triangular-shaped floral crowns with tassels or jewels that hang off protrusions from each side at the back of the head. A feature seen on these two examples and not found on later bodhisattva imagery at the site is the depiction of two long wavy locks of hair that hang down in front of the shoulders. These and other stylistic elements reflect a
continuation of earlier representational modes of depicting bodhisattvas since the Six Dynasties period but more schematically rendered and less formalized.

**Characteristics of Five Dynasties niches**

This phase of activity at the site corresponds to the fifty-eight odd years of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (Wudai shiguo 五代十国) period of Chinese history after the collapse of the Tang Dynasty. During this time, the region of Sichuan was ruled by three different states, the Former Shu (Qian Shu 前蜀, 907-925), Later Tang (Hou Tang 后唐, 926-936), and Later Shu (Hou Shu 后蜀, 934-933). Over this time span numerous small- to medium-sized niches were carved at the Fowan site. By conservative estimates, out of the 277 numbered image niches/cave at the site, around 125, over forty percent of the total niches at the site, can be dated to this period. Additionally, a large number of the carvings at the Foeryan and Yingpanpo sites are also datable to this period. Although no larger niches comparable to the core group of Late Tang niches are datable to this period, there is a greater variety of subject matter, niche types, and modes of representation. Apparent tendencies seen in the representational mode of the Late Tang imagery at the site continue in the Five Dynasties period, and imagery of the

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169 There are several different tabulations for Five Dynasties niches. The *NRZL* dates 107 niches to the Five Dynasties period. Liu Xiaoping 刘笑平 and Yin Jianhua 尹建华, "Shilun Dazu Beishan Wudai zaoxiang 试论大足北山五代造像," *SW* 4 (1992): 34-41, identify 105 niches dating to the Five Dynasties period. Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiong (1988), 40, identify only sixty-eight, but estimate that an additional number of the some 105 damaged niches could also date to the Five Dynasties period. Song Langqiu 宋朗秋, "Shishu Dazu shiku fenqi shulun 大足刻分期述论," *DHY* 3 (1996): 66, believes that around 158 niches at the site date to this period.
two periods is difficult to distinguish between. However, as the period progressed a more distinctive mode of representation developed out of mannerisms seen in Late Tang imagery at this site and elsewhere. The style that emerged is viewed by Chinese scholars as a bridge between the representational extremes of the Tang and Song periods at the site.\textsuperscript{170}

The general topology of Five Dynasties niches at the Fowan site follows that of the Late Tang with the primary body of niches located on the far northern and southern sections of the site. In the southern section are approximately fifty-three niches that can be dated to the Five Dynasties period based on inscriptions, style, or other factors.\textsuperscript{171} Among these niches, eight have inscriptions with legible dates: numbers 24 (dated 919-924), 26 (dated 920), 27 (dated 938), 32 (dated 913), 35 (dated 941), 37 (dated 940), 39 (dated 922), and 53 (dated 915).\textsuperscript{172} On the opposite end of the site are approximately seventy-one niches that date to the Five Dynasties period, which are all located on the northern end of the northern section.\textsuperscript{173} Among these only four have inscriptions with legible dates: niches 244 (dated 945), 266, 268, 269.

\textsuperscript{170} Liu Xiaoping, and Yin Jianhua (1992), 38.

\textsuperscript{171} These include niches 1, 3, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 56, 57, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 73, 82. Seventeen other niches in this section of the site also date to either the Late Tang or Five Dynasties period but are not distinguishable enough to be specifically dated. These include niches 4, 18, 59, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89 90, 91, and 92.

\textsuperscript{172} See Appendix B, numbers 1.4, 1.6-10, and 1.15.

\textsuperscript{173} These include niches 88, 190, 191, 194, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 218, 220, 221, 224, 225, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 238, 241, 242, 244, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 266, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, and 284. Also, niche 246 belongs to either this period or the Later Tang period.
The twelve dated inscriptions indicate that activity continued at the site for the span of the Five Dynasties period, with four niches dated by inscription to the Former Shu (907-925) and seven to the Later Shu (934-965), but none are dated to the seven year interim (926-933) when Sichuan was controlled by the Later Tang (923-933). According to historical accounts, during the period of Later Tang rule the region of Sichuan was unstable, with a number of revolts resulting from loyalty to the former regime, corruption, and the wanton plundering of the countryside by the armies of the Later Tang. Thus, the lack of inscriptions dating to that period may reflect that only few, or no, niches may have been carved at the site in the unstable social environment of that time.

The subject matter of imagery in Five Dynasties period niches includes much of the same subject matter as the Late Tang niches, with the addition of a few more themes. Representations of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara are most prominent, with approximately twenty-four niches depicting Avalokiteśvara as the primary image. These represent a more diverse range of forms of Avalokiteśvara than found in Late Tang niches. In addition to generic depictions of Avalokiteśvara, the forms of the bodhisattva depicted include two multilimbed forms of the bodhisattva, the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, which occurs in four niches (numbers 60, 218, 235 and 273), and Amoghapāśa, which occurs in three niches (niches 208, 212 and 224).

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174 See Appendix B, numbers 1.51, 1.61, 1.64, and 1.67.

175 The fascicle 64 of the Xin Wudai shi records that, during this time, thieves and brigands filled the mountains and forests of the region. See Yang Weili, 108-109.

176 These include niches 16, 19, 26, 27, 31, 60, 67, 70, 200, 204, 210, 211, 212, 214, 218, 224, 225, 233, 235, 249, 253, 268, 272, 273, 274, 280, and niche 4 at the Foeryan site.
Other imagery of Avalokiteśvara, includes two depictions of the Treasure-seal (Baoyin 宝印) Avalokiteśvara in niches 211 and 274. At least five niches (numbers 70, 200, 210, 213, and 280) feature the Potalaka or Water-Moon form of Avalokiteśvara, depicting the bodhisattva seated in the posture of royal ease (rājalilāsana) with a large round, moon-like aureole.

The bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha is featured in at least nine different niches and is depicted as an independent subsidiary figure on a number of different niches that date to the Five Dynasties period. One of these niches, number 205 (Figure 2.66), includes a depiction of the Ten Kings of Hell, who are associated with Kṣitigarbha and mortuary rites that became increasingly popular from the tenth century. Kṣitigarbha is paired with Avalokiteśvara in at least eighteen different niches. The largest and most elaborate of these, niche 253 (Figure 2.67), includes depictions of the Ten Kings of hell. In addition to the pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, four small niches

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177 These include niches 15, 23, 28, 37, 203, 205, 242, 266, and 276.

178 Numerous paintings of the Ten Kings dating to the tenth century have been found at Dunhuang, see Matsumoto Eiichi 栗松本英一, *Tonkōga no kenkyū* 敦煌画の研究, vol.1 (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin, 1937), 402-16.

179 Those niches dating to the Five Dynasties period with this subject matter include niches 17, 29, 32, 82, 191, 196, 221, 228, 241, 244, 248, 249, 252, 257, 275, 277, and 284. Several others may also have contained this subject matter, but are too damaged to identify.
feature the pairing of the bodhisattvas Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, who are associated with the Medicine Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, but not known to have been the focus of an independent cult.

Niches containing a central Buddha with two bodhisattva attendants and subsidiary figures remained popular in the Five Dynasties period at the site. The most frequently depicted Buddha is Amitābha, who is featured in eleven different niches, seven of which include Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara as his primary attendants. The Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, who is not depicted in the previous period, occurs in nine niches. Another new subject matter occurring in this period at the site is found in niche 39, dated 922, which features the Buddha Tejaprabha and the nine planets, or luminaries, that make up his retinue (Figure 2.68). The historical Buddha Śākyamuni is depicted in two

180 These include niches 11, 21, 22, 35, 40, 48, 53, 57, 73, 194, and 270. Those with Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara instead of the canonical pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta include niches 22, 35, 40, 53, 57, 73, and 194.

181 These include niches 38, 46, 190, 227, 255, 256, 278, 279, and 281.
niches with images of the sixteen arhats (numbers 36 and 220). Of these, niche 36 (Figure 2.69) is of substantial size (2.79 x 8.14 meters) relative to other Five Dynasties niches at the site and displays certain stylistic affinities to later Song Dynasty imagery at the site and elsewhere in the area.

A type of subject matter occurring in the Five Dynasties period and not in the Late Tang period are dhāraṇī pillars. There are six niches that feature these pillars (niches 260, 262, 269, 271, 279, and 281), all of which are located at the far

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182 A smaller grouping of sixteen arhats is also depicted in niche 22 at the Foeryan with the arhats arranged in two tiers, but this niche is in a poor state of preservation. The theme of Sixteen arhats is derived from a scripture translated by Xuanzang in 654 known as Record on Abiding by the Law (Fazhuji 法住記), T.49.2030, where the arhats are given the task to remain in the world to protect and maintain the Buddha's teachings after Sākyamuni's departure. For a dated but comprehensive study of arhats in East Asian Buddhism see Marinus W. de Viser, The Arhats in China and Japan (Berlin: Oesterheld and Co., 1923). Also see Richard K. Kent, "Depictions of the Guardians of the law: Lohan Painting in China," in Latter Days of the Law, ed. Marsha Weidner (Lawrence, Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1994).
northern end of the site. Other subject matter includes the Buddhist
philosopher/semi-divine monk Nāgāraṇjuna (Longshu pusa 龙树菩萨), who is
depicted in several small niches (162, 189, and 258) holding a brush and ink
well and accompanied by a dragon (Figure 2.70). The esoteric deity Acala
(Budong, 不动) is depicted in niche 56 (Figure 2.71). In addition to this

183 The semilegendary Nāgāraṇjuna, who lived sometime in the second to fourth century, was
connected with both the transmission of the teachings of the Prajñāpāramitā, the
fundamental philosophical text of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which he reportedly rediscovered in
the undersea realm of the nāgas (serpents), and the Mahāvairocana sūtra, which was
revealed to him in a iron stūpa. His name is derived from his association with the nāgas as
his spiritual teachers and, the fact that he was born under an Arjuna (victorious) tree. His
biography is given in Longshu pusa zhuan 龙树菩萨传, T.50.2047A-B, translated by
Kumārajiva. Also see Max Walleser, The Life of Nāgāraṇjuna from Tibetan and Chinese
Sources (Delhi: Nag, 1979). The three images of Nāgāraṇjuna do not have identifying
inscriptions, but their identification is confirmed by a similar image of Nāgāraṇjuna in niche 64
in the Duobaota that is identified by inscription; see Appendix B, number 3.9; MWL, 447-
448 number 10.1.

184 This figure has been misidentified by Chinese scholars as Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Nearby niche 47 contains a unique image of a fierce deity that Chinese scholars have
identified as Acala, but does not correspond to the standard iconography of Acala.
imagery, several niches contain imagery that has yet to be correctly identified. One of these is a bodhisattva seated on a bull in niche 209 (Figure 2.72). Chinese scholars identify this figure as Yamarāja. An inscription in the niche refers to the figure as “The Great Holy Bodhisattva who Unties the Knot(s) of Injustice” (Jieyuanjie dashengpusa).  

A bodhisattva with this name is not known to occur in canonical Buddhist scriptures but appears to be connected to a dhārāṇī scriptures popular in the region. This bodhisattva is also represented at two sites in Anyue county.

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185 See Appendix B, number 1.48; MWL 21-2, number 29.

186 A dhārāṇī text, which removes wrongs and bad karma, is inscribed on a stone block bearing this title found in a Five Dynasties period tomb in Sichuan. See Zhu Zhangyi 朱章义, “Shilun Chengdu huacheng cun Wudai mu chutu de zunshengtuluo shike 试论成都化成村五代墓出土的尊胜陀罗尼石刻,” SW 3 (1999): 72-76.

187 A similar image to Fowan niche 209 is found in niche 43, Yuanjuedong, Anyue, but does not have an identifying inscription. At the Qianfozhai in Anyue there is reportedly a donor inscription that identifies the imagery in niche 60 as a Jieyuanjie bodhisattva and a seated Buddha; see Zeng Deren (2001), 59.
Stylistic features and typological characteristics of Five Dynasties imagery at the Fowan site

In terms of sculptural techniques, the carvings datable to the Five Dynasties period at the Fowan continue the stylistic tendencies exhibited in the Late Tang imagery at the site. Many of the features of Late Tang niches are carried over into those of the Five Dynasties period, and stylistic differences between some imagery of the two periods are almost imperceptible. However, there are certain traits that distinguish the general body of Five Dynasties imagery at the site from those of the Late Tang. Based on dated imagery these traits become more apparent in the second half of the Five Dynasties period in imagery dating to the Later Shu period (934-65).

Comparative study of niches dating to the Former Shu period at the site with those from the Late Tang with the same subject matter reveals only minor variances from the representational mode of the Late Tang. Two excellent examples for

Figure 2.73: Niche 53, Fowan, Beishan. Photo by author, 2001.
comparison are niche 53 (Figure 2.73), dated 915, and niche 52 (Figure 2.57), dated 897. Both niches contain a seated image of the Buddha Amitābha attended by two standing images of the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha. Niche 52 is slightly smaller than niche 53, but otherwise the niches are almost duplicates of one another. The similarities suggest that niche 53 was modeled after niche 52, which was created 18 years earlier, and may even have been carved by the same atelier of sculptors. The design of both niches follows the popular niche type of the Late Tang period, with a rectangular border and triangular brackets in the upper interior corners (corresponding to type I.2.D in Diagram 8). The same type of niche morphology of Late Tang niches is also characteristic of Five Dynasties niches at the site, with the only difference being that a number of Five Dynasties niches feature decorative elements such as apsarasas, stylized curtains, and sets of Buddhas on the sides and lintels of some niches.

The central Buddhas in niches 52 and 53 are carved in a similar manner with somewhat elongated torsos and robes that reveal the shape of the body with gouged striations to indicate folds. The head of the Buddha in niche 53 is partially defaced, but it has a more rounded appearance than that of the Buddha in niche 52. This may only be a reflection of the individual hand of the carver; however, in general the heads of Five Dynasties figures at the site are often proportionally more oversized than Late Tang images. A distinctive difference between the two images is the type of lotus platform on which the Buddhas are seated. The platform in niche 52 is a variation of a lotus throne with a rounded inner-tube-like midsection that occurs in many Late Tang niches. The lotus throne in niche 53 is more elaborate, with an
octagonal plinth. In general there are a greater variety of throne types in Five Dynasties niches, such as lotus thrones with cloud bases (niches 35, 39, 220, 276, and 253) and other varieties such as niche 57, that includes *kimnara* (half-bird half-man) figures at the base of the throne (Figure 2.74). The throne, aureole, and other elements of niche 53 are more crisply carved which may be attributed to a continued development of carving techniques such as the use of flat-edged knifes, which give the edges of many Five Dynasties images a more terse and crisp cut feeling than Late Tang images. In both niches the small *apsarasas* figures are skillfully carved with trailing cloud streamers extending to the lintels of each niche. *Apsaras* are less frequently represented in the interior of Five Dynasties niches, but occur more often in low relief on the exterior lintels of niches.

Comparisons of bodhisattva figures of Late Tang and Five Dynasties niches also reveal the continuity of Late Tang representational conventions in the Five Dynasties period imagery at the site. The right attendant bodhisattva in niche 53 representing Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.75), compared with the Avalokiteśvara image in niche 240 (Figure 2.65) dated to the Late Tang period, has the same appearance, with a slightly elongated body type

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188 Liu Xiaoping and Yin Jianhua, 35.

189 Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang, 39.
and similar gowns and adornments. The damaged pair of bodhisattvas in niche 32, dated 913, also reveals the continuation of the Late Tang figural mode at the site (Figure 2.76). The pair of figures in this niche are depicted in a columnar-like manner with a flat surface treatment of adornments, and parallel schematic garment folds like Late Tang images.

Directly adjacent to this niche, the figures in niche number 35 are representative of the characteristic style of Five Dynasties imagery of the Later Shu period (934-965). This niche is dated 941 and features a standard grouping of Amitābha seated in dhyāna mudrā and the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha (Figure 2.77).\(^\text{190}\) Compared to the depictions\(^\text{190}\) The dated inscription is transcribed in Appendix B, number 1.9; MWL, 19 number 23.
of Amitābha in niches 52 and 53, this Buddha has a squatter body type with broader shoulders (Figure 2.78).

His robe is still rendered with schematically rendered garment folds, but the robe is slightly less revealing of the contours of the figure than the two earlier Buddha images. The attending bodhisattvas in this niche are depicted seated in pralambapādāsana and have similar body types to the Buddha; they are also heavier and more squat than the Late Tang imagery at the site. This figurative mode of representation is also apparent
on a number of niches on the northern end of the site, such as in niche 279, which is dated 955 (Figure 2.79). Niche 279 is an example of a type of niche morphology, that only occurs in the Five Dynasties period at the site, featuring multiple smaller niches within a larger rectangular border (Figure 2.80). The primary images of this niche, which represent the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru and his two bodhisattva attendants Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, follow the same figurative style seen in niche 35. The bodhisattvas have large, round, oversized heads with full faces, which make the figures appear doll-like. The garment folds and adornments of the figure are schematically rendered.
in a linear manner, but crisply carved, giving the figures an ornamental character that is far removed from the naturalism of the classic Tang mode of representation.

**Characteristics of Song niches/caves**

The last major phase of activity at the site corresponds to the Song Dynasty (960-1279), and represents the most active period of stone carving in the Dazu area. The Song Dynasty is divided into two periods: the Northern Song (960-1127), when the capital was at Bian 汴 (modern Kaifeng 开封), and the Southern Song (1127-1279), when the capital was moved to Hangzhou 杭州 after the Jurchens, or Jin 金 (1115-1234), had overrun the north. Sichuan became integrated into the Song empire in 965 with the surrender of the Former Shu ruler Meng Chang, who was invited to take up residence at the Song capital. After a somewhat turbulent transition period filled with revolts and economic difficulties, the region quickly rebounded to become one of the most prosperous parts of the Song empire. Although the Song Dynasty spans some three hundred years most of the carving activity at Beishan during this period was concentrated in the first half of the twelfth century, during the last decades of the Northern Song and the first several of the Southern Song. At that time, many of the largest niches and caves at the Fowan site were carved, including those containing some of the most refined and artistically accomplished imagery found at the site. This period of activity, concludes in
the 1140s with the building of the Duobaota pagoda, after which time there is little evidence of continued carving activity at the Fowan and other cliff sculpture sites on Beishan.

At the Fowan, this period is marked not only by larger niches, but also by a new stylistic idiom and new subject matter. Although there is some measure of continuity from the preceding periods, in many ways it was if the site experienced a renaissance reflecting the social and cultural changes that demarcate the Song from the preceding Tang and Five Dynasties periods. These developments are also reflected in the increased scale of imagery at other sites in Dazu, Anyue, and neighboring areas. Dazu in particular emerged as a major center of cliff sculpture, with a number of sites with relatively large-sized imagery and a fairly unified style, culminating in the imagery of the large-scale site of Baodingshan at the end of the twelfth century up to the Mongol invasion of Sichuan in the mid-thirteenth century.

**Typology and topology of Song niches/caves at the Fowan**

The preceding section described how the development of the site progressed from several large niches on the two ends of the site, carved in the 890s. Subsequently, smaller niches were added around these larger niches through the span of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods, covering the surface of the cliff face on the extreme ends of the site like book ends, but leaving the large central area of the northern section of the site largely untouched. During the Song Dynasty, this large span of uncarved space would be filled with niches and small excavated caves (see Diagram 10). But before this activity would begin in the early twelfth century there appears to have
been a span of about one hundred years for which there is little evidence of active sponsorship of new imagery at the site. The earliest dated donor inscription at Beishan during the Song Dynasty is found in niche number 12 at the Foeryan site, which has a votive inscription dated 1085. At the Fowan the earliest extant donor inscription for a new image niche dated to the Song Dynasty is dated 1107. Between the date of that inscription and the last dated inscription before the Northern Song annexation of Sichuan in 964-5, which is found in niche 279 and dated 955, there are only a couple of inscriptions for the painting and decoration of niches found at the site, which date to the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. This apparent lacuna of activity at the site is also reflected at other sites in Dazu and the neighboring area of Anyue where there is also little evidence of active patronage of cliff sculpture sites until the second half of the eleventh century. The absence of activity may be a reflection of the political unrest and economic problems experienced by the region during the first century of rule over Sichuan by the Northern Song, which was discussed earlier. In Dazu the only imagery with inscribed dates dating to the early eleventh century are a number of fragments of small free-standing stone statuary from the former site of a temple in eastern Dazu called the Dazhongsi 大钟寺, which have dates

191 See Appendix B, number 4.2; MWL, 61-62 number 1.
192 See Appendix B, number 1.70; MWL, 24 number 37.
193 See Appendix B, number 1.64; MWL, 21 number 27.1.
194 The inscriptions that record the painting and redecoration of niches are found in niches number 247, dated 1005 (Appendix B, number 1.54); number 249, dated 995-997 (Appendix B, number 1.56); number 253, dated 1001 (Appendix B, number 1.58); number 279, which has two inscriptions dated 999 and 1001 (Appendix B, numbers 1.64 and 1.66); and number 281, dated 1005 (Appendix B, number 1.64).
ranging from 998 to 1067. The inscriptions on that statuary indicate that stone carvers were still active in the area, but only that no other epigraphical evidence has been found at cliff sculpture sites to indicate that images were carved during this period. Possibly, some of the niches at the Fowan site may date to this period. A more careful stylistic study of the imagery at the site and those dated to tenth and eleventh centuries at other sites in the region is needed to determine if these and other niches may date to the early Northern Song. Until that is done the study of the site needs to rely on dated inscriptions to determine its relative chronologic development.

Most of the Song Dynasty niches and caves are located in the northern section of the Fowan and include around seventy niches. Only two niches, numbers 83 and 84, located on the southern section of the site, are believed to date to the Song Dynasty. The other niches on the northern section of the site are principally located to the south of niche 245, including most of the niches numbered between 103 to 189. Among the total of seventy niches/caves dating to the Song period, only nine have dated donor inscriptions and for the most part are attached to the larger niches and caves.

At the Fowan, the first clearly dated donor inscription for the creation of a new niche during the Song Dynasty doesn’t occur until 1107, a date that


\[196\] The numbers given by Chinese scholars vary. Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang give forty-six niches, Yan Wenru gives sixty-seven, and the NRZL lists seventy-four. The niches that may be dated to the Song on stylistic or contextual grounds include approximately seventy-eight niches. Those niches identified in this study that potentially date to the Song Dynasty include niches 83 and 84 on the southern section of the site, and on the northern section, niches 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 140, 141, 142, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 184, 186, 187, 285, 286, 288, and 289.
appears to mark the beginning of a second wave of activity at the site that continued into the 1140s. This niche, number 288, is located at the far northern end of the site adjacent to the last dated images of the Five Dynasties period. Subsequently the next dated donor inscription is dated 1116 and is found in cave 180, which contains multiple images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.81). There are multiple donor inscriptions in this cave indicating that the individual imagery in the cave was sponsored by separate donors. Inscriptions in several of the other Song caves at the site also indicate that the imagery in a single cave/niche was sponsored by different donors. Based on dated inscriptions, cave 180 was the first of a series comparatively large niches/caves, including numbers 177 (dated 1126), 176 (dated 1126), 168 (dated 1122), 155 (dated 1126), and 149 (dated 1128), that were carved in a relatively short time span in the waning years of the Northern Song, when the conflict with the Jurchen in northern China was at its height. This conflict did not affect the region directly, but concerns for the welfare of the state are reflected in some of the votive inscriptions at the site.

197 Niche 288 was recarved in the Ming Dynasty and contains only a few traces of the original Song imagery of the niche.

198 See Appendix B, numbers 1.29-1.32.
such as in niche number 149 (Figure 2.82). In that cave, the primary donor inscription, dated 1128, by a local military official includes a prayer for peace that “the weapons of war to be put to permanent rest,” reflecting the unsettled times.

Although the protracted conflict with the Jin did not affect the area physically, it must have exerted a psychological force on the local elites who in part sought a resolution to the conflict though their Buddhist patronage. Since the donor images in cave 149 are relatively large and prominently featured in the cave, it may also have been intended as a sort of family shrine.

During the Southern Song Dynasty the carving at the site appears to have culminated with cave 136, which is dated by inscriptions to 1142 to 1148 (Figure 2.83). As such it was probably begun just before or after the negotiated peace treaty with the Jin in 1141. Cave 136 is the largest excavated cave at the site and is located in almost the exact center of the area between the southern end of the northern section of the site and the earliest dated Song cave, number 180, where most of the imagery dating to the Song

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199 Appendix B, number 1.29; MWL, 27 number 44.1.

200 See Appendix B, numbers 1.20-1.24.

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Dynasty is located. This cave is a variation of the central pillar type caves (zhongxinku 中心窟) common in excavated caves of north-central China from the Six Dynasties period, with the central portion of the cave carved to replicate a large revolving wooden bookcase, or zhuanlun jingzang 转轮经藏, used as a repository for Buddhist texts, a common item in larger Buddhist temples during the Song Dynasty. A Buddha teaching assembly, with a central image of Śākyamuni attended by the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta and the Buddha’s disciples Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda, is carved on the back wall of the cave. Four complimentary niches with individual bodhisattva images are carved on each of the lateral side

These repositories were intended to function less for the storage and retrieval of texts, as in the modern sense of a book repository or library, but were instead primarily intended for the symbolic reading of texts by revolving the case (kan zhuan 看转) to multiply the generation of good merit in the same way that prayer wheels are used in many Tibetan Buddhist temples. One wooden repository dated 1181 and built by a monk is still extant in a rebuilt form in a Daoist temple northwest of Mianyang in Sichuan. See Jiangyou xian wenwu baohu guanlishuo 江油县文物保护管理所, “Sichuan Jiangyou Ruishan Yunyansi feitianzang 四川江油圆山云岩寺飞天藏,” WW 4 (1991): 20-33.

Figure 2.83: Fowan cave 136, view from the back. Reproduced from DSDS, vol. 1, 82-3, figure 91.
walls of the cave along with two opposite facing dharmapāla figures on the outer most sides of the cave (Diagram 15). The bodhisattva images on the right, south-facing side of the cave include Samantabhadra, Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, and a two-armed form of Avalokiteśvara that holds a string of prayer beads. Depicted directly opposite on the north-facing wall are the bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī, the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara, and the White-robed Avalokiteśvara who holds a wish-grant gem (cintāmaṇī). The extant donor inscriptions in the cave indicates that these images appear to have been offered by separate donors with different intentions such as for family prosperity and the well-being of the state. However, the images may have been intended to function as a symbolic unit, with the bodhisattvas on the south wall representing the transcendent wisdom (prajñā) aspect of Buddhist enlightenment and teachings and the opposite figures on the north wall as their symbolic counterparts demonstrating the compassionate (karuṇā) and skillful means (upāya) aspect of the Buddhist teachings. Together these aspects are embodied in the symbolic identity of the image of Śākyamuni at the rear of the cave. This image represents the physical teaching body (nirmāṇakāya) of the Buddha with the central repository representing the abstract knowledge of the Buddha’s enlightenment and the universal aspect of the Buddhist teachings.

Based on the inscriptions in cave 136 the imagery in it was sponsored by multiple donors, several with official titles, over a period of at least six years, between 1142 to 1148, but with the principle support of members of an

202 Two of the inscriptions in the cave also express wishes for the welfare of the state and emperor, indicating that their patronage was also a way to show their support to the government. See Appendix B, numbers 1.20 and 1.22; MWL, 31-32 numbers 46.1 and 46.3.
elite local family who are depicted as donor figures in the north corner of the rear of the cave. However, the date for the initiation of the project and the reason for the carving of the central pillar repository are not given. Possibly the creation of the cave was related to an engraving of a scene depicting the famous debate between the layman Vimalakirti and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This engraving, number 137, is located directly adjacent to cave 136 and is identified in a Song source as having been copied from a mural in a “sūtra hall” of a local temple in order to preserve it (Figure 2.29). The relief, which predates the earliest dated inscription in cave 136 by about eight years, may have inspired the carving of a stone version of a revolving wooden sūtra repository. This carving may have been modeled after the same temple in which the Vimalakirti mural was located. It may also be significant that the cave was made during the tenure of the layman Feng Ji as the Civil and Military and Overseer of the Tongchuan Circuit who is also noted to have sponsored the printing of a Buddhist canon to replace ones destroyed in the conflict with the Jin. The actual text of that canon or other texts may have been placed in the stone repository to symbolically vivify the cave and to

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203 According to Wang Xiangzhi the mural was copied onto stone in fear of its being ruined by flood waters. See Yudi jisheng, fascicle 161; Chen Xishan, et al, 217. The actual location of the temple is not known, but the Qing scholar Zhang Shu noted that it was forty miles south of the city and was destroyed in the Ming Dynasty. Cao Xuequan, in his Shu Zhong Guangji (1618), added to Wang Xiangzhi’s description of the original mural by saying that the painting was by the famous tenth-century Sichuanese artist Shi Ke 石恪. Shi Ke was one of the famous artists of Chengdu who traveled to the Song court in Kaifeng after the Shu Kingdom submitted to Song rule. Li Fangyin (1999), 132-33, believes that it may have been a work painted by the famous artist Zuo Quan, also from Chengdu, who is noted in art historical documents to have painted this subject.

204 During the Southern Song Dynasty a number of sūtra repositories were built at temples in the region; see Jiangyou xian wenwu baohu guanlisuo 江油县文物保护管理所, 12.

205 See Fozu tongji, T.49.2035.283c., 426b, 892a.
insure its permanence so that, as one of the inscription states, “the wheel of dharma will constantly turn” to provide for the everlasting continuity of the Buddhist teachings and the bestowal of merit on the donors and their dependents. Given the scale of the cave and the imagery contained in it, its creation was undoubtedly intended not only to display the donors’ religious sentiments but also as a showcase for their wealth and status.

The appearance of larger scale niches and caves at the site in the twelfth century follows from a trend toward “monumental” imagery in Dazu and surrounding areas in the Song, which first appears in Anyue. In roughly the same span of activity at the Fowan in the first half of the twelfth century, a number of other cliff sculpture sites with imagery of a similar scale emerged at other sites in Dazu, such as Miaogaoshan, Shizhuanshan, and Shimenshan and at sites in Anyue. Like the niches/caves at Beishan the imagery at these sites reflects changes in the the figurative mode of representation and the development of new thematic subject matter.

At the Fowan the subject matter of the Song Dynasties niches/caves is dominated by images of Avalokiteśvara. There are approximately thirty niches datable to the Song Dynasty that feature Avalokiteśvara as the primary image. These include several of the largest niches/caves at the site and several which feature multiple images of Avalokiteśvara. The largest of

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206 See Appendix B, number 1.21; MWL, 31-32 number 46.2.
208 According to Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang, 42, Avalokiteśvara represents 52% of the subject matter of Song niches at the site.

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these, cave 180, contains a large central image of Avalokiteśvara with ten smaller images of various popular forms of Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.81). In the Sūtra Repository Cave, number 136, four of the niches in the cave feature images of different forms of Avalokiteśvara. The most commonly depicted form of Avalokiteśvara in Song niches/caves is the so-called Potalaka, or Water-moon (Shuiyue guanyin 水月观音) Avalokiteśvara, which occurs in at least six different niches (113, 128, 131, 135, 151, and 165) and one medium-sized cave (number 133), (Figure 2.84). The esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara are also represented by a number of niches that feature images of the Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara and by a single image of Cintāmanicakra in cave 149.\textsuperscript{210} There are also a number of niches with more generic forms of the bodhisattva, including two images, in niches 132 (Figure 2.85) and 125 (Figure 2.86), that are depicted with effeminate qualities. A subject matter new at the site in the Song Dynasty and related to Avalokiteśvara is the depiction of the charismatic monk Sengqie 僧伽, in cave 177, who is considered a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara (Figure 2.87). The pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha found in many niches of the two preceding

\textsuperscript{210} The Song Dynasty niches that feature Amoghapāśa include niches 116, 119, 127, 148, 159, 173, and 174, and niches 146 and 123, where Amoghapāśa is depicted paired with a two-armed form of Avalokiteśvara.
periods is also represented in six medium- to small-sized niches (117, 121, 170, 171, 172, and 187).

Ksitigarbha is only depicted in three small niches (161, 153, and 186), but besides Avalokiteśvara no other bodhisattvas are depicted as the primary icon in independent niches.

There are fewer niches with triads of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas, which are common in the two earlier periods at the site, but there is a more diverse number of Buddhas depicted. These include imagery of Amitābha, Śākyamuni, Bhaisajyaguru, Vairocana, Maitreya, Tejaprabha, and Śākyamuni paired with the Buddha of the past Prabhūtaratna (Figure

Figure 2.85: Avalokiteśvara, niche 132, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 2.86: Avalokiteśvara, niche 125, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999.
Other new subject matter not depicted at the site earlier, but given prominence, are the esoteric deities Mahāmāyūrī in cave 155 (Figure 2.89), Māricī in niche 133 (Figure 2.90), and Hāritī in two niches, numbers 122 and 289 (Figure 2.91). The theme of five-hundred arhats is depicted in cave 168, Bhaisajyaguru is depicted in five niches (numbers 107, 110, 140, 147, and 158). Vairocana and his attendant bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are depicted in niches 105 and 106. The Buddha Tejaprabha is depicted in one large deep niche, number 169. The future Buddha Maitreya, who is not represented in earlier niches at the site, is depicted in an elaborately carved deep niche, number 178. Amitābha is depicted in at least one niche, number 166, and Śākyamuni occurs in cave 136. Buddha images in niches 129 and 123 could represent either Śākyamuni or Amitābha.
which features a central *caitya* added at a later date (Figure 2.92). The depictions of *arhats* became a major theme of Buddhist painting from the Tang Dynasty, and the group of five-hundred *arhats* was associated with mount Tiantai 天台 in southeast China, but their origins as an iconographic theme may have derived from several sources.²¹²

²¹² The five-hundred *arhats* are based on a legendary account that they dwell in mount Buddhavanagiri in South Asia, which was first described in China by the famous monk Xuanzang. On the legends and textual sources associated with the five-hundred *arhats* see De Viser (1923), 21-56. According to De Viser (1923), 32, the first images of the five-hundred *arhats* reportedly date to the Song Dynasty.
Stylistic features and typological characteristics of Song Dynasty imagery at the Fowan site

The imagery of Song Dynasty niches/caves at the Fowan site is distinctive from the preceding periods. The most apparent difference between the niches/caves of the Song and the two earlier periods is the morphology of niches and the appearance of excavated caves at the site. The standard type of niche that is framed by a rectangular border with two inner triangular brackets is less prevalent during the Song. There are more variations in the design and exterior shape and decoration of niches, such as the border of niche 113 (Figure 2.93), which is carved to look like stylized rocks to convey the setting of mount Potalaka where the central figure, Water-moon Avalokiteśvara, resides. A similar design is used on the exterior of cave 168 to indicate the mountainous landscape where the arhats dwell and await the coming of the next Buddha, Maitreya. The niches are generally deeper-set than those of the two preceding periods. The images contained in these niches represent a new figurative mode of representation that is quite distinctive from the imagery of the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods. The figures are more proportional and life-like, with less

Figure 2.93: Niche 113, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
of the plumpness of the imagery of the late Five Dynasties period. The depiction of garments tends to obscure the outline of the shapes of figures more, with bolder, more modeled representations of garment folds. Images of bodhisattvas often have an almost baroque-like quality, with excessively ornamented costumes and fluttering ribbons and scarves that hang down to the base of many images, such as in niche 113 (Figure 2.93 and 2.94).

The stylistic characteristics of the Song representational mode are most clearly manifest in images in larger niches and caves. In particular, the imagery in cave 136 epitomizes many of these characteristics. This imagery combines a more naturalistic treatment of facial and physical features with a more abstracted and bold rendering of the garments with calligraphic-like gouge techniques. The carving is done in a way that matches closely with the

Figure 2.94: Potalaka Avalokiteśvara, Niche 113, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 2.95: Detail, Avalokiteśvara, south wall, cave 136, Fowan. Reproduced from DSDS, vol.1, 92, fig.102.
figurative art of brush painting, with a more subtle delineation of flesh and a bolder treatment of garments. The dramatic effect of these images is intensified by the contrasting shadows created by the natural light filtering into the cave. The introspective face of the bodhisattva in Figure 2.95 is representative of the facial physiognomy of Song, which are more subtly rendered as if modeled in a softer medium like clay. Song images also have more of a sense of natural weight and physicality than the Tang and Five Dynasties images at the site. The outer guardian figures in cave 136 display this sense of physicality with accentuated, tightened muscles and carefully articulated veins that convey a sense of an underlying skeletal structure (Figure 2.96). The manner of depiction of bodhisattvas in cave 136, with their billowing scarves, ribbons, ornate jewelry, and embroidery, also reveals an interest in detailed ornamentation (Figure 2.97). Unlike earlier imagery of bodhisattvas, where the ornamentation was confined to the frontal area of the body with crisscrossing strings of pearls and jewels, the ornamentation on Song bodhisattvas is often extended to cover a larger surface of the garments and scarves, which perhaps is intended to

Figure 2.96 Guardian figures, cave 136. Reproduced from DSDS, vol.1, 92, fig. 102.
represent jeweled brocade work and may have been inspired from real brocade work for which the region was famous. Contrasting the ornamental surface of the bodhisattva’s garments are the circular undecorated aureoles featured in most Song images. The type of aureoles with a pointed flame motif on the exterior common in the preceding periods is less often encountered on Song imagery at the site.

One of the most elegant images at the site and maybe in all of Song statuary is the Avalokiteśvara image in niche 125, which has an effeminate demeanor and a lean body with a light ethereal feel (Figure 2.86). The image in its current condition has a somewhat worn surface caused by natural erosion but still maintains its essential beauty. The natural pose of the figure with a subtle weight shift and almost serpent-

like ribbons that appear to be gently blown by an imaginary sea breeze makes this image an outstanding example of Song art. The figure is given an ornamental character with the carving of adornments that cover the bodhisattva’s chest and the scarfs that hang from shoulders and forearms. A long scarf hangs between the legs of the bodhisattva and extends over the lotus base on which the figure stands. Scarfs of this sort that hang over the base of images are a standard feature of Song bodhisattva images at the site.

Images of Buddhas follow the same figurative mode exemplified by bodhisattvas, but not to the same degree of dramatic exuberance. Most Buddha images have long twirling ribbons of light that emerge from the ūrṇā or the top of the head. This sort of design is found in niche 245, which dates to the Late Tang period, but it is not a standard feature of Buddha images at the site until the Song Dynasty. Another representational feature common to Song images of Buddhas at the site is the depiction of a tie or clasp on the left shoulder that holds the Buddha’s outer garment up to the shoulder in a manner that is associated with the formal dress of Chan patriarchs. It first appears on Buddha images in the Five Dynasties period at the site, but it is not common until the Song. Many Buddha images also feature a different kind of lotus pedestal base with a swirling dragon base similar to the lower section of dhāraṇī pillars from the Five Dynasties period.

In relation to the stylistic developments seen at the site during the Song Dynasties it is significant that a number of inscriptions at the site mention the names of the artisans who created the imagery. In cave 155, which features a large central image of Mahāmāyūrī seated on top of a

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214 On this clasp, see Howard (2001), 151.
peacock, an inscription by the artisans, Fu Yuanjun 伏元俊 and his son Fu Shineng 伏世能, is located on the side of the back support of the central figure.\textsuperscript{215} The names of these artisans are also given in an inscription in cave 176, and the senior Yuanjun’s name is found in an inscription in cave 177 dated to the same year.\textsuperscript{216} Inscriptions that mention artisans and craftsmen are rarely found at cliff sculpture sites in China, and when they do occur it is often in longer inscriptions documenting the patronage. These inscriptions are carved independent of donor inscriptions, with the names the artisans and dates of completion clearly set out in the same way a painter would sign a painting. Inscriptions of this sort are found at quite a few sites in the area of Dazu and Anyue perhaps indicating that these artisans were viewed as more than simple village craftsmen.\textsuperscript{217} In several inscriptions at other sites the names of artisans are prefixed with the generic title chushi 处士 (“reclusive scholar”), indicating at least a modicum of social pretensions.\textsuperscript{218} The earliest dated example of the recording of the names of artisans on a piece of sculpture in the area is found on one of the sculpture fragments from the Dazhongsi,

\textsuperscript{215} See Appendix B, number 1.33; MWL,26-27 number 41.

\textsuperscript{216} See Appendix B, numbers 1.44 and 1.45; MWL, 27 numbers 42 and 43.


\textsuperscript{218} Officials titles were given to artists who served at the court of Meng Chang in the Later Shu period, and a similar status could have been awarded to artisans who served local officials and gentry mimicking the practices of the court, perhaps to vie for the patronage of the more skillful among them.
which is dated 1052.\textsuperscript{219} The existent inscriptions indicate that many of the carvers belonged to family lineages, with the most prominent being the Wen family, which is mentioned in inscriptions in Anyue, Dazu, and Zizhong over a hundred year period (Diagram 12). The names of other members of the Fu family, possibly the sons of Fu Shineng mentioned in the inscriptions in 155 and 176 at the Fowan, are recorded in other inscriptions at the nearby Daoist site of Shuchengyan 舒成岩 and several other inscriptions at sites on Beishan (Diagram 13).\textsuperscript{220} On two niches in the Duobaota, niches 60 and 64, the name of Fu Xiaoba 伏小八 is recorded, and his brother Fu Xiaoliu 伏小六 is credited with carving niche number one at the Guanyinpo site.\textsuperscript{221} The inclusion of the names of artisans, many independent of donors inscriptions and similar to artists’ signatures on paintings, indicate that they viewed their handiwork not only as religious icons, but also as art works and marketable commodities.

\section*{2.5 Chapter Summary}

This chapter began with a sketch of the history of Buddhist cliff sculpture in the region up through the Tang Dynasty. The stone carvings of Beishan are part of a rich legacy of Buddhist art in the region, which began to

\textsuperscript{219} See MWL, 471-2.

\textsuperscript{220} The inscriptions at Shuchengyan identify the carver of niche 3 (dated 1143) as Fu Zhongjing 伏忠靖, and the carvers of niche 2 (dated 1152) as Fu Yuanjun 伏元俊 and Fu Yuanxin 伏元信. See MWL 290-1, numbers 3-4.

\textsuperscript{221} See MWL, 447-448 number 10.4, 448 number 11. In niche 60 his name is inscribed on exterior side of the keystone of the niche.
particularly flourish from the High Tang period, but can be traced to the earliest phases of Buddhism in China. Several important local and sub-regional centers of cliff sculpture emerged in the Tang Dynasties. In the northern part of the region Guangyuan and Bazhong represent the earliest centers of cliff sculpture in Sichuan and benefited from their position on important routes leading to the political centers of the Central Plain. Subsequently, a large number of cliff sculpture sites also appeared in the vicinity of the Chengdu Plain, the political and economic heart of the region. Another important center of cliff sculpture to emerge in the Tang was Anyue in the eastern edge of the central Sichuan. Several sites in Anyue, such as the Qianfozhai and Yuanjuedong, provide important precedence for the carving that would take place at Beishan in the Late Tang period. Moreover, these sites also experienced similar development sequences as the Fowan site on Beishan, with niches/caves added in a process of accretion over an extended time period. Another important site was that of Chonglongshan in Zizhong, which ostensibly dates to the Mid Tang period.

The second section discussed the founding of the Fowan site during the turmoil of the end of the Tang Dynasty and its historical context during the Five Dynasties and Song periods. Knowledge of the historical context of the site is facilitated by the Wei Stele, which documents the early history of the site. Following the presumed defeat of the local militia leader Wei Junjing, who founded the site as a stronghold, by forces loyal to Wang Jian in 897, little historical information is available about the site and the area. The Five Dynasties period saw continued patronage of the site, but on a reduced scale from the initial large niches created during the Late Tang. This may be a
reflection of a decrease in the economic and political standing of the area
during the period. In the early twelfth century, activity at the site was
resumed until the middle of that century. This period represents the high
point of carving at the site. Also during this time carving was done at a large
number of cliff sculpture sites in Dazu, Anyue, and surrounding areas. This
activity was fueled by the economic prosperity of the area. Dazu in particular
became a thriving market center and was returned to prominence as a local
administrative center.

The third section described the layout, content, and general chronology
of the sites on Beishan. The primary site of Beishan is the Fowan, which is a
rocky outcropping on the western face of Mount Bei and consists of
approximately 290 numbered niches/caves and stele inscriptions. In addition
to the Fowan, there are several other smaller cliff sculpture sites on the hill.
These sites are much smaller and have not fared well with time. The Fowan
site also features a Song Dynasty brick pagoda called the Duobaota pagoda,
which was built in the mid-twelfth century. The coherent effort by locals to
patronize the pagoda is also reflected in the patronage of multiple donors in
larger caves at the Fowan during the twelfth century.

The fourth section turned toward a specific chronological analysis of the
contents of the Fowan site. Material evidence at the site indicates that it
experienced three phases of activity. The first phase represents the initial
niches carved in the Late Tang period, which includes some thirteen niches.
The subsequent Five Dynasties period includes some 120 niches, but more
limited in scale. Imagery of the two periods are difficult to distinguish until
the second half of the Five Dynasties period when the imagery becomes more
distinguishable. The Song Dynasty represents the high point of carving at the site and is distinguishable from the preceding periods in content and in the manner of representation. The Song period at the site culminates in the creation of the sūtra repository cave, number 136, the largest cave at the site, and the erection of the Duobaota pagoda. Having provided this background about the site, the next two chapters will examine the imagery of the site in detail by discussing the major iconographic types that appear at the site and their categorization, which has only been touched upon in this chapter.
CHAPTER 3
ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE ESOTERIC IMAGERY AT
THE FOWAN CLIFF SCULPTURE SITE

Abstract

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the iconography of imagery at the Fowan site that is affiliated with esoteric Buddhism. It presents an in-depth examination of eleven different iconographies that occur at the site and establishes their significance in the context of the site and the period. In addition to supplementing known imagery with more detailed analysis, my examination provides information on overlooked and misidentified imagery and attempts to shed light on the place of esoteric imagery within the devotional patronage of the site.

This chapter discusses the iconographies of eleven different esoteric Buddhist deities depicted at the Fowan site. The cliff sculpture sites of Sichuan, in particular those in Dazu and neighboring Anyue, are frequently cited for their relative abundance of esoteric Buddhist imagery compared to other cliff sculpture sites in China.\(^1\) Among these Beishan is particularly noted for its proportionally high number of images with subject matter affiliated with esoteric Buddhism, which is taken as an indication of the

relative vitality of esoteric Buddhist teachings in the area.² Up to two thirds of the imagery of Beishan has been classified by Chinese scholars as being representative of esoteric Buddhist subject matter.³ Although the parameters used to classify this imagery may cast too wide a net and include some subject matter with little or no affiliation to esoteric Buddhism, the amount of this imagery at the site is still substantial and indicates that throughout the active history of the site the veneration of esoteric deities formed an important component of the matrix of beliefs of those who patronized the site.⁴

Before discussing the iconographies of esoteric Buddhist imagery at the Fowan, it is necessary to provide some brief background on the development of Chinese esoteric Buddhism and the evidence for its presence in Sichuan during the Tang and Song periods. My motive here is not to provide a detailed study of esoteric Buddhism in China, but to point out central aspects in regard to its history, doctrine, and practice so that the iconographies of the esoteric divinities depicted at the Fowan can be discussed in a clearer light.

³ Guojia Wenwuju Jiaoyuchu 佛国家文物保护处 ed. Fojiao shiku kaogu gaiyao 佛教石窟考古概要 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1993), 154, states that two thirds of the imagery at Beishan can be classified as esoteric.
⁴ For example most recently in Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 and Li Fangyin 黎方银 ed., DSDS, vol.2 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1999), 2; also Ding Mingyi 丁明夷, “Sichuan shiku zazhi 四川石窟杂识,” WW 8 (1988): 47.

Chinese scholars often over-classify subject matter as esoteric when the imagery is not found in an esoteric context. For example, Hu Liangxue, 272-3, includes the ten directional Buddhas, Water-moon Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, and the Three Worthies of the Avatamsaka as esoteric. Although some texts classified as esoteric concern some of these deities, such as Bhaiṣajyaguru, nothing at the site supports that these were understood separate from their popular exoteric aspects as beneficent protectors.
3.1 Introductory overview of the doctrine and historical development of Chinese esoteric Buddhism

Chinese esoteric Buddhism represents a distinctive subset of teachings, ritual practices, and yogic techniques within Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in which the skilled adept through ritual experience can rapidly realize enlightenment and employ the acquired transcendental powers for both spiritual and worldly benefits. The Chinese term for esoteric Buddhism is mijiao, meaning literally “secret teachings.” These teachings are understood to be “secret” because their meaning transcends mundane understanding and requires proper initiation from a spiritual preceptor (guru) to reveal their true profundity. Fundamental to esoteric Buddhism is the notion, that through the proper practices, enlightenment can be achieved in one’s lifetime, which differs from other forms of Mahayana Buddhism that generally understand the attainment of enlightenment as occurring only after lifetimes, if not eons, of slow spiritual progression. However, these practices require rigorous training and demands as well as altruistic intentions on the part of the adept. To accomplish the goal of enlightenment esoteric Buddhism has an elaborate ritual practice that employs a complex symbolic system of icons, diagrams, and psychophysical techniques to lead to the understanding

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5 Esoteric Buddhism in China is primarily known through the Shingon and the Tendai sects of Japan. It is often referred to as a “school,” but is better understood as a class or category of teachings; see Ryüichi Abe, The Weaving of Mantra: Kukai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse (New York, Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1999), 191-3, 412. For an overview of the history of esoteric Buddhism in China, see Lu Jianfu 呂建福 (1995); also Huang Xinchuan 黄心川, “Mijiao de Zhongguo hua 密教的中国化,” Shijie zongjiao yanjiu 2 (1990): 39-43.

6 The term “mi” 密 is from the Sanskrit guhya, which means concealed or secret. On the use of this term, see Lu Jianfu, 4-12.
of abstract Buddhist doctrines and the realization of the potential of one’s innate Buddha-nature through transformative yogic meditative (dhyāna) and ritual practices (sādhanā). Ancillary to these practices are the use of incantations (mantra or dhāranī), body postures and hand gestures (mudrā), symbolic diagrams (maṇḍalas), mediation (samādhi), visualization (guanxiang 观想), and consecration (abhiśeka) rituals. Images figure prominently in the ritual practice of esoteric Buddhism by serving as agents in the ritual process and a large amount of literature is dedicated to explaining how images should be depicted and used in the context of rituals. According to the monk Kūkai 空海 (779-835), who founded the first formal esoteric school of Japan based on teachings acquired in China, images are essential for its practice:

The great variety of postures and mudrās depicted [in drawings and paintings] come from the great compassion [of the Buddha]. With a single glance [at them] one becomes a Buddha. The secrets of the sūtras and commentaries are depicted in a general way in diagrams and illustrations, and the essentials of the Esoteric teachings are actually set forth therein. If [the diagrams and illustration are] discarded, both those who receive and those who transmit the dharma will experience difficulty...⁷

The religious attainment (siddhi; chengjiu 成就 or xidi 悉地) in esoteric Buddhist practice is directed at the benefit and salvation of other sentient beings. As such, many ritual practices are meant to not only reify philosophical doctrine, but also to provide transcendental empowerment for

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mundane worldly benefits, such as to ward off enemies, quell uprisings, control heavenly phenomena, insure seasonable rains, cure maladies, avert natural calamities, and succor the dead. It is in this capacity that esoteric Buddhism was made popular in China and supported as a matter of state policy in the Tang and later periods. The esoteric imagery of the Fowan is primarily an expression of this aspect of esoteric Buddhism to provide material boons and spiritual blessings rather than complicated philosophical doctrine and complex meditative practices.

Many of the essential elements of esoteric practice can be traced back to ancient Indic prototypes that predate the historical founding of Buddhism. The high point of Chinese esoteric Buddhism is generally associated with the Tang Dynasty when systematized, “mature” esoteric teachings, texts, and ritual manuals, kalpa or viddhis (yigui 仪规), were introduced by several charismatic esoteric masters at the Tang court. However, esoteric teachings were an important component of Chinese Buddhism before that time. The first phase of esoteric Buddhism in China is associated primarily with so-called dhāraṇi sūtras, which are quite numerous and extend back to some of

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9 Much literature on Chinese esoteric Buddhism refers to a two-phase paradigm, derived from Japanese Buddhist exegetists. This paradigm distinguishes texts taught by Śākyamuni, as a nirmāṇakāya or sambhogakāya Buddha, thus being placed in a lower hierarchy to the later teachings held to be revealed directly from the dharma-kāya. This is discussed in some detail by Abe Ryuichi in his recent study of Kūkai; see especially Abé (1999), 153. Other scholars also believe that this distinction is too narrowly defined and may not be relevant to the actual development of esoteric Buddhism in China; see Strickmann (1996), 128-31; Yü (2001), 48-49; see also Lu Jianfu, 100-153.

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the earliest Buddhist texts translated into Chinese.\textsuperscript{10} During the Six
Dynasties period, when Buddhism took root in China, several notable monks
who specialized in the use of dhāraṇī (incantations) and esoteric rites as a
means to procure mundane benefits for the state, such as to make rain, stop
epidemics, and avert defeat in battle, were highly regarded and patronized by
the ruling elite of China.\textsuperscript{11} In the same way, the group of charismatic monks
who are regarded as the founders of the “mature” phase of Chinese esoteric
Buddhism in the eighth century received the patronage of the Tang court,
where their ritual practices were perceived as being instrumental to the
success of the state.

During the seventh and eight centuries a series of esoteric masters and
their direct disciples served the Tang court. The most famous of these are
three foreign monks named Śubhākarasimha (Shanwuwei 善无畏, 673-735),
Vajrabodhi (Jingangzhi 金刚智, 669-741), and Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空,
705-774). These monks are known in Chinese as the three great Kaiyuan
masters (Kaiyuan san dashi 开元三大士) after the kaiyuan 开元 reign era of
emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r.712-755) and are held to be the patriarchs of

Chinese esoteric Buddhism.\textsuperscript{12} The teachings they promulgated represented a

\textsuperscript{10} These texts are primarily concerned with the practice of ritual with the use of dhāraṇī and
mudrā. For an overview of several of these texts and early masters, see Chou Yi-liang, 242-
244.

\textsuperscript{11} Often the term fashi 法师 (dharma master) was applied to monks who engaged in these
practices. One of the most noted figures associated with this form of Buddhist practice was
Fotudeng 佛图澄 (231-348); see Lu Jianfu, 128. On his life and activities, see Arthur
(December 1948): 322-371. Also see Berger, 90.

\textsuperscript{12} The biographies and activities of these monks are described in Chou Yi-liang, based on a
translation of their biographies in fascicles 1 and 2 of SGSZ. (T.50.2061.711-716).
highly rationalized unified symbolic system centering on the Buddha Vairocana and the maṇḍala of the five Tathāgatas or Dhyāna Buddhas with the Mahāvairocana and Sarvatathāgatatattvasamgraha or Vajraśekhara, sūtras serving as the core doctrinal texts. After their arrival in China these monks were kept under virtual “house arrest” at court-sponsored monasteries, where they performed rituals and translated sūtras for the benefit of the state, and the living and deceased members of the imperial family. The appeal of their teachings was primarily limited to members of the court and the Tang elite. After the direct disciples of the Kaiyuan Masters, such as Yixing (683-727) and Huiguo (752-805), little is known about subsequent initiates into esoteric teachings, and the direct teaching lineage appears to have become dispersed after the destruction of temples in the northern political centers during the Huichang Buddhist suppression (841-846) and subsequent Huangchao Rebellion (875-85). However, the continued sponsorship of esoteric Buddhism at the Tang court is

13 Respectively, T.18.848, and T.18.865, 866.


15 According to the Song Buddhist historian Zanning, after Amoghavajra’s disciple Huilang 慧朗 “...the [teaching lineage] split into branches and formed many different sects 自後歧分派别.” SGSZ, fascicle 1, T.50.2061.714a. The teachings were transmitted to Japan by Kūkai 空海 (779-835), also known by the posthumous title Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, in the ninth century. Kūkai further systematized the teachings and founded the Shingon sect after having studied in Changan under Huiguo, one of Amoghavajra’s six chosen disciples, in 805 during the last six months of Huiguo’s life. Kūkai returned to Japan in 806 with a handful of scrolls, rituals implements, images, and mandalas, including the Vajradhatu and the Mahākarunadhatu, which became the core of Shingon teaching and practice.

Through the Five Dynasties period and Song Dynasties a number of monks associated with esoteric Buddhism were active in China and received support from the ruling class.\footnote{See Lu Jianfu, 432-63.} Esoteric text continued to be translated in the Song but do not appear to have been widely promulgated as during the Tang, and there is no evidence of a formalized teaching lineage that could have formed a sectarian tradition similar to the esoteric sects of Japan.\footnote{Chou Yi-liang, 246.} In 982 following previous precedents, the Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976-97) founded a translation center located in the Taipingxingguosi 太平兴国寺 (Temple of Universal Peace and Prosperity of the the Empire), which was active through the reign of emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1068-86).\footnote{Lu Jianfu, 445-6.} Under this imperial patronage several South Asian monks, notably Fatian 法天 (Dharmadeva), Tianxicai 天息灾, and Shihu 施护 (Dānapāla), worked on the

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translation of new esoteric texts. Esoteric rituals were also performed there for the benefit of the state, but their practices and teachings appear to have had little impact beyond the narrow confines of the court. However, outside the Song capital esoteric Buddhism continued to thrive in a more diffused form as part of the substratum of general popular beliefs and practices. Some of its most visible manifestations, which continue to the present, are rituals performed for the dead in the form repentance rites with vegetarian feasts (zhai chanfa) and plenary masses, or Water-land (shuilu) rituals, which represent an amalgamation of esoteric ritual practices derivative of those first performed at the Tang court by Amoghavajra in 766. These rituals were widely popular in Sichuan, where the earliest known ritual manual for their performance was written in the eleventh century by Yang E (1032-1098) and based on earlier oral traditions. Since at least the late ninth century, images related to the Shuilu ritual are recorded in Chengdu’s temples and a number of votive inscriptions dating to the Song Dynasty at

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22 See Daniel B. Stevenson, “Text, Image, and Transformation in the history of the Shuilu fahui, the Buddhist Rite for Deliverance of Creatures of Water and Land,” in Cultural intersections in Later Chinese Buddhism, ed. Marsha Weidner, 30-70 (Honololulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 35. According to the famous Song Dynasty scholar/poet Sushi, who had a shulu ritual performed for his deceased wife, the plenary masses practiced in Sichuan represented their most authentic form; see Ding Mingyi (1988), 53.
sites in Dazu and Anyue make reference to the performance of this ritual. The continued imprint of esoteric Buddhism is also reflected strongly in the art of Sichuan and Dunhuang during the Five Dynasties and Song periods, indicating that elements of esoteric Buddhism permeated the religious beliefs in those areas.

3.2 Esoteric Buddhism in Sichuan during the Late Tang and Song Dynasties

In the wake of the Anlushan and Huangchao rebellions, Sichuan served as a temporary refuge for three Tang emperors, Xuanzong (r.712-755), Dezong (r.780-804), and Xizong (r.873-888), all of whom are known to have supported esoteric Buddhism. The support of these emperors and their entourages, which included monks, undoubtedly helped to foster the practice of esoteric Buddhism in Sichuan, where it continued to have some measure of popularity through the Song Dynasty as evidenced by imagery at Sichuan’s cliff sculpture sites. Temples such as the famed Dashengcisi (Temple of Great Sagely Compassion) in Chengdu that benefited from

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23 The Yizhou minghua lu records that Zhang Nanben 张南本 was commissioned in the late ninth century to paint 120 images for a Water-land Precinct in the Baolisi temple in Chengdu; see YZMHL, miaoge zhongpin 妙格中品; Stevenson, 38. Plenary masses are mentioned on several inscriptions from Dazu; see Ding Mingyi (1988), 53. These include niche 253 at the Fowan (Appendix B, 1.58), which records the offering of a Shuilu ritual to celebrate the redecoration of the niche; and two niches at Shizhuanshan, number 6 (MWL, 317 number 4) and number 7 (MWL, 317 number 5). Also an inscription in niche 22 dated 1107 at Yunajuedong in Anyue mentions the offering of a Shuilu ritual; see Wang Jiayou (1989), 51.

24 Xuanzong fled to Sichuan in 756 but did not stay long. Dezong fled to Sichuan in 784 and stayed until 785, and Xizong stayed the longest, remaining for six years from 874 to 880.
imperial support are particularly noted for their esoteric subject matter.\textsuperscript{25} There are also several passing references in historical documents indicating that some monks in Chengdu specialized in esoteric teachings in the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods.

Most discussions of esoteric Buddhism in Sichuan center around the somewhat obscure local lay figures, Liu Benzun (d.907)\textsuperscript{26} and Zhao Zhifeng (b.1159), who are connected with the Southern Song site of Baodingshan 宝顶山 in Dazu and, several smaller sites in Dazu and Anyue.\textsuperscript{27} Zhao styled himself as the inheritor of the teachings of Liu Benzun, a lay practitioner who reportedly lived in the Late Tang or possibly Five Dynasties period. Large reliefs honoring Liu Benzun at the Baodingshan (Dazu) and Piludong 精松洞 (Anyue) sites depict the central events in his religious life involving a series of ten self mortifications, such as meditating in the snow, cutting off his left arm, gouging out one of his eyes, and burning his flesh, which he performed at various sites in the general vicinities of Emeishan and


\textsuperscript{27} There are numerous studies by Chinese scholar concerning Baodingshan and its founder. For a recent publication in English on this topic, see Angela F. Howard, Summit of Treasures: Buddhist cave art of Dazu, China (Trumbull, CT: Weatherhill, 2001).
Chengdu. Since neither figure is recorded in historical documents, knowledge of their activities and religious affiliations is primarily limited to a few stele inscriptions found at the Baodingshan site. In an inscription at Baodingshan, Liu is identified as the “sixth generation patriarch” (liudai zushi 六代祖师) of the esoteric school, which has led a number of scholars to believe that Zhao’s and Liu’s teachings and practices were potentially derived from the teaching lineage of the esoteric masters of the Tang. However, the type of esoteric imagery depicted at Baodingshan and related sites is far removed from the systematized esotericism of the Tang court and represents a localized amalgam of popular religious practices including elements of esoteric Buddhism. Further, the central practices attributed to Liu are not necessarily the product of esoteric Buddhism, but are related to a practice known as yishen 遺身, “abandoning the body,” practiced by monks and Buddhist devotees in China since at least the fourth century.

28 For the description of these self-mortifications, see Howard (2001), 175-177. The term used for these acts is lian 炼 or “smelting,” which has the connotation of purification and transformation like that of an alchemist. In that sense it is similar to the mental purifications of tantric practices, which is done in Buddhist ritual on a purely symbolic level.

29 See MWL, 170 number 25.1. For a recent study representing the viewpoint that Baodingshan is a esoteric ritual center, see Chen Mingguang 陈明光, “Dazu Baodingshan shiku dui zhongguo siku yishu de chuangxin 大足宝顶山石窟对中国石窟艺术的创新,” DHY 1 (2001): 8-14. Several scholars have also theorized that Baodingshan was in part a product of Tibetan and Yunnanese esoteric traditions. For example Li Sisheng (2000), 15; and Wang Haishou 王海涛, “Dazu shike mijiao zaoxiang yuanliu shulue 大足石刻密教造像源流述略,” in WJ, edited by Guo Xiangying (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 268-274. However, Wang fails to regard the more likely influence of Tang esotericism on much of the imagery that he associates with Yunnan.

30 On the practice of yishen, see Zurcher, 282; Gernet, 241-243. This practice was known to have occurred in Sichuan as early as the fifth century, based on a case of a monk who incinerated himself in front of a large crowd of spectators, including the governor of Shu, in Chengdu in 459.
Several Chinese scholars have suggested that Liu Benzun may have adopted teachings from one of the disciples of Huiguo 慧果 (752-805), the primary disciple of Amoghavajra.\textsuperscript{31} In the biography of Huiguo by the lay disciple Wuyin 吴殷 in 806, one of the six disciples before Huiguo's death in 805 was Weishang 惟尚, who resided in Chengdu.\textsuperscript{32} According to Wuyin, Weishang was entrusted with the teaching of the *Vajradhātu maṇḍala*.\textsuperscript{33} Nothing else is known about Weishang, but it is assumed he returned to the Chengdu area to promulgate the esoteric teachings.\textsuperscript{34} The twenty-fifth chapter of the *Song gaosengzhuan* describes rituals related to the Vajradhātu that were performed in 918 by the ācārya Yanmi 演秘 at the Shengshousi 圣寿寺 (Temple of Sagely Longevity) in Chengdu.\textsuperscript{35} These rituals may possibly have been based on teachings brought to Chengdu earlier by Wei Shang.\textsuperscript{36} The *Song gaosengzhuan* also mentions that a monk named Shouzhen 守真 (893-971) from Kaifeng, Henan, traveled to Sichuan at age twenty in 903, studied with a series of teachers at the same temple in Chengdu, and received esoteric (*yoga*) teachings from Yanmi, but no other mention of Yanmi occurs in other

\textsuperscript{31} For example see Lu Jianfu, 318, and Hu Zhaoxi, 71.

\textsuperscript{32} According to the Shingon point of view Huiguo is considered as the last of the Chinese Patriarchs. Orzech (1989), 88.

\textsuperscript{33} Abé, 126. Liu Changjiu believes he was given both the Vajradhātu and Garbhadhātu māṇḍalas from Huiguo at the Qinglongsi, but does not provide any supporting evidence, see Liu Changjiu 刘长久 ed., *Zhonguo Xinan shiku yishu* 中国西南石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 123.

\textsuperscript{34} On Wei Shang, see Liu Changjiu (1998), 122-3; Lu Jianfu, 318.

\textsuperscript{35} *SGSZ*, fascicle 25, T.50.2061.871.

\textsuperscript{36} Lu Jianfu, 318.
historical documents, and it cannot be discerned if he was part of the lineage of Huiguo. This occurred around the same time that Liu Benzun was active around the Chengdu area where he reportedly performed his ten self-mortifications between 886 to 906. Another monk named Hongzhao 洪照 (d. 873), who arrived in Sichuan in 834 after having been initiated into the esoteric teachings at the Xingshansi 善兴寺 temple in the Tang capital, was associated with a temple in Zizhou 梓州 (modern Santai), the capital of Eastern Sichuan, where he performed rituals to make rain and cure disease. These references indicate that esoteric teachings were still being promulgated in Chengdu and surrounding areas during the early Five Dynasties period, but there is no direct connection with Liu Benzun, who may have been one of several popular religious figures who tried to garner support from the rulers of Sichuan and local elites by demonstrating feats of mental concentration in the face of self-inflicted physical pain, thereby gaining local renown. However, it is clear at the Baoding site that Zhao Zhifeng tried to situate the

37 *SGSZ*, fascicle 25 (T.50.2061.871-2); Liu Changjiu (1998), 123. Another monk is also noted from the Shengshousi, named Zhang Nanyin 张南印, during the Tang (806-820), but nothing is known about him.

38 On this monk and a the former temple and cliff sculpture site associated with him, see Zhao Changsong 赵长松, “Santai Dongshan moya yicaun shi Tangdai mizong daochang 三台摩崖遗存是唐代密宗道场,” *SW* 3 (1998): 67-75.

39 *The Zizhi tongjian* 资治通鉴, fascicle 49, records that in 908 the ruler of Shu, Wang Jian, provided a feast for 10,000 monks after a monk had scooped out an eyeball as an offering. Ding Mingyi (1988), 49. Several of the inscriptions that accompany the images of Liu’s self-mortifications at the Dafowan indicate that they were applauded by the King of Shu who reportedly bestowed praise on Liu in 905 and 906; see *MWL* 159-161, numbers 18.8 and 18.10.
religious practice of his spiritual mentor within the context of esoteric Buddhism by including depictions of esoteric deities in association with imagery of Liu Benzun.⁴⁰

Although the esoteric teachings attributed to Liu Benzun and Zhao Zhifeng have questionable authenticity as heirs to Tang esotericism, some of the imagery associated with them at Baodingshan and other sites is reflective of the importance of esoteric Buddhism in Sichuan from the Tang through Song Dynasties. As the primary architect and designer of the Baodingshan complex Zhao Zhifeng included many of the popular esoteric deities depicted at earlier surrounding sites in Dazu, including several of those at the Fowan site on Beishan.

The following eleven sections of this chapter will describe the iconographies of the eleven esoteric deities depicted at the Fowan site, several of which are also featured at the later Baodingshan site. The first to be discussed is the Buddhist god of the North Vaiśravaṇa who was widely represented at sites in Sichuan during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods, but not depicted at Baodingshan or other sites in the region dating to the Southern Song period.

### 3.3 Imagery of the Devarāja, Vaiśravaṇa

When visiting the Fowan site the first image encountered by visitors as they enter the site is an imposing two-and-a-half meter high standing image of the Heavenly King of the North, Vaiśravaṇa (Bishamon 畿沙门 or

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⁴⁰ These include group number 21 at the Dafowan and number 9 at the Xiaofowan, where Liu’s acts of self mortification are depicted along with sets of vidyārājas and the Buddha Vairocana.
Duowmentian 多闻天) in niche 5 (Figure 3.1). Vaiśravaṇa had wide popularity in Sichuan during the ninth and tenth centuries. In the political instability and militarized environment of Sichuan of that period, the powers of Vaiśravaṇa as a martial protector and upholder of the social order had great appeal to the ruling elite of the region. Numerous images of Vaiśravaṇa dating to the Mid Tang through Five Dynasties periods are found in cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan, and, according to literary sources, a disproportionately large number of painted images of Vaiśravaṇa were featured at many temples in the vicinity of the regional center of

Figure 3.1: Primary image, niche 5, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Chengdu. Among the extant images of Vaiśravaṇa in Sichuan from this period, niche 5 at the Fowan contains the most elaborate depiction of Vaiśravaṇa’s retinue with eight attendant figures. This is comparable to the subject matter of painted banners titled “The Traveling Heavenly Emperor” and “Vaiśravaṇa Crossing the Sea” found at the Mogao caves, Dunhuang, and possibly representative of murals of the same subject found in the major temples of Chengdu in the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods.

42 The Yizhou minghua lu 益州名画录 (YZMHL) identifies over a dozen images of this subject at four different temples in the Chengdu area. A number of the images are referred to by the generic term “tianwang” 天王, which can be taken to refer to Vaiśravaṇa or the four Heavenly Kings as a group. Images of Vaiśravaṇa mentioned by Huang Xiufu include the following works at temples in Chengdu. Two images are noted at the Baołisi 寶厓寺. One was located in the Tianwang Pavilion and described as the “Heavenly King(s) and retinue” by Pu Shixun 潘师训; the location of the other is unspecified, but is described as “The Heavenly King Carrying a Stūpa” by Chang Zhongyin 常重胤. Six images are noted in the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺: two were located in the Samantabhadra Pavilion, and these are described as the “Northern Guardian King” by Du Jingan 汪敬安, and the “Heavenly King of the North” by an unknown artist; two images were located in the Stone Sūtra Precinct and are described as “The Heavenly King(s) and Retinue” and a “Heavenly King Transformation Illustration” one image described as the “Heavenly King(s) with [the monk] Buddhapolita” by Li Sheng 李升 was located in the Huayan Pavilion. Four images of Vaiśravaṇa were located in the Shengshousi 圣寿寺. These include an image described as “The Traveling Vaiśravaṇa” by Fan Qiong 范琼, Chen Hao 陈皓, and Peng Shu 彭舒 in the Great Hall; “Vaiśravaṇa with a Bow” by Zhang Teng 张腾 in the Bathhouse Precinct; and “Heavenly King(s) and Retinue” by Yang Yuanzhen 杨元真, in the Tianwang Hall; “Northern and Southern Heavenly Kings” by Fan Qiong, Chen Hao, and Peng Shu in the Great General Hall. Two images of Vaiśravaṇa were located in the Zhongxingsi 中兴寺; “Heavenly King(s) and Retinue,” by Zhao Wenqi 赵温奇 in the Great Compassion Precinct; and “Vaiśravaṇa,” by Fan Qiong, Chen Hao, and Peng Shu in the Mañjuśrī Pavilion.

43 Ogata Ken (1999), 78, 87 n. 67. Two banners from cave 17 depict this subject, one in Paris (MG 17666, Pelliot Chinois 35018-1) and the other in the British Museum (Stein Painting number OA 1919.1-045). Imagery of this theme at Dunhuang is discussed by Matsumoto Eichi 松本英一, Tonkōga no kenkyū 敦煌画の研究, vol.1 (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuen, 1937), 463-472. The YZMHL records that images of the “Traveling Vaiśravaṇa” were depicted in the Shengshousi, Chengdu, and in a temple in Meizhou south of Chengdu; see the previous note above.
The location and typology of niche 5 at the Fowan indicate that it was one of the first of several niches carved at the site, probably under the direct sponsorship of Wei Junjing and his officers. Carved on the outer edge of the site on a south-facing side of the rock outcropping, it would have faced toward the main entrance to Wei’s fortified encampment on the hilltop and functioned as a protective icon to deter attacks on the site. Niche 3, which is located catty-corner to niche 5 and faces west, is the only other niche at the site that features an image of Vaišravaṇa (Figure 3.2). The image of Vaišravaṇa in that niche is relatively large (c. 2 meters high), but smaller and less imposing than the image in niche 5, and includes only two attendant figures. The dating of this niche is less certain, but it is believed to date either to the Late Tang or Five Dynasties period based on stylistic and contextual grounds. In addition to these niches with Vaišravaṇa as the primary image are several

44 Several different dates are given for this niche. The authors of the NRZL, 430, date this niche to the Five Dynasties; Li Fangyin 李方银 and Wang Xixiang 王熙祥 (1988), 32-3, date it to the Tang Dynasty; Liu Xiaoping 刘笑平 and Yin Jianhua 尹建华 (1992), 35, date it to the Later Shu Kingdom (934-965).
other niches where Vaiśravaṇa appears as a secondary figure, part of a standard group of guardian figures representing the Four Heavenly Kings (Caturmahārājikas; Sitian wang 四天王). 45

The Four Heavenly Kings preside over the four cardinal directions as world protectors (lokapālas) and lords of semi-divine beings that dwell in their realms. 46 Each watches over a quadrant of the Mount Meru world system to guard against recalcitrant beings and aid righteous Buddhist kings when called upon. Their primary task is to serve as the protectors and overseers of the Mount Meru world system to insure the continuity of the celestial order and bestow wealth and success on Buddhist practitioners.

According to the Scripture of the Four Heavenly Kings (Sitianwang jing 四天王经), they descend at regular intervals to inspect their realm and meet out rewards and punishments on the living. 47 In the most influential sūtra regarding the four Heavenly Kings, titled the Golden Light Sūtra (Suvarṇaprabhāsa sūtra; Jinguangming jing 金光明经), Vaiśravana is singled

45 These include niches 9, 10, and 176 at the Fowan site. There is also a small niche at the Foeryan site, niche number 10 (.7 x .7 meters), dated to the Five Dynasties period, that features a seated image of Vaiśravaṇa.

46 The Eastern quadrant is ruled by Dhāritārāśtra (Chiguotian 持国天), the lord of the gandharvas (heavenly musicians); the Southern quadrant is ruled by Virūdhaka (Zengzhangtian 增长天) the lord of the kumbhandas, a race of giant demons; the Western quadrant is ruled by Virūpākṣa (Guangmutian 广目天) the lord of the nāgas, serpentine beings; and the Northern quadrant is ruled by Vaiśravana, the lord of the yaksas and rākṣasas, two classes of demons. In some scriptures the names of the Heavenly Kings are also given in their transliterated form.

47 T.15.590. This brief sūtra was first translated into Chinese in the fifth century. It has been translated and studied by Henrik H. Sorensen, "Divine Scrutiny of Human Morals in an Early Chinese Buddhist sūtra: A Study of the Si tianwang jing (T.590)," Studies in Central & East Asian Religions 8 (1995): 44-83.

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out as the leader of the four kings and explains their vow to protect those striving for enlightenment and promise to defeat the enemies of rulers who follow the teachings of the sūtra.\textsuperscript{48}

Among the four Heavenly Kings, only Vaiśravaṇa developed an independent cult with a number of scriptures related to his worship.\textsuperscript{49} The major concern of the scriptures dedicated to Vaiśravaṇa is to secure mundane benefits for devotees, primarily the granting of wealth and the protection from enemy attack. A majority of these texts are attributed to the tantric prelate Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 707-774). They include the Beifang Bishamen suijun hufa zhenyan 畿沙门北方随军护法真言 [The mantra of the Heavenly King of the North Vaiśravaṇa who watches over armies for protecting the Dharma], and the Bishamen tianwang jing 畿沙门天王经 [Scripture of the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa], which is a shortened version of the

\textsuperscript{48} This text was translated into Chinese at least four times; see T.16.663-665. The first translation was an abbreviated version that was done in the early fifth century.

\textsuperscript{49} A partial list of texts is given in Lu Jianfu, 367; also see Henrik H. Sorensen, “The Buddhist Sculptures at the Thousand Buddhas Cliff in Jiajiang, Sichuan Province,” Oriental Art 43, 1 (1997); 48 n. 34. Several important scriptures concerning Vaiśravana are also highlighted by Phyllis Granoff, “Tobatsu Bishamon: Three Japanese Statues in the United States and an Outline of the Rise of This Cult in East Asia,” East and West 20 (1970): 152-3.

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Suvarṇaprabhāsottara sūtra.\textsuperscript{50} Most of these scriptures feature dhāraṇīs (duoluoni 多罗尼), potent incantations, which are to be recited to procure protection for the devotee and fulfill a wide range of wishes.\textsuperscript{51}

The worship of Vaiśravaṇa and the development of his cult and iconography in East Asia have been the subject of much research.\textsuperscript{52} Vaiśravaṇa’s origin as a cultic figure independent of the three other Heavenly Kings appears to have developed early on and may have stemmed from the interchangeable use of his name and identity with Kubera, an important South Asian yakṣa (nature deity) worshiped as the god of wealth.\textsuperscript{53} The identity of Vaiśravaṇa is believed to be the result of a conflation of South Asian wealth cult deities, Pāñcika and Kubera, and the ancient Zoroastrian god of kingly majesty, Pharro.\textsuperscript{54} A number of different “prototypes” of Vaiśravaṇa are apparent in the art of the Kuśāna period (ca. Late first to


\textsuperscript{51} The term dhāraṇī is formed from the Sanskrit root dhr, which means to hold or sustain. Dhāraṇī in Chinese Buddhist texts typically consist of phrases transliterated into Chinese from Sanskrit and include unintelligible phonetic elements.

\textsuperscript{52} The most comprehensive account of the development of this cult is provided by Phyllis Granoff (1970). Also very useful is Valerie Hansen (1993), who explores the impact of the cult on Chinese popular religion.

\textsuperscript{53} On the formation of the cult of Vaiśravaṇa in South Asia and Central Asia, see Tanabe, Katsumi 田辺胜美, Bishamonten zō no tanjō 畋沙门天像の誕生 (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1999).

\textsuperscript{54} Granoff, 167.
third centuries C.E.). Much of Vaiśravaṇa's inherent symbolism is associated with kingship and may be a derivative of the cult of the divine emperor “devaputra” as practiced by Kuśāṇa rulers, which stems from Iranian and western Asian cultures. This close connection of Vaiśravaṇa with kings is fully apparent in how the deity was perceived in the ancient Central Asian kingdom of Khotan (Yutian 于阗国, located in the modern area of Hetian 和田市, Xinjiang province), where he was venerated as the chief tutelary of that kingdom. The pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 596-664) in his Da tang xiyuji 大唐西域记 (Record of the Western Regions in the Great Tang) records that the kings of Khotan were the descendants of an ancestor who was miraculously born from the head of a statue of Vaiśravaṇa. Literary sources indicate that the popular iconographic form of Vaiśravaṇa seen at the Fowan and other sites in Sichuan originated in Khotan as one of its primary auspicious images (ruixiang 瑞像) that blessed and protected the kingdom. The entry for Khotan in the Buddhist dictionary of the monk Huilin 慧琳 (737-820) describes a seven story wooden tower in the city of Khotan that contained a particularly efficacious image of Vaiśravaṇa. Since Khotan was recognized in China as an

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57 T.54.2128.375, Yiqiejing yinyi 一切经音义 [The Meanings and Sounds of All sūtras], compiled 788.
important Buddhist center, it is very conceivable that a particular Khotanese representation of Vaiśravaṇa was well received as being especially efficacious and used as a standard model for representations of the god. However, the only direct literary evidence of the transmission of a Vaiśravaṇa image from Khotan to China is given in two Song Dynasty texts, the *Tuhua jianwenzhi* 图画见闻志 (TJZ) and the *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧传 (SGSZ), which record that in 726 the emperor Xuanzong dispatched an artist named Che Daozheng 车道政 to Khotan to bring a copy of an image of Vaiśravaṇa back to the Tang capital.\(^58\)

According to a popular legend current in the ninth and tenth centuries, the inception of widespread worship of Vaiśravaṇa occurred in the mid-eighth century. As legend has it, this was the result of a ritual performed at the Tang court by the tantric prelate Amoghavajra in which he evoked the supernatural power of Vaiśravaṇa to lift the siege of the distant protectorate of Anxi 安西 (the area of modern Kucha, Xinjiang Province) in 742. As a consequence of this event, an imperial order was given by emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756) to install images of Vaiśravaṇa in the northwest corners of city walls and in temples throughout the country.\(^59\) Although this legend has been shown to have little historical veracity the background of the legend does hold a kernel

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\(^{58}\) This is described in the biography of the monk Huiyun 慧云 in the SGSZ, fascicle 26, T.50.2061.875a. An account of this image is also given in the *Tuhua jianwenzhi* (TJZ), fascicle 5.

\(^{59}\) There are several versions of this well-known tale. The earliest is given in the *Ritual Regulations of Vaiśravaṇa* (Bishamen yigui 班沙门仪规), T.21.1249.228: Hansen 82-3. A later version is given in the biography of Amoghavajra in *SGSZ*, fascicle 1, T.50.2061.714, which has been translated by Chou Yi-Liang, 305-6.
of truth about the development of a full-fledged cult to Vaiśravaṇa in China, which appears to have been initiated sometime in the eighth century but to not have become widely popular until the ninth century. Vaiśravaṇa was known in China from at least the fifth century; however, before the later half of the eighth century there is little evidence that Vaiśravaṇa was in his own right the focus of a devotional cult in China. The mid-eighth century was a period of extensive military operations in the western regions of China. The reported date of the miraculous Anxi incident described above is just nine years before the famous battle of Atlakh on the Talas River in Central Asia, which represents the furthest projection of Tang military power. In many military operations Khotan was an important ally to the Tang armies, especially those conducted under the command of the famous Korean general Gao Xianzhi 高仙芝 who led many campaigns in the region. The Khotanese king Yu Chisheng 尉迟胜 (Vijaya Sangrama) was awarded a title and a bride for helping Gao Xianzhi against the Tibetans in 748-51. Later, during the Anlushan rebellion (755-763), the same king led a force of five thousand troops to help the Tang government recover Luoyang and Changan from rebels. Subsequently, he remained in Changan, where he and his army took

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60 Valerie Hansen believes that Vaiśravaṇa was worshiped in China since around 600 CE based on the date of the translation of the *Suvannaprabhāsa sūtra* and the use of the name Vaiśravaṇa as a nickname for one of the sons of the Tang founder Gaozu (r.618-626). See Hansen, 84.


up residence and intermarried with Han Chinese. Although there were many cultural contacts between Khotan and China before this time, the arrival of such a large number of Khotanese in the Tang capital may have contributed significantly to establishment of the cult of Vaiśravaṇa, especially with regards to the puissance of Vaiśravaṇa in military matters.

In the ninth and tenth centuries the worship of Vaiśravaṇa was widespread and particularly prominent in the areas of Shaanxi, Dunhuang, and Sichuan. A number of literary and epigraphical sources make reference to images of Vaiśravaṇa in the area of the Tang capital of Changan (modern Xian in Shaanxi Province). At the Mogao caves of Dunhuang, Vaiśravaṇa is depicted in the murals of some twenty different caves, and a number of materials related to his worship were discovered among the cache of materials in cave 17. Documents from cave 17 indicate that rituals to

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63 Gou Tingyi (2000), 44.

64 In addition to these areas, worship of Vaiśravaṇa was also prominent in the area of Yunnan, see Huang Ruying 黄如英, "Nanzhao Dali shiqi de beifang tianwang shike 南诏大理时期的北方天王石刻," 158-162.

65 See Lu Jianfu, 363-369.

Vaiśravaṇa and the Heavenly Kings were performed on a regular basis. In the region of Sichuan images of Vaiśravaṇa are found at over a dozen cliff sculpture and temple sites, indicating that the cult of Vaiśravaṇa had a strong presence in the region. The apparent popularity of Vaiśravaṇa in the region may have been prompted by the influence of northern refugees on the elite culture of Sichuan in the wake of the Anlushan and Huangchao rebellions. Although during this period Sichuan was comparatively more stable than the northern political centers of China, it still experienced its share of political strife and external threats, especially from the Nanzhao Kingdom (650-902), which made a number of military excursions into the region in the ninth century. These social and political circumstances provided fertile ground for the worship of Vaiśravaṇa as a martial protector and upholder of social order when the nominalized power of the central state had little to offer. The large numbers of images of Vaiśravaṇa in the region are an expression of the fervent devotion to his protective powers and the efficacy attributed to his image.

The two relatively large images of Vaiśravaṇa at the Fowan site are representative of the standardized iconographic depiction of Vaiśravaṇa seen elsewhere in Sichuan from about the late eighth century, which is sometimes referred to as the Khotanese type or by the Japanese term “tobastu” (douba

67 These are discussed by Tan Chanxue 谭蟾雪, "Tang Song Dunhuang suishi fosu--zhengyue 唐宋敦煌岁时佛俗月," DHY 4 (2000): 71. Although Dunhuang is now known as an artistic and religious center, in the Tang Dynasty its primary significance was as a military staging area. The prominence of the military in the area may in part account for the popularity of the worship of Vaiśravaṇa and the Heavenly Kings evident at the Mogao site. Many of the prominent patrons of the Mogao caves were connected to the Tang military apparatus, and at least one important local family formed a marital coalition with the ruling family of Khotan.
The same type of imagery of a similar date is found elsewhere in China and Japan, indicating that all the imagery is based on a shared iconographical model. The general basis for this iconography is found in several scriptures that provide descriptions of how to depict Vaiśravaṇa. The key features of this iconography include the depiction of Vaiśravaṇa as an imposing cuirassed martial figure with a fearsome countenance and accentuated angry eyes. Typically, he is dressed in full military regalia with a long-skirted ornately decorated coat of armor and wearing a large polygonal, three-paneled miter with two long, flaring ribbons like that of a Sassanian king. Often lavish attention is paid to the detail of the armor, in which intricate patterns represent chain or scale armor and a ring pattern appears on the sleeves. Two large discs representing the sun and moon are prominently displayed on his chest, and other adornments hang from

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68 The meaning and origin of the name “tobatsu” is uncertain and may refer to a type of armor or, more likely, a foreign land, such as Tibet or Central Asia/Khotan. The various interpretations of this name are discussed by Granoff, 144-5. Tanabe Katsumi has shown that the basic iconographic form of Vaiśravaṇa appears in some Gandhāran reliefs of the Kushan period; see Tanabe Katsumi (1963/4), 176.

69 In the second half of his study of the famous wooden Vaiśravaṇa image in the Toji temple, Kyoto, Okada Ken compares it to examples in Sichuan and provides an overview of the images of Vaiśravaṇa found in the region; see Okada Ken, 岡田健, “Toji’s Bishamonten Image (second half) 东寺毘沙门天像(下),” Bijutsu Kenkyu 371 (March, 1999): 78-81.

70 The Mahe tushiluomo nayetipoheluoshe tuoluoqi yigui 摩诃吐室逻末那野提婆喝罗陀罗尼仪, T.21.1246.219; and the Beifang Bishamen tianwang suijun hufa zhenyan 北方毗沙门天王随军护法真言, T.21.1248.225, provide descriptions of Vaiśravaṇa.

71 The East Asian representations of Vaiśravaṇa and the other Heavenly Kings always appear as martial figures. However, in early representations from South Asian they are typically depicted as royal or princely types wearing robes. Some later Tibetan and Nepalese images of the Heavenly Kings continued to be represented in that manner. However, the East Asian version came to predominance in both Tibet and to a lesser degree Nepal.
necklaces and chains, representing the ornamental splendor (*alamkāra; zhuangyan 庄严*) of the god. His hands carry a small reliquary *stūpa*, which honors the Buddha Śākyamuni, and sometimes a halberd or flag staff, or one hand may also be placed on his hip. Often instead of a round head aureole to mark his divine status, a pair of ox-horn shaped flaming arcs above his shoulders form a partial nimbus encircling his head. He is most often depicted standing, but sometimes seated, typically in a rigid pose and having a robust appearance. Below to the sides of his feet are two demons named Nilanpo 尼蓝婆 and Pilanpo 毗蓝婆. The head and shoulders of a third figure, representing the earth goddess Pṛthivī (Ditian 地天), emerges from the ground between his feet. In most images she is depicted with raised, outstretched arms holding the feet of the god aloft, but in others that task is fulfilled by the two demons.\(^2\)

Typically, Vaiśravaṇa is flanked by male and female attendants representing one of his sons, Naṭa (Nazha 那吒) or Dujian 独健, and the goddess Śridevi (Jixiangtian 吉祥天), who is variously described as his devotee, daughter or wife. In a few examples, such as niche 5

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Figure 3.3: Niche 5, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

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at the Fowan, Vaiśravana is surrounded by a larger retinue of his demonic followers and other figures (Figure 3.3).

These general iconographical features are found on the two images of Vaiśravana at the Fowan. In niche 5, the large central image of Vaiśravana has a portly, robust appearance. The slightly ill-proportioned head and oversized feet of the figure do not detract from the sense of mighty physicality that the appearance of the image evokes. Vaiśravana is depicted in a stiff standing pose wearing a long chain-mail coat and a three-panel miter decorated with a filigree design (Figure 3.4). The arms have a pattern of rings representing metal rings of protective armor, and the chain mail of the coat is depicted with an inverted “Y” shaped pattern (Figure 3.5). This same pattern also occurs on a small image of Vaiśravana in niche 9 (Figure 3.6), which also dates to the Late Tang period. The chest of the deity is protected by a thick armor guard, fastened in the center by two straps.
Hanging from his shoulders is a long garland of jewels connected to a series of floral discs and two circular masks on the chest. A small, ornamental, curved dagger hangs from his belt. Behind the head and shoulders is a plain circular head aureole and the god’s characteristic ox-horn shaped flaming arcs. The feet of the image are held up by two demons whose bare upper torsos emerge from the clouds on the base of the niche. The partially damaged head of Prthivi, the earth goddess, is depicted emerging from the ground between the feet of Vaiśravana and wearing a flat panel miter similar to the main image (Figure 3.7). This type of hat and the facial features of the image suggest that it is intended to represent a male deity. The depiction of the earth goddess as a male figure may be based on traditional Chinese conventions that hold the god of the earth to be a male deity. Hence, the image reflects the incorporation of indigenous beliefs into the depiction of the deity.\(^a\) As a whole, this image

\(^a\) A similar transformation occurs with Vaiśravana images in Japan where the earth goddess often has the appearance of a Shinto deity. See Granoff, 147, 154.
of Vaiśravaṇa has many of the characteristics of earlier images of Vaiśravaṇa from the early ninth century in Sichuan that have a more foreign appearance, for instance in the type of armor and the ornamental garland. However, as Ogata Ken has pointed out, this image also has a number of Chinese elements, such as the cloth scarf draped beneath the waist and the animal heads on the shoulders and above the belt buckle.\textsuperscript{74}

The composition of the niche with Vaiśravaṇa surrounded by a retinue of attendants who stand on a swirling cloud pattern base compares closely to banner paintings of Vaiśravaṇa from Dunhuang known as the “Traveling Heavenly Emperor” and may have been based on a version of that subject found in one of the temples of Chengdu.\textsuperscript{75} The retinue includes the two usual attendants of Vaiśravaṇa, his son Naṭa dressed as a soldier with his hands resting on a battle axe, and his female companion, the goddess Śridevi, who holding an offering bowl. Flanking Vaiśravaṇa on the backsides of the niche are two large demons who are part of the entourage that follows Vaiśravaṇa and carries out his will. On the right, the figure is a wild-eyed demon with a snarling grimace, clad only in a loincloth and holding a large sword, still in its scabbard, with his left hand (Figure 3.8).

\textsuperscript{74} See Ogata Ken, 80-81.

\textsuperscript{75} Ogata Ken 79, 87 n.67.

Figure 3.8: Detail, attendant figures, right side niche 5, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
He is adorned with a necklace of three skulls and wears a diadem with a single skull on his head. The appearance of this demon looks very similar to the demon depicted in the famous wood block print of Vaiśravaṇa recovered from Dunhuang dating to the mid-tenth century (947), who holds a child in the palm of his raised right hand (Figure 3.9).  

Possibly the figure may have also held a child in his raised right hand, but that hand has been broken off. The demon on the left of Vaiśravaṇa holds a gnarled wooden club in his right hand and pounds his left fist against his chest (Figure 3.10). To the left of the demon a standing male figure represents a courtier who wears a hat with two large, long feathers and holds an offering bowl up to his chest with both hands. In the front part of the niche, a pot-bellied dwarf holds a large jar with both hands and stands barefooted on the base of the niche (Figure 3.11). On the opposite side of the niche a similar figure of a dwarf has been destroyed above the waist. An image of a

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76 This image is frequently reproduced; see Hansen, 36 fig. 3.1; Zhang Acai, 264.
similar dwarfish figure holding a large jar appears on one of the banner paintings of Dunhuang, but similar figures are not found any other of the carved images of Vaiśravaṇa in Sichuan.

The imagery in niche three (Figure 3.2) represents a more standard rendition of Vaiśravaṇa, with only two attendant figures: Naṭa, dressed as a soldier, and Vaiśravaṇa’s female companion, the goddess Śrīdevi, on his left and right respectively. Although not as imposing as the image in niche 5, this figure appears more naturalistic and proportionally correct. Vaiśravaṇa is depicted in his typical stern frontal pose and is dressed in military regalia with two arcs of flame forming a partial nimbus around his head. At the
bottom of the niche the figures of the earth goddess and two demons are completely worn away. On his head he wears a three-panel miter with filigree designs similar to the one depicted in niche 5, but with the inclusion of the stylized head of a bird on the front panel. The depiction of a bird on the crown of Vaiśravaṇa is one of the standardized features of Vaiśravaṇa imagery of the ninth to eleventh centuries in Japan, but seems to only occur in this one example in Sichuan. The depiction of Vaiśravaṇa’s military outfit is substantially different than that of niche 5, which has more of a foreign character. His coat only reaches to his thighs, and below it is a billowing skirt. A large scarf is draped between his arms, and at his elbows his sleeves billow out to the sides. A similar image of Vaiśravaṇa is found in niche 79 at the Junziquan 君子泉 site, Zizhong, which dates to the Late Tang (Figure 3.12). Thus, the two large Vaiśravaṇa images at the Fowan may represent two roughly concurrent modes of representing Vaiśravaṇa, one having an almost overt foreign appearance with an ankle length suit of chainmail and the other more Chinese with an appearance more like a Tang general, which became the

Figure 3.12: Vaiśravaṇa, niche 79, Junziquan, Zizhong. Photo by author, 2001.

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77 The bird may have been depicted on other examples but was worn off or damaged. According to Katsumi Tanabe, this adornment of Vaiśravaṇa’s headdress is derived from the symbol of the Zoroastrian god Xvarnah and appears in Gandhāran reliefs that depict Vaiśravaṇa; see Katsumi Tanabe (1993/4), 165.
standard mode for representing Vaiśravaṇa and the other lokapālas in the later Dynastic periods.

Neither niche 3 nor niche 5 bears an inscription so the reason for their sponsorship can only be surmised as fulfilling a protective function when the site was part of an armed military encampment. Several other niches with images of Vaiśravaṇa at other sites in Sichuan bear inscriptions that provide information about the worship of Vaiśravaṇa and sponsorship of his image in the region. At the Nankan grotto in Bazhong niche number 93 (approximately 2 meters high) features a standing image of Vaiśravaṇa in a deep-set niche several meters above the base of the cliff (Figure 3.13). According to a stele inscription that accompanies the niche, dated 846, the niche was sponsored by Zheng Gong 郑公, the Prefect of the Ba Commandery who is depicted on the right side of the niche holding an incense pot. 

The inscription, which

Figure 3.13: Niche 93, Nankan cliff, Bazhong. Photo by author, 2001.

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78 This niche has been the focus of two articles, Ning Qiang 宁强, “Bazhong Nankan di 93 hao Bishamen tianwang zaoxiang kan xincan 巴中南龛第93号毗沙天王造像龛新探,” DHY 3, (1989): 11-15; and Gou Tingyi 荀廷一 (2000).

79 A full translation is given in Tom Suchan (2002). Two slightly variant transcriptions of the text are given Liu Changjiu 刘长久 ed., Zhongguo Xinan shiku yishu 中国西南石窟艺术 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 52; and Ning Qing (1989), 15.
describes the background of the sponsorship of the niche, mentions that Zheng Gong fastidiously performed regular devotional activities to an image of Vaiśravaṇa, including the offering of incense and the ritual investment of his official seal of office with the spiritual power of Vaiśravaṇa. The sponsor’s intent for the making of the image was to benefit the state and its surrounding peoples and to bring future victories in battle. A similar reasoning undoubtedly underlined the carving of the large Vaiśravaṇa niche at the Fowan some fifty years later, as the cliff wall would have served as part of the natural defenses of Wei’s stronghold.

Another important inscription regarding the worship of Vaiśravaṇa in Sichuan is found in a relatively large niche depicting Vaiśravaṇa at the Western-cliff (Xiyan 西岩, also called Yuhegousimiao 御河沟寺廟), in the area of Zizhong, west of Dazu. This niche, number 34, contains a large but extensively eroded image of Vaiśravaṇa. The image originally stood about two meters tall, but only the rough shape of the figure remains (Figure 3.14).\footnote{Vaiśravaṇa is attended by four figures. Ogata Ken (1999), 86-7 n.65, states that this niche corresponds closely to niche 5 at the Fowan, Beishan. However, the grouping doesn’t seem to be as elaborate as that niche.}

The inscription in the niche records the creation of the niche in 929, during the interim rule of Sichuan by the Later Tang Dynasty, by the prefect of Zizhong,
Yuan Hongxi 元弘習, and includes a list of around ten officials, several with military titles.\(^81\) Like the inscription in niche 93 at the Nankan site, this inscription begins with the formalities of providing some background information about Vaiśravaṇa and describing his attributes. The inscription then gives an abbreviated retelling of the 742 Anxi legend followed by a slightly more detailed description of an event that reportedly took place in Chengdu in the middle of the Xiantong era (860-73). According to the stele:

The city of Chengdu was besieged by the Southern Tribes with a horde of ten-thousand people of various kinds... Burning and pillaging with fierce savagery they committed the worst evils to suit their pleasure. None of the generals of the Commanderies could stop them. Just when the city wall and moat was about to be breached, the Heavenly King prominently revealed his divine power by appearing above the city towers in divine majesty radiating brilliant colored light. Witnessing this the Southern Tribes became afraid and so did their leaders. They then quickly retreated and fled back to their home land.\(^82\)

This incident is modeled after the famous Anxi legend and may be related to a story given the the biography of the monk Zhiguang 智广 in the Song gaoseng zhuan.\(^83\) According to his biography, Zhiguang was a famous healer who used a bamboo staff like a magic wand to cure people of their illnesses. During the qianning reign era (894-98) Wang Jian requested that Zhiguang use his talents to raise funds to rebuild a Vaiśravaṇa image that was originally erected to commemorate the miraculous appearance of Vaiśravaṇa some thirty years earlier in Chengdu:

... In the xiantong reign era (860-863) the king of the Southern Tribes and Tanchuo (?) together laid siege to Chengdu. When the city was

\(^81\) Transcription in Liu Changjiu (1998), 64.

\(^82\) Based on the transcription in Liu Changjiu (1998), 64.

\(^83\) SGSZ, fascicle 27. T.50.2061.882a-b.
about to fall, the Heavenly King appeared in the form of a giant five
zhang (fifty feet) high śramaṇa (monk) with eyes that emitted rays of
light, which caused the Southern Tribesmen to become terrified and
retreat. To memorialize this event the people of Shu erected a fifty feet
high image of a monk in the Baolisi temple located in the northern part
of the city. Later, the statue was destroyed by the minister Niu Yu.
After the statue was destroyed there were frequent wars which may
have been due to the decline in respect paid to Vaiśravaṇa...

The correspondence between the time and location of the two legends
indicates that they may have stemmed from the same source. Like the
famous Anxi legend there is a kernel of truth to these legends. The Southern
Tribes (Man 蛮) referenced in both stories refers to the Nanzhao Kingdom,
which was at the height of its power in the mid-ninth century. During the
course of the ninth century the Nanzhao did make a number of military
inroads into Sichuan, even capturing Chengdu. These were more short-term
excursions to capture supplies and prisoners rather than attempts to grasp
territory. The most famous of these incidents was the winter invasion of
Sichuan in 829 when Nanzhao forces plundered the surrounding countryside
of Chengdu and made a hasty retreat before the arrival of imperial forces,
taking with them thousands of skilled craftsmen as captives. According to
the Zizhitongjian fascicle 252, one Nanzhao aggression on Sichuan did

84 A Heavenly King Pavilion in the Baolisi 宝历寺 is noted in the YZMHL, miaoge xiapin 妙格下品. It contained an image identified as “Heavenly King(s) and Retinue,” by Pu Shixun 蒲师训.

85 SGSZ, fascicle 27. T.50.2061.882a-b.

actually occur in the second month of 870/869.\textsuperscript{87} The story on the inscription and in the biography of Zhiguang were probably formulated later from a local legend based on the attacks of the Nanzhao and the sudden pullback of the Nanzhao forces.

These related stories about Vaiśravaṇa saving Chengdu and the previous inscription in the niche sponsored by the prefect of Bazhong provide a basis for understanding the receptivity toward belief in the protective powers of Vaiśravaṇa by the elites of the region, which underscored the proliferation of images of the deity in Sichuan, especially in the tumultuous years of the Late Tang period. The sponsorship of the two images of Vaiśravaṇa was undoubtedly tied to these beliefs and occurred while Beishan served as a military stronghold, with the cliff walls of the Fowan serving as part of the natural defenses of the site. Images of other esoteric deities at the site may have been tied to a similar function with the hope of bringing divine protection to the site, local area, and the state. One of these deities, the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, known as the “queller of demons,” will be discussed in the next section of this chapter following an introduction to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

### 3.4 Imagery of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, known in China as either Guanyin 观音 (“Perceiver of Sounds”) or Guanshiyin 观世音 (“Perceiver of the World’s Sounds”), is the most venerated of all bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna

\textsuperscript{87} Zizhi tongjian 资治通鉴, fascicle 252. Ogata Ken (1999), 87, n. 65.
Buddhist pantheon of East Asia. Avalokiteśvara is considered the embodiment of compassion (karunā) and serves as a universally available savior who can assume a multiplicity of forms to aid those in need of physical and spiritual assistance. The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is also an associate of the Buddha Amitābha, who helps sentient beings realize their wish for rebirth in that Buddha’s Pure Land. In another aspect, Avalokiteśvara is also considered to be a perfected being who resides in an earthly paradise called Potalaka, and a supreme master of mediation (samādhi) who reveals the teachings of the Prajñāpāramitā (“perfection of wisdom”), the philosophical foundations of mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Avalokiteśvara also assumes the form of multi-limbed benefactors who embody powerful dhāraṇīs (incantations) for the protection and benefaction of devotees. In Buddhist art, Avalokiteśvara has numerous iconographic forms, both exoteric and esoteric, and is known by many different names. A passage in the Karanaḍavyūha sūtra, translated into Chinese

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88 C.N. Tay, “Kuan-yin: The Cult of Half Asia,” History of Religions 16 (November 1976): 148-150. The original Sanskrit name Avalokiteśvara is formed by the compound avalokita “seen” and iśvara “lord,” meaning “the Lord who sees” or “the Lord who is seen.” In Tibet, Avalokiteśvara is translated as sPyan-ras gZigs, “one who sees with eyes.” The name Guanshiyin is used in most esoteric sūtras concerning Avalokiteśvara, except those translated by Xuanzang who advocated that the name should be translated as Guanzizai 观自在 (“self-existent Perceiver”); see T. 51.2087.883b. Avalokiteśvara has been the subject of much research. The most authoritative and comprehensive study of the cult of Avalokiteśvara in China is Chün-fang Yü, Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

89 The primary scripture describing Avalokiteśvara as a compassionate and universally available savior is the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra (better known as the Lotus Sūtra, Fahuajing 法华经), which was translated into Chinese at least six times. A translation by Kumārajiva in 406 became the most popular version (T.9.262). Avalokiteśvara appears in the twenty-fifth chapter (T.9.26256c-58b), which is titled the “Universal Gateway” (Pumen 菩门). For an English translation see, Leon Hurvitz, trans. Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

90 See Tay, 163-70.
during the Song Dynasty, and one of the more than eighty different canonical scriptures that concern this bodhisattva, describes how the spiritual power of Avalokiteśvara can be manifest,

...as a lamp of brilliant light for those in darkness, a shade for those caught in scorching heat, a flowing river for those who thirst, a granter of fearlessness for those in a frightful place, a medicine for the ill, a mother and father for those that suffer, a guide to Nirvāṇa for those in Avica [the lowest of the Buddhist hells], and insurance that all sentient beings will obtain the beneficial virtues of peace and happiness.\(^{91}\)

From this and similar passages, it is easy to imagine why this deity received such popular attention as the center of Mahāyāna Buddhism in China and elsewhere in Asia.

The popularity of Avalokiteśvara is evident throughout the 260-year history of the Fowan site, which has a large number of images of Avalokiteśvara. These include several of the largest images at the site, reflecting the elevated status of Avalokiteśvara in the local religious milieu as well as on a broader level. The bodhisattva was represented in a multiplicity of ways, some following established conventions and others representing modified or unique iconographic forms often without a clearly identifiable source. These were perhaps the product of local artisans, who based their artworks on the stipulations of donors and/or local monks, or took inspiration from images in temples that have been lost with time.

The imagery of Avalokiteśvara at the site includes over sixty niches/caves in which Avalokiteśvara is the primary deity, and some twenty-odd niches that pair Avalokiteśvara with the either the bodhisattva

\(^{91}\) T.20.1050.55b, for a partial translation of this passage see, C.N. Tay, 156. In the same scripture Avalokiteśvara is described as having “power so great that it exceeds that of a Buddha,” see T.20.1050.49c.
Ksitigarbha or Mahāsthāmaprāpta. In addition to these are over a dozen niches where Avalokiteśvara is depicted as a secondary figure to the Buddha Amitābha or part of a larger teaching assembly. By my estimate Avalokiteśvara is represented in approximately 36% of the total 274 image niches/caves at the site--an estimate that is considerably higher if niches with unidentifiable, damaged imagery are not considered in the total. The large numbers of depictions of Avalokiteśvara are not unique to this site, but the variety of forms of the deity represented at the site is perhaps only comparable to those found at Mogao caves of Dunhuang, or in the famous Long Scroll of Buddhist Images (ca. 1173-6) from the Dali Kingdom of Yunnan, for the same general time frame in China.

Among the sixty-odd niches/caves with images of Avalokiteśvara, about one third represent forms of the bodhisattva that are based on esoteric scriptures. The three primary esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara represented at the site are Cintāmaṇicakra (Ruyilun 如意轮), Amoghapāśa (Bukongjuansuo 不空绢索), and the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara (Qianshou Guanyin 千手观音), all of which are discussed in the following subsections of this chapter. These also represent three of the most widely disseminated esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara in Tang and Song times, each with several scriptures.

92 Minus the total of niches with damaged, unidentifiable imagery the percentage of niches/caves with images of Avalokiteśvara is approximately 50%.

Among the three, the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara maintained the greatest popularity and is frequently encountered at cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan. In China, outside the area of Dunhuang, images of Cintāmaṇiśrīcakrapā and Amoghapāśa are rarely encountered, but their presence at the Fowan and several other sites in Sichuan testify to their popularity at these sites as well.

These three forms of Avalokiteśvara are not the first and only of the so-called esoteric, or secret, forms of the bodhisattva that occurred in China. The esoteric aspect of Avalokiteśvara was introduced early in the transmission of Buddhism to China and is interwoven with the exoteric identity of the bodhisattva. There is great affinity between the esoteric and exoteric aspects of Avalokiteśvara, and they should not be understood as being entirely mutually exclusive in the type of religious soteriology they represent. It is really only in the frequent appearance of esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara as multi-limbed or multi-headed deities, and more detailed elaborations on the performance of rituals (sādhanas), that set the cultic practices associated with esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara apart from those outlined in exoteric scriptures. By at least the Late Tang many of the so-called esoteric forms of

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94 Another frequently encountered esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara in the Tang Dynasty, but not represented at the site, is the Eleven-headed (Ekādaśamuka, shiyimian 十一面) Avalokiteśvara.

95 Esoteric scriptures dedicated to Avalokiteśvara often intersect with the exoteric Pure Land aspect of the bodhisattva. For example, the Karandavyūha Sūtra, an esoteric text quoted previously, describes how Avalokiteśvara leads those incarcerated in Avāci hell to birth in a Pure Land. The Nilakantha Sūtra, the most popular of esoteric texts concerning Avalokiteśvara, promises devotees rebirth in the paradise of their choice.

96 Yū (2001), 71, provides four points that distinguish esoteric sūtras of Avalokiteśvara from exoteric ones. These mainly entail the more ritualized nature of the religious practices associated with the esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara.
Avalokiteśvara, such as the Thousand-handed and Eleven-headed forms, had become icons of popular devotional worship as benefactor forms of the bodhisattva and were not exclusively identified with esoteric teachings and practices.

The scriptural basis for the cultic traditions associated with Avalokiteśvara include, most significantly, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra* or *Lotus sūtra* (Fahuajing 法华经), *Avatamsaka sūtra* (Huayanjing 华严经), *Śūraṅga sūtra* (Shoulengyanjing 首楞严经), *Heart sūtra* (Xinjing 心经), and the *Longer Sukhāvativyūha* (Wuliangshoujing 无量寿经) and *Amitāyurdhyāna* (Guanwuliangshoufojing 观无量寿佛经) *sūtras*.\(^97\) In short, these are among the most popular and influential texts of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism and indicate the pervasive and important position of Avalokiteśvara to East Asian Buddhism. In addition to these mainstream exoteric scriptures there are also numerous esoteric texts associated with Avalokiteśvara.\(^98\) Of all these texts, the *Lotus sūtra* has had the most lasting importance on the development of the cult of Avalokiteśvara and is considered one of the most, if the most, influential texts in Chinese Buddhism, providing the basis for much art work in China and other parts of Asia.\(^99\)


\(^98\) The esoteric scriptures dedicated to Avalokiteśvara are primarily found in volume twenty of the Taishō canon.

\(^99\) There are a number publications that discuss the art of the *Lotus sūtra*. One of the more well known, but dated, publications is Joseph Leroy Davidson, *The Lotus sūtra in Chinese art: a study in Buddhist art to the year 1000* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1954)
Among the twenty-eight chapters of the *Lotus sutra* the one dedicated to Avalokiteśvara has had the greatest popular appeal and even circulated as independent text.\(^{100}\) In this chapter, entitled the “Universal Gateway” (Pumen) to denote the universal availability of Avalokiteśvara’s spiritual power, the Buddha Śākyamuni expounds on the name of Avalokiteśvara and the powers of its evocation to the bodhisattva Akṣayamati (Wujinyi 无尽意, “Inexhaustible Mind”). Śākyamuni’s discussion of Avalokiteśvara in this chapter provides the core aspects of the cultic beliefs associated with Avalokiteśvara. First, Avalokiteśvara is as a savior from dangers and distress, which are illustrated in the sūtra as eight kinds of perils that can be avoided by reciting the name of the bodhisattva using the formulaic phase “Namo Guanshiyin Pusa 观世音菩萨” (“Praise the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara”). These include salvation from fire, drowning, shipwreck, murder, malignant spirits, incarceration, brigands, and lust.\(^{101}\) Additionally, it also promises male and female offspring for women who make worshipful offerings to the bodhisattva.\(^{102}\) These same sorts of mundane benefits are also promised to those who follow the stipulations given in esoteric scriptures.

\(^{100}\) Tay, 154. In Dharmaraksà’s translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* in 286 (T.19.263) the Pumen is the twenty-third chapter, and in the translation of the sūtra done by Kumārajiva’s in 406 (T .l.9. 262) it is the twenty-fifth chapter, and in the translation by Jñagupta and Dharmagupta in 601 (T.19.264) it is the twenty-fourth chapter. Also an independent text of this chapter was created, called the *Guanyin jing* 观音经. At Dunhuang some128 copies of that text were found in cave 17 along with 860 copies of the *Lotus Sūtra*. See Mikeko Murase, “Kuan-yin as Savior of Men: Illustration of the Twenty-fifth Chapter of the Lotus Sūtra in Chinese Painting,” *Artibus Asiae* 33 (1971): 39.

\(^{101}\) T.19.262.56-7; Hurvitz, 311-313.

\(^{102}\) T.19.262.57a; Hurvitz, 313.
concerning Avalokiteśvara. The other aspect of Avalokiteśvara illuminated in the sūtra is the skillful means (upāya, fangbian 方便) used by the bodhisattva to teach the Dharma by taking the form of a teacher who will provide the fullest efficacy for each listener. This is illustrated by some thirty different physical forms manifested by the bodhisattva. The physical forms manifested by the bodhisattva include a diverse range of identities, from a Buddha to a hungry ghost (prēta), but by implication any of the myriad of life-forms in the Buddhist universe can be used as needed. This explanation of Avalokiteśvara’s ability to take different forms provides the scriptural basis for the multiplicity of the forms of Avalokiteśvara seen in art and the large influential body of apocryphal literature that was produced in China regarding indigenous manifestations of the bodhisattva. The two aspects of Avalokiteśvara outlined in the sūtra, compassionate and universally available savior from physical distress and spiritual guide who can manifest different physical forms, provide the core beliefs associated with Avalokiteśvara. These beliefs are elaborated and expanded upon in different ways in other scriptures associated with the bodhisattva.

The first esoteric scripture concerning Avalokiteśvara to appear in China was the Scripture on the Samādhi Method for the Dhāraṇī of Invoking the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to Dissipate Poison and Harm (Qing Guanshiyin pusa xiaofu du hai tuoluoni jìng 请观世音菩萨消伏毒害陀罗尼三昧

103 Chūn-fāng Yū (2001), 50, notes that the common characteristic of esoteric sūtras devoted to Avalokiteśvara is the emphasis on dhāraṇīs that promise the fulfillment of material and spiritual desires for those that recite them. Hence, on a devotional level the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Avalokiteśvara maintain a great deal of affinity and are interwoven in the identity of Avalokiteśvara in East Asian Buddhism.

104 T.19.262.57; Hurvitz, 314-315.
Avalokiteśvara teaches an incantation (dhāraṇī), which, together with the evocation of the bodhisattva’s name, will save the reciter from various perils.

The majority of scriptures regarding esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara appeared in China around the sixth through eighth centuries, just before and during the transmission of systematized esoteric teachings and corollary to the rise in prominence of Avalokiteśvara over other bodhisattvas. These scriptures emphasize the powers of dhāraṇīs, and often feature multi-headed or multi-armed forms of Avalokiteśvara who hold a variety of different symbolic implements used to help devotees escape all forms of difficulty and attain spiritual awakening. However, not all images of these multi-limbed forms of Avalokiteśvara are purely esoteric. Strictly speaking, this would be determined by the intended ritual context of the imagery, but they also frequently occur outside the esoteric context where they are understood to represent benefactor forms of Avalokiteśvara.

The first esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara to become popularized in China was the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara (Ekādaśamuka, shiyimian 十一面), which was introduced in China in the sixth century. During the Tang
Dynasty there was a flourishing cult to this form of Avalokiteśvara in China.\textsuperscript{108} The scriptures concerning Ekādaśamukha promise fourteen beneficial rewards and results for following the prescribed ritual procedures outlined in the scriptures. These benefits are similar to the *Lotus Sūtra*, such as escape from drowning and fire, and several benefits related to Avalokiteśvara’s Pure Land aspect with promises of seeing the Buddhas of the ten directions at the time of death and the obtainment of rebirth in the paradise of Amitābha.\textsuperscript{109} These types of benefits are given in many of the esoteric scriptures concerning Avalokiteśvara and indicate the inseparability of Avalokiteśvara’s basic aspect as a salvational Pure Land deity.

Not long after the introduction of Ekādaśamukha, another group of scriptures concerning Amoghapāśa appeared in China during the Sui Dynasty (581-618), followed by another group of scriptures dedicated to the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara and Cintāmanicakra Avalokiteśvara, which were translated in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Numerous translations of sūtras concerning these three esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara were done during the Tang Dynasty, many by famous monks like Xuanzang 玄奘, Bodhiruci 菩提流志, and Amoghavajra 不空. The make-up of these sūtras follows the same premise of promising unfailing aid and spiritual benefit for

\textsuperscript{108} For a study of this deity in Chinese art, see Sherman E. Lee and Wai-Kam Ho, “A Colossal Eleven-Faced Kuan-yin of the T’ang Dynasty,” *Artibus Asiae* 22, 2 (1958): 121-137. Twenty-six murals of Ekādaśamukha at sites in Dunhuang are listed in the index of the *DSNZ*, 277, and attest to the popularity of this form of Avalokiteśvara. However, images of Ekādaśamukha become increasingly scarce after the ninth century in China. Also see Sorenson (1991/2), 302-4.

\textsuperscript{109} See T.20.1071.149b-151b, and T.18.901, 812-813c. For a translation of the passage concerning these benefits, see Yū (2001), 54-55.
those that follow prescribed ritual methods, with each text proclaiming its own unique efficacy over other teachings. The following three sections of this chapter will discuss the iconographies of these three esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara at the Fowan site. The first to be discussed is the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, which is the most frequently encountered esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara at cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan and one of the first Buddhist divinities carved at the Fowan site.

3.5 Imagery of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara

The Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara (Qianshou Guanyin 千手观音), short for the Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed (Sahasrabhuja-sahasranetra) Avalokiteśvara, is commonly referred to in China as the “Great Compassionate One” (Dabei 大悲) because of the bodhisattva’s infinite compassion (karuṇā). This form of Avalokiteśvara has one-thousand hands, each with an eye in the palm, symbolizing the limitless expedient means (upāya) and boundless compassion of Avalokiteśvara that reaches to all realms of existence. Of all the forms of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara based on esoteric scriptures, this form achieved the most wide-spread and continued popularity in China. Maria Reis-Habito, who has done a study of the doctrinal materials related to this divinity, calls the primary scripture associated with the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara the most widely recited Buddhist scripture in East Asia.¹¹⁰ That text and several others dedicated to this form of Avalokiteśvara were translated in the Tang Dynasty from the


By the Late Tang period worship of this form of Avalokiteśvara was widespread and continued to flourish in the later Dynastic periods.\footnote{In the eight and ninth centuries several monks were associated with the worship of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara and were known for their ability to evoke the bodhisattva’s powers to cure illnesses and make rain; see Reis-Habito, 43-4. One reason for the continued popularity of this form of Avalokiteśvara after the Tang period was its association with Miaoshan 妙善, a legendary female incarnation of Avalokiteśvara in apocryphal stories, that became popularized in the Song Dynasty. In the later dynastic periods Miaoshan’s birthday (the nineteenth day of the second lunar month) was taken as the birthday of Avalokiteśvara in the monastic calender. To the present that day is the major devotional day in the Dazu-Anyue area. For an overview of the cult of Miaoshan, see Glen Dudbridge The Legend of Miao-shan (London: Ithica Press for the Board of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford University, 1978); and Yü (2001), 293-350.}

The popularity of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara from the Tang Dynasty is particularly evident in the area of Dunhuang where there are some forty murals depicting this deity in the Mogao caves alone.\footnote{The Dunhuang images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara all date to after the ninth century. An overview of images of this imagery is given in Peng Jinzhang 彭金章, "Qianyan zhaojian qianshouhuchxi 千眼照见千手护持,” DHY 1 (1996): 11-31.} Among the materials recovered from cave 17 were a number of scriptures related to the worship of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara and over a dozen painted
banners depicting this bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{114} Images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara were also very popular in Sichuan during the Tang through Song periods. According to the \textit{Yizhou minghua lu} several temples in the Chengdu area had halls and precincts named after the “Great Compassionate One” (Dabeiyuan 大悲院) and images of the bodhisattva by noted local artisans were featured in several temples.\textsuperscript{115} In Meizhou 眉州 (modern Meishan county), just south of Chengdu, the site of Xiangershan 象耳山 (“Elephant-Ear mountain”) was reportedly a cultic center for the worship of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in the ninth century.\textsuperscript{116} There are also a great number of images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara at cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan, most of which date to the Tang and Five Dynasties


\textsuperscript{115} The Shengshousi 圣寿寺 and Zhongxingsi 中兴寺 had Dabei precincts, and the Zhaojuesi and 昭觉寺 a Dabei hall. The images of this subject noted in the \textit{YZMHL} include three works in the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺 temple, including a “Dabei transformation” in the east side of the Huayan Pavilion by Zhang Nanben 长南本, a “Dabei bodhisattva” in the Xingshan Precinct by the same painter, and a “Thousand-handed Dabei transformation” on the east side of the Mañjuśrī Pavilion by Zuo Quan 左全; a “Dabei transformation” in the Great Hall of the Shengxingsi 圣兴寺 temple by Fan Qiong 范琼, and a “Dabei transformation” in the Stone Sūtra area of the Zhongxingsi 中兴寺 temple also by Fan Qiong. In addition to these, there is a silk painting in the National Palace Museum, Tabei, of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara that includes a colophon identifying the painting as having been painted by Fan Qiong in 850 in the Shengxingsi; see Yü (2001), 296, 297 figure 8.1. This work is one of at least eleven paintings of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara included in the Song \textit{Xuanhe huapu} (XHHF) of the Song Dynasty. For a list of the paintings with this subject matter in the \textit{Xuanhe huapu}, see Matsumoto Eiichi, 651-2.

\textsuperscript{116} See Kobayashi Taichirō, 85-87. Also see Yü (2001), 272; and Howard (2001),180-1 n.11, who calls it Mount Elephant.
The earliest of these date to the High Tang period and are found at the Wofoyuan, Anyue county, and at Zhengshan, Danleng county. Several of the images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in Sichuan are fairly large and include elaborate depictions of the bodhisattvas retinue, such as niche 55 at Chonglongshan, Zizhong county (Figure 3.15). The most

For an overview of this imagery, see Hu Wenhe, “Sichuan yu Dunhuang shiku zhong de “Qianshouqianyan Dabei bianxiang” de bijiao yanjiu,” Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao 3 (1998): 291-330. I would like to thank him for providing me with a copy of that article.

These are number 45 in cave 46, Wofoyuan, and number 40 at Zhengshan, which are frequently reproduced in Chinese publications; see Liu Changjiu, 刘长老 (1999), 19 pl..97, 169-72 pl.170-3.
impressive is a large relief at the Baodingshan, number 8 (7.2 x 12.5 meters), which has a huge aureole formed by one-thousand seven hands carved in high relief (Figure 3.16) and testifies to continued popularity of this form of Avalokiteśvara in the area during the Southern Song.\footnote{This image is frequently reproduced. For a reproduction of this image and a brief discussion of its iconography in context of the Baodingshan site, see Howard (2001), 15-16.}

The Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara is represented in nine niches at Beishan, with six located at the Fowan and three others located at Yingpanpo, Foeryan, and Guanyinpo.\footnote{These include niches 9, 60, 218, 235, 243, and 273 at the Fowan. Niche 288 has also been identified as formerly having an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara based on an inscription; see Appendix B, number 1.70. Others at Beishan include niche 10 at Yingpanpo, niche 13 at Foeryan, and niche 27 at Guanyinpo.} Most of these niches are small and feature only a standardized seated image of the bodhisattva with two attendants, such as niches 218 (Figure 3.17) and 273 (Figure 3.18). The largest of these niches is niche number 9 at the Fowan (Figure 3.19), which was introduced earlier in chapter two. This niche contains a relatively large seated image of

![Figure 3.16: Niche 8, Dafowan, Baodingshan. Reproduced from Wang Qingyu ed. (1991), fig. 77, pg. 84.](image-url)
Avalokiteśvara (2.5 meters high) attended by a retinue of some forty figures represented in relief on the interior sides of the niche.

The scriptural basis for imagery of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara is found in a number of scriptures translated in the seventh and ninth centuries. The earliest of these is known by the abbreviated *Qianbi jing 千臂经*, which was translated by Zhitong 智通 in 637-650. A number of other translations by Bhagavaddharna 伽梵达摩, Xuanzang 玄奘, Bodhiruci 菩提流志, Amoghavajra

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121 The full title is the *Qianyan qianbi Guanshiyin pusa tuoluoni shenzhuo jing* 千眼千臂观世音菩萨陀罗尼神咒经 (Scripture on the Divine Dhārāṇī of the Thousand-eyed and Thousand-Armed bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara), T.20.1057.
不空，and others followed shortly thereafter.\textsuperscript{122} The most important of these scriptures is known by the abbreviated title \textit{Qianshou jing} 千手经.\textsuperscript{123} There are several versions of this scripture, the most influential version is attributed to Bhagavaddharmā and translated around the mid


\textsuperscript{123} T.20.1060. The full title is \textit{Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa guangda yuanman wuai Dabei xin tuoluoni jing} 千手千臂观世音菩萨广大圆满无碍大悲心陀罗尼经 (The Scripture on the Vast, Complete, Unobstructed, Great Compassionate Heart Dhārāṇī of the Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara).
Figure 3.19: Niche 9, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999.
seventh century.\textsuperscript{124} The main focus of the scripture is dedicated to explaining the efficacy of an eighty-four phrase *dhāraṇī* known as the “Great Compassion Dhāraṇī” (Dabei zhou 大悲咒). This scripture promises spiritual and material benefits for the devotee through the power of this *dhāraṇī*. The allotted benefits for the practice of the *dhāraṇī*, according to the ritual requirements outlined in the scripture, include freedom from fifteen conditions of bad death and the granting of fifteen conditions of good death. It also vouchsafes ten vows made by the devotee that will be fulfilled for their obtainment of enlightenment. The scripture also describes the appearance of the bodhisattva with forty primary hands, each with a different attribute or *mudrā*, and the entourage that accompanies the bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{125} Variations and elaborations on this iconography are included in a number of other scriptures.\textsuperscript{126} According to the *Qianshou jing*, the bodhisattva’s multiplicity of limbs was the result of a vow made by Avalokiteśvara to end suffering, while the *Qianbi jing* explains that these are a result of his role as a demon.

\textsuperscript{124} A slightly version is T.20.1057 translated by Zhitong. Maria Reis-Habito, who has done a comparative analysis of the two texts, believes that they are based on two separate Sanskrit originals; see Reis-Habito, 32-34.

\textsuperscript{125} The description of the primary hands and attributes have been translated by Chūn-fang Yū (2001), 63-65, based on a later translation by Amoghavajra, that includes an additional hand; see T.20.1064.115-119.

It may have been the latter aspect as the “queller of demons” that made images of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara popular in Sichuan, a region that was steeped in indigenous beliefs in demonic forces.

The large image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in niche number 9 at the Fowan conforms to the standard iconography of this bodhisattva in Sichuan during the Late Tang period, which has only minor variances from the canonical descriptions of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is depicted in a seated in “western fashion” (pralambapādāsana or bhadrāsana) on a rectangular sumeru platform with the feet resting on two large lotus flowers that emerge from the base of the niche. The depiction of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in this posture is unique to Sichuan and first occurs in images that are dated to the Mid Tang Period (781-845), but became common for images of the bodhisattva during the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods. Of the nine images of this form of Avalokiteśvara at Beishan, all are depicted in bhadrāsana except niche 10 at Yingpanpo, which depicts the bodhisattva seated in padmāsana on a lotus pedestal (Figure 3.20). The image in niche 9 has forty-two major arms, most of which have been broken off at the elbow and are now missing, and an additional set of eighteen hands are carved in low relief on the back wall of

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127 see Reis-Habito, 33.

128 The only comparable examples are found in Yunnan; see Henrik H. Sorensen, “The Buddhist Sculptures at the Thousand Buddhas Cliff in Jiajiang, Sichuan Province,” Oriental Art 43, 1 (1997): 49 n. 29.

129 Several scriptures describe the correct posture as the cross legged posture of mediation (padmāsana); see table 1 in Yamagishi Koki, 110-11.
the niche to form part of the bodhisattva’s aureole (Figure 3.21).\textsuperscript{130} The set of forty primary arms follows canonical proscriptions, which varies between forty-two and forty three.\textsuperscript{131} The remaining hands and attributes of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in niche 9 include a vase (kalaśa), jade ring, casket, prayer beads (aṃśamālā), aṇījali mudrā (pair of hands),

\textsuperscript{130} A photograph taken by Yang Jialuo in the 1940s shows the image with a full complement of arms and attributes, but these appear to be later replacements that have subsequently been removed, see Yangjia Luo (1968), no page number.

\textsuperscript{131} The \textit{Qianshou jing} (T.20.1060.111) identifies thirty-seven hands with attributes and five that form mudrās; and the \textit{Qianshou qianyan Guanshiyin pusa dabei xin tuoluoni} (T.20.1064.117-19), attributed to Amoghavajra, identifies thirty-eight hands with attributes and five hands that form mudrās. The additional hand in Amogavajra’s text is the amṛta (ambrosia) hand, which drips sweet dew or ambrosia to the suffering. Another text attributed to Supoluo identifies forty two hands and attributes, T.20.1065.130. Bodhirici’s text gives eighteen hands, T.20.1058.101. The pertinent passages of these texts are transcribed in Hu Wenhe (1998), 295-98.
transformation Buddha, grapes (āmalaka mudrā), shield or placard, water bottle (kuṇḍikā), dhyāna (meditation) mudrā, and an emanation uṣṇīa Buddha (held with two hands).\footnote{This mudrā with the fore fingers and thumb touching corresponds to a variation of the first level of rebirth in Pure Land meditation practice.} In scriptures, each of the attributes and mudrās of the bodhisattva are given a specific beneficial outcome and a corresponding dhārāṇī. that is to be recited by the adept.\footnote{These are described in T.20.1060 and T.20.1064.} The mudrās and attributes are not stated to be the hands of the deity, but rather that the gestures should be performed by the adept in rituals to obtain the desired outcomes.\footnote{See Yü (2001), 520 n.19.} There inclusion in images may have been initially intended as a mnemonic device, which later became conventionalized as part of the

Figure 3.21: Main image, niche 9, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
appearance of the deity. The beneficial results attributed to each of the hands include specific spiritual and material benefits. For example, the prayer bead (mālā) hand will provide a future predication of enlightenment by the Buddha’s of the ten directions, the casket hand will help one find buried treasure, the jade ring hand is for acquiring good servants, the water vase hand provides harmonious family relationships, the placard hand will ward off wild animals, and the grape hand will supply an abundant harvest.  

Niche 9 includes the depiction of a retinue of some thirty odd figures that are depicted on the two interior, lateral side walls of the niche (Diagram 13). This is a somewhat simplified version of a canonical set of twenty-eight groups (ershibabu) of deities that make up the retinue of this form of Avalokiteśvara. Several earlier High and Mid Tang images of this form of Avalokiteśvara in Sichuan, such as niche 115 at Zizhong (Figure 3.15) and among the niches at Mount Zheng, Danleng (Figure 3.22), have more elaborate depictions of the entourage, which can be compared with painted banners from Dunhuang. In the Fowan niche these figures are arranged as four tiers of complementary pairs of figures on the two sides of the niche, with the

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136 The retinue of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara is described in five scriptures (T.1057, T.1060, T.1065, T.1067, and T.1068), but varies somewhat. For a comparative analysis of these texts, see Peng Jinzhang, 18-20. The core group of twenty-eight deities are described first in the Qianshou jing (T.20.1060.108b), and identified in a ritual manual translated by Śrāvakasimha (T.20.1068.138-9). For the Sanskrit names of these deities, see Yamada Meiji, “Senju Kannon niju hachi bushu no keifu,” Ryūkoku Gakuho 333 (1972): 48-64. Reis-Habito, 34-35.

137 A tentative identification of the subsidiary figures in niche 115 at Chonglongshan is given in Howard (1990), 53. Also see Hu Wenhe (1998), 309-11. One of the masterpieces among the paintings from cave seventeen is Stein painting number 35.chi.1vi.0019, dated to the mid ninth century, which depicts the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara with a large retinue and includes identifying inscriptions. That image and others are discussed By Whitfield, vol. I, 313-14; and Matsumoto Eichi, 656-9.
figures in the top three tiers enclosed in stylized cloud patterns (Figures 3.23 and 3.24). On the top tier the outer clouds contain the weather deities and the inner clouds contain images of the ten directional Buddhas, with five on each side of the niche. The weather gods, which include the gods of wind, rain, thunder, and lightning, are part of the standard retinue of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara. During the Tang Dynasty one of the chief functions for invoking this deity was to make rain. The rain god is depicted as a bearded Persian-like figure holding a whisk and wand to sprinkle rain (Figure 3.23). This is different than the popularized Daoist inspired version of the rain god riding on a dragon that is seen elsewhere, such as at niche 17 at Dafowan, Baodingshan, opposite the large Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara depicted

138 Several Tang monks were known for their ability to recite the dhāraṇī of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara to make rain. These included the monks Daochuan 道船 (d.906) and Zujue 自覚 (737-797); see Res-Habito, 42.
The ten directional Buddhas are not part of the standard retinue of the bodhisattva as described in scriptures, but they are frequently depicted in association with this form of Avalokiteśvara, such as on the lintel of niche 273, as well in banners from Dunhuang. The reason for the inclusion of the ten directional Buddhas is undoubtedly related to the vow made by Avalokiteśvara in the Qianshou jing that practitioners will see the Buddhas of the ten directions at the time of death and be led to the Buddha land of their choosing.\(^\text{140}\)

\(^{139}\) For a description of that figure, see Howard (2001), 27-28. However, I disagree with her description of the weather gods as “non-Buddhist” since they are included in Buddhist scriptures.

\(^{140}\) See T.20.1060.107a. The predication of enlightenment from the ten directional Buddhas is the benefit of the mālā (prayer-bead) hand (T.20.1064.117c), which is also one of the chief attributes associated with Avalokiteśvara in general. The ten Buddhas may also be intended to imply symbolically the Thousand Buddhas of the present age, which are generated by the bodhisattvas hands and eyes according to the Qianbi jing of Zhitong. See T.20.1057.87.
Figure 3.24: Detail, north side, niche 9, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
The outer clouds of the second tier contain depictions of the Bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī, and the inner clouds depict multi-limbed deities representing Maheśvara and Mahāmayūri seated on their respective animal mounts. Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are not listed among the standard retinue of twenty-eight deities, but they appear on a number of other images of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara in Dunhuang and Sichuan. The pair are also featured as the primary attendants of the Ekādaśamukha form of Avalokiteśvara depicted in a large cave at Tianlongshan, Shaanxi that dates to the seventh century. In later Dynastic art the two are also featured as the chief attendants of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, but examples from the Tang Dynasty are not known. The inclusion of the two bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī, who are associated with the Buddha Vairocana, may be intended to convey the notion that the central deity is understood as manifesting the dharmakāya (法身) and the equivalent of a fully enlightened being.

The outer clouds on the lower tier of clouds depict the four Heavenly Kings and the inner clouds depict a set of generic standing figures that may

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141 The bodhisattvas do occur in a maṇḍala to the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara described in T.20.1067.430-1.

142 This is niche number 9; see Sherman Lee and Wai-Kam Ho (1959), 136.

143 After the Ming the trio is depicted as more or less equals and is known as the Three Great Beings (Sandashi 三大士). Yū (2001), 441, discusses this grouping. However, she incorrectly identifies niche 10 at Yingpanpo as the earliest known example of this iconography. In that niche Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are not depicted as the primary attendants of the bodhisattva, but as subsidiary figures in the bodhisattvas retinue similar to niche 9 at the Fowan.

144 T.20.1065.121 refers to Avalokiteśvara as being the Dharmakāya who emanates twenty-five bodhisattvas that travel to each of the different realms of existence to save sentient beings. Yū (2001), 69.

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depict Indra or Brahma who form part of the standard retinue of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara (Figures 3.24 and 3.25). Vaiśravaṇa is the inner most figure and is depicted in a conventionalized manner similar to the large Vaiśravaṇa in niche 5, with identical chainmail skirts (Figure 3.5). Below, on the outer side of the base of the niche, there are two mutilated images of vigorously posed multi-armed protective deities (vajrapālas) shrouded in stylized flames (Figures 3.25 and 3.26). These images were likely intended to represent Ucchuśma (huotou jingang 火头金刚, Fire-headed Vajrapāla) and Qingmian jingang 青面金刚 (Blue-faced Vajrapāla) or Kundalini, but are too damaged to individually identify. Next to them on the outer part of the niche are two kneeling attendant figures.

145 Chinese scholars have identified these figures as bodhisattvas, but the depiction of the attendants and the outfits of these figures corresponds with images of generic Chinese images of gods rather than to that of bodhisattvas.
These figures are also too damaged to specifically identify, but were intended to represent the elephant-headed vināyaka, Gaṇapati, known as the “Father of demons,” and the boar headed Cāmuṇḍā, known as the “Mother of demons.” Next to the two vajrapāla figures on the inner part of the niche are two figures representing the Brahmin Vasu (Poxian 婆仙) and the goddess of material blessings, Śrīdevi (Jixiangtian 吉祥天), on the right and left sides respectively. Vasu is represented in standard fashion as an aged and somewhat emaciated bearded ascetic holding a staff. Śrīdevi holds an offering tray and is represented as a heavenly maiden dressed in a gown with wide ankle length sleeves and wearing a box like crown that is covered by a veil. Vasu and Śrīdevi are the most frequently represented attendants of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara in Tang and Song imagery and are included in many smaller niches where the bodhisattva’s elaborate retinue is not depicted. Another standardized feature of depictions of the bodhisattva is the presence of the two figures who kneel on the sides of the bodhisattva to receive the boons dispensed from the bodhisattvas’ downstretched hands. These
figures represent a hungry ghost (*preta, egui* 俄鬼), who holds a bowl to catch *amrīta* (nectar of immortality) that drips from the bodhisattva’s hand, and the beggar, who holds a bag to catch treasure dispensed by the bodhisattva. In niche 9 these figures are represented on the left and right side respectively, with the *preta* depicted as an emaciated figure and the beggar dressed in a Chinese costume.

The general arrangement of the attendant figures in niche 9 conforms to the compositions of other depictions of Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. The level of detail and number of figures in the niche falls between the complex arrangement in niche 115 at Chonglongshan and the more abbreviated depiction of these deities in niche 3 at Shengshuisi, Dazu, which both date to the Mid Tang period. The only major difference between the secondary imagery in this niche and other examples in Dunhuang and Sichuan is that the Amoghapāśa and Cintāmaṇicakra forms of Avalokiteśvara are not depicted as part of the retinue.

There is no inscription in niche 9, but the niche is referred to in the Wei Stele located directly adjacent to it. According to the stele the niche was created by Wei Junjing after building his stronghold on the hill. Although Wei’s intentions are not fully spelled out, the niche was probably intended to have an apotropaic function to provide divine protection of the site. Only one of the nine other smaller images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara at the site has a legible donor inscription. That inscription is found on niche 243.

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146 Although not visible in this image, other images often depict coins being dispensed from Avalokiteśvara’s hand to a bag held by the beggar figure. The *preta* and beggar are not noted in scriptures specifically concerned with the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. Peng jinzhang, 20.
(Figure 3.27), which was offered by a local military official and his wife in 901.\textsuperscript{147} The inscription is not fully legible, but indicates that the image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara was offered for peace and protection, which, along with the wish for seasonable rains, appears to have been the primary reasons for venerating this form of Avalokiteśvara in the region.

\textbf{3.6 Imagery of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara}

The Fowan is one of the few cliff sculpture sites in China with imagery of the bodhisattva Amoghapāśa (Bukongjuansuo 不空绢索), an important esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara introduced in China during the Sui Dynasty (581-618).\textsuperscript{148} Amoghapāśa whose name means, literally, “the unfailing or never empty noose,” is the embodiment of a powerful \textit{dhāraṇī} that offers the reciter a litany of material and spiritual benefits. Imagery of Amoghapāśa is found throughout the Mahāyāna Buddhist world, and the worship of

\textsuperscript{147} See Appendix B, 1.50.

\textsuperscript{148} Amoghapāśa first appears in the \textit{Bukongjuansuo zhou jing} 不空绢索咒经 (Scripture on the Spell of Amoghapāśa), T.20.1093, translated by Jñānagupta (Shenajueduo 鬥那崛多) in 587.

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Amoghapāśa is still prominent in Nepal, Tibet, and Japan. There are a total of fourteen extant images of Amoghapāśa found at the Fowan site, all of which primarily date to the Song Dynasty. Another three images of Amoghapāśa are located in niches 36, 37, and 68, inside the Duobaota Pagoda. Elsewhere in Sichuan, I am aware of only two other sites, Xiyan (Yuhegou 御河沟) in Zizhong, and Huangzesi 皇泽寺 in Guangyuan, that have extant images of Amoghapāśa. Outside of Sichuan, painted images of Amoghapāśa dating to the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods are notably


150 These include niches 116, 119, 127, 136, 146, 148, 159, 173, 174, 180, 197, 208, 212, and 224 at the Fowan. A number of these (niches 116, 136, 174, and 224) are identified incorrectly by Chinese scholars as the Sun-moon bodhisattva (Riyue pusa 日月菩萨).

151 See Hu Wenhe (1994), 50, 224. Hu Wenhe identifies seven niches (numbers 8, 11, 12, 24, 71, 72, 77) with this subject matter at the Xiyan site, but later also gives numbers 79, 80, and 91. The Huangzesi image of Amoghapāśa is found in niche 24; see Wang Jianping, 王剑平, Huangzesi ji shiku yishu 皇泽寺及石窟艺术 (Kuitun: Yili renmin chubanshe, 2000), 79. There is also a small unnumbered niche adjacent to niche 1 at Yutan, Dazu, that appears to have an image of Amoghapāśa. In addition to images of Amoghapāśa found in the Sichuan Basin, images of Amoghapāśa (number 14) and Cintāmanīcakra (number 12) are carved in the western section of the Liangshan, Buyiwayi site in southwestern Sichuan, which belong to the Late Nanzhao/Dali Kingdom cultural sphere. These images are described in Liu Changjiu (1998), 30. Several images believed to represent Amoghapāśa also occur opposite Cintāmanīcakra in several niches depicting the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara at Danleng in niches 34, 4, and 45, see Park Hyounggook 朴亨国, "Nyoirin Kannon zō no seiritsu to tenkai 如意轮观音像の成立と展開," Ars Buddhica 262 (2002): 87.
numerous at the Mogao caves and other sites around Dunhuang, but they have not been reported to be found at other cliff sculpture sites in Northern China.\textsuperscript{152}

Like the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, Amoghapāśa is often depicted with multiple limbs, typically with eight or six arms, and sometimes with two or more additional heads. At Beishan all the images of Amoghapāśa have either two or six arms, and only one image has multiple heads. Images of Amoghapāśa elsewhere primarily depict the bodhisattva with eight arms.\textsuperscript{153} The primary identifying attribute of Amoghapāśa is his unerring (amogha) noose (pāśa), which he uses to draw sentient beings away from their worries and troubles in the realm of saṃsāra to deliverance on the shore of enlightenment. At Beishan other attributes typically held by images of Amoghapāśa with multiple sets of arms include a sword (khaḍga), alms bowl (pātra), willow branch, and solar and lunar discs, as seen in Figure 3.28. Except for the pāśa these attributes do not conform to the textual descriptions of Amoghapāśa. However, the descriptions of the bodhisattvas

\textsuperscript{152} A recent study discusses imagery of Amoghapāśa at Dunhuang and provides limited comparative analysis with images at Beishan; see Peng Jinzhang 彭金章, "Dunhuang shiku Bukong Juansuo Guanyin jingbian yanjiu," DHY 1 (1999): 1-24. Peng Jinzhang (1999), 4, identifies 75 murals of this subject in the Dunhuang area that include one example from the High Tang, nine from the Mid Tang, twenty from the Late Tang, thirty-seven from the Five Dynasties, thirteen from the Song, and three from the Xisha period. The earliest known dated image of Amoghapāśa in China, dated 766, was found in cave 148 at the Mogao caves, but is no longer extant. The worship of Amoghapāśa must have had some prominence before this time since a large wooden image of Amoghapāśa was enshrined as the principle deity of the Hokkedō at the Tōdaiji temple (Nara, Japan) in the early eighth century. Outside of East Asia numerous images of Amoghapāśa are found in Java which date from the tenth to thirteenth centuries; see Pal, 235-238. There are also several examples from Yunnan, see Lee Yu-min (1986), 227-264.

\textsuperscript{153} Images found at Dunhuang are primarily eight-armed (56%), but six-armed forms occur in 26% of images; see Peng Jinzhang (1999), 8. Japanese examples are also mostly eight-armed, Mori Masahide, 43.
attributes vary considerably even within the same text.¹⁵⁴

Worship of Amoghapāśa was introduced in the Sui Dynasty (581-618) when the first sūtra concerning this form of Avalokiteśvara, entitled the Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya or Scripture on the Spell (dhāraṇī) of Amoghapāśa (Bukong juansuo zhou jing), was translated by Jñānagupta in 587.¹⁵⁵

Between the seventh and eleventh centuries eight other Amoghapāśa sūtras and variations on the text first translated by Jñānagupta were translated into Chinese. In 695 the famed Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang translated a new version of the

Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya at the translation center in the Daciensi 大慈恩寺

¹⁵⁴ A variety of different attributes and numbers of arms are given in scriptures. The images at Dunhuang also include a number of attributes not described in texts and have a variety combinations that don’t correspond to descriptions in texts; see Peng Jinzhang (1999), 8-9.

¹⁵⁵ T.20.1093. This text was subsequently retranslated four times. A list of the five Chinese versions of this text is given in R.O. Meisezahl, “The Amoghapāśardaya-dhāraṇī the Early Sanskrit Manuscript of the Reunji Critically Edited and Translated,” Monumenta Nipponica 17 (1962), 272. Several errata to Meisezahl’s text are noted by Rob Linrothe, Ruthless Compassion: Wrathful Deities in Early Indo Tibetan Esoteric Buddhist Art (Boston: Shambala, 1999), 93 n.19.
temple in Changan (modern Xian). Subsequent translations during the Tang include three versions of the *Amoghapāśa-kalparāja*, a lengthy ritual text with the *Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya* forming the first chapter, which were translated by Cintāmanī (Baosiwei 宝思惟) in 693, Li Wuchan 李无诤 in 700, and by Bodhiruci in 707. The other versions of the *Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya* were translated by Bodhiruci in 693, Amoghavajra in 705-774, and Amuqu 阿目佺 in 746-774. The last translation of the *Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya* was done in 1010 by Dānapāla (Shihu 施护). These sūtras contain many similarities to those that concern the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara and other esoteric
forms of Avalokiteśvara. Similar to the *Nilakanṭha sūtra* discussed in the last section of this study, the focus of these sūtras is a powerful *dhārani* taught by the bodhisattva that will provide a variety of spiritual and material rewards, which are enumerated in each of the various scriptures.

The *Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya sūtra* is focused on a *dhārani* taught in first person by Avalokiteśvara at the bodhisattva’s mythical home, Potalaka, and provides guidelines for reciting the *dhārani* and making images to achieve desired results. The results for practicing the methods outlined in the scripture include recovery from physical ailments of every imaginable affliction—fever, eye ailments, back problems, dysentery, ulcers, and so on—as well as reducing the results of bad karma acquired in actions undertaken in previous life times. The sūtra provides a list of twenty specific beneficial outcomes to be received by reciting the *dhārani*. These include such things as protection from disease, granting of wealth, health, beauty, protection in battle, warding off evil spirits, prolonged life and protection from natural dangers such as fire and bad weather. It also includes eight conditions of good death, including physical and spiritual facets of one’s dying, such as the promise of rebirth in the paradise of one’s desire. A brief passage from the

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161 Lee Yu-min has noted several shared features in the rewards associated with Amoghapāśa and the Buddha Bhaśajyaguru as well as similarities with those of other esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara; see Lee Yu-min 李玉民, "Dunhuang Yaoshi jingbian yanjiu 敦煌药师经变研究," *Gugong xueshu jikan* 7 (Spring 1990): 18-19.

162 Central aspects of this scripture have been summarized by Yü (2001), 56-58.

163 Yü (2001), 56.

164 Meisezahl, 293.

165 See Yü (2001), 56-58.
second fascicle of the version of the sūtra translated by Li Wuchan provides some idea of the declared benefits derived from reciting the dhārani and the reason for its vogue:

If only recited once, [the reciter] will obtain clothing, food, bedding, medicine and all other necessities. All [their desired] benefits will be attained and none will be lacking. They will have long lives, few ailments, and little worries.

The largest number of images of Amoghapāśa in China are found in the Dunhuang area, including seventy-five different cave murals and five painted banners. The earliest dated examples found there date to the mid-eighth century about the same time that the earliest Amoghapāśa images are found in Japan. The appearance of Amoghapāśa imagery at the two geographic extremes of East Asia in the eighth century attest to the wide dispersal of worship of Amoghapāśa in the Tang Dynasty. However, in China proper, outside the Gansu area, images of Amoghapāśa are found only in Sichuan and Yunnan. As studied by Peng Jinzhang, the images of Amoghapāśa in Sichuan have some shared characteristics with depictions of Amoghapāśa at Dunhuang, but there are also many differences in the bodhisattva’s appearance, types of attributes, and attending retinue. As well, Japanese images of Amoghapāśa also have many differences from those in Dunhuang and Sichuan, suggesting that in all these locations the artists who created the

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166 T.20.1092.410c.

167 Peng Jinzhang, 3.

168 Several wooden and lacquer images of Amoghapāśa are found in Japan from the Nara period (710-794). The most well known early image of Amoghapāśa (Fukūkensaku) in Japan is found in the Hokkedō of the Tōdaiji monastery and is dated to the 780s; see Pal, 238-9; Peng Jinzhang, 12.

169 see Peng Jinzhang, 6-11.
imagery did not strictly adhere to the known canonical descriptions of the bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{170} This observation can be applied to a broader range of Chinese Buddhist imagery suggesting that the lack of correspondence of images to text was the result of more artistic leeway and perhaps the input of local monks who may have overseen the creation of this imagery. That much of the imagery in each of these places have shared characteristics suggests the importance of localized interpretations independent of canonical literature perhaps reproducing a well known or particularly efficacious local image.

Four of the seventeen images of Amoghapāśa found at Beishan are dated to the Five Dynasties period, and the other thirteen date to the Song Dynasty. Imagery at Dunhuang indicates that depictions of Amoghapāśa became popular in the Late Tang and Five Dynasties period and less common after the Northern Song when the region was ruled by the Xisha (ca.1038-1227) from 1072.\textsuperscript{171} The Beishan images, in terms of numbers and size, indicate that the worship of Amoghapāśa was particularly prominent in the area during the Song dynasty.

None of the Beishan images of Amoghapāśa can be dated to the Tang; however, a group of four small niches at the Xiyan site in Zizhong is dated to the Late Tang period.\textsuperscript{172} These niches are poorly preserved and are located in the Luohandong 罗汉洞, a small natural cave partially filled with water.

\textsuperscript{170} Peng Jinzhang, 13. Early Japanese images of Amoghapāśa are enumerated by Peng Jinzhang, 12.

\textsuperscript{171} Peng Jinzhang, 3.

\textsuperscript{172} These are niches 79, 80, 91, 92. See Hu Wenhe (1994), 224. The dating of these niches is based on a nearby niche that is dated 901. An additional image not noted by Hu Wenhe is located on the east side of the Xiyan site.
opposite the main area of carvings at the Xiyan site. Representative of these
niches is niche 80, which features a six-armed standing image of Amoghapāśa
(Figure 3.29). The shape of the niche, with a rectangular border and upper
interior triangular-shaped corners, relates to the common niche types from
the Late Tang and Five Dynasties period at the Fowan. The image is badly
eroded, but it still can be identified as Amoghapāśa by its six arms and the
remaining attributes held in its hands. Although scriptures provide various
combinations of arms from two to thirty-two, six arms is the typical number
of arms used in depictions of Amoghapāśa at this site and at
Beishan. At Dunhuang and in Japan, eight-armed images of the deity predominate.
Three of the characteristic attributes of the Amoghapāśa imagery at
the Beishan are visible in this image. These include the noose (pāśa) in the outer left hand
and the solar and lunar discs in clouds supported by the
bodhisattva’s two raised

Figure 3.29: Niche 80(?), Luohandong, Xiyan, Zizhong. Photo by author, 2001.

173 The painted numbers in the cave were mostly worn off at the time of my visit to the site.
Based on the location of this niche I believe it is most likely number 80 or possibly number
78.
174 Peng Jinzhang, 7-8, 13. This is also true for images of Amoghapāśa found in Java that
date to the 10th-13th centuries; see Pal, 235-8.
arms. The latter two attributes are not mentioned in scriptural descriptions of Amoghapāśa and do not occur in standard eight-armed images of Amoghapāśa outside of Sichuan. The convention of using these two attributes in images of Amoghapāśa in Sichuan may have grown from the established convention of depicting multi-limbed asuras with these attributes or may also have been influenced by depictions of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara and the general tantric symbolism of the sun and moon, which symbolize the masculine and feminine aspects of the tantric enlightenment equation.

Another small-standing image of Amoghapāśa (.52 m high) is featured in a small intrusive niche adjacent to the Dafoku 大佛窟 (number 28) at the Huangzesi site in Guangyuan (Figure 3.30). This niche, number 25 at the site, is dated by Chinese scholars to the High Tang period (705-780), which would make it the earliest extant image of Amoghapāśa in China.

Amoghapāśa is depicted with one head and four arms, with a pāśa held in the outer left hand and a sword (khaḍga) in the outer right hand.

The central arms of the image are damaged, but were held in front of the abdomen.

The solar and lunar attributes may also relate to Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha who symbolize the sun and the moon. Although this pair of bodhisattvas are most closely associated with the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, a number of images of Amoghapāśa have Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha as attendant figures. Also the sun and moon gods are mentioned in several passages in at least one scripture dedicated to Amoghapāśa as part of his retinue, but are not prominent figures; see Peng Jinzhang, 9-11.

Wang Jianping, 79, identifies this figure as a four-armed Avalokiteśvara holding a water bottle, fly-whisk, vajra, and pāśa. A drawing of the niche is given in Guangyuanshi wenwu guanlisuo 光元市文物管理所 and Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan zongjiaosuo fojiaoshi 中国社会科学院宗教所佛教室, “Guangyuan Huangzesi shiku 光元皇泽寺石窟调查记,” WW 6 (1990), 29.

The niche is badly worn and the interpretation of these attributes is different than the published report, which identifies them as a water bottle, fly whisk, vajra, and ring. See Guangyuanshi wenwu guanlisuo, 33.
hands are damaged but appear in the conventional position for holding a willow branch and vase/bowl seen in almost all the Beishan images of Amoghapāśa. The position of the pāśa and khadga in the outstretched rear arms is also seen on almost all the multi-limbed images of Amoghapāśa at Beishan. Four-armed images of Amoghapāśa are described in several scriptures but do not occur elsewhere in Sichuan or Dunhuang.

The two examples just discussed are standing images of Amoghapāśa, which contrasts to most images of Amoghapāśa at Beishan and Dunhuang which are typically depicted seated in padmāsana. The only multiple-armed standing image of Amoghapāśa at the Fowan is featured in niche 224 and is one of the three images of Amoghapāśa dated to the Five Dynasties period at the Fowan (Figure 3.31). Like the image in the Luohanlong, this figure originally had six arms, but the two front arms have been broken off. The upper arms support the lunar and solar discs, which rest on clouds above the bodhisattva’s palms, while the lower arms hang to the sides with a pāśa held

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179 No four-armed images are noted by Peng Jinzhang at Dunhuang, but among the images he describes fourteen images are damaged, and the arms cannot be counted; see Peng Jinzhang, 8. There is a four-armed image of Amoghapāśa in Zhang Shengwen’s Long scroll of Buddhist images that is identified as the “Savior of Disease and Illness,” number 96 in Li Lin-t’san, 109.

180 The NRZL, 415, identifies this figure as having only four arms. Breaks at the elbows of the lower arms indicates that there was another set of arms held in front of the chest.
The bodhisattva is dressed in an ankle-length robe that clings to the body, with the front of the image elaborately bejeweled with necklaces and scarfs. Images of Amoghapāśa at Beishan are represented, like other bodhisattvas, as a royal prince (rājkumār) types wearing crowns, and none of them feature a deerskin draped across that shoulder, which is proscribed in several scriptures for images of Amoghapāśa. In niche 224 Amoghapāśa is attended by two small figures, a male and female, on the left and right respectively. Both are badly damaged, but the male figure appears to be a monk standing on a raised rocky mound. A pair of figures representing a monk and female attendant, which can often be identified as Sudhana and the Dragon maiden, appear to be the standard pair of attendants in niches depicting Amoghapāśa at Beishan. There is no direct scriptural source for their inclusion in the iconography of Amoghapāśa; however, Sudhana and the Dragon maiden are both associated with Potalaka, where the Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya is revealed by

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181 The lower left hand may have held a water bottle or vase, but it is too damaged to identify.

182 The deerskin, a symbol of asceticism, is represented on most images of Amoghapāśa found at Dunhuang, see Peng Jinzhang 11. The deerskin is mentioned in many of the descriptions of Amoghapāśa in scriptures; see Mastumoto Eichi, 708-10.
Avalokiteśvara, and may account for their inclusion in the iconography. The monk in this niche doesn't appear to represent Sudhana, since he is made somewhat distinct by being elevated on a rocky mound.

The other two Amoghapāśa niches, numbers 208 and 212, dated to the Five Dynasties period are part of a multi-niche group on the northern section of the site that includes niches 207 to 213 (Figure 3.32). Niche number 212 to the right of niche 209 contains a six-armed and three-headed image of Amoghapāśa seated in padmāsana (Figure 3.33). The upper hands hold two discs, representing the sun and moon, that rest on clouds. The middle outstretched hands hold a sword and pāśa, right and left respectively, and a bent willow branch is held in the right front primary hand above a small bowl or vase that rests in the palm of the bodhisattva's primary left hand in front of the center of the chest. These attributes represent the standard set of attributes for the bodhisattva who unties the knot of justice,” which Chinese scholars have associated with Yamarāja, the lord of the underworld or Maheśvara. Li Sisheng (1999), 11, suggests that this image depicts a form of Amoghapāśa (Note, he mistakenly identifies this niche as number 208). However, his primary justification for this identification is the smaller Amoghapāśa niches in this group, and he provides only the general textual basis that Amoghapāśa has many different forms for his rationale of identifying this image as Amoghapāśa.
Amoghapāśa images at Beishan.\textsuperscript{184} This image represents the only multi-headed image of Amoghapāśa at the site. Scriptures provide that Amoghapāśa can be depicted with multiple heads: three, four, and eleven.\textsuperscript{185} The two side faces of the image are described by Hu Wenhe as having an angry appearance, but they are badly worn and have no indication of fangs or angry grimaces.\textsuperscript{186} An interesting feature of the iconography of this niche is the depiction of a small, winged, two-armed figure carved in low relief in front of the bodhisattvas’ seat and enclosed in a roundish aureole. The figure is child-like and appears to be standing and bent slightly over with his hands clasped in \textit{añjali mudrā}. Extending from his back are a pair outstretched bat-like wings, which makes the figure look similar to \textit{kiṃnaras} (half bird men) that are sometimes used as subsidiary figures in larger Buddha teaching assemblies. A similar figure is also depicted in niche

\textsuperscript{184} The sun and moon discs, willow branch, bowl, and sword are not attributes of Amoghapāśa given in scriptures. The occurrence of attributes of Amoghapāśa images at Dunhuang are described individually by Peng Jinzhang, but he doesn’t explain if there is a group of attributes that occur most frequently; see Peng Jinzhang (1999), 8-9.

\textsuperscript{185} According to Peng Jinzhang there is only one evident example of a three faced Amoghapāśa at Dunhuang, which is located in the western Thousand Buddha Caves, number 1-18 and dates to the Late Tang. See Peng Jinzhang (1999), 6, 19. In scriptures Amoghapāśa is also described as having three eyes, which doesn’t occur in the imagery at Beishan and is found only in a few examples at Dunhuang.

\textsuperscript{186} Hu Wenhe (1994), 225.
208 (Figure 3.34), and looks like a child with wings attached to the figure’s outstretched arms. Li Sisheng suggests that these figures represent a messenger/servant (ceṭā, shi 使) of Amoghapāśa called Luoshali tongzi 罗刹利童子 (Rākṣasa youth). Chapter eight of Li Wuchan’s translation of the Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya mentions a “subduing messenger” who will serve the every wishes of the practitioner. This messenger is described as having the appearance of a happy youth, which fits the appearance of the child-like figures in the niches 212 and 208. Elsewhere in the same scripture is a description of an image to be placed beneath the central image of Avalokiteśvara in a maṇḍala, which is described as a happy faced figure with four arms and four tusks (lambodara). The text further describes that the figure kneels and makes añjali mudrā and that “his body is bent over slightly and he looks like a flying

Figure 3.34: Niche 208, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

187 Li Sisheng 11.
188 T.20.1096.413a.
189 Linrothe discusses the textual description of this figure as a harbinger for the appearance of wrathful deities in Buddhist texts and literature; see Rob Linrothe, 88-89.
Except for the multiple limbs and tusks, this description conforms closely to the two small figures in niches 208 and 212 beneath Amoghapāśa, which may represent simplified renditions of this figure. In two or three other Amoghapāśa niches at the site a similar youthful-looking figure, but without wings, is depicted in the same position. In niche 127 the figure is depicted as a small, slightly-hunched-over child with his hands in añjali mudrā (Figures 3.35 and 3.36), and in cave 136 a similar figure is depicted below Amoghapāśa (Figure 3.37). The latter two niches date to the Song Dynasty and the figure looks similar to standardized images of the Buddhist pilgrim Sudhana.

In niche 208, Amoghapāśa is seated in padmāsana on the same platform with another figure who is seated in dhyāna mudrā (Figure 3.34). This second figure is damaged but appears to wear a hood and could possibly represent Kṣitigrabha, since

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190 In the text this attendant figure is called Amoghapāśa’s Dhāranirāja. T.20.1096.415c. The figure is also identified in Bodhiruci’s version of 707 (T.20.1092.266c, 269); see Rob Linrothe, 89.
there are numerous niches at the site that feature the pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha, or it could also be intended to represent Avalokiteśvara in meditation revealing the dhārani associated with his Amoghapāśa form. One other niche has Amoghapāśa paired with another figure (Figure 3.38). In that niche, number 146, which dates to the Song Dynasty, Amoghapāśa has six hands that hold the conventional attributes of images of Amoghapāśa at the site and is depicted seated in padmāsana on a sumeru pedestal. Seated next to him on a separate sumeru pedestal is a partially damaged image of a bodhisattva seated in the posture of royal ease (rājalilāsana). The pose of the figure and its round aureole suggest that it represents a variation of the Potalaka or Water-moon Avalokiteśvara. At the base of this niche are four lotus buds on top of a railing with four small child-like nude figures lounging on it who represent newly reborn beings in Amitābha’s Pure Land. Another niche that features a six-armed Avalokiteśvara paired with a regular two armed form of Avalokiteśvara is found at the main east side of the Yuhegou site in Zizhong (Figure 3.39). \[191\]

\[191\] This niche was not noted by Hu Wenhe (1994), 224. The niche type and apsarasa on the lintel indicate that it should date to the Five Dynasties period based on similar dated imagery found at the Fowan.
The image of Amoghapāśa in that niche conforms to the iconography of images at Beishan except that he is seated in *lalitāsana*. On Amoghapāśa’s right, the other figure is damaged but appears to have the hands in the conventional position associated with Avalokiteśvara to hold a willow branch and bowl above the lap. On each side of the niche three or four figures are seated on lotuses and may represent reborn beings or Pure Land Buddhas.

Images of Amoghapāśa that date the Song Dynasty generally conform to the iconographic type already described. These include several larger-sized images and niches indicating that worship of Amoghapāśa was prominent in the local area. One of the masterpieces of Song sculpture at the Fowan site is the six-armed seated image of

Figure 3.38: Niche 146, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 3.39: Bodhisattva niche, Xiyan, Zizhong. Photo by author, 2001.

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Amoghapāśa in cave 136 (Figure 3.37). The attributes held by the bodhisattva, conform to the standard set that occurs in most other images at the Fowan except that an axe (*paraśu*) has replaced the *pāśa* in the outer left hand. The axe is mentioned as an attribute of the six-armed Avalokiteśvara in one scripture. Because this figure does not hold a *pāśa* Chinese scholars have resisted identifying this figure as Amoghapāśa and generally refer to it as the Sun-moon Bodhisattva because of its two prominent attributes. The stylized ribbon wrapped around the axe handle, which forms a small loop where it is attached to head of the axe, may have been intended by the sculptors to represent a *pāśa.*

An important trait seen in this image associated with Amoghapāśa, but not readily seen on the smaller images of Amoghapāśa at the site, is the depiction of a small Buddha in *dhyāna mudrā* at the peak of the bodhisattva’s large floral crown, which represents Avalokiteśvara’s spiritual source the Buddha Amitābha.

The image of Amoghapāśa in cave 136 has some similarity to the image of Amoghapāśa in niche 127 (Figure 3.35). The image of Amoghapāśa in that niche conforms to the standard six-armed type of Amoghapāśa with the *pāśa* held in the outstretched left hand and the sword in the opposite hand. Although the niche is damaged by erosion and doesn’t compare

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192 T.20.1092.345a. An axe occurs as an attribute in only two images of Amoghapāśa at Dunhuang; see Peng Jinzhang (1999), 8.

193 A *pāśa* is held with a sword in one hand in a six-armed figure of Amoghapāśa in niche 159 at the site. Although all of the six-armed forms of Amoghapāśa described in texts include the *pāśa* as an attribute, several four armed forms and a two armed form do not.

194 This iconography is noted in several of the scriptures that describe Amoghapāśa and is an attribute associated with Avalokiteśvara in general. The Buddha is damaged but can be seen in a detail reproduced in Guo Xiangying and Li Fangyin (1999), 94 pl.104.
artistically with the image of Amoghapāśa in cave 136, it has several iconographic similarities in addition to the pose and attributes held in five of the six arms. On top of the bodhisattva’s crown is a round disc that is partially eroded, which probably featured a depiction of a small meditating Buddha like the image in cave 136. The most important similarity between this niche and the image in cave 136 are the attendant figures. Both feature a small child-like figure in añjali mudrā surrounded by smoke and flames beneath the bodhisattva, and two side attendant figures, with a hooded monk on the left side and female attendant on the right side. The general depiction of the two attendant figures in this niche corresponds closely to the larger pair of figures represented in the subsidiary niche of Amoghapāśa in cave 136.

There are three other relatively large-sized images of Amoghapāśa at the Fowan, depicted in niches 148 (Figure 3.40), 119 (Figure 3.28), and cave 180. The later image is one of ten manifestations of Avalokiteśvara in cave 180 and represents the bodhisattva in regular human form with two arms holding a pāśa with the right hand. The former two niches feature six-armed images of Amoghapāśa with the standard set of attributes discussed.

Figure 3.40: Niche 149, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999.
earlier. The image of Amoghapāśa in niche 119 is the only depiction of Amoghapāśa seated in pralambapādāsana at the site.\textsuperscript{195} The adoption of this pose for this image may have been inspired from imagery of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara in the area. In this niche Amoghapāśa is attended by a small monk and a female who holds an offering tray. Unlike the monk attendant in cave 136, which has a western appearance, the monk in this niche has a round Han Chinese face and appears somewhat like conventionalized images of the Buddhist prelate Sudhana.

For the most part, the other small niches that date to the Song Dynasty and depict Amoghapāśa conform to the iconography of those already described. Among them there is only one niche that is notably unique. This is niche 197, which is severely damaged and located relatively high on the cliff wall (Figure 3.41). The niche includes a standard seated, six-armed depiction of Amoghapāśa, but it is not depicted as the primary image of the niche. Instead, the bodhisattva is depicted above a primary image, which is no

\textsuperscript{195} None of the Dunhuang images of Amoghapāśa are depicted in this pose, nor are any other image of Amoghapāśa elsewhere that I am aware of.
In this position Amoghapāśa represents the spiritual source or emanation of the primary image. Possibly the primary figure of the niche was a monk associated with Amoghapāśa such as the western-looking monk in cave 136. A number of famous monks were posthumously considered manifestations of different forms of Avalokiteśvara, but I am not aware of any specifically associated with Amoghapāśa. However, supporting this tentative suggestion that the missing main figure was a monk is the inclusion of two secular or monkish-looking damaged figures on the sides of the niche. Behind these figures are large lotus stalks that support seated figures above them. This suggests that this niche may have been intended to represent a group of semi-divine monks with their associated spiritual source represented above them.

Unfortunately, unless similar images are identified, the damaged condition of the niche may prevent an accurate identification of its iconography to confirm this suggestion.

The three images of Amoghapāśa in the Duobaota conform to the standard six arm type found at the Fowan. Two of these images occur as subsidiary figures to images of Buddhas. In niche 36 Amoghapāśa faces opposite the bodhisattva Mahāmāyūrī, and in niche 57 Amoghapāśa faces opposite the bodhisattva Cintāmanīcakra, another esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara. The pairing of Mahāmāyūrī and Amoghapāśa as attendants to a Buddha, possibly identified as Śākyamuni, appears to be local aberration

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196 The faint outlines of the back of the head and shoulders of the figure are still visible in the niche. The location and size of the outline of the head in relation to the base of the niche suggest that this figure was seated.

197 Although the specifics of this iconography are not noted elsewhere in Sichuan, the depiction of a trio of monks considered manifestations of Avalokiteśvara was a popular theme in Sichuan during the Song, which is discussed in chapter 4 of this study.
reflecting the popular cults of these two divinities in the local area during the Song Dynasty. However, the pairing of images of Amoghapāśa with Cintāmaṇicakra is a convention that is seen very often at Dunhuang. There does not appear to be a specific scriptural source for this iconography, but it may be derivative of iconography of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara where the two appear in his retinue. In niche 57 in the Duobaota, the two bodhisattvas serve as the attendants of Amitābha who is considered the spiritual father of Avalokiteśvara. Similarly, Amoghapāśa is also depicted as an attendant of a Buddha and is opposite a badly damaged figure that may represent Cintāmaṇicakra in niche 123 at the Fowan. As esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara, Amoghapāśa with Cintāmaṇicakra have many similarities in terms of their symbolism and promised benefits to their devotees. These similarities will be explored in the following section of this chapter that examines the iconography of Cintāmaṇicakra at the site.

3.7 Imagery of Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara

A third important esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara found at the Fowan site is Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara (Ruyilun Guanyin 如意轮观音), whose name means “wish-granting jewel, wheel.” This esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara was introduced in China in the early eighth century in a scripture entitled The Sūtra on the Cintāmaṇicakra Dhāraṇī (Ruyilun

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198 The two bodhisattvas are often depicted opposite each other in entrance ways and entrance corridors; see Peng Jinzhang, 11-12.

199 These appear in several of the painted banners as part of his retinue, but are not part of the core group of canonical attendants. However, both are mentioned in the inner court of an eight petaled lotus mandala of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara explained by Amoghavajra in T.20.1067.
tuoluoni jing 如意轮陀罗尼经), one of several related works dedicated to
cintāmaṇīcakra. The content of this scripture is similar to the primary
scriptures of the other two esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara previously
discussed and promises all sorts of worldly and spiritual benefits, especially
regarding the prevention of illness and physical hardships, for those who
follow the prescribed devotional methods of the scripture, chiefly involving the
recitation of a powerful, almost all encompassing, dhāraṇī. This dhāraṇī is
described as being like a wish-fulfilling gem (maṇi) that can satisfy the
desires of all sentient beings. In imagery this dhāraṇī is often depicted
symbolically as a “treasure gem” (baozhu 宝珠), one of the standard
attributes of Cintāmaṇīcakra, which is symbolic of the power of the dhāraṇī
and Avalokiteśvara’s altruistic thought (cintā) for the suffering of sentient
beings. The other primary attribute associated with the bodhisattva is a

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200 This scripture was translated by Bodhiruci (d. 727) in 709, T.20.1080. Several versions
of the same scripture were translated at about the same time. These include the
Guanshiyin pusa mimi zang ruyilun tuoluoni shenzhou jing (Scripture on the secrete
storehouse of the Cintāmaṇicakra dhāraṇī and divine mantra of Avalokiteśvara),
T.20.1082, translated by Śikshānanda 实义难陀 (652-710); Guanshiyin pusa ruyimani
tuoluoni jing (Scripture on the wish-granting gem dhāraṇī of the bodhisattva
Avalokiteśvara), T.20.1083, translated by Baosiwei (d.721); and Foshuo guanzizai pusa
ruyi xin tuoluoni jing (Scripture spoken by the Buddha on the wish-granting heart dhāraṇī of
the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara), T.20.1082, translated by Yijing 义净 (635-713). Several
related sūtras translated later include the Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yujia fayao (The
essential yogā method of the bodhisattva Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara), T.20.1087
translated by Vajrabodhi in 730; Guanshiyin pusa ruyimani lun tuoluoni niansong fa (The
method of intoning the wish-granting gem wheel dhāraṇī of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara),
T.20.1084, translated by Baosiwei; and the Guanzizai pusa ruyilun yujia, (Yogā of the
bodhisattva Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara), T.20.1086, translated by Amoghavajra.

201 T.20.1080.188-189.
wheel (cakra, lun 輪), which is understood to be a demonstration of the Buddhist teachings (dharma). Hence, the two attributes symbolize the non-duality of compassion and wisdom of the enlightened state.

The relatively large numbers of Chinese translations of scriptures concerning this bodhisattva is reflective of Cintāmaniçakrā’s importance in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon of East Asia.\textsuperscript{202} However, similar to Amoghapāśa, extant representations of Cintāmaniçakrā are not frequently encountered at cliff sculpture sites in China outside of the Dunhuang area. Also there are only a few references to depictions of the bodhisattva in Chinese art historical documents.\textsuperscript{203} At Dunhuang images of Cintāmaniçakrā are prevalent from the Mid Tang to Five Dynasties periods and often appear in tandem with images of Amoghapāśa. Only a few other extant images of Cintāmaniçakrā have been found elsewhere in China for the same time period.\textsuperscript{204} Several examples are found at cliff sculptures sites in Sichuan, including a small relief image (dated 812) in a large excavated cave at the


\textsuperscript{203} The subject matter of four works in the Xuanhe huapu are identified as Cintāmaniçakrā. These include a paintings by Wu Daozi 吳道子, Yang Tingguang 杨庭光, Du Zigui 杜子瑰, and Cao Zhongyuan 曹仲元.

Qianfoyan site, Guangyuan, one niche (dated 860-74) at the Nankan site, Bazhong (Figure 3.42), and four images at Beishan.\(^{205}\) The Beishan images of Cintāmaṇiśvara include imagery in niche 50 and cave 149 at the Fowan and two images in the Duobaota pagoda in niches 7 and 57.\(^{206}\)

These images of Cintāmaṇiśvara in Sichuan represent two of the variant iconographic forms of the deity. The two images of Cintāmaṇiśvara located at Guangyuan and Bazhong depict the bodhisattva in a seated position with six arms. The seated six-armed form of the bodhisattva, which is first described in a scripture concerning Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara translated in 707, represents the most popular form of the bodhisattva in East Asia.\(^{207}\) Both images in Guangyuan and Bazhong represent variations on

\(^{205}\) There are also small images of Cintāmaṇiśvara in the retinue the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara in three niches at Danleng; see Park (2002), 87.

\(^{206}\) An inscriptions in niche 7 dated 1150 indicates the images was offered by a local official for his deceased father, see Appendix B, number 3.2. In niche 57 the inscription is dated 1153, but only identifies the primary image of the niche Amitābha; see Appendix B, number 3.10.

\(^{207}\) The earliest description of a six-armed form of Cintāmaṇiśvara is found in T.20.1092.271a-288a. The six-armed form is also the most often represented form of Cintāmaṇiśvara in Japan and at Dunhuang. In scriptures the bodhisattva is also described as having two, four, eight, ten, and twelve arms. Only six- and two-armed depictions occur in China. In southeast Asia the four-armed version of the deity was most prominent.
the standard iconographical depiction of the six-armed Cintāmaṇiṣicakra seated in the posture of royal ease (rājalilāsana, wangzuo 王坐), with the left leg folded horizontally and the right leg folded vertically. The image in niche 16 at the Nankan is relatively well preserved, and the attributes held in the bodhisattva's hands can be identified (Figure 3.42). These attributes include a string of prayer beads (mālā) in the outstretched middle right hand, a gem (mani) held at the center of the chest in the lower right hand, a lotus (padma) in the middle left hand, and a dharma wheel (cakra) displayed horizontal and balanced on the tip of the forefinger of the lower, back, left arm. These attributes correspond to the attributes associated with the bodhisattva in Buddhist scriptures. The two other gestures (mudrās) depicted in the image also correspond to the textual descriptions of the bodhisattva. The upper, front right arm forms the gesture of contemplation (siwei 思惟), with the arm bent at the elbow and the palm of the hand placed against the right side of the bodhisattva's face as if supporting the head. The front left arm is held downward with the palm of the hand touching the top of the bodhisattva's lotus pedestal, which forms the “repressing the mountain” (anshan 按山) gesture symbolic of unshakable resolution and the subjugation of evil. The meanings of these gestures are explained in the Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yujia 观自在如意轮菩萨瑜伽 (Meditation on the Bodhisattva Cintāmaṇiṣicakra)

208 At the Qianfoyan site the bodhisattva's six arms form the same gestures, only the cakra is not depicted.

209 This image is a little unusual in that this gesture typically appears more as if the left arm were supporting the upper torso, with the left shoulder slightly thrust up and the arm held stiff to the side, not outward like in this image. A similarly posed six-armed Cintāmaṇiṣicakra is depicted in the Long Scroll of Buddhist images of Yunnan, number 113 in Li Lin-t'san; Helen B. Chapin, and Alexander C. Soper (1971):113 number 84.
Avalokiteśvara) translated by Amoghavajra in the mid-eighth century as part of the visualization and realization of the deity in the mind of the adept as a preparatory step before reciting the dhāraṇī as the deity:

...the first (right) hand is the contemplative hand, which is the result of compassionate feelings. The second hand holds a gem that is able to satisfy all desires. The third hand holds a string of prayer beads, and [represents] crossing over to the opposite shore for the suffering of sentient beings. The first (left) hand presses down on Mount Guangming (Potalaka), and [represents] instantaneous success. The second left arm holds a lotus in the hand, and [symbolizes] the ability to cleanse away all false teachings. The third arm holds a wheel, which [symbolizes] the ability to turn the unsurpassed Buddhist Law. The vastness of these six arms makes them capable of traveling out to the six realms [of transmigration] by using mahākaruṇā (great compassion) and upāya (skillful means) to bring to an end all suffering.\footnote{T.20.1086.208c. The same passage is duplicated in two other texts: T.20.1087.213b, Guanzizai ruyilun pusa yujia fayao, translated by Vajrabodhi; and T.20.1088.217, Ruyilun pusa guanmen yizhu mijue translated by Huiguo.}

The image of Cintāmañicakra in niche 50 at the Fowan (Figure 3.43) corresponds closely to the same iconography of the Nankan image just described. This niche has partially collapsed, and the image it contains is severely eroded; however, the pose of the image is unmistakably that of the six-armed form of Cintāmañicakra. This identification is confirmed by an accompanying donor inscription dated 897 that identifies the featured image in the niche as Cintāmañicakra Avalokiteśvara.\footnote{See Appendix B, number 1.12.}

The figure is seated in the posture of royal ease (rājalilāsana), with the right knee raised and the left\footnote{These refer to the six destinies of rebirth, or realms of transmigration (samsāra), where one experiences the cycle of birth and death, including those in hell, pretas (hungry ghosts), beasts, humans, asuras (demigods), and gods. The bodhisattva’s six gestures are also each associated with the salvation of the beings in one of these realms: the contemplative gesture with hell, the jewel with pretas, the prayer beads with beasts, the pressing the mountain gesture with asuras, the lotus with humans, and the wheel with gods. Fowler, 59.}
folded horizontally. The head is tilted to the right side and is supported by the palm of the right hand, with the right elbow resting on the raised right knee to form the gesture of contemplation. Several of the gestures and attributes held by the bodhisattva’s five other arms are still discernible. On the right side, one hand is placed at the center of the chest and holds a roundish object undoubtedly representing a cintāmaṇi, and opposite the front left hand rests on the left knee and appears to hold a mālā. The upper left arm is held vertically, with the hand resting on the base of the niche behind the left knee to form the “repressing the mountain” gesture. The other two arms of the bodhisattva have been broken off at the shoulder.213 Except for the position of the mālā, the bodhisattva’s remaining gestures

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213 The authors of the NRZL, 375, identify this figure as being four-armed. However the damaged shoulder portions of the image clearly indicate that the bodhisattva had two additional arms.
correspond those of the image in niche 16 at Bazhong and similar dated imagery, such as the relief image of Cintāmaṇiśakra on one side of the inner gold casket from the Famensi dated to the late ninth century (Figure 3.44). These also correspond to the popular six-armed depiction of the deity which was transmitted to Japan by Kukai 空海 (774-835) and Ennin 円仁 (793-864) in the early eighth century.

The other images of Cintāmaṇiśakra at Beishan represent the two-armed form of the bodhisattva. Cintāmaṇiśakra is the primary image in cave 149 (Figure 3.45), one of the larger caves located in the middle of the northern section of the Fowan. In this cave the image of Cintāmaṇiśakra is depicted with two arms and seated in padmāsana on a raised lotus pedestal with

Figure 3.45: Niche 149, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999.
three tiers of upturned lotus petals and an octagonal plinth (Figure 3.46). Attending Cintāmaṇīcakra are two slightly smaller bodhisattvas, which are also seated in *padmāsana* on lotus pedestals. To the sides of the attending bodhisattvas a female and male donor figure are depicted, right and left respectively, each with a smaller attendant figure. The upper torsos of four divinities are depicted emerging from behind the aureoles of the primary trio on the back wall. Three of these are dressed in military outfits and hold weapons, and a fourth appears to be a female divinity in *añjali mudrā*. One of the three martial figures has a demonic appearance and four heads. On the two lateral side walls of the cave are three rows of smaller attendant figures carved in high relief, with six to eight figures in each tier, organized for the most part in pairs and trios (Figures 3.46, 3.47). Some of the figures are depicted as warriors or demonic types, while others appear as officials or female figures holding seals and dressed in court costumes. All the images in the cave carved on or above a small square ledge that wraps around the three sides of the cave about one meter above the base of the cave. Just below the lip of the ledge two decorative bands are carved in low relief. The lower band
contains a floral vine scroll motif while the upper band contains a pattern of alternating *vajras* (adamantine “tridents”) and *ghanṭās* (bells), which indicate the esoteric context of the imagery in the cave.\(^{214}\)

Three inscriptions on the back of the cave identify the donor images as a local military official named Ren Zongyi 任宗易 and his wife, née Du 杜氏. The donor images in the cave face directly outward like the main image, and it could be suggested that they were included with the hope to benefit from devotion performed in the cave by others, especially their descendants, after their passing.\(^{215}\) The primary donor inscription is not fully legible, but it indicates that the partial or primary motive for the sponsorship of the image of Cintāmanicakra was to bring peace and was undoubtedly related to the military hostilities that erupted in 1127 with the invasion of

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\(^{214}\) This lower pattern is similar to the upper decorative border of the Long Scroll of Buddhist images from Yunnan.

\(^{215}\) This is not stated directly in the inscriptions in the cave, but was a general motivating reason for carving niches and caves. A similar practice is particularly evident at Dunhuang caves were patronized by particular families to serve as a sort of ancestral halls to bring perpetual benefits to living and deceased family members.
Northern China by the Jurchen or Jin 金 (1115-1234) and resulted in loss of
the Song capital.\textsuperscript{216} In 1128 when the primary donor inscription was inscribed,
the fate of the Song Dynasty was militarily uncertain, and the possibility of
the fighting reaching Sichuan would have been a reasonable concern of
military officials in Sichuan.\textsuperscript{217} Success in battle is one of the all-pervasive
powers that are ascribed to the \textit{dhārāṇī} that Cintāmanīcakra embodies.\textsuperscript{218} A
second donor inscription located
above the donor image of the donor’s
wife Née Du (Du Huixiu 杜慧修) also
expresses a belief in the
bodhisattva’s powers to bring peace
to the land.\textsuperscript{219}

The image of Cintāmanīcakra
in cave 149 (Figure 3.48) represents a
different iconographic type than the
six-armed image in niche 50 and
corresponds to the description of the
bodhisattva in a separate text. The
bodhisattva is depicted in a stiff
cross-legged pose unlike the relaxed

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.48}
\caption{Primary image, cave 149. Reproduced from \textit{DSDS}, vol.1, 75, pl. 83.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{216} See Appendix B, number1.29.

\textsuperscript{217} Sichuan was not secure from the potential threat of invasion by the Juchens until the
Song general Wu Jie achieved his famous victory at Heshangyuan, Shanxi in 1131.

\textsuperscript{218} See T.20.1080.189c.

\textsuperscript{219} See Appendix B, number 1.31.
attitude of the six-armed form of the deity which are seated in the posture of royal ease. The left hand holds the stem of a large lotus flower located above the bodhisattva’s left shoulder. On the lotus is a round orb with a glowing flame rising above it, which represents the bodhisattva’s wish fulfilling gem. The right hand is held in front of the chest and makes a closed fist gesture, which is possibly intended as a one-handed variation of the teaching gesture called “wheel of the law” (dharmacakra mudrā), is the symbolic equivalent of the cakra in the six-armed depictions of the deity. On the bodhisattva’s head is a high crown with a perforated scrolling floral design, similar to the band of relief at the base of the cave. A small image of a Buddha in dhyāna mudrā is depicted in the center of the crown. This depiction of Cintāmanīcakra fairly accurately corresponds to a description of Cintāmanīcakra in the Cintāmanīcakra Dhārāṇi Sūtra translated by Bodhiruci in 709.  

According to that description the bodhisattva should be seated in padmāsana on a lotus pedestal and face west:

...his countenance is brilliant and happy, and his complexion is golden. On his head is a treasure headdress and in the headdress there is a transformation Buddha. The bodhisattva’s left hand holds an open lotus. On it paint a treasure pearl. The right hand makes a teaching gesture. He wears heavenly garments with armlets, bracelets, and necklaces made of the seven treasures, and all kinds of splendid adornments, and his body emits a brilliant light.

The two images of Cintāmanīcakra in the Duobaota are similar two armed types, but don’t correspond accurately to textual descriptions of the two armed form of the bodhisattva. In niche 7 in the Duobaota the bodhisattva faces west like the image in cave 149 and is seated in padmāsana. The right

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hand makes a similar clenched fist gesture as the image of Cintāmaṇiśicakra in niche 149 at the Fowan. The left hand, however, is positioned on the lap and holds a stylized twelve-pointed cakra. The image of Cintāmaṇiśicakra in niche 57 has the same pose, only the cintāmani jewel is held in the palm of the left hand on the lap instead of a cakra. In this niche Cintāmaṇiśicakra is depicted opposite a six-armed image of Amoghapāsa.

The section of the text that provides a description of Cintāmaṇiśicakra corresponding to the image of Cintāmaṇiśicakra in cave 149 describes the creation of a maṇḍala with two courts of eight and sixteen major figures. The inner court includes Mahāsthāmaprāpta and the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, which may be the source for the two primary attendant bodhisattvas seated next to Cintāmaṇiśicakra in the cave. The outer court of this maṇḍala describes fifteen groups of figures including Indra, Yama, Brahma, Maheśvara, Vaiśravana, Sun and Moon gods, fire, water, and wind gods (Agni, Varuṇa and Vāyu), two dragon kings, the King of the Asuras, the King of the Rākṣas, and a vidyārāja. Although there is not a direct correspondence between the figures depicted in the cave and those that make up the maṇḍala of Cintāmaṇiśicakra in the Cintāmaṇiśicakra Dhārāṇī Sūtra,

222 An iconographically corresponding image dated to 1094-1113 is located at the Qianfodong, Shuanglong county, in central Shaanxi. This image is reproduced in 李澋, Shanxi fójiao yìshù 陕西佛教艺术, Fójiao meishu quanjì 佛教美术全集, vol. 9. (Taibei: Yishujia, 1999), 199. It is one of ten bodhisattvas depicted in the entranceway of an excavated cave.

223 In the text the White-robed Avalokiteśvara is interestingly called the “White-robed Mother” Avalokiteśvara, suggesting that when the text was translated that form of Avalokiteśvara had a female persona. However, the image in cave 149 with a cowl doesn’t have any overtly effeminate characteristics.

224 See T.20.1080.193c. Each is accompanied by a retinue of related figures.
there is sufficient correspondence to indicate that they were at least loosely based on that *maṇḍala*.\(^{225}\) Except for a few distinctive figures that can be recognized such as Vaiśravaṇa, Vāyu, and the King of the Asuras, most of the other figures are more stereotyped and lack specific individual iconographic traits. This sort of simplification is not usual for depictions of larger groups of figures in Chinese Buddhist art. According to the section on the creation of this *maṇḍala* in the *Cintāmanićakra Dhārāṇī Sūtra*, its creation in conjunction with the performance of rites will bring the protection of the gods of the *maṇḍala*, eliminate obstacles, increase wealth, and lead to rebirth on a lotus in the western Pure land of Amitābha.\(^{226}\) These outcomes generally relate to the wishes of the patrons for the sponsorship of the cave for peace in this world and spiritual elevation in their next lives.

### 3.8 Imagery of Adorned Buddhas

This section discusses the iconography of an adorned Buddha depicted in niche number 12 at the Fowan (Figure 3.49). The imagery depicted in this niche represents a variation on an iconographical model, introduced in China in the mid-seventh century, that depicts an esoteric, transcendental form of the *nirmanakāya* Buddha Śākyamuni in a fully enlightened state. Other examples of this iconography are found at a number of cliff sculptures sites in Sichuan outside the Dazu area.\(^{227}\) The primary feature of this iconography is a

\(^{225}\) See Howard (1990), 55-56.

\(^{226}\) See T.20.1080.194a.

\(^{227}\) This iconography has been addressed by several Chinese and western scholars. A good overview of this imagery in Sichuan is given by Li Sisheng 李巳生, “Yifowushipusa he pusazhuangfo 一佛五十菩萨和菩萨装佛,” *DH Y* 2 (1991): 49-58.
seated Buddha adorned with a crown (mukaṭa) and bejeweled with necklaces and arm bracelets that symbolize spiritual achievement and the transcendental, universal aspect of Buddhahood. Adorned Buddhas of this type are characteristically depicted wearing a robe (kaśāya) that covers only the left shoulder and seated in padmāsana with the right hand in bhūmisparśa mudrā (earth touching gesture) symbolizing the realized state
of universality. Typically the Buddha is depicted seated beneath the canopy of a tree on a sumeru-throne with an ornate, high backrest decorated with auspicious mythical creatures of South Asian design, such as haṁsas (geese), śārdūlas (leogryphs), makaras (mythical crocodilian creatures), kunḍas (pots) with lotus flowers, and other imagery, which serve both a decorative and symbolic function.

The iconography of this type of adorned Buddha was derived from a famous auspicious image (ruixiang 瑞像) located in the Mahābodhi temple (Putisi 菩提寺) at Bodh Gayā, the site of the vajrāsana where Śākyamuni realized his enlightenment, and was first transmitted to China in the seventh century by the Chinese visitors to that site. Some of the earliest examples of this iconography in China are known from the Leigutai 擂鼓台, located opposite the main western cliff of the Longmen site (Luoyang), which date to around the early eighth century (Figure 3.50). At Dunhuang images of this type are included among sets of auspicious images and are labeled in cartouches as the “light emitting auspicious image
of the country of Magadha."²²⁸ Those in Sichuan for the most part date to around the early eighth century and are found at sites in Guangyuan, Bazhong, Tongjiang, Pujiang, and Anyue.²²⁹

Niche 12 at the Fowan is the only extant example of this iconography in the Dazu area and dates to the Late Tang period. This medium-sized niche (1.43 x 1.18 meters) is partially collapsed and features a central, seated, adorned Buddha flanked by two seated bodhisattvas. The two bodhisattvas are severely damaged and not identified in the NRZL, but they are recognizable as Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī by their respective animal mounts, the elephant and lion. The central Buddha is seated in _padmāsana_ on an ornate _sumeru_ platform with an elaborate, high backrest extending above the Buddha's head. His robe is slung over the left shoulder leaving the right shoulder bare (Figure 3.51). Across his chest is a large necklace with dangling key-hole shaped adornments.²³⁰ The hands and arms of the figure are almost completely destroyed, but the remaining portions of arms suggest that

²²⁸ Magadha is the area of modern Bihar province where most the activities associated with the life of Śākyamuni Buddha took place. An image of this type is found on the famous tattered banner depicting famous images found at Dunhuang. See Alexander C. Soper, “Representation of the Famous Images at Tun-Huang,” *Artibus Asiae* 4 (1965), 349. A drawing of this image is found in Roderick Whitfield, “Ruixiang at Dunhuang,” in *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*, K.R. van Kooji and H. van der Veer eds. (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995: 149-156), 154 fig. 3.


²³⁰ The same type of necklace is represented on secondary figures in niches 5 and 9.
the right hand was in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and the left hand rested on the lap in *dhyāna mudrā*. The Buddha’s pate is missing but probably featured a jeweled crown above the first two rows of curls on the top of the head similar to examples seen elsewhere (for example, see the head of the Buddha in figure 3.50).

Behind the Buddha is an elaborate backrest carved in imitation of wooden lattice work. The sides of the backrest are decorated with auspicious imagery that is modeled after a conventional South Asian design used from at least the Gupta period (ca. 4th-6th centuries). Both sides of the backrest feature a diminutive squatting figure that supports a lotus pedestal on its head. On this lotus stand the hind legs of a rearing quadruped with a rider. Each end of the upper crosspiece are carved into the shape of the head of a mythical *makara*, with a small *hamsa* perched above it. Above the ornate, openwork top of the backrest are two small *apsarās* who hold a garland of jewels above

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231 Several South Asian precedents for this iconography are reproduced in Susan L. Huntington, *The Ancient Art of India* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1985) 203 fig 10.20, 256-7 fig. 12.18. A similar type of backrest is used for the Maitreya image in niche 176 at the Fowan and is found on any number of Maitreya images elsewhere in China. This style of chair was also associated with images of the Udāyana type; See Luo Shiping (1991), 123.
the Buddha’s head. Barely discernible on the back wall of the niche between the Buddhas’ chair and the aureoles of the attending bodhisattvas are two clumps of foliage representing a bodhivṛksa, tree of enlightenment.

The NRZL and other Chinese publications have identified this image as Śākyamuni and have not recognized this image as representing a unique iconographical type of adorned Buddha, which has been identified elsewhere in Sichuan. Based on the iconographical content of the niche and related imagery elsewhere I believe that the correct identification of this image should not be understood simply as the historical Buddha Śākyamuni, but the transcendental form of Śākyamuni manifesting his shared Buddha nature as Vairocana. As such the image was intended to depict Śākyamuni in a sambhogakāya (bliss body) form in a fully enlightened state, demonstrating his shared identity with the dharmakāya Buddha Vairocana.²⁰² The jeweled necklace and crown (missing) are symbolic of the transcendental splendor (alamkāra; zhuangyan 裝嚴) of Vairocana, who represents the ultimate sublime Dharma body of the Buddha. The attending bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, who personify, respectively, the perfection of transcendental wisdom (prajñā) and skillful means (upāya), serve as the primary associates of the Buddha Vairocana as part of a standard iconographical triad based on the Buddhāvatamsaka Sūtra. The inclusion of these two bodhisattvas represents a variation on the standard typology of this subject matter depicted elsewhere in Sichuan, which typically feature images of Avalokiteśvara or less specifically identifiable bodhisattvas. The

scriptural basis of this iconography is found in seventh-century esoteric ritual manuals that describe the transcendental hypostasis of Śākyamuni known as the Buddhōśnīṣa (Buddha of the top knot), which is equivalent to Vairocana in the “systematized” tantra of the eighth century.  

The artistic source of this iconography is believed to be a famous image in Bodh Gayā at the site of the vajrāsana, where the historical Buddha Śākyamuni experienced enlightenment under a bodhi tree. Both the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 596-664) and the Tang emissary Wang Xuance 王玄策 (ca. seventh century) who visited the site provide descriptions of this image. The image was reportedly located in a temple built by two brahmin converts to Buddhism just east of the site of the vajrāsana. Xuanzang records the circumstance of the miraculous creation of the image by a brahmin who was an incarnation of the bodhisattva Maitreya, which was revealed by Maitreya to a monk in a dream.

“Fearing that the mind of no artist could conceive the beauty of the sacred features I myself [Maitreya] have come to paint and delineate the figure of the Buddha. His right hand hangs down in a token that when he was about to reach the fruit of a Buddha, and the enticing Māra came to fascinate him...the Tathāgata dropped his hand and pointed toward the ground saying, ‘Here is my witness.’”

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233 On this Buddha, see Lu Jianfu, 190, 198-200. However, he believes that the identity of the Buddha of the top knot as a hypostasis of Śākyamuni is different from Vairocana.


235 Da Tang xiyu ji, fascicle 8, T.51.2087.916. My translation is based on Beal, 120-121.
Xuanzang explains that area above the right chest of the image was left unfinished by Maitreya for an unexplained reason, but may account for Chinese images modeled after this image, which leave the right shoulder and breast exposed. According to Xuanzang the adornments of the Buddha were added by the monks of the temple who placed a necklace of precious stones, jewels, and a crown of jewels on the image. The diplomat Wang Xuance who visited India on three separate occasions also provides an account of seeing this image in Bodh Gaya. An artist named Song Fazhi 諸法智, who accompanied Wang Xuance on his third trip, made a sketch of this image, and, when they returned to China, Wang supervised the installation of a copy of the image in the Jingaisi 敬愛寺 monastery Luoyang in 665. This image is described in the third fascicle of the Lidai minghuaji 历代名画记 as Maitreya, which has led some Chinese scholars to identify this iconography with Maitreya. A copy of the Bodhi temple image described as the “true-appearance of the vajrāsana” (jingangzuo zhenrong 金刚座真容) was also

236 Da Tang xiyu ji, fascicle 8, T.51.2087.916; Beal,121.


239 Lidai Minghuaji, fascicle 3. See the annotated translation by Williams Reynolds Beal Acker, Some Tang and Pre-Tang Texts on Chinese Painting (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1954), 306-360. Some images of Maitreya also use the same elaborate throne back and are depicted under a tree. Maitreya will also become enlightened at the vajrāsana, so it would make sense that images of the future Maitreya would also use the same type of throne.
brought back by the Chinese pilgrim Yijing 义净 (635-713), which he presented to the empress Wuzetian in 695.\textsuperscript{240} Based on these accounts, it was during the reigns of emperor Gaozong (r.650-684) and empress Wuzetian (r. 684-705) that this iconography was introduced in China, concurrent with the popularization of the Avatamsaka (Huayan 华严) and early esoteric teachings. In particular Empress Wu’s favoritism toward Buddhism aided in the establishment of this iconography in China, and others related to the Avatamsaka teachings and esoteric Buddhism, such as that of Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara. Since Wu Zetian was a native of northern Sichuan and the route taken by Wang Xuance to and from India was via Sichuan, it is not surprising that this iconography became well established in Sichuan, particularly in sites in northern Sichuan on routes leading to north-central China.\textsuperscript{241}

Although in prior publications niche 12 at the Fowan has not been discussed in any detail, other niches with this iconography in Sichuan have been studied by other scholars. One of the two examples of this iconography found at the Feixiange 飞仙阁 cliff sculpture site in Pujiang, niche number 9, has been examined separately by Henrik Sorensen and Angela Howard (Figure 3.52).\textsuperscript{242} This niche (1.75 x 2 x 1.5 meters), the largest at the Feixiange

\textsuperscript{240} SGSZ, fascicle 12, T.50.2061.701b.

\textsuperscript{241} This is discussed by Li Sisheng (1991), 57. Wang’s travels occurred during a period of relatively friendly relations between China and Tibet, which allowed for the opening of the Tubo(Tibet)-Nepal road for travelers from China to India.

site, dates to circa 700 and has a more elaborate grouping than the Fowan niche, but the iconography of the central Buddha is similar to the Fowan image. The Buddha is attended by two bodhisattvas seated in pralambapadāsana and two monks representing Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa. Howard takes the central Buddha to represent the historical Buddha Śākyamuni at the precise moment of his enlightenment, while Sorenson proposes that the iconography is based on the Avataṃsaka teachings and that the depicted adorned Buddha is intended to represent a manifestation of the dharmakāya or absolute form of Śākyamuni Buddha. Sorenson cites several passages at the beginning of the Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra that describe the bodhi tree and the adornment of the site of the vajrāsana with “precious objects and variegated flowers” at the

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243 For the date of the niche, see Howard (1988), 23. The dating of the niche does not skew with Howard’s argument of Pala influence since it predates the founding of that Kingdom. See Sorenson (1997), 41. Moreover, the type of throne she associates with Pala art is known in examples from the Gupta and post Gupta periods.

244 In addition, the gods of the eight quarters (tianlong babu) are depicted on the back of the niche, which is evidence that this iconography was related to models in northern Sichuan.

245 Howard’s study is largely concerned with using this imagery to help establish the notion of an overland route from Sichuan to India via Burma. The major faults in her argument are addressed by Sorenson (1997), 41.
These, however, do not describe the actual adornment of the Buddha as such, but the surroundings. However, the description of Vairocana in the sūtra as the great illumination Buddha who “constantly emits great beams of light” corresponds with the identification of this iconographic type as the “light emitting auspicious image” found on cartouches of depictions of this iconography in Dunhuang.

In a study of the adorned Buddha in niche 33, also known as the “Auspicious Bodhi Image Cave” (Puti ruixiang ku 菩提瑞像窟) at the Qianfoyan site, Guangyuan, Luo Shiping identifies the iconographical source of this imagery to the well known Tuoluoni ji jing 陀罗尼集经 (Sūtra Collection of Dhārānīs), translated by Ajikuta (Adjuduo 阿地瞿多) in 645. The image in this niche is dated by Luo Shiping to circa 712 based on a donor inscription located on the interior south wall of the niche (Figure 3.53). This donor inscription refers to the image as representing the

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Footnotes:

246 T.278.9.395a; Sorenson, 39.

247 T.18.901. This text is chiefly concerned with methods of constructing ritual altars and the worship of images. The same identification of this iconography is made by Lu Jianfu, 190.

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Figure 3.53: Niche 33, Qianfoyan, Guangyuan. Reproduced from ZSDQ 8, 22, fig. 22.
“Auspicious Bodhi Image,” which undoubtedly refers to the image at the Mahâbodhi temple noted by Chinese visitors to the site. A much later stele on the northern wall of the niche that records a restoration of the niche in 947 identifies the central Buddha as Vairocana.\textsuperscript{248} Like the Pujiang image, this niche has a more elaborate grouping than niche 12 at the Fowan, but features a central adorned Buddha in \textit{bhûmisparśa mudrā} seated on an elaborate throne beneath the foliage of several stylized trees and attended by two bodhisattvas, one of which can be identified as Avalokiteśvara by the \textit{kundikā} and willow sprig held in the left and right hands. Lou Shiping has identified the textual source of this iconography in the first fascicle of the \textit{Tuoluoni ji jing}, which describes the Foding (Uṣṇīṣa) Buddha, a transcendental form of Śākyamuni.\textsuperscript{249} In a pertinent passage, the image of this Buddha is described as being seated in posture of meditation on a seven-treasure (\textit{sapta ratna}) lotus flower pedestal with his right hand placed on the right leg with the fingers pointing down forming the \textit{bhûmisparśa mudrā}, and the left hand placed horizontally on the lap in \textit{dhyāna mudrā}. The Buddha is described as being the color of true gold and adorned with bracelets, necklaces, and a crown made of seven-precious substances. Attending the Buddha are the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Vajragarbha.\textsuperscript{250} This particular passage does not describe the Bodhi tree, but another text in the second fascicle of the same collection describes that behind all images of Foding Buddhas two trees

\textsuperscript{248} See Luo Shiping (1991), 127.
\textsuperscript{249} T.18.901. Luo Shiping (1991), 128-29.
\textsuperscript{250} T.18.901.785c-786a. Luo Shiping (1991), 129.
should be depicted. In general this iconographic description has a good correspondence with the adorned Buddha in niche 33 at Qianfoyan and other examples, such as the previously discussed image at Feixiange, Pujiang.

The chief distinction of niche 12 at the Fowan from these earlier examples of the same iconography is the inclusion of the two bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, which replace images of Avalokiteśvara and more generic bodhisattvas in earlier examples. The inclusion of these two bodhisattvas indicates that the central image was understood as a demonstration of the dharmakāya Buddha Vairocana. In texts from the eighth century the Foding Buddha is identified as Vairocana. The iconography of niche 12 reflects that understanding of the central Buddha.

3.9 Imagery of Tejaprabha, the Buddha of Blazing Radiance

Images of the Buddha of “Blazing Radiance,” Tejaprabha (Zhishengguangfo 炽盛光佛), are not frequently encountered in the art of Chinese Buddhism. Radiating blazing light from the pores in his skin, the Buddha Tejaprabha is a transcendental form of the mortal (mānuṣī) Buddha

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253 The most authoritative study of Tejaprabha is Meng Sihui 孟嗣徽, ”Zhishengguang fo bianxiangtu tuxiang yanjiu 炽盛光佛变相图图像研究,” Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu 2 (1997): 101-148. Also see Mastumoto Eiichi, 338-343. A brief overview of the cult is provided by Henrik Sorenson (1991/1992), 301. Also useful is Marilyn Gridley, “Images of Tejaprabha’s Paradise,” Archives of Asian Art 51 (1998-99), 7-15. The title of her article is, however, somewhat misleading since Tejaprabha is not directly associated with a Buddhist paradise.
Śākyamuni. Conceptually, Tejaprabha resides in the celestial sphere in the position of the Northern Dipper constellation (beidou 北斗), where he serves as the Buddhist overlord of the constellations and other heavenly bodies that affect human events. As such, the worship of Tejaprabha is intimately related to astrological prognostication and directed at the service of the state and individuals to ameliorate the effects of negative celestial portents and bring good fortune.

Worship of Tejaprabha appears to have been introduced in China during the eighth century in connection with a dhāraṇī scripture translated by Amoghavajra. Although a relatively late arrival in the Chinese Buddhist pantheon, the direct association of Tejaprabha with the celestial bodies, especially the five planets (wuxing 五星), incorporates earlier astrological symbolism, which had a great measure of currency in eighth century China when Tejaprabha was first introduced. Astrology was an important concern of the state and strictly controlled as a state prerogative. Esoteric masters

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254 According to scriptures Tejaprabha is a Buddhośniṣa (foding 佛顶) meaning, literally, “cranial protuberance of transcendental wisdom,” which is understood as a transcendental teaching body of Śākyamuni. See Meng Sihui, 117. Dhāraṇī scriptures regarding the Buddhośniṣa form of Śākyamuni were introduced in China in the sixth century.


256 On astrological symbolism and its importance in the Tang Dynasty, see Edward H. Schafer, Pacing the Void: T'ang Approaches the the Stars (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977). Also see Raoul Birnbaum, “Introduction to the Study of T'ang Buddhist Astrology: Research Notes on Basic Principles and Primary Sources,” Society for the Study of Chinese Religions Bulletin 8 (Fall 1980), 5-19. The important connection between the stars and Buddhist practice in China was established as early as the Han Dynasty when a text for the worship of celestial phenomena, which also included dhārāṇī, was translated, see Chou Yi-liang, 242.
such as Śubrākarasimha and Amoghavajra engaged in astronomical studies at the Tang court, and South Asians were employed as court-appointed astrologers, representing an acknowledgement of the superiority of South Asian astronomical sciences to the native practices of China.257 Given the connection between court-sponsored ritual and astrology, the promotion of the worship of Tejaprabha may have been an attempt to provide a means to place astrological phenomena under a Buddhist banner and further secure the position of esoteric ritual at the court in the service of the state as a counterpart to Daoist ritual that also received the backing of several Tang emperors.

The earliest image of Tejaprabha noted in classical literary sources is ascribed to the famous Tang painter Wu Daozi 吳道子, who was active in the eighth century.258 A number of other classical literary references to painted and sculpted images of Tejaprabha in temples from the Five Dynasties and Song periods are found in Guo Ruoxu’s Tuhua jianwenzhi (TJZ) and Huang

257 See Schafer (1977), 11.

258 An image of Tejaprabha is listed among the works attributed to Wu Daozi in the Xuanhe Huapu, fascicle 2. Since a large number of works are attributed to Wu Daozi in this text Alexander Soper held this attribution to be suspect; see Alexander C. Soper, "Hsiang-kuossu, an Imperial Temple in Northern Sung," Journal of the Oriental Society 68 (1948: 19-45), 43 n. 100.
Over a dozen extant images of Tejaprabha are known from locations scattered around China dating from the late tenth to fourteenth centuries. Most of these images are now found outside of China, in American and European collections. The most impressive of these include two large murals dating to the Yuan and Ming Dynasties, which were removed from the Lower Guangsheng temple, Hongdong county, Shanxi Province, and are now located in the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art and the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Several other murals depicting

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259 On literary sources of images of Tejaprabha, see Meng Sihui, 118-121. Painted images are ascribed to three different painters in the Tuhua jianwenzhi (TJZ). The painter Gaoyi 高益 painted a mural of Tejaprabha in one of the corridors of the famous Xiangguosi 相国寺 in the Song capital of Kaifeng. Also in the same temple, Cui Bo 崔白 is credited with a mural of Tejaprabha in the eastern corridor of the temple; see TJZ, fascicle 4. Sun Zhiwei 孙知微 painted a mural of Tejaprabha in the Shouningyuan 寿宁院 temple in Chengdu, TJZ, fascicle 3. Two sculpted images located in Chengdu dating to the Former Shu period are noted in the nengge zhongpin wuren 能格中品五人 section of the YZMHL. One image was located in an unspecified location in the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺 temple and made by the sculptor Xu Hou 许候. This work could possibly have been located in the Tejaprabha Precinct within the same temple. Another image was found in the Hall of the Heavenly Kings at the Shengshousi 圣寿寺 and was made by the sculptor Yong Zhenben 雍中本. Both images were painted by Yang Yuanzhen 杨元真.

260 The iconography and details of thirteen known painted and printed examples of images of Tejaprabha from China are discussed by Meng Sihui, 101-117. However, she doesn’t include the three dimensional imagery of Tejaprabha found in Sichuan.

261 The mural in the Nelson-Atkins museum and a printed image of Tejaprabha recovered from a clay image of Śākyamuni located on the second floor of the wooden Śākyamuni Pagoda in Yingxian, Shanxi are the subjects of an article by Marilyn Gridley, “Images of Tejaprabha’s Paradise.” Both murals are also discussed in Michele Baldwin, “Monumental Wall Paintings,” Artibus Asiae 54, no.3/4 (1994), 241-67.
Tejaprabha that are still in China are found in the Dunhuang area. Two painted cloth banners of this subject were taken from the cache of materials in cave seventeen at the Mogao caves, Dunhuang, by Stein and Pelliot, and another cloth painting was recovered from the ruins of Khara-Khoto by the Russian explorer P. K. Kozlov in the early part of the last century. The most outstanding example among these is a banner dated 897 in the British Museum, which provides the earliest dated extant image of Tejaprabha. Wood block prints with images of Tejaprabha have been found in pagodas in Ningxia, Shanxi, and Zhejiang. Extant three-dimensional images are less

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262 One mural dated to the Late Tang period is located on the north side of the west wall of the entrance corridor of the fore chamber of cave 35 at the Yulin caves. Another is found at the Subeiwugemiao grotto, cave 1, and dated to the Xisha period. A third is located at the Mogao caves in the entrance corridor of cave 61 and dated to the Yuan Dynasty. Roderick Whitfield suggests that the later mural may date to the Northern Song, see Whitfield, vol. 1 (1982), 323. A badly damaged mural on the opposite wall is believed by Meng Sihui to also represent Tejaprabha; see Meng Sihui, 111.

263 The two banners from cave 17 are located in London and Paris: Stein painting number OA 1919,1-1,0.31, in the British Museum, and P.3995 in the Paris Library. The Kharkhoto banner is located in The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg and dates to the Xixia period. Two paintings on cloth of Tejaprabha that are also attributed to the Xisha were found in the Hongfo pagoda, Helan county Ningxia. See Ningxia Huizu zizhiwenwu guanli weiyuanhui bangongshi 宁夏回族自治区文物管理局办公室 and Helan xian wenhua ju 贺兰县文物局, “Ningxia Helan xian hongfota qingli jianbao 宁夏贺兰县宏佛塔清理简报,” WW 8 (1991): 1-13. Another painted image of Tejaprabha is in the Boston Museum of Fine Art and is dated to the Ming Dynasty. Related Dunhuang manuscripts include: P. 2149 and P. 2382. See Sorenson (1991/1992), 329 n.74.

264 This painting is reproduced in Whitfield, vol. 1 (1982), 323-4, plate 27.

265 A dhāranī print with Sanskrit text, dated 1005 and printed in Hangzhou, was recovered from the Ruiguang temple pagoda, Suzhou, see Su Bai (1999), 194. Another print of Tejaprabha was found sealed in an image of Śākyamuni that was placed in the famous wooden Śākyamuni pagoda of Yingxian county, Shanxi; see Gridely (1998-99), 10-13.
common, and the only examples that I am aware of are found in Sichuan.\footnote{Two images of Tejaprabha are located at the Fowan. According to Hu Wenhe, three others are found at the Xiyan (Yuhegou) site, Zizhong, in niches 13, 27 and 90, see Hu Wenhe (1994), 50. In addition to these images a stele at the former Fohuisi temple, Dazu, dated 1090 records a list of niches at the Shizhuanshan that included a niche described as featuring “Tejaprabha Buddha and the eleven planets,” MWL, 326-327. Unfortunately, although several of the other niches listed in the stele are still extant at Shizhuanshan, this niche is not.} Two of these are found at the Fowan in niches number 39 (Figure 3.54) and 169 (Figure 3.55), which are dated respectively to the tenth and twelfth centuries.

Tejaprabha Buddha is understood to be an emanation form of Śākyamuni and the embodiment of a dhāraṇī that has the power to subdue the baleful influence of celestial phenomenon on human fate. The name Tejaprabha, “Blazing radiance,” connotes the sum effulgence of the light
Figure 3.55: Niche 169, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
produced by celestial phenomenon, which is manifested as flaming rays of light emitted from each of his pores to illuminate the firmament.  

Tejaprabha is given the place of a Buddhist celestial monarch who presides over the five planets, twenty-eight lunar mansions, twelve constellations of the ecliptic (western zodiac), and other celestial bodies. Two very brief sūtras were translated in the Tang Dynasty concerning Tejaprabha. Neither provide much background information on the Buddha, but both emphasize the power of the dhārani identified with Tejaprabha to protect a state by counteracting the evil influence caused by maligned stars and other negative celestial portents. Successful performance of the rites described in these sūtras will not only bring bountiful blessings and remove the bad influence of malignant celestial events on the course of human events, but it will also transfer those negative influences to enemies of the state. Different from the dhārani sūtras previously discussed, these scriptures make no reference to fostering enlightenment, spiritual awareness, or promises of birth in a Pure Land, but instead are solely concerned with the temporal world and its relation to the nighttime sky.

The appearance of Tejaprabha in the Buddhist pantheon in the eighth century needs to be understood in the backdrop of the importance placed on astrology at the Tang court. The interpretation of celestial phenomena was an important part of Chinese state craft from ancient times, and images of deities representing celestial bodies are known since at least the Han Dynasty. Built upon preexisting concepts, the symbolism of Tejaprabha as

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267 Meng Sihui, 124; Dasheng miao jixiang pusa shuo chumie jiaoling falun 大圣妙吉祥菩萨除灭教令法轮, T. 19. 966.343.
the majestic lord of the cosmos and master of prognostication situates astrological phenomena within a Buddhist context. The symbolism of Tejaprabha as a lord of the cosmos also bears relation to the medieval concept of the power and person of the emperor signifying the correspondence of the state and the cosmos.\(^{268}\)

The connection between Tejaprabha and the state is made clear in the chief scripture concerning Tejaprabha, which was translated by Amoghavajra in the eighth century and titled the *Sūtra of the Buddha’s Sermon on the Mighty and Virtuous, Tejaprabha [Buddha]’s Auspicious Dhārāṇī that Removes Difficulties*.\(^{269}\) The sūtra is taught by Śākyamuni in the Palace of the Heaven of Purity to the gods of the firmament who form the basic retinue of Tejaprabha in art. The focus of the scripture is a dhārāṇī taught in the past by the Tathāgata Pālarāja that removes the difficulties and calamities brought on by evil celestial portents. In the sūtra the situations in which the dhārāṇi should be invoked are explained by Śākyamuni:

“If the residence of a king and all his various ministers as well as to the borders of the country that suffer from the forceful arrival of the five planets, eclipses, comets, and malign stars that shine on one’s

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\(^{268}\) In her study of Tejaprabha imagery in Shanxi from the Liao and Yuan dynasties, Marilyn Gridley makes the argument that Tejaprabha was symbolic of a Buddhist Universal King (Cakravartin) and that his depiction in images from Shanxi could have been used to exalt the emperors Xingzong of the Liao and Kublai Khan of the Yuan, as their spiritual counter part. See Gridley (1998-99), 11-13.

\(^{269}\) *Fo shuo chishengguang da weide xiaomie jixiang tuoluoni jing* 佛说炽盛光大威德消灭吉祥陀罗尼经, T.19.963. Another sūtra translated in the Tang is called “The Sūtra of the Buddha’s Sermon on the Dhārāṇī of the Mighty and Virtuous Golden Cakra Buddha Tejaprabha Tathāgata, (which) Rids All Difficulties.(Fo shuo da weide jinlun foding Chishengguang rulai xiaochu yiqie mienan tuoluoni jing 佛说大威德金轮佛顶炽盛光如来消除一切灭难陀罗尼经), T. 19.964. The translator of this sūtra is not known. This sūtra follows the same format as the previous text only that it is taught to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and that the Buddha Śākyamuni received it in the distant past from a Tathāgata named Pālavṛksarāja. The rest of the sūtra is essentially the same as T.19.963.
destiny mansion and star positions or shine on the constellation of the highest lord so as to place the country and the household into opposing [stellar] positions. At the time of their forceful arrival, some will retreat, others will draw near to cause all sorts of hindrances and dangers. In a pure and clean place erect an altar and recite this dhāraṇi 108 times or a thousand times. If for one, two, three, up to seven days according to this practice adorn the altar until [it is such that] this dhāraṇi is sustained and recited in the heart then all the calamities will be eradicated and will not be able to harm you. If a flaming comet enters the Southern Dipper and the kingdom and the household are placed in opposing [stellar] positions, resulting in all sorts of hindrances and dangers, in front of an image of a wrathful (krodha) [deity] paint the form of a destroyer (śatru) and wholeheartedly recite this dhāraṇi and all calamities will be removed and transferred to disobedient kings and rebellious people [within your kingdom].”

After giving the dhāraṇi, composed of some seventy characters, Śākyamuni then goes on to explain further benefits and conditions under which the dhāraṇi, could be recited to remove calamities:

“This dhāraṇi, is propagated by all Tathāgatas. If a monk, nun, a noble man or woman should receive and recite this dhāraṇi, they will be able to achieve eighty-thousand kinds of auspicious matters, and be able to eliminate eighty-thousand kinds of inauspicious matters. If a king, his great ministers and their dependents, and all his subjects suffer from the five planets, Rāhu, Ketu, comets or maligned stars, which forcefully arrive and place the constellation of the highest lord or that of the household into opposing [stellar] positions. Those celestial mansions that will give rise to calamities, or Saturn’s forceful arrival or some that draw near or retreat, and enemies of previous lifes desiring to bring harm and cause various unanticipated malicious events, disputes, loathsome prayers, and curses. To those that suffer these calamities and difficulties is cause to make all sentient beings rely on the method [of this dhāraṇi,] and sustain [it]. All calamities and difficulties will be eliminated and will not be able to do harm and will be transformed into blessings. Today I have taught this dhāraṇi of which its incomprehensible merits can not be compared. Secretly receive and sustain it and do not unduly disseminate it.” At that time

270 T.19.963.337c.
the Tathāgata said to the assembly, “If the countries borders are not peaceful and calamities arise request that in a pure and clean [place] among the multitude according to [established] methods erect an altar (bodhimandala) and place on it a Buddha image, demarcate the space to protect it [from evil]. Make offerings of incense, flowers, lamps, and candles as one desires. [Doing this] will cause all sentient beings to reap immeasurable wealth and the calamities will be eliminated.”

Although the sūtra does mention the establishment of an altar and the placement of a Buddha image, it does not provide any details on how the image should be depicted nor is the depicted Buddha referred to as Tejaprabha. Other scriptures also provide little details for Tejaprabha’s appearance except to explain that he radiates blazing light. However, imagery of Tejaprabha from the earliest examples indicates that there were well established conventions for his representation in art. Tejaprabha is usually depicted seated in padmāsana, sometimes on an ox-drawn cart or on a more conventional lotus dais. In his hands he typically holds a golden wheel (suvarṇa cakra), an ancient Indic solar symbol representing cosmic order that was incorporated into Buddhism as a symbol of the Dharma. The cakra is also considered a weapon and the primary symbol of a Buddhist universal monarch (cakravartin). All of these aspects of the cakra’s symbolism are relevant to Tejaprabha’s position as celestial monarch insuring the constant order of the cosmos for the Buddhist cause. Besides the cakra the primary means of identifying Tejaprabha is the unique retinue that accompanies him.

\textsuperscript{271} T.19.963.338a.

\textsuperscript{272} The only other description of Tejaprabha is given in T.19.966.342. Here he is described as having his hands in the same position as Śākyamuni and wearing a five Buddha crown. The latter doesn’t occur in known examples of Tejaprabha. The usual attribute of Tejaprabha, the cakra, is not specifically identified as an attribute of Tejaprabha in texts, but only inferred from his title.
This retinue typically includes a group of nine to eleven figures known as the Nine Luminaries (Jiuyao 九曜) or Navagraha, which represent anthropomorphized forms of the five planets, sun, moon, comets, and eclipses. Also often included in Tejaprabha’s retinue, but typically in a more simplified manner as symbols or without individual characteristics, are the twenty-eight constellations (Nakṣatras) and twelve signs of the zodiac. The latter are often represented by symbols of the zodiac enclosed in roundels as opposed to the Nine Luminaries and twenty-eight constellations that appear in anthropomorphized form.

In her study of the iconography of Tejaprabha, Meng Sihui has assigned imagery of Tejaprabha into three compositional types: carriage procession (chengche xunxing 乘车巡行), mandalic, and Pure Land transformation. The latter two compositional types overlap and are not readily distinguishable since they follow established conventions of depicting Buddhas as part of a teaching assembly in somewhat more formalized compositions. The type she defines as a carriage processional is a more unique type that depicts Tejaprabha seated in a cart drawn by an ox and surround by the Navagraha as if making a circuit of the sky. The cart is not mentioned in scriptures concerning Tejaprabha, nor is there any specific explanation of Tejaprabha as

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273 The planets were a popular subject in art from the Tang. A list of works of this subject in the Xuanhe huapu are provided by Edward Schaffer (1977), 279-280.

274 Meng Sihui, 132-142.

275 According to Meng Sihui, the distinguishing characteristic between the two is that the Pure Land transformation type includes a teaching assembly with attendant bodhisattvas in addition to the standard celestial retinue. It should be pointed out although some imagery of Tejaprabha follows conventions for Pure Land imagery of Amitābha and other Buddhas, there is no mention or association of Tejaprabha with a conventional Pure Land or paradise.
leader of the celestial bodies on their march through the sky. Meng Sihui believes that this cart and its related symbolism were incorporated into the iconography of Tejaprabha from earlier indigenous Chinese symbolism of a sky chariot. This symbolism, she argues, is based on the constellation of Ursus Major (beidou 北斗), which had central importance in Chinese astrology and was understood to represent a chariot driven by a divine emperor. Her supporting evidence makes her argument persuasive and is also supported by the association of Tejaprabha with the Northern Dipper in a ritual manual for constructing a mandala for propitiating the seven stars that make up the Northern Dipper Constellation. The central deity of this maṇḍala is not specifically called Tejaprabha, but called the Suvarṇa Cakra (Golden Wheel) Kimono, which could be understood as another name for Tejaprabha.

The two images of Tejaprabha at the Fowan would fall into the “mandalic” compositional type outlined by Meng Sihui since they do not include the ox cart or attendant bodhisattvas. Niche 39 is a small niche located on the east-facing side of the far south end of the Fowan (Figure 3.56). An inscription located in the niche is dated 922 and identifies the subject

276 Meng Sihui, 133-136. According to Edward Schafer (1977), 48, the Greeks also believed that Ursas Major, the Northern Dipper, represented a carriage. The Northern Dipper is also important in Daoism and is associated with the god Tayi 太乙, who was sometimes also referred to as the supreme emperor of heaven, and the goddess Duomu 多母. See Stephen Little, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2000), 242, 283.

matter and the donors of the niche. Tejaprabha is depicted seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus pedestal with a stylized cloud pattern base. In his lap the Buddha holds an eight-spoked wheel with both hands (Figure 3.54). The oversized head of the image and simplified treatment of the garments that cover the figure exemplify one of the larger trends in the figurative sculpture of the Five Dynasties period at the site. The stylized coiffure of the Buddha is depicted with a wavy horizontal pattern, almost like a turban, and without the repeating raised “snail” curls typically used to represent the hair of the Buddha. This type of coiffure occurs on several Buddha images on the south

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278 See Appendix B, number 1.11. Unfortunately the inscription is no longer completely legible, but it indicates that it was offered by multiple donors and that a relatively large number of people were gathered to celebrate its completion. The number of names mentioned in the donor inscription may be indicative that the creation of the niche, despite its relatively small size, may have had some sort of local political or social significance. Two of the names mentioned in the inscription are identified as the donors of niche 37, directly adjacent to the niche 39 and is dated eighteen years later. See Appendix B, number 1.10.
end of the Fowan that date to the Five Dynasties period. Attending the Buddha are seven small figures represented in high relief on the side walls of the niche. Several of the figures are badly damaged, and others have been completely destroyed. These figures would have composed a standard group of nine representing the Nine Luminaries.

