

Shishi: A Stone Structure

Associated with Abaoji in Zuzhou

It is hard to argue that the primary meaning of the first *shi* in the two-character combination *shishi* 石室 is anything but “stone.” The type of stone is not specified in dictionary or encyclopedia definitions, but that the material is hard and permanent, is.¹ The second *shi* is less obvious to translate. A primary meaning and frequent translation is room, or chamber, but there are other possibilities.²

Shishi is used in modern Chinese studies to name one of the most enigmatic structures in East Asia (figure 1, overleaf). Situated in Chifeng 赤峰 county of Inner Mongolia, this building has been called *shishi* at least since the twentieth century.³ In 1922, Father Joseph Mullie referred to it as “la Maison de Pierre,” or Stone House, following, he wrote, the Mongolian name used by the local population.⁴ (In the present article, the capitalized words “Shishi” and “Stone House” are used to designate this specific stone structure in Inner Mongolia.)

Mullie’s sketch of the outer walled area that confined la Maison de Pierre was remarkably accurate (figure 2). Except for battlements that project on three of its sides, one finds little difference between Mullie’s wall with five, simple straight segments and the plan published sixty-nine years later by the Chinese researchers who engaged

THE FIRST version of this paper was presented at a conference at the University of Pennsylvania in December 2003 in honor of the sixtieth birthday of Victor H. Mair. I thank him for years of extraordinary collegiality in addition to valuable comments about this paper.

¹ See, e.g., three standard reference works: *Cihai* 辭海 (Shanghai: Shanghai jishu chubanshe, 1979) 3, p. 3730; *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* 大漢和辭典 (Tokyo: Taishukan shoten, 1966–88) 8, pp. 8435–36; and *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典 (Shanghai: Xinhua shudian, 1997), p. 4486.

² *Cihai* 2, pp. 2333–34.

³ See two articles in *Nei Menggu Dongbuqu kaoguxue wenhua yanjiu wenji* 內蒙古東部區考古學文化研究文集 (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1991): Zhang Songbo 張松柏 and Feng Lei 馮雷, “Zuzhou shishi tansuo” 祖州石室探索, pp. 127–34, and Chen Yongzhi 陳永志, “Zuzhou shishi zaitan” 祖州石室再探, pp. 135–39.

⁴ Joseph L. Mullie, “Les anciennes villes de l’empire des grands Leao au royaume Mongol de Barin,” *TP* 21 (1922), p. 141.



Figure 1. Shishi

Located Chifeng county, Inner Mongolia. Photo courtesy of Roy and Marilyn Gridley.

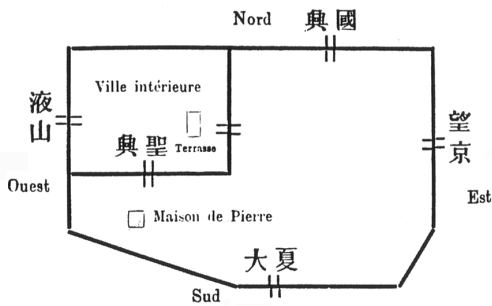
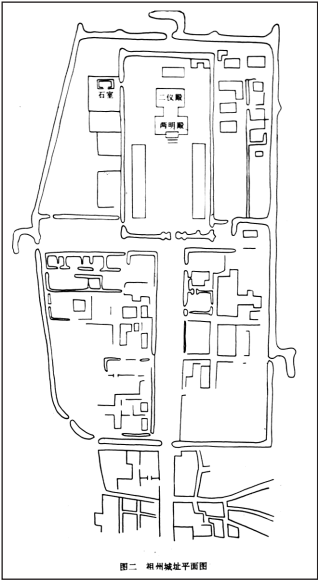


Figure 2. Sketch of Plan of Zuzhou
From Mullie, "Les anciennes villes"
(cited n. 4), p. 146.

Figure 3. Reconstruction
Plan of Zuzhou

From Zhang and Feng,
"Zuzhou shishi tansuo"
(cited n. 3), p. 129.



in limited archaeological reconnaissance at the site and also labeled it Shishi (figure 3). Air photographs of wall remains published in 2002 leave no doubt about the five-sided shape and three battlements.⁵ The position of Shishi, southwest inside the outer wall, roughly south of the inner enclosure, also is uncontested. So is the existence of a two-walled enclosure that defined the boundaries of Zuzhou 祖州, the ancestral prefecture designated by Abaoji 阿保機 (872–926), the leader who confederated Khitan tribes and posthumously was given the title Taizu, first ruler of the Liao dynasty (907–1125).⁶

Mullie's measurements for the structure differed somewhat from the ones published in 1991 and 2002. Mullie measured the bases of the north and south walls as 5.25 meters, the west wall as 6.1 meters, and 3.1 meters was the distance from ground level to roof; the measurements published by Chinese investigators in 1991 were 4.7 by 6.8 meters at the base and 3.5 meters in height; in 2002 they were given as 5.3 meters by seven, and 3.6 meters high. Each of the seven megaliths that formed the structure's three solid sides, roof, and front with a T-shaped opening is about 30 centimeters thick and weighs several tons. The corners of each piece are chamfered and held in place with iron hooks.

Four theories about the stone structure have been put forth by Mullie and the Chinese publications. One, favored by Mullie, is based on the description in *Liaoshi* 遼史 that informs the reader that a tower (*lou* 樓) was erected in each of the four directions outside the Liao capital Shangjing 上京 ("Upper ["superior"] Capital") and that West Tower (Xilou 西樓) was inside the walls of Zuzhou.⁷ Mullie believed the position of the Stone House corresponded to the place where West Tower should have stood.⁸ Other accounts, including one recorded in *Qidan-guo zhi* 契丹國志 (*Record of the Khitan State*), take Xilou to have been a place that, one might infer, was marked by a *lou*.⁹

⁵ For illustrations, see Zhongguo lishi bowuguan yaogan yu hangkong sheying kaogu zhongxin 中國歷史博物館遙感與航空攝影考古中心和 Nei Menggu Zizhiqu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 內蒙古自治區文物考古研究所, *Nei Mengu Dongnanbu hangkong sheying kaogu baogao* 內蒙古東南部航空攝影考古報告 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2002), pp. 116–21.

⁶ The best source for Zuzhou and Abaoji's association with it is Tuotuo 脫脫 (1313–55) et al., eds., *Liaoshi* 遼史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974) 37, pp., 442–43; and 2, pp. 22–23. Hereafter, all references to standard histories will be to the punctuated Zhonghua shuju series.

⁷ *Liaoshi* 37, pp. 441–42.

⁸ Mullie, "Les anciennes villes," pp. 140–43.

⁹ In 926, Yao Kun 姚坤, a Chinese envoy of the Later Tang court, went to Shangjing for an audience with Abaoji that he expected to have in Xilou. The meeting took place in the east, but Yao Kun was in Xilou twice that year. He discusses West Tower as if it were a fortified place adjacent to Shangjing. The account is discussed and translated in Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1999), pp. 44–47. Hu Jiao 胡嶠, another Chinese official, who spent six years in Shangjing in the mid-10th c., also left an account titled *Xianbei(lu) ji* 鮮卑(錄)記, which is found in Ye Longli 葉隆禮 (13th c.), comp., *Qidanguo zhi* (rpt.

The second theory is that the Stone House was a place of incarceration.¹⁰ The idea is a modern one, based on interpretation of passages in the biography of Lihu 李胡, third son of the first Liao ruler, Abaoji. Shishi is not mentioned specifically in the passage, and thus the theory is not explored further here.¹¹ Third, it has been suggested that Stone House was a burial shrine.¹² The last theory, that this was an ancestral temple or a place where ancestral tablets were housed, is the easiest of the three to support from textual evidence discussed below. Presented in addition are several ideas drawn from texts or based on associations with other monuments.

Even though the first theory has received the most attention in scholarly literature, the longstanding definition of *lou* as a multi-story building and the combination of wood radical and a multi-level structure in the character suggest that if the Shishi inside the walls of Zuzhou was Xilou, it would be a nearly unique example of a one-story stone edifice with such a name.¹³ More likely, it seems, is that it was near a

Taipei: Taipei shangwu yinshuguan, 1968) 25, the passage being on p. 168, and in Ouyang Xiu (1007–72), *Wudaishi ji* 五代史記 (Taipei: Ershiwu shi bian kan guan, 1956) 73. Opinions of Western scholars about the location of West Tower are discussed in Karl Wittfogel and Feng Chisheng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949), p. 175. I discuss West Tower in *Liao Architecture* (Honolulu: U. Hawai'i P., 1997), pp. 250–51.

¹⁰ Chen, “Zuzhou shishi,” p. 136.

¹¹ When the second Liao ruler Taizong (Deguang 德光) died in 947, Yuan 院, eldest son of the eldest son of the first Liao ruler, and thus Deguang's nephew, declared himself emperor according to Chinese custom. This act caused immediate conflict among family factions, particularly Abaoji's widow, dowager Yingtian 應天, and her third son with Abaoji, Lihu, also known as Honggu 洪古. According to Khitan custom, succession passed from older brother to younger brother, whereby Deguang, second son of Abaoji and Yingtian, would have been followed to the throne by his oldest surviving brother. This led to open warfare just south of Shangjing. The crisis was resolved in a few days, with Yuan 院 the victor. Yingtian and Lihu were arrested and “imprisoned” in Zuzhou for the rest of their lives. Lihu was posthumously given the title Zhangsu 章肅 emperor (*huangdi* 皇帝) in 1052. How or where they were incarcerated, or if this was some form of house arrest, are not explained. Nothing more specific than “in Zuzhou” is stated in the text. In 1991, based on research published in the previous year by Wang Xiangping 王襄平, Chen Yongzhi (“Zuzhou shishi”) suggested that incarceration might have occurred in the stone house. Lihu's biog. is at *Liaoshi* 72, pp. 1213–14. For summaries of the events, see Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol. 6: *Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994), pp. 75–76, and Wittfogel and Feng, *Liao*, pp. 401–2, 415–17, and 544.

