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ŚARĪRA AND SCEPTER:
EMPRESS WU'S POLITICAL USE OF BUDDHIST RELICS*

JINHUA CHEN

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Wu Zhao 武曩 (623 or 625-705), or Wu Zetian 武則天 (literally, "Wu who took heaven as a model") as she is better known, was unique in Chinese history. As the only female monarch in the history of imperial China, she ruled, with remarkable success, for one-sixth of the almost three hundred years of the Tang dynasty (618-907), first as the empress of the third Tang emperor Gaozong (r. 649-83) (655-83), then as the regent of her emperor-son Ruizong (684-690) and finally as emperor in her own right (690-705)¹. This fascinating woman is remembered (and sometimes hated)

* The author of this article wants to express his gratitude to T. H. Barrett, James A. Benn, Antonino Forte and an anonymous reviewer for their detailed and inspiring comments. Cristina A. Scherrer-Schaub, JIABS Editor, also provided some very useful suggestions on how to improve the article. The author is also grateful to Eugene Wang for generously allowing him to use a photograph of the Renshou stele.

¹ Ruizong was preceded by his older brother Zhongzong (r. 684, r. 705-10), who ruled for a mere fifty-five days following the death of his father Gaozong, from 1 January to 26 February 684, when he was dethroned by his mother. Zhongzong was not re-enthroned until twenty-one years later, on 23 February 705, one day after her mother's forced abdication.

for many things, including her strong personality, her unique political character and her colorful private life (which has also been distorted and exaggerated by her venomous critics).

What has continued to intrigue scholars of Chinese Buddhism is her apparent fondness for the religion, which derived from her family, her personal piety and her political needs. Hard work by scholars all over the world has done much to reveal some crucial aspects of Empress Wu's religious life². However, it seems that very little scholarly attention has been paid to one significant aspect of her complicated relationship with Buddhism; that is, her veneration of Buddhist relics³. This article attempts to make some long overdue compensation for this deficiency.

In any historically founded religion, enthusiasm for “holy relics” is aroused by the followers' desire to decrease, if not to erase, the distance separating them from their deceased patriarch — the more remote the

This time he ruled longer, until 3 July 710, when he was poisoned to death by his wife Empress Wei 韋后 (?-710). After an interval of twenty days (5-25 July 710), during which Zhongzong's youngest son Li Chongmao 李重茂 (698-714), to be posthumously known as Shangdi 殤帝, was briefly declared as the new emperor, Ruizong succeeded his brother once again. He ruled until 7 September 712, when he abdicated in favor of his son Li Longji 李隆基 (685-761), Xuanzong (r. 712-56).

² Among the most important studies on Empress Wu's Buddhist ties are Yabuki Keiki 矢吹慶輝, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* 三階教の研究 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1927), pp. 685-763; Chen Yinque 陳寅恪, “Wuzhao yu fojiao” 武曩與佛教, in *Chen Yinque Xiansheng lunwen ji* 陳寅恪先生論文集 (two vols. Taipei: Jiusi chubanshe, 1977), pp. 421-36; Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, “Cong shike lun Wu Hou zhi zongjiao xinyang” 從石刻論武后之宗教信仰, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 45.3 (1974), pp. 397-418; Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century: Inquiry into the Nature, Author, and Function of the Tunhuang Document S. 6502. Followed by an Annotated Translation* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, 1976); and Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu (Rome and Paris: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente and École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1988); [Richard] W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-T'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China* (Program in East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, Occasional Papers, Volume 11, 1978).

³ An important exception to this is T. H. Barrett's recent study, “Stūpa, Sūtra and Śāriṛa in China, c. 656-706 CE,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 18.1 (2001), pp. 1-64. In this article Barrett relates the empress's interest in Buddhist relics to the rise (or spread) of wood-block printing technology in seventh century China and also East Asia. The main points of this intriguing study are summarized in his *The Rise and Spread of Printing: A New Account of Religious Factors* (SOAS Working Papers in the Study of Religions, London, 2001), pp. 15ff. I am most grateful to Professor Barrett for supplying me with copies of these works.

patriarch's death becomes, the more keenly the distance will be felt and the more passionately the relics will be sought. In Buddhism, almost immediately after the Parinirvāṇa, the corporeal remains of the Buddha, his belongings and even the places he ever visited all became objects of worship for his followers, hence the rise of the relic-cult in Buddhism⁴.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism "sacred relics" were understood in terms of two categories: one physical and the other spiritual, with the latter denoting the dharma, or the Buddha's teachings. Such an understanding was obviously based on the theory of *trikāya* (three bodies [of the Buddha]), with physical and spiritual relics corresponding with the Buddha's *nirmāṇakāya* (transformation-body) and *dharmakāya* (dharma-body) respectively. Closely related to the belief that one who sees the dharma sees the Buddha, the *dharmakāya* theory fostered the sacralization of texts on the one hand and on the other, the textualization of relics. Thus, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, a pagoda enshrined not only a piece of the physical remains of the Buddha, but also a *sūtra* or an extract thereof. The text was understood as they were as a written record of the Buddha's teachings and therefore a demonstration — or a remnant — of the *dharmakāya*. This accounts for the cult of the so-called "dharma-*śarīra*," or dharma-relic (*fasheli* 法舍利), as was described by the great Buddhist translator and pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-64). In his famous travels, completed in 646 with the assistance of his disciple Bianji 辯機 (ca. 618 – ca. 648)⁵, Xuanzang tells us an Indian custom of manufacturing miniature pagodas (six to seven inches high) of scented clay that contained some *sūtra* extracts. When these miniature pagodas became numerous, a larger pagoda was built to house them. Xuanzang tells us that one of his Indian teachers Jayasena (Ch. Shengjun 勝軍) spent three decades in constructing seven *koṭis* (= 70,000,000!) of these dharma-*śarīra* pagodas, for each *koṭi* of which he built a great pagoda⁶.

⁴ David L. Snellgrove, "Śākyamuni's Final Nirvāṇa," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 36 (1973), pp. 399-411.

⁵ For this highly controversial person, see Chen Yuan 陳垣, "Da Tang Xiyu ji zhuanren Bianji" 大唐西域記撰人辯機, in *Chen Yuan shixue lunzhu xuan* 陳垣史學論著選 (eds. Chen Yuesu 陳樂素 and Chen Zhichao 陳智超, Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1980), pp. 266-87.

⁶ See *Da Tang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Record of the Western World, [Compiled] under the Great Tang; completed in 646), *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (100 vols,

Although Xuanzang seems to have been the person responsible for introducing this Mahāyāna practice to his Chinese compatriots, there is no evidence that he ever actively promoted it in China. It seems that such a task was first undertaken by Empress Wu and her Buddhist translators. Accordingly, this article will discuss the empress's involvement in the worship of the physical relics and the dharma relic as well. While the first four sections will be devoted to some outstanding examples of the empress's veneration of physical relics, we will discuss in the fifth section the empress's promotion of the cult of dharma-relic centering on three *dhāraṇī* texts translated by Indian and Central Asian Buddhist missionaries in China who were under her patronage. After that, our discussion will take a somewhat unexpected turn — we will compare Empress Wu with the founding emperor of the Sui Dynasty, Emperor Wen (Wendi, r. 581-604) (i.e. Yang Jian 楊堅 [541-604]). Both of them are famous (or infamous) for their enthusiastic patronage of Buddhism and their “usurpation.” It is, however, the following two facts that make such a comparison particularly necessary: not only does Emperor Wen, who was also an ardent worshipper of Buddhist relics, turn out to be an important source of inspiration for Empress Wu's attitude and policies towards

eds. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, *et al.*, Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924-1932) (hereafter *T*), vol. 51, no. 2087, 920a21-29. The most meticulously annotated version of the *Da Tang xiyu ji* remains Ji Xianlin 季羨林, *et al.* (annotated), *Da Tang xiyu ji jiaozhu* 大唐西域記校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985). For Japanese, English and modern Chinese translation of this passage, see Mizutani Shinjō 水谷真成 (annotated and translated), *Dai Tō saiiki ki* 大唐西域記 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1981), p. 280; Samuel Beal, *Si-yu ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1888), vol. 2, pp. 146-7; Ji Xianlin, *et al.* (translated), *Da Tang xiyu ji jinyi* 大唐西域記今譯 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 288.

A slightly different version of this practice is reported by Yijing 義淨 (635-713) in his travels written in 691, the *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Account of Buddhism Sent Home from the Southern Sea), *T* vol. 54, no. 2125, p. 226c15-27; see Wang Bangwei 王邦維, *Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan jiaozhu* 南海寄歸內法傳較注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), pp. 173-75; [Junjirō] Takakusu (tr.), *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695)*, by I-tsing (London: Clarendon Press, 1896), pp. 150-51. The same passage is also translated by Daniel Boucher in his “Sūtra on the Merit of Bathing the Buddha,” in *Buddhism in Practice* (ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr.; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 61.

Mitomo Ryojun recently provided a general study on the dharma-relics, “An Aspect of Dharma-*śarīra*,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 32.2 (1984), pp. 4-9 (backward pagination).

Buddhism (especially her relic veneration), but they also happened to be related by kinship.

(I) *The Veneration of the Famensi Relic between 659 and 662*

Empress Wu's enchantment with relics was already known to the world when she was still the empress of Gaozong. Historical evidence shows her vital role in fostering the cult of the relic stored at the Famensi 法門寺, one of the few temples in China which not only had a glorious history but also continue to enjoy remarkable popularity in the present. Located in Fufeng 扶風 (seventy-five miles west of Xi'an, Shaanxi), the Famensi has attracted worldwide attention since a number of cultural relics were dramatically brought to light in 1987 from the stone-chamber underneath the pagoda at the temple. These cultural relics include one piece of *śarīra* (*sheli* 舍利), which is believed to be a finger-bone of the Buddha.

Before turning to discuss Empress Wu's role in the veneration of the Famensi relic from 659 to 662, let us briefly survey the scant information that we know about Famensi's early history. This survey will shed some light on Famensi's relationship with the three major relic-distribution campaigns under the Sui on the one hand, and on the other with the Longxi Li 隴西李 clan in general (the Tang rulers claimed to be members of this prestigious clan) and in particular, Tang Gaozu (r. 618-26) and Taizong (r. 626-49), the two Tang predecessors to Empress Wu and her husband-emperor Gaozong. One of the main sources for our discussion in this section is provided by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667), the great Tang Vinaya Master and Buddhist historian who, as we will see below, was himself a key player in the 659-62 politico-religious drama⁷.

The early history of the Famensi under the Northern Wei (386-534), Western Wei (535-56) and the Northern Zhou (557-81) remains enshrouded in mystery. Regarding the temple's situation in these periods, Daoxuan, who was probably the earliest known recorder of this temple, tells us

⁷ The earliest available record of this temple is perhaps provided by Daoxuan in his *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 (Account of the [Mysterious] Stimulus and Responses Related to the Three Jewels in China; *T* vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 406b4-407b21) of 664, which is quoted in Daoshi's 道世 (ca. 596-683) 668 *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Pearl-forests of the Dharma-Garden; *T* vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 586a24-587a9).

nothing more than the fact that it was then called Ayuwangsi 阿育王寺 (The Monastery of King Aśoka), housing five hundred monks, and that the whole temple, except for its two halls, was razed to the ground during the Northern Zhou persecution of Buddhism (574-78). It is only thanks to a memorial inscription dedicated to the Famensi pagoda that we gain some glimpse into its obscure early history⁸.

This eighth century inscription traces the beginning of this temple to two or three mysterious monks of Taibaishan 太白山 (i.e. Zhongnanshan, a mountain range close to Chang'an). They were attracted to Qishan 岐山 by its fame as one of the five places in China to which King Aśoka had allegedly distributed five of the eighty-four thousand Buddha-relics. These monks allegedly prayed there intensively for several days until a relic appeared on the palm of one of them. Inspecting the inscription on the relic, they found some words to the effect that it was the relic distributed by Aśoka. Thus, they named the temple (and/or the pagoda built for the relic) after Aśoka.

After this legend, the inscription tells us something of more concrete historical value. In Yuanwei 元魏 2 (532, or 555), Tuoba Yu 拓拔育 (a.k.a. Yuan Yu 元育, d. after 554), who was then the governor of Qizhou, had the temple enlarged and allotted to it an unspecified number of monks. It is significant that Tuoba Yu should be revealed as a member of the Longxi Li clan (the surname Tuoba, which belonged to the Western

⁸ “Da Tang Shengchao Wuyouwangsi Dasheng zhenshen baota beiming bing xu” 大唐聖朝無憂王寺大聖真身寶塔碑銘並序 (Inscription, with a preface, for the Treasure-pagoda of the True Body of the Great Sage at the Wuyouwang Monastery of the Divine Dynasty of the Great Tang), *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 516.8a-13a, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I. 3.1668-70. Dated 16 May 778 (Dali 13.4.15), this inscription was composed by Zhang Yu 張彧 (d. after 797), and Yang Bo 楊播 (d. after 778) performed the calligraphy for it. It is better known as “Wuyouwangsi baota ming” 無憂王寺寶塔銘. A son-in-law and assistant to Dezong’s capable general Li Cheng 李晟 (727-93) (*Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975], 133: 3665; *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976], 232: 7477), Zhang Yu served as Vice Minister of the Ministry of Works (*gongbu shilang* 工部侍郎) in 787 (*Zizhi tongjian* 232: 7477) and Vice Minister of the Bureau of Punishment (*xingbu shilang* 刑部侍郎) in 797 (*Jiu Tang shu* 158: 4163). Yang Bo was the father of Yang Yan 楊炎 (727-81), a famous minister of emperor Dezong (r. 779-805). It is also worth noting that he was a kinsman of Empress Wu’s maternal ancestors, who were related to the Sui imperial family; see *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 71: 2360 and the relevant discussion of Empress Wu’s family background in Section (VI).

Wei rulers, was bestowed on him as a recognition of his distinguished service)⁹. Although scholars have cast doubt on the historical veracity of the claim made by the Tang rulers of their ties with the Longxi Li clan, this kind of link (no matter real or invented) constituted a central part of the Tang state ideology¹⁰.

The same inscription continues by telling us that the temple was renamed Chengshi daochang 成實道場 during the Kaihuang reign-era (581-604) and that at the end of the Renshou reign-era (601-04), Li Min 李敏 (576-614), who was a grandchild-in-law of Wendi and who was then Right Director of the Secretariat (*youneishi* 右內使), renovated the pagoda again¹¹. Li Min was a son of Li Chong 李崇 (536-83), who died fighting

⁹ Kegasawa Yasunori 氣賀澤保規, "Famensi de qi yuan yu Tuoba Yu: Cong Famensi Bei Zhou beiwen lai fenxi" 法門寺的起源與拓拔育: 從法門寺北周碑文來分析, *Wenbo* 2 (1997), pp. 43-46 and p. 95.

¹⁰ It is Chen Yinque's opinion that the Tang rulers actually descended from another Li family, which was very obscure compared with the Longxi Li clan. They tried to relate themselves to the Longxi Li clan in order to enrol the support of this prestigious and powerful clan (especially in the Guanzhong 關中 area, which was then their chief power-base). See Chen Yinque, *Tangdai zhengzhi shishu lungao* 唐代政治史述論稿, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982 [rpt]; and a series of articles that he published on this issue: "Li Tang shizu zhi tuice" 李唐氏族之推測, "Li Tang shizu zhi tuice houji" 李唐氏族之推測後記, "Sanlun Li Tang shizu wenti" 三論李唐氏族問題 and "Li Tang Wu Zhou xianshi shiji zakao" 李唐武周先世事蹟雜考, in *Chen Yinque Xiansheng quanji*, pp. 341-54, 355-64, 475-80, 481-86.

¹¹ As for the renovation of the temple, the inscription only ambiguously observes that it was undertaken by a Tuoba Yu, who was the prefect of Qizhou and a Minor Minister of State (Xiao Zhongzhai 小冢宰), in the second year of the Great Wei (*Quan Tang wen* 516.8b8, *Shike shiliao xinbian* L3.1668b4-5). Tuoba Yu was Yuan Yu, who was an "adopted" member of the royal Tuoba family but who later sided with Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 (507-56), when some Tuoba rulers turned against him, as he was then becoming increasingly aggressive in his control of the Western Wei regime (535-56). Scholars differ from each other in dating the "second year of the Great Wei." While Chen Jingfu 陳景富 identifies it as 532, Kegasawa believes that it should be the year 555. See Kegasawa, "Famensi de qi yuan," p. 43; Chen Jingfu, *Famensi* 法門寺 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1988), pp. 10-14. Chen Jingfu's book has been republished as *Famensi shilüe* 法門寺史略 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1990).

Zhang Yu's inscription dates Li Min's visit to the Famensi to the end of the Renshou era. However, as is reported by Daoxuan (*Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 406c59), in Zhenguan 5 (7 February 631-26 January 632) the Famensi relic was believed to have remained under the pagoda for thirty years since it was last entombed there, which referred to Li Min's renovation of the reliquary pagoda. This means that Li Min arrived there in Renshou 2 (602). It was probably on the basis of this calculation that

Turk and whose father was an older brother of the famous Li Mu 李穆 (510-86), who was highly trusted by Sui Wendi (Li Mu once saved his life) and who claimed to have descended from the Longxi Li clan. In view of the unique contribution his father and his granduncle made to the Sui dynasty, Wendi raised Li Min within the inner palace since he was a child. Later he married his grand-daughter (the daughter of his daughter Yang Lihua 楊麗華 [561-609])¹², Yuwen Eying 宇文娥英 (?-614), to Li Min. Partly because of the extraordinary favor that Wendi showed to him, Li Min later became a powerful figure under the reigns of Wendi and his successor Yangdi (604-617)¹³. However, in 614, as Yangdi became more and more obsessed with the prophecy that a Li was to usurp the Sui dynasty, Li Min became a target of his suspicion, which led to his execution on 7 June 615 (Daye 11.5.6 [*dingyou*]) on the charge of treason¹⁴. Remarkably, Li Min was rehabilitated by Tang Gaozu on 9 September 618 (Wude 1.8.15 [*dinghai*]), less than three months after he declared the establishment of his new dynasty on 18 June¹⁵. I believe that this rehabilitation was not merely done to undo a misdeed committed by the former ruler. Rather, it should be understood at least partly as Li Yuan's compassion for the misfortune of one of his kinsmen. Thus, regarding Li Min, a crucial figure in the formation of the veneration centering around the Famensi relic, we can say that he was a very special person in Sui-Tang politics, closely tied as he was to the royal families of three successive dynasties: a member of the Longxi Li clan, he married the daughter by the Northern Zhou emperor Xuandi and the daughter of Yang Jian, the founding emperor of the Sui.

Wu Yi 武億 (1745-99) gives Renshou 2 as the date of Li Min's visit. See *Shoutang jinshi ba* 授堂金石跋 (Shoutang's Remarks on Inscriptions on Metal and Stone), *Shike shiliao xinbian* 1.25.19081.

¹² For this woman, see note 220.

¹³ For some general information about Li Mu, Li Chong and Li Min, see a joint biography for them and some of their kinsmen at *Sui Shu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 37: 1115-25.

¹⁴ *Bei shi* 北史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 59: 2118-19, *Sui Shu* 37: 1120-21, 4: 89. The date of the execution quoted here is provided by *Sui shu*, which the *Bei shi* differs by providing a different date, 8 April 615 (Daye 11.3.5 [*dingyou*]).

¹⁵ *Jiu Tang shu* 1: 7-8; cf. *Xin Tang shu* 1: 7, which dates this to 22 September 618 (Wude 1.8.28 [*genzi*]).

Although this inscription attributes the relic to the pious prayers of the Taibaishan monks, it seems more likely that the relic was actually brought to the temple by Li Min in 602. Li Min's visit to the Ayuwangsi was undertaken when the Sui rulers were particularly enamored with the relic-cult and the whole empire was enthusiastically engaged in the relic-distribution campaigns, which were launched in 601, 602 and 604, three years during the Renshou reign-era (601-04). During these three campaigns, one hundred and seven Buddhist relics were distributed to the same number of prefectures, where pagodas were erected to enshrine them. Although undertaken on the pretext of commemorating a legendary nun who allegedly acted as the young Yang Jian's guardian at her nunnery, this endeavor was obviously inspired by the Indian legend that Aśoka, with the assistance of supernatural agents, simultaneously erected 84,000 pagodas all over the world in order to enshrine the same number of relics of the Buddha¹⁶. Directed by Tanqian 曇遷 (542-607)¹⁷, a Buddhist leader at that time, the court historiographer Wang Shao 王劭 (a.k.a Wang Shao

¹⁶ This legend about Yang Jian's birth is recorded in Daoxuan's *Ji gujin fodaolunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 (Collection of [the Documents Related to] the Buddho-Daoist Controversies in the Past and the Present; completed 661), *T* vol. 52, no. 2104, p. 379a18ff. According to this legend, right after Yang Jian's birth a Divine Nun (*shenni* 神尼) came to his parents' residence and asked them to entrust the baby to her on the grounds that it was of an extraordinary origin and not fit for the environment of a secular family. The parents complied and Yang Jian stayed with the nun until he was thirteen years old. The nun was said to have prophesied to the young Yang Jian that he was to restore Buddhism as a powerful ruler. After becoming Sui Wendi in 581, Yang Jian repeatedly told his court officials, "I rose thanks to the Buddha." In order to repay his debt to Buddhism and to the "divine nun" in particular, Yang Jian distributed the relics and had a picture of the "Divine Nun" inscribed within every pagoda.

For a meticulous study of this legend, see Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, "Zui bukkyōshi josetsu – Zui Buntei tanjō setsuwa no bukkyōka to senpu" 隋佛教史序説 - 隋文帝誕生説話の佛教化と宣布, *Tsukamoto Zenryū chosaku shū* 塚本善隆著作集 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppansha, 1974-76), vol. 3, pp. 131-43. I discuss its ideological implications in my *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, forthcoming), Chapter Two.

¹⁷ Tanqian was a prominent figure in Sui Buddhism and politics, mainly because of his important role in spreading Buddhist relics to over one hundred prefectures and in the construction of the Chandingsi 禪定寺 as a nation-wide meditation center. Both projects were carried out at the beginning of the seventh century and during the last years of Sui Wendi. Despite his importance, Tanqian has not received sufficient scholarly attention. I am now publishing a book on Tanqian and his group (Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*).

王邵, d. ca. 610) and a Sui prince Yang Xiong 楊雄 (542-612), the Sui “relic trio” was assisted by one hundred and seven teams, each composed of one court official, one eminent monk and two of his attendants. On the way from the capital to the provincial destinations, the relic-distributors busied themselves with collecting miraculous signs and conferring the bodhisattva-precepts on people they met. After arriving in the prefectures, a series of complicated religious ceremonies were performed both before and on the day of the reliquary enshrinement.

Despite their importance, the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns have not yet received the scholarly attention that they deserve. Scholars have generally interpreted them as an important ideological device that Sui Wendi adopted to legitimate his rule on the one hand and on the other to break down the racial and cultural barriers that existed in his re-unified empire¹⁸. In my forthcoming study of Sui Buddhism, I try to read the Renshou relic campaigns as an important measure on the part of Emperor Wen to adopt Buddhism as the sole cornerstone of his state ideology, which represented the first attempt by a ruler of a unified China to build a Buddhist kingdom. Furthermore, I also highlight the religious and political significance of these campaigns. In addition to serving the Sui political ideology and propaganda (among which was an expansionist agenda), the Renshou relic distributors also disseminated the Buddhist faith to the majority of the Sui population¹⁹.

Thus, given the timing of Li Min’s Famensi visit and especially his special relationship with Emperor Wen, we cannot exclude the possibility that he went to the Famensi not just in order to renovate the pagoda there, but also for some more important mission, like escorting a relic there for enshrinement.

Not only was this temple closely related with the Sui rulers, but it also maintained very special ties with the Tang rulers. We have noted that Tuoba Yu (a.k.a. Li Yu) and Li Min, two figures crucial for the formation

¹⁸ Among the published studies of this important issue, that by Yamazaki Hiroshi 山崎宏, re-published in his 1942 book, remains the most thorough; see Yamazaki, *Shina chūsei bukkyō no tenkai* 支那中世佛教の展開 (Tokyo: Shimizu shoten), pp. 331-46. The only significant study of this topic in a western language was by Arthur Wright, “The Formation of Sui Ideology,” in *Chinese Thought and Institutions* (ed. J. K. Fairbank, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), pp. 71-104. It was mainly based on Yamazaki’s work.

¹⁹ See Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*.

and development of the Famensi reliquary cult, were from the Longxi Li family, and therefore were perceived as kinsmen of the Tang rulers. It turned out that the relationship between the Tang rulers and the Famensi went far beyond this. It was under the order of Li Yuan that the Ayuwangsi was renamed Famensi in Yining 2 (1 February – 17 June 618)²⁰. One year later, in Wude 2 (21 January 619–8 February 620), Li Shimin 李世民 (599–649), the future Taizong, decided to ordain about eighty monks in order to gain merit to redeem the mental and spiritual damage caused in the course of quelling the forces of Xue Ju 薛舉 (d. 618). At the recommendation of a Baochangsi 寶昌寺 monk Huiye 惠業 (d. after 619, otherwise unknown), these monks were assigned to the Famensi²¹.

In Zhenguan 5 (7 February 631–26 January 632), thirty years after Li Min interred or re-interred the relic underneath the Famensi reliquary

²⁰ Daoxuan attributes this temple-renaming to an unspecified Grand Counselor-in-chief (Da Chengxiang 大丞相) (*Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 406b23–26). Chen Jingfu (*Famensi*, pp. 27–28) identifies this Grand Counselor-in-chief as Pei Ji 裴寂 (ca. 568 – ca. 628). But I believe that he was actually Li Yuan 李淵 (566–635). On 20 December 617 (Yining 1.11.17 [*jiazi*]), Sui Gongdi (r. 617–18) appointed Li Yuan as his Grand Counselor-in-chief, a position he held until 18 June 618 (Yining 2.5.20 [*jiazi*]), when he accepted Sui Gongdi's abdication and founded his own dynasty (Tang), introducing a new reign-name Wude (17 June 618–22 January 627); see *Jiu Tang shu* 1: 4; *Xin Tangshu* 1: 5; *Zizhi tongjian* 184: 5765. Given that Daoxuan here explicitly dates the temple-renaming to Yining 2, rather than Wude 1, I believe that it was still under the Sui and therefore that the Grand Counselor-in-chief refers to Li Yuan, rather than Pei Ji. Furthermore, in Wude 1 Pei Ji was only the Administrator of the Office of the Counselor-in-chief (Chengxiang[*fu*] zhangshi 丞相[*fu*]長史; see *Jiu Tang shu* 1: 6), rather than Counselor-in-chief himself.

²¹ *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 406b26–29. Xue Ju (official biographies at *Jiu Tang shu* 55: 2245–47; *Xin Tang shu* 86: 3705–07) was one of the warlords who emerged out of the social turmoil following the collapse of the Sui. He was a chief rival of Li Yuan in competing for supreme power in the vacuum left by the paralyzed Sui order. After being defeated by Li Shimin in Fufeng 扶風 (in present-day Fufeng, Shaanxi), where the Famensi was located, on 18 January 618 (Yining 1.12.17 [*guisi*]) (*Jiu Tang shu* 1: 5), Xu Ju died on 4 September 618 and was succeeded by his son Xue Rengao 薛仁果 (d. 619), who was defeated and captured by Li Shimin on 31 December 619 (Wude 2.8.10 [*renwu*]) (*Jiu Tang shu* 1: 8). Given that this victory over Xue Rengao was not achieved until the very last day of 619, the ordination of these eighty monks, which happened after this victory, must have occurred in 620. A document included in Daoxuan's 664 *Guang Hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Expansion of the *Hongming ji* 弘明集 [Collection for Glorifying and Elucidating [Buddhism]) (initially completed 664), the “Tang Taizong yu xingzhen-suo li qisi zhao” 唐太宗於行陣所立七寺詔 (Tang Taizong's Edict of Ordering the Construction of Seven Temples on the [Seven] Battlefields; T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 328c12–329a6), mentions the Zhaorensi 昭仁寺 as the temple built in Binzhou 幽州 (in present-day

pagoda, the Qizhou 岐州 governor Zhang Liang 張亮 (d. 646), who was a long-standing Buddhist believer, had the relic exhumed from the pagoda and showed it to the public for worship for some time before putting it back into the pagoda and having it safely sealed²². He did this in accordance with an old belief that to open a pagoda every three decades would bring forth a number of beneficial results²³.

In the ninth month of Xianqing 4 (22 September – 22 October 659), as the time to re-open the Famensi pagoda approached (it was to fall in 660), two “mountain monks” (*shanseng* 山僧) with unidentified temple-affiliation, Zhicong 智琮 (d. after 662) and Hongjing 弘靜 (d. after 662), who were then serving at the palace thanks to their “talent with spells” (*zhoushu* 咒術), probably referring to some Esoteric skills related to *dhāraṇīs*, tried to persuade Gaozong to re-open the Famensi pagoda on the grounds of this tradition. At the outset, Gaozong was not entirely convinced of the alleged miracles related to the pagoda. He reluctantly allowed the two monks to try, insisting that the pagoda was *not* to be opened unless and until some miraculous signs emerged from it. The two monks then started a seven-day observance of praying in front of the pagoda. On the fourth day, that is, 30 October 659 (Xianqing 4.10.10), the eagerly expected miracles emerged: a relic, along with seven smaller

Binxian 彬縣, Shaanxi) for the memory of people killed in the campaign against Xue Ju. This was apparently not identical with what Daoxuan tells us here about the eighty monks housed at the Famensi. This means that even before coming to throne Li Shimin had already adopted some measures to alleviate the social and political trauma caused by the military activities against Xue Ju and his successor.

²² The “Wuyouwangsi baota ming” has Zhang Deliang 張德亮, rather than Zhang Liang, as the person who orchestrated this relic veneration (*Quan Tang wen* 516.9a9, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.3.1668b15). This is probably wrong, given that no such a person is known to have served as governor of Qizhou at the time, while, on the contrary, Zhang Liang’s two dynastic biographies confirm his governorship of Bin 邠 (i.e. Qizhou) around Zhen-guan 5 (*Jiu Tang Shu* 69: 2515; *Xin Tang Shu* 94: 3828). Zhang Liang was executed in 646 on charges of treason. Daoxuan reports his associations with two eminent monks, Zhihui 智徽 (560-638, a disciple of Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠 [523-92]) and the Vinaya Master Jinglin 靜琳 (565-640); see these two monks’ biographies in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (A Continuation of Biographies of Eminent Monks; initially completed by Daoxuan in 645), *T* vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 541c17, 590c12.

²³ Daoxuan confirms that this reliquary exposition did bring forth various miracles and profuse religious passion on the part of local people (*Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, *T* vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 406c11-23).

ones, appeared. Placed on a tray, the relic rotated alone, with the remaining seven emitting rays of light. After learning of this exciting news, Gaozong swiftly granted the two monks permission to open the pagoda.

With high expectations of miraculous signs, Gaozong sent an envoy to the spot with three thousand bolts of silk, which were to defray the cost of making an Aśoka statue the size of the emperor himself, and for the renovation of the pagoda. After the relic was exhumed from underneath the pagoda, the masses reacted to it with frenzy. It was said that the road connecting the temple and the capital, which was as long as two hundred *li*, was lined continuously by both Buddhist monks and lay-people. They passionately praised the virtues of the Buddha, and an unprecedented radiance emanated from the relic.

Sometime in the third month of Xianqing 5 (16 April – 14 May 660), an imperial decree ordered that the relic be moved to the imperial palace in Luoyang for veneration. At the same time, a Tang envoy to India, Wang Xuance 王玄策 (active 646-661), submitted to the court a relic secured in Kāpiśī, which was believed to have been a portion of the Buddha's skull-bone (*dinggu* 頂骨)²⁴. At the time, seven monks in the Western Capital Chang'an were summoned into the inner palace in Luoyang to practice Buddhist observance (*xingdao* 行道), during which the skull-bone and the Famensi relic were shown to them. After this brief display, the relics were taken back and jealously guarded in the inner palace. Empress

²⁴ About the submission of this skull-bone, the Taishō version of the *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* tells us the following: 時周又獻佛頂骨至京師 (*T* vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 407b11-12). On the basis of this, Huang Chi-chiang (Huang Qijiang) 黃啟江 has identified the contributor of the relic as Zhou You. See Huang Chi-chiang, "Consecrating the Buddha: Legend, Lore, and History of the Imperial Relic-Veneration Ritual in the T'ang Dynasty," in *Chung-hwa Buddhist Journal* 11 (1998), p. 506 (Huang gives the Chinese characters for Chou Yu [Zhou You] as 周愚 [Zhou You]). However, referring to the *Fayuan zhulin*, we find the following report: 時西域又獻佛束頂骨至京師 (*T* vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 586c29-586a1). Thus, it seems that *zhouyou* 周又 in the Taishō version of the *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* is a mistake for *xiyou you* 西域又. It is therefore difficult to take Zhou You as a name. Furthermore, the same *Fayuan zhulin* reports the arrival of a skull-bone relic in the spring of Longshuo 1 thanks to Wang Xuance (*T* vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 497c28-498a2), a fact which is also repeated by the Song Tiantai historian Zhipan 志磐 (d. after 1269) in his *佛祖統紀* (A General Record of the Buddha and Other Patriarchs; compiled between 1258 and 1269; see *T* vol. 49, no. 2035, p. 367c2). Obviously, the skull-bone that was put on display with the Famensi relic was exactly the skull-bone brought back by Wang Xuance.

Wu made many donations, including her own bed-covers and bed-curtains in addition to one thousand bolts of silk, sufficient to cover the cost of making gold and silver reliquaries for the relic²⁵. These reliquaries, nine in total, were designed in such a way that one could be put inside the other. The reliquaries were carved with extremely beautiful colors and designs.

On 10 March 662 (Longshuo 2.2.15), almost two years after it had been worshipped within the palace, the relic was returned to the Famensi, where it was sealed into an underground stone chamber underneath the pagoda. The relic was escorted by Daoxuan, Zhicong, Hongjing and other monks from the capital monasteries or the Famensi, accompanied by some court officials and thousands of attendants²⁶. It is interesting to note that sometime in Longshuo 3 (15 March 662 – 12 April 663) Helan Minzhi 賀蘭敏之 (a.k.a. Wu Minzhi 武敏之, d. ca. 670), a nephew of Empress Wu, wrote an inscription for the Famensi pagoda (he also executed the calligraphy for the inscription). As this happened a mere one year after the Famensi relic was moved back to its home-temple, the inscription must have been written as an afterthought to this relic-manoeuvring by Gaozong and Empress Wu²⁷.

²⁵ One embroidered skirt (*xiuqun* 繡裙) possessed by Empress Wu is among the surviving textiles that was excavated in 1987 from the Famensi underground chamber, where the Buddha's finger-bone was interred. See Wu Limin 吳立民 and Han Jinke 韓金科, *Famen digong Tang mi mantuoluo zhi yanjiu* 法門地宮唐密曼陀羅之研究 (Hongkong: Zhongguo fojiao youxiangongsi, 1998), p. 459; *Fomen mibao: Da Tang yizhen* 佛門秘寶：大唐遺珍 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1994), p. 95; Kegasawa Yasunori, "Hōmonji shutsudo no Tōdai bunbutsu to sono haikē" 法門寺出土の唐代文物とその背景, in *Chūgoku no chūsei bunbutsu* 中國中世の文物 (ed. Tonami Mamoru 礪波護, Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku Jimbun kagaku kenkyūsho, 1993), p. 595.

