ZHANG ZONG 張總

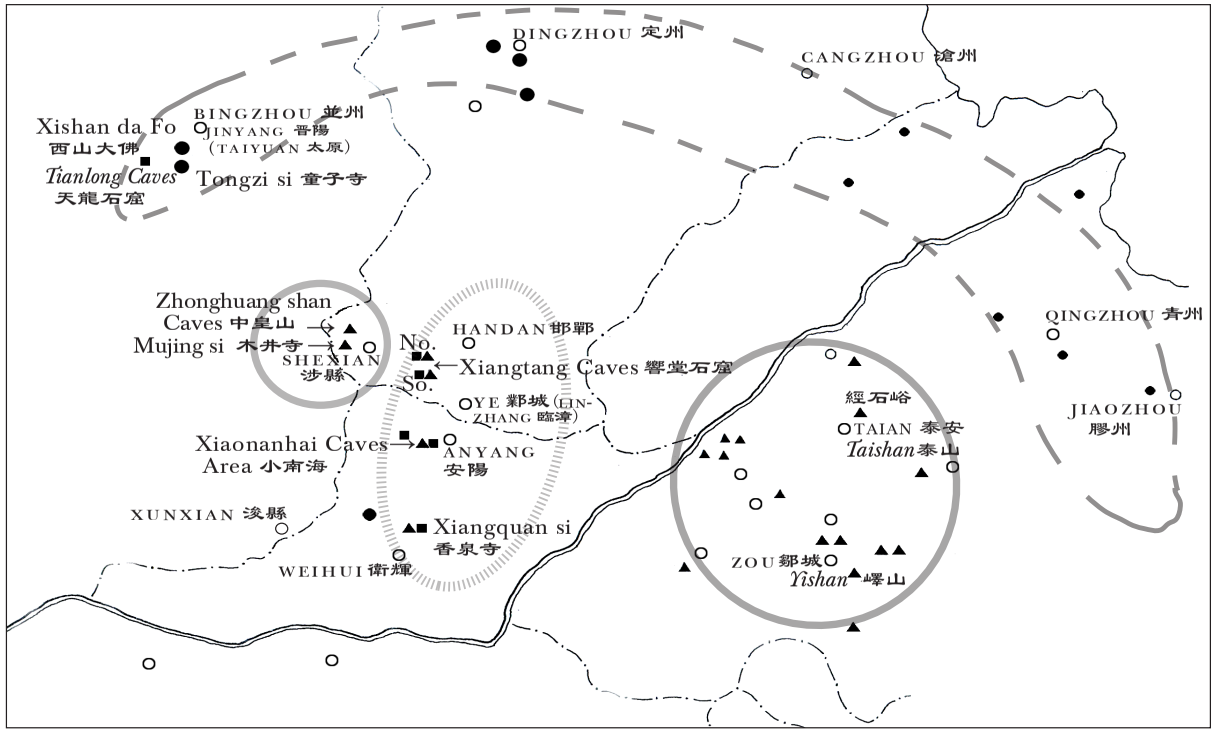
TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY HOWARD L. GOODMAN

Northern Qi Inscribed Sutras and Buddha Images: The Unique Case of the Inscribed-Sutra Cave at Mount Zhonghuang

In the Buddhist art of the Northern Qi dynasty we see achievements at a very high level, and in particular much diversity. From such diversity, what has stood out most for their monumental quality are both the Buddha-images carved in stone, whether line intaglio or shallow or full relief, and the engraved sutras carved into prepared, flat stone surfaces, or *in situ* in mountainous rock, a medium called *moya* 摩崖. About these carved sutras, there already exist several recent discoveries and studies. However, we need a wider perspective so that we can synthesize findings and refine certain elements. The present article aims to provide some new refinements and small, suggestive interpretations.

Su Xuanshu 蘇鉉淑 in general has considered Buddha-images and mural-painting tombs in her studies of the decorative texture of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi periods, and has discussed the four cultural centers of Northern Qi – Ye municipality 鄴城, Qingzhou 青州, Dingzhou 定州, and Bingzhou 並州 (see map), where there are many cave temples, Buddha images, and mural paintings. However, Su did not discuss the sutras inscribed in stone. In addition, several years previous to Su's work were two groundbreaking efforts, that by Ma Zhongli 馬忠理, Liyuqun 李裕群, et al., and the article of Katherine Tsiang. The latter in particular brought together features of the most important sites of carved sutras in the north during Northern Qi and

THE TRANSLATOR expresses thanks to those who helped in the effort, namely the two outside reviewers, as well as Kate Lingley, John Kieschnick, and in Beijing – Zhang Zong himself and our conference assistant Jane Wang. Because of the pressure of time and resources, we have not translated the author's original footnotes, but placed the titles into an appended bibliography. One aim of this special issue, unlike our regular issues, is to present bibliographies to benefit the fields of Wei-Jin Nanbei history and culture. Footnotes were added to bring to bear the recent work of Katherine Tsiang and to show several technical citations by Zhang Zong concerning the editions of *Siyi fantian wen jing*; see below.



Map of North China, with Three Zones of Text–Image Combinations

Labeled are only the cities, image sites, cave sites, and inscribed sutra sites that are relevant to the article. Others are unlabeled but their presence marked for sense of overall distribution.