¹² Chen Dawei 陳大為, “Lun Liaoning de ‘shiben’ jiqi yanbian” 論遼寧的石棚及其演變, *Liaohai wenwu xuekan* 遼海文物學刊 1 (1991), pp. 82–89.

¹³ On the criteria for designating *lou* and other tall buildings, see: Wang Guixiang 王貴祥, “Lüelun Zhongguo gudai gaoceng mugou jianzhu de fazhan” 略論中國古代高層木構建築的發展 (2 parts): *Gujian yuanlin jishu* 古建園林技術 6.1 (1985), pp. 2–8, and 7.2 (1985), pp. 2–7, and 31; Chen Zehong 陳澤泓 and Chen Ruozhi 陳若子, *Zhongguo men, lou, pai, fang* 中國門樓牌坊 (Guangdong: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1993); and Tanaka Tan, “The Appearance and Background of the *Lou*: Multi-Storeyed Timberwork Towers in Ancient China,” in Hashimoto et al., eds, *East Asian Science: Tradition and Beyond* (Osaka: Kansai U.P., 1995), pp. 281–89.

place referred to as Xilou, perhaps because a tower stood or formerly had stood there, or that Xilou was a tower or other tall military fortification or lookout, one of four beacons on the sides of Shangjing, but that it had disappeared by Mullie's day.¹⁴

Both the association with Xilou and the Liao date hinge on Shishi's location. That the enclosing wall was part of Abaoji's ancestral prefecture Zuzhou is not disputed, but is that sufficient justification to identify Shishi as a Liao building? Equally possible, it seems, is that the wall of Abaoji's precinct was constructed in deference to an existing structure.

If Shishi was constructed in the Liao period, it seems very peculiar that it is never mentioned in the *Liaoshi* description of Zuzhou or the other important sources.¹⁵ Surely something that necessitated the transport of this many tons of stone should have been noted in the standard history of the dynasty who built it or sited their ancestral prefecture in response to it, or in the record of an emissary to that place. If the stone building had been used for imprisonment, this too, it seems, should have been noted somewhere in the dynastic histories. The omission seems to suggest either that such a building was not noteworthy, or that it was not standing when Abaoji's Zuzhou was walled. Neither seems likely.

No matter when Shishi was constructed, a tremendous amount of labor was required. Chen Yongzhi 陳永志 suggests that the stone for Shishi had been taken from a quarry about fifteen kilometers to the south,¹⁶ but he did not consider how or by whom it might have been transported. These practical concerns, whether in the tenth century or five centuries earlier or later, underscore fundamental issues not just about this building but about stone architecture more generally. In premodern times, moving the stone, polishing it, erecting it, and getting it to hold together should have required a massive labor force that we have to assume was directed by someone powerful or working for a serious purpose. Whoever the patron and whatever his purpose, it is reasonable to assume that construction of the Zuzhou Shishi was the result of organized, directed effort and may therefore have been of prime importance when it was built. Whether roughly shaped stone of the kind used at Stonehenge or highly polished marble of the Parthe-

¹⁴ The towers could have been freestanding or attached to the outer city wall. Piero Corradini, "On the Qidan and Jurcin Capitals," *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 76.1-4 (2002), pp. 169-71, has proposed that there were two Xilou, one in Shangjing and the other in Zuzhou. For a plan of Liao Shangjing, see Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 1990), p. 124.

¹⁵ These are mentioned in n. 9, above.

¹⁶ Chen, "Zuzhou shishi," p. 135.

non or St. Peter's, it is universally assumed when a stone building is planned that it will stand for millennia.¹⁷

When Mullie came to Zuzhou, Shishi was empty. Locals told him that at one time a white marble statue had stood in a corner and that it had been broken when it was used to sharpen knives. Such a statement lends itself to the kind of images readily conjured about a semi-nomadic people such as the Khitan, living on the fringes of Chinese society.¹⁸ The lone stone statue also calls to mind another of Chifeng county's most powerful images of the Khitan, the sculpture at Shangjing identified as the bodhisattva Guanyin that lost its head sometime between the time of Japanese occupation-period photographs and recent times.¹⁹ The existence of a statue in Shishi seems to support the third theory, namely, that it was a temple. The corollary to the suggestion, that it was Abaoji's ancestral temple, is harder to prove. If the building was there, it is likely Abaoji used it. Whether he built it or worshipped his ancestors in it are other matters.

Two aspects of the Zuzhou Shishi are crucial to figuring out if it was used by Abaoji and what it was. First is the question of architectural precedents. Second is what is implied by the name *shishi*.

STONE CONSTRUCTION IN CHINA AND NORTHEAST ASIA

The Zuzhou Shishi was one of two stone buildings published by Japanese archeologist Torii Ryūzō 鳥居龍藏 in 1936 in his four-volume illustrated study of Liao culture (figures 1 and 4).²⁰ Torii did not speculate on their purpose, nor did he explain his reasoning in dating them to the Liao period, but the second example informs us that the Zuzhou Shishi was not unique in the regions of former Manchuria that had been Liao

¹⁷ On stone construction and the expectations that it elicits, see, e.g., Lee Goff, *Stone Houses: Colonial to Contemporary* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002); Erhard Winkler, *Stone in Architecture: Properties, Durability*, 3d edn. (Berlin and New York: Springer-Verlag, 1997); and Richard Kierkhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture from Byzantium to Berkeley* (Oxford and New York: Oxford U.P., 2004).

¹⁸ Exotic aspects of Khitan customs have made an impression on Chinese observers since the time of Yao Kun and Hu Jiao. The Khitan, for example, practiced trepanation and encased corpses in suits of precious metal, on the one hand, and they or their subjects painted signs of the Western zodiac alongside the lunar lodges and duodenary animals, on the other. An often-cited source on Qidan burial practices is Southern Song-era scholar Wen Weijian's 文惟簡 description of the preparation of the corpse of second ruler Deguang for transport home, "Luting shishi" 虜廷事實, preserved in Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (1316–1403), ed., *Shuofu* 說郛 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927) 8, p. 49a. All these subjects are discussed in Steinhart, *Liao Architecture*.

¹⁹ For a picture with its head, see Torii Ryūzō 鳥居龍藏, *Kōkogakujō yori mitaru Ryō no bunka: Zufu* 考古學上より見たる遼の文化, 圖譜 (Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin, 1936) 1, pll. 12–13.

²⁰ Torii, *Ryō no bunka*.



Figure 4. Shishi at Korban-toroghai

Found there by Torii Ryüzō. From Torii, Ryū no bunka (cited n. 19) 2, pl. 93.

most famous examples, at Stonehenge, in Salisbury, England,²¹ but dolmens are far from unique in Asia, particularly north and northeast Asia, and specifically Manchuria. Asian dolmens survive in Kyushu, Korea, China's northeastern provinces, and the eastern portions of Inner Mongolia. Many have been dated to preliterate times, but it should be noted that unlike in China, in Japan and some regions of Korea the Bronze Age commenced before the occurrence of writing and continued into the early centuries AD, so that the Yayoi period of Japan, for example, which is often suggested as the date of the stone monuments in Kyushu, extends to about 300 AD. In addition, the Manchurian examples have in almost every case been considered funerary. The Chinese (and Japanese) name for these structures is *zhishimu* 支石墓, literally "propped up stone tombs."²² Among them are several comprised of four walls and a roof (figure 5).²³

²¹ Among numerous studies of Stonehenge, see, for example, Sir Fred Hoyle, *From Stonehenge to Modern Cosmology* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1972); John D. North, *Stonehenge: A New Interpretation of Prehistoric Man and the Cosmos* (New York: Free Press, 1996); and Aubrey Burl, *Great Stone Circles: Fables, Fictions, Facts* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1999).

²² On *zhishimu* of Japan, Korea, and former Manchuria see all five articles in *Kōkogaku zasshi* 考古學雜誌 38.4 (Nov. 1952). For other examples in the former Koguryō kingdom, see *Chōsen koseki zuroku* 朝鮮古蹟圖錄 (Tokyo: Kokkasha, 1915), pll. 660–62. The stone structures published in the earlier work are not dated, and a funerary or other purpose is not specified.

²³ One of the most intriguing stone structures in Japan is the stone hall (*sekidō* 石堂) in

territory. He labeled the buildings dolmen, directing one's thinking far beyond China or Mongolia, to construction since prehistoric times of upright stones, some with flat megaliths across their tops.

The use of the term dolmen may immediately call to mind the world's



Figure 5. Funerary Dolmen, Xiyuan 岫巖 County

In former Manchuria. From Kōkogaku zasshi 38.4 (cited n. 22), p. 67.

China's Central Plain has its own traditions of construction in stone or other permanent materials. Due to the prevalence of timber-frame architecture in China, the general name for halls that do not use wood is *wuliangdian* 無樑殿 (beamless halls). The earliest extant *wuliangdian* are from the Ming dynasty, with famous examples in Nanjing and on Mount Wutai.²⁴ Below ground or directly into the earth, however, Chinese built with permanent materials long before the Ming dynasty. Stone was a standard material in underground and cliff tombs in the Han period.²⁵ Stone, brick and combination brick-and-stone tombs were even more common.²⁶ Stone was the dominant building material for tombs in the Koguryō 高句麗 kingdom (37 BC–668 AD), whose territory included much of the region known as Manchuria. Koguryō builders also covered tombs with mounds made of piled stone, and stone was the primary building material for city walls.²⁷ Smaller-scale stone funerary monuments also were common in Han China, particularly in Shandong province, where famous examples remain in Jinxiang 金鄉, Jiaxiang 嘉祥, and Xiaotangshan 孝堂山.²⁸

Okamasu 岡益, associated with the tragic death of child emperor Antoku 安德 (12th c.). Because the structure is thought to have been built at least two centuries after Abaoji, it is not discussed here. On the Okamasu building, see Hirose Takarō 平勢隆郎, "Nihon Okamasu sekidō oyobi sono saiseki, Chūgokuteki eikyō" 日本岡益石堂及其西暦、中國の影響. I thank Victor Mair for this unpublished paper.