²⁶ Daoxuan himself refrained from mentioning his own involvement in this imperial mission. It is from one of his biographies that we know his role; see *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Lives of Eminent Monks, [Compiled] in the Song; by Zanning 贊寧 [919-1001] in 988), *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 790c24. This is repeated by Zhipan (see *Fozu tongji*, *T* vol. 49, no. 2035, p. 367b16-17).

²⁷ The inscription itself is not extant, only with its title, "Tang Qizhou Famensi sheli-ta ming" 唐岐州法門寺舍利塔銘 (Epitaph for the Pagoda at the Famensi in Qizhou of the Tang), recorded in the *Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (Record of Inscriptions on the Metal and Stone; published 1119-25); see *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.12.8819. Helan Minzhi was an accomplished author of prose, associated with a number of contemporary literati, including Li Shan 李善 (630?-689), the author of the commentary on the *Wenxuan* 文選, and his son Li Yong 李邕 (678-747), and Zhang Changling 張昌齡 (d. 666). He was believed to have attempted to assault sexually his cousin Princess Taiping 太平 (d. 713), Empress Wu's

Given that starting from 656, Gaozong had suffered from some severe health problems, which left him temporarily paralyzed and with impaired vision, it seems reasonable to assume that the Famensi relic appeared so attractive to him (and his wife Empress Wu) because of its alleged therapeutic power²⁸. In addition, we need also recognize that the relic veneration of 659-662 was a natural continuation of the relic-worshipping activity executed thirty years ago by a relative of Sui Wendi and a kinsman of the Tang rulers (Li Min). It established the precedent of bringing the Famensi relic to the imperial palace for worship. In this sense, Gaozong and Empress Wu can be taken as the initiators of the imperial veneration of the Famensi relic, which was to play increasingly important roles in Tang political and religious life. Since it was begun by Gaozong and Empress Wu at the end of the 650s, the practice of bringing the Famensi relic to the palace was repeated five times in total during the Tang dynasty: (1) 705, (2) 756, (3) 790, (4) 819 and (5) 873, by Empress Wu, Suzong (r. 756-62), Dezong (r. 779-805), Xianzong (r. 805-820), and Yizong (r. 859-73) respectively. Partly because of Han Yu's 韓愈 (768-824) strongly worded protest, the relic veneration sponsored by Xianzong became the most famous of its kind. But we need to note that Empress Wu alone was responsible for two of these six relic-worshipping activities²⁹.

daughter, and even more startling, to have had incestuous relationship with his own maternal grandmother Madam Rongguo, Empress Wu's mother. See Wu Chengshi's 武承嗣 (d. ca. 697) biography in the *Jiu Tang shu*: 183: 4728; Empress Wu's *Xin Tang shu* biography (76: 3476); Wu Shihuo's *Xin Tang shu* biography (206: 5836).

²⁸ According to the two Tang histories (*Jiu Tang shu* 6: 115, *Xin Tang shu* 4: 81), these health problems started to affect Gaozong from the beginning of the Xianqing reign-era (7 June 656-4 April 661). Cf. *Zizhi tongjian* 200: 6322, which does not clearly tell us when Gaozong became seriously ill, but roughly says that it happened "before" (*chu* 初) (that is, before the tenth month of Xianqing 5 [8 November – 7 December 660]). Thus, it seems that Denis C. Twitchett and Howard J. Wechsler were mistaken when they dated the start of Gaozong's health problem to the tenth month of Xianqing 5. See Denis C. Twitchett and Howard J. Wechsler, "Kao-tsung and the Empress Wu: The Inheritor and the Usurper," *Cambridge History of China* (ed. Denis C. Twitchett; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), Vol. 3.1, p. 255.

For a stimulating analysis of the possible therapeutic considerations underlying the 659-62 Famensi relic veneration, see Tansen Sen, *Buddhism, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, forthcoming), Chapter Two.

²⁹ The most thorough study of the history of the Famensi, and the veneration centering around the Buddhist relic stored at the temple, remains Chen Jingfu's book, *Famensi*.

Depicting Gaozong as the central figure of this relic drama, Daoxuan here seems to have attributed a secondary role to Empress Wu. However, the clout that Empress Wu had already achieved within the imperial court by that time suggests that she might have played a much more important part. Entering the Xianqing reign-era (7 June 656 – 4 April 661), Empress Wu started to take over more and more power from the hands of her husband emperor, whose deteriorating health prevented him from actively attending to state affairs. Both Confucian historians and modern scholars believe that by the end of 660, the empress had become the ruler of the empire in fact if not in name (權與人主侔矣)³⁰. It is important to note that this happened only seven months after the relic was brought to the palace from the Famensi. Was the political success that Empress Wu enjoyed at that time purely coincidental with the veneration of the Famensi relic, or was there some intrinsic connections between them? Very little can be said for certain at this moment about this intriguing possibility, although it is significant that about one and half decades later, when Empress Wu reached another crucial point in her political career, she once again demonstrated to the public her interest in the “divine relics.”

(II) *The “Discovery” of the Guangzhai Relics in 677 and Their Distribution in 678*

In Yifeng 2 (8 February 677-27 January 678), a soothsayer, whose name is not revealed in any source, claimed to have noticed an extraordinary

Stanley Weinstein examines this religious phenomenon against the broad context of Tang Buddhism in his *Buddhism under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 37, 46, 58, 96, pp. 102-04. Kegasawa, “Hōmonji shutsudo no Tōdai bunbutsu to sono haike,” surveys the major cultural relics excavated in 1987 from underneath the Famensi reliquary pagoda. A more selective report (with splendid illustrations) of some major Buddhist art work found at the Famensi can be found in Yang Xiaoneng (ed.), *The Golden Age of Chinese Archaeology: Celebrated Discoveries from the People's Republic of China* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999), pp. 462-87. Huang Qijiang recently made a significant contribution to the study of the Sui-Tang relic veneration (including the relic at the Famensi) (see his 1998 article quoted above). Wu Limin and Han Jinke's book (*Famensi digong*) studies the reliquary crypt underneath the Famensi pagodas as a great *mandala*. Empress Wu's veneration of the Famensi relic in 705 will be discussed in Section IV.

³⁰ *Zizhi tongjian* 200: 6322. Twitchett and Wechsler, “Kao-tsung (reign 649-83) and the Empress Wu,” p. 255.

aura in the Guangzhai Quarter 光宅坊 of Chang'an. Following his advice, Gaozong (and/or Empress Wu) ordered that an excavation be undertaken in that quarter. As a result, a stone coffer was found. This coffer contained over ten thousand grains of relics, which were shining and bright in color, but also as hard as iron. The empress therefore ordered the construction of the Guangzhaisi 光宅寺 in that place³¹. Subsequently, the relics were distributed to the monasteries in the two capitals and all the prefectures and “superior prefectures” (*fu* 府) in the country, each of them receiving forty-nine grains of relic. Later on, Empress Wu further built a “Tower of ‘Seven Precious Materials’” (Qibaotai 七寶臺) there and the Guangzhaisi was accordingly renamed Qibaotaisi 七寶臺寺³².

³¹ Regarding the location of the Guangzhai quarter and the Guangzhaisi, Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019-79) tells us the following in his *Chang'an zhi* 長安志 (Account of Chang'an): “The Guangzhai Quarter was originally part of the Yishan Quarter 翊善坊 from which it was separated when, following the construction of the Daming Palace 大明宮, the Danfengmen Road 丹鳳門街 was opened... To the north of the horizontal road there is the Guangzhaisi.” See Hiraoka Takeo 平岡武夫 compiled, *Tōdai kenkyū no shiori* 唐代研究のしおり (*T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jimbun kagaku kenkyūsho, 1954-65, 12 vols.), vol. 6, p. 104; translations by Forte (*Political Propaganda*, p. 202, note. 112), with slight modifications.

³² Here I have followed Antonino Forte in understanding *tai* 臺 as “tower,” rather than “terrace,” which is another connotation of *tai* in Literary Chinese. See Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 19, note 31. “Qibao” (Skt. *sapta-ratna*, seven treasures) is a common term in Buddhism; see Nakamura Hajime 中村元 (ed.), *Bukkyōgo dai jiten* 佛教語大辭典 (Tokyo: Tōkyō shoseki, 1981), p. 587. However, it remains noteworthy that it is in a box of seven precious materials (*qibaoxiang* 七寶箱) that the Sui Wendi was said to have stored the thirty grains of relics before distributing them in 601. See *Guang Hongming ji*, T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 213c16; Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Two. This “tower” was so named probably because it was decorated by the seven kinds of precious materials known in Buddhism. In addition, on some occasions Empress Wu understood the “seven precious materials” in a different way. On 13 October 693 (Changshou 2.9.9 [yiwēi]), at the Wanxiang shengong 萬象神宮 (Divine Shrine of Ten Thousand Phenomena; that is, the *mingtang* 明堂 [Hall of Light] complex) where the empress “received” her *cakravartin* title, she had seven precious materials made, which, according to the *Xin Tang shu* (76: 3483) and the *Zizhi tongjian* (205: 6492), consisted in (1) *jinlun bao* 金輪寶, (2) *baixiang bao* 白象寶, (3) *nübao* 女寶, (4) *mabao* 馬寶, (5) *zhubao* 珠寶, (6) *zhu bingchen bao* 主兵臣寶, (7) *zhu zangchen bao* 主藏臣寶, which Forte (*Political Propaganda*, p. 142, note 75) translates as (1) Golden Wheel, (2) White Elephant, (3) Maiden, (4) Horse, (5) Pearl, (6) Minister Head of Military Affairs and (7) Minister Head of the Treasury. It seems to me that *zhu zangchen bao* here probably referred to “Minister Head of the Civil Affairs,” in contrast to “Minister Head of Military Affairs.” Here, Empress Wu was obviously inspired by the legend promoted in some Buddhist texts, especially the *Mile*

This summary of the discovery of the Guangzhai relics is mainly made on the basis of the biography of Facheng 法成 (a.k.a. Wang Shoushen 王守慎, active 685-701) in a Song dynasty anthology of Buddhist biographies and hagiographies³³. It reports Facheng's background and his decision to become a Buddhist monk in this way:

釋法成，本姓王，名守慎，官至監察御史。屬天后猜貳，信酷吏羅織，乃避法官，乞出家為僧。苦節勤於化導，聲發響隨，行高質直。³⁴

The Buddhist Monk Facheng's original surname was Wang and his personal name Shoushen. His political career culminated in the position of Investigating Censor (*jiancha yushi* 監察御史). Suspicious [of her subjects], the "Heavenly Empress"³⁵ (i.e. Wu Zhao) at the time was credulous of the huge number of cases that her "cruel officials" (*kuli* 酷吏) trumped up [against the innocent]. In order to avoid the judicial position [that he was holding at the time], [Wang Shoushen] asked the empress to allow him to be a Buddhist monk. He was dedicated to ascetic practices and was diligent in converting and guiding people. People followed him as closely as an echo responds to the voice. His conduct was lofty and his personality upright.

The biography also remarks that Facheng was lodged at the Guangzhaisi (the Qibaotaisi), where he encouraged and persuaded people to believe in Buddhism, and that Facheng was a strong promoter of social welfare at the time. The same biography also attributes to him a remarkable feat:

xiasheng chengfo jing 彌勒下生成佛經 (Skt. *Maitreyavyākaraṇa Sūtra*? T no. 454), that the Cakravartin king Saṅkara possesses such seven precious materials (T vol. 14, no. 454, p. 424a21-24).

³³ *Song gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 872c26-873a4: 儀鳳二年，望氣者云，"此坊有異氣。" 敕掘之，得石函。函內貯佛舍利萬余粒。光色璨爛，而堅剛。敕於此處造光宅寺。仍散舍利於京寺及諸州府，各四十九粒。武后於此始置七寶台，遂改寺額。Similar accounts can be found in Wang Pu's 王溥 (922-82) *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Collection of Essential Materials of the Tang; completed 961) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998, 48: 846) and the *Chang'an zhi* (*T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, vol. 6, p. 104). Of the three versions in these three sources, that in Facheng's biography contains richest detail, especially about Empress Wu's distribution of the Guangzhaisi relics, which is found in neither of the other two versions. The *Chang'an zhi* account is quoted, translated and discussed in Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 202, footnote 112, although he does not refer to the account in Facheng's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography.

³⁴ T vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 872c18-20.

³⁵ See below for the title of "Tianhou" 天后 (Heavenly Empress).

長安中，於京兆西市疏鑿大坎，號曰“海池”焉。支分永安渠以注之，以為放生之所。池上佛屋經樓，皆成所造。穿池之際，獲古石，銘云，“百年為市，而後為池。”自隋朝置都立市，至于時正一百年矣。³⁶

During the Chang'an reign-era (26 November 701-29 January 705), he dug a huge pit in the Western Market (*xishi* 西市) in the capital, calling it “Sea-like Pond” (*haici* 海池). He drew water from the Yong'an Canal³⁷ to fill this pit, turning it into a pond for “releasing life”³⁸. On the pond³⁹ there were a Buddha-chamber and a Sūtra-pavilion, both built by Facheng. In the process of digging up the pit, [they] found an old stone-stele bearing this inscription, “After a hundred years as a market, this place will become a pond.” From the time when that market was set up as the Sui dynasty built its [new] capital there⁴⁰, it had been exactly one hundred years to that time [when the pond was constructed].

Another source, Liu Su's 劉餗 (d.u.) *Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話 (Beautiful Anecdotes of the Sui and Tang; compiled around the middle of the eighth century), credits this project to another much more famous figure, Princess Taiping, Empress Wu's daughter:

太平公主於京西市掘池，瀆水放之，生者置其中，謂之“生池”。墓銘云，“龜言水，著言市。”⁴¹

³⁶ *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 872c20-25. This story is also recorded in Wei Shu's 韋述 (d. 757) *Liangjing xinji* 兩京新記 (New Records of the Two Capitals; completed 722), Xu Song's 徐松 (1781-1848) *Tang liangjing chengfang kao* 唐兩京城坊考 (Investigation of the Walls and Quarters of the Two Tang Capitals [Chang'an and Luoyang]; published in 1848) and *Chang'an zhi*; see *T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, no. 6, p. 189, pp. 49-50, p. 119. The version of the *Chang'an zhi* contains less details than those in the other two sources, which, mostly identical with each other, are, in turn, more brief than that in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography.

³⁷ According to the *Tang liangjing chengfang kao* (*T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, no. 6, p. 53), the Yong'an canal was dug in Kaihuang 3 (29 February 583-16 February 584). It was also known as Jiaoqu 交渠 (Jiao Canal) at that time, as the water was drawn from River Jiao 交河.

³⁸ *Fangsheng zhi suo* 放生之所; that is, a pond into which people could release fish and gain merit.

³⁹ The *Liangjing xinji* and *Tang liangjing chengfang kao* have *chishang* 池上 (on the pond) as *chice* 池側 (on the bank of the pond), which makes more sense; see *T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, no. 6, p. 189b3, p. 50a2.

⁴⁰ The *Liangjing xinji*, *Chang'an zhi* and the *Tang liangjing chengfang kao* (*T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, no. 6, p. 189, 119, 49) identify the *xishi* 西市 as *liren-shi* 利人市 (Market for People's Convenience). This is probably based on one record in *Sui shu* 24: 798: 西市曰利人.

⁴¹ *Sui Tang jiahua* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), p. 46.

In the Western Market of the Capital (i.e. Chang'an) Princess Taiping dug a pond, into which was poured some water that had been retained [before-hand]. With some creatures (fish) put into it, this pond was called "Pond for [Releasing] life." A funeral epitaph [unearthed from there] read, "Gui 龜 [turtle-shell] means *shui* 水 [water] and *shi* 蓍 [milfoil stalks] means *shi* 市 [marketplace]"⁴².

Four *fangshengchi* in Chang'an are reported in historical sources: first in the Kaihua Quarter 開化坊, near the famous Da Jianfusi 大薦福寺; second within the Chuguosi 楚國寺 at the southwestern corner of the Jinchang Quarter 進昌坊; third in the northeastern corner of the Eastern Market (Dongshi 東市), and the fourth in the north of Western Market (dug by Facheng)⁴³. As only one *fangshengchi* is known to have existed in the Western Market of Chang'an, the *fangshangchi* that Liu Su here reports as constructed by Princess Taiping was very likely the *fangshengchi* that Facheng dug in the same marketplace according to the *Chang'an zhi* and other sources. In addition, the "funeral epitaph" reported in the *Sui Tang Jiahua* seems also compatible with the prophecy reported in Facheng's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography, implying as it does that a plot of ground in a marketplace would be turned into a pond. Thus, regarding this "pond for releasing life," the truth might have been that it was done through the joint efforts of the two persons, with the princess as its chief patroness and the monk as the superintendent and architect.

Wang Shoushen's reputation as a world-renouncer was also great enough to win him a biography, although rather brief, in the *yinyi* 隱逸 (hermits) section in the *Jiu Tang shu*, which, in addition to confirming

⁴² Here the author of this epitaph apparently played with the two pairs of phonetically close characters, *gui* 龜 (kuj) – *shui* 水 (suj) and *shi* 蓍 (rʃ) – *shi* 市 (rʃ'). See Edwin George Pulleyblank, *Lexicon of Reconstructed Pronunciation in Early Middle Chinese, Late Middle Chinese and Early Mandarin* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991), p. 114, 290, 282, 284. Furthermore, as *gui* ("turtle" or "turtle shell") and *shi* ("milfoil stalk") indicate two chief divinatory methods in ancient and medieval China, the six-character statement, *gui yan shui shi yan shi*, can also be read as, "When we divine by turtle-shell, it will say 'water'; when we divine with milfoil stalk, it will say 'marketplace.'" (James Benn, who called my attention to the story in the *Sui Tang jiahua*, also kindly suggested this reading to me in his correspondence dated 6 March 2001).

⁴³ *Chang'an zhi*, *Tang Civilization Reference Series*, vol. 6, p. 101, 108, 109, 119; Michihata Ryōshū 道端良秀, "Hōjō to dan-nikushoku" 放生と断肉食, in *Chūgoku bukkyō-shi zenshū* 中國佛教史全集 (11 vols. Tokyo: Kabushiki gaisha shoen, 1985), vol. 3, p. 429.

what is said of the reason for his becoming a monk, provides more details about him. According to this biography, he served as Investigating Censor during the Chuigong reign-era (9 February 685 – 26 January 689). He quit his job because he could not tolerate the brutality of Empress Wu's secret police, of which his uncle Zhang Zhimo 張知默 (in the capacity of Vice Minister of Justice [*qiuguan shilang* 秋官侍郎]), along with Zhou Xing 周興 (?-691) and Lai Junchen 來俊臣 (651-97), was a chief leader. At the outset, Empress Wu was very surprised by Wang Shoushen's desire for a monastic life. But later, when he explained to her his reasons in an impassioned and persuasive way, the empress was allegedly moved and bestowed on him the dharma-name Facheng⁴⁴.

From the foregoing summary of his biographical sources (both monastic and secular), we get the impression that Facheng (Wang Shoushen) was closely related with Empress Wu. Not only had he been an important member of Empress Wu's secret police before renouncing his household life, but he also maintained significant ties with Empress Wu after he became a Buddhist monk, as is demonstrated by the fact that he and Empress Wu's daughter worked together for the construction of a "Pond for Releasing Life" in Chang'an.

Facheng's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography is particularly interesting in providing a piece of information not found in other sources about Empress Wu's involvement in relic veneration; that is, after their "discovery" in 677, the Guangzhai relics were widely distributed throughout the whole country. However, we have also to admit that this monastic biography of Facheng also leaves too many problems unanswered. First and foremost, it says nothing about why Empress Wu chose the Guangzhai Quarter as the place to "discover" the relics? Secondly, it remains silent on when the Guangzhai relics were distributed. Thirdly, it gives us no hint whatsoever about the purpose of this apparently rather significant and large-scale

⁴⁴ See Wang Shoushen's biography at *Jiu Tang shu* 192: 5123. In addition, two notes in the *Jiu Tang shu* (192: 5121; 50: 2142) tell us that Wang Shoushen was a native of Puzhou 蒲州 (in present-day Yongji 永濟, Shanxi) and that he had assisted Empress Wu in reforming some legal codes.

Zhang Zhimo, a notorious "Cruel Official," is briefly mentioned at the end of the *Xin Tang shu* biography of Zhang Zhijian 張知謩 (650?-730?), who was his older brother (*Xin Tang shu* 100: 3948).

politico-religious program centering around the Guangzhai relics. Fourthly, it also avoids telling us what the Qibaotai was and when Empress Wu ordered the construction of this “tower” within the Guangzhaisi. Finally, it remains a mystery as to why such a “tower” was built although its importance was beyond question given that the monastery was renamed after it. Given that the Qibaotai was constructed, as it will be revealed, toward the end of Empress Wu’s life, we will discuss the last two problems when we turn to deal with Empress Wu’s relic veneration in her late years (Section IV). The rest of this section will be devoted to the first three problems, which are of essential importance for our understanding of Empress Wu’s relic veneration and her Buddhist policies.

Regarding the location of the “discovery” of the Guangzhai relics, we might propose the following two explanations. The name of this quarter was obviously derived from the famous phrase, *guangzhai tianxia* 光宅天下 (“[King Yao’s 堯 intelligence was so great that] it filled and stayed in the whole world”) from one of the most respected Chinese classics⁴⁵. The “imperial” symbolism underlying this phrase must have been rather attractive to Empress Wu at the time when she was relishing the taste of supreme power. In addition, the following possibility is also worth serious consideration. On 12 December 507 (Tianjian 6.12.23 [*xuyin*]), Liang Wudi (r. 502-49) decreed that his old residence in Sanqian 三橋 of Jinling 金陵 (present-day Nanjing) be turned into a monastery named Guangzhaisi⁴⁶. Partly because of its ties with Liang Wudi, the Guangzhaisi became a very famous monastery in southern China. Major monks known to have resided there include Fayun 法雲 (467-529) and Zhiyi 智顛 (538-97). In Tianjian 7 (508) Fayun became the abbot of the Guangzhaisi (he was probably the first abbot of the Guangzhaisi given that its

⁴⁵ Chapter “Yaodian” 堯典 of the *Shangshu* 尚書: 昔在帝堯, 聰明文思, 光宅天下; see Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 compiled, *Shangshu tongjian* 尚書通檢 (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, inc., 1978), p. 25.

⁴⁶ See the “Guangzhaisi chaxia ming bing xu” 光宅寺剎下銘並序 (Inscription on the Base of the Guangzhaisi, with a Preface; in the *Guang Hongming ji*, T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 212c3-28; that date is mentioned at p. 212c12-14). Although this inscription is anonymous as it is presented in the *Guang Hongming ji*, the author might have been Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (d. 521), whose biographies report that Liang Wudi, in appreciation of his literary talent, asked him to write an inscription for the Guangzhaisi; *Liang shu* 梁書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 49: 698; *Nan shi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 72: 1780.

“establishment” was decreed only one year earlier)⁴⁷. Allegedly, Zhiyi decided to move to the monastery after the spirit of Liang Wudi appeared in his dream and invited him to do so⁴⁸. Given that Liang Wudi could be taken as a relative of Empress Wu in the sense that one of his fifth-generation granddaughters became the empress of Empress Wu's relative Sui Yangdi (r. 604-17), that is, Empress Xiao 蕭皇后 (d. after 630)⁴⁹, Empress Wu's decision to base one of her fundamental politico-religious programs on the Guangzhaisi probably can be read as her intention to link herself with this prominent relative, also renowned for his devotion for Buddhism.

Let us then turn to the distribution of the Guangzhai relics, an issue of considerable interest to us. Given that the Guangzhai relics were discovered in 677 and that a document presented to the court on 16 August 690 referred to their discovery and subsequent distribution⁵⁰, we at least know that the relics must have been distributed between these two dates. Is there any way for us to narrow down this time-frame? The fact that the relics were apparently deliberately buried underground to be “discovered” before they were used to serve some political purposes might encourage us to assume that they were distributed not too long after their “discovery” in 677. However, other considerations would make it appear more likely that the relics were distributed in or shortly before October 690.

In the late 670s Empress Wu had still to content herself with wielding supreme power through her husband-emperor. This might lead one to assume that she was then probably not so keen on launching such a large-scale and complicated politico-religious project of distributing Buddhist relics all over the country. On the country, she must have been much more

⁴⁷ See Fayun's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 464b4-5.

⁴⁸ The *Sui Tiantai Zhizhe dashi biezhuan* 隋天台智者大師別傳 (Separate Biography for Great Master Zhizhe of Mount Tiantai of the Sui; by Guanding 灌頂 [561-632] ca. 605), *T* vol. 50, no. 2050, p. 194b17-19; Zhiyi's *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* no. 50, no. 2060, p. 565c26-28.

⁴⁹ See her official biography at *Sui shu* 36: 1111-13. She was a fifth-generation descendant of Liang Wudi: her father Mingdi of the Later Liang (r. 562-85), was a grandson of Liang Wudi (*Xin Tang shu* 71: 2281). Arthur Wright briefly discusses this woman, especially her influence on Yangdi, in his *The Sui Dynasty* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978], p. 158. See Section (VI) for the details of the kinship relationship between Empress Wu and Sui Wendi (and therefor his son Yangdi).

⁵⁰ See Section III for this document, which was a commentary on the *Dayun jing*.

interested in such a project on the eve or in the wake of her usurpation, which was officially committed on 16 October 690. This assumption seems also supported by the following fact. We already noted a time-honored belief surrounding the veneration of the Famensi relic: the opening of the Famensi relic every three decades was thought to bring numerous benefits. We also know that the Famensi relic was sent back and re-sealed in the pagoda in 662, which means that the next opening was due in 691, exactly one year after the establishment of the Great Zhou. On the other hand, there is no evidence whatsoever that the Famensi relic was opened in that year or one year later. Thus, it may strike us as particularly strange that such a shrewd politician as Empress Wu, who was then badly in need of political legitimation, let such a valuable opportunity slip by so easily⁵¹. This strange phenomenon could be explained if we assume that the empress had just executed a large-scale relic-distribution campaign one year earlier, which might have rendered the Famensi relic much less attractive to her. This might encourage the assumption that the Guangzhai relics were distributed around 16 October 690, when Empress Wu officially founded her dynasty.

Thus, it seems that the factors for assuming a 690 distribution counterbalance that for a date of 677. Which assumption is more plausible? Fortunately, an inscription which was written on the occasion of celebrating the enshrinement of a portion of the Guangzhai relics establishes beyond any doubt that the relics were distributed in 678, one year after they were “discovered.”

The inscription in question is entitled “Da Tang Shengdi gan sheli zhi ming” 大唐聖帝感舍利之銘 (Inscription for the Relics Acquired through the Stimuli on the Part of the Sagely Emperor of the Great Tang [Gaozong])⁵². It states that when some relics mysteriously appeared in the

⁵¹ One might assume that the failure on the part of Empress Wu to open the Famensi pagoda in 691 or 692 might be due to the temple’s close association with the Tang rulers, not with her own newly established Zhou dynasty. See Sen, *Buddhism, Trade, and Diplomacy*, Chapter Two. However, as is noted in Section I, the temple was actually also very closely related to the Sui rulers, Empress Wu’s relatives. Empress Wu’s puzzling attitude towards this seemingly highly rewarding opportunity in 691 remains unsolved.

⁵² The epitaph bearing this inscription measures one *chi* eight *cun* in height (60.3 cm) and one *chi* and six *cun* (53.4 cm) in width. The inscription was written in twenty-one lines (each line twenty-three characters). The text was written by Zhang Yi 張毅 (otherwise

“Divine Capital” (Shenjing 神京, Chang’an), the Acting Prefect of Luzhou 潞州 (in present-day Changzhi 長治, Shanxi) Heba Zheng 賀拔正 (d. after 678)⁵³

面承恩受，頂戴而還。凡四十九粒，為青白二色，流瓶轉匣，吐照含明。離若分珠，爭開日月之彩；合如聚米，各服天地之容。一見一聞，永清三業；且瞻且仰，長賓六塵。⁵⁴

received the [August] grace by accepting the relics in the presence [of His Majesty]. [He then] returned [to Luzhou], with the relics [reverently] placed on the crown of his head. Totalling forty-nine in number, these relics were green and white in color. They revolved within the [reliquary] coffer and [the reflection of their radiance] make them look as if they were floating within the [reliquary] vase. Shining brightly, they contain [more] brilliance [inside]. When they were separated, they looked like individual pearls, which emanated a radiance comparable with that of the sun and moon. When they were put together, they look like assembled rice, each assuming the shape of heavens and earth. By taking even one look at them or even hearing one word about them, people would have their “three types of karma” (*sanye* 三業) purified forever. By gazing at and worshipping them, people would get rid of the “six types of impurities” (*liuchen* 六塵) once and for all⁵⁵.

unknown), a Scholar (*xueshi* 學仕) in the prefecture (Luzhou) and Dai Anle 戴安樂 (otherwise unknown), Vice Prefect (*sima* 司馬) of Luzhou executed the calligraphy for it. It was written in regular script (*zhengshu* 正書). Hu Pinzhi 胡聘之 (d. after 1901) reports that the epitaph was then preserved at the Guanzhuangsi 官莊寺 in Sub-prefecture Changzhi 長治 (in present-day Changzhi, Shanxi). See *Shanyou shike congbian* 山右石刻叢編 (Collection of the Stone Inscriptions in the Area Right to the Mountain [of Taihang 太行] (i.e. Shanxi); completed 1901), *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.15012a17, a13, b16.

⁵³ For Heba as a family name, see *Wei shu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 113: 3009, which also notes that the name was later known as He 何. Neither of the two dynastic histories grants a biography to Heba Zheng. The inscription identifies him as a Grand Master for Thorough Counsel (*Tongyi dafu* 通議大夫), who was commissioned, with extraordinary powers (*shi chijie* 使持節), to be in charge of the military affairs (諸軍事) in Luzhou, Acting (*shou* 守) Prefect (Cishi 刺使) of Luzhou, and Senior Commandant-in-chief of Cavalry (*Shang qi duwei* 上騎都尉). *Tongyi dafu* was a prestige title (*sangan* 散官) for civil officials of rank 4a; see Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 555.

⁵⁴ “Da Tang Shengdi gan sheli zhi ming,” in *Shanyou shike congbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.15012b5-8.

⁵⁵ *Sanye* here indicates three kinds of bad karmas related to human acts, words and thoughts. The *liuchen* refer to the six organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and consciousness) and their correspondent objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and idea).

The inscription continues by telling us that on Yifeng 3.4.8 (4 May 678), the Buddha's birthday, the forty-nine relics were enshrined under the old pagoda at the Fanjingsi 梵境寺 in Luzhou. Obviously, these forty-nine relics were the portion allotted to Luzhou from the over ten thousand relics discovered in the quarter of Guangzhai one year earlier. From Facheng's biography we know that the relics were distributed to all the prefectures and the two capitals, each of them receiving forty-nine relics. Therefore, like Luzhou, other prefectures also received their reliquary allotment in the same year. Given that in Luzhou, the relics were enshrined on a very special day for Buddhists (that is, the Buddha's birthday), it is very likely that the relics were also enshrined on the same day in other prefectures. This echoed the practice of the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns, the last two of which were also executed simultaneously all over the country on the Buddha's birthday in the years 602 and 604, although during the first in 601 the relics were enshrined at the noon of the fifteenth day of the tenth month, which happened to be, interestingly, the last of the "Three Primary Days" (*sanyuan* 三元) in Taoism⁵⁶.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Fanjingsi was one of the one hundred and seven monasteries which were chosen during the Renshou reign-era to enshrine the relics. The team escorting the relic from the capital to the Fanjingsi was led by the monk Daoduan 道端 (d. after 602), who was then affiliated with the capital monastery Renfasi 仁法寺 but who was originally a native of Luzhou⁵⁷. Thus, it turned out that the forty-nine Guangzhai relics assigned to Luzhou were enshrined under the pagoda built in 602 on the occasion of the second Renshou relic-distribution campaign⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Two. Eugene Y. Wang discusses the possible purpose of choosing the last of the three Taoist "Primary Days" to execute the first nation-wide relic enshrinement during the Renshou reign-era; see his "Of the True Body: The Buddha's Relics and Corporeal Transformation in Sui-Tang China," in *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (eds. Wu Hung and Katherine Mino, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, forthcoming).

⁵⁷ *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, *T* vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 669b23-c3; cf. *Guang Hongming ji*, *T* vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 219c14; *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, *T* vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 412c14; Yamazaki Hiroshi 山崎宏, *Shina chūsei bukkūō no tenkai* 支那中世佛教の展開 (Tokyo: Shimizu shoten, 1942), p. 334.

⁵⁸ Quoting from the *Tongzhi* 通志, which probably referred to the *Luzhou tongzhi* 潞州通志, Hu Pinzhi (*Shanyou shike congbian*, *Shike shilitiao xinbian* I.20.15012b-15013a) reports the following story of how the relics and the inscription were found. Located in

Finally, let us briefly remark on the possible purposes of the Guangzhai relic-distribution campaign. In order to do so, we need to consider Empress Wu's political situation at the time. The 670s witnessed a new apogee of political power reached by the empress. The following are just a few important landmarks that warrant particular attention.

On 20 September 674 (Xianheng 5.8.15 [*renchen*]), Gaozong bestowed the title Tianhuang 天皇 (Heavenly Emperor) on himself and his empress Wu Zhao accordingly became the Tianhou 天后 (Heavenly Empress). The Song dynasty historian Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-86) believes that this political move, through which the empress appropriated this unprecedented honorific title, was actually planned by the empress herself⁵⁹. Sima Guang's suspicion seems well founded given that since 664, the empress and the emperor had been called "Two Sages" (*ersheng* 二聖):

自是，上每視事，則后垂簾於後。政務大小，皆與聞之。天下大權，悉歸中宮。黜陟殺生，決於其口，天子拱手而已。中外謂之二聖。

the northeast of Changzhi 長治, the Fanjingsi was built in the Sui. During the Wanli reign-era (1573-1620), when the Fanjingsi and the pagoda therein had fallen into ruins for long, some local residents found the relics and the epitaph when they dug into the ground. Prince of Shending 瀋定, Zhu Chengyao 朱理堯 (d. after 1584), built a pagoda at the east of the Zhaojuesi 昭覺寺 for the relics and the epitaph, which he buried together (for Zhu Chenyao see his biographical note at *Ming shi* 明史 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974] 118: 3606). Later the Zhaojuesi and pagoda collapsed and the place became cropland. When the plot of cropland was excavated during the Tongzhi reign-era (1862-74), a stone coffer was found. However, it was buried so deep and it was so hard to open that the locals did not know what was inside. Hearing of this, the prefect ordered to bury it again. In the *yimao* year of the Guanxu reign-era (i.e. 1879), some compilers of the gazetteers opened the coffer and obtained four epitaphs. Two of them were incised pictures of monks, without inscription, while the other two were a Sui inscription and Dai Anle's inscription. All these epitaphs were then placed at the Guanzhuangsi at the east of the walled-city. The Sui inscription was very likely the one written when the relic were enshrined there in 602. For this inscription, see *Shanyou shike congbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.14990a-b. Right after recording the Sui inscription, Hu Pinzhi confirms that it was indeed along with Dai Anle's inscription that this Sui inscription was unearthed (*Shanyou shike congbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.14990b). As I showed elsewhere, in 602, all the inscription erected for the purpose follow an identical format that was laid out by the central government beforehand. For several examples of this kind of inscription, see Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Two.

⁵⁹ *Jiu Tang shu* 5: 99, *Xin Tang shu* 3: 71, *Zizhi tongjian* 202: 6372-73. On the same day was introduced a new reign name Shangyuan 上元, which lasted for about twenty-seven months (20 September 674-18 December 676).

From this event onwards, whenever the emperor attended to business, the empress then hung a curtain [and listened] from behind it. There was no matter of government, great or small, which she did not hear. The whole power of the empire passed into her hands; reward and punishment, life and death, she decided. The emperor just folded his hands and that is all. In court and country, they were called the “Two Sages”⁶⁰.

The title of “Heavenly Empress” was obviously a further measure on the part of the empress to solidify her status as a “co-emperor” of China⁶¹.

It is also remarkable that in the third month of the next year (1-30 April 675) Gaozong, officially because of his deteriorating health (although more likely under the pressure of the empress), offered the regency to her. She would have taken it but for the strong remonstrance of a court official⁶². One month later, on 1 May 675 (Shangyuan 2.4.1 [*yihai*]), Heir Apparent Li Hong 李弘 (652-75), the second son of Gaozong and Empress Wu, who was then starting to pose a potential threat to Empress Wu, mysteriously died. Contemporaries generally suspected that he was actually poisoned by his mother⁶³. Evidence also shows Empress Wu’s effort to constitute a “shadow cabinet” with some ambitious literati loyal to her (the so-called “Scholars of the Northern Gate” [*Beimen xueshi* 北門學士]), through which she was able to manipulate the government to her own ends⁶⁴.

It might be going too far to suggest that Empress Wu was already seriously plotting usurpation in the 670s. However, the extraordinary (if not abnormal) power structure that she and her supporters had managed to create and maintain at the time did require some sort of legitimation. At least some of the implications of the series of politico-religious

⁶⁰ *Zizhi tongjian* 201: 6343. Translations by Guisso, *Wu Tse-t’ien*, p. 20; with slight modifications.

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that this relationship between empress Wu and her husband was obviously modeled on that between Sui Wendi and his formidable empress Dugu 獨孤皇后 (553-602) (posthumously known as Wenxian 文獻), who were also called “Two Sages” by their Sui subjects (*Sui shu* 36: 1108).

⁶² *Zizhi tongjian* 202: 6375-76.

⁶³ *Zizhi tongjian* 202: 6377. Some scholars have tried to discredit this suspicion; see, for example, Guisso, *Wu Tse-t’ien*, p. 23.

⁶⁴ *Zizhi tongjian* 202: 6376; Twitchett and Wechsler, “Kao-tsung and the Empress Wu,” p. 263.

campaigns related to the “discovery” and distribution of the Guangzhai relics are to be understood against this political background. We need also note that some aspects of this enormous ideological project demonstrated a close relationship between Empress Wu and Sui Wendi in the relic veneration. We have reasons to suspect that at least some, if not most, of the Guangzhai relics distributed to the prefectures all over the country were enshrined in the pagodas constructed during the three Renshou relic-distribution campaigns, like the pagoda at the Fanjingsi. Empress Wu's reliance on her Sui relative in the matter of relic veneration will become clearer as we proceed to examine her engagement with the “sacred bones” in later periods of her life.

(III) *Empress Wu's Relic Veneration in the Early Period of Her Reign (690-694)*

Although the Guangzhai relics were distributed as early as 678, the implications of this campaign extended far beyond the 670s. It took a dozen of years or so for Empress Wu and her ideologues to re-capitalize on the ideological value of this campaign. On 16 August 690, ten Buddhist monks of “Great Virtue” (Skt. *bhadanta*) (*shi dade* 十大德), headed by Huaiyi 懷義 (var. Xue Huaiyi 薛懷義, d. 695), who was believed to be Empress Wu's lover and who himself was recognized as such a *bhadanta*-monk, presented to the court an important document, which was cast in form of a commentary on the *Dayun jing* 大雲經 (i.e. *Dafangdeng wuxiang jing* 大方等無想經) (Skt. *Mahāmegha sūtra*) (The Sūtra of Great Clouds)⁶⁵. Entitled “*Dayun jing Shenhuang shouji yishu*” 大雲經神皇授記義疏 (Commentary on the Meaning of the Prophecy about the Divine Emperor [i.e. Wuzhao] in the *Dayun jing*), this document represented a major measure preparatory to the “usurpation” of the empress. Remarkably for us, it stresses both the “discovery” of the Guangzhai relics and their distribution:

⁶⁵ *Jiu Tang shu* 4: 121, *Xin Tang shu* 4: 90, *Zizhi tongjian* 204: 6466; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 4-7.

神皇先發弘願，造八百四萬舍利寶塔。以光宅坊中所得舍利，分布於四天下，此則顯八表一時下舍利之應。斯乃不假人力所_レ_レ，並是八表神功共成。此即顯護持正法，大得舍利之驗也。⁶⁶

The Divine Emperor formerly made the grand vow that she would build eight million and forty thousand treasure-pagodas [to enshrine] relics. Thus, to spread the relics obtained in the Guangzhai Quarter to the four continents is to demonstrate the correspondence [between the actuality and the prophecy of] spreading the relics to the eight extremities simultaneously. The distribution of these relics was not done through human effort alone, but was accomplished together with the divine power of the eight extremities. This makes manifest the proof [of the prophecy] that those who protect and maintain the True Law will harvest a large number of relics.

Here, the Guangzhai relics and their distribution were celebrated as a spiritual source justifying Empress Wu's ascendancy to supreme power. The story of Empress Wu predicting during one of her previous lives that she would build eight million and forty thousand reliquary pagodas was obviously based on the Aśoka legend that he had 84,000 supernatural agents build 84,000 reliquary pagodas all over the world. The difference is that Empress Wu's ideologues seem to have been much more ambitious than the author(s) of the Aśoka legend, as the number of pagodas the Chinese empress was said to have vowed to build was almost one hundred times⁶⁷ the number that Aśoka was allegedly able to build!

At least partly encouraged by the Guangzhai relic campaign and the new ideological implications imposed on it after the publication of this commentary on the Sūtra of Great Clouds, a series of relic veneration was carried out under the empire. Within several years after her formal ascension to throne, at least two significant measures were taken by Empress Wu's supporters to honor the "sacred bones."

⁶⁶ The *Dayun jing* (T no. 387) was translated by Dharmakṣema (385-433) sometime between 424 and 430; for this dating, see Chen Jinhua, "Dharmakṣema (385-433): A Fifth Century Indian Buddhist Missionary in China," forthcoming. The "commentary" is preserved as S 6502 and is transcribed in Yabuki, *Sankaikyō no kenkyū*, p. 690; reproduced in Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Plate V. Forte's translation of the same passage, which significantly differs from mine in some places, is found in the same book, p. 203.

⁶⁷ The Divine Emperor allegedly built eight million and forty thousand (8,040,000) pagodas, only three hundred and sixty thousand less than one hundred times of the number of Aśoka's pagodas ($8,4000 \times 100 = 8,400,000$).

Let us first look at a multi-storied pavilion which was very likely a pagoda that enshrined the Buddha's relics. The pavilion proper long ago ceased to exist. Fortunately, a stele dedicated to this pavilion survives to the present, shedding some light on this impressive Buddhist edifice which displayed very significant politico-religious symbolism. Ironically, it was within a Confucian shrine in Yishi 猗氏 (in present-day Linyi 臨猗, Shanxi) that this stele was found in 1941. With an impressive height of 2.81 meters, it bears the interlacing dragon crown and the tortoise base characteristic of most official Tang monuments. Its title, "Stele for the Multi-story Maitreya Pavilion of the Dayunsi" (Dayunsi Mile chongge bei 大雲寺彌勒重閣碑), clearly reveals its original function. The inscription on the stele does not tell us when the stele and the pavilion were erected. However, the following two dates inscribed close to the bottom of the stele and right above the place where a list of the sponsors of this pavilion was carved, suggest that all this might have happened either in or shortly after 692:

天授二年二月二十四日，准 制置為大雲寺。至三年正月十八日，准 制迴換額為仁壽寺。⁶⁸

On the twenty-fourth day of the second month of the second year of the Tianshou reign-era (28 January 691), [this monastery] was [re]named Dayunsi in accordance with an imperial edict. Upon the eighteenth day of the *zheng* month of the third year [of the Tianshou reign-era] (13 December 691), the name-tablet of the monastery was changed back to Renshou in accordance with an[other] imperial edict.

According to this, the monastery in which this Maitreya Pavilion was built was originally named Renshou, and was renamed Dayunsi on 28 January 691, obviously as a result of the sweeping edict that Empress Wu issued on 5 December 690 (Tianshou 1.10.29 [*renshen*]) to set up a Dayunsi in each of the two capitals (Chang'an and Luoyang) and every prefecture in her empire to store the *Dayun jing* (and very likely also its

⁶⁸ "Dayunsi Mile Chongge bei," *Shanyou shike conbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* 1.20. 15020a6-7. The characters *tian* 天, *nian* 年, *yue* 月 and *ri* 日 were written in the new forms introduced under the reign of Empress Wu (the so-called "Zetian xinzi" 則天新字). A space was left blank before *zhi* 制, which refers to the imperial decree.

commentary composed by the ten *bhadanta*-monks)⁶⁹. However, as is clearly indicated by this inscription, the name of Dayunsi in Yishi only lasted for less than eleven months, as the name of the monastery reverted to its original name Renshousi on 13 December 691. To the best of my knowledge, this was the only known example of a Dayunsi being changed back to its original name on the order of Empress Wu herself. Thus, what has made Renshousi extraordinary was not the fact that it was renamed Dayunsi at the beginning of 691, but that the empress took the trouble of making an exception in order to enable it to assume its previous name less than eleven months after the renaming. What was the reason for this unusual naming and renaming process? On what grounds did Empress Wu grant this special favor to this local temple? In order to understand this unusual practice, we need to look more closely into the history of this temple.

It turns out that the Renshousi was a place of unique importance in Sui Buddhism and politics. First of all, its name happened to be identical with the title of Wendi's second reign-era, which lasted from 8 February 601 to 24 January 605.

Secondly, it was the power-base for the renowned Buddhist monk Tanyan 曇延 (516-88), who was active under the Northern Zhou (557-81) and Sui, and was deeply trusted by Sui Wendi. It was at this temple that Tanyan studied with his teacher Sengmiao 僧妙 (fl. ca. 530-550) and trained his own disciples including Daoxun 道遜 (556-630)⁷⁰.

Thirdly, this Renshousi was famous for its relic, which, according to Daoxuan, was sent to the Western Wei court during the Datong reign-era (535-51) from the "Western Regions" (Xiyu 西域; India or one of the Buddhist kingdoms in Central Asia). In admiration for Sengmiao, Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 (507-56), the Prime Minister and the real power behind the throne of the Western Wei, sent the relic to Sengmiao and asked him to enshrine it at the Renshousi, which was then called Changniansi 常念寺. One year after being placed in the temple, the relic started to glow brightly at midnight. The light eventually became so strong that it lit up a large

⁶⁹ *Zizhi tongjian* 204: 6469; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁰ *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, pp. 486a-b (especially p. 486a25ff), 488a-489c (especially 488a25-b8), 533c-534c (especially 534a2ff), and 598c (especially 598c17ff).

area around the temple. It was only after Sengmiao's prayers that the relic ceased to emit light. The local communities, both religious and lay, enthusiastically celebrated this rare event with incense and chanting⁷¹. The Renshou relic was also implicated in Tanyan's composition of a commentary on the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, as is demonstrated in a well known legend recorded in his *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biography⁷². This legend, although it concerns the composition of a commentary on the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, has led some scholars to conclude that Tanyan, to whom is attributed a commentary on the *Dacheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Treatise on Awakening faith in Mahāyāna), had actually also composed this text, which is generally believed to have been an apocryphon of Chinese provenance despite its traditional attribution to Aśvaghōṣa⁷³.

Finally, this temple was closely related with the Qiyansi 栖巖寺, which was founded by Sui Wendi's father and which figured prominently during the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns⁷⁴.

Thus, in view of what we know about the Renshousi, I am inclined to believe that it might have been out of Empress Wu's respect for her Sui relatives and perhaps her intention to remind her subjects of her ties with the Sui royal family that she ordered that the name of the Yishi Dayunsi

⁷¹ See Sengmiao's biography at *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, p.486a25-b7. Daoxuan continues to report that since Sengmiao's death the Renshousi relic, which he refers to as *fogu* 佛骨 (a bone of the Buddha), had never issued any light any more although it was still stored at the temple in his own time (*Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 486b10-11).

⁷² *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 488a25-b8. In the course of preparing this commentary, Tanyan dreams of Aśvaghōṣa, who instructs him in the essence of the *sūtra*. Inspired by these dream revelations from this great Buddhist sage, Tanyan swiftly finishes his commentary. Lest his commentary contain any possible errors, he decides to seek confirmation from the Renshousi relic. Unrolling the *sūtra* and his own commentary in front of the pagoda, he burns incense and beseeches the relic to prove his commentary by exhibiting auspicious signs. No sooner does he utter this vow than the scrolls of the *sūtra* and his commentary start to emit light, as does the relic inside the pagoda. The divine light lasts for three days and nights.

⁷³ For the latest noticeable study on the issue of Tanyan's possible authorship of the *Dacheng qixin lun*, see Aramaki Noritoshi 荒牧典俊, "Hokuchō kōhanki bukkyō shisō-shi josetsu" 北朝後半期佛教思想史序説, in *Hokuchō Zui-Tō chugoku bukkyō-shi* 北朝隋唐中國仏教思想史 (ed. Aramaki Noritoshi, Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2000), pp. 65-84.

⁷⁴ See Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Two and Appendix A. See also the relevant discussion in Section VI.

be changed back to the Renshou. In other words, the Renshou was at the beginning renamed as Dayunsi under a nationwide order; then, after its unique importance was noted and recognized, its old name was reinstalled.

The importance that the Empress and her government had shown to the Renshou is corroborated by the fact that the organizer of the project which led to the construction of this Maitreya Pavilion was a leader of a capital monastery, which was of considerable importance at the time. The person in question was the Buddhist monk Yitong 義通 (d. after 691), the Rector (*shangzuo* 上座) of the Taipingsi 太平寺 in the Divine Metropolis (Shendu 神都; that is, Luoyang), who was also a native of Yishi. Although we now almost know nothing for certain about this monk other than his leadership of the Taipingsi and his role in constructing the Renshou Maitreya Pavilion⁷⁵, the importance of his monastery under the reign of Empress Wu is beyond any doubt. For example, Chengban 成辦 (d. after 695), one of the seventy co-compilers of the Buddhist catalogue compiled in 695 under the aegis of the Great Zhou government, was an administrator (Ch. *duweina* 都維那, Skt. *karmadāna*) of this monastery⁷⁶. Furthermore, one of Xuanzang's disciples, the Indian Lishe 利涉 (625?-722?), who was very active under the reigns of Zhongzong (r. 684, r. 705-10) and Xuanzong (r. 712-56), was also once affiliated with the same monastery⁷⁷.

With these remarks on the history of the Renshou and its possible ties with Empress Wu, and the background of the constructor of the Maitreya Pavilion at the temple, we are now ready to see what kind of Buddhist architecture the Maitreya Pavilion was. Although very little is known about this edifice, the scenes elaborately carved on the two faces of that

⁷⁵ In one of his Buddhist catalogues, the Japanese Buddhist pilgrim Ennin 圓仁 (793-864) records an inscription, dedicated to a Yitong 義通, who was a palace chaplain (*[nei]gongfeng* [內]供奉), a Bhadanta and a Dharma Master. See *Nittō shingū shōgyō mokuroku* 入唐新求聖教目錄 (Catalogue of the Sainly Teachings Newly Sought in the Land of Tang, completed 847), *T* vol. 55, no. 2167, p. 1084a22. It is not clear if this Yitong was the homonymous monk who built the Maitreya Pavilion in 692.

⁷⁶ *Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定眾經目錄 (Catalogue of the Buddhist Scriptures Collated and Sanctioned in the Great Zhou Dynasty [690-705]); completed in 695), *T* vol. 55, no. 2153, 475c9. Chengban served as a “monk who collated the titles of the *sūtras*” (*jiao jingmu seng* 校經目僧).

⁷⁷ For Lishe, see his biography at *Song gaoseng zhuan* at *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 815a-b; and Makita's exclusive study, “Tō Chōan Dai Ankokuji Lishō ni tsuite” 唐長安大安國寺利涉について, *Tōhō gaku* 31 (1961).

stele suggest its reliquary function. The “front”⁷⁸ face contains, from the base upwards, the following scenes related to the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa:

- 1) the Buddha’s last preaching at the house of Cunda;
- 2) his entry into nirvāṇa;
- 3) a group of smaller scenes depicting (a) Queen Māyā’s lamentation over the closed coffin of her son; (b) the Buddha’s miraculous resurrection from the coffin as a response to his mother’s wailing, bidding farewell to her; (c) his funeral procession and finally d) the cremation of his body.

An inscription running down the frame between the four small panels clearly identifies the nature of this series of scenes: “The Dayunsi of the Great Zhou, humbly on behalf of the Sacred and Divine Imperial Majesty, has reverently made one stele with scenes of the nirvāṇa” (大周大雲寺奉為聖神皇帝敬造涅槃變相一區)⁷⁹.

The “rear” face bears the following three tiers: in the top tier is shown the scene of the partition of the relics between the eight kings; the middle tier has a Buddha triad (from left to right: Śākyamuni – Maitreya – Amitābha) flanked by bodhisattvas; the bottom tier has a votive inscription by some local officials and Buddhist monks⁸⁰.

⁷⁸ As is reported by two Japanese art historians and archeologists, the stele, as it stood in the Confucian shrine in Yishi when they found and photographed it in 1941, had the Parinirvāṇa scenes on its front side and the Buddha-triad image on the reverse. See Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Hibino Takeo 日比野丈夫, *Shansai Koseki-shi* 山西古蹟志 (Kyoto: Nakamura insatsu kabushiki gaisha, 1956), pp. 153-54. This has been the way universally adopted by all the art historians when they refer to the two faces of the stele. As the Confucian shrine was definitely not the original home of the stele, it was just moved there from where it originally belonged — presumably the multi-story pavilion at the Dayunsi, as is suggested by the title of the stele. This suggests that, contrary to what art historians have generally accepted, the face bearing this title and the Buddha-triad image it indicated must have been meant as the facing side and accordingly, that the side with the Parinirvāṇa scenes was designed as the reverse. This is supported by the fact that on the bottom of the “facing” (actually the reverse if I am correct) side is a dado-like area where are indicated the names and titles of this memorial stele (and probably also the Maitreya Pavilion). It seems that as far as the two sides of a stone stele were both carved, the part bearing the names of the donors was generally to be found on the reverse, probably out of a sense of modesty and humility.

⁷⁹ “Dayunsi Mile Chongge bei,” *Shanyou shike congbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* 1.20. 15018b18.

⁸⁰ This description of the carvings on the two sides of the stele is based on Alexander C. Soper, “A T’ang Parinirvāṇa Stele” (*Artibus Asiae* 22.1/2 [1959], pp. 159-69), which is in turn based on the report in Mizuno Seiichi and Hibino Takeo, *Shansai Koseki-shi*, pp. 153-54.

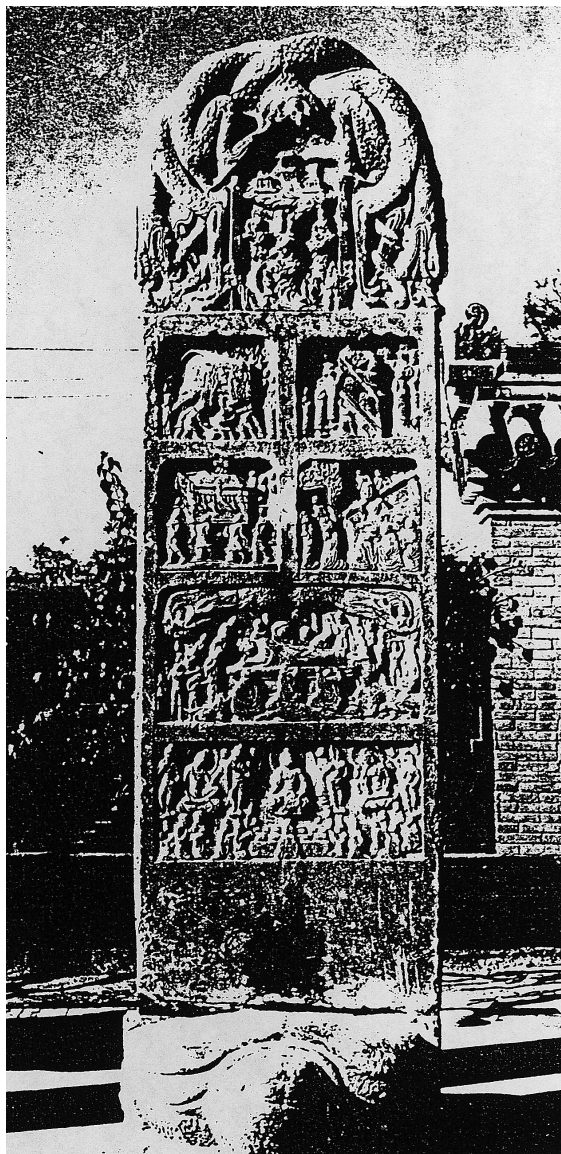


Fig. 1. Dayunsi Mile chongge bei 大雲寺彌勒重閣碑,
Dayunsi (Renshouji) in Yishi; by courtesy of Eugene Wang.

That the scenes on both the obverse and reverse sides of the stele deal with the Buddha's Parinirvāṇa and the famous story of the eightfold partition of his relics strongly suggests that this Maitreya Pavilion might have contained some relics. This becomes more likely when we consider the probability that this building, referred to as *chongge* 重閣, was a multi-story pagoda⁸¹. Let us here confine ourselves to the following two examples of Tang authors using *chongge* to indicate a pagoda. In his epitaph for the famous Indian Esoteric Buddhist missionary Shanwuwei 善無畏 (Śubhākarasiṃha, 637-735), Li Hua 李華 (717?-774?) uses *chongge* to refer to the multi-story "pavilion" within the Baimasi 白馬寺⁸². The same building is called *futu* 浮屠, which was a Chinese transliteration for the Sanskrit *stūpa* (pagoda), by the authors of the *Xin Tang shu*⁸³. Another example is provided by the Avataṃsaka master Fazang 法藏 (643-712), who describes the octagonal pagoda dedicated to the Central Indian monk Divākara (Ch. Dipoheluo 地婆訶羅; or Rizhao 日照; 612-87) at the Xiangshansi 香山寺 of Longmen 龍門 as a *chongge*⁸⁴. Although this pagoda only contained the relics of the Indian monk, not those of the Buddha, this example still bears out the assumption regarding the usage of *chongge*.

At first glance, it might appear rather puzzling that a pagoda enshrining the Buddha's relics was named after Maitreya, the future Buddha. This unusual practice is probably to be understood in terms of the efforts on the part of Empress Wu's Buddhist ideologues to depict her as the Maitreya reincarnate⁸⁵.

⁸¹ For the practice of using this term in this way in the Tang literature, see Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 212, note 15.

⁸² "Da Tang Dongdu Da Shengshansi gu Zhong Tianzhu guo Shanwuwei Sanzang Heshang beiming bing xu" 大唐東都大聖善寺故中天竺國善無畏三藏和尚碑銘並序 (Inscription, with a preface, for the Late Tripiṭaka Upādhyāya Śubhākarasiṃha from Central India of the Great Shengshansi in the Eastern Metropolis of the Great Tang), *T* vol. 50, no. 2055, p. 290c18-19; Chou Yi-liang 周一良, "Tantrism in China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 8 (1944-45), p. 256. Forte, *Mingtang*, 212, note 15. The tentative dates of Li Hua's life that I presented here are based on Silvio Vita, "Li Hua and Buddhism," in *Tang China and Beyond* (ed. Antonino Forte, Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 1988), pp. 99-100.

⁸³ *Xin Tang shu* 217A: 6119. Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 226.

⁸⁴ *Huayanjing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳記 (Biographies and Accounts about the *Huayan Jing*), *T* vol. 51, no. 2073, p. 155a5-6. Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 212, note 15.

⁸⁵ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Chapter Three. See also Eugene Wang's insightful discussion of the symbolism of this "Buddha-trid" image on the Renshousi stele in his "Of the True Body."

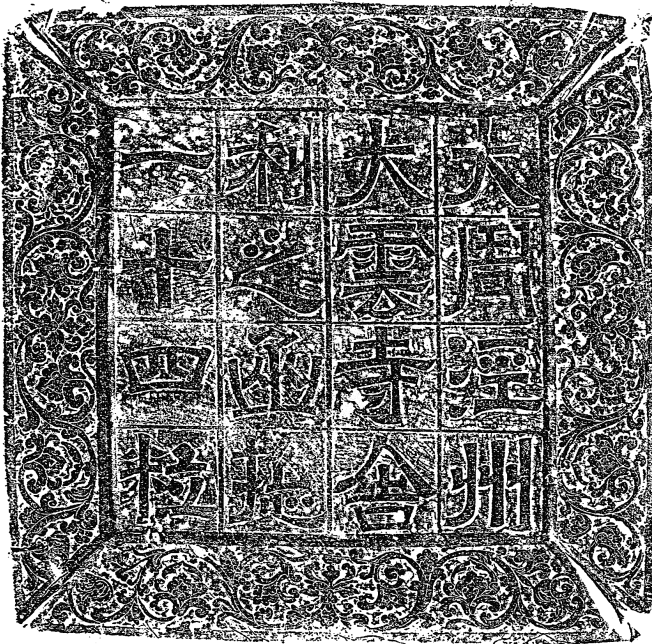


图 三

石函盖文字及纹饰 (2/9)



图 四

石函盖侧纹饰 (2/9)

Fig. 2. Jingzhou Dayunsi Sheli shihan 涇州大雲寺舍利石函;
Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui, 1966.

Let us now consider another example of the relic veneration in this period, which happened in another Dayunsi, this one in Jingzhou 涇州 (present-day Jingchuan 涇川, Gansu). In December 1964 in Jingchuan County of Gansu Province was unearthed a stone coffer, which turned out to be a reliquary. On the surface of the stone reliquary was an inscription, entitled “Jingzhou Dayunsi Sheli shihan ming bing xu” 涇州大雲寺舍利石函銘並序 (Inscription, with a Preface, on the Stone-coffer of Relics at the Dayunsi)⁸⁶. The inscription reveals that the reliquary originally belonged to the Dayunsi in Jingzhou. It also serves as a testimony to a drama of the relic veneration which happened in the area only a few years after Empress Wu founded her dynasty in 690. The inscription attributes this relic veneration to the cooperation between a significant local official and a leader of the monastery. On the right side of the Dayunsi in Jingzhou, there was left a foundation of a dilapidated pagoda. The monk Chufa 出法 (otherwise unknown), the administrator (Ch. *duweina* 都維那, Skt. *karmadāna*) of the Dayunsi, who noticed that some rays of light rising from the foundation, came to believe that this must have been one of the locations to which King Aśoka had distributed the Buddha's 84,000 relics. Although he was eager to dig into the pagoda foundation, the lack of labor and funding prevented him from doing so. When he later told this to Meng Shen 孟詵 (ca. 621? – ca. 713), who was then the Vice Prefect (*sima* 司馬) of Jingzhou, Meng Shen became similarly intrigued with the idea. He excitedly offered his support. An excavation was then carried out and a stone coffer was recovered. Within the stone coffer was a *liuli* 琉璃 (Skt. *vaiḍūrya*) vase which contained fourteen grains of relic. After a stately ceremony, they were buried under the base of the Buddha Hall (*fodian* 佛殿) of the Dayunsi on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of Yanzai 1 (11 August 694), the day on which the Ullambana festival was celebrated. It was rather unconventional that the relics were enshrined (or re-enshrined) not within a pagoda but under the central building of a Buddhist monastery. According to the long list at the end of the inscription, the sponsors of the Maitreya Pavilion included some officials, both

⁸⁶ The inscription is transcribed in Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui 甘肅省文物工作隊, “Gansu Sheng Jingchuan Xian chutu de Tangdai sheli shihan” 甘肅省涇川縣出土的唐代舍利石函, *Wenwu* 3 (1966), p. 9, 12; see also Wu Gang 吳綱 (ed.), *Quan Tangwen buyi* 全唐文補遺 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 6-8.

local and from outside Jingzhou (including the Jingzhou prefect Yuan Xiuye 源修業 [otherwise unknown]), Buddhist monks and lay believers.

Modern scholars who are not satisfied with the legend that the fourteen relics were allotted by Aśoka might be suspicious about their provenance. Given that in 601 Sui Wendi sent a relic to the Jingzhou Daxing guosi 大興國寺, one of the forty-five “Dynastic Monasteries” that he built in different locations throughout the empire, people are tempted to relate the Jingzhou Dayunsi relics to the relic enshrinement at the Daxing guosi in 601⁸⁷. However, two problems have to be solved before such a connection can be established. First, how to explain that while only one relic is known to have been sent to the Daxingguosi in 601, fourteen relics were retrieved from the pagoda beside the Dayunsi in 694?⁸⁸ Second, was it the Daxingguosi in Jingzhou which was renamed Dayunsi at the cross of 691 following the imperial decree? Indeed, we must admit that there is no direct evidence showing the connection between the Sui Daxing guosi and the Zhou Dayunsi in Jingzhou. However, this Daxingguosi’s status as a “dynastic monastery” might have made it a perfect candidate when the Jingzhou government had to decide on a local monastery to act as the Dynastic Monastery (Dayunsi) under its jurisdiction.

As for the second question, we need to consider the possibility that actually more relics might have been sent to the Daxing guosi in 601 although according to the imperial decree there was only one; or that the Renshou relic was later joined by more relics sometime before 694, when the relic was recovered and then re-enshrined, or that thirteen more relics were simply added by Chufa and his group in 694. Moreover, the following fact

⁸⁷ *Guang Hongming ji*, T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 214c56-7; *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu*, T vol. 52, no. 2106, p. 411c25-26; Yamazaki, *Shina chūsei bukkō no tenkai*, p. 334. For the efforts to identify the Jingzhou Dayunsi relics as deriving from the 601 relic-distribution campaign, see Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui, “Tangdai sheli shihan,” p. 14, p. 47.

In 585 Yang Jian decreed that a Daxing guosi be erected in each of the forty-five prefectures that he had visited before ascending the throne. See Falin’s 法琳 (572-640) *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (Treatise on Deciding the Rightful), T vol. 52, no. 2110, p. 509a; Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T’ang*, p. 5. These dynastic monasteries were named in this way because the Daxing guo 大興國 was the name of the fief from which Yang Jian had obtained his noble title before becoming emperor. See, Arthur Wright, *The Sui Dynasty*, p. 130.

⁸⁸ *Guang Hongming ji*, T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 213c16.

also suggests the connection between the relics discovered in 694 and those (or that) sent to the Daxing guosi in 601. According to the excavation report published in 1966, the Dayunsi relics were placed within five containers, which were designed in such a way that they fitted into one another in the following order from inside to outside: 1) *liuli* vase → 2) gold coffin → 3) silver *guo*-coffin⁸⁹ → 4) copper casket → 5) stone coffer⁹⁰. Given that under the Tang dynasty, usually nine or eight containers were cast for the relics⁹¹, Chufa and Meng Shen probably did not make new reliquaries for the relics when they re-enshrined them in 694 (otherwise we would have more than five containers when the relics were unearthed in 1964). In other words, when the relics were recovered in 694, they had already been enclosed within the five reliquaries. This reminds one of the reliquaries used during the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns, at least those used for the one conducted in 601. As is recorded by Daoxuan, a Renshou reliquary was composed of four containers (from inside to outside), made of *liuli*, gold, copper and stone⁹². Contrasting this with the Jingzhou Dayunsi reliquary, we find that they were identical in structure except that the latter had one container that was not reported of the Renshou reliquary — the third layer of silver. Were the Renshou reliquaries only four-layered, or were they also five-layered, one of which (the silver one) was omitted by Daoxuan? We do not know. However, the high level of similarity between the Renshou reliquaries and the Jingzhou Dayunsi reliquary lends additional support to the assumption regarding the latter's probable origin in the Sui.

Here, we need to know some things about the background of the central figure of this relic veneration, Meng Shen, about whom his two official biographies give the following information⁹³. Meng Shen was a native of Liang 梁 in Ruzhou 汝州 (present-day Linru 臨汝, He'nan). He must have obtained his degree of Presented Scholar (*jinshi* 進士) sometime

⁸⁹ The *guo* 槨 was the outer coffin.

⁹⁰ Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui, "Tangdai sheli shihan," p. 9.

⁹¹ As was noted in Section I, Empress Wu ordered that nine reliquaries be made for the Famensi relic before sending it back to the monastery for re-enshrinement. When it was excavated in 1987, the Famensi relic was contained within eight reliquaries (the outer one was already broken). See, for example, Wu Limin and Han Jinke, *Famen digong*, pp. 334ff.

⁹² *Guang Hongming ji*, T vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 213c16-22

⁹³ *Jiu Tang shu* 191: 5101, *Xin Tang shu* 196: 5599-600.

before the Chuigong reign-era (9 February 685-26 January 689) given that it was at the beginning of the era that he was appointed as a secretary (*sheren* 舍人) in the Secretariat (Fengge 鳳閣 [Phoenix Hall])⁹⁴. He was fond of Taoist-related “arts and techniques” (*fangshu* 方術) from his youth, and was closely associated with the Taoist priest and physician Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581-682), whom he treated as his teacher⁹⁵. This probably happened when Sun Simiao served as a private physician for Gaozong in the palace. If this is true, Meng Shen must have already served at the court before his appointment in the Secretariat sometime around 684. His alchemical knowledge is amply demonstrated by the following episode. Once he visited the home of his superior Liu Yizhi 劉禕之 (631-87)⁹⁶, Vice Director of the Secretariat (Fengge shilang 鳳閣侍郎), he saw a gold bullion, which Empress Wu bestowed to Liu Yizhi. He immediately declared it to be “medicinal metal” (*yaojin* 藥金), probably referring to a kind of alchemical stone. He bet that it would emanate five-colored smoke when placed in the fire. His prediction was proved correct when the test was carried out. Empress Wu was displeased when she learned of this seemingly innocent scientific experiment. She later found a pretext and demoted Meng Shen to be the Vice prefect of Taizhou 台州 (in present-day Zhejiang), a coastal area remote from the capital. Meng Shen somehow succeeded in repairing his relationship with the empress, which led to his promotion to the position of Vice Director of the Ministry of Rites (Chunguan shilang 春官侍郎). When Ruizong became the Crown Prince, which happened as a demotion on his part as a result of her mother’s declaring herself the Emperor of the Great Zhou Dynasty on 16 October 690, Meng Shen was appointed as a, if not the, tutor (*shidu* 侍讀) of his. During the Chang’an reign-era (26 November 701-29 January 705), he became the Prefect of Tongzhou 同州 (present-day Dali

⁹⁴ *Fengge* was the official variant designation of the Secretariat (*zhongshu sheng* 中書省) from 684 to 705. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, p. 214.