● *Buddha-image site* ▲ *Carved-sutra site* ■ *Cave* ○ *City*

Mixed sutra–image zone *Sutra-only zone* *Image-only zone*

ventured thoughts on the motives behind them and their use. One of my earlier studies as well concerned different regional traditions of inscribed stone sutras, categorizing them into the *Prajñāparamitā sūtra* 般若經 tradition at Mount Tai 泰山 and Mount Yi 嶧山 in Shandong; the Mind-Only 唯識經 tradition in Shexian, Hebei; and in Ye the *Avataṁsaka sūtra* 華嚴經 (or, *Huayan jing* 華嚴經). When we consider the overlapping elements among these, we can see both cultural interrelation and distinctiveness. Given the broad connotations implicit in the engraved stone sutras of Shexian, they deserve further explorations according to content and form. Yet for this article, I concentrate on the inscribed sutras at Mount Zhonghuang 中皇山, near Ye. My suggestion, which must remain limited and tentative until further study is completed, is that future interpretations should consider the way three overall types of inscribed-text and Buddha-image combinations are distributed across China, and the possible implications seen in the distances and impacts from the dynastic center at Ye.

CONTENTS OF STONE SUTRAS AND THEIR GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Many sutras were inscribed in close proximity to Buddha images. Such images in Northern Qi times possessed clear-cut transitional characteristics. Analyzing them today, we can say that they were different from the Northern Wei style of loose gowns with wide sashes and slim forms; they are also different from the skillful articulation of Tang times. The transition was a reaction to sinification of Northern Wei Buddhist images, which introduced certain non-Chinese characteristics; moreover, the Northern Qi images matured by having taken in elements from India; and, finally, the forms themselves have inherently regional distinctions.

Ye, the capital of Northern Qi (present-day Linzhang 臨漳, Hebei), already had established monasteries on a broad basis, but those suffered Yang Jian's 楊堅 edict in 580 that called for their destruction. Thus at an early date they ceased to exist, except for some surviving archeologically retrieved partial Buddha images. However, at the nearby Xiangtang Caves 響堂石窟 (about 35–40 km northwest of Ye) are stupa-form facades and sculptures with muscular torsos, both deriving from imperial clan image-making activity. In the vicinity of Qingzhou, in eastern Shandong, a large number of Buddha-images was unearthed from below-ground storage places; these exhibit a strong influence of Indian prototypes. There are many small statues carved from marble

in Dingzhou, Hebei, and a giant Buddha was carved directly out of mountain rocks in Taiyuan, Shanxi. However, from Ye municipality to the rural mountainous areas of Shandong, historically we see very few of such Northern Qi-era inscribed stone sutras either produced along with stone caves, or standing alone on a summit, or engraved on steles. Moreover, the special decorative Northern Qi characteristics such as the lotus-blossom column 蓮花柱 and flying *apsaras* 飛天 concretely demonstrate both richness and diversity. With all that, we ought to take a synoptic view of such circumstances and thereby understand the essence of Northern Qi Buddhist art in the context of Northern and Southern Dynasties culture.

Inscribed sutras in stone-caves were an important feature of Northern Qi times. Because they have been studied in greater detail before by both Ma and Li, here a brief summary of four examples (A–D, below) will lay a general groundwork, but one that points to patterns not yet discussed, like zones of sutra-inscription by types.

First we must mention general typology. There are actually only two types of carved-sutra caves and cave areas; one contains extracts from sutras, and the other contains a complete sutra text. Of the extract-type, we have three subtypes: 1. text and Buddha-images determined at the beginning of the composition; 2. text done afterward but relating to the subject-matter of a Buddha-image; and 3. text inscription coming later as an added element. The southern cave (the Grotto of Stone Sutras 刻經洞) of the Xiangtang North Caves complex (see below) simultaneously belongs to both textual types. Yet it might be even more comprehensible, in my view, to classify all these caves into simply areas where the caves combine Buddha-images with sutras ("sutra–Buddha-image"), and areas where they have only carved sutras ("sutra-only") (these areas are indicated on the map).

There are many stone sutras carved on the cliffs of Shandong-area Mount Tai and Mount Yi. Jingshiyu 經石峪, or Sutra Rock Valley 經石峪, on Mount Tai is carved with the *Diamond sūtra* (*Jingang boruo boluomi jing* 金剛般若波羅蜜經). Extracts of *Wenshu shili suoshuo mohe boruo boluomi jing* 文殊師利所說摩訶般若經 (*Saptaśatikā prajñāpāramitā sūtra*), *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa sūtra* 維摩詰經, and *Daji jing* 大集經 (*Mahāsaṁnipāta sūtra*) were engraved on the cliffs of several mountains in the Zoucheng 鄒城 area. There are also quite a few steles carved with *Guanyin jing* 觀音經 (part of the *Lotus sutra*) and the *Shi'e pin jing* 華嚴十惡品經. Most of these sutras were done in Northern Qi; some were a little bit later but still followed the sutra carving tradition of Northern Qi. However, the

four chosen examples below are drawn from farther west, in the areas of Ye and Handan cities, and slightly northwest of there.

A. Xiaonanhai 小南海 *Caves (Anyang* 安陽*, Henan): Sutra–Buddha-Image Type*

The central cave at Xiaonanhai is quite small (1.78 m high, 1.19 m wide, and 1.34 deep), with low-relief carvings on three walls of (see figure 1). It was begun in the year 550; in 555, Sengchou 僧稠 (481–560), the state preceptor 國師, took over its patronage and remodeled it.

Buddha Images: relief-images concern stories of Fusha Buddha and the Youth of the Himalayas. The central statue is Śākyamuni together with a small statue of Sengchou on the bottom. Reliefs on left and right walls are stories of Amita Buddha and the Sixteen Meditations, and reliefs of Maitreya Buddha and Maitreya's dharma lectures given to the heavenly hosts.

Scripture Engravings: post-560 scripture engraving on the outside face of the central cave:

- *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra* (section: "聖行品")
- *Avataṁsaka-sūtra gāthā*

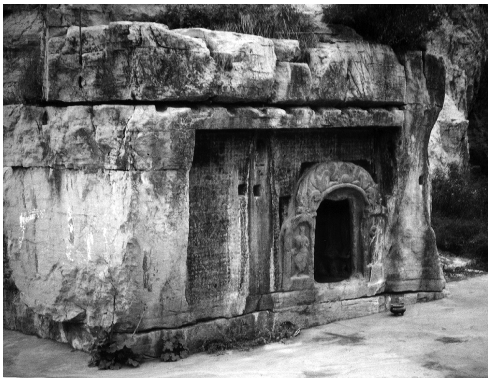


Figure 1. Xiaonanhai Central Cave
Photo courtesy of the author.