²⁴ For an illustration of the hall in Nanjing, at Linggu 靈谷 Monastery, see Chinese Academy of Architecture, *Ancient Chinese Architecture* (Beijing and Hong Kong: China Building Industry Press and Joint Publishing Company, 1982), p. 162, and for the hall on Mount Wutai, see *Wutaishan* 五臺山 (Beijing: Wenwu Press, 1984), pll. 74–76.

²⁵ The most famous rock-carved tombs are probably those of prince Liu Sheng and his wife Dou Wan, from the second century BC in Mancheng 滿城, Hebei. Western Han rulers of the states of Chu and Liang built stone tombs in Shandong and Henan; discussed in Zhou Xueying 周學鷹, *Xuzhou Hanmu jianzhu* 徐州漢墓建築 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001); Henansheng Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所, *Yongcheng Xi Han Liangguo wangling yu qinyuan* 永城西漢梁國王陵與寢園 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1996); and Henansheng Shangqiushi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 河南省商丘市文物管理委員會 et al., *Mangdangshan Xi Han Liangwang mudi* 芒碭山西漢梁王墓地 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2001). Examples of stone tombs of the Eastern Han are found mostly in southern Shandong and northern Jiangsu. Famous examples remain in Yinan 沂南, Cangshan 蒼山, Anqiu 安丘, and Maocun 茅村. Rock-carved tombs are found in numerous places in Sichuan, including Leshan 樂山, Qiyang 祁陽, and Pengxian 彭縣.

²⁶ Han tombs in which stone combines with another material are too numerous to list. Two well-known examples are the early second century BC tomb of the Nanyue 南越 king in Guangzhou and the very late-Han Tomb no. 1 in Dahuting 打虎亭, Henan.

²⁷ On Koguryō construction, see Wang Bohou 王伯厚, *Gaogouli gucheng yanjiu* 高句麗古城研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002); Wei Cuncheng 魏存成, *Gaogouli yiji* 高句麗遺跡 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002); and Wei Cuncheng, *Gaogouli kaogu* 高句麗考古 (Changchun: Baishan ziliao, 1994).

²⁸ On these stone shrines see, for example, Wilma Fairbank, "The Offering Shrines of 'Wu Liang Tz'u'," *HJAS* 6.1 (1941), pp. 1–36, and "A Structural Key to Han Mural Art," *HJAS* 7.1

Freestanding stone monuments that were not dolmen also existed in China in the Han dynasty. Carved out of living rock, the stone known as Kongwangshan 孔王山, near Lianyungang 連雲港 is unique, its singular importance consistent with the use of a permanent material.²⁹ The use of stone also was widespread in freestanding pillars, monumental sculpture, and gate- or pillar-towers (*que* 闕) positioned at either side of the approaches to imperial tombs to define “spirit paths” (*shendao* 神道) beginning in the Han dynasty.³⁰ Ceremonial archways, building platforms, stele, funerary pagodas, and inscribed rocks also were standard stone structures in premodern China. Each can logically be associated with a desire to endure weather and other natural disasters. The platforms are especially important, for the Chinese building system is inherently transitory: columns and other wooden elements supported by platforms will need replacement, but the stone pilasters into which columns may be lodged and the platform that may support those pilasters might last for centuries or longer.

The multi-millennial decision to build even China’s monuments of supreme significance, halls of the Forbidden City, the Altar to Heaven complex, and their predecessors, for example, from wood, and to restrict stone construction to subterranean funerary architecture, funerary shrines, symbolic gate-towers, and building platforms, and only occasionally to experiment with stone structures above ground, underscores how extraordinary Shishi was. If the Shishi stood in Zuzhou in the tenth century, it is truly remarkably that neither Yao Kun nor Hu Jiao wrote of it.³¹

(1942), pp. 52–88; Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1989); and Cary Y. Liu et al., *Recarving China’s Past: Art, Archaeology, and Architecture of the “Wu Family Shrines,”* (New Haven and London: Yale U.P., 2005). Qing scholar-antiquarians such as Huang Yi (1744–1802) 黃易, who visited the Wu Family Shrines site, referred to them as *shishi*. On Huang’s visit and writings and other visits by Qing scholars, see Liu, *ibid.*, pp. 61–63, and elsewhere. The use of the term *shishi* for the shrine stones was noted in conference papers by Lillian Lan-ying Tseng and Bai Qianshen presented at the conference, “Recarving China’s Past,” held at Princeton in May 2005.

²⁹ For a recent discussion in a Western language of the imagery of Kongwangshan, see Marylin M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 1999) 1, pp. 27–47. For important Chinese studies of the rock-carved images, see three articles in *WW* (1981.7), pp. 1–19. Illustrations of the images are found in Rhie and the *WW* articles.

³⁰ On *que*, see Chen Mingda 陳明達, “Handai de shique” 漢代的石闕, *WW* (1961.12), pp. 9–23; rpt. and ed. in *Chen Mingda gu jianzhu yu diaosu shilun* 陳明達古建築與雕塑史論 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 142–55; and Xu Wenpeng 徐文彬 et al., *Sichuan Handai shique* 四川漢代石闕 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992) On monumental funerary sculpture in stone see Ann Paludan, *The Chinese Spirit Road* (New Haven: Yale, 1991).

³¹ These two are mentioned in n. 9, above.

SHISHI IN EARLY WRITTEN SOURCES

In contrast to the structure Shishi that stands in Zuzhou, the word is not unique or even rare. In colloquial writing about Chinese architecture, *shishi* is a standard way to designate both an offering shrine of the type mentioned above and a rock-carved cave, the latter space alternately known as *shiku* 石窟 or *dongku* 洞窟.³² One has no reason to infer from this that the Zuzhou *shishi* was a freestanding worship cave, erected in a place where no natural rock could provide that kind of environment. Still, the widespread use of rock-carved caves for Buddhist worship in South and East Asia and sometimes also for Daoists and other ascetics in China, may support the possibility that one or more images were at one time inside it.

In premodern Chinese literary and historical writings, not only is the term *shishi* not uncommon, it possesses a wide range of meanings and allusions. *Shishi* alone (with no prefix) is found 136 times in the twenty-four dynastic histories and their well-known commentaries. Of these, 102 date to the Five Dynasties period or earlier, and thus are considered most pertinent to ascertaining the purpose of the structure inside Zuzhou, if it preexisted or was built by Abaoji 阿保機.³³ *Shishi* occurs 871 times in the *Taishō Tripitaka*.³⁴

Ten references are found in *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*), compiled in about 104–87 BC.³⁵ In *juan* 5, for example, in the historian's discussion of the distant forbears of Qin Shi Huangdi, one learns that king Mu 穆 enjoyed himself so much on a hunting expedition in the West that he almost forgot to return home. Commentator Guo Pu 郭璞 (276–324) writes that his diversion took him to Mount Kunlun 崑崙, which he sites near Jiuquan 酒泉 in Gansu, where the

³² To cite just a few examples, offering-shrines are called *shishi* in Henan Bowuguan 河南博物館, *Henan chutu Handai jianzhu mingqi* 河南出土漢代建築明器 (Zhengzhou: Dajia chubanshe, 2002), p. 81, and Liang Sicheng 梁思成, "Zhongguo de Fojiao jianzhu" 中國的佛教建築, in *Liang Sicheng wenji* 梁思成文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 1986), vol. 4, p. 184. These are the primary or secondary definitions for *shishi* in *Cihai* 3, p. 3733, for *sekimuro* in Morohashi, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* 8, p. 315, and Shinmura Izuru 新村出, ed. *Kōjien* 廣辭苑 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1975), p. 109. Relatively formal writers of Chinese architectural history, such as Liang Sicheng and Fu Xinian 傅熹年, interchange the term freely with *shiku*. Other studies in which *shishi* is used to refer to cave-rooms are cited below.

³³ I thank Yang Jidong for printing the passages from the Academia Sinica website and for adding Chinese characters to this article.

³⁴ I thank John Kieschnick for providing me with this number. Although a few passages relevant to Buddhism are cited below, a Buddhist explanation for the Zuzhou Shishi is not in question.

³⁵ I thank Paul Goldin for pointing me in the direction of *Shiji* 史記. Several of the *Shiji* references are cited in entries for *shishi* in Morohashi, *Dai Kan-Wa jiten* and *Zhongwen da-cidian* (see n. 1, above).

Queen Mother of the West was believed to reside. King Mu found a *shishi* at Kunlun named Queen Mother Hall (Wangmutang 王母堂) that was strung with pearls and decorated with bells so that it shone like a divine palace.³⁶

The next mention of *shishi* is in the biography of the Western Han's most long-lived and arguably most illustrious emperor, Wudi (r. 140–87 BC). In the third moon of the year 110, Han Wudi 武帝 ascended to the *taishi* 太室 (great chamber) of the Central Sacred Peak to make sacrifices.³⁷ An explanation of this passage by Wei Zhao 韋昭 informs us that the marchmont had greater (*tai*) and lesser (*shao*) *shi* 少室, so named by Wudi because they were *shishi*.³⁸ It is not certain what stood at the peak when the emperor visited. Most likely, if we follow the more common usages of *shishi* that will be cited below, Wei Zhao assumed that the emperor had been inspired by stone shrines or perhaps grottoes. In 118 and between 118 and 123 AD, respectively, Eastern Han emperor Andi 安帝 (r. 106–125) had Taishique 太室闕 and Shaoshique 少室闕, pairs of pillar-towers, erected on the sacred mountain just north of Dengfeng 登封. The purpose was to commemorate the associations of the mountain with legendary emperor Yu 禹, credited with teaching the Chinese people to control flood waters. Yu's two wives, who were sisters, were associated with the greater and lesser *shi* (corresponding to the elder and younger sister), perhaps grotto areas, and perhaps not on the same parts of the mountain. The Taishi pair of towers would come to be the entrance of the major architectural complex on the mountain, the Temple to the Central Peak, where they remain today. A third pair of *que*, Qimuque 啓母闕, were built in 123 in front of Qimu Temple at the foot of the mountain to commemorate the birth of Yu the Great's son.³⁹ *Shishi* meaning a room carved into rock occurs in explanations of passages in *juan* 32 and 67 of *Shiji*.⁴⁰ It is likely that Wei Zhao assumed this meaning when interpreting what sort of structure was seen by Han Wudi.

³⁶ *Shiji* 5 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), pp. 174–76. The same reference, *shishi* as a hall for the Queen Mother of the West, occurs in a note to *j.* 117, p. 3061.

³⁷ *Shiji* 12, p. 474.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Today the *que* are kept in locked sheds. They are described in guidebooks to the mountain. See, e.g., Hu Mingke 胡明可 and Hu Fang 胡方, *Luoyang mingsheng* 洛陽名勝 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1993), pp. 80–82. The dates on the three pairs of *que* are confirmed by inscription. The visit of Han Wudi to the marchmont in 110 BC may be the reason Nagel's *Encyclopedia-Guide to China* (Geneva, Paris, and Munich: Nagel, 1979), p. 810, mistakenly says that the *que* had been built in 118 BC.

⁴⁰ *Shiji* 32, p. 1478; 67, p. 2203.

Shishi occurs again in a commentary to a prose-poem by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (d. 117 BC) that was recorded in his biography in *Shiji*.⁴¹ Positioned at the approach to Mount Kunlun, one comes upon the Queen Mother of the West. As in *juan* 5, discussed above, the commentator reports that the abode of the Queen Mother includes a hall bearing her name and *shishi*.⁴² The Queen Mother of the West and her Kunlun residence are mentioned again in *juan* 123, a report on the Western Regions (Dayuan 大宛). In the discussion of Daxia 大夏 (Bactria), one learns of the Buddhist kingdom of Shendu 神都 (India), where a Buddha sits in a stone cave and where there is also a stupa.⁴³

A different definition of *shishi* is found in *Shiji*, *juan* 130. We are told that state documents may be stored in *shishi jingui* 石室金匱. The explanation in the commentary is explicit. Both *shishi* and *jingui* are places where the state's writings are stored.⁴⁴ Near the end of the *juan*, indeed near the end of Sima Qian's work, a third enigmatic structure is mentioned, *mingtang* 明堂. Although a subject of considerably more scholarly attention than *shishi* during the last two millennia, the structure of the *mingtang* is less well understood.⁴⁵ In this passage, all three are said to have been repositories of precious writings and documents, but in contrast to *shishi* and *jingui*, or metal chests,⁴⁶ *mingtang* were made of wood.

Twenty-six references to *shishi* occur in later histories of the Han, Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* (*Standard History of the Han*) and Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) *Hou Hanshu* (*Standard History of the Later Han*), covering the period through the Wang Mang interregnum (9–23 AD) and the Eastern or Later Han (25–220), respectively. In the annals of the dynastic founder, Liu Bang, one again finds *jingui shishi*, with the understanding that the two are used for the same purpose, but here the order of the binoms is reversed from the above-cited passage in *Shiji*, *juan* 130.⁴⁷ More intriguing is the following line that informs us

⁴¹ The biog. is at *j.* 117, pp. 2999–3074.

⁴² *Shiji* 117, p. 3061. The entire *juan*, including Sima Xiangru's complicated *fu*, is translated in Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia U.P., 1993) 2, pp. 259–306.

⁴³ *Shiji* 123, pp. 3164–65.

⁴⁴ *Shiji* 130, p. 3296.

⁴⁵ Crucial knowledge of the *mingtang* had been lost even before the writing of *Shiji*. On *mingtang*, see Hwang Ming-chorng, "Ming-tang: Cosmology, Political Order and Monuments in Early China," Ph. D. diss. (Harvard University, 1996). An extensive bibliography is provided. Another important work in a Western language is Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Emperor Wu* (Rome: Istituto Italiano il Medio, 1988).

⁴⁶ For the basic definition of *jingui*, in which this passage from *Shiji* is quoted, see *Cihai* 3, p. 3873.

⁴⁷ I thank Victor Mair for insightful discussion of *jingui* and for pointing out that in this passage the two objects are listed in the reverse order.

that both were stored in the ancestral temple (*zongmiao* 宗廟).⁴⁸ In *juan* six, one finds another explanation presented in *Shiji*: concerning offerings at Songgao 嵩高. The later commentator Wei Zhao tells us that this place was given its name because larger and smaller caves were carved into natural rock there.⁴⁹ *Hanshu*, *juan* 28 and an explanation in *juan* 40, again mention *shishi* as the abode of the Queen Mother of the West.⁵⁰ *Juan* 62 of *Hanshu* records Sima Qian's reference to *jingui* and *shishi* as places to store documents.⁵¹ In *juan* 97 of *Hanshu*, *jingui* occurs alone, but an explanation associates it with *shishi* as a place to store precious items.⁵²

Thus before the end of the last BC century, *shishi* had at least three associations: a room carved into rock; such a room or groups of rooms in the exotic and elusive western regions where one sought the abode of the Queen Mother of the West and her immortality-granting powers; and a container for something precious, perhaps a case or cupboard (*gui* 匱), perhaps a small shrine, or perhaps a multi-room structure such as the *mingtang*.

Many references to *shishi* in *Hou Hanshu* are similar.⁵³ Related to references cited above is a passage in *juan* 79 in which *shishi* is one in a list of structures – *biyong* 辟雍, *dongguan* 東觀, *lantai* 蘭臺, *xuanming* 宣明, and *hongdu* 鴻都 – in which imperial documents that were transferred from Chang'an to the new capital in Luoyang were stored.⁵⁴ This passage is particularly interesting, because the association with *biyong*, a component of the ritual hall complex that included the above-mentioned *mingtang*,⁵⁵ as well as with *lantai* and *dongguan*, suggests *shishi* to be a

⁴⁸ *Hanshu* 5, pp. 80–1.

⁴⁹ *Hanshu* 6, p. 190. For the reference in *Shiji*, see n. 37, above.

⁵⁰ *Hanshu* 28, p. 1611, and 40, p. 2037, the latter passage informing the reader that the transcendent Chisongzi 赤松子 ("Red Pine"), who lived at the time of the legendary emperors, often came to the Queen Mother of the West's *shishi*.

⁵¹ *Hanshu* 62, p. 2716, where it is noted that an alternate form of the character *gui* is used.

⁵² *Hanshu* 97, p. 3996.

⁵³ E.g., associations between the Queen Mother of the West, Mount Kunlun, and/or *shishi* are found in the commentarial notes at *j.* 2 (p. 122), 28 (p. 988), and 29 (p. 1030). Storage of *jingui shishi* in the ancestral temple occurs in a note at *j.* 12 (p. 743). The use of *shishi* as a place to offer sacrifices to ancestors is at *j.* 85 (p. 1809), and the use of *shishi* specifically for storage of documents is explained in notes at *j.* 59 (p. 1939), 61 (p. 2033), and 63 (p. 2077).

⁵⁴ *Hou Hanshu* 79, p. 2548.

⁵⁵ Excavations of Eastern Han sites south of Luoyang have shown the *mingtang*, *biyong*, and *lingtai* 靈台 (spirit altar) to have been separate structures, but at the Western Han capital Chang'an, excavations suggest that several ritual structures may have been merged in a composite ritual building. For reconstructions and discussion of ritual architecture at both capitals, see Yang Hongxun 楊鴻勛, *Gongdian kaogu tonglun* 宮殿考古通論 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 2001), pp. 262–85, and 319–39.

building as opposed to a portable container, the primary association for *jingui*. Corroboration that *lantai* was a structure is found in a late-Han text, “Lihuelun” 理惑論 (“Essays on Reason and Bewilderment”), cited in (Shi) Sengyou 僧祐’s (445–518) *Hongming ji* 弘明集 (*Collection of Grand Illuminations*), in which one is told that during the reign of Eastern Han Mingdi 明帝 (r. 58–75), forty-two Buddhist sutras were stored in a *lantai* 蘭台 *shishi* of fourteen bays that was purportedly at Baimasi 白馬寺.⁵⁶ As for *dongguan* and *lantai*, their function as structures for the storage of documents is certain.⁵⁷

The most intriguing reference to *shishi* in *Hou Hanshu* is found in the section of biographies of non-Chinese peoples. In *juan* 86, we are informed that the people known as Panhu 槃瓠 carried their dead to a dangerously located place, *shishi*, about halfway up a mountain. There, as many as tens of thousands of deceased had been buried. According to the commentary, stone sheep and other animals, and perhaps human images carved in stone, were said to remain at the spot that today is in Yunnan.⁵⁸ It is possible the reference is to the kind of cliff tombs (*yamu* 崖墓) used for burials in the Han dynasty that remain in great numbers in Sichuan province.⁵⁹

The use of *shishi* as places to store precious documents is further confirmed in *Sanguozhi* 三國志.⁶⁰ So are the definitions of *shishi* as a room carved into rock and a place where ancestral tablets are housed.⁶¹ The latter definition is also found in *Jinshu* 晉書 and in *Quan Jinwen* 全

⁵⁶ Baimasi was said in Buddhist traditions to have been the monastery to which sutras were brought from India on white horses; see Takakusu Junjirō 高橋次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡邊海旭, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Tokyo: Issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–34), no. 2102, vol. 52, , p. 5A. I thank Tansen Sen for bringing this passage to my attention.

⁵⁷ Such function, esp. for *dongguan*, was regularized since E. Han; see Howard L. Goodman, “Chinese Polymaths, 100–300 AD: The Tung-kuan, Taoist Dissent, and Technical Skills,” *AM* 3d ser. 18.1 (2005), pp. 101–74, and the sources cited there. I thank Howard Goodman for sending me a prepublication draft of his article.

⁵⁸ *Hou Hanshu* 86, p. 2830.

⁵⁹ Cliff tombs (*yamu*) were particularly common in the regions of Ba and Shu, today’s Sichuan, the Zhaotong area of Yunnan, and the Zunyi region in Guizhou during the Eastern Han and in the century afterward. This is the area of the southern Man and southwestern Di referred to in *Hou Hanshu* 86. For an introduction to *yamu*, see Luo Erhu 羅二虎, “Sichuan yamu de chubu yanjiu” 四川崖墓的初步研究, *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 (1988.2), p. 142, and Reinhold Kreifelts, “Felsengräber in Sichuan und Kammergräber in Fujian und Guangdong vom Ende der Westlichen Han-Zeit bis zum Ende der Tang-Zeit,” in Dieter Kuhn, ed., *Arbeitsmaterialien aus chinesischen Ausgrabungsberichten (1988–91) zu Gräbern aus der Han- bis Tang-Zeit* (Heidelberg: Edition forum, 1992), pp. 138–58. For recently excavated human faces in cliff tombs, see Santaixian wenhua tiyujū 三台縣文化體育局 and Santaixian wenwu guanlisuo 三台縣文物管理所, “Sichuan Santai Qijiang yamun 2000-nian duqingli jianbao” 四川三台鄭江崖墓群 2000年度清理簡報, *WW* (2002.1), pp. 16–41, illust. of the heads on p. 21.

⁶⁰ *Sanguozhi* 2, p. 58; 24, p. 678.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 48, p. 1171; 65, p. 1459.

晉文 (*Complete Prose of the Jin*), *juan* 88.⁶² *Jinshu* also informs us that *shishi* is a place to store documents and that it is a grotto.⁶³ The precious nature of *shishi* is always implicit: *Jinshu* also refers to *shishi* as *yutang* 玉堂, literally “jade hall,” in all likelihood an association equivalent to *jingui*, and to a stone container inside *shishi*.⁶⁴ The most interesting mention of *shishi* in *Jinshu* is found in the biography of Shan Daokai 單道開, a painter from the vicinity of Dunhuang who lived more than a century. When he died, his remains were placed in a *shishi*.⁶⁵ In a context like this, it is possible that *shishi* refers either to a grotto or an underground tomb, for as mentioned above, stone was a construction material in subterranean tombs in the Eastern Han dynasty and in the next century.

Nine references to *shishi* are found in Shen Yue's 沈約 (441–513) *Songshu* 宋書, dealing with the period 420–79 of the Liu-Song dynasty. One finds further confirmation that *shishi* were used to store precious objects, that the word referred to a place to store ancestral tablets, functioning like an ancestral temple,⁶⁶ but in addition, new details suggesting links between *shishi* and imperial burial begin to emerge. In *juan* 15, in a discussion of death rituals, we are told that when Wendi 文帝 (r. 424–453) died, the imperial seals were placed in *shishi*, and precious objects were not put in the tomb.⁶⁷ This is a sharp contrast to the Han practice of filling tombs with valuable goods. The association between *shishi* and *lantai* also is found in *Songshu*, and another stone entity is mentioned, *tianlu* 天鹿,⁶⁸ a winged feline more resembling a tiger than its namesake, a deer, that stands along spirit paths of Han and Southern Dynasties tombs. Later in the same *juan*, in discussing post-Han burial, the reader is informed that lavish burial continued in the post-Han era, including the use of *shishi*, stone animals, and engraved stele, even though in 205 AD an imperial order had been issued to terminate the excessive practice.⁶⁹

⁶² *Jinshu* 晉書 19, pp. 605–6, and *Quan Jinwen* 全晉文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 199) 88, p. 1971.

⁶³ Regarding storage of documents, see *Jinshu* 49, p. 1370, and re. grotto, see 79, p. 2072; and 94, p. 2456.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 86, p. 2240; 94, p. 2440, respectively.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 95, pp. 2491–92.

⁶⁶ E.g., *Songshu* 宋書 16, pp. 451–52. Writing of the same period, Fu Xinian 傅喜年 equates the term *shishi* with *shici* 石祠 (stone shrine). See his, *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi* 中國古代建築史 (vol. 2) *Liang Jin, Nan-Beichao, Sui-Tang, Wudai jianzhu* 兩晉南北朝隋唐五代建築 (Beijing: Zhongguo jianzhu gongye chubanshe, 2001), p. 301.

⁶⁷ *Songshu* 15, p. 404.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 40, pp. 1246, 1266.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 15, p. 407.

SHISHI UNDER THE NORTHERN WEI,
EASTERN WEI, AND NORTHERN QI

Some of the most important information about *shishi* for our purposes comes from records about the Northern Wei period (386–534) and the periods right after in northeastern China and at its borders. According to Li Daoyuan's 酈道元 (d. 527) *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (*Commentary on the Classic of Waterways*), a temple stood in front of the tomb of Sima Zichang 司馬子長 and in Yongjia 4 (148 AD) a stele on which were recorded the meritorious deeds of Yin Ji 殷濟, an official of Hanyang 漢陽, was erected in a *shishi*.⁷⁰ Here, *shishi* seems to mean a stele pavilion or other structure of stone or some other permanent material.

Much more explicit is the reference to *shishi* in Wei Shou's 魏收 (506–72) *Weishu* (*Standard History of the Wei*). In the annals of the reign of Xiao Wendi 孝文帝 (r. 471–499), we are told that while taking a walk in Fangshan 方山 (about twenty-five kilometers northwest of the present city of Datong) in the fourth moon of 481, Empress Dowager Wenming 文明 told her son that she wanted to be buried there.⁷¹ Already in the summer of 479, Wenshishi 文石室 (Chamber with Writings on Stone, perhaps a stone structure in which there were inscriptions on the walls) and Lingquan 靈泉 (Spirit Spring) Hall had been erected at Fangshan during a time of famine, when the imperial granaries had been opened to feed the hungry.⁷² Thus stone architecture may have been there when the emperor and dowager took their walk. Construction of the tomb, known as Yonggu *shishi* 永固石室 (“eternally solid *shishi*”), is said to have started immediately and been completed three years later, in 484. Xiaowendi also had a stele erected in a hall, or perhaps in a courtyard (*ting* 庭), and he built Jianxuan 鑒玄 (Mirror of Darkness) Hall.⁷³

⁷⁰ Li Daoyuan 酈道元, *Shuijingzhu* 水經注 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1969) 4, p. 42.

⁷¹ *Weishu* 魏書 7, p. 150. Empress-dowager Wenming, née Feng 馮, entered the palace after her father, a government official, was put to death. At age thirteen, she became a concubine of emperor Wencheng and later became empress. According to one account, at Wencheng's funeral in 465, she threw herself into the flames in which his imperial robes and utensils were being burned, but was pulled out. Eventually, she was honored with the title of empress-dowager by the emperor Xianwen, who met with a violent death in 470, an incident often blamed on her. The empress-dowager, meanwhile, had taken charge of raising his successor, Xiaowen, since his birth. After Xiaowen ascended the throne, Wenming was consulted in all affairs of the state. See her biog. at *Weishu* 13, pp. 328–30. The self-immolation is not recorded in *Weishu*, but is found in her biog. in Li Fang (925–96) et al., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 139. Much of her biography is translated in Archibald Wenley, *The Grand Empress Dowager Wen Ming and the Northern Wei Necropolis at Fang Shan* (Washington DC: Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers, 1947).

⁷² *Weishu* 7, p. 147.

⁷³ Li Yanshou's (fl. 618–76) *Beishi* 北史, which covers a longer period of Northern history

In 1925, the Freer Gallery and the National History Museum in Beijing attempted a joint excavation at Fangshan: one of their main goals was to find and uncover the tomb of empress-dowager Wenming. They found her tumulus, but the local population was so opposed to the project that they were not able to excavate.⁷⁴ In 1976, however, a team from the Datong City Museum and the Shanxi Provincial Cultural Relics Commission successfully excavated the site. In spite of the name of the tomb, Yongguling 永固陵 (“eternally solid royal tomb”), the interior construction is layers of brick, not stone (figure 6). Nevertheless, excavators refer to the interior as *shishi*,⁷⁵ perhaps following the description in *Weishu*, although it is not cited, or perhaps a more generic use of the term to refer to an interior of permanent materials.

The empress-dowager may, however, have asked for a subterranean tomb made of stone. According to Wenming’s biography in *Weishu*, her mother was from Lelang 樂浪.⁷⁶ Located in what is today North Korea, Lelang is in the heart of former Koguryō territory. More stone tombs, often with mounds also made of stone, remain in Koguryō territory than any other part of East Asia.⁷⁷ It is thus possible that the empress-dowager had seen or

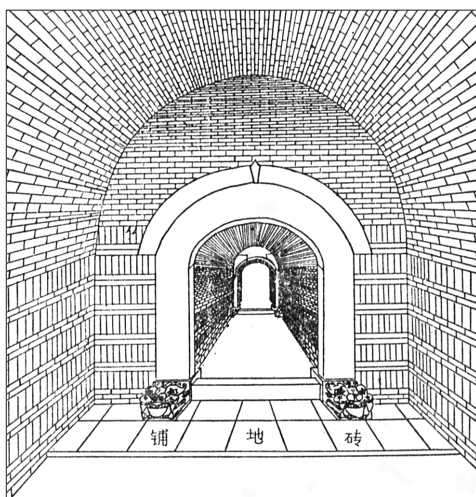


Figure 6. Interior Chambers of Yonggu Mausoleum
In Fangshan, Shanxi; reconstructed drawing.
From WW (1978.7), p. 29.

than *Weishu*, viz., 368–618, also has biographical information about Xiaowendi, his ancestors, and empress-dowager Wenming. Some of the passages in the annals are identical to those in *Weishu*, and among them is the account of the walk during which the empress-dowager became determined to be buried at Yonggu *shishi*. For Xiaowendi’s biography, see *Beishi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 3, pp. 95–97, and for Wenming’s, see 13, pp. 495–97. The expedition is also recounted in Wenley, *Grand Empress Dowager*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷⁵ Datongshi Bowuguan 大同市博物館 and Shanxisheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui 山西省文物工作委員會, “Datong Fangshan Bei Wei Yongguling” 大同方山北魏永固陵, *WW* (1978.7), pp. 29–33.