⁹⁵ Meng Shen’s association with Sun Simiao is not reported in his own biographies, but at *Jiu Tang shu* 191: 5095.

⁹⁶ Official biography at *Xin Tang shu* 117: 4250-52. Cf. his biography at *Jiu Tang shu* 87: 2846, which is far more brief but which contains a serious mistake by dating his death to the beginning of the Yonghui reign-era (7 February 650-6 February 656). According to Sima Guang (*Zizhi tongjian* 204: 6444), Liu Yizhi was executed at the order of Empress Wu on 22 June 687 (Chuigong 3.5.7 [*genwu*]).

大荔, Shaanxi) and was bestowed the prestige title Grand Master of Imperial Entertainments with Silver Seal and Blue Ribbon (*yinqing guanglu dafu* 銀青光祿大夫). At the beginning of the Shenlong reign-era (30 January 705-4 October 707), he retired to his mountain villa in Yiyang 伊陽 (present-day Songxian 嵩縣, He'nan), where he avidly practiced Taoist ways of cultivating life, which allegedly enabled him to maintain his vitality despite his senility. It is said that the two secrets for longevity and health he recommended to his friends and relatives were “kind words” (*shanyan* 善言) and “good medicines” (*liangyao* 良藥). After Ruizong was re-enthroned in 710, he was summoned to the court and was requested to return to public service, an invitation which he strongly resisted on the grounds of age. This seemed to have increased the emperor's respect for his erstwhile teacher, making as he did many gifts to him in Jingyun 2 (24 January 711 – 11 February 712), shortly before his death, which was believed to have happened at the beginning of the Kaiyuan reign-era (713-41). Enjoying a prodigious longevity (ninety-three years old), he was also an accomplished expert on medical sciences and rites⁹⁷.

Meng Shen's biographical sources impress us with his broad knowledge on what we today might call chemistry, alchemy, and medical sciences, and also his close relationship with Empress Wu. Although falling into disfavor with the empress at the beginning, he later managed to regain her trust and favor judging by the promotions that he was able to make in his political career, and especially by the fact that he was appointed as a (or the) mentor to Empress Wu's Crown Prince. We do not know how his role in the 694 relic veneration contributed to his political success under the reign of Empress Wu, although it seems certain that the highly

⁹⁷ The following three medical works are attributed to him:

- 1) *Buyao fang* 補藥方 (in three *juan*), *Jiu Tang shu* 47: 2048, *Xin Tang shu* 59: 1571;
- 2) *Mengshi bixiao fang* 孟氏必效方 (in ten *juan*), *Jiu Tang shu* 47: 2050, *Xin Tang shu* 59: 1571.
- 3) *Shiliao bencao* 食療本草 (in three *juan*), *Xin Tang shu* 59: 1571, *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977) 207: 5314 (has it as six *juan*).

In addition, he was the author of the following three works on rituals and ceremonies, especially those related to ritual clothing:

- 1) *Jiaji li* 家祭禮 (in one *juan*), *Xin Tang shu* 58: 1492, *Song shi* 204: 5132
- 2) *Sangfu zhengyao* 喪服正要 (in two *juan*), *Xin Tang shu* 58: 1493.
- 3) *Jindai shu* 錦帶書 (in eight *juan*), *Song shi* 207: 5293.

publicized event won him some merit in the eyes of the empress. Meng Shen's close relationship with Empress Wu is also shown by the fact that his retirement was simultaneous with Empress Wu's forced abdication and subsequent death in 705. Although his retirement might have been due to his advanced age at the time, political factors cannot be entirely excluded when we take into account his good health at the time.

In addition to Meng Shen, a monk called Fuli 復禮, identified as a Rector in the inscription, stood out among the participants of this relic veneration in the Jingzhou Dayunsi. We know that a monk by the same name, active from the 680s to the 700s, was of extraordinary importance in the political and religious life at the time. Not only did he participate in the translation projects supervised by almost all of his contemporary major Buddhist translators, including Divākara, Devendraprajña (d. 691 or 692)⁹⁸, Śikṣānada (652-710) and Yijing (635-713), all of whom were supported by Empress Wu, but he was also personally close to Empress Wu as one of her chief ideologues (he was especially instrumental in fostering the *cakravartin* ideals before Empress Wu's ascendancy to supreme power)⁹⁹. Was this Fuli in the Jingzhou Dayunsi identical with that famous homonymous monk? Apparently, this does not seem so likely if we assume that one Fuli was a Rector of the Jingzhou Dayunsi in 694, while at the same time the other Fuli was active at the capital as a Buddhist translator. However, it is far from certain that Fuli was necessarily the Rector of the Jingzhou Dayunsi. As a matter of fact, in the inscription, in addition to Fuli, three more monks (Chuyi 處一, Chongdao 崇道 and Wuzuo 無著) are also identified by the same office. Therefore, not all of these monks belonged to the local monasteries. Some of them might have come

⁹⁸ This date is provided by Forte, "Le moine Khotanais Devendraprajña," *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient*, LXVI (1979), pp. 289-298; see also its Chinese version, "Yutian Seng Tiyunboruo" 于闐僧提雲般若, in *Xiyu yu fojiao wenshi lunji* 西域與佛教文史論集 (tr. Xu Zhangzhen 許章真, Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1989), pp. 233-46.

⁹⁹ In addition to a brief biographical note at the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (Catalogue of [the Texts Related to] the Buddhist Teachings, [Compiled in] the Kaiyuan Reign-era [713-41]; by Zhisheng 智昇 [fl. 700-786] in 730; *T* vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 564b14-26), he has a much longer biography at the *Song gaoseng zhuan* (*T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 811c-812a), which confirms his status as an eminent scholar and translator. For this monk, especially his importance as a Buddhist ideologue for Empress Wu, see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, especially pp. 138-141. For more information about this monk, see Section IV.

from outside Jingzhou. Thus, the possibility cannot be excluded that this Fuli was from the capital and that he was actually none other than the monk of the same name.

Despite the uncertainty about the connection (or the lack thereof) between the Daxing guosi of the Sui and the Dayunsi of the Great Zhou in the same prefecture (Jingzhou) and the identify of the monk Fuli as a participant of the relic veneration in 694, it is doubtless that Meng Shen and his friends tried to depict Empress Wu as a Buddhist king, as is clearly indicated by the following passage in the inscription:

神皇聖帝，地同天合。星拱辰居，川潮海納。偉哉叡后，顯號著於[]¹⁰⁰刊；鑠矣康期，景行載於冥紀。乘變之機不測，先物之軌難尋。彰妙本之宿圓，證善權之今發。舍天形而演慶，采協大雲；懷地品以宣慈，化敷甘露。¹⁰¹

Our Divine Emperor and Sagely Sovereign is identified with the earth and harmonizes with the Heaven. Surrounded by the stars and the constellations, [Her Majesty is widely loved and supported by the people in the same way as] the sea becomes the destiny of the rivers, all of which run into it. O how Great our Sagely Empress! The distinguished titles of Her Majesty are eminent on the [] texts; O how Brilliant our time is! The grand practices echo (literally, “are recorded in”) the remote records. The “mysterious mechanism” (*ji* 機) riding on transformation cannot be fathomed and it is hard to find the traces of former beings. Manifesting the perfection previously achieved by her wondrous origin, Her Majesty is proof that expedient skills may be demonstrated in the present. Assuming the complexion of the Heaven, Her Majesty develops one felicity after the other, with her brilliance matching that of the “Great Clouds”¹⁰². Embracing the shape of the Earth, Her Majesty exemplifies the principle of compassion, which spreads and converts [people] like sweet dew.

This passage is remarkable not only for unambiguously identifying Empress Wu as a compassionate Buddhist king whose benevolent rule converted people all over the world, but also for directly comparing (almost literally one might say) with the Heaven and Earth (*Tiandi* 天地), which

¹⁰⁰ Here a character becomes too corrupt on the stele to recognize.

¹⁰¹ Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui, “Tangdai sheli shihan,” p. 12; Wu Gang, *Quan Tangwen buyi*, vol. 1, p. 7.

¹⁰² *Dayun* (“Great Clouds”) here refers to the *Dayun jing*, and especially the Buddha’s prophecy therein on Devī Jingguang 淨光 that she was to appear in the world as a female *Cakravartin*. See Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 184ff.

represented the most fundamental source of the whole of universe according to Chinese traditional philosophy.

It is beyond doubt that the two cases of relic veneration under examination here aimed at legitimating the unconventional (if not anti-traditional) way Empress Wu, as a female, wielded supreme power both in fact and in name. However, we need also to understand their source and functions in terms of the unique ideology that then dominated domestic politics, foreign policies and religious life, an ideological form which Antonino Forte has termed “international Buddhism” or “Buddhist pacifism”¹⁰³. An excellent material representation of this kind of ideology was the towering octagonal bronze pillar which is generally known as *tianshu* 天樞 (Axis of Sky) but the full name of which was in fact “Da Zhou Wanguo Songde Tianshu” 大周萬國頌德天樞 (Celestial Axis of the Myriad Countries Exalting the Merits of the Great Zhou). Although it was not completed until 695, the construction of this colossus had been attempted four years earlier, almost immediately after the foundation of the Great Zhou dynasty. The title of this imposing structure spoke eloquently of its ideological implications, which were also emphasized in the commentary on the *Dayun jing*:

萬國朝宗於明堂也。¹⁰⁴

The ten thousand countries make an act of submission and unite in the *mingtang*¹⁰⁵.

大聖威德，化及萬方。四夷之人，咸來歸服。¹⁰⁶

With her extraordinary virtue, the Great Saint spread her transformation (impact) to all parts (of the world). All the men who belonged to the four [types] of barbarians come to make their act of submission¹⁰⁷.

神皇降伏萬國，威力無等也。¹⁰⁸

The extraordinary power of the Divine Emperor (Empress Wu) succeeds in subduing myriads of countries, her mighty force being without match¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰³ Forte, *Mingtang*, (especially 229-52 *passim*).

¹⁰⁴ S 6502; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Plate I, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Slightly modified on the basis of Forte's translation (*Political Propaganda*, p. 192).

¹⁰⁶ S 6502; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Plate I, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Forte's translation in Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 195-96.

¹⁰⁸ S 6502; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Plate I, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Forte's translation in Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 196.

It is significant to note that the “Celestial Axis” was an “international” enterprise: not only was its construction first supervised by Quan Xiancheng 泉獻誠 (Kor. Ch’ŏn Hŏnsŏng, or Yŏn Hŏnsŏng) (651-92), who was a son of the Koguryŏ dictator Quan Nansheng 泉南生 (Ch’ŏn Namsaeng, or Yŏn Namsaeng) and who was then living in China (perhaps as a hostage like some other foreign princes in China at the time), but also the international funds for its construction were raised by Vahrām, the Persian aristocrat who served in the court of the third Tang emperor Gaozong and then served Empress Wu herself¹¹⁰. Antonino Forte has astutely observed the complicated political and religious symbolism represented by this monument:

Considering also the great contribution made to China by Indian civilization through the vehicle of Buddhism, one is tempted to view the Axis of the Sky as a kind of synthetic representation, above all of the three great Asian civilizations of the time — the Chinese, the Indian and the Iranian. The fairly detailed description given to us of the monument by the different sources will allow the specialists to make their considerations concerning the origin of the various artistic elements. However, it seems fairly clear to me that the ideology capable of bringing about this extremely difficult synthesis must have been the one expressed by the international Buddhism of the time. The Axis of the Sky is above all reminiscent of the pillars of Aśoka, the “mountain” on which it stood must have been a representation of Sumeru. It was this international Buddhism that skillfully played its trump of pacifism and obtained an international consensus, the likes of which had never been seen before¹¹¹.

It is easy to see that the two cases of relic veneration in 692 and 694 and the Tianshu sprang from the same ideological source and they, among other political and ideological projects (the best known of which is the *Mingtang* complex), fitted very well with each other. As a matter of fact, given the relative earliness in time of the relic-related campaign which

¹¹⁰ Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 263-64, p. 242; Forte makes some further remarks on Vahrām’s role in the construction of the Tianshu and the international context against which the Tianshu was constructed in his “On the So-called Abraham from Persia: A Case of Mistaken Identity,” in *L’Inscription nestorienne de Si-ngan-fou: A Posthumous Work by Paul Pelliot* (ed. Antonino Forte, Kyoto and Paris: The Italian School of East Asian Studies and the Collège de France, 1996), pp. 375-418 (especially pp. 407-09).

¹¹¹ Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 242-43.

demonstrated in these two cases and which actually could be traced back to the Guangzhai event, and especially given the relic campaign's more direct connection with the *cakravartin* idea incorporated in the Aśoka legends, I am even willing to consider the possibility that the relic campaign was actually a major force that catalyzed, if not fostered, the Tianshu project¹¹².

(IV) *Songshan, the Qibaotai and Famensi: Empress Wu's Relic Veneration in Her Late years (700-705)*

However, it should not escape our attention that Empress Wu not only tried to emulate King Aśoka, who was remote from her both geographically and temporally, but she was also obviously inspired by the precedent set up by Emperor Wen, who was close to her, in time, space and also biologically. There is however a significant difference between Emperor Wen and Empress Wu in their distribution of relics: whereas Emperor Wen had reliquary pagodas constructed for enshrining the relics, there is no evidence to show that Empress Wu was closely committed to the same type of relic enshrinement during the nationwide distribution of the Guangzhai relics in 678. Rather, it seems that she showed little if any reluctance in honoring the newly found relics with the old pagodas built by her Sui relatives.

This said, Empress Wu did build some pagodas — at least we can say with some certainty that such a pagoda was built at Songshan 嵩山 under her commission. Let us turn to this story recorded in the *Tang huiyao*:

聖歷三年七月，幸三陽宮。有胡僧邀駕，看葬舍利。上許之。千乘萬騎，咸次於野。內使狄仁傑跪於馬前，曰，“佛者，夷狄之神。君者，天下之主。當重帷難見，居安慮危。上路崎嶇，既為難衛。庸僧詭惑，何足是憑？且君舉必書，不可不慎。”上中路而還，曰，“成吾直臣之氣也。”¹¹³

¹¹² Empress Wu's image as a Buddhist Universal King was enthusiastically supported by Buddhist monks not only in China but also from India and Central Asia, as Antonino Forte has shown in his article, "Hui-chih (fl. 676-703 A.D), a Brahmin Born in China," *Annali dell'Istituto Orientale di Napoli* 45 (1985), pp. 105-34.

¹¹³ *Tang huiyao* 27: 517.

In the seventh month of Shengli 3 (23 May – 21 June 700)¹¹⁴, [Empress Wu] visited the Sanyang Palace 三陽宮¹¹⁵. A “barbarian” monk invited her

¹¹⁴ This story is also recorded in *Zizhi tongjian* 206: 6546. In contrast with the *Tang huiyao*, which records that this happened in the seventh month of Shengli 3, the *Zizhi tongjian* dates this to the *xushen* (twenty-ninth) day of the fourth month of Shengli 3, which corresponds with 21 May 700.

¹¹⁵ The Sanyang Palace was built at the proposal of Wu Sansi 武三思 (d. 707), one of Empress Wu's nephews notorious for his very unpopular role during the reign of his aunt (see his two Tang official biographies: *Jiu Tang shu* 183: 4785; *Xin Tang shu* 206: 5841; cf. *Zizhi tongjian* 207: 6569). Different sources have varying information about this palace.

Regarding the date of the construction of this palace, the *Jiu Tang shu* (6: 128) tells us that this happened in the *la* 臘 month of Shengli 3, on a certain day after the *jiayu* day; that is, between 21-27 December 699 (Shengli 3.1a.24-30), while the *Xin Tang shu*, followed by the *Zizhi tongjian*, gives a certain day after Jiushi 1.1.28 (*xuyin*); that is, either in Jiushi 1.1.29, or 30. Given that the Jiushi era was introduced on 27 May 700 (Shengli 3.5.5) and ended on 15 February 701 (Jiushi 2.1.3), the date Jiushi 1.1.28 was obviously another way of indicating Shengli 3.1.28, which corresponds to 24 December 699. This means that the Sanyang Palace, according to the *Xin Tang shu* and the *Zizhi tongjian*, was built either in 24 December 699, or one day after. This explains why on another occasion the authors of the *Xin Tang shu* (38: 982) report that the Sanyang Palace was built in Shengli 3, which covered the period of time from 27 November 699 to 27 May 700. Thus, the apparently different statements in the two Tang dynastic histories (one followed by the Northern Song dynasty *Zizhi tongjian*) turn out to be compatible. On the basis of these two sources, we can say that the Sanyang Palace was built (or, which might appear more likely, its construction was ordered) close to the very end of 699.

However, contrary to these three sources, Wang Pu, the author of the *Tang huiyao* (30: 557), provides Shengli 3.11.28 as the date of the construction of the Sanyang Palace. This date is obviously implausible, not only because it is contradicted by the three sources just discussed, but also for the following two reasons. First, the date of Shengli 3.11.28 itself did not exist, given that the Shengli reign-era was replaced by a new one (Jiushi) on 27 May 700. Second, according to the story of Empress Wu being invited to attend the reliquary enshrinement that was reported by Wang Pu himself, Empress Wu was already at the palace in the seventh month of Shengli 3, four months earlier than the date Wang Pu proposes for the construction of the palace. That the Sanyang Palace already existed by the summer of that year (Shengli 3 or Jiushi 1) is also corroborated in a preface that Empress Wu wrote for a Buddhist translation (see below).

Thus, it seems plausible to conclude that the building of the Sanyang palace started at the end of 699 and was brought to completion in early 700. However, it turns out that the palace only existed for four years. According to the *Tang huiyao* (30: 557), it was demolished on 1 March 704 (Chang'an 4.1.22) so that the materials could be used to build another palace, the Xingtai Palace on Wan'anshan in Shouan (see below for this palace). The *Zizhi tongjian* (207: 6569) dates the same palace one day later, on 1 March 704 (Chang'an 4.1.20 [*dingwei*]).

Finally, about the Sanyang Palace, it should be noted that according to the *Zizhi tongjian* (206: 6545) and the *Xin Tang shu* (4: 100), it was built at the side of Shicong 石淙 in Gaocheng 告成 (the sub-prefecture of Yangcheng 陽城 of Luoyang), which was close to,

to observe the enshrinement of relics. The empress accepted [his invitation]. One thousand chariots and ten thousand cavalymen lined up on the field. The Chamberlain for the Capital (Neishi 內使) Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (607-700)¹¹⁶ knelt in front of the horses [of Empress Wu's chariot], saying, "The Buddha was the deity of the barbarians, while Your Majesty is the lord of people under the heavens. Your Majesty needs to hide yourself behind the layered curtains, preventing others from beholding [Your Majesty in person]; and needs to prepare for emergencies even when Your Majesty is secure. The uphill road is rugged and rough, making it difficult to protect Your Majesty. Being only good at misleading people with tricks, how can the vulgar monk be counted on? Moreover, whatever a sovereign does will be recorded. It will not be appropriate to be careless." The empress returned from only halfway along the road, saying, "[We comply] to fulfill the will of Our uphill official."

Wang Pu, the author of the *Tang huiyao*, here does not deign to tell us the name of this "barbarian monk" (*huseng* 胡僧). However, some external sources, one of which was from the empress herself, suggest that he was very likely the Khotanese monk Śikṣānanda (Ch. Shicha'nantuo 實叉難陀 [a.k.a. Shichicha'nantuo 施乞叉難陀; or Xuexi 學喜], 652-710), whom the empress invited to stay at the Sanyang Palace to prepare a new Chinese version of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*, which was to be known as the *Dacheng ru Lenqie jing* 大乘入楞伽經, in exactly the same year that our "barbarian monk" allegedly invited her to attend the reliquary enshrinement. In her preface to the *Dacheng ru Lenqie jing*, Empress Wu narrates her association with Śikṣānanda and how she came to write this preface. In the summer of Jiushi 1 (27 May 700-12 February 701), while

rather than on, Songshan. Thirty *li* southeast of present-day Dengfeng, Henan, the mountain stream Shicong flowed from the eastern valley of Songshan and was then a place of stunning scenic beauty; see *Zhongguo gujin diming dacidian* 中國古今地名大辭典 (comp. Zang Lihe 臧勵蘇, et al, Hongkong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), p. 272. The *Quan Tang Shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1960) includes one poem on Shicong attributed to Empress Wu (see *Quan Tang shi* 86: 941). There also survives a composition believed to be the preface that Empress Wu wrote for her poem on Shicong; see *Quan Tang shi waibian* 全唐詩外編 (comp. Wang Chongmin 王重民, et al., Tai-peí: Muduo chubanshe, 1983), p. 329.

¹¹⁶ A capable minister of Empress Wu, Di Renjie also played a central role in the restoration of the Tang, which was achieved after his death by officials loyal to the Li royal family, most of whom were protected and/or promoted by Di Renjie. See David McMullen's lengthy study of this man, "The Real Judge Dee: Ti Jen-chieh and the T'ang Restoration of 705," *Asia Major*, Series 3, 6.1 (1993), pp. 1-81.

she spent her holiday in the Jishan 箕山 and Yingshui 潁水 areas¹¹⁷, she invited Śikṣānanda and the monk Fuli 復禮 (fl. 680s-700s) of the Da Fuxiansi 大福先寺 to the Sanyang Palace to prepare a new *Laṅkāvatāra* translation. After the translation was completed on 24 February 704 (Chang'an 4.1.15), Buddhist believers, both lay and monastic, urged her to honor it with a preface, and she eventually complied¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁷ Qishan, also known as Xuyoushan 許由山, was located in the southeast of present-day Dengfeng 登封, Henan. Yingshui, i.e. Yinghe 潁河, originated from the southwest of Dengfeng.

¹¹⁸ “Xinyi Dacheng ru Lengqie jing xu” 新譯大乘入楞伽經序 (Preface to the New Translation of [the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*], the *Dacheng Ru Lengqie Jing*), included at the top of the *Dacheng ru Lengqie jing* (*T* vol. 16, no. 672, p.587a3-b7) and in a commentary on the *Dacheng ru Lengqie jing* by the Song dynasty monk Baochen 寶臣 (d.u.), the *Zhu Dacheng ru Lengqie jing* 注大乘入楞伽經 (*T* vol. 39, no. 1791, p. 433c9-434a11). See especially *T* vol. 16, no. 672, p. 587a23-b7; *T* vol. 39, no. 1791, p. 433c28-434a11 for Empress Wu's associations with Śikṣānanda.

The two versions are completely identical except for their different ways of identifying the author of this preface: while the former ambiguously has *yuzhi* 御制 (composed by the emperor), the latter provides a specific identification, *Tiance Jinlun shengshen huangdi zhi* 天冊金輪聖神皇帝制 (composed by the Heaven-appointed Saintly and Divine August Emperor of Gold-wheel). The title *Tiance Jinlun shengshen huangdi* was obviously a combination of two of the *cakravartin* titles that Empress Wu accorded herself: *Jinlun shengshen huangdi* 金輪聖神皇帝 (Saintly and Divine August Emperor of Gold-wheel; on 13 October 693 [Changshou 2.9.9 *yivei*]) and *Tiance jinlun dasheng huangdi* 天冊金輪大神皇帝 (Heaven-appointed Great and Divine August Emperor of Gold Wheel; on 22 October 695 [Tiancewansui 1.9.9 *jiayin*]) (*Jiu Tang shu* 6: 123, 124; *Xin Tang shu* 4: 93, 101; *Zizhi tongjian* 205: 6492, 6503). Both titles were officially renounced on 27 May 700 (Jiushi 1.5.5 [guichou]) (*Jiu Tang shu* 6: 129; *Xin Tang shu* 4: 101; *Zizhi tongjian* 206: 6546). Also abolished on the same day were two other *cakravartin* titles: *Yuegu jinlun shengshen huangdi* 越古金輪聖神皇帝 (Saintly and Divine August Emperor of Gold-wheel Who Surpasses the Ancient; received on 9 June 694 [Yanzai 1.5.10 *jiawu*]; *Xin Tang shu* 4: 94; *Zizhi tongjian* 205: 6494) and *Cishi yuegu jinlun shengshen huangdi* 慈氏越古金輪聖神皇帝 (Saintly and Divine August Emperor of Gold-wheel, the Maitreya, Who Surpasses the Ancient; received on 23 November 694 [Tiancewansui 1.1.1 *xinsi*]; *Xin Tang shu* 4: 95; *Zizhi tongjian* 205: 6497). Given that Empress Wu had abandoned all of her *cakravartin* titles more than four years before 24 February 704, when he wrote the preface, it was obviously an anachronistic error to address her by such a title as “Tiance Jinlun shengshen huangdi.” For a detailed discussion of the historical circumstances under which these titles were adopted and their politico-religious agenda, see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 142ff.

The story of making this new translation is also recounted by Fazang in his commentary on the *sūtra*, *Ru Lengqie xin xuanyi* 入楞伽心玄義 (*T* no. 1790, vol. 39), p. 430b16-23. According to Fazang, by the time he went back to Khotan in Chang'an 2 (2 February 702 – 21 January 703) Śikṣānanda had only been able to finish a draft of the Chinese translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* at the Qingchansi 清禪寺 in Chang'an, where he lived at

That report in the *Tang Huiyao* and the *Zizhi tongjian* has led some scholars to conclude that Di Renjie's remonstrance succeeded in persuading Empress Wu to cancel the relic-enshrinement ceremony at Songshan¹¹⁹. This assumption might also be supported by the following edict attributed to Empress Wu:

釋氏垂教，本離死生。示滅之儀，固非正法。如聞天中寺僧徒今年七月十五日下舍利骨，素服哭泣。不達妙理，輕徇常情。恐學者有疑，曾不踴毀？宜令所管州縣，即加禁斷。¹²⁰

The teachings transmitted by the Śākyamuni Buddha are fundamentally about transcending death and birth. The ritual of making a display of his death definitely does not accord with the true dharma. For instance, we heard that while entombing the Buddha's bone relics on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of this year, some monks of the Tianzhongsi 天中寺¹²¹

the time, following his patroness Empress Wu, who moved her imperial court from Luoyang to Chang'an in the two-year period from 26 November 701 to 21 November 703. The draft was then entrusted to the Tokharian monk Mitrasena (or Mitraśanta, see below for this monk) for polishing, with the assistance of Fuli, who was responsible for "binding the composition" (*zhuiwen* 綴文), and Fazang himself. The empress composed a preface for it when the translation was done. This account is noteworthy in its failure to mention Śikṣānanda's stay at the Sanyang Palace in the course of preparing for the *Laṅkāvatāra* translation. In contrast with this, in his biography for Śikṣānanda, Fazang mentions this Sanyang Palace connection, although he says that Śikṣānanda left China in Chang'an 4 (10 February 704-29 January 705), contradicting what he says in the *Ru Lengqie xin xuanyi*, according to which Śikṣānanda left China two years earlier. See the *Huayanjing zhuanji*, *T* vol. 51, no. 2073, p. 155a19-25. For the complicated issue of the date of Śikṣānanda's departure from China, see my discussion in my forthcoming book on Fazang, *History and His Stories: A Biographical Study of the Avataṃsaka Master Fazang (643-712)*, Chapter One.

That Śikṣānanda was engaged in the *Laṅkāvatāra* translation at the Sanyang Palace in 700 is also supported by his later biographical sources; see, for examples, *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, *T* vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 566a22-23; *Song gaoseng zhuan*, *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 718c28-719a1.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Barrett, "Stūpa, Sūtra and Śāra in China," p. 41.

¹²⁰ The *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (Compilation of the Tang Imperial Edicts; comp. Song Minqiu in 1070) (Shanghai: Shanghai yinshuguan, 1959), p. 587. The same edict is also included in *Quan Tang wen* 95.11b.

¹²¹ Fuli is known to have stayed at this temple, at which he was once visited by Wu Sansi and a chief minister of Empress Wu, Su Weidao 蘇味道 (648-706), a notorious "fence-sitter" of that time. To celebrate this visit, Wu Sansi and Su Weidao each composed a poem; see *Quan Tang shi* 65: 755 and 80: 867.

The *Zizhi tongjian* (208: 6616) mentions a temple called Zhongtiansi 中天寺 as one of the three temples headed by the notorious Buddhist monk Huifan 慧範 (?-712). It is possible that Zhongtiansi was an error for Tianzhongsi, or *vice versa*.

wept while wearing white (mourning) robes¹²². They did not understand the wondrous principles and recklessly surrendered themselves to the feelings of the commoners. We fear that scholars will have doubt about [this practice]. How can they avoid slandering [Buddhism]? It is proper that [the authority of] the prefecture and sub-prefecture with jurisdiction over this monastery immediately prohibit this practice.

Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019-79) has dated this edict to the fifth month of Shengli 3 (25 March – 23 April 700). This is apparently incorrect given that the edict condemns an event which happened on “the fifteenth day of the seventh month of this year” (*jinnian qiuyue shiwu ri* 今年七月十五日), which implies that this edict must have been issued either in or after the later half of the seventh month of the unspecified year. Is it possible to correlate this edict with the reliquary enshrinement reported in the *Tang huiyao*? We do not have sufficient evidence to do so. Even if this edict was directed at that reliquary enshrinement, it was issued in order to prevent the *repetition* of the practice of enshrining the Buddha's relics accompanied by a secular ritual — a fact which proves that the reliquary enshrinement had already happened.

Thus, this edict by Empress Wu cannot prove that the reliquary enshrinement reported by *Tang huiyao* and the *Zizhi tongjian* was cancelled. Indeed, Empress Wu's cancellation of her own attendance at the relic-enshrinement ceremony does not necessarily imply the cancellation of the ceremony itself. Some circumstantial evidence suggests that such

¹²² The relic was enacted in this way probably in accordance with some customs related to the Ullambana festival (i.e. Yulanpen jie 盂蘭盆節 – the “Ghost Festival”), in which the spirits of one's ancestors were honored. In one of his rhapsodies, the “Yulanpen fu” 盂蘭盆賦, the renowned early Tang poet, Yang Jiong 楊炯 (650-693?) describes this festival in Ruyi 如意 2 (22 April – 22 October 692), two years after Empress Wu's officially announced ascension to the throne; see Yang Jiong's biography at *Jiu Tang shu* 190: 5003; for his “Yulanpen fu,” see *Quan Tang wen* 190.8b-11a, for which Stephen Teiser provides an English translation in his *Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988; pp. 72-77). It seems that at that time some Buddhist monks attempted to include the reliquary enshrinement (or entombment) as a part of the ghost festival. T. H. Barrett (“Stūpa, Sūtra and Śāra in China,” p. 40) suggests that Empress Wu's government censured this effort as it involved treating the decease of the Buddha as an occasion of actual rather than apparent loss. This understanding is supported by what is said in Empress Wu's edict.

a relic enshrinement ceremony might have indeed happened at Songshan in 700.

The *Quan Tang shi* contains two poems attributed to Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731) and Xu Jian 徐堅 (ca. 659-729)¹²³. Entitled “Song Kaogong Wu Yuanwai xueshi shi Songshan shu shelita” 送考功武員外學士使嵩山署舍利塔 (Farewell to Director Wu of the Bureau of Evaluation with the Title of Academician, Who is Leaving for Songshan for the Imperial Mission of Preparing for [i.e., Overseeing the Construction of] a Pagoda), the poem attributed to Zhang Yue reads:

懷玉泉，戀仁者。
 寂滅真心不可見，空留影塔嵩巖下。
 寶王四海轉千輪，金曇百粒送分身。
 山中二月娑羅會，虛唄遙遙愁思人。
 我念過去微塵劫，與子禪門同正法。
 雖在神仙蘭省間，常持清淨蓮花葉。
 來亦好，去亦好。
 了觀車行馬不移，當見菩提離煩惱。¹²⁴

Yearning for the Jade Spring,
 Longing for the Benevolent One (the Buddha?)¹²⁵.
 Invisible is the true mind in extinction,
 vainly leaving a shadow-pagoda beneath the cliffs of Songshan.
 After the Treasure-king¹²⁶ turned one thousand [dharma-]wheels within the
 Four Seas,

¹²³ Zhang Yue’s two official biographies are located at *Jiu Tang shu* 97: 3049-59, *Xin Tang shu* 125: 4404-12. Zhang Yue was famous for his close and extensive associations with his contemporary Buddhist leaders, including the Northern Chan leader Shenxiu 神秀 (606?-706), whom he probably treated as a teacher, and the renowned monk-scientist Yixing 一行 (673-727). For Zhang Yue’s connections with the Northern Chan tradition and especially with Shenxiu, see Bernard Faure, *The Will to Orthodoxy: A Critical Genealogy of Northern Chan Buddhism* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1997), p. 34ff.

Xu Jian has an official biography in *Jiu Tang shu* (102: 3175-76), which reports that he died in Kaiyuan 17 (3 February 729-22 January 730) when he was over seventy years old, hence the approximate date of his birth in 659.

¹²⁴ *Quan Tang shi* 86: 941.

¹²⁵ This might remind one of the Chinese rendering of Śākyamuni as Nengren 能仁 (“Talented and Benevolent”).

¹²⁶ Treasure-king (Skt. Ratnaraja?) refers to a Buddha, see the *Da boruo boluomi jing* 大般若波羅蜜經 (*Mahāprajñāpāramitāsūtra?*), *T* vol. 7, no. 220, p. 950c3ff.

you are now escorting a golden jar¹²⁷ of one hundred grains of his relics.
 A Sāla Assembly¹²⁸ to be convened at the mountain in the second month,
 with rarefied [Sanskrit] songs saddening thoughtful people from afar.
 I think of the past *kalpas* as countless as tiny motes of dust,
 when I practised the true dharma with you under the meditation gate.
 Although fluctuating between the immortals and Orchid Terrace,
 I have constantly held the leaves of pure lotus flowers.
 Coming well, leaving well.
 Although the chariot proceeding, a horse remains motionless in perfect con-
 templation.
 We should see bodhi and have the afflictions removed!

Some Chan scholars have understood the pagoda mentioned in this poem as one dedicated to the Northern Chan master Shenxiu¹²⁹. The effort to relate this pagoda to Shenxiu is probably derived from the poem's reference to Yuquan 玉泉, which is easy to identify with the Yuquansi 玉泉寺 in Jingzhou, a monastery so closely related to Shenxiu. However, we should note that Yuquansi seemed to be a very common monastery name at that time. In addition to the one in Jingzhou, which was arguably the most famous due to its ties with such prestigious monks as Zhiyi and Shenxiu, at least two monasteries by the same name were known in the same period: one at Lantian 藍田 of Zhongnanshan, the other at Wan'an-shan 萬安山 in the Sub-prefecture Shouan 壽安 (in present-day Yiyang 宜陽, Henan)¹³⁰. It is noteworthy that in Shengong 1 (29 September – 19 December 697), Empress Wu would have visited the Wan'an-shan Yuquansi but for opposition from one of her court officials on the basis of the mountain's extraordinary steepness¹³¹. The Wan'an-shan Yuquansi

¹²⁷ It is a famous Buddhist story that the Buddha Śākyamuni's relics were contained in eight gold jars. See the *Daban niepanjing houfen* 大般涅槃經後分 (The Latter Part of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*), *T* vol. 1, no. 377, 910c-911a.

¹²⁸ This refers to the death of the Buddha, which was said to have turned the twin Sāla trees, under which the Buddha spent his last moment in this world, into white.

¹²⁹ See note 135.

¹³⁰ The former is recorded in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* biographies of Jingzang 靜藏 (576-626) (*T* vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 521c21, 523b22-23) and Kongzang 空藏 (569-642) (p. 689c3-4), while the latter is mentioned in Wang Fangqing's 王方慶 (d. 702) *Jiu Tang shu* biography (89: 2898). The Yuquansi mentioned in one Tang poem (*Quan Tang shi* 138: 1397) was also obviously the Yuquansi at Lantian.

¹³¹ It was Wang Fangqing who stopped the empress from this trip. See his *Jiu Tang shu* biography quoted above.

must have been a celebrated monastery at the time given that Empress Wu built a palace there in Chang'an 4 (10 February 704-29 January 705)¹³². I believe that Yuquan in Zhang Yue's poem refers to the Wan'anshan Yuquansi, given that Shouan was close to River Yi 伊川¹³³, at the banks of which the farewell banquet was held according to Xu Jian's poem.

With this clarification, let us return to the poems by Zhang Yue and Xu Jian. With a title almost identical with that of Zhang Yue's poem, Xu Jian's poem highlights the gloominess of imminent separation felt by all the participants of the party¹³⁴. Judging by their titles and contents, these two poems were dedicated to a certain Wu, who was a Vice Director (*yuanwai/lang* 員外郎) of the Bureau of Evaluation (*kaogong/si* 考功司) and an Academician (*xueshi* 學士), in a farewell banquet held in his honor shortly before his leaving Luoyang for an imperial mission

¹³² *Tang huiyao* 30: 557.

¹³³ See Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 (8 vols., Shanghai: Ditu chubanshe, 1982), vol. 5, pp. 44-45.

¹³⁴ The title of Xu Jian's poem, "Song Kaogong Wu Yuanwai xueshi shi Songshan zhi shelita ge" 送考功武員外學士使嵩山置舍利塔歌, is identical with that of Zhang Yue's poem except for the following two differences: in addition to being followed by *ge* 歌 (verse), a character not found in the title of Zhang Yue's poem, the title of Xu Jian's poem has *zhi shelita* 置舍利塔 (to "construct a reliquary pagoda"), in contrast with *shu shelita* 署舍利塔 in the title of Zhang Yue's poem. *Shu* 署 might be an error for *zhi* 置.

伊川別騎，灞岸分筵。
對三春之花月，覽千里之風煙。
望青山兮分地，見白雲兮在天。
寄愁心於樽酒，愴離緒於清弦。
共握手而相顧，各銜悽而黯然。

(*Quan Tang shi* 107: 1112)

With our horses parting by the side of the River Yi,
We leave each other after the banquet at the banks of the River Ba.
Facing the spring moon and flowers,
we see the wind and smoke ten thousand miles [away].
Watching the green mountains breaking the land apart,
while the white clouds floating in the sky.
Submerging our despondent hearts in wine,
expressing gloominess through the cold strings.
Shaking each other's hands,
looking into each other's eyes.
All dejected, everybody down by sadness.

of establishing on Songshan a pagoda for one hundred grains of relics¹³⁵. This Wu turns out to be Wu Pingyi 武平一 (d. ca. 741), a kinsman of Empress Wu¹³⁶. Neither of these two poems is dated, although one of them makes it clear that the banquet was held in the second month of the unspecified year¹³⁷. Now let us see how we can narrow down the timeframe of these two poems, and also of the imperial decree ordering the establishment of the pagoda on Songshan.

¹³⁵ In discussing Zhang Yue's relationship with Wu Pingyi, Faure (*Will to Orthodoxy*, p. 35) observes that Zhang Yue sent Wu Pingyi to Songshan after Shenxiu's death in order to place a poem on his pagoda there. Although Faure does not specify the poem, I suspect that he refers to the poem under discussion here given that it is Zhang Yue's only poem for Wu Pingyi. It is hard to believe that on this occasion Wu Pingyi went to Songshan as ordered by Zhang Yue, as the character *shi* 使 in the title of the poem shows the imperial nature of his mission. It is also difficult to assume that the pagoda in question was Shenxiu's. Some expressions in the poem, for example, Ratnaraja, "turning the dharm-wheel" and the Sāla assembly, all suggest that the pagoda was for what was believed to be some relics of the Buddha.

¹³⁶ The "Zaixiang shixi" 宰相世系 (Lineages of the Tang Prime Ministers) in the *Xin Tang shu* (74: 3140) refers to Wu Pingyi (a.k.a. Wu Zhen 武甄) as a Vice Director of the Bureau of Evaluation (*kaogong yuanwailang* 考功員外郎) and an Academician of the Xiuxue Academy (*Xiuxueguan zhixueshi* 修學館直學士). Throughout the Tang period he was the only member of the Wu clan who was known to have held the two titles of *kaogong yuanwailang* and *xueshi*. According to the same "Zaixiang shixi" (74: 3136-44), Wu Pingyi was a great grandson of a paternal uncle of Empress Wu. The two official biographies of Wu Yuanheng 武元衡 (d. 813), who was a grandson of Wu Pingyi, identifies Wu Pingyi's father Wu Zaide 武載德 as a cousin (*zudi* 族弟 or *cong xiongdì* 從兄弟) of Empress Wu (*Jiu Tang shu* 158: 4159, *Xin Tang shu* 152: 4833). This contradicts the "Zaixiang shixi," according to which Wu Zaide was one generation junior to Empress Wu; that is, he was a grandson of a paternal uncle of Empress Wu.

Wu Pingyi is famous for his ties with the Northern Chan Buddhism. He was the author of the funeral epitaph for Puji 普寂 (651-739), one of the most important Northern Chan leaders after Shenxiu. He was deeply involved in the creation and promotion of some Northern Chan ideologies, including its version of Chan patriarchy, to the extent that Shenhui 神會 (686-760) singled out him and Puji for criticism. See Yanagida Seizan 柳田聖山, *Shoki zenshū shisho no kenkyū* 初期禪宗史書の研究 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), p. 111 and 116 note 14; John R. McRae, *The Northern School and the Formation of Early Ch'an Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 67; Faure, *Will to Orthodoxy*, p. 35, 75, 80, 94, 98 and especially pp. 192-93, note 67.

¹³⁷ See Zhang Yue's poem. Xu Jian's poem provides a less specific time frame for the occasion, by the expression *sanchuan* 三春, which in literary Chinese refers to the three months in the spring season (i.e. the first three months in the lunar calendar); see Morohashi Tetsuji 諸橋轍次, *Dai kanwa jiten* 大漢和辭典 (13 vols., Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1966-68) 1: 150.

First of all, Zhang Yue's poem makes it explicit that he was then serving at court¹³⁸. As Zhang Yue began to serve in 690 by passing an examination supervised by Empress Wu herself¹³⁹, the banquet must have been held after that year. Secondly, as Zhang Yue and Xu Jian died in 730 and 729 respectively, they could not have appeared together at a banquet that was held after 729. Thirdly, of the four Chinese rulers during this four-decade period (690-729), Empress Wu (r. 690-705), Zhongzong (r. 705-10), Ruizong (710-12) and Xuanzong (r. 712-56), Empress Wu was the only one who is known to have been involved in some form of relic veneration¹⁴⁰. This enables us to narrow down the timeframe of the banquet to some time between 690 and 705. Fourthly, some time shortly after the incident of Wei Yuanzhong 魏元忠 (640?-710?) in the ninth month of Chang'an 3 (15 October – 13 November 703)¹⁴¹, Zhang Yue was banished

¹³⁸ In his poem Zhang Yue expresses to Wu Pingyi his devotion to Buddhism despite his interest in pursuing the Taoist practice of immortality and his preoccupation with official responsibilities in a government office that he calls 蘭省 (雖在神仙蘭省間，常持清淨蓮花葉), which was probably equal to Lantai 蘭台 (Orchid Terrace). In Tang poems, Lantai usually referred to the Palace Library (Mishusheng 祕書省). For *lantai*, see Morohashi, *Dai kanwa jiten* 9: 1035.

¹³⁹ While Zhang Yue's *Jiu Tang shu* biography (97: 3049) notes that he passed this examination after the capping age (when one became an adult at the age of twenty), his *Xin Tang shu* biography (125: 4404) specifies that this happened during the Yongchang reign-era (27 January – 17 December 689), when he was twenty-three years old. Neither the *Jiu Tang shu* nor the *Xin Tang shu* is accurate in the date of Zhang Yue's court examination, which was actually held on 29 April 690 (Zaichu 1.4.15 [*xinyou*]) according to Du You 杜佑 (735-812), Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (d. after 1013) and Sima Guang. See *Tongdian* 通典 (Comprehensive History of Regulations; completed 801, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 15: 354; *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (The Original Tortoise, Precious Treasure of the Document Store; compiled 1005-13; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 643: 2124a8-9; *Zizhi tongjian* 204: 6463; Chen Zuyan 陳祖言, *Zhang Yue nianpu* 張說年譜 (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 1984), pp. 7-9.

¹⁴⁰ Zhongzong seems also to have something to do with the Famensi relic, bestowing as he did in 710 a title on the Famensi reliquary pagoda. But it should be noted that he was the emperor who ordered the relic to be sent back to the temple after it had stayed in the palace for three years since it was brought there in early 705 at the request of Empress Wu (see Section IV).

¹⁴¹ In Chang'an 3 (22 January 703-9 February 704), Zhang Yizhi 張易之 (ca. 677-705) and his younger brother Zhang Zongchang 張宗昌 (ca. 677-705), two favorites of Empress Wu who were believed to have been secret lovers of the empress (see below), asked Zhang Yue for false testimony against Wei Yuanzhong, who was then in the way of the Zhang brothers. Refusing to perjure himself, Zhang Yue revealed the truth to Empress Wu. However, probably at the instigation of the two Zhangs, the empress still decided to punish

to Qinzhou 欽州 (in present-day Qinxian 欽縣, Guangdong), whence he did not return until Zhongzong re-assumed the throne in 705. From this, we know that this banquet which involved Zhang Yue, Xu Jian and Wu Pingyi, must have happened before 703, which can also be confirmed by what we know about Wu Pingyi. Wu Pingyi's biography tells us that during the reign of Empress Wu, he went into retreat on Songshan to cultivate Buddhist practices, ignoring repeated imperial summons and that he did not return to his political career until Zhongzong resumed his reign in 705. Supposing that these repeated summons happened over several years, Wu Pingyi must have retired to Songshan as a recluse several years before Empress Wu's death in 705 — sometime around 702. This implies that his acting as Empress Wu's emissary to Songshan must have happened no later than 702. Thus, we can conclude that Wu Pingyi was sent to Songshan to build a pagoda sometime between 690 and 702.

Although there is no decisive evidence for us to pinpoint a specific year in which Empress Wu ordered Wu Pingyi to build a reliquary pagoda at Songshan, I still feel tempted to correlate Wu Pingyi's imperial mission on Songshan with the event reported by the *Tang huiyao* and the *Zizhi tongjian*. We know that Wu Pingyi went to Songshan some time in the second month of an unspecified year (one of the thirteen years between 690 and 702), while Empress Wu was invited to attend a reliquary enshrinement ceremony at the same mountain in the fourth or seventh month of 700. Is it possible that it was in the second month of 700 that Empress Wu sent one of her kinsmen to Songshan to oversee the construction of a reliquary pagoda there, the completion of which would, according to a pre-planned schedule, have been personally witnessed and sanctioned by the empress herself two or five months afterwards but for the strong intervention of Di Renjie? This appears probable to me.

Thus, regarding Wu Pingyi's imperial mission of constructing a pagoda on Songshan and the reliquary enshrinement ceremony at Songshan in 700, maybe the following comments are appropriate. First, we know with some certainty that sometime between 690 and 702, Empress Wu ordered one

Zhang Yue by exiling him to a remote region in the south. See *Jiu Tang shu* (6: 131; 92: 2952-53; 97: 3050-51), *Xin Tang shu* (122: 4344-45; 125: 4406) and *Zizhi tongjian* (207: 6563-64).

hundred grains of relics to be enshrined in a reliquary pagoda on Songshan, the construction of which was supervised by one of her kinsmen. Second, if this reliquary enshrinement on Songshan happened in 700 (which is probable although not definitely certain), it was very likely the reliquary enshrinement that Empress Wu was invited to attend¹⁴². Finally, I am inclined to believe that the 700 reliquary enshrinement ceremony at Songshan, no matter whether it was the one overseen by Wu Pingyi or not, was probably performed eventually although it was not personally attended by Empress Wu as was originally planned. Empress Wu's decision to build such a significant edifice on Songshan is rather considerable given her unusual fondness of the mountain¹⁴³.

The Songshan pagoda was not an isolated expression of the empress's veneration for the sacred relics during her late years. Another impressive piece of architecture was also constructed for the same purpose in the same period, although it was located far away from Songshan — in the western capital Chang'an. This building was known as Qibaotai, which we have briefly mentioned before in connection with the Guangzhai relics and the Guangzhai Monastery.

Regarding the Qibaotai, let us first make it clear from the very beginning that this "tower" was in fact a pagoda according to Duan Chengshi 段成式 (803?-863), who reports on the "treasure-tower" (*baotai* 寶台) at the Guangzhaisi:

¹⁴² If this is true, Empress Wu ordered the construction of at least one pagoda on Songshan at the turn of the eighth century. This would also mean that Wu Pingyi started his reclusion at Songshan shortly after his imperial mission to the mountain, not unlike his kinsman Wu Youxu 武攸緒 (655-723), who was a grandson of one of Empress Wu's paternal uncles (Wu Shirang 武士讓, an older brother of Empress Wu's father Wu Shihuo) and who decided to pursue a reclusive life at Songshan right after his mission of accompanying Empress Wu during her visit to Songshan in 696 for the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 ceremonies (*Zizhi tongjian* 205: 6503; *Jiu Tang shu* 183: 4740; *Xin Tang shu* 196: 5605).

¹⁴³ The 700 episode on Songshan was the last visit but one that the empress is known to have made to this mountain. After this, the empress had found only one opportunity to go back to Songshan, in the fifth to the seventh month of Dazu 大足 1 (11 June – 6 September 701) (*Jiu Tang shu* 6: 130; *Xin Tang shu* 4: 102). T. H. Barrett suggests that the empress, and also her husband, were attracted to this sacred mountain not only because of its unique status as the so-called Central Mountain, but also for some astrological reasons: they both believed that their fates were literally governed by this mountain. See Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang: Religion and Empire During the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: the Wellsweep Press, 1996), pp. 44-5.

寶台甚顯，登之四極眼界。其上層窗下尉遲畫，下層窗下吳道元畫，皆非其得意也。丞相韋處厚，自居內庭，至相位，每歸，輒至此塔焚香瞻禮。¹⁴⁴

The Treasure-terrace was very prominent. Ascending it, one could see as far as the very limits of the four directions. The mural underneath the window of the top storey was drawn by Yuchi [Yiseng] 尉遲[乙僧] (ca. 650-710)¹⁴⁵. Under the window of the bottom storey was also a mural by Wu Daoxuan 吳道元 (Wu Daoxuan 吳道玄; a.k.a. Wu Daozi 吳道子, ca. 673-750)¹⁴⁶. Neither of them was the best work [of these two artists]. From the time he served

¹⁴⁴ *Sita ji* 寺塔記 (Account of Temples and Pagodas; compiled by Duan Chengshi between 843 and 853). The *Sita ji* is included as two *juan* in the *Youyang zazu xuji* 西陽雜俎續集, a ten-*juan* continuation of Duan Chengshi's twenty-*juan* *Youyang zazu* 西陽雜俎 (Miscellanies of Youyang; completed in 860). Fang Nansheng 方南生 provides an excellent annotated version of the *Youyang zazu* (also called "Youyang zazu qianji" 西陽雜俎前集) and the *Youyang zazu xuji* as well in *Youyang zazu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981) (the *Sita ji* is found in pp. 245-64). In addition, an incomplete version of the *Sita ji* is included in *T* vol. 51, no. 2093, p. 1023c18-23.

The quotation is found in p. 257 (Fang Nansheng's version) but is not found in the Taishō version. Alexander Coburn Soper's translation of this passage is found in his "A Vocation Glimpse of the Tang Temples of Ch'ang-an. The *Ssu-t'a chi* by Tuan Ch'eng-shih" (*Artibus Asiae* XXIII.1 [1960], pp. 15-40), pp. 30-31. Song Minqiu makes a mistake when he quotes this passage in his *Chang'an zhi*. He quotes 其上層窗下尉遲畫 as 其上層窗下殿是畫; see *Chang'an zhi*, *T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, p. 104.

¹⁴⁵ The *Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄 (Record of the Renowned Painters and Their Paintings under the Tang Dynasty), alternatively known as *Tanghua duan* 唐畫斷 (On the Tang Painters and Their Paintings) (by Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄 [a.k.a. Zhu Jingzhen 朱景真, Zhu Jingyuan 朱景元, active in the 840s] sometime in the early 840s), identifies this Yuchi as Yuchi Yiseng 尉遲乙僧, a Tokharian painter who arrived in China in early Zhenguan reign-era (23 January 627 – 5 February 650). See Nagahiro Toshio 長廣敏雄, "On Wei-c'ih [sic] I-seng: a Painter of the Early T'ang Dynasty," *Oriental Art* 12 (1955), pp. 70-74; Soper, "*T'ang Ch'ao Ming Hua Lu*: Celebrated Painters of the T'ang Dynasty by Chu Ching-hsüan of the T'ang," *Artibus Asiae* XXI.3-4 (1958), pp. 213-14. This record is repeated by Li Fang 李昉 (925-96) in his *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Broad Records compiled in the Taiping [xingguo] 太平興國 era [976-83]; comp. between 977 and 978; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 211: 1618-19; Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年, *Chūgoku Zui Tō Chōan jin shiryō shūsei* 中國隋唐長安寺院史料集成 (2 vols. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), vol. 1, p. 62. The tentative dates of Yuqi Yiseng and Wu Daozi are both provided by Nagahiro Toshio in his annotated Japanese translation of Zhang Yanyuan's 張彥遠 (d. after 845) *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Records about the Renowned Painters [and Their Paintings] through the Ages; completed 845), the *Reikidai myōga ki* 歷代名畫記 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1977, 2 vols.), vol. 2, pp. 182-86, pp. 200-11.

¹⁴⁶ It is also interesting to note that Wu Daozi had painted murals on another famous Tang pagoda, the Dayanta 大雁塔 (Great Wild Goose Pagoda), which was built within the Ciensi 慈恩寺 in 652 at the proposal of Xuanzang and which still survives in present-day Xi'an.

in the Inner Court until he was promoted to the position of prime minister, Prime Minister Wei Chuhou 韋處厚 (773-828)¹⁴⁷, on his way home (from the court), always came to this *pagoda* to burn incense and pay homage to it (emphasis mine)¹⁴⁸.

Thus, it seems that the Qibaotai was a pagoda of impressive height. The Guangzhai quarter and the Guangzhaisi's connections with relics also support the reliquary nature of the Qibaotai. As for the construction of the Qibaotai, Antonino Forte suggests that it happened probably sometime towards 690, when Empress Wu was ready to replace the Tang dynasty with her own¹⁴⁹. However, the evidence shows that the Qibaotai was completed either in 703 or shortly before.

A Dunhuang manuscript, which was a colophon to a copy of the Chinese translation of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra*, the *Jingguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 (Sūtra of the Supreme King of the

¹⁴⁷ Wei Chuhou was then an important supporter of Chan Buddhism, mainly a Southern Chan branch deriving from one of Huineng's 慧能 (638-713) disciples, Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709-88); see Jinhua Chen, "One Name, Three Monks: Two Northern Chan Masters Emerge from the Shadow of Their Contemporary, the Tiantai Master Zhanran 湛然 (711-782)," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 22.1 (1999), pp. 29ff.

¹⁴⁸ In addition to these mural paintings, which did not survive, the tower was a house to some sculptures, thirty-two of which are still extant, preserved in Xi'an (7), Japan (21) and the United States (4). These existing sculptures consist of five groups of icons: 1) seven eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara, 2) four Amitabha Triads, 3) seven Maitreya Triads, 4) nine Ornate Buddha images, and 5) five unidentified Buddha Triads. These existing sculptures are the topic of Yen Chuan-ying's (Yan Juanying) 顏娟英 1986 Harvard Ph.D dissertation, "The Sculpture from the Tower of Seven Jewels: The Style, Patronage and Iconography of the Monument." She published main points of her dissertation in two articles in 1987, "The Tower of Seven Jewels and Empress Wu," *Gukong tongxun* 故宮通訊 (*National Palace Museum Bulletin*) 22/1, pp. 1-19; and "Tang Chang'an Qibaotai shike foxiang" 唐長安七寶臺石刻佛像 (Stone Buddha-images within the Qibaotai [Tower of Seven Jewels] in Chang'an), *Yishu xue* 1, pp. 40-89.

Duan Chengshi also reports in the *Sita ji* that the Guangzhaisi included a Samantabhadra Hall (Puxiantang 普賢堂), which was originally Empress Wu's *boudoir* (*shuxitang* 梳洗堂) and which Empress Wu always visited when the grapes were ripe. He also tells us that there were some murals by Yuchi [Yiseng] in this hall. See *Sita ji*, p. 257; *T* vol. 51, no. 2093, p. 1023c18-23. This suggests that near the place where the Guangzhaisi was located there was a temporary palace, in which the empress stayed now and then, either as the consort of Gaozong or as a ruler in her own right.

¹⁴⁹ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 202, footnote 112.

Golden Light), lists Fabao 法寶 (d. after 703) as a collaborator of Yijing¹⁵⁰. This manuscript also records that the translation was finished on 17 November 703 (Chang'an 3.10.4)¹⁵¹. All this suggests that the Guangzhaisi had already been renamed Qibaotaisi by 17 November 703 and that the Qibaotai pagoda was very likely constructed before that time. Furthermore, an inscription dated 27 October 703 (Chang'an 3.9.15) identifies the monk Degan 德感 (640?-705?), who was an important ideologue of Empress Wu, as the Superintendent of the Construction of the Qibaotai (*jianjiao zao qibaotai* 檢較造七寶臺)¹⁵². This also proves that the Qibaotai was constructed not too long before that time (Degan would have had no reasons to identify himself with a title accorded to him for a project that had been completed long before). Qibaotai's tremendous size suggests that it might have taken a couple of years to construct such a colossus. Consequently, given that the Qibaotai was completed sometime in 703 (or slightly earlier), it does not appear too far from the truth if one assumes that Empress Wu ordered the construction of the Qibaotai in 700 or 701.

We know therefore that sometime between 700 and 703, a pagoda (very likely for the enshrinement of relics) called Qibaotai was built within the Guangzhaisi, which was accordingly renamed as Qibaotaisi. At least one century after Empress Wu's death in 705, this monastery still prospered in Chang'an under its original name, Guangzhaisi¹⁵³. It is not clear as to whether, after the official renaming, the name of Guangzhaisi

¹⁵⁰ This Dunhuang manuscript, S 523, is included in the *Dunhuang baozang* 敦煌寶藏 (130 vols. comp. Huang Yongwu 黃永武, Tai-pei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1984), 4.260-70. It is also reproduced in Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Plate XXXIII.

In this manuscript, Fabao is identified as a "Verifier" (*zhengyi* 證義), a [Bhadanta] Translator, the Senior of the Qibaotai[si] (*Fanjing [dade] shamen Qibaotai Shangzuo Fabao zhenyi* 翻經沙門七寶臺上座法寶證義; *Fanjing* 翻經 was an abbreviation of *Fanjing dade* 翻經大德 ["Bhadanta Translator"]; see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 105, note 156).

¹⁵¹ This translation date is confirmed by Zhisheng in his *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 567a19-20.

¹⁵² *Jinshi cuibian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* 1.2.1108b-11091. Forte quotes and discusses this inscription in his *Political Propaganda*, pp. 105-06. For the importance of Degan under the Great Zhou, see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 100-08.

¹⁵³ During the Jianzhong era (11 February 780-26 January 784), the monk Sengjie 僧竭 (fl. 780s) constructed a Mañjuśrī Hall (Manshutang 曼殊堂) at the Guangzhaisi in Chang'an, which Zanning explicitly identified as that constructed by Empress Wu, saying that there was a Tower of Seven Precious Materials at that monastery (see Sengjie's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography, T vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 878b15-c2).

remained in use or, as seems more likely, the name of the monastery was shifted back to Guangzhaisi sometime after 705 (when Empress Wu abdicated and then died) or sometime after 727¹⁵⁴. Several significant monks were known to have been associated with the Guangzhaisi at the end of the seventh century and at the beginning of the eighth century. They include the famous Chan master Huizhong 慧忠 (d. 775) (a chief disciple of Huineng), a Buddhist missionary from Kucha and a couple of Buddhist scholar monks, who were active participants in the Buddhist translation enterprise at that time¹⁵⁵. The importance of this monastery during the mid-Tang period is also confirmed by the fact that it was the base for compiling a (if not the) Buddhist canon, at least under the reign of Dezong (r. 779-805)¹⁵⁶.

If we correlate the 700 reliquary enshrinement on Songshan with the Qibaotai, which was constructed in Chang'an also as a pagoda around the same time, we are able to understand the two events better. They were very likely two important components of the same politico-religious project based on relic veneration. The purposes of this project are yet to be studied, although it seems to be of little doubt that the empress's interest in Buddhist relics surged to another height at that time.

Up to this point supreme power seems to have remained firmly in the hands of this aged woman. It turned out, however, that her power was starting to erode. Starting from the beginning of the eighth century, probably taking advantage of her age and poor health, her court officials who remained loyal to the Li royal house conspired to re-enthroned one of the disposed Tang emperors. As an indicator of the delicate political situation

¹⁵⁴ There is evidence that until 727 the name of Qibaotaisi was probably still in use. See Hyechō's (Ch. Huichao) 慧超 (active 720-73) *Wang Wu Tianzhu guo zhuan* 往五天竺國傳 (Record of Travels in Five Indic Regions), completed after 727), *T* vol. 51, no. 2089/1, p. 979b3-7; *Echō ō Go-Tenjūkoku den kenkyū* 慧超往五天竺國傳研究 (comp. Kuwayama Shōshin 桑山正進, Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku Jinbun kagaku kenkyū sho, 1992), p. 26. The passage is translated in Forte, "Chinese State Monasteries in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries," Kuwayama, *Echō ō Go-Tenjūkoku den kenkyū*, p. 229.

¹⁵⁵ At the Guangzhaisi, Huizhong probably associated with two important monks Liyan 利言 (706? – after 788) and Zhizhen 智真 (fl. 800s). See *Song gaoseng zhuan*, *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 716b18, 721a1-14, 805b16-17.

¹⁵⁶ *Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (Catalogue of Buddhist Translations, Newly Completed in the Zhenyuan Reign-era [785-804]) (completed 799-800), *T* vol. 55, no. 2157, p. 771c11-14, 774a3-5.

at the time, in mid-703 some court officials, led by the out-spoken Wei Yuanzhong, levelled severe criticisms against the empress's two favorites (or lovers as later Confucian historians asserted), Zhang Yizhi and Zhang Zongchang, to her considerable embarrassment¹⁵⁷. It was only with her forceful intervention that the enemies of her favorites were defeated. Although faced with one of the most severe crises of her life, it would have been impossible for a person of her talent, ambition and will to give up without any struggle. The empress moved to act rapidly. On 21 November 703 (Chang'an 3.10.8 [*bingyin*]), she left Chang'an for her chief power base, the eastern capital Luoyang, in which she arrived nineteen days later (10 December 703; Chang'an 3.10.27 [*yiyou*])¹⁵⁸. In Luoyang, she started to contemplate and enforce some measures aimed at regaining a full control of the empire. It was in this delicate political environment that she launched the last round of relic veneration of her life¹⁵⁹.

At the end of Chang'an 4 (10 February 704 – 29 January 705), fourteen months after her return to Luoyang, Empress Wu had an audience in her palace chapel with Fazang, whom she had known since 670 when she lodged him at the Taiyuansi 太原寺 in Chang'an (Western Taiyuansi 西太原寺), which she had constructed for the posthumous benefit of her newly deceased mother Madam Rongguo¹⁶⁰. During this audience, Fazang

¹⁵⁷ *Zizhi tongjian* 207: 6563-67 for this episode. It is through the arrangement of Empress Wu's daughter Princess Taiping that Zhang Zongchang started his relationship with the empress in Wansuitongtian 2 (30 November 696-29 September 697). Soon after that, he introduced his older brother Zhang Yizhi to the aged empress, who took both of them as lovers. The biography of the two brothers is attached to that of his grand-uncle Zhang Xingcheng 張行成 (585-651), who was deeply trusted by Taizong and Gaozong (*Jiu Tang shu* 78: 2706-08; *Xin Tang shu* 104: 4014-16). While maybe the nature of Empress Wu's relationship with the two Zhangs is to be decided, there is no doubt that they were deeply trusted and emotionally relied on by the empress in her late years.

¹⁵⁸ *Zizhi tongjian* 207: 6567.

¹⁵⁹ The following account is based on the relevant part in Fazang's biography by the Korean Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn (Ch. Cui Zhiyuan) 崔致遠 (857 - after 904) around 904, the *Tang Tae Ch'ŏnboksa kosaju pŏn'gyŏng taedŏk Pŏpchang hwasang chŏn* 唐大薦福寺故寺主翻經大德法藏和尚傳 (Biography of the Preceptor Fazang, the Late Bhadanta Translator and Abbot of the Da Jianfusi of the Tang), *T* vol. 50, no. 2054, 283c25-284a14. For modern studies on this relic veneration sponsored by Empress Wu, see Chen Jingfu, *Famensi*, pp. 101-07; Kamata, "Genjū Daishi Hōzō to Hōmonji" 賢首大師法藏と法門寺, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 38/1 (1988), pp. 232-37.

¹⁶⁰ See Fazang's funeral epitaph written by Yan Chaoyin 閻朝隱 (? - ca. 713) shortly after his death in 712, the "Da Tang Da Jianfusi gu Dade Kangzang Fashi zhi bei"

mentioned to Empress Wu the Famensi relic, with which she was by no means unfamiliar. Empress Wu immediately ordered Vice Director the Secretariat Cui Xuanwei 崔玄暉 (638-705) and Fazang to go to the Famensi to fetch the relic to Luoyang¹⁶¹. They were accompanied by ten eminent monks including the vinaya master Wengang 文綱 (636-727)¹⁶², and a *bhadanta*-monk called Ying 應¹⁶³.

Before opening the Famensi reliquary pagoda, the imperial emissaries and their entourages performed a seven-day observance, probably in front of the pagoda. When it was brought out, the relic emitted dazzling rays of light. Fazang, who had burned a finger in front of the Famensi pagoda earlier in his life, was emotionally overwhelmed¹⁶⁴. He held his votive text in hands, reading it aloud to the people present there. The relic shone on the palm of his hand, lightening up places both close and far away. In accordance with the power of the merits that they accumulated over their past lives, people on the spot saw different divine phenomena. Driven by their flaming religious passion, they competed with each other in per-

大唐大薦福寺故大德康藏法師之碑 (Epitaph for the Late Bhadanta and Dharma Master Kangzang [i.e. Fazang] of the Da Jianfusi under the Great Tang), *T* vol. 50, no. 2054, p. 280b15-17; a more detailed account can be found in Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's biography, *T* vol. 50, no. 2054, p. 281b15-20.

¹⁶¹ Cui Xuanwei's two official biographies are located at *Jiu Tang shu* 91: 2934-35; *Xin Tang shu* 120: 4316-17. One year after Empress Wu's death in 705, framed by Empress Wu's nephew Wu Sansi, Cui Xuanwei was exiled by Zhongzong to Guzhou 古州 (in present-day Qiongsan 瓊山, Guangxi) and died on the way.

¹⁶² For Wengang's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography, see *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 791c-792b. A chief disciple of Daoxuan and Daocheng 道成 (d. after 688; *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 791b-c) and a fellow-disciple of Huaisu 懷素 (624-97, *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 792b-793a), Wengang was a renowned expert on the *Sifenlü* 四分律 (Skt. *Dharmagupta-vinaya*). He was highly regarded by Zhongzong and his successor Ruizong. His disciples included the famous Daoan 道岸 (654-717; *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 793a-c). Wengang's *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography confirms his role in escorting the Famensi relic to Luoyang in the turn of 705 (*T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 792a21-22).

¹⁶³ I have been unable to identify this monk so far.

¹⁶⁴ This refers to the record in the same biography by Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn (*T* vol. 50, no. 2054, p. 283b10-11), according to which Fazang committed this act of self-immolation when he was only sixteen *sui* old (that is, in 658, almost half a century before he returned to the Famensi as an imperial emissary). It is noteworthy that this happened exactly one year before Gaozong (and Empress Wu) sent the two Famensi monks back to the temple to search for the propitious signs necessary for the opening of the Famensi reliquary pagoda (see Section I).

forming acts of self-immolation. Some set fire to the crown of their heads (*dinggang* 頂釘), while others burned their fingers (*zhiju* 指炬). They also feared lagging behind in offering donations.

The imperial team returned to the Chongfusi 崇福寺 in Chang'an with the relic on the very last day of that year (29 January 705). On this day, Prince of Kuaiji 會稽王¹⁶⁵, who was then acting as the Regent (*liushou* 留守) of Chang'an, led all the officials and five congregations of Buddhist believers in Chang'an to prostrate themselves at the left side of the road, greeting the relic with extravagant offerings including fragrant flowers and various types of music. The relic allegedly brought sight and hearing back to the deaf and blind, enabling them to see the relic and hear the music honoring it.