Because the text of the gatha is different from that in the Buddhist canon, and because it mentions that "this is a most auspicious place due to Vairocana Buddha's coming here," thus some scholars have presumed that the central statue is Vairocana Buddha. However, the cave was not dug out on one occasion. It is very possible that the central statue was carved as Śākyamuni in the 550s but repurposed to represent Vairocana Buddha in the 560s. (Besides the central cave, the eastern and western caves in Xiaonanhai contain similar subjects and forms of statues, but carved at a slightly later date.)

B. Xiangtang 響堂石窟 *North Caves: Sutra–Buddha-Image Type*

These caves (both North and South) are in the Handan 邯鄲 municipality area, Hebei (also near Ye). They were sponsored by the imperial family of Northern Qi and dug out sometime before their 568–572 AD sutra engravings were done (see below). There are three separate caves: north, center, and south, the latter also called "Grotto of Stone Sutras."

Buddha Images: three walls of the south cave depict the Three Buddhas 三世佛 of past, present, and future, as described in the *Lotus Sūtra.*

Scripture Engravings: front wall carved with gathas about the Great Arrayed Bodhisattvas 大莊嚴菩薩 taken from the *Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings* 無量義經, the section "德行"; they extol the Buddha's Thirty-two *laksana*s (physical marks) and Eighty Passions (actually eighty-one, as enumerated in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*).

On the columns in the southern cave of Xiangtang North there are engravings of Buddha-names, and so forth, but because the wall was bricked up in the Qing era and greatly covered over, we can see only scattered words on three of the columns. Previously, scholars already distinguished relatively legible items of a group of 25 Buddha names and of 35 Buddha names. But the present writer can assert that of those mentioned, after the 35 names there is in addition a phrase from the "Buddha-nature 如來性" section of the the *Daban nieban jing* 大般涅槃經 (*Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*), and the paragraph after the 25 names is from the *Foshuo qian Fo yinyuan jing* 佛說千佛因緣經 (the "Thousand Buddha Affinities sutra") and another paragraph is a gatha from the *Shengman jing* 勝鬘經 (*Śrīmālādevī sūtra*).

The 568–572 AD scripture engraving projects produced the following:

- *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa sūtra*, *Śrīmālādevī simhanāda sūtra* 勝鬘經, *Sutra Spoken by Buddha on Bo* 孛經, and the sutra *Maitreya Becoming the Buddha* 彌勒成佛經. These were four complete-text sutra projects sponsored by Tang Yong 唐邕, a powerful minister of Northern Qi. They were done from Tiantong 天統 3 (568) to Wuping 武平 4 (572) and represent the main overall theme of sutra-inscriptions. Their total of over 60,000 words is enormous compared to the total of under a thousand for the other carvings combined. Motivations for carving sutras often concerned the Buddhist notion of the end days, or *mofa* 末法 (the final, end-period of the *dharma*, a type of Buddhist eschatology that began to concern monks and lay adepts beginning in the last part of the sixth century); but Tang Yong's choices strongly related to his political experiences.

Moreover, not in that specific time-frame are the following four:

- *Gāthā of the Vow to Be Reborn,* from the *Sukhāvatī vyūha*; exterior flank of the south cave.
- the twelve traditional genre divisions of the Buddhist canon, and then the ten epithets of the Buddha above the southern cave.
- various Buddha names from the *Fo ming jing* 佛名經 (*Buddha-nāma sūtra*).
- section on the "*Lion's Roar Bodhisattva*" on the slope beneath the cave.

Recently discovered by Zhao Lichun 趙立春 on an exterior flank of the south cave near the above gatha is:

- the title only (not text) of the section called "Universal Gateway of Guanshiyin Pusa," from the *Lotus Sutra* (it is popularly called "Guanyin jing" 觀音經).

C. Xiangtang South Caves: Sutra–Buddha-Image Type

According to the Sui-era Stele of the Fushan Stone Cave 滏山石窟 (a popular name for the Xiangtang South cave complex), the caves were begun in 565 by monk Huiyi 慧義 and sponsored by Xianbei prime minister Gao A'nagong 高阿那肱. (As noted by Tsiang, the site was damaged during the persecution of Buddhism that occurred after the conquest of Northern Qi by emperor Wu 武帝 of the Northern Zhou in 577, then repaired during Sui times.) Both the first and second caves are in the single central-column 中心柱 style, the column being filled with Buddha images.

Cave no. 1, interior (also called Huayan Cave)

Scripture engraving: incomplete texts of the sections titled "Four truths 四諦" and "Pure conduct 淨行" from the (*Avataṁsaka sūtra*) *Huayan jing*; names of the Sixteen Princes 十六王子佛名 are on the central column.

Cave no. 2 (also called Boruo Grotto 般若洞*)*

Scripture engraving:

- 98-character extract from *Wenshu shili jing*; left-front wall.
- extract from "Cibei xishe" 慈悲喜舍 section of *Mahāsamghata sūtra.*
- extract of *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*; passageway at the rear wall.

Caves no. 4 and 6

Scripture engraving:

- Gatha of Impermanence 無常偈; on exterior eaves.
- 54 characters representing an extract also from *Wenshu*; on exterior eaves.

Cave no. 4

Scripture engraving:

• "The Universal Gateway of Guanshiyin Pusa"

Many of the caves of the Xiangtang complex originally did not have inscribed sutras. The contents of these Xiangtang South inscribed sutras are significant for their relationship with other areas of China. The *moya* carved sutras in Shandong that contain a 98-character extract and a 54-character extract from *Wenshu shili jing* are the same as here; and those at Xiaonanhai, Xiangquan Monastery (below), and Baoshan Monastery 寶山寺 are mostly carved with the *Avataṁsaka sūtra.*

D. Xiangquan Monastery Caves 香泉寺 *(Weihui* 衛輝*, Henan): Sutra–Buddha-Image Type*

The stone cave is located on Mount Linluo 霖落, Weihui.

Scripture engraving:

• section "佛不思議法", part 28 of *Avataṁsaka sūtra*, on right side of entrance.

• "Pure conduct" and "Xianshou" sections of same sutra, left side.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Buddhist art of Northern Qi times, including caves, statues and images, and engraved sutras, yields a certain geographical distribution. The area around the capital of Ye mainly has cave monasteries with images and sutras. As for the dynasty's secondary capital at Taiyuan, it not only has caves but also a large Buddha carved directly out of mountain rock. The small marble statues found in Dingzhou and some places in Hebei have their own special features, and in the Mount Zhonghuang 中皇山 caves of Shexian 涉縣, Hebei, there are only Buddhist sutras (the Sutra-only type). There were a large number of Buddhist statues unearthed around ancient Qingzhou; these contain colorful patterns and gold overlay of an Indian Buddhist type. Buddhist sutras carved directly on the cliffs and in the steles of Mount Tai and Mount Yi demonstrate an indigenous, local cultural consciousness and are spectacular pieces in the history of calligraphy.

Thus, there is quite a bit of variety. But if we integrate Buddhist cave statues and sutras into our four cultural centers of Northern Qi, that is, Ye, Bingzhou, Dingzhou and Qingzhou, we see that the distribution is in a center-and-periphery pattern: the center is characterized by sutras found together with Buddha-images, while the periphery has areas of Sutra-only caves, and areas of Buddha-image-only caves.

The Ye municipality Sutra–Buddha-image area goes from the east-west surrounds of Ye to Anyang and then to Weihui (see the map's hash-line demarcation), and runs basically north-and-south. Mostly, the Xiangtang caves in the Ye vicinity are of the Sutra–Buddha-image type. The sutra caves of Xiangtang North were carved with four complete sutras, and most of its other caves have sutra extracts. It is of the same type as the Xiaonanhai central cave and the Xiangquan Monastery. Among the above, the *Avataṁsaka sūtra* assumes a very important role. We might say that the Buddha-images of the southern part of Ye generally reflect the great influence of the dynastic center at Ye.

Then we have the Sutra-only area (see areas demarcated in solid-grey). Examples are located mostly east and west of the Ye area, including Shexian (Hebei) and Mounts Tai and Yi in central Shandong, yet generally the evidence is fragmentary. Although Shexian is but one small place and is in fact close to the Ye dynastic center, nevertheless its cave-wall surfaces were created just for sutra carving, with a stone surface ground flat and carved with small, regular characters used for three important full-text sutras containing over 130,000 characters. Its features are rather the opposite of those at Tai and Yi: the faces there clearly were not ground flat,and in some cases the text carving was done on stone ledges. Except for the *Diamond sūtra* in Sutra-Rock Valley on Mount Tai, the rest are mostly extracts from paragraphs of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra.*

The regions containing caves with statues only (no sutra engravings) basically comprise Bingzhou (Taiyuan), Dingzhou, Qingzhou (in Shandong) and several other places. From the southeast to the northwest, we can see an arc-shaped zone of distribution. The zone starts at several cities controlled administratively by Jiaozhou 膠州 (Shandong) that are generally south of Ye in latitude, up through Qingzhou to Cangzhou, then westward to connect with Dingzhou, where it curves southwestward, following the shape of the Bingzhou (Taiyuan) area (see the area shown inside the dashed-line).

Each of the three regions, above, has its own characteristic. The medium and small Tianlong Caves 天龍 (just southwest of Taiyuan) display influences from the cave images of Ye; but the large Buddha carved directly out of the mountain rock is unique. There is the enormous mountain-face carving of the Three Western Saints 西方三聖 made at Tongzi Monastery 童子寺 and the full-relief Śākyamuni at Xishan, the Xishan Da Fo 西山大佛. Besides, there is the large Maitreya Buddha statue in Xun xian 浚縣, southwest of Ye. The marble statues of Dingzhou and other places are small but delicately engraved and carved.

Buddha-images in Qingzhou, both those long-preserved and recently unearthed, have colorful patterns and overlaid gold, with the "dharma world image 法界像" style from Vairocana symbolism – giving a distinctly Indian and South Asian appearance.

THE MOUNT ZHONGHUANG ENGRAVED SUTRAS IN SHEXIAN

Shexian is located in the southwest corner of Hebei, and in the Northern Qi period belonged to Linshui 臨水 *xian*. Sitting at the east foot of the Taihang Mountains, at the entrance to the fourth of the Eight Passes (or Bafu 八陉) through the Taihang range, in ancient times Shexian was a vital transportation nexus between the states of Qin and Jin, on the one hand, and Qi and Lu on the other. During the Northern Qi period it was located on the route between the capital of Ye and the secondary capital at Jinyang 晉陽. Mount Zhonghuang (also called Tangwang 唐王, or Fenghuang 鳳凰), is located at a place called Suopu *zhen* 索堡鎮 on the left bank of Qingzhang River 清漳河, fifteen km northwest of the county seat. It was during Ming and Qing times that the Wahuang gong 媧皇宮, also called Wahuang ge 閣,[1] was built on the mountain-flank precipice there (see figure 2.)

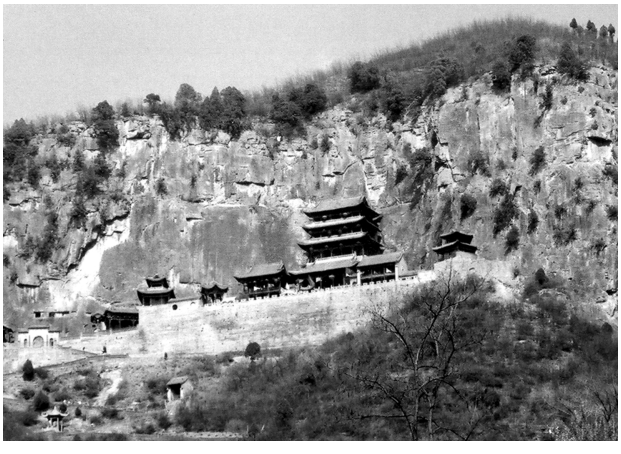


Figure 2. Zhonghuang shan, View from a Distance
Tallest structure on the right is Wahuang ge 媧皇閣 *(or gong* 宮*); to the left of that is Shuzhuang lou* 梳妝樓. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

Evidence for dating the Northern Qi sutra carvings at Mount Zhonghuang has been taken from *Shexian zhi* 涉縣志 (printed in Jiaqing 4 [1799]), which states that much of this activity occurred under the emperor Wenxuan 文宣帝 (550–59), although this text is not altogether trustworthy.[2] Futhermore we have evidence concerning Tang Yong (see above); and

[1] Tsiang, "Monumentalization," p. 239, says that Wahuang gong was at some point a Daoist temple.

[2] Ibid, p. 240, n. 33 (citing a different edn. of the gazetteer): "The *She Xian xianzhi* [*She Xian*

the dates Wuping 武平 2 (571) and 4 (573) are given on two steles installed at Mujing Monastery 木井寺 (just west of Shexian).

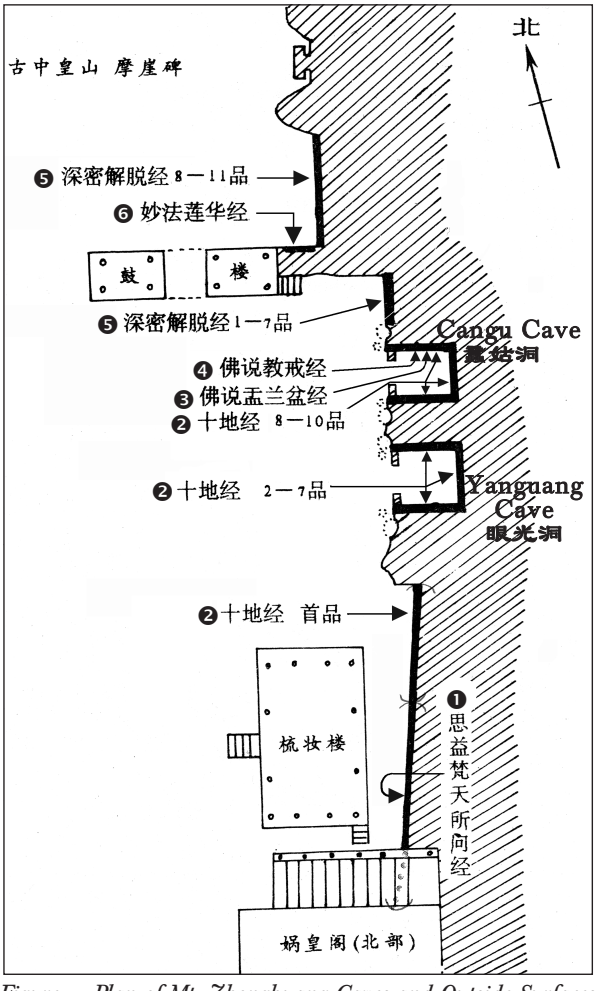


Figure 3. Plan of Mt. Zhonghuang Caves and Outside Surfaces Showing Sutra-Inscription Locations
Adapted from Ma et al., "Shexian Zhonghuang shan," p. 68.

A General Picture

The Buddhist sutras on the cliffs of Mount Zhonghuang are carved inside two neighboring caves (with a third one that became defunct and

Gazetteer] of the Guangxu period (1875–1907) records that the Emperor Wenxuan built a detached palace at the foot of the mountain. On the mountainside several hundred monks could be seen performing their religious activities and so three caves were excavated. At the end of the Tianbao era of the Northern Qi the sutra casket from the Zhulinsi ("Temple of the Bamboo Grove") was brought and the texts engraved on the cliffs."

mostly built over) as well as outside on the flat north-south wall. There are a total of six Buddhist sutras covering 165 square meters (see figure 3, with the six different texts numbered). The southernmost of the two main caves is commonly known as Yanguang Cave 眼光洞 (see figure 4 for an exterior view) and that to the north as Cangu Cave 蠶姑洞 (figure 5). They are of the same size – 2.6 meters wide, 2.35 meters deep, and 4 meters high. The statues in the caves were moved in later. Outside, between and flanking the entrances of those two caves, there are sculptures of muscular figures, indicating a typical Northern Qi element (see figure 5). The entrance faces were later filled in with masonry and pseudo-windows (see below the lettered sign in figure 5) in a Song-era style.

The following are the six categories of sutra carving at Mount Zhonghuang (the numbering used is the same as in figure 3).