⁷⁶ *Weishu* 13, p. 328.

⁷⁷ On stone and other tombs of the Koguryō kingdom, see Koguryō Research Society, *Kogu-*

knew about the burial practices of her ancestors and wanted such a tomb for herself.

Rock-carved caves with writing on the interior walls may also be relevant to Wenming's desire for *shishi* at her burial site, or the earlier existence of Wenshishi at Fangshan. Although her maternal ancestry

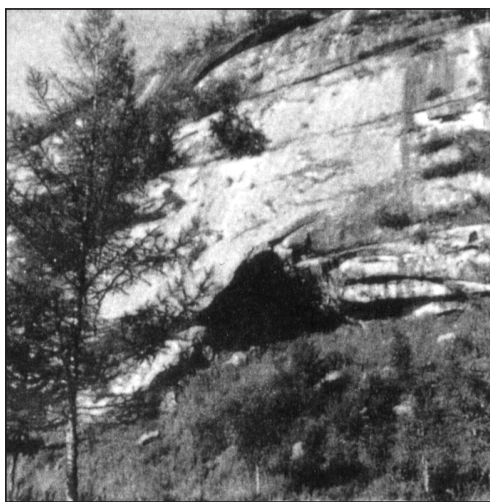


Figure 7. Gaxian Grotto, Near Hailar, Inner Mongolia

From Mi, WW (1981.2), p. 1.

can be traced to the people of the Koguryō kingdom, the Xianbei, ancestors of the Tuoba, to whom, of course, the Northern Wei traced their origins, had an equally strong hereditary association with *shishi*.⁷⁸ According to Wolfram Eberhard, all Turkish people, the Tuoba included, had a creation myth in which their ancestors entered the world from a sacred grotto.⁷⁹ Rock-carved caves near the border between Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia, northwest of Qiqihar (in

Heilongjiang) and northeast of Hailar (in Inner Mongolia), have long been believed to be ancient burial sites of the Xianbei ancestors.⁸⁰ On July 30, 1980, among grottoes known to excavators and researchers for decades, a research team entered a cave named Gaxiandong 嘎仙洞 (Snapping Immortal Grotto) and discovered a Chinese inscription dated 443 (figure 7).⁸¹ The inscription recorded a visit of Northern Wei emperor

ryō kobun pyōkhwa 高句麗古墳壁畫 (Seoul: Hak'yon Munhwa-sa, 1997), and Wei Cuncheng 魏存成, *Gaogouli kaogu* 高句麗考古 (Changchun: Jilin Daxue chubansha, 1994), pp. 45–95.

⁷⁸ On the ancestry of the Tuoba, founders of the Northern Wei dynasty, and their Xianbei origins, see E. G. Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and Their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times,” in David Keightley, ed., *The Origins of Chinese Civilization* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1983), and Wolfram Eberhard, *Das Toba-Reich Nordchinas: Eine soziologische Untersuchung* (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1949).

⁷⁹ Wolfram Eberhard, *A History of China*, 3d edn. (Berkeley: U. California P., 1969), p. 146.

⁸⁰ Mi Wenping 米文平, *Xianbeishi yanjiu* 鮮卑史研究 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2000), pp. 3–36.

⁸¹ Mi Wenping, “Xianbei shishi de faxian yu chubu yanjiu” 的發現與初步研究, *WW* (1981.2), pp. 1–7.

Taiwu 太武 in that year, to this place north of Daxing'an 大興安 Peak where the Xianbei had come to pay homage to their ancestors before their move south and division into Tuoba and other tribes.⁸²

The date falls in the period 440–451, the date of an imperial inscription carved on a stele at Gaoling 高靈 Temple on Mount Song, Henan province, approximately 2,000 kilometers southwest, in the Chinese heartland. Some of the characters and passages were common to both the Gaxian Grotto and Gaoling Temple inscriptions. A comparison of the calligraphy led to the suggestion that the same Daoist monk may have carved both.⁸³ Even if the calligrapher was not the same person, the similar inscriptions are probably not a coincidence. Mount Song, of course, is just east of Luoyang. Although the Tuoba would not move their capital there until 493, sinification was on the mind of Taiwu during his ceremonial visit to Gaxian Grotto,⁸⁴ half-a-century before the transfer of the capital under the emperor who built Yongguling for his mother. Already standing at Mt. Song were the above-mentioned Taishi and Shaoshi *que*, so that the allusion to that mountain as possessing *shishi* may have been more than three centuries old. Perhaps considered in the justification for the move to Luoyang was the presence of *shishi*, or a mountain with *shishi*, spaces carved out and containing writing – a mountain that in addition had been sacred to Chinese emperors since Yu the Great.⁸⁵ In any case, to the Northern Wei, a *shishi* was a sacred architectural space, one closely associated with their ancestors.

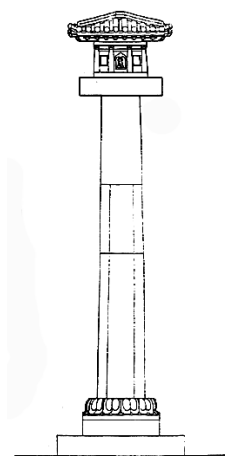
⁸² Mi Wenping writes about the inscription in more detail in *Xianbei shishi xunfang ji* 鮮卑石室尋訪記 (Jinan: Shandong huabao, 1997).

⁸³ Zhang Mingshan 張明善, "Gaxiandong juwen keshe yu Songshan Gaolingmiao bei" 嘎仙洞祝文刻石與嵩山高靈廟碑, *WW* (1981.2), p. 8. The two stela are also discussed in Yang Hong, "An Archaeological View of Tuoba Xianbei Art in the Pingcheng Period and Earlier," *Orientalia* (May 2002), pp. 27–33. The cave is illustrated on the front and back inside covers of *Beichao yanjiu* 北朝研究 6.1 (1992).

⁸⁴ The Tuoba emperors were already performing the rituals of a Chinese emperor in their first capital, at Shengle, in Inner Mongolia, around the turn of the fourth century. Ceremonies of the Chinese state were performed and architecture erected with more concern for proper ritual at Pingcheng, capital of the Tuoba-Wei in Northern Shanxi, for most of the fourth century. On these ceremonies and their architecture, see Victor Cunrui Xiong, "Ritual Architecture under the Northern Wei," in Wu Hung, ed., *Between Han and Tang: Visual and Material Culture in a Transformative Period* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2003), pp. 31–95. As Lillian Lan-ying Tseng points out, exemplary of the mixing of Chinese and Tuoba practices by Northern Wei emperors, the Taiwu emperor first sacrificed to Heaven, according to Chinese imperial practice, and second to his own ancestors; Tseng, "Visual Replication and Political Persuasion: The Celestial Image in Yuan Yi's Tomb," in Wu, ed., *Between Han and Tang*, p. 401.

⁸⁵ The sacred mountain and its writing are not discussed among the numerous reasons for the move of his capital, as promulgated by the Xiaowen emperor, the man who built Yongguling for his mother. On the emperor's reforms, see Le Kang, "An Empire for a City: Cultural Reforms of the Xiao-wen Emperor (A.D. 471–499)," Ph. D. diss. (Yale University, 1983).

In the next century, another kind of *shishi*, one not mentioned in standard histories or dictionary definitions, was erected in Dingxing 定興, Hebei province, under Northern Qi rule. Placed on top of a 4.54-meter-high octagonal stone pillar whose eight sides were of uneven dimensions, was a *shishi* in a front niche of which was carved a Buddhist image (figure 8).⁸⁶ The stone pillar is named for its main purpose, *yicihui* 義慈惠, or presentation of kindness. In the aftermath of chaos caused by Erzhu Rong 爾朱榮 between 525 and 528, the bones of seven people who had died as a result were gathered and reburied under one mound. Subsequently, Yi 義 Hall was built to the left of the mound at a place where the Buddhist community offered relief to those starving during the years of famine. The year 557 was another one of extreme disaster for the local population. Two years later, inscriptions recounting the history of the site and hall were carved, and in 567 the stone column was erected. The inscriptions were placed on its wider sides. At the top was the three-bay-by-two building, perhaps a replica of a Buddhist structure of the sixth century. This unique *shishi* combines



several purposes: commemorative, Buddhist, and, because of its location next to a tomb, probably also funerary. The only objects with which Yicihui column has been compared are also funerary – namely, the monumental columns, some with inscriptions carved on placards on their lower portions, found along the spirit paths of tombs of rulers of the Southern Dynasties in the vicinities of Nanjing and Danyang county, Jiangsu.⁸⁷ They stand in pairs together with the above-mentioned *tianlu*. None of the Southern Dynasties pillars has a Buddha hall at the top.

Figure 8. *Yicihui Pillar, Dated 567*

Dingxing, Hebei province. Line drawing; after Liu Dunzhen wen ji 劉敦楨文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo yingzao gongye chubanshe, 1984) 1, p. 44.

⁸⁶ The major study of Yicihui pillar is Liu Dunzhen 劉敦楨, “Dingxingxian Bei Qi shizhu” 定興縣北齊石柱, *Zhongguo yingzao xueshe huikan* 中國營造學社彙刊 5.2 (1934), pp. 28–66.

⁸⁷ For illustrations and information about these pillars and other stone images, see Yao Qian 姚遷 and Gu Bing 古兵, eds., *Nanchao lingmu shike* 南朝陵墓石刻 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1981), and Nanjing Bowuyuan 南京博物院, “Jiangsu Danyangxian Huqiao, Jianshan liangzuo Nanchao muzang” 江蘇丹陽縣胡橋·建山兩座南朝墓葬, *WW* (1980.2), pp. 1–17.

In the fifth and sixth centuries, the dominant purposes of *shishi* were funerary, commemorative, and the locus of ceremonies to the ancestors.⁸⁸ The container aspect of *shishi*, for precious items, more common in Han writings, had not been lost: probably it was implicit in the other three aspects of *shishi*. New in the fifth and sixth centuries was the funerary aspect. In addition to empress-dowager Wenming's designation of her tomb as Yonggu *shishi*, rulers of the next two dynasties in northeastern China came to carve their tombs into natural rock. Gao Huan 高歡, the military leader who began his career as an official of the Northern Wei, helped put Xiaowudi on the throne, later moved his power base to Ye 鄴, and established the Eastern Wei dynasty in 534 (rather than overthrow the Northern Wei and put himself on the throne in Luoyang), is believed to have been buried in a Buddhist cave.⁸⁹ An important patron of the Xiangtangshan 響堂山 caves, when Gao Huan died, his son and successor, Gao Deng 高澄, is said to have had him buried "above" a Buddha image in a cave.⁹⁰ Another passage points to reburial of Gao Huan together with his wife empress Lou 婁 and second son, Gao Yang 高洋, in triplet caves at North Xiangtangshan.⁹¹ Yet another text tells us that even though it was made to look like Gao Huan's remains would be placed in the cave, the founder of the Eastern Wei dynasty actually was buried at a different, unidentified cave.⁹²

Families with as many political enemies as the Gao had reason to mislead potential grave desecrators in documents as well as in actuality. The important point is that burial occurred in a *shishi*, here, a chamber carved into natural rock. The practice of burial in a cave-temple was

⁸⁸ This paper focuses on references to *shishi* from histories of the Northern Dynasties and prior. Yet it should be stated that references in other standard histories and in *Taishō Tripitaka* support the meaning and usages of *shishi* discussed here. E.g., Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–72) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061) et al., *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975) 13, p. 345, indicate that a *shishi* was built in the funerary precinct (*qinyuan* 寢園) for the storage of spirit tablets and at the time of the *di* 禘 and *xia* 袷 sacrifices (both performed to the imperial ancestors), the emperor made sacrifices there.

⁸⁹ Gao Huan's biog. is at *Bei Qishi* 北齊史 1–2.

⁹⁰ The best evidence for this idea comes from a stele of the Jin period (1115–1234) at the foot of the northern group of cave-temples usually referred to as North Xiangtangshan. The stele inscription is discussed in: Luo Shuzi 羅叔子, *Beichao shiku yishu* 北朝石窟藝術 (Shanghai: Shanghai chubangongsi, 1955), p. 189; Alexander Soper, "Imperial Cave-chapels of the Northern Dynasties: Donors, Beneficiaries, Dates," *Artibus Asiae* 28.4 (1966), pp. 259–60; and Katherine T. Mino, "Bodies of Buddhas and Princes at the Xiangtangshan Caves: Images, Text, and Stupa in Buddhist Art of the Northern Qi Dynasties (550–577)," Ph. D. diss. (University of Chicago, 1996), pp. 82–94.

⁹¹ For discussion of the sources, see Soper, "Imperial Cave-chapels."

⁹² Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86), *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976) 160, and *Tongle dadian* 永樂大典 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1962) 13, sect. 824, p. 10. Implications of these passages are discussed in Mino, "Bodies of Buddhas," pp. 86–88.

continued for empress Yifu 乙弗, wife of Western Wei (535–550) emperor Wendi, who was interred in 540 in a cliff tomb beneath Cave 43 at Maijishan 麥積山.⁹³ Perhaps burial in Buddhist caves was influenced by the Han practice of burial in cliff tombs.

Stone sarcophaguses, also named (*shishi*), fashioned to resemble houses or temples, also were used in the fifth and sixth centuries. The function of this kind of *shishi*, of course, is uncontested, whereas movement and deterioration of bones and other remains in a cave in the course of 1,500 years render it harder to confirm how widespread the practice of human burial in caves might have been. In China, sarcophaguses usually were placed in the conventional subterranean burial spaces. There is not consensus about whether the inspiration for those that looked like buildings was secular or religious. The number of shared features in timber-frame houses and temples is such that a case can be made for both possibilities.⁹⁴ Proof that it was one or the other, of course, would inform us about the ideology of container burial.⁹⁵ Northern Dynasties tombs have yielded more house- or temple-shaped *shishi* from the fifth and sixth centuries than other parts of China, and so far, most of the occupants of coffin-*shishi* are identified as non-Chinese.

⁹³ Fu Xinian 傅喜年, “Maijishan shikuzhong suofanyingchu de Beichao jianzhu” 麥積山石窟中所反映出的北朝建築, *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 文物資料叢刊 4 (1981), pp. 156–83. An updated version of the article appears under the title, “Maijishan shiku suojian gujianzhu” 麥積山石窟所見古建築, in Tianshui Maijishan shiku yishu yanjiusuo 天水麥積山石窟藝術研究所, ed., *Zhongguo shiku: Tianshui Maijishan* 中國石窟, 天水麥積山 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), pp. 201–18. For details on the Buddhist practice of burial in caves, in which the corpse is exposed, see Liu Shufen 劉淑芬, “Shishi yiku, zhong gu Fojiaolu shizang yanjiu” 石室瘞窟中古佛教露屍葬研究 (3 parts), *Dalu zazhi* 大陸雜誌 98.2–4 (1999), pp. 49–60, 97–113, and 154–52. I thank John Kieschnick for calling these articles to my attention.

⁹⁴ Well-known and well-published sarcophaguses with features of timber-frame architecture are numerous. Tang examples include the sarcophagus of Li Jingxun 李靜訓 and other stone examples in the Shaanxi Provincial Museum, Xi'an. Liao examples have been excavated in Tomb No. 3 at Daiqintalasumu 代欽塔拉蘇木, Keyouzhongqi 科右中旗, Inner Mongolia, in Beipiao 北票, Liaoning, in Balinyouqi 巴林右旗, Inner Mongolia, and at Yemaotai 葉茂臺, Liaoning. The Tang examples are illustrated in publications by the Shaanxi Museum, and other books that focus on archaeological treasures of the Tang period in Xi'an. On the Liao sarcophaguses, see Zhou Hanxin 周漢信 and He Si 哈斯, “Keyouzhongqi chutu Liaodai muguanshi ji shichuang qianxi” 科右中旗出土遼代木槨室及尸床淺析, in Wei Jian 魏堅, ed., *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu wen ji* 內蒙古文物考古文集 (Beijing: Zhongguo Dabaike quanshu chubanshe, 1997) 2, pp. 567–79, and Cao Xun 曹汛, “Yemaotai Liaomuzhong de guanchuang xiaozhang” 葉茂臺遼墓中的棺床小帳, *WW* (1974.12), pp. 49–62.

⁹⁵ The piece-by-piece resemblance between a coffin such as Li Jingxun's and the main hall of Nanchan Monastery, both Tang period, and between the Yemaotai sarcophagus and Buddha halls at Geyuan and Hualin monasteries, in Hebei and Fujian, respectively, all three 10th c., suggest to me that by the Tang period, the intent was burial in a temple. I discuss the Liao cases briefly in “The Architecture of Liao and Underground Resonances,” in Hsueh-man Shen, ed., *Gilded Splendor: Treasures of China's Liao Empire* (New York: Asia Society, 2006), pp. 40–53. For the period discussed here, the evidence is less clear due to the lack of extant residential or religious wooden architecture.

In 477, four years before emperor Xiaowen and the dowager took their walk at Fangshan, Northern Wei official Song Shaozu 宋紹祖 was buried in a stone sarcophagus in a brick tomb in the Pingcheng 平城 capital, today Datong.⁹⁶ Three-bays-by-two, the proportions are those of the shrine atop Yicihui stone pillar. A portico is formed as an additional front bay of the sarcophagus by four octagonal pillars, each, like the pillars that support the Yicihui stone house, of uneven sides and lodged in a lotus-flower pedestal (figure 9). Another stone sarcophagus, found in an undated Northern Wei tomb in Zhijiabao 智家堡 in the southern suburbs of Datong, also is three-bays-by-two.⁹⁷ A stone structure, perhaps offering shrine and perhaps sarcophagus, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, dated to the sixth century in the Northern Wei period, is, by virtue of materials and shape, a *shishi*.⁹⁸

Buried in the vicinity of Pingcheng under Northern Wei rule, and possessing tombs of the size and materials they did, one may assume that Song Shaozu and the occupant of the Zhijiabao tomb followed burial practices in vogue under the Tuoba-Wei. The occupants of four other famous *shishi*, Kudi Huiluo 庫狄迴洛, Ning Mao 寧懋, Yu Hong 虞弘, and Sir Shi 史 included a member of Northern Qi nobility and a Sogdian official (of the title *sabao* 薩保) working in China under the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, and eventually Sui who unified China in 589.⁹⁹ Based on these examples, Wu Hung raises the possibility that stone sarcophagi might have

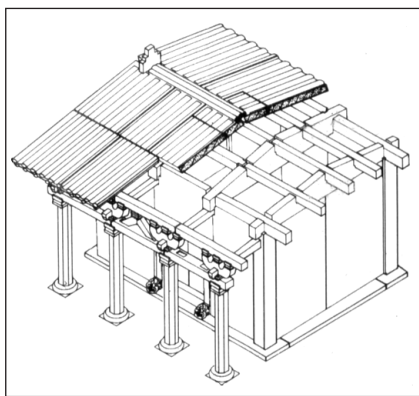


Figure 9. *Shishi* from Tomb of Song Shaozu, 477 AD

Datong, Shanxi; line drawing from WW (2001.7), p. 24.