The Nine Luminaries (Navagraha) are described in *Fantian huoluo jiuyao* as anthropomorphized forms of the five planets (*wuxing* 五星), sun, moon, eclipses, and comets. Literary references to icons of these stars and planetoids indicate that from the Tang Dynasty they were a popular subject in art both with and independent of Tejaprabha. In scriptures, each of the five planets are distinguished by their demeanor and by wearing different types of hats with animal heads. Venus (*jinxing* 金星) wears a bird hat and is typically shown as a female musician holding a pipa (琵琶) or lute. Mars (*huoxing* 火星) appears as a demonic martial figure, often with four arms, dressed in military regalia and wearing a donkey hat. Saturn (*tuxing* 土星) takes the form of Brahmin ascetic and wears an ox hat. Mercury (*shuixing* 水星) wears a monkey hat and is shown as a female scribe holding a

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279 T.21.1311.459-62 (*Fantian huoluo jiuyao* 梵天火罗九曜), by an unknown translator. The planets are also described in the *Qiyao rang mie jue* 七曜攘灭诀 (T.19.1308.426-7), which was translated by the South Asian Brahmin Jinjutu 俱吠陀. In the latter text they are described as having animal vehicles (*vāhanas*) or appear with animal heads or non-human bodies. The planets are also the focus of the *Qiyao xingchen biexingfa* 七曜星辰别行法 (T.21.1309), which was translated by Yixing. For an excellent study of South Asian astral divinities, see Stephen Markel, *Origins of Indian Planetary Deities* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edward Mellon, 1995). According to Markel the veneration of the seven planets was inspired from Hellenistic astronomical knowledge which filtered its way into India. The group of nine did not become codified until around ca.600 with the addition of Ketu. Markel, 20.
brush and paper. Jupiter (muxing 木星) is depicted as a benign figure wearing a boars-head crown and holding a bouquet of flowers. The attributions of these figures correspond to western astrology and may have been introduced to China through Sogdiana.\textsuperscript{280} The other four members of the group include Rāhu (luohu 罗虎), the personification of eclipses, and Ketu (jidu 计都), the personification of comets, who are shown as demonic figures; and the lunar and solar deities, who hold orbs. By the early Song Dynasty two other luminaries of Chinese origin, Ziqi 紫气 and Yuebo 月孛, respectively representing the superfluous vapors of Jupiter and Saturn, were added to make a group of eleven.\textsuperscript{281}

Several of the figures in niche 39 can be identified by their characteristic attributes. On the right wall are five figures in three tiers. The upper-most figure may be identified as the lunar goddess, since the figure is depicted as a female holding an orb. Below the lunar goddess, the outer figure holds a brush and inkwell indicating that it represents Mercury, the scribe. Next to Mercury is a female figure who holds a lute, the attribute of Venus. On the bottom, the outer figure has a pointed beard indicating that it represents the god Saturn, who is usually depicted as an old man or mendicant with a long beard. The inner figure on the bottom is badly eroded and can not be identified. Opposite on the left side of the niche, the upper-most figure holds an orb and undoubtedly represents the male solar deity to compliment the lunar deity on the left side of the niche. All that remains of

\textsuperscript{280} Little, 137.

\textsuperscript{281} Soper (1948), 44. These two deities are also given in the Daoist version of the Nine Luminaries included in the Daoist canon; see Meng Sihui, 128.
the other figures on this side of the niche is a portion of a standing figure at the bottom. This figure is depicted in martial regalia, indicating that it is intended to represent either Mars or one of the dark stars.

Niche 169, located on the northern end of the Fowan beside the large cave of the five-hundred arhats (number 168), has a more complicated iconography (Figure 3.57). A thin wall of stone that separated this niche from cave 168 has collapsed and been repaired with stone masonry work. There is no extant inscription in niche 169; however, cave 168 has several dated inscriptions to the Xuanhe reign era (1119-1125), and the style of the central Buddha in niche 169 bears some similarity to the Maitreya Buddha in niche 176 dated to 1126, suggesting that this niche dates to the 1120s. Since the five-hundred arhats are associated with mount Tiantai 天台 in Zhejiang Province, and Tejaprabha was an important deity propitiated by the Tiantai sect, the two
niches may have been created at about the same time. Tejaprabha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus pedestal (Figure 3.55). On his lap is a seven-spoked cakra held with his left hand, while the right hand (partially broken) is held up to the chest and makes a teaching gesture. Behind the Buddha is a large ovoid aureole and the stylized branches of a tree in low relief. To the sides and front of the Buddha are eleven figures, which represent a Chinese elaboration of the original nine Luminaries. The inclusion of two additional figures, Ziqi and Yuebo, to the standard group of nine represents a change in the iconography from niche 39. Also unlike the images in niche 39, these figures are not depicted with their characteristic attributes; instead they appear more as generic official types who hold jade tablets of office. Since the figures are not shown with their characteristic attributes, and the heads of all most all the figures are damaged or completely broken off, only one or two figures can be positively identified. One figure that can be identified is located on the bottom row on the right side of the small altar directly below the Buddha. This figure is depicted leaning over and appears to be making an offering in an incense burner on the alter. The head of the figure has been broken off, but the

282 In the Northern Song Dynasty a manual concerning the worship of Tejaprabha was written by the Tiandai master Zunshi 遵式 (964-1032) called the Rite of Recitation for the Altar [of the Buddha of] Blazing Radiance (Chisheng kuang dao-chang niansong yi 炽盛光道场念诵仪), T.46.951.978; see Daniel Stevenson, “Protocols of Power: Tz’u-yun Tsu-shih (964-1032) and Tien-t’ai Lay Buddhist Ritual in the Sung,” in Buddhism in the Sung, eds. Peter Gregory and Daniel A. Getz Jr., 340-408 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 373. The worship of Tejaprabha was introduced to Japan by the Tendai prelate Enin 圆仁 in the mid 9th century; see Soper (1948), 42.

283 The head is a recent replacement carved by a local sculptor and appears to have been modeled on the Tejaprabha image in niche 39.
pointed end of a long beard is still visible, suggesting that the figure represents Saturn. In most of the extant images of Tejaprabha, Saturn is depicted in front of the Buddha, often holding an incense burner and/or leading the ox that pulls the Buddha’s cart. The placement of Saturn in front of Tejaprabha may be related to the importance given to Saturn in astrology.\(^{284}\) Opposite Saturn, on the left side of the altar, the outer figure appears to wear a more elaborate garment with shoulder guards, which might indicate that it represents the martial planet Mars. The others figures are less readily identifiable. The inclusion of eleven figures is significant in that it shows the development of the iconography that includes two additional Chinese celestial figures, which is first noted in the latter half of the eleventh century.\(^{285}\)

In addition to the eleven figures representing the Nine Luminaries on the back wall of the niche, the sides of the niche contain several additional sets of figures. The southern wall of the niche has collapsed, but the northern wall is still intact. On the north side are five sets of figures (Figure 3.58). The lower three sets appear to be donor images with a group males on top, dressed in official outfits, and a female donor and her attendants in the middle. Above the donor images on the upper sides of the niche are two sets of figures in clouds. The upper cloud contains fourteen badly damaged standing figures. These figures appear to be generic civil official (wenguan 文官) types that hold jade seals of office. On the opposite wall of the niche, which has collapsed, the

\(^{284}\) In Indic cosmology Saturn is considered the most influential planet next to the sun god and is regarded to be baleful in his astrological influence. See Markel. 50.

\(^{285}\) Soper (1948), 44.
remnants of a duplicate group of figures are still visible, indicating that the two clouds formed a complimentary pair that represented the twenty-eight lunar mansions (*nakṣatras*).\(^{286}\) Below the upper cloud on the north wall the lower cloud is more severely damaged and appears to contain five or six figures. Since the twelve symbols of the zodiac are a standard part of many images of Tejaprabha, it is reasonable to assume that figures on this cloud, together with a complimentary group on the south wall that is no longer extant, would have formed the twelve symbols of the Zodiac.

The two images of Tejaprabha at the Fowan provide evidence of the continued worship of Tejaprabha from the Tang through the early Song Dynasty. Worship of Tejaprabha in the area may have been introduced in the Late Tang when the court of emperor Xizong, and earlier Xuanzang, fled to Chengdu. Both

\(^{286}\) The lunar mansions are the constellations that the moon transverses on its circuit of the nighttime sky.
Tejaprabha niches were carved during times of uncertainty. The smaller niche, number 39, dates to the end of the Former Shu and the larger niche was carved sometime in the early twelfth century, when the Song was engaged in an extended war with the Jin.

Although scholars have recently given more attention to the cult of Tejaprabha in China, the Fowan images of this deity have been largely overlooked. In this section I have tried to further provide the scriptural details that form the basis of the cult of Tejaprabha. The analysis of the iconography of the niches in this section provides a more detailed identification of the subsidiary figures than previously offered. In the next section I will discuss a female esoteric deity, Māricī, who is also associated with light and the Northern Dipper.

3.10 Imagery of Māricī, “the Goddess of the Dawn”

The goddess Māricidevi (Molizhitian 摩利支天) is another important esoteric divinity associated with celestial phenomena. Māricī is a female bodhisattva emanation of the “Great Sun” Buddha Mahāvairocana (Dari rulai 大日如来, Piluzhena 毗卢遮那) and associated with light as the personification of the dawn.²⁸⁷ Her name is a derivation of the word “marici” मरॊचि, meaning ray or speck of light, and is connected with the appearance of rays of light and effulgence that precede the appearance of the sun above the horizon in the

²⁸⁷ Māricī represents an amalgamation of several early Hindu deities, such as the Marhuts and Indra who possessed similar powers later ascribed to Māricī. See David A. Hall, “Martial Aspects of the Buddhist Māricī in 6th century China,” Taisho daigaku sogo bukkyo kenkyujo nenpo 11 (1989): 148.
morning sky. As the goddess of the dawn she is described as having a complexion of brilliant gold similar to that of the early morning sun and as being surrounded by a blazing aureole of light. In the principle scripture regarding the worship of Mārācī she is described as having “great supernatural power” that allows her to travel though the sky undetected by men and gods, evade capture, and remain free from condemnation and punishment. The same abilities are promised to those who know her name and keep it constantly in mind:

...men cannot perceive or recognize you, neither can they catch, bind, or hurt you. Moreover people cannot deceive you. Your property will not be taken and you will not be condemned or punished.

Similar to other esoteric divinities already discussed, Mārācī is also associated with a powerful dhāraṇī. Those that recite her dhāraṇī are vouchsafed a number of mundane protective benefits, which include protecting

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288 On the etymology of Mārācī’s name, see Hall (1989): 151 n. 19.

289 Fo shuo da Molizhi pusa jing 佛说大摩利支菩萨经 (The Buddha’s Sermon on the Sūtra of the great bodhisattva Mārācī), T.21.1257.269a, 265c.

290 Fo shuo Molizhitian jing 佛说摩利支天经 (The Buddha’s Sermon on the Sūtra of the Goddess Mārācī), T.21.1255.260b, translated by Amoghavajra. This passage has been translation by E. Dale Saunders, Mudrā a Study of the Symbolic Gestures in Japanese Buddhist Sculpture (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1960), 117-8. Similar passages are found in other scriptures dealing with Mārācī such as the Fo shuo Molizhitian tuoluoni zhou jing 佛说摩利支天陀罗尼咒经 (The Buddha’s Sermon on the Sūtra of for Invoking the Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Mārācī), T.21.1256.261c, by an unknown translator. There are a number of texts concerning the worship of Mārācī. These include a short ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra entitled Molizhi pusa lue niansong fa 摩利支菩萨略念诵, T.21.1258, and a longer version of the Mārācī sūtra entitled the Fo shuo da Molizhi pusa jing 佛说大摩利支菩萨经, T.21.1257, which was translated by Tianxicai 天息灭 in the Song Dynasty. Mārācī is also highlighted in fascicle eleven of the Tuoluoni ji jing 陀罗尼集经, T.18.901.869-874.


292 A translation of her principle dhāraṇī is given in Hall, 152-3.
rulers from adversity, and protecting devotees from thieves, trouble while traveling, getting lost in the wilderness, water, fire, armies, demons, poison, wild beasts, poisonous insects, and malicious and evil persons.\textsuperscript{293} Carrying a copy of the \textit{dhārāṇi} or image of the goddess as an amulet will protect the wearing from harm and will cause all forms of evil that one encounters to “retreat and scatter and not dare to attack you.”\textsuperscript{294} Māricī also provides protection against disease and the power to “pass [undetected] through all military positions and [the camps of] malicious bandits, and stop all weapons” from harming the reciter of the \textit{dhāraṇi} if done in the proscribed manner.\textsuperscript{295}

Extant depictions of Māricī from Tang and Song times are relatively rare, but are noted in Chinese art historical documents.\textsuperscript{296} Later depictions of the goddess are more numerous, especially after the fourteenth century when Māricī was also worshipped by Daoist in a variant form known as the Heavenly Empress (Tianhou 天后) or Duomu 多母, the Dipper Mother.\textsuperscript{297} Māricī is depicted in two images at Beishan that date to the Southern Song Dynasty.

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\textsuperscript{293} T.1255.260c.

\textsuperscript{294} T.1256.262a.

\textsuperscript{295} T.1256.262a; Hall, 156, 158.

\textsuperscript{296} Amoghavajra reportedly gave a sandalwood image of Māricī to Emperor Daizong when he ascended the throne in 762; see Weinstein, 77. In the \textit{Xuanhe huapu} the artists who painted this subject include Zhang Sengyou 张僧繇, Lu Lengjia 卢楞伽, Cao Chongyuan 曹仲元, and Lu Tanwei 陆探微. See Marsha Weidner (1994), 451. However, there is no mention of images of Māricī in the \textit{Yizhou minghua lu}. Although a number of scriptures related to Māricī have been found at Dunhuang only two paintings feature her image; see Sorensen (1991/92), 318. An image of Māricī is included in the Chang Shengwen's \textit{Long Scroll of Buddhist Images}, Li Lin-t'san number 107; and number 78 in Chapin and Soper (1971), 110-1.

\textsuperscript{297} On the Daoist aspect of Māricī, see Stephen Little, 247, 283.
and may represent the earliest extant Chinese sculptural representations of the goddess. One of these images is located in niche 130 at the Fowan (Figure 3.59), and the other in niche 33 (Figure 3.60) on the second floor of the Duobaota pagoda. In both niches Mārici is depicted with eight arms and three heads standing on a stylized chariot pulled by two diminutive elephant-like boars or sows.\footnote{In textual descriptions, these are said to be seven sows, which represent the seven stars of the Big Dipper constellation (Ursa Major). The boars/sows in the Fowan image of Mārici have long snouts like elephants, which they may have been intended to portray. Elephants may have been used as a play on words since the Chinese word elephant “xiang” 象 also has a meaning of “form or appearance;” this may be an inference to the illusionary quality ascribed to the powers of Mārici.}

A related image, which may be contemporaneous with the Beishan images of Mārici, is found in the south-facing niche at the base of the Baoenta 宝恩塔 Pagoda at Luzhou (Figure 3.60). In that niche Mārici is also depicted as a standing eight-armed goddess, but her image is less well preserved than the Beishan images.

Mārici’s appearance is described in several texts describing two-, six-, and eight-armed forms of the goddess.\footnote{The two-armed form of the goddess is described in T.21.1255.261b, where Mārici is described as having the appearance of a heavenly maiden standing or seated on a lotus and wearing various adornments. Her left hand holds a fan and her right hand is held in varada mudrā.}
The eight-armed form of the goddess is described in the *Fo shuo Damolizhi pusa jing* 佛说大摩利支菩萨经 translated by Tianxicai 天息灭 in the Northern Song Dynasty, as part of the visualization (guanxiang 观想) of Mārici.\footnote{T.21.1257. This scripture also provides descriptions of two- and six-armed forms, which are variants of the eight-armed form of the goddess.}

“...her color is that of the golden sand of Jambu or like the color of the morning sun. On top of her head is a treasure pagoda and she wears red heavenly garments, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and all kinds of...
Figure 3.59: Niche 130, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
splendid ornaments. She has eight arms and three faces with three eyes. Her lips are [white] like mandārava flowers and emit extremely brilliant light. The Buddha Vairocana is in the interior of the treasure pagoda. She wears a wreath of [red] flowers from the aśoka tree. Her left hands hold a pāśa, a bow, a branch of an aśoka tree with flowers, and a piece of thread. The right hands hold a vajra, a needle, a hook, and an arrow. The front face is benevolent and has a slight smile. It is has a deep yellow color or the color of gold. The eyes are elongated and the lips are red. It expresses great resolve. The left face has the appearance of a swine that is angry and wicked with protruding tusks and a tongue, and knit eyebrows, which cause people to become afraid. The right face is deep red like a lotus flower and exudes the utmost brilliance, with the compassionate and kind face of a young girl.

Figure 3.60: Niche 33, Duobaota. Reproduced from DSDS, vol.1, 22, pl. 22.

Figure 3.61: South facing niche at the base of the Baoenta, Luzhou. Photo by author, 2001.

301 An Aśoka tree (wuyoushu 无忧树) is the type of tree under which Śākyamuni was born.

302 The function of the needle and thread is given in other passages to “sew shut the eyes and mouths of malicious people,” T.21.1257.269c.24.

303 T.21.1257.284b-c. (fascicle 7), three other similar descriptions are found in fascicle 1 (265c), fascicle 3 (269a-b), fascicle 4 (272c-273a). The latter description varies in that Mārici also holds six nāgas (serpents).
The two images of Mārici represent a variant form of this iconography. In niche 130 the upper left hand holds a flaming eight-spoked cakra, the middle right hand holds a bow, and the lower hand holds a shield decorated with a demon-headed serpent (Figure 3.62). A sword is held in the upper right hand, and an arrow is held in the middle right hand to correspond to the bow in the opposite hand. The lower right hand holds the shaft of a halberd. The front primary hands are held in front; the right hand is placed near the navel with the palm turned inward and the thumb pinching the index finger, and the left hand is held in front of the chest with the index finger pointing up (Figure 3.63). The eight hands in the Duobaota image are arranged in the same manner, except that the mudrās of the two primary hands are switched. The sword, halberd, shield, and cakra are not described as attributes of the goddess in Chinese textual sources, but may be intended to represent the martial aspect of the goddess. The mudrā made by the upper right hand in niche 130 may be intended to represent the mudrā of extermination (qikeyin
Figure 3.63: Detail, primary image, niche 130, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001
which is given in one description of the eight-armed form of Mārici. The other mudrā is not found in scriptural accounts of the deity, but may possibly represent a variation of a hand gesture called the “mudrā of hidden shapes,” which is to be formed by the practitioner when visualizing being hidden within the heart of Mārici.

The face and heads of the image of Mārici in niche 130 also do not correspond directly to the textual descriptions of the goddess. The third eye is not depicted, and the two side faces are represented as small cherub-like human faces behind the ears of the central primary head. The treasure pagoda described as appearing on the head of the goddess is depicted directly above Mārici’s head, emerging from behind the goddesses’ circular body aureole. The treasure pagoda is depicted as a three-story Han style tower with two small figures represented on the upper two levels, one of which is undoubtedly intended to represent Vairocana, her spiritual source. On the sides of the pagoda flowering Aśoka branches are depicted, which follows from the textual descriptions of the goddess.

The most striking feature of the depiction of Mārici in niche 130 is the inclusion of eight multi-armed attendants arranged in two rows of two on the lateral side walls of the niche. These figures are depicted as powerful demonic types wielding weapons in support of Mārici. On the right side, the lower outermost figure has six arms and three heads (Figure 3.64). The two side heads appear like those on the central image as small cherub-like female faces with the right face having a small pair of fangs. The upper hands hold a

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vajra-tipped mace and a pāśa, while the lower hands hold a sword and a scarf that is attached to the figure’s waist. An axe (paraśu) is held across the chest by the two primary hands, which are clasped at the center of the chest. To the left of this figure, the inner figure is depicted with four arms and a single large head with a pointed goatee. His back right hand forms the mudrā of extermination with the index finger pointed outward, and the opposite hand holds an object that looks like a clam shell. The front right hand is held in front of the left shoulder and holds a vajra-tipped mace, and the left hand holds a spear. Directly above this figure, the inner upper figure on the north wall has six arms and three heads (Figure 3.65). The upper rear arms hold a
*khakkhara* and mace carved like a human skull, while the lower hands hold a sword and a circular shield with a snarling *taotie* 鬼面具.

The primary left arm is held out horizontally across the chest and is held at the wrist by the primary right hand. A large arrow is held in the deity’s primary left hand. The outer upper figure has four arms and a snarling demonic face (Figure 3.66). The upper rear arms hold a bamboo cane and a conch-shell-like object, possibly a vase, while the primary hands hold a sword across the chest. On the opposite side of the niche, the upper outer figure has four arms and one head (Figure 3.67). The rear right hand is held down and holds a *pāśa* and a serpent while the rear left hand is raised above the head and holds a large axe. The primary right hand is damaged, but is held to the center of the chest, and the primary left hand is held to the hip and holds a serpent-like hooked object. Next to this figure, the inner upper figure has three heads and six arms. The upper rear hands hold a *vajra* and make the *mudrā* of extermination, and the lower hands hold a club. The primary right hand holds a trident and the opposite hand holds a clam-shell-like object in front of the chest. Below, the inner figure has four arms and a single head. The rear right hand holds a square seal or mirror with a
ribbon attached to it that is held at the other end by the lower rear left hand. The palms of the primary hands are pressed together to form a gesture of adoration and hold a bow balanced across the chest. To the left of this figure the outer lower figure on the south wall has six arms and three heads. The arms of the figure are damaged and not all the attributes are identifiable. The upper hands appear to have held a short spear and a vajra, while the primary hands rest on the pummel of a large sword between the deity’s legs.

These eight figures do not directly correspond with the canonical attendants of Mārici and may represent wrathful personifications of her mantras and attributes. Hu Wenhe suggests that these eight figures represent the eight great nāga kings (Mahānāga rājas) who appear in the eight corners of a maṇḍala in the fourth

Figure 3.66: North wall, upper outer figure, niche 130, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
fascicle of the *Fo Shuo Damolizhi pusa jing* 佛说大摩利支菩萨经. In that *manḍala* each of the *nāga* kings is placed in one of the cardinal or intermediary directions. However, the appearances of the eight figures do not match the description of the eight *nāga* kings in the scripture, where they appear as kneeling two-armed figures with seven serpent-heads and holding lotuses. In the same scripture other multi-limbed figures wielding weapons are identified as *mantra* bodhisattvas (*zhényan pusa* 真言菩萨) that appear with Marici. The descriptions of these also do not directly correspond with the eight guardian figures depicted in the niche, but may have served as the inspirational source of this iconography.

The inclusion of a group of eight masculine martial figures is in keeping with the martial focus of Márici’s cult in East Asia. The characteristics that one will acquire through the worship of Márici, such as invisibility from

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306 T.21.1257.272b. Hu Wenhe (1994), 234. The *nāga* kings are identified in the text as Ananduo 阿南多 (Upananda?) in the east, Fusuzhi 答酥枳 (Vāsuki) in the south, Dechajia 德叉迦 (Taksaka?) in the west, Jieliujihajia 良里俱吒迦 (Anavatapta?) in the north, Shangquboluou 商什钵罗 (Sāgara?) in the southeast, Bonamo 钵纳摩 (Nanda?) in the southwest, Lianhua 莲华 (Utpalaka) in the northwest, and Jukangjia 俱勒迦 (Manasvin?) in the northeast.


308 For example, T.1257.269 describes four four-armed figures located in each of the directions on a wheel of wind beneath Márici’s feet.

309 There is a frontispiece to a manuscript in the Stein collection in British Museum which depicts Márici, OA 1919.1-1.0207, reproduced in Whitfield, vol.2 (1982), pl. 68. The painting bears an inscription with four characters “ba jingang ming 八金刚名” (“names of the eight *vajra[dharas]*”) indicating that the scripture concerned a group of eight deities, which may possibly be the related to the figures represented in this niche.

310 On the martial aspect of Márici, see Hall.(1989), and David A. Hall, *Marishiten: Buddha and the Warrior Goddess* (Diss., University of California, Berkeley 1990).

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attackers, the ability to confuse enemies, and invincibility from weapons, have military applications. The longer version of the Mārīcī scripture by Tianxicai includes a section on the method of defeating belligerent armies for a king whose kingdom has been invaded by a neighboring state. This section includes the visualization of the eight-armed form of Mārīcī. In 1127 after the fall of the Northern Song capital to the Jin, Mārīcī was evoked by the empress dowager née Meng by having an image of the goddess installed in the Tianzhusi 天竺寺 temple in Hangzhou. The location and stylistic characteristics of the Mārīcī image at the Fowan suggests that it should date to the first half of the twelfth century, possibly during the period when the Song state was engaged in a

311 T.21.1257.264c-266a.
312 Li Sisheng (1999), 11.

Figure 3.67: South wall, niche 130, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
protracted war with the Jin. Since there is no donor inscription on the niche, the intentions of the donor(s) are not known; however, given the importance of the veneration of Māricī as a martial deity it may have been sponsored by local officials as a token of spiritual support of the Song war effort and to insure the safety of their surroundings. The next section considers the iconography another important goddess Hāritī, which has a more domestic character than that of Māricī, reflecting the different focus of her cult from the protective and martial focus of Māricī’s cult.

3.11 Imagery of Hāritī, “The Mother of Demons”

The goddess Hāritī (Helidi 诃利帝), commonly known in China as Guizimu 鬼子母 (Mother of Demons) or Jiuzimu 九子母 (Mother of Nine Children), is a well known minor esoteric Buddhist deity and the subject of a number of niches in the Dazu area including two niches, numbers 122 and 289, at the Fowan.313 In Tang and Song times Hāritī was worshipped primarily as a protectress and granter of children.314 The first scripture concerning Hāritī to be translated into Chinese was a brief text entitled

313 Other niches in the Dazu area with this subject matter include Shizhuanshan niche number 1, Shimenshan niche number 9, and Yutan niche number 3. Images of Hāritī are also reportedly found at Faoqiao and Lingyunsi; see Li Sisheng (1999), 11. The only other images of Hāritī in Sichuan that I am aware of are niches 68, 74, and 81 at the Nankan site in Bazhong; see Hu Wenhe (1994), 231.

314 There have been a number of studies of Hāritī. A study of her iconography focusing on a type of narrative illustration is given in Julia K. Murray, ”Representations of Hāritī, the Mother of Demons, and the theme of “Raising the Alms Bowl” in Chinese Painting,” Artibus Asiae 43 (1981-82): 253-268. The most exhaustive study of Hāritī was done by Noel Peri, ”Hāritī la mere-de-demons,” Bulletin de l' Ecole Française d’Extrem-Orient (1917): 1-102. Another comprehensive, but somewhat dated, study of Hāritī in China is Kobayashi Taichirō 小林太一朗, ”Karitei worship and her images in China,” Shina bukkyo shigaku v.2, 3 (1938): 1-48; also see Soper (1959), 227-228.
Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Mother of Demons, also known as the Hārīti sūtra, which was done in the Western Jin Kingdom (265-420).\textsuperscript{315} Later, Hārīti was the subject of several esoteric texts, translated in the eighth century by Amoghavajra, describing dhārānas and ritual methods associated with the worship of Hārīti.\textsuperscript{316} As an esoteric goddess, Hārīti is understood to be a personification of the Buddhāmārātka (fomu 風母, Mother of Buddhas), which represents the metaphysical source of enlightenment.\textsuperscript{317}

The legend of Hārīti’s origins as a fearsome rākṣasī named Abhirati (Huanxi 欢喜), the mother of a brood of five-hundred demon children, with a rapacious habit of stealing and devouring children of the city of Rājgir, and her conversion to become a supporter of Buddhism is told in a number of scriptural and literary sources.\textsuperscript{318} The cause of her cruelty was a vow of revenge made in her former life after she was caused to miscarry.\textsuperscript{319} To mend Hārīti’s ways, the Buddha Śākyamuni hid her youngest and most cherished

\textsuperscript{315} T.21.1261, Foshuo guizimu jing 佛说鬼子母经 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Mother of Demons), by an unknown translator.

\textsuperscript{316} These are all relatively brief and include T.21.1260, Da yaochanū huanximu bing aizi chengjiu fa 大药又女欢喜并爱子成就法 (Ritual Method of the Great Yakṣṇī Abhirati and Her Beloved Son); T.211261, Helidimu zhenyanjing 诃利帝母真言经 (Scripture on the Mantra of Hārīti); and T.21.1263 Bingjieluotiantongzi jing 冰揭罗天童子经 (Scripture on the Kumāra Deva (god child) Pingala).

\textsuperscript{317} See Susan L. Huntington (1985), 148.

\textsuperscript{318} For an overview of Chinese texts and literary references to Hārīti see Zhao Bangyan 赵邦彦, "Jiuzimu kao 九子母考," Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan vol. 2, n. 3 (1931): 261-74.

child, Pīṇgala (Bingjieluo 冰揭逻). This made Hāritī grief-stricken, and she eventually realized the cruelty of her past actions and subsequently converted to Buddhism. The details of the story vary with differing accounts. In what became the most well-known version in China, Śākyamuni hides Hāritī’s child beneath an inverted begging bowl. Hāritī’s conversion only comes after she exhausts all her powers in a futile attempt to lift the bowl and recover her child. As converts to Buddhism Hāritī and her children use their powers to protect the Buddhist faithful, especially children, and grant children to childless couples. This legend of Hāritī’s conversion to Buddhism is likely a reflection of the early Buddhist assimilation of a well-established pre-Buddhist cult to Hāritī, which was a derivative of nature spirit (yakṣa and yakṣī) cults of the ancient Indic world that focused on wealth, well being, and fecundity. These traits, especially fecundity, were maintained as an important component of the worship of Hāritī in China.

Early sculptural representations of Hāritī from the Kuśāṇa period in greater Northwest India are relatively common. In these images she is...
typically depicted as a well-endowed matron suckling an infant, seated next to her husband, the wealth god Pāñcika (Banzhijia 半支迦), and surrounded by several of their frolicsome progeny. Chinese representations of Hāritī generally do not include Pāñcika; however, the general maternal appearance of Hāritī with her mischievous brood was maintained, albeit in a manner altered to reflect Han Chinese cultural ethnicity. Images of Hāritī are mentioned in a number of classical art historical texts and attest to her popularity in Tang and Song times. After Hāritī was introduced in China, two modes of representation developed: an earlier “portrait-like” or iconic mode that follows from the Indic convention of representing Hāritī as a seated or standing maternal figure holding or suckling a child, and a later “narrative” mode that depicts the story of her conversion based on a version of the story recorded in a collection of miscellanea from the late fifth century. Images representing the later mode are frequently entitled “Raising the Alms-bowl” (Jiebo tu 揭钵图), which became an important subject for Buddhist painting from the Song Dynasty.

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323 According to Li Sisheng (1999), 11, there is an image of Hāritī paired with her spouse in a niche at the Lingyansi cliff in Dazu. Photographs of this niche have not been published, and I have not visited this site to confirm its identification.

324 The YZMHL records that one image of Hāritī was located in the Southern Corridor of the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺, which was made by Fan Qiong 范琼, Chen Hao 陈皓, Peng Shu 彭竖. An image of Hāritī is also attributed to the painter Hou Yi 候翌 in the fourth fascicle of the Xuanhe huapu.

325 T.4.203.493. On the two modes of representing Hāritī see Murray, 256.

326 This became the most popular type of her representation found in China in the later dynastic periods. According to Murray, 256, the depiction of this theme is a uniquely Chinese creation.
The images of Hāritī found at the Fowan and other sites in the Dazu area follow the former “iconic” mode. These niches all date to the Song Dynasty. In these niches Hāritī is depicted seated in a formal posture holding her youngest son, Piṅgala, on her lap, with her other offspring, at her feet, watched over by several female attendants. The scriptural basis for this iconography is found in two of the texts translated by Amoghavajra.

According to the *Helitimu zhenyan jing* 順利帝母真言經, Hāritī should be depicted with the appearance of a goddess with skin the color of pure gold. Her body is to be adorned with deva garments, a crown, and necklaces. She is to be shown seated on a regal dais with both feet pendant (*pralambapādāsana*). Two children are to be shown standing next to her feet, and two others should sit on her knees. In her left arm a fifth child is cradled to her bosom while the right hand holds a pomegranate. The latter attribute is a widespread symbol of fertility in the ancient world. The description of Hāritī given in the *Da yaochanü huanximu bing aizi chengjiu fa* 大藥叉女欢喜并爱子成就法 adds a few more details, but is essentially the same, except that her skin is pink instead of gold, and she is seated with one leg pendant (*lalitāsana*) and accompanied by female attendants who hold fans or adornments.

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328 A number of scholars make reference to the notion that Śākyamuni used the red fleshy fruit of the pomegranate to cure Hāritī of her cannibalism; see Getty, 86.

329 T.21.1260.286c. In this text the child held in her arm is identified as Piṅgala and her adornments are described in more detail, including small bells for earrings and bracelets made of white shells.
The two images of Hāriti at the Fowan, niches number 122 and 289, are representative of other iconic images of Hāriti in the area. Of these two niches, number 122 (Figure 3.68) is slightly more refined and is used here to describe the iconographic features of the two niches and related imagery elsewhere. In niche 122 (1.67 x 1.51 x 1.13 meters) Hāriti is shown seated in “western fashion” with both legs pendant on a Chinese style dragon-head chair in front of a three-panel folding screen. In other niches in the Dazu area, Hāriti is depicted in this type of seated posture. Unlike most other divinities depicted at the site Hāriti is characteristically depicted without a halo or body aureole. Except for the present gilt gold surface covering her face and hands, she has the appearance of an aristocratic Chinese matron seated upright and wearing elaborate formal Chinese robes and cloud-head slippers (yuntou xie 云头鞋). Her forehead is decorated with a gold dot (tilak) in the center, and her head is adorned with a large phoenix hat (fengguan 风冠), which represents popular
foreign fashions of aristocratic Tang women.
The phoenix hat is not mentioned in iconographic descriptions but appears on most other images of Hāritī in Dazu. A toddler representing her beloved son Piṅgala sits on her left knee and holds a round fruit, which looks more like a peach (taozi 桃子), an auspicious fruit that symbolizes longevity, than a pomegranate. Hāritī’s right hand is placed palm-down on her right thigh. The position of Hāritī’s right hand is not consistent in other images of Hāritī in Dazu. In niche 289 (Figure 3.69) her right hand firmly grasps the right leg of her infant son, while in other examples, such as in niche 1 at Shizhuanshan, she tempts her son with a small piece of fruit (Figure 3.70).

In Fowan niche 122 Hāritī is depicted with two slightly smaller standing female attendants dressed in Chinese style outfits. Like Hāritī neither of the attendants have halos. In front, below Hāritī’s throne, are the remnants of seven small figures representing the remainder of her playful
offspring. Except for one child seated in the lower right side of the niche the others are almost completely destroyed. Hāritī’s frolicking children are slightly better preserved in niche 1 at Shizhuanshan and niche number 9 at Shimenshan (Figure 3.71) where they appear as plump healthy Chinese toddlers. In these niches Hāritī’s children are depicted engaged in all sorts of play and mischief, which contrasts with the stern, formally-posed image of Hāritī herself. The descriptions of Hāritī in the ritual manuals translated by Amoghavajra describe the depiction of five children, which is believed to be symbolic of her five-hundred children.\footnote{The actual number of Hāritī’s offspring varies. In the Da yaochanū huanximu bing aizi chengjiu fa she has 500 children (T.21.12160.286a). The Zabaozangjing makes her the mother of 10,000 children (T.4.203.492a). In the Foshuo guizimu jing she is the mother of 1,000 children, with 500 in heaven and 500 on earth (T.1262.290c).} In niche 122 and most other images

Figure 3.70: Niche 1, Shizhuanshan, Dazu. Photo by author, 2001.
of Hāritī in Dazu, she is shown with nine children, which became the standard number for depicting her offspring in China.\textsuperscript{331} The number nine is not given in a scriptural source, but probably derives from the traditional symbolic nature of the number nine in China, which has auspicious connotations and is associated with the masculine (yang \textsuperscript{332} 阳) principle in nature. Although Hāritī is not directly associated with Pure Land practice, nine children are also the standard number of “new born” figures used to convey the nine ranks of rebirth in Sukhāvati, the paradise of the Buddha Amitābha, which fits with the notion that Hāritī is the embodiment of the \textit{Buddhamātrka}.\textsuperscript{333}

\textsuperscript{331} Earlier imagery of Hāritī from South Asia typically depicts five offspring, which is believed to be symbolic of her larger number of children. See Huntington (1985), 147.

\textsuperscript{332} In addition to the obvious connection of the number nine with the desire for male descendants, the number nine has a number of cosmological and buddhalogical symbolic connotations. In China the organization of the ideal society was based on the number nine. The Chinese goddess of immortality, Xi Wangmu 西王母, presides over nine courts. There are also nine assemblies in the esoteric Vajradhātu \textit{mandala} and nine ranks of rebirth in the western Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha. See Elizabeth Ten Grothenhuis, 23-27.

\textsuperscript{333} One of the children in the Shizhuanshan niche is depicted holding a lotus, which may be a visual reference to rebirth in a Buddhist paradise (see figure 3.63)
One of the standardized attendant figures of Hāritī depicted in niche 122 is a heavy-set nursemaid in the lower left front corner of the niche (Figure 3.72). The nursemaid is depicted kneeling and suckling one of Hāritī’s offspring with her exposed left breast. The same type of heavy-set nursemaid is depicted in other Hāritī images in Dazu, for example in niche 3 at Yutan (Figure 3.73), as well as in a less robust form in a painting of Hāritī in Zhang Shengwen’s “Long Scroll of Buddhist Images” (Figure 3.74). At Shizhuanshan the nursemaid is depicted with both breasts unabashedly exposed while one of Hāritī’s more precocious offspring helps her nurse an infant (Figure 3.70). In a well-known painted banner dated to the ninth century found by Albert von LeCoq in Turfan, Hāritī is herself depicted nursing a child, which follows from earlier conventions of depicting Hāritī in art of the Kuśāṇa period. This particular aspect of Hāritī’s earlier iconography may not have become popularized in China since her image was modeled on that of a Han Chinese noblewoman and such a public display of human mundanity may have been seen as unbecoming of a woman of status. The inclusion of a nursemaid was probably based on the

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334 For a reproduction of this image, see Zhao Bangyan, 268.
use of servants as nursemaids in elite aristocratic families, which was incorporated into Hāritī’s iconography in China. The aforementioned examples in Dazu have the character of a genre portrait of a noble household with Hāritī depicted in the role of regally-posed matron while her servants tend to her mischievous progeny.

The placement of Hāritī in a Chinese aristocratic setting is in part a reflection of the infusion of the socio-cultural environment into the artwork, which is in part sanctioned by the identification of Hāritī’s home with China in a ritual manual translated by Amoghadajra. The aristocratic setting depicted in niche 122, with a folding screen as a backdrop, and niche 289, which has the frame of the niche carved to look like a pair of folded curtains, is

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335 According to this text “Abhirati (Hāritī)... normally resides in Mahā-cīna (China) upholding the protection of the world;” see T.21.1260.286a.
remarkably, similar in character to the depiction of Hāriti in Zhang Shengwen’s *Long Roll of Buddhist Images* (Figure 3.73). Hāriti’s depiction in that painting has an even greater quality of an aristocratic genre scene with Hāriti surrounded by an entourage of five female attendants helping attend to her mischievous brood. The Dazu images of Hāriti and Zhang Shengwen’s image are derivative of the same iconographic model, which could have come from imagery in Chengdu’s temples. A small image located at the Nankan site, Bazhong, dated to the late ninth century shows Hāriti as a plump Tang style woman indicating it was already a convention to represent Hāriti as a more secularized figure by the end of the Tang.\(^{336}\)

Niche 122 is located in close proximity to the image of Mārici described in the last section and several smaller niches containing effeminate images of Avalokiteśvara, also dating to the Song Dynasty. These indicate the increasing importance of the female gender in Chinese popular religion. The next section will examine another esoteric goddess, Mahāmāyūrī, who is depicted in a number of fairly large-scale niches and caves in the greater Dazu area. Niches with Hāriti at Shimenshan and Yutan are located adjacent to niches with images of Mahāmāyūrī, who, like Hāriti, represents the embodiment of the *Buddhamātrkā*. But unlike Hāriti, who is represented in conventional human form as a female/mother and somewhat sinicized in appearance, Mahāmāyūrī is depicted as a multi-limbed bodhisattva.

\(^{336}\) This is niche number 81 at the site and is dated 888. Inscriptions for this niche are given in Liu Changjiu (1998), 56-7. Niche 68 is reproduced in Hu Wenhe (1994), pl. 74, fig. 1. The images of Hāriti at the Nankan site also includes images of nine children.
3.12 Imagery of Mahāmāyūrī, “The Mother of [All] Buddhas”

The bodhisattva Mahāmāyūrī (Dakongque 大孔雀), meaning, literally, “The Great Peafowl,” is known by the appellation “Mother of [all] Buddhas,” (Buddhamātrkā, ēmu 佛母) and belongs to a class of spiritual beings known as vidyārājas or vidyārājñī (“brilliant light (wisdom) king,” mingwang, 明王) who personify dhārāṇī and represent the transcendent wisdom (vidyā) of the enlightened mind of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.\(^{337}\) As such, Mahāmāyūrī is considered the embodiment of a dhārāṇī taught by Śākyamuni, which is held to be especially effective as an antidote against snake bite but will also protect the reciter against other illnesses, physical difficulties, natural calamities (especially drought and flood), demons, war, and avail the protection of a host of demigods. It will also provide the reciter and his relations, with happiness, prosperity, and longevity. The protective and curative powers of this dhārāṇī can also be understood in metaphoric terms as devouring the evil thoughts and passions which delude the mind.\(^{338}\) Unlike most other vidyārājas who appear as frightening wrathful figures, Mahāmāyūrī is typically depicted as benign bodhisattva figure, often with

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four or six arms, seated in lotus posture (*padmasana*) on a peacock, with the peacock’s colorful tail feathers raised to form a natural aureole behind the bodhisattva. The gender of Mahāmāyūri is female; however, in East Asia Mahāmāyūri is almost always depicted as a male figure. Mahāmāyūri’s standard attributes reflect the benevolent aspects of her divinity and include a pomegranate, symbolizing fecundity, a lotus-flower, symbolizing purity, a citron, symbolizing causation, and peacock feathers, symbolizing the transformation of poison. The peafowl, which serves as the bodhisattva’s mount and namesake, is an auspicious bird associated with royalty and symbolizes the triumph over passions and poisons, that is, the transformation of negative energies into positive forces toward one’s enlightenment.

There is a fairly large body of Chinese Buddhist texts that focus on Mahāmāyūri, a number of which are attributed to Amoghavajra. The oldest primary scripture concerning Mahāmāyūri is known as the *Scripture on the* 

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339 This description refers to East Asian imagery of Mahāmāyūri. In Himalayan imagery Mahāmāyūri is not shown with the peacock and often has three heads and eight arms. Nepalese images of Mahāmāyūri follow the description in the *Nispannayogāvali*, with the goddess appearing as a yellow, eight-armed figure without the peacock; see Mevissen, 234-5.

340 Mevissen, 228, states that all East Asian examples of Mahāmāyūri are depicted as males 228. Howard (2001), 21, on the other hand, states that Mahāmāyūri was always considered a female deity. The imagery of Mahāmāyūri in the Dazu area appear to be male or non-gender-specific.

341 The peacock is also used as vehicle (*vāhana*) for several other deities, such as Kumāra (Jiumoluotian 孔鸠摩罗天) and the Hindu god Kārtikeya. The two species of Peafowl are native to South and Southeast Asia and are known for their appetite for snakes, even poisonous ones, which could explain why the peacock *dhārani* was associated with an antidote for snake bite. Peafowl also mate in the spring marking the coming of monsoon rains in South Asia, which may account for the association of Mahāmāyūri with the powers to make rain. Rain and water were believed to be controlled by serpents (*nāgas*), over which Mahāmāyūri has mastery. Other lore associated with peacocks in Tang China is discussed by Edward H. Shaffer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 96-99.
Spell of the Peacock King (Kongque wangzhou jing 孔雀王咒经), or Mahāmāyūrīvīrṇājñī sūtra, which was translated into Chinese at least six different times from the early fourth to ninth centuries. This scripture can be traced to older jātaka tales that feature the Golden-hued Peacock King, Survarṣavabhāsa. The focus of the Mahāmāyūrīvīrṇājñī sūtra is the “Dhāraṇī of the great Peacock,” which is taught by Śākyamuni. It begins by telling a story about a novice monk named Svati (Shadi 莎底) who is bitten in the toe by a poisonous black snake while gathering fire wood. After being informed of Svati’s condition by Ānanda, the Buddha Śākyamuni teaches the dhāraṇī to save the monk and explains its awesome powers. A number of expanded versions of Mahāmāyūrīvīrṇājñī and kalpa (ritual manuals) were translated in the eight century by Yijing  and Amoghavajra. These include ritual instructions and the first explanations on how the bodhisattva should be depicted. Amoghavajra’s translations appear to have been

The first version of the Kongque wangzhou jing is attributed to Śrimitra (Shilimiduolo 尸梨密夺罗). Later versions are attributed to Kumarajiva, T.19.988, and Samghapāla (Sengjiapulu 僧伽婆罗), T.19.984. A list of six versions of this text is given by Wang Huimin, 37. An overview of this text is provided by Visser (1919-20), 373-378. Also see Watanabe H. (渡辺喜一), “Kujaku myōō zō ni tsuite 孔雀明王像に就いて,” Bijutsu kenkyū 53 (1936): 177. A Daoist version of the scripture is discussed by Wang Huimin, 45.


The Mora jātaka is T.19.983, Foshuo da kongque mingwang huxiang tanchang yigui 佛说大孔雀明王画像坛场义轨 (Mahāmāyūrī vīrṇājñā citrapratibimba mandala kalpa, Ritual Guide Spoken by the Buddha on Painting Images and Setting up Altars for the Vīrṇājñā Māhamāyūrī) translated by Amoghavajra, and T.19.985, Fo shuo da kongque wang jing 佛说大孔雀咒王经 (Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Māhamāyūrī, the King of Spells) translated by Yijing in 705.
particularly influential in providing the basis for the standard Tang and Song iconography of Mahâmâyûri and establishing the worship of Mahâmâyûri at the Tang court.\textsuperscript{345}

Classical Chinese art historical records of the Tang and Song periods indicate that imagery of Mâhamâyûri was an important subject of Buddhist art. A number of paintings of this subject matter are attributed to well-known painters such as Yan Liben 阎立本, Wu Daozi 吴道子, and Wang Wei 王维 of the Tang.\textsuperscript{346} The *Yizhou minghua lu* records only one work of this subject, which was painted in the Precinct of Elated Goodness (Xingshan 兴善) of the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺 temple, Chengdu, during the *zhonghe* reign era (881-85) by the noted painter Zhang Nanben 张南本.\textsuperscript{347} Although the references to paintings of Mahâmâyûri are relatively numerous compared to other esoteric subject matter, few extant images of Mahâmâyûri dating to the Tang and Song periods have been identified. The earliest surviving painted images of Mahâmâyûri in China are found in the Dunhuang area with the earliest dated

\textsuperscript{345} According to Amoghavajra’s biography on the year of his return from the south in 746, he erected an alter to Mahâmâyûri in order to avert a drought at the request of the emperor. *SGSZ*, fascicle 1, T.50.2061.712c.

\textsuperscript{346} Many of the paintings of Mahâmâyûri are given in the first three fascicles of the *Xuanhe huapu* and include works by Yan Liben 阎立本, Lu Lengji 卢楞伽, Di Yan 翟㻅, Yao Siyuan 姚思元, Du Nigui 杜倪龟, and Cao Zhongyuan 曹仲元, and Wu Daozi 吴道子 who is attributed four paintings of this subject. Several of these attributes are suspect, such as the painting attributed to Yan Liben who died in 673 several decades before the first text describing the deity was translated into Chinese; see Wang Huimin, 38. Nonetheless, the large number of paintings of Mahâmâyûri in the *xuanhe* imperial collection is indicative of the popularity of Mahâmâyûri in Tang and Song times.

\textsuperscript{347} *YZMHL, miaoge zhongpin shiren* 妙格中品十人. Two of the painters attributed works in the *Xuanhe huapu*, Lu Lengjia and Du Nigui were active in Chengdu, but no works of this subject are attributed to them in the *YZMHL.*
to the ninth century.\textsuperscript{348} Images of Mahāmāyūrī in the Dunhuang area include eight mural paintings, most of which date to the Five Dynasties and Song periods, and are primarily featured on the entryway ceilings of caves.\textsuperscript{349} The earliest images of Mahāmāyūrī at Dunhuang depict Mahāmāyūrī as part of the retinue of the thousand armed Avalokiteśvara, which are also found in Tang niches of the same subject in Sichuan.\textsuperscript{350} The independent images of Mahāmāyūrī at Dunhuang are comparable to early surviving images of Mahāmāyūrī in Japan that date from the twelfth century.\textsuperscript{351} Few sculptural

\textsuperscript{348} The earliest extant images of Mahāmāyūrī occur as secondary figures in two banner paintings of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. One is in the Pelliot collection of the Museé Guimet and dated 981. The other in the Stein collection of the British Museum and dated to the early ninth century. These are described in Sorensen (1991), 140. Also see Whitfield, vol.1 (1982), 313-4. In these images Māhamāyūrī is depicted with three heads and with four or six arms.

\textsuperscript{349} These include murals in caves 205 and 208 at the Mogao caves, and cave 333 at Yutan, all of which date to the Five Dynasties period; and caves 133, 165, 169, 431, and 456 at the Mogao caves, which date to the Song Dynasty. All these except the image in cave 133 are located on the ceiling. Wang Huimin 44, believes that the position of these images indicates that there function at Dunhuang was one of spiritual protection, not for praying for rain and dispelling poison. Several manuscripts concerning Mahāmāyūrī were recovered from Dunhuang, see Wang Huimin, 38; Sorenson (1991/92), 331 n. 124. The Mahāmāyūrī imagery at Dunhuang is more varied than examples found at Dazu, and includes depictions of with Mahāmāyūrī with two, four, and six arms. These are described by Wang Huimin, 39-40.

\textsuperscript{350} Tang representations of Mahāmāyūrī occur in Sichuan in niches depicting the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, such as in niche 9 at the Fowan. These images of Mahāmāyūrī typical are found opposite images of Maheśvara who rides a bull.

\textsuperscript{351} No Japanese images of Mahāmāyūrī survive before the twelfth century, but rituals to Mahāmāyūrī are noted in Japanese historical documents between the early tenth to mid-thirteenth centuries; see De Viser, 386; Mevissen, 228.
examples of Mahāmāyūri survive from Song and earlier times in China.352 There is, however, a fairly large concentration of sculptural images of Mahāmāyūri found in the Dazu area. The images of Mahāmāyūri in Dazu all date to the Song Dynasty and include over a half dozen images, several of which are comparatively large, suggesting that Mahāmāyūri was the focus of considerable veneration by the locals of the area. It may also reflect the larger popularity of Mahāmāyūri during the Song Dynasty given the relatively large number of images identified with this subject matter in classical art historical sources. Wang Huimin, who has done a comparative study of imagery of Mahāmāyūri at Dunhuang and Dazu, suggests that the reason for the popularity of Mahāmāyūri in these two areas was the result of the influence from the Later Tang Kingdom (923-936), which ruled Sichuan for seven years between 926 and 933 and also had political links with the ruling families of Dunhuang.353 This idea is based on the notion that the worship of Mahāmāyūri was promulgated by National Preceptor (Guoshi 国师) of the Later Tang, the monk Daoxian 道贤 (d.936), who is noted in his biography to

352 Outside of Dazu and Dunhuang, the only other image of Mahāmāyūri at a cliff sculpture site that I am aware of was a small image located in the Yanxia 烟霞洞 cave in Hangzhou dated to the Five Dynasties period, which was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In that cave Mahāmāyūri was included with a group of eighteen arhats, see Choe Songeun, 102. There is a sculpted clay image of Māhamāyūri that dates to the Ming Dynasty in the Lantianyansì site in Shaanxi about 60 kilometers southeast of Xian. This image is reproduced in Li Song 李岩, Shanxi fójiaoyìshù 陕西佛教艺术 (Taipei: Yishujia, 1999), 233.

353 See Wang Huimin, 41-43.
have practiced rites to Mahāmāyūrī as a daily ritual.\(^{354}\) Although a tenuous connection can be made between the appearance of Mahāmāyūrī imagery at Dunhuang with the Later Tang, imagery of Mahāmāyūrī in the area of Dazu does not occur in the area until well into the Song Dynasty.\(^{355}\) As well, the description of the image of Mahāmāyūrī painted by Zhang Nanben in the YZMHL indicates that imagery of Mahāmāyūrī was found in temples in Chengdu from at least the ninth century.

The images of Mahāmāyūrī in the Dazu area include two images from Beishan, one a large, well-preserved image in cave 155 dated to 1126 (Figure 3.75), and a small, damaged, freestanding sculpture in niche 36 of the Duobaota and dated 1150.\(^{356}\) Other depictions of Mahāmāyūrī in the area are found in niche number 13 at the Dafowan, Baodingshan (Figure 3.76); niche no.8 at Shimenshan 石门山; niche no.2 at Yutan 玉滩 (Figure 3.77); and the Kongquedong 孔雀洞, “Peacock cave,” at the Baoguosi 报国寺 temple in Anyue (Figure 3.78), just north of Dazu.\(^{357}\) Among these, the image of Mahāmāyūrī in

\(^{354}\) SGSZ, fascicle 25, T.50.2061.870c. Part of Wang’s explanation relies on establishing a connection between Daoxian and Liu Bezun. Wang Huimin, 42, interprets the dates of Liu’s lifespan as being 855-938 to prove that Daoxian and Liu Benzun were contemporaries. However, most scholars believe that Liu died in 907, which is some nineteen years before the Late Tang took control of Sichuan.

\(^{355}\) According to Wang Huimin, 42-3, the earliest independent image of Mahāmāyūrī at Dunhuang occurs in cave 205, which was repaired in the Five Dynasties period by Cao Yijian, who was granted a title by the Later Tang in 935.

\(^{356}\) Liu Changjiu (1999), 150, dates this image to 1148, but the inscription in the niche is record in the MWL, 455, as 1150.

\(^{357}\) A small image of Mahāmāyūrī is located in niche 36 on the second floor of the Duobaota, Beishan. This image is located on the west side wall of the niche opposite an image of Amoghapāśa and is reproduced in Guo Xiangying and Li Fangyin (1999), 150 fig.163. Another image that has been destroyed was located in niche number 4 at Qigongqiao 七拱桥 site not far from Yutan.
the Kongquedong is the artistically most accomplished and is recognized by most scholars as dating to the late Northern or early Southern Song, making it potentially the earliest image of Mahāmāyūrī in the area with the exclusion of smaller representations of Mahāmāyūrī within the retinue of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara that date to the Tang Dynasty.\footnote{Angela Howard (2001), 123, dates the Kongquedong site and other sites in the Shiyangzhen area to the late twelfth century, contemporaneous to the carving of images at Baodingshan, which she believes formed a supposed “pilgrimage circuit.” Of the images in the Dazu area only cave 155 at the Fowan has a dated inscription. An errata for Angela Howard (2001), 181 n.19, incorrectly dates cave 155 to 1176. Sorensen (1989), 14, dates Kongquedong to the early Southern Song. Hu Wenhe (1994), 23, dates it to some time between the Northern Song and early Southern Song.} The

Figure 3.75: Overview, cave 155, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999
other depictions of Mahāmāyūrī all appear to have been carved during the Southern Song, but only the two images at Beishan have dated inscriptions.359

In cave 155 at the Fowan, Beishan, Mahāmāyūrī is depicted in the middle of a large artificial cave (3.47 x 3.22 x 6 meters), decorated with approximately one thousand small images of Buddhas (each about 18 cm high) carved in low relief in twelve rows on the three walls of the cave. This is one of the few caves at the Fowan site where there is sufficient space to imagine the performance of group devotional activities and rituals. The

359 The Yutan niche can be approximately dated by its neighboring niche, number 1, which has a date of 1137; see MWL, 375. The Shimenshan niche can also be dated to the twelfth century by inscriptions in surrounding niches; see MWL, 350-5. Several of the images in the area could have been carved by the same artisans. However, as a group, these images display some degree of contextual and stylistic variation, so I don’t believe that these were all the work of the same atelier of artisans as suggested by other scholars; see Sorensen (1989), 14.
image of Mahāmāyūrī is carved almost completely in the round and is located about two meters from the back of the cave to form a sort of central pillar that allows for passage behind the image with a few feet on each side. Mahāmāyūrī is depicted seated in padmāsana on a large, round lotus flower, with four layers of upturned lotus petals. The flower is positioned on the back of a stylized peacock with outstretched wings. The peacock’s tail feathers rise vertically to the top of the cave and form a natural aureole behind the bodhisattva with the backside undecorated. A similar type of design is seen in niche 8 at Shimenshan, with the image of the bodhisattva and peacock detached from the back wall forming a central pillar (Figure 3.79), but with different imagery carved on the walls of the niche that represents the monk Svāti being bitten by a snake, eighteen arhats, and
Indra’s triumph over the *asuras.* The other images of Mahāmāyūrī in the area are done in a more conventional fashion with the image attached to the back wall of the niche.

All the fully extant images of Mahāmāyūrī in the area have one head and four arms. In the Fowan image the two front primary hands are placed on the deity’s lap with the right hand holding the stem of a lotus, or peacock feather, which is broken (Figure 3.80). The left hand holds a round hand fan.

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366 At the bottom of the niche Svati appears just as described in the sūtra lying on the ground frothing from the mouth as Ānanda looks on above him. Above them is an image of a spear wielding *asura* waging battle with Indra. These two themes are featured on several other niches in the area. According to Soresen (1989), 14, the inclusion of the warring gods and demigods is based on T.19.985. However, Li Fangyin believes that it comes from a different sūtra, entitled *Fshuo wuneng shengfan wang rulei zhuangyan tuoluoni* 佛说无能胜幡王如来庄严多罗尼经, T.19.943, where the Buddha provides Indra with a *dhāraṇī* to defeat the *asuras,* see Li Fangyin (1990), 128-9.
stylized in the shape of a peacock feather.\textsuperscript{361} The rear arms are held outward and bent upwards at the elbows with an citron or peach in the right hand and a \textit{pustaka} (an accordion style book), likely intended to represent the \textit{Prajñapāramitā sūtra}.\textsuperscript{362} Although these attributes are not a precise match to the scriptural descriptions of Mahāmāyūri the general appearance of the bodhisattva with an elaborate trefoil-shaped floral crown, long strands of pearl earrings, and other adornments corresponds relatively closely with the descriptions of how to depict Mahāmāyūri in the ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra, which states:

\begin{quote}
In the center of the central court of the [\textit{maṇḍala}] paint a lotus flower with eight petals. In the center of the lotus paint the \textit{Buddhamātrkā}, Mahāmāyūri Vidyārāja Bodhisattva. Her head faces toward the east and is colored white. She is dressed in layers of light garments and wearing a crown. Her body is adorned with earrings, bracelets, and all sorts of splendid adornments. She rides on a golden hued peacock king, and is seated cross-legged on a white or blue lotus flower. She has a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{361} Peacock feathers were commonly used for fans and dusters; see Schafer (1963), 111-112.

\textsuperscript{362} This is the primary philosophical text of Mahāyāna Buddhism. As an attribute, it is associated with the bodhisattva of wisdom Mañjuśrī and the goddess Prajñapāramitā who is held to be the personification of wisdom and the “mother” of all Buddhas.

Figure 3.79: Overview, niche 8, Shimenshan, Dazu. Photo by author, 1999.
compassionate demeanor and four arms. On the right side the first hand holds an open lotus flower, and the second hand holds a green citron (*bijapurā*), which has a shape similar to that of a water melon. On the left side the first hand holds a pomegranate, which has a shape similar to peaches and plums, and the second hand holds three to five peacock quills.\(^{363}\)

The only attribute held by the Mahāmāyūrī in cave 155 that does not correspond with this textual description is the book, which if intended to represent the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* may have been a symbolic substitute for the pomegranate since both relate to Mahāmāyūrī’s aspect as the *Buddhamātṛkā*. The attributes held by other images of Mahāmāyūrī for the most part correspond with those of the Fowan image, although the positions of the attributes vary somewhat between images. The

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\(^{363}\) T.19.983A.440a. A similar description is given in a ritual manual translated by Yijing, T.19.985.476c, which was translated in 705. It describes the deity seated on a lotus or a golden throne wearing a white-colored skirt and finely woven white silk scarfs. Mahāmāyūrī is also described as having four arms and holds the same attributes given in Amoghaśāstra’s text, except that a pomello is held in the right hand instead of a citron. However, in the description the image is to be depicted standing or seated next to a peacock, and a Buddha is to be placed in the center of the *maṇḍala* not Mahāmāyūrī.
closest match is niche 8 at Shimenshan (Figure 3.81), which may have been modeled after the Fowan image or carved by the same atelier of artists. One feature not found on the Fowan image is the inclusion of the small Dhyāna Buddha in the center of the bodhisattva’s crown depicted on the Shimenshan image, which also appears in the images at Baodingshan and Kongquedong.\textsuperscript{364}

The secondary imagery in cave 155 is distinctive from other niches in the area featuring Mahāmāyūri that typically include depictions of the story of the monk Svati and the war between the gods and demigods over the elixir of immortality.\textsuperscript{365} The side walls of the cave are carved with twelve or thirteen rows of small figures (about 18 cm high), most of which represent stylized Buddhas seated on lotuses in a posture of meditation.\textsuperscript{366} These figures number just over one thousand and were undoubtedly intended to represent the thousand Buddhas of the present age (bhadrakalpa), a popular theme

\textsuperscript{364} This Buddha is barely discernible; for a close up of the crown, see \textit{DSDS}, vol.4, 56.

\textsuperscript{365} The Svati story is depicted in the niches at Yutan, Shimenshan, and Baodingshan. Possibly, the damaged portion of the back wall of cave 155, where several standing monks are depicted, could be have been intended to represent this story. The battle of the gods and demigods occurs in the niches at Shimenshan, Baodingshan, and Kongquedong. Other additional imagery includes the depiction of eighteen arhats on the top of niche 8 at Shimenshan; the four lokapala and a pair of hooded, sword-wielding attendants in niche 2 at Yutan; and at Baodingshan a depiction of an event from the legend of King Aśoka in which a giant hand marked the simultaneous enshrinement of the relics in his 84,000 stūpas. For the identification of the later iconography see Chen Zhuo 陈灼, "Zhi Kongque mingwang kan ju shou 识孔雀明王龛手," in \textit{WX}, edited by Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 170-174.

\textsuperscript{366} There is some variation in how these figures are depicted. A number of the figures appear as monks and bodhisattvas. One of the figures appears to represent the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, holds a mālā, and makes bhūmisparsa mudrā. This imagery may have been the fancy of the artisan(s) who carved the images rather than have additional symbolic meaning. It could also be understood as evidence of the widening of the concept of an enlightened being beyond the form of a Buddha.
from at least the fourth century in China.\textsuperscript{367} The descriptions of the mandalas associated with Mahāmāyūrī do not include the depiction of this number of Buddhas, but the ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra does include the depiction of the seven mānuṣi Buddhas and the bodhisattva Maitreya in the inner court of Mahāmāyūrī, which could have served as a generic basis for filling the walls with images of Buddhas.\textsuperscript{368}

Since Mahāmāyūrī is considered an embodiment of the Buddhamātrkā, the inclusion of the multitude of figures representing the Buddhas of the current age is an appropriate symbolism to convey the abstract notion that Buddhas are produced through the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā) that Mahāmāyūrī embodies. In addition to the repetitive rows of small Buddha images, several slightly larger images and small niches are carved on the walls of the cave. Several of these appear to be later intrusive niches, but three Buddha images depicted in the approximate centers of the back and side walls appear to be

\textsuperscript{367} The textual basis for this theme is the Xianjie jing 贤劫经, T.14.425 which was translated by Dharmarakṣa (Fahu 法护) around 300 C.E.

\textsuperscript{368} See T.19.983A..440a.
part of the original imagery of the cave. The Buddha in the center of the south facing wall is depicted seated in *padmāsana* on a *sumeru* style pedestal, making the earth-touching gesture with the right hand and the left hand on the lap in *dhyāna mudrā*. The Buddha wears a robe that covers the left shoulder and leaves the right shoulder exposed. Behind the Buddha is an elaborate throne back similar to the one depicted in niche 12 and associated with the imagery of adorned Buddhas discussed earlier in this chapter. Five small *jina* Buddhas are depicted on the top of the backrest, and two large vases are depicted next to the throne. The opposite Buddha on the north facing wall doesn’t have a throne back, but has round body and head aureoles and is seated on a *sumeru* style pedestal between two monk attendants. This Buddha makes a teaching gesture with the right hand, and the left is in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*. These two opposite-facing Buddhas are perhaps intended to represent the transcendental (*sambhogakāya*) and earthly (*nirmanakāya*) forms of Śākyamuni, respectively the Buddhas on the north and south walls, with a slightly larger Buddha image set in a subsidiary niche directly behind the main image of Mahāmāyūrī, representing the *dharmaṇakāya* aspect of the Buddha.\(^{369}\) Hence, they reinstate the symbolism of Mahāmāyūrī as a fully enlightened being identical with the root of enlightenment.

The source of Mahāmāyūrī’s mystical power is the *dhārani* (incantation) that the bodhisattva personifies. Mahāmāyūrī’s image was understood to be the equivalent and embodiment of that *dhārani*. In the next section another iconography related to *dhārani* will be discussed. However, unlike the iconography of Mahāmāyūrī, which is an anthropomorphized

\(^{369}\) The latter figure is damaged so its identification is tentative.
personification of the dhāraṇī, the dhāraṇī in that iconography is not
personified but displayed in written form.

3.13 Imagery of Budhōṣṭiṣavijaya Dhāraṇī Pillars

This section discusses the general iconography of the seven dhāraṇī
pillars carved in high relief in niches on the far northern end of the Fowan
site. These seven relief pillars represent a specific genre of Buddhist
monument known as jingzhuang 经幢, which means, literally, sūtra-dhvaja
(scripture-banner), but, more appropriately understood as “dhāraṇī pillars”
since most are in the form of vertical, octagonal, stone pillars inscribed with
dhāraṇīs rather than with complete or partial passages from Buddhist sūtras
(Figure 3.82). In general these monuments have the appearance of a pillar
with an octagonal shaft topped by a very ornate votive stūpa with a pointed
spire. The practice of carving and erecting stone dhāraṇī pillars evolved out of
an established tradition of commemorative and mortuary stone monuments
in China, particularly ornamental pillars called huabiao 华表 placed outside
of tombs, a form which may ultimately have been derived from pre-Aśokan
stone monuments in South Asia. The creation of dhāraṇī pillars became
much in-vogue during the Tang Dynasty and was continued as a form of
devotional activity into the later dynastic periods. This custom appears to

370 These are located in niches 250, 260, 262, 269, 271, 279, and 281. Several of these
pillars occur in pairs or are depicted in niches with other imagery.

371 For a study of these objects, see Liu Shufen 刘淑芬, “Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing yu
Tang dai zunsheng jingzhuang de jianli 佛顶尊胜陀罗尼经与唐代尊胜幢的建立,” Zhongyang
yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan 67, 1 (1996): 145-193. One of the larger, more
famous pillars is the subject of article by Angela F. Howard, “The Dhāraṇī Pillar of
Kunming, Yunnan,” Artibus Asiae 57, 1/2 (1997): 33-72, which provides a detailed analysis
of a large (8.3 meters high) thirteenth-century dhāraṇī pillar now in the Kunming Museum.
have been initiated in China in the seventh century and is related to the propagation of an esoteric scripture titled the *Buddha uṣṇīśa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, “Scripture on the Superior Dhārāṇi of the Buddha’s Top-knot,” (Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing 佛頂尊胜陀罗尼经), which provides the doctrinal rational for creating these monuments.\(^{372}\) The vast majority of dhārāṇi pillars in China are inscribed with the dhārāṇi given in this scripture; this is true of all the pillars carved at the Fowan site, which still have legible inscriptions. Numerous other examples of dhārāṇi pillars and other stone monuments inscribed with this dhārāṇi are found in Sichuan, especially in the vicinity of the regional center, Chengdu.

In the preceding sections of this chapter all the esoteric deities that have been discussed were intimately associated with

\(^{372}\) Liu Shufen, 145-9.
dhāraṇīs (tuoluoni 陀罗尼), which are incantations or formulas composed of syllables and partially intelligible Sanskrit phrases conceived of as having the mystical and magical powers embodied or held by a particular deity, which will provide an almost endless array of benefits if recited with conviction in the proscribed manner. As outlined in scriptures and ritual manuals, images of the personified dhāraṇīs were largely intended for visualization in conjunction with the ritual performance of the dhāraṇī to evoke its power through the representation of the deity.

The same principle underlies the reproduction of the written text of dhāraṇīs, which is advocated in many scriptures. Copies of dhāraṇīs, either handwritten or produced through wood block prints, were carried in amulets for personal protection or placed in pagodas and images to serve the same numinous functions as physical relics. The inscription of dhāraṇīs on the surface of natural rock, cut stone slabs, memorial stelae (bei 碑), architectural monuments such as pagodas, and, most frequently, on stone pillars (zhuang 幢) was also a popular devotional practice and allowed for the permanent display of the text so that it could perpetually generate merit even in the age of the decline of the Buddhist teachings.

373 A number of printed dhāraṇī have been found in pagodas in recent years; see Su Bai 宿白, Tang Song shiqi de diaoban yinshua 唐宋时期的雕版印刷 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1999), 7-11.

374 The notion of Mofa 末法, or the age of the decline of the dharma, was one of the major themes in Chinese Buddhism since at least the sixth century and represented an important undercurrent of beliefs in the Tang Dynasty. From the mid-sixth century, a number of projects were initiated to preserve the Buddhist teachings by carving them in stone, such as the Wofoyuan site in Anyue. On the background of this practice, see Katherine R. Tsiang, “Monumentalization of Buddhist Texts in the Northern Qi Dynasty: The Engraving of Sūtras in Stone at the Xiangtangshan Caves and Other Sites in the Sixth Century,” Artibus Asiae 56, 3/4 (1996): 233-261.
The most frequently inscribed dhāraṇi in stone is known as the Superior Dhāraṇi of the Buddha’s Top-knot (Buddhośniṣa vijaya dhāraṇi; Foding zunsheng tuoluoni) since most dhāraṇi pillars are inscribed with this dhāraṇi the pillars are popularly called zunshengzhuang. This dhāraṇi is the focus of the previously mentioned Buddhośniṣa vijaya dhāraṇi sūtra (commonly known by the short form Uṣṇiṣa vijaya sūtra), which was introduced in China during the late seventh century. The Uṣṇiṣa vijaya sūtra is representative of a genre of esoteric Buddhist texts popular in the early Tang Dynasty before the arrival of “systematized” esoteric teachings with the three Kaiyuan masters. Unlike some other esoteric sūtras that discourage the wide dissemination of the text without proper initiation and instruction, this text advocates its open display so that its numinous power could benefit both individuals and society in general. Stone monuments, which were displayed in temples, tombs, crossroads, and other public settings, provided a means to both display the text and insure the longevity of its propagation for future generations.

During the Tang Dynasty the Uṣṇiṣa vijaya sūtra received the support of the Tang court, especially under Empress Wu (r. 684-701) and Emperor Daizong (r. 762-780), which aided in the wide dissemination of the text and the popularity of erecting stone monuments with the dhāraṇi.

In inscriptions this dhāraṇi is typically written in Chinese characters, although Sanskrit versions have been found in Yunnan, Zhu Zhangyi, “Shilun Chengdu huacheng cun wudai mu chutu de zunshengtuoluoni shike” Trial research on the pebbles from the fifth and sixth century in Chengdu (1999): 76.
from the text inscribed on them. The earliest known dhāraṇī pillars in China are dated to the late seventh century, not long after the Uṣṇiṣa vijaya sūtra was translated, and appear to have spread rapidly throughout China reaching a peak in the Five Dynasties and early Song periods. They continued to be popular through the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Based on surviving examples the erecting of dhāraṇī pillars appears to have been particularly prominent in Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan during the Tang and Song Dynasties. An inventory of dhāraṇī pillars in Shaanxi province in the 1950s counted some 150 pillars while in Sichuan many dhāraṇī pillars have been unearthed along with other stone statuary at former temple sites.

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376 In 776 Emperor Daizong ordered all monks and nuns in the realm to memorize it by heart and recite the sūtra twenty-one times each day. Lu Jianfu, 178; Liu Shufen, 147, 175.

377 A list of dhāraṇī pillars found in China is given in Inoue Tadashi, The Stone stelea with Thousand Buddhas and Dharani (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1974), cited in Howard (1997), 35 n. 7. In recent decades numerous dhāraṇī pillars have been noted in archaeological reports. One of the more interesting is a dhāraṇī pillar found in Luoyang that is believed to be by the hand of the famed Tang poet and statesmen Bai Juyi, see Wen Yucheng, “Bai Juyi guju chutu jingzhuang 白居易出土的經幢,” SW 3 (2001): 63-65.

378 Over a dozen examples of free-standing dhāraṇī pillars have been found in the vicinity of Chengdu; see Zhu Zhangyi, 73. One pillar dated 866 was found in the Nanhe 南河 river. Another dated 912 was found in the same area. Five other pillars found in the 1950s are described in Yuan Mingsen 袁明森, "Chengdu xijiao faxian Tangdai shike 成都西郊发现唐代石刻," WW 9 (1959): 481-482. Also several free-standing examples were found among the Wanfosi and Longxingsi statuary. In Shaanxi some 140 objects related to the sūtra are listed in a report from the early 1950s; see Shaanxi sheng wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 陕西省文物管理委员会, “Shaanxi sheng suojiande Tang dai jingzhuang 陕西省所见的唐代經幢,” WW 8 (1959): 29-30, 26.
addition to the numerous extant stone monuments inscribed with the *dhāraṇī* many others are also included in ancient collections of epigraphy indicating that the copying and carving of this *dhāraṇī* in stone was widespread.\(^{379}\)

The scripture that contains this *dhāraṇī* became widely popular after it was translated into Chinese by the famous monk Buddhapāli (*Fotuoboli* 佛陀波利), also known as Buddhapali, in the late seventh century.\(^{380}\) According to a well-known legend on a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Wutaishan 五台山 in northern Shanxi, Buddhapāli was instructed by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in the guise of an old man to return to India to bring the text to China.\(^{381}\) However, the sūtra was actually translated before 683, the date the legend records that Buddhapāli brought it to China, but the sūtra did not achieve wide popularity until it was promoted by Buddhapāli during the reign of Wuzetian (r. 684-705).\(^{382}\) After Buddhapāli there were several additional translations of the sūtra and related ritual manuals including

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\(^{379}\) Several examples are given by Zhu Zhangyi, 73. A collection of some 560 are found in Ye Changzhi 叶昌炽, “Wubai jingzhuangguan 五百经幢馆,” *Yushi* 语石, fascicles 3, 4; Wang Huimin (1991), 7. Sixty-six examples dating to the Tang Dynasty are found in Wang Chang 王昶, *Jinshi lai pian* 经幢来篇, fascicles 66, 67.

\(^{380}\) *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛顶尊胜陀罗尼经, T.19.967, translated in 683. There were three other translations done at about the same time as Buddhapāli’s translation: T.19.968, translated in 679 by Du Xingyi 杜行頤, T.19.969, translated in 679 by Divākara (Dipohelu 地坡诃罗), and T.19.970, translated in 688 by Divākara and Huizhi 慧知. Buddhapāli’s biography is included in the *SGSZ*, fascicle 2, T.50.2061.717c-718b.

\(^{381}\) This legend is given in the preface of T.19.967.349b-c and has been translated into French by Étienne Lamotte, “Mañjuśrī,” *T’oung Pao* 48.1-3 (1960): 86-88. The various lore associated with the text and Buddhapāli is discussed by Lu Jianfu, 174-9; Liu Shufen, 167-173.

\(^{382}\) See Lu Jianfu, 178; Liu Shufen, 168.
several by the famous tantric monks of the Tang, Yixing, Śubhākarasimha, Amoghavajra, and in the Song by Dharmadeva. However, the version by Buddhapālita remained preeminent and appears to have been the version of the dhāraṇī inscribed on most dhāraṇī pillars.

The protagonist of the the Uṣṇiṣa vijaya sūtra is a god in Trayastriṃśā Heaven named Susthita (Shanzhu 善住), “Abode of Excellence,” who receives an unexpected prophecy from a mysterious voice that foretells of his eminent death and the unfavorable conditions of his future rebirths in the lower realm of Jambūvidpa. According to the prophecy he will face seven successive rebirths as an animal--pig, dog, jackal, monkey, python, crow, and vulture--and subsequently endure the torments of hell before being reborn in a human body as a destitute blindman. Frightened by his impending future, Susthita asks Indra, the lord of Trayastriṃśā for help. At Indra’s request Śākyamuni teaches a dhāraṇī, which he says can purify all evil paths by eliminating bad karma so that Susthita will not have to endure his prophesied suffering. According to the scripture if this dhāraṇī is recited or written it will spare one from rebirth in the evil destinies. In addition to promising the eradication of karmic retribution (zui 罪)--the result of the moral defilements of past actions--the dhāraṇī is ascribed the power to lengthen ones lifespan and

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383 There are around a dozen texts related to this sūtra in the Taishō canon. These include T.19.971, translated in 710 by Yijing; T.19.973, translated in 722 by Śubhākarasimha; T.19.972, translated by Amoghavajra in 764, and T.19.974A, translated by Fatian 法天.

prevent illness.385 Most importantly, it promises favorable rebirths leading to one’s predication of enlightenment by a Buddha. All of these benefits are granted to Susthita at the end of the scripture.

Not long after Buddhapālita’s translation in 679, stone pillars inscribed with the Buddhośniṣavijaya dhāraṇī were erected throughout China and continued to be popular during the Song Dynasty.386 The basis for depicting the dhāraṇī on “banners” is found in a passage in the scripture that advocates the dissemination and open display of the dhāraṇī.

Where this dhāraṇī dwells, if it is written for distribution, propagated, received and upheld, read and recited, heard and revered, this will cause all evil paths to be purified, and the miseries and sufferings of all hells to be eradicated. If someone could write this dhāraṇī and place it on the top of a tall banner, high mountain or in a tall building or even place it in a stūpa... If there are monks and nuns, upasakas and upsikas, and lay persons who see it a top a banner or one of the above structures; or if being close to these structures so that its shadow should fall on them or particles of dust from the dhāraṇī on top a banner or one of the above structures are blown onto their bodies... Should the accumulated evil karma of these persons cause them to fall into the evil paths, such as the realms of hell, animals, king Yama, hungry ghosts, asuras, and others, they will all be spared from these evil paths, and they will not be tainted with filth and defilement... Instead Buddhas will bestow predictions (vyakarana) onto these persons and they will never regress from the path to complete enlightenment (samyaksambodhi).387

Although the use of stone is not specified in the text it is easy to understand

385 Subrakarasimha’s version adds the promise of providing children to childless couples. T.19.973.374c.

386 The earliest known extant example is dated to 689 and is one of the dhāraṇī pillars given in the 1958 Shaanxi report. The earliest account of the carving of a Zunsheng dhāraṇī sūtra is recorded to have been carved at Løngmen caves in 692, see Subai; WW 9 (1989), 53 n.16; Wen Yucheng (2001), 63.

387 T.19.967.351.b.
the obvious advantage of using a more permanent material to display the dhāraṇī and provide a means to allow future generations to come in contact with it.

The primary mode of presenting the teachings of this sūtra was though the direct display of the text on dhāraṇī pillars. Called “Zunshengjing zhuang 尊勝經 “ or “jingzhuang 经幢,” these pillars were typically free-standing stone monuments and, less frequently, were also carved in relief on the surface of stone slabs or natural rock formations and grottoes. The term zhuang (dhvaja) in fact does not mean “pillar” in a literal sense, but a “victory banner” symbolic of the success of the Buddhist teachings, and knowledge over ignorance. It is believed that the ultimate origins of these pillars was from Indian cloth and silk banners, called dhvaja, or patākā, which were placed in temples and carried in ceremonial processions on raised poles.388 Wang Huimin suggests that one popular form of these banners, which has a tubular shape and is topped by a parasol, may have served as the prototype for stone pillars.389 Eight-sided cloth banners are described as part of the setting of Amitābha’s paradise. These banners are often represented in Chinese tableaux depicting his paradise in the conventional form of dhāraṇī pillars. The connection between the two is not only visual, since many dedications on dhāraṇī pillars express the hope for rebirth in Amitābha’s

388 See Howard, (1997), 34. An early example of these are banners depicted in a Kuśāna period image identified as Amitābha/Amitāyus reproduced in Huntington (1985), 145 fig. 8.24.

389 Wang Huimin (1991), 18. As an example Wang Huimin cites the eight cornered and eight sided banners described in the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra (Guanwuliangshou jing 观无量寿经), T.12 342.342.
paradise, Sukhāvatī. The Uṣṇīṣa vijaya sūtra does not specifically mention Amitābha, but a passage in the sūtra states that those who hear the dhāraṇī will be reborn in “a realm free of temptation and stress (jijing shijie) and after this life they will no longer endure birth from a womb, but instead will be reborn on a lotus flower,” which can be understood as referring to rebirth in Sukhāvatī.

A direct precursor of dhāraṇī pillars are fifth-century small, stone votive stūpas (shi-ta) with sūtra inscriptions that have been found in the western regions of China and Central Asia. These have essentially the same form as later dhāraṇī pillars with multiple sections, images of Buddhas, and usually an octagonal base. Another prototype for the conventional shape and form of dhāraṇī pillars are earlier Chinese stone mortuary monuments, such as shique 石阙 “stone gates or towers” and ornamental pillars (huabiao 华表) which were erected along the spirit roads (shendao 神道) in front of tombs. Since the Uṣṇīṣa vijaya sūtra emphasizes the use of the dhāraṇī for the removal of bad karma to overcome future evil transmigrations dhāraṇī pillars often had a mortuary function similar to

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390 T.19.967.351b.

391 For a study of these stone monuments, see Wang Yi, “Beiliang shita 北凉石塔,” Wenwu ziliao congkan 1 (1977): 179-188. Also see Tsiang (1996), 255-256; Abe, 103-171.

392 The origins of these forms of Chinese mortuary monuments is discussed by Zhao Chao, Zhongguo gudai shike gailun 中国古代石刻概论 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1997), 54. According to Wu Hong in the Six Dynasties period the pillars erected in front of some tombs were derived from Indian prototypes, see Wu Hong, Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 278. Some similarity in form can also be noted to the Soul jars (魂瓶 hunping) popular in the south during the fourth and fifth centuries, which are topped by architectural features.

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their non-Buddhist prototypes. Most pillars were dedicated for the benefit of a deceased person(s) and many where erected near tombs and, less frequently, within tombs.\textsuperscript{393} Recently, in 1995, a well-preserved sandstone block inscribed with the $\text{Uṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī}$ was found in a tomb dated to the Five Dynasties period in the vicinity of Chengdu.\textsuperscript{394} In the same area a number of pillars where found in the middle of the Min river, in the vicinity of Chengdu, where they were placed for the benefit of water spirits and those that died of drowning.\textsuperscript{395}

Numerous examples of $\text{dhāraṇī}$ pillars inscribed with the $\text{Buddhoṣṇiṣavijaya dhāraṇī}$ have been found in Sichuan with many dating to the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods. The seven $\text{dhāraṇī}$ pillars at the Fowan are located on the far northern end of the site. Two are carved as part of multiple niche groups, and all are believed to date to the Five Dynasties period. Relief depictions of $\text{dhāraṇī}$ pillars occur at other cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan, such as at the Huangzesi (Figure 3.83) and Qianfoyan in Guangyuan, the Wofoyuan grotto in Anyue, and the Luohandong in Rongxian, but do not seem to have been as widely popular as the free-standing variety of

\textsuperscript{393} Those placed in front of tombs and are called $\text{muzhuang}$ 殡幢 or $\text{fenzhuang}$ 坟幢. Examples of these are found in Sichuan, especially in the area of Xichang, and in Yunnan. Non-Buddhist funerary texts describe the placement of $\text{dhāraṇī}$ pillars in tombs. See Zhu Zhangyi (1999), 74-5. The Yongling, tomb of Wang Jian reported had $\text{sūtra}$ pillars in front of it; see Zhu Zhangyi (1999), 74.

\textsuperscript{394} This tomb and its contents are described in Chengdushi wenwukaogu gongzuodui, “Chengdu wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 成都市文物考古工作队，“Chengdu wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 成都市文物考古工作队，“Chengdu wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 成都市文物考古工作队，“Chengdu wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 成都市文物考古工作队，“Chengdu wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 成都市文物考古工作队,” SW 3 (1999):100-102. The inscription also includes three shorter $\text{dhāraṇīs}$.\textsuperscript{395} Zhu Zhangyi, 75. One inscription reads: “[This] honored and victorious [dhāraṇī pillar] has been respectfully made and placed in the middle of the river in the river-palace for all water ancestors, dragon spirits, those that have drowned to death, and orphaned spirits with that wish that each use this merit to be born in the Pure Land.”

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dhāraṇi pillars. The relief versions are modeled after their free standing counterparts. Typically the pillars have an octagonal shape and consist of three basic parts: a base consisting of an octagonal platform, a central shaft where the text of the dhāraṇi is inscribed, and a upper spire decorated with architectural features and figures of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The pinnacle of the spire is often capped by an image of a jewel (cintāmaṇi) in a lotus. Larger pillars may have more elaboration, with multiple upper levels, but still maintain the same basic appearance of smaller

Figure 3.83: Niche 6, Huangzesi, Guangyuan. Photo by author, 2001.

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396 A dhāraṇi pillar is inscribed in a Maitreya cave in the Qianfoyan, Guangyuan, and several pillars are carved in niches on a rock outcropping below the Huangzesi site in Guangyuan. These niches are believed to date to the Mid to Late Tang period. The best preserved of these is niche number six, which has the same basic form as those found at the Fowan except that the back of the niche is decorated with low relief carvings, which appear to represent narrative mono-scenes of the story of Mulian目连 (Mahāmaudgalyāyana), who rescued his mother from the underworld. Cave 52 at the Wofoyuan in Anyue has a dhāraṇi pillar relief dated 961; see Zeng Deren (2001), 57. Also the text of the Buddhāsāvatijāya sūtra is included among the sūtras inscribed at the site and found in cave 46; see Peng Jinzhang (1988), 6. Several pillars are found at the Louhandong site in Rongxian. One niche contains an image of Vaiśravaṇa standing next to a pillar, which may serve a dual function of representing the reliquary that Vaiśravaṇa normally holds.
pillars. The dhāraṇī pillars at the Fowan are only a little over a meter high on average. Several are badly damaged but all appear to be of a similar design and were probably created within a few years of each other.

The dhāraṇī pillar in niche 279 is part of a larger multiple-image niche and is the best preserved of the dhāraṇī pillars at the site (Figure 3.84). It will be used here to explain the general form and features of these pillars. The pillars are all carved in high relief with only the upper-most position of the pillars completely detached from the back wall of the niche. In all the niches the surface of the niche is left undecorated except for the depictions of several small standing figures on clouds on the upper lateral walls of the niche. Each cloud contains three figures, a large central figure and two smaller attendants. These figures are all badly worn but, their placement indicates that they may be intended to represent the gods Indra and Sushita or the recipient(s) of the offering.

At the bottom of the pillar is a two-tiered octagonal plinth with the upper torsos of miniature Atlantean figures located on four of the sides of the base of the pillar. These figures face inward and are represented as if emerging from the ground to support the pillar with their muscular arms, like the famous sculpted images in the tomb of Wang Jian in Chengdu. Above this octagonal plinth the base of the pillar narrows and has a circular shape with

397 The largest dhāraṇī pillar in China is found in Zhaoxian 赵县, Hebei. Erected in 1038 the pillar is some eighteen meters high. Zhao Chao, 52.

398 Only three of the pillars have inscribed dates: numbers 260 (dated 945), 279 (dated 955), and 280 (dated 954); see Appendix B numbers 1.61, 1.64, and 1.67. Based on the topology of the other pillars in relation to the dated ones, they where probably all created about the same time in the Former Shu period.

399 The NRZL, 426, incorrectly identifies these figures as Buddhas.
intertwined dragons carved in relief. Above the dragons, the top of the base of pillar widens out and has four seated figures representing the four Guardian Kings (Caturmaharājikas; Sitianwang 四天王). The Guardian Kings are interlocutors in the Uṣṇīṣa vijaya sūtra, but their depiction here is part of the symbolism to convey a microcosm of the Buddhist universe. They are located at the base of the pillar as defined by their cosmological position on the side peaks of Mount Meru, below the higher spiritual realms and above the cosmic ocean symbolically represented by the intertwined dragons. The four

The Guardian Kings are also in charge of the four elements (mahābhūta)--air, water, earth, and fire, which form the fundamental constituents of the Buddhist universe.
Guardian Kings are indistinguishable from one another and are seated western style with pendant legs on a ledge. Behind them are two rows of upturned lotus petals forming the seat of the main shaft of the pillar.

The main shaft is octagonal, and the text of the dhāraṇī is carved on the front-facing three sides. In this pillar the inscribed dhāraṇī is badly worn and only partially legible. A comparison of the five pillars at the Fowan that still have portions of the inscribed dhāraṇī still legible reveals that they all follow the standardized version based on Buddhapālita’s translation, which appears to be the version used for other dhāraṇī pillars in Sichuan.\textsuperscript{401} However, each of the inscriptions has some minor variations in the use of characters to represent the phonetic sounds of the dhāraṇī, indicating that they were not copied from a single printed text.\textsuperscript{402} Some of the dhāraṇī inscriptions are accompanied by donor inscriptions, with the name of the donor or the intended beneficiary of the offering inserted within the text of the dhāraṇī.\textsuperscript{403}

Protecting the dhāraṇī inscription is an overhanging roof structure acting as a chattra, or umbrella, to separate the main shaft of the pillar from the upper spire. On the underside of this roof, flying apsarases are carved in low relief and form a ring around the pillar’s shaft. Above the overhanging roof, is a section of swirling clouds surmounted by a second layer of clouds with small, seated Buddha figures on each of the eight corners (only six are represented). Behind and between the small Buddhas figures are five larger

\textsuperscript{401} Zhu Zhangyi (1999), 73.

\textsuperscript{402} I also compared the inscriptions with the published transcriptions of other dhāraṇī pillars in the region and found good correspondence with all those I compared.

\textsuperscript{403} See Appendix B numbers 1.61 and 1.63.
Buddhas, one on each side of the pillar. These Buddhas are intended to convey the notion of spiritually lofty Buddha Lands generated through the meritorious achievement of this dhāraṇī. A ring of eight outwardly projecting lotus petals form a canopy above the Buddhas. Above the ring of lotuses petals there is an eight sided pavilion, which represents the palace on top of mount Meru. On each side of the pavilion are smaller architectural structures and between them are small roundels with seated images of Buddhas. On top of the roof of the pavilion there is a lotus with two rows of upturned pedals holding a round cintāmani jewel from which a thin spire extends to the center of a lotus represented in low relief on top the niche.

The same general format is used for dhāraṇī pillars elsewhere. The design is obviously intended to convey a microcosm of the Buddhist world system, symbolically leading to more lofty realms and ultimately enlightenment symbolized by the jewel in a lotus at the top of the pillar. The purpose of these pillars was to provide protection and expunge bad karma, but moreover with the ultimate goal to achieve rebirth in the western paradise of Sukhāvatī, which is symbolized by the lotus above the top of many of the dhāraṇī pillar niches.\(^{404}\)

The damaged conditions of the inscriptions on the Fowan pillars provide limited information about the sponsorship of the pillars at the site. Of the five pillars with inscriptions, niche 260 has the most completely legible text of the dhāraṇī and includes a line indicating that it was made with the wish that the deceased mother of the donors would “forever ascend to the Pure

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\(^{404}\) Zhu Zhangyi (1999), 73.
A more interesting and informative inscription on a dhāraṇi pillar is found at the former site of the Dazhongsi temple in eastern Dazu that was located on an important roadway. Dated 1052, the inscription on this pillar provides the dhāraṇi followed by a lengthy explanation of the reason for its creation as atonement for the crimes of the deceased husband and father of the donors, who appears to have been a sort of local thug. Since the inscription details the reasons for the sponsorship of the pillar and the hoped outcomes I translate the inscription below.

The female disciple née Wang, her sons Luo Xiang and Luo Tai, along with others of our family who have suffered a series of difficulties in recent years. We fear the cause of this is that in the past Luo Chao with his brothers used officials to divide the ancestral lands, which we fear was not done evenly because there was evil intent among them to take all that is above heaven and below the earth. Therefore, Luo Chao had in the past conspired with Luo Guiji, Luo Shanwu, Luo Xingye to hire Yang Heijiu to kill the third daughter. For the act of this crime he obtained money the heavenly spirits were offered a banquet and incantations were recited. Again, in the past Luo Chao stole from Yang Yan and Zhang Shuijie of Changzhou and brought them to ruin, which caused earlier people (the previous generation?) to invoke the heavenly spirits with the offering of a banquet and the reciting of incantations. For the reason that Lou Chao in the past killed Li Zan’s mule and stole a pig’s head from Liu Zhen, the earlier people invoked the heavenly spirits with the offering of a banquet and the reciting of incantations. Again, previously Luo Chao in the past set fire and burnt down Li Congtai’s house I, myself invoked the heavenly spirits with the offering a banquet. Politely requested that fearing that those of the Wang family who have been victimized and killed and fearing that for many years the entire family will suffer and face difficulties. The evil demons

See Appendix B, number 1.61; MWL 20, number 26.

This pillar, artifact number 36, is one of two broken fragments of dhāraṇi pillars dating to the eleventh century found at the site. These artifacts are reported in Deng Zhijin (1989), 48-52. This inscription is also significant in that it provides the earliest name of an artisan in Dazu.
retreat and return, whenever we butcher we made offerings of four legged and two legged animals. This has caused those of the present to vow to create this pillar for merit to have good benefits and to save harbor the day that he who committed the former crimes as well as for the fate of those butchered and murdered so that each will have the good power to be born among men or to be born in heaven. In the future, my sons and daughters with née Wang, mother and sons, make this complete repentance on the tenth day of the eleventh month in the fourth year of the huangyou reign era. Erected by née Wang, her sons Luo Xiang, Luo Tai, and their new brides née Wang and née Zhao, granddaughters Daniang, Sanniang, grandsons Bajun, Shijun, jun. Carved by Wen Chang and his sons, Weijian and Weiyi.

The inscription makes clear that the intentions of the donors were to offer the pillar and the performance of memorial ceremonies to expurgate the bad karma of a deceased family member and bless those that were his victims. The Fowan dhāraṇī pillars do not provide the same detailed accounts, but at least two were offered by families. These two dhāraṇī pillars, number 279 and 281, are part of multi-niche groups that included images of Kṣitigarbha, Bhaisajyaguru, and the seven mānuṣi Buddhas. Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang have suggested that these units represent the teachings of the Three Stages school (Sanjiejiao 三阶教), but provides no explanation. These probably should be better understood as lay offerings intended as a unit to provide for the benefit of current and future members of the family without any particular sectarian affiliation.

407 Based on the transcription in the MWL, 471. I would like to thank Tianshu Zhu for her suggestions to improve my translation of this inscriptions. Any errors that remain are my own.

408 Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang, (1988), 38. This school does not appear to have still been a viable entity in the period when these niches were carved. Aspects about the repudiation of sins were already a part of the general Mahāyāna practice of China at that time.
According to the *Uṣṇīṣa vijaya sūtra* banners with the inscription should be displayed on mountain tops. In respect to that passage the carving of the seven *dhāraṇī* pillars at the Fowan near the summit of Beishan makes perfect sense. Moreover, as all but one of the pillars are carved on the western face of the cliff those who visited the site in the morning would have been cast in the shadows of these pillars. Although, aesthetically somewhat mundane the numbers of pillars at the site and elsewhere in Sichuan indicate that the patronage of *dhāraṇī* pillars was an important part of devotional practices and much in keeping with the character of Buddhism in Sichuan that emphasizes the mystical and magical power of Buddhism infused with Pure Land beliefs. The next section will discuss one of the few esoteric deities found at the site that does not have at least some nominal, if not overt, link to aspirations of rebirth in a Pure Land. This deity, Acala, is intimately connected to the systematized esoteric rituals of the Tang.

### 3.14 Imagery of Acalanātha, “the immovable one”

Acalanātha, or Acala, is a wrathful (*krodha, fennu* 怒) manifestation of the *dharmakāya* Buddha Vairocana and an important esoteric deity especially associated with rites of purification. In that role Acala is given the task of aiding in the removal of obstacles and hindrances to physical well-being and the attainment of enlightenment. The name Acala, meaning literally “the immovable one” (*budong* 不动), is symbolic of his function to

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protect and “hold the ground” of consecrated ritual space so that it is not overtaken by impure forces either in the form of external supernatural threats or internal ones brought on by the mind of the adept.\textsuperscript{410} As an emanation of Mahāvairocana (Dapiluzhena 大毗卢遮那), Acala is one of a class or group of super-mundane beings known as \textit{vidyārājas} (“brilliant light [wisdom] king,” \textit{mingwang}, 明王) who represent the transcendent wisdom (\textit{vidyā}) of enlightened beings and personify \textit{dhāranī}. As such the \textit{vidyārājas} are not mere protectors of the Buddhist \textit{dharma} (teachings), but are understood to be fully enlightened beings who use their wrath as a transformative tool to destroy the mental impediments of ignorance, anger, and passion, and to engender wisdom and compassion. Among the \textit{vidyārājas} that occur in East Asian esoteric Buddhism Acala is one of most prominent because of his role in preparatory rites (\textit{bandhaya-sīman}) and by his frequent mention in important esoteric scriptures, as well as his appearance in standardized sets of \textit{vidyārājas}.\textsuperscript{411}

\textsuperscript{410} Linrothe, 152; T.18.848.5a, \textit{Dapilushuna chengfo shenbian jiachi jing} 大毗卢遮那成佛神变加持经 (\textit{Mahāvairocana abhisambodhi vikurvitādhithāna vaipulya sūtra}), translated by Yixing and Subhakarasimha (725). This text has been translated by Yamamoto Chikyō, \textit{Mahāvairocana sūtra} (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 1990).

\textsuperscript{411} The \textit{vidyārājas} occur in several groups. Five \textit{vidyārājas} make up the Hall of Mantra Holders of the \textit{Garbhadhatu mandala}, which is based on the \textit{Mahāvairocana Sūtra}. Another set of eight is derived from the \textit{Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa} (\textit{Da fangguang pusa zang Wenshushili genben yigui jing} 大方广菩萨藏文殊利根本仪轨经), T.21.1191, which was translated by Tianxicai in 983. A Tang text translated by Damoxina 达摩栖那 called the \textit{Damiao jingang da tianlu juncha liman yan man zhishengfoding jing} 大妙金刚大天露军拿利焰熖炽盛佛顶经, T.19.965, describes a group of eight \textit{vidyārājas} as manifestations of the eight great bodhisattvas. In this text Acala is appropriately a manifestation of the bodhisattva Chugaizhang 除盖障 (Disposer of Hindrances), T.19.965.341a. According to Song Langqiu, 51, 55, another set of ten is given in a text translated in the Song Dynasty by Faxian called the \textit{Fo shuo huanhuagang da yujia jiaohi fennu da ming guanxiang yigui jing}. 佛说华严大瑜伽教十忿怒明王大明观想仪轨经.
The important position of Acala in esoteric rites is evident from the numerous images and rituals associated with Acala in the Shingon school, the major Japanese offshoot of Chinese esoteric Buddhism of the Tang Dynasty. However, few images of Acala are found in the central areas of China dating to Tang and Song times.\textsuperscript{412} The absence of imagery of Acala, like other esoteric deities, may have been the result of the secrecy and ritual focus of his worship, which limited the dissemination of his image in the public view. Besides a few free-standing images, the only notable examples of images of Acala are found at several cliff sculpture sites in Yunnan and Sichuan. These include several sets of eight and ten \textit{vidyārājas} found at two sites associated with the Nan Zhao Kingdom (650-902) at Jianchuan 剑川 (Yunnan) and Boshenwahei 博什瓦黑, near modern Xichang 西昌 (Sichuan), and two other sets found at the Baodingshan complex in Dazu.\textsuperscript{413} Also in Sichuan an image of Acala is found in

\textsuperscript{412} One image of Acala dated to the Tang was among the ten marble images unearthed in 1959 at the former site of the Anguosi 安国寺 temple in Xian and now kept in the Forest of Stelae Museum, Xian. Another stone image of Acala dated to the second half of the seventh century is located in the Field Museum, Chicago. Both images are discussed by Park Hyounggook 朴亨国, "Osaka Kongoji no Kongokai Dainichi, Fudo, Gozanze no sanso keishiki ni kan suru ichi kōsatsu 大阪金刚寺の金堂金刚界大日不动, 降三世の三尊形式に关する一考察," \textit{Bukkyō Geijustu [Ars Buddhica] }240 (September 1998): 35-72. Images of \textit{vidyārājas} found at Dunhuang are discussed by Michele Soymie, "Notes d'iconographie bouddhique: Des Vidyārāja de Touenhouang," \textit{Cahiers d'Extreme-Asie} 3 (1987): 9-26.

\textsuperscript{413} A study of the images of \textit{vidyārājas} at these sites and a comparative analysis of the imagery at the Nanzhao sites, dating to approximately the ninth century, and the late eleventh to early twelfth century site of Baodingshan has been done by Angela F. Howard, "The Eight Brilliant Kings of Wisdom of Southwest China," \textit{RES} 35 (Spring 1999): 92-108; and in Chinese by Song Langqui 宋朗秋, "Dazu Baodingshan yu Jianchuan Shizhongshan shi da, ba da mingwang de bijiao yanjou 大足宝顶山与剑川石钟山十大，八大明王的比较研究," \textit{DHY} (1999): 51-59.
a niche at the Pantuosi 盘陀寺 site just outside Qionglai. In that niche, which is dated to the ninth century, Acala is depicted along with another important *vidyārāja*, Trailokyavijaya (Xiangsanshi 降三世), “Conquer of the Three Worlds” (ie. Desire, Form, and Formlessness), as an attendant to the Buddha Mahāvairocana.

The Fowan site provides one rare example of an image of Acala depicted as the central icon of an image niche at a Chinese cliff sculpture site. This image is located in a relatively small niche, number 56 (.72 x .56 x .17 meters), on the north face of a small overhang on the south end of the site, dated to the Five Dynasties Period (Figure 3.85). The subject matter of this niche has been identified by most Chinese scholars as the bodhisattva Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. However, the iconography of this niche, which will be explained below, indicates clearly that the central image is intended to

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414 A study of the imagery in this niche through a comparative analysis of its iconography with related imagery in Japan has been done by Park (1998).

415 The name Trailokyavijaya has a double meaning, also refering to the overcoming of the three mental poisons: desire, anger, and ignorance. The source of this iconography is a ritual manual translated by Śubrākarasimha entitled *Ritual Methods for Practicing Yoga of the Honored Victorious Buddha’s Top Knot* (Zunsheng foding xiu yujia fa guiyi 尊胜佛顶修瑜伽法轨仪), T.19.973.381c. The pertinent passage describing the *mandala* has been translated by Ten Grotenhuis, 105-6. Both Acala and Trailokyavijaya are mentioned together several times in the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* and are ascribed similar functions especially in the role of purification and securing the borders of the ritual space; see Linrothe, 151-2.

416 Another image has been identified as Acala at the Qianfozhai grotto, Anyue, niche 52; see Tang Chengyi 唐承义, “Qianfo zhai moya zaoxiang 千佛寨摩崖造像,” *SW* 2 (1989), 37. The niche is badly eroded and features is a single large standing image of a protective deity that holds a sword across his chest. The image is too damaged to identify, but doesn’t appear to represent the standard typology for Acala.

417 The only alternative identification has been given in *DSDS*, vol. 1, 9, which more correctly identifies the image as a *mingwang* (*vidyārāja*).
represent the *vidyārāja* Acala, not Amoghapāśa. In addition to this image, niche number 47 at the Fowan (Figure 3.86), which is also dated to the Five Dynasties period, and an image of a wrathful six-armed deity in the interior sixth floor of the Duobaota pagoda, number 70 (Figure 2.50), have been identified by Chinese scholars as representing Acala. The iconography of these two images can be conclusively used to support their identification as Acala. Instead, the later image in the Duobaota, which doesn’t conform to standard representations of Acala, may represent a Daoist deity, probably Tianpeng Yuanshi 天蓬元帅 who is depicted at other Song sites in Dazu, or a localized variant of Ucchusma (Wubinisha 乌鲁)).

\[\text{Figure 3.85: Overview, niche 56, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.}\]

\[\text{418 Sorensen (1989), 6, 18 n. 21, believes that the later figure represents the Vidyārāja Ucchusma. I am more inclined to believe that it may represent a Daoist divinity or a syncretic deity, since nearby in niche 75 the Daoist deity Marshel Wen and a multi-armed companion deity are depicted.}\]
The iconography of niche 49 is equally obscure and lacks any of the specific iconographic characteristics of Acala.

The primary scripture that describes Acala and his position in the ritualized methodologies of esoteric Buddhism is the *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, which was described briefly in the first section of this chapter. Acala appears several times in the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* along with *dhāranīs*, *mudrās*, and rituals associated with him. In chapter three on the “Cessation of Hindrances” of the *Mahāvairocana sūtra*, the role of Acala in removing mental obstacles, the result of karmic debt, is revealed by the Buddha Mahāvairocana while in *samādhi* (deep mental concentration):

Obstacles derive from one’s own mind, following from past parsimonious actions. In order to rid oneself of the causes, meditate on the *bodhicitta* (the seed or thought of enlightenment)....Often one should think of Acala Mahāsattva, and making his secrete *mudrā*, one can do way with all obstructions... Next I should explain how to put a stop to all obstructions. Meditate on the *dhārani* of great fierceness, that of Acala-Mahābala. Reside (one’s mind) in his original *maṇḍala*.

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419 This figure has six arms and three heads. The primary hands hold a *pāsa* and *pustaka*, and the secondary hands hold a trident, *ghantā*, sword, and mace. A four-armed form of Tianpeng Yuanshi is depicted in niche 3 at Shuchengyan, Dazu and holds a noose, sword, axe, and seal; see *DSDS*, vol. 4, 119. The identification of the figures as Ucchusma is suggested by Sorensen (1989), 6, in relation to a similar multi-limbed wrathful deity in niche 13 at Yuanjuedong, Anyue. However the iconography of the two figures it not precisely the same.
It is as if the adept himself was in the center or else sees this image [of Acala]... these obstructions will be destroyed; having been stopped they will not be produced.  

A commentary of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* by Yixing 行 and Śubhakarasimha further explains how the adept is to mediate on Acala and visualize himself as the deity physically stamping out mental obstructions. These obstructions, according to Yixing, are avarice and desire within the mind of the practitioner. Acala is equated with the omniscient wisdom of the “Great Mind of Enlightenment” that will put these obstructions to an end. The obstructions that Acala removes are both external and internal, as is made clear in a ritual manual entitled the *Trisamaya Rāja Krodharāja Acala Dūtasādhana Vidhi*, translated by Amoghavajra in 774. If the rituals to Acala described in this text are done in the prescribed manner the text promises all sorts of benefits for the adept, including the creation of an aphrodisiac, the subjugation of evil doers, and the immobilization of enemy armies. Amoghavajra apparently put this into practice by performing ceremonies to Acala to aid in the effort of the Tang court to put down the Anlushan rebellion.

420 T.18.848.13. Linrothe, 152.

421 T.39.1796.679, 大毗卢遮那成佛経疏 Da bilushuna cheng fo jingshu (Commentary on the *Mahāvairocana* sûtra), by Yixing 行.

422 T.39.1796.679b; Linrothe, 153.


The appearance of Acala is described in several different passages in the *Mahāvairocana sūtra.* The descriptions of Acala in these passages are essentially identical. In the second chapter, which describes the primary *maṇḍala* of the sūtra, Acala is identified as the servant/messenger (*cetā, shi* 使) of the Tathāgata and is to be depicted below the primary image in the southwest position:

He holds a sword of discrimination and a *pāśa*. His hair falls from the top of his head onto his left shoulder and he has one eye that squints intently. His awe-inspiring and wrathful body emanates flames as he sits serenely on a round rock. His forehead is wrinkled like waves, but his form is that of a completely filled youth.

The appearance of the image in niche 56 at the Fowan corresponds with the standard representation of Acala with some minor variations (Figure 3.87). The main image is depicted seated on a mound of rocks in the position of *lalitāsana* with the right leg pendant. As described in the passage just quoted from the *Mahāvairocana sūtra* a rock instead of a more customary lotus or *sumeru* base is used as Acala’s seat. The rock on which he is seated signifies the massive weight of hindrances that press one down from developing higher awareness and the immovability of the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) that ontrasts to the constant flux and fickle of the realm of *samsāra.* In low relief on the back wall of the niche behind the figure is a large flaming (*jvāla*) aureole. This flaming aureole is distinctive

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426 See T.18.848.7b, 23b.

427 T.18.848.23b, Linrothe 153, (note,in footnote 15 page 160, he mistakes this passage for one on page 7b, which gives a similar but more abbreviated description of Acala.

428 Lokesh Chandra, *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography,* vol.1, (New Dephi: Aditya Prakashan and International Academy of Indian Culture, 1999), 32-3
from depictions of the aureoles of other divinities at the site where the flames are usually limited to an outer band. Unlike the flames in the aureoles of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, which are intended as a visual device to convey the emanation of effulgence as a mark of divinity, Acala is described as emanating flames, which signifies purification and the burning of illusions. The left hand of the main image in niche 56 holds a loop of chord (pāśa) that, like Acala’s weight pressing down on his rocky seat, signifies the binding and subduing of ignorance and passion. The attribute in the right hand has been broken off but undoubtedly held a sword (khadga), the primary samaya (symbolic attribute) of Acala that represents wisdom (prajñā) and the severing of passions and hindrances. Acala is depicted with a heavy-set body with broad shoulders, and his face has a snarling grimace and a pair of bulging eyes. As an image of Acala, the image is somewhat
unusual in that it doesn’t have a hair braid on the left shoulder, and that he wears a large crown that appears like a military helmet.

The two child-like attendants with large round heads can be identified as the two chief attendants of Acala, Cetaka (Zhiduoqia tongzi 制多罗) and Kinkara (Jinjieluo 稽羯罗), who serve as Acala’s page boys. Both stand barefooted on small rocky mounds and wear knee-length skirts. On the right, the figure who holds vertically a cylindrical object, possibly a vajra, represents Cetaka (Figure 3.88). The opposite figure, representing Kinkara, is more badly damaged and appears to hold an object horizontally in front of his chest. A smaller third figure is located on a cloud that emerges from the flaming aureole behind Acala on the right side of the niche (Figure 3.89). Carved in low relief, the surface of this small image is badly weathered; however, it is recognizable as a bodhisattva or adorned Buddha seated in padmasana with a lotus-petal shaped aureole and is unlike similar figures representing deceased patrons on clouds ascending to heaven depicted in relief on other niches at the site. On first glance the
hands of this figure appear to be held in front of the chest in the devotional
gesture of añjali mudrā. But on closer inspection the right hand appears to be
clenching the left fist, which seems to be turned palm-inward with the
forefinger extended. The mudrā formed by this gesture is the vajra or
knowledge fist mudrā (zhiquanyin 智拳印) specifically associated with
Mahāvairocana and representing the knowledge and principle of Vairocana’s
enlightened state of being. This mudrā suggest that this small figure may
be intended to represent Mahāvairocana as the emanating spiritual source of
Acala, or a portrait of an adept in the ritual process of visualizing himself as
the deity.

This depiction of Acala at the site is an important artifact of esoteric
Buddhism indicating that rites to Acala were still practiced in the tenth
century during the Five Dynasties period in the area. Images of Acala are not
often encountered in China, so it is somewhat fortuitous that niche 56
features an image of Acala since niche 47, which has been identified
previously as representing Acala, has proven to be suspect. Moreover, by not
identifying the iconography of niche 56 with Amoghapāśa, the other images of
Amoghapāśa at the site have a great deal more conformity.

3.15 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the iconographies of eleven different
Buddhist deities and objects, which represent images in some forty-two
different niches and excavated caves at the Fowan site. This imagery belongs
to the general typological category of Chinese esoteric Buddhism, an overtly

429 For a discussion of this mudrā and is symbolism, see Saunders, 102-107.
ritualistic tradition within Chinese Mahāyana Buddhism with a distinctive subset of teachings and ritual practices that assert to provide a means for the rapid realization of enlightenment and the acquisition of transcendental powers for spiritual and worldly benefit though ritual experience. Images are important to the practice of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition because they serve as focal points in ritual practices, as conduits for invoking psycho-spiritual forces, and as aids in meditative processes. Esoteric Buddhism came to prominence in China in the early to mid-Tang period under the patronage of several Chinese emperors as part of their ritual regime to support and protect the country (*hu guo* 护国). At that time the core texts of the tradition were translated into Chinese and promulgated by a series of prominent masters, and something of a nascent school/lineage (*zong* 宗) emerged. After the string of revolts that rocked the Tang government during the later half of the Tang Dynasty and the suppression of Buddhism in the mid-eighth century, the tradition became more dispersed and, in the opinion of some, completely defunct. There is, however, enough evidence from historical documents and material objects to indicate a continued interest in esoteric Buddhism after the Tang in some areas of China. The relatively large numbers of imagery related to esoteric Buddhism found at the Fowan and other sites in Sichuan indicate the continued popularity of a number of esoteric deities. Although the complete religious and ritual contexts for this imagery cannot be reconstructed to determine the extent to which this imagery was viewed as distinctive from other imagery at these sites, it is

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430 Although recent scholarship has tended to reassess the later generalization it is still an often cited conclusion. For a recent example, see Richard C. Folts, *Religions of the Silk Road.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 53.
sufficient to indicate that the veneration of esoteric deities formed an important component of the matrix of beliefs of those who patronized the Fowan and similar sites. As such, it probably emphasized the aspects of these deities to provide material and spiritual blessings, not the complex meditative aspects of esoteric Buddhism.

In the study of these eleven iconographies I have attempted to provide a comprehensive account of the esoteric imagery at the Fowan site and the relationship of that imagery to materials elsewhere within and outside of the region of Sichuan. Each iconography was approached individually, and the canonical literature associated with each deity, as well as the general historical development of each iconography, was described. This examination has shown that, for the most part, the imagery at the site is reflective of the relative popularity of the same imagery found elsewhere in the region or noted in historical documents such as the YZMHL. When possible and relevant, I have tried though the use of historical documents, epigraphy, and the interpretation of the imagery itself to shine some light on the historical context for this imagery, the patrons, and the patrons’ motivations for commissioning it. Based on this general analysis it is evident that patronage of this esoteric imagery involved a number of general religious concerns, the foremost of which were to provide protection, prosperity, and aid in the striving for rebirth in a Buddhist paradise.

In regards to the chronology of this imagery, it is evident that esoteric imagery remained to some extent important throughout the history of the site. Imagery affiliated with Esoteric Buddhism at the site that dates to the late Tang consists of four images. These include two images of the Thousand-
handed Avalokiteśvara, one of Vaiśravaṇa, and one of Cintāmaṇicakra Avalokiteśvara. In the Five Dynasties period esoteric imagery is more numerous. The esoteric subject matter found in this period at the site includes images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, Vaiśravaṇa, the Buddha Tejaprabha, Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, Acala, and Uṣṇiṣavijaya dhāraṇī pillars. The latter is the most prominent, with seven examples. Esoteric imagery is most abundant in the Song period. The most common esoteric deity at the site in the Song Dynasty is Amoghapāśa, which occurs in nine niches. Others esoteric subject matter dated to the Song occurs only in single niches and includes imagery of the Buddha Tejaprabha, Marici, Mahāmayūri, Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, and Cintamaṇicakra. Many of these are featured in relatively large-sized niches and caves, which is indicative of their importance.
CHAPTER 4

ICONOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF PURE LAND IMAGERY AT
THE FOWAN CLIFF SCULPTURE SITE

Abstract

A large portion of the imagery at the Fowan site can be related to the concerns of Pure Land Buddhism. The objective of this chapter is to provide a more careful reading of the iconography of this imagery to explain its buddhalogic content and significance in relation to the patronage of the site. The chapter discusses the important conventionalized Pure Land iconographies found at the site, but also suggests the sources and intended meanings of a number of variant and unique iconographies that are featured at the site.

This chapter discusses the iconographies of six different Buddhist divinities found at the Fowan site and affiliated explicitly or implicitly with Pure Land Buddhism. The iconographies to be discussed include three Buddhas (Amitābha, Maitreya, and Bhaisajyaguru), two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Ksitigarbha), and the semi-divine monk Sengqie who is considered a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. As a group these represent an important cross-section of popular deities within mainstream Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism and those associated with Pure Land Buddhist beliefs in China. The iconographies discussed in this chapter occur in over eighty niches/caves at the Fowan site, indicating that subject matter related to Pure Land Buddhism was a dominant theme of imagery at the site and the focal
point of the local religious matrix that sponsored this imagery. The relatively large amount of imagery related to Pure Land Buddhism is not unique to this site and was the major theme of cliff sculpture sites in China from its inception.

The importance of Pure Land Buddhism as a major religious orientation, especially for laity in Chinese Buddhism, and a dominant theme in Chinese Buddhist art is widely recognized. In modern scholarship Pure Land Buddhism is often taken to refer solely to the cultic practices and beliefs associated with the Buddha Amitābha, which follows from how the Chinese term for Pure Land, “jingtu 净土,” was overtly understood since the Tang Dynasty.¹ In this study, however, a more inclusive view of Pure Buddhism is adopted to facilitate the discussion of the imagery at the site. The view adopted by this study is to understand the general taxonomy of Pure Land Buddhism as a major substrata of beliefs within popular Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. Pure Land Buddhism properly includes a host of other divinities in addition to Amitābha that belong to a broad base of related, and often mutual, beliefs and practices focusing on the wish for the future attainment of rebirth in a Pure Land or on receiving the blessings of a divinity associated with a Pure Land. For that reason a broader more inclusive definition of Pure Land Buddhism is adopted for this study over the more narrowly focused conventional treatment of Pure Land Buddhism as affiliated solely with the

Before discussing each of the Pure Land iconographies found at the Fowan site I would like to first introduce some of the essential concepts and distinctions concerning Pure Land Buddhism in China so that the iconographies can be discussed more clearly as parts of a related manifold of popular devotionalism and cultic practices. Since the historical development of Pure Land Buddhism in China is best discussed in relation to the cults of specific deities rather than as a general normative tradition, the historical aspects of Pure Land Buddhism in China will be included in the subsequent sections on individual iconographies.

1. Introductory overview of Pure Land Buddhism in China

The term Pure Land Buddhism is used in this study to refer to a general subset of beliefs and cultic practices within Mahāyāna Buddhism that are directed at the goal of obtaining rebirth in a Buddha Land (Buddha-kṣetra; fōguo 佛国) as well as the devotion to divinities who aid in the attainment of that goal. These Buddha Lands can include our own world at certain times, but are primarily understood as separate extraterrestrial world systems (lokadhātu) that are often described as paradisiacal realms,

In a recent article Jan Nattier has adopted a similar, more inclusive definition of Pure Land Buddhism; see “The Realm of Akṣobhya: A Missing Piece in the History of Pure Land Buddhism,” The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies 23,1 (2000), 74-5. The definition adopted in my study is more inclusive than her definition, which is limited to Buddhas in world systems other than our own and wavers on the issue of Maitreya's future earthly paradise as an aspect of Pure Land Buddhism.

The term Pure Land has no Sanskrit antecedent and appears to have originated in China. It possibly may be a derivation of the term ksetra-vyuha (field-array); see Nattier (2000), 73-4 n. 6. Although the term is linked to Amitābha it was not applied to his paradise-like realm until the eighth century. Kenneth K. Tanaka, The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yuan’s Commentary on the Visualization Sutra (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 189.
which to varying degrees, can be infinitely better than the general human condition of the ancient world, and in which one will experience relatively few, if any, discomforts and unhappiness. They are called “Pure Lands” in the sense that they are purified by the presence of a Buddha whose accumulated karmic rewards make them free of negative qualities. The aspirant who is fortunate to be reborn into one of these realms will not only experience its physical splendors but, more importantly, will be privileged to enter a stage of non-retrogression (avaivartika; bu tuizhuan 不退转) and be guaranteed the eventual realization of perfect enlightenment (samyaksambodhi; sanyesanputi 三耶三菩提, or dengjue 等觉) by virtue of living in the presence of a Buddha who teaches the dharma.

Aspects of Pure Land beliefs can be traced to the early substratum of Mahāyāna Buddhism in South Asia. Scriptures concerning ideas about Pure Land Buddhas were among some of the earliest scriptures translated into Chinese. The notion of being reborn in a paradise in the next life had great appeal in China since there were already established beliefs in terrestrial

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4 Except for the paradise of Tu≈ita, discussed below, these “realms” are not heavens in the conventional sense, but represent separate world systems much like other galaxies outside our own.

5 Tanaka, 1.

6 See Huntington (1985), 146, 632. See especially note 18, page 632, which points out the importance of paradisiacal beliefs in early Buddhist texts as well as precursors in ancient Indic literature.

7 The earliest scriptures include the Pratyutpanna samādhi sūtra (Banzhouansmeijing 般舟三昧经, T.13.418) translated by Lokakśema in c.a.179 C.E., and the Aksobhyavyūha (Achufogou jing 殊阿弥陀国经), T.11.313, also translated by Lokakśema around 186 C.E. The earliest of the core texts concerning the Pure Land of Amitābha first appeared shortly later in the first half of the third century.
paradises such as that of the Queen Mother of the West (Xiwangmu 西王母) at Mount Kunlun 昆仑 in the west and the mythical land of Penglai 蓬莱 inhabited by immortals in the east.\(^8\) Pure Land beliefs were also spurred by the concept of the decline of the *dharma* within the general Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. This concept had considerable significance within Chinese Buddhism and is related to the notion that in the present age, in the absence of a mortal (*mānuṣī*) Buddha, salvation requires the external help of the *karmic* merit of a transcendental Buddha or bodhisattva, because the teachings have become degenerate and insufficient for religious achievement except for a select few.\(^9\) These beliefs were manifested in two primary devotional forms, one being the devotion to a Buddha of the future who will usher in a future golden age on earth and the other being the devotion to Buddhas of transcendental realms that exist for the most part outside the cycle of religious decline.

There are conceptually a countless number of Pure Lands, each presided over by a Buddha; however, only a few have caught the imagination

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\(^9\) It was a generally held notion that the *dharma* (Buddhist teachings) goes through three stages, known as *zhengfa* 正法 when the teachings are pure, *xiangfa* 像法 when the teachings have only a semblance of truth, and *mofa* 末法 when the teachings become extinct. Chinese Buddhists often perceived themselves as being on the threshold of the later stages, and this had repercussions for how they approached their devotional practices. For an authoritative study on the origins and evolution of this concept, see Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1991).
of the Buddhist faithful and are discussed in any great detail in Buddhist scriptures. In East Asia, Pure Land Buddhism is primarily centered around the cult of the Buddha Amitābha (Amituo fo 阿弥陀佛) who presides over the Buddha-kṣetra called Sukhāvati (jilesijie 极乐世界), “Land of Bliss,” located an unimaginable physical distance to the west of our world-realm. The Buddha Amitābha was known in China since at least the third century, but his cult did not take its fully developed form until around the sixth century, after which time it had a dominant position in Chinese devotional Buddhism and developed into a quasi-sectarian tradition.10 Another Buddha of some importance to the early phases of devotional Buddhism in China was the Buddha Akṣobhya (Budongfo 不动佛), who presides over the Pure Land of Abhirati (Miaoxi 妙喜), the land of “Profound Joy,” located in the remote east.11 The teachings of the primary scriptures regarding his worship not only explain how one can be born in his realm but also advocate devotees to emulate Akṣobhya and create Pure Lands of their own. Although Akṣobhya is featured in a number of early texts translated into Chinese his cult never caught the full imagination of the Chinese Buddhist community and was superseded by a focus on Amitābha’s paradise, which shares many of the

10 One of the often-quoted indications for the ascendancy of Amitābha over other Buddhist divinities is the increased numbers of images of Amitābha over those of Śākyamuni and Maitreya at Longmen after the mid seventh century; see Ch‘en (1964), 171-2. The ascendancy of Amitābha should in part be credited to the monk Shandao 謝道 (613-681), who was prominent at the Tang court and appointed by Empress Wu to oversee the construction of the massive Buddha group of the Fengxiansi at Longmen.

11 For a recent study of this Buddha that also provides a reassessment of the development of Pure Land Buddhism, see Jan Nattier (2000). The most famous former resident of Akṣobhya’s paradise was layman Vimalakirti.
same qualities. The Buddha Bhaisajyaguru (Yaoshi 药师), frequently called the Medicine Buddha in western literature, who resides in a different Pure Land located to the east of our world system, was known in China since the fourth century and enjoyed considerable popularity after the Sui Dynasty. Unlike the two aforementioned Buddhas whose worship chiefly concerned the desire to be reborn in their respective paradises, Bhaisajyaguru was, and still is, venerated primarily for his powers as a healer of spiritual and philosophical ailments. A fourth Buddha affiliated with Pure Land Buddhism in China was the future mānuṣī Buddha Maitreya. The Buddha Maitreya is not associated with a remote Pure Land, but with the earth of the future, where he will appear after the end of an extended period of social tyranny and decline in Buddhist religiosity. In his presence the world will become an earthly paradise, and those fortunate to live at that time will benefit from the merit of living in his presence and live under much improved material circumstances. Worship of the Buddha Maitreya was particularly prominent in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but did not develop into the same level of quasi-sectarian dimensions as did the worship of Amitābha in later times. However, general belief in Maitreya as the future Buddha of this world system was shared across the Buddhist community in China, irrespective of sectarian tradition, and occasionally given prominence in periods of social and political crisis. A related cult to Maitreya as the Buddha of the future was one that focused on his role as the bodhisattva overseer of the paradise of Tuṣita, a heavenly realm where one could aspire to be reborn and await Maitreya’s future enlightenment.
Also within the general scope of Pure Land Buddhism are the roles played by bodhisattvas and other divinities who assist one towards the goal of advancing spiritually and residing in a land where a Buddha dwells. Two of the most important bodhisattvas in this regard are the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, whose worship intersects with the devotional cult of the Buddha Amitābha. In the core scriptures dedicated to the Buddha Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara is made one of the primary bodhisattva associates of Amitābha. Although Avalokiteśvara has an extensive and multivalent cult, one of the prominent features of Avalokiteśvara emphasized in many texts is his role as a guide to Amitābha’s Pure Land. This aspect of Avalokiteśvara has already been seen in the last chapter in the discussion of scriptures concerning the esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara that offer promises to devotees of future rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha or that of other Buddhas. A similar role is served by the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha who is primarily viewed as the savior of those in the lower realms, or durgatis, offering to remove his devotees from the physical and mental torments of the underworld by transporting them to the Pure Land of Amitābha. The important connection of the worship of Kṣitigrabha with the desire for rebirth in the paradise of Amitābha is particularly evident in imagery at the Fowan and elsewhere where he is depicted along with Avalokiteśvara as the primary attendants of Amitābha. From the Tang Dynasty the propitiation of Kiṣṭigarbha was given prominence in relation to funerary rites and the importance of generating merit for deceased relatives to insure their rebirth in higher realms, which was ideally that of the Pure Land of Amitābha. Because the devotional cult of Amitābha represents a
dominant fixture of Pure Land Buddhism in China, as well as being the most frequently represented Buddha at the Fowan site, my discussion of these iconographies will proceed from the imagery of Amitābha.

4.2 Imagery of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Radiance

The Fowan has around a dozen niches that contain images of Amitābha (Amituo 阿弥陀), the Buddha of “Infinite Radiance.” In the Pure Land traditions of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism the Buddha Amitābha has central importance and has been, since at least the sixth century, the focus of Pure Land worship in East Asia. Amitābha, also referred to as Amitāyus (Wuliangshou 无量寿), is a transcendental Buddha who in a former life as the bodhisattva-monk Dharmākara made a series of forty-eight compassionate vows (prāṇḍhāna) that he would fulfill prior to obtaining Buddhahood. These vows were directed at the creation of a wondrous, perfected Buddha Land (Buddha-kṣetra, fuguo 佛国) where he would serve as overlord and allow sentient beings to be reborn free from the worry of further transmigrations, unhappiness, and suffering. Central to his vows is the notion that those reborn in his paradise will benefit spiritually from living in

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12 Niches that can be identified with this subject matter include niches 10, 11, 21, 22, 35, 40, 48, 52, 53, 57, 73, 123, 194, 245, 254 and possibly niche 230. Imagery of Amitābha is also found in niches 4 and 5 in the interior of the Duobaota, and at least one niche at the Yingpanpo site. Among the large number of damaged and unidentifiable standardized depictions of a Buddha with two bodhisattvas at the Fowan and other sites on Beishan, probably a high percentage were intended to represent Amitābha.

13 These names are used interchangeably in scriptures concerning this Buddha. Both names refer to his spiritual qualities of having an “infinite lifespan” (Amitāyus) and radiating an endless supply of brilliant “light” (Amitābha), which is a visual trope for his enlightened state of being.

14 The actual number of vows he made varies between 36 and 48 in different texts.
his presence and eventually realize enlightenment. The resulting Buddha Land created from the fulfillment of these vows is called Sukhāvati, “the Blissful [Land]” (jile 极乐),\(^{15}\) and is located an unimaginable distance to the west of our world system. When aspirants enter Sukhāvati they are born inside of lotus buds that grow in seven gigantic jeweled ponds. Emerging free from worry they spend their time listening to the dharma while enjoying the resplendent physical comforts of this marvel-filled realm—magical breezes, fragrant flowers, jeweled trees, towering pavilions, auspicious birds, aromatic pools, and many other attractive features—all of which are intended to increase mental awareness and facilitate the spiritual development of the inhabitants. Although meditational practices and the accumulation of perfected merit (puṇyapāramitā) through generous deeds are advocated as part of the preconditions to gain entrance into Sukhāvati and determine one’s relative spiritual status within the paradise, in the end, all that is necessary to consummate this wish is the simple belief in Amitābha’s saving powers and a sincere expression of the desire to be born there through the evocation Amitābha’s name. The devotional character and rather straight-forward theology based on the redeeming power of Amitābha’s vows made belief in the goal of rebirth in Sukhāvati one of enormous popular appeal and resulted in

\(^{15}\) The common Chinese term for Sukhāvati, “Jile” became standardized from the Tang Dynasty. Before that time it is often rendered as to as Anleguo 安乐国 (Country of Peace and Happiness).
the development of quasi-sectarian traditions focusing on the worship of Amitābha. It also permeated, to some degree, most if not all of the various traditions within Chinese Mahāyāna.\(^\text{16}\)

According to Chinese historical sources Amitābha was known in China since at least the third century although his cult did not take its fully developed form until around the sixth century, at which time it became a fixture of Buddhist practice in China and experienced growing popularity from there after. The establishment of Pure Land practice centering on the worship of Amitābha in China is generally ascribed to the meditational master Huiyuan 慧远 (334-416), who founded a Buddhist devotional society (she 社) known as the “White Lotus Association” (Bailianshe 白莲社) in South China on Mount Lu 庐 (Jiangxi Province) in 402.\(^\text{17}\) The association was composed of a coterie of 123 lay and clerical disciples who made a collective vow to be reborn in Sukhāvatī and aid each other in achieving that goal. Central to their practice were meditation (dhyāna) methods using images of Amitābha as a focal point for the visualization of the Buddha based on practices outlined in

\(^{16}\) A full-fledged independent school devoted to Amitābha did not develop in China. Distinct sectarian movements, sometimes called Amidism, developed in Japan in the twelfth century. However, there were many Buddhist organizations and groups within the larger Chinese Buddhist community that almost exclusively paid devotion to Amitābha. The general prominence of Amitābha in Mahāyāna Buddhism is reflected in the occurrence of his name in over three hundred canonical scriptures; see Hirakawa Akira, “Buddhist Literature: Survey of the Texts,” in The Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade, (New York: Macmillan, 1987).

\(^{17}\) For a summary of Huiyuan’s activities and writings, see Ch’en (1964), 103-112. There were several Pure Land practitioners before Huiyuan noted in historical literature such as Zhidun 支盾 (314-366); see Tanaka 13-15. A testimonial by Zhidun provides the earliest account of the commission of an image of Amitābha for devotional purposes in China. See T.52.2103.19; Zurcher, vol.1, 128.
In later Pure Land practice an increasing emphasis would be placed on the visualization of Amitābha’s paradise as well as the recitation of his name. After Huiyuan worship of Amitābha became increasingly popular, and by the early sixth century the major cultic practices regarding the worship of Amitābha were fully established. Important in this regard are three monks active in the late fifth through seventh centuries and associated with the Xuanzhongsi 玄中寺 monastery in Shanxi, northern China. The most influential of these three monks was Shandao 善道 (613-681), who spent most of his life in the Tang capital where he was highly regarded and patronized by the court. Shandao and his two predecessors placed greater emphasis on nianfo 念佛 (buddhānusmṛtī), the recitation of the Buddha’s name, as an essential practice in devotion to Amitābha, and were the first to promote the notion that commoners could be reborn in the Pure Land of Amitābha. The use of images in devotion to Amitābha was also advocated by Shandao, who is credited with the creation of some three-hundred paintings of Amitābha’s Pure Land, an image that became increasingly a major theme in Chinese art in the Tang Dynasty.

18 See Tanaka, 13-15. “Scripture on the Samādhi (Perfected Contemplation/Meditation) in which the Buddhas Stand Before One,” T.13.418. This text was translated by Lokakṣema around the late second century and teaches methods of meditation on how to visualize the Buddhas of the ten directions, which will lead to rebirth in the western paradise. It was influential in the Six Dynasties period; see Yü (2001), 110-111.

19 For an overview of these monks see Ch’en (1964), 343-7.

Three sūtras—the Larger Sukhāvatīvyuha Sūtra, the Smaller Sukhāvatīvyuha Sūtra, and the Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra—provide the core doctrinal basis for the cultic veneration of the Buddha Amitābha. Around these three texts a larger body of liturgical and commentarial works were subsequently developed. The core texts include the Larger Sukhāvatīvyuha Sūtra (Scripture on the Adornments of the Realm of Bliss), which is known in China as the Wuliangshou jing 无量寿经 “Sūtra of [the Buddha of] Immeasurable life”). The Smaller Sukhāvatīvyuha Sūtra, which is known in China as the Amitābha Sūtra (Amituo jing 阿弥陀经), was first translated by the prolific translator Kumārajiva (Jiumaluoqipo 鸠摩罗什) in 402. The Amituo jing is believed to be the earlier of the two texts and is chiefly concerned with a description of the features and qualities of Amitābha’s Pure Land, while the Wuliangshou jing focuses on the vows of Dharamākara and describes the necessary practices and character of rebirth in Sukhāvati. These two scriptures are believed to be based on Sanskrit texts compiled around the first century CE in Northwest India during the Kuśāna Dynasty.

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21 All three of these scriptures have been translated several times. The first English translations are found in volume forty-nine of Max F. Müller ed., The Sacred Books of the East. Tr. by Various Oriental Scholars (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965).

22 The earliest Chinese translation of this sūtra appeared around the mid-third century and is attributed to Zhijian 支謙. There are at least five different Chinese translations of this text, which include T.12.360, 362, 310, and 363. For a list and dates of translation, see Fujita Kōtatsu, 7. A recent English translation of the Sanskrit text and a Chinese version reportedly attributed to Saṃghavarman (Kangsenghui 康僧会) of the third century is given in Luis O. Gomez, Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light: Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the Sukhāvatīvyūha sutras (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i press, 1996).

23 T.12.366. This text was also later translated by Xuanzong in the early Tang Dynasty. Recent English translations of Kumārajiva’s translation and the Sanskrit version are also found in Gomez (1996).
(ca. 50-220 CE).\textsuperscript{24} It is also during the Kuśāna period that the earliest known images of Amitābha are found.\textsuperscript{25} Little is known about the formation of the worship of Amitābha in South Asia but appears to have been part of a larger undercurrent of beliefs in paradises in early Mahāyāna Buddhism and an outgrowth of the Mahāyāna notion of the multiplicity of contemporaneous transcendent Buddhas.\textsuperscript{26}

The third core text, entitled the \textit{Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra} (\textit{Guanwuliangshoujing} 观无量寿经), hereafter referred to by the shorten title \textit{Guan jing} 观经, was translated by Kālayaśas (Jiangliangyeshi 疆良耶舍) in the early fifth century.\textsuperscript{27} Although appearing after the other two core scriptures focusing on Amitābha, it became the most influential of the three and played the most central role in the full emergence of the Pure Land cult focusing on Amitābha in the Sui and Tang Dynasties. This scripture has no extant Sanskrit or Tibetan version and is generally believed to have been compiled in Central Asia or China. It belongs to the same category of scriptures as the \textit{Pratyutpanna samādhi sūtra}, which focuses on the use of

\textsuperscript{24} Tanaka, 3-4.

\textsuperscript{25} For a thorough study of early images of Amitābha and his cult in South Asian, see John C. Huntington, "Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvatī," \textit{Annali Istituto Orientale di Napoli} 40, n.s.30 (1980): 651-672.

\textsuperscript{26} See Huntington (1985), 146. Various opinions on the origins of Amitābha are outlined by Tanaka, 8. According to Tanaka, 4-5, most western scholarship follows the notion that the concept of Amitābha may have been influenced or synthesized from Central Asian light cults, Zoroastrian sun gods such as Mithira, or Ancient Indic gods, while Japanese scholars favor a view that it represents a purely internal Buddhist development. For the latter view, see Soper (1959), 14.

\textsuperscript{27} T.12. 365. This scripture is often referred to as the “Meditation” or “Contemplation” sūtra. The importance of this scripture is evident by the fact that there are at least 40 commentaries written about it. Tanaka, xvii.
meditation to visual different Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The contents of
the Guan jing focus on contemplative/visualization practices, but also further
develop the core elements of the two earlier sūtras dedicated to Amitābha. In
the sūtra aspirants are taught how to visualize (guanxiang 觀想, anusmṛti)
the features of the Pure Land, Amitābha, and his primary attendant
bodhisattvas through the experience of the main protagonist of the story,
Queen Vaidehī. The message of the scripture widens the access to
Amitābha’s Pure Land, which allows even the worst sinners to be reborn there
if they experience conversion and recite Amitābha’s name ten times. It also
articulates a hierarchy of nine possible ranks of birth in Amitābha’s Pure
Land depending on the aspirant’s karmic merit. These subsequently became
a theme in Chinese Buddhist art to support the visualization practices
elucidated in the sūtra.

Literary sources indicate that images of Amitābha were made in China
since at least the early fourth century, with the earliest extant images dated
by inscription to about a century after that. Representations of Amitābha
became increasingly more common in China after the fifth century and took on
greater complexity of detail. Images of Amitābha are found at many cliff
sculpture sites in China from the Tang and later periods. The Fowan is not

28 Tanaka, 10.

29 This hierarchy and the practices of visualization and the oral recitation of the Amitābha’s
name (chēng ming 称名) are not discussed in the two earlier sūtras.

30 The earliest extant dated image of Amitābha in China is found in cave 169 at Binglingsi,
Gansu, and dated 420. The earliest dated image of Amitābha in Sichuan is a stone carving
with opposite-facing images of Amitāyus and Maitreya from Maoxian county, which is dated,
483. See Shao Lei 邵磊, “Maowen nan qi yongmin zaoxiangbei zhiyi 茂汶南齐永明造像碑质
exception, with around a dozen niches with images of Amitābha. Most of
these are small- to medium-sized niches consisting of simple triads composed
of a central image of Amitābha flanked by two bodhisattvas, and occasionally
a few additional figures.

Representative of these somewhat generic types is niche 53 (Figure
2.75), dated 915, which depicts a seated Amitābha Buddha with two standing
bodhisattva attendants. Niches such as this were intended as devotional
images often sponsored for the benefit of deceased individuals to consummate
their rebirth in Sukhāvatī though the transfer of merit. Where an inscription
is lacking the identification of the image is often dependent on the
identification of his two primary bodhisattva attendants, Avalokiteśvara and
Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Dashizhi 大勢至), or Kṣitigarbha. Otherwise these
niches are almost impossible to distinguish from more generic
representations of Buddha teaching assemblies, which could also represent
Śākyamuni.

This problem is apparent in niche 10, which is the largest niche of this
type at the site (Figure 4.1). Chinese scholars have identified the subject
matter of this niche as a teaching assembly with the central Buddha
representing Śākyamuni. The niche can also be read as representing
Amitābha, which I believe is the more likely intended iconography of the
niche. The basic iconographic elements in the niche match the standardized
type of “welcoming descent” (laiying 来迎) iconography of Amitābha. This

31 See NRZL, 367. The inclusion of the disciples of Śākyamuni, Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa
are a standard feature added to triads of Amitābha and other Buddhas, and do not
necessarily imply that the central image is Śākyamuni. A similar image of a Buddha with
two pairs of monks and bodhisattvas is located in niche 21, which has an inscription that
identifies the Buddha as Amitābha; see Appendix B, number 1.3.
iconography was used to convey the appearance of Amitābha descending from Sukhāvati with a retinue of followers to appear before the faithful at the moment of death to greet them into his Pure Land. Key features for identifying the Buddha as Amitābha include the two attendant bodhisattvas that can be identified as Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara, right and left respectively, and the inclusion of the Buddhas of the ten directions on the side walls of the niche, which are associated with the visualization of the appearance of Amitābha in the Guan jing.\(^\text{32}\) There is a somewhat similar

\(^{32}\) If done successfully the ninth visualization in the Guan jing on the visualization of the appearance of Amitābha will cause the Buddhas of the ten directions to appear and provide prophecies of the meditator’s future destiny to become a Buddha; see T.13.365. 343b-c.
depiction of the compositional group of niche 10 in niche 245, which represents an elaborate depiction of Amitābha in his paradise with narrative elements from the *Guan jing* (Figure 4.2). The similar compositional group consists of a small Buddha teaching assembly on the lower portion of niche 245 below the main image group (Figure 4.3). This Buddha assembly has been identified by Chinese scholars as representing the highest ranking of the nine types of welcoming descents of Amitābha to greet the deceased that are described in the *Guan jing*. The central Buddha of this group and the primary Buddha in niche 10 are depicted with similar mudrās that appear to be a variation of the *laiying* gesture. 

One of the more interesting iconographic features of images of Amitābha at the Fowan is the frequent replacement of the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, who is one of the pair of chief bodhisattva associates of Amitābha described in the *Wuliangshou jing* and *Guan jing*, with the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. This occurs in ten out of the fifteen niches that

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33 Most other images of Amitābha at the site are depicted in *dhyāna mudrā*.
feature Amitābha at the Fowan, as well as one niche at the nearby Yingpanpo site (Figure 4.4) This iconographic arrangement is found on niches dated to both the Late Tang and Five Dynasties period at the site and occurs at a number of other sites in Sichuan, such as at the Qianfoyan, Jiajiang (Figure 4.5) dating to the early eighth century. A similar iconographic type is known in Japan, but I am unaware of the same iconography occurring elsewhere in China. There appears to be no known textual basis for this variation on the

34 For the dating of this niche, see Sorenson (1997), 45-6. However, I disagree with his identification of the central Buddha in that niche as Śākyamuni. The same iconography also occurs in niche 125 at the site. Some niches at the Western cliff site (Xiyan) in Zizhong also feature this iconography.

35 In Japan this iconographic type is called the Amida Jizō raigō, which is incorrectly identified as being “particular to Japan” by Louis Frédéric, Buddhism Flammarion Iconographic Guides (Paris: Flammarion, 1995), 117.
standard iconography of Amitābha and is most likely an innovation based on popular interest in Ksitigarbha, who functions to save beings from the suffering of hell by leading them to rebirth in the Pure Land. Since Mahāsthāmaprāpta never developed an independent cult of worship like Avalokiteśvara, his image could easily have been replaced by Kṣitigarbha, whose cult was already partially conflated with that of Amitābha in his prominent role in funerary rituals to insure that deceased devotees would avoid suffering in the durgatis and gain access to the Pure Land of Amitābha. Since votive inscriptions indicate that many of these niches were intended to generate merit for deceased relatives, Kṣitigarbha could have been added in good measure to help insure the fate of deceased loved ones. An iconographic innovation related to Kṣitigarbha’s depiction with Amitābha is the independent pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, which occurs on a large number of niches at the Fowan site and indicates that the two bodhisattvas were jointly worshipped. An inscription in one niche depicting the pair of bodhisattvas specifically states that the intended merit from the creation of the niche was to help a deceased family member to achieve “rebirth in the Western Paradise and receive all its happiness.”

36 See Appendix B, number 1.17.
Few of these standardized depictions of triads with Amitābha and two bodhisattvas have any elements to convey the setting and ambience of Amitābha’s Pure Land. Only one depiction of Amitābha’s Pure Land occurs at Beishan and that is provided in niche 245, taken to be one of earliest niches at the Fowan site (Figure 4.2 and Diagram 14). This niche is a complex and intricate tableau of Amitābha in his paradise based loosely on the descriptions given in the *Guan jing* and two *Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtras*. The size (4.6 m x 2.58 meters) and complexity of this niche make it one of the most impressive carvings at the site. The center of the relief is dominated by images of Amitābha, accompanied by the two great bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and surrounded by numerous small figures representing the inhabitants of Sukhāvati (Figure 4.6). Above them are resplendent canopies held aloft by multicolored peacocks, and magnificent towering architectural structures populated with tiny figures representing the inhabitants of Sukhāvati. Below the central triad are lotus ponds, ornamental railings, musicians, small Buddha
assemblies, and other figures (Figure 4.7). There is hardly an inch on the interior of the niche that is not filled with an image of a figure or architectural element. The frame of the niche is decorated with square bas-relief panels depicting individual mono-scenes based on the Guan jing. Additionally, at the base of the niche are series of scenes carved in vertical rectangles that represent narrative scenes form the Guan jing.

This configuration of a central area composed of three sections, with a large teaching assembly framed by rows of square and rectangular bas-reliefs on the two vertical sides and one horizontal row at the bottom of the niche, is a standard diagrammatic representation of the core elements of the Guan jing that emerged in its mature form around the eighth century. The most famous image of this type is the eighth-century tapestry of the Taimadera, a temple
in Nara, Japan, which was reportedly imported from Tang China and has the same basic compositional structure as the Fowan niche, indicating that they both ultimately stem from the same source. Many examples of murals depicting the Guan jing are found in the Mogao caves at Dunhuang, where it was one of the most often depicted subject matter in caves excavated or redecorated in the Tang dynasty. A number of examples from the Mid to Late Tang Periods are found at other sites in Sichuan, but do not match the

37 The iconography and history of this type of image is discussed by Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, Japanese Mandalas: Representations of Sacred of Geography (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 13-32, 122-141.

38 There are some eighty examples listed in the index of the DSNZ, 281-282.
elaborate details as the Fowan example. Two examples are found at Chonglongshan in Zizhong. The largest of these, niche 55 (Figure 4.8), has the same essential elements as niche 245 at Beishan but on a much smaller scale and with a more stratified arrangement of figures. Several other examples

Figure 4.8: Niche 55, Chonglongshanshan, Junziquan, Zhizhong. Photo by author, 1999.

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See Hu Wenhe, “Sichuan tangdai moya zaoxiang zhongde xifang jingtu bian,” SW 1 (1989): 27-33. Depictions of this subject matter are found in niche 15 at Yunfengsi, Anyue, which is reproduced in Liu Changjiu (1997), 51. Similar imagery is also found in niches 4 and 6 at Shisunshan (Qionglai); niche 42 Zhengshan (Danleng), niches 99, 115, 132 and 137 at Qianfayan (Jiajiang); niches 55 and 32 Chonglongshan (Zizhong); niche 8 at the Dafowan (Baodingshan, Dazu); and niches 3 and 4 at Niujiaoazhai (Renshou). One work of this subject is listed in the YZMHL as a Western Paradise Transformation by Fan Qiong, Cheng Hao and Peng Shu and was located in the Dabei Precinct of the Shengshousi temple. Another work by the same artists identified as Amitābha with four bodhisattvas is listed in the YZMHL as belonging to the gateway of the Dabei Precinct of the Zhongxingsi.

An inscription on this niche indicates that it was redecorated in 1009, but the niche was carved in the Late Tang period. Most niches at this site date to the late ninth century, particularly to the xiantong reign era (860-74), see Wang Xixiang 王熊祥 and Ceng Deren 曾德仁, “Sichuan Zizhong Chonglongshan moya zaoxiang,” WW 8 (1988): 19-30.
are found in the area of Rongxian; one located at Luohandong (Figure 4.9), has an even more simplified version of the same composition.\textsuperscript{41} A variation of this composition is found at two reliefs at the Niuzaizhai site in Renshou below the giant Buddha image there (Figure 4.10).\textsuperscript{42} Here the individual scenes of the Guan jing are not depicted in separate panels, but as part of the main relief with the main protagonist of this narrative, Queen Vaidehê, depicted multiple times seated on a lotus along the outer edge of the niche. This niche contains limited architectural features and appears to have been inspired from another popular composition that depicts Amitâbha with fifty bodhisattvas rather than from images based on the Sukhâvativyuha sūtras that emphasize

\textsuperscript{41} Images at the Luohandong date to the Mid and Late Tang Periods, see Hu Wenhe (1994), 109-110.

the architectural elements of the Pure Land.\footnote{This iconographic type appears in Sichuan in the early Tang; see Li Sisheng, “Yifowushipusa he pusazhuangfo 一佛五十菩萨和菩萨装佛,” \textit{DHY} 2 (1991): 49-58. Niche number 6 at the Foeryan, Beishan features a depiction of this type, and niche number 20 on the southern end of the Fowan could also have been intended to represent Amitābha surrounded by bodhisattvas on lotuses. This theme was first mentioned in a collection of miscellanea entitled the \textit{Collected Records of Miracles of the Three Jewels in the Divine Continent} (\textit{Jishenzhou sanban gantong lu} 集神州三宝感通录), which describes an image of this theme that dated to the Northern Qi (555-77); see Li Sisheng (1991), 49.} Other examples such as niche 99 at the Qianfoyan (Jiajiang) do not include narrative elements of the \textit{Guan jing}, but depict the setting of the paradise (Figure 4.11).\footnote{Jiajiang has several depictions of this subject; see Sorenson (1997), 40-41.} Among these and other examples from Sichuan niche 245 at the Fowan is the most comprehensive in terms of its pictorial elements.\footnote{Several later depictions of the \textit{Guan jing} are found in the Dafowan (Baodingshan) and at the Qianfoyan (Dazu, near Shizhuanshan) niche number 7, dated 1410-12.}

The term \textit{bianxiang} 变像, meaning “transformation tableaux,” is applied to configurations of this type of imagery, which convey narrative and doctrinal themes from literary sources in pictorial terms. \textit{Bianxiang} primarily appear in the form of paintings, murals, and banners, which are more conducive for conveying the intricacies of pictorial narration. Indeed compared to most other images at the Fowan site...
the appearance of niche 245 is more like that of a painting than a three-dimensional sculpture. The depiction of the central area of niche 245 combines physical depth and the traditional Chinese method of conveying space in two dimensions by tilting the ground plain vertically so that the higher elements are perceived as being further in the background. In the case of niche 245, this also heightens the grandeur of the palatial setting by making the architectural structures depicted on the top of the niche appear more imposing and ethereal.

All the major elements depicted in the niche follow from the descriptions of Sukhāvatī supplied in the *Amituo jing*. The imagery in the niche does not depict precisely these descriptions but conveys their essence. Here the grand paradise of Amitābha is presented in all its splendor as described in the *Amituo jing*:

There are seven tiers of railings, seven rows of nettings, seven rows of trees. They are all made of the four precious substances... there are bathing pools... filled with the best water, endowed with the eight good qualities... they have steps made of gold, silver, lapis-lazuli, and crystal... Above, there are towered pavilions, adorned with gold, silver, lapis-lazulri, crystal, coral, red pearls, and agate... On the surface of the pools are lotus blossoms as large as cart wheels... the ground is made of gold. Four times a day, exactly on the hour, day and night, mandara flowers rain down from heaven... you will always see many flocks of rare
and exquisite birds of many colors--white egrets, peacocks, parrots, shari, and kalavinka birds, and those called “living together”\textsuperscript{46}.

The layout of the interior of the niche proper is visually divided into three sections separated by terraces. The central and largest section of the niche contains a large triad of the Buddha Amitābha and the bodhisattvas Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara, located on the central terrace on the main wall of the niche (Figure 4.6). The central image of the Buddha Amitābha is seated in \textit{pADMāsana} on a lotus throne with an octagonal base. His hands are positioned in the exact center of his chest, with the right hand above the left to form a variation on the \textit{dharmacakra mudrā}.\textsuperscript{47} To his left the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is seated in \textit{pADMāsana} on a lotus throne with a circular base. Avalokiteśvara can be identified by his characteristic attributes, a sprig of willow in his right hand and an alms bowl (\textit{pātra}) in his left hand. On the opposite side of Amitābha the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta is depicted holding a large lotus flower against his right shoulder. Above each of the three primary images is a four layered, eight-sided, jeweled canopy held aloft by a multi-colored peacock. Surrounding the primary triad on the same terrace are rows of smaller seated and standing attendant figures who have their hands clasped in gestures of adoration. Richly bejeweled and garbed bodhisattvas are depicted seated on lotuses that line the lateral walls of the niche. Above and behind the central assembly are trees and banner-pillars, which are part of the ornate and luxuriant

\textsuperscript{46} T.12.366.346b-347a. Translated by Gomez, 146-7.

\textsuperscript{47} His hands are broken so it is difficult to determine the formed gesture, but it may be a variation on the \textit{dharmacakra mudrā}, which occurs in a number of images at the site, such as the Buddha in cave 136. The NRZL, 413, states that he appears to hold a round pearl-like object.
environment of the paradise of Sukhāvati described in the two
Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtras. Flying in front of the trees and pillars is a host of
apsarasas and winged kimnaras who hold offering trays and garlands. The
tops of the trees demarcate the area of the central assembly from the upper
section of the niche that depicts the marvelous palaces, towers, and pavilions
of the western paradise, linked by overhanging terraces. The depicted
structures follow Chinese architectural models with bowed tiled roofs and
dougong 斗拱 structural members.\textsuperscript{48} Rows of balconies overlooking the
teaching assembly below are filled with inhabitants who gaze down below or
watch boat races in lotus ponds on the two upper lateral walls of the niche.\textsuperscript{49}
Also appearing are several small triads of a Buddha and two attendants on
clouds that drift down from the top of the niche. These groupings of triads
may be intended to represent either transformation bodies (huafo 化佛)
created by Amitābha to teach or may be intended to convey the appearance of
Buddhas from other quarters in Amitābha’s paradise like the ten directional
Buddhas represented in niche 10. Also depicted appearing on clouds on
opposite sides of the niche are the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and
Samantabhadra on their respective animal mounts. These two bodhisattvas
are not mentioned in scriptures as part of the assembly of divinities in
Sukhāvati, but both occur in the Larger Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtra as part of the
\textsuperscript{48} The Tang architectural elements depicted in this niche are discussed by Li Xianwen 李显
文, "Dazu Beishan Fowan moya zaoxiang di 245 ku zhong fanying de tangdai jianzhu ji
\textsuperscript{49} Boats are not described in related scriptures, but appear on other depictions of Sukhāvati
in Sichuan such as at Shisunshan (Qionglai), which may represent an element of local
culture integrated into the conception of Sukhāvati.
teaching assembly of Śākyamuni. Mañjuśrī also appears in the Shorter *Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtra* and is identified as the head of the assembly in the *Guan jing*.

Above the roofs of the towering buildings the top of the niche is depicted with different types of auspicious birds and heavenly musicians. Several of the birds can be identified among those described in the shorter *Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtra* including parrots, peacocks, and a two headed bird called ‘living together’ at the very apex of the niche. According to the Larger *Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtra* the birds are not physical creatures but magical apparitions miraculously created by the Buddha to sing the dharma.\(^50\) On the top of the interior of the niche a lotus canopy is held aloft by four *apsarasas* directly above the primary image of Amitābha, and musical instruments enclosed in two variegated clouds waft in the air.\(^51\) Music either sung by birds or created magically by gentle breezes is an important component in descriptions of Sukhāvati. Although floating musical instruments are not described as such in texts, these may be intended to convey visually the description of the subtle breezes of Sukhāvati that gently sway jeweled trees and nets so that they make “an exquisite sound, like that of hundreds and thousands of diverse kinds of instruments playing together at the same time.”\(^52\) Their sound is produced, however, not for mere enjoyment, but to induce thoughts of the Buddha and the dharma. Similar depictions of


\(^51\) On a description of the musical instruments represented in this niche, see Qin Fangyu 秦方瑜, “Beishan shike yueqi kaolue 北山石刻乐器考略,” in *WJ*, ed. Guo Xiangying (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 406-410.

Musical instruments are found in niches at the site, such as niche 254 depicting Amitābha and in some niches that depict Bhaisajyaguru.

The upper section and middle section of the niche are joined by two pairs of white streamers representing rays of celestial light, which emerge from the bottom of the central canopy above the main image of Amitābha and extend outward and upward to the exterior lintel of the niche. The lower portion of these streamers are damaged, but would have originated from the ūrṇā or top knot of Amitābha, similar to the small Buddha in the assembly at the central bottom of the niche (Figure 4.3). The lower streamers twist to form eight loops, each containing a small seated Buddha in dhyāna mudrā. These streamers are intended to represent the celestial light emitted by Amitābha that radiates Buddhas of distant world systems according to the Wuliangshoujing.53 The whole effect of the two upper sections of the niche is to represent the spiritual splendor and fantastic spectacle of the western paradise and its many wonders. Although the depiction, like most images of this theme, does not match the precise description given in the textual descriptions it conveys the intended essence.

The paradisiacal scene is continued on the lower section of the niche, which is separated from the main terrace with the primary triad by a balcony with an ornate railing that spans the length of the niche (Figure 4.7). Clambering on the railing are small, childlike nude figures representing newly arrived inhabitants making their way to a place among the central assembly from the lotus ponds below. A centrally placed arched bridge leads down over an area of lotus ponds to a military-style terrace with two corner buttresses

and two central flights of stairs that lead to the base of the niche. An arched bridge is a prominent feature in many of the relief depictions of Sukhāvatī in Sichuan and may have a metaphoric connotation to symbolize the crossing over to a more spiritually elevated state. Two bodhisattvas peer over the sides of the bridge to look at three resplendent lotus ponds, which are filled with lotuses and populated with figures on lotuses. Some figures sit on newly opened lotus flowers while others have yet to emerge from closed calyxes. Two groups of musicians, severely damaged, fill the spaces between the lotus ponds, and numerous other figures fill the railings and stairways of the bottom of the terrace. Along the terrace are several Buddha and bodhisattva assemblies. The largest of these, which has already been mentioned, is located between the two flights of stairs and directly below the central arched bridge. This group includes a seated Buddha, two standing bodhisattva attendants holding lotuses, two dynamically posed guardian figures, and twelve disciples. Like in the main triad, a large canopy is held over the central Buddha’s head by a peacock (damaged), and a foliated tree is depicted behind the entire assembly. The other assemblies include only a Buddha and two bodhisattva figures.

The small Buddha assemblies in this section of the niche are thought by Chinese scholars to represent imagery of “welcoming and leading the way” (laiyingjie 来迎接, commonly known by the Japanese equivalent raigō) associated with the three grades and nine ranks of rebirth. According to the Guan jing, which provides the scriptural source for the grades of rebirth as part of the sixteen contemplations of Vaidehi, Amitābha and his associates will appear to devotees at the time of their death to escort them back to his

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paradise where they will emerge from a lotus. The number of deities who appear to greet the newly deceased, the length of time one spends in the calyx of a closed lotus, and the speed of spiritual progression once they emerge from the lotus are all dependent on the devotee’s former deeds and how well they have perfected virtues. Although it takes only a simple devotional act of faith to insure one’s rebirth in the western paradise, the levels of rebirth provide graded levels of spiritual progress that span vastly differing temporal periods.

In the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyuha sūtra*, Śākyamuni discusses three types or kinds of persons who will experience rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Those of the superior type, at the moment of death, will be personally greeted by Amitābha accompanied by a large assembly. Those of the intermediate type will be greeted not by Amitābha but by illusionary reflexes of the Buddha and his attendants. Those of the lowest or inferior type will only see a Buddha in a dream to greet them. These are further elaborated in the *Guan jing*, with each type or level further graded into three classes, which are referred to as the *sanpin jiusheng* 三品九生, or the nine degrees of the welcoming descent.⁵⁴ According to the authors of the *NRZL* the small central Buddha teaching assembly in the lower center of the niche below that arched bridge should be identified as representing the upper rank, highest birth, and the two smaller groups on top the buttressed ends of the terrace as representing the two lower grades of the upper rank. The smaller groups beneath the two flights of stairs on the sides of the large central group represent the intermediate rank,

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Ten Grottenhaus believes that the ninefold categorization has its origins in ancient Chinese ordering of geographical space and ranking systems for officials, as well as in the symbolism of the mythical mount Kunlun; see Ten Grottenhaus, 23-28.
middle birth, and the inferior rank, highest birth. Except for the central group the specific identification of the groups is somewhat speculative, and the full nine types of greetings are not represented. I believe that the central group and the two lower groups are indeed intended to depict the greeting of the deceased, however they appear to convey that idea in a more general sense, not specifically. The same is also implied by all the beings on lotuses in the three lotus pools of the lower terrace who are not depicted in a very specific manner.

The lowest portion of the relief consists of eleven rectangular sections and has been identified in the NRZL and by other Chinese scholars as representing the story of prince Ajātaśatru (Asheshi 阿閦世) (Figures 4.12 and 4.13). However, no specific identification of the individual reliefs has been supplied. This story, forming the background for the Guan jing involves the evil prince Ajātaśatru who is influenced by Śākyamuni’s rival Devadatta to

\[55\] NRZL, 419.
imprison and kill his father, king Bimbisāra. Ajātaśatru’s mother, queen Vaidehi, took advantage of opportunities to visit her husband to help keep him alive by secretly bringing him food concealed on her body. Upon learning this, Ajātaśatru also placed his mother in prison. While in prison Vaidehi prayed to Śākyamuni to reveal to her the method of meditating on the Pure Land of Amitābha to obtain release from her plight. The reliefs of this lower section are badly worn, and the narrative scenes are not easily recognizable. On the far left the corner relief (Figure 4.13 and B1 in Diagram 14) depicts a princely figure mounted on a horse, which may either depict Ajātaśatru in route to inspect the prison holding his father or king Bimbisāra traveling to visit a hermit, the latter is described in a related tale of causation that leads to Bimbisāra’s evil fate.\textsuperscript{56} Several of the scenes depict buildings with figures

\textsuperscript{56} See T.57.2209.576.
inside of them that could be intended to represent the imprisoned Vaidehi or
Bimbisāra. Other figures on clouds may represent the visitations paid to
Vaidehi by Śākyamuni and his disciples. However, the scenes appear to be
very generic and may be too damaged to make a specific identification of each
scene to correspond with events in the story. An alternative interpretation of
the lower relief has been suggested by Hu Wenhe, who believes that these
nine relief scenes on base of the niche (B2 to B10 in Diagram 14) represent
the three levels and nine grades of rebirth. However, Hu fails to supply any
specific identification of any of the scenes in relation to those described in the
Guan jing.

The two vertical
borders of the niche are
decorated with rectangular
bas-reliefs, ten on each
side. These reliefs are
based on the Guan jing with
the top eight reliefs on each
side forming the sixteen
meditations taught to
Vaidehi by Śākyamuni
while a prisoner of her son.
Three of the lower reliefs
depict architectural
settings and may not have any intended narrative content. The second relief

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Figure 4.14: Detail, panel, north side, niche 245, Fowan.

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57 Hu Wenhe (1997), 71. In an earlier article, he follows the identification given in the NRZL;
see Hu Wenhe (1989), 31.
from the bottom on the right side (R9 in Diagram 14, Figure 4.14) depicts Vaidehi kneeling before Śākyamuni begging to be taught how she can concentrate her mind to visualize and enter the Amitābha’s Pure Land. The sixteen visualizations taught to her are depicted above in mono-scenic form and in the sequential order given in the text from top to bottom, with the first visualization depicted in the top right square (R1 in Diagram 14) and the last in the third square from the bottom on the left (L8 in Diagram 14). In each, Vaidehi is depicted in a posture of meditation next to each thing she is to visualize. The first several visualizations, one through six, concern the appearance of the land of Sukhāvatī. The seventh and eighth concern the jeweled throne of Amitābha and his image. In Figure 4.15 (R-9 in Diagram 14), she is shown meditating on an image of Amitābha on a lotus in a small pool. Like the central image, rays of twirling light are emitted from the top of the Buddha’s head.

Visualization nine through twelve focus on the appearance of Amitābha and his primary assistants, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The thirteenth meditation is visualizing oneself born in the Pure Land. In this scene Vaidehi is depicted seated next to a duplicate image of herself seated
on a lotus that emerges from a small pool (Figure 4.16, L4 in Diagram 14). The final three visualizations concern the nine possible degrees of rebirth described earlier, which elaborate the three types of rebirth given in the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyuha*.

The inclusion of these narrative panels and the complexity of the niche sets it apart from other niches at the site. The number of donor figures depicted outside the niche exceeds all others at the site and the large number of smaller intrusive niches that have been crammed in around it are indicative of its importance as an object of devotion. The only niche with a similar level of complexity at the sites dates to the Southern Song Dynasty. That niche, which depicts the Buddha Maitreya in his terrestrial paradise with imagery based on his primary scriptures, is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

### 4.3 Imagery of Maitreya, the Future Buddha

The appearance of a mortal (*mānuṣī*) Buddha in the world is a rare event, so the arrival of the Śākyamuni’s successor, Maitreya (Mile fo 弥勒佛), is greatly anticipated by both Mahāyāna and Theravādin Buddhists.\(^{58}\)

\(^{58}\) The South Asian and East Asian aspects of the cult to Maitreya are treated in a compilation of essays in Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre ed., *Maitreya, the Future Buddha* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
According to Buddhist cosmology Maitreya will appear on this earth sometime in the distant future, usually understood to be five thousand years after Śākyamuni’s death, as the next mānuśi Buddha to reclaim a halcyon age after a period of religious decline (mōfa 末法) and social tyranny. At that time Maitreya will descend from Tuṣita Heaven (Doushuaitian 兜率天), where he presently resides as a celestial bodhisattva perfecting his merit, to be born the son of Brahmin parents in the city of Ketumati (Xitoumo 奚头末 or Chitoumo 翅头末), modern day Vārānasi, India. He will experience a life similar to that of Śākyamuni and consummate his enlightenment beneath a nāgapuṣpa, or serpent-flower tree (longhuashu 龙花树), where he will hold three great assemblies (longhuashu sanhui 龙花树三会) with nine billion attendees to discourse on the Dharma. During this future time the world will become a terrestrial paradise with great prosperity and tranquility. Life will not be perfect, but people will be provided with happy living circumstances and live extended lives. Moreover they will experience living in the world at the time of a Buddha and have an opportunity to receive a prediction (vyākarana, shouji 授记) of their future enlightenment.

This theme of Maitreya’s enlightenment in the earth of the future is the subject of niche 176 (2.7 x 1.95 x 2.4 meters) in the central portion of the northern section of the Fowan. This is the only readily identifiable image of Maitreya Buddha at the Fowan site, (Figures 4.17 and 4.18). In this niche the

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59 The life of Maitreya will follow that of Śākyamuni but varies on several accounts. For instance, his parents will be of the brahmin class, the world will be ruled by righteous wheel-turning king (cakravartin), and his spiritual life will progress much faster than Śākyamuni.

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Buddha Maitreya is surrounded by over one-hundred smaller figures carved in relief on the back and side walls of the niche. This imagery is loosely based on descriptions in the canonical scriptures concerning Maitreya’s future enlightenment. Although no similar images of Maitreya have been identified at other cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan this subject matter is mentioned in a number of classical art historical texts including the *Yizhou minghua lu*, which identifies one image of this subject entitled “The Descent of Maitreya” that was located in the Great Hall of the Shengshousi temple, Chengdu. There are also a relatively large number of murals depicting this subject in the Dunhuang area that date from the Mid Tang to Song periods. More conventional iconic images of Maitreya are found at a number of cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan. Typically Maitreya is depicted seated with pendant legs in “western fashion” (Figure 4.19). Images of Maitreya in

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60 This image is ascribed to Zhang Sheng 张胜. Other related imagery of Maitreya described in the *YZMHL* includes a Maitreya Buddha in the Duobaota of the Dashengcisi by an unknown artist, and a Maitreya image by Fan Qiong, Chen Hao, and Peng Shu in the Great Hall of the Shengxingsi temple.

61 Maitreya Buddha in Ketumati is the third most common subject matter found at Dunhuang and only depicted less often than Amitābha and Bhaisajyaguru. Murals of this subject include twenty-six images dating to the Mid Tang, eighteen images dating to the Late Tang, twenty-six images dating to the Five Dynasties period, and thirteen images that date to the Song Dynasty; see *Dunhuangxue da cidian*, 128. For a study of this imagery at Dunhuang and related cloth paintings, see Akiyama Terukazu 秋山光和, “Miroku geshō kyōhen hakubyō funpun (S 259 v) to Tonkō hekiga no seisaku 弥勒下生経變白描粉本敦煌壁画と制作,” *Monumenta Serindica* 6 (1963): 47-74. Maitreya imagery at Dunhuang is also analyzed by Matsumoto Eiichi 栗松本英一, vol.1, 91-109; and Li Yongning 李永宁 and Cai Weitang 蔡伟堂, “Dunhuang bihua zhongde Mile jingbian 敦煌壁画中的弥勒经变,” *DHY* 2 (1988): 34-6. A banner painting of this subject from Dunhuang and now in the British Museum is discussed by Whitfield (1982), vol.1, 308-312. The theme Maitreya’s three great assemblies is also featured in Zhang Shengwen’s “Long Scroll of Buddhist Images,” (ca.1173); see Helen B. Chapin and Alexander C. Soper (1970), 297-299.

62 Imagery of Maitreya in Sichuan is described in Hu Wenhe (1994), 216-219, 292-293.
Figure 4.17: Niche 176, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 4.18: Detail, niche 176, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
Sichuan include a number of colossal Buddha images such as the gigantic (Bṛhad) Buddhas of Leshan (60 meters high), Rongxian (37 meters high), and Renshou (12.4 meters high) (Figure 4.20), which represent attempts to convey the enormity of the Buddha’s size as described in scriptures. However, in general, images of Maitreya are less frequently encountered than those of the Buddhas Amitābha and Bhaisajyaguru. Song representations of Maitreya become less common, which could be the result of the suppression of popular based anti-govermental movements that often took Maitreya as a focal point.

The worship of Maitreya, both as a bodhisattva and future Buddha, was introduced in China around the early second century and became one of the most popular movements in Chinese Buddhism during the Northern and Southern Dynasties Period (Nanbei Chao).

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63 Maitreya is described as being one thousand feet (chi 尺) high, thirty yards (zhang 丈) wide at the chest, and having a head twelve yards and four feet high; see T.14.454.324b. The popularity of producing large scale images of Maitreya may be attributed to empress Wu (r.690-705) as part of her religious propaganda campaign, but can also be seen as a continuation of the tradition of gigantic (Bṛhad) Buddha images such as the recently destroyed giant Buddha at Bamiyān, the legendary giant Maitreya at Darel, the giant bronze Buddha of the Daibutsuden in the Todaiji, Nara, and the giant Buddhas of Yungang, Longmen, and elsewhere.

64 One of the few sites in Sichuan with multiple images of Maitreya is the Qianfoyan, Jiajiang, where there are reportedly some twenty images of Maitreya; see Zhou Jiehua 赵周杰华, “Jiajiang qianfoyan 赵夹江千佛岩,” SW 3 (2002): 90.

南北朝, 420-589), which may in part be reflective of the general social and political turbulence of that era.\(^6\) After the sixth century the popular worship of Maitreya was partially eclipsed by the devotional cults to Amitābha and Bhaiṣajyaguru.\(^7\) In Tang and later times, however, the worship of Maitreya, especially in his form as the future Buddha, remained an important component of Chinese Pure Land beliefs. It did not evolve, however, into the same level of focused, almost sectarian, dimensions as the cultic worship of Amitābha except for several militant political movements outside mainstream Buddhist traditions where

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\(^6\) The early history of the Maitreya cult and images of Maitreya are studied in the doctoral dissertation of Yu-min Lee 李玉珉, *The Maitreya Cult and Its Art* (Diss., The Ohio State University, 1983), which documents the early development of the cult in China and associated imagery. One of the key figures in establishing the worship of Maitreya in China was the monk Daoan 道安 (312-385); see Ch’en (1964), 100.

Maitreya was worshipped as an eminent messianic figure.\textsuperscript{68}

Three scriptures are devoted to Maitreya, providing the foundations for the mainstream worship of Maitreya in China. These are the \textit{Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Maitreya’s Rebirth Above} (\textit{Foshuo Mile shangsheng jing} 佛说弥勒上生经),\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on Maitreya’s Rebirth Below} (\textit{Foshuo Mile xiasheng jing} 佛说弥勒下生经),\textsuperscript{70} and the \textit{Sutra of Maitreya Achieving Buddhahood} (\textit{Foshuo Mile dachengfo jing} 佛说弥勒大成佛经).\textsuperscript{71} Based on these texts the cult of Maitreya centered on two interrelated aspects of the deity.\textsuperscript{72} One represents the “ascending” (\textit{shangsheng 上生}) aspect of Maitreya’s cult, with the wish for rebirth in the paradise of Tuśita to join the bodhisattva Maitreya and wait for his eventual return to earth, and the other representing the “descending” (\textit{xiasheng 下生}) aspect of his cult, with

\textsuperscript{68} For an overview of the worship of Maitreya in Tang times in relation to sectarian schools of the period, see Wang Juan 汪娟, “Tangdai Mile xinyang yu fojiao zhu zongpai de guanxi 唐代弥勒信仰与佛教诸宗派的关系,” \textit{Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal} 5 (1992): 193-231. For a brief overview of some of the popular movements in China lead by figures claiming to be the incarnation of Maitreya see Ch’en (1964), 427-429.

\textsuperscript{69} T.14.452.

\textsuperscript{70} This scripture is also known as the \textit{Maitreya-vyākarana sūtra}. There are three versions in the Taisyō Canon: T.14.453 translated by Dharmaraksha in the Western Jin period, T.14.454 translated by Kumārajiva, and T.14.455 translated by Yijing in the Tang Dynasty.

\textsuperscript{71} T.14.456, which was translated by Kumārajiva. There is also a short related sūtra called the \textit{Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Time of Maitreya’s Arrival} (\textit{Foshuo Mile laishi jing} 佛说弥勒来时经) translated by an unanimous translator in the Eastern Jin Period. There does not appear to have been a large body of commentarial or liturgical literature concerning Maitreya.

\textsuperscript{72} On the idea of two cults to Maitreya, see Yu-min Lee (1983), 338-340.
the aspiration to be reborn at the time of Maitreya’s enlightenment. These may not have been seen as mutually exclusive aspirations independent of one another.

The depiction of Maitreya in niche 176 at the Fowan represents the descending aspect of his cult and is based on the two primary scriptures that describe the world of Maitreya’s future enlightenment. The basic pictorial elements in the niche are similar to Maitreya Buddha transformation tableaus depicted at Dunhuang. Maitreya is depicted seated in padmāsana on an elaborate lotus pedestal with an ornate throneback similar to the design of the throneback of the ornate Buddha in niche 12 (Figure 3.49). This type of elaborate throneback is decorated with geese, makra heads, and figures mounted on goat-like quadrupeds that stand on lotuses emerging from a vase (Figure 4.21). As discussed in the last chapter, it is associated with the vajrāsana or seat of enlightenment.\(^{73}\)

According to the Foshuo Mile dachengfo jing immediately after his enlightenment Maitreya will enter the city of Ketumati where the “vajra treasure throne of the Buddha” will naturally emerge from the ground in which Maitreya will sit to turn the wheel of law.\(^{74}\) Maitreya, however, is not shown in a teaching gesture, but with his left hand placed in front of his left thigh forming bhūmisparśa mudrā and the right hand is on the lap in dhyāna mudrā.\(^{75}\) The depiction of Maitreya in padmāsana is somewhat unconventional since Maitreya is typically shown

\(^{73}\) Li Fangyin (1990), 191, incorrectly identifies this as a Daoist chair.

\(^{74}\) T.14.456.431b.

\(^{75}\) These mudrās are the opposite of their conventional depiction. This could have been a mistake made by the artists who may have based the image on a print with a reversed image. The representation of a Buddha making bhūmisparśa mudrā with the left hand is not unique to this image, but seen on a number of Chinese Buddha images elsewhere.
seated in bhadrāsana with the legs pendant in the so-called “European or western fashion.”

Tree foliage representing the nāgāpuṣpa tree under which Maitreya will become enlightened is depicted in low relief above and behind the Buddha’s throneback. Directly above the head of Maitreya on the upper back wall of the niche a circular canopy protrudes out from the back wall of the niche. On top, the canopy is a two-story Chinese style building that is likely intended to portray Maitreya’s current abode of Tuṣita Heaven, a standard feature in versions of this subject matter at Dunhuang. Extending out to the top sides of the niche from the base of the canopy are four widening ribbons or streamers, two on each side, which represent rays of light emitted from the Buddha’s uṣṇīsa. The lower ribbons each swirl to form three loops in which are depicted small seated Buddhas and buildings representing distant lands and Buddhas illuminated by Maitreya’s spiritual effulgence.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Maitreya uses his spiritual effulgence to illuminate innumerable lands allowing the faithful to see the Buddhas dwelling in them; see T.14.454.424b.
Also on each side of the canopy are two birds, an apsarā holding an offering tray, and an auspicious cloud. These are conventionalized elements also used in depictions of the paradise of the Buddha Amitābha.

Flanking Maitreya are two monks, Mahākāśyapa on the left (Figures 4.18 and 4.22) and a more youthful looking Ānanda on the right. According to scriptures Mahākāśyapa will still be present in the world at the time of Maitreya, along with three other monks, but Ānanda is not mentioned. Their depiction here follows a convention for depicting Buddha teaching assemblies. Protruding from the sides of the niche are smaller images representing Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, who are not mentioned specifically in the Maitreya sūtras, but are depicted as in niche 245 out of convention, and are perhaps intended to convey Maitreya’s equivalency as a Buddha.

Figure 4.22: Back wall, left side, niche 176, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

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77 Birds and their soothing songs are described in several of the Maitreya scriptures, for example see T.14.454.429c. But unlike Amitābha’s paradise they are not magical creations.

78 Mahākāśyapa is given the task to wait for Maitreya and give him the robe of Śākyamuni; see T.14.456.433c. Ānanda is not mentioned as one of the four monks who will await Maitreya’s arrival, but he serves as the main interlocutor of the Maitreya sūtras.
to the transcendental Buddha Vairocana. In the background behind Mahākāśyapa is a six armed figure which may be intended to represent a demon king called the Great General (Dajiang 大将) who comes to pay respect to the newly enlightened Buddha, or one of the Protectors of the Eight Quarters (Tianlongbabu 天龙八部) that also appear in Maitreya’s assembly.\(^79\) Next to Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda several rows of smaller figures wrap around the lateral sides of the niche and depict the attendees of Maitreya’s teaching assemblies lead by Śāṅkharā (Sengluo 僧罗), the cakravartin (zhuanlunwang 转轮王) ruler of Ketumati, and his consort Śyāmavati (Shemipodi 舍弥婆帝), who are depicted in the center of the lateral side walls of the niche (Figures 4.23 and 4.24).\(^80\)

In their retinue that fills the side walls of the

\(^79\) The Demon king is mentioned in T.14.453.421c-422a. The Tianlongbabu are mentioned in T.14.456.431b when Maitreya takes his seat on the vajra treasure throne. The attributes of this six armed figure corresponds to the conventional depiction of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara at the site except that the primary hands are in añjali mudrā.

\(^80\) Chinese scholars identify the figure on the south side as the King, but the two opposite facing images are damaged and appear to be virtually identical. There are a number of different groups of 84,000 followers mentioned in the scriptures concerning Maitreya. One group is lead by an elder named Sudhana and another by the King’s son; see T.14.453.424c.
niche are monks, nuns, secular figures, and the Four Heavenly Kings.\textsuperscript{81} According to scriptures Maitreya will be born to the chief minister of the \textit{cakravartin} king Śāṅkhara who rules Ketumati. After Maitreya achieves enlightenment the king and his consort will renounce the secular world, give up their worldly possessions, and become disciples of Maitreya. They each will lead 84,000 followers, composed of ministers and palace maids, to attend each of the three teaching assemblies at the \textit{nāgapuspa} tree, where they will become monks and nuns and achieve the spiritual state of being \textit{arhats}. The adoption of a monastic life as disciples of Maitreya by the King, his consort, and their followers is represented by figures receiving tonsure in the front corners of the back wall of the niche, a standard pictorial element in painted versions of this subject.

Beneath the main assembly on the north and south walls are panels depicting scenes of the utopian life to be experienced in Ketumati. According to the different related scriptures that describe Maitreya’s future enlightenment the world will no longer have hills and valleys, but will be level

\textsuperscript{81} The Heavenly Kings are given the role to escort the king and his followers to the place of Maitreya’s enlightenment; see T.14.456.431b.
like a sharpening stone or mirror, and the four seas will disappear.\textsuperscript{82} Pearls and other valuables will litter the ground, and the landscape will be covered by huge trees thirty miles high. The land will be fertile and people will not experience the threats of fire, flooding, war, or famine. People will have extended lives of 8,400 years, and when they are about to die they will walk to their own tombs.\textsuperscript{83} This theme is depicted on the right side of a panel on the lower portion of the south wall (Figure 4.25), which depicts a group of four figures and a small hemispheric object with a square door representing a tomb. The group of figures appear to be sending off a bent-over old woman with a cane to her tomb. To the left of this group in the center of the panel a women is shown reaching up to remove a garment from the branches of a tree. According to scriptures, at the time of Maitreya luxuriantly soft garments will

Figure 4.25: Detail, lower south wall, niche 176, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.


\textsuperscript{83} T.14.456.429b.
grow on trees and can be picked like fruit. The inner scene has a single standing figure and may be too worn to determine its content. Because there appears to be several objects, which are barely discernible, near the figure this scene could represent another description of life in Ketumati that valuables placed along the road side will be ignored by passersby as if they were stones or grass since everyone will be wealthy. More scenes are depicted on the panel on the opposite side of the niche (Figure 4.26). The outer left scene depicts a person on horseback holding a large umbrella followed by a retainer on foot holding a basket. In the center scene is a figure carrying a pole holding two baskets across his shoulders, and on the right interior side of the panel is a scene with three figures around a table. Hu Wenhe identifies these as representing a narrative of people giving away their

Figure 4.26: Detail, lower north wall, niche 176, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

84 T.14.453.421b.
possessions and traveling to their tombs.\textsuperscript{86} The figure on horseback and the figure carrying a pole may be intended to convey the broad, clean, dust-free lanes and avenues of Ketumati that one can travel without the fear of thieves and robbers since the people will all be wealthy and have high morals. The group of monks gathered around a table appear to be organizing scrolls. One monk holds a scroll-like object in his arms while another holds a begging bowl, which may indicate the giving away of worldly possessions as suggested by Hu Wenhe.\textsuperscript{87} On the interior corner is a two-story building carved in low relief with a small female figure peering out of a door. This may be based on the description that no gate or door in the city will be closed, conveying the meaning that people will live without fear.\textsuperscript{88}

Below these panels representing life at the future time of Maitreya’s enlightenment is a row of twenty donor images who likely aspired to be reborn in this future utopia. The carving of this niche indicates that aspirations of future rebirth in Maitreya’s paradise where still current in the devotional milieu in the early twelfth century. According to an artist inscription in the niche, it was carved in 1126. That date corresponds with a period of intensified conflict with the Jurchen that resulted in the eventual loss of the Song capital. The idea of a halcyon age represented by the promise of Maitreya’s rebirth may have had great appeal in that time of increasing

\textsuperscript{86} Hu Wenhe believes that this is depicted as a narrative that begins on the far right where a figure peers out of a door on the ground floor of a two-story building, which he takes as a person leaving home; see Hu Wenhe (1994), 293. Li Fangyin(1990), 122, simply describes this panel as representing the splendors of life in the city of Ketumati.

\textsuperscript{87} Hu wenhe (1994), 293.

\textsuperscript{88} T.14.453.424b. This imagery is similar to a conventionalized motif depicted in Chinese tombs with a women peering out of a closed doorway.
political and military uncertainty. This niche appears to have been created in tandem with niche 177, which depicts the Tang Dynasty monk Sengqie and two other famous monks. Sengqie was considered an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara; however, an apocryphal text describes his vow to appear at the time of Maitreya’s arrival, which may have inspired the creation of the two adjacent niches. This will be further explored in a subsequent section of this chapter.

4.4 Bhaisajyaguru, the Buddha of Radiant Lapis Lazuli

The Buddha of Radiant Lapis Lazuli (Liuli guang fo , Bhaiśajyaguru (Yaoshi), or the “Master of Healing,” is represented in sixteen different small- to medium-sized niches at the Fowan, which are mostly located at the far northern end of the site and date to the Five Dynasties period. According to the Bhaisajyaguru Sūtra, the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru resides in a mind-dazzling Pure Land called Vaiḍūryavatī (Jingliuli), “the Land of Pure Lapis Lazuli,” which is located in the remote east “beyond as many Buddha fields as there are ten times the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River.” His paradise is free from suffering and evil, and features a landscape covered by precious blue

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89 These include imagery in niches 38, 46, 75, 190, 227, 231, 255, 256, 278, 279, and 281, which date to the Five Dynasties Period, and niches 107, 110, 140, 147, and 158, which date to the Song Dynasty. Two niches at the Foeryan site, numbers 12 and 9, also have this subject matter. Number 12 has an inscription dated 1085, and number 9 also has an inscription, but without a date, and is dated to the Five Dynasties period in the NRZL, 461-462. These two niches compare closely to those found at the Fowan. A comprehensive study of Bhaisajyaguru and English translations of the primary scriptures devoted to him is given in Raoul Birnbaum, The Healing Buddha, rev. ed. (Boston: Shambhala, 1989).

90 T.14.450.405a.
gemstones, lapis lazuli, palaces and pavilions constructed of the seven precious substances (gold, silver, crystal, agate, carnelian, ruby, and lapis lazuli), and roads marked in gold. It is described as being comparable in every way to that of Sukhāvatī, the western paradise of Amitābha. Although the aspiration for rebirth in Bhaisajyaguru’s paradisiacal Pure Land is given as one of the benefits for his devotees, it is not stressed as much as his aspect as a spiritual healer. Through the power of twelve vows, Bhaisajyaguru is able to cure physical ailments and the mental and spiritual afflictions—delusion, anger, stupidity, and lust—that impede one’s spiritual development. Similar to Amitābha and the salvational bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara the primary means to benefit from the spiritual power of Bhaisajyaguru is through the sincere invocation of his name.

From an early date the prevention and cure of illness, both physical and mental, was a major concern of Buddhists, in China. There is a rich body of Buddhist literature that use the process of healing as a metaphor for spiritual development. These include early influential Buddhist texts such as the Lotus sūtra and Vimalakirtinirdesa sūtra. As discussed in earlier sections of this study numerous other Buddhist texts provide dhāranīs and other ritual methods to dispel disease. One of the functions of Buddhist monks was also to serve as physicians to the laity, administering both spiritual and practical medicine. Monks such as Fotudeng 佛图澄 in the Six Dynasties period gained great fame for their abilities to cure illness, and

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91 T.14.450.405c.

92 Ch’en (1964), 482-484. In addition to the prevention and cure of maladies on a spiritual level Buddhism also made contributions to medical practices in China. In this regard the introduction of tea and sugar cane cultivation in monasteries in Sichuan is noteworthy.
helped to secure a practical societal function for Buddhist institutions in China. A number of Buddhist divinities, most prominently Avalokiteśvara, are also ascribed powers to vouchsafe devotees from illness. However from at least the sixth century the most popular and widely venerated healing deity in China was the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. The spread of his worship was aided by the support of several Chinese emperors who were devotees of Bhaisajyaguru, most significantly the Tang Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684, 750-859) who credited his survival during the Wu Zetian interim to his devotion of Bhaisajyaguru. The devotional worship of Bhaisajyaguru did not develop into an independent cult but appears to have been practiced along side worship of Maitreya and Amitābha. In addition to curing the mental and physical ailments of devotees, the primary texts concerning Bhaisajyaguru also mention that he will aid devotees who seek rebirth in Sukhāvati and the paradise of Tuṣita.

Worship of Bhaisajyaguru was introduced in China in the early fourth century. Before that time, there is no evidence for his worship in South Asia.

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93 On the career of Futudeng, see Arthur F. Wright (December 1948): 321-371.

94 By the late sixth century the worship of Bhaisajyaguru is evident by a large lamp lighting festival performed at the request of emperor Wen of the Chen Dynasty (560-89) T.52.2103.334b-c, Ning Qiang (1997), 51. The Tang Emperor Zhongzong was reportedly the scribe of a text concerning Bhaisajyaguru that was translated by the monk Yijing, Birnbaum (1989), 69-70.

95 See Ning Qiang (1997), 44.

96 A version of Bhaisajyaguru's primary scripture by the monk Huijian 慧简 mentions rebirth in Tuṣita. See Ning Qiang (1997), 43. The benefit of assisting those who desire to have rebirth in Sukhāvati is mentioned in several texts concerning Bhaisajyaguru; see T.14.410.406b. T.21.1331.533a.

97 See Raoul Birnbaum (1989), 54-60.
His worship appears to have originated in Central Asia or in the border lands of northwestern India and was a later development that incorporated aspects and qualities of the earlier established cults to the Pure Land Buddhas Amitâbha and Akṣobhya.\textsuperscript{98} The paradise of the later Buddha is also located in the east and is describe as being the color of lapis lazuli. Alexander Soper has theorized that certain aspects of Bhaiṣajyaguru may be related to Near Eastern healing cults, in particular the healing miracles associated with the Christian tradition, which may ultimately stem from the same source in the religions of ancient western Asia.\textsuperscript{99}

The primary scripture dedicated to Bhaiṣajyaguru, popularly known as the Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra, was translated into Chinese at least five times.\textsuperscript{100} The earliest Chinese version of this text formed the twelfth and final chapter of the Foshuo da guanding shenzhou jing, also known by the abbreviated title as the Guanding jing or Initiation Sutra [Abhiṣeka Sūtra], a composite text of twelve separate sūtras translated by Śrīmitra (Shilimiduoluo 尸梨密多罗) in the early fourth century.\textsuperscript{101} It includes a description of the essential functions of Bhaiṣajyaguru to heal severe sickness and save people from untimely death. The first known independent version of

\textsuperscript{98} The connection between Bhaiṣajyaguru and Akṣobhya is noted by Guiseppe Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, vol. 2. (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1949), 360.

\textsuperscript{99} see Soper (1959), 172.

\textsuperscript{100} There are also Tibetan and Sanskrit versions of this text. The earliest Sanskrit version of the text was found among the Gilget manuscripts (ca. 6th-7th century).

\textsuperscript{101} T.21.1331.532b-535b. The chapter concerning Bhaiṣajyaguru is titled the Foshuo guanding bochu guozui shengsi dedu jing 佛说灌顶神咒经, also known by the Buddha on the Initiation Rite (Abhiṣeka) that Eliminates Faults of Past Actions and Confers Release From the Cycle of Rebirth].
this text, the *Yangshi liuliguan jing* 药师琉璃光经 [*Sūtra on the Master of Healing of Radiant Lapis Lazuli*], was translated in 457 by the monk Huijian 慧简. A second version, translated by Dharmagupta 达摩笈多罗 at the end of the Sui Dynasty in 617, is the *Yangshi rulai benyuan gongde jing* 药师如来本愿功德经 [*Sūtra on the the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Master of Healing*].

These versions were largely eclipsed in popularity by a fourth version of the scripture translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 in the mid-seventh century, which became the most popular version in East Asia. A variant of this text was translated in 707 by Yijing 义净 and is known as the *Saptabuddha Sūtra* (Qifojing 七佛经); it discusses six other Buddhas of the east in addition to Bhaiṣajyaguru. This later text is classified as an esoteric scripture; however, beyond a slightly stronger emphasis placed on *dhāraṇī* there is little difference between the content of this scripture and the earlier Bhaiṣajyaguru sūtras, except that it adds a description of a series of Buddhas and their Buddha lands in the east, with Bhaiṣajyaguru being the

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102 T.14.449.409a-404c. The preface to this scripture explaining the circumstances of its translation has been translated by Birnbaum (1989), 149-50.

103 Xuanzang’s version is entitled the *Yangshi rulai benyuan gongde jing* 药师琉璃光如来本愿功德经 [*Sūtra on the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Lapis Lazuli Radiance Tathāgata, Master of Healing*], T.14.450. This version is said to correspond closely with the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the text, and has been translated by Raoul Birnbaum (1989), 151-172.

104 T.14.451. The full title of this text is the *Yangshi qifo benyuan gongde jing* 药师琉璃光七佛本愿功德经 [*Sūtra on the Merits of the Fundamental Vows of the Seven Buddhas of Lapis Lazuli Radiance, the Masters of Healing*]. This text has also been translated by Birnbaum (1989), 173-217.
culminating Buddha. These six other Buddhas share similar qualities to Bhaisajyaguru, and in ritual manuals they are described as being his emanations. The multiplication of Buddhas of the east may have arisen out of rituals to Bhaisajyaguru that were to be conducted for seven days in front of seven images described in Dharmagupta’s translation. In addition to these sūtras several ritual manuals related to the worship of Bhaisajyaguru were translated in the eighth century.

The Bhaisajyaguru sūtra is taught by Śākyamuni with the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī serving as the primary interlocutor. The scripture begins by describing a series of twelve great vows (dayuan 大愿) made by Bhaisajyaguru when he set out on his bodhisattva path. Similar to the forty-eight compassionate vows made by the bodhisattva/monk Dharamākara described in section 4.2 of this chapter, a number of these vows focus on the appearance of Bhaisajyaguru and the benefits he will provide in return for faith and devotion. Many of these benefits are the result of the same sorts of salvation powers attributed to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara in the Lotus Sutra, and other esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara. These include providing for basic


107 These include T.19.922.,T.923, T.924 (three versions), T.925, T.926, T.927, T.928, T.929, 930. Numbers T.922, T.923, T.924, and 930 date to the Tang, while the others are from Yuan and Qing Dynasties.

108 Birnbaum points out that internal evidence suggests that the Bhaisajyaguru sūtra was modeled on the Lotus Sutra; see Birnbaum (1989), 61. Lee Yu-min has also pointed out similarities between Bhaisajyaguru and esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara, see Lee Yu-min 李玉珉, "Dunhuang Yaoshi Jingbian Yanju 敦煌药师经变研究," Gugong xueshu jikan 7 (Spring 1990): 18-19.
material and spiritual needs such as help in upholding the precepts of moral conduct, purification of transgressors, escape from punishment, freedom from illness, food and drink for the famished, and garments for the destitute. The most important of the vows are the sixth and seventh, which concern the curing of illness and maladies caused by disease:

The Sixth Great Vow: “I vow that when I attain enlightenment in a future age, if there are sentient beings whose bodies are inferior, whose sense organs are impaired, who are ugly, stupid, deaf, blind, mute, bent, lame, hunchbacked, leprous, convulsive, insane, or who have all sorts of diseases and sufferings -- such beings when they hear my name shall obtain proper appearances and practical intelligence. All their sense will become perfect and they shall have neither sickness or suffering.”

The Seventh Great Vow, “I vow that when I attain enlightenment in a future age, if there are sentient beings who are ill and oppressed, who have nowhere to go and nothing to return to, who have neither doctor nor medicine, neither relatives nor immediate family, who are destitute and whose sufferings are acute as soon as my name passes through their ears, they will be cured of all their diseases and they will be peaceful and joyous in body and mind. They will have plentiful families and property, and they will personally experience the supreme enlightenment.”

After the twelve vows and brief descriptions of the paradise of Vaiḍūryavatī and the bodhisattvas who live there, the scripture explains the means by which the spiritual power of Bhaisajyaguru can be invoked. These include the sincere recitation, orally or mentally, of the Buddha’s name and the performance of a pūja, ritual offering, to the sūtra or an image of the Buddha. The sūtra also provides a method of offering a pūja to intercede on behalf of a terminally ill person and describes nine untimely deaths (jiuhengsi 九横死) that can be avoided though the grace of Bhaisajyaguru. The

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A description of these rituals to Bhaisajyaguru feature the offering of lamps. The scripture ends with a brief description of twelve yakṣa generals who, having heard Śākyamuni preach the sūtra, made a vow to take refuge in the Buddha and pledged to champion the cause of the sūtra by protecting anyone who supports it and worships Bhaisajyaguru.\footnote{Each commands seven-thousand troops. The number twelve is also thought to have astral symbolism as related to the twelve months of the solar cycle.} The twelve vows, nine untimely deaths, and twelve yakṣa generals were frequently included in depictions of Bhaisajyaguru and his paradise.

Although Bhaisajyaguru is mentioned in texts from the fourth century the first images of Bhaisajyaguru in China are not known until the Sui Dynasty. The occurrence of imagery of Bhaisajyaguru at the Mogao caves of Dunhuang provides a good measuring stick for revealing the development and popularization of his worship. At Dunhuang depictions of Bhaisajyaguru’s paradise are only second to that of Amitābha’s Pure Land, and a large number of copies of the Bhaisajyaguru Sūtra have been found there.\footnote{There are over ninety murals with this subject at Dunhuang, which are listed in the index of the DSNZ. Some 270 copies of the Bhaisajyaguru sūtra were found at Dunhuang; see Ning Qiang (1997), 35.} The imagery of Bhaisajyaguru at Dunhuang has been studied by Lee Yumin, who shows that the earliest imagery of Bhaisajyaguru appears in the Sui dynasty and becomes increasingly popular during the Tang Dynasty and subsequent periods, with the largest number of imagery occurring during the rule of the Cao 宗 family (ca. 914-1002) in the Five Dynasties period. This development is also apparent in the imagery of Bhaisajyaguru in Sichuan with the earliest images dating to the Sui and Early Tang Periods. However, unlike most of
the Dunhuang images that include depictions of Vaiḍūryavatī and narrative illustrations of the twelve great vows and nine untimely deaths, the three-dimensional images of Bhaisajyaguru in Sichuan are typically iconic teaching assemblies with a standardized retinue of two bodhisattva attendants, twelve guardian generals, and eight bodhisattvas. Only one niche, number 24 (dated 724) at the Qianfozhai in Anyue (Figure 4.27), includes a depiction of the nine untimely deaths and twelve great vows, depicted in low relief on the sides of the niche. In addition to the Qianfozhai in Anyue, images of Bhaisajyaguru are found at a number of sites in Sichuan, including the Xiyan and Shuiningsi sites in Bazhong, Qianfayan (Jiajiang), Xiyan (Zizhong), and other sites. The largest of these is a severely eroded image of Bhaisajyaguru

Figure 4.27: Niche 24, Qianfozhai, Anyue. Photo by author, 1999.

in niche 26 at Xiyan, Zizhong, that is dated to the Late Tang/Five Dynasties period (Figure 4.28). Representative of these niches and those found at the Fowan is niche number 1 at Shimenshan, which is dated to 1151 by inscription (Figure 4.29). Several depictions of Bhaisajyaguru dating to the Late Tang period are also noted in the temples of Chengdu in the YZMHL.

The sixteen images of Bhaisajyaguru at the Fowan represent the largest concentration of Bhaisajyaguru images in Sichuan and can be divided

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113 The inscription is transcribed in the MWL, 355-6 number 6.

114 Three images of Bhaisajyaguru are noted in the YZMHL. They include an image of Bhaisajyaguru and 12 generals, by Fan Qiong, Chen Hao, and Peng Shu, which was located in the Great Hall of the Shengxingsi, an image of Bhaisajyaguru by the same trio of artists that was located in the Dabei Precinct of the Zhongxingsi; and a Bhaisajyaguru transformation tableau, by Zhao Zhongyi, which was located in the Precinct of the Sixth Patriarch in the Dashengcisi.
into two types. One type being small niches that depict Bhaisyajyaguru alone or with two bodhisattva attendants. These include niches 46, 75, 140, 227, and 231. Bhaisyajyaguru can be identified in these niches by his characteristic attributes, a pātra in the form of a medicine bowl and a monk’s staff (khakkhara), and his two primary bodhisattva attendants Sūryaprabha (Riguang 日光) and Candraprabha (Yueguang 月光). Since the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha also typically holds a khakkhara a number of these images have been mistakenly identified as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The other type of niche is more elaborate and features Bhaisyajyaguru accompanied by a larger retinue of ten bodhisattvas and twelve guardian generals. Niches of this type include niches 107, 110, 147, 158, 190, 255, 256, 278, 279, and 281. Several of these niches are referred to as bianxiang (transformation tableaus) of Vaiḍūryavati in the NRZL; however, they do not contain literal depictions of Bhaisyajyaguru’s paradise or include illustrated narrative elements from the sūtra like niche

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115 The Chinese names of the two bodhisattvas are also given as Riyao 日曜 and Yuejing 月净; see T.21.1331.533a.
26 at the Qianfozhai, Anyue. Of the total sixteen niches depicting Bhaiṣajyaguru at the site, all but two or three date to the Five Dynasties period and most are found on the northern end of the site.\textsuperscript{116}

With the exception of niche 107, the layout of these niches and the depiction of Bhaiṣajyaguru are similar. Bhaiṣajyaguru is most often depicted seated in padmāsana on a lotus or sumeru-style pedestal, with his left hand on his lap in the meditative position (dhyana mudrā) and holding a medicine bowl (yaoqi药器) in the palm of his hand. In some niches the medicine bowl, described as being made of lapis lazuli, may be depicted next to the Buddha as if magically hovering in the air on a cloud. His right hand may rest on his outer leg or knee, palm-down in a variation of bhūmisparśa mudrā, or will hold a monk’s staff (khakkhara) up against his right shoulder.\textsuperscript{117} In a number of niches the khakkhara is depicted in low relief to the side or behind the Buddha or is carried by an attendant. The khakkhara is not described as an attribute of Bhaiṣajyaguru in Chinese scriptures but became a standard attribute of Bhaiṣajyaguru in China by the Tang Dynasty, and it is believed to be related to the staff of a physician.\textsuperscript{118} In most niches, Bhaiṣajyaguru is attended by two indistinguishable bodhisattvas, Śūryaprabha (All-Pervading

\textsuperscript{116} These include niches 38, 46, and 75, on the southern section and niches 107, 110, 140, 147, 158, 190, 227, 231, 255, 256, 278, 279, and 281, in the northern section of the Fowan.

\textsuperscript{117} A ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra provides an iconographic description of Bhaiṣajyaguru in which holds a medicine jar called the “Priceless Pearl” with his left hand, and the right hand is in bhūmisparśa mudrā; see T.19.924A.29b.

\textsuperscript{118} The staff is associated with the Greco-Roman god Aesculapoius and probably entered the iconography of Bhaiṣajyaguru in Central Asia; see Birnbaum (1989), 84. An image dated to the Sui Dynasty at the Western-Cliff (Xiyan), Bazhong, depicts Bhaiṣajyaguru holding the staff, indicating that it had already been part of Bhaiṣajyaguru’s iconography by that time. In a number of niches at the Fowan the Buddha is accompanied by two unidentified monk attendants, one of which often holds his staff.
Solar Radiance) and Candraprabha (All-Pervading Lunar Radiance) who are always depicted as mirror images with each holding a circular disc representing the sun and the moon, respectively. The scriptures concerning Bhaiṣajyaguru provide little information on these two bodhisattvas except to describe them as the leaders of the limitless host of bodhisattvas who dwell in his realm. They appear to have been created as complementary figures to the two primary bodhisattvas of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, in Suhāvatī. The pair are represented alone in several niches at the Fowan indicating that may have been on occasion worshipped independent of Bhaiṣajyaguru.\(^{119}\) Perhaps on a devotional level their roles were conflated with the bodhisattvas, Bhaiṣajyaraja (Yaowang 药王; King of Healing) and Bhaiṣajyarasamudgata (Shangyao 上药; Supreme Healer), who are described in several sūtras, but not frequently represented in art.\(^{120}\)

The niches of the more elaborate type feature eight other bodhisattvas representing the eight Mahābodhisattvas (Bada pusa 八大菩萨) who are part of the standard retinue of Bhaiṣajyaguru. These include Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, and several lesser known bodhisattvas.\(^{121}\) Typically they are represented as stereotyped generic figures

\(^{119}\) The pair are depicted in niches 24 and 45. The NRZL also identifies niche 32 as depicting this pair of bodhisattvas, but the iconography suggests otherwise. There is one brief work in the Taisyō Canon that is dedicated to Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha; see T.20.1160.660b. The focus of that text is a dhārāṇī recited by Avalokiteśvara, which protects travelers, cures illness, and removes obstacles and fear.

\(^{120}\) The pair are featured in T.20.1161, translated by Kālayāśas (ca. 424), which describes the two bodhisattvas and their future Buddha realms. See Birnbaum (1989), 115-148.

\(^{121}\) The names of the eight bodhisattvas are given in the Saptabuddha Sūtra and the Guanding jing. The latter names Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Dedashi 得大势, Wujinyi 无尽意, Baoanhua 宝坛华, Yaowang 药王, Yaoshang 药上, and Maitreya; see T.21.1331.533c.
in *añjali mudrā* standing on the lateral side walls of the niche or on the back wall of the niche behind the Buddha. In the Bhaisajyaguru sūtra the eight Mahābodhisattvas are given the special function of descending to guide newly deceased devotees who wish to be reborn in the paradise of Sukhāvati.\(^\text{122}\)

Also part of the standard retinue are the twelve great yakṣa generals who are typically depicted along the base of the niche or less frequently on the lateral side walls of the niche.\(^\text{123}\) Like the eight great bodhisattvas, they are depicted for the most part as indistinguishable generic types outfitted in armor and holding their hands in gestures of adoration (Figure 4.30). Several niches also feature depictions of musical instruments on the top of the niche, like niches

\(^{122}\) T.14.450.406b, also T.21.1331.533a.

\(^{123}\) The placement of the twelve generals below Bhaisajyaguru’s platform agrees with a ritual manual translated by Amoghavajra called the *Yaoshi rulai niansong yigui* 药师如来念诵仪轨, T.19.924A.424a; *DSZJ*, 253 n. 93. The names of the twelve are given in the translations by Xuanzang and Yijing. Their names are Kimbhira, Vajra, Mekhila, Anila, Anila, Śaṇḍila, Indala, Pāyila, Māhura, Cidāla, Caundhura, and Vikala, see T.14.450.408a-b, T.14.451.416b. Later Japanese tradition identifies them with fighting against specific illnesses.
with images of Amitābha. These instruments are meant to convey the paradisiacal setting of the Buddha’s Pure Land and are not based on a direct scriptural source.

Representative of the majority of Bhaiṣajyaguru niches at the Fowan are niches 279 (Figure 2.80) and 281 (Figure 4.31), which contain several smaller niches and images arranged within a larger niche. The primary image in both these multi-niche groups depicts Bhaiṣajyaguru with his standard retinue. Bhaiṣajyaguru is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform flanked by two small monks and the bodhisattvas Śūryprabha and Candraprabha. The eight great bodhisattvas are depicted on the side walls of the niche and the twelve generals are depicted at the base of the niche standing above a stylized cloud pattern. Below the niche are several lotuses and rocks carved in low relief. The other imagery in the surrounding group of niches include dhārāṇī pillars, which were discussed in the last

Figure 4.31: Detail niche 281, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
chapter, multiple images of the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, and a row of small Buddhhas on the lintel of the niche, which are identified differently in the inscriptions that accompany the two niches.\footnote{In niche 271 the ten Buddhhas are called the ten directional Buddhhas (shifangfo 十方佛). In niche 281 there are eleven Buddhhas, and they are identified as representing Amitabha, the Buddhas of the three realms, and the seven manusi Buddhhas. Chinese scholars have taken this imagery to suggest that it is affiliated with the Three Stages School (Sanjiejiao 三阶教), but without much factual basis except that the Three Stages School placed emphasis on the propitiation of sets of Buddhhas; see Li Fangyin and Wang Xixiang, (1988), 38.}

Niche 107 is unique from other depictions of Bhaiṣajyaguru at the site (Figure 4.32). This niche depicts six other Buddhhas in addition to Bhaiṣajyaguru. The Buddhhas are represented on the upper portion of the niche with the image of Bhaiṣajyaguru in the center. The six other Buddhhas may have been intended as additional representations of Bhaiṣajyaguru based on the ritual requirement for seven images of the Bhaiṣajyaguru given in two translations of the \textit{Bhaiṣajyaguru sūtra}. These seven images are to be made for a ritual to rescue a person from the

Figure 4.32: Niche 107, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
The seven Buddhas of the east are not often encountered in Chinese Buddhist art. Bhaisajyaguru Buddha has two attendants and is made distinct from the six other Buddhas, all depicted in dhyāna mudrā, by being depicted holding an offering bowl on his lap with his left hand and making a teaching gesture with his right hand. At the top of his aureole are four swirling ribbons, two on each side that extend to the top of the niche. The lower ribbons each have a loop containing a small building. These sorts of ribbons are a convention seen on a number of images of Buddhas at the site and represent the divine light radiated by the enlightened mind and body of Buddhas. In this niche they convey the description of Bhaisajyaguru in his first vow that his body will radiate light and “illumine limitless, countless, boundless realms.”

The six other Buddhas are somewhat non-distinctive except for one located on the right side (south-facing). This figure is not represented as a typical Buddha, but is depicted with a cowl covering the head, similar to imagery of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara (Figure 4.33). The artist may have added this detail based on the popular understanding that the paradisiacal land of Potalaka where Avalokiteśvara resides was an island located off the east coast of China.

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125 T.14.449.404a; T.14.450.407c. A mural with seven images of Bhaisajyaguru dated ca. 642 is found on the northern wall of cave 220 at the Mogao caves, Dunhuang, a cave that served as a family shrine. Ning Qiang has identified the seven Buddhas as representing a ritual scene described in the Dharmagupta translation; see Ning Qiang, “Ritual, Entertainment and Politics: Rethinking the Northern Wall of Dunhuang Cave 220,” Oriental Art XLII (1996/7): 39-51. Also see Ning Qing (1997), 19-97. He argues that this mural was sponsored by a prominent local family for family members wounded or killed in battle.

126 T.14.420.405a.
The niche also includes depictions of the eight great bodhisattvas and twelve guardians kings. On the bottom of the niche are several donor images and an abbreviated ritual scene at the base of the niche, with a small altar flanked by a multi-level offering lamp on the left and a large banner and a small hemispheric object, which looks like a bird cage or a burial mound, with a bird emerging from its entrance on the right (Figure 4.34). The lamp is identified in the NRZL as a pagoda, but is more likely to represent a multi-level “shining forever lamp” (changmingdeng 长明灯) used in rituals to Bhaiṣajyaguru. The small mound could either be intended to represent the freeing of animals as an offering or the tomb of a deceased person for whom the niche was offered. The banner is likely intended to represent a five-colored, forty-nine-foot-long banner used in rituals to Bhaiṣajyaguru. Next to the banner is a robed monk-like figure. The upper torso of a female figure is depicted next to the monk, as if her lower body was covered in clouds. This figure probably represents a deceased or terminally ill person for whom the niche was offered, with the monk-like figure perhaps intended to represent the

Figure 4.33: Detail, middle north side, niche 107, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.
Yinlu pusa 引路 bodhisattva, who guides the souls of the dead. A large size image of this bodhisattva is depicted in niche 1 at Guanyinpo (Figure 2.44, page 108) and a small image in niche 105 at the Fowan may be identified as this bodhisattva. The function of this bodhisattva as a guide to the newly deceased is related to similar roles given the bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, which are discussed in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.5 Imagery of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara

The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, known in China as Guanyin 观音 (Beholder of Sounds), was introduced in the previous chapter of this study where imagery of several important esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara found at the Fowan site were highlighted. As discussed earlier, Avalokiteśvara is considered the exemplar par excellence of the Buddhist virtue of compassion

An image of this bodhisattva with a dated inscription occurs in niche 8 at the Foanqiao site in Dazu. The inscription is dated 1144, see MWL, 321 number 12.
(karunā) and unquestionably the most popular bodhisattva in the Buddhist pantheon of East Asia. By Late Tang and Song times, when imagery was being carved at the Fowan site, Avalokiteśvara had already achieved celebrated status in Chinese popular religion and was increasingly taking on a more sinified character with the introduction of new unique Chinese forms and manifestations, including several representing the female gender, which begin to appear in the imagery and vernacular literature of the period. The popularity of Avalokiteśvara is evident throughout the 250-odd-year history of carving at the Fowan site, which has a large number of images of Avalokiteśvara reflecting the elevated status of Avalokiteśvara in the local religious milieu as well as on a national level.

In addition to the imagery of esoteric forms of the bodhisattva such as Cintāmañicakra, Amoghapāśa, and the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara discussed in the last chapter, a greater number of two-armed, non-esoteric depictions of Avalokiteśvara at the Fowan site, represent the general Mahāyāna conception of the bodhisattva as a beneficent protector and savior. These include a number of popular widely known forms of Avalokiteśvara such as the Water-moon (Shuiyue 水月) or Potalaka Avalokiteśvara, the White-robed Avalokiteśvara (Baiyi Guanyin 白衣观音), and the more generic Saving [one] from Suffering Avalokiteśvara (Jiuku Guanyin 救苦观音). There are also a number of non specifically-identifiable images of Avalokiteśvara and several images that depict the so-called Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara (Baoyin Guanyin 宝印观音), which is an iconographic type not known to occur elsewhere outside the local area (Figure 4.35). As described in the last
chapter of this study, the doctrinal basis for the multiplicity of forms of Avalokiteśvara follows from the description of the bodhisattva in the “Universal Gateway” chapter of *Lotus Sūtra*, which highlights Avalokiteśvara’s spiritual powers to appear in different bodily forms to aid in the salvation of other beings.  

During the Tang Dynasty an increased number of variant forms of Avalokiteśvara began to occur. First the multi-limbed esoteric forms discussed in the last chapter, followed in the later half of the Tang Dynasty by unique Chinese forms of the bodhisattva, which became increasingly more important in later times. This expansion of the Avalokiteśvara’s iconography is apparent in imagery at the Fowan site, which reflects the significant developments in the iconography of the bodhisattva during the Late Tang and Song periods.

An important aspect of Avalokiteśvara’s role as a compassionate savior is the notion that devotion to Avalokiteśvara will not only spare one from physical harm and bring mundane benefits, but will ultimately lead one to rebirth in a Buddhist Pure Land, in particular the Western Pure Land of

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129 T.262.55a-58b. Translated by Hurvitz, 311-319.
Amitābha. For that reason, the exoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara at the site are discussed under the general rubric of Pure Land Buddhism in this chapter. The goal of rebirth in a Pure Land is a given aspect of the East Asian belief in Avalokiteśvara in general. The doctrinal association of Avalokiteśvara with the Pure Land tradition is provided by the longer version of the *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*, which includes a brief description of Avalokiteśvara as one of the two primary bodhisattvas in the western paradise of the Buddha Amitābha.130 An expanded description of Avalokiteśvara and his cohort Mahāsthamaprapta is given in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* (Guan jing 观经), as part of the visualization of Sukhāvati. In that text, Avalokiteśvara descends as part of the retinue to greet newly deceased devotees into Amitābha’s paradise.131 This aspect of Avalokiteśvara as a spiritual guide to the Pure Land of Amitābha is interwoven into the bodhisattva’s identity in Chinese Buddhism.

The description of Avalokiteśvara in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna sūtra* (Guan jing) includes the appearance of a small transformation Buddha, symbolic of Avalokiteśvara’s spiritual source Amitābha, in the bodhisattva’s headdress.132 This is one of the chief identifying traits used to distinguish Avalokiteśvara from other bodhisattvas. Other attributes commonly associated with Avalokiteśvara include, most importantly, the lotus (padma), water-bottle (kuṇḍikā), willow branch, and prayer-beads (mālā). In the majority of images

130 The description focuses on Avalokiteśvara’s powers of discernment and mental concentration; see T.12.360.273; Gomez, 97-98.

131 Several scriptures also speak of Avalokiteśvara as being the spiritual heir of Amitābha, even succeeding him as the Buddha overlord of Sukhavati; see Yū (2001), 35-36.

132 T.12.365.343c.
of Avalokiteśvara at the Fowan where the bodhisattva is not depicted in a specific form, Avalokiteśvara is depicted holding a willow branch in the right hand and a kuṇḍikā or an alms bowl (pātra) in the left hand, holding the stem of a large lotus with both hands. The lotus (padma) is symbol of purity and transcendence and is the most ancient symbol associated with Avalokiteśvara, identified in early South Asian representations as Padmapañi (The Lotus Bearer) from the Kuśāna Dynasty (ca. 100-300 C.E).\textsuperscript{131}

By the Tang Dynasty the willow branch, an attribute of the bodhisattva introduced in early esoteric scriptures concerning Avalokiteśvara and associated with curative powers, along with the water-bottle and prayer beads, had also become fixed attributes of the bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{134}

One of the most significant developments in the iconography of Avalokiteśvara during the Tang to Song periods is the gradual transformation of the popular perception of the bodhisattva into a female deity. This transformation begins in the Tang Dynasty with a general trend to portray bodhisattvas with effeminate qualities making many images in the absence of the depiction of facial hair appear non-gender-specific. However, it is not certain that this trend in the depictions of bodhisattvas inspired the development of female forms of Avalokiteśvara, which begin to appear around the Song Dynasty. There have been a number of arguments raised to explain the appearance of female forms of Avalokiteśvara, with some scholars

\textsuperscript{131} See Huntington (1985), 139 fig. 8.16.

\textsuperscript{134} See Yü (2001), 78. Chun-fang Yü takes the inclusion of the willow branch as a standard attribute for the bodhisattva as a evidence for the influence of the elevated status of Avalokiteśvara in esoteric texts on the iconography of the bodhisattva in China.
suggesting the influence of esoteric Buddhist deities like Tara, and others
believing it was based on antecedents in indigenous goddess figures such as
Nüwa 女娲.\footnote{These views are summarized and discussed in Yü (2001), 407-419.}

The first recognized female form of the bodhisattva is the White-robed
Avalokiteśvara, which became one of the most popular forms of the
bodhisattva after the Tang Dynasty. According to Chün-fang Yü the
popularity of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara was tied to widely circulated
vernacular scriptures that portray her as a granter of children.\footnote{See Yü (2001), 253. This aspect of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara as a mother figure is hinted at in at least one Tang esoteric text where a bodhisattva appears with the name “White Robed Mother Avalokiteśvara;” see T.20.1080.193b-c.}
The origins of this form of Avalokiteśvara are somewhat obscure, but it is believed to be a
derivation of the esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara known as Baiyi 白衣,
Pāṇḍaravāsini (“Clad in White”).\footnote{Some scholars have tried unsuccessfully to connect this esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara to White Tara; see Rolf A. Stein, “Avalokiteśvara/Kouan-yin, un exemple de transformation d’un dieu endeesse,” Cahiers d’Étreme-Asie 2 (1986): 27-37. Chün-fang Yü (2001), 184 believes that this iconography was derived from the Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara. On the other hand, Wai-kam Ho has suggested that it may be linked to Nestotarian and Manichean influences, cited in Marilyn Gridley (1985), 29.}
The earliest extant images of this form of the bodhisattva are dated to the tenth century.\footnote{The earliest reference to an image of this form of Avalokiteśvara is a donor inscription dated 936 from a site in Meishan county just south of Chengdu; see DSY, 174. Yü (2001), 253, 531 n. 12, incorrectly places this image at Beishan and misidentifies niche 118 at the Fowan site as having an image of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara. The earliest art historical text recording this subject matter is the Xuanhe huapu, which identifies one Tang painter and two painters of the Five Dynasties period who depicted this subject matter; see Songeun Choe, Buddhist Sculpture of Wu Yueh, 907-978: Chinese Sculpture of the Tenth Century. (Diss., University of Illinois, 1991), 91. Earlier images of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara are speciously attributed to the Tang painter Wu Daozi; see Yü (2001), 253.}
The appearance of this imagery coincides with several legendary tales that establish the worship of
the White-robed Avalokiteśvara with the ruling elite of several parts of China. The earliest extant image of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara is believed to be an image in the entrance way of the Yanxiadong cave in Hangzhou that dates to the mid-tenth century (Figure 4.36).

There are several images at the Fowan that may be identified as this form of Avalokiteśvara. These include images located in caves 136 (Figure 2.97) and 180 (Figure 4.37), which feature multiple images of Avalokiteśvara and date to the twelfth century. These two images feature the chief identifying attribute of this form of Avalokiteśvara, a veil or cowl, which is draped over the top and the back of the bodhisattva’s headdress. The meaning and origins of the cowl in association with the bodhisattva are uncertain. Some have suggested that the cowl relates to meditation practices, but it could also have been adopted from imagery of Kṣitigarbha, since Avalokiteśvara’s role as a universal savior is related

Kṣitigarbha’s role as savior of the damned. Both images in cave 136 and 180

139 One legend is connected to the Liao who ruled northern China from 974-1125, see Marilyn Gridley, “A White-robed Guanyin as the Embodiment of a Liao Ideal,” Orientations 32, 2 (February 2001): 47-50. Another legend associates a white-robed goddess with the founder of the Wu-Yue kingdom in Southeast China, see Songeun Choe, 90.

140 This image is questionably intended as a female figure, since it has the broad shoulders of a male figure.

141 These are all subsidiary figures and include imagery in the following niches/caves: 105, 136, 149, 155, 168, and 180. However, since none of these images have identifying inscriptions it can not be certain if they were all intended specifically as the White-robed Avalokiteśvara or just generic images of the bodhisattva wearing a cowl.
have a small transformation Buddha representing Amitābha in the headdress. The bodhisattva in cave 180 holds a string of prayer beads, an attribute featured in several early depictions of this form of Avalokiteśvara. Prayer beads are an attribute associated with the worship of Amitābha since being advocated by the Pure Land patriarch Daochuó 道绰 (562-644). Prayers to the White-robed Avalokiteśvara may not only have been directed at procuring offspring, but to propitiate Avalokiteśvara to seek rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha. In that role Avalokiteśvara becomes a sort of divine mother through whom one can be reborn into the Buddha’s Pure Land.

The standing bodhisattva on the south wall of cave 136 holds a cintāmanī with a spiraling and widening trail of smoke or light extending to

142 There is a small seated bodhisattva on the upper wall of the opposite side of cave 180 that also holds a mālā and wears a cowl, which also may be intended as the White-robed Avalokiteśvara.
the top of the niche. This attribute is not normally associated with the White-robed Avalokiteśvara but is one of the primary attributes of the esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara, Cintamanicakra. Although the White-robed Avalokiteśvara is considered a female, neither image cave 180 nor 136 is made more distinctly feminine than other Song images of bodhisattvas at the site, all of which, with the exception of Kṣitigarbha, have somewhat effeminate appearances. Further, the manner in which the bodhisattva is depicted in cave 136, with the chest only partially covered by a diagonal undergarment, is uncharacteristic for female images. This style of depiction of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara perhaps relates to imagery of the bodhisattva popular in northern China under the Liao, which Marilyn Gridley has identified a “heroic” type distinct from the gentler southern representations of the bodhisattva.

Niches 125 and 132 contain the most effeminate looking images of the Avalokiteśvara at the site. The elegantly carved figure in niche 125, with its lithe body and gently swaying posture, embodies the qualities that became the dominate model for the portrayal of Avalokiteśvara in China (Figure 2.86). The body of the figure and facial features appear to be modeled after a pubescent female dressed in elegant garments that flutter in an imaginary wind. The pose of the figure and manner in which the right hand holds a string of pearls or prayer beads that dangle from the hand forming a figure

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143 The same is true for images of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara in Dunhuang, such as in cave 306 and 308.

144 See Gridley (2001), 47-50.

145 These images are identified by Angela Howard as representing the earliest representations of Avalokiteśvara as being distinctly female. See Howard (1990), 55.
eight and the left hand grasps the right wrist is similar to other early
eamples of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, such as the image in the
entrance way of the Yanxia dong 烟霞洞 cave in Hangzhou. Since the
bodhisattva in niche 125 lacks a cowl it was probably not intended as the
White-robed Avalokiteśvara, but may have been inspired from the
iconography of that form of Avalokiteśvara and a popular masculine form of
Avalokiteśvara known as the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara, which can be
difficult to distinguish from the White-robed Avalokiteśvara.

The Water-moon (Udakacandra, Shuiyue 水月) or Potalaka
Avalokiteśvara is one of the most frequently depicted forms of Avalokiteśvara
at the Fowan, occurring in at least ten niches/caves at the site.\textsuperscript{146} The
iconography of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara (Shuiyue guanyin 水月观音)
represents an uniquely Chinese iconographic innovation to the standard
depiction of Avalokiteśvara and is identified by Chün-fang Yū  as the “first
truly Chinese” image of the bodhisattva.\textsuperscript{147} In this iconography
Avalokiteśvara is typically depicted in a landscape setting and seated in
some variant of the posture of royal ease (råjalålásana, ruyizuo 如意坐) on top
of a rock or sumeru throne in a rocky landscape setting. A key feature of this
form of Avalokiteśvara is the inclusion of a large round aureole resembling a

\textsuperscript{146} These include niches 70, 113, 128, 131, 135, 151, 165, 200, 210, 213, and 280. Other
depictions of this theme are found in one unnumbered niche at the Yingpanpo site, and in
niches 4 and 15 in the Duobaota pagoda. For a study of this iconography, see Yamamoto
Yōko 胜山本阳子, “Suigetsu Kannonzu no seiritsu ni kansuru itshi kosa 水月观音图の成立に

\textsuperscript{147} Yū (2001), 21.
full moon, which envelops the body of the bodhisattva. As with other images of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva is outfitted in luxuriant garments, diaphanous scarfs, and precious adornments. In Song images at the site this apparel has an almost baroque character with the deity totally enveloped in embroidered scarves and ribbons, which spill over the bodhisattva's seat, as in niche 113 (Figure 2.93). This form of the bodhisattva may be represented alone, but more typically is attended by a female figure representing the Dragon Princess (Longnü 龙女) and a priestly male figure representing the Buddhist prelate Sudhana (Shancai 善财). In some depictions, such as in niche 133, the back or sides of the niche are carved to emulate a craggy landscape. Early extant painted images of Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara have identical iconographies but with some minor flourishes, such as the inclusion of bamboo and a pool of water as part of the setting.

The inspirational source of this iconography is the last part of the *Buddhāvatsāsaka Sūtra* (Huayan jing 华严经) titled the *Gaṇḍhavyūha* (Entry into the Dharma realm), which was added to the main body of the scripture in the late seventh century as the thirty-ninth and final chapter.\textsuperscript{148} It describes the pilgrimage of the youthful Buddhist aspirant Sudhana in the quest for spiritual knowledge and ultimate truth. Avalokiteśvara is the twenty-seventh of the fifty-three spiritual guides, or good friends.

(kalyāṇamitras), visited by Sudhana on his journey. Their meeting occurs in the distant mountain home of the bodhisattva in the ocean of the far south on the island of Mount Potalaka:

Climbing the mountain, he [Sudhana] looked around for Avalokiteśvara and saw him on a plateau on the west face of the mountain, which was adorned with springs, ponds, and streams, sitting wakefully on a diamond boulder in a clearing in a large woods, surrounded by a group of enlightened beings seated on various jewel rocks, to whom he was expounding a doctrine called “light of medium of great love and compassion,” which concerns the salvation of all sentient beings.

Although Sudhana’s meeting with Avalokiteśvara is not given special prominence in the text, it became one of the most often depicted subjects from the scripture. By the Song Dynasty the depiction of Avalokiteśvara in the natural setting of the bodhisattva’s mountain home became one of the most endearing themes in Chinese Buddhist art. There is no early corresponding iconography of Water-moon Avalokiteśvara from South Asia, but the pose of the figure can be traced to South Asian conventions for depicting bodhisattvas that appear first in the Kuśāna period (ca. 100-300 C.E.), perhaps based on royal imagery of western Asian. According to the Japanese scholar Yamamoto Yōko, the appearance of this form of Avalokiteśvara is based entirely on Chinese prototypes of immortals and reclusive scholars popular since the Han dynasty. However, it probably

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149 Imagery in the Duobaota pagoda consisting of thirty-three reliefs depicting Sudhana’s meetings with many of the fifty-three good friends (kalyāṇamitras), who guide Sudhana on his spiritual quest, was briefly introduced in the second chapter of this study.

150 T.10.279.366c; Cleary, 151. The verse portion of the text describes Avalokiteśvara as having been seated on a lion throne in a lotus calyx.

151 See Huntington (1985), 139.

represents a domesticated convention of an established pose for royal figures
and deities modified with Chinese elements. The iconography of Water-moon
Avalokiteśvara emerged in China sometime around the Mid Tang period and
became an increasingly popular subject in the Song Dynasty. By the ninth
century this iconography had spread to Japan. The earliest mention of this
subject is found in the mid-ninth century Lidai minghua ji (Record of Famous
Painters of All Dynasties), which credits its origination to the famous Tang
figure painter Zhou Fang 周昉 (730-800) who painted a mural of this subject
in the Shengguangsi 胜光寺 temple in the Tang capital. This mural is
vaguely described as having a round aureole, bamboo, and a protective screen,
which were colored in by a different artist. The large round body aureole,
which often appears in images of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara in the
shape of a full moon enveloping the body of the bodhisattva, is one of the chief
iconographic attributes of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara. However, there is
no scriptural explanation for this attribute, but may follow from the general
association of Avalokiteśvara with brilliant white light as described in the
longer Sukhavativyuha sūtra and/or be symbolic of the teaching called the
“light of medium of great love and compassion,” mentioned in the
Gāndhavyūha sūtra. The prominence of the aureole may also be an

153 Images of this subject were taken to Japan in 839 by returning Japanese monks, Engyō 常晓 和 Jōgyō 圓行; see Dunhuangxue da cidian, 164.

154 Lidai minghua ji, fascicle 3, 1; Acker (1954), 293.

155 Lidai minghua ji, fascicle 3; translated by Acker (1954), 293.

156 T.10.293.366c. In the Sukhavativyuha sūtra both Mahāsthamaprajñā and Avalokiteśvara are described as emanating radiant light that shines throughout the universe; T.12.360.273b. See Gomez, 193.
inference to the name of this form of the bodhisattva, which appears to have been based on the appearance of the image rather than derived from a scriptural source.\(^{157}\) Chün-fang Yü suggests that the name “Water-moon” is based on Buddhist metaphors symbolizing the empty and transitory nature of the phenomenal world.\(^{158}\) In Song times and earlier these metaphors were a poetic device frequently used by such notable authors as the native Sichuanese Su Dongpo 苏东坡.

In addition to Zhou Fang a number of artists are known to have painted this subject, including two well known painters who worked in Chengdu during the Late Tang period.\(^{159}\) It may be the influence of these painters that made this subject popular at many cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan, especially in the Dazu and Anyue area.\(^{160}\) One example, dated 1094, is niche number 2 at Shimenshan, Dazu, which was carved by a member of the Wen family atelier, Wen Judao 文居道 and was sponsored by a monk.\(^{161}\) This niche features a

\(^{157}\) The name only occurs in an apocryphal text from Dunhuang that has is its title the name “Moon in Water Avalokiteśvara.” See Yü (2001), 233-35.


\(^{159}\) Zuo Quan 左全 and Fan Qiong 范琼 are noted for painting this subject in the YZMHL. Zuo Quan painted this subject in the Mañjuśrī Pavilion of the Dashengcisi with an image of the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, and Fan Qiong painted an image of it in the Shenghousi. Others who painted this subject matter are described in other Song art historical texts; see Mastumoto Eiichi (1939), v.1, 349-350.

\(^{160}\) Other sites in Dazu with images of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara include Shimenshan number 4, Yutan number 8, Foanqiao 6, Miaogaoshan number 5. See Li Fangyin (1990), 147.

\(^{161}\) The inscription is transcribed in the MWL 350-1 number 2. The monk who offered the niche is named Fashun 法顺. The inscription notes that it was offered for peace and the wish that the wheel of the dharma will constantly continue to revolve, as well as the wish that all sentient beings will be able to depart from suffering and see their true nature to become Buddhas.
somewhat ill-proportioned depiction of the bodhisattva seated on a rock representing a miniature island in the midst of a seascape (Figure 4.38). There are several larger and more skillfully carved examples in the Dazu area, but none of them features the same pictorial quality as this image. The occurrence of images of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara in the Dazu area parallels that of the popularity of depictions of Water-moon Avalokiteśvara at sites around Dunhuang, with the earliest images dating to the Five Dynasties period and increasing numerically, and in scale, in the Song Dynasty. Among the smaller images of this subject at the Fowan, four are datable to the Five Dynasties period but none of them is well preserved. Niche 213 is representative of these niches (Figure 4.39). The image in this niche is damaged, but it can be unmistakably identified as Water-moon Avalokiteśvara.

Figure 4.38: Niche 4, Shimenshan, Dazu. Photo by author, 1999.

162 According to the entry for the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara in the Dunhuang Studies dictionary, there are thirty-four images of the subject from the Five Dynasties and Song periods at sites in Dunhuang in addition to five banners recovered from cave 17, with the earliest dated to 934. Dunhuangxue da cidian, 164. The index of DNHZ lists twenty murals of this subject with five dating to the Five Dynasties period, five to the Song Dynasty, three to the Xisha Period, one to the Uiger Period, and one dating to the Yuan Dynasty. DSNZ, 278.

163 These include niches 70, 200, 210, 213, and possibly niche 280. Li Fangyin doesn’t believe that the Five Dynasties niches of this subject can be positively identified; see Li Fangyin (1990), 147.
Avalokiteśvara by the relaxed pose of the figure, large round body aureole, and seat that is carved to look like a rocky crag. This niche differs from Song representations of Water-moon Avalokiteśvara at the site in that Sudhana and Longnü are not depicted. Another example that is better preserved is found at Yingpanpo (Figure 2.33).\(^{164}\) This small image was buried in dirt until it was uncovered in 1995. The bodhisattva is depicted seated on a rocky mound with lotuses in front. The pose of the bodhisattva is a variant of the royal ease posture with the right leg pendent and the left leg bent horizontally. The bent left leg is supported by bodhisattva’s hands, which are folded around the leg. Characteristic of many early images of Water-moon Avalokiteśvara the bodhisattva wears a robe that is slung over the left shoulder leaving the right shoulder exposed. Instead of a full moon-shaped body aureole, the image features a large circular head aureole.

Images of Water-moon Avalokiteśvara are more common in the Song Dynasty, and several sites in the Dazu and Anyue area feature larger sized

\(^{164}\) The style of the figure with a large head is probably a work of the Five Dynasties period rather than the Late Tang, as given by Guo Xiangying and Li Fangyin (1999), 30.
carvings of this subject. In addition to images of this subject found at sites on Beishan and the previously mentioned image at Shimenshan, other sites with images of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara include Yutan, Miaogaoshan, Foanqiao in Dazu, and Piludong in Anyue. Among them the image at Miaogaoshan is particularly well carved (Figure 4.40). At the Fowan six images of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara are datable to the Song dynasty. The largest of these is niche 133, which includes a more elaborate depiction to emulate the setting of Potalaka (Figure 4.41). In this example the bodhisattva is posed in rājalilāsana, with the left hand holding a string of prayer beads that hangs over the bodhisattva’s left leg. In the background the bodhisattva’s kundikā is depicted on a rocky ledge. The depiction of the kundikā off to the side of the bodhisattva is a standard feature that first appears in the Song Dynasty, often with a willow branch sticking out of it.

Attending the bodhisattva on the back sides of the cave are Sudhana and the Dragon Princess. Sudhana is associated with this form of Avalokiteśvara.

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165 The largest of these is niche 19, Piludong, Anyue. This image of Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by smaller images, which Angela Howard (1990), 57, believes are Qing period additions. The niche has undergone restoration and is difficult to view in the metal cage that protects it from human damage.

166 Shimenshan 4, Foanqiao 5, Yutan 8, and Miaogaoshan 5.

167 These include niches 113, 128, 131, 135, 151, and 165.
Avalokiteśvara through the description of his visit to Potalaka in the *Gandhavyūha* sūtra. Longnü is not directly associated with Potalaka but is described in several esoteric scriptures, where she appears to present the bodhisattva with a precious gem.\(^\text{168}\) According to Chün-fang Yü the pair first begin to appear as the attendants of Avalokiteśvara in the twelfth century, but if the dating of several small images of this subject at the Fowan to the Five Dynasties is correct then their incorporation as part of the iconography of Avalokiteśvara dates to at least the tenth century. The inclusion of Sudhana and Longnü in the iconography of Avalokiteśvara may have followed from a similar convention of depicting Śrīdevi and Vasu in images of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. By Song times the pair had became a standard fixture of images of Avalokiteśvara, not only the Water-moon form.

\(^{168}\) Yü (2001), 440. She believes that the pair are counter parts of the Daoist Jade girl and Golden boy.
An interesting feature of cave 133 is the inclusion of four fierce, multi-limbed guardian figures on the lateral side walls of the niche (Figures 4.42 and 4.43). These figures are superbly carved with great attention given to the body armor and expressive faces of the four figures. The inclusion of these dynamically posed martial figures is unusual for depictions of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara, which are typical imbued with contemplative serenity. Angela Howard identifies the four as wrathful manifestations of Vairocana and suggests that they are intended merely as “space fillers” added as a “novelty” by the artists. However, given the size and care taken to depict these figures, they undoubtedly have some symbolic significance in relation to this form of Avalokiteśvara. They are probably intended as wrathful manifestations of Avalokiteśvara and may be related

Figure 4.42: North wall, niche 133, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Figure 4.43: South wall, niche 133, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

Howard (1990), 55.
to the notion that the *dhārāṇis* associated with esoteric forms of the bodhisattva were revealed by the bodhisattva at Potalaka.\textsuperscript{170} It may be significant that this cave is adjacent to niche 130, which features an image of Māricī with eight wrathful figures. In the area of the niche are a cluster of images of Avalokiteśvara, including two niches, numbers 125 and 132, with distinctly effeminate images of the bodhisattva. This may be an indication that this cave may have been created at around the same time as the Māricī niche and may be intended to reflect the aspect of the bodhisattva as protector and counterpart of the female martial figure of Māricī.

The central image of Cave 180 may also have been inspired from the iconography of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara (Figures 4.44). This cave is

\textsuperscript{170}Most of the sūtras that concern the esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara are taught by Śākyamuni at Potalaka, which may account for the frequent pairing of the Water-moon and thousand-hand forms of Avalokiteśvara at Dunhuang.

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dated by inscriptions to the Northern Song (1116-1122).\textsuperscript{171} It features a relatively large central image of Avalokiteśvara (1.86 meters high on a base 1.34 meters high) seated in rājalāsana on a sumeru platform decorated with floral patterns carved in incised relief. Attending the bodhisattva are six life-size standing bodhisattvas (1.9 meters high) that line the walls of the cave (Figures 4.45 and 4.46). Above ten of the twelve bodhisattvas are miniature images of bodhisattvas seated on clouds and lotuses that rise up from behind the lower row of larger standing bodhisattvas. The smaller bodhisattvas depict Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Sūryaprabha, Candraprabha, and several forms of Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{172} Below, the twelve larger standing bodhisattvas

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4_45.jpg}
\caption{North wall, cave 180, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{171} Appendix B, number 1.45-7. More inscriptions were in the cave, but they are no longer legible.

\textsuperscript{172} There are also two slightly smaller standing figures on the outer part of the niche. These figures are severely damaged, and I am not sure if they were also intended as bodhisattvas or attendant figures.
are slightly smaller in scale than the main image, and stand barefooted on a small ledge decorated with upturned lotus petals. The two outermost figures are extensively eroded, but the others are well preserved. They all have similar appearances with minor differences between them, except that each has a different attribute or hand gesture. These includes figures with a pāśa, willow branch and kuṇḍikā, wicker basket, mālā, pātra, treasure-seal, ruyī, brush and ink well, and one figure who makes varada mudrā. Most of these attributes and gestures are associated with Avalokiteśvara. For this reason the twelve are commonly believed to represent twelve different manifestations of Avalokiteśvara. Although several alternative explanations have been offered such as that they represent the Twelve Yuanjue bodhisattvas or are manifestations of
Samantabhadra, not Avalokiteśvara. These arguments are not convincing in light of the specificity of some of these attributes to Avalokiteśvara such as the pāśa, willow branch, and kuṇḍikā, as well as the representations of small standing transformation Buddhas in the crowns of the bodhisattvas.

Images with multiple forms of Avalokiteśvara are not unusual at this site or elsewhere. For example, a number of banners from Dunhuang show several forms of the bodhisattva in a single painting, and images of different forms of the bodhisattva were frequently included in a single cave. Similarly the famous twelfth-century *Long Scroll of Buddhist Images* from Yunnan features twenty-two different forms of Avalokiteśvara, but as independent images within the painted divisions of the scroll. However, the grouping of twelve images of Avalokiteśvara plus the central image appears to be unique to this cave. For this reason some have suggested that the figures are intended to represent aspects of multi-limbed/headed esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara, such as the Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara or

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173 The latter interpretation is given by Li Sisheng (1999), 11-12, who argues that the central image represents the bodhisattva Samantabhadra and that the use of multiple images of bodhisattvas is based on an episode near the end of the *Gandhavyuha sūtra* where Samantabhadra multiplied himself. The twelve Yuanjue bodhisattvas are associated with the Avatamsaka teachings and are depicted at several sites in Dazu and Anyue, for a study of that imagery see Hu Wenhe, “Sichuan shiku Huayan jing xitong bianxiangde yanjiu 四川石窟华严经系统变相的研究,” *DHY* 1 (1997): 90-95; Xiang Shisan 向世山, “Cong moyan zaoxiang kan (Yuanjue jing) zai Sichuan minjian de chuanbu 从摩呀岩造像圆觉经在四川民间的传布,” *WX*, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 264-271.

Ekadaśamukha. Although there are a number of different groupings of forms of Avalokiteśvara, such as the 108 forms popular in later Dynastic China, I am not aware of any scriptural or literary references to twelve or thirteen forms of Avalokiteśvara. There are, however, a number of niches and caves in the Dazu area dating to the Song Dynasty that depict ten images of Avalokiteśvara in a similar way to how the twelve images are depicted in this cave. These other examples are all slightly later and date to around the shaoxing reign era (1131-1163). In niche 105 at the Fowan, ten images of different forms of Avalokiteśvara are depicted including an image of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, below a depiction of a Buddha triad (Figure 4.47). Two other larger sets of ten figures of Avalokiteśvara are ascribed to the painter Cao Zhongyuan in the XHHP, fascicle 3, but are not necessarily a single work. Although multiples of Avalokiteśvara are known elsewhere, the set of ten only occurs in extent imagery from Dazu. There is, however, a set of ten bodhisattvas surrounding a seated Buddha dated to the Northern Song period, which are found in a cave in Shaanxi province; see Li Song (1999), 188-189.
Avalokiteśvara line the walls of two caves in Shimenshan, number 6, dated 1136-1141 (Figure 4.48), and Miaogaoshan, number 4 dated ca. 1136-1163 (Figure 4.49). Both have images of the Buddha Amitābha as the primary image on the back walls of the caves. The images in these caves are similar to those found in cave 180 at the Fowan, but do not include the smaller bodhisattvas above the images. The Shimenshan
Avalokiteśvara images stand on lotuses emerging from flower pots (Figure 4.50).\textsuperscript{178} Given these other depictions of sets of ten Avalokiteśvara images with each representing a different aspect of the bodhisattva, it could be that the set of Avalokiteśvara images in cave 180 was also intended to represent a set of ten, not twelve, with an image of Avalokiteśvara replacing the central Buddhas in the other examples.\textsuperscript{179} The two bodhisattvas directly to the sides and behind the central seated image of Avalokiteśvara are carved

\textsuperscript{178} Niche 105 at the Fowan also uses this convention and may have been modeled after these figures. The primary reason given for the carving of the Miaogaoshan cave was the wish to bring rain after a period of draught, see MWL, 351-5.

\textsuperscript{179} Although there is no reason given for ten images, the number could have been based on the symbolism of the ten stages of bodhisattvahood.
back from the other figures in shallow niches and face directly outward like the central image. These figures do not have smaller images of bodhisattvas depicted above them like the other ten figures. For these reasons, I believe they are intended as attendants to the central figure and separate from the other figures that line the lateral sides of the cave.

Although there is no literary reference to twelve or thirteen forms of Avalokiteśvara as a set, a set of ten is mentioned in one Song Dynasty art historical source. This is found in Deng Chun’s *Hua ji* 画继 (ca. 1167), which mentions that a monk-painter named Zujian 祖鉴, a student of a famous painter of Avalokiteśvara images in Chengdu, painted a group of ten images of Guanyin in the Buddha Hall of the Dacichaowuyuan 大慈超悟院 temple during the Song Dynasty.  

It is possible that the set of ten images of Avalokiteśvara painted by Zujian was related to those found in the Dazu area.

There are several donor inscriptions in cave 180, indicating that the images were sponsored individually by different donors. Each image appears to have had its own donor inscription, but the names of the bodhisattvas are not legible. The names of the ten figures in Shimenshan cave 6 are given in inscriptions, which are still mostly legible. There each image of Avalokiteśvara is identified according to the attribute held by the figure.

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180 Deng Chun 邓椿, *Hua ji* 画继 fascicle 5.

Many of the names include the honorific prefix bao 宝, which is translated as treasure or precious. Probably a similar naming convention was used for the figures in cave 180 which was carved some twenty years earlier. However, the attributes of the Avalokiteśvara images do not all correspond to those found in the Shimenshan cave. A comparison between images at Miaogaoshan, Shimenshan, and Fowan niches 105 and cave 180, shows that the sets are not all the same, but only the Shimenshan cave provides a complete set that has no damaged figures.

Several of the figures in cave 180 appear to represent or refer to aspects of specific forms of Avalokiteśvara such as Amoghapāśa, the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, and the Fish-basket Avalokiteśvara. However, others, like many of those named in the Shimenshan cave, are associated with Avalokiteśvara only by the attribute or gesture. Chün-fang Yü suggests that these sets of figures are derived from the descriptions of the attributes of the Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara, which local artisans borrowed to depict two armed non-esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara.\(^{182}\) Possibly such images were a derivation of a Tang esoteric scripture concerning the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara that instructs the practitioner to make an image of Avalokiteśvara with the appropriate mudrā/attribute of the forty primary hands of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara for the outcome(s) they hope to achieve.\(^{183}\) Hence, the depiction of multiple images of two-armed human forms

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\(^{182}\) Yü (2001), 231. Her description of the images in cave 180 is not entirely correct, and several of the attributes are not part of the standard set of forty-two associated with the Thousand-handed form of Avalokiteśvara.

of the bodhisattva with different attributes to address different needs. However, a number of the attributes held by the bodhisattvas do not correspond with those given in the standard set of forty-two associated with the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara.\footnote{The attributes held by figures in cave 180, which are not among the standard set of forty attributes associated with the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, include a ruyi, basket, and brush.}

One of the attributes held by the bodhisattvas in cave 180 that is one of the standard attributes associated with the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara is a square seal, which otherwise has no apparent scriptural source in connection with Avalokiteśvara. The figure that holds the stamp seal is identified by Chinese scholars by the name Jade or Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara (Baoyin Guanyin). This form of Avalokiteśvara is also depicted in at least five other niches at the site (niches 118, 126, 136, 211, 274), and may have been modeled after an image that was considered particularly efficacious. Images of this form of the bodhisattva, such as the bodhisattva depicted in niche 126 (Figure 4.35), have not been identified elsewhere, but may be connected to several images of a Treasure-seal (Baoyin) bodhisattva mentioned in the \textit{XHHP}, which were attributed to artists associated with Sichuan.\footnote{The \textit{XHHP}, fascicle 2, lists a painting of the Baoyin bodhisattva under works attributed to Wu Daozi (Wu Daoxuan). Since many of the works attributed Wu Daozi are suspect it may have been a work brought from Sichuan and added to the imperial collection. Two others works of this subject mentioned in the \textit{XHHP} are attributed to Xin Cheng in fascicle 2, and Du Zigui in fascicle 3, who were both active in Chengdu. However, works of this subject matter are not attributed to them in the \textit{YZMHL}.} In images at the site this deity is depicted holding a square stamp seal with the right hand and a long ribbon attached to the seal with the left hand. According to the \textit{Dabei sūtra} of Amoghavajra the
mudrā of the stamp seal provides eloquence of speech, which is a quality associated with the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the wisdom side of the Buddhist enlightenment equation.

The development of this apparently localized form of Avalokiteśvara could possibly be related to the famous Sichuan monk Zhixuan 知玄 (809-881) of Meizhou (modern Meishan county) whose biography is given in the sixth fascicle of the Song gaoseng zhuan. Zhixuan is associated with Elephant-Ear mountain 象耳山 in Meizhou, which was a cultic center of worship of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. According to the account of Zhixuan’s life in the Song gaoseng zhuan, he spoke with a heavy local accent that could not be understood. One night while reciting the Dabeī dhārāṇī, he dreamed that a monk cut off his tongue and changed it with a new one. Subsequently he was able to speak eloquently in the dialect of the capital and thereby accrued great fame. Circulating tales about this noted monk may have provided the inspiration for images of Avalokiteśvara with the attribute associated with eloquence of speech. Images of this form of Avalokiteśvara may have been sponsored by local gentry with the hope that their sons would be blessed with

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186 SGSZ, fascicle 6, T.50.2061.736c.
188 The original image of this form of Avalokiteśvara may be an image identified as the “Xiangershan daibei zhenxiang 象耳山大悲真像” (True likeness of the Xiangershan Great Compassionate [One]) attributed to Li Sheng 李昇 in the third fascicle of the XHHP. According to the YZMHL Li Sheng lived in the Shengshousi with Zhixuan for several years, see YZMHL, miaoge xiapin 妙格下品.
the ability to have eloquent speech to help them gain fame as high ranking officials in the capital in light of the monk Zhixuan’s successes.

The more complete donor inscriptions that accompany the Shimenshan cave explain that it was made after a drought and include wishes to bring seasonal rains, prosperity, peace, and the wellbeing of the donors’ families.\textsuperscript{189} Similarly, one of the partially legible donor inscriptions in cave 180 mentions that the image, which may refer to either the primary image or one of the subsidiary figures, was intended for the peace and happiness of the donor’s family and refers to the image as “the Universal Seeing [One]” (Pujian 普見), which is probably intended as a moniker for Avalokiteśvara.\textsuperscript{190} The depiction of multiple forms of Avalokiteśvara in the same cave was likely intended to express the universality and the omnipotence of Avalokiteśvara, whereby representing in a condensed form the various aspects of the bodhisattva would provide the fullest benefit for the specific concerns of the patrons.

In the next section a more specifically identifiable image will be discussed, an image that represents a historical personage believed to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. The only niche containing a representation of this figure at the site is located directly adjacent to cave 180 and was carved several years later. The location for the carving of that niche was probably intentionally selected because it reflects a further extension of the universality of Avalokiteśvara expressed in cave 180.

\textsuperscript{189} See MWL, 351-355, especially the primary donor inscription, number 4.1.

\textsuperscript{190} Appendix B, number 1.45. Li Sisheng (1999), 11-12, transcribes the first character of the name as yan 眼 instead of jian 见, and believes that the name refers to Samantabhadra (Puxian 普贤), not Avalokiteśvara.
4.5 Avalokiteśvara incarnate, the semi-divine monk Sengqie

As the previous section has shown Avalokiteśvara has many forms and manifestations. The famous “Universal Gateway” (Pumen 普门) chapter of the Lotus sutra, which describes the thirty-two teaching bodies of Avalokiteśvara, provides the canonical basis for the numerous Chinese apocryphal stories concerning semi-legendary and historical figures described as incarnations of Avalokiteśvara. One such figure is the charismatic monk Sengqie 僧伽 (Saṅgha, 617-710), who was posthumously identified as an incarnation of the eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, Ekādaśamukha (Shiyimian 十一面), an esoteric form Avalokiteśvara that was especially popular in the Early Tang.191 During his life Sengqie gained great celebrity that only increased after his death as various miraculous events such as ending floods, curing illness, granting sons, and preventing warfare were attributed to his powers. By the Late Tang special halls for the worship of Sengqie and images in his likeness became common features of Buddhist temples in China.192 One of these halls built in the first year of the Jianzhong 建中 reign era (780) was located in the famous Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺 temple in Chengdu and reportedly drew a constant throng of devotees carrying incense and lamps, who crowded

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191 A thorough study of Sengqie and his worship in China is provided by Xu Pingfang 徐莘芳, “Sengqie zaoxiang de faxian he Sengqie chongbai 僧伽造像的发现和僧伽崇拜,” WW 5 (1996): 50-58. A version of the same article has been translated into French by Marianne Bujard, see Xu Pingfang, “Les Découvertes récentes des statues de Sengqie et le culte de Sengqie,” Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie 10 (1998): 393-410. In English the most comprehensive account of Sengqie is provided in a chapter on divine monks in Chün-fang Yü (2001), 211-22, which also discusses the monk Baozhi who is discussed later in this section.

192 Xu Pingfang, 53.
into the hall to worship before a mural depicting Sengqie. Images of Sengqie dating from the Late Tang and Song Dynasties have also been identified at several cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan. One slightly larger than life size image of Sengqie flanked by two other famous monks is found in cave number 177 (3.3 x 2.2 x 2.5 meters) at the Fowan site, which was carved in 1126 by members of the Fu  family atelier (Figure 4.51). The comparatively large size of this cave compared to others at the site is indicative of the popularity of his veneration in the region and the wide belief of the great efficacy attributed to images made in his likeness during the Song Dynasty.

There are several biographical descriptions of Sengqie that also elaborate on the miraculous occurrences attributed to him in the centuries following his passing. Sengqie was a foreign-born monk who arrived in China from his home country in 661 and quickly gained notoriety for the thaumatugical abilities. Most of his activities were focused in the area of Sizhou (modern Sihong, in Jiangsu Province near the provincial

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193 This mural was painted in the Late Tang by Xin Deng 辛澄 and is described by Huang Xiufu in the YZMHL. In addition to describing the religious devotion that the mural attracted Huang Xiufu notes that a visiting Central Asian remarked that the image looked like him. The THJWZ, fascicle 2, also records this painting.

194 There are three primary biographical sources for Sengqie. The earliest account of Sengqie is a stele composed by a younger contemporary of Sengqie, which gives a more conventional presentation of Sengqie as an eminent monk. Later biographies increasingly highlight his magical abilities and elaborate on the earlier account; see Yù (2001), 211. Other later biographic sources include the Taiping guangji 太平广记, by Li Fang 李昉 (925-996), fascicle 96; see Xu Pingfang, 51. The SGSZ, fascicle 18, T.50.2061.822-823, further elaborates on his life and identifies Sengqie as a form of the eleven-head Avalokiteśvara; His biography is also given in the Jingde chuandenglu 景德传灯录, T.51.2076.433.

195 According to his biographies Sengqie’s native land was the kingdom of Yahe 亚何, which has not been identified, but most scholars identify Sengqie as being of Central Asian descent.
border with Anhui 安徽）where he took up residence in a temple he founded called the Puguangwangsi 普光王寺 (“Temple of the Universal Light King”), later an important pilgrimage destination as the devotional center of his cult.\textsuperscript{196} The temple he founded was located at a nexus of important water and land transportation routes, which helped facilitate the spread of his celebrity for performing miraculous deeds. According to a later biographical account, Sengqie was considered so numinous that the sick would go so far as to drink his dirty wash-water to cure their illnesses.\textsuperscript{197} In 709 at the request of the Tang emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 705-710) Sengqie visited the Tang capital of Changan where he was well-received and bestowed with the title “National

\textsuperscript{196} The temple was originally called the Puzhaowangsi 普照王寺.

\textsuperscript{197} Xu Pingfang, 51.
Preceptor” (Guoshi 国师). Sengqie’s biographies credit him with the performance of a number of miraculous acts during his life such as the ending of a drought by merely sprinkling water from a bottle. After his death his fame continued to expanded as popular legend and hagiographic works transformed Sengqie from an eminent monk into a divine monk who was viewed as incarnation of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara. Later he was venerated as a fully divine being and worshiped as the god of the Huai river in eastern China and patron deity of Sizhou. According to Chūn-fang Yū this transformation occurred in three stages over the period of the Tang and Song Dynasties. At the time when cave number 177 was carved in 1126 the worship of Sengqie was at its height, and his likeness was widely perceived as having the talismanic powers of his persona.

The worship of Sengqie had several facets but is most prominently connected with his powers to control water to insure seasonable winds and rain, prevent flooding, and provide safety for water born travelers. In addition to his ability to control water, Sengqie is also attributed the power to cure illness and prevent warfare. The latter aspect is given in several legendary accounts that have him appearing in a manner similar to Vaiśravana to

198 Taipingguang ji, fascicle 96. Xu Pingfang, 51.
199 Taipingguang ji, fascicle 96. Xu Pingfang, 51.
200 Yū (2001), 211.
frighten away rebel troops. In later times he became the subject of a popular Chinese opera and was also worshipped as a patron of lovers.

The catchment basin for the worship of Sengqie is the eastern coastal areas of China, but by the early Song his worship had achieved a wide geographical distribution. His popularity is recorded in the accounts of the Japanese monks Ennin 圓仁, in the mid 9th century, and Jōjin 成寻 in the late 11th century who mention a number of images of Sengqie installed in Chinese temples and lay worship carried out particularly by boatmen and water born travelers in China. In his biography of Sengqie, Zanning writes that in his time all newly constructed temples installed a “true likeness” (zhenxiang 真相) of Sengqie with a placard reading “Great Saint, the Monk Sengqie.” Unfortunately none of the temple images of Sengqie from Zanning’s time are still extant. There have been a number of small images of Sengqie found in pagodas, however, which date from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

According to a legend recorded in SGSZ, fascicle 18, T.50.2061.822, in 866 Sengqie appeared on the top of the temple pagoda of the Puguangwangsi to frighten away an enemy army, which resulted in the Emperor granting him the posthumous title “Grand master of Verified Sainthood.” See Yü (2001), 214. At about the same time an incident involving Vaiśravana taking the appearance of a giant monk to frighten away a horde of Southern rebels is given in the biography of a another monk in SGSZ, fascicle 27; see chapter 3, section 3.3 of this study.

For the latter, see Ma Shutian 马书田 ed., Zhonguo fojiao zhushen 中国佛教诸神 (Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe, 1994), 165.

Xu Pingfang, 54.


These are described by Xu Pingfang, 55-56.
Sengqie’s cult was particularly strong in the eastern coastal areas of China where there are many references to his magical appearances. The center of his cult was located in Linhuai 临淮 of Sizhou 泗州 (modern Sixian 泗洪, Jiangsu 江苏 near Anhui province) in Eastern China at the confluence of the Huai 淮 and Bian 汴 rivers in modern Jiangsu province where the temple he founded was located. After Sengqie’s death in 710 his body was preserved in lacquered cloth and interred in a pagoda that became a focal point of devotion. The location of the temple site at the nexus of important water and overland transportation routes may in part be responsible for the great popularity of Sengqie’s cult on a national level. This was particularly true in the Northern Song when travel to the capital at Kaifeng from the economically burgeoning area of southeastern China necessitated passing through this area. In addition to commoners, visitors to the temple during the Song Dynasty included several noted elites such as Huang Tingquan 黄庭全 and Sushi 苏轼 (Su Dongpo 苏东坡). The latter visited the site in 1081 to pray for rain.

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206 Reportedly the mention of the preservation of Sengqie’s body is the earliest mention of the practice of embalming the bodies of monks in China. In later periods a number of famous monks associated with the Chan tradition were embalmed and preserved in lineage halls.


208 Yü (2001), 216.
According to historical sources images of Sengqie were quite common and are mentioned in a number of art historical documents of the Tang and Song Dynasties. In recent decades a number of small images of Sengqie have been found in pagodas in eastern China. Other images of Sengqie have also been identified at Dunhuang and at cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan and Shaanxi. The images depicting Sengqie in Sichuan include the aforementioned image at the Fowan, and images in at least four other sites.

Descriptions of images are also provided in the accounts of the two Japanese Monks, Ennin (Yuanren 圓仁, 793-864) and Jōjin (Chengxun 成寻), who, respectively, visited China in the mid ninth and late tenth centuries. Ennin's visit to China is described in the Nittō Guhō Junrei Gyōki (Ru Tang qiufa xunli xing ji 如唐求法巡礼行记, “The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law”), T.55.2167, which has been translated by Edwin O. Reischauer, Ennin’s Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law (New York: The Ronald Press, 1955). Seijin's travels are recorded in the San Tendai Godaisan ki (Can Tiantai Wutaishanji 参天台五台山記, “Record of Performing Pilgrimage to Tiantai and Wutai Mountains”). Art historical texts provide a number of examples of images of Sengqie. According to the YZMHL two images of Sengqie where located in the Dashengcisi, one image was located in the Xingshan Precinct, and was painted by Chang Zhongyin 常重胤. The Lidai minghua ji, fascicle 3, records that there was a Sengqie hall in the Ganlusi temple in Zhejiang; see Acker (1954), 376.

Xu Pingfang, 55-6, has compiled a list of five images which have been found in recent decades. These include a wooden image of Sengqie that was found in the third floor of the pagoda of the Ruiguangsi 瑞光寺 in Suzhou, which was built in 1013-17. A small bronze image was found beneath the pagoda of the Xingjiaosi 兴教寺, Shanghai, which was built in the Northern Song Dynasty. A stone image of Sengqie was found on the first floor of the Wenzhou Baixiangta 白象塔 pagoda, which dates to 1115. Other images were found in the earth palace of the Tianfengta 天封塔 pagoda, Ningbo (Zhejiang), dating to 1144; and the Wanfota 万佛塔 pagoda in Jinhua, which is dated to the Northern Song Dynasty.

There is an image of Sengqie at the Mogao caves, on the outer south side of the west wall of cave 72, see DSNZ, 30. Also Sengqie is depicted on a 9th-10th century banner in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, see Makita Tairyō 『Tonkō-bon san-daishi den ni tsuite, Indōgaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū, 7 (1958): 250-3. Francoise Wang-Toutain, "Une peinture de Dunhuang conservée a la Bibliothèque Nationale de France," Ars Asiatiques 49 (1994): 53-69. There are also several manuscripts now in Paris and London from cave 17 related to Sengqie, these include S.2565, S.2754, and P.2217. In Shaanxi an image of Sengqie dated to the Late Tang is located at the Wangjiahe grotto 王家河, Heyang county, Eastern Shaanxi on the west bank of the yellow river, see Li Song (1999), 122-4.
that include niche number 91 at the Qianfo cliff in Jiajiang;\textsuperscript{212} niche number 4 at the Gaopingshifosi 高坪石佛寺 grotto in Jiangjin 江津;\textsuperscript{213} niche number 14 in the Erfosi, Laitan 洱滩 (Figure 4.52); and niche 10(?) at Longduoshan 龙多山 (Figure 4.53) in Hechuan,\textsuperscript{214} and an unnumbered niche at Xichansi 西禅寺, Longtaizhen 龙台镇, in Anyue.\textsuperscript{215} These niches, all of which appear to date from the Late Tang through Song, along with the accounts of images of Sengqie in temples in Chengdu, suggest that the worship of Sengqie was well

\textsuperscript{212} Luo Shiping (1998), 58, dates this niche to the Late Tang-Five Dynasties period and believes it may be similar to the image taken to Japan by Ennin.

\textsuperscript{213} This niche is dated to the Southern Song Dynasty and is reproduced in Liu Changjiu (1999), 243 pl. 240.

\textsuperscript{214} The image of Sengqie at Laitan is dated to the late twelfth century and is reproduced in Liu Changjiu (1999), 211 pl. 214. The Duolongshan image is niche number 9 or 10 at the Dongyanxia area. On Longduoshan see Xi Ge 西哥, "Longduoshan Tang Song fojiao zaoxiang de diaocha" 龙多山唐宋佛教造像的雕查," in Ba Yu wenhua 1, ed. Xu Wenshan (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1989), 244-262.

\textsuperscript{215} This is one of several niches at this site which date to the Tang and Song periods described in Hu Wenhe (1994), 326. This niche is a double tiered niche with 32 bas-relief scenes separated by buildings. Each scene has an image of Sengqie with a small meditating bodhisattva in a cloud. Originally each scene included captions which are no longer legible. The donor inscription reads “Respectively carved, a niche [depicting] thirty-two transformations of the monk Sengqie.”
established in the region. Given the accounts of imagery of Sengqie by the Japanese monk Ennin in north China, the worship of Sengqie may have been introduced from the north during the diaspora of the Late Tang into Sichuan. However, the cult may ultimately have been sustained by common people as trade blossomed between Sichuan and Eastern China during the Song Dynasty.\textsuperscript{216}

In all of the aforementioned images at cliff sculpture sites except one, Sengqie is depicted in a meditative posture with his head covered by a hood.\textsuperscript{217} This iconography may have been based on the appearance of his lacquered corpse, which was placed in a specially built pagoda after his death rather than on his living appearance. Smaller versions of the same type of seated image of Sengqie have been found in several pagodas. The placement of these

\textsuperscript{216} During the Song Dynasty Sichuanese merchants and sailors where well established throughout the Yangtze river region; see Chun-Shu Chang and Joan Smythe, \textit{South China in the Twelfth Century} (Hongkong: Chinese University Press, 1981), 141.

\textsuperscript{217} The only image in Sichuan where Sengqie is not depicted seated is in the Erfosi, Laitan where he is included among a larger retinue of monks on the upper floor of Erforsi; see Figure 4.54.
images in pagodas may have been intended to recreate the aura of efficacious power associated with the Puguangsi, which was derived from the presence of Sengqie’s mummified body. Based on the evident popularity of this type of depiction of Sengqie it may undoubtedly be the “true likeness” images mentioned by Zanning, which he does not describe.

In several of the niches described above Sengqie is also depicted in a triad with two other eminent monks who were also famous eccentrics and thaumaturgists: the monk Wanhui 万回 (632-711), a younger contemporary of Sengqie, and the monk Baozhi 宝志 (425-514), who lived in the Six Dynasties period. Wanhui, a native of Gansu was well received at the courts of Gaozong, Wuzetian, and Zhongzong.\footnote{There are several biographical sources for Wanhui. One is included in SGSZ, fascicle 18. T.50.2061. On Wanhui, see Luo Shiping 罗世平, “Sichuan Shiku Xiancun de Liangzun Wanhui Xiang 四川石窟的两尊万回像,” WW 6 (1998): 57-60.} The latter awarded him the title “Dharma Cloud master” (Dayungong 大云公). He is noted for speaking in conundrums and having the appearance of a buffoon. According to the biography of Wanhui by Zanning, Wanhui explained that Sengqie was a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara and, in another account, died shortly after learning of Sengqie’s death.\footnote{SGSZ, fascicle 18. T.50.2061.824b.} Baozhi, also commonly known as Master Zhi (Zhigong 志公), lived a few hundred years before Sengqie and Wanhui during the Nanbei Chao Period (420-589) and spent most of his life in the capital of the Liang Dynasty in the area of modern Nanjing. His biography is given in the Lives of Eminent Monks by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554), which has recently been
Baozhi is most closely associated with Emperor Wu (r. 502-549), founder of the Liang Dynasty and considered one of the greatest Buddhist rulers in the history of China. It is believed that under Baozhi’s tutelage emperor Wu initiated the practice of Water-land Assembly (Shuilu fahui 水陸法會) rituals for the propitiation of deceased souls which later became a mainstay Buddhist ritual in China. The Like Sengqie and Wanhui, Baozhi is also attributed with miracle-working powers such as making rain, appearing in multiple places at once, and having the ability to predict future events. Baozhi’s appearance is described as that of a disheveled person, often partially naked with bare feet or wearing non-monastic garb. Niche number 2 (2.34 x 2.54 x 1.72), dated 1085, at Shizhuan-shan contains a relatively larger-sized image of Baozhi that matches well with accounts of his appearance (Figure 4.54). In that niche he appears more as a well-fed middle-aged man dressed in lay clothes and wearing a

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220 Other accounts of Baozhi are found in the History of the Southern Dynasties (Nan shi 南史) and the Taiping guangji. The latter appends accounts of an earlier monk named Baogong from the Northern Wei to the life of Baozhi; see Berkowitz, 579.

221 On Emperor Wu, see Ch’en (1964),124-128.

222 Berkowitz, 581.

223 MWL 316, number 3. The inscription records that the niche was carved by Wen Wei 文惟.
This image agrees with Huijiao’s account of Baozhi that although he would fast for days he never appeared undernourished. In his hands are a ruler and a pair of scissors, while an attendant carries a staff with a scale and whisk broom dangling from it. The staff and the other trinkets Baozhi carries are described in his biographies. Like Sengqie later hagiographic accounts describe Baozhi as an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. His cult was well-established but does not appear to have had the same scope as the cult of Sengqie. Worship of Baozhi in Sichuan is attested by the Shizhuanshan image and historical records that describe an image hall built

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224 This niche was earlier misidentified as representing the famous architect of the Zhou Dynasty, Lu Ban 鲁班. On this niche, see Chen Mingguang, “Dazu Shizhuanshan shiku "Lu Ban" danwei Zhigong heshang kan 大足石篆山石窟鲁班龛为志公和尚龛,” in *Dazu shike kaogu yu yanjiu*, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 2001), 118-122. The Chinese scholar Gu Sen was able to identify the figure based on its iconography as Baozhi as well as confirm its identification by the description of the niche in a nearby stele at the Fohuisi temple; see Gu Sen 顾森, “Dazu Shizhuanshan "Zhigong heshang" kan bianzheng ji qita 大足石篆山志公和尚辨正及其它,” in *WJ*, ed. Guo Xiangying (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 396-405.

225 One convention for depicting Baozhi is as a twelve headed figure, which originated with a painting by the famous artist Zhang Sengyao; see Gu Sen (1997), 398.
for the worship of Baozhi in Jiange 剑阁 in northern Sichuan, which is believed to be one of the places he visited.\textsuperscript{226} His popularity in the region may be related to the Water-land tradition, which was prominent in the region.\textsuperscript{227}

All three of these monks belong to a category of divine or saintly monks who were known for their magical powers, unorthodox behavior, and for being well-received at the courts of Chinese Emperors. After their passing all three received imperially sponsored funerals, and their remains were placed in temples where they became objects of devotion.\textsuperscript{228} Both Sengqie and Baozhi are identified as incarnations of Avalokiteśvara. Although Wanhui is not specifically identified as being an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara at least one account mentions that he had personally met Sengqie who he treated with reverence and died only a few months after Sengqie.\textsuperscript{229} The three monks are mentioned together in several manuscripts recovered from Dunhuang.\textsuperscript{230}

\textsuperscript{226} The hall and an image of Baozhi carved on a cliff in Jiange 剑阁, in northern Sichuan are described in fascicle 26 of Cao Xuechuan’s Shuzhong mingshengji; Gu Sen (1997), 398-9. Gu Sen believes that Jiange may be one of the places outside of the Nanjing area which was visited by Baozhi according to his biography in the Wudenghuiyuan. There is also a small niche at the Guanyinyan site outside Guangyuan, niche 105 (1.34 x 1.38 x .28 meters) that features an image of Baozhi with an image of Avalokiteśvara dating to the Mid Tang period; see Guangyuan shi wenwu guanlisuo 广元市文物管理所, “Guangyuan Guanyinyan shiku diaocha ji 广元观音岩石窟调查记,” SW 3 (2002): 11.

\textsuperscript{227} On the Water-land tradition in Sichuan see Stevenson (2001), 44.

\textsuperscript{228} Sengqie was buried in the aforementioned Puzhaoguangsi, Wanhui’s remains were placed in a pagoda in the Xiangjisi 香积寺 temple outside of Changan. This temple has the same name of an ancient temple that stood on the site of Sengqie’s temple in Sizhou. Baozhi’s remains were buried on Mount Zhong just outside of Nanjing, at the spot later selected for a Ming tomb.

\textsuperscript{229} Yü (2001), 212.

The earliest mention of depictions of the three monks together is by the Japanese monk Ennin (Yuanren 圓仁, 793-864), who carried a set of carved images of the trio back to Japan from the Tang capital of Changan after he visited China in 838-847. Although art historical texts mention images of Sengqie, images of the trio are not described. Two depictions of this trio are known in cliff sculpture sites in Sichuan, one being cave 177 at the Fowan. The other example of this iconography is niche 91 at the Qianfoyan, Jiajiang not far from Leshan, believed to date to the Late Tang or Five Dynasties period. Although not as large as the Fowan cave the Qianfoyan niche is

Figure 4.55: Overview, niche 91, Qianfoyan, Jiajiang. Photo by author, 2001.


232 Sorenson (1997), 45, suggests that this niche is stylistically similar to other niches at the site dated to the Huichang period, However, he also incorrectly identifies the main image in this niche as a Buddha.; see Sorenson (1997), 43.
comparatively large for other niches at that site (Figures 4.55, 4.56). The head of the central image is missing, but the image can be identified as Sengqie by his characteristic meditative pose and monastic garb. Flanking Sengqie are the monks Wanhui and Baozhi who are seated with one leg pendant. Wanhui is depicted on the right with a large, round, shaved-head. His mouth is open in a wide grimace like that of a baby crying, and his eyes are wide open and glaring. The monk Baozhi is depicted opposite Wanhui and appears as a somewhat aged figure with a wrinkled face, wearing a hood over his head. In his left arm he holds a staff, from which dangles a pair of scissors, a mirror, strips of silk, and several other trinkets. Two attendant figures behind and to the sides of the central image of Sengqie complete the group.

The same basic composition occurs in cave 177 at the Fowan, with a central seated image of Sengqie flanked by seated images of Wanhui on the right (Figure 4.57) and Baozhi on the left (Figure 4.58). Also depicted in the cave are four standing attendant figures, two behind the central image and two flanking the outer part of the cave. According to an inscription on the
back wall of the the cave, it was carved in 1126 by Fu Yuanjun.\textsuperscript{233} An inscription in niche 176 directly next to this cave and carved by the same sculptor and his son Shineng during the same year, identifies the content of the two niches as Maitreya and the Great Saint of Sizhou (Sizhou dasheng).\textsuperscript{234} The later name was a posthumous title granted Sengqie by the Song Emperor after a miraculous appearance of Sengqie brought an end to a two-year-long flood of the Huai river in 1118-1119.\textsuperscript{235}

In the cave Sengqie is depicted seated in a meditative posture on top of an elevated square dais with a high back rest that is carved in low relief to represent a type of throne used for eminent monks. Sengqie is depicted as a heavy-set figure fully covered in monastic robes that obscures and rounds out the contours of his body (Figure 4.59). He has a large, round, fleshy face and

\textsuperscript{233} See Appendix B, number 1.44; MWL, 27 number 43.
\textsuperscript{234} See Appendix B, number 1.42. Luo Shiping (1998), 58, dates the niche to 1066 and describes the image as being representative of the Northern Song style. This may have been an editorial mistake since no reason is given for overturning the established dating of 1126.
\textsuperscript{235} See Fozutongji, T.49.2035.421c. Yü (2001), 218. Li Sisheng (1999), 82, states that the title was granted in 984.

Figure 4.57: Right side, niche 177, Fowan. Photo by author, 1999.
wears a hood over his head. A similar hood is also depicted on the images of Wanhui and Baozhi. Sengqie’s hands are folded beneath his sleeves and rest on a meditative armrest with three stylized legs carved on the bottom to look like animal paws. A similar image of Sengqie is found at the Gaopingshifosi 高坪石佛寺 site in Jiangjin 江津 dated to 1152 (Figure 4.60), depicting Sengqie seated in a very similar meditative arm rest. In that image Sengqie appears somewhat leaner and with a more elongated face and pronounced facial features. As with the Fowan image Sengqie is flanked on both sides by two figures, a larger monk holding a khakkhara and smaller nun or female lay devotee who holds a water jar. These two attributes are

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502 Several photographs of the niche are reproduced in Li Sisheng (1999), figures 243-246.

502 The captions for details of these images in Li Sisheng (1999) identify the monk as Baozhi and the smaller figure as the monk Daoming. The Jiajiang image also has similar figures flanking the central figure the one of the left is a monk with his hands in añjali mudrā. The head of the opposite figure is missing, but the body is depicted wearing garments substantially different than the robes worn by the opposite monk, which suggest that this figure is also intended as a nun. Sorenson (1997), 43 identifies the pair as representing as Ánanda and Mahåkåṣyapa which is clearly not intended given the appearance of the robes of the figures.
ascribed to Sengqie’s disciple Huiyan 慧俨, who may be the monk shown in both niches holding the khakkhara. Zanning’s biography of Sengqie mentions two other disciples besides Huiyan.\textsuperscript{238} The outer figures of the Fowan niche may have been intended as generic images of monks. Among Sengqie’s disciples described in Zanning’s biography of Sengqie, the monk Mucha 木叉 is highlighted by having been bestowed the title “the true-image great teacher” (zhênxiàngdà shī 真相大师) and having a likenesses of him commissioned, so

\textsuperscript{238} Two other disciples of Sengqie are Mucha 木叉 and Huian 慧岸. The latter is only mentioned by name in the Song Gaoseng zhuan, fascicle 18, T.50.2061. There is no mention of female disciples of Sengqie; however, Sengqie’s biography includes an account of a nun returning from a pilgrimage to Wutaishan who, seeing a miraculous image of Sengqie on top of the temple pagoda, climbed to the top of the spire and leapt to her death as an offering.
one would suspect that if these represent the disciples of Sengqie, Mucha would be depicted. However, other than Zanning’s brief note that Huiyan carried a khakkhara and a water jar nothing else is known about the appearance of Sengqie’s disciples.

The identification of this image as Sengqie did not occur until the late 1980s when the Chinese scholar Gu Sen identified the image as Sengqie. Prior to that time the image was thought to represent a manifestation of Kṣitigarbha, who is also often depicted as a monk with a hood covering his head. As Chün-fang Yü has noted images of Sengqie have frequently been misidentified with Kṣitigarbha, including a banner from Dunhuang obtained by Paul Pelloit. Gu Sen, who first identified the image as Sengqie, also identified the flanking figure on the left side seated in pralambapādāsana as

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239 SGSZ, fascicle 18, T.50.2061.823b.

240 SGSZ, fascicle 18, T.50.2061.823b.

241 In the DSZJ, Chen Xishan questioned this identification but his assertion that they represent eminent monks was not adopted in the NRZL; see DSZJ, 232-3.

the monk Baozhi. Baozhi, as noted earlier, is identifiable by the staff he is shown holding in his left hand, from which dangles a pair of scissors, ruler, hand broom, and mirror. These objects are believed to be symbols of the three Southern Dynasties (479-589). According to the biographical sources on Baozhi, he is known to have carried such a staff on his peregrinations around the Liang capital. On the back side of the staff is a small rodent climbing up the staff, which may have been added at the fancy of the artist, or it could represent the Song Dynasty (420-479). Baozhi’s appearance is similar to that of the Jiajiang niche and unlike the middle-aged, healthy figure seen in the Shizhuanshan niche. Here he is depicted as a somewhat bent-over old monk dressed in monastic garb with a hood over his head. However, unlike the Jiajiang and Shizhuanshan image he is depicted barefooted with his feet resting on a small rectangular stool. One description of Baozhi describes him as walking about barefooted.

The figure opposite Baozhi is in a posture of meditation like the image of Sengqie only without an arm rest. Like the other two figures he wears monastic robes and a hood over his head. His eyes are shut and his mouth is held open as if he were chanting. Various interpretations as to the identity of


244 According to a poem written by the famous Tang Poet Li Bai these are symbolic for the three Southern Kingdoms: the scissors stand for the state of Qi, the ruler for the Liang Dynasty, and the duster for the Chen Dynasty. Berkowitz, 580. In differing biographies the objects vary somewhat. The Huijiao gaoseng zhuan, fascicle 10, T.50.2059.394, gives three objects: scissors, knife, and a mirror. The Nan shi, fascicle 76 says he carried a bronze mirror, scissors, knife, and pincers. The Wudengenbuiyuan 五灯会元 fascicle 2, says he carried a pair of scissors, ruler, and a duster. See Gu Sen (1997), 397.

245 Although there is no explanation for this the rodent could have been a rebus to refer to “Shu” (Sichuan) which was part of the Liang Dynasty.

246 Huijiao gaoseng zhuan, fascicle 10, T.50.2059.394a.
this figure have been suggested. Chen Xishan believed that it represents an eminent monk, Gu Sen hypothesized that it may depict Sengqie’s disciple Mucha, and others have identified it as a manifestation of Kṣitigarbha.\textsuperscript{247} The identification of this figure as the monk Wanhui was first suggested by Luo Shiping, who realized that this triad represented the standardized grouping described by Ennin, which is also depicted in niche 91 at the Qianfoyan, Jiajiang.\textsuperscript{248} The depictions, however, are significantly different since in the later niche he is depicted wearing lay garments and has a wild eyed face and open mouth. Like the image of Baozhi seen at Shizhuanshan and depicted at the Fowan and Jiajiang there could have been several different ways of depicting Wanhui.

The three monks had similar eccentric personalities and were associated with many of the same magical abilities, such as the ability to make rain, from which they gained their celebrity that over time became enhanced. Moreover, all three where recipients of imperial patronage and were given imperial sponsored funerals with their remains placed in pagodas. In many ways they were the early Chinese equivalents of the famous mahāsiddhas of Indo-tantric Buddhism who practiced Buddhism in unorthodox manners and achieved great spiritual power as well as renown for their eccentricities, for example Lūipa who feasted on fish entrails. The eccentric behavior of Baozhi and Wanhui exemplified the type of unorthodox monk that became popular in China such as the legendary monk Budai.\textsuperscript{249}

\textsuperscript{247} See Gu Sen (1997), 400-1.

\textsuperscript{248} Luo Shiping (1998): 57-60.

\textsuperscript{249} See Yü (2001), 196-7.
A great number of clerics of this sort roamed China, most of whom are lost to history or remarked upon in terse accounts given historical documents like the *Song Gaoseng zhuan*. Chun-fang Yu suggests that their opposing “anti-exemplary” ideals represented a protest to established religious authority.\(^{250}\) However, the numerous temples with halls for the worship of Sengqie indicate that his worship received the tacit approval of the monastic community if not only as a concession to popular demands of the lay community.

The brief artist inscription inside the niche does not provide any details about the patronage of the niche and the reason for its creation. The niche here and those at Jiajiang, Tianjiang, and elsewhere were probably made with the wish for seasonable rain, controlling the flow of rivers, or to ward off the flooding which inevitably follows periods of drought. Dazu experienced several recorded droughts in the twelfth century, the earliest in 1134, so that it is possible to imagine such motives may also have been behind this work.\(^{251}\) Given the apocryphal accounts of Sengqie’s appearance as a protector from rebel armies, the time frame of the 1120s needs also be considered, given the Song military situation and thoughts of better times and supernatural intercession that such imagery may invoke. Since the adjacent niche, number 176, is identified in an inscription as having been carved by the same artisans during the same year, the two niches were possibly sponsored by the same patrons or had some related symbolic significance. Niche 176, as discussed earlier, contains an image of Maitreya with depictions of the earth of the future when Maitreya will descend to become the next *mānuṣī* Buddha.

\(^{250}\) Yu (2001), 197.

\(^{251}\) On droughts during the twelfth century, see DX, 112.
question of the relationship between the two niches has been raised by Li Sisheng who hypothesizes that the two were associated by the fact that Baozhi was considered an incarnation of Maitreya.\footnote{252}{Li Sisheng (1999), 11.} Although his identification of Baozhi as a manifestation of Maitreya is unfounded, the niches may be have been intended to be related symbolically. An important point regarding this niche and its relation to the Maitreya image in 176 is provided in one of the apocryphal works found at Dunhuang, which has been translated by Chün-fang Yü.\footnote{253}{This apocryphal scripture was composed sometime before the eleventh century and is entitled Sengqie Heshang yuju niepan shuo liu jing (Sutra Spoken on the Six Perfections by the Monk Sengqie Before Entering his Nirvana), T.85.2920.1463-64, and has been translated by Chün-fang Yü (2001): 218-220. This text highlights Sengqie’s role as a water god and describes that he will prevent wars and end a great deluge with the coming of Maitreya.} This text presents a more aggrandized description of Sengqie as a divine being who has manifested himself into “ten thousand billion” manifestations. The main portion of the text concerns the future and the appearance of the future Buddha Maitreya. Significantly in the context of these two niches, Sengqie proclaims in the text that “I shall descend to earth together with Maitreya Buddha. We shall sit together in the transformed city [hua-cheng] and save those people who have a affinity [shan-yüan] with me.”\footnote{254}{Yü (2001), 219; T.85.2920.1463.} It is possible that this apocryphal story may account for the carving of the two niches together, which may have been an attempt to propitiate Sengqie and evoke the promised blessings of the arrival of the Buddha Maitreya and the halcyon era of his presence.
4.6 Images of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha

Next to Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Dizang 地藏), or “Earth Womb,” is the second most frequently represented Buddhist divinity at the Fowan site. Kṣitigarbha, who is popularly characterized as the Buddhist savior of the damned, is depicted in over forty niches as a primary or secondary figure, often in tandem with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Images of Kṣitigarbha are distinctly recognizable from other celestial bodhisattvas like Avalokiteśvara, since Kṣitigarbha is not normally depicted in princely raiments, but as a shaven-headed monk dressed in monastic garb, often wearing a cowl and carrying a mendicant’s staff (khakkhara) and a precious “wishing-granting” gem (cintāmani) (Figure 4.61). The large number of images of Kṣitigarbha at the site are reflective of Kṣitigarbha’s local importance and his great popularity in Chinese Buddhism from the later half of the Tang Dynasty, particularly in relation to beliefs about the afterlife.

255 Until quite recently, the best western language overview of the cult of Kṣitigarbha in China was Marinus W. De Visser, The Bodhisattva Ti-Tsang (Jizō) in China and Japan (Verlag, Berlin: Oesterheld & co., 1914). A more recent comprehensive study of the development of the cult has been done by Ng Zhiru, The Formation and Development of the Dizang Cult in Medieval China (Diss., University of Arizona, 2000).

256 Niches 15, 23, 37, 85, 91, 161, 195, 203, 205, 217, 242, and 276 have Kṣitigarbha as the primary image. Sets of small subsidiary images of Kṣitigarbha are found in niches 262 (listed as niche 266 in the NRZL), 273, 279, and 281. Images of Kṣitigarbha are also found at Yingpanpo niche 9, Foeryan niche 20, and in the Duobaota, niche number 60. There are several damaged images at the Fowan, which may contain images of Kṣitigarbha, but are difficult to distinguish from Bhaiṣajyaguru. These include niches 54, 153, and 231. Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara are paired in niches 17, 29, 32, 58, 82, 117, 121, 170, 171, 172, 187, 191, 193, 196, 221, 228, 241, 244, 248, 249, 253, 275, and 284. The pair also occurs in niches 1 and 4 at Foeryan, and in niche 65 in the Duobaota pagoda. Images of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha as attendants of Amitābha at the Fowan include niches 35, 40, 52, 53, 57, 73, 110, 166, 194, and 254. One article suggests that there are some seventy Kṣitigarbha niches in the Dazu area alone; see Gou Tingyi 谷廷一, “Bazhong Nankan ershiwu hao dizang kan jianyi 巴中南龛25号地藏龛,” SW 5 (1999): 45-49.
Considered as one of the four great bodhisattvas of Chinese Buddhism, Kṣitigarbha is venerated as a counterpart of Avalokiteśvara and serves as a compassionate savior of all the suffering beings in the six realms of transmigration, but primarily for those who must endure the torments of the infernal regions. Like Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Samantabhadra he is identified with a specific place in China, Jiuhuashan 九华山, Anhui Province, which became a focal point of his cult in the later dynastic periods. Worship of Kṣitigarbha was particularly well-suited to the deeply-rooted Chinese concerns with the well-being of deceased relatives in the belief that one could evoke the bodhisattva’s munificence and transfer merit from the living to the deceased as an act of merit and filiality.

Kṣitigarbha was first introduced in China during the Six Dynasties period, but did not become a widely popular figure until the later half of the Tang Dynasty. His rise in popularity is tandem with the ascendancy of a

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257 Jiuhuashan is associated with a Korean prince believed to have been an incarnation of Kṣitigarbha who founded a monastery there in the eighth century.

258 Soper (1959), 211. However, the Buddhist encyclopedia entitled the Fayuan zhulin, compiled in 668, mentions that Kṣitigarbha was widely worshipped since the fifth century. De Visser (1914), 20.
greater concern in Chinese religious thought with the afterlife and emergent Chinese beliefs in Hell and purgatory, as well as the proliferation of mortuary rites and rituals. Although his name occurs in Sanskrit Buddhist literature, Kṣitigarbha does not appear to have been venerated independently in South Asia except as one of the eight great bodhisattvas. Scholars generally believe that his cult took form outside of South Asia in Central Asia and fully matured in China incorporating aspects of Chinese moral thought with South Asian notions of the underworlds. There are a number of canonical sūtras and apocryphal works regarding the worship of Kṣitigarbha. The principle sources of information about Kṣitigarbha are found in two sūtras, the Scripture on the Ten Wheels (Shilun jing 十轮经) and the Scripture on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha (Dizang pusa benyuan jing 地藏菩萨本愿经). The former text was translated twice, with a shorter eight-chapter version translated in the fifth century under the Northern Liang Dynasty (397-439) by an anonymous translator, and a fifteen-chapter version translated in the mid-seventh century by the famous Chinese monk Xuanzang (602-664). This text is generally believed to be an indigenous work or to have been compiled in Central Asia. In the sūtra Kṣitigarbha appears in the form of a Buddhist


260 Kṣitigarbha as one of the eight great bodhisattvas is described in T.201167.675c, which was translated by Amoghavajra.

261 The full title of the first translation is the Mahāvaipulya daśacakra sūtra (The Great Extensive Scripture on the Ten Wheels; Dafang shilun jing 大方广十轮经), T.13.410. Xuanzang’s version is entitled the Mahāyānamahāsamnipatadaśacakraśūtra Sūtra (Scripture of the Great Vehicle’s Great Collection on Kṣitigarbha’s Ten Wheels; Dacheng diji dizang shilun jing 大乘大集地藏十轮经), T.13.411.
disciple (śrāvaka, shengwen 声闻) and is given the task of protecting sentient life as a savior during the interim between the death of Śākyamuni and the arrival of the future Buddha Maitreya. The multiplicity of forms the bodhisattva can assume to fulfill that task are enumerated, and include gods, Buddhist divinities, animals, Yama, and those that administer judgment in hell. Thus, Kṣītigarbha is cast in the same mold as Avalokiteśvara as a universally-available, compassionate savior of the suffering and those in distress, requiring only that one call out his name. There is no explanation of his origins given in the sūtra, and the later prominent emphasis on his relation to hell is only hinted at as part of his concerns for saving other beings.

The *Scripture of the Past Vows of Kṣītigarbha* was more influential than the *Sūtra on the Ten Wheels* in the full-fledged development of Kṣītigarbha’s cult in China. In it the bodhisattva is given a more distinct identity, and the central themes of his worship in China are given full form, especially with regard to his role as the savior of beings in hell. This sūtra, translated by the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda (Shichanantuo 实叉难陀) in the late seventh century, has no Sanskrit or Tibetan counterpart and is believed to be a heterogeneous compilation of Khotanese or Chinese origin.

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262 T.411.725c-726a.

263 T.13.412. The full title of this scripture is the *Kṣītigarbhābodhisattvapranidhāna Sūtra* (Sūtra of the Past Vows of the Bodhisattva Kṣītigarbha; Dizang pusa benyuan jing 地藏菩萨本愿经). This sūtra has been translated into English by Heng Ching, *Sūtra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva the Collected Lectures of Triṣṭaka Master Hsuan Hua* (New York, N.Y.: Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions, 1974).

The sūtra is taught by Śākyamuni in Trayāstraṁśa heaven (Daolitian 切利天) with his mother, Queen Māyā, serving as one of the primary interlocutors. Part of the sūtra is taught by Kṣitigarbha himself who appears in the form of a Buddhist disciple (śrāvaka). The sūtra promises rebirth in the paradise of the Trayāstraṁśa, the heaven of the thirty-three gods, and freedom from falling into lower rebirths for those who follow the proscribed methods of the sūtra, which chiefly consist of invoking the Kṣitigarbha’s name, making of images of the bodhisattva, and venerating the sūtra itself. The last chapter enumerates twenty-eight benefits, such as providing protection, sustenance, and freedom from natural disasters, pestilence and thieves, for following the practices outlined in the scripture.

The principle theme of the Scripture of the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha is filial piety (xiao 孝), the most highly regarded virtue in traditional China. This theme is demonstrated in the sūtra through illuminations on the former vows (praṇidhana) made by Kṣitigarbha at the initiation of his bodhisattva path. These vows, which consist chiefly of setting aside his realization of Buddhahood until all beings have been saved, revolve around a greater notion of filiality to benefit not only one’s parents, but all those enduring difficulty and suffering. The vows are explained in light of four former lives of Kṣitigarbha. In two of these Kṣitigarbha appears as a devout young woman who, through the transfer of merit from acts of devotion, is able to save her less-than-devout mother from damnation in hell. Saving her mother and seeing and hearing about the torments of the infernal regions ultimately leads her make a vow to save all others from a similar fate. Thus, the formation of Kṣitigarbha’s vows are phrased within the context of a filial act.
establishing filial piety to one’s parents as a fundamental basis for Buddhist practice. This notion of filiality in the afterlife became increasingly stressed within Chinese Buddhism from the Tang Dynasty as a means to fulfill filial responsibilities into the afterlife, which was also used as a counter argument against the Confucian based criticism of Buddhism in China. A number of influential apocryphal Chinese Buddhist works, such as the legend of princess Miaoshan 妙山, who is understood to be an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara, and the story of Śākyamuni’s disciple Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Mulian 日连) feature similar stories of the visitation of hell and acts of devotion to spare one’s deceased relatives from the tortures of hell, which may be derivative of this sūtra.\(^{265}\)

Kṣitigarbha is often categorized by Chinese scholars as an esoteric deity, but the contents of the *Scripture on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha*, which was most influential in the establishing the primary aspects of his cult, is quintessentially a work reflecting general Mahāyāna and Pure Land beliefs. Recent studies by Ng Zhiru have tried to establish Kṣitigarbha’s importance within the Pure Land tradition of China.\(^{266}\) The high percentage of images of Amitābha at the Fowan which include Kṣitigarbha as one of his

\(^{265}\) The story of princess Miaoshan is told in the *Xiangshan baojuan* 香山宝卷, see Yü (2001), 320-22. Several versions of the story of Mulian have been found at Dunhuang. The most complete version is a bianwen text titled *Mulian yuanqi* 目连缘起 (P.2193) and has been translated by Victor H. Mair, "Transformation Text on Mahāmaudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld with Pictures, One Scroll and Preface," in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed.Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

\(^{266}\) See Ng Zhiru, “The Kṣitigarbha Connection: A missing Piece in the Chinese History of Pure Land Buddhism,” *SCEAR* 12 (forthcoming 2002). The connection of Kṣitigarbha with Amitābha is also noted by Whitfield (1982), vol.1, 333.
primary attendants replacing the more inconspicuous Mahāsthāmaprāpta, suggest that Kṣitigarbha was viewed on a popular level integral to the cult of Amitābha. Although the role of Kṣitigarbha to the cult of Amitābha and Pure Land beliefs and aspirations is not expressly stated in the two primary canonical scriptures concerning Kṣitigarbha they do imply that worship of Kṣitigarbha will lead to a better rebirth, with the *Scripture on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha* specifically identifying rebirth in Trayāstrimśa, the heaven of the thirty-three (Vedic) gods, as a result for worshiping Kṣitigarbha. Moreover, a number of apocryphal works concerning Kṣitigarbha make a direct relationship between Kṣitigarbha and the Buddhist paradises of Maitreya and Amitābha. Numerous copies of a brief manuscript recovered from cave 17 at Dunhuang titled the *Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Bodhisattva Dizang* (Foshuo dizang pusa jing 佛说地藏菩萨经) associates worship of the bodhisattva with rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha. According to this text a “a person who makes an image of Kṣitigarbha, writes out the *Scripture of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha*, or recites Kṣitigarbha’s name will in all certainty obtain rebirth in the western realm of Sukhāvatī.”

A formal iconographic description of Kṣitigarbha is not given in the *Scripture on the Ten Wheels* or the *Scripture on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha*, except that he appears in both in the guise of a śrāvaka, which is the likely source for his typical appearance in art as a monk. The latter text advocates

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267 Images of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha as attendants of Amitābha at the Fowan include niches 35, 40, 52, 53, 57, 73, 110, 166, 194, and 254.

268 Stein collection, S.197. It is transcribed in Matsumoto Eiichi 栗松本英一, vol. 1, 406.

the making and worship of his icon in several passages, but does not include a
description of how he should be depicted. Descriptions of how Kṣitigarbha
should be represented are given in several other sources. The *Dizang Pusa*
Yigui 地藏菩萨仪轨, a brief ritual manual translated by Śubhakarasimha in
the early eighth century, describes his appearance as that of a śrāvaka or
monk clad in a kaśāya (robe) with his right shoulder exposed, holding a flower
with one hand, and making abhya mudrā with the other hand. The two
usual attributes of Kṣitigarbha, the khakkhara and cintāmaṇi, are not
described, nor is the cowl that is often depicted on Kṣitigarbha’s head in Tang
and Song images. Kṣitigarbha is rarely depicted in China as princely figure,
such as described in the *Scripture on the Mandala of the Eight Great*
Bodhisattvas (Bada pusa manchaluo jing 八大菩萨曼茶罗经), translated by
Amoghavajra. A unusual depiction of Kṣitigarbha as a celestial
bodhisattva is found at the Southern Song site of Baodingshan, Dazu, but it is
not the norm for his representation in China.

Images of Kṣitigarbha are prevalent at cliff sculpture sites in
Sichuan. This reflects the broad appeal of the bodhisattva throughout
China in Tang times and later, and is undoubtedly related to a regional focus
on demons and hell, which is evident in the popularity of those subjects in

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270 T.20.1158.652.

271 T.20.1167.675. The only example of an image of Kṣitigarbha in princely raiments in
Sichuan from Song times and earlier is found in group 20 at the Dafowan of Baodingshan.

272 This is the central figure in group 20 at the Dafowan; see Howard (2001), 46-48.

273 A large number of banners depicting Kṣitigarbha were found in cave 17 at Dunhuang.
The earliest literary reference to an image of Kṣitigarbha in China is ascribed to the famous painter Zhang Sengyao 张僧繇 who painted a miraculous light-emitting image of the bodhisattva in a temple in the regional center of Sichuan, Chengdu, in the mid-sixth century. Extant images of Kṣitigarbha in Sichuan primarily date to the Mid Tang and later. Images are found at a number of different sites, including those in Guangyuan, Bazhong, Jiajiang, Pujiang, Danleng, Zizhong, Anyue, and Dazu. The depictions of Kṣitigarbha at the Fowan correspond closely with the iconography of the bodhisattva found elsewhere in Sichuan and other places in China. Most of the images of Kṣitigarbha at the Fowan date to the Five Dynasties period and are found in small- to medium-sized niches, chiefly on the northern and southern extreme ends of the site. Among these there is only a limited variation in how the bodhisattva is depicted.

Niche number 37, which is dated by inscription to 940 is representative of Kṣitigarbha images at the site and is comparatively well preserved (Figure 4.61). The manner in which the bodhisattva is depicted in the niche represents a standard manner of representation of Kṣitigarbha in the Tang and Song periods. Kṣitigarbha is seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform with his lower foot resting on a lotus. He is depicted wearing monastic robes

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275 This is recorded in the *Sanbao ganyingluoyao* 三宝感应略录, T.51.2084.854; Hu Wenhe (1994), 226. This image is also cited in the *Fayuan zhulin*, T.53.2122.392c; Howard (1988), 64 n.61. Because of this Howard suggests that his cult may have developed even before the Tang in Sichuan. Only one image of Kṣitigarbha is mentioned in the *YZMHL*, which was located in the Precinct of the Sixth Patriarch in the Dashengcsi.

with a cowl covering the top of his head. The cowl is a common accessory of Kṣitigarbha, which Roderick Whitfield suggests represents his aspect as the “patron saint of travelers.” The cowl and Kṣitigarbha’s appearance as a monastic figure is not fully explained in scriptures, and probably is meant as an allusion to him as the foremost exemplar of upholding vows (yuan 愿), a Buddhist virtue most clearly associated with monastics. As suggested by Whitfield, the cowl may be related to the notion of Kṣitigarbha as a constant traveler in the six gati, or realms of transmigration, to save beings, but may also be a derivative of the tradition of monks wearing head coverings in funerary services, since his cult by late Tang times was fully intertwined with Buddhist mortuary rites. The khakkhara and cintāmaṇi, held by Kṣitigarbha in niche 37, are the most common attributes of the bodhisattva but are not described in his primary scriptures. These attributes are, however, mentioned in an influential apocryphal work dating to around the ninth century best known by the abbreviated title, the Scripture of the Ten Kings (Shiwangjing 十王经). This scripture explains that Kṣitigarbha uses his khakkhara to smash open the gates of hell and his precious gem to illuminate its darkness. However, by the time this text was compiled these attributes had already become the standard attributes for the iconography of the bodhisattva. On the right side of the bodhisattva’s seat is a small animal resting on its stomach. This animal, usually represented as a dog or lion, is

277 Whitfield (1982), vol. 1, 333. He incorrectly states that this iconographic type is found only at Dunhuang and in Korean paintings.

278 De Visser (1914), 33-4.
often depicted as a companion of Kṣitigarbha. In this niche Kṣitigarbha is accompanied by one attendant, which in this niche may represent one of the donors. In other niches Kṣitigarbha is often given one monk attendant, which may represent the monk Daoming, a legendary figure known as the Guide to the Dark Regions who was mistakenly taken to hell and guided back by Kṣitigarbha.

Several Kṣitigarbha niches have slightly more elaborate iconographies with the inclusion of smaller images of the ten directional Buddhas and the ten magistrates of hell represented in low relief on the sides and back of the niche (Figure 4.62). The depiction of Kṣitigarbha with the ten magistrates was a popular subject throughout China. Two examples are found at the Yuanjuedong site in Anyue and date to the Five Dynasties period (Figure 4.63), and another example, niche 9 at Shizhuanshan, dates to the Northern Song.

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279 According to Hu Wenhe (1988), 20, this animal refers to the story of Mulian, in which Mulian's mother was rescued from hell and briefly reincarnated as a dog. See Mair (1994), 1126.

280 This monk and the lion companion are identified in cartouches in painted banners from Dunhuang. On Daoming, see Teiser (1994), 65-7.
Dynasty (Figure 4.64). In Figure 4.61, Kṣitigarbha is depicted in standard fashion but surrounded by seated images of the ten kings and their lictors. Directly below the bodhisattva is a roundel, intended to represent a karmic mirror with a scene of a person being tortured in hell. The source of this iconography is the aforementioned Scripture on the Ten Kings, which details the judgment of the dead and the bureaucratic structure of hell. The core message of that sūtra is that suffering after death can only be avoided by

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281 The earliest dated depictions of the ten kings in Sichuan is found in niche 85 at Xiyan (Zizhong), inscribed with a date of 891-901; see Ding Mengyi (1988), 53. Niche 9 at Shizhuanshan has an inscription dated 1096 and was carved by members of the Wen family; see MWL number 7, 318. The ten kings also are featured in group 20 at the Dafowan, Baodingshan; see Howard (2001), 46-55.

282 This figure is identified by Hu Wenhe (1988), 20 as the mother of Mulian who is featured in the Yulanpan sūtra. The vernacular text Mulian jiuku bianwen was written around the eight century; see Teiser (1988), 186-7; Yü (2001) 323.

283 For a study of this text and its relation to developments in the Chinese ideas about the afterlife; see Stephen F. Teiser (1994).
worshiping the ten kings, or magistrates, before death, or through the intercession of one’s relatives after death. The earliest copy of this work, found at Dunhuang, is dated to the early tenth century and is attributed to a monk at the Dashengcisi temple in Chengdu, which suggests that their worship may have originated in Sichuan.  

In niche 253 the ten kings and their officers and retinue are carved in low relief on the interior sides of the niche in twelve stylized clouds (Figures 4.65 to 4.67). In these and other examples the representation of the ten kings are as nondescript generic figures that for the most part require the addition of cartouches to identify them individually. Niche 253 is also one of the largest and best-preserved niches at the site that features the pairing of

Figure 4.64: Niche 9, Shizhuanshan. Reproduced from from *DSDS*, vol. 4, fig. 114, page 104.

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284 The text may have been formulated as early as the seventh century; see Teiser (1993), 121. The *YZMHL* records murals depicting hell scenes attributed the Tang painter Zuo Quan 亜全 that were located in the Dashengcisi, which may have been related to the worship of the Ten Kings.
Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The two bodhisattvas are carved almost entirely in the round in the center of the niche, with Kṣitigarbha depicted on the left as a shaven headed monk and Avalokiteśvara on right outfitted in princely regalia and holding a kūṇḍika and a willow branch.

The pairing of the two bodhisattvas is common at other sites in Sichuan and also in banner paintings at Dunhuang.\textsuperscript{285} Based on extant examples this iconography appears to have originated in the Late Tang period. There is no direct scriptural source for the pairing of the two bodhisattvas, and several scholars have suggested that it represents the expansion of Avalokiteśvara’s cult to infringing on the role of Kṣitigarbha as a savior of beings in hell.\textsuperscript{286} Chün-fang Yü notes that because of their similar roles as saviors the two became linked in art and ritual in the Late Tang.\textsuperscript{287} Although there are no known contemporary scriptural sources for the pairing

\textsuperscript{285} Sites in Sichuan with the pair include niche 38 at Feixiange (Pujiang), niche 154 at Qianfoyan (Jiajiang), and several examples at Xiyan (Zizhong).

\textsuperscript{286} This view is held by Chün-fang Yü (2001), 228-9, and Angela Howard (1990), 56. The two bodhisattvas are also featured in the important Garbhadhatu mandala as the heads of adjacent courts in the mandala, which also could have provided a basis for their joint depiction.

\textsuperscript{287} Yü (2001), 323. Note 14, page 537 incorrectly states that images of the pair are found at Nanshan.
of the two a later text from the Song Dynasty describes a mortuary rite in which the officiating adept is made to request that Ksitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara descend together to the consecrated grounds of the ritual site as part of the ceremony, thus indicating that the pair were worshipped jointly.\textsuperscript{288} A likely source that may have inspired this iconography is the twelfth chapter, called the “benefits for seeing and hearing,” of the Scripture on the Past Vows of Ksitigarbha, in which Avalokiteśvara is the primary interlocutor.\textsuperscript{289}

Although the chapter is focused on Ksitigarbha, Śākyamuni also praises the virtues of Avalokiteśvara, which may have inspired the representation of the two bodhisattvas side by side as equals.

The pairing of the two bodhisattvas may also be related to the popular connection of Kṣitigarbha with Amitābha. As mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter a large number of niches at the site show Kṣitigarbha depicted opposite Avalokiteśvara as the attendants of Amitābha. This iconography is also known elsewhere, but perhaps not as common as the numbers of it at the Fowan site would suggest. Since Kṣitigarbha was widely popular and a chief aspect of his veneration was for the wish for avoiding the torments of the lower regions and being guided to rebirth in the western Pure Land it is not

\textsuperscript{288} Yu (2001), 323.

\textsuperscript{289} T.13.412.787b-789a.
difficult to understand why his image was substituted in some images for the more obscure figure Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The carving of niche 253 directly in front of and adjacent to niche 245, which represents a large scale tableau of Amitābha and his paradise, was likely an intentional choice based on the perceived role of the two compassionate bodhisattvas as providing accessible means to be saved from the worst of fates to find rebirth in the western paradise.

One iconographic feature that appears to be unique to images of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara in Sichuan is the inclusion of a vase (kalaśa) between the two figures with lotus flowers growing out of it supporting ten Buddhas, as in niche 187 (Figure 4.68).\footnote{See Howard (1990), 56-57.} The flower vase is an ancient Indic symbol of fertility and abundance and may be used here in reference to the compassionate aspects of both bodhisattvas providing salvation to others in the ultimate form of Buddhahood. In niche 187, the ten small Buddhas are arranged with seven in a row on the back of the niche and three other Buddhas below. The authors of the NRZL have identified these Buddhas as representing the ten directional Buddhas, but they may also represent the seven mānuṣi Buddhas and the Buddhas of the Three Ages. In his questions
about Kṣitigarbha in the *Scripture on the Past Vows of Kṣitigarbha*, Avalokiteśvara makes reference to both the Buddhas of the ten directions and the Buddhas of the past, present, and future as praising Kṣitigarbha, which may account for the representation of the Buddhas in this and other niches that feature images of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara.

In summary, in the later half of the Tang Dynasty the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, or Dizang, became one of the most popular Buddhist divinities in China. His role became almost exclusively associated with the afterlife and the saving of beings from the damnation of hell. Many aspects of his cult overlap with the compassionate savior Avalokiteśvara, which he may have been modeled after. The abundant depictions of Kṣitigarbha at the Fowan site is evidence of his popularity, especially with regards to concerns of the afterlife. His frequent depiction with Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha provide further evidence of his connection to Pure Land Buddhist beliefs and practices. A stressed component in literature regarding Kṣitigarbha is the virtue of filial piety. Since the offering of niches was primarily done for

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Figure 4.68: Niche 187, Fowan. Photo by author, 2001.

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deceased relatives with the intent of transferring merit to fulfill filial obligations with the wish that the deceased would not suffer in the next life, images of Ksitigarbha were an obvious choice and may account for the popularity of his depiction at the site.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the standard iconographies of six different Buddhist divinities identifiable among the imagery at the Fowan site. Those discussed included three Buddhas (Amitābha, Maitreya, and Bhaiṣajyaguru), two bodhisattvas (Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara), and the semi-divine monk Sengqie, as well as a number of specific forms of Avalokiteśvara, such as the White-robed and Water-moon forms. As a group, these iconographies represent images in over eighty different niches/caves at the site and include several of the largest and most intricately done carvings at the site. These iconographies include several of the most popular deities within mainstream Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, which for the most part can be placed within the category of Pure Land Buddhism as a general religious outlook. It is clear from the preponderance of this imagery and general content of the donor inscriptions at the site that Pure Land Buddhist beliefs represented the major modality of beliefs that guided the patronage of imagery at the site and was a central component to the local religious matrix.

In the discussion of these iconographies I have tried to define their often direct, or sometimes indirect, relevance to Pure Land Buddhist beliefs, which are dominated by the wish for the future attainment of rebirth in a Buddhist paradise through the blessings and assistance of a number of
different Buddhas and bodhisattvas. In the strictest sense, the chief Pure Land Buddhist divinity in East Asia is the Buddha Amitābha (Amituo fo 阿弥陀佛), who is represented in over a dozen niches at the Fowan site. In the case of Amitābha and most of the other iconographies discussed in this chapter, they can be related to similar imagery found within and outside the region, which attests to their popularity and indicates that the relative high numbers of their depiction at the site are not necessarily the result of a limited localized emphasis on a particular deity or groups of deities.

Niche 245 is the most important of the carvings at the site depicting Amitābha and is evidently based on a popularized model seen in painted images found at Dunhuang and elsewhere, and it incorporates instructional narrative imagery from the *Amitāyur-dhyāna sūtra*. The only similar niche that could be classified as a *bianxiang*, or transformation tableau, along with niche 245 is niche 176 that depicts the Buddha Maitreya in his future terrestrial paradise. Other imagery of Amitābha at the site is more strictly iconic in character and represents simplified teaching assemblies with Amitābha accompanied by two bodhisattvas and occasionally several other acolytes. One of the most interesting iconographic features of this imagery is the replacement of one of the chief canonical attendants to Amitābha, the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, with the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha, which occurs in the majority of niches depicting Amitābha at the site. This variation of the canonical iconography of Amitābha is indicative of the heightened popularity of the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha as well as his popular connection to the Pure Land of Amitābha.
For the most part, the imagery discussed in this chapter represents variations on commonly-occurring subject matter found elsewhere. Several themes discussed, such as the seven Buddhas of the East in niche 107 and the trio of semidivine monks in cave 177, are more rarely encountered in Chinese Buddhist iconography. A number of the more unique images discussed in this chapter pertain to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. These include some of the earliest extant effeminate depictions of Avalokiteśvara and several sets of different forms of the bodhisattva, which may represent localized variations on well-known images from within the region. This imagery may not relate to Pure Land Buddhism directly, but reflects Avalokiteśvara’s aspect as a compassionate, universally-available savior, which is intertwined with his role as the assistant of the Buddha Amitābha. Avalokiteśvara is also depicted paired with Kṣitigarbha in over twenty niches, not including those where they serve as attendants to Amitābha. This imagery makes clear that on a popular level the pair was equated with each other, and their worship was integral to the cult of Amitābha. Although the pairing of the two bodhisattvas is one of the most common subject matter found at the site and is also known at several others sites in the region, it is not noted in historical documents as a subject found in temples. It was perhaps a theme associated with a funerary function that was most suitable for the interest of the sponsors of imagery at the site. These sponsors appear to have been primarily driven to create imagery that would perpetually generate merit for living and deceased family members.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Fowan佛湾 is a Buddhist cliff sculpture site on Mount Bei (Beishan), Dazu, and is composed of some 270-odd image niches and small caves, mostly carved over a span of roughly 250 years, from the late ninth to mid-twelfth centuries. In this dissertation an attempt has been made to provide an iconographical analysis of the Buddhist imagery found at the site and to show their significance within the developments in Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art in general, as well as to reveal something of the nature of the local society and Buddhist practices that underpinned the sponsorship of this imagery. This was done by first situating the site in its proper historical context and providing an overview of the contents and periodization of the Fowan and related sites on Beishan. Seventeen of the most significant iconographic subject matter that occurs at the Fowan site were then discussed under the broad categories of Esoteric and Pure Land Buddhism. Accordingly, the iconography of the imagery at the site was presented in light of scriptural sources, historical documents, epigraphical sources, and extant related imagery elsewhere, particularly within the regional area.

To accomplish its goals, my study is indebted to the scholarship of a number of scholars who provide the foundation for this study. The current study has added to this body of research by further clarifying the imagery at 529
the site and making a number of amendments to previously unidentified or misidentified imagery at the site, as well as presenting the first full and formal account of the site in western literature. The iconographies discussed in this dissertation have been discussed by scholars elsewhere, but for the most part not in regard to the Buddhist art of Sichuan. Therefore, this study not only provides a specific account of the Buddhist imagery of the Fowan site, but also clarifies its relationship to the Buddhist art of the region and the Buddhist art of the period.

The Buddhist sculpture of the Fowan site follows from a rich legacy of Buddhist art in the region, which particularly flourished in the later half of the Tang Dynasty. Historical records indicate that the regional center of Sichuan became a major center of Buddhist art in the Late Tang. This was the result of the relative political stability and economic vitality of the region and the influx of northern elites in the region in wake of the Anlushan and Huangchao uprisings. In particular, the arrival of the Tang Emperor Xizong (r. 873-888) and his courtiers, who took refuge in Sichuan for an extended period of time and patronized local temples such as the Dashengcisi 大圣慈寺. Numerous artists attached to the court followed these emperors to Sichuan, and collections of paintings were brought by the established families that took refuge in the region, making the capital city of Chengdu one of the artistic
centers of China. As a result of the infusion of artistic talent and relatively good economic situation Buddhist art flourished in the region.

In addition to the art that was found in temples, an important form of devotional Buddhist art in the region was cliff sculpture, which is found throughout the region with the largest concentrations in three general areas: in northern Sichuan around Guangyuan and Bazhong; in the surrounding area of the Chengdu Plain, especially southwest of Chengdu; and in the southwest portion of the central Sichuan Basin in Anyue, Dazu, and surrounding counties. Sites with imagery from the Tang Dynasty are quite numerous. However, the most dynamic period for cliff sculpture in the region was during the Song Dynasty, and was centered in the area of Dazu and Anyue. The Fowan is one of two primary sites with cliff sculpture in Dazu. It is significant in the historical development of Buddhist cliff sculpture in the region for the reason that the activity of the site spans the period of the Late Tang through the Song Dynasties and is therefore of crucial importance to the understanding of the development of the Buddhist sculpture of the area.

A full understanding of the local historical context of the site is hindered by a dearth of historical documents about the local area, and can only, at best, be partially reconstructed from available sources, which chiefly consist of epigraphical materials found at the site and at other local sites in the area. Based on imagery and epigraphy found at the site, three phases of activity can be identified, which roughly correspond to the political

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1 The prefixes of the YZMH and Deng Chun’s Hua ji both describe the wealth of artistic talent that came into the region from the northern political centers; see Wai-Kam Ho, “Aspects of Chinese painting from 1100 to 1350,” in Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and The Cleveland Museum of Art, ed. Lee, Sherman Lee (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), xxxi.
subdivisions of the Late Tang, Five Dynasties, and Song Dynasty. Imagery from each of these periods at the site display some degree of distinctiveness in terms of both style and iconographic subject matter. In regards to the periodization and identification of the imagery at the site, the following conclusions can be drawn. Among the 277 numbered image niches/caves at the Fowan some two-hundred can be roughly dated based on style, topology, or inscriptions, where as other imagery at the site is too badly damaged to identify and date with certainty. From the total, thirteen niches can somewhat confidently be dated to the Late Tang period, 124 niches can be dated to the Five Dynasties period, and seventy niches/caves can be dated to the Song Dynasty.

A parallel may be drawn between the relative scale and quality of the carving at the site with the known political and economic situation of the local area. The cliff sculpture of the Fowan appears to have been initiated by a local militia leader Wei Junjing, who founded a stronghold called the Yongchang zhai 永昌寨 on the hill in the late ninth century after consolidating control over a large area of southeastern Sichuan. At that time a number of relatively large image niches were excavated at the Fowan site. Based on epigraphical information sponsorship of carvings at the site continued through the Five Dynasties period. A break in activity at the site appears to have occurred in the first half of the Northern Song Dynasty, which may be a reflection of the economic and social problems experienced by the region as it was integrated into the Song state. The first half of the twelfth century represents the most dynamic period of activity at the site, with the excavation of a number of small caves and image niches. This resurgence of activity at
the site parallels developments at other sites in the local area of Dazu, Anyue, and surroundings areas, although the exact chronology has yet to be fully resolved. Certainly, the blossoming of cliff sculpture in this period was related to the economic prosperity of the local area. Activity appears to have come to a halt at the Fowan in the mid-twelfth century following the creation of cave 136, the largest cave excavated at the site, and the erection of a brick pagoda on the hilltop directly opposite the Fowan site. Carving was abated at the Fowan, probably in part because little of the suitable rock surface of the cliff remained uncarved. At other sites in the area the sponsorship of cliff sculpture continued as an important devotional activity that culminated in the large scale Dafowan cliff sculpture site of Baodingshan at the end of the twelfth through early thirteen centuries. The imagery at that site represents an outgrowth of the developmental sequence of the sculpture seen at the Fowan, which ended with larger scale and increasingly complex niches and cave units.

The Buddhist imagery found at the Fowan site represents an eclectic grouping of iconographic subject matter. This imagery is important in its own right, but also provides a somewhat fragmentary glimpse at the former greater wealth of Buddhist art in the region. To provide a framework for study, the imagery at the site was discussed according to the iconographic typologies of Esoteric and Pure Land Buddhism. The former represent iconographies that are affiliated in some way with Esoteric Buddhism; however, the actual function of this imagery at the site most likely had a greater affinity with mainstream Mahāyāna devotional beliefs and practices than the abstract systems of transcendental meditation of Esoteric
Buddhism. In the case of much of the imagery found at the site, it is evident that they represent popular iconographic subject matter that, for the most part, can be found elsewhere in the region and are often noted in classical art historical texts, such as the *Yizhou minghua lu*.

Except in a few cases, there is no indication that the imagery at the site was intended to be directly related symbolically between different niches/caves except in a general sense of being part of the numinousness of the site. There is some rather limited evidence in inscriptions found at the site to suggest that monks may have overseen the site and supplied support for the carving of images. A number of inscriptions make reference to monks and an adjacent temple, which was probably located in the area of the Doubaota pagoda where the dilapidated remains of a temple still stand. However, there is no indication that the creation of any of this imagery was guided by specific sectarian belief, but rather the site represents the eclectic character of devotional Chinese Buddhism of the Late Tang and Song periods. The patronage of the site was driven largely by the same concerns for worldly and spiritual well-being that are found from the earliest stages of Buddhism in China. The patrons included local gentry, monks, nuns, and members of the echelon of civil and military officials who oversaw the local administration. The intentions of these donors are given in some sixty-odd votive inscriptions at the site, which indicate their religious intentions. These included such things as obtaining personal merit, curing of illness, gaining longevity, prosperity, and wishing for the well-being of the government. Their primary concerns were focused on individuals and families with wishes for family prosperity, protection, future male descendants, and, most frequently, the
transfer of merit from the offering of images to family elders and the recently deceased with the wish they be reborn in a Buddhist paradise. In general, the imagery was intended to provide perpetual benefits for their sponsors. At the center of this was the wish to extend blessings to deceased relatives and to insure the well-being of the sponsors and their descendants. One may assume that similar wishes were expressed in temples and shrines by the sponsors, with the patronage of Buddhist imagery at cliff sites such as the Fowan representing only one aspect of their devotional practices. Several niches have inscriptions for their redecoration indicating that they were maintained possibly over several generations. In this way, many of the niches and caves at the site probably served as individual or family shrines and may have served the dual functions of providing religious merit and demonstrating wealth, social standing, and filiality.

The abundance of cliff sculpture sites in the southeastern portion of the central Sichuan basin, which the Fowan exemplifies, can be explained by several factors. The offering of images carved in natural rock was a well-established devotional practice and was particularly prominent in the region from the Tang Dynasty. Besides the economic, social, and religious factors that supported the carving of Buddhist images, the character and quality of the stone in local naturally-occurring rock formations provided a medium that was cheap, readily available, and suitable for carving. It is also notable that possibly as early as the Tang Dynasty the area of Longshui 龙水 of Dazu was
also a noted manufacturing center of small metal implements, which may have provided artisans with superior metal tools for their craft of stone carving.²

In part, the medium of natural stone was chosen as a material to create devotional objects because patrons wished to create images that were durable. Because of its enduring quality, stone in China was considered to possess the power of longevity and was understood as a means for attaining immortality.³ Considering that many in the region were descendants of those uprooted from their native homelands in the north, the permanence of stone imagery in a fixed location may have made the local rock formations an ideal medium for devotional expression. Many of the votive inscriptions at the site include some variation of the formulaic phrase yong wei gongyang 永为功养 (“[made] as an eternal offering”) expressing the patrons’ beliefs that their offerings would perpetually generate merit for the living and the deceased. Although the concept of non-permanence of the perceptual world is central to Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy on a devotional level, stone imagery such as those found at Beishan was meant for all purposes to be permanent within conceivable time to insure that the Buddhist teachings and beneficiaries of the imagery would eternally flourish.

As part of this study to provide a comprehensive study of the site, this chapter is followed by three sections of appendixes. The first provides an interpretive and descriptive account of each niche/cave of the Fowan site and is modeled after the NRZL. The content of this appendix is based on site field

² For historical references to metal working in Dazu, see DX, 372.

research and critically examines the attributions assigned to each niche in the
NRZL. The second and third appendices provide transcriptions and
translations of a significant portion of the relevant epigraphy found at the
site. In the second appendix, the inscriptions are organized according to the
niche numbering system at the site from lowest to highest rather than being
listed chronologically as in the MWL. Translations of three commemorative
inscriptions relevant to the history of the site are given in the third appendix.
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65: Avalokiteśvara & Ksitigarbha
66: Sudhana, the boy Vishvamitra (#43)
67: Damaged
68: Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara
69: Damaged, three registers of figures

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53: Sudhana, unidentified.
54: Śākyamuni Buddha.
55: Sudhana, Surendrabha (#42)
56: Sudhana, the lay woman
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57: Amitābha, Amoghapāśa &
   Cintāmanicakra.
58: Avalokiteśvara.
59: Sudhana, Brahmin Shivaragra (#49)
60: Śākyamuni, Ksitigarbha &
   Nāgārjuna.
77: Stele, same as 71
78: Stele, dated 1893

Stele: Repair of the Duobaota pagoda

70: Unidentified, Acala(?)
71: Stele, dated 1893
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Drawn by the author, 2002.
Diagram 8  Morphology of major niche types at the Fowan site.

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Six Generations of Wen Family Sculptors of Dong Pu (Eastern Anyue) from dated inscriptions: 1052 - 1179 (127 years)

First Generation

Second Generation

Third Generation

Fourth Generation

Fifth Generation

Sixth Generation

Three Generations of the Fu Family, Sculptors of Changzhou (Dazu) from dated inscriptions (1126 - 1154)

First Generation

Beishan
Fowan #176, 1126
Fowan #177, 1126
Fowan #155, 1126
Shuchengyan 2#, 1152

Fu Yuanjun
Fu Yuanxin
Shuchengyan #2, 1152
Shuchengyan #5, 1143

Second Generation

Beishan
Fowan #176, 1126

Fu Shineng
Shuchengyan #2, 1152

Third Generation

Beishan
Duobao ta # 60, 1153
Duobao ta # 64, 1154

Fu Xiaoba
Fu Xiaoliu

Beishan
Guanyinpo # 1, 1154


Schematic Diagram of Fowan niche 245

Map 4  Modern map of the central Sichuan Basin. Drawn by Tom Suchan, 1999.
Map 6: Topographic map of Dazu county. Drawn by Author. Based on MWL.
Map 7  Major areas with cliff sculpture sites. Drawn by Tom Suchan, 2000.
APPENDIX A

Content Analysis of Niches/Caves of the Fowan Cliff Sculpture Site
Cave/niche number: 1.¹

NRZL title: Image of Wei Junjing 韦君靖像.

Dimensions: 2.54 x 1.12 x 0.3 meters.²

Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties, ca. 896-907.

Inscription(s): see Goulongcheng beiji stele, Appendix C, number 1.

Primary image(s): historical personage, Wei Junjing.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: shallow arched niche, type V in Diagram 8.³

Content description: This shallow arched niche contains a single standing image, which is believed to represent the founder of the site, Wei Junjing. The figure is depicted wearing the heavy full length robes of a Chinese official and an officials’ hat with two arcing ribbons that hang down to the shoulders. He stands in a static frontal pose and holds with both hands in front of the chest a damaged object, which is undoubtedly a tablet used as an insignia of office. Hanging from the left side of his waist belt are tassels and a small pouch-like object, which may be intended to represent a fish-shaped tally Wei was awarded. Overall, this image is representative of the non-individualistic character of Chinese commemorative stone portraiture, a highly conservative tradition, separate from the tradition of Buddhist imagery, which varied little in traditional China since the Han Dynasty.⁴

¹ The organization of this appendix follows the NRZL, which provides a summary of the content of each niche at the site. The content in this appendix is based on the descriptions of each individual niche in the NRZL and first hand reexamination of each niche at the site to confirm, correct, and supplement the information in the NRZL. Pages references to the NRZL in this study refer to the version published in DSY.

² Unless otherwise noted the dimensions for each niche/cave in the appendix are based on the measurements given in the NRZL. Those marked by an asterisk * are based on my own measurements.

³ The various niche types found at the site are illustrated in a Diagram 8. All references to niche types in this appendix refer to examples in that diagram.

Cave/niche number: 2.

NRZL title: Stele of Wei Junjing 韦君靖碑.

Dimensions: 2.73 x 3.4 meters.

Date: Late Tang, 895.

Inscription(s): see Appendix C, number 2; MWL, 37-43 number 1.

Niche type: rectangular, type III.1.

Content description: This stele is inscribed on the southern most face of the cliff wall and was written by Hu Mi 胡密, a petty local official not known in historical documents. The stele eulogizes the career of Wei Junjing during the turbulent years of the late ninth century and the establishment of his stronghold at this site. Written in vertical lines the text reads from left to right. Beneath the main part of the stele the names and titles of one-hundred forty-five of Wei’s officers are listed. A large natural crack divides the upper and lower sections. The upper part of the stele is written in kaishu 楷书 (standard script) and contains 53 rows of characters with an estimated original total of 1,440 characters. Of these around 300 are no longer legible. The lower section is written in smaller kaishu characters, about half the size of the upper characters, and contains 101 lines and an originally total of 2,866 characters, of which around 100 are no longer legible.5

Cave/niche number: 3.


Dimensions: 3.54 x 1.52 x .88 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Vaiśravaṇa.

5 The stele was first mentioned in the thirteenth century Yudi jisheng 興地紀勝, fascicle 161. The first transcription of the text was not until the Ming Dynasty when it was partially transcribed by Cao Xuequan 曹學佺 (1618) in his Shuzhong Shengji 萬中名勝記. In the early nineteenth century it was copied in full by Zhang Shu 張澍 and included in the nineteenth century Dazu County gazetteer. See Chen Mingguang, "Tang Wei Junjing bei' xiaobu 唐韦君靖校补," in WJ, ed. Guo Xiangying 郭相颖 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 351-352.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures, Naṭa and Śrīdevī.
Niche type: rectangular border and upper, angled corner brackets, type I.2.B.
Content description: This niche features a large image of the Heavenly King of the North, Vaiśravaṇa, standing in a stern frontal pose. Vaiśravaṇa is depicted in military regalia and has two ox-horned shaped flaming arcs above his shoulders. Both hands of the image are broken off. His left hand would in all probability have held a small votive stūpa. The right forearm is extended outward at the elbow indicating that his right hand held a lance or banner. The lower portion of the figure is damaged, but the remnants of the two demons, Nilapa and Vilapa and the earth goddess, Pṛthīvī, are still faintly detectable at his feet. Vaiśravaṇa is accompanied by his two usual attendants, his son Naṭa dressed as a soldier, and his female companion, Śrīdevī, on his left and right respectively.

Cave/niche number: 3-1 (not numbered in the NRZL).
Dimensions: approximately .3 x .3 meters.*
Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: rectangular frame, type I.5.
Content description: This small unnumbered niche is located near the top left corner of niche 3. The niche faces north and contains a single figure seated in dhyāna mudrā. The figure appears to be depicted with a cowl or scarf covering the head. The figure does not have an aureole, which suggests that it could represent a meditating monk or arhat.

Cave/niche number: 4.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: 1.45 x .94 x .2 meters.*
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.
Secondary image(s): two monk attendants.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This partially collapsed niche contains a central Buddha seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal with an octagonal base. The Buddha is severely damaged and only the rudimentary core of the figure remains. Behind the figure is a tear-drop shaped flaming aureole and halo. The stylized curling tongues of flame in the aureole are depicted with deeply gouged “U” shaped patterns, which is characteristic of both Late Tang and Five Dynasties imagery at the site. The Buddha is flanked by two monk attendants. The attendant on the proper right side is better preserved and is depicted in añjali mudrā.

Cave/niche number: 5.


Dimensions: 2.95 x 2.74 x 1.45 meters.
Date: Late Tang.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Vaiśravaṇa.
Secondary image(s): a retinue of seven attendants, described below.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This niche features a large imposing image of Vaiśravaṇa (2.5 meters high) with a retinue of seven attendants. The base of the niche on which the figures stand is carved with a stylized swirling cloud pattern. Vaiśravaṇa is depicted in a stiff standing pose with two demons supporting his feet and the head of the earth goddess emerging from the ground between his legs. Directly to the side of Vaiśravaṇa are two large demons. On the right, the demon holds a large sword. The demon on the left of Vaiśravaṇa holds a gnarled wooden club and his left fist is held against his chest. To left of the demon is a standing male figure representing a courtier who wears a hat with two large, long feathers. This figure holds an offering bowl up to his chest with both hands. In front between the demon and courtier is a female figure, representing Śrīdevi, who holds an offering tray of fruit or flowers. Below to the left of Śrīdevi is a pot-bellied dwarf who holds a...
large jar with both hands. On the opposite side of the niche is a similar figure of a dwarf, which has been destroyed above the waist. Opposite Śrīdevi is Naṭa, who is depicted as a soldier resting both hands on an axe. There was probably an additional figure behind Naṭa to compliment the courtier on the opposite side of the niche. The carving of the small niches on the opposite facing corner of the rock face may have weakened the right wall of the niche and resulted in its collapse.

*Cave/niche number:* 6.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* approximately .76 x .6 meters.*

*Date:* Late Tang.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, possibly Śākyamuni.

*Secondary image(s):* the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

*Niche type:* partially collapsed, type I.2.

*Content description:* This partially collapsed niche features a central Buddha seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal. The Buddha appears to make añjali mudrā and wears a robe that covers both shoulders. The hair style of the Buddha is done in a wavy pattern, which is seen on several images at the site that date to the Late Tang and Five Dynasties periods. Flanking the Buddha on the right is a bodhisattva who holds a glowing sword in his right hand. Based on this attribute the figure can be identified as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This is the only standing image of Mañjuśrī found at the site. Typically, Mañjuśrī is depicted seated on a lion and shown in tandem with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The identification of this figure as Mañjuśrī does not support the identification of the main image as Amitābha given in the *NRZL,* but suggests that the main Buddha may represent Śākyamuni or Vairocana. The left side of the niche has collapsed.

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6 The *NRZL,* 366, identifies this bodhisattva as Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Yan Wenru identifies this figure as Vajratiksana, a form of Mañjuśrī, see Yan Wenru (1986), 38 n.12.
Cave/niche Number: 7.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .91 x 1.24 meters.*
Date: not dated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): several attendant figures.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is severely damaged and possibly may have been two different niches that have been reattached after this part of the rock face collapsed. The niche contains a central seated figure with a female(?) head. To the right are three attendant figures including one female figure who holds an offering bowl. On the left side of the niche is a fragment of the lower portion of a figure that stood on a lotus-pedestal. The scale of that figure doesn’t match the others in the niche. A large crack runs through the right side of the niche where the niche has been reattached.

Cave/niche number: 8.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .84 x .91 x .30 meters.*
Date: not dated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated figure, a monk or arhat.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: rectangular niche, damaged.
Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and contains a single seated figure in a posture of meditation with the hands in dhyāna mudrā. The NRZL identifies this image as a Buddha. However, the figure lacks any indication of a body or head aureole. Additionally, the figure is seated on a round pillow with a grass-mat like surface pattern, which indicates that the image is probably intended as a meditating monk or arhat, not a Buddha.
Cave/niche number: 9.

NRZL title: Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva 千手观音菩萨.

Dimensions: 2.9 x 2.7 x 1.42 meters.

Date: Late Tang, 892-895.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): retinue of some 43 figures including Maheśvara, the four lokapālas, the ten directional Buddhas, Mahāmayūri, Indra, Brahma, the four weather gods (rain, thunder, lightening, and wind), Samantabhadra, Mañjuśrī, the Brahmin Vasu, and the goddess Śrīdevī.

Niche type: rectangular niche with upper corner brackets, type I.1.B.

Content description: The main image in this niche depicts the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara seated in pralambapādāsana on a rectangular platform. The image appears to have had forty primary arms, twenty on each side. Behind the figure are an additional eighteen arms, which are carved in low relief on the back wall of the niche giving the image a total of fifty-eight hands. Below to the sides of the main figure are two kneeling figures who hold bowls to receive gifts from Avalokiteśvara. On the right a beggar and opposite an emancipated preta. Above the main image are a pair of apsarasas in clouds, which flow out from the top of a small seated Buddha image held in two hands above the head of the main image. On the side walls are three tiers of complimentary paired figures in clouds. On the right side, the top outer cloud contains a depiction of the wind god and the top inner cloud contains five seated Buddhas. The outer cloud of the middle tier contains an image of Samantabhadra seated on an elephant. In the cloud next to Samantabhadra is a four armed image of Maheśvara seated on bull. Below, the outer cloud contains two standing figures, one is damaged, but the inner figure can be identified as Vaiśravaṇa by the position of his broken arms. The inner cloud has three figures with a larger central figure dressed as a Chinese official and a male and female attendant. The central figure is likely intended to represent Indra or Brahma. At the base of the niche are three figures. The outer figure is damaged, but represents a vināyaka kneeling in aṇjali mudrā. To the left of the kneeling vināyaka figure the central figure is
also badly damaged and represents a multi-armed vajrapāla. Standing to his left is the bearded brahmin Vasu, who holds a staff and gestures toward the head of the vajrapāla figure with his right hand.

On the top left side of the niche the outer cloud contains three weather gods. The central figure in the cloud depicts the god of thunder, who is represented with an animal head and a ring of drums. Next to the Thunder god is the god of lightning represented as animal headed figure, who holds a long length of rope that he appears to snap like a whip. On the outer part of the cloud is a bearded figure wearing a black cap and holding a fly-whisk. This foreign looking figure can be identified as the god of rain. The inner cloud depicts five seated directional Buddhas to complement the identical set of five on the right side of the niche. Below, the outer cloud of the middle tier depicts the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī seated on his loin with three attendants. The inner cloud depicts a six-armed Mahāmāyūrī seated on a peacock. Below on the lower tier of clouds the outer cloud contains two standing lokapālas, the inner figure rests his hands on a sword and may be identified as Virūḍhaka, the lord of the south. Next to him a figure holds a bow and sword, which is possibly intended as Virūpākṣa, the lord of the west. The inner cloud has a standing figure with two female attendants similar to the group on the opposite side of the niche. On the bottom is a group of three figures similar to the opposite side of the niche with a small figure kneeling in añjali mudrā facing the damaged central vajrapāla figure. The inner figure represents Śrīdevi, who wears a square miter and holds an offering tray. Her hair style is similar to the depiction of Śrīdevi in niche 5.

Cave/niche number: 9-1.

NRZL title: Damaged Niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .3 x .3 meters.*

Date: not dated.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated figure, unidentified.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: 1.5.
Content description: This small square intrusive niche is located between niches 9 and niche 10. The niche contains a figure seated in lotus posture. The figure is too damaged to identify.

Cave/niche number: 10.
NRZL title: Image of Śākyamuni Buddha 释迦牟尼像
Cave/niche dimensions: 2.48 x 3.2 x 1.9 meters.
Date: Late Tang.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amitābha Buddha (?).
Secondary image(s): retinue of twenty six figures including two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta), two monks (Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa), the ten directional Buddhas, eight guardian figures, and four apsarasas.
Niche type: rectangular niche with a curved interior, type I.1.A.
Content description: This large niche contains a Buddha teaching assembly. The NRZL identifies the central Buddha as Śākyamuni, but the image was probably intended to represent Amitābha. The central Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a raised lotus-pedestal. The right hand (broken off) was held out possibly in abhaya mudrā. The left hand rests on the left knee, palm-down. This image appears to have been repaired. On the top of the niche next to the Buddha’s aureole are a pair of apsarasas depicted in low relief. Also depicted in low relief on the back wall behind the Buddha are two trees with pointed leaves that form a canopy above the Buddha. The Buddha is flanked by a pair of standing monks in añjali mudrā. The older Mahākāśyapa is depicted on the left opposite the youthful Ānanda. Above the monks are another pair of apsarasas that kneel on clouds. On each side of the monks is a larger standing bodhisattva. The bodhisattva on the right is in añjali mudrā, while the opposite bodhisattva holds a lotus stem across his right shoulder. Both bodhisattvas wear pointed crowns that have a small standing Buddha image at the apex. The bodhisattvas are identified in the NRZL as Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara, respectively left and right.
On the upper lateral sides of the niche are two sets of five Buddhas representing the Buddhas of the ten directions. The Buddhas are seated on lotuses in clouds with abstracted cloud-trails as if appearing from each of the cardinal directions to hear the Buddha teach. Below these Buddhas are two rows of standing figures on each side of the niche. On the right side the figures in the back row are severely damaged and unrecognizable. The inner figure appears to wield a club while the outer figure appears to hold a seal of official investiture. Below in front, the inner figure can be identified as Vaiśravaṇa by the position of his arms and by the remnants of his peculiar ox-horn shaped flaming halo. The outer figure next to him rests on a battle axe. Opposite on the left side of the niche is a similar set of martial figures. In the upper back row the innermost figure holds a large club while the outer figure appears to hold a tablet or offering tray. The later figure is distinct from the other figures in that it is depicted dressed in robes, not armor. The inner figure on the bottom row makes a gesture similar to the image of Vaiśravaṇa on the opposite side of the niche, but does not have distinctive halo or full skirt of armor as that image. The outer lower figure is damaged, but is also dressed in armor and has a circular halo.

*Cave/niche number:* 11.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Cave/niche dimensions:* approximately .84 x .84 meters.*

*Date:* Five Dynasties.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* Amitābha (?) Buddha, seated.

*Secondary image(s):* two bodhisattvas (possibly Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta).

*Niche type:* rectangular, type I.1.

*Content description:* The main image of this niche is a severely damaged Buddha seated on a lotus-pedestal. The Buddha is flanked by two standing bodhisattvas. Both bodhisattvas hold lotus stems, which may indicate that the eroded main image of this niche represents the Buddha Amitābha.
Cave/niche number: 12.

NRZL title: Image of Śākyamuni Buddha 释迦牟尼佛像.

Dimensions: 1.43 x 1.18 x .36 meters.

Date: Late Tang.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated adorned Buddha, Śākyamuni/Vairocana Buddha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra), and two apsarasas.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: The right side of this niche has collapsed and been repaired. This niche features an image of an adorned Buddha seated on an elaborate sumeru throne with two attendant bodhisattvas. This iconography represents a glorified depiction of Śākyamuni at the time of his enlightenment in a transcendental form equated with the Buddha Vairocana.\(^7\) The top portion of the head of the Buddha in this niche is missing, but it can be assumed to have had a crown of some sort. The lower portion of the image is also damaged. It appears that the left hand was placed on the lap and the right hand may have been in bhūmisparśa mudrā, which is a gesture commonly associated with this type of adorned Buddha. The Buddha wears a large necklace with key-hole shaped hanging adornments similar to that worn by the dwarf in the large Vaiśravaṇa niche number 5 and, in a simplified form, on the small image of the brahmin Vasu in niche number 9. The Buddha’s robe is slung over the left shoulder and the right shoulder is exposed. Behind the Buddha is an elaborate throne-back carved with makara heads and a pair of riders on mythical goat-like creatures. This type of throne-back is associated with imagery of adorned Buddhas from the early and mid Tang periods. Two badly eroded apsarās figures are carved in relief above the Buddha’s elaborate throne back. Below them tree foliage is carved in low relief on the back of the niche.

Flanking the Buddha are two seated bodhisattvas, which are not identified in the NRZL. On the right Samantabhadra is seated on an elephant, and opposite, Mañjuśrī is seated on a lion. Both bodhisattvas are

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\(^7\)The iconography of this niche is discussed in chapter 3, section 3.8 of the current study.
severely damaged and feature lotus petal shaped flaming aureoles. The flames in the aureoles are represented with stylized “U” shaped gouged patterns.

*Cave/niche number: 13.*

*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.*

*Dimensions: .76 x .53 x .09 meters.*

*Date: Five Dynasties.*

*Inscription(s): none.*

*Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.*

*Secondary image(s): one unidentified attendant figure.*

*Niche type: damaged, type I.2.*

*Content description: This niche faces north and is extensively eroded. Only the rudimentary shape of the primary image still remains. The figure appears to be seated on a sumeru pedestal with one or both legs pendant. An attendant figure was depicted on the right side of the niche, but is too badly worn to identify.*

*Cave/niche number: 14.*

*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.*

*Dimensions: .84 x .64 x .19 meters.*

*Date: Five Dynasties.*

*Inscription(s): none.*

*Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.*

*Secondary image(s): two apsarasas.*

*Niche type: damaged, type I.2.*

*Content description: Located directly below niche number 13 this small niche contains a severely eroded figure seated on a pedestal. Little can be said about the figure except that it appears to have worn a cowl over the head suggesting that it represented Kṣitigarbha, but the image is too eroded to confirm that identification. The figure has a large, round aureole and an unusual nimbus that is divided into two horned shaped halves that extend*
above the figure’s body aureole. A similar nimbus is seen in niche 19. The outer left side of the niche seems to be unfinished since the stone hasn’t been cut away. This portion of the niche may have been obscured by a door or wooden wall that was placed next to it as indicated by holes on the rock surface near this part of the niche and on the opposite facing rock surface. On the lintel of the niche are two damaged *apsarasas*, which are carved in low relief. Similar *apsarasas* decorate the lintels of several niches dated to the Five Dynasties period at the site, such as niche number 39.

*Cave/niche number:* 15.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* .94 x .69 x .33 meters.*

*Date:* Five Dynasties.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

*Secondary image(s):* two *apsarasas*, and one donor(?) figure.

*Niche type:* type I.2.

*Content description:* The central image of this niche is significantly weathered, and was left unidentified in the *NRZL*. The figure appears to be seated in *lalitāsana* with the right leg pendant on a *sumeru* pedestal. The right arm was extended out while the left arm rests on the left knee. The figure appears to wear a hood and behind the head is a plain round aureole. Below on the right side of the base of the pedestal is a damaged image of a small dog-like animal lying on its stomach. The appearance of the image and the small animal indicate that the main figure is intended as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha.

On the outer right corner of the niche are traces of a standing donor figure. Above on the lintel of the niche is a badly damaged *apsarā* figure, which is carved in low relief. Prior to the collapse of the upper left portion of the niche this *apsarā* would have been part of a pair of *apsarasas* similar to niche number 14.
Cave/niche number: 16.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .53 x .43 x .11 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara(?).

Secondary image(s): two unidentified attendant figures, and one donor figure.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This niche is extensively eroded. The surface of the central image has been weathered smooth, and was left unidentified in the NRZL. Only the basic outline of a central standing figure remains. The shape of the figure and the lotus-base it stands on suggests that the image was a generic representation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. To the two sides of the central image are traces of two eroded standing attendant figures. On the exterior right side of the niche is a small female(?) donor figure.

Cave/niche number: 17.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .91 x .66 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): one attendant figure.

Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche is severely weathered and features a pair of standing bodhisattva figures. Only the essential shapes of these figures remain. The right figure is in a slightly more relaxed pose compared to the figure on the left. The contrasting appearance of these figures suggests that they may have represented the bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, left and right respectively. On the right corner of the niche next to the Avalokiteśvara image is a small standing attendant/donor figure.
Cave/niche number: 18.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .91 x .68 x .22 meters.*

Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties. 

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.1; MWL, 15 number 11.

Primary image(s): unidentified, seated bodhisattva.

Secondary image(s): two attendant bodhisattvas.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche is extensively eroded. The primary figure appears to be a bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana seated on a round lotus-pedestal. The image is too damaged to speculate its identity, but the relaxed pose of the figure indicates that it is a bodhisattva, not a Buddha as suggested in the NRZL. Behind the central figure in low relief is an aureole with an outer flame motif similar to the one in niche 14. Standing on the sides of the main image are two attendant bodhisattvas with round nimbi and pointed flaming aureoles. The figure on the right side is slightly better preserved and appears to hold a lotus on the left shoulder.

Cave/niche number: 19.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .69 x .60 x .17 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.2; MWL, 15 number 12.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two attendant bodhisattvas, maybe Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha, and the ten directional Buddhas.

Niche type: rectangular niche with a recessed border, type I.2.A.

Content description: This niche is extensively damaged and features a seated central figure with two standing attendants. The heads of all three figures are missing. The NRZL identifies these three figures as Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. I believe that this attribution is

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The authors of the MWL date this niche to 900 based on an inscription in the niche, but their reasoning is not fully explained, see MWL, 15.
incorrect for several reasons. Closer examination reveals that the central image wore a headdress and holds the characteristic attributes of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, a willow branch and an alms bowl. Further, the inscription for this niche identifies the primary image as the “Saving [one] from Suffering” Avalokiteśvara (Juiku guanyin 求苦观音). For these reasons, I suggest that the proper identification of this figure is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, not Amitābha.

To the sides of the main figure are two standing bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva on the left side is almost totally obliterated. The bodhisattva on the right side is slightly better preserved, but missing its head. This bodhisattva holds a round object in front of the abdomen with the left hand, while the right hand dangles down to the side and holds part of a scarf. Since the bodhisattva holds a round orb-like object it may indicate that the two attendant bodhisattva in the niche represent Śūryaprābha and Candraprabha. On the back of the niche the Buddhas of the ten directions are depicted seated on stylized clouds, with five on each side of the flaming head aureole of the main figure.

**Cave/niche number:** 20.

**NRZL title:** Thousand Buddha Wall 千佛壁.

**Dimensions:** 3.36 x 5.19 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated Buddha, Śākyamuni or Amitābha(?).

**Secondary image(s):** several attendant bodhisattvas (damaged), three hundred small Buddha/bodhisattva figures.

**Niche type:** Shallow niche, roughly rectangular in shape, type III.1.

**Content description:** This shallow niche contains ten rows of small figures seated on lotuses surrounding a damaged central image group. The central image has been destroyed, but appears to have sat on a raised platform with

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9 I am not aware of this iconography occurring elsewhere, but a stone image of Avalokiteśvara, dated 548, and found in the horde of stone images from the Wanfosi temple site in Chengdu, also features two attendant bodhisattvas holding circular discs, which are identified by Chün-fang Yü as manifestations of Avalokiteśvara, see Yü (2001), 77.
two standing bodhisattva attendants. The NRZL identifies the central Buddha figure as Śākyamuni, but the image is too damaged to determine its identity. The ten rows of small seated figures on lotuses appear to be both bodhisattvas and Buddhas. Most are seated in padmāsana and in dhyāna or añjali mudrā. Several are also seated in other postures including royal ease and kneeling. Some of the figures also wear head adornments and hold lotuses and other attributes. Next to each figure is a blank, rectangular cartouche for an identifying inscription. Across the base of the niche is a lotus petal pattern with several unopened lotus buds. This niche could have been intended as a generic image of the thousand Buddhas of the aryakalpa or possibly Amitābha surrounded by the bodhisattvas who inhabit his paradise. The theme of representing Amitābha surrounded by figures on lotuses, usually around fifty, was popular in Sichuan from the Early to Mid Tang periods. This niche could likely have been intended be a variation on that theme.

Cave/niche number: 21.

NRZL title: Image of Śākyamuni Buddha 释迦牟尼佛像.

Dimensions: 1.14 x 1.01 x .34 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.3; MWL, 21 number 28.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Amitābha.

Secondary image(s): two attendant bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta), and two monks (Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa).

Niche type: roughly square with an outer border (type I).

Content description: The figures in this niche are damaged by erosion. The NRZL identifies the main image as Śākyamuni Buddha. However, an inscription on the outer right side of the niche that was discovered in 1994 indicates that the main image represents Amitābha. The central Buddha is

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10 On this iconography see Li Sisheng 李巳生, “Yifowushipusa he pusazhuangfo 佛五十菩萨和菩萨装佛,” DHY 2 (1991): 49-58. A version of that theme is found in the early Tang site of Jianshanzi, Dazu, niche 4. I also suspect that niche 6 at Foeryan, dated to the Five Dynasties period depicts this subject matter.
seated in lotus posture on a damaged lotus-pedestal with a tubular mid-section. The right hand of the Buddha is held on the knee palm-down in bhūmisparśa mudrā. The left hand is held on the lap and holds an alms bowl. The Buddha has a plain round halo and an ovoid body aureole. On the sides behind the Buddha’s aureole are two monks in añjali mudrā. The monk on the left side is bearded and is probably intended to represent the elder monk, Mahākāśyapa. Opposite on the right side of the niche the monk is damaged and missing its head, but was probably intended to represent Ānanda who is often paired with Mahākāśyapa. Next to the monks on the outer part of the niche are two standing bodhisattvas that hold lotus stems.

Cave/niche number: 22.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .78 x 1.04 x .25 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Amitābha(?).

Secondary image(s): two attendant bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha), and two donor figures.

Niche type: rectangular niche, type III.1.

Content description: This niche contains three badly damaged seated figures. The central figure is almost totally destroyed and was seated on a lotus-pedestal. Behind the remaining fragment of the central image is a plain, round body aureole. On the sides of the central figure the attendant bodhisattvas are seated in lalitāsana. The bodhisattva on the right side holds an object, possibly a pātra, on his lap and a khakkhara against his right shoulder. The presence of the khakkhara indicates that this bodhisattva is Kṣitigarbha. The bodhisattva on the left appears to hold a willow branch in the right hand, indicating that the image represented the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. If this pair of bodhisattvas represents Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara then the main image was likely intended as the Buddha Amitābha. On the lower exterior left side of the niche are two small kneeling donor figures in añjali mudrā.
Cave/niche number: 23.

NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha image 地藏像.

Dimensions: .5 x .45 x .14 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: rectangular, type I.1.A.

Content description: This niche contains a single image of Kṣitigarbha seated in padmāsana on a lotus-base without a raised pedestal. Kṣitigarbha’s right hand is on his knee, palm-down, and his left hand rests on the lap and holds an alms bowl (pātra). Behind the bodhisattva is a round halo and an ovoid shaped body aureole with stylized etched spiraling flame designs. Kṣitigarbha’s khakkhara is carved in low relief on the right side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 24.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .66 x .57 x .12 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties, 919-924.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.4; MWL, 14 number 7.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: arched interior, type I.1.

Content description: This niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas, which are identified in the donor inscription as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. The pair of bodhisattvas can also be identified by their characteristic attributes, the solar and lunar discs, which are held with both hands in front of the chest of each figure. The head of the bodhisattva on the left is damaged, but the figure on the right side has a large, round face with chubby cheeks. Both figures appear to have triangular shaped crowns and round nimbi behind their heads. The bodies of both figures are somewhat elongated and their garments cling to their bodies and are decorated with
strings of pearls carved in low relief. Suryaprabha and Candraprabha are not known to have been worshipped independently, but is at least one scripture dedicated to their worship.\footnote{The two bodhisattvas are discussed in chapter 4, section 4.4 of this study, see page 435.}

**Cave/niche number:** 25.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 0.91 x 0.83 x 0.17 meters.*

**Date:** Late Tang/Five Dynasties.

**Inscription(s):** one, see Appendix B, 1.5; MWL, 16 number 13.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified standing Buddha(?).

**Secondary image(s):** two unidentified bodhisattvas.

**Niche type:** type I, damaged.

**Content description:** This small shallow niche contains three badly damaged, standing figures, which possibly represent a Buddha with two attendant bodhisattvas. All three of the figures have head aureoles. The two attendant bodhisattvas hold objects up to their chests, but are too damaged to identify. The central figure, probably a Buddha, appears to have made a teaching gesture with the hands held in front of his chest. He stands barefooted on a small lotus-base.

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**Cave/niche number:** 26.

**NRZL title:** Avalokiteśvara image niche 觀音龛.

**Dimensions:** 0.57 x 0.30 x 0.12 meters.

**Date:** Late Tang/Five Dynasties, 920/895.

**Inscription(s):** one, see Appendix B, 1.3; MWL, 11-12 number 2.

**Primary image(s):** standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** one donor figure.

**Niche type:** type I.1.

**Content description:** This niche features a standing image of Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is depicted with the characteristic attributes of Avalokiteśvara, a lotus-flower in the right hand and a water bottle (kunḍikā) held on the left side. The body of the figure is elongated and the head of the
figure is topped by a triangular crown with two rounded protrusions on the back sides. Behind the head of the bodhisattva is a teardrop shaped aureole with an outer flame motif. The style of the image is very similar to niche 24. The inscription on the niche identifies the central image as the Saving [one] from Suffering Avalokiteśvara and is dated to the second year of the qiande (920), or qianning (895), reign era. The same donor, He Junyou is responsible for niche 24. The inscription for the niche is located on the exterior right side of the niche above a small donor figure. The donor figure is depicted kneeling on a cloud. A small cloud-trail rises up behind the figure. This figure may be intended to represent the deceased son of the donor for whom the niche is dedicated.

**Cave/niche number:** 27.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .36 x .10 meters.*

**Date:** 938, Five Dynasties.

**Inscription(s):** one, only partially legible, see Appendix B, 1.7; MWL, 19 number 21.

**Primary image(s):** Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** kneeling devotee figure.

**Niche type:** Shallow rectangular niche, type I.2.

**Content description:** This niche contains an image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The somewhat stiff standing pose and body type of the figure is similar to the bodhisattvas in niches 24 and 26. It differs from those images in that is a slightly more elaborate depiction of the necklaces and jewels that adorn the front of the bodhisattva. Both of the bodhisattva’s hands are broken off, but from their position it would appear that the left hand held a water bottle and the right hand a willow branch or lotus.

On the outer lower right side of the niche is a small, kneeling devotee in añjali mudrā on a cloud. A cloud-trail behind the figure leads into the interior of the niche.
Cave/niche number: 28.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Cave/niche dimensions: .48 x 32 x .12 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small, south facing niche is badly eroded. The central image appears to be a bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana with the right leg pendant. The pose and traces of a khakkhara (monk’s staff) on the right side of the image suggests that it represents the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The niche is similar to other damaged images of Kṣitigarbha in this area of the site.

Cave/niche number: 29.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .71 x .49 x .13 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): kneeling donor figure.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: The niche contains two standing bodhisattvas that are badly damaged. The heads and hands of both figures have been destroyed. The bodhisattva on the right is in a more static pose and has no sign of adornments, which suggests that it represents Kṣitigarbha. In contrast, the other bodhisattva is depicted in a more relaxed pose and wearing adornments. The pose of the left bodhisattva, with the left arm dangling to the side and the right arm curled up toward the chest, conforms to many images of Avalokiteśvara. As well, the way the drapery hangs down in front of the figure is similar to the images of Avalokiteśvara in niches 27 and 26. In
their damaged state the pair of bodhisattvas compares closely to the pair of bodhisattvas identified as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha in niche 25, which dates to the Former Shu period. Thus, this niche should be of a similar date.

On the exterior left side of the niche is a small donor figure on a cloud. The figure is depicted kneeling on the left leg with the hands clasped in aṅjali mudrā while gazing up at the left bodhisattva. A small cloud-trail rises up behind the figure on to the side wall of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 30.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .6 x .93 meters.*

Date: Late Tang.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): damaged, unidentified.

Secondary image(s): damaged, unidentified.

Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche contains three seated figures on lotus-pedestals. All three images are severely eroded and only the rudimentary shape of the figures remain. The composition of the niche is somewhat similar to niche 33 located next to it.

Cave/niche number: 31.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: 1.21 x .76 x .17 meters.*

Date: Late Tang.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara(?).

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This niche is severely eroded and contains a single
standing figure, which probably represented the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The figure has an elongated slender body and stands in a static pose. Behind the head of the image is a round aureole.

Cave/niche number: 32.

NRZL title: Suryaprabha and Candraprabha Images 日光月光菩萨像.

Dimensions: .86 x .61 x .07 meters.

Date: 913, Five Dynasties, Former Shu.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.8; MWL, 17 number 17.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: I.2.A.

Content description: The niche contains two standing bodhisattvas similar to those in niche 29. The NRZL identifies these figures as Suryaprabha and Candraprabha based on an inscription in the niche. However, the inscription has been transcribed differently in the MWL, which doesn’t include the identification of the images. The appearance of the figures does not support the identification given in the NRZL, which is followed in the MWL. The images are severely damaged and missing their heads, but can be identified as Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha by the appearance of their garments and adornments. Both stand barefooted on lotus-petals and behind their heads are round nimbi each with an outer circle of stylized flames. The figure on the right, Ksitigarbha, appears slightly more austere with an ankle length robe and a minimal amount of adornments depicted on his chest. The arms of the figure are damaged, the right arm was held to the side and the left was curled up toward the chest. Opposite, the figure on the proper left is more ornately dressed with dangling pearl necklaces and scarves. The hands are broken off, but the figure appears to have held an object, possibly a water-bottle, in the left hand at the side, and the right hand was curled up toward the chest. The contrasting appearance of the two bodhisattvas is more in keeping with

12 NRZL, 371.
standard depictions of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha than Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha who are conventionally shown as mirror images of one another.

Cave/niche number: 33.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: approximately .7 x .93 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): three unidentified seated Buddhas.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.D.
Content description: Located near the top of the cliff this niche contains three severely eroded images of seated Buddhas, which face directly outward. The figures are the same size and are seated on pedestals. The Buddha on the right side is the best preserved and holds a bowl in the palm of his left hand on his lap. This Buddha triad probably represented the Buddhas of the three realms (Sanshifo 三世佛), but the images are too badly damaged to confirm that identification.

Cave/niche number: 34.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .81 x .83 x .20 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.
Secondary image(s): two unidentified attendant bodhisattvas.
Niche type: partially collapsed, type I.2.A.
Content description: This niche has been severely damaged by erosion. The central Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal. The image is too severely damaged to identify. Behind the Buddha is an ovoid shaped body
aureole, which contains a circular halo rimmed by a flame motif. On the sides of the niche are two badly eroded attendant bodhisattva figures. The figure on the right has a teardrop-shaped halo.

*Cave/niche number:* 35.

*NRZL title:* Amitābha Buddha niche 啊弥陀佛龛.

*Dimensions:* 1.02 x 1.07 x .61 meters.

*Date:* 941, Five Dynasties, Later Shu period.

*Inscription(s):* one, see Appendix B, 1.9; *MWL*, 19 number 23.

*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, Amitābha.

*Secondary image(s):* two seated bodhisattvas, Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, and two monks, Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa.

*Niche type:* type I.2.C.

*Content description:* This niche is more deeply excavated than surrounding niches and is much less damaged by erosion. The niche contains a Buddha teaching assembly with five figures. These are in fairly good condition except that the heads of the figures are either missing or damaged. The central Buddha, Amitābha is depicted seated on a lotus-pedestal in *dhyāna mudrā* with the thumbs touching the tips of the fore-fingers. His lotus seat has two rows of upturned lotus-petals, a round midsection, and a stylized base with mushroom-like cloud patterns. Behind the Buddha and the two attendant bodhisattvas are large tear-drop shaped aureoles rimmed by a decorative band of flames. Directly above the Buddha is a large, round, four pointed canopy.

The bodhisattvas are seated in *pralambapādāsana* on lotus-pedestals. On the right the bodhisattva is depicted in a thick robe that covers both shoulders. His hands are held out in front of the right side of the chest, but are too damaged to recognize the gesture or attribute held by the figure. Although lacking a definitive attribute the garments of the figure and minimal amount of adornments suggests that it this figure represents the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The opposite bodhisattva is depicted more like a princely figure with adornments and scarves. That bodhisattva holds the characteristic attributes of Avalokiteśvara, a bowl with his left hand and lotus stem or
willow branch with the right hand. Above the pointed tip of the bodhisattvas’ nimbus is a cloud that contains a floating pipa (lute). A similar cloud is located above the bodhisattva on the right, but the instrument in the cloud is no longer recognizable. In the background between the aureoles of the Buddha and bodhisattvas are two monks, the elder Mahākāśyapa on the right and Ānanda on the left.

Cave/niche Number: 36.

NRZL title: Images of the Sixteen Arhats 十六罗汉像.

Dimensions: 2.79 x 8.14 x .83 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties or possibly Northern Song.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Śākyamuni.

Secondary image(s): fifteen arhats.

Niche type: variation of type V.

Content Description: This niche is located on the back east facing side of the rock face and is 2.79 meters above the ground. It features a central Buddha, Śākyamuni, surrounded by a long row of fifteen seated arhats, with seven on the right side and eight on the left. There was probably an additional arhat on the right side of the niche, which may have collapsed, to form a standard group of sixteen. According to the NRZL this niche was restored after the Five Dynasties period, and only three of the arhats are originals, which have not been repaired. Śākyamuni is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal with three rows of upturned lotus-petals and a pyramidal octagonal base. His

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13 The sixteen arhats are described in the Record on the Duration of the Law (Fazhuji 法住记), T.49.2030.12-14, which was translated by Xuanzang in 654. It describes the names and abodes of sixteen arhats who are entrusted with the protection and maintenance of the dharma and providing prosperity to the world in the period after the death of Śākyamuni. The cult of arhats did not become prevalent until the Late Tang. One of the most famous painters of the group of sixteen was Guanxiu 贯休 (832-912) who resided for a time in Sichuan at the end of his life. For a dated, but comprehensive study of arhats and the sixteen arhats in particular see Marinus W. De Viser, The Arhats in China and Japan. (Berlin: Oesterheld and Co., 1923).

14 NRZL, 371-2.
right hand is placed in the front of the knee in bhūmisparśa mudrā and his left hand holds an alms bowl on the lap. His robe covers both shoulders with a clasp holding up part of his robe on the left shoulder. This type of clasp is associated with Chan monks and frequently occurs on images of Buddhas at the site and surrounding areas in the Song Dynasty. Behind the Buddha is a pointed nimbus with two outer bands of decoration, an inner stylized lotus pattern and an outer band of flames represented with stylized, gouged, U-shaped tongues of flame.

In front of the arhats on both sides of Śākyamuni are depictions of clogs, boots, water bottles, and alms bowls representing the trappings of the attending arhats. All the arhats are seated on thick pillows some of which are decorated with frills and stylized creased folds. The majority of the arhats are seated in padmāsana and behind their heads are plain, round aureoles. They are depicted as generic types with out any distinctive identifying traits. The arhat on the extreme right of Śākyamuni is seated in padmāsana on an unadorned pillow. His hands are held clasped in front of his chest. Below his right knee is a water pitcher, and a pair of sandals. His robe is folded in the front revealing an inner layer of garments. Moving inward, the arhat to his left holds his right hand on his lap. The left hand was held up to the chest. His head is slightly tilted to the left and his robe is folded in the front to reveal an inner layer of garments. His pillow has a frill design and a water-bottle is located below his left knee. The third arhat from the right has a slightly bulbous forehead. His head is titled slightly toward the left. Below him are two large boots, almost proportionally too large for the figure. His right hand was held up in front of the right side of the chest, while the left hand is held below the left side of the chest and holds part of his robe. The arhat to his left is depicted seated in dhyāna mudrā with his hands covered by his robe. His pillow has frills and below his right knee is a water bottle. The arhat to his left is seated in lalitāsana with the left leg pendant. His head has been broken off. He wears a robe that covers his chest and hangs over his seat. In his right hand he holds a string of prayer beads while his left hand rests on his left thigh with the palm-up and fist clenched. Below next to his left foot is a water pitcher with a handle. The arhat to his left is
seated in lotus posture on a pillow with a stylized pattern of creases. He wears a hood over his head which is tied in a bow beneath his chin. His right hand rests on the right leg palm-down, and his left hand is placed on his left knee with the palm-up and open. Below him are a pair of large creased boots. The arhat directly to the right of Śākyamuni is seated with crossed legs with his bare feet visible beneath his legs. His hands are held in añjali mudrā. Below his right leg is a water bottle with a small nipple and pair of clogs. His seat is unadorned.

The arhats to the left of Śākyamuni are all missing their heads. The first arhat directly to the left of Śākyamuni is seated in padmāsana on a pillow with a pattern of frills along the edge and a wavy linear pattern along the front. In his right hand he holds a string of prayer beads which hangs down to the palm of his left hand which is placed on his lap. The robe of the figure is depicted in a similar manner to the Śākyamuni image with a clasp on the left shoulder creating a triangular shaped fold in the robe. Directly below the image is another pair of large boots with linear creases. The next arhat to the left is seated in padmāsana and holds with both hands a damaged object that looks something like a measuring scale. He also wears a robe similar to the main Buddha. His seat is decorated with frills and a cloth cover with stylized repeating creases. The arhat to his left is seated in padmāsana. The hands are held together in front of the chest and rest on a cane or some other object which has been broken off. The arhat to his left is again seated in padmāsana and the head is missing. His robe has only a few folds and is folded in front. The right hand was held out in front of the chest, palm-down. The damaged left hand rests on the lap. His seat is decorated with wavy striations and a pattern of creases. Below the image are a pair of boots and a large bowl or pitcher, which is broken. The arhat to his left is seated in lotus posture and his hands are placed on his lap with the left hand clasping his right wrist. His robe is folded over to the left side. Part of his robe hangs over his pillow seat, which has a fold pattern and wavy striations. The arhat to his left is seated in lotus posture and wears a robe that is folded over from the left side. Part of the robe is pulled up to the right shoulder but not in the same manner as the central Buddha or other arhats. His right
hand is broken but was turned-up at the elbow, while the left hand rests on the knee, palm-down. His seat has a fold pattern, and a water bottle is depicted below his left knee. The outer most arhat on the left side of the Buddha is seated in pralambapādāsana. Unlike all the other arhats which face outward this arhat is seated off to the side and faces inward at about a forty-five degree angle. His hands are broken off but were held out in front of the chest. A long staff is placed between his legs with the top resting against his left shoulder. He wears a robe the crosses over the left and has simple linear striations for folds. Traces of blue paint remain on the outer robe. This figure seems slightly smaller than the other arhats. On the opposite end there may have been a similar figure which has broken off to form a more standard group of sixteen arhats; however, are no longer any indications of an additional figure at that end of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 37.

NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha image 地藏像.

Dimensions: .93 x .81 x .20 meters.

Date: 940, Five Dynasties, Later Shu period.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.10; MWL, 19 number 22.

Primary image(s): Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): two apsarasas and two donor figures.

Niche/caves type: type I.2.E.

Content description: This niche contains an image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform. He wears the robes of a monk with a cowl covering his head. In his right hand he holds a khakkhara which rests on his right shoulder. His left hand holds a large cintāmani. Behind his head is a plain circular halo enclosed in a large, round aureole. Below on the right side of his pedestal is a small lion or dog resting on its stomach. On the left side of the niche is a small male donor figure depicted in añjali mudrā. Another donor figure, which has a long pointed beard, is located outside the niche below a donor inscription. These
images undoubtedly represent the two sponsors of the niche mentioned in the inscription. Carved in bas-relief on the lintel of the niche are two *apsarasas* who hold a wreath over the main image.

*Cave/niche number:* 38.

*NRZL title:* Buddha Image niche 佛像龛.

*Dimensions:* .87 x .81 x .20 meters.

*Date:* Five Dynasties.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* standing Buddha, Bhaişajyaguru.

*Secondary image(s):* two bodhisattvas (Candraprabha and Sūryaprabha), the twelve *yakṣa* generals, and the eight great bodhisattvas.

*Niche/caves type:* the top of the niche has collapsed, type I.2.D.

*Content Description:* This niche depicts the Buddha Bhaişajyaguru with his two primary bodhisattva attendants, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, along with others in his standard retinue. Bhaişajyaguru is depicted standing barefoot on a lotus-base. His right arm hangs down to the side and holds a *khakkhara*, which is barely detectable above his right shoulder. The left arm (broken) is bent back at the elbow. Behind his head is a large, round halo with an outer flame motif and directly above his head on the top of the niche is a lotus-canopy. Behind and to the sides of the Buddha are two smaller figures in añjali mudrā. The figure on the right is a monk while the opposite figure wears a small cap and appears to be a female. Next to these two figures are two standing bodhisattvas, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha who hold circular disks representing the sun and moon. All four attendant figures stand on lotus-bases and have plain round halos. On the sides of the niche and behind the halos of the two bodhisattvas are several rows of smaller figures, which are partially correctly identified in the *NRZL* as bodhisattvas. On each side are ten figures. Some of the figures in the upper back rows wear helmets indicating that they represent the twelve *yakṣa* generals who

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15 *NRZL,* 372.
serve Bhaiṣajyaguru. The eight figures in the lower front rows have halos and represent the eight great bodhisattvas, who are also part of Bhaiṣajyaguru’s retinue.

Cave/Niche number: 39.

**NRZL title:** The Almighty Virtuous Golden Wheel Tejaprabha Buddha

**Dimensions:** .79 x .76 x .23 meters.

**Date:** Five Dynasties period, 922.

**Inscription(s):** one, see Appendix B, 1.11; *MWL*, 19 number 20.

**Primary image(s):** Tejaprabha Buddha.

**Secondary image(s):** the nine luminaries, two apsarasas.

**Niche/caves type:** rectangular frame niche, type I.2.E.

**Content description:** This niche is located at ground level below niche 36. The main image depicts the Buddha Tejaprabha seated in lotus posture (padmāsana) on a lotus-pedestal with a swirling cloud pattern base. He holds on his lap with both hands a flaming cakra (wheel) with eight spokes. He is depicted wearing a one-piece robe that covers both shoulders. The head is proportionally oversized for the body and has a distinctive turban-like coiffure that is conical in appearance. Directly above the head in low relief is a lotus-canopy and behind the Buddha is a large, plain, round aureole. On the upper sides of the Buddha’s aureole are two small swirling ribbons, one on each side.

On the side walls of the interior of the niche are three tiers of figures representing the nine luminaries, anthropomorphized versions of celestial phenomena. On the right wall are five figures in three rows with two pairs in the lower rows and a single figure on top. These figures are somewhat damaged but several of them can be identified by their characteristic attributes. The top figure appears to be a female who holds an orb and may represent the Moon goddess. Below in the middle row the outer figure who holds a brush and bowl or inkwell represents Mercury, the scribe. The inner figure is a female and holds a lute, the attribute of Venus. On the bottom the
figures are more badly eroded and are smaller in stature compared to the upper images. The outer figure has a pointed beard and may represent the god Saturn who is usually depicted as an old man or mendicant. The inner figure is too damaged to be identified. Opposite on the left side, the middle pair of figures have been completely obliterated. The upper figure holds an orb, and undoubtedly represents the Sun god to compliment the Moon goddess on the opposite side. On the bottom is a damaged, standing figure. Only the lower portion of this figure remains, but it appears to be depicted in martial dress indicating that the figure may be the martial god, Mars.

The exterior lintel of the niche is decorated with two facing apsarasas with outstretched arms depicted in low relief. On the right exterior side of the niche is a donor inscription that identifies the subject matter of the niche. According to the inscription it was offered by more than a dozen donors. Two of the sponsors are given as the donors of niche 37, which is dated eighteen years later.

Cave/niche number: 40.

NRZL title: Amitābha Buddha niche 阿弥陀佛龛.

Dimensions: .84 x 1.11 x .29 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Amitābha Buddha, seated.

Secondary image(s): Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa, and two small devotee figures on the exterior of the niche.

Niche type: rectangular framed border, type I.2.

Content description: This niche depicts a Buddha assembling with a Buddha, two bodhisattvas and two monks. The niche is fairly well preserved except for the heads of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, which have been destroyed. The central image represents the Buddha Amitābha seated in dhyāna mudrā on a large, round, lotus-pedestal. He wears a robe that covers only his left shoulder. Behind the Buddha is a large, undecorated, circular aureole. Two monks peer out from behind both sides of the aureole with an older looking monk, Mahākāśyapa, on the left and a younger monk, Ānanda on the opposite side.
side. On the right side the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha is seated in lalitāsana with the right leg pendant on a lotus-pedestal and holding a khakkhara in his right hand. His head is damaged, but he appears to have been depicted with a hood covering his head. Opposite on the left side, Avalokiteśvara is depicted as a reverse image of Kṣitigarbha and is seated lalitāsana with his left leg pendant. He holds an alms bowl on his lap with his left hand. The right arm of the image is missing. Unlike Kṣitigarbha who has a small round halo and no aureole, Avalokiteśvara’s aureole is large and shaped like a lotus petal with a stylized flame motif. Outside the niche on the lower right corner is a damaged donor image. There are also traces of another donor figure on the opposite side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 41.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .60 x .30 x .05 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure, Avalokiteśvara(?)

Secondary image(s): none.

niche type: the niche has partially collapsed, type I.2.

Content Description: This small niche is part of a row of four severely damaged niches above niche number 36. This niche contains a single standing figure, which the NRZL identifies as Avalokiteśvara. Given the severely eroded condition of the image this identification cannot be confirmed. The hands of the figure are held together in front of the abdomen.

Cave/niche number: 42.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .81 x .60 x .12 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified, seated figure.
Secondary image(s): unidentified, two attendants.

Niche type: partially collapsed, type I.

Content description: This niche is part of a row of four small, severely damaged, east facing niches above niche number 36. The bottom part of this niche has collapsed. The niche contained a central figure seated on pedestal and two attendant figures.

Cave/niche number: 43.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .60 x .45 x .10 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: partially collapsed.

Content description: This niche contains a central seated figure, which is too severely damaged to identify.

Cave/niche number: 44.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .6 x .45 x .1 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha(?).

Secondary image(s): unidentified standing attendant figure.

Niche type: damaged, type IV.

Content description: This niche is located adjacent to niche 43 above niche number 36. The top and right side of this niche has collapsed. On the right side of the niche is a large fissure in the rock where the side of the niche has fallen off. The images in this niche are identified in the NRZL as a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The central Buddha is seated in dhyāna mudrā on an unusual simple square base. On the left is a standing attendant figure, with
long scarves, and the hands held together in front of the chest.

On the left side of the niche is a small rectangular area for an inscription, which is no longer legible. There are traces of an additional figure to the right of the fissure in the rock, which may be part of another niche that has collapsed.

_Cave/niche number:_ 45.

_NBZL title:_ Damaged image niche 残像龛.

_Dimensions:_ .96 x .78, x .20 meters.*

_Date:_ Five Dynasties.

_Inscription(s):_ none

_Primary image(s):_ bodhisattva pair, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha.

_Secondary image(s):_ none.

_Niche type:_ damaged, type I.2.A.

_Content description:_ This niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas, which are identified in the _NRZL_ as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. Both images are badly weathered. The two bodhisattvas stand on small lotus-bases and have pointed nimbi. They wear head adornments and long scarves that hang from their forearms. On the left the bodhisattva holds a disc with both hands in front of his chest. The other bodhisattva also holds his hands together in front of his chest. The object he held is no longer recognizable, but was most likely a disc to complement the other bodhisattva. Although badly worn the basic appearance of the two bodhisattvas is similar to niche twenty-four, which contains a pair of images of Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha dated to the qiande reign era (919-924) of the Former Shu.

_Cave/niche number:_ 46.

_NBZL title:_ Five worthies niche 五尊龛.

_Dimensions:_ 1 x .81 x .52 meters.

_Date:_ Five Dynasties.

_Inscription(s):_ none.

_Primary image(s):_ seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.
Secondary image(s): two seated bodhisattvas (Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha), and two monks.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.D.

Content description: This niche is identified in the NRZL by the generic title “Five Honored Ones.” It contains a group of five figures recognizable as a small teaching assembly of the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru. The central Buddha is seated in padmāsana on an lotus-pedestal with three layers of upturned lotus-petals and a circular base. The Buddha’s right hand rests on the right knee palm-down and the left hand is placed palm-up on the lap and holds an alms bowl. Behind the Buddha a large pointed aureole extends up to a canopy on the top of the interior of the niche above the Buddha. Behind the aureole on the right, the top of a khakkhara, an attribute associated with the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru, is depicted in low relief. The two bodhisattva attendants are depicted as mirror images seated in lalitāsana on lotus-pedestals with their pendant feet resting on lotus-flowers. The bodhisattva on the right is slightly better preserved and holds a lunar or solar disc on his lap with his left hand. The right arm is placed palm-down on the knee similar to the central Buddha. Between and behind the aureoles of the Buddha and the two bodhisattvas are two standing monks in añjali mudrā. On the center back wall of the niche tree foliage is depicted in low relief.

Cave/niche number: 47.
NRZL title: Image of the vidyārāja Acala 不动明王像.
Dimensions: .87 x .56 x .52 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties, possibly Northern Song.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified deity, possibly Āṭavaka(?).
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures and two devotee figures.
Niche type: type I.3.D.
Content description: The surfaces of the images in this niche have suffered erosion damage. The main image is placed on a ledge above the base of the niche and stands in a defiant attitude with a scowling face. His legs are planted firmly on the ground and the upper torso is twisted to the left side. A
bellowing scarf surrounds the head of the deity and adds to its intensity. The hands of the image are broken off at the wrist, but were held in front of the chest, probably in the namaskāra mudrā with the palms held together. The figure is depicted in military garb with a chain mail skirt and a sword that hangs from his belt. The armor and garments are similar to the main image of Vaiśravana in niche 3, and images of the twelve yakṣa generals of Bhaiṣajyaguru dating to the Five Dynasties period, which are depicted in several niches at the site. The hem of the figure’s robe, which hangs in a loop between the legs and flares out at the sides, is similar to that of the main image in niche 3. Directly above the figure is an eroded, circular canopy, which is carved in low relief.

On the sides of the niche are two small figures, which are barely discernible. The figure on left side is better preserved and appears to have a pointed beard and ears. In his right hand he wields a club. The object held in the left hand is not discernible, but may be a pāśa (lasso). Like the main image this smaller figure has a large flowing scarf behind his head and shoulders. Next to this image on the outer part of the niche is a stylized tree that extends up from the base of the niche. Opposite the tree on the right side of the niche are two small figures carved in low relief. One figure is slightly larger and is depicted like a monk in robes and wearing a hood. In his right hand he holds a staff and points toward the main image with his outstretched left hand. Next to this figure is a smaller female figure who stands in añjali mudrā. This figure appears to face and listen to the larger figure that looks like a monk. In the area below the main image is other imagery, which is eroded and no longer recognizable. Faintly discernible is an image of a standing figure, possibly a Buddha or monk.

Chinese scholars have identified the primary image of this niche as Acala (Budong 不动). Acala is one of the eight great vidyārājas (mingwang 明王), “brilliant light kings,” who are ferocious manifestations of the Buddha Vairocana. Other than the dynamic pose, there is no substantial evidence to indicate that this image represents Acala rather than some other protective deity, such as the cannibal yakṣa Āṭavaka or Āṭavika (Azhalibojju 阿吒利薄俱.
who lived under a banyan tree. The tree depicted on the left side of the niche could possibly refer to the story of Āvataka. However, this is only a very speculative identification and the figure could very well represent some other deity, even a variation of Vaiśravana or one of his sons.

Cave/niche number: 48.
NRZL title: Images of the three holy ones of the West 西方三圣像.
Dimensions: .99 x .75 x .23 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): Buddha, Amitābha (?).
Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta), two devotee figures, and two apsarasas.
Niche type: type I.3.D.
Content description: This niche features a seated Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The style of the figures in the niche with proportionally squat bodies and large heads are characteristic traits of Five Dynasties imagery at the site. The central Buddha, identified in the NRZL as Amitābha, is seated in pralambapādāsana on a rectangular sumeru platform. This posture and seat are usually associated with Maitreya, not Amitabha. The hands of the Buddha are damaged, but he appears to make a teaching gesture with his right hand and his left hand is placed on his lap. The attendant bodhisattvas are seated in pralambapādāsana on lotus-pedestals and hold lotuses, which may indicated that they are intended as Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Directly above the Buddha is a large canopy with two apsarasas off to the side. The apsarās on the left is still somewhat intact and is depicted kneeling on a cloud similar to the apsarās figures in niche 53, which is dated 915.

Directly below the Buddha is a small altar with with an incense burner placed on top of it. On each side of the alter is a kneeling devotee figure with a round halo and holding an offering bowl. In the front bottom corners of the niche are two stylized lions. Similar depictions of lions do not occur on other niches at the site, but are found on Tang imagery at other local sites such as 655.
niches 3 and 5 at Jianzishan, Dazu.

*Cave/niche number: 49.

*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions: approximately 1.01 x .50 x .15 meters.*

*Date: Five Dynasties.

*Inscription: none.

*Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara (?).

*Secondary image(s): none.

*Niche type: damaged, type I.

*Content description: This badly eroded niche features a single standing figure. Only the rudimentary shape of the figure remains. Scarfs on the sides of the figure and the shape of the head suggests that it depicts a bodhisattva. The NRZL identifies the figure as Avalokiteśvara, but the image is too damaged to confirm that identification.

*Cave/niche number: 50.

*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions: .88 x .55 x .20 meters.*

*Date: 897, Five Dynasties.

*Inscription: one, see Appendix B, 1.12; MWL 12-13 number 5.

*Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Cintāmanicakra Avalokiteśvara.

*Secondary image(s): none.

*Niche type: damaged, type II.2

*Content description: This niche is severely eroded and the left side has collapsed. The niche contains a single image seated in rājalilāsana, which is identified in a donor inscription as the bodhisattva Cintāmanicakra. Although severely weathered the characteristic pose of this form of Avalokiteśvara is readily recognizable. The image appears have had six arms but only four of the six arms are still partially intact. The lower right hand is held in front of the chest and holds an eroded cintāmani and the lower left hand is placed in front of the left knee and holds holds a string of prayer beads. The bodhisattva's upper right arm is bent at the elbow and supports
the head and the upper left arm is held stiffly to the side as if supporting the upper torso. Behind the image are traces of a teardrop-shaped aureole and directly above the image is a canopy. The base that the figure is seated on is weathered but appears to be depicted as a layered rock. A donor inscription dated 897 and located on the outer right side the niche gives the names of three monks.

*Cave/niche number:* 51.

*NRZL title:* Buddhas of the three realms niche 三世佛龛.

*Dimensions:* 1.55 x 1.98 x 1.34 meters.

*Date:* 899, Late Tang.

*Inscription:* one, see Appendix B, 1.13; MWL 14-15 number 8.

*Primary image(s):* three seated Buddhas, Śākyamuni, Maitreya, and Kāśyapa(?).

*Secondary image(s):* Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Ānanda, Mahākāśyapa, the protectors of the eight quarters, the Buddhas of the ten directions, and two dvarapāla figures.

*Niche type:* damaged, type III.3

*Content description:* The NRZL provides only an abbreviated summary of the contents of this niche. The primary images are identified as the Buddhas of the three realms (Sanshi fo 三世佛). Śākyamuni, the Buddha of the present is depicted in the center, Maitreya, the Buddha of the future is depicted on the left, and Kāśyapa, the Buddha of the past is depicted on the right. The central Buddha is seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus-pedestal with an octagonal base. His right hand is placed on his knee palm-down (*bhūmisparśa mudrā*) and the left hand holds an alms bowl on the lap. The Buddha on the right side identified as Kāśyapa is seated in *dhyāna mudrā* on a two-layered lotus-pedestal with a round base. Opposite Kāśyapa, the Buddha Maitreya is seated on a *sumeru* platform in *pralambapādāsana*, with the left arm placed palm-down on the left knee and the right hand is broken but appears to have made a teaching gesture (*abhaya mudrā*). Between the three Buddhas are
two standing monks. On the right the younger Ānanda is depicted in aṅjali mudrā while the older looking Mahākāśyapa holds a seal with his left hand.

Carved in high relief on the back wall behind the Buddhas are twelve figures, six on each side, seated in padmāsana on clouds. Except for two figures, all these figures are depicted either in dhyāna mudrā or with the hands held together in front of the chest as if in aṅjali mudrā. The outermost figures hold large, round discs on their laps. As a group these figures are probably intended to represent the Buddhas of the ten directions. The two additional figures that hold orbs may be intended as bodhisattvas. Also on the back wall directly above the central Buddha are two apsarasas who hold offering bowls.

The lateral walls of the niche have three rows of figures. On the bottom rows are two sets of standing figures, representing the Tianlong babu (Protectors of the Eight Quarters) and above them a bodhisattva in a cloud. On the top of the right (north) side wall the bodhisattva Samantabhadra is depicted seated on his elephant mount and is attended by two bodhisattvas, a groom, and a small figure in aṅjali mudrā representing Sudhana. Below Samantabhadra are two rows of figures. In the back upper row are three figures and below them is a single figure. The figures in the upper two rows are all in aṅjali mudrā and not very distinctive except for the outer figure who has two top knots and a sort of animal figure behind his head. The lower figure represents the Lord of the Nāgas and is depicted wearing armor. Behind him is a cloud pattern and a dragon.

The same arrangement occurs on the opposite lateral wall of the niche. On the top of the wall is a cloud that contains an image of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī seated on a lion and attended by two bodhisattvas, a groom, and a small image of Sudhana. Below, the upper back row contains three figures. The outer figure is a bearded male who holds an offering bowl, and the other two figures are depicted in aṅjali mudrā and appear to be females. Below them is a six-armed figure depicting the Lord of the Asuras.

On the top of the niche directly above the central Buddha is a round lotus-canopy in low relief. Also depicted on the top of the niche in low relief are twelve musical instruments, six on each side of the central canopy.
On the exterior of the niche is a dynamically posed *dvarapāla* type figure on each side of the niche. Both figures are damaged. The right figure is muscular and clad only in a *dhoti*. He stands in a dynamic pose on a cloud, with his right arm raised as if ready to strike an opponent. The opposite figure on the left stands on a rocky mound and is dressed in a martial costume and appears to lean on a sword.

*Cave/niche number*: 52.

*NRZL title*: Amitābha Buddha niche 阿弥陀佛龛.

*Dimensions*: .98 x .69 x .32 meters.

*Date*: 897, Late Tang.

*Inscription*: one, see Appendix B, 1.14; *MWL* 14, number 6.

*Primary image(s)*: seated Buddha, Amitābha.

*Secondary image(s)*: Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

*Niche type*: damaged, type I.2.D

*Content description*: An inscription identifies the triad of figures in this niche as the Buddha Amitābha and the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. Amitābha is depicted seated in *padmāsana* on a large lotus-pedestal with two rows of upturned lotus-petals and a circular base on top of another set of lotus-petals. His hands are broken off but were held up in front of the chest. The Buddha wears a robe that covers both shoulders. The folds in the Buddha’s robe are depicted with simple parallel grooves and form a repeating U-shaped pattern. The hairstyle of the Buddha is done in a swirling pattern similar to the image of Tejaprabha in niche 39 (dated 922). Behind the Buddha is a lotus-petal shaped aureole with a inner round halo and an outer border etched with stylized flames. Directly above the Buddha is a splendid jeweled canopy decorated with strings of pearls and jewels. To the sides of the canopy are two slender elongated *apsarasas* who face inward and hold offering trays. The *apsarasas* are depicted in clouds with cloud-trails that extend to the top exterior of the niche. The Buddha is attended by two standing bodhisattvas. On the right the bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara holds a
vase with the left hand and a willow branch with his right hand. Opposite, Kṣitigarbha is depicted as a monk with a shaven-head and holds a large cintāmaṇi with both hands.

*Cave/niche number*: 53.

*NRZL title*: Amitābha Buddha niche 阿弥陀佛龛.

*Dimensions*: 1.24 x 1.03 x .55 meters.

*Date*: 915, Five Dynasties, Former Shu period.

*Inscription*: one, see Appendix B, 1.15; MWL 17, number 18.

*Primary image(s)*: seated Buddha, Amitābha.

*Secondary image(s)*: Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

*Niche type*: damaged, type I.2.D.

*Content description*: A donor inscription in this niche identifies the three primary images as Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The layout and imagery of the niche appears to be modeled after niche 52 located next to it, which was carved eighteen years earlier. This niche is slightly more skillfully carved and more refined than its earlier counterpart. Amitābha is depicted seated in padmāsana on a large, lotus-pedestal, with two rows of upturned lotus-petals on top of an ornately carved octagonal base. The Buddha's hands are in dharmacakra mudrā with the thumb and forefingers touching. A lotus-petal shaped flaming aureole appears behind the Buddha similar to one depicted in niche 52. The tongues of the flames are depicted in stylized curling U-shaped patterns with the bottom of the curls deeply gouged. Directly above the Buddha is a flat circular lotus-canopy and below it on the back of the niche are two apsarasas depicted kneeling on clouds. The apsarasas on the right holds a banner and the opposite apsarās holds an offering tray and a lotus bud. The cloud-trails of the clouds that contain the two apsarasas extend to the top exterior of the niche and cross over in the center of the lintel.

The attendant bodhisattvas match those in niche 52. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right and Kṣitigarbha who appears as a monk, is depicted
on the left. Both bodhisattvas stand barefoot on lotus-bases with two rows of upturned lotus pedals. Avalokiteśvara is made distinct from the more austere looking Kṣitigarbha, with an ornate crown and other adornments.

*Cave/ niche number:* 54.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像.

*Dimensions:* 1.06 x .15 x .12 meters.*

*Date:* 896, Late Tang.

*Inscription:* one, see Appendix B, 1.6; MWL, 16 number 14.

*Primary image(s):* standing bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha(?).

*Secondary image(s):* none.

*Content description:* The NRZL identifies this figure as a separate image, but it was probably intended as part of niche 58. The figure stands on a lotus-base and is somewhat columnar and appears to have held an orb or jewel. The image lacks a nimbus but wears monastic type robes without princely adornments suggesting that it may represent Kṣitigarbha. The MWL identifies this figure as Avalokiteśvara, but without explanation.¹⁶ I believe that this image was intended to be part of niche 58, which contains a pair of images depicting Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. On the north exterior side of niche 58 is a trailing cloud pattern extending from behind the figure labeled niche 54 indicating that the figure was intended as part of niche 58. There are also traces of a counterpart to this figure on the opposite side of niche 58.

*Cave/ niche number:* 55.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龺.

*Dimensions:* approximately .32 meters high.*

*Date:* Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* unidentified seated figure.

*Secondary image(s):* unidentified attendant figure.

*Niche type:* damaged.

*Content description:* This niche is located on a small protrusion on a corner of

¹⁶ MWL, 16.
the cliff next to niche 51. The niche is difficult to see from ground level and has partially collapsed. The primary image is a figure seated on a pedestal. Standing next to the primary image on the right side is a small attendant figure.

Cave/niche number: 56.

NRZL title: Image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara 不空绢索观音像.

Dimensions: .72 x .56 x .17 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): Acala.

Secondary image(s): Two attendant figures, Kinkara and Ceṭaka, and a small seated figure on cloud.

Niche type: type II.2.A.

Content description: The main image of this niche is identified in the NRZL as Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. However, the appearance of this image does not conform to other images of Amoghapāśa at the site which are shown as more benign figures with multiple limbs. Instead the appearance of this image suggests that it represents the vidyārāja Acala who like Amoghapāśa also carries a looped chord (pāśa) as one of his primary attributes. Acala is a wrathful manifestation of the Buddha Vairocana and an important esoteric deity associated with rites of purification. He is typically depicted in a manner similar to the way he is shown here seated in the posture of royal ease (lalitāsana) on a platform that has been carved to suggest a rocky crag. The right hand is held out above the right thigh and holds the hilt of a sword, while the left hand is held out above the bent left knee and holds a pāśa. As described in textual sources Acala is depicted as a somewhat bulky figure with broad shoulders. He wears a robe slung over his left shoulder and his body is decorated with a large necklace, earrings, and arm bracelets. The face of the image is somewhat eroded, but the scowling grimace and glaring large, round eyes are still readily discernible. On his head he wears a crown similar to a military helmet with a pointed spike on top and fluttering ribbons that hang from each side. Directly behind the head is a plain, round halo that is
enclosed in a larger flaming aureole. This aureole is distinctive from most others at the site where the flames are confined to an outer band. There is a small figure seated on a cloud that rises from the left side of the flaming aureole behind Acala. This figure carved in low relief appears to be seated in *padmāsana* with his hands held together in front of the chest. The figure is somewhat weathered but is recognizable as a Buddha or bodhisattva with a round body aureole and lotus-leaf shaded halo. The depicted gesture made by the figure appears be the *vajra* or knowledge fist *mudrā* with the right hand enclosing the erect left forefinger. This *mudrā* is specifically associated with Mahāvairocana the spiritual source of Acala in the Vairocana cycle tantras.

The identification of the main image as Acala is also further confirmed by the presence of the two small standing attendant figures on each side of the main image. These two figures can be identified as the two messenger boys or acolytes of Acala named Cețaka (Zhiduojia tongzi 制多罗) and Kinkara (Jinjieluо 矈羯罗). Both appear as child-like figures with large, round heads and wearing knee length skirts. The figure on the right appears to hold a *vajra*, which is an attribute typically held by the acolyte Cețaka. Opposite the other figure representing Kinkara is more badly damaged and appears to hold an object horizontally in front of his chest.

The location, typology, and style of the niche suggest that it dates to the Five Dynasties period or possibly the Late Tang.

_Cave/niche number: 57._

NRZL title: Amitābha Buddha niche 阿弥陀佛龛.

*Dimensions:* .86 x .85 x .45 meters.
*Date:* Five Dynasties.
*Inscription:* none.
*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, Amitābha.
*Secondary image(s):* Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
*Niche type:* damaged, type I.2.D.
*Content description:* This niche features a triad of Amitābha attended by two bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara on the left and Kṣitigarbha on the right.
Amitābha is seated on a large lotus-pedestal with three rows of upturned lotuses. In front of the base of the Buddha’s lotus-pedestal are two winged *kinnara* figures with human torsos attached to bird bodies who hold offering trays. Amitābha is depicted in *dhyāna mudrā* with the tips of the thumbs and index fingers touching and he wears a robe that covers both shoulders in a style similar to niche 53 dated 915. His hair is represented in a wavy, turban-like style similar to the Amitābha image in niche 52 and the Buddha in niche 39. Two attendant bodhisattvas stand to the side of Amitābha. On his right Kṣitigarbha is depicted as a monk and holds a *cintāmaṇi*. Opposite, Avalokiteśvara holds a bowl and a willow branch(?). Both bodhisattvas have pointed halos with stylized flame motifs.

The exterior decoration of the niche with a curtain is seen only on a few other niches at the site all of which appear to date to the Five Dynasties period. Other stylistic traits such as the proportions of the figures, round aureole suggest a Five Dynasties date for the niche.

*Cave/niche number*: 58.

*NRZL title*: Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha images, 观音地藏像.

*Dimensions*: 1.34 x 1.24 x .45 meters.

*Date*: 896, Late Tang.

*Inscription*: two, see Appendix B, 1.17-18; MWL, 12 numbers 3.2 and 3.2.

*Primary image(s)*: seated bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

*Secondary image(s)*: two standing attendant bodhisattvas.

*Niche type*: type I.2.E.

*Content description*: This niche contains a pair of bodhisattvas seated in *padmāsana* on lotus-pedestals, which are identified in a donor inscription as Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. Both bodhisattvas are depicted wearing almost identical robes that cover both shoulders. Above the bodhisattvas are elaborate jeweled canopies. The bodhisattva seated on the right can be identified as Avalokiteśvara by the crown on its head and slightly more elaborate ornamentation. The head of the opposite bodhisattva representing Kṣitigarbha is missing. In the background between the aureoles of the two bodhisattvas is a small female figure depicted in *añjali mudrā* kneeling on a
cloud. This figure is believed to represent the recipient of the merit for the offering of the niche, who is identified in the two donor inscriptions. On each side of the central bodhisattva pair is a standing attendant bodhisattva who holds an offering tray. The two attendant bodhisattvas stand on lotus-bases and behind them long cloud-trails rise up to the top of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 59.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** not measured.

**Date:** Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription:** none.

**Primary image(s):** three seated figures, unidentified.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** eroded, type II.4.

**Content description:** This small, badly weathered niche is located near the top of the cliff face. The niche contains the rudimentary forms of three eroded figures, which the NRZL refers to as “three seated honored ones.” Compared to the size of the niche the figures seem to be diminutive in scale. Little can be noted about the figures except that they are all about the same size and seated on pedestals.

**Cave/niche number:** 60.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .78 x .68 x .24 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription:** none.

**Primary image(s):** Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** two standing attendant/donor figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.

**Content description:** This niche features a severely damaged seated image of the Thousand-armed form of Avalokiteśvara. The image of the bodhisattva fills the niche with a large, circular aureole formed by its radiating arms.
Avalokiteśvara is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform. All of his primary hands, except for a pair in front of his chest in añjali mudrā, are damaged or broken off. In the front of the niche are two standing figures, probably donor images, which are too damaged to be identified.

*Cave/niche number: 61.*

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .76 x .17 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription:** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated Buddha, unidentified.

**Secondary image(s):** two unidentified attendant figures, two monks, and two donor figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.

**Content description:** This small niche is located at the base of the cliff and features three figures seated on pedestals. The NRZL identifies these figures as the Buddhas of the three realms. However, the figures are too substantially damaged to confirm this identification and their general appearance doesn’t conform to typical depictions of the Buddhas of the realms. The central figure appears to represent a Buddha and is depicted seated in padmāsana on lotus-pedestal with his hands forming dhyāna mudrā. Flanking the central Buddha are two figures seated in padmāsana on sumeru type pedestals. The figure on the right side is turned slightly inward and holding what appears to be a scroll that lies across his lap. His posture is unusual for a Buddha or bodhisattva and appears more like that of a monastic or someone engaged in a conversation or debate. The head of the figure is missing but he appears to have a pointed beard. The opposite figure is more badly damaged but the head of this figure appears to have been turned inward toward the other figure. Behind this figure a faint trace of an aureole and halo are visible. Between the Buddha and the two attendant figures on the back wall of the niche, two standing monks are carved in high

*NRZL, 378.*
relief. Both monks are depicted in añjali mudrā and undoubtedly represent the Buddha's disciples Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa. On the front sides of the interior of the niche are two small, damaged, donor images.

*Cave/niche number: 62.*
*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.*
*Dimensions: not measured.*
*Date: Five Dynasties period.*
*Inscription: none.*
*Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, unidentified.*
*Secondary image(s): none.*
*Niche type: damaged, type I.*
*Content description: This niche is located near the top of the cliff face next to niche 59. The niche contains two seated figures, which are unidentified in the NRZL. The figures are both severely damaged. Based on their postures they appear to represent two bodhisattvas. Both have round halos and appear to be seated in lalitāsana.*

*Cave/niche number: 63.*
*NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.*
*Dimensions: .63 x .43 x .13 meters.*
*Date: Five Dynasties period.*
*Inscription: none.*
*Primary image(s): bodhisattva, unidentified.*
*Secondary image(s): none.*
*Niche type: damaged, type I.*
*Content description: This niche contains a single, severely damaged, figure seated on a sumeru platform. The NRZL identifies this image as a Buddha seated with pendant legs. However, the appearance of the figure in its damaged condition is recognizable as a bodhisattva not a Buddha. The outline of the head indicates that the image was depicted wearing a*
bodhisattva style crown. Although it is too damaged to tell for certain, the figure may have been depicted in *lalitāsana* with the right leg pendant not in *pralambapādāsana*.

*Cave/niche number* 64.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* .55 x .38 x .15 meters.*

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated figure, unidentified.

*Secondary image(s):* none.

*Niche type:* damaged.

*Content description:* This niche contains the rudimentary form of a seated figure that is too damaged to identify. The figure is located on the right side of the niche and appears to be facing toward the left.

*Cave/niche number* 65.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* .66 x .53 x .17 meters.*

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, Maitreya(?).

*Secondary image(s):* two unidentified attendant figures, three donor figures.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.

*Content description:* This niche is located at the base of the cliff and contains a Buddha seated in *pralambapādāsana* on a *sumeru*-type platform with his pendant feet resting on lotuses. The Buddha is not identified in the *NRZL*, but the seated posture of the Buddha suggests that it represents the future Buddha Maitreya. The figure’s hands are damaged but appear to form *abhaya mudrā* with the right hand and the left hand, which is placed on the lap, palm-down, holds a scarf or ribbon that is draped between both hands. The Buddha is flanked by two attendants standing on raised bases. On the right side the
figure is a female that wears a high crown. The opposite figure is a male and appears to have a beard. In the front corners of the niche are three small donor figures. On the right side is a female figure with a small boy. The opposite figure is a male and is slightly larger than the female figure.

*Cave/niche number:* 66.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* not measured.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* two unidentified seated figures.

*Secondary image(s):* one unidentified attendant figure.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.

*Content description:* This small, badly eroded, niche is located near the top of the cliff. The niche features two seated figures with a third standing figure located on the exterior right side of the niche. Only the basic shape of the figures remain.

*Cave/niche number:* 67.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* .83 x .78 x .25 meters.*

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara(?).

*Secondary image(s):* three donor figures.

*Niche type:* damaged.

*Content description:* This niche features a bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana on a rocky platform and three donor figures. The head of the central figure is missing and the figure is not identified in the *NRZL*. The posture of the figure and its base suggests that it represents Potalaka Avalokiteśvara; however, the figure is somewhat stocky and lacks adornments. The bodhisattva’s right hand holds an object (broken, but possibly a willow branch) and the left hand
(damaged) is placed on the left leg. The figure appears to turn toward the left almost as if gazing down at a small child in front of a bearded male donor figure on the left side of the niche. On the right side of the niche is a female donor figure with her hands clasped in front of her chest.

*Cave/niche number:* 68.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* not measured.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, unidentified.

*Secondary image(s):* one unidentified attendant figure.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.

*Content description:* This niche is located near the top of the cliff in a group of seven niches arranged in two rows. The top row of three niches (numbers 68, 77, and 78) are badly eroded and difficult to see from ground level. All three niches are the same size and contain a central seated figure with two standing attendant figures, which possibly represent a triad of a central Buddha with two attendant bodhisattvas. The images in these niches are all damaged by erosion. In this niche the central figure is seated on a round lotus-pedestal and has a large, round aureole. The two attendant figures have round halos.

*Cave/niche number:* 69.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* not measured.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription:* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, unidentified.

*Secondary image(s):* none.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.
Content description: This niche is located near the top of the cliff in a group seven of niches arranged in two rows. The image in this niche is too badly damaged to identify. The remaining shape of the figure suggests that it represented a seated bodhisattva.

Cave/niche number: 70.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x 1.27 x .7 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): ten to twelve monks/bodhisattva figures, and Sudhana(?).

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche contains a central image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and a group of figures on the outer left side of the niche, which appear somewhat disconnected from the central image. Avalokiteśvara is depicted in his Potalaka form seated in rājalilāsana on a rocky pedestal with his right leg pendant. The bodhisattva has a large, round aureole characteristic of depictions of the Potalaka or Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara. On the left side of the niche are a group of ten or twelve standing figures arranged three rows. The figures are carved in low relief and are placed at the back of a small ledge, which is raised above the base of the main part of the niche. There appear to be ten or twelve figures, but the right side of this group of figures has collapsed where several more figures could have been located. All the figures appear to have round halos and most look like monks. The central figure in the second row has six arms with two hands held in aṅjali mudrā, two arms raised above the head, and two arms held out to the sides. This figure could be intended to represent an esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara such as Amoghapāśa or an asura. None of the other figures are multi-limbed and most look like monks. This group does not appear like a standard grouping of attendants, but looks more like a group of monks and bodhisattvas discussing the dharma. Possibly this group is intended to
depict Sudhana’s visit to Potalaka that is described in the Gandhavyūha sūtra. In that sūtra Avalokiteśvara is described as being seated on a vajra boulder surrounded by enlightened beings discussing the dharma. Sudhana may be depicted as a small figure on the far right side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 71.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated bodhisattva pair.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This small niche is located adjacent to niche 68 on the upper portion of the cliff face. The niche is badly eroded and contains two bodhisattvas seated on round pedestals.

Cave/niche number: 72.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated bodhisattva pair.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This small niche is located adjacent to niche 70 on the upper portion of the cliff face. The niche features two damaged images of bodhisattvas seated on round pedestals similar to the pair of bodhisattvas depicted next to it in niche 71. Both bodhisattvas appear to be seated in lalitāsana. The bodhisattva on the right holds a lotus and has an aureole with a flame motif. The other bodhisattva is more badly damaged and has a simple round halo and aureole.

On this textual reference see section 4.5 of chapter 4 of this study.
Cave/niche number: 73.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .93 x 1.72 x .38 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): Amitābha Buddha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha), eight donor figures, and one apsarā.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche may have been created as a pair with niche 70 or possibly a triad with the left portion of niche number 70 representing a separate niche. Although damaged the central triad of this niche is readily identifiable as Amitābha with the bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, which occur in a great number of niches on this end of the site. The Buddha image is damaged and the head is missing. He appears to be seated in dhyāna mudrā on a large lotus-pedestal with two rows of upturned lotus-petals and an octagonal base. Directly above the Buddha is a badly weathered canopy with a damaged apsarās figure on the right side. Standing on the right of Amitābha is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who holds a water-bottle in the left hand. Opposite Kṣitigarbha is dressed as a monk and holds a cintāmaṇi in his left hand. Both bodhisattvas stand on a lotus-bases.

Outside the central part of the niche are two rows of donor figures with four on each side. The figures on the right side of the niche are better preserved. These four figures are all females and are depicted in añjali mudrā. Opposite on the left side of the niche is a complementary set of male donor figures. The inner most figure on this side is the best preserved. He wears the garments of an official with a belt and a hat with horizontal side bars.

Cave/niche number: 74.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: not measured.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

673
Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas and two monks.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: This small niche is located near the top of the cliff next to niche 72. The niche contains a badly damaged Buddha assembly with a central seated Buddha, two bodhisattvas, and two monks. The Buddha is seated on a lotus-pedestal and has a large aureole. His right hand is in bhūmisparsā mudrā and the left hand holds a bowl on his lap. The attendant figures are depicted standing.

Cave/niche number: 75.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x .50 x .22 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): Bhaiṣajyaguru (?) or Kṣītigarbha (?)

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: type I.1.A.

Content description: This niche contains a single figure standing barefoot on a lotus-base. The image is almost completely destroyed except for the feet and hem of the figure’s robe. The NRZL identifies the figure as a bodhisattva. Above the figure’s right shoulder is a faint trace of a khakkhara, which was held against the figure’s right shoulder. This attribute is commonly held by both the bodhisattva Kṣītigarbha and the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru. The stiff formal pose of the figure indicated by the outline of the figure suggests that it represents the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru.

Cave/niche number: 76.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x .50 x .22 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva pair.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type I.1.A.
Content description: This niche features two severely damaged standing figures which are identifiable as a pair of bodhisattvas, but are too damaged to be specifically identified. The only intact portion of the figures are a small portion of the hems of their robes, which do not appear to be the same. The outline of the figure on the right is slightly leaner and taller than the other figure. These appearances suggests that the figures were not carved as duplicate or mirror images. This makes the pairing of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha as a candidate for the identification of the figures. Given the condition of the figures such an identification can only be speculative.

Cave/niche number: 77.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.
Secondary image(s): two unidentified bodhisattvas.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small damaged niche is located at the top of the cliff between niches 68 and 78. All three niches are the same size and contain a central seated figure with two standing attendants, which likely represent a triad of a central Buddha with two attendant bodhisattvas. In this niche the central figure is seated on a round lotus-pedestal and has a large, round aureole. The attendant bodhisattva on the right holds an object on his right side, which may be a monk’s staff.
Cave/niche number:  78.
NRZL title:  Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions:  not measured.
Date:  Five Dynasties period.
Inscription:  none.
Primary image(s):  unidentified seated Buddha.
Secondary image(s):  two unidentified bodhisattvas.
Niche type:  damaged.
Content description:  This small niche is located at the top of the cliff in a row of three niches, which each contain a triad of a central Buddha with two attendant bodhisattvas. In this niche the central figure is seated on a round lotus-pedestal. The two attendant bodhisattva have round halos. On the right side the bodhisattva appears to hold a monk’s staff, which may indicate that it represents Kṣitigarbha.

Cave/niche number:  79.
NRZL title:  Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions:  1.01 x .96 x .3 meters.*
Date:  Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription:  none.
Primary image(s):  unidentified bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha (?).
Secondary image(s):  four or more donor figures.
Niche type:  type I.3
Content description:  This niche contains two seated bodhisattvas on round lotus(?) pedestals. Both bodhisattvas are in a poor state of preservation. They appear to both be seated in pralambapādāsana. The bodhisattva on the left has a crown and appears more ornately depicted than the opposite figure. Possibly the pair could have been intended to represent Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
On the exterior sides of the niche are a pair of small donor figures on each side, which are faintly visible. Also directly in front and below the niche are a series of eroded striations which could be indications of a row of figures.

Cave/niche number: 80.
NRZL title: Empty niche, 空龛.
Dimensions: .81 x .58 x .27 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): none.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This appears to be an unfinished niche that was blocked out, but never carved.

Cave/niche number: 81.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .83 x .68 x .17 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche contains a single seated figure that is severely eroded. The figure appears to have been seated with the left leg pendant in lalitāsana or rājīlāsana. The shape of the figure suggests that it represented a bodhisattva.

Cave/niche number: 82.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .71 x .58 x .15 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

677
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: This niche features a pair of bodhisattvas, which can be identified as Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. Both bodhisattvas stand on small lotus-bases and have faintly visible round halos. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right and Kṣitigarbha on the left. The head of the bodhisattva on the right is missing, but the remaining outline of the head indicates that the figure was depicted wearing a headdress. The arms are also both damaged but the right hand appears to hold the stem of a lotus and the left hand held a water-bottle. On the left, the image of Kṣitigarbha is more intact. He is depicted with a hood covering his head and wearing unadorned monastic robes without the scarves which are depicted on the Avalokiteśvara image. His right hand holds a khakkhara and his left hand is held up to his chest possibly holding an object which is too worn to identify.

Cave/niche number: 83.
NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche, 观音龛.
Dimensions: 1.89 x 1.38 x .60 meters.
Date: Northern Song Dynasty.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): two standing attendant figures, and two apsarasas.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche contains a large seated image of Avalokiteśvara flanked by two standing attendants. Avalokiteśvara is seated in pralambapādāsana on a square plinth-style dais that is carved to simulate a rocky mound. The image is stiffly posed with the arms held tight to the sides with the right hand holding the stem of a lotus. Only the lower portion of the figure below the knees is still fully intact. The garment folds are depicted with repeating parallel gouge lines. Avalokiteśvara’s feet rest on two lotuses above an elaborately carved low relief design on the bottom of the
The head of Avalokiteśvara is severely eroded, but the shape indicates that a scarf was draped over the bodhisattva’s high headdress. Flanking Avalokiteśvara are two attendant figures who stand on lotuses, which are raised on a sort of stylized rocky ground similar to the plinth that the main image is seated on. Both figures are badly eroded but appear to be depicted in an añjali mudrā. The one on the right is better preserved and appears to represent a slender bodhisattva with a slightly bent posture. Like the main image this figure’s garments are not depicted in a dynamic manner but with gouge lines. The opposite attendant figure is slightly shorter and appears to be more heavy set with an extended stomach. In the top upper corners of the niche are two apsarasas figures carved in low relief.

The NRZL identifies this niche as dating to the Song Dynasty, however, the niche type, apsarasas, and manner of depicting the garments suggests that it dates to the Five Dynasties period. An adjacent niche, number 84, can be dated to the Song based on stylistic features. Both niches have elements not characteristic of the fully developed Song style at the site and may reflect a transitional type from the Northern Song.

Cave/niche number: 84.
NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche 观音龛.
Dimensions: 1.85 x .76 x .35 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): three donor figures, and two apsarasas.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche contains a relatively large standing image of Avalokiteśvara. The body type is somewhat elongated and the figure is statically posed with stiff garments. The lower portion of the figure, which is better preserved, has an intricate pattern of adornments below the knees. Scarves that hang from the bodhisattva’s arms are decorated with a raised relief design and the bodhisattva’s crown is decorated with an open filial lotus-cloud pattern. The face of the bodhisattva is worn but has a narrower
appearance like other Song imagery at the site. On the lower right side of the niche two small female donor figures are depicted in añjali mudrā. On the upper sides of the niche are traces of two apsarās figures that have been eroded. There is also traces of another eroded donor figure on the left side of the niche.

The appearance of the bodhisattva suggests a Song date because of the body type and manner of the depiction of the bodhisattva’s costume. The more elaborate decoration of the adornments on the figure’s lower body as well as those on the scarfs are characteristic features of Song imagery. The rather static appearing garments may suggest a date to the Northern Song period.

*Cave/niche number: 85.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.  
*Dimensions: .76 x .63 x .15 meters.*  
*Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.  
Inscription: none.  
Primary image(s): Kṣitigarbha.  
Secondary image(s): none.  
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.
Content description: This niche features a single seated image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha, which is severely eroded. This image can be identified as Kṣitigarbha by the khakkhara he holds on his right side and the hood covering his head.

*Cave/niche number: 86.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.  
*Dimensions: .76 x .76 meters.*  
*Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.  
Inscription: none.  
Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva pair.  
Secondary image(s): none.  
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This niche contains a pair of standing bodhisattvas, which are severely eroded. Only the rudimentary shapes of the figures remain.

Cave/niche number: 87.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x .76 x .17 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva pair.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: This shallow niche contains a pair of seated bodhisattvas. Both figures are severely damaged. The bodhisattva on the right is slightly more intact and is seated in lalitásana.

Cave/niche number: 88.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x .60 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.

Secondary image(s): three attendant/donor figures.

Niche type: damaged, type II.2.

Content description: This small shallow niche contains a badly eroded, seated figure. Only the rudimentary shape of the figure remains. On the right side of the niche are outlines of three or more attendant/donor figures, which are almost completely eroded.

Cave/niche number: 89.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .68 x .55 x .15 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

681
Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.

Secondary image(s): one donor figure.

Niche type: damaged, type II.2.

Content description: This niche contains a single seated figure that is too badly damaged to identify. On the exterior right side of the niche a small donor figure is faintly visible.

Cave/niche number: 90.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .88 x .55 x .15 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated bodhisattva.

Secondary image(s): one donor figure.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: This niche contains a bodhisattva, which is too badly damaged to identify. The figure is seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform with the right hand on the right knee and the left arm curled up toward the chest. On the exterior left side of the niche is a small donor figure.

Cave/niche number: 91.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .76 x .68 x .15 meters.*

Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.

Inscription: none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: The upper portion of this niche has collapsed and the image it contains is damaged by erosion. The niche features an image of a bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru style platform. Although the
image is severely eroded it can be identified as Kṣitigarbha by the remnants of a *khakkhara* held by the bodhisattva on the right shoulder and a hood that covered the bodhisattva’s head.

*Cave/niche number:* 92.
*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.
*Dimensions:* .66 x .50 x .12 meters.*
*Date:* Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
*Inscription:* none.
*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.
*Secondary image(s):* none.
*Niche type:* type I.2.
*Content description:* This niche contains an image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara seated in *pralambapādāsana* on a *sumeru* style rectangular platform. The left hand holds the stem of a large lotus and the right hand is placed on top the lap. A tall headdress is depicted on the bodhisattva’s head. The image has suffered some erosion damage and part of the head has flaked off the image.

*Cave/niche number:* 93.
*NRZL title:* Empty niche 空龛.
*Dimensions:* .67 x .58 x .22 meters.*
*Date:* Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
*Inscription:* none.
*Primary image(s):* none.
*Secondary image(s):* none.
*Niche type:* type V.
*Content description:* This niche contains no imagery.

*Cave/niche number:* 94.
*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.
*Dimensions:* .55 x .50 x .10 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.2.
Content description: This niche contains a badly eroded image of a seated figure. The image is almost completely eroded.

Cave/niche number: 95.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .55 x .50 x .10 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This shallow niche contains a badly eroded image of a standing figure with a round head aureole. The image is almost completely eroded.

Cave/niche number: 96.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .55 x .39 x .07 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.
Secondary image(s): one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This niche contains a badly eroded standing figure, which appears to hold a khakkhara against the right shoulder. The image is
too damaged to identify but likely represents the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha or the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru. A small donor figure is depicted on the exterior right side of the niche.

*Cave/niche number: 97.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .63 x .55 x .17 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated bodhisattva.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type I.2.
Content description: This niche is located just outside the enclosed area of the cliff and contains a single damaged image of a bodhisattva seated in lalitāsana on a rectangular sumeru platform. The head is missing and the image is too damaged to identify.

*Cave/niche number: 98.
NRZL title: Empty niche 空龛.
Dimensions: .83 x .75 x .07 meters.*
Date: Late Tang or Five Dynasties period.
Inscription: none.
Primary image(s): none.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: rectangular, type III.1.
Content description: This niche is located outside the enclosed portion of the cliff. The niche is shallow and rectangular and looks like it may have been intended for an inscription.

*Cave/niche number: 99.
NRZL title: Reliquary stūpa 舍利宝塔.
Dimensions: 1.33 x 1.22 x .56 meters.
Date:  Ming or Qing Dynasty.
Inscription:  none.
Primary image(s):  votive caitya.
Secondary image(s):  none.
Niche type:  type I.2.C.

Content description:  This niche is one of a pair of niches located between the two main sections of the site by steps leading to administrative offices above the site. Both niches contain high relief images of one storied votive stūpas with curved roofs. The shape of the stūpas suggest that they may date to the later dynastic periods. The stūpa in this niche is wider and less decorated than the one next to it in niche 100.

Cave/niche number:  100.
NRZL title:  Reliquary stūpa 舍利宝塔.

Dimensions:  1.33 x 1.22 x .56 meters.
Date:  Ming or Qing Dynasty.
Inscription(s):  none.
Primary image(s):  votive caitya with a meditating monk.
Secondary image(s):  none.
Niche type:  type I.2.C.

Content description:  This niche is one of a pair of niches located between the two main sections of the site. Both niches contain relief images of one storied votive caityas (stūpas) with curved roofs. The caitya in this niche is more elaborately carved than the caitya in niche 99. A lotus-pattern is carved on the top of the caitya and a swirling cloud-pattern on its base. In the center of the caitya is a seated figure in dhyāna mudrā in a recessed niche. The NRZL identifies this figure as a Buddha, but the figure has the appearance of a monk and may represent a particular deceased monk for whom the caitya may have been intended to memorialize.
Cave/niche number: 101.

NRZL title: Five honored ones niche 五尊龛.

Dimensions: .95 x 1.14 x .25 meters.

Date: Qing Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas, one monk.

Niche type: multi-niche group, type III.1.

Content description: This niche has an elongated rectangular shape and contains a stele, dated 1902, labeled number 102, and a group of four figures labeled niche number 101. The group of four figures include a central Buddha, two bodhisattvas, and a monk. The later is identified in the NRZL as Śākyamuni’s disciple Mahākāśyapa, but may be intended as a generic monk or one that sponsored the niche. The Buddha and bodhisattvas are seated on lotus-pedestals with octagonal bases. All three of the figures have a stocky appearances with oversized heads. The central Buddha is depicted seated in dhyāna mudrā. The bodhisattva on the right is seated in padmāsana with both hands on the lap holding a disc. The opposite bodhisattva is the same but appears to hold a small bowl on the lap. On the left side the monk is depicted standing with his hands in añjali mudrā. The NRZL states that there was a second monk on the right side of the niche, which represented Ānanda.

The treatment of the figures doesn’t relate to imagery of the Tang through Song periods at the site. These figures likely date to the carving of the stele next it in the late Qing Dynasty.

Cave/niche number: 102.

NRZL title: The Jiao xiao stele 教孝碑.

Dimensions: .70 x 1.27 meters.

Date: Qing Dynasty.

Inscription(s): one, see MWL, 58 number 6.

Niche type: type III.1.
Content description: This niche has a elongated rectangular shape and contains a stele labeled number 102 and a group of four figures labeled number 101. The stele is rectangular and is engraved with two large characters, jiao xiao 教孝 (“teach filial piety”) written horizontally in zhuanshu 篆书 (seal script) on the left side of the stele. On the right side is a fourteen line inscription in smaller kaishu characters, which is dated 1902.

Cave/niche number: 103.


Dimensions: 3.26 x 8.14 meters.

Date: Southern Song Dynasty, ca. 1163-1194.

Inscription(s): one, see MWL, 45-55 number 3.

Primary image(s): stele inscription.

Secondary Image(s): none.

Niche type: six rectangular sections.

Content description: This stele is written in six parts and frames niche 104, which contains a copy of a spirit road stele of the Northern Song Official Zhao Zhan 赵瞻 (d.1091). The stele contains 66 vertical lines of kaishu 楷书 (standard script) with an original total of 1,819 characters of which 202 characters are no longer extent. On the first line the title “Ancient Text [version] of the Classic of Filial Piety” (Guwen xiao jing, 古文孝经) is given, and the author, Fan Zuyu 范祖禹 (1041-98) is given on the last line of the text. The stele is believed to have been inscribed during the reign of Emperor Xiaozong (r. 1163-1194) based on the absence of certain taboo characters, but there is no inscribed date on the stele nor is there an explanation given for its placement at the site.19 The stele was inscribed either at the same time, or after, the Master Yijian stele was inscribed because it is located on the interior and exterior sides of the niche that encloses that stele. Two

additional lines of the stele that are no longer legible where recorded by the Qing scholar Zhang Shu, which indicate that the stele was inscribed by a person named Zhao Fan. However, the identity of Zhao Fan is uncertain, but he was possibly a descendent of Zhao Zhan.

During the Song Dynasty many private Buddhist shrines and temples served as ancestral halls and perhaps a similar function was intended for the two stele inscriptions to serve as a memorial for ancestral worship. The *Classic of Filial Piety* has a long history in association with funerary practices in China and was frequently used as part of the pictorial program in many Song tombs. Therefore, the placement of the stele and the creation of the niche could have been created as a sort of surrogate or symbolic mortuary shrine for Zhao Zhan’s descendants to fulfill their filial obligations at a time when they were no longer able to visit the actual tomb of their honored ancestor. Although *The Classic of Filial Piety* is a Confucian moral tract it is in keeping with the devotional purpose behind the sponsorship of much of the imagery at the site, which had a strong filial component with the desire for the transfer of merit (pariṇāma) from the making of images to deceased relatives and for the benefit of future generations.

The ancient version of *The Classic of Filial Piety* is credited to the scholar Sima Guang (1019-86) and is organized into twenty chapters. The more popular version of the text was published under emperor Xuanzong in 722, and is organized into eighteen chapters. The content of the two versions is exactly the same with only minor differences between the two versions in how the text is organized into separate sections and the use of a few different characters. *The Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing*) is one of the thirteen Confucian classics and is ascribed to several of the disciples of

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20 see Deng Zhijin and Cao Lai, 31-2.


Confucius, but may actually be a creation of the Han period. It records a
dialogue between Confucius and his disciple Zengzi 曾 and teaches the basic
moral code of xiao (孝), or filial piety, as the norm of human conduct and good
government.

_Cave/niche number:_ 103.

_NRZL title:_ Niche of the spirit road stele of Master Yijian 懿简公神道碑龛.

_Dimensions:_ 3.95 x 3.74 x 2.06 meters.

_Date:_ Southern Song Dynasty.

_Inscription(s):_ one, see _MWL_, 45-55 number 2.

_Primary image(s):_ stele inscription.

_Secondary Image(s):_ none.

_Niche type:_ type IV.2.

_Content description:_ This niche contains a copy of a spirit road stele of a
Northern Song scholar named Zhao Zhan 赵瞻 (d. 1091), who obtained the
_jinshi_ rank in 1046 and was posthumously called Yijian 懿简. The original
stele was placed in front of his tomb in the area of modern Zhouzhi 周至,
central Shaanxi province. The title of the stele consists of six characters
inscribed in seal script in the top center of the stele in a cartouche surrounded
by intaglio images of dragons. The main portion of the stele contains thirty-
one lines of fifty-one characters. A significant portion of the stele is no longer
legible. The text of the stele was written by the historian Fan Zuyu 范祖禹
(1041-98) and the calligraphy was done by one of the most noted calligraphers
of the Song Dynasty, Cai Jing 蔡京 (1047-1126) who also served as the Prime

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23 There have been several articles written about this stele, see Deng Zhijin 邓之金 and Cao Lai 曹莱, “Zhao Yijian Gong shendao beike zai Dazu de Niandai he youlai kao 赵懿简公神道
碑在大足的年代和由来考,” SW 1 (1986): 30-2; Chen Mingguang 陈明光, “Dazu ‘Yijian Gong
shendao bei’ kaolu 大足懿简公神道碑考略,” in _Dazushike kaogu yu yanjiu_, ed. Chen
Mingguang (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2001), 113-117; and Yu Yunguo 虞云国,
“Dazu ‘Yijian Gong shendao bei’ kao 大足懿简公神道碑考,” in _WJ_ edited by Guo Xiangying
(Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1997), 386-395.
Minister of Emperor Huizong (r. 1101-25). The stele is generally believed to have been carved during the reign of Xiaozong (r. 1163-1194). However, the inscription does not include a date nor is a reason given for its placement at the site. Several scholars have suggested that it was inscribed at the site by a descendent of Zhao Zhan based on a name given in an inscription attached to the *Gu xiao jing* Stele, number 103.

*Cave/niche number:* 105.  
*NRZL title:* Buddha Vairocana niche 毘卢佛龛.  
*Dimensions:* 1.73 x .97 x 1.03 meters.  
*Date:* Song Dynasty.  
*Inscription(s):* none.  
*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, Vairocana.  
*Secondary image(s):* two monks, Mañjuśrī, ten forms of Avalokiteśvara, the Yinlu bodhisattva, and eleven donor figures.  
*Niche type:* type III.  
*Content description:* This niche contains three tiers of figures, which wrap around the curved walls of the interior of the niche. The upper tier features a central image of a Buddha. The middle tier contains ten standing images of different forms of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Donor figures are depicted at the base of the niche.

On the upper tier is a central image of a Buddha seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus-base. The right hand of the Buddha makes a teaching gesture while the left hand is placed on the leg palm-down. Emerging from the Buddha’s *usṇiśa* are ribbons representing rays of light that go to the top of the niche. Flanking the Buddha are two standing monks in *añjali mudrā*. On the left side wall of the niche is an image of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī seated on a lion and accompanied by an attendant and the prelate Sudhana. The right upper side of the niche has collapsed but undoubtedly contained an image of...

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24 see above note 13.  
25 For an alternative view see Yu Yunguo, 393-4 who believes that its placement dates to 1092-4 when Cai Jing served as an official in Chengdu.
the bodhisattva Samantabhadra to be paired with Mañjuśrī. The depictions of these two bodhisattvas indicates that the central Buddha image is intended to represent the Buddha Vairocana.

The middle tier of the niche contains ten standing bodhisattvas with three on the lateral walls of the niche, and four on the back wall. The bodhisattvas stand on lotus blossoms that emerge from behind the lower tier of figures at the base of the interior of the niche. Each bodhisattva is depicted with a different attribute or hand gesture. The three bodhisattva figures on the northern side of the niche are damaged. On the back wall of the niche, the right most figures holds a ruyi (scepter). Moving to the left, the next bodhisattva holds a vase and willow branch. The next bodhisattva holds a round mirror up to the left shoulder with a long ribbon attached to it, which is held in the right hand. On the interior left corner of the niche the next bodhisattva holds a large lotus. The next three bodhisattva are located on the left side-wall of the niche and face north. The inner most bodhisattva holds his left hand out from which a cloud emerges with a damaged figure seated on a lotus. The central figure on the south wall holds bowl or jar with both hands. The outermost figure, representing the White-robed Avalokiteśvara, is hooded and holds a string of prayer beads with the right hand. These ten bodhisattvas appear to represent a version of a set of ten forms of Avalokiteśvara found at several sites in Dazu including cave 180 at the Fowan site.

The bottom tier on the base of the niche contains donor images and a small altar. The altar is located on the central back wall of the niche. On the right side of the altar is a small figure of a hooded monk, which may represent the bodhisattva who guides the way (Yinlu pusa 引路菩萨). This figure points towards the center of the niche with his left hand and holds a banner staff in his right hand. Next to him are the upper torsos of a male and female figure that emerge from a cloud. These figures perhaps represent the intended recipient of the niche, possibly the deceased parents of the donor(s). Next to them on the north wall of the niche is a small round, mound like object representing either the tomb of the deceased personages or bird cage. The mound has a round doorway and a bird with outstretched wings appears to be
emerging from the inside of the tomb/cage. Standing next to the small mound are two damaged donor figures. On the opposite side of the altar is an object described as seven tiered pagoda in the NRZL, but was probably intended as a six-tiered offering lamp. Next to the offering lamp is a monk in aṇjali mudrā and on the south wall of the niche are five donor figures. The inner figure is a male and holds an incense burner. Next to him is a female figure, possibly his wife, and three smaller figures (damaged) representing children, and a female figure with long dangling sleeves.

On top the niche is a trapezoidal recessed space for an inscription. Similar spaces for inscription is are also found above niches 106 and 107.

Cave/ niche number: 106.
NRZL title: Three Worthies of the Avataṃsaka 华严三圣像.
Dimensions: 2.25 x 1.6 x 1.5 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Vairocana.
Secondary image(s): Mañjuṣrī and Samantabhadra, two monks(?), two unidentified bodhisattvas (Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara(?), one apsarās, and eleven donor figures.
Niche type: type IV.1.
Content description: This niche contains a Buddha teaching assembly raised on a plinth above the base of the niche. The central group depicts the Buddha Vairocana and his two primary bodhisattva attendants Mañjuṣrī and Samantabhadra. The Buddha Vairocana is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal with a dragon-base. The Buddha makes a variation of dharmacakra mudrā with the hands held at the center of the chest. The left hand is placed below the right hand palm-up and the right hand is slightly cupped. This mudrā occurs on a number of images at the site such as the Buddha on the back wall of cave 136. At the top of the Buddha’s halo two large ribbons that extend up and outward to the exterior top of the niche. On each side of the Buddha is a smaller figure standing on a plinth, which are identified as the monks Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa in the NRZL. However, these figures both
wear somewhat ornate costumes that are not typical for monks and do not have shaven-heads. The figure on the right has curly hair like that of the prelate Zhao Zhifeng of Baodingshan. The figure on the right has his hands in añjali mudrā and his hair is parted in the center.

Flanking the Buddha are the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra seated in padmāsana on sumeru style platforms. Next to the bodhisattva on the side walls of the niche are two damaged figures which are identified in the NRZL as Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. On the right wall facing south is a large figure seated in pralambapādāsana. This figure held a staff and perhaps represented a monk or Kṣitigarbha as identified in the NRZL. Opposite on the left wall the figure is more severely damaged. This figure appears to have been standing. On the upper north interior wall of the niche is an apsarās figure, which was undoubtedly complimented by another apsarās on the opposite side of the niche which has collapsed and been repaired.

In front of the plinth at the base of the niche are around eleven donor images. These images are all damaged with the heads broken off. Two are located directly below the main Buddha group. Five others are located on the left side of the niche and four on the right side. The size of these figures varies perhaps indicating that they represent a family with children.

Above the niche is a trapezoidal space for an inscription similar to niches 105 and 107.

_Cave/niche number:_ 107.

_NRZL title:_ Seven Virtuous Buddha niche 七賢佛龛.

_Dimensions:_ 2.36 x 1.95 x 1.4 meters.

_Date:_ Song Dynasty.

_Inscription(s):_ none.

_Priority image(s):_ Bhaiṣajyaguru, the seven Buddhas of the East.

_Secondary Image(s):_ ten bodhisattvas, two monks(?), two bodhisattva attendants, eight donor figures, the Yinlu bodhisattva, and twelve yakṣa generals.

_Niche type:_ type IV.1.
Content description: This niche contains three tiers of figures. The figures in the upper tier are identified in the NRZL as the seven mānuṣī Buddhas. The seven Buddhas are all seated in padmāsana on lotus-pedestals. The central Buddha is depicted holding an offering bowl on his lap with his left hand and the right hand in a teaching gesture. Unlike the other Buddhas, which have circular aureoles and teardrop shaped halos, the central Buddha has a single ovoid shaped body aureole. At the top of his aureole are four swirling ribbons, two on each side, that extend to the top of the niche. The lower ribbons each have a loop containing a small building. To the sides of the Buddha are two small standing bodhisattva attendants. The bodhisattva on the left holds a khakkhara. The six other Buddhas all have their hands in dhyāna mudrā with the index and thumb fingers touching. With the exception of one of the Buddhas, they are all somewhat non-distinctive. The one distinctive Buddha figure is located on the right, south facing, side which has cowl like that of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara. These seven Buddhas do not represent the seven mānuṣī Buddhas, but represent the seven Buddhas of the East with the central Buddha representing Bhaiṣajyaguru.

Beneath the seven Buddhas of the East is a row of ten bodhisattvas seated on sumeru plinths. All these figures are badly damaged, but are identified as the ten great bodhisattvas in the NRZL. Bhaiṣajyaguru is usual accompanied by a group of eight great bodhisattvas, not ten. The two additional figures may have been intended as the bodhisattvas Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. Below the bodhisattvas on the side walls of the niche the twelve yakṣa generals of Bhaiṣajyaguru are depicted in two rows of three figures. These figures are non distinctive except for one figure located on the upper row of the south side. Instead of a male martial figure this figure is depicted as the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The twelve yakṣa generals have corresponding bodhisattvas who are their spiritual source. One of the generals named Annira is considered an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, which may explain the inclusion of this representation.

The images at the base of the main wall may be intended to represent a scene of a ritual to invoke the seven Buddhas of the East. In the center is a small altar flanked by an offering lamp on the left and a burial mound or
cage, with a bird emerging from its entrance, on the right. The offering lamp is identified as a small pagoda in the NRZL. Behind the burial mound and lamp are two, damaged, standing figures. To the left of the offering lamp are four donor figures and a figure with a halo. The donors figures include three large adult figures and a small child. Next to the burial mound or cage is a large banner and a robed figure (damaged) similar to the hooded monk/Yinlu bodhisattva depicted in niche 105. A female figure is depicted next to the hooded bodhisattva with her lower body covered in clouds. This figure probably represents a deceased person for whom the niche was offered.

*Cave/niche number: 108.*

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:*.53 x .35 x .08 meters.

*Date: undated.*

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* unidentified seated figure.

*Secondary Image(s):* none.

*Niche type:* type IV.1.

*Content description:* This small shallow niche contains a single seated figure, which is severely damaged. The figure wears an official’s hat and may be intended to represent a secular official or a Daoist deity. The typology of the niche with the relatively large size of the figure compared to the size of the niche and the shallowness of the carving are atypical for Song and earlier niches at the site and suggests that it is a later addition. The NRZL dates this niche and the empty niche below it, number 109, to the Song Dynasty, but without any explanation.

*Cave/niche number: 109.*

NRZL title: Damaged image 残像.

*Dimensions:*.45 x .30 x .06 meters.

*Date: undated.*

*Inscription(s):* none.
Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type damaged, type IV.1.
Content description: This niche is severely damaged. It appears to have contained a single seated figure similar to niche 108. The NRZL dates this niche to the Song; however, it may be a later addition.

Cave/niche number: 110.
NRZL title: Bhaiṣajyaguru Buddha image 薬师琉璃光佛像.
Dimensions: 2.12 x 1.9 x 1.6 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.19; MWL, 34 number 47.
Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.
Secondary Image(s): four seated bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, Sūryaprabha, and Candraprabha), two monks, twelve guardian generals, and ten or more donor figures
Niche type: type damaged, type IV.1.
Content description: The donor inscription in this niche identifies the subject matter of the niche as the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his twelve yakṣa generals. The main image of Bhaiṣajyaguru is almost completely destroyed. Bhaiṣajyaguru is seated on a lotus-pedestal with a swirling dragon base. Behind the Buddha is an aureole and two swirling ribbons of “light” that extend out to the sides. Each ribbon forms two loops that contain small images of seated Buddhas in dhyāna mudrā. Flanking Bhaiṣajyaguru are two standing monks. The monk on the right holds a khakkhara and the monk on the left has a solar disk on a cloud rising above his halo. Attending the Buddha are four bodhisattvas seated on sumeru platforms with two on the back wall flanking the Buddha and two facing inward on the side walls of the niche. The bodhisattva on the right of the Buddha is severely damaged and is identified in the NRZL as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The bodhisattva next to him on the north side wall of the niche is also badly damaged and is identified in the NRZL as Sūryaprabha. The two opposite bodhisattvas are slightly better preserved. The inner bodhisattva flanking the Buddha is
identified as Avalokiteśvara in the *NRZL*. The outer bodhisattva on the South wall has a crown with a standing Buddha in it and is identified in the *NRZL* as Candraprabha. On the lateral side walls of the niche are three tiers of standing figures with three figures in each row, which represent the *yakṣa* generals of Bhaiṣajyaguru. They are depicted with their hands clasped and wearing long ribbons in their hair similar to images in niche 107.

On the upper south wall is an inscription in a banner. The inscription mentions the name of the donor and his immediate family. A similar banner is located on the north side, but doesn't contain an extant inscription. At the base of the south wall are seven damaged donor figures, which correspond to the family members mentioned in the inscription. On the opposite side of the niche are two more small donor figures. These appear to be half figures in clouds like those found in niches 105 and 107, which likely represent the deceased beneficiaries of the offering of the niche. Also depicted is a small monk and an offering lamp.

*Cave/niche number:* 111.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* 1.85 x 1.32 x .88 meters.*

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* four unidentified seated figures.

*Secondary image(s):* an unidentified Buddha, four bodhisattvas (including Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra), and approximately twenty donor figures.

*Niche type:* type III.3.

*Content description:* This niche has been damaged by erosion and is composed of an upper section with the primary images and a lower section with donor figures. On the back wall of the niche in the upper section of the niche are two seated figures, which are too damaged to identify. The figure on the left has a round body aureole and is seated in *padmāsana* on a lotus-pedestal. The opposite figure is seated on a high backed *sumeru* throne. In the center between these two seated figures are three smaller donor figures that face the seated figure on the right. Two of the figures are depicted
kneeling and one stands behind them. Above this group of figures are smaller images of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas seated on lotuses with stems that emerge from behind the figures below. The central Buddha is depicted with his right hand on the lap and the left hand held up to the chest making a teaching gesture. On the right side the bodhisattva holds a fan and a ruyi. The opposite bodhisattva holds only a ruyi.

On the upper north lateral side of the niche is a figure seated on a pedestal with two standing attendant figures. Directly above the halo of the seated figure is an image of Mañjuśrī seated on a lion and a small image of Sudhana on the left. There are also two smaller seated figures on the outer part of the niche, one above the other. On the left toward the interior of the niche is a standing figure that is recessed in a niche. This figure appears to hold a seal in the right hand. On the upper south lateral side of the niche opposite Mañjuśrī is a small image of Samantabhadra on an elephant. Below Samantabhadra is a figure seated on a dragon throne. On the right side of this figure toward the inner part of the niche is a standing figure who holds a banner with a lotus(?) emblem. This figure has a halo and wears a polygonal hat with two ribbons. Next to this figure is a standing martial figure.

The lower section of the niche is more severely damaged by erosion. On the back wall are two rows of standing donor figures with approximately seven figures in each row. On the lower north lateral side of the niche are a pair of seated figures in añjali mudrā. Opposite on the south side is a large vase and two figures. One figure appears to be pouring water into the vase.

The composition of this niche is unique at the site. Given the condition of the images one can only speculate what the imagery in the niche was intended to represent. Perhaps the four upper figures were intended to represent a group of semi-divine monks similar to the group in 177.

_Cave/niche number:_ 112.

_NRZL title:_ Niche a pair of Buddhas 双身佛龛.

_Dimensions:_ 2.07 x 1.83 x 1.58 meters.

_Date:_ Song Dynasty.

_Inscription(s):_ none.
Primary image(s): Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna.
Secondary image(s): Kṣitigarbha(?), Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara(?), a monk and female attendant, the Yinlu bodhisattva(?), and twelve donor figures.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche features a pair of Buddhas seated in padmāsana on a rectangular plinth. The NRZL identifies these Buddhas as representing the nirmānakāya and dharmakāya forms of the Buddha Śākyamuni, but no evidence is given to support that identification. The pair are more likely intended to represent Śākyamuni and Prabhūtaratna. The Buddha on the right holds his right hand (damaged) in abhaya mudrā and the left hand is placed on the lap. The opposite Buddha holds a bowl on his lap with his right hand and the left hand is placed on the knee palm-down.
Between the two Buddhas is a low relief cloud motif containing six small donor figures arranged hierarchically. In front are three smaller figures, which look like a girl and a boy, and an older boy behind them. Behind them is a larger male and female couple perhaps representing the parents of the children depicted below them. Behind the couple is a larger female figure that likely represents the family matriarch. Flanking the Buddhas are two standing attendants with round halos. The figure on the right is a female figure who holds an offering tray with her left hand. On the opposite side a monk holds a large khakkhara with six rings. In front of the platform that the Buddhas are seated on are remnants of three small donor figures. Another set of donor figures is located on the interior right corner of the niche, which includes an adult couple and a child. Behind this group of donor figures is a larger damaged figure that held a large banner, which appears to have represented the Yinlu bodhisattva who guides the souls of the dead.

On the front sides of the niche are two large seated figures facing inward. Both are badly damaged. The figure on the southern side has multiple arms with a pair of upper arms held up over the shoulders and another pair held out to the sides. The upper left hand appears to hold the stem of a lotus or some other object. This figure may have represented an esoteric form Avalokiteśvara, probably Amoghapāśa, but is too damaged to identify for certain. Directly opposite on the north wall the seated figure
appears to have been depicted holding a staff and wearing a cowl over the head. The general appearance of this figure suggests that it represents the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha who is often paired with Avalokiteśvara in other niches at the site.

*Cave/niche number:* 113.

*NRZL title:* Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara 水月观音像.

*Dimensions:* 1.3 x .83 x .95 meters.

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.

*Secondary image(s):* Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, and approximately seven donor figures.

*Niche type:* type II.1.

*Content description:* The outer part of this niche is decorated with an abstract mountain motif to convey the rocky landscape of the home of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara. Avalokiteśvara is seated on a square plinth in a posture of royal ease. The bodhisattva’s right arm is extended and rests on the right knee and the right hand nonchalantly holds the end of a long scarf. Numerous scarves and ribbons hang from the bodhisattva. Attached to the bodhisattva’s crown are two ribbons that extend upward and form two loops. Behind the bodhisattva is a large, round aureole and on left side a vase is carved in low relief. Flanking the bodhisattva on the sides of the niche are several standing figures, with three on each side. On the right side the inner figure is smaller and holds an offering tray. This figure has the appearance of a foreigner and likely represents the Buddhist prelate Sudhana. The other pair of figures represent a donor couple. Opposite on the left side is a similar group of figures. The inner figure is again smaller and looks like a child. This figure likely represents the Dragon Maiden to complement the opposite image of Sudhana. The other pair of figures again represents a standard male and female donor couple. Unlike the pair on the opposite side of the niche who hold their hands clasped in a gesture of adoration these figures are depicted
with their right arms to their sides and their left arms held bent in front of their waists. On the outer part of the niche are two small figures, perhaps representing children.

*Cave/niche number:* 114.

*NRZL title:* Empty cave 空窟.

*Dimensions:* 2.2 x 2.06 x 4.15 meters.

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* none.

*Secondary image(s):* unidentified damaged figure.

*Niche type:* cave.

*Content description:* This small excavated cave is located several meters above the base of the cliff and can be reached by climbing a crude set of seven steps carved in the surface of the cliff next to niche 113. The cave is a simple rectangular shape. In the rear of the cave adjacent to the back wall is a ledge with a small altar and a step carved in front of it. On the floor in front of the altar is a hollowed out circular area perhaps for offerings. Traces of a figure are evident on the right (north) wall next to an empty niche. This may be an image of Avalokiteśvara that is mentioned in the *NRZL*, which is no longer intact.

*Cave/niche number:* 115.

*NRZL title:* Stele record of the painting of Buddhist images 彩化佛像记碑.

*Dimensions:* 1.23 x .54 meters.

*Date:* Republican period, 1924.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* none.

*Secondary image(s):* none.

*Niche type:* stele, type III.1.
Content description: This stele inscription is dated May 18, 1924 and records the redecoration of Daoist and Buddhist imagery at seven places in the county. The lower half of the stele is eroded and is no longer legible.

Cave/niche number: 116.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .73 x .53 x .38 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): four attendant figures, two donor(?) figures.
Niche type: damaged, type II.4.
Content description: This small niche features a six-armed image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara seated in padmāsana on a rectangular platform. The bodhisattva’s primary hands are held in front of the torso. These hands are damaged, but may have held a willow branch and bowl. The outer back hands hold a sword (right) and an axe (left) while the upper hands hold lunar/solar discs. The bodhisattva wears a large crown with a small seated transformation Buddha in the center. On each side of Amoghapāśa are two damaged attendant figures. A pair of standing figures, which have worn off and may have represented donors or guardian figures, are located on the exterior of the niche.

Directly below this niche is an empty, deeply recessed, square niche (.5 x .63 x .66 meters), which is not numbered.

Cave/niche number: 117.
NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara niche 地藏,观音龛.
Dimensions: 1.87 x 1.14 x .90 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): the Ten Kings with ten attendants, two donor figures, two *apsarasas*.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.

*Content description:* This niche contains a pair of standing bodhisattvas representing Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. On the lateral interior walls of the niche are three tiers of smaller figures that represent the Ten Kings of hell. The composition of this niche is somewhat similar to niche 253 that dates to the late Five Dynasties period. The heads of the primary pair of bodhisattvas are missing. Both bodhisattvas are depicted in static poses standing on a pair of lotuses that emerge from the base of the niche. On the right Avalokiteśvara has a more elaborate costume with scarves and ribbons hanging down from the bodhisattva’s arms and shoulders. The bodhisattva’s right hand holds a stylized willow branch. The other hand is broken, but was held down to the side. Opposite, Kṣitigarbha appears more austere with his arms held close to his sides. Above the two bodhisattvas is a large canopy with two *apsarasas* carved in low relief on the front of the canopy. On the back wall of the niche between the two bodhisattvas is a rectangular area for an inscription.

On the side walls of the niche are three tiers of standing figures. The top two tiers are represented standing on stylized clouds. The lower tier on the north wall has a pair of donor figures. The inner figure is a female and the outer figure is a male who wears an official’s hat. The other tiers on both sides of the niche each contain four figures with two larger central figures representing a male and female couple and two smaller attendant figures. These figures represent the Ten Kings and their entourage. In the middle tier on the north wall the two central figures hold jade seals. The inner attendant figure is a male and wears an official’s hat. The top tier on the north side also has four figures with the two central figures larger than the outer figures. The outer attendant on the right is dressed in a short skirt and his hands are clasped together at the chest. Opposite the other attendant is a female and holds a jewel. The central figure on the right side holds a jade seal with the left hand and the opposite female figure has her hands held together under her garments.
The south wall has a similar arrangement of figures. Each row has two larger central figures and two smaller attendants. The figures on the bottom tier stand on a plain ledge like the donor figures directly opposite. These figures do not appear to represent donors but are part of the set of the Ten Kings of hell represented on the upper tiers. The larger central figures wear Chinese style garments and have their hands are held clasped in a gesture of respect. The outer attendant on the left is a female and holds her hands outward toward the inner figures. The other attendant is a male and appears to hold a bag like object. Above on the middle tier, the two central figures hold jade seals. The inner figure is slightly smaller and may depict a female. The attendant figure on the right holds a box or drum and may represent the god of thunder. The outer attendant is a female and appears to hold a jar. The upper tier again has four figures. The central pair of figures depict a male who holds a jade seal and a female with her hands clasped. The outer attendant figure is damaged but appears to hold a large rectangular tablet. The inner attendant figure is a female.

Cave/niche number: 118.

NRZL title: Image of the Jade-seal Avalokiteśvara 玉印观音像.

Dimensions: 1.47 x .94 x .96 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.

Niche type: damaged, type I.8.

Content description: This niche features a central seated image of the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara with two standing attendant figures. Avalokiteśvara is seated in padmāsana on a sumeru platform. The bodhisattva’s left hand holds a square seal (damaged) near the left shoulder. The right hand is placed on the lap palm-down and holds a long ribbon that is attached to the seal in the bodhisattva’s left hand. The bodhisattva is depicted with an ornate filigree floral crown with long ribbons that are draped
to each side. The costume of the bodhisattva and the manner of its representation with large flat folds is typical for Song imagery at the site.

The two attendants stand on raised plinths on the front interior side walls of the niche. Both figures hold rectangular seals and wear heavy robes and cloud head slippers. The attendant figure on the left side is a male and the opposite figure is a female. Both figures look out of the niche rather than toward each other or the central bodhisattva. The NRZL identifies these attendants as Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.

Cave/niche number: 119.

NRZL title: Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara image.

Dimensions: 1.77 x 1.27 x 1.03 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, and two attendant figures.

Niche type: type II.1.

Content description: This niche features an image of Amoghapāśa seated in pralambapādāsana on a rectangular plinth below a round canopy. The feet of the bodhisattva rest on two lotus buds that emerge from a central lotus at the base of the niche. On the bottom in front of the image is a circular pattern with ribbons, which may be intended to represent a water pond. The bodhisattva has six arms and holds his standard attributes. The outer lower right hand holds a large double bladed sword with the hilt of the sword shaped like a vajra. Opposite, the lower outer left hand holds a pāśa. The bodhisattva’s front primary right hand holds a willow branch in front of the chest and the front left hand holds a bowl on the lap. The two rear upper arms are raised above the shoulders. Above the upper two hands are a pair of figures seated on lotus-pedestals, which are likely intended as anthropomorphized forms of the sun and moon.

Several smaller attendants are depicted to the sides of the bodhisattva standing on a ledge that rings the niche. On the proper right next to
Amoghapāśa is a female figure that holds an offering tray, and on the right front corner of the niche is a female figure with long dangling sleeves. Opposite on the outer left side of the niche is a monk who holds prayer beads with his left hand. Between the monk and Amoghapāśa is a male figure who holds an offering tray. This figure and the opposite female figure who holds an offering tray represent, respectfully, Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.

**Cave/niche number:** 120.

**NRZL title:** Image of Kuṇḍikā Avalokiteśvara 净瓶观音象.

**Dimensions:** 1.6 x 1.08 x .28 meters.

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.

**Niche type:** type IV.1.

**Content description:** This niche features a large seated image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara accompanied by two standing attendants. Avalokiteśvara is depicted seated on a ledge in lalitāsana with the left leg pendant and resting on a large lotus. The bodhisattva’s left hand holds a small water vessel (kuṇḍikā) on the lap and the right arm is bent up toward the shoulder. The right hand is broken off but the outline of where the hand was located indicates that it held a willow branch. The bodhisattva has a large filigree crown with floral patterns and a central lotus. Two long flaring ribbons hang from the back of the crown. The bodhisattva’s garments are depicted in Song fashion with heavy robes and raised relief depictions of adornments hanging below the knees. Behind the bodhisattva is a large, round halo and body aureole.

Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by two attendants. On the right side of the niche the Dragon Maiden holds a round jewel. Opposite, Sudhana holds an offering tray. Sudhana is not depicted as a youth but as a middle age man with a shaven forehead and his hair tied up in a bun on top his head. This type of depiction of Sudhana occurs on a number of Song niches at the site.
Cave/niche number: 121.

NRZL title: Images of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Dimensions: 1.87 x 1.25 x 1.52 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, two small monks, four donor figures.

Niche type: type IV.1.

Content description: This medium size niche contains a pair of bodhisattvas seated in lalitāsana on a ledge. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the left in the form of a monk with a shaven head and holding a cintāmaṇi jewel. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right holding a ruyi. The bodhisattvas are attended by Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden. The Dragon Maiden is depicted on the right side of the niche and holds a kunḍika. Below to her left are two small donor images representing a mother and daughter. Opposite on the left side of the niche Sudhana is depicted as a monk and holds a walking staff. To his right are two small donor figures representing a father and son. On the upper sides of the niche there two small pavilions carved in low relief. The pavilions are depicted floating on clouds and each contains a small figure who bows toward the two primary images.

Cave/niche number: 122.

NRZL title: Hārīti image.

Dimensions: 1.67 x 1.51 x 1.13 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Hārīti.

Secondary image(s): three female attendants and nine children.

Niche type: IV.1

Content description: Hārīti is depicted seated western style on a high backed throne in front of a three-piece screen. She holds a child on her lap with her...
left hand. To her sides are two standing female attendants in aṇjali mudrā. In front on the left side of the niche is a heavy set nursemaid kneeling on the ground with a child suckling her breast. Seven other children are depicted on the base and sides of the front part of the niche.

_Cave/niche number:_ 123.

**NRZL title:** Images of Śākyamuni with Avalokiteśvara 阿弥陀佛及觀音像.

**Dimensions:** 1.62 x 1.31 x .80 meters.

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Śākyamuni or Amitābha Buddha.

**Secondary image(s):** Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, Cintāmanicakra (?), Avalokiteśvara, and four donor figures.

**Niche type:** IV.1.

**Content description:** The central Buddha is seated in _padmāsana_ on a raised lotus-pedestal. He holds a _pātra_ on his lap, while the right hand (damaged) forms a teaching gesture. On the sides of the niche are two bodhisattvas seated in _lalitāsana_. The bodhisattva on the right side is a badly damaged. This bodhisattva has two arms and possibly represents Cintāmanicakra Avalokiteśvara. Below to the right of this figure are two small female donor figures representing a mother and daughter. On the left side of the niche is a six-armed image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is depicted holding the standard set of attributes of Amoghapāśa, which include lunar and solar discs, sword, willow branch, pāśa, and _pātra_. Below to the left of the bodhisattva are two small male donor figures, representing a father and son.

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26 This Buddha is identified in the _NRZL_ as Śākyamuni. Niche 57 on the fourth floor of the Duobaota pagoda contains a central west facing image of Amitābha, identified by donor inscription, and two opposite facing images of Amoghapāśa and Cintāmanicakra, which may also be the intended iconography of this niche. See _MWL_, 447 number 8.
Cave/niche number: 124.

NRZL title: Empty cave 空窟.

Dimensions: .63 x .68 x .30 meters.*

Date: undated.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): none.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: IV.1.

Content description: A small empty niche located directly below the guard office.

Cave/niche number: 125.

NRZL title: Image of the Pearl Necklace Avalokiteśvara 数珠观音象.

Dimensions: 1.26 x 1.02 x .70 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): Sudhana, the Dragon Maiden, and two apsarasas.

Niche type: damaged, type IV.1.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and was discovered buried under earth in 1933. The niche features an elegant standing image of Avalokiteśvara who holds a string of prayer beads. The image has a large ovoid shaped body aureole. On the sides of the niche are two smaller standing attendant figures. The youthful Sudhana is depicted on the left and the Dragon Maiden (damaged) is depicted opposite on the right side of the niche. Above the two attendants are two apsarasas who hold offering trays.

Cave/niche number: 126.

NRZL title: Jade-seal Avalokiteśvara 玉印观音象.

Dimensions: 1.36 x .82 x .91 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

710
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.
Niche type: damaged, type I.4.
Content description: This niche features an image of the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara seated in padmāsana on a ledge. The bodhisattva’s right hand holds a seal up to the shoulder and the left hand is on the lap and holds a ribbon, which is attached to the seal held in the right hand. The bodhisattva is adorned with an ornate filigree crown and necklace. Two standing attendant figures are depicted on the interior sides of the niche. On the right side is a male figure representing Sudhana who holds a seal of investiture. Opposite on the left side is female figure representing the Dragon Maiden who appears to hold the stem of a lotus. Directly below the main image is an incense pot.

Cave/niche number: 127.
NRZL title: Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara image 不空绢索观音像.
Dimensions: .95 x .74 x .38 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, messenger boy.
Niche type: type II.4.
Content description: Amoghapāśa is depicted seated in padmāsana on a sumeru pedestal. He wears an unusual hat with a large disc on top and two pronounced side flaps. The six arms of the bodhisattva hold the standard attributes of Amoghapāśa seen in other niches: pāśa, sword, pātra, willow branch, and lunar and solar discs. On the right side of the niche is a damaged standing female attendant figure representing the Dragon Maiden. Opposite on the left side of the niche is a male attendant figure representing Sudhana who is dressed as a monk with a cowl. In front of the main image is a small child-like standing figure surrounded by clouds. This figure may represent a messenger/servant of Amoghapāśa.
Cave/niche number: 128.

**NRZL title:** Image of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara 水月观音像.

**Dimensions:** 1.43 x 1.04 x .97 meters.

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** two unidentified bodhisattvas, two donor figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.4.

**Content description:** Avalokiteśvara is seated in rājalilāsana on a rocky platform with a rectangular plinth. The bodhisattva’s right armed rests on the right knee and holds a string of prayer beads. Two attendant bodhisattva figures are depicted seated facing each other on the sides of the niche. These figures are damaged and possibly represent other forms of Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva on the right is seated in pralambapādāsana, with the right hand on the knee holding a ribbon. The bodhisattva’s left arm is damaged. The opposite bodhisattva is seated in rājalilāsana with the right hand held at the chest, possibly holding a willow branch. On the outer left side of the niche is a small male donor figure and a female donor figure is depicted on the opposite side of the niche.

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Cave/niche number: 129.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.05 x .74 x .5 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified Buddha or bodhisattva (?).

**Secondary image(s):** Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.

**Niche type:** damaged, type II.4.

**Content description:** This niche contains a damaged figure seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal. The figure is identified in the NRZL as a Buddha, but is too damaged to confirm that identification. Two smaller standing attendant figures are depicted in the back-corners of the niche. On
the left side is a youthful monk, which is probably intended to represent Sudhana. Opposite on the right side is a female figure wearing a necklace and earrings, which may represent the Dragon Maiden. These two attendants typically accompany Avalokiteśvara not images of Buddhas.

**Cave/niche number:** 130.

**NRZL title:** Image of the goddess Māricī 摩利支天像．

**Dimensions:** 2.4 x 1.12 x 1.42 meters.

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Māricī.

**Secondary image(s):** eight attendant guardian figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.5.

**Content description:** This niche features an ornate image of Māricī standing on a stylized chariot that is being pulled by two elephant-like boars. Māricī has three faces and eight arms. In her eight hands she holds a sword, arrow, trident, cakra, bow, and shield. Her primary hands are held in front of her chest and form a mudrā with the index finger of the right hand pointing up. The left hand is held palm-up below the right hand at her abdomen. On the side of her head are two small cherub-like faces and she wears a filigree floral crown. Above her head is a three story pavilion with two small figures and a flaming jewel. On the side walls of the niche are eight multi-limbed, fierce, guardian figures depicted in two rows. These figures are described in chapter three of this study and possibly represent the eight nāga kings or a set of mantra bodhisattvas (Zhenyan pusa 真言菩萨). For a full description of these figures see chapter 3, section 3.10 of this study.

**Cave/niche number:** 131.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** approximately 1.06 x .74 x .49 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.
Niche type: type II.4.
Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a damaged image of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva has a large, round body aureole and is seated in rājalilāsana on a rectangular sumeru style pedestal. The bodhisattva is attended by a male and female figure, respectively on the left and right sides. The female figure is badly damaged, but was probably intended to represent the Dragon Maiden. Opposite the male figure is better preserved and holds an offering tray. This figure can be identified as Sudhana.

Cave/niche number: 132.
NRZL title: Image of the Precious Pearl Avalokiteśvara 宝珠观音象.
Dimensions: 1.06 x .74 x .49 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two standing attendant figures.
Niche type: type II.4.
Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features an image of Avalokiteśvara seated in padmāsana on rocky dais. The bodhisattva is depicted wearing numerous ribbons that cover the bodhisattva’s torso and the surface of the dais that the bodhisattva is seated on. The bodhisattva has a strong effeminate quality similar to nearby niche 125. The bodhisattva’s hands hold the stem of a lotus. On the lotus is a round ring like object identified in the NRZL as a light emitting pearl. On the lateral sides of the niche are two damaged, standing attendant figures. They both have flaring garments and ribbons similar to the main image. Howard (1990) believes that this image represents a “popularized version” of the Water-moon Avalokiteśvara.\(^{27}\)

\(^{27}\) Howard (1990), 55.
Cave/niche number: 133.

NRZL title: Water-moon Avalokiteśvara 水月观音象.

Dimensions: 3.18 x 2.25 x 3.11 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, four multi-limbed guardian deities.

Content description: This large excavated cave features a central image of the Water-moon or Potalaka Avalokiteśvara seated in rājalilāsana on a sumeru pedestal. The right hand rests on the raised right knee and the left hand is placed on the left thigh and holds a string of prayer beads. Behind the bodhisattva the back wall of the niche has a rocky landscape carved in low relief to simulate Avalokiteśvara’s island abode. On the left side a water vase (kuṃdikā) is depicted resting on a ledge. Attending the bodhisattva on the back side of the cave are a male and female attendant figure who hold offering trays. The figure on the left side represents the Dragon Maiden, and opposite on the right is an older looking Sudhana. On the lateral walls of the cave are two pairs of large, fierce, multi-limbed guardian figures outfitted in armor and holding weapons. On the right side, the outer figure has six arms, two are broken, and holds a vajra-mace, halberd, sword, mirror, and lasso. This figure has two cherub-like faces on the side of its head. The inner figure on the right side also has four arms and holds a sword, lasso, battle-axe, and a bowl that contains a small dragon. Opposite on the southern (left side) wall the outer figure has six arms and holds a large eight spoked flaming cakra above his head. In the center of the cakra is a standing Buddha. The other hands hold a small vajra, spear, and a ribbon attached to his garments. This figure has two small cherub heads on the side of the head. The inner figure on the left side has four arms and holds a vajra-mace, sword, and axe. The middle left hand is held up to the chest with the palm-up and fist clenched.
Cave/niche number: 134.
NRZL title: Stele recording of the visit of the Dazu Stone Carving Investigation Group 大足石刻考察团记游碑.
Dimensions: .7 x .86 meters.
Date: Republican Period, 1945.
Inscription(s): stele inscription, see MWL, 58 number 7.
Niche type: III.1.
Content description: This stele commemorates the research group that investigated this and other sites in Dazu in the spring of 1945. The names of the participants led by Yang Jialuo are listed on the stele. The inscription consists of a total of fourteen lines and one-hundred eighty two characters.

Cave/niche number: 135.
NRZL title: Joint niche of a Buddha and Avalokiteśvara 佛,观音合龛.
Dimensions: 1.7 x 1.5 x .76 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Potalaka Avalokiteśvara, and an unidentified Buddha.
Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, and the monks Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa.
Niche type: type V.
Content description: This niche has two tiers of figures. The lower portion of the niche features a central image of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara seated in rājalilāsana on a sumeru style platform. The bodhisattva has the characteristic large, round body aureole of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara and holds a string of prayer beads in the right hand. Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by his usual attendants. The Dragon Maiden is depicted on the right holding a large pearl. Opposite, Sudhana is depicted with a topknot and his hands (damaged) held in front of his chest. Directly above Avalokiteśvara on the upper tier of the niche is a Buddha seated in padmāsana on a lotus-flower. The Buddha’s right hand is damaged, but appears to have made abhaya mudrā, and the left hand is in bhūmisparśa mudrā and rests on the
leg, palm-down with the figures extended and touching the top of the lotus-pedestal. Attending the Buddha are two standing monks in anjali mudrā. On the right is the youthful looking Ānanda and opposite the elder monk Mahākāśyapa. These two attendants usually accompany Śākyamuni, but Amitābha is the Buddha most closely associated with Avalokiteśvara. In low relief on the upper sides of the niche are a pair of apsarasas.

Cave/niche number: 136.

NRZL title: Revolving sūtra repository cave 转轮经藏窟.

Dimensions: 4.05 x 4.1 x 6.79 meters.

Date: Southern Song Dynasty, 1142-1146.

Inscription(s): Six inscriptions, see Appendix B, 1.20 to 1.25; MWL 34-5 numbers 46.1-46.5, 75 number 10.

Content description: This is the largest cave at the Fowan site. In the center of the cave is a large central pillar carved to simulate the shape of an ornate wooden, revolving, sūtra repository. The form of the sūtra repository in this cave, which is carved in natural stone, is totally unique and without prior precedent in the history of excavated caves in China. However, wooden sūtra repositories were common features of Chinese temples and were used to store and preserve Buddhist scriptures, which were rarely retrieved to be read, but read symbolically to generate merit by revolving the repository case. This carved stone version of the repository was of course not meant to turn, except in a metaphoric sense of communicating the permanence of the Buddhist teachings. Around the sides of the central pillar is enough space, about two feet, to allow for circumambulation. In front of the back wall is a raised platform, about two feet high, which extends out about three feet from the back wall of the cave. A Buddha teaching assembly with a central Buddha, two bodhisattvas, and two monks are carved on the back wall. On the side walls are eight separate niches, four on each side complimentary to each other. The niches on the south wall feature from back to front, Mañjuśrī, the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara, White-robed Avalokiteśvara, and a fierce dvarapāla figure. The complementary niches on the north wall depict Samantabhadra, Amoghapāsa Avalokiteśvara, Prayer-bead(?).
Avalokiteśvara, and a dvarapāla figure. Images on the two complementary sides of the cave may be intended to symbolize the two aspects of the Buddha’s enlightenment and teachings, wisdom and compassion. Since the central pillar represents the Buddhist teachings, the multiple forms of Avalokiteśvara may symbolize the bodhisattva’s use of the expedient means of adopting different forms to teach the dharma and lead devotees to enlightenment.

Five remaining donor inscriptions indicates that the niches in the cave were sponsored by multiple donors over a period of several years in the early 1140s. Four of the donors are depicted on the back wall of the cave.

The base of the central sūtra repository is octagonal and is carved to symbolize the cosmic mountain, Mount Meru at the center of the Buddhist world system. This is symbolized by a large swirling dragon carved in relief at the base similar to the base of the dhāraṇi pillars depicted at the site. The dragon’s undulating body circles the entire base of the repository and implies circular motion like the revolving sūtra repository cases that the cave is modeled after. Below the dragon the stone is carved to simulate a rocky surface and water to represent the cosmic oceans and continents that surround Mount Meru. Above the dragon is an octagonal plinth carved with three tiers of designs. On the bottom tier is an abstract floral pattern carved in etched relief. Above that design is a series of upturned lotus leaves. The top tier consists of a railing with a number of small chubby children playing on it. Most of these figures are badly damaged. Supporting the upper part of the repository are eight pillars, one in each corner. The central portion of the repository is empty except for a smaller central pillar, which may not be original. Actual scriptures may have been placed here to symbolically vivify the cave. The eight supporting pillars are elaborately carved. The lower outer part of each pillar has a low relief image of a standing female figure in clouds. The figures are depicted in different attire and each figure holds a different attribute or makes a unique hand gesture. Clockwise from the figure on the pillar on the front east corner these figures are depicted in the following manner: the first figure holds a ruyi, the second figure holds a cakra, the third figure has her hands folded beneath her garments, the fourth is in añjali
mudrā, the fifth figure holds a fly whisk, the sixth figure holds a gem, the seventh figure holds a ribbon or scarf, and the eighth has her hands folded beneath her garments. These eight figures maybe intended as a generic group of offering goddesses that also symbolize the eight heavens in the universe.

Above the female figures on each pillar is a coiling dragon with the head positioned towards the bottom of the pillar and the tail at the top. The inner side of the pillar is undecorated except for some cloud patterns on the sides. Above, the top of the repository consists of several tiers of designs. On the bottom are a series of stylized clouds forming a regular pattern. Above these designs each of the eight sides have low relief depictions of terraces and pavilions in clouds. These structures are probably intended as stylized representations of Buddhist paradises.

The rear wall of the cave has a Buddha teaching assembly. The Buddha is identified in a donor inscriptions for the decoration of the image as Śākyamuni. However, the attendants of the Buddha include Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta who are normally associated with the Buddha Amitābha. The Buddha is seated on a lotus-pedestal. On the base of the pedestal is a flaming jewel with a ribbon motif in a recessed peanut-shaped frame. The Buddha makes a gesture with his hands held in front of his torso. The right hand is held above at chest level with the palm-down and his left hand is held below with the palm-up, almost as if he held a round object. This gesture may be a reference to the turning of the wheel of the law and may be a substitute for the dharmacakra mudrā to indicate that the teaching wheel he turns is the central sūtra repository. From the Buddha’s head emerge two twirling ribbons representing rays of light, which extend to the ceiling of the cave. Tree foliage is carved in low relief behind the Buddha. Flanking the Buddha are two monks and two bodhisattvas. Directly on the left of the Buddha is the older looking Mahākāśyapa with an inscription directly above. On Mahākāśyapa’s left is a standing image of Avalokiteśvara who holds a kuṇḍikā and a willow branch. Above the bodhisattva is another inscription. On the right side of the Buddha is a standing damaged image of a monk that represents the youthful Ānanda who is always paired with Mahākāśyapa. To Ānanda’s right is the bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta who holds a large lotus
with several open lotus buds. Next to Mahāsthāmaprāpta is a group of four donor figures, with two pairs of couples in two rows. The upper back pair of figures are slightly larger in scale and the female is more ornately attired than the lower female. Above the image of Mahāsthāmaprāpta to the left of these images is an inscription for the offering of the Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Ānanda, and Mahākāśyapa images, which also identifies the four donor figures depicted below.

The back niche on the south wall features Mañjuśrī seated on a lion. On the upper part of the niche is an area for an inscription. Within the niche is a small image of Sudhana in aṅjali mudrā facing Mañjuśrī’s back. Mañjuśrī is seated on a lion and holds a pustaka in his left hand and makes a gesture similar to the main Buddha with his right hand. This image faces out toward the central sūtra repository. The reins of his mount are held tight by a demonic looking groom on the front of the niche. Opposite Mañjuśrī on the north wall Samantabhadra is depicted seated on an elephant. Samantabhadra holds a ruyi with the right hand and makes a gesture similar to bhūmisparśa mudrā with the left hand. Samantabhadra’s elephant has six tusks and is held in place by a fierce looking groom. Like Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra faces toward the central sūtra repository. Behind Samantabhadra Sudhana is depicted in a smaller inner niche.

The niche to the left of Mañjuśrī contains a seated image of the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara with two attendants. The bodhisattva is seated on a rectangular dais and holds a seal with the right hand and a ribbon attached to the seal is held by the left hand. The attendant on the left side is a female who holds an a small offering bowl. On her head is a bird-like hat. Opposite her is a standing male figure who holds a jade seal and wears an ornate hat. The niche to the left of this niche features a single standing image of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva holds a round jewel with both hands. Emitting from the jewel is a long twirling stylized ribbon of light or smoke that rises to the top of the niche. The bodhisattva wears a filigree crown with a small image of a seated Buddha on top. The top and sides of the crown are covered by a scarf. The niche to the left of this niche on the outer edge of the cave is a single image of a fierce dvarapāla figure who holds a large
club with his right hand and his left hand holds a ribbon that is attached to his belt. This figure has a fierce grimace and also looks slightly inward toward the central repository with its large bulging eyes.

Opposite on the north side of the niche facing south is an equally fierce guardian figure with a clinched fist raised above his shoulder as if ready to strike a powerful blow. In his left hand is a rectangular mace. The niche to the left of this figure contains a single standing image of Avalokiteśvara. Similar to the opposite image of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva stands on a lotus-base and has elaborate adornments. The left hand holds the wrist of the right hand, which holds a string of prayer beads. The bodhisattva wears a floral filigree crown, with a small image of a standing Buddha on top. A twirling ribbon-like pattern emerges from the bodhisattva's ārūḍhā and expands to the top of the niche in two ribbon-like bands to frame an inscription located at the top of the niche. To the left of this niche is a seated image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is seated on a rocky platform. In front of the platform is a small child-like kneeling image in añjali mudrā who faces away from the image toward the Buddha on the rear wall. Amoghapāśa is depicted with six arms. His raised upper hands hold the sun and moon discs. The rear right hand holds a sword and the rear left holds an axe. The primary right hand is held up in front of the shoulder and holds a willow branch, while the primary left hand is placed on the lap and holds a pātra. Attending the bodhisattva are a pair of standing figures. On the left a female attendant and on the right a monk who wears a hood and has an aged or foreign appearance. This pair of attendants is likely intended to represent Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden who are frequently depicted as attendants to Avalokiteśvara.

_Cave/niche number: 137._

_NRZL title: _Vimalakirtinirdesā sūtra transformation illustration 维摩诘经变相图._

_Dimensions: 6.82 x 8.86 meters._

_Date: Southern Song Dynasty, 1134._
Inscription(s): four, see Appendix B, 1.26-1.28; MWL 30-1 numbers 45.1-45.3, 62 number 3.

Primary image(s): the debate between Vimalakirti and Mañjuśrī.

Secondary image(s): four female attendants, ten monks.

Niche type: rectangular stele inscription.

Content description: Located to the right of cave 136 this intaglio relief depicts the famous debate between the laymen Vimalakirti and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. The relief is thought to be based on a mural in a local temple called the Huiyin yuan (Temple of Beneficent Causes), which was copied on to stone to preserve it from water damage. Vimalakirti is depicted on the proper right side facing south with several female attendants. He holds a ruyi and sits facing Mañjuśrī on a square dais in front of a folding screen with a mountain landscape. Opposite, Mañjuśrī is seated on a similar dais and is accompanied by ten monks. To indicate they are engaged in intellectual debate Vimalakirti and Mañjuśrī are depicted emitting ribbons of light from their heads that become entwined together on the top of the relief. In front of Vimalakirti is a female attendant who holds a water vase and in front of Mañjuśrī is a slightly stooping female who holds an offering tray. The later may be intended to represent the incident in the sūtra were the monk Sariputra was changed into a female.

The NRZL identifies the relief as being based on the work of the famous tenth century painter Shi Ke. However, Li Fangyin believes that it may be based on a mural by the Late Tang artist Zuo Quan since Shi Ke is not noted to have painted this subject. The identification of the relief with Shi Ke is based on a description of the relief by Cao Xuequan in his Shu zhong mingsheng ji which records that it was based on a mural painted

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28 This is recorded in the Yudi jisheng. The temple was later destroyed at the end of the Ming Dynasty.

29 NRZL, 397.

30 Li Fangyin (1999), 132-133.
by Shi Ke in the rear wall of the Huiyin yuan temple’s sutra repository. However, this information is not noted in the inscriptions that accompany the relief.

Cave/niche number: 138.
NRZL title: Beacon fire of endless peace stele 烽烟永靖碑.
Dimensions: 2.07 x 3.54 meters.
Date: Republican Period, 1924.
Inscription(s): one, see MWL, 67-8 number 16.
Niche type: rectangular stele inscription.
Content description: This stele inscription consists of four large characters written in seal script and the name of the author and date is given in smaller standard kaishu script. Written by Luying who also wrote the inscription in number 143.

Cave/niche number: 139.
NRZL title: Unknown 不详.
Dimensions: 1.27 x 1.28 x .46 meters.
Date: Ming or Qing Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): two unidentified seated figures.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type III.1
Content description: This niche contains two unidentified seated images which appear to represent civil and military officials. The figure on the left side is depicted with a beard and wears the hat and gown of a civil official. In his left hand he holds a small cup like object while the right hand grasps his belt. The opposite figure is depicted wearing armor and a helmet. He holds a small triangular object in his right hand and the left hand rests on his knee, palm-down. The proportions of the figures and the style of their depiction indicates that this niche was a later addition, possibly dating to the Ming or Qing Dynasty.
Cave/ niche number: 140.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .76 x .60 x .17 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru (?).
Secondary image(s): two unidentified bodhisattvas, two donor figures.
Niche type: type V.
Content description: This niche contains three seated figures that are extensively damaged by erosion. To the right of the central figure is a khakkhara. Based on the placement of the khakkhara one would expect the central figure to be Bhaiṣajyaguru. This figure appears to have been seated in pralambapādāsana. The remaining outline of the two side figures indicates that they are bodhisattvas because of the outline of their heads that indicate they wore crowns. On the right and left sides of the niche is a damaged donor figure.

Cave/ niche number: 141.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .76 x .60 x .25 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): standing figure, unidentified.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type IV.1.
Content description: This niche contains a single standing figure, possibly a semi-divine monk, who holds a staff. The head of the figure is missing and the front of the image is entirely worn away. The figure stands directly on the base of the niche and is depicted wearing shoes and heavy monastic robes that drape down below the ankles. Behind the figure is a large plain round
halo and oval shaped body aureole. Above the figure on top of the niche is a small area carved in relief to resemble a banner or scroll, which was probably intended for an inscription.

**Cave/niche number:** 142.

**NRZL title:** Empty niche 空窟.

**Dimensions:** 1.16 x .66 x .25 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified standing figure.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** type III.1.

**Content description:** This niche is carved along side niche 144. Both niches are severely damaged. The rough outline of a standing figure is visible in this niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 143.

**NRZL title:** Poem of Luying stele 鲁赢诗碑.

**Dimensions:** .64 x 1.12 meters.

**Date:** Republican period, dated 1924.

**Inscription(s):** one, see MWL, 69 number 17.

**Niche type:** rectangular stele inscription.

**Content description:** This inscription is dated 1924 and is written by the Luying who wrote the inscription in niche 138. The inscription concerns the evils of war.

**Cave/niche number:** 144.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.16 x .71 x .25 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** two seated figures, unidentified.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: type III.1.
Content description: This niche is recessed in a larger niche, type IV.1, with niche 142. This niche contains a pair of figures seated “western-style” on a single plinth. Only the rudimentary form of the figures remain.

Cave/niche number: 145.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .78 x .55 x .20 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated figure, Avalokiteśvara(?).
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This damaged niche featured a central seated figure accompanied by two smaller standing attendant figures. All that remains of the central image is a large lotus-pedestal and large, round nimbus. This image probably represented the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. On the left side of the niche is a small standing male attendant figure in añjali mudrā, possibly representing Sudhana. This figure has an interesting lower garment with wavy, vertical striations representing folds. Opposite are traces of another standing figure on the right side of the niche. Below the niche is a stylized rock or lotus petal pattern carved in low relief.

Cave/niche number: 146.

NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche 观音龛.
Dimensions: 57 x .58 x .26 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa and Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): four new born infants.
Niche type: partially damaged, type I.1.
Content description: This niche contains a pair of bodhisattvas seated on square sumeru style pedestals. The bodhisattva on the right has six arms and can be identified as Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. In his primary hands he holds a bowl and a willow branch while the outstretched rear arms hold a sword and lasso. The upper raised hands hold sun and moon discs. The bodhisattva on the left has only two arms and is seated in rājalālāsana. Faintly visible behind the figure is a large, round body aureole. The aureole and the pose of the figure suggests that it represents the Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara. Below the pedestals of the two bodhisattvas are four lotus buds and a railing with four new born infants playing and lounging on the railing.

Cave/niche number: 147.

NRZL title: Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Buddha of Lapis Lazurli Radiance niche. 药师琉璃光佛龛

Dimensions: 1.03 x 1 x .43 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.

Secondary image(s): Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha, the eight great bodhisattvas, the twelve yakṣa generals, two attendant figures, and two apsarasas.

Niche type: damaged, type II.4.

Content description: This niche features images of the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his retinue. The Buddha and two primary bodhisattva attendants, Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha, are seated in pralambapādāsana on sumeru style pedestals. The Buddha’s left hand is placed on his knee, palm-down and his right hand is held at the chest and is slightly cupped with the palm pointing down. On the Buddha’s right the attendant bodhisattva holds a disc on his lap with the right hand and the left hand is placed on the left knee. The opposite bodhisattva is a mirror image. On each side of the Buddha is a standing attendant figure. A female figure
holding a large khakkhara is depicted on the right and a monk in añjali 
mudrā is depicted on the left. On the lateral sides of the niche are eight 
damaged standing figures, four on each side, which represent the eight great 
bodhisattvas. On the lower front part of the niche are a row of twelve figures 
representing the twelve yakṣa generals. On the interior top of the niche above 
the Buddha is a small canopy and around it are instruments and two 
apsarasas. To the left of the Buddha is a broken circular object topped by 
flames, which probably depicted Bhaiṣajyaguru’s medicine bowl.

Cave/niche number: 148.
NRZL title: Image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara 不空绢索观音像.
Dimensions: 1.67 x 1.7 x 1.13 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary Image(s): none.
Niche type: type I.1.
Content description: Located directly beneath niche 147 this niche contains a 
single image of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is seated in 
padmāsana and has six arms that hold the standard attributes of 
Amoghapāśa: the sun and moon discs, sword, lasso, willow branch, and bowl. 
Amoghapāśa is depicted wearing an elaborate floral crown that has a clover-
leaf shape and a ribbon on each side. The bodhisattva is depicted with an 
elaborate assortment of scarves and ribbons, which hang down on to the 
bodhisattva’s seat.

Cave/niche number: 149.
NRZL title: Cintāmanīcakra Avalokiteśvara 如意轮观音.
Dimensions: 3.43 x 3.22 x 3.46 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty, 1128.
Inscription(s): six, see Appendix B, numbers 1.29 -1.32; MWL, 27-29 
numbers 44.1-44.4, 65 number 10, 66-67 number 13.
Primary image(s): Cintāmaniçakra Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant bodhisattvas, two donors figures, and a larger retinue of forty deities.

Content description: This cave features a seated two armed image of Cintāmaniçakra Avalokiteśvara with two attendant bodhisattvas and a large retinue of some forty figures. All the figures are depicted on or above a ledge that runs along the three sides of the cave, about a meter above the ground. The base of the ledge is decorated with two bands of decoration. The top band contains a pattern of alternating vajras and ghaṇṭās. The lower band of decoration is a floral vine pattern.

The three bodhisattvas are depicted seated in padmāsana on lotus-pedestals on the rear wall of the cave. The central image of Cintāmaniçakra has two arms and is slightly larger than the two attendant bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva’s right hand is held to the chest with the fist clinched and turned outward. The left hand holds a large lotus stalk with a lotus-flower that holds a flaming cintāmani. In the center of the bodhisattva’s crown is a seated Buddha in dharmacakra mudrā. Above the bodhisattva is an octagonal canopy. The attendant bodhisattva on the right holds a ruyī with both hands and wears a large clover-leaf shaped floral crown. Opposite, the other bodhisattva has a crown that is covered by a scarf and holds a small vase on his lap with the left hand and a willow branch in the right hand. These two attendant bodhisattvas appear to represent two forms of Avalokiteśvara.

Behind the nimbi of the three bodhisattvas are four figures standing in clouds. On the far right is a female figure in añjali mudrā standing on a cloud that emerges from behind the bodhisattva who holds a ruyī. Between the nimbi of Cintāmaniçakra and the bodhisattva with a ruyī the upper torso of a two armed, male, martial figure depicted with the left arm held to the chest and the right hand holding a sword. On the opposite side of the central image is another two armed martial figure. This figure has four heads and holds a spear or staff. On the far left is another martial figure who holds a staff with his two hands. Two donor figures and their two smaller attendants are also depicted on the back wall of the cave. On the right side next to the
bodhisattva with the *ruyi* is a female donor figure standing on a slightly raised platform. She is depicted in *añjali mudrā* and wearing an ornate crown with a phoenix like shape. To her right is a south facing smaller female figure who holds an offering bowl. On the opposite side the other donor figure is a male and is dressed in official garments. His hands are held together below his chest and are covered by his sleeves. Next to this figure on the south wall facing north is a small male attendant figure who holds a large tablet. The two donors are identified in inscriptions located on the back wall of the niche.

The lateral side walls of the niche feature three rows of standing figures, which may be based on a *mandala* to Cintāmanicakra. Behind each row is a band of clouds. On the north wall the bottom row has six figures. On the far right is a dwarfish figure who holds a round object which is spewing out a stream of light or mist. In the same row is a female figure who holds a tablet, a martial figure with an axe, and three figures that hold tablets and wear hats. Above on the middle tier are six more figures. The outer right figure is a male figure who holds a tablet. On his left is a martial figure who holds an axe. Two smaller demonic looking figures are depicted to his left. One holds an axe and the other a sword. On their left is a male figure who holds a scale. Next to him are two more martial figures. The figure directly to his left holds a sword and votive *stūpa* and can be identified as Vaiśravana. On his right a martial figure holds a club. The top tier has only five figures. The outer right figure is a female figure who holds a staff or sword. Next to her is male figure who holds a *vajra*-mace. On his left are three male figures who hold tablets.

The south wall contains a similar set of figures in three rows complementing those on the north wall. The lower row has six figures. The outermost figure on the left is the wind god. Directly next to him a damaged figure holds a tablet. On the right of that figure is a male martial figure who holds an axe, and two female figures, with one holding a tablet and the other in *añjali mudrā*. The inner most figure on the right is a male figure who holds a tablet. In the second tier the outermost figure is demon-like and holds a battle axe. Next to him is a male figure who holds a sword. To the right of this figure are two smaller demons, one holds a sword or club. Next to them is
an armored male figure who holds a battle axe, and two figures who hold tablets. The innermost figure in this row holds a sword. Above on the top row are five figures. The outermost figure is a demon who carries a banner. Next to him is a six-armed three-headed asura demon who holds moon and sun discs, a sword or club, bow, and arrow. His primary hands are held in *aṅjali mudrā*. On his right are three male figures who hold tablets.

*Cave/niche number: 150.*

*NRZL title: Account of events stele* 记事碑.

Dimensions: 2.4 x .33 meters.

*Date: *Southern Song, dated 1186.

*Inscription(s):* one, see MWL, 65 number 9.

*Niche type:* rectangular stele, type III.1.

*Content description:* This stele inscription is located just to the left of cave 149. The brief inscription records the visit to the site by five individuals in 1186.

*Cave/niche number: 151.*

*NRZL title: Damaged image niche* 残像龛.

Dimensions: .40 x .33 x .01 meters.*

*Date: *Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara(?).

*Secondary image(s):* none.

*Niche type:* Damaged.

*Content description:* This small niche contains a single figure, which is almost completely obliterated. The figure appears to be seated in *rājalilāsana*. The remaining fragments of the figure indicate that it represented a bodhisattva because of the indication of adornments on the upper torso and head. Behind the bodhisattva is a large, round body aureole. These features indicate that this fractured image probably represented the Potalaka or Water-moon form of Avalokiteśvara, which is depicted in many
Song period niches at the site.

*Cave/niche number*: 152.

*NRZL title*: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions*: .53 x .33 x .08 meters.*

*Date*: Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s)*: none.

*Primary image(s)*: seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

*Secondary image(s)*: two standing attendant figures.

*Niche type*: Damaged.

*Content description*: This niche is slightly better preserved than niche 151. It contains a single figure that is seated in pralambapādāsana on a rectangular ledge. The figure is depicted wearing a robe and has no visible ornamentation except for the outline of a crown that was depicted on the head. The right arm is held up to the chest and holds a willow branch. The damaged left hand is held just above the lap and probably held a bowl. These attributes suggest that the figure represented the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Behind the figure is a plain circular body aureole and a large, round halo. Two small standing attendant figures accompany the bodhisattva. The figure on the right side is almost completely obliterated. The figure on the left side appears to hold a bowl or an offering tray.

*Cave/niche number*: 153.

*NRZL title*: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions*: 1.39 x .30 x .08 meters.*

*Date*: Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s)*: none.

*Primary image(s)*: unidentified standing figure.

*Secondary image(s)*: none.

*Niche type*: damaged, type III.1.

*Content description*: This niche contains a single standing figure with a single large, round nimbus. The figure is severely damaged with only the
outline of the figure remaining. Based on the outline the figure held a
khakkhara, which would indicate that it represented either the bodhisattva
Kṣitigarbha or the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru.

Cave/niche number: 154.
NRZL title: Empty niche 空窟.
Dimensions: 1.39 x .30 x .15 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none
Primary image(s): unidentified figure.
Secondary image(s): three unidentified attendant figures.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: Several figures are barely discernible in this damaged
niche. The primary figure appears to have held a staff on the left side, which
indicates that it could have represented Kṣitigarbha or Bhaisajyaguru. On
the top part of the niche are indications of two figures with smaller aureoles.
The figure on the right side appears to be seated in dhyāna mudrā. Also is a
damaged figure on the exterior of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 155.
NRZL title: Mahābuddhamātrkā Mahāmāyūri vidyārāja cave 大佛母孔雀明王窟.
Dimensions: 3.47 x 3.22 x 6.07 meters.
Date: 1126.
Inscription(s): nine, see Appendix B, 1.33; MWL, 26-27 number 41.
Primary image(s): Mahāmāyūri.
Secondary image(s): The walls of this cave are decorated with over one-
thousand small images representing the Buddhas of the auspicious kalpa.
There are also several larger Buddha groups. All total are approximately
1,066 figures represented.
Content description: This cave contains a central image of Mahāmāyūri
seated on a peacock located in the center of the cave toward the back wall.
The image has been carved completely in the round allowing for passage behind the image with a few feet on each side. Mahāmāyūrī is depicted with four arms and holds the stem of a lotus, or a peacock quill, that has been broken off, a round hand-fan stylized to look like a peacock feather, an orb like object, probably intended to represent a citron, and a pustaka (an accordion style book). The appearance of the bodhisattva with an elaborate floral crown, long string of pearl ear-rings, and other adornments corresponds closely with the textual descriptions of the deity. Behind Mahāmāyūrī the long tail feathers of the peacock form a nimbus behind the bodhisattva. To support the image the matrix of stone base has not been removed between the spindly legs of the peacock, but instead has been carved in low relief to emulate a rocky surface.

The side walls of the cave are decorated with several rows of small images of Buddhas, each approximately .18 x .6 meters, and carved in low relief. A number of the Buddhas are carved to look like monks and bodhisattvas. On the north wall one of these “Buddha” figures looks like the White-robed Avalokiteśvara who holds a string of prayer beads and wears a hood, and another image depicts a four storied pagoda rather than an anthropomorphic figure. The back wall has twelve rows of figures with approximately eighteen in each row. The south wall has twelve rows of figures with approximately thirty-four in each, and the north wall has thirteen rows with thirty four figures in each row. Most of the figures are depicted seated except for the lower rows toward the back of the cave. In the middle of each wall is a slightly larger Buddha image, about twice the size as the other figures. In the middle of the north wall a larger image of a Buddha (head missing) is depicted seated in padmāsana on an ornate throne with a high back decorated with mythical beasts. On the top of the throne back are five Buddhas and to the sides of the image are two vases. Toward the back of the north wall is a banner inscribed with an inscription that is no longer legible and a small rectangular niche with three seated figures in pralambapādāsana. On the south wall directly opposite the Buddha in bhūmisparśa mudrā is another larger Buddha image. This Buddha is seated on a lotus platform in padmāsana and is accompanied by two monks. The
Buddha makes the earth touching gesture with his left hand and the right hand makes a teaching gesture with the index figure pointing up. In the center of the back wall directly behind Mahāmāyūrī is a large image of a Buddha (about .6 m high) seated in padmāsana on a square pedestal with the hands (damaged) held up to the chest. Above the Buddha is a rectangular niche (.48 x .63 m) with three bodhisattvas seated in pralambapādāsana. The central figure, Avalokiteśvara holds a willow branch and a pātra. The figure on the right appears to be Kṣitigarbha who holds a khakkhara on his right shoulder. The left bodhisattva has both hands on the knees.

In the southeast corner of the back wall is a large niche (1.04 m wide) that contains a rectangular sumeru platform with a stylized cloth draped over it. An image that was seated on the pedestal appears to have been chiseled off and removed. On the back wall of this niche are remnants of a round halo and on the right side is a banner for an inscription. The niche was probably a later addition. Opposite on the northeast corner is a large crack in the wall.

Cave/niche number: 156.
NRZL title: Stele of the stūpa in which the seated Chan Master of the West was transformed 西域禅师坐化塔碑.
Dimensions: .51 x .56 meters.
Date: Qing Dynasty, 1882.
Inscription(s): one, see MWL, 67 number 15.
Content description: This inscription is written in standard script and consists of eight vertical lines. There is no date given in the inscription but the author Zhao Ciguan, also inscribed an inscription at Baodingshan that is dated, 1882.

Cave/niche number: 157.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .73 x .68 x .3 meters.*
Date: Qing or Ming Dynasty.

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Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): no longer intact.
Secondary image(s): two unidentified seated figures.
Niche type: damaged, type V.
Content description: This small niche has an unusual composition. The central image of the niche is missing but appears to have been a standing figure. The central image was attended by two diminutive figures with round halos that are seated in pralambapādāsana on benches and face each other. These figures are too damaged to identify. Above where the central image was located is a circular ring depicted in low relief on a “cloud” rising up from where the central image was located. The interior of the ring may have contained another figure as an emanation of the central image below. The unusual composition of the niche and the remaining remnants of the figures suggest that this niche was a later addition, possibly added in the Qing Dynasty.

Cave/niche number: 158.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .60 x .68 x .12 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty(?).
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.
Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (missing) and two monks.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: The damaged central figure in this niche is incorrectly identified in the NRZL as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. This figure should be correctly identified as the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru. The Buddha is seated in padmāsana on an sumeru style platform. He holds a pātra in the left hand, and the right hand (damaged) is raised toward the chest. Standing to the sides of the Buddha are two monks. The monk on the right holds a khakkhara, while the other monk is depicted in añjali mudrā. On each side of
the back of the niche is a round circular halo indicating that two bodhisattvas attended the Buddha. On top of the niche above the Buddha is a sun-flower like lotus-canopy carved in low relief.

Cave/niche number: 159.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .63 x .53 x .17 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): one attendant figure (damaged).
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is badly eroded. The niche contains an image of Amoghapāśa seated in padmāsana. The figure has six arms. The upper pair of arms hold the solar and lunar discs, which rest on clouds that emerge from the bodhisattva’s hands. The outstretched back arms hold a pair of swords. In addition to a sword, the right hand holds a coiled pāśa. The primary hands are positioned above the lap with a small pātra held in the left hand. The damaged right hand is positioned directly above the bowl and likely held a willow branch. On the left side of the niche is a damaged standing figure.

Cave/niche number: 160.
NRZL title: Damaged stele inscription 残碑刻.
Dimensions: .81 x .38 x .05 meters.*
Date: Southern Song Dynasty, 1143.
Inscription(s): one, see MWL, 62 number 4.
Content description: This inscription is written in clerical script and consists of a total of 32 characters in four vertical lines. Most of the inscription is no longer legible.
Cave/niche number: 161.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .66 x .63 x .27 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha(?).

**Secondary image(s):** two attendants, one devotee.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.4.

**Content description:** The NRZL identifies the main image of this niche as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The bodhisattva is dressed in monastic robes and seated in pralambapādāsana on a rocky ledge. The arms and head of the figure are damaged or missing. The left hand is placed on the lap palm-up. There is a plain circular double halo behind where the head was located. The remnants of the neck indicate that the figure was depicted wearing a cowl. Attending the central figure are two smaller standing figures. On the right side a hooded female(?) figure holds a large khakkhara. Opposite on the right side a male(?) figure holds a pātra. Both attendant figures wear monastic robes and appear to wear hoods or funerary caps. The inner front base of the niche is decorated with a pattern of upturned lotus-petals. Standing below the three primary figures and next to the attendant who holds the khakkhara is a smaller female devotee figure. The niche type and the style of the figures suggest that the niche dates to the Song Dynasty.

Cave/niche number: 162.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .63 x .59 x .25 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** divine monk, Nāgarajuna.

**Secondary image(s):** one attendant figure, one dragon (nāga).

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This eroded niche depicts the legendary South Asian
monk/arhat Nāgārajuna accompanied by one attendant and a serpent (nāga). The images are badly weathered, but identifiable by similar depictions of this subject matter in niches 258 and 189. Nāgārajuna is seated on a rectangular plinth and holds a writing brush in his right hand. In front of Nāgārajuna on the right side is a small standing figure who faces Nāgārajuna. Above and behind Nāgārajuna is the twisting form of a dragon. The tail of the dragon appears to emerge from the clasped hands of the small attendant figure.

**Cave/niche number:** 163.

**NRZL title:** Stele of the inexhaustible old man 无尽老人语录碑.

**Dimensions:** 1.7 x: 1.46 meters.

**Date:** Southern Song.

**Inscription(s):** one, see Appendix C, number 3; MWL, 51-56 number 4.

**Content description:** This inscription is written in sixteen vertical lines and contains 247 characters.

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**Cave/niche number:** 164.

**Dimensions:** 1.29 x .93 x .71 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified bodhisattva.

**Secondary image(s):** two unidentified bodhisattvas, two apsarasas, and two donor figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.4.

**Content description:** This niche contains three seated figures. The surfaces of the images are eroded. The central figure appears to be a bodhisattva. The bodhisattva’s two hands are held at the center of the chest with the right hand held above, or clasping, the left hand. Flanking the central image are two seated bodhisattvas. Both bodhisattvas appear to be seated in pralambapādāsana. The bodhisattva on the left holds a pātra with the left hand. The other bodhisattva is more severely damaged. On the back of the
niche there a flower design that is repeated on both sides of the central image and two apsarasas, one on each side. Two donor figures are located on the inner front sides on the niche.

*Cave/niche number: 165.*

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* 1.04 x .81 x .40 meters.*

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.

*Secondary image(s):* four attendant figures.

*Niche type:* damaged.

*Content description:* This niche features an image of the Water-moon form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The head and upper torso of the image have been destroyed. The bodhisattva is seated in lalitāsana on a rectangular plinth on top of a rocky pedestal. The bodhisattva has a large, round aureole. To the right of Avalokiteśvara is a small female figure in añjali mudrā. Another figure was depicted on the right side of that figure, but only the base of the figure remains. Opposite on the left side of the niche are the remnants of a complementary pair of attendant figures. These four attendant figures probably depicted the Dragon Maiden, Sudhana, and two donors.

*Cave/niche number:* 166.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* .78 x .71 x .15 meters.*

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated Buddha, Amitābha.

*Secondary image(s):* Avalokiteśvara, Kṣitigarbha, three unidentified attendant figures, and one donor figure.

*Niche type:* damaged, type II.4.
Content description: This niche has two tiers of images. The upper tier features a Buddha and two bodhisattvas. The central Buddha is seated in lotus posture on a lotus-pedestal. His right hand is held near the chest and the left hand is placed on the lap, palm-up. Flanking the Buddha are two bodhisattvas seated in pralambapādāsana. The two bodhisattvas appear to represent Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha, right and left respectively. The bodhisattvas on the right wears a crown and holds the stem of a lotus. Opposite, the left bodhisattva has a shaven head and holds an orb or bowl. The identification of the two bodhisattvas as Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara suggests that the central image represents Amitābha.

The base of the top tier is decorated with a pattern of upturned lotus-petals. Below, the lower tier contains the remaining upper torsos of three seated figures. These figures appear to be seated in lotus posture and use arm rests, which indicates that they may be intended as monks. The central and right figures appear to have beards and wear a caps. The figure on the left has a shaven head like a monk. In addition to the three seated figures, on the right side of the niche is a small, damaged, standing donor figure.

Cave/niche number: 167.

NRZL title: Empty cave 空窟.

Dimensions: 1.54 x .63 meters.*

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary image(s): one or two attendant figures.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche is located to the left of cave 168 and contains a large standing figure, approximately life-size. The figure is badly damaged and only a small portion of the figure remains intact. Below the figure on the right side are remnants of a smaller attendant figure.
Cave/niche number: 168.

NRZL title: Cave of five-hundred arhats 五百何罗汉窟.

Dimensions: 3.3 x 3.14 x 7.1 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): ten or more, see Appendix B, 1.34-41; see MWL, 26 numbers 40.1-40.5; 56-58 number 5; 65 number 8; 73-4 numbers 6-8.

Primary image(s): central caitya (later addition).

Secondary Image(s): Five-hundred arhats and other figures.

Content description: The exterior border of this cave is decorated with a relief pattern imitating a rocky or mountainous setting. In the center near the back of the cave is an octagonal memorial caitya (.45 x 1.91) made of cut stone. The front of the caitya has a square niche with an inscription. The inscription indicates that it was created for a monk in the seventeenth century (1634). The three walls of the cave are covered with over five-hundred small relief images, arranged in six rows, which represent the legendary five-hundred arhats. Inscriptions in the cave indicate sets of several arhats were donated by different donors. There is considerable variation in how the arhats are depicted. Some appear to be depicted as Buddhas. One figure on the top row of the south side of the cave holds a vase and wears a cowl like the White-robed Avalokiteśvara.

On the top center of the rear wall is a small rectangular niche (.8 x 1.35 x .33), which contains a Buddha teaching assembly. The central Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal and holds his right hand up in front of the chest and the left hand on the left knee palm-down. Behind to the sides of the Buddha are eight monks, four on each side. The two attendant bodhisattvas who flank the Buddha are also seated in lotus posture on lotus-pedestals. The bodhisattva on the right holds a lotus and has a cowl draped over the head. The opposite bodhisattva is depicted with the hands held in front of the chest. On the sides of the niche are two standing monk attendants. The monk on the right ride holds a khakkhara and the opposite monk holds a jewel or orb.

\[31\] The inscription is transcribed in the MWL, 56-58 number 5.

\[32\] On the five-hundred arhats see De Viser (1923), 21-37.
Cave/niche number: 169.


Dimensions: 2.2 x 1.5 x 1.23 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Tejaprabha Buddha.

Secondary image(s): nine (eleven) luminaries, twenty-eight constellations, twelve signs of the zodiac, and eleven donor figures.

Content description: The Buddha Tejaprabha is depicted seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal and holds a six-spoked dharma wheel in his lap with his left hand. His right hand makes a variation of the dharmacakra mudrā. The head of the Buddha is a replacement carved by Mao Shifu of the Dazu Research Institute in 1983. Behind the head of Tejaprabha is a large circular aureole with an outer band that has a swirling pattern. The halo is enclosed by a large, plain, oblong shaped aureole. On both sides behind the Buddha's aureole are stylized tree branches depicted in low relief. Directly above the Buddha is an elaborate floral canopy with a long ribbon extending out from each side going to the top of the opposite sides of the niche. Eleven figures representing the eleven illuminaries stand to the sides of the Buddha on a ledge even with the base of the Buddha's pedestal. Unfortunately, all the heads of these figures are damaged or missing.

On the right side of the niche are four separate groups of smaller figures carved in relief. On the upper part of the wall are two groups of figures in clouds. The top cloud has fourteen standing figures, seven in each row. The lower cloud is badly worn, but appears to have had two rows of figures with possibly four or five figures in each row. Below the two clouds is a group of five standing male donor figures arranged in two rows with three figures in front and two in back. Beneath this group are three female donor images and at the very bottom of the niche are three donor figures, which are badly damaged.

The left side of the niche has collapsed and been replaced by a wall of cut stone bricks. A portion of the wall remains near the top of the south wall where are two rows of figures in clouds, which seem to repeat the group of
fourteen on the opposite side of the niche. Very likely this group of twenty-eight figures was intended to represent the twenty-eight constellations with the figures on the lower clouds intended to represent the twelve signs of the zodiac.

_Cave/niche number_: 170.

_NRZL title_: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

_Date_: Song Dynasty.

_Inscription(s):_ none

_Primary image(s):_ bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

_Secondary image(s):_ eight mānuṣi Buddhas.

_Niche type_: damaged.

_Content description_: This small, badly weathered niche is located above and to the left of the niche 169. The niche features two seated figures, which are appear to represent Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The figure on the left holds a _khakkhara_, which indicates that it likely represents Kṣitigarbha. Above and behind the two primary images are seven or eight Buddhas seated on lotuses that emerge from a pot between the two central figures. This arrangement is seen on several other depictions of the two bodhisattvas at the site, such as in niche numbers 171 and 172.

_Cave/niche number_: 171.

_NRZL title_: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

_Dimensions_: .73 x .45 x .12 meters. *

_Date_: Song Dynasty.

_Inscription(s):_ none.

_Primary image(s):_ two bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

_Secondary image(s):_ seven mānuṣi Buddhas(?).

_Niche type_: damaged.

_Content description_: This small severely damaged niche features two central seated figures with a lotus-flower vase (_kalaśa_) between them. The two seated figures are almost completely destroyed except for their round halos
and aureoles. Behind the nimbus of the figure on the left is the top of a khakhara, which indicates that the figure probably represented the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The figure on the right is seated in lalitāsana and appears to have held a willow branch and bowl, the standard attributes of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The kalaśa between them has five or seven stems coming out of it. Directly above the vase one of the stems leads up to the outline of a halo and aureole, which probably represented a seated Buddha. Six other Buddhas were probably represented on the back and sides of the niche like niche 170.

There is a small badly damaged niche (1.44 x 1.06 x .4 meters) between niches 169 and 174, and below niche 171, which was not recorded in the NRZL. The niche contains several damaged figures that are barely discernible.

Cave/niche number: 172.

NRZL title: Images of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara.

Dimensions: .76 x .65 x .39 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): seven mānuṣi Buddhas, two unidentified attendant figures.

Niche type: type I.4.

Content description: This niche features images of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. Both bodhisattvas are seated in pralambapādāsana on separate sumeru style platforms. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right holding a bowl and a willow branch. Kṣitigarbha holds a staff on his right shoulder and a bowl or jewel with his left hand. On the back wall of the niche six or seven small Buddhas are depicted seated on lotuses that grow out of a group of stems between the two bodhisattvas. On the right side of the niche is a figure seated on a lotus who holds a banner with another standing figure in front. The opposite side of the niche is severely damaged.
Cave/niche number: 173.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .6 x .55 x .17 meters.*

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two attendant figures.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche features a six-armed image of Amoghapāśa seated in padmāsana on a sumeru platform. The attributes held by the bodhisattva include the solar and lunar discs, sword, lasso, and willow branch. The front left arm is damaged but probably held a bowl on the lap. On each side of Amoghapāśa is a damaged, standing figure.

Cave/niche number: 174.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .71 x .58 x .31 meters.*

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none

Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two attendant figures.

Niche type: damaged, type I.4.

Content description: This niche is similar to niche 173 located above it. The niche contains a six-armed figure of Amoghapāśa seated in padmāsana on a sumeru platform. The upper hands hold solar and lunar discs. A sword and pāśa are held in the outstretched middle hands while the right primary hand holds a willow branch. The left arm is damaged but would have held a bowl on the lap. Below in front of the sumeru platform are two lotus buds. Two badly damage attendants are depicted on the sides of the niche.
Cave/niche number: 175.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Date: Song Dynasty.

Inscription(s): none

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche is located above niche 176. The niche is severely eroded and features a single standing figure, which is no longer identifiable. The NRZL dates this niche to the Song Dynasty. There also appears to be another niche on the right side of this niche that has been partially obscured by repairs done for niche 176.

Cave/niche number: 176.

NRZL title: Ketumati Maitreya sūtra transformation illustration 弥勒下生经变相图.

Dimensions: 2.72 x 1.95 x 2.4 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty, 1126.

Inscription(s): four, see Appendix B, 1.42-43; MWL, 27 number 42; 62-66, numbers 7 and 12; 74 number 9.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Maitreya.

Secondary image(s): complicated assembly of over one hundred small figures which include the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, the monk Ānanda and Mahākāśyapa, the four heavenly kings, and approximately twenty donor figures.

Content description: The iconography of this niche is discussed in chapter 4 of this study. The niche depicts the Buddha Maitreya in the future world of Ketumati. Maitreya is depicted seated on an elaborate circular lotus-pedestal with an ornate throne back. On the base of the pedestal are three lion like beasts with their forelimbs raised as if supporting the upper part of the pedestal. Between the lions are two small niches that contain seated female musicians who play a flute and a pair of wooden clappers. The
Buddha’s throne back is similar to the type depicted in niche 12. Each side is decorated with two foreign looking cherub-like figures riding mythical beasts that stand on lotuses emerging from a vase. On the top sides of the throne back are six small Buddhas seated on lotuses, which represent the six former māṇusi Buddhas. Maitreya is depicted seated in padmāsana with the right hand placed on his lap and the left hand palm-down on the knee in bhūmisparśa mudrā. Directly above Maitreya is a circular canopy topped by a two-story Chinese style building and a peacock. The building may represent Tuṣita, the heavenly paradise of the bodhisattva Maitreya. Extending out to the sides of the niche from the base of the canopy are four widening ribbons, two on each side, representing rays of light, which originally where connected to Maitreya’s uṣṇīṣa. The lower ribbons each swirl to form three loops. The inner two loops each contain a small seated Buddha and the outer loops a building. Also on each side of the canopy are two birds, an apsarās, and an auspicious cloud. On the ceiling of the cave above Maitreya a lotus-canopy is carved low relief.

Directly flanking Maitreya are two monks. On the left is the elder Mahākāśyapa and on the right the youthful Ānanda. On the right next to Ānanda are several rows of figures, which include a number of female figures and monks, and a tonsure scene. In front of Ānanda is small kneeling figure in añjali mudrā on a cloud. The arrangement on the opposite side of the niche is similar with a six-armed, three headed asura type figure standing behind Mahākāśyapa. This figure’s upper two arms hold sun and moon discs, and the middle arms hold a sword and pāśa, while the front primary hands are in añjali mudrā. This figure and a larger figure behind Ānanda may be intended to represent the eight classes of demigods (tianlongbabu 天龙八部). To the right of Mahākāśyapa in the lower left corner is another tonsure scene.

On the bottom of both sides of the back of the niche is a badly worn panel of donor figures. On the right side are three figures, two larger adult figures and a smaller child figure. One of the adult figures appears to hold two long lotus stems above the child figure. The opposite side is badly damaged and covered in lichen, but appears to depict two larger donor figures and two smaller ones.
The bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, with small images of Sudhana, are depicted on the back corners of the niche. The side walls of the niche are organized into four sections. On the bottom are panels of donor figures. Above them is a panel depicting scenes of life in Ketumati. In the main portion of the wall has a large grouping of figures with a larger central figure representing the cakravartin king and queen of Ketumati. On the top sides of the niche are a series of stylized mountain, which may represent the mountain setting in which the three future teaching assemblies of Maitreya are to take place.

On the North wall below the stylized mountains are seven rows of figures with around five figures in each row. The top two rows have female figures, four of which are depicted in armor. The lower rows contain monks except at the very bottom where the upper torsos of two Heavenly Kings and two other armored figures are depicted emerging from behind the tops of trees on the lower register. In the center of the wall is a larger standing figure with a group of female attendants who hold fans and offering trays. The central figure is damaged, but may represent the consort Syāmavati who leads 84,000 palace maids to become disciples of Maitreya. On the outer lower side of the central group is a damaged figure who holds a large banner.

On the opposite south side of the niche the same grouping is repeated with some minor variations. In the stylized mountain landscape on the top are are five small figures kneeling on clouds with their hands in añjali mudrā. These perhaps represent the members of the assembly who achieved arhathood. Also is one larger bodhisattva figure in añjali mudrā and seated in padmāsana in a circular disc on upper right corner in front of the mountain landscape. Below the landscape are six or seven rows of figures similar to the opposite side of the niche with a larger central figure. The upper two rows each contain five female figures and the lower rows have images of monks or nuns. On the bottom row are two Heavenly Kings, two martial deities, and a figure who holds a large banner. Above the two martial figures in the center is a larger standing figure with a group of female attendants like those on the north wall of the niche. This figure may represent the carkravartin Śāṅkhara who leads 84,000 of his ministers to become disciples of Maitreya.
Beneath the main assembly on both sides of the niche is a panel depicting scenes of life in the future paradise of Ketumati. These panels are discussed in chapter four of this study.

Cave/niche number: 177.

NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha transformation tableau 地藏像变相图.

Dimensions: 3.32 x 2.2 x 2.54 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period, 1126.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.44; MWL, 27 number 43.

Primary image(s): the monk Sengqie.

Secondary image(s): two Chinese monks, Wanhui and Baozhi, and three standing attendant monks and one nun.

Content description: This cave contains three large seated images of monks with four attendant figures. The authors of the NRZL have identified the images in this niche as manifestations of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. However, more recent research has lead to the correct identification of these images as representing a triad of famous monks. The central image represents the famous Tang monk Sengqie (617-710), who was considered a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara. Sengqie is seated in a posture of meditation on a raised square dais with a high throne back. He wears the garments of a monk with a cowl covering his head. His hands are folded together beneath his robe and rest on an arm rest that has legs carved to look like the paws of a lion. Peering out from behind the throne back are two figures. On the left side is a monk who holds a large khakkhara and on the right side is a smaller figure, possibly intended as a nun who holds a water bottle. Flanking Sengqie on the lateral walls of the cave are two monks seated on similar platforms. On the right the monk is seated in padmāsana. His head is covered by a cowl and his mouth is held open as if chanting. This monk represents Wanhui (632-711), a famous monk from the Tang Dynasty who forms part of a standard triad with Sengqie. The opposite facing monk is seated in pralambapādāsana with his bare feet resting on a small
rectangular stool. This monk represents Baozhi (425-514), a famous monk from the Six Dynasties period. He can be identified by the staff he holds in his right hand, which has several objects attached to it.

Next to Baozhi and Wanhui are two standing monks. The monk on the left side of the cave next to Baozhi has his head tilted toward the exterior of the cave. His hands are held in front of his waist with the right hand clasping his left wrist. The opposite figure is too badly damaged to identify but appears to have been a similar monk to complement the opposite figure.

The ceiling of the cave is flat and decorated with several bas-relief carvings. In the center of the ceiling is a circular canopy and around it are two birds, one of which is a peacock, and several floating musical instruments. These are all somewhat eroded and difficult to identify. An inscription is carved in a prominent panel on the left side of the back wall of the cave and identifies the artisan.

Cave/niche number: 178.
NRZL title: Empty niche 空龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is located to the right of cave 180. The niche is badly damaged and all that remains of its contents is the faint trace of the nimbus of a seated figure.

Cave/niche number: 179.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: 1.24 x .93 x .40 meters.*
Date: Song Dynasty.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara(?).
Secondary image(s): two attendants figures and two donor images.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and contains five figures. The primary figure is damaged, but appears to represent a bodhisattva, probably Avalokiteśvara, seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru style platform. The figure can be identified as a bodhisattva by the remaining fragment of the figure’s headdress. To each side of the bodhisattva is a standing attendant figure. In front of the attendant figures are two male donor figures.

Cave/niche number: 180.

NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara transformation illustration.

Dimensions: 3.75 x 3.79 x 3.17 meters.

Date: Song Dynasty, 1116.

Inscription(s): three, see Appendix B, 1.45-47; MWL, 25 number 39.1-39.3.

Primary image(s): Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): ten Avalokiteśvara images, two bodhisattva attendants, and a twelve smaller bodhisattva figures.

Content description: This is one of the largest caves at the Fowan site and features a large central image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara seated in rājalilāśana on a sumeru style pedestal with ten other forms of Avalokiteśvara carved on the walls of the cave. Above several of the standing bodhisattvas that line the walls of the cave are smaller bodhisattvas arranged in a row to roughly correspond to each of the larger standing bodhisattvas below. The extant donor inscriptions in the cave indicate that the larger bodhisattvas were offered by different patrons.

The central bodhisattva is almost completely carved in the round. In the middle of the bodhisattva’s headdress is a small Buddha representing Amitābha, the spiritual source of Avalokiteśvara. The pose of the bodhisattva and it’s large, round nimbus suggest that it represents the Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara. On the ceiling of the cave directly above the head of Avalokiteśvara is a somewhat plain circular lotus-canopy. Two large lotus
buds are located in front of the bodhisattva’s pedestal. Behind and to the sides of the central bodhisattva, two attendant bodhisattva are carved in shallow niches and are slightly smaller than the ten bodhisattvas that line the sides of the cave. Unlike the ten other standing bodhisattvas these two bodhisattva figures face directly outward. The bodhisattva on the right holds a small ball or bowl(?) with the left hand and makes the *vitarka mudrā* with the right hand. The opposite bodhisattva holds an alms bowl in the palm of the left hand and a willow branch in the right.

The ten bodhisattvas that are arranged on the side walls of the niche stand in stiff postures on a small ledge decorated with upturned lotus-petals. Each bodhisattva is given an unique attribute or *mudrā* otherwise their appearance is similar. A number of these bodhisattvas can be identified as specific forms of Avalokiteśvara. On each side the bodhisattva nearest the exterior of the cave has been almost completely destroyed. To the right of the outer most figure on the left (south) side of the cave the bodhisattva holds an ink well and a brush. To the right of that figure the Treasure-seal form of Avalokiteśvara is represented holding a square seal with the right hand while the left hand holds a ribbon attached to the seal. The bodhisattva to the right holds a small wicker basket. Next to this bodhisattva the innermost bodhisattva on the left side represents Amoghapāśa and holds a coiled rope with the right hand while the left hand grasps the right wrist. This figure is located on the corner of the back wall of the cave and faces at an angle to the exterior of the cave. Opposite on the right side of the cave the innermost bodhisattva holds a willow branch and water bottle. The bodhisattva to the right is depicted in *varada mudrā*. The head of the bodhisattva on the right of this figure is turned slightly to the right and faces toward the exterior of the niche. This bodhisattva holds a *ruyi* with both hands in front of the chest. To the right of the bodhisattva holding a *ruyi* is the White-robed form of Avalokiteśvara who holds a string of prayer beads. The back of the headpiece of this bodhisattva is partially covered by a scarf that is draped on to the shoulders.

Above the bodhisattvas on the upper side walls of the cave are smaller bodhisattva figures, with six on each side corresponding to the larger standing
bodhisattvas below. On the right side of the niche are three bodhisattva figures seated in a row on lotuses with a stylized cloud-pattern below them. The innermost of the three figures is seated in rājalilāsana. The two outer figures are damaged. Next to these three figures the bodhisattva Samantabhadra is depicted seated on his elephant mount. Above the bodhisattva who holds a willow branch and kundikā on the inner right side of the cave another small bodhisattva is depicted seated on a lotus. This bodhisattva holds a willow branch and an alms bowl. Unlike the other bodhisattvas who are depicted as if floating on clouds, the lotus seat of this bodhisattva is connected to a stem that extended up from behind the head of the lower bodhisattva. Directly opposite on the left side of the niche another small bodhisattva is depicted seated on a lotus with a stem that emerges from behind the head of the larger lower standing bodhisattva identified as Amoghapāśa. This bodhisattva is seated in lalitāsana and holds an alms bowl on the lap and a willow branch (?) in the right hand. Above the bodhisattva who holds a basket is the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī who is seated on a lion above a stylized cloud pattern. Next to Mañjuśrī another bodhisattva is depicted seated in rājalilāsana on a lotus above a stylized cloud-pattern. To the left of this figure two more bodhisattvas are depicted on lotuses that share a single stem that rises from behind the lower, standing bodhisattva who holds an ink well and writing brush. The two bodhisattvas hold circular objects on their laps and may represent Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. In addition to these seated figures above the damaged outer figures on both sides of the cave are two damaged standing bodhisattva figures, one on each side.

Cave/niche number: 181.

NRZL title: Damaged image 残像.

Dimensions: 3.10 x .5 meters.*

Date: undated

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary Image(s): see niche 184, below.

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**Niche type:** type V.

**Content description:** This large shallow niche is located adjacent to cave 180 and features a large, three meter high figure that stands barefoot on two lotuses. The entire surface of the image with the exception of the feet is eroded. The image is depicted in a slightly relaxed pose and the hands appear to have been held in front of the chest. The end of a scarf is depicted at the base of the image between the feet of the figure similar to the bodhisattvas depicted in cave 180. A smaller figure adjacent to this niche, which is identified in the NRZL as niche number 184, was probably intended to be part of this niche. The figure in that niche is also almost completely destroyed, but faces the figure in niche 180. This composition is similar to the large standing images of Śākyamuni with the monk Mahākāśyapa seen at the Yuanjuedong in Anyue and at the Eastern cliff in Zizhong.

**Cave/niche number:** 182.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 0.3 x 0.35 x 0.03 meters.*

**Date:** undated.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** two unidentified seated figures.

**Secondary Image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This niche is badly eroded and has partially collapsed. The niche contains the rudimentary forms of two eroded seated figures.

**Cave/niche number:** 183.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.06 x 0.71 x 0.17 meters.*

**Date:** undated.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified seated figure.

**Secondary Image(s):** one or two standing attendant/donor figures.
**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This niche is almost completely destroyed. The niche contains a damaged central figure seated on a pedestal and a smaller standing attendant figure on the right side of the niche, and possibly one on the opposite side.

**Cave/niche number:** 184.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .99 x .35 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified standing figure.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This niche was probably intended to be part of niche 184 with the standing figure in this niche serving as an attendant to the larger standing figure in niche 184. The pair of niches may have represented a popular composition depicting the transmission of the teaching lineage symbolized by Śākyamuni’s gift of a flower to Mahākāśyapa. However, both images are far too damaged to confirm that identification. The figure depicted in niche 184 faces south and stands barefooted on a lotus-base like the large image in 184. Also like that image, the figure in 184 has a scarf that hangs down to the feet between the legs, which is similar to images in cave 180. The upper portion of the image is completely destroyed.

**Cave/niche number:** 185.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛

**Dimensions:** .68 x .58 x .16 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** unidentified seated figure.

**Secondary image(s):** two unidentified attendant figures.
**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** The images in this niche are badly damaged and not identifiable. The niche features a central figure seated in *pralambapādāsana*. The left arm appears to be placed on the lap and the right arm held above it. The head of the image has been completely destroyed. Attending the central figure are two attendants placed symmetrically, one on each side. These figures are also badly damaged and missing their extremities.

**Cave/niche number:** 186.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .88 x .73 x .30 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

**Secondary image(s):** seven mānuṣi Buddhas.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This damaged niche is located at the base of the cliff and depicts the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha with the seven mānuṣi Buddhas. The niche is very similar to nearby niche 191. Kṣitigarbha is depicted seated holding a *khakkhara* with his right hand and holding a *cintāmaṇi* on his lap with his left hand. Seven roundels containing small Buddhas seated in *dhyāna mudrā* on lotuses are arranged in a row above Kṣitigarbha. Next to Kṣitigarbha the lower portion of the niche is carved to represent a stylized rocky landscape. There may have been two additional figures on the lateral sides of the niche, but are now completely eroded.

**Cave/niche number:** 187.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.62 x 1.44 x .45 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): seven mānuṣi Buddha, the Buddhas of the three realms, and two donor figures.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.
Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a pair of bodhisattvas seated in lalitāsana on sumeru platforms. In the center of the niche between the bodhisattvas is a vase (kalaśa) with ten stalks growing out of it that extend upward behind the bodhisattvas. On the end of each stalk is a small figure of a Buddha seated on a lotus. The upper seven figures may depict the seven mānuṣi Buddha and the lower three the Buddhas of the three realms. This group of ten may also represent the ten directional Buddhas.

Both of the primary bodhisattva figures are damaged. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the left with a hood covering his head and a khakkhara held in his right hand. He has a plain circular halo and aureole. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on his left with a flaming, tear-drop shaped halo and aureole. This image is severely damaged and the attributes of the bodhisattva can not be identified. The outline of the head indicates that the bodhisattva was depicted wearing a crown. Two standing donor images are carved on the interior sides of the niche, one on each side. Foliage has been carved in low relief on the back of the niche around the upper row of Buddhas.

Cave/niche number: 188.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Five Dynasties period (†).
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): damaged.
Secondary image(s): unidentified standing figure.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is located at the top of the cliff wall and has been damaged by erosion. The primary image is no longer intact. All that
remains in the niche is a standing figure on the left side, which is not readily visible from ground level. The niche is deeply cut, which is a characteristic of some Five Dynasties niches at the site.

*Cave/niche number: 189.*

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .48 x .41 x .07 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties or Song (?).

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Nāgārjuna.

**Secondary image(s):** unidentified standing figure.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This small niche is located between niches 190 and 187 near the base of the cliff. The niche contains a badly damaged image of a seated figure, which can be identified as the monk Nāgārjuna by a small image of a dragon depicted next to the figure. There are a number of similar small images of this theme on the north end of the site, but none of them are well preserved. Directly above this niche is a small unfinished and unnumbered niche that is almost completely collapsed.

*Cave/niche number: 190.*

**NRZL title:** Bhaiśajyaguru Buddha niche 药师琉璃佛龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.46 x 1.25 x .30 meters.

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated Buddha, Bhaiśajyaguru.

**Secondary image(s):** Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, two attendant figures, the eight great bodhisattvas, twelve yakṣa generals, and one donor figure.

**Niche type:** type II.4.

**Content description:** This niche contains a conventional Bhaiśajyaguru teaching assembly. Bhaiśajyaguru is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform. His arms are damaged. The right hand is held up to the
right chest and the left hand is placed on the lap. To the sides of the Buddha are two attendants. On the right a female attendant holds a *khakkhara*. On the left a monk is depicted in *añjali mudrā*. Suryaprabha and Candraprabha flank the Buddha. They are depicted as mirror images seated with pendant legs on lotus-pedestals and holding orbs. On the sides of the niche are two rows of bodhisattvas representing the eight great bodhisattvas. Below in front of the niche is a row of twelve figures representing the *yakṣa* generals of Bhaiṣajyaguru. On the bottom left next to the generals is a bearded donor figure. Tree foliage is depicted in low relief behind the Buddha on the upper back portion of the niche.

Above this niche is a small niche that has not been numbered. This niche is severely eroded and contains the remnants of a central seated figure with two standing attendant figures.

*Cave/niche number:* 191.

*NRZL title:* Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara images

*Dimensions:* 1.59 x 1.25 x .54 meters.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* seated bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

*Secondary image(s):* seven *mānuṣi* Buddhas, the Buddhas of the three realms, Sudhana, and the Dragon Maiden.

*Niche type:* type I.1.

*Content description:* This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a pair of bodhisattvas representing Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Both bodhisattvas are seated in *lalitāsana* on separate *sumeru* platforms. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right with a lotus-petal shaped flaming halo and aureole. The bodhisattva wears a crown and holds an alms bowl (*pātra*) in the palm of his left hand on his lap and the right hand holds a willow branch directly above it. Kṣitigarbha holds a *khakkhara* in his right hand and a *cintāmani* in the palm of his left hand on his lap. Behind Kṣitigarbha is a plain circular aureole and halo. Between the two bodhisattvas is a large vase (*kalaśa*). Seven, damaged, small Buddhas,
representing the seven māṇusi Buddhas, are depicted in a row on the back of niche seated on lotuses that grow out of the kalaśa. Three other Buddhas on lotuses, perhaps depicting the Buddhas of the three realms, are depicted below. Most of the Buddhas are depicted in dharmacakrā mudrā or some variation, except for the upper central Buddha who is depicted in bhūmisparśa mudrā and the lower central Buddha who is depicted in dhyāna mudrā. Foliage is carved in low relief on the upper back part of the niche around the ten Buddhas. Two standing figures in añjali mudrā are depicted on the sides of the niche and may represent Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden, on the left and right sides, respectively.

Cave/niche number: 192.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .91 x .86 x .25 meters.*

Date: undated.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two unidentified attendants, and five or more donor figures.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small niche faces north and features a badly damaged seated bodhisattva. The pose of the figure suggests that it represents the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Two smaller standing attendant figures are depicted on the interior sides on the niche. At the base of the niche below the main part of the niche five donor figures are carved in low relief. There are also several more donor figures represented on the left exterior side of the niche, but are too eroded to identify.

Cave/niche number: 193.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .83 x .60 x .17 meters.*

Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha (?).

Secondary image(s): two unidentified attendants and seven donor figures.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small severely weathered niche features two bodhisattvas seated in lalitāsana on sumeru platforms. The two bodhisattvas can tentatively be identified as Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva on the right holds a staff against his right shoulder, which indicates that it could represent Kṣitigarbha. The opposite bodhisattva is almost completely obliterated, but most likely represented Avalokiteśvara, the celestial counterpart of Kṣitigarbha. Two standing figures are depicted on the inner sides of the niche. The figure on the right holds an offering bowl. In the front of the niche below the primary images are seven small, damaged, standing donors figures carved in low relief. Four are depicted on the right side and three on the left. All the figures face outward except the inner figure on the left side, which is turned toward the side and looking up.

Cave/niche number: 194.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .66 x .53 x .22.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Amitābha Buddha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche contains a triad with a central seated Buddha and two standing bodhisattvas, which is not specifically identified in the NRZL. The triad is recognizable as Amitābha with Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The central Buddha image is badly damaged and missing its head. The Buddha is depicted seated in dhyāna mudrā on a lotus-pedestal. The bodhisattva on the right side is severely damaged. Opposite Kṣitigarbha
is depicted as a monk with his hands in añjali mudrā. Based on the general appearance of the figures and the location of the niche it should be dated to the Five Dynasties period.

Cave/niche number: 195.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .68 x .63 x .17 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Ksitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): one donor figure.
Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This small niche contains a severely damaged image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The bodhisattva is seated on a sumeru platform and is recognizable as Kṣitigarbha by the khakkhara held against his right shoulder and the hood covering his head. On the outer left side of the niche is a small standing donor figure in añjali mudrā.

Cave/niche number: 196.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .55 x .63 x .27 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): five donor figures.
Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This small niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas representing Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. The surfaces of both images are eroded. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the right with the shaven-head of a monk and wearing monastic garb. He holds a cintāmaṇi in both hands below his chest. Opposite, Avalokiteśvara is depicted wearing a crown and princely garb. He holds an object, possibly a pātra, with both hands.
below the chest. Both bodhisattvas have simple round halos and stand on
lotus-pedestals. Stylistically the images can be dated to the Five Dynasties
period. Five donor images in two tiers are carved in low relief on the exterior
left side of the niche.

*Cave/niche number:* 197.

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* not measured.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* damaged.

*Secondary image(s):* Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara, four seated figures, two
apsarasas, and several damaged figures.

*Niche type:* damaged, type I.

*Content description:* This niche is located high on the cliff face. The primary
image has been completely destroyed by erosion. Above where the primary
image was located is a seated six-armed image of the bodhisattva
Amoghapāśa. The bodhisattva holds the six standard attributes of
Amoghapāśa: pāśa, sword, willow branch, bowl, and lunar and solar discs.
There is an apsarās figure to each side of Amoghapāśa. On each side of the
niche are two seated figures in postures of meditation, one above the other.
The upper figures appear to be seated on lotuses with thick stalks that look
like tree trunks. On the lower left side of the niche is a standing secular
figure. The lower part of the niche looks unfinished with a small broken figure
in front. The niche is dated to the Five Dynasties period based on its location
and the inclusion of apsarasas figures, which are more typical of Five
Dynasties niches at the site than Song niches. The cloud patterns below the
discs held by Amoghapāśa are similar to those in niche 212, which is also
dated to the Five Dynasties period. It is unfortunate that the niche is badly
damaged because it represents a unique iconographic type not seen elsewhere
at the site.

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Cave/niche number: 198.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .73 x .91 x .35 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, unidentified.

Secondary image(s): two attendant monks, fifteen arhats, and approximately six small attendant figures.

Niche type: damaged, type I.

Content description: This small rectangular niche is badly damaged and features a central Buddha accompanied by two monks and fifteen arhats. All the images in the niche are severely damaged. The Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal with the right hand held up to the chest and the left hand on the knee palm-down in bhūmisparsā mudrā. Attending the Buddha are a pair of monks. Three tiers of figures are carved on each side of the niche. Each tier contains two or three damaged seated figures. The number of figures would suggest that they represent a version of the famous sixteen arhats. On the outer end of several of the rows is a small standing figure in añjali mudrā. This figure appears to have been originally duplicated at the end of each row and probably represented a devotee figure.

Cave/niche number: 199.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .72 x .63 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, unidentified.

Secondary image(s): unidentified figure seated on a cloud.

Niche type: damaged, type II.4.

Content description: This small niche features a bodhisattva seated on a
sumeru platform with two lotus-flowers in front. The bodhisattva is too severely damaged to identify. On the left side of the niche is a small donor(?) figure in añjali mudrā seated on a cloud.

Cave/niche number: 200.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .71 x .57 x .07 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.
Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff and features an image of a bodhisattva seated in rājalilāsana. The image is badly damaged, but the pose of the bodhisattva suggests that it represents the Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is seated on a rocky platform with the left leg pendant. To the sides of the bodhisattva are two standing attendant figures, both damaged, which probably represented the Dragon Maiden and Sudhana.

Cave/niche number: 201.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .59 x .63 x .12 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): two unidentified attendant figures.
Niche type: damaged, type I.2.
Content description: This small niche is severely eroded. The niche features a central figure seated on a low pedestal with two standing attendant figures depicted on the sides of the niche. The central image is identified as a Buddha
in the NRZL, but the image is too extensively worn to confirm that identification. The two attendant figures are identified in the NRZL as bodhisattvas. These figures are also too damaged to identify.

**Cave/niche number:** 202.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .52 x .76 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva pair, Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha (?).

**Secondary image(s):** one donor figure.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.2.

**Content description:** This small shallow niche features a pair of bodhisattvas standing on lotus-bases. The pair appear as identical mirror images in stiff, almost columnar-like, poses. Each bodhisattva wears a crown and appears to hold a circular object in front of the chest. This attribute and the identical appearance of the images suggests that the pair was intended to represent Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. However, the surfaces of the images are too eroded to confirm that identification. In addition to the two bodhisattvas, a small donor figure in añjali mudrā is depicted on the exterior left corner of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 203.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .27 x .06 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

**Secondary image(s):** one donor/attendant figure.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.

**Content description:** This niche contains a standing image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The niche is paired with niche number 204, which depicts the
bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. A small donor image is located between the two niches. The surfaces of the images in both niches are eroded. In this niche Kṣitigarbha is depicted standing on a lotus-base and has a round nimbus behind his head, which is covered by a hood. He holds a *khakkhara* against his right shoulder and a *cintāmaṇi* jewel in his left hand. On the right side of the niche is a small donor/attendant standing figure.

*Cave/niche number: 204.*

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .33 x .07 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** seven donor figures; one attendant/donor figure.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.

**Content description:** This niche contains a standing image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The niche is paired with niche number 203, which depicts the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. Avalokiteśvara is depicted standing a lotus-base. The arms of the bodhisattva are damaged and the attributes held in the hands are no longer identifiable. The bodhisattva is adorned with scarves and a crown with ribbons. On the left side of the niche is a small standing attendant/donor figure. Outside the niche on the right side are two rows of donor figures with two adult figures in the top row and two adult figures with two children in the lower row. A small standing male donor figure in *aṅjali mudrā* and wearing an official’s hat is located in the space between niches 203 and 204.

*Cave/niche number: 205.*

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 99 x .96 x .22 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

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**Primary image(s):** seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

**Secondary image(s):** ten judges of hell and attendants; five/six donor figures.

**Niche type:** type I.2.

**Content description:** This niche features a central image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha with the ten judges of hell represented on the sides and back wall of the niche. The surfaces of the images are eroded. Kṣitigarbha is depicted seated in rājalāsana on a sumera platform with a khakkhara held to his right side. A hood covers the bodhisattva’s head. On each side of Kṣitigarbha are three groups of figures in clouds that represent the judges of hell who decide the fate of newly deceased beings. Each group features a larger seated central figure with two smaller, standing attendant figures. The central figures are depicted as officials seated behind tables. Two additional groups are represented on each of the lateral walls of the niche. On the lower right lateral side of the niche are three standing figures on a cloud. A similar grouping may have been located on the opposite side of the niche, but are damaged. These figures are probably intended to represent the donors and the recipient(s) of the donation of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 206.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** not measured.

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** three seated figures, Buddhas of the Three Ages(?).

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This niche is severely eroded and is located on the upper portion of the cliff wall beneath the ceiling beams of the enclosure. The niche features three figures seated on lotus-pedestals. Each figure has a large ovoid shaped body aureole. The figures are too severely damaged to identify.
Cave/niche number: 207.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .35 x 2.61 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): ten seated Buddhas, Buddhas of the ten directions

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: each image is carved in a small separate niche, type V.1.

Content description: Number 207 refers to ten Buddhas arranged in a row on top of an excavated area that includes niches 207-214. Each Buddha is set in a small separate niche. All the Buddhas are depicted in dhyāna mudrā except the central Buddha (fifth from the right), which is depicted in bhūmisparśa mudrā. This set of Buddhas is probably intended to represent the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Cave/niche number: 208.

NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche 观音龛.

Dimensions: .57 x .58 x .26 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Amoghapāśa and an unidentified bodhisattva.

Secondary image(s): two attendants, and a small messenger figure.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This niche contains a pair of bodhisattvas seated in padmāsana on a ledge. The bodhisattva on the right represents a standard six-armed form of Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara. In his primary hands he holds a bowl and willow branch while the outstretched rear hands hold a sword and lasso. The upper raised hands hold sun and moon discs. The figure on the left is more badly damaged. This figure appears to have only two arms

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and is seated in *dhyāna mudrā*. The figure wears a cowl over the head indicting that it may be intended as a meditating monk, Kṣitigarbha, or another form of Avalokiteśvara in meditation.

Below, directly in front of the bodhisattvas is a circular aureole that surrounds a small child-like figure with outstretched arms, which appear to have wings attached to them. This figure may be indented as an emanation messenger of Amoghapāśa who serves the needs of devotees. Next to this figure on the right side of the niche is a small female figure with extremely long sleeves which are held out in front of the figure. Opposite on the left side of the niche is a standing male figure who appears to be holding a bowl with his left hand.

*Cave/niche number*: 209.
*NRZL title*: Praise to the Great Holy Bodhisattva who Unties the Knot(s) of Injustice 南无解冤结大圣善.

*Dimensions*: 1.17 x 1.12 x .47 meters.
*Date*: Five Dynasties.
*Inscription(s)*: one, see Appendix B, number 1.48; *MWL*, 21-22 number 29.
*Primary image(s)*: unidentified bodhisattva.
*Secondary image(s)*: five oxen with three riders; two apsarasas, and two guardian figures.
*Niche type*: type I.2.

*Content description*: This niche is the primary niche of a group of small niches carved together in a rectangular area. The niche features a bodhisattva seated in *padmāsana* on an ox accompanied by four smaller oxen depicted in low relief on the back wall of the niche. An inscription in the niche identifies the deity represented in the niche as the *Jieyuanjie* (“untier of the knot(s) of injustice”) bodhisattva. The source of this name has yet to be unidentified; however, it appears to be from a *dhāraṇī* text.\(^3^3\) Since the

\(^3^3\) A *dhāraṇī* text inscribed on a stone block bearing this title was found in a Five Dynasties period tomb in Sichuan, see Zhu Zhangyi 朱章义, “Shilun Chengdu huacheng cun Wudai mu chutu de zunsheng tuoluoni shike 试论成都化成村五代墓出土的尊胜陀罗尼石刻,” *SW 3* (1999): 72-76.
surrounding niches feature images of Avalokiteśvara this bodhisattva is likely intended to be a manifestation of Avalokiteśvara, perhaps a conflation with Mahēśvara whose vehicle is the ox. The right hand of the bodhisattva holds a square seal and the left hand rests on the left thigh, palm-down. Directly behind the bodhisattva is a round nimbus and aureole. The outer band of the nimbus is decorated with a flame motif and the aureole is decorated with flowers and diamond shapes.

On the back wall of the niche are four oxen, with two on each side arranged vertically. Three of the oxen feature diminutive riders. Only the ox on the lower right side does not have a figure seated on it. It is difficult to tell if these riders are intended to be male, female, or children. On the upper left side the figure seated on the ox is shown grasping it’s tail. The lower left ox is accompanied by a small calf. Above the oxen are two kneeling apsarasas in clouds and hold an offering trays. On the front sides of the niche are two martial guardian figures, which face each other. On the right the guardian figure holds a sword while the opposite figure on the south side of the niche holds an axe.

Cave/niche number: 210.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .55 x .55 x .15 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): Sudhana and the Dragon Maiden.
Niche type: type I.2, part of a group of niches that includes 207-213.
Content description: This small niche contains an image of Potalaka Avalokiteśvara seated in a posture of royal ease (rājalilāsana) on a rocky platform. The bodhisattva has a high headdress and a round head nimbus and aureole. On the sides of the niche are two attendant figures that hold offering trays. The figure on the left represents the Dragon Maiden and the opposite figure on the right depicts Sudhana.
Cave/niche number: 211.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .53 x .43 x .13 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendants/donor figures.
Niche type: type I.2, part of a group of niches that includes 207-213.
Content description: This small niche features an image of a bodhisattva seated in padmāsana. The bodhisattva can be identified as a localized form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who holds a jade seal. The seal would have been held in the missing right hand. The left hand is placed on the lap and holds a ribbon, which was connected to the seal that was held in the missing right hand. Below the bodhisattva’s base are two standing figures, one on each side. The figure on the right is depicted in añjali mudrā and the figure on the left holds a tablet.

Cave/niche number: 212.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .52 x .43 x .16 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures, and a small messenger figure.
Niche type: type I.2, part of a group of niches that includes 207-213.
Content description: This niche contains an image of Amoghapāśa seated in padmāsana. Amoghapāśa is depicted with six arms and holding his usual attributes: a bowl, willow branch, sword, lasso, and the sun and moon discs. The image has three faces, a primary face and two smaller side faces. Directly below in front of Amoghapāśa is a plain half disc shape with a small winged figure. A similar figure is depicted in niche 208. The appearance of the figure is almost like a bat with an additional set of human arms. On the
front sides of the niche are two damaged, standing, attendant figures. The figure on the left side appears to point toward the disc in front of Amoghapāśa with his right hand and may hold an offering bowl with his other hand.

Cave/ niche number: 213.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .55 x .43 x .15 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): three donor figures.
Niche type: type I.1, part of a group of niches that includes 207-213.
Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff next to niche 209. The niche features an image of the Potalaka form of Avalokiteśvara seated in rājalilāsana. Behind the bodhisattva is a large, round aureole and below his base are several stylized rocks to represent the bodhisattva’s mountain home. Three donor figures are depicted below the bodhisattva at the base of the niche. On the right side are two identical female figures standing close together and opposite them on the right side is a single male figure wearing an official’s outfit and holding an essence burner.

Cave/ niche number: 214.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .60 x .21 x .10 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): one male donor figure.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche faces south and is located at the base of the cliff adjacent to the group of niches that includes niches 207 to 213. The niche contains a standing bodhisattva who holds an alms bowl in the palm of the
left hand. The right hand is broken, but was directly over the alms bowl and most likely held a sprig of willow. A scarf covers the bodhisattva’s headdress. These attributes suggest that the bodhisattva represents Avalokiteśvara. On the bottom left side of the niche is a bearded male donor figure that wears an official’s hat. The opposite side of the niche has collapsed.

_Cave/niche number:_ 215.

_NRZL title:_ Empty niche 空龛.

_Dimensions:_ not measured.

_Date:_ Five Dynasties period(?).

_Inscription(s):_ none.

_Primary image(s):_ unidentified seated figure.

_Secondary image(s):_ none.

_Niche type:_ damaged.

_Content description:_ This niche is part of a row of small niches on the upper portion of the cliff wall, which are all severely damaged by erosion. The topography and appearances of these niches suggest that they date to the Five Dynasties period. This niche featured a seated figure which is now almost completely eroded.

_Cave/niche number:_ 216.

_NRZL title:_ Damaged image niche 残像龛.

_Dimensions:_ not measured.

_Date:_ Five Dynasties period(?).

_Inscription(s):_ none.

_Primary image(s):_ unidentified standing figure.

_Secondary image(s):_ none.

_Niche type:_ damaged.

_Content description:_ This niche is part of a row of small niches on the upper portion of the cliff wall, which are severely damaged by erosion. This niche contains the eroded remnants of a standing figure.
Cave/niche number: 217.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .63 x .63 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): two donor figures and one monk attendant.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This erosion damaged niche features a seated image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha with a monk attendant. Kṣitigarbha is seated on a sumeru platform and holds a khakkhara against his right shoulder. The image of the bodhisattva is severely eroded. The bodhisattva was depicted with a hood covering his head. On the left side of the niche is a smaller image of a monk in añjali mudrā standing on a raised platform. The remnants of two donor figures are located on the outer right side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 218.

NRZL title: Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva 千手观音菩萨.

Dimensions: 1.31 x .79 x .20 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two attendant figures (Vasu and Śrīdevi), two apsarasas.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche features an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru pedestal. The head and arms of the figure have suffered erosion damage and the image does not appear to be as skillfully carved as other examples found at the site. The figure has a total of approximately forty-six arms, which can not all be identified. These include the standard mudrās and attributes seen on other images of this subject at the site. A pearl necklace or
mālā and a pāśa are held on the right and left knees respectively and a small image of a seated Buddha is held above the head of the bodhisattva with two hands. Directly above the bodhisattva on the top of the niche is an eroded canopy with a crossing ribbon pattern and on the top sides of the niche are two apsarasas, which are almost completely destroyed.

Two figures standing on clouds on the interior sides of the niche attend the bodhisattva. On the right a female figure holds a banner and opposite an aged bearded male figure holds a staff. The later figure depicts the brahmin Vasu, not Sudhana as suggested in the NRZL, and the former figure represents the goddess Śrīdevī, who are often depicted as the attendants of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. However, Śrīdevī usual carries an offering tray not a banner.

Cave/ niche number: 219.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: not measured.

Date: undated.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified seated bodhisattva.

Secondary image(s): three donor figures and one male attendant.

Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche is located near the top of the cliff in a row of small niches. The images in the niche are damaged by erosion, especially the right side of the niche. The niche features a seated bodhisattva, which is too damaged to identify. The bodhisattva wears a triangular shaped crown and has a tear-dropped shaped nimbus. On the left of the bodhisattva is a smaller male attendant figure who holds a tablet. Below to the left of the attendant figure are three small donor figures. These include a male figure and two smaller figures. There may have been additional figure(s) on the right side of the niche, which have now completely vanished.
Cave/niche number: 220.

NRZL title: Images of the sixteen arhats 十六罗汉像.

Dimensions: 1.25 x 4.2 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Śākyamuni.

Secondary image(s): sixteen arhats.

Niche type: damaged, type V.

Content description: This niche depicts the Buddha Śākyamuni with sixteen arhats, eight on each side. The images are somewhat eroded and a number are missing their heads. The condition of the images and the generic representation of the figures prevents a specific identification of each of the arhat figures. Śākyamuni is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal and has lotus petal shaped body aureole. The body and arms of the figure are damaged. Eight arhats are depicted seated to the left and right of Śākyamuni and represent a standard group of sixteen, which is also depicted in niche 36 on the southern end of the site and in niche 198. All the arhats are seated in padmāsana except the end figures on each side, which are seated in pralambapādāsana. Carved in low relief in front below the arhats are sandals and water bottles. The arrangement of the niche is essentially the same as niche 36, which is somewhat larger.

Cave/niche number: 221.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: 1.39 x 1.16 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): seven donor figures.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche is set at the base of the cliff wall and features two standing bodhisattvas, Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Both
bodhisattvas have round halos and stand on lotus-bases on top of stylized clouds. On the right the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha is depicted in a stiffer posture and dressed in monastic robes with a cowl draped over his head. In his right hand he holds a *khakkhara*. Avalokiteśvara is depicted in a slightly more relaxed pose and wearing a crown with a veil draped over it. The bodhisattva’s left hand holds a *kundika* and the right hand (damaged) held a willow branch. An interesting feature is the face of Avalokiteśvara, which is carved with a mustache. Many painted images of the bodhisattva before the Song Dynasty feature mustaches and they are often painted on sculpted images, but rarely carved. On the exterior front of the niche four donor images have been carved in low relief in four small subsidiary niches, two on each side. These figures all face outward. On the left side are two kneeling male donor figures in *añjali mudrā*. A cloud-pattern below the upper figure suggests that it may represent a deceased individual for whom the niche was offered. On the opposite side of the niche are two standing female donor figures. Three more donor figures are located on the ledge in front of the niche.

*Cave/niche number: 222.*

*NRZL title:* Damaged image niche 残像龛.

*Dimensions:* not measured.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* unidentified seated Buddha.

*Secondary image(s):* two unidentified bodhisattva attendants.

*Niche type:* type I.1.

*Content description:* This small niche is set near the top of the cliff. Like other niches on the upper portion of the cliff the figures in this niche have suffered environmental damage. The niche contains a badly damaged image of a seated Buddha with two standing bodhisattva attendants, which are too damaged to identify.
Cave/niche number: 223.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .83 x .43 x .15 meters.*

Date: not dated.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and is almost completely destroyed. The niche featured a standing figure of which only a portion of the base of the figure remains.

Cave/niche number: 224.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .93 x .76 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Amoghapāśa Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): two attendants figures.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche contains the only standing multi-armed image of Amoghapāśa at the Fowan site. The type of crown, stylized treatment of the garments, and elongated appearance conform to Five Dynasties imagery at the site. The image is somewhat stiff in appearance and has four intact arms. The upper arms hold discs that float on clouds above the palms of the hands. The lower arms hang down to the sides of the image. The right hand holds a pāśa. The object held by the left hand is not recognizable, but may be a water bottle. The two primary arms are missing, but appear to have been held in front of the image just below the chest.

On the lower right side of the niche is a small standing female figure on a round base. Opposite, a male figure, possibly a monk, stands on a rocky mound.
Cave/niche number: 225.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .86 x .48 x .17 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): none

Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and contains a single standing image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The image is severely damaged and completely destroyed above the shoulders. Avalokiteśvara stands in a slightly relaxed pose and holds a kuṇḍīka in the left hand. The right hand is damaged but was held up to the chest. Long scarfs hang down the legs and arms of the bodhisattva.

Cave/niche number: 226.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .86 x .53 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is set at the base of the cliff wall and contains a single standing figure representing a Buddha or a bodhisattva, which is too severely damaged to identify. The figure is stiffly posed and stands barefooted on a lotus-base. Behind the head of the figure is a round nimbus.
Cave/niche number: 227.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .88 x .45 x .22 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): standing Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: type II.4.

Content description: This niche contains a single standing figure that is identified in the NRZL as the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The figure is more correctly identified as the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru. The Buddha stands in a stiff posture on a lotus-base. He wears a heavy monastic robe and is depicted holding a khakkhara with his right hand and a pātra with his left. The NRZL incorrectly states that the head of the figure is covered by a scarf. The head of the figure is not covered, but has the snail-shell curled hair of a Buddha. Behind the Buddha is a cloud-trail as if he were descending from above. The style of the garments and bulkiness of the figure correspond to imagery of the Five Dynasties period at the site.

Cave/niche number: 228.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .68 x .5 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): five donor figures.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is set at the base of the cliff wall and features two standing bodhisattvas. Both images are damaged and can only be tentatively identified as Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The more relaxed pose of the bodhisattva on the left with the right arm bent upward at
the elbow and the left arm hanging down to the side suggests that it represents Avalokiteśvara. The attributes held by the Bodhisattva are no longer identifiable and the head of the figure is missing. The opposite bodhisattva is posed in a stiffer posture. The hands and head of the bodhisattva are damaged, but the contrasting pose of the figure suggests it represents Kṣitigarbha. Similar depictions of this pair of bodhisattvas occur in a number of niches at this end of the site. On the exterior right side of the niche five donor figures have been carved in low relief and arranged in three tiers. On top tier are two kneeling figures. In the middle tier is a kneeling figure with a smaller standing figure, and below them is a single kneeling, male figure.

**Cave/niche number:** 229.  
**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.  
**Dimensions:** not measured.  
**Date:** Five Dynasties period.  
**Inscription(s):** none.  
**Primary image(s):** unidentified.  
**Secondary image(s):** approximately nine unidentified figures.  
**Niche type:** damaged, type I.1.  
**Content description:** This niche is located on the upper portion of the cliff and has been badly damaged by erosion. The niche has a rectangular shape and features an usual composition with nine or ten standing figures arranged in a row. Unfortunately the figures are almost entirely eroded. The largest figure is off center on the right side of the niche. To the left of this figure are five or six smaller standing figures in añjali mudrā. On the right side are two more figures, one of which holds a club. The location of the niche and niche type with a rectangular border and upper corner brackets, indicate that the niche dates to the Five Dynasties period.
Cave/niche number: 230.

NRZL title: Images of the three holy ones of the west 西方三圣像.

Dimensions: .66 x .58 x .30 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Buddha, Amitābha.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta), and two dvarapāla figures.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: The NRZL identifies the three primary images in the niche as the three holy ones of the west: Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The central Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal base. His right hand is held in front of the right knee making the earth touching gesture (bhūmisparśa mudrā) and his left hand is placed on the lap and holds a pātra(?) . The surface of the Buddha image is badly damaged, but the garments appear to be represented in a somewhat stylized manner with repetitive parallel grooves. Above the Buddha is a splendid eight-sided jeweled canopy with two ribbons that emerge from the inside of the canopy and stretch out along the top of the niche on to the lintel. The bodhisattva to the right of the Buddha is extensively damaged. The bodhisattva on the left is better preserved and appears to hold the stem of a lotus. Both bodhisattvas are seated in padmāsana on lotus-pedestals. Between and behind the primary triad are two rows of standing monks, with six in the back row and four in the front. All the monks have round halos and hold their hands clasped in añjali mudrā. On the front exterior of the niche are two small dynamically posed dvarapāla figures. Only the outline of these figures remain.

Cave/niche number: 231.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .68 x .5 x .17 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): standing Buddha, Bhaiśajyaguru(?).
Secondary image(s): two unidentified bodhisattvas, one donor figure.
Niche type: type I.2.
Content description: The central figure in this niche is identified in the NRZL as the bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. The figure stands in a stiff posture and is dressed in monastic garb and holds a khakkhara against his right shoulder and a damaged object, possibly a jewel or bowl, in his left hand. The figure looks very similar to the image of the Buddha Bhaiśajyaguru in niche 190 and probably also represents that Buddha. Two standing bodhisattvas attend the Buddha, both are damaged. On the outer left side of the niche is a small figure in añjali mudrā who kneels on a cloud.

Cave/niche number: 232.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified Buddha.
Secondary image(s): two unidentified bodhisattva attendants, one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.
Content description: Located on the upper portion of the cliff, this niche is severely eroded. The niche featured a seated Buddha with two standing bodhisattva attendants. On the exterior, left side of the niche is a small male donor figure in añjali mudrā.

Cave/niche number: 233.
NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche 观音龛.
Dimensions: .82 x .31 x .15 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): standing bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff and contains a fairly well preserved image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is depicted standing barefoot on a lotus-base. The left hand holds the stem of a large lotus-flower with a cintāmaṇi, or possibly an eroded seated figure, on the top of the lotus. The right hand holds a string of prayer beads or pearls. The bodhisattva is depicted with a teardrop shaped flaming nimbus that extends to the top of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 234.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .83 x .45 x .15 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva pair.

Secondary image(s): five donor figures.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff. The niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas with round halos. Both figures appear to hold objects up to their chests. The bodhisattva on the right is extensively damaged. On the left the bodhisattva is depicted with a veiled crown of the type associated with Avalokiteśvara. Donor images are carved in the exterior front sides of the niche. On the right side is one figure in añjali mudrā and on the left there two pairs of female(?) figures. The lower pair is depicted standing and the upper pair is depicted kneeling.

Cave/niche number: 235.

NRZL title: Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva 千手观音菩萨.

Dimensions: .73 x .59 x .20 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

786
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): a beggar and preta, Śrīdevī and Vasu, two apsarasas.
Niche type: type I.2.
Content description: This niche features an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. The image is similar to other versions of this subject at the site. The bodhisattva is depicted seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform. Because the surface of the image is worn the bodhisattva’s attributes are not identifiable. The right side of the figure appears to have have eighteen arms and the left side fifteen or sixteen arms. On the knees, the right hand holds a mālā and the left hand holds a pāśa. Behind the figure is a large, round aureole, which may have featured additional hands to symbolize the thousand hands of the deity. The bodhisattva is shown with his typical attendants. A diminutive beggar dressed as an official and holding a bag is depicted on the right of the bodhisattva’s seat and an emaciated preta is depicted on the opposite side. The brahmin Vasu is depicted on the right side of the niche holding a staff and a seal. Opposite on the left side Śrīdevī is shown holding an offering bowl. Above the two attendants on the sides of the niche are two apsarasas depicted in añjali mudrā.

Cave/niche number: 236.
NRZL title: Empty niche 空龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): none.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff near niche 245. The niche has completely collapsed.
Cave/niche number: 237.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified Buddha.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located to the top left of niche 245. The niche faces north and contains a single image of a seated Buddha, which is badly damaged by erosion.

Cave/niche number: 238.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): missing.
Secondary image(s): unidentified attendant bodhisattva figure.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small north facing niche is located near the top left side of niche 245. The niche has collapsed leaving a only a fragment of a standing attendant bodhisattva on the right side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 239.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified damaged figure.
Secondary image(s): monk attendant figure.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located to the left of niche 245 and faces north. The left side of the niche has collapsed and only a small fragment of the primary image remains. A standing monk attendant in anjali mudrā with a round halo is depicted on the right side of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 240.
NRZL title: Avalokiteśvara niche 观音龛.
Dimensions: .78 x .62 x .19 meters.
Date: Late Tang, 896.
Inscription(s): one see Appendix B, number 1.49; MWL, 25 number 4.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): three donor figures.
Niche type: type I.1.
Content description: This small niche faces north and is located adjacent to niche 245. According to a donor inscription, located on the right exterior side of the niche, it was offered by a nun. The niche contains a pair of duplicate standing images of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The image on the left side is almost totally eroded. The better preserved image on the right side depicts the bodhisattva holding the stem of a lotus with both hands. The bodhisattva is outfitted with scarves and adornments. The pair of undulating scarves that hang down the side of the bodhisattva is characteristic of Late Tang images of bodhisattvas at the site.

Cave/niche number: 241.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .50 x .58 x .12 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Ksitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): one attendant figure and two donor figures.
Niche type: damaged, type I.2.
Content description: This small shallow niche faces north and is carved on
the exterior left side of niche 245. The niche features a pair of bodhisattvas, Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the right seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru pedestal. He wears a hood over his head and holds a khakkhara against his right shoulder and a cintāmaṇi on his lap. To the right of Kṣitigarbha’s pedestal is a smaller attendant figure in añjali mudrā. Kṣitigarbha’s animal companion is depicted on the left side of the base of the pedestal. Opposite Kṣitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara is depicted standing on a lotus-base with two tiers of lotus-petals. The bodhisattva is also depicted with a hood and holds a large lotus with both hands. Two donor figures are depicted on the exterior left side of the niche.

The NRZL dates this niche to the Late Tang; however, the proportions of the images suggests a Five Dynasties date. The images in the niche are somewhat clumsier in appearance than those in niche 240 above it. This niche and the niche next to it, number 242, were probably carved in the Five Dynasties period.

Cave/niche number: 242.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .48 x .35 x .10 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): standing bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged, type I.2.
Content description: This niche contains a single standing image of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. The niche is located on the left, north facing, side of niche 245. Kṣitigarbha stands on a two tiered lotus with a khakkhara resting against his right side. He wears a cowl and has a round halo behind his head. A standing donor figure facing niche 245 is depicted below the niche on the left side. Stylistically the image of Kṣitigarbha with its doll like proportions relates to images of the Five Dynasties period.
Cave/niche number: 243.

NRZL title: Sahasrabhuja Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva 千手观音菩萨.

Dimensions: .93 x .68 x .13 meters.*

Date: Late Tang, 901.

Inscription(s): see Appendix B, number 1.50; MWL, 15 number 9.

Primary image(s): Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): Śri and Vasu, two apsarasas.

Niche type: type I.2.

Content description: This niche is located adjacent to niche 245 and faces north. The niche is dated by a donor inscription to 901 and features an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. The primary image is almost identical to other versions of this subject at the site, but does not include the preta and beggar figures. The bodhisattva is depicted seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform. There appears to be fifteen primary hands on each side of the bodhisattva. The surface of the figure is eroded, but the attributes appear to be similar to other images of this subject at the site. On the knees the right hand holds a string of prayer beads and the left hand holds a jade ring shaped like a lotus petal. Śrīdevī is represented on the right side of the niche holding the stem of a lotus with both hands. Opposite the aged brahmin Vasu is depicted holding a staff with his right hand and a seal in his left. Both attendants stand on stylized clouds with a cloud-trail behind them. On top of the niche are two apsarasas with long trailing ribbons that intertwine to form a canopy above the primary image.

Cave/niche number: 244.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .57 x .48 x .12 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period, 945.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.51; MWL, 19-20 number 24.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): seven donor figures.

Niche type: type III.1.
**Content description:** This small niche is faces north and is located at the base of the cliff adjacent to niche 245. The niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas, which represent Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Both figures are stiffly posed and have somewhat oversize heads. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right wearing a crown and holding a pātra and a willow branch. Behind the bodhisattva’s head is a roundish halo with a flame motif. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the left wearing a hood and holding a khakkhara and cintāmani. His halo is round and undecorated. A row of seven donor figures are carved in low relief on the exterior left side of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 245.
**NRZL title:** Amitāyur-dhyāna sūtra transformation illustration 观无量寿佛经变相.
**Dimensions:** 4.7 x 2.58 x 1.18 meters.
**Date:** Late Tang.
**Inscription(s):** two, see Appendix B, 1.52-3; MWL, 15 number 10, 17-18 number 19.
**Primary image(s):** Amitābha Buddha.
**Secondary image(s):** Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and estimated 560 secondary figures.
**Niche type:** variation of type I.2.

**Content description:** This large and intricately detailed niche depicts the Buddha Amitābha and his two primary bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, in the paradise of Sukhavatī along with associated narrative elements based on the *Contemplation Sutra* (Amitāyur-dhyāna sūtra; Guan wuliangshou jing 观无量寿佛经). A full description of the niche is given in chapter four of this study.

**Cave/niche number:** 246.
**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.
**Dimensions:** approximately .48 x .30 meters.*
**Date:** Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.

792
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated Buddha.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located near the top right corner of niche 245 and faces south. The niche is eroded and contains a single figure of a Buddha seated on a lotus-pedestal.

Cave/niche number: 247.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .60 x .91 meters.*
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.54; MWL, 73 number 4.
Primary image(s): unidentified bodhisattva.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche faces south and is adjacent to the upper right side of niche 245. The niche is damaged by erosion and features a single standing bodhisattva with a large, round head nimbus. An inscription dated 1003 records the redecoration of the niche.

Cave/niche number: 248.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .86 x .60 x .12 meters.*
Date: Late Tang/Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): four donor figures.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located on the south facing cliff wall adjacent to niche 245. The niche features a pair of standing bodhisattvas, which represent Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Both images are still in
good condition except for the heads and hands, which are damaged. The images relate stylistically to niche 240, which is almost directly opposite this niche and dated to the Late Tang period by inscription. The bodhisattvas stand on lotus-bases and have tear-drop shaped halos with a gouged flame motif. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right in princely garb with a crown and fluttering scarves. Kṣitigarbha is depicted in more austere monastic garb and holds a staff against his right side. His left arm is bent upward at the elbow, but is broken at the wrist. On the exterior sides of the niche are two pairs of donor figures carved in low relief.

Cave/niche number: 249.

NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara images 地藏, 观音像.

Dimensions: .77 x .64 x .15 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): two, see Appendix B, 1.55-6; MWL, 24 number 36, 72 number 1.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): one attendant and five donor figures.

Niche type: deeply recessed, type I.1.

Content description: This niche faces south and is located at the base of the cliff directly adjacent to niche 245. The niche features two bodhisattvas seated on sumeru platforms. The niche is dated to the Song in the NRZL based on an inscription, dated 995-997, recording the redecoration of the niche. However, the style of the figures in the niche suggest a Five Dynasties date. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the right seated in lalitāsana and dressed in monastic garb with a cowl covering his head. He holds a khakkhara against his right shoulder and his left hand holds a cintāmani. Below his platform on the right is a small kneeling figure in añjali mudrā, probably representing the monk Daoming. Avalokiteśvara is seated in pralambapādāsana and holds a pātra on his lap and a willow branch in his right hand. The bodhisattva is depicted in princely garb and wearing a miter. Behind the head of the bodhisattva is a round halo with a gouged flame motif. Kṣitigarbha has a plain circular halo. On the exterior of the niche are two groups of donor figures carved in low relief.
with two depicted on the left side and three on the right. The niche was
redecorated during the zhida reign era (995-997) by a female disciple for her
deceased husband.

**Cave/niche number:** 250.

**NRZL title:** Damaged [dhāraṇī] pillar niche 残幢龛.

**Dimensions:** approximately .6 x .25 meters.

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** dhāraṇī pillar.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This niche is located on the upper portion of the cliff wall
near niche 245 and features a dhāraṇī pillar. The left side of the niche has
collapsed and the surface of the pillar is damaged by erosion. This pillar is
similar to others located on the north end of the site and has three primary
sections: an octagonal base supported by diminutive half-bodied strongmen,
an octagonal mid section or shaft, and a multi-level pinnacle. The pinnacle of
this pillar has five upper levels with seated Buddha figures. Other seated
figures representing the four lokapālas are depicted on the top of the base of
the pillar above a spiraling dragon. This is the only pillar at the site that is
carved in an independent niche separate from other imagery.

**Cave/niche number:** 251.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** approximately .5 x .45 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva pair, Suryaprabha and Candraprabha(?).

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.2.

**Content description:** This niche is located on the upper portion of the cliff wall
near a large crevice. The niche features two bodhisattvas seated on lotus-pedestals. The surfaces of the images are eroded and the lower portion of the bodhisattva on the right is damaged. Both figures have triangular crowns and look roughly identical. The bodhisattva on the left is seated in *padmāsana* with the hands holding a circular object above the lap. The bodhisattva on the right also holds a circular object above the lap. Based on the similarity of the two figures they may have been intended to represent Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha, but the niche is too eroded to confirm that identification.

*Cave/niche number: 252.*

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** approximately .5 x .45 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** one, see Appendix B, 1.57; MWL, 22 number 30.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha(?),
**Secondary image(s):** one donor figure.

**Niche type:** type I.1.

**Content description:** This niche features two standing bodhisattvas. Both figures are substantially damaged and can not be specifically identified. However, the contrasting appearance of the two figures suggests that they represent Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva on the left, which has more flamboyant garments, probably represents Avalokiteśvara. The head and upper torso of this figure are eroded, but the lower portion of the figure is depicted with scarves and strings of pearls. The bodhisattva on the right is depict in thick robes without the scarves and adornments of the opposite bodhisattva. Unfortunately the surface of the head and upper torso of this figure are badly eroded. Both figures stand on lotus-pedestals and have round head nimbi with an outer band of flame motifs. On the exterior left side of the niche a small female donor figure is depicted in *añjali mudrā* and kneeling on a cloud with a long cloud-trail that rises up behind the figure. This figure likely represents a deceased person for whom the niche was offered. The donor inscription in the niche is only partially legible and does not include a date.

796
Cave/niche number: 253.

NRZL title: Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara images 地藏, 觀音像.

Dimensions: 1.57 x 1.25 x .86 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): one, Appendix B, 1.58; MWL, 72-73, number 3.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): Ten Kings and their attendants, and two apsarasas.

Niche type: type II.3.

Content description: This medium sized niche is located at the base of the cliff near niche 245. The niche features an elegantly carved pair of bodhisattvas representing Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, which are carved almost completely in the round. The bodhisattvas are depicted standing barefoot on separate lotus-bases with two layers of upturned petals above an inverted arching ribbon pattern with trefoil designs. Above the bodhisattvas on the interior top of the niche is a single large canopy with two apsarasas depicted in low relief in front.

Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right wearing a floral crown and celestial garments with strings of pearls and flowing scarves. A small Buddha seated in dhyāna mudrā representing Amitābha is depicted in the center of the bodhisattva’s ornate floral crown. The bodhisattva holds a kundika in his left hand and the right hand holds a willow branch (damaged). Opposite, Kṣitigarbha is depicted as a monastic with a shaven head and wearing a robe that covers both shoulders, simple round earrings, and jeweled undergarments. The hands of the bodhisattva are damaged. The appearance of the two bodhisattvas with slightly oversized heads, clinging garments with grooved folds suggests a Five Dynasties date for the niche. Other features such as the type of lotus-bases and apsarasas also support a Five Dynasties date. However, the NRZL dates this niche to Song Dynasty.

The interior sides of the niche are decorated with groups of figures in stylized clouds, with six on each side arranged in pairs. Each cloud contains several standing figures and a small rectangular cartouche with an identifying inscription, of which only three are partially legible. The figures in the clouds can be identified by the inscriptions and iconography as
representing the Ten Kings of Hell and their two officials. Because the figures are represented as generic types they can not all be specifically identified.

The uppermost outer cloud on the right side of the niche contains three figures with a larger figure dressed as an official holding a seal of office and accompanied by two child-like smaller attendants. The top inner cloud contains a black figure seated on a horse and holding a lance or banner. This figure can be identified as one of the officials of the Ten Kings who serves as their messenger. Below, the outer middle cloud contains a central figure holding a seal accompanied by two attendants with one that holds an umbrella. The inner middle cloud features a larger central figure accompanied by three small child-like attendants with one holding a umbrella and the others a scroll and snake-like object. Below, the lower two clouds also features a central figure representing one of the judges of hell accompanied by three attendants. None of the inscriptions in the cartouches on this side of the niche are legible.

On the left side of the niche the upper outer cloud has a cartouche inscribed with the characters “guanwang” 官王, which may be an abbreviation for the fourth king called the King of Five Officials (Wuguanwang 五官王). In this cloud the king is depicted as an official holding a seal of office and is accompanied by three attendants. One attendant holds a scroll or seal and the other holds a scroll and brush, and the third holds an umbrella. The upper inner cloud also has a cartouche with a partially legible inscription that reads “yongzhaimiaowang” 永齋妙王 (“The Excellent King of Endless Fasting”), which is not a standard name for one of the Ten Kings. This cloud contains three standing figures depicted as generic official types. The outer middle cloud has a cartouche inscription that reads taishang dawang 太山大王 (“The Great King of Taishan”), which refers to the seventh king, the lord of Mount Tai. Again this cloud contains a central figure dressed as an official who holds a seal of office and is accompanied by three attendants. One attendant holds an umbrella, another an orb or jewel, and the third a reflection mirror used to reveal the past actions of a deceased person. The
inner middle cloud features an armored figure who holds a sword. This figure is attended by three attendants: a girl who holds a scroll, and a male official who holds a square book-like object, and girl who holds an umbrella. Below, the bottom two clouds each contain a larger central figure dressed as an official who holds a seal of office and is accompanied by three attendants.

The arched shape of the border around the exterior of the niche with a pointed top is unique at the site. An inscription dated 994 and 1001 records the redecoration of the niche and offering of a Water-Land banquet by a local military official for the protection and well-being of his family during an uprising.

*Cave/niche number:* 254.

*NRZL title:* Three Holy Ones of the West 西方三圣像.

*Dimensions:* 1.33 x 1.15 x .62 meters.

*Date:* Five Dynasties period.

*Inscription(s):* none.

*Primary image(s):* Buddha, Amitābha

*Secondary image(s):* two bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha), and sixteen figures in clouds.

*Niche type:* type I.2.

*Content description:* This niche contains a triad of the Buddha Amitābha with the bodhisattvas Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara. Amitābha is seated in *padmāsana* on a large lotus-pedestal. His hands are in *dhyāna mudrā* with the index fingers and thumbs touching. To the sides of the Buddha are two tree trunks carved in relief. The foliage of the two trees fills the back of the niche. Above the foliage on the top of the niche are several floating musical instruments carved in low relief.

The two bodhisattvas to the sides of the Buddha are depicted seated in *lalitāsana* on lotus-pedestals. The bodhisattva on the right is identified in the *NRZL* as Mahāsthāmaprāpta, but the appearance of the bodhisattva is more like that of Kṣitigarbha since he is dressed more like a monk than a princely bodhisattva. The opposite bodhisattva holds an orb(?) on his lap.
with his left hand. Unlike the more austere looking image of Ksitigarbha this
bodhisattva is depicted with a crown and adornments covering the chest.

On the sides of the niche are four sets of figures on clouds. On the top
left, are three figures, two in front and one in back. A cartouche next to the
figures reads *zhai guan* 斋官 (“Official of Vegetarian [Feasts]”) Below another
cloud holds five figures, with three in front and two in back. All wear the hats
and garments of officials and hold tablets of investiture. One of the
cartouches next to them reads *mu wen xing* 木文行(?) Opposite on the right
side of the niche the top cloud contains three figures between two cartouches,
with two figures in front and one in back. These figures are all in *añjali
mudrā*. Below in the lower cloud are five figures similar to those on the left
side of the niche. The cartouches on this side of the niche are not illegible.
These sixteen figures may be intended to represent celestial deities that are
part of the Water-Land ritual.

**Cave/niche number:** 255.

**NRZL title:** Bhaisajyaguru Pure Land transformation 东方药师净土变相

**Dimensions:** 1.06 x .88 x .53 meters.

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** two, see Appendix B, numbers 1.59-60; *MWL*, 22 numbers
31.1-2.

**Primary image(s):** seated Buddha, Bhaisajyaguru.

**Secondary image(s):** two bodhisattvas (Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha), the
eight great bodhisattvas; twelve *yakṣa* generals, and five donor figures.

**Niche type:** type I.2.

**Content description:** This niche features a standard depiction of the
Bhaisajyaguru and his retinue. The central Buddha is seated on a *sumeru
platform, with the right leg pendant. The left leg is missing, which makes the
Buddha appear to be seated in *lalitāsana*. The Buddha’s left hand is on the
left knee palm-down, and the right arm is broken off, but appears to have
been in *abhaya mudrā*. Behind the Buddha, two trees are carved in low relief
on the back wall of the niche and form a canopy above the Buddha. On the
right side of the Buddha is a *khakkhara*. Flanking the Buddha are two mirror-image bodhisattvas seated in *pralambapādāsana*, which can be identified as Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha by the disks they hold on their laps. The eight great bodhisattvas are depicted on the sides of the niche standing in two rows of two. They are all depicted in *añjali mudrā*, except the upper inner figures on both sides, which hold a teardrop shaped orb and a lotus, right and left sides respectively. The twelve *yakṣa* generals are depicted in a row on the bottom of the niche. On the exterior of the niche are five standing donor figures, with three on the right and two on the left. The border of niche is decorated with a curtain carved in low relief.

*Cave/niche number*: 256.

*NRZL title*: Bhaiṣajyaguru Pure Land transformation 东方药师净土变相.

*Dimensions*: 1.03 x 1.18 x .45 meters.

*Date*: Five Dynasties period.

*Iinscription(s)*: none.

*Primary image(s)*: seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.

*Secondary image(s)*: two bodhisattvas (Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha), the eight great bodhisattvas, twelve *yakṣa* generals, and two attendant figures.

*Niche type*: type I.2.

*Content description*: This niche features a standard depiction of the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his retinue. The central Buddha is seated in *pralambapādāsana* on a *sumeru* platform. The Buddha’s arms are damaged, but the right hand was held in front of the chest, possibly in *abhaya mudrā*, and the left hand was placed on the left leg. Behind the Buddha on the back of the niche two trees form a canopy above the Buddha. Standing on the right of the Buddha is a female attendant who holds a *khakkhara*, and opposite on the left side a monk is depicted in *añjali mudrā*. Hovering above the monk is the Buddha’s medicine bowl. Flanking the Buddha are two mirror-image bodhisattvas seated in *pralambapādāsana*, which can be identified as Śūryaprabha and Candraprabha by the disks they hold on their laps. The eight great bodhisattvas are depicted on the sides of the niche standing in two rows and the twelve *yakṣa* generals are depicted in a row on the bottom front
of the niche. On the top of the niche a lotus-canopy and musical instruments are carved in low relief. The bodhisattvas and Buddha look like they have been crudely repaired.

**Cave/niche number:** 257.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .93 x .76 x .15 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.1.

**Content description:** This niche contains two standing bodhisattvas, which are incorrectly identified in the NRZL as Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. The bodhisattva figures are somewhat eroded, but their appearance indicates that they should be correctly identified as Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. The bodhisattva on the right has the appearance of Avalokiteśvara with the left arm hanging down to the side and the right arm bent at the elbow. This bodhisattva has ornaments, scarves, a crown on its head, and stands in a slightly relaxed pose. The bodhisattva on the left is more stiffly posed and holds a round object, possibly a cintāmaṇi, up to the chest with both hands. This figure appears to be less ornamented than the opposite figure and may have had a cowl covering the head. These features suggest that this figure represents the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha.

**Cave/niche number:** 258.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .58 x .43 x .15 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** Nāgārjuna.

**Secondary image(s):** none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.1.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and appears to have been carved in tandem with niche 259. The niche features an image of a monk seated in padmāsana on a rocky platform. The image is damaged, but it can be easily identified as the semi-divine monk Nāgārjuna who appears in several niches on the northern end of the site. Nāgārjuna is depicted in monastic garb and in his hands he holds a writing brush and an ink well. A dragon (nāga) is depicted snaking its way around the back and sides of the Nāgārjuna’s seat.

Cave/niche number: 259.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .55 x .43 x .15 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara (?).

Secondary image(s): three donor figures.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a seated image of a bodhisattva, which is identified in the NRZL as Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva is seated in padmāsana on a sumeru platform. The right arm is broken at the elbow and the left arm is held straight down behind the left thigh as if in the posture of rājalilāsana. The bodhisattva is outfitted with a large crown, adornments, and scarves that hang down the front of the bodhisattva’s seat. Attending the bodhisattva are three diminutive donor figures on the sides of the niche in front of the bodhisattva, with two on the right side and one on the left. The donor figures on the right side include a female figure that wears a string of prayer beads and a smaller figure. Opposite, on the left side of the niche is a somewhat heavyset male figure with his hands raised in a gesture of respect. This niche appears to have been carved in tandem with niche 258.
Cave/niche number: 260.


Dimensions: 1.18 x .7 x .25 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period, 955.

Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, number 1.61; MWL, 20 number 26.

Primary image(s): dhāraṇī pillar.

Secondary image(s): three donor figures.

Niche type: Damaged.

Content description: Niches 260 and 262 appear to be carved as a set. These niches are located together at the base of the cliff. Both niches contain damaged dhāraṇī pillars. Niche 260 is more fully intact and the dhāraṇī inscribed on the main shaft of the pillar is partially legible. The pillar has the same basic design as others at the site with an octagonal base and mid-section, and a narrowing multi-leveled spire. Between the base and the main shaft of the pillar is a spiraling dragon, which symbolically represents the cosmic ocean on which Mount Meru rests. Directly above the pillar on the top of the niche a lotus-flower is carved in low relief. The spire of the pillar would have extended up to the center of the lotus like the dhāraṇī pillar in niche 279. On the upper left side of the niche a small triad of figures standing in a round cloud is carved in low relief. The central figure is larger and may represent the recipient of the offering of the pillar, née Wang, who is mentioned in the dhāraṇī inscription as the mother of the donor. This figure is damaged, but similar figures in other niches with dhāraṇī pillars appear to be regular human figures, not Buddhas as suggested by the NRZL.

Cave/niche number: 261.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .99 x .83 x .22 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): unidentified standing figure.

Secondary image(s): none
Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small niche is severely eroded and contains a single standing figure. The figure is too damaged to identify.

Cave/niche number: 262.


Dimensions: 1.2 x .7 x .3 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): dhārāṇi pillar.

Secondary image(s): three donor figures, two images of Kṣitigarbha.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This niche is carved along side niche 260. Both niches feature dhārāṇi pillars. The pillar in this niche is poorly preserved with only the base and a portion of the main shaft of the pillar remaining. The design of the pillar is similar to others at the site with an octagonal base supported by diminutive strong men with a pair of spiraling dragons between the base and the main shaft. On the upper right corner of the niche three figures standing on a cloud are carved in low relief. The figures include a larger central male figure and a boy and girl attendant figures. Possibly the central figure is intended as the deceased father of the donor to be paired with the donor figure on the opposite side of niche 260, which may depict the deceased mother of the donor. Two south facing images of the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha are carved on the exterior right side of the niches. These are numbered 266, but appear to be a subsidiary part of this niche. The images of Kṣitigarbha are poorly preserved and appear similar to other subsidiary images of Kṣitigarbha on the north end of the site, such as those found in niche 279.

Cave/niche number: 263.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: not measured.

Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small niche is located on the upper portion of the cliff just below the roof beams. The niche is severely damaged by erosion and contains a single seated figure, which is too damaged to be identified. The figure is seated on a pedestal with the left arm placed on the lap and the right arm bent at the elbow and held out in front of the chest.

Cave/niche number: 264.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): unidentified seated figure.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This niche is located on the upper portion of the cliff just below the lower roof beams. The niche is severely eroded and appears to have contained two tiers of figures. Only one figure remains, which is located on the lower portion of the niche. This figure is seated and is too severely damaged to identify.

Cave/niche number: 265.
NRZL title: Empty niche 空龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: undated.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): none.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small niche is almost completely eroded and has partially collapsed.

Cave/niche number: 266.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .43 x .27 x .76 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): two duplicate Kṣitigarbha images.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche is misidentified in the NRZL with niche 267. According to the numbering system on the cliff this niche is located on the right side of niche 262 and appears to be a subsidiary part of that niche. Two duplicate images of Kṣitigarbha are depicted, one above the other. The upper image is slightly better preserved and depicts Kṣitigarbha seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform. He holds a khakkhara on his right side, and wears a cowl over his head. The image is similar to duplicate sets of Kṣitigarbha images in niches 281 and 279.

Cave/niche number: 267.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .91 x .81 x .22 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta or two forms of Avalokiteśvara.

Secondary image(s): nine donor figures.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This niche features two seated bodhisattvas, which are identified in the NRZL as Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, but could
also depict two images of Avalokiteśvara. Both figures have been damaged and their identification can not be positively confirmed. The bodhisattva on the right, identified as Mahāsthāmaprāpta in the NRZL, is seated in pralambapādāsana on a rocky platform. The attributes of this figure can no longer be identified, but the position of the hands suggests they held an alms bowl and willow branch. The opposite bodhisattva holds the stem of a large lotus and also appears to be seated in pralambapādāsana. This bodhisattva has a large ellipsoid body aureole, which contrasts with the aureole of the opposite bodhisattva, which is round with an outer flame motif. The head of the bodhisattva on the left is still intact and has a crown that is partially covered by a veil. The opposite bodhisattva was also depicted wearing a crown, but the head and upper torso of the figure are almost totally destroyed.

A male donor figure is depicted on the outer left side of the niche. Also on the exterior of the niche two rows of four donor figures have been carved on the north facing side of the cliff. These figures are damaged and include three female donor figures. The niche appears to have been carved in tandem with niche 271, which contains a dhāraṇī pillar.

Cave/niche number: 268.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .81 x .81 x .35 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Buddhas of the three realms (?).
Secondary image(s): the seven mānuṣi Buddhas, two attendants, and one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged.
Content description: This small square niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a teaching assemble of three seated figures, which are identified as the Buddhas of the three realms in the NRZL. The heads of all three figures are damaged and the surfaces are somewhat eroded. All three figures are seated in padmāsana on round lotus-pedestals and have round head and body aureoles. The central figure can be identified as a Buddha with his
hands (damaged) held in front of the chest. Standing on a small ledge on each side of the Buddha is a small attendant figure with a round halo. On the right the attendant figure is a monk and on the left the figure appears to be a female. The seated figure on the left side of the niche is depicted in dhyāna mudrā and the opposite seated figure on the right side holds a stick-like object with his right hand. These two figures are not distinctly recognizable as Buddhas. Next to the seated figure in dhyāna mudrā on the left side of the niche is a donor figure that stands on a cloud and holds the pedestal of the seated figure. Above the main group of figures seven figures representing the mānuṣi Buddhas, are depicted seated on lotuses. These figures are badly eroded and are arranged in two rows with three on top and four on bottom. The lower row is almost completely obliterated.

Cave/niche number: 269.
NRZL title: Damaged [dhāraṇi] pillar niche 残幢龛.
Dimensions: not measured.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, 1.62; MWL, 22-23 number 32.
Primary image(s): dhāraṇi pillar.
Secondary image(s): one or two donor figures, the ten directional Buddhas.
Niche type: damaged
Content description: This niched is carved along side niche 270 on the upper portion of the cliff wall. The two niches appear to be carved as a set, with a row of ten Buddhas in the space above both niches. Niche 269 features a dhāraṇi pillar similar to others at the site with three primary sections: a base, shaft, and spire that extends to the center of a lotus-flower carved on the top of the niche. Like other carvings on the upper walls of the cliff the pillar has been damaged by erosion. The upper portion of the pillar is best preserved and appears similar to the well preserved pillar in niche 279 and has three levels with seated figures on clouds and architectural elements. On the interior south wall is a faint trace of a figure on a cloud similar to other
niches with this subject matter at the site. There is also a donor figure on the left exterior side of the niche matching an opposite facing figure to the right of niche 270.

Cave/niche number: 270.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: not measured.

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Amitābha.

Secondary image(s): two monk attendants, two attendant bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta), one donor figure, and the ten directional Buddhas (shared with niche 269).

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche appears to be carved in tandem with the dhāraṇī pillar in niche 269. The two niches are carved in a rectangular recession with a row of seated Buddhas running across the top of both niches. The inclusion of a row of ten Buddhas is a feature of a number of niches that date to the Five Dynasties period at the site. Niche 270 features a Buddha teaching assembly with five figures. These figures all have suffered some erosion damage. The central Buddha is identified in the NRZL as Śākyamuni, but is more likely intended to represent Amitābha given the attending bodhisattvas who hold lotuses. The Buddha is seated in padmāsana on a lotus-pedestal. His left hand holds a pātra on the lap and the right hand is placed on the knee palm-down. Behind the Buddha is an ornate round head and body aureole with the inner part decorated with lotus-petals and the outer section decorated with a flame motif. This type of aureole decoration is unique to this image at the site. To the sides of the Buddha are two standing monks with plain round head aureoles. On each of the outer interior sides of the niche is a standing bodhisattva. The bodhisattvas have lotus petal shaped head aureoles and hold large lotus stems. They are probably intended to represent Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. The interior top of the niche is decorated with fluttering
ribbons carved in low relief, which were attached to *apsarasas* or musical instruments, which are now too eroded to identify. A south facing donor figure is depicted on the exterior right side of the niche.

*Cave/niche number:* 271.

**NRZL title:** Damaged *[dhāraṇī]* pillar niche 残幢龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.43 x .73 x .20 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** one, Appendix B, 1.63; see MWL, 23 number 33.

**Primary image(s):** *dhāraṇī* pillar.

**Secondary image(s):** six donor(?) figures.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.1.

**Content description:** This niche appears to have been carved in tandem with niche number 267, which depicts two seated images of Avalokiteśvara. Niche 271 features a *dhāraṇī* pillar, which has the same basic design as others at the site with a *dhāraṇī* inscribed on the main octagonal shaft of the pillar. The base of the pillar is damaged and the upper spire is completely destroyed. The best preserved portion of the pillar is the section between the base and the main shaft of the pillar. It features a pair of entwined dragons below a row of four figures seated in *pralambapādāsana*, which represent the four *lokapālas*. Behind these figures are two rows of upturned lotus-petals that serve as a base for the main shaft of the pillar.

On the upper right interior side wall of the niche are three figures standing on a cloud. The central figure holds a seal and is accompanied by two youths, a boy and girl. On the opposite side of the niche is a similar group of figures, but they are too damaged to identify.

*Cave/niche number:* 272.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .86 x .77 x .43 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara(?).
Secondary image(s): four attendant figures, the seven mānuṣi Buddhas(?), and one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff and is similar in appearance to niche 268, which is directly adjacent to it. This niche features three figures seated in padmāsana on round lotus-petals. The NRZL identifies these figures as bodhisattvas. The central figure is depicted wearing a headdress and holds both hands in front of the abdomen with the right hand placed below the left. The left hand appears to hold an object which is also supported by the upturned palm of the right hand. Attending the central figure are two smaller attendant figures that stand on a small ledge on each side of the central figure. The attendant figure on the right holds a vase with lotus and the opposite figure holds an offering tray. The lotus held by the attendant figure may indicate that the central figure is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The two other seated figures are missing their heads and appear to represent monks. The seated figure on the left is depicted in dhyāna mudrā and the opposite figure has his left hand placed on the knee palm-down and the right hand, which is broken, was held out in front of the chest. Standing next to the latter figure is a smaller figure that stands on a cloud base and appears to grasp the sleeve of the seated figure. This figure may be an image of the donor or the intended beneficiary of the offering of the niche. On the upper portion of the back wall of the niche there appears to have been a number of smaller Buddha figures seated on lotuses like niche 268, but only the rudimentary form of two or three of these figures remain.

Cave/niche number: 273.

NRZL title: Image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara 千手观音菩萨像.

Dimensions: 1.51 x 1.1 x .73 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): four attendant figures, two apsarasas, the ten directional Buddhas, and four images of Kṣitigarbha.

Niche type: type 1.2.

Content description: This niche features a well preserved small image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara, with subsidiary images of Kṣitigarbha and the ten directional Buddhas carved on the exterior of the niche. Avalokiteśvara is depicted seated in pralambapādāśana on a sumeru pedestal with the bodhisattva’s bare feet resting on two lotuses. The bodhisattva has a total of thirty six arms. The secondary hands of the bodhisattva, fifteen on each side, form a halo around the bodhisattva. Many of the attributes are still identifiable and represent a variation of a standardized set of attributes. The bodhisattva has a pleasant countenance and wears a floral crown. On the top of the niche directly above the bodhisattva is a lotus-canopy and two apsarasas figures carved in low relief. Below on the sides of the bodhisattva are two small kneeling figures representing a hungry ghost and beggar. Two standing attendants are depicted on the interior sides of the niche. The bearded brahmin Vasu who holds a staff and a string of prayer beads is depicted on the right and opposite on the left is Śrīdevi who holds an offering tray.

Carved above the niche are a row of ten Buddhas seated in padmāsana on lotuses. On the exterior sides of the niche are four duplicate images of Kṣitigarbha, with two on each side. These images of Kṣitigarbha are substantially damaged. Kṣitigarbha is shown seated in lalitāśana on a sumeru platform and holding a khakkhara on his right shoulder and an alms bowl on his lap. He is accompanied by the diminutive figures of the monk Daoming and a small lion like creature.

Cave/niche number: 274.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: .93 x .76 x .12 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures, one donor figure.
Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff and features a partially damaged image of a standing bodhisattva, which can be identified as the Treasure-seal Avalokiteśvara. The bodhisattva has a somewhat elongated torso and is depicted standing barefoot on a lotus-base. The right hand of the bodhisattva is held out to the shoulder and holds a rectangular object, which is likely intended as a seal. Attached to the seal is a long ribbon, which is held by the left hand. The bodhisattva is attended by two figures that hold tablets. Both figures are damaged. A smaller donor figure is depicted on the right side of the niche below in front of the ledge on which the primary image and two attendants stand.

Cave/niche number: 275.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: approximate size .6 x .6 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.
Secondary image(s): none.
Niche type: damaged, type I.
Content description: This small niche is located above niche 279 and contains a pair of seated bodhisattvas. Kṣitigarbha is depicted on the right seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform. He is depicted wearing monastic garb with a hood covering his head. He holds a khakkhara against his right shoulder and a cintāmani in the palm of his left hand on his lap. Avalokiteśvara is depicted seated in pralambapādāsana with a single large, round aureole. The bodhisattva holds the stem of a large lotus with both hands and is depicted in princely garments and wearing a crown.
Cave/niche number: 276.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .4 x .5 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is located between two niches with paired images of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara, and contains a single seated image of Kṣitigarbha. The image has been defaced, but the rest of the image is still in fair condition. Kṣitigarbha is depicted seated in lalitāsana on a sumeru platform. A hood covers his head and he holds a khakkhara in his right hand and a cintāmani in his left hand.

Cave/niche number: 277.

NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.

Dimensions: approximately .6 x .4 meters.*

Date: Five Dynasties period.

Inscription(s): none.

Primary image(s): bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha.

Secondary image(s): none.

Niche type: damaged, type I.2.

Content description: This small niche is located above niche 279 and contains a pair of standing bodhisattvas. The images are skillfully carved and well preserved. Avalokiteśvara is depicted on the right wearing an ornate headdress and a heavy gown. The bodhisattva’s right hand holds a string of prayer beads (mālā) and the left hand holds the right arm at the wrist. This image appears to be based on the standard representation of the White-robed Avalokiteśvara. Kṣitigarbha is depicted in monastic garb with a hood.
covering the top of his head. He holds a *khakkhara* on his right side and a *cintāmanī* in his left hand. Both bodhisattvas have elongated body aureoles and round halos.

**Cave/niche number:** 278.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** 1.04 x .83 x .3 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none

**Primary image(s):** seated Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru.

**Secondary image(s):** two bodhisattvas (Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha), the eight great bodhisattvas, twelve *yakṣa* generals, and one *apsarā*.

**Niche type:** damaged, type I.1.

**Content description:** The NRZL identifies the three primary figures in this niche as the “Three honored ones.” The imagery in the niche is severely damaged, but recognizable as standard depiction of the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaguru and his retinue. The central Buddha is seated in *pralambapādāsana* on a *sumeru* platform. On the sides of the Buddha are two damaged standing attendant figures. The right figure holds a *khakkhara* and the left figure, a monk, holds a bowl of flowers. The two seated attendant bodhisattvas are also badly damaged. A disc on a cloud by the left shoulder of the seated bodhisattva figure on the left side indicates that these figures represented Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha. On the front interior sides of the niche are two rows of standing figures in *añjali mudrā*, which represent the eight great bodhisattvas. All are badly damaged. On the top right side of the niche is an *apsarā* who holds a lotus. The front base of the niche has a row of damaged figures, which probably represent the twelve *yakṣa* generals.

**Cave/niche number:** 279.

**NRZL title:** Transformation illustration of the eastern Pure Land of Bhaiṣajyaguru 东方药师净土变相.

**Dimensions:** 1.86 x 2.4 x .66 meters.
Date: Five Dynasties period, 955.

Inscription(s): three, see Appendix B, numbers 1.64-66; MWL, 22 numbers 27.1-2; and 72 number 2.

Primary image(s): Bhaisajyaguru and retinue.

Secondary image(s): dhāraṇi pillar, the ten directional Buddhas, four images of Kṣitigarbha, and nine donor figures.

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This niche contains two subsidiary niches (279-A and 279-B) and a number of subsidiary figures. The primary niche (279-A) features a standard teaching assembly of the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. Next to it on the left a dhāraṇi pillar is depicted in a narrow, rectangular niche. An inscription is located between the two niches. Below the two niches stylized rocks and lotuses are carved in low relief along the base of the niche. On the left side of the niche is a vertical row of four images of Kṣitigarbha. These images are all the same and depict Kṣitigarbha seated in lalitāsana and holding a khakkhara and cintāmaṇi jewel. Attending each image of Kṣitigarbha is a small monk standing in añjali mudrā. On the top of the niche above the two subsidiary niches is a row of ten Buddhas identified by inscription as the ten directional Buddhas. The sixth Buddha from the right, in the middle of the group is depicted in bhūmisparśa mudrā. The others Buddhas are depicted in some variation of añjali mudrā. On the exterior right side of the niche facing south are nine donor figures carved in four vertical blocks. The top two blocks contain two pairs of male figures. In the second block from the top one figure is larger than the others and may represent the primary donor of the niche who is identified as a local official. Three female figures are depicted below the two upper blocks, and a single female figure with a child is depicted at the bottom.

Niche Number: 279-A

Dimensions: 1.45 x 1.1 x .34 meters.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaisajyaguru.

Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas, Suryaprabha and Candraprabha, the eight great bodhisattvas, twelve yakṣa generals, two apsarasas.
Content description: This niche depicts a teaching assembly of Bhaiṣajyaguru. The main Buddha is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform beneath the canopy of a tree. The head of the figure is missing. The right hand is broken, but was held up to the chest and the left hand is placed on the left thigh, palm-down. To the left of the Buddha’s nimbus an alms bowl is depicted as if hovering in the air. Flanking the Buddha are two small monks standing on a ledge. The monk on the right holds a khakkhara, and the opposite monk is depicted in añjali mudrā. Suryaprabha and Candraprabha are depicted as mirror images seated in pralambapādāsana on lotus-pedestals. On the two interior sides of the niche are four standing figures on lotuses, which represent the eight great bodhisattvas. The twelve yakṣa generals are depicted in a row at the base of the niche standing above a stylized cloud pattern. On the top of the niche above the Buddha is a large lotus carved in low relief and surrounded by two apsarasas and eight musical instruments with ribbons including a pipa (lute), konghou (vertical harp), youzi (bamboo flute), and wooden clappers.

Niche Number: 279-B.
Dimensions: 1.45 x .57 x .06 meters.
Primary image(s): dhāraṇī pillar.
Content description: This is the best preserved of the dhāraṇī pillar at the Fowan site. The pillar is similar to others at the site and is described in the third chapter of this study. The top of the pillar extends to the center of a lotus-flower represented in low relief on the top of the niche. On the upper sides walls of the niche are two male figures that stand on clouds with two smaller female attendants.

Cave/niche number: 280.
NRZL title: Damaged image niche 残像龛.
Dimensions: .91 x .83 x .33 meters.*
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Inscription(s): none.
Primary image(s): damaged seated figure, possibly Potalaka Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures, and five donor figures

Niche type: type I.1.

Content description: This small niche is located at the base of the cliff under niche 279 and has suffered severe damage from erosion. The niche features a seated central figure, which is now almost completely destroyed. The remaining fragment of this figure indicates that the figure was posed leaning on the left arm, which is a pose associated with the Potalaka or Water-moon form of Avalokiteśvara. The platform on which the figure is seated also suggests a crude rocky appearance, which is also associated with the Water-moon form of Avalokiteśvara. Above the figure on the top of the niche is a large lotus-canopy with floral patterns. The central figure is attended by two standing figures. Five donor figures are depicted on the outer sides of the interior of the niche, with three on the right side and two on the left.

Cave/niche number: 281.

NRZL title: Transformation illustration of the eastern Pure Land of Bhaisajyaguru 东方药师净土变相.

Dimensions: 1.86 x 2.46 x .66 meters.

Date: Five Dynasties period, 954.

Inscription(s): three, see Appendix B, numbers 1.67-68; MWL, 20 numbers 25.1-2; 73 number 5.

Primary image(s): Bhaisajyaguru and retinue.

Secondary image(s): dhāraṇī pillar, the seven mānuṣi Buddhas, the Buddhas of the three realms, Amitābha, three images of Kṣitigarbha, and nine donor figures.

Niche type: damaged.

Content description: This niche contains two subsidiary interior niches (280-A, 280-B) and a number of subsidiary figures. The niche is almost a mirror image of niche 279 with some minor differences. The primary niche features a standard Bhaisajyaguru teaching assembly. Next to it on the left a dhāraṇī pillar is depicted in a narrow rectangular niche. A donor inscription is located between the two niches. Below the two niches stylized rocks and lotuses are carved in low relief along the base of the niche. On the left side of the niche is
a vertical row of three duplicate images of Kṣitigarbha. These depict Kṣitigarbha seated in lalitāsana and holding a khakkhara and cintāmaṇi. Attending each image of Kṣitigarbha is a small monk in añjali mudrā. On the top of the niche above the two subsidiary niches are a row of ten Buddhas, which are identified in a donor inscription as the seven mānuṣi Buddhas, Buddhas of the three realms, and the Buddha Amitābha. All the Buddhas except two are depicted in some variation of dhyāna mudrā. The sixth and ninth Buddha from the right are shown in abhaya mudrā. Four of the Buddhas on the left side are carved in recessed roundels. The fourth Buddha from the left is slightly larger and may represent Amitābha. On the left side of the niche facing west are five donor figures in three tiers. The upper tier has one male and two female figures. On the opposite right side of the niche facing east are four tiers of single donor figures.

Niche Number: 281-A
Niche Dimensions: 1.32 x 1.05 x .32 meters.

Primary image(s): seated Buddha, Bhaisajyaguru.
Secondary image(s): two bodhisattvas (Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha), the eight great bodhisattvas, twelve yakṣa generals, and two apsarasas.

Content description: This niche depicts a teaching assembly of the Buddha Bhaisajyaguru. The main Buddha is seated in pralambapādāsana on a sumeru platform beneath the canopy of a tree. The head of the figure is missing. The right hand is broken, but was held up to the chest and the left hand is placed on the left knee. To the left of the Buddha’s nimbus a bowl hovers in the air. Flanking the Buddha are two small monks standing on a ledge. The monk on the right has a top-knot and holds a khakkhara, and the opposite monk is in añjali mudrā. Sūryaprabha and Candraprabha are depicted as mirror images seated in pralambapādāsana on lotus-pedestals. On the interior sides of the niche are four standing figures on lotuses, which represent the eight great bodhisattvas. The twelve yakṣa generals are depicted in a row at the base of the niche standing above a stylized cloud pattern. On the top of the niche above the Buddha is large lotus carved in low relief surrounded by eight musical instruments and two apsarasas.
**Niche Number:** 281-B  
**Dimensions:** 1.32 x 1.05 x .32 meters.  
**Primary image(s):** dhāraṇī pillar  
**Content description:** The dhāraṇī pillar in this niche is identical to the pillar in niche 279. It has an octagonal base and shaft, and a spire that is divided into five sections with a crowning cintāmani. The spire of the pillar ends in the center of a lotus-flower carved on the top of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 282.  
**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.  
**Dimensions:** approximately .35 x .11 meters.*  
**Date:** undated.  
**Inscription(s):** none.  
**Primary image(s):** unidentified seated bodhisattva.  
**Secondary image(s):** one (?) attendant figure.  
**Niche type:** damaged.  
**Content description:** This small niche faces south and is carved adjacent to the upper right side of niche 281. The niche has partially collapsed and contains an image of a bodhisattva seated on a sumeru pedestal. The image too severely damaged to be given a specific identification. There may also have been an attendant figure on the right side of the niche.

**Cave/niche number:** 283.  
**NRZL title:** Empty niche 空龛.  
**Dimensions:** approximately .2 x .15 meters.*  
**Date:** undated.  
**Inscription(s):** none.  
**Primary image(s):** none.  
**Secondary image(s):** none.  
**Niche type:** type V.
**Content description:** This small niche faces south and is the middle niche of three niches carved to the right of niche 281. The niche is completely empty and has no evidence of images.

**Cave/niche number:** 284.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .46 x .41 x .15 meters.*

**Date:** Five Dynasties period.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** bodhisattva pair, Avalokiteśvara(?) and Kṣitigarbha.

**Secondary image(s):** none.

**Niche type:** damaged.

**Content description:** This small niche contains a pair of standing bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva on the left side is totally destroyed with only the rudimentary outline of the original figure remaining. The bodhisattva on the right depicts Kṣitigarbha in monastic garb holding a khakkhara on his right side. The opposite bodhisattva probably represented Avalokiteśvara who is paired with Kṣitigarbha in many niches on the north end of the site.

**Cave/niche number:** 285.

**NRZL title:** Damaged image niche 残像龛.

**Dimensions:** .88 x .63 x .22 meters.*

**Date:** Song Dynasty.

**Inscription(s):** none.

**Primary image(s):** seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.

**Secondary image(s):** one female attendant.

**Niche type:** type II.4.

**Content description:** The left side of this niche has partially collapsed and the remaining figures are damaged by erosion. The niche contains an image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara seated in *padmāsana* on a rocky base. The bodhisattva holds a *kuṇḍikā* (damaged) in the palm of the left hand on the lap and a long willow branch in the right hand. The bodhisattva wears a
headdress and heavy robes, which partially hang over the rocky base. The bodhisattva has a large plain aureole and halo. Standing to the right of Avalokiteśvara is a smaller female attendant who holds an offering tray. There was probably a corresponding figure on the opposite side of the niche where it has collapsed. The NRZL assigns a Five Dynasties date for this niche; however, the appearance of the primary figure suggests that it should be dated to the Song Dynasty.

Cave/niche number: 286.
NRZL title: Image of Avalokiteśvara 观音像.
Dimensions: 1.14 x 1.07 x 0.41 meters.
Date: Song Dynasty, 1109.
Inscription(s): one, see Appendix B, number 1.69; MWL, 24 number 38.
Primary image(s): seated bodhisattva, Avalokiteśvara.
Secondary image(s): two attendant figures, and two apsarasas.
Niche type: type I.2.
Content description: This niche is carved alongside niche 288 at the base of the far northern end of the cliff. The niche features a well preserved seated image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, which is identified in a donor inscription dated 1109. Avalokiteśvara is depicted seated in pralambapādāsana on a square seat. The right hand holds a willow branch and the left hand holds an alms bowl on the lap. The bodhisattva wears heavy robes with thin gouged striations for folds, and has a high rounded tiara with floral designs. Avalokiteśvara is depicted with two standing attendants. The attendant on the right is better preserved and appears to represent a female holding an offering bowl. The other figure is too damaged to identify, but the pair was probably intended to represent the Dragon Maiden and Sudhana. Two apsarasas in clouds are depicted in low relief on the upper back corners of the niche.
Cave/niche number: 287.

NRZL title: Stele with damaged characters 残字碑.

Dimensions: not measured.

Date: undated.

Inscription(s): one, no longer legible.

Niche type: stele, type III.1.

Content description: This rectangular stele is located above niche 288. The characters inscribed on the stele have completely eroded away.

Cave/niche number: 288.

NRZL title: Image of Lin Jun 林俊像.

Dimensions: 2.34 x 2.06 x 1.55.

Date: Northern Song Dynasty, 1107. Recarved in the Ming Dynasty, 1522-65.

Inscription(s): four inscriptions, see Appendix B, number 1.70; MWL 24, number 37; 62 number 5; 65-66 number 11.

Primary image(s): Thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara or Amitābha (?), which was replaced by an image of Lin Jun, a secular official.

Secondary image(s): two secular officials (later Ming additions), two bodhisattvas.

Niche type: variation of type III.1 with a lintel.

Content description: This niche is located at the base of the cliff. The niche was recarved in the Ming Dynasty during the jiaqing period (1522-1565). The recarved central image depicts a stiffly posed secular official seated on a square plinth and holding a seal of investiture. According to an inscription on the lintel of the niche this figure represents Lin Jun who served as the Governor of Shu (Sichuan) in the sixteenth century. He is depicted as an elder man with a pointed beard and wearing an officials hat with two long stiff horizontal ribbons. On the interior side walls of the niche are two smaller subsidiary niches with seated figures. These niches appear to be later additions. The niche on the left side features a bearded male courtier who holds a seal. The NRZL identifies this figure as a local Ming official named Fan Fu who served as the Associate Administrator of Chongqing during the
jiaqing period and who wrote the inscription in niche 290. The opposite niche features a younger figure that is also depicted as a courtier. This figure is identified in the NRZL as an unnamed understudy of Lin Jun. Both images in the side niches are crudely fashioned. Several elements remain from the original Song Dynasty imagery of the niche. These include a number of musical instruments that are depicted on the top of the niche. There are also two small roundels above the side niches on the lateral walls of the niche. In each of the roundels a bodhisattva is depicted seated in *padmāsana* and surrounded by a swirling cloud motif. The authors of the NRZL infer from an inscription located on the interior left side of the niche that the niche originally contained an image of the Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara. However, the inscription also mentions Amitābha and the kind of floating musical instruments depicted on the ceiling of the niche are featured in a number of niches with images of Amitābha at the site.

*Cave/niche number:* 289.

*NRZL title:* Image of Hārīti 诃利帝母像.

*Dimensions:* 1.5 x 1.11 x .46

*Date:* Song Dynasty.

*Inscription(s):* one visitor inscription dated 1171, see MWL, 62 number 6.

*Primary image(s):* Hārīti.

*Secondary image(s):* three female attendant figures and nine children.

*Niche type:* type I.1.

*Content description:* This niche is located at the base of the cliff adjacent to niche 280 and may have been carved as a group with niches 280 and 279. The rectangular border of the niche is decorated with folded curtains to convey the domestic setting of the palace of Hārīti. Hārīti is depicted seated in *pralambapādāsana* on a square plinth. She holds a child on her lap with the right hand holding the child’s right leg. Her dress is that of a Chinese noble lady with an elaborate phoenix headdress. To her sides are two youthful female attendants and below her knees seven of her offspring are depicted playing on the ground in front of Hārīti. One child directly in front of Hārīti plays with a round object. The images of the seven children are all badly
damaged. On the right side a stout, obese nursemaid is depicted seated on the ground nursing one of Hārīti’s offspring with her right breast. The head of this figure is missing.

*Cave/niche number:* 290.

*NRZL title:* Lin Jun poem stele 林俊诗碑.

*Dimensions:* 2.46 x 3.55 meters.

*Date:* Ming Dynasty, 1524.

*Inscription(s):* one, see *MWL*, 67 number 14.

*Niche type:* type III.1.

*Content description:* This stele inscription was written by Fan Fu, an administrator in Chongqing during the sixteenth century who is depicted in niche 288. The stele is a poem that eulogizes the Ming governor of Sichuan, Lin Jun.
APPENDIX B

Donor Inscriptions
1.1 Fowan niche 18.
_Inscription location:_ outer left side.
_Date:_ Late Tang.¹
_Transcription:_ MWL, 15 number 11.²

TRANSCRIPTION:

Translation:

( line 1 illegible), (line 2 illegible), (illegible)... Jingnan militia...
(illegible).

1.2 Fowan niche 19.
_Inscription location:_ outer left side.
_Date:_ Five Dynasties.³
_Transcription:_ MWL, 15 number 12.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Translation:

"Reverently made, one image of the Saving [one] from Suffering
Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva... two bodhisattva figures... together in one niche ... (illegible)."

1.3 Fowan niche 21.
_Inscription location:_ outer right side.
_Date:_ Five Dynasties.
_Transcription:_ MWL, 21 number 28.

TRANSCRIPTION:

Translation:

"Made with reverence, Amitābha Buddha together with
Avalokiteśvara... (illegible)... The honorable orphan Wang Qizhong

¹ Unless otherwise noted the transcriptions in this appendix are based on the MWL. The special characters follow the basic conventions in the MWL, see below:

△ : represents a blank space.

□ : represents a missing/ illegible character.

(漶) : represents an illegible string of characters, which are not countable.

( ) : characters enclosed in parenthesis are replacements for missing/damaged characters.

] : end of line.

² The authors of the MWL state that the date for this inscription is “without doubt” before guanghua year 2 (900) because of the phrase “Jingnan jun (militia),” see MWL, 15.

³ This niche is dated this to the Late Tang based on style and location by the authors of the MWL, see MWL, 15.
presents [this] in honor of... (illegible)... with the hope that spirit of the deceased will be reborn in the Pure Land...(illegible).”

1.4  Fowan niche 24.
Inscription location: right wall, side post.
Date: Five Dynasties, 919-924.  
Transcription: MWL, 14 number 7.
敬(镌)造日月光菩萨龛] 右(弟子)何(君友先)发心造上仚功德 □ 已]
(并乞自身安泰夫妇)咸昌 □ □ 以乾 □ ] □ □ □ □ □ (修)斋
表赞讫永为供养]
Translation:
“Carved with reverence, one niche of the bodhisattvas Sùryaprabha and Candraprabha. The honorable disciple He Junyou has first vowed to create the above items for merit. In addition, he prays for the peace and safety of his wife and himself. Xianchang □ □ □ in the qian[de] reign era (919-924) □ □ □ □ □ □ a vegetarian feast was provided to celebrate the completion of the niche as an everlasting offering.”

1.5  Fowan niche 25.
Inscription location: right side post of the niche.
Date: Five Dynasties.  
Transcription: MWL, 16 number 13.
□ □ 奉] △ △ 亡妣]
Translation:
“(illegible)... in honor of [this offering for] ...(illegible)...deceased mother.”

The authors of the MWL date this niche to the Late Tang based on style and suggest the missing character at the end of line three is “ning” ⤢, which dates the niche to 894-897, see MWL, 14.

Vegetarian feasts (uposadha; zhai 儀) were frequently celebrated on special occasions and offered in gratitude for benefits or to mark special occasion as here with the completion of the meritorious project of carving a Buddhist image. On the practice of vegetarianism in Chinese Buddhism see Ch’en (1964), 283-5.

The MWL dates this niche to the Late Tang based on the niche type, topology, and image style, see MWL 16.
1.6  Fowan niche 26.  
_Inscription location:_ right wall, outer portion.  
_Date:_ Five Dynasties, 920. 
_Transcription:_ MWL, 11-12 number 2.  

敬造求苦观音菩萨一身] 右弟子何君友敬为亡男 [ ] [ ] 造上件  
(功德 [ ] [ ] 以乾二年二月十三日赞讫 ]  

_Translation:_  
“Made with reverence, one image of the Saving [one] from Suffering  
Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva. The honorable disciple, He Junyou,  
reverently made the above images for his deceased son [ ] [ ] the merit  
[ ] [ ] [ ] celebrate [its] completion on the thirteenth day of the second  
month of the second year of the qian[ning(?)] reign era (920).”

1.7  Fowan niche 27.  
_Inscription location:_ outer upper right side of the niche.  
_Date:_ 938.  
_Transcription:_ MWL, 19 number 21.  

Translation:  
“(illegible)...one image...(line 2 is illegible)... on the eighth day of the  
seventh month of the first year of the guangzheng reign era (938)  
...(illegible)...to express celebration of [its] completion.”

1.8  Fowan niche 32.  
_Inscription location:_ right wall, outer post.  
_Date:_ 913.  
_Transcription:_ MWL, 17 number 17. 

Translation:  
“[ ] [ ] [ ] made for my deceased mother. On the fourteenth day of the  
ninth month of the third year of the yongping reign era (913), a  
vegetarian feast is offered in honor of its completion.  Made by née  
Zhou in honor of her mother.”

---

\[7\] The donor, He Junyou is also given as the donor of niche 24. Based on the style and topology of the niche I suggest that it should be dated to the qiande reign era (919-24) of the Former Shu instead of the qianning reign era of the Late Tang as given in the MWL, 11.

\[8\] The NRZL gives a different version of this inscription: “...建造日月光菩萨一龛永为供养永  
三年九月十四日追斋赞讫,” which may have been mistaken for the inscription in niche 24.  
The MWL does not comment on this.
1.9  Fowan niche 35. MWL, 19 number 23.
InSCRIPTION location: outer left side.
Date: 941.
Transcription: MWL, 19 number 23.

(潢) 一龛  (潢) 意所造上件  (潢) 为妻  □  陈 □  (潢) 应
(潢) 广正四年炙日记]

Translation:
“(illegible)... one niche... (illegible)... the above was made with the intention... (illegible)... for my wife □ Chen □ ... (illegible)... recorded
on the fourteenth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of the guangzheng reign era (941).”

1.10  Fowan niche 37.
Inscription location: right wall, outer post.
Date: 940.
Transcription: MWL, 19 number 22.

敬(镌造)地藏菩萨一龛]  右弟(子)于彦章邓知进并奉为]
外(学任)师礼发心造上件功德以希]  眷属(宁)泰 □ □ (增)柴以广政三年]
(二月四日)修斋表庆讫永为(瞻)敬]

Translation:
“Respectfully carved one Ksitigarbha bodhisattva niche, presented
together by the honorable disciples Yu Yanzhang and Deng Zhijin.
Outside we learn our responsibilities and study the rites, and
have vowed to make this image to acquire merit in the hope that our
families will experience peace □ □ and increased prosperity. On the
fourth day of the second month of the third year of the guangzheng
reign era (940) a vegetarian feast is given to express celebration of [its]
completion. May it be forever looked upon with reverence.”

1.11  Fowan niche 39.
Inscription location: right wall, outer post.
Date: 922.
Transcription: MWL, 19 number 20.

敬 □ 发心镌造(大威)德炽盛光佛并九曜共一龛右弟子 □ □ □ □]
与 □ □ □ 兄弟等 □ 造上件功德并已成(就意)者 □ □ □ 同]
范 □ □ 陈雷 □ 陪法百年相守次乞家(人) □ □ □]
偶随永无障堤时(以乾)德四年十二月十六日修斋表庆 □ □]
(敬)弟子温孟达鸾(进)于彦章梁□□□□□(敬造)]
□ □ □ 扬宗厚蹇 □ 芝程彦辉王(孟言)王(德)全陈 □ □ (敬造)□
Translation:

“Having respectfully vowed to carve one niche of the Almighty Virtuous Tejaprabha Buddha together with the nine planets. The honorable disciples and brothers, the merit from the completion of the above together with Fan and Chen Lei. We will abide by the Buddhist teachings for a hundred years. Second, we pray that our families until the time there will forever be no obstacles. On the sixteenth day of the twelfth month of the fourth year of the qiande reign era (922), a vegetarian feast is respectfully celebrated by the disciples Wen Mengda, Jian Zhongjin, Yu Yanzhang, Liu Jue(?), Chen Ji, Deng Zhijin, Yang Zonghou, Jian zhi, Cheng Yanhui, Wang Mengyan, Wang Dequan, Chen. Respectfully created.”

1.12 Fowan niche 50.
Inscription location: right wall, outer post.
Date: 897.
Transcription: MWL, 12-13 number 5.

Translation:

“Respectfully carved one image of Cintāmanicakra Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva, presented by Ming Wu, the Chief Manager Abbott of monks, in honor of the dånapati (alms givers) of the ten directions. [Recorded] on the day of the third month, fourth year of the ganning reign era (897). A vegetarian feast has been prepared to express celebration of [its] completion. the senior monk Daoguang, and the lesser disciple Daotian.”

1.13 Fowan niche 51.
Inscription location: interior right and left walls.
Date: 899.
Transcription: MWL, 14-15 number 8.

Translation:

“The Buddhas of the three realms(trikayā) and their entourage... Prefect and Officer on the Left Commander 832
in-Chief of Changzhou, [Holder of the] Silver and Blue Pillar of the State, Wang Zongjing... (illegible)... for [my] daughter... (illegible)... the twelfth wife... (illegible)... praising its completion.

(legible)... increase in wealth... (illegible)... On year two of the guanghua reign era (899), seventh month, 26th day... (illegible) was celebrated praising the completion.”

1.14 Fowan niche 52.
Inscription location: right and left outer side posts.
Date: 897.
Transcription: MWL, 14 number 6.
Translation:
“One image of Ksitigarbha bodhisattva, Amitabha Buddha, and one image of the Saving [one] from Suffering Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva have been respectfully made by the female disciple née Li in honor of her deceased husband, Liu [Gui (?)]. A vegetarian feast has been celebrated at the time of its creation on the third day of the first month, fourth year of the ganning reign era (897). My deceased husband Liu [Gui (?)], the of Changzhou, General and [Acting] Censor-in Chief to be worshipped.”

1.15 Fowan niche 53.
Inscription location: right and left outer side posts.
Date: 915.
Transcription: MWL, 17 number 18.
Translation:
“This image of Ksitigarbha bodhisattva has been respectfully made by the Officer on the Left and General of the Number Three Military Superior Prefecture, Zhong Shenneng to create merit for his deceased husband Liu [Gui (?)], the of Changzhou, General and [Acting] Censor-in Chief to be worshipped.”

There are two names listed on the Wei Junjing stele that have the surname Liu. One is Liu, which is approximately the 108th name listed, and the other is Liu Gui, which is approximately the 141st name listed on the stele.
son, Xiyan who was injured by bandits. A seven day vegetarian feast was celebrated on the fourth day of the fourth month of the fifth year of the yongping reign era (915) so that he will be reborn in the Western Paradise to see the Buddha and listen to the dharma. [This image of] Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva has been respectfully created so that there will be everlasting peace and no calamities. Also for my son’s teacher Qi Chouhu (?) it is peacefully made. [This image of] Amitābha Buddha has been respectfully created so that from beginning to end the fourth month will be flourishing, the disciple Zhong Shenneng wishes protection. On the sixth day of the seventh month of the fifth year of the yongping reign era a vegetarian feast was prepared to express praise of [its] completion.”

1.16 Fowan niche 54.
Inscription location: above the head of the image.
Date: Late Tang.
Transcription: MWL, 16 number 14.

Translation:
“(illegible)... twenty-thousand cash... (illegible)... five days because of one hundred days of vegetarian banquets as an expression of praise... (illegible)... worship... (illegible)”

1.17 Fowan niche 58.
Inscription location: exterior left side.
Date: 896.
Transcription: MWL, 12 number 3.1.

Translation:
“This niche of Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva and Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva has been respectfully made for née He, the seventh wife, with the wish that she be granted the merit from its carving to hasten her rebirth in the Western Paradise and receive all its happiness. On the twenty third day of the ninth month of the third year of the ganning reign era (896) a vegetarian feast was prepared to express praise for its completion. Made by Wang Zongjing, the Honorary Minister of Works and Concurrent Acting Prefect of Changzhou.”
1.18 Fowan niche 58.
Inscription location: exterior right side.
Date: 896.

Transcription: MWL, 12 number 3.2.

Translation:
“Twenty-third day of the ninth month in the third year of the ganning reign era (896), the Military Commander, Officer on the Left, and the Acting Cavalier Attendant-in Ordinary of the Left, and the Concurrent Censor-in-Chief and Supreme Pillar of the State, Zhao Shike had [this niche] adorned and decorated for his paternal aunt, née He.”

1.19 Fowan niche 110.
Inscription location: left and right side walls.
Period: Song Dynasty.

Transcription: MWL, 34 number 47.

Translation:
“[We who] reside on Zhengdong street within the outer wall of Changzhou, the disciple who praises the good, Zhang Hui, and (his wife) née Liu, and below our knees our son Zhang Shiming and his wife, née Zan, their daughter and her caretaker. The family has together ordered the carving and decoration of this niche of the Tathāgata Bhaiṣajyaguru, bodhisattvas, yaksā spirit generals for successive generations to gaze up upon it. (right side lines 1-3 are not fully legible)... numerous descendants and flourishing grandsons

Zhao Shike is listed on the Wei Junjing stele (approximately the 59th name listed), but with a slightly different title: “Military Commander and Concurrent Principle Attendant Follower on the Right and Holder of the Honorary Title of Grand Master of the Palace with the Silver Seal and Blue Ribbon, and the Acting Censor-in-Chief Supreme Pillar of State, Zhao Shike” See MWL, 41.
... (illegible) ... on the first second day of the third month to honor □ at the adjacent temple a vegetarian feast was held □ □ to express celebration □.”

1.20 Fowan niche 136.
Inscription location: rear wall, above the head of Avalokiteśvara.
Date: 1142.
Transcription: MWL, 31 number 46.1.

Translation:
“Zhang Minxin, the Grand Master for Closing the Court on the Left and the Provisional Officer of the Changzhou Military Prefecture, has wholeheartedly vowed to have the adjacent temple make one image of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara that it may be everlastingly gazed upon with reverence. Today, the painting and carving are all finished. The decoration is perfect. An exquisite vegetarian feast has been presented to the long-life banner to express celebration and praise. We pray and request that the country will be wealthy and prosperous, and that [our] family will be blessed with purity and good fortune. Recorded on renxu, the twelfth year of the shaoxing reign era (1142), nineteenth day of the second winter month.”

1.21 Fowan niche 136.
Inscription location: rear wall, above the head of Mahākāśyapa.
Date: 1143.
Transcription: MWL, 31-32 number 46.2.

Translation:
“[illegible]: reside outside the city wall, [the disciple who] praises the good, Née Guo’s grandson Chen Wenming carved and painted [images] of Mahāsthāmaprāpta bodhisattva, Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda. All together three honored [images] □ □ in the sūtra repository cave to be permanently gazed up

11 The four donor images on the north side of the rear of the cave probably represent the members of the Chen family mentioned on this inscription and in inscription number 1.15.
upon. We pray for the protection of our longevity to have lengthy and wealthy long lives, flourishing descendants with increasingly brilliant futures, and to wish that the wheel of dharma will constantly turn. We pray that the Shun day will only be brilliant. Today the carving and decoration is finished on the twenty-fifth day of the first month, thirteenth year of the shaoxing reign era (1143). Recorded with celebratory praise by the monk Fu (?). [Carved by] the sculptor Xu An of Yingchuan.

1.22 Fowan niche 136.

Inscription location: left wall, above the head of Mañjuśrī.
Date: 1142.

Transcription: MWL, 32 number 46.3.

弟子赵彭年同寿杨氏] 发至诚心敬镌造] 文殊师利菩萨普贤王]
菩萨二龛上祝] 今上皇帝圣寿无疆皇] 封永固夷夏安人民快] 乐次
乞母亲康宁眷属] 吉庆普愿法界有情同] 沾利益绍兴十三年岁] 在癸
亥六月丙戌朔十六] 日辛丑斋僧庆赞左从] 事郡昌州录事参军] 兼司
户司法赵彭年谨题]

Translation:
“The disciple, Zhao Pengnian together with [his wife] née Yang have solemnly vowed to have two niches of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the bodhisattva Samantabhadra respectfully carved to bless the emperor a long life, endless domains, permanent control of barbarians, and that his people are happy. Second, to request that my mother is healthy and that our family is blessed with fortune, with a universal vow that the sentient beings of the Dharma realm will have the same benefits. On the sixteenth day, xinchou, of the guihai sixth month of the thirteenth year of the shaoxing reign era (1142), bingxu shuo, a vegetarian feast was held for monks in celebratory praise. Written with sincerity by Zhao Pengnian, Officer on the Left of Changzhou Military Affairs and the Concurrent Revenue Manager.”

1.23 Fowan niche 136.

Inscription location: right (north) wall, above the head of Avalokiteśvara.
Date: 1146.

Transcription: MWL, 32-33 number 46.4.

在城奉佛弟子王升同政] 何氏伏为在堂父王山母亲] 周氏谨舍净财镌造]
大圣数珠手菩萨一尊] 永为瞻仰伏愿二亲寿算增] 延合属百顺来宜五福
咸备] 二六时中公私清吉以丙寅绍] 兴十六年季冬十二日表庆讫]

I am unsure of the meaning of this phrase.
Translation:
“In the city, the devotee who praises the Buddha, Wang Sheng together with his wife née He, prostrated themselves in the hall of [my] father, Wang Shan, and mother, née Zhou, and solemnly donated funds to carve and decorate one image of the Great Holy Prayer-bead Avalokiteśvara so that it may be permanently gazed upon. Prostrated we wish our two parents have their long lives extended and that all family members will experience one-hundred blessings and the five happinesses will be complete. During the two six time[?] may we in our public and private matters have purity and good fortune. [Recorded] on the twelfth day, third winter month, sixteenth year of the shaoxing reign era (1146) to express celebration of its completion.”

1.24 Fowan niche 136.
Inscription location: rear wall, above the head of Ānanda.
Date: Southern Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 33-34 number 46.5.
Translation:
“Donated in honor of the Buddha ...(illegible)... Zhou Beibu ...(illegible)... to express celebration for ...(illegible)... the above, recorded on the sixth day.”

1.25 Fowan niche 136.
Inscription location: rear wall, above the head of Mahākāśyapa.
Date: Southern Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 75 number 10.
Translation:
“The resident of Nanshan township who praises the good, Chen Ji, together with the sincere Née Guo and grandson Chen Wenming and his wife Née Wang have together vowed to donate money to guild and paint [this image of] the root teacher Śākyamuni Buddha.”

---

I am unsure of the precise meaning of the time reference in this line of the inscription.
1.26  Fowan niche 137.  
*Inscription location:* upper left corner.  
*Date:* 1134.  
*Transcription:* MWL, 30 number 45.1.  

$$
\begin{align*}
\text{当州充宁十将文志于} & \quad \text{初黎日同施大钱三贯} \\
\text{绍兴甲寅重九日谨铭} & \quad \text{母亲薛氏家室任氏男兼}
\end{align*}
$$

*Translation:*

“On the first day that this was being copied, Wen Zhi, the File Leader of Chongning [township?] in the present prefecture, has jointly offered the large sum of 3 strings of cash for the welfare of the image to be firm for a long time and this stele not to topple. Solemnly inscribed on the the ninth day of the zhong [month], of the jiayin [year] of the shaoxing reign era (1134). [His] mother née Xue, the household, née Ren, and sons, concurrently.”

1.27  Fowan niche 137.  
*Inscription location:* upper left corner below inscription 1.16.  
*Date:* Song Dynasty.  
*Transcription:* MWL, 30 number 45.2.  

$$
\begin{align*}
\text{李大郎重摹} & \quad \text{罗复明另刻} \\
\text{住岩僧志诚}
\end{align*}
$$

*Translation:*

“Copied by Li Dalang. Engraved by Luo Fuming, and the monk Zhicheng who dwells on the cliff.”

1.28  Fowan niche 137.  
*Inscription location:* upper right corner.  
*Date:* Northern Song Dynasty.  
*Transcription:* MWL, 30-31 number 45.3.  

$$
\begin{align*}
\text{东平(十清河八成)} & \quad \text{纪三(太原三遍观)} \\
\text{士最(佳伦皆适主)} & \quad \text{僧宜(护之丁卯仲秋)} \\
\text{月十(四日题)} & \quad \text{院(壁画维摩居)}
\end{align*}
$$

*Translation:*

“*Dongping* ten, *Qinghe* eight, *Chengji* three, *Taiyuan* three. Having viewed all the murals of this temple, [the painting of] the householder Vimalakirti is the most outstanding. The others are not appropriate. The head monk ought protect it. Recorded on fourteenth day of the mid autumn month of the *dingmao* year (1134).”

---

14 There are an additional five lines of characters inscribed on the outer middle top of the stele, but they do not appear to be contemporary with the stele, see MWL, 31.

15 In inscription 1.40 Wen Zhi is identified as the File Leader of the areas of Kening and Rong □ in Changzhou.
1.29 Fowan niche 149.
Inscription location: right wall, near exterior.
Date: 1128.
Transcription: MWL, 27 number 44.1.

Translation:
“Ren Zongyi, the Grand Master for Forthright Service and Administrator of Prefectural Military Affairs, together with the reverent née Du have vowed to carve and decorate a niche of the bodhisattva Cintāmani-cakra Avalokiteśvara so that it forever be gazed up upon from one direction. We pray to request that the weapons of war to be put to permanent rest. Fourth month of the second year of the jianyan reign era (1128).”

1.30 Fowan niche 149.
Inscription location: back wall, left corner above the image of Ren Zongyi.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 28-29 number 44.2.

Translation:
“While still fasting, Ren Zongyi self-proclaims to fully accomplish all of the six embodiments included. This is to paint legs on a snake, having made this stone room. The magistrate appeared, snow like frost.”

1.31 Fowan niche 149.
Inscription location: back wall, right corner above the image of née Du.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 29 number 44.3.

Translation:
“In the fog, Du Huixiu self-proclaims that the female body is impure and filthy and not a vessel of the dharma. [I] devoutly believe that the
bodhisattva will make the land pure and clean. I wish to grow more
good roots and escape my original nature to realize the wish from the
west.”

1.32  Fowan niche 149.
Inscription location: back wall, right and left side.
Date: Song dynasty.
Transcription:  MWL, 29-30 number 44.4.

Translation:
“The White pagoda is respectfully offered to the faces of all Buddhas.
Red dust will not stain the heart of a sage. Written by Cui Dingzi of
Chu.”

1.33  Fowan niche 155.
Inscription location: left side of the central image.
Date: 1126.
Transcription:  MWL, 26-27 number 41.

Translation:
“This image was carved by Fu Yuanjun and his son Shineng in the
bingwu year (1126),”

1.34  Fowan niche 168.
Inscription location: right wall.
Date: 1121.
Transcription:  MWL, 26 number 40.1.

Translation:
“In the city of Changzhou [ ] resides the disciple who reveres
goodness, Li Shiming, husband and wife, intended for our third and
second daughters [ ] we have carved five images of arhats with the
wish for our family to have peace, happiness, and long lives. Recorded
on the first fifth day of the seventh month of the third year of the
xuanhe reign era (1121).”
1.35  Fowan niche 168.
Inscription location: left wall.
Date: 1122.
Transcription: MWL, 26 number 40.2.
Translation:
“In the great [kingdom] of the Song, Chang Prefecture, Dazu county, eastern outskirts of Yuan township, He Yixing, and his son Juefa, and eldest, second, third, and fourth daughters, the entire family, having vowed to carve and decorate a total of nineteen arhats on the [twenty?] eighth [day] of the sixth month of the fourth year of the xuanhe reign era (1122) the next son the above the above the above the above celebrate the offering is recorded.”

1.36  Fowan niche 168.
Inscription location: left wall.
Date: 1119-1125.
Transcription: MWL, 26 number 40.3.
Translation:
“on the seventh month, seventh day of the xuanhe reign era (1119-1125) it is recorded the city reside outside, the disciples who honor goodness Miao [?], husband-and-wife, and the whole family with the desire that the arhats have made five images. We pray and request that the disciples have no. Those of today together with grandsons and daughters on the day of [setting free?] the fetters monks were ordered to read sūtras to express celebration. Recorded by Xiao Ba.”
1.37  Fowan niche 168. *Inscription location:* right wall.
*Date:* Song Dynasty.
*Transcription:* MWL, 26 number 40.4.

弟子王惟祖夫妇造像上位[ ориенлив]

*Translation:*
“The disciple Wang Weizu, and his wife have made the mentioned image(s)....”

1.38  Fowan niche 168.
*Inscription location:* left wall.
*Date:* Song Dynasty.
*Transcription:* MWL, 26 number 40.5.

弟子王北(倒)夫妇造像上位四身祈(无灾)[ ориенлив]

*Translation:*
“The disciple Wang Beidao and his wife have made the four aforementioned images. We pray they not be destroyed.”

1.39  Fowan niche 168.
*Inscription location:* left wall.
*Date:* 1122.
*Transcription:* MWL, 73 number 6.

□□存日发心妆此五色云下相对罗汉供拾陆身义宜和四年中(涩)[ ориенлив]

*Translation:*
“□□存日发心妆此五色云下相对罗汉供拾陆身义宜和四年中(涩)”

1.40  Fowan niche 168
*Inscription location:* left wall.
*Date:* 1128.
*Transcription:* MWL, 73-74 number 7.

昌州克] 宁荣[ ] 挥十将] 文志夫] 妇一家] 等先(发)] 心认
(题)建炎] 四年十] 月十] 二日记]

*Translation:*
“File Leader of Kening and Rong [townships?] in Changzhou (prefecture), Wen Zhi, husband and wife as one family having first vowed in agreement to decorate five images of arhats with prays for
peace, happiness, and the protection of our lives. Today monks have been ordered to celebrate. Recorded on the twenty second day, second month, fourth year of the jianyan reign era (1128).”

1.41 Fowan niche 168.
Inscription location: right wall.
Date: Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 74 number 8.

Translation:
“Temporary residents of Changzhou prefecture who honor goodness the disciple Zhao Zhong and née Wang for [our children?] below our knees we decorate these ten arhats birth day a vegetarian feast, ten monks read scriptures celebratory prayers.”

1.42 Fowan niche 176.
Inscription location: right entrance post, interior side.
Date: 1126.
Transcription: MWL, 27 number 42.

Translation:
“The artisans of this prefecture, Fu Yuanjun and his son Shineng, carved Maitreya, [and] the Great Sage of Sizhou. Inscribed during the bingwu year (1126).”

1.43 Fowan niche 176.
Inscription location: left wall near entrance.
Date: Southern Song Dynasty.
Transcription: MWL, 74 number 9.
Translation:
“The Pure believer He □, who resides in the city in the left township on □ zheng street together with my wife née Zhao, [our] tears fall on the boys and girls beneath our knees. In the preceding years, we have been worried by the [one] below our knees, our son He Yan who contracted an eye disease and has not been at peace □ □ □ decorate this vision of the descending sūtra of Maitreya together with the heavenly musicians on top the canopy. We request that his eyesight recover □... (illegible)... today carved □ together celebrate □. □ □ □ □ □ .”

1.44 Fowan niche 177.
Inscription location: left side interior, front, upper section.
Date: 1126.
Transcription: MWL, 27 number 43.
Translation: Carved by Fu Yuanjun, recorded in the bingwu year (1126).

1.45 Fowan niche 180.
Inscription location: interior, right wall. Above the second and third bodhisattva from the interior.
Date: 1116.
Transcription: MWL, 25 number 39.1.
Translation: “The Front Officer of the District Gate, the disciple, Deng Weiming, has had this one image of the Universal Seeing [One] (Avalokiteśvara?) made and painted as an offering to request the wish that his entire family will have peace and happiness. [Recorded] during the □ first month of the sixth year of the zhenghe reign era (1116), [by] the disciple Deng Weiming.”

1.46 Fowan niche 180. MWL, 25 number 39.2.
Inscription location: interior, right wall. Above third bodhisattva from the exterior.
Date: 1122.
Transcription:
Translation: □ (德)德(德) □ □ 長(長) □ □ 妝(妝) 同(同) 贏(贏) 水 □ □ 庚(庚) 三(三)月]
Translation:
(illegible)... image □□ carving ...(illegible)... the adornment and painting have been completed together. He Enshui (?) □ [Recorded on] the third month of the gengzi year (1122).

1.47 Fowan niche 180.
Inscription location: interior, right wall. Above the second bodhisattva from the exterior.
Date: 1122.
Transcription: MWL, 25 number 39.3.

Translation:
“The disciples who honor the Buddha in the city of this prefecture □ together have vowed to complete the painting... (illegible)... one bodhisattva figure...(illegible)... as an express celebration of its completion in the fourth year of the xuanhe reign era (1122).”

1.48 Fowan niche 209.
Inscription location: niche exterior, right side.
Transcription: MWL, 21-22 number 29.

Translation:
“Praise to the great holy bodhisattva who unties the knot(s) of injustice.”

1.49 Fowan niche 240.
Inscription location: right wall, outer side.
Date: 896.
Transcription: MWL, 12 number 4.

Translation:
“One image of the bodhisattva Abhiratirāja has been respectfully made by the bhikṣuṇi Zhihui as an offering to the dānapati (alms givers) of the ten directions. On the sixteenth day of the fifth month of the third year of the ganning reign era (896), a vegetarian feast has been sponsored in honor of its completion so that it can serve as an eternal offering. The lesser disciple Jingxiu and the lesser disciple Fajin.”
1.50  Fowan niche 243.
Inscription location: left wall, outer side.
Date: 901.
Transcription: MWL, 15 number 9.

Translation:
“Respectfully carved one niche of the great compassionate Thousand-hand Avalokiteśvara the honorable disciple and Military Commissioner, Jian Zhijin, first for stronghold in the midst of, husband and wife in a frightful state of worry have together vowed to make the above. Men of virtue and sages from the start have had unity and increased protection safe and sound with our kindred reunited today we can not disappoint the hearts of the past. Therefore, the carving of the above image of the bodhisattva in xi jiyou year (889). On the fifteenth day of the fifth month of the first year of tianfu reign era (901) it has been repaired by the adjacent temple praise is given by using the release of swans in the pond as an everlasting offering.”

1.51  Fowan niche 244.
Inscription location: outer left wall.
Date: 945.
Transcription: MWL, 19-20 number 24.

Translation:
“□ □造地藏 □ □ ... 一龛(澈) (澈)子之 □ 氏 □ 求造 □ □ □ 广政
八年四月十七日 表赞讫

□ □ one niche of Kṣitigarbha and Avalokiteśvara?... (illegible) ... née □ sought to make... (illegible)... on the seventeenth day of the fourth month of the eighth year of the guangzheng reign era (945) to express praise of its completion.”

According to the MWL, 15, the characters used in the inscription to provide the dates are incorrect and that the correct date should be 901. Li Fangyin (1996), 349, dates the inscription to 917.
*Inscription location:* niche exterior, right side second row of donor figures.
*Date:* Late Tang.
*Transcription:*
造西方】 龟化首】 刘净意】 陈静喜】 弟子李氏】 (漶)】 □文氏】 (漶)】

*Translation:*
“The chief alms [collector(s)] for the making of the Western [Pure Land]
niche, are Liu Jingyi, Chen Jingxi, and the disciples née Li... jimao... □
née Wen... (illegible).”

1.53  Fowan niche 245.
*Inscription location:* on the niche base below the lower register of reliefs.
*Date:* 919.
*Transcription: MWL, 17-19 number 19.

Translation:

“The county monk association... (lines 3-31 are not fully illegible). . . early in the seventh month... treasure towers and pavilions... nine ranks of rebirth... have come to recite the Buddha’s [name]... jimao [year].”

1.54  Fowan niche 247.
*Inscription location:* outer part of the left wall.
*Date:* 1005.
*Transcription: MWL, 73 number 4.

Translation:

“The Buddhist disciple Zhang Wenxin... has vowed for his son
Tianbao to have the adjacent temple paint and decorate [this image] of

*17 The jimao year given in line thirty of the inscription as the year occurred in 919 and 859, see *MWL*, 17-19.*
the Saving one from Suffering Avalokiteśvara bodhisattva on the eighth day of the tenth month of the sixth year of the xianping reign era (1005) to express celebration of its completion.

1.55 Fowan niche 249.
*Inscription location:* outer part of the left wall.
*Date:* Five Dynasties/Northern Song.
*Transcription:* MWL, 24 number 36.

Translation:
"Respectfully made, one niche of the Saving one from Suffering [Avalokiteśvara] together with the holy Kṣitigarbha bodhisattva."

1.56 Fowan niche 249. MWL, 72 number 1.
*Inscription location:* outer part of the right wall.
*Date:* 995-997.
*Transcription:*

Translation:
"The female disciple née Li, the ninth daughter, presented for her deceased husband Wang Ting. Having planned for three years to adorn these two images of Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha for use to reach out and seek the great expanse of the living world. On the twenty-first day of the fourth month of the zhida reign era (995-997) a vegetarian feast is offered to express praise of its completion."

1.57 Fowan niche 252. MWL, 22 number 30.
*Inscription location:* exterior left side.
*Date:* Five Dynasties.
*Transcription:*

Translation:
"(illegible) day(s) of vegetarian feast/fasting... (illegible) the merit for... (illegible) the disciple née Chen not... (illegible)"

1.58 Fowan niche 253.
*Inscription location:* exterior left side.
*Date:* 1001.
Translation: MWL, 72-73 number 3.

Translation:
“(...) the disciple and administrative commander of the counties of Changyuan, Yongchuan, and Dazu, Chen Shaoxun and his relation, née Huang, in the fifth year of the chunhua reign era (994), during the time of uprisings made a vow for the family to remain in peace and have constant blessings. We have adorned and painted this niche for merit. On the fourth year of the xianping reign era (1001), second month, eighth day, a Water-land vegetarian banquet has been offered as an expression of celebratory solemnity and is here recorded.”

1.59 Fowan niche 255. Inscription location: left wall, outer side.
Date: Five Dynasties.

Translation: MWL, 22 number 31.1.

Translation:
“(illegible)... the above holy appearances... (illegible) eighteenth day of the [...] month... (illegible)”

1.60 Fowan niche 255.
Inscription location: right wall, outer side.

Translation: MWL, 22 number 31.2.

Translation:
“(illegible)... the female disciple née Jie... (illegible) eighteenth day of the [...] month has offered a vegetarian feast to express praise... (illegible) wish that [her?] ear disease will soon be removed... (illegible) niche... (illegible).”

1.61 Fowan niche 260.
Inscription location: dhāraṇī pillar shaft.

Part of an illegible inscription in the niche includes the following: 男杨正章 ("son Yang Zhengzhang") and 男杨古章 ("son Yang Guzhang"). see MWL, 22.
Translation:
“The honored superior incantation (dhāraṇī) of the Buddha’s topknot (uṣṇīṣa)... (dhāraṇī passage)... [For my/our] deceased mother, née Wang [I/we] have made [this] True-word (mantra) with the desire that she will forever ascend to the Pure [Land]... (dhāraṇī passage)... On the day of the [ ] month, of the eighteenth year of the guangzheng reign era (945) [I/we] express praise upon its completion to serve as an everlasting offering.”

1.62 Fowan niche 269.
Inscription location: dhāraṇī pillar.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
transcription: see MWL, 22-23 number 32.

1.63 Fowan niche 271. MWL, 23 number 33.
Inscription location: dhāraṇī pillar.
Date: Five Dynasties period.
Partial transcription:
( dhāraṇī passage lines 2 to 13)...
弟子张 [ ] 恩萨婆 [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] 耶 [ ] [ ] [ ] 萨婆揭么钵 [ ] (dhāraṇī passage lines 15 to 17)
Translation:
“The honored superior incantation (dhāraṇī) of the Buddha’s topknot (uṣṇīṣa)... (dhāraṇī passage lines 2 to 13)...the disciple [née(?)] Zhang [ ] en sa po [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] ye [ ] [ ] [ ] sa po zhe ma bo .. (dhāraṇī passage continues on lines 15 to 17)...

1.64 Fowan niche 279.
Inscription location: between the two subsidiary niches.
Date: 955.
Transcription: MWL, 21 number 27.1.
弟子通引宜行首王承秀室家女弟子张求脱部众并十方佛阿弥陀佛尊胜幢地藏菩萨四身共－龛佛保...氏发心诵念药师经－卷并舍金钱妆此龛勒氏同发心造上件 [ ] [ ] 今已成就伏翼福寿长远灾障不侵(眷属) [ ] [ ] 公私清吉以广政十八年二月廿四日修斋表...德意希保家门之昌盛保妇以康和男福 [ ] [ ]
"The disciple and Official of the Reception Office and Column Leader Wang Chengxiu and his wife the female disciple Zhang [have sponsored imagery of] seek release. [Images of] the entourage (of Bhaiṣajyaguru ?) with the Buddhas of the ten directions, Amitābha, a Buddho≈∫ª≈a pillar, and four images of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, together all in one niche. Née Bao has vowed to recite the Bhaiṣajyaguru sūtra and also has donated money to decorate this niche. Née Shao has together vowed to make the above images today it has already been accomplished, to be wealthy and have long lives, and that difficulties and barriers will not enter the family public and private [life] to be pure and fortunate. On the twenty-fourth day of the second month of the eighteenth year of the guangzheng reign era (955), a vegetarian feast was held with the intention and hope that the Bao family will flourish and prosper, and that Mrs. Bao will have good health and her son(s) will be wealthy wife née Li and née Zhou, the second and fourth daughters and son-in-law, Yu Chengjiang, and his sons, Wuxiang, Erxiang, and Sanxiang, and daughter Xiaoxiu (decline and cease?), not to be tainted by calamities. On the eighteenth day of the fourth month of the fourth year of the xianping reign era (1001), banners were hung and a vegetarian feast was held to express vindication. Recorded by the Official of the Reception Office and Column Leader, Wang Chengxiu."

1.65 Fowan niche 279.
**Inscription location:** dhāraṇī pillar.
**Date:** Five Dynasties period.
**Transcription:**
佛顶尊胜陀罗尼曰] ... (dhāraṇī passage lines 2 to 9)

**Translation:** MWL, 21 number 27.2.
"The honored superior dharaṇī of the Buddha’s uṣṇīṣa..."

1.66 Fowan niche 279.
**Inscription location:** dharaṇī pillar niche, side wall.
**Transcription:** MWL, 72 number 2.
Translation:
“Daughter née Jie has adorned this honored superior banner that the righteous disciple née Dong made for the daughter née Jie. On thirteenth day of the third month of the second year of the xianping reign era (999) have practiced fasting (or provided a vegetarian feast) in praise for its completion □ □ □ wei day.”

1.67 Fowan niche 281.
Inscription location: between the two subsidiary niches.
Date: 954.
Translation: MWL, 20 number 25.1.
敬镌造药师琉璃光佛八菩萨十二神王一部众并七佛三世佛何弥陀佛尊胜幢
壹所兼地藏菩萨三身当即壹龛] 右弟子右厢都押衙知衙务刘恭姨母任氏男
女大娘子二娘子男[仁寿]仁福仁绿等发心镌造前件功德今并周圆伏愿身田清
[爽]』 寿算遐昌眷[属]康安高封禄位先灵祖远同沾殊善以广政十七年太岁
甲寅二月丙午朔十一日丙辰设 斋赞讫永为瞻敬]
Translation:
“Respectfully carved, the Buddha Bhaiṣajyaaguru, the eight [great] bodhisattvas, twelve spirit kings (yakṣa generals), and their entourage, together with the seven [mānasī] Buddhas, the Buddhas of the three realms, the Buddha Amitābha, a honored superior Buddhosophiṣa dhārāṇī pillar, along with three images of Kṣitigarbha all together in one niche. The honorable disciple and the Township-chief Administrator on the Right, Liu Gong and his aunt née Ren, sons and daughters, first and second wives, and sons, Renshou, Renfu, Renlu, together have vowed to make the aforementioned images for merit. Today, in addition [we] form a circle, prostrate and pray that [our] bodies and fields will be fresh and cool, and will have longevity and prosperity, our family will have health, peace, high rank, and that our distant ancestors will have mutual benefits, with extreme goodness. On the seventeenth year of the guangzheng reign era (954), fifty-first day of Jupiter’s second month, eleventh day of the forty-third new moon, we have celebrated its completion with a vegetarian feast. May it be eternally gazed upon with reverence.”

1.68 Fowan niche 281.
Inscription location: dhārāṇī pillar niche, right wall.
Date: 1124.
Translation: see MWL, 73 number 5.
Translation:
弟子胡承进为阖家妆此] 功德以景德二年二月八日] 表赞讫永为供养]
Translation:

“The disciple Hu Chengjin has decorated this [niche] for the merit of his entire family. On the eighth day, second month of the second year of the jingde reign era (1122) praise is expressed for its completion. May it serve an everlasting offering.”

1.69 Fowan niche 286.
Inscription location: center top of the niche.
Date: 1110.
Transcription: MWL, 24 number 38.

Translation:

“(lines 1-4 are illegible)...the year of office □ □ sickness and disease...to fulfill (our/my) vow by having this □ □ niche of Avalokiteśvara □ carved during the first month of the third year of the daguan reign era (1110). The painting was finished □ □ a vegetarian feast was held in celebratory praise of its completion on the eighteenth day of the □ month.”

1.70 Fowan niche 288. MWL, 24 number 37.
Inscription location: niche exterior , upper right side.
Date: 1107.
Partial transcription: MWL, 24 number 37.

Translation:

“[These were] each carved to protect the aged, forever □ □ to repay Amitābha □ □ written by Ma Dao □ □ on the first 9th day as a celebratory expression of the merit in honor of the good disciple(s)□ □ □ □ □ □ □ having followed happiness saw and heard the same □ □ superior □ □. In year one of the daguan reign era (1107)

19 The inscription is not fully legible. The translation provided here is only tentative.
during the dinghai 11th month a great [amount] of incense was burnt with the hope to bring near the powerful wind of the great sage, treasure papers mother(s) has/have mutually produced bad (karma) since ancient times. [I/we] vow the three causations river produce changes and a great transformation ought gold return cash (?), unduly recited the long river (Yangtze?) for wish the way of wisdom in the prefecture will have results cause to show the prefecture. The Thousand-handed and thousand-eyed [Avalokiteśvara] knowing and seeing the returning flow the water. The adjacent temple exists in the six paths (realms of transmigration)...

2. 1 Guanyinpo niche 1. 

*Inscription location:* right wall, outer portion.
*Date:* 1154.
*Transcription:* MWL, 35 number 48.
*Translation:* 

“In the twenty-fourth year of the shaoxing reign era (1154) of the Song emperor, [these images of] Kṣitigarbha rāja bodhisattva and the Yinlu wang (“King of Guides”) bodhisattva have been carved by Fu Xiaoliu. [Recorded on the] sixteenth day of the fifth month.”

2. 2 Guanyinpo niche 25.

*Inscription location:* separate lines carved above each donor image.
*Date:* Southern Song.
*Transcription:* MWL, 36 number 51.
*Translation:* 

“My deceased father Yuan Weimen. My deceased father-in-law He Shoukai. The middle disciple Yuan Guang.”

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20 There are several short inscriptions above the four donor figures on the left side of the niche: 亡 何正言 (“deceased He Zhengyan”), 同政杨氏 (“jointly with his wife née Yang”), 男乡贡士浩 (“his son, Hao a prefectural graduate of Doctorate of Letters”), 新妇解氏 (“the new wife, née Jie”). The MWL, 35, failed to transcribe the character “男” (nan).

21 Dated to the Southern Song based on the style of the imagery in the niche, MWL, 36.
2. 3  Guanyinpo niche 30.

_Inscription location:_ outer left side, carved in a rectangular stele.

_Period:_ Southern Song, _shaoxing_ reign era (1131-63).  

_Transcription:_ MWL, 35 number 49.

Translation:

“(illegible)....Wen Zhi...(illegible)...during the seventh month, this prefecture...(illegible)...”

2. 4  Guanyinpo niche 40.

_Inscription location:_ back wall above and to the right of the head of the main image.

_Period:_ Southern Song, before 1148.

_Transcription:_ MWL, 35-36 number 50.

Translation:

“The Acting Instructor of Changzhou, Liu Kui, together with his wife née Wang, the entire household has vowed to carve and decorate [this] niche of Śākyamuni Buddha and the Horse-king (Aśvarāja) bodhisattva and -king bodhisattva. We pray for the livestock will be on the move and increase, and that our family business will flourish.”

3. 1  Duobaota niche 2.

_Inscription location:_ right wall, upper right corner.

_Date:_ Southern Song.

_Transcription:_ MWL, 449 number 14.

Translation:

“...”

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22 Dated based on the occurrence of the name Wen Zhi who is also identified in inscriptions in cave 168 and stele 137 at the Fowan, the former dates to 1128 and the later 1134. MWL, 35.

23 Liu Kui is identified in an inscription in niche 7 in the Duobaota, which is dated 1148, MWL, 36.

24 The translations of inscriptions in the Duobaota pagoda in this appendix represent only a part of the inscriptions found there. The inscriptions are all transcribed in MWL, 443-462.

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Translation:

“Mañjuśrī guiding Sudhana on his southern route. (Feng Shanyuan) has ordered artisans to carve one set of [images] of the sūtra. Written in celebration.”

3.2 Duobaota niche 7.
Inscription location: right wall of the niche.
Date: Southern Song, 1150.
Transcription: MWL, 445 number 4.

Translation:

“I who reside on the middle of North street within the outer wall of the right township of this prefecture, the Buddhist disciple and metropolitan graduate Liu Sheng together with my wife née Yuan, first daughter Wan, [and] younger brother and metropolitan graduate Liu Zhi, his wife née Yu, second daughter Qing, and in the shrine my mother née Wang, ninth daughter Nian, below [our] knees my eldest son Songnian, my daughters Ergui and Sangui, together with family dependents in the wuchen year (1150) record [this] for my deceased father, the acting assistant instructor of this prefecture, Liu Kui, who when alive vowed to carve a niche of Cintāmanīcakra Avalokiteśvara. Afterwards he was not able to have it decorated. However, today artisans have been ordered to apply silk ribbons and bells on the aforementioned sacred likeness with prayers to help the deceased to be reborn in heaven and to see that the living obtain wealth. On the △ day of the △ month of the twentieth year of the shaoxing reign era (1150) monks were ordered to read sūtras, with celebratory praise [this] is solemnly recorded.”

3.2 Duobaota niche 8.
Inscription location: upper back wall.
Transcription: MWL, 444 number 3.

Translation:

[I] who reside on the middle of North street within the outer wall of the right township of this prefecture, the Buddhist disciple and metropolitan graduate Liu Sheng together with my wife née Yuan, first daughter Wan, [and] younger brother and metropolitan graduate Liu Zhi, his wife née Yu, second daughter Qing, and in the shrine my mother née Wang, ninth daughter Nian, below [our] knees my eldest son Songnian, my daughters Ergui and Sangui, together with family dependents in the wuchen year (1150) record [this] for my deceased father, the acting assistant instructor of this prefecture, Liu Kui, who when alive vowed to carve a niche of Cintāmanīcakra Avalokiteśvara. Afterwards he was not able to have it decorated. However, today artisans have been ordered to apply silk ribbons and bells on the aforementioned sacred likeness with prayers to help the deceased to be reborn in heaven and to see that the living obtain wealth. On the △ day of the △ month of the twentieth year of the shaoxing reign era (1150) monks were ordered to read sūtras, with celebratory praise [this] is solemnly recorded.”
Translation:
“Residents on the great North street, the Buddhist disciple He Zhengyan together with his wife, née Yang. [Recorded on] the first eighth day of the fourth month of the eighteenth [year] of the shaoxing reign era (1148).”

3.3 Duobaota niche 9.

Inscription location: upper portion of the stone.

Translation:
“He Zhengyan’s step mother, née Feng, the fourth daughter. He Zhengyan’s eldest son, Hao who is a prefectural graduate of Doctor of Letters.”

3.4 Duobaota niche 14.

Inscription location: upper right side.

Translation:
“The brick pagoda person of the way, Xing Xindao has for his mother née Wang, the second daughter, prepared money to solicit artisans to carve the fifty three scenes of good friends (kalyāṇamitrās) with the wish that his mother will be reborn in a Buddha Land. The sreśṭhin Muktaka of Vanavāsī, who has obtained the non-hindrance dharma gate of the perfection of devices (upāya-sampānna).”

3.5 Duobaota niche 37.

Inscription location: middle of the niche, upper portion.

Translation:
“The night goddess (rātridevā) Vāsanti [of Kapilavastu], the dharma gate of smashing all the bad darkness of living beings. The brick pagoda person of the way Xing Xindao created this virtuous merit for his mother née Wang, the second wife.”
3.6 Duobaota niche 50.\textsuperscript{25}

Inscription location: left and right sides of the image of Feng Ji.

Transcription: MWL, 457 number 43.

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敷文阁直学士左中奉大夫潼川（府）路兵马都（领辖泸南边）   安抚使知泸州
军州提举学事兼管内劝农使文安县开   国伯食邑九佰户赐紫金鱼袋冯□□
（谨施第）陆层（宝塔）兼（造像全堂）□□□□□□□
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Translation:

“The Auxiliary Academician of the Hall for the Diffusion of Literature, Grand Master of Palace Affairs on the Left, Tongchuan Circuit Chief Military Administrator of Infantry and Calvary of the Southern Lu as the Border Pacification Commissioner, Supervisor of Education, and simultaneously the Superintendent of Interior Agricultural Development, the Founding Baron of Wen-an County with 900 Households, and Holder of the Honorary Purple Robe and Golden Tally, Feng [Ji]\textsuperscript{26} has donated the sixth floor of the treasure pagoda along with the making of images to fill all the shrines□□□□□.

3.7 Duobaota niche 54.

Inscription location: left and right sides of the primary image.

Transcription: MWL, 458 number 45.

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奉佛圖通善人王堂男□一郎   同政女弟子赵氏女大一娘□□□□
□□□□友同□□□   造此圣容祈求安乐□□□□□□□□□
```

Translation:

“Worshiper of the Buddha and person of perfect goodness, Wang Tang, my son□ the first son, together with his wife the female disciple née Zhao, the first daughter□□□□□□□□□□□ friends together□□ have made this divine apparition and pray for peace and happiness□□□□□□□□□．”

3.8 Duobaota niche 57.

Inscription location: left and right sides of the primary image.

Transcription: MWL, 447 number 8.

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奉佛文竣妻毛氏為□□□   母唐氏耳目不安布施□
锋一枚爱为卧嗣息女□□□   契造无量寿佛一尊祈乞□
```

\textsuperscript{25}This niche features a portrait of image of Feng Ji. On the left side of the niche there is an image of a monk with an inscription that reads (男童)妙悟 “(the boy child) Miaowu.”

Opposite on the right side there is an image of a nun with the inscription that reads 女童妙明 “the girl child Miaoming.”

\textsuperscript{26}In other inscriptions in the pagoda Feng Ji is referred to by the name Daxue 太学, which is a honorary appellation meaning Grand Academician.
Translation:

“Worshiper of the Buddha, Wen Zhi and his wife née Mao, have for □□ my mother, née Tang whose hearing and vision have failed, arranged bells on the first level. Then for our descendants to stop having females □ an image of Amitābha Buddha has been carved so that our prayers will soon be answered with all our hearts that our grandchildren be prosperous and wealthy and have long lives. [Recorded in] the xinyou year (1153).”

3.9 Duobaota niche 60.
Inscription location: left wall, upper right side.
Translation: MWL, 447-448 number 10.1.

Translation:

“The blacksmith Liu Jie and his wife née Yang, who live in Yuxi (Jade-creek) village in Dazu county, Changzhou, have vowed since the beginning of the erection of the pagoda to donate labor for building using steel to make □□ [For the] outside [we] donated steel cable, one length with the weight of thirty jin (41 pounds). □ [This] Nāgārjuna bodhisattva niche, and Huayunshui township □ to make windows with three lengths of steel cable Prostrated we wish for four births □□ to ascend [to Sukhāvatī] to see and be preserved. For my mother to have brilliant eyes, a long wealthy life and double happiness. [Recorded] in the Guiyou year (1153).”

3.10 Duobaota niche 60.
Inscription location: right wall, upper right area.
Translation: MWL, 448 number 10.2.

Translation:

“Worshiper of the Buddha, Zan Yan together with his wife née Ren and the whole family have given money to make [this] Kṣitigarbha-rāja

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tathāgata niche. [We] pray that deceased family members will quickly ascend to the heavenly realm to see and be preserved in peace and happiness.”

4.1 Foeryan niche 9.
*Inscription location:* exterior right side.
*Date:* Southern Song.
*Transcription:* MWL, 23 number 35.
(漉)(药师琉璃)光佛日月光菩萨同一龛]

*Translation:*
“(Illegible)... the Buddha of Radiant Lapis Lazuli, Bhaiṣajyaguru, with the bodhisattvas Sūrya[prabha] and Candraprabha together in one niche.”

4.2 Foeryan niche 12.
*Inscription location:* left side.
*Date:* 1085, Northern Song.
*Transcription:* MWL, 61-2 number 2.
(元丰八年六月七日前郡幕吴绶题]

*Translation:*
“Seventh day of the sixth month of the eighth year of the yuanfēng reign era (1085), recorded by the Vanguard Headquarters Commander, Wu Shou.”

5.1 Yingpanpo niche 6.
*Inscription location:* left and right wall, inner side of the post.
*Date:* 896.
*Transcription:* MWL, 16 number 15.
(院)镌造] 永为供养] (漉)有 □ □月癸] (漉)三(漉)] (漉)二女(漉)]
(漉)三人(漉)] (漉)造(漉)] (漉)施一贯(漉)] (left side)

(漉) 状(文兴)(漉) 之日新生男小师解绊之日命僧看 □ ]
□ (宁三) 年润十二月初五日题记] (right side)

*Translation:*
“Carved by the adjacent temple as an everlasting offering... (illegible) □ □ month gui ...(illegible)... third... second daughter....three people.... (illegible)... made... (illegible)... donated one string of cash...(illegible) decorated with literary flourish... (illegible)... On the day a new born

27 Another inscription was located on the left side of the niche, which is no longer legible. Only the phrase “vow to decorate this niche” can be read. MWL, 23.

28 I am unsure of the intended meaning of this phrase. It may be a name Wen Xing.
son arrived, the day that a lesser disciple set free the fetters [of the mundane secular world(?)], monks were ordered to read [sūtras]. Recorded on the first fifth day of the second lunar twelfth month of the third year of the [qian]ning reign era (896)."

5.2 Yingpanpo niche 13 (number 8 in the NRZL).
*Inscription location:* outer right side.
*Date:* Five Dynasties period.
*Transcription:* MWL, 23 number 34.

Translation:

“[as an everlasting offering] on the fifth day of the fourth month, the lesser master [made the former image(s) for merit] treasure [one Buddha niche... (illegible)... Yang Shu]."

5.3 Yingpanpo number 15.
*Inscription location:* a squarish stele niche carved on the cliff wall
*Date:* Song.
*Transcription:* MWL, 36 number 52.

Translation:

“(Sector Overseer, Guardian of Vindicators?) Ying Xie [piously offers to the Capital Minister Archivist] Commandant of the Anshan Court... together with... (illegible).”

5.4 Yingpanpo, unnumbered sculpture in the round.
*Inscription location:* back side.
*Date:* 894-898.
*Transcription:* MWL, 16 number 16.

Translation:

[Detached sculpture in the round that was unburied in 1990. The damaged image is now in the Beishan storage room.]
Translation:

“[] [] made this [] adornment [] the alms given for this one part, in the [] [first?] year of the qianning reign era (894-898), [] née He, daughters and their husbands to make full the next [generation] of male grandchildren [] [] recorded [on the first of the year].”
APPENDIX C

Commemorative Inscriptions
1. The Gou Longcheng stele 勾龙诚碑．

*upper portion*
“Placed on stone by Wang Yi, the prefect of Changzhou, and Gou Longcheng, the district magistrate of Dazu, on the second month of spring, guimao, year five of the xuanhe era (1123).”

*lower portion*
“When the retainers [of Wei Junjing] surrendered to Shu they still obtained an image in the likeness of his honor and had it installed in all the official rooms and on the cliff. Those deprived of their office because of fraud do not merit a portrait... to such extent [this practice] has been contaminated and vulgarized. However, I know that the honorable Wei possessed a righteous demeanor as if in his whole lifetime he had done nothing to regret.”

2. The Wei Junjing stele 韦君靖碑．

*lines 1-2*
Erected [for] the Grand Master of the Palace with the Golden Seal and Purple Ribbon, Acting Minister of Works and Concurrent Acting Military Commissioner of Changzhou Over Military Matters as the Acting Prefect of Changzhou and the Commander-in-Chief of the four regions of Chang, Pu, Yu, and He, Military Commander of the Jingnan Militia, as well as serving as Censor-in-Chief and Supreme Pillar of the State, and the Founding Lord responsible for the three hundred households in Fufeng County, Wei Junjing.

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1 This stele fragment was uncovered to the left of niche number 1 in 1933 and was later placed on the ground in front of that niche. Only the upper and lower portions of the stele are extant. The stele has not been assigned a number and was not included in the MWL, but is discussed by Chen Xishan in the DSZJ, 216, where it is transcribed. At present, I do not know the whereabouts of the stele.

2 My translation is based on the transcription of the stele in MWL, 37-43. The stele is composed of two parts. The formal text in larger script consists of 54 vertical lines and reads from left to right. Below in smaller characters are 104 vertical lines that provide the names and titles of Wei Junjing’s followers. The latter portion of the stele is not included in this translation. The main text of the stele is composed of three basic parts. The first part lines 1-12 are a eulogy of Wei Junjing. The second part, lines 13-24 describe his military exploits. The subsequent section eulogizes the area under his control and describes the founding of the Yongchang stronghold. Lines 37-47 are of particular interest because they describe the founding of the site and Wei’s patronage of Buddhism. My translation relies on a number of studies of the stele by Japanese and Chinese scholars especially the annotations provided by Liu Shuyi 刘蜀仪, “Wei Junjing bei zhu 韦君靖碑注,” in WX, ed. Chen Mingguang (Chongqing: Dazu shike yishu bowuguan, 1995), 149-162. I would like to thank Dr. Guymeei Yang and Tianshu Zhu for their suggestions and help with my tentative translation of this stele. However, I take responsibility for any errors and faults that remain.
Authored, by the Military Supervisor and Court Gentleman for Ceremonial Service, the Former Acting District Magistrate of Jingnan county, Hu Mi.

The celestial sphere bestows heavenly power and the earth nurtures excellence. All these can certainly produce outstanding people who will accomplish famous deeds and become the great leaders of their time and make the giant screen of the world. But if not for the ability to thoroughly analyze and flexibly cope with each situation who would be able to make a great contribution and accomplish fame. Not having been memorialized

Our Governor and Minister of Works [Wei Junjing]. His honor came from Jingzhao (Shaanxi) and was a remote descendent of the Yaotang clan, and descendent of the Han Councillor-in-Chief [Wei Xuancheng] in succession through the generations. The dynastic histories have explanations and the family genealogy is still intact, which has been handed down on bamboo books, tersely narrated with details. His honor held lofty ambitions as a youth. He looked down on small skills. Seeing the proper time he quickly took action, without hesitation. Harboring the complete sincerity like that of the sun and the demeanor of the gathering of high clouds. In terms of [his] benevolence and wisdom Chu Lizi would cease speaking, and in regards to [his] power and strength Wu Huo would stop lifting. [his] heart is like the loyalty of Zi Mou. From the military he established his exploits, which were equal to Ma Yuan’s attack on the Man (Southern tribes). Destroying the stove he obtained the strategy of Sunzi. Tossing sticks he had the secret strategy of Zhang Liang. Waving his sword dragons hid, and drawing his bow apes screeched. And on top of that, his crescent-shaped eyebrows and the firm, refined, curve of the crown of his head gave him a dignified temperament that is rarely seen. His ability and appearance are without equal. He is truly a great talent who is famous throughout the world, and among the eminently talented personages of the time.

Not long after, during the qianfù reign era (874-79), the world was in turmoil, locust and draught came repeatedly, military arms rose up in all directions. His honor seeing this long term disorder with people having no way to live, there upon [he] organized a righteous militia recruiting from local households by offering amnesty. Restraining the strong and placating the weak, [he] devoted himself to organizing and stirring up the peasantry. Fully supplied and trooped, [he] used demonic spirits to exorcise demonic spirits [ie.
used fire to fight fire]. When the Huangchao rebels had sacked the imperial city, the imperial chariot fled to Chengdu. The four seas and three rivers seethed like a boiling cauldron. Han Xiusheng revolted in Guizhou and attacked Ba-Yu (Southeastern Sichuan). His honor then took command of [his] righteous militia on a punitive expedition to eliminate the opposing faction. On the occasion that Xiusheng abandoned his boats and laid siege to Juncheng (Yuzhou, modern Chongqing), his Honor carefully appraised the situation. Intercepting them from above and below, he relied on the mountains to file his troops with their backs to the water. Facing each other they attacked from both sides and pushed forward as one mind. The bandit’s force suffered a crushing defeat. Our military rose to the occasion. The Prefect of Yu, Tianhui prepared a memorial recording the news and recommended that the loyal Commander and acting Censor-in-Chief be promoted by the Emperor as the Prefect of Puzhou (Anyue).

Just then (Yang Shili), the Commander of Chuan (Eastern Sichuan), revolted and the General Minister (Gao Renhou) led an expedition against him. Only then did his honor recapture Hezhou and severe the branches of disorder. An order from the emperor was given to add the [title] Cavalier Attendant-in-Ordinary of the Right and decree that he be appointed as the Prefect of Hezhou.

When Zheng Junxiong, Vice-Director, was defeated at Guanghan, the Minister, Shan Xingzhang laid siege to this chuan (an administrative district, referring to eastern Sichuan), which caused the Commandery Governor, the honorable Gu (Gu Yanlang), the Defender-in-Chief and Commander-in-Chief, to be repeatedly attacked. An imperial order was given several times to recruit support to meet the enemy. His Honor, organized and lead some twenty-thousand hand-picked men. Having reverently consulted the oracles, based on their reply [he] ordered his officers and soldiers. In all, smashing twenty-seven strongholds and killing some fifty-thousand men. Shaking the earth with mighty screams, the Emperor heard [of Wei’s accomplishments] and bestowed on him the special rank of Minister of Works and promoted him as the Prefect of Wenzhou, which includes Chang, Pu, Yu, and He, and Military Commander of [these] four prefectures, Commissioner of the Jingnan Militia, and added in succession the titles Head of the Bureau of Punishment and Vice Director of the Left.

Arriving at his commandery and getting on in years, his honor finally thought about retiring. The emperor expressed his heartfelt sympathy, but would not yet allow it and bestowed upon him heaps of praise and honor and added the titles Grand Master of the Palace with the Golden Seal and Purple Ribbon, Concurrent Acting Vice Director on the Left, and Founding Baron of Fufeng County responsible for three hundred households. His Honor accumulated the bestowal of imperial edicts and was constantly promoted with the fish-shaped tally. The government flourished in Yingchuan (eastern
Sichuan), and his brilliance transformed the land. In the cities there were songs about the granary and vulgar ballads were recited about garments, prayers for the (curing of) illness were more resolute, the mind to rid suffering was especially ardent. He promoted outstanding figures who valued benevolence and righteousness like a mountain and belittled gold and silk as mud and sand. They pitied orphans, sympathized with the aged, rescued the weak, and supported the infirm. Guest houses were like returning [home] as those from afar collected together in the inn of Zheng Zhuang. The hustle of travelers was like a market, everyone ascended to the gateway of the Assistant Magistrate.

So it was that the four directions were rescued and pacified, only then was it like this. Every time on the occasion of an auspicious day and beautiful setting, during the Autumn Moon and Spring Flowers [festivals] merrymaking was sought with [the music] of strings and flutes. Banquets were held and monks were called. Socializing with proper etiquette, bowing with clasped hands without overdue clamor, the wine vessels were never empty, the seats for guests were always full. As if the frosty jade kettle of Wang Yu had changed its brilliance and the jade stone of Ji Kang was destroyed, such was his behavior, modest and courteous. As for his success, for family and country, whether seated in a tent with a dark tally or himself raising a black lance and leading his troops to subdue villainous criminals, his plans had total success without any miscalculation. Again just like that, he was steadfast, brave and decisive. Measuring their merits and crimes turbid waters were made clear by selecting the commendable. His honor removed his own relations. And so it was that the three armies felt great virtue and the hearts of the masses returned by his compassionate rewards and punishments. His honor saw that the ocean waves had not yet rested and the clouds were aligned like a horizontal line. Changhou (Yang Shouhou) seized Mianzhou and Daishi made a sudden attack on the garrison [at Suizhou].

A message was dispatched requesting [Wei] to press on to patrol the border. As this was the case, although the officers and horses were skilled, they were without the security of a walled palisade. [He] thought of the meaning of xi (“dangerous”) and kan (“difficult”) in the great *Yijing (Book of Changes)*, which verified in writing that the nobility were in danger.

**lines 37-47**

Thus, in January of the first year of the jingfu reign era (892), his honor selected this mountain, Longgangshan (“Dragon-Mound Hill”) northwest of the present town, to build the Yongchang (“Eternally Flourishing”) Stronghold. At the top it is covered in clouds and at the bottom it shelters the surrounding area. Its appearance is upright like a long cloud, a towering spire like a broken shore line with cliffs layered on top of each other. To climb the

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uneven route, a single man with a dagger, could prevent ten thousand men from ascending. He then cleared [the hill] of grass and trees to survey the topography. Many peoples came with their sons, carrying wicker-baskets and shovels, arrived in clouds [of dust]. The roofs of the crowded buildings appeared to be connected together. There were a thousand gates for ten thousand households. Resounding loud and sonorous [water flowed through] the irrigation ditches. Shrouded in smoke and white walls, the jeweled towers [stood out] in the glow of the evening, [one could hear] the sound of the dragon singing and the lightening quick beat of the war drums. Moreover, the excellent craftsmen did the carpentry and painting, and the minds of artisans planned and measured. The city wall was erected with some two thousand units and some one hundred defensive towers. When seen on the horizon even the tortoise city [Chengdu] could not compare. So elevated high among the clouds how could it but seem as if an illusionary city. From above natural springs spew forth into verdant ponds and streams, the twelve towering peaks surround twenty eight miles. It must be a creation of nature beyond a city of human construction. Let alone that [the stronghold] stored enough grain to last ten years and station tens-of-thousands of troops. Soon it was finished. Soldiers and commoners all celebrated. The planting and weaving were never hindered, and with no shortage of corvée labor it could be called one work of endless leisure. With [everything] well prepared there was no need for worry. His honor, moreover, by the western interior of the stronghold on the emerald walls chiseled out a golden immortal with the appearance of the mighty god with one-thousand hands and eyes (Thousand-handed Avalokiteśvara) complete with all the eighty kinds of lucky signs [of a Buddha] and donated [his] salary to build a stūpa. The sounds of bells and clappers could be heard from dawn to dusk and the clamor of chants, of those who made the so-called vow to the fine gate of wisdom to seek enlightenment, would reach near and far.

lines 47-50

Among the officers and generals in his military were [those who] had strategic accomplishments and were knowledgeable of the ancients and present. All of them were his honor’s comrade brothers. They had different names, but were of the same flesh. They had one heart/mind to preserve the state with the utmost military obedience, and were all rewarded with generosity. All shared in the rewards of the nobility or as honored officials wearing swords or held the standing and rank of Prefect, or who gloriously confer the adornments [of office], or serving simultaneously to uphold the fundamental laws. Elegantly in accord with each other upon meeting, properly suited and in brilliant order, [they] have been invited to sign their titles, fortunately without loss [they] have made great achievements and [performed] meritorious service.
Humbly relying on [my] teachers, accumulating their kindness and honor, [my] literary talent is little and [my] learning is shallow. I have not given a full account. Mentally stupid and awkward, [I have] recorded the wonderful acts with negligence by having given only a tentative account of these accomplishments with vulgar words. Seeking brilliance that will not decay to be transmitted without limit this text was completed harmoniously and finally to has been carved on this stone in the second year of the ganning reign era (895) of the great Tang [Dynasty].

3. Wujin Laoren stele 无尽老人碑.

The inexhaustible old man (Zhang Shangying?) asked me, “What is the strongest thing in the world?” I replied, “The wind has the greatest strength.” The old man then responded, “How can you say that?” I told [him], “At the time when Vairambha began [to blow] the seven jeweled peaks of Mount Meru pounded against each other and were broken up like fine dust. Therefore, I know that the wind is the strongest.” The old man replied, “Although the winds of Vairambha are able to break apart the seven jeweled peaks of Mount Meru, they are not able to change the hearts of men. Therefore, I take the strength of will to be the greatest force.”

Now seeing the stone of Beishan (North Hill) limited to the hands of an old monk, [I feel even more interest in those words and [so I have]

This brief stele is number 163 at the Fowan and is transcribed in MWL, 51-56 number 4. The inscription consists of 16 lines and 247 characters. There is no formal date given on the stele, however, line five is taken as evidence that the stele dates to the Southern Song, see the MWL, 56; and DSZJ, 214. This inscription is discussed by Zhao Huizhi, “Dazu shike Miaogaoshan Sanjiao zaoxiang kaoshu,” SW 1, (1996): 43-46. According to Zhao the old monk referred to in this inscription is Zhang Shangying 张商英 (1043-1122), a famous laymen who was an advocate of the “Three Religions as One” (Sanjiaoheyi 三教和一) philosophy and possibly associated with Song official and lay devotee Feng Ji (1074-1153) through through the Chan Master Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163).

Vairambha (pilan feng 晃岚风) is a great circle of wind on which the Mount Meru world system rests and will scatter the universe at the end of time.

“Beishan” is probably a reference to the site, but could also refer to Mount Meru discussed above as Uttara, the North hill, or it may be a reference to Mount. Wutai, which Zhang Shangying was closely connected with.

According to Li Sisheng (1999), 26, this monk refers to the monk who lived on the cliff, Zhi Cheng who is mentioned on the Vimalakirti Stele, number 137 (dated 1134), Li Sisheng (Personal conversation May, 2001). Li Fangyin (Personal conversation June, 2001) believes that it is intended in a more general sense as referring to the monks who oversaw the site.
playfully composed a *gata* (song-poem). When one recitation prevails, all dharmas (methods, teachings) prevail. Birds fly and dust rises to the soaring clouds. In a solitary wild temple from the beginning I have no affairs and I have just sown seedlings (engaged in conversation?) with a mountain monk. The true place of reason has not received one speck of dust, therefore to see the Buddha or to see the Dharma is to see Mount Meru. Among the myriad of ways there is not a single dharma (method) to be abandoned. Therefore, piling up sand and painting the ground are all the ways of becoming a Buddha. Although it is like this, it is an incorrect view to be avoided. The auspicious smoke of joss sticks swirled the whole day around the stone Buddha. Sigh for it did not radiate light. Ask [the Chan Master] Danshao⁸ after [his Buddha image] has burnt to an end, “Why carve [a statue] to worship the king of immateriality [ie. the Buddha]??” Our Buddha only sits in the heart. To seek [him] out in color and form by throwing away the meditation bed is not due to impatience. Next to the wall hang an opening to come and go. If a patchwork robed [monk] with discriminating eyes, enters the temple invite [him] to look at this admonition.

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⁸ Danshao, is the famous Chan master Tianran Danshao who chopped up a Buddha image for firewood.