The grandiose entry of the relic into Luoyang is depicted in the following way:

洎新年端月孟旬¹⁶⁶有一日，入神都。敕令王公已降，洛城近事之眾，精事幡華幢蓋。仍命太常具樂，奏迎置於明堂。觀燈日，則天身心護淨，頭面盡虔，請藏奉持，普為善禱。其真身也，始自開塔戒道，達于洛下，凡擒瑞光者七，日抱戴者再。¹⁶⁷

On the eleventh day of the first month of the new year (i.e. Shenlong 1)¹⁶⁸ (9 February 705), the relic entered Shendu (i.e. Luoyang)¹⁶⁹. The empress ordered the officials below the ranks of Prince and Duke, along with commoners in

¹⁶⁵ This might refer to a nephew of Empress Wu, Wu Youwang 武攸望 (d. ca. 710), who was enfeoffed as Prince of Kuaiji in Tianshou 1 (16 October – 5 December 690) (*Jiu Tang shu* 183: 4729; cf. *Xin Tang shu* 206: 5837). However, Sima Guang reports that in the seventh month of Shengli 2 (1-28 August 699) Empress Wu ordered another of her nephews Wu Youyi 武攸宜 (d. before 710) to replace Wu Youwang as the Regent of Chang'an (*Zizhi tongjian* 206: 6540) and that on 2 November 703 (Chang'an 3.9.19 [*dingwei*]), only nineteen days before her departure for Luoyang, which happened on the 21st of the same month (Chang'an 3.10.8 [*bingyin*]), the empress appointed Wu Youyi as the Regent of Chang'an (*Zizhi tongjian* 207: 6567). Thus, it seems that it was Wu Youyi, rather than Wu Youwang, who was the Regent of Chang'an when Jizang and his team stopped by there *en route* to Luoyang from the Famensi. Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn seems mistaken here.

¹⁶⁶ Mengxun 孟旬 means the first ten days in a month.

¹⁶⁷ *T* vol. 50, no. 2054, p. 284a9-14.

¹⁶⁸ On the very first day of Chang'an 5 (30 January 705), the reign name was changed to Shenlong; see *Xin Tang shu* 4: 105, *Zizhi tongjian* 207: 6578.

¹⁶⁹ Historical sources show that Empress Wu made some deliberate preparations for the arrival of the Famensi relic. On 30 January 705 (Shenlong 1.1.1 [*renwu*]), she decreed a grand amnesty (*dashe* 大赦); on February 7 (Shenlong 1.1.9 [*gengyin*]), two days before the relic arrived, she prohibited butchery (*Xin Tang shu* 4: 105; cf. *Jiu Tang shu* 6: 132).

Luoyang and its adjacent areas, to carefully prepare banners, flowers and canopies; she also ordered the Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*taichang* 太常) to perform music and to greet the relic as it was placed in the Hall of Light (*mingtang* 明堂). Then, on the day of “Lantern Watching [Eve]” (*guandeng-ri* 觀燈日; i.e. the fifteenth day of the first month [13 February 705])¹⁷⁰, [Empress] Zetian, with her mind and body properly maintained and purified and with [an expression of] supreme piety on her face, asked [Fa]zang to hold up the relic as [she herself] prayed for universal good. From the time the “True Body” (*zhenshen* 真身) (relic) was unearthed from the pagoda, to the days when the roads were reserved [when it was transferred to the two capitals], until the day it arrived in Luoxia 洛下 (i.e. Luoyang), there were seven times when the propitious lights were captured and twice [when the relic was lifted up by its own light so that it appeared] to be embraced in [Fazang’s] bosom and to be worn on the crown of his head¹⁷¹.

As the third story of the *mingtang* was actually a pagoda, it should not come as a big surprise that Empress Wu chose this building as the location for the ceremony of honoring the Famensi relic¹⁷².

It is almost certain that Empress Wu brought the Famensi relic to her palace in the hope that it would work some miraculous regenerating power on her rapidly deteriorating health. Insofar as this is concerned, this time the Famensi relic was also consulted for its putative therapeutic power, not unlike the situation forty-five years earlier when Empress Wu and her husband turned to the same “sacred bone” for the personal welfare of the emperor. However, in view of the political situation at the time, one might assume that Empress Wu sponsored this relic veneration also with an eye to re-allying the declining political support for her.

Contrary to what Empress Wu might have expected, this grand religious ceremony did not perpetuate her fortune. Only one week later, on 20 February 705 (Shenlong 1.1.22 [*guimao*])¹⁷³, joined by the seemingly reluctant

¹⁷⁰ Here I assume that *guandeng-ri* refers to the fifteenth day of the first month, the night of which was the *yuanxiao* 元宵 festival.

¹⁷¹ In an interlinear note following the last two sentences in this passage (*T* vol. 50, no. 2054, p. 284a14-19), Ch’oe Ch’iwŏn provides more details about these miracles. They are discussed in my forthcoming book on Fazang (*History and His Stories*), Chapter Three.

¹⁷² Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 161-63.

¹⁷³ *Xin Tang shu* 4: 105; the *Jiu Tang shu* (6: 132) records the day as *guihai* of the first month, which was obviously a mistake for *guimao*, given that there was no *guihai* day in this month.

Zhongzong, who was then ranked only as “Heir Apparent” by his mother, Zhang Jianzhi 張柬之 (725-706), Cui Xuanwei and other court officials launched a *coup d'état*, which, though nominally targeting Empress Wu's two favorites, the brothers Zhang Yizhi and Zhang Zongchang, who were killed that day, was actually directed at the empress herself. On 23 February (Shenlong 1.1.25 [*jiachen*]), Zhongzong proclaimed that he was “superintending” the country (*jianguo* 監國) and on the same day Empress Wu, after “handing over” (obviously not totally out of her own will) the throne to Zhongzong, was moved to the Shangyang palace 上陽宮, where she died less than ten months later, on 16 December 705 (Shenlong 1.11.26 [*renyin*])¹⁷⁴. What might have disheartened the empress on her death-bed probably was not only the non-responsiveness of the “divine relics,” but also, ironically enough, the fact that the two leaders of the expedition to the Famensi, Cui Xuanwei and Fazang, whom she had both appointed herself, became a chief plotter and an accomplice in the *coup d'état*.

When Empress Wu was transferred to the Shangyang Palace, she complained to Cui Xuanwei, “Other officials were promoted by some people other than Us. It is only you who were promoted by Us [directly]. Why did you treat Us this way?” Cui Xuanwei was reported to have made this reply, “I did this exactly in order to pay back Your Majesty's kindness!”¹⁷⁵

As for Fazang's involvement in the court strife in the early Shenlong era, I argue elsewhere¹⁷⁶ that a passage in Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's biography for Fazang must be read as a testimony of Fazang's cooperation with the Zhang Jianzhi group who plotted the murder of Zhang Yizhi and his brother and Empress Wu's downfall. Fazang was then a chief director of relic veneration in the court, especially the enshrinement ceremony in the *mingtang* complex. We can imagine that after he brought the relic to Luoyang on 9 February 705, he must have stayed close to Empress Wu (and therefore close to the Zhang brothers) in the course of orchestrating this important ceremony. This provided him some opportunities to keep abreast of what the two Zhangs and their clique were then planning.

¹⁷⁴ *Jiu Tang shu* 6: 132.

¹⁷⁵ *Xin Tang shu* 120: 4317: 此正所以報陛下也。The *Zizhi tongjian* (207: 6581) dates this story at the night of the 705 coup.

¹⁷⁶ Chen Jinhua, *History and His Stories*, Chapter Three.

He thus cunningly turned his close relationship with his patroness into a valuable political asset that he used to ingratiate himself with Zhongzong and his group. This reveals Fazang as a politically opportunistic and shrewd monk, who was ready to abandon his most important secular supporter when he sensed that the political situation had started to spin out of her control, making his continued association with her increasingly to his own disadvantage (or as he might have thought of it, to the disadvantage of his religion). Fazang ended up being a “betrayer,” rather than a supporter and sympathizer, of Empress Wu. This also partly explains the glory and success that he continued to enjoy under the reigns of the three successors of Empress Wu, Zhongzong, Ruizong and Xuanzong (r. 712-56). Fazang may have saved Buddhism from being associated closely only with the Zhou in the minds of these three emperors and their officials.

The Famensi relic was not returned to its home temple until Jinglong 2.2.15 (11 March 708). On that occasion, the monks who escorted the “sacred bone” included the two monks who brought it to Chang’an and Luoyang in 705, Wengang and Fazang, the latter of whom made for the relic a “spirit canopy” (*lingzhang* 靈帳), which was excavated in 1987¹⁷⁷. A stone stele unearthed in 1978 from near the Famensi pagoda reveals an extraordinary practice on the part of the royal family — Zhongzong and his empress, joined by four of their children, had their hair buried together with the relic when it was sealed back inside the pagoda on 11 March 708¹⁷⁸. We do not know whether the relic was sent back to Famensi from Luoyang or Chang’an, where Zhongzong switched his imperial court on 7 December 706. It could be that Zhongzong brought the relic with him when he left Luoyang or that he just left it there. Two years later, on 15 March 710 (Jinglong 4.2.11) Zhongzong decided to honor the Famensi relic once again by bestowing the title, “Dasheng zhensheng baota” 大聖真身寶塔 (“Treasure-pagoda for the True Body of the Great Sage”),

¹⁷⁷ This role of Wengang is recorded in his *Song gaoseng zhuan* biography at *T* vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 792a21-22. On the basis of this record Weinstein (*Buddhism under the T’ang*, p. 49) observes that Zhongzong had the finger-bone relic (i.e. the Famensi relic) brought to the imperial palace for worship. This seems inaccurate. For the “spirit canopy” with the inscription signed by Fazang, see Wu Limin and Han Jinke, *Famensi digong*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁸ Han Wei 韓偉 and Luo Xijie 羅西傑. “Famensi chutu Tang Zhongzong xiafa ruta ming” 法門寺出土唐中宗下髮入塔銘, *Wenwu* 6 (1983), pp. 14-16.

on the pagoda. He also had forty-nine monks ordained to mark the occasion¹⁷⁹.

(V) *Empress Wu and the Dharma-relic Veneration*

So far we have confined ourselves to Empress Wu's veneration of what was believed to be the physical remains of the Buddha Śākyamuni. Now, let us turn to another aspect of Empress Wu's relic veneration — the cult of the “dharma-*śarīra*.” For this issue, the Chinese versions of the *Bud-dhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra* immediately capture our attention. First and foremost, this *sūtra* equates, although only implicitly, a stone-pillar inscribed with the *uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* with a “pagoda of the relic of the Buddha's whole body” (*Rulai quanshen sheli sudubota* 如來全身舍利窣堵波塔)¹⁸⁰. Secondly, this *sūtra* devotes considerable attention to the amount and nature of the mysterious powers that it attributes to such a *dhāraṇī*-pillar. According to this *sūtra*, the erection of a *uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* pillar guarantees that all the bad karma one has accumulated over one's past lives will be automatically cut off forever. The spiritual merits deriving from such a *dhāraṇī*-pillar are not limited only to its patron. Those sentient beings who have the fortune to see, or to be close to it, or just to be touched by the dust blown from the pillar or even just pass under its shadow, will instantly be freed of any kind of bad karma, no matter how severe, and be enlightened to the truth¹⁸¹. Finally, it is worth noting that Chinese audiences understood the equation of a *dhāraṇī* pillar with a reliquary pagoda not merely metaphorically but also literally, as there is evidence that some relics were enshrined within or at the top of some *dhāraṇī*-pillars, which were thus literally turned into pagodas¹⁸². Given

¹⁷⁹ “Wuyouwangsi baota ming,” *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.3. 1669.

¹⁸⁰ If one constructs a pagoda on a thoroughfare, placing this *dhāraṇī* on it and decorating it with a variety of ornaments, and paying homage to it, the merits he gained by this will be even greater: he will be a mahāsattva, a pillar of the dharma and even a “pagoda of the relic of the Buddha's whole body (*Rulai quanshen sheli sudubota* 如來全身舍利窣堵波塔). That one becomes a reliquary pagoda is an unusual idea. Here, the author might mean that the pagoda with such a *dhāraṇī* will become a reliquary pagoda.

¹⁸¹ *T* vol. 19, no. 967, p. 351b9.

¹⁸² Liu Shufen 劉淑芬, “Jingchuang de xingzhi, xingzhi he lai yuan — jingchuang yanjiu zhi er” 經幢的形制，性質和來源——經幢研究之二, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 68/3 (1997), pp. 643-786.

that the *dhāraṇī* was considered a crystallization of the Buddha's teachings, the *dhāraṇī*-pillars with relics were actually constructed and worshipped as pagodas for both the physical and spiritual relics of the Buddha. This *dhāraṇī sūtra* became very popular in China, as is attested by the vast numbers of *uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* pillars found all across medieval China¹⁸³.

Empress Wu played an important role in translating this *dhāraṇī sūtra* and fostering the cult centering around that *dhāraṇī*. Four Chinese versions of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra* were produced under her and her husband's patronage:

- (1) *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), allegedly completed by Buddhapālita (Ch. Fotuoboli 佛陀波利, Jueai 覺愛; d. after 677) around Yongchun 2 (2 February – December 27 683)¹⁸⁴;
- (2) *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經, completed by Du Xingyi 杜行顛 (d. after 679) on 20 February 679 (Yifeng 4.1.5)¹⁸⁵;
- (3) *Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂最勝陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), completed by Du Xingyi and Divākara (612-87), Yancong, Daocheng 道成 (d. after 688) and others on 3 July 682 (Yongchun 1.5.23)¹⁸⁶;
- (4) *Zuisheng foding tuoluoni jingchu yezhang [zou]jing* 最勝佛頂陀羅尼淨除業障[咒]經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot for Eradicating Karmic Obstacles); translated by Divākara (assisted

¹⁸³ Liu Shufen, "Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing yu Tangdai zunsheng jingchuang de jianli – jingchuang yanjiu zhi yi" 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經與唐代尊勝經幢的建立 – 經幢研究之一, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 67/1 (1996), pp. 145-93.

¹⁸⁴ *T* no. 967; see below for the relevant discussion on the legend regarding the formation of this version.

¹⁸⁵ *T* no. 968. This date is provided by Yancong 彥棕 (d. after 688) in his preface to the *Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing* (*T* vol. 19, no. 969, p. 355a24-26), which is followed by the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (*T* vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 564a29-31) and *Xu Gujin yijing tuji* 續古今譯經圖記 (Continuation to the *Gujin yijing tuji* 古今譯經圖記 [Illustrated Record of Buddhist Translations from the Past to the Present; compiled during 664-65 by Jingmai 靖邁 [fl. 640s-660s]], *T* vol. 55, no. 2151, 368c22-26. Yancong's preface is partly translated in Forte, "The Preface to the So-called Buddhapālita Chinese Version of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa Vijaya Dhāraṇī Sūtra*," in *Études d'apocryphes bouddhiques: Mélanges en l'honneur de Monsieur MAKITA Tairyō* (ed. Kuo Li-ying, Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, forthcoming).

¹⁸⁶ *T* no. 969; see Yancong's preface to the *Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing* (*T* vol. 19, no. 969, p. 355b4-12), followed by the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* (*T* vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 564a1-3).

by Huizhi 慧智 [fl. 676-703 A.D]) shortly before 4 February 688 (Chuigong 3.12.27)¹⁸⁷.

This number almost accounts for half of all the extant ten texts which are either different versions of the *sūtra*, or belong to the same *Buddhoṣṇīṣa* genre¹⁸⁸. Further, the legend centering around the *Foding zunsheng tuolu-*

¹⁸⁷ T no. 970. Zhisheng reports that Divākara prepared this new version with Huizhi on the eve of his plan to go back to India (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 564a4-6). On the other hand, according to Divākara's biography in the *Huayanjing zhuanji* (T vol. 51, no. 2073, p. 155a1), although he was allowed to go back to India after repeated petitions, he ended up dying in China when he was about to leave. As the same biography dates his death 4 February 688 (Chuigong 3.12.27) (p. 155a1), we know that the translation must have been done shortly before that. For Huizhi, see Antonino Forte's exclusive study, "Hui-chih."

¹⁸⁸ The Taishō Chinese Buddhist canon preserves thirteen texts, which is regarded as belonging to the genre of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, including the following nine texts in addition to the four translated under the reign of Empress Wu:

- (1) T no. 971: *Foshuo foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛說佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (Sūtra preached by the Buddha on the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), completed by Yijing 義淨 (635-713) in Jinglong 景龍 4 (4 February – 4 July 710) (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 567b21-23);
- (2) T no. 972: *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yiguifa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼念誦儀軌法 (Procedures and Methods for Reciting the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), attributed to Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra, 805-74) (*Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu*, T vol. 55, no. 2157, p. 879c21);
- (3) T no. 973: *Zunsheng foding xiu yujia fa guiyi* 尊勝佛頂修瑜伽法軌儀 (Procedures for Cultivating the Yoga of the Utmost Superior [*Dhāraṇī*] of the Buddha's Topknot), attributed to Śubhākarasiṃha or Xiwuwei 喜無畏 (d.u.), allegedly Śubhākarasiṃha's disciple; see *Eun Zenji shōrai kyōbō mokuoku* 惠運禪師將來教法目錄 (Catalogue of the Buddhist Texts Brought back by Meditation Master Eun 惠運 [798-869]; one *juan*, compiled in 847 by Eun), T vol. 55, no. 2168A, 1089b5;
- (4) T no. 974A: *Zuisheng foding tuoluoni jing* 最勝佛頂陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), translated by Fatian 法天 (active 973-85);
- (5) T no. 974B: *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 (Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot);
- (6) T no. 974C: *Jiaju lingyan foding zunsheng tuoluoni ji* 加句靈驗佛頂尊勝陀羅尼記 (Record of the Miracles Related to the Extended *Uṣṇīṣavijaya Dhāraṇī*), compiled by Wu Che 武徹 (d. after 765) sometime after 765;
- (7) T no. 974D: *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhuyi* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼住義 (Meanings of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), allegedly translated by Bukong;
- (8) T no. 974E: *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhenyan* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼真言 (True Words of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot);
- (9) T no. 974F: *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni biefa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼別法 (Separate Methods for the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), by Ruona 若那 (Skt. Prajñā?, d.u.) (allegedly active during the Tang).

However, three of these thirteen translations cannot be regarded as independent translations. T no. 974D is only a reproduction of the *dhāraṇī* section in Bukong's translation

oni jing by the obscure Indian monk Buddhapālita, which turned out to be the most popular of all the Chinese versions of the *sūtra*, was an important step in the formation of the Wutaishan cult.

Narrated in a preface to the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing*, this legend has it that Buddhapālita arrived in China in Yifeng 1 (18 December 676-7 February 677) in order to make a pilgrimage to Wutaishan, the reputed abode of Mañjuśrī. On Wutaishan Buddhapālita's sincere prayers bring about the appearance of an old man, who asks him if he comes to China with a copy of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, which he believes is the most effective way to rid the Chinese people of their bad karma. Receiving a negative answer from Buddhapālita, the old man urges him to return to India, saying that it is no use seeing Mañjuśrī without a copy of the *sūtra* in his hand. Buddhapālita complies and returns to India. Seven years later, in Yongchun 2 (2 February – December 27 683), he returns to Chang'an with a copy of the *sūtra*, where he has an audience with Gaozong, who commissions Divākara and Du Xingyi to translate the *sūtra* into Chinese. After that, the emperor rewards Buddhapālita and tries to send him off without giving him back the Sanskrit original, but when Buddhapālita insists it is eventually returned to him. Buddhapālita then goes to the Ximingsi 西明寺, where he finds a Chinese monk called Shunzhen 順貞 (otherwise unknown), who knows Sanskrit well. Then, with imperial permission and Shunzhen's assistance, Buddhapālita starts to prepare a new translation of the *sūtra*. After the translation is done, he leaves Chang'an for Wutaishan, whence he has never emerged.

After relating this legend, the author of this preface refers us to the Dingjuesi 定覺寺 Abbot (*sizhu* 寺主) Zhijing 志靜, who, not unlike Shunzhen, is not known from other sources¹⁸⁹. It seems that the author

(*T* no. 972), with interlinear notes explaining the meanings of the Chinese transliteration of the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī*. *T* no. 974B is identical with *T* no. 974D except that it is accompanied by the Sanskrit original of the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* while *T* no. 974D is not. As for *T* no. 974C, it is composed of (1) some miracle stories related to the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī*, (2) the Chinese transliteration of that *dhāraṇī* and (3) that of an extended version of that *dhāraṇī* allegedly translated by Śubhākarasiṃha or his disciple Xiwuwei (found in *T* no. 973).

¹⁸⁹ The compiler(s) of the Ming edition of the *Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing*, and the compilers of the *Quan Tang wen*, identified the author of this preface as Śramaṇa Zhijing of the Dingjuesi in the Tang (*Tang Dingjuesi Shamen Zhijing* 唐定覺寺沙門志靜). See

introduces Zhijing to us exclusively for the purpose of substantiating the Buddhapālita legend itself, as the rest of the preface is devoted to Zhijing's experiences of getting it certified and re-certified by two contemporary Buddhist authorities. First, we are told that in Chuigong 3 (19 January 687–6 February 688) — exactly the year when Divākara died, while staying at the Eastern Weiguosi 魏國東寺 in Luoyang, Zhijing asks Divākara about the source of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*. Divākara allegedly tells him the same Buddhapālita story. Then, Zhijing gets the very same story re-confirmed two years later (in Yongchang 1 [27 January – 18 December 689]) at the Da Jing'ai 大敬愛寺, from a dharma master called Cheng 澄 of the Ximingsi, who was probably Hui-cheng 慧澄 (a.k.a. Huicheng 惠澄, d. after 695), an important ideologue of Empress Wu¹⁹⁰. The author concludes his story by saying that at the time he wrote this preface the monk Shunzhen was still active at the Ximingsi¹⁹¹.

The spurious nature of this legend is rather obvious. As a matter of fact, the discreet Buddhist scholar Zhisheng already raised two points of doubt concerning the chronology implied in this legend. First of all, he calls our attention to the discrepancy that two Chinese versions of the *sūtra* were already completed in 679 and 682 (one by Du Xingyi independently and the other by Divākara and Du Xingyi together) on the one hand,

T vol. 19, no. 967, p. 349, editorial note 2; *Quan Tang wen* 912.14a8-9. This attribution has been uncritically accepted by modern scholars. This seems doubtful judging by the way that Zhijing is introduced here (the Rector of the Dingjuesi [Dingjuesi shangzuo 定覺寺上座]). Generally speaking, in his own composition a medieval Chinese author was not expected to refer to himself by his official title(s) (such an act would be considered arrogant and therefore inappropriate in a society in which modesty was regarded as one of the greatest virtues). Furthermore, in talking about this preface, Zhisheng tells us, "That preface was composed by *somebody* sometime after the Yongchang era (689)" (其序復是永昌以後有人述記; *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, *T* vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 565b11; emphases mine). That Zhisheng here avoids directly identifying the author of this preface as Zhijing suggests that he actually does not take him as the author.

¹⁹⁰ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹¹ *T* vol. 19, no. 967, p. 349b-c. This legend is also summarized in Etienne Lamotte, "Mañjuśrī." *T'oung Pao* 48 (1960), pp. 86-88; Forte, "Hui-chih," pp. 117-118; Robert M. Gimello, "Chang Shang-ying on Wu-t'ai Shan," *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (edited by Susan Nanquin and Chün-fang Yü, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 130-31; Liu Shufen, "Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing yu Tangdai zunsheng jingchuang de jianli," pp. 169-70.

while on the other, the Sanskrit original of the *sūtra* did not arrive in China until 683 according to the Buddhapālita legend. Secondly, Gaozong had already moved to Luoyang by 683. How could it be possible that Buddhapālita saw him in Chang'an in 683?¹⁹² We can supplement Zhisheng's argument by one more piece of evidence from another source about the same Buddhapālita.

A document which has survived to us by the title, "Xiuchan yaojue" 修禪要訣 (Essentials of Cultivating Meditation), starts with this remark:

北天竺婆羅門禪師佛陀波利唐云覺愛隨問略說。西京禪林寺沙門明恂問，並隨口錄。同寺梵僧慧智法師傳譯。於時大唐儀鳳二年丁丑歲也。¹⁹³

Briefly lectured on by Northern Indian Meditation Master Fotuoboli (in Chinese Jueai 覺愛)¹⁹⁴, who was a brahmin [in caste], in response to the inquiries [asked of him]. Inquired of by Śramaṇa Míngxun 明恂 (fl. 670s) of the Chanlinsi in the Western Capital (i.e. Chang'an), who also made this record accordingly. The Indian monk Huizhi of the same monastery acted as interpreter. It was then the second year of the Yifeng era of the Great Tang (the *sui* of *dingchou*) (8 February 677-27 January 678).

As suggested by its title and confirmed by its contents, this text was a record of the dialogue between the monk Míngxun and Buddapālita concerning some principle methods of meditation. Regarding the date and purpose of this meeting between Míngxun and Buddapālita, Antonino Forte suggests that it happened shortly after Buddapālita arrived in China and that such a meeting was arranged in order to test Buddapālita's ability and personality and to find out, on Gaozong's behalf, to what extent he might be useful¹⁹⁵. This is not supported by the contents of the *Xiuchan yaojue* itself. Míngxun begins his queries with his concern that Buddapālita was

¹⁹² *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 565b5ff. On 3 June 682 (Yongchun 1.4.22 [yiyou]), Gaozong arrived in Luoyang, where he stayed until he died on 27 December 683 (Yongchun 2.12.4 [dingsi]). See *Jiu Tang shu* 5: 109-12, *Xin Tang shu* 3: 77-79, *Zizhi tongjian* 103: 6409-16; *Jiu Tang shu* 5: 112, *Xin Tang shu* 3: 79, *Zizhi tongjian* 103: 6416.

¹⁹³ *Wanzi xuzang jing* 卍續藏經 (Tai-pei: Xin wenfeng chuban gongsi, 1968-70) (rep. *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 [eds. Nakano Tatsue 中野達慧, et al., Kyoto: Zōkyō shoin, 1905-12] (hereafter XZJ), 110: 834a13-15.

¹⁹⁴ This sentence is presented as an interlinear note in the text.

¹⁹⁵ Forte, "Hui-chih," p. 117.

about to leave China and that there would be no chance for them to meet again (*jiyu huan guo, chonghui wuqi* 即欲還國，重會無期). He repeats the same concern in his second query¹⁹⁶. All this proves that the meeting was conducted shortly before Buddapālita's departure from China. The meeting was brought about by Mingxun's desire to consult Buddapālita on meditation. More importantly, it seems that Buddapālita did not have, or at least was not known to have, any plans to come back to China on the eve of his departure. Otherwise, Mingxun would not have so strongly expressed to Buddapālita his regret on his inability to see him again. Although we cannot exclude the possibility that he later changed his mind and did come back, this does undermine the authenticity of the story that he went back to India to fetch the *dhāraṇī* text.

Thus, we can say that, on the one hand, this text proves that a Northern Indian monk called Buddhapālita did arrive in China and that he left China either in or shortly after 677; and that, on the other, it also presents some additional difficulties for us to take the Buddhapālita legend at its face value. The fictitious nature of the preface, which turns out to be the sole source for his biographies in the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* and *Song gaoseng zhuan*, has rendered it difficult to accept the theory it fosters that Buddhapālita returned to China six years later with a copy of the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*. It is therefore questionable that Buddhapālita was the transmitter or a translator of the *dhāraṇī* text. He was probably only used as a convenient figure to promote the efficacies of the *uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* on the one hand and Wutaishan's reputation as Mañjuśrī's alleged new abode on the other. To have a respectable Indian monk to confirm Wutaishan's ties with Mañjuśrī was actually an "integral part of a far-reaching political project whose aim was to transform China from a peripheral to a central area of Buddhist civilization"¹⁹⁷. Such a project was urged by Empress Wu's claim to her sacred reign of China, and potentially the whole world or even the whole universe, as the new Cakravartin king.

The geographical proximity between Wutaishan and the empress's native place (i.e. Wenshui 文水, in present-day Shanxi) suggests that the

¹⁹⁶ *Xiuchan yaojue*, XZJ 110: 834b1, b4.

¹⁹⁷ Forte, "Hui-chih," p. 118.

Buddhapālita legend was probably a strategy on the part of the empress and her ideologues to tout her family's divine origin by establishing its intrinsic ties to this sacred mountain and the principal Buddhist deity dwelling there — Mañjuśrī¹⁹⁸. The fact that one of Empress Wu's kinsmen compiled a text relating some miracles related to the *Uṣṇīṣaviṣaya dharāṇi* also attests to the extent to which she and her family were involved in the *Uṣṇīṣaviṣayadharaṇi* cult¹⁹⁹. Also, the effort made by two of her major ideologues to promote the *Buddhoṣṇīsa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra* is clearly documented by a commentary, which does not survive but the title of which is fortunately recorded in two Japanese Buddhist catalogues compiled at the beginning of the tenth century²⁰⁰.

¹⁹⁸ Empress Wu was not the initiator of the Wutaishan cult, which can be traced back to Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei (r. 471-99), who constructed at least one temple and thousands of small stone-pagodas on the central peak of the mountain. See the *Gu Qingliang zhuan* 古清凉傳 (Oldest Record of Mount Qingliang [i.e. Wutaishan]; by Huixiang 慧詳 [active 660s-680s] sometime between 680 and 683), *T* vol. 51, no. 2098, p. 1094a25ff; *Fayuan zhulin*, *T* vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 393a11-13, 596a11-12. That Empress Wu's fascination with Wutaishan might have been spurred by her family interest is suggested by Du Doucheng 杜斗城 in his *Dunhuang Wutaishan wenxian jiaolu, yanjiu* 敦煌五臺山文獻校錄·研究 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1991), p. 111.

¹⁹⁹ This text is the above-mentioned *Jiaju lingyan foding zunsheng tuoluoni ji* by Wu Che, a fourth generation grandson of Wu Shirang, one of Empress Wu's uncles: Shirang → Hongdu 弘度 → Youwang → ? → Che. See *Xin Tang shu* 74A: 3136-39, where Wu Che was identified as the governor of Yangzhou 洋州 (in present-day Yangxian 洋縣, Shaanxi), although in the *Jiaju lingyan foding zunsheng tuoluoni ji* he identifies himself as a Grand Master for Court Discussion (Chaoyi dafu 朝議大夫) and Attendant Censor (Shiyu shi 侍御史) (*T* vol. 19, no. 974c, p. 386a3). In the same work Wu Che tells us that he started to recite the *Uṣṇīṣaviṣayadhāraṇī* from his boyhood. His religious devotion had become more enthusiastic after he lost his wife in the early Yongtai 永泰 reign-era (26 January 765-18 December 766). In view of this, Liu Shufen seems mistaken in identifying Wu Che as a person belonging to the ninth century; see her “Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing yu Tangdai zunsheng jingchuang de jianli,” p. 161.

Hongdu was also known by his style name Huaiyun 懷運. For Wu Shirang and Wu Youwang, see notes 142 and 165.

²⁰⁰ This text was called “Zunsheng tuoluoni jing zhulin” 尊勝陀羅尼經珠林 (Pearl-forest of the *Zunsheng tuoluoni jing*, in one *juan*), recorded in the *Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui soroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類總錄 (Complete Catalogue of Various Dhāraṇī Esoteric [Works Brought Back from China by] the [Japanese] Ācaryas) (initially compiled in 885 and revised in 902 by Annen 安然 [841-904?]), which attributes this text to Bolun 波菴 (d. after 703) and Xinggan 行感 (d. ca. 694) (*T* vol. 55, no. 2176, p. 1119b2); and the *Hossōshū shōsho* 法相宗章疏 (by Heiso 平祚 [d. after 914] in 914), which identifies Xinggan alone as its author (*T* vol. 55, no. 2180, p. 1139a11). Both Bolun and Xinggan were important Buddhist ideologues for Empress Wu, with one (Xinggan) among the ten Buddhist monks

We cannot be very certain as to when this legend was concocted, although it definitely appeared before 730, as Zhisheng questioned it in a catalogue completed in that year. In view of the fact that the last year mentioned in that preface is 689, we might assume that it was probably written either in that year or shortly afterwards and therefore that the Buddhapālita legend also appeared around the same period — exactly on the eve of Empress Wu's "usurpation" in 690²⁰¹.

After the *Zunsheng tuoluoni jing*, another *dhāraṇī* text translated under the same empress's patronage ought to be considered. Titled "Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing" 無垢淨光大陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Great *Dhāraṇī* of Pure Light), this text is a Chinese version of the Sanskrit *Raśmivimalaviśuddhābhādhāraṇī* prepared by the Tokharian monk Mituo-shan 彌陀山 (var. Mituo-xian 彌陀仙) (Mitraśana? or Mitraśanta?; d. after 704) in 704, the very end of Empress Wu's reign, when her enthusiasm for relic veneration culminated in the transfer of the Famensi relic to Luoyang.

The earliest known report of Mitraśanta is provided by Fazang in his commentary on the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. Mitraśanta had stayed in India for twenty-five years and knew the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* very well. Because of this, sometime in Chang'an 2 (2 February 702-21 January 703) Empress Wu ordered him to edit the draft of the *Laṅkāvatāra* translation left by Śikṣānanda. This is Mitraśanta's earliest accountable activity in China, a fact which suggests that he arrived in China either in or shortly before 702. The second source about Mitraśanta is Zhisheng, who left two largely identical biographical notes for him in his two Buddhist catalogues²⁰². In addition to confirming Mitraśanta's role in translating the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, Zhisheng also tells us that Mitraśanta and Fazang translated the *Wugou jingguang tuoluoni jing* in the last year (*monian* 末年) of Empress Wu's reign, which one of Fazang's biographers, the Qing Dynasty Buddhist

who presented to the court the commentary on the *Dayun jing* on 16 August 690 and the other (Bolun) actively serving in the translation projects sponsored by the empress. See Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 97-100.

²⁰¹ In one of his forthcoming articles on the Buddhapālita legend (tentatively titled "Fixing Mañjuśrī in China in Late Seventh Century"), Forte suggests that the preface was written sometime between 689 and 695.

²⁰² *Xu Gujin yijing tuji*, T vol. 55, no. 2155, p. 369c23-27; *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 566b27-c4

monk Xufa 續法 (fl. 1680), dated to Shenlong 1 (30 January 705-18 January 706)²⁰³. This dating seems problematic given what Zhisheng continues to tell us: shortly after completing the translation of the *Wugou jingguang tuoluoni jing* Mitraśanta returned to Tokhara with a lot of gifts from Empress Wu²⁰⁴. Given that Empress Wu abdicated on 22 February 705, this report of Zhisheng suggests that Mitraśanta's translation was very likely undertaken in 704, rather than 705. If this is correct, then Mitraśanta only stayed in China for about two years (702-4).

In contrast with Zhisheng, the Song Buddhist author Zanning, in his biography for Mitraśanta, dates the translation of the *Wugou jingguang tuoluoni jing* to the Tianshou reign-era (17 October 690-21 April 692)²⁰⁵. This cannot be true if we accept Zhisheng's opinion that Mitraśanta's *Wugou jingguang tuoluoni jing* was a second version after Śikṣānanda's *Ligou jingguang tuoluoni jing*, which could not have been made before 695 given that Śikṣānanda arrived in China either in or shortly before that year²⁰⁶. Zanning's dating is particularly implausible if Mitraśanta did not arrive in China until 702 (or shortly before), as is suggested by Fazang.

In comparison with the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* is far less familiar to scholars of East Asian Buddhism. For this reason, let us make a summary of its contents before discussing its connections with Empress Wu and its importance for the cult of "dharma-relics" in East Asia.