⁹⁶ For the report, see Liu Junxi 劉俊喜, Zhang Zhizhong 張志忠, and Zuo Yan 左雁, "Datongshi Bei Wei Song Shaozu mu fajue jianbao" 大同北魏宋紹祖墓發掘簡報, *WW* (2001.7), pp. 19-39.

⁹⁷ Wang Yintian 王銀田 and Liu Junxi 劉俊喜, "Datong Zhijiabao Bei Weimu shiheng bihua" 大同智家堡北魏墓石槨壁畫, *WW* (2001.7), pp. 40-51.

⁹⁸ For studies of stone sarcophagi, all of which fit this funerary definition of *shishi*, see Wu Hung, "On House-shaped Sarcophagi," paper presented at the third international conference "Between Han and Tang," University of Chicago, October 2001; Wu Hung, "A Case of Cultural Interaction: House-shaped Sarcophagi of the Northern Dynasties," *Orientations* (May 2002), pp. 34-41; and Liu Junxi and Li Li, "The Recent Discovery of a Group of Northern Wei Tombs in Datong," *Orientations* (May 2002), pp. 42-47.

⁹⁹ On Kudihuiluo's tomb see Wang Kelin 王克林, "Bei Qi Kudihuiluo mu" 北齊庫狄迴洛

been a burial preference of peoples of the Northern Dynasties leading up to Sui.¹⁰⁰ Stone-faced subterranean tombs, as mentioned above, were common in Koguryō at the same time. The use of *shishi* atop pillars cannot be called widespread, but the sole evidence, Yicihui pillar, stands in northern Hebei. In fact, the evidence from the Northern Wei and Northern Qi, and from Datong specifically, leads one to consider if empress-dowager Wenming's desire for burial in *yonggu shishi* might not have referred to a stone container for her corpse inside her tomb of the also permanent material of brick, and if members of the Gao family and empress Yifu were not encased in stone coffins, or *shishi*, inside their rock-carved caves (*shishi*).

ZUZHOU SHISHI

None of the possible meanings of *shishi* – rock-carved chamber, worship space, place where precious items such as writings or documents are stored, ancestral temple, place for housing ancestral tablets, tomb, sarcophagus, or even house of incarceration – is inconsistent with the building at Zuzhou made of seven mammoth stones. Several of the meanings with implications of high potency in Chinese civilization such as associations with the Queen Mother of the West and her abode near Kunlun, *mingtang*, *biyong*, and *lantai*, probably had greater significance during the Han dynasty, as attested by the frequency of references to them in Han historical writings, and are less likely to have been considered if Abaoji was the builder of the *shishi* in Zuzhou. Some, by contrast, have been retained into modern times.¹⁰¹ Mullie's

墓, *Kaogu xuebao* (1979.3), pp. 377–402. On Ning Mao's *shishi*, see Lin Shengzhi 林聖智, “Bei Wei Ning Mao shishi de tuxiang yu gongneng” 北魏寧懋石室的圖像與功能, *Meishushi yanjiu jikan* 美術史研究集刊 18 (2005), pp. 1–74. Yu Hong and his sarcophagus have been the subjects of numerous studies. In addition to the overview of the sarcophagus and its images in Zhang Qingjie 張慶捷 et al., “Taiyuan Suidai Yu Hong mu qingli jianbao” 太原隋代虞弘墓清理簡報, *WW* (2001.1), pp. 27–52, and James C.Y. Watt, *China Dawn of a Golden Age* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 2004), pp. 276–83, see the complete report on the tomb, Shanxisheng Kaogu Yanjiusuo 山西省考古研究所, *Taiyuan Sui Yu Hong mu* 太原隋虞弘墓 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2005). On the tomb of the Sogdian, Mr. Shi, see Yang Junkai 楊軍凱 and Sun Wu 孫武, “Xi'an Bei Zhou Liangzhou sabao Shijunmu fajue jianbao” 西安北周涼州薩保史君墓發掘簡報, *WW* (2005.3), pp. 4–33.

¹⁰⁰ Wu, “House-shaped Sarcophagi.”

¹⁰¹ Although we stated at the outset that the focus here would be on *shishi* up to the time of Abaoji and Zuzhou, one much more recent painting is noteworthy. A painting dated 1820 by Gai Qi 改琦 and Wang Run 王潤, recently purchased by the Royal Ontario Museum, presents an image of a stone structure that, based on context, I believe is a *shishi*. If so, the building in the painting has the multiple symbolism of a dwelling of an old man and a funerary chamber, perhaps anticipated for the future, or the dwelling of an immortal, whose function would negate the need for a funerary space. I thank Klaas Ruitenbeek, the Museum's Curator of Chinese Art, for permission to mention the recently-acquired painting here.

information, that it at one time contained images, is especially consistent with a building of permanent materials in an ancestral prefecture. Still, no definition gives us cause to associate the Zuzhou structure with the first quarter of the tenth century. The main justification for linking the structure to Abaoji is its location.¹⁰²

Although we have no structural evidence of Abaoji's tomb or those of his ancestors, the funerary city of his son and successor, Deguang 德光 has been identified. Huaizhou 懷州, located about thirty kilometers northwest of Zuzhou in Balinyouqi 巴林友旗, according to one of the excavators was within view of the Liao capital Shangjing. Huai-zhou has been reconstructed as a walled enclosure with two building foundations. Excavators believe that Deguang's tomb, Huailing 懷陵, is three kilometers north between two mountains.¹⁰³ There was no stone house, but stone was the material used for the outer wall that enclosed the tomb precinct.

Still, we have no evidence that the house of stone, perhaps one of the most unambiguous uses of *shishi*, was a creation of a Khitan ruler. It seems just as likely that Abaoji decided to locate his ancestral city where he did because a stone chamber stood there already.

Of all the references to *shishi*, one from the fifth century may offer the most insight. According to *Beishi* 北史, in the year 443 an emissary from the kingdom known as Wuluohou 烏洛侯 came to the Northern Wei court (in Pingcheng) and reported on the remains of a *shishi* to the northwest.¹⁰⁴ It measured 90 by 40 *bu* 步 at the base and 70 *chi* 尺 in height. The chamber, he said, contained *shenling* 神靈,¹⁰⁵ and people often came to it to make supplications. The emperor ordered an official,

¹⁰² Potentially, evidence that would support an association with Abaoji would be definitive information about his tomb site. *Liaoshi* places the tomb five *li* northwest of Zuzhou in a place replete with mountains and streams. Due to its location between two mountains and stone sculpture in the vicinity, a site has been proposed, but nothing there resembles a tomb. On Abaoji's tomb, see Wang Yuping 王宇平, "Nei Menggu Wenhua ju diaocha Liaodai Zuzhoucheng Liao Taizumu" 內蒙古文化局調查遼代祖州城遼太祖墓, *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 文物參考資料 (1955:5), pp. 109–10; Zhou Jie 洲傑, "Nei Menggu Zhaomeng Liao Taizuling diaocha sanji" 內蒙古昭盟遼太祖陵調查散記, *KG* (1966.5), pp. 263–66; *Liao Shangjing yizhi jianjie* 遼上京遺址簡介 (Balinzuoqi: Balinzuoqi Wenhua guan, 1983), pp. 8–11; and Wei Changyou 魏昌友, "Liaodai Zuzhou yu Zuling" 遼代祖州與祖陵, *Dongbei difangshi yanjiu* 東北地方史研究 4 (1989), pp. 143–44. The arial survey of southeastern Inner Mongolia, *Nei Menggu dongnanbu hangkong sheying* (pp. 122–23), confirmed a valley between two mountains, not the tomb itself.

¹⁰³ On Huaizhou and Huailing see Zhang Songbo 張松柏, "Liao Huaizhou Huailing diaocha ji" 遼懷州懷陵調查記, *Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu* 內蒙古文物考古 (1984.3), pp. 67–71.

¹⁰⁴ *Beishi* 94, p. 3132.

¹⁰⁵ This word is crucial to understanding the passage and it is ambiguous. A standard way to translate *shenling* is spirits, but a more appropriate meaning here seems to be spirits capable of acting on others. In *Grand Empress Dowager*, p. 5, n. 5, Wenley takes the phrase to mean that the *shishi* was haunted.

Li Chang 李敞, to go there and make sacrifices. The official carved a prayer 祝 on the wall of the *shishi* and returned home.¹⁰⁶

Three important points are made in this passage. First, in the mid-fifth century a *shishi* large enough for a person to enter existed. Second, *shenling* were believed to reside in *shishi*. Third, *Beishi* informs us that Wuluohou was about twenty days journey southeast of Lake Baikal.¹⁰⁷ This would place it in Chifeng county of Inner Mongolia, in the general vicinity of Zuzhou. Any place twenty-days journey from Lake Baikal, moreover, should be in the grasslands, so that if a *shishi* were desired, there might have been no choice but to make a freestanding structure. Finally, even if the *shishi* in Wuluohou territory was not the one inside the Zuzhou walls, the *shishi* published by Torii (figures 1 and 4) and other Japanese researchers (figure 5) may trace their histories to the fifth century or earlier.

It may never be known if Abaoji built the *shishi* that today stands in his ancestral prefecture, nor if it was there when he ordered the construction of Zuzhou. But if the existing *shishi* stood before his arrival, it probably was an incentive for construction of the ancestral prefecture around it. If so, the imperial Khitan show themselves to have been inheritors of the structures and perhaps the symbolism of non-Chinese peoples who populated the territory of their empire some five hundred years earlier.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 5, n. 26, translates *zhu* as exorcism.

¹⁰⁷ *Beishi* 94, p. 3132.