1. *Siyi fantian suowen jing* 思益梵天所問經 (*Viśeṣacintā Brahma-paripṛicchā sūtra*) is carved at the southern end of the entire outside wall, in the translation of Kumārajīva. The first part of this sutra was covered over by the stairs going up the Wahuang ge (represented at

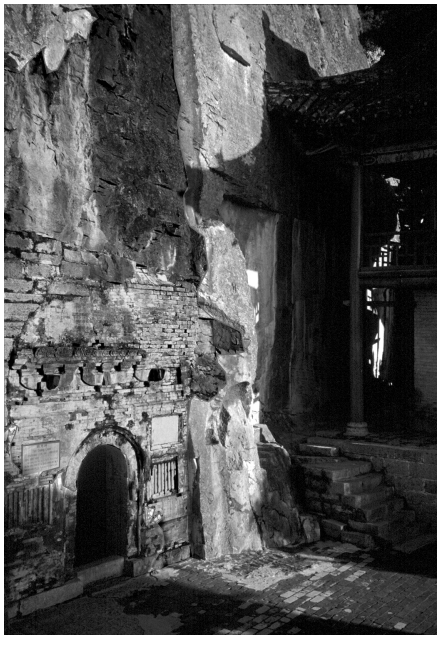


Figure 4. Yanguang Cave Entrance

In the background is the portico and balustrade of the north wall of Shuzhuang lou. Photo courtesy of author.

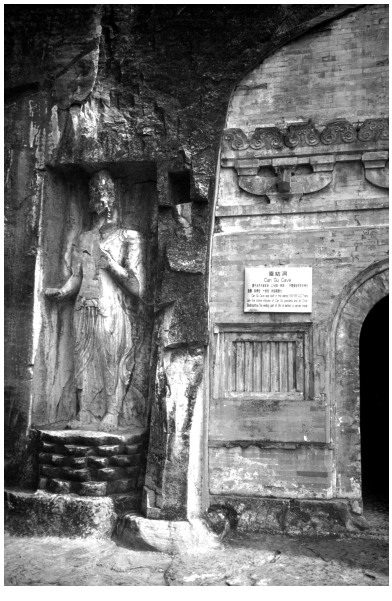


Figure 5. Canggu Cave Entrance

This shows a typical Northern Qi style of muscular, loosely draped statue. Photo courtesy of author.

the bottom of figure 3) that were built in a later period, but most of the sutra still exists. The Wahuang ge (tallest edifice in figure 2) has covered over what remained of the defunct cave.

2. *Shidi jing* 十地經 (*Daśabhūmi sūtra*, in a special version; see below) is carved in a total of three places, covering sections *shou* 首 to 10 (section 5 is on the north wall of Yanguang, figure 6).
3. *Yulanpen jing* 盂蘭盆經 (*Ullambana sūtra*) is on the north wall of Cangu Cave.
4. *Fochui boniepan lueshuo jiaojie jing* 佛垂般涅槃略說教誡經 is also on the north wall of Cangu Cave
5. *Shenmi jietuo jing* 深密解脫經 (*Saṁdhinirmocana sūtra*), translated by Bodhiruci (d. 527), is on the smoothed-out north side of the cave wall outside the entrance of Cangu Cave. (Section seven is shown in figure 7.)

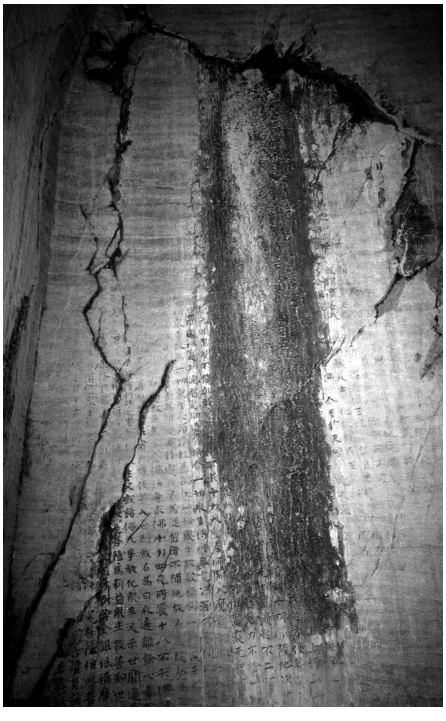


Figure 6. Yanguang Cave, Interior North Wall

Northern wall inside Yanguang; section five of Shidi jing. *Water-mineral damage is visible. Photo courtesy of author.*

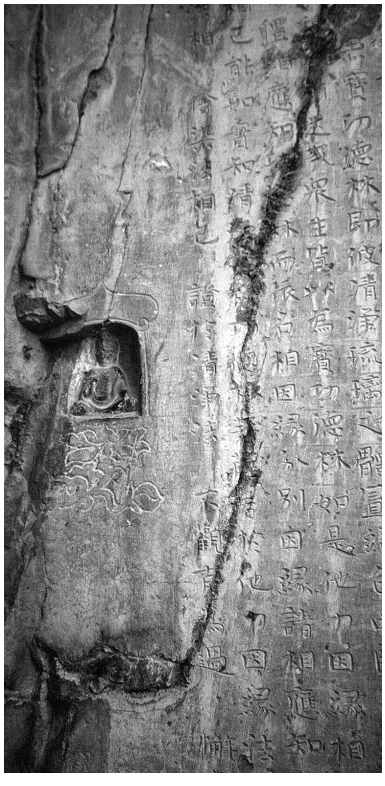


Figure 7. Northern Wall outside Canggu Cave

Section 7 of Shenmi jietuo jing 深密解脫經*; see lower of the two no.* ❺ *locations in fig. 3. Photo courtesy of author.*

6. The *Lotus Sutra* section popularly called "Guanyin jing" 觀音經 (see above, "B. Xiangtang North Caves"), accompanied by a colophon, is located farther north, on the other side of the Gulou 鼓樓 (the smallest, roofed structure two buildings to the left of the towering Wahuang; figure 2). A statue of Guanyin stands in a niche; another niche with a carved image of Amitabha was added in the Sui era.

Among Buddhist rock-inscribed sutras of the Northern Dynasties period these inscribed texts should be considered masterpieces; they total 130,000 characters and contain the complete-text versions of the *Siyi fantian suowen*, *Shidi*, and *Shenmi* sutras, or twice the 60,000-character sutras at the Xiangtang caves taken as a whole. There are three calligraphy styles: *lishu* 隸書, a broad *biankai* 扁楷, and *kaishu* 楷書. Therefore, it is quite possible that at least three hands were at work. (One example of calligraphic form is seen in figure 8.)

The Distinctive Edition of Daśabhūmi-sūtra

The version of *Shidi jing* at Mount Zhonghuang is a very special one. It is not strictly speaking Dharmaraksa's (Fahu 法護; d. ca. 310) translation of *Jianbei yiqie zhide jing* 漸備一切智德經 of Western Jin times nor the later one drawn from Buddhabhadra's 佛馱跋陀羅 (359–429) translation of the *Avataṁsaka sūtra*. Rather, the compilers of the text began with the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna sūtra* translated by Bodhiruci in Northern Wei times, extracted the sutra while eliminating the sastra, then added the gathas from Kumārajīva's 姚秦鳩摩羅什 (344–413) translation (known as *Shizhu jing* 十住經). This created a special, amalgamated edition, which was carved at Shexian.

The term "dasabhumi" indicates the ten stages of bodhisattva practice. There are in all six types of *Daśabhūmi* sutras in the Avataṁsaka system. Except for two later ones, from the Tang-dynasty period, there are four of interest here: *Jianbei jing* 漸備經 translated by Dharmaraksa was earliest, followed by *Shizhu* of Kumārajīva; Buddhabhadra's 60-*juan Avataṃsaka* was a very influential work, and the "Shidi" section 十地品 from it is in fact the *Daśabhūmi sutra*. The text translated by Bodhiruci is categorized as a sastra 論, or commentary, therefore it contains a version of *Daśabhūmika*. In sum, we are able to conclude that before the Northern Qi sutras in Shexian there existed four different versions of the same text.

What is the difference between these editions? The specific names of the ten stages of bodhisattva practice became more fixed after Kumārajīva's version, while the sutra translations became richer and more finely wrought over time. Before the existence of the Shexian inscribed sutras,

the prose (*sanwen* 散文) contained in the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna sūtra* of Bodhiruci was the most accomplished of the Chinese translations. But because of the limitations of the sastra form it did not include gatha rhyme-prose. Sastras are composed of one paragraph of sutra followed by one of sastra prose. By contrast, sutras are generally made up of unrhymed prose together with rhymed gathas (or *yunwen* 韻文). These numerous different *Daśabhūmika* versions are no exception. Therefore, the monks who sponsored the carvings at Zhonghuang extracted sutra text from the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna sūtra* and added gatha rhyme-prose at the right places to make a version that was, in terms of Buddhist literary style, highly refined.

Chinese Buddhist sutras are generally translated from either an Indian or a Central Asian original; however, regardless of source-text, the main translators in any event leave their names so as to be the responsible party for the particular translation. An amalgamated version, as discussed above, was rarely seen. Zhi Mindu 支敏度 included, *seriatim*, five editions of the *Śūraṃgama sūtra*, but only to put these different translations into a book; this may be called a kind of anthologizing. The *Hebu Jinguang ming jing* 合部金光明經 made by the monk Baogui 釋寶貴 in Sui times is a sutra of eight *juan* (including twenty-four sections) that stitched together earlier, only partial, translations by Dharmakṣema (Tanwuchen 曇無懺; Northern Liang) and the Southern Dynasties-era Paramartha (Zhenti 真諦), plus his own, to make a new whole translation. The combination work of sixty volumes of *Daji jing* 大集經 by monks during the Sui dynasty was an effort that produced an edited version of a sutra. However, the stone inscription of *Daśabhūmi* at Shexian, which I have called an amalgamated version, was comprised of extracts from two different accomplished translation works, something unlike any of these other examples – almost the only such case. Although as a stone inscription it was hard to produce, it was more long-lasting, which is my assumption as to why the eminent monks decided to extract the best parts and put them together in this way. Because the *Daśabhūmika* here is not the version in the present Taishō Canon, then if not for its existence on Mount Zhonghuang, we would not have this rare evidence.

The stone-carved *Siyi fantian wen jing* of Mount Zhonghuang has its own particularly important feature. It is quite different from the version of *Taishō Tripitaka* and versions found in various manuscripts from Dunhuang. The texts from the *Taishō Tripitaka* were emended according to early Japanese manuscripts and versions from the Song, Yuan and Ming periods. The Mount Zhonghuang *Siyi fantian wen jing*

is quite close to a version found in the Japanese collection *Shōgo-zō* 聖語藏 (held in the Tōdaiji Shōsōin 正倉院), and has some similarities to one in the collection of the Library of the Imperial Household Agency 宮內寮本. According to the index *Shōwa Hōbō sōmokuroku* 昭和法寶總目錄, the relevant manuscript in the *Shōgo-zō* was copied in the Jingo-keiun 神護景雲 period (767–770 AD) period. Unfortunately the first *juan* of this four-*juan* manuscript has not survived.[3] The Zhonghuang inscription shares some common factors with the Library manuscript. Undoubtedly the stone inscription is the genuine early version and was carved in the sixth century, while the *Shōgo-zō* and Library manuscripts were copied in the eighth and the twelfth centuries, respectively. These ancient versions are quite different from the *Taishō* version handed down from the Song period, as is apparently shown by the numbers of the sentences of the Sanskrit dharani in the last paragraph. Finally, there are differences even in comparison with the examples of *Siyi fantian* passages among the Dunhuang manuscripts.[4] This shows the importance of the Mount Zhonghuang inscribed sutras as a textual source, something that will come out with further work in comparing the Dunhuang material.

Connections to the Early-Period Mind-Only Doctrine

There are further links that emerge from the evidence of the inscribed sutras of Mount Zhonghuang. In particular is the type of Buddhist philosophical approach that the texts carry. In this regard we must briefly note the links with early forms of the Mind-Only School. This school was pejoratively also called the Dharma-Character 法相宗 School and was developed in a formal way by the famous Tang-era monk Xuanzang 玄奘 (602/03–664). It was one of eight so-called Mahayana schools in the Sui and Tang periods. However, in the preceding Southern and Northern periods, scriptures related to Mind-only doctrine were translated by Paramārtha (Zhendi 真諦), who started the *Mahāyāna-saṁgraha* School (*Shelun zong*) in the south, and Bodhiruci (Puti Liuzhi 菩提流支) who started the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* school (the Ten Stages School, or Dilun *zong* 地論宗) in the north. These constituted what is called the early-period Mind-only doctrine 唯識古學.

[3] The Shōsōin holds a set of Buddhist sutras called 聖語藏 dated to the Tenpyō period (729–49) at the earliest. *Siyi fantian jing* belongs to period of sutra writing in the slightly later Jingo-keiun period, but it is missing *juan* 1; only 2–4 are extant. See "Shōsōin gyobutsu Issai-kyo" 正倉院御物一切經, in *Shōwa Hōhō sōmokuryō*, vol. 3, p. 959.

[4] See *Dunhuang yishu zongmu suoyin xinbian* 敦煌遺书总目索引新编 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), pp. 105–6. The Taishō canon does not make any textual comparisons with Dunhuang materials.

Shenmi jietuo jing 深密解脫經 was the essential scripture of Mind-only ideas. The sixth-century Bodhiruci translated it into five *juan*, and Paramārtha translated the second one, naming it *Xiang xu pin jing* 相續品經. It was later retranslated by Xuanzang and titled *Jieshen mijing* 解深密經, for which Xuanzang then created a new school based on parts of *Shenmi* and other works, including Mind-only sastras such as *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論. The full text of *Shenmi jietuo* was carved into rock on Mount Zhonghuang. Except for the Sui-era Fangshan 房山 stone inscriptions (near Beijing) containing all the sutras of the Tripitaka, rock-carved scriptures containing Mind-only doctrine are rarely seen in China even in a relatively wider time-frame. Even Xuanzang's later school did not sponsor engraved sutras for their doctrine. This fact emphasizes the importance of the Shexian carvings. Especially considering the importance the *Shidi jing* and its related sastras, the author holds that the contents of the early-period Mind-only scripture carved at Mount Zhonghuang deserve greater attention.

To demonstrate this, we must consider these early developments. The fourth-century Indian monk Vasubandhu's *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyāna* explicated in sastra style the ideas that connected *prajñā* (wisdom) with yoga. This is in fact similar to the situation of the engraved *Shidi jing lun* in Shexian, which connected *Siyi jing* and *Shenmi jing*. The contents of *Shidi jing lun* are laden with other aspects of Mind-only doctrine as well. As a result of such philosophical works having their beginnings with Indian monks, new schools were formed during the Southern and Northern Dynasties period, when specialization in specific scriptures, particularly Mahayana ones, was valued by monks. Consequently, specialist master-disciple groups arose, such as the Niepan *shi* 涅槃師, Chengshi *shi* 成實師, and Shelun *shi* 攝論師. But it was the Dilun *shi* 地論師 that held the main position among them, and its doctrine was the most important part of the whole *Avataṁsaka sūtra* before the formation of the Avataṁsaka School itself.

The Dilun school became divided into Southern and Northern branches. The Northern one centered around Ye was a smaller, less flourishing phenomenon in contrast to the Sourthern monks, who frequently held high positions with official Buddhist ranks. What is of interest for this article is that the doctrine of the Northern Dilun school had elements of Mind-only teaching. The stone inscriptions of the *Shidi* in Shexian county originated from the *Shidi jing lun*; moreover, *Jie shenmi jing* was inscribed beside it, showing a close relationship between the

inscriptions and teachings of the Dilun Northern branch of the early-period Mind-only School of Mahayana Buddhism.

CONCLUSION

The stone inscriptions that flourished in the late Northern Dynasties period are generally located either in the Mount Tai and Mount Yi areas of Shandong or at the eastern foot of the Taihang Mountains in Hebei and Henan. In general, it is easy to consider this sort of division as two regionalisms. Yet the stone inscriptions in Shexian county are unique: there are grottoes specifically for inscriptions of 130,000 characters on polished cliff faces where full texts of some scriptures were inscribed. They may be considered the first of this large-scale type of text inscription. Their contents vary from the early-period Mind-only development in Buddhist teachings to the Dilun School. This differentiates the Shexian inscriptions from those in the nearby grottoes of Mount Xiangtang, and from those in the relatively distant Shandong areas. Moreover, the version of the Shexian inscriptions at Mount Zhonghuang are of great value in the history of sutra transcriptions and printings. *Siyi jing* appears to be an ancient version; and *Shidi jing* was pieced together, taking sutras and gathas from two different sources.

By comparing the intellectual concepts of the four cultural areas of Northern Qi with those of the two areas of stone inscriptions, this article has argued that the Buddhist art of the Northern Qi period can be divided into three areas: the northern periphery arc with images and no scriptures, the middle area of scriptures without images, and scriptures-and-images in the zone of the political center. In terms of Buddha-image vis-a-vis sutra inscription, the grottoes in Ye and the Great Buddha of Taiyuan were both sponsored by the imperial family and high officials, while the Shandong stone inscriptions carry quite a bit of local flavor and a pure, Central Plains calligraphic style – in aesthetic terms a sharp contrast to the Buddhist statues of the Indian style in Qingzhou.

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Figure 8. Calligraphic Detail of Shenmi jietuo *Inscription at Mt. Zhonghuang*
Detail of author's photo of sections 8–11 of Shenmi jietuo jing 深密解脫經*; edited to reveal the calligraphic work. (See the upper of the two no.* ❺ *locations shown in fig. 3.)*