Like the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, this text begins with a panicked *brahmin* who learns from a prognosticator that he is to die in seven days and is to be reborn in the hell for continuous suffering. Upon this terrifying revelation, the *brahmin* runs to the Buddha for help. The Buddha recommends him to repair a collapsing pagoda which contains some relics of a Tathāgata and is located beside a road in Kapilavastu. The Buddha assures that *brahmin* that if he puts inside the pagoda a wood tablet inscribed with some *dhāraṇīs* and worships it with various offerings, his

²⁰³ *Fajiezong wuzu lieji* 法界宗五祖略記 (A Brief Account of [the Lives of] the Five Patriarchs of the Fajie [i.e. Huayan] Sect; completed 1680), XZJ 134.548a1-2.

²⁰⁴ *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 566c3-4.

²⁰⁵ *Song gaoseng zhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2061, p. 719c5-6.

²⁰⁶ See Śikṣānanda's biography in the *Huayanjing zhuanji*, T vol. 51, no. 2073, p. 155a12-15.

life will be significantly lengthened and after his death he will be reborn in Tuṣita heaven. Asked the details of this *dhāraṇī* procedure, the Buddha starts to lecture on three *dhāraṇīs* and the corresponding methods for honoring them.

The first is the so-called “root-*dhāraṇī*” (*genben tuoluoni* 根本陀羅尼), for the worship of which the Buddha prescribes the following procedure. On the eighth, thirteenth, fourteenth or fifteenth day of the month, one should clockwise circumambulate a pagoda seventy-seven times and recite this *dhāraṇī* the same number of times. Then, one should purify oneself and make seventy-seven copies of this *dhāraṇī* on a *maṇḍala* which should be well protected and ornamented. The seventy-seven *dhāraṇī*-texts are finally placed inside the pagoda. One can also make seventy-seven miniature clay pagodas, into each of which is inserted one of the seventy-seven *dhāraṇī* scripts.

Regarding the second *dhāraṇī*, which is for the “central pillar” at the top of the pagoda (*xiangluntang zhong tuoluoni* 相輪檜中陀羅尼)²⁰⁷, ninety-nine copies of this *dhāraṇī* must be reproduced which are used to surround the *xiangluntang*. A copy of the *dhāraṇī* will also be inserted into the core of the central pillar of the pagoda. One can also make a miniature clay pagoda and have a copy of this *dhāraṇī* inserted into it. The third *dhāraṇī*, which is for the center of the “rings around the top pillars” of a pagoda (*xianglun tuoluoni* 相輪陀羅尼), should be recited 1008 times before the construction of a pagoda. The reciting of this *dhāraṇī* will bring forth unusual fragrances from the pagoda. Of this *dhāraṇī*, an unspecified number of copies will also be made properly, and will be enshrined in the pagodas and their central pillar too.

After the Buddha introduces to his audience these three *dhāraṇīs* and their corresponding procedures, Bodhisattva Sarva-nivaraṇa-*viṣkambhin* (Ch. Chugaizhang 除蓋障) recites a *dhāraṇī*, called “the *dhāraṇī* for the seal of self-mind” (*zixinyin tuoluoni* 自心印陀羅尼). This *dhāraṇī*, preached by ninety-nine *koṭīs* of Buddhas, will also be reproduced ninety-nine times and the ninety-nine *dhāraṇī*-scripts will also be put inside, or spread around, a pagoda.

²⁰⁷ Close to the top of a pagoda are some rings (i.e. *xianglun* 相輪), which are surrounded by a central pillar (i.e. *xianglun-tang*).

After approving the *dhāraṇī* and its procedure as recited and formulated by Sarva-nivaraṇa-viṣkambhin, the Buddha lays out an overall procedure for observing the four *dhāraṇīs* in connection with the pagoda cult. The practitioner should properly reproduce ninety-nine copies of these four *dhāraṇīs*; and then construct in front of a Buddha-pagoda a square *maṇḍala*, on which some specific rituals are to be performed. These rituals will be followed by the enshrinement of the *dhāraṇī*-copies around the pagoda or inside the central pillar at the top of the pagoda. After that, one starts to visualize the Buddhas in the ten directions, simultaneously reciting a fifth *dhāraṇī* twenty-eight times, which will succeed in evoking the appearance of various deities, who will empower the pagoda and turn it into a great *maṇi* pearl²⁰⁸.

Throughout the whole *sūtra*, the author has spared no energy in emphasizing the numerous mysterious merits that a pagoda sanctified with the four *dhāraṇīs*, no matter whether separately or collectively, will yield. These merits include longevity, rebirth in Tuṣita heaven, extirpation of bad karmas on the part of the practitioner of the *dhāraṇī*-pagoda cult. However, the erection (or ornamentation) of such *dhāraṇī*-pagodas will benefit not only the erector/embellisher but also those sentient beings who, no matter whether consciously or adventitiously, come into contact with the *dhāraṇī*-pagodas. All sentient beings, including human beings and all kinds of animals, who are under the shadow of such a pagoda or hear the sound of the bells at its top, will attain liberation. The place where such a pagoda is erected will be free from all human and natural disasters. All this strongly reminds us of the extraordinary powers that the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra* attributes to an *uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* pillar.

It is interesting to note that although this is a Buddhist text, it is not within the circle of scholars of East Asian Buddhism, but that of experts on the history of East Asian science and technology, that the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* is best known. This is not so hard to understand as it appears to be, given that the earliest known evidence for printing technology in East Asia still remains a wood-block printed version of this text excavated in 1966 from a Buddha-pagoda at the Pulguksa 佛國寺 in

²⁰⁸ A more general summary of the contents of the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* can be found at Mimi Hall Yiengpruksawan, "One Million of a Buddha: the Hyakumantō Dharani in the Scheide Library," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 48 (1986-87), pp. 230-31.

Kyōngju 慶州 of Korea, which was constructed in 751. Evidence shows that the same *dhāraṇī sūtra* (probably also a printed copy) had already been placed inside a pagoda in a different Korean temple almost half century earlier (in 706)²⁰⁹. Peter Kornicki suggests that the practice of enshrining this *dhāraṇī* text in a pagoda might not have originated from the Korean peninsula; rather, he points to its possible connections with Empress Wu²¹⁰. This opinion is shared by Forte:

To go back to the printed material found in Korea and Japan, it is obvious that here we are dealing with a Buddhist religious practice that is directly related to the *dhāraṇī* in question. Now, it is known that Korean and Japanese Buddhism in the eighth century is purely and simply an emanation of Chinese Buddhism. It is unthinkable that any Buddhist religious practice existing in Korea or Japan in that period was not also to be found before in China. In the last analysis, it is all too obvious that one must think of China as the place from which the practice spread east, and all the more so if we consider that the text in question was translated in China between 690 and 705 by the monk Mitsuoshan. The fact that the text found in Korea contains special characters, used until 705, leads to (*sic*) believe that the text, after translation, could immediately have been printed and some copies sent to Korea, which was under the control of China at that time²¹¹.

The likelihood of this hypothesis seems rather high given that some time between 764-770, around six decades after Empress Wu's death, the

²⁰⁹ For this important archaeological discovery, see Li Hungjik 李弘植, "Keishū Bukkokuji shakatō hakken no Muku jōkō dai daranikyō" 慶州仏國寺釋迦塔発見の無垢淨光大陀羅尼經, *Chōsen gakuho* 49 (1989), pp. 457-82; and Kawase Kazuma 川瀬一馬, "Shiragi Bukkokuji Shakatō shutsu no Muku jōkō dai daranikyō ni tsuite" 新羅仏國寺釋迦塔出の無垢淨光大陀羅尼經について, *Shoshigaku*, 2nd Series, 33/34 (1984), pp. 1-9. Denis Twitchett, *Printing and Publication in Medieval China* (New York, Frederic C. Beil, Publisher, 1983), pp. 13-14.

²¹⁰ Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998), pp. 114-117.

²¹¹ Private correspondence dated 20 May 2001. See also Forte, "Scienza e tecnica," in *Cina a Venezia: dalla dinastia Han a Marco Polo* (Milano: Electa, 1986), pp. 38-40. The English version of this article was published as "Science and Techniques" (in *China in Venice: From the Han Dynasty to Marco Polo* [Milano: Electa, 1986], p. 38-40), which, as Professor Forte told me, was not checked by him and contains many errors. He kindly provided me an emended version of the relevant passages in the English version. The passage I quoted here is from this emended version. Forte maintains his opinion in another of his articles, "Marginalia on the First International Symposium on Longmen Studies," *Studies in Central & East Asian Religions* 7 (1994), p. 77.

Japanese female ruler Empress Shōtoku 稱徳 (a.k.a. Kōken 孝謙, 718-70; r. 749-58, 764-770), whose reign bears comparison with that of her counterpart in China, sponsored an enormous project of creating one million miniature pagodas containing printed copies of the same *dhāraṇī* text²¹². Partly based on Kornicki's study, T. H. Barrett has recently associated this *dhāraṇī* text, or the *dhāraṇī*(s) contained therein, with the funeral rites of the empress. He suggests that the 706 text in Korea might be traced back to the effort on the part of Zhongzong to honor (or pacify) the empress's spirit by spreading printed copies of the *dhāraṇī* text to the whole kingdom and several neighboring states including Korea²¹³. This *dhāraṇī* text was picked not only because it was one of the last translations that the empress had ever sponsored, but also its alleged inconceivable posthumous benefits for the deceased.

We cannot conclude this discussion of Empress Wu's involvement in dharma-relic veneration without mentioning a third text, which, although much shorter than the two discussed above, was also important for the dharma-relic cult. Entitled "Foshuo zaota gongde jing" 佛說造塔功德經 (Sūtra Preached by the Buddha about the Merits of Constructing Pagodas), this *sūtra* was translated by the same Divākara in Yonglong 1 (21 September 680 – 24 January 681)²¹⁴. As this text has been accurately translated and capably studied by Daniel Boucher, here let me but observe that by urging its readers to reproduce the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā*, which

²¹² Shōtoku is well known for her deep reliance, both political and emotional, on the Buddhist monk Dōkyō 道鏡 (d. 772), who was believed to have been her secret lover and who almost succeeded in becoming an emperor in his own right. See Yokota Ken'ichi 横田健一, *Dōkyō 道鏡* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1959); Ross Bender, "The Hachiman Cult and the Dōkyō Incident," *Monumenta Nipponica* 34 (1979), pp. 125-53; and Paul Groner, *Saichō: The Establishment of the Japanese Tendai School* (Seoul: Po Chin Chai Ltd, 1984), pp. 10-11.

For the construction of the one million miniature pagodas sponsored by Empress Shōtoku (generally known as "Hyakumantō" 百萬塔), in addition to Nakane Katsu's 中根勝 monograph, *Hyakumantō darani no kenkyū* 百萬塔陀羅尼の研究 (Osaka: Hyakumantō darani no kenkyū iinkai, 1987), see also Nakada Sukeo 中田祐夫, "Hōryūji Hyakumantō darani no insatsu" 法隆寺百萬塔陀羅尼の印刷, *Bunbutsu* 49 (1981), pp. 72-85; Brian Hickman, "A Note on the Hyakumantō Dhāraṇī," *Monumenta Nipponica* 30 (1975), pp. 87-93; Yieng-pruksawan, "One Million of a Buddha."

²¹³ Barrett, "Stūpa, *sūtra* and Śāra in China," pp. 51-58.

²¹⁴ T no. 699. The translation date is recorded in the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, T vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 564a8.

it regards as the Buddha's *dharamkāya* (*fo fashen* 佛法身), and put the copies into pagodas, this *sūtra* presents an interesting contrast to the former two *dhāraṇī sūtras*, which conceive *dhāraṇī*-pillars or pagodas containing *dhāraṇī*-texts as pagodas²¹⁵.

As is presented in the version prepared by Divākara, the *pratīyasamutpādagāthā* is composed of the following four lines:

諸法因緣生，
我說是因緣。
盡故滅因緣，
我作如是說。

All dharmas arise from a cause,
I have explained this cause.
When the cause is exhausted, there is cessation.
I have produced such a teaching²¹⁶.

(VI) *Ties by Blood and Dharma: A Comparative Study of Emperor Wen and Empress Wu's Political Use of Buddhism*

As noted above, the founding emperor of the Sui Yang Jian, the patron of three large-scale relic-distributions at the beginning of the seventh century, was a predecessor for Empress Wu in her relic veneration. A comparison of these two sovereigns might therefore shed some new light on this aspect of Empress Wu's complicated political and religious life. Let us start this comparative study with these lines:

高祖勃焉革命，
就日合明，則天齊聖。
中興王道，深入法性。
調御淳和，汲引樂淨。
佛身舍利，帝儀靈爽。

²¹⁵ Daniel Boucher, "The *pratīyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14/1 (1991), pp. 1-27. See pp. 8-10 for his English translation of this *sūtra*.

²¹⁶ *T* vol. 16, no. 699, p. 801b10-11; translation by Boucher at p. 9 in the article quoted above. The same *gāthā* also appears in the *Yufo gongde jing* 浴佛功德經 (Sūtra on the Merit of Bathing the Buddha) translated by Yijing in 710; see *T* vol. 16, no. 698, p. 800a10-12; Boucher, "Sūtra on the Merit of Bathing the Buddha," p. 65.

八彩光華，五色炫晃。
 合寶為塔，鎔金成像。
 十方迴向，兆民瞻仰。

Gaozu rose to launch a revolution:
 Approaching the sun, he merged himself with it in brightness;
 Modeling himself on Heaven, he matched the [ancient] sages.
 He renewed the Way of the [Former] Kings,
 and penetrating deep into the dharma-nature.
 Regulating and manipulating Pure Harmony,
 he led people to the bliss and purity.
 The relics of the Buddha's body
 [make] the emperor's manners numinous and lofty.
 In their eight tints, [the relics are] bright and brilliant,
 they shine dazzlingly with five colors.
 Putting jewels together to build pagodas,
 melting metal to cast images.
 Directing merits to the buddhas in the ten directions,
 billions upon billions of people looked at [His Majesty] with reverence.

Some expressions in these lines, such as *geming* 革命 (revolution), usually a euphemism for usurpation, and Zetian 則天 (“to model on heaven”), one of Empress Wu's self-imposed titles, might suggest that the empress is the subject here. Is this correct? It is not. These lines are from an inscription on a memorial stele for a pagoda set up at a temple built by Yang Zhong 楊忠 (507-568), the father of the first Sui emperor Wendi²¹⁷. It might go too far to assume that the title Zetian was copied from this inscription, as the concept is in fact traceable to such classics as the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*)²¹⁸. However, it is undoubtedly significant that both

²¹⁷ See “Da Sui Hedong jun Shoushan Qiyang dao-chang sheli-ta bei” 大隋河東郡首山栖巖道場舍利塔碑 (Stele for the Pagoda at the Qiyang dao-chang at Shoushan of Hedong Prefecture; by He Deren 賀德仁 [557?-627?] around 608), *Shike shiliao xinbian* 1.4.3059b4-7.

For the Qiyangsi and He Deren's inscription for the reliquary pagoda at the temple, see my discussion in *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Two and Appendix A.

²¹⁸ See *The Analects*, VIII:

子曰，大哉，堯之為君也！魏魏乎，唯天為大，唯堯則之。蕩蕩乎，民無能名焉。其有成功也，煥乎其有文章。(Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 [tr.], *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958], p. 8)

The Master said, “Great indeed was Yao as a ruler! How lofty! It is Heaven that is great and it was Yao who modelled himself upon it. He was so boundless that the common people

Empress Wu and Emperor Wen's ideologues happened to cast their patrons in terms of the same ideal. Moreover, this inscription also carries another significant echo in its reference to the young Yang Jian's guardian, the "Divine Nun" Zhixian, as the "Divine Mother" (*shenmu* 神母), which reminds us of the title that the empress first assumed on 21 June 688, the "Sacred Mother and Divine Emperor" (Shengmu shenhuang 聖母神皇)²¹⁹. All this underscores the necessity of comparing these two medieval Chinese monarchs.

As soon as we subject them to a comparison, a number of significant similarities emerge. They are both famous for their enthusiastic patronage of Buddhism, and they were both regarded in Chinese historiography as usurpers, one taking the rule from her own son, the other from his "grandson"²²⁰. What makes this comparison more interesting and rewarding is the fact that they were relatives.

Empress Wu was one of the three daughters of Wu Shihuo 武士護 (577-635) and his wife *née* Yang (Madam Rongguo 榮國夫人, 579-670)²²¹, whom he married around 620 as his second wife. This marriage is noteworthy for the following two reasons. First, it was arranged by Tang

were not able to put a name to his virtues. Lofty was he in his successes and brilliant was he in his accomplishments!" (D. C. Lau [tr.], *The Analects* [Penguin Books, 1979], p. 94)

²¹⁹ For Shenmu, see "Da Sui Hedong jun Shoushan Qiyandaochang sheli-ta zhi bei," *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.4.3058b3. For Empress Wu's adoption of the title "Shenmu shenhuang," see *Xin Tang shu* 4: 87; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, p. 4, note 1.

²²⁰ Yang Jian's daughter, Yang Lihua 楊麗華 (561-609), officially known as Empress Yang (Yang Huanghou 楊皇后), was the first of Zhou Xuandi's 周宣帝 (578-79) five empresses. Although the biological mother of Yuwen Yan 宇文弼 (573-81), Xuandi's eldest son and the future Zhou Jingdi 周靜帝 (r. 579-81), was another of Xuandi's empresses, Zhu Huanghou 朱皇后 (547-86), because of Empress Yang's paramount status among Xuandi's five empresses and many consorts and concubines, he automatically became her son when he was proclaimed as the Heir Apparent in 579. In this sense, Jingdi was regarded as a grandson of Yang Jian. It is interesting to note that Empress Yang seemed to have identified herself more closely with the Yuwen family in general and her "son" Jingdi in particular than with her father Yang Jian, as her biography tells us that she was strongly opposed to her father's usurpation in 581; see *Zhou shu* 周書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971), 9: 146. She was granted the title Princess Yueping 樂平 sometime after her father founded his own dynasty. Boodberg briefly discusses this woman in his "Marginalia to the Histories of the Northern Dynasties," *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg* (comp. Alvin P. Cohen, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979), p. 322.

²²¹ In 660, five years after she became Gaozong's empress in 655, Empress Wu won for her mother the title "Madam Rongguo"; see *Jiu Tang shu* 4: 81.

Gaozu (Li Yuan) and his daughter Princess Guiyang 桂陽, whose husband, Yang Shidao 楊師道 (?-647), was a cousin of *née* Yang (their fathers were brothers [see below])²²². Second, Madam Rongguo was from the imperial family of the Sui. Her father, Yang Da 楊達 (551-612), was a younger brother of Yang Xiong 楊雄 (542-612) (Shidao's father), who was a *zuzi* 族子 of Yang Jian according to some historical sources²²³. Another source suggests the opposite — Yang Jian was a *zuzi* of Yang Xiong — in other words, Yang Jian and Yang Xiong belonged to the same clan, with one (Yang Jian) one generation junior to the other (Yang Xiong). Let us here have a quick look at the latter view regarding the relationship between Yang Jian and Yang Xiong/Yang Da.

Under the section of the Yang family in the “Zaixiang shixi” of the *Xin Tang shu*, we find the following information about Yang Jian's lineage:

- [1] Yang Qu 楊渠 → [2] Yang Xuan 楊鉉 → [3] Yang Yuanshou 楊元壽 →
 [4] Yang Huigu 楊慧嘏 → [5] Yang Lie 楊烈 → [6] Yang Zhen 楊禎 → [7]
 Yang Zhong 楊忠 → [8] Yang Jian 楊堅

²²² *Née* Yang was already forty-two years old when she was married to Wu Shihuo (supposed the marriage happened in 620 [see below]). Her life and family background are described in a memorial epitaph, entitled “Wushang xiaoming Gao Huanghou beiming bing xu” 無上孝明高皇后碑銘並序 (Epitaph, with a preface, for the Grand Empress Wushang Xiaoming). See *Quan Tang wen* 239.6a-17a; also included in the *Baqiongshi jinshi buzheng* 八瓊室金石補正 (Baqiongshi's Supplementary and Correcting Remarks on Metal and Stone Inscriptions), *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.7.4727b-4732b. The inscription was written by Wu Sansi on 6 February 702 (Chang'an 2.1.15) (this date is given in the version of the *Baqiongshi jinshi buzheng*, but not in the *Quan Tang wen* version), almost one decade after Empress Wu had the posthumous imperial title “Wushang xiaoming Gao Huanghou” 無上孝明高皇后 accorded to her in 693. According to this epitaph, shortly after Wu Shihuo lost his first wife, Li Yuan heard of the good reputation of the future Madam Rongguo and asked his daughter to act as a go-between for Shihuo and her. This is confirmed by the *Cefu yuangui*, which also reports that this remarriage happened during the Wude era (618-26) (853: 3273b8-11). See also Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien*, p. 15, 207, 209 (Guisso dates the marriage to 620). The same epitaph also identifies Yang Da, Yang Shao 楊紹 (d. ca. 557) and Yang Ding 楊定 as her father, grandfather and great-grandfather (*Quan Tang wen* 239.7a4-8a1; *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.7.4728a1ff). This remarkable marriage is also recorded in the inscription that Empress Wu commissioned Li Qiao 李嶠 (644-713) to write in early 702 for her father's mausoleum, the “Panlong-tai bei” 攀龍臺碑 (Inscription of the Panglong-tai), *Quan Tang wen* 249.10a2ff.

²²³ In the *Bei shi*, Yang Xiong and Yang Da's biographies follow that of their father, Yang Shao (*Beishi* 68: 2369-70, 2371), while Yang Xiong's biography is followed by Yang Da's in the *Sui shu* (43: 1215-17, 1218). Yang Xiong's relationship with Yang Jian is noted in *Sui Shu* 43: 1215.

After this, we are told the following about Yang Da's family:

[1] Yang Qu 楊渠 → [2]? → [3] Yang Xing 楊興 → [4] Yang Guo 楊國 →
[5] Yang Ding → [6] Yang Shao → [7] Yang Da²²⁴.

Thus, contrary to the *Sui shu*, which implies that Yang Da was a *zuzi* of Yang Jian, the *Xin Tang shu*, by identifying Yang Da and Yang Jian as seventh and eighth generation grandsons of the same Yang Qu, establishes Yang Jian as a *zuzi* of Yang Da. Which one is correct? It is hard to make a decisive answer on the basis of the material at our disposal. Given that the *Xin Tang shu* provides much more detailed information about the family backgrounds of both Yang Jian and Yang Da, it seems reasonable that the view supported by the *Xin Tang shu* is to be preferred. If this is correct, then Yang Jian was a kinsman one generation senior to Empress Wu, whose ninth generation grandfather, Yang Qu, was his eighth generation grandfather.

No matter which account about Empress Wu and Emperor's kinship relationship is correct, there is no room to doubt this relationship proper. It also seems certain that Empress Wu's mother Madam Rongguo, like her granduncle Yang Xiong, was a devout believer in Buddhism too, which seemed to have been their family faith. We already noted in Section (I) Yang Xiong's role as a chief director of the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns. The staunch early Tang Buddhist apologist Falin 法琳 (572-640) highly praised Yang Xiong for his effort to promote Buddhism, attributing to him the construction of the Buddhist temple Guiyisi 歸依寺²²⁵. Regarding Madam Rongguo's devotion to Buddhism, Yancong 彦悰 (d. after 688) tells us the following:

敬崇正化，大建福門，造像書經，架築相續。²²⁶

[She] revered the True Teachings [of Buddhism], widely built "merit-gates"; had [Buddha-]images built and [Buddhist] scriptures copied, and continuously engaged in the [temple-]construction projects.

²²⁴ *Xin Tang shu* 71: 2347-48, 2350-58. These two lineages in the "Zaixiang shixi" are also discussed by Nunome Chōfū 布目朝瀨, although he does not note its discrepancy with what is said about Yang Xiong's relationship with Yang Jian in *Sui shu*. See Nunome, *Zui Tō shi kenkyū* 隋唐史研究 (Kyoto: Nakamura insatsu kabushiki gaisha, 1968), p. 173-74.

²²⁵ *Bianzheng lun* T vol. 52, no. 2110, 518a12-18.

The kinship background shared by Yang Jian and Wu Zhao might lead one to assume that Empress Wu's attitudes towards, and use of Buddhism were influenced by her Sui relatives. It even does not sound so far-fetched to assume that Empress Wu's usurpation might have been to some extent inspired and encouraged by that committed by Sui Wendi, arguably her most preeminent male relative. These assumptions are bolstered by a number of similar strategies that they employed in justifying and solidifying their secular power.

To snatch power from a close relative would probably have been condemned by many societies²²⁷. In particular, the ways by which Sui Wendi and Empress Wu seized supreme power were unacceptable in traditional Chinese political theory, which is centered around the idea of the "Heavenly Mandate" (*tianming* 天命). According to this theory, a secular rule was established by virtue of the Heavenly Mandate, although the conferment of the Heavenly Mandate was neither unconditional nor eternal. Should a recipient of the Heavenly Mandate prove incompetent and/or immoral, it could be revoked and re-conferred on a more qualified candidate. As a matrilineal relative of a ruling emperor, Yang Jian (Sui Wendi) or Wu Zhao (Empress Wu) was regarded as a member of the imperial family, the current holder of the "Heavenly Mandate." The "Heavenly Mandate" involved not just the individual ruling emperor; it also embraced his extended family. As theoretically a challenger to the holder of the "Heavenly Mandate" had to come from outside the latter's family, neither Yang Jian nor Wu Zhao was qualified to be the substitute of the incumbent ruler as the new recipient of the "Heavenly Mandate." Both of them were therefore faced with a serious legitimacy problem. For Empress Wu, the problem of political legitimacy was heightened by the fact that she was not only a usurper, but also a female usurper — in imperial China, political ethics forbade a woman from assuming supreme

²²⁶ *Ji Shamen buying baisu dengshi* 集沙門不應拜俗等事 (Collection about Buddhist Monks not Bowing to the Secular [Authorities] and Other Issues; compiled sometime after 662), *T* vol. 52, no. 2108, 456a6. Cf. *Guang Hongmingji*, *T* vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 284c28. See also Chen Yinque, "Wuzhao yu fojiao" and Rao Zongyi, "Cong shike lun Wu Hou zhi zongjiao xinyang."

²²⁷ This might not have been true in Central Asian nomadic societies, from which the Tang were ultimately descended.

power²²⁸. As they committed some traditionally unacceptable political misdeeds, Sui Wendi and Empress Wu turned to Buddhism for legitimating their usurpation.

First of all, they had themselves depicted as restorers of Buddhism: Wendi saved Buddhism from the Northern Zhou state persecution, while Empress Wu rescued Buddhism from the rather less brutal prohibition it had suffered at the hands of the first two Tang emperors (Gaozu and Taizong)²²⁹. To be specific, Wendi and his ideologues manufactured and promoted a legend of his birth. In this legend, he is raised in a Buddhist nunnery by a mysterious figure, the so-called “Divine Nun,” who became almost a “Dynastic Guardian” for the Sui rulers in the state ideology. As this legend has it, this “Divine Nun” saw Yang Jian as a bodhisattva reborn in China, where, she predicted, he was to restore Buddhism, which was then suppressed by the Northern Zhou rulers. The most illustrative expression of this ideology is found in the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 (Records of the Three Treasures through the Ages; compiled in 598) by Fei Zhangfang 費長房 (d. after 598), who himself was a chief ideologue of Emperor Wen. Not only does Fei Zhangfang depict Yang Jian as a heavenly emissary appointed to rule the world and restore Buddhism, but also he hails the Sui replacement of the Northern Zhou ruler as a triumph of the dharma — an evil anti-Buddhist force was eventually overcome by a virtuous king intent on reversing the course of decline or even extinction of Buddhism in China²³⁰. Similarly, Empress Wu’s Buddhist ideologues also described their patroness as a bodhisattva (or even Maitreya) reincarnated in China for a similar mission²³¹. Here the two usurpers are depicted as two divine saviours of the dharma and by extension, also of

²²⁸ See Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞, “Female Rulers in Imperial China” (*Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 23: 47-61), pp. 50-52; Richard Guisso, *Wu Tse-T’ien*, p. 68.

²²⁹ For Gaozu and Taizong’s effort to reduce the power and influence of Buddhism, see Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, *Sui Tang fojiao shigao* 隋唐佛教史稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), pp. 10-18; and Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T’ang*, pp. 5-27. Arthur Wright discusses Taizong’s attitudes and policies towards Buddhism in “T’ang T’ai-tsung and Buddhism,” *Perspectives on the T’ang* (eds. Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett; New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 239-63.

²³⁰ *Lidai sanbao ji*, T vol. 49, no. 2034, p. 107b17-25; Chen Jinhua, *Monks and Monarchs*, Chapter Three.

²³¹ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 153-68.

the world whose operation depends on the dharma. A misdeed that might be condemned by secular moral standards was thus justified by being presented as a necessary measure to invest a bodhisattva reincarnate with secular power, which would enable him or her to fulfil a divine mission.

These two Chinese emperors took further measures in order to cast themselves as Buddhist universal sovereigns (*cakravartin*). In the legend of Yang Jian's birth and a story inserted into a Chinese translation of a Sanskrit text (see below), the Sui ideologues make no secret of their intention to depict their patron as an incarnate bodhisattva or even a Buddha, an idea which is also unmistakably conveyed by Yang Jian's self-proclaimed designation "Bodhisattva Son of Heaven" (*pusa tianzi* 菩薩天子)²³². Furthermore, prodded by his ambition of becoming an Aśoka-like *cakravartin* sovereign, Wendi elaborately planned and performed the relic-distribution campaigns during the last few years of his protracted reign.

Empress Wu similarly presented herself as an incarnation of the Devī Jīngguāng 淨光 (Skt. Vimalaprabhā, literally, "Pure Light"). She and her ideologues also carried out an ambitious project to alter, re-interpret and disseminate two Indian Buddhist scriptures, the *Baoyu jing* 寶雨經 and *Dayun jing*²³³. As a matter of fact, on 13 October 693, the Empress proclaimed herself as the Golden-wheel king, the highest of the *cakravartin* sovereigns²³⁴. The splendid complex of the *mingtang* completed in 689 was also, as Antonino Forte convincingly demonstrates, constructed under the guidance of the *cakravartin* ideology²³⁵.

To their satisfaction, Sui Wendi and Empress Wu found in the *cakravartin* theory a very attractive ideal of a universal sovereign and a very effective means of political legitimation in comparison to traditional

²³² Wright, "The Formation of Sui Ideology," p. 98.

²³³ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, Chapter One (for the *Dayun jing*) and Chapter Three (for the *Baoyu jing*). The *Baoyu jing* (i.e. *Foshuo baoyu jing* 佛說寶雨經) (Skt. *Ratnamegha sūtra*; Sūtra of the Precious Rains), translated by Dharmaruci (a.k.a. Bodhiruci; Ch. Putiliuzhi 菩提流支, 572?-727) in 693, T no. 660. While Empress Wu's ideologues contented themselves with re-interpreting the *Dayun jing*, they altered the original of the *Ratnamegha sūtra*, to which they added some passages aimed at glorifying Empress Wu's image as a female *cakravartin* sanctioned by the Buddha.

²³⁴ *Jiu Tang shu* 6: 123, *Xin Tang shu* 76: 3483, *Zizhi tongjian* 205: 6492; Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 142-43.

²³⁵ Forte, *Mingtang*, especially pp. 254-55.

theories of kingship. As is clearly shown by the pictoriographic form of the Chinese character indicating a ruler, *wang* 王, Chinese kingship theory understands a ruler as a connection between the three aspects of the universe: heaven, human and earth²³⁶; he is no more than a human representative of heaven; or simply put, an agent of the divine, who is nominated, approved by and responsible to this higher principle. In contrast to the Chinese traditional kingship theory, the Indian *cakravartin* idea regards a king as an incarnation of the Buddha who wielded unlimited power over the whole world. Thus, represented as Indian Bodhisattvas reborn in China, Sui Wendi and Empress Wu found themselves powerful enough to disregard Chinese traditional political ethics and furthermore, found themselves entitled to rule not only China but the whole world. This unconventional ideology of political legitimation appeared more effective and powerful than the traditional one — it was universal in comparison to the traditional one which was local in the sense that it was confined to China, which, according to Buddhist cosmology, only represented a tiny quarter of the universe.

In order to demonstrate better the nature of the connection between Emperor Wen and Empress Wu with regards to their political recapitalization of Buddhism, let us here elaborate on their exploitation of the famous legend of Candraprabhakumāra's (Ch. Yueguang tongzi 月光童子) pre-destined mission in China.

The Candraprabha story is first expounded in one of the three extant Chinese versions of the *Candraprabhakumāra sūtra*, the *Foshuo shenri jing* 佛說申日經²³⁷, according to which Candraprabha would be reborn in China (Qinguo 秦國) as a sage-king (*shengjun* 聖君), who would promote

²³⁶ Before being reiterated in Xu Shen's 許慎 (30-124) authoritative lexicon, the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (completed in 100), this understanding had already been asserted by the Former Han (206 BC – 25) philosopher Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BC). See Julia Ching, *Mysticism and Kingship in China: The Heart of Chinese Wisdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 35.

²³⁷ *T* no. 535, vol. 14; one *juan*, translated by Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa, fl. 266-313). The other two versions, one also attributed to Dharmarakṣa (the *Yueguang tongzi jing* 月光童子經, *T* no. 534) and the other (*Shenri benjing* 申日兒本經) by Guṇabhadra (394-468, *T* no. 534), are also both in one *juan*. The passage regarding Candraprabha, only found in the *Foshuo shenri jing* and not in its two different versions, was obviously an interpolation made by its translator in order to please the Chinese rulers.

Buddhism so enthusiastically and effectively that not only China but also her neighboring regions, including Shanshan 鄯善 (Ruoqiang 若羌, Xinjiang), Wuchang 烏長 (=Wuchang 烏婁?, Udyāna or Uḍḍyāna), Guici 歸茲 (Kucha), Shule 疏勒 (Kāsha, in Xinjiang), Dayuan 大宛 (one of the thirty-six states in the “Western Region” [Xiyu 西域]; in present-day Ferghana, Russia), Yutian 于填 (Khotan), and all the other “barbarian territories,” would be turned into Buddhist countries²³⁸. Inspired by this story, Emperor Wen’s ideologues had the Indian monk Narendrayaśas (Ch. Naliantilyeshe 那連提黎耶舍, a.k.a. Naliantiyeshe 那連提耶舍, 490?-589) insert a lengthy passage into his Chinese translation of the *Śrīgūptasūtra*, the *Dehu Zhangzhe jing* 德護長者經 (in two *juan*)²³⁹.

In this passage, the Buddha makes the following prophecies about Candraprabhakumāra and his reincarnation. After the Buddha’s Parinirvāṇa Candraprabha will rise to protect the Law of the Buddha; furthermore, when the Buddhadharmā enters the “Last Period” (*mofa* 末法), he will be reborn in a country called Great Sui within the Jambudvīpa Continent, to be a great king with the name (or title?) of “Daxing” 大行 (Great Practice). Under his rule, all the sentient beings in the Great Sui would take faith in the Law of the Buddha, and plant various good roots. In particular, King Daxing would worship the Buddha’s alms-bowl (*fobo* 佛鉢) with great faith and great power of virtue, which would, in a few years, cause the arrival in the Great Sui of the Buddha’s alms-bowl via Kashgar (Ch. Shale 沙勒) and other countries. Making great offerings in the place of the Buddha’s alms-bowl, King Daxing would maintain the Law

²³⁸ *T* vol. 14, no. 535, p. 819b1-5. For the importance of Candraprabha in Chinese prophetic and eschatological literature, see E[rik] Zürcher, “Eschatology and Messianism in Early Chinese Buddhism” (*Leyden Studies in Sinology: Papers Presented at the Conference held in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Sinological Institute of Leyden University, December 8-12, 1980* [ed. W. L. Idema, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981], pp. 34-56), and his “Prince Moonlight: Messianism and Eschatology in Early Medieval Chinese Buddhism” (*T’oung-pao* LXVIII 1-3 [1982], pp. 1-75); the *Shenri jing* prophecy about Candraprabha’s rebirth in China is discussed in “Eschatology and Messianism,” pp. 46-47 and “Prince Moonlight,” p. 24; see also Kang Le 康樂, “Zhuānlunwáng guānnián yu zhōngguó zhōnggu de fójiao zhèngzhì” 轉輪王觀念與中國中古的佛教政治, *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 67/1 (1996), pp. 128-30.

²³⁹ *T* no. 545, completed in 583. This text is related to the *Candraprabha-kumāra sūtra* both in content and form. Narendrayaśas has biographies in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* (*T* vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 432a-433b) and the *Lidai sanbao ji*, *T* vol. 49, no. 2034, pp. 102c-103a.

of the Buddha by copying countless Mahāyāna “Extensive and Equal” (Ch. *fangdeng* 方等, Skt. *vaipulya*) *sūtras*; by making countless Buddha-images and Buddha-pagodas (*fota* 佛塔)²⁴⁰, and by arousing countless sentient beings’ “never-retreating” (Skt. *avaivartika*, Ch. *butuizhuan* 不退轉) faith in the Law of the Buddha. Subsequently, the Buddha turns to prophesy the fate of King Daxing himself. By virtue of all the merits accumulated through the offerings he had made to the Buddha, Candraprabha (now King Daxing) would be reborn in the places of the immeasurable, boundless and ineffable Buddhas and would always rule as the Cakravartin King in all the “Buddha Realms” (*focha* 佛刹; Skt. *buddha-kṣetra*). Always possessed of the good fortune of encountering the Buddha, he would worship, respect and praise the “Three Jewels,” and erect pagodas and temples. In the middle of his life-span, he would abandon secular life and join the saṃgha, setting an example for all the people in Jambudvīpa to emulate. Finally, the Buddha prophesies that King Daxing will become a Buddha in the future²⁴¹.

In his *Lidai sanbao ji*, Fei Zhangfang, a Buddhist ideologue of Emperor Wen, quotes this prophecy in the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* and asserts its veracity by referring to the Northern Zhou persecution of Buddhism and the efforts Emperor Wen made to rescue the religion from this severe setback²⁴².

Interestingly enough, a very similar passage is found in a Chinese version of the *Ratnamegha sūtra*, the *Baoyu jing*, prepared by Empress Wu’s Buddhist ideologues in 693. In this passage, a Devaputra (Ch. *tianzi* 天子), also called Candraprabha, is prophesied by the Buddha to appear in the last period following the Parinirvāṇa (i.e. the fourth five-hundred year period) when the dharma is about to fade away, in Mahācīna (i.e. Great China) in the north-western region of this continent of Jambudvīpa, where he, manifesting himself in a female body, will assume the position of

²⁴⁰ Understanding the *fota* as relic-shrines, Zürcher believes that the text here refers to Emperor Wen’s imitation of King Aśoka’s effort to construct Buddhist pagodas. As this did not happen until the very beginning of the seventh century, Zürcher (“Prince Moonlight,” p. 26) suspects that the insertion of this passage into the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* may have been made at this date, or somewhat later.

²⁴¹ *T* vol. 14, no. 545, p. 849b-c. A partial English translation of this passage is found in Zürcher, “Eschatology and Messianism,” p. 47.

²⁴² *T* vol. 49, no. 2034, p. 107b7-25.

Avaivartika (i.e. Avaivartika Bodhisattva, the never-retreating Bodhisattva who goes straight to *nirvāṇa*). He/she will sustain and promote the Law of the Buddha, erect pagodas and temples and honor the śramaṇas by offering them all the necessities. Endowed with the name “Yuejingguang” 月淨光 (“Moon-like Pure Light”), he/she will be an Avaivartika Bodhisattva and a Cakravartin King²⁴³. As Antonino Forte and other scholars rightly point out, this passage, which is not found in other three Chinese versions of the *Ratnamegha sūtra*, was forged by Empress Wu’s Buddhist ideologues²⁴⁴. However, its remarkable similarities with the passage in the *Dehu Zhangzhe jing* (e.g. the rebirth in China as a great king, the ideals of the *cakravatin* king and never-retrogressing faith [or Bodhisattva]²⁴⁵, the protection of the “Three Jewels,” etc) strongly suggest that this passage in the *Baoyu jing* was actually inspired by if not directly modeled on that in the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* concerning Emperor Wen²⁴⁶.

Some Concluding Remarks

As soon as we examine Empress Wu’s involvement in relic veneration throughout her sustained rule, we immediately find that it started and ended with the Famensi relic, which was closely related to, if not directly derived from, the Renshou relic distribution campaigns sponsored by her Sui relative, Emperor Wen. We also note with interest the important role that Daoxuan, who can be taken as a “dharma-nephew” of Tanqian, an architect of the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns, played in escorting

²⁴³ See Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 130-32 for an English translation of this passage. In the same book (p. 131, footnote 23) Forte suggests that the name of Yuejingguang was chosen purposely in order to remind the reader of the name of the Devakanyā Vimalaprabhā (Jingguang), the object of the Buddha’s prophecy in the *Dayun jing*.

²⁴⁴ Forte, *Political Propaganda*, pp. 132-36.

²⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, the Sanskrit term *avaivartika* can mean an *avaivartika* bodhisattva and *avaivartika* faith as well, since the two are considered inseparable (an *avaivartika* bodhisattva is a bodhisattva with *avaivartika* faith).

²⁴⁶ Zürcher (“Eschatology and Messianism,” p. 48) has already noted that Emperor Wen’s political use of the Prince Moonlight legend had set up a precedent which Empress Wu and her ideologues might have followed. This is supported by Hubert Durt, *Problems of Chronology and Eschatology: Four Lectures on the Essays on Buddhism by Tominaga Nakamoto (1715-1746)* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 1994), p. 54. However, neither of them has raised the possibility that the two passages in the *Dehu zhangzhe jing* and the *Baoyu jing* might have been directly connected.

the relic back to the Famensi in 662. When Empress Wu was approaching the end of her life, both politically and biologically, she once again resorted to the Famensi relic, apparently in hope of halting the gradual dwindling of her power as her age and health turned against her. In this case, the “divine relics” proved to be as inefficacious as they had been exactly one century earlier with her great Sui relative who embraced them with equal fervour, enthusiasm and high expectations. Just like Emperor Wen, who died (or was murdered by his own Crown Prince as some historians suspect) three months after the third relic-distribution was undertaken under his command²⁴⁷, Empress Wu also breathed her last barely ten months after bringing the Famensi relic to her capital. In comparison with Emperor Wen, Empress Wu appears to be the more pitiful figure given that she was even betrayed by, among others, a Buddhist leader whom she had trusted for years and who was a, if not the, director of the Famensi relic veneration of 705.

The exhuming of the numerous relics in the Guangzhai quarter and their subsequent distribution all over the country was obviously an important aspect of the ideology prepared for the empress's subsequent usurpation. It is important to note that Guangzhai (19 October 684 – 8 February 685) became the second reign title that the empress adopted for her regency after deposing one of her sons, Zhongzong, and then neutralizing the other (Ruizong), whom she had set up and manipulated as a puppet-emperor until she had him abdicated in 690. By doing this, she obviously hoped to refresh and reinforce people's memory of the Guangzhai relics and their profound implications. It is clear that this politico-religious strategy was inspired by the Renshou relic-distribution campaigns, although the latter were more directly driven by Emperor Wen's expansionist agenda, rather than the need to legitimate a likewise problematic rule. This makes the following fact particularly meaningful for us to understand the complicated relationship between Empress Wu and her relatives in the Sui: one of her grand-uncles, Yang Xiong, had figured in the Renshou relic-distribution campaign. Our brief comparison between Sui Wendi

²⁴⁷ Emperor Wen died on 13 August 604 (Renshou 4.7.13 [*dingwei*]), only three months after the third and last relic distribution during the Renshou era, which was executed on 11 May 605 (Renshou 4.4.8).

and Empress Wu not only points to the direct political connections between them, but it also suggests that the whole series of pro-Buddhist policies adopted by Empress Wu was very likely modeled at least as much on Sui Wendi as it was on ideas taken from Buddhist canonical literature. We are here presented with two excellent examples of how the family faith of two medieval Chinese rulers informed their political perspectives. As two of the most “Buddhist” rulers of a unified China, both Emperor Wen and Empress Wu seem to have been obsessed, at least in a certain phase of his or her rule, with the vision of establishing a Buddhist kingdom in China. Evidence even shows that they might have tried to supplement their expansionistic pursuits with their Buddhist ideals. For different reasons, their efforts in this aspect failed, but not without leaving some profound legacies, which require serious assessment.

Although tradition attributes the discovery of the Guangzhai relics to the prognostic ability of an unspecified soothsayer, it appears to be of little doubt that the relics were buried there in advance by Empress Wu’s ideologues for excavation. Throughout the Guangzhai relic campaign, the role of a so far almost entirely neglected man is particularly suspicious. He is Facheng, or Wang Shoushen. Both his secular and monastic biographies depict him not only as a prudent and wise official but also as a devout Buddhist practitioner. However, given that before becoming a monk Wang Shoushen had been an important member of Empress Wu’s secret police system and that he was later ordered to reside at the Guangzhaisi (the Qibaotaisi) — apparently as a leader of this highly political monastery, I suspect that this man was very likely a mastermind behind the Guangzhai relic campaign (I am even willing to suggest that his assumption of a monastic life might have been arranged for supervising the Guangzhaisi). His role in the construction of the “Pond for Releasing Life” in the Western Marketplace of Chang’an, which pointedly reminded people of the connections between the Sui and Great Zhou dynasties through the prophecy borne on a stone stele, also betrays his intention of justifying Empress Wu’s usurpation with some sort of divine legitimacy. It is also noteworthy that this project might have been accomplished through his collaboration with Empress Wu’s daughter Princess Taiping.

It warrants our attention that the Renshou relic campaigns appear to have been a main source of inspiration for Empress Wu’s political use of

Buddhist relics, as is remarkably shown by the cases of the relic veneration surrounding the Fanjingsi, the Renshousi Maitreya Pavilion and probably also the Jingzhou Dayunsi. On the other hand, although the scale of the distribution of the Guangzhai relics was even larger in comparison with its Sui precedent, no evidence shows that the empress followed the Sui precedent by building new pagodas to enshrine the relics. Empress Wu's decision of not fully following her Sui relative in handling the divine relics might have been primarily out of economic considerations. Also, there might have been the suspicion that the Renshou campaigns had not exactly gone well — Emperor Wen died soon after the last Renshou relic campaign.

Insofar as relic veneration is concerned, Empress Wu differed from her Sui relative in one more important point. While Emperor Wen was limited to the corporeal relics of the Buddha, Empress Wu was perhaps the first Chinese ruler to promote the cult of “dharma-relics,” which again were cheaper, easier to produce and control. It is also important to note that the empress's patronage of the dharma-relic veneration based on the *Wugou jingguang da tuoluoni jing* was fostered towards the end of her reign and life. It seems to have been largely derived from her personal concerns and fears: her heart-felt repentance for some heinous crimes that she had committed in the course of seizing and solidifying supreme power, her strong desire to lengthen her life and to neutralize all her bad karma in order to escape punishment in the after-life²⁴⁸.

Although no evidence shows that Empress Wu constructed pagodas during the Guangzhai relic distribution in 678, she did have at least one pagoda built at Songshan, probably around 700, for one hundred grains of relics, which probably came from the Guangzhai quarter too. This is another indicator of her fondness for Songshan, a mountain which she frequented, either along with her husband or on her own, and at which two

²⁴⁸ The bitterness with which the empress repented her previous crimes is demonstrated by an inscription carved on a “gold slip” (*jinjian* 金簡) and dated 29 May 700 (Jiushi 1.7.7). In this inscription the empress humbly begged Taoist deities to pardon her by removing her name from the records of the sinners. This inscription is included in *Daojiao jinshi lue* 道教金石略 (comp. Chen Yuan and ed. Chen Zhichao *et al.*, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1988), p. 93. For an excellent reproduction of the “gold slip” bearing this inscription, see *Tō no jotei Sokuten Bukō to sono jidaiten* 唐の女帝則天武后とその時代展 (Tokyo: Tokyo National Museum, 1998), p. 158. Barrett quotes and discusses this inscription in his “*Stūpa, Sūtra and Śāṛīra in China*,” pp. 47-48.

of her kinsmen retired as recluses for long periods. It is remarkable that in 700, the same year that the empress undertook her visit to Songshan, which was probably driven — at least partly — by her unfulfilled desire to “cut the ribbon” for the newly completed reliquary pagoda there, the empress summoned to Luoyang the most prominent Northern Chan leader at the time — Shenxiu²⁴⁹. Given (i) the influence of Northern Chan at Songshan, where there was a large and active group of meditation practitioners led by Shenxiu’s chief disciple Puji, and (ii) Wu Pingyi’s close association with Puji at Songshan, it is tempting to speculate that the empress’s interest in Northern Chan might have been aroused and increased during her stay at Songshan and that the summoning of Shenxiu might have been, at least partly, due to the recommendation of one, or both, of her two hermit-kinsmen who lived on the mountain.

Songshan was, however, not the only “sacred mountain” implicated in Empress Wu’s relic veneration. Wutaishan also stood out in this respect, especially for her cult of dharma-relics. As we already noted, what was at stake here was not only the Wu family’s divine status, but also China’s alleged status as the Buddhist center of the world (or of the universe, as Empress Wu’s Buddhist ideologues would claim) as a result of the empress’s ruling as the *cakravartin* sovereign. This ideological project proved to have had epochal significances in the development of Buddhism in East Asia. For example, this image of China as the new Buddhist center in the world, supported by Wutaishan’s reputation as the abode of Mañjuśrī and other stories both historically true and fake, was extensively exploited by members of the Japanese Tendai school, which lacked a direct relationship with an Indian *sūtra*. They seemed more eager than some of their Chinese “dharma-brothers” to establish China’s position as a new source of authority in Buddhism²⁵⁰.

What particularly intrigues us is, however, the inclusion of a *dharaṇī* text like the *Buddhoṣṇīṣa vijaya dhāraṇī sūtra*, which was functioning as

²⁴⁹ Shenxiu’s glorious entry into Luoyang is recorded in his biographies in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* and several Chan chronicles, in addition to his funeral epitaph written by Zhang Yue. For a careful and detailed reconstruction of this event based on these historico-biographical sources, see McRae, *The Northern School*, pp. 51-54.

²⁵⁰ See Chen Jinhua, *Making and Remaking History: A Study of Tiantai Sectarian Historiography* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1999), pp. 135-40.

a core of the cult of dharma-relics, in this major politico-religious propaganda. Was it the intrinsic connections between the Aśokan ideal and relic veneration in general that invited Empress Wu's attention to our *dharaṇī* text? It sounds logical, although this requires further supporting evidence.

Bibliography

The translation of Chinese and Japanese titles has been supplied by the author of the present article in parentheses in roman script and with no quotation marks. For secondary literature in Chinese and Japanese which already has an English title, this has been indicated in italics (in the case of books) or within quotation marks (in the case of articles).

(I) Abbreviations used in the footnotes

- S Chinese manuscripts from Dunhuang in the Stein Collection, British Library, London; references made to the *Dunhuang Baozang* 敦煌寶藏 (see Bibliography III).
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (see Bibliography III).
- XZJ Xinwenfeng (Taiwan) reprint of the *Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* 大日本續藏經 (see Bibliography III).

(II) Primary sources:

Baoyu jing → *Foshuo baoyu jing*

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- compiled in 646 by Xuanzang 玄奘 (602-64) and Bianji 辯機 (ca. 618 - ca. 648), *T* no. 2087, vol. 51.
- Da Tang Zhenyuan xu Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 大唐貞元續開元釋教錄 (Continuation to the *Kaiyuan shijiao lu*, [Compiled] during the Zhenyuan Reign-era of the Great Tang [785-805]), 3 *juan*, by Yuanzhao 圓照 (d. after 800) in 795; *T* no. 2156, vol. 55.
- Dayun jing* 大雲經 (Skt. *Mahāmegha sūtra*), 6 *juan*, tr. Dharmakṣema (385-433) sometime between 424 and 430, *T* no. 387, vol. 12.
- Dayun jing Shenhuang shouji yishu* 大雲經神皇授記義疏 (Commentary on the Meaning of the Prophecy about the Divine Emperor [i.e. Wuzhao] in the *Dayun jing* 大雲經 [Skt. *Mahāmegha sūtra*]), 1 *juan*, composed by Huaiyi 懷義 (?-695) and others around 690, S6502; see Yabuki 1933 (p. 690), Forte 1976 (Plate V).
- “Dayunsi Mile Chongge bei” 大雲寺彌勒重閣碑 “Stele for the Multi-story Maityreya Pavilion of the Dayunsi,” composed by Du Deng 杜登 (d. after 691) and calligraphed by Jing Shishan 荆師善 (d. after 691) in 691, *Shanyou shike conbian*, *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.15018b-15020a.
- Da Zhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定眾經目錄 (A Catalogue of the Buddhist Scriptures Collated and Sanctioned under the Great Zhou Dynasty [690-705]), 15 *juan*, compiled by Mingquan 明詮 (d. after 695) and others in 695, *T* no. 2153, vol. 55.
- Eun Zenji shōrai kyōbō mokuroku* 惠運禪師將來教法目錄 (Catalogue of the Buddhist Texts Brought back by Meditation Master Eun 惠運 [798-869]), 1 *juan*, compiled in 847 by Eun, *T* no. 2168A, vol. 55.
- Fajiezong wuzu lüejì* 法界宗五祖略記 (A Brief Account of [the Lives of] the Five Patriarchs of the Fajie [i.e. Huayan] School), 1 *juan*, compiled by Xufa 續法 (fl. 1680) in 1680 on the basis of Ch'oe Ch'iwŏn's 崔致遠 (857 - after 904) *Tang Tae Ch'ōnboksa kosaju pŏn'gyōng taedōk Pōpchang hwasang chŏn*, XZJ 134, pp. 542-55.
- Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Pearl-forests of the Dharma-Garden), 100 *juan*, by Daoshi 道世 (ca. 596-683) in 668, *T* no. 2122, vol. 53.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, completed around 683, attributed to Buddhapālita (Ch. Fotuoboli 佛陀波利; Juehu 覺護, Jueai 覺愛) (d. after 677), *T* no. 967, vol. 19.
- Foding zuisheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂最勝陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, trs. Du Xingyi and Divakāra (Ch. Dipoheluo 地婆訶羅; or Rizhao 日照; 612-87) and others in 682, *T* no. 969, vol. 19.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 (Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, *T* no. 974B, vol. 19; identical with T974D except that it is accompanied by the Sanskrit original of the *Uṣṇīṣavijaya dhāraṇī* not found in T974D.

- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni biefa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼別法 (Separate Methods for the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, attributed to Ruona 若那 (Skt. Prajñā?, d.u.) (allegedly active during the Tang), *T* no. 974F, vol. 19.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經, 1 *juan*, tr. Du Xingyi 杜行顛 (d. after 679) on 20 February 679, *T* no. 968, vol. 19.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni niansong yiguifa* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼念誦儀軌法 (Procedures and Methods for Reciting the Utmost Superior *dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, tr. Bukong 不空 (Amoghavajra, 805-74), *T* no. 972, vol. 19.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhenyan* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼真言 (True Words of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, *T* no. 974E, vol. 19.
- Foding zunsheng tuoluoni zhuyi* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼住義 (Meanings of the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, allegedly tr. Bukong, *T* no. 974D, vol. 19; a reproduction of the *dhāraṇī* section in Bukong's translation (*T* no. 972).
- Foshuo baoyu jing* 佛說寶雨經 (Skt. *Ratnamegha sūtra*; *Sūtra* of the Precious Rains), 10 *juan*, tr. Dharmaruci (a.k.a. Bodhiruci; Ch. Putiliuzhi 菩提流支, 572?-727) in 693, *T* no. 660, vol. 16.
- Foshuo foding zunsheng tuoluoni jing* 佛說佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經 (*Sūtra* Preached by the Buddha on the Utmost Superior *Dhāraṇī* of the Buddha's Topknot), 1 *juan*, tr. Yijing 義淨 (635-713) in 710, *T* no. 971, vol. 19.
- Foshuo shenri jing* 佛說申日經 (Skt. *Candraprabhakumāra sūtra*), 1 *juan*, tr. Zhu Fahu 竺法護 (Dharmarakṣa, fl. 266-313) sometime between 266 and 313, *T* no. 535, vol. 14.
- Foshuo zaota gongde jing* 佛說造塔功德經 (*Sūtra* Preached by the Buddha about the Merits of Constructing Pagodas), 1 *juan*, tr. Divākara in 680; *T* no. 699, vol. 16.
- Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (General Record of the Buddha and Other Patriarchs), 54 *juan*, compiled by Zhipan 志磐 (d. after 1269) between 1258 and 1269, *T* no. 2035, vol. 49.
- Gu Qingliang zhuan* 古清涼傳 (Old Record of Mount Qingliang [i.e. Wutaishan]), 2 *juan*, compiled by Huixiang 慧詳 (fl. 660s-680s) sometime between 680 and 683, *T* no. 2098, vol. 51.
- Guang Hongmingji* 廣弘明集 (An Expansion of the *Hongming ji* 弘明集 [Collection for Glorifying and Elucidating [Buddhism]]), 30 *juan*, compiled by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) in 664 and under continuous revision until at least 666, *T* no. 2103, vol. 52.
- “Guangzhaisi chaxia ming bing xu” 光宅寺刹下銘並序 (Inscription on the Base of the Guangzhaisi, with a Preface), composed in 508 probably by Zhou Xingsi 周興嗣 (d. 521); included in the *Guang Hongming ji*, *T* vol. 52, no. 2103, p. 212c3-28.
- Hossō-shū shōsho* 法相宗章疏 (Commentaries Related to the Hossō School), 1 *juan*, completed by Heiso 平祚 (d. after 914) in 914, *T* no. 2180, vol. 55.

- Huayanjing zhuanji* 華嚴經傳記 (Biographies and Accounts about the *Huayan jing*), 5 *juan*, by Fazang 法藏 (643-712), *T* no. 2073, vol. 51.
- Ji gujin fodaolunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 (A Collection of [the Documents Related to] the Buddho-Daoist Controversies in the Past and the Present), 4 *juan*, compiled by Daoxuan in 661, *T* no. 2104, vol. 52.
- Jiaju lingyan foding zunsheng tuoluoni ji* 加句靈驗佛頂尊勝陀羅尼記 (Record of the Miracles Related to the Extended *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī*), 1 *juan*, compiled by Wu Che 武徹 (d. after 765) sometime after 765, *T* no. 974C, vol. 19.
- “Jingzhou Dayunsi Sheli shihan ming bing xu” 涇州大雲寺舍利石函銘並序 (Inscription, with a Preface, on the Stone-coffer of Relics at the Dayunsi of Jingzhou), by Meng Shen 孟誥 (ca. 621? - ca. 713) in 694; in Gansu Sheng Wenwu Gongzuodui, 1966; and Wu Gang 吳綱 (ed.), 1994, 1.6-8.
- Jingguangming zuisheng wang jing* 金光明最勝王經 (Skt. *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sūtra*; Sūtra of the Supreme King of the Golden Light), 10 *juan*, tr. Yijing 義淨 (635-713) in 703, *T* no. 665, vol. 16.
- Jinshi cuibian* 金石萃編 (A Miscellany of Choice Inscriptions on Metal and Stone), 160 *juan*, by Wang Chang 王昶 (1725-1806). Printed edition of 1805 reproduced in *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.1.1-I.4.2988.
- Ji Shamen buying baisu dengshi* 集沙門不應拜俗等事 (A Collection about Buddhist Monks not Bowing to the Secular [Authorities] and Other Issues), 6 *juan*, compiled by Yancong 彥棕 (d. after 688) sometime after 662, *T* no. 2108, vol. 52.
- Ji shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 (An Account of the [Mysterious] Stimuli and Responses Related to the Three Jewels in China), 3 *juan*, by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) in 664, *T* no. 2106, vol. 52.
- Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (Record of Inscriptions on the Metal and Stone), 30 *juan*, published by Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081-1129) in 1119-25, *Shike shiliao xinbian*, Series 1, vol. 12.
- Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old History of the Tang, 618-907), 200 *juan*, completed in 945 under the direction of Liu Xu 劉昫 (887-946); Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1975.
- Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 (Catalogue of [the Texts Related to] the Buddhist Teachings, [Compiled in] the Kaiyuan Reign-era [713-41]), 20 *juan*, completed by Zhisheng 智昇 (fl. 700-786) in 730, *T* no. 2154, vol. 55.
- Liangjing xinji* 兩京新記 (New Records of the Two Capitals [Chang'an and Luoyang]), 4 *juan*, composed by Wei Shu 韋述 (d. 757) in 722; references made to Hiraoka 1954-65.
- Liang shu* 梁書 (History of the Liang Dynasty, 502-57), 56 *juan*, completed 635 by Yao Silian 姚思廉 (?-637) on the basis of a draft left by his father Yao Cha 姚察 (?-606). Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1973.
- Ming Shi* 明史 (History of the Ming, 1368-1644), 332 *juan*, by Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755) and others, completed in 1735; Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1974.

- Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 (Records of the Three Treasures through the Ages), 15 *juan*, completed by Fei Zhangfang 費長房 (d. after 598) in 598, *T* no. 2034, vol. 49.
- Mile xiasheng chengfo jing* 彌勒下生成佛經 (Skt. *Maitreyavyākaraṇa*?), 1 *juan*, tr. Kumārajīva (344-413) sometime between 402 and 412, *T* no. 454, vol. 14.
- Nanhai jigui neifa zhuan* 南海寄歸內法傳 (Account of Buddhism Sent Home from the Southern Sea), 4 *juan*, by Yijing 義淨 (635-713) in 691, *T* no. 54, no. 2125. See Takakusu, 1896; Wang, 1995.
- Nan shi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), 80 *juan*, by Li Yanshou 李延壽 (d. after 659); Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1975.
- Nittō guhō junrei gyōki* 入唐求法巡禮行記 (The record of a Pilgrimage to Tang in Search of the Law), 4 *juan*, by Ennin 圓仁 (793-864); *Dainihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書, vol. 72.
- “Panlong-tai bei” 攀龍臺碑 (Inscription of the Panglong-tai), by Li Qiao 李嶠 (644-713) in early 702; *Quan Tang wen* 249.10a2ff.
- Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (A Complete Collection of Tang Poems), 900 *juan*, compiled by Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645-1719) and others ca. 1707; Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1960.
- Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Complete Collection of Tang Prose), 1,000 *juan*, completed in 1814 by Dong Hao 董誥 (1740-1818) and others; Hualian chubanshe 華聯出版社, Tai-pei, 1965.
- Ru Lengqie xin xuanyi* 入楞伽心玄義 (Mysterious Meanings of the Core of the [*Dasheng*] *ru Lengqie [jing]*), 1 *juan*, by Fazang 法藏 (643-712) sometime between 704 and 712, *T* no. 1790, vol. 39.
- Shanyou shike congbian* 山右石刻叢編 (Collection of the Stone Inscriptions in the Area Right to the Mountain [of Taihang 太行] (i.e. Shanxi)), 40 *juan*, completed 1901 by Hu Pinzhi 胡聘之 (d. after 1901); *Shike shiliao xinbian* I.20.14927-I.21.15874.
- Shenrier benjing* 申日兒本經 (Skt. *Candraprabhakumāra sūtra*), 1 *juan*, tr. Guṇabhadra (Ch. Qiunabatuoluo 求那跋陀羅, 394-468) sometime between 435 and 534, *T* no. 534, vol. 14.
- Sho ajari shingon mikkyō burui soroku* 諸阿闍梨真言密教部類惣錄 (Complete Catalogue of Various Dhāraṇī Esoteric [Works Brought Back from China by] the [Japanese] Ācāryas), 2 *juan*, initially compiled in 885 and revised in 902 by Annen 安然 (841-904?); *T* no. 2176, vol. 55.
- Shouhu guojiezhū tuoluoni jing* 守護國界主陀羅尼經 (Sūtra of the Dhāraṇīs Protecting the Lord of the State), 10 *juan*, trs. Prajña (Ch. Poruo 般若; Zhihui 智慧, 734-?) and Mounishili 牟尼室利 (Jimo 寂默) (Skt. Muniśrī?, d. 806) sometime between 793-806, *T* no. 997, vol. 19.
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- Sita ji* 寺塔記 (Account of Temples and Pagodas), 2 *juan*, in *Youyang zazu* 西陽雜俎 (Miscellanies of Youyang; completed in 860; 30 *juan*); references are to the edition collated and annotated by Fang Nansheng 方南生 (1981). Cf. Soper, 1960 (tr.).
- Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks, Compiled in the Song), 30 *juan*, by Zanning 贊寧 (919-1001) in 988, *T* no. 2061, vol. 50.
- “Song Kaogong Wu Yuanwai xueshi shi Songshan shu shelita” 送考功武員外學士送考功武員外學士 (Farewell to Director Wu of the Bureau of Evaluation with the title of Academician, Who is Leaving for Songshan for the Imperial Mission of Preparing for [i.e. Overseeing the Construction of] a Pagoda), by Zhang Yue 張說 (667-731) probably in 700, *Quan Tang shi* 86: 941.
- “Song Kaogong Wu Yuanwai xueshi shi Songshan zhi shelita ge” 送考功武員外學士送考功武員外學士使 (Verse Bidding Farewell to Director Wu of the Bureau of Evaluation with the Title of Academician, Who is leaving for Songshan for the Imperial Mission of Constructing a Pagoda), by Xu Jian 徐堅 (ca. 659-729) probably in 700, *Quan Tang shi* 107: 1112.
- Song shi* 宋史 (History of the Song Dynasty, 960-1279), 496 *juan*, completed by Tuo Tuo 脫脫 (1313-55) and others in 1345; *Zhonghua shuju*, Beijing, 1977.
- Sui shu* 隋書 (Book of the Sui, 581-617), 85 *juan*, compiled by Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643) and others in 636 and 656; *Zhonghua shuju*, Beijing, 1973.
- Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話 (Beautiful Anecdotes of the Sui and Tang), 3 *juan*, compiled by Liu Su 劉餗 (d.u.) around the middle of the eighth century. In *Sui Tang Jiahua*, *Chaoye qianzai*, Beijing, *Zhonghua shuju*, 1979.
- Sui Tiantai Zhizhe Dashi biezhuan* 隋天台智者大師別傳 (A Separate Biography for Great Master Zhizhe of Mount Tiantai in the Sui), 1 *juan*, by Guanding 灌頂 (561-632) ca. 605, *T* no. 2050, vol. 50.
- Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Broad Records Compiled in the Taiping[xingguo] 太平興國 Reign-era [976-83]), 500 *juan*, compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925-96) between 977 and 978; *Zhonghua shuju*, Beijing, 1961.
- Tangchao minghua lu* 唐朝名畫錄 (Record of the Renowned Painters and Their Paintings under the Tang Dynasty), 1 *juan*, by Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄 (a.k.a. Zhu Jingzhen 朱景真, Zhu Jingyuan 朱景元, active in the 840s) sometime in the early 840s; see Soper 1958.
- Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (Compilation of the Tang Imperial Edicts), 130 *juan*, compiled by Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019-1079) in 1070 on the basis of a draft left by his father Song Shou 宋綬 (d. 1040); Shanghai yinshu guan 上海印書館, Shanghai, 1959.
- Tanghua duan* 唐畫斷 (On the Tang Painters and Their Paintings) → *Tangchao minghua lu*
- Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Collection of Essential Materials of the Tang), 100 *juan*, completed by Wang Pu 王溥 (922-82), *Zhonghua shuju*, Beijing, 1998 (the fourth reprint of the 1955 edition).

- Tang liangjing Chengfang kao* 唐兩京城坊考 (Investigation of the Walls and Quarters of the Two Tang Capitals [Chang'an and Luoyang]), 5 *juan*, by Xu Song 徐松 (1781-1848), published in 1848; reproduced in the *T'ang Civilization Reference Series*, vol. 6, pp. 1-74.
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- “Tang Taizong yu xingzhen-suo li qisi zhao” 唐太宗於行陣所立七寺詔 (Tang Taizong's Edict Ordering the Construction of Seven Temples on the [Seven Previous] Battlefields), issued by Tang Taizong (r. 626-49) sometime between 19 January – 17 February 630; included in the *Guang Hongming ji*, *T* no. 2103, vol. 52, pp. 328c12-329a6; and *Tang da zhaoling ji* 113: 586.
- Tongdian* 通典 (Comprehensive History of Regulations), 200 *juan*, by Du You 杜佑 (735-812), Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1988 (5 vols.).
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- Wei shu* 魏書 (Book of the [Northern and Eastern] Wei, 386-550), 114 *juan*, compiled 551-554 under the Northern Qi by Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572), revised 572, Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1974.
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- “Wuyouwangsi baota ming” 無憂王寺寶塔銘 → “Da Tang Shengchao Wuyouwangsi Dasheng zhenshen baota beiming bing xu” 大唐聖朝無憂王寺大聖真身大唐聖朝無憂
- Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New History of the Tang, 618-907), 225 *juan*, compiled by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-72), Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061) and others between 1043 and 1060; Zhonghua shuju, Beijing, 1975.
- “Xinyi Dasheng ru Lengqie jing xu” 新譯大乘入楞伽經序 (Preface to the New Translation of [the *Lankavatāra Sūtra*], the *Dasheng Ru Lengqie Jing*), by Wu Zhao 武曩 (623 or 625-705) shortly after 24 February 704; see *T* no. 672, vol. 16, p. 587a3-b7, or *T* vol. 1791, vol. 39, pp. 433c9-434a11.
- Xu gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (A Continuation of Biographies of Eminent Monks), 30 *juan*, initially completed by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) in 645, *T* no. 2060, vol. 50.
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- Past and Present), 4 *juan*, compiled 664-65 by Jingmai 靖邁 (fl. 640s-660s), *T* no. 2151, vol. 55.
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- “Yulanpen fu” 盂蘭盆賦 (Rhapsody on the Yulanpen Festival), by Yang Jiong 楊炯 (650-693?) in 692, *Quan Tang wen* 190: 2426b-28a.
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- Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (A Catalogue of [the Texts about] Buddhist Teachings, Newly Translated in the Zhenyuan 貞元 Rign-era [785-804]), 30 *juan*, compiled by Yuanzhao 圓照 (d. after 800) between 799 and 800, *T* no. 2157, vol. 55.
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