East Asian Landscapes and Legitimation

Localizing Authority Through Sacred Sites in China and Vietnam

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MERCUR Mercator Research Center Ruhr **Area Ruhr** Alliance for Research on East Asia Ruhr 東 **RUB** OAW

Contents

You can find the attachment as a download via QR code or at the following link: www.frank-timme.de/site/assets/files/6890/appendix.pdf

List of Illustrations

Abbreviations

AT	Aarne-Thompson Index.
CIG	Common Interest Group.
DNNTC	*Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 大南一統志 [C].
DVSKTT	*Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* 大越史記全書 [C].
HYCD	*Gudai Hanyu Cidian* 古代汉语词典 Beijing: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 2009.
HYGZ	*Huayang Guozhi* 華陽國志 [C].
LNCQ	*Lính Nam Chích Quái* 嶺南摭怪 [C].
LNCQLT	*Lính Nam Chích Quái Liệt Truyện* 嶺南摭怪列傳 (EFFEO A. 33 edition) [C].
LXT	Stele Inscription of chùa Linh Xứng of Ngưỡng Sơn 仰山靈稱寺碑銘.
PDB	Buswell and Lopez. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*.
PM	Placed Material.
RNIS	Regulatory-Normative Institutional Sphere.
SES	Social-Experiential Sphere.
STX	*Santai Xianzhi* 三台县志 [C].
SWBJ	*Shuwang Benji* 蜀王本紀 [C].
TUTA	*Thiện Uyển Tập Anh* 禪苑集英 [C].
TPQ	Terminus post quantem.
VSL	*Việt Nam Sử Lược* 越南史略 [V].
ZLMZZ	*Zhili Mianzhouzhi* 直隸綿州志 [C].

Chinese and Vietnamese Dynasties

Timeline with selected rulers according to their appearance in the text. Mythical dynasties and rulers in cursive.

China		Vietnam	
Xia	*2200—1600 BCE*	*Hồng Bàng Dynasty*	*2879—258 BCE*
Shang	1600—1046 BCE		
Western Zhou	1046—771 BCE		
Eastern Zhou	770—256 BCE	Đông Sơn	1000 BCE—1 CE
Kaiming Dynasty	*666—316 BCE*	*Âu Lạc*	*257—179 BCE*
Warring States	475—221 BCE	*An Dương Vương 安陽王*	
Qin Dynasty	221—207 BCE		
Han Dynasty	202 BCE—9 CE	Nam Việt	204—111 BCE
	25 CE—220 CE	Zhao Tuo 趙佗 (r. 203—137 BCE)	
Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE—49 CE)		**Jiaozhi (Occupation)**	**111 BCE—905 CE**
Three Kingdoms	220—280 CE		
Shu-Han Dynasty	221—263 CE		
Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181—234 CE)			
Jin Dynasty	265—420 CE		
Northern and Southern Dynasties	386—589 CE		
Sui Dynasty	581—619 CE		
Sui Wendi 隋文帝 (r. 581—604)			
Tang Dynasty	618—907 CE		
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	907—960 CE	Autonomous Phase	905—939 CE
Former Shu	907—925 CE		
Wang Jian 王建 (847—918)			
Later Shu	934—965 CE		

China		Vietnam	
Song Dynasty	960—1279	Ngô Dynasty	939—968 CE
Song Taizu 宋太祖 (r. 960—976)		Đinh Dynasty	968—980 CE
Song Renzong 宋仁宗 (r. 1022—1063)		Earlier Lê Dynasty	980—1009
Song Huizong 宋徽宗 (r. 1100—1126)		Later Lý Dynasty	1009—1224
_ Liao	916—1125	Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 (r. 1009—1028)	
_ Jin	1125—1234	Lý Thái Tông 李太宗 (r. 1028—1054)	
_ Southern Song	1126—1279	Lý Thánh Tông 李聖宗 (r. 1054—1072)	
		Lý Nhân Tông 李仁宗 (r. 1072—1128)	
		Lý Anh Tông 李英宗 (r. 1138—1175)	
Yuan Dynasty	1279—1368	Trần Dynasty	1225—1400
Da Xia	1362—1371	Trần Thái Tông 陳太宗 (r. 1226—1258)	
Ming Yuzhen 明玉珍	(1331—1366)	Trần Nhân Tông 陳仁宗 (r. 1278—1293)	
Ming Dynasty	1368—1644	Hồ Dynasty	1400—1407
Hongwu Emperor 洪武 (r. 1368—1398)		Ming Occupation	1407—1427
Yongle Emperor 永樂 (r. 1402—1424)		Later Lê Dynasty	1427—1778
Xuande Emperor 宣德 (r. 1425—1435)		Lê Thái Tổ 黎太祖 (r. 1428—1433)	
Jiajing Emperor 嘉靖 (r. 1521—1567)		Lê Thánh Tông 黎聖宗 (r. 1460—1497)	
Wanli Emperor 萬曆 (r. 1572—1620)		Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢 (1525—1613)	
		_ Mạc Dynasty	1527—1627
		_Trịnh & Nguyễn Lords	1627—1777
		_Đàng Ngoài	1627—1789
		Lê Huyền Tông 黎玄宗 (r. 1654—1671)	
		__Đàng Trong	1627—1744
		Nguyễn Phúc Trăn 阮福溙 (r. 1687—1691)	
		Nguyễn Phúc Chu 阮福澍 (r. 1691—1725)	
Qing Dynasty	1644—1911	Tây Sơn Dynasty	1778—1802
Kangxi Emperor 康熙 (r.1661—1722)		Nguyễn Dynasty	1802—1883
Yongzheng Emperor 雍正 (r. 1723—1735)		Gia Long 嘉隆 (1762—1820)	
Qianlong Emperor 乾隆 (r. 1735—1799)		Minh Mạng 明命 (r. 1820—1841)	
Jiaqing Emperor 嘉慶 (1796—1820)		Thiệu Trị 紹治 (r. 1841—1847)	
		Tự Đức 嗣德 (r. 1847—1883)	

China		Vietnam	
Republic	1912—1949	French Colonial Reign	1858—1954
		Đồng Khánh 同慶 (r. 1885—1889)	
		Thành Thái 成泰 (r. 1889—1907).	
		Khải Định 啟定 (r. 1916—1925)	
		Bảo Đại 保大 (r. 1926—1945)	
PR China	Since 1949	SR Vietnam	Since 1945

Sacred Site Glossary

This glossary provides the most important categories of sacred sites in China and Vietnam that contain at least one building. In the Chinese language, the categories are usually presented as suffixes, in the Vietnamese language, they are presented as prefixes. Not included are numinous places without constructions, like lakes or riversides. Terms like *dong* 洞 "caves/grottos" or *lin* 林 "forests" may either serve *as* temples — containing icons and shrines — or to refer to the temples contained inside such places.

Temple Categories in China

gong 宮	A closed space with multiple worship options, usually without a central tablet/icon.
miao 廟	A singular building or architectural complex with multiple worship options and a central tablet/icon.
ci 祠	Originally a single shrine, later also an architectural complex, dedicated to ancestors and deified persons. Although everybody can establish a *ci*, their objects of worship are commonly tied to imperial orthodoxy.
si 寺	A term for a government office that is used to refer to Buddhist temples after the Han dynasty. It is at times used for temples of other religions as well.
guanyuan 觀院	After the Han dynasty, this term for a pavilion on a platform began to refer to Daoist temples and monasteries. Both characters may occur as an independent suffix and *-yuan* alone may refer to individual courtyards inside larger architectural complexes or to governmental courts.

ting 亭   A freestanding pavilion with a square, round, hexagonal or octagonal base that may contain a sacred object or stele. Inside a temple complex they may be empty. The *ting* originated in freestanding huts which, like the *lu*, served as resting stops for travelers. Older examples had no walls to preserve the view into the landscape, but later variants that housed objects did.

an 庵   A small, roofed shrine with or without walls and a square or round base. It is commonly freestanding, placed in nature as a wayside shrine. Occasionally, the *an* is associated with female deities, female worship, and female practitioners. As such, the suffix may denote a nunnery.

lu 庐   Originally referred to a funeral hut, then to shelters for traveling scholars along popular routes, of which some turned into wayside shrines.

Some architectural units are used inside temple complexes but may also occur independently:

dian 殿   The *dian* is the basic unit to compartmentalize complex buildings. In a religious context, it is a hall that contains at least one shrine or altar, but may contain several more in a hierarchical order. This sometimes refers to religious spaces adjacent to nonreligious buildings.

tang 堂   A main hall in various types of architecture.

ge 阁   A pavilion or pagoda with a room and possibly a sacred object at its base.

tan 壇   A high platform which serves as an altar, originally made from stamped earth, later also from ceramics and bricks.

Temple Categories in Vietnam

chùa A prefix usually referring to a Buddhist temple. It originally described the *tháp* 塔 "stupa" and is used instead of *tự* 寺. Chinese temple names ending in -*tự* 寺 that did not actually refer to a Buddhist place are marked in modern Vietnamese with the prefix *đền*. Due to Buddhism's strong influence on Vietnamese history, any temple can be called *chùa*.

công This small and narrow site is often rendered in Chinese as *gong* 宮 because of its similar structure and function. *Công* rarely contain more than a single icon or group of icons and are common in Đạo Mẫu sites.

đền This category encompasses all shrines not associated with other organized religions. Because the entities venerated here are often heroes or ancestors, *đền* are commonly rendered as *ci* 祠 in Chinese text, but nature spirits are also venerated with imperial framing. In Chu Nôm, the characters 嚴 or 殿 are used to represent this term.

đình Although rendered as *ting* 亭 and sometimes *ding* 庭 in Chinese text, the *đình is* completely different from the Chinese structures. It is a communal house in the center of each village, characterized by an extremely wide platform, that is dedicated to local deities and ancestors. The *hậu cung* 後宮 "back hall" of larger *đình* contains the main shrine.

miếu The Sinitic *miao* 廟 is used for sacred sites of Chinese association. However, the northern *miếu* are commonly also dedicated to the spirits of mountains, water and earth, preferably established in remote areas or at the back of a village. For most of the year they are left alone to not to disturb possibly malevolent nature spirits. In the south, the term refers to very small (<10 m²) places of worship similar to *đền* or *am*. Small wayside shrines for local and nature spirits may also be called *miếu*.

am	Correlates to the Chinese term *an* 庵. Small, simple shrines in free nature mostly used by Buddhist nuns and dedicated to hungry ghosts, the tutelary deities of small settlements and Buddhas.
điện	Although rendered as *dian* 殿 in Chinese script, in contrast to China, these sites are larger than *miếu*, but smaller than *đền*. They are established communally or privately, originally for Daoism inspired worship. Later, Đạo Mẫu, Buddhism and regional cults also have used this category.
phủ	Rendered as *fu* 府 or *fu* 婦 in Chinese text, this is a greater temple and pilgrimage destination of Đạo Mẫu, usually located outside of urban and settled areas. The oldest known *phủ* date from the seventeenth century. In Thanh Hóa, a *đền* may also be called *phủ*.
nghè	A transposed temple used for a new settlement, related to an ancestor of an older village or if the main temple of a cult is hard to reach. The oldest known *nghè* date to the seventeenth century.
quán 觀	This is usually a Daoist temple just like in China, but can also be a site of a popular religion.
văn chỉ 文址	This is a small Confucian temple built by literati to propagate imperial ideology. A simple and small site that is not normally visited by the common people outside of events.

Preface

In the spring of 2011, while conducting field research for my Master's thesis, I came across the Longmafutu Temple 龍馬負圖寺 in Mengjin, roughly forty minutes by car from Luoyang. The "Dragon Horse" (*longma* 龍馬) is a reference to classical Chinese mythology. Officially, the temple was presented as Confucian. Arriving there, I perceived multiple disharmonies regarding that claim — the presence of drum and bell towers, the color of the roof tiles, and the relationship of building sizes, which were in contradiction to their placement. A large Fuxi Hall was in the center, and at the end of the central axis, there was also a great hall dedicated to the Three Emperors.[1] My impression of the mismatch was confirmed when I discovered an undecorated hall in the temple's west side which contained the entire ensemble of icons that one would actually expect of a Buddhist temple — certainly not from a Confucian one. Rarely, Buddhist icons may find their way into Confucian temples but an entire ensemble in one room was highly unusual, so this warranted further investigation. My research showed that this site had been established as a Buddhist temple in the fourth century CE. About thousand years later, in the 1560s, Neo-Confucians officially claimed the site, so Buddhists and Neo-Confucians were obliged to use it simultaneously. Since then, the temple has switched multiple times the suffixes that identified it as either a Buddhist or a different type of Chinese temple. The Neo-Confucians were determined to change the site's perception, but the Buddhist religious practices continued to be more relevant for the local population. The full switch of the temple's official alignment thus only occurred after a temporary desacralization in the twentieth century. However, contemporary practice within the temple continues to favor Buddhist and popular content.

It was the fascinating history of the Longmafutu Temple's destruction, reconstruction, and reinterpretation that ignited my interest in the dynamics of claims and spatial markings as they point to changes of ideological dominance, religious practice, and political control.

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1   Here: The Yellow Emperor Huangdi, the Flame Emperor Yandi and the cultural deity Fuxi.

I found that similar events to those in the Longmafutu Temple's history have occurred worldwide: like the rededication of Latin American pyramids or Mesopotamian temples; the protection or destruction of former Buddhist sites by Muslims in Central Asia; the polysemantic use of St. George churches in Israel, or the Christian occupation of Roman temples, synagogues, and especially of healing springs in Ireland and Germany. This made me aware of the discrepancies in historical sources, especially between material-physical evidence, text evidence, and religious behavior as described or observed. I found that architecture reflected very well the discrepancies between religious practice and historiography. This eventually led to my research questions.

I wanted to know what kinds of change led to such rededications. Who benefited from rededications, how were they carried out, and how did they affect local cultures? All these questions led me to examine the possible differences between local and transregional religious ideas, practices, politics, and their interactions in relation to spatiality. "Transregional" refers here to individuals and ideas that transcend specific geographical boundaries, carrying with them both tangible and intangible cultural elements. For instance, a monk transporting a sutra amulet from one region to another spreads the practice of placing miniature sutras as protective elements within amulet shells, thus disseminating the idea beyond its place of origin. The term underscores the interconnectedness of cultural exchange and the diffusion of beliefs and practices across diverse regions.

This book sheds some light on situations of transcultural contact, where the familiar local and the unfamiliar transregional are forced to react to each other's presence. These reactions range from efforts to preserve local identity to attempts to establish political supremacy over an (superficially) unified realm. Water-centric temples serve as prime example sites for such contacts. The legitimation of local authorities rested to no uncertain degree on such sites since they provided the spiritual control over rainmaking and flood prevention. For this reason, water-centric temples became ideological battlegrounds between different local and transregional factions vying for supremacy and water control. As contested spaces, these temples were actively involved in the production of new worldviews and were the places where competing fragments of local and transregional spatial ideas merged and reinterpreted.

Contested religious sites assume multiple identities. The power struggles between these identities are reflected in the spatial configuration (the relationship of buildings to each other), the content (images, icons, altars, the use of symbols and colors), their external perception and the actual usage of a site. Spatial reconfigurations manipulate the socio-spatial traits of religious sites, altering their structure, representation, and portrayal in media to encourage transcultural ideology transfer. This manipulation is usually aimed at securing religious or political dominance for the sponsors of such reconfigurations. This means that contextualizing the traces of spatial reconfiguration events found in material evidence with relevant textual sources, approaches from the cognitive science of religion, and theories of broader historical dynamics provides a better understanding of local historical developments.

In this book, I introduce the Experiential Architecture Analysis (EAA) as a novel methodological approach to uncover the different reconfiguration tactics that religious and political authorities applied (and still apply) to the material structure, cultural content, and the media treatment of significant sites (Chapter II–IV). Through my research, I have verified its significance as a vital tool for the comparative study of institutional change that expands our understanding of identity negotiation and ideology transfer in transcultural contexts.

Sacred sites serve as the principal instruments for initiating and perpetuating such processes of transfer and negotiation. Whether as collaborators or competitors, religious and political authorities have compelling reasons to reconfigure sacred sites using either aggressive or mediative reconfiguration tactics to convey their ideology — even in alien environments. Such reconfiguration events commonly create tensions between the subjective, socially constructed meanings of sacred sites and their politically imposed ones. A high level of such tensions is detrimental to the success of transcultural ideology transfer.

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I want to give thanks to Tracy Miller for her publication *The Divine Nature of Power* (2007) which inspired me to conduct this project. My knowledge about archaeology was vastly advanced during my training at the LWL-Museum für Archäologie Herne, Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Germany. Working there offered many research opportunities and allowed me to study Vietnamese

history intensively and productively. My sincere thanks go to Dr. Stefan Leenen for his guidance and continued close support in acquiring and dealing with Vietnamese archaeological objects. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Andreas Reinecke, head of the Southeast Asia division of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), whom I thank for his expertise and permission to stay and work at the library. I would like to recognize Margaret M. Bruchac for the informative conversations regarding her work and the perspectives of indigenous populations.

My sincere thanks go out to the many people who helped me find locations, make contacts, get permissions for visits, surveys, and photographs at temple sites or to translate questions and answers into local dialects — especially to Guo Guanghui and Cui Longhao who supported me in Sichuan, likewise to Tanja and Denis Katzer regarding Leibo and Mahu. My deepest gratitude goes to my parents Heinz-Hermann and Lorna and to my godparents Sigrid and Reiner, for missing out on me so much and yet being full of emotional and financial support. I thank Amr Nfady for his optimism and information on Saudi Arabian use of territorial marking and my friends Marleen Klum and Katja Siling for taking care of my sanity during the darkest hours of working on this project.

I dedicate this book to Annaliese Wulf (1922~*2000*), a German author and journalist who wrote extensively about Southeast Asia. Her book *Vietnam. Pagoden und Tempel im Reisfeld — im Fokus chinesischer und indischer Kultur* ['Vietnam. Pagodas and Temples in the Rice Field — in the Focus of Chinese and Indian Culture'] (1995), though billed as a travel guide, was one of the first and most profound art historical studies of Vietnam in German. It introduced critical topics that turned out intensively relevant to Vietnamese Studies decades later. In this sense, I would like to recognize Gerd Hoffmann and Prof. Dr. Wilfried Lulei for providing personal information about Annaliese Wulf.
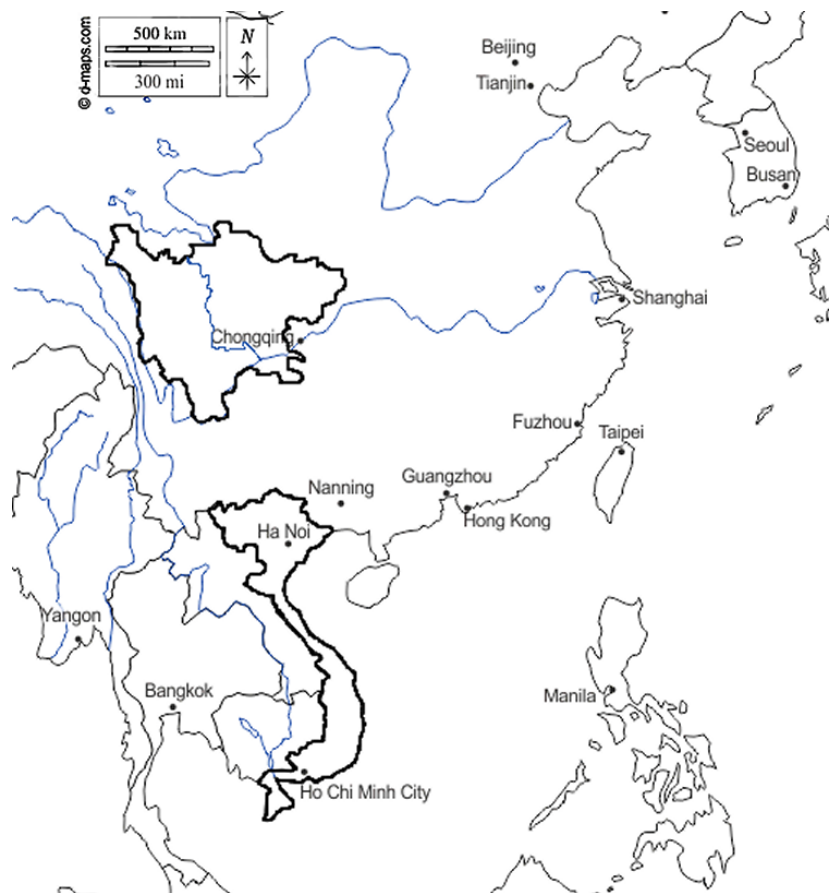
[Img. 1] Map of Sichuan Province (China) and Vietnam in their modern locations. Created with d-maps.com,[2] modified with emphasis and with Dadu River added

Legend: (1) Chengdu; (2) Mianyang; (3) Santai; (4) Suining; (5) Neijiang; (6) Yibin; (7) Mahu; (8) Leibo; (9) Huanglongxi.

[Img. 2] Map of the Sichuan province (China) created with d-maps.com,[3] modified with cities, numbers and the Fu River

3   d-maps: https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=18057&lang=en (February 2024).
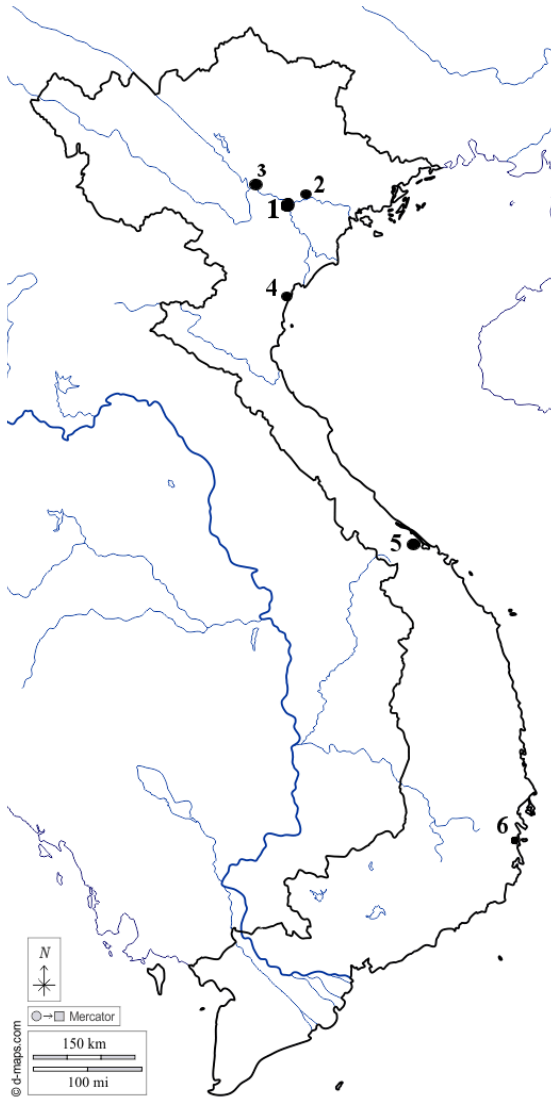
Legend: (1) Hanoi; (2) Bắc Ninh; (3) Việt Trì; (4) Thanh Hóa; (5) Huế; (6) Nha Trang.

[Img. 3] Map of Vietnam created with d-maps.com,[4] modified with cities and numbers

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4   d-maps: https://d-maps.com/m/asia/vietnam/vietnam08.gif (February 2024).

Introduction

There is the widespread misconception that from the very moment that a society is conquered by a foreign power, its cultural identity is in jeopardy. After transcultural military conquests, new rulers introduce new ideologies to integrate their foreign subjects. Such new ideologies are often expressed through changes in sacred sites. Spatially reconfigured sites then become vehicles for ideology transfer, which is essential for the establishment of political and cultural dominance. A focus on material religion[5] elucidates transcultural relations before, during, and after historical colonization, because material settings and objects often reveal new information about how people interacted with them. Sacred sites, in this sense, are themselves contained networks of objects with which their visitors interact three-dimensionally. Studying sacred sites through the lens of material religion — as informants — thus opens an additional level of local history, one that was commonly left out of text documents written by the colonizers. This approach demonstrates that although conquest and colonization commonly resulted in a significant loss of cultural identity, the process of ideology transfer is bidirectional. Threatened cultures are not passive or helpless; they actively engage in identity negotiation and are just as capable to utilize spatial reconfigurations to defend their cultural identity, to influence the ideologies of their oppressors, and to take from them what is needed to create opportunities for the restoration of sovereignty.

More than two thousand years ago, the Chinese Empire was still young, yet eager for growth. Concisely, its center lay in the Central Plains (*zhongyuan* 中原) which surrounded the lower and middle reaches of the Huanghe — the Yellow River. From there, the empire advanced into the south and southwest and conquered territories that seemed unfamiliar and strange. They were filled with

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5   Different perspectives on material religion and the material turns in religious studies have been excellently summarized in: Bräunlein, Peter J. "Thinking Religion Through Things. Reflections on the Material Turn in the Scientific Study of Religion\s." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 28 (2016): 365–399.

dangerous waterscapes, hard to reach and difficult to survive. The language and the customs of the South differed from what the Chinese of the Central Plains knew. Yet, fertile ground, slaves, exotic luxury goods like agarwood, and the fame of expanding the realm seemed to be worth the fight. These southern territories were the areas of the contemporary Sichuan and northern Vietnam. Both areas shared many similarities in historical development and cultural circumstances, however, they diverged in one important point: in terms of imperial integration.

One thousand years passed and led to a pivotal era where emerging empires dared to challenge the Chinese Son of Heaven. Notable among these were the Vietnamese and Sichuanese Empires. Today, Vietnam stands as an independent nation, while Sichuan remains a province of China. This book explores the captivating developments that sparked such profound divergence and examines them in the context of the cultural and ideological transformations of sacred sites. These developments are empirically examined through the methodological approach introduced here:

The EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS (EAA) serves as an instrument for the comparative research of institutional change in relevant sites. It helps to analyze the physical expressions of constructed identities and hybridized meanings in the context of power imposition processes. Especially in historical contexts, EAA enhances our comprehension of the manifold conditions of colonization and decolonization. By focusing on the experientiality of spaces in the constructed placements and configurations, the EAA can generate information about subjected, colonized, and misrepresented groups even if no authentic documents from these groups' perspective have survived. The EAA thus highlights the connections between symbolic meaning, cultural identity, and political power.

If we consider the alteration of political borders by conquest, fusion, or separation, this leaves the question: what are the motivations for political borders to change at all?

When state territories expand, annex or separate, this is commonly related to frictions, assimilations, and hybridizations between local and transregional worldviews. To put it simply, worldviews are assumptions about what is *true* in the world. If they are systematized into sets of coherent, accepted convictions

about what is *right*, they turn into ideologies.[6] Most ideologies are focused on immobile, symbolic centers or are tied to typical features of their environment. However, some ideologies contain the demand to be propagated to an unlimited scale. Once local ideologies spread far beyond their places of origin, they become transregional ideologies that will inevitably reach the territories of other cultures during their expansion. These cultures are not passive recipients of foreign influence; rather, they adhere to their own local ideologies or localized versions of other transregional ideologies.

After making such contact, a transregional ideology must assert its dominance to justify its further dissemination. To this end, it typically initiates the discrimination of any local ideology that cannot be appropriated or repurposed, but may legitimize competing authorities. However, the adherents of local ideologies are just as typically determined to defend themselves. For this reason, transcultural expansions commonly create social tensions that would only cease if one side achieves absolute dominance. Most of the time, though, the tensions remain unresolved because achieving absolute dominance is difficult and comes with high costs, including high levels of violence and the loss of human lives.

When people actively pursue the spread of transregional ideologies, they usually want to achieve two different things. On the one hand, they may seek to expand their followership by integrating the population of recently approached territories into their own ideological[7] sphere. This is usually driven by an inherent mandate or obligation within the ideology itself. Consequently, this objective relates more to religious ideologies. Transregional religious authorities need the local population[8] to think like them and acknowledge their in-

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6   Ideologies may be of subjective nature, but are understood as objective and universal by the ideology holder. Not necessarily aware of their ideology, the ideology holder makes this the basis for idealized social values and norms. It thus determines what they consider to be right or wrong. Those who want to adjust social behavior to their own values in a normative way are acting politically.

7   Religions are ideologies in a categorical sense because they assume objective and universal values and norms which are allegedly sanctioned by a transcendental authority.

8   In this book, "local population" refers to three different kinds of people who share a common local culture and live in the same place. The indigenous people are, as far known, the original people of a place. The natives were born in the area and identify with it but are not

terpretative privilege. Transregional political authorities merely need the local population to comply and accept the conditions of legitimacy they impose. If these transregional authorities succeed in their endeavors, this results in *cultural* dominance. Cultural dominance can be actively pursued through methods such as religious proselytizing (e.g., Christian missions) and economic incentives, or it can occur passively through trade, seasonal migrations, or immigration. However, attaining cultural dominance is not as simple as copy-pasting an unaltered ideology from one context to another. The measures required to transfer ideology, to adapt it to a new local context and to make the new context hospitable to a new ideology will be one focus of this book. On the other hand, people who actively pursue the spread of transregional ideologies may also seek to extend geographical territory to expand their realm's borders. They need to create a sense of unity to gain undisputed access to new material and human resources. If they succeed, this establishes *political* dominance. Political dominance is usually achieved either by solely physical means like military violence, by the imposition of law,[9] by administrative coercion or by preparing the territory by establishing cultural dominance. If cultural dominance is established first, it grants the new rulers access to local means of legitimation, which facilitates the takeover and subsequent assimilation process. However, the newly designated subjects in an annexed territory are not necessarily compelled to immediately adopt the transregional ideology imposed upon them. If political dominance is established first, this accelerates the process of creating cultural dominance because the new government will support helpful elites who contribute to the localization of their ideology.

Local communities often struggle with the challenge of preserving their identity after a political annexation, especially if it has occurred through conquest. They try to negotiate their way of life while accommodating the demands of the newly imposed transregional authority. In cases where the transregional ideology has not yet established cultural dominance, its representatives will

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necessarily indigenous. The locals are everyone who has lived in the area for a significant time and identifies with local interests, although they may have a different heritage.

9   Schauer, Frederick. The Force of Law. Harvard University Press, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt21pxkpx.

have to offer incentives to encourage the locals to align with them. Failing to do so can cause resentment and rebellion. Under the threat of violence, some locals may reluctantly choose to relinquish their cultural identity in exchange for security and other perceived advantages. Once the locals yield, their assimilation begins and unfolds through religious conversion or the voluntary acceptance of the annexing state's authority. If high levels of cultural and political dominance are achieved, the annexing state may assert absolute ideological supremacy, leading to the rapid stabilization of state control. That may disrupt the reproduction of competing ideologies, violate local interests, and undermine the legitimacy of local authorities. Local identity is thus at the risk of being superscribed and eventually forgotten. Cultural tensions are hence resolved but at the expense of the indigenous cultures.

From a practical perspective, investing in large armies and superior weaponry to conquer a territory by force may seem expensive. However, it turns out to be comparatively easier than the full-scale ideology transfer required for cultural dominance. Although the preceding dynamics can be observed throughout history and across the world, yet absolute ideological supremacy is rarely ever achieved. In most cases, cultural tensions persist, sometimes for centuries. They follow either successful, transient, or failed attempts of expansion due to the efforts of either religious proselytizing or political conquest. Many contemporary world powers still have strained relationships with the territories that they have conquered (like Turkey with its part of Kurdish territory or China with Xinjiang) or which they once conquered, like Japan and South Korea, the United Kingdom and Botswana, Russia and Ukraine, or China and Vietnam.

Taking the example of the latter, this book delves into fundamental questions: What distinguishes those who have been 'conquered' from those who were 'once conquered'?

Why do some areas, such as Sichuan, yield to expanding transregional ideologies, acculturate and integrate — while others, like Vietnam, break free and assert their sovereignty once more?

The answers to these questions relate to the process of identity negotiation. When local populations are forced to react to the presence of imposed transregional ideologies in some manner, sacred sites present an essential resource

for the negotiation of the clashing cultural identities. They are by nature highly symbolic and socially distinctive. Hence, they increase the visibility of the ideologies behind them and improve their transfer and reproduction. For this reason, sacred sites are commonly the focus of transcultural conflicts.

Creating social relevance for newly established sacred sites demands considerable effort, so transregional authorities save a lot of time by occupying and rededicating the existing sacred sites of their competitors. Political transregional authorities actively seek out the most authoritative sacred sites to convey their own culture's values by fostering points of mutual identification.[10] Political and religious transregional authorities can hence spread their respective or merged ideologies most effectively if they support each other.

However, as soon as multiple groups are interested in a site, it becomes contested. Each group seeks to manipulate spatial-symbolical hierarchies by implementing different spatial reconfigurations to align the site's structure, content, and external presentation with their own preferences because each group needs the site to reflect cultural codes that correspond to their respective ideological narratives. This also means that sacred sites offered local populations a third option beyond mere submission to transregional authorities or open resistance that could lead to their obliteration. By manipulating the socio-spatial characteristics within either their own or newly introduced sacred sites, local populations were able to take advantage of the benefits offered by transregional networks while preserving their identities. They were able to selectively learn aspects of the transregional authority's expectations to present their sites in a decorative manner that allowed for the subversive continuation of their practices while pacifying their colonizers. They could also start to cohabit, incorporate and amalgamize transregional religious content to create entirely new forms of religious practice. Eventually, they reassigned parts of the transregional ideology to their own local authorities, thereby revitalizing them enough to fight for independence.

Strategic reconfiguration events typically occur in the context of religious mission or political conquest. Analyzing the spatial reconfigurations within

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10   Cf. Humphrey and Vitebsky 2002, p. 31. Points of mutual identification are places where different cultural ideas are related to and identified with each other.

sacred sites and the tactics behind them therefore yields new insights into the underlying processes of power imposition, highlighting cultural tensions and shifts in ideological narratives.

The Historical Background

The contemporary People's Republic of China is a culturally heterogenous state, a characteristic that it shares with its imperial predecessors. The growing territory of the Central Plains culture progressively integrated different regional cultures into one centralized state. Since the Qin dynasty (211—207 BCE) initiated the Chinese Empire, the legitimacy of the Chinese emperor relied to a significant extent upon his ability to unify and to expand the realm. The agents of the Chinese Empire accordingly serve as examples for *transregional political authorities* that quested for new territories. They include the emperor and all ranks of officials involved with the expansion and representation of the imperial government.

In Buddhism, the proselytizing and expanding of the religious network with new converts is considered a meritious activity.[11] The agents of Buddhism accordingly serve as examples for *transregional religious authorities*. These primarily include the Buddhist clergy with its missionaries, preachers and thaumaturges, as well as laypeople engaged in social welfare, medical care, and miraculous occurrences. Throughout East Asian history, transregional religious authorities occasionally joined the assimilation efforts of their differing political peers (or masters). This is also true for the areas of Sichuan and Vietnam.[12]

The religious scope of this book revolves around the power dynamics between Mahāyāna Buddhism, (Neo-)Confucianism and (indigenous) local religions. The question of Confucianism's classification as being more of phil-

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11   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 435–441.

12   "Vietnam" refers to (parts of) the geographical area occupied by the modern state of Vietnam. This does not mean that there was only one continuous state, since the area was occupied by different political and cultural groups. For a comprehensive treatment on Vietnam in historical contexts, cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 2–5.

osophical or more of religious nature has produced a considerable discourse.[13] To address this, I employ a functional working definition of religion alluding to the conceptual frameworks of Emile Durkheim and Clifford Geertz: religion is the shared belief in potentially offendable, not necessarily personified supernatural entities among an identifiable group. This group shares (1) recognizable variants of the same core narratives, (2) a core set of accepted and expected social behaviors, and engages (3) in similar practices and rituals. Historical Confucianism was indeed centered in ritualism and assumed the existence of an abstract transcendental power known as Tian 天, which reacted to human moral behavior[14] with blessings or punishments. It placed significant emphasis on correct moral conduct within specific social relations. Icons[15] of Confucius and his students were venerated not only as exemplary people but also to provide luck and academic success.[16] Consequently, I treat (Neo-)Confucianism as

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13 Christian authors promoted the idea that Confucianism was pure philosophy to make it appear less offensive to their peers in the West. Confucianism was represented through a Christian lens and modern values were applied in an anachronistic manner. Confucianism was later reduced to statecraft and important traits of its practices outside the governmental sphere were ignored. Rodney Taylor has investigated why Confucianism was often evaluated differently than similar world ordering systems deemed as religions. Taylor, Rodney L. "The Religious Character of the Confucian Tradition." *Philosophy East and West* 48, no. 1 (1998): 80–107. Confucianism has since been reevaluated and is more often treated in its religious dimensions in postcolonial studies, e.g., by Chih-P'ing Chou. "The Establishment of Confucianism as a State Religion During the Han Dynasty." In *English Writings of Hu Shih*. Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer, 2013. Treating Confucianism as a religion is different from *calling* it a religion. The criticism of calling Confucianism a religion in Western media is rooted in a limited, linguistic definition of the Latin word *religio* that proscribes its use for any non-Abrahamitic belief systems. However, for the treatment of Confucianism *as* a religion, it is irrelevant if the Classical Chinese language had a word equivalent for *religio*, see Cline, Erin M. "Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities." *Philosophy in East and West* 64, no. 4 (2014): 1103–1106. The political and social influences of calling Confucianism a "religion" have been scrutinized in: Yong Chen. *Confucianism as Religion. Controversies and Consequences*. Leiden: Brill, 2013. General approaches to the use of the term "religion" in Asian contexts are treated in Schalk, Peter (Ed). *Religion in Asien? Studien zur Anwendbarkeit des Religionsbegriffs*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2013.

14 Cf. Yao Xinzhong 2000, p. 175.

15 In the context of iconography, the term icon is used for different kinds of religious images, including sculptures. What differentiates icons from regular statues and paintings is that they are symbolically constructed in specific ways to portray religious ideas.

16 Cf. Murray 2009, p. 373.

a religious category. It was a primary resource for China's late-imperial cultural imperialism and the vehicle to transfer Sinitic ideology to neighboring cultures, mainly by education.

Daoism, which had an intensive relationship with early Chinese Buddhism, held and still has a strong presence in Sichuan. Although it disintegrated in Vietnam,[17] it strongly influenced local lore. Robert Hymes[18] has already conducted extensive research on the transcultural transfer, localization, and spatiality of Daoism. Therefore, given the length constraints of this book, I will only briefly touch upon Daoist sites, deities, and legitimizing narratives when they are directly relevant to the context. Sichuan is also often associated with Vajrayāna Buddhism; however, this tradition is more prevalent in the province's western high plateau. Given that the focus of this book is on central and eastern Sichuan, Mahāyāna Buddhism serves as a more satisfactory comparative basis to Vietnam.

The term "popular religions", while not entirely satisfactory, summarizes the less institutionalized ideas and customs of local religions, which commonly do not have regulated religious specialists or sacred scriptures. It is within this category that the veneration of water finds its place as well. For this book, I have restricted my examples to freshwater deities, though overlaps with maritime deities may occur. They also encompass tree, rock and mountain deities that people pray(ed) to for rain.

In later periods, Buddhist and Confucian contexts reinterpreted early animalistic or female water deities as pseudo-historical male persons to bolster their claims to occupied sacred sites. However, the material composition of sacred sites may still contain vestiges that reveal the original nature of these deities. The lens of material religion allows one to explore the agency of objects beyond the textual narratives attributed to them. So, the point of this book is to introduce a method for the detection and interpretation of such material traces left by the past within newer and contemporary sites. The case studies are therefore analyzed for their spatial reconfigurations and social context, they

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17   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 245.

18   Hymes, Robert. *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002.

are not meant to provide detailed iconography or comprehensive histories of individual temples.

Despite developing in diametrically opposed directions regarding their political integration, the regional histories of Sichuan and Vietnam show many similarities concerning the conditions of their environment, religious concepts, and their conquest by the Chinese Empire. A primary similarity between historical Sichuan and Vietnam was that their indigenous population was not Han Chinese. The early Chinese Empire conquered their territories around roughly the same time and turned them into Chinese provinces. I chose these areas due to their prolonged contact to the Chinese Empire and the number of centuries spent as components of the Middle Kingdom. I acknowledge that the term "Han Chinese" is occasionally used anachronistically, since it derives from the Han Dynasty (202 BCE—9 CE, 25—220 CE). It serves here to distinguish the predominant ethnic group of Chinese states from other ethnic groups, such as the ancient transregional cultures of the Ba and Shu.

In Sichuan, my focus is on the former territory of Shu, situated in the central and eastern regions of the modern province. The territory of the Ba corresponds largely to modern Chongqing, which is not within the scope of my study. Neither are the Tibetan areas of western Sichuan because they were only integrated into the province by the eighteenth century and do not meet the criterion of prolonged contact with the Chinese Empire. I have restricted my research to the areas east of the River Dadu 大渡, which formerly served as a natural border to the west. My focal points in order to trace the expansion of the Vietnamese Empire are the Red River Delta and the provinces Thanh Hóa, Huế and Nha Trang.

The transregional political authorities in China and Vietnam utilized the integration of highland societies and nomadic peoples to centralize rule and to establish cultural dominance. However, the Sichuan area has historically been highly heterogeneous and continues to be home to numerous cultural groups, many of which have evolved into ethnic minorities within the People's Republic of China. The case study of the Hailong Temple of Mahu in southern Sichuan [S.3.3.] treats the cultural tensions between the Han Chinese and the Yi — the largest ethnic minority of Sichuan — and accounts for the identity negotiations between indigenous groups, the local state, and the central state.

In Vietnam, I looked for the presence of Sinitic tropes during the gradual southward expansion of Việt culture into the territory of Champa. However, I excluded the Việt conquests in the Mekong Delta from my study due to their relatively recent occurrence in history.

After the Sichuanese and Vietnamese territories had been annexed, both areas were exploited by the Han Chinese while the officials praised their valuable resources. Although cultural integration was not a priority at all, these conquests still initiated a thousand-year-long process of introducing Sinitic concepts of empire building, education and religious control to the Sichuanese and Vietnamese areas.

Among all ex-colonies of China, Vietnam has had doubtlessly the most intensive contact with Sinitic culture. The northern area of Vietnam spent almost 1,080 years as a Chinese province. This book thus covers a nine-hundred-year period from the tenth century to the nineteenth century. This is a timeframe that allows me to generate sufficiently robust propositions about the processes of identity negotiation in Sichuan and Vietnam after the first Chinese interventions took place. Fernand Braudel's (1902—1985) historiographical approaches of the *longue durée* and the *événement*[19] link historical events to their spatial contexts, so I have combined both into a series of historical spotlights focused on periods of dynastic change and empire building. This has helped me to trace the continued transcultural ideology transfer resulting from typically short-lived events of spatial intervention that nevertheless produced lasting effects. This is particularly relevant for the dual study of Sichuanese and Vietnamese history, as the most consequential political turns took place at similar points in time.

The era between the tenth and twelfth centuries initiated the divergence between both territories. Sichuan and Vietnam were the scenes of major rebellions against the Chinese central authority. These led to a reinterpretation of

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19   The *longue durée* focuses on the structural transformations of social, state, and economic nature as influenced by their environment. The *événement* treats shorter time frames of political upheaval. Cf. Braudel, Fernand. "Geschichte und Sozialwissenschaften. Die longue durée" In *Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Lucien Febvre: Schrift und Materie der Geschichte. Vorschläge zu einer systematischen Aneignung historischer Prozesse,* edited by Claudia Honegger, 47–85. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.

the emperor's institution, followed by multiple instances of secession. However, none of the Sichuanese secessions lasted longer than two generations. Due to that, the Chinese Empire was able to tighten its control over the Chengdu Plain while Vietnam successfully restored its independence. In the same era, Buddhist networks rapidly expanded into remote peripheries and introduced the indigenous populations to Sinitic concepts. It contributed significantly to Vietnamese empire building.

The fifteenth century initiated an era of paradigm shifts. Neo-Confucian ideology increased its social influence in Vietnam after Vietnamese Buddhism had fallen out of the government's favor (although it remained a representative of imperial power). In Sichuan, a surge of Buddhist occupation efforts increasingly finalized the superscription[20] of hydrolatric sites that had been only tentatively claimed before. However, the administrators of Sichuan also attempted to occupy hydrolatric sites without relying on Buddhist spadework. Vietnam defended its independence again, but new Sichuanese attempts at empire building failed.

The eighteenth to nineteenth centuries represent the era of assertion. Although Vietnam grew into a heterogeneous empire of its own, Sinitic ideology had been successfully transferred and reassigned. This was shown in no uncertain terms, by the narrative that accompanied the southward expansion, which expressed the Việt's claim to 'civilize' the Indianized cultures of the Cham and Khmer by subjecting them to their culture. This was later named Nam Tiến 南進, ['The March to the South'] and the employment of Buddhist ideology was essential for its success. By contrast, Sichuan assumed a secure position in the Qing Empire's strategic expansion and served as a stepping stone towards the west.[21] However, local identity still differed strongly from Sinitic ideals. When dynastic turnovers caused huge losses to the population of Sichuan, these were compensated through immigration from southern China. Such demographic

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20   A term first defined by Duara, Prasenjit. "Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War" *The Journal of Asian Studies* 47, no. 4 (1988): 778–795. However, my definition as found in Chapter IV differs.

21   After the westward expansion, Sichuan assumed its contemporary shape, creating a province with severe cultural and environmental differences between its eastern and western parts.

change led to the hybridization[22] of local identities between the indigenous, the 'naturalized' Han Chinese and the new immigrants. This reinvigorated the preservation of local identity and ultimately stalled imperial control within the province.

The period of consideration ends in the 1850s, when Western colonial interventions initiated a different era of colonial dynamics in East Asia. However, I did consider some persistent twentieth century consequences of the historical ideology transfers to highlight the legacy of this empire-building millennium.

Buddhism had arrived early in Sichuan and Vietnam, so its local variants differ considerably from those of Chinese Buddhism. Early Buddhists had to assert themselves between indigenous religions and the Chinese imperial forces. Therefore, they created communication networks that provided them with a level of unity and functionality that attracted the sponsorship of worldly authorities. Buddhism did not become a permanent state religion in either area, but its interactions with political authorities profoundly influenced the choice of spatial reconfigurations that would be applied to indigenous sacred sites. Buddhists could thus mediate or inhibit the transmission of imperial ideology. The amount of influence that Buddhists gained in the central government was certainly one factor for the divergent development of political autonomy between Sichuan and Vietnam. However, another factor may have had an even greater impact.

Sacred Sites of Water and Ideology Transfer

Sichuan and Vietnam are examples for distinct water cultures, characterized by an environment with abundant terrestrial water resources.[23] Their populations lived between countless rivers and streams where the omnipresence of water

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22   The concept of hybridity was most importantly coined by: Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge, 1994. It describes the liminal cultural spaces in colonial and post-colonial situations where cultures and ideas mix unequally and result in different balances of power.

23   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyun 2015 and for a different example, see: Rogers, Dylan Kelby. *Water Culture in Roman Society.* Leiden: Brill, 2018.

formed liminal landscapes in a dynamic state of fleetingness and transgression. On the one hand, that meant the waterways served as natural borders that isolated these areas from neighboring cultures. On the other hand, they also provided means of communication and transport ways that localized phenomena (mountains or settlements) or impermanent phenomena (like fire, lightning, trees, or rocks) could not. In consequence, water became uniquely associated with trans and interregional exchanges, perpetually transcending cultural identities and political borders.

Just like water, the cultural and social landscapes of Sichuan and Vietnam were in constant flux,[24] yet their geographic isolation fostered the development of exceptionally stable local cultures. However, these cultures were constantly challenged by their environment. Despite the abundance of terrestrial water, rainfall was still unreliable and the rivers were menacing as well: they were hard to navigate, prone to flooding, and home to snakes and crocodiles. All of this encouraged the cultures of Sichuan and Vietnam to develop technological and spiritual means of water control. Spiritual practices regarding the control of water, i.e., the veneration of and ritualistic interaction with water and associated entities, are called *hydrolatry*. It stands as one of the earliest forms of human religious behavior that we know of.

The narrow landscape of Vietnam was densely filled with the sites of indigenous nature deities. By contrast, China had a vast territory that offered many options for the construction of genuinely new temples. And yet, Buddhists made the occupation of already existing hydrolatric sites a priority.[25] They had recognized the significant cultural prestige associated with sites dedicated to water control.

In water cultures, the power over technological and spiritual water control is equal to the power over life and death. All kinds of worldly authorities have relied to some extent on sites venerating water to legitimize their power. To assimilate the locals, transregional authorities needed to appropriate local

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24   Cf. Karpouzoglou, Timothy and Vij, Sumit. "Waterscape: a perspective for understanding the contested geography of water." *WIREs Water* 4:e1210 (2017): 1–5. Doi: 10.1002/wat2.1210. pp. 2–3.

25   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 192.

methods for the reproduction of legitimation. To do this, they had to become relevant to the local society and establish themselves, which required them to develop their own localized means of water control. By doing so, they could undermine traditional methods of water control over time, which reduced their ability to provide legitimation to competing local authorities. This intensified the pressure on local cultures and substantially expedited the process of transcultural ideology transfer.

However, both transregional religious and political authorities discovered that hydrolatric sites were very hard to occupy. Their symbolic integrity and connections to local authorities made them resilient, allowing them to serve as reservoirs of local identity.

The extent to which these sites either promoted or severely challenged transregional authority and ideology transfer depended on the choice of spatial reconfiguration tactics employed and whether or not they proved appropriate.

As a prerequisite for the successful occupation of a sacred site, transregional authorities need to modify it in a manner that persuades the locals of their ideology's superiority without offending them. This can be achieved through either aggressive or mediative spatial reconfiguration tactics. Although the former may yield quick results, they easily cause resentment, whereas the latter offers greater long-term stability but may struggle to transfer transregional ideology thoroughly. To enhance the likelihood of ideology transfer and subsequent cultural assimilation, the selected tactics of spatial reconfigurations must hence fit the site's social context. Ignoring the site's social background and choosing an inappropriate tactic — which was not rare — easily generates innately contradictory sites. Such contradictions lead to questions and divergence that may significantly inhibit the accurate reproduction of a homogenous ideology.

Moreover, the reconfiguration of sacred sites is a bilateral process. Enduring local authorities can counter transregional interventions into their sacred sites by implementing their own reconfiguration that may indeed influence the members of the expanding culture, too. As reservoirs of local identity, hydrolatric sites were particularly capable of either mediating the hybridization between transregional and local cultures or to encourage the latter to reassign transregional ideology to themselves.

In historical contexts, it is evident that local hydrolatry has been a principal incendiary factor for social frictions. The degree of transcultural ideology transfer achieved by the spatial reconfiguration of hydrolatric sites has critically determined the establishment of cultural and political dominance. This means that the treatment of water-related sites must have been a major factor for the divergent developments of Sichuan's and Vietnam's sovereignty and studying this would surely offer insights into the identity negotiation between local and transregional cultures as well as into the historical conflicts arising thereof.

In the end, investigating the spatial reconfiguration events that occurred in relevant hydrolatric sites of Sichuan and Vietnam revealed diverse strategies for expressing and manipulating spatial concepts in the context of transculturalism and their varying impacts on the long-term success[26] of cultural dominance. But to get there, I had to develop a new methodological approach to uncover how political and religious authorities placed, occupied, and controlled hydrolatric sites to localize and legitimize their power.

Time for a New Approach

It is difficult to study the processes of transcultural ideology transfer as a precondition for cultural dominance if the evidence provided by historical documents is slim. Historical normative texts of the dominant cultures exclusively represent the values of these cultures. They intentionally misrepresent or ignore indigenous groups and other subjected cultures. I required a methodological approach that would allow me to examine architectural compositions in a way that could corroborate, complement, and even refute written sources. An approach that could help to partially recover the voices of those (once) conquered and gain a sounder knowledge about the local histories that challenge transregional narratives.

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26 The anthropologist Aihwa Ong describes the general uncertainty of transcultural ideology transfer and how a culture may fail to gain social acceptance after spreading into a new territory. Cf. Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.* Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999.

The Experiential Architecture Analysis (eaa) is this approach. I developed it during my field research to focus on the experiential aspects of architectural compositions. This approach provides a better comprehension of the conscious[27] and subconscious placements made during the spatial reconfiguration of sacred sites. It helps to identify the spatial reconfiguration tactics employed at specific sites, which is crucial to reconstruct their historical appearances. Analyzing the choice of reconfiguration tactics helps to discern some of the motivations behind spatial interventions and to understand how those who interfered with a site may have sought to address perceived issues. The material analysis within the framework of the eaa thus provides a higher degree of insight into the social dynamics among the various groups involved with the site, shedding light on their interactions and conflicts. In addition to the material analysis, surviving written documents provide context on how people of different sociocultural backgrounds and statuses perceived architectural compositions.

The combination of material and textual analysis unveils the social-experiential dimensions that influence the persuasiveness of the narratives embodied within the site. Textual reports or descriptions, alongside interventions into the material, indicate the reactions provoked by the employed reconfiguration tactics and whether the objective of altering the perceptions of the site's beholders was accomplished. The historical contextualization of spatial reconfiguration events thus shows which consequences a successful transcultural ideology transfer via sacred sites could have for the assertion of cultural and political dominance.

Through the combination of art history, archaeology, spatial analysis, actor network theory,[28] the sociology of spaces and historical analysis, it is the synoptic view on places that makes the Experiential Architecture Analysis a valuable tool for exploring socio-spatial behavior in historical

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27   Cf. Götz and Holmén 2018, pp. 157–161.

28   The actor network theory provides a basis for tracking not only human, but also human and nonhuman entity interaction within fleeting material-semiotic networks. Cf. Mol 1999, p. 83.

contexts. This approach represents another tool towards liberating the study of local history from the shackles of normative narratives.

An Overview

The first chapter introduces the reader to the concept of spatiality and to the basic terms of transculturalism, ideology transfer, and the expansion of states and religions, particularly so in the context of the Chinese Empire. Chapter I treats principles of spatial sanctity in the human experience. In Chapter III, I present the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS. This is followed by a preliminary typology of spatial reconfiguration tactics for sacred sites in Chapter IV. Chapter V provides a concise definition of hydrolatry and summarizes its Sichuanese and Vietnamese manifestations in relation to the assimilation policies of Buddhism and the early Chinese Empire.

Chapter VI provides a comprehensive summary of the four case study clusters from Sichuan and Vietnam, presenting the findings related to the hydrolatric sites influenced by Buddhism [Appendices V.1–3. and S.1–2.] as well as those impacted by the Chinese and Vietnamese Empires [Appendices V.4–6. and S.3.]. The chapter treats different aspects of the identity negotiation process including how — and if — Sinitic concepts were accepted and transformed among local populations. Additionally, it outlines the distinct cultural coping mechanisms that emerged in Sichuan and Vietnam in response to their respective transregional pressures.

Chapter VII assesses the results of the case studies and examines the local responses influencing the dynamics between ideology transfer and political (dis-)integration. Here, I explore overarching concepts concerning the conditions required for the localization of authority to integrate new territories into transregional entities. I contrast these with factors that contributed to the failure of such processes and examine concepts which facilitated the subsequent overthrow of colonizers.

The conclusion asserts that the method of EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS and the resulting typology provide a fairly satisfactory framework to reconstruct historical reconfiguration events. This framework,

in turn, supports the analysis of cultural frictions stemming from related power imposition processes. It was thoroughly tested to see if it helps to reduce the reliance on normative texts. It does so (1) by the compartmentalization of representative spatial organizations within sacred sites as they are tied to transregional narratives; (2) by the determination of the applied spatial reconfiguration tactics that point towards the local social dynamics; (3) by content analysis, which reveals the identity and resilience of involved groups, and (4) by historical contextualization which can determine the degree to which a site was resilient and contributed to the social resilience of a local culture.

Social authorities need to generate legitimation for their power and actions and do so by marking the landscape with mostly institutional buildings that have a public and communicative character. The symbolical density of sacred sites makes them especially effective vectors for ideology transfer. Changing the spatial image of sacred sites also alters the social experiences caused by them. This ultimately affects the social spatial imagination of the site's consumers who decide whose ideology the site reproduces. The reconfiguration of institutional sites is hence an essential tool of social control.

Hydrolatric sites are more contested than other types of sacred sites because transregional authorities are especially interested in their legitimizing traits. They often go through multiple occupations and changes of alignment and thus contain numerous traces of spatial reconfigurations that can be studied to improve the understanding of local history.

The case studies demonstrate that the choice of spatial reconfiguration tactics affects hydrolatric sites and influences the long-term success of ideology transfer. If hydrolatric sites are reconfigured consequently and convincingly, they facilitate the localization and following dissemination of the transregional ideology. But if this is not the case, they become fixed points of identity negotiation. Their high relevance for the general livelihood and for specific demographics makes them particularly resilient against transcultural occupation and contributes to rising levels of local hybridity. This resilience is increased if the social groups connected to these sites are ostracized or oppressed by the transcultural authorities. Such behavior may cause hydrolatric sites to serve as reservoirs for local ideology. These can be used to preserve or reassign ideology and to develop subversive narratives aimed against the occupying group. The

EAA is thus a tool that helps to evaluate the degree of a sacred site's architectural resilience which in turn helps to determine the level of local social resilience.

Buddhism, Daoism, and the imperial authorities achieved varying degrees of transcultural ideology transfer by occupying hydrolatric sites. In reaction, Sichuan and Vietnam developed unique coping mechanisms for the protection of their cultural identity. These are, nonexclusively, the Guanyin Culture, the Tứ Pháp system, the Chuanzhu system and the Đạo Mẫu system. The Guanyin Culture, a coping mechanism that preserved female religious traditions under Buddhist (and later imperial-Confucian) pressure, may be the most prevalent among them. These coping mechanisms show that the historical differences between Sichuan and Vietnam were connected to the factors of (1) treatment of local gender relationships, (2) environmental relationships, and (3) economic benefits of water control.

Despite the many similarities in their coping mechanisms, Sichuan and Vietnam employed very different strategies of identity negotiation. The social resilience centered on hydrolatric sites helped to preserve local identity in both areas, but only in Vietnam did the inability of Confucianism to occupy hydrolatric sites as female spaces affect the further imperial expansion. This was already a result of ideology reassignment from the Chinese to the Vietnamese Empire, showing the success of transcultural ideology transfer even after China lost political supremacy over its southern neighbor.

The high resilience of hydrolatric sites in Sichuan forced Buddhism to redevelop its hybrid strategies while this hardly affected Confucianism. This was mostly due to the weak presence of the empire within the province. The central imperial authority had minimal visibility in Sichuan, resulting in low effective pressure of imperial ideology. Thus, local identity was comparatively easy to defend, and the people of Sichuan seldom concerned themselves with who nominally controlled their territory. However, the lack of unity among the local hybrid elites of Sichuan, coupled with a sense of economic contentment, eventually led to the erosion of the concept of an independent Sichuanese identity. Since the Chinese dominance did not impose significant hardships, it was accepted for its perceived benefits, and Sichuan remained a Chinese province.

In Vietnam, the Chinese — especially the local officials stationed there — discriminated strongly against the Việt population based on the assumption

of their own superiority within their cultural imperialist narrative. They hence imposed significant hardships, so contentment among the indigenous was impossible. Imperial-Confucian ideology prohibited the integration of Việt hydrolatric sites because they were strictly tied to the social sphere of women. This created an opportunity for Buddhism to become much better at occupying these spaces, which turned it into a significant provider of legitimation for the revived local authorities of Vietnam. Buddhism also contributed to the reassignment of Chinese imperial ideology, which the Việt fused with their idea of aquatic patrons. This enabled Vietnam to regain its sovereignty and to eventually evolve into an independent empire of its own. In the case of Vietnam, the imperialist justification for the southward expansion against the Cham culture proved that the Chinese political dominance ended because Sinitic imperial ideology *was* successfully transferred and subsequently gained sufficient cultural dominance to legitimize local authorities. However, Confucianism proved to be unfit for the cross-cultural expansion southward, where the occupation of hydrolatric sites was crucial. As a result, the Vietnamese government needed to rely on the hybridizing potential of Buddhism once again.

This contributed to the stark contrast between the difficult southward expansion of the Chinese Empire and the successful southward expansion of the Vietnamese Empire. The early Chinese Empire favored aggressive reconfiguration tactics to propagate the Confucian ideology upon which their imperial legitimation relied. However, Confucianism generally rejects hybridity. In combination with the Chinese Empire's low level of extraneous presence and control, such an exclusively aggressive approach could only cause local resistance against which the Chinese Empire had insufficient resources. In defense of their cultural identity, the locals used different sets of spatial reconfiguration tactics that encouraged subversive behavior and contributed to the regeneration of local authorities.

By contrast, the Vietnamese Empire was aware that it could not tightly control its heterogenous territories and thus sought common ground with its new subjects. Buddhism had previously successfully employed mediative reconfiguration tactics in Vietnam and Sichuan. It was used again to occupy specifically hydrolatric sites in former Cham territories. However, Buddhism also possesses a notion about its own superiority and the Vietnamese Empire's state patronage

occasionally prompted it to adopt aggressive reconfiguration tactics as well, although these also caused some backlash. Although the Vietnamese imperial system of the late imperial era (1427—1858) was based on Neo-Confucianism, the significant state expansion was still owed to Buddhism. In the nineteenth century, the competition between both groups led to a destabilizing dissonance within the state. By implication, the successful transfer of transcultural ideology may facilitate the creation of cultural dominance, but the achievement of superficial ideological harmony does not guarantee political unity.

In conclusion, mediative reconfiguration tactics tend to be more successful and are more likely to contribute to the creation of stable religious and/or political supremacy. This stability is created by the increasing levels of hybridity which result from processes of mutual identity negotiation. Transregional authorities who nevertheless employ the much more perilous aggressive reconfiguration tactics commonly do so because of notions of purity and superiority. Since resilient hydrolatric sites create high local levels of hybridity, transregional authorities may either accept these for their own benefit or reject them and thereby jeopardize their claims to the sites.

Due to the relevance that hydrolatric sites had for historical local authorities and the different processes of identity negotiation that they were involved in, their occupation — or lack thereof — had significant influence on the chances of restoring sovereignty in Sichuan and Vietnam.

This book demonstrates how political influence could affect the design and presentation of specific sacred sites and entire religious landscapes. This affected the process of transcultural ideology transfer and the likelihood of reestablishing local sovereignty.

The comparison of the two cultural areas of Sichuan and Vietnam against the backdrop of their relationships to the Chinese Empire has provided new insights into transcultural ideology transfers and power imposition processes as they typically take place during religious and political expansion. Creating new contexts of meaning in symbolically significant places can enhance the ability to resist the ideological influences of one's conquerors. This helps to preserve cultural identity despite the reconfiguration of local institutional sites. In the future, using these findings may help to preserve and strengthen the cultural identity and diversity of people who are under transregional duress.

How to Read This Book

This publication adopts a hybrid format, it features an online appendix that provides more than merely supplementary material. It contains supporting evidence for the findings presented in the main body of the book. The key statements of the book stand on their own and provide sufficient insight into the research project, the summarized research material (Chapter VI) and its results. The appendix contains the full-length case studies, complete with the associated translations, references, and citations, and thus offers a more comprehensive understanding of the research. References to the appendix are indicated throughout the book in square brackets, accompanied by a corresponding letter and number. Because the case studies are organized into two main clusters, Vietnamese cases are denoted with a "V" for Vietnamese, while the Sichuanese cases are marked with a "S" for Sichuanese. The case studies comprise the temple descriptions, the translations, the study of the respective sources, the reconfigurative analyses and their subsumptions. In the sections [V.3.]; [V.4.]; [S.1.] and [S.3.1.–2.], each case study is further contextualized with major historical developments and the specific topic that it is significant for. All case studies can be read separately or in context with the main body. In the eBook version, the numbers inside the brackets directly link to the referenced case study.

Regarding the formal conventions, the (once) character-based writing systems of East Asia do visualize material ideas to a certain degree. They add characters to a site's name to express its category, which is related to specific site types and religious affiliations. The social groups who held power over a sacred site and controlled its narratives also controlled the attribution of such categories within visual media. It was hence not rare that sites were recategorized. For this reason, it is important to note how religious sites were categorized in the transliteration of names. Therefore, the prefix or suffix is indicated whenever a site's name remains untranslated. In Chinese script, the category of religious affiliation is expressed as a suffix to the site's name. For example, in Chinese, the Shengshui-si, Erwang-miao and Qiuyu-guan refer to sites presented as

Buddhist, imperial or Daoist. In the Vietnamese language,[29] the affiliation of a sacred site is expressed as a prefix. In Vietnamese, the chùa Ba Đa, miếu Ông or đền Voi Phục refer to sites presented as Buddhist, imperial or popular religious. Not all Vietnamese temple categories can be expressed in Chinese characters and even those that are may use characters that would signify a different site category in China. Likewise, Western publications often translate the Vietnamese term *chùa* as "pagoda", although the term designates an entire Buddhist temple instead of just the pagoda (i.e., the tower within a Buddhist temple, called *tháp* "stupa" in Vietnamese). For more precision, this book uses the term *chùa* for Vietnamese Buddhist temples; "pagoda" exclusively for tower-like multilevel buildings with Chinese architectural traits; and "stupa" for tower or stele-like marking structures with Indianized architectural traits.

If not established otherwise, Chinese names will be transcribed into Pinyin. In Chinese, there are multiple characters that translate to "river", so the names of Chinese waterways are transliterated to indicate their character, e.g., Huanghe instead of "Yellow River". In Vietnamese, the term for river is usually *sông,* therefore it is sensible to directly translate the names, like "Red River" instead of sông Hồng.

The personal names of supernatural entities are written in one word, like Fuxi 伏羲 or Erlangshen 二郎神. If the name clearly consists of a personal name and a title or rank, I use a lowercase suffix, like Na-gong 拿公 or Yu-wangye 禹王爺. The names of Buddhist entities vary greatly between the Chinese and Vietnamese languages, so Buddhist entities are identified with their Indian names. The Chinese or Vietnamese rendition is used depending on the context. For example, an icon of Avalokiteśvara (Sanskrit) may be further referred to as Guanyin (Chinese) or Quan Âm (Vietnamese).

The research for this book was carried out as a one-person project. In addition to the challenges posed by anti-religious state practices, it was usually not possible to carry out precise measurements. I thus used the Chinese *jian* 間, a relative measurement unit, as an alternative. It measures length in ref-

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29 Until the twentieth century, Vietnamese was mainly written with Chinese characters. Some Vietnamese religious categories hence refer to Chinese suffixes although they are expressed as prefixes in vernacular and modern Vietnamese.

erence to the smallest possible Chinese building unit — the space between four pillars — and is frequently used to describe the interspace between two pillars. Although the *jian* has no definitive length,[30] most traditional Chinese and Vietnamese buildings have a width between one and up to eleven *jian*, so this unit provides an adequate impression of relative size which is sufficient to judge hierarchical relations based on size.

All direct translations in the following chapters that are not attributed otherwise are my own. I use the third-person singular "they/them." Following this Introduction, <u>underlined</u> words are used to clarify references to the reconfiguration tactics and concepts of Experiential Architecture Analysis as they are introduced in depth in Chapter IV.

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30 For example, the central *jian* of a building may be broader than the symmetrical number of side *jian*, while the end *jian* to both sides of the central axis may only measure up to a third of the side *jian*. Cf. Thilo 1977, p. 54.

1 Landscapes and Legitimation

The relationship between the social idea of legitimation and the geographic idea of landscape relies on the concepts of material agency and spatial networks which are connected through social experience.

Today, it is hard to imagine that society was once studied without considering spatial aspects; after all, spatial thinking is one of the main lessons of postmodern epistemology. But this was not always the case. The simple realization that space is more than the background of life caused multiple *spatial turns* to erupt across various disciplines. Each one tried to grasp the concept of space and its social role a little bit better than the others, but unfortunately with their own technical vocabulary. The situation that similar concepts are expressed in different field-specific jargons regularly impedes the collaboration and knowledge transfer between the more material subjects (archaeology, art history, geography, area studies) and the more social subjects (sociology, religious studies, political science). The following is a very short overview on the history of these spatial turns.

1.1 A History of Spatial Turns

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892—1968) revived the technique of iconography[31] and extended it to build structures and landscapes. Using his research techniques, paintings could be culturally 'decoded' in regard to the different backgrounds, worldviews, perceptions, and comprehensions of disparate cultural codes. This was a great advancement in the process to understand that people could perceive and interpret the same data differently. With a similar idea, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857—1913) studied the meaning and creation of signs independently of their form. His posthumous book *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (1916) initiated the

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31   Panofsky, Erwin. *Meaning in the Visual Arts*. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955.

field of semiology. However, he did not yet pay attention to the construction of signs nor how such construction was related to the assertion of power.

In a later era, László Moholy-Nagy (1895—1946) proposed the innovative argument that there was no independent space; it was instead constituted by the relationship between bodies.[32] Influenced by this idea and Saussure's semiology, Claude Lévi-Strauss's (1908—2009) structuralism studied architecture as a total system of 'constructed' knowledge, influenced in its cultural history by ecology, resources, available techniques and the economy. However, structuralism tends towards a passive concept of social actors. Jacques Derrida (1930—2004) opposed this tendency and went to the other extreme. His deconstructionism (of ideological biases) denied that objects like buildings could have any meaning of their own. All significance that they could possess was assumed to be in the minds of visitors and interpreters.[33] This pushed the concept of space into the background once more. Yet, when Derrida utilized the term *khôra* to refer to an individual and transient sphere between the idea and the material,[34] I believe he was close to tracking down the Socio-Experiential Sphere — one constituent of spatial perception which will be described in Chapter II. Derrida's work inspired the architectural philosopher Nader El-Bizri[35] to formulate the theory that the environment creates the ontology of the material. And although Derrida did not deal with the subject of sponsors and patrons, modern spatial research has spent years fixating on the schism between structuralist and deconstructionist ideas to find out who is responsible for the generation and reproduction of meaning.

The writings of Dietrich Bartels (1931—1983), Henri Lefebvre (1901—1991) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930—2002)[36], all published between 1968—1977,

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32 Cf. Hill 2006, p. 67.

33 Cf. Conway and Roensch 2005, pp. 47–48.

34 Cf. Derrida, Jacques. *Khôra*, Paris: Galilée 1993.

35 Cf. Nader El-Bizri, "On Dwelling: Heideggerian Allusions to Architectural Phenomenology." Studia UBB. Philosophia 60, no. 1 (2015): 5–30. Derrida's approach strongly affected the discipline of architecture, cf. Wigley, Mark. *The Architecture of Deconstruction. Derrida's Haunt.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997.

36 Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

initiated another wave in the reconsideration of material culture and its social effects. Bartels defined an activity-based social geography, but rejected the aspect of individual experience, while Bourdieu focused on individual experience in spatially contained contexts. Bourdieu's contribution was the recognition of spatial-social dynamics which went beyond the relationship between material and subject. His focus on practice conveyed how actions and interactions may be structured by external factors, but that each action also contributes to the reproduction of these factors. This is not only essential to understand interactions with institutional architecture, but also the basis for recognizing the reciprocal relationship between actions and the factors that shape them. To illustrate the profound influence of human actions on the social and spatial landscape, Chapter II will explore how reconfigurative actions can also *influence* the very factors that originally structured them. In a similar vein, Henri Lefebvre used a more material approach to study social relations and the reproduction of structures. He viewed space as a complex social construction that relies on cultural symbols and values which, in turn, reproduce and influence spatial practices and perceptions. Against this background, Lefebvre created a rudimentary and evolutionary typology of spatial aspects based on alternating dynamics of dominance.[37]

In 1984, the sociologist Anthony Giddens proposed his structuration theory, which he used to study the inseparable intersectionality of human agents and material structure. This was a balanced view on the agency of people within socio-structural constraints, neither all passive nor entirely autonomous. Over the course of the twentieth century, space became a field of interest, a container for traces of changing social orders which — in the shapes of landscapes, places, and spatial ensembles — turned into the symbols thereof. This process is described in detail in Setha Low's extensive literature review about the research on place and space.[38]

By the 1990s, the relationship between space and social experience became a feature of the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour (1947—2022) and John

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37   Cf. Lefebvre 1991, p. 46.

38   Cf. Low 2017, pp. 15–33.

Law.[39] Its revolutionary trait is that the social actor is not necessarily human or even a living being. John Law continued to develop this approach into the Post-Actor-Network-Theory (Post-ANT). He considers the relationship between the producer and consumer in regard to matters of material representation and argues that one and the same representation could constitute different identities with different roles for ontological politics.[40] He also emphasizes the importance of performance to make things 'real', an idea that allows 'multiple realities' to coexist. My own research perspective relies on Annemarie Mol,[41] who argues that these multiple realities are not just subjective interpretations but are actively produced and negotiated through various practices, technologies, and discourses. This approach leads to the third important aspect of Post-ANT: the idea of 'fluidity' that assumes a constant situation of change between human orders[42] and networks. In a similar vein, the environmental psychologist Setha Low has focused on the embodiment of space and the space constituting power of the consumer. According to her, the embodiment of space can insert the transregional or global into locally inscribed spaces. This dissolves the static nature of architecture and recreates sites as places of "flow."[43] My perspective is that her assessment is crucial for the understanding of political power dynamics as they are attached to socially relevant spaces — and not only in terms of how elites aim to utilize them, but also in the way of how audiences perceive and use them. It is important to pay attention to the

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39   Cf. Latour, Bruno. *Aramis, or the Love of Technology.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996 and Law, John. "Notes on the Theory of the Actor Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity." *Systems Practice* 5 (1992): 379–393.

40   For example, the roles of the producer, of the consumer, of the material, of other groups able to perceive the material representation, and so forth. Cf. Law, John and Ruth Benschop. "Resisting Pictures: Representation, Distribution and Ontological Politics." In *Ideas of Difference: Social Spaces and the Labour of Division,* edited by Kevin Hetherington and Rolland Munro, 158–182. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

41   Cf. John Law und John Hassard (Ed.): *Actor Network Theory and After.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

42   These are the ways in which people categorize, interpret, and navigate their experiences, shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors.

43   Cf. Low 2017, pp. 94–118.

consumers of spaces to prevent the targets of ideology transfers from being unfairly relegated to passive roles.

In 2001, the pioneer of the modern sociology of spaces — Martina Löw — broke the preconceptions of her era by focusing on the power of the consumer's interpretation and the dynamic nature of space as a social phenomenon. She created a still relevant typology of space as a social medium. Similarly, Jon Anderson (2003) studied the relationships between people and places by looking at their affects, thus expanding the growing discipline of cultural geography. While all these developments in emerging disciplines have led to the creation of new methods, like the digitally supported spatial analysis,[44] Setha Low criticizes the continued disregard for ethnographical field data in the theoretical discussions of spatial analysis.[45] Avoiding such neglect is why I invested much effort into my extensive corpus of ethnographical field studies.

1.2   The Spatial Communication of Power

The basis of spatial communication is the socially coded space. One of its functions is to depict and reproduce the ideologies upon which the authorities that established it rely. Religious and worldly authorities, like the Confucian Chinese empires or the Buddhist religious networks, used spatial communication to mark territories that were either recently obtained or planned to be acquired. However, spaces are not inherently communicative. In order to understand how different authorities used spatial communication, it is important to first consider how spaces are constituted. In 1992, Dieter Läpple combined many of the previously established scholarly approaches with the goal to derive universal concepts about the constitution of space. Accordingly, the communicative aspects of spaces are determined by their arrangement, structure, context, description, perception, and evaluation. All of this is strongly tied to material aspects. To examine how space is structured, Richard Strassberg emphasized such materiality, but also the environment and the placement of inscribed

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44   Cf. Götz and Holmén 2018, pp. 157–161.

45   Cf. Low 2017, p. 6.

texts in his book *Inscribed Landscapes* (1994). Strassberg treated landscape and architecture as connected mediums of communication, which is quite sensible, because the term 'landscape' is also framed by human perception and thus mutable. As early as 1960, Otto Friedrich Bollnow claimed that there is no physical landscape, that it is merely the human topography of an environmental reality where humans ascribe values to the marks within. Such marks are the architectural compositions and the infrastructure between them. These cover the environment like a net and gaps in-between are the challenges that nature poses to humanity.[46]

Since the idea of turning spaces into places precedes their construction, spaces are already interpretive before they enter the sphere of materiality. Architecture condenses ideas of spaces into *places.* Places receive a name and a meaning; they are physically marked within the landscape through the placement of symbols and buildings. Due to this specificity, places seem more relevant and are experienced more consciously than the less defined space. This brings the architectural composition of a place into the continuous process of mutual renegotiation between identity and ideology. [47]

The consumer's bodily interaction with a site is the first step towards communication.[48] It recreates in their mind an image of the ideologies behind the site's construction. To make the ideal tangible[49] constitutes the experiential aspects of architecture which are responsible for the transfer and reproduction of ideology. In this manner, a place's physical markings define a genre for the message it delivers and establishes an intended consumer perception and interpretation. But there is seldom just one interpretation of a place, and the sum of interpretations creates multiple layers of meaning that can lead a place to

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46   Cf. Bollnow 1960, pp. 397–98.

47   Landscape studies are a nexus of methods and techniques across disciplines that are dedicated to researching human landscapes. I used the morphology and toponymics of landscape studies to determine relevant sites. Cf. Muir 2005, pp. xiv, 2–37.

48   For example, if a lot of effort is invested into architecture, like free-hanging monasteries on a mountainside, this is considered to be more prestigious since its consumers tend to identify with the dedication that it took to build it.

49   Cf. Knott 2005, p. 27.

take on multifold identities. The potency of each interpretation-based identity is dependent on the social power of the interpreters.

Martina Löw describes both space and place as collections of relationships whose physical elements are placed at certain distances from each other. The placed elements and their distances create an *ensemble* where the 'emptiness' of the in-between suggests the ideational relationships among the physical elements which serve as allegories. This creates the identity of a place. Ensembles break down the complexity of a place into more approachable symbols that are thoroughly experienced with all senses, especially regarding their ties to perceived spatial hierarchies. [50] Consequently, every space marked and inscribed by humans is a location of person-to-person communication about social relationships, expected norms and suggested desires. What makes architecture extraordinary compared to other media is the persistence of the ideas presented within. They are unaffected by any reassessments during the consumption process.[51] Architecture is difficult to change, so traces of older ideas persist among more recent adjustments and enhancements. This preserves ideas over extensive time spans to the degree that the symbolical narratives of architectural compositions may outlast prohibitions, persecutions, and even the extinction of those social groups who coded them into the site.

Places that are imbued with ideological meaning anchor a certain ideology within the surrounding landscape. These are *institutional places*. They are heavily charged cultural-symbolic settings[52] where political, religious, economic, or other social elites create rules, norms, and collectively acceptable interpretations. Examples are, aside from sacred sites, administrative buildings, military bases, sites of education or justice and decorative-representative monuments like memorial arches. Institutional places are supposed to reproduce their imbued meaning far beyond themselves. The sites, buildings and objects within institutional spaces are placed in a way that offers or denies options of interaction for the consumer. Hence, they modify the socio-spatial experiences of the consumers because they limit their behavior much more than in

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50   Cf. Löw 2001, pp. 132–34, 137, 195.

51   Cf. Mellmann 2014, p. 86.

52   Cf. Engel 2020, p. 121.

noninstitutional spaces.[53] This control over acceptable behavior enables institutional architecture to express, transmit and legitimate the power dynamics that previously constituted parts of its configuration. The idea that architecture can easily be transferred across transcultural limits is only true regarding its physical aspects. If a certain type of institutional architecture is simply inserted into a cultural environment with very different values and interpretations, then it is doubtful whether its ideational aspects can be transferred and locally reproduced as well. For this reason, external interventions into local institutional space can cause a lot of tension.

Martina Löw introduced two valuable terms[54] to describe such discrepancies between different interest groups during a site analysis:

1. **The Spatial Image** refers to the physical configuration and all tangible objects of a site. It is the state of an architectural complex at the very moment of seeing it.
2. **The Spatial Imagination** describes an idealized metaphysical imagination of the site, derived from the symbolical meanings attached to the material objects within and based upon specific public and elite[55] knowledge about the site.

Spatial images usually express the spatial imagination of the group that holds the privilege of placement, which is commonly a political, religious or economic elite. Although the consumers of a place are unaware of these categories, discrepancies between spatial image and imagination are relevant for all of them.[56] Hence, these are appropriate terms to highlight the cultural frictions in sacred sites after reconfigurations have occurred. I use them to study the factors that may cause a sacred site to change[57] its identity.

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53   Cf. Löw 2001, p. 163–67, 194.

54   Cf. Löw 2001, pp. 15–16.

55   Cf. Knott 2005, p. 26.

56   Cf. Löw 2001, p. 132.

57   In 2013, Michael Guggenheim used actor-network theory to interpret buildings as actants stabilized by architect-controlled networks. Although his view that sacred architecture's

1.3   Ideology Across Borders

Different ideologies have specific ideas about the relationship between spatial communication and power. How can they transfer these ideas beyond their realm of origin into new cultural contexts and who is interested in transferring them?

In a globalized world, humanity has become more mobile than ever before and natural borders are easily transcended. This is not as uniquely modern as it is commonly thought to be. Cultural change was not solely connected to people's migrations, it also occurred due to the exchange of goods or due to material interventions. This insight of the recent decades has changed our understanding about the connectedness of ideas across various borders.[58] Terms like transregionalism, transculturalism and transnationalism, all of which are rooted in the concept of translocalism, aim to describe such (non-)human cross-border movement.

Translocalism principally describes the interaction between people from at least two spots, like from at least two cities or countries; or between a profane to a spiritual place or from male spaces to female spaces. In the moment that communication is established, the participants gain access to the affects and past interactions pertaining to both spots; this initiates a flow of ideas and goods that substantiate the 'trans-' aspect. Goods and communication transcend the body's physical limitations and create networks of *material places* which are shared by different groups, whose transferred and shared experiences constitute the *metaphysical translocal space*. Hence, all these trans-concepts track the transfer of experienced culture. What is inherently experiential about translocalism is the awareness that something that is in one place and belongs to this place feels simultaneously like it belongs to another.[59] This discrepancy between belonging 'here' and 'there' often arouses the desire to find or create

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agency is limited to outside classification cannot be upheld, his research on the changing identities of sacred sites has raised the visibility of the ontological features of architecture. Cf. Guggenheim 2013, p. 445, 462.

58   Cf. Middell 2019, pp. 1–3.

59   Cf. Low 2017, pp. 174, 179–80.

something familiar; this commonly causes interventions into local material compositions. These interventions create physical points of identification that may redistribute ideas which have originated elsewhere. Such cultural exchange can grow into hybridity, from which a new dominant culture and possibly a new political supremacy may arise. While translocalism describes connecting points in close proximity to each other, certain factors determine if further development into transregionalism and transculturalism occurs. These are the accessibility of the involved places, their relevance to various stakeholders, the speed of communication and the options for resource exchange. All of these affect the transformative effects[60] that a transferred culture may have on the target region.

Transregionalism refers to multidirectional cultural, political, and economic networks that span across various kinds of borders in increasing distance from their place of origin. Transregional networks are created, e.g., by proselytizing religions, the administrative units of expanding states and long-distance merchants. Aside from the latter, these *transregional authorities* seek not only material gain, but they also try to fulfil either religious duties or demands for legitimacy by gaining local authority to expand their spheres of influence.

If ideas are disseminated beyond their — possibly quite considerable — original cultural sphere, they become transcultural. The world was not static before the 'Colonial Age' of the European states, and colonial efforts were not rare.[61] When people moved or were moved, their way of life did not abruptly end at the often arbitrarily defined frontiers of states. On the contrary, they often proved to be even more consistent over the millennia than such borders.[62] Some migrants made only temporary trips, like merchants and seasonal workers. Others stayed at their destinations. There, they either created enclaves — areas of intense transcultural communication whose peripheries were prone to tensions — or merged with the local population. Although the

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60 Cf. Low 2017, pp. 175–76.

61 A great endeavor to demonstrate this and China's historical transculturalities is found in Gentz, Joachim. *China and the World — the World and China. Volume I. Transcultural Perspectives on Pre-modern China.* Gossenberg: OSTASIEN Verlag, 2019.

62 Cf. Welsch 2001, p. 68.

migrants might lose some of their original cultural traits during such blending, they did not vanish and their habits and ideas continued to affect the local culture. If the effect of experienced contact is that both cultures change, then some degree of hybridity must be expected for all territories that receive outside influence. However, in the starting areas as well as in the destination areas, there are those who define themselves as representatives and protectors of their culture — these are usually the political and religious elites. They have to develop mechanisms to either promote or inhibit hybridization, depending on its accordance to their own convictions. The reason for this is that in transregionalism, the different spots are still considered 'neighbors' — but transculturalism describes the interaction with 'The Other'.[63] Transculturalism often results from processes of centralization where satellite networks more or less neutrally transcend political borders but hold connections to the original center. This entangles the involved cultures in power negotiations. The need to defend and extend dominance in transculturalism means that the stakes are much higher than in transregionalism. A transregional political authority may *expand* beyond cultural borders by slowly integrating peripheral members of the network into a centralized regime, but the *transcultural state* tends to subdue and *colonize* foreign cultures. Thus, while transculturalism may be able to create new forms of public culture, in negotiating transregional and local ideas, it enforces rather than dismantles notions of state territoriality.[64] Although this might lead to the creation of new states and borders, there are factors which influence the success of transregional and transcultural expansions. One of them is the degree of ideology transfer.

Cultural Dominance and Ideology Transfer

Cultural dominance describes the concept of one culture having the interpretative privilege within a certain territory. To have the interpretative privilege hypothetically constitutes the right to keep the world ordered in accordance to

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63   The Other, and 'othering' are post-colonial studies terms coined by Gayatari Spivak. They refer to the process whereby someone attributes negative characteristics to others to distinguish themselves. See: Spivak, Gayatari C. "The Rani of Simur. An Essay in Reading the Archives" *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 247–272.

64   Cf. Low 2017, p. 178–80.

one's ideology. The dominant culture is supposed to serve as a basis for everyday life and institutions, but there also exist various cultural groups subjected to the dominant one. Authoritarian groups may attempt to extend their cultural dominance transculturally and start to oppress, annex, and integrate other cultural groups that they encounter. Groups in the process of subjugation adopt content from the expanding culture. This creates hybrid cultures which form a satellite system around the expanding one. If there is hardly any difference left between expanding and subjected cultures, then the expanding culture has achieved cultural dominance. Institutions of public knowledge now start to distribute its established cultural codes and spatial hierarchies to solidify them into norms. However, this first requires substantial *ideology transfer*.[65] In this book, I refer specifically to the transfer of collective ideology, which is commonly offered and modified by institutional groups of religious or political nature, by families or educational systems. Ideology transfer is the intentional sharing of ideology with the aim to disseminate it and to integrate others into one's own group. Basically, it is meant to turn *The Other* into *The Same.* The precondition is that the initiating group collective has accepted their ideology as true.

The plan to actively disseminate ideology may evolve out of a sense of mission, which is usually the case for politicians and knowledge elites — including religious elites. Because of their authoritative status, the process of sharing their ideological ideas already leads the targeted persons to question their own personal identity, to negotiate what is known with what is learned. People whose life is not dedicated to ideology transfer, like settlers, craftsmen, and merchants, may transfer ideology passively through presence and imitation, by performance or casual communication.

Ideology transfer initiates ideological change if enough people accept the offered ideology, but this process may change the ideology's content. This is the greatest challenge for the active transmitters of ideology. On the one hand, they do not want such change to take place because they already assume their ide-

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65 A study on the transmission of restrictive and relaxed ideology is found in: Harrison, Kevin, and Tony Boyd, eds. "The role of ideology in politics and society". In *Understanding political ideas and movements*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526137951.00011

ology to be absolutely correct. On the other hand, strong differences between the transferrers and their targeted groups may lead to mutual othering which would impede any further transfer. They thus need to conduct ideology transfer with certain tactics to ensure the successful transmission of authentic content. However, so far, there has been a lack of adequate methodology to study such tactics.[66] There are many ideas about the intentions of ideology transfer, but the factors affecting its success or failure have been neglected in research. One reason might be that the Neo-Marxist critique of ideology used to view the individual person passively, like an empty vessel.[67] In recent years, scholars have realized that the recipients of cultural media are active agents in their cognitive processes[68] and this has led to new vocabulary about the "consumption" of media. Similar to the consumption of food, it describes the active act of putting ideas into oneself, which also encompasses the processing, changing, and reproducing of internalized and adjusted content. This is the reason why I refer to those who directly or indirectly perceive architectural compositions as 'consumers.' With the backdrop of this conceptual change, Knott and Lee (2018) published a summary of a systematic approach on ideology transfer which describes, based on economic concepts developed by Robert Cialdini, the strategies that political and religious organizations use to achieve ideology transfer. The prospects of these tactics depend on the skill and appeal of their presentation.[69]

- reciprocation (charity followed by coercion)
- consistency (grand promises)
- scarcity (e.g., of access to paradise)
- liking ('one-upping' of existent cultural offers)
- authority
- social validation
- patronage
- public acclamation

66   Cf. Knott and Lee 2020, pp. 6, 9, 30–31.
67   Cf. Lee and Knott 2018, p. 10.
68   Cf. Mellmann 2014, p. 80.
69   Cf. Lee and Knott 2018, pp. 9–11.

The incentives required to convince the audience of their ideology relate, e.g., to religious authorities who offer healing or protection from evil and calamity, or to political authorities that protect the population from physical dangers, pacify and expand the territory, and try to provide prosperity. If both the offered ideology and the local ideology provide attractive incentives, the physical means of the transregional authorities — usually those with the larger army — will contribute to subversive scenarios where the adherence to one ideology is feigned. Although threats of violence are certainly effective, they are unsustainable in the long-term, so if the information about the offered ideology remains low and the incentives as well, the targeted people will ultimately reject it. Even if there are sufficient incentives, those confronted with a new ideology seek to adjust it to their own needs. Hybridizations are thus the most common result of ideology transfers in relation to successful expansions. Comprehensive cultural dominance has been rather the exception to the rule.

Mellman sees experientiality as an essential factor for successful ideology transfer.[70] Therefore, transregional authorities have the objective to make the offered ideology experiential in order to avoid the gatekeeping of the local elites who consider themselves as protectors of their own culture. Certain spatial settings are capable of recreating human experiences. They evoke mimetic reproduction among those who consume these settings. This creates points of mutual identification that make the offered ideology more approachable and relevant. Only with a sufficient level of experientiality can the information held within cultural media create a mental representation of the referenced ideology within its consumers and complement their individual belief systems. Regarding the topic of spatiality, these problems will be further investigated in Chapter II.

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70   Cf. Mellmann 2014, pp. 80, 83, 89.

1.4   Transregional Rule in the Sinosphere

This section outlines some principles of transregional rule and integration before leading over to a consideration of the southern expansion trends of the Chinese Empire.

Transregional rule is established if the influence of an authoritative political community grows beyond the extent of a city state. For this book, further mentions of 'state' will refer to such political communities with transregional rule that enforce the fulfillment of representative, administrative and lawmaking tasks under the guidance of a legitimated government. This reduced definition is meant to avoid the ahistorical, Western-centric conjuring of a strict separation between political and cultural units.[71]

The idea of transregional rule relies on the principle of centralization. On a global scale, authoritarian power relies mostly upon concentrated infrastructure and the provision of tight administrative surveillance. Since water transport and water architecture naturally tend to centralize, a well-organized system of water infrastructure facilitates the centralization of political states. It ensures a surplus of water, which can spur the development of complex cultures and has been a significant factor for the transition to a lifestyle of agriculture and settlements with stratified societies. In the early phases of centralization and expansion, collective actions like the maintenance of streets, canals, and dikes served as the primary medium of integration.[72] In this sense, water culture is related to state building.

The center of a centralized state wields interpretative privilege and social authority. However, the power over its claimed territory is limited by factors like distance and accessibility. It is crucial that the central state is able to dispatch emergency relief or military interventions quickly, otherwise the government's reputation will be tarnished. In consequence, strong sovereignty in the

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71   A detailed treatise can be found in Gottowik, Volker. "Transnational, Translocal, Transcultural: Some Remarks on the Relations Between Hindu-Balinese and Ethnic Chinese in Bali." *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 25, No. 2 (2010): 178–212.

72   Cf. Wenzlhuemer, Roland. "The Role of Infrastructure in Transregional Ventures." In *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*, edited by Matthias Middell, 252–258. New York: Routledge, 2019, p. 253.

pre-modern era was often limited to strictly controlled areas near the capital or in economically relevant regions. The power of the center waned in concentric waves towards the limits of its territory, Scott calls this the *friction of distance*.[73] Over time, economic favoritism and the lack of communication created gaps between well-integrated regions and those isolated by mountains, rivers, and other environmental obstacles. The central state considered the latter peripheral. However, it is a still common bias[74] to think that the peripheries were areas of non-government. Such assumptions usually result from source studies, e.g., because historical Chinese authors depicted them in that manner. In fact, such regions could themselves be central for competing cultural groups [V.4.], economic associations [S.1.], [V.4.2.], or religions [V.1.], [V.5.], [V.6.2.], [S.3.3.].

In history, it has not been rare for an expanding state to establish political dominance in a conquered territory without the means to assert cultural dominance. Such situations required ideology transfer to introduce the culture of the new political leaders in order to create cultural coherence and to stabilize the situation. Nevertheless, the Chinese Empire rarely cared about the cultural integration of conquered territories and tended to let them fester in a liminal status for decades, even centuries. The enduring ideological differences perpetuated cultural friction and hampered integration. Such territories turned into peripheries not only because of their location but also due to their cultural difference. Therefore, it was a recurring issue of Chinese history that such culturally distinctive peripheries challenged the sovereignty of the Chinese Empire and possibly destabilized its transregional power.

As representatives of the alleged superiority of the Chinese Empire, civil officials had to transfer imperial ideology to the people whom they administered. In the peripheral territories, officials were therefore held to higher standards in their representation of the orthodox lifestyle than, say, the settlers. However, if the annexed areas were underdeveloped, the center was continuously underrepresented and failed to present imperial ideology to its best advantage. Lackluster communication to the capital and unreliable supplies forced the officials and settlers to connect to their new environment and to learn local

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73   Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 43–61; regarding wetlands, pp. 162–174.

74   Cf. Flad and Chen 2013, pp. 2–4 and Scott 2009, pp. 7, 11–13, 41.

behaviors in order to ensure their own survival. Transcultural communities emerged, consisting of the indigenous — who were more or less left to themselves — and the Chinese officials and settlers who were dependent upon them. They developed strong leadership skills around local ideologies which enabled them to rapidly reform local political entities while building resistance against the Empire.

Imperial ideology had to serve as an anchor for the Chinese Empire to avoid precisely such scenarios. A transferred imperial ideology initiated the creation of new infrastructures and strengthened ties to the center, making the annexed territory more relevant until mutual identification was achieved. This was a double-edged sword, as the central state's sudden cultural pressures would force local populations to either abandon their identities in order to gain central state benefits, or provoke them into subversive or violent measures to defend themselves. The representatives of the central state could hardly imagine what social values the 'peripheral' cultural groups (who were so different from themselves) might have. They solely relied on the information from the state propagandistic texts of their peers, which left them uncertain about how measures to promote imperial ideology would be received. Eventually, they realized that successful ideology transfer relied on effective *localization* — that is, the 'dialectical' outcome of adapting to pre-existing patterns (and sites) while simultaneously incorporating them into their own ideology.[75] If the central state's thinking became part of an identity that *belonged* to the local, then it would be constantly present and always remain relevant even if the military and civil personnel were understaffed.

Chinese Cultural Imperialism

Whenever the Chinese imperial government decided to conquer another region, their justification was the need to 'civilize' the inhabitants with their own superior culture. The subjected populations were supposed to view it as a blessing.[76] This is called *cultural imperialism*, the careful construction of a social identity, associated with a controlled territory, placed into a higher hierarchical

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75   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 110.
76   Cf. Zhao Suisheng 2004, p. 41.

position vis-à-vis other cultures. At the root of cultural imperialism is the assumption of moral superiority over everyone else,[77] which applies especially to the Confucian ideology of the Chinese Empire.[78] Chinese historical documents are full of stories about local officials who had to repeatedly teach the 'barbarians' basic cultural techniques, because only some, but by no means all of the 'inferior' people were considered teachable. After all, the civilizing narrative *needed* antagonists to uphold its legitimating aspects.[79]

Although the civilizing narrative was essential for imperial legitimation, it was commonly neglected during the southern and southwestern expansions. The Chinese often used indigenous structures for lower-ranking government positions because it was too arduous to establish imperial seats of government in these areas. Without a realistic threat of intervention, the indigenous officials severely diverged from Chinese cultural ideals.[80] Some areas spent centuries under merely nominal Chinese suzerainty and economic exploitation before an assimilation process was initiated. This could happen to put an end to ceaseless uprisings, to secure new trade routes, or if the semi-integrated area was meant to be used as a stepping stone for further conquests. Indigenous and hybrid leaders willingly engaged in the assimilation process if it bolstered their power while they were protected under a central state system that they did not actually represent. The Chinese officials were aware of this, just as they were aware of the need to regularly communicate with the center — without actually being able to do so. They also realized that violence was counterproductive yet had to repeatedly caution their peers about acts of cruelty against the indigenous.[81] The civilizing narrative failed them, so they developed spatial strategies.

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77   Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 98, 116–17.

78   Regarding the Chinese imperial expansion and identity negotiation, see: Pines, Yuri. "Beasts or humans: Pre-Imperial origins of Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy". In Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World, edited by Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, 59–102. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

79   "Cooked" and "raw" 'barbarians', cf. Fiskesjö 1999, especially pp. 149–153.

80   Cf. Brook 1985, pp. 3–4.

81   Cf. Wiens 1954, p. 219.

Ruth Mostern provides the example of a Song dynastic official[82] who stresses that administrators needed to be aware of the causes of unrest in their territory and the connections between its 'bandits'. For these potential rebels would undermine the empire's power if they were able to communicate and collaborate. The official's mention of 'bandit marriages' implies that he was writing about adversary local authorities. He also warns against the premature combination of new territories into greater administrative units. This would affect the military-subject ratio and lead to a loss of control as uprisings could no longer be subdued by the now insufficient troops. If the troops were supplemented with untrained conscripts, their loyalty would be questionable at best, and this would contribute to the loss of political dominance over the territory. This is proof that there was a discourse about the integration of annexed territories, ideology transfer and the handling of resistance. Chapter VI will pick up here to show how this was exercised in the context of Sichuan and Vietnam.

In the long-term, the civilizing narrative of the Chinese Empire was a success story of territory acquisition that was mimicked by many other political entities who also wanted to expand their territories, like the Burmese, Siamese, Tibetans, and Vietnamese.[83] Furthermore, indigenous leaders in the annexed peripheries between India and China appropriated the prestigious Chinese and Indian regalia, clothes, titles, ceremonies, sacred architecture and even genealogical claims. Acquiring objects of the transregional rulers was thought to raise the appearance and thus the status of their political power.[84] The Chinese Empire welcomed this despite the potential empowering of local rulers because the exchange of goods also supported the transfer of ideology to some

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82   Cf. Mostern 2011, pp. 4–5.

83   Cf. Han Dongyu 韓東育. "The Rise and Fall of the Hua-Yi System in East Asia." J*ournal of Chinese Humanities* 5 (2019): 200–214; Phillips, Andrew. "Contesting the Confucian Peace: Civilization, Barbarism and International Hierarchy in East Asia." European Journal of International Relations 24, no. 4 (December 2018): 740–64. The conflicts caused by the civilizing narratives of the Chinese and Vietnamese in relation to each other are studied in Han Xiaorong. "How Special has the Special Relationship between China and Vietnam been? A Re-examination of Three Aspects of Sino-Vietnamese Relations: the Chinese Model, the Chinese World Order, and Conflict Management." *Occasional Paper* 33 (2016): 1–22. https://www.southeastasianstudies.uni-freiburg.de/documents/occasional-paper/op33.pdf

84   Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 113–114.

degree. The Vietnamese Empire emulated this tradition perfectly (although with less success) when the Vietnamese began to encroach on the territories of highland ethnic groups and their southern neighbors. The Chinese and Vietnamese interactions with their own perceived peripheries left architecture-shaped traces in the environment; examples of this are studied in the Appendix [V.4.–6.], [S.3.].

1.5   When Religions Expand

This section treats the expansion of religion, the dynamics between political and religious authorities and the transregional spread of Confucianism and Buddhism.Religions grow very easily by word of mouth. This is the most basic degree of ideology transfer between an individual who convinces their family and friends within their average sphere of mobility. Many local and translocal religions are tied to traits of their original territory and thus lack the incentive to spread further. However, this does not mean that they are more tolerant or less interested in proselytizing. Foreigners may still be expected to acculturate.

Religions which turn transcultural do not typically tie their content to a specific area and have often achieved a high level of organization and mobility. This does not mean that there is an evolutionary process between local and transregional religions, like it was often assumed in colonial writing.[85] The difference in scope is rather a result of dissimilar aims and occasionally, there were factors that could turn local religions transregional, or even transcultural, as well. One such determinant is the introduction of a religious geography that needs to be realized (i.e., Mount Meru or Jerusalem).[86] Another is the increasing urge to proselytize, which is an especially strong and voluntary incentive

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85   Cf. Jahnel 2019, p. 448

86   A history of religious geographies has been previously expounded in Kong, Lily. "Geography and religion: Trends and prospects." *Progress in Human Geography* 14, no. 3 (1990): 355–371. Methods for their study are presented in Kong, Lily. "Mapping 'New' Geographies of Religion: Politics and Poetics in Modernity." *Progress in Human Geography* 25, no. 2 (2001): 211–233.

that makes people penetrate the borders of foreign states and cultures.[87] A third factor are the institutional pressures and persecutions that drive refugees to flee and settle in places far away from their homeland.[88] Religions which expand into new territories face similar challenges to transregional states, especially if they have the goal of proselytizing. Kong and Woods identified proselytizing as one of the main causes for religious conflict because it necessarily weakens one group in favor of another.[89] If the missionaries are too harsh in their proselytizing, converts feign conversion or distort religious content with local religious ideas. They thus have to transfer ideology sustainably. This suggests the fourth factor for the transregional spread of religions: that the most educated religious specialists must be free to travel.[90] They are responsible for the dissemination of religious narratives, which strongly depends upon their charisma.

Although missionaries were commonly able to cross political borders without a military invasion, from as soon as they started to proselytize, they were held against higher moral standards and had to prove their worth. To ensure the success of their missionaries, transregional religions trained them in valuable skills as well as in rhetoric. The linear or concentrical spread of religions was hence accompanied by specialized knowledge[91] about administration, medicine, literature, or technology. This was an important factor to gain acceptance, localization, and support for the expanding religion. Tweed's model of religious hydrodynamics[92] is a recent approach in the religious stud-

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87   An example: Judaism may be widespread due to the Jewish diaspora, but conversion is not intended in the orthodox schools, so historically, Judaism has not had a strong sense of mission. Christianity and Islam do have a strong sense of mission, reflected by the number of their followers across various ethnicities and nations.

88   This has been studied via the Actor-Network Theory (cf. Vásquez 2019, p. 434) and via the migration studies (cf. Baumann, Martin "Migration, Diaspora, and Religion." In Middell 2019, pp. 456–63).

89   Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, pp. 52–53.

90   For example, in north Indian Brahmanism, Brahmins were not allowed to travel far by sea due to the "ocean taboo" (*sagara ullanghana*), see the second Baudhāyana sutra (~6th century) 1:2.2 and 1:51.

91   Cf. Kleine and Clart 2019, p. 425.

92   Cf. Tweed, Thomas A. *Crossing and Dwelling: a theory of religion.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, pp. 60–63.

ies of spatiality that, in a similar way, compares the spread and transcultural contacts of religion with cultural confluences, flows and currents. Such flows leave traces in time and space by transforming people, places, public knowledge, and political systems.

Missionaries are transregionally acting agents of their religion[93] and in a powerful position to modify its representation. They can advertise their faith by highlighting advantages or similarities and even temporarily integrate agreeable traits of the local religions, while glossing over uncomfortable rules, like monastic codices. Creating networks of container deities who absorbed numerous local deities was another strategy that allowed them to superficially resolve some of the cultural frictions that their presence caused. They were ultimately intended to become consolidating deities (see Chapter VII) who had the task to prepare a target area for the supremacy of a transregional religion. However, container deities also helped less individualized or nameless deities to gain a greater set of ritual options. Moreover, they themselves could become integrated into a set of standardized mythologies and supplemented with local context (see the Đạo Mẫu religious system [V.4.]). The presence of missionaries hence prompted, according to the local situation, the emergence of new subversive, hybridized or revitalized religious groups.

Mutual Ties Between Political and Religious Authorities

While religions might have been able to spread transregionally on their own, collaboration with political authorities was preferred whenever possible. It offered security, enabled quicker and broader dissemination, and provided access to many more resources.[94] What the political authorities desired in return was usually a functional legitimation for the government and its ruler. After all, otherworldly legitimation is rather hard to contest and the trustworthiness of religious specialists was protected by social and military measures. If the collaboration between religious and worldly authorities went well, the expansion of joined realms of authority ensured the timely cultural integration of the annexed territories. This mutually beneficial dynamic continued globally for

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93   Cf. Jahnel 2019, p. 449.
94   Cf. Knott 2005, p. 27.

millennia — and in many world regions still continues to this day. Therefore, it makes little sense to view religious and political expansions separately.[95] Religious and worldly power could be conjoined in one person or distributed among the representatives of both, with one side determining how life should be lived and the other controlling these lives.[96] Such representatives could be equals or hierarchically dependent upon each other, sparking ongoing discourse about the extent of power that each was allowed to wield.[97]

Throughout history, worldly rulers have had to remain vigilant about challengers to their authority. Although they needed a class of loyal warriors, military leaders also posed the greatest threat to the ruler's autonomy in terms of popularity and power. The relationship with religious authorities had similar downsides — religious specialists could use their exclusive access to the transcendental sources of religious legitimation to either exploit the political patronage until the state was financially destabilized, or they could even use it to take over the entire government. Indigenous religions are anchored in the local environment, which enables them to forge very stable collaborations with the governments of their homeland. However, this trait also makes it easier for them to challenge the sovereignty of the worldly ruler, especially if there is no competition to them. One of the best examples is the way that the principle of *da'wah* "invitation" is used in Saudi Arabia. Since the eighteenth century, the Saudi rulers have depicted themselves as the protectors of Wahhabi Islam to legitimize their power. However, the unceasing systematic propagation of Wahhabi ideology and the building of a religious state became an obligation against the threat of losing "domestic legitimacy."[98] This situation creates con-

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95   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, p. 371.

96   Hammond and Machacek 2009, pp. 391–2. More details can be found in: Turner, Bryan S. "Religion and Politics: Nationalism, Globalisation and Empire." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34, no. 2 (2006): 209–224.

97   In some situations, rulers coerced religions into state building missions and thoroughly institutionalized, bureaucratized, rationalized and even deritualized them. Cf. Gauthier 2017, p. 449.

98   It was originally meant to unite the Arabian Peninsula but is now utilized to mark territory for Wahhabism far beyond the borders of the Saudi Arabian state. While the territory of the more than seventy embassies built since the 1980s has not been annexed, the religious attachés stationed there are tasked to build mosques that serve as external reservoirs for

straints that can endanger other sources of legitimacy or lead to the avoidance of necessary social and economic reforms.

Worldly rulers have few options to counterbalance such threats. For example, they can emphasize other sources of legitimacy and attend to social needs, as it was the case with the Sinitic promise of prosperity[99] which is still one of China's main legitimatory propositions.

If multiple religions compete for the state's patronage, though, this creates internal pressure to keep good relations to the government to secure donations and protection, because if the ruler changed their favored religion, these would be redistributed to the competitor.

Local and translocal indigenous religions suffer the most if the state abandons them to the benefit of transregional ones because they seldom have other means of support. This abandonment may also expose them to persecution. Although some historical rulers attempted to accommodate all religions in their realm, many favored one over others and granted it all necessary means to suppress its competition. This enables the government to justify military actions inside and outside the state by citing the religious legitimation of defending 'spiritual purity.' Conversely, rulers are incentivized to persecute their favored religion's competitors to protect their means of legitimation. Even if such persecutions remain superficial,[100] becoming part of the state knowledge elite and gaining interpretative privilege allows religious representatives to reshape historical narratives in their favor.

Historically, local religious authorities had to create protective, subversive networks in the anticipation of such events. However, even if measures of religious resistance served primarily in the defense against oppression, they also

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Saudi Arabian legitimacy. Cf. Lacey, Robert. Inside the Kingdom. Kings, clerics, modernists, terrorists, and the struggle for Saudi Arabia. New York: Penguin Books, 2009, pp. 10–11, 95 and House, Karen Elliot. *On Saudi Arabia. Its people, past, religion, fault lines and future.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. p. 234

99 Cf. Mubarak, Ali "Religion and Politics: Integration, Separation and Conflict. Relations to power of religion and Politics." Lahore, 2009. *irenees.net.* Accessed 18 December 2020. http://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-884_en.html and Perry, Elizabeth J. "Chinese conceptions of "rights": From Mencius to Mao—and now." *Perspectives on Politics* 6, no. 1 (2008): 37–50.

100 Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 372–74.

had the potential to be weaponized in a struggle for political dominance. It posed a great problem to a ruler if the religion that legitimized them defected in favor of charismatic leaders with political ambitions. This could prompt even peaceful communities to spontaneously transform into rebels. The state thus had a valid interest in suppressing uncontrolled religious communities to avoid such developments. This made transregional religions particularly attractive allies for expanding states that had to deal with increasingly diverse cultural geographies. They already had their own networks and effective methods of ideology transfer, and their higher level of organization made them more visible and easier to control. All they needed to do in exchange for financial support, social privileges and possible political participation was to add some additional, formal political ideology to their own.

Imperial Religions

In China, there were many alternative transregional religions to choose from. Although Confucianism was the state ideology for most of written Chinese history,[101] the imperial cult was not actually bound to any particular religion. From what we know, the imperial cult was a collection of ideas, values and rites considered more sophisticated than others, and for this reason they were cherished and preserved. This was a matter of continuous ritualism which had not been created by but sincerely enforced by Confucianism.[102] At the beginning of the Common Era, religious criticism and atheism were feasible options and the state held no specific grudge against popular religions either. Their rites were deemed useful if they kept the people calm, trained them in observing rites and tradition, and cultivated a sense of dependence on superior powers and the submission under authority.[103] With the same demands, leaders accepted or abandoned Buddhist or Daoist support at their convenience.

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101   Cf. Bell, Daniel A. "Political Legitimacy in China: A Confucian Approach." In *East Asian Perspectives on Political Legitimacy: Bridging the Empirical-Normative Divide*, edited by Joseph Chan, Doh Chull Shin and Melissa S. Williams, 78–106. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. doi:10.1017/9781316466896.005

102   Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, pp. 3–4 and cf. Wilson, Thomas A. "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius." *History of Religions* 41, no. 3 (2002): 251–287.

103   Cf. Day 1969, p. 12, 189.

From the perspective of endemic religions, the emperor stood at the top of the spiritual and worldly hierarchy. Nevertheless, the Mandate of Heaven that provided the emperor's transcendental legitimation was fickle. Heaven easily chose new champions and provided them with the very ability to righteously take the throne. Challengers to the emperor's throne were either rebels (if commoners) or usurpers (if from the elite level). They created songs and stories about their miraculous births, heroic deeds, about their rule being predestined or that they had been chosen by supernatural patrons.[104] They would unite the public in their cause and assumed the role of communicating the will of the gods on earth — these were originally duties of the emperor. Other responsibilities of the Chinese emperors included surveying the land without traveling too much; to expand the realm while maintaining harmony within it, and to foster prosperity while preserving the moral values and virtues of the people — particularly of their officials. The emperors may have communicated with Heaven but was solely responsible if the people were not sufficiently moral. In addition, they had to take care of administrative tasks that could have both technological and spiritual aspects, like the provision of infrastructure and water management.[105]

The imperial government was free to choose between religious offers, but the religions in China could also choose to align with political rivals of other ethnic groups and provide legitimation for them.[106] Once such rivals ascended the throne, their alliance with the chosen religion mandated their support and propagation of it, irrespective of potential conflicts.

The potential problems that Buddhism had in China were its foreign heritage, asceticism, monastic orders, the removal of women from their domestic duties, its rapid growth and economic influence. All of such had previously led to constant conflicts with the Confucian social orders.[107] Over the course of

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104　Cf. Perry 2002, p. IX; Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 9.

105　Cf. Mote 1999, pp. 99–101, 574. An extensive study of the emperor's duties is found in: Chün-chieh Huang. *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994.

106　Cf. Wang Jinping. "Daoists, the Imperial Cult of Sage-Kings, and Mongol Rule." *T'oung Pao* 106, no. 3–4 (2020): 309–357.

107　Cf. Seiwert and Ma Xisha 2003, pp. 107 (women), 120, 152–54, 230.

Chinese history, Buddhism and Confucianism remained competitors for the government's favor. However, they also influenced each other thoroughly[108] and created new perspectives on both sides. In other societies of the Sinosphere, Buddhism eventually left this competition with greater success,[109] but in China, Confucianism solidified its position as the dominant state ideology.

Transregional Confucianism

Centuries after the lifetime of Confucius (551—479 BCE), the government of the early Han dynasty came to rest on the shoulders of Confucian scholars. Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 (179—104 BCE) expansion of Confucianism with the ideas of *yinyang* 陰陽 and the *wuxing* 五行 ['Five Phases'] had contributed to its rise as the state doctrine and diminished the significance of other state religions for the imperial cult ever since.[110] The Confucians asserted the already ancient idea that the ruler's position was sanctioned by *tian* 天 ['Heaven'] and tied this right to rule to his moral behavior.[111] However, it was the Confucians who defined what constituted moral behavior, and they justified this right with their self-proclaimed role as keepers of the ancient traditions.

China's various geographic conditions gave rise to a vast variety of cultures specialized to their unique environments. The encroaching imperial state reduced these to local cultures, but many of them have remained discernible. Kai Vogelsang asserts that the greatest challenge for the Chinese Empire was to govern such a heterogenous realm.[112] Confucian ethics hence stressed unity as the primary aim to stabilize the realm. However, unity was seldom enforced

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108   Cf. Vuong, Quan-Hoang, Quang-Khiem Bui and, Viet-Phuong La et al. "Cultural additivity: behavioural insights from the interaction of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism in Folktales." *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 143 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0189-2

109   Cf. Seiwert and Ma Xisha 2003, p. 98 and Yang C.K. 1961, pp. 205–08, 222. For further reading, see: Chün-chieh Huang. *The Debate and Confluence between Confucianism and Buddhism in East Asia: A Historical Overview.* Translated by Jan Vrhovski. Göttingen, V&R unipress, 2020.

110   Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, p. 115. The Wuxing is a world ordering system that relates the five elements of Han Chinese cosmology with five colors, five animals, five directions, …

111   Cf. Yang 1961, p. 179.

112   Vogelsang, Kai. *Geschichte Chinas*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 2013.

down to the local level, so peace and harmony became alternative values to be upheld. The political climate of the Song dynasties (960—1279) saw the Neo-Confucians rebuild Confucian ideology with their own ideas (and quite some of Buddhism). Their aim was to harmonize and strengthen the central state based on a new, more efficient state orthodoxy[113] which they contrasted with 'heterodoxies' (*yiduan* 異端). Heterodoxies combined Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist elements, venerated zoomorphic, sexualized, or female[114] deities in combination with 'undignified', joyous, or bloody rituals.

The Neo-Confucians copied many of the Buddhist and Daoist tactics of site reconfiguration because they were interested in creating their own network of sacred sites.[115] They also more frequently occupied and intervened in predominantly Buddhist and Daoist sites to convert them into Neo-Confucian academies. They perceived Buddhism as a 'foreign' religion that endangered Chinese morality, but regional cults were also regarded as threats because they could lead to decentralization. In order to avoid rebellions, though, the persecutions they demanded were rarely enforced.[116] Instead, official documents usually glossed over such cults and thus concealed them in the historical narrative (see Chapter IV). Because the Confucians believed in the superior civility of the *Chinese*, they did not originally intend to actively spread their ideology transculturally. Their initial intention was simply to conquer other cultures, to subject and assimilate them. However, faced with the problem of acculturation, Confucianism was repeatedly transfigured until alternative emperors emerged, who, according to the original conception of the Confucian worldview, should not exist.[117] Thus, Confucianism only proselytized in the most abstract sense and was originally strictly limited by location.

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113   Cf. Yao Xinzhong 2000, pp. 96–114.

114   Cf. Davis 2001, p. 205–7, 214–16. A similar devaluation occurred in Buddhism, cf. Grünhagen, Céline. "The female body in early Buddhist literature" In *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23 (2011): 100–114. https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67383; cf. "The Rhetoric of Subordination", in: Faure 2003, pp. 55–90.

115   Cf. Robson 2012, p. 103.

116   Cf. Yang 1961, pp. 105, 136–37.

117   Cf. Yao Xinzhong 2000, pp. 115–138. Among the societies famous for Confucian emperors, Vietnam is often forgotten, an exception to that is: Richey, Jeffrey L. *Confucius in East Asia:*

The Buddhist Expansion

Buddhism became one of the most widespread transcultural Asian religions. Even when it was challenged by the expansion of Islam, Buddhism has remained as an important ideological basis for many Asian states and a significant social factor in others.[118] Today, Buddhism continues to influence Asian politics. [119] Although the relationship between governments and Theravāda Buddhism has been comprehensively studied for South and Southeast Asia, the relationship between governments and Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna Buddhism is mostly presented in individual studies. The existing overviews are a bit dated.[120]

Buddhism fulfils two of the prerequisites for transregional spread: it proselytizes and is not bound to specific sites in the area of its origin. Since the Buddha's spiritual presence can also be expressed in metaphysical space,[121] Buddhism was able to leave its homeland and confronted the religions of Central and East Asia early on, followed by the Hellenistic kingdoms to the west and Southeast Asia in the east.[122]

Buddhism evolved in a religious geography that was already highly competitive. Faced with Brahmanism, Jainism and various translocal religions, Buddhism developed strategies to ostracize, superscribe and conceal other religions to its own benefit. Additionally, Buddhism offered soteriological ideas in areas where most religions merely provided this-worldly salvation despite the suffering of groups like women and slaves. Freiberger and Kleine have defined three additional traits which helped Buddhism to expand transregionally:

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Confucianism's History in China, Korea, Japan and Viet Nam. Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2013.

118 Comprehensive and comparative groundwork with historical sources has been contributed by Moore, Matthew J. *Buddhism and Political Theory.* Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016. DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190465513.001.0001

119 Cf. Kawanami Hiroko. *Buddhism and the Political Process.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

120 Cf. Harris, Ian. *Buddhism, Power and Political Order.* London and New York: Routledge, 2007 and Pardue, Peter A. *Buddhism: A Historical Introduction to Buddhist Values and the Social and Political Forms They Have Assumed in Asia.* New York and London: Macmillan, 1971 as a historical example.

121 Cf. Robson 2012, p. 92.

122 Cf. Kleine and Clart 2019, p. 425.

A superiority complex (exclusivism), the recognition of non-Buddhist practices as unaccomplished but capable of integration (inclusivism), and the (temporary) acceptance of the claims of other religions, even if they were perceived as inferior (pluralism).[123]

The Buddhist denominations used different spatial tactics during their expansion of their networks, depending on the circumstances. Mahāyāna Buddhism often lacked the systemic patronage of government elites. For this reason, it began to offer more options for salvation to the laypeople. This required some openness towards the laypeople's religious practices and customs. To ensure its dissemination, Mahāyāna Buddhism thus had to use more mediative tactics like incorporation or amalgamation.[124] Theravāda Buddhism allied with governmental elites early on, so it had more opportunities to use aggressive tactics in its attempt to become a universal creed. Thus, it supported multiple Southeast Asian polities on their way to sovereign statehood. Although Theravāda scholars *did* occasionally incorporate local practices*,* the monarchs — dependent on Buddhist legitimation — persecuted monks and monasteries that deviated from their idea of orthodoxy and outlawed the incorporation of local practices. However, the Buddhist mission was an individualistic, pluralist movement without organized oversight. Hence, Buddhist groups did not require the security of state patronage to grow violent and attack other sites and communities.[125] In general, though, the most important method of Buddhist proselytizing was the idea of the "skill in means" *upāya/upāya-kaushalya* (Ch. *fangbian shanqiao* 方便善巧 or V. *phương tiện* 方便). This describes the acceptance of narratives and methods which the Buddhists considered imperfect, albeit deemed suitable if they slowly led people to enlightenment. However, *upāya* is a pejorative term, as the religions subjected to it were merely seen as devices to bring the 'superior' contents of Buddhism to people who were thought of as not yet capable of understanding it.[126]

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123   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 441–42, 466–67.

124   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 446–47.

125   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 466–69 and Robson 2012, p. 101.

126   Cf. Matsunaga, Daigan and Alicia. "The Concept of Upāya (万 便) in Mahāyāna Buddhist Philosophy" *Japanese Journal of Buddhist Studies* 1, no. 1 (1974): 51–72, pp. 67–69, 72. This

With increasing inter and intrareligious competition, the Buddhist campaigns for government support intensified. The clergy aimed to create a Buddhist cultural dominance under which other religions vanished. This was neither successful, nor were they able to keep indigenous ideas out. Instead, Buddhism received new content by interacting with local religions and in turn increasingly influenced them. The Buddhist expansion demonstrates that the idea of an authentic 'purity' of a religious tradition is an illusion. Religions are by nature fluid and if they interact and merge, this does not necessarily create a discernible 'newness.'[127] Terms like 'hybridity' or 'hybridized' only imply a sense of negativity or untruth from the perspective of ideologies concerned that their alleged superiority might be 'tarnished.' Objectively though, hybridity describes those religious traditions that emerge from cultural frictions and which are free to create their own values in the religious landscape.

The Buddhist Expansion into China

Buddhism came to China as a foreign religion, localized there[128] and thus formed Chinese Buddhism before turning into one of the strongest ideological forces of the realm.[129] In the early third century CE, the legitimacy of the Han dynasty as well as that of Confucianism was severely weakened. This weakness attracted millenarian religions, including those affiliated with Daoism and Buddhism. Buddhism's advantage was that it offered an eschatology *and* soteriology at once. The Daoist interpretation hastened the localization of Buddhism. For centuries, the relationship between the two was one of mutual learning and competition.

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was sometimes extended to other Buddhist groups as well, cf. Federman, Asaf. "Literal means and hidden meanings: a new analysis of skillful means" *Philosophy East and West.* 59, no. 2 (2009): 125–141. doi:10.1353/pew.0.0050.

127 Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, p. 447.

128 Cf. Zürcher 2007, pp. 43–159.

129 For further reading on the intrareligious history, see: Chün-fang Yü. *Chinese Buddhism: A Thematic History.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020. For further reading on the interreligious history, see: Zürcher, Erik. "Buddhism in a Pre-Modern Bureaucratic Empire: The Chinese Experience." *In Studies in the History of Buddhism*, edited by A. K. Narain, 401–411. Delhi, 1980.

After translation and localization, Buddhism had to gain government patronage. However, most Han Chinese dynasties required the Buddhists to subject themselves to the Heavenly Mandate system. Other dynasties, mostly those not ethnically Han Chinese, utilized the idea of the righteous *cakravartin* (Ch. *zhuanlunwang* 轉輪王) and thus became more dependent on Buddhism. Buddhist authors adapted local ideas and customs and even created new Chinese sutras to emphasize their benefit for the empire.[130] Countless books have been written about the conflicts between Buddhist and Confucian moral sensibilities or how Buddhist cosmology challenged the emperor's position.[131] The economic status of Buddhist monasteries as important employers, slave owners, landowners and investors was also offensive to the Confucians. Buddhists enjoyed tax privileges and thanks to their wealth, respectable political influence. However, the wealth was also distributed along their religious network and thus beyond political borders, i.e., the host countries' economy did not necessarily benefit from it. Finally, Buddhist visual material was also seen as a problem. Chinese Buddhist temple architecture had evolved from private to palace buildings with banners and bells that emulated symbols of imperial sovereignty.[132] This framed Buddhism as a competitor to Confucianism. Challenged by the pressure of hostile state officials, Buddhists built their temples with enormous haste and did not hesitate to occupy indigenous or Daoist sacred sites. Although the proscriptions of the Buddhist monastic codex (*Vinaya*) prohibited the destruction of sanctuaries belonging to other religions, Buddhism had already targeted pre-existing sites in India.[133] The Buddhists generally preferred to move along already established networks with socially relevant sites which, under Buddhist influence, switched their affiliations multiple times back and forth.

Robson relates some further strategies for the Buddhist localization in China: (1) the transposition or discovery of Buddha relics to/in China legitimized

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130   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, p. 114–116, 288–289, 375–376, 453.

131   For example: Fu, Charles Wei-hsun "Morality or Beyond: The Neo-Confucian Confrontation with Mahāyāna Buddhism." *Philosophy in East and West* 23, no. 3 (1973): 375–396.

132   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 381–382, 453.

133   Cf. Humphrey and Vitebsky 2002, p. 30; Cf. Robson 2012, p. 91.

the presence of Buddhism and allowed for the construction of new sites. (2) The discovery of Buddha foot or hand prints inscribed the landscape as Buddhist. (3) Natural markers of the Chinese landscape were interpreted as Buddhist hints regarding secret powers, plants, freshwater, constellations and miracles. (4) Names and categories were retained. Since Chinese Buddhists resided in government offices, their typical suffixes -*si* 寺, -*dian* 殿 or -*tang* 堂, came to designate Buddhist sites. Once a relationship between localized Buddhism and the government was established, sacred sites could be ordered to convert. Monks were commonly invited by the locals or local officials to settle at established sites of other religions, like in the Neijiang Shengshui-si [S.2.1.2.–II]. This created a Buddhist religious landscape within Chinese territory, the aggressiveness of the Buddhist expansion increased and so did the cases of (ineffective) backlash by local religions and Confucian officials.[134]

Oddly enough, Buddhism and Confucianism became transcultural in very different ways, but their occupation strategies and spatial reconfiguration tactics were not so different at all.

1.6 Architecture Beyond Borders — Temples as Territorial Markers

In the quest for cultural dominance, expanding transregional authorities face the challenge of asserting their presence in unfamiliar territories. It is not enough to merely spread narratives about their legitimacy, they must also establish tangible symbols of authority within the landscape itself. These symbols serve as enduring markers of their power and ensure that their narratives of legitimacy remain undistorted and unchallenged, even in the absence of constant surveillance. *They need to raise their visibility.* For ideology transfer, visibility is essential because it relates to the sense of identity.[135] A high degree of visibility thus facilitates the localization process and the successful integration of the local into the transregional realm or network. This section shows

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134   Cf. Robson 2012, pp. 91–104.

135   Cf. Tuan 1975, p. 159.

the reasons why it was important to the transregional authorities to control pre-existing sites.

Transregional elites sponsored eye-catching buildings and particularly sacred sites to find entry into the local people's minds. They needed to gain relevance among the general population, only then could they expect their support. However, new territories were no blank spaces. They were already imbued with architectural marks that reflected local ideologies. The transregional authorities had to appropriate such established sites to enforce the prevalence of the 'correct' ideology throughout the domain. The more transregional authorities encroached on a new territory, the more options they gained to occupy or to add relevant sites. Sacred sites, in particular, served as potent vehicles for ideological narratives. Thus, interventions in these sacred sites were prioritized for assimilation efforts, which was followed by the creation of supporting narratives. However, the insertion of new narratives into occupied sites required the manipulation of physical structures, site contents and related media. Despite the effort required, this process of spatial reconfiguration transformed previously arbitrary sites into potent territorial marks. But how did this work?

Sacred sites possess a high symbolic density to convey their ideological narratives, which gives them greater symbolical meaning than profane institutional sites. [136] Even if in some cultures the access to sacred sites may be restricted, the sight of sacred architecture still reaches all social strata. This reach allows them to serve as a nexus for the negotiation of worldviews. This trait is the reason for the high social relevance that sacred sites enjoy within the human topography. This relevance affects the experiential effects that they have on their consumers, which relate to the innate experientiality within the ensemble of sacred sites. Experientiality is a term introduced by Monika Fludernik in the context of narratology in 1996, who linked it to the concept of embodiment.[137] This connection implies that experientiality, i.e., the representation

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136   Cf. Humphrey and Vitebsky 2002, p. 31.

137   However, Fludernik recognized the direct connection between experientiality and embodiment, which "[…] evokes all the parameters of a real-life schema of existence which always has to be situated in a specific time and space frame, and the motivational and experiential aspects of human actionality likewise relate to the knowledge about one's physical presence in the world." When she writes that "All experience is therefore stored as emotionally charged

of human experience, is a constant presence within the spatial arrangement of sacred sites, as this conveys ideological narratives through the expression of emotionally charged memory. Sacred sites serve the construction of social memory because they can embody ideas of heritage. However, the heritage attributed to prestigious sacred sites may be as constructed as their spatial image: it is not necessarily true, but sufficiently persuasive[138] to be used to justify contemporary events. The significance that a sacred site has held in the past thus determines its meaning in the present.[139] This is ultimately why the elites who control society want to control the perception of sacred sites: they need to secure their legitimacy and social positions by dominating public *memory*.

Experientiality allows sacred sites to turn basic *spatial images* into greater *spatial imaginations* of institutional order. Hence, sacred sites visualize authority on an unchallengeable level and help to create a transregional authority's public identity. Sacred sites are therefore efficient territorial markers and intermediaries of ideology transfer because they convey ideologies through their mere presence.

Erecting a military camp on somebody else's territory is considered a major provocation: the act of placing institutional buildings to mark territory is a form of aggression. Sacred sites, however, are not initially tied to territorial ownership and are mostly perceived as inoffensive (mosques being a famous exception in the contemporary era[140]). This makes them a perfect medium to transfer ideology both transregionally and transculturally. As sacred sites are placed farther and farther from the limits of their sponsor's original territory, the sponsor's sphere of influence slowly expands. They give the religious staff attached to these sites the opportunity to spread their ideas in the vicinity to the target group and thus to inject their culture and ideology into a new setting. The

sacred architecture adds to this injection through the spatial image it presents. The consumers perceive and internalize the normative spatial imaginations presented by the spatial image that they experience and interact with. They carry their impressions of it beyond the site's limits and thereby contribute to the reproduction of the underlying ideology. This process is unconscious for consumers who are already entangled in the presented ideology. Consumers with a different ideological background, however, may notice this. Even so, their experience and evaluation of cultural codes is irreversibly affected (Chapter II).

The just right amount of convincing architecture can thus change the spatial social experience of a local culture and encourage it to conform to the desires of proselytizing religions and expanding states. As soon as the balance between followers of local ideologies and adherents to the transferred ideology tips in favor of the latter, cultural dominance is achieved and the expansion successful. However, if there are strong contradictions within the spatial image, the process of ideology reproduction becomes more noticeable to most consumers. They may feel discomfort and possibly start to question the narrative presented to them.

Religions claim to provide guidance towards what is right or wrong by reference to transcendence. According to Tim Cresswell, "moral geographies" describe the normative relationship between space and behavior and what is allowed to belong, when and where. This also applies to the microspace of sacred sites. Their configuration can be read like a map of one or multiple ideologies.[141] This means that expanding authorities must monopolize the occupied sacred sites to ensure that they reproduce the 'right' ideology. Ideally, they need to install a spatial concept that unapologetically defines what a 'correct' site looks like. Otherwise, the local followers will not notice undesired deviations from the standard. In reality, such standards are rarely sufficiently transferred into the material and usually collide with the spatial imaginations and rules of interaction that the local societies already possess.

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141 Cf. Cresswell, Tim. "Landscape and the Obliteration of Practice" In *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, edited by Kay Anderson et. al., 269–282. London: SAGE online edition, 2003. p. 281.

Spatial images serve as compelling indicators of cultural frictions whenever multiple religions, or a collaborating state and religion, express interest in the same site and can equally, although with distinct motivations, intervene into the site by reconfiguring various aspects of it. Even though different ideas about a site can be 'true' at the same time on a metaphysical level, the arrangement of the physical material cannot simultaneously correspond to all different ideas. The clashes between contrasting spatial imaginations inevitably cause deviations that produce a deficient spatial image not only for one, but for all groups involved. These deficits need to be negotiated between the intervening groups, which leads to hybridizations, superscription or even to open conflict. Contestations in sacred sites are thus neither accidental nor an anomaly,[142] they are part of the identity production process within human topography. The traces of spatial reconfiguration events are their witness. The object of Experiential Architecture Analysis is to pay attention to the differences between the spatial imaginations of transregional authorities and those of the local cultures, as well as to trace the modifications of sacred sites that occur during the negotiation of them. The following section introduces some spatial concepts relevant to the analysis of sacred architecture in China and Vietnam.

Temple Building in China and Vietnam

There are already very good in-depth studies on Chinese spatiality in relation to ideology.[143] However, it is important for the EAA to understand the typical layouts and styles that are commonly associated with the temples of each category. This knowledge allows for the identification of deviations in the spatial image of sacred sites. The glossary at the beginning of this book provides an overview of the most common temple categories in China and Vietnam. This section focuses on providing practical aid to the reading of sacred sites, the 'typical' traits referenced next should thus be understood as conceptional aids and not as absolutes.

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142 Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, p. 18.

143 For example, Zhu Jianfei. *Chinese Spatial Strategies. Imperial Beijing 1420—1911*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004.

East Asian cultures have their own 'science' of spatiality that is not restricted to any specific religious ideology. In China, it is called *fengshui* 風水 and commonly translated as "geomancy." It is a philosophical-spiritual concept of cosmological nature but was performed with the same eagerness as a science — it includes clearly defined sets of rules, causes, and consequences and the utilization of analytical tools. Under the assumption that wind and water influence the mystical energy within everything (Qi), geomancers analyze the landscape for the flow of such energy which may be enhanced, guided, weakened, or blocked. The condition of the energy flow affects the people in its direct vicinity or even in the whole realm.

Geomancy rests on several older, world-ordering approaches, like the principle of *yinyang* 陰陽, which treats the world in dualities, e.g., mountains and paths are associated with the male *yang*-energy and water is associated with the female *yin*-energy. It also relies on *wuxing* 五行, which refers to a multitude of coded concepts that determine how different phenomena affect or condition each other in spatial-creational interrelationships. When *wuxing* was institutionalized between the second and tenth century,[144] it expanded to encompass elements, cardinal points, symbolical colors, animals, seasons, organs, plants and much more. In combination with geomancy, *wuxing* concepts had considerable influence on art and architecture. They became the basis of Sinitic spatial-hierarchical standards, including the hierarchical ordering of the cardinal points[145] and the 'mirroring' of the cosmos in the basic architectural arrangements. By imagining material consequences within the ancient belief of *ganying* 感應 ['stimulus and response'], geomancy offered systematic interpretations of spatial objects and their correlations.[146]

Among the various geomantic schools, some are more technical and others more magically oriented. Most of them have focused on the positive notion

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144   Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, p. 13.

145   For example, in Chinese cosmology, the north is associated with black and a 'black warrior', the south is associated with red and a large bird, the west is associated with white and the white tiger, the east is associated with azure and a rainbringing dragon, while the center is associated with yellow and the imperial dragon. Cf. Gassmann/Behr 2005, p. 32; Cf. Warner 2008, pp. 25.

146   Cf. Eggert 2002, p. 243.

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of mountains as the carriers of Qi. The geomantic traditions of Sichuan[147] and Vietnam[148] differ from that because they see *water* as the carrier of Qi. Here, the usually negatively interpreted coagulation of Qi energy due to water is perceived as something positive that could enrich the land.[149] The Việt believed that "river Qi" produced good scholars,[150] but the Chinese general Gao Pian 高駢 (821—887), who had been sent to Vietnam for nine years to suppress early attempts at independence, saw it as an option to attack the aquatic base of local Việt legitimacy. According to a famous account, Gao Pian was a devout Daoist and skillful geomancer. He surveyed the land and sites, created elaborate maps, and redirected the rivers and lakes to block any royal Qi from reaching the provincial capital.[151] Vietnamese Buddhists used hydrolatric rituals and opposing structures[152] to counter this effect, but it took centuries to repair the 'energetic damage' [V.6.].

Geomantic ideas attribute hierarchical values to the different parts of the courtyard style house (*siheyuan* 四合院). This is the basis structure for Chinese palace and temple construction, where it is mirrored or lined up for larger structures.[153] It became a standard to align architectural compositions along a central axis, possibly to avoid having to hire a geomancer for every building.[154] The most important buildings of the complex were placed centrally on this axis and less important buildings were arranged next to it or served as the outer walls. Since the north was considered dangerous in terms of weather and potential enemy invasions, gates were preferably set in the south from where

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147   The "Secretly Passed Down Water Dragon Classic" *Michuan Shuilong Jing* 秘傳水龍經 by Jiang Pingjie 蔣平階 (ca. 1572—1620) revived an older, almost extinct geomantic school which rested on even older Sichuanese sources going back to the fourth century CE. It was translated and analyzed by Michael J. Paton, Cf. Paton 2013.

148   Cf. Kurfürst 2011, p. 29 and Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 44.

149   Cf. Paton 2013, pp. 66–69, 126–27.

150   Cf. Li Tana 2017, p. 13.

151   Cf. TUTA 48b.

152   Cf. TUTA 47a; Cleary 1991, 103.

153   Cf. Thilo 1977, pp. 12–13; Warner 2008, p. 25.

154   Cf. Feuchtwang 1974, p. 228–9.

the axis extended to the north.[155] In addition to the placement, the horizontal width, the height of the platform, height of the building, color of the roof tiles and the number of roof charms (*yanshou* 檐獸) on the roof ridges all served as indicators of rank in the Sinitic spatial hierarchy.

Temple Types and Layouts

The most basic sacred sites in Chinese and Vietnamese areas are nature shrines. They may consist of a single stone or a tree with offerings in front of them, or of open altars made from stamped earth or bricks.[156] More elaborate nature shrines consist of an altar, a sacred object, offerings and maybe a kneeling pad. A simple shrine hall, like a free-standing *dian* 殿, contains the same in a usually rectangular,[157] roofed structure, with or without walls.

Small temples have usually one building that may hold multiple compartments and shrines. Here, the spatial order of architectural composition and placement become more apparent. With increasing complexity, multiple courtyard units are, in adaption to topographical conditions, arranged behind or besides each other into one site. The final arrangement with a specific distribution of buildings and traffic paths forms the *layout*.

In China, temple types do not differ too much in their basic layout because the various governments used to strictly control architectural structures.[158] The variations in layout are thus aligned to religious categories. The two main layout types of Chinese temples can be distinguished by their core emphasis. The layout preferred by endemic religions (local religion, Confucianism, Daoism) emphasizes the end of the central axis. The biggest, tallest, most elevated building will be the last one in the complex.[159] It contains the main deity and if there are multiple deities, then the most important one will be placed at the

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155 Cf. Warner 2008, p. 26.

156 Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, p. 17 and Wulf 1995, p. 100.

157 Rarely, there are also round structures, like the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests in Beijing's Temple of Heaven.

158 As evidenced by, e.g., the *Yingzao Fashi* 营造法式, written by Li Jie 李誡 (1065—1110), who served the Directorate of Buildings and Construction of the Song dynasty. Cf. Tian Yang 2003, pp. 17–18.

159 Cf. Warner 2008, pp. 25–26.

center of the rear panel, possibly in a closed sanctuary. This is the more traditional layout — it was already in use before the advent of Buddhism (the term does not imply that any type of layout would be more appropriate or 'more Chinese'). In contrast, the Buddhist layout emphasizes the center of the central axis, because Buddhist temples were historically arranged around a stupa or pagoda that symbolized nirvana.[160] Due to rededications and the popularity of Buddhism, the Buddhist layout can also be found in non-Buddhist sites.

In Vietnam, independent villages built strong but isolated communities that rarely formed translocal associations. Surrounded by thick hedges for protection, occasionally enhanced by embankments and moats and with a gate in every cardinal direction, temple development went a different path. Each home held not only an ancestor shrine, but also altars for protective deities and local gods. Sometimes, they were placed in a small separate building within the courtyard in front or behind the main edifice. In cities, two-storied houses became the norm. The temple was commonly located in the lower story and could, with increasing popularity, turn into a public place of worship.[161]

In contrast to China, there was no strict imperial building code for most of Vietnamese history.[162] Constant wars, however, regularly destroyed sacred architecture[163] and the perpetual rebuilding sped up the development of new styles and structures. Vietnamese temple types thus vary much more in layout than their Chinese counterparts. Furthermore, the layouts do not express a typical religious affiliation, but rather a successive development of styles, which helps to gain an estimate of the age of a site.

Like in China, small Vietnamese temples consisted of one building which, as the site grew, was multiplied along a central axis. Medium to large sites, though, followed the most common layouts which were named for their re-

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160   Cf. Fu Xinan and Nancy Steinhardt 2002, pp. 44, 83, 118.

161   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, pp. 17–21 and Wulf 1995, pp. 170–72, 182.

162   Cf. Li Xuefeng 2015, p. 85. Emperor Gia Long tried to prescribe architectural decorations at the beginning of the nineteenth century, cf. Wulf 1995, p. 172.

163   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 129.

semblance to Chinese characters: *đinh* 丁, *công* 工, *tam* 三 and *quốc* 國.[164] Of these, the đinh layout is the oldest one. It is often seen 'on its head' with a large horizontal front hall and a vertical back hall. Next were the công and tam layouts: both have three halls that follow each other on a central axis. However, in the công layout, the central hall is connected to the front and back hall, while the front hall may be smaller. In the tam layout, three equal, unconnected halls are set behind each other.[165] The quốc layout is the most recent and spread during the seventeenth century.[166] It is basically a tam layout surrounded by walls or residential buildings. The layout types shall be written in lowercase to differentiate between the đinh layout and the type of sacred site called Đình.

The Đình is a Vietnamese kind of communal house. Usually, it is located at the center of each village (or close to a river), elevated by a platform or stilts, and it can reach an impressive width. In the late imperial era, important families began to build additional Đình that sometimes accumulated along the main traffic path to a city. Đình contain the village's ancestor shrines, the village council, sometimes an altar to the local earth god, and since the fifteenth century they also contain the village tutelary deities and city gods.[167] In official documents, this was hence often referred to as the miếu Thành Hoàng — City God temple.

Đình are not affiliated to a particular religion and can contain all kinds of spirits or deities, even heterodox ones, like those of criminals. In northern Vietnam, the Đình can thus serve as reservoirs for the older deities. In the south, they contain almost exclusively founders of villages and guilds. More recently, wealthier Đình can encompass multiple buildings in a tam layout. They usually contain the guardians in the front hall, the local gods in the central hall and the territorial deities in the last "main" hall.[168]

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164   More layouts and their explanations are found in Le Huu Phuoc. *Vietnamese Architecture*. Lakeville: Grafikol, 2016.

165   Cf. Li Xuefeng 2015, p. 85.

166   Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 190–91.

167   Cf. Dror 2007, p. 56 and Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 24.

168   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 22, 31, 57.

The oldest remaining Đình date to the fifteenth century. Some assume[169] that this is the era when they were introduced to northern Vietnam, but there are mentions of icons being placed into Đình[170] centuries before. Because Đình are built from wood, many have not survived to our day. In villages, the Đình was the central place for all communal matters and like the Buddhist temples, they were also important market sites.[171] In cities, though, they became more thematically categorized and craftsmen, for example, had their own Đình. Although the communal houses had been shared sites in earlier times, the increasing Confucianization of society soon caused women to be forbidden from entering the Đình.[172]

Differences Between Chinese and Vietnamese Buddhist Temples

The Buddhist temples of China and Vietnam follow a basic structure which can be expanded according to necessity, although in Vietnam with much more variety. The entrance is usually marked by a triple-gated and double-storied "Mountain Gate" (*shanmen* 山門), which originated in Chan Buddhism, but found its way into many other Buddhist sites as well. The gate is commonly followed by a large courtyard with a drum and bell tower, which were later also imitated by other temple types. The front hall normally contains the "Hall of Heavenly Kings" (*tianwangdian* 天王殿); these are protective deities of the cardinal points. In the center of the hall, there may be a shrine that is dedicated to the Bodhisattva Maitreya at its front and to the protector of Buddhism, Skanda, in its back. Alternatively, Maitreya may appear in a separate "Hall of Maitreya" (*miledian* 彌勒殿) behind the Hall of the Heavenly Kings. In early Buddhist temples, pagodas used to be in the center. However, as the need to include more halls grew, the pagoda was later placed in the front of or behind the temple complex.[173] From then on, the "Hall of the Great Hero" (*daxiongbaodian* 大雄寶殿) marked the center. In a standard Buddhist temple, this is the main hall

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169 Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 24.

170 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 43, 45 and Wulf 1995, p. 183.

171 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 180.

172 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 184.

173 Cf. Fu Xinian and Steinhardt 2002, pp. 44, 83, 118.

that contains the Buddha triad, which is usually centered around the Buddha Shakyamuni. Older Buddhist temples use the "Jade Buddha Hall" (*yufodian* 玉佛殿) as the last hall, which references the Buddha's attainment of nirvana. In more recent temples, Avalokiteśvara moved from the back of the main hall into his own "Guanyin Hall" (*guanyindian* 觀音殿). There may be more halls with additional contents that vary from temple to temple. Buddhist temples usually have a sutra library and a separate office for the abbot. Monasteries provide additional meditation rooms and quarters to the resident monks or nuns, as well as guest rooms, all preferably placed into the east of the complex.[174]

In accordance with Vietnamese customs, historical Buddhist temples in Vietnam were typically enclosed by their own walls and hedges. Unlike in some other Buddhist traditions, mountain gates were not very common in Vietnamese temple architecture. The inclusion of the Hall of the Heavenly Kings was optional, even in larger temple structures. Instead, the front halls often contained local deities and different protector spirits. Typical Buddhist temples in Vietnam had a *bái đường* 拜堂 "Ceremonial Hall" for performances, which was often located in front of the main hall. The main hall can be called the Hall of the Great Hero, *tam bao* 三寶 "Three Jewels" or just *chính điện* 正殿 "Main Hall." It is still not uncommon or perceived as extraordinary to find Daoist shrines inside Buddhist main halls.[175] The buildings in the back of the complex are reserved for Buddhist teachers like Bodhidharma, deceased abbots (*nhà tổ* 茹祖), various spirits and mother goddesses. The shrine to the mother goddesses [V.4.3.1.] is commonly located in proximity to the temple's well. Against a fee, laypeople can erect additional small *đền* (small non-Buddhist temples) on the temple grounds.[176] The oldest Buddhist temples of Vietnam have đinh and công layouts, which have been occasionally expanded into tam layouts. The largest monasteries of the late imperial era show quốc layouts. Pagodas were introduced by Chinese Buddhism only after the first Buddhist

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174   Cf. Thilo 1977, pp. 47–49.

175   Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 29, 190.

176   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, pp. 81–84.

sites were built.[177] For this reason, the same site may host stupas and pagodas of very different designs.[178]

Content Arrangement in China and Vietnam

An important matter besides the layout of buildings within a sacred site is the arrangement of the content inside these buildings. In Chinese Confucian temples, the representative content includes steles, spirit tablets, and unusual stones. In the sixteenth century, Neo-Confucianism caused an iconoclastic movement in China, after which the statue of Confucius alone was permitted inside Confucian temples. This iconoclasm did not extend to Vietnamese territory, where Confucian temples still contain icons of Confucius along with representations of his most important students.

Ancestor temples and nature shrines in China used to be aniconic aside from spirit tablets. However, Buddhist influence popularized sculptures for all other kinds of sacred sites. These were commonly made from wood, ceramics, bronze, or even from paper mâché.

In Vietnam, the deities of older temples and village Đình are still represented aniconically by decorated crowns, thrones, costumes, silk, or weapons. Sculptures are a later development and remain rare in non-Buddhist temples.[179] The arrangement of Buddhist icons differs from the Chinese traditions as well. Vietnamese sites and buildings are generally smaller, so there is a lower number of shrines, which are arranged in tiers to combine many entities with just one altar. Such shrines have from two up to five rising levels among which the most important deities are either placed in the highest or the most central tier. For example, in some places, Buddha Shakyamuni is placed on the top tier, the second tier holds Buddha Amitabha and his bodhisattvas, the third one contains various other Buddhas, bodhisattvas and local deities. Another difference to China is that Vietnamese sacred architecture is rarely painted[180]

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177   Cf. Li Xuefeng 2015, p. 86.

178   Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 186–98, the book includes an extensive description of Vietnamese Buddhist architecture with the pertaining layouts and content ensembles.

179   Cf. Unger 1997, pp. 38–40.

180   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 134, 185.

colorfully. However, their roof constructions hold elaborate carvings, in which heterodox deities can be hidden away.

Water Architecture

Water architecture was integral for local societies and therefore of high social relevance. Its importance provided it with symbolic potency and the capability of ideological redistribution.[181] "…Well defined by shared practices, water flows [follow] a line of control which is never allocated by chance […]."[182] This makes the ownership and claim of water architecture relevant for any group who strives for power. Hence, while water architecture is under regular or even constant repair for practical reasons, it is also often adjusted for the transfer of ideological narratives. This results in numerous historical layers that make water architecture particularly suitable to test the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS. Water architecture encompasses all installations and infrastructures that control, store and distribute water. Wells, channels, dams, reservoirs, and bridges serve technological water control (Chapter V). Trading posts, ports, docks, and harbors are infrastructural economic markers of water control. Steles, statues, shrines, pavilions, and temples, but also the residencies of hydraulic officials, refer to spiritual water control — these are sites of hydrolatry. For my research, I focused on sites of hydrolatry that feature at least one human-made built structure that demonstrates material interaction with enduring character. These include temple structures, shrines, as well as the springs and grottoes that are ritually connected to them. Although the placements of votive figures at the sites of rivers and lakes also represent sites of hydrolatry, I have excluded them due to their lack of architectural elements.

While hydrolatric sites are indeed usually built closely to water, I found that their placement already offers some first hints towards the nature of the deity venerated in them:

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181   Cf. Cadinu 2015, pp. 103–07.

182   Cf. ibid., p. 28.

1. Temples located close to springs are often connected to demands for rain, irrigation and health because the springs represent a source of 'new' water.
2. Temples located along rivers are connected to rain, irrigation and trade while those placed at river junctions are predominantly used to pray for safe passage.
3. Temples located on mountains and islands may concurrently serve for the calling for rain and the stopping of floods.
4. Small temples placed on the middle section of large bridges, like they are common in Vietnam,[183] may be dedicated to deities of river crossing or to the embodiment of the river to keep the bridge safe and stop floods.

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183   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 179.

2 Spatial Sanctity in Human Experience — Methods of Analysis and Interpretation

How can architecture help us to learn about transcultural ideological exchange from eras long bygone? The goal to chart processes of transcultural power imposition through the study of sacred sites calls for innovative interpretations beyond the conventional textual and material studies. So far, textual evidence continues to be a major source of historical knowledge production although it is known to be partisan in its leanings, incomprehensive in its transmission, and — especially regarding normative texts — full of their author's ulterior motives. It can only incompletely reveal the human experience that matters so much in spatial communication. Spatially expressed symbols have no lesser effect on human experience than the written word. They condense grand social dynamics with personal experience and thus contribute to the creation of social experience. Rearranging the content of a sacred site changes the message carried in spatial communication in much the same way as editing a text does. My goal is to look at the *process* of such change in the context of ideological discourse. For this purpose, I introduce and test the new methodological approach of EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS. The EAA connects different procedures from sociology, (art) history, archaeology and — in the context of this book — religious studies, to reliably trace ideological frictions. It enables researchers to confidently expand spatial studies into the realm of historical settings. To do so, it requires three steps:

- To combine mutually supportive analytical tools that facilitate the interpretation of textual evidence (if any) with material evidence.
- To interpret material evidence with helpful historical context.
- To evaluate both the above with appropriate theories from social and cognitive science.

Such a comprehensive process of combining textual and nontextual materials with the factor of social experience exposes how the tensions between the presented and perceived material, between the elites and commoners and between the transregional and local population has affected historical dynamics. This reveals potential ideological imbalances which may occur whenever different social groups intervene into man-made sites and landscapes.

In the following three chapters, I explain how spatial sanctity relates to experientiality and resilience; how the EAA works and which modes of spatial reconfigurations occur in the processes of transcultural ideology transfer.

First, I will start with the aims and the context of the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS and look at some foundational concepts and perspectives on spatiality by prominent scholars in religious studies. These insights provide the framework for my conceptualization of sacred space.

Kim Knott has presented some of the most representative research on sacred space and ideological transmission. She not only comprehensively investigated the religious studies' spatial turn but also significantly contributed to it herself. Her investigation led her to the conclusion that religious studies focus too much on embodiment and performance and neglect the cognitive aspects of spatiality. She also calls out the problem that those who have tried to study the relationship between space and power have not sufficiently engaged in theoretical debates about space itself and its relation to religion.[184] Thus, there were not too many theories at that time about the interconnectivity between the religious and political authorities' struggle over space. What I gained from Knott's 2009 short essay[185] was her appeal to treat transregional ideologies and the pressures these exert on local religions by doing spatial research from the perspective of the locals, which would also help to detect and avoid colonialist biases. In her studies on intercultural and political-religious contestations, she asserted that the attempt to gain religious control over social space was recognizable on all levels, from the individual body to the state. In her seminal publication, Kim Knott created a methodological approach to the spatial

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184   Cf. Kim Knott 2010, pp. 33–36.

185   Knott, Kim. "From locality to location and back again: A spatial journey in the study of religion" *Religion* 39, no. 2 (2009): 154–160, partly noted already in Knott 2005, p. 2.

analysis of religion, which naturally also ties into the analysis of sacred sites, but it was limited to Western modernity. [186]

At the very beginning, Knott asserts that the spatial analysis of architecture, thought to be ephemeral with its dependence on movement assessments, was not momentary at all. Instead, architecture exists and communicates for long timespans and is thus able to disclose the changes of constructive, ritualistic and political interaction. This leads to what Knott calls "stratified places." Multiple ideational layers of meaning that differ in age, relationship and relevance, are attached to one material space. The accumulation of ideational layers points to previous ideological interactions within a site. Sacred sites accumulate especially many of these layers, which is why Knott describes religious spaces as "sites of contestation."[187]

A second approach towards spatiality within religious studies follows similar goals but goes towards the opposite direction of Knott's requests. The Aesthetics of Religion define the term 'aesthetics' as something that refers to sensual perception, experience and expression. This direction of multidisciplinary research seeks to develop new concepts about efficacy, universality and the intersection between body and culture. In the pursuit of initiating an aesthetic turn, the scholars behind the Aesthetics of Religion emphasize the physical, material and bodily aspects to focus on sensing, perceiving and rationalizing. Their focus is on exploring new options for the description and explanation of politico-historical religious effects to enable transhistorical and transregional comparisons, which would generate new knowledge about the function of communities and identities.[188] The perspective of the Aesthetics of Religion is strongly focused on the perceptions and experiences of the consumer and the performances that they engage in.[189] Grieser and Johnston specifically asked for an entirely new mode of analysis that involves a certain skill in methodology and data collection, new

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186   Cf. Knott 2005, pp. 20–35.

187   Cf. Knott 2005, pp. 4–5, 20–35, 122–23, extended on pp. 125–30.

188   Cf. Grieser and Johnston 2017, p. V–VII, 2–4, 14–20, 27, 30.

189   Cf. Grieser and Johnston 2017, p. 23. In the same volume, Jens Kreinath uses the description and comparison of the sacred to explore the effects of mimetic acts in interaction with them. Cf. Kreinath 2017, pp. 282–92.

ideas about the representation of nontextual media, new strategies of research notification, measuring, and detection as well as a new kind of terminology.[190]

Although I do not fully subscribe to the Aesthetics of Religion's approach, my Experiential architecture analysis bridges the gap between material-representative aspects and perceptive-experiential affects and thus reflects relevant social realities more accurately. The EAA fulfills the need for historical and contemporary research designs regarding a site's evaluation, representation and the interaction with it. It connects Low's advocacy for the consideration of ethnographic data with Knott's demand to pay attention to local spaces and conforms to the Aesthetics of Religion's desire for new analytical options to represent the nontextual in transhistorical comparisons by grasping the experiential.

There is a broad field to cover between the materiality of sacred sites and transcultural ideology transfer, so there have already been very worthwhile contributions to it: Wang Hongbo[191] created a study on the microspace of sacred architecture in a transhistorical analysis when most works within sociology, architecture and geography were still preoccupied with states, regions and cities. This was a major source of inspiration for me. Jilly Traganou and Miodrag Mitrasinovic edited a volume on transnational architecture practices and found that spatio-architectural practices are multi-sited and can be much better viewed by considering their networks than by essentializing them in terms of place *or* culture.[192] Annette Münchmeyer has provided a valuable practical with her archaeological building reconstruction approach that relates very well to Knott's analytical approach because it reveals prior construction phases and their later integrations.[193]

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190   Cf. Grieser and Johnston 2017, p. 21.

191   Wang Hongbo 王洪波. "The Historical Development of the Guangde-si in Suining, Sichuan 四川遂宁广德寺历史沿革" *Shanxi Architecture* 35, no. 9 (2009): 28–29.

192   Mitrasinovic, Miodrag, Jilly Traganou, and Matthew Carmona. *Travel, Space, Architecture.* Abingdon, Oxon: Taylor and Francis, 2016.

193   Münchmeyer, Annette. "Wieviel Querhaus steckt im Westbau? Der Pórtico de la Gloria am Kontext der Querhausportale" In Druzynski et. al. 2020: 167–174.

While there are many noteworthy contributions to the research regarding ideology transfer,[194] there are two very relevant works specifically concerned with transcultural transfer of ideology in regard to water deities and their architecture. These are Duan Youwen's specialized local cult study[195] and Megan Bryson's comprehensive work on a Yunnanese water goddess and 'frontier deity' caught between local identity, Buddhism and Ming Sinitic ideology.[196] This deity is an example for gendered demarcations between Chineseness and other ethnic groups which is also a topic in my case studies [V.3.1.]–[V.4.1.], [S.2.], [S.3.].

2.1   The Constitution of Sacred Sites

Sacred sites are architectural compositions of institutional nature with high symbolic relevance. They offer preset social narratives that are supposed to invoke certain popular/common experiences within the persons who perceive them. This is something that religious-political legitimization relies on. It makes sacred sites one of the main vectors of transcultural ideology transfer. In the context of religious and political expansions, these locations are regularly subjected to spatial reconfigurations. I define *spatial reconfigurations as the*

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194   Yü Chün-fang 2001; Kang Xiaofei. *The Cult of the Fox: Power, Gender, and Popular Religion in Late Imperial and Modern China.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006; Louise Revell. *Roman Imperialism and Local identities.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; James Benn. "One Mountain, Two Traditions: Buddhist and Taoist Claims on Zhongnan shan in Medieval Times" In *Images, Relics and Legends: the Formation and Transformation of Buddhist Sacred Sites. Essays in Honour of Professor Koichi Shinohara*, edited by James Benn, Jinhua Chen and James Robson, 69–90. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2012; "Qiyunshan as a Replica of Wudangshan and the Religious Landscape of the Ming Empire." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 42, no. 1 (2014): 28–66; Nguyễn Tho Ngoc. "When the Sage Becomes a 'God': The Spiritualized Confucian Sect of Minh Đức Nho giáo Đại đạo in Southern Vietnam." In *Asian Studies Special Issue: Confucianism in Vietnam*, edited by Jana S. Rošker, 17–50. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, 2020.

195   Duan Youwen 段友文. "Shanxisheng Linfen Pingshuishen Beike Ji Qi Shuili Xisu Kaoshu 山西省临汾平水神碑刻及其水利习俗考述 [Investigation of the Ping-River God Inscriptions and Related Water Conservancy Customs of Linfen, Shanxi Province]", *Shanxi Shuyu Shehui Shi Yantaohui Lunwen Ji.* (2003): 34–42.

196   Bryson, Megan. *Goddess on the Frontier: Religion, Ethnicity, and Gender in Southwest China.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016.

manipulation of a site's hierarchies and presented content to reflect communally or personally held convictions.

The scrutinous analysis of sacred sites in terms of the reconfiguration of their appearance, content and representation helps to understand the transcultural aims behind the occupation of a site and how its uncertain outcomes have affected the population.

Understanding the nature of sacred sites is a prerequisite to analyze them in terms of their social and experiential value and their effect on transcultural ideology transfer. There are three spheres of social aspects that affect the spatial perception of a site, for which I have created a model that was structurally inspired by Dieter Läpple's "matrix space." Läpple's work was itself an advanced and reorganized version of the rudimentary typology that Henri Lefebvre had created in 1974.[197] However, Lefebvre's goal was to show the spatial aspects of alternating dominance over the course of time. My model reflects constants that do not dominate each other but rather create a synergy that affects the identification and experience of a site and therefore the understanding and reproduction of the messages contained therein.

The approach suggested in this book proposes the following spheres [Img. 4] for the interpretation of the social aspects in a man-made space:

1. The PLACED MATERIAL (PM) refers to the entire physical reality of a site, to everything that can be seen, touched, heard, smelled or tasted. It encompasses the environment and the constructed space with its surroundings and limitations of human movement[198] due to physical factors. This includes arrangements, distances and buildings, their content, decorations and facilities. When the PLACED MATERIAL is imbued with meaning, it transforms into the *spatial image*.

2. The REGULATORY NORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL SPHERE (RNIS) refers to the collective ideological space attached to a place. It conjoins the material and metaphysical aspects of a site by identi-

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197   Cf. Läpple 1992, pp. 194–97 and Lefebvre 1991, pp. 38–41.

198   Cf. Hägerstrand 1970, pp. 11–12, "capability restraints."

fying their social meaning[199] within the material arrangement. This is the sphere where the ideologies of different common interest groups (CIG) come into conflict. The CIGs are mostly represented by social elites who are able to control and intervene into a site,[200] but also by those involved in the site's construction — like planners, builders and artisans. All of them may be subjected to the demands of superior authorities who intend to use the site as a source for legitimation. The members of political, religious and economic elites determine laws, regulations and behavioral rules to create symbolical hierarchies and to codify options of interaction into the Placed Material. The rnis thus presents the cultural norms,[201] rules, values and identities that are meant to be reproduced from the experience of the site. The rules, norms and symbols which preserve the legitimation, power and narrative of a culturally dominant group become the socio-physical default settings.

3. The Socio-Experiential Sphere (ses) refers to the aspects of a site that embody and evoke human experiences, usually with awareness of the social value systems that are represented and negotiated within the rnis. These are expressed, e.g., by the choice of material, shape, placement, structure and decoration in the context of their attributed meaning. The ses contains the options for individual interactions with the site — either directly or via third party[202] representations. This creates the individual meanings that contribute to the site's relevance. They are affected by the way a site is framed in narration,[203] in its representation (e.g., via name or rank), its location (e.g., cliff inscriptions, proximity to a well) or by its material configuration.

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199 Kong and Woods frame this as exclusivity and centrality, cf. Kong and Woods 2017, p. 19.

200 Cf. Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, pp. 123–24.

201 Cf. Löw 2001, pp. 140–50.

202 Cf. Birnbaum 2012, p. 114.

203 For the narratological concept of transportation and its effects on the reproduction of values, see: Green, Melanie C and Timothy C. Brock. "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives" *Journal of Personality and Psychology* 79 (2000): 701–721.

Regulatory Normative Institutional Sphere

Socio-Experiential Sphere

Placed Material

Social
Spatial
Imagination

Individual
Spatial
Imagination

Spatial Image

Reproduction
of
Ideology
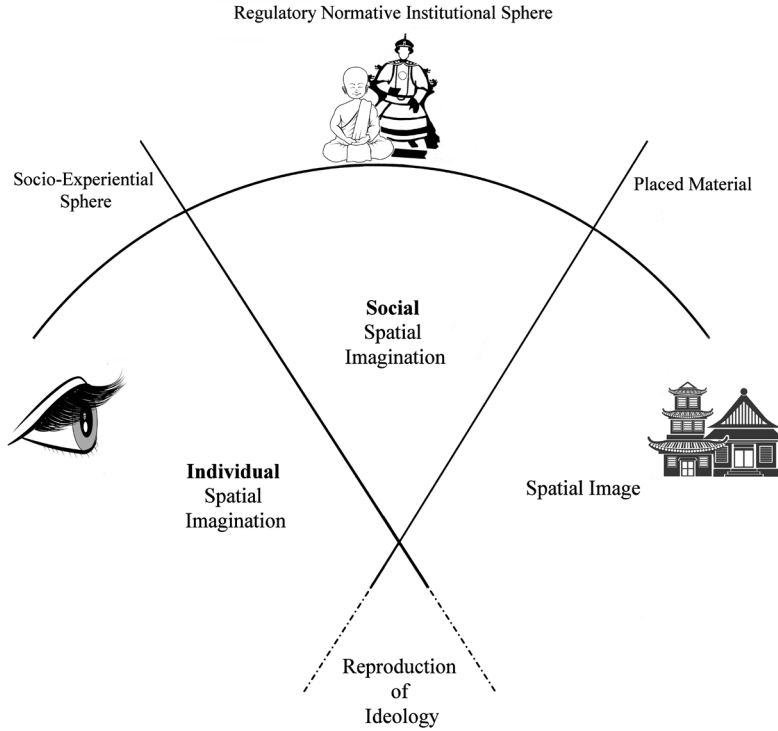
[Img. 4] The three spheres of a site's social aspects

The representative spatial organization is a spatial image that has been aligned with the *preferred* spatial imagination of a dominant group who has successfully advanced from the local power struggles.[204] This is where transhistorical narratives and the behavior of direct and indirect consumers are controlled. The representative spatial organization is hence strongly tied to the RNIS, whose representatives spatially embed their cultural symbols as a 'manual' for the consumer's interactions with the site. This ensures that the site is 'correctly' evaluated to directly reproduce the dominant group's ideology.

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204   Although a group dominant in one particular site is not necessarily the culturally dominant group of the area.

If a site is contested by multiple CIGs, there are just as many spatial imaginations. Some of the groups interested in the site may intervene into the spatial image to materialize their own spatial imagination, but doing so contests the dominant group. If this is the case, the spatial imagination offered by the dominant group is called the official spatial imagination, while those of groups capable of noticeably reconfiguring the spatial image according to their own ideology produce additional offered spatial imaginations [Img. 5]. The other Common Interest Groups involved with the site who cannot noticeably intervene into the spatial image still project their own social spatial imaginations that attribute different meanings to the objects and structures within the PLACED MATERIAL. However, without a material-physical expression, these are often hard to communicate outside the relevant group.

Individual consumers of a site may challenge or reject any of the offered spatial imaginations although they can never completely free themselves[205] from authoritative constraints. They form a myriad of individual spatial imaginations which are ambivalent, prone to change, and possibly are vastly different from those spatial imaginations that the elites and artisans had intended to reproduce. Hence, neither sponsors nor executors can truly recreate an accurate image of their own ideas in the minds of the consumers. This is a translation gap in the spatial communication of institutional sites.

With this, we can come to a tentative definition of sacred sites. Sacred sites are institutional and contested spaces that hold a high level in symbolical hierarchy because they use an elevated amount of symbolically enhanced material. They are themselves symbols of the constituting, consuming and perceiving parts of society. Their configuration hence evolves with their claim to topography and their conveyance of ideologies. They contribute to the stabilizing, upholding and transmitting of those ideologies that legitimate both the constituting and receiving parts of society, and thereby consolidate the social structures desired by the groups that influence the REGULATORY NORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL SPHERE.

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205   Cf. Hägerstrand 1970, p. 11.

Representative Spatial Organization

A Spatial Image that has been adjusted to reflect the Official Spatial Imagination

Official Spatial Imagination

Used to reproduce the ideology of the dominant cultural group that claims the site

Offered Spatial Imagination

The Social Spatial Imagination of groups that are able to intervene into the spatial image, but cannot claim the site

Social Spatial Imagination

Reflects the ideology of all groups that the site is relevant to, but not all groups are able to intervene into the spatial image

Individual Spatial Imagination

Produced by all consumers, may be expressed in small individual modifications of the spatial image

[Img. 5] The layers of spatial imagination

2.2   The Experiential Factor of Architecture

Everyone involved in the constitution of a site, be it by sponsoring or technical involvement, leaves behind traces of what they thought the site should be. However, the communicative function of architecture is not limited to condensing ideology into symbolic patterns, it also conveys affects and past interpretations. Sacred sites are social compositions where such communication takes place much more consciously than in other types of sites. Consequently, sacred sites have a greater capacity to efficiently evoke emotional responses. Religious interest groups exercise symbolic acts to constitute and maintain sacred sites. It is desirable for the involved religious authorities to design the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE in a way that deeply moves its consumers. This creates a lasting connection between the sacred site and its consumers that encourages them to donate goods and money, to exert patronage or to support the dissemination of the site's narrative far beyond its limits of direct influence.

Political authorities may also be interested in maintaining such lasting connections to turn a sacred site into a more effective source of legitimation. These aims are among the main reasons why sacred sites show a characteristic imbalance between the material and symbolic usage of space. According to Martina Löw, the symbolic ensembles of sacred sites are condensed institutional orders beyond any straightforward meanings. They need to convey entire worldviews. And even while there are spatial bodies within them that have designated ideological roles, their spatial configuration is in constant transformation.[206] Sacred sites are thus highly dynamic which contributes to the development of multilayered metaphysical spaces as described by Kim Knott. They are full of past interpretations that testify to different social spatial imaginations.

Since the "meanings of the past are the measures of the present" and "history is the central focus of social competition,"[207] the past is the perfect tool to legitimate the rule of a contemporary elite group. The multilayered reference to the past and its especially effective expression within the SES allow whomever controls a sacred site to also control the image of the past, to dominate social

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206   Cf. Löw 2001, p. 131.

207   Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2010, p. 12.

memory, and to determine *which* ideology should be transferred. Reinterpretations and reevaluations may change the *content* of a reproduced ideology, but spatial reconfigurations are able to change the *source* of the reproduced ideology. Thus, the ideological changes in the RNIS of a sacred site — be they due to open conflict, migration, learned or lost knowledge or internal changes of perception — motivate changes in the PLACED MATERIAL; the reinterpretation of cultural codes, and the rearranging of evaluation mechanisms like spatial hierarchies — all out of the desire to control the interpretation of past. In sum, this means that the elites who struggle for the control of sacred sites are strongly interested in modifying the individual spatial imagination. How can they do that?

Every space has experiential value for those who interact with it and this determines how the space is interpreted. For institutional spaces, this is a major function to create experiential and representative values for all the people involved in their constitution, upkeep and rationalization. However, the experiential and informative values for those who are not directly interacting with an institutional space depend upon what others relate about it via images, descriptions or maps. When people experience defined spaces, they negotiate these with their previous social experiences, their current social environment, and the expectations of those ideologies that they are familiar with or which they follow. The study of the experiential factor of space is thus a worthwhile endeavor because we learn about the social dynamics between vastly different people: how they perceived and represented themselves, how they related to a place, and how they contextualized it within their world view. Even if all of this has occurred in the distant past — traces of material interaction, of manipulations within the presented materials and textual expressions still convey this experiential factor.

Theoretical approaches to the experiential factor of space were developed in philosophy and geography during the 1960s and 1970s. They had no further impact on architecture or art history and left no immediate effect on the research of this matter. [208] There were also extensive studies on emotions and

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208   Otto Friedrich Bollnow: *Mensch und Raum.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010. 11th ed. Originally published 1963, this book had a strong impact on future studies of space, but mostly

affects *about* sites but they did not take into consideration the spatial makeup of the sites that caused these. [209] If the experiential factor was studied at all, then either within the analysis of individual usage of architecture or particularized within the semiotics of architecture.[210] However, the 'general' meaning, individual usage, the architects and sponsors were all analyzed separately. In contrast, my research focuses on the *connections* between space, experience and the spatial organizations that are meant to represent ideologies.

According to Yi-Fu Tuan, creators, sponsors and builders are often aware that their architectural compositions must evoke affects[211] among the consumers if the offered spatial imaginations are meant to efficiently influence their behavior. As the discipline of architecture has modernized, architects have become more attentive to the social and experiential compositions of their creations.[212] Francis D. K. Ching's book *Form, Space and Order* (1979) was a forerunner of this movement:

> "Architecture is generally conceived […], built, in response to an existing set of conditions. […] they may also reflect in varying degrees the social, political, and economic climate. The initial phase of any design

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regarding philosophy and sociology, less so in art history. Bollnow was more concerned with the possible experiences that could occur in spatial settings than with studying what their intrinsic nature was. He and Tuan both dealt with the home or the city but did not pay sufficient attention to institutional spaces, cf. Tuan 1975, p. 154–58.

209   Cf. Low 2017, pp. 145–55.

210   See: Baumberger, Christoph and Claus Schlaberg (Ed.). "Architektur, Zeichen, Bedeutung. Neue Arbeiten zur Architektursemiotik." *Zeitschrift für Semiotik*, edited by Roland Posner and Stephan Debus, 36 no. 1/2 (2014).

211   Cf. Tuan 1975, p. 102.

212   Price, Frederick William. "Experiential Architecture". Graduation Thesis. Texas Tech University, 1997.

Franz, Gerald, Markus von der Heyde and Heinrich H. Bülthoff. "Predicting experiential qualities of architecture by its spatial properties." Proceedings 18th IAPS-Conference, Vienna, 2004.

Hackenfort, Thomas and Stefan Hochstadt. "Zum Interpretieren von Architektur. Theorie des Interpretierens" *TOC: Wolkenkuckucksheim* 12, no 2 (2008). via ArtHist.net 09.01.2009. https://cloud-cuckoo.net/journal1996-2013/inhalt/de/heft/ausgaben/207/Hackenfort_Hochstadt/hackenfort_hochstadt.php

process is the recognition of a problematic condition and the decision to find a solution to it. […] the depth and range of [the designers'] design vocabulary influence both their perception of a question and the shaping of its answer. If one's understanding of a design language is limited, then the range of possible solutions to a problem will also be limited."[213]

Every person who uses, visits, sees or even only reads about architecture experiences it. This experience simultaneously changes the consumer and their *idea* about the architecture that they are consuming. The result of this can be retained and reproduced. If an offered spatial imagination is reproduced, this affirms the legitimacy of the group who has offered it. Controlling the socio-experiential aspect of a site is hence of great importance for the CIGs but at the same time hard to achieve because there is usually some degree of deviation between the meaning that a person understands and the message that a CIG wants to convey. Taking up Ching's sentiment, Memar asserts that there is no accidental architecture.[214] All sites are constructed to convey the meaning of invested persons or groups and they need to be cognitively deconstructed to create a personal meaning. Social groups with sufficient power can adjust a site's architectural composition to the spatial imagination that they consider to be 'right'. They do so in order to embody social norms that their ideology constructs to be 'true'. Their aim is to reproduce them within the minds of the site's consumers. This reproduction works basically like this:

Due to their socio-historical background, each consumer perceives a site with preset expectations and an individual understanding of the embedded cultural codes therein, which determines the consumer's further spatial behavior. The very moment that a consumer perceives a site creates a transient experiential space that belongs to the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE. There, this very first perception is immediately contrasted with previous experiences in a subliminal, aesthetic-cognitive reaction[215] called *synthesis*.[216] Thus, every con-

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213   Cf. Ching 2007, p. IX.

214   Cf. Memar 2009, p. 4.

215   Cf. Tuan 1975, pp. 146, 161 and Bollnow 1962, p.1.

216   Cf. Löw 2001, pp. 158–159. Compare with Auffarth 2017, p. 190.

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sumer negotiates the spatial image that they see first (a) with the offered spatial imaginations present and compares these with the metaphysical narratives they are familiar with. They negotiate those (b) with their own[217] individual spatial imagination and (c) with the affects that are instantly created by consuming the representation of past human experiences within the site.

Once this fleeting moment has passed, the experiential space is replaced with the *memory* thereof.[218] This *experiential memory* is what modifies somebody's spatial perception. However, human memory is not overarching, it is enhanced by the sensual effects caused by the site's atmosphere and the correlation of emotional responses[219] to it. It is distorted by misunderstandings, false assumptions and misinformation. Therefore, the experiential memory is quite imprecise.[220] This inherent impreciseness allows for the different spatial imaginations represented in a site's spatial image to compete.

The consumer's unique individual spatial imagination that is derived from their former experiences is juxtaposed upon the social spatial imaginations, which are caught in a constant process of negotiating their collections of codes and values. The social spatial imaginations are meant to convey and replicate these codes and values in a manner that causes the consumer to realize them as desirable. Thus, a well-presented representative spatial organization may overwrite an individual spatial imagination to the degree that smaller contradictions are glossed over.[221] If that happens, the values that the official spatial

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217 Low references Edward Hall regarding the natural distancing mechanism that humans have developed based on their clan, group and status structures. This can be modified by culture to adjust behavior to specific social situations, which is one reason why people of different cultural and social backgrounds and education perceive, structure and experience space differently. Cf. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2010, p. 4.

218 Muir uses the term "perceived landscape," to describe that what is sensed and remembered as hypotheses *about* the real landscape. Cf. Muir 2005, p. 115.

219 Cf. Tuan 1975, p. 152; Bollnow 1960, p. 406.

220 Cf. Conway and Roensch 2005, pp. 215–217 and Tuan 1975, pp. 86–88.

221 Cf. Grieser 2017, p. 264. Regarding the belief in authority that overwrites individual perception, information and ideas, refer to: Moussaid, Mehrdi et. al. "Social Influence and the Collective Dynamics of Opinion Formation." *Plos One* (2013). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0078433 and Martin, John Levi. "Power, Authority, and the Constraint of Belief Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 4 (2002): 861–904. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1086/343192. For coercion by trust into authority, see: Hofmann, Eva et. al. "Author-

imagination represents have been accepted and ideology has been transferred to the consumer. Even if a consumer rejects the official spatial imagination, the evocation of sufficiently strong affects can still influence their experiential memory. They are essentially 'infected' by the ideology expressed within the representative spatial organization as soon as they recognize it. It becomes part of their personal experiential canon and henceforth factors into their future spatial experiences.

Manipulations of the spatial image and external influences, however, can level the field in favor of contesting spatial imaginations. Whenever a significant number of people start to adopt the spatial imagination of a contesting common interest group, their individual spatial imaginations will recode the spatial image to align with that group's social spatial imagination. The reproduction of that group's values begins at this moment.

Man-made sacred sites, like temples and altars, differ considerably from natural sacred sites, like lakes, caves or mountain tops, because their placement, creation and appearance are already meaningful interventions into nature. In the conflict between local and transregional authorities, both sides may employ spatial reconfigurations in sacred sites to either facilitate or avoid ideology transfer. However, in the end, it is the sum of individual experiences carried away from the site that determines if ideology transfer has been successful or not.

2.3 The Reuse, Resilience and Sharing of Sacred Sites

According to the historians Alexander Nagel and Christopher Woods, almost all production of artifacts; all art making, meaning making, and the manipulation of codes — thus all histories of building and painting — are histories of reuse. "The true rarity is the opposite of reuse, namely, pure creation ex nihilo."[222] Religious and political authorities are determined to monopolize

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ities' Coercive and Legitimate Power: The Impact on Cognitions Underlying Cooperation." *Frontiers in Psychology* (2017). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00005.

222   Cf. Merrill and Giamarelos 2019, pp. 1–2.

control over the interactions between a sacred site and its consumers because these interactions constitute social memory. This influences the reproduction of ideology regarding three factors that relate to the Regulatory Normative Institutional Sphere:

The Mark is the very first spatial reconfiguration. Humans intervene into the natural environment to transform a spot in nature into a part of the human topography. This turns general space into something special, something demarcated from the ordinary.[223] Symbols and limits *mark* the chosen area. This may be as simple as pushing a spear into the ground. Subsequently, meanings are attached to the mark to create a qualitative space. Finally, the application of a name turns space into a place. [224] It is now ready to serve as a point of identification for the group who created it and provides a connection to this specific locality, a sense of belonging,[225] but also of ownership. Due to the importance attached to it, the ideational traits associated with a sacred site transport the mark into the Socio Experiential Sphere. Over time, the mixture of the material with the ideational mark turns into numinosity,[226] which may persist even after any physical remains of the site have been obliterated.[227] Such persisting numinosity marks the 'sacred' areas within the landscape, they encourage the erection of new sacred sites and preserve parts of local identities.[228] Sometimes, like in Chinese Buddhism, this was considered a feature that added to a place's sanctity.[229]

The Claim is the interpretative privilege usually held by a dominant group that enables it to control the RNIS, i.e., to publicly determine a site's

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223   Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, p. 18.

224   Cf. Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2010, p. 18; Tuan 1975, p. 161.

225   Cf. Muir 2005, p. 274.

226   This term, though often associated with Rudolf Otto, refers without any specific theological affiliation to something that possesses — or creates the perception of possessing — a supernatural energy. The term suggests no nature or origin of such metaphysical power.

227   Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, p. 26. The immaterial remains of material constructions of any scale were e.g., famously treated as "externalizations" by Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

228   Cf. Birnbaum 2012, p. 122.

229   Cf. Robson 2012, p. 97.

nature and function. The more relevant a site becomes, the more likely it is that other groups will try to contest the claim by intervening into the material (PM) or by changing evaluation[230] mechanisms (SES). By controlling or diverting the representative spatial organization, both sides can change the social experience of a site to their favor. As soon as a contesting social spatial imagination becomes the most reproduced one, this group acquires the claim and officially occupies the site. If a group marks and claims a place, or if a group successfully acquires the claim to an established place, then merely exercising the claim reproduces the importance already attached to the site — but now with whatever meaning the claimants determine. This produces:

THE LEGITIMATION, which determines if the exercised claim is acceptable. In dependence on the importance attached to the site, legitimacy ensures its further maintenance and social persuasiveness. Importance and persuasiveness condition the site's social relevance. The social relevance correspondingly legitimizes the ideology of the claimant and thus reinforces their claim. This is an interdependent and mutually beneficial process that enables *those with the power to materially intervene in sacred sites*[231] to create and reproduce worldviews that allow them to gain more of that power. Of course, this is especially relevant to political authorities who share the claimant's ideology and who need to legitimate their right to rule. Theoretically, this process of mutual legitimacy reproduction could continue indefinitely. Practically, claims can be lost. First, because the claimant no longer exists or because the legitimacy of their ideology has otherwise been damaged. Second, because another group has successfully contested the former claim with spatial reconfigurations. If a contesting group is able to intervene into a site and place its own cultural codes, it initiates a new process of mutual legitimacy production. More and more parts of the site start to provide legitimation for the contesting group, parallel to the official claimants. For a while, sacred sites can provide some amount of legitimation to multiple groups simultaneously. The dominance of the claimants then depends on social and political factors beyond the site.

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230   Cf. Löw 2001, pp. 198, 205.

231   Cf. Löw 2001, p. 272.

In sum, a strong and unchallenged claim can continue for a long time with only minor reconfiguration events. However, if a site is contested, the historical perspective reveals constant changes. In the long term, these force the competing groups into negotiations — which may result in the creation of local hybrid cultures.

The success of a change of claim to a sacred site depends on resilience. In architecture, resilience usually refers to sustainability and disaster management but also to continuity. Architectural resilience means that buildings, ensembles and site compositions withstand change and preserve their purpose, key identity and character while adapting to highly dynamic circumstances. Although resilient spaces may have vastly diverse temporal and geographic foci, they are denoted by their distinctly formal, environmental and experiential qualities.[232] Sacred sites are comparatively resilient due to their symbolical significance. So, if their official claim changes, this depends on the resilience factors of (1) the number, position, and power of the authorities interested in it; (2) its relevance for the local population; (3) its rank in transregional networks and (4) how unique or commonly shared the symbols used within the site are. Symbols which are unique, or uniquely interpreted, make sites more resilient. Reconfigured sacred sites are relevant for the research on interactions between local and transregional ideas because the preservation of the established meanings within sacred sites depends on the activity and repeated engagement of the related local population. Centrality[233] is thus a main factor for the resilience of sacred sites and their occupations, appropriations, and rededications mark important events in transcultural history.

When transregional authorities expand into new territories, they intervene into local sites for the sake of visibility and stability. However, their repertoire of cultural codes usually differs from that of the local population, so their contestations of local sacred sites lead to ideological frictions. These are more immediate and noticeable within the PLACED MATERIAL than in texts. The

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232   Cf. Merrill and Giamarelos 2019, p. 4.
233   Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, p. 19.

contestations manifest as contradictory spatial images that perhaps will not inhibit the consumption or the usage of a site, but which modify its evaluation.

Before a sacred site is fully occupied and rededicated, it goes through a *multilocal* or *polysemous* phase[234] — which, depending on the circumstances, can last for centuries.

If the PLACED MATERIAL is hardly changed, but there are contestations of the site's content and meaning — conflicts which refer primarily to the RNIS —, then the site is *polysemous*. Different invested groups perceive the site in the same genre, but attribute different meanings to it. If structures of different natures compete within the same site, and there are different deities that different social groups interact with independently, then the site is *multilocal*. Different social groups perceive the same physical site as completely distinct ideational spaces. Both terms have evolved from a tradition of awareness about the changing claims of sites. For example, the concept of multilocality is very important for the study of indigenous spatial concepts in reference to rootedness and transregional pressure.[235] It is hence a historical phenomenon and not a recent occurrence.[236] Most sites treated in this book fit the two categorical perspectives established by Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler: either as the — previously described — contested sites, or as "heterodyne" sites which offer communal experiences beyond the limits of specific religions and traditions.[237] Related to the latter are sites in a semi-permanent multilocal or polysemous states, i.e.,

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234 Multilocality often arises in sociological contexts occupied with questions regarding heritage and authority, like in Gable, Eric and Richard Handler. "After Authenticity at an American Heritage Site" In *The Anthropology of Space and Place. Locating Culture.* edited by Setha M. Low, and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, 370–386. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010 and Rodman, Margaret C. "Empowering Place: Multilocality and Multivocality" *American Anthropologist* 94, no. 3 (1992): 640–656. Polysemy is mostly connected to semiotics and art history. Examples are respectively Remizova, Olena. "The Structure of the Architectural Language" *Architectural Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 81–86 and Brouskare, Erse. *Ottoman Architecture in Greece*. Athen: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2009.

235 Cf. Low 2017, p. 28.

236 Verstegen, Ute. "Normalität oder Ausnahmesitation? Multireligiöse Raumnutzungen aus historischer Perspektive." In *Viele Religionen — ein Raum?!: Analysen, Diskussionen und Konzepte*, edited by Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler et. al., 77–100. Berlin, Frank & Timme, 2015. p. 77.

237 Cf. Beinhauer-Köhler 2015. pp. 65–72.

when different ideological groups accommodate a site to their usage without actively challenging the interpretative privilege of a dominant group. This may occur when the level of cultural hybridization is high. On the other hand, if a multilocal situation persists for a long time although the claim of the dominant group is rejected, this indicates a <u>decorative</u> situation (see Chapter IV).

Sometimes, multilocal or polysemous attributes are deliberately enforced even if the site does not allow for it. For example, a new claimant may weaponize the numinosity of a mark by referencing a prior sacred site of a possibly different affiliation that allows them to take advantage of age-related legitimation. And although such an earlier site may never have existed,[238] the fabricated multilocal or polysemous traits may not cease even after such fabrications are revealed. All of this emphasizes why it is important to not solely rely on material and textual evidence, but to conduct a proper contextual analysis as well.

The EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS detects disharmonies in the spatial image, typologizes them, contextualizes the resulting typological categories with all available material and textual data and *then* puts the resulting information into the greater social and historical context of the area. This helps to determine the resilience of a sacred site, which is directly connected to the social resilience of the groups engaging with it. These are not necessarily part of the group who officially holds a claim to the site. On the contrary, resilient architecture is especially noticeable when it contradicts the official spatial imaginations.

Ideology Transfer and the Negotiation of Identity at Sacred Sites

Although the medium of architecture allows its patrons to project their messages vastly beyond their own lifespans, the narratives within are chronologically fragile.[239] Even little changes to the spatial image can cause them to reproduce diverse spatial imaginations that resemble neither the previous nor the later sponsor's intentions. If the dominant ideology of an area changes, so do the evaluation mechanisms that determine how symbols, myths and past events

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238   An example of such a case is found in Meckseper 2020, p. 233–34.

239   Cf. Memar 2009, pp. 7–9.

are interpreted. Spatial reconfigurations are hence not limited to the Placed Material, they also reflect the changes in the site's representation and interpretation — like its name, its depiction in visual media, or its contextualization in maps and rankings — all of which refer to the Regulatory Normative Institutional Sphere.

There exist slow and fast ways to challenge an active claim. Demographic changes, e.g., caused by migrations, lead to slowly progressing shifts in the social spatial imagination. These spark the need to readjust the spatial image of a contested site, which begins with minor interventions that increase over time. Proselytization or conquests, however, require much faster and more comprehensive spatial reconfigurations. The entire experience of an occupied site must change to strengthen a newly introduced claim, to legitimize the new claimants, and to destabilize the legitimation of prior claimants. For ideology transfer, the socio-experiential sphere is thus an especially important analytical category. This is the sphere directly manipulated by configurations and reconfigurations whenever sites are repurposed.

A sacred site that has lost its original narrative is open for reinterpretation. A new group can make a claim without contesting it, so that comprehensive material interventions — beyond some restorations — are not as necessary as they would be in active locations. And yet, active sites are the ones preferred for occupation. The reason for this is based upon the process of identity negotiation. Transculturally expanding authorities seek to transfer their ideology to stabilize their presence in the new territory. The creation of a common line of moral orientation between (at least) two different cultural groups requires the localization of the transregional ideology. Newly introduced sites — be they of sacred, educational or military nature — are not an efficient means for localization and ideology transfer. Rather, they only delineate cultural borders. While they *do* mark the landscape and may introduce new hierarchical systems, they cannot shake off the stigma of being 'alien' to the indigenous population. This taint warps their intended function and tremendously inhibits the ideology transfer to the local level. Localizing by occupying preexisting sites thus makes a transregional ideology's codes of placement and representation much more relatable and acceptable. Transregional authorities hence need to identify the

sacred sites that are the most relevant to the local population to subject them to aggressive or mediative measures.

The most aggressive measure is certainly destruction. This removes the local population's choice and ensures that transregional sacred sites will quickly outnumber the indigenous ones. However, due to the stigma of foreignness, this is likely to motivate the indigenous population to fight back. Sacred site occupation, on the other hand, manipulates the spatial image with transregional cultural codes. It injects transregional content into the indigenous cultural landscape and thus adds to the choices of the local population instead of taking them away. Furthermore, the preexisting and still active sites are already socially relevant and do not require the propagandistic effort that newly established or reactivated sites need. They are also preferred because they may be placed in strategic positions, or since they are historically valued territorial markers, or due to their connection to the highest levels of the religious or worldly hierarchy. Especially during the integration of an entire territory into a religious network or into a state, the occupation of preexisting sites also provides economic advantages. It saves costs and materials and that helps to outcompete opposing groups. In historical China, for example, bureaucratic procedures recommended the occupation of preexisting sacred sites over the construction of new sites[240] because it was easier and less likely to aggravate the locals.

The longer a site exists,[241] the more likely claims are to change. Each new claim is followed by a sequence of spatial reconfigurations. These cause contradictions in the spatial image that make the site's communicative aspect imprecise. However, for the localization process of transregional ideologies, it suffices to create a superficial recognition of the official spatial imagination. The consumers merely need to realize what the site is supposed to be, independent of what it really is. Even if the narratives reproduced at contested sacred sites vary for each of the social groups attached to them, the competition between people with varying social backgrounds, cultural values and spatial experiences merely increases a site's relevance. The traces of the spatial reconfigurations required to adjust the site to a new official spatial imagination that fits the most

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240   Cf. Chao 2002, p. 32.

241   Cf. Läpple 1992, p. 203.

recent claim often remain discernable long after the reconfiguration event. The presence of spatial reconfigurations is thus a reliable indicator for preceding shifts in claims and patronage that have resulted from changes in local power dynamics. To use the analysis of spatial reconfigurations to reveal the nature of such changes extracts new knowledge about local historical developments.

If a sacred site is of high relevance to a transregional network, there will be many more comprehensive interventions in the spatial image than at sites of lower relevance. The locals can reject and defend against such interventions and for different reasons, claimholders from a transregional group may also favor local interests. Both interest groups can reconfigure sites in a way that benefits local identity. Some sites are merely contested because they are associated with very relevant locations [V.1.2.2.]; they tend to show more such counter-reconfigurations. To avoid this dissidence, transregional authorities use political and economic measures to nudge the local population into identifying with the transregional ideology presented to them at occupied sites. Localization is achieved if transregional content is reproduced in the local consciousness by indigenous mechanisms. This ensures the sustainability of a transregional authority's interpretative privilege and leads to cultural dominance. However, transcultural ideology transfer is not a straightforward process.

When transregional contents are negotiated with local ideas and values, this goes both ways and often results in hybridity. Conquerors and missionaries try to keep the degree of hybridity low because that allows them to comprehensively reconfigure active sacred sites. Locally functional sites that reproduce transregional ideology contribute to the reconfiguration of the entire local religious geography. If the locals do not possess measures of identity preservation, they are acculturated into the transregional network or state.

The perspective of the local authorities is hence quite different. They challenge transregional sacred sites by placing new local sites into their direct vicinity, introduce local deities into such recently erected transregional sites, or reinterpret foreign entities as (inferior) incarnations of local deities. They react to the violation of local interests in two ways:

1. <u>Local identity preservation</u> occurs if the local population rejects the transregional authority's interpretative privilege and resists against transcultural pressures in order to ensure a continuation of their established lifestyle. For the same reason, this approach usually avoids open conflicts.

2. <u>Ideology reassignment</u> occurs if a transregional ideology has been partially localized and the traditional local culture begins to dissolve. The local population fills the void by reassigning values of the transregional ideology to their own culture based on their own best interests. Newly crafted narratives can revitalize the social power of native authorities and support resistance. Such development can encourage open conflicts for the sake of achieving independence. A precondition for this is the continued presence of local authorities whose repertoire has been merely enhanced, so that they can differentiate themselves from the representatives of the transregional ideology.

Ideology reassignment may be followed by self-elevation. It alleges that one's own statehood or religion is more ancient than that of the colonizer/missionaries. This was indeed the case for Vietnam but also for Korea in their struggles against Chinese cultural dominance.[242] Self-elevation fuels fights for independence and enables secession by providing a new basis of legitimation. In colonial situations, conquered territories were often neither able to completely reject transregional ideology nor to reassign it. In such cases, high degrees of hybridity helped to preserve the local cultural identity.

In this way, transregional interventions in new territories lead to contested religious landscapes whose sacred sites generally show sliding scales of conformity with transregional ideology. Over the course of time, resilient sacred sites only persist if they are maintained by sufficiently active and motivated subpopulations. The mere existence of such subpopulations, already calls the

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242   See: Pai Hyung Il. Constructing "Korean" Origins: A Critical Review of Archaeology, Historiography, and Racial Myth in Korean State Formation Theories. Harvard: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000.

success of any transcultural ideology transfer into question. Experiential Architecture Analysis uses the context of spatial reconfigurations to reconstruct such socio-historical dynamics of ideology transfer as precisely as possible to identify the relevant subpopulations and their motivations. In the context of transhistorical dynamics, the original motivations behind spatial reconfigurations must be compared to the effects that they have realistically achieved. Reconciling intention, effect and long-term consequences enables the researcher to assess the impact that specific spatial reconfigurations have had on the success of ideology transfer.

Defining Spatial Reconfigurations and Reconfiguration Tactics

The case studies presented in this book focus on the spatial contestations between transregional and local authorities because the interventions of authorities are — thanks to their funding and education — commonly larger in scale. They hence leave stronger and more noticeable traces in the physical material. However, they are not the only ones creating reconfiguration events in sacred sites. When smaller groups are interested in affecting a site's RNIS but find themselves caught between competing authorities, they may intercept and adopt parts of the ideology transfer to serve their own best interests. Other parts of the local population and even individuals may also manipulate the site with minor acts of contestation, which is meant to enhance their own lives — they are often unaware how these acts may subvert the official spatial imagination of a dominant group.

The interventions of multiple groups with varying power levels leave "cracks"[243] in the spatial image of a site. These reflect the contrasting cultural codes in the Placed Material and become part of the site's material discourse. Since they are systematic relicts of reconfiguration events, I call these "cracks" Modification Patterns. They are evidence of the exhaustive localization measures which authorities conduct to achieve the goals of cultural and political dominance as well as stability. Authoritative spatial reconfigurations are willful acts executed to cause specific social effects. Various spatial recon-

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243   Cf. Knott 2005, p. 27.

figuration events[244] thus follow ideology-driven tactics that are meant to rewire the experience of a sacred site with the ideology that it is meant to reproduce. These modification patterns provide information about the <u>Reconfiguration Tactics</u> that a site has been subjected to:

A reconfiguration tactic is the sum of efforts deliberately invested into spatial reconfigurations and prescriptive interpretations to manage the social behavior within a site with the aim of representing a certain ideology.

If modification patterns of conflicting ideologies visually clash with each other, they constitute disharmonies. However, the sustainable reproduction of the claimant's ideology depends on the persuasiveness of the official spatial imagination as reflected in the spatial image. It needs to be coherent and noncontradictory[245] to make individual consumers accept the transferred ideology, to make them change their behavior and ideas. A rising number of disharmonies causes increasingly contradictory spatial images. This decreases the interpretative privilege of the culturally dominant group[246] and supplies the s e s with polysemous interpretative options. The agency is delegated to the site's consumers whose contemporary social environment leads them to accept, reject or modify the offered spatial organization presented to them. The traces that spatial reconfiguration events leave within the physical ensemble thus inform us about the experiential options available to the site's past consumers. The e a a uses reconfigurative analysis to expose how (dis-)advantageous varying reconfiguration processes were for the transcultural ideology transfer. This encompasses a rigorous spatial analysis to account for the symbolical-representative nature of a site's material aspect and a pragmatic approach to socio-spatial interactivity to transcend the previously overemphasized metaphysical religious space.

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244   Of course, there are also spatial reconfigurations that occur for solely practical reasons — like for maintenance, accessibility or restoration after disasters.

245   Cf. Mellmann 2014, p. 83, 91.

246   A consistent narrative of the site's spatial hierarchies can obscure numerous contradictions, though, which is why spatial reconfigurations primarily target relevant hierarchical points.

Certain reconfiguration tactics can be perceived as inherently more aggressive and others as more mediative in their pursuit of these goals. The kind of reconfiguration tactics that groups interacting with a desired sacred site choose, depends on local religious history, local power relations, and economic developments. An authority's specific choice to employ either aggressive or mediative reconfiguration tactics, in combination with what is known about the economic and political conditions in a site's environment, has tremendous effect on the success of ideology transfer and the establishment of dominance. Indeed, the unique socio-historical circumstances of a site may inverse the local effect of them: a high number of material disharmonies that show the strong contestations within a site's social environment may cause the applied reconfiguration tactics to achieve the opposite of what they originally had been meant to do. For this reason, it is important to understand that the analysis of reconfiguration tactics cannot determine a *certain* goal with *certain* results. It traces *a process* between a goal, the tactic used to achieve it, and the actual result of this process with its historical consequences. The initial analytical process requires a provisional estimation about whether an applied reconfiguration tactic was of a more aggressive or a more mediative nature for a specific site. The socio-historical context recreated at the end of the E A A should then reveal their ultimate effect: The reconfiguration tactics are reconciled with the historical and contemporary spatial images to conclude whether they successfully caused a transfer of ideology — and under what conditions, with what consequences — or if the transfer was rejected, and by which means, with what results.

3 How to Conduct Experiential Architecture Analysis

Three things are needed to reveal the spatial reconfigurations employed in a site's history: a careful analysis of the spatial hierarchies, studying the representation in material and written texts, and observing the treatment of the site in third party resources. This is derived from Cosgrove and Daniels' demand[247] to read the material — in this case architectural compositions — with all their expressions and the complete available evidence about the creation, changes, sustaining and visiting of a site. Correspondingly, the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS analyzes architectural compositions, their functions, their social roles and their status in collective memory. It gathers information from the material, from authoritative interventions and experiential interactions to deepen the understanding for the creation, location and design of a site; for its ownership, patronage, meaning and acceptance from multiple perspectives. These perspectives are sorted by identifying the groups who are involved in and interacting with the site. The tracking down of spatial reconfigurations helps to reveal power impositions in any type of place and the analysis of the applied reconfiguration tactics provides new opportunities to explain the interests and motives behind minor and massive material interventions. The theoretical approaches of religious studies, anthropology and political science are useful to contextualize the analytical findings with the greater historical developments of a relevant area to illuminate the successes, failures and consequences of ideology transfer. The EAA thus helps to examine the consequences of elite interactions with a site and their representation to certain parts of the population in order to eventually determine the site's role in the local and transregional developments. This presents a more rounded image of local historical pasts.

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247   Cf. Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, pp. 126–27.

The following pages introduce the application of the EAA and provide details on how to carry it out. First, we need to regard the available resources, the condition of conventional architectural analysis and the spatial hierarchies connected to the REGULATORY NORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL and SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERES.

Part of the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS process for historical settings is the recreation of the spatial images of preceding construction phases. The necessary data can be collected from a variety of resources, some of which also provide information about the groups attached to a site. Here are some relevant examples from the Sinosphere:

I. Non-textual Materials

Nontextual materials are of local or distant nature. Many of them relate to spatial hierarchies, for example, the most important local material is the architectural composition itself. The layout of a site is noted for 'stationary' elements (multi-building structures, towers) or 'flexible' elements (smaller buildings, shrines, content and decorations).[248] Past interactions by consumers can be traced, e.g., by the placements of additional votive objects to sites and shrines. These imply, for example, that certain religious needs of the consumers were not met and their nature can reveal the identity of the group who felt the need to intervene. In some ideal cases, older votive objects may survive in less prominent areas of a site. Additionally, the analysis of structural and representational reconfigurations for the interpretation of consumer interactions is complemented by the condition of materials within the site. For example, if fresh incense and fresh sacrifices are placed at low-ranking shrines while the main icons in the main hall are dust-ridden and their altars are empty, this implies that the claim of a dominant religious group does not translate into local religious practice. Such disharmonies are a good basis for an investigation to find out which groups are interested and active in the site and how they are able to influence it. For historical settings, archaeological excavations give additional information about the use sacrificial goods or sacrificial endowments in the laying of the groundwork.

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248   Cf. Großmann 2010, pp. 45–46.

The importance attached to a sacred site is determined by studying the site's location in the transregional contexts of politics, religious movements, and merchant networks, as well as by observing the surrounding landscape and its accessibility. The vicinity of the site may show donated fields or attributed infrastructures like wells and bridges. The "setting" of the site helps to narrow down the social dynamics that it could have been part of. Depictions of the site, like paintings, models, ceramics and photographs are distant materials, because they are rarely stored locally. Instead, they are meant to provide an impression of the site to those who cannot visit in person. Depictions are also static and directive — they show the site only at one certain stage and force a specific perspective upon the consumers. Consequently, depictions can control the perception of the site and are not necessarily authentic.

II. Material Texts

Some objects carry text inscriptions. Such objects may be mobile, like travel shrines, inscribed cups or amulets. Others, like the steles that are common in Asia, are consciously placed at sites, close to sites, or in nature. Steles provide relevant information about a site's construction date, inauguration, affiliation, function, legends and performed rituals. They relate which groups were interested in the site, who sponsored its construction and maintenance and which persons were involved during important events. Chinese steles originated as markers of sacred sites and tombs. Later, they also served as public memorials for rituals, donations and honored persons. Temple steles often describe former construction phases or recent renovations and provide details about what has changed. Oftentimes, the creation of steles and cliff inscriptions was considered prestigious,[249] just like the writing of name plaques for temple buildings.[250] The columns flanking temples and shrines in East Asia also help to categorize sites. Inscriptions in the landscape (hill sites, crossroads) were not necessarily related to specific sites, but could mark the presence of religious groups. For example, during the fifth century, private persons and lay associations began to sponsor

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249 Cf. Rösch 2010, pp. 29–30.

250 After the eleventh century, these became a tool for ranking by the government. Cf. Hansen 1990, pp. 80–81.

Buddhist steles to accumulate religious merit by marking the landscape. Less officially, craftsmen often left ink-painted inscriptions about construction dates and sponsors on the horizontal beams of roof structures. Some consumers of a site may leave graffiti at the bases of statues or at the insides of shrines — such individual interactions reflect a site's importance, content or accessibility.[251]

III. Nonofficial Texts

Private and semi-official document resources were written under less normative pressure than official texts. Private texts, like the Chinese *biji* 筆記 ['[Personal] Notes'], contain personal thoughts, anecdotes, descriptions, but also composed stories. They commonly describe sites, interactions or relate narratives that the author collected for only a very limited audience. However, occasionally such notes — especially travelogues — were published in local gazetteers. The experiences of local elites or ancestors were often not included in official documents, but described in a more or less purple prose in nonofficial texts. They are also valuable for the collection of oral narratives and legends and the descriptions of mundane events. Poetry often transcended the line between private and semi-official publications. For example, female poetry had the freedom to show a more differentiated approach to various topics because it was not expected to be published.[252]

Religious treatises, lore, hymns, ritual descriptions, administrative texts and chronicles are typical semi-official texts meant to be read by a wider audience.

Texts composed by highly educated scholars also have a special position because they were often created with a semi-official character directed towards other literati but without the perspective of an office-holder. Nonofficial texts on architectural materials encompass, in particular, the late imperial catalogues of famous sites,[253] which had developed from leisurely travelogues to (mostly) governmental registers of ancient monuments.

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251   Cf. Großmann 2010, p. 36.

252   Cf. Rexroth and Zhong 1982, pp. 36–37.

253   One of the earliest fully illustrated catalogues of famous sites was published in 1609. Cf. Lin Li-Chiang. "A Study of the *Xinjuan hainei qiguan*, a Ming Dynasty Book of Famous Sites." In *Bridges to Heaven. Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong*, edited by Jerome Silbergeld et.al., 779–812. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

IV. Official Texts

Official documents may not contain many detailed descriptions, but they offer a lot of contextual information — as well as judgments about what was deemed appropriate or not. They can be separated into three categories: texts with a direct function, with an archival function, or creative texts in a governmental context. Texts with a direct function are meant to cause immediate reactions — these are imperial edicts, orders, itineraries and fiscal materials. They can provide, for example, information about a community's wealth, donations to religious groups or the number of monks freed from taxes. In Vietnam, these also contained the registers of people indentured to Buddhist estates.

Building regulations bridge direct and archival functions. Archival texts preserve information for later generations — these are, e.g., state sponsored histories, official biographies or law codices. Local gazetteers provide condensed data about the areas that they treat. They contain longer descriptions of sites and rituals, quotes from other and possibly no longer existing texts as well as legends and other narratives. However, local gazetteers also had official agendas and were often strongly edited.[254] As normative documents, they were held up to cultural values that enforced omission of whatever was deemed inappropriate, problematic or heterodox. Since an official's rank could depend on the quality of their writing, most other literature produced by them was normative as well. Even an official's creative texts — poems, musings, captions to illustrations — were evaluated in the governmental context and thus had to adhere to imperial norms. However, sometimes normative texts mention interactions that their authors did not approve of. And while these will be described negatively, they are sometimes the only evidence left for certain groups and practices. Officials may also note down strong reactions of the local population, like petitions and vandalism. These allow to estimate how pervasive transcultural ideology transfer was so far.

V. Other Resources

Recently, many more resources have become available. Databases collect geographical, general historical and art historical information. They connect

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254   Cf. Moll-Murata 2001. pp. 219–237.

unprecedented amounts of information that enable researchers to find new contexts and patterns within. Multiple interdisciplinary projects combine their data to generate new knowledge, while others make rare historical texts accessible. Previously, archaeological excavation reports took years to be published and were hence often overlooked. These are now more commonly collected centrally and reach a wider reception. They are most valuable resources because they contain measurements and stratigraphical data that an individual researcher cannot produce. They also provide the dating of layers, components and objects close to sacred sites which helps to date the architectural structures. However, due to economic factors, more obscure sites are less likely to have been excavated with a published report.

Traditional Architecture Analysis

The EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS advances conventional approaches of architectural analysis that developed primarily in art history and archaeology. These discussed the sources, the iconography, philosophy or the stylistic history of architecture, but did not question the architectural compositions themselves. Yet, historical building methods researcher Ulrich Großmann insists that it is the most important task to check the established claims of a site; he compares this to finding the original source of a quote. Doing so unravels the multi-layered metaphysical space attached to institutional buildings.[255]

Modern architectural analysis relies heavily on comprehensive descriptions of sites and demands thorough on-site surveys. Only if this is not feasible, the documentation of a site based upon available third-party resources becomes the next best option. The comprehensive descriptions are enhanced by construction data regarding the historical and political interactions with the site, the budgeting of the construction project, and its cultural relations.[256] This may already help to contextualize a site with the developments in its local, regional and national vicinity, but the EAA demands a *complete site survey* that not only regards the current spatial image, but also multiple historical layouts from the

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255   Cf. Großmann 2010, p. 8; Conways and Roensch 2005, pp. 49–51.

256   Cf. Druzynski et. al. 2020, p. 9.

site's different construction phases. So far, such surveys have been rarely conducted in conventional architecture analysis due to inhibited academic communication[257] and financial restraints, which also have led to a lack of technical data.[258] While a technologically enhanced site investigation is always preferable, the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS offers the advantage of not being dependent on precise material dating. With the addition of a certain level of cultural comprehension, relative dating is sufficient for the determination of spatial reconfigurations inspired by differing spatial hierarchies.

Thus, another important task that the EAA fulfills is the transcension of limited disciplinary approaches to the material. It connects the questions posed to architectural compositions by sociology, religious studies, area studies and political studies by correlating the material with the ideological. Ideology determines the identity, function, usage and especially the preservation of architectural compositions, so a thorough analysis in relation to the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE can fill gaps between the local history as it *likely* happened and the narratives that normative sources have created *about* how it allegedly happened.

The Analytical Function of Spatial Hierarchies

The representative spatial organization of a site expresses the narratives attached its REGULATORY NORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL SPHERE. It is carefully constructed to affect the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE by offering behavioral presets and social-group-specific hierarchical orders that prompt the site's consumers to reproduce these narratives. As Francis D. Ching wrote: "The manner in which the functional or symbolic differences among a building's elements are revealed is critical to the establishment of a visible, hierar-

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257   Laser scanning, aerial surveys, Structure From Motion technology, or simply opportunity to acquire skills like CAD and GIS are common parts of geographical, architectural and archaeological studies but are hardly accessible for researchers of religious studies, area studies or sociology.

258   Großmann 2010, pp. 13–18 goes into detail on the necessity of exact dating for good art history research on architecture, how rarely any accurate site surveys take place, and how a lack of funding makes traditional architecture analysis vulnerable to being questioned by researchers of other disciplines.

chical order among its forms and spaces."[259] There are three greater categories of spatial hierarchies which are presented next in the context of East Asian identity negotiation.

The External Hierarchies

These describe the social evaluation of a site as it is treated by external powers and represented in third-party media. The external treatment refers to, for example, (1) the amount of money and security spent on the site, (2) officially sponsored name plaques or titles attached to the site's buildings, or to (3) the site's transregional value expressed by the rank attributed to it. If sacred sites receive patronage from elite groups or support from a village federation, they often have a high visibility, are thus easier to recognize, and are generally kept in better condition.

The representation in third-party media can refer to paintings, descriptions and maps. The use of allusive names and categorizing suffixes/prefixes commonly reflects elite agendas more than material reality. This can help to 'hide' heterodox sites under a favored suffix. The way in which names and suffixes are used can thus reshape the interpretation of entire territories by presetting the expectations of the medium's consumers. An example: if consumers expect that a site is Confucian, they can easily miss any non-Confucian attributes. Especially maps can be more ideological than accurate. The misrepresentation of sacred sites in maps and travelogues could lead the members of transregional groups to visit contested sites — where the transregional claim was possibly not yet firmly established — as part of their own network, which would strengthen the transregional claim and intensify local frictions.

The Outer Hierarchies

These close the gap between the physical and the metaphysical aspects of space. They refer to the site's invisible social ties, to the placement of the site in a proximity or a periphery, to its accessibility, and to matters of geomancy. For example, the temples for water deities are usually close to water, those for mountain deities on the top of mountains and the sites of territorial tutelary

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259   Ching 2007, p. 358.

deities are placed close to political centers or borders. Deviations, like inexplicable geographic distances from an entity's point of relevance,[260] are indications of socio-historical frictions. The geographical and ideational proximity to a nexus of political or religious power influences a sacred site's ability to produce sufficient transregional legitimation. For example, sites located in peripheries are more susceptible to local ideologies.[261] The importance of a site is also emphasized — in dependence to specific cultural ideas — by how hard or easy it is to access. Religious and political authorities can obstruct or prevent the access to a site, or they can clear forests and create infrastructure to facilitate the access to it. The latter also makes it easier to keep a site under control. In East Asia, the placement of sites also commonly used to be subjected to the value system of geomancy (see Chapter I). The field of geomancy claims that placing sites in locations with special traits affects environmental energy,[262] which either leads to the success or demise of local powers.

The Inner Hierarchies

These determine the relation between objects, buildings and 'empty' space in an ensemble. For the consumers of sacred sites, inner hierarchies are the codes to the site's message. They connect the site's spatial image with its offered spatial imaginations but concurrently offer the option to reject them. Inner hierarchies use anomalies to create emphases throughout the site. A site can contain multiple points of emphasis, e.g., repetitions and elements that increase in number to create tensions and rhythm.[263] Emphasis and rhythm are relevant to culture-specific religious aesthetics, like concepts of sacred geometry.[264] Even if the inner hierarchies direct the evaluation and categorization of an experienced site, it is the cultural background of the consumers that determines the contents and results of such analysis. Inner hierarchies also apply to the microspace of

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260   For an example, cf. Huang Fei 2018, pp. 111–150.

261   Local authorities had easier uninterrupted access to peripheral sites and thus the opportunity to counter-reconfigure them.

262   Cf. Gao Youqian 2007, pp. 33–36, 77, 107.

263   Cf. Ching 2007, pp. 358–59, 382.

264   Cf. Memar 2009, pp. 2–3, 39; Cf. Ching 2007, p. 359.

the presented content — the religious objects that make up ensembles inside a building or which are placed in the vicinity and in relation to a site's ensemble. The presented content communicates the identity of a sacred site based on the presence of specific symbols, entities and other culturally charged objects.

The following pages introduce the most important factors of inner hierarchies based on Parya Memar's[265] approach.

Setting and Placement predetermine the consumer's categorization and expectations for a site's experience. The placement of the entire site depends mostly on ecological, tactical and economic reasons. For example, there is the friction of distance, the availability of water and infrastructure or how exposed or hidden the location is (e.g., on top of a mountain or inside a cave). Placements within the site stratify more and less important buildings by distance, rhythm[266] or the proximity to the entrance, center or end of a central axis. The orientation of buildings depends on climatic or scenic aspects, questions of accessibility, but also on spiritual influences[267] — like the potentially blessed or unlucky directions of geomancy.

Traffic Paths can manipulate the consumer's perception. They are meant to lead a passive consumer through the site to serve the sponsor's narrative. For example, the paths to the buildings that are relevant to the claimants may be kept in pristine condition. A building at the end of the main path is thus marked as the most relevant, emphasized by the path being especially wide and made from high quality materials to evoke awe and humility. Occasionally, consumers are made to suffer burdens[268] before they can experience a site's

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265   Cf. Memar 2009. pp. 64–104.

266   Cf. Low 2017, p. 103, i.e., repetitions and symmetries in architectural structures, the repetition of room structures or identically-looking buildings. This is not the rhythm of rhythm analysis which refers to spatial interactions during specific events, like rituals.

267   Cf. Ching 2007, p. 198, 259.

268   In East Asia, this usually means to climb many stairs up a mountain or to enter a dark cave. Well-known examples outside East Asia are, for example, the shrines of female saints in Israel that are commonly located in caves (Cave of Hanna Milk Grotto), tombs (of Mary, of Rachel) and wells (Mary's Well), so that visitors must enter a small, dark chamber and, according to their beliefs, reemerge 'changed.'

core content. This may be done for internal religious reasons, like marking exceptionality. Alternatively, authorities may restrict the access to a site or to certain parts of it entirely or for specific groups.[269] Traffic paths depend on the consumer's collaboration since the offered paths and narratives can be rejected. The consumer may choose to follow different ways, thus modifying the socio-experiential message they gather from the site. Traffic paths are thus an especially relevant element for the analysis of multilocal sites.

Height, Size and shape convey the inner hierarchies from a distance. They are mostly about visibility and effort. Height is expressed by multiple stories, platforms or clerestories but also by placing buildings on natural hills and mountains. Towers make a site much more visible from afar. Big buildings are more expensive in construction and upkeep, they hence tend to be the most important ones. Depth and width raise the amount of time and effort required to cross a room, this gives more time to the consumer to contemplate the building's meaning and content. If the internal space of a building is wider or higher than practical reason would seem to indicate, size itself turns into a symbol. Anomalous shapes, like a pyramid among squares or a circle on top of a square, are another expression of emphasis. However, they can only serve as hierarchical tools within the general trends[270] of their time or culture.

Materials have different meanings in their varying cultural context. Valuable materials usually directly reflect the importance of a building — at least in the intention of its sponsors. Some materials may be reserved for certain usages (e.g., white jade), others are meant to provide specific functions. For example, stone inscriptions are meant to transfer the endurance of stone to the content of the text. Furthermore, materials contribute to symbolical meanings by their colors and patterns.

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269   Cf. Hägerstrand 1970, p. 16 "authority constraints."
270   Cf. Conway and Roensch 2005, pp. 62, 66, Memar 2009, p. 93.

Lighting directly influences the experience of the site, but the way that it does so is very culturally specific[271] and often tied to ideas of purity and impurity. For some religious groups, high-ranking buildings are built open-style and flooded with light while others emphasize dark, contained places to create a sense of mystery.

Decorations inside and outside provide extensive information about a building or room. They support the consumer's cognitive determination of a building's structure and meaning. Especially in East Asia, official standards limit which decorations are allowed for which building rank.[272] Aside from conveying narratives about heroes, deities and local worthies, decorations can also cause 'warm' or 'cold' affects within the consumers. If decorations are found in hidden locations, they hint at possibly subversive narratives that may mark a hidden spatial identity within the site. Such decorations contest transregional ideology if they depict heterodox content like nudity or outlawed entities.

Atmosphere is a preliminary expression of the Socio-Experiential Sphere and strongly affected by the rnis.[273] When the consumers perceive a site's ensemble, they reconcile their individual spatial imagination to the atmospheric quality of the spatial image. This involves the connection of sensual perceptions like smell, noise, humidity or temperature with other recognized spatial hierarchies. In institutional spaces, the factors for creating atmosphere are tightly controlled in coercive contexts that regulate the available range of experiences and the access to the transcendental. The suppression of senses, e.g., by silence or darkness, is of an especially emphasizing quality. What is perceived or not contributes to the atmospheric quality and thus to the spatial

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271 Cf. Conway and Roensch 2005, pp. 73–74.

272 Cf. Memar 2009, pp. 28, 59. For a comprehensive article on hierarchical decoration in the Palace Museum of Beijing, see: Jiang Chun and Fan Yu. "Cultural Metaphors in China: A Visual Experience of Hierarchy and Status Symbols." *International Communication Studies* XVII 1 (2008): 71–78.

273 For the conceptualization of the term atmosphere in religious studies, see: Radermacher, Martin. "'Atmosphäre': Zum Potenzial eines Konzepts für die Religionswissenschaft." *Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft* 26, no. 1 (2018): 142–194.

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experience. A *healing atmosphere* is a special type of sensory experience:[274] the mere contact with a sacred site may be considered as healing by magical contagion. It may relate to rituals like spirit possessions, magical healing, healing water or other objects that connect space, objects or performance to curing experiences.

However, this is very difficult to track in a hierarchical sense. Atmosphere is by nature ephemeral and individualistic because the perceiver of an atmosphere is also its co-creator. To analyze the concept of atmosphere, Heidemann introduced the Japanese term *ajiwau* 味わう, which roughly means "to know by (bodily) experience."[275]

Travelers, believers and even skeptical observers do indeed describe atmosphere in historical sources. Their descriptions of the other hierarchical factors and the environment, combined with their own perspective, allow for the careful estimation of general values attached to certain symbols and styles to gain an idea of the contemporary atmospheric setting.

The Procedure

The Experiential Architecture Analysis is a method that I developed during multiple field research stays in China and Vietnam. Including the case study clusters presented in this book, I surveyed more than 43 temples in both countries. I continuously refined the concept of the EAA while undertaking those surveys until it became the reproducible approach presented here. This is an approach that analyzes the placed material of sacred sites in context with related traditional sources to track down evidence for the ideas that influenced such sites' regulatory normative institutional sphere and which are then connected to the socio-historical dynamics of the area.

The basis of the EAA is the creation of a survey with a complementary Deep Description and a documentation of the site's spatial hierarchies. Such

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274   Cf. Low 2017, p. 100.

275   Cf. Heidemann 2017, pp. 457–58.

a tight documentation and interpretation of the site's spatial image reveals the socio-historical dynamics that it was subjected to. The EAA contributes information by the following steps:

I. The historical part of the EAA tracks down the site's construction phases and reconfigurations. It explains how and why certain reconfigurations were sponsored and explores the socio-cultural background of the site's consumers.

II. The spatial analytical part outlines how reconfiguration events were executed and how they possibly affected consumers.

III. The contextualizing part provides the basis to evaluate which social effects the reconfigurations of the site had and if the applied reconfiguration tactics led to the desired results or not.

This makes the SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE tangible. When the primary results are contextualized with the transhistorical developments of locally invested social groups, ideally, there is evidence from material and historical documents or interviews that helps to evaluate the needs of the locals, the interests of invested elite groups and the activities of transregional authorities and their representatives. This makes it easier to deduce the motivations behind the reconfiguration tactics that were applied, which reflect dominant trends in the RNIS and may highlight possible tensions between transregional and local spatial imaginations. That allows to evaluate the success and consequences of transcultural ideology transfer to a specific site and its vicinity. The EAA can hence ascertain the effectiveness of specific spatial reconfigurations and comprehensive reconfiguration tactics for the transmission of their sponsor's intended narratives to a specific area. In sum, it helps to determine if local dynamics fit or diverge from historical trends. The following pages describe an idealized application of EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS in the East Asian context:

1. Locating Places of Interest

At the start of a research project, the researcher must decide if they will focus on singular buildings or entire sites. What nature do they belong to? Are they infrastructures, like train or mail relay stations? Are they sites of entertainment and social gathering? Are they of governmental, educative or military nature? Or are they symbolical and monumental sites, like towers, museums and sacred sites? All of these refer to a unique section of social experience, so it is helpful to make a list of typical locations and traits that the sites of interest should have. Maps and the geographic section of general and local histories help to find sites that fit the criteria by topographical location or toponyms. During field work, the oral accounts of locals help to find additional relevant sites.

There are suffixes used in East Asian maps that help to superficially categorize the types of sites. However, place names can be misleading and suffixes can be attributed inappropriately. The toponymy hence requires refinement from the histories and local gazetteers (if available). These contain tables and lists for certain types of buildings and infrastructures whose entries ideally extend beyond the mere name and describe the corresponding location, history, rituals and local legends (commonly in this order). A well-prepared toponymy contributes to the finding of sites with relevant characteristics and prevents a collection of sampled sites from becoming arbitrary. Furthermore, an extensive toponymy contributes to the creation of clusters for the early detection of trends — in this case, transregional connections.

To find the hydrolatric temples for the research presented in this book, I began to identify hydronyms in Sinitic thought — toponyms that refer to water, aquatic beings and hidden dragons. These were sorted into five categories, some of which are analogies ("azure", "jade", "salt"), others infrastructures or antagonists ("drought"). It was, of course, important to know the names of important water deities because the toponyms of sacred sites can refer to them in abbreviated or mixed forms. At the limit of my scope, I included toponyms that are only related in the metaphorical sense, like "efficacy", "bronze drum", "swallow" or "oyster".

[Tab. 1] A Chart of Toponyms Used to Find Relevant Sites of Hydrolatry

Obvious	Associated	Lifeforms	Deities	Special
river: *he* 河 *jiang* 江 *chuan* 川 *shui* 水	cave or grotto: *dong* 洞 *xue* 穴 *shiku* 石窟	dragons: *long* 龍 *jiao* 蛟 *chi* 螭	Chuanzhu 川主	efficacy: *ling* 靈
rain: *yu* 雨 spring: *quan* 泉 waterfall: *pu* 瀑	salt: *yan* 鹽 saline pond: *xie* 澥 saline marsh: *xi* 潟	lizard: *xiyi* 蜥蜴 *bihu* 壁虎	Erlangshen 二郎神	energy: *qi* 氣
creek: *xi* 溪	bridge: *qiao* 橋	carp: *li* 鯉	Shuimu 水母(娘娘)	
whirlpool: *xuanwo* 漩渦	drought: *han* 旱	turtle: *gui* 龜	Guanyin 觀音	
lake or pond: *hu* 湖 *pao* 泡 *chi* 池 *tang* 塘 *zhu* 瀦	to wash/im- merse: *xi* 洗 *dang* 蕩 *jin* 浸	frogs and toads: *wa* 蛙 *ha* 蛤 *chu* 蜍 *meng* 黽	of irrigation: *guan* 灌 *gai* 溉 *jiao* 澆 *wo* 沃	
cloud: *yun* 雲 fog: *wu* 霧 dew: *lu* 露 mist: *lan* 嵐 *ai* 靄	azure: *qing* 青 indigo: *lan* 藍 jade: *yu* 玉 *bi* 碧	fish: *yu* 魚 oyster: *hao* 蚝 swallow: *yan* 燕 otter: *ta* 獺 snake: *she* 蛇	of crossing the river: *ji* 济	
pool: *ze* 澤 *tan* 潭 *yuan* 淵	dike: *tang* 塘 weir: *yan* 堰	lotus: *lian* 蓮 reed: *lu* 蘆	of inundation: *fan* 范	
swamp: *jiao* 湫 *sou* 藪 *wa* 窊	cliff: *yan* 巖 *ya* 崖		of bronze drums: *tonggu* 銅鼓	

2. The Deep Description

Clifford Geertz's[276] Thick Description refers to the intensive, small-scale description of social actions, including the subjective interpretations of the observer. It is meant to position the symbols, meanings and values interpreted from the observed social actions into their broader context of specific cultural behavior. Geertz advocated for thoroughness instead of straightforwardness and emphasized the importance of contextual cultural understanding.

The Deep Description works in a similar way and with an analogous goal, but it is dedicated to the comprehensive descriptions of objects[277] and architectural space within their social context. The basis for the Deep Description is a site survey. In contrast to the surveys carried out by historical building research, this is less focused on material components and measurements,[278] but more on the spatial relationships between buildings, objects and infrastructure as people have placed and used them. In preparation for the survey, the researcher studies the target site for its represented image found among the publicly available information regarding its nature, age, location, heritage, dedication, or suggested functions. The researcher constructs a preliminary spatial image of the site that summarizes the known contemporary external hierarchies which are intended to predefine consumer behavior. If the predefined interpretation can be *consciously* rejected, it becomes easier to notice reconfigurations and contestations. This crucial step enables the researcher to differentiate between the official narrative that is presented to them and the site's experiential properties which they actually observe.

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276   Cf. Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

277   After I had determined this term for my method, I came across a blog article from 2015, created by Margaret M. Bruchac of the Penn Cultural Heritage Center. She used the term 'Deep Description' for the act of creating extremely detailed descriptions of museum objects in the context of the colonized North American histories of the indigenous. I contacted Prof. Bruchac in March 2020 and received a warm reply stating that she does not plan to continue systematic work on this term. Yet, she agreed that the Deep Description is an important and helpful tool to avoid aesthetic and colonial biases and to reveal local histories wherever they have been clouded by transregional voices. Cf. Deep Description and Reflexivity: Methods for Recovering Object Histories. Penn Museum Blog, Bruchac, M. Accessed 02 March 2020 https://repository.upenn.edu/anthro_papers/147.

278   Cf. Großmann 2010, pp. 59–62.

If a site no longer exists or is no longer accessible, one cannot avoid relying upon historical descriptions. In all other cases, site surveys are the preferred way to verify a spatial image, to evaluate the quality of construction,[279] and to gain a sense of immediacy which is an important factor for the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS. On the background of culturally presupposed spatial imaginations, immediacy connects the material reality with human interaction. It relates the site's experiential qualities and enables the observer to discover affective situations and other details that are not conveyed by secondary media.

An ideal survey consists of multiple walks. During the first walk, the researcher enacts the official spatial imagination offered to them to roughly approximate the effect of the spatial image on the SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE. They should avoid following the paths and spatial hierarchies that they are used to in their own culture. The survey(s) should produce illustrative, photographic or video material to preserve the status of the site for future studies.[280] Textual descriptions must be carefully detailed because the loss of relevant information could skew later interpretations. Visual material and text description are paired to avoid the former's forced perspective and to close the information gaps in the latter. The detail level of the description rises with the time spent at the site to ensure that every stone may be turned, every stele written down and dated. However, if the time and access to the site is limited, then the description should focus on making the site as re-experiential as possible.

The survey begins with notes of the site's vicinity and setting, e.g., concerning its urbaneness, significant landmarks and accessibility. How do people talk about the site? Are owners and caretakers approachable, secretive or intimidated? What is the first impression of the atmosphere and condition of the site? Are there any immediate disharmonies visible from the outside? Is the site entered through its original entrance or via an alternative? Are there money barriers and whom do they apply to? Is the entrance followed by open space or by obviously suggested traffic paths? Such and similar questions accompany the observer throughout the entire site. The description then lists the number, order and arrangement of buildings as encountered in the site while noting

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279   Cf. Druzynski et. al. 2020, p. 9.
280   Cf. Großmann 2010, pp. 62–63.

their (1) size, (2) shape and (3) sequence along the traffic paths, their (4) names, (5) building types, (6) decoration and (7) relationships to each other. Which parts of every building within the site can be accessed? If buildings that should be relevant by their placement are inaccessible, a peek inside — if possible — may help to find out about the reasons for the obstruction.[281]

The first walk, or any observations of the consumers while conducting it, may point to contestations. These are explored during successive walks along alternative paths. If time allows, a last walk is conducted in a systematic way 'against the grain' to break conventional assumptions and to be more aware of possible disharmonies. Any anomalies and divergences from an alleged ideal standard need to be carefully described.

When the structures, buildings and possible traffic paths are accounted for, the survey moves on to the content of the buildings. The researcher describes the interior and the perceived atmosphere as objectively as possible and should note, if feasible, whether the suggested function of the hall fits its presentation, for example by the amount of decoration or care. It is also relevant to see if anything else is stored in the building — are there exhibition objects or are parts of the building used like a stockroom? Are there communal or representative zones? For temples, the number of shrines and icons needs to be counted with notes on whom they represent and how they are arranged (in juxtaposition) to each other. Are the shrines cared for or in a bad condition? How durable are the offerings on the altar? Their durability may suggest how often the shrine is interacted with. Individual objects are described according to the traditional rules of iconography.

After the survey is conducted and the text description created, the resulting Deep Description should conjure an almost lifelike image of the site without falling into the bias of aesthetic beauty. In consideration of each researcher's interpretive bias, it is preferable if the Deep Description does not include too many interpretations. Although the researcher may already tentatively identify and categorize icons and objects, such initial interpretations may have to be retracted during analysis. The less interpretation there is, the better the

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281   In such cases, a talk to local representatives and caretakers is useful to learn if a building is only temporarily or permanently closed and whether that is for technical, practical or religious reasons.

Deep Description can be used as a resource for future projects and to verify if subsequent theories and interpretations fit or whether they need correction.

3. Archaeological Evidence

There are some challenges in the tracing of spatial reconfigurations and re-dedications. Textual resources, especially the more available normative texts, often contain some (self-)censorship and the East Asian timber frame structure system means that temples were regularly destroyed and rebuilt for various reasons not related to ideology.

Archaeology offers some assistance in reconstructing and dating earlier construction phases. For example, aerial archaeology[282] can reveal the distribution of sites or show the (few) layout(s) of destroyed sites because post holes, pillar foundations and walls mark the former size and structure of buildings. If a collaboration with archaeologists is possible, laser-scanning, carbon dating and similar techniques help to support age estimations and interpretations about cultural and historical context.

The Landscape Studies use field walking to find points of settlement and cultural interaction.[283] Surface archaeology[284] provides a good ratio of maximized information on very limited budgets[285] and may lead to the discovery of objects. However, archaeological surface surveys at active sacred sites are rather difficult. If there is more interaction, this leads to more fluctuation of objects, so the number of surviving historical objects that one can find is comparatively low. Those objects that remain were often consciously left behind, placed or

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282 See Song Baoquan. Investigations for Using Aerial Archaeology in China. Proceedings of the International Conference on "Chinese Archaeology Enters the Twenty-First Century" Peking, May 1993. Peking: Guoxue chubanshe, 1998. pp. 596–612.

283 Cf. Muir 2005, pp. 73–74.

284 Cf. Ebert, James I., Signa Larralde, and LuAnn Wandsnider. "Distribution Archaeology: Survey, Mapping, and Analysis of Surface Archaeological Materials in the Green River Basin, Wyoming." *Anthropology Faculty Publications* 111, (1987). Accessed 10th May 2020. http://digitalcommuns.unl.edu/anthropologyfacpub/111.

285 Especially when traveling as a private person, legal restrictions must be observed. Unlicensed digging must be avoided, nor should objects be removed or structures manipulated. Any findings must be reported to the proper authorities to let them schedule excavations with local archaeologists.

translocated. Excavated objects are evidence for the social groups who were active at a site. They are commonly stored in musealized rooms within the site, in museums near the site or in the provincial museum.

4. Observing Inner Hierarchies

To account for all material evidence, the researcher notes the structural arrangements within the Placed Material into a hierarchic scheme that is then compared to typical layouts of sites in the same category. This indicates if main deities conform to the official affiliation of the sacred site and whether the temple fits the suffix attributed to it. If there are any divergences, this is proof that spatial reconfigurations have occurred. Further disharmonies are listed, categorized and sorted into:

1. accommodating building measures (e.g., if a community grew strongly)
2. maintenance renovations
3. governmental interventions
4. other nonpractical changes

Especially the latter two will most likely reveal common structural reconfigurations. As the researcher compares these to the contemporary spatial image, they can already identify groups who have been active at the site. The sum of reconfigurations gives a first impression about the more aggressive or mediative nature of past interventions. This enables the researcher to 'reverse-engineer' the layouts of previous construction phases.

5. Contextualizing the Presentation of Content

The analysis of the presented content in the context with its direct, indirect and social environment exposes the presentation, expression and contestation of the ideologies involved with the site. The presented content is constituted by all the formerly described symbolic decorations and objects, including icons and anicons.[286] A researcher needs to note in which hall what icons and objects were

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286   Anicons are objects that are used to emphasize the absence of a more typical icon of a living being.

found, in which context they were placed, how they relate to each other, and if they represent a coherent ensemble regarding the affiliation of the building or site that they are found in. After doing so, the researcher identifies the presented icons carefully and checks them for derivations from standard iconographies and other indicators for hybridity, as well as for shared or rededicated symbols and if their hierarchical position is typical for the religion and area. Do icons and symbols appear in unexpected places? Are the icons venerated or neglected? To which social groups do the represented entities belong and do these groups have access to the building? This nonconclusive list of possible questions may lead to the detection of even more reconfigurations.

6. The Interpretive Survey

The interpretative survey discloses nudging factors among the spatial hierarchies and presented content. It is the summation of the previous steps and refines the raw data into the basis of a case study. The interpretative survey is a condensed description of the site that focuses on specific research questions and leaves out irrelevant sections for the sake of readability. It is enhanced with definitive interpretations of the site, its spatial structure and presented objects. The interpretative survey incorporates information that was gained from interviews with local consumers, caretakers, and authorities or from the description of ritual interactions. In contemporary studies, it is possible to gather further information from observing the usage of buildings and alternative traffic paths, the sequence in which buildings are visited, or/and private ritual performances.

All of this is contrasted with the spatial image encountered during the site survey to reveal the spatial imaginations that have been projected onto the site. This enables the researcher to feasibly relate the traces of spatial reconfigurations with the alternative spatial imaginations that have contested the official one. The interpretative survey hence suggests preliminary ideas about the site's relevance from ideological, infrastructural and social perspectives and ends with an interpretative statement.

7. Categorizing Cultural Alignment

In this step, the researcher recreates the official narrative that is projected by the site's architecture and content and compares this to the alternative narratives

that the encountered disharmonies — if there are any — suggest. The context of official and unofficial narratives vis-à-vis reconfigurations of structure and representation provides the groundwork to evaluate possible reconfigurations of media.

A site's cultural alignment rests on its official dedication, the public knowledge about the site and further suggested dedications as well as on the summated analysis of the spatial hierarchies and the presented content. Additional factors that influence the cultural alignment of sacred sites are vocal claimants, the entity presented as the main deity and its relation to the entity that receives the most interaction. This provides an idea about which religious groups interact with the site and whose ideology it is meant to represent. At this point, the researcher can assess whether the site shows traits of polysemy or multilocality.

8. Contextualizing the Site with Historical Sources

In historical studies, texts replace the information that would otherwise be gained from interview partners. The researcher thus has to reconstruct the social environment and the actual impact of a site from historical sources. However, texts can be just as unreliable as the humans who created them. Therefore, an old-fashioned historical source analysis is inevitable to answer questions about the nature of the source text, its motives, sponsors, addressees and discourse. The historical sources provide extensive data about the material site. They must be mined for information on construction, sponsors, religious content, past construction phases, reasons for name changes, building and object placements and reconfigurations. All of this must be checked for the agendas behind them and the influencing social pressures. This information is usually not found in a single place, but across different chapters and books.

Most importantly, historical sources help to establish the scope of the site's historical RNIS. They inform about the demographics who were once involved in the constructing, caring, promoting and evaluating the site. They relate the views of the elite, the addressees of reconfigurations, the site's position in local and transregional networks; the political discourse and the conflicts between different political and religious authorities; the evaluation of the site by non-involved outsiders but also the site's relevance for different groups who may have been appreciated or criticized as heterodox by the source authors. The

previously acquired information is subsequently sorted according to age so that previous construction phases can be correlated to the social conditions of their respective eras.

With all this data, it is now possible to attribute the encountered spatial reconfigurations to explicit reconfiguration tactics that certain groups have employed to achieve specific goals.

9. Creating Construction Tables and Drawing Layouts

A construction table helps to order the events of the previous building phases. It provides a synoptic overview of the construction history of the site to emphasize spatial and representative changes. The construction table contains all the practical information gained from material and textual evidence. Sorted according to time period, it includes e.g., the localization, impression and atmosphere of the site; the number, kind and distribution of buildings, their orientation, expansion, size, material or special traits, their sequence or the order in which they are mentioned and in which context (e.g., if they are called the main hall). The placing and material of the presented content can also help to recreate a historical spatial image. In the case of sacred sites, a construction table should at least contain:

- The year of (re-)construction.
- The person or group who ordered/sponsored the construction or change.
- The identity that was officially assigned to the site at the time.
- The identity that can be determined from the described structure and content. This may be expanded by available information about famous sponsors and consumers of the site.
- Notes about unusual style choices, available stele texts, agendas and significant interactions, when the sources mention them.
- The main deity/affiliation of the main hall and other relevant deities.

The construction table also includes what is not there anymore: periods of destruction, abandonment, and severe damage caused by disaster or human actions that could have altered the spatial image of a site. These events might impact the established claim and create openings for competing groups to assert new claims.

As a summary of the previous analyses, the construction table serves as a base upon to draw historical layouts that visualize the effects of socio-historical change. It is not necessary to depict every single construction phase. Instead, the focus should be on phases that showed the most significant changes or which had the most impact on the further history of the site. If it is not feasible to create a construction table for the entire site due to a lack of material, it is prudent to concentrate on the construction histories of individual buildings and their interrelations with each other in terms of age and reconstructions. The comparison of the different layouts leads the researcher to notice additional contradictions that raise more questions. To answer these makes the analysis more comprehensive.

10. Contextualizing with Historical Narratives

Since the previous steps have provided insight into the socio-architectural history of the site — its semantic nature, categorization, and role for different invested groups — the researcher can now contrast the contemporary spatial image with the reconstructed historical spatial images and the relevant historical spatial imaginations attached to them. They are now able to distinguish the representative spatial organization created by the official claimants from the interventions of contesting groups. This uncovers the tensions between the narratives that influence the Socio-Experiential Sphere and the site's position in historical dynamics.

It is now possible to start writing the local history of the site with its links into official narratives, economic flows and the struggles between different groups of political or religious, transregional or local nature. This overview allows to assess whether the employed reconfiguration tactics had an aggressive or mediative motive and effect. That answers the question if the ideology

transfer at the respective site was successful[287] and whether it was considered as such from the perspective of those who employed reconfiguration tactics.

The researcher needs to apply all the newly gained knowledge to the context of greater historical, political, religious and economic trends to learn about the transhistorical consequences that the reconfiguration tactics had on the transregional and local level.

For example, a site may have been important for imperial self-elevation or for the religious domination of the vicinity. It could represent a unique or new art style. The site may be poor due to its distance from supportive networks or affluent due to being located in an economic nexus. This discloses whether a site has continuously preserved local narratives or if it represented transregional authority.

To abstract the situation of a specific site demonstrates the consequences that certain trends of interventions have had for the historical development of an area. In this way, the Experiential Architecture Analysis supports or disputes official historical narratives to give a voice to those overlooked, concealed or left out of textual documents.

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287 It is important to note that this is an outsider perspective, because the groups involved with the site may consider their involvement as a success or failure irrespective of factual ideology transfer.

4   A Typology of Reconfiguration Tactics

This typology of common reconfiguration tactics for sacred sites was created on the basis of the site surveys that I conducted at 43 temples between 2016 and 2018 in Sichuan and Vietnam. It was complemented by further experiences with other Chinese temples as well as with relevant case studies from other researchers (as referenced). It is by no means a closed canon; it rather presents the tactics that I have determined so far and is thus both a preliminary result and future tool for the EAA. The application of EAA to different contexts and site categories will certainly expand the current typology of reconfiguration tactics. These reconfiguration tactics are divided — according to the area they target — into those of structure, representation or media. Each tactic is described by its name, possible nature, involved actors, the objects subjected to change and the possible outcomes of their application. They are all about enforcing new ways of thinking onto the consumers of a site. To mark some tactics as aggressive or mediative only refers to their initial effect, not to their long-term consequences that they may ultimately cause. Unmarked tactics thus tend to produce ambivalent results.

4.1   Reconfigurations of Structure

Reconfiguration tactics that target the structure of a site mainly affect the inner hierarchies. However, some of them also influence the outer hierarchies or the presented content. They determine the physical location and condition of a building or object and whether it is visible or accessible. These tactics initiate the communication between new influences on the site's RNIS in negotiation with the placed material to form a new representative spatial organization.

Destruction: **(aggressive)**	To remove the representations of undesired identities up to the complete obliteration of the entire site — often under the pretext of combating heresy or heterodoxy to justify the excessive violence.
Actors:	Members of transregional authorities, local authorities.
Objects:	Icons, buildings, entire sites.

Outcome:

The destruction tactic attacks opposing cultural identities. It materializes the ideological conflict, e.g., if objects and icons are not merely destroyed but 'killed.'[288] Transregional authorities target the physical representations of local identity to remove opportunities for the reproduction of local ideologies.[289] They undermine the legitimacy of local authorities simply by being able to carry out such destruction — because then the associated deity and the elites attached to it may be blamed for not engaging in its prevention. Weakening the competition in this way allows the transregional authorities to localize more easily. However, the residual numinous mark of sacred sites commonly outlasts physical obliteration. This encourages transregional authorities to repurpose the site and if they fail to do so, the numinous mark may help local authorities to reconstruct the site and thus revitalize their source of legitimation.

Destruction is both the easiest and most aggressive of the structural reconfiguration tactics. It is the tactic of choice if sufficient resources are available and the political dominance is already secured. However, although destruction may demonstrate the superior power of a transregional ideology, it is a very venturesome tactic. If local authorities still possess sources of legitimation and local ideologies remain culturally dominant, destructive actions certainly incite resistance and social unrest. The local authorities may themselves destroy newly erected transregional sites or transregional contents that were placed into occupied indigenous sites. Yet, the establishment of numerous transregional sites suggests that the transregional authorities have already gained considerable political control over the affected territory. In the consequence of such counterdestructions, the friction of distance may decide over the struggle be-

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288   Cf. Morgan 2017, p. 121.

289   Cf. Kong and Woods 2017, pp. 26–27.

tween transregional and local authorities and if the transregional authorities consider it worthwhile to continuously fight and rebuild. An example for a more recent destruction is found in [V.2.]. To replace indigenous sacred sites with those transregionally occupied makes it easier to control which site the local population interacts with and to determine to what extent the transregional ideology has been adopted.

Duplication: (aggressive)	To erect a representative sacred site, building or shrine in the direct vicinity of the local site that it imitates. The new site or shrine carries the same name and claims to either contain the same entity as — or even more effective entities than — the original.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Often entire sites, rarely singular buildings, shrines or icons.

Outcome:

The duplication tactic is a marginally less aggressive measure whenever straightforward destruction is not possible. Without attacking the original site, duplication strongly changes the site's social environment. It generates social pressures that coerce the locals to visibly choose between a transregional or a local site, thereby compelling them to publicly show their submission to or opposition against transregional ideology. Consequently, those who refuse to submit may be punished by ostracism, by discrimination in trade, housing or social aid, by enslavement or even with death. Such punishments encourage more and more people to abandon support for the original site and to visit the duplicated one instead.

Duplication was among the favored tactics of Buddhism in East Asia. Some Buddhist temples were erected directly beside popular sacred sites, like the Chùa Đại Bi in Việt Trì (Vietnam). Others carried the same name as the sites of sacred springs [S.2.] or sacred trees after the Buddhist missionaries claimed that the local spirit had been subjugated [V.2.] or was much more satisfied with the Buddhist site.[290] The Chùa Hàm Long 含龍寺, once the largest Buddhist monastery in southern Hanoi, was created in a similar way. Much later it was

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290   Cf. Faure 1991, 2003 and 2007. Also cf. Cleary 1991 and Trần Quốc Vượng 1995.

duplicated itself by a Catholic church. Further examples are found in [V.1.2.2.], [V.1.2.5.], [V.6.3.5.] and [V.3.3.1.].

Regarding the duplication of presented content, there are multiple sites in Vietnam and China that contain duplications of Guanyin icons. Some of them are representations of a Buddhist entity but others serve as a container for local spirits [V.1.], [S.2.]. The multiplication of icons that depict the same deity in the same function or the placement of votive figurines by consumers are not duplications because these acts are meant to emphasize the deity's power.

Insertion:	To introduce new content to a local site, commonly with its own hall and with the expectation of local engagement. The insertion originates in a different religious or cultural context than the site's affiliation and thus differs from a mere addition.
Actors:	Transregional authorities, displaced non-authorities in a process of transposition.
Objects:	Buildings, shrines and icons.

Outcome:

The insertion tactic immediately turns a site multilocal. It forces local consumers to acknowledge the presence of a transregional culture in relation to their own. Insertions are of limited aggressive nature, especially if they are the result of a transposition. The local consumers usually retain various options to reject them and other social circumstances decide whether the local population will engage with the insertion. Inserted content may remain in a status of cohabitation or evolve into a superscription.

An example for the insertion tactic is the Baoning temple 保寧寺 in Sichuan as studied by Tristan Brown, which was a site dedicated to rainmaking at Panlongshan 蟠龍山. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE—220 CE), Daoist buildings and a shrine for the deity Zhenwu [V.5.1.] were inserted. In the seventeenth century, Muslims erected a shrine for a Sufi saint within the site.[291] But although the Muslims had gained considerable cultural relevance in the area, the original traits of rainmaking and Daoism remained unchanged and

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291   Cf. Brown 2019, pp. 449, 452, 455, 458.

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no superscription took place.[292] The local practice in this example remained at the stage of cohabitation. Further examples are found in [V.6.3.4.], [S.2.1.1.], [S.3.2.] and [S.3.3.5.].

Obstruc-tion: (aggressive)	To obstruct the access to a local deity by keeping the doors to a shrine permanently locked, by walling it up, building a moat, by severing or blocking parts of the infrastructure like paths, stairs or bridges. Often, obstructions focus on territorial or nature entities whose efficacy may affect the site.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Singular shrines and buildings, rarely entire sites.

Outcome:

The obstruction tactic aims to destroy the connections between a local entity and their followers. Targeting the accessibility of an entity causes consumer interactions to decrease because the unavailable entity may be perceived as weak. Obstructions accelerate the process of oblivion and undermine the legitimation of competing ideologies that rely on this entity. They are often combined with a diversion tactic to redirect local consumers to a deity that supports the transregional claim to the site. Obstructed deities are neither destroyed nor removed because it is assumed that they still possess power over the site. Nature deities, for example, are thought to retaliate against perceived threats with floods, earthquakes and other disasters. There may even be new icons created or rededicated to appease such manifestations of nature.[293] For this reason, the representatives of transregional authorities may even continue to covertly offer sacrifices to such a deity. This prevents the deity from losing all their efficacy and the potential for a revival remains as long as the icon is kept within the site. See [V.6.3.5.] and [S.2.1.1.]. One example for the obstruction of an entire site is found in Zhongdu Town 中都鎮, Pingshan County 屏山县, in the westernmost area of the prefecture-level city Yibin 宜賓 (Sichuan, China).

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292   Instead, the Muslim leaders were also thought to be capable of calling rain. Cf. Brown 2019, pp. 442–43, 450, 456.

293   Early Buddhism already used this tactic, e.g., in the Ajaṇṭā Caves, cf. DeCaroli 2011, p. 145.

Among the few *tuzhu* 土主 temples[294] [S.3.2.2.] that have survived in Pingshan is the Heilongtuzhu-miao 黑龍土主廟.[295] This popular site was renamed Dawang-miao 大王廟, which implies a transformation into a site of Li Bing (Chapter V.4.). Two separate halls once contained hundreds of Yi ancestor figurines of which only three remained by the twentieth century.[296] It was taboo to enter the main hall or to touch the altar unauthorized, and so was building anything that was higher than the temple. However, after the site was damaged during the Cultural Revolution, the Yi lost interest in it. The government had promised to reinstate the temple,[297] but the outer parts were subjected to demolition and the lower part was turned into a grain supply station that separated it from the street and soon rose higher than the original temple. In 2016, only three annexes to the central courtyard were left, none of them had doors and the long walls of the surrounding buildings were raised directly in front of the gates. There is no more access to the temple and yet, although it occupies a valuable plot of land, it has never been demolished. Instead, it was declared a county-level cultural relic in 1982.[298] However, during our independent and

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294   Tuzhu are territorial deities that once were venerated by the indigenous population in Si-chuan, e.g., the Yi. Their translocal spiritual jurisdiction blurred the lines between older deities, deified heroes and former worthies.

295   Until the twelfth century, different Yi clans venerated the Black Dragon Pond *heilongchi* 黑龍池 that was connected to a legend about a Longmu deity who gave birth to a chimera of horse and lion called Laqu 蠟曲. The name Laqu means "Song of the La (Ritual)," this is likely a rendered Yi term that does not reflect the original deity's name. Rather, it seems to be connected to the *la* sacrifice that the Yi of Sichuan celebrated at the beginning of winter (Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 18:9a–b). It was an exorcist rite; shamans danced and sang to drive away disease. The deity Laqu was anthropomorphized during the Northern Song dynasty (cf. Pingshan Gazetteer Compilation Committee 1998, pp. 737–38) and venerated for protection against the soldiers of Muchuan 沐川 (nowadays in Leshan 樂山). After Laqu's death, the military established the Black Dragon Shrine *heilong-ci* 黑龍祠 (Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 2:23a), from where Laqu answered the people's prayers against calamities. In the Ming dynasty, this became the Heilongtuzhu-miao. Cf. Pingshan Gazetteer Compilation Committee 1998, pp. 737–38.

296   Cf. Pingshan Gazetteer Compilation Committee 1998, pp. 737–38.

297   Cf. Li Renqing. "(Qing Xi Yidou) Guanzhu Heilongtuzhumiao de Guoqu he Weilai 【情系夷都】关注黑龙土主庙的过去和未来" Shijie Yidou. 19 August 2019. https://wemp.app/posts/fcd68361-4c88-47a8-9f4b-2a18af8ecb8c

298   Cf. Pingshan Gazetteer Compilation Committee 1998, pp. 737–38.

separate research, Li Renqing and I both realized that the local Yi people's memory of the site is vanishing.[299] Since it can neither be used nor taken care of, the temple has completely lost its relevance. It is very uncommon that completely obstructed sites that cannot be put to either local nor regional touristic use become recognized as cultural relics. This situation may be related to the tense relationship between the Han Chinese government and the Yi minority (see Chapter VII and [S.3.3.]).

Diversion:	To insert or invent a transregional deity with the sole aim to imitate a popular local deity. The placement of the new icon is meant to divert attention from the original. For example, by placing it in front of the original icon, if the shrine is placed in a hall that is encountered earlier, or which is easier to access, during a visit to the site, or if the shrine and icon are crafted with materials and styles of higher quality.
Actors:	Transregional religious authorities.
Objects:	Icons and halls.

Outcome:

The diversion tactic is an attempt to transfer local modes of ritual performance towards a transregional object of worship. On its own, diversion is rarely effective in the transfer of ideology and often leads to the development of decorative situations. However, it is commonly combined with the obstruction tactic. Together, they become one of the most powerful and aggressive tactics in transcultural ideology transfer. If the local deity is weakened and no longer accessible, it is comparatively easy to portray a new transregional deity as more attractive and attentive. Nonetheless, a newly invented transregional deity needs to have individualized characteristics and their lore must fit local spiritual needs. Otherwise, it cannot sufficiently distract the local religious

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299   The only one who was able to help me find this temple was a young man whose grandmother lived in a building high enough to directly look onto the temple. The other Yi of the Minzhu Street 民主街 around it directed me to the Buddhist sacred spring not too far in the distance (Longyin Temple 龍吟寺) and declared that the Heilongtuzhu-miao — if they knew about it at all — was not important to them anymore.

attention from the obstructed one and this may cause resistance. Examples are found in [V.1.2.], [S.2.1.1.] and [S.3.3.].

Elision:	To remove specific contents and buildings from a sacred site to relocate them. Elisions target buildings that structurally compete with transregional buildings or content which the transregional authorities regard as offensive. In contrast to destruction, icons are not smashed but may be subjected to decontextualization or royal displacement. Affected buildings may be decontextualized and subjected to musealization.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Icons, shrines, buildings.

Outcome:

The elision tactic replaces local deities with transregional alternatives. The original icons are moved to lower ranking halls or entirely taken out of the site. This emphasizes their decreased rank, potency and relevance. In the Sinitic cultural realm, the icons of female, animalistic or 'heterodox' deities were often removed from the main halls to be replaced by humanoid male deities.[300] After the prohibition of certain deities, the locals themselves may remove the affected icons to either avoid repercussions or to protect the deity. While elision may be less aggressive than destruction, it can facilitate superscription in the long term. For example, at the Snake Temple (Viet. Đền Rắn) in Cẩm Lương (Cam Thủy, Thanh Hóa, Vietnam), the original snake deity was initially pushed out of its own temple building and supplanted by transregional dragon kings. Subsequently, these dragon kings were themselves replaced by the Mẫu Tam Phủ of Đạo Mẫu [V.4.3.1.]. The snake deity is still venerated in a very small shrine to the side of its former temple, but the process of elision caused the loss of its name and lore. An example is found in [S.2.1.2.–I.].

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300   Cf. Miller 2007; Cf. Duan Youwen 2003.

Desacraliza-tion: (aggressive)	To place an object into a secular setting, often following the elision from a sacred site. This tactic has two subtypes: 1) <u>Musealization</u>: To strip the object/site of its religious traits and treat it as an art piece. To hide objects away in archives or storage or to prominently exhibit them in a controlled environment of institutional supervision. To prevent collective religious behavior at shrines and sites. 2) <u>Decontextualization</u>: To sideline or hide an object/shrine in a position that facilitates the process of oblivion. To assemble various objects or shrines in a way that interferes with the narratives attached to them.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Icons, ritual objects, shrines, entire sites.

Outcome:

Both subtypes of the desacralization tactics have the aim to remove efficacy from religious objects or sites by taking them out of their context and treating them as the cultural remains of a long bygone era. The difference between these two methods lies in the visibility and accessibility that they allow.

Museums are institutional sites as well and also offer spatial imaginations by the conscious choice of display, placement, presentation and their accommodation to consumers.[301] Just like in sacred sites, consumers bring their own "cultural baggage"[302] and negotiate what they perceive with the narratives and agendas that they deem relevant. However, museums offer few opportunities for contestations, so the knowledge that they reproduce is most strictly controlled by the ideology of their sponsors. For this reason, museums have been a traditional part of secularization processes. They abstract objects from their original context and place them in disengaged displays. Although museal settings may place the object in plain view, they prescribe a different set of interactions to their consumers. The creators of museums expect a greater cognitive distance between consumers and objects. Therefore, they present objects as if

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301   Cf. Buggeln et. al., 2017, pp. xx, xxii.

302   Cf. Berns 2017, p. 83.

they have no numinosity.[303] This simultaneously obstructs and desacralizes them in a quite different, tightly controlled meaning system.

Musealization was a popular tactic among Western colonialists that was later also adopted in Asia.[304] In the modern Chinese and Vietnamese contexts, musealization can occur as a variant of Royal Displacement if objects of great meaning for the local identity are collected in the capital city's museums. However, for the (indigenous) populations, relevant objects still keep their numinosity.[305] According to recent research, visitors still engage religiously with musealized objects whenever it is possible. This forces the museum staff to either accommodate or to stop their actions.[306] Usually, they limit the consumer's agency, e.g., by placing the objects elsewhere, by changing traffic paths or by putting them under strict supervision. The placement of votive objects and the performance of rituals[307] in relation to objects in museums are thus acts of identity preservation that reject the museum's framing. Sometimes, entire sites are musealized. These locations are entirely under state control and thus subjected to its agenda. Religious interaction with parts of the site may still be possible but the individual spatial imaginations of the consumers are restricted. For the sake of drawing visitors, the supervising office may tolerate religious shrines and objects on the compound, but these either receive no signage or mentions in textual material, or the related information may be inaccurate. Furthermore, related textual material may avoid narratives of religious history and custom

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303 Some museums deliberately prevent religious interactions, e.g., art museums, which classify religious objects solely as art and thus prohibit any kind of interaction beyond viewing. See Berns 2017, p. 87; Byrne 2017, p. 77.

304 In response to the protests against the use of desacralized temples as schools during the Republican Era of China, icons and other objects were redesignated as antiquities and put into museums Cf. Byrne 2017, p. 74.

305 "Exhibited objects continue to communicate and invite responses from those who are accustomed and attuned to their calls." Cf. Berns 2017, p. 88. For the questions of authenticity of indigenous objects and continued veneration in museal contexts, see: Roberts, Mary Nooters. "Altar as Museum, museum as Altar: Ethnography, Devotion and Display" in Buggeln et. al. 2017, pp. 49–56.

306 Cf. Buggeln et. al. 2017, p. xxi.

307 Cf. Berns 2017, pp. 83, 90.

in favor of material and developmental information.[308] The Bishui-si and the lower court of the Qinquan-si in Sichuan [S.2.] are examples for musealized sites. The latter demonstrates the collection of objects with different origins, functions and eras in one site with information plaques that recontextualize these objects with their new function as traces of the past. More examples in: [V.6.3.] and [S.3.3.].

The decontextualization of an entire site usually refers to its <u>superscription</u> with profane buildings that make religious engagement difficult to impossible. Decontextualized objects, on the other hand, must be controlled for a very long time before they lose their meaning. However, decontextualizing an object in a hidden location is not always an advantage. If the followers of the object's associated religion remain active in the area, a sidelined and hidden position of the decontextualized object allows them to interact with it without any guidance towards an alternative use. This could accelerate a process of resacralization. But if the decontextualized object is in a sidelined and open position, dissident religious engagement is much easier to prevent and control. The main icons of the former Jiangdu-miao 江瀆廟 in Chengdu (Sichuan) are an example for the latter. This temple was decontextualized twice; once during the Tang dynasty, when Gao Pian built a new city wall and cut it off from the river that it referred to[309] and once during the Republican Era (1912—1949) when the Qing dynastic temple site was turned into a school. The life-sized iron main icon, two female icons, and a bottle, were brought to Chengdu's Renmin Gongyuan 人民公園 ['People's Park'] to be exhibited under the open sky. Although the statues were given to the Provincial Museum of Sichuan in 1966, they never entered the museum. The three icons (the bottle was lost) are now displayed in a humble,

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308   For an example, cf. Tatjana Hering, "Reframing Space: The Haci-Bektas-Museum in Turkey." Conference Talk 04 June 2021 Panel II: Meaning Making: Collecting and Collections. Conference: Religious Materials, Emic Perspectives — Etic Constructions — Museum Classifications. Religiöse Dinge und wie wir sie erforschen [Conference Title]. As of 2024, partially published online as: Tatjana Hering, "The Hacıbektaş Veli Museum" *God's Collections* (blog) https://www.godscollections.org/case-studies/the-hacbekta-veli-museum.

309   The first Jiangdu-miao was established after the Qin conquest of Shu (Sichuan) and there were four Jiangdu-miao in Sichuan for all the great rivers. The temple in Chengdu was dedicated to the Yangzi River and its god was the deity of Mount Min 岷, where the Yangzi was once thought to originate.

sidelined but easy to access pavilion in the museum's front park. Without any decoration, their only framing is a Chinese and English object description.

4.2   Reconfigurations of Representation

Reconfiguration tactics that target the presented content of a sacred site mainly affect the outer hierarchies (via attribution) and inner hierarchies (via structure). They refer to the ideational ideas about objects and the grander social themes associated with certain entities and their representation. These tactics connect the demands of social spatial imaginations to prescribe the available options in the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE with the PLACED MATERIAL. They are listed in their descending potential to successfully localize transregional authority.

Incorpora-tion: (aggressive)	To adopt a deity with desirable traits from a different religion and to present it as being from one's own. To create new narratives for a local deity that support a different (transregional) ideology. To maintain most of a deity's identity and iconography but change its hierarchical position.
Actors:	Religious authorities.
Objects:	Icons, rituals.

Outcome:

When a religious group incorporates a local deity, they preserve the aspects that are relevant to the local population to make their ideology more palatable. For example, deities that guarantee a good harvest are very socially relevant. If religious authorities that are interested in occupying a certain area transfer such a deity to their own ideology, they are hence attributed with ensuring the good harvest and gain relevance in the local culture. The incorporation of a site-specific deity intensifies the localization of the newly introduced ideology even more. Doing so greatly facilitates transcultural ideology transfer because the local people do not feel like they are losing a part of their identity. In the long term, resistance decreases and the vicinity of the site will politically stabilize.

Buddhism has intensively utilized the incorporation tactic to interpret foreign deities as dharma protectors (*dharmapāla*)[310] while Confucians reinterpreted local deities as historical persons (reverse euhemerism).[311] A strong example is found in [V.1.2.6.].

The incorporation tactic is generally very successful in localizing transregional ideology and in convincing the locals to follow it. However, it works both ways. If transregional deities offer unique skills and soteriologies, the indigenous population may incorporate them into their pantheon. This could either facilitate the acceptance of transregional ideology or the reassignment of ideology. If the locals become increasingly familiar with transregional ideas, hybridization can turn the deity into something new and unique (e.g., the Indonesian Lara Kidul and the Cham-Vietnamese Pô Nagar [V.6.]).

Super-scription: (aggressive)	To change a deity's narrative and identity to match the transregional ideology, or to present a transregional deity as the original god of a site while attempting to erase all traces of the former deity.
Actors:	Competing authorities in general.
Objects:	Icons, sites, text documents.

Outcome:

The superscription tactic especially affects the iconography within the presented content, the inner hierarchies and the external hierarchies. In normative texts, the term superscription refers to the manipulation of a deity's narrative. But in sacred sites, superscription is one of the most aggressive reconfiguration tactics and commonly paired with the destruction of former content or its elision to lower ranking areas. Authorities who employ the superscription tactic do not tolerate the presence of any competition and actively fight any sign of contesting spatial imaginations. If previously incorporated deities remain in a semi-integrated stage because the locals keep transmitting their 'heterodox'

310   Cf. PDB 2014, p. 600.
311   Cf. Boltz 1981, p. 142.

lore about them, the claimants may exclude the locals from ritual activities for this deity or entirely prohibit rituals for it.[312]

In well-controlled areas, the superscription tactic is immensely successful in transferring transregional ideology to the great detriment of the local identity, which dissolves in the long term. However, the total erasure of all traces referring to a site's original deities is rarely accomplished. Superscriptions thus commonly cause disharmonies in a site's spatial image. The success of superscription depends strongly on the prior application of less aggressive tactics with the aim to weaken the legitimation of local authorities, to develop local control mechanisms and to establish either cultural or political dominance. If transregional religious authorities attempt to enforce superscription while the local authorities are still strong, its aggressive nature may cause local groups to either rebel or to use the <u>decoration</u> tactic.

Amalgamation: (mediative)	To merge multiple similar deities into one. [313] The iconography, and possibly also the narratives, of amalgamated deities show the traits of at least two religions. All involved groups accept minor divergences from the tradition that they are used to.
Actors:	All consumers may engage in amalgamation.
Objects:	Icons and other depictions.

Outcome:

The amalgamation tactic helps multiple groups to negotiate their worldviews by turning multiple deities with a common denominator into one. In contrast to <u>superscription</u>, though, all the groups involved remain able to access the deity and have ritual opportunities within the site. Since amalgamated icons thus reproduce transregional as well as local values, all involved identities are protected, spread and shared.

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312   When Buddhists incorporated aquatic deities of the sacred sites that they occupied, they would prohibit their traditional sacrifices like wine or animals, if any sacrifices would be allowed at all. For example, several times a day, the monks of the Wenshu Monastery 文殊院 in Chengdu collect the sacrifices in front of the non-Buddhist deities' shrines and redistribute them to the main shrine of the Buddha.

313   Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 446–48.

The amalgamation tactic provides is among the best options for the long-term stabilization of cultural or political dominance because it balances the transfer of transregional ideology with the preservation of local identity. In spite of this advantage, thoughts of ideological purity may urge religious authorities to reject this step towards cultural hybridization. Such may occur in Buddhism, Confucianism and commonly in the Abrahamitic faiths. Daoism, on the other hand, employs amalgamation enthusiastically — sometimes even to the point of dénouement, as in Vietnam — which may create entirely new local ideologies that revitalize local authority. Examples are numerous, some striking ones are found in [V.5.1.], [V.6.3.], [S.2.1.].

Cohabitation: (mediative)	To accept the content of all the groups involved in a site without imposing dominance. Interior halls or icons of cohabited deities with different origins are placed in the same spot, but each group venerates their own deity. There is no exchange and the cohabited icons do not change their iconography. There is no elision, no displacement of shrines or rededications of halls. An ensemble may thus grow but not shrink.
Actors:	All consumers may engage in cohabitation.
Objects:	Icons and halls.

Outcome:

The cohabitation tactic is often a consequence of insertion. If a newly introduced entity does not affect the already present practices and narratives, the group that introduced it may have failed to properly localize itself and may lack assertiveness. Cohabitation is thus an adequate tactic to create political stabilization and a superficial cultural dominance. However, the transregional and local ideologies remain separate from each other. Since the transregional ideology cannot penetrate the local society, it fails to transfer. From the perspective of a local culture that has to react to transregional pressures, cohabitation is probably the most advantageous reconfiguration tactic. Most of the original identity of a site can be kept intact, in contrast to incorporation and amalgamation, which commonly affect the local cult's narrative or even leave it unrecognizable. Cohabitation ensures the conservation of local content

while it also alleviates transregional pressures by superficial appeasement. This means that the cohabitation tactic is well-suited for identity preservation. In contrast to decoration, the locals do not need to act subversively, even though the official claimants are actively present within the site. However, like in the case of amalgamation, ideals of ideological purity on either side may inhibit or prevent cohabitation.

However, the cohabitation tactic has the potential to initiate superscription if the numbers of one involved group significantly dwindle. The other involved groups thus gain the opportunity to establish an official claim and suppress all other groups. Both Buddhism and Daoism commonly employ the cohabitation tactic and the incorporation tactic, it would be an interesting question for another study to determine the factors that make them choose the one or the other. Examples for cohabitation are the aforementioned Baoning Temple (Daoism and Sufism); the Chùa Bạch Mã 白馬寺 of Hanoi (a local river god and the mothers of Đạo Mẫu); the Chùa Tam Giang 三江寺 of Việt Trì that cohabits various religions and deities;[314] or the Đền Châu Đệ Tứ (Thanh Hóa) — a Đạo Mẫu site that did not incorporate a river god. The Hailong-si of Mahu [S.3.3.] was at least historically cohabitational and the Wangye-miao 王爺廟 in Santai (Sichuan) is still a multi-cohabitational site.

Transposition:	To transpose the core icon of a cult into a new area (via voluntary or forced migration), often to establish a hierarchical relationship between both sites. In contrast to a cult's natural spread, transposition leaves the original cult site empty. If a new cult community develops at the destination site, the functions of the transposed deities may expand to be more relevant to the new environment until they fully localize.
Actors:	Transregional political authorities, non-authorities, migrants.
Objects:	Icons, objects and sites.

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314   Cf. AE.A11/15.

Outcome:

The transposition tactic is commonly applied to locally limited cults whose deities would normally not appear in multiple sites. It shows a variety of expressions and affects multiple communities at once. Transposition poses a great challenge to the local religious authorities of the original site who need to recreate local identity in the *absence* of their deity. This may severely undermine their legitimation and encourage other religious groups to occupy the empty site. However, if the cult is strong enough, the deity's lore may be revitalized with a new icon or some other replacement for it.

If a political authority claims the site that the deity was transposed to, or for some reason forgoes the occupation of the destination site (which is subsequently targeted by transregional religious groups like Buddhism or Daoism), the local population is challenged to negotiate the foreign presence in their midst. If the locals at the destination site gain interest in the foreign deity, they may attribute new functions to it to adapt it to the transregional culture's needs. In the long term, the deity may develop into an entirely new entity.

However, even if the cult of the transposed deity thrives at its destination site, it is often limited to worshipers from its original culture. These cults rarely turn transregional themselves because a transposition neither causes a comprehensive spread nor does it initiate the creation of a high number of new sites. The usually considerable distance between the original and the destination site also usually prevents the cult from turning translocal.

In the case that an icon is transposed via voluntary migrations (e.g., settling) or forced migrations (e.g., war prisoners), it can either serve as a tool of transcultural communication or as an identity marker. Under the circumstances of migration, an icon may be transposed multiple times because it represents something 'from home.' But it will also repeatedly need to adjust to new demands. The transposition tactic may thus cause schisms between the cults of the original (or intermediary) site and the destination site. Although they may share the same name, main deity and lore, they can develop in vastly different ways.

The rise of commercialization during the Chinese Song dynasty made transpositions very common along the merchant networks.[315] A Vietnamese example for the transposition tactic is the Chùa Châu Lâm close to Hanoi's West Lake, where the capital's Cham [V.3.4.1], once taken as war prisoners, venerated a deity that may have been Pô Nagar. After the icon was destroyed in the fifteenth century, the community promptly dissolved. More examples are found in [V.1.2.2.], [V.5.], [S.2.1.1.] and [S.3.2.2.].

Royal Displacement: (aggressive)	To remove the icons of local deities from their original temples and bring them to the capital of the transregional culture, where they either cohabit with the capital's entities or receive a site of their own. To bring sacred objects to the capital and temporarily hold them there, even if this is to the detriment of the place they came from.
Actors:	Transregional political authorities.
Object:	Icons, objects, documents.

Outcome:

The royal displacement tactic is related to the transposition tactic but refers specifically to the relationship between rulers and local deities. A ruler who employs this tactic considers the capital — the direct vicinity of the ruler — to be the most valuable place to be. Royal displacement thus commonly occurs after the superimposing tactic has been employed. The icon of the local deity is intentionally removed far from its realm of power and worshipers to 'weaken' the deity and turn it into a subject of the ruler. The forceful removal of local and ethnic deities robs local authorities of their supernatural protection and legitimation. It is hence a reconfiguration tactic which is used to pacify problematical territories — especially if the displaced icon is taken hostage and subjected to interpretive changes and superscription. This can also cause schisms between the original site's and the capital's site's consumers; the deity may even become irrelevant to its original cultural group. Although the icon displaced to the capital may thus hold only little relevance for small communities of equally

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315   Cf. Hansen 1990. pp. 128–131.

displaced populations, the political narrative can use it to signify the extent of the ruler's territorial claims. Even if royal displacement does not lead to the stabilization of the original site's area, it still provides the transregional ruler with the necessary legitimation to use excessive force against local groups. The royal displacement tactic can hence serve as a sandbox for greater assimilation efforts against a foreign ethnic group in the aftermath of its territory's conquest.

In East Asia, the royal displacement tactic follows a specific paradigm that prescribes the creation of new narratives about how a ruler meets the deity and the latter expresses their affection towards him. The deity may support the ruler in a military campaign, supply him with magical gifts, or beg him to take them to the far-superior capital city [V.6.1.]. In the eleventh century, the Chinese government even started to collect minor deities to integrate them into an imperial religious network that was meant to create points of associations for the so far only loosely integrated borderlands. Most local religions had neither scriptures nor clergy, so they relied on the preservation of material symbols that the Chinese state was easily able to seize. Occasionally, displaced icons were put into a city god temple (for education, or purification?) before they arrived in the capital.[316] The Vietnamese did the same, initially with Việt local deities, then with the regional deities of the emperor's foreign wives, until they ultimately displaced the Hindu deities of Champa after the March to the South.[317] In the case of the latter, this tactic was combined with the obstruction tactic to prevent the Cham from accessing their most important deities [V.3.4.].

The royal displacement of objects also occurs in more specific circumstances, for example in times of drought. Especially efficacious sacred objects are taken from the communities that depend on them and brought to the capital.[318] The government holds onto these objects to coerce the original community into certain behaviors. Sometimes — like in the case of the Heilongtuzhu-miao — the locals have retaliated with the creation of new narratives about alleged curses or about the objects' loss of power if they spend too much time away from their place of origin.

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316   Cf. Hansen 1990, pp. 57–61.

317   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 154.

318   Cf. Pomeranz 1991, pp. 70f., 80–83 and Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 56, 103–104.

In general, the royal displacement tactic forces local communities to engage with transregional ideology and to try to understand it. Taken together with other measures, this significantly facilitates ideology transfer.

Elevation: (mediative)	To merge an important local deity and a chosen minor transregional deity with the intention to protect the local deity.
Actors:	Local religious authorities.
Objects:	Icons and sites

Outcome:

The local religious authorities under transregional pressure use the elevation tactic to invite a transregional deity to their site in an attempt to preserve local identity. In contrast to the amalgamation tactic, the merged deities show no prior similarities, neither in iconography nor in function. The merger elevates the low-ranking transregional deity by attributing new functions to it that allegedly raise its efficacy. The local religion can thus continue under the transregional deity's guise without raising suspicion. Examples for successful elevations are the Miếu Quan Công 關公廟 of Hội An that venerates the horse of Quan Công as an independent deity or the general treatment of Garuda in Champa.

However, the elevation tactic is still quite mediative because the original religion of the site may be forgotten in the long term. Natural disasters, epidemics or violent conflicts may contribute to the loss of knowledge about the site's original deity and the meaning behind the façade. Although the elevation tactic can lead to the development of new and highly localized sites, these are often under the increasing influence of the transregional ideology. If the original deity is indeed forgotten, the former aspects of the minor transregional deity may return and finalize an ideology transfer.

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Decoration:	To continue local practices that favor the shrines and deities which a different cultural group presents as being of lower rank in the spatial image of a site that group claims. To disregard the higher-ranking icons and halls of the new claimant, or to adjust them by supplementing votive icons that do not fit the new claimant's spatial imagination (or pantheon).
Actors:	Local authorities and non-authorities.
Objects:	Entire sites, rarely individual halls.

Outcome:

The decoration tactic is characterized by extreme contradictions in the placement and presentation of content, as well as by a strong schism between the site's structural hierarchies and the ritual activities performed there. It is employed subversively after transregional authorities have occupied and claimed a site. This is after they have already intervened into its spatial image, but not before the transregional ideology has been reproduced well enough to convey to the locals what the desired spatial imagination and cultural codes should look like. The decoration tactic is usually employed if previous attempts at superscription have failed, or whenever transregional authorities are unable to finalize their claim to the site, but also eschew more mediative reconfigurations tactics.

Similar to the elevation tactic, the decoration tactic is a measure of local identity preservation. It is used to satisfy a transregional authority's need for nominal subjection to spare the site from further aggressive interventions. Sometimes, a transregional ideology cannot be reproduced locally in an efficient manner. If this is the case, the transregional authorities may be satisfied with the legitimation that they can gain from the site's representation in the external hierarchies and do not look further into local realities.

When the decoration tactic is employed, the locals reject the transregional ideology and it is thus no longer transferred to the site's consumers. The transfer of local lore is not inhibited anymore and the continued existence of local deities is ensured. Superficially, a site in a decorative situation may resemble a multilocal site whose representative spatial organization is under the control of transregional authorities [S.2.1.1.], [S.2.1.2.–III]. Its subversive character relies on the ritual practices of the consumers, who prefer to visit halls and venerate

shrines that they identify with, even if these are placed in low-ranking or hard to access positions. In a historical context, such behavior can be traced by looking for the disharmonies within the hierarchical arrangement of the ensemble or by finding material evidence of intense interaction (e.g., the blackening of surfaces from incense or touching, the placement of gifts and votive icons, archaeological excavations of sacrificial hoards). The authors of historical texts may describe 'heterodox' rituals or complain about the 'wrong' placement of incense or icons or how the 'wrong' icons are in the 'wrong' positions. They may also criticize that the 'right' and 'true' icons collect dust, that they receive no sacrifices, that the offerings are incorrect (e.g., meat for a Buddhist entity), or that their halls are dilapidated and full of weeds.

The transregional authorities of China have often favored the aggressive superscription tactic, so it is not surprising that decorations have occurred quite commonly. If studied individually, many superficially superscripted sites may turn out to be actually decorative situations.

In Vietnam, this reconfiguration tactic is known as *hèm* 嫌 and contains its own ranking system of 'valid' deities that contradicts the imperial ranking. Hèm rituals were exercised in secret because they consciously transgressed the norms propagated by the central government.[319] Especially in late imperial Vietnam, the decoration tactic was commonly employed to defend against centralization pressures without engaging in violent conflicts. Villages registered a 'hero' as their tutelary deity with the central authorities, but that hero would then receive a wide range of servants or guardians that just so happened to precisely resemble the local pantheon. Alternatively, they registered the tamed hagiography of a historicized local deity,[320] which did not actually matter to the local lore and practice.

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319   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 48, 51.
320   Cf. Dror 2007, pp. 33–34.

4.3 Reconfigurations of Media

The reconfigurations of media target the external hierarchies because they concern the social evaluation of the material and the creation and transmission of specific spatial imaginations. They hence have the strongest influence on the SOCIO-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE because they allegedly provide the entire experience of a site to those who cannot visit it in person, or fix conceptual experiential options before a consumer has the chance to visit.

Reconfigurations of media are used in third party representations either before any on site reconfiguration tactics have been employed, or they derive from the successful implementation of such. Reconfigurations of media can thus mark the presence of other spatial reconfigurations. Documents that contain renaming, suffix attributing and mapping provide valuable hints for reconfigurations in sites that might not have otherwise been revealed. Contrarily, an unconvincing spatial image due to the presence of numerous unexpected reconfigurations on-site can prove that the concealing tactic has been applied.

While media — like texts, images and maps — are by themselves experiential, they do not convey the same mimetic quality that a site visit would. They create ideologically designed spatial imaginations that do not necessarily align to the actual spatial image. However, since the consumers of media commonly avoid conflicting primary or secondary information about their sites of interest, the accuracy of such representations is rarely doubted. According to Mellmann, consumers tend to trust third party representations because of the rationalization of memory capacity, i.e., they judge them based upon generalized knowledge and trusted sources.[321] However, such trusted sources are often identical with the sponsor groups of the media, who may thus use misrepresentations to manipulate public knowledge.

The reconfigurations of media are very powerful devices of transcultural ideology transfer because the direct experience of a site's spatial image is limited to its vicinity — but media representations convey spatial imaginations far beyond and transfer values across political and cultural borders.

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321   Cf. Mellmann 2014, pp. 81, 83, 88.

Superimposition: (aggressive)	To declare that all local cults of the realm are the equivalent of the ruling group's centralized cult, with the intention to absorb them.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Entire sites, documents.

Outcome:

The superimposition tactic declares — not necessarily by law — that all cults within the realm are principally the same as the dominant religion or state cult. This tactic rests on the assumption that a central authority can only gain recognition if it proves itself to be more powerful than its local alternatives.[322] Historical superimpositions sought not only to snatch the spiritual protection of local deities, but also the resources connected to their cults.

This tactic relies on the prior application of incorporation, amalgamation or transposition with the aim of superscription or royal displacement. It also requires a quickly spreading narrative that, e.g., describes the fictionalized travels of an emperor who encounters various supernatural entities.[323] Imperial travels, like those of Han Guangwu 漢光武 (r. 25—57 CE), demonstrated the ruler's moral character and were thought to encourage deities to submit themselves.[324] An alternative to that was the initiation of imperial publications which categorized and ranked the strongly edited lore of the approved deities of the realm. These deities were groomed for imperial preferences and their lore filled with pro-imperial feats. The *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* 粵甸幽靈集 [1329] is an example for that, it provided certain cults with the opportunity to get out of governmental scrutiny by accepting the reinvented versions of their deities[325] and with them the arrival of the central power. Further examples are found in [V.2.1.], [V.6.1.], [V.6.2.] and [S.3.3.].

A continuous superimposition can cause a valuable cult's symbols and icons to appear among the architecture and art of the transregional authority. This

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322 Cf. Mabbett 1986, p. 290; Johnson 1985, pp. 425–27 and Birnbaum 2012, p. 115.

323 A famous example for this is the fictive third century CE biography *Mu Tianzi Zhuan* 穆天子傳 "Transmission of the Heavenly Son Mu." Cf. Tian Xiaofei 2019, p. 188.

324 Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 162 and Tian Xiaofei 2019, p. 188.

325 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 20, 29.

creates an integrative synergy and a pull effect that leads to the assimilation of the locals into the transregional culture. Although this process may not be welcome from the perspective of a transregional authority, it enhances the transregional ideology with new ideas, styles and traditions. For this reason, the superimposition tactic may often be intended as an aggressive measure, but it actually has very mediative effects and may even lead to hybridization — which affects the entire transregional set-up. The example of the deity Wenchang (Chapter V) shows that regional cults may attempt the superimposition tactic as well. After determining which deity is considered above all others of the same type, it becomes a matter of oral transmission and written reproduction to actually assert such superiority over other local deities in the area.

Suffix Attribution: (aggressive)	To obfuscate a site's identity in normative media by attributing a suffix that misrepresents the site's category and religious affiliation.
Actors:	Transregional authorities
Objects:	Maps and documents.

Outcome:

The suffix attribution tactic is especially relevant in the context of the character-based languages of East Asia that mark the categories of sites by attributing certain suffixes to the place names. Many of these are derived from Chinese and may look like *-si* 寺, *-miao* 廟, *-guan* 觀, *-gong* 宮 or *-ci* 祠. However, the different East Asian cultures may apply the same suffix as different types of site categories.

The suffixes used in maps and documents were commonly changed according to the audience expectations. In some cases, they may neither fit the real category and affiliation of the site, nor its local name. However, in the same way as the name, the suffixes condition the consumer's expectations and the interpretation of what they perceive. They nudge the consumers into accepting the official spatial imagination more willingly. Examples are found in [V.1.2.1.], [V.4.3.], [V.6.3.], [S.3.2.]. Of course, suffixes were also occasionally misheard or misattributed due to human error. Therefore, it is critical to pay attention

to the official categorization of a site and to assess whether the appearance of the site fits the layout that is typically associated with the attributed category.

When the number of consumers from the transregional culture rises, official documents diminish local characteristics or may no longer mention them at all. When the transregional cultural group finalizes its claim to the site, material disharmonies appear alongside local frictions. The local content of the site is subsequently threatened by <u>destruction</u>. Even if it is destroyed and the spatial image aligned to the transregional spatial imagination, it is still possible to discover misattributed suffixes by comparing the maps of different eras.

Renaming:	To rename a site in a way that obscures its true nature.
Actors:	Transregional authorities, local authorities.
Object:	Sites, maps and documents.

Outcome:

The renaming tactic takes advantage of the important role that language plays in human cognition. The language used for sacred sites influences how they are perceived, regardless of whether the narrative is truthful or not. Descriptions can surely evoke either wrong or truthful impressions, but the coding of a place starts with its name. The actual name raises expectations concerning the topography, tradition, content or various other aspects of a site. The naming of places hence belongs to the world ordering techniques and does not merely say what something is, but also how it is, what it is good for, or what it is like. Renaming thus limits the consumer's spatial experience by programming expectations that affect their interpretation of the spatial image and may cause them to miss other offered spatial imaginations. Examples for the renaming tactic are found in [V.6.3.5.], [S.2.1.2.–II], [S.3.2.2.] and [S.3.3.]. Renaming is usually invoked in two kinds of media and situations.

The first variant refers to names that are locally displayed. Local authorities petition for the renaming of a site or deity to receive a name plaque from the central authorities. By doing so, they create official recognition for the local deity although they have likely misrepresented its nature. The central authorities hence assume that the site has a different affiliation than it actually has

and this either protects the local religion or may even attract central patronage. Occasionally, transregional authorities arbitrarily install a new name plaque to superscribe a site, but this is not a very successful measure.

The second variant refers to names in official texts and maps. If the renaming tactic is used in documents, there are two possible motivations for it. The first motivation is to reestablish a lost or problematical site by applying its original name to a different place that may come to serve as a *Sehnsuchtsort*.[326] The second motivation is to give the name of an accepted affiliation to a problematic site in an attempt to obscure local issues.[327] To achieve cultural dominance, Buddhism often used the renaming tactic on sites that already contained incorporations to push them towards superscription.

Ranking:	To hierarchically organize sites with an imperial title or rank that is either visibly displayed or listed in normative documents. Geomantic values can also constitute ranking if the geomantic position of the site influences its interactions and patronage.
Actors:	Transregional political authorities, local authorities.
Objects:	Sites and documents.

Outcome:

The ranking tactic manipulates the perception of a site's social position. The rank indicates the level of official recognition of a site or a specific deity. Social authorities seek deities that fit their ideology. The deity whom they deem to be of the highest rank is thus not necessarily the main deity of the site. In this manner, ranking may support the diversion tactic. Although buildings ranked highly in the imperial or national hierarchization of architecture may receive more patronage and hence be better maintained, it is important to understand that the difference in care between ranked and unranked buildings may not

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326   A place of longing. This can also apply to entire territories. The Chinese repeatedly applied the name Rinan, the southernmost province of ancient Jiaozhi (Vietnam), to different northern territories as they were pushed back. See Chapter V.

327   More on this trend can be found in: Rosner, Erhard. Leitzeichen des Imperiums. Programmatische Ortsnamen in der Geschichte Chinas. Wiesbaden, 2013.

indicate their relevance. Instead, it may simply mirror a shortage of funds among local elites.

Transregional patronage — especially imperial and national patronage — furthermore influences the accessibility of the site. Additional infrastructure draws an increasing number of transregional visitors to it, which endangers local claims to the site because the lesser groomed deity is often perceived as less efficacious.

Ranking is deduced from the way that sites and icons are placed according to established spatial hierarchies or from the manner that they are written about in specific texts. Deities ranked by political authorities are usually found in the Sacrificial Register (*sidian* 祀典); ranked sites in the Temples (*simiao* 寺廟), Landscape (*shanchuan* 山川), Walls and Ramparts (*chengque* 城闕) and Ancient Sights (*guji* 古蹟) sections of histories and local gazetteers. Sites and entities ranked according to the perspective of religious authorities are often found in the Ancient Records (*gulu* 古錄), Temple Records (*siji* 寺記 and *miaoji* 廟記), Temple Gazetteers (*sizhi* 寺志) or Deity Records (Viet. *thần tích* 神跡).[328] In Chinese history, the ranking of deities, governmental sites, religious sites and entire landscapes depended upon the local's ideological proximity to and their support for the central government.[329] An example concerns the superimposition that Emperor Lý Phật Mã 李佛瑪 (1000—1054) exercised in the context of his abduction of the Cham queen Mỵ Ê 媚醯 in 1044. After the queen committed suicide, Lý Phật Mã granted her name and title to a water spirit and pronounced this deity as a goddess he 'knew' — a goddess who was enticed by his royal virtue. He continued to do the same with further Cham entities who allegedly moved their support to the Việt.[330] The following dynasty considered these deities as markers of his territorial power. Another example is the Thiên Mu temple in Huế [V.6.3.], whose beautiful landscape has evoked feelings of numinosity since the sixteenth century. It was ranked as a scenic spot

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328   The situation that historical information is scattered throughout all kinds of document types — true for most East Asian states — has already been aptly asserted as a great challenge for the study of spatial matters by Wolfram Eberhard. "Temple-Building Activities in Medieval and Modern China. An Experimental Study." *Monumenta Serica* 23 (1964): 264–318.

329   Cf. Huang Fei 2018, pp. 85–95 and Hansen 1990, pp. 79–84, 92–93.

330   Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 168.

to gain the (financial) attention of the emperors, but this did not only lead to advantages for the associated Buddhist community. In China, the area of Mahu [S.3.3.] is nowadays ranked as a scenic area to ensure the government's control and to undermine its religious and non-Han Chinese meanings.

Mapping:	To represent a site in a map based on ideology instead of reality. Location, name and size of the site may present imperial ideas about it instead of reflecting realistic situations.
Actors:	Transregional political authorities, local gentry.
Objects:	Maps

Outcome:

The mapping tactic is a powerful device for the assertion of political dominance and interpretive privilege. It targets the representation of a sacred site in a widespread medium consumed by people often unfamiliar with the real local circumstances. For this reason, maps often depict spatial imaginations rather than spatial images. Thus, neither the representation of the mapped site nor the image conjured in the map's consumer's mind need to relate to material reality. This influences the site's perceived attribution and the amount of political patronage that it receives.

In the contemporary era, we expect maps to provide accurate and helpful spatial information to aid in safe mobility and planning. For the majority of history, however, maps were political devices (in regard to the borders of national states, they still are) that condensed political information. This has added an interpretable layer to them.

In historical eras, the local population whose sites were mapped had rarely access to official maps. The main objective of this reconfiguration tactic was hence to control the spatial imagination of the transregional culture's population. And although mapping had consequently little effect on the transcultural ideology transfer, it significantly strengthened the legitimation of political authorities. Commonly paired with renaming and suffix attribution, mapping supports the concealment tactic. Map creators could omit not just sites and cities, but entire ethnic groups and their territories. This served to delegitimate

the local authorities or to present the local conditions in a better light towards their superiors.

However, the misrepresentation in maps could, over time, cause misconceptions about a territory and its sites, especially regarding the status of transregional integration that had been achieved there. For instance, a newly deployed magistrate who anticipated to encounter a community strongly influenced by Buddhism might be surprised to discover that the locals still adhered to their indigenous traditions, which the magistrate did not know enough about to handle effectively.

In China, maps represented sites through the eyes of officials. The mapped sites were hence integrated into the imperial identity, a process that ultimately brought the empire to the local level.[331] Although the location of sacred sites within maps was often imprecise, especially in the borderlands, they still served as ideological demarcations.[332] During the eighteenth century, the mapping tactic was consciously used for its imperializing effect when the western expansion made accurate topographical information more relevant. Yet, local gentries challenged the imperial spatial narrative by creating their own maps. [333]

331   For examples on political condensation in maps, see: Hilde de Weerdt. "Maps and Memory: Readings of Cartography in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Song China." *Imago Mundi* 61, no. 2 (2009):145–167. For a deeper analysis of bringing the empire to the local level, see: Fan Lin. "The Local in the Imperial Vision: Landscape, Topography, and Geography in Southern Song Map Guides and Gazetteers." *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 6, no. 2 (2017): 333–364.

332   The information regarding rivers and other sources of water was comparatively accurate in Chinese maps, because it was needed to plan military movements and agriculture, cf. Hsu Mei-ling 1993, pp. 97–99. Sacred sites close to water resources were thus treated with a little more scrutiny but also with a higher need to present them in a way that suited the dominant ideology.

333   Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 227 and see Hearn, Maxwell K. "Pictorial Maps, Panoramic Landscapes, and Topographic Paintings: Three Modes of Depicting Space during the Early Qing Dynasty." In *Bridges to Heaven. Essays on East Asian Art in Honor of Professor Wen C. Fong*, edited by Jerome Silbergeld et.al., 93–114. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

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Suggestion: (aggressive)	To associate a contemporary site with an invented heritage to make it appear older than it really is or to suggest victory over a different ideology.
Actors:	Transregional authorities.
Objects:	Sites and objects in documents.

Outcome:

The suggestion tactic uses a reference to an alleged former site that never existed — or that is severely misrepresented — to create dominance over an area. It relies on depictions in maps and descriptions in documents. The fabrication of an ancient site places the contemporary one into a supposedly older tradition. This has a legitimizing effect on transregional or local authorities, depending on which affiliation the (allegedly) ancient site is presented with. If the suggested ancient site is presented as having belonged to the transregional religion, this legitimizes the transregional authorities who currently claim the site by implying the superiority of their ideology due to age. Such narratives can be used to destroy an original local site, like it happened to the Babri Masjid Mosque in India in 1992, leading to the most recent consecration of a new Ram temple at its spot in January 2024.

If the suggested ancient site is presented as having belonged to the local religion, it becomes part of a new narrative that is meant to depict the legitimate transfer of spiritual power from the local to the transregional authorities to create local legitimation for the transregional authorities and to enhance the spread of their ideology.

Other options that use invented heritage comprise deities, persons or events that either never existed or were never connected to the site. The case study about Mahu, Sichuan [S.3.3.], provides an example for the suggestion tactic in which characters and elements from a classic novel were attributed to a contemporary site.

In some cases, social authorities create or attribute sacred artifacts to sites ex post facto to emphasize the necessity to create a new site that supports the

contemporary claimants. The nature of these sacred objects may be exaggerated to emphasize the site's importance or the power of the affiliated religion.[334]

The new lore attached to the suppositious former site is either created specifically for that location or referred to in independent fictional publications. In regard to the suggestion tactic, new narratives must have been plausibly created in a deliberate manner or while condoning misinterpretation. The results of honest misinformation do not represent examples for the suggestion tactic. However, later authors may adopt suggested narratives bona fide and thus contribute to the reproduction of its effects, although they are not their originators.

Conceal-ment: (aggressive)	To deliberately hide all traces of a religion or a specific deity in text resources and signage. To omit them entirely or to misrepresent them to avoid a clear identification. To conceal the gender of female deities by giving them male titles, appellations and pronouns.
Actors:	Transregional and local authorities.
Objects:	Buildings and all kinds of documents.

Outcome:

The aim of the concealment tactic is to disempower the concealed deity (and the religious group connected to it) by manipulating the available information about a site. Employing the concealment tactic means that the most noticeable buildings, structures or icons of a site possibly will not be mentioned in text or that their significant features are omitted, which may cause readers to misidentify them. Both tricks significantly twist the imagination of the consumer who relies on textual descriptions

When normative texts employ the concealment tactic to describe sites with self-imposed authority, deviations from such 'ideal' textual descriptions may soon no longer be considered as 'authentic.' Over time, planners and sponsors may want to adjust the spatial image to the text's spatial imagination and this

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334   A famous example is the former Vatican Secret Archive (now called the Vatican Apostolic Archive). The narratives about the world-changing documents allegedly hidden there imply superiority regarding the Vatican's position and maintain an atmosphere of mystery that can conjure religious sentiments in Catholic believers.

leads to the removal of concealed content, like name plaques, icons, decorations, and entire buildings. The concealment tactic is often combined with the diversion and obstruction tactics to subject the concealed content and its associated groups[335] to oblivion. Thus, entire religious groups may 'vanish' from history. The concealment tactic is hence a very effective measure to assert the ideological dominance of transregional authorities.

However, both local officials and religious specialists can only handle what they know about. The concealment tactic is hence very prone to encourage the development of decorative situations. If the transregional authorities employ concealment while the local authorities employ decoration, there is not much need for other subversive behavior. In such cases, the buildings and icons of the concealed religious group may continue to exist without the need to be hidden or to adjust the spatial image of the site to transregional standards. In 2007, Tracy Miller described precisely such a case at the Jinci shrine of Shanxi, where the Chinese Empire willfully ignored the healthy cult of the water goddess Zhaoji Shengmu 昭濟聖母, just like it ignored that the imperial shrine structures that had been inserted into the site were crumbling and overgrown with weeds. Although the concealment tactic firmly establishes political dominance and supports the superficial stabilization of territories, it holds the risk of suggesting a false cultural dominance. For examples, see [V.1.2.], [V.6.], [S.2.].

On its own, concealment does not contribute to transcultural ideology transfer. However, it becomes strikingly effective as soon as a historical event — like a war or a natural disaster — disrupts the local religion's knowledge tradition. In such cases, the original cult is often lost because local religions usually have no unredacted texts of their own. The official documents used to 'reestablish' the sacred site contain no mention of the actual religious practices and the rebuilt site thus resembles the transregional ideology's representative spatial organization, free from traces of former identities, a complete super-scription.

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335   Tristan Brown found that the local gentry at Baoning Temple (Sichuan) exclusively used Daoist and Buddhist language to describe Muslim activities at the site. Cf. Brown 2019, pp. 481–83.

The Experiential Architecture Analysis in the Case Studies

In the context of Sichuan and Vietnam, the interventions of transregional ideologies are represented by the general Sinitic cultural lore, by Buddhism, or by an imperial strategy that incorporated Sinitic spatial thinking with ideal religious landscapes. To find out how noticeable the resistance against transregional pressures was on the material level, I tried to figure out what kind of consequences spatial interventions have had depending on their Buddhist-local, Sino-local or imperial-local nature.

Regarding my case studies, the Eaa enabled me to find out

- If the effort that transregional claimants put into the spatial reconfiguration of a site properly reflected the changed social and political values to a degree that the site's consumers would be encouraged to reproduce these. Or
- If there were efficient measures to preserve identity that inhibited the reproduction of transregional values and/or transferred local ideology to transregional consumers.

Tracking the localization processes of transregional ideologies (i.e., mostly Buddhist and imperial doctrines) and their consequences for local culture illuminated the role that spatial reconfigurations play for ideology transfer and how success or failure of reconfiguration tactics can lead to political independence.

5 Water, Legitimacy and Representation

Nothing can live and thrive entirely without water. Having enough water has been understandably a central matter for human survival. Its acquisition and transport, the evaluation of its economical use whenever it is scarce, or how to deal with torrential rain, floods, and rapid streams, all these matters have affected human behavior and settlement practices. Water has influenced how humans build, what they subsist on, how they apply gender roles and in which ways and frequencies they communicate with each other.

> Therefore, water is not only the basic resource for our human survival, but the long-term historical process of the interaction with water, human survival and development has also profoundly affected human social development. In this process, human thoughts, political systems, lifestyles, production methods, literature and art etc., have all been marked by water.[336]

As people share common environmental experiences, water themes have become core motifs for human traditions worldwide, which has led to similarities across different cultures.[337] Geographical anthropology has studied this phenomenon, especially in the context of China and its uneven distribution of water availability.[338] Unequal water availability strongly affects religious views and other social dynamics. Just as water can both connect or separate cultures, transcultural contacts may cause cultural frictions due to different approaches in the treatment of water.[339] Looking at the way how humans interact with

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336   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, p. 17.
337   Cf. Garry and El-Shamy 2005, pp. 489–93.
338   Cf. Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 1.
339   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 22–23.

water is therefore pertinent to all disciplines studying human-environmental behavior, including religious studies.

To conceptualize the meaning of water in the context of transcultural ideology transfer, this chapter introduces basic terms, key characteristics and relevant practices of hydrolatry in Sichuan and Vietnam. It explores their relation to China, and their implications for political governance. The second section treats the gendering and transformation of water deities as a result of social changes. It presents a short overview over relevant types of hydrolatric entities, their associated sites and the practices directed at them. The third section will introduce general aspects of Sinitic hydrolatry, the Buddhist treatment of hydrolatric deities in the Sinosphere, and specific traits of Sichuanese and Vietnamese hydrolatry. This discussion will illustrate why the differentiation between snakes and dragons is relevant for this study's objectives.

Let us start with the term *hydrolatry*. One reason for the initiation of water veneration and its ties to other religious worldviews is the profound impact that the availability of water in a given environment has on the sustainability of human life. The idea of an animated landscape with supernatural representatives of water may date back to the era of hunters and gatherers, as rock art implies.[340] In an attempt to control the environment, some humans directed magic and rituals towards these representatives. Over time, human thought evolved these representatives into less-defined spirits[341] and more-defined gods. Hydrolatry is thus neither a specific religion nor specific to a religion, it is a globally occurring trait of religion that matters to everyone. Hydrolatry usually belongs to local and popular religious contexts but has been commonly integrated into institutional religions. Daoists and Buddhists, for example, have both enthusiastically occupied popular hydrolatric sites, incorporated local deities and expanded their own ritual ideas of hydrolatry to become relevant to their target population. However, because the availability of water was a vital

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340   Cf. Strang 2014, p. 90.

341   The term "spirits" will be used for supernatural beings named for their job or locality, while "gods" will refer to individually named supernatural beings. "Deities" will be the general term for supernatural beings who receive any kind of sacrifices.

matter for each community, local religious specialists have often been preferred over transregional ones.[342]

The issue of water conservancy recently brought renewed attention to the religious connotations of water, following a long pause in research in the East Asian context. In the first half of the twentieth century, Wolfram Eberhard (1909—1989) wrote *Lokalkulturen im Alten China* (1942). It became one of the most important preliminary works in the study of hydrolatry. This book set standards in research of symbols and Eberhard's avant-garde focus on the peripheral local cultures along the Chinese borders provided most valuable data.

Edward H. Schafer (1913—1991) shared this focus: he was another main contributor to the study of Chinese and Vietnamese hydrolatry. He was among the first scholars to concentrate on the female aspects of water deities and investigated their roots beyond the orthodox narratives. His most seminal works are *The Vermilion Bird. T'ang Images of the South* (1967) and *The Divine Woman: Dragon Ladies and Rain Maidens in T'ang Literature* (1976).

A decade later, David Johnson studied the relationship between popular and imperial culture and the role of water deities in *The City-God Cults of T'ang and Sung China* (1985).

Another ten years later, James Rattue coined the modern term 'hydrolatry' in his book *The Living Stream: Holy Wells in Historical Context* (1995). More than another decade passed before Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke kicked off a new era of hydrolatry research in East Asia. His book *Dry Spells: State Rainmaking and Local Governance in Late Imperial China* (2009) examines the origin of imperial rainmaking and imperially controlled rain rituals in regard to their effects on the village level. In the same era, Zheng Xiaoyuan emerged as China's leading specialist in this field, but his decade-long research was only made available to a more global audience after it was collected in the anthology *Shuiwenhua yu Shuilishi Tansuo* 水文化与水历史探索 ['The Exploration of Water Culture and Water History'] in 2015.

Zheng Xiaoyuan explored the term *water culture* and defined it as encompassing all concepts that cultures develop in relation to water and about their interactions with it. Water culture is expressed through identity, in social sys-

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342   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, p. 59.

tems and behaviors, literature, art, material construction, and religion[343] — including hydrolatry. Water culture hence describes the ways in which different cultures deal with water in dependence on two major factors.

The first factor is the amount of water available in the immediate human environment. Humans respond to that with practices of collecting, distributing, or inhibiting water.[344] These practices are aimed at enhancing their chances of survival, facilitating communication, or making their livelihoods easier. The availability of water thus influences choices of settlement, demarcation, construction, infrastructure, agriculture, and trade.

The second factor is the manner in which water is present in the environment, such as whether the climate is humid, if rainfall is constant, seasonal, or unreliable; if there are large bodies of water or reliable springs, and if the rivers and streams serve as easy-to-navigate communicative infrastructure or as perilous natural borders.

Water culture can also denote cultural groups who developed in areas with an abundance of terrestrial water. These needed less time to find and transport water and were able to cultivate crops with significant surplus yields, which afforded them more time for cultural advancement and state formation. However, they also faced frequent threats from floods, predators, and isolation. This required them to conceptualize exceptionally comprehensive cultural repertoires for their interactions with water.

Northern Vietnam and the central and eastern parts of modern Sichuan were such water cultures. They not only experienced conquest by the Chinese Empire in roughly the same timeframe, they also shared environmental factors. As a result, their expressions of water culture are more alike to each other than to those of the central plains.

Sichuan is surrounded by high mountain ridges on all sides, so it was geographically isolated from the Central Plains.[345] When northern Vietnam was officially a part of the Lingnan area 嶺南 (together with Guangdong and Guangxi), it was separated from the rest of China by the Nanling Mountains 南嶺. In later

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343 Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, p. 18, with a more detailed definition on pp. 21–22.

344 Cf. Oeastigaard 2009, p. 19.

345 Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 1 and Wang Hongjie 2011, p. 23.

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eras, the territory of northern Vietnam was separated from southern China by the Hoang Liên Mountain Range 黃連山 and the Cao Bằng Mountains 高平山. The endemic tropical diseases prevalent there served as an additional natural border to the north. Although both Sichuan and Vietnam suffered from unreliable rainfall, they were able to use the rivers as effective means of transport. However, the rivers flooded regularly and needed to be controlled by dams and dikes.

The Three Gorges made the navigation on Sichuanese rivers very dangerous. Local knowledge was essential to navigate the Yangzi safely, so it was reserved for private trade. The Chinese officials had to use the land route via the Baoye Pass 褒斜道,[346] which was arduous but ensured their intact arrival at political centers.

The situation in Vietnam was comparable[347] in the aspect that international trade avoided the rivers and was preferably transported via the sea routes.[348] The Clear River (Sông Lô), Black River (Sông Đà) and the Red River (Sông Hồng) are all rapid streams with a formative role for the Red River Delta. However, there was no central river connecting the different regions and the canals supposed to fulfill this task were only constructed much later. Thus, long-distance transport via inland waterways was a late development in both regions. However, the advent of hydraulic engineering eventually altered river courses or even created new ones.[349]

Unlike the people of the Central Plains, the cultures of Sichuan and Vietnam did not just live from water but with it. Their existential dependence on water control bestowed immense prestige upon those who regulated it.

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346   Cf. Dai 2009, p. 4.

347   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 14.

348   Cf. Li Tana 2017, p. 8, 15.

349   See Dujiangyan in Sichuan and cf. Li Tana 2017, pp. 1–22, especially page 3, for the examples of the vanished river Sông Bồn and the imperial canal Sông Nhà Lê.

5.1   Ideas of Water Control

Water control is the part of water culture preoccupied with enforcing the human will upon the aquatic part of the landscape. It is an integral topic for religion and politics and encompasses countless technological and spiritual measures of water management. Specifically, it concerns measures of water management that transcend the limits of individual actions and encompass collective ideas and practices with far-reaching effects. Relevant stakeholders implement, codify and reform these with translocal aims and consequences. In this book, the term water control will refer to *the cultural ideas for practices of technological and spiritual water management that are meant to create favorable conditions for human survival and which, at least in the scope of the translocal perspective, are executed by a political (local gentry, regional, imperial) or religious collective.*

In historical China and northern Vietnam, water control was a fundamental condition for the agricultural lifestyle that the majority of the population was accustomed to. Northern China was rather arid, suffering from unreliable rainfall and common droughts. If rain fell, it led to severe flooding because the packed, dry soil was unable to absorb it.[350] In southern China, the landscape was pierced by unnavigable rivers that were even more prone to flooding.[351] The same applied to northern Vietnam, where the salt residue from coastal flooding also spoiled rivers and fields. Although there was plenty of terrestrial water, rainfall was unreliable and often not sufficient for the wet rice cultivation.

One of the earliest scholars to meaningfully explore the dissemination of unfavorably available water as a factor for social authority in East Asia was Karl August Wittfogel (1896—1988). In 1931, he published *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Chinas* and defined the "hydraulic society" as a society reliant on irrigated agriculture to such a degree that the management of water distribution necessitated governmental intervention.[352] This idea was not explored much because Wittfogel gained a very controversial reputation due to criticism of his

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350   Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, p. 24.

351   Cf. Wittfogel 1931, pp. 69–78, 188–194.

352   Cf. Wittfogel 1931, pp. 77–92 (definition), 410–455 (description).

concept of "oriental despotism",[353] which he formulated decades later. Another criticism of Wittfogel was that he could only conceive of governmental water control in a centralized state. However, not only did it occur outside of centralized systems,[354] on the contrary, central governments quite often had to wrestle water control from local authorities. Especially in Southeast Asia, Wittfogel's model failed to encompass areas where the state was not necessarily involved in hydro-agricultural irrigation systems or where state-sponsored large-scale systems served a more religious than practical function, although both were not mutually exclusive.[355] As long as a ruler took care of water control, the availability of water was not a concern for the realm and the population of said realm did not worry about *how* the ruler took care of it. Governmental water control thus serves as a link between religious efficacy and political power, but it is neither dependent upon nor a condition for specific *styles* of government.

The likelihood of a community's survival depended indeed on the ability to decide on the right measures of water control and the ability to ensure their accurate execution; both require strong leadership. The leaders of numerous cultures distinctive for their close association with rivers[356] — among them Egypt, Mesopotamia[357] and Byzantium — needed to undertake extensive water control projects and thus carried a high responsibility for countless lives. They had to manage large numbers of people and to motivate them into investing countless hours of labor into projects that had been conceptualized by others.[358] All of this refers to traits that tie hydrolatry to the legitimation of religious and political authorities and indicates the mutual legitimation that religion and politics could provide to each other. For example, political and religious authorities needed to collaborate if there was a disaster, because very often only

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353 Cf. Ball 2016, pp. 156–188.

354 The water masters of the Hani Yiche 哈尼 奕車 people are an example for this. They live in the provinces Yunnan (China), Lào Cai, Lai Châu (Vietnam) and Phongsaly (Laos).

355 Cf. Boomgaard 2007, pp. 15–16.

356 For China, see von Glahn 1987, pp. 59–61.

357 Terrestrial water commonly took a serpentine shape here, too. Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 252.

358 Cf. Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 8.

one of them could provide the sufficient workforce while the other created the necessary motivation.

In hydrolatry, worldly authorities tried to keep up good relations with the water deities to ensure the general prosperity and security of their realms. Many of the water cultures occurring in southern China and most of Vietnam thought of themselves as descendants of aquatic beings or deities[359] and extended that idea towards their rulers — because if a ruler descended from water deities, they must be especially gifted in water control. In turn, excellent water control became the hallmark of someone who was particularly suited to rule the realm. Water control was therefore able to confer legitimacy and serve as a gateway to cultural and political dominance. Consequently, sites where water control was practiced became extraordinary points of identification. Unfortunately, this allure often attracted the occupation by foreign authorities during transcultural contacts.

Technological Water Control

Technological water control is occupied with different tasks depending on the environmental conditions. In arid areas, it focuses on the transport of water over long distances, the building of wells and sufficient agricultural irrigation. In humid areas, it is directed at drainage, dike building and embanking. In urban areas, the management of storm water and waste water poses an additional challenge.

The hydraulic engineering for irrigation and drainage has a particularly long tradition and high prestige in Sinitic cultures.[360] This is why the basic idea of a *hydraulic society* has its charms, which Veronica Strang puts into an aptly modern perspective. She views the conception of irrigation as a form of technological water control that created a new, human-centric relationship to the material world.[361] This eventually triggered the development of more hu-

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359   Cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005. pp. 105–6: The Miao, for example, believed that a dragon had created humanity and the Bai have an ancestor snake that became a dragon who created humans, the only beings not afraid of it.

360   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 70–73.

361   Cf. Strang 2014, p. 93.

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manoid deities and the prevailing de-euhemerization[362] dynamics throughout East Asia after the tenth century CE.

The status of those who led successful large-scale water control projects was easily elevated and the boundaries between mythical and historical persons involved in such endeavors eventually blurred. One example for that is the myth of Da Yu 大禹, which illustrates the entanglement of agriculture, water control and legitimate rule. Da Yu controlled a great deluge by, allegedly with the help of dragons, building dikes and canals,[363] which qualified him to become the founder of the mythical Xia 夏 dynasty. This created a precedent, good rulers were since required to take care of the irrigation systems throughout the realm to ensure sufficient food production, safe water transportation and quick disaster relief. Of course, the emperor would not normally do this by himself. Dams, wells, canals, and bridges were monitored by local subjects, who were supervised by officials.[364]

The Earlier Han dynasty (206 BCE—8 CE) was the first to install the *hedi(shi)zhe* 河堤(使)者 ['Inspectors of Rivers and Dikes'], who came to constitute the class of hydraulic elites, although the actual maintenance of irrigation and embanking remained mainly in the hands of local craftsmen. Over time, these were consolidated into an office for water supervision which facilitated the increasing need for river-control and canal building after the empire's expansion into the Yangzi region. By the Ming dynasty, the Yangzi was meant to support the northern court via the Grand Canal, so the hydraulic engineering

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362   The term "euhemerization" goes back to Euhemerus (4th c. BCE) and describes the deification of heroes, scholars, or kings. De-euhemerization describes the invention of a profane, (pseudo-)historical origin for a deity, implying that it was just an ordinary human and the narrated deeds are exaggerations. Cf. Irwin 1990, p. 66, compare "reverse-euhemerism" in Boltz 1981, p. 142, 151. For a study in the Chinese context, see: Liu Yonghua. *Confucian Rituals and Chinese: Villagers Ritual Change and Social Transformation in a Southeastern Chinese Community, 1368—1949.* Leiden: Brill, 2013. pp. 205–219.

363   Cf. Birrell 1993, pp. 81–89; Cf. Ball 2016, pp. 52–64. In contrast to flood myths elsewhere, this was a story about the victory of human civilization, cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005, pp. 115–17.

364   Cf. Sternfeld 2008, p. 842.

activities at its shores started to receive academic interest.[365] Given the rapidly growing population, it was necessary to supervise public dam building, but the state also had to intervene into private dam construction because local project leaders often disregarded the consequences of their actions and caused water calamities elsewhere.[366] In the late imperial era, the quality of technological water control along Chinese rivers decreased significantly and led to profound environmental change.[367] The reason for this was that the political and financial resources of the hydraulic elites had been weakened by the Qing dynasty's (1644—1911) reorientation[368] towards maritime transportation.

The waterscape environment of northern Vietnam had necessitated the development of hydraulic engineering long before the arrival of the Han Chinese. Floods were a constant threat and the higher the danger of water was to a region, the higher was the position of those who successfully controlled it. Dike building projects and the control of the waterways helped to create central areas.[369] By 1248, the Trần dynasty (1225—1400) had introduced the office of minister and vice-minister of the dikes. To legitimize their rule, they initiated several dike-building projects and secured the irrigation system in the Red River Delta,[370] which still exists in northern Hanoi. This contributed to the idea that a legitimate emperor would be good at hydraulic engineering, which conversely meant that those who were proficient at it could compete as *potential emperors*. 'Unworthy' rulers could thus be deposed if they were unable

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365 Cf. Dodgen 1999, p. 829: The official Wan Gong 萬恭 (1527—1574) wrote the *Zhishui Quanti* 治水筌蹄 "Notes on River Control", the first known piece on Chinese hydraulic theory.

366 Cf. Jiayan Zhang 2014, p. 45. For a later example, see Rowe 1988, pp. 353–387.

367 The change of the Huanghe's course in 1850 led to an environmental disaster that caused many debates about infrastructural and administrative issues, as studied by Amelung, Iwo. *Der Gelbe Fluss in Shandong (1851—1911): Überschwemmungskatastrophen und ihre Bewältigung im China der späten Qing-Zeit.* Wiesbaden, 2000. Further information about the mechanical details of technological water control can be found in Needham, Joseph and Wang Ling. *Science and Civilization in China. Volume 4: Physics and Physical Technology. Part II: Mechanical Engineering.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965. pp. 330–434.

368 Cf. Leonard 2018, pp. 1–12, 39–62.

369 Cf. Cleary 1991, p. 112; Wulf 1995, p. 16 and Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997. p. 70.

370 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 82.

to stop floods, provide irrigation or "produce" timely rainfall.[371] The reigning emperors thus had a valid interest in monopolizing large water control projects.

Spiritual Water Control

In traditional societies, rituals gave humans the impression that they could control their environment, a perception that was later reinforced with technological means. Up to the modern era, spiritual means of water control were not yet decoupled from technological ones. Instead, rituals and prayers were seen as a condition for technological methods to work at all.[372] Spiritual water control therefore refers to rituals that are meant to keep good relations to water entities — either to appease them or to make them grant favors. For the purpose of this book, hydrolatric rituals are all repeated performances with a magical intention that use water as subject or object in a material or symbolic way. This includes manipulating the environment, e.g., to gain rainfall or to stop floods, interacting with supernatural animals, beasts, and deities who represent water, and the sympathetic, thanksgiving and apotropaic rites directed towards nature, a numinous site, or the human body.

In the absence of government intervention, families and occupational groups organized small-scale projects for irrigation, dams, dikes, and canals to create and preserve their livelihoods.[373] As the scale of technological water control projects grew and transferred into the sphere of regional and transregional states, the spiritual measures of water control also transcended from local circles to the governmental stage. Kings and emperors had the duty to appease the unruly local gods, to ward off demons and to entice the benevolent deities of the realm. In the ruling elite's quest to assemble a wide pantheon of possible rain-givers, flood-stoppers and wish-fulfillers,[374] local ideas and preferences were collected and circulated among nobles and officials. Their writings inform us about rituals and the ideas behind them, but also draw

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371   Cf. Synder Reinke 2009, p. 189, 191–92.

372   Cf. Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 8.

373   Cf. Scott 2009, p. 42.

374   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, p. 6.

attention to the situation that the practices through which entities were meant to be addressed could vary greatly between imperial and local perspectives.

For the earliest history of China and Vietnam, it is difficult to distinguish between spiritual water control measures of institutional or popular nature. If there was any difference, it was likely minuscule. Archaeological evidence from both regions shows a connection between serpentine animals or crocodiles with what is thought to be religious specialists.

According to Wang Ping and Wang Wei, who respectively have studied the human sacrifice practices of the Shang (~1600—1046 BCE), the Han Chinese sacrificed large numbers of women of their own ethnic group during the rituals for rain and rivers. This emphasizes the extreme importance of such rituals because in general, women are rarely sacrificed.[375] In dire need for rain, liminal members of society were forced to partake in rituals of exposure (*chi* 赤) and immolation (*fenwuwang* 焚巫尪) as well. These included disabled people (*wang* 尪), religious specialists (*wu* 巫) and even rulers.[376] In the same era, people observed that clouds accumulated at mountain peaks, where the springs of numerous rivers gushed forth and flowed into the plains. They thus deemed these different terrains to be the abodes of water spirits, who commonly took the form of various animals and finally condensed into dragons.

During the Zhou dynasty (1045—770 BCE), the worship of the deities of Mountains and Streams *shanchuan* 山川 became exclusive to the highest levels of society.[377] They were perceived as the spiritual representatives of an animated landscape and local rulers had to negotiate with these deities to establish their rule, defend their territory or to receive potent omens for the future of their dynasty.[378] These practices were later exported to annexed regions like northern Vietnam. By negotiating with water deities, human rulers thus acquired power over profane and spiritual territories.

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375   Cf. Wang Ping 2008, pp. 11–29; Wang Wei et. al. 2012, pp. 8–9 and Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 6. For details on sacrificing women, see: Girard 1992, p. 25 (generally) and Schwermann and Wang Ping 2015, pp. 49–83 (specifically in China).

376   Cf. Schafer 1951, pp. 130–84. The ruler's exalted position also made them liminal: in special circumstances, they could be sacrificed as well, cf. Girard 1992, pp. 24–25.

377   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 28–37, 43, 63–64, 106; Cf. Loewe 1994, pp. 142–45.

378   Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994, p. 4 and Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, p. 5.

Snyder-Reinke illustrates how the human sacrifices began to cease with the beginning of the imperial era. Instead, the governmental administration turned to rites of sympathetic magic, like the public exposure of clay dragons and similar figurines meant to "bring rain" (*xingyu* 行雨). Certain rain dances were introduced to the court. Dong Zongshu introduced the *dayu* 大雩 as the most important one in relation to the hero Da Yu. But after the Tang dynasty (618—907 CE), dancing was demeaned to an emergency remedy and was relegated to hired Buddhists and Daoists.[379] The rituals meant to be performed by the head of the imperial state were carefully chosen by the high officials to ensure their success. After all, a failed ritual could destabilize the legitimacy of the entire dynasty.

Synder-Reinke also explains how the idea of *ganying* 感應 — the belief that events in heaven and on earth influence each other — put local officials under great pressure. They had to fulfill the civilizing expectations of the government and the demands of the local population, with droughts being seen as a sign of an official's incompetence. This motivated them to hide the occurrence of natural disasters, which caused the population to suffer even more as disaster relief arrived late or not at all. Occasionally, the local elites threatened violence to coerce officials into participating in rituals which the latter considered heterodox because they encompassed exposure, mutilation and even human sacrifice. While hiding their activities from the government, the local officials had to prove that they had tried everything to alleviate a drought, including the reactivation of old forbidden gods and rituals outside of the imperial sacrificial register *sidian* 祀典 controlled by the Ministry of Rites *libu* 禮部.[380]

Officials high and low, even the emperors, tried to fulfill their duty to provide appropriate rainfall by appropriating efficacious magical objects and the deities attached to them and bringing them to the capital in an act of superimposing (see Chapter IV). Such deities had to be 'cleaned up' before they could be integrated into imperial practice. This often caused two versions of a deity to exist — the sanitized one at the court level and the popular variant at the local level. For example, in the late imperial era, the government institutionalized

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379   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 38–44, 52, 56–59.

380   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 25, 31–32, 44, 151, 155–159, 163.

rituals for the well spirits in Sichuan, although the officials were not sure if they even believed in such deities.[381] However, ending a drought and relieving the distress of the people was more important than metaphysical questions. In sum, local officials had to represent the empire in a practical sense while being held to the same duties as the emperors. They were forced to engage in their jurisdiction's rituals without becoming too localized. In turn, court officials modified appropriated popular deities and their cults to separate the emperor from practices that could endanger the imperial legitimacy. Although the majority of technological water control came under state supervision, most aspects of spiritual water control remained in the hands of commoners. Many of the spiritual water control practices were based in sympathetic magic, e.g., fish were painted on the ground to attract rain or on the walls of a well to fill it up. Singing, dancing, libations and sweeping were also common parts of popular water control measures. None of these rituals were specific to any particular religion, but due to their prestige, Buddhist and Daoist religious specialists were occasionally employed for them.[382]

The people had two main objectives: to make dragons rise from their dwellings and evoke rainfall or to invoke the pity of heaven by compensating the people's (and thus the regent's) transgressions, the latter was derived from Confucian ideas. The ritual measures to achieve this can be separated into three categories shown in the (non-comprehensive) Table 2: rituals of visiting a site, rituals of transport and movement and violent rituals. The coercion rituals relied on a new perception of local water spirits as subjects to the emperor and his officials. They were no longer appeased but became parties of an extended hydro-social contract. In this arrangement, the human side could cancel at any time and replace the local deity with a more efficacious one. The sacrifice of river brides was the most famous among the violent rituals. The southern Chinese *Chuci* 楚辭 (~300—150 BCE), attributed to Qu Yuan 屈原 (340~278 BCE), already romanticized the *He Bo Quqi* 河伯娶妻 ['He Bo takes a wife'] ritual, He Bo being the ancient deity of the Huanghe (who was also transposed to Vietnam as the deity of the Red River). The author describes bitterly how

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381   Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 224, 349.

382   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, p. 7. 17.

the turtle-riding He Bo drags his arriving bride under the crashing waves into a cold grave, where schools of fish become her eternal companions.[383]After the worship of He Bo was formally recognized and integrated into the imperial cult, human sacrifices to river deities were henceforth discouraged in the Central Plains.[384] However, local rulers or officials still encountered river bride rituals for a long time to come[385] — in Sichuan, human sacrifices continued at least until the eleventh century. Similar developments occurred during the gradual expansion of the Vietnamese Empire and its encounter with the population of Champa. Indeed, the discourse about human sacrifice served as an indication of identity negotiation processes in the peripheries of centralized states.

In Việt society, the people relied strongly on being able to navigate the rivers safely and to use them as protective borders. Consequently, rituals for rivers held somewhat more importance than those for rain. The Việt villages usually focused on their own deities, so long-distance icon fetching like in the Chinese *qushui* ritual was less common, although individual icons could be shared in village associations. The Vietnamese imperial system tried to emulate the Chinese superimposition upon local cults, but it was much less pervasive. The marshes, swamps, deltas and island-dotted river mouths offered refuge to those whom the transregional (imperial) ideologies considered heterodox, and hiding places[386] for practices that they despised. They effectively hindered efforts at political and cultural centralization and enabled such practices to reappear once central attention shifted elsewhere.

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383   Cf. Minford 2002, p. 261.

384   Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 413.

385   Cf. Wang Wei and Wang Lachun 2020, pp. 4–5.

386   Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 45, 169–72, "Water joins" and "hills, swamps, and mountains divide".

[Tab. 2] A Selection of Popular Rituals for Spiritual Water Control

Category	Ritual	Intention	Process
Visiting a Nature Site	*chen* 沉 "Immersion"	To alleviate drought. To create new efficacious cult objects or spirits.	Originally animals and humans, but later mostly objects were lowered into the water and either permanently or temporarily inundated so they could reach the 'watery realm'.[387]
	qiyu 祈雨 "Imploring for rain"	To ensure agrarian fertility.	High-ranking or popular persons (heroes, sages) were invited to nature sites or temples to persuade the gods into granting requests during an institutionalized community event.
Transport and Movement	*qiuyu* 求雨 "Pleading for rain"	To alleviate drought.	Dragons or other aquatic figurines were placed under the sky at temple sites, or rainfall was reenacted via the sweeping or spray of water droplets. This kind of ritual came to include processions and the translocal sharing and exchange of efficacious icons.[388]
	qushui 取水 "Fetching water"	To alleviate drought.	Water was collected from a numinous spring, or transformed dragons (reptiles and fish) were caught, or efficacious icons/objects were ritually fetched and brought to temple sites.

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387 Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, pp. 24–25.

388 Cf. Pomeranz 1991, pp. 70–77 (sweeping) and Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 11–13, 17–20.

Category	Ritual	Intention	Process
Violent Rituals	*quqi* 娶妻 "[A god] takes a wife"	Avoid flooding, ensure fertility of fish and abundance of pearls.	Women were drowned to become brides of the river god. In Sichuan, men could also be sacrificed to the female spirits of the well.[389]
	Coercion	To bring rain or stop flooding.	A human would be presented as suffering and fasting to draw the deity's pity; the deity's abode would be polluted with tiger bones, dirt, metal or loud music. Icons were scolded, smeared, exposed, whipped, chained and even smashed.[390]

5.2   Hydrolatry in China and Beyond

Hydrolatry is directed towards entities — usually deities — who either embody environmental features, personify bodies of water, or have otherwise gained control over the safe interaction with water. Water deities are approached in regard to freshwater, punctual rainfall, floods, healing and purity, safe water collection and safe passage. Especially the embodiments of water were deemed essential for the persistence of the community[391] and thus acquired further functions as territorial deities. In contrast, the deities associated with safe passage were naturally able to spread beyond their original sites and acquired translocal natures. In East Asia, this divergent development had profound consequences for the hydrolatric pantheon.

The gender of animal-shaped deities may not always be discernible. However, their connection to fertility, vitality and healing often implied female

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389   Cf. von Glahn 1987. p 14, 85.

390   Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 38–41; cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005, p. 108. For chaining, smashing and further coercive measures, cf. Cohen 1978, pp. 244–65.

391   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 13.

deities. Veronica Strang argues that female water deities were most commonly of the embodiment type. They were usually locked to one place in the vicinity of human settlements. The advent of hydraulic engineering turned water into a commodity. Men were more easily delocalized and were subsequently aligned with the translocal and transregional availability of water. Additionally, the transregional agricultural production and state centralization were increasingly linked to irrigation and thus became a male domain. Thus, many economic water deities — such as those of river crossing, trade and (salt) wells — shifted to male forms.

At the same time, women had decreasing options to exert claims over water resources and in the long term, female water deities were expulsed from transregional institutions. In a global trend, the remaining transregional water goddesses were turned male or lost at least their reptilian traits, which made it easier to de-euhemerize them into pseudo-historical persons.[392] As soon as female deities were relegated to the sphere of women, they were no longer deemed relevant by historical authors, a fact that exacerbates greatly the difficulty of their research. Only the most efficacious and transregionally popular water goddesses can still be found in textual documents.[393] It is curious that this development even occurred in cultures where women had equal ownership rights.[394] However, Strang's strict separation between nature-embodying water goddesses and economic water gods did not fit the Vietnamese model. Dutton demonstrates that Vietnamese women were very mobile and that they had female economic deities[395] and even some water goddesses delocalized by Royal Displacement (see Chapter IV). Strang's theory thus refers to a trend that fits most areas of China, although it should not be seen as imperative. In general, female water deities of contested sites *do* appear to have been more frequently obscured than male ones. In order to study them and other transformations of water (as it was influenced by shifting social power relations), one requires

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392 Cf. Strang 2014, pp. 86–88, 95–97. Strang claims that this also happened all over Europe and in Mesopotamia.

393 Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 2–3, 6–7, 19–20.

394 Cf. Strang 2014, p. 103.

395 Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 10–11.

a view beyond normative sources. Examining the composition and reconfiguration of hydrolatric sites has proven to be particularly fruitful in this regard.

Changes in the Treatment of Female Water Deities in China

The aforementioned *Chuci* contains the earliest mention of Chinese water deities. Most of them were of agrarian nature and some had healing aspects. In accordance with Strang's theory, many ancient water deities of China did start out as female, mainly for apotropaic reasons due to their role as river brides or due to (ritualized) suicide.[396] In the same accordance, female water deities became unacceptable after water had been commodified and delocalized in Sinitic mainstream culture.[397] Water goddesses were no longer considered powerful by themselves, instead, they were depicted as victims of draconic rape via fog, rain or even fruits. Their male offspring took over their role in fighting droughts and protecting the realm. The water goddesses who persisted received newly invented fathers, brothers and husbands as 'protectors'. However, from the perspective of patriarchal governance, a male protector had to be more powerful than those he protected. The male entities would hence take over the water goddesses' cults. A goddess more powerful than a god was soon considered to be a violation of the 'natural' balance.[398]

The Han dynasties saw an increase of stories about virgin girls or infertile old women who were supernaturally impregnated and gave birth to dragons or future kings. Many of them referred to remnants of semi-active dragoness cults whose former goddesses had become de-euhemerized and depowered to become ordinary human women. This type of protagonist is called a Dragon Mother (*longmu* 龍母). Growing societal prejudice against women made the Dragon Mother narratives more extreme — women now lost their lives while giving birth to one or multiple dragons.[399] This was an effective superscription mechanism that ensured that women disappeared from the narrative and that

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396   Cf. Paper 1990, pp. 35–36; Schafer 1973, pp. 22–33; Eberhard 1937, pp. 140–41 (apotropaic role); von Glahn 2004, p. 31 (drowning).

397   Cf. Schafer 1973, p. 43.

398   Cf. Eberhard 1937, pp. 41, 58, 60, 91.; Johnson 1985, pp. 383–88; Paper 1990, pp. 31–32.

399   Cf. Eberhard 1937, 102–4.

the female was purged out of dragon god lore. Although later origin tales of dragon kings mention these women in passing, the individual personalities of the Dragon Mothers were (with rare exceptions) usually lost.[400]

During the Song dynasties, all kinds of deities were subjected to de-euhemerization. They were reinterpreted as former officials, military heroes or local former worthies (*qianxian* 前賢) and thus necessarily depicted as or transformed into men.[401] The ostracization of female-centric cults as heterodox led to a growing rift between the imperial and local religious culture. It may not have been feasible to completely exclude women from cultural life. However, it was very easy for the elites to conceal or exclude their actions from the historical narrative.[402] The gentry class, which emerged during the Southern Song dynasty (1127—1279) alongside the class of long-distance merchants, actively engaged in historical writing but was often unaware of their complicity in such erasure. Both groups profited from the contestation of religious spaces between imperial and local cultures[403] because they acted as powerbrokers between the imperial officials — tasked with streamlining local culture to imperial ideals — and the locals who wanted to protect their traditions.

After the Ming dynasty (1368—1644) refurbished the river and dike control system, a new group of high-ranking water inspection officials, called the *hedao zongdu* 河道總督, emerged as a technological elite with equal standing to the governors-general (*zongdu* 總督). Their hydraulic projects relied on the corvée labor of the commoners, leading them to promote their own cults of delocalized, state-sanctioned river deities. This inadvertently led to the Confucianization of the commoners living along the Chinese rivers, prompting a strong push for the Neo-Confucian agenda to decrease the social role of women even further. By the seventeenth century, women had been excluded from most spiritual roles.[404]

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400   Cf. Chau 2006, pp. 86–88.

401   Cf. Paper 1990, pp. 26, 28, 30–31.

402   Cf. Duan Youwen 2003, pp. 37–38.

403   Cf. Dodgen 1999, pp. 815–833.

404   Cf. Paper 1990, p. 39. For more details, see Dodgen, Randall A. *Controlling the Dragon: Confucian Engineers and the Yellow River in Late Imperial China.* Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2001.

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The long-distance merchants, on the other hand, distributed their wealth deities selectively along their trade routes: a development which worked diametrically against Confucianization. Although they collected all kinds of river deities, they preferred dragons. These were thought to be responsible for everything that could happen to a ship, so appeasing them guaranteed safe passage. They also promoted 'foreign' deities (from southern China). These were only some factors that contributed to the continuation of the Confucian elite's ancient prejudice against merchants.[405] However, the cults spread by water-controlling officials and traveling merchants promised water security and the improvement of the local economy, so both were well-received. Although local communities were quite willing to abandon their own traditions to become more attractive to the new elites, neither the officials nor the merchants deemed it appropriate to partake in local cults, whose deities they described as strange and unusual — often as female and animalistic.[406] Although these newly transregional cults were a great competition to the local ones, native deities and practices were quickly revived whenever border incursions or financial problems caused a lack of governmental support for local irrigation and embanking projects. Although this helped to preserve some local water goddesses to a degree, the transregional interruptions of indigenous cults still caused a significant loss of lore. This caused the remaining goddesses to appear weak and made them even more vulnerable to transregional superscriptions.

The imperial officials measured the civility of the 'inferior' locals in the peripheries by the degree of their veneration of 'heterodox' goddesses. The great social relevance held by water goddesses in the southern and southwestern cultures gave Confucians ample 'reason' to describe them as man-eating 'wrong' dragons and other vile creatures. This image most often overlapped with the equally slandered jiao-dragons (*jiaolong* 蛟龍) of the ethnic peripheries.[407] The prevalence of such 'false' traditions was a welcome reason to propagate the urgent need for the guidance by the Chinese Empire that such regions allegedly required. "Dams, canals, and irrigation were seen as vital civilizing enterprises

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405   Cf. Hansen 1990, pp. 128–31, 147, 165, 182.

406   Cf. Dodgen 1999, pp. 815–17 (strange and unusual), pp. 826–27, 830–842 (local reactions).

407   Cf. Schafer 1967, pp. 217–21.

[…] [because] subaltern religious practices often center on water." [408] The ostracism against female deities played a crucial role in suppressing subversive practices and ensured that those representing Chinese imperial ideology were perceived as in control over water.

Whoever controlled the water of an annexed territory was also thought of as having tamed the environment as well as its people. This idea created a new type of male water deity — the dragonslayer. From the perspective of imperial authorities, the dragonslayer was supposed to restore the 'right' balance by killing the evil local serpent or dragon to demonstrate that men ruled over women. Many water-controlling officials behaved just like dragonslayers and owing to this role, they could successfully replace aquatic goddesses by being deified themselves. This superscription mode was not restricted to China or East Asia, e.g., a similar one is found in the story of Beowulf. [409]

The conflict between the narratives of female and male water deities along the waterways constitutes a major characteristic of the friction between local and transregional authority. It was not only expressed in official documents, [410] but just as much in the spatial reconfiguration of their sacred sites. This makes examining the treatment of hydrolatric sites by different kinds of authorities especially relevant in the context of transcultural contacts.

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408   Cf. Strang 2014, p. 105.

409   The mother of Grendel is a "merewif", her epithet "áglaec-wif" was mistranslated as "ugly wife" but it actually refers to a female warrior. Without a name and depicted as evil, part of her power was transferred to her son, only for her to be slain by the hero to reintroduce the patriarchal 'natural balance'. Kuhn views this as a trace of the struggle between local religions and the growing Christianization. Cf. Kuhn, Sherman. "Old English Aglæca — Middle Irish Oclacw." *In Linguistic Method: Essays in Honor of Herbert Penzl*, edited by Irmengard Rauch and Gerald F. Carr. The Hague: DeGruyter Mouton, 1978, pp. 213–230. p. 218.

410   Cf. Schafer 1973, pp. 2, 7, 29.

Entities of Sinitic Hydrolatry

The mythology of China encompasses a multitude of water deities who personify animated parts of the landscape in animal or human shape, who are depicted as pseudo-historical persons or who evolved from deified historical persons.

Chinese hydrolatry was not only focused on rivers and lakes but also on mountains. Since the Bronze Age, the Han Chinese have worshipped deities of the mountain peaks to receive rain and good weather for bountiful harvests.[411] In the Han dynasty, five sacred mountains were canonized and integrated into the *wuxing* 五行 world ordering system.[412] They came to represent the imperial world order as part of a ranking system that differentiated imperial agendas from local ones.

On the other hand, mountainous regions were also thought of as uncivilized, dangerous, nonhuman territory filled with strange and unusual deities. Confucians and Daoists alike expected evil spirits to appear there in the shape of wild animals.[413] This problem was solved by anthropomorphizing the mountain deities.[414] This civilized the mountain sites enough so that imperial officials could pray there against floods, droughts and 'bandits'[415] — a term often used to refer to the highland ethnic groups. Mountain springs were considered particularly numinous and often called "dragon pools" (*longtan* 龍潭). They were marked with temples and gardens to announce that the dragon gods were dwelling at these sacred sites.[416] In Sichuan, though, the numinous springs were more commonly found at the foot or midsection of mountains, often located in grottoes. Many of them were superscribed by Daoists.[417]

The Han Chinese preferably settled alongside rivers, so their narratives reflect the conflict between ensuring fertility via rain and the constant danger

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411 Cf. Allan 1984, p. 528 and Kleeman "Mountain Deities" 1994, p. 226.

412 Cf. Kleeman "Mountain Deities" 1994, p. 228.

413 Cf. Hansen 1990, p. 163 (Daoists); Strassberg 1994, p. 1 and Wang Wei et. al. 2012, p. 23.

414 Cf. Kleeman "Mountain Deities" 1994, p. 230–33.

415 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 10.

416 Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 170–71.

417 Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 235.

of rapid streams and flooding. The river deities were allegedly of capricious character and often took the form of fish, dragons and tortoises — they were anthropomorphized considerably later.[418]

While women might have been more commonly sacrificed to them than men, the notion that the deities of major rivers were always male cannot be sustained because the Luojiang and the Hanjiang were originally embodied by goddesses.[419] The women who drowned or were drowned were believed to transform into "Water Mothers" (Shuimu 水母), these were usually benevolent but could still flood entire cities if angered. The term Shuimu was a job description applied to various local water spirits and just like the Dragon Mother, this general term was frequently used to obscure specific water goddesses.[420] After the Northern Song dynasty (960—1126), Shuimu were reimagined as dangerous crones who needed to be exorcised or waterlocked (see next section). Alternatively, they had to transfer their powers to the much more docile and romanticized Shuimu Niangniang 水母娘娘. These were depicted as young maidens and placed in a sitting position on top of springs, buckets or river mouths, where they served as container deities for various local water goddesses.[421] Although the Shuimu Niangniang were themselves a product of the rising imperialization and urbanization, they were soon waterlocked as well. Many of their temples thus center around a *covered* well. The general trend for all the embodiments of nature referred to here is that they became gradually more humanoid over time.

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418   Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 411.

419   See the goddesses of Luojiang and Hanjiang in Schafer 1973, pp. 53–56, 70–72.

420   Cf. Duan Youwen 2003, p. 36.

421   The motif of the survivor floating in a bucket (cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 182–3) may be related to the motif of a pair of siblings escaping a deluge in a gourd, bucket or drum in the heritage stories of many southwestern ethnic groups. A great collection of these stories is found in Dang Nghiem Van. "The Flood Myth and the Origin of Ethnic Groups in Southeast Asia." *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 106, No. 421 (1993): 304–337. The best representation of a possible Shuimu and Shuimu Niangniang are the Shengmu icons of Jinci 晉祠. Shengmu is a water spirit whose Song-dynasty main icon is depicted as a matron, but her incarnation in the tower building is younger and sitting on top of a bucket. Cf. Miller 2007, p. 160.

Animals are also considered a part of nature, but are very different from a landscape feature in that they can act and react in ways that humans may interpret as having particular meaning. The animals associated with water served as mediators between the humans and this element. Some of them served as omens, others as erratic beasts and monsters, some were venerated as self-aware gods and the limits between these categories were often blurred. Many animals were considered hidden or young dragons. These were mostly reptiles like snakes, tortoises and lizards, but also fish, mussels and frogs.[422] In Sichuan, frogs, turtles, snakes and dogs were typical forms that deities of the springs would take while dragons were more often found in rivers, lakes and marshes.[423]

Frogs and turtles played specific roles in the conflicts between the north and south. In the south, frogs were popular rain bringers but the north viewed them with skepticism. Since the Tang dynasty, turtles were considered to be supernatural messengers who bestowed favors on Chinese Emperors. They were also thought of as counterparts to the storm-raising snakes venerated by southern ethnic groups. In tales of their fights against such snakes, the turtle's victory typically symbolized the superiority of the Han Chinese, as indicated by ending statements like 'and the entire South was rid of poisonous influences'.[424] Such a tale is scrutinized in the case study on Mahu [S.3.3.6.–II.].

The association of water deities and snakes is very common across all continents and in most of the relevant cultures. Mythological snakes are ambiguous — they show benevolent and malevolent characteristics. Archaeological evidence from China[425] shows that in ancient times, snakes were also venerated in the Central Plains. However, at some point, this underwent a division: all positive attributes were ascribed to dragons, while all negative traits were accorded to snakes (see Table 3). This division, though, was not necessarily shared by the southern cultures, where snakes were revered as benevolent river deities

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422   Cf. Schafer 1967, pp. 85, 104, 254 and Loewe 1994, p. 150, 154.

423   Cf. Verellen 1998, pp. 240–41 (frogs and dogs); Kang Wenji 2009, pp. 12–13 (dragons).

424   Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 243.

425   Cf. Major 1999, pp. 130, 136–37.

or appeased as storm-calling giant snakes.[426] Medieval Han-Chinese literature mentions instances of sacrificing children and maidens to these giant snakes[427] and emphasized the perceived threat that they and their worshipers posed to society. This suggests snake veneration as a factor of cultural demarcation between the north and the south of China.

Parts of modern Sichuan were once covered by the ancient state of Chu 楚, the snake-venerating archenemy of the Qin dynasty (221—206 BCE), and sported numerous tales about giant snakes. Among them were the elephant-eating Ba snake 巴, the poisonous and the flood-raising Xiangliu 相柳 (killed by Da Yu and soon forgotten outside Sichuan)[428] and the important translocal snake cult of the "Viper" (*e'zi* 蜇子 or *dushe* 毒蛇 "venomous snake") at Qiqushan 七曲山 in Zitong 梓潼. In the *Huayang Guozhi* 華陽國志 (5th c. CE) by Chang Qu 常璩, the E'Zi is a serpentine mountain deity associated with the conjuring of storms and fertility rites in spring.[429] The Qiqushan is located between Chengdu and the main cities of the North China Plain, so the E'Zi guarded the entrance to Shu in the function of a territorial deity. As a chthonic deity, it needed to be appeased and the failing to do so (allegedly) enabled the first colonization of Sichuan's Shu people by the Qin Chinese.[430] The cult of E'Zi remained relevant to the legitimation of local authorities in Sichuan. Allegedly, the viper incarnated itself as the self-proclaimed emperor Wang Jian 王建 (847—918) [S.1.1.2.] and later merged with a flood-associated snake deity from Chengdu called Zhang 張. Terry F. Kleeman identifies the E'Zi with the deity Wenchang 文昌 or Zitong Dijun 滓潼帝君 ['The Lord of Zitong'], whose serpentine cult differed greatly from the humanoid transregional version of Wenchang that is known throughout late imperial China.

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426   Cf. Eberhard 1968, p. 380.

427   Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 240. "The Little Snake of Pixian"; Minford 2002, pp. 663–664 "Li Ji the Serpent Slayer" and Chen Huaiyu 2019, pp. 4–5.

428   Cf. Shanhaijing 2009, pp. 164f., 179 and Yang, An and Turner 2005, p. 214.

429   Cf. HYGZ 3:4a–b.

430   Cf. von Glahn 1985, p. 2, 34.

[Tab. 3] Positive and Negative Traits of Snakes in Sinitic Mythology[431]

Former Traits of Snakes	Later Traits of Snakes	Traits of the Dragons
Chthonic	Malevolent	Divine
Bring rain, fertility and virility	Bring drought	Bring rain and fertility
Create springs	Poison springs	Create springs
Know about medicine	Spread disease *Are* good medicine	Know secret sutras and elixirs
Know water sources Unclog rivers	Pollute nature	Sign of a healthy environment
Control floods	Bring floods	Control and bring floods
Grant favors	Eat humans	Grant favors
Supernatural mothers/fathers	—	Supernatural mothers/fathers
Supernatural brides/grooms	Demand virgin sacrifices	Supernatural brides
May turn into heroes and territorial defenders	Are enemies of heroes	May turn people into gods or immortals
Provide treasures and wealth	Bring the downfall of a family	May protect a monastery
Pretty, irresistible	Lewd and lustful	Impregnate dragon mothers

Anyhow, the deity Zhang E'zi 張惡子, whom local chieftains utilized to defend their territory, was a hybrid figure encompassing elements of E'Zi, Zhang, and Wenchang, all of which were once imagined as serpentine creatures.[432] In Sichuan, Wenchang was a primordial water deity capable of superimposing hydrolatric sites. In other areas of China, he was more associated with constellations and education and rarely able to occupy these sites.

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431   This table contains summarized information from the classics of Chinese dragon studies, these are: de Visser 1913, Schafer 1973 and Dragan, Raymond Anthony. "The Dragon in Early Imperial China." Dissertation. University of Toronto, 1993.

432   Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994, p. 4, 26–27, 30–34, 38 and Kleeman 1998, pp. 341–42, 349.

Ranking the Dragons

Although dragons monopolized the good traits of serpents, they were not inherently good. Their morality was ambiguous and their nature not well-defined.[433] In the *sifang* 四方 system, used by the ancient Chinese to venerate the cardinal directions, the dragon symbolized the east — the direction of the sea, where rain clouds hailed from.[434] It was an automatic reaction that rain would fall as soon as a dragon rose to the sky, regardless of the dragon's agreement.[435] The numerous coercion rituals meant to annoy dragons to chase them out of their hiding places treated them like regular animals, just with supernatural powers, and like the animals, dragons could be wild beasts or wise gods. By the eighth century, dragons had turned into approachable and moral deities who had to represent the center and its civility, ruling as dutiful lords over inferior water deities.[436] However, this only applied to the *long* 龍, noble dragons associated with the sky, stars, weather and the reliable provision of rain. The *long* were allegedly unable to be coerced, the imperial cult venerated them instead for their benevolence and as omens regarding the Heavenly Mandate. The relationship between rulers and dragons had evolved from totemic ideas and ancestor veneration.[437] Several of the early culture heroes of China were at least semi-draconic and numerous emperors were allegedly sired by dragons. However, this relationship remained platonic and did not resemble the close partnership between the rulers of southern cultures and their aquatic patrons.

When the first Han Chinese settled in the area of Sichuan, they developed long-lasting stereotypes about the indigenous people. Even in the late imperial era, stories about human sacrifice, demonic cults, kidnappings, mutila-

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433 Cf. Eberhard 2007, p. 154; Yang, An and Turner 2005, pp. 100–101 and Wang Wei et. al. 2012, pp. 4–5.

434 Cf. Major 1999, p. 125.

435 Cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005, p. 101.

436 Cf. Schafer 1973, p. 13.

437 He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 364 and Yang, An and Turner 2005, p. 109. Although later treated in a metaphorical way, the Han Chinese also once shared the belief of many southern ethnic groups that they were descended from dragons. Some of the earliest heroes were implied to be dragons themselves or used water control to prove their legitimacy. Cf. Zhao Qiguang 1989, p. 232.

tion and black magic were still commonly told. The narrative of good citizens threatened by 'indigenous outsiders' provided the imperial expansion with a sense of moral urgency and permitted the suppression of local cultures. The *jiao* 蛟 was created as the antithesis to the long-dragon. While the 'immature' dragons called *chi* 螭 and *qiu* 虬 were meant to depict local cults as inferior, the jiao-dragons were meant to denigrate entire local cultures. Jiao lived in bodies of water, they were depicted as dangerous beasts, venomous, vampiric and fond of human flesh. They reflected the crocodiles and pythons feared by the Han Chinese and conflated them with southern religious imagery. They could appear as serpentine dragons, but also as water buffaloes, maelstroms and man-eating mermaids.[438] As symbols for the 'uncivilized' southern ethnic groups, jiao-dragons were 'not yet' able to fly, but the civilizing narrative of the Chinese considered them to be potentially able to turn into noble long-dragons at some point.[439]

The treatment of the jiao was indeed another demarcation point between Han and non-Han cultures, because the Han commonly used the term jiao for water goddesses that were considered benevolent by the southern ethnic groups. While the long-dragon was usually male, many of the southern jiao remained female. The Han Chinese officials viewed them as malicious seductresses who would lure dutiful Confucians into certain death.[440] However, similar stories outside the Confucian sphere saw the officials more likely turned into immortals or deities. As such, the stories may have been inspired by those officials who were stationed in the southern peripheries as a punishment and chose to switch sides.

Another catch-all term for the southern goddesses of rivers, marshes and rain in draconic shape was "Dragon Woman" (*longnü* 龍女)*,* who, in later literature, was always subject to a dragon king father. This is shown by a tale of the Zhenze Cave that Berndt refers to in his broad study on dragon kings. He also refers to the tale retold by Li Chaowei as one of the earliest that has the

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438   Cf. Eberhard 1968, pp. 378–79; von Glahn 1987, pp. 16, 20–22.

439   Cf. Schafer 1967, p. 219.

440   Cf. Schafer 1967, pp. 219–20 and Schafer 1973, p. 220. Nonetheless, outside of official documents, the terms long and jiao were often used interchangeably.

dragon king in an active role.[441] Since it was collected from older material, a close reading reveals that the dragon woman in this story still possesses a lot of agency, which is precisely what enabled the story's male protagonist to become immortal. The subjugation of dragon women under dragon kings was a consequence of the Buddhist ideology transfer to China, which appears to have significantly accelerated during the Tang dynasty. References to dragon women from the Tang era still acknowledge their power. For example, the Tang poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712—770), known for his travel poetic series,[442] described one of them in Sichuan like this:

> The dragon woman — from whence does she come?
> But when she comes — she rides the wind and the rain!
> At the hall of her fane,[443] below the blue wood,
> She coils sinuously, as if about to speak to you.
> Men of Shu vie there, with worshipful thoughts,
> To offer her wine to the beating of drums.[444]

We learn that the Dragon Woman controls storms and rain and that her temple is painted blue as it is still typical for hydrolatric temples in modern Sichuan [S.2.]. Her coiling is a serpentine trait, inhuman in nature and appearance. While the beating of the drums connects her to southern Chinese shamanic traditions, by being offered wine, she was still worshiped like an orthodox deity. The drums here may refer to bronze drums, which were not uncommon[445] in old Sichuan until the end of the imperial era.

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441   Berndt 2015, pp. 346–347. A translation of the Li Chaowei story can be found in Minford 2002, pp. 1034–46.

442   Cf. Tian Xiaofei 2019, p. 181.

443   An old term that refers to a temple. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "fane," accessed March 26, 2020, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fane.

444   *Quantangshi* 198/2044, translated in Schafer 1973, p. 47–48.

445   Cf. von Glahn, 1987, p. 15.

Well Deities

Another type of localized water deity typical for Sichuan may not completely contradict Strang's theory, but it does challenge it. Wells are by nature localized and tightly connected to identity and religion. They provide people with the freedom to settle at a safe distance from rivers and alleviate the threat of droughts. Chinese wells were marked as numinous sites by carved dragon heads or by the erection of pavilions and entire temple halls above them.[446] Festivals for well spirits have been celebrated since the Shang era (~1600—1046 BCE), commonly in the first month of the lunar year. Although wells are inherently localized, they are also an important factor in the commodification of water. Since wells are human-made, their associated advantages and the prevailing cosmological emphasis on civilizing led to their perception as superior to natural water sources. Consequently, by the late imperial period, male dragon kings had taken up residence in wells and controlled all water sources within a region from there.[447] The well deities of Sichuan, though, were predominantly female. They provided rain, healing and even treasures. Following the conquest of the Shu region, the Han Chinese central government sought to replace these female deities with male counterparts. However, this process was significantly inhibited by the prevalence of salt wells. Salt wells were a great factor for the local economy and had been a cherished tribute for centuries, so the Chinese Empire swiftly established a salt monopoly that lasted until the seventeenth century. The goddesses of the salt wells had particularly strong ties to the indigenous groups and were typically appeased by the sacrifice of young men. References to this practice are expressed in the antagonistic salt goddess in the Ba people's origin tale about Linjun 廩君 and by the salt goddess of the Naxi people 纳西, who allegedly constructed the first brine wells.[448] In reaction, the Han Chinese settlers created new narratives about subduing these entities and replacing them with humanoid and protective salt well deities. These were tasked with keeping 'bandits' away, thus safeguarding the imperial monopoly from indigenous resistance.

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446   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 162–70, 179.

447   Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, pp. 224, 321.

448   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 34; Flad 2011, p. 52 and Flad and Chen 2013, p. 198, 207.

By the Tang dynasty, Buddhists and Daoists had recognized the value of these sites as well and started to occupy numinous salt wells, and so did the opportunistic magnates of Sichuan [S.1.2.] three hundred years later. These magnates, who were open to acculturating with the indigenous ethnic groups, encouraged the spread of salt wells to such an extent that they endangered the state monopoly. Therefore, when the Song dynasty expanded towards southern Sichuan, its assimilation attempts caused severe cultural frictions. By the Ming dynasty, salt production had become almost exclusively male; taboos prevented women from even entering salt production compounds.[449] The remaining salt well goddesses had been waterlocked, dehumanized and transformed into snakes who were then married off to "more responsible" dragon deities who would keep them in check.[450] An example of this is the story of the Western Mountain God (Xishanshen 西山神) from the Renshou district 仁壽縣 in central Sichuan. It treats the marriage of an indigenous salt goddess with a serpent god, who are meant to balance each other's heterodox qualities.

Transregional Deities

The entities mentioned so far are typical for local cultures and often bound to their locations, but the following ones transcended regional borders for various reasons.

The first reason was a connection to naturally transregional matters, like shipping in the waterways. The *jishen* 濟神, deities of "crossing-over", include different types of deities that guarantee safe river-crossing or passage while traveling the sea. They were prevalent along dangerous rivers like the Huanghe and Yangzi as well as in regions that depended on the waterways for communication and trade. The intensified river traffic since the creation of the Grand Canal in the seventh century created a new kind of employment, the *caofu* 漕夫 ['canal employed']. These people spend their lives along the Grand Canal, often

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449   Cf. Flad 2011. pp. 50–53 (salt compounds; taboos); von Glahn 1987, pp. 70–73 (state monopoly).

450   Ma Fanruo 馬凡若. *Renshou Xianzhi* 仁壽縣志, rev. by 羅廷權. Luo Tingquan. 1866. 15/37b, edited by Harvard-Yenching Library Chinese Local Gazetteers Digitization Project- Jiu fang zhi. [online] Retrieved 30 May 2020. DOI: https://iiif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:483190019$1i

for multiple generations, and depended on it for their livelihood — naturally, they were mainly responsible for the dissemination of *jishen* in China. Some of these were eventually adopted and imperialized by water controlling officials.[451]

The second reason for water deities to transcend regional limits was because they were able to be picked up and transported by those who worshiped them for protection and financial gain, like the previously mentioned merchants. Local deities were thus transformed into network-affiliated deities. So far, all these deities could assume dragon shape.

However, the third reason for a water deity's transregional dissemination was its human appearance. Humanoid deities were more likely to conform to imperial values and demands. The prevailing transregional water goddesses of China even bore such striking resemblances to each other that they were occasionally confused with each other. An example of this are the notable visual similarities between the imperialized maritime goddess Mazu 媽祖[452] and the popular Guanyin version of the Buddhist Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (and much later even the Christian Mary). During the Buddhist expansion, Avalokiteśvara spread along the southern sea routes and was increasingly perceived as a patron of travelers and pilgrims. Due to artistic choices that covered up the male bodhisattva's chest in his depictions, he was at some point reinterpreted as female since that suited the hydrolatric functions that he had long since assumed. [453] This topic will be discussed in more depth in the case study [S.2.] and Chapter VI. Despite Guanyin's origin as a Buddhist entity of salvation, she developed into a water goddess and Mazu, who originated as a sea goddess, had to fulfill more and more tasks of disaster relief.[454] Both adapted to similar functional niches, which led to an overlap in their distribution and visual representation.

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451   Cf. Dodgen 1999, pp. 815–16, 832–834 and He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 375.

452   For more information, see Zhang Yanchao. "Mazu Worship in Late Imperial China: Gender, Politics, Religion and Identity Construction." Dissertation. University of Florida, 2018.

453   Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, pp. 7–13. and Eichenbaum Karetzky 2004, p. 8, 16, 42.

454   For more details on this, see: Tian Chong and Huang Yungang. "A comparative study of belief in Mazu and Guanyin in China." *The Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 29, no. 1 (2021): 17–26.

Da Yu is another humanoid water deity who was widespread throughout China. He is a comparatively ancient deity who features in many regional deluge myths and commonly employs aquatic creatures — including the river god He Bo — to build his irrigation systems. He is attributed with introducing the basic principle of Chinese technological water control: "Water has to be led and not just stopped."[455] In the Central Plains, though, his hydrolatric nature was downplayed in favor of portraying him as an exemplary ruler and founder of the mythical Xia dynasty. The Da Yu of the Central Plains thus represents a later layer of Chinese legitimation related to hydrolatry, one that emphasizes how human civilization can subdue the powers of nature embodied by local deities. Although there are other deluge myths in China that refer to different people stopping floods, Da Yu is singled out as an engineering hero who fights dragons, snakes and the ape-shaped deity of the Huai River.[456]

In Sichuan, there exist two different interpretations of Da Yu. One is the Central Plain variant, while the other is a local version who was allegedly born in the Sichuanese area of Mianyang 綿陽. It is again the poet Du Fu who found one such temple that was already described as ancient during the eighth century, when the first temples for the Central Plains Da Yu just started to be built. The Da Yu temple described by Du Fu housed the Da Yu of the Ba people, which at the time was neglected to an extent that lets the poet lament:

<div align="center">

禹廟空山裏，秋風落日斜。
荒庭垂橘柚，古屋畫龍蛇。
雲氣虛青壁，江聲走白沙。
早知乘四載，疏鑿控三巴。

The Temple of Yu is located in the deserted mountains,
Autumn wind descends with the setting sun.
In the desolate courtyard droop tangerines and pomelos,
The old building is painted with dragons and serpents.

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455   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, p. 73.

456   Cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005, pp. 236–240; Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, pp. 349–50 (other deluge myths). For the Huai River deity, see: Andersen, Poul, The Demon Chained under the Mountain: The History and Mythology of the Chinese River Spirit Wuzhiqi. Berlin: G & H Verlag, 2001.

The breath of clouds empties over green cliffs,
The sound of the river runs across white sands.
[Since] long ago, I knew that he rode the Four Vehicles,
That he dredged, chiseled and drew the three [regions] of Ba.[457]

This Da Yu is still strongly connected to reptilian buildings here, but Du Fu presents him as a "has-been", his temple having been abandoned. By pushing the Da Yu of the Ba into the past, Du Fu may alleviate himself from the taint of engaging with a heterodox deity. One of the famous deeds of the Da Yu of the southern Ba-Chu religious culture was the taming of serpents with the help of yellow oxen.[458] Using oxen to subdue water deities is a trope that many 'civilizing' dragonslayers employed and is treated again in Chapter V and [S.1.1.1.].

5.3   Hydrolatry in Buddhism

When the Buddhist missionaries traveled across East Asia, they were already aware of the high social relevance of water. Ancient India was a land of farmers who had to struggle with similar environmental conditions as the East Asian ones; this sufficed to create horizontal connections in hydrolatric practice.[459] Moreover, hydrolatric sites, especially those associated with springs, were often linked to trade networks. Occupying them was a great advantage for the Buddhists and enabled them to generate income to facilitate their mission travels. The Buddhists had therefore already begun to claim hydrolatric sites of indigenous deities in India.[460] Their targets were primarily the sites of the Nagas, a mythical race of semi-divine serpentine creatures from Indian my-

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457   *Quantangshi* 229/2489 "Yumiao", my own translation. I view the last verse as a reference to the creation aspects of Da Yu's engineering activities, three words referring to the way that he shaped those regions. Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 13 for a pro-Sichuan interpretation of the poem; cf. Owen 2016, pp. 72–75, poem 14.60 "Yu Miao 禹廟" for a more pro-imperial interpretation that ignores the snakes of the original text.

458   Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 14.

459   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 69.

460   Cf. DeCaroli 2011. p. 145.

thology associated with fertility, rainfall and only rarely floods. They allegedly lived in trees, under stones, in springs, or in their own realm at the bottom of the sea. By the second century CE, Buddhists in South Asia began to build their own Naga shrines for protection against disastrous weather and to receive punctual rain.[461]

Some similarities in the religious practices between South India and East Asia are already indicated by rituals like the coercing of Nagas by throwing certain objects (talismans, sutra copies, iron, bones) into the body of water that they dwelt in.[462] Soon, the Buddhists merged water control practices introduced from India, adapted from East Asia and also some whose origin is unknown — like monks wearing blue robes during rituals to attract rain.[463] The *Mahāmeghasūtra* ['Sutra of the Great Cloud'] (~6th—8th c.) claims that the Buddha used a spell-prayer (*dhāraṇī*) to summon the Nagas for rain. However, by that time, Buddhism had long been transferred to China. It is hence not clear who influenced whom regarding the belief that Naga brought storms and rain when angered.[464] In Chinese, the *Mahāmeghasūtra* was also called *Qing Yu Jing* 請雨經 ['Implore for Rain Sutra'], because it contained elaborate directions for an exhausting twenty-one-day long rain ritual. That was unusually complex from a Chinese perspective, regular Buddhist rain rituals consisted of mere praying and reciting the sutras. Chinese shamanic traditions may have inspired the adaption of practices like self-mutilation and self-immolation that became prevalent in Chinese Buddhism before the tenth century.[465] However, the *Lotus Sutra* (Chin. *Miaofa Lianhuajing* 妙法蓮華經), also called *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sutra,* originated in India and already depicted suicide and mutilation as valid ways to gain merit.[466] Chinese apocryphal sutras like the *Fanwangjing* 梵網經 (~ "Brahmajāla Sutra") simply expanded on that. Although self-immolation

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461 Cf. Deeg 2008, pp. 92, 95–96, 102, 110–114 and Lange 2019, p. 2, 4, 7.

462 Cf. Deeg 2008, pp. 107–8.

463 Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, p. 289.

464 Cf. Deeg 2008, p. 99, 104–105 and Cf. DeCaroli 2009, pp. 94–95.

465 Cf. Freiberger and Kleine 2011, pp. 290–291. The standard work in this regard is Benn, James A. *Burning for the Buddha: Self-Immolation in Chinese Buddhism.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i press, 2007.

466 Cf. Hope 1967, p. 152.

was a strange and unusual practice from the perspective of Confucian morality, officials did self-immolate under exceptional circumstances like dire droughts. However, they did so according to Chinese traditions and usually survived while Buddhist self-immolating monks died.[467]

The public engagement in rainmaking made Buddhism attractive for possible converts, but the main motivation for it was to present Buddhism as an advantage for the realm to gain the ruler's patronage. This also influenced the presentation of Nagas who were described to the Chinese as much more benevolent, dutiful and humanoid than they were in India. Some adjustments in mythology and ritual practice were acceptable for the Buddhists if it enhanced their chances of unhindered proselytizing.

Transforming the Dragons

In the Buddhist worldview, Nagas are considered low, condemned rebirths awaiting conversion by powerful monks.[468] This view was extended to the Chinese long-dragons whose exalted spiritual status diminished. In Buddhism, there was a moral divide between Nagas and snakes similar to that between dragons and snakes in China. Although the Buddha was indebted to the Nagas for their protection, snakes were still considered "loathsome" and one of the three poisons.[469] In Mahāyāna Buddhism, they were associated with heretical teachings and the enemies of Buddhism.[470] The Nagas could thus be depicted as adversaries and symbolize pre-Buddhist religions. Like in Kashmir, where a Buddhist dynasty violently tried to end the Naga worship at springs and mountain lakes. According to lore, the Nagas reaction was to send disasters.[471]

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467   Cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 27–37 (officials); cf. Kleine 2003, pp. 37–38 (self-immolating monks).

468   Cf. Faure 2003, p. 317.

469   Snakes depict hatred or anger, a bird (or rooster) depicts greed or lust and a boar depicts ignorance or delusion.

470   Cf. Chen Huaiyu 2019, pp. 5–8, it is noted how Theravāda Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia — where snake worship remained common — maintained the nonviolent approach to snakes.

471   Cf. Lange 2019, p. 10, 15. Refer to the *Nīlamata-Purāṇa* for the Nagas' connection to springs in Kashmir.

And yet, early Buddhism also asked to treat snakes with nonviolence and according to the monastic codex, even killing them accidentally was an offense. This changed drastically after the Dragon Kings became prevalent in China.

There is the idea that the identification of Nagas with the Chinese long-dragons rests on their ability to conjure storms.[472] However, storm-conjuring serpents were not unheard of in China. Since there was already a similar dichotomy between natural snakes and mythological snake-like beings, it is perhaps more likely that dragons and Nagas were identified with each other based on their association with royalty. In Indian lore, the Nagas were ruled by eight *nāgarāja* ['snake kings'], who lived in palaces under the sea. They acted as protectors of the Buddha and were thus easily likened to the imperial dragons.

The exalted dragons of China had so far been called Dragon Lords (*longjun* 龍君). After the introduction of Buddhism during the Eastern Han Dynasty (25—220 CE), the term Dragon King (*longwang* 龍王) was used to reflect the Buddhist nāgarāja. This transformation was accelerated by the "Sea Dragon King Sutra" (*Hailongwangjing* 海龍王經), created during the Western Jin dynasty (265—420 CE), which suggested that Dragon Kings had palaces and their own courts under the sea. They were hence real royalty and because kings were always male, all the dragon gods who had become dragon kings were also seen as male. However, some female dragon kings did exist under this moniker [S.2.1.2.–II].

By the sixth century, Dragon Kings had become the dominant regional water deities of northern China. Monks and local officials skillfully employed them to supersede local deities, because in contrast to other supernatural animals, dragon kings could be hierarchized. The Dragon King was therefore no longer an animal, an embodiment of nature or a heavenly messenger — he had become a subject of the emperor, just another official. He wore clothing and regalia and was generally depicted in human form. All of this made him appear less erratic than other reptilian deities and easier to control.[473] However, from the Buddhist perspective, the Dragon Kings were lower rebirths as well

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472   Examples can be found in the *Sāgaranāgarājaparipṛcchā-sutra* (ca. 285 CE) and *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* 華嚴經 (ca. 100 BCE—100 CE).

473   Cf. Zhao Qiguang 1989, pp. 237–239.

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and automatically outranked by any monk, unable to enter monasteries by themselves.[474] That the Buddhist Nagas could symbolize otherized people[475] affected the long-dragon as an imperial symbol negatively because his image became muddled with untamed and dangerous dragons. This confusion led to attempts to explain that there were two different kinds of Dragon Kings: protective or malevolent ones (the latter sent floods or withheld rainfall).[476]

By the late imperial era, Dragon Kings had become the typical epithet for the local water gods of sizeable towns. Although every body of water could have a Dragon King, their power was dependent on the amount of water that they ruled over.[477] Therefore, the most powerful dragon kings ruled over the seas and all other water deities according to the cardinal directions. The Sea Dragon Kings were easy to introduce into hydrolatric sites that had been recently occupied by Buddhism and quickly endangered the once predominantly female native dragons. This development was welcomed by government officials who were very interested in obscuring older water goddesses who did not match the values of their Confucian education. The imperial cult's focus on Dragon Kings excluded the female dragons, so officials simply stopped mentioning them in their writings. Water deities with unspecified gender were automatically transformed into male Dragon Kings and the surviving goddesses received new relatives and spouses to undermine their agency.[478] Consequently, the water goddesses were pushed out of the main hall and eventually elided from their own temples. If there were no female religious lineages to preserve them subversively [S.1.1.], [V.4.3.], their cults lost relevance and thus followers.[479]

As a matter of fact, a Dragon King was not required for the acceptance of a Buddhist temple, and most Buddhist temples were not even associated with one. Instead, the superscription of water goddesses as Dragon Kings was a

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474   Cf. Lange 2019, p. 14.

475   Cf. DeCaroli 2009, pp. 95–100. Not to be confused with the nineteenth century idea that all Nagas supposedly referred to one specific race or people, cf. Lange 2019, pp. 19–21.

476   Cf. Zhao Qiguang 1989, p. 238 and cf. Deeg 2008, pp. 93–94.

477   Cf. Yang, An and Turner 2005, p.108.

478   Cf. Schafer 1973, pp. 43–45, 120.

479   Cf. Duan Youwen 2003, p. 35.

deliberate and highly successful tactic adopted by imperial officials to their own advantage.

The Buddhist Occupation of Hydrolatric Sites

The first Buddhist communities in China met in private houses. Afterwards, the missionaries preferred to occupy the sacred sites of other religions although there was plenty of space available to create new temples. They took advantage of the locals who kept visiting their old sacred sites out of habit or because they felt dependent on whatever the original local deity had to offer. Correspondingly, hydrolatric sites were a main target of the Buddhist missionaries because everyone relied on good relations with the water deities.

Buddhists developed a modus operandi for occupying hydrolatric sites across East Asia.[480] Initially, they made offerings similar to those of the previous cult. However, they first needed to establish their superiority over the indigenous deity. This was accomplished by either converting the deity to Buddhism or by portraying it as malevolent, so that it could be destroyed through exorcism. Subsequently, they would establish a Buddhist temple on the spot and begin to gather new followers.

The bias that they shared with Confucian officials was evident, because local gods were commonly tamed, but local goddesses were usually destroyed — they were considered 'naturally' unable to be good.[481] A twelfth century story cited by Chen Huaiyu profoundly illustrates the Buddhist occupation practices and encounters between monks and water goddesses. At a cliff featuring a serpent cave, repeated attempts to establish a Buddhist hermitage and monastery failed because the 'seductress' tempted the monks, cursed them with disease and struck them with thunderstorms. The leading monk Shantong 善同 then gathered a group of monks who successfully killed the giant snake, resulting in the cessation of rainstorms. A brief justification concludes the tale, stating that

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480   Cf. Bodiford 2003, p. 251–252

481   Cf. Faure 2003, pp. 316–17.

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the snake had purportedly killed eight Buddhists previously.[482] Chen Huaiyu may claim that this kind of story is an exception, but Faure[483] demonstrated that it rather depicts a common trope of interaction between Buddhists and local hydrolatry. If a water goddess could be exterminated, the prohibition against the killing of snakes and Nagas was promptly ignored. After all, women and their wiles were obstacles in the old Buddhist worldview, not allies. Buddhism had also adopted the Chinese stance to associate women with the Yin principle of humidity, rain, darkness and nefarious intentions. In combination with snakes, goddesses of the indigenous religions were easily twisted into devouring, poisonous influences.

> "The Buddhist community […] developed its own narrative against women by binding women and snakes together. This narrative teaches that both women and snakes could die in misery due to their evil karmic retributions, but they could be saved as long as these women/snakes converted to Buddhism."[484]

In medieval Buddhist narratives, there was still a fear of supernatural retribution if a snake, pacified as the protector of a temple or confined under a pagoda,[485] was killed. This may also have been an allegory against offending the locals too much, lest they should turn against the Buddhists. Snakes also asserted themselves more prominently and occasionally demanded that monks, depicted as tamers, missionaries, and dragonslayers, had to take up residence elsewhere.[486] These were fictionalized encounters between Buddhists and local populations who rejected them. The tales about monks who were killed by

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482 Cf. Chen Huaiyu 2019, pp. 1–2. Compare the events mentioned in the *Stele Inscription of Linh Xứng Temple of Ngưỡng Sơn* [V.2.3.3.] and the treatment of a Thunder Grotto's snake in Mahu [S.3.3.6.].

483 Cf. "The Rhetoric of Subordination" in: Faure 2003, p. 55–90 and the entirety of Faure 2007.

484 Cf. Chen Huaiyu 2019, p. 12.

485 Cf. "Tale of the White Snake" *Baishezhuan* 白蛇傳, also called "The Maiden Eternally Subdued Under Leifeng Pagoda" *Bainiangzi Yongzhen Leifengta* 白娘子永鎮雷峰塔, collected in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 *Jingshi Tongyan* 警世通言 of 1624.

486 Cf. Robson 2012, p. 96.

rainstorms, like the one cited by Chen Huaiyu, possibly illustrates the resilience of local hydrolatry, or even local victories over the representatives of a transregional religion. Chan Buddhists were particularly ruthless snake hunters, determined to make room for themselves and to ensure their own relevance.[487]

Daoists also recognized the significance of occupying hydrolatric sites as they intensified their efforts to spread transregionally. Originally, Daoist priests used to exorcise and kill snakes as well. However, in competition with Buddhism for the most advantageous hydrolatric sites, they inversed their approach. They still performed snake taming rituals, but now claimed to gain control over them. This control was believed to extend to the point of causing harm, or even death to encroaching Buddhist monks, government officials, or troops intending to destroy a site. This defensive stance gave Daoists a significant advantage in occupying snake sites. However, this was just one more reason for Buddhists to condone the killing of these reptiles.[488] The Buddhist preference to occupy Daoist sites, as referenced in Chapter I, was thus primarily directed at hydrolatric sites that the Daoists had previously seized themselves.[489]

The encounter between local and transregional deities or entities presents a common cause for conflict. It is a competition for dominance, often a competition of (perceived) genders, and oftentimes a cultural clash. This was vividly evident when the declining status of dragons meant that the methods of snake dispelling, taming, and killing were now extended to them as well. However, the Han Chinese generally regarded dragons as morally good and killing them was not easily accepted. The Buddhists had to find a different solution to occupy draconic sites: waterlocking (*suoshui* 鎖水). This term is worth further exploration. Waterlocking is a trope of Chinese mythology specific to encounters between local/localized and transregional water deities, which were especially common in the southwest. There exist over Yunnan entire "Pavilions of Waterlocked Deities" (*Suoshuige* 鎖水閣), mentioned for the first time in the local history *Shu Taowu* 蜀檮杌 (11ᵗʰ c.).[490] The trope characterizes the changing social

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487   Cf. Deeg 2008, pp. 105–6; Chen Huaiyu 2019, pp. 7–8; and Lange 2019, pp. 10, 15.

488   Cf. Chen Huaiyu 2019, pp. 12–16.

489   Various examples are found in Robson 2012, pp. 98–100.

490   Cf. Hinton 2001, pp. 21–22.

dynamics of the eleventh century and the increasing differentiation between imperial and indigenous lore in the aftermath of transcultural contacts. In the late imperial era, waterlocked deities became more prevalent throughout the Chinese Empire. According to legend, even old Beijing had been built over wells with waterlocked dragons.[491]

Buddhists and Daoists created new narratives about their own entities tricking supposedly unreliable or malevolent indigenous deities into entering a well, hole, cave or pagoda. Subsequently, these places would be covered or the deities chained and locked up. This provided the local communities with a reliable water supply or consistent water control without the need for fear or sacrificial tradeoffs. As a result, the occupation of hydrolatric sites by Buddhists or Daoists became highly appealing and garnered strong public support for these transregional religious institutions.

The nameless status of the Shuimu made them particularly susceptible to this type of superscription and as a result, they became the most common kind of waterlocked deities. There are numerous legends about Guanyin tricking a Shuimu[492] into eating vermicelli that would magically turn into iron chains inside her throat — iron being the opposite element to water in the Chinese *wuxing* system. It is one of the narratives used to establish Buddhist superiority over the local religions during the occupation of hydrolatric sites. As a result of this popular legend, Guanyin received the epithet "Shuimu." Many well-dwelling dragons faced the same fate as the Shuimu and were turned into "trapped dragons" (*kunlong* 困龍). Once waterlocked, pavilions and shrines were explicitly built to harness their draconic powers.[493] It is a testament to the resilience of hydrolatric sites that such minor structures commonly remained in Buddhist sites and contributed to the perseverance of dragon deities.

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491   Cf. Chan, Hok-Lam 2008, pp. 221–231.

492   Cf. Yü Chun-fang 2001, p. 121.

493   Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 224 and Deeg 2008, p. 97, 102.

5.4   The Sichuanese, Their Hydrolatry and the Chinese Empire

Nowadays, the image of Sichuan as a Chinese province is so strong that it is often forgotten — or even opposed — that the indigenous of the area were once not Han Chinese. Before the area of modern Sichuan east of the Dadu River was conquered by the young Chinese Empire, it was a very isolated region that shared no culture with the Central Plains.[494] In the center lived the Shu 蜀, the Ba 巴 culture lived in the eastern part. The south was inhabited by multiple ethnic groups who had partially migrated from the areas of Yunnan and Guizhou. The groups of Yi 夷 who had settled west of Leshan 樂山, Yibin 宜賓 and up to Xichang 西昌, were the most influential among them.[495]

The territory of Shu bordered on the Daba Mountains 大巴山 with the Hanjiang 漢江 valley in the north; the Qinling 秦岭 Mountains in the northeast and the Tibetan Plateau to the west. Its most important rivers were the upper Yangzi (Jinshajiang 金沙江), the Minjiang 岷江 and the Fujiang 涪江, leading across Mianyang and Suining as the only communication route out of Shu. In such an environment, it is not surprising that the mythological origins of the Shu are rooted in hydrolatry.

In contrast to the imagined past of the Vietnamese [V.3.1.2.], the mythological origin of the Shu was created in close temporal vicinity to the early Chinese states. The most important sources are the *Shuwang Benji* 蜀王本紀 (1st c. BCE) and the *Huayang Guozhi* 華陽國志 (5th c. CE). They report that except for the very first one, all rulers of Shu were legitimized by their ability to control water. The names of these early rulers had aquatic motifs (like Bo Huo 柏濩 ['Bo Running Water'] or Yufu 魚鳬 ['Fish Mallard']) and possibly were an indication of deified ancient clans.[496] They were succeeded by the Du Yu 杜宇 dynasty, which was credited with expanding the realm and introducing agriculture to

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494   Cf. von Glahn 1987, pp. 26–27, 31.

495   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 2, 7, 67.

496   Cf. Flad and Chen 2013, p. 72. Cancong, Du Yu and Kaiming may also have been hegemonic clans.

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Shu.[497] The first Du Yu ruler allegedly married a water spirit to legitimize his government and the *Shuwang Benji* states in no uncertain terms: "There was a woman, her name was Li 利, she came out of a well at the river source, she became Du Yu's wife".[498] The younger *Huayang Guozhi* omitted this aspect and depicted Consort Li as a human.[499] Three hundred years later, the last Du Yu ruler had to abdicate his throne "like Yao and Shun" to a foreign deity.[500]

Bieling 鱉靈 ['Freshwater Turtle Spirit'] likely evolved from a nature spirit/totem of Chu 楚 (Hunan and Hubei), the southern opponent of the Qin. His myth shows significant overlaps with Da Yu — who was also very popular in Chu — by solving the problem of a deluge and founding a 'first' dynasty. This was the Kaiming dynasty 開明, which is roughly equated to the Ba-Shu cultural era. It allegedly lasted for seven generations and led to advances in hydraulic engineering which enabled wet-rice cultivation and thus prosperity. This again led to centralized labor which enabled even greater projects, like diverting the Minjiang. The scale of their operations proves that the people referred to as the Kaiming had achieved a high level of political control and organization.[501]

The Ba federation settled further to the east and along the Yangzi. Although their culture was very different from the Shu, they legitimized their rulers in a similar way. The Ba chose their leader by contest. The first one was, according to legend, Linjun 廩君 ['Master of the Granary']. When he chose to travel upstream, he found a favorable spot to build his capital, indicated to him by a Salt Goddess (*yanshen* 鹽神). However, instead of accepting her marriage proposal like Du Yu once did, he chose to kill her.[502] This allegory concurrently describes how territory was wrangled from nature and the brutal manner how men subjugated women. And yet, female salt well deities persisted in this

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497   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 42–44.

498   有一女子，名利，從江源井中出，為杜宇妻。 Cf. Shuwang Benji [digital] line 3.

499   有梁氏女利遊江源宇悅之納以為妃. Cf. Huayang Guozhi Ch. 3:2a.

500   Cf. HYGZ Ch. 3:2a–3b.

501   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 45–46; Scott 2009, p. 41 and Flad and Chen 2013, p. 159.

502   A translation of the story is found in Verellen 1998, pp. 219–20. The relationship between Shu and Ba was like that between the Việt and Cham — the Ba were not a consolidated kingdom but united, confederated groups of strong warriors who were often employed as mercenaries by other cultures.

territory, because despite the White Tiger becoming the Ba's main deity, salt was still their main trade product.[503]

Reactions to the Chinese Conquest

Steven Sage is convinced that if the realm of Shu had not been conquered by the Han-Chinese Qin in 316 BCE, it would have evolved into an independent political entity like Korea and Vietnam. However, the most striking difference is that the latter two countries retained their own languages even after adopting the Chinese script. This suggests that the language of the Shu and Ba may have been very similar to Chinese, which would have facilitated their integration into the Chinese Empire after their own script was discarded. This linguistic similarity might explain why the Han Chinese viewed the Shu people more favorably than other neighboring cultures and treated them comparatively leniently.[504]

The Qin's colonization strategy was to send settlers to Shu to impart their ideology to the indigenous population. There was only one problem. These settlers had themselves only recently come under Qin rule and a considerable portion of them were criminals, war prisoners, and rebels. Their arduous journey to Chengdu likely did not generate much sympathy for their new ruler either. The settlers were offered land ownership upon arrival, a strategy aimed at quickly establishing Qin dominance over the territory. However, in reality, this offer provided the settlers with the first chance at social mobility they would ever get. Consequently, they were not very loyal to the Qin culture and quickly assimilated into Shu culture. Nevertheless, this does not imply that there were no conflicts between them and the indigenous people, nor that the settlers did not wipe out entire ethnic groups.[505] Theoretically, the nouveau-riche arriving in the new territory would have been better vectors for imperial ideology. However, they also had the least motivation to do the government's bidding.

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503   Cf. Hou Hanshu Ch. 86; Verellen 1998, pp. 220–23; Flad and Chen 2013, p. 219. The white tiger is an ancient cardinal point deity of China, likely associated with the west due to the Ba people, cf. Major 1999, p. 125.

504   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 59, 74–81.

505   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 134–35, 151, 154 and von Glahn 1987, pp. 58–60.

Localizing the Empire: Li Bing

The deities of mountains and streams were the one familiar element in this foreign environment that the settlers understood, so the government propagated these cults. For the locals, this was an opportunity to conceal their less harmonious water deities.[506] That helped local lore to survive but reshaped specific identities. The concealed deities commonly switched from female to male, animal to human and from commoner to official.

Franciscus Verellen aptly characterized the competing hydrolatric cults of Sichuan as a significant battleground between local religions and the imperial government, given that Shu had previously received considerable influence from the state of Chu, the archenemy of the Qin. This included the introduction of specific deities and the revitalization of snake cults.[507]

According to legend, the Qin used a Trojan Horse deception to invade Shu and successfully navigate past its serpentine territorial deities.[508] After the conquest, they left the Kaiming in power, but they demoted them to marquis *hou* 後, overseen by a Qin military governor *shou* 守 and a Qin minister *xiang* 相. However, the Qin representatives in the new governmental structure were at a severe disadvantage. Only the Kaiming marquis was able to draw legitimacy from the local environment and this led to frequent rebellions and the formation of new legends about the marquises who supported them.

One example for such a Kaiming marquis was the story where he was supposed to be posthumously transported to the Qin capital. However, he had already turned into a rain deity. He broke the wagon and demanded that his body should remain in Chengdu so he could serve as the city's protector.[509] The

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506 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 10.

507 Cf. Verellen 1998, pp. 225–26; Major 1999, pp. 122–24, 128–31; Flad and Chen 2013, p. 108.

508 The "Stone Cattle Road" *Shiniu Dao* 石牛道 was a path built through the mountains supposed to transport an expensive gift from the Qin to a 'greedy' Kaiming king. However, the road's broadness enabled the Qin army to invade in full force. Cf. HYGZ 3:3a–b and Sage 1992, pp. 108–114, p. 108 for the legend about the serpentine territorial deity, which can be compared to type F348.0.1. and F420.1.3.9. in Thompson 1958.

509 A similar legend exists in my hometown Essen, Germany, about Bishop Liudger (742—809 CE). He died in Billerbeck and was brought to Münster, but according to legend, he led his hearse break and posthumously exclaimed he did not want to be buried there, so he was buried in the monastery that he founded in Essen Werden. Curiously, this is also an area

locals built a shrine on the same spot,[510] which restored prestige to the former Shu capital. Such tales highlight the enduring support that indigenous authorities enjoyed and emphasize their connection to the immediate environment. The marquis wielded authority over the local territory in life and this authority continued even after death, as a power inherent to the environment itself. Furthermore, this tale exemplifies how commoners leveraged public action to inscribe the cityscape with protective water deities as a form of resistance against the demands of their colonizers. When the Qin government realized that hydrolatry was key to the preservation of local identity, some officials decided to incorporate it into their plans to transmit imperial ideology.

Li Bing 李冰, who served as the governor of Shu since 227 BCE, was a gifted hydraulic engineer. His greatest achievement, the Dujiangyan Irrigation System 都江堰, is the oldest still running irrigation system in the world. [511] It diverted the Minjiang and safeguarded Chengdu from floods. This made the area more fertile and thus richer. This had the effect that Li Bing was deified as a dragonslayer and credited with ending the practice of human sacrifices to the Minjiang's jiao-dragon at the wells in the vicinity.[512] For this reason, modern Dujiangyan is still home to the Erwang-miao 二王廟,[513] one of Li Bing's main sites. However, he shares it with a local water god who was reinterpreted to be his son [S.3.2.1.].

Allegedly, Li Bing turned himself into an ox to fight the river deities, or he placed stone oxen along the river shore to control them.[514] He is said to have built a temple for the Minjiang Deity — the Fulong-guan 伏龍觀 — and entered the dragon deity into the sacrificial register. However, the Minjiang Deity

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with a famously superscribed pre-Christian sacred spring said to heal diseases of the eyes (compare [S.2.]). Cf. Binding, Günter: "Die ehem. Pfarrkirche St. Klemens in Essen-Werden." In *Vor- und Frühgeschichte des unteren Niederrheins*, edited by Günther Krause and Günter Binding, 11–30. Bonn: Habelt, 1982.

510   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 128–29; compare HYGZ Ch. 3:5b–7a.

511   For further technical information refer to Willmott, W.E. "Dujiangyan: Irrigation and Society in Sichuan, China", in: *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 22 (1989): 143–153.

512   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 148–50 and Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 12.

513   He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 96.

514   Cf. Sage 1992, p. 151 and von Glahn 1987. p. 14.

was soon forgotten in Li Bing's favor. Posthumously, Li Bing received many more titles and was subsequently used to occupy another hydrolatric site, the Chongde-miao 崇德廟 that was dedicated to the Sichuanese variant of Da Yu.[515] This initiated the process that Li Bing began to replace numerous indigenous deities, a trend that unfolded until the late imperial era.

Many more flood-related legends accumulated about Li Bing. In the Tang and Song dynasties, when the Chinese Empire attempted to consolidate its power over Sichuan, Li Bing's lore was revived by granting him the title of *Guangji Wang* 廣濟王 ['King of Extensive Aid [crossing a river]']. Li Bing, himself, had become a water deity.[516]

Da Yu had *employed* honorable long-dragons, but Li Bing *fought* dangerous jiao-dragons in an era of conflict between the empire and local culture. Although legends localized Li Bing and incorporated him into the local pantheon, they did not strip him of his imperial authority. It was his transformation into a water deity that led to a cross of affiliations and eventually prevented imperial ideology transfer. The consequences of this are scrutinized in case [S.3.2.]. Li Bing's story is an example for a localization that took a different turn and did not contribute to the transfer of ideology as imperial authorities had expected. However, history shows that this was not a rare exception.

A Short Overview Over the Integration of Sichuan

After the conquest, joint communities of adventurers, merchants and land-owners formed. These communities were represented by local chiefs, who spearheaded efforts in hydraulic engineering to ensure the survival of their supporters. This laid the foundation for the 'magnates',[517] Sichuan's economic elite. Their opportunism created a lifeline for Shu culture and repeatedly led to conflicts with imperial officials. The pattern of their resistance, then titles

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515 He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, pp. 95–96.

516 Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 226, 250 and He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 95

517 Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 39. Although von Glahn's translation "magnate" is not indisputable, it aptly describes this group of non-nobles who wielded transregional power not as members of the military or bureaucracy, but through their economic wealth and business endeavors.

being granted to them, with subsequent corruption and regionalism became typical for the further history of Sichuan. [518]

After the fall of the Han dynasty, Sichuan became a reservoir for imperial legitimation [S.1.1.1.]. However, the measures taken to preserve this reservoir simultaneously weakened the emperor's central position and empowered local authorities to challenge it. This was the incorporation of the local Da Yu variant into Central Plains mythology and the appropriation of the Shu as descendants of the Han Chinese high deity, Huangdi 黄帝. By doing so, the Chinese Son of Heaven seemed to be less unique; this provided later local authorities with the chance to declare themselves emperors of Sichuan.[519]

The colonization of Sichuan dragged on until the eleventh century, hindered by several factors that prevented the Han Chinese from gaining political dominance.

In the beginning, Sichuan served as a petri dish for various ideology transfer methods that later proved successful elsewhere. These failed in Sichuan because the majority of officials who served there were paid so poorly that they had to identify with local culture to survive.[520] Furthermore, the intelligentsia who frequently transferred to Sichuan as refugees had the necessary knowledge to establish sovereignty, but held no effective loyalty to the Empire.

The Tang dynasty therefore attempted to control and exploit Shu more efficiently by dotting the provincial landscape with garrison towns (*zhen* 鎮). However, due to the shortage of reliable officials, the government opted to empower the magnates with enhanced political administration skills and the authority to build their own garrisons and armies. This conferred symbolic status upon the magnates in the long term, and any attempts to bypass them rapidly incited civil unrest.[521] Their increasing local power encouraged the magnates to create private travelogues, maps and gazetteers from their perspective, thereby asserting nominal ownership over 'their' territory.[522] While

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518   Cf. Sage 1992, p. 99; von Glahn 1987, p. 63, 65.

519   Cf. Sage 1992, pp. 11, 151, 157.

520   Cf. Sage 1992, p. 170.

521   Cf. Donner 1981, p. 263–66; von Glahn 1987, pp. 45, 59, 138 and Wang Hongjie 2011, p. 28.

522   Cf. Mostern 2011, pp. 6, 167.

the Han Chinese were still trying to get northern and central Sichuan under control, the Yi migrated into Liangshan 凉山 and Wumengshan 烏蒙山 under the leadership of their theocratic "demon masters" (*guizhu* 鬼主). They preyed on the other southern ethnic groups and achieved political dominance over the south, which remained terra incognita for the Han Chinese.[523] Before the Northern Song dynasty 北宋 (960—1127) began, the Shu were gradually absorbed into the nativized Han Chinese population, which fostered a burgeoning sense of local community. Once local regimes gained nominal control over the southern populations, it was this newfound cohesion, combined with the ability to emulate imperial legitimacy, that enabled local regimes to evolve into local empires [S.1.1.1.]–[S.1.1.2.]. This was only possible if there was still a shared sense[524] of being culturally different from the Chinese of the Central Plains.

Hydrolatry Under the Song Dynasty

To make the story short: all local empires in Sichuan failed. This failure led to a paradigm shift in the history of Sichuan. The Northern Song and the Southern Song 南宋 (1127—1279) dynasties finalized the Han Chinese claim over the center of the province, stabilized their grip on the northern territories and initiated their first serious attempts to control the south. The Song government also employed large-scale spatial reconfiguration to destroy indigenous power dynamics. The most important one among them was the separation of the province into four different circuits (*lu* 路) which intentionally crossed regional-cultural limits to facilitate the trade of goods and people. Another objective was the control over heterodox religions.[525]

The circuits Chengdufu 成都府, Zizhou 梓州 (later Tongchuanfu 潼川府), Lizhou 利州 and Kuizhou 夔州 were all connected by a new infrastructure, but differed greatly in their economic development and integration status. Other assimilation tactics were also employed, such as the attempt to use laws and taxes to disrupt native family and village relationships. This strategy failed primarily due to the competition between circuits and prefectures, as well as

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523   Cf. von Glahn 1987, pp. 181–90.

524   Cf. Verellen 1998, pp. 213–14.

525   Cf. Mostern 2011, p. 131–134.

due to the friction of distance from central authorities, in combination with the enormous legitimacy that the local elites possessed.[526]

However, the Song made great progress in turning the southern ethnic groups into tenants of their own land,[527] although it is important to note that the Song government's objective was primarily economic gain rather than the assimilation of the southern regions. In the end, the Song government achieved neither because the Mongol advance forced them to relocate from the capital Kaifeng 開封 to the southeastern Hangzhou 杭州.

This relocation had profound consequences, as the introduction of the Song market network to southern Sichuan, followed by its later abandonment, led to the emergence of new local elites in the region. These new elites took great care to make their jurisdictions attractive and thereby accelerated immigration significantly. They also began to create new popular pantheons that soon had transregional impact.[528] Through intermarriage, the magnate class had become a hybrid elite who was much better suited to maintain political dominance in Sichuan than the undiplomatic officials sent from the central government. Due to the autonomy granted to them for their service, the Southern Song were unable to prevent the magnates from waging private wars. Instead, new settlers were dispatched to the south of Sichuan, who had to compete with the magnate's farm villages for both land and the authority to represent central political control. In the end, the southern settlers became independent from both the central state and the magnates. They organized their own infrastructure, labor, police, justice and disaster relief. However, they did all that without creating a centralized political entity capable of serving as an independent polity separate from the Song Empire. Following the fall of the Southern Song dynasty, they returned to traditional means of self-reliance and without governmental pressures, the further expansion southward was paused.[529]

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526   Cf. von Glahn 1987. p. 2; Kang Wenji 2009, pp. 21–22 and Mostern 2011, pp. 35–36, 46, 55.

527   Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 106, 80–110, 128–29, 138, 213.

528   Cf. Hansen 1990, p. 3.

529   Cf. von Glahn 1987, pp. 110–22, 145–47 (with more examples of rogue magnates), 171–72.

The Northern Song dynasty had missed the opportunity to establish a strict state orthodoxy and instead allowed Chan Buddhism to spread freely throughout the realm. Similar to the developments in Vietnam, the monasteries served in Sichuan as prestigious educational institutions where local students were not only introduced to the Buddhist teachings but also exposed to Confucian materials. The Northern Song was also the formative period of Neo-Confucianism which integrated many Buddhist concepts but held a firmly anti-Buddhist stance.[530] They were politically engaged in providing the growing Han Chinese population in Sichuan with access to Confucian education and this also had effects on the local religious landscape. It was observed that the number of de-euhemerized deities in urban areas increased with the number of Confucian schools.[531] This was mostly due to the central government's title granting campaign for popular deities that was part of the superimposing reconfiguration tactic meant to redirect spiritual attention towards the imperial ideology (see Chapter IV). And yet, between 1170—1201, there was an unexpected boom to build nature deity temples which had originally been excluded from this campaign.[532]

Kang Wenji's extensive historical study has significantly enhanced the knowledge about the treatment of hydrolatry during this era. He showed that a third of the cults mentioned in documents and steles were dedicated to the deities of Mountains and Rivers. Included were the four deities of Ditches and Rivers *dushuishen* 瀆水神 who received imperial sacrifices and titles.[533] In descending order, these were followed by deified persons, deified animals and dragons, city gods and trade deities. The cults of shamanic or commoner nature were a minority, but so were those of filial sons, monks and ancient rulers.[534]

Kang Wenji has counted fifty sites for water deities, seventy for mountain spirits and just as many for dragons, efficacious caves and springs. Roughly

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530   Cf. van Ess 2003, p. 64, 69. The late imperial state orthodoxy would be based on the teaching of their masters, mostly on the influential ideology of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130—1200).

531   Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994. pp. 26–27, 30–31.

532   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, pp. 13, 23–24, 33.

533   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, pp. 9–11, compare to Hansen 1990, pp. 36–37.

534   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 8.

140 hydrolatric sites were dedicated to benevolent Dragon Women *longnü* 龍女 and Dragon Mothers *longmu* 龍母 without implicated male deities.[535] These numbers show that hydrolatry held significant prestige in the Sichuanese society of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. However, Neo-Confucians strongly opposed female and animal deities. They regarded water-controlling snakes and similar entities as *gui* 鬼 ['demons'].[536] The Neo-Confucian sponsorship of human and new 'industrial' deities contrasted strongly with local religious culture and put even male dragon deities under duress. Only the most powerful water deities were reluctantly integrated into the supernatural bureaucracy. For example, groups of dragon deities would be replaced by patriotic military heroes and bestowed with the same water-controlling titles as the dragons.[537] This procedure concealed the dragon cult and enabled local officials to partake in its rituals. Consequently, various unrelated deities acquired hydrological attributes.[538] The deeds of half-forgotten indigenous deities were at the same time ascribed to ancient figures like Da Yu, Li Bing, and Zhuge Liang [S.1.1.1.].

In the Sichuanese tradition, the altars to appease dangerous deities remained onsite.[539] Hence, there was no transition from chthonic to celestial deities like in the Central Plains. The indigenous groups of the south had so far retained many of the influences of Ba and Chu culture, including their rich shamanic lore and a belief system focused on controlling the landscape. As they lost territory, the indigenous tribes in the south of Sichuan were often forced to rob Han Chinese settlements. The settlers denigrated them as wild animals and claimed that their demon masters were real demons. Although both groups lived in spitting distance from each other, they avoided interaction. Instead, efforts were made to avoid spiritual hybridization, like the introduction of serpent-taming yellow ox deities inspired by the legends of Da Yu and Li Bing. Unfortunately, this plan was thwarted because the southern indigenous groups also traditionally revered water buffaloes as water deities. The categories of

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535   Cf. ibid., pp. 12–13. Kang's list of water deity shrines is found in pp. 39–42.

536   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 24.

537   Cf. Song Huiyao Jigao, Rites Ch. 21:62.

538   Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 14 and Kang Wenji 2009, p. 20.

539   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 7.

water-bringers and water-tamers began to blur and many settlers preferred to adapt to the local belief system rather than participate in the government sanctioned cults of humanoid deities. Human sacrifices did not deter them from that,[540] which finally provoked the Northern Song government to interfere into the 'heterodoxy'.

In 982, it began to prohibit the "white-clothed shamans in all prefectures of Xichuan".[541] In 1154, an official urged for the prohibition of such cults and the destruction of all 'obscene' shrines in a report about murders in Huguang 湖廣 (i.e., Hubei and Hunan) which were ascribed to "shamanic devils." He further reported that "[…] in Sichuan, people are killed to be sacrificed to the salt wells."[542] By the end of the Southern Song dynasty, persecutions of shamanesses who practiced snake magic and conducted human sacrifices still took place in Chengdu.[543] Even if the locals venerated an indigenous entity as a benevolent *shen* 神, the officials deemed them to be "worshiping demons" (*shanggui* 尚鬼). The prolonged discourse proves that prohibitions and demands for destruction were usually fruitless. As long as imperially sanctioned gods were not forgotten, the central government did not support the worried local officials and the people were free to sacrifice each other. Due to the scarcity of historical sources from the Yuan and Ming dynasties, it is difficult to determine precisely when human sacrifices in Sichuan truly ended.

The Mongol invasion cut the land route to the Central Plains; Sichuan was once again on its own. During this time, military positions became hereditary and the civil officials began to financially prey on the local population because they no longer received their salaries. This prompted a new wave of rebellions throughout the province, thousands of households were lost from the tax reg-

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540   von Glahn 1987. pp. 10–14.

541   禁西川諸州白衣巫師. Cf. Songshi Ch. 47, Annal no. 4, p. 66. This is Xichuan Circuit 西川路, i.e., the Chengdu area during the early Song dynasty.

542   四川又有殺人而祭鹽井者, […]. Cf. Song Huiyao Jigao, Rites Ch. 20:1.

543   Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 14–15. Kang also claims that ancient shamanic tradition had been reduced to the areas of ethnic minorities, but the late imperial local gazetteers from my case studies in central Sichuan show that shamans were still active far outside of the southern regions, see [S.1.2.] and [S.3.3.].

isters and it took centuries to regain them.[544] The Chengdufu circuit remained somewhat stable throughout the chaos of the Yuan dynasty (1279—1368), but the Mongol reign neglected other circuits to such an extent that they almost achieved autonomy.

The Chinese Empire's consistent lack of political dominance in Sichuan during this era is evident in the scarcity of sources concerning this territory. The province suffered multiple devastations during dynastic transitions, which caused it to fade into obscurity[545] until the Qing dynasty (1645—1911) started its new frontier efforts to the west. By that point, Sichuan had lost the power and self-representation to elevate itself beyond its provincial status. But even stuck with that political label, the view from the *longue durée* [S.1.1.2.], [S.3.1.] reveals that Sichuan could hardly be characterized as a well-integrated province.

The Pitfalls of Controlling Sichuan

Chinese historiographies imply that the Song dynasties swiftly pacified Sichuan, but seventeenth century data casts doubt on this narrative.[546] Instead, even these numbers from normative texts suggest that there was a massive surge in local uprisings between 960 and 1367. Even with the exclusion of the separatist regimes, the numbers multiplied by forty. These issues were downplayed in Qing dynastic materials to present Sichuan as an exemplary integrated territory, fit to be a stepping stone for the planned westward expansion.

The Song may have effectively transferred imperial ideology, but their exploitative actions hardly avoided breeding resentment among the local population. Consequently, the progress of official and private endeavors of expansion and acculturation in the south was critically slow[547] and systemic interventions seldom yielded long-lasting effects.

After the reestablishment of the Southern Song in Hangzhou, it was almost impossible for the Southern Song to significantly influence the politics of Si-

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544   Cf. Mostern 2011, pp. 256–57.

545   von Glahn 1987, p. 220.

546   Cf. Wiens 1954, p. 187.

547   Cf. von Glahn 1987, pp. 202, 217–18.

chuan. Yet, there were no new local attempts to create a separate empire. The previous attempts to turn Sichuan into an empire of its own had been initialized by Han Chinese from other provinces, not by the local population [S.1.1.]. The autonomous villages in the south of the province already enjoyed a maximum of freedom without entering potentially devastating armed conflicts with the imperial state. In the north, the local population — now consisting of the indigenous, localized Han Chinese and their hybridized descendants — also felt no need to react to a central state that they perceived as being utterly powerless.

For Sichuan, obedience to the Empire had never implied giving up any real autonomy. The imperial state had always been unable to exert significant direct influence, so the preservation of local identity was but a minor struggle. If local culture could be continued and the goal of prosperity was met, political independence was likely not worth the trouble.

5.5   The Hydrolatry of Vietnam

In northern Vietnam, water control was critical to all aspects of life, which inspired Ben Kiernan to call it an "aquatic culture".[548] The profound social significance of water is evident in the Vietnamese word for (drinking) water — *nước* 渃, which at the same time means "homeland." This already implies the fundamental role of hydrolatry for the formation of Vietnamese identity and their modes of political legitimation.

In the landscape of ancient Vietnam, the coast lay much closer to the earliest known settlements than it does today. Rivers served as both conduits and barriers to traffic, maritime floods salted the earth and droughts were frequent occurrences.[549] Water permeated every aspect of life, in good and bad ways, and this was mirrored in a language rich with water metaphors. The rich and mighty sat 'upstream', at the source, where they ate clean food and drank clean water while most commoners were farmers who lived where "mud is slops[sic!]

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548   Cf. Kiernan 2017. p. 7, 26.

549   Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 25.

and water stands still."[550] Like the Buddhist lotus flower rising from the mud of illusion unstained, the wealthy rise from the 'mud' of the lowborn, uncaring for their issues.[551]

In a realm with low urbanization, river trade was an essential but perilous occupation — not just due to environmental hazards and wildlife, but also because of illegal Chinese tradesmen and irascible officials preying on the merchants. The officials tasked with the supervision of rivers and dikes held a unique position in society, akin to their counterparts in China. However, rather than embodying integrity and diligence, their role was one of dishonesty and greed. Just like the local gods, these officials had to be constantly appeased or they would block traffic and trade.[552]

The dragonboats symbolized wealth and stood in sharp contrast to the fisherboats. Fishermen formed their own social groups separate from land society, because they owned no land and so their entire families lived on boats. The mercantile boatswomen and boatsmen often married within their own communities due to their perceived poverty and low social status. Their lack of wealth was not due to a lack of diligence, but rather due to the challenges posed by their status, which made it hard for them to be paid fairly. This social bias affected both genders equally; even the most beautiful woman would be rejected if she did not possess sufficient wealth to "wash off" the taint of low status. However, this bias of low status was occasionally contradicted by reality. A proverb said: if you wish to get rich, go trading on boat and rafts. So, this was exactly what some women did — they actively engaged in trade on the waterways and achieved considerable success in the business [V.4.2.]. Trade was one of the few means of social mobility. This was one of the reasons why Confucians held a pronounced bias against merchants, as contemporary documents reveal.[553] Wealthy merchants had indeed the power to erode social ranks and to endanger the authority of local and transregional rulers.

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550 Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 30.

551 For the metaphor of the lotus in Buddhism, refer to the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* 10.81.

552 Cf. Huỳnh, pp. 43–44, 60.

553 Cf. Huỳnh 1997, pp. 38–42, 74, 77, p. 42 also cites a poem by Emperor Lê Thánh Tong (1442—1497) that compares merchants to lizards, vipers and crabs.

The life of a merchant in a sedentary society was a liminal one and long-distance merchants in particular were strangers wherever they went. Moreover, the interests of merchants and peasants were opposed: farmers feared long bouts of drought, but the merchant dreaded the floods.[554] Consequently, their ritual activities were viewed as a threat against the agricultural society. The river merchants were also considered to be a part of the watery realm, which was associated with nonconformism. This added to the distrust they had to endure, although it was to some extent justified.

The individualists who gathered followers, explored the seas, turned into popular heroes, rebelled against oppressive rulers and who were deemed future emperors — they, too, were framed in water metaphors.[555] People like that lived in the marshes, jungles and along the coasts, which made it difficult for the authorities to catch them. Duckweed swimming on the water surface, plentiful but worthless, symbolized the poorest of the poor. However, if the pressure of the imperial authorities became too strong, then "the dams broke" and "the flood came". When the "duckweed hit the dirt" with nowhere left to go — then "duckweeds climb to the top." The proverb "when a flood occurs, then dogs leap onto the altar" referred to those of lowest standing being able to reach the top of the social hierarchy during a revolution. More Sinicized officials likened this to the punishing floods sent by Heaven.[556]

Ancient Indigenous Hydrolatry[557]

Hydrolatry was likely the strongest indigenous trait that survived the Sinicization of northern Vietnam, it was a core feature of Vietnamese identity. The proto-Việt did not leave any texts, but many of their traditions can be at least partly determined by archaeological evidence and by the traditions of the persistent water, tree and rock cults. Regarding archaeological evidence, the Đông Sơn Culture (1000 BCE—100 CE) buried their dead in boats and

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554   Cf. Huỳnh, p. 90.

555   Cf. Huỳnh, pp. 85–86.

556   Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 48.

557   Parts of this section were previously published in German: Koppen 2016, pp. 281–313.

boat-like trunks, a tradition which survived into the thirteenth century.[558] Their famous bronze drums were simultaneously a tool for calling rain and a symbol for worldly authority.[559] The usually male rulers were associated with thunder and dragons (later specified as of the jiao kind). The religious authorities were often women, uniquely able to communicate with the water spirits, which was in stern contrast to the later Sinitic ideas.[560]

By the sixth century BCE, bronze drums spread to Burma, Thailand and Indonesia, constituting one of the oldest artistic traditions in Southeast Asia. The Chinese, however, only mentioned bronze drums for the first time during the first century CE.[561]

The frog figurines often found on the tympanum of bronze drums indicate their possible hydrolatric function. They also showed totemic animals and ritual scenes like rain dances. The drums, themselves, could be animated or inspirited by ancestors and deities. This encouraged the Chinese even more to destroy them in an attempt to undermine the local authorities, but the drums persisted just as long as the boat coffins.[562]

What we know about the early religious conceptions of ancient Vietnam is that the people engaged with an inspirited environment and believed in the initially nameless spirits of water, trees and rocks. These were all integral parts of the agrarian pantheon and their veneration often overlapped.[563] The worship of tree spirits was widespread in South and Southeast Asia and commonly tied to hydrolatric as well as territorial aspects. In Vietnam, the most revered tree was the Banyan tree.[564] Immigrating Buddhists projected their idea

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558   Cf. Tring Nang Chung and Nguyen Giang Hai 2017, pp. 33–35.

559   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 24.

560   Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 19.

561   Cf. Cooler 1995, p. 8. Regarding the bronze drums, there has been exhaustive discourse between Vietnam and China about who influenced whom, which has been characterized more by political interests than by facts. Cf. Churchman 2016, p. 32.

562   Until about the thirteenth century, cf. Tring Nang Chung and Nguyen Giang Hai 2017, pp. 39–41.

563   Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 93.

564   Cf. Koppen 2016b, p. 284.

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of the bodhi tree (normally *ficus religiosa*, a fig tree) on it,[565] thus turning it into a mark for Buddhist and subsequently most other sacred sites. In ancient times, trees received human sacrifices because they were believed to contain *ma*.[566] The term later referred to spirits of women who had died before their time. It likely conflates two concepts. Originally, *ma* were a kind of *anima* of everything in nature and could be good or evil. *Con tinh* were another kind of ghosts associated with trees, appearing as young women similar to the later *ma,* or manifesting as snakes nesting at the foot of the haunted tree. Both types of ghosts were strongly associated with bodies of water and "the themes and motifs of mother, young woman, snake, tree and rock are found to be recurrent in Lý- and Trần-era myths and popular practices."[567] Due to the connection between trees, snakes and possibly springs, the Buddhists began to treat these spirits as Nagas.

Related to tree worship is the worship of wood. While in China, peach and mulberry wood were considered as sacred, the Cham people in southern Vietnam revered aloeswood, camphor and cinnamon. Their main goddess Pô Nagar was the tutelary deity of aloeswood and famously venerated via trunks of it [V.6.1.].

The worship of rocks was focused on spirits that dwelt in unusual rock formations, meteorites and rarely manuports.[568] They were usually the least mobile of the ancient water-tree-rock trifecta. However, they could spark indirect transcultural transfer whenever the displaced *lingas* or broken frescoes of the

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565 The many surface roots of the Banyan stop the growth of anything below it, so it came to represent the end of rebirth. Cf. Haberman 2013, pp. 94, 160, 166.

566 In Chinese, the word was rendered as *gui* 鬼, a spirit of the dead, usually that of a disrespected ancestor, that could make people sick. The Buddhists used the term to refer to *preta*, the hungry ghosts. While the etymology of *ma* is uncertain, it is a very different concept of ghost and may rather be related to the Chinese term *mo* 魔 specifying an evil spirit that was not necessarily human before it became a spirit. However, the Chinese *mo* is prejudiced by implying a general malevolence while the term *ma* was originally merely apotropaic. However, *mo* also has a connection to plants, being made up of the character *ma* 麻 "hemp" and *gui* "ghost".

567 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 106–107.

568 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 49–50. Cf. Wang Wei et. al. 2012, p. 17 for Chinese rock veneration.

Cham were mistaken for independent rock deities and subsequently venerated by the Việt [V.5.2.].[569] Moreover, the gods of mountains, like Mt. Tản and Mt. Sóc, gained translocal fame due to their visibility over wide distances.[570] As territorial deities, they were held in high regard and often imagined to possess a military character. Even as antagonists to the deities of the ocean, they also functioned as providers of rain.[571] Đỗ Thiện argues that rock spirits were likely the oldest spirits evoked for rainmaking in ancient Vietnam and that they were symbolically linked to the feminine principle.[572]

The water spirits of early Vietnam commonly took the shape of animals, mostly that of a snake. Similar to the Chinese dragon stories, serpentine water deities were often born to childless couples, raised like human children, and ended up bringing rain and good crops.[573] Wells dominated the village center as sacred places in front of a Đình or a Buddhist temple, although they were also inherently female places where women were able to bathe undisturbed.[574] Apparently, there was no problem with the veneration of trees and rocks in nature — it was only the water spirits who were de-euhemerized as "(once) human spirits" (*nhân thần* 人神) and subsequently placed into sacred buildings that were gradually expanded into temples. However, despite their humanoid appearance, these deities were not regarded as celestial beings. When the Han Chinese entered northern Vietnam, they encountered a landscape teeming with potentially dangerous spirits at every turn, within a religious geography that they did not understand.

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569   Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, p. 2.

570   Cf. Unger 1997, p. 18–19. The deity of Tản Viên Sơn 傘圓山, northwest of the Red River Delta, is one of the Four Great Immortals (Tứ Bất Tử 四不死) of Vietnam.

571   Cf. A.277 pp. 28–29.

572   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 50–51, 108, 121. Many stone deities also seem to have started out as female, but were treated as male if they later entered royal veneration circles.

573   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 53–67.

574   Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, pp. 180–81. Although Confucian documents claimed that they had appropriated the village wells, they were in fact unable to do so. See [V.4.1.].

External Impacts on Vietnamese Hydrolatry

The proto-Việt already shared some cultural ideas with the Han Chinese before they had made any contact, like hydrolatric rituals that involved dragonboat racing, the act of royal plowing and the use of aquatic deities to support their rulers. Many kinds of water deities found in northern Vietnam could also be found in China, but they were occasionally treated differently. Animal deities, for example, remained important throughout Vietnamese history and were not ostracized like in China. The majority of the water deities were female snakes and dragons, who could assume the form of young ladies or occasionally that of honorable old men. Many of them were supposedly spirits of the drowned, an idea inherited from the sacrifice of river brides that had been prevalent in northern Vietnam as well.[575] All of this suited the visualization of the afterlife as a watery realm that was ruled by the old dragon mother Bà Thủy 婆水.[576] Bà Thủy later supplanted numerous unnamed deities of wells and rivers, many of whom would only be revived in the late imperial era.

The Vietnamese dragons were usually identified with the *long,* but their behavior was more akin to the Chinese jiao-dragons. Due to that, they were more closely associated with rivers than with heaven. This is again mirrored in the Chinese-Vietnamese hybrid script Chữ Nôm 𡨸喃, where the word for the Vietnamese dragon (*rông* 瀧 or 滝) was written with the characters for "water" and "long-dragon". In Chinese, this character refers exclusively to the dangerous forms of water — like rapids, waterfalls and torrential rain.[577] In Vietnamese, this character became the general word *song* "river". The imperial dragon was unable to gain hold in the far south before the Việt had formed their idea of a local emperor. This started with the dragons who saved Đinh Bộ Lĩnh 丁部領 (924—979), the first Vietnamese emperor. Another appeared to the first emperor of the Later Lý dynasty (1009—1225) to announce the

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575   Cf. Schafer 1973, pp. 2, 7–25, 29; Wulf 1995, p. 100; Huỳnh 1997, p. 97 (female spirits of the drowned); Schafer 1967, p. 80 and Lai 1990, p. 337 (river brides). Examples for draconic water deities appearing as old men are found in Honzák et al. 1991, pp. 121–23 or in the popular legend often called *Người tiều phu và ba chiếc rìu* "The Woodcutter and the Three Axes."

576   Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 96.

577   Cf. s.v. "瀧" *zdic.net.* https://www.zdic.net/hans/%E7%80%A7 Retrieved 09 April 2021.

proper location for his capital Thăng Long. All of these dragons were yellow, the imperial color.[578] These rulers also used traditional means of legitimation by associating with those aquatic creatures that were the most identifiable with Chinese modes of legitimation and could bring the institution of the emperor to the south. The turtle, for example, was originally a patron of fishermen. However, once it assumed golden color, it became a sign of supernatural investiture for righteous rulers like An Dương Vương (antiquity) [V.3.1.2.] and Lê Lợi 黎利 (1348—1433) [V.3.1.1.]. It hence became the patron deity[579] of the first lasting imperial dynasty of Vietnam, the Later Lý. It was likely the Chinese influence that made the Việt start to trace their ancestry back to the dragon Lạc Long Quân[580] [V.3.1.2.] although they lived amidst cultures who identified themselves as descendants of snakes.

In contrast to China, where snake worship was associated with the south, in Vietnam, it was once more typical for the northern parts. The province Thanh Hóa was a particular center for such snake worship among both the Việt and the Mường ethnic groups. It was custom to erect snake temples along the great rivers like the Red River, Cầu River and Đuống River, which shows that they were considered as water deities. But once again, the Thiền Buddhists (Chin. Chan Buddhists) began to hunt serpents and were able to mostly push the snake worship back into the Mường's highland regions. Buddhism presented itself as inclusive and welcoming to people from various backgrounds, so many individuals retained their old habits after joining the monasteries. Nevertheless, advanced monks were at some point expected by their elders to drop their 'attachments' to these cults. The *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh* 禪苑集英 ['Collection of Outstanding Persons of the Thiền Garden'] (1337) reports how the senior monk Viên Chiếu 圓照 (990—1091) met another monk who grieved over a snake. When he asked about the monk's heritage, he realized that he came from the mountains and had not abandoned his local beliefs, so he punished him.[581] Từ Đạo Hạnh 徐道行 (1072—1116) even ventured into the mountains to

"tame mountain snakes."[582] However, among the common population, snakes remained symbols of fertility and water control and in times of drought it was good to have a snake shrine at hand.

Across Southeast Asia there is the belief that the call of frogs or toads can attract rain, and the call of the drums would encourage them to call for rain.[583] This is possibly an example for ideology transfer from Vietnam to China because this idea was known in southern China only centuries later and mostly unknown in northern China.[584]

Outside of ancient rain rituals, frogs and toads were mostly independent water deities. Like the dragons, they were in the possession of a special pearl that was able to heal eye diseases — a trait that is reminiscent of the numinous springs in southern China [S.2.]. They were particularly popular among the commoners and therefore came to be associated with low status.[585] If they croaked too loud, this could announce an early demise, which also used to refer to privately taught or surplus Confucian scholars who had been sent back to their villages [V.3.1.1.] but refused to farm, craft, or serve. Because their dissatisfaction often led to subversiveness, toads and frogs frequently appeared as challengers to Heaven's authority who accused the civil and military officials of disinterest in local affairs.[586] Frogs also symbolized those who used water control to care for the people's livelihood and thus acted as a challenge to local authority.[587] A wrong decision here could either cost a high official his legitimacy or lead to a rebel's early demise.

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582   Cf. TUTA 55a.

583   Cf. Cooler 1995, p. 38; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 22

584   Cf. Loewe 1994. pp. 150, 154.

585   Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 57 (eye diseases). Legends of rainbringing frogs are found in: Henricks 1998, p. 102, 112. A Vietnamese example in Võ Văn Thắng und Lawson 2005, pp. 17–23.

586   Cf. Schafer 1967, pp. 49, 57–62, 67 (subversiveness), 254 (commoners); and Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 312.

587   Huỳnh 1997, pp. 62–68 contains more examples of frog rebellions. He muses that the most famous rebels were surrounded by such low-ranking symbols (ants, mosquitoes, frogs, and water buffaloes), motivated by the promise of 'water' which was equal to prosperity, power and wealth.

Some water deities of Vietnam were more commonly found in the southern regions and were thus comparatively unscathed by the Chinese occupation. These were, for example, the deified whales (Cá Ông)[588] of central Vietnam or the otters, who served as river deities, patrons of fishermen,[589] and occasionally as deities of river crossing for the emperors of the Vietnamese imperial era [V.3.3.1.], [V.6.3.1.].

In sum, water was a legitimating force in Vietnamese history equal to the Heavenly Mandate in China: its embodiments supported the emperor, but also the righteous rebel — and in case of doubt, the local authority.

A Short Overview of the Chinese Occupation

Similar to Sichuan, northern Vietnam came to hold a special status among the territories of the Chinese Empire. The Chinese called northern Vietnam Jiaozhi 交趾 (Viet. Giao Chỉ), with *jiao* 交 referring to the confluence of rivers. Crocodiles were prevalent in the area and terrified the Han Chinese, so it is no surprise that Jiaozhi and jiao-dragons share a sound.[590] For the Han Chinese, Jiaozhi was a strange, foreign and dangerous place but also full of desirable resources. This encouraged them to conquer northern Vietnam on multiple occasions, despite the frequent occurrence of tropical diseases that claimed the lives of numerous soldiers before they even reached the Red River Delta.[591]

First contact between the Han Chinese of the Central Plains and the proto-Việt was established through the conquests by a defected Qin general called Zhao Tuo 趙佗 (Viet. Triệu Đà, r. 203—137 BCE). In 204 BCE, he established his kingdom of Nanyue 南越 (Viet. Nam Việt) in the Lingnan area. Although Zhao Tuo introduced imperial ideology and the first Confucian texts, he gen-

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588   Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 106. See: Nguyen Minh Nguyet 阮明月. "神圣的 '嘎翁'—越南芹晟京人的综鲸信仰研究 Sacred "Gaweng" — to study the worship of whales by the Vietnamese Kinh people of Cần Thạnh." Dissertation. Xiamen University, 2016 and Lantz, Sandra. *Whale Worship in Vietnam*. Uppsala: Swedish Science Press, 2009.

589   Cf. Ishida Eiichirô. "The 'Kappa' Legend. A Comparative Ethnological Study on the Japanese Water-Spirit 'Kappa' and Its Habit of Trying to Lure Horses into the Water." *Folklore Studies* 9 (1950): i–vi+1–152+1–11, pp. 18–19, 118.

590   Especially in the Yangzi area, cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 37, 71, 500.

591   Cf. Churchman 2016, p. 70.

erally maintained a mediative approach.[592] He was later sometimes counted as a ruler of ancient Vietnam, but his grasp on northern Vietnam was mostly nominal and his capital located further north.[593] In 111 BCE, Han general Lu Bode 路博德 (Viet. Lộ Bác Đức) used a sea campaign to defeat Nanyue[594] and turned northern Vietnam officially into a part of the Chinese Empire. The Han divided northern Vietnam into three regions: Jiaozhi, Jiuzhen 九真 and Rinan 日南 (summarized as Jiaozhou 交州), but merely focused on exploiting them economically.[595] For the first one hundred years of occupation, the Han Chinese made no efforts at all for cultural assimilation. It was likely challenging to find people willing to serve in such a culturally foreign area, and perhaps the Han Chinese had recognized the potential for their civil and military governors to acculturate into the local traditions. To mitigate this risk, they stationed them in Cangwu (modern Guangxi), and used indigenous lords to directly rule the region of Jiaozhou.[596] But the settlers who continuously migrated from the north were hardly protected at all by the military. They were swiftly Vietnamized by the indigenous, rather than the other way around.[597]

> The total suppression of local authorities would have necessitated the stationing of a sizable military force in Nan-Yueh over a period of time and at an expense greater than was probably feasible for the Han, who had other problems to deal with of a more pressing sort up north.[598]

Jiaozhi was rich in customs that the Chinese morally opposed (like protective tattooing) or which they physically despised (like betel chewing). The higher status of women was offensive to the Han Chinese — some clans were matri-

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592   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 30 and Lulei 2018, p. 10.

593   Cf. Taylor 1976, pp. 161–2, with reference to later Vietnamese historians seeing him a defender of "the frontier" against the north; and O'Harrow 1979, pp. 144, 149–150.

594   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 31.

595   Cf. Churchman 2016, p. 56.

596   Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 1; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 32.

597   Cf. O'Harrow 1979, p. 152; Taylor 1983, p. 53.

598   Cf. O'Harrow 1979, p. 154.

lineal and the land was predominantly inherited by the female line, so levirate marriage was common.[599]

The Han government thus created a long-term plan to make Jiaozhou a stable tax resource, which included its transformation into an area that would follow Chinese customs, rules and ideas of obedience. The first step was to raise the agricultural production. However, the subregions of Jiaozhou turned out to be quite hard to develop. The second step was to establish new patriarchal structures by marrying the local women. To achieve that, the local men had to go. As the exploitation continued under the addition of corvée labor, the male population was more and more depleted through hazardous occupations (pearl diving, mining, the production of lacquer wares). Soon, rebellions erupted and rendered the prospect of a reliable tax resource moot.[600] No political or administrative stability could be claimed for the delta or any settlements along the waterways.[601]

And yet, the cultural balance of the Red River Delta shifted in favor of the Han Chinese as the Wang Mang Era (9—23 CE) caused the arrival of larger numbers of aristocratic refugees in the south. This enormously accelerated the official assimilation measures. From now on, the Chinese elite was treated preferentially and the indigenous population soon held the lowest rank in the social hierarchy. The officials who had been exiled to the disease-ridden, dangerous, and deadly area of Jiaozhi — those who had previously even risked death to avoid serving there[602] — now sought to make the region more hospitable to persuade the wealthier and more educated settlers to stay.[603]

However, the genuine assimilation process engineered by the central government began only after the rebellion of the Trưng sisters 㜏婆徵 (40—43 CE).[604] After that, the Chinese abolished all remaining forms of indigenous

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599   Cf. Taylor 1983, pp. 58–59, 76–78; Cf. Kiernan 2017, 75, 92.

600   Cf. O'Harrow 1979, p. 153; Lulei 2018, p. 16

601   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 75.

602   Cf. Rosner 2019, pp. 145–48f.

603   Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 2; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 35.

604   Fan Ye 范曄. *Hou Hanshu* — Liezhuan — Ma Yuan Liezhuan 後漢書 — 列傳 — 馬援列傳 16–18, pp. 838–840, for a translation of the event, see [V.7.].

institutions and switched to direct administration.[605] The local governors were now able to spread Chinese language, laws, rites and thoughts more efficiently than before, but there were still several factors that inhibited ideological transfer from the Chinese Empire to Jiaozhou.

1. Intermarriage politics were meant to bring all the land owned by women into male inheritance lines, but this practice led to the creation of a Sino-Việt elite who became mainly responsible for the negotiation of Chinese demands with local interests.[606]
2. Confucian officials were occupied with enforcing ideological change top to bottom, yet instead of their laws, it was the language barrier that prevented their measures from reaching the wider population.[607]
3. Although Jiaozhi began to resemble a respectable province, the officials still needed the protection of the soldier-farmers settling in the vicinity. However, these were not educated well enough to morally oppose local customs and had even less incentives to return to the north, so they quickly and intensively identified with local issues. They thus placed the officials into a hard place by pushing them into more local-friendly politics.
4. While trustworthy officials served in the safe central regions of the Red River Delta, the officials who had been exiled had to fend for themselves in the peripheries, like Jiuzhen, where social pressures quickly nudged them towards hybridization.

Financial feasibility was an important factor for the choice between aggressive and mediative spatial reconfiguration tactics, as it was for all other measures meant to achieve political and cultural dominance. Funding was a constant concern in Sino-Việt relations due to the high friction of distance and the problems that this caused. The Chinese Empire proved unable to exert cultural dom-

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605　Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 38–39.

606　Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 40; O'Harrow 1979, pp. 159–60; Kiernan 2017, p. 75.

607　Cf. Taylor 1983, p. 126.

inance in Jiaozhi because it was unwilling to make the necessary investments into political dominance. This created instability in the occupied territory, followed by rebellions and secession attempts. Without central control, many vulnerable officials either became corrupt or cruel enough that even Chinese documents would criticize their actions.[608] In this situation, leaving the local customs alone was seen as the sign of the better administrator, since doing so would incite less resistance. However, the ruling officials were also ordered to avoid cultural contacts with the southern state Linyi 林邑 (Viet. Lâm Ấp). That was the predecessor of Champa, its capital was located close to modern Huế.

After the fall of the Han dynasty, communication with the Chinese Empire was severed due to the disunity and unrest in China. This provided the Sino-Việt elite with the opportunity to learn how to govern themselves. The rebellions were now headed by disgruntled northerners instead of indigenous leaders. By taking part in the maritime silk road trade, Jiaozhi gained new cultural influences and wealth and the new local elite used these to consolidate and prepare for war against the southern cultures. This was the point at which the Sino-Việt elite began to view itself as non-Chinese, a significant development for the future independence movement.[609] The Sino-Việt implemented a new occupational strategy by investing into their own governors who had familial ties to Jiaozhi. One of those was central to the narratives tied to the Tứ Pháp complex in the first case study cluster [V.1.].

Transforming a Dragonslayer

The Han Chinese officials had a simple solution for the perceived threat of female water deities — they simply did not mention them anymore in their writings. Instead, they concealed them with male titles like *cha* "father" (Nôm 吒), *vua* "king" (Chin. jun 君 or Nôm 𤤰 or 𣄔) and *vua* and *vương* 王. Early Buddhism also began to transfer female hydrolatric agency to male monks and tried to conceal the original entities, like it happened in the case of Man Nương [V.1.2.–II], [V.1.2.3.]. This process led to the early de-euhemerization of some river deities who were later associated with the building of cities and capitals,

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608   Cf. Dutton et. al. 2012, pp. 25–26; Kiernan 2017, pp. 86–88.

609   Cf. Holmgren 1980, pp. 66–69, 173.

like Tô Lịch 蘇瀝. Such aquatic territorial deities would commonly visit Chinese and later Vietnamese rulers and officials in dreams to negotiate over the land.[610]

The aforementioned large-scale rebellion led by the Trưng sisters 尪婆徵 as narrated in the *Hou Hanshu* [V.7.] took place 40—43 CE in reaction to an especially aggressive local administrator. Although they were defeated, the Trưng sisters' rebellion became central to the Vietnamese ethnic self-perception[611] especially after they shook off the Ming invaders in 1427 [V.3.1.1.]. The Trưng sisters had originally no relationship to water, but later historians claimed they had drowned themselves in a river instead of having actually been decapitated. Due to this claim, they were later occasionally regarded as rain deities.[612]

As for the victorious general Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE—49 CE), he received a fief in Jiaozhi after subduing the unrests and executing the sisters. In his fief, he supported the building of infrastructure, created irrigation and drainage canals and reviewed the law codex — in short, he behaved like an exemplary ruler. Ma Yuan also deliberately seized the bronze drums of the proto-Việt authorities and had them melted into a horse-shaped trophy that he sent back to the imperial capital.[613] This was because the bronze drums were instruments in rainmaking, they connected the indigenous rulers to the aquatic patrons who gave them legitimacy. By seizing and repurposing them, Ma Yuan robbed the proto-Việt of their symbols of authority and demonstrated Sinitic superiority.[614]

While alive, Ma Yuan had not engaged any supernatural power — unlike the Chinese general Gao Pian, who became famous for fighting multiple spirits much later.[615] However, it turns out that both sides of the rebellion were posthumously turned into water deities. Curiously, it was the imperial representative

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610   Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 157–58.

611   The court historian Ngô Sĩ Liên 吳士連 (~1490s) dedicated three chapters of the general history *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* (1497) to their terribly short reign, bemoaning the lack of support by the men who caused their downfall. Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 9, 13–16, with reference to *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* 3:1b–2b.

612   Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 97.

613   Fan Ye 范曄. *Hou Hanshu* — Liezhuan — Ma Yuan Liezhuan 後漢書 — 列傳 — 馬援列傳 16–18, pp. 838–840.

614   Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 17.

615   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 51–52 and Kelley 2015a, pp. 86–90.

who, in contrast to the Trưng sisters, became the more popular water deity, although he had robbed objects of such profound cultural meaning. This seems quite contradictory, but there were three reasons for that:

1. His rare title *fubo jiangjun* 伏波将軍 ['Wave-Subduing General'] sounded like the epithet of an imperialized water deity. He was famous for traveling the sea and his first act was to create canals and dikes, i.e., water control.

2. He had not only recognized the meaning of the bronze drums,[616] but had also been able to seize and destroy them without being harmed. That suggested that he had more power than the deities of the bronze drums.

3. In the second to fifth centuries, long after his death, there were legends akin to those of Zhuge Liang [S.1.1.1.], [S.3.], that Ma Yuan had placed bronze pillars along a river's shore to tame the jiao-dragons and to make it navigable. In a more profane sense, the pillars were meant to separate the civilized, sinicized world from that of the 'barbarians' who were referred to as fish, snakes and jiao-dragons.[617] And the legends claimed that, whenever there were conflicts between north and south,[618] these pillars would reappear.

Thus, he became the river deity Fuboshen 伏波神 ['Wave-Subduing God'][619] and the spiritual ancestor of localized Han Chinese families with the family name Ma. He received temples across Thanh Hóa, Phúc Yên and Bắc Ninh.[620] The Han Chinese had only noticed his cult by the Tang dynasty and immediately used it to seize the rivers of southern China, where many of his temples survived over

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616 Cf. Churchman 2016, p. 161.

617 Cf. Eberhard 1968, p. 369, 376 with a reference to the *Yuexi Congzai* 粤西叢載 16:12a–b.

618 Cf. Sutton 1989, p. 104.

619 Cf. Schafer 1967, p. 2; Holmgren 1980, p. 20–21.

620 Cf. Adriano di St. Thecla, translated by Olgar Dror 2002, pp. 46–47. Dror adds a site in Hanoi, but only because she identifies the territorial deity Long Độ with Ma Yuan.

centuries.[621] Ma Yuan's transformation fits Strang's interpretation of male water control as an effect of colonization. By becoming what he was once meant to subdue, Ma Yuan colonized the local population. Later Ming and Qing authors were astounded that Ma Yuan was worshiped by non-Han people, but stressed how useful his cult was in civilizing them.[622] The Chinese traveling south disregarded his local legends as a water deity. They depicted him as a cultural hero instead, not as a rainbringer but as a deity of river-crossing. Facilitating river crossings was very benevolent thing to do: it was claimed that Ma Yuan, as an imperial representative, did not possess the moral capacity to let ships sink and people drown — in contrast to the local water deities.[623]

Ma Yuan could not be separated from his Chineseness. Even after he became a water deity, he was still efficiently transferring Sinitic ideas to the population. This demonstrates how hydrolatry could simultaneously serve the continuation of local traditions and the imperial subjugation of the realm.

Buddhist Hydrolatry in Vietnam

Water metaphors were not only reflective of social issues in Vietnam, they also played a role for the Buddhist penetration of Việt local culture. Buddhists promised that hardships would be 'submerged' and claimed that life is a 'sea of bitterness', caused by lust and greed, in which humans may 'drown', if not saved by the 'boat' of wisdom or 'dharma rain' [V.2.3.2.]; [V.6.3.2.]. In Western languages, both greed and desire are commonly described as 'hunger', but in Việt culture they are expressed as 'thirst'. Buddhist compassion, therefore, is the donation of a 'bowl of water' to someone who thirsts.[624] The Buddhist missionaries who arrived in Jiaozhou 交州 by sea were accompanied by bodhisattvas like Dīpankara (Nhiên Đăng Phật) and Avalokiteśvara (Quán Thế Âm):[625] both protected sailors and merchants who prayed for their help.[626] Since then,

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621   Cf. Schafer 1967, p. 98–99.

622   Cf. Sutton 1989, p. 101–2.

623   Cf. Sutton 1989, p. 104–107, see also the poem of Ma Fenggao 馬逢皋 on page 109.

624   Cf. Huỳnh 1997, pp. 21, 25–26.

625   Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 46.

626   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 10.

Buddhism was associated with water by the locals. This greatly facilitated the Buddhist's strategical occupation of hydrolatric sites that were linked to governmental power.

Khuông Việt 匡越 (933—1011) was a head of the monk's assembly at the Vietnamese imperial court.[627] In 986, the emperor asked him to help the realm against the attacking Chinese, so Khuông Việt magically controlled the Ninh River to create monster waves and ordered jiao-dragons to attack the Chinese soldiers, who immediately fled.[628] This story shows how Buddhists were integrated into the state apparatus. They proved their worth for the empire by showcasing their ability to control water spirits and additionally supported the realm's sovereignty by utilizing the *local* version of dragons against the Chinese.

During the early Buddhist expansion, the monks had indeed followed a less academic approach compared to China. They presented themselves as thaumaturges, made prophecies, healed and provided rain. Focused on efficacy, the locals occasionally treated the monks like fabulous beasts of their own.[629] However, the natives were frequently afraid that their old gods would punish them. Consequently, the Buddhists were constantly busy with proving their superiority over the local environment.[630] The hagiography of Tịnh Giới 淨戒 (?—1207)[631] describes how he had to compete with drum-users in a magical contest of weather control. Elsewhere, they were obliged to make rain fall into buckets to convince the emperor.[632] The hagiography of Từ Đạo Hạnh 徐道行 (1072—1116) is an example for the process of localization. Although he engaged in impressive practices from Chinese Buddhism, like self-mutilation and self-immolation, his weather-controlling skills were rather attributed to his drowned father, whose corpse allegedly swam upstream.[633]

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627   Information about the political system of the era and the Buddhist State is found in [V.2.1.].

628   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 76–78, 81–82; TUTA 8b–9a.

629   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 13. Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 81, 168.

630   Cf. TUTA 1997. 49b–50b; Cleary 1991 p. 110; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 78.

631   Cf. TUTA 1997. 33b–34a.

632   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 253.

633   His biography is among the most extensive in the TUTA 53b–56b. The father is mentioned on p. 55a.

Buddhism did not always win these battles of will. A good example is one of the most important Vietnamese gods, Phù Đổng 扶董.[634] This entity, who unites the water, tree and rock cult trifecta, started out as the tutelary rain goddess of a village with the same name.[635] As the cult grew, a Longmu narrative was used to turn the deity male.[636] He was subsequently merged with many other translocal deities the *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái Liệt Truyện* 嶺南摭怪列傳 (LNCQLT) identified him with the defender of the realm[637] of Mt. Sóc.

In 820, the Buddhists were attracted by the popularity of his cult and erected one of the most important Vietnamese monasteries — the Kiến Sơ Temple 建初寺 — directly beside Phù Đổng's shrine. However, they could hardly compete with the god and began to call his site a *dâm từ* 淫祠, a "lewd shrine" of a 'licentious' cult.[638] Legend has it that the Buddhists attempted to exorcize and convert the deity. In response, the deity communicated via a tree that he wanted sacrifices and an icon in exchange for his protection of the monastery.[639] Slowly, the rulers started to notice the cult. By 1010, there was still a spirit shrine next to the Kiến Sơ Temple, both sites claimed to be the real site of Phù Đổng — a case of duplication. During the Lý dynasty (1009—1225), the emperors chose to emphasize hydrolatry and built an even bigger temple for Phù Đổng.[640] Such transitions from Buddhist to imperial occupation became a common event in Vietnamese history.

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634 He was later identified with the deity of Mt. Sóc as Thánh Gióng 聖揀. The generalized names indicate the age of both original entities. Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 98.

635 Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 838. The fact that the Đạo Mẫu [V.4.3.] chose to occupy the well in front of the younger temple also indicates a former female entity.

636 Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 839.

637 The defender of the realm is a deity type that defeats foreign forces by military feats or by evoking natural disasters. In contrast to the protectors of the realm [V.5.], they are not necessarily recognized by the government and do not receive imperial sacrifices. Compared to imperial tutelary deities, defenders of the realm are often only of local relevance because their famous deeds refer to a single event or a limited time-frame.

638 Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 158; Dutton, Werner and Whitmore 2012, p. 62 and Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 101.

639 Cf. Taylor 1986, pp. 158–59; Kiernan 2017, p. 151.

640 Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, pp. 170–72 and Kelley 2015a, pp. 82–85.

Generally, Buddhism helped to maintain the role of women for water control rituals. They were believed to have a closer connection to water deities and to be thus more likely to successfully summon rain,[641] which in turn helped to attract the patronage of the elites. After the Việt restored their sovereignty, they called their own imperial realm Đại Việt. It was based on a Buddhist state system, Buddhism had thus achieved cultural and political dominance [V.2.1.] from the Later Lý dynasty to the early Trần dynasty. During this time, Quan Âm's influence grew immensely. Because the bodhisattva had arrived by sea, he was perceived as independent of Amitabha and it did not take long until Quan Âm replaced Buddhas in Buddhist altars, being flanked by Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra. Although Quan Âm was feminized much later than in China (see Chapter VI) he was still able to serve as a container for indigenous water deities. The emerging Quan Âm centric hydrolatric cults were sufficiently resilient when the imperial government began to push for Confucianization.[642] The rapid occupation of hydrolatric sites enabled Buddhism to gain a strong and enduring cultural dominance that supported Đại Việt's evolution into a multicultural imperial state during its expansion to the south [V.3.4.].

Changes in the Hydrolatry of Imperial Vietnam

There was little systematization during the earliest attempts of the Việt imperial government to control the deities of the realm. Similar to the developments during the Chinese Northern Song dynasty, villages were soon able to petition for the recognition of their deities. If these deities were deemed useful, they would receive a title and an origin story that was sanitized to align with the government's moral values. The official origin would be exhibited alongside an imperial seal in the village's communal house (Đình).[643] However, transregional and imperial deities were in turn only accepted by the population if local religious specialists negotiated with the territorial spirits about it.[644]

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641   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 31 cites an example of 1136, when the empress dowager had to pray at Dâu temple to end a great drought.

642   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 198.

643   Cf. Trần Quốc Vượng 1995, p. 13.

644   Cf. Unger 1997, pp. 20–21.

Lý Tế Xuyên 李濟川, the author of the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* 粤甸幽靈集 ['Anthology of the Departed Spirits of the Việt Realm'] (c. 1329), collected stories about the spirits of the drowned of both genders and depicted them as protectors of the realm.[645] In his era, the cultural gap between the elite and the commoners had widened, particularly regarding snakes. Among the elite, snakes had lost prestige. Although some of these reptiles had been turned into dragons, they were still seen as tainted and targeted to be killed.[646] Similar to the Chinese treatment of jiao-dragons,[647] and the Buddhist treatment of snakes in China, the snakes were depicted as seductresses, as malicious tree goddesses who would lure men to their death.[648] The commoners, however, continued to venerate snakes as benevolent river deities and several fishermen lineages were thought to possess a serpentine ancestor. They were very important for the transregional expansion of the hydrolatric network, where people communicated via wells and created interconnected sibling temples.[649] There were two significant changes in the lore about snakes. First, they were now considered able to fight epidemics, so their responsibilities had been extended. Second, in the popular stories about raising snake children, the snake's potency was gradually transferred to the human characters.

Jiaozhi, the Chinese colony, had been far too peripheral to receive any official buildings with dragon décor. However, by the Later Lý dynasty, the Buddhist state temples showed such.[650] Recurring dragon sightings supported the dynasty's legitimacy and the emperor personally prayed for rain. The city of Thăng Long 昇龍, founded by Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 (r. 1009—1028) after the first dragon sighting, remained in use until 1789.[651] The city was characterized by

645   Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 167 and Dror 2007, pp. 19–20.

646   Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 694.

647   It seems that in areas with particularly strong snake veneration, the term *jiao* was also used to refer to snakes and sea serpents that showed no dragon traits, cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 1027.

648   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 106–7.

649   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 45.

650   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 252.

651   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 249. A translation of the edict about the capital's movement is found in Hữu Ngọc 2007, pp. 879–882, including an analysis.

topnotch hydraulic engineering and full of waterways and lakes that supported the association of water with the legitimacy of the ruler.[652]

When the Nguyễn dynasty (1802—1945) made the central Vietnamese city Huế their capital, they took all possible dragon symbols of the former capital Thăng Long with them and destroyed those that they could not take.[653] Afterwards, they changed the northern city's name to Hanoi.[654] In accordance with geomancy, they wanted to avoid that any imperial energy would be left behind to be harnessed by competing authorities in the north [V.3.3.1.]–[V.3.3.2.]. The Vietnamese dragon was now as much Sinicized as it was imperialized.

Spiritual Water Control in Vietnam

Popular water control rituals were rarely described in the historical literature of Vietnam. They were often only hinted at when they were criticized by Buddhists and Confucian officials. The rituals that were described were usually perceived with a colonial bias. One of the most common kinds superficially resembled the Chinese *qushui* ritual, but the community would gather the water from the river, not from a spring.[655] The ritual was also not limited to drought, nor was the water kept at the temple, instead it served further ritualistic means for temple care and funeral rites. The case studies also revealed that there were rituals of dragon boat racing [V.6.3.3.] or goddess races on land, processions and various kinds of interaction with differently colored sticks [V.1.].

Given that human sacrifices were condemned by Chinese officials and thus cited as evidence for the criticism of the local cultural practices, we learn that both Việt and Cham cultures engaged in this practice and that the Chinese occupation apparently hardly affected that. It is plausible that human sacrifices in the north were discontinued when Việt rulers began to present themselves as emperors of the Sinitic style. Since then, there have been no further mentions

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652 Cf. Phan Huy Lê et.al. 2012. p.74–75.

653 This was also related to Thăng Long being the only capital recognized by the Chinese. Even the royal palace was destroyed to emphasize that the Việt were the ones to choose their capital and that it was now in Huế. Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 53–54.

654 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 253–54.

655 Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 239.

of institutionalized human sacrifice, apart from cases of Buddhist self-immolation. In the Champa realm, however, human sacrifices of foreign ethnic groups were somewhat institutionalized, particularly among the fishermen of Khánh Hòa,[656] who lived close to the sanctuary of the Cham main goddess Pô Nagar in Kauṭhāra, and these sacrifices persisted until the eighteenth century [V.6.3.].[657]

State rituals of water control have been mentioned much more often in Vietnamese historical sources. However, the lack of religious segmentation and the pluralistic religious geography did not produce too many *types* of ritual that would be exclusively enacted at court. It was expected that a ruler had to feed his people and quench their thirst. A dutiful ruler's deeds were like rain. Droughts and crop failures thus endangered his legitimacy.[658]

Since the Chinese governors and officials were held to the same expectations, they had no choice but to reluctantly accept the indigenous jiao-dragon and turtle deities, which soon became their allies in the subjugation of the local territorial deities.[659] However, the Han Chinese officials had the goal to shape Jiaozhi in the Chinese image, so they completely ignored indigenous rituals against droughts. They instead introduced their own water control rituals from China and established new paradigms of negotiation with the local spirits.[660] Yet, Vietnamese literature is full with references to the officials' ineptness and inflexibility, especially when it came to handling the tropical climate. This, in addition to their exploitative behavior, was directly responsible for the many rebellions of the proto-Việt.

After the Việt gained independence from the Chinese Empire in 938 CE [V.2.1.], imperial Đại Việt kept on using Sinitic water control measures, like throwing admonishing poems into a river full of crocodiles.[661] The emperors had to follow a sequence by praying for rain, praying for favorable weather,

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656 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 106.

657 Cf. Phillips 2013, p. 119 and Li Tana 2018, p. 132.

658 Cf. Huỳnh 1997, p. 63.

659 Taylor 1983 cites multiple examples on pages 195, 237 and 251. An extensive example regarding a water deity granting acceptance to a new ruler can be found in the *Lính Nam Chích Quái Liệt Truyện* 2:8b.

660 Cf. Kelley 2015a, pp. 86–88; 95–98.

661 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 173.

appeasing the rivers, and sacrificing to the Mountains and Streams. New emperors would tour the realm and offer introductory sacrifices to avoid disasters.[662] They would light incense and ask for any spirits of the realm willing to support their reign [V.6.3.6.]. This was a great way to find new sources for spiritual legitimation.

As Confucianism gained prominence during the late imperial era (1427—1858), state-level rituals in Vietnam began to resemble those in China, there were just more water deities to choose from. The local officials in Vietnam also tried to hide it if droughts occurred in their districts, fearing punishment for their failure to manage local morality. However, the Vietnamese Confucian officials preferred to search for suitable deities within the Chinese literature rather than choosing a heterodox indigenous option. Although they were expected to show utmost sincerity during rain rituals, the late imperial stagnancy of Việt Confucianism rendered them incapable of creating new rituals, unlike their Chinese counterparts.[663]

Kathryn Dyt has investigated the most important state water control ritual of the late imperial era, the *cầu đảo* (originally: *cầu phong đảo vũ* 求風禱雨 ['requesting wind and praying for rain']) and illustrated how the locals were eventually excluded from participation. This was once a rare emergency ritual, likely introduced by the time that the Confucians had come into power.[664] When the early years of the Nguyễn dynasty were marked by droughts, the first Nguyễn emperor was prompted to engage in *cầu đảo*, which made it a paradigm for his successors. If the *cầu đảo* ritual failed, the emperor could still enact a "secret prayer" (*mật đảo* 密禱), to emphasize the emperor's pain.[665] However, the *mật đảo,* with its vegetarianism, fasting and reciting sutras, had already become too Buddhist for a government dominated by Neo-Confucian

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662   Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 165.

663   Cf. Dyt 2015, p. 1–6. Different Confucian schools allowed for the adaption and innovation of new water control rituals, while the Vietnamese Confucians tried to be more pedantically traditional than the Chinese ever were. The Vietnamese Neo-Confucian orthodoxy came to discourage innovation out of fear that examination candidates might deviate from the norms of the Four Books, cf. Tạ Văn Tài 2009, p. 14. [V.3.1.1.].

664   Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, p. 497.

665   Cf. Dyt 2015, p. 27.

officials. Bodily aggressive rituals like exposure had been downplayed for a long time and Buddhists were no longer allowed in state temples.[666]

In the context of this book, the most intriguing aspect of the *cầu đảo* ritual is that it was not directed at Heaven, like comparable Chinese rituals were, but rather at the countless protectors of the realm. An explanation for this may lie in the fact that a significant number of Vietnamese water deities had been transformed into such protectors [V.1.2.4.], [V.4.3.4.]; [V.6.3.5.]. Case study [V.5.] takes a closer look at protectors of the realm and investigates a deity who would play a central role in the rainmaking of the Nguyễn dynasty through the ritual of *cầu đảo* — the "Lady of Thái Dương" (Thái Dương Phu Nhân 邰陽夫人). Her case is a good example for the function of sacred sites as repositories of cultural memory and concepts that may have lost their context but not their numinosity [V.5.2.].

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666   Cf. Dyt 2015, pp. 1–42.

6 Hydrolatric Sites in Sichuan, Vietnam and the Defense Against Chinese Imperial Assimilation Politics

Sichuan and Vietnam offer numerous instances of sacred sites whose appearance results from the competing and overlapping spatial imaginations of various groups. These groups were generally involved in the religious and political transformations for which these areas later became known. As a subsequent step to ensure the applicability of the EAA in historical contexts, I applied it to my case studies in combination with other established working methods. Doing so provided new insights into the specific strategies of transcultural ideology transfer, processes of power imposition, and the social dynamics surrounding them. The manipulation of sacred sites significantly influenced the originally quite similar cultural settings of Sichuan and Vietnam. Different strategies of identity negotiation caused them to react very differently to the colonization efforts of the Chinese Empire.

After finishing my case studies, I realized that the Experiential Architecture Analysis had worked well and produced relevant results, but that my case study corpus had grown to quite an extent. This chapter therefore summarizes the main findings thematically to provide an impression about the impact that historical spatial reconfiguration events have had on the social experience of religious space. It also addresses the consequences that each successful or failed ideology transfer had for the assertion of dominance or the maintenance of sovereignty in the respective area. It is thus possible to reconstruct why the spatial reconfiguration events occurring in hydrolatric sites affected the success of transcultural ideology transfer between the local and transregional religions of the Sinitic, Việt and Sichuanese cultures.

The results show that Sichuan and Vietnam developed different and variably effective coping trends in defense against the transregional pressures exercised by the Chinese Empire. Some of these coping trends progressed into

transcultural phenomena of their own. The last section thus treats the grander coping trend of the Guanyin Culture, its development in China and its more recent spread throughout Southeast Asia.

For the interested reader, the appendix offers the complete case studies with some additional historical and religious context. Each case study treats one or two main sites and auxiliary sites for comparative reasons. Each encompasses the interpretative survey, the site's written history, its historical contextualization, the reconfigurative analysis and a summary of the site's historical relevance in respect to this research. The additional historical materials that frame them provide the context concerning the consequences that the events in these sites are related to. The more extensive historical sections — for the sake of context — are the Imperialization of Vietnam [V.3.1.]; Women in Việt Society [V.4.] with a treatise on the coping trend that is Đạo Mẫu [V.4.3.]; the Making of Sichuan Province [S.1.] and the Imperialization of Hydrolatry in Late Imperial Sichuan [S.3.1.] with a treatise on the split Chuanzhu system as both an imperial superscription modus and local coping trend [S.3.2.].

The first case study cluster [V.1.] treats the role of Buddhism as a proselytizing transregional religion whose social power was first elevated by the centralizing political authorities and then employed by transregionally expanding states. For the study of the Tứ Pháp system in northern Vietnam, I combined the EAA content analysis with the literary analysis of related narratives. This served to explore the content and practices at the Tứ Pháp sites and their greater context within northern Vietnamese culture. This cluster demonstrates the interaction between Buddhism and local hydrolatry and the attempts of Buddhists to attract political patronage. The following elaboration on the national hero Lý Thường Kiệt and the sites associated with him in the northern central province of Thanh Hóa [V.2.] demonstrates the use of sacred sites as religious and political markers of territory and marks the relevance of spatial control for the Vietnamese historical development. Here, the EAA is coupled with historical analysis to exemplify how to treat already destroyed sites or sites of which very few material traces remain. The results of the analysis have exposed the effects that the strategical placement of Buddhist sites and the religious-political transregional networks had on the stabilization of the centralizing Vietnamese Empire.

The second case study cluster scrutinizes the Thiên Mụ Temple of Huế [V.6.], which served as a late imperial marker in an area of central Vietnam that had once belonged to the Indianized Cham culture of southern Vietnam [V.3.4.1]. This case study represents my most comprehensive application of the EAA due to its exceptional depth of material preservation and the abundant availability of textual sources. It connects closed site analysis (which focuses on the inner hierarchies and representation) and open site analysis (which focuses on the external hierarchies of a site) with a profound historical deduction. The events at the site of Thiên Mụ 天姥 are contextualized with the shifting political centers during the Imperialization and Neo-Confucianization in Vietnam [V.3.], Feminine Religion [V.4.3.], and the other Transcendental Representatives of the Empire [V.5.]. This cluster shows how the need for political legitimation during the geopolitical shift south in the late imperial era affected the reinterpretation of hydrolatric sites across interreligious boundaries and their utilization in a multicultural setting.

The third case study cluster investigates the occupational behavior of Buddhists during the classical and late imperial phases of the Buddhist expansion into Sichuan. For this reason, the cluster encompasses the hydrolatric temples of Sichuan that are associated with numinous springs [S.2.], especially if they are claimed to have healing properties [S.2.1.2.–II.], [S.2.2.]. Subjecting the relevant hydrolatric sites to the EAA's closed site and open site analysis derived examples for Sichuanese measures of local identity preservation, which led me to common motifs that referred to a specifically Sichuanese coping trend: Guanyin Culture. Guanyin Culture was very versatile, which may have led to its transformation into a popular religious category. This would mean that its transcultural spread was possibly not caused by imperialist motivations.

The fourth case study cluster sheds light on the various methods of empire-building that took place in Sichuan. Beginning with a summary of the established studies on the veneration of Chuanzhu deities, it outlines how the Chinese government utilized native and localized water deities to transfer imperial ideology beyond the established limits of Han Chinese culture [S.3.2.]. The imperial version of Chuanzhu veneration was meant to be a mediative device aimed at the southern Sichuanese indigenous ethnic groups, who remained rebellious even during the late imperial era. Cultural misunderstand-

ings led to the reappropriation of the Chuanzhu by the migrant and native people of southern Sichuan.

The EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS of the Hailong-si in Mahu treats the relationship between the imperial center and the Yi minority in an environment where Buddhism struggled to gain hold [S.3.3.]. It proved that the transformation from an imperial to a communist system did not stop the appropriation of Yi culture, that the localization attempts of the central government continue and that discrimination inhibits ideology transfer.

Guanyin made an appearance in all Chinese case study clusters, sometimes earlier and sometimes later in the sites' historical development, and thus necessitated a closer investigation within the phenomenon of 'Guanyin Culture'.

6.1 How Buddhists Treated Hydrolatric Sites in Colonized Vietnam

Proto-Việt identity was framed around a hydrocentric worldview. The bronze drum culture of Vietnam shows that, long before the Chinese conquered the northern area of Vietnam in 111 BCE, local authorities depended on the legitimation by water deities. At first, the Chinese employed very aggressive reconfiguration tactics [V.1.1.], but the Chinese administrators also employed narratives of dream encounters to negotiate their dominance over the realm and to subjugate territorial deities. The former removed the symbols of local authorities from their natural environment and the latter separated them from their supernatural aquatic patrons [V.3.1.2.].

Meanwhile, Indian and Chinese Buddhists spread along the coasts. It took a few centuries for them to assert themselves in the competition with other religious presences. However, since those did not proselytize, they were no competition for the Buddhist missionaries who adapted to the hydrocentric religious landscape. The Buddhist clergy realized that they had to make their ideology attractive to the locals by offering means of water control and this initiated a localization process. The incorporation of indigenous water cults provided Buddhism with locally sourced magical potential that raised its social relevance. Since the Chinese administrators had previously tried to destroy the

local culture, the Buddhists were provided with an opportunity to integrate local traits and to present Buddhism as an option of resistance against the Sinitic assimilation. The Tứ Pháp complex of Bắc Ninh [V.1.1.] demonstrates this process. It comprises several originally independent hydrolatric sites of small-scale indigenous beliefs from one or multiple collaborating villages.

The site of Man Nương is likely the oldest site of the cluster. It was of especially high importance for the indigenous people. This allowed Man Nương to remain the only entity within the temple complex who retained her individual lore. Two narrative lineages are attached to this small temple. One hints at an Indianized female-centric hybrid cult that treats Man Nương as an earth-water-mother type goddess. The other — the official one — is an example for the suggestion tactic since it describes the transfer of her powers to anachronistic, pseudo-Buddhist men. These two competing narrative lineages do not only emphasize the beginning schism between male and female religious practices that started long before the Neo-Confucianization of Vietnam [V.1.2.4.]. They also exemplify the changing social-political dynamics of early Vietnam under Chinese political control and the Buddhist ideological impact. Buddhists used the character of Man Nương to create a point of identification for the Proto-Việt. Just like Princess Miaoshan relates to Guanyin in China,[667] Man Nương depicted a Buddhist sage of local origin. The immoral behavior of the "monk" or "Kalacarya" was relevant to female spirituality because it reflected the violence women commonly experienced. However, from a Buddhist perspective, male points of identification were still preferable, so Man Nương's role was increasingly diminished. Furthermore, the official narrative reinterprets the character Kalacarya as a spiritual teacher and reframes his abuse as a miracle pregnancy. The contest between the local and Buddhist religions still continues within the contemporary temple of Man Nương and thus preserves these cultural tensions. Its spatial image does not fit Buddhist spatial imagination. Instead, a structural emphasis on the numinous well and the dragon relief that was more recently added behind it reveal the temple as a reservoir of local

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667   According to legend, she was a princess in the province of Henan and her filial piety made her turn into a bodhisattva. See Dudbridge, Glen. *The Legend of Miao-Shan*. London: Ithaca Press, 1978.

hydrolatry. Man Nương and an aniconic Quan Âm both serve as containers for local water deities. This compelled the contemporary (male) Buddhist staff to insert a hall for the Buddha Triad[668] to mark the site as clearly Buddhist.

Since the Buddhist clergy did not have much transregional competition in Bắc Ninh, it was unnecessary to start elaborate structural interventions into the sites they occupied; this allowed them to keep the costs low. They soon became the knowledge elite in control over the public image of all original Tứ Pháp sites; this enabled them to change names, categories and official narratives — they <u>concealed</u> the local identity of the sites. Such reconfigurations of media created the illusion of a Buddhist cultural dominance over an impressively large territory that kept potential competition at bay. At the same time, the clergy depicted itself as attractive partners for governmental consolidation projects. When the chùa Dâu developed an especially strong relationship to the government, it became the most relevant site of the complex and was thence subjected to the most spatial reconfigurations [V.1.2.5.].

Does this mean that the Tứ Pháp sites are a good model for successful ideology transfer? Quite to the contrary.

The Tứ Pháp system expanded rapidly across various local, hybridized and even Daoist sites, many of them were multilocal and cohabited entities from different pantheons [V.1.2.1.]. Although the sites entering the Tứ Pháp system were potentially at risk of suffering a complete superscription at some point (like it would also be the case with the Đạo Mẫu religion in later eras), their incorporation into this transregional religious network held ample benefits. The Buddhists at chùa Dâu established a Pháp Vân lending system that offered all partaking sites quicker inter-site communication as well as shared economic opportunities and — most importantly — an escape from Buddhism's own normative demands. This was so attractive that 'unlicensed' sites tried to sneak into the system to profit from it [V.1.2.2.].

This superficial integration of an increasing number of sites already satisfied the Buddhist ambition, so when a site was readily offered to enter into the Tứ

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668   This term commonly refers to the Sahā Triad consisting of Buddha Śākyamuni and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha. However, it could equally be composed of different buddhas and bodhisattvas or consist of three different buddhas.

Pháp system, Buddhist proselytization and intervention at the site ceased. In Tứ Pháp sites that consisted of multiple categorical components, the female Buddhas were typically placed outside of the Buddhist *chùa* part. This emphasized that the Tứ Pháp Buddhas were not perceived as Buddhist entities at all. Buddhism was instead used as an umbrella device within the <u>decoration tactic</u> to protect the pluralistic identities of the original Tứ Pháp sites and their branches. Such perseverance of local identity under the pretense of subjecting to Buddhism with only the lowest level of hybridity was a typical pattern for northern Vietnamese sites. It mirrored Sichuan's acceptance of imperial benefits without adhering to Chinese imperial values. The Tứ Pháp sites hence demonstrate how transregional authorities may have miscalculated the consequences that their reconfiguration tactics have had on the local sphere.

When Guanyin lore started to influence the Vietnamese interpretation of Quan Âm in the late imperial era, the Tứ Pháp system had already lost its relevance. The condition that Quan Âm appears multiple times as both a bodhisattva and as a water deity within the Tứ Pháp sites connects them to the late modern Southeast Asian Guanyin Culture that will be explored at the end of this chapter.

6.2 The Role of Hydrolatric Sites in the Vietnamese Buddhist State System

While Man Nương was the connection to the local religion that made Buddhism relevant and experiential, Pháp Vân, The Buddha of Clouds, was the connection between Buddhism and the government [V.1.2.–I]. However, this relationship was not as good as local sources depicted it in the legends [V.1.2.3.]. Pháp Vân's chùa Dâu had been established as a Thiền Buddhist center for centuries before the imperial court paid attention to the site [V.1.2.4.], because what was actually relevant to the government was high economic gain. The scion sites created by the Pháp Vân lending system may not have been Buddhist, but they were still important markets. The lending system hence served as a capable centralization measure that allowed the Buddhists to bargain for political participation, at least until the Neo-Confucian administrative elite

of the post-Ming era [V.3.1.1.] revoked the governmental involvement in the site's activities. Pháp Vân's previous role in preserving local identity created a sufficient precedent for her late imperial transformation into a protector of the realm [V.1.2.6.]; [V.5.].

After Đại Việt gained political independence in 938, missionaries like Ma Ha 摩訶 (~ 10th c.) and Pháp Loa 法螺 (1284—1330) [V.2.3.3.] realized that the natives cared less about hermeneutic sutras and more about practical matters, like rain for agriculture or healing water against disease. The Buddhist missionaries thus employed water metaphors more frequently to connect their lore with environmental realities. As a part of the *upāya* method, they reinvigorated Tantric magical practices that were by nature mediative and allowed the transfer of Buddhist ideology without causing resentment among the locals.[669]

Under the Vietnamese Buddhist State System between the tenth to fourteenth centuries [V.2.1.], the Buddhist expansion accelerated dramatically and supported the government in centralizing and stabilizing the realm. Buddhist missionaries served as pioneers in the Indianized southern areas, where they used Buddhism's mediative tactics to consolidate the indigenous population in preparation for the arrival of the imperial military that would annex their territory. General and regent Lý Thường Kiệt 李常傑 (1019—1105) [V.2.3.] was the most famous example of this standard dynamic of state expansion during the classical imperial period.

The Buddhist missionaries would have traveled south without any governmental encouragement as well, but they preferred the support of the military. This was immensely helpful to renovate and 'purify' a temple from any local entities who might have found their way inside due to previously employed tactics of incorporation and amalgamation. Thanks to this alliance between Buddhism and the government, the Buddhists of the eleventh and twelfth centuries abandoned *upāya* and switched to aggressive tactics. They used super-

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669   Cf. Sage 1992, p. 154. In a similar vein, early medieval Christian missionaries relented to the spiritual needs of the common population by providing magical lead inscriptions instead of reciting the scripture. For this, they used prayers and entities from Germanic, Roman and Greek religion only superficially enhanced with Christian terms. Cf. Muhl, Arnold and Mirko Gutjahr. *Heft 10: Magische Beschwörungen in Blei. Inschriftentäfelchen des Mittelalters aus Sachsen-Anhalt.* Halle: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie, 2013.

scription, destruction, and relentlessly attacked the indigenous narratives in writing. During the southern advance, the porousness of transcultural ideology transfer had already allowed southern narratives and 'useful' deities to migrate north, where they competed for the social prestige that Buddhism enjoyed. These aggressive Buddhist campaigns were meant to proactively protect Buddhism's cultural dominance, for there had also been violence against Buddhists whenever they attempted to exercise superscription prematurely [V.2.3.2.].

Trần Nhân Tông 陳仁宗 (1278—1293) and Pháp Loa realized that to create more stability, it was necessary to unite the many regional and translocal Buddhisms of the realm [V.2.3.3.]. Their collaboration made Buddhism not only more visible but also representative of the government: Buddhist in nature, imperial in function. Due to official and private donations, Buddhist estates became significant economic factors, the distributors of communicative connections, and the markers of the empire's borders. There was also a lot of overlap between the imagery of Buddhism and that of the diverse Hindu religions in the former Cham territories. In the early phases of the March to the South [V.3.4.], Vietnamese Buddhists easily incorporated the visual program of the Hindu-Buddhist Cham. Under their guidance and the intensive political expansion pressure from the north, a gradual Cham-Việt hybridization developed — but only when this was mostly in favor of Việt culture [V.6.2.].

In the early imperial era, Buddhism was a catalyst that transformed the old indigenous models of aquatic legitimization into Sinitic modes of ordering and civilizing. However, Buddhism also considered itself to be superior to indigenous culture. After the Chinese officials had been expelled, Buddhists adapted well to a social position that resembled the Confucians in China; they adopted and transferred some of their ideas as well. The prevalence of these Sinitic concepts, which they had previously spread, were precisely how the Confucian literati (who still harbored enmity against the Buddhists) regained significant political power. By that point, the aggressive measures of the Chinese dominance had already transferred enough Sinitic ideology to identify sovereignty with the acts of unification and expansion [V.2.4.]. Between the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, the Việt emperors increasingly viewed adhering to the Buddhist virtues of benevolence and mercy as a constraint that no longer fitted their desire to expand the realm. With the decline of governmental patronage,

the Buddhist State System failed. As a result, Buddhism lost its privilege to use aggressive reconfiguration tactics without repercussions.

In sum, hydrolatric sites were significant for the dissemination and prestige of Vietnamese Buddhism. Their resilience encouraged Buddhism to seek governmental support but also made it dependent on it. During the era of self-discovery, secure succession, administrative ranks, tasks and integration still had to be figured out. The charismatic emperors relied on the strong legitimacy provided by well-organized Buddhist networks. This stabilized the war-torn early Đại Việt enough to make the Later Lý dynasty (1009—1225) the first to survive for more than two generations. It led Đại Việt into a new, sovereign era.

By the thirteenth century, the roles had reversed and Buddhism lacked the administrative organization now prevalent in the government. After losing governmental patronage, Buddhist unity quickly dissolved due to the ongoing trend towards hybridization and the allure of local hydrolatry. However, Confucianism was still limited to the elite levels of society. Hybridized forms of Buddhism were thus able to assert a superficial regionalized dominance that characterized the sub-governmental religious landscape of Đại Việt.

6.3   The Role of Hydrolatric Sites for the March to the South

It was difficult for Confucianism to localize in Vietnam and penetrate the landscape properly. There were attempts to overproduce scholars to initiate a passive ideology transfer by seeing some of these scholars return to their original villages and take the capital's centralizing ideology with them. Such attempts, however, were only marginally effective in spreading Confucian core ideas because Vietnamese Confucianism was unable to offer convincing benefits to the average commoners.

Nevertheless, the Sinitic ideology that the Việt previously reassigned to themselves also raised the desire of doing some cultural imperialism of their own. Just like the Chinese viewed the Proto-Việt as beneath them when they conquered the Red River Delta, the Việt began to view their own culture as superior to others. It was not only their right but their *duty* to conquer and

'civilize' the 'barbarians' living in the southern realms. The acquisition of land and new resources for their own population was presented as a mere bonus. To manage such a state expansion, the Vietnamese imperial administration began to reform the educational system and emulated the earlier cooperation with Buddhism. It was now Confucian scholars who were sent beyond the peripheries to familiarize the locals with the Việt imperial ideology before the military arrived to formally annex the area.

After the Chinese Ming dynasty (1368—1644) initiated a second occupation of Việt territory between 1407—1427 [V.3.1.], Neo-Confucian scholars who had been educated in China rose into elevated government positions. They enforced the desired social behaviors, at least to a limited degree, by coercion [V.3.1.1.]. However, as there was no support by the commoners, it was almost impossible to enforce the occupation of sacred sites outside the government's direct sphere of influence. Doing so would have caused resistance which could have negatively affected the desired cultural assimilation of the South.

Vietnamese Neo-Confucianism tried to carry out the Chinese model better than the Chinese themselves, which made deviations from Confucian ideals unacceptable and prevented endemic innovations. Consequentially, Vietnamese Neo-Confucianism became quite rigid and incapable of using mediative measures. When the deity Zhenwu [V.5.1.] was introduced to consolidate the highly heterogeneous realm, the Daoist and Buddhist iconographic traits of his statue offended the court literati to such an extent that they preferred to see his consolidating functions fade away, rather than to permit his cult to grow transregional.

Another debilitating factor of the same vein was how Confucianism rejected female spiritual agency [V.4.2.]. Thus, it was unable to occupy hydrolatric sites like Buddhism had previously done. In Vietnam, this meant to forgo significant factors of the local economy [V.4.3.3.] and transcultural relations. Confucianism hence only slowly gained more cultural dominance in the north, and even though the military campaigns in the south were successful, the transfer of Confucian ideology to the south was not. This contributed to the growing cultural differences between the north and south and finally enabled the Nguyễn lords to create their own territory until the realm was separated into northern Đàng Ngoài and southern Đàng Trong [V.3.2.].

In the north, governmental Neo-Confucianism successfully permeated the commoner sphere and consequentially became less tolerant towards other cultural expressions. The growing visual presence of Cham culture within the capital — as a result of the deportation of war prisoners and the employment of sought-after craftsmen — was increasingly perceived as a threat to the moral integrity of the empire. This led to the discriminatory laws under which the Cham would continually suffer throughout the late imperial era [V.3.4.2.].

The developments of the northern religious landscape caused the formation of Đạo Mẫu [V.4.2.], a countermovement to the Confucianization of society, and contributed to its growth into a nongovernmental and noninstitutional transregional religion. Đạo Mẫu provided women with a sanctuary from the painful experiences that the male-dominated Confucian ideology did not acknowledge. It offered them new purpose and a network of shared beliefs to express themselves. In this way, northern Đạo Mẫu filled the same social niche that Guanyin Culture would occupy in the late nineteenth century. In similarity to early Vietnamese Buddhism, Đạo Mẫu only used a small number of spatial reconfigurations. Initial insertions and cohabitations would be followed — in the case of female deities — by amalgamation or — in the case of male deities — by renaming and ranking. Both could lead to superscription, depending on how much the site was demanded for Đạo Mẫu ritual activity. In contrast to Confucianism, Đạo Mẫu was highly mediative and easily able to create multilocal sites that combined entirely different sacred site categories. Đạo Mẫu carefully preserved the female aspects of hydrolatry and greatly benefitted from doing so [V.4.3.5.]. Just like the Tứ Pháp system, Đạo Mẫu offered an umbrella for the continued existence of local cults and used this to claim sites that were highly relevant to society and commerce.

The deity Liễu Hạnh, a patron of female merchants, who was sponsored by female traders, became a consolidation tool of Đạo Mẫu [V.4.3.3.]. She contributed to the interconnection of numerous northern sites into a spiritual reservoir that was capable of preserving indigenous identities. Đạo Mẫu thus fulfilled the same function that Buddhism had before, one that Confucianism was still unable to fulfill: to integrate the local religions and make them more manageable for civil administrators. Unsurprisingly, the Neo-Confucians considered Liễu Hạnh as a threat to their dominance. They thus deliberately

depicted Liễu Hạnh as heterodox, malicious and generally as dangerous for the central authority of the government. Đạo Mẫu was, as a matter of fact, quite the opposite. In contrast to Buddhism and Confucianism, Đạo Mẫu was an endemic religion and thus an especially strong marker of Việt identity — one that actually emphasized Việt authority. In the contemporary era, this has helped Đạo Mẫu to present itself as a national religion of Vietnam.

Compared to the north, the southern territory of Đàng Trong was quite underdeveloped. The population consisted foremostly of Cham and there was only a low level of centralization. The Nguyễn lords hence felt the urge to stabilize their political dominance through a swift transfer of Việt culture [V.3.3.]. A first step to localize their legitimacy was to prove that their rule was supported by the deities of the Cham — especially by deities who fitted into the mold of aquatic patrons. The Nguyễn lords had to establish their separate realm in an era of drought, so they chose to appease locally relevant rain goddesses. This simultaneously served to demonstrate their difference from the northern realm. One of the newly subjected southern goddesses was Thái Dương Phu Nhân [V.5.2.], a rock deity of Huế. Her site had already been an enduring reservoir of local identity before the Nguyễn appropriated it to present themselves as virtuous rainmakers in order to localize their rule. But no amount of sponsorship was able to make this rock cult mobile. The imperial interpretation of her as a capable rainbringer was not relevant enough to generate a following among the commoners — Thái Dương Phu Nhân's mediative power was not high enough. After a phase of stabilization, the Nguyễn lords quickly realized that they wanted to continue the March to the South. Once again, hydrolatric sites became indispensable tools of identity negotiation and ideology reproduction. The most important among them were those associated with variants of Pô Nagar [V.6.1.]. The main goddess of the Cham became one of the most pervasive transcultural deities in Vietnam. An all-powerful main deity, though, could neither be obstructed nor sufficiently superscribed and thus would have maintained Cham identity. The Nguyễn lords hence did not refer to Pô Nagar directly but to alternative hybrid interpretations of her, like Thiên Y A Na 天依阿那 [V.6.2.] and Thiên Mụ [V.6.3.], who had been created by earlier pioneers to the south. These variants made Pô Nagar more palatable to the Việt by removing her heterodox traits, like polyandry. After

the intense reconfiguration of a Thiên Y A Na main site, she was reduced to a mere rain deity: one that was easily expelled from the northern capital when Neo-Confucians criticized her as a foreign deity. And yet, she persisted effortlessly within female religious lineages of central Vietnam. By contrast, Thiên Mụ was the Pô Nagar variant who became relevant to the male religious lineages [V.6.3.6.]. The increasing imperial aspirations of the Nguyễn lords and the also increasingly pressing matter of their legitimacy led them to revive the collaboration between the government and Buddhism. Đàng Trong's imperial-Buddhist alliance seamlessly absorbed water cults along the way of its expanding territory. Buddhism was hence again able to use the more aggressive tactics[670] that brought Việt culture into every village.

After the Nguyễn lords had strengthened their reign, they wrote about the site of the Thiên Mụ temple and their ties to it. The esteemed forefather of the Nguyễn lords — Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢 (1525—1613) — had allegedly selected four main imperial sacred sites. One of them was the former Pô Nagar sanctuary that early Việt settlers had reinterpreted as a Thiên Y A Na site. This site was initially converted into a shrine of the -ci category, its Buddhist occupation was sponsored only much later — in 1715 — which led to its reconfiguration in accordance with Buddhist spatial imagination [V.6.3.1.]. However, the great relevance that Thiên Mụ held for rain control and legitimation meant that the government continuously intervened into the site, which prevented the successful Buddhist superscription of it.

The reason why Emperor Khải Định 啟定 (r. 1916—1925) suddenly revealed the formerly intentionally concealed Cham traits of Thiên Mụ (in the last imperial stele that was ever created for the temple) was related to another question of sovereignty. In the days of Western imperialism in Vietnam, the Cham did not only no longer pose a challenge to Việt political dominance [V.3.4.3.], it also only now became advantageous to describe Cham and Việt as parts of a unified Vietnamese identity and to position it against a common enemy — the French. In the twentieth century, Buddhism was freed of imperial regards and finally able to conclude its claim to the Thiên Mụ Temple, which

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670   This refers exclusively to the Mahāyāna Buddhists of the Việt, not to those who existed among the Cham.

resulted in the contemporary spatial image and the <u>obstruction</u> of the site's original deity [V.6.3.5.].

Direct experience of the Chinese trend of subjugating target regions with military force to exploit them, of limiting the administration and education to the Han Chinese but forgoing the prioritization of ideology transfer, taught Đại Việt valuable lessons about what factors delay acculturation. The Việt emperors of the north thus chose either Buddhist or Neo-Confucian religious consolidators to familiarize target territories with imperial ideology before conquering them by force. This made the conquests during the early phase of the March to the South more sustainable. To the Nguyễn lords, Buddhism was the more traditionally Việt religion, one that indeed helped them to achieve their goals [V.3.2.]. They regarded Neo-Confucianism as something unsuitable for the southern religious landscape, as something foreign that their enemies — the Trịnh lords — engaged in. Furthermore, the Trịnh's measures of centralization had failed disastrously. For this reason, they were merely ready to accept Sinitic ideology (mostly Confucian ideas) as far as it upheld their administration and enabled them to rule. The separation of the realm had since brought the centralization efforts to a halt at a time when they were desperately needed for the political localization in the south, especially after the Nguyễn dynasty (1802—1945) chose Huế as their capital. Without sufficient centralization measures to balance the developing regionalisms, the notion of unity and the authority of the emperor were challenged. The Nguyễn dynasty tried to intensely support Neo-Confucian ideology in an attempt to re-strengthen the institution of the emperor to stabilize their reign. But in their haste to expand southwards, the Nguyễn lords had neglected acculturation. The Neo-Confucian ideology had only incompletely been transferred to the south and did not fit the model of the realm that the Nguyễn lords' era had formed [V.3.3.1.]. This neglect of previous centuries had led to a degeneration of southern Việt Confucian scholarship which impacted the literati's ability to administrate. However, the Nguyễn dynastic government did not consider the better educated northern Việt Confucians trustworthy [V.3.3.2.]. The southern literati were hence put under the immense stress of trying to keep the government administration afloat without enjoying any social prestige. Such dissatisfaction by the state system's upholders severely destabilized this empire.

6.4 How Buddhists Engaged with Hydrolatric Sites in Sichuan

Like in northern Vietnam, the Buddhist expansion reached Sichuan quite early and the just as early adoption of local traits is what differentiates Sichuanese Buddhism from general Chinese Buddhism[671] [S.2.]. Unlike in early Vietnam, though, the Buddhists in Sichuan did not only compete with the local religions but also with other transregional religions, mostly with Daoism. This situation encouraged the Buddhist missionaries to use fairly aggressive reconfiguration tactics to integrate the sites of numinous springs into their religious network as quickly as possible. Springs were specifically targeted out of practicability [S.2.1.], as a demonstration of power and for economic reasons, because especially healing springs could draw translocal visitors and donations to the site.

The terms *ganquan* 甘泉 and *ganlu* 甘露 are Buddhist terms of spiritual subjugation. They often refer to an intermediary stage in the Buddhist superscription of hydrolatric sites [S.2.1.1.3.] that maintains the focus on the hydrolatric aspect of the site, even as the related locations and practices become increasingly framed by Buddhist ideology. The occupation of numinous springs often began with cohabitation, which quickly led to incorporations and amalgamations. In the long-term, Buddhists sharply reduced the local traits in the spatial image of the occupied site or would reinterpret them with their own narratives to finalize the superscription. This modus operandi is exemplified by the numerous Shengshui-si, which are treated here with examples from Sichuan, although they are found throughout China. These represent a specific *type* of temples that resulted from this kind of Buddhist approach that often particularly targeted female dragon deities — as seen in the temple that predated the Zitong Shengshui-si [S.2.1.2.–II]. The Zitong site is likewise a good example for the suggesting tactic. Its claimants attributed lore from various temples of the same name to it, in order to make the Buddhist version of the site, which merely emerged in the Ming dynasty, appear much older. Building upon this process, the Bishui-si [S.2.1.2.–I], demonstrates the case of

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671 For a general introduction into what constitutes Chinese Buddhism, see: Yü Chün-fang. *Chinese Buddhism. A Thematic History.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2020.

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a successful superscription that resulted in the total loss of the name and lore of a previous cult. The only remnant of the local water deity was the idea that it was embodied by a turtle. It also illustrates that the reuse of the former temple's numinous mark did not necessarily prevent nonaggressive contestations between imperial and religious locations.

The successful <u>superscriptions</u> are contrasted by the Qinquan-si [S.2.1.1.] and Chaoyin-si [S.2.1.2.–III]. Although the latter appears superficially to be a perfect superscription, local religious lore and practices (like the sacrifice of seafood) revealed it to be a case of the <u>decoration</u> tactic. In the case of the Qinquan-si, the Buddhists were either unwilling or unable to properly claim the mountain's spring. After the Buddhist heyday of the Tang dynasty had waned, other groups (mostly the local administration) reaped the numinous and economic benefits of the spring. This led to the perpetual poverty of the monks residing there and the decrepit condition of the temple. In their struggle, the Buddhists used almost all possible reconfiguration tactics in the book [S.2.1.1.2.] except for those that required transregional authority — because the monks did not possess any. The monks of the Qinquan-si had been unable to create lasting and respectful connections to the local administration and were thus rarely granted sponsorship. The permanent separation between the Buddhist temple and the spring itself meant that the site remained polysemous.

In the competition between Buddhist monks and imperial officials, hydrolatry emerged victorious. The local marsh deity connected to the site has persisted well into the present day — this was in fact what led to the <u>obstructions</u> observed in the temple's current spatial image. Similar to the case of the Thiên Mụ Temple, the Buddhist community prospered as soon as governmental intervention ceased during the later twentieth century and attempted to finalize its claim. But even under these conditions, non-Buddhist elements remained. This can be seen, among other things, in an overabundance of Guanyin icons meant for all kinds of tasks. This makes the site a prime example for Guanyin Culture.

One cause for the economic suffering of the Qinquan-si monks was a similar division of commoner and elite populations as it is reflected in the history of the Lingquan-si and the Guangde-si [S.2.2.]. These two sites were connected by the same rainmaking monk and by embodying Guanyin's *bodhimanda*

(*puti daochang* 菩提道場 — the place where Guanyin became a bodhisattva) in Sichuan. Although the Guangde-si is not nearly as 'purely' Buddhist as it is framed, it is still considered to be the more orthodox one of these sister sites. The upper Lingquan-si, on the other hand, is a hydrolatric site preferably used by women. It was a result of ideology reassignment and its primary function was to fulfill the needs of the commoners. Typical traits of a Buddhist temple layout are missing. There is no Daxiongbao Hall, instead, the main hall is dedicated to a Guanyin who sits over an accessible well. The traces of previous water deities were slowly removed — a process that was only recently finalized — and what has remained was Guanyin Culture. Nevertheless, once the upper Lingquan-si's relevance increased, the Buddhist clergy gained more interest in it and duplicated it in a more accessible spot at the foot of the mountain. The lower temple shows a comparatively straightforward Buddhist layout and has since been used primarily by monks. Although it makes intense references to the Miaoshan legend, this is not meant to negotiate Buddhist beliefs with Confucianism but to reconcile them with regional hydrolatry.

Although it cannot be ascertained how strongly hydrolatry influenced the process of the Bodhisattva Guanyin's feminization, it had some significant influence and the female Guanyin thus seems to be particularly popular at Buddhist hydrolatric sites. However, Sichuanese Buddhists had already used Guanyin to occupy hydrolatric sites long before the bodhisattva was feminized in the rest of China. Guanyin therefore adopted two different roles when she was used to consolidate local water deities: she either served as a transregional modus operandi of identity preservation or as a superscription mode that efficiently 'destroyed' numerous female-centric traditions.

The aggressive tactics of Sichuanese Buddhism caused many cases of concealing and decoration. The former often ended up in merely making superscriptions more difficult. However, the sites of local cults that were decorated as Buddhist offered excellent opportunities for the application of the EAA. It was revealed that the local hydrolatry often continued under the guise of Guanyin-centric Buddhism in a similar way as it had under the Tứ Pháp system in Vietnam.

6.5 The Treatment of Hydrolatric Sites by Imperial Authorities in Sichuan

The Confucian-centric administration of China was a reliable political force. Even in areas where Confucianism did not have the interpretative privilege, the high position of literati within the imperial hierarchy still enabled them to coerce certain behaviors and to determine cultural identity from the top. In the case of Sichuan, literati changed the scene of certain myths and emphasized mutual deities (like Da Yu) to suggest a common ancestry between the Han Chinese and the Shu people. This assimilation, enforced by legal imposition and imperial propaganda, was fickle at best. In the vein of cultural imperialism, the Han Chinese thus had to demonstrate their cultural superiority by superscribing local cults. This meant that the deities themselves would be changed. Typical water deities like the dragons were put into a hierarchical system and ranked accordingly to their proximity to imperial culture. The *long*-dragons reflected the noble empire, but jiao-dragons and other varieties came to symbolize indigenous and rebellious nativized groups as allegedly 'not yet grown up' and under the need of guidance by the Confucian values of the empire. Since animal deities were no longer acceptable in the Confucian state orthodoxy, a whole category of dragonslayers was created to subdue these wild beasts. These were indigenous deities like Erlangshen 二郎神 or former humans like Li Bing [S.3.2.], Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181—234 CE) [S.1.1.1.], and Ma Yuan (Chapter V). This caused the responsibility for water control to be split and redistributed among these old and new deities.

And yet, according to Kang Wenji's research, female and animal deities of Sichuan were still doing just fine by the time of the Song dynasty. The ideology transfer of Han Chinese culture to Sichuan had mostly failed. This situation repeatedly led to rebellions, culminating in the tenth century with Sichuan's double attempt to secede, before the Song dynasty was able to unify the realm. The charismatic military leader of the Former Shu regime 大蜀 (907—925), Wang Jian 王建, competed with Emperor Song Taizu 宋太祖 (960—976) for the Heavenly Mandate [S.1.1.2.]. His attempt to show the typical virtues of an emperor, and his use of benevolence to attract the support of at least one native

group, set the precedent for coming separatist[672] rulers of Sichuan [S.1.1.]. Even though Wang Jian attempted to politically separate his realm from the Chinese Empire, the paradigm of his localized legitimacy was actually the imperialization of *Shu culture* — a reassignment of ideology that ultimately failed.

In this era, many rebellions still aimed to reestablish the realm of "Shu", but the majority of their supporters were the localized Han populations who had only a faint idea about what "Shu" was meant to be. Moreover, not one of the separatist rulers of Sichuan was a local of the province. The Sichuanese attempts at secession therefore cannot be categorized as restorations of independence, as in Vietnam. Instead, they were attempts to build 'different' Chinese empires on Sichuanese soil.

The Song government initiated a superimposing tactic on the heterogenous religious landscape of the empire which also applied to relevant water deities. Some of these were concealed in the Shanchuan 山川 category of histories and local gazetteers. Others were subjected to de-euhemerization, which was an excellent way to superscribe local cults. Nevertheless, this practice often did not go beyond renaming and suffix-attribution, which allowed some local cults to continue *because* their original identity had been concealed in the registers. The behavior of the settlers did not conform to imperial demands; this proved that the central government was unable to demonstrate cultural dominance in Sichuan. The cultural dominance that actually emerged there was that of the *localized* Han Chinese and it was one that resulted from hybridization. The Sichuanese never really had to give up their autonomy and suffered less from transregional pressures than was the provincial norm in China. Since it was not at all difficult to preserve local identity, there was no reason to particularly value it. By the thirteenth century, there was no "Shu" identity left to fight for [S.1.1.3.]. The rebellions that occurred during the Southern Song dynasty's demise rather expressed economic dissatisfaction than the desire for true secession.

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672   Separatist is used as a neutral descriptor for a person who desires to make a political territory independent of the political unity it previously belonged to, with its own government and administration. The use of this term does not reflect any judgment as to whether such an act is to be approved of or not.

There had been some success in transferring Sinitic ideology to Sichuan: it influenced civil processes, spatial structures and social values — especially regarding the gender roles in urbanized areas. However, the Song government concentrated on tightening its political control over the realm and cared less for religious policy. The religious landscape of Sichuan thus remained pluralistic. Dragon deities and female-centric indigenous traditions persisted — albeit under the vocal criticism from Confucian administrators. These imperial scholars tried different approaches to deal with the persistent heterodox deities of Sichuan.

One of these approaches pertained to the Chuanzhu, who are river controlling deities endemic to Sichuan [S.3.2.]. They originally represented the connection between human society and the environment. However, between the 10th—16th centuries, Han Chinese officials appropriated the Chuanzhu into an imperial system of spiritual administration. They inserted deified heroes of their own — chosen for their reputation in water control — into imperially approved sites. These spiritual agents of the empire had the task to bring the hydrolatric sites under control and to ensure that imperial ideology would finally reach the common population. Zhuge Liang [S.1.1.1.] was popularized as a master tactician by general histories like the *Zizi Tongjian* 資治通鑑, this caused his imperial cult to expand significantly until he was eventually transformed into a Chuanzhu. The population of southern Sichuan quickly appropriated the Wuhou-ci 武侯祠 dedicated to him as a resource for local identity. After all, his reputation as a dragonslayer implied that he was a superior water deity. Li Bing and Zhuge Liang became the most prominent imperial Chuanzhu in Sichuan — but none of them in their identities as deified historical heroes, but in their localized hydrolatric ones.

The expansion of the Chuanzhu network was accompanied by military expeditions that penetrated deep into the south. While the Chuanzhu slowly replaced the indigenous Tuzhu temples, the presence of the military was meant to prevent any interaction between the immigrants from the Huguang area (Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou) and the indigenous groups [S.3.2.2.]. However, the functions appropriated and represented by Li Bing rather encouraged the blending of hydrolatric ideas between the southern Chinese and the southern Sichuanese. This helped to revitalize local identity and transformed

the imperial Chuanzhu from a tool of superscription into one for the preservation of local culture. The Chuanzhu system is proof that the imperial government had recognized hydrolatric sites as important points of inter-ethnic identity negotiation and had tactically tried to superscribe them. This was a great advancement compared to the use of brute force in previous centuries.

By the Ming dynasty, the most persistent opponent of the central government was the Sichuanese magnate gentry. Although the magnates' main motivation was economic, this had far greater consequences than the occasional rebellions [S.1.2.]. The adherence to Confucian norms in Sichuan relied on the opportunism of underpaid and ostracized civil officials. They were unable to compete with the magnates' affluence which enabled them to appropriate hydrolatric sites much more effectively than these officials ever could. The magnates had already begun to establish their own villages in earlier centuries which in the long term contributed to the development of anti-imperial communities. Particularly the villages in southern Sichuan tended to collaborate with indigenous groups. This encouraged the formation of hybridized traditions with reliance on ancient Shu lore, which helped to localize Sinitic values. All of this contributed to the revitalization of endemic cults during the government's Chuanzhu campaigns.

The conquest of Sichuan had become a long-established trait of future emperors, or better said: those who controlled Sichuan were prone to declaring themselves emperor. And yet, the late imperial dynasties had lost interest in using this province as an imperial reservoir — possibly because their centers of powers were located farther towards the east. Their competitors quickly took advantage of that. However, although the emperors of Sichuan did their best to fulfill the necessary imperial qualities, they generally failed at the expansion of the realm. This was either due to military incompetence, the lack of a unifying ideology or — like in the case of Zhang Xianzhong [S.3.1.] — due to mere unwillingness. Zhang never intended to unite the empire and preferred to use Sichuan's nonconforming religion as a mark of distinction. This was a mutual sentiment and his postmortem elevation to the incarnation of a local god also emphasized Sichuan's cultural distinctness from the Central Plains. By the Qing dynasty, though, Sichuan was left without any unifying ideology and without any military leaders capable of mobilizing the locals enough to prevail

against the new rulers of China. The government-led resettlement programs made the population of the province more diverse than ever before and Shu culture had already become mostly forgotten. The pluralization of late imperial Sichuan somewhat resembled that of the Vietnamese south, but there were no sufficient networks or ambitions left to create similar regionalisms [S.1.2.]. Although Sichuan did not become any less rebellious, the lack of an identifiable Sichuanese identity rendered any further attempt to secede futile.

Negotiating the Empire in the Deep South

The Qing government had the great desire to expand westwards, but such an endeavor required the streamlining of Sichuan and thus produced new attempts at its cultural assimilation [S.3.1.]. The case of the Mahu area [S.3.3.] demonstrates the multi-step process of integrating local hydrolatric sites into the networks of competing transregional religions and the subsequent governmental reinterpretation of these sites.

According to the available historical evidence, Daoism was the first transregional group in Mahu to incorporate the indigenous snake veneration. After Daoists superscribed hydrolatric sites as Thunder Grottoes [S.3.3.1.], dragon representations started to appear in these sites — first by the reference to spiritual hierarchies, then by exorcism. Since the central state's influence was too weak to affect the religious landscape significantly, this led to an increasing presence of localized Buddhism. The existence of local and Daoist competition encouraged the Buddhists to occupy hydrolatric sites even if their entities had no chance of gaining more than secondary relevance. Although Buddhism may have been present at the Hailong-si since the eleventh century, the first mentions of Buddhist traits within the site only date to 1589. Although spatial and descriptive evidence points towards the multilocal nature of the site, maps from the nineteenth century presented the temple as of Buddhist appearance.

In the contemporary Hailong-si, there are no traces of Buddhism until the central axis culminates in a Pingjing Guanyin 平井觀音 [S.3.3.6.], who is positioned directly opposite to an intensively interacted with basin/well that is associated with rain and environmental fertility. This Guanyin serves in name and arrangement as a container for — and possibly a former competitor to — a local water deity. Its presence suggests that there was likely at least some degree

of cohabitation and subsequent hybridization between the different religions active within the site. However, the isolated location of the Hailong-si made communication with Buddhist centers unreliable, so there was no corrective to the local practices or to their deviating beliefs regarding Guanyin. Thus, the site has no Daxiongbao Hall. If there ever was one, it likely contained an amalgamated Guanyin because the site's focus was always on freshwater and the dragon horses, snakes and dragons associated with it. The Hailong-si therefore constitutes an outlier of Guanyin Culture in an area that was culturally dominated by localized Daoism. Although the modern steles at the site [S.3.3.4.] may suggest that the local Yi population had some interest in Buddhism and that this religion was utilized as a demarcation against governmental interventions, the Buddhism presented in the Hailong-si is not related to Yi Buddhism at all. It is thus not surprising that the more recent Buddhist steles at the site seek governmental patronage.

The Hailong-si is located on an island and the first known imperial intervention there was the placement of a Zhuge Liang shrine during the Yuan dynasty (1279—1368) [S.3.3.5.]. However, this did not lead to any noticeable ideology transfer [S.3.3.2.].

The Ming government used aggressive political measures paired with specifically tailored legends which were meant to convince the locals of the Ming dynasty's legitimate political *and* religious authority. However, the fact that the imperial industry of *nanmu* 楠木 harvesting relied on water for the transport of the wood worked to the detriment of this endeavor. It meant that water deities were too important to be concealed [S.3.3.3.], a fact that had also led to the peak in southern Chuanzhu temple building at the end of the Ming dynasty [S.3.2.2.]. This allowed the Yi to challenge the imperial narrative by demonstrating that their rainmaking skills were superior because nature itself allegedly favored them.

The late Qing dynasty finally achieved political dominance over southern Sichuan, but its ideology still did not permeate the area. It was ultimately the presence of Western colonial forces and the increasingly globalizing world that put the Qing government under intense pressure to redefine what 'Chineseness' actually entailed [S.3.1.]. Convinced that unity meant strength, the Qing attempted new governmental policies to integrate the various indigenous groups

into 'the Chinese.' To this end, they specifically targeted sites of shared heritage for spatial reconfiguration with the goal to visually strengthen the empire's representation — and thus its control — in peripheral and ambivalent areas.

The Hailong-si was meant to become one of these sites, it was to symbolize the unity between Han and Yi [S.3.3.4.]. However, it turned out that the local Yi were not involved with this temple at all. It was the Han Chinese who pushed this unity narrative and who even inserted all of the Yi traces into the site, including Meng Huo. The alleged first mention of Meng Huo's presence within the temple is attributed to 1589, when massive Yi rebellions caused the spatial reconfiguration of the site. The new spatial image of the site was primarily meant to stabilize the Ming dynasty's political dominance by alleviating resentments in the shape of some concessions to Yi culture. It remains unclear if there ever was a Meng Huo cult in Mahu before the late imperial era introduced it. This means that the Hailong-si is a rare example of a government using the decoration tactic to evoke the impression that the imperial ideology was more accepted than it actually was [S.3.3.5.].

In the multilocal arrangement of the site, the Meng Huo icon assumed a polysemous identity. Since his entire prestige relied on the connection to Zhuge Liang, the Han Chinese thus saw in him a good option to pacify the Yi. But over time, Meng Huo adopted hydrolatric traits and assumed the position of a territorial deity: he instead became a resource for Yi identity. Contemporary local lore connects the 1589 refoundation of the temple with a dream revelation that designated the Hailong-si as a site to unite the Han and Yi [S.3.3.6.–I.]. Furthermore, the narrative of a transregional Zhuge Liang and a territorial Meng Huo was updated for contemporary audiences by pairing the Yi man Meng Huo with the fictional Han woman Zhurong Furen from the *Sanguo Yanyi*. Both narratives constitute examples of suggesting, they endanger Yi identity because they presume the subjugation of the Yi to Han Chinese culture. Even the position of Zhurong Furen as the wife of the liaison implies this — although she is meant to be Han Chinese, she is also the daughter of a fire deity and fire held the highest venerated position[673] in Yi culture.

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673   Cf. Zheng Xiaoyuan 2015, p. 22.

The three different versions of a local legend about an indigo snake reflect the different power dynamics that affected the Hailong-si over time [S.3.3.6.–II.]. In the narrative of Shop Keeper, the temple is built to honor a compassionate turtle who symbolizes Buddhism. Yang Qingzhen's narrative sees the temple built in honor of a snake-turned-dragon, who brings fertility to the area out of benevolence — which may be a Buddhist or governmental trait — and is supported by the turtle, who symbolizes a local group. The narrative of the public poster in the front court, though, sees the temple built in honor of Meng Huo. He receives all the recognition for the dragon's feat to bring water to the area. In this version, Meng Huo serves as a facilitator of Han Chinese dominance 'for the sake' of the locals. The dragon — the symbol of the Chinese Empire — seems to be genuinely benevolent while the turtle is depicted as wrongfully mistrustful. Due to this 'lack in character', the turtle is later forced to serve the dragon — a narrative that reinforces the subjugation of the Yi under "Chineseness." The Mahu area provides an example for political dominance without cultural supremacy. The government consciously applied spatial reconfiguration tactics to control the territory of an ethnic minority in order to reserve the military funds it needed for the northwest. In an attempt to completely assimilate the Mahu area, reconfigurations of media served to replace the Yi's identity with the imperial interpretation of it [S.3.3.6.–III].

Under Chinese political dominance, there were only few options left for the Yi to protect their identity. The empire was not going anywhere, so acculturation was only a question of time. However, the contemporary site suggests that this process is not yet complete and is still ongoing. The modern framing of the Hailong-si site directly derives the aims and methods of Qing ethnopolitics. Their actual failure is evidenced by the low religious activity at the site despite the massive governmental advertisement campaigns. The case of the Hailong-si demonstrates the effects of a manipulated Social-Experiential Sphere meant to reinforce a normative narrative whose effect is inhibited by the social differences between the Han and Yi. This is representative for the fate of many southern Sichuanese sites with similarly artificially reinforced narratives. I conclude that the treatment of the Yi creates a dissonance with the spatially suggested narrative of Han and Yi unity and that this narrative will not be convincing as long as this discrimination against the Yi continues.

6.6　The Superscription Mode of Guanyin Culture

Despite the differences between the sites, eras and circumstances treated in the case study clusters, it becomes evident that the Bodhisattva Guanyin was intensively connected to hydrolatric sites. Guanyin had been commonly used to superscribe indigenous water deities but also adopted so many traits of them that he was at times difficult to distinguish from them. This points towards a coping trend that utilized the employment of Guanyin in superscription agendas to protect local identity, which is summed up as 'Guanyin Culture' [S.2.2.]. How that worked requires a look into the development of Guanyin within China.

From the very beginning, the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara has been extremely versatile. He could take various forms that were relevant to different strata of society. He also protected clerical as well as secular travelers — especially if they traveled by water. These traits enabled the bodhisattva to absorb, merge and replace indigenous water deities in acts of consolidation and this made him an important factor for the spread of northern Buddhism. As this happened in progressively standardized ways, the appearance of Avalokiteśvara's variants soon constituted their own superscription mode. This made him attractive for other ideologies as well. After Buddhism had entered the Chinese Empire, the Chinese elites did not accept it without friction. They viewed Buddhist ideology as potentially harmful because it came from another culture. Soon, both sides of this dispute began to look for ways to mitigate the foreign cultural elements of Buddhism. The adjustments made on Avalokiteśvara to turn him into Guanyin eventually produced a Guanyin belief system with unique cultural characteristics, specialized adjustment systems and structures.[674] One step towards the sinicization of Buddhism had been to localize Avalokiteśvara in China by reinterpreting him as the filial Chinese princess Miaoshan [S.2.2.]; [S.2.1.1.2.]. This ultimately led to his feminization in iconography and lore. However, the much greater consequence of his localization was that the Guanyin superscription mode would no longer be reserved to Buddhist goals.

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674　Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 172.

Initially, Guanyin was meant to show that Buddhism was superior to the local pantheon, which adhered to the Buddhist objectives of mission. The imperial authorities supported the Buddhist superscriptions of hydrolatric sites because Guanyin was associated with positive traits and the official narratives attached to him were free of scandals. Moreover, the officials knew at least somewhat better how the structures of Buddhism worked than those of the manifold local cults that were difficult to control and repeatedly served as reservoirs for subversion and rebellion. This continued even after Guanyin was feminized. The Buddhists viewed Guanyin's feminization as a method of *upāya,* meant to make people understand Buddhism more easily, i.e., in the Buddhist weltanschauung, he was 'not really' female. Guanyin's feminization was still a good measure to offer a point of identification to Chinese laywomen[675] — but it also served as one for their goddesses.

By the eleventh century, governmental elites increasingly perceived the continued worship of both animalistic and female deities, particularly on the hands of hydrolatric cults, as a violation of social morality. To the imperial authorities, a not 'really' female entity was still much more acceptable than a naturally female one. The imperial state therefore preferred to support a transregional system that helped control local religious sites — especially in the peripheries. They would rather deal with the known entity of Guanyin than with indigenous deities — even though the rising number of localized Guanyins were not exactly "authentic" either. Similar to the expansion of the Chinese Empire, where nominal recognition of its authority was often enough to appease the imperial authorities, Buddhist authorities were also often content with the centralization of Guanyin in local and regional contexts, even if the local practices were considered deviant.

At the end of the Song dynasty, it was the continued prevalence of the loathed animalistic and female water deities of Sichuan that led the imperial government to continuously encourage the Buddhist expansion despite the rising ideological conflicts between officials and monks within the province. During the Ming dynasty, this caused one of the largest Buddhist expansions in Sichuan. The numerous sites of (female) dragons were first consolidated

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675   Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 294.

into dragon marshes and then superscribed by Guanyin as a means to 'tame' the dragons [S.1.2.].

The indigenous cults of China — summarized as popular religions — were comparatively fragile. They were often limited to one or a few temples kept by a village community or village network. They had no reliable institutions, professional priests or scriptural lore. Shamans, mediums and religious specialists of other religions could freely visit such temples to offer their services. The upkeep of a site was a community effort that officially relied on the aid of the local village head or magistrate, but it was usually in the hands of influential families and merchants. The lore of the venerated deities was passed down orally and could therefore change drastically from generation to generation, between villages within the community network, or the areas tangentially connected to them.

Local religions rarely possessed land of their own — the deities would reveal their desire for titles and plaques in dreams, but they seldom asked for land. Without the ownership of independent land, their sites and the religious communities behind them were incapable of creating a reliable source of income. Moreover, although local cults depended on donations, they were not exempted from taxes like Buddhism was.

When deities failed to perform a miracle, donations would stop and the site could no longer be kept in a good condition. However, the site's condition was seen as directly affecting the deity's efficacy. Conversely, successful and efficacious deities had magnificent temples that made them appear even more powerful.[676] But the deity of a decrepit site would not be considered powerful enough to be worshiped. The *Zhili Mianzhouzhi* of 1813 therefore contains multiple mentions of hydrolatric sites that were either in the process of being forgotten — suffering want behind profane locations — or were known only by their vestigial names and already replaced by shops and inns.[677] If new gods were able to solve a persistent local problem, they easily occupied the site of

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676   Cf. Hansen 1990, pp. 60–61.

677   For example, in ZLMZZ 1813, 6:13b, there is a dragon grotto which is still in use behind a more famous family inn; in 27:14b, a famous spring was replaced by a store; in 27:17a, a Dragon King Temple that was used until the Qianlong era had been remodeled into an inn.

the old deity.[678] Hence, a cult could vanish in the beat of a moment. Guanyin, coming from a transregional, organized religion, had the advantage that his efficacy was hard to challenge because monks and nuns could vouch for it and shared tales of his miracles across time and regions. Indigenous deities could hardly compete with that and if their local community lost faith, they were simply replaced.

What made Guanyin that efficient in replacing the indigenous water deities? It was not only his efficacy and reliability, but also his lore and iconography. Four Buddhist traditions led to the association of Guanyin with water control:

1. The *Lotus Sutra* depicts Guanyin as a general reliever from calamity. The spread of Tantric concepts during the Tang dynasty intensified this notion. They established the idea of personified Dabei 大悲 ("Great Compassion") and the iconographies of the multi-headed and multi-armed Guanyin which expressed his ubiquitous all-saving presence. This all-covering power made Guanyin relevant beyond the limits of Buddhist belief.[679]

2. The *Pusa Benxing Jing* 菩薩本行經, translated around 420 CE TPQ already suggested praying to Guanyin for rain. It describes him as bringing rain during a famine when he was a pratyekabuddha.[680]

3. Guanyin could allegedly heal any disease. In the Song dynasty, his reputation as a healer, savior from calamity and rainbringer connected him to holy water and sacred dew.[681] Bhaisajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha, had been a great competitor of Guanyin in regard to popularity among the Chinese. However, both entities joined in one dynamical point as healers and relievers of suffering and have often been venerated together ever since.[682]

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678   Cf. Hansen 1990, p. 72.

679   Cf. von Glahn 2004, p. 147.

680   Someone who has found enlightenment without teaching and who does not teach. Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 173.

681   Cf. von Glahn 2004, p. 148.

682   Cf. Reid 1997, pp. 31–33.

4. According to popular Buddhist lore, Guanyin once wanted to pros-
   elytize the King of Nagas (in China: Dragon King) — and succeeded
   in doing so with his daughter. The Dragon Girl became Guanyin's
   common attendant and he became a ruler of dragons, which enabled
   Guanyin to turn into one.[683] These traits made Guanyin a convincing
   alternative to fulfill the water control needs of the local population.
   However, countless <u>amalgamations</u> and <u>incorporations</u> took place
   in the process of superscription that made Guanyin progressively
   absorb the iconographic traits of indigenous water deities, thereby
   visually aligning to them. This made him even more into a capa-
   ble substitute for the local water deities whose roles he took on.
   This process led to a hybridization that made Guanyin look more
   and more feminine, which was likely initiated by the White Robed
   Guanyin (*Baiyi Guanyin* 白衣觀音) of Hangzhou. She had been mod-
   eled on local fertility goddesses[684] and her iconography seems to
   be closely linked to the bodhisattva's feminization during the early
   Tang dynasty. One of the oldest female Guanyin images was found
   at the Shifo-si (at Guangde-si) in Suining [S.2.2.]. Moreover, the
   Legend of Miaoshan[685] that depicted Guanyin as a Chinese princess
   relates that she chose the Chinese island Putuoshan as her residence.
   Therefore, her cult at Putuoshan was very interested in intensifying
   the usage of feminine Guanyin images.[686] All of this merely facili-
   tated Guanyin's identification with indigenous water goddesses and
   accelerated both his Sinicization and superscription processes.

Various specialized water-associated iconographies of Guanyin had emerged
by the time of the Song dynasty. Among them were non-Buddhist Guanyin

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683   Cf. Eichenbaum Karetzky 2004, p. 47, 83.

684   More on this in: Idema, Wilt L. *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety. Two Precious Scroll Nar-
      ratives of Guanyin and her Acolytes.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

685   Cf. Dudbridge 1978 and his other publications on the matter.

686   Cf. von Glahn 2004, p. 150.

variants like Guanyin Niangniang 觀音娘娘 or Guanyin Mu 觀音母.[687] Moreover, Buddhist and Buddhisized sites produced Guanyin iconographies that were directly derived from the local lore of water deities,[688] even if these deities continued to exist on their own.[689] Some of these were negotiated with legends, tales and personalities from Buddhist lore, but for the Chinese population they were polysemous. Some such iconographies were variants of Nanhai Guanyin, like the Guanyin Riding on a Fish (or Dragon) or Guanyin Riding a Boat (or Leaf) Across the Sea. Others were Guanyin with a Fish Basket (*Yulan Guanyin* 魚籃觀音) or in a Mussel (*Geli Guanyin* 蛤蜊觀音). Although most of these had previously been dated to the Yuan and Ming dynasties,[690] they were already known during the Tang dynasty.[691]

Moreover, some indigenous goddesses were reinterpreted as the incarnations of various bodhisattvas,[692] until they all eventually ended up as incarnations of Guanyin because her female appearance made that more comprehensible.

Other aquatic iconographies had no such connections, they were true translations from indigenous lore. The Shuimu Guanyin 水母觀音 is one of them. She became more common during the Ming dynasty, when the depiction of Guanyin as an older woman became more popular and the Buddhist superscription of indigenous sites intensified again. In earlier stories, Guanyin used to fight against local Water Mothers and turned them into waterlocked deities (see Chapter V). But in later ones, she takes on the role of the Shuimu as she bestows popular religious characters like Shuimu Niangniang with their magical gadgets. In relation to these two types of Chinese water goddesses — and likely closer related to the older Shuimu type — Guanyin adopted the iconography of sitting on top of a spring, like she was once depicted at the Bishui-si [S.2.1.2.–I.]

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687   Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 176.

688   Cf. Reid 1997, p. 221.

689   Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 447 and Eichenbaum Karetzky 2004, p. 33.

690   Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, pp. 192, 262–65.

691   Cf. Reid 1997, p. 144.

692   Cf. Chou Yi-liang 1945, pp. 328–29.

and other places of Mianyang.[693] This is certainly an iconography with extremely strong hydrolatric associations, yet only a few non-Guanyin variants of it have survived. One of them is found at the Jin Shrine 晉祠 of Taiyuan 太原 and was extensively studied by Tracy Miller.[694] The manifold iconographies of Guanyin were related to an endless list of functions. These caused the Guanyin statues within her sites to multiply to cover each and every request a believer might have. Guanyin has since been considered extremely potent and her cult rose to a high position among the Chinese religions. She became a savioress who granted wishes, relief, and salvation. A deity whose omnipotence reminds one of the God of monotheistic religions who had also either absorbed or annihilated his competition. Guanyin had become a transregional phenomenon all of her own.

Guanyin's popularity as a universal goddess enabled her to cross religious limits and become almost independent of Buddhism. Aside from also appearing in popular and Daoist sites, there are entire temples dedicated to Guanyin that are not necessarily Buddhist.

In a standard layout of a Buddhist temple, Guanyin should be a supporting character who appears in secondary halls or behind the main hall's triad, either in the same or in a separate building. But Jordan Paper already has pointed out that there are Chinese temples where Guanyin is placed directly behind the screen of the main hall's triad and if that is the case, she will often be of the same size as the Buddha triad — thus contesting their centrality.[695]

However, those temples that constitute Guanyin Culture have chosen Guanyin as the main goddess and do not include a Buddha triad at all. Hence, they do not need a Daxiongbao Hall. Although some of these temples also exist elsewhere in China (e.g., the Fayun-si 法雨寺 at Putuoshan), most of them are found in Sichuan. However, due to the growing imperialization and the imperial patronage of Buddhism during the Ming dynasty, many of these Sichuanese temples were equipped with secondary Daxiongbao Halls. It is thus necessary to specify that a typical trait for Guanyin Culture Temples is a Guanyin main hall combined with the lack of an *original* Daxiongbao Hall.

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693 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:14a–b and 27:14b.

694 Cf. Miller 2007.

695 Cf. Paper 1990, p. 37.

[Img. 6] An example for the observable secondary character of later Daoxiongbao halls due to their placement[696]

The nudging politics of the Ming and Qing governments (and those of the Vietnamese Nguyễn dynasty as well) sought to reduce the huge number of local religions in favor of a much smaller number of imperially sanctioned and standardized deities. However, this kind of transregional pressure did more than just causing the shrinkage of the general number of cults practiced, continued and transmitted.[697] It also encouraged the intensified defensive employment of decoration and concealment tactics. With a patient employment of the Experiential Architecture Analysis, it is still possible to find sites that employed the decoration tactic because this method uses material and structural evidence to reveal information that is not mentioned in texts. The analyses of the case study clusters, especially of the numinous spring sites [S.2.], Mahu [S.3.3.] and Thiên Mụ [V.6.3.], demonstrate how the diligent contextualizing of a site's framing, its representative content and its placement within internal hierarchies, peels away layers of reconfiguration and reinterpretation. This gives the researcher a more accurate glimpse into the historical dynamics of a sacred site's past.

In conclusion, the superscription mode of the female, popularized, hydrolatric Guanyin was so effective in China that it strongly impacts our knowledge about female-centric cults prior to the Song dynasty.[698] We do know that there were female deities in antiquity,[699] but if no ancient texts were left, and no ancient practices survived even in remote areas, then the lore concealed by variants of Guanyin was easily forgotten. The perilous times of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries hence led to many finalized superscriptions of concealed goddesses. However, the lore and function of the superscribed goddesses often stuck to Guanyin and caused her local variants to deviate from mainstream Chinese Buddhism. Sometimes, these deviations formed their own religious category — like the Guanyin Culture that spread in Sichuan, along the Chinese coasts and across Southeast Asia.

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697   Cf. Hinsch 2021, p. 78.

698   Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 413.

699   Cf. Hinsch 2021, p. 79.

Guanyin Culture Beyond China

The situation of Avalokiteśvara's gender development and integrative role in Southeast Asia was different from that in China. The veneration of Avalokiteśvara was widespread throughout the region and, according to Peter Skilling, even represented the vast majority of bodhisattva images.[700] But in most Southeast Asian countries outside Vietnam and Cambodia, Avalokiteśvara remained principally male. Although there are some female depictions of the bodhisattva — due to hybrid imaginations related to various patron deities of dynasties and individual rulers[701] — it is not exactly known when the feminized version of the bodhisattva was conceptualized. It seems that many female versions are variants of Guanyin that emerged from Chinese migrant communities during the past few centuries. These are often addressed as 'goddess' or 'Mother Guanyin' in the pertaining languages.

For Vietnam, the research on Avalokiteśvara's female version Quan Âm has been rarely more than superficial. Kiều Thị Vân Anh relates that, similar to the Chinese situation, his soteriology — the immediate relief from disaster and despair — was especially appealing to the people and his numerous forms made it easy to negotiate indigenous with Buddhist ideas. The Buddhist missionaries in Vietnam hence preferred him for the propagation of Buddhism. They also avoided the complex concepts of Buddhist theory and instead portrayed Quan Âm as a miraculous wish-granter. They claimed that, in contrast to indigenous deities, Quan Âm never became angry and never judged or condemned people. This provided the basis for his progressive identification with the benevolent and motherly aspects that indigenous goddesses could hold and very soon, childlessness became the main 'suffering' that Quan Âm was meant to relieve. Being the Giver of Children thus became the most important trait of Quan Âm's female form.[702] However, for much of the early era, we do not know how Quan Âm was most commonly depicted or conceptualized. After all, the first case study cluster [V.1.] illustrated that at least until the sixteenth century,

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700   Cf. Skilling 2011, p. 365.

701   Cf. Guy 2009, pp. 144–145.

702   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 35, 40, 46–48, 51.

Vietnamese Buddhists did have alternative options to integrate indigenous water deities and that there was no urgency to feminize Quan Âm.

The majority of textual materials concerning Quan Âm — mostly textualizations of folk stories or descriptions of rituals — were collected in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[703] Therefore, some scholars[704] assume that Quan Âm did not become female before the sixteenth century, when the Miaoshan legend — mainly spread by *baojuan* 寶卷 ['precious scrolls'] literature[705] — arrived (quite late) in Vietnam. Buddhists and Confucians alike enjoyed the Miaoshan baojuan literature, even more so than in China, and soon the stories spread through all social strata. These became an integral part of Việt culture.[706]

However, the assumption of a late imperial feminization of Quan Âm is challenged by the biography of the Empress Mother Ỷ Lan 倚蘭 (1044—1117). This historical person held a special position in Vietnamese history because she was not only a commoner who became the imperial consort, but also effectively reigned for forty years. Accordingly, she was distinguished from the other imperial wives because she did not only cultivate her beauty, she also had a sharp mind and an interest in studying. Ỷ Lan was from Bắc Ninh, the old Buddhist center of northern Vietnam and she reigned in the heyday of the government's use of Buddhism for legitimation. The person who helped her to the throne was no other than Lý Thường Kiệt [V.2.]. When she ruled over Đại Việt in her son's place, she invested into building temples; discussed public education matters with the monks, and supported social welfare. She was socially active, dismissed corrupt officials, and gave relief to the needy while visiting poor and troubled areas in person. The people revered her for this and Ỷ Lan

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703   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 33.

704   As claimed by Berezkin, Rostislav and Nguyễn Tô Lan 2016, p. 554.

705   See Overmyer, Daniel L. *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999.

706   Cf. Berezkin, Rostislav and Nguyễn Tô Lan 2018, pp. 132–33.

became the only known historical person of Vietnam who was considered a bodhisattva[707] — the incarnation of Quan Âm.

If Quan Âm had actually turned female as late as the sixteenth century, it would have been very curious that empresses, queens and princesses of the Lý and Trần dynasties were more involved with Quan Âm than their male peers were. There must have been at least some earlier ideas about Quan Âm as being non-male or even female. It is possible that such ideas were restricted to the court, where Chinese literature would have been much more readily available and where Chinese descriptions and depictions were more likely to circulate than among the commoners. Tạ Chí Đại Trường was convinced that Vietnam knew of the female Quan Âm as early as the eleventh century, even if it may not have been the most common representation of the bodhisattva. He cites that Quan Âm was the only bodhisattva who received titles uniquely shared with indigenous goddesses and added that the female version may have originated between the ninth to tenth century in the southern Buddhist temple complex of Đồng Dương (today in Quảng Nam Province). There, Quan Âm was depicted as a woman and venerated by a separate female cult. With a large temporal gap, Tạ Chí Đại Trường also relates events from 1437: an admiral summoned mediums and "witches" for expensive rituals to Quan Âm in order to make the emperor fall in love with his daughter.[708] Such matters were usually delegated to goddesses, not to male bodhisattvas, and Buddhist nuns would not have been called 'witches'. Furthermore, when the female-centric Đạo Mẫu religion developed, some groups chose Guanyin as the head of their pantheon. These are all some hints that the feminized Quan Âm existed before the sixteenth century. Even so, she was either not a widespread phenomenon or the idea of a female Quan Âm did not commonly translate to the material representation in temples.

The era of separation between Đàng Ngoài and Đàng Trong led to two different ideas of Quan Âm. In the north, the incorporation of female nature deities continued to solidify the Giver of Children type of Quan Âm. In the south, Quan Âm became central to female disciples who prayed to be reborn

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707   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 42–44.

708   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 196–97.

in a male body.[709] Refugees and merchants from China influenced the iconography of the female Quan Âm even more and due to this, she appears in some of the same distinct ways as in China,[710] including her aquatic traits.

The Mạc dynasty (1527—1677), which had also sponsored Liễu Hạnh [V.4.3.3.], may have caused the greatest turn in Quan Âm's perception. The Mạc came from a lineage of seafaring people and thus were aware of the female Guanyin of Putuoshan. Therefore, when they chose Quan Âm as the protector of their dynasty, it was as a patro*ness*. They introduced Nam Hải Quan Âm to Vietnam and consequentially, the Lâm Tế Thiền master Chân Nguyên (1647—1726) wrote the Nôm epic poem *Nam Hải Quan Âm Phật Sự Tích Ca* 南海觀音佛事跡歌,[711] one of the earliest Miaoshan variants that spread in Vietnam. It simultaneously contributed to distinguish the Vietnamese from the Chinese tradition and to bring Quan Âm's bodhimanda to Vietnam by declaring that the Princess had not been spirited away to the island Putuoshan, but farther south to Vietnam.

This illustrated that Quan Âm had already turned female when the great expansion of the Thiên Mụ Temple took place not many years later, in 1715 — finishing an endeavor that had started around 1695 [V.6.3.2.]. This supports my impression that the very matronly statue inside the Quan Âm Hall was used as a spiritual container for Thiên Mụ.

Soon, the female Quan Âm was used for the purposes of both Buddhist and imperial expansion. During the southern advance, she again incorporated various water deities and new, additional aquatic iconographies, like the Guanyin riding on a dragon across the sea.[712]

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709   See: Nguyễn Thi Hoa "*Yuenan Guanshiyin Pusa Xinyang Zhi Yanjiu* 越南观世音菩萨信仰之研究 ['Research on Avalokiteśvara Belief in Vietnam']". Dissertation. Fujian Normal University, 2016. pp. 27–60. This also contains an iconographical study of female Quan Âm icons beginning in the sixteenth century.

710   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 40.

711   Chân Nguyên. *Nam Hải Quan Âm Phật Sự Tích Ca* 南海觀音佛事跡歌 [17th c.]. Via Yale Digital Collections, Maurice Durand Papers: Series II: Han Nom texts with Vietnamese. Created 1945 based on Han-Nôm Archive edition AB.224. https://hdl.handle.net/10079/digcoll/39210.

712   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 85 and Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 197.

In the separated realms of Vietnam, the great sea goddesses were cherished as a balance against the pressures of the Confucian masculinization of the commoner sphere, and now Quan Âm had become one of them. However, her efficacy was not limited to the coasts — she had become a symbol of fertility beyond the divine bestowal of sons, so various spring festivals were dedicated to her. Women made pilgrimages to the Quan Âm-centric temples of Hanoi. Many of these had been built over grottoes, the women would hit the stalactites or rocks resembling a child to receive the bodhisattva's grace.[713]

A contrasting movement sexualized Quan Âm's image of the princess-like, East Asian woman and suggested that the child usually held by the Child-Giving Quan Âm was actually her own.[714] Such ideas may have been evoked by a different iconography transmitted from China, the Fish Basket Guanyin — enhanced by the lore of Malangfu Guanyin 馬郎婦觀音.[715] These were ambiguous incarnations that, although seemingly maritime, actually originated in the central provinces of China. These incarnations were associated with marriage but also with prostitution just as the symbols of fish and basket were connected to sexuality. The related narratives thus featured a nonconformist protagonist who was only posthumously revealed to be (or reinterpreted as) a bodhisattva.

Although the Buddhist interpretation claims that the fish and basket are meant to symbolize the *suppression* of sexuality, it also says that Guanyin used the basket to control the weather or the abundance of fish.[716] It is very likely that her water control powers — rather than her (questionable) chastity — contributed to her popularity among the Vietnamese, who customarily lived along rivers and coasts. On the other hand, the lore of Fish Basket Quan Âm was also quite comparable to another heterodox goddess who became popular in the same time frame. In regard to sexuality, water control and moral

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713   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 86.

714   Cf. Reid 1997, p. 231.

715   Malangfu is a legend based on a custom of the southwestern indigenous groups of China, which was strongly abstracted for the Guanyin legend. See: Wu Tianming 吳天明. "Miao Yao Xianmin de 'Malangfu' Xianxiang 苗瑶先民的 '马郎妇' 现象 ['The Figure of 'Malangfu' in the Ancestors of the Miao and Yao People']". *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities* 24, no. 6 (2002): 93–96.

716   Cf. Reid 1997, pp. 144–47, 151–52.

ambiguity, some similarities to Liễu Hạnh are indubitable [V.4.3.3.]. Although Liễu Hạnh was, as far as we know, not derived from Quan Âm lore, both may have absorbed some of the same — or very similar — indigenous cults.

The association of Quan Âm with water deities peaked when the government started to use Quan Âm to consolidate the Cham goddesses. Although the Cham had known their own Avalokiteśvara since the sixth century,[717] and also occasionally venerated him as an individual deity, it was exclusively the female Quan Âm who was put to the task of integrating the Cham. Among the propagated narratives was one attributed to Central Vietnamese fishermen who allegedly reported about how Quan Âm saved the founder of the Nguyễn dynasty — Emperor Gia Long 嘉隆 (1762—1820). His ship was sinking and Quan Âm transformed her dress into a giant whale that took the emperor to safety. As a sign of gratitude, the whale was granted an imperial title.[718] The Bodhisattva Quan Âm would not have needed a whale for a rescue that she could have carried out herself. The function of this narrative was to integrate the centuries old cult of Cham-Việt whale deities into the narrative of Quan Âm as a patron deity of the seafaring people. Although Quan Âm was intended to serve as a vehicle for orthodoxy here, this narrative enabled the whale deities to qualify for government recognition and protected them from persecution. This demonstrates how the Vietnamese modus operandi for superscriptions via Quan Âm was considerably less aggressive than in China and provided more options for incorporations and decorations that ensured the survival of local religions.

In Sichuan, many occurrences of Guanyin can either be clearly related to primary water goddesses or even categorized as such. This was not the case for Quan Âm for most of Vietnamese history. However, in the course of the Later Lê dynasty, the Tứ Pháp system proved to be unable to spread further to the south and the Thiên Y A Na cult was also unable to successfully establish itself in the north. The established ways to occupy and integrate hydrolatric

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717 See: Schweyer, Anne-Valérie. "Buddhism in Čampā". *Moussons* 13–14 (2009): 309–337. Especially page 311.

718 Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 103. The locals of the fishing and farming occupations contested the same whale deity.

sites into transregional ideologies and their networks hence failed. That created an integrative gap in a time when the rising Confucianization of society saw water cults as increasingly problematic, as something dangerous that needed to be contained.

In the last two centuries of imperial Vietnam, the female Quan Âm filled this gap and helped to spread imperial ideology throughout the entire realm. By now she had taken on so many hydrolatric aspects that she could serve as a consolidating stand-in for water deities. The demise of the older, mediating systems of transcultural religious integration also enabled the newer, female and hydrolatric Quan Âm to spread into sites previously reconfigured by them. However, Quan Âm did not cause very aggressive reconfiguration events in the sites of the affected water deities, which undercut any resistance to her replacement of the local deities. Quan Âm was also not always able to successfully superscribe them but showed a stronger visual presence than her Chinese counterpart. While her icons were continuously interpreted as polysemous, they often showed no more great signs of amalgamations. Quan Âm had thus become a successful container for indigenous water goddesses and accordingly provided the grounds for finalized superscriptions — whenever the indigenous aspects of the deity were lost.

The comparatively sudden spread of Quan Âm was the result of a power shift from the Buddhist clergy to laity. In the very late imperial era, Vietnamese Buddhism became more pluralistic and faced a new wave of hybridization with local deities [V.3.3.1.]. Similar developments took place in other Southeast Asian countries. During the nineteenth century, this process culminated in the development of Vegetarian Halls *zhaitang* 齋堂 and Guanyin Halls *Guanyin-tang* 觀音堂.[719] These sites were once officially aligned to Thiền Buddhism and allegedly conceived as gender neutral places where men and women could pray together. However, the main altars of these halls — and later the main halls of these sites — were dedicated to Guanyin. Other entities venerated there were also exclusively female.[720] Modern Vegetarian Halls are inherently multilocal

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719 Cf. Reid 1997, pp. 231–32.

720 Vegetarian Halls outside Southeast Asia may present different ensembles. Even then, the materials cited and described by Broy show a significant prevalence of Guanyin over the

places that often also house Daoist immortals, local tutelary deities, the Unborn Holy Mother (*wusheng laomu* 無生老母) of the "Way of Former Heaven" religion (*xiantian dadao* 先天大道), or even entities from entirely foreign religions.

The Southeast Asian Vegetarian Halls were commonly the residential sites of organized laywomen from different branches of Buddhism who chose not to marry and formed sisterhoods. Many of them were former "water guests" (*shuike* 水客), a form of boat traders and occasional smugglers with high mobility between the mainland and the islands. The women of this occupation were often spearhead pioneers for future migrations of their home villages. The Vegetarian Halls were also places of care for marginalized women in need. [721] These women strongly identified with the entirely-female religious culture of the Vegetarian Halls which ultimately led to a certain detachment from their former Thiền Buddhist ideological alignment. The tight-knit communities were places where women could regain purpose and greater authority after increasingly Confucian (Vietnam) or Muslim societies (Malaysia) had stripped both from them. They began to create networks of sister temples along rivers and coasts dedicated to their unique varieties of religion. Accordingly, these economic faith networks were largely traveled by boat. There were occasional attempts to explain the boatwomen's veneration of Quan Âm in terms of their dedication to purity, but the real reasons were perhaps more pragmatic. Their faith and their religiously based socio-economic networks, as well as their occupational past and future, were entirely dependent on crossing water safely. Hence, Quan Âm naturally attracted their worship after she spent centuries developing hydrolatric characteristics and adopting femininity. Due to her prevalence and miraculous nature, Quan Âm was the most powerful water

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Buddhas. Cf. Broy 2014, pp. 168–69, 243, 282. Broy also includes several examples for Guanyin as the main deity of multiple sites under water toponyms (e.g., Tanshuiting 潭水亭) which implies that these are hydrolatric sites. Cf. ibid., pp. 184, 189.

721 Cf. Show Ying Ruo 2018, pp. 2–3. The organization of Vegetarian Halls seems to be similar to that of the Beguines in Western Europe. These lay sisterhoods of the thirteenth to fifteenth century consisted of unmarried women and widows but did not take religious vows. Not only were they business oriented and active in social welfare as well, they also developed specific religious worldviews that Christian authorities deemed heretical. See: Swan, Laura. *The Wisdom of the Beguines. The Forgotten Story of a Medieval Women's Movement.* Wellington: Bluebridge, 2016.

controlling entity whom these women knew. This extraordinary increase in importance was expressed by the transfer of the Vietnamese term Phật Mẫu 佛母 — originally attributed to Man Nương — to Quan Âm at the beginning of the twentieth century.[722] With this new era of "Guanyinization", the Guanyin-centered faith no longer integrated only 'wild' local temples, but also sites that had previously already been integrated into Buddhism through different measures and entities. This is why Guanyin statues are now scattered throughout the Tứ Pháp sites.

Guanyin Culture is hence neither a purely Sichuanese nor an exclusively Chinese phenomenon, it just developed later in Southeast Asia due to the delayed feminization of Avalokiteśvara. However, this condition only affirms that the connection between Avalokiteśvara and femaleness — established by hydrolatry — was a prerequisite for Guanyin Culture and its transformation into a popular religious category in its own right.

A Definition of Guanyin Culture

According to Xing Li, who was one of the first scholars to study Guanyin Culture, the phenomenon is closely related to the dangers and resources in a population's natural environment.[723] Guanyin Culture evolved in transcultural and transnational contexts, among ethnic and social peripheries, and in reaction to the bidirectional localization process of the bodhisattva. Guanyin absorbed indigenous deities vital to survival in rain-dependent agrarian states such as China or water cultures like Sichuan and Vietnam: those originally responsible for the matters of rainfall, flood control and safe passage on water. This allowed the bodhisattva to become the focus of their own religious tradition that, over time, developed into a popular religious category.

Guanyin Culture booms in regions with an especially diverse indigenous religious substrate that was rich in nature deities. These were supernatural powers that remained relevant to the people's livelihood, but which had rarely been relevant to — or controlled by — authorities who could have served as a corrective. Due to their peripheral, aquatic and border-crossing nature, Guan-

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722   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 71.

723   Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 180.

yin Cultural networks were free to grow beyond the scrutiny of orthodoxies. They did so all along the East Asian coasts during the late imperial era and the twentieth century. Contemporary Guanyin Culture is hence found in areas well-known as water cultures — like Sichuan, Zhejiang and Guangdong and along the coasts of Southeast Asia between Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia. There are also cases of Guanyin Culture in other Asian nations, like Japan and Korea, but these require further research.

Guanyin Cultural networks compensated for the spiritual and economic contacts that other — mostly political — transregional authorities had failed to establish. They offered women who had been disregarded by male ideologies certain opportunities for social and spiritual expression. As such, they supported the survival and revitalization of female religious lineages and were significant factors for social resilience.

With these sheltering and entrepreneurial traits, Guanyin Culture fills a social niche similar to that of Đạo Mẫu. However, because of their strong differences in pantheon and practices, the Đạo Mẫu and Guanyin Culture each represent their own popular religious categories that have dramatically contributed to the survival of indigenous hydrolatric traditions. Therefore, Guanyin Culture can be categorized as a measure for local identity preservation. However, due to the local framing of a site, the narratives and names of the original indigenous goddesses still get lost.

Since Guanyin Culture is currently growing, modernizing and continually hybridizing, it is helpful to get a systematic idea of what constitutes Guanyin Culture. The following is my suggestion for a definition of the phenomenon:

1. The Guanyin of Guanyin Culture is always female. This is a consequence of containing those local goddesses who had been threatened by male-centered transregional religions.
2. Typical appearances of Guanyin in Guanyin Culture are those of the princess-like young woman, the bodhisattva, the stern matron, or the crone. This is meant to show her as a point of identification for women of all ages and at all levels of society. It allows the women of Guanyin Cultural networks to form bonds of loyalty around their

locally individualized compound worldviews which helps to continually develop, share, and transfer them among believers.

3. Guanyin Culture presupposes the centrality of Guanyin; the ritual practice focuses on her. Guanyin is either the main icon in the central hall, or a Guanyin Hall serves as the main hall of the site. Although the site may be framed as Buddhist, a Daxiongbao Hall is either absent or it is structurally secondary because it was inserted much later.

4. Guanyin may appear several times within the same site, serving different functions.

5. Guanyin typically shows traits of amalgamation, decoration, or renaming. In the case of hydrolatric sites, framings that suggest connections to water goddesses often comprise aquatic colors and animals, the ubiquitous presence of dragons combined with aquatic Guanyin iconographies, or the placement of regular Guanyin icons above a well, spring, pond or bucket, within grottoes, or directly next to a body of water.

7 The Consequences of Ideology Transfer for Political Dis-/Integration

The previous chapter treated the dire effects of the transregional authorities' treatment of hydrolatric sites relating to the transfer of transcultural ideology. The following pages abstract the consequential politics of cultural assimilation and explore the measures that are necessary for a conquered territory to restore its sovereignty.

This chapter contains two parts. The first part illuminates the expansion of one culture into the territory of another culture. It summarizes trends in localizing political authority and empire building in the sense of ideal types to get an idea about the role that ideology transfer has played for the stabilization of conquered territories. Although the points of reference are the Chinese and Vietnamese Empires, many of the mentioned points can be applied to other colonizing states as well. This section will also treat the concept of the consolidating deities as an enabler for the extension of religious networks from which state expansions usually benefitted. The second part reviews what options the population of target areas had when transregional authorities demanded the surrender of their territory, resources and identity. The analysis of the case studies has revealed two primary lines of reaction: local identity preservation, which prioritizes the continuation of traditional lifestyles and seeks to avoid conflicts; and the rejection of transregional ideology, which not only involves open conflicts but also emphasizes the revitalization of local authorities by re-assigning elements of the transregional ideology into newly crafted narratives of legitimation.

7.1   Annexing a Territory

When empires expand, they need to decide whether they will first invest resources into establishing cultural or political dominance. If they aim to stabilize the targeted territories, a solid cultural dominance can significantly enhance the prospects for political dominance. However, establishing political dominance first did not necessarily increase the prospects of achieving cultural dominance. The Chinese Empire usually chose to establish political dominance first. Most expansions were enforced by war, which was a costly, resource-intensive strategy that left some dynasties off worse than before.

The military conquest was followed by a phase of appropriation in which the indigenous government system was abolished, local authorities debased and the indigenous culture weakened through the destruction of religious sites, artifacts and scriptures. Obliterating any trace of competing ideologies would indeed free the way for a successful ideology transfer, followed by cultural dominance and assimilation. However, that required a high level of surveillance which was often not realistic in isolated regions far from the imperial center — like Sichuan or Vietnam. Instead, the Chinese forces often focused on integrating the lower levels of the indigenous elites into the restructured local administration. This was meant to take advantage of their knowledge about regional conditions. However, imperial officials often presented the gathered information in a biased way, so that it was not regarded objectively or sensibly. Due to this, the Chinese imperial government commonly failed to correctly predict local behaviors and was often unable to adapt to new environmental conditions. This resulted regularly in the loss of human life whenever troops were sent into areas that they were not equipped for, especially during highly inadvisable times of the year.

The formal phase of appropriation ended with the establishment of a functioning local administration and the depiction of the territory as part of the empire in Chinese maps. To start cultural assimilation, the next steps were insertion and localization, which might well have overlapped. Although the Chinese Empire was quick to insert representative facilities in the target areas, the southern and southwestern peripheries often waited centuries for meaningful attempts at localization.

The phase of insertion was marked by the construction of institutional sites, the raising of imperial visibility, ideology transfer and the suppression of local languages. Local temples were either destroyed or occupied. The occupied temples would be subjected to aggressive reconfiguration tactics like obstruction, diversion, elision and superscription. If they had not already done so, the imperial authorities now looked to cooperate with other transregional authorities. They offered patronage to those transregional religions that were able to provide legitimizing narratives (especially when tied to the local environment) and were willing to propagate Sinitic values. Daoism and Buddhism were common candidates for that.

Dai Việt's approach was to collaborate with a transregional religion (Buddhism) *before* military actions and to send its members as pioneers into those areas where imperial troops could not yet penetrate. Such religious pioneers represented the empire, they familiarized the locals not only with Buddhism but also with imperial ideology. Once they held interpretative privilege in an area, they began to intervene in indigenous sacred sites using mediative reconfiguration tactics like cohabitation, incorporation or amalgamation. These created material points of mutual identification that were essential to the localization process of their ideology. As soon as the imperial military arrived, the religious authorities could effortlessly shift to more aggressive reconfiguration tactics. This symbiosis with Buddhism enabled the Việt government to assert cultural and political dominance almost at once. Collaborations with other transregional entities would have brought greater risks to the empire as non-religious transregional powerbrokers like mercenaries, merchants and entrepreneurs were less willing to endure hardship without the social glue of a shared conviction. On the contrary, they were opportunists who could easily transform into warlords and compete for local dominance (see Chapter V and [S.1.2.]).

When cultural imperialism is forced onto pluralistic realms, this leads unavoidably to cultural tensions. The preliminary violent assertion of transregional norms hence needs to be followed by nudging the population into accepting them. Social mobility and prosperity are effective incentives to achieve this. Economic development may make population temporarily compliant. However, any natural disaster — which imperial ideology itself associated with the

emperor's virtue — could expose this to be superficial. Social mobility and the access to education were both inherently necessary for the spread of imperial ideology, but both was initially denied to the members of hybrid elites. As potential vehicles for ideology reassignment, the local government did not trust them and avoided their participation as long as possible. This was a common cause for discontent among the hybrid elites and did not encourage their loyalty. Thus, neither the Chinese nor the Vietnamese central government were able to overcome the friction of distance during their southward expansions — the elites of their peripheral territories defected all the time.

It can thus be deduced that a successful transcultural ideology transfer with subsequent localization and effective assertion of cultural dominance is possible in these settings:

I.   If the information about the terrain and the local population is carefully evaluated and applied to future planning.

II. If the empire becomes sufficiently visible in local society without causing resistance among the local population due to its representative's violent measures.

III. If the empire acts with such violence against competing local ideologies that they are eradicated, which provides the most effective opportunity to replace them. If this is not possible, then it needs to use mediative reconfiguration tactics to occupy socially relevant sites and to reproduce the imperial ideology locally and under the consideration of indigenous values.

IV. If the empire applies additional systems of ideology transfer, e.g., by integrating the territory into the tribute system or by propagating intermarriage even beyond the appropriation phase.

V.   If the imperial ideology that is meant to replace local ideologies is presented in its best light because both the settlers and the officials have good, educated and socially well-integrated backgrounds. They hence represent the empire positively without defecting or exploiting the locals.

In reality, though, corrupt officials had a disastrous effect, especially if Confucian ideology had already been transferred. In such cases, the locals would have been familiar with the Sinitic ideal of virtuous behavior and judged their rulers accordingly. Bad, unvirtuous rulers and administrators could therefore involuntarily jump-start the reassignment process if they let the locals believe that they could govern themselves better any day.

The Conceptual Effect of Consolidating Deities

If transregional authorities could not rely on the human personnel whom they sent to the annexed or integrated territories, then they had to fall back on those who must be reliable by nature: supernatural representatives. These were usually borrowed from transregional religions who had already thoroughly tested them in the course of their own expansions.

In the process of transcultural expansion, some deities provide more useful functions for the transfer of ideology than others. Main deities, for example, hold a high symbolic value and are often rigidly defined. Their transfer, along with any attempts to use them as immediate replacements for indigenous deities easily creates cultural tensions. Therefore, they are not the best tool to transfer ideology between two cultures, but rather a part of what is meant to be transferred. Lower deities, on the other hand, do not possess enough social relevance to produce any cultural traction and could be easily appropriated — which was exactly what happened when the tactic of elevation was employed.

The deities suited best for transcultural ideology transfer are those of the higher medium stratum of the spiritual hierarchy. The upper management, so to speak. Such deities hold power over matters that are relevant to the daily lives of ordinary people, like water, fire, trees or animals to hunt. Their presence is easily considered implicit in the local environment and their veneration is a logical consequence of trying to magically manipulate the conditions of life. Since everyone understands what they are and what they are for, they are accessible and their worship does not require religious training nor the presence of a religious expert.

Although these conditions are not very hard to fulfill, there are only a few deities and other entities in history who have served as a consolidation device for their source religion. Consolidation deities are only effective containers

for entire groups of indigenous deities if they show additional traits that make them overlap with as many of them as possible — for example, in terms of gender, ethnicity, relationships or skills.

Before a consolidation deity is introduced, the transregional religion presents itself as quite open. Similar to the superimposition tactic, the designated consolidating deity is often depicted as similar but slightly more powerful than the indigenous deities that it is meant to absorb. In the process of absorption, the consolidating deity localizes and receives the indigenous deity's powers and efficacy. The indigenous deity is not obliterated, their numinosity remains and the consolidation deity of *that specific site* retains the traits of the original deity's local identity. It becomes a *container* deity for the original deity.

From the perspective of the transregional authorities, this stage is meant to be temporary. The consolidating deity is intended to replace the indigenous deity as an object of worship in order to redirect the veneration and sacrifices to its source religion until all traces of the original deities have disappeared and the superscription is completed. Until then, the consolidation deity is meant to be identified with additional, similar deities to build a network of various indigenous gods that all become known as variants, avatars or incarnations of the consolidation deity. This *consolidates* the deities of several local sites into one transregional god or goddess who takes their physical as well as their functional place.

The extraordinary characteristic of such a consolidation is that it is neither recognizable as the destruction of indigenous religious content, nor is it meant to be a true unification or merging of multiple different deities. Instead, the consolidating entity pools, familiarizes and simplifies individual local cults into a shared category[724] for which this deity itself becomes a symbol. The presence of this new category is the mark of the transregional religion's presence and needs to be clearly distinguished from the regular indigenous deities. For this reason, consolidation deities need to have a certain level of recognizability. The

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724   A deity used by multiple religions may be "multi-vocal", but if it does not interact with previously unrelated deities and its prevalence does not result in a new deity category, it does not count as a consolidating deity. One example for a very successful transreligious deity that does not fit this definition is Wenchang. Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994, p. xii.

Dragon Kings of China and Vietnam, for example, attained container deity status but could not qualify as consolidating deities because they typically lacked a distinctive personality. Furthermore, they themselves once originated in the appropriation of local cults and the influence of Buddhism, so the Dragon Kings had little imperial ideology to transfer.

Consolidating deities are intended as powerful vehicles of ideology transfer that greatly facilitate the establishment of cultural dominance by transregional religions and thus make them more attractive partners for expanding states. However, in practice, local deities did not vanish so easily. If the retained traits are reemphasized and visually expressed in amalgamations that indicate a hybridization between local and transregional ideology, the consolidating deity may be forced to remain a container for them [S.3.2.1.]. The container deities could then be endorsed with additional local lore and integrated into a set of standardized mythologies, as was the case with Đạo Mẫu [V.4.]. If local environmental, political or economic circumstances did not support thorough consolidation and subsequent superscription, then the presence of missionaries from a transregional religion could actually trigger the emergence of new subversive, hybridized or revitalized religious groups.

The preceding analysis has demonstrated that hydrolatric sites are common targets for consolidating deities due to their relevance for daily livelihood, but that they also quite often caused the reversal of the consolidation process by turning the consolidation deities into water deities. These do not only gain the new function of preserving local identity but may also serve as a decoration and thus prevent further incursions. Transregional authorities may think at a first glance that the site in question has been successfully assimilated, when in fact, the religious practice simply continues local traditions.

Avalokiteśvara's peculiarity was that he came to East Asia already equipped with some maritime lore and an above average number of female avatars. Water deities are among the most prevalent and most relevant. The high number of water goddesses may have contributed to Guanyin's feminization but this feminization was also what made Guanyin especially potent in occupying hydrolatric sites by superscribing and consolidating their goddesses. Thus, Guanyin became possibly the most successful consolidating deity in East Asia, but she is also the most often amalgamated one.

Mazu is another consolidating deity and the traits shared between her and Guanyin mostly derive from this function. Further Chinese consolidating deities are the Daoist Zhenwu, who was used to occupy hydrolatric sites in the Chinese south, and most of the dragonslayer-type entities and Chuanzhu like Ma Yuan, Li Bing and Zhuge Liang.

The Vietnamese Đạo Mẫu religions offer two different types of consolidating deities for the occupation of hydrolatric sites. Liễu Hạnh predominantly occupied the more or less male-coded commercial hydrolatric sites at nodes of the river trade network; Mẫu Thượng Ngàn occupied the female-coded sites of springs. Although she originated in the Cham culture, both Đạo Mẫu and the Vietnamese Empire used Thiên Y A Na as a consolidating deity in central and southern Vietnam — from the imperial perspective, it was irrelevant from which religion a consolidating deity originated as long as it provided the desired function.

The phenomenon of consolidating deities is not limited to East Asia. In the Middle East, Habibi-I Neccar is an amalgamated, possibly ahistorical 'person' who serves as a vector between Christianity, Islam and Judaism.[725] Similarly, al-Khidr may be the most potent consolidating deity of Islam with an influence that reaches from his identifications with St. George in Middle Europe and the Middle East to his identifications with powerful water deities in Indonesia.[726] St. George also falls under the dragonslayer type[727] and is commonly consolidated the local deities of multilocal and polysemous sites between Iraq, Jerusalem, Greece and Germany (Regensburg). Last but not least, the Christian Saint Mary and the vernacular version of her sister Martha are rare examples for female

725   "The veneration of Habib-i Neccar provides empirical evidence that devotees of different religious communities represent, imitate, and simulate each other's accounts of the saint and, in doing so, interact with one another on multiple levels." Cf. Kreinath 2017, p. 278–80.

726   See Franke, Patrick. *Begegnung mit Khidr.* Beirut: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000 (=Beiruter Texte und Studien 79) and Wessing, Robert. "Nyai Rara Kidul. The Antecedents of a Cosmopolitan Queen" *Anthropos* 111 (2016): 371–393.

727   Coroucli, Maria. "Saint George the Anatolian, Master of Frontiers." In *Sharing Sacred Spaces in the Mediterranean. Christians, Muslims, and Jews at Shrines and Sanctuaries,* edited by Maria Coroucli and Dionigi Albera, 118–140. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

dragonslayers and Saint Mary has intensively consolidated non-Christian deities of all kinds.[728]

The great number of consolidating deities specialized in the occupation of hydrolatric sites emphasizes not only the importance of water control but also the fluid character of hydrolatry that facilitates cultural hybridity. The employment of consolidating deities capable of occupying hydrolatric sites has proved to be a good tactic for transregional political authorities. It allowed them to harmonize the diverse belief systems within their more recently conquered areas and thereby stabilized their own political dominance. Additionally, this approach devalued the available resources for the legitimation of local authorities.

7.2   Resisting Annexation

> My sense is that histories, especially Indigenous histories, can be nearly erased, but they can never entirely be silenced as long as the land (and sacred places, and springs, etc.) survives, because something of the past always resonates, and something in the relations of living communities always remembers.[729]

From the perspective of an expanding religion or state, a perfect expansion would not leave any opportunities for local identity preservation. In practice, though, plenty such opportunities arise when transregional authorities make mistakes or face problems that they cannot solve. Both applied to the Chinese

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728   One recommendable summary is found in: Bowen, John. *Religions in practice: an approach to the anthropology of religion*. Sixth edition. Boston: Pearson, 2014. Pp. 113–129. Mary was specifically used to superscribe maritime and spring deities (e.g., Amorsbrunn of Würzburg, Germany; Notre Dame des Fontaines in La Brigue, France). Mary is commonly depicted as stepping on a snake or dragon (e.g., the St. Blasius church of Fulda, Germany). Although this is officially a reference to Genesis 3:15, such an iconography attracted those in East Asia who feared floods and other calamities. Thus, Mary took on traits of a water goddess and was thus also often functionally conflated with Mazu and Guanyin. A specific view on what connects Mary and Guanyin is provided by Reis-Habito, Maria. "The Bodhisattva Guanyin and the Virgin Mary" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 13 (1993): 61–99.

729   Margaret M. Bruchac. Personal e-mail communication on the topic of reverse ethnography. 03 March 2020.

Empire, which attacked northern Vietnam and Sichuan by land and thus increased the friction of distance. The result was that personnel and material deliveries progressed too slowly and communication with the central government was severely inhibited. This also meant that no immediate support from the center could be expected. To survive, the displaced agents of the transregional authorities gave in to hybridization or became corrupt. In Sichuan as well as in northern Vietnam, the Chinese administrative systems introduced after the conquest were rarely adequately staffed and thus newly introduced laws could hardly be enforced. This called the Chinese political dominance into question and rendered their governance ineffective.

The Han Chinese commonly did not pay enough attention to the local cultures they had conquered and thus sacrificed countless lives to environmental dangers and tropical diseases. This could have been avoided through reconnaissance, which would have helped to better understand indigenous systems of power as well. Often, these were not even recognized by the Han Chinese, which allowed them to be preserved in plain view. The lack of qualified personnel led to the opening of administrative ranks to whomever was left of the local elites. This enabled them to learn from the Chinese system and to apply it to local interests.

Although the tribute system served the empire's image and transferred imperial ideology well, due to the unequal nature of its being, it was also a money trap. Whenever it was abandoned in peripheral regions, smuggling and uncontrolled private trade created networks for subversive organizations. That was also true for the Vietnamese Empire, where the Christian missionaries later took advantage of this. Furthermore, the Chinese Empire was prone to abandoning its southern and southwestern borders whenever unrest arose in the north. This allowed local authorities to regenerate and to create new, hybrid religious options to ensure their own legitimacy. The same abandonment also often led to social hardship, which provided local authorities with the occasion to gain new prestige through charity and enabled younger local authorities to train in valuable leadership skills. Solely the lack of imperial attention thus offered two important means for the restoration of sovereignty.

Subtle Resilience and Identity Preservation

Given that there are opportunities to resist transregional authorities, <u>primary local identity preservation</u> is dedicated to preserving *indigenous* identity. An immediate measure was to avoid contact and to limit accessibility. Highland people and jungle dwellers did not need to feign loyalty, they were hardly contacted until the late imperial era because the imperial government lacked the skills and resources to penetrate this type of environment. A way to actively avoid the imperial armies was thus to relocate to mountainous terrain or to the swamps. These were areas that the Han Chinese associated with wilderness and particularly in the southern areas, they were commonly exposed to tropical diseases to which they had no immunity. These areas provided sanctuaries that when combined with military strategies, offered local authorities the best opportunities to defeat armies of much greater size.

If contact could not be avoided, an alternative strategy was to accept a low degree of hybridity with the introduced transregional ideology because this could deter further aggressive incursions and lead to reduced surveillance. Once an area was noted as loyal to the empire, the locals had more freedom to continue their traditions. Language barriers were also a severe impediment to any transcultural ideology transfer. In the case of Sichuan, the language was likely very similar to that of the Han while ancient Vietnamese was not related to Chinese at all. Although they developed no script of their own and all documents were written in Chinese, the Việt were able to preserve their language as a cultural reservoir. To further distance themselves from former Chinese rule, they developed Chữ Nôm 喃, a writing system for Vietnamese that used reconfigured Chinese characters. Many southern cultures under Chinese cultural pressure developed such writing systems because a unique language and the ability to express its distinct features helped to preserve identity — and also provided opportunities for subversive interaction.

Blocking communications or retreating to regions that were difficult to access made it easier for local authorities to maintain power when the empire moved closer. But although their worldly means of legitimation recovered whenever the local authorities were more capable of providing security and prosperity than the empire, their spiritual means of legitimation may have been weakened. However, isolated regions were occasionally very attractive

destinations[730] for religious groups who were already considered heterodox by the imperial authorities. Especially in times of turmoil, such persecuted groups also sought the security and protections that 'peripheral' local authorities could offer. These religious groups were thus very willing to hybridize their ideas with local beliefs, as happened in late imperial Sichuan [S.1.]. Creating or preserving a heterodox religious tradition despite the imperial threat clearly demonstrated the support of the gods and made it easier to gain visibility by intervening into the sites built or occupied by representatives of the imperial ideology. The most important spatial reconfiguration tactics for this kind of preservation of local identity were the decoration, amalgamation, renaming, insertion and diversion tactics.

Sites of hydrolatry were among those most resilient places, frequently preserving local identity under the guise of transregional ideology, thereby facilitating the survival of subversive traditions that were relevant to the legitimacy of local authorities. They were also able to relocalize deities that had already been tamed, streamlined and court-sanctioned by the act of superimposition. The local lore then included the transregional feats that had been newly attributed to the local deity[731] while reinforcing its traditional traits. Hydrolatric sites thus always harbored the potential to enable the locals to depose their colonizers — this was one of the reasons why transregional authorities were interested in them and occasionally used destructive aggression against such sites that they could not superscribe.

The magnate elite of Sichuan is a good example for secondary local identity preservation which aims to protect *hybridized traditions* and localized identities. They were wealthy Han Chinese migrants who had localized by developing the land in collaboration with the other settlers. They created infrastructure and occasionally initiated self-motivated first contacts with indigenous populations. This made the magnates seem like a good ally for imperial expansion and a possible alternative to the partnership with transregional religions.

While the magnates were quick to facilitate comprehensive political integration, they were laissez-faire when it came to cultural integration. Ultimately,

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730   Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 156–58.

731   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 56.

their goals overlapped only marginally with those of the empire and they felt no moral obligation to continue in imperial service if it was not beneficial to them. The incentives that the government had to offer to persuade magnates to give up their occupied and newly developed lands to the empire thus had to be immense. But if the magnates prepared the occupied territories for the empire by fulfilling all tasks of an emperor — developing the area, providing prosperity, welfare, security and defense — why should they not act like one? The market centers that they had created concentrated the economic power on their side and made them respectable local authorities. If the Sichuanese magnates had united instead of competing with each other, they could have easily created a politically independent Sichuan. However, the magnates had no interest in seceding from the empire for the same reasons that the Chinese Empire had to rely on them as representatives. In the isolation of Sichuan, the imperial capital was far away, so the government could hardly disturb their proceedings. As businessmen, their only commonality was their profession — they neither shared a creed, nor ideals, nor heritage. No degree of self-reliance could lead to independence if there was no ideological framework for the formation of a political unit.

Well-preserved local identities that remained in contact with transregional authorities learned how to be less penetrable — quite literally in the case of Sichuan — to imperialism and its demands, so they had less need to reassign transregional ideology. As long as local identity was preserved with an acceptably low effort and the direct vicinity remained safe, there was no incentive to build a strong resistance against the transregional authorities.

How to Depose Colonizers by Ideology Reassignment

When locals reassign parts of the transregional ideology to themselves, this either reduces the level of preserved local identity or replaces important elements of the local culture that have already been lost, like the means of legitimation. Such reassigned elements are helpful in breaking down traditional group behaviors and local boundaries, which is crucial for the creation of unity. Such

unity is necessary to build insurgency and attain independence.[732] While ideology reassignment could function as a catalyst, it also had the potential to redirect the imperialist desire for expansion, as witnessed in Vietnam. Welsch[733] describes transculturalism as the ability to link and transform. Transcultural contact does not only lead to divergences but also to fruitful opportunities for the creation of entirely new public cultures which were previously not thought to be possible. While transculturalism creates demands that may offend established customs, the concentration on what is shared and the ensuing connective possibilities can be of great advantage. Transculturalism may thus lead to the formation of new cultural concepts, views and practices, but it also creates new differences.[734] This means that the uninhibited hybridization in transcultural contacts neither leads to standardization nor to the development of political dominance. If ideas are free to hybridize, none of the originally involved ideologies 'win' because a third option develops. In the colonial situations studied

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732   The unification of multiple ethnic groups sharing one territorial environment to create unity is one of the most important steps to remove colonial oppression. Relevant publications are in general: Dugard, C. J. R. "The Organisation of African Unity and Colonialism: An Inquiry into the Plea of Self-Defence as a Justification for the Use of Force in the Eradication of Colonialism." *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1967): 157–90. Akwei, Adotei. "Colonialism and the Organization of African Unity: The Effect of the Colonial Experience on African Attempts to Unite." Dissertation. The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1987. Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Eskandar. "The origins of Communist Unity: anti-colonialism and revolution in Iran's tri-continental moment." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 5 (2017): 796–822. DOI: 10.1080/13530194.2017.1354967. Marr, David G. *Vietnamese Anticolonialism,* 1885—1925. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1971. Antlöv, Hans and Stein Tønnesson. *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism*, 1930—1957. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995. Kuhnt-Saptodewo, Sri, Volker Grabowsky and Martin Grossheim (ed). *Nationalism and Cultural Revival in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from the Center and the Region*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997. Sidel, John T. "The fate of nationalism in the new states: Southeast Asia in comparative historical perspective." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 1 (2012): 114–44. Although all Southeast Asian states have regained their political sovereignty, there is often a sentiment of a continuing cultural colonization, therefore these narratives of unity and nation building continue in the context of globalization: Jönsson, Kristina. "Unity-in-Diversity? Regional Identity-building in Southeast Asia." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 29, no. 2 (2010): 41–72.

733   Cf. Welsch 2001, pp. 77–78.

734   Cf. ibid., p. 85 and Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 173.

in this book so far, there are two conditions for the creation of third options via reassignment.

1. The transregional ideology offers desirable and less desirable traits.
2. There are enough agents of local ideology left to create a distinct alternative option to the representatives of transregional ideology.

As long as local ideologies persist, the continued transfer of transregional ideology may simply enhance the repertoire of local authorities. The transregional authorities might indeed at some point succeed in creating cultural dominance in a certain territory, but the respective territory may no longer be theirs.

What is it that gives local societies, who may have been subjected to a colonial power for centuries, the impetus to fight for political sovereignty? The complex dynamics behind this question can be summarized in three factors.

I. Prosperity. Prosperity was the main promise of Sinitic empires and if conquest was not followed by prosperity, then the empire appeared to be like a leech. Rejecting it was an act of self-preservation. Prosperity was also the main motivation for settlers and (some) missionaries. If their government or religious center did not take good care of them, they readily adopted local beliefs to their advantage and shared their organizational knowledge. In the Chinese Empire, it often happened that a territory appeared consolidated and peaceful as long as taxes were low. However, as in Sichuan, a sudden tax increase quickly provoked resistance and subversive behavior, because for those accustomed to tax exemptions, aligning with the rest of the empire felt like a loss.

II. Equality. It is difficult to integrate conquered people into the established population of the empire if emphasis is placed on *not* integrating them, because they are not only treated differently, but worse. If locals were forced into degrading or dangerous work, that dehumanized them and emphasized the distinction between the colonizers and the colonized, which prevented any mutual identification. It called the morality of the ruler into doubt, undermined the creation of loyalty, and provoked rebellions. This was a key difference between Sichuan and Vietnam. The Việt were deemed unable to be civilized.

In the eyes of the Han Chinese, they were never more than bugs, like many derogatory terms and metaphors illustrated. The Chinese political dominance was synonymous with constant disregard for Việt needs, this massively encouraged ideology reassignment. Since there was nothing to gain and quite possibly much to lose from the Chinese occupation, the inequality experienced under Chinese rule fueled resentment among the Việt. This resentment ultimately triggered the reassignment of Sinitic ideology to such an extent that even the imperial system was seen as applicable to the Việt. The war for independence therefore led to the establishment of a sovereign Việt Empire that attempted to emulate the Chinese style of government.

Conversely, the diverging appearances and customs of the ancient Shu may have been repeatedly detailed, but they were at least credited with the potential to be equal to the Han Chinese. The high number of Han Chinese settlers and their intermarriage soon made the distinction between the indigenous Shu and Han Chinese obsolete, although the visibility of the Han Chinese was relatively low. The Shu-Han hybrids were soon treated like regular Chinese subjects. In contrast, indigenous groups of southern Sichuan (Yi) suffered from similar prejudices like the Việt once did. This could be another reason why they have maintained their separate identities to this day.

III. Educated identity negotiation. For the Chinese and Vietnamese Empires, education was intended to be a unilateral channel of ideology transfer and a privilege for the elite. While the members of hybrid elites and the gentry were familiar with the demands of transregional ideology and could have served to convey these, they often preferred to follow their localized interests. Hybrid elites were highly motivated to participate in the empire, but they became resentful if it they realized that they were continuously considered inferior or that certain spaces of society were off-limits to them. They possessed the necessary knowledge resources to negotiate local needs but superficially appeared like they represented the empire. In the long term, this subversiveness empowered them to act as independent proponents of local identity, capable of supporting self-elevation and jumpstarting ideology reassignment. As such, they became a potent source of political upheaval. In Vietnamese history, this process was repeated several times: once with the Sino-Việt elite of Jiaozhou

under the Chinese Empire, once with the hybrid elite of Thanh Hóa during the early imperial period and another time with the Nguyễn lords and the Cham during the late imperial era.

Although the localized descendants of the Sichuanese magnates also count as a hybrid elite, they were considered to be fully Chinese. Furthermore, the magnate's descendants could usually relyon the economic networks as an alternative means of social prestige.

While Sichuan preserved its local identity and simply did not care about the rules of its colonizers, Vietnam shook off political oppression. Instead of focusing on the preservation of local identity against the foreigners, the Vietnamese leaders simultaneously reassigned ideas from two transregional authorities, Buddhism and the Chinese Empire. By transcending established customs and the grip of colonization, they created new religio-political state systems. This empowered them to expand the empire and they began to subjugate other cultures themselves. Although first Buddhism and then the Sinitic imperial ideology achieved cultural dominance in Đại Việt, neither of them was able to establish lasting *political* dominance. The Buddhist state system failed and the integration into the Chinese Empire was shaken off twice. Yet the hybridization of both with the remnants of local culture was exactly what enabled the Việt to create an independent and unique Vietnameseness.

8 Conclusion

This book demonstrates that the spatial manipulation of sacred sites affected the success of transcultural ideology transfer between East Asian empires and the areas they targeted for expansion. The research presented here showcases the first-ever application of the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS methodological approach to sacred buildings, temple complexes and temple clusters in East Asia. A stress test, so to speak, where theory meets practical reality. The author concludes that the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS satisfactorily analyzed the traces of frictions that power imposition processes leave in the spatial configuration of sacred sites. This has proved particularly valuable due to its applicability to the study of sacred sites in historical contexts. Such study has provided valuable insights into the factors that contributed to the divergent development of Sichuan (as a Chinese province) and Vietnam (as an independent state with restored sovereignty) even though both regions once shared many cultural similarities. The research results explain the influential role of hydrolatric sites in shaping the ideological landscapes of both areas.

The high social relevance of hydrolatric sites made them resilient. They could therefore function as reservoirs of local ideology and preserve local means of legitimation. This social relevance also appealed to expanding transregional authorities. Hydrolatric sites were thus among the first places where the ideologies of different cultures came into contact. They could either facilitate potential ideology transfer or, due to their resilience, easily trigger ideology reassignment. Without them, Vietnam would hardly have been able to revive its system of legitimation through aquatic patrons, to hybridize it with Sinitic concepts of imperialism, or to conquer Champa and expand into the south.

Resilient hydrolatric sites supported *social* resilience. Without the identity negotiation processes exercised within them and their ability to reverse the effects of consolidating deities, Sichuanese local culture would likely have been less resilient and less well preserved. Being treated as an afterthought by the central government would have left the Sichuanese population less content

and possibly more willing to openly resist, which could have prompted harsher government crackdowns and the possible extinction of local traditions.

Hydrolatric sites encouraged the emergence of religious traditions such as Đạo Mẫu or the Guanyin Culture and inspired them, even as the oppression of women increased, to preserve and create spaces for female religious expression. This confirms the hypothesis that the treatment of hydrolatric sites significantly influenced the transcultural ideology transfer and thus the development of sovereignty in Sichuan and Vietnam.

The Role of Hydrolatry for Social Resilience

Occupations and rededications are important vehicles for transcultural ideology transfer. They cause reconfiguration events which produce new representative spatial organizations that control transhistorical narratives and the behavior of the site's consumers. The Experiential Architecture Analysis facilitates the deconstruction of this process into its constituent elements and their specific social ties, which reduces the dependence on normative texts. The analysis of the reconfiguration tactics applied to a site provides a nuanced comprehension of the motivations behind them and points to the social dynamics between the groups invested in the site. Analyzing the placed content of a site helps to determine the identity and resilience of these groups. After the identification of spatial reconfiguration events in the history of a sacred site, their socio-historical contextualization helps to determine its degree of architectural resilience.

If a sacred site lacks resilience, it is easier for transregional authorities to reconfigure it and ensure the successful transfer of their ideology. A medium level of resilience may imply that, e.g., the local population has the means to contest the reconfiguration tactics used on a sacred site, but not to challenge the transregional claim to it — such situations encourage hybridization. However, many hydrolatric sites show high levels of resilience and are therefore able to serve as reservoirs for local identity.

The resilience of hydrolatric sites stems from their integral role in ensuring the punctual and sufficient availability of water, which is crucial for community

survival. This significance makes it difficult to alter the ideas and customs related to sites of water control within communities, as they are hesitant to risk droughts or floods by changing established practices. Due to this, we can find traces of obstructed or concealed indigenous water deities even within sites that are otherwise heavily superscribed.

Water control is also what made the occupation of hydrolatric sites an important resource for the legitimation of the groups invested into them. The means of legitimation bound to hydrolatric sites are usually rooted in indigenous traditions, derived from the immediate environment. Therefore, they relate to local rather than to transregional authorities and improve the social resilience of the local population. For this reason, indigenous and local authorities also occasionally establish new claims in pre-existing hydrolatric sites to strengthen the preservation of local identity (as Đạo Mẫu did), to force the rejection of a foreign ideology (like among the Chuanzhu and Tứ Pháp sites), or to unify people and territory after ideology reassignment has occurred. As sites of high social relevance, hydrolatric sites have been more commonly contested and therefore tend to show more traces of spatial reconfigurations than many other kinds of sites. Their ability to preserve local deities, customs and traditional means of legitimation defines hydrolatric sites as reservoirs of local identity. As such, they are a valuable resource for the revitalization of local authorities.

The architectural resilience of a sacred site and the resilience of a local population thus influence each other, which emphasizes sacred sites and the presentation of their architecture as important vectors for transcultural ideology transfer.

Aggressive and Mediative Reconfiguration Tactics

Whenever an expanding transregional authority seeks cultural dominance, its success depends on developments at the local level. Such developments may promote or hinder the ideology transfer that is crucial for the process of localization. They thus determine how effectively foreign authorities can seize

local means of legitimation and whether they ultimately gain legitimacy or lose control over a territory.

The legitimatory nature of hydrolatric sites forces transregional authorities to either occupy or replace them in order to limit the means of legitimation for local authorities. In a hypothetical, idealized process, they would utilize the occupied hydrolatric sites by initiating spatial reconfigurations that create a convincing, undistorted spatial image capable of reproducing transregional ideology in an indigenous context. This would legitimize the transregional authorities through local means. They might also introduce consolidating deities, create new narratives and rituals about the subjugation of indigenous deities, and perform acts of public welfare to persuade the locals of their superiority. If exercised well and there are no factors of resistance, this would encourage the locals to change their customs more willingly. In reality, however, the negotiation of ideologies often leads to disharmonies within the hierarchies expressed within the spatial image, making it unconvincing. Instead of the transregional ideology, the spatial image thus reproduces a distorted — actually a hybridized — version of it, which may lead to ideology reassignment.

The Đại Việt Empire recognized that hydrolatric sites were very difficult to superscribe and that in such cases, mediative reconfiguration tactics were the best choice. The <u>amalgamation</u>, <u>cohabitation</u>, and varieties of the <u>incorporation</u> tactics all sufficiently placed transregional elements into local contexts. This prompted a strong acculturation process, albeit a comparatively slow one — which avoided the intense transregional pressures that otherwise might have resulted in the rejection of imperial ideology. Rather than aiming for immediate and comprehensive ideology transfer, the objective was to gradually diminish the significance of indigenous culture. Accepting a less comprehensive ideology transfer and remaining open to new influences thus ensured both the political dominance and a steady increase of cultural dominance.

If mediative reconfiguration tactics were more advantageous and ultimately produced the same results, then why did transregional authorities often ignore them? The reasons for doing so were exclusive truth claims on the religious side (Confucianism, Buddhism) and cultural imperialism on the political side. Both perspectives imply that the transregional authorities viewed the local culture as inferior, as something to completely obliterate in favor of their own.

Such aspirations demanded a maximized ideology transfer, only allowed a minimum of acculturation and considered hybridization to be unacceptable. They encouraged the use of the more perilous aggressive reconfiguration tactics like <u>destruction</u>, <u>duplication</u> in combination with <u>obstruction</u> and <u>diversion</u>, <u>elision</u>, <u>desacralization</u>, other varieties of <u>incorporation</u>, <u>royal</u> <u>displacement</u>, <u>superimposing</u>, <u>ranking</u>, and <u>superscription</u>. Such aggressive tactics frequently incited resentment and resistance and could jeopardize the stability of the target area. Moreover, they could strain a transregional power's financial resources enough to halt any further expansion. However, the intensity of cultural imperialism diminishes with the rising friction of distance and the waning support from a powerful center. This made it very difficult to maintain aggressive reconfiguration tactics over a long period of time. The more remote an area was from the centralized government, the less present were external influences and control. Consequently, the <u>decoration tactic</u> was particularly prevalent in these areas. It seems to have been the most powerful strategy to protect local identity against consolidating deities.

It appears almost impossible to reconfigure the hydrolatric sites of a different culture to such an extent that they would reproduce the foreign ideology without modifications. Despite this, transregional authorities persist in their efforts because their need for representative sites of high social relevance that raise their visibility in target areas frequently outweighs concerns of pride or purity. Thus, they often attempted to <u>insert</u> representatives of their ideology into sites in less-than-ideal circumstances, although they had to expect some degree of hybridization or reassignment to result from it. Consequently, the localization of a transregional deity or entity could easily lead to its transformation into a local one.

This was *not* what the transregional authorities needed. They required a representative that appeared acceptable to the locals, but not a subversive agent of local interests that only superficially seemed to agree with their own sentiments. The local variant eventually started to subvert other sites where the transregional deity had already been introduced. In this way, transregional deities could be 'lost' because they were localized as symbols for certain transregional ideas, but without the systematic acceptance of the transregional ideology that these belonged to. If there were no additional incentives, no

amount of reintroduction could reverse this process — a local variant would always be more relevant for local society than the transregional one. The only way to revive such deities or entities as transregional representatives was if the overall presence of the transregional authorities in the area increased. Consequently, hydrolatric sites tend to turn multilocal or polysemous rather than to directly switch affiliations. They might therefore support the localization and acculturation efforts in certain cases, such as those of Ma Yuan or Zhenwu, but in general they are inhibitors of ideology transfer. Due to this, hydrolatric sites can be considered as enduring points of frictions between local and transregional authorities.

How the Treatment of Hydrolatric Sites Affected Political Development in Sichuan

As the Chinese Empire expanded, it subjugated the aquatic patrons of the cultures it had conquered. Many East Asian cultures traced themselves back to snakes or dragons, or had aquatic main deities who were considered to be patrons and relatives of the local authorities, thus providing them with essential means of water control. The ranking tactic was used to hierarchize water controlling deities into jiao-dragons, long-dragons and dragonslayers. These reflected the different levels of civil development that the Confucian view attributed to the associated populations. The dragonslayers were commonly consolidating deities meant to transfer Sinitic ideology by subjugating the local water deities. Although many of the imperial dragonslayers were rapidly localized and themselves appropriated as water deities, they retained some imperial aspects.

During the Buddhist expansion in China and Vietnam, hydrolatric sites were strategically occupied for economic reasons and with the aim to increase the value of the religious network and to attract governmental patronage. The support of the government was needed to deal more effectively with the more resilient hydrolatric sites. In Sichuan, speed was of the essence, because in contrast to Vietnam, many transregional religious authorities were competing for the best strategic locations. To occupy the sites of numinous springs, Chan

monks hence engaged in the harassing and killing of dragons to introduce the Bodhisattva Guanyin as a consolidating deity. The bodhisattva gradually turned female and thus became an even better container for indigenous water goddesses. She began to slowly penetrate numerous hydrolatric sites even without Buddhist impetus.

Many of the Sichuanese water deities were originally female dragons but became increasingly recategorized as Shuimu or Longmu, although their sites were still called dragon marshes. The late Ming dynasty government sponsored another wave of Buddhist occupation on these sites because the not-actually-female Guanyin was slightly more palatable to the Confucian morality of the imperial officials. They expected to gain control over these sites if a deity that they were more familiar with could erode the inherent resilience of them. However, such sponsorship remained the exception. There was hardly any form of systematic collaboration between the empire and the Buddhists of Sichuan. On the contrary, the latter were occasionally persecuted and oftentimes harassed by local officials. Consequently, the Buddhists had no reason to voluntarily serve as a proxy for imperial ideology; they were too busy enforcing their own.

Although Buddhists and (mostly Confucian) imperial officials actively and aggressively targeted the hydrolatric sites of Sichuan, these were irrelevant to the legitimacy of the central government and the emperor. It just did not matter whether Confucianism could occupy hydrolatric sites in Sichuan or not. Their attempts at creating a transregional presence in local hydrolatric sites can thus be described as halfhearted at best. Two systems of consolidating deities were introduced to Sichuan and neither proved particularly effective for the transfer of imperial ideology.

The emergence of Guanyin Culture was a result of the bodhisattva's universalization that had enabled her to appear outside the Buddhist context. However, this diminished her significance as a distinct symbol of Buddhism. While the Guanyin Culture demonstrated effective localization, it also reduced Guanyin to a mere vessel whenever she got stuck in the role of a container deity. In sites like the Qinquan-si, it is likely that her guise once hid even multiple local goddesses. The Guanyin Culture was therefore extremely successful in occupying hydrolatric sites and transferring ideology — but the ideology being propagated was not necessarily Buddhist anymore. Like Đạo Mẫu, Guanyin Culture

ensured that women could express their religious sentiments, find shelter and do business like they could do nowhere else in Chinese society. But in contrast to Đạo Mẫu's effect in Vietnam, the Guanyin Culture did not inhibit Confucian ideology or imperial activities because these hardly affected the female spaces of Sichuan anyway. Thus, there was too little interaction. Although the imperial government occasionally sponsored these sites to influence the weather, they were not relevant enough for the reproduction of imperial ideology to require intensive spatial interventions. Meanwhile, the Guanyin Culture became one of the most successful popular religious categories in East Asia.

The imperial Chuanzhu system, originally instituted by Daoist officials, attempted to superscribe *local* water deities with *localized* water deities, but this did little to increase the empire's visibility. Moreover, the localized nature of the Chuanzhu deities and the widespread use of the decoration tactic in their cult sites severely hindered and sometimes even blocked imperial ideology transfer to the south of Sichuan. The popular Chuanzhu system of the south proved to be mediative enough to serve as a point of identification for the diverse late imperial population of Sichuan that comprised settlers from Hunan, Guangdong and various southern minorities. It may have fostered unity between natives and settlers but bypassed the imperial government and thus rather encouraged regional identity preservation and, at times, subversion. The imperial Chuanzhu system therefore proved ineffective for both. It did not contribute to the transfer of imperial ideology and certainly did not facilitate the integration of the southern regions, which ultimately had to be completed by force.

In sum, the aggressive reconfiguration tactics employed at hydrolatric sites by the Chinese Empire, Buddhism, and others, provoked the development of coping mechanisms to mitigate external aggression. However, Sichuan's approach to local identity preservation was entirely defensive. The locals avoided defending their religious views in open conflicts and none of the territorial expansions or attempts to secede were actually planned by them. Since the Chinese Empire had been barely capable to exert political dominance over Sichuan, it was even less able to create anything close to cultural dominance. The population of Sichuan was fine with that; it relied upon itself and that was enough to preserve its local identity with minimal effort. There was no reason to rebel and jeopardize a good livelihood as long as economic demands were

met. Sometimes, the lack of central control had the consequence that material and spiritual needs were not fulfilled. However, hunger uprisings subsided as quickly as supplies arrived, showing that they were not concerned with the restoration of sovereignty. This suggests that the legitimacy of the Chinese imperial government in Sichuan was primarily centered on economic factors, but not on religious divergences. The cultural frictions at hydrolatric sites predominantly occurred through the conflict of local religion with Buddhism and Daoism, while there were comparatively fewer ideological frictions with the imperial government. This dynamic likely contributed to the frequent appropriation of dragonslayers and Chuanzhu.

The hydrolatric sites of Sichuan demonstrated remarkable resilience. One could argue that they were almost too efficient in preserving the local identity. Ultimately, the Sichuanese were able to continue their traditions without having to concern themselves too much about whom was nominally in charge of their territory. This nonchalance negatively affected their political identity. Therefore, even the hybrid identities that had developed under the persistent lack of imperial control turned out sufficient to transfer the imperial ideas to the point of them being reassigned, as demonstrated by the emergence of the multiple separatist dynasties of Sichuan. These placed great emphasis on utilizing hydrolatry and associated sites to their advantage, appropriated suitable local narratives and asserted political dominance — all traits that should have worked in favor for the foreign emperors of Sichuan. However, they soon discovered that the local hybrid elite lacked unity as well as organization and that the common population had no concept of Sichuan as an independent state. By the end of the late imperial era, any notion of a distinct Sichuanese identity was gone, so there was no need for a separate Sichuanese polity anymore.

Hydrolatric sites in Sichuan thus fulfilled their role as resilient reservoirs for local identity and as nodes for identity negotiation. The hydrolatry of Sichuan had an immense draw, but was almost impermeable for transregional ideology transfer. Its resilience commonly caused the localization and appropriation of transregional spiritual representatives. Guanyin became a water deity, so did Li Bing and Zhuge Liang. The hydrolatric sites worked so well in favor of local identity preservation that there was no need any more to rebel against the political dominance of the Chinese Empire. The empire could not assert cultural

dominance and therefore posed no threat to local traditions, just as the local hybrid elites had never posed an effective threat to the central government.

How the Treatment of Hydrolatric Sites Affected Political Development in Vietnam

During the transregional expansion in Vietnam, the female-centric nature of many hydrolatric sites targeted for occupation held profound consequences for identity negotiation and the success of creating an integrated imperial realm.

It took a long time for Vietnamese Confucianism to gain influence, and even longer for its ideology to extend beyond the capital's walls. By the end of the Buddhist state system, Confucianism had achieved political dominance, not only by collaboration with the government, but also by *constituting* the government itself. The greatest obstacle for the success of Vietnamese Confucianism lay in its inherent bias against women and merchants. Aside from the fact that it repelled significant and influential parts of the population, this consequently prevented Confucians from occupying the most advantageous hydrolatric sites[735] associated with both groups, particularly those frequented by the businesswomen.

Before the Nguyễn dynasty, women could hold relatively high positions in Vietnamese society. However, the rising influence of Sinitic imperial ideology brought about a growing adherence to Confucian doctrine among the common people, resulting in the expulsion of women from temples and Đình. The protection of autonomous spaces for female spirituality became an urgent matter in local culture and emphasized the transregional ideological pressures imposed upon women. In Sichuan, Buddhism had posed a threat to the religious expression of women, which was countered by the emergence of Guanyin Culture. Conversely, Buddhists in Vietnam had recognized the advantages of preserving female agency in the sites that they occupied. Buddhist hydrolatric temples thus often remained female spaces, with lore that incorporated local

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735 This does not mean that this religion was unable to occupy hydrolatric sites at all. There are even a few examples for Confucians occupying the sites of male water deities.

women as exemplary practitioners and female deities as water-controlling Buddhas. This provision of continued female spaces ensured the steady interaction with wealthy businesswomen and their patronage. Consequently, there were fewer occasions for the feminization of Quan Âm until the imperial era. The feminization had been unnecessary as long as the Tứ Pháp system persisted, but became more relevant as the Việt expanded southward.

Đạo Mẫu evolved in outright opposition to Neo-Confucian values, not only protecting spaces of female agency but also creating new ones. It even occupied and reconfigured male sites for this purpose. Đạo Mẫu incorporated Liễu Hạnh, a powerful, nonconforming goddess and patroness of businesswomen as one of their main deities, thereby ensuring the financial security and independence of its communities. For centuries, Buddhism had achieved significant cultural dominance, particularly due to its extensive collaboration with (and participation in) the government — but in the late imperial era, Đạo Mẫu became an impressive competitor. Although Đạo Mẫu substantially contributed to the consolidation of the territories conquered during the southern advance, the government would not consider it as a valid collaboration partner until the nineteenth century.

After the second Chinese occupation ended in 1427, Confucian scholars like Ngô Sĩ Liên 吳士連 (~1490s) [V.2.3.3.], [V.3.1.1.] did not eschew attributing supernatural aquatic heritage to the earliest rulers of the realm in their conceptualization of an imagined past [V.3.1.2.] that was meant to legitimize the later imperial emperors. However, under their leadership, Đại Việt's imperial ideology diverged ever more from the interconnected network of water deities along the waterways that constituted the indigenous religious landscape. This network extended throughout the south, which became object of the empire's desire for expansion. The key to Đại Việt's successful southern advance lay in the integration of predominantly female water deities of the south, including the main Cham goddess Pô Nagar. However, the fundamental incompatibility of Confucianism with hydrolatry rendered it unsuitable for the southward drive. The Nguyễn lords understood this during the era of separated realms between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and therefore revived the governmental collaboration with Buddhism. In service to the imperial govern-

ment, Buddhism became the primary consolidating ideology for the southern territories.

The use of hydrolatry as a means of control in the south and its role as an integral part of the hybridized imperial ideology is exemplified by the case of Thiên Mụ [V.6.]. Hydrolatry also served as a symbol of cultural differentiation because the Nguyễn felt obliged to assert their distinct identity against the Trịnh lords of the north, who relied on a more Sinitic legitimation. However, despite the Confucians constituting the government of the Trịnh, Buddhism still experienced a cultural revival in the north. In the south, though, Confucians had no cultural dominance to speak of until the Nguyễn dynasty. And even then, Confucian ideas were merely used to justify the unification of the realm.

Yet, Confucian doctrines eventually reached the commoners and Neo-Confucian ideology achieved cultural dominance during the nineteenth century — at least in some regions of Vietnam. Nevertheless, the reliance of the Nguyễn regime on its Neo-Confucian administration ultimately led to the loss of political control. The Nguyễn rulers did not trust the experienced officials from the north and instead relied on southern scholars who, due to the neglect of the Nguyễn lords, were lacking in both education and social prestige. These scholars shouldered significant responsibilities but received little recognition for their efforts. Their disdain for the local hydrolatry of Huế foreshadowed the extent to which Sinitic ideology had been transferred through these officials. When their socially marginalized role finally led them to abandon their emperor and their government in an act of indignant self-destruction [V.3.3.], it became evident that Confucianism, as a remnant of the Sinitic ideology transfer initiated two thousand years ago, had been an unsuitable choice as the state ideology of the Vietnamese Empire.

The ancient Chinese had targeted hydrolatric sites to debase the local authority of the proto-Việt. Under the guise of Buddhism, these sites became reservoirs of local identity throughout most of the first Chinese domination. They were crucial for Đại Việt's fight for independence since its earliest days. Hydrolatric sites helped to establish the young empire's visibility in a pluralistic religious geography. They provided legitimation to the late imperial rulers both inside and outside the Later Lê dynasty. Hydrolatric sites were instrumental

to the occupation of former Champa territory and in creating a strong, multi-cultural legitimation for the emperors of a newly unified realm that was larger than ever before. Thus, hydrolatric sites permanently worked in favor of the Vietnamese Empire.

In sum, the treatment of hydrolatric sites in Vietnam was mostly mediative, contrasting sharply with the aggressive tactics historically employed by the Chinese. These tactics eventually transferred Sinitic imperial ideology a little too successfully and ultimately backfired when the local authorities reassigned it to themselves and for their own purposes. This reassignment, combined with the absence of a sustained political dominance by the Chinese Empire, the strategic use of mediative reconfiguration tactics, and the collaboration with a transregional religious authority (Buddhism), empowered Đại Việt not only to reclaim its sovereignty, but also to emerge as an expanding empire in its own right.

Although the Việt emulated Sinitic imperial behavior, the discrimination they subjected the Cham to had the stated goal of transferring *Vietnamese* imperial ideology and to turn the 'barbarian' Cham into civilized Việt subjects — not into Chinese ones. For this reason, it was acceptable to include Cham goddesses into the imperial legitimation of southern Việt rulers. Only through this process was it possible to integrate the southern water goddesses, and it was only as a result of that integration that the transfer of the hybridized imperial ideology turned out to be so very successful.

The Development of Coping Mechanisms

Buddhism, imperialism, and to some degree Daoism exerted increasing transregional pressures on three factors that connected Sichuan and Vietnam as water cultures. This prompted the creation of coping mechanisms, which preserved local identity in the process of identity negotiation and countered assimilation:

I. Gender Relationships: When Buddhist and Sinitic imperial authorities (often, but not always Confucians) approached local hydrolatric sites, they were

eager to transform female-centric religious lines into male ones, to transfer female agency to men, and to turn primordial goddesses into heroic male mortals.

II. Environmental Relationships: The legitimation generated by hydrolatric sites was of indigenous nature, inspired by the immediate environment. Local authorities were more acquainted with the local landscape, climate, flora and fauna. Legitimacy that relied on the relationship to natural phenomena was more easily held by local thantransregional authorities because it was assumed that local authorities would likely have better relations with nature deities. This motif was used in the lore of the Yi and in the imagined past of Đại Việt [V.3.1.2.] to defend their cultural identity.

III. Economic Benefits: Spiritual and technical water control provided power and relevance and still does so incontemporary discourses. Moreover, dam and dike-building could strongly affect the local ecological balance and destroy the livelihood of indigenous populations. Controlling boat traffic, especially for trade and transport, accelerated the spread of ideas along the waterways. Investments into infrastructurecould also lead to an increase in economic vitality and prosperity — a resource for legitimation that the transregional authorities could appropriate. Occasionally, like in the case of numinous springs, transregional authorities took advantage of magical water resources simply because they needed to sustain their own institutions and financially profited from their draw towards pilgrims and tea connoisseurs.

Guanyin Culture emerged as a profound coping mechanism in response to the Buddhist expansion. It developed in multiple places of East and Southeast Asia and contributed to the preservation of religious spaces where women could exercise religious agency, albeit with a superficially Buddhist appearance. Moreover, Guanyin Culture appropriated Buddhism's transcultural communication network and quickly evolved into a popular religious category. It was since able to protect entire areas from transregional — mostly Buddhist — pressures.

The Tứ Pháp system was a similar coping mechanism that emerged in reaction to the Buddhist expansion. It stands as one of the oldest examples

for the systematic and continuous use of the decoration tactic. In later centuries, after it had lost its imperial and economic relevance, the sites of the Tứ Pháp system were taken over by Guanyin Culture and Đạo Mẫu. Compared to Guanyin Culture, the Tứ Pháp system's mediative potential seems to have been less transferable across cultures, although further studies on related sites in Vietnam and China are needed to explore this further.

Đạo Mẫu is another coping mechanism that evolved into a popular religious category, but this one emerged during the late imperial era of Vietnam in response to the increasing Confucianization of Việt society. It protected not only the religious agency of women but also their enterprises and their significant contribution to the realm's healthy economy. The religious practices of Đạo Mẫu, along with the mediative reconfiguration tactics that it employed, significantly facilitated the integration of the Cham and the highland minorities of southern Vietnam. As a result, Đạo Mẫu contributed to the success of the imperial southward expansion, but it simultaneously functioned as a barrier against the imposition of the imperial Neo-Confucian ideology, thereby protecting the religious agency of women.

The Chuanzhu system was a coping mechanism in response to the imperial Confucianization in Sichuan, but unlike to the previous examples, it focused on the male domain of hydrolatry. Sichuan already had many male water deities when it was conquered by the Chinese Empire. The Han Chinese deemed these to be more potent and hence more challenging to superscribe. However, these deities were also allegedly the ones who governed the treacherous streams, which at some point became crucial to the creation of a more efficient transport system throughout the empire. In an attempt to gain more visibility and to integrate the province better, the government appropriated endemic water deities and established an imperial Chuanzhu system. Especially in the late imperial era, the imperial Chuanzhu were distributed and inserted into valuable hydrolatric sites, particularly at trade nodes. This was done with the expressed purpose to prevent the resurgence of local ideologies after extensive resettlement policies had brought new hydrolatric ideas from other southern Chinese regions into the area. However, the persistence of the popular Chuanzhu system alongside the imperial one resulted in quite the opposite effect. Because the imperial and popular Chuanzhu were hard to tell apart, the decoration tactic

was used extensively and served as a protective shield against further imperial interventions, which allowed local religious practice to diverge from imperial expectations.

The Contribution of this Book

In conclusion, cultural dominance was often a prerequisite for durable political rule, but was not a guarantee for it. The case of Vietnam demonstrated that although the aggressive methods of the Han Chinese had eventually led to the cultural dominance of an extensively Sinitic imperial ideology, it was precisely this ideology that enabled Đại Việt to secede and restore its sovereignty to the detriment of the Chinese supremacy. Sichuan is the converse case in the sense that the Chinese Empire established nominal political dominance early, needed multiple centuries to assert it, but was ultimately not successful in creating a comprehensive and durable cultural dominance.

Therefore, it is evident that at least in the case of water cultures like Sichuan and Vietnam, the assertion of cultural dominance, particularly as it depends on the success of transcultural ideology transfer, is closely linked to the treatment of hydrolatric sites.

This analysis of spatial reconfigurations in order to supplement normative texts has yielded strong and detailed evidence for the effects that hydrolatric sites have had on the imposition of power, the preservation of local identity, and the reassignment of or assimilation into transregional ideologies. The term "used" has been consciously avoided because it is a point of this research to show the mobility — or in the case of hydrolatric sites, rather: the fluidity — of sacred sites and the agency that they can wield beyond the direct intervention of interested sponsors and builders. Although many paragraphs were utilized to show what the elites did — as it is prone to happen in historical contexts — a relevant takeaway from this research is that the EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS is a suitable tool to reveal Setha Low's "flow" of the consumer's space constituting power. By viewing text and material in a converse sense, the EAA expands on Low's embodiment of the transregional in

locally inscribed places by adding the *expression of the local in transregionally inscribed places*.

Therefore, the main contribution of this book is to present a useful methodological approach to study exactly this aspect and to thus gain a new comprehension for the active role that consumers take in the consumption of spatial media. This reflects the reality that spatial media are negotiated, that they can be rejected and redefined and that the consequences of these redefinitions reversely impact the transregional level.

The EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS proves to be a valuable tool for the study of spatial-social interactions within historical settings. The associated typology of reconfiguration tactics for sacred sites presented in Chapter IV is the result of an extensive analysis of temple data from Sichuan and Vietnam, extending beyond the case study clusters outlined in this book. This may make the typology, for now, specific to East Asian contexts. However, the next time EXPERIENTIAL ARCHITECTURE ANALYSIS is applied, it will also be with the backdrop of this typology. On the one hand, this will make the analysis much more effective, but on the other hand, it is important to do the site survey and the deep description with an open mind. This typology should therefore not be regarded as a closed canon; it should rather evolve with the addition of a diverse range of research projects and the study of sacred sites in other religious contexts and in other parts of the world. As such, further studies and analyses will certainly add some more reconfiguration tactics to expand the existing typology. It may also be worthwhile to study other types of institutional sites to learn about their involvement in religious and religion-government dynamics.

Furthermore, the repertoire and the reconfiguration tactics of the EAA can be broadened and applied to many other types of spaces pertinent to identity negotiation. This facilitates not only the examination of historical and contemporary power dynamics but can also contribute to the sustainable transfer of specific concepts to the population. For example, this approach may be useful in the context of urban planning, international relations, environmental protection and public health initiatives.

Prospects

My research has raised further worthwhile topics, like that of the Tamil goddess Mariamman who likely split into multiple Việt, Cham and Indonesian goddesses. She may be an example of a category that I call a 'dissolved deity' for now, and her derivative Pô Nagar may have been dissolved to some degree as well. Dissolved deities may be a counterpart to consolidating deities, but more examples need to be studied to assert this claim.

Some of the sites which I studied did not make it into this book, like the temple cluster of Tam Giang in northern Vietnam. It may be interesting to explore similar sites to study how temples of the Guanyin Culture and Đạo Mẫu interact with each other. This has become a matter of raised importance because contemporary Đạo Mẫu organizations in Huế and elsewhere aspire to become the new national religion of Vietnam. And although they have so far not been crowned as such, there has been an impressive expansion of Đạo Mẫu that permeates almost every temple close to a river in the greater Huế area. It is possible that contemporary Đạo Mẫu groups have begun to reverse their role from that of preservers of identity and become transregional authorities themselves.

It will be exciting to grasp Đạo Mẫu's contemporary expansion mode (given its pluralistic lack of organization) and to examine whether and how the perceptions of the environment of Đạo Mẫu leaders and participants have changed, particularly in relation to competing sacred sites and the patronage of the government.

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10   Appendix[736]

V.1.   The Tứ Pháp Temple Complex and the Traces of the Buddhist State System

Before the Việt declared their independence from China, several attempts to legitimize local authority with the remnants of their aquatic local ideology had failed. However, although their subsequent empire building employed mostly Sinitic concepts, water deities remained important for the ruler's legitimacy. It was a tedious process for Đại Việt to integrate very different cultural groups separated by difficult terrain into a greater empire that extended from the northern mountain ranges to the narrow strips of central Vietnam. It might have been of advantage that Vietnamese sacred sites rarely focused on one main deity. Instead, incorporation and cohabitation were common practices for Vietnamese sacred site development. Indeed, there is a common northern Vietnamese reconfiguration tactic called "front to the Buddha, back to the god" (*tiền Phật hậu Thánh*). It refers to placing local, pre-Buddhist deity shrines behind the bigger Buddhist shrine to take them out of sight. Local religion remained quite open to new influences. Due to this, Buddhism was easily able to incorporate the sites of nature deities into their own infrastructure. This led to frequent hybridizations which caused unique local developments of Buddhism, while some others mirror the Sichuanese developments.

 This chapter describes the Buddhist/Popular dynamics in Vietnam that demonstrate how the historical development in northern and central Vietnam was affected by spatial reconfigurations of Buddhist character. This includes the occupation of nature deity sites, like the complex of Man Nương and the Tứ Pháp in Bắc Ninh. This illuminates the Buddhist treatment of aquatic deities, the Buddhist usage of water control, and the management of those sacred sites that were utilized to attract imperial favor.

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736   The following sections contain the case study clusters with the individual site surveys, additional analysis and historical context.

Maps of the Tứ Pháp Temples
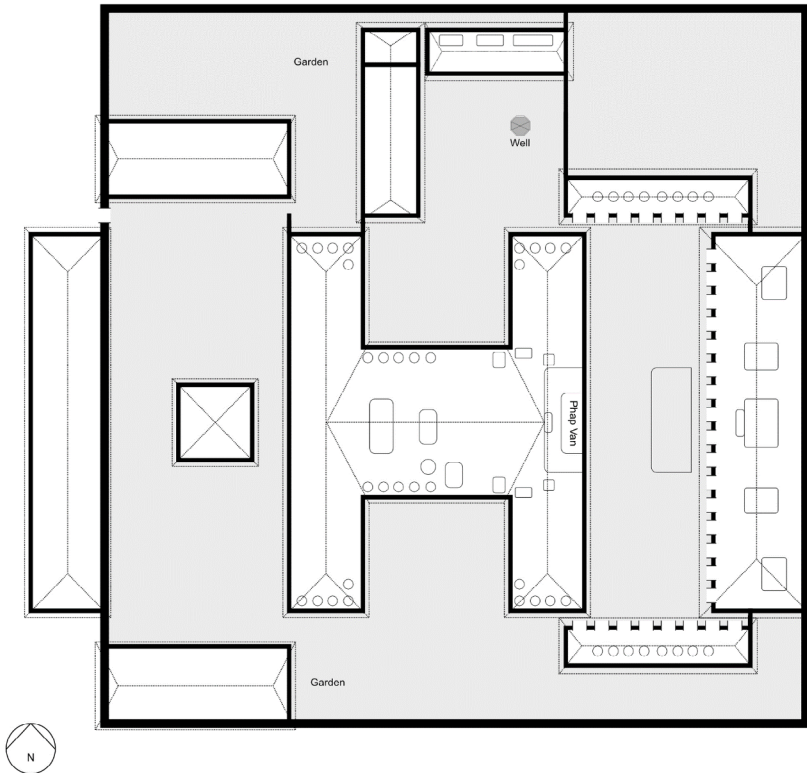
[Img. 7] The layout of the contemporary Pháp Vân Temple. It is the largest of the still existing Tứ Pháp temples
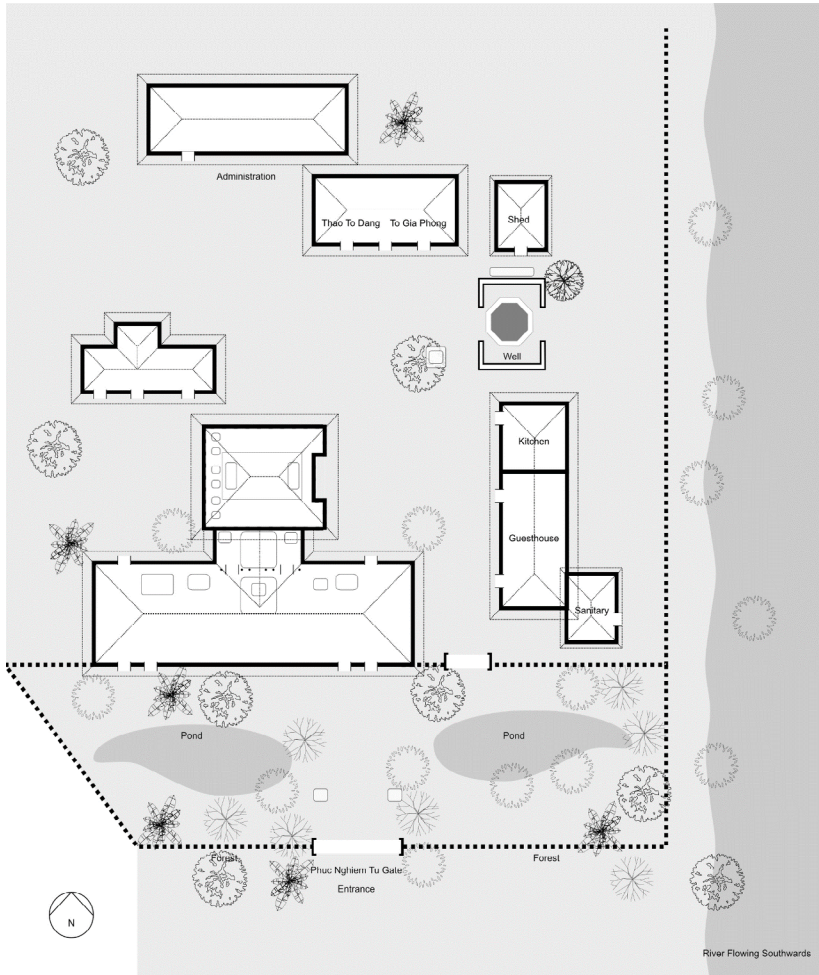
[Img. 8] The layout of the contemporary Man Nương Temple
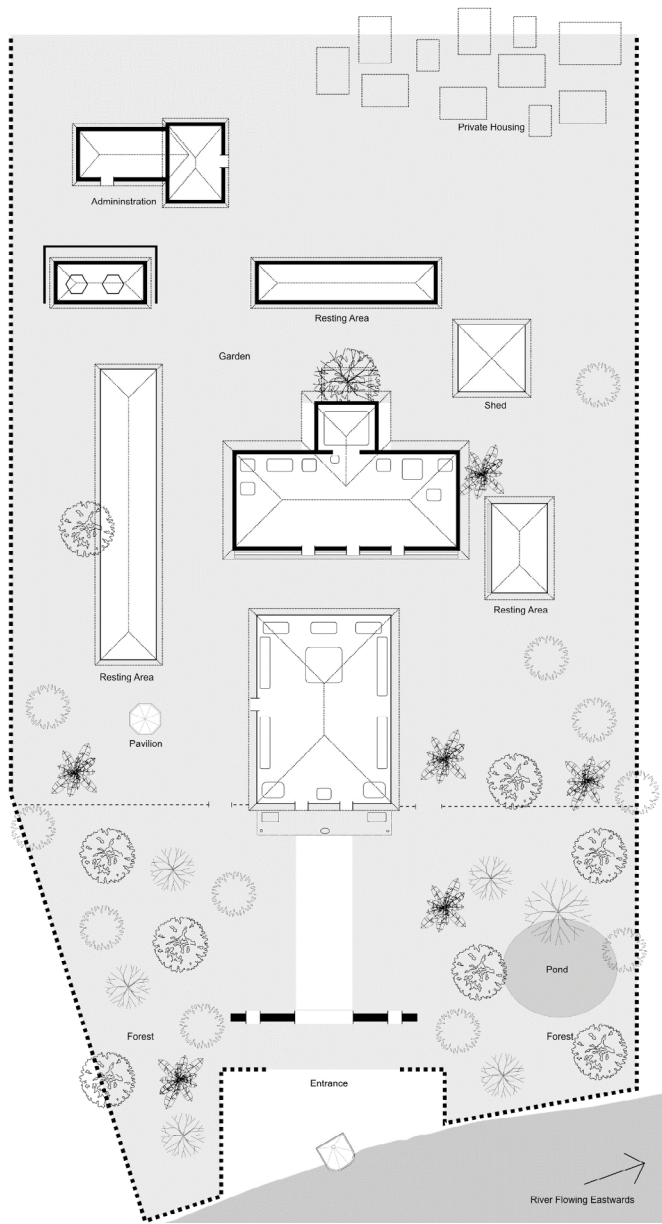
[Img. 9] The layout of the contemporary Pháp Lôi Temple
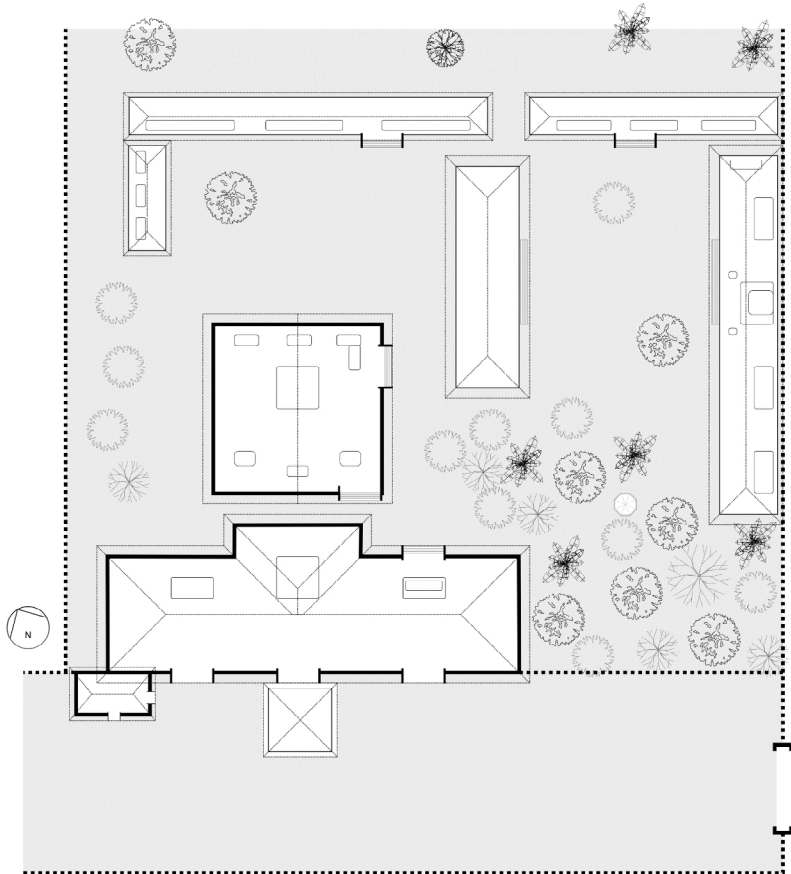
[Img. 10] The layout of the contemporary Pháp Điện Temple

V.1.1.   The Tứ Pháp System and the Bắc Ninh Temple Complex

The Tứ Pháp temples of Bắc Ninh are the only *Buddhist* temples in Vietnam where nature spirits are venerated in an officially invested manner. The temple complex reflects the connection between the Tứ Pháp Buddhas: the individual temples are all in close proximity to each another, which ensures shared veneration. There exist many more Tứ Pháp temples throughout northern Vietnam that are either dedicated to one of the Tứ Pháp Buddhas or contain all four of them. However, this is the result of a complex metaphysical investment system, so all of them can be traced back to the original complex in Bắc Ninh.

Tứ Pháp 四法 ['Four Dharmas'], describes a belief system in northern Vietnam that connects Buddhism with female rain deities. These deities do not possess personal names, they are named according to a Chinese — or Chinese interpreted — ritual and were turned into the 'Dharmas' of clouds, rain, thunder and lightning. Their appellations are Pháp Vân 法雲, Pháp Vũ 法雨, Pháp Lôi 法雷 and Pháp Điện 法電. They are respectively venerated in chùa Dâu, chùa Đậu, chùa Phi Tướng, and chùa Dàn. All these temples have various Chinese names as well, they are respectively: Diên Ứng tự 延應寺, Thành Đáo tự 成道寺, Phi Tướng Đại Thiền tự 非相大禪寺, and Trí Quả tự 智果寺. Although the term Tứ Pháp emphasizes the number of four, the system would not be complete without Man Nương 蠻娘. Man Nương is a legendary person who is likely rooted in another agrarian deity. She is considered the mother of the four Buddhas and venerated together with Tu Định and Khâu Đà La — two further characters in her legend — as the Tam Tổ 三組 ['Three Ancestors'] at chùa Tổ 祖寺 (or Phúc Nghiêm tự 福嚴寺).

In addition to the four Buddhas of the Tứ Pháp that are related to weather, there is a fifth one called Phật Thạch Quang. While the first four are related to rain cult and tree worship, the latter brings rock worship into the matter. As will be seen from the legend of Man Nương, when a magical tree was chopped to produce the Tứ Pháp statues, Man Nương's petrified baby also gained magical powers and was venerated like a Buddha. It is often suggested that Thạch Quang refers to the accidental excavation of some Cham artifact like a *lingam*. The Thạch Quang stone used to be placed in front of Pháp Vân, but by 2018 it was not there anymore. The stone is reported to have had a diameter of 24 cm and a height of 23 cm, its top was rounded, with circled lines, and split in the

middle at the top. That does indeed sound like a stone *lingam*, a Hindu object of worship that represents the penis of Shiva and the male power of creation in general. Apparently, there is evidence for a tradition of rock worship in the area of the modern chùa Dâu, and that rock worship transformed into the worship of Thạch Quang when Buddhism arrived.[737] For reasons of practicability, Phật Thạch Quang was transformed into the small, female Buddha images in front of the Tứ Pháp statues. They were interpreted as Man Nương by everyone whom I talked to during the site surveys and simultaneously presented as the sole "daughter" of the Buddhas.

The status of the Tứ Pháp may appear chaotic to foreign eyes because they connect to so many different ideas of belief. They were interpreted as Buddhas, as bodhisattvas[738] or agrarian deities, but are always female. Their gender did not pose a contradiction to historical or contemporary believers. It is explained that the Tứ Pháp were former deities who converted to Buddhism when they decided to follow the Buddha.[739] This implies that Buddhism would have brought the beneficent rain deities with it, rather than just occupying their territory. When Buddhism came to Vietnam, it was already eagerly producing figurines, seals and clay images. Buddhist images multiplied easily and assumed various roles, including offering protection, warding off disease and bringing rain.[740] However, it is more likely in this case that the Tứ Pháp were artificially constructed on the basis of indigenous agrarian deities, because even as all four of them have been associated with Buddhist concepts,[741] only the rainbringing Pháp Vân and Pháp Vũ were of functional relevance to the people's religious practices. Furthermore, the highest position was not held by the Buddha of rain, but by Pháp Vân, the Buddha of clouds, who could also represent all four

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737   Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, pp. 2–3.

738   Cf. AE.a13/15 p. 76.

739   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 358.

740   Cf. Skilling 2011, p. 374.

741   Pháp Vân with the concept of *dharmamegha*, Buddhism as a "fertilizing cloud" (cf. PDB 2014, p. 596), Pháp Vũ with the "Buddha truth that is raining down", Pháp Lôi with the "awakening thunder of Dharma", and Pháp Điện with the "lightening of truth". Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 27, 30.

principles by herself.[742] In contrast, Pháp Lôi and Pháp Điện's prestige was limited to their specific villages. The need to connect the four 'Buddhas' with each other may have had more to do with trans-communal relations than with their performative functions. The <u>renaming</u> of the local water deities proves how Buddhism was able to claim their original places of worship. But what made these sites so attractive for Buddhism?

The high status of the Tứ Pháp can be attributed to the commercial importance of chùa Dâu. It is the Tứ Pháp site that is closest to the ancient city of Luy Lâu 羸陵, the old capital of Jiaozhou under Chinese rule. The Chinese consciously chose administrative centers that were well-placed strategically and which had already been in use by the indigenous peoples. This saved time and investments in regards to establishing infrastructure.[743] In combination with an administrative elite of largely unwilling officials exiled to the south, this likely contributed to the numerous unrests during the Chinese rule. Although these unrests caused provincial capitals to fluctuate, Luy Lâu's strategic position in a traffic nexus between two rivers helped to maintain its economic status throughout the age of Chinese occupation. Since at least the first century BCE, it had been an economic, religious and administrative center that served as a famous fortress in the battles against the surrounding peoples like the Thai, Lao, Bo and Yi. For this reason, Luy Lâu had formative influence on the Vietnamese history of the early first millennium. The temple festivals and markets held at chùa Dâu contributed to this influence. Because the Tứ Pháp complex was of great importance for infrastructure and trade, political and religious authorities were encouraged to accelerate the centralization of the territory and create means of legitimacy that would allow them to control the site's benefits. The early first millennium at Luy Lâu was thus not only an important time for the development of an agrarian-Buddhist hybrid cult, but it also determined many of the dynamics between political and religious authorities for the coming centuries.

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742 Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, pp. 170–72. Pháp Vân was also a common epithet of Quan Âm in Sichuan and southern China, which may be relevant for the later history of Pháp Vân Temple.

743 Cf. O'Harrow 1979, p. 155 and Holmgren 1980, p. 37.

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As one of the capitals of Jiaozhi, the northernmost region of Jiaozhou, Luy Lâu lay between two major rivers used to transport the products of its rich sericulture. The most important routes ran to the Thái Bình 太平 river system towards the Southern Chinese Sea, another to the Red River Delta and the Chinese Sea,[744] and there was also a land route to the Chinese border that still exists as the Vietnamese Route 18.

In this era of intense southern Asian trade, the monsoon not only hindered Chinese officials from returning to China, but also forced the Indian traders to stay for a year before they could return home with their profits. Due to this, Indian lore spread to Vietnam and gained hold especially in the south. But because that was no directed colonial effort, the quality and choice of transcultural information that was exchanged differed strongly from the Sinitic kind. The advent of Buddhism began between the first century BCE[745] and the first century CE. At first, Central Asian and Javanese[746] Buddhists arrived by sea via the India-Thai-Mekong route that led north, others via the India-Burma-Yunnan route. The earliest Chinese Buddhist monks arrived as late as the third century. Some scholars argue that Buddhism arrived in Jiaozhi even earlier than in southern China.[747] Vietnam was influenced by all three of the big Buddhist traditions: Vajrayāna only spread marginally but in all Vietnamese regions, Theravāda was mostly present in the Indianized regions of central and southern Vietnam (among the Cham and Khmer, respectively), and Mahāyāna was the dominant Buddhist tradition in the Vietnamese north. Mahāyāna propagated equality, the idea of the bodhisattva and the selfless sacrificing of one's own interests to eliminate the suffering of others — this led to the spread of fearless and resilient missionaries throughout East Asia.

The first known active Buddhist missionaries in Vietnam were the Chinese Mou Bo 牟博 (Viet. Māu Bāc, 170—? CE), the Sogdian Khương Tăng Hội (Kang Senghui 康僧會, ?—280 CE), the Scythian Kalyānaruci 彊梁樓 (biographical dates unknown) who was known for translating the *Lotus Sutra*, and the

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744   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 20.

745   Cf. Nguyễn Duy Hinh 2007, p. 4.

746   As early as 132 CE, cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 10.

747   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 9–14, 35.

Indian Māhajīvaka 摩羅耆域 (Viet. Ma La Kỳ Vức, active in 294), known for traveling from Funan up to Luoyang.[748] The Buddhist missionaries exchanged scriptures among each other and started incorporating the plentiful local spirits to make their teaching more understandable to the indigenous peoples. Different groups of Buddhists employed different tactics, some groups were thus more successful in the upper levels of society and some more among the commoners. In this early stage of Buddhism, the group most successful among the Proto-Việt commoners was apparently Thiên Thai 天台 Buddhism.[749] Due to this multilateral heritage, Vietnamese Buddhism developed in a pluralistic manner without standardized practices or strong dogmatic differences between the different orders. The term 'school' was mostly a technical phrase reserved for writings about, but not 'of' Buddhism.[750] When the Chinese tightened control of Vietnam during the first century CE, they may not have immediately recognized that they were dealing with Buddhists. Strong Hindu and Theravāda influence led to clothing styles and practices that differed from those that Chinese Confucians would have recognized.

The Chinese in Jiaozhi were predominantly Confucians or Daoists.[751] By the turn of the millennium, Chinese governors had begun to take up their offices locally. When Luy Lâu received great numbers of Chinese refugees during the Wang Mang Era (9—23 CE), the local governors started to invest more energy into promoting Sinitic values and behaviors. They gradually Sinicized Jiaozhi to make it more comfortable to refugees, travelers and soldiers from the north. These often found no reason to return home again and rather accommodated themselves to local cultures.

Shi Xie 士燮 (Viet. Sĩ Nhiếp, 137—226 CE) was the most famous ruler of Luy Lâu (and later Long Biên 龍編). His reputation as having been wise and benevolent was in stark contrast to the previous greedy administrators. He offered protection to literati fleeing from the north and made use of their expertise.[752]

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748   Cf. de Casparis and Mabbett 1992, p. 292.

749   Cf. Taylor 1983, p. 156.

750   Cf. Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, p. 91, 98f; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 36.

751   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 1.

752   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 42.

This turned Jiaozhi into a junction of education: Confucian classics were reproduced, commented on and supplemented among the elite. Shi Xie encouraged the plurality of religions and used them to strengthen his own position. He was commonly accompanied by two incense-burning 'Hu' 胡[753] whenever he was in public,[754] but Daoists were also welcome, especially those of Ge Hong's 葛洪 (Viet. Cát Hồng, 283—343 CE) Lingbao School 靈寶派. Chinese documents mentioned all this only in passing, because they preferred to emphasize Shi Xie's 'Confucian' aspects and how he annotated some of the classics because he was so fond of them.[755] Shi Xie's patronage supplied the necessary resources for the development of Vietnamese Buddhism. Not everyone was pleased that this attracted countless Buddhists from surrounding countries. Magical technicians and Daoists competed with the Buddhist missionaries, they also used medicine and magic to convince the populace of their powers.[756]

For the second century, Mou Bo's *Lý Hoặc Luận* 理惑論 ['Treatise on Settling the Doubt'] reports that many of the native and foreign monks in Jiaozhi showed bad behavior (drinking, having a family, hoarding wealth). They also wore red and did not bow before authorities. A district chief reported for the year 425 CE that the people were not sincerely practicing Buddhism. Instead of repairing old temples, 'everyone' wanted to build a new one for their own prestige — thus, temple building and bronze casting should require permission to avoid the waste of financial goods. Indeed, early Buddhism in northern Vietnam was probably not what the Buddha had intended. Its adoption of local and Daoist ideas turned Buddha into a miracle-working, omnipresent and omniscient being that sanctioned moral behavior.[757]

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753 Usually, the term refers to northwestern ethnic groups, but in the Han era it could refer to almost anything non-Han. In this case, it certainly refers to Central Asians, because the most important Buddhist centers of the time that had sent their missionaries east were located in Central Asia.

754 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 42.

755 Cf. Dutton, Werner and Whitmore 2012, p. 17.

756 Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 46; Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, p. 11; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 14, 26, 36–7

757 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 18, 22, 34, 43–44. Although there are some disputes about the age and authorship of the *Lý Hoặc Luận*.

The development of the Tứ Pháp system began in the second to third centuries. From Luy Lâu, Buddhism had spread to the Red River Delta and subsequently to the Mã 馬 and Cả (Chin. *lanjiang* 藍江) river areas. At this time, the Tứ Pháp system had already turned into a symbol of Luy Lâu whose economic power spread together with the Tứ Pháp's alleged power to command rain. The heyday of Luy Lâu represents an example for peaceful transcultural ideology transfer without militaristic aggression, unlike the Chinese invasion. During this time, Buddhism lived and thrived through the work of tirelessly active missionaries and the transcultural exchange all over Asia.[758] Ethnocentric or proto-nationalist thoughts were not yet relevant. Buddhism was open to adapt to various local customs and changing political situations. It is said that in 574 CE, under the local ruler Hậu Lý Nam Đế 後李南帝 (r. 571–602), the Thiền patriarch Vinītaruci arrived in Luy Lâu. He allegedly introduced Thiền Buddhism (the Vietnamese equivalent to Chan or Zen Buddhism) until 580 CE and settled at Pháp Vân Temple.[759] If this is based on historical events, then these could have possibly caused the changes that are nowadays visible in the Man Nương legend. It is said that in Vinītaruci's time, there were twenty Buddhist temples with over 500 ordained monks that had already translated fifteen sets of sutras.[760] Archaeological studies did indeed prove that even before Vinītaruci's alleged activities, Buddhism was already well-established enough to have built large quarters for monks and guests, as well as study rooms at important sites.[761]

It was advantageous that Thiền Buddhism quickly became the favorite of the elite,[762] possibly because it was one of the few discernible Vietnamese Buddhist schools. Most monks active in Luy Lâu came from the elite families. This led to great patronage of the Buddhist temples that turned these into a not to be underestimated political-economic factor. Until the sixth century, Buddhism

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758 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 19.

759 TUTA 44a:2. However, the Vinītaruci mentioned in this context was probably a narrative construct, as the teaching lineage ascribed to him contains multiple anachronisms and served mainly as legitimation. Cf. Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, pp. 38–42.

760 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 47.

761 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 55–58, 62, 98.

762 Cf. Taylor 1983, pp. 156–57.

bloomed and supported local powers while China was politically preoccupied with its own chaos. However, due to lasting religious contacts, the influence of Chinese Buddhism gradually increased. Yet, starting with the seventh century, long-distance sea trade ships began to directly head for the newly established harbors of Guangdong and this led to a fast and prompt decline of Luy Lâu's importance.[763]

To gain insight into the history of the Tứ Pháp temples of Bắc Ninh, the following case introduces the spatial formation of the two most relevant temples — those of Pháp Vân and Man Nương — and quickly gives an overview over the other temples of the system.

V.1.2.   The Tứ Pháp Temple Complex
Bắc Ninh, Thanh Khương Commune, Thuận Thành district.
Date of the visit: 25th August 2018.
Accompanied by the site guide Nguyễn Thị Hòa, a staff member of the Relic Management Committee of Bắc Ninh Province Việt Nam, and Nguyễn Kim Oanh, an interpreter. Kim Oanh also served as my local informant for the Jade Spring Temple.

I. chùa Dâu thờ Pháp Vân 法雲寺 (also: Diên Ung Tự 廷應寺)
Nguyễn Thị Hòa, guide of the Bắc Ninh Relic Management Committee, states that the chùa Dâu is the oldest of the remaining structures. Building likely started in 187 CE, extended over forty years and was allegedly finished in the year Shi Xie died. Nowadays, the compound covers an area of 1730 square meters.[764] It is famous for its relation to the Man Nương legend and because Emperor Lý Thánh Tông 李聖宗 (r. 1054—1072) prayed for a son here just before he met a commoner woman named Ỷ Lan, who became his empress and provided him with an heir to his throne.[765] According to the official narrative, the temple has four names that reflect the different social groups interested in it. Cổ Châu Tự 古珠寺 refers to the local community, Thiền Đình Tự 禅廷寺 refers

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763   Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 108.

764   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 55.

765   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 2014, pp. 71.

to the Buddhist community, Pháp Van Tư 法雲寺 refers to the main deity and Diên Ung Tự 廷應寺 was the name granted to the site by Lý Thánh Tông after his wish for a son was fulfilled.

The modern visitor of the site meets a spacious forecourt with two side buildings and an administrative front building. These new constructions from 2004 surround the Hoà Phong Tower 和丰塔 that formerly stood in front of the temple. On its top is a water jar, a symbol of Quan Âm (Avalokiteśvara). On the left side of the tower is a four-sided stele that contains texts about governmental events and the reconstructions of the site, e.g., *Dư Khuyến Sang Kiến Tháo* 與劝創建造 about petitioning for the (re-)construction; *Hoạ Thai Tháp Bi Ký* 和臺塔碑記, a record of the pagoda's reconstruction of 1737; the *Di Lưu Vạn Thế Cơ* 遺留萬世基, a record about leaving a basis for future generations, and finally a hardly readable text about the reconstruction of the Late Lê era *Dĩ Niên Trọng Thu* 丁已年仲秋. To the right side of the entrance, there is a sheep statue. Many legends are attached to it. According to the guide, one tells of a Buddhist missionary who brought sheep to Vietnam. Some of them got lost, one of them found its way to this temple and another one to the Shi Xie's mausoleum just three kilometers away.

The tower has a square layout of seven meters and was once a nine stories high pagoda. Nguyễn Thị Hòa relates that the tower was part of the imperial rain rituals that took place at this site. The original tower was probably erected between the sixth and seventh centuries.[766] Strange stone creatures flank the four steps into the tower, they are not the usual lions or lion-dogs. The guide says they are supposed to be squirrels, but it may just be a unique variant of the Vietnamese Nghê 猊,[767] which was very popular during the Lý dynasty and also used in later dynasties. The current brick tower is 17 m high and dates to 1737,

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766 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 64, 67. Between the thirteenth and seventeenth century, it collapsed and only one story of height was left.

767 The Nghê is a very variable fabulous beast indigenous to Vietnam. It is one of the nine children of the dragon and often identified with the Chinese *suanni* 狻猊. The term can be translated as "wild beast", "wild horse", or "lion", yet none of these animals are identical with the Nghê. Like many 'dragons', it is a chimera and in later centuries often looked like a borzoi dog. In Vietnam, the Nghê took over the position of the stone lion *shishi* 石獅 as a guardian of temples and high-ranking houses.

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additional conservation enhancements took place in 1988.[768] Its three empty levels give it a hollowed out appearance. While the ground floor was recently enhanced, the two upper levels have been kept as original as possible. The tower also serves as the front hall and thus contains four statues of the Heavenly Kings placed in all corners. The statues are comparatively simple and of East Asian in appearance. All of them are pale and look quite similar, they can only be distinguished by their attributes. Above them hangs a bronze bell dating to 1793 and an anchor-shaped gong from 1813, both are decorated with praising inscriptions for the temple — they are hung too high to be read, though.

The original temple had a công-type layout and was oriented from the west to the east. The original layout has nowadays melted into one building.[769] Its front roof is decorated with two phoenixes and a scroll that shows the Eight Trigrams. The other roofs are straight and red-tiled, showing only few phoenix and lion decorations. Inside the main building, the front part shows on each side one half of the "Eight Vajras" Bát bộ Kim Cương (multiplied derivations of Vajrapāṇi 金剛手) which serve as temple guardians. Both groups are accompanied by one giant Dharmapāla who receives his own sacrifices. The very first shrine which is made from visibly aged wood has been refurbished. It is aniconic and has been arranged in such a way that the female Buddha behind it is already visible. The Chinese script plaque reads Diên Ung Tự 廷應寺 ['The Temple That Answers to the Court']. The Vietnamese note reads Án Ngoại Công Đồng ['The Court of Foreign Affairs']. Since this temple received countless pilgrims from all over the realm and was a destination for processions from the court, this was a sensible title for the first shrine. To the left of this shrine are the Hell Kings. Behind it, in the center part, there is a small altar called Tam Bảo Thượng, dedicated to the Three Jewels (or Trikaya) of Buddhism (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), which are normally represented by a triad. Here, the altar shows a bronze statue of a child Buddha with a hieratic, adult Shakyamuni behind it. To the right, between this altar and the second half of the Hell Kings, is a seat for the displaced chùa Đậu thờ Pháp Vũ. The Rain Buddha's chùa Đậu

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768   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 58.

769   Detailed measurements of the individual halls can be found in Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 50–70.

was destroyed 1951, but the icon had already been moved to chùa Dâu in 1948. In front of it is a protective smaller statue that, while in the temple, symbolizes Man Nương, but when it is used for processions, embodies the Rain Buddha herself. In front of both is a small altar full of sacrifices. At the end of the central hall, there is an icon on the left that depicts the famous Trần dynasty Confucian scholar Mạc Đĩnh Chi 莫挺之 (1272—1346). He rebuilt the temple and erected the original nine-story-pagoda,[770] which is why he is honored in this place. He is depicted in official clothing, seated in relaxed meditative pose, but has a sorrowful expression. Nguyễn Thị Hòa sees no conflict in the fact that a Confucian official is honored in a Buddhist temple or that he was involved in its reconstruction.

The middle of the back hall shows the shrine of Pháp Vân, the Cloud Buddha. The style of her shrine is very different from the others, it seems to be simpler with fewer carvings, painted with red and golden decorations. The oversized, plum-colored icon with a solemn woman's face dates to a renovation of the seventeenth century. She is clad in yellow clothing with a red headdress. In front of her is a dark brass vase. She is accompanied by two much smaller attendants, who are supposed to be "Golden Boy" (Kim Đồng 金童) and "Jade Girl" (Ngọc Nữ 玉女, originally *long nự* 龍女 "Dragon Girl"), who would normally accompany the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. And although Kim Đồng wears male garb, his features are more feminine than usual.[771] To the side of the Cloud Buddha's shrine, the two sponsors of the aforementioned renovations are depicted as slightly smaller wooden statues of women, one clad in red, the other in white, representing famous seventeenth century local donors.[772] These embody the continued engagement of women with this temple. Further, both sides of the main shrine exhibit the equipment for the annual procession: a small red sedan chair for the tiny icon and a small throne. The latter is dated to a reconstruction which took place in a *đinh vị* 丁未 Year, most likely 1667.

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770   This event was later embellished by a legend that said the scholar learned how his mother was suffering in hell and during a descendit ad inferna he learned he had to build a hundred temples and a pagoda to save his mother's soul. Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 66.

771   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 62 relates how this resembles the practice of women playing male roles during temple festivals.

772   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 61, 69–70.

In the left corner of the back hall is a simplistic statue with uncommon and bland facial features and an unusual clothing style. It is made from wood and placed on a stone lotus pedestal. The statue depicts Vinītaruci (?—594), the Indian Buddhist missionary who allegedly founded the first Thiền school of Vietnam. The left wall is also filled with an altar of three painted statues that depict sitting men: the outside one sits on a white tiger, the center one on a black elephant. The left one is dressed in martial gear, the right one in clerical clothing. They are all made from stone but colorfully lacquered. These may be Vairocana, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra, but the altar has no label. To their left, there are two simply designed female bodhisattvas. On the right wall there is another unlabeled altar with three statues depicting a monk, an official and a member of the military. They are also flanked by two bodhisattvas of whom at least one is female. In the right back corner of the hall, there is a gold-plated Thousand-Armed Quan Âm. Next to it is the exit of the hall which leads six steps down to another narrow court that lines up to a gallery of individually created sculptures of arhats. The temple's last hall is an open gallery-style; it contains everything expected from a more typical Buddhist temple as well as eighteen steles. There is the *Hậu Phật Bi* 後佛碑, for example, dated to the 7th month of the 21st year of the era Cảnh Hưng 景興 [1761], which reports about a village that borrowed the icon and returned it dutifully, which established new relations between the two locations. The *Cổ châu tự Hậu Phật Bi* 古珠寺後佛碑 is another stele about returning the borrowed icon from a close village. However, it also refers to some conflicts with a Confucian scholar, lists the number of men and women who were contributed to the temple as servants or for festival preparations, and mentions a violation of the temple's etiquette. The stele seems to have two faces, but the second one cannot be accessed. The *Thạch Phật Bi Ký* 石佛[773]碑記 is a partly damaged stele from the Minh Mạng (1820—1841) reign that shows a copied older text referencing an imperial ritual and the fields donated to the temple. This last gallery hall is only raised by two steps compared to the main hall's six-step-high platform. It was, therefore, likely added much later and not an original part of the temple. Far in the right corner is a shrine to Kṣitigarbha, followed by a shrine to a version of Ānanda — Đức Thánh Hiền

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773 Written with a variant of the character consisting of 亻 and 天, human and heaven.

— depicted here with a civil and a demon attendant. He is commonly venerated for wisdom but also for making women able to join the sangha. Next is a fat Buddha of Luck standing on a fish. Almost at the center, a simple altar to the Bà Hậu "The Ladies" depicts the solemn statue of a very modest woman. This shrine is used for the veneration of the meritorious women who contributed to the temple. The center shrine is again dedicated to the Three Jewels of Buddhism Tam Bảo Hậu, embodied by a typical male Buddha triad. However, in front of the triad, the Buddha who would usually be Shakyamuni has some female traits and sits on a kind of elephant-turtle hybrid. To its left sits a pale male figure in civilian attire. The shrine is headed by a Chinese script plaque that identifies it as a Hall of the Great Hero, normally the main hall of a Buddhist temple which would be situated in its center. To the left of that shrine is one that shows Avalokiteśvara in the form of a mature woman who holds a chest in her hands. Interestingly, the shrine is called Quan Âm Thị Kính — this is not the ordinary Quan Âm, it is the "new" sinified version of Quan Âm that originated in an epic poem from the nineteenth century. Next to her are three more unreadable steles. Further to the left follows the shrine of Đức Ông, who is depicted like an ordinary human and flanked by two attendants. This is Anāthapiṇḍika (*geigudu* 給孤獨) who was a follower of Buddha who got rich twice and supported the Sangha. He is also called Cấp Cô Độc (Sudatta 須達多, his former name) and serves as a "Buddhist" god of wealth who provides for the poor and homeless. Thus, he became the great patron of the laymen.[774] Đức Ông is also worshiped as a protector of the realm [V.5.] — possibly because his red-faced statues tend to look similar to Quan Vũ (Guan Yu). The veneration of Anāthapiṇḍika is something uniquely Vietnamese and does not commonly occur in other East Asian countries.[775] The far-left corner of the gallery is filled with a votive horse and some more steles, of which some are strongly damaged. Most deal with the lending and returning of the Pháp Vân icon or contain notes

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773   Cf. PDB 2014, pp. 100–101.774

775   He can also be a guardian or a protector of children. The latter does not fit his Buddhist contextualization, it may be that his raised status results from the incorporation and amalgamation with other deities, possibly an example for <u>elevation</u>.

about donations to the temple. One of them is dated to the fourth year of Gia Long (1806), another to the fifth year of Minh Mạng (1825).

The second half of the Arhats is shown in another gallery at the opposite side of the courtyard. It leads to the eastern court, which was added at a later point parallel to the main building. The guest house of the temple is situated in the front, while the east shows a long building called Nhà thờ Tổ và thờ Mẫu ['House of Worshiping the Ancestors and Mothers'] that contains shrines to the most important abbots of the temple and the shrine of the Mothers from Đạo Mẫu. There is a well in front of the Mothers' shrine. Behind the court lies a garden and at the very last point before reentering the front court, there is a stele named *Sắc Chỉ Cổ châu Diên Ung Tự* 勅旨古珠廷應寺 ['Imperial Decrees on Cổ châu's Diên Ung Temple'] which contains the interactions of the first three Nguyễn dynasty emperors with the site.

II. chùa Tổ thờ Man Nương

In 2018, the 25th of August was the day of the Ghost Festival (Tết Trung Nguyên 中元節), when the people would contact and feed their deceased ancestors. The tradition merged with the Buddhist Ullambana, and since that festival is meant to especially honor fathers and mothers, it has become the Vietnamese Mother's Day. Because of this, the Man Nương temple was especially busy and prepared gift bags for visitors, which are considered a blessing and meant to be brought to the other temples — a kind of connective gift. In the same way, in each spring during the Buddha's birthday festival, sticky rice cake is made in order to be evenly distributed to all the other Tứ Pháp temples.

Due to its remote location, this temple was only renovated occasionally, once in 1313 and during the Nguyễn dynasty. It is oriented from south to north. The modern front court contains two eye-shaped lotus ponds under the shade of the surrounding trees. On the long side, there are two stone pillars leading to a path that ends in a single double-story gate of ~4 m height: The original main entrance that now leads into nowhere still carries the old name of the temple: Phúc Nghiêm Tự 福嚴寺. The other half of the long court is the 'front' side of the temple's main hall, also named Phúc Nghiêm Tự. The doors between the pillars are usually closed, but were opened in the afternoon in celebration of the day. Then, the hall turns into a roofed gallery that offers the most import-

ant shrines to the visitors. The hall has a width of impressive nine jian and is raised on a five-flat-step (roughly equal to three normal steps) platform. The main building joins up with another single gate called Thuận Tiện Môn 方便門 ['Gate of Upāya']. Some modern facilities have been squeezed in between the front corner and the guest house between the temple's walls.

To the left, high stairs lead into the main building. This connects two further halls in a vertical relation to the large front hall: it is a đinh-style layout which precedes the larger temple complex. Since the đinh-type is the oldest of the Vietnamese temple layouts, fitting the age of the site, one can see that the long hall represents the original main hall. The eastern side of the main building has a large indention that is two-thirds of a hall deep, but the front is raised to the level of an altar. The front presents a poster with the official narrative of the site in modern Vietnamese. People engage with the poster by offering votive flowers. The poster is embraced by two half-pillars with tributes that connect to the outside wall and it seems as if the poster has replaced a shrine or altar. The main building shows different stages of refurbishment with different degrees of success. The building has a clerestory[776] which once may have had windows or another kind of large gap that is now closed with brown wooden planks. The roof eaves show unusual decorations of dragon heads looking 'back' towards the roof. The outer sides have window sized decorations; one shows plants and the other shows a red-faced person who is identified as a Heavenly King. On each side, former windows became white surfaces of which the lower ones are decorated with Chinese characters (*nghiêm* 嚴 and *trang* 莊). Although unreachable without a ladder, the building was 'edited' by someone who placed female figurines and one dog figurine on the rim of the roof. The characters *từ bi* 慈悲, an epithet of Avalokiteśvara, are written on the north side of the building. The western side has a raised terrace that is half a jian wide. There is a smaller indention for a shrine, in its center is a votive Buddha (not identifiable) accompanied by the Lucky Gods (Tam Tinh 三星). The altar is full of sacrifices, surrounded by votive flowers.

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776   A clerestory is a half-a-story high upward elongation of a building that normally contains window rows to let more light inside. In East Asian architecture, they usually do not have windows but serve to artificially raise the height of buildings.

The only parts of the main building that can be accessed on the inside are the floor behind the steps and the 'horizontal beam' of the đình-structure that is the main hall. It contains five different shrines of which the first one, a simple stone pedestal, shows a gold-plated hieratic Kṣitigarbha. The sacrificial table in front of it is well filled. It is followed by the lacquered icon of Đức Ông, who appears here with a scholar's cap and a red face. The red face connects him to a military-noble aspect, as he is sometimes venerated for the military feats of the realm. Đức Ông sits on a wooden throne that is placed on a stone pedestal, his richly filled altar is also made from stone and connected to the pedestal.

Next is the center of the main hall marked by four old wooden pillars. The space between the pillars is occupied by a large shrine. Its protruding altar is so full with sacrifices that the throne in its center is hardly visible. The aniconic shrine is dedicated to Quan Âm and it is located parallel to the vertical 'beam' of the đình layout. Between the Quan Âm shrine and that of Đức Ông, there is a narrow opening that leads to the back chamber, which ends in a concrete wall where there must have once been a connection to the rest of the vertical compartment. This narrow opening is the only way to access the enormous Man Nương shrine in the heart of the main hall, whose altar is full of sacrifices and fresh incense. To the left side of the Man Nương shrine is a separate, layered shrine dedicated to a fat Buddha which is in bad condition. To the right side is another layered shrine with a medium sized statue of Khâu Đà La 伽羅闍梨 (i.e., Kalacarya). Khâu Đà La is an Indian spiritual master in the Man Nương legend, he lived supposedly in the second century CE. The main shrine of Phật Mẫu Man Nương 佛母蠻娘 is very elaborate. The central icon resembles Pháp Vân and Pháp Vũ, but is dressed in yellow with a yellow crown. On the wall behind her hang two small cabinet shrines depicting her father and mother with small statuettes. In front of her is a smaller icon sitting in another cabinet shrine, this icon is supposed to be Man Nươngs daughter who was turned into stone and became Thạch Quang. Returning to the main hall, next to the opening to the back chamber on the right side, there follows a simple stone pedestal and an altar dedicated to Đức Thánh Hiền (Ānanda). In the left corner of the hall, there is a large, recent altar with a triple shrine for the icons of the Tam Tòa Thánh Mẫu of the Tứ Phủ religion [V.4.3.], with the fourth Mother put in front, flanked by two attendants and the tiger spirit below the altar. The fourth mother is the

green-dressed Mẫu Thượng Ngàn (Lâm Cung Thánh Mẫu 林宮聖母), Mother of Mountains and Forests, who is commonly placed close to springs. All four mother icons have individually painted faces. Sacrifices are rich, and incense has blackened the altar.

Leaving the main hall and passing the vertical part of the đình-structure with the poster about the temple's history, there is another building of three jian width. It is raised five steps to a platform, appearing higher than the đình structure. The steps are fronted with two stone pillars that contain tributes. Its front is made from stone, it has two smaller gates and a wooden central gate. This building is not old at all. Although it appears rectangular from the outside, entering it from the east side shows that it consists of a broad front hall and a narrow back hall. The eastern side is decorated with the first half of the Hell Kings. In the front wall towards them sits a shrine for Quan Âm Chuẩn Đề 觀音准胝. This is not really a Quan Âm, since Chuẩn Đề is the Vietnamese name for Cundī 準提菩薩, the Buddha-Mother, whose cult was mostly relevant to Amoghavajra's Chinese Vajrayāna Buddhism in the eighth century. She is usually placed opposite to Quan Âm, but just like with Japan's Jundei Kannon 准胝観音, this is an amalgamation of both. The icon has the appropriate eight arms but also wears a bodhisattva crown with the image of Amitabha on it.

In the back niche of the hall, there is the large Buddhist altar standing on a wooden platform, including a wooden fish drum[777] and a gong. The three-level altar is raised so high that the last Buddha statue's head reaches into the roof console structure. The Buddhist altar shows a child Buddha with a spirit shield[778] behind it. The spirit shield itself is made from bronze and shows several bodhisattvas and a tiny Buddhist triad. Behind it sits a fat Maitreya, a

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777   The wooden fish drum common in East Asian Buddhist temples was originally associated with rain rituals. Cf. Eberhard 1968, pp. 367–68.

778   A spirit shield (Viet. *tường bình phong*) is a specific version of a "shadow screen" (Chin. *yingbi* 影壁) in traditional Sinitic architecture. These more or less elaborate, free-standing pieces of wall may or may not be decorated with mosaics or intricate carvings/chiseling. Spirit shields are usually placed on the central axis directly behind the entrance to a site or behind important icons/objects, occasionally in front of icons, to ward off evil influences. The idea is that evil spirits and similar beings can only move in straight lines, so the spirit shield prevents them from entering or approaching. Commonly, spirit shields are decorated with strong and efficacious creatures like dragons, tigers or qilin ('Chinese unicorns').

hieratic Shakyamuni Buddha and to each side, a medium sized attendant in painted colors. Shakyamuni is flanked by a tiny bronze Ānanda statue and a painted Quan Âm statue. Between the bigger Buddha statues are numerous votive figurines. The last and highest level consists of the Buddha triad, but the central Buddha's facial features appear more feminine than the others. According to the content that is summarized as Tam Bảo Thương [Statues of the Three Jewels] this should be the main hall of a Buddhist temple and its placement seems to have aimed for centrality. However, due to the comparatively tiny size of the compound, it is dislocated to the west, which shows that it is an <u>insertion</u>. On the western side of the hall, there are the other Hell Kings and a Quan Âm Tọa Sơn, who is normally an Avalokiteśvara who resembles the Chinese style of the Nanhai Guanyin with a baby in one hand and a parrot on her shoulder, which relates to the story of Quan Âm Thị Kính. However, this statue has neither a child nor a parrot. It is an older painted stone statue that was refurbished with lacquer and bronze color and now shows a pretty regular Quan Âm, while a tiny male figure at the side of the rock that she is sitting on has not been restored at all. Additional small Quan Âm statues have been placed on her altar as votive gifts.

Between this Buddhist hall and the kitchen building roughly opposite to it, there is a small tower-like structure that seems to represent a stupa. The lower part is open on two sides and contains a fruit and incense offering. It is the Lăng Phật Mẫu Tứ Pháp 堎佛母四法 ['Tomb of the Buddha Mother of the Four Dharmas']. The tomb was renovated a while ago but is not in good condition. Its top part has some Chinese characters, among them *mu* 母 for "mother" and *kong* 空 for the Buddhist concept of emptiness. Behind this stupa and right beside the river shore is the Giếng Man Nương 井蠻娘, supposedly the original spring that Man Nương magically produced during a drought, or which, according to other legends, was created by the monk Kalacarya. Nowadays it is an entirely masoned well that is at least five meters deep. It sits in a square that is made from bricks, with interrupted brick corner walls that are topped with modern lotus buds. The well is still used for water, and to celebrate Man Nương, visitors bring flower sacrifices to get some of the water in return. At the back end of the brick square, there is a large modern wall showing several dragons, something that seems completely out of place in this temple — at least

if one forgets that this well originated from a spring and that Man Nương was not originally Buddhist. It is quite intriguing that someone chose to erect a wall with such symbolism here, especially in modern times. Positioned behind the well, it is not a spirit shield. Here, there might have been some confusion, possibly stemming from a legend associated with the temple that speaks of a Small Dragon Well that never runs dry. However, this legend pertains to a small, stupa-like pillar adjacent to the well, which may or may not have been once connected to a water source.

In the back of the temple, between the Buddhist hall and the well, there is another, slightly larger and modernized three jian wide building that contains the office of the abbot and a shrine hall to the former abbots. It is called Thao Tổ Đàng [卆]祖堂 and the shrine is called Tổ Gia Phóng 祖家風. Despite the strong association of the site with female entities, only a small group of monks resides here. The last significant building in the compound's northwest contains their living quarters and a library. The temple staff and the abbot showed great hospitality and were ready to fill me in on some details about the practice at the temple. The abbot also states that the majority of sacrifices in the temple are flowers, and that the jackfruit trees — once donated in the distant past — contribute to the temple's income.

V.1.2.1.   The Other Temples of the Complex

There are two more temples belonging to the Tứ Pháp complex of Bắc Ninh which will be quickly summarized here. The word *tướng* of the chùa Tướng thờ Pháp Lôi points to a local village that was already famous for being the home of a female general who had once served the Trưng sisters during their rebellion. The village provided land for the building of the temple and in return, it received the third icon of the Tứ Pháp. The site of the Thunder Buddha is also called Phi Tương Đại Thiền Tự 非相大禪寺, which refers to the Buddhist concept of 'shapelessness' because thunder is only sound without shape. The temple of Pháp Lôi is located in the remote curvature of a river. Its original size was maybe half of the chùa Dâu's extent, and half of the modern compound is nowadays occupied by recreational space. There are only four religious structures left within the compound, plus one administrative building. The temple is further framed by two white Quan Âm statues. One is placed at the bank

of the river that flows in front of the temple and the other is venerated in a modern, octagonal pavilion in front of the main hall's entrance. The latter is a white water-pouring[779] Quan Âm with many sacrifices.

The original main hall once had a công-type layout. In 1982, the street in front of the temple was damaged and the front hall part of the building collapsed. The open wall to the front was closed with wooden boards that can be opened for festive occasions to give a free view inside the Pháp Lôi shrine. The hall now faces a tiny forecourt raised on a one-step platform. Two large Dharma protectors, Japanese-style stone lanterns and a large incense vessel have been added to it. The original roof of the main hall had to be removed and was replaced with corrugated metal. The sides of the main hall join up with a smaller stone wall that surrounds the compound. The temple can be accessed from its left side and the main hall is also — quite unusually — accessed from the west. The main hall's wooden structure dates to the Later Lê era and has visibly aged. From the former công-layout of the main hall, only the 'upper beam' and the longitudinal part remain. The longitudinal part of the main hall had to be reinforced with concrete, the current main hall is now five jian wide and two jian deep.

The shrine of Pháp Lôi is situated in the center of the 'upper beam' and richly decorated. Over the shrine is a plaque that reads "Revealing Efficacy." The icon is smaller than that of the other Tứ Pháp sites, less androgynous and more matronly. The original roof structure above it has been preserved, the remains of the resting-hill roof have high eaves but few decorations. Four of the old lacquered stone statues to each side of the shrine were also damaged. They hold Buddhist objects or gesturing mudras although they are wearing the attire of officials, an unusual iconography. All of them are of different ages and ethnicities. They align with two sets of hell kings along the outer walls.

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779   Quan Âm holding a vase in both hands is a traditional form in Buddhist iconography, but Quan Âm pouring out water from the vase is an aquatic iconography mostly found in the context of hydrolatric temples. Tạ Chí Đại Trường (2014, pp. 197–98) is convinced that the Water Pouring Quan Âm is the incorporation of an indigenous Vietnamese deity. However, I have seen several examples of the Water Pouring Guanyin in hydrolatric temples of Sichuan as well.

It was claimed that Vinītaruci stayed at Pháp Lôi temple first before he moved on to Pháp Vân temple. A wooden icon of him is found crammed into a tiny and hardly accessible space between the back wall and the Pháp Lôi shrine. Even though, it receives many offerings. The crammed situation is likely a consequence of the 1982 damage. Before, the temple had a Thập điện Diêm Vương 十殿閻王 that would have contained a Vinītaruci shrine, followed by a hall of dharma protectors and the Western Paradise triad. The Western Paradise triad is now situated to the right side of the Pháp Lôi shrine in the shape of an altar with statues from different eras, of different styles and materials. In the center is a Shakyamuni-Amitabha amalgam, a female Quan Âm with an androgynous Quan Âm to the right, and a four-armed bodhisattva in the southern style to the left who should be Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

To the left of Pháp Lôi, behind the hell kings, an altar shows a stone relief with a Buddha in a Central Asian style. To its left is a rubbing of the 1697 stele with a Vietnamese translation of it exhibited. The stele *Phi Tướng tự* 非相寺 of 1697 describes the temple's restoration, which was initiated by a monk, a nun and the village head. It notes that no other steles existed at the temple (at that time). The first part of the stele mentions everyone involved and those who donated money. The joint effort recreated an Upper Palace *thượng cung* 上宮 (the section where Pháp Lôi is venerated), an Incense Hall *thiêu hương* 燒香 (the original longitudal part) and a front hall (for the ancestors) — this is the typical structure of a công-layout. They also added a back hall, a two-sided hallway, a bell tower and a main hall with Buddha statues. New bells were cast, new sutras printed, but the first mention of the fully-named main deity Thánh Pháp Lôi Phật 法雷佛神 ['Deity Buddha Thunder Dharma'], occurred only in 1743. Other than in the deity's name and the 'Buddha' statues, there are no further references to anything Buddhist about the temple. There are younger steles from 1839 and 1873 which list the donations from wealthy locals. A stele of 1855 notes how the temple, which was by then jointly managed by three villages, had been destroyed. Another stele, which is undated, records the reconstruction of the "upper courtyard" and mentions two constellation deities that are no longer present in the current temple.

Instead, the contemporary temple connects the main hall to another through a corrugated metal-roofed courtyard: a modern hall with a moderate

đinh-layout that is three jian wide but only has one central gate. The dharma protectors inside are painted murals. The first altar is dedicated to Đức Ông and a small altar beside it shows the village's tutelary deities in the form of three unnamed officials. The back niche contains the expected multi-layered altar with the Buddhist triad, Buddhist students and a newborn Buddha. However, the central layer is dominated by four different votive Quan Âm figurines and several images of her. On the left side of the hall, there is a shrine to another bronze Shakyamuni flanked by two female bodhisattvas, a shrine to Thánh Hiền 聖賢 (Ānanda) and the original bronze bell from the bell tower that no longer exists.

Outside, at the back wall of the Buddhist hall, there is an altar in front of growing vines and the many incense sticks point to the veneration of a tree deity. In the western part of the temple, there are also two tomb stupas for monks who previously lived here. This temple is full of contrasts, showing a hybrid material culture in which the purely Buddhist elements are recent, but even these emphasize the female Bodhisattva Quan Âm.

In comparison, the material-physical substrate of the chùa Dàn thờ Pháp Điện, formerly Trí Quả tự 智果寺, is a bit more complicated. Trí Quả has two temples that are dedicated to different variants of Pháp Điện, but this is the one that the commune was probably named after. For clarification, this site is also called chùa Dàn Phương Quan, like the local village. According to the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh*, the temple was restored in the eleventh century and later played a major role in ending droughts. The site was most recenlyt renovated in 2017. The Pháp Điện temple exhibits the ordinations of 1786 and 1802, when Pháp Điện and the two city gods were granted titles by the government. These city gods are a god of light and a female earth god. In total, there are four steles from the Nguyễn dynasty exhibited in front of what is now the central hall, as well as some inscriptions which refer to previous refurbishments, e.g., in 1903. They suggest that the site received slightly more ritual attention than the chùa Pháp Lôi and also that large parts of the original temple are missing. The temple's stone gate, enhanced with metal wings, stands in the middle of nowhere. The compound is nowadays enclosed by a high metal fence and dominated by a large, arid frontyard made from red tiles. This courtyard leads to several

buildings of the local government and the recently renovated front hall of the temple has thus been adjusted in color to fit in with them. The front hall is marked by a square pavilion with double eaves.

The front hall is unusual seven jian wide, but it is only two jian deep. The backside of the hall has two entrances to the temple and now basically functions as an elaborate gate. However, it is not an accident that this hall closely resembles a Đình. It is apparent that the front elements of the temple have been lost and that the Đình which used to be in the center of the temple now replaces those elements. The local Đình and the Pháp Điện temple were once located so close to each other that they slowly merged into the đình-chùa Dàn.

The first shrine inside the Đình is dedicated to the Graceful Patriarchs (Đức Ân Tổ Nghiệp 德恩祖業). However, the icon within of an old man with a scholar's cap has been locked away and the temple warden tries to divert the attention away from this hall. The shrine likely depicts a local ancestor or tutelary deity of the village and would disturb the Buddhist image of the site. The front hall has its own back niche which houses a big shrine to the emperor (Thánh Cung Vạn Tuế 聖躬萬歲). The emperor is aniconically represented by an urn, and there is no hint as to which emperor may be remembered here.[780] Next, there is the Altar of Bright Benevolence (Minh Thiện Đàn 明善壇) which depicts the newborn Buddha and a red-faced icon that is likely Đức Ông, since the rhymes allege that the altar is meant to bring fortune. An image of the Buddhist triad behind the altar seems like an arbitrary attempt at superscription since there is nothing especially Buddhist about this hall.

Behind the Đình lies a notably older courtyard. Although the central hall or "upper palace" is only raised on a one-step platform, the staircase leads to an entrance higher up. The architecture of the hall dates back to the Later Lê and Nguyễn dynasties. Inside, the hall is only two jian wide and is separated in front and back compartments. In the front part, behind an altar with three bronze vessels, there are two empty shrines that resemble sedan chairs. What is missing is the Tổ Nghề 祖藝 group, the 'ancestor professions' who according

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780   Like in other Buddhist sites, it may be a shrine dedicated to the institution of the emperor in general, because Buddhism subjected itself to the empires that supported it. Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 168.

to local legend taught the people here how to make fish hooks. It is possible that they were stored away in the not accessible lower story. The front of the building is separated from the back by a wood panel wall that has three doors which are normally closed. Behind them is the shrine of Pháp Điện. This eighteenth century icon is supposed to be the youngest 'sister' of the Tứ Pháp, but its red face resembles a woman of matronly age. The smaller icon in front of her shows a more Buddhist and androgynous style. Above the shrine is a mounted bronze plate with dragon decor. To the left of the Pháp Điện shrine, a court scene titled "Feast" presents the elevated icon of an emperor accompanied by civil and military officials, a Buddhist monk and most likely a Daoist priest. To the right of the Pháp Điện shrine, there are two female statues: one showing most likely a sponsor in the dress of a teaching bodhisattva and the other a nun. The pride of the temple is situated behind the Pháp Điện shrine: a procession chair with remnants of golden paint and an imperial dragon decor said to be 1200 years old.

All the buildings surrounding the main hall have been recently refurbished. There is a smaller courtyard behind the main hall and a larger parallel courtyard to the east. The central hall at the back of the temple is dedicated to the former abbots, the left backside has been rededicated to the Tứ Phủ religion of Đạo Mẫu. The eastern courtyard contains a resting area and two locked buildings dedicated to Amitabha Buddha. A gallery shows a shrine to Đức Ông, which implies that the icon in the front hall may not be of him. Next to him appears a shrine with an icon that resembles Nam Hai Quan Âm, accompanied by a parrot. However, there is no bodhisattva crown with Amitabha in her hair. The shrine is called "Merciful Clouds are Expected" (Từ Vân Tại Vọng 慈雲在望). The contemporary curtain identifies her as a Lý empress; this is thus likely the empress dowager mentioned in the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh* who participated in a Lý dynastic rain ritual to end a severe drought. This indicates she did not only visit chùa Dâu but likely made a pilgrimage to all original Tứ Pháp sites.

A hall that resembles a gallery also has a back niche; it was added during the Nguyễn dynasty. Its niche contains the multi-layered shrine for the Buddhist triad with an especially high number of female bodhisattvas and a thousand-armed Quan Âm in its center. To the left of the niche is another bronze to Potalaka Quan Âm flanked by Kim Đồng and Ngọc Nữ and Ānanda is finally

placed on the far-left wall. The last structures close to this hall are medium sized stupas in the temple's garden.

The hydrolatric aspect of this temple is still strong, expressed by the emphasis on various Quan Âm variants, including an empress. However, during the festive processions, Pháp Điện goes first, and according to tradition, 32 young healthy men dance with red-wrapped "persimmon" sticks and salt-covered "white" sticks to clear the way for the procession.[781] This is very much not a typically Buddhist ritual and proves that some Daoist[782] ideas were incorporated into the local traditions. The Daoist influence on the area is also shown by the second temple of this commune which will be treated in the next section.

V.1.2.2. Temples Associated with the Complex

In addition to the original complex, there are many other Tứ Pháp temples in northern Vietnam. They include both sites that authentically belong to the greater Tứ Pháp system but also sites that merely appear as if they do.

The Trí Quả commune encompasses two villages located next to each other at the shore of the Dâu River, Phương Quan and Đại Trạch. In the thirteenth century, the chùa Xuân Quan or Huệ Trạch tự 惠澤寺 emerged in relation to the settlement Đại Trạch 大澤 and its tutelary deity, an unknown general named Trần Hưng Hồng.[783] According to local lore, this general built two villages, Đại Trạch and Xuân Quan. He also established the temple in dedication to Pháp Thông Vương Phật 法通王佛, who had aided him in defeating the Mongol army. Pháp Thông is considered both a separate entity and identified with Pháp Điện. Consequently, this site is interpreted as a second Pháp Điện temple. It differs significantly from the other Tứ Pháp sites and, in contrast to those, is operated by nuns.

In 2004, a local craftsman accidentally excavated the "Stupa Engraving Stele" (*Xá Lợi Tháp Minh* 舍利塔銘碑). By 2012, official excavations also found Chinese coins and local jade objects. The *Stupa Engraving Stele* is dated to 601

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781   Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, p. 8.

782   In Daoism, persimmon is one of the magical woods used to exorcise malevolent spirits.

783   Possibly once spelled 陳興洪 or 陳興紅.

CE and thus one of the oldest steles in Vietnam.[784] According to a translation on the district's website,[785] the old inscription already mentioned a temple named Thiền Chúng tự 禪眾寺, which had received relics from the Chinese Sui emperor to build more temples. Therefore, the thirteenth century activity at this site was not a new construction, but the restoration of an existing site. The original construction date remains uncertain, because all other steles in the area are younger than the seventeenth century. No other available source ever mentions this Thiền temple in the manner of being related to chùa Xuân Quan ever again, but a temple of the same name appears in the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh* within the biography of Định Không 定空 (730—808). Định Không was the monk responsible for renaming the entire area of chùa Dâu as Cổ Pháp ['Old Dharma']. The reason for this was that he had unearthed an incense burner and stone chimes while building another temple nearby.[786] If this newly built temple was the predecessor of chùa Xuân Quan, the site may have been in use for at least 200 years before the Mongol invasions. It would also imply that there may have been many more temples in the area that had already fallen into obscurity by the 9th century.

Although commonly referred to as a chùa in contemporary times, the site is a multilocal temple that faces west, which deviates from the usual orientation of temples. Most of the architecture dates back to the seventeenth century and superficially resembles one large building in a đình layout. However, the internal separation into a front hall, incense hall, and back hall indicates a previous công layout. Next to the temple building is a platform used for tree veneration and performances. A drainage canal separates the oldest structure — the back hall — from the longitudal part in front of it. The first hall is, similar to the original Pháp Điện temple, seven jian wide and contains the local Đình.

The temple building contains aniconic shrines to the generic fathers and mothers (i.e., the village ancestors) and to a tutelary deity with the title Linh

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784   Cf. Trần Đình Tuấn 2016, pp. 46–47.

784   Nho Thuận. "CHÙA XUÂN QUAN — HUỆ TRẠCH TỰ 'Huyền thoại và lịch sử.'" Huyện Thuận Thành. March 2017. http://thuanthanh.bacninh.gov.vn/news/-/details/22340/chua-xuan-quan-hue-trach-tu-huyen-thoai-va-lich-su.

786   Cf. TUTA 47a–48a.

Lang Đại Vương 靈郎大王, which was a standard title given to many local heroes and does not provide any further information. In the passage to the incense hall is another shrine to the ancestors. The incense hall is three jian deep and contains the shrine of Pháp Thông. It is noticeably called a *đền*, not a *chùa*. This placement means that Pháp Thông is not considered to be a Buddhist entity. Yet, the icon is depicted in a Buddhist posture and painted like a Buddha, including the snail-shell hair.[787] The style suggests a similar origin and age to the Pháp Vân icon. However, the body of Pháp Thông is female[788] and clad in a traditionally female dress. Next to Pháp Thông are variants of Kim Đồng and Ngọc Nữ which seem identical to those at the chùa Dâu.

The area between the Pháp Thông shrine and the back hall holds thirty smaller statues in total, as well as a wooden throne that dates to the Later Lê dynasty. The back hall contains the *chùa* part which superficially shows a typical ensemble for northern Vietnamese standards, with separate shrines for Đức Ông, Ānanda, Kṣitigarbha and two dharma protectors. However, the Buddhist triad and its central shrine are missing and so is the 'upper beam' of the công layout. The modern temple instead added another building to the end of the complex, which rests on the highest platform. On the left side, it contains a thousand-armed Quan Âm and a child-giving Quan Âm. In the back niche there is the shrine of a Buddhist triad, and a choice of hell kings. The right side holds a large niche for a Đạo Mẫu shrine that is flanked by a shrine to the Mother of the Forest on the left and a shrine to Trần Hưng Đạo[789] on the right. The Đạo Mẫu [V.4.3.] had a strong influence on the current temple and apparently sponsored the new hall. Since Quan Âm is one of their main deities and their faith also accepts some Buddhas, they 'abducted' the Buddhist shrine and thus created a new main hall at the end of the temple's central axis.

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787   This is a hairstyle that became typical for the Buddha beginning with the second century CE. Cf. Shimada 2012, p. 103.

788   Cf. Trần Đình Tuấn 2016, p. 48.

789   A Trần dynasty general and hero relevant to Đạo Mẫu religion, more on his person and cult in: Kelley, Liam C. "From Moral Exemplar to National Hero: The transformations of Trần Hưng Đạo and the emergence of Vietnamese nationalism" *Modern Asian Studies* 49, no. 6 (2015): 1963–1993.

There are steles from 1699, 1876 and 1924 about great expansions of the site and the donation of bronze bells, which shows that the temple was once very large and influential. Restorations occurred as late as 1920. A stele of 1924 relates the elaborate narrative of Pháp Thông. She was a girl born to a god and a local woman, who had both become devout Buddhists due to childlessness, until the Jade Emperor ordered a goddess to be reincarnated as their child. This is an element that is also present in the legend of Princess Liễu Hạnh [V.4.3.3.]. The girl grew up to become a nun and the disciple of the famous monk Từ Đạo Hạnh 徐道行 (1072—1116). She learned how to command rain and thunder, which made her respected among Buddhists and Daoists alike. This narrative shows some similarities to the Man Nương legend, but also some strong Daoist characteristics as it ends with Pháp Thông suddenly disappearing while she was praying during a thunder storm, only her clothes were left behind.[790] Local worshipers were convinced that she became the leader of the Tứ Pháp, a fact that went entirely unnoticed by worshipers at the original Tứ Pháp complex. The case of Pháp Tông is one where Buddhist and Daoist ideas were visibly amalgamated. However, the reasons for her integration into the Tứ Pháp system remain unclear. Was it because there had always been an agricultural aspect (rainmaking) to her story or was this aspect added *because* she had been integrated into the Tứ Pháp system?

The case of the Giếng Ngọc — Đền Cùng 井玉 — 供廟 of Viêm Xá, Hòa Long Village, represents a mirror image to the chùa Xuân Quan. It is located in quite a distance from the original Tứ Pháp complex. My translator, Kim Oanh, served as my guide as she is a local who knows this temple very well. The Jade Well Temple is an extremely popular site dedicated to a fish deity. However, this site does not focus on fertility, it is rather dedicated to love and sexuality — something that would have been considered frivolous among Confucian scholars. The oldest structure of the temple is a now calcified wooden pavilion close to its outer wall, which shows inscriptions about the local village and its bridge.

Three different groups of entities are worshiped in this site. The first one is the Jade Fish deity who lives in the freshwater spring in the entrance area

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790   Cf. Nho Thuận 2017.

of the modern temple. It is very likely that this is an original indigenous deity which has neither a name nor specific characteristics other but the function to provide water and healing. There is only one legend attached to it which tells about seven fish that aged to 300 years and thus gained magical healing powers, which they embedded into the spring's water. The second group of entities are the "three daughters" associated with the spring. These are said to be a Hùng king princess and her two maidens. However, the Hùng king legends only spread from the fifteenth century onward [V.3.1.2.], so these must be secondary deities. The third group are the mothers (Mẫu) of the Tam Phủ [V.4.3.] religion, which inserted itself into the temple compound. Although the fish deity is still mentioned, the Vietnamese information board at the entrance of the temple only calls it a Đền thờ Mẫu Tam Phủ. In addition to these, the compound holds multiple tree shrines.

The main hall of the Đền Cùng is called "Efficacious Dragon" (*Long Tắc Linh* 龍則靈) and located behind the spring basin. It is four jian wide, two jian deep, and has a back niche of unknown size. The elephants in front of the main hall imply a connection to royalty. Inside, it is separated into three chambers. The "Shrine of the Most Efficacious" Tối Linh Từ 最靈祠 is aniconic, but flanked by two koi and headed by a red plaque that shows two dragons. This represents the fish deity who may have been associated with a dragon (see Chapter V). The front of the central chamber has an altar dedicated to ancestors and immortals, partly connected to Đạo Mẫu lore.

Behind that altar, there is a prayer space in front of a platform that holds two fish sculptures, which are venerated to find love. Behind that is a sacred chamber with a door. This chamber contains the temple's main deity, but as a foreigner, I was not allowed in. However, the elderly ladies who participated in the daily ceremony were very helpful. They described the back chamber to me and reported that the statue in the back 'is' Pháp Vân, that it is female and that it has the same size and face as Pháp Vân at chùa Dâu. The local women are entirely convinced that this deity is Pháp Vân, but they do not categorize it into the Tứ Pháp system. Nor is the temple officially a Tứ Pháp location. The Tứ Pháp system was apparently very attractive — it did not only integrate other deities and their sites, the 'Buddhas' of the Tứ Pháp system also permeated into other sites. However, since the statue is supposed to look extremely similar to

Pháp Vân, this may also be a case of <u>transposition</u> or <u>displacement</u> if it happens to be one of those icons that were borrowed from chùa Dâu but never returned. Which was, according to the steles at chùa Dâu, not a rare occurrence.

There is also a <u>duplication</u> of chùa Đậu in Hanoi, Thường Tín area. This site contains several Later Lê steles. One stele of 1656 retells the legend of the Tứ Pháp without great deviation from the standard narrative. Another stele, dating back to 1639, asserts that this temple was devoted to Pháp Vũ and constructed as far back as the Lý dynasty. It cites that the temple grounds were donated by three neighboring villages, mirroring the pattern observed in the other temples of the Tứ Pháp.[791] Although people prayed fervently in this temple, it fell into ruin and was only restored by the fifteenth century due to the sponsorship of a princess. This princess later received, similar to Ỷ Lan, a small shrine in which she was represented as a six-armed Quan Âm. In 1639, "axes were swung" to repair and expand the temple anew. The local preceptor adorned his words with several water- and rain metaphors to express his gratitude. Why? Because this site is an example for the practice of *tiền Phật hậu Thánh.* As people still remembered in 1636, the original local deity was a "dragon god of the earth"[792] and placed behind the 'Buddhist' shrine of Pháp Vũ.

These three temples provide examples for the intricate network that was connected to the Tứ Pháp system. A network that would come to balance the support of rulers with the provision of access to water by efficacious water deities.

V.1.2.3.   The Written Sources about Man Nương and the Tứ Pháp

The Tứ Pháp derive from conceptual agrarian deities, so they are neither pseudo-historical people nor do they have specific lore attached to them. Even though the Tứ Pháp are thought of as sisters — with Pháp Vân being the oldest — they do not have individual personalities.[793] It is possible that the weather deities lost their individual narratives in the process of the Buddhist occupation of their sites. The Buddhist clergy had no interest in preserving

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791   Cf. Nguyễn Thị Xuân 2011, p. 76.

792   Cf. ibid., pp. 84, 128–131.

793   Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 26–27

such after their incorporation into Buddhist practive. However, since their names resemble 'job titles', they may just be so old that they represent purely functional personifications of nature. But how does one examine the reconfiguration history of a site if the main deities show neither personality nor a definitive affiliation? The necessary answers are found in the complex range of narratives about the "Mother Buddha", who is said to have given "birth" to the four female weather Buddhas venerated in the Tứ Pháp complex. The legend of Man Nương contextualizes these abstract deities within human experience, renders them more relatable and elicits sympathy for them.

The character Man Nương 蠻娘 'barbarian woman' or A Nương 阿娘 is a Vietnamese archetype that appears in many different kinds of legends. She is a symbol for, and sometimes the personification of, the fertile forces of the earth and featured in ancient agricultural rituals.[794] Later stories depict her as a local woman with an outstanding fate — sometimes she becomes a warrior, but very often she is married away in order to complete some quest. The most famous Man Nương legend is the one attached to the Tứ Pháp temple complex, which belongs to the latter category. The original Man Nương legend of this type is no longer known, all existing legends have been more or less influenced by Thiền Buddhism. Thiền Buddhism arrived in Vietnam centuries after the creation of the Tứ Pháp sites, but was in control over public education for many centuries afterward. The different variants of the remaining Man Nương legends therefore show varying levels of surprisingly blatant superscriptions. However, the many obviously foreign tropes in the Man Nương legend merely reflect the secure standing Buddhism once had in Vietnamese society. It could be said that Man Nương does not conform to Buddhism, but this did not deter authors from presenting her legend as a Buddhist tale. Because of this, it is questionable if we can call her transformation a successful superscription at all, or whether

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794   Cf. A.977 pp. 78–79: A text titled "Man Nương" reports a ritual as "an affair of the southern realm" that was gradually influenced by Chinese customs. The Man Nương ritual only relates to the fields of villages or the corners of special types of grounds. In spring, the village leaders would hire a Daoist outsider to set up dishes with delicacies as offerings, this act was called "sacrificing to the earth" (*tự thổ* 祀土). They were meant to be used by "Man Nương" to pray for blessings in the underworld. The ritual was also associated with mystically determining the female lineage of offspring in a rite called "purchasing earth" *māi thổ* 買土. The described ritual actions show similarities to rituals once reported for the goddess Hārītī.

the Tứ Pháp complex is more of an example of incomplete superscriptions, or even a case of decoration.

The oldest still available written source regarding the Pháp Vân temple is the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngũ Lục* 古珠法雲佛本行語錄 ['Recorded Sayings on the Native Practices of the Pháp Vân Buddha of Cổ Châu'],[795] which was likely written after 1322.[796] There are linguistic similarities to the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh,* so it is assumed that the author was a Thiền master. Lê Mạnh Thát even ascribes it to the same author, Kim Sơn 金山.[797] Lê Mạnh Thát also assumes an originality for this text that cannot be verified, and describes it as the 'correct' version of the legend, while he labels the more common — and much shorter — variant found in the *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái* 嶺南摭怪 ['Strange Tales of Lingnan'] [798] (14th c.), attributed to Trần Thế Pháp 陳世法, as 'false'.[799] The latter variant is actually titled *Man Nương Truyền* 蠻娘傳 and thus puts the focus on Man Nương instead of the 'Buddhas.' It also makes no reference to the monk Kalacarya. I thus argue that the LNCQ version draws on a different and perhaps older narrative tradition that was less focused on establishing connections between Buddhism and political leadership. A completely different variant concerning the original Tứ Pháp sites was gathered from Hà Nam (a province south of Hanoi) as part of an extensive project led by the renowned scholar Nguyễn Bính in 1572. A younger Nôm variant of the Man Nương legend is also found in the 1752 edition of the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hạnh Ngũ Lục* 古珠法雲拂版行語錄.[800] This one is supposedly based on the *Báo*

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795 Present as a quoted official copy edition in AE.A13/15 pp.12–27. It seems to be identical with the separate A.818 edition that K.W. Taylor used in his 2018 article.

796 Although some authors argue it could have been written in the eleventh century. Cf. Taylor 1986, p. 144.

797 Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 142.

798 Vũ Quỳnh and Kiều Phú, Lính Nam Chích Quái Liệt Truyện, (1492 edition), Digital collections of the Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation, https://lib.nomfoundation.org/collection/1/volume/820/page/1/

799 Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 151.

800 Found as A.818 in the archive of the Han-Nôm Institute Hanoi.

Cục Truyện 報極傳[801] and was originally composed during the Ming dynasty.[802] Finally, there is the poem Pháp Vân Cổ Tự Bi Ký 法雲古寺碑記 by Lý Tử Tấn 李子晉 (1378—1457), which was collected by Lê Quý Đôn 黎貴惇 (1726—1784).[803]

The Official Narrative

As more and more related temples were established across northern Vietnam — especially in the vicinity of modern Hanoi — the Tứ Pháp system became transregionally famous. The *Deity Register* of Hà Nam thus did not merely collect local material but also texts that concerned the original temples of Bắc Ninh. The version of the legend of the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngữ* Lục that was collected in 1852[804] from a preserved copy created between 1506—1510[805] by Hải Tịch Khâm 海寂欽, on the basis of the unknown author's text of 1322, goes like this:

In Jiaozhou, in the era of Luy Lâu's Shi-king — that is Shi Xie — there was the Pháp Vân Buddha which the people of Jiao valued as an auspicious icon, a belief that was widespread. It is said that once there was a Brahmin Khâu Đà La 丘陀羅.[806] He was from western India and behaved purely. He would commonly sit between rocks, trees, cliffs and caves. In the final years of Han Lingdi (168—189 CE), there was also an elder monk Kỳ Vực 耆域 (i.e., Mahajivaka 蔴訶奇域) and clouds followed his monk's staff into the region. Both arrived at the seat of Shi Xie's government in Luy Lâu at the same time. In that city, there was the *upāsaka*[807] Tu Định 修定, who invited them to stay in the region. Mahajivaka did not grant him that favor, only Khâu Đà La followed him home. Once

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801   A no longer extant collection of Buddhist miracle tales from the eleventh century.

802   Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 165.

803   Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2007, pp. 777–78.

804   AE.A13/15 pp. 12–27.

805   The text says: "In the ninth year of Cảnh Thống 景統." However, that era lasted only seven years from 1498—1504.

806   Assumed to be a transliteration of the name Kalacarya. Another spelling variant is Già La Đố 伽羅闍.

807   *ưu bà tắc* 優婆塞, a Buddhist layperson who takes special oaths but is too attached to achieve enlightenment in this incarnation, and who depends on the virtue of generosity to gain merit for a better rebirth.

there, he meditated until he became tired and did not eat all day. Tu Định also had a daughter who was twelve years old. Because she was so dark, respectful, solemn and had moral integrity, she was called "A Man" by the Master. After a month, Tu Định hoped to gain a verse from the Master that would help him to advance his religious training. However, the Master basically called him too dense and added: "Although she is a woman, it is A Man who has attained the Way. If she met a man, she could fulfill being a dharma vehicle." Meditating in the wilderness by standing on one leg all day, Khâu Đà La returned after seven days, rubbed A Man's forehead and said: "You fulfill my dharma."

In spring, Khâu Đà La returned to Tu Định's house again and said: "In three years, there will be a great drought that will burn and scorch the grain, people and livestock will suffer for they will not have anything to drink, but I will help your family." Touching the earth with a magical wand, water spew from it. Thus, Tu Định's home now had a well to prepare for the coming drought. Khâu Đà La went to the Azure Mountains and Tu Định made A Man follow him quietly to learn the master's whereabouts and to supply him with food. Tirelessly, for years, A Man went back and forth from dawn till dusk. When she was 15 years old, she had not yet been married off, but found herself pregnant. Tu Định felt deeply disgraced. He confronted the Master: "Whose fault is it that she does not have a husband and is [now] pregnant?" But Khâu Đà La just reprimanded him and said that everything would be resolved. He offered him his money (jade) to spend as he wished and urged him to not see this as A Man's fault. This caused Tu Định to at least take good care of "A Man's fetus" — there is no note of taking good care of A Man, the girl — until she gave birth on the eighth day of the fourth month. Tu Định immediately sent her out to the mountains, where she found Khâu Đà La and called her child the "Master's child." Khâu Đà La then asked all the great trees to open up for him to contain that baby girl, promising that if they did, "Heaven will truly treat your life with ten thousand years of honor." One tree responded; thus, the Master placed the child inside and the tree closed up again. His next verse gives a hint at how A Man became pregnant — Khâu Đà La blamed the treacherousness of appearances and claims that the understanding of the ten thousand things can only be found with a void body and a mind empty of doubt, "just like humans will hide a crime so it is not seen." Hearing this, the entire forest becomes lush, but A Man was unable

to come and worship it (*bai* 拜), thus he returned. When the great drought came, rivulets and pools dried out and many people died of thirst. Only the well at A Man's house could not be exhausted and the people of Luy Lâu came to depend on it. Shi Xie learned of this matter and sent a messenger to A Man to inquire about it, then he sent an envoy to the mountains to find the Master. As he could not be found, Shi Xie summoned A Man and tasked her to find him. She handed Khâu Đà La the order of Shi Xie, but he just raised his leg and immediately it started to rain. When the people learned of this event, they rejoiced and nobody doubted Shi Xie's command anymore. The people went to the monasteries and offered large amounts of incense and money, but Khâu Đà La would only stop his meditation for food and music.

When a storm caused a deluge, the big tree that held A Man's child floated up the Long Biên river to the ferry crossing of Luy Lâu. As it arrived, faint music and light emanated in all directions and a good scent protruded through the entire prefecture. Shi Xie ordered strong men to carry the tree trunk out of the water, but he did not know what to do with it. At night, he dreamed of meeting a noble person who told him that he would help him if he opened the face (the trunk) and returned their "head" to the surface after eight years. A group of scholars agreed to interpret that dream and concluded that the tree must be an image of a god. Thus, Shi Xie ordered that Buddhist icons would be carved from it. He summoned carpenters and potters to create four icons for four regions. The craftsmen encountered a stone, which — while being cleaned in the river — fell into it and that place was then called the Buddha Pool. Four temples were constructed for the icons. But suddenly, in the middle of a drought, the sky became overcast and heavy rain occurred. Because of that, the icons were called Pháp Vân, Pháp Vũ, Pháp Lôi and Pháp Điện and placed into the according temples. Three of the icons were easily lifted, but Pháp Vân could not be moved. Shi Xie then had a fisherman dive for the stone, who became scared because the stone glowed, so it was retrieved with a net. Shi Xie suddenly understood that this stone was A Man's daughter and because of that, he studied the Master's virtues and wrote another official letter to ask him how the tree was involved. The Master merely replied in verse that he had traveled a lot and had become extremely old. In the end, nobody knows how or when Khâu Đà La died. The story ends abruptly with the explanation that there is a

place in front of the *Thiền* temple called "Tomb of Mistress A Man" (*A Man tử chi mộ* 阿蠻子之墓) or "Tomb of the Buddha Mother" (*phật mẫu chi mộ* 佛母之墓). The following historical notes, among them two alleged Chinese attempts to capture the statues, will be treated in the next chapter, they are obvious later additions to strengthen Đại Việts ideological position.

This legend is quite curious. While A Man is described as the daughter of a local named Tu Định, she is also physically described as "dark", which will be of interest in the next chapter. Khâu Đà La engages in magical practices like rainmaking and the one-leg-meditation but shows no apparent Buddhist traits. When A Man did not have contact to anybody but her father and Khâu Đà La, she becomes pregnant. Because her father appears to be just as dense as Khâu Đà La deemed him to be, the story mystifies the cause of the offspring. And yet, the source of the creation of the offspring seems obvious to the extent that Khâu Đà La not only bribes Tu Định into compliance, but also feels the need to 'hide' this improper child that is his "dharma". That the baby girl was born on Buddha's birthday — usually between April and June — may be a later insertion, since other legends, and even the very first historical addendum in this document, relate the 17th day of the first month as the birthday. Furthermore, although Buddhist omens like magical music and perfume appear in the story, Khâu Đà La promises to the tree that "Heaven" will reward him with "honor", which does not fit Buddhism at all. A Man takes part in the creation of multiple magical 'offspring' and is later inquired about by a ruler, which puts her into a similar situation as the Dragon Mothers in China. However, in this version, the agency and rainmaking are focused on Khâu Đà La, and Shi Xie's attention is also quickly directed towards him. A Man entirely disappears from the narrative. By the end of the story, it becomes apparent that this must be the result of textual manipulation, because neither Shi Xie nor the people who are calling her "Buddha Mother" could have possibly known that the magical stone was Khâu Đà La's and A Man's offspring. However, if the original narrative was indeed similar to a Dragon Mother tale, then the use of that name would make sense. This oldest known variant of the Man Nương legend evidently underwent significant editing, possibly to stress the role of the worldly ruler Shi Xie. The legend emphasizes how well the site of Pháp Vân temple and the worldly

ruler worked together and how the site was a good provider of legitimation since "nobody doubted Shi Xie's command anymore."

The *Pháp Vân Cổ Tự Bi Ký* 法雲古寺碑記 by Lý Tử Tấn 李子晉, (1378—1457) was written when Emperor Lê Nhân Tông ascended the throne and had the icon of Pháp Vân brought to Hanoi to pray for rain. The poem belongs to the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hạnh Ngũ Lục* variant tradition and only changes minor details,[808] but most importantly, like many later versions, it turns the dubious circumstances of the pregnancy[809] into a miracle. From then on, the miraculous pregnancy would become the standard interpretation.

An Older Narrative Layer Reveals Man Nương's Agency

The *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái* version[810] is also clearly set during the reign of Shi Xie. South of Bình Giang City, there was a Buddhist temple administered by a resident western monk called Kalacarya.[811] He was influential and the people worshipfully called him "Master." Man Nương was a young and poor orphan who sought out Buddhism by herself and became the servant of the temple. Because she could not speak properly, she was incapable of reciting the sutras. Thus, she served in the kitchen, where she worked and slept, preparing meals for the monks — this service enabled her to study. One night in the fifth month, the monks went out to chant the sutras in the early morning. Man Nương was already preparing food. As they returned, still chanting but without having eaten, Man Nương had dozed off in the kitchen door. The monks stopped chanting and went to their individual rooms. But one monk, interpreted by some as Kalacarya,[812] took a step over Man Nương into the kitchen. Subse-

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808   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 162.

809   Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 112.

810   Cf. LNCQLT 2:14b–16b.

811   The usual transliteration as Khâu Đà La does not actually appear in the text. This version was either the original transliteration or, as Taylor 2018 p. 111 suggests, the authors did not recognize the name as specific to a person and turned it into Già La Xà Lê 伽羅闍梨, which seems similar enough but can also be read as an aptronym.

812   The text does not stress that this is him, it could have been anyof the monks. Taylor 2018 interprets this as Kalacarya, however, he also attributes the "ninety years of age" to Kalacarya although that passage clearly refers to Man Nương: "時蠻娘九十餘歲，適蓉樹摧倒，流至寺前江津, …"

quently, something moved in Man Nương and she became pregnant. Four months later, Man Nương was very ashamed and left the temple; the Buddhist monk was also ashamed and did the same. Man Nương walked far and settled at the divergence of three rivers. She gave birth to a girl on the eighth day of the fourth month,[813] then she went back to search for the monk who had fathered the child. At night, the monk took the baby to the river divergence and when he saw a lush tree that had a hole cleanly eaten out by insects, he put the baby into it and said: "I entrust this Buddha child [to you], if you have to hide it, each [of you] will attain the way of the Buddha." After he hides the child away, he approaches Man Nương — who had no say in these events — and hands her a wand: "I confer this to you, you will be compensated when there is a season of great drought, then you will use the rod to hit the ground, and water will come out of it to save the lives of the people." Man Nương respectfully received the wand and returned to live at the old temple. When the great drought year came, she put the staff on the ground and indeed water gushed out; many people came to depend on it.

When Man Nương was over ninety years old, the old tree crumbled into the river and floated upstream until it reached the river crossing in front[814] of the temple. It then started to whirl around but would not move on. The people wanted to use it for firewood, but all the hatchets broke. Then they assembled over three hundred people from the village to haul the tree, but they could not move it. When Man Nương came to the river crossing to wash herself, she jokingly pushed the tree and it finally moved; everyone was amazed. Man Nương had to drag the tree ashore and craftsmen were ordered to create four Buddhist statues from it.[815] As they chopped the stem into three parts, they

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813   This is a common date for the birthday of the Buddha and would have made the pregnancy in this story last for only five months, so it is possibly a later redaction.

814   Archaeological evidence shows that the Pháp Vân temple was once located directly at a river with a large lake, both dried out a long time ago, Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 55. This is another argument to believe that this version of the legend is truer to older lore.

815   This version of the legend shows strong similarities with the founding legend of Cambodian Phnom Penh. The Cambodian legend also features a female protagonist, who is a grand-mother and a wealthy widow. She finds a tree trunk circline in the river and drags it ashore to use it for firewood. She then finds four bronze Buddha statues inside, as well as a Vishnu (the Hindu deity) made of stone. She interpreted this as the Buddha asking for a new home

found the baby girl hidden inside, but she had already turned into stone. As they hacked on it, the hatchets broke until they ran out of them. The craftsmen then cast the stone into a deep pool and it burst into rays of light. When it began to sink, all the craftsmen died instantly. Man Nương was asked to perform the rites and a fisherman had to enter the water to collect the stone. When the Buddhist icons were received in the temple's hall, the monks called them Pháp Vân, Pháp Vũ, Pháp Lôi and Pháp Điện. People came from all directions to pray and no prayer remained unanswered. Everyone called Man Nương the Mother Buddha. On the fourth day of the fourth month, she died without illness. She was buried in the temple and every year on this day, men and women would gather at the temple to celebrate what later generations would call Bathing the Buddha (Buddha's Birthday).[816] This passage attempts to save the narrative for the sake of Buddhism and connect the cult following of Man Nương with the Buddha, although the festival's date is off. The icons were 'born' on the Buddha's birthday, but Man Nương's celebration occurs four days earlier.

The LNCQ variant of Man Nương differs significantly from the previous version. Kalacarya does not take up residence with a layperson but lives at a temple. There is no close relationship between Man Nương and Kalacarya and there is no reason to think that he would be the monk who stepped over her. The scenery suggests that all monks, who did not eat all day, did not dare to enter the kitchen with Man Nương sleeping in the door frame. Instead, they went to bed hungry except for the one that did step over her. This does not sound like the exemplary behavior a master who administered a temple would

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and built a temple (wat). It is not explained why there are four Buddha statues, but the events took allegedly place in Chaktomuk Village, which translates to "Four Faces" due to being located at a four-arm junction of the lower Mekong River, the Tonle Sap (today Cambodia) and the Tonle Bassac (today in Vietnam). The four Buddhas thus reflect the local rivers. The temple became a pilgrimage site known as Phnom Daun Penh, meaning "The Hill of Lady Penh", from this derives the name of the later Cambodian capital Phnom Penh. On the one hand, the use of bronze would explain why the hatchets broke. On the other hand, the Cambodian legend refers to events taking place in 1372, so it is unlikely that there is a direct connection between the Cambodian and the Vietnamese legends — rather, they may both be related to a common ancestor. This is supported by the Burmese legend of Ngamoyeit that also contains the motifs of floating ashore, only a woman being able to move the object, and building a temple.

816   The text uses *yufohui* 浴佛會 to reference the more common *yufojie* 浴佛節.

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show. It is something that a novice monk would do. That both Man Nương and the monk are ashamed of her pregnancy also stresses that this is *not* a miracle pregnancy and that 'stepping over' should be read as a euphemism. If a miracle had happened, there would have been no reason to feel ashamed. The story thus dances on the edge between practicality and magic. The monk who fathered the baby also feels the need to hide the child, hence he goes out at night to abandon it in the hole of a tree, even though he promises merit to that tree. Most significantly, Shi Xie is entirely missing from this narrative.

The LNCQ variant *Truyện Man Nương* 蠻娘傳 is the only one that puts Man Nương into the title and it is also a more female tale than the other versions. Its focus and agency are on Man Nương. She births the child, she receives the magical wand, she uses it to end the drought. It is not clear at all how the monk even came into the possession of such a wand and why he would give it to Man Nương. This might just be a hint on the true nature of Man Nương that survived the Buddhification long enough to be written down in this version. Instead of disappearing from the narrative, Man Nương was depicted as being even more magical on her own: The situation at the river is changed as she is the only one capable of drawing the trunk from the river, a deed that is clearly framed as a miracle. All ordinary persons who meddle with the supernatural are punished and all the craftsmen are killed.

What is going on here? Tạ Chí Đại Trường has a suggestion: The Man Nương legend shows the clash between local nature worship and advancing Buddhism. It was now allowed to cut down the once sacred trees to make Buddhist statues from them and worshiped rocks could not be removed from their place of veneration.[817] Bringing both 'naturally' to the shrine of the Buddha was an in-story measure to recreate peace — at least from a Buddhist perspective, since it is a Buddhist story. Thus, the LNCQ version of the legend features remnants of water-, tree- and rock veneration, all former layers of the Proto-Việt religion. Further, Man Nương then helps the people to carve the tree into icons that are all entirely female. Even her baby girl reoccurs, but not as a Buddha. Instead, it is a somehow recognizable, petrified baby-sized object.

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817   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 92.

In contrast to the first version, this tale offers an explanation to why and how Man Nương became publicly known as the Mother Buddha.

The *Cổ Châu* version established the often repeated standard form of the Man Nương legend that is rather a Pháp Vân/Shi Xie-legend. The variants deriving from the LNCQ lineage do not only divert into completely different directions but also tend to preserve Man Nương's agency more effectively. For example, AE.a13/15 contains a deity register collected from Vân Châu Village 雲洲社 in the second year of Vĩnh Hữu 永佑 (1737).[818] The deity register starts out with the curiously titled story *Đại Thánh Pháp Vân Man Nương Vương Phả Lục* 大聖法雲蠻娘王譜錄 ['Register Record of the Great Sage Pháp Vân and King Man Nương'] where Man Nương receives the title of "king". It calls Kalacarya an immortal (*tiên* 仙), people sought out his teaching of *đạo tiên* 道仙, he sees a girl named "Man" who is an orphan. Later, after she gets pregnant and births a girl, Man Nương is the one who gives the girl to a tree and promises that if it takes her "immortal child" *(tiên tử* 仙子), it would become an immortal as well. This variant is very close to the LNCQ version, but it frames the legend in Daoist language until the Tứ Pháp are eventually mentioned.

Further Versions of the Man Nương Legend

One stele at chùa Dâu preserved a shortened Man Nương legend, recorded in the *Bắc Ninh Tự Miếu Bi Văn* 北寧寺廟碑文 ['Stele Texts of the Temples of Bắc Ninh'].[819] It is simply called *Siêu Loại huyện Diên Ung Tự* 超類縣延應寺. The first sentence notes that there are four woodcut icons and one that is Thạch Quang 石光. During the reign of Shi Xie, a monk from India commonly resided in town and stopped eating after his enlightenment. Tu Định is mentioned but the condensed wording leaves it unclear if he or the monk first see "an unusual little girl" who spoke in an enlightened manner. When the girl arrived in the temple, she was called A Man. She served the monk when he retreated into the mountains, but with fifteen years of age, she became unexpectedly pregnant — and that is all the stele has to say about this. After fourteen months, she gave

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818   Cf. AE.a13/15 pp. 74–76.

819   Cf. A.277 pp. 21–22.

birth to a baby girl and under order of [Khâu] Đà La,[820] Tu Định went to the mountains and it is *he* who gave the baby to the monk. As before, the monk bewitched a large tree to put the baby inside. Later, the fallen tree floats to the city's ferry crossing and Shi Xie dreams of the tree's spirit saying: "As I encountered a sovereign king, I will gladly open my face." Thus, he ordered workers to cut the tree into four pieces to make Buddha icons from them. During this process, the stone fell into the river while it was being cleaned. When the images were finished, Shi Xie ordered the construction of four temples. Each received an icon which was then sacrificed to. A unique aspect that this stele records is that Pháp Vân was highly regarded as a Buddha and Shi Xie put special importance to that icon, which he often visited because its "wood had stone edges." As he heard of [Khâu] Đà La, he summoned A Man to dive for the stone in the river, so it could be put in front of the icons. When there was a great drought and the people prayed for rain, they said: "Pháp Vân, Pháp Vũ, Pháp Lôi and Pháp Điện, there is no order in the Thiền temple [so a kind of bad] karma must be the cause [for the drought]." The people would then move to do rituals at A Man's tomb, who was called the Buddha Mother.

As the stele tries to reconcile material reality with the narrative, it must have been written later in the chùa Dâu's history. Elements of previous versions are mixed and matched, but there seems to be some confusion about who did what in the legend. There is no real interaction with Kalacarya and Man Nương's role is very reduced: she has no magical powers and the pregnancy is a sudden and unquestioned event. Instead, the focus seems to be on Shi Xie's actions, on the materials and the new detail about Shi Xie preferring Pháp Vân. Furthermore, the drought events and their relief are now directly associated with the temple.

The edition of Nguyễn Bính's 1572 compilation from the Lý Nhân prefecture in Hà Nam was copied by Nguyễn Tư 阮資 in 1737. Nguyễn Bính himself copied a register record from the Ministry of Rites called *Đại Thánh Pháp Vân Phật Ngọc Phả Lục* 大聖法雲佛玉譜錄 ['Jade Register Record of the Pháp

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820 Some of the resources I browsed mentioned that Kalacarya connected the Tứ Pháp with the worship of Indra, for which I could find no evidence. This may go back to a text like this, where for some reason his name is given as Y Đà La 意陀羅, an old phonetic rendering of "Indra."

Vân Buddha'].[821] As it is typical for texts of the Later Lê dynasty, it begins with a summary of the Hùng kings' mythology [V.3.1.2.]. This version stresses how they recognized the advantageous positioning of mountains and streams and thus established the Phung Province with their capital as a scenic spot. The Man Nương legend starts out in the mountains of Bắc Ninh. She is paired up with a designated Thiền monk and when she becomes pregnant, the monk "did not know how that happened".[822] This makes the pregnancy a mysterious matter. This time, it is Man Nương who moves into the mountains to live with birds and animals as her friends, subsisting on flowers and fruits. A behavior that others saw as very strange. After three long years, on the seventh day of spring, she gave birth to four fragile and cracked stones. In the mountains, there also was a white altar with an ancient tree which had rotted away over the years and sported a hole, three to four foot deep. This is perhaps a reference to former tree worship and the precise measurement is meant to give credence to the tale. Without any magic, Man Nương places the four stones into the tree and says: "I entrust you with these Buddha children." Yet after saying that, she did not know where to go or what to do. Afterwards, in the course of one year, the tree died, withered and fell into the river, where it floated to the ferry crossing in front of the chùa Phúc Nghiêm 福巖寺 (that is chùa Tổ). Many people came to take the trunk apart but nobody could move it. When the monks of the temple approached, they saw that there were four stones in the tree's hole and each stone had writing on it. The first stone read "A Bow to Great Sage Pháp Vân the Luminous Stone King Buddha" (Đại Thánh Pháp Vân Thạch Quang Vương Phật 大聖法雲石光王佛). Like this, the other stones continued this manner of naming with Pháp Vũ, Pháp Lôi and Pháp Điện. The monks were astounded and ordered the locals to create four icons from this trunk, using the wood for their bodies and the stones as their heads. As they were finished, the monks welcomed the icons into their temple to venerate them. Pháp Vân turned out to be especially efficacious, prayers for rain were never unanswered. After this, the account continues with valuable information on religious practices. People would come to the site to take the icons with them for worship or to establish

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821   Cf. AE.a13/15, pp. 1–9.
822   Cf. AE.a13/15, p. 3.

new temples with them. After initial resistance and another strong drought that proved Pháp Vân's efficacy, people brought even more money and incense to the temple and begged to be allowed to invite the icon to their villages.

At this point, the monks at the temple understood how advantageous this situation was for centralizing their missionary efforts — a realization that was later shared by the monarchy — and the practice of borrowing the stone Buddhas was allowed. The borrowed icons were used to produce copies that were placed in local Pháp Vân *miếu*, so they did not actually help to create *Buddhist* temples. Hence, the water control aspect must have been the sole reason for the lending and duplicating in the Tứ Pháp system. Yet, Buddhism deemed it a success: "The entire region turned into a Pháp Vân region".[823] Over the course of three years, whenever a plague had to be stopped or another urgent matter needed to be dealt with, people would pray at these sites. As the grain harvest flourished, even more people "welcomed" the Buddha and brought gifts to the temple in a practice called "Returning the Favor" (*hối phụng* 回奉). Ever since, the birthday of the Buddhas was celebrated on the seventh day of the first month. For the festival, everyone came to chùa Dâu, where fasting meals were served and nothing could stop the great assembly. All the people lined up for a ceremony called "Welcome the Buddha" (*phụng nghịnh thánh* 奉迎聖). From here, the general account of the Pháp Vân cult switches to the local variety of it. The people in the village of Vân Lâm 雲林 used the sister-site established from inviting the Pháp Vân icon to assure themselves of a good harvest. The local Pháp Vân cult thus lost the few Buddhist traits it had and returned to a purely agricultural cult. And yet, the last page notes that various dynasties supported the site and thatonce a golden lotus seat was granted to the temple, before the text concludes with "Absolutely, Vân Lâm is esteemed as a Dharma region."

This legend shows a high level of practicality. While the situation of the monk who gets Man Nương pregnant is apologetic, it is also not very magical except for the possibility that Man Nương was too young to realize what was happening to her. On the other hand, there are some new and unusual elements in the story, like the reference to an older tree altar and the magical birth of four stones, which supports the theories regarding one or some of the Tứ Pháp icons

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823 Cf. AE.a13/15, p. 7.

having originated from a *linga* (symbols of Shiva). Although Man Nương only appears briefly, the focus is on her agency. However, the author seems confused by this and does not know what to do with her. Since the tale of her stopping a drought is missing, she vanishes from the narrative. Similar to the LNCQ version, the tree trunk floats to a temple instead of a city and is again unmovable, but nobody is killed. Interestingly, the temple that it floats to is the very temple where Man Nương is venerated in. This is proof that this variant must be missing large parts of its original content. The motif of this variant is once again legitimation, but this time it is not a result from the relation to worldly rulers. It refers instead to the site's supernatural reputation that is utilized as a means to centralization. As the Tứ Pháp system spread with its sister sacred sites, so did administrative control and economic interaction. This dynamic was highly attractive for rulers and thus benefited the Buddhists in charge of the temple complex both economically and in gaining patronage.

Nguyễn Tài Thư sums up the 1752 *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hạnh Ngũ Lục* version of the *Báo Cực Truyện*.[824] This version gives a much more precise description of the location. There are many points merged from the earlier legends, and parts of the legend are arranged in a new order. The two famous monks of early Vietnam, Mahajivaka and Kalacarya, met Tu Định, who appears in this narrative with his whole family. Only Kalacarya agreed to his invitation. Tu Định turned to ascetic monkhood in his own home while his daughter A Man, described as a "beautiful" girl this time, had to serve Kalacarya. Again, Tu Định asked him for a divination and Kalacarya explained that Tu Định still suffered an attachment by having a daughter, but that A Man would receive a grand religious favor: when she met a "savior" she would become a vessel of the Dharma. Following this, Kalacarya stayed and lived in a hut under a Banyan tree while he exhibited various bizarre behaviors as expected of Thiền monks. In this version, A Man slept, in an unexplained and unusual way, in the door to Kalacaryas room. Because he did not see her, the monk accidentally stepped over Man Nương and thus the miraculous pregnancy came to be. The baby girl's

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824   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 26–30. This appears to be a different one from the ones available to K.W. Taylor and me.

birth is described like that of the Buddha:[825] Born after fourteen months on the eighth day of the fourth month and with a five-colored halo. Tu Định ordered A Man to give the baby away and the monk carried the baby to a banyan tree. Without receiving any promise for its service, the tree cracked open and started blooming after it absorbed the child. When the monk and A Man return home, they created no well, but she again received a magical wand which she used to attract water when there was a drought. After a storm, the enchanted tree fell into the Dâu River and floated upstream until it found Man Nương. It drifted ashore by itself as soon as Man Nương removed a strap of her bodice to wash herself. After Shi Xie's dream and the creation of the icons, only Pháp Vân's icon was missing until the stone was found. Name giving rituals were organized under auspicious Buddhist omens: five-colored clouds rose for Pháp Van, it rained for Pháp Vũ, and so on. Finally, the text explicitly states how the statues were distributed to each site. In this variant, A Man's pregnancy is completely magical, which serves as an apologia to keep both Kalacarya and A Man 'pure'. Thus, nobody had to hide or go into exile.

In conclusion, there are two major narrative lineages. The standard variants pretend a Buddhist context but focus on the relation to worldly rulers without containing too many recognizable Buddhist elements — and it is dubious whether Kalacarya was Buddhist at all. The polished official and normative variants focused on establishing a Buddhist imagination of the narrative that was meant to stress the usefulness of the Buddhist clergy and the sites it controlled in order to woo governmental patronage.

The *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái* lineage, on the other hand, focuses on Man Nương. It does not only contain older material, its narratives were also considered heterodox from the perspective of normative documents. We can thus expect that the LNCQ lineage was closer to popular religious narratives of the Pháp Vân and Man Nương sites as they evolved from a female-centric, water- and fertility focused religious environment. These must have provided a profound and enduring tradition, since all of the Tứ Pháp Buddhas remained female over two millennia. It is worth considering how far the original legend must have deviated from Buddhist ideals. The numerous textual artifacts with-

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825   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 29.

in this lineage are particularly striking because the LNCQ we have is an already heavily edited version that was supposedly stripped of all obscene elements in order to "promote morality." Furthermore, the LCNQ is known to contain elements from non-Chinese sources shared with other non-Chinese Southeast Asian cultures[826] and this is especially relevant in regard to the identity of Man Nương.

To Find What was Hidden

The legend of Man Nương fits into the archetype of the indigenous woman who has a sacred relation with a foreign man — the word marriage is not appropriate here — which leads to a miraculous birth. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ classify her as a "mother of the realm".[827] Although the legend is presented as Buddhist, many aspects show its origin among the Vietnamese water-, stone- and tree veneration that is in some parts still present at the contemporary sites.

The names Man Nương or A Man have often been interpreted as referring to something 'barbarian'. Taylor recently denied this, although he had used it in earlier publications himself. Now he assumes that the term refers to A Man's barbarian *behavior*. Taylor suggests that the names are renditions of local words for "young woman".[828] However, Man Nương does not show any barbarian behavior and an interpretation like that disregards her appearance as a fertility deity and/or spirit of the earth when she is mentioned outside the Tứ Pháp legendary cycle. There is no need to linguistically reconstruct an explanation of her name, the meaning is contained in the narrative itself: She cannot speak 'normally', according to the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngũ Lục* she is "dark",[829] and we never learn about the identity of her mother. A plausible reason for these traits is that Man Nương is of at least mixed heritage — her darker complexion could be caused by her mother being of Cham or Indian origin. Taylor's only argument against this is that Man Nươngs parents

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826   Cf. Taylor 2012, p. 135.

827   Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, p. 3.

828   Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 111.

829   AE.a13–15 p. 11.

are described as a "Harmonious Pair" [830] in the 1752 version of the legend. But an eighteenth-century variant of the legend is perhaps not the best basis for the defense of Man Nương's ethnic "purity", especially because this term is not used in older variants and Man Nương's mother is never mentioned before.

Another argument supporting the interpretation of Man Nương as a woman of mixed heritage is the practice among the Việt who settled in former Cham areas during the late imperial era. They were known to venerate a black-skinned Man Nương, whom missionary father Leopold Cadiére (1869—1955) saw as a phonetic rendition of Uma/Pô Nagar [V.6.] and whose cult survived into the twentieth century. [831]

Last but not least, the easy lifting of a heavy object by a woman is common trope in Indian lore. [832] For this reason, connecting A Man and Kalacarya to southern Indian linguistic lore seems much more promising to identify Man Nương's heritage, and so Taylor does: [833] The main mother goddess of the Tamils, identified with the northern Indian Devi Mata ("Goddess Mother"), was called (Mari)Amman. The term *mari* translates to "rain", *amman* to "mother" and the main function of the "Rainmother" was to send rain. [834] In the era in which the Man Nương legend takes place, there was only a low Buddhist presence in northern Vietnam. Shi Xie's companions were described as *hu*, not as Buddhists. If they were indeed Indians, then the goddess Amman was possibly more relevant to them than a Buddha. Taylor's theory seems to fit, since the festival of Mariamman is to this day celebrated during the second week of April. [835] More aspects are shared in iconography: Earlier variants of Man Nương never show her as a beautiful princess or mother sitting with a child in her arms — an iconography that was known of several deities throughout Asia as it was spread by Buddhism. However, Mariamman is usually shown

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830   Taylor 2018, p. 112.

831   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 115.

832   Cf. motif H479.1. in Thompson 1958.

833   Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 118.

834   Cf. Younger 1980, p. 505. There are also interpretations of her name as *mari* "rain", *am* "water" and *an* "lack of", producing the same image of a deity to pray to for rain.

835   Cf. Younger 1980, p. 494.

as a youthful bride or as an old woman, but she never appears as a mother.[836] Thus, both Man Nương and Mariamman may represent the abstract fertility of the earth that is not limited to human embodiments. It is the sacred fertility of life and its environment that is relevant — not the profane fertility of a family.

Man Nương is a rare female protagonist and the main actor of the first and last act: She gives life to a magical child, she has the actual power of magic. In the standard lineage, the magic is transferred to the men, while the LNCQ lineage lets Man Nương's keep her ability to control rain. It is Man Nương's superpower to retrieve the tree and have it worked upon to create the four icons of rain, clouds, thunder and lightning. Icons that are all female, all associated with rain phenomena and all related to former local tutelary deities.[837]

Both female and male protagonists give the child to the tree, albeit it turns into an efficacious item, the child's life is still ended by petrification. Although the kind of tree varies, it is distinguished by special traits and has to be convinced to collaborate. This relates to the human sacrifices that occurred in ancient tree worship.[838] The Dâu area did indeed have local spirits in the shape of trees,[839] and so did many other villages, like Hà Nam and its white tree altar. The unknown tree entities were merged with remnants of rock worship into Thạch Quang and subsequently even "tamed" with an official title.[840]As indicated by her anonymous name, Man Nương appears to be a superscripted earth-water goddess, possibly inspired by Indian lore, framed by a legend that shows traces of rock- and tree veneration. As such, the Man Nương legend seems to preserve some ideas of ancient Vietnam.

The Buddhist Interpretation and Kalacarya's Agency

In the Buddhist perspective, the Tứ Pháp did not replace the four deities of weather phenomena. Instead, they represent the four dharmas of meditation,

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836 Cf. ibid., p. 506.

837 Cf. Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, p. 70, 162–3, 333–4; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 27–9, 70f., 82.

838 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 106 and Đỗ Thiện 2007, p. 162.

839 Cf. A. 277, p. 23 for a report on the old capital Cổ Loa's special banyan tree right next to the temple of Mỵ Châu.

840 Cf. Trần Quốc Vượng 1995, p. 22–3.

achievement, leadership and wisdom. In another interpretation, they stand for Buddhism as a "fertilizing cloud," the "rain of Buddha-truth," the "thunder of dharma, awakening man from stupor," and the "lightening of truth".[841] Their physical representations are meant to be forms which bodhisattvas took to educate those living and suffering, while the stone lingam Thạch Quang Phật was supposed to represent the concept of emptiness.

An important part of the Buddhist framing is the monk Khâu Đà La, who has been retraced to the name Kalacarya. He is usually treated as a historical person, although there are neither Chinese nor other Vietnamese sources for him. Even if a person of that name existed, it is unknown what he may have done after the legend's events or how he died. He is often paired with the monk Mahajivaka 麻诃奇域 or Ma Ha Kỳ Vực, who *does* appear in Chinese sources — however much later (306 CE). Lê Mạnh Thát assumes[842] that this was simply a different early Buddhist missionary of the same name, but it is just as likely that later variants of the Man Nương narrative added the name of the famous Mahajivaka to give authenticity to Kalacarya. Kalacarya himself should be seen as a literary device. Taylor suggests that Khâu Đà La may have been a rendition of the name Kaundinya, the founding father of the Khmer Kingdom.[843] Apparently, Kaundinya was a name that occurred often in southern India. 'Kalacarya's' strange behavior from the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngũ Lục* resembles that of a tantric guru and would not have been out of the ordinary there. Then, Taylor argues, if this man symbolized a southern Indian guru, it would make sense that he called the girl A Man, like the goddess he would be familiar with. Nonconforming guru behavior also fits that of a literary type of Thiền Buddhist monks that commonly appears in early Thiền legends[844] — a lonesome traveling teacher who astonishes people with quirky behavior and magic, who trades wisdom and blessings for shelter. But Thiền did not yet

841   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 27–28.

842   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 153.

843   Cf. Taylor 2018, pp. 116–18.

844   A good example has been studied by: Anderl, Christoph. *Sengchou* 僧稠 *(480—560) — Studie über einen chinesischen Mediationsmeister des 6. Jahrhunderts unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Bedeutung für die frühe Periode des Chan-Buddhismus.* MA thesis. University of Vienna, 1995.

exist during Shi Xie's reign, thence any mention of Thiền monks and Thiền monasteries must be anachronisms. Kalacarya may not have been a monk but his quirkiness was interpreted like that of a Thiền monk by later audiences.

The pregnancy of Man Nương is not mysterious at all in earlier variants. In the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngữ Lục* version, it is obvious that the monk had sex with — or raped — Man Nương. This is emphasized by the monk's need to secretly 'hide' the child — and with that, his misbehavior. When the monk "steps over" Man Nương in the *Lĩnh Nam Chích Quái*, it is probably also a euphemism, because afterwards, both protagonists act ashamed and also decide to hide the child. The behavior of the monk here does not fit that of an alleged Buddhist master at all.

In the LNCQ version, the unnamed monk gives Man Nương a magical wand as a kind of trade-off for her child. In the standard version, Kalacarya keeps his magical tool but buys himself free from Tu Định. He assures Man Nương's deeply religious father that he should not worry about her pregnancy, since the child would be beneficial to everyone in the future. Conveniently, he leaves quickly. When Man Nương finally confronts him, he reacts not too happily and immediately sacrifices the baby to a magical (but Buddhist) tree.

The variants show significantly different interpretations of Kalacarya's role. He may be used in a throwaway line without ever interacting with Man Nương or actually fathering her child. In the standard lineage, Kalacarya is depicted as a famous Thiền monk who brought Buddhism to Shi Xie's realm — a sage like that can impossibly be guilty of something as outrageous as causing an extramarital pregnancy. Thus, the pregnancy was turned[845] into a miracle and the baby was no longer placed into a peculiar natural tree, but into a tree that miraculously cracked open out of religious conviction.

The — from a modern perspective — pedophilic nature of Kalacarya's and Man Nương's relationship has so far not been discussed widely. At least Taylor noticed it in the legend's summary of his most recent article, given that he puts the term *dharma wife* into quotation marks when Kalacarya uses it on A Man, and his choice of wording when he sees Tu Định "confront" Kalacarya after the

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845   Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 111.

latter got his daughter pregnant.[846] After all these legendary events Kalacarya vanishes completely. He did not behave like a monk at all but more like an Indian spiritual teacher — albeit a fictional one. Most likely, Kalacarya was the condensation of multiple unnamed historical persons and a stand-in for the Indian migrants that traveled northern Vietnam at the time. He is worshiped together with Man Nương and her parents in chùa Tổ (chùa Phúc Nghiêm), the site of Man Nương's tomb.

The Man Nương legend exemplifies on the one hand the power struggle between female and male religious traditions — and on the other hand, the transfer of spiritual power and water control to the Buddhists.[847] This is why there are so many ideas about whom 'caused' the existence of the magical objects that turned into the original Tứ Pháp icons (of which none still exist) and this is why Man Nương controls the magical wand in the LNCQ lineage, while in the standard lineage transfers the power to relieve drought to Kalacarya.

V.1.2.4. The Historical Contextualization of the Tứ Pháp Sites

The available secular literature asserts that the Dâu temple was constructed during the reign of Shi Xie. However, this claim appears to be based more on the legends themselves than on any actual proof, as Shi Xie is not even mentioned in all the legends about the origin of the Tứ Pháp. On the other hand, archaeological evidence shows that the sites of the Tứ Pháp complex are at least vastly older than most other surviving temples in Vietnam, although a definitive founding date has not been determined. They predate the era of strong Buddhist influence and it is likely that they were part of a hybrid layer of local and transferred Indian culture. This provided a rich substrate that the Buddhist clergy could use to their advantage. The historical dates relating to the Pháp Vân Temple are often attached to the relevant sources, *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngũ Lục*'s historical appendage that was updated in different

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846 Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 109: "When A Man became pregnant, Tu Định confronted Khâu Đà La. Khâu Đà La replied that there should be no blame because by forbearing this situation all the bad karma accumulated in Tu Định's family would be removed. Tu Định accepted this and thereafter disappears from the story."

847 Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, pp. 70–71.

versions. The updates in the A.818 version end in the classical era, while the AE.a13/15 version also includes events from the Later Lê dynasty.

The economic rise of Luy Lâu was attractive to many transregional groups and the Buddhist missionaries were one of them. They saw it as a suitable place to study local customs, to spread their belief and to get into contact with local elites. The agricultural and economic success of the area was attributed to the supernatural weather control system provided by the Tứ Pháp.

When the Buddhists claimed control of this system, it facilitated their negotiations with political rulers and enabled them to receive sponsorship. The ever expanding temples raised their prestige and attractiveness. According to the *Cổ Châu,* Vinītaruci came from western India to "all the great realms" and took up residence at Pháp Vân Temple. He turned the temple and Luy Lâu into one of the greatest Buddhist translation centers of its time. Although it cannot be ascertained that a Vinītaruci actually dwelt there, the grand Buddhist center did certainly exist at Luy Lâu. The chùa Dâu became the very center of northern Vietnamese Buddhism, thence, the Vinītaruci Thiền school was also called the Pháp Vân lineage.[848] Nguyễn Bính also reported about the spread of various Tứ Pháp temples throughout northern Vietnam due to a practice of lending and duplicating Bắc Ninh icons. The idea of controlling such a network of interconnected sacred sites of water control would have seemed irresistible for worldly rulers and encouraged the desire to sponsor the Buddhists.

Soon, Pháp Vân was regularly visiting the capital in times of drought, no matter where the capital was located at the given time. Each successful rain ritual inspired the common people to make material and financial sacrifices to the temples, while the government provided renovations, rewards and titles to them.

The Pháp Vân Buddha's first mention outside of religious texts occurs in 1072, after Lý Nhân Tông ascended the throne. "[…] at that time, it rained heavily, and then Buddha Pháp Vân was brought to the imperial capital to pray to stop [the rain]."[849] Another incident is cited for the autumn of that year

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848   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 172. This makes it very likely that the sixth century was the latest point at which the Man Nương legend may have been translated into Buddhist language.

849   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 144.

and describes an event similar to the one in the *Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật Bản Hành Ngũ Lục:*[850] The emperor personally went to the chùa Dâu to beg for the sky to clear up during persisting rainfall. The poem he bestowed described a central "Immortal Assembly Hall" (Hội Tiên điện 會仙殿) within the temple. From there, one could see "six palaces" (shrines?) and the people who prayed, offered tea, pearls, and blueish-green brocades in front of each of them.

However, during a great autumn drought that occurred only three years later, the emperor first ordered all scholars to search every book for a solution and this implies that visiting the chùa Dâu was not a matter of course yet. In a conflict between the courtiers and the monks, the latter defended their "prestige and righteousness" and the Pháp Vân rites were finally observed with drum music. The icon's procession was received in a temple of the capital Thăng Long where, in a hall with a water theme, the emperor himself burned incense. At once, there was abundant rain and prosperity.

The next mention of the Pháp Vân icon being brought to Thăng Long was in 1136. This time, the empress dowager ended a drought with three days of rain.[851] As the carriage returned to the residence where the imperial couple stayed at, it was already raining heavily and the empress dowager tried to flee, but the emperor exclaimed: "Heaven! [The lack of] rain for such a long time harmed our crops in the field, and now that we receive it, we flee from it? This cannot be." Hence, he ordered the canopies to be taken away. Exposed in the heavy rain, he walked to the palace in a demonstration of imperial sincerity.[852]

It is said in the same entry that, whenever the wells were destitute, this was because the Pháp Vân temple was not in a good condition — and if the temple was rebuilt during a drought, then rain would follow. When the "stone Buddha" was borrowed by others, it always had to be returned to the original temple. Even though none of the current Tứ Pháp icons are originals, the original Pháp Vân icon already went missing by the twelfth century. It is related that once, conscripted temple laborers stole it after it had been borrowed and nobody could find it anymore. Immediately, a dead crab-apple tree was used to create

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850   Cf. AE.a13/15, p. 19.

851   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 29–31.

852   Cf. AE.a13/15 p. 21.

a new stone Buddha and as a sign of numinosity, a box with a yellow brocade dress was found inside the felled tree. A quote of the historian Lý Tế Xuyên 李 济川 describes the popularity of the cult: "So far the rite has been welcomed by everyone in all the villages. Everyone in the lane welcomes the Buddha icon from Diên Ung Tự until it reaches the capital. Men and women from near and far, more than a hundred million thousand [sic!] people come to watch the dramas."[853] For all of the Later Lý dynasty, a senior monk headed the state ritual in presence of the emperor.[854] Several abbots of Pháp Vân temple became very famous and built long lineages, although not much is known about them.[855] The processions were continued throughout the entire dynasty, then occurred less during the Trần dynasty (which also did not mention a single important abbot of the temples) and the early Later Lê dynasty. The sixth month of 1448 was the first time that the throne commanded officials to fast and pray for rain at a temple in the capital. Emperor Lê Nhân Tông performed the ritual prayer himself. He sent a court minister to Cổ Châu to greet the Pháp Vân Buddha and to escort the icon to the capital, where Buddhist monks were ordered to perform the rituals and rewarded with silk and cash for their services. The throne also released special prisoners on that day.[856] All of this served to distance the emperor from the Buddhist practices of these sites.

After the capital was moved to Huế,[857] the emperors of the Neo-Confucian Later Lê dynasty no longer took part in the rites at all. Instead, a senior official took charge of the monks — who were still allowed to hold the ritual for the entire realm if they also asked for a long life for the emperor. In the early years of the Later Lê dynasty, gifts like dragon robe brocade and imperial chariots had still been bestowed on the temple. In the Later Lê puppet state, the Trịnh lords suffered from political instability as well from a series of serious droughts, so they feverishly constructed and restored Buddhist sites. At that point, his-

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853   Cf. AE.a13/15 p. 22. Exaggerated numbers like that are used as rhetorical devices to empha-size intensity.

854   Cf. Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, p. 70.

855   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 71–73.

856   Cf. Dutton, Werner and Whitmore 2012, p. 106.

857   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 172.

torical texts also began to mention famous abbots again, which lasted until 1755.[858] The eighteenth-century steles at chùa Dâu falls exactly into this time and, according to tradition, the temple's pagoda was reconstructed in 1737. Written documents refer to ten reconstructions and enhancements between 1727—1850.[859] In the same way, the *Hậu Phật Bi* 後佛碑 of 1761 proves that the Pháp Vân lending system was still running!

Some of the historical notes that were added to Pháp Vân stories really stressed that the close relationship between Buddhism, represented by the Pháp Vân Temple, and the worldly government had started long before Vietnam's independence, but it is questionable if these notes even refer to the temple's alleged Buddhist identity: During the Three Kingdoms era (208—280 BCE), governor-general Đào Hoàng 陶橫[860] arrived in Jiaozhou. After praying to the Buddha, he created an altar for the protection of the land. When a Chinese state invaded without cause, he repaired the four temples and ordered the people to burn incense there. This patronage of the sites proved 'beneficial', because he ruled peacefully for thirty years afterward. With the site's high prestige and intensive veneration, he commissioned a stele named *Thiên Quốc Ký* 天國記, which is still present in the Pháp Vân Temple:

天國記曰古珠法雲佛於國最灵. 凡遇歲亢旱, 蝗虫, 疫癘, 奉國命詣禱禳, 其灾立効. 乃致公卿士民無嗣者詣佛祈禱皆獲歆感.以致上官賴布:牧養蚕苗叩禱,懇禳必淂如願. 故其灵異之聲名名遠播.

Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật is the country's most efficacious. Whenever the country encounters years of severe drought, locusts, epidemics and plagues, then someone went there on governmental orders to pray against calamity. The calamities were immediately affected. Because of this, those high-ranking officials and the people without offspring went to venerate the Buddha there and all received their desired results. This went far enough that high-ranking officials declared: to raise silkworms and sprouts, fervent and earnest implorations against calamity would certain-

ly meet with what was wished for. So, the [temple's] reputation for [its] unusual efficacy spread since early on.[861]

The Chinese emperor heard of the Dâu deity's rainmaking efficacy and had the icon robbed. However, one entry describes that the icon grew so heavy,[862] that the Chinese soldiers involved in the campaign died of exhaustion. So, the deity even participated in the resistance against the Chinese Empire! Of course, this entry is a fabrication. It mentions the official Tao Kan 陶侃 (259—334) who indeed traveled far into the south to Guanzhou — but when the story allegedly took place at the end of Jin Mingdi's 晉明帝 (?—325) reign, he was actually the governor of Jing province 荊州 (modern Hunan and Hubei) and too far away to engage in this robbery.

Another account referring to the era of the Song-Việt border war in the 1070s, states that 80,000 soldiers were stationed at the Nhu Nguyệt River (see next chapter). In this situation, the Chinese robbed the Pháp Vân icon a second time before returning to Wuping 武平, one of the war-torn areas in Guangzhou. Chased by the Việt army, the Song soldiers abandoned the icon in the wilderness and out of spite set the entire field on fire. Everything burned down, winter came, new seeds grew — and the icon was finally found unscathed among luxurious vegetation. After being returned to its temple, the emperor bestowed new clothes to it. The author of this text celebrated the recognition of the site with his comment: "[That the] countless prayers against the calamities of water and drought were always answered is stated in all the books and records".[863] Pháp Vân continued feature in war songs of the anti-Chinese resistance and it physically accompanied Việt troops into battle. The creation of good weather for the harvest was also seen as providing supplies for the army.

However, accounts which emphasize Pháp Vân as a protector of the realm in earlier centuries, like those previously presented, were actually created during

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861   Cf. AE.a13/15 p. 17. On page 210 of the same document, there is a variant of the same text with some character differences that I have referred to for clarification.

862   Cf. Motif D1687 in Thompson 1958.

863   Cf. AE.a13/15, p. 20.

the eighteenth century.[864] The last stele of chùa Dâu, *Sắc Chỉ Cổ châu Diên Ung Tự* 勅旨古珠廷應寺, collects the imperial decrees of the Nguyễn emperors Gia Long, Minh Mạng and Thiệu Trị in relation to the site. None of them mention rain at all, because the emperors of the Nguyễn dynasty in Hue had already chosen new transcendental providers of water control, like the local dragon king and Thái Dương Phu Nhân [V.5.2.]. In the nineteenth century, the French quickly proved that the Westerners were hostile and that the country was not prepared to defend itself against them. Any kind of supernatural protection was accepted and thus the focus of the decrees changed to protecting the realm from foreigners. The steles at chùa Dâu present the reason for the fabrication of the historical accounts: in late imperial Vietnam, Pháp Vân had become much more important for spiritual defense than for any rainmaking.

Without too much imperial attention, the traditions at the Bắc Ninh sites continued relatively undisturbed. The original sites of the Tứ Pháp complex were never abandoned and the Pháp Vân temple remains of translocal importance. The Tứ Pháp temples have been restored multiple times and the layouts of the temples were changed. They were expanded and many structures have been lost again. But to this day, the Tứ Pháp complex of Bắc Ninh represents one of Vietnam's oldest continuously functioning sacred sites.

V.1.2.5. The Reconfigurative Analysis: Vietnamese Reconfiguration Tactics

The available sources for the Tứ Pháp Temple complex in Bắc Ninh are unfortunately not very rich in architectural descriptions. Some steles contain references to restorations and expansions but many of them have been damaged. However, the available sources still shed light on placements and claims. The mythology behind the Tứ Pháp system supplemented an idea of reconfiguration events that must have taken place in relation to textual editing. This emphasizes the importance of a site survey for the evaluation of spatial matters.

The Tứ Pháp complex delivers some good examples for the northern Vietnamese placement tradition called *tiền Phật hậu Thánh*, setting the Buddha in front of the deity. This placement tradition developed out of cultural friction

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864   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 31.

and thus involves multiple reconfiguration tactics. The first one is the tactic of insertion, as a Buddhist entity is brought into the site. The second is diversion, as the placing is meant to allow the Buddhist entity to distract the consumer from interacting with the local deity that is 'hidden' behind the 'Buddha'. This placement also sets the Buddha closer to the center which would be its appropriate place in Buddhist spatial hierarchy. The *tiền Thánh hậu Phật* tactic is a less common version that places the deity in front of the Buddha. This results from two possible situations: on the one hand, even Buddhists may be confused and not be aware of traditional hierarchical rules. They may believe that they are restoring the superiority of a 'misplaced' Buddha by setting it at the end of a central axis. On the other hand, this situation may be a decoration as a means of local identity preservation — the local deity's cult remains dominant yet the site may be called "Buddhist".

None of the Tứ Pháp sites has an original main hall that resembles a Buddhist main hall with a Buddhist triad as the main shrine. The triads are later additions and the later they were placed — especially those dating from the twentieth century — the more likely they were placed at the end of the temple's axis. In the Pháp Vân temple, there is a 'purely' Buddhist shrine dedicated to a triad placed into the center of the main hall — the incense hall part of the công layout. It represents the most traditional placing of a shrine to the Buddha, but it does not actually contain a triad. Surely, it was an attempt of *tiền Phật hậu Thánh*, but the sheer size of Pháp Vân's shrine renders the attempt at diversion moot. Instead, a modern 'main shrine' was added in the long gallery at the end of the temple's axis, which is a very recent addition. That gallery hall is quite crowded. It looks a lot more Buddhist than the rest of the temple, yet many of the bodhisattva and even some Buddhas have been feminized.

At the Man Nương temple, there was an attempt to place the 'Buddhist' shrine with its triad into the center, but due to the structural limitations of the compound it ended up on the western side. Calling it a 'Buddhist' shrine is appropriate because its presence emphasizes the non-Buddhist nature of the "Mother Buddha". The 'Buddhist' hall contains several duplications: Đức Ông and Ānanda typically frame the main shrine in a Buddhist context, but they have already appeared in the chùa Tổ's main hall. There, the center is occupied by the shrine of Man Nương. Although the 'deity' Man Nương resides in front

of the Buddha throughout the entire compound, a Quan Âm shrine has been *tiền Phật hậu Thánh*'ed in front of her. No Buddhist triad is present in the main hall at all. Instead, both Man Nương and Quan Âm represent hydrolatric containers for older concepts. They were not deemed Buddhist enough, so more recent Buddhists had to insert another hall containing this triad into the compound. Similarly, the old Pháp Lôi temple had, according to descriptions, either a double-công layout or a sam layout. The Western Paradise triad was placed in the back of the latter công structure, far behind the Pháp Lôi shrine. In the current setting, the Western Paradise triad is located on the right side of the Pháp Lôi shrine, but it is a potpourri of variously aged icons and therefore must be viewed as a relict. A more standardized Buddhist triad was thus placed in a newly added hall. Although it cannot be determined whether it existed in the site before the twentieth century, if it did, it was in a *tiền Thánh hậu Phật* setting. Again, remnants of other typically Buddhist framings, like the Hell Kings, are placed into the main hall. But Đức Ông and Ānanda only occur in the Buddhist hall, where the Buddhist entities still have to share space with the local tutelary deities.

As the most relevant to imperial rule, the chùa Dâu is the temple which was best preserved and received most transregional attention. The công layout of the main hall seems to be original, but there is the curious case of the Heavenly Kings in the tower in front of the temple. Although it was rebuilt in the eighteenth century, the tower was never reported to be completely destroyed. If it was not moved, then there was never enough space between it and the main building for a Buddhist front hall to have existed. A possible explanation is that the Heavenly Kings were placed in the tower as a deviation from the standard for unknown reasons. Another would be that the Heavenly Kings were inserted as a Buddhist marker during the restorations induced by the desperate Trịnh lords.

Finally, as probably the least transregionally relevant sites of the Tứ Pháp, both Pháp Điện temples represent local agreements to combine communal houses with Buddhist temples and even with another kind of local temple into one. They are examples of mostly peaceful cohabitation as the followers of the different entities did not have to interact with all content offered but had the option to do so. The locals do not see the ancestors as Buddhist nor do they

perceive the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as incarnations of local ancestors. In both cases, due to different interventions in different eras, the Buddhas reside behind the Tứ Pháp. This makes the classification of the Tứ Pháp identity even more ambiguous and that is surely connected to their religious nature.

V.1.2.6. Evaluation: An Umbrella System for Local Hydrolatry

The persisting trait of the Tứ Pháp sites is their relation to water phenomena and women. Women were common sponsors and caretakers of these sites; they were also continually involved in the rain rituals. Rainmaking, agricultural prosperity, and even dragons are motifs that continue to occur at multiple points throughout the sites, although references to the long-lost imperial rule also persist. Lê Mạnh Thát offers an interesting explanation[865] as to why praying for rain was preferred over praying to deities of rivers and wells: the former could run low and the latter dry out — this is indeed mentioned in some source texts — and both were locally limited. A safe and far-reaching availability of water could only be guaranteed by rain. Similarly, the deities inside the system are ranked according to their 'usefulness'. Even the historical texts mention that only Pháp Vân was and stayed relevant to the cult of the Tứ Pháp and achieved translocality,[866] the lending system turned that into transregionalism. The architecture reflects this because chùa Dâu was the most regularly repaired and embellished. The other Buddhas were only locally important.

The Tứ Pháp sites have their own wells, although the one at the Man Nương temple is said to have formerly been a spring. Since Đạo Mẫu intervened, there is also a prominent placement of the Mother of the Forest Mẫu Thượng Ngàn, who serves as a marker of springs. This means there were multiple religious groups who saw a connection between heavenly rain and earthly springs and recognized these sites as hydrolatric. There was continued female interaction with the Tứ Pháp sites, most of it by royalty. The female sponsors had their own commemorative icons, mostly in the shape of Quan Âm, inserted into the temples. Multiple Buddhist entities that were usually depicted as male, or androgynous, started to appear feminine in the Tứ Pháp sites. As Lê Mạnh

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865   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 170.
866   Cf. A.977 pp. 21–22.

Thát described: Buddhism needed to give the Việt the opportunity of spiritual advancement. With the Tứ Pháp, it offered this to Việt women who were its main clientele. Buddhism in Jiaozhou had still been young during the establishing phase of the Tứ Pháp complex and increasingly received influence from Chinese Buddhists. Avalokiteśvara had already arrived with Indian merchants and missionaries, but both the Chinese and Indian Avalokiteśvara were still male. Since his feminization took place over centuries, he was initially unable to serve as a container for Vietnamese water deities. This function was instead held by the Tứ Pháp system, as proven by the preferential establishment of sister temples at sites of already active female water deities.[867]

In the late imperial era, the Tứ Pháp system had lost its transregional importance and its original lore was in the process of being forgotten. Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, Quan Âm turned female and thus became able to express high-ranking female engagement. This enabled the bodhisattva to more efficiently encroach on Vietnamese water temples. In late imperial times, the story of *Quan Âm Thị Kính* (treated in the next section) promoted Quan Âm's popularity. She had turned into a patron of the waterways and their boatswomen and since began to visually dominate the interior and exterior of hydrolatric temples. Quan Âm inherited the task of the Tứ Pháp to contain the remnants of local water deities and to provide women with a supernatural entity whom they could identify with. Contemporary temples now show an overabundance of Quan Âm shrines and statues, like in the Pháp Lôi Temple where one regular Quan Âm sits in the Buddhist back hall[868] and many more appear as water deities throughout the compound.

The textual sources inform us that local rain rituals were performed at chùa Tổ thờ Man Nương, in contrast to the imperial rituals at chùa Dâu that involved the emperor. This means that Man Nương was more intensively tied to local identity. The đình layout in Vietnamese temples predates the other typical layout types but the vertical part would normally be oriented towards the temple's

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867   An example of one of the bigger temples of that kind is chùa Thái Lạc in Lạc Hồng Village of Vân Lam Commune in Hưng Yên province, established during the Trần dynasty. It derives from the numinous site of a dragon mother.

868   Even in this hall there is an excess of votive Quan Âm figurines and images placed in front of the Buddhist triad, undermining the triad's superiority.

entrance. Here, it is upside down. The main hall of the temple rather resembles a communal house both in layout and size although it does not contain any ancestors except for Man Nương herself. The multiple empty indentations of the main hall (that visitors still interact with) suggest that several deletions occurred in the past and that the ensemble of the main hall was once even greater than it is now. It is quite peculiar that both Quan Âm shrines inside and outside the main hall are aniconic. Was this an act of concealing another local entity or an attempt at avoiding a confusion with the Tứ Pháp entities? The đình layout also emphasizes the well that limits the compound and causes the squeezed-in placement of the 'Buddhist' hall. As the modern manifestation of the legendary spring that would not dry out in times of drought, visitors still sacrifice to the well in exchange for its water. More recently, a massive wall decorated with dragons was added to the well, although the Man Nương temple still houses some Buddhist monks. This is another implication that the water controlling aspect of Man Nương is not as strongly tied to Buddhism as is suggested by the surviving lore.

In sum, the Man Nương temple seems to be in a very old and established decorative situation and signifies a victory of local heritage over transregional Buddhism. However, in contemporary times, the Buddhist hall was added and put on a much higher platform to stress its superior status. It also contains the image of Cundī, who does not regularly appear in Vietnamese ensembles. Even amalgamated with Quan Âm, Cundī is the "Buddha Mother" used here as a duplication. However, this was not attractive enough to create a diversion.

While Man Nương's site was very important for the continuation of local identity, the chùa Dâu was of significance for the empire precisely *because* it was integrated into a transregional network. The "Court of Foreign Affairs" is proof of that. It dominates the front hall of the chùa Dâu main building and is unique among the Tứ Pháp sites. As a part of the lending system that the Pháp Vân temple engaged in, it was used to welcome the pilgrims who would leave copious amounts of sacrifices in front of it. Among those, pearls and azure-colored objects were typical offerings for water deities.[869] The number of steles at chùa Dâu that refer to the borrowings show the pride that was taken

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869   Cf. Schafer 1973, pp. 53–56.

in this system. Imperial visitors also left grand gifts granted by the emperors at the "Court of Foreign Affairs" and the couplets beside it imply that the Buddha was meant to bring luck, prosperity, and long life to the realm. The protection of the entire realm had become much more important for the southern emperors of later imperial Vietnam than punctual rainfall in the north.

Where does this leave the other sites of the complex? The now rather small compounds were once much larger, as shown by the margins of their walls and visually noticeable renovations. Although all of them were used for rain rituals, they gained less transregional attention and were not of interest to the empire. Yet, possibly there was a deeper connection between the Tứ Pháp sites, as the ritual reported for chùa Dàn Phương Quan also had some similarities with the celebration of Mariamman.[870]

The sister temples created by the lending system of chùa Dâu became *miếu* and not *chùa*. In the case of chùa Xuân Quan, the Tứ Pháp icon is placed in a *đền*, situated between the communal house and the *chùa*. These categorizations imply that the Tứ Pháp were not in general regarded as representatives of Buddhism, or at least not strictly so.

In regard to Pháp Thông's religious affiliation, the deity's origin conjoins a few elements of Man Nương with many elements of Daoist ideas that are similar to the origin of Mazu.[871] Hence, it is possible that in earlier centuries, Daoists occupied those more remote Tứ Pháp sites, which caused less pressure to appear Buddhist. Daoism had hardly produced any cultural frictions in Jiaozhi because it incorporated local lore so strongly that it was hardly noticeable as a culturally foreign transregional religion. On the other hand, the legend of Mazu dates to the twelfth century, so if there were any inspirations taken from her lore, then the Daoist influence at the site would have begun long after chùa Xuân Quan had been established and had replaced an even older Buddhist temple from the seventh century. How was chùa Xuân Quan integrated into the Tứ Pháp system then? Was it already a site of an important

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870   I will study the potential of Mariamman as a dissolved deity and an ancestor of multiple Việt deities in a separate article.

871   See: Ruitenbeek, Klaas. "Mazu, the Patroness of Sailors, in Chinese Pictorial Art." *Artibus Asiae* 58, No. 3/4 (1999): 281–329, especially page 282.

female water deity or was the water deity added to the local earthbound tutelary deities to enable their integration into this system? After all, being part of the official Tứ Pháp system, as it had just started to gain imperial attention during the twelfth century, offered many advantages regarding prestige, recognition, religious tourism or the pilgrimage infrastructure, and thus: financial gain. The Tứ Pháp system was so attractive that Pháp Vân icons even started to show up in 'unlicensed' places like the Jade Spring Temple.

The Historical Relevance

The legends of Man Nương associated with the temples show a multitude of narrative strata and several variances. This allows us to assume that there is a no longer known original narrative layer that was a lot less Buddhist in design than the later variants suggest. Taylor agrees with this theory in his most recent article, explaining that during the third century, the Tứ Pháp complex was probably among the first temples built in Vietnam that had any Buddhist connotations at all. He concludes: "The story itself suggests that it was not about Buddhism but that later generations placed a Buddhist gloss upon a non-Buddhist story".[872] Everything Buddhist about the narratives associated with the Tứ Pháp temple derives from terms and names. These were easy enough to change by a rapidly growing Buddhist elite who spent centuries in charge of education and official documents.

If Taylor's discovery about Amman is correct, then the Indian migrants who arrived during the third century's era of intensive trade brought their belief in Mariamman with them and spread it during their one-year stays. The locals of Luy Lâu picked it up and came to understand that A Man was the name of a female deity who was connected to an earth-mother-water symbol complex. During what Taylor sees as an important era of Indianization in Southeast Asia, a meaningful layer of Vietnamese mythology developed that has so far not been sufficiently studied. Taylor may believe that Amman was an inspiration for naming the story's protagonist *like* the Indian deity. But the existence of Man Nương as a separate fertility entity and her continued earth-mother-water traits in the various legends have convinced me that the legendary Vietnamese

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872   Cf. Taylor 2018, p. 107.

Man Nương or A Man *is* indeed a localized interpretation of Mariamman. The Indian traders who transferred her mythology were no religious specialists, they likely presented this deity quite practically through their own eyes to the proto-Việt. Both traders and the proto-Việt would give their own twist to what would become Man Nương. 1100 years later, in accordance to our oldest text resource regarding the Tứ Pháp complex, Amman had simply turned into A Man and although she is not the only possible trace of Mariamman in Vietnam [V.6.1.], the memory of the Indian presence during the early first millennium was long gone.

During the early first millennium, Indian thought spread through economic activities and had influence on both the northern and southern religious geography of Vietnam. During the third century CE, one of Luy Lâu's most important markets, which even continues to this day, was located in front of chùa Dâu.[873] But Buddhism had not yet spread far through the north at that time, nor did it provide an authoritative elite. Both economically and religiously, trade rather than Buddhism was what led to the emerging high status of the Tứ Pháp.

In sum, neither Man Nương nor the Tứ Pháp system were derived originally from Buddhism. They were rooted in local nature worship and ideas brought to Vietnam through economic, not religious transcultural contacts. Luy Lâu's Thiền Buddhist translation hub came into existence much later, but at that point in the sixth century, Buddhism must have already laid claim to the temple complex to be able to thoroughly change and dominate its historical narrative to the present extent. How did that happen?

In the process of localization, Buddhism incorporated native deities into its pantheon. This could only work in the long term if the proto-Việt identified with Buddhism. To achieve that, Buddhism could no longer only refer to foreigners and the despised Chinese. It had to feature the Proto-Việt as well, to convey that they could become Buddhas or bodhisattvas, too. And this is exactly what happens in some variants of the Man Nương legend: a local woman becomes the Buddha Mother and is elevated by the virgin birth that was added

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873 Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, pp. 4–6. There exist multiple legends about the market, e.g., that on special occasions, heavenly and underworldly beings wandered among humans, paying with money that would vanish the next day, cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 66.

later to the story. As Lê Mạnh Thát puts it: "The Vietnamese ancestors had a culture that needed to be respected, every new ideology had to find a way to raise that culture within an acceptable limit for both cultural ideologies, i.e., indigenous and exotic. The case of the Buddha Vân was localized like that".[874] Lê Mạnh Thát further summarizes the tension between local and Buddhist elements as such: Buddhism expanded during a time when infractions from the north and an oppressive colonial regime threatened to destroy local culture. The insertion of local ideas and aspects into a Buddhist narrative aimed to resist the assimilation process brought by the Chinese colonial rulers.[875] The incorporation of the agrarian deities into Buddhism was thus a method of local identity preservation. This provided precedence for future rulers to employ Pháp Vân as a protector of the realm. One could ask if the result of this was a fully hybridized culture, but the close study of specific sites reveals that Buddhism seems to be — and has been — more like a disguise for local customs that protected them for a long time. Buddhism had localized in Bắc Ninh and just like in the rest of northern Vietnam, Buddhists belonged to a religious as well as a political elite. This secured resources for the Tứ Pháp complex and its sister temples. But religious practice, narratives, performance and placements show that the local Buddhism remained superficial.

A not to be neglected aspect of the Tứ Pháp were also the diplomatic relations between up to twelve villages involved in the sites, which endured until 1945.[876] Most villages in Vietnam have their own tutelary deities, therefore religious village cooperations of such size are very rare. A large number of involved villages enhanced the translocality of the budding Tứ Pháp cult and encouraged its further transregional development. The diplomatic ties were strengthened by nine-day-long annual rituals that, due to the festival market and the procession through all the sites relevant to the legend, became famous far beyond Bắc Ninh. All statues would be brought out of their temples to the garden of chùa Dâu to 'hold council' there. The rituals were huge social events — each village would contribute up to fifty persons just to take part

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874   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 177.
875   Cf. Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 166.
876   Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, p. 7.

in the procession — with all kinds of entertainment and trade going on. At some point, a ritual competition became involved, which Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ describe in detail. It seems to relate to an actual competition between two Tứ Pháp temples. The result of the competition was an oracle for the coming year: at Pháp Lôi temple it is said that if Pháp Lôi won, then the year would have a good amount of rain.[877] If Pháp Vũ won, there would be "leeches in the fields," meaning there would come heavy floods. However, in Pháp Vũ's site (later chùa Dâu) it goes: if Pháp Vũ won, everything flourishes but if Pháp Lôi won, there would be droughts and insects in the fields.[878] This is another aspect that shows how the strong ties of the Tứ Pháp agricultural traditions have survived into modernity.

Summary

The Tứ Pháp system was established to create a "dharma region". Belonging to the dharma region was equal with receiving better protection and donations — official and private ones — as well as infrastructural integration. This enhanced the site as well as the villages invested into it. Belonging to the Tứ Pháp system was very advantageous on the one side, as it brought better financial options, prestige and a way to protect local traditions. On the other side, the system was a method of consolidating local deities and taming local beliefs in favor of a politically ambitious Buddhism. Consequentially, the Tứ Pháp system was a measure of centralization that created an attractive network which Buddhist authorities could use to bargain with governmental authorities for patronage and political influence.

The standard narrative lineage constantly connects the events of Man Nương and the creation of the Tứ Pháp temples to the era of Shi Xie, while the LNCQ narrative lineage does not mention worldly rulers — it represents essentially a local legend, religiously relevant only for locals. The political connection was a long fought for achievement, since the events of 1072 show that praying for rain at Pháp Vân during droughts had not yet become a standard pattern of the imperial court at the beginning of the Lý dynasty, although the

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877   Cf. Nguyễn Hữu Toàn and Lê Quốc Vụ 2008, p. 8.

878   Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 68.

Tứ Pháp complex was already active for more than 700 years old at that point. Although the alignment of chùa Dâu was officially Buddhist by then, it is questionable how strongly it was perceived as such. The famous Confucian scholar and politician Mạc Đĩnh Chi 莫挺之 (1272—1346) did not seem to take issue with building a pagoda in front of the site. Our oldest textual source was written during his lifetime and therefore, we cannot know how it was categorized before the Trần dynasty and what the temple embodied for Mạc Đĩnh Chi. In any case, the presence of his icon with the curiously distraught face is not an insertion, but a true honor for a patron of the temple. The following centuries introduced additional legends to create a tighter bond to the government, like the sheep that walked to Pháp Vân Temple and to Shi Xie's tomb to show their owner — a Buddhist missionary — "the connection" between those two places. If the association between the two had been original, why would the formation of this legend have been necessary? Moreover, a sheep statue was placed in the Pháp Vân temple. It is a very unusual thing to encounter in a supposedly Buddhist site, thus this very visible placement would conjure questions among the visitors and create occasions to tell this tale and use it to stress the desired connection between the site and one of the most famous and cherished rulers of Vietnamese history.

Over time, the appearance of the Tứ Pháp changed only slightly and their nature deity heritage was hardly opposed despite being almost completely concealed in the Buddhist narrative by reinterpretation. The Tứ Pháp system may be interpreted as an obvious case of incorporation from the Buddhist perspective because the hybridization that resulted in the (main) four female Buddhas is superficial at best. But although Buddhism successfully established a claim on the Tứ Pháp sites, the local perspective shows that, even if monks were present at the site like in chùa Tổ, the religious practices there were not necessarily Buddhist. The Tứ Pháp system really drives home the importance of the SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE: the involved temples kept offering various options of relevance for consumers without demanding ideological purity. This allowed practitioners to step out of normative demands and continue local traditions that may well be over two thousand years old. This established a belief system that was unique to northern Vietnam. It served both the Buddhist goals of creating political contacts and gaining transregional recognition, but

more so it was useful to the natives by saving traditions from transregional pressure. The Tứ Pháp system became an umbrella to preserve local identity: it provided and distributed the means for grand scale <u>decoration</u> under the guise of a transregional Buddhist cult. This is probably one of the most effective and enduring examples of decoration in East Asia.

V.2.   Lý Thường Kiệt and the Buddhist Expansion

For independence needs the support of the people and the steadfastness of the rulership requires an ideology that connects people beyond the traditional habit of loyalty to each local leader, which had so far been the seed of conflict. — Tạ Chí Đại Trường [879]

After the Việt restored their sovereignty, the new imperial government of Đại Việt faced pressure by a population hungry for food and a Buddhist clergy eager to proselytize. At the same time, the new emperors had to expand the realm to justify their position. They found support from the Buddhist elite, which presented the empire's territorial growth as proof of the government's legitimacy and thus enabled further expansion. After the Việt Buddhist clergy gained the trust and support of the ruling elite, it involved itself in worldly politics. As officeholders or advisers, it was the Buddhists' duty to support political actions with affirmative religious narratives. In return, this stately patronage enabled Buddhism to spread and mark its territory either by building new or by claiming older temples. New Buddhist sites thus became representative of the central government. This circle of mutual support and demand followed the Việt to the south.

Irrespective of expansion desires, by the tenth century any central government power beyond the Red River Delta was nominal at best. Bringing the empire to the various individualistic groups of central Vietnam required the creation of some connective points. As it had worked well in the north, Buddhism targeted again sites of water and trees to 'convince' the local deities of their

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879   Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 109–110.

faith's superiority. There was no systematic order on how to convince locals or when to establish new Buddhist sites, so sometimes, there were backlashes. Occasionally, Buddhist sites were attacked as symbols of foreign oppression, so they had to be abandoned; or the locals could not identify with them and quickly returned to their own traditions. It was hence not rare to see military heroes and Buddhist monks team up to pioneer into the south. Such dynamic duos of imperial representation had the objective to transfer their ideologies to the southern populations to turn them into dutiful Buddhist servants of the empire. Important military heroes were often either directly or in an honorary manner related to the imperial families and would often intermarry with the tribes that lived at the fringes of Việt territory to introduce imperial thought. Due to that, central Vietnamese local beliefs found their way to the capital, where they challenged the Buddhist establishment. Such challenges contributed to the pluralization of Vietnamese Buddhism.

This chapter explores the imperial utilization of hydrolatry for legitimization, coupled with the collaboration with Buddhism as a consolidating force. These efforts were made to annex new sacred sites as territorial markers and hubs for ideology redistribution during the territorial expansion to the south. This is illustrated with the example of Lý Thường Kiệt as a connective factor between various imperially relevant Buddhist sites. To understand the social circumstances Lý Thường Kiệt lived in, the following pages help to catch up on the Buddhist expansion in Vietnam up to the reclaiming of sovereignty, and how the new imperial Buddhist state system was established.

V.2.1.   Vietnamese Buddhism Until the Early Imperial Era

The multiple cultural influences on and geographical features of northern Vietnam contributed to the development of strongly localized variants of Vietnamese Buddhism.[880] Temples were mainly influenced by Chinese architecture, but until the eight century, the Javanese style also influenced the Việt Buddhist aesthetic.[881] The Buddhist pantheon showed modifications from Indian and

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880   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 99.
881   Cf. Taylor 1983, pp. 83–84.

Cham lore,[882] so some Indian deities were deemed more important than in Chinese Buddhism. Brahma (Viet. Phạn Vương 梵王; Chin. Fan Tian 梵天) and Indra (Viet. Đế Thích 帝釋), for example, were often represented in Vietnamese Buddhist temples,[883] especially because the latter became very relevant to the early state cult.

Under local governors like Shi Xie, transregional faiths had found new audiences in Jiaozhou — except for Confucianism, which remained restricted to the capital city's elite.[884]

Although the proficiency of Jiaozhi monks in Chinese and Indian scripts kept translation centers like Luy Lâu relevant even after their economic importance had decreased,[885] the Buddhist orthodoxy was initially limited to the Proto-Việt elite as well. Most temples and their teaching monks were located faraway and isolated from each other. However, in contrast to Confucianism, Buddhism also received support from outside the court. These supporters were principally women, as the oldest still known Buddhist text of Jiaozhi shows: a bell inscription of 798 CE. The list of donors for the founding of a Buddhist lay association shows that the majority of the donors were local, independent women.[886]

After Buddhism declined in India,[887] contacts with Chinese monks intensified. Jiaozhi monks were quite amiable with the Sui and Tang emperors, who sponsored their temples to create merit for themselves.[888] The narrative of Thông Biện relates:

[Emperor Sui Wendi 隋文帝 (r. 581—604)]: "As a monarch, I have supported the Three Jewels on a wide scale all over the country. I have had all the relics in the country collected, and I have built 49 precious stupas for

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882   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 54–55.

883   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 120.

884   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 110.

885   Cf. de Casparis and Mabbett 1992, p. 293.

886   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 109.

887   Cf. Irons 2008, pp. 250–51.

888   Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 64. and Taylor 1983, p. 212.

them. To show the world the way across [to enlightenment] I have built
more than 150 temples and stupas. I have built them all across Jiaozhou
(Giao Châu) so that their sustaining power and fructifying merit could
extend everywhere. Although Jiaozhou belongs to China, we still need to
bind it to us, so we ought to send monks renowned for their virtue to go
there and convert everyone and let them attain enlightenment."[889]

Although Thông Biện, the Chinese head monk, replies in this account that Jiaozhou had long been communicating with India and thus was already familiar with Buddhism, this report was not too far from reality. It shows how important Buddhism was as a transcultural vehicle to establish cultural dominance and political stability. Vô Ngôn Thông 無言通 — the second Thiền school of Vietnam — was furthermore inspired by the Guangzhou based monk of the same name. His disciple founded the Vietnamese school in Phù Đổng (Bắc Ninh) in 820 CE, shortly after the Kiến Sơ Temple was built.[890]

The border between Guangdong and Jiaozhi was created when conflicts erupted between the descendants of Shi Xie and the Chinese imperial forces.[891] The outcomes of military exchanges between China and Vietnam typically depended on climatic conditions, as Southeast Asian weather was influenced by the monsoon. In spring, it was too hot to fight, and from May to October heavy rains caused floods that made large areas inaccessible. The Sino-Việt leading families[892] were thus able to predict the four months of a year in which Chinese armies were able to advance without getting stuck in flood zones. They used this knowledge to block the governors sent from the north. This empowered them to establish their own hereditary 'governor dynasties'[893] and increased their desire for complete independence.[894] In response, the Chinese general

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889   TUTA 20a. Translated by Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 129.

890   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 107; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 65–70.

891   Cf. Holmgren 1980, pp. 72–74; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 42–43.

891   The hybrid elite that emerged from the marriage of Han Chinese settlers with local women and who over time developed a strong interest in local affairs that superseded their mild interest in the affairs of northern Chinese politics.

893   Cf. Holmgren 1980, pp. 115, 119, 121–130.

894   Cf. Churchman 2016, pp. 68–69, 114–15.

Gao Pian 高駢 (821—887) was dispatched to Jiaozhi to pacify the southern territories. Although his legendary feats popularized Daoism in Jiaozhi, it was quickly diffused among local religions until it disappeared. However, its lore remained identifiable within the temples of Buddhism and popular religions.[895]

So far, all independence efforts had relied on ancient legitimation models which had become inconsequential at this point. Therefore, it was easy for the Sui and Tang dynasties to regain control over Jiaozhou, now named as the protectorate Annam 安南.[896] The aggressive style of rule of the military governors (*jiedushi* 節度使) created resentment among the local elite but also taught them which traits were expected of Sinitic rulers: to show that they were supported by transcendental forces, to build dams and dikes, to survey the land, to construct infrastructure and a formally dedicated provincial capital.[897]

After understanding that they could no longer rely on tradition, but needed to show they would be the ideal *Chinese style rulers* in accordance with Confucian virtues, the independence fighters of the tenth century were much more successful than their predecessors. Wilfried Lulei even regards the governor dynasty of the Khúc 曲 family as the first true independence of the Việt. Unfortunately, the Khúc provoked an attack by the Southern Han 南漢 (917—971) in 938 CE, which Ngô Quyền 吳權 (897—944) was able to repel in the famous battle at the Bạch Đằng River (modern Hải Phòng).[898] Thirty years later, northern Vietnam had achieved independence. However, Ngô and his successors still relied too much on ancient legitimation models, which contributed to the short-lived nature and instability of the first dynasties.

The First Emperor Đinh of Đại Cồ Việt (Đại Cồ Việt Đinh Tiên Hoàng Đế 大瞿越丁先皇帝, i.e., Đinh Bộ Lĩnh 丁部領 (924—979)) found the right balance when he decided to adopt a Chinese-style emperor title, even though he still

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895 Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969. p.45; Unger 1997, p. 24; Chen Xiaowei 2001, p. 60; Xu Yongzhang 2002, p. 101, 103–04; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 80. When Catholicism became another competitor in the seventeenth century, Daoism disappeared until it re-emerged during the modern era.

896 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 21.

897 Cf. Taylor 1983, p. 153; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 51–52.

898 Cf. Taylor 1983, p. 218, 221; Lulei 2018, pp. 31–32.

relied on Chinese imperial investiture.[899] This act stressed the independence from the Chinese Empire because there can only be one Son of Heaven (Chin. *tianzi* 天子, i.e., the emperor).[900] However, Đinh Bộ Lĩnh also placed his capital Hoa Lư 華閭 between rivers and caves to fit his new 'identity' as the son of a water deity.[901] The narrative attached to this water deity shows traces of having been about a goddess, but it was later changed to be about his alleged father.

The tenth century was the time when the first Mahāyāna Buddhist centers developed outside the Red River delta. Like the early Christian mission in ancient Europe, Buddhist missionaries in the Cham provinces of Ái and Hoan (later Thanh Hóa und Nghệ An) used medical knowledge and water as a magically healing substance[902] to impress the local populations. Examples are found in the hagiographies of Ma Ha 摩訶 (~ 10th c.) — who proselytized in Ái and criticized the local traditions of worshiping "demons and spirits (*guishen* 鬼神)"[903] — and of Từ Đạo Hạnh 徐道行 (1072—1116), known for bespeaking water to heal with it.[904] This already suggests that water was an important conductor in the spread of Buddhism.

The Buddhist clergy actively promoted Buddhism as an alternative ideological model to Chinese Confucianism. This built the ideological base for a Buddhist state system that would endure for more than two centuries and led to the establishment of the Later Lý dynasty (1009—1225). The Buddhist monks were just as educated as the Confucian literati and were able to create an enduring administrative system that was later continued by the Việt literati. By 971 CE, the Đinh government officially recognized Buddhism. This marked

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899   Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 35, Engelbert 2016, p. 248.

900   Cf. DVSKTT 2015, ch.1, p. 119.

901   Cf. DVSKTT 2015, ch. 1, p. 120.

902   The use of medical knowledge to proselytize in the context of Buddhism has been researched by: Baker, Don. "Monks, Medicine, and Miracles: Health and Healing in the History of Korean Buddhism." *Korean Studies* 18 (1994): 50–75. Further examples can be found in: Kleine, Christoph and Katja Triplett. "Religion and Healing in Japan." *Japanese Religions* 37, no. 1–2 (2012) and Salguero, C. Pierce and Andrew Macomber. *Buddhist Healing in Medieval China and Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2020.

903   Cf. TUTA 49b–51a.

904   Cf. TUTA 55a.

the moment when Buddhism became a part of the Việt religious identity, which led to the creation of Vietnamese Buddhism. However, Buddhism and Daoism were still treated equally and the same number of their representatives received government offices.[905]

In this era, Pure Land Buddhism (*tịnh độ* 淨土) began to influence the emerging Việt Thiền Buddhism. This influence led to a split between the more tantric, more magical and more Cham-influenced 'old' Buddhism — popular among commoners and the elite alike — and the 'new' court Buddhism that focused on Chinese patriarchal variants of Thiền.[906] However, the Vô Ngôn Thông school, the Thiền school that would be mainly responsible for the carrying out rainmaking rites during the Later Lý dynasty, also used tantric magical practices to turn Hanoi's oldest temple (Trấn Quốc Temple 鎮國寺) into the next Buddhist center of the short-lived Đinh dynasty.[907]

How Buddhist was the Buddhist State?

With its independence, Đại Việt faced the daunting task of building a reliable, functional and self-sufficient government that would be able to handle the heterogeneous landscape, its inhabitants and the threat of the Chinese Empire. The Buddhists were in control of the historical accounts and painted the usurpers of the Đinh dynasty, the previous ruler Lê Hoàn 黎桓 (941—1005) and his descendants, as incompetent and cruel.[908] The Buddhist clergy of the emerging eleventh century aimed to ensure that the next ruler would favor Buddhism. They achieved this by strategically placing a candidate into the government[909] and crafted an impenetrable narrative to legitimize him.

Lý Công Uẩn 李公蘊 (974—1028) was an orphan from a Sino-Việt family who grew up at Kiến Sơ Temple. He was raised[910] by the abbot Lý Vạn Hạnh

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905   Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 78; Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997. pp. 9–10; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 72, 76–77; and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 59.

906   Cf. Cleary 1991, p. 100 and Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 20.

907   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 76, 111.

908   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 147.

909   Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 169; Taylor 1986, p. 142 and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 63–64.

910   Cf. Việt Nam Sử Lược 2015, p. 98 (2:1–2a).

李萬行 (938—1018) because, according to a legend that Vạn Hạnh likely invented himself, Công Uẩn's unmarried mother[911] had been impregnated by a nature spirit and gave him to the temple before she died. The night before, the abbot had supposedly dreamed of a deity who announced "his majesty is at the gates" and indeed, the baby was marked with mystical characters. Multiple legends obscured his real origin with Buddhist (he knew the sutras from memory and commanded the local deities) and somewhat Sinitic (a dog appears whose hair showed the characters 'son of heaven') tropes to prove that he was the Chosen One.[912] Because Kiến Sơ Temple was related to the cult of Phù Đổng, it also connected him to an aquatic patron — which was important for Vietnamese rulers. To cover all bases, Công Uẩn also 'received' the Mandate of Heaven because the clergy was aware of its importance to the Chinese, whom they would have to appease and organize the correspondence for.[913]

In the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh,* the famous monk Đa Bảo 多寶 came to Kiến Sơ Temple, saw Lý Công Uẩn as a child and said: "In the future, he will be a king". Shocked, the monks replied that the current king was still reigning, so such a prophecy could get all of them executed. Đa Bảo replied: "The Mandate of Heaven is already decided. Even if you wish to avoid it, this would be impossible to do."[914]

Owing his reign and legitimacy to Buddhism, this orphan comprehensively supported Buddhism after he became the Emperor Lý Thái Tổ 李太祖 (1009—1028). He built several temples, had icons and bells cast and ordered a Tripitaka from China. He also granted high ranks to the monks. "Buddhist monks became the new nobility under the Lý and many highborn men became

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911   The Later Lê dynastic lyric *Thiên Nam Ngữ Lục* 天南語錄 "Annals of the Heavenly South" embellishes the hardly mentioned mother of Lý Công Uẩn as a variant of Man Nương, seeing him born during a rainstorm and relocated to Cổ Pháp. See p. 2 of Vu Hong Lien. "Cham Features in Buddhist Arts under the Lý Dynasty of Vietnam" *International Conference on Culture and Arts of the Ly Dynasty of Vietnam*. Bắc Ninh, Vietnam, February 2017.

912   Cf. TUTA 51b–52b. The Chosen One, a supernaturally predestined and equipped hero, is a narrative trope that occurs globally. In the west, it is commonly developed from Christian lore but pervades all kinds of literature from classical myths up to Harry Potter, cf. Garry and El-Shamy 2005, p. 15.

913   Cf. Taylor 1986, pp. 141–43.

914   TUTA 9b–10a.

monks and accessed the highest privileges."[915] In his first two years, more than 8,000 monks were registered in Đại Việt.[916]

One of the most important factors for the social power of Buddhism during the Lý dynasty was its control over the educational system. Buddhist temples were the only places where the children of nonimperial families could learn anything useful in order to rise in social rank. They taught the princes; they taught the sons of officials and they taught anyone who could afford it at the monasteries. With the aid of Buddhist lay organizations, Buddhism became even more involved in the education of children during the twelfth century.[917]

However, inside the governmental administration, the power over educational, spiritual and administrative branches was split between two ideological positions that reported to the emperor via illiterate eunuchs.[918] The initially more important position was the Master of the Realm (*quốc sư* 國師)[919] — a high-ranking Buddhist monk. He was the head of the knowledge elite and chief of the Monk's Assembly (*tăng lục* 僧錄) — the most important monks at court. His Confucian counterpart was the Grand Preceptor *(thái su* 太師), whose 'wisdom', which came from Chinese books, was initially treated with skepticism.[920] Until 1028, the Grand Preceptor rose in status and his office was permanently filled since then.[921] From 1069 on, the crown prince was to be taught by both high officials who were equally responsible of treating spiritual and worldly questions at court.[922]

Lý Thái Tổ's successor Lý Phật Mã 李佛瑪 (1000—1054) reigned as Lý Thái Tông 李太宗 (r. 1028—1054) and allegedly showed great benevolence and gen-

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915   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 65.

916   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 257.

917   Cf. Cleary 1991, pp. 95–97, 108 and Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 94–95.

918   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 159.

919   Hucker 2008, p. 298, no. 3530 sees the title as a shortening of the Grand Preceptor *thái su* 太師, who only gained a Buddhist association in the thirteenth century; in Vietnam the *quốc sư* was an entirely different office.

920   Cf. Taylor 1986, pp. 150–152, 156.

921   Việt titles may imitate Chinese titles but do not necessarily describe the same offices. The *thái su* was, e.g., more similar to the Chinese grand tutor *taifu* 太傅.

922   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 159.

erosity. While he initiated more than 150 temples throughout his realm, he also established an agricultural altar for the seasonal sacrifices.[923] His continued administrative and construction work notably alternated between localized Buddhist and Sinitic demands. The following Lý emperors also never forgot who brought them into power, Buddhism was strongly supported by financial action, governmental employment and propaganda. Benevolence played a significant role in the Lý dynasty's legitimation and politics. During difficult times, the government would lower taxes, restrict slavery,[924] and order the construction of more temples as acts of merit.[925] The reign of the Lý was allegedly not one of military power but of divine investiture and virtue,[926] which was not too different from the idea of the Sinitic Son of Heaven.

Confucianism had been unable to properly localize itself. It had been slowly thinned out in the upper classes during the struggle for independence and thus remained without public support or social influence. Buddhism took advantage of that and was free to steer the imperial politics. The Buddhists' advice in building the realm was a game changer. Rapid integration of indigenous sites and deities[927] provided the early imperial court with the transregional authoritative reach that previous dynasties had lacked. The government's patronage supported temple building, festivals and sutra reproduction. The valuable first contacts to new areas provided tactical opportunities to expand the imperial territory. This fueled the simultaneous exchange of patronage and legitimation between government and Buddhism in both directions.[928] Sometimes, the government even employed the guise of patronage to impose Buddhist statues in communal houses,[929] thereby asserting control over the associated villages. Despite this, the Lý government merely projected an idealized Buddhist society

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923   Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 178 and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 67, 69.

924   Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 85.

925   Cf. Cleary 1991, p. 99.

926   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, pp. 10, 17.

927   Cf. Nguyen Cuong Tu 1997, p. 16; Cf. Trần Quốc Vượng 1995. p. 18.

928   Cf. de Casparis and Mabbett 1992, p. 300; Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 75–76.

929   Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 183.

onto the diverse and decentralized temple communities,[930] a vision not fully realized yet. It was only later in the dynasty, with improved infrastructure and increased political centralization that Buddhism gained coherent transregional influence.

Another significant strategy employed by the government to utilize Buddhism for territorial expansion was the donation of land to Buddhist monasteries. This land could be situated in various provinces, compelling disciples and monastic lineages to relocate in order to manage it effectively. Over time, the land donated by emperors and private persons alike[931] amassed to major landholding estates which were handled by clergy, temple caretakers, festival guests, corvée laborers, sharecroppers and slaves.[932] The slaves were either lent or donated by the government, or they sold themselves to the temple. The exemption of Buddhist estates from taxation, while the clergy was allowed to charge rent and collect taxes from their properties, turned monasteries and temples into major economic factors.[933] By the fifteenth century, the Buddhists would still have the monopoly on cultivating fallow land and the sole permission to build dikes in the alluvium. This illustrates the continuous connection between Buddhist proselytizing efforts and land ownership. Buddhism was not merely passively receiving land; it actively participated in the development of territory and established communicative structures that facilitated the growth of the imperial state. Although this secured the political influence of the Buddhist clergy, it also caused huge losses to state finances. In reaction to that, governmental temple wealth managers[934] were deployed to inspect the most important temples' finances for possible illegal activities.

By the eleventh century, Buddhism had become the largest consolidated and the sole truly transregional religion of Đại Việt. Its scope was, ideologically and administratively, *indispensable* for the Lý emperors. No matter their

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930   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 99.

931   Nguyễn Tài Thư relates an estimation of 1,371 acres of land that were given to the temples just in 1057 alone. Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 91.

932   Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 349; Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 169.

933   Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 39.

934   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 91–93.

real convictions, ruler and court took part in Buddhist activities and even in monastic life. They supported Buddhist building activities because the temples and pagodas were an extended symbol of their own political power. Buddhism had also spread among the common people. Lay societies collected money and added to the temple building craze. Every new statue and painting would lead to tax reductions for the local community; therefore, locals had a practical interest in creating such objects of worship.[935]

When the clergy lost its relevance for state legitimacy at the end of the Lý dynasty, many monks still served as political advisers and composed books on state ideology that revealed a mix of Confucian and Buddhist education.[936] The biographies of young monks and those of officials who converted to Buddhism show excellent expertise in both Buddhist and Confucian texts:[937] Whilst Buddhism could not be avoided for its service to the Lý dynasty's court, the state ordering aspects of Confucianism also could no longer be ignored. In the late Later Lý dynasty, Confucianism was regarded as a line of political thought that provided advantageous ideas such as unity. Yet, although state officials began to wear Confucian attire, this Sinitic ideology was neither prestigious, nor were there any examinations for it.[938]

The question whether the Lý rulers and their court were truly devout Buddhists — or just pretending for political advantage — is an old topic of Vietnamese historiography. In the case of Lý Thái Tông, his Buddhist personal name did not stop him from slaughtering rebels[939] or installing an indigenous storm deity as the protector of the realm. According to legend, when he was still a prince fighting against Champa, he met the deity Đồng Cổ ["bronze drum"] at a mountain of the same name. The deity offered him military support and later also warned him of a revolt. Thus, he took the bronze drum god, embodied in some object, to the capital and after he ascended the throne, he made him his

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935   Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, pp. 89–91; Cleary 1991, p. 108.

936   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 96.

937   Examples are found in TUTA 16a, 22b–23b and 24b.

938   Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 179; Li Shaohui 2009, p. 118.

939   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 258.

personal deity.[940] He built him a new temple in Thăng Long and installed an annual oathtaking ceremony that included drinking animal blood[941] — which violated Buddhist ideas of purity. The ritual was soon set into proximity to the Sinitic sacrifices for Heaven and Earth, which raised its status.

However, Đồng Cô was not actually new. Thần Núi Đồng Cổ 銅鼓丘神 was an elevated spirit of a bronze drum who controlled storms and rain[942] and his cult, with an annual oath of loyalty, had already existed in the era of Đại La 大羅.[943] Lý Thái Tông reintroduced the god for multiple reasons: Đồng Cổ's connections to the watery realm provided sufficient legitimacy in the fight against his rebellious brothers and enabled him to take control of the Lý dynastic rain rituals, which secured the prosperity aspect of his legitimacy. All of that revived the territorial authority that bronze drums once had held. Further, the new narrative of Đồng Cổ helped Lý Thái Tông to stress his military successes and strengthened the attachment of his subjects to the emperor. And yet, Lý Thái Tông still became a patriarch[944] of the Vô Ngôn Thông Thiền school.

His son preferred to start his own court based Thiền school — Thảo Đường 草堂 — which was explicitly aimed at court women.[945] Lý Thánh Tông (r. 1054—1072) made Buddhist benevolence the core narrative of his reign. Although Engelbert calls him the "most Buddhist"[946] of the Lý emperors due to his intensive temple building, he also built the capital's first Literature Temple (Văn Miếu 文廟, finished 1075), where Confucius and his disciples were venerated. He also ended the primacy of Buddhism in education by ordering future crown

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940 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 66–67.

941 Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư 2;25a.

942 Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 175 and Tring Nang Chung and Nguyen Giang Hai 2017, p. 41.

943 The "City of the Great Dike", on the territory of modern Hanoi, was supposedly founded by Gao Pian. After the first Later Lý emperor moved the capital there from Hoa Lư, it was renamed Thăng Long.

944 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 151.

945 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 71. This school showed more Việt traits than former ones but existed only until 1205. Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, pp. 90–91.

946 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 258.

princes to study there, likely in an attempt to give his young son guidance.[947] The romantic story of her ascendancy from a commoner woman to empress provided his widow Ỷ Lan with the necessary legitimacy to rule in their son's name. After securing the borders against China, she introduced the first official examinations in 1075[948] — however, these still contained Daoist and Buddhist lore. In the coming decade, two Imperial Academies were founded: the Hàn Lâm Viện 翰林院 and the Quốc Tử Giám 國子監. They were meant to educate the courtiers and to administrate the Confucian classics.[949]

The turn towards Confucianism was intended to legitimize the "punitive expeditions" against the southern ethnic groups, which became increasingly common due to Đại Việt's need to expand. The Lý were obligated to protrude into the south, both to satisfy the Buddhist's proselytizing zeal and to provide for their growing population. Therefore, the empress dowager continued to sponsor the Buddhist spatial expansion as well.[950]

The Buddhists noticed the changing balance of power and although they created new legends and prophecies in support of the imperial court, individual politicians began to oppose them. Although the famous Thiền monk Từ Đạo Hạnh claimed he would be reborn as the nephew of the infertile emperor Lý Nhân Tông 李仁宗 (r. 1072—1128),[951] that nephew became the first Lý emperor who studied Confucianism himself. Lý Thần Tông 李神宗 (r. 1128—1138) was an ideological opportunist. He relied on Buddhist narratives for legitimacy and to appease the people during natural disasters. However, he also attempted to strengthen his position by introducing further Sinitic imperial customs, such as the first plowing of the 'sacred fields' in spring (tịch điền 籍田).[952] Some of the customs that had been previously despised now became acceptable.[953]

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947   Cf. Taylor 1986, pp. 153–54. The emperor was sick and knew his son would ascend the throne very young.

948   This is officially attributed to the young emperor, but he was only nine years old at the time.

949   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 73.

950   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 196.

951   TUTA 55b–56b.

952   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 259.

953   Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 176 and Kiernan 2017 p. 155 severely misrepresent the event as a Southeast Asian tradition that Confucian "mandarins" saw as inappropriate. However, imperial

Although there had been no powerful Confucian elite in the early days of the Buddhist state system, the government still relied on Sinitic-Confucian ideas to advance political centralization. While the general scholarly elite had to be versatile and knowledgeable in both Buddhist and Confucian texts, there was soon a division of work between representatives of Buddhist and Confucian education. Buddhism had been useful as a pioneer to unite and consolidate southern peoples in preparation for the Việt political expansion, but it was Confucianism that supported the moral integrity of the troops[954] and most importantly: justified the military aspects of the southward advance.

V.2.2.   How Vietnamese Buddhism Occupied Hydrolatric Sites

The indigenous belief in spirits of water, trees and stones projected a certain numinosity to large parts of the environment. When the Buddhists searched for spaces to establish their own sacred sites, most suitable places they encountered were already associated with other entities. The Buddhist occupation of these places inevitably affected the established religious geography of northern Vietnam and changed community relations significantly.

Even though early Vietnamese Buddhism was not bound to certain locations, it proved difficult to establish independent Buddhist temples within a landscape limited by rivers, mountains and jungles, which was filled with potentially hazardous nature spirits and their shrines. Thus, Buddhist rites were initially exercised at the open stone altars (*tông miếu* 宗廟) of other religions. This helped first Buddhist communities to localize, but it also limited their

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plowing in spring was an old Chinese custom to ensure the fertility of the soil, mentioned as early as in the *Liji* (Cf. Sterckx 2009 p. 844.) The custom's introduction rather suggests the presence of Confucian officials. As Taylor mentions, Lê Hoàn also tried to plow and was opposed by his officials — but these were likely not Confucians. According to the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*, disagreement did not occur when the emperor plowed for the first time (Cf. DVSKTT bản ký ch. 2, p. 164) but during a later occasion in 1038 (ibid., p. 168).

For more information, see: Armstrong, E.A. "The Ritual of the Plough" In *Folklore* 54, no. 1 (1943): 250–257. For a take on the reception of the ritual plowing by monarchs, see Ledderose, Lothar. "Der Kaiser am Pflug." In *Bild und Ritual. Visuelle Kulturen in historischer Perspektive,* edited by Claus Ambos, Petra Rösch, Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter, 185–196. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2010.

954   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 259.

mobility. As the communities grew and monkhood spread, permanent buildings became a necessity. At first, they resembled ordinary houses which grew into three halls along a central axis. The main hall was located in the center, but the temples also contained a stupa or pagoda. The oldest remaining stone stupa was found in Vạn Phúc Temple 萬福寺, Bắc Ninh, showing Central Asian motifs in combination with the Longmen style.[955]

Buddhas and bodhisattvas were venerated in a nonrepresentational way in the shape of wooden boards,[956] cloths, or simply by the character *phật* 佛. Figural representations seeped in through elaborate woodcarvings that depicted scenes from popular religions, even if they ran counter to Buddhist ideas — like scenes of fertility and possession cults. This was complemented by the springs, trees and rocks of the local spirit sites that the Buddhists occupied with their temples. Scholars may be prone to distinguish between the cults of rocks, trees or water, but the indigenous Việt did not and neither did the Buddhists. Instead, they mixed different local ideas to create new legends. This was not limited to Vietnam; the modus was very similar in China, Japan and Korea.[957]

Buddhists and Daoists were interested in places with a high symbolical relevance. However, they wanted to utilize their inherent magical powers and not the spirits associated with them.[958] Whenever possible, the Buddhists ignored the local spirits. If this was not possible, they tried to incorporate them in some way. Most indigenous gods were eventually identified with bodhisattvas and other Buddhist deities. For some, the advancing superscription certainly endangered their existence. For others, this was only nominal. Unintendedly, several bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism had become containers for the various local deities.[959] This status as a container was originally intended to be temporary, with the goal to replace the indigenous deities with Buddhist enti-

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955   Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 67.

956   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008 p. 120.

957   Cf. Faure 2003, p. 316.

958   This was, for example, the case for the numinous Phong Nha Grottoes, which were associated with dragons due to their stalactites, and due to the dragons with rain. Cf. Unger A.H and W. Unger 1997, p. 94–5.

959   Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 69–72.

ties completely. However, through the use of the proselytizing method *upāya,* traces of local cults and their deities often remained for centuries after their sites were taken over by Buddhists. However, only a few of the subjugated local deities survived in their own identity within the most appealing legends,[960] others were simply turned into Dharmapālas (*hộ pháp* 護法 "Dharma Protectors"), whose specific legends and symbols nobody but the locals could interpret. In this way, the Buddhists wove their stories around the local villages they planned to impress. They tried to incorporate the entire realm into established Buddhist lore in their attempt to smoothen the relationship between the original sites and the occupying religion. For example, many early Buddhist temples in Vietnam were strategically constructed near bodies of water to showcase their role in water control. Some temples even placed round vessels, similar to those used in purification rituals, to advertise the presence of a shrine to the Bodhisattva Quan Âm, who was often amalgamated with local water deities.[961]

The Buddhist policy of incorporating, amalgamating or even cohabiting with local spirits proved far more successful in garnering support from the population compared to the Confucians' hostile stance toward popular cults. However, the Buddhists did not view local religions in a favorable light either and called their sites *dâm từ* 淫祠 "obscene shrines" — they were simply better at hiding their sentiments. The occupation with a following incorporation or superscription of the indigenous sacred sites, the integration of Vietnamese nature deities into Buddhist narratives and the recreating of a Buddhist mythological landscape helped this religion to gain hold among the Việt. This allowed Buddhism to accomplish political goals faster and more efficiently.

Particularly the creation of new myths and legends that contained local elements could be used to either enhance the legitimization of a dynasty or to hurt it with negative self-fulfilling prophecies.[962]

In his early reign, Lý Thái Tổ ordered the repair of even humble temples and donated multiple bronze bells as a pledge for his desire to spread Buddhism.[963]

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960   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 76.

961   Cf. Taylor 1983, pp. 81–4; Wulf 1995, pp. 192–93 and Robson 2012, p. 91.

962   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, pp. 14–15.

963   Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 174.

Of course, he especially supported the monastery he was raised in. These actions were less about piety than about actively using the administrative and integrative modes that the Buddhist transregional system offered to him. To back up his newly independent empire, he had to find personal protectors of his legitimacy and common ideals to unite the people with. Although many local deities and heroes had been forgotten during the Chinese occupation,[964] Lý Thái Tổ and his successors employed Buddhist mediative measures to recreate a collective memory of old spirits who would now become the protectors of the realm. These protective deities presented by the Buddhists were not only limited to the survivors in cultural memory but also only to those who were able to be reconciled with the Lý's imperial rule.

With the peaking political power of Buddhism, former *upāya*-based tolerance towards indigenous deities vanished. Degradations of and antagonism against the followers of local cults became more common.[965] But at that time, there were no grand persecutions of 'evil cults' like they sometimes occurred in China.[966] The imperial Buddhists took it upon themselves to vanquish delinquent spirits wherever they were sent — the indigenous spirits of areas that the Lý wanted to claim.

Starting from the translation center in Luy Lâu, Buddhist monks had surveyed the realm on their own and had often been the first to contact jungle dwelling peoples and foreign tribes. In that manner they expanded the realm of Đại Việt. As soon as the Lý rule was recognized by a community and the deities representing it, they would be counted as 'civilized'.[967] Those deities deemed valuable and civilized would be subjected to royal displacement. The Trưng sisters from the western delta, Phù Đổng of the north and Đồng Cô from Thanh Hóa were brought to the capital[968] to be venerated in especially built

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964   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 16.

965   Cf. Cleary 1991, p. 110.

966   Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 15. Compare with Glahn 2004, pp. 223–42. And See: Vincent Goossaert. "The Destruction of Immoral Temples in Qing China." Journal of Chinese Studies Special Issue (2009): 131–153.

967   Cf. Taylor 1986. p.143.

968   Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 151.

temples. They became symbols of the pacification of local powers that were now subjects of imperial authority.

The importance of *upāya* for the success of transferring Buddhist ideology anywhere — and without creating numerous enemies who would see the Buddhists as religious invaders or heretics[969] — cannot be underestimated. In Vietnam, it was the precondition for an institutionalized mediative tactic of incorporation that provided a safe strategy for political expansion. The Confucians lacked such a mediative concept.

V.2.3.   The Imperial Use of Buddhist Sites as Territorial Markers

In the Buddhist state system, emperors had certain expectations to fulfill. Among the most important were the tasks to defend the realm and to provide prosperity by ensuring the fertility of the soil and favorable weather. The Lý rulers felt unable to do that without spiritual support, so they had personal aquatic deities and owned magical MacGuffins on the one hand; but on the other hand, they were also dependent on the Buddhist interpretation of their character as compassionate and humanitarian — so very virtuous that nature spirits voluntarily subjected themselves to them (compare [S.3.3.2.]). Buddhism, especially in combination with water control, served as a vehicle to transregionalize local cults that were deemed suitable to support the imperial legitimacy. The goal was to create an unquestionable narrative of superior emperors who deserved their elevated position and the people's loyalty. Similar to the Japanese case described by Bodiford,[970] the rulers of the Lý dynasty sponsored the establishment of Buddhist temples specifically in border regions to subjugate the locals in a nonmilitary manner. But even before that, many monks had already aggressively fought or converted the local spirits to claim the land for Buddhism. They had actively adopted local water symbolism and means of water control to make Buddhism even more indispensable to the Đại Việt government. Proving that a temple had successful rainmakers was a

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969   Cf. ibid., p. 126.

970   Cf. Bodiford 2003, pp. 251–253.

surefire way to increase court patronage,[971] as Li Tana reasons: "Integration was a central goal for the Việt authorities and water was one of their most important means of achieving it."[972]

The rainmakers themselves were made high officials. Their great value made them eligible to be sent into peripheral territories to introduce the locals to the ideas of Buddhism and those of the court. Although mission was primarily a self-serving goal for Buddhism, it prepared the southern Cham territories for the subjection to a new central government. Thus, the Buddhists proved their usefulness to the government and that they were worthy of the social prestige they received. It became systematic during the Lý and following dynasties to send religious scholars into borderland regions under the pretense of providing education. However, the true objective was to transfer Việt imperial ideology to the indigenous peoples, just to have generals follow on the monk's heels to annex those territories.

An example for the usage of this system is found in Lý Thường Kiệt 李常傑 (1019—1105). Today perceived as a "national hero", he is likely the most famous general in old Vietnamese history, a defender-in-chief with an exceptionally long career in protecting the realm at all fronts. Curiously, the Chinese sources do not pay any attention to him at all.[973] His story will demonstrate how the Việt empire marked the landscape with temples that were Buddhist in nature but imperial in function.

The Life of Lý Thường Kiệt

Lý Thường Kiệt was born in Thuận Thành 順成縣, modern Bắc Ninh, although later texts claim he was born in Thăng Long.[974] His father had been the Defender-in-Chief before him and died when he was thirteen. Afterwards, he studied Confucian texts until his mother died when he was eighteen years

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971   Cf. TUTA 1997, 59a–b.

972   Cf. Li Tana 2017, p. 3.

973   Cf. Keng Hui-ling 2007, p. 1.

974   Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 39 cites a Nguyễn dynastic stele about Lý Thường Kiệt that claims he was from Thanh Hóa but that may be a conflation with his later residence.

old. Although he was married to the granddaughter of a famous scholar,[975] at roughly twenty-three years of age, Lý Thường Kiệt became a eunuch (*nội giám* 内監).[976] This provided him the opportunity to get close to the Emperor Lý Thánh Tông, the second of three emperors under whom he would serve. The *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* records an event that was surely fabricated later. The emperor met a deity in a dream and it revealed to him a man who would lead his military campaign to victory. However, the emperor did not know that man. When he went out on the next day, he found a young man sitting in study under the southern gate and recognized him. The emperor offered him four hundred coin-strings if he castrated himself, and so the young man did.[977] After this man's first successful raid, he was granted the honorary name Lý Thường Kiệt.[978] He proved to be a talented politician with a good sense of organization.[979] His settling policies paved the way for future expansions and cemented the developing trend of the Việt to view their neighbors as lesser countries and their kings as mere 'vassals', just like China viewed Đại Việt itself. While the neighboring countries superficially recognized Đại Việt's superiority, they rarely sent animals and people as tribute. Champa quite disliked this whole tribute situation and that it was previously forced to cede territory, hence the southern border war erupted.[980] During the anti-Cham campaign of 1069, Lý Thường Kiệt also contributed to the fall of Vijaya and finally Champa had to cede three more districts.[981] This was the first time that Cham territories had been robbed and occupied with the expressed idea of permanent settlement.[982]

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975   Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, pp. 39–41 and Keng Hui-ling 2007, p. 8.

976   Pháp Bao. Stele Inscription of Linh Xứng Temple of Ngưỡng Sơn 仰山靈稱寺碑銘, 1126. Carved stone inscription. Thanh Hóa, Vietnam. Usually located at the National Museum of History, Hanoi. Viewed 30th January 2017 in Herne, Germany. Hereafter abbreviated as LXT. Line 6.

977   Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 109.

978   DVSKTT 2015, p. 270.

979   LXT line 7.

980   Cf. Nguyen Thanh Binh 2017, p. 59.

981   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 72, 95–98. Today in the modern provinces Quảng Trị and Quảng Bình.

982   Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 60.

In 1072, the new emperor Lý Nhân Tông made Lý Thường Kiệt the prime minister,[983] but he was actually the regent for this seven-year-old boy[984] and would remain an auxiliary ruler for most of his life. Lý Thường Kiệt's heroic status derives from his role in defending Vietnamese independence during the bloody border war with Song China (1075—1077) when he was already 57 years old. The Song chancellor Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021—1086) had proposed to attack Đại Việt while it was weak from its recent war with Champa,[985] but Lý Thường Kiệt repelled the Chinese with many more troops than the Chinese had expected the Việt to have. In 1074, Champa attacked in the south, while the Song attacked from the north and tried in vain to bring the northern minorities to their side.[986] The dynastic history *Songshi* reports for the year 1075, that a sub-province was captured, but gives no further details about it. The "Inspection on the Four Frontiers" (*Siyi Kao* 四裔考) in Li Tao's 李燾 (1115—1184) chronology *Xu Zizhi Tongjian Changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 records espionage results which include a gathering of troops among the 'southern barbarians' and mentions that among them were many talented and meritorious persons. In reality, the Việt employed two-front war strategies to gain control over four Chinese strongholds in three sub-provinces. The erupting war is described in detail in the history *Đại Việt Sử Kí Tiền Biên* 大越史記前編[987] Chapter 3, pages 14–16, as cited by Keng Hui-ling.[988]

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983　This is mentioned in the Linh Xứng inscription but often omitted in later historical texts. Hoàng Xuân Hãn explains this censorship with the growing hatred towards too powerful eunuchs during later dynasties. Thus, the historians did not wish to mention how much military and civil power had concentrated in Lý Thường Kiệt. Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 73.

984　LTX line 9–10.

985　Cf. Nguyen Thanh Binh 2017, p. 58.

986　The Lý were often lenient towards the multiple ethnic groups of the northern territories that tended to not pay taxes, nor acknowledge central authority or who allied with the Chinese. Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 73, 91.

987　An edition of the DVSKTT published under the Tây Sơn government by Ngô Thì Sĩ 吳時仕 (1726—1780).

988　Cf. Keng Hui-ling 2007, pp. 2–3. The sub-provinces were to be Yongzhou 邕州, Qinzhou 欽州 and Lianzhou 廉州 with the strongholds of Hengshan 橫山, Taiping 太平, Yongping 永平 and Guwan 古萬. Cf. Phan Văn Các and Claudine Salmon 1998, p. 169, note 13.

Lý Thường Kiệt successively captured Qin- and Lianzhou, killing 8000 local military forces (*tuding* 土丁), while the Zhuang chief Nùng Tông Đán[989] besieged Yongzhou (Ung Châu 邕州, modern Nanning 南寧 in Guangxi), which caused the prefect Su Jian 蘇緘 (1016—1076) to commit family suicide. The massacres taking place in the Chinese cities led to the recruitment of a new pacification commissioner. Although the Song forces were allied with Champa and Zhenla, they were defeated with heavy losses by Lý Thường Kiệt at the Nhu Nguyệt River. The commissioner resigned and the Việt prefectures were returned.

In 1076, Lý Thường Kiệt devastated large areas of southern China, took countless people prisoner and caused some of the non-Han ethnicities to sway back to the Lý.[990] Since Chinese soldiers were dying hour by hour in the Việt regions, the Chinese emperor ordered the creation of special medicines. He sent employees of the Ministry of Rites to the south to work against the "pestilential" climate and to prohibit raw food and alcohol for the sick soldiers.[991] It is mentioned that of 80,000 soldiers, more than half died of evil miasmas and heat stroke.[992] The Song attacked again in 1077 at the Như Nguyệt river,[993] almost reaching Thăng Long, but Lý Thường Kiệt forced them to fall back. When the Lý emperor called for a truce, he tactically referred to the protection of the Ningzong Shrine, which was on Việt territory that was endangered by the ongoing bloody battles.[994] This reach for legitimation put Đại Việt into a

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989 Nùng Tông Đán 侬宗亶, born 1046 with an unknown date of death, was a chief member of the Zhuang and a descendant of the infamous rebel Nùng Trí Cao 侬智高 (~1025—1055). He led the sea attack on the Chinese districts in 1075.

990 Vu interprets this as one of the contributing factors for why Wang Anshi had to resign as well. Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 73–74.

991 Cf. Rosner 2019, p. 122, 168. Not too long ago, in 1006, the military commissioner of Guangxi had evaluated the Yongzhou region as "miasmic" and advised not to conquer the tribal grottoes in the south, but to remain with what had been settled after the establishment of the Song dynasty. Cf. Mostern 2011, p. 143.

992 Cf. *Songshi. Lianzhuan* No. 49. Ch. 290, p. 9725.

993 This is nowadays Sông Cầu, a river of northern Vietnam south of Hanoi.

994 LXT line 12. It is unclear to whom Ningzong refers to. It is not Emperor Song Ningzong, who was only born by 1168, long after the events and much later than the stele at Linh Xứng Temple was erected.

morally superior position and depicted the Song army in a bad light. The Song accepted the truce due to their enormous losses.[995] The much younger *Việt Nam Sử Lược*[996] describes events differently and implies that the offer of peace came from the Chinese side.

In any case, the border war was a disaster for the Song. Đại Việt was able to keep most of the territory they seized and additionally received an area of Cao Bằng that the northern tribes had given to the Song before. This explains why the conflict was downplayed in the history of the Song dynasty, even given the lesser importance that (southern) borderland politics had compared to central events. In the aftermath, the Song lost interest in 'pacifying' Đại Việt,[997] which was now seen more and more as a sovereign political entity.

Lý Thường Kiệt became known as the author of the 'first declaration of independence' of Vietnam, the *Nam Quốc Sơn Hà* 南國山河 ['Mountains and Rivers of the Southern Realm'].

<div align="center">

南國山河南帝居

截然定分在天書

如何逆虜來侵犯

汝等行看取敗虛

Mountains and Rivers of the Southern Realm, where the South's
emperor resides,
his sovereignty clearly determined by Heaven,
How can northern barbarians[998] dare to rebel and encroach
[on our border]?
What awaits you is facing defeat![999]

</div>

....

995   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 74. For further details, see *Songshi. Lianzhuan* No. 205, Ch. 446, pp. 13156–13157 and *Songshi. Benji* No. 15. Ch. 47, pp. 289–292.

996   Cf. VSL 2015, pp. 110–11. Referring to original chapter 2:16b.

997   Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, pp. 257, 278.

998   The term *lu* 虜 referred originally to non-Han populations northwest of China, it is used here to reflect the Việt's alleged moral superiority.

999   DVSKTT 2015, p. 188 (3:9b). My translation.

Lý Thường Kiệt's further actions then emulated the typical acts of an emperor according to the Sinitic ideal. He rebuilt the dikes, restored the former capital cities and temples; he brought order to the war-torn areas. He reformed the administration and initiated new examinations which now focused on Confucian literary education.

In 1083, the emperor turned sixteen and moved into the main palace to start governing by himself. Lý Thường Kiệt was sent to Thanh Hóa between 1082—1083 not in disgrace, but as a politically sensible decision.[1000] It allowed the emperor to find his own strength and avoided conflict with the newly blossoming relations to the Song. Lý Thường Kiệt became prefect of the military and civil affairs of Ái province, the Cửu Chân region and Thanh Hóa garrison, receiving a generous army at his disposal and a fief of 10,000 households.[1001] He stayed in the south for twenty years. After Lý Thường Kiệt defended the former Cham territories for the last time in 1104, he died of old age in the following year.

As he was unable to have children of his own, the control over his fief was given to his younger brother Lý Thường Hiến 李常憲, who was also a eunuch. This uncommon situation would have caused pity in China. However, Lý Thường Kiệt's family was already in an exceptional position of power that would never have had forced the family to castrate two adult sons if it had not been of political advantage. In that era, there were other influential Defenders-in-Chief who were also castrated.[1002] It is therefore possible that the eunuch system differed from China. If it was intended to limit the power of families who had been granted the imperial dynasty's name, this would have avoided the challenge of influential descendants who carried the imperial name without being related to the imperial family. This is indeed what happened to the descendants of Lý Thường Kiệt: His legacy was continued by his grandnephews: Đỗ Anh Vũ 杜英武 who became Defender-in-Chief under Lý Thần Tông and who grew so famous that he carried almost the same high number of titles as his grand uncle. Bành Tổ 彭祖 became a Confucian scholar and Viên Giác (Pháp

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1000 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, pp. 311–314.

1001 LTX line 13.

1002 Cf. Keng Hui-ling 2007, pp. 9–10.

Trí) and Minh Ngộ (Pháp Tư) became Buddhist grandmasters. However, the latter two had to give up the honorary last name Lý due to their indirect blood relation to Lý Thường Kiệt — they were the grandsons of Lý Thường Kiệt's sister. Otherwise, they were both successful in opening a manor and establishing the Thánh Ân Temple 聖恩寺 with the intention to connect the descendants of Việt people in the south with their northern roots.[1003]

V.2.3.1. The Lý Thường Kiệt Memorial Shrine
Thanh Hóa, Hà Trung district.
Date of the visit: 4th October 2018.
Lý Thường Kiệt's deification as "Great King of Assisting Fortune and Wide Prestige" (*dực vận quảng uy đại vương* 翊運廣威大王) is mentioned in the general overview over imperial deities, the *Hoàng Việt Thần Kì Tổng Sách* 皇越神祇總冊 of 1786.[1004] According to the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập,* the people petitioned for a temple to worship Lý Thường Kiệt in.[1005] Thus, his memorial temple was established right beside Linh Xứng Temple in modern Hà Trung district of Thanh Hóa province.[1006]

The đền thờ Lý Thường Kiệt is located in a depression, so twelve steps lead downwards to the temple compound. As of 2018, the compound was surrounded by a low, ancient wall. A gate is no longer existent, but the entrance is marked with flags that show its recognition by the state as a cultural memorial. Behind the front yard with several ancient trees, there is a second wall, raised on a four-step-high platform. It extends to the right side towards a second gated compound for a tree deity. Between both compounds is a small pavilion with a stone stele, which is not readable. This second gate consists of two small side gates and a double storied main gate, giving it the appearance of a Buddhist mountain gate. On the front, it is titled *Đại Lý Vương* 大李王

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1003 Cf. LXT, lines 33–37.

1004 Archive no. A.833, p. 46. The author is unknown. It collects all the consecrated deities of Vietnam at the time, including deified emperors, princesses, generals and authors: these were 1,242.

1005 Cf. Vo Nghia 2012. pos. 680–85 in reference to the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập.*

1006 There is another temple to him in modern Hanoi that was, in contrast, an imperial honor.

['Great King of the Lý']. Couplets on the pillars are hardly readable anymore, but call Lý Thường Kiệt a defender of the realm. The backside reads *Ngưỡng Sơn Từ* 仰山祠, marking it as the most important hero shrine of the mountain. Most of the memorial temple was destroyed during the twentieth century; to the left side of the entrance is a tin container that replaces a former building. It contains the temple warden and a replacement shrine to Lý Thường Kiệt. The shrine of "highest efficacy"

(*Thượng Thượng Đẳng Tối Linh* 上上等最靈) is aniconic, decorated with an empty throne. As with any martial deity or hero, there is a weapon rack to its front. There are many sacrifices and recent votive horse statues that show that the temple is still cherished. The couplets to the side of the shrine praise Lý Thường Kiệt as the wise hero of the southern realm and as a brave field commander who governed the people. Between the entrance and the tin building, there is a well cared for altar to another ancient tree deity called "đai" said to be older than the memorial temple. As the history of the Linh Xứng Temple reveals, non-Buddhist religious groups used to live in this area before, so it is well possible that the sacred grounds of a popular tree deity were chosen to erect this memorial site.

The former main building was located on a five-step-high platform, some of the walls, one pillar, and the pillar bases still exist and allow one to recreate the original structure of the hall. This hall used to be four jian deep and seven jian wide, of which the end jian are much narrower and at least one of those third length spaces was walled in for an unknown reason. The corners of the main building were marked with square pillars of which one remains, their pacing suggests that the front of the main hall was open. The inner wall of the temple connects directly with the short walls of the main hall; thus, we can assume that the currently visible extent of the compound is close to its original extent. In this conjunction, there is another stele which will hopefully be restored during the planned reconstruction works, as it is in a very bad condition.

The building has a slightly đinh shape, as there is a very narrow niche rather than a back hall in the center of the main hall in which the main shrine used to be located. In front of the niche is a stone altar. To each side of the niche, there is a smaller stone shrine that would have carried additional icons. The wall still shows a painted decoration with Buddhist ornaments and a burning

cintamani jewel that is depicted like a *yinyang* symbol. In relation to typical structures, we can expect that in front of the main shrine to Lý Thường Kiệt there was a kind of protective or tutelary deity and to the sides two Buddhist entities, since Lý Thường Kiệt appears here not only as an imperial hero but also as a protector of Buddhism. This memorial site is therefore best understood in context with the Linh Xứng Temple, as its establishment was a direct result of founding that Buddhist site.
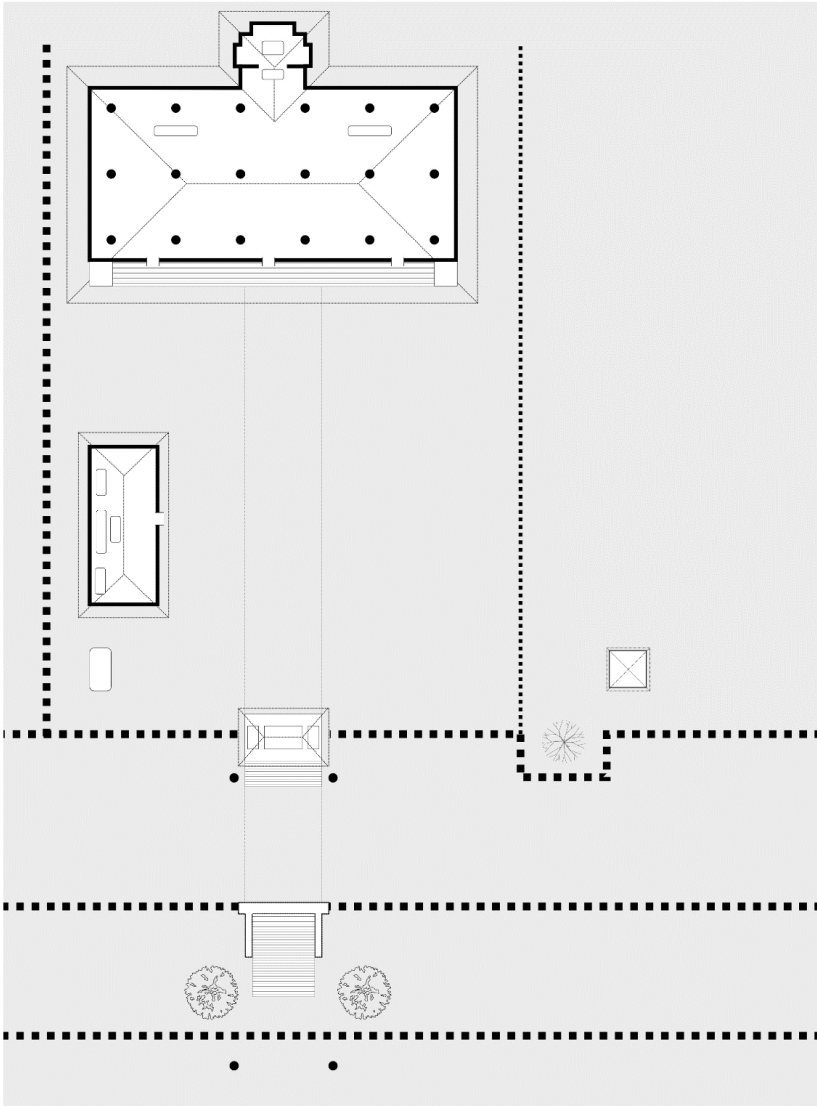
[Img. 11] The đền thờ Lý Thường Kiệt in October 2018

At the time of the visit, this memorial place was only three weeks away from state organized reconstruction. Even though the site was in bad condition, there were many fruit and plant offerings placed on the steps of the former main hall. The offerings, state organized reconstruction and flag markings show that this place is not only still relevant to the local population, but that it is also still treated as a representative mark of the central government.

V.2.3.2. The Written Sources About Lý Thường Kiệt's Use of Buddhism

Under Lý Nhân Tông there are eight inscriptions[1007] that show how he used Buddhism to bring localities into the royal purview. Four of them treat the crucial territory of Thanh Hóa that was under Lý Thường Kiệt's jurisdiction.[1008] During the early Lý dynasty, this borderland had rebelled six times. After the long-lasting conflict of 1061—1069, Lý Thường Kiệt was the first who was able to pacify Champa, to survey the new territories and to leave settlers there. However, the various highland ethnic groups preferred to keep their own traditions that had been influenced by the Cham. His official term in Thanh Hóa — still a very non-Việt area — began in 1082. Hoàng Xuân Hãn (1908—1996) describes how Thanh Hóa was basically a self-reliant country, free from any central politics, and Lý Thường Kiệt was able to reign however he wanted.[1009] He was the first to establish an actual town with a stationed Việt army, so Thanh Hóa remained peaceful. It is not known how exactly he pacified the multiethnic province, but apparently, he had eager helpers.

During his extremely long tenure in the south, Lý Thường Kiệt used Buddhism actively as a territorial marker and a cultural consolidating tool in favor of his emperor. One of the most important artifacts pertaining to him is the

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1007   Further, in 1121, Ly Nhan Tong made his own inscription, which was decorated with dragons, since the text refers to the emperor as "ruler of men, king of dragons." Cf. Whitmore 2015b, p. 296.

1008   Cf. Whitmore 2015b, p. 293.

1009   Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 316.

Stele Inscription of chùa Linh Xứng of Ngưỡng Sơn 仰山靈稱寺碑銘, referring to a temple he founded himself.[1010]

The stele dates to 1126, the text was compiled by Pháp Bao 法寶 (Giác Tính Hải Chiếu 覺性海照)[1011], a purple-robed[1012] grandmaster and the prefect of Thanh Hóa. All in all, there are three inscriptions composed by Pháp Bao about the south.[1013] The stele of 1126 is the third, it describes the life of Lý Thường Kiệt, his achievements and interactions with monks and commoners. Pháp Bao and Lý Thường Kiệt shared a common agenda, as demonstrated by Pháp Bao's multiple mentions of the importance of temples and icons as markers of Buddhist ideology. Their creation would bring merit to the nobles and create important sites that served to distribute the jointly Buddhist-governmental ideology: "The erection of [Buddhist] icons reveals the places to unify, the worshiping at the pagodas and temples creates the places to return to. Mental and physical powers are exhausted to keep them running."[1014]

....

1010 The original stele was generously lent by the Vietnam National Museum of History to the LWL-Museum of Archaeology, Herne (Germany) for the exhibition "Schätze der Archäologie Vietnams" (7 Oct 2016—26 Feb 2017). I had the occasion to thoroughly study and transcribe the text and generously received professional photographic documentation for further study.

1011 Pháp Bao is mentioned in TUTA 57a.

1012 *cizi* 賜紫 "granted purple" refers to a certain piece of court attire of which the purple colored one marks the highest rank. Sometimes this piece of clothing was granted to monks — in Vietnam more often than in China — who would then wear a purple Kasaya (monk's robe). During the Tang dynasty, rulers began to "grant purple" to excellent monks. It was usually prefects and princesses who petitioned in favor of a certain monk at the court. See: Kieschnick 2003, pp. 100–101.

1013 The first inscription from 1118 describes Lý Nhân Tông's progression to the south, stating that it was the role of both the king and Buddhism to bring order into disorder. A local lord would carry this out for the ruler; this would bring peace and prosperity to the local people and the way out of *samsara*. He refers to both Buddhism in India and the Zhou dynasty in China. Another stele recounts how the family of the local lord, Chu, constructed and repaired the temples of the region similar to the previous acts of Lý Thường Kiệt. Cf. Whitmore 2015b, p. 295.

1014 立像相而示有所統，崇塔廟而令有所歸。竭心力以經營 […]. All interpunctuation is mine, it may thus differ from the interpretation of Phan Văn Các and Claudine Salmon, which only became available to me at the end of my research project.

Alluding to Buddhist metaphors like the Pearl Net of Indra,[1015] Pháp Bao describes luxurious splendor, insisting it was not "extravagant", and emphasizes the important role that nobles played as sponsors of Buddhism:

> 凡有名山勝境，莫不啓拓以建覺場。然則非王公大人弘護匡維而莫能成焉。
> *Wherever there were famous mountains with great scenery, there was nobody who would not have wanted to found or extend a [sacred] site there. But if it had not been for the princes and dukes and those [other] high-standing persons to protect and support [these places], there would be nobody who could accomplish that.*[1016]

Lý Thường Kiệt was talented as a governor and also very popular because he used public acts and social welfare to his advantage while transforming the south into a part of Đại Việt:

> 移風易俗，何憚勤勞。[…] 威而殲惡，政以決獄，獄無濫之。
> *He changed customs and habits,*[1017] *how could he dread hard work?* […] *In his authority, he annihilated evil. With integrity he decided about the legal cases and the prisons were not overflowing.*[1018]

Pháp Bao goes into detail about how Lý Thường Kiệt took care of agricultural affairs and ensured that everyone was provided for, he calls this a "method to pacify the state". Pháp Bao then starts to connect Lý Thường Kiệt's political and tactical skills with Buddhism:

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1015 An old Buddhist metaphor for the concept of Śūnyatā (emptiness), the most famous citation coming from the Avataṃsaka-sūtra. The metaphor became very popular starting in the sixth century. For more information, see: Cook, Francis H. *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra.* Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1977.

1016 Cf. LXT, line 3–6.

1017 Local customs refer to the customs of the Hindu-Buddhist Cham people, who were still the majority in the newly acquired territories of "the south", in what is now northern central Vietnam. Lý Thường Kiệt introduced the Sinicized, northern Vietnamese lifestyle.

1018 Cf. LXT, line 14–15.

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而公三朝弼政，兼禦定邊亂。於其數年而八方寧謐，其功盛矣。雖身拘俗諦。
而心遂變乘。

*And the duke served three courts assisting the government, he defended
and fixed the chaos (of the border). In all these many years, the realm was
pacified and quiet, his meritorious deeds flourished! Even if restrained to
the profane truth,*[1019] *his mind would turn towards the Buddhist creed.*[1020]

No matter what his personal conviction was, Lý Thường Kiệt bowed to Bud-
dhism's popularity within the government and did not only cater to that, he also
joined the Buddhist proselytizing effort. Most importantly, he accompanied the
monk Sùng Tín, who was famous for garnering the sympathy of people who
otherwise tended to behave hostile towards Buddhism:

上與母后宗尚浮圖之教。[…]太后師<u>崇信</u>長老,忽從京師適來此郡。旁行教化導諸
異俗而懲惡。懷柔譬以壹雨所潤三草,孰不忻忻然。於是公與師遄游於<u>粉黛</u>海門,
艤舟於<u>龍鼻山</u>脚。嵩白石而璧玉 凝輝窺瀑泉而 衣襟映水。而乃刱短亭於岳麓。

The Emperor and the Empress Mother[1021] *value the teachings of the Bud-
dha. […] On request of the Empress Mother, the elder monk Sùng Tín
suddenly came from the capital to this region here. He traveled every-
where to enlighten [the people], he corrected all the unusual customs,*[1022]*he
punished evil*[1023] *and appeased [the locals]. Exemplarily he moistened*

....

1019 *sudi* 俗諦 is a Buddhist term referring to the world of laypeople, the opposite to the True
      Truth of initiated Buddhists. (see: Soothill 2004, p. 296a).

1020 Cf. LXT, line 16.

1021 This is the famous Ỷ Lan 倚蘭, the commoner mother of Lý Nhân Tông who served as a re-
      gent in absence of the emperor 1066—68, and during the reign of her son as a co-regent. The
      emperor's grandmother Thượng Dương 楊皇had granted herself the title Empress mother
      and demoted Ỷ Lan to an imperial concubine. Ỷ Lan had her killed, an act that endangered
      the legitimation of the dynasty. Thus, as in previous dynasties, her intense support of Bud-
      dhist expansion may have been an effort to make up for political murder. It is believed that
      she built more than 72 temples to atone for her sin. Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, pp. 70–72.

1022 This targeted probably all customs that were not of Sino-Vietnamese origin. Holders of
      these beliefs did not want to be converted to the Sino-Vietnamese Buddhism, which differed
      greatly from the Buddhism of Champa.

1023 In the *Thiền Uyển Tập Anh*, this refers to the indigenous religion.

an entire region[1024] *by the means of just one rainfall, who would not be delighted about that?*

Thereupon, Lý Thường Kiệt and the Master traveled upstream to the harbor of Phấn Đại and moored the boat at the foot of Long Tỵ Sơn[1025]. *A white rock on the island was shaped like a jade disc with a hole in its center, by gazing through it, one could see the rushing spring, and it was [so clear that] the lapels were reflected in the water. Between the feet of the high mountains, a small pavilion had been erected.*[1026]

This passage reflects a trend of Buddhist literature which emphasized water metaphors. Water metaphors were common in Buddhism[1027] because water was so important for the connection between the clergy and worldly rulers. Places that offered a lot of water therefore signified suitable sites for temple establishment. The description here suggests a numinous place between a spring and a mountain. In continuation, the moistness of the environment is emphasized as a feature for the fledgling Buddhist expansion in the area. Pháp Bao goes on to describe that the area had already been integrated by a form of Buddhism that

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1024 *sancao* 三草 literally means "three herbs," it originally refers to all kinds of nonarboreal plants. In Buddhism, the term may also refer to the ordinary people (Cf. Soothill 2004. p.75a). The sentence semi-quotes a famous parable of the *Lotus Sutra*, which expresses that the Buddhist teaching is distributed to all groups of people evenly, just like rain hits any kind of plant. Cf. Muller, A. Charles. "三草二木" *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id(%27b4e09-8349-4e8c-6728%27). This means that the monk was exceptionally good at proselytizing.

1025 The Dragon Nose Mountain refers to different locations: The more well-known one is located in the modern Quảng Bình Province; however, this would be quite a far distance to mention on a stele located in Thanh Hóa. Indeed, there is a lesser known place called Long Tỵ Sơn to the north east of modern Thanh Hóa City. The stele text mentions how both personages later cross the sông Lên and travel *west* to the Ngưỡng Sơn. The latter is already close to the coast nowadays and would have been almost completely coastal in the twelfth century, given that the east coast of Vietnam grows roughly 12 km a century (Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 177–78). Thus, it is unlikely that the Long Tỵ Sơn here refers to the place in Quảng Bình.

1026 Cf. LXT, line 17–19.

1027 Evaluated examples can be found in: Lai Whalen. "Ch'an Metaphors: Waves, Water, Mirror, Lamp." *Philosophy East and West* 29, no. 3 (1979): 243–253. Also of relevance: Zhang Yi'nan. "On 10 Chan-Buddhism images in the poetry of Du Fu" *Studies in Chinese Religions* 4, no. 3 (2018): 318–340.

was more recognizable to Vietnamese eyes than an earlier site of first Buddhist settlers which was confronted with arson.

起崒堵于烟杪。師乃諮於公曰：此山勝奇,既已開拓， 復有何處清幽,貽名勝迹, […] 鼓枻西巡, 歷南碩之清江,達大里之名邑。渡頭躡足游目瞻視僅之五里髣髴 於郡城中有孤岫曰仰山。脚盤澝岸，非屺非岵。不崖不峭。嵐光凝 黱黛色氤氳
The tips of the stupas[1028] rose out of the mist. The master then consulted with the duke: 'This mountain is of wonderful beauty; it was already developed. Where it was quiet and secluded before, it now presents famous cultural monuments.' […] Subsequently, they had their followers row towards the west and passed the Azure River of the south[1029] and reached the famous capital of [the district] Đại Lý. From the ferry crossing, they slowly traveled by foot, surveying the area, when they saw that there was a lone mountain peak inside the region's city. It seemed to be hardly five miles away, named

Ngưỡng Sơn. Its foot lay flat at the bank of the river; it was neither a barren nor lush mountain, it had no cliffs nor was it steep. The mountain haze condenses into a dense smoke of gloomy black color.

On the mountain ridge there was a simple village with some minor religious buildings. Pháp Bảo recounts that formerly, there was a recluse in a simple hut (*an* 庵) who had been tasked with propagating Buddhism, yet the area of Ngưỡng Sơn had not been rigorously developed so far. After finding this area where the first steps of Buddhist progress had already occurred, the text projects further numinosity when Lý Thường Kiệt leads his troops up the mountain and into a forest with mist so thick that the soldiers could only advance by walking close to each other. Relieved to be allowed to build a camp, the soldiers and civilians of the troop were immediately put to work according to their talents.

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1028 An abbreviation of *sudubo* 窣堵波, a phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit term "stupa". Cf. Phan Văn Các and Claudine Salmon 1998, p. 170, note 22.

1029 This is the modern river sông Lên.

Lý Thường Kiệt stresses the remarkable landscape by saying: "Humaneness and wisdom are what [causes] their joy; there are mountains, there is water." That sentence, though, is a reference to *Lunyu* 6:23, where Confucius explains to his students that the wise enjoy water while the humane enjoy the mountains. With that, the general asserts that this area is especially valuable for the establishment of a site that will generate civility. For this reason, Lý Thường Kiệt ordered his troop to build a Buddhist temple on the sunny side of the mountain, opposite to the camp.

Although the Buddhist monk and the general have different motivations and goals, they deem the same kind of site, based on the same characteristics, as suitable for territorial marking.

The newly built temple is described as a two-winged building with supporting pillars that were carved to resemble Buddhas and covered in gold. It was the highest building around: "like a blooming lotus rising from the water". The walls were painted with the sixteen bodhisattvas and their narratives.[1030] Behind the temple was a pagoda with nine levels with a net-like layout. The bell of the temple was golden and the surface of the temple's walls itself dazzled red and gold in the sunlight. Inside the main gate, large golden bells were set up whose sound was meant to move the earth, warn of 'rotten' customs and to urge the good to punish evil. Leaning towards the river, there was another small pavilion and a plank bridge close to the docks. The temple was supposedly so magnificent that people from Champa and Zhenla came there to venerate the Buddha.[1031] This may be a hyperbole to claim cultural influence on the southern neighboring cultures.

Unfortunately, the Linh Xứng Temple has been lost, it was obliterated during the wars with the French. Even today, the landscape shows the scars of the more recent Vietnam War: new green between the leftovers of foundation walls. The only thing marking its former space is a grassy field with a banana tree in its center. A new temple of the same name has been established on the

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1030 *bianxiang* 變相 "transformation tableaux" are "pictorial representations of Buddhist narratives" containing jatakas but also abridged sutras in mostly popular Buddhism. see: PDB 2014, p. 118.

1031 Cf. LXT, lines 27–31.

hill beside it. It consists of only one tin wall hall containing big, but inexpensive icons of the Buddhist triad, the Buddha's disciples, a child Buddha and in total three Quan Âm figurines. It is cared for by one single nun who belongs to Pure Land Buddhism. However, in Hoàng Xuân Hãn's time, some remains of the original site still existed. He describes the front of the temple as a "patch of wasteland" that "looks like an old lake." Four brick columns are left of the mountain gate which separates the former garden from a modern dike road. "Across the river, there is a temple called Lý Thường-Hiến, which is more magnificent, but there is no stele of the Lý dynasty."[1032] All of that suggests that water featured strongly into the appearance of the former Linh Xứng Temple.

Although Pháp Bao's stele account expands in detail how happy everyone was about the temple, how much it was celebrated and how all the people contributed to it and gave up their possessions; this was not always the case. As it turns out, the temple erected by Lý Thường Kiệt was not the first Buddhist building at this site. Instead, it "scorned local elders" who destroyed the hut of the recluse "just like Rājagṛha". That leads Pháp Bao to the conclusion that Lý Thường Kiệt was destined to build the temple in order to make up for the previous injustice.[1033] Rājagṛha was the former capital of Magadha (modern Raigir, Nalanda, Bihar state of India), the location of the first Buddhist council. In Buddhist legend, an elder named Śrīgupta tried to kill the Buddha with fire or by putting his chariot on fire.[1034]

This shows that no matter how joyous Buddhist authors report the establishment of their sites, they cannot completely omit that the indigenous population occasionally resisted their interventions and proselytizing. Faced with an intruder who had allied with a transregional government, the locals found no other option of protecting their own identity except for the most aggressive mode of putting the transformed landscape back into order: by destroying the visual markers of the intruders. However, as the transregional network grew, the backlash to these aggressions grew as well and the consequences of

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1032 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, pp. 327–28.

1033 Cf. LXT, line 32.

1034 Cf. Soothill 2004. p.101a and Phan Văn Các and Claudine Salmon 1998, p. 170, referencing the Lotus Sutra and Taisho Canon No. 262, 9:12b–13c.

aggressive actions like burning down a shrine or temple became too heavy to bear. In this sentiment, the stele of Pháp Bao continues to further praise Lý Thường Kiệts character but also dives into Buddhist poetry that scrutinizingly connects rainbringing metaphors with the persecution of indigenous religions and the marking of place:

[…] 壹雨霈潤三草萌舒。 法幢大竪邪網頓除。
[…] *Only one torrential rainfall moistened the sprouts of an entire region. This dharma banner*[1035] *was erected to wipe out the nets of heterodoxies.*[1036]

The *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* reports that Lý Thường Kiệt used as much his influence as his troops to chase away half of the known professional spirit mediums of whom he thought that they "deceived"[1037] others and promoted ghosts and demons. He turned "obscene shrines" of evil spirits into those of benevolent spirits.[1038] If people were fond of demons, spirits, witches and wizards, he reprimanded them and ended the customs. More than building temples himself, he restored or rededicated them. The most famous locations associated with Lý Thường Kiệt are the aforementioned Linh Xứng Temple and the Hương Nghiêm Temple of Càn Ni Sơn 乾尼山香嚴寺 which he restored in 1086, as well as the Báo Ân Temple of An Hoạch Sơn 安穫山報恩寺, restored in 1099.

Hương Nghiêm Temple was also an already occupied sacred site, where an older Buddhist temple had been established by a rich layman during the Tang dynasty. As a favor to a friend, Lý Thường Kiệt repaired the temple to such an extent that it was later ascribed to him as a founder. In 1949, the temple was

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1035 *fachuang* 法幢 "Dharma banner" means an emblem of Buddhist spiritual power (i.e., truth), this could be literally banners at festive occasions, steles or newly established monasteries. This is a metaphor on the militaristic use of banners to mark territory. In such a way, this metaphor marks the gathering of a Buddhist community. Cf. PDB 2014, p. 695.

1036 Cf. LXT, line 41. *xiewang* 邪網 "demonic nets" can be read literally or more commonly in a figurative way, pointing to "heterodoxies" and other non-Buddhist or diverging religious teachings. Cf. Soothill 2004, p. 246b.

1037 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 21.

1038 Cf. Vo Nghia 2012. pos. 581.

restored and no ancient objects or structures remained, but like in the ruins of Linh Xứng Temple, the Lý dynastic steles were still in situ. Hoàng Xuân Hãn mentions how the oldest stele was renovated in 1726,[1039] but that some characters were also intentionally changed, which shows that steles can be 'reconfigured', too.

Báo Ân Temple is worthy of mention because it was erected in a war-torn area in the matter of only one year.[1040] The two steles of this temple report the usual praises for Lý Thường Kiệt and describe the temple. It was situated in an area famous for mining a durable green rock (likely malachite), behind it were two mountains and in front of it a river, a well was placed to its face as well as two special rocks.[1041] The placement and arrangement of the temple had thus been made in compliance with ideas of geomancy. In 1949, Hoàng describes the formerly big temple as a very small fenced-in compound with a locked bell tower, stone steps, and a garden with the steles close to the entrance. Another part of the temple remained and was still active. Hoàng Xuân Hãn described a "beautiful" Buddhist icon which is sitting on a creature with a pig's head. This is not a common example of Buddhist iconography, but would fit the Hindu god Ganesha. He further found the statue of a Cham-style Garuda, and a Garuda who is touching a well, with pillars and lotus decorations.[1042] This means the temple's appearance had been strongly influenced by the Cham craftsmen who had been employed for its construction and it surely also catered to the local Cham ethnic population. It is not clear based on this description whether the icons showed traits of amalgamation or incorporation, but in any case, it was probably a site where Việt and Cham culture merged under political pressure and Buddhist guidance. Since Buddhism and Hindu religions share several common entities and concepts, Buddhism was well able to offer multiple options of incorporation to Cham ideas and to create an environment that was more welcoming of Cham-Việt hybridization — although, due to the economic

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1039 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 318, 377–79, 384.

1040 Cf. Keng Hui-ling 2007, p. 9.

1041 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 385.

1042 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 388.

relationship with the Việt government, the favor would always slightly sway to Việt culture.

The inscriptions of these temples demonstrate the reach of the throne in this southern border region. In Lý Thường Kiệt's lifetime, Buddhism was active and public and not restricted to monasteries.[1043] Lý Thường Kiệt assisted and supported his ruler in the south and maintained the territory by extending Lý Nhân Tông's idea of a unified Buddhist orthodoxy that served as a unifying factor for his central government. Đỗ Thiện goes as to state that the general practice of reforming (i.e. rededicating) local temples — as it was continued throughout the Lý and Trần dynasties — was initiated by Lý Thường Kiệt's actions.[1044]

In 1101, Lý Thường Kiệt was finishing his eighteen-year tenure as lord of Thanh Hóa and the south. At the age of 83, he returned to Thăng Long to serve once again as prime minister.[1045]

V.2.3.3. The Historical Context of Proselytizing and Expansion

Lý Thường Kiệt had been as interested in Confucian texts as in Buddhism. It was certainly advantageous to show himself as a devout Buddhist to keep up with the government image that the Lý had established. In the same sense, it was beneficial to Buddhist authors to stress the support and approval by someone as powerful, popular and influential as him.

Lý Thường Kiệt was interested in protecting and expanding the realm; he used Buddhism to consolidate the new territories and to create a recognizable social order that he and his successors would know how to direct.

The Buddhists profited from governmental protection: their aim was to expand and proselytize in any manner that worked. By providing legitimacy to the government and its representatives, they had access to military mobilization and centralized state measures that their layperson community could not provide. The strength that the Buddhist missionaries wielded during this

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1043 Cf. Whitmore 2015b, p. 294.

1044 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 45.

1045 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 320.

era intensified the anti-indigenous narratives, and local cults were depicted more negatively than ever before.

Due to the governmental patronage, Buddhism was no longer dependent on employing *upāya.* Incorporation was no longer perceived as an adequate measure because its sponsors wielded enough violent power to enable aggressive measures like superscription or even destruction. Some of the continuously occurring, meritorious temple restorations were exercised with the sole aim of removing local deities that had found their way inside due to the interventions of the indigenous people.[1046] Local cults were indeed a bother to the Buddhists. With the growing expansion, the Việt population encountered entirely new deities. Some of these new deities had characteristics that were able to provide legitimacy as well; others offered services sought for by the general population. In this sense, the local deities "discovered" during the political expansion into the south could become competition to Buddhism if they turned transregional. The best way to avoid such a worst-case scenario was to constantly advocate against local cults and to depict them as something evil, something that had to be cleaned up or harmonized by Buddhism. This worked best if similar narratives were spread along the religious networks that hurried ahead of generals and settlers.

There was now sufficient pressure to hasten unifying trends in the pluralistic Vietnamese Buddhist landscape. The actions of Lý Nhân Tông and Lý Thường Kiệt to unify the Buddhist system (as much as to unify the realm) provided a basis to establish an ideologically thorough infrastructure piercing through the southern realm. It was an option of control that was based on Buddhist pioneers and pseudo-Buddhist peacemakers (*bình tiết độ sứ* 平節度使) which became necessary to ensure the future success of the political southward expansion, although it was interrupted for roughly a century.

Lý Nhân Tông had created a strong Buddhist system that, while not enduring, was like other Southeast Asian Buddhist kingdoms, especially compared to Angkor. By the 1180s, though, state Buddhism had already started to decline. As the Master of the Realm lost his status to his Confucian competition, the number of Buddhist adepts dwindled particularly among the upper classes.

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1046 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 140.

Being a member of the clergy no longer guaranteed the same political success as in earlier decades. The Lý dynasty had relied on Buddhist legitimation, but the transition to the Trần dynasty severely affected Buddhist society. The three Thiền sects that had established themselves in the past centuries vanished quickly. The first of them was the Thảo Đường 草堂 sect, that had been limited to the Lý court anyway and which ended with Lý Cao Tông's death in 1210. The schools of the popular Vinītaruci and the scholarly Vô Ngôn Thông 無言通 lost their leaders shortly after.[1047]

An Imperial Dynamic Duo

The early Trần dynasty attempted to build on Lý Nhân Tôngs work and tried to create a Thiền orthodoxy[1048] to strengthen the realm against outside aggressions and the inner stresses of expansion. Possibly due to their proximity, Buddhist and Confucian ideology had become very mixed in the government of the Trần dynasty. As previous centuries had seen a tendency to combine Buddhism with Daoism, it was now Confucianism which was meant to be more actively married into the state ideology. For most of the Trần dynasty, examinations covered all three religions.[1049]

The reform of the examination system pushed Buddhism off its pedestal as Confucian scholars wished for Buddhism to keep to the spiritual aspects of life instead of interfering with politics.[1050] The contemporary scholars of competing ideologies saw the Buddhists in the government as supposedly greedy and immoral. However, there are opposing views on the position of Buddhism during the Trần dynasty. The popular narrative is that Buddhism directly went into decline and Confucianism became the favored ideology. But this is the perspective of court historians who wrote about these events centuries later. These were historians who were part of a much more Confucian government and who had internalized Confucian values that were used to evaluate the Trần dynasty. The fewer mentions of Buddhism result from this historiographic bias; in reality,

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1047   Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 167–68.
1048   Cf. Whitmore 2015b, p. 301.
1049   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 165.
1050   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 262.

the Trần court continued to support Buddhism[1051] and saw more Thiền sects rise and fall. Studies of the Trần dynasty[1052] show that the historical texts refer to many very non-Confucian events, like tattooing and other body mutilations, rulers entering Buddhist orders or having sutras taught at court or miraculous events like people spontaneously changing sex.[1053] An emperor even ordered that all horse resting posts throughout the realm had to be equipped with Buddhist statues, which was surely not an act of promoting Confucianism.[1054] However, Buddhists had indeed previously used Confucian ideas for advising the rulers and this trend increased during the thirteenth century.

Trần emperors were continuously involved in Buddhism but also open for the stabilizing moralities from other ideologies: Trần Thái Tông 陳太宗 (1218—1277) — who styled himself a Buddhist ruler — wrote two extensive essays about Buddhist teaching and composed repentance texts that also listed 'sins' against Confucian morality, father/son, or ruler/subject relations.[1055]

His successor Trần Nhân Tông (1278—1293) had hardly any legitimacy issues. He had defended the realm against two incursions by the Mongols in 1285 and 1288 and was thus perceived to be a true hero. The emperor considered himself a Buddhist as well and studied under his maternal uncle. When he abdicated, he sought a suitable monastery to retire to. That retirement was very active, though, as he traveled through the country and established or intensified the connections between the most popular temples to promote the

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1051 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 168.

1052 Like Whitmore 1997 or McHale 1999, the latter explicitly mentions that Ngô Sĩ Liên wrote about the Trần rulers as examples of bad rulers who failed to live up to Confucian norms (p. 496).

1053 Cf. McHale 1999, p. 502. He also includes sacrifices to the mountain gods or attention to bad omens as non-Confucian. However, in China many mountains were included in Confucian ritualism, so I do not see any conflict between mountain veneration and orthodox Confucianism. Bad omens (especially by observing nature) also played a role in court Confucianism, so this merely shows that not everything included in the marginalia is also non-Confucian. Information about Confucianism and the interpretation of 'weird' omens can be found in Lipiello, Tiziana. *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China*. Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2001.

1054 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 83.

1055 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 117 and Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 140.

establishment of a unified clergy. In 1301, he traveled to Champa and arranged for a political marriage that would have dire consequences a few years later, although with the result that Đại Việt acquired two additional provinces. He personally founded a new Thiền school, the Trúc Lâm 竹林 "Bamboo Grove" sect, at the Yên Tử 安子 mountain monastery.

Trúc Lâm Thiền is seen as the first and only native Vietnamese Thiền school that shook off foreign influences, although it was rich in contents from Confucianism and Daoism. The Trúc Lâm also was a school centered on the court, but somewhat successful in unifying the many smaller Buddhist groups of the realm. The Trúc Lâm school became more and more tantric to gain support among the common population. New techniques of meditation were once again promoted to heal disease, banish evil and call for rain. This enabled the monks to use their services to influence public opinion. Although this Thiền school only existed for three generations,[1056] they were prolific temple builders and thus provoked a rising number of influential Confucian court officials to paint the Buddhists as an economic burden for the state.[1057]

Trần Nhân Tông was simultaneously a ruler, an ambassador and a missionary who traveled to change customs, forbid "lewd language" and taught the people about the Ten Good Things — a Buddhism based social morality. In 1304, the emperor emeritus met the monk Pháp Loa 法螺 (1284—1330), who became his disciple and the second patriarch of the Trúc Lâm school. The succession ceremony was performed as an imperial event in which the entire court participated. And as the years continued, the queen mother and the following two emperors also had him teach them. In much of the same way, Pháp Loa was not an ordinary monk, but a high government official in charge of the clergy which became increasingly unified. He had no time to travel far because he was preoccupied with transregional organization, education and the training of proselytizing monks.[1058] Under his direction, not less than a thousand people would enter monkhood every three years.

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1056 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 140.

1057 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 187.

1058 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 148–151.

Temple building was Pháp Loa's favored method of expansion: until 1329, he personally built two ensembles of big temples, five pagodas and two hundred monasteries while also enlarging other temples. His disciples followed his example in many regions of Đại Việt. For these endeavors, the imperial family gradually donated more than one thousand acres between 1312—1319. These included slaves and additional donations by laymen. With the funds he received from the land donations, Pháp Loa hat 1,300 bronze statues and more than hundred earthen statues made, he founded reading associations and printed sutras. Copies of the entire Tripitaka were bestowed to the most important temples. To emphasize the convergence between Buddhist and imperial practice, he called for the laymen to offer their blood to print more than five thousand prayer books.

Pháp Loa had recognized that the magical tantric practices, like healing, rainmaking or snake control, incited more interest among the common people than the complex and somewhat hermeneutic sutras that were publicly preached. So, old tantric practices were strengthened or reintroduced, like the *vassa* summer prayer refuge during the rainy season or the *abisheka* ceremony that became much more generalized and common.[1059]

Trần Nhân Tông and Pháp Loa together were a catalyst for the transregional success of Buddhism in imperial Vietnam. They turned isolated islands of different teaching lineages, which had only been somewhat connected with each other, into a profitable network. This increased the output of icons and texts, both collected in ever more and ever grander temples. Thus, by around 1320, Buddhism had not only become extremely visible but was also completely identified with the government. Indeed, the speed of territorial marking by Buddhism in the new territories had risen to such a degree that when the Cham king Chế Bồng Nga 制蓬峩 (r. 1360—1390) tried to conquer the lost provinces of Champa back after merely a few decades after the annexation by Đại Việt, the cultural landscape there had already changed so thoroughly that he could not gain a footing there anymore. The provinces Ô and Lý now identified with the Việt and the deities of the Cham sanctuaries had been reinterpreted [V.3.].

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1059 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 153–56. The abisheka ceremony practiced is the old variant of consecration by water pouring, not the initiation ritual of Vajrayāna Buddhism.

Wherever Buddhism went, the government followed, and where the central administration established itself, Buddhism flourished. Pháp Loa's entrepreneurship and skilled means marked the Trần era and would have encouraged a Buddhist state like Thailand — if not for the consequences of the Mongol invasions.

V.2.4. The Decline of State Buddhism

After leading several successful campaigns against Champa and founding his own Thiền school lineage, Trần Nhân Tông's strong support for Buddhism led other scholars at the court to blame Buddhism for taking economic advantage and being a burden on the state, because people became monks during famines. This caused two movements at the end of the Trần dynasty to force monks under forty back into lay life.[1060] In contrast to that, Emperor Trần Anh Tông 陳英宗 (1293—1320) continued favoring Buddhism and ordered another Tripitaka from China.

After the triple victory over the Mongol invaders between 1258 to 1288, many state officials still saw the realm in great danger and started to collect and expand myths and stories about the state ancestors and protectors of the realm.[1061] They saw it as necessary to build up an alternative legitimation scheme to get rid of the 'asocial and greedy' Buddhists. The sudden hate was related to the fact that the Mongols had used Buddhist and Daoist agents against the Việt court officials. On the one hand, this caused Buddhism to lose prestige and social status and promoted the idea of the old separation between Buddhism providing soteriological aid and Confucianism dealing with worldly matters.[1062] On the other hand, many of the spiritual protectors of the realm were connected to Buddhist lore, so Buddhist narratives reentered daily life among the commoners. That fitted the teaching of the short-lived Trúc Lâm Thiền school which had propagated more closeness between the ruler and the people. A Trúc Lâm Grand Master advised: If someone rules, then he has to make the will of the people his own will, to make the heart of the people

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1060 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 172 and Kiernan 2017, p. 192.

1061 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 125.

1062 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, pp. 117–19.

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his own heart.[1063] However, at the end of the Trần dynasty, the supporters of Buddhism finally lost their political and economic power because more and more Confucians held relevant offices in public administration and this quickly multiplied due to the now more regular examinations. In contrast to them, the lesser educated monks had hardly a grasp of their own religion anymore and adopted from Daoism and Vajrayāna Buddhism whatever they needed.[1064]

In 1396, the usurper Hồ Quý Ly 胡季犛 (1336—1407?) stopped the training of all Buddhist adepts and forced all monks under forty back into the laity. As the third campaign of this kind, Buddhism was robbed of young, ambitious and educated new blood and that abruptly ended the reign of Buddhism in Vietnam.[1065]

During the Ming occupation of Đại Việt 1407—1427, the Han Chinese took advantage of the Buddhist system they were familiar with. Although the Ming were prolific builders of Confucian school temples, they also employed fortune tellers, physicians and Buddhist monks for education in their own temples. Since qualified Confucian scholars could not be trained fast enough, every measure was valid to transfer Sinitic thought to the new subjects. Many monks were — also forcefully — invited to China and sent back later, which gave Buddhist monks another stain of possible espionage, which they would never be able to wash off again.

After the Ming had retreated, the Later Lê dynasty established itself with an entirely new administrative staff that primarily consisted of very young Neo-Confucian scholars and Confucianism replaced Buddhism as the state ideology. Lê Lợi preferred Confucianism for the consolidation of his government and saw Buddhism as a bad influence on society that created heterogeneity, dissent and had to be stopped.[1066] It cannot be underestimated how a switch in state ideology helped to emphasize his reign as something fresh, new and completely unburdened with the failures of former dynasties.

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1063 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 131.
1064 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 164.
1065 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 157–58.
1066 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 166, 168–170.

Even though they were still allowed to have festivals and to bring the Pháp Vân icon to the capital to pray for rain, Buddhist monks were forbidden to build new temples, to meet palace women, and to continue the Trúc Lâm lineage.[1067] Lê Lợi's strict regime prompted too many men to try to evade taxes and corvée labor by becoming monks, which again caused the introduction of even more strict examinations for Buddhists down to the provincial level in 1429. For this reason, he advanced the Confucian tendencies of the state administration although he was aware that this would strengthen the Sinitic cultural influence on his realm. However: "At the same time, the Lê tolerated and sometimes favored Buddhism at the popular level because of the religion's stabilizing benefits.[1068]" Buddhism did not vanish, but it came to fill a different niche in Vietnamese society.

The Effects of the Buddhist State System

For centuries, members of the elite joined Buddhist ranks and due to their involvement in establishing the Lý dynasty, Buddhist monks enjoyed the continued support of elite families and their growing monastic estates.

As all Lý emperors participated in Buddhist religious life, mercy became a core virtue that led to tax alleviations in emergencies, amnesties for minor crimes as well as to the prohibition of child slavery.[1069] For the most part, Buddhists filled the niche of the Confucian literati in China. They were advisers to the emperor, controlled access to the court, abbots were at the same time administrative officials of the districts under their supervision. They also had to submit poems to the court to be chosen as officials.

These Buddhists must have had access to basic Confucian education since the dynasty founding prophecy shows that they were familiar with — and knew how to use — the concept of the Mandate of Heaven. Court rhetoric was filled with Confucian terms — the five relations were known, but instead of the five virtues, the emperor was reminded to use benevolence and mercy to both

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1067 Cf. ibid., p. 186. That was not the end of that school, though. Its adherents hid in southern central Vietnam and reappeared in the latter half of the dynasty.

1068 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. 3.

1069 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 39.

protect the people and bind important deities to his rule. Under governmental sponsorship, great numbers of new Buddhist temples were established and the expansion of Buddhism among the common people of northern and central Vietnam accelerated significantly. The incorporation of and amalgamation with local deities greatly facilitated the integration of rural and borderland territories, causing the extension of Đại Việt's cultural and political borders. Transregional Buddhism had localized in Đại Việt and thus served as a catalyst in the transformation from an indigenous aquatic legitimation of rule to a Sinitic ordering and civilizing legitimation of rule, with an enhanced notion of water control. And while the adaption of the more Sinitic legitimation system helped the Việt emperors to acquire some centralization, more order, and a bit more stability; the Buddhists lost their status in the provision of upper-class education and with that, their control over the court. The loss of prestige during Đại Việt's most troublesome times led to the descent of Buddhism into the commoner sphere and allowed for the ascent of (Neo-)Confucianism which would finally spread beyond the capital's walls.

V.3. Imperialization and Neo-Confucianization in Vietnam

Similar to the separation between southern China and northern Vietnam, the people of southern Vietnam were also very hard to reach due to the rivers, hills and jungles that separated them from the north. Even if they were reached, then it was difficult to uphold a sufficient level of communication, which would have been necessary to exert any kind of centralized control.

The south of Vietnam had been thoroughly Indianized.[1070] Therefore, southern cultures differed intensely from northern Việt culture and many of the southern customs and traditions were irreconcilable with the Sinitic ideologies

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1070   On the dynamics of Indianization and new definitions of 'Greater India', see: Murphy, Stephen A. and H. Leedom Lefferts. "Globalizing Indian religions and Southeast Asian localisms: incentives for the adoption of Buddhism and Brahmanism in first millennium CE Southeast Asia." In *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization*, edited by Tamar Hodos, 768–788. New York: Routledge, 2017.

that the Việt had adopted. Politically, the Indianized kingdoms had sometimes relied on concepts similar to Sinitic imperialism to secure political power. For example, they utilized the idea of the Hindu universal monarch to claim ritual supremacy with the aim to integrate local cults under shared, institutionalized rituals (→ superimposing). Institutionalized rituals with greater cosmological settings became even more necessary in an attempt to balance the relative political and military weakness of these states under the pressure of the Việt southward expansion.[1071]

For both the Việt and the rulers of the Indianized kingdoms, religion proved to be an invaluable tool in nudging the inhabitants scattered across these culturally multifarious regions to submit — out of their own volition — to central governments. For a long time, the north had used Buddhism to achieve exactly this purpose and it had produced adequate results. However, foreign incursions weakened Buddhism's social prestige among the population and government alike. This enabled Neo-Confucianism to gain ideological dominance over late imperial Việt governments, especially in the aftermath of another Chinese occupation and a complete replacement of the local administrative system. However, even under the growing influence of Confucian ideology, Buddhism still served as a transcultural integrative factor during the Viet's March to the South, which created the territory of Vietnam that we know today.

V.3.1.　The Context of Late Imperial Vietnam — An Ideological Turn

The usurper Hồ Quý Ly had managed to fool the Chinese Empire about the legitimacy of his rule. However, he made one big mistake — he attacked the southern neighbor Champa, at that time a protectorate of China. Necessarily, this course of action drew attention to his real heritage.

The emperor of China at the time, Yongle 永樂 (r. 1402—1424), had also ascended to the throne through usurpation. Although the invasion of Đại Việt had not been planned, for the sake of his own legitimacy, he had no choice but to reannex the 'rebellious southern province' in 1407 — ostensibly to reinstitute

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1071　Cf. Scott 2009, pp. 99–100. Although the highlanders in Vietnam were not generally regarded as uncultured barbarians before the late imperial period.

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justice and order.[1072] The Yongle Emperor "was determined to integrate his new subjects morally as well as administratively into his realm."[1073] By the power of virtue (*de* 德), he aimed to avoid the separate treatment between central and peripheral populations of the previous dynasties — and demanded that tributary states should behave according to the Chinese Confucian interpretation of correctness. After the invasion, the Ming killed or dispersed most of the old government officials. As a result, many offices remained empty for almost a decade.[1074] They promised to restore the old Trần elite's power, even after Đại Việt had been renamed Jiaozhi again.[1075] After a headcount, the Ming government recruited surviving Confucian scholars by promising them prestigious offices. They were subsequently brought to China for 'proper' training. Nobody had expected the violent reeducation campaign that followed.[1076]

Although the Việt had conformed to Chinese law codices for centuries, they were described as vermin, as unable to be civilized and oblivious to righteousness.[1077] The Ming governors had arrogated a civilizing mission to themselves and went through immense efforts to destroy Việt culture. They forcefully introduced Chinese deities and rites in 1409, which included the destruction of indigenous sacred sites and the suppression of local cults by Chinese Buddhist monks. The Ming drafted Việt monks together with doctors, astrologers and craftsmen to the Chinese court, which robbed Đại Việt of valuable expertise.

After ten years, the Ming had hardly returned any reeducated scholars and the previous Việt administration lay in pieces.[1078] Collaborators, though, could hold high positions that helped them to gain wealth and status.[1079] The

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1072 Cf. Engelbert 2016, pp. 250–51. An in-depth study on the relation between Ming China and Đại Việt can be found in: Baldanza, Kathlene. *Ming China and Vietnam. Negotiating Borders in Early Modern Asia.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

1073 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 51.

1074 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 53.

1075 Cf. Yang 2019, p. 182.

1076 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 52.

1077 Though occasionally, there was the Confucian sentiment that prosperity, tolerance and a righteous government would make the Việt righteous as well. Cf. Whitmore 1977, pp. 65–67.

1078 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 263.

1079 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 64.

central administrative system was expanded down to the village level;[1080] for many villages it was the first time they were ever integrated into transregional political control.

Visibility and education were strongly tied to promoting Confucian ideology. In the first year after the takeover, new *văn miếu* were established all over the country with the intention to replace Buddhist temples as local schools — 44 of them just in the capital.

The Neo-Confucian canon commissioned by the Yongle Emperor was finished in 1415. It became the standard of Chinese state ideology that all scholars of the Chinese Empire would be trained in. Meanwhile, the inhabitants of districts and villages were taught on the basis of Chinese classics, while the books about Việt history were brought to China to be either burned or conveniently lost.[1081] And yet, the Ming were neither able to stabilize the areas south of the capital nor to change old customs.[1082] Although later dynasties may have benefitted to some extent from the Ming's following infrastructural investments, these were merely meant to enable even fiercer reeducation campaigns.

When the canon reached the south in late 1419, Huang Fu 黃福 (1362—1440) was tasked with overseeing the transformation of Đại Việt into an obedient Chinese province. He claimed that for the strengthening of the Five Relationships in Đại Việt, it was 'essential' that dress, behavior and religion had to resemble Sinitic culture.[1083] In his *He Jiaozhi Pingding Biao* 賀交阯平定表 "Congratulations on the Pacification of Jiaozhi", Huang Fu emphasizes that to achieve good government, the 'evil' local customs had to be eradicated in order to bring the 'pure' customs to light.[1084] He blamed the indigenous tribal people for taking Jiaozhi from China, for inhibiting Sinitic influences and thus causing rebellion.

However, the Chinese considered almost all Việt rituals as licentious and their deities as evil. He thus introduced the shrines of already known Chinese

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1080 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 264.

1081 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 106–107 and Engelbert 2016, p. 264–65.

1082 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 54, 58, 61, 65.

1083 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 69; Kiernan 2017, p. 193; Lulei 2018, p. 52 and Yang 2019, p. 176.

1084 Cf. Whitmore 1977, pp. 65–66 and Yang 2019, p. 183.

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deities with a renewed Chinese appearance.[1085] The Buddhist establishments were initially ignored by the Chinese Neo-Confucian officials and simply subjected to the same restrictions as in China. But then they started to persecute Buddhist and Daoist cults by destroying their sacred sites: "… in truth, they wanted to discard the temples hosting Vietnamese tradition."[1086] In the year 1419, the Ming also finally returned the seized senior monks and tribute students, who had been reeducated and immersed in Chinese Neo-Confucian ideology. About 161 of these scholars entered higher service, while others were sent into local offices with the full expectation that they would support the Chinese effort.[1087]

This expectation was not fulfilled, it cost Ming China all control over the administration of the countryside and communication to the border, which rendered all previous centralization efforts moot.[1088] This created safe havens for rebels.

The rebel leader Lê Lợi 黎利 (1348—1433) of Lam Sơn, Thanh Hóa, was a Mường-ethnic[1089] landowner who ultimately led Đại Việt back into independence.[1090] The Xuande Emperor 宣德帝 (r. 1425—1435) had long decided that the cultural war in Vietnam was too expensive to be worth the trouble, especially while the Chinese Empire was facing incursions from the north.[1091] However, he could not accept a rebel to become the next ruler of Đại Việt, so he wasted even more funds in a war with local authorities who enjoyed all local support. Lê Lợi continued the established tradition of luring the Chinese army into the marshes[1092] where they found nothing but death. Afterwards, he

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1085 Cf. Whitmore 1977, pp. 67–68; Engelbert 2016, pp. 264–65.

1086 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 107.

1087 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 194.

1088 Cf. Whitmore 1977, pp. 60–61, 70.

1089 For the longest time, this aspect of his identity had been denied and is still denied in Vietnamese discourse (cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường and Trần Hạnh 2012, p. 149), but Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014 spell this out clearly on page 113.

1090 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 108.

1091 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 152–154; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 109 f. and Kiernan 2017, p. 195.

1092 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 109–112; Engelbert 2016, p. 253.

founded the Later Lê dynasty (officially counted from 1427—1789) in 1428 and eventually, internal politics tilted southwards.[1093]

There are multiple reasons why the Ming occupation was doomed. Since the Việt had emulated the Chinese government for decades, the invasion led to no visible change of rule. This made it difficult to enforce changes unless they were made very noticeable. The officials who were tasked with governing Jiaozhi were once again exiles, criminals and unsuccessful candidates[1094] from southern China. None of them were good representatives of Chinese ideology or even loyal to it.[1095] Finally, the Ming wanted to make the Việt pay for their own annexation by exploiting them, prostituting the women and working the men to death.[1096] This, together with the destructive treatment of their sacred sites, proved to the Việt that the Ming did not care about their well-being at all. This insight, combined with the values and expectations of reassigned Confucianism, revealed to them that the Ming lacked the necessary virtue to be adequate rulers. Additionally, the Ming had missed their chance to establish local sources of legitimation during the bureaucratic reform of 1419 and opened themselves up to political competition. In sum, the assimilation measures employed by the Ming dynasty were too aggressive. They estranged the Việt and thereby made the stabilization of their reign impossible. However, the influx of Sinitic imperial ideology in synergy with a more complex administrative system whose most influential positions were filled with zealously Neo-Confucian scholars changed the Vietnamese state forever.

Despite distrusting Buddhists as a huge security risk due to their foreign relations,[1097] the coming dynasty accepted the officials who had spent most of their lives in China without reservation. Before the Ming invasion disrupted society, the Buddhist state system had already been crumbling. The following cultural obliteration and the complete replacement of the administrative sys-

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1093 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 197.

1094 Cf. Whitmore 1977, p. 63.

1095 Cf. Yang 2019, p. 176.

1096 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 107 and Engelbert 2016, p. 252.

1097 Using religious missionaries as spies can indeed be considered a worldwide tradition. Cf. Kleine and Clart 2019, p. 426.

tem transferred Sinitic ideology more successfully in just two decades than ever before.[1098] Even though China ultimately lost its political dominance, it put Vietnamese Confucianism into unequivocal power. This enabled the re-educated Neo-Confucians to accomplish what had not been possible before: the building of a Confucian state system which would ensure lasting Sinitic cultural dominance.

In the aftermath of the Ming occupation, Lê Lợi returned to Thăng Long as Emperor Lê Thái Tổ 黎太祖 (r. 1428—1433) and reestablished the city as his dynasty's capital. [1099] However, his government maintained many of the Ming's new policies, like movement restrictions, all kinds of registers, and the mistrust regarding merchants.[1100] Newly installed trading limits — hardly enforceable — led to the development of trading centers in the south and outside of the government's direct influence.[1101] This was followed by a migration movement southward that opposed the imperial centralization efforts. With the following Đại Việt protrusion to the south, the previously frequent incursions of the Cham ceased.

Authoring Legitimation

Although Lê Lợi had driven out the Chinese, he faced great trouble proving his legitimacy as the new emperor Lê Thái Tông. On the one hand, he had no ties to the Red River Delta nor to the old aquatic deities of investiture and on the other hand, the Chinese withheld their seal of authorization which former Việt rulers had received.

One thousand years before, being a hero of the people would have been sufficient legitimation for his rule, but the status of the Việt emperor had changed. What had once been a revocable position based on benevolent behavior had turned into an enduring, natural as well as spiritual given "fact".

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1098 Engelbert claims that only the Ming incursion and the following fair weather politics between China and Vietnam enabled the latter to become a dominating polity in eastern Southeast Asia. Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 251.

1099 Cf. Engelbert 2016. p. 253 and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 113.

1100 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 199–201; Engelbert 2016, pp. 264–66.

1101 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 63.

The legend of An Dương Vương that later featured so prominently in Ngô Sĩ Liên's *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* [V.3.1.2.] served as an inspiration for his new legitimating narrative. A rumor was spread that divulged how Lê Lợi had also received a magical object from a golden turtle while he was still a poor fisherman at the Hoàn Kiếm Lake (Hanoi).[1102] This object was the sword Thuận Thiên 順天 "Heaven's Will," which bestowed on him the Mandate of Heaven[1103] in a mix of Việt and Sinitic traditions. Shortly after Lê Lợi took the throne, the golden turtle allegedly reappeared to reclaim the sword[1104] — a narrative that provided a good reason as to why such evidence of spiritual intervention could not be examined. Lê Lợi then appointed the turtle as the tutelary deity of the state and dedicated a temple to it, located on the island of the Hoàn Kiếm Lake.

A warrior like Lê Lợi did not compose such a story by himself. He relied on one of the most famous Confucian politicians of Vietnam — some call him *the* Vietnamese Confucian sage: Nguyễn Trãi 阮廌 (1380—1442).[1105] Nguyễn Trãi had commanded Lê Lợi's troops until 1428, and afterwards became his trusted adviser. The strategist became famous for his poetry, for writing the first primers for girls[1106] (who were continuously excluded from school education) and for his research into the fields of geography, philosophy and politics.

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1102 This legend is dated to 1418, the same year in which Lê Lợi started his rebellion during the second month. At this time, he was definitely no longer a "poor fisherman". As a highlander from Lam Sơn, he was not close to the Red River Delta at all. Just like Đinh Bộ Lĩnh was intentionally depicted as a simple peasant, this legend was meant to connect him to the common people as well as to the politically relevant elites of the Red River Delta. In later versions of the legend, like in the *Đại Việt Thông Sử* 大越通史 (1759), receiving the sword was attributed to his friend Lê Thận.

1103 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 122. The Mandate of Heaven had been known since the earliest Chinese invasion and it was kept within legitimating narratives even in Buddhist contexts, like at the begin of the Lý dynasty.

1104 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 53. However, Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 122 relate that the imperial seal and magical sword were lost under one of his successors, Lê Thánh Tông, many decades later. That loss may be more historical, and the turtle legend an embellishment to give yet another reason why later emperors could not produce the sword either.

1105 Cf. Engelbert 2016 and Hữu Ngọc 2007.

1106 These were quite strictly moral in a Confucian way, stressing the ideals of quietness and orderliness for girls.

He was the father of the Later Lê's state system, which he had conceptualized and composed almost single-handedly[1107] while simultaneously writing additional impressive literature. His works in economy, law, geography and administration were crucial for the future of the empire. The *Lam Sơn Thực Lục* 藍山實錄 (1431) narrated Lê Lợi's victory and the establishment of the dynasty. Although the sword Lê Lợi received was already a direct reference to the Mandate of Heaven, Nguyễn Trãi took great care to explicitly restate the heavenly support through Lê Lợi's words in the "Great Proclamation about the Pacification of the Ngô"[1108] (*Bình Ngô Đại Cáo* 平吳大誥):[1109]

> For a long time before this, our Viet nation already declared to have a civilized culture, a separate territory with borders demarcated from the Northern country and with different customs. We have been independent under the Đinh, Lê, Lý, Trần dynasties, and sovereign in our realm, side by side with the Han, T'ang, Sung and Yuan dynasties… Recently, the Hồ politics was [sic!] wrong …the mad Ming took advantage of it, […] Probably Heaven has wanted to entrust the burden to me and to challenge me through hundreds or thousands of difficulties; […] [W]hen the enemy generals were captured, they kowtowed and admitted to their crimes. In the name of Benevolent Heaven, I spared them from death … and gave them several hundreds of boats … and several thousands of horses to return to China… The State is now secure … due to the protection of Heaven and our ancestors.[1110]

This *Proclamation* includes the novel political concept that "each emperor" ruled over his own quarter and claimed that Đại Việt was equal to China. It became Nguyễn Trãi's most well-known work. Further, in his *Geography,*

1107 Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, pp. 70–71 evaluates him as the opposite to Machiavelli, because Nguyễn Trãi cared for the people first and saw the pacification of the realm as more important than continued wars of resistance against the north.

1108 Ngô 吳 refers to the Chinese.

1109 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 196.

1110 Translation by Tạ Văn Tài 2009, p. 11.

Nguyễn Trãi reinforced a kind of proto-nationalist thinking and decried that the Việt might wear any clothing, or use the language, or practice the customs from China, Champa or the far south.[1111] After Lê Lợi's death, Nguyễn Trãi fell victim to an intrigue and his entire family was executed in 1442. The fifth Later Lê emperor posthumously reinstated him 1464, after he recognized how meaningful his work had been to secure the dynasty's legitimacy.[1112]

V.3.1.1.   How to Create a Confucian State System

After Lê Lợi's ascension to the throne, the current officeholders faced the most severe repercussions for collaborating with the Ming Chinese,[1113] which led to the third complete replacement of the administrative body in only three decades. However, those empty ranks were refilled with new, young scholars who at this point had all exclusively studied in China. They had been educated in the newest administrative trends, but were also indoctrinated with the Ming dynasty's Neo-Confucian state orthodoxy. Furthermore, at that time, the only educational base left in Đại Việt consisted of Confucian materials. The Trần dynastic system, inspired by Song China, was despised, yet gradually replacing it with newly created administrative structures proved to be a difficult and slow process. The Confucian schools of the Ming therefore had to be maintained to prevent Buddhism from influencing education.[1114]

Lê Lợi was afraid that chancellors and Defenders-in-Chief would divert power from the emperor's central position, so he chose to validate all important decisions in minutiae, a workload that could not be upheld. Soon, the actual power started to accumulate in the only two ministries that existed[1115] at the beginning of this dynasty: in the Ministry of the Interior (Bộ Lại 部吏) and the Ministry of Rites (Bộ Lễ 禮部). Because the emperor was consistently upheld

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1111 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 198.

1112 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 54.

1113 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 113.

1114 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 115.

1115 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 266. Later, additional ministries for finances, war, justice and public works were created to resemble the traditional Six Ministries.

as a model of caring for the people rather than the other way around,[1116] Lê Lợi instructed his officials to remind rulers of questionable decisions and to report corrupt officials to the censor.[1117] However, this was rarely wise, as officials doing so became targets of intrigue or were falsely painted as traitors.[1118]

The second Later Lê emperor standardized official examinations which now occurred every six years. The Court Examination (Thi Đình 殿試) would be held on demand, beginning in 1442. The successful candidates of that year were the first ones immortalized on the steles of the Temple of Literature. Daoist and Buddhist examinations were now held separately from the officials' and with higher stakes: failing meant to return to laity.[1119]

The fifth[1120] emperor, Lê Thánh Tông 黎聖宗 (r. 1460—1497), was the most influential ruler of this dynasty. He actively distanced himself from northern conflicts for the sake of his people's prosperity. He displayed Đại Việt as the southern heaven instead, declaring it a region of manifest civility.[1121] His politics led to Đại Việt's effective turn to Neo-Confucianism and initiated Việt imperialism by conquering the Cham state Vijaya.

Lê Thánh Tông presented himself as a Confucian sage emperor. During droughts, he did not engage in the established rain rituals.[1122] He moved to a smaller palace to fast and concentrate on his work. He would wait like this for

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1116 Cf. Tạ Văn Tài 2009, pp. 12–13. In Chinese Confucianism, criticism of the ruler was an important task of the dutiful scholar. Humaneness had to be protected, even if it meant that the scholar would turn against their lord. If a ruler would not act to the benefit of the people, he was violating the Mandate of Heaven and lost his legitimacy, cf. Roetz 2008, pp. 96–100. Realistically, such criticism was not often applied and caused even less often any positive change. In Đại Việt, the Buddhist narratives of benevolence created for the former reigns facilitated the application of this Confucian ideal, though without much success in the case of Lê Lợi.

1117 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 267.

1118 There were also many Chinese examples of valid criticism that had previously been severely punished. A famous one is that of the Tang dynasty poet Du Fu. Cf. Tillman "Du Fu" 2002, p. 299; Tạ Văn Tài 2009, pp. 12–13; Engelbert 2016, p. 269.

1119 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 268 and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 115.

1120 In official counting he is the fourth, however, before him there was a very short reign of a usurper 1459—1460.

1122 Cf. Whitmore 2015a, pp. 232, 240–1, 244–5, 251–55.

1123 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 208.

Heaven to show mercy in reaction to his virtue. He held Confucian lectures at court, oversaw the examinations, and praised his own government as the epitome of moral integrity and himself as the bringer of peace and unity.[1123] He also commissioned a general history that led to the compilation of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* 大越史記全書 ['Complete History of Đại Việt'], which explains its propagandistic nature.

To eliminate ideological competition, Lê Thánh Tông prohibited monkhood for men under fifty. He also outlawed Buddhist estates from buying land or the establishment of new temples.[1124] The success of these measures is doubtful, since many Buddhist communities remained wealthy. In 1462, Lê Thánh Tông reformed the official examinations, they were now held every three years and entirely based upon Chinese classical texts. However, although his aim was to create a countrywide Neo-Confucian elite with loyalty as its main trait, students and scholars from the southern provinces were offered very few options.[1125] The frequent examinations produced an overabundance of successful high-level graduates. Rather than allowing these surplus graduates to return to their villages to become part of the local gentry, which would allow Confucian ideology to slowly seep into the common population (as it had occurred in China), the administrative system was bloated.

Confucian scholars were distributed all over the country. The expanded infrastructure enhanced the regional communication between many villages and their economic situation as well. Thus, even more *văn miếu* were built on all levels of the provinces and those scholars who could not fill any of the lowest offices were employed as educators and propagandists. Lower stratum offices included those responsible to control local militia, local minorities, local markets and also the rivers and channels.[1126] They were tasked with urging the villagers to actually adhere to Confucian moral standards, including the

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1124 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 269. This only referred to his own people since he led many wars against other ethnic groups.

1125 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 204.

1126 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 278.

1127 Cf. ibid., p. 267, 269.

subjection of women to their husbands,[1127] but this was perceived as foreign and strange in the village societies.

When Lê Thánh Tông proclaimed the Hồng Đức 洪德 legal codex of 1483, it still contained defined rights for women as based on the Việt tradition. Noticeably and probably resulting from the emperor's military activities, the number of offices and jobs that could be held by women were even expanded.[1128] This ran counter to his Confucianization efforts[1129] and illustrates the difficulty of bringing Confucian rule into the reality of the Việt population: the codex reflected the clashes between Confucian ideology and practice. Confucianism was still unable to localize enough to forcibly impact local sacred sites outside the government's direct focus. It thus remained restrained to the governmental sphere instead of growing into an individually held personal conviction. However, with the spread of trained Confucians throughout the realm, Neo-Confucian ideology finally received the sole interpretative privilege.[1130] It was now able to steer the transregional ideological discourse of the realm.

The high output of Neo-Confucian scholars spreading Confucian education throughout a countryside marked with small literature temples was what finalized the Neo-Confucian transformation of Đại Việt. Neo-Confucianism grew into the most prestigious ideology for the career oriented elite members. Yet, at the end of their lives, many of these Confucian scholars found Buddhism. Some even wrote Buddhist books with the dire consequence of having their names removed from the Literature Temple's steles. This caused the late imperial Buddhism to become just as silent as the subsequent late imperial Neo-Confucianism, so innovation was rare.[1131]

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1128   For the position of women in Confucianism, see: Roetz, Heiner. "Sind Frauen Menschen? Eine Anmerkung zu Lunyu 8.20" In *Den Jadestein erlangen. Festschrift für Harro von Senger*, edited by Monika Gänßbauer, 61–70. Frankfurt am Main: Otto Lembeck Verlag, 2009, pp. 67–70.

1129   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 119.

1130   Like higher punishments for women who left their husbands, the fact that husbands who killed their wives were even less punished than in China, or that levirate marriage was now a punishable offense. Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 206.

1131   Cf. Lee Cheuk Yin 2008, pp. 10–11.

1132   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 166, 171.

Due to this silence in academic writing, neither Vietnamese Confucianism nor Buddhism had much impact outside Đại Việt. Without new ideas and strategies to enhance the empire-wide education of monks, the political expansion outpaced Buddhist training, especially in the south, and robbed it of its former pioneer role. Lineages pluralized and the superficial unity needed to show Buddhism's usefulness for empire building was lost. As temples fell out of governmental attention, they again started to hybridize with local religions.

V.3.1.2.   The Imagined Past

The second Chinese conquest was an even more traumatic event than the first occupation. The initially Mường-ethnic and later weak emperors of Đại Việt thus had to answer the questions of their legitimacy in new and simultaneously old ways. Since the fifteenth century, Vietnamese history books contain sections about super-aged dynasties: a term used to describe dynasties projected farther into antiquity than they actually were. These sections aim to explain how there was a centralized Việt state long before the Chinese intervened, or even long before any other neighboring civilization came into statehood. This is a mechanism of self-elevation.[1132] Such legendary dynasties only appear a thousand years after the supposed events because their core function is to serve as claims for legitimacy.

The Later Lê dynasty, the Nguyễn dynasty (1802—1945), and even modernity mingled ancient lore with earlier and later imperial ideas and also with some neo-mythological apologetic tales. This created an imagined past which served as an etiology for the experience of conquest and strengthened the contemporary rulers. The myths about the 'earliest dynasty' of the Hùng kings 雄王 were disguised as dynastic histories.[1133] Their stories preceded the tale of the early kingdom Âu Lạc 甌貉 (257—207 BCE) under the reign of the pseudo-historical An Dương Vương 安陽王, which was meant to explain how Zhao Tuo could ever come into power. The first consolidated appearance of

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1132 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 112.

1133 An in-depth analysis of the social background of the mythological development regarding the Hùng kings is found in: Dieu Thi Nguyễn. "A mythographical journey into modernity: The textual and symbolic transformations of the Hùng Kings [sic!] founding myths." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2013): 315–337.

these stories is found in the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư*. The Confucian scholar Ngô Sĩ Liên created a genealogy that dated back to primordial times only to connect the Later Lê emperors to the more ancient aquatic patrons of Việt rulers. He and his followers were aware that this was a constructed narrative, but they retold it with a sincerity as if they considered it real.[1134]

Ngô Sĩ Liên introduced the dynastic age of the Hùng Kings (Hùng Vương 雄王) with the alleged Hồng Bàng 鴻龐 dynasty (2879—258 BCE) in a state called Văn Lang 文郎[1135] which was ruled by relatives of Chinese cultural heroes and deities, the sons of goddesses and dragons.[1136] This incorporates the old myth of the dragon Lạc Long Quân 貉龍君, who married the mountain spirit Âu Cơ 嫗姬[1137] — together, they were the primogenitors of the Việt and Mường people. Nothing of this had been accepted as history during the Trần dynasty (1225—1400), when the *Đại Việt Sử Lược* 大越史略 dated the beginning of Việt history to Zhao Tuo's reign. Nor was this new "corporate identity", centered on draconic ancestors, even well-known outside of the Later Lê dynasty's literati circles.[1138]

Although there was one Hùng King mentioned in ancient Chinese documents, all the other Hùng Kings were created much later. The majority of them appeared during the nineteenth century, after the French colonization put Vietnamese identity under severe pressure.[1139] The more Confucianized elite of the nineteenth century could no longer accept the old references to aquatic ancestors, so they were removed in later historical works.[1140]

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1134 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường and Trần Hạnh 2012, p. 143, 151–52.

1135 The bronze age Phùng Nguyên Culture (2000~1500 BCE) is often identified with the mythical Văn Lang, although there are strong differences and no evidence.

1136 DVSKTT 2015. ch. 1, p. 39.

1137 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 20.

1138 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường and Trần Hạnh 2012, p. 143, 151.

1139 The emphasis on the Hùng king myth for the self-elevation of the state reached its peak during the twentieth century. In contemporary Vietnam, it is still difficult to talk about the Hùng kings critically. The different circumstances of when further Hùng kings appeared are summarized in Tạ Chí Đại Trường and Trần Hạnh 2012, pp. 153–54.

1140 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường and Trần Hạnh 2012, p. 144.

However, there are a few older additional Hùng kings who were meant to integrate popular narratives of hydrolatry into imperial lore. This is exemplified by legends such as the flood-type myth of *Sơn Tinh Thủy Tinh* 山精水精[1141] and the legend of An Dương Vương. Allegedly, the last Hùng King was defeated by the prince Kai Minh Phán 開明泮, or just Thục Phán 蜀泮.[1142] As the name implies, this was supposedly the last prince of the Kaiming dynasty of Sichuan,[1143] which famously descended from a turtle spirit. Taking the name An Dương Vương, he turned Cổ Loa 古螺 into his capital. However, he was only able to rule it after he was invested by a Golden Turtle.[1144] After Zhao Tuo sent his son Trọng Thủy 仲始 to seduce his daughter, the princess Mỵ Châu 媚珠, he obtained the magical turtle claw that had made An Dương Vương invincible and was thus able to defeat him. An Dương Vương beheaded his own daughter for treason before he followed the Golden Turtle into the sea. Afterwards, it was revealed that Mỵ Châu was 'of the watery realm' as well and that her husband Trọng Thủy followed her there by drowning himself in a well.[1145] Mỵ Châu's surviving cult at Cổ Loa thus links the obscure but continuous hydrolatric cults of her and Trọng Thủy to other older Việt legends and with rock veneration through the Cham relict that serves as her 'body'.[1146]

All of this demonstrates how hydrolatry remained relevant to the elite of the classical and late imperial age. Newly created and rearranged narratives about aquatic ancestors and patrons were still meant to provide legitimation for contemporary rulers. These narratives became the new basis of Việt identity in resistance to Sinitic influence. However, those in charge of these narratives were the same Neo-Confucian literati who were dedicated to the implementation of centralizing measures that had resulted from such Sinitic influences.

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1141 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 21.

1142 DVSKTT ch.1, pp. 43–48.

1143 Cf. Taylor 1983, p. 19, also see: Stith-Thompson Motif Index A511.2.3. and A165.3.2.

1144 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 28–29.

1145 Cf. LNCQLT 2: 8a–12b.

1146 Ban quản lý khu di tích Cổ Loa "Công chúa Mỵ Châu" Accessed August 12, 2020. https://thanhcoloa.vn/my-chau

V.3.2. Governing Two Realms (1627—1777)

The (Confucian) golden age of the Later Lê dynasty already ended again with Emperor Lê Thánh Tông's death. Weak rulers and land grabbing provincial governors, power hungry fallen nobles and religiously inspired peasant rebellions destabilized the realm.[1147]

A series of natural disasters, severe droughts, and the lack of resources due to deforestation and the exhaustion of salt resources[1148] contributed to the gradual loss of sovereignty that the emperors after Lê Thánh Tông suffered. These weak rulers were opposed by strong land owners and subjected to the dispute between two powerful clans who would turn the Later Lê dynasty into a puppet regime.

The Mạc were a family of former Ming collaborators who came to control large portions of northern Vietnam, where they established their own Mạc dynasty 莫朝 (1527—1592/1677). The two clans of Trịnh 鄭 and Nguyễn 阮 both claimed to protect the imperial family and had initially served as its extended arm until they started to fight the Mạc and each other at the same time. Nguyễn Kim 阮淦 (1476—1545) reinstated the Lê rulers in 1533 and pushed the Mạc back to Cao Bằng Province. His son Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢 (1525—1613) was vigilant after the Trịnh caused his father's death and requested in 1558 to be sent as governor to Thuận Hóa 順化.[1149] This border territory covered the future Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị, Thừa Thiên (and later Quảng Nam) provinces that were still culturally Cham. These rebellious and culturally pluralistic areas had been neglected in the Confucianization scheme of the Late Lê emperors and were perfectly suited to establish an independent reign. However, it still came as a shock to the Trịnh when the Nguyễn provinces stopped paying tribute in 1620. By 1673, the empire was separated into the realms Đàng Ngoài (north) and Đàng Trong (south).[1150] The Trịnh held the imperial capital Thăng Long

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1147 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 73 and Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 122–25.

1148 Cf. Kiernan 2017, 213.

1149 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 132–34 and Lulei 2018, p. 75.

1150 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 282 and Kiernan 2017, p. 221.

and as they kept closer relations to China, the northern realm was the only government of Đại Việt with a 'lawful' Chinese investiture.[1151]

A part of the Trịnh lords' emulation of Chinese rulers was the expansion of the centralization efforts. However, these failed disastrously because they opened offices to bribery but were at the same time unable to stop officials from claiming land and enslaving indebted peasants. The wealthy could thus simply buy offices to became lords of their own regional territory. Facing a growing number of great land owners, the central government levied exorbitant taxes. However, the tax profits were almost completely invested into the war against the south. The fiscal and agrarian problems of Đàng Ngoài[1152] quickly put restraints upon its initial cultural growth.

In contrast to that, the Nguyễn had no time nor need to appease the Chinese. They were busy with building a new state from the bottom up. Đàng Trong was low in material resources, the infrastructure barely developed, and on top of that, the ethnically mixed population was not only smaller but also dispersed in difficult territories.[1153] After parting the realm, Nguyễn Hoàng established the capital later known as Huế and abruptly vanished from the later editions of the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư.*

The *Đại Nam Thực Lục* 大南寔錄[1154] contains information about his last thirteen years, during which he supposedly built five important temples as his first grand projects. Some of them were Buddhist, while others only acted as if they were Buddhist, but all of them were relevant for supporting the legitimation of the Nguyễn — which implies that many of these accounts may be fabrications. One of these temples is Thiên Mụ Temple, which will be treated in the subsequent case study [V.6.].

Since the Nguyễn controlled the most relevant ports[1155] and maritime trade was rising, Đàng Trong faced fewer financial troubles compared to the north.

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1151 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 77.

1152 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 245–47.

1153 Cf. Lulei 2018, pp. 78–79, 81.

1154 "Veritable Records of the Nguyễn Dynasty", published originally between 1844—1909, but extended to include the emperors up to 1925.

1155 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 134.

This "migrant country"[1156] differed from the Sinicized north by its orientation towards a trading economy instead of an agricultural economy. Chinese refugees fleeing the Manchu conquest brought fresh expertise to the realm and helped to build up a new administration. Although the Nguyễn lords started out with a Confucian governmental system, they created distinction from the north by renaming positions, ranks and their markings.[1157] Đàng Trong never stopped being a military regime with its own administrative and fiscal processes that were more oriented on Southeast Asian traditions than it was the case in the north. Their "illegal" status allowed the Nguyễn lords to divert from Confucian orthodoxy without losing inherited legitimacy. For example, they accepted the idea of the Hindu god-king, like other Southeast Asian states. As long as it served the Nguyễn lord's prospects to secure their reign, southern traditions and customs were not only accepted but also merged with Việt ones.

Although the requests for Chinese investiture had never been answered by the Manchus, the Nguyễn started to behave like emperors anyway. They produced their own seals and, in an act of superimposition, began to grant titles to various local spirits. This was meant to show the Nguyễn ruler's imperial status.[1158] However, the rulers of this independent, well-organized state still eschewed the title 'emperor' until shortly before the Tây Sơn uprising. Nguyễn Phúc Khoát 阮福濶 (1738—1765) preferred the term *võ vương* 武王 to avoid Chinese intervention. However, his message was clear when he continued to intervene into the customs of the people by ordering officials and commoners — especially those of the regions with strong Cham culture — to wear clothing in Chinese style, to use Chinese tools, and to abandon the indigenous customs of the north (Vietnam).[1159]

Although he secured his legitimacy by acting more Chinese than his Trịnh counterpart and the puppet emperor together, he continued to use the reign year of the Later Lê emperor as the sole Son of Heaven. This emphasis on the Later Lê's Heavenly Mandate was an inconvenience to the Trịnh, who had

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1156 Cf. Li Tana 2018, pp. 155–56.

1157 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 101.

1158 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 137 and Kiernan 2017, p. 241.

1159 Trịnh Hoài Đức. "Customs of Gia Dinh (1820)" translated by George Dutton, pp. 295–96.

trouble to depict themselves as being imbued with moral integrity. The first self-reference of a southern ruler as an emperor occurred in 1750, when northern Đàng Ngoài had been suffering from droughts for decades and thus faced a failing agrarian economy.[1160] The starving people fled south- and westwards, countless rebellions brought the Trịnh down and the Nguyễn used the Trịnh's public loss of the Mandate of Heaven to their own advantage. Although Đàng Trong was also affected by the dire climate and famines, the maritime trade that the northern Neo-Confucians had avoided so adamantly was exactly what alleviated the catastrophe in the south. However, the indigenous populations outside the southern governmental system still suffered. This caused multiple highland tribes to attack the lowlands.[1161] Yet, the Nguyễn can be seen as the more successful government of the two realms. This caused a reorientation of the Việt state southwards[1162] and initiated the abolishment of the last Champa city states.

Was There Confucian Dominance in the Two Realms?

In the course of the people suffering from the war-torn status of their realms, an epic called *Quan Âm Thị Kính* 氏敬觀音 spread among the commoners. It popularized Buddhist concepts like 'mercy for all creatures' or 'karma' and centered on the injustice in women's lives. The epic thus focuses on the concept of mercy and how renouncing the world could be helpful (for women).[1163] Thị Kính is revealed to be Quan Âm in the style of the Chinese Nanhai Guanyin imagination.[1164] It is suggested that the idea of *Quan Âm Nam Hải* was a Nôm-language narrative based on older legends that had once been recorded from the Trúc Lâm school. But if this was the case, then why did this type[1165] of Miaoshan 妙善 (Viet.

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1160 One drought between 1745–1775 lasted for thirty years.

1161 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 253–4.

1162 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 155.

1163 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 177, 180–81.

1164 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 38–39.

1165 Early in the story, it mentions the motif of the three souls of devout Buddhist sons who had to make up for one sin and who were then turned into Miaoshan and her sisters. Therefore, it is likely derived from the same circle as the *Xiangshan Baojuan* 香山寶卷 "Precious Scroll of Xiangshan" version from Zhejiang. The text of that Baojuan edition dates to 1773 (but

Diệu Thiện) legend spread to Đại Việt so late? By comparison, Miaoshan legends already developed in China during the eleventh century.[1166]

Before Confucian thought became socially dominant in this era, it had simply never been necessary to consolidate Buddhism with Confucian morality. The epic's sudden widespread distribution also was not caused by its introduction by seventeenth century Chinese migrants into northern Vietnam. On the contrary, *Quan Âm Thị Kính* contrasts sharply with the main character's relentless filial piety in the Chinese version.[1167] Thị Kính distances herself from Confucian moral concepts instead, because she sees them as the root cause of incessant suffering. Behind the superficial similarities lies a basis on which Confucian social realities are incorporated and simultaneously criticized.

All of this alluded to the behavior of the Trịnh lords: Although their realm was troubled, they were preoccupied with appeasing China and propagating Neo-Confucianism. Official examinations were regular and standardized occasions with a high output of qualified Neo-Confucian scholars of whom some became extraordinary personalities who shaped society. The well-organized administration made the central state as strong as never before and the propagation of filial subjection to the emperor spread enormously.[1168] Neo-Confucian rituals took root among the commoners and replaced indigenous rites — partly because local customs were once again outlawed in the 1650s, being called amoral and in disagreement with Sinitic ideals. In 1663, Buddhism and Daoism also fell victim to such prohibitions.[1169] The power of local authorities relied on indigenous traditions, therefore, keeping tight control of other religions allowed the civil officials to keep the local authorities subjugated. But over the

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elements of the story already occur in the 1550s in China, cf. Yü 2001, p. 298). The Zhejiang version is collected in: Doré, Henry. *Research Into Chinese Superstitions. Second Part,* translated by S. J. Kenelly. Shanghai: T'usewei Printing Press, 1920, pp. XXII, 134–96. Although Baojuan literature — popular religious texts from the late imperial era — was incredibly rare in Vietnam, the majority of it centers on Quan Âm. Cf. Berezkin and Nguyễn Tô Lan 2018, 107–44.

1166 Cf. Dudbridge 1978, pp. 10, 15.

1167 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 183.

1168 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 243.

1169 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 38.

course of a century, the quality of the examination graduates declined and only few offices remained that could not be bought into. This greatly diminished the effectiveness of the Neo-Confucian administration. By the eighteenth century, Neo-Confucianism was quickly falling out of fashion again. Instead, both Vietnamese realms supported Buddhism as a connection to the people.

Under decreasing surveillance, three new Thiền schools developed. The Đàng Ngoài based Liên Tông 蓮宗 school was so strongly influenced by Pure Land Buddhism that it became synonymous with it. The Liên Tông school used Water and Land rites to integrate whatever local spirits they could still find to prove its value for the Trịnh's centralization goals. Each political failure of the Trịnh caused Buddhism to regain more influence within the government. The Trịnh began to enthusiastically restore Buddhist sites and even established new ones — on the precondition that canals and dikes were dug, roads built, and officials would lead inauguration ceremonies — all of this was intended to raise the central government's visibility and its influence in the areas where these temples were built.[1170] On the one hand, the old Stone Cow Road tactic[1171] seemed to be of eternal success and led to an increased recognition of the government. On the other hand, the people who supported temple reconstructions were exempt from taxes for one year;[1172] which was a noble but unwise decision in a failing economic system.

The south had opted for a completely different social model which began with the favoring of local goddesses to fortify their breakaway from northern concepts.[1173] This included variants of the Cham main deity Pô Nagar. The Nguyễn family had never been Confucian and all acceptance of the features of this doctrine was solely meant to establish governmental institutions and to create a convincing imperial image. There were no schools to spread Neo-Con-

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1170 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 248–49 and Li Tana 2018, p. 107.

1171 The Stone Cow Road was a legendary tactic of the ancient Qin: The Qin offered a gift to the king of Shu which could only be delivered if he allowed the Qin to build a mountain road strong and broad enough to allow the Qin military to safely pass into Shu territory. This road was then used to invade Shu. Cf. HYGZ 3:3a–b and Sage 1992, pp. 108–114.

1172 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, pp. 229–30.

1173 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 98.

fucian ideology, nor academies to serve as central organs of education.[1174] The official examinations were open to all social standings, and although they had been quickly initiated at the beginning of the Nguyễn lords' reign, they occurred only rarely and did not even cover the Confucian classics.[1175] These examinations would never hold as much prestige as in the north and Confucian scholars remained socially irrelevant.

The trade activities of the Nguyễn lords created an attractive and welcoming culture for new arrivals in their pluralistic realm and offered a kind of social mobility that had become unthinkable in the north. There, the Confucian primacy of collectivity opposed the social flexibility that had brought Đàng Trong so many valuable immigrants and it would have disapproved of the highly profitable interethnic marriages that took place. Confucianism was incompatible with Đàng Trong's economic model and its attitude towards life, so Confucianism stood no chance to gain hold in the south.[1176]

In contrast to the north, the Nguyễn invested into a Buddhist state religion from the very beginning. This provided a common point of identification for the Cham population and kept the commoners content.[1177] This also attracted the Buddhist monks among the Chinese refugees and turned Huế into a city of temples. The most popular Thiền school of the southern realm was the Cantonese Lâm Tế 臨濟 school, founded by Nguyên Thiều 元韶 (1648—1728).[1178] Thích Đại Sán 釋大汕 (1633—1704),[1179] one of Nguyên Thiều's companions, would serve as an abbot of the Thiên Mụ Temple and was thus an important bellwether of the future imperial relations. The local abbots had ordered over a thousand Buddhist scriptures from China in 1749 and stored them there.[1180] This emphasized the special position that the Thiên Mụ temple held in late imperial Vietnam.

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1174 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 306 and Li Tana 2018, p. 103.

1175 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 228.

1176 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 111.

1177 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 283 and Li Tana 2018, p. 102.

1178 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 198.

1179 Better known as Thạch Liêm 石濂, a famous Thiền monk originally from Jiangxi. Cf. Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 147.

1180 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, pp. 231–2.

As a result of lacking quality management and many questionable decisions, the Trịnh had grasped for a mere Buddhist tokenism in an architectural shape, while the Nguyễn had only accepted a Neo-Confucianist administrative system as far as it was necessary to show their imperial fitness while truly favoring Buddhism as an opposing ideology. However, Đàng Trong's administrative system also suffered from the lack of further incentives to dutifully support the government and therefore failed in effectiveness.

The prolonged environmental problems left the population of both realms destitute, which caused social unrest. The people had lost trust in both Confucian and Buddhist ideological narratives. A civil war in 1778 brought the Tây Sơn rebels into power, who created a short-lived dynasty of the same name.[1181] The Tây Sơn unified the realm and recovered some prosperity; they introduced an inspired cultural integration policy that honored Cham sites and treated Cham deities as Việt. But after their ideological leader died in 1792, they failed to pacify the realm and their fledgling administrative system fell apart. Nguyễn Phúc Ánh 阮福映 led the 'war of seasons'[1182] against the Tây Sơn. This military campaign was named that way because he used the summer monsoon to sail north and conquer some territories, then retreated to the south for winter. Exhaustion, a lack of logistical control on the side of the Tây Sơn and European interventions[1183] enabled Nguyễn Phúc Ánh to conquer Thăng Long in just one year. As Emperor Gia Long 嘉隆 (r. 1802—1820), he is best known for giving Vietnam its modern name in 1804.[1184]

The loss of Buddhist scriptures during the Tây Sơn rebellion was a setback for clerical education.[1185] Because the Buddhist estates had closely resembled the wealthy establishment that the Tây Sơn had rebelled against, many temples were destroyed and bronze objects melted; monks were drafted for war.[1186]

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1181 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 255–67.

1182 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 88.

1183 Cf. Woodside 1971, p. 16.

1184 Although the Qing's Jiaqing emperor 嘉慶帝 (1796—1820) ordered the term Nam Việt to be changed into the Việt Nam that we know today. Cf. Ang 2013, p. 7.

1185 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. p. 212, Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 263.

1186 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008. pp. 207–10, 212–13.

However, the Tây Sơn also disclosed the weaknesses of Vietnamese Confucianism. This caused a severe crisis, because the literati no longer saw the relevance of their once cherished concepts. These had neither been helpful in the Tây Sơn's success nor defeat, so once again, the disillusioned scholars sought refuge at Buddhist monasteries and tried to create a better teaching from "the three religions".[1187] These kept a Confucian dominion in mind, although the aim was to become relevant to the government again by tweaking different religious teachings in a politically useful way.[1188] However, especially in the south, Confucian education remained hardly existent and this had dire long-term consequences for the Vietnamese statehood.

V.3.3.   Statehood in the Nineteenth Century and the Loss of Independence

As a descendant of Nguyễn Hoàng, Gia Long bestowed his ancestor with the posthumous title of an emperor. Due to this, the city of Huế was considered the traditional territory of his family and made the capital of the Vietnamese Empire. He therefore decided to portray his new realm as the successor to Đàng Trong, rather than as a successor to the duly invested later Lê dynasty. In fact, he did not care much for the northern territories at all.[1189] Although he rejected European merchants, Gia Long expanded the ports and the maritime trade. This was meant to bring prosperity to the population and to appease the nobles who had aided him. However, in 1812—1815, Gia Long introduced a legal code that was a huge step backwards compared to the Lê legal code. It was an almost exact copy of the Ming legal code without any regard to Vietnamese culture, which he intended to strengthen the institution of the emperor[1190] and to turn Vietnam into a strong and consolidated realm.

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1187 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 232.

1188 The monk Toàn Nhật 全日 (1757—1834) attempted this in his Nôm tale *Hứa Sử Truyện Vãn* 許使傳挽 — although he ultimately argued against royalism, outlined the connection between labor to truth and mercy, and pointed out how armed struggles were related to authentic compassion. Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 4.

1189 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 273, 299.

1190 An in-depth study on the institution of the emperor in Vietnam, his self-identification in correspondences with China, and the turn from Đại Việt to Việt Nam can be found in: Ye

V.3.3.1.   Ideological Development Under the Nguyễn Dynasty

When Gia Long established his reign, he did it with absolutism: there would be no prime minister, no first doctorates, no queen, no titled princes. Even though he came from the lineage of the Buddhist-leaning Đàng Trong, he realized that the merely politically reunified state was still divided in the minds of the people. The severe scarcity of resources just intensified this issue. This created a tense climate at court — the Nguyễn emperors tended to massacre every real or perceived enemy, even loyal and skilled court officials.

Gia Long felt the urge to centralize authority, but his ancestors had left him without the tools to guarantee the structural centrality he needed. Due to that, Neo-Confucianism was again the ideology of choice to strengthen the institution of the emperor to a degree that could maintain a superficially steadfast rule.[1191] Gia Long mirrored the former capital Thăng Long by duplicating its Temple of Literature and the Imperial Academy, which was required to continue the Neo-Confucian educational system. With Neo-Confucianism as the primary guide to life in the empire, cultural imperialism was pushed to a new level. Although official examinations only occurred every six years until Minh Mạng, teachers were frequently sent to the remote new territories to spread Confucian ideas.

Gia Long had specific ideas about the spiritual landscape of his empire and expressed them in his 1804 decree that was meant to restructure the pantheon. It differed clearly from China, because the first class of spirits did not only include deified humans, like great kings, heroes and ministers, but also nature spirits like otters or the whale deities of the Cham. The second class of spirits encompassed (pseudo-)historic ancestors and culture heroes and the third class was made up of older local deities, virtuous women and former local worthies.[1192]

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Shaofei 叶少飞. "Yuenan Gudai 'neidi waichen' Zhengce yu Shuangchong Guohao de Yanbian 越南古代 '内帝外臣' 政策与双重国号的演变 ['The 'Inside Emperor Outside Subject' Policy of Ancient Vietnam and the Development of a State's Double Name']." *Xingxiang Shixue Yanjiu* 1 (2016): 134–166.

1191 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 223.

1192 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 48–49.

There were many deities that found no place in this classification system, especially those associated with spirit mediumship. These, as well as the practice of spirit possession itself, were soon outlawed.[1193] Gia Long zealously wanted to control religious practice and art, so his decree gave detailed orders as to when sacrifices could be made, under which formal conditions they could be made, when sacred sites could be repaired and how they were to be categorized. He even determined in what colors religious objects could be painted and prohibited embroidery.[1194]

Gia Long's successor Minh Mạng 明命 (r. 1820—1841) ascended the throne when he was thirty. After surviving several rebellions in the early years of his reign, he concluded that there was a dire need for a more centralized authority of the emperor. By 1829, Minh Mạng had created a secret council, so he no longer had to rely on illiterate eunuchs like previous rulers. As Gia Long had him trained in Confucian ways, Minh Mạng was well versed in statecraft. He was conscious of the power that spatial representation could hold. Therefore, when the counter-court of the Lê Văn Khôi 黎文僙 Revolt of 1833 created its own citadel, the emperor had it immediately obliterated. Subsequently, he initiated a local reconstruction of the imperial citadel to prevent any further claims for a restoration of the Lê.[1195]

As a very involved regent, Minh Mạng was willing to restructure administrative traditions for the sake of his country. However, he allowed the first six official ranks to become hereditary, which compromised the official examinations for all social standings. As a result, most of the Nguyễn dynasty's high officials came from the Huế elite.[1196] In a similarly contradictory way, Minh Mạng started to compensate officials with money and rice and abolished their rights to land and taxes with the objective to prevent the development of great land owners. However, his land reforms also forced peasants to relinquish the land they had received from the Tây Sơn rebellion back to the very great land

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1193   Although this prohibition may not have been enforced. Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 97.

1194   A partial translation of the decree is found in Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 58–59, 124.

1195   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 155–158.

1196   Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 273.

owners they had rebelled against.[1197] Practical politics may not have been Minh Mạng's strong suit, but his main goals were to enforce Neo-Confucian supremacy in all regions of the realm and to curb the foreign influence of Christianity, which he initially succeeded in doing.[1198]

Multiple eminent specialists of Vietnamese history, like Alexander Woodside, have disregarded the efforts made by the Tây Sơn and described the strict Confucianism initiated by Gia Long as the reason for the effective reunification of the state.[1199] However, even though the Neo-Confucian state system helped to recentralize the realm somewhat, it was not as typical for Sino-Vietnamese culture as it had been assumed by twentieth century authors.

Nola Cooke has studied the raised importance of the official examinations as the "principal 'Confucianizing' agency of the state". In her opinion, dynastic power was severely weakened after Lê Thánh Tông's death due to his Confucianization policies, which incited rebellion among the disadvantaged southern territories loyal to Buddhism. She found that, despite Gia Long's Neo-Confucian agenda and Minh Mạng's efforts to strengthen the examination system, the Neo-Confucian elite of the Nguyễn dynasty had actually very little influence because Neo-Confucianism was mostly considered a matter of private piety.[1200] What the emperors had struggled to achieve now became a sign of weak persuasiveness. The state system rather relied all too often on the assertive and charismatic qualities of an emperor rather than allowing them to rely on an administration of loyal officials.

Cooke describes the Nguyễn system as an attempt to enhance the Confucian state system and to distance it from the lowly motivated, poorly educated and creatively restricted stratum of scholars that had emerged during the era of the two realms. However, it achieved quite the opposite: the Nguyễn dynasty yielded the lowest number of Confucian doctors in Vietnamese history and

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1197   Cf. Lulei 2018, pp. 89–91.

1198   Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 94; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 158–59.

1199   Cf. Woodside 1971, pp. 18–24.

1200   Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 273–74, 284–93

those were, compared to the Later Lê, of lower quality, less successful, and unable to form "great scholar families."[1201]

There was a gap of sixty years between the last examinations of Đàng Trong and the first ones under Gia Long [V.3.4.3.]. Without the examinations, there was no fresh blood for the administration. This resulted in a lack of infrastructure, a lack of a scriptural basis for governmental procedures and a shortage of human resources, all of which hindered the production of quality graduates, with no incentive for current scholars to improve the situation. Visually, the literati of the Nguyễn dynasty tried to distinguish themselves with a visual dichotomy. They imitated the Chinese language, styles and mannerisms in contrast to the common population who more closely resembled Southeast Asian cultures.[1202] But practically, they lacked interest in actual academic study (which was based on a quite lackluster curriculum), so they competed for the lowest advantageous positions. According to Cooke, the main weakness of the Nguyễn dynasty's Confucian state system was its unrelenting attempt to emulate the Sinitic system without adapting or embracing change.[1203] The inability of Vietnamese literati to generate prestige for their work outside their own social group damaged the social relevance of Neo-Confucian learning and strained their relationship with the emperor.

Buddhism remained a significant competitor to the battered Confucian ideology, although the latter was continuously promoted by the rulers. The popularity that Buddhism had enjoyed during the pre-dynastic rule of the Nguyễn lords now turned out to be a problem. The charismatic popular Buddhist groups were well-organized and diverted attention and loyalty from the central power to local interests. Gia Long's solution to this problem was to put Buddhist estates under utmost fiscal scrutiny, to severely limit the options for religious activity and to revoke the exemption from corvée labor for monks younger than fifty. This course of action was praised by the officials, who regarded Buddhism as a useless and potentially evil doctrine that endangered the ritualism which the Confucians considered essential to maintaining order in the world. And yet,

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1201 Cf. Cooke 1994, pp. 302–07.

1202 Cf. Woodside 1971, p. 199.

1203 Cf. Cooke 1994, 284, 301, 311.

most of the later Nguyễn rulers continued to invest into Buddhist sites if these were of relevance to the empire — like the Thiên Mụ Temple, which had provided a dynastic landmark since the earliest days of the Nguyễn in the south. Minh Mạng and his successor both supported Buddhism, albeit subtly, so as not to provoke opposition from the Neo-Confucian establishment, which already hardly supported them at court. The women of the imperial family in particular adhered to Buddhism, and the nobles continued to keep small temples in their homes, invited senior monks to teach, and demanded official ceremonies from their ruler.[1204] However, the last Vietnamese emperor before the French takeover found himself in such despair due to his weak political standing that he imitated Gia Long's harsh anti-Buddhist regulations. He even outdid him by outlawing Buddhist ceremonies and preaching.[1205] These regulations were hardly ever put into effect and the number of people living in monasteries scantly decreased, but Buddhist public life came to a halt and now had to seek new expressions through literature. Since the Buddhist clergy recalled previous persecutions, they began to preemptively invest in archives of the Vietnamese sangha, Buddhist histories, and 'catechisms' early in the dynasty, as a precautionary measure in the case Buddhism needed to be restarted.

In the Lý and Trần dynasties, the rulers had encouraged Buddhism to unify and create an orthodoxy. In contrast to that, the Nguyễn public pressures and governmental disregard led Vietnamese Buddhism to diversify independently from the court. Buddhism lost governmental and laymen's sponsorship with the start of the French colonial rule. It then entered socio-politics — though not entirely voluntarily, since Buddhist doctrines had to be reformulated around this new social activity of the clergy.[1206] However, this was what finally led Buddhism into new directions and allowed it to become vastly different[1207] from historical Vietnamese Buddhism.

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1204 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 226.

1205 Cf. ibid., p. 224.

1206 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 5–6, 272–74.

1207 An overview can be found in: Sourcy, Alexander. "Contemporary Vietnamese Buddhism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Buddhism*, edited by Michael Jerryson, 177–195. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

V.3.3.2. A Question of Loyalty

The Christians had reached Vietnam in the sixteenth century. Their doctrine of a single God undermined the Son of Heaven and Mandate of Heaven narratives that provided imperial legitimacy. During the Nguyễn dynasty, this began to seriously threaten the stability of the state, as demonstrated by the numerous rebellions by Vietnamese Christians.

Banning Christianity to put a hold on subversive actions certainly seemed like a wise decision. However, resistance against the encroaching European missionaries led to political isolation and eventually the missionaries received backing from Western forces. It was shown on multiple occasions in history that the more Asian regimes opposed Christianity, the more aggressive military incursions became.[1208] Therefore, when Thiệu Trị 紹治 (r. 1841—1847) followed Minh Mạng on the throne, his supposed 'lenience'[1209] towards Western interferences had been coerced by the French warships in his harbor, which were equipped with weapons superior to those of the Vietnamese. Threatened like that, his desire for centralization urged him to avoid the possible intervention of northern literati who still adhered to the Đàng Ngoài ideology. Thiệu Trị thus artificially raised the number of successful graduates[1210] from the central provinces in order to create an even stronger local presence among the highest officials. However, many of these graduates were hardly qualified while he had prevented qualified politicians from entering decisive governmental positions.[1211] This sowed dissent among the officials and worsened the general situation.

The French bombardment of Đà Nẵng in 1847, the same harbor the French would attack to take over the country a mere ten years later, was caused by the

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1208 This modus operandi was recognized (noted on page 36) as early as 1900 by Pourtney Bigelow in: "Missions and Missionaries in China." *The North American Review* 171, no. 524 (1900): 26–40. Protecting the Christian missionaries had been an important point of the treaties signed after the Opium Wars. For Julius Bautista, colonialism and missionary objectives were inseparable: Bautista, Julius. "Christianity in Southeast Asia: Colonialism, Nationalism and the Caveats to Conversion." In *The Oxford Handbook on Christianity in Asia*, edited by Felix Wilfred. Oxford Handbooks Online, 2014. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199329069.013.0014.

1209 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 160.

1210 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 311.

1211 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 311.

illegal return of a formerly expelled Christian missionary. Thiệu Trị retaliated like any proper emperor would and ordered the persecution of Christian missionaries. Allegedly, the French had not originally intended to completely take over the country, but the attempted persecution of missionaries achieved nothing but to anger them. Some contemporary voices thus even mused that the Christians had intentionally created a crisis.[1212]

Not a single missionary was hurt. The emperor had already lost his standing at court and the civil officials simply refused to execute his order. Soon after, Thiệu Trị died of a sudden and unknown illness, leaving the throne to his inept and traditionalist second son who was still a teenager. The disloyal officials kept Tự Đức 嗣德 (r. 1847—1883) intentionally clueless about the country's situation. He was therefore unable to introduce the direly necessary reforms or to react appropriately to the European imperialistic efforts. And yet, of all the Nguyễn rulers, it was the disadvantaged Tự Đức who pressed for an educational reform.[1213] Unfortunately, this merely led to even fewer successful doctoral graduates among the insufficiently trained candidates and this was possibly one of the reasons why the court officials did not feel loyalty towards him. When Tự Đức became aware of the foreign threat, he issued 13,069 royal certificates, mostly to Đình of the southern regions, to strengthen the realm both spiritually and through moral integration. A high number of the spiritual certificates were granted to the Pô Nagar variant Thiên Y A Na, to the Cham whale deities and several other southern entities.[1214] However, it was already too late to create a united Vietnamese nation that extended beyond ethnicity, nor was Tự Đức in a position that would have allowed him to ideologically lead his people that far.

According to Lulei,[1215] the fall of Vietnam to the French in 1858 was the culmination of several problematic trends during the Nguyễn dynasty, with spatial matters being a significant concern. Earlier rulers had lived in economic centers and in the company of important social elites, but Huế had never be-

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1212 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 162.
1213 Cf. Cooke 1994, p. 310.
1214 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 59.
1215 Cf. Lulei 2018, p. 97.

come one. Hence, the emperors lost their connection to the people and were unaware of the occurring social changes. In 1866,

Tự Đức's isolation had become so particularly severe that he moved to live at the tomb that he had built for himself while he was still alive.[1216] A popular colonialist narrative was to blame nations like China and Vietnam for being not 'open' enough to aggressive proselytizing[1217] and not 'modern' enough to avoid[1218] forceful conquest.[1219]

However, as far as Tự Đức's reign and his father's death are concerned, it is in my opinion undeniable that the main problems of the Nguyễn dynasty were more likely a lack of cooperation and solidarity at court, which arose from the absence of a coherent, unifying ideology and the comparatively weak institution of the emperor. In a situation like that, it was not helpful at all that the imperial family kept rebelling against its own members[1220]and thus undermined the emperor's status even further.

Instead of unity, the court factions could not agree on how to respond to the foreign threat, but they were never satisfied with the emperor's decisions either. The fact that the country's most important administrative organs actively avoided a strong and decisive reaction and did not support their own head of government, nor did they present any valid alternatives to his rule, was a major factor in the downfall of the Nguyễn dynasty. Such an indecisive govern-

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1216 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 160. However, he was not buried there, the real location of the emperor's final resting place is unknown.

1217 For example, see: Keith, Charles: *Catholic Vietnam. A Church from Empire to Nation.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

1218 For an orientalist interpretation of modernization theory, see: Wahed, Mohammad Shakil. "The Impact of Colonialism on 19th and Early 20th Century China." *Cambridge Journal of China Studies* 11, no. 2 (2016): 24–33. And for background information: Hung Ho-fung. "Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories: China and the European Conceptions of East-West Differences from 1600—1900." *Sociological Theory* 21, no. 3 (2003): 254–280.

1219 For a thorough investigation of colonial dynamics in Indochina, see: Brocheux, Pierre and Daniel Hémery. *Indochina: an ambiguous colonization, 1858—1954.* Translated by Ly Lan Dill-Klein, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. For a treatment of orientalism applied to Indochina, see: Bowd, Gavin and Daniel Clayton. "Tropicality, Orientalism, and French Colonialism in Indochina: The Work of Pierre Gourou, 1927—1982." *French Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005): 297–327.

1220 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 162.

ment, with an emperor who lacked both authority and internal support, was extremely vulnerable to external threats with or without superior weaponry.

Long ago, the narratives created by Buddhists ensured the legitimacy of the emperors and the independence from China. In contrast, the Neo-Confucian officials of the late Nguyễn dynasty had not been well-integrated into the greater picture of the realm. They did not adapt to the demands of the local cultures and did not form a unit with the emperors. The most powerful officials were not the most capable ones, the efforts invested to gain an office did not return sufficient prestige. And thus, the officials abused their power, incapacitated the emperor and eventually hastened the loss of sovereignty to the French.

V.3.4.   The Imperial Expansion Towards the South

Due to the strong influence of Sinitic culture, the Việt elite felt a sense of superiority towards the mostly Indianized neighboring cultures of South East Asia as well as towards the minorities of their own highlands. The areas occupied by the federalized Champa city states in central Vietnam were attractive to the Việt, but the local culture differed strongly from Sinitic ideals. This made the southern border a perfect stage for a prestigious 'civilizing' campaign that spanned centuries and became known as the March to the South in historiography. The march began with the consolidation of the Đại Việt empire in the tenth century and continued until the end of the late imperial era.[1221] On the pretext of a Việt princess who almost died on a sati pyre,[1222] the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries became characterized by the wars between Đại Việt, Champa and the Khmer. These conflicts were caused by the enormous settlement pressure that Đại Việt exerted.[1223] The March to the South was a slow, long-term endeavor that was only loosely tied with acculturation efforts:[1224] this led to the development of numerous regionalisms. To interconnect with

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1221   Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 245. The March to the South does not refer to a continuous and linear movement, but occurred in waves throughout the centuries with long pauses between the campaigns whenever the Việt government had to deal with internal problems.

1222   Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 96–97.

1223   Cf. Vickery 2009. p. 56.

1224   Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 171.

these many regionalisms was the main challenge for the unification efforts of the Nguyễn dynasty, who also had to handle the remains of Cham and Khmer culture. As a result, the March to the South often served as an explanation for the regional differences of Vietnam and *inter alia* the distinctiveness of Đàng Trong. To this day, this significant era is a heated topic of Vietnamese Studies. It can be said that, due to the fortunes of war, the northern narrative has remained dominant. This has drowned out the voices of those southern historians[1225] who, based on Huế's position, saw their region as the true successor to the Nguyễn dynasty.

V.3.4.1 Who were the Cham?

Champa was a loose confederation located in central Vietnam, south of the Jiaozhou region. Its frequent incursions northwards caused multiple changes in the border of the Chinese region Rinan or the Đại Việt province Ái 爱.[1226] The territorial expanse of Champa varied but stretched roughly from riversides in modern Quảng Bình into the south, where the Cham minorities are still found today. The flooding in the Cham areas was less severe than in the north;[1227] some areas were even comparatively dry and there were more hills throughout the narrow landscape. The poorer regions compensated for their limited agricultural opportunities that resulted from the rugged terrain by maintaining relations with highland communities and by offering secure ports for maritime trade. This brought many different Indian cultures and religious concepts to the Vietnamese coasts.[1228] The merchants who traveled the coasts between China and the Middle East engaged in a 'passive colonization'. They did not conquer anything by military aggression or forceful conversion. They rather used the southeastern monsoon to get to East Asia, but then had to wait for the northeastern monsoon to take them home in the following year.[1229] This

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1225 Claudine Ang studied the remains of the counternarratives recreated by historians of the Republic of Vietnam. cf. Ang 2013, pp. 1–2.

1226 Cf. Holmgren 1980, p. 144.

1227 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 8.

1228 Cf. Skilling 2011, p. 372; Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 139, 156.

1229 Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, pp. 9–10.

gave them plenty of time to found local families and to spread their ideas of Hindu and Buddhist origin.[1230] Although there was no obligation to adopt these ideas, they inscribed their presence into the landscape via statues, columns and tablets with Sanskrit inscriptions.

Indian and local religions in Southeast Asia and southern China hybridized effortlessly and Champa became one of the Indianized realms consisting of multiple city states that shared a common culture.[1231] For example, their sacred sites were similar to the Việt, often determined by dream revelations but also by a spatial system that — similar to the Chinese — preferred mountains in the back and rivers to the front of a site.[1232] They preferred to build their sacred sites in the coastal plains, at the sea shore, in closed valleys, or on hills close to estuaries and rivers, but some also occurred in the highlands of central Vietnam on mountain ridges or in caves. The presence of water was a prerequisite because of its high liturgical importance for purification.[1233]

Cham temples relied on Indian styles. A temple complex contained a *makaran* (Cham: *kalan*) in its center — the main sanctuary with a square layout flanked by pillars. It would be directed to the east, with a single tower gate (*gopura*) opposite to it. There would be at least three more fake doors to the other directions which could be staffed with sculptures. A small chamber inside the main sanctuary (*garbhagṛha*) contained either a deity's icon or a yoni-linga.[1234] The tympanum outside the sanctuary had a relief that advertised what deity was venerated inside. But only the priests were allowed to enter the sanctuary, so the gates showed sculptures of minor deities and representative

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1230 It has to be studied on a case-by-case basis as to which Indian cultures these belonged to. For the cases treated in this book, the lore suggests contacts to southern Indian Tamil culture. For Buddhism in Champa, see: Guy, John. "Pan-Asian Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Cult in Champa." In *The Cham of Vietnam*, edited by Trần Kỳ Phương and Bruce M. Lockhart, 300–322. Singapore: NUS Press, 2011.

1231 Cf. Guy 2009, pp. 135–36; Vickery 2009, pp. 45–46, 55; Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 137.

1232 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 148.

1233 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2009, pp. 148, 155, 168, 174–75.

1234 The symbolical representation of the creative forces of the universe in the shape of an abstracted phallus and vulva.

animals which the population could venerate.[1235] With time, sacred sites were commonly rededicated or switched alignment in dependence on the favored deities of local rulers.[1236]

The influence of Buddhism on architecture was, aside from the famous Đồng Dương complex, negligible. Major changes occurred after the tenth century when art and ritual practices were imported from Java:[1237] Chinese and Javanese Vajrayāna-Buddhist traits mixed with the local repertoire and introduced the Kīrtimukha, a half face depicting the all-devouring time, and the man-eating *makara.* The makara was a hybrid of a dragon and crocodile and would later strongly influence the appearance of Việt dragons in the north. Nymph-like *apsaras*, heavenly musicians (*ghandarvas*) and some local tutelary deities also started to appear in Việt architecture whenever Cham craftsmen were used.[1238] This ubiquitous visual evidence of the Cham's presence, especially in Đại Việt's capital Thăng Long, was one factor that led to their dire discrimination in late imperial Vietnam.

Trade and the provision of freshwater wells were the main income sources of the Cham. The entire Southeast Asian maritime trade relied on ports like Hội An and Nha Trang, which were also starting points for the distribution of Chinese goods along the land routes. Especially Nha Trang rose to fame and was soon integrated into the Arabian trade networks as well.[1239] Arabian travelogues report about the Cham's most important trade good: aloeswood (*aquilaria malaccensis* and *sinensis*, Chin. *chenxiang* 沉香).

Although the Cham mostly defended themselves against encroachments, the Chinese and the Việt continued to view them as predators.[1240] The northernmost city states of Champa had become dominant in their realm just in time for Đại Việt's independence. The following expansion pressures from the north

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1235 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2009, pp. 160–62.

1236 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 150.

1237 Cf. Auboyer et. al., 1988, p. 307.

1238 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2009, p. 161.

1239 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, pp. 138, 155–157.

1240 For example, when Sui China led a predatory expedition against the capital in 605 CE, the Chinese robbed 1,350 Buddhist texts. Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 138, 151.

then forced the Cham multiple times to move their cultural centers southward. The political turmoil eventually turned Kauṭhāra into the new center of Cham culture and provoked a short-lived switch towards Buddhism that popularized Avalokiteśvara among the Cham.[1241]

The March to the South

The growing population of the Later Lý dynasty was physically limited by mountains, the Khmer, and the Nanzhao to the west; by the ocean to the east and by even more mountains towards China in the north. The only feasible direction to expand into was the south.[1242] Searching for fertile land, Việt farmers pierced through the Annamite mountains into a realm of hunters and sailors. Troops under imperial orders followed to enforce their interests against the indigenous population of what in the future would become the province Quảng Nam. With the idea that the Việt emperor had the right to rule all what the eye can see, the (often defensive) attacks of the Cham on Đại Việt were perceived as the 'rebellious' behavior of territories that the Việt already considered theirs. This is expressed by a council note preserved in the *Đại Việt Sử Ký Toàn Thư* from the early Lý era of Lý Thái Tông:

> *We [counselors] think the cause of this [internal trouble] is that, although your virtue has reached them, your majesty has not yet spread far. The reason for this is that, ever since you ascended the throne, while they have rebelliously refused to come to court, you simply displayed virtue and bestowed favor in order to soothe them. You have not yet proven the truth of your majesty, glory, and military power by attacking them. This is not the way to show majesty to distant peoples. We fear that the different clans and nobles in our realm will all become like Champa.*[1243]

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1241 Cf. Vickery 2009, p. 49.and Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 154, 161.

1242 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 46.

1243 DVSKTT 2:32a–b as translated by Taylor 1986, pp. 162–63.

According to Confucian thought, the virtue of an emperor was enough to control his subjects. And yet, the councilors advised an aggressive and military approach towards the 'distant peoples' to keep the already defined Việt society united. In 1044, Lý Thánh Tông led a devastating campaign against Champa that resulted in 30,000 executions and 50,000 war prisoners, who were deported to the north. In 1069, his last era name became *thần võ* 神武 "holy war" and he initiated his anti-Champa campaign. He prepared a navy and started war activities while engaging both Lý Thường Kiệt and his younger brother as generals and pioneers.[1244] The Champa king Rudravarman III (1061—1074) was captured and had to cede northern territories — including the later Quảng Nam — where the Việt settlers had established themselves in agricultural colonies.[1245] As in the case of the former Rinan, the true affiliation of the territories Bố Chính, Địa Lý, and Ma Linh,[1246] which later formed one-half of the province Thuận Hóa 順化, was uncertain for a long time.

After the conflicts between the Việt and Cham, many Việt remained there but Champa probably held most of the political influence. The Cham court fled south and Champa reached its greatest extent down to the Mekong River. By the twelfth century, the new dominant center was Vijaya 毗闍耶, a successful centralizing state. But until the thirteenth century, Champa was constantly attacked by the southwestern Khmer, followed by the Mongols, which caused members of the Cham courts to flee to Đại Việt. The Việt used these persons to gather intelligence and to then repeatedly attack the borders of Champa. This forced the Cham kings to buy their freedom by ceding more and more districts to Đại Việt. In 1301, Trần Nhân Tông (r. 1278—1293) arranged an alliance and received the Cham provinces Ô 烏 and Lý 里 — forming the second half of Thuận Hóa — for the hand of his daughter. The mission to save the princess from a ritual death caused a war that led to a temporary annexation of (probably just northern) Champa in 1312.

In the aftermath, Đại Việt never stopped viewing Champa as a provincial territory that belonged to them. The Việt continually interfered with the

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1244 Cf. Hoàng Xuân Hãn 1949, p. 51.

1245 Cf. Wong Tze Ken 2011, p. 240.

1246 Corresponding to the Cham names Po Ting, Delhi and Melhi.

Cham throne and asserted their alleged right to appoint rulers whom they favored. The relationship between Việt and Cham thus came to resemble that between China and Đại Việt and both realms spent a lot of time devastating each other's capitals. Champa was marked as a political entity separate from Đại Việt when the Chinese court accepted the former's tributes. In exchange for valuable goods, the Mongol Yuan dynasty even claimed to protect Champa — but they never did. In the last two decades of his reign, Po Binasuor, or Chế Bồng Nga 制蓬峩 (r. 1360—1390), attempted to reconquer the provinces that Champa had lost to Đại Việt.[1247] The war spread as far up north as Nghệ An and the partially hybridized Việt settlers were crushed between Việt and Cham forces.[1248] This cost him the sympathy of the local population, especially since local culture had already changed to such an extent that his intervention was no longer appreciated.

V.3.4.2. Reassigned Cultural Imperialism

In the previous dynasties, Buddhism's desire to proselytize had jumpstarted the imperial motivation for expansion. In the late imperial era (1427—1858), the desire to expand resulted from more worldly needs — the lack of land for the ever-growing population and the raised importance of interregional trade. However, the trade limits imposed by the Later Lê government in the north forced merchants to move south. And although the land reform of the Later Lê dynasty ensured that most people of the Vietnamese north received at least small patches of communal ground, many people in the provinces of Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An und Hà Tĩnh had never owned land or lost it to natural disasters. As they were becoming used to droughts and pests, these people were able to create new agricultural land for their families by moving to the southern former Cham territories.[1249]

The first complete mapping of the realm under Lê Thánh Tông outlined the territorial borders between the cultural neighbors. Under the influence of

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1247 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 98, 101.

1248 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 100.

1249 Cf. Engelbert 2016, p. 266.

Nguyễn Trãi,[1250] the emperor took care to separate his subjects from the 'ill' customs of the Cham and highlanders. From now on, Đại Việt was supposed to possess superior morality over the Cham 'barbarians',[1251] and at the same time felt a moral responsibility for them. It was no longer enough to plunder the neighboring states, now they also had to be contained and civilized.[1252] This narrative served as a background for Lê Thánh Tông's expansionist feats: he led an extremely expensive expedition to the south and achieved what his ancestors could not. In 1471, he defeated Vijaya (Bình Định) and caused the majority of Champa to crumble.

The Việt who arrived from the north to fight were shocked by the sights that only the localized settlers were used to — like seeing high-ranking women fight in battle. Although women would occasionally fight in Đại Việt, female generals and professional warriors had become an image from a distant past. But the Cham were still following some bilateral traditions, as demonstrated by the Pô Pô 婆婆 woman: a leader who helped the poor and healed the diseased[1253] and who may have been named for, or seen as an incarnation of Pô Nagar. The conquest climaxed with a massacre of 60,000 people because the Việt possessed firearms while the Cham did not.[1254] Similar to the conquest of Sichuan, roadbuilding gave easy access to the new Thừa Thiên Province 承天省 and to make it easier to control.

After the conquest, Lê Thánh Tông controlled 80 % of the original Champa territory. Social and cultural life in Champa came to a halt. Đại Việt now held nominal claim from Quảng Nam down to Phú Yên. Yet, small Cham states continued to exist along the coast until the seventeenth century, although they were tributary states from the Việt's perspective.[1255]

Although the southern Việt villages were subjected to transregional, centralized rules, the economic wealth that Lê Thánh Tông's politics had created

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1250 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 119.

1251 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 208.

1252 Cf. Whitmore 2017, p. 133.

1253 Cf. Lê Văn Minh 2016 p. 177. Her grave still exists and she is venerated as a local heroine.

1254 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 209–11; Taylor 1993 p. 53.

1255 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 120.

at the cost of the Cham obviated further rebellions. Lê Thánh Tông wanted to preserve this situation even after he expanded deep into non-Việt areas and was thus challenged to rule a realm more heterogeneous than ever before. This challenge did not in the least stop the population replacement planned by the Việt authorities. They introduced strict anti-Cham laws that made the Cham flee to Malaysia if possible, while more and more Việt settlers — landless peasants, peasant-soldiers and military prisoners — made their home in the new territory.[1256] To enhance his military might and the motivation of his soldiers, the emperor started an ethnic cleansing that ended every kind of tolerance towards the neighboring cultures, or those that still existed at the realm's peripheries, or — perceived as even worse — right amidst the Việt.[1257] The strict assimilation policy required all non-Việt people to pledge themselves to the state. The Việt reenacted what had happened to the proto-Việt in the first century CE with reversed roles: scholars were sent to educate the Cham about proper (Việt) customs and behavior. [1258] The settlers claimed Cham land, which was encouraged by the government, and married Cham wives, which was not encouraged by the government.

The resulting Việt-Cham elite was able to partake in local examinations, which sped up the spread of Sinitic Việt ideology among the Cham and also helped to visually disintegrate their culture. Confucian aniconism opposed Cham sculptures, so the latter were soon replaced by spirit tablets with face-like headings.[1259] The Việt acknowledged the Cham towers as sites of foreign numen and in fear of spiritual retribution, they were often avoided. For example, at the

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1256 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 57; Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 122.

1257 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 212. Ethnic cleansing refers to the forced removal and extermination of an ethnic group (cf. Jones, Adam. "'Ethnic Cleansing' and Genocide." In *Crimes Against Humanity: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008, pp. 19–40), in this case the Cham living in the areas that the Việt desired. It includes the destruction of material cultural representations (buildings, sacred sites, statues), the prohibition of immaterial cultural representation (clothing, hairstyles, language, faith) and the removal of the targeted group by deportation and enslavement (cf. ibid., 40–61). The intention of ethnic cleansing is the removal of evidence for the target group (ibid., 121–32), which the Việt continually struggled with until they mostly succeeded in the nineteenth century.

1258 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 122.

1259 Cf. Auboyer et al. 1988, pp. 307—8.

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foot of the Pô Nagar temple is a small island, since the territory was recognized as sacred, the local fishers established a shrine there,[1260] but the Cham temples themselves were rarely continued in use. Rather, the military plundered them and used the statues and steles for bridge- and street building.[1261] This was the most meaningful cultural turnover during the March to the South. It continued in the following centuries until it reached the formerly Cambodian territory of the Mekong delta at the southern tip of modern Vietnam. In the aftermath of this most powerful thrust into the south, the north received significant amounts of Cham population, either as war prisoners and later slaves, or as desired craftsmen.[1262] The latter changed the appearance of the dragon and phoenix in the north, but the Cham also adopted some mythical animals from the Han-Việt culture.[1263] By the end of the fifteenth century the Cham population in the capital had grown enough that they had their own temples or that temples were shared between Việt and Cham. Similar symbols had melted into hybrids. The presence of the Cham was visible in every corner of the capital and the surrounding cities, not at least because Cham craftsmen and prisoners had been used to build countless Buddhist temples for centuries.[1264]

The Neo-Confucian state system favored a more 'harmonious' — and this meant a culturally homogeneous — population. To the officials, it was unacceptable that an 'inferior' culture who had been subjected through countless wars, had such a high visibility and thus constant presence in the imperial capital. As the Neo-Confucians asserted cultural superiority over the 'barbarians', they also aimed to protect Việt patrilineal land from Cham matrilineal claims by once again outlawing the intermarriage between Việt and Cham[1265] with reference to the preservation of moral purity.[1266] In 1509, Emperor Lê Uy Mục

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1260 The spirits of the "former landowners", i.e., the deities formerly venerated there, would also be appeased in an apotropaic manner by the Việt settlers. Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 114.

1261 Cf. Unger 1997, p. 153; Hardy 2009, p. 4.

1262 Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 94; Auboyer et al. 1988, p. 336.

1263 Cf. Vickery 2009, p. 48.

1264 Cf. Trần Quốc Vượng 2011, pp. 269–70.

1265 Cf. Cooke 2010, p. 8.

1266 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 212.

黎威穆 (1505—1509) heard allegations of an intrigue — actually the attempt of war prisoners to flee south — and allegedly initiated a pogrom against the Cham of the capital, followed by a massacre in the province Quảng Nam.[1267] Afterwards, the language, talismans, hairstyle and the spiritual patrons of the craftsmen were outlawed, confiscated and partly destroyed in yet another and this time most thorough ethnic cleansing. This was followed by a century with less movement at the southern borders as the Việt had to take care of internal struggles.

V.3.4.3. The Last Days of Champa

In the second half of the Later Lê dynasty, an initially empowered Neo-Confucianism provided new ideas of sovereign rule. This would later lead to the development of the nation state — a sovereign state that completely controls all the claimed territory between its borders to other sovereign states. Due to enhanced means of communication and infrastructure, even remote areas could now be subjected to central government politics. The areas where people could opt out of subjecting to a central authority were significantly dwindling.[1268] Just like its neighbors, Đại Việt attempted to integrate its frontier regions. The government wanted to control trustworthy and untrustworthy populations and most importantly to gain access to their resources. This task was complicated by the cultural and linguistic differences between highland- and lowland populations. In Vietnam, this difference referred particularly to the split between the Việt and the Mường of the highlands.[1269]

Concerning the various northern highland ethnic groups, state influence ended at the foot of the mountains — even by the twentieth century. In the same way, the Cham had not managed to integrate the jungle-hill-dwelling ethnic groups who lived in their vicinity, but the lowland Cham proved to be just as difficult[1270] to successfully integrate into the Việt empire. In another similarity

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1267 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 46; Cooke 2010, p. 9. However, this emperor was especially disliked by later historians, so the tales about his depravity may be exaggerated.

1268 Scott 2009, p. 11.

1269 Cf. Scott 2009, p. 117.

1270 Cf. Scott 2009, p. 21.

to the Sichuanese developments, the Neo-Confucian elite despised the situation that the Việt settlers in the far southern territories had often established their settlements all on their own and were prone to hybridize. However, when the late imperial empire was separated into two mostly independent realms, the centralization efforts were separated as well and mostly came to a halt.

Before the Việt could overpower the previous southern cultures, they first needed to establish some kind of Việt culture within the southern territories. This was done in a process of *địa phương hóa* 地放化 "localization", an important step for the distinction and identity building of Đàng Trong.[1271] The severe challenge of integrating multiple indigenous ethnic peoples became part of the Nguyễn lord's narrative of their legitimacy. The *Đại Nam Thực Lục*, 大南寔錄 (19th c.) records Nguyễn Hoàng's deathbed speech in which he exhorts his close associates to move southwards.[1272]

Due to being part of a federation, the city states Kauṭhāra and Pāṇḍuraṅga of Champa were able to survive on their own for quite a long time after the previous attacks, although they had suffered significant destruction in their territories. Because the separation of the realm between Trịnh and Nguyễn lords initially interrupted the March to the South, Claudine Ang concludes that there was a noticeable change between the eras of the March being coordinated in Thăng Long and the era when it was coordinated by the Nguyễn rulers.[1273] Indeed, between 1600—1840, the options for the enhancement of infrastructure and the methods for land surveying multiplied; record keeping and text dissemination had become much easier; and the introduction of advanced firearms helped to speed up the enforced acculturation process enormously. The Nguyễn lords had supplanted the Cham in their niche within the South China Sea maritime trade, although that also got them entangled in conflicts between China and Japan. The international trade created greater revenues and provided more resources that, among other things, helped to fund the

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1271 Cf. Li Tana 2018, pp. 99–102. This era is not well documented because it contradicted the linear narratives of both nineteenth century and modern historians. Cf. Li Tana 2018, pp. 99–101 and Ang 2013, pp. 3, 5, 8, 15.

1272 Ang 2013, p. 5, referring the Đại Nam Thực Lục 1:37, entry for the year 1613.

1273 Cf. ibid., p. 7.

persecution of religious heterodoxy. This included Islam, which had gradually spread among the Cham as a soteriological alternative to the hardships they were facing.[1274] However, Cham Islam — as strongly hybridized as it was — was not pervasive and other Cham stayed Hindu and Buddhists.

The Nguyễn lords did not directly engage in active persecutions. Rather they tolerated Buddhist encroachment on other religions because they favored this religion. The Nguyễn lords "domesticated their regime […] through an eclectic weaving of indigenous spirits and beliefs into a syncretic (Vietnamese) Buddhist framework, a hybrid religious system that bestowed moral legitimacy on Nguyễn authority in Đàng Trong."[1275]

The popular religious system in the south was very diverse, but in its core, it relied on individualistic venerations of rocks, trees and animals. Therefore, Buddhism was able to employ the same mediative tactics that had worked so well in the north. This enabled it to grow into the dominant religion of the political and the commoner spheres. The commoners, though, had a hard time to orient themselves in the foreign spiritual environment. They had adapted Cham cults and customs so intensively that some Cham deities prevailed among them until the twentieth century.[1276] An important reason was that the new settlements lacked a scholarly elite. Settlement demographics were reflected mostly by peasants, soldiers, and the underprivileged.

As previously established, Đàng Trong did famously not invest into a good Confucian education. The few Confucian scholars who existed in the south were qualitatively unable to compete with their northern counterparts.[1277] They were either not very influential, or not even present in the new settlements. The lack of Sinitic constraints gave free way to the reinvigoration of older agrarian religious practices that were much easier to reconcile with the customs of the

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1274 Cf. Guy 2009, pp. 130 and Rie Nakamura. "Awar–Ahier: Two Keys to Understanding the Cosmology and Ethnicity of the Cham People (Ninh Thuận Province, Vietnam)" In *Champa and the Archaeology of Mỹ Sơn (Vietnam)*, edited by Andrew Hardy, Mauro Cucarzi and Patrizia Zolese, 107–28. Singapore: NUS Press, 2009.

1275 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 102.

1276 Cf. Li Tana 2018, pp. 106–107, 110.

1277 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 57.

indigenous population. Đỗ Thiện goes as far as to call the subsequent developments after the March to the South a "Chamification" of Vietnam.[1278]

However, in 1635, Japan closed its ports and as the Nguyễn also retreated from the maritime trade network, they realized that their small central Vietnamese territory could not provide enough land and resources for the growing population. Since the north was occupied by another regime with continued Chinese patronage and the west unreachable due to the mountain plateaus, they again had to push against the southern border.

The last ruler of Kauṭhāra was Po Rome 波羅美 (r. 1627—1651). He had managed to unite the remaining Cham with former allied tribes. In Việt records, it was allegedly the intrigue of the Việt third queen[1279] that led to Po Rome's death. However, since she died as well, this was likely a fabrication. His half-brother — direly misjudging the situation — decided to attack the northern Vietnamese provinces in an attempt to get rid of the Việt surrounding him — but the political Goliath that Đàng Trong had become defeated him easily. In 1653, he had to cede all territory and Kauṭhāra's main sanctuary Nha Trang, the seat of the state deity Pô Nagar, was abandoned. Yet it took until 1836 to survey and map the comparatively small territory in order to turn it into a taxable part of the realm.[1280]

Pāṇḍuraṅga had officially been conquered in 1692 but was tolerated as a tributary kingdom — it continued the Cham legacy until it was abolished in 1832. The Việt had not been able to attempt assimilation because the resistance of the Cham population was very strong and the settlers in Bình Thuận consisted mostly of criminals from the Trịnh territory and other dishonored people with a questionable loyalty.[1281] In this era, the Cham were isolated into their own villages and subjected to discrimination in trade, tax and legal rights.[1282]

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1278 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 95.

1279 Being distracted with attacks by the north, the Nguyễn lords engaged in marriage diplomacy (cf. Wong Tze Ken 2011, pp. 246–47). Po Rome's third queen was a Việt princess named Nguyễn Phúc Ngọc Khoa 阮福玉誇, the daughter of Phúc Nguyễn, cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 139.

1280 Cf. Nguyễn Đình Đầu 2009, p. 74.

1281 Cf. Cooke 2010, p. 22.

1282 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 140.

Laws were more preoccupied with securing border issues than with ordering society and the Cham officials who had kept their posts were quickly assimilated into Việt culture.[1283] This late era is badly documented because the Việt had no interest in supporting the legacy of their defeated enemy.[1284]

In the course of massive militarization, the acculturation in the territories around Pāṇḍurañga accelerated significantly.[1285] Pāṇḍurañga was particularly despised by Confucian rulers like Minh Mạng because the desired property was still mainly possessed by matrilineal lines and the private economy was also still upheld by women.[1286] Thus, Minh Mạng faced the same problems that the Han Chinese had faced in early Jiaozhi.

The strict acculturation policies he employed to Confucianize the 'barbarians'[1287] — the Cham, former Khmer and highland minorities — were severe and had lasting effect. Even to this day, former Cham territories are still more restricted in and excluded from religious ritual than in the north.[1288] After he defeated the last Cham resistance under the Muslim leader Katip Suma,[1289] Emperor Minh Mạng acted with utmost cruelty to completely eradicate Cham culture from his realm. He outlawed anything related to Cham culture with the most violent punishments. Cham villages were split up and the inhabitants spread among Việt settlements. The ports were seized and the Cham were no longer allowed to access the sea or to engage in trade. It was forbidden for Cham to buy iron, which was meant to restrict their contacts to the highlands. The Việt then promptly seized the iron production for themselves. Like the Ming had done centuries before, the government either forced people into extremely dangerous occupations (like hunting elephants) which had a high

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1283 Cf. Nguyễn Đình Đầu 2009, pp. 73–74 and Weber 2012, p. 164.

1284 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 171.

1285 Cf. Scott 2009, p. 253.

1286 Cf. Nguyễn Đình Đầu 2009, p. 74; Vo Nghia 2012. pos. 401 and Kiernan 2017, p. 202. Modern Cham still connect their ancestry via the matrilinear line.

1287 Cf. Choi Byung Wook 2004, pp. 136–37.

1288 Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 239.

1289 The Katip Suma uprising of 1833—1834 failed because Cham Hindus supported the Vietnamese government rather than the Cham Muslim rebels. Cf. Weber 2012, p. 165.

body count, or simply worked them to death while destroying the jungles.[1290] The Cham were forced to learn the Việt language and script and how to accommodate to Việt traditions and customs. Soldiers even enforced the wearing of trousers. Violators and rebels had to eat pork if they were Muslim and beef if they were Hindu[1291] — a punishment with no other benefit but to demoralize them on an ideological level. The Việt violated the ritual purity of priests and prohibited the Cham ancestor worship for the same reason. The Việt forced Cham to reenact their rituals in front of imposed Việt icons and did so even on the household level — bringing the new empire into every home. Mosques and Hindu cemeteries were razed and desacralized.[1292] This shows that the Việt consciously targeted sacred sites as points of shared identity and used aggressive reconfiguration tactics like destruction and superscription.

Minh Mạng thought that sheer force was optimal to bring "civilized" culture to the remaining Cham allies. But although this was an emperor who had decidedly defended the realm in his own right, he did not argue that it was the *Việt* culture that brought virtue to the tribes, but that the Việt had brought to them the *civilization of the Chinese*.[1293] It is thus evident that, even though officially separate from the Chinese Empire, Việt culture was Sinitic culture.

The conquest of Champa moved in Sinitic ways along the level terrain or coastlines with navigable rivers that lowered the friction of distance.[1294] This made influencing the highland populations significantly harder. Promoting a unique and united culture,[1295] Champa remained Minh Mạng's main target even after he had completely seized their territory. Afterwards, the Việt continued their March to the South towards the former Khmer Empire.[1296] Wilfried

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1290 Cf. Weber 2012, pp. 166, 170–73.

1291 Cf. Choi Byung Wook 2004, p. 141.

1292 Cf. Weber 2012, pp. 176–79.

1293 Scott 2009, p. 117. This relates to Dror's suggestion that Việt rulers used Sinicization to police their society while maintaining their integrity. This policy was one of the reasons why Sinitic ideas emerged very late and only sparsely at the village level, cf. Dror 2007, p. 166.

1294 Cf. Scott 2009, p. 165f.

1295 Cf. Weber 2012, p. 174.

1296 Cf. Scott 2009, p. 51.

Lulei summarizes[1297] the contrasting nature of the conquest of Cambodian territories compared to that of Champa: the Cambodians-née-Khmer had only occasionally interacted with the Việt previously. However, during a period of political vulnerability, they made the mistake of offering the Nguyễn lords precious land for settlement.[1298] Waves of Việt people suddenly flooded the kingdom and Vietnamized these territories in a short time,[1299] fully occupying them by 1691. By 1780, Vietnam reached the extent of its modern territory[1300] although the Mekong delta would only be officially annexed with the inauguration of Gia Long in 1802. With that, the March to the South was completed.

V.4.   Placing Women in Việt Society

Before contemplating the dynamics of transcultural ideology transfer in late imperial Vietnam, it is important to take a step back to look at the general relationship between Confucianism and one of the most mobile agents in Việt society: women. Patriarchal views that devalued women's lives and restricted their access to ritual spaces were also present in Buddhism.[1301] Nevertheless, Vietnamese Buddhism actively sought sites of water worship, occupied them

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1297 Cf. Lulei 2018, pp. 79–80.

1298 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 252.

1299 How exactly the Vietnamese transferred their culture to the Mekong delta so quickly and efficiently, what role the establishment of clearly Vietnamese buildings and the occupation of sacred sites played and how much of that they had learned from conquering Champa is an interesting subject for a future study.

1300 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 141–44.

1301 Cf. Faure 2003, p. 55–90. For more on this, see: Paul, Diana Y. *Women in Buddhism. Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.

Karma Lekshe Tsomo (Nun). *Women in Buddhist Traditions*. New York: New York University Press, 2020.

Thammananthā (Nun) and Chatsumarn Kabilsingh. *Women in Buddhism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1996.

Salgado, Nirmala. *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013; and Meeks Lori. "Women and Buddhism in East Asian History: The Case of the Blood Bowl Sutra, Part I: China." *Religion Compass* 14, no. 14 (2020):e12336. https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12336

and continued to provide women with some options of spiritual expression. Confucianism, on the other side, found itself in an ongoing conflict with both hydrolatry and the women connected to it. The effects of the rising Confucianization in late imperial Vietnam were not at all welcomed by everyone and especially not by women. Instead of letting themselves be subjected to moral values that felt foreign to them, their reaction to male-governmental attempts at suppression were met with a countermovement that massively affected the religious geography up to the present.

V.4.1.   The Rise of Vietnamese Confucianism

When the Chinese script was introduced to Jiaozhi, it contributed considerably to the spread of Confucian ideas and to education in general. For centuries to come, Confucianism was the political creed of the learned man. It supported centralized rule by viewing all land as the ruler's property and provided a sense of unity that helped to create an impenetrable political entity against the north. However, many ideas were changed, bent or even ignored in Vietnam.[1302] For example, loyalty (*trung/zhong* 忠) did not focus on supporting the personified institution of an emperor because it was not owed to individual regents, but to the realm.[1303] Ancestor worship had already been part of the indigenous religions, so filial piety was easily accepted and became part of popular narratives that wanted to emphasize the moral superiority of their protagonists.[1304] However, it rarely went to the same extremes as in China[1305] and quickly split into a popular and a court variety. The latter was not much different than in Chinese Confucianism, but the popular variety differed in defining points. There was the concept of "small filial piety" directed at the parents and "grand filial piety" towards the realm. If one could not honor both, then the grand filial piety had to be prioritized.[1306] That was something unimaginable for the

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1302   Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 52.

1303   Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, p. 116.

1304   Cf. Nguyễn Duy Hinh 2007, p. 9.

1305   For example, children martyring themselves for their parent's sake was rather rare. Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 66.

1306   Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, p. 117.

Chinese Confucians who would put their parents first (*Lunyu* 13:18), but it was in accordance with the older Việt idea of the ruler as a 'father' to the people.

Most importantly, the bias against women increased much more slowly in Vietnam. The men were either conscripted to labor or constantly at war and the women needed to take care of agriculture and the economy. They were more mobile, more independent, and more involved in rites and even politics than their Chinese peers. In third-century China, there was already a solid idea of the subjection of women to men, but in Vietnam, women were able to choose their sons-in-law[1307] and roam freely outside their homes up to the fifth century.[1308] Afterwards, elite women were more restricted but hardly banished to the inner quarters. It took many more centuries to subject non-elite women to Confucian morals.

Independent Đại Việt continued the established Sinitic rituals of Heaven and Earth, the sacrifices for harvest, for the seasons and the founders of civilization.[1309] However, between the fifth and sixteenth century, the development of Vietnamese Confucianism had stagnated to the point that even visual differences to China were solely based in the fact that the iconoclasm caused by Neo-Confucians in the Confucian temples of the sixteenth century did not spread to Vietnam.[1310] Before Emperor Lý Nhân Tông's 李仁宗 (1072—1128) introduction of the local institutionalization of Confucian learning, Confucian matters had been taught in Buddhist temples or by wandering private teachers. The emperor may still have relied on Buddhist legitimation, but the Confucian literati had been busy with openly advertising the centralization of power.[1311] The first official examinations took place in 1076 and 1077. They were followed by the establishment of the Hàn Lâm Academy 翰林院 in 1086, where elite offspring was meant to study. However, the established balance of power was

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1307 Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, pp. 117–118.

1308 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 92.

1309 Cf. Lê Thanh Khôi 1969, p. 86; Gu Lezhen 1995, p. 174.

1310 Cf. Lee Cheuk Yin 2008, p. 12 and Hansen 1990, pp. 36–37.

1311 Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, pp. 15, 20.

toppled as soon as Confucian officials oversaw the evaluation and taxation of the Buddhist temples' assets.[1312]

Confucianism was so far unable to transcend the capital's limits for the entire Lý dynasty.[1313] Only by the end of the Trần dynasty did Confucian learning become the main criteria for the selection of officials.[1314] From their newly acquired position of power, Confucian officials frequently accused Buddhism of following its own agenda. As a transregional ideology of its own, Buddhism was able to withdraw from the partnership with the government for any reason — or even wreak havoc on imperial legitimation by spreading prophecies in a deleterious manner. According to Confucians, Confucianism did not have such conflicts of interest.

The distrust that the Mongol invasions (14th c.) sowed against Buddhists as potential spies made Buddhism unfit as a source of imperial legitimation.[1315] Later rulers may still have relied on Buddhism for spiritual legitimacy, but it never regained its former direct influence on the government after the Buddhist state system ended.

The Confucian officials, on the other hand, convinced the government that their ideas were more suitable for the advancement of state building and expansion.[1316] After achieving interpretative privilege and receiving Neo-Confucian influences from China, the Trần officials initiated a much stricter treatment of other religions, but could not yet monopolize the examination system.[1317] Years of instability necessitated the legalization of commoner literati. These were unfortunately very prone to corruption,[1318] but also important carriers of Confucian ideology into the rural areas.

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1312 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 160–61.

1313 Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 88, 116.

1314 Cf. Yu Insun 2007, p. 48.

1315 New attempts at creating Buddhist protectors of the realm had been made. Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 1969, pp. 116–19; Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 125.

1316 Cf. Nguyễn Cuong Tu 1997, p. 20.

1317 Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, p. 115; Kiernan 2017, p. 168; Lulei 2018, p. 44.

1318 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 94–95.

The Ming incursion and the Later Lê government both encouraged and supported the rising social importance of Neo-Confucianism. However, the administrative changes that the Ming had initiated in Vietnam inhibited the development of further local characteristics in Neo-Confucianism. As most Việt Confucian treatises had been lost in the recent occupation, the Later Lê followed the Chinese guidance books very closely — some argue that the over-emphasis of the Zhu Xi tradition may even be the specific trait of Vietnamese Confucianism.[1319] The Vietnamese Neo-Confucian orthodoxy actively discouraged innovation out of fear that examination candidates might deviate from the norms of the Four Books.[1320] The zealously enforced new state orthodoxy created an increasingly hostile climate towards non-Confucian religions;[1321] this inhibited the upkeep of Buddhist temples and attempted to erase the influence of Cham culture on art and religion. Consequently, images of dragons became more popular and lost the serpentine attributes and traits of the *makara* that they had acquired in previous centuries.[1322] Later Lê reforms repurposed Buddhist school temples as *văn từ* 文祠, where Neo-Confucian scholars educated the commoners about the Confucian ways.[1323] Although Buddhism decreased in these areas, the *văn từ* were also increasingly ignored and the still mostly autonomous villages preferred to returned to their indigenous deities.[1324] As soon as private schools outside the public education system were allowed in the seventeenth century, Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130—1200) teachings eventually reached the commoner families, albeit in an environment of reinvigorated local cults. Due to this, Neo-Confucian scholars argued even more against the central state's recognition of tutelary deities and even against city gods.[1325] This refusal to integrate or just to tolerate local religion was — an argument going

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1319 Cf. Lee Cheuk Yin 2008, p. 12.

1320 Cf. Tạ Văn Tài 2009, p. 14. The Four Books of Confucianism refer to the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸*, the Great Learning*大學*, Mencius* 孟子, and the *Lunyu* 論語.

1321 Cf. Le Tanh Khoi 1969, p. 171.

1322 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 63; Koppen 2016a, pp. 237–40.

1323 Cf. Whitmore 1997, p. 668.

1324 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 107, 162 and Unger 1997, p. 38.

1325 Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 14–15, 39.

back to Alexander Woodside — likely a major reason for Confucianism's slow development in Vietnam.[1326] Like the scholar Lê Quát 黎括 (~1370) lamented: "I know about the teaching, I wanted to take it and teach it to the people, but in the end, no village believed in it."[1327]

By the seventeenth century, the Later Lê dynasty treated non-Confucian doctrines as false and immoral, which accelerated the process of cultural imperialism. By 1663, nearly all other religions came under government repression when Emperor Lê Huyền Tông 黎玄宗 (1654—1671) decreed that the printing, selling and buying books of Daoism, Buddhism or other "despised" doctrines was prohibited, stating: "Buddhist temples are useless; except for those which are famous and already registered, villages must not without authorization construct new ones, wasting labor and money."[1328]

Access to monkhood, as well as the life of monks itself, was strictly controlled: if a monk violated inner-religious rules, he was drafted into the army. Every movement outside a temple had to be reported to the local government. The decree also targeted women who worked as mediums or served as bodhisattvas, who were commonly punished with conscript labor. This was a tactic specifically meant to outlaw religious specialist positions for women. The newly arrived Christian religion was not subjected to such suppressions until it was, relatively late, recognized as a competitor to state Confucianism.[1329]

The reason for the only lukewarm progress that Confucianism made in Vietnam was that it neither offered a soteriology — like Buddhism did — nor did it have enough flexibility to integrate Việt localisms into its own narrative. The Confucian ideology did not possess a tool like the Buddhist *upāya*, which could have helped to incorporate the 'inferior' local cults, but the Confucian officials also usually lacked the resources to enforce effective superscriptions. Confucianism relied entirely on its expertise in the administrative system to attract governmental patronage. Otherwise, it had very little to offer to the Việt and rather openly opposed many traits of their culture. After the Ming

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1326 Cf. McHale 1999, pp. 497–98.
1327 Quoted according to Lê Mạnh Thát 2003, p. 175.
1328 Quoted according to Tạ Văn Tài 2009, p. 14.
1329 Cf. Tạ Văn Tài 2009, pp. 15–16.

occupation, Confucian narratives of unity spurred the incomplete centralization process and initially strengthened the institution of the emperor. But even though the Việt government was quickly Confucianized, the continuation of persecutions against local cults was not acceptable for most Việt rulers and thus the limits of Việt state Confucian ideology were set.

The key to Confucian success had been to gain power over the education system that had previously been tied to Buddhist sacred sites and to rededicate those sites. By doing so, Neo-Confucianism largely extended its control. First, the control over the minds by spreading its ideology among the commoners until it achieved the authority of interpretation. Second, the control over space by marking the realm with their school-temples. With rising influence, Confucianism was deemed useful by the emperors. They were ready to employ Confucian narratives of unity and centralization to justify both their legitimacy and the expensive expansions of the realm. By the eighteenth century, Neo-Confucianism may not have been of high quality at the court, but its ideological content had become more well-known and — most importantly — accepted among the commoners. Rites, morality and the treatment of women had changed markedly, often to the latter's detriment. By the nineteenth century, hardly any differences between Chinese and Vietnamese concepts of Confucian social order remained. Yet, the aim of strengthening the emperor's position had been sorely missed. The attempted stabilization of the administrative system had instead led to a debilitation of the emperor for almost three centuries [V.3.3.]. The inability of Confucian learning to grow lasting roots within Việt society and the consequent isolation of Confucian literati culminated in the disunity between the governance of the emperor and his officials at the end of the Nguyễn dynasty.

V.4.2. Women, Water and the Impact of Confucianism in Vietnam

The spread of Confucian ideas in Vietnam was restricted as much by class as by locality. The Confucian ideology had already permeated society from the elite to the commoners in the Red River Delta, while the southern provinces were

generally not yet willing to accept Confucian ideas or Chinese customs.[1330] The treatment of women was one factor in that.

The situation of gender roles was very different between Đại Việt and China, and yet Neo-Confucian ideology adhered steadfast to Sinitic ideals. For example, if a Chinese family was left without a male descendant, it would usually die out if the daughter's husband could not be adopted under very specific circumstances.[1331] In Đại Việt, however, daughters could inherit the household and continue the ancestor rites themselves. Furthermore, it was a longstanding tradition that a woman could leave her husband and marry again.[1332] In China, Neo-Confucians preferred widows to never marry again.[1333] Up until the eighteenth century, women in the former Cham territories were still able to own land and to have multiple husbands, this became a constant thorn in the flesh of Việt officials.

Starting in the Later Lê dynasty, Neo-Confucian doctrine in Vietnam demanded women to be obedient. The academic court Confucianism wanted them to be virtuous, pretty, and simply good seamstresses. However, the women outside the court families were preoccupied with more important issues. Until the nineteenth century, Việt men constantly left the household for long periods of time due to wars and corvée labor. Women were the only ones able to create income for the family.[1334] Likewise, the infrequency of official examinations made the path into one of the valuable offices very long. Nevertheless, high-ranking and successful female merchants generated substantial incomes and enabled their husbands to focus on studying for their political careers.[1335]

Dutton argues that the Confucian bias against merchants played a significant role in maintaining the freedom of Việt women. As commerce was considered taboo for elite men, women wielded considerable social power by

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1330 Cf. Taylor 1983, pp. 175–78, 215.

1331 Cf. Birge 2003, pp. 217–221.

1332 Cf. Sun Yanfeng 2005, p. 117.

1333 For more on the Neo-Confucian limitations put on the life of widows in China refer to: Waltner, Ann. "Widows and Remarriage in Ming and Early Qing China" In *Historical Reflections* 8, no. 3 (1981): 129–146.

1334 Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 9–10.

1335 Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 241.

controlling the finances. It was hence quite difficult to enforce the absolute power of men when farming, crafts, trade and even higher education were impossible without women's labor. Therefore, it was the male-centric perspective that precluded a comprehensive transfer of Confucian ideology into a commoner sphere in which women played such a significant role.

Since the women were in charge of trade and transportation, the waterways were female territory.[1336] Water served as the foundation of women's livelihoods and businesses and was thus of immense importance in their daily lives. Consequently, hydrolatric sites were held in especially high regard. Compared to the Central Plains of China, individual Vietnamese hydrolatric cults survived much longer and in more prominent positions. Not only because they were relevant to women on a larger scale, but also because their sites were more advantageous than other types of sacred sites due to their ritual connection to the trade economy. These sites not only provided women with spiritual opportunities to influence the success of their trading endeavors, but also served as safe avenues to attain prestigious social positions.[1337] Naturally, women paid more monetary attention to those sites which they believed to protect their livelihoods. Connected by economic relevance, hydrolatry and women protected each other. Hydrolatric sites were frequent stops along the waterways and preserved female mobility, they also provided additional trade options during temple festivals. All of this upheld the visibility of women without nudging them to join transregional religions like Buddhism or Đạo Mẫu.

However, hydrolatric sites were often appropriated by Buddhism. Buddhism also viewed women as inferior to men and yet, these sites remained female spaces and laymen only attended Buddhist sites for festivities. New temples were preferably built close to water as well and advertised their Quan Âm shrines.[1338] In that way, Buddhist temples remained able to provide meeting points for women and to benefit from their sponsorship. In both the capital and

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1336 Cf. Dutton 2013, p. 10.

1337 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 92.

1338 Cf. Wulf 1995, pp. 162, 193.

the villages, women appear predominantly as sponsors for the creation, restoration and expansion of such temples or for the creation of icons and bells.[1339]

Confucianism, in contrast, usually failed to appropriate water deities and their spaces,[1340] mostly because it remained incapable and unwilling to provide accessible spaces for women. This made Confucianism unattractive to the more recently assimilated parts of the population and due to that, the subjugation of women in Vietnam did not reach Chinese levels until the nineteenth century. Since Confucianism utterly lacked positive points of attraction for the common population, it was unable to serve as a tool for assimilation because it did not possess any transcultural integrative power in Vietnam.

The governmental application of Confucian ideology towards women during the fifteenth century was inconsistent. Court officials had begun to create rule sets for women with the intention to undermine their rights and to purge the last traces of matrifocal features.[1341] Nguyễn Trãi's primer for the education of girls sounded good on paper, but it was really the beginning of institutionalizing restrictive norms for women. In this era, social recognition was tied to the official examinations that women were not allowed to partake in.[1342] But a decree of 1434 showed[1343] that officeholding women certainly existed and that family heads were interested in educating their daughters, or at least they did not obstruct their studying. Even if women disguised themselves to take the examinations, being revealed rarely led to negative consequences.[1344]

Academic study was not their only option for education. In the previous eras, girls were able to acquire literacy and learning by the monastic way. Be-

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1339 Cf. Dutton 2013, p. 25.

1340 Rare examples for hydrolatric sites occupied by Confucianism are the Miếu Gàn 乾廟 and other Hanoi sites associated with the worship of Bảo Ninh Vương 保寧王. This dragon who wanted to be a Confucian scholar and brought rain by spreading ink around will be treated in a separate publication.

1341 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 51.

1342 Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 8, 15.

1343 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 117.

1344 Nguyễn Thị Duệ 阮氏叡 (1574—1654) placed first in the triennial examination and was later pardoned from decapitation by king Mạc Mậu Hợp 莫茂洽 (1560—1593). Instead, she was allowed to teach. Cf. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, p. 219.

coming a nun was typically another option for women to attain more authority than life usually offered and it provided an alternative lifestyle to becoming a wife and mother. The prevalence of Buddhist nuns in the countless temples suggests that they were surely involved in the educational process and able to present these alternative perspectives to their students.

Although the Hồng Đức legal codex of the Later Lê dynasty was inspired by Chinese law, it contained several women's rights: women were equal to men, daughters inherited like sons and after 1471, a first-born daughter had the right to the family estate even before her younger brothers.[1345] Yet in alignment to Neo-Confucian ideology,[1346] widows only had rights to their husband's property as long as they remained unmarried. However, real life may have been quite different. Between all the Confucian cultures of the fifteenth century, Việt women still endured the least oppression,[1347] mostly because Đại Việt was not *yet* a fully 'Confucian' culture. There were obvious differences between the treatment of women in Vietnam and the big imperial cities of China, but the treatment of women compared between rural Đại Việt and rural Sichuan or even rural Henan was not that different.

This does not mean that late imperial Vietnam was a paragon of women's rights, Confucians acquired increasingly powerful positions that shaped history to women's detriment. Although court Confucians like Ngô Sĩ Liên emphasized the women who had rebelled against the Chinese as rhetorical tools in their discourse of independence,[1348] they used female heroes only to berate the lacking qualities of the men.[1349] They advocated for the subordination of women and depicted their social role as limited. However, the great gap between the restrictions applied to upper class women — deemed to have a moral obligation — and those applied to commoner women remained because the

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1345 Cf. Kiernan 2017, pp. 205–6.; Lulei 2018, p. 66.

1346 A popular quote of Zhu Xi (who was inspired by Cheng Yi) in *Jinsi Lu* 近思錄 "Things at Hand" 6.5b says that it was better for a widow to starve than to lose her virtue by remarrying. For more information on the Neo-Confucian chastity obsession: Wang Hwa Yeong. "Chastity as a Virtue" *Religions* 11, no. 5 (2020): 259. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050259

1347 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 204.

1348 Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 4–8.

1349 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 203.

latter's economic role functioned as an effective override[1350] to the enforcement of Confucian values.

Gia Long's 嘉隆 (1762—1820) introduction of the Ming codex into local law[1351] was the final blow against the female gender. From then on, the "Records of Venerable Women of the Great South" (*Đại Nam Liệt Truyện* 大南列傳) aligned to those of China, decrying any agency for women and demanding utmost femininity according to Confucian thought in order to consider them virtuous. Confucianism had so far been unable to thoroughly change the mindset of a society accustomed to independent women, but its rising status in elite society forced men to subject themselves — and their wives — to Confucian virtues as to not endanger their career.[1352] The higher the status of an elite man was, the more he had to restrict his wife's' mobility and ban her to the inner chambers as a kind of living status symbol. The treatment of women was therefore more a matter of social standing[1353] than one of personal conviction.

The success of Confucian ideology in permeating all social strata relied heavily on restricting female mobility, which raised the degree of heterodoxy that was attributed to female water deities. However, this limitation on women also served to constrain these 'heterodox' hydrolatric cults, which ultimately benefitted government control. Consequently, the taming of water deities became intertwined with the Confucian agenda and underscored the power and renewed relevance of water deities as sources of dynastic legitimacy.

V.4.3.　Feminine Religion

This section describes Đạo Mẫu as a transregional countermovement against the Confucianization of society which not only served as a nongovernmental consolidation tool but also preserved local identity by providing reservoirs for local (water) deities.

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1350　Cf. Dutton 2013, p. 9.

1351　Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 31, 62.

1352　Cf. Dutton 2013, pp. 1, 7–9.

1353　This was not limited to the treatment of women, but also to the lifestyle of the elite members. High ranking officials had to code as Chinese by using the Chinese language, mannerisms, clothing styles and much more. Cf. Woodside 1971, p. 199.

In Đại Việt, power became divided along gender lines. As literati or monks, men held political and public power and were usually in control of the sacred sites. Women were responsible for commerce and household sustentation, but their access to meaningful spiritual positions was often limited to popular religion. Even as the treatment of women became increasingly unequal under the progressively Confucianized laws, the Việt held on to traditional equal property rights and equivalent standing in civil law.[1354] Similarly, when the government pushed for aggressive Confucianization in late imperial Vietnam, female deities did not only fail to disappear — their veneration was even reinvigorated.

Many early cultures featured important female deities who were associated with all kinds of fertility issues or served as territorial and war deities. Many of the goddesses associated with fertility belonged to the category "mother goddess", an often humanoid goddess who birthed or created important cultural deities or the first humans. She symbolized not only the fertility of the soil, animals and people but also other concepts associated with mothers: safety and refuge, justice and wisdom and prosperity.[1355] In opposition to earth mothers, mother goddesses also had sexual aspects tied to rituals of agrarian and political regeneration.[1356] In Vietnam, female aspects in the common religion remained quite strong in comparison to other parts of the world and that was reflected in profane life as well.

The contrast between the teachings of the elite and the lifestyle of women, busy to keep their families alive and well, was translated into countless fairy tales and proverbs. A firstborn daughter was considered a blessing, because she

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1354 Cf. Tạ Văn Tài 2009, p. 20.

1355 For more information on mother goddesses, see: Borgeaud, Philippe. *Mother of the Gods: From Cybele to the Virgin Mary.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004. Gimbutas, Marija. *The Civilization of the Goddess. The World of Old Europe.* San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993. Dhawan, Savitri. *Mother Goddess in Early Indian Religion.* Jaipur: National Publishing House, 1999. The category "mother goddess" should not be confused with Gimbuta's by now refuted "Goddess hypothesis": Beckman, Gary. "Goddess Worship — Ancient and Modern" In *A Wise and Discerning Mind. Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long,* edited by Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley. Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000.

1356 Cf. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Mother goddess." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 13, 2010. https://www.britannica.com/topic/mother-goddess. Retrieved 01 March 2021.

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was associated with wealth coming to the family. Even under rising Buddhist influence it was still believed that the destiny of a child was determined by the merits of the mother. And those ethnic groups who were less influenced by the Sinitic mindset saw women with respect concerning their high status and rights.[1357] For example, the female deities of the forest were often remnants from the jungle- and mountain-dwelling ethnic groups of which some spread into the plains. The waterways that connected the highlands and plains served as conduits of ideological distribution and helped certain water deities to become as transregional as the female merchants who dominated the rivers. Water connected people of high and low status. In contrast to the Chinese, who focused on the bilateral forces of Heaven and Earth, the Việt thus saw three important forces in the world: Heaven, Water and Earth.[1358] Representations of these three forces were worshiped throughout all social strata. On the microlevel, villages customarily planted a banyan tree close to a river and placed vegetables between river and tree to venerate those three forces of nature.[1359] Later, the village Đình — also often placed close to a river — replaced the Banyan tree. In late imperial Vietnam, these three forces became associated with three magical realms and the goddesses who ruled over them — the Tam Phủ 三府.

The Confucianization of late imperial Vietnam cut women out from the most high-ranking religious occasions. There were no more officially tolerated positions as religious specialists that women could hold. They were now denied access to the Đình and could thus no longer get in contact with their own village's tutelary deities and ancestors. Neo-Confucianism explained that women, being subjected to men, could hold no ritual authority. Instead, women were seen as ritually impure on the account of their production of

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1357 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 79–80.

1358 Dror 2007 p. 74 notes that a heaven-water-earth belief complex did exist in China (the sanguan 三官), but the massive differences to Đạo Mẫu religion make it unlikely that it was an inspiration. The main difference was that the Chinese complex was, in opposite to Đạo Mẫu, quite obsessed with the afterlife (194–7). However, there is a related Daoist tradition endemic to the former Shu region that was prevalent until the tenth century and which showed a similar preference for gigantic pantheons to integrate various local deities. However, it still differs strongly in ritual and setup. Cf. Huang Shih-shan 2002, pp. 3, 176–77, 194–97, 223–25.

1359 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 82–84.

blood during birth, sex and menstruation — an idea that was also prevalent in Buddhism — and because of their activities in trade.[1360] As a result, women were soon more active in sites that did not prohibit them from entering, like Buddhist temples.[1361]

Vo[1362] is convinced that the inability of both Confucianism and Buddhism to reach the Việt people on an emotional level was the reason for the emergence of female-centric economic cults, like those of northern Liễu Hạnh, or Bà Chúa Kho (the Lady of the Storehouse), or the southern Bà Chúa Xứ[1363] (Lady of the Realm). Many of them were Việt reinterpretations of Pô Nagar and others represented older layers of Vietnamese religion that had evaded acculturation. The rise of Đạo Mẫu religions in late imperial Vietnam was therefore not rooted in the 'superstitiousness' of women — like the scholars portrayed it — but it was directly caused by their exclusion from most orthodox and accepted parts of governmentally recognized religion. The Đạo Mẫu cults with their female following were an expression of feminine religion that counterbalanced male lineages of power.

V.4.3.1. The Traits and Development of Đạo Mẫu

The term Đạo Mẫu was primarily coined in the 1990s to describe the shared beliefs, traditions and rituals of religious movements that centered around mother goddesses and could be traced back to late imperial Vietnam.[1364] Đạo Mẫu is a religious category that includes nature worship, hero- and ancestor veneration as well as shamanic traditions. In the category of Đạo Mẫu, there are three major movements that adhere to this shared religious culture with minor differences from one another. Thánh Mẫu 聖母 is likely the oldest, followed by the (Mẫu) Tam Phủ 三府母 and the slightly younger (Mẫu) Tứ Phủ 四府母.

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1360 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 123 and Roszko 2011, p. 89.

1361 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 58; Roszko 2011, p. 241.

1362 Vo Nghia 2012. "The Vietnamese Cosmos. Introduction." Pos. 70–71.

1363 The original site of this goddess in An Giang Province is also another example for the use of transposed southern stone sculptures and reliefs, in this case, a Shiva statue from the ancient state of Funan, a predecessor to Cambodia.

1364 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, p. 2.

Đạo Mẫu religions claim to have already existed under Chinese occupation and that their faith just faded over the course of the early imperial dynasties, but that the religious practice existed continuously. This narrative is supposed to elevate the age of Đạo Mẫu to create the necessary legitimacy to achieve interpretative privilege over all earlier female-centered cults. Vu and Kiều theorize that Đạo Mẫu may have originated in tree worship[1365] and that it likely developed in the oral lore of scriptless social circles, so its myths and legends would have been written down much later than those of other religions.[1366]

Although it remains uncertain when Đạo Mẫu was established, the available evidence points towards the Later Lê dynasty — the heyday of Confucianization. In that era, Đạo Mẫu became rapidly visible and belonged to the first Vietnamese religious phenomena ever described in detail by Westerners. However, Đạo Mẫu suffered from an elitist bias in research and for a long time, the discussion was whether it could be counted as a full religion at all or if it was 'just' a folk belief.[1367] That bias was possibly derived from the ritualism that is dominant in Đạo Mẫu, since the act of worshiping and the communal rituals are favored over intricate knowledge of the deities' identities,[1368] origins, or their rank in the pantheon. Such knowledge is limited to the mediums, priests and community leaders.

After many former goddesses had been turned into pseudo-historical persons by the end of the fifteenth century, Đạo Mẫu began to redeify them for their own purposes. Tam Phủ and Tứ Phủ developed a more detailed language of goddess worship including a complex ritual system merged with shamanic traditions and Daoist lore. They benefitted from the century-spanning process that had removed female deities from their sites and deleted their names — goddesses were deidentified under ambiguous titles like royal Quốc Mẫu 國母, Vương Mẫu 王母, or the generic and popular (Thánh) Mẫu (聖)母[1369].

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1365 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, pp. 81–82, p. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 20.

1366 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 74.

1367 Cf. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 21.

1368 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, p. 40.

1369 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 45.

Đạo Mẫu claimed them all, which led to a significant expansion of their pantheon and power. Thus, old cults were reinvigorated and with some adjustments able to once again flourish in the Đạo Mẫu network.

Bà Đồng[1370] and Ông Đồng were no longer unaffiliated religious specialists who were hired on demand and occasionally persecuted by the government — they became leaders of small defined groups. In this way, they evolved into a position similar to priests, called Thanh Đồng or Đồng Thầy, who were able to initiate new mediums and led the most important ritual of Đạo Mẫu: the *lên đồng* 登童.[1371] Before doing a ritual, the medium has to purify their body by abstaining from meat and sexual intercourse, something that was common both in Buddhist and Daoist traditions. Although starting with petitions to the Buddha, many practices of Đạo Mẫu were inspired by remnants of Daoism, although Đạo Mẫu adopted its concepts of good and evil from Confucianism.[1372] Đạo Mẫu also accepted some Buddhas, bodhisattvas and Daoist deities. In some variants, the Daoist Jade Emperor is the main deity. Others consider Quan Âm to be their main goddess and degrade the Jade Emperor to a secondary deity, having him appear up to ten different times throughout a temple.[1373]

All of this served as a framework that related to the 'official' religions under which the true Đạo Mẫu pantheon unfolded: Drawing from nature worship, Đạo Mẫu religions claim to focus on the earth, water and heaven as important elements of wet rice culture which allegedly was the basis of Việt culture and which had once elevated the status of women, leading to their deification.[1374]

The three forces are represented both as realms and as 'mothers' with varying appellations, the most common are:

Mẫu Thượng Thiên 上天母, the red-dressed Mother of Heaven, identified with Liễu Hạnh; Mẫu Thoải 水母, the white-dressed Mother of Water[1375] and

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1370 The term is thought to have originated in the Austroasiatic lexicon, referring to wild dancing. It is reflected by several Chinese characters pronounced 'dong', but none directly refer to its meaning. On their nature see: Dror 2007, p. 77.

1371 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, p. 1.

1372 Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2016, p. 963.

1373 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 84.

1374 Cf. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 20, 23.

1375 White was a typical color for water deities in Sichuan as well. Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 226.

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Mẫu Địa Phủ 地府母, the yellow-dressed Mother of the Earth who is occasionally merged with Mẫu Thoải and whose principal temple is a former Thiên Y A Na site[1376] in Huế.

The Tứ Phủ religion added the 'mountains and forests' as a fourth force and Mẫu Thượng Ngàn 上山母 is its green-dressed Mother of the Forest who rules over the dead and was likely inspired by highland traditions. South of Huế, she is sometimes replaced by Mẫu Thượng Phong 上峰母, Mother of the Central Sky (or Summit), responsible for medicine.[1377] In sum, there are five possible Mẫu who represent the most important mother goddesses. Đạo Mẫu movements are free to choose from them to create their three or four mothers. Although they have different names and realms to rule over, three of them are connected to different kinds of water. Those are the Mother of Heaven, who controls clouds, rain, thunder and lightning; the Mother of Water is a dragon descendant who controls oceans, rivers and lakes; and the Mother of the Forest, due to her association with mountains, controls the springs and is sometimes identified with Âu Cơ.

The mothers have a large and indeterminable following. Their entourage starts with varying numbers of sons of the Dragon Kings of the Eight Seas who are represented as five up to ten "Royal Officials" (Ngũ Vị Tôn Quan 五位大官 or Ngũ Vị Tôn Quan 五位尊官).

The Mẫu can further incarnate into four to twelve saintly ladies (Tứ Vị Thánh Bà 四位圣婆). These ladies are used to integrate local deities who 'in truth' are avatars of the mothers; they receive their own altar but lose their original name. On the next lower rank are the five to ten princes (Tứ Vị Vương Tử 五位王子 or Thánh Hoàng 十皇,) also sons of the dragon kings and mostly associated with defenders of the realm, followed by the Twelve Royal Maiden (Thập Nhị Vương Cô 十二王姑 or Thánh Cô).[1378] Finally, there are the Twelve Boys (Thập Nhị Vương Cũu 十二王舅 or Thánh Cậu) who may represent deceased infants or refer to local male deities who are turned into the 'sons' of the Mẫu. Each

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1376 The Hòn Chén temple, see below. Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, p. 44, table 3.1.

1377 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 85.

1378 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, pp. 47, 49–50 and Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 26.

temple shows one of five tigers (Ngũ Hổ 五虎, embodying the elements) and two snakes (Ông Lốt 翁律, usually in the shape of a green and a white cobra). A bureaucratized pantheon like this could only have grown from a Confucianized environment that propagated such intricate systems.[1379]

Although it started out as a female-centric religion for women, men also began to follow Đạo Mẫu. Even though male mediums were less common, they were a useful resource to annex the cult of Trần Hưng Đạo 陳興道 (1228—1300). It venerated the historical general who fought off the Mongols, as well as his family, in the Phủ Trần Triều ['Indigo Realm'].[1380] He became the preferred spirit of male mediums and filled a similar niche to the Heavenly Kings.[1381] Trần Hưng Đạo often appeared in house shrines to expel demons and epidemics, but for women he was meaningful because he defended them against a demonized former river spirit, which was later interpreted as the vengeful ghost of an executed Mongol war prisoner who caused miscarriages.[1382]

V.4.3.2. Đạo Mẫu as an Integrative Movement

Đạo Mẫu showed an extremely powerful integrative draw. It incorporated most local deities that it encountered which led to the extreme size of its pantheon. This pantheon includes a high number of Chinese and Việt deities that do not belong to any category other than being 'subordinate' to the Mẫu and their entourage. The Đạo Mẫu devotees took their religion everywhere and it quickly became visible in the sacred sites of other religions. Many Vietnamese Buddhist temples received a shrine to the Mẫu that enabled women to express their spirituality even during the male-dominated nineteenth century.

Đạo Mẫu started out in the north of Vietnam. Both Tam Phủ and Tứ Phủ were less relevant in central Vietnam, where Đạo Mẫu was represented by Thánh Mẫu or the Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo 皇天仙聖教, a variant endemic

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1379 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 75.

1380 Cf. Hữu Ngọc 2016, pp. 964–65.

1381 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 79. Đạo Mẫu also integrated queer persons by being open to cross-gender possession.

1382 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, pp. 12–14, poses the theory that the river deity was transformed into the general's deity (who originally had fisherman ancestry) by royal appropriation. Also see. Hữu Ngọc et. al. 2016, pp. 101–02 and Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, p. 52.

to the later capital Huế. The most important goddesses of these central area groups were Bà Ngũ Hành 婆五行, Pô Nagar, or Thiên Y A Na, and Buddhist elements were much more pronounced than in the north.

The Đạo Mẫu of the far south differed by focusing more on local and traditional deities who had been turned male in the north — like the Lady of Bronze or the Water Dragon. The southern main mother goddess was represented by the black goddess of the earth whom the Khmer used to venerate.[1383] Taking these small differences into regard, Đạo Mẫu became rapidly transregional. It may have been limited to Vietnam until the twentieth century,[1384] but Đạo Mẫu can still be called a transcultural movement because it followed the Việt settlers south. Thus, many Cham, Khmer, highland minority and even Laotian deities were integrated in more or less recognizable form.

During the later phase of the March to the South, Đạo Mẫu helped the Việt to claim the land spiritually and succeeded in a massive ideology transfer because they never limited their pantheon and otherwise offered very little ideology of its own. Its influence was limited to some deity categories, hierarchies, a certain liturgical language and shared ritual ideas. At the same time, Đạo Mẫu reacted with incorporation and amalgamation to any new input that roughly fitted its mold: deities who were female, popular and *relevant* to the common people. However, even though Đạo Mẫu expanded transregionally, it did not become a *transregional authority* due to its lack of organized institutions. The ever expanding pantheon was the maximum of organization that most Đạo Mẫu variants had. The Đạo Mẫu devotees shared the belief that there was a spiritual world beyond and that certain ritual ceremonies had to be performed out of respect for the spirits, who would then react to them by providing merit and blessings.[1385] These would be mundane compared to the great virtues of Buddhism and Confucianism, but they were much closer to people's daily lives. Aside from religious terms, fairly similar pantheons and the common rituals, Đạo Mẫu knew no dogmas, no obligatory scriptures, no formal institutions,

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1383 Cf. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 26.

1384 Nowadays, there are large Đạo Mẫu communities in the USA.

1385 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, p. 5.

neither communal hierarchies nor moral obligations for the believers.[1386] Due to this, and its costume-practices during spirit possession, Đạo Mẫu was not only attractive for women but also a refuge for marginalized men and queer persons.[1387]

Đạo Mẫu is a religion centered on life, focused upon offering wish-fulfillment options and providing occasions for shared social experiences. Ideas of creation or the afterlife were left for other religions to deal with.[1388] Such a 'division of labor' expressed a certain recognition and acceptance towards the rest of the Vietnamese spiritual landscape.

Some rulers attempted to use Đạo Mẫu to justify their conquests and the suppression of the conquered people. Some even had their ancestors deified and integrated into the pantheon as manifestations of the Mẫu. But the late imperial era was mostly characterized by a Confucian patriarchy in which the government officials took great care to create legal codes that outlawed the spirit summoning practices that were the core of Đạo Mẫu rituals, as well as forbidding certain goddesses or even female ritual activity itself. Shamanism and its Đạo Mẫu continuation were perceived as a threat to centralized government and this idea was still propagated after Vietnam had become a French colony.[1389]

V.4.3.3. The Heterodoxy of Women, Water and Trade

In the seventeenth century, a new powerful goddess appeared who would eventually replace the Mother of Heaven in many Đạo Mẫu variants: Thánh Mẫu Liễu Hạnh 柳杏母神. In 1580, the Mạc dynasty officially recognized Liễu Hạnh as a Mẫu, so Dror deems the year 1557 as the most likely earliest date for Liễu

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1386 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, pp. 41–42.

1387 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 92, 105. Also, in some of the more rural Đạo Mẫu site that I visited in 2018, some of the priests prefer to lead a female lifestyle even outside of ritual duties. For more information, see: Tran Thi Thuy Binh. "Queer Deities of Dao Mau — A Vietnamese Indigenous — And Its Religious Tolerance Toward Gender Diversity". The Twelfth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS 12), Kyoto, August 24—28th 2021. https://doi.org/10.5117/9789048557820/ICAS.2022.083

1388 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, p. 1.

1389 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, p. 5.

Hạnh's cult to occur. One of her narrative lineages refers to the year 1434, but this is based on a document supposedly written by Nguyễn Bính, whose authenticity is very doubtful because it includes too many anachronisms and a date that refers to Gia Long.[1390] Rather, this document refers to a string of legends that developed after Liễu Hạnh's cult had already become important and widespread. The multiple 'incarnations' in the essay *Truyện Kỳ Tân Phả* 傳奇新譜 ['New Assortment of Wondrous Tales'] by the poetess Đoàn Thị Điểm 段氏點 (1705—1749) are meant to make sense of Liễu Hạnh's multiple (and depending on location, widely differing) origin stories. It is the oldest verifiable account of Liễu Hạnh and describes all her four incarnations on earth.[1391] These were: (1) 1434 into a Lý family from Đại An in Khánh Hòa, where she died unmarried at the age of forty; (2) 1557 into a Lê family at Vân Cát village, where she married young, had two children and died without a cause at just 21 years of age. Three years later she returned to visit her family, then traveled for thirty years only to return (3) in 1610 to marry a descendant or the rebirth of her husband and formed another family — a narrative that went against all Confucian ideas of morality! (4) In 1615, she returned with two other female deities and it is told that she punished those men who mistreated women. In reaction to this, her temples were built with willows (Liễu Hạnh), osmanthus and persimmon (her friends) enshrined.[1392]

In the forged 1434 legend, Liễu Hạnh came to earth because she had angered the Jade Emperor by breaking a jade cup and thus had to become a shopkeeper among humans. She did regular business but also supernaturally struck men who abused women with insanity or death. In the Đạo Mẫu narrative, she regularly flees from the unwanted attention of a 'Chinese' prince by turning, like a nymph, into various animals until she finally bewitches him. The king sends for Quan Âm to punish Liễu Hạnh but instead the bodhisattva admonishes him for the prince's misbehavior.[1393] Liễu Hạnh's legends are often full of Buddhist allusions that point to an unsure level of acceptance, like one variant

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1390 Cf. Dror 2007, pp. 60–65.

1391 Cf. Dror 2007, pp. 54, 85–89 and Trần Đại Vinh 2017, p. 11.

1392 Cf. Kiều Thị Vân Anh 2010, p. 87.

1393 Cf. ibid.

that abruptly ends with her devotion to Buddhism and 'becoming good'. But mostly Liễu Hạnh caused death among the men who pursued her, appearing like a vengeful deity who bordered on being malevolent from the perspective of social harmony.[1394]

Liễu Hạnh went against all norms that the elite had imposed and openly denounced the noxious aspects of the rising Confucianization in favor of the commoner woman's lifestyle. Although she ended up in a mother goddess religion, Liễu Hạnh is usually unmotherly: some legends tell how she had children, but did not take care for them. Dror concludes that this made her a more available "female ancestor [who could be worshiped] by anyone."[1395] In the 1615 legend, the Trịnh supposedly tried to exorcise her by destroying her temples, but were then struck by epidemics and had to rebuild them.[1396] This rudimentary story provides no reason for the Trịnh's aggressive measure and it was likely a reinterpretation of what happened to Pô Nagar's temple in Thăng Long decades earlier [V.5.2.]. However, the Trịnh likely did have a reason to oppose Liễu Hạnh, since she was a tutelary deity of their political enemies, the Mạc.

Another account embellishes the enmity in this manner: A school of male pseudo-Buddhist magicians appeared in the early days of Đạo Mẫu development. Their agenda was to heal the sick and hunt down evil spirits, like Buddhist monks had done centuries ago since this was a good tactic to gain popularity. They depicted Liễu Hạnh as a demon who commanded an "army of water and mountain spirits"[1397] which they of course defeated by turning her into a devout nun. This was never acknowledged by other narrative lineages but it shows how Liễu Hạnh's existence challenged the world order of men: "…she eventually turns into what she is supposed to be: a weak and defenseless woman begging the men to spare her humble life.[1398]" Liễu Hạnh was associated with

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1394 Cf. Dror 2007, pp. 49–51.

1395 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 81.

1396 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 88.

1397 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 107.

1398 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 110.

all kinds of 'sinister' motifs, like the snake or the owl.[1399] She was painted as evil because "The more the sublime *mysterium tremendum*[1400] is increased, the more striking is the success of domesticating it."[1401] Dror suggests that this and the former stories refer to literary attempts to reconcile Liễu Hạnh with the male authority of Buddhism. This was all while Đạo Mẫu shrines and Liễu Hạnh icons were so often introduced into Buddhist temples,[1402] that it created another type of the reconfiguration tactic called *tiền Phật hậu Thánh*: the *tiền Phật hậu Mẫu*. This type of placement easily led to decoration, which must have caused a great loss of ideological authority for Buddhism. While Buddhist authors attempted to depower Liễu Hạnh to keep her out, court authors realized they could severely influence her origin stories and tamed them down significantly to turn her into a "divine host to support dynastic rule" and an "extension of royal authority".[1403] However, her legends were also spread in vernacular language and this helped her to evade superscription efforts.

When Đoàn Thị Điểm wrote her essay during the eighteenth century, Liễu Hạnh had already become an extremely popular goddess. Not only did multiple sites recognize her as a city goddess, she also entered the Đình and thus the worship traditions of men. She was so prevalent that missionaries noticed and described this.[1404]

Since women were excluded from most rituals, they organized themselves into social clubs. One of them was dedicated to carrying out female pilgrimages and another was an umbrella organization for the female mediums of Đạo Mẫu. Such clubs were likely the most important carriers of Liễu Hạnh and had a remarkable trait: the high sums of money they would ask for as donations. This related to the fact that Liễu Hạnh is a rare — though in Vietnam not too rare — example for a female commercial goddess. Similar to Guan Yu and Jinlong-

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1399 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 11.

1400 Another term from religious studies coined by Rudolf Otto in *Das Heilige* (1917), this describes an inherent numinosity that evokes a feeling of fear, uneasiness and even terror.

1401 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 111.

1402 Cf. ibid., p. 113.

1403 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 11.

1404 Cf. ibid., p. 61.

sidawang[1405] 金龍四大王 or the Chuanzhu 川主 of Sichuan, her sacred sites were located along the river trading routes of northern Vietnam. Like Dror points out,[1406] merchants and entertainers were the only women on the village level who were able to travel afar and the only ones who could financially sponsor the donations to such clubs. Because Liễu Hạnh herself was 'incarnated' as a business woman in later legends, she consequently became their tutelary deity. Similar to the case of the Pháp Vân Temple, there would be a special market in front of her sites shortly before Liễu Hạnh's annual festival in spring. In lore, people and spirits brought and sold their 'fates' there, but in reality, it was just a grand transregional fair.

But how is Liễu Hạnh related to water deities?

One of her most popular transregional narratives originated in Nghệ An Province. As a missionary reports, Li Liễu Hạnh was drowned in the local river by the people of her own village out of jealousy and after her spirit returned,[1407] a cult developed around it. Her local temple was staffed by two girl attendants, who would be paid off when they left that task.[1408]

Drowning was a traditional way to become a water spirit and the Nghệ An temple was also located close to the river, so this Liễu Hạnh was definitely an original water goddess. Although the Nghệ An legend may be very local, it needed some kind of basis that connected it to the transregional Liễu Hạnh cult. And indeed, her main temple in Vân Cát (in Nam Định Province), which due to the 1557 legend is likely her original temple, used to be a sea gate.[1409] In Vân Cát, Liễu Hạnh was part of a triad with two other goddesses and all of them

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1405 See: Dodgen, Randall "Hydraulic religion: 'great king' cults in the Ming and Qing" *Modern Asian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1999): 815–833.

1406 Cf. Dror 2007, p. 57–59.

1407 Cf. Lewis 2009, p. 585.

1408 Cf. Adriano di St. Thecla's *Opusculum de Sectis apud sinenses et Tunkinenses* cited by Dror 2007, p. 66.

1409 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 206. Sea gates were significant in maritime defense and trade. They served as points of entry and exit for ships and provided access to harbors or coastal settlements. They also played a crucial role in regulating trade, as they were often subject to customs inspections and toll collections.

were connected to water disasters. This is actually an excellent explanation for Liễu Hạnh's sometimes malevolent character.

The legend about her as a reborn goddess who was sent to earth because she broke a heavenly jade cup is another interesting point in this context. Sichuanese lore knows a narrative about a cup that was broken or tipped in Heaven and caused a deluge on earth[1410] — that would be another motif that could connect her to water and disasters. The majority of Liễu Hạnh sites marked strategic positions at rivers and ports along the communication routes that her devotees traveled. Her power over the waterway's commerce greatly facilitated her geographical distribution.[1411] Tạ Chí Đại Trường mused that the expansion south opened Việt culture up for the influx of central Vietnamese sea goddesses and that their spread was what had helped Liễu Hạnh to gain the high position she received:[1412] she became the only female of the Four Immortals of Vietnam.

In sum, Liễu Hạnh expresses an older layer of Việt religion in a new and changed environment. Water deities had been the advocates of women, so Liễu Hạnh's cult bridged the ancient reverence for water goddesses with a new narrative as an 'avenger' of women due to the demands posed by the social circumstances in which her cult developed. Her cult revitalized traditional aspects of Việt feminine religion and adjusted them to persist within the constraints of a Neo-Confucian government keen on imposing its ideology across society. Therefore, Liễu Hạnh represents a reimagined water spirit who became part of a transregional, though not institutionalized, religion.

V.4.3.4. Đạo Mẫu as a Counter Movement

When Confucianism declined again in the eighteenth century, it had already left its marks on society: Women had lost status and respect, politics were habitually unstable and the many wars had exhausted the people. Đạo Mẫu provided services relevant to female livelihoods: the protection of children, the household's wealth and the field's fertility. Đạo Mẫu was where women found prestigious positions as spirit mediums and where they could address their

1410 Cf. Eberhard 1937, p. 86.

1411 Cf. Dror 2007, pp. 70–72.

1412 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 206.

personal suffering and the prejudices conjured by Confucian society.[1413] In the same way, Liễu Hạnh was only 'malevolent' in the sense that she gleefully broke social norms that disadvantaged women. She offered refuge for women in times of war, disaster and from domestic violence, thus becoming the patron of all those vulnerable or unable to fit into a society dominated by Confucian images of maleness.

Neo-Confucianism had brought many hardships to women's lives as it bound them to oppressive social rituals while robbing them of spiritual participation. Đạo Mẫu inversed that by placing women over men, painting the care of mothers as being superior to scholarship, and depicting female deities as the better protectors of the realm due to their motherly instincts. As already noted, the oppression of women was linked to social status: only the upper classes could afford to oppress them, and only upper class men benefited from portraying women as properly subjugated. Commoner Việt women enjoyed a little more leniency until the nineteenth century, so it was easier for female-centric religious practices to survive below the Neo-Confucian eye by condensing into Đạo Mẫu variants.

The painful experience of losing freedom and status was a trauma that connected women during and after the March to the South. Đạo Mẫu welcomed women regardless of their ethnicity, faith or class, alleviating pain and offering purpose. Its integrative power only accelerated over time and finally created a broad network of shared belief that went flying under the radar due to its 'disorganization'. It not only survived late imperial crackdowns but also the European colonization and the communist anti-superstition campaigns. It created a vigorous religion that, by ascertaining that it is a representation of authentic and ancient Việt practices,[1414] presents itself as the new national religion[1415] of contemporary Vietnam. It has become a means of emancipation and a marker of identity for Vietnamese abroad.[1416] In 2016, Đạo Mẫu was added to the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

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1413 Cf. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 21, 28.

1414 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, pp. 70–73.

1415 Cf. Vũ Thị Tú Anh 2015, pp. 5–6.

1416 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, pp. 77–168.

V.4.3.5. The Effects of Đạo Mẫu on Hydrolatric Sites

Although Đạo Mẫu devotees may not know the rank, origin or even the name of a deity, roughly half of the absorbed entities in the Đạo Mẫu religion have their own principal temples throughout Vietnam. Further, Đạo Mẫu sometimes shows traits of revelation cults and in accordance with that, sub-temples are often built wherever a deity was thought to have 'acted'.[1417] This was enormously helpful for its dissemination.

Đạo Mẫu's mediative approach worked like a sponge, drawing in the dispersed cults of surviving once powerful deities. Those profited from an enhanced network and new devotees who helped to keep their narratives alive. If late imperial Đạo Mẫu was remotely as interested in proselytizing as its contemporary incarnation is, then the visual pressure on the absorbed sacred sites was intense. It would mean that the money of local communities was more likely to be invested into new Đạo Mẫu structures than into restoring the local deity's shrine. But even in regard to such internal struggles for dominion, joining the Đạo Mẫu raised the chances of survival significantly, especially for water deities that easily floated on Đạo Mẫu narratives due to the gender preference. A female deity could become an incarnation of a Mẫu while a male deity could only become a subordinate son or general.

Although Đạo Mẫu had some basic requirements regarding the depiction of shrines and deities, it was very adaptive. The Mẫu and deities might be presented as spirit tablets, icons, or objects dressed with costumes in the suitable colors. Their dominance was enforced by ritual practice and the change of content, but the typical structural reconfiguration tactics were restricted to insertion. Hosting a single shrine to the mothers was enough to be considered a Đạo Mẫu temple, this offered opportunities for decoration. Sites of hydrolatry were preserved by presenting themselves as Đạo Mẫu temples and their cults often got away with only minuscule interventions and without committing to the Đạo Mẫu ritual tradition. If local interest in Đạo Mẫu activity was low, temples like that could continue a constant state of decoration. However, if disciples of Đạo Mẫu indeed interacted with the site, then additional reconfigurations of representation would occur. This turned many sites into religious hybrids,

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1417 Cf. Fjelstad, Karen and Nguyễn Thị Hiền 2011, pp. 43, 54.

expressed by an apposition of prefixes like *đền chùa mẫu* — a general *and* Buddhist *and* a mother's temple — or *mẫu miếu,* a mother's temple on the site of a hero- or ancestor temple. Many different sacred sites were condensed to form overlapping polysemous *and* multilocal sites that shared the same name and were only further categorized by their prefixes. They showed different kinds of reconfigurations in an immensely complex network of inter-site relationships, which will be investigated more thoroughly in a separate article on the Tam Giang temple network of Phú Thọ Province.

In conclusion, Đạo Mẫu represents a separation of feminine religion from the male-centric religion as it was transregionally presented in Vietnam. It created a reservoir for heterodox deities and enabled their cults to survive more or less effectively beyond the access of transregional religious politics. The porousness of Đạo Mẫu movements turned them into valid tools of local identity preservation. In the short term, the umbrella of Đạo Mẫu enabled local cults to protect their central deities by creating decorations. However, if the Đạo Mẫu community genuinely sought to participate at the site, inviting them always posed the long-term risk of losing the original identity. In general, Đạo Mẫu demonstrates that a transregional religion does not necessarily turn into a transregional authority, but this might already be changing in contemporary Vietnam. Additionally, Đạo Mẫu played an important role for the integration of southern ethnic deities and for the creation of hybrid interpretations of them. In this manner, Đạo Mẫu provided the non-governmental coalescence necessary for the level of ideological transfer required to make the Việt territorial expansion to the south a success. Since the cultural integration of the multi-ethnic south was a major headache for late imperial Đại Việt, the next two case studies treat governmental ideas meant to solve this problem.

V.5.   Transcendental Representatives of the Empire

Several features made water deities particularly relevant to Vietnam's late imperial state cult. This appendix shows how being imperially relevant influenced their survival, identity, and dissemination by examining two examples that ultimately failed to fulfill their intended functions in Vietnam.

The category of territorial deities evolved whenever humans settled down and developed a religious connection to their direct environment. They express the spiritual idea of locality and their function is to defend their territory from evil and enemies. In Vietnam, they are thus typically venerated in the communal house (*đình* 庭) in the village center.

In the process of growing from settlements to cities and regions and of local authorities expanding their territories until they became transregional and covered countries and empires, the responsibilities of territorial deities constantly increased.

Territorial deities started out as the embodiments of the local environment. They were imagined as potentially harmful spirits who had to be appeased with sacrifices in exchange for the guarantee of human safety. Over time, the territorial deities progressively transformed into self-motivated guardians who had to fight all real and perceived foreign threats. They had to battle the spiritual representatives and armies of other cultures, to prevent natural catastrophes and to end epidemics. Their most important duty was to protect their own people and this made them the protectors of the realm. The scope of their responsibilities is what differentiates protectors of the realm from ordinary tutelary deities: only the most powerful nature deities and the most skilled military subjects were deemed capable of providing protection for the entire empire.[1418]

There were countless military deities and deified military heroes who continued their jobs from a 'former' life by thwarting invasions. Nature deities were more preoccupied with the well-being of the people but could occasionally repel enemy armies by sending appropriate natural disasters their way. However, all protectors of the realm were regarded as imperial representatives and due to this status, they had to fit the moral ideas of the government. In Neo-Confucian late imperial Vietnam, nature deities were subjected to an especially thorough cleanup of their personalities and origins. Like the superheroes of the twentieth century, protectors of the realm were flagships of the government with meticulously crafted images that reflected contemporary views and often differed significantly from their original contexts. Occasionally, this led to ritual splits between the protector of the realm personality and their local variant (see

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1418 Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 56.

transposition, <u>royal displacement</u>). However, the governmental adoption of a deity into the state cult did not always produce the desired results. The following pages treat one pre-expansion and one post-expansion non-Buddhist deity who respectively became relevant during the era of two realms due to their translocal potential and their abilities to incorporate various local expressions of religion. However, for different reasons they failed to turn transregional.[1419]

V.5.1.   Zhenwu — a Failed Consolidating Deity in Đàng Ngoài

The Trịnh lords who governed the northern one of the two realms (1627—1777) did not have to lead expansion wars with their neighbors. The realm was already established and its borders mostly defined. Cultural challenges occurred from two directions. One was the Han Chinese who constantly migrated southwards into Đàng Ngoài. The other were the northern Vietnamese and southern Chinese highland ethnic groups who repeatedly tried to wrangle border territory for themselves from Việt hands.[1420] The latter culminated in the Tây Sơn uprising. The Trịnh were initially most interested in deities who were able to consolidate heterogeneous and/or foreign-ethnic sites to lead their adherents towards the Trịnh's idea of Việt culture. But facing the Chinese giant to the north and the more and more frequent contacts to European forces, the factor of protection became more relevant to them.

A Transcultural State Cult

Considering the typical occupations of territorial deities, one may be led to assume that a deity who is at the center of a state cult would be certainly specific to that state. However, this is not necessarily the case and raises the unpleasant question of who would be protected by a deity shared by two warring states. Such a question would be difficult enough to answer concerning a monotheistic religion. It becomes even more peculiar if two polytheistic cultures are

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1419 A 'transregional' cult status describes deities whose cult spread far beyond their region of origin with or without governmental attention. 'Translocal', in reference to cult status, means that the cult center of a deity has been moved, the deity transposed or displaced, or multiple cult sites were created but without a relevant distribution beyond the deity's place of origin.

1420 For more details, see: Davis, Bradley Camp. *Imperial Bandits. Outlaws and Rebels in the China-Vietnam Borderlands*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.

involved, who would have more than enough potential candidates at their disposal to avoid choosing the same transcendental representative. But this is exactly what happened to the deity Zhenwu 真武. His case is especially intriguing because he was *not* one of the deities brought to Vietnam during the first Chinese occupation.

Although many aspects of his intensely amalgamated origin are unclear, Zhenwu must have evolved from an ancient entity named Xuanwu 玄武.[1421] According to the Wuxing 五行 theory, Xuanwu was the deity of the north who ruled over wind and rain. Originally nondescript, he was symbolized by a tortoise-snake hybrid. In the Sui-Tang dynasties, Xuanwu became part of the Daoist *sisheng zhenjun* 四聖真君 ['Four Holy Perfect Lords'] and took on a new humanoid shape.[1422] From then on, he became transregional and started to appear in numerous popular and Daoist sites. In 1012, he received several imperial titles and due to an imperial taboo, his name was changed to Zhenwu.[1423] Daoist influence provided him with a new hagiography and fitting iconography, which depicted him with his foot placed atop of his former embodiments — snake and tortoise — since was reinterpreted as a pseudo-historical noble who exorcised demons.[1424] Buddhist influence generated another hagiography in which Zhenwu was a former butcher who was converted to Buddhism by the Bodhisattva Guanyin.[1425] With the support of two transregional religious authorities, Zhenwu turned into a protector of the realm against enemies from the north.[1426] Confucian literati supported the efforts of the Daoist clergy with

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1421 Xuanwu appears in the documents of ancient China and southern ethnicities mostly in the context of star veneration and was later grouped into the Sifang 四方 system, where Xuanwu became the black deity of the north.

1422 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 64.

1423 Cf. Chao 2002, p. 27.

1424 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 66–7.

1425 Cf. Chao 2002, pp. 269–70.

1426 Cf. Theobald, Ulrich "Zhenwu dadi 真武大帝, the Martial or Black Emperor" ChinaKnowledge.de — An Encyclopaedia on Chinese History, Literature and Art. August 10, 2013. Accessed 09 January 2021. http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Religion/personszhenwudadi.html

favorable publications that focused on his role as a defender.[1427] Slowly, the protector role overwrote other ritualistic associations.

Daoism used Zhenwu to claim multiple sacred sites south of the Yangzi, which at the same time saved these sites from governmental repression.[1428] He turned into a reliable consolidating deity with the additional feature that he also secured the southern borders.[1429] Although Zhenwu originated as a deity of the knowledge elite, his popularity grew the most among soldiers and merchants. In the south, his description aligned with the southern Chinese spirit mediums,[1430] so his cult transferred quite easily to the village level Zhenwu's imperial usage during the Song dynasty was based on his first imperially sponsored temple built in Kaifeng, the Xiangyuan-guan 祥源觀 ['Temple of the Auspicious Spring'].[1431] It was created after the mysterious appearance of a snake and tortoise in a military camp in 1017, which caused a spring with healing powers to erupt. Renamed as Liquan-guan 醴泉觀 ['Temple of the Sweet Spring'] (1055—1127), this site became a center of state religious activities connected to him. Zhenwu's birthday became a state holiday, celebrated by everyone, from the emperors to the commoners. It just so happened to be the third day of the third month (*shangsi* 上巳), a day traditionally associated with a hydrolatric festival since pre-Han times.[1432] Laypeople started to sponsor new shrines and temples and emperors even offered up their residences to him.[1433]

After the Mongol conquest, the rulers accepted him as a protective deity into their imperial cult. When the Yuan dynasty changed the capital and sacrificed to the local river deities (to avoid flooding), a snake and turtle appeared and the empress identified them as Zhenwu, so a new temple was built. Daoist

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1427 Cf. Chao 2002, p. 33.

1428 Like the destruction of 1038 shrines in the year 1111, cf. Chao 2002, p. 31, 46, 62.

1429 Cf. Davis 2001, p. 76.

1430 Cf. ibid., p. 77.

1431 The first independent Zhenwu temple was likely located in southern Sichuan and built in the same century. However, it was not well cared for and later merged with a Buddhist monastery. This was a cohabitation, because Zhenwu's shrine remained under solely Daoist administration. Cf. Chao 2002, pp. 28–29.

1432 Cf. Chao 2002, p. 240.

1433 Cf. Chao 2002, pp. 30, 44, 58–59, 65.

priests were put under governmental protection and Mt. Wudang turned into Zhenwu's most important cult center. The Ming continued the patronage of Zhenwu, especially since he became the tutelary deity of the Yongle Emperor — who employed multiple traditional deities and legends to cover up the legitimacy issues resulting from his usurpation of the throne.[1434] Since then, it became customary for the Ming state cult that emperors sacrificed to Zhenwu after ascending the throne: this raised the population's perception of him.[1435] New scriptures were published to enhance his imperial meaning and his connection to Mt. Wudang. In 1412, Yongle renovated and expanded the sanctuary of the site massively.[1436]

Zhenwu now wielded transregional authority of both religious and political nature. He was a major deity who commanded countless spiritual generals and officials. However, this elevation came at the cost of being stripped of his aquatic symbols. Tortoise and snake vanished in favor of golden boys and jade maidens (*jintong yunü* 金童玉女). His origin was changed as well. It was now alleged that the auspicious spring only erupted *after* a Zhenwu hall had been built at the site.[1437] His connection to the well at the heart of the Mt. Wudang sanctuary was forgotten as well.

In late imperial central China, Zhenwu could not be classified as a water deity, but this was different in southern China. His temples were preferably placed close to water convergences and in Guangdong he became known by his epithet Pak Tai 北帝 ['Sovereign of the North'] — the northern Polar Star that was indispensable for naval navigation. As a patron of seafaring people, a second center of his cult developed during the Ming dynasty in a Guangzhou township named Foshan 佛山. It was located close to a water route that led to the town's economic rise. In local narratives, Zhenwu appears as a powerful storm deity.[1438]

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1434 Cf. Chan 2008, pp. 48–54, 173–99.

1435 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 65 and Chao 2002, p. 63.

1436 Cf. Davis 2001, p. 76 and Chao 2002, pp. 74–75.

1437 Cf. Chao 2002, p. 61.

1438 Cf. Chao 2002, pp. 216, 229.

Huang Fei's case study of an azure dragon temple of Dongchuan 東川, in Yunnan (and parts of modern Sichuan)[1439] proved that Zhenwu was used to occupy unrelated sites of hydrolatry even when he was presented in his role as protector of the realm. Huang relates the development of <u>cohabitation</u> after his icon mysteriously appeared in an ancient well:

> […] before it was destroyed the Azure Dragon Temple had consisted of a compound with three main halls in which several statues of Buddha and Zhenwu had been erected. Each year the local people attended the temple festival on the third day of the third month and worshiped a different deity, each according to his or her own beliefs. Apart from these religious statues, there was another location related to the Dragon Cult situated on the western side of the compound. However, the Dragon Cult had neither statues nor buildings, its center was a cave in which a spring whose waters flowed through the compound had its source.[1440]

The initial cohabitation eventually turned into attempted <u>superscription</u>: the indigenous population venerated the local dragon deity for fertility, but narratives of waterlocked dragons were used to demonstrate the superiority of Daoism, who acted here in the service of imperial control. Zhenwu had thus turned into a stand-in for the imperial expansion into the border regions.

From the north to the south, a star deity turned from demolishing demons to thwarting foreign invaders by becoming a protector of the realm and into consolidating non-Han cults in the south. His moonlighting as a water deity can be explained with the watery aspect being a facilitating factor for his acceptance by the locals.

Zhenwu in Vietnam

In Vietnam, Zhenwu is known as Trấn Vũ. He mostly assumed the same roles as in southern China: a militaristic deity, protector of the realm, lord over the water creatures and sometimes a maritime deity who commanded the dragon

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1439 Cf. Huang 2018, pp. 85–95.

1440 Cf. Huang 2018, p. 95. This is a similar setting for dragon sites in Sichuan as well.

lords. Xuanwu (Viet. Huyền Vũ) continued to exist in Vietnam as a separate deity who had to serve him, but he kept his own iconography as a sacred animal of the north. Parallel to China, Trấn Vũ became a tutelary deity of the realm during the eleventh century, when a legend of Lạc Long Quân was transferred to him.[1441] It fitted both his role as an exorcist but also kept the water element. It was thus Trấn Vũ who saved the Red River Delta from a monstrous nine-tailed fox and subsequently created the West Lake.

Keith W. Taylor interprets the fact that Lý Thánh Tông turned Trấn Vũ into one of Thăng Long's city gods as an act of claiming the 'hero of the enemy', which was intended to fortify his rule against Song China.[1442] However, after the war with the Chinese was laid to rest, he was not even deemed important enough to keep his temple in the capital's set-up after it was restructured.

Again, parallel to China, Trấn Vũ only reappeared when Emperor Lê Tương Dực 黎襄翼 (r. 1510—1516) reestablished a Trấn Vũ temple in 1514. The quán Trấn Vũ 真武觀 or đền Quán Thánh 全聖殿was in reality a Daoist-Buddhist monastery that occasionally switched completely to Buddhism.[1443] The Việt emperors were more than willing to accept the tutelary deity of the Chinese, who recently had subjected their realm once again. This was possibly an act of reassignment, just like Taylor suspected for the eleventh century era.

The Việt emperors took advantage of his power over water but it is unclear what importance Trấn Vũ possessed in military terms. The emperors were rather inspired by his usefulness in consolidating 'heterodox' cults and attempted to use him in the same way. This attempt failed because due to his location in a Daoist-Buddhist site, the Confucian scholars did not accept him and — as far as available sources allow to determine — withheld their support, which aborted any attempt at transregional extension. However, there is evidence that the imperial household used the site to pray for rain during droughts.[1444]

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1441 Cf. Kelley 2015b, pp. 175–76.

1442 Cf. Taylor 1976, p. 180.

1443 Cf. Gu Lezhen 1995, p. 174; Xu Yongzhang 2002, p. 103; Lê Thành Khôi 1969, p. 233–34.

1444 Cf. Department of Culture and Information. "Đền Quán Thánh- Trấn Bắc thành Thăng Long." Ba Đình District — Hà Nội City. October 7 2020. Accessed January 11, 2021. https://badinh.hanoi.gov.vn/di-tich-danh-thang/-/view_content/5814698-den-quan-thanh-tran-bac-thanh-thang-long.html#

In the quán Trấn Vũ's years between 1618 and 1941, the temple saw the most repairs during the nineteenth century, before the French destroyed it in 1947.[1445] These nineteenth century repairs included huge expansions that pointed towards a raised significance of the cult during this era. However, is peculiar that the repairs to this site were in general not conducted after dynastic changes or throne ascensions (as would be typical), except for that of Trịnh Tạc 鄭柞 (1606—1686), one of the most successful Trịnh lords. After peace negotiations with the Nguyễn lords, he initiated the expansion of the site in 1677 and provided the still existing main icon, which is an <u>amalgamation</u> of the different religious influences on the site: this Trấn Vũ has full hair, but he is barefoot and wears a monk's robe. His left hand forms a mudra while the right is ready to grab his sword. To his feet are a snake and turtle, but they are free and climb up his sword.

The waves of Zhenwu/Trấn Vũ popularity occurred in parallel between China and Vietnam, but while Zhenwu was very successfully communicated to the commoner sphere in China, in Vietnam he remained confined to the imperial elite. Although Zhenwu's cult can thus be considered transcultural, it failed to turn transregional in Vietnam. It was limited to the northern capital's area and even there, commoners were not interested in him. One reason for that might be that the religious niches he represented were already occupied by other deities. There were more than enough water deities to choose from, plenty of spirit mediums who exorcised demons, and even the patronage of the military and the annual blood oath ceremony were already covered by Đồng Cổ. Trấn Vũ was hence a transplanted deity who did not have much to do in Đại Việt and therefore was unable to gain relevance.

V.5.2.   Consolidating Cultural Identities in Đàng Trong

In contrast to the Trịnh, the Nguyễn did not have to fear so much that their neighbors might plan a takeover as much as they themselves wanted to take over their neighbors. According to Taylor, Vietnamese historians prefer narratives of unity and resistance[1446] and therefore did not pay too much attention

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1445   The contemporary site in Hanoi is a full restoration that was carried out in 2014.
1446   Cf. Taylor 1993, p. 45.

to Nguyễn Hoàng and the early Nguyễn lords. However, the early Đàng Trong era played an important role in the consolidation of a pluralistic realm that provided the unity needed for the Nguyễn's own future dynasty. Their subtle religious policy created the fertile ground for future ideas of national identity and due to that, their importance for modern Vietnamese history cannot be underestimated.

The *Đại Nam Thực Lục* mentions how, when Nguyễn Hoàng was under attack by the Mạc, he received help from a female water spirit.[1447] The story plays in 1572, at Ái Tử 爱子, when Nguyễn Hoàng found a spot at the local river that was close to his military camp and made[1448] an unusual sound. Given the historical assistance that Việt rulers had received from water spirits in the past, he prayed for their aid in defeating the enemy, just in case. Soon after, he had a dream in which a woman dressed in green appeared to him. In this context, this was not too surprising, but the goddess request was quite unexpected. It was an old war tactic about sending beautiful women as a distraction to the enemy camp. One palace lady became the agent of the water goddess and lured the enemy army towards the numinous spot, where they were massacred by the Nguyễn army. Afterwards, Nguyễn Hoàng built a temple and instituted the formal worship of her.[1449] And duly he had to, because this water goddess was his golden turtle, his yellow dragon, it was the marker of rightful rule and the founding of dynasties. Having received supernatural aid from an aquatic patron emphasized his level of virtue and his independence from the north. This beneficial experience likely prompted Nguyễn Hoàng to further 'collect' female water spirits.[1450]

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1447 Cf. *Đại Nam Thực Lục Tiền Biên* 1844. 1:10a–12b.

1448 Various natural phenomena can cause the combination of rivers, mountains and cliffs to create murmuring, mumbling or even singing sounds. These places have often provoked ideas of numinosity in humans all over the world. For example, such murmuring made people think magical gnomes lived at a curve of the German river Rhine. This idea again caused the development of the literary sorceress Lorelei from the hand of Clemens Brentanos (1778—1842), later popularized by the poem of Heinrich Heine.

1449 Cf. Taylor 1986, pp. 156–69, which cites similar cases of a ruler taking interest in a scenic spot and calling for possible spiritual assistance — if the help was given, a temple was erected.

1450 Cf. Taylor 1993, p. 49 and Li Tana 2018, p. 105.

When the Nguyễn lords of Đàng Trong moved southwards, they integrated former territories of Champa. Some of them had already been under Việt control for centuries, while others in the vicinity of the remaining Cham city states had only recently been subjected. Đàng Trong thus represented a landscape of sliding Vietnameseness, but to unite the people, the Nguyễn needed to take care of all worldly and spiritual needs. However, the environmental conditions were not the best for the expansion of their influence. "The war-torn period 1570—1670 […] saw nine of the forty driest years recorded between 1250 and 2008. The second half of the sixteenth century alone included fourteen years of poor crops.[1451]" In the way Ben Kiernan describes the conditions of the era, it is not hard to imagine why the Nguyễn preferably adopted (mostly female) spirits of water and the local territory into their proto-imperial pantheon.[1452]

Just like in the north, women in the former Cham territories dominated trade and their wealth enabled them to have relations with the men they fancied.[1453] Only in the northern parts of Đàng Trong did Việt settlers represent the dominant culture and no laws against inter-cultural marriage were able to prevent hybridization, because the northern traditions were too difficult to maintain after the separation of the realm had cut off constant communication with the Red River Delta. Even further south, the Việt and Cham remained separated, because the Việt neither had the manpower to culturally dominate the Cham nor did they want to be subjected to the special laws that Cham settlements were burdened with.

In ancient times, the Chinese had pried the land out of matrilineal ownership by marriage policies. However, that tactic did not work under these circumstances, so the Việt had to start ruling over relevant female deities to create points of mutual identification. If the Việt wanted to claim the land, they needed to prove that they commanded the deities of the realm, just like Chinese and Sino-Việt officials and even some Việt emperors had been obliged to negotiate with territorial spirits. To assert their power even in the most remote areas of their territory, the Nguyễn needed to *control* the waterways and coast

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1451 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 223.

1452 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 226.

1453 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 235.

not only by spiritually providing prosperity with punctual rainfall as evoked by rituals, but also commercially by managing river and sea traffic under the protection of suitable water deities. However, if they also wanted to integrate the Cham in order to stabilize their cultural dominance and keep peace, then the Nguyễn needed to prove that the Cham deities supported them just as much as — or even more than — their own previous kings.

A Việt Goddess Made of Cham Stone

Thái Dương Phu Nhân 邰陽夫人 is a deity with translocal status. She is known in Quảng Trị, Quảng Nam, but mostly in Thừa Thiên-Huế. Although her name reflects the sun and should be associated with good weather, she was usually worshiped to end droughts and as a patron of certain rivers.[1454] Her oldest known account is about her most well-known temple in Thái Dương 邰陽 village in Huế. Yet, there is another miếu Thái Dương Thần Nữ 邰陽神女廟 in Câu Nhi which may be slightly older.

The identity of Thái Dương Phu Nhân is a bit complex. She is first mentioned in the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* 烏州近錄 of 1553,[1455] the oldest known gazetteer of Vietnam written by Dương Văn An 楊文安 (1514—1591).[1456] It recounts a story that superficially appears to be quite Vietnamese but there is a controversial feature. Therefore, it was taken from an Unofficial History (*dã sử* 野史) and had to be checked by the Ministry of Rite's regulations (*Hội Điển* 會典).

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1454 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng and Tôn Nữ Khánh Trang 2016, pp. 55–56.

1455 There are no known complete editions, but the most extensive is A.263 at Han Nôm Institute of Hanoi, it only misses the first two volumes. It is not clear how extensive the first two books were. Possibly, they were only introductions, since book 3 starts with the maps and geography that gazetteers usually begin with. This version is dated to the 20th of October 1910, compiled from two older text versions. The Social Science Publishing House first translated it into Vietnamese in 1997. However, the translation by Nguyễn Khắc Thuần from 2009 is of better quality and provides a facsimile of the A.263 text as it is stored in the Han Nôm Institute.

1456 Dương came from Quảng Bình province, north of Huế. Not much is known about this state official other than that he graduated as a *tiến sĩ* 博士 in 1547, which means he received a Neo-Confucian education. He wrote the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* when he was revisiting his hometown and based it on older publications of two compatriots, which he corrected and expanded on. After his death, he received imperial honorary titles. Cf. Nguyễn Khắc Thuần 2009, p. 9–12.

The site of the temple is identified as Thai Dương village, in Hương Trà (formerly Kim Trà) district. When the story was collected, it was already told "according to tradition" that there was a brother and sister who lived at the river in dire poverty. In an argument, the brother struck his little sister with a knife and left a mark on her forehead. He went to another country, where he became a rich merchant of a seagoing vessel. By fate, both met again, married, and since he loved her very much, she soon became pregnant, still unaware that they were siblings. One day, he looked at her closely and noticed the mark. Inquiring about it, he grew terrified but could not tell her. So, at night, he left her one half of his gold and secretly took a ferry away. Missing him every day, she died at the shore and the fetus inside her turned into stone. One day, when a fisherman from a coastal village went out at night, he rested his head on that stone and immediately dreamed about a woman who whisked his hand away, telling him to not violate her womb. The fisherman, believing in a miracle, said that if she was an efficacious spirit at all, he would catch many fish that very night — and his wish was fulfilled. He then set up a shrine for her and none of his prayers were ever not responded to. It is said that every winter, a young woman was sacrificed, but out of respect for life, this custom was later changed to a red-horned buffalo offering. During the winter sacrifice, one person would represent the descended deity and be called Ba Dương 婆陽.[1457] "Now," the author of the text tells us, "[Every year] in the fourth or fifth month, there comes a strong wind that is called 'Welcoming the Husband Back to One's Country.'"[1458]

At the beginning, the siblings are identified as locals. But which ethnic group does 'local' refer to? On the one hand, the narrative itself fits a Việt miracle story like other miracle stories that occur in Chinese areas. The trope of the woman who waits for her husband to return in vain and eventually petrifies is known throughout the world, Asian examples can be found from Japan to Tibet.[1459] Indeed, there seems to be a narrative almost identical to the first

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1457 This is normally a phonetic rendering of Pô Nagar.

1458 年四月五間颶風大作[_] "迎夫之歸本國" 也. Cf. *Ô Châu Cận Lục* 5:52b–54a. My translation from Chinese text.

1459 For example, similar narratives exist for the Sha Tin of Amah Rock in Hong Kong; for the sixth-century woman Matsura Sayohime at Hizen, Japan; and for Mangbuseok 望夫石 at Chisul Mountain Pass. The Tibetan fairy tale *Qingwa Qishou* 青蛙骑手 "The Frog Rider",

part of the tale which belongs to a numinous site at Núi Vọng Phu ['Waiting Woman Mountain'] in Lạng Sơn, which is close to the Chinese-Vietnamese border.[1460] However, it does not fit with the second part of the tale about the fisherman or the custom of human sacrifice. In the antiquity of China and Vietnam, young women were customarily sacrificed to water deities and many stories contain reminders of that, as well as how the people (often through outside force) gave the practice up.[1461] Indeed, the Cham knew that kind of human sacrifice as well.[1462]

The legend mentions that the husband-brother went to another country to become a wealthy maritime merchant, and in connection to that the last passage is highly interesting: the strong wind of the fourth to fifth month refers to the Southwestern Monsoon, the monsoon that not only brings rainstorms, but which was also used by the Indian merchants of antiquity.[1463] Thereby, the legend may express the sentiment of countless women during the first centuries of the common era, who married merchants and had to wait up to a year for them to return with the monsoon, if they ever did. The customs described in the latter half of the entry may therefore point to an older variant of the tale, while the first part is a Việt legend that was translated from the northern areas. As all parts of Vietnam received the attention of Indian merchants in antiquity, it is unclear if the legend refers to a Việt or to a Vietnamized Cham entity.

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a Frog Prince tale (AT 440), also features this trope. Similar stories are found at Mount Kinabalu in Borneo, Malaysia, where the wife of a Chinese Prince dies while waiting for him; and existed in Ancient Greece when Niobe was turned into a weeping stone at Mount Sipylus, Manisa, modern Turkey. In Yoruba culture, ancestors could turn into stone to become Orishas (godspirits), some legends about the water goddess Oshun relate to this. The Great Stone Mother of the Paiute People in North America waited in vain for her children (humans) to stop fighting. La Piedra del Perro "The Dog's Stone" at Fortin de San Gerónimo del Boquerón in Puerto Rico featured this trope with a dog (it was destroyed in 2016). Waiting husbands also exist, but they are comparatively rare. This trope remains popular in modern pop culture.

1460   TheGioiCoTich.Vn "Truyện sự tích nàng Tô Thị" https://thegioicotich.vn/su-tich-hon-vong-phu-hay-cau-chuyen-nang-to-thi/ (Accessed 17 April 2021).

1461   Cf. Eberhard 1937, p. 141.

1462   Cf. Bremmer 2007, pp. 180–83.

1463   Cf. Nguyễn Tài Thư 2008, p. 9.

This is vastly different in the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí,* the geographical record of the Nguyễn dynasty (originally published in 1882). It contains two accounts that likely refer to the same objects, although they were not consciously put into connection when the texts were written down during the Nguyễn dynasty. Both show that they take inspiration from the ~1553 tale but ignore the incestuous legend. The first account is titled *Thái Dương Phu Nhân Từ* 邰陽夫人祠 and treats the shrine of Hương Trà district in Huế. It records that the goddess received sacrifices during the second months of spring and autumn and relates: A fisherman named Bố 布 was stuck in a storm at the estuary until at midnight when he found a strange stone (*kỳ thạch* 奇石) at the shore. Rubbing it, he lost consciousness and met a *young* imperial lady who introduced herself as Thái Dương Phu Nhân. She was appalled by his lack of respect to her and scolded him. As he awoke, he asked the goddess for a favor as well, which was granted. Thus, he built a reed shrine at the river ford.

As the numinous stone became famous, a Japanese merchant ship anchored at the shore. Passing the stone, the Japanese said to each other: "This is unpolished jade!"[1464] They tried to break it apart but those carrying the hatchets fell down and presumably died. In the morning, they carried the stone to their ship and although the sea was calm, the ship suddenly started to sink and capsized. No man survived and everyone witnessing these events was astonished when a "spirit box" appeared.[1465] This legend is assumed to play in the early southern days of the Nguyễn warlords, which would fit in with their rising maritime trade with Japan. Đào Thái Hành (1870—1916) [1466] adds: By 1800, the temple, located behind an old fisher village, was already considered ancient. Between 1636—1648, as the sea transport to the capital had been difficult, the court [of Nguyễn Phúc Lan] thus sent a delegation to do the *cầu đảo* rain ritual in her temple, afterwards Thái Dương Phu Nhân was granted a title. This was when she entered the sacrificial register and received state level sacrifices.

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1464 "日本商船泊江濱, 經過祠所見其石, 相謂曰: 璞玉也." *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, p. 235 (Vol. 2, 40b: 7–8).

1465 Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, pp. 234–35 (Vol. 2, 40a–b).

1466 A French interpreter, secretary of the imperial council and starting in 1915, governor of Quảng Trị.

In August 1883, the temple was destroyed, the icon burned and thrown into the river — this supports Strang's theory that colonialists oppress water cults of the people they intend to rule. However, General Alexandre-Eugène Bouët (1833—1887) fled because his troops became terrified of something nondescript. Afterwards, the locals dived for the leftovers of the stone and brought them back in a 'coffin'. In 1897, the temple was destroyed again by a flood. Although the temple was ordered to be moved, it was rebuilt in place.[1467]

This account contains some elements we have become familiar with: The unwillingness of sacred objects to let themselves be robbed appears in the legends of Pháp Vân and Mỵ Châu, the killing of those trying to move them also features in the legend of Man Nương. The legend regarding General Bouët is likely a reapplication of the older Japanese merchant legend, which was meant to give the tale new power and the locals some strength in the dire colonization process by the French.

Next to the previous entry, the DNNTC records the story of the Kỳ Thạch Phu Nhân Shrine 奇石夫人祠 of Thanh Phước village. It also tells the story of a fisherman who at night encountered an *old* woman by dream revelation, after heavy stones had blocked his net. This woman acted amiably and told him that if he would take her to the shore, she would help him in return. With companions, the man retrieved two large stones from the river that resembled a big seated lady. On her blueish-white face was an inscription, but her body was that of a beast with twenty hands and four legs. After recognizing the divine object, the men constructed a reed shrine and sacrificed to it. From then on, all fishermen had much better catches and the site became famous.[1468] In the early Nguyễn dynasty she received a simple title[1469] and whenever there was a *cầu đảo* — the imperially sanctioned kind of rainmaking ritual — the rain was granted.

Stones were particularly related to the feminine principle and to rainmaking in central Vietnam,[1470] therefore it is not surprising that such a strange find

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1467 Cf. Đào Thái Hành 1914, pp. 243–49.
1468 Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, p. 236 (Vol. 2, 41a).
1469 Kỳ Thạch Phu Nhân Chi Thần 奇石夫人之神 "The Goddes of Kỳ Thạch".
1470 Cf. Dyt 2015, p. 13.

made even officials believe in its efficacy. The entry of the DNNTC continues: In a year of great drought, when it did not rain for ten days, there was the order to move both stones into the river. At night, a great storm erupted and the next day, one of the stones was missing. The leftover stone was returned to the shrine for thanksgiving and it still existed at the time the account was written. The description of multiple limbs and animal traits proves that the men in the tale had discovered a sculpture or relief of the Cham culture.

It was not unheard of that even in the north of Vietnam Cham reliefs were found — usually at the coast — and reinterpreted in a Việt context[1471] — Mỹ Châu was just another example for that.[1472] Now, Thanh Phước village is located roughly two kilometers upriver from Thái Dương village. The stones are described as blueish-white, which could have made the Japanese in Thái Dương think that the strange stone was jade. As the story of the storm is not necessarily chronologically connected to the granting of the title mentioned before, it becomes more than likely that the lost stone of Thanh Phước village washed up downstream and then rediscovered in Thái Dương village. Of course, both stones may also simply come from the same group of submerged ruins dating back to the Cham era of Thừa Thiên, which lasted into the early fourteenth century. Conflated with the original legend, this allowed "the" stone to be destroyed by foreigners twice.

But what happened to the baby of the older legend? Võ Vinh Quang explains[1473] that the character *thai* 邰 is used as a homonym to replace 胎 — which means "fetus" but was considered somewhat vulgar. This suggests that the cult *predates* the village name of Thái Dương in Huế and that the goddess was not named for the village.

Regarding cult practice, it is explained that the praying for rain and ripe grain at her site was already an established tradition by the beginning of the

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1471 Cf. Trần Quốc Vượng 2011, p. 267.

1472 Ban quản lý khu di tích Cổ Loa "Công chúa Mỹ Châu" Accessed August 12, 2020. https://thanhcoloa.vn/my-chau

1473 Cf. Võ Vinh Quang 2016, p. 56.

Nguyễn dynasty. Thái Dương Phu Nhân was granted an excessively long title[1474] to emphasize her efficacy and prestige. This title was bestowed on a plaque after the repair of her temple and a state sacrifice during Gia Long's tenth year (1812).[1475] As it is explained elsewhere:

陽夫人祠. 在順安汛部陽社. 嘉隆十二年建正堂一間二厦. 春秋二仲地方官致祭.
Dương Phu Nhân Shrine: Located in Thuận An Tấn Thai Dương village. In the twelfth year of Gia Long [1814], a main hall was erected of one jian [size] with two wings. In the second month of spring and autumn, a local official was sent to offer sacrifices.[1476]

Minh Mạng turned the rural shrine into a brick temple and personally engaged in a joint sacrifice. "In this shrine, there were often prayers for rain which always received efficacious response."[1477] Between the time of the alleged reed shrines and the sixteenth century, there may have been various buildings that served as a place of worship for Thái Dương Phu Nhân, but the site stayed remarkably tiny especially regarding the goddess' high position in the Nguyễn pantheon and the fact that emperors visited it in person.

Đào Thái Hành adds: When in years of severe droughts numerous rain deities had failed, the emperor ordered coercing rituals and threatened to cook the statues of all the deities that would not make rain. Thái Dương Phu Nhân revealed in a dream that she was the only one able to petition the Jade Emperor. Thus a delegation was sent to her island and rain came.[1478] This led the Thái Dương Phu Nhân shrines of Huế and Câu Nhi to become the main rainmaking site for the Nguyễn dynasty right after the Dragon King of the Southern Sea.[1479]

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1474 Thái Dương Linh Thạch Đoan Thục Nhu Thuận Trinh Ý Tư Tế Ý Đức Cẩn Hàng Phu Nhân 部陽靈石端淑柔順貞懿慈濟懿德謹行夫人 "Extremely Gentle, Kind, Responsive, Chaste, Exemplary, Compassionate, River-Crossing [Aiding], Utmost Virtuously and Cautiously Behaving Lady of Thái Dương's Efficacious Stone".

1475 Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, pp. 235–36 (Vol. 2, 40b–41a).

1476 Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, p. 86 (Vol. 1, 32b).

1477 "此祠農禱雨常有靈應." Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, p. 236 (Vol. 2, 41a).

1478 Cf. Đào Thái Hành 1914, pp. 243–49.

1479 Cf. Dyt 2015, p. 13.

However, this was not without tensions: there is one part in the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí*, though very short, that reports about a mountain deity — the dragon of Phụ Ổ mountain. During the reign of Minh Mạng, Thái Dương Phu Nhân had failed to respond to *cầu đảo*, so when there was thunder at that mountain in 1838, the emperor mused: "'Since the mountain has thunder, there must also be a dragon, a dragon can send rain'. Thus, he ordered the capital's magistrate to go to the mountain and do a *cầu đảo*, this obtained rain."[1480]

The contemporary temple of Thái Dương Phu Nhân has remained small. It has a decorative gate with the title plaque and two couplets, behind it is a large spirit tablet with a *qilin* (a 'Chinese unicorn', a supernatural chimera). The red tiled courtyard contains two special *plumeria* trees —the Cham flower. The single hall in a đinh-layout is, like the DNNTC notes, one jian wide with four decorative pillars that show climbing dragons. The first half of the hall is an open platform, the plaque on the inner wall shows the second half of the goddess' title. Above it is a diorama of the three lucky gods. Inside, there is an enormous red-golden altar with a mother-of-pearl and lacquer image of a dragon that receives its own sacrifices. Behind it is a modest red shrine. The goddess has no icon, she is represented by a spirit tablet. In front of her is a glass 'coffin', it contains the crumbled remains of the strange stone, wrapped in red silk. This may not be the original rubble, because it is neither blueish-white, nor do the stones appear like they were ever processed. The local community leader Hôa[1481] relates that the goddess is still very important and meaningful for his community, but he also says that the dragon is a full dragon god and worshiped to protect her. Since the dragon's altar is already significantly oversized for a guardian spirit, this may be the beginning of a superscription process.

Thái Dương Phu Nhân is a good example for the continuation of social experience across millennia and for legends that have become embodied in certain objects and sites. These objects and sites serve as a cultural repository

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1480 "帝以: 山有雷起, 必有龍, 龍能致雨. 乃命京尹詣山祈禱, 果得雨." Cf. *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 1941, p. 237 (Vol. 2, 41b).

1481 Interview with Hoa, community leader and village head. Interview on the 12th October 2018, on site. The temple is usually closed outside of festivals, Hoa is the one holding the key to the temple. I am grateful to Jack Long for making the visit of the temple possible.

of memory, relating to sentiments and ideas that may have lost context but not their numinosity.

The Việt recognized Cham objects as numinous and repurposed them for their own religious ideas, the development of the deity across the late imperial era exemplifies this transcultural interpretation of sacred art. Her narratives demonstrate how her cult offered a framework for the interpretation of similar findings, which may still have been a common event even in late imperial Vietnam. The translocal status of Thái Dương Phu Nhân was also related to the imperial sponsoring of her cult. Although she was a quite immobile local goddess, the government still encouraged and propagated her. However, she was not bound to any institutional or transregional religious tradition that could have afforded her any kind of authority. Therefore, her cult hardly extended beyond the provinces north and south of Huế, the center of imperial authority. It was rather the framework provided by her narratives that enabled Thái Dương Phu Nhân to spread into multiple locations in central Vietnam. Unfortunately, such finds were much rarer beyond the areas of former Champa and thus, the northern provinces offered less canvass for Thái Dương Phu Nhân to be applied to.

Thái Dương Phu Nhân remained relevant only to small groups of locals in places where suitable 'canvases', such as Cham relics, had been found and sanctified. Even in her imperial function as a rain deity, commoners from outside the local community of one of her sites did not participate in her cult. Without any authority of her own, she did not gain a general cult following and was unable to evolve into a goddess of the people. As a stone deity, she was rigid and unable to be emancipated from her sites in central Vietnam, which was necessary for her to be transferred to new locations. Her existing sacred sites were often isolated and rarely interacted with each other. This scattered nature of her cult and its limited reach prevented her from attaining the status of a transregional phenomenon.

V.6. Transforming Cham Hydrolatric Sites

The subsections of this appendix contain the introductory, empirical, historical and analytical material related to the imperial patron goddess who resides in a Buddhist temple that was once a Cham sanctuary.

V.6.1. Pô Nagar — A Multi-functional Goddess

In contrast to the two previous transcendental representatives of late imperial Vietnam, Pô Nagar is indeed one of the most successful transregional and transcultural deities. She spread effortlessly to the far south, up to the Việt north and even eastwards to the islands of modern Indonesia. She possessed traits so relevant to everyone that she was accepted everywhere. However, during this expansion, this multi-religious composition of a goddess was subjected to many more transformations. This first subsection introduces Pô Nagar, the main goddess of the Cham, followed by Pô Nagar as a Việt-Cham hybrid in the north and south and Pô Nagar's late imperial reinterpretation as a transcendental representative of the Nguyễn dynasty.

Pô (Inu) Nagar(a) "The Goddess (-Mother) of the Realm" was the main female deity of Champa. Since she originated as a local earth mother[1482] — a type of deity in ancient civilizations that connects concepts of earth, fertility and creation independent from male input — she condensed a multitude of functions and abilities.

Archaeologically, Pô Nagar's predecessor was commonly depicted as one or multiple human breasts[1483] and retrospectively named with the Sanskrit-term Uroja.[1484] The Cham had accepted most of the Hindu culture brought by Indian maritime merchants, so this predecessor was amalgamated with multiple Hindu deities. Especially older literature often refers to an identification of Pô Nagar with Shiva's wife Uma (a variety of Parvati), but this was disproven

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1482 Cf. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Earth Mother" *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 20, 1998. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Earth-Mother. Retrieved 01 April 2021.

1483 Cf. Auboyer 1988, p. 331, img. 102. The Đà Nẵng Museum of Cham Sculpture exhibits several examples.

1484 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 270.

because neither her mythology nor her cult history match.[1485] This misconception resulted from the common mediative practice of Indianized royal cults to present local goddesses as the shaktis (female powers) of Shiva.[1486] However, Pô Nagar does show some iconographical similarities to Durga — the Hindu warrior goddess and all-mother. According to Cham mythology, Pô Nagar created the world. She had 97 husbands and 39 daughters, who were all goddesses of their own. She created the rice and the incense wood, the most important trade goods of Champa. The incense wood is often identified as agarwood, made from multiple varieties of *aquilaria* trees. Agarwood was the most precious product of Champa. As a coveted incense, it was worth its weight in silver and constituted a part of Cham as well as Việt tributes to China. Due to her all-encompassing power, Pô Nagar rose to become the tutelary deity of the entire Champa realm. Like a lingam, her image was venerated in the corners of relevant temples.[1487] After the Việt conquered most of Champa, the Nguyễn lords used the high demand for calambac — the finest grade and rarest variety of agarwood — to replenish their state finances. While acquiring the calambac, the Việt learned and imitated[1488] Cham and highlander rituals. Since the agarwood was so important to them, they eventually accepted Pô Nagar as the patron deity of it.

Hydrolatric Aspects of Pô Nagar

Pô Nagar, the snake, was born from the clouds and the sea foam.[1489] A patron of women (Patao Kumay), the one born from the waves,[1490] on which she rode materialized as a piece of agarwood.[1491] Like many Indianized deities, Pô Nagar appeared in a variety of forms and many were very ambiguous. Pa Yan Dari was

1485 Cf. Noseworthy 2015, pp. 109, 129–32.

1486 Cf. Jordaan 1984, p. 110.

1487 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 42–43.

1488 Cf. Li Tana 2018, pp. 79, 125. She states that Vietnamese agarwood collectors still made offerings to Pô Nagar.

1489 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. p. 190.

1490 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 270.

1491 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 42.

her incarnation as a deity of disease and love at the same time. Pô Nagar was generally associated with epidemics, as the Việt rulers had to "learn" whenever they attacked her cult or sanctuaries. This could be the influence of the Hindu goddess Durga, but also that of Mariamman and the shared lore with the Javanese goddess of the Southern Ocean, Lara Kidul. Lara Kidul, who was also called "the old woman",[1492] was connected to the ocean and serpents as well and most prominently born from the sea foam[1493], just like Pô Nagar.

Southeast Asian goddesses like Pô Nagar and Lara Kidul are in a triadic symbol-complex connected to fertility, rice and snakes. Although the alliance of Southeast Asian rulers with serpent women was a common trope, the serpent aspect in Pô Nagar was very reduced and only found in some lore.[1494] As the Lady of the Realm she was usually depicted as humanoid. As Muk Juk, she is the "dark-complexed One",[1495] an epithet of Durga/Kali but also of a wealth of other black goddesses in Southeast Asian who are all associated with water and occasionally also with the underworld.[1496] The Sinologist Rolf Stein (1911—1999) described goddesses called "Cô Bẩy", found in the temples of Huế, who were bare-breasted, dark-skinned, and held a piece of wood and a bottle of "perfume" in their hands.[1497] These temples venerated gods and goddesses of the "upper [river] bank", who were not considered to be of Vietnamese origin.[1498]

Pô Nagar was also connected to blood sacrifices, which were tied to rain-making. The chants of mediums involved in her modern-day worship, as stud-

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1492 One tale about Lara Kidul says she suffered from a skin disease and threw herself into the ocean, and according to the water spirit trope, she thus became the patron deity of it. Cf. Jordaan 1984, pp. 100–101.

1493 Cf. Jordaan 1984, p. 113, note 10.

1494 Cf. Jordaan 1984, pp. 108–109. For more details on Southeast Asian relationships between rulers and snakes, see: Wessing, Robert. "Symbolic Animals in the Land between the Waters: Markers of Place and Transition". *Asian Folklore Studies* 65, no.2 (2006): 205–239.

1495 Cf. Noseworthy 2015, p. 131.

1496 Cf. Jordaan 1984. pp. 104–106.

1497 No characters are given but the second syllable is usually written 悲. The description could imply a mix of Cham ideas with Quan Âm iconographies, since Pô Nagar was associated with wood and Quan Âm was commonly depicted holding a vase or a bottle.

1498 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 125.

ied by Ngô, may give some insights into this. In some Cham rituals to acquire rain, ox blood was spilled over their fields. Blood was also sacrificed to deities with chthonic characteristics, like Pô Nagar showed them as an earth mother who occasionally appeared as a snake and could send dangerous epidemics. This connected her to the earlier chthonic phase of religious development when serpents were associated with fertility, water, treasures and death.

The modern Cham celebrate her annual festivals during the first month of the year and ask for appropriate weather for the harvest. She is again invoked during the rain rituals of the second and seventh month, which is called "waking up" the goddess.[1499] The ritual involves a procession to the river, where the icon is ritually bathed, as it occurs in Hindu religions. More river water is taken to her sanctuary in a continuation of the ritual.

The Việt recognized that Pô Nagar was a source of life, responsible for "distributing or stopping rainfalls, favoring or destroying crops, giving health or death."[1500] Her example stresses the connection between water, agricultural fertility and trade. Although not primarily represented as a water deity, it can be gathered from this that the water aspect was essential to Pô Nagar's identity.

Pô Nagar in Legends

In 1856, a Vietnamese legend of Pô Nagar at Nha Trang[1501] was recorded as follows: On a local mountain, the goddess was incarnated as a young girl who would steal the watermelons of a childless couple by night, but was finally adopted by them. When the couple abandoned her because she took measures against a coming flood that they did not understand. She turned into a log of wood and floated north. All the people who wanted to collect the log for its pleasant smell could not lift it, until a northern prince lifted it easily. When he found out that a spirit lived in the log, he married her. Feeling homesick, the goddess — still in the shape of a tree — took her children and traveled home to erect a temple for her adoptive parents. She taught the locals cultivation and disaster prevention before she disappeared in broad daylight. When the prince

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1499 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. pp. 189–190.
1500 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 44.
1501 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. pp. 198–201.

came looking for her, his troops behaved rudely towards the locals and thus, a typhoon swept them away. From then on, the goddess would occasionally appear as a strip of clothing, riding an elephant or a crocodile — both images from the Hindu religion.[1502] The locals built two towers, one for Thiên Y and one for the prince[1503] as well as two smaller ones for the children and the old couple. The legend also mentions unreadable steles, likely referring to Devanagari script. It was said that animals and sea creatures would gather in front of the temple.

This legend, perhaps due to being edited, has no clear core but the clear goal to depict the goddess as a cultural heroine specializing in flood aid. Ngô notes that the legend is very similar to that of Muk Juk among the Cham.[1504] It starts with the same scenario in a vegetable field. Instead of a flood, there is a long drought and the rain rituals failed. While swimming, the young woman is spirited away by a magical log that brings her to China. There, a Daoist priest urges the king to pick up the aloe tree that had arrived at the river. Again, he is the only one able to. This time, there is some initial reluctance to let the prince marry the tree goddess, and the reason she leaves for the south is that the prince leads too many wars. She acts again as a cultural hero and receives the name Pô Inu Nagar. It is clearly stated that it is her who calls a thunderstorm to sink the ship of her brutal husband and sons. This tale also serves as an etiology for the rocks in the sea in front of the Nha Trang temple. This rather late Cham legend shows strong influence from Vietnamese culture, but still continues to slightly emphasize Muk Juk's hydrolatric traits.

William Noseworthy offers a third version from late Champa, the *Damnây Po Inâ Nâgar* ['Hymn to Po Inâ Nagar'] which is actually a short story.[1505] A childless couple was felling trees — which implies they were new to the region — and growing water melons when at night, they found a twelve-year-old girl.

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1502 The river goddess Ganga rides a crocodile, the shakti (female counterpart) of Indra, and Vishnu's female avatar Mohini occasionally ride elephants.

1503 This likely refers to the Tower of the Father of Heaven, Pô Nagar's counterpart without much lore.

1504 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. pp. 201–04.

1505 Cf. Norseworthy 2015, pp. 111–14.

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When she started to build a temple during a storm, they scolded her. This time she flees *on* a log of wood to the north and seems to possess the prince like a spirit, yet they come to have children of each gender. Her first magical deed is to teleport them to the south, but she is unable to find her parents again. For twelve years she teaches the Cham cultural skills. Grateful, they build 'towers' for her and call her Po Nai[1506] ("The Princess"). In a strong divergence from the other versions, her husband's soldiers also come for her, but they are followed by an evil spirit and that is the one and only reason that she regretfully sinks the ships. However, she is somehow reunited with her husband and leads a family life with him in the south. When the Việt came to the land, the Princess Po Nai took care of the Cham and gave them a livelihood.

Trần Kỳ Phương notes[1507] that older versions of the legends do not mention China or Daoists, and that the "northern sea state" where the enamored king (instead of a prince) lives likely refers to another Champa state. Like later Đại Việt had the story of Âu Cơ (representing the mountains) and Lạc Long Quân (representing the sea), the Cham had a similar narrative: they believed that in ancient times, the Champa kingdom was ruled by a male "Areca" clan who descended from the mountain king and by a female "coconut" clan[1508] who descended from a sea king. Trần Kỳ Phương links these to the northern kingdom of Amaravati, centered around the Mỹ Sơn temple complex, in the north and the sanctuary of Nha Trang in the south.[1509] While in the Việt tales one of both parties won, the two Cham sites were connected to each other through a continued dual cosmology. Mỹ Sơn related to the government and military, Nha Trang to the god king and ritual. Therefore, these sites were frequently restored during the same periods of time. This demonstrates that, although the oral legends were written down in the late imperial era and contain many

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1506 This was an identification of Pô Nagar with the goddess Po Nai or Nai Tang Riya Bia Atapah of Pāṇḍuraṅga who was venerated for favorable weather. Praises to her are *inter alia* collected as CAM 224 from the EFEO (EFEO Paris Library).

1507 Trần Kỳ Phương and Rie Nakamura 2008, p. 16.

1508 This may again refer to the strong matrilineal tradition and the many female deities once venerated in the south of Champa. The area was also seen as less civilized by the more intensively Indianized groups of northern Champa. Cf. Katsimpalis 2009, pp. 35, 42.

1509 Trần Kỳ Phương and Rie Nakamura 2008, pp. 16–17.

Vietnamized features, they still carry a core idea from ancient Champa. The legends also show that Pô Nagar was a goddess of her own and closer to Cham concepts than to Hindu ideas. Her identification with Uma can be interpreted as a schism between the local practice and an elite interpretation.[1510] Some interesting insights of these legends are that Pô Nagar's celebrations start in the first month, the same day that Man Nương is celebrated when her festival is not moved to the Buddha's birthday, and Mỵ Châu's festival happens shortly after the New Year's festival. Although the legends vary in regard to Pô Nagar's relation to the log of wood, by the time that she arrives in the north, she has usually turned into a trunk that cannot be moved except by a chosen person. This trait also occurs in the LNCQ version of Man Nương's legend and in the local legends (there: a stone) of Mỵ Châu. It cannot be excluded that both northern entities may have been inspired by ancient Cham lore, but this situation may also support the hypothesis that they are all different interpretations of the same basis in the goddess Mariamman.

Pô Nagar and the Việt

As a multi-functional goddess, Pô Nagar was associated with the underworld, wood, rice, and everything nice[1511] — but when Đại Việt started to integrate the conquered Champa territories, her hydrolatric aspect became much more emphasized. A legend from the *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* 粵甸幽靈集 [1329] is her first mention by name in Việt texts, it tells a retrospective story about Lý Thánh Tông 李聖宗 (1054—1072) when he engaged in Royal Displacement. During the 1069 expedition against Champa, he was crossing a river in Nghệ An when a storm almost sank his boat. In his great fear, Pô Nagar appears to him to turn

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1510 It should be added that due to the Islamization of the northern Cham starting in the twelfth century, Pô Nagar was also reinterpreted in Muslim legends. Ngô Văn Doanh collected some of those: fittingly to Champa's history of transcultural hybridizations, the legends with their many deities still depict Pô Nagar as a creator (though subjected to Allah) and would not be deemed very Islamic outside of Vietnam.

1511 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 44, 46–7.

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into a traitor of her own people. Introducing herself as the spirit of the southern realm, the beautiful lady in white dress and green trousers[1512] tells the emperor:

> I have long been reborn to live in a place of water and clouds, watching and waiting for a time at which to appear. Due to this opportune meeting and with the good reason of having fortune to come upon the royal countenance, my entire life's desire has truly been satisfied. Yet I still wish that your majesty on this trip proceed promptly and skillfully, achieving complete victory. Although I am only sedge and willow [a mere woman] and of light carriage, I hope to contribute my trifling strength, secretly giving support. On the day of your triumphant return, I shall be waiting here to pay my respects.[1513]

Lý Thánh Tông went to the shore, where he found a tree trunk that looked like the goddess he had seen, and took it with him. The storm calmed and the Cham lost the war. The appeal of the Việt emperor was allegedly so great that Pô Nagar betrayed the Cham in favor of him — for that, the emperor built a shrine for her inside the capital. By the time the legend plays in, this was a common scheme of the centralizing ruler. Peripheral deities were superimposed or displaced into his realm to show his virtue and authority in harmonizing the realm. That way, the independent deity was subjugated and the emperor's power legitimated by proving how attractive his country was. After she was introduced into the capital and into the state cult, the physical territory of Pô Nagar was claimed.

Ideally, honoring the principal goddess of the Cham should have calmed the tensions between Việt and Cham and lessened the resentment of the conquered. However, it is more realistic to assume that Pô Nagar was likely brought to the north by all the Cham who had been displaced there as war prisoners and subsequent slaves, or who had been invited as craftsmen with no option of return. In legends, Pô Nagar had been associated with water and tree deities.

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1512 An entity with green trousers may relate to Pô Nagar's roots in Mariamman [see: V.1] as well. It can also be interpreted as traditional color symbolism where green resembles earth and forests, while white resembles the water, both relating to Pô Nagar's areas of power.

1513 *Việt Điện U Linh Tập* pp. 61–62, translated by Ostrowski and Zottoli in Dutton, Werner and Whitmore 2012, pp. 47–48.

Her power over harvests, health and rainfall made her attractive for the Việt and after she stopped a drought under Lý Anh Tông 李英宗 (r. 1138—1175), she was promptly identified with the male Chinese spring- and fertility deity Câu Mang 句芒.[1514]

The capital's Pô Nagar was also meant to continually secure victories over her former people.[1515] In the Trần dynasty, Pô Nagar received official titles three times: twice after the Mongol invasions and once after an expedition against the Cham — each of them referring to the deity's renewed profession of loyalty to Đại Việt. Ngô lists eight temples to Pô Nagar that were established by Việt people, who venerated their own interpretation of the goddess.[1516]

Concerning the original Pô Nagar, it had not been expected that Cham culture would influence the capital city strongly enough as to divert Sinitic trends in the political narrative. The scholarly elite perceived this with growing uneasiness and decided to regulate the Cham influence by law. An edict of 1374 outlawed the Cham language; one of 1499 prohibited Việt men from marrying Cham women to "preserve moral purity" and all of this culminated in the ethnic cleansing of 1509. Pô Nagar was renamed the Jade Princess Chúa Ngọc Thánh Phi 主玉聖妃,[1517] although one of her epithets about the 'jade' mentioned on Cham steles actually referred to a 'pearl.' A map from 1594 of the annexed southern territories still labeled the Nha Trang sanctuary as Chúa Ngọc Tháp 玉主塔 "Tower of the Pearl Princess".[1518] Pô Nagar's legends were progressively adapted to be more comfortable to the northern Vietnamese and thus removed her children, her many husbands, and turned her supernatural

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1514 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, pp. 44–45. Goumang (Chin.) was once adapted as part of the important spring rituals in the capital. Although the ritual took place in a water spirit's site, the Bạch Mã temple, Câu Mang was imagined as a bird and his ritual demanded clay buffaloes instead of clay dragons (cf. Snyder-Reinke 2009, pp. 38–39 with a translation of *Hou Hanshu* 5:1a), as described in Adriano Di St. Thecla's *Opusculum de Sectis apud Sinenses et Tunkinenses* (ca. 1750).

1515 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 107.

1516 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. p. 196.

1517 Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, pp. 43, 46. On 24th day of the ninth month of the third year of Minh Mạng, he issued an ordainment for Thiên Y A Na Diễn Ngọc Phi which is exhibited in the on-site Museum at Nha Trang Pô Nagar Sanctuary.

1518 Cf. Noseworthy 2015, p. 117.

companions into human attendants,[1519] because this was more palatable for the scholarly elite.

The Nha Trang Sanctuary

The Pô Nagar temple of Nha Trang[1520] is located on a hill at the estuaries of the Cái and Hà rivers, the two largest rivers of the region — a spot where warm and cold, fresh- and salt water mix. Nha Trang is her main sanctuary, but thirteen more are still known.[1521] Nowadays, it is a popular tourist spot and one of the few occasions for the Cham minority to express their culture with public shows. However, they have no agency in the site neither in worship nor administration.

The partly broken pillars of the ninth-century *mandapa* in front of the sanctuary,[1522] one level under the temple itself, now give room to a black altar that the Việt and the Chinese tourists interact with.[1523] The stairs that once led directly to the main building are no longer accessible due to the altar, visitors are thus directed via a side gate to the upper level. While the smaller towers outside the main tower contain black stone icons[1524] that depict deities similar to a Buddha or to a Cham woman,[1525] the main shrine of the main tower holds a painted icon dating from the eleventh century that visually appears Vietnamese. It shows a matron with tanned skin and neither Indian nor Cham facial features.[1526] The body under the clothing shows more traditionally Cham features with prominent breasts and wrinkles.[1527] She wears a yellow dress, its style according to the one granted to her by the Nguyễn emperors — they still

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1519 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 259.

1520 Described with some more detail in Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. pp. 210–11.

1521 Cf. Noseworthy 2015, pp. 116, 120.

1522 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2009, p. 156.

1523 New steles in Vietnamese and Chinese that imitate the style of old ones have been placed in front of the temple buildings.

1524 Nowadays replacements, the originals are stored in the museum.

1525 One of these is supposed to be Vishnu, the identity of the woman is unknown. The original icons date to the ninth century. Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. p. 194.

1526 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương and Rie Nakamura 2008, p. 14, inform that the head and hands have been restored and the statue originally sat on a lotus-yoni pedestal.

1527 An image can be found in Katsimpalis 2009, p. 58. fig. 17.

respected the goddess in her original place, although they later expelled her from the capital. When I walked around the shrine, it became visible that the painted icon was placed on the lap of the black stone replica. The eleventh century original of that inside the museum shows Pô Nagar with the number of arms and the attributes of Mahishamardini,[1528] but with a Cham woman's face. She sits in front of a board decorated with a *kala*-mask and two makara. This icon and the tympanum on the main tower's front are the earliest depictions of Mahishamardini in Champa art.[1529] Inside the compound, Pô Nagar is often shown riding on an elephant like the Hindu king of gods, Indra, does and thus mirrors his iconography as well, likely due to her connection to worldly rulers. The traits of Durga and Indra both give her a very militaristic appearance that befits a protector of the realm.

Most of our knowledge about Nha Trang comes from inscriptions and most of these inscriptions show the royal interaction with the site. Pô Nagar's first mention in written text occurs together with her sanctuary on a stele in Nha Trang.[1530] It is dated to the year 591 CE during the Dvàparata era (7th century) and was erected by King Vichitrasagara.[1531] An extensive stele lists all the sacrifices made by King Vikarantavarman II (ca. 686—738). Another stele dated to 781 CE (C.38A) describes how the original temple was destroyed by plunderers in 774 CE and its Shivalinga was lost. King Satyavarman (~784) rebuilt the temple and donated a new, metal-covered *mukhalingam*[1532] and a statue of the goddess[1533] which was called Bhagavati. Bhagavati can refer to Parvati, the wife of the Hindu god Shiva, but it was also a general honorific appellation for high goddesses.

After a fire, the temple was reconstructed with bricks and stone in 784 CE. The whole complex once held as much as ten structures on a space of a 500 m²

1528 This is the warrior goddess Durga in her demon-slaying incarnation.

1529 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. p. 215.

1530 Cf. Guy, 2009, p. 152.

1531 No biographical data known and it is unclear whether the king is legendary or historical.

1532 A penis-shaped stone icon with the face of Shiva.

1533 Cf. Southworth and Trân Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 155.

hilltop. Today, five structures are left.[1534] The kings of the tenth century did not mention which sculptures existed before, but created new ones: a main icon of Pô Nagar in 918, which was stolen by the Khmer, and another in 965. In 1015, a festival for yet another main icon recounts the fields (including the Khmer, Chinese and Thai slaves) donated to the sanctuary. In 1064, one king made the decision to donate a massive gate to the temple.

From the eleventh to the twelfth century, additional entities entered the temple as statues of Vishnu and personifications of Buddhist aspects were enshrined. Inscriptions begin to mention the goddess Bhagavati Kautharesvati,[1535] but since this basically translates to "Honored Goddess of Kauṭhāra", this is just a new epithet of Pô Nagar rather than a new deity. From the mid of the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth century, Cham kings — and in 1275 one princess — conferred the title Yang Pu Nagar upon the site[1536], which honored her importance as the protector of the realm.

When the Việt pushed the Cham southward,[1537] Nha Trang (Kauṭhāra) became the next capital of the Champa Federation. After Nguyễn Hoàng had conquered a part of Kauṭhāra in 1611, he renamed the area Phú Yên. Rebellions caused its final destruction at the hands of the Việt in 1653. It was written that Kauṭhāra was later abandoned, but actually, Việt settlers were already living there and claimed Pô Nagar's site for themselves. They called her Thiên Mụ Ya Na 天姥依阿那 or Thiên Y Thánh Mẫu 天依聖母 and her sanctuary was called Tháp Bà "Tower of the Lady". Inspired by Cham legends, the Việt created new ones about her and began to conduct the sacrifices according to Việt custom on the first and fifteenth day of a month. Nha Trang's continued use was a big factor for the good condition of the site in comparison to the destruction that most other important Cham sanctuaries suffered.[1538] The actual Cham people

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1534 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2008, pp. 11–12.

1535 Cf. Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. pp. 192–93.

1536 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương 2008, p. 12.

1537 Cf. Wulf 1995, p. 264.

1538 Cf. Katsimpalis 2009, p. 39 and Ngô Văn Doanh 2012. p. 187, 198.

were severely restricted in their options to actually visit the site.[1539] During the Nguyễn dynasty, travel bans prohibited the Cham from making their pilgrimages to Nha Trang, but the Việt were free to use the sanctuary.

The Việt living in central Vietnam perceived Pô Nagar as a veritable Vietnamese deity, only the name Thiên Y A Na and the agarwood in her temples was reminiscent of her origin.[1540] She is thus the most famous example for the incorporation of Cham deities in Vietnam, while others were either intensively transformed and lost their original names until they became unrecognizable. Royal Displacements that led to a more public incorporation can be called representative incorporations. They led to massive spatial reconfigurations of structure (see Chapter IV) with a severe impact on the survival of the affected cults. But as main deity of the Cham, this could not happen to Pô Nagar. Royal displacement was meant to limit the power of peripheral and foreign deities and to harness them for one's own realm. By claiming the deities, the realm they protected was claimed as well, which proves that royal displacement is a very aggressive reconfiguration tactic. In contrast, the representative incorporation was a mediative tactic that calmed peripheral and minority populations but also secured the increasing cultural dominance of the incorporating culture. This demonstrates how spatial reconfiguration tactics of different types can be combined with each other for maximized effect.

V.6.2. Pô Nagar as a Hybrid Deity: Thiên Y A Na 天依阿那

In the era of Đàng Ngoài and Đàng Trong, power moved south and beyond the Confucian sphere. The population of Đàng Trong was more pluralistic than that of former Đại Việt eras had ever been. It also included many more ethnicities whose cultures differed notably from the Việt. Such new social challenges required new options of transcendental support. In previous centuries, multiple southern deities had been kidnapped (or enticed to switch sides), but this was an era when new deities were consciously chosen for their integrative

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1539   However, they continued to venerate goddesses like Thiên Y A Na and still do so in contemporary times. Though after conflicts with the Communist government, it is believed that the goddess is no longer truly present. Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 236.

1540   Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 44.

potential. Since Buddhism was an important factor for the incorporation of the valuable southern entities into Việt ideology, countless new temples were created — again preferably in spots that had already been established as sacred. The Nguyễn lords initially profited from their relationship with the Buddhist clergy but would also restrict the latter's access to political influence.[1541] However, variants of Đạo Mẫu had spread and localized under their radar. Between Buddhist and Đạo Mẫu transregional aspirations, the Cham main deity Pô Nagar was Vietnamized as Thiên Y A Na. Although she was always an incarnation of Pô Nagar, she displayed different traits depending on where she was worshiped.

Thiên Y A Na in the North

Pô Nagar's enshrinement in the northern capital and her recognition by the Việt emperor marked her successful transformation into a transcultural deity. She gained some influence on the elite level and split into multiple interpretations most of which mixed Pô Nagar with Daoist ideas. Therefore, she already started to influence the Việt imagination before the March to the South had gained momentum. However, she had not been brought to the capital under her original name. It was due to the Cham population that Thiên Y A Na became a more obvious stand-in for Pô Nagar. This worked well until the court officials initiated the purge of Cham culture from the city, so she had to be renamed yet again.

Emperor Lê Huyền Tông 黎玄宗 (r. 1654—1671) did not mind the existence of the Cham deity in Nha Trang, which had been conquered by that time, but he was driven to purge her "obscene" cult from his capital. Supposedly, the angry deity repaid his aggressive acts of destruction by sending numerous epidemics until he had to give up and rebuild her temples. Previously, Pô Nagar's connection to epidemics had not been too pronounced in Thăng Long, so this 'new' aspect led to another identification of her with the Chinese goddess Hậu Thổ 后土, who ruled over the underworld and the afterlife in general. The northern Thiên Y A Na replaced both Hậu Thổ and a Daoist rice god in Thăng Long, whose temple was rededicated to her.[1542] This situation was criticized by Confu-

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1541 Cf. Kiernan 2017, p. 242.

1542 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 207; Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 47; Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 107.

cian scholars and when Thiên Y A Na proved herself during a different disaster once again as a worthy protector of the realm, they suggested her new title to be 'king' (*wang* 王) to <u>conceal</u> her female nature at least in official documents. However, this did not affect her iconography. Furthermore, because agarwood was inseparable from the Cham, it was replaced in Thiên Y A Na's shrines by cinnamon, the trademark plant of Thanh Hóa. Thus, both sticks of agarwood and cinnamon could depict "Y A Na" in Vietnamese temples.[1543]

In the late eighteenth century, the Pô Nagar cult in the capital remained healthy until 'Princess Pearl' received a new shrine, sponsored by a Việt governor for her aid in 'eliminating tigers', i.e., local rebels. In her role as Princess Pearl, Thiên Y A Na had become very romanticized. Her originally voluptuous shape had been transformed into that of a delicate, tamed princess. It cannot be ascertained whether she did indeed merge with Liễu Hạnh as Li Tana claims.[1544]

Indeed, the legends of Pô Nagar and Liễu Hạnh were alternatively attributed to both goddesses who also both received the epithet 'Jade Goddess'.[1545] Due to this, Liễu Hạnh is sometimes mistakenly identified with Pô Nagar. This could be explained by the geographical border formed by the Đèo Ngang Pass, which separated northern and southern Vietnam for a long time.[1546] During the eighteenth century, shrines of Liễu Hạnh dominated the regions north of it, while Thiên Y A Na dominated in the regions south of it.[1547] It is thus more accurate to say that Liễu Hạnh appropriated some lore from Pô Nagar and filled her niche in late imperial northern Vietnam. This had become necessary because, after centuries of offering imperial sacrifices, the Nguyễn dynasty finally expelled Thiên Y A Na from the capital at the beginning of the nineteenth century. While Thiên Y A Na was mostly forgotten among the northern Việt, Princess Liễu Hạnh took her place in her former temples.[1548]

1543   Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, pp. 46–47.

1544   Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 105, 118.

1545   Cf. Vu Hong Van 2020, p. 26.

1546   Cf. Nguyễn Thế Anh 1995, p. 47.

1547   Cf. Noseworthy 2015, p. 118.

1548   Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 33.

Thiên Y A Na in the South

Thiên Y A Na's Cham traits remained more pronounced south of former Jiaozhi. Although the Việt were very cautious and avoided angering foreign spirits in a foreign environment, on the basis of a *do ut des* principle, they also expected aid from any deity that they interacted with in a friendly way. They thus also came to venerate Pô Nagar, though in a version more streamlined to their values. She also lost her many husbands as well as most of her children and was reinterpreted as a heavenly maiden *thiên nữ* 天女. As the Việt proceeded southwards during the fourteenth century, the settlers pushed against the southern border and penetrated deeper into Cham territory. They encountered a whole new sea-god-system there, were introduced to the whale deities and new kinds of dragon kings.[1549]

The area of Huế was known for its numerous Pô Nagar temples. It was once located deep in Cham territory and originally not Việt at all. In 1301, the emperor emeritus Trần Nhân Tông visited the Cham court of King Jaya Simhavarman III (Chế Mân 制旻, r. 1288—1307) in Vijaya to ally with him against the Mongols. He offered his daughter Huyền Trân 玄珍 (1289—1340) in marriage. In exchange, the Việt would receive the tactically advantageous Cham provinces Ô châu 烏州 and Lý châu 里州. The wedding took place in 1306 and was a splendid deal for the Việt, whose realm had been stricken by disaster while Champa prospered. The Cham, on the other hand, interpreted the princess as a reparation for former Việt incursions and made her a second rank queen called Tapasi "penitence". One possible reason for this deviation is that the sale of the provinces was solely mentioned in Việt sources. Consequently, the locals protested when the Việt army moved into Ô and Lý and changed the names of the provinces to Thuận 順 and Hóa 化.[1550] In an attempt to appease them, the Việt chose to hire local administrators, but not even a three-year tax exemption could obscure that they now occupied this territory. When the Cham king died unexpectedly just one year later and the princess

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1549 Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 34. One and the same place had multiple seafaring deities because maritime trade was so important, while the land along the coast also venerated some of them as rain deities. A special deity is "Water Dragon" (Thuỷ Long 水龍), a goddess who reigns over both fresh and salt water. Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 199

1550 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 2014, pp. 95–96.

was to be burned on his funeral pyre,[1551] the Việt objected. This prolonged her life long enough for the Việt to invade in 1311 to rescue her. The Việt used the occasion to also abduct the Cham crown prince and by the next year, Vijaya was captured. Since Champa was a protégé of the Yuan dynasty, China threatened Đại Việt but never acted on it — Champa was subsequently under Việt control for sixteen years. After its release, the two provinces were ultimately lost to Đại Việt.[1552]

When Việt settlers were dispatched to the future provinces of Quảng Trị and Thừa Thiên, the political tensions had merely been glossed over. Originally, it had been planned that the Việt would settle in Ô châu as soon as the Cham had left the new province, but the tax exemptions show that the local population was never deported — the Cham and five other ethnic groups were still present when the Việt arrived.[1553] Although this provided the seeds to develop a Việt-Cham local culture, it also led to continued disputes which led to more fighting and destruction. Ultimately, the area would not be safe for decades to come. When severe succession wars took place in Champa roughly half a century later, Đại Việt sided with the loser and the Cham took revenge for that. They attacked the Hóa province — future Thừa Thiên. Even though the Việt were able to defeat the Cham, the wars between 1353—1357 devastated the landscape.[1554]

Isolated from the culture they were familiar with and dependent on unreliable communication routes north, the Việt settlers were as much afraid of the human locals as of the supernatural ones. They avoided settlement in the mountainous areas and kept to the riversides. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth century, large groups relocated from Nam Định Province. Initially, they had to seek out the Cham villages to establish themselves because those

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1551 Cf. Lê Thành Khôi 169, p. 133, this refers to a custom called sati in some Hindu traditions. For a deeper analysis of pre-nineteenth century *sati*, see: Brick, David. "The Dharmaśāstric Debate on Widow-Burning." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130, no. 2 (2010): 203–23.

1552 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 2014, pp. 95–98.

1553 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng 2008, p. 373.

1554 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 2014, p. 100.

were the best at growing rice in the local climate. Due to this prolonged contact, places, phenomena, legends and languages were progressively Vietnamized.[1555]

When the Việt started to forget that they lived on conquered territory, they began to refer to those descendants of the Cham-Việt hybrid culture who did not look Việt 'enough' as *mọi* 蠻 "of the forest people, barbarian". Part of this othering process was the new assumption that the Cham temples no longer housed foreign deities, but Vietnamese ones. These Nam Định settlers were likely the ones who developed the idea of Thiên Y A Na as a Việt deity, who was clearly inspired by Pô Nagar but considered to be a separate entity.

By the sixteenth century, the area around Huế was mostly Vietnamized and only some Cham enclaves remained.[1556] The Việt had become used to worship Thiên Y A Na primarily to call for rain and began to build new temples for her. These were, just like Pô Nagar's before, preferably built at riverbanks and estuaries.[1557] According to Léopold Cadiére, the area of Huế was so filled with Thiên Y A Na shrines, it can be concluded that Pô Nagar's former center of power likely never ceased to exist.[1558]

In the Later Lê dynasty, the descendants of the former Nam Định settlers formed the Hội Sơn Nam 南山會 ['Southern Mountain Society'], which shows that they still had some need to recognize their heritage as an identity factor and implies that they were somewhat conscious about being (descended from) migrants. The society was connected by religious activities that are only partially known due to the oldest known gazetteer of Thừa Thiên-Huế, the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* 烏州近錄. Fitting the trend of the times, the Hội Sơn Nam quickly developed into a Đạo Mẫu subgroup called Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo 皇天仙聖教 that remained endemic to Huế. Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo mixed Đạo Mẫu Tam Phủ beliefs with local, Cham derived lore and what was left of northern Daoist ideas. They did not have many religious rules, except for

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1555 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng 2008, p. 376.

1556 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 225.

1557 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương and Rie Nakamura 2008, pp. 16–17.

1558 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 105.

obligatory festivals and some eclectic food taboos.[1559] However, it still differed strongly from northern Đạo Mẫu religions. Over time, the local groups became self-contained as a unit called *phổ* 浦. These consisted of "incense disciples" (*con nhang đệ tử* 昆香递子) led by a male or female "master" (*thủ* 首). Religious services occurred three times a month. These incense disciples could amount to several hundred, many of them were relatives of sick people who looked for healing — and for a chance at healing, the parents had to do service for the temple.[1560] The prices depended on what was prayed for and were paid either in donations or labor.

The Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo was — and still is — very architecturally active. Their main temple is another former Pô Nagar site called điện Hòn Chén 玉盞殿 "Temple of the Jade Cup",[1561] which is well worth its own study.[1562] The Hòn Chén temple is considered the originating point of the Thiên Y A Na-who-is-not Pô Nagar and who was locally just called Bà Mẹ Xứ Sở 婆母处所 ['The Lady of this Place']. This Thiên Y A Na of Huế took on a special role as a heavenly deity because she was a daughter of the Jade Emperor. She was thought to be a mountain deity who had taught the people wet rice culture, but she was simultaneously also a water deity, the wife of a dragon prince and a tutelary deity of fishermen.[1563] This made her the most powerful non-Việt mainland goddess of the Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo pantheon. Her celebra-

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1559 Cf. Department of Science and Technology of Nghệ An. "Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo: tín ngưỡng độc đáo!" Khoa Học Xã Hội & Nhân Văn Nghệ An Nghe An Social Sciences and Humanities. 22 December 2018. Accessed 26 February 2021. http://khxhnvnghean.gov.vn/m/?x=1266/khxhnv-doi-song/thien-tien-thanh-giao-tin-nguong-doc-dao

1560 Cf. Trần Đại Vinh 2017, p. 7.

1561 Referring to the epithet of both Thiên Y A Na and Liễu Hạnh as Jade Goddess and a legend about breaking the jade cup of the Jade Emperor which was also attributed to both deities.

1562 Located at a slope, it contains an upper and a lower part. Pô Nagar was venerated in the upper part, but during my visit in 2018, the hall was named as Liễu Hạnh Hall. This is not too surprising, since Liễu Hạnh also originated in Nam Định (cf. Dror 2007, p. 3). The main hall was under reconstruction in 2018 and now looks much more Buddhist than ever before. The lower part of the temple is strongly associated with water, it contains two halls dedicated to water deities and behind a path near the dock is another single hall for the river dragon. A list of deities contained there during the nineteenth century can be found in Trần Đại Vinh 2017, p. 5.

1563 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng 2008, p. 375 and Roszko 2011, p. 80.

tions were similar to the ritual activities at the Tứ Pháp temples: the festival in spring was celebrated with prayers for rain and boat racing at the Ô Lâu river. In Huế lore, Thiên Y A Na was a dark-skinned girl from Đại An, Khánh Hòa and after being adopted by a melon growing couple, she was later reincarnated in China to marry a prince.[1564] This was very close to Pô Nagar's Cham legends and the comparatively lucky marriage made her especially attractive to upper-class Việt women.[1565]

The Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo began to truly flourish during the nineteenth century, due to the longstanding ties between the Hội Sơn Nam and the Nguyễn rulers.

In the year of his inauguration, 1802, Gia Long immediately inserted Thiên Y A Na into the imperial pantheon and she would frequently be appeased during *cầu đảo* rituals over the course of the dynasty.[1566] However, she was called Pearly Consort Ngọc Phi, one of her countless Việt epithets. Her long-standing association with pearls and jade (which was based on translation issues into Chinese script) was renewed through a new legend about Minh Mạng who (replacing the Jade Emperor) allegedly dropped a jade cup into the river at điện Hòn Chén and a turtle returned it to him. This prompted him to restore the temple in 1832.[1567] This legend united lore attributed to Pô Nagar, Thiên Y A Na and Liễu Hạnh with supernatural symbols of imperial investiture because the turtle marked the Hòn Chén temple as a spot that produced legitimacy. This imperial favor encouraged many other southern temples to establish Mẫu shrines.[1568] Later, the Đồng Khánh 同慶 Emperor (r. 1885—1889) massively expanded the Hòn Chén site out of gratefulness for having been able to ascend the throne. He turned its temple festival into an imperial holiday and contradicted the traditional superimposing by depicting himself as a disciple of the Mother Goddess, making him the first emperor to ever recognize Đạo Mẫu. Khải Định 啟定 (r. 1916—1925) attempted to follow that step and this caused

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1564 Cf. Trần Đại Vinh 2017, pp. 3, 10.

1565 Cf. Roszko 2011, p. 89.

1566 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 108.

1567 Cf. Department of Science and Technology of Nghệ An 2018.

1568 Cf. Trần Đại Vinh 2017, p. 4.

the Thiên Y A Na cult to be reinvigorated,[1569] even if only in the area of Huế. Peculiarly, this meant that Pô Nagar was imperially revitalized twice. How that was possible will be elaborated in the following case study.

V.6.3. Conjuring Unity with a Transformed Pô Nagar: The chùa Thiên Mụ 天姥寺

Over the course of the seventeenth century, the Champa royalty between Huế and Nha Trang disintegrated. Việt nobles began to refer to themselves as *deva-raja* to attract the Cham locals. Hindu deities began to vanish in favor of newly assembled gods that reflected the social groups invested into them. The Việt rock deities thought to live in old Cham sculptures became very prevalent while the Sinitic earth gods remained rare in southern Đình.[1570] Both Cham and Việt actively worshiped mother goddesses, they merged their lore and adapted local river worship which was often integrated into Đạo Mẫu practice. By this point, the northern Neo-Confucian establishment had made clear what was expected of the separatist Nguyễn Hoàng if he wanted to present himself as the mandated ruler of an independent realm. Therefore, he ordered a 'survey of the land' that collected all the relevant deities venerated by the Việt locals. The three most important sacred sites that he personally visited formed a triangle of power and all of them were dedicated to different incarnations of Thiên Y A Na.[1571]

The central Vietnamese temples of Pô Nagar and Thiên Y A Na were preferably built near riverbanks or at the mouth of rivers,[1572] like the Cham sanctuary at the Thuận An estuary of Huế that was dedicated to Pô Nagar as the former tutelary deity of the flood zone.[1573] This one was integrated into Nguyễn Hoàng's collection of relevant sacred sites as well.

The location of the Thiên Mụ temple in modern Hương Hòa village thus fits a typical Pô Nagar site and once there was indeed a Cham Pô Nagar temple on

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1569 Cf. Đỗ Thiện 2003, p. 98.

1570 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 34–35.

1571 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng 2008, pp. 373–375.

1572 Cf. Trần Kỳ Phương and Rie Nakamura 2008, p. 16.

1573 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 171.

top of that hill.[1574] For this reason, the later Thiên Mụ temple once contained a minor temple (building?) dedicated to Pô Nagar as well for a while.[1575]

In Champa, temples were the only architectural structures made from enduring materials and thus lasting representatives of their culture. When the Cham Pô Nagar temple was destroyed,[1576] likely during the war of 1311, its ruins still marked a numinous place. Since Việt settlers claimed the site for their own, they renovated it and dedicated it to Y Na 伊那, whom they later called Thiên Mụ. The local Giang Đạm commune can be traced back to the late Trần dynasty and may therefore have been one of the first persevering Việt settlements in the area. This commune was then renamed Hà Khê 河溪 and expanded to a comparatively large size.[1577] Only half a century later, the severe succession wars of Champa shook the area and led to great devastation; the Y Na temple may have fallen victim to those. There are no mentions of the Hà Khê site between the 1380s and 1550s, although its next oldest mention in the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* [1555] suggests that a sacred site continued to exist there. Thus, there may be no sources left to enlighten us about the spatial contestations between the indigenous Cham population and Việt settlers at the site, but for the late imperial era, there are sufficient materials to trace the tug-o-war between the Buddhist and imperial claims to the occupied site. The following case study investigates the treatment of Thiên Mụ's identity in material representations and written narratives in connection to her role — both as deity and sacred site — for late imperial empire building, cultural integration and national unity.

Thừa Thiên — Huế Province, Huế City, Hương Hòa village. Date of visit: 09 Oct 2018.

The temple of Thiên Mụ, the "Heavenly Old Woman", is located five kilometers north of Huế, close to Kim Long village and Hà Khê hill, and it sits at the edge of

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1574 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 105.

1575 Cf. Cooke 1994, pp. 283–84.

1576 Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 229 argues that the Cham Pô Nagar temple may have been destroyed even earlier and by Gao Pian himself, since it was said that Gao Pian "broke the [geomantic] circuit".

1577 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, pp. 146, 158

the Perfume River (Hương Giang 香江). The Phước Duyên pagoda of Thiên Mụ temple is a highly visible landmark of Huế and belongs to the group of popular sights booked for tourism, but it is also a very active Buddhist temple. Nowadays, the temple is primarily accessed from the southern side via the waterway in front of its big pagoda. I chartered a private boat to access the temple like the majority of visitors do — from the waterside. To the east of the temple there are some tourist shops and a few houses, to the west there is a small settlement and the northern back of the temple is dominated by fields that used to separate the site from the Huế imperial citadel. From the docks, many steep stairs lead up to a street that covers the previous location of the former Nguyễn dynasty's ancestral shrine (đình Nguyễn) and two smaller temples. Four pillars on the stairs mark the Đình's former presence. The temple is surrounded by low walls and the steep hill's surface is rough and mostly untouched. More steps finally lead to the temple level. The first visible building is the seven stories high (21 m) pagoda made from red bricks. Every hexagonal level is partly roofed with tubular tiles and decorated tile ends. Every level gate is headed by a title plaque and embraced by a couplet. On the roofs, there are eave turrets in the shape of dragons in all directions. The pagoda has a simple, calabash shaped tip and is raised on a four-steps-high platform. In front of the pagoda is a lawn raised on a one-step-high platform, inside a stone rim are several pillar bases *(trụ sở/zhuchu* 柱础) that refer to the place of a former building with a square layout of three times three jian size. These are not surface traces, but rather newly placed stones. If these are meant to be a reminder to the đình Nguyễn, then the location would not be accurate and the four stairs on each side do not align with the number of entrances of a typical đình building. This imagination of surface traces was consciously planted, likely to enhance the national heritage character of the temple.

The front court of the temple is filled with several pavilions. On each side to the front of the pagoda, there is a square pavilion on a one-step-high platform, followed by a hexagonal pavilion raised on a two-step-high platform. All of them have clerestories and conical roofs. They were once painted yellow with colorful images, but they are not in a good condition. In a move towards musealization, the temple's treasures and steles are presented with information tags in Vietnamese and English that mention their recognition as national treasures.

The pavilions contain one votive bronze bell and the steles commemorating former restorations of the temple. The simple bronze bell located in the pavilion to the left behind the pagoda shows no text inscriptions, only decorative seal script characters followed by bands of meanders, hexagrams, dragon-like clouds and crashing waves.

The steles presented in the pavilions are:

- The "Imperially Established Thiên Mụ Temple" (*Ngự Kiến Thiên Mụ tự* 御建天姥寺), 1715, concerning the reconstruction of Nguyễn Phúc Chu 阮福淍 (r. 1691—1725).
- The "Imperially Manufactured Stele of Phước Duyên Pagoda of Thiên Mụ Temple" (*Ngự Chế Thiên Mụ tự Phước Duyên Bảo Tháp bi* 御製天姥寺福緣寶塔碑) and the "Imperially Manufactured Poem of the Thiên Mụ Bell's Sound — Fourteenth Scenic [Spot] of the Imperial Capital" *Ngự Chế Thi Thiên Mụ Chung Thanh — Thần kinh đệ thập tứ cảnh* 御製詩天姥鐘聲神京第十四景, both by Thiệu Trị 紹治 (r. 1841—1847) and dating to 1846.
- A stele about the Ministry of Works's (Bộ Công) restoration, without title, established 1899 under emperor Thành Thái 成泰 (r. 1889—1907).
- The "Poem With a Preface Written by the Emperor, Spontaneously Composed While Visiting Phước Duyên Pagoda of Thiên Mụ Temple" (*Ngự Chế Thiên Mụ tự Phước Duyên Bảo Tháp Lâm Hạnh Ngẫu Thành Nhất Luật Tính tự* 御製天姥寺福緣寶塔臨幸偶成一律併序), by Emperor Khải Định 啟定 (r. 1916—1925), dated to the 17th January of 1920. It is a freestanding stele located between the pagoda and the temple gate on a two-step-high platform that looks like a stone tripod.

The front wall of the temple has a small gate in each corner and a big threefold gate in its center. The latter has the oldest roof, but it was recently repainted. The walls that replace the usually couplet-bearing pillars are still empty of designs. Each entry of the main gate is sided by its own set of door gods. The upper level of the central gate is noticeably closed with wooden palisades, freshly painted brown. The roof has two eave turrets that depict clouds forming

a phoenix decoration. The central ridge turret is a steep stupa. The left gate has a plaque that reads *đại trí huệ* 大智慧 "Great Wisdom", referring to Mañjuśrī, the right gate has a plaque that reads *đại tư bi* 大慈悲 "Great Mercy", referring to Avalokiteśvara. The center gate's plaque, written in gold, reads Linh Mụ Tự 靈姥寺 — a supposedly old but actually rather recent name for the temple. Both bodhisattvas thus flank the "efficacious mother" as if she were a Buddha.

The architecture of the drum- and bell towers is very interesting. They are not individual towers but part of the inner wall. To each side of the main gate, the drum to the left, the bell to the right, their lower part connects to the wall and only the upper part resembles a tower. From the inside of the temple, they can be accessed by a small stone staircase. They have hipped roofs and stone ridges with dragon riders.

Entering the temple, a broad path of red ceramic tiles, flanked by lawns and young pines, leads to the first hall which is also the main hall. Taking a look back, the upper part of the main gate is open and shows a hieratic, painted icon of the Buddhist protector bodhisattva Skanda (Vi Đà Hộ Pháp, chin. *Weiduo* 韋駄) which stands behind a full altar table and a smaller, painted icon of a sitting yellow-blue dressed scholar (likely a votive icon).

Skanda is usually placed either in the first hall of a temple (commonly the Hall of Heavenly Kings) and it is unusual to see Skanda viewing the inner part of a temple. As a protector, he normally faces the gate of the temple to ward off evil influences. This raises the question as to what he could be guarding.

On the eastern side, directly connecting to the front wall, there is an open hall, three small jian-wide, facing west, which is raised on a two-step-platform. The curb roof has a lotus-bud ridge turret and the hall is in a semi-repainted condition, former couplets have been removed. The fenced-in statues show two white-skinned and one black-skinned heavenly king. The king in the center carries an umbrella, which is the attribute of Vaiśravaṇa,[1578] King of the North. The one on the left carries what appears to be a stick and holds a scroll, he is

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[1578] Cf. PDB 2014, p. 2360 and Frédéric 2003, pp. 242–46. For more information on the iconography of the Heavenly Kings, see: Shim, Yeoung Shin "Four Heavenly Kings: Iconography and Symbolism seen Through Literary Evidence and Imagery" Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania, 2013. https://repository.upenn.edu/handle/20.500.14332/32713.

Virūpākṣa, King of the West. The black-skinned king on the right (wall-side) carries a sword, the attribute of Virūḍhaka, King of the South. The western half of the temple mirrors this arrangement. The side statues are the same, the one in the center differs in depiction: it is a man on a tiger or lion that does the *vitarka-mudra*. If this is supposed to be Dhṛtarāṣṭra — the King of the East — then it would be a very unusual iconography, because he usually plays a pipa in Sinitic culture and carries a sword elsewhere.[1579]

In Buddhist iconography there are usually four heavenly kings, but among the six statues here we have the King of the North, twice the King of the West, twice the King of the South and a statue of what may be the King of the East. Sorting the present heavenly kings into black and white colors is also uncommon. Since the Heavenly King Hall between the main gate and main hall that Liu Xuefeng described[1580] does not physically exist, it is likely that after multiple former destructions of the site, the former Heavenly King Hall was deconstructed into the main gate's second story and the open halls to each side. Economic constraints may explain this as well as the iconographic differences.

The central path leading to the main hall, which is raised on a four-step-high platform, accentuates its size while the gable roof with multiple eaves visually raises the hall's height. Its stone ridge is topped with dragons that are turning their heads to look behind them, as a reference to the local legend. The central ridge turret depicts a shining *cintamani* (wish-fulfilling jewel.) that is filled with the Nôm-script character *xuống* 迊, meaning "to descend". This is also a reference to the local legend because Buddhist entities typically do not descend. Below the upper roof, there is a series of paintings that alternately depict plants in nature or Buddhist scenes. In front of the hall, there is a well-filled incense vessel on a lower platform. The entire hall is seven jian wide, its front part is three jian deep and the back hall appears to be two jian deep, all in all, the general appearance is majestic. The rectangular front pillars change to round pillars inside the hall and wooden plates with praising couplets are attached to them. The floor of the hall is also tiled red. The inner roof structure of the hall is typically Vietnamese in the sense that the consoles are hidden

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1579 All Heavenly King identifications are based on Frédéric 2003, pp. 246–247.

1580 Cf. Liu Xuefeng 2015, p. 88.

behind stabilizing wooden boards that in this case have no elaborately carved decorations. In the center of the main hall's front half is a glass vitrine positioned on a half-octagonal pillar that resembles a small pavilion. It contains a gold-plated statue of Bố Đại 布袋, who in Thiền Buddhism is considered an incarnation of the future Buddha Maitreya and therefore also called Bố Đại Di Lặc 布袋彌勒. He is clothed in a monk's robe and has one hand raised to his ear. With him, the front hall assumes the content and function usually given to the first hall in a Buddhist temple layout. At the back wall of the front hall there is a regular vitrine that contains various votive figurines, possibly of arhats, which are not enshrined but rather serve as decoration — to show the dedication that this site receives from believers. The side walls are closed and each has a round lattice window. In the front right corner, there is a bronze bell, in the left corner there is a drum, which visually emulates the bell- and drum towers.[1581] The front hall is separated from the back hall by wooden panel doors; thus, the back hall also serves as an inner chamber. At the time of my visit, only the central panel doors were open. Over the opening is a Nguyễn dynastic plaque titled *Linh Thứu Cao Phong* 灵鹫高峰, which is a name variant for Gádhrakúta, the Vulture Peak, a sacred place in the Buddhist religious landscape and a retreat of the Buddha. The inner chamber is a bit narrow and the doors and windows at the backside of the hall are not visible from here. There must be another compartment of at least one jian depth.[1582] With six jian depth, this hall is enormous by Vietnamese standards.

In the center of the hall is a simple shrine,[1583] not one of the multi-storied panorama shrines that are common in Vietnam. It contains a Buddhist triad with identical statues, in this case the Tam Thân 三身 "Trikaya". In front of it is an altar with a vitrine that contains a Shakyamuni statue. This ensemble signifies the *đại hùng bảo điện* 大雄宝殿, the Buddhist main hall. In front of the altar, there is a separate, golden incense vessel and a large bronze basin. To the

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1581 The main hall seems to embody a complete small temple on a microscale. Since it is close to one of the original gates, I chose it as a possible location for the core hall of the earliest temple establishments in my recreations of former layouts.

1582 Liu Xuefeng 2015, p. 88 also mentions a shrine to Quan Vũ that could not be found.

1583 Only monks are allowed to enter the chamber. I was allowed to take exactly three pictures, therefore I had to determine some details from a distance.

right of the central shrine is another, smaller shrine with a simple altar, but many flowers, fruit and incense offerings. The shrine has a pillar base in lotus shape, made from brass with a hexagonal vitrine part. The golden icon of a male person holds a lotus bud in the left hand and has an Amitabha Buddha on their crown. The plaque reads: *Thần Thông Trí Thăng* 神通智勝 ['Remarkable Ability and Surpassing Wisdom'], a reference to Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Đại Thế Chí Bồ tát 大勢至菩薩).[1584] On the left side of the hall, this set-up is mirrored, but the statue holds the lotus in his right hand, as Avalokiteśvara should do according to traditional Buddhist iconography[1585] and accordingly the shrine has a plaque titled *Quảng Vận Từ Tâm* 廣運慈心 ['Widespread Fortune and Compassionate Mind']. The backside of the building contrasts with the solemn and dignified appearance of the front side; it is painted pink and looks very run-down. Two locked doors give access to the rooms at the back of the main hall's inner chamber, the central part is the dharma-teaching hall, the western door leads to the abbot's office.

To the western side of the main hall, the path leads along a small rivulet and to the grand square behind the main hall. The square is filled with small tables that carry bonsai trees. Among the tiles, traces of prior walls are still recognizable, this square was likely the location of another temple hall before the destruction of 1904. The square is flanked by a side building with a simple, undecorated roof. The slim, two-jian-deep building is seven jian long. Except for the first room, it contains offices and other nonpublic administrative spaces. The first room displays the famous Austin motor car of monk Thích Quảng Đức (1897—1963), who immolated himself in protest against the Diệm regime (1955—1963). The further western side of the temple is occupied by a long side building back up to the outer wall that contains the monk's quarters, administrative offices and facilities.

Behind the bonsai square, there is a four-step-high platform with a significantly smaller hall on it. In the standard Buddhist layout, this platform

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1584 Position and plaque could also refer to Mañjuśrī. Both are commonly paired with Avalokiteś-vara in southern China and northern Vietnam because they both symbolize wisdom. Mahāsthāmaprāpta, though, is dependent on Avalokiteśvara and usually not depicted on his own. Cf. Frédéric 2003, pp. 124–26.

1585 Cf. Frédéric 2003, pp. 155–56.

would contain the main hall. And indeed, the space around the smaller hall on top of the platform still shows the old pillar bases that suggest the size of the hall was once seven jian wide and seven jian deep — a gigantic, imperial size.[1586] This would fit in with the historical accounts about this temple's former splendor. The contemporary hall is three jian wide and three jian deep, almost with a square layout. The pink painted hall would normally open its front to the south. Apparently, every hall in this temple shows a different roof style, this one has a curb roof that is comparatively plain and the central ridge turret depicts a dharma wheel. This hall is temporarily closed but usually open for ceremonies. Through the lattice windows one can see the (likely temporary) setting of a free-standing high altar table with a simple rectangular vitrine that contains a golden icon with a flowerlike crown. This is Kṣitigarbha[1587] (Địa tạng 地藏) and behind him is smaller altar for the deceased abbots and a tablet with many photos of deceased locals or donors.[1588] The last hall of the temple is also seven jian wide. The existence of many halls of that size in one site is very uncommon. It is raised on a four-step- high platform, to each side of the steps, guardian animals have been added rather recently. The hall has a curb roof, but this one has single eaves. There are many rather abstract ridge turrets and eave turrets. Among the seven jian, the outer wings are walled up with small round lattice windows, the central three jian are wooden panel doors. In front of the hall, there is a large bronze incense vessel, which was empty at the time of the visit: as local visitors explain, this hall is permanently closed and forbidden to the public.

It is important to note at this point that the back of the hall consists completely of wooden panel doors along all seven jian: This means that this hall originally faced north, not south, like the rest of the halls. This is a severe disharmony, just like having a permanently locked hall in the middle of such

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1586 A noticeable trait is that, similar to the temple of Lý Thường Kiệt, the outward jian are reduced by half.

1587 Cf. Frédéric 2003, pp. 191–92.

1588 The Kṣitigarbha Hall is one of the most important halls in East Asian Buddhism. Kṣitigarbha is responsible for alleviating all suffering and delivering those kept in hell until the coming of Maitreya (cf. Taylor 1986, p. 154), his hall is usually used for the rites of the dead and memorial services.

a famous temple. Up to this point, the entire temple that is named Heavenly Old Woman is utterly devoid of any trace of femininity and Thiên Mụ herself is nowhere to be seen. Is she so old that she has vanished completely from this active Buddhist temple? Although it is difficult to peek inside the hall, the content of it answers as many questions as it raises new ones. The central main shrine of the hall is visible, in front of it is a vitrine with a knee-high white statuette that depicts a female Bodhisattva Quan Âm as in the Chinese Nanhai style[1589] — a stark contrast to the Quan Âm of the main hall which resembles a gender ambiguous Indian prince. A little table contains rich sacrifices of flowers, perfume, *fresh* fruits and burned incense. Behind Quan Âm is a bigger, elaborate shrine whose front shows a 'wall' of five small flaming Buddhas, possibly the Manushibuddhas. Behind them is a large golden icon of a female Quan Âm — recognizable by the Amitabha in her crown. But this is not the usual young woman, her face is instead solemn and matronly, similar to that of Pháp Vân. The right side of the hall was not visible, but the left of the main shrine shows a long vitrine with five hell kings. Therefore, this can be assumed to be mirrored on the right side as well. The main shrine has a plaque that is simply titled *Quan Âm điện* 觀音殿, but (1) considering the depiction of the grand icon, (2) the water imagery of the smaller icon, (3) the fact that this is the only female themed hall in the entire complex, which is (4) 'permanently closed' and (5) the different orientation of the hall, then this building likely contains what is left of Thiên Mụ.

In the lush back of the temple, another red-tiled but smaller square leads to a rectangular pond behind which a large lawn expands over the former territory of the temple that once held many more buildings. Flanked by narrow paths, it leads to another raised platform. The steps towards it are flanked by lions. On the platform with two pillars to each side, there is another small platform that contains a small pagoda style stupa that visitors of the temple encircle in a fast pace. The octagonal, roughly three meters high stupa stands on small lion feet, it has six levels with green roof tiles and a calabash shaped tip. Its front holds a metal spirit tablet of Thích Đôn Hậu (1905—1992), who

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1589 A style that is related to the maritime iconographies of the seafaring goddess Mazu, cf. Yü 2001, pp. 245, 265.

was the politically active third supreme monk of the Giáo hội Phật giáo Việt Nam Thống nhất, the "Unified Buddhist Association of Vietnam". When Thích Đôn Hậu was to be buried, there was a dispute between the monks and the government because the government wanted to give him a state funeral for his many merits, which would have brought him to Hanoi. However, the monks refused with hunger strikes and threatened self-immolation, so he was buried here. A high wall protects the stupa from northern influences and behind it, a pine grove leads to the outer wall. Following the eastern path back to the entrance, there is suddenly a very old gate to the east. It can still be used as a side entrance, but is not cared for at all. However, there are strong stone pillar bases to the sides of the gateway, which means that even though this gate appears unofficial nowadays, it once held importance. The locals refer to this gate as "the old gate". From here, a path leads sideways down the mountain towards the settlement at the Perfume River bank. Looking at the historical materials and comparing the steep northern hill to the eastern slope, it becomes apparent that this was likely an ancient option to access the temple before the riverside entrance became accessible.

It does not seem to matter that this temple, which is nowadays presented as of pure Buddhist affiliation, has a name and a core legend that do not refer to anything Buddhist at all. Although the Buddhist tradition at this site is now old and was mostly undisturbed, the association with Thiên Mụ was important enough that no attempts were made to significantly change the temple's name — although name changes in Buddhist temples are otherwise rather unexceptional. Although named for a female spirit, Thiên Mụ temple is not a nunnery but a male monastery, therefore there are no feminine references to be found except for the one hall that is inaccessible to the public. The contemporary setting emphasizes the south and the current main hall is also located in the south of the temple. However, the center of the temple appears to have been gutted, this empty center is possibly still owed to the devastation at the beginning of the twentieth century and an imbalance between temple territory and available funding. Although throughout the compound there have been attempts at preserving historical evidence, this has been carried out without guidance. The active and musealized parts of the temple often contradict each other and this contests the atmosphere of normalcy that is superficially provided. Even in

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comparison to other famous Vietnamese temples, the enormous size of Thiên Mụ temple denotes its exalted position. Multiple structural aspects — like the orientation and <u>obstruction</u> of the Quan Âm hall, the alternative gates, the gaps once filled with buildings — point towards the previous construction phases of the site. With so many hints, it is now time to look at the textual sources to reconstruct the context of the site's reconfiguration history. With that, we could find answers to the following questions:

How does the aspect of spiritual water control of this incarnation of Thiên Mụ reflect the issue of cultural integration in relation to Thiên Y A Na?

What role did the site's history of cultural integration play for its political evaluation as it became increasingly relevant for empire building?

How did that evaluation influence the perception and representation of Thiên Mụ?

All of these questions lead to the meaning that Thiên Mụ possessed in later imperial times and to the answer why a more and more uncontested Buddhist temple has held on to her name and her presence — even if it is strongly concealed. Looking at this one site that has passed through the claims of at least four different interest groups provides valuable insight into the dynamics of transcultural ideology transfer.

V.6.3.1. The Thiên Mụ Site in Context with Written Sources

In 1558, the first ruler of the Nguyễn lords, Nguyễn Hoàng 阮潢 (1525—1613), called out his own reign in opposition to the north. In 1600, he established the second of his capitals in Dinh Cát, where he had previously served as a governor. This place became Phú Xuân (modern Huế). In 1601, after he had visited various mountains and rivers, Thiên Mụ temple was established under the name Thiên Mụ từ 天姥祠. This is supposed to be the official founding date of the temple,[1590] however, the Thiên Mụ từ was neither the first temple at that

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1590 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 146.

location, nor the first carrying the name Thiên Mụ. The first known mention of the site can be found in the *Ô Châu Cận Lục*.

> 天老寺. <u>金茶縣</u><u>江淡社</u>之南, 上居山頂下扰江流. 超塵世之三千近天邉之咒尺 客有散步登臨. 不自知其發善心俗消. 慮誠, 方丈之景致也.
>
> *Thiên Mụ tử. Located in the south of Giang Đạm village, Kim Trà district.*[1591] *Residing on a hilltop, below [the shrine] flows a river. Transcending the limits of the mundane world, approximating the three thousand heavenly recitations, the visitors take a walk to visit this place famous for its scenery. Spontaneously they harbor good thoughts and the vulgar is eliminated. Considering that, this is truly the scenery of the abbot's quarters.*[1592]

The term *phương trượng* 方丈 has several meanings, but most commonly refers to the abbot's quarters in a Buddhist monastery. The text is focused on presenting the site's qualities as a scenic spot but remains vague. Considering the religious geography of the area, this could already be a case of <u>concealment</u> or at least an attempt at misdirection: here, "the scenery of the abbot's quarters" is used as a metaphor and does not necessarily express that there is a physical abbot's quarter present at the temple site. Perhaps Buddhists lived there during the sixteenth century when Việt settlement in the area was already three hundred years old. However, if we regard that a famous Buddhist teacher (see below) refused to even go there, then whatever form of Buddhism was practiced on site was probably not considered pure by northern Buddhist standards. This is supported by the next entry of the *Ô Châu Cận Lục*, which describes the đền Linh Di 靈移祠 ['Shrine of the Efficacious Motion'] and how, after tree felling activities on the site of Thiên Mụ temple, a large mussel was seen moving between the trees. Since this is quite a curious thing for a mussel to do, it was captured and enshrined. The people called it Linh Dị Cự Dạng 靈移巨蚌 ['Huge Mussel of Efficacious Motion'] and it allegedly always answered prayers immediately.[1593]

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[1591] A district of roughly 4 km diameter that is mostly identical with modern Thừa Thiên Huế.

[1592] *Ô Châu Cận Lục* 5: 48b. "天老祠".

[1593] *Ô Châu Cận Lục*. 5:53b–54a.

We do not learn what the people prayed to it for. All of this means that before 1601, there already existed an elegant site at the spot of Thiên Mụ temple which was visited by the locals. This site may or may not have been aligned to Buddhism, but its location beside a river and its connection to a mysterious aquatic creature implies ties to hydrolatry. 1601 is therefore not the founding date of the temple, but when it was *claimed* for the empire.

The first textual evidence that connects Thiên Mụ temple with a Nguyễn ruler is a century younger and does not relate to Nguyễn Hoàng at all. The *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 海外紀事[1594] was written in 1696 by the Chinese monk Thích Đại Sán 釋大汕 (1633—1704). Nguyễn Phúc Trăn 阮福溙 (r. 1687—1691) had invited him to propagate Buddhism in his realm, but the monk refused and only accepted the invitation of his successor even though he was already 61-years old.[1595] In October 1695, Thích Đại Sán arrived at Thiên Mụ temple in the middle of the rain season.[1596] At the time, the abbot's hall which he was meant to take residence in, the community hall, and two administrative buildings were still being renovated.[1597] He states that although the woodcutters were still busy, the columns of the temple were already decorated with "beautiful" carvings.

Thích Đại Sán called the site a "fishermen's temple" (*chùa ngư phủ* 漁甫 寺) but also claims that it was previously an "imperial palace" (*vương phủ* 王 府), surrounded by ancient trees and facing the riverbank. Thích Đại Sán describes the site primarily for its comfort and leisure, but he did not mention any qualified monks,[1598] which gives the impression that he did not consider

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1594   Original editions of the *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* are located in the Japanese Archives of Indochina and in the China National Library 國立中央 圖書館, divided into six volumes, which at the time of writing were not available to me. Although there is a scanned version of the book available in the repository of the Vietnam National University, Hanoi: https://repository. vnu.edu.vn/handle/VNU_123/53200, that edition is missing the essential pages 1–5 and 16b–19b of book 5. Therefore, I am working with a Vietnamese translation that I checked against the stele of 1715 in situ.

1595   Cf. Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 147. The famous Thiền monk from Jiangxi was also known as Thạch Liêm / Shi Lian 石濂. He later served as a diplomat to the Chinese Kangxi emperor, although without success.

1596   Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 192.

1597   Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 190.

1598   Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 208, in reference to the original edition's Book 5.

the Buddhist practice there to be relevant. The fact that a ruler invited a famous monk to act as the abbot to Thiên Mụ temple and to educate the local Buddhist community further implies that Việt Thiền Buddhism may not have been locally accepted as accurately as he wished for. Thích Đại Sán's description praises the landscape and stresses 'moist' imagery, like the mountain gate that was overgrown with moss. In his poem, he mentions, "Since ancient times, rain would result in the building of altars,"[1599] he claims this to be a quote from an old legend about Thiên Mụ. Taking that comment together with the idea that Thiên Mụ Temple was once a palace-like building, this shows that Thích Đại Sán was not unaware of the site's older heritage. He must have known that it was important to another social group and implies the function of the entity once venerated here: making rain.

In addition, Thích Đại Sán relates how Nguyễn Phúc Chu later came to visit the site and inquired as to why the construction of the temple had not yet been completed and Thích Đại Sán had not yet taken up residence in the abbot's quarters. Representing the temple's fledgling monastic community, Thích Đại Sán answered that previously, they had been financed by an official, but he had been promoted to another post. Thus, from a total cost of up to eight thousand taels, five thousand taels[1600] were still missing. Nguyễn Phúc Chu claimed to be fortunate to be his (Buddhist) disciple since the famous monk had decided to come, but he found that "his humble self" had done nothing of merit. In reaction to the ruler's lamentation about not having a representative place, Thích Đại Sán immediately suggested that supporting this temple would surely produce fame and merit. Nguyễn then assured him that the monks could utilize as much funding as they needed over the course of one year, and he would not have any regrets about it. The present monks then argued that the realm in China was filled with temples, but except for the chùa Pháp Tướng

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1599 Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 203.

1600 A tael was ideally equal to a hundred coin-strings, but mostly it was much less, as little as eighty coin-strings. Vietnamese coin-strings usually had sixty to seventy coins and furthermore, the Nguyễn lords ran low both on cash mints and copper. Cf. Andreas Reinecke and Helmut Richter, e-mail conversation with author, May, 28–31, 2017.

(chin. Faxiang-si) 法相寺 in Zhejiang,[1601] none had been built by foreign kings (i.e., non-Chinese ones). Encouragingly, the monks insisted that if Nguyễn also finished the grand halls of chùa Trường Thọ (chin. Changshou-si) 長壽寺 [1602] and chùa Pháp Tướng — both Chinese sites — he would surely get a good reputation. Nguyễn agreed to "promote merit" and to make his family's "origin known".[1603] The monks were very eager to receive his patronage to finish their expansion projects. The fact that the monks involved in Thiên Mụ temple's expansion were that interested in getting funding for temples located in China is another hint that they may have been comparatively new to the area (possible travel companions of Thích Đại Sán) and did not represent a locally grown Buddhist community.

For Thích Đại Sán, Thiên Mụ temple belongs to the same kind of site as the Chinese temples that Nguyễn Phúc Chu was asked to support, the kind which always ensured Buddhist popularity in contested environments: hydrolatric sites that provided the means for spiritual water control. The other two temples showed similarities to the Tứ Pháp, this may either be owed to the southern Chinese-Việt cultural network or to the Tứ Pháp system being more widespread than we can fathom so far. In any case, these other temples were famous for their rainmaking function and the same function was thus

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1601 The site of a secondary member of the Tứ Pháp (or a homonym thereof) in Hangzhou, China. It was strongly associated with a sacred spring, fertility rites, and rites for good weather.

1602 This was a site in Guangdong (China) that venerated Pháp Vũ. Thích Đại Sán later became abbot of that temple. Another Pháp Vũ/Fayu Temple 法雨寺 was once one of the three major temples of Putuo Shan (普陀山), Zhejiang. Originally named "Stone Temple" 石寺, it was expanded into a nunnery in 1580 because of a numinous local spring. It was named Fahai Guanyin 法海觀音 or Haichao-an 海潮庵. The Kangxi Emperor rebuilt it in 1699 and bestowed the plaques called *Fayu Huisi* 法雨揮寺 "Temple Commanding the Dharma of Rain" and *Tianfu Fayu* 天花法雨 "Smallpox Dharma of Rain", which led to the temple's modern name. To this day, the temple's main hall is a Guanyin Hall that was later renamed Nine Dragons Hall because it contains a well of the same name. Cf. Chinese Buddhist Association 中国佛教协会. "Putuoshan Fayu-si 普陀山法雨寺" March 13 2012. http://www.chinabuddhism.com.cn/zdsy/95/2012-03-13/278.html. After further investigation in 2023, I cannot ascertain any Sino-Việt relationship in the lore of this site. However, it proved to be a superscribed hydrolatric site based on a fishermen's temple as well. The reference to smallpox needs to be investigated further on the background of possible ties to coastal predecessors of Pô Nagar and the Tứ Pháp due to the Greater India era.

1603 Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 204.

expected of Thiên Mụ, although there was neither a discussion nor indication of her actual mythology. Thích Đại Sán's account[1604] is retold on the stele of 1715[1605] together with a summary of the 1710—1715 reconstruction of the temple and another poem.

The 2.6 m high stele *Ngự Kiến Thiên Mụ tự* 御建天姥寺 ['Imperially Established Thiên Mụ Temple'] is one of the oldest that remains in the entire area of Huế. It starts with a praise of the Buddha and continues to describe the virtues of the country — its western mountain and the "mostly" peaceful waters. The general area of Kim Long and the hill at the river bank are considered perfect for the construction of Thiên Mụ temple, written Thiên Mụ thiên 天姥禪[1606] here. The expansion of the site employed both artisans and soldiers. Their hard work resulted in an enormous temple, ready to house a high number of visiting monks. The stele text describes the gold-and-jade filled temple with a newly erected mountain gate that surely came with a fitting outer wall. The gate was followed by a Hall of Heavenly Kings (điện Thiên Vương 天王殿), a hall for the Jade Emperor (điện Ngọc Hoàng 玉皇殿), leading up to the Treasure Hall of the Great Hero — the Buddhist main hall. Next to that was a dharma hall for teaching and a sutra hall (library). This is the first occasion that a bell and a drum tower are mentioned; they were able to mark the temple as Buddhist even when viewed from a distance.

Drum and bell towers are usually found in the front of a temple but here they were placed unusually deeply and centrally inside the complex, possibly so they could be seen from any of the accessible sides. There was a hall of the ten hell kings (điện Thập Vương 十王殿), likely used for services for the dead, and

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1604 Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, pp. 202–04.

1605 Cf. *Hải Ngoại Kỷ Sự* 2016, p. 281.

1606 In Vietnam, *thiền* 禪 was occasionally used as a suffix categorizing a Thiền Buddhist temple. It was also used like that on some of the Tứ Pháp steles. It is likely an abbreviation for *thiền tự* 禅寺.

a Vân Thủy[1607] chamber behind it, followed by a *Tri Vi* building.[1608] The back part of the already huge temple was occupied by a Quan Âm hall (điện Đại Bi 大悲殿) and one for the Medicine Buddha (điện Dược sư 藥師殿), a Solitary Meditation Hall[1609] with ten chambers and behind it was the Garden of Vaiśāli City Abbot's Hall[1610] and multiple monk's quarters.

Whatever shape the previous smaller site had, all these additions show that the site had only now transformed into a full-fledged Buddhist temple with permanently residing monks. Only then did Thiên Mụ Temple become part of the Buddhist landscape. If we do not disregard the accounts about Nguyễn Hoàng as being completely fabricated, then the previous change in suffix attribution from the Buddhism associated -tự 寺 to a more general -từ 祠 in 1601 which was then changed back to a Buddhist -tự 寺 makes it likely that Nguyễn Hoàng had a more stately and traditional usage of the site in mind. But that would not have fit into the Buddhism-sponsoring narrative that Thích Đại Sán had developed for Nguyễn Phúc Chu. Since that regent did seek an alliance with the clergy,[1611] it was wise to acknowledge them with the -tự 寺 category.

Sources on Thiên Mụ from the Nguyễn Dynasty

For another century, we do not learn much about the development of the Thiên Mụ temple other that it was almost completely destroyed at the end of the eighteenth century. The Nguyễn rulers then took a keen interest in the site and

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1607 Jap. *unsui* 雲水 is a term of Thiên Buddhism that describes a neophyte traveling (like clouds and water) from monastery to monastery to find the right master. Cf. A Dictionary of Buddhism. ed. Damien Keown et. al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. s. v. "unsui", p. 316 and PDB 2014, p. 2507.

1608 The term *zhiweitang* 知味堂 refers to the concept of Rasarasāgratā but this does not help to identify this building. Bonhomme 1915 p. 178 translates the term as "flavor of the Law" or room of knowledge. Maybe it is a variation of the Vegetarian Hall *zhaitang* 齋堂, in this context a dining building for the monks.

1609 *tăng liêu* 僧寮, literally "monk's hut".

1610 The building's name refers to Vaiśāli, a city-state in the Buddha's lifetime and place of the Second Buddhist Council. It is a variant to *piyeku* 毘耶窟 the "Room at Vaiśāli", the Vimalakīrti's room known as *fangzhang/phương trượng* 方丈.

1611 So much so that he and his family converted to Buddhism in 1695, which caused his entire court to follow him in doing so. Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 108.

its relationship to their first ancestor in the south. Due to this relationship, it could provide them with options to demonstrate their legitimacy as rulers who were not only connected to but also identified with the southern territories. The Vietnamese historian Lê Nguyễn Lưu refers to the *Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ* 欽定大南會典事例, a late nineteenth-century book about the laws and statutes under the Nguyễn dynasty, for a description of the temple after Gia Long's reconstruction that was finished in 1815. The temple was still big, but very reduced in comparison to 1715. Gia Long's successor emperor Minh Mạng 明命 (r. 1820—1841) organized several Buddhist services for the deceased there, although he was known to have preferred Confucianism.[1612] After his renovation, the điện Đại Hùng ['Hall of the Great Hero'] was now placed in the center of the site, followed by a Di Lặc hall, a Quan Âm hall, a Sutra Storing building and another hall for the hell kings. The library was enlarged, now measuring three jian. Curiously, at the sites there was now *another* điện Đại Hùng[1613] which can only be seen as a reconfigurative disharmony. Thiệu Trị was the first Nguyễn ruler who personally wrote about the site, his account is highly relevant because the 1.77 m high *Ngự Chế Thiên Mụ tự Phước Duyên Bảo Tháp bi* 御製天姥寺福緣寶塔碑 ['Imperially Manufactured Stele of Phước Duyên Pagoda of Thiên Mụ Temple'], erected between April and May of 1846, finally presents the mythology of Thiên Mụ in the variant of a legend that must have been transmitted for a long time.

It describes Thiên Mụ as an old woman dressed in red and green who would materialize at the hilltop. This was expanded to contain a request for a temple and then a prophecy about an ideal ruler who would bring prosperity to the realm. Thiệu Trị's stele begins with praise for Shakyamuni and details about the construction of Phước Duyên Pagoda, containing obvious Buddhist messages meant to be put into practice by the readers:

1612 Cf. Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, pp. 146–147.

1613 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, pp. 182–83. With reference to the *Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ* 208:33 and 123:13.

發菩提心, 勸人善, 弘施方便, 力濟眾歸良. 此是生善之妙緣進行之深福也. 故出其言 善則千里之外應之德.

Expand the bodhicitta,[1614] *recommend good deeds; abundantly carry out the skillful means, energetically aid the masses to return to goodness. This is the miraculous cause that advances profound good. Because of this, the good words are responded to with virtue over a thousand miles' distance.*

But these are followed by a legend that does not contain the slightest trace of Buddhism:

我大南, 天生聖人, 造山河。肇開邦國, 閱山川之形勝有河溪之平原, 突起高崗蟠龍回顧。 前臨香水, 道味之源淵涵。 後鎮平湖清之境, 自在詢知天姥時降曰: 應天順人眞主興建梵宮, 聚靈氣以固龍脈, 信如其言也。時辛丑四十四 年乃建天姥寺于是山, 以表發祥定鼎之福地者也。聖明世出廣被善緣。

In our country,[1615] *Heaven brought forth the sages and created mountains and rivers. At the founding of our state,*[1616] *during the land survey [travels of Nguyễn Hoàng], on the plain of Hà Khê, a cragged high mound stuck out, appearing like a coiled dragon*[1617] *that was turning its head. In its front, it faces the Perfume River, which is the source of the [numinous] scent. Behind it, there is the pure realm of the Calm Lake. When [Nguyễn Hoàng] inquired about it, he learned that once, Thiên Mụ descended and said: 'To comply with Heaven's arrangement, a man — the true lord — will build an Indian Palace,*[1618] *and gather efficacious Qi to strengthen*

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1614 *putixin* 菩提心 "thought of enlightenment" is the basic prerequisite to commence seeking the enlightenment, its spread is thus especially important in Mahāyāna Buddhism to make Buddhism successful. Cf. PDB 2014, pp. 311–314.

1615 Đại Nam 大南 is an epithet for the Vietnamese realm during the imperial period.

1616 This refers to Đàng Trong, the southern territory under the rule of the Nguyễn lords.

1617 There are several descriptions that likened the hill of Thiên Mụ temple to the appearance of a dragon; some even claimed that there was a dragon cave in the vicinity (Cf. Liu Xuefeng 2015, p. 88). More likely, the dragon-like appearance was a reason to assume that the place might be numinous.

1618 *fangong* 梵宮 originally refers to the palace of Brahma, but was also used as a synonym for Buddhist temples. Cf. Soothill 2014, p. 354.

the dragon vein.[1619] *His words will be reliable.'*[1620] *In the 44th year [of his reign, the year] Tân Sửu [in the hexagenary cycle, i.e., 1601], Thiên Mụ temple was founded on that mountain to express the lucky position in which the capital had been [newly] fixed. Generations of saints occurred widespread due to good karma.*

The stele also lists other prior interactions with the site: the big bell cast in 1710, the reconstruction of 1714, the older stele of 1715 that "announced" new buildings and whose meditation and lecture halls "reminded of Vulture Peak". Gia Long restored the temple in 1815 and "increased the splendor". Minh Mạng also initiated some reconstruction and expansion, though no details are mentioned. According to the stele, all this was done for the sake of the people. It is emphasized that the seven-level high pagoda was added in times of peace, stability and sufficient public funds. That statement shows that there was some interest in stressing that the Buddhist restoration activities, which went on for two years, were no burden on the state or the people.

This tale of reconstruction and expansion ends with the addition of the precious pagoda named Phước Duyên, which contained golden Manushibud-dhas and two Shakyamuni sculptures. It also mentions further buildings whose names are plays on words. These were a raised Định called Hương Nguyễn 阮鄉 ['native place of the Nguyễn'] and two minor temples called Hương Nguyễn 香願 "desiring incense". The last Buddhist laudation ends abruptly with a quote from the Confucian core scripture *Lunyu* 論語 (7:22) about choosing good quality in one's teachers, followed by quotes from the *Yijing* 易經 and *Shujing* 書經 (both

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1619 Strengthening the Qi and the "dragon vein" are geomantic concepts. It was believed that dragon veins ran through mountains and their ability to flow influenced the well-being of the land.

1620 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, 152, translates the passage like this: "Bả Trời bảo rằng: 'Đe vâng mệnh trời, thuận lòng dân, vị chân chúa dựng lên chùa Phật, quy tụ khí thiêng cho vững bền long mạch'. Quả đúng như lời, vào năm thứ bốn mươi bốn, Tân Sửu [1601], […]". The original stele is without punctuation, so Lê interprets the phrase "信如其言也" as referring to the following sentence. However, the character *ye* 也 usually designates a final stop. In my opinion, the phrase is part of Thiên Mụ's direct speech and intended to emphasize the authority transfer from her to the foreign Nguyễn Hoàng by encouraging the locals to trust the new ruler from a different culture.

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Confucian classics) that refer to acting in accordance with Heaven's will and cherishing the Mandate of Heaven. After these quotes, the inscription ends with a poem that encourages the propagation of Buddhist teaching. These mixed messages mirror adequately the ideological turmoil of the Nguyễn dynasty.

Although Thiệu Trị's stele was erected centuries after the Nguyễn lords had established their regency, the legend of Thiên Mụ was important enough to be included, because of its connection to Nguyễn Hoàng who was presented in a messianic way. It was not entirely a newly formulated narrative, as indicated by the sentence "once, Thiên Mụ descended", when Thiên Mụ is used as the goddess' personal name instead as a descriptor. It was surely a constructed narrative that the Heavenly Old Woman was already expecting someone just like him to arrive, it is just too convenient to not be intended to create legitimacy for the Nguyễn ancestor whose power was achieved by an illegal secession. Nguyễn Hoàng does not even directly interact with the goddess, she is presented to him as a matter of the past, a local legend that 'foretold' his arrival. Her announcement, "His words will be reliable" demonstrates the legend's appealing character. By calling him a "true" lord, the supernatural authority encourages the reader to believe that Nguyễn Hoàng was worthy of subjecting oneself to.

There is another legend related to the pagoda's construction that also takes up the motif of supernatural investiture: The Calm Lake was a small pond inside the temple, located close to the pagoda (notice how that was called the "back" of the site). After the pagoda was finished, one especially durable turtle came up from the river to drink the pond water and broke through the outer wall, which was a supernatural feat. Suddenly, a storm rose and lightning struck the turtle, turning it into stone. The wall was then repaired but the turtle preserved and since then the pond has had a turtle-like stone at its edge.[1621] This would be the second supernatural aquatic creature to interact with the site, with the meaningful difference that the turtle was a specifically Vietnamese symbol of legitimate investiture. The appearance of the turtle just in time for the construction of the pagoda emphasized the imperial claim to the site by conveying the agreement of the water deities, which was then proven by the end of the prolonged drought. Thus, Thiệu Trị's intervention was depicted as a

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1621 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 177.

part of the heavenly plan. In this way, the events at the site became connected to the fate of the entire realm. The Nguyễn dynasty erected their Đình directly in front of the pagoda, turning this site into the location of their family clan and thus irrevocably connecting Thiên Mụ Temple to their name.

The second stele of Thiệu Trị provides more details on belief and practice at Thiên Mụ temple. It repeats some lyrically embellished information from the first stele, referencing the entity of the legend as Thần Nữ (chin. *shennü* 神女). Her bestowment of a heavenly grant is seen as good fortune to build the temple at this mountain. A short poem describes the temple as a visible trace of Buddhism that brings good fortune by separating good from evil. The second poem, *Hạnh Thiên Mụ tự* 幸天姥寺 ['Imperial Visit to Thiên Mụ Temple'] leads into an aquatic motif common in the context of this temple which equals the spread of Buddhism with nourishing water. It ends with: "Compassionate clouds droop at the ocean's peak, Dharma rain will benefit people and Heaven.[1622]" The poem *Hạnh Thiên Mụ tự Ngẫu Đề* 幸天姥寺偶題 ['Images Inscribed on the Occasion of an Imperial Visit to Thiên Mụ Temple'] is another example of praising the raised visibility of Buddhism, the temple's scenery and how it supports the prosperity of the imperial capital's dragon vein to demonstrate how Buddhism is useful to the state. Vulture Peak seems to be an ongoing motif for the temple and was likely already a name for the main hall: approximately "The splendor of the Vulture Peak Room of the temple was increased.[1623]" The third titled poem is *Thiên Mụ tự Trung Nguyên* 天姥寺中元 ['Ullambana at Thien Mu Temple'] and describes the performance of Water and Land rites. It mentions how popular and important the temple was, attracting boatloads of Thiền monks coming for a visit. This is very important information, since the Water and Land rites were very expensive and meaningful on the one hand, but useful for negotiating various religious beliefs on the other hand.[1624] The

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1622 Stele in situ, front face: 慈雲垂海岳 | 法雨利人天.

1623 Stele in situ: 增輝梵宇鷲峰鮮.

1624 This refers to the liberation rite of water and land *fajie shengfan shuiliu pudu dazhai shenghui* 法界聖凡水陸普度大齋勝會 or simply *shuiliu zhai* 水陸齋, which invites the ascendant beings to help those suffering in the lower realms (or Buddhist hell), but it also became a ritual of rainmaking and state protection. It was a rare rite because it was very expensive and exceptionally exhausting. It occupied a high number of monks and often relied on the spon-

most important information of this stele is found in a lengthy account on its backside:

節交末伏夏季秋初, 乃近來夾旬嗇雨余之憂民憫農無時或暇. 命<u>承天府</u>之府承<u>阮</u><u>忠義</u>禱雨於<u>會同廟</u>兩次未獲輒應. 誠恐連日: 恒暘必至傷禾. 余心務本重, 念民天更加焦急適天姥寺築福緣褓塔.[1625]

Turning from the heat of summer to the beginning of autumn, in recent weeks there was hardly any rain and I am worried for the people and I feel compassion for the farmers who have neither time nor leisure [as they lose their crops]. I ordered the government official Nguyễn Trung Nghĩa of the governmental seat in Thừa Thiên to engage in earnest prayer for rain at the Temple of Council [miếu Hội Đồng][1626] twice, but no immediate response was obtained. I am truly afraid that the continuous and constant sunshine day after day certainly will destroy the grain! My mind is preoccupied with this heavy matter, the people are growing more worried day by day, So I pursue the completion of the building project of the Phước Duyên pagoda of Thiên Mụ temple.

The stele continues to describe the inauguration in detail. Since the emperor is already expecting the pagoda's erection to produce rain and other court members spontaneously produce Buddhist texts, he also writes down his thoughts on the matter using some Buddhist vocabulary. The terms "benevolent dark

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soring by a ruler. In some iterations, the ritual needs to be conducted close to a cliff. The Water and Land rites were commonly a place of syncretism, where different religious aspects and entities were brought together to receive Buddhist relief. Cf. PDB 2014, pp. 1947–48. Their occurrence here stresses the importance of Thiên Mụ Temple and its ties both to the empire and rain ceremonies, yet the temple had no separate Water and Land Hall as they occur in bigger temples of China or Korea. For the usage of Water and Land rites to consolidate local cults, see Davis 2001, pp. 175–76. Also refer to the extensive work of Bloom, Phillip Emmanuel. "Descent of the Deities: The Water-Land Retreat and the Transformation of the Visual Culture of Song-Dynasty (960—1279) Buddhism." Dissertation. Harvard University, 2013.

1625 The eroded stele text was enhanced with a transcription from Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 169.

1626 Also called Vĩnh Long 永隆, this is the place where the two otters that saved Gia Long's life are venerated. This shows that a temple that directly connected the ruling house with water deities was preferred to one that related a rain deity with an earlier ancestor and the former inhabitants of the area that the imperial Nguyễn were trying to culturally obliterate.

clouds" (*tư đàm* 慈曇) and "Dharma Rain" (*pháp vũ* 法雨) are normally used metaphorically. However, in this case, they refer to actual weather. The accumulating clouds finally bring the desired downpour, fields and vegetables are replenished with rain. It is said that there was no storm and that the rivers swelled in a safe manner, so that the transport ships that had been stuck on the imperial channel could finally reach the seaport.

The descriptions of Thiên Mụ Temple are usually full of references to its moist environment and constant rains, a drought in this place must have been terrifying for the people. The government acted responsibly by sending a high official to partake in the rainmaking rituals of the highest academic Confucian temple. The Nguyễn dynasty may have used Buddhism to support their legitimacy and to appease the people, but they did not treat Buddhism like a state religion nor did they allow Buddhists to become politically influential. Concerning everyday governmental affairs, they relied on the means of their often flawed Confucian state system first and only went for Buddhism when the situation grew dire.[1627] Only when official rainmaking failed did it become acceptable for the emperor to invest into a Buddhist temple. It is important to note that Thiệu Trị did not really accept Buddhist rites because those had already proven their efficacy, instead he had them done because he *expected* them to be efficacious. That tells us that his personal beliefs may have differed from the official Nguyễn ideology. Finally, his meritorious construction activity is depicted as the cause for the rain that was granted and thus supported his political legitimacy as well.

The stele ends with four more poems which praise the pagoda's efficacy and refer to the clouds that always accumulate on top of it. This means that the pagoda's power to alleviate droughts came from Buddha. The second poem also praises the pagoda as fulfilling its intended function as a religious and imperial landmark, a purpose intended to last for centuries. The third poem adds that the newly erected đình Hương Nguyện will bring relief and clear up clouds

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1627 For more information on how the Nguyễn dynasty reapplied their Nguyễn lord heritage, see: Cooke, Nola. "The Myth of the Restoration: Dang-Trong Influences in the Spiritual Life of the Early Nguyen Dynasty (1802—47)". In *The Last Stand of Asian Autonomies. Studies in the Economies of East and South-East Asia,* edited by A. Reid, 269–295. London: Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1997. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-25760-7_11.

and water. The last poem contains Buddhist praises relating to Ullambana. Although all four poems were created by the same author, they express the competition between Buddhist and imperial structures regarding the question as to who alleviates droughts most efficiently. The different poems appreciate different parts of the temple but attribute the same water controlling powers to them. This relates the agenda of the interventions applied to the site clearly to the intention of making Buddhism more visible.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the French had invaded the country and subjected it to their colonial system. The position of the emperor had suffered great losses and interaction with the site was limited. The untitled 1899 stele by the Ministry of Works succinctly states that the pagoda was renovated and the officials took note of it. The last proof of imperial interaction with the site is the stele of Emperor Khải Định that will be treated at a later point. Late imperial documents provide some more variants of the Thiên Mụ legends.

Bonhomme[1628] cites the *Việt Nam Khai Quốc Chi* 越南開國志 ['History about the Foundation of Việt Nam'].[1629] According to the record, "the Lord of the South" made an excursion through the territory's scenic spots. "There were no mountains he did not visit, no streams where he did not contemplate." When he came to the area of Hă Khê, he noticed the dragon-like hill and when he climbed it, he saw that a trench had been cut into the hill's base. The locals relate to Nguyễn Hoàng that the hill has "always been an abode of a deity," because during the Tang dynasty, the Chinese general Gao Pian "visited all the mountains and all the rivers of the country. When he 'encountered any place with supernatural power, he immediately had a trench dug there, in order to

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1628 This was a French author who studied Vietnamese temples and often published in the *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Huê* at the beginning of the twentieth century. The journal was meant to alleviate the fears of the 'arcane' Vietnamese tradition. Cadière, who had lived in Vietnam since 1895, founded the organization behind the bulletin in 1913 as he was alarmed by the visible deterioration of the Vietnamese historical sites. To stop them from disappearing before their eyes, he assembled seventeen French and Vietnamese friends in Huế to create a society that would study, preserve and transmit the heritage of the Huế area. Bonhomme was one of them and became a top French official in the 1920s. Cf. Cooke 1991, pp. 282–83.

1629 An official history that contains material of the seventeenth century, but was revised under the reign of Gia Long. Cf. Momoki Shiro 2017, p. 164.

destroy this power with the intention of seizing the territory of the South."[1630] Such a trench would have, according to geomancy, inhibited the mountain's power and may have caused the disappearance of the goddess. In recognition of the numinous site, Nguyễn Hoàng had the backside of the hill dug up and the locals further reported that there once was a youthful woman with white hair, in a red dress and green trousers, sitting down at the hill moaning: "The lord of the land will fill in the veins of the hill in order to enlarge the Court of the South and he will build a temple for the hill so that it will regain its supernatural power" which would bring prosperity. She disappeared and was then called Thiên Yêu 天妖 ['Heavenly Enchantress']. Nguyễn Hoàng exclaimed in reaction "This is the Lady who will give the throne to my family." After that, the temple he built was named Thiên Mụ, all the favor the locals asked for there were reportedly granted.

Nguyễn Hoàng is much more active in this version of the legend and more emphasis is given to his interaction with the environment. As a proper ruler, he surveys the land and balances its Qi. The locals state that the deity had been with them for a long time. The intervention from the Chinese general made the deity disappear, so in this variant of the legend, Nguyễn Hoàng also never meets her personally, nor did any of the locals alive at the time ever meet her. For them, the goddess of the hill is an entity from the distant past.

The *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* 大南一統志, the official geographical record of the Nguyễn dynasty, includes a long section on Thiên Mụ Temple that begins with a description of the site, recounts its legend and then describes the further fate of it. First, let us look at the legend presented here,[1631] since the verified commentary that retells it includes some interesting twists deriving from its late imperial perspective.

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1630 Bonhomme 1915, pp. 175–76, referring to *Việt Nam Khai Quốc Chi* 1:44–45.

1631 Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí 1941, pp. 145–148. 1:51a–52b. This edition has been compared with the most complete edition of 1882 available at the Han Nôm Institute of Hanoi, A.69–9. The Japanese 1941 print edition follows the revision of 1909, some unusual variants have been replaced by standard characters, single characters have been inserted to clarify meanings and occasionally a few characters are missing; names of buildings have also been changed. The later edition's entry is also five columns longer than the nineteenth-century edition. The Chinese text is presented here with original punctuation. Characters inserted in the revised edition are marked by round brackets.

In the year 1601, Nguyễn Hoàng — now described with his posthumous imperial title — visited Hả Khê and came upon the dragon-like hill. He did not directly approach the locals, but it is reported that they had the following lore: There were 'some' people who at night[1632] met an old woman who wore a red dress and a green skirt, sitting on top of the hill. She told them about the 'true lord' who would come to 'repair the temple' and who would gather up the Qi to strengthen the dragon vein. Afterwards she disappeared and was not seen again. Because of that, the site was called Thiên Mụ Sơn "Mount Heavenly Matron". Due to that Qi, a temple named Thiên Mụ Temple was erected there — it is not stated by whom.

This version of the legend contains important details, like the spirit woman decidedly talking about the *repair* (*chongxiu* 重修) of the temple, not creating or founding one. This means that previously there had already been a temple at this exact place. It is implied that the old woman was likely the spirit of the lost temple which greatly narrows down the options of her identity. The later edition of the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* shows significant editorial differences in the text of this legend. All of them are intended to distance and raise the imperial authority from the local people and their gods. It alters the way people talk about Thiên Mụ and changes the situation of when Thiên Mụ appears. This, taken together with the 'true lord' who is meant to come from *elsewhere* to repair the temple, turns a local deity who previously communicated with the locals in general into a unique occurrence solely meant to designate Nguyễn Hoàng as the 'chosen one'. Correspondingly, the meeting with Thiên Mụ embodies a certain stage in the hero cycle: the meeting with The Goddess, a narrative device in myths and legends that enables the hero to transcend his subjective limits and to unfold his full potential[1633] — in this

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1632 In the earlier edition, the sentence 相傳昔有人夜見一老 reads 相傳昔人常見一老嫗. Curiously, the *chang* 常 "commonly" has been replaced by *ye* 夜 "at night", and it is no longer "the people", but *you ren* 有人 "some people." So, there are 'some people' who go to that mound's top at night to meet a mysterious woman; the later edition surely invokes a sense of suspicion regarding the behavior of the locals. While in the former edition, meeting this mysterious woman seems to have been a 'common' occurrence, in the later edition there is the idea that this was an exceptional occasion with the sole function to deliver that prophecy, and only once, some time before Nguyễn Hoàng arrived.

1633 Campbell 2004, pp. 103–10.

case the establishment of the main political (capital) and religious (temple) site at the foundation of his new and independent realm. While the local lore is mostly added in the commentary, the longest part of the entry covers the features of the reconstructed temple:

天姥寺　在京城外之西安寧社山岡上舊有佛寺因乱後廢嘉隆十四年重建，正中為大雄殿，（殿）後之（左）右厨家各一，又後為彌勒殿，又後為觀音殿，殿後之右為藏經楼，大雄殿之前東西十王殿堂各一，又前左右雷家各一，又前正中為儀門，門上有楼，門内左為鐘楼右為鼓楼. 門外之左為六角碑亭，右為六角大鐘楼，四圍繚以磚墻，大小門八[.]

Thiên Mụ temple is located outside the imperial city to the west, on a hill near the village of An Ninh. Since the old times, there has been a Buddhist temple[1634] *on top of that hill, but due to chaos it was later destroyed.*[1635] *In the fourteenth year of Gia Long [1815], it was rebuilt. In its center, there was a Hall of the Great Hero, to the back of the hall there was a kitchen at each side, even further back was a Di Lặc Hall, even further back was a Quan Âm Hall, at the back of that hall to the right was the Sutra Storehouse Building. To the west and east in front of the Hall of the Great Hero there were halls of the Ten [Hell] Kings. In front of them was on each side left and right a Thunder House,*[1636] *and in front of those was a ceremonial gate,*[1637] *on top of the gate was a tower, inside the door to the left, there was the bell tower, on the right was the drum tower. Outside of the gate to the left was a hexagonal stele pavilion, to the right was a hexagonal Great Bell Tower,*[1638] *everything was encircled all around by a brick wall with eight bigger or smaller gates.*

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1634 *fosi* 佛寺 is used to emphasize it was a Buddhist site.

1635 *yinluan hou fei* 因乱後廢 was omitted from the revised version.

1636 With access to multiple dictionaries, I was not able to determine what type of building *lôi gia* or *leijia* 雷家 is. If it was associated with the Thunder God (雷神) this would be unusual in a Vietnamese temple and the suffix -gia does not fit buildings with worship activities.

1637 *yimen* 儀門 is a secondary gate inside a complex. From the description, we can see that what was once the ceremonial gate now serves as the modern main gate.

1638 *dazhonglou* 大鐘樓 refers to another small pavilion but this one houses the famous bronze bell.

The ensemble described here is already close to the contemporary setting. There was a large main hall with facilities in its back, followed by a hall once dedicated to Maitreya which has been replaced by a smaller hall for Kṣitigarbha in the contemporary setting. Behind it was a hall for Quan Âm, as it is today, and we learn that in the large space in the temple's back there once was a grand library, among the many other buildings that were lost later. The records of the Ministry of Works also give some more technical details, mentioning that the Hall of the Great Hero was composed of three central jian and two wings. Connected to it was a "front hall" of five jian which was richly decorated. The Maitreya Hall measured three jian with a pavilion on each side. The Quan Âm hall had three central jian with two wings, an additional kitchen and a store. On the sides of the temple there were long buildings of five jian, which housed the monks.[1639]

The rebuilt halls of the contemporary site are all smaller than their predecessors except for the main hall. This is a significant change: the hall of Quan Âm, the most likely place for Thiên Mụ to be concealed, was not only enormous compared to the other halls of the site, it was of *the same size* as the Hall of the Great Hero, taking attention away from its centrality. The record of the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* goes on to describe the events of 1844, when Thiệu Trị created his poems about the capital's twenty scenic spots of which Thiên Mụ temple was number fourteen. This is followed by a description of the newly-built pagoda: its size, name changes and statues within, and it also gives insight into the extent of the temple at that time:

> 塔前為香願亭，上設法輪隨風(常)轉.又於左右建碑亭各一, 前左右三面施以欄杆
> 前臨香江岸 ( ) 砌花[1640] 表柱(門).
> *In front of the pagoda was the đình Hương Nguyện, on top of it was a*
> *dharma wheel that always turned with the wind. Again, on each side*
> *to its left and right, there were set up stele pavilions, in front of them on*

three sides to the left and right, there has been bestowed a banister facing towards the Perfume River's bank [and] a marble pillar [gate].[1641]

The commentary of the author extends the entry significantly and after giving the previously quoted account of the legend, he lists the past and future events regarding Thiên Mụ Temple: Nguyễn Phúc Thái repaired it in 1665, Nguyễn Phúc Chu had a big bell cast in 1710 and restored the temple four years later,[1642] personally inscribing the stele in 1715. All buildings he established are recounted again,[1643] which supports the possibility that they — including the Buddhist main hall — were indeed newly introduced to the site. It is also noted that Nguyễn Phúc Chu established a fishing platform for imperial visits, while the earlier edition of the DNNTC claims that it was his favorite spot to reflect. After it had been "obliterated into dust" during military struggles, its ruins were allegedly still existing at the time of the author's writing.[1644]

The earlier edition of the DNNTC ends here, the later edition continues with a reference to Gia Long's Minister of Rites Đặng Đức Siêu 鄧德超 (1751—1810), who was able to remember the location of Thiên Mụ temple, where the stele about the great bell still existed. The author cites the passage from the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* to enforce the special position and merit that Thiên Mụ temple possesses only to report about its destruction by a typhoon in 1904. But in 1907, during the reconstruction, "the three buildings of the Di Lặc Hall and the Ten [Hell Kings] Halls to its left and right were dismantled." What remained

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1641 *men* 門 only appears in the later edition, but in the earlier edition the sentence is started with *shang* 上.

1642 The later edition inserts a *you* 有, putting the sentence into the passive "there was a restoration…". Further, the term used for "temple" here is *fanyu* 梵宇 "Brahma space", another word for a Buddhist temple (Cf. Soothill 2004, p. 354) — but at this place an unusual choice of wording.

1643 With one exception, the Hall of the Grand Master 大師殿 replaces the Hall of the Medicine Buddha 藥師殿 that was still mentioned in the early edition of the DNNTC.

1644 The earlier edition simply states that the platform was destroyed and uses the less dramatic term *canpo* 殘破. The high drama in the later edition emphasizes the triumph of relics like the platform having survived.

of them was used to move and reconstruct the đình Hương Nguyện[1645] in their place. The two minor temples, or stele pavilions as the DNNTC claims, were not rebuilt.[1646] With this reconstruction it became obvious that although the two transregional authorities had joined forces for such a long time, the imperial claim to the site was thought of as being more important than the Buddhist one. The Maitreya hall of Buddhist temples conveys important soteriological aspects, but the spiritual core of the temple was replaced with a non-Buddhist imperial building. By sacrificing the Di Lặc Hall to house the dynasty's family Đình, the dynasty was physically positioned in the heart of the site — but this also expressed disregard for Buddhist sentiments. Maybe as a sort of compromise, it was decided that Kṣitigarbha/Địa Tạng could also be venerated there.[1647] And although the deceased abbots and local worthies nowadays replace the Nguyễn rulers in the hall of the bodhisattva who is the Savior from Hell,[1648] this explains why the pillar bases have been kept in place to emphasize the now much smaller hall in the center of the temple.

V.6.3.2. The Historical Context:
From Cham Sanctuary to National Symbol

The Thiên Mụ temple was the first greater structure built close to the new capital of Nguyễn Hoàng's Đàng Trong.[1649] That first temple was very simple and small with no special architectural features. Lê expects that it was possibly only a small imperial court construction. Since then, the Thiên Mụ temple has been strongly tied to the Nguyễn of Đàng Trong and frequently received

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1645 There seems to be some confusion among the texts whether the Đình of the Nguyễn was called Hương Nguyện 阮鄉 or Hương Nguyện 香願, since structures carrying both names existed.

1646 Võ Văn Tường and Huỳnh Như Phương. "Các chùa miền Trung". *Buddhism Today*. 24 August 2000. Accessed 11 May 2020. http://www.buddhismtoday.com/viet/pgvn/chua/002-danhlamnuocviet2.htm

1647 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 147.

1648 Cf. PDB 2014, p. 1073.

1649 Bonhomme, A. "La pagode Thien-Mau: Historique" *Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Huế*, II, no. 2 (1915): 173–192, p. 175.

special attention.[1650] The temple thus falls into the category of religious-political architecture. But it was still a time of constant war and the Nguyễn had barely established their power in the south. Due to the fighting, an urbanization of Huế had previously been impossible and creating an elaborate temple would not only have been a logistically and financially difficult feat, it would also just have attracted unwanted enemy attention. In 1636, the first year of his regency, Nguyễn Phúc Lan 阮福瀾 (1601—1648) transferred his palace to what he named Kim Long 金龍. What was impossible in size was made up in quantity: since the heart of the Nguyễn had not been invested in Confucianism anyway, they sought the support of Buddhism to consolidate the desired territory. It was recorded "how Buddhist pagodas were consciously raised on the ruins of Cham temples early in Nguyễn rule", and "how old Cham temples were respected by Nguyễn rulers who wanted to replace them with Buddhist pagodas", and this "may also have reflected a Vietnamese desire to exploit the magical power of existing religious sites to their own ends."[1651] Li Tana explicitly cites Thiên Mụ temple as an example for that:

> "When the first Nguyễn chúa [lord] consciously erected a Buddhist pagoda on this site traditionally identified as having great spirit potency, he was making a gesture of enormous political significance. [And if that had been] a symbolic construction at an existing temple whose spirit had not been officially recognized by the Lê court, the act [was] even more charged with local meaning."[1652]

In 1665, the territory of the Nguyễn was expanded and so was the Thiên Mụ temple, but it was still comparatively small. The primary function of the temple was to integrate the local deity that the sacred space originally belonged to and in which the predominantly Cham-Việt population believed in. Although the integration supported and strengthened the new rule and avoided local resistance, the site was not yet very important to the Nguyễn. In 1687, the area was

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1650 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 146.

1651 Cf. Li Tana 2018, p. 104.

1652 Cf. ibid., p. 105. "Pagoda" is referring to the entire temple here.

divided into Hà Khê, Kim Long and Vạn Xuân. Although names changed, the area stayed divided into three districts up to the era of Minh Mạng.

When the Nguyễn lords invited Thích Đại Sán to Đàng Trong to propagate Buddhism, they must have realized that Buddhism was a connective element between the Việt and Cham cultures and a well-suited tool to pacify and unify the locals. However, Thích Đại Sán was skeptical about the sincerity of the Nguyễn lords and refused several times to come to Vietnam. Even when he finally agreed in 1695, he made Nguyễn Phúc Chu swear the bodhisattva vows. In 1710, Nguyễn Phúc Chu dedicated a bell of two tons weight to the temple and four years later conducted its grandest expansion. Nguyễn Phúc Chu also established the ceremony of *vassa (*Viet. Tỳ Da, chin. *jiexia anju* 結夏安居), a Buddhist meditative retreat during the rainy season. This was not common in Mahāyāna Buddhism but well-established in Vietnamese Thiền Buddhism, probably as a result from much earlier cultural exchanges with Theravāda in-fluenced Cham Buddhism.

In the following years, a new Tripitaka and further Mahāyāna sutras were acquired from China which were subsequently stored at Thiên Mụ temple. This was, of course, a measure to legitimize the site in the Buddhist context. However, it only emphasized that the former phases of the temple had not been (entirely) Buddhist. Even in this description, we find a Jade Emperor Hall that only starts to fit into the picture if one remembers the context of the Nguyễn lords' imperial aspirations. Nguyễn Phúc Chu was depicted by the annals as a fervent Buddhist sympathizer.[1653] Maybe he was indeed a zealot, but perhaps he just emulated the first successful decades of the Later Lý dynasty whose rulers were not always as Buddhist as they portrayed themselves as. In any case, he acted with real interest, taking part in purification ceremonies: isolating in meditation and donating to the poor. In the 1690s, there had been another conflict with the remaining Champa kingdom and most of it was annexed in 1693, becoming the province of Thuận Thánh 順城. One of the Cham princes was allied with the Việt and was made prince of this province. When he took part in the ritual of Nguyễn Phúc Chu, his three sons were raised to the rank of marquis. This shows three things: that the ritual was public, that it absolutely had political relevance and that the

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1653 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 179.

site was still meaningful for representatives of Champa. This was, however, not at all seen with sympathy by the Vietnamese annalists.[1654] Since there is no further mention of the Heavenly Mother, she had either already been identified with Quan Âm, or she was concealed by being left out of textual descriptions.

In 1788, the Tây Sơn dynasty 西山 (1778—1802) killed the entire Nguyễn family except for one nephew who fled to Siam which was afterwards defeated as well. The Tây Sơn defeated the Trịnh lords and Nguyễn Huệ 阮惠 (1753—1793), the second emperor of the Tây Sơn (unrelated to the Nguyễn lords), repelled an invasion of the Qing army that had captured the capital city Thăng Long.[1655] To avoid a Chinese-Siamese double attack, he sent a submissive letter to the Qianlong Emperor, in which he asked for investiture as King of Annam. Both sides had strong incentives to restore the tributary relationship. For the Tây Sơn it meant the Qing would forgo any efforts to reinstall the Later Lê dynasty and Qianlong could maintain his ritual supremacy while stabilizing the southern border at minimal costs.[1656] It was precisely at this time when Nguyễn Huệ used the Thiên Mụ temple as his earth altar, clearly establishing his imperial position although he continued the tradition of pretending to be a king while communicating with the Chinese. This once and for all solidly established the high position that the Thiên Mụ temple held in late imperial Vietnam. But where did the Tây Sơn place the earth altar at Thiên Mụ temple? There was enough space because the Trịnh lords had besieged the territory from 1775 to 1786 and let the desolate temple fall into ruins.

The following Nguyễn dynasty (unrelated to the Tây Sơn) took no offense that the site of the Thiên Mụ temple had been used by the Tây Sơn. The connection between the site of an important local deity and their first southern ancestor was too valuable to lose. When Gia Long wanted to restore Thiên Mụ temple, there was hardly anything left. In the year of his coronation (1802), he had already interviewed Đặng Đức Siêu 鄧德超 (1751—1810),[1657] as to whether

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1654 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 179.

1655 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, pp. 145–49.

1656 Cf. Wang, Wensheng 2014, p. 215.

1657 This official had refused to serve the Trịnh as well as the Tây Sơn, after the reestablishment of the Six Ministries he became the director of the Ministry of Rites in 1809.

he still remembered the floor plan and old scaling models to take as a reference. Based on these, he rebuilt the temple.[1658] The fact that Thiên Mụ temple occupied his mind so early in his reign is especially relevant because Gia Long only started to build his imperial city two years later in 1804, after China officially recognized him.[1659] Gia Long reinvigorated the interest in the temple and re-established its connection to water by setting up a ceremony in memory of the soldiers who had died in a shipwreck during the second year of his reign. Curiously, those soldiers had not died in the vicinity, but in faraway Thanh Hoà.[1660]

Even though it is known that Emperor Minh Mạng had a preference for Confucianism, he still ordered expiatory rituals to be held at Thiên Mụ temple, mostly dedicated to the fallen of the recent wars and fights against the Siamese pirates, one in 1825, the other in 1835.[1661] But in contrast to using piety to make himself look better, Minh Mạng emphasized "*the memory of my generals and my missing officers never escaping me, this ceremony will be above all testimony to my compassion, not encouragement for Buddhist beliefs.*"[1662] Minh Mạng gave honorary titles to some monks at Thiên Mụ temple and one other temple in Huế, but to avoid that the people would transgress religious prohibitions, he also advertised that *any* exemplary religious person who could relieve the deceased and cure the diseased would receive honor. He had a good reason to act in such a contradictory manner. He never accepted the claim of Buddhists for the site, he saw Thiên Mụ as a clearly imperial site and the Buddhists were a nuisance he had to accept:

> *[There is no other site] as imposing as this one. The government practicing Confucian doctrine would have liked to build the literature temple here. However, this [Buddhist] temple was erected since the previous reigns, many years ago. Despite the barbarity and cruelty of the Tây Sơn rebels,*

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1658 Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 146.

1659 Cf. Vu Hong Lien and Peter D. Sharrock 2014, p. 153.

1660 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 180.

1661 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, pp. 182–83. With reference to the *Khâm Định Đại Nam Hội Điển Sự Lệ* 208:33 and 123:13.

1662 Translation according to Bonhomme 1915, p. 183.

the pagoda has not been moved, the steles and the bell have remained intact. This is not without reason. So, I made it a point to continue the work of my ancestors — verily by repairing the temple.[1663]

Thiệu Trị 紹治 (r. 1841—1847), otherwise willing to continue his father's work, was a devout Buddhist. He also organized ceremonies at Thiên Mụ temple, but those were of a completely different nature. Instead of accentuating tragedy and expressing compassion by relieving the dead's souls, he asked for protection, health and rain and felt that he received it. Therefore, his ceremonies were those of thanksgiving, dedicated to his female ancestors and "in order to invoke longevity and happiness."[1664] In contrast to Minh Mạng, Thiệu Trị did indeed intend to propagate Buddhist doctrine, emphasizing how the pagoda as an emblem of Buddhism rises (thanks to standing on a hill) above all other buildings which surround it.[1665]

Emperor Tự Đức 嗣德 (r. 1847—1883) prayed at Thiên Mụ temple for a son and as he wanted to avoid the punishment of Heaven by implying Heaven was responsible for his lack of heirs, he changed the temple's name to Linh Mụ. This taboo existed from 1862—1869, afterwards both names for the sites were used interchangeably.[1666] There is no information about his position towards Buddhism, but this action seems to imply that he saw Thiên Mụ as a connection to Thiên — Heaven — and thus as a celestial deity, which was why he asked for an heir there. While it was not unusual to make such a request at this site, another site dedicated to another derivate of Pô Nagar and located close to Huế citadel — the điện Hòn Chén — was usually the more famous place for giving sons and was used exactly for that matter by Tự Đức's successor, Đồng Khánh.

After the devastation of 1904 and the reconfiguration of 1907 as gathered from the *Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí* above, Bonhomme reports that, at the

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1663 *Đại Nam Thực Lục* 大南寔錄 "Veritable Records of Đại Nam", second book, 156:8 of the 1836 edition, according to the translation of Bonhomme 1915, p. 184.

1664 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 187.

1665 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 188.

1666 Võ Văn Tường and Huỳnh Như Phương. "Các chù — miền Trung". Buddhism Today. 24 August 2000. Accessed 11 May 2020. http://www.buddhismtoday.com/viet/pgvn/ch-ua/002-danhlamnuocviet2.htm

then current site, only one of the original buildings had been preserved.[1667] Furthermore, the pagoda, while still standing, was smaller after its repair. The times were dire, money was scarce, many people suffered from hunger and no thought was wasted on further rebuilding or expansion activities.

The last Vietnamese emperor, Bảo Đại 保大 (1913—1997), abdicated in 1945 in favor of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which took its capital back to northern Hanoi. He was later head of state for the French with a government seat in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). With that, Thiên Mụ temple lost its imperial relevance. Between 1946—1954, the First Indochina War wrecked the landscape. Although the Thiên Mụ temple was rebuilt in 1957 almost to its contemporary spatial image, the Ngô Đình Diệm regime (1955—1963) was a Catholic minority government that attempted to suppress Buddhism in similar ways that previous emperors had attempted to — e.g., by forbidding them to expand their sites. This first passive and progressively aggressive persecution was one reason for senior monks, like Thiên Mụ temple's Thích Quảng Đức, to immolate themselves in protest. After the fall of Diệm, the Vietnam War followed. Huế was located between northern and southern forces, with the Battle of Huế being the bloodiest in its history. The war robbed Huế of its last resources: the Communists hindered local Buddhists from gathering money from foreign Buddhist associations. Since the victory of the north a few decades ago, the options of expansion have remained quite limited and due to that, large parts of the Thiên Mụ temple's estate are still overgrown with pine forest.

V.6.3.3. A Quest for Thiên Mụ's Identity

So far, we have learned a lot about Thiên Mụ temple's spatial development and its importance for the legitimacy of anyone carrying the name of Nguyễn. But one deciding part is missing and that is anything regarding Thiên Mụ herself. On the one hand, the entity who gave this extremely important temple its name is depicted as some spirit from the distant past that nobody really knows about and who disappeared a long time ago. But on the other hand, she is described with peculiarly specific details down to the color of the individual parts of her clothing. So, maybe there is more about Thiên Mụ than being 'just some' spirit.

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1667 Cf. Bonhomme 1915, p. 192.

We have learned that Nguyễn Hoàng preferably claimed sites of Pô Nagar variants, so we start to assume that Thiên Mụ may be one as well. Two questions will be answered here: how can the nature of Thiên Mụ be tracked down and why was she treated that differently from other Pô Nagar variants, even to the extent of receiving a special name?

In regard to Thiên Mụ's identity, it is helpful to take another look at the *Ô Châu Cận Lục*:

> 伊那神. 在金茶縣屈浦社. 俗傳本婦人頗有靈應.
> 每歲春首祈雨, 競舟以治官為配祭之, 輒得雨云.
> *Thán Y Na. The altar is at Khuât Phố commune in Kim Trà district. The spiritual tradition is that the deity is a lady who is very efficacious. Every year in spring, the village head prays for rain, there are festival boat races and if governing officials take part and offer sacrifices, then at once they will obtain rain.*[1668]

Curiously, the entries for Thiên Mụ temple and Thiên Y A Na are complete separated. The former is listed in the temple category, the latter in the spirit shrine category (*shenci* 神 祠), although the referenced place is not even 800 meters east of Thiên Mụ temple in the same district. The Thiên Mụ entry does not refer to Thiên Y A Na, nor does the goddess's entry reference the temple. The religious affiliation of Thiên Mụ temple is not mentioned at all, nor why it carries that name, nor who Thiên Mụ is supposed to be.

Among the names that Việt settlers gave to Pô Nagar was Bà Dương 婆楊 (modern Vietnamese: Bà Dàng), deriving from a phonetic rendering of her name, and this name was identified with the Vietnamese Bà Trời (later rendered in Chinese script as *tianyu* 天嫗), meaning "Old Lady of Heaven," which in the Classical Chinese script turned into Thiên Mụ.[1669] We previously have learned that "Old Woman" could be an epithet of Thiên Y A Na and that Thiên Y A Na was called Thiên Mụ by the Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo. As the

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1668 *Ô Châu Cận Lục.* 5/54a.
1669 Cf. Lê Nguyễn Lưu 2005, p. 158

previously cited literature shows, nowadays it is no secret that Thiên Mụ was and is a variant of Pô Nagar, but what *kind* of variant is she?

Thiên Mụ/Bà Trời is the interpretation of Pô Nagar from the perspective of Việt-Cham contacts on a small landowner basis. She is the negotiation of an agrarian and territorial mother deity between two cultures and was more relevant to the ordinary farmer than to any high officials.[1670] In the sixteenth century, full of calamities, farmers were most interested in good weather and the way Thiên Mụ and Y Na's stories are framed in the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* gives deep insight into the environment of old Huế. The story that follows the Y Na-entry is that of the Thần Thuỷ Tộc 水族神[1671] ['Spirits of the Water Kind'], it describes customs that closely resemble old northern traditions.[1672] It is said that the spirits — there seems to be more than one — haunt several villages of a district of Huế. The local custom called for one woman of each village to be presented as a match to the spirit in order to appease it. The deities would also seduce women, get them pregnant, after which the women would lay eggs and die — such a case is even cited for a village head's wife. The author comments how "lewd and nefarious" this is and doubts these to be real deities. River brides as human sacrifices have been known in many places of the world, in China[1673] as well as northern Vietnam (see Chapter V). The spirit's behavior furthermore resembles the countless Dragon Mother narratives that exist in China and other East Asian countries, which are themselves already derivations from earlier narrative layers in which the dragon mother was not killed off.[1674] It is noteworthy that, although those practices and narratives were mostly gone from the north centuries ago, the author does not criticize a Cham or highland custom of the indigenous population here, but one of the river-dwelling Việt. In addition, the *Ô Châu Cận Lục*'s section on temples[1675] is dominated by hydrolatric sacred sites

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1670 Cf. Trần Đình Hằng 2008, p. 376.

1671 Cf. *Ô Châu Cận Lục.* 5/54a–54b.

1672 The spirits of the water kind were also found in Du Guangting's 杜光庭 (850—933) *Luyiji* 錄異記 "Record of Marvels", which was anthologized in the famous miracle tale collection *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 (published 978), e.g., ch. 469.

1673 Cf. Bodde 2008, p. 33.

1674 Cf. Eberhard 1937, pp. 91, 102–4.

1675 Ô Châu Cận Lục. 5/47a–55b.

of a natural and architectural kind that were associated with rainmaking. All other kinds of sacred sites seem to play a minor role. That shows how strongly the needs of the farmers influenced the religious environment.

Squeezed in between the Spirits of the Water Kind and the strange mussel of Thiên Mụ temple, Y Na is tightly categorized as a water deity. If Y Na was already considered primarily a water deity, so was Thiên Mụ. Thiệu Trị's stele claims that in the seventeenth century there was a calm lake on top of the hill, which would provide a natural body of water that Thiên Mụ could have been related to. And Thích Đại Sán previously claimed that the building of 'altars' was a result of acquiring rain — implying that the Thiên Mụ temple was established as a sacred site due to its efficacy in controlling precipitation.

The second half of the *Ô Châu Cận Lục's* Y Na entry mentions the occurrence of annual rituals in spring and boat racing, both typical in Sinitic hydrolatry. However, most important is the emphasis that the participation of a local official — representatives of the central government — would cause an especially effective response during rain rituals. If officials participated and happened to not be punished for that, this gave prestige to the site and raised its economic opportunities. Therefore, we can see this part of the entry as a kind of advertisement in the sense that the site was open for creating governmental ties, just like it later happened at Thiên Mụ temple. During the Nguyễn dynasty, Thiên Mụ was involved in the ideological disputes about the engagement of state officials in *cầu đảo* rituals that involved the reciting of Buddhist sutras in public space. This was mostly a dispute of spatial ownership, not of religious identities. State officials generally tolerated Buddhist recitation, the exception being in spaces considered to be non-Buddhist. In 1820, there was a severe drought followed by an epidemic and Minh Mạng encouraged monks and nuns to *cầu đảo* for the people. After a long-drawn-out drought, his successor Thiệu Trị left the aforementioned stele with the recorded imperial sponsorship of a rain prayer to the Buddha. Both emperors also engaged in a vegetarian diet, the prohibition of animal slaughter during the drought periods and the release of captive animals.[1676] The *cầu đảo* at Thiên Mụ temple was hence an integral part of Nguyễn dynastic drought relief.

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1676 Cf. Dyt 2015, pp. 15–16.

Again, the question arises as to why Thiên Mụ was treated differently compared to the other Thiên Y A Na sites relevant to the Nguyễn establishment. Why did the Nguyễn emperors who had formerly invested in separating Buddhist activities from state ritual suddenly feel comfortable with engaging in rain rituals at the Thiên Mụ temple? To answer these questions, we need to study the reconfiguration history of the site.

V.6.3.4. Reconfigurative Analysis and Maps: An Evolution of Sacred Identity

The original sacred site in this location was subjected to destruction, but the mark of its numinosity remained and the Việt settlers claimed the site for their own, dedicating it to an incorporated deity sometime between the 1310s and the 1340s. Thiên Y A Na was not considered Buddhist, therefore the traditional position of a shrine in a sacred site would be towards the end of an axis. The settlers may have brought Buddhist ideas with them, but if Buddhist monks were present, they did not have particularly strong connections to their peers in the north. The precise time when the temple started to develop into a Buddhist direction cannot be exactly determined anymore, but over the course of roughly 250—300 years the site remained small. If there was a prominent Buddhist spatial imagination, then a Buddhist shrine would take the center of the small temple building with other possible deities arranged around it. In 1601, the official claim to the site changed from local to transregional-imperial. However, the lack of structural and representative reconfigurations (that we know of) implies that the religious practice was likely not affected. Therefore, we can expect a mild situation of contestation between local and transregional desires. The Cham of the era were pushed back into demarcated Cham villages or into steadily shrinking kingdoms. Nguyễn Phúc Chu may have invited an allied Cham prince to a ritual at Thiên Mụ Temple, but this was less a voluntary interaction with the site than a necessary act to bind the prince and his sons to his reign. It is unknown to what extent the remaining ordinary Cham were still able to interact with the site but the intensive Vietnamization of the area gave them few options for this.
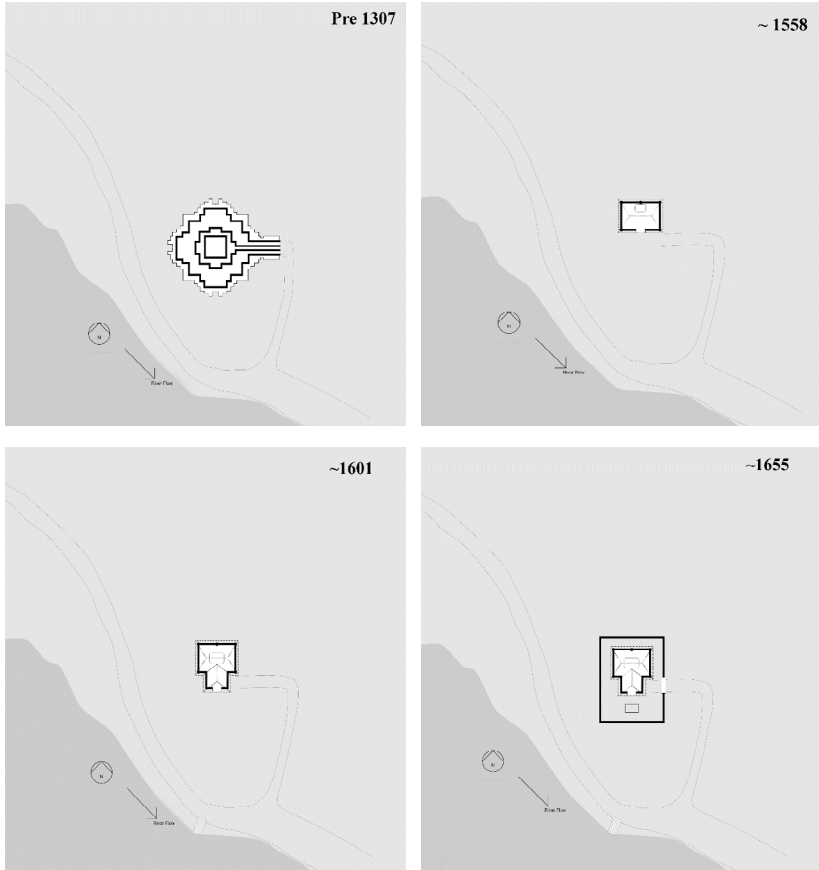
[Img. 12] Historical Layouts of the Thiên Mụ Temple Site from 1307 to 1655

1715
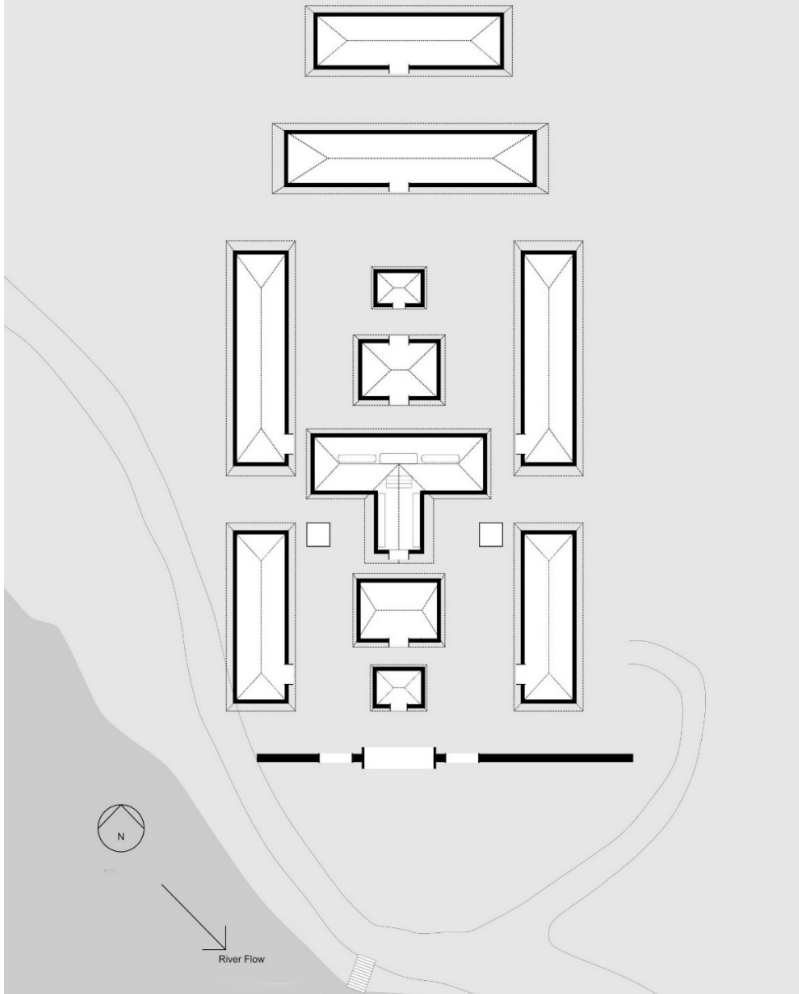
[Img. 13] Historical Layout of the Thiên Mụ Temple Site, 1715

The expansion of the temple during the eighteenth century thus relied on increased imperial patronage. Since then, the central hall has continuously been of impressive dimensions, but an increased sense of necessary grandeur led to the situation that all buildings of the central axis reached unusual sizes. This created a visual unity in the most humility evoking way.

Since the imperial patronage supported the Buddhist claim to the site, it accelerated the already ongoing process of superscription and facilitated the integration of the site into the transregional Buddhist network — something the monks in the era of Nguyễn Phúc Chu had been working towards. Thus, Thích Đại Sán's arrival was likely the turning point to change Thiên Mụ temple into an actual Buddhist site.

Late imperial texts mention multiple gates in all directions for the temple. The contemporary Quan Âm Hall at least suggests an access point from the north and the old gate in the temple's east leads to one from that direction. Due to the Nguyễn dynasty's travel bans, we can assume that since at least 1802, no further Cham interactions were possible at Thiên Mụ Temple. This was the first case of obstruction for this place and it secured the unchallenged imperial claim to it. The temple's direction now focused on the southern entrance where the docks favored the river-dwelling Việt visitors. The southern access point was further emphasized when the dynastic Đình of the Nguyễn, plus two smaller temples, were added to the southern front to connect the ruling family to this numinous site. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a major insertion occurred when the puppet imperial government dismantled two Buddhist halls to place the dynasty's family Đình into the center of Thiên Mụ temple. In other contexts, this could have created a major contestation. However, in this case, the ties between two transregional ideologies and the advantages gained by imperial patronage outweighed any opposition. In the later twentieth century, state interest in the site waned as a Buddhist temple could not provide legitimacy for either Catholics or Communists. The Buddhists now cared for the temple on their own, and new local- transregional and Buddhist-governmental animosities rose whenever the government tried to intervene into the site. Today, many religious movements are categorized as cultural customs and due to this, the very religiously active Thiên Mụ temple has been subjected to external musealization: The Vietnamese and English

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plaques installed throughout the compound, but especially in the pavilions in front of the temple, frame its narrative from a governmental perspective regardless of the local or the temple's desires.

### V.6.3.5. Thiên Mụ and the Locked Room

Y Na and Thiên Mụ can both be represented by an old, rainbringing woman, which provides a hint to tracing down Thiên Mụ's presence in Thiên Mụ Temple. So far, Thiên Mụ has been more present in narratives connecting to emperors who engaged with Thiên Mụ Temple than in the descriptions of the temple itself. Representations or placements of Thiên Mụ are hardly ever mentioned, architectural descriptions center on the Buddhist buildings present, and the contemporary temple shows no trace of Thiên Mụ outside of the front plaques. After tracking down the identities of the different temple sections and their buildings by comparing the contemporary installments and their predecessors as presented in historical descriptions, there remains only one place where Thiên Mụ could possibly be found at and that is in the hall of Quan Âm. How is that so?

First, the sixteenth century Thiên Mụ Temple was likely not Buddhist. Its entry in the *Ô Châu Cận Lục* is ambiguous at best and Nguyễn Hoàng's supposed interest in Buddhism anachronistic. In reality, Nguyễn Hoàng changed a site that was categorized as a Buddhist -*tự* 寺 into a more neutral -*từ* 祠. This means that he claimed the site out of political ambition and not out of religious fervor. He considered Thiên Mụ to be a local spirit or former worthy, not a Buddhist entity. From the sources regarding the temple itself, we do not know what the temple looked like or which deities or Buddhas were venerated within, but it would have had at least one spot for Pô Nagar and a shrine for the mussel spirit.

Nguyễn Phúc Chu was the first Nguyễn lord who was actively interested in imperializing Đàng Trong. He knew he needed the support of the Buddhist clergy with their greater network to gain more transregional influence. For this reason, he renovated and expanded many temples, including Thiên Mụ. However, it seems that this was the first time the site received the typical layout of a Buddhist temple.
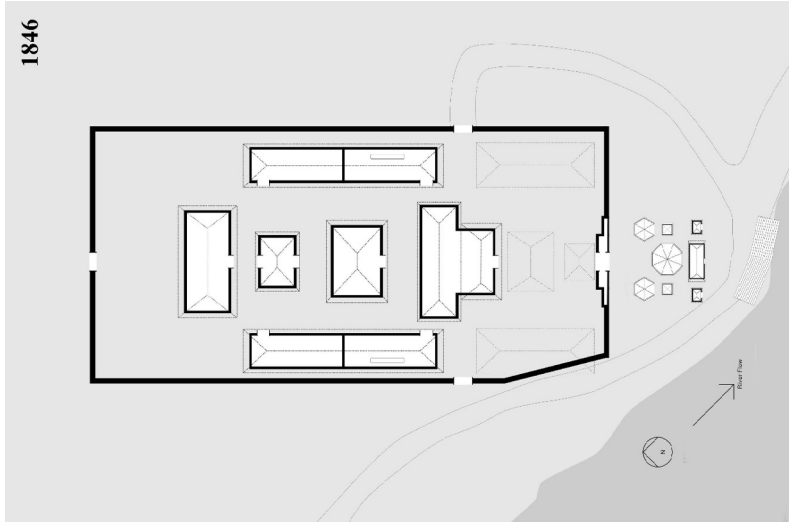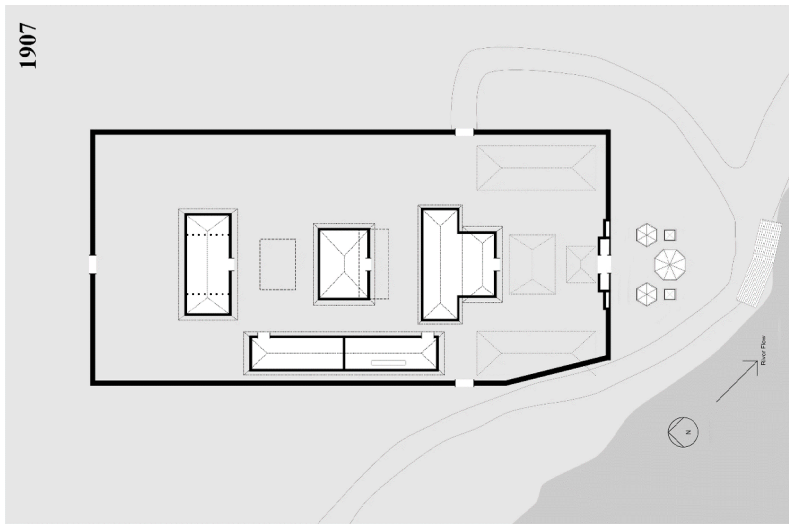
1907

1846

[Img. 14] Historical Layouts of the Thiên Mụ Temple Site from to 1846 to 1907
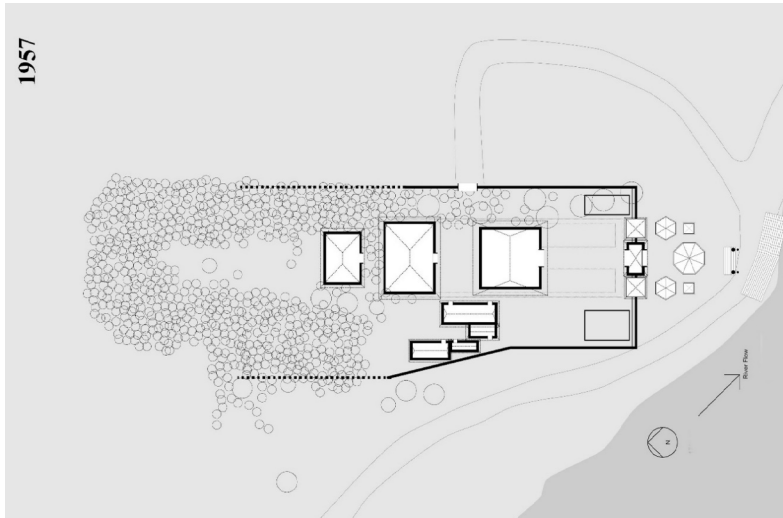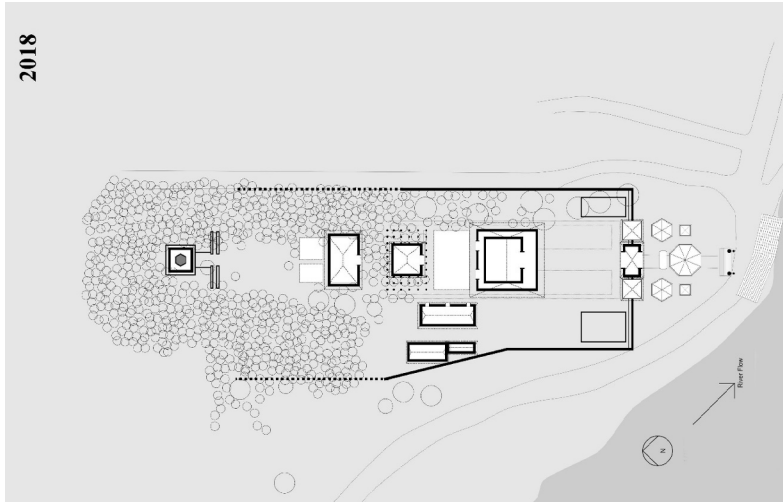
2018

1957

[Img. 15] Historical Layouts of the Thiên Mụ Temple Site from 1957 to 2018

Although Nguyễn Phúc Chu's reconstruction stele lists every building down to the canteen, there is no sign of Thiên Mụ, but a Quan Âm Hall is mentioned. Even though a Quan Âm Hall is not unusual at all in a Buddhist temple, it was unusual for the Quan Âm Hall to be the same size as the main hall — especially since the main hall had already grown to imperial dimensions. With two monumentally sized halls among its already large ensemble, Thiên Mụ Temple was comparatively gigantic. Therefore, the Quan Âm Hall must have been considered of unusual importance. When a storm wrecked large portions of the temple centuries later, three different halls were completely demolished to make room for the imperial Đình, but the Quan Âm Hall was left untouched.

Second, the Quan Âm Hall constitutes a duplication. An older Buddhist version — the gender ambiguous, princely variant of Quan Âm — is already exhibited in the main hall.[1677] The Quan Âm Hall is also a case of *tiền Phật hậu Thánh*: both icons are meant to depict Quan Âm, but the first, smaller icon shows a young woman in Nam Hai Quan Âm style and the large icon behind her is of matronly appearance that resembles a Tứ Pháp statue. Thích Đại Sán's report suggests that the Thiên Mụ temple belonged to a network of Buddhist sites that engaged in similar identifications between Buddhist and hydrolatric entities as the Tứ Pháp system did. This would then also to apply to the Thiên Mụ temple and that would imply that the larger Quan Âm statue in the Quan Âm Hall *is* in truth Thiên Mụ and that this is the place where she was located for the past centuries.

A reconfiguration of media as simple as renaming thus led to a thorough concealment over the course of centuries and enabled the complete Buddhist superscription of the site.

There is no question about the religious identity of the contemporary temple anymore. As a famous tourist spot, it is eager to present itself as pure no-nonsense brand Buddhism. A normal Quan Âm Hall would be inoffensive and a good representation, especially compared to the Kṣitigarbha Hall that seems to be in a perpetual state of construction with its a makeshift shrine

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1677 Due to the depiction in an older style, there is no reason to assume that the entity Quan Âm was a new addition to this hall. Of course, this refers to the representative content. If the physical icons were damaged, they would have been replaced.

and a lower quality icon. The fact that the contemporary Quan Âm Hall is ob-structed and closed to the public merely emphasizes that the entity embodied by the icon inside is to this day not perceived as entirely Buddhist by the temple administration. And yet, the Quan Âm in the closed hall received fresh fruit sacrifices while Kṣitigarbha had received none. This implies that the Quan Âm icon is thought to be more potent.

A third, minor hint towards this status is the placement of Skanda, who would normally protect the temple from evil outward influences, instead he faces the interior of the temple — the direction of the Quan Âm Hall. Skanda usually only does that if he is placed behind Maitreya in a joined front hall, so this could suggest that this Quan Âm is perceived as something not purely Buddhist, something he would possibly have to protect against. But where did the connection between Quan Âm and Thiên Mụ come from?

In China, where Guanyin is often interpreted as female, Guanyin common-ly serves as a vessel for the incorporation or amalgamation of local deities.[1678] In Vietnam, the Dâu Temple of Bắc Ninh demonstrated that female rain deities could be reinterpreted as female Buddhas, but not as Quan Âm. In major dif-ference to China, Quân Am was not commonly depicted as female in Vietnam *prior to the sixteenth century,*[1679] at least not outside the Việt court.[1680] Instead, Avalokiteśvara was commonly depicted male or gender neutral (a more differ-entiated treatment follows in Chapter VI). Female bodhisattva statues occurred in Đồng Dương and usually depicted the amalgamations of various protectors of the realm.[1681] These may have influenced the early female variants of Quan Âm.

The scholarly basis for Berezkin and Nguyễn Tô Lan to limit the appear-ance of the female Quan Âm to the sixteenth century was likely the extreme propagation of her cult during the Mạc dynasty. Since Cham territories were

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1678 Cf. Berezkin, Rostislav and Nguyễn Tô Lan 2016, p. 554. Aside from the Sichuanese exam-ples, Guanyin is, for example, also used in this way in the previously mentioned temple at Putuoshan. However, it is not clear if this was an individual development or if it came from elsewhere in China.

1679 Cf. Berezkin, Rostislav and Nguyễn Tô Lan 2016, p. 554.

1680 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, p. 196.

1681 Cf. Southworth and Trần Kỳ Phương 2016, p. 159.

more easily conquered when attacking from the sea, deities who were able to protect seafarers had become even more popular. They thus grew in efficacy and power, which enabled them to provide new modes of identification and to offer refuge against the pressures of Confucianization.[1682] Due to this, water deities had become much more relevant to the government and with Quan Âm, the Mạc were able to concentrate all their power over water into one entity whom they were associated with. Yet, traces of the superscribed popular water deities still influenced Quan Âm's female depictions.

The *Ô Châu Cận Lục*, gives us an insight into the time period when Quan Âm began to be negotiated with female local identities. In the century between the publication of that gazetteer and the imperial expansion of the temple by Nguyễn Phúc Chu around 1715, there was enough time to amalgamate the local identity of Y Na (as the rainbringing old woman) with the now feminine Quan Âm. This would explain why Thiên Mụ temple's Quan Âm looks so similar to a rain Buddha of Bắc Ninh, and why this not entirely Buddhist 'Quan Âm' has to be 'locked away' in the contemporary site.

Obstruction is a reconfiguration tactic that takes both local and transregional needs into regard. The intention is to create a spatial image that fits the transregional spatial imagination. Since the ambitious ruler depended on the ideological support of the Buddhists, he provided an opportunity to occupy Thiên Mụ Temple and financed the spatial reconfigurations that were necessary to construct a Buddhist spatial image. However, keeping the connection to Thiên Mụ, as a representative of the local non-Việt and hybrid communities, became increasingly beneficial to imperial legitimation as well. It was therefore inacceptable to let Thiên Mụ vanish completely from the site. Furthermore, the Buddhists seem to have interpreted her as a territorial spirit and possibly feared that ignoring her could cause godly wrath — like a lack of rain — so she still received offerings. The bodhisattva Quan Âm is a typical part of Buddhist temples in Vietnam and one of its most popular entities. There is a high demand among Buddhist and casual believers to interact with her. A normal Quan Âm Hall would therefore never be permanently closed without good

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1682 Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 197–198.

reason.[1683] It is hence the obstruction of this hall that emphasizes its exceptional identity. Although the presence of Thiên Mụ is thus not necessarily felt by the daily consumers of the temple, it does matter to the groups claiming the site and sponsoring the temple, since they are more familiar with her narrative. For them, the Quan Âm of the Quan Âm Hall is neither fully Thiên Mụ (Y Na) nor Quan Âm and because the local spirit cannot simply be elided for the fear of supernatural repercussions, obstructing it seems like a reasonable tactic for the modern temple administration. It worked well enough in the Qinquan-si of Sichuan [S.2.1.].

However, in practice, such obstructions only emphasize the issue because they constitute obstacles and these produce anomalies in the consumption of the site. Admittedly, during my first visit of the temple, I almost disregarded the site for this study because the temple appeared so uniformly Buddhist and uncontested — if it had not been for this obstructed hall that turned the spatial image on its head. The hall may be closed to the public, but it really unbolts the reconfiguration history of the site.

V.6.3.6. Who Are You, Thiên Mụ? Thiên Mụ's Role for Cultural Integration in National Politics

The rainmaking aspects of Pô Nagar made her a perfect canvass for the settling Việt to adopt a potent local deity. That way, they could feel safer in a foreign environment. Later settlers were able to identify more easily with an already Vietnamized version of the goddess in Thiên Y A Na. In the late imperial era, Confucianization and its Đạo Mẫu counter movement caused the separation of feminine religion from the mainstream. Thiên Y A Na became part of the Đạo Mẫu religion due to her veneration by the Hoàng Thiên Tiên Thánh Giáo, so she remained in the feminine religious sphere. Thiên Mụ, on the other

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1683 Thiên Y A Na and Quan Âm are both relevant to the Đạo Mẫu religion, which is now recognized by the state. It is not feasible to impose travel bans on Đạo Mẫu practitioners, as was the case with the Cham in imperial times. Rather, Đạo Mẫu is extremely present in the surrounding temples. It could be theorized that the hall is locked to prevent groups of female practitioners from shifting the focus of temple content from the main hall to Quan Âm. It would be an interesting topic for future studies to investigate how the Thiên Mụ temple defends its position in this strongly Đạo Mẫu-influenced environment.

hand, seems to have been Vietnamized more intensively. The emphasis on her rainmaking abilities downplayed the other traditional attributes of the Thiên Y A Na variants, like earth- and human fertility, disease or snakes. This only accounts for her Việt representation, since we do not know how the local Cham viewed Thiên Mụ.

The significant difference between Thiên Mụ and other (Thiên) Y (A) Na incarnations lies in the Buddhist occupation assumed for the sixteenth century and the subsequent imperial patronage, which caused Thiên Mụ to enter the masculine religious sphere. She was no longer a transregional patron of women and fertility with roots in Cham culture. Instead, she became Thiên Mụ, a local Việt goddess who helped male officials to obtain rain and male warlords to gain legitimacy. Her relevance for the Việt government depended directly on stripping her off her southern identity and transregionalism, the former only remained in rain provision for the realm. In this rare case, emphasizing her local character was what enabled her to be a valuable support of imperial legitimacy. All of this would turn around during the first half of the twentieth century:

At this point we return to the 1920 stele of Emperor Khải Định. The emperor's text describes temples as the markers of a country's grandness, shortly recounts the history of the temple and describes it with a focus on its atmosphere while he was sacrificing incense and witnessing two undescribed rituals. However, the stele also offers a remarkable new version of the Thiên Mụ legend. When Khải Định retells it, he refers to Thiên Mụ as "Bà Trời" and neither questions her identity nor her presence. Since earlier texts had made no more mentions of her *at* the site, this conveys the notion that she 'never left'. This treatment implies that she was <u>incorporated</u> in the literary sense and <u>amalgamated</u> in the iconographic sense. The legend begins with a quote of the Confucian master Mengzi about an ancient kingdom that was famous for its political families, which Khải Định refutes by stating that famous temples and scenic spots are more prestigious. It further reads like this:

奉我<u>太祖嘉裕皇帝</u>以<u>橫山</u>清吟決計圖南，世傳帝遇<u>天嫗</u>于此贈香一株，囑帝持香沿江岸東行到香盡處，可都成而寺興焉．敕建寺，奉佛，命名<u>天姥山靈姥寺</u>．

I respectfully heard that, according to the Hoành Sơn Khúc Ngâm,[1684] *Thái Tổ — Gia Dụ Hoàng đế [Nguyễn Hoàng] decided to survey the south. For generations, it has been passed down that the emperor*[1685] *met Bà Trời there. She gave him a piece of incense wood and urged him to hold onto it [while riding] east along the river shore, wherever the incense would be used up, [there] he could erect his capital and start a temple. On imperial order, a temple was built to revere the Buddha and it was called Thiên Mụ Mountain's Linh Mụ temple.*

This is a carefully newly constructed variant of the legend that changes the narrative position of Thiên Mụ into that of the Supernatural Aid who provides a hero (Nguyễn Hoàng) with a MacGuffin to advance his journey. This change does not only raise Thiên Mụ's position inside the narrative, it also reinterprets her role as a protective[1686] one. The piece of incense wood is nothing else but the famous agarwood, the symbol of the deity Po Nagar.

During the twentieth century, in the last phase of imperial Vietnam, this incense wood was more than enough to clearly identify the deity. But why would an account that was written centuries after the imperial claim of the site, centuries after any Cham aspect had been stripped from Thiên Mụ, and long after the final victory over Champa, be used to unveil this long-term act of <u>concealment</u> and reconnect the emperor's own ancestor through a direct interaction with the old Cham deity?

In the earliest accounts, the identity of Thiên Mụ is kept obscure and she has no direct contact to the ruler. Over time, her real identity as a variant of Pô Nagar who was incorporated into Việt popular practice became more evident, but it was never spelled out for multiple reasons. During the seventeenth century, the Việt were still in the midst of their southward expansion. The territory that Đại Việt conquered so far merely reached down to the province of Bình

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1684 Nowadays *ngâm khúc*, originally *thanh ngâm* 清吟, a Vietnamese genre of poetry with texts more than a hundred verses long. The text that the emperor relates here is not known.

1685 Nguyễn Hoàng was no emperor, but the Nguyễn dynasty bestowed posthumous titles to their ancestors.

1686 Cf. Campbell 2004, p. 63.

Định, covering roughly two-thirds of modern Vietnam's extent. Roughly a third of the former Champa territory was left, among it the two major city states Kauṭhāra (Nha Trang) and Pāṇḍurañga (Phan Rang). Kauṭhāra fell first and Pāṇḍurañga was defeated 150 years later. However, Cham kings continued to rule there under Việt investiture until 1832.[1687] Thus, the Nguyễn lords of the seventeenth century could never be too sure if their southern neighbors or the local Cham populations would be loyal or a threat. Even though Thiên Mụ had been thoroughly Vietnamized, giving *the* main goddess of Champa too much acknowledgment would have provided a prestigious connecting point of identity for the Cham that could have encouraged them to continue fighting for their territory and culture.

The stele of Nguyễn Phúc Chu mentions how one can listen to the 'old story of Thiên Mụ' and thereby acknowledges that Thiên Mụ was an older entity. Inexplicably, this story of the older entity caused not only the creation of an entirely Buddhist temple, but the temple was also named for this goddess who had apparently not been integrated into the Buddhist narrative at all, e.g., by presenting her as the incarnation of a bodhisattva. It is my interpretation that there was a subconscious idea that this could have risked a reassignment of ideology that would have turned a newly emphasized, state-supporting sacred site into a pillar of resistance. There was historical precedence for how aware and strict Vietnamese rulers were about such possible contestations of power based upon ideology.

Even twelve years after the final downfall of the Cham statehood, Thiệu Trị could still not be too sure about the Cham's loyalty. Therefore, he avoided to mention characteristics of Thiên Mụ that could have connected her to the Cham. However, the readers of his stele, especially the locals of Huế, very likely knew who the old lady of this stele's legend really was.

By 1920, these problems did not matter anymore. At this point in time, Emperor Đồng Khánh 同慶 (r. 1885—1889) had already officially recognized the Thiên Y A Na cult as a variety of the Cham's Po Nagar.[1688] But by then, the Cham had already split into two minorities (Muslim and Hindu Cham) and

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1687 Cf. Vickery 2011, p. 407.
1688 Trần Đình Hằng 2008, p. 375.

were most certainly integrated subjects of the state. If anyone had still wanted to rebel, it would not have been the problem of the Vietnamese emperors, but that of the French who had turned Vietnam into a colonized protectorate.

In complete contrast to the previous centuries, it had now become *advantageous* for the Vietnamese elite to clearly indicate the Cham traits of Thiên Mụ. Under the threat of Western colonization, they realized that they required a unified Vietnamese culture to preserve identity instead of having multiple ethnic identities fight each other.[1689]

Having Thiên Mụ meet the Nguyễn ancestor in a personal encounter was meant to create such a sense of unity between the Việt and the Cham — a shared Vietnameseness — to persist against the pressures of French imperialism.

The French had deemed Khải Định's father Đồng Khánh to be the most docile and collaborative emperor and therefore helped Khải Định to ascend the throne.[1690] However, it only recently became known that Khải Định actually dreamed of restoring the Vietnamese Empire. Unfortunately, he was too indebted to the French to make a move against them. He was forced to obey French demands and to act as their puppet ruler, even though he was not satisfied with his position. Khải Định saw western education as a tool to reinvigorate Vietnam,[1691] but in the eyes of the general public, his study travels to France made him appear even more like a proper servant of the colonial oppressors. Due to this, he lost all support among the Vietnamese population.

It can be concluded that Khải Định had the right idea about the type of propaganda needed at the time. However, he was neither in the right political position, nor in possession of the necessary funds and popularity to effectively utilize it in favor of his country's independence.

In the post-imperial era, historians of both northern and southern Vietnam adopted his thought of ethnic unity, although in different ways. Aware of the

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1689 See again the quote of Tạ Chí Đại Trường at the beginning of [V.2.]. Cf. Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014, pp. 109–110.

1690 The French's view on him is described in detail in: de Tessan, François. "S.M.Khai Dinh, Empereur d'Annam" *Dans l'Asie Qui S'éveille: Essais Indochinois* 13. Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1922: 153–63.

1691 Cf. Nam Nguyễn 2017, pp. 41–43.

Việt's role as a colonizing aggressor, the historians of the Communist Party preferred to depict Vietnamese history as inclusive of all ethnic groups and turned a blind eye to the March to the South. The historians of the Republic of Vietnam,[1692] on the other hand, continued Khải Định's attempted narrative of a united fight against foreign aggressors but included the individual contributions of the different ethnic groups of the south.

Thanks to the excellent conservation of the Thiên Mụ site and the good availability of sources related to it, the temple serves as a prime example for chronological site analysis — and as the most extensive historical application of Experiential Architecture Analysis among my case studies. The previous application of the EAA revealed reconfiguration tactics like obstruction by questioning the material presentation (PM and RNIS), the social interaction with the material, and the sentiments held that led to the chosen way of interaction (RNIS and SES). Because of that, transregional narratives and superscriptions could be challenged and local dynamics unfolded. In historical research, architectural descriptions in textual sources provide information on structure and content, while notes on royal interaction, common usage and legends attached to a site provide information about third party representation.

It is helpful to create multiple layouts for the identified historical building phases of a site to visualize its chronological development and to assert the level of aggressiveness of the reconfiguration tactics that were applied in between. The historical context gathered from material and textual sources helps to partially determine the intentions of the applied reconfiguration tactics. The comparison with the contemporary or latest available spatial image enables us to determine the success of them.

Although there had been an ongoing transformation towards a Neo-Confucian state system in Vietnam, political power had shifted to the southern realm where Neo-Confucianism had a hard time in gaining ideological influence because the Nguyễn government did not properly support it. Because the Nguyễn lords had not been ideologically invested in Confucianism, the educational and administrative system broke down to such an extent that the Confucian scholars of the Nguyễn dynasty were unable to achieve high social

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1692 Cf. Ang 2013, pp. 7–10.

prestige. This influenced their work motivation and led to a lack of support for the emperors. These had to seek different means to legitimate their rule. Favorable weather with enough but not too much rain and without floods was something everyone desired and thus, deities of hydrolatry were again particularly relevant to not only generate legitimacy but also to support the ideological transfer needed for the cultural integration of the far south.

In the south, the high position of female deities had prevailed somewhat among the Việt and mostly among the Cham. If the Nguyễn emperors wanted to create an unquestionable legitimacy for themselves, a stable expansion of the Việt realm, and the dominance of Việt culture, then the path to cultural integration relied on the patronage of the southern goddesses.

In the process of remodeling their narratives, heterodox features like polyandry or chthonic traits like 'sending plagues' were stripped away. The southern goddesses were primarily integrated into Việt culture by limiting their function to rainbringing. They were subsequently imperialized by involving them in the *cầu đảo* ritual. In the case of Pô Nagar, the Cham main goddess was split into multiple transcultural variants who differed in expression and power depending on location and function. There is an especially large gap between the southern Thiên Y A Na, who was turned into a primary rain deity and became an important goddess of a Đạo Mẫu movement, and Thiên Mụ — who even though present in the same area — entered the sphere of masculine religion.

Thiên Y A Na continued to represent a Việt-Cham hybrid who was at least ideologically available for both genders, for both Việt and Cham. In the case of Thiên Mụ, the aspect of cultural integration was retired for centuries. Instead, her roots in the Cham goddess Pô Nagar were outright denied. Although variants of the late imperial legends of the Thiên Mụ temple hinted at her, she was depicted as a being of the distant past and the people who worshiped her were marginalized. Sponsoring of the Buddhist occupation helped to put a wedge between the Cham cultural origins of the site and the Việt claims to it. The focus of Thiên Mụ shifted to supporting imperial legitimacy and the claim of the Nguyễn family to the southern territories. Thiên Mụ was moved up to one of the most important late imperial cult sites and it was probably the previous Buddhist occupation which made her more suitable to be integrated into the male-oriented imperial cult network than other Pô Nagar interpretations.

After Vietnam was conquered by the French and turned into a colony, there was a significant shift in the treatment of the southern goddesses. They were now needed to create united expressions of Vietnameseness and to build up anti-colonial narratives. This is demonstrated by the late legends attached to Thái Dương Phu Nhân but also by the reinterpretation of Thiên Mụ. While her Cham roots had previously been <u>concealed</u>, Emperor Khải Định tactically reemphasized them to create a point of mutual identification to achieve a Vietnamese national identity that included the Cham minorities. This caused a multiethnic unity narrative that remained relevant throughout the twentieth century and until today.

V.7. The Story of Ma Yuan in the Hou Hanshu

Author's translation, an excerpt from Fan Ye 范曄. *Hou Hanshu — Liezhuan — Ma Yuan Liezhuan* 後漢書 — 列傳 — 馬援列傳 16–18, pp. 838–840.

"Again, in Jiaozhi the women Trưng Trắc and her younger brother [sister] Trưng Nhị, rebelled. They attacked [the seats of government] of the headquarters, the barbarians of Jiuzhen, Rinan and Hepu all obeyed them. The bandits raided sixty towns outside Lingan and Trắc made herself king. In consequence, an imperially sealed letter was sent to [Ma] Yuan who was honored as the Wave-Subduing General. Together with the Marquis of Fule, Liu Long, as his Second and Duan Zhi as the admiral, as well as others, he was to attack Jiaozhi in the south. When the army reached Hepu, [Duan] Zhi died of disease. According to imperial order, [Ma] Yuan commanded both armies at once. In the following, Yuan advanced along the coast and penetrated through thousand li of the mountains.[1693] *In the spring of the 18th year, the army reached Langpo, where he fought the bandits and succeeded — over one thousand heads rolled, more than 10,000 people capitulated. Yuan followed Trưng Trắc and others to Jinxi, where he again defeated them, afterward the bandits fled by foot in all directions. In the first month of the*

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1693 This entry started the tradition of attributing the existence of one of the passes between Jiaozhi and southern China to Ma Yuan. Cf. Churchman 2016, pp. 57–58.

following year, Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị were beheaded; their heads were sent to Luoyang. Yuan received the title Marquis of Xinxi, together with a fief of three thousand households. He had an ox slaughtered and wine poured to entertain a banquet and motivate the soldiers. […] *With 2000 double-storied junks and over 20,000 soldiers, Yuan attacked the followers of Trưng Trắc, Du Yang and others that were left in Jiuzhen. From Wugong to Jufeng over thousand prisoners were executed. Lingnan knew peace. Yuan wrote in a memorial to the throne that the district Xiyu held 32,000 households, its distance to the seat of government was thousand li. He asked to separate the districts Fengchi and Wanghai, which was granted. Wherever Yuan went, immediately there were walls created for the regional- and district cities and irrigation canals dug for the benefit of the people. In his memorials to the throne, he noted that the Việt-Law and the Han-Law differed in more than ten issues, but to the Việt he publicly declared that he would restrict himself to the old system. From then on, the Lạc-Việt generals usually obeyed General Ma.* […] *Yuan was a good rider; he was good at choosing horses. In Jiaozhi, he acquired the bronze drums of the Lạc-Việt, which he had then smelted into the shape of a horse and had that sent back to the emperor.*"

S.1. The Making of Sichuan Province

The historian Kang Wenji once stated that economic prowess and a dense population were prerequisites for the Confucianization of Sichuan during the Song dynasty. Less important regions and less densely populated regions like Kuizhou 夔州,[1694] or the far south of Sichuan, received less attention and were thus able to preserve their traditional deities.[1695] The Sichuanese case studies provide insight into the persistence of traditional water deities in a cross section of areas that were strongly influenced by the Chinese Empire and Buddhism — with special regard to the localization of Buddhism — and those peripheral areas that contained spaces of ethno-political interest, like Mahu in Leibo County. The persistence of these deities, their reinterpretation, the utilization and claiming of their sites offer valuable insights into the outcomes of ideology transfer processes and their ramifications for the establishment of political and cultural dominance.

The following pages treat some peculiarities about Sichuanese sovereignty — most importantly the influence of transregional personnel and rulers and the latter's attempt to separate Sichuan into an independent empire. This is followed by a short overview over Sichuan in the Ming dynasty, which was an important transformative period for this province.

This forms the foundation for the subsequent case study clusters. The first looks at the interaction between Buddhism, local hydrolatry and the state, while the latter focus on the late imperial ethno-politics and their spatial claims to demonstrate how hydrolatric sites were used in the final takeover of Sichuan — and how this development was challenged.

S.1.1. The Separate Dynasties of Sichuan

Chinese historians created the image that legitimate dynasties succeed each other smoothly and without a question left concerning the times in-between.

1694 As one of the circuits of the Sichuanese area during the Song dynasty, Kuizhou covered parts of eastern Sichuan and most of what is now Chongqing Province.

1695 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009 pp. 21–24. According to Kang, the Chengdu area had 38 sacred spaces of Confucianism, thirty founded during the Song dynasty. By comparison, Kuizhou received seven more temples in addition a single preexisting one.

However, it is a fallacy of historical writing to pay less attention to the 'illegitimate' era. This means to subscribe to one perspective and miss out on the others, thus obscuring a part of the whole picture. The dynasties outside the official line up provide valuable information pertaining local and transregional identities, about the acceptance and rejection of foreign ideologies, about independence and integration.

Throughout its history, the area that is now Sichuan has been characterized by an unceasing separatist mindset. Even the scholar Gao Dai 高岱 (1508—1567) already noted that a mere sneeze from the Chinese emperor could prompt Sichuan to separate.[1696] During periods of internal political turmoil, powerful leaders took over Sichuan who sought to establish their own realms. The necessary conditions particularly occurred during the transitional periods between official dynasties. Therefore, Sichuanese dynasties usually emerged at the end or beginning of these transitions.

Due to its isolated position, Sichuan was easy to defend and the surrounding areas were easy to conquer with little effort. It was also fertile enough to feed its own population without outside support. Above all, however, it was a reservoir for imperial ideology, a bastion where the essence of the empire was upheld and to which dynasties retreated during times of peril in the capital. However, after the Song dynasty, subsequent rulers redirected their focus eastward and no longer needed this reservoir. This gave those who opposed central authority (that was not theirs) the chance to take it for themselves.

The long-standing status of Sichuan as a reservoir of imperial ideology enabled ideology reassignment by proxy. The sheer act of conquering Sichuan was thought to entitle the conqueror to the imperial throne. The separatists[1697] in Sichuan were hence particularly prone to proclaiming themselves emperors. However, to be emperor, certain goals or achievements were required, like the unification of the realm[1698] — something that was not as important to rebels

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1696 Cf. Fölster 2009, p. 90.

1697 The term separatist is used here as a neutral descriptor for people who want to make a political territory independent of the political unity it previously belonged to. Not because they question the government system but to enhance their own standing and power. The use of this term does not reflect any moral judgment regarding this kind of act.

1698 Cf. Pines 2012, pp. 11–43.

in other areas. One reason why these separatist dynasties were often ignored among the legitimate dynasties was indeed the historical allegation that they only controlled a partial territory and failed in pacifying the empire.[1699] Had these dynasties succeeded, our understanding of history would certainly be radically different. However, their failure to establish a lasting realm does not diminish their significance. Their success should not be measured solely on their duration, but on their long-lasting effects. To evaluate the imperial qualities of these separatist regimes, it needs to be considered whether they aspired to unite the realm the again; whether they at least regarded it as a potential future endeavor; or if they were content to rule over a limited territory as a very endangered local regime.

S.1.1.1. An Exemplary Minister of Sichuan

Sichuan's image as a reservoir of imperial ideology and the trope of conquering Sichuan as a precondition to successfully reuniting the imperial realm goes back to the Shu-Han Dynasty 蜀漢 (221—263 CE). The Shu-Han was one of the Three Kingdoms (220—280 CE) that formed after the fall of the Later Han dynasty, an era well-known due to its literary representation, particularly by the fourteenth-century Chinese novel *Sanguo Yanyi* 三國演義 ['Romance of the Three Kingdoms'] by Luo Guangzhong 羅貫中 (~1330—1400). Among the dynastic histories, this era has its own official history, the *Sanguozhi* 三國志 by the Shu scholar Chen Shou 陳壽 (233—297 CE), which compiles the histories of the individual kingdoms Wei 魏 (in the north), Wu 吳 (south of the Yangzi River) and the Shu-Han Empire that covered Sichuan.[1700] All three kingdoms were in competition for political legitimacy and cultural dominance. They all wanted to be acknowledged as the legitimate heirs of the Han Empire and advertised their regional identities as suitable fits. Especially Wei and Wu competed with each other. As the smallest and weakest of the three kingdoms, the Shu-Han was comparatively content with the western province Yizhou 益州 (~Sichuan and Chongqing) and committed to first stabilizing its own territory. Their

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1699 Cf. Fölster 2013, p. 71.

1700 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Three Kingdoms." Encyclopedia Britannica, May 14, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/event/Three-Kingdoms-ancient-kingdoms-China.

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main problems were the lack of population (especially of educated persons), the rough territory through which the pluralistic population was dispersed, and the natural borders like mountains and rivers.[1701] The Shu-Han had been initiated by Liu Bei 劉備 (161—223 CE) — a relative of the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155—220 CE) — who made himself the King of Shu. Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181—234 CE) was the prime minister[1702] of the Shu-Han dynasty and Liu Bei's advisor. During his reign, Liu Bei went on campaigns while Zhuge Liang defended Chengdu. In 221 CE, Liu Bei declared himself emperor but died soon after. His son Liu Shan 劉禪 (207—271 CE) succeeded him, but administrative and military matters were handled by Zhuge Liang as the regent. Zhuge Liang, originally from Shandong, took on the primary responsibility of strengthening the borders. His smart decisions and tactical brilliance earned him widespread fame and respect.[1703] However, most of his fame as a tactician goes back to Chen Shou's favorable depiction of him as a creative military leader and his portrayal in Sima Guang's general history *Zizhi Tongjian*.[1704]

During the Han dynasty the degree of acculturation between the central-eastern and southwestern parts of Sichuan had differed greatly. However, there existed in both areas a social elite called the Great Lineages *daxing* 大姓. These were powerful, wealthy families capable of controlling the defense of settlements. Although they were proud Han Chinese migrants, they did not support the imperial idea and only superficially pledged alliance to the Shu-Han as long as nobody actually intervened into their business. Unfortunately, they exploited the common people and Zhuge Liang had to put a stop to that. His ambitious reforms were warmly welcomed by the common population. He engaged in several imperial acts like the building of granary roads, passes, forts and dykes. To encourage a reliable agricultural production, he lowered taxes and corvée labor demands. Corrupt officials were purged and the noble families restricted by laws.[1705] While propagating the salt, iron and silk indus-

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1701 Cf. Tian Xiaofei 2016, p. 709.

1702 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 142.

1703 Cf. Tillman "Du Fu" 2002, p. 296 and Tian Xiaofei 2016, pp. 709–10, 719.

1704 Cf. Tillman "Historic Analogies" 2002, p. 61, 66, 68 and Tillman 2007, p. 56.

1705 Cf. Sanguozhi Ch. 35.

tries, he continuously planned for war. His aim was to achieve stabilization and unification beyond ethnic limits. To achieve this agenda, he needed the networks of the dispersed lineages of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou. However, the south rebelled immediately after Liu Bei's death. This provoked Zhuge Liang's Southern Campaigns (*nanzheng* 南征) in 225 CE.[1706]

While these campaigns were largely successful and culminated in the defeat of the rebel leaders, they inadvertently provided an opportunity for 'Meng Huo 孟獲' to prove himself as a capable leader of the "Man Barbarians" (*manyi* 蠻夷). He retreated with them towards Yunnan and eventually succeeded in uniting them before Zhuge Liang could.

Zhuge Liang died suddenly in 234 CE, having taken measures to prevent power from reverting to Liu Shan, who was a weak ruler. However, Han refugees quickly started to unite with the native Shu in rebellion against oppressive local officials, so the imperial troops were soon chased out of Chengdu. Only thirty years after Zhuge Liang's death, the Shu-Han became subjected to Wei in 263 CE.[1707] Soon after, Wei, itself, was conquered by the Jin dynasty 晉 (266—420 CE). This was followed by the short rule of the Cheng-Han 成漢 (304—338/347 CE), who also soon had to subject themselves to the Jin.

The *Zizhi Tongjian Gangmu* 資治通鑑綱目 — a historical criticism based on the *Zizhi Tongjian* — attributed to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130—1200), but actually compiled by his students, formulated the legacy of the Shu-Han dynasty. The famous scholar seemed to decidedly favor the Shu-Han in the legitimate succession of dynasties by the virtue of its rulers. This had great influence on the recognition of the Sichuan area as a reservoir for imperial legitimacy, as was expressed by the common reference to Zhuge Liang in times of doubtful imperial legitimacy. Such a view was also adopted in the *Sanguo Yanyi*. Zhuge Liang was soon deified as an exemplary person and outshined the actual founder of the dynasty. By the middle of the third century, there were already numerous stories and grand tales about him.[1708] There were many temples that proclaimed to house Zhuge Liang's tomb and due to this, he turned into a territorial deity

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1706 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 142, 144–45.

1707 Cf. Tillman "Historic Analogies" 2002, p. 60.

1708 Cf. Tillman "Historic Analogies" 2002, pp. 61, 66, 69; Tillman "Du Fu" 2002, pp. 296–98.

for several regions of Sichuan. Because the maintenance of these temple sites depended upon the trends of his popularity,[1709] they had a keen interest in popularizing his legends.

The *Sanguo Yanyi* built up on several such legends about him, its glorification of Zhuge Liang was mainly responsible for his late imperial popularity. Among his more important legends are the three visits that Liu Bei supposedly had to make to a thatched cottage before he was able to recruit Zhuge Liang. Du Fu refers to this story as well,[1710] but it was definitely created at a later point for propagandistic reasons. The motif of multiple visits, declinations and final agreement repeats itself in the story of *Qizong Qiqin* 七縱七禽 ['Seven Times Released Seven Times Captured'], which became a trope for Zhuge Liang stories. Another, older trope of the novel's Zhuge Liang is the superiority of the educated Chinese man over the 'barbarians': Zhuge Liang is depicted like a technomancer who was able to employ advanced explosives while the Man had to team up with literal wild beasts.[1711]

Zhuge Liang also appears in non-Han lore and toponyms; in narratives about the formation of places, introduction of cultural goods or about acculturation. Hence, he was either remembered very sadly and positively or with refutation and past anger for taking away the land from the indigenous peoples. Zhuge Liang had become a symbol of Sinitic thought among the indigenous and the emperors of the Song dynasty repaid his allegedly positive effect of transforming the local religious geography with the continuous refurbishments of his temples in Luzhou 瀘州 and Xuzhou 敘州 (in contemporary Yibin 宜宾) and by granting a plaque titled 忠靈 *zhongling* ['Numen of Loyalty'].[1712] Since

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1709 Some of the temples were described by Du Fu, cf. Owen 2016, pp. 134–37. Poem 15.12 "*Wuhoumiao* 武侯廟"; pp. 168–69. Poem 19.27. "*Zhugemiao* 諸葛廟"and pp. 298–99. Poem 9.23 "*Shu Xiang* 蜀相".

1710 Cf. Owen 2016, pp. 298–99. Poem 9.23 "*Shu Xiang* 蜀相". The musealized thatched cottage can still be visited.

1711 Cf. Tillmann 2007, pp. 54–57.

1712 In religious context, *ling* 靈 can be translated in two ways: either as the presence of some kind of supernatural atmosphere or entity, or as the success of its applied power. In the former case, I will translate the term as "numinosity" when referring to the atmosphere, "numen" referring to the entity and "efficacy" when referring the entity's power.

these temples among the southern natives possessed political meaning, they were more dedicatedly cared for than those in the north.

An important factor for the localization of Zhuge Liang sites, usually called a variant of Wuhou-miao 武侯廟 or Wuhou-ci 武侯祠, was his transformation into a water deity that shows many parallels to that of Ma Yuan. Both of them worked with southern non-Han ethnic groups and found themselves in an environment filled with foreign deities. Both of them had to battle indigenous water spirits to prove the superiority of their respective dynasties and both of them ended up becoming such themselves. Zhuge Liang became one of three persons (aside from Da Yu and Li Bing) who famously positioned yellow oxen in a spiritual fight with local water spirits. And like Ma Yuan, Zhuge Liang allegedly erected bronze pillars at the rivers to intimidate the spirits. The pillars were intended to stop the passage of wild jiao-dragons to the north, the jiao-dragons were thus once again symbols for the indigenous populations. And Zhuge Liang seized the local bronze drums as well, but instead of destroying them like Ma Yuan did it, he acknowledged their magical potential and consciously placed them at strategical points along the rivers to utilize their powers.[1713] If he, himself, believed in such powers did not matter as long as the indigenous population did.

> "Ma and Zhuge symbolized the sovereignty of the Han monarch, the power to unite contrasting and hostile worlds, to subdue the gods and demons of the foreign and watery lands of the south and, by extension, the native peoples as well.[1714]"

In the case of a dragonslayer, there was a similar transfer of power like in the cases of the brothers, sons and husbands that had been commonly attributed to powerful dragon women and which later turned into dragon kings. The religious perspective regarding enormous feats was that Zhuge Liang must have

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1713 Cf. von Glahn 1987. p. 15.

1714 Cf. ibid. in reference to Kaltenmark, Max. "Le dompteur des flots," *Han-Hiue: Bulletin du Centre d'Études Sinologiques de Pékin* 3, no. 1–2 (1948): 3–103.

been able to control the dragons because he himself was the more powerful water deity!

The tales of Zhuge Liang and the imagination of Shu-Han were able to return some feelings of self-worth to the inhabitants of Sichuan, who so far had repeatedly reverted to viewing themselves as "Shu". When the separatist rulers in "Shu" felt that they were the true inheritors of imperial power, they contributed to localizing the idea of the empire and some of them employed the symbolic Zhuge Liang to convey that.

S.1.1.2. An Exemplary Emperor of Sichuan

The Tang dynasty united one of the most extensive Chinese realms in history, but this seize also led to a lack of control in peripheral areas. Although Shu had been conquered and annexed almost one thousand years ago, it was still not well connected to the Central Plains except for some granary roads. Vast territories of the province were far from being Sinicized and the Shu continued as a people of their own whose most distinctive trait was their tendency to rebel.

When Gao Pian 高駢 (821—887) was tasked to take care of this problem, his violence and massacres added fuel to the flames. After the fall of the Tang dynasty, Wang Jian 王建 (847—918) rebelled under a corrupt governor, established the Former Shu 大 蜀 (907—925), and conquered Chengdu and other important cities. He closed the granary roads and subsequently unified the separated territories of the Sichuan area in an astonishingly swift manner.[1715] During the era of the Ten Kingdoms and Five Dynasties (907—979), multiple kingdoms from the former Tang territories invested their own emperors, but Wang Jian's military might and diplomatic engagement made him one of the first who 'shared' the Mandate of Heaven.[1716] Soon, Emperor Wang Jian controlled most of present-day Sichuan, southern Gansu and Shaanxi, and western Hubei.

Wang Jian's official aim was to reunify the realm, but first he needed to secure his borders. Knowing that he needed the support of the Shu people, he depicted himself as a benevolent ruler who supported the economy. He

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1715 Cf. Wang Hongjie 2011, pp. 38–46, 56, 63–72.

1716 Cf. ibid., pp. 9, 13, 15.

consciously installed himself as the rightful heir of the Tang Empire and even though he openly patronized Buddhism and Daoism, he also relied on Confucianism for imperial legitimacy. Therefore, he ordered the construction of Confucian temples and academies — which had previously been a rare sight outside the province's capital. Wang Jian emulated the Central Plains' politics to integrate imperial culture into Shu culture and to enhance his legitimacy.[1717] He expanded successfully into the south and consolidated the southwestern tribes against the Nanzhao 南詔 (760—902).[1718] He succeeded in imitating the imperial tribute diplomacy even against these foreign 'barbarians', which raised Wang Jian's reputation in the Central Plains. He generously bestowed titles and autonomous governments on the southern peoples but was ruthless if there were any revolts.[1719] He created a new calendar, granted amnesties, ensured the suburban sacrifices and attended to everything an emperor should.[1720] This, together with his protection of refugee literati, made him appear like a true imperial sovereign. Wang Jian also honored former Shu regimes and drew upon local history, reinforcing local traditions, customs and religion. This brought him the favor of the Shu people and strengthened Shu's regional identity.[1721]

All in all, Wang Jian was on a really good way to establish a stabilized realm. However, his second son and crown prince, Wang Yuanying 王元膺 (892—913) had a very militaristic world view and his subsequent rebellion destabilized the realm again.[1722] In reaction to this traumatic event, Wang Jian began to sponsor Daoism through his court Daoist Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850—933). Based on his advice, several temples were built, superscribed and superimposed. This territorial marking campaign localized both Daoism and the Former Shu and achieved that they both could draw legitimacy from the material territory itself. However, his son's treason had made Wang Jian paranoid and he started to undermine his own regency. His successor was a weak ruler who

1717 Cf. Wang Hongjie 2011, pp. 41, 180–84.

1718 Cf. ibid., pp. 140–43.

1719 Cf. Wang Hongjie 2011, p. 146, 172.

1720 Cf. Pines 2012, pp. 21, 26–27.

1721 Cf. Wang Hongjie 2011. pp. 185–89.

1722 Cf. Zizhi Tongjian, Ch. 266.

was unable to control the military elite. Very shortly after, the territory fell under the control of one of the other kingdoms of the era, until a Former Shu administrator called Meng Zhixiang 孟知祥 (874—934) stepped up to reapply Wang Jian's original strategies for the rule of Later Shu 後蜀 (934—965). However, Meng Zhixiang died just one year after declaring himself emperor. His very young son lacked the kind of heroic legitimacy that the strong military elite expected. The attempts by Meng Chang 孟昶 (919—965) to appease the people with benevolence only made him appear even weaker in the eyes of the military. Furthermore, he was unwilling to consolidate his strict Confucian views with the local culture and that cost him the sympathy of the pluralistic population. He also lacked the military talent to oppose the invading Song.[1723] In 965, Meng Chang had to realize that no person of Shu would die for him, so he surrendered.

Both Shu regimes were very short in nature, they initially relied on charismatic and talented military leaders but never survived the weak successors of these leaders. However, Wang Jian and Emperor Song Taizu 宋太祖 (960—976) had actually more in common concerning their challenges than Wang Jian and Meng Zhixiang had: Both leaders had to find a way to transcend their military origin, to balance their conquests with benevolent behavior and convince everyone beyond a doubt that the Heavenly Mandate had been received by them. Wang Jian succeeded in this task while Meng Chang forgot that an emperor could not ignore the people he ruled over. Wang Jian, on the other hand, had been aware that he needed to gain the support of most ethnic groups of his realm. It is owed to Wang Jian that integrating Shu culture with imperial culture became a paradigm of local legitimacy. Meng Zhixiang would never have been able to create another independent state so soon if he had not been able to work from Wang Jian's model. Wang Jian's methods of establishing sovereignty would serve as a blueprint for many future separatist regimes in Sichuan, although none of them sufficiently applied that blueprint to reality. Most importantly, Former and Later Shu represent a phase in Sichuan's history when political independence was still seen as an attainable and desired goal.

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1723 Cf. Zizhi Tongjian, Ch. 292–93.

The rapidly succeeding uprisings in 965, 966, 973, 981, 993, 997, and 999[1724] all aimed to restore the independence of "Shu". Yet, there were no greater independence movements like there had been in Vietnam, so this goal was completely lost in later rebellions which were truly mere temporary separations from the 'bigger empire'.

S.1.1.3. An Exemplary Sage of Sichuan

During the Song dynasties, the Chinese Empire was able to more or less stabilize its control over northern and central Sichuan, but the southern areas remained problematic and under self-governance. Sichuan was among the first territories invaded by Kublai Khan (1215—1294) in 1253. The advance of the Mongols during the thirteenth century actually benefitted the Han settlements in Sichuan to some degree because they made central state interventions difficult.[1725] However, the conquest took place over a very long period, and when the Yuan dynasty (1279—1368) finally established itself, China's once most agriculturally productive province lay devastated, depopulated and its infrastructure in ruins.[1726] For the Yuan government, Sichuan was not even worth a basic survey at that point, although this would have been necessary for the collection of taxes. The Yuan left the province to fend for itself instead and hardly ever intervened into the social injustices, the welfare dramas and the conflicts between landowners and magnates.[1727] When the Yuan dynasty began to decline, once again many small dynasties emerged and one of them was the Da Xia 大夏 dynasty (1362—1371). It was founded by Ming Yuzhen 明玉珍 (1331—1366), who had been born into a peasant family from Hubei. However, he was well-educated, fond of literature, and allegedly of noble character,[1728] so his family was likely not poor at all. In his home province, Ming Yuzhen had been well-established and popular, so he served as a mediator and a people's

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1724 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 20.

1725 Cf. von Glahn, 1987, p. 211, 217.

1726 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 5, 14; Kang Wenji 2009. p. 34.

1727 Cf. Fölster 2009, p. 7.

1728 Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, p. 44, 46.

judge. Allegedly, he was coerced into joining the Red Turbans[1729] in 1353 and when one of the main Red Turban leaders was betrayed and captured, he decided to strive for his own empire.

The *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 ['Veritable Records of the Ming'] depicts Ming Yuzhen as a liberator from plunderers who had split from the Red Turbans to save the people of Shu from despair and was thus reportedly welcomed with open arms by the common population.[1730] This is an astonishingly positive portrayal for a collection of imperial annals that was curated by central government officials[1731] of his competitor, the Ming dynasty. Ming Yuzhen also sold himself to the public as a wise, frugal ruler who would stop plundering and thus, this became his duty when he claimed to have received the Mandate of Heaven.

In 1360, Ming Yuzhen declared himself king and granted a title and an ancestor temple to his former leaders of the Red Turbans, an appeasement tactic that Wang Jian had used as well in regard to the Tang dynasty. Liu Zhen 劉楨 was his close advisor, a noble Confucian scholar who had previously served the Yuan dynasty.[1732] He emphasized Sichuan's advantages when he urged him to make his dynasty official and repeated the necessary conditions to be an emperor: to pacify the land, to chase away bandits, to nourish the people, to use the gifted ones wisely and to keep the troops in order. All of that would lead to a great reign. However, he also warned him: if Ming Yuzhen did not establish a dynasty, he would risk losing the loyalty of his soldiers. However, if he did, he would give the commoners and soldiers a point to turn to. With the same motif as used in the story of Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, Ming Yuzhen demonstrated virtue by refusing Liu Zhen repeatedly until he finally gave in and proclaimed

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1729　A millenarian rebel group grown from the White Lotus Movement, active from 1351—1368. They had aimed to overthrow the Yuan dynasty. For more information, see: Chan Hok-Lam. "The 'Song' Dynasty Legacy: Symbolism and Legitimation from Han Liner to Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming Dynasty". *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 68, no. 1 (2008): 91–133. This article also examines the use of fire symbolism by Zhu Yuanzhang, the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty.

1730　Ming Shilu Ch. 14 according to Fölster 2009, p. 28.

1731　More about the compilation of the *Ming Shilu* and its stance towards non-Han Chinese people is found in: Wade, Geoff. Southeast *Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: An Open Access Resource*. Singapore: Asia Research Institute and Singapore E-Press — http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl.

1732　Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, pp. 44, 46.

the dynasty. However, Liu Zhen mentions one very important factor in a mere throwaway line:[1733] that the Central Plains had no emperor. The Da Xia dynasty could not persist against the Ming dynasty that established itself over there.

Initially, Ming Yuzhen's administration was based on Confucian ideas and emulated the Zhou system. He issued a new calendar, erected an imperial academy and checked some other typical first tasks of emperors off his list: he determined his capital and an era name, performed Heaven and Earth sacrifices, minted new money and publicly referred to the virtuous rulers of ancient times.[1734] Some of his activities were purely symbolical, e.g., he initiated official examinations and founded schools to prepare for those, but there were not enough candidates to fill them. However, this still helped to establish his legitimacy because it was assumed that only an emperor could do all this, so by implication the one who did all this had to be an emperor. This was soon enhanced by spreading rumors about his miraculous heritage, birth, and appearance. This demonstrates how Ming Yuzhen's legitimacy was footed on charisma and popularity, which placed some limitations on his policies. He could not offend the people of Sichuan or pressure them in any way, so the taxes were kept low and there was no corvée labor at all.[1735] This situation would not have been sustainable if the dynasty had existed for a longer time.

There were hence two sources for Ming Yuzhen's legitimacy: the Confucian Mandate of Heaven and his charismatic-popular rule of benevolence.[1736] The latter was also linked to his heritage as a peasant from whom the common people expected that he would understand their struggles better than any other warlord. The rule of benevolence was also a concept present in Buddhism and similarly expressed by the emperors of the Việt Lý dynasty. It actually suited Ming Yuzhen's personal beliefs much better because these were not aligned to Confucianism at all.

Ming Yuzhen defined two indigenous districts with indigenous chiefs as conciliators, so he was aware of the non-Han groups in his realm. And yet, he

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1733 Cf. Fölster 2009, pp. 34–35, 81 (Liu Zhen's line).
1734 Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, p. 46 and Fölster 2013, p. 86.
1735 Cf. Fölster 2013, pp. 81–92.
1736 Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, p. 42.

initially destroyed the legitimacy of the Yuan rulers by stressing that they were not Han Chinese[1737] and that the joint effort in resisting against rulers of a foreign ethnicity had to transcend all social ranks and differences. However, the majority of his administration eventually returned to copying the established bureaus from the Yuan dynasty, even under the pronounced protest of Liu Zhen, who represented an entire faction of traditionalist literati at the court. The loss of their support significantly destabilized Ming Yuzhen's reign.[1738]

The only thing Ming Yuzhen still had on his list to be considered a full-fledged Chinese emperor was the control over the entire Chinese Empire. Zhang Jizhi points out that many historians blamed the failure of his dynasty on the lack of expansion and ignored that Ming Yuzhen had a completely different idea of rule than his contemporaries. He aimed for a balanced ruling system that was stable and beneficial for his population, one capable of restoring peace after a century marked by uprisings and social injustice due to the Yuan's administrative neglect of Sichuan. Liu Zhen both encouraged and warned Ming Yuzhen about the imperial duty of unifying the realm. The Da Xia did not have sufficient resources to conduct successful campaigns and to ensure the prosperity of the people simultaneously. Yet, Ming Yuzhen had made an imperial promise and attempted to keep it. The pressure to expand was thus what ultimately led to the downfall of Ming Yuzhen's reign.[1739]

His southward expansion turned into a disaster when he fell gravely ill. This presented a great opportunity for Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, the future Ming Emperor Hongwu 洪武 (r. 1368—1398), to initiate rather manipulative diplomatic contacts. After Ming Yuzhen's death, the mere fact that his successor was a child spared him from Zhu Yuanzhang's attacks. Instead, the future Ming ruler employed a ruse to swiftly conquer the Da Xia dynasty.[1740]

However, the public resisted him. Since the Yuan dynasty had cruelly abandoned them, the people of Shu did not trust another regime coming from the Central Plains. If the idea of separatism was still widespread and popular

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1737 Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, p. 45.
1738 Cf. Fölster 2013, pp. 61–63, 70.
1739 Cf. Zhang Jizhi 1983, pp. 41–42.
1740 Cf. Fölster 2013, pp. 81–82.

among them, this explains the strong support for the Da Xia dynasty although it had been unable to keep its promises of prosperity.

In the aftermath, Ming Yuzhen's enemies described him in an unusually positive manner, as distinctly not cruel, and the worst criticism he ever received was about his lack of perspective. This highly untypical treatment of the former competitor for the emperor's title was part of an intricate psychological warfare initiated by the Ming dynasty to demonstrate the advantages of the central state. Putting him on a pedestal like that while going into detail about everything that did not work out — the supposed lack of perspective, the rampant corruption, the bad karma which supposedly caused the illness — all of that was meant to tell the people of Sichuan: It was an earnest attempt, but you cannot do it alone.

Additionally, Ming Yuzhen had legitimized himself through both Confucian and Buddhist means, just like Zhu Yuanzhang intended to do. Therefore, his options to besmirch Ming's actions were limited if he did not want to undermine his own legitimacy.

Religious Activities of the Da Xia Dynasty

Fölster's extensive study about this dynasty corrects the idea that Ming Yuzhen adhered to Manichaeism and rightfully points towards the "King of Light" (*mingwang* 明王) motif that occurred in Buddhist "apocalyptic" lore since the sixth century. The King of Light was a messianic bodhisattva from a tradition that mixed Maitreya belief with Daoism.[1741] Fölster cites actions attributed to Ming Yuzhen that initially appear contradictory: he is reported to have expelled Buddhism and Daoism, yet he also commissioned the construction of a Maitreya Hall (Chin. *mile-tang* 彌勒堂). In consideration of Ownby and with the background of the Red Turbans, though, it is clear that Ming Yuzhen followed a millenarian Buddhist-Daoist hybrid movement that had sufficiently distinguished itself to demand the banishment of the competing religions from which it had emerged. Although it is not likely that there was any persecution of other religions or a propagation of the Maitreya religion, this belief spread

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1741 Cf. Ownby 1999, pp. 1527–29.

far enough to encourage some small uprisings against the Ming after 1371.[1742] Modern literature occasionally accuses Ming Yuzhen of having propagated a "radical millenarian belief" in combination with Confucian traditions to appeal to both the higher and lower strata of society.[1743] However, this is exactly what he did not do. Ming Yuzhen was neither sufficiently radical nor did he propagate his beliefs. We know of one Maitreya Hall he built and not much more. Fölster could[1744] hardly find any elements hinting at his personal belief at all. There is no indication that any of his hypothetical further religious acts antagonized anybody. Maybe that was a missed opportunity.

The people of Sichuan already harbored separatist sentiments due to the maltreatment of the previous dynasty. Ming Yuzhen enjoyed a favorable reputation among them, making them receptive to a new religious belief that could serve as a marker of identity. A belief system that, with its millenarian ideas, offered the hope of salvation from the daily struggles of commoner life. This Maitreya belief was only ever a small religious movement and thus perfectly suited for the Sichuanese people's perceived uniqueness. It also still contained details from Buddhism and Daoism that the population would have been familiar with.

If Ming Yuzhen had lived longer and invested more energy into propagating this faith, if he had built many temples throughout the landscape to localize the Maitreya religion and turn it into a *Sichuanese* religion, he might have been able to create a strong enough sense of unity to raise a small but stable Empire of Sichuan.

S.1.2.   Sichuan in the Ming Dynasty 明朝 (1368—1644)

The population of Sichuan slowly recovered during the Yuan dynasty, but the economic focus of the central government had shifted to the eastern coastlines. The province thus missed the advent of new technologies and administrative advancements, it turned into a forgotten hinterland. For the first fifteen years

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1742 Cf. Fölster 2013, pp. 76–77, 98–102.

1743 Cf. Fölster 2013, p. 83.

1744 Cf. ibid., p. 94.

after the establishment of his dynasty, the new Emperor Ming Hongwu 明洪武 (1368—1398) showed no great interest in Sichuan.

He may have carefully planned the downfall of the Da Xia when the opportunity to take Sichuan with little effort had presented itself. However, the following conquest proceeded against the expressed will of the 'Shu' population and eventually, Hongwu decided that fighting the many uprisings was not worth the prize. Due to this, there was not much administrative interaction going on between Sichuan and the early Ming dynasty. The emperor did not want to waste any more time with this province and thus kept its borders mostly the same as during the Yuan dynasty.[1745]

As soon as the power of the Ming concentrated, they made new but futile attempts to reactivate the routes to Guizhou and Yunnan. Only by the sixteenth century did the population growth in the empire entice new settlers to migrate to Sichuan.[1746] The Ming dynasty thus had to fight rebellious indigenous ethnicities of the southwest for the latter half of that century. Once again, the Ming representatives were careful to collect the local chief's bronze drums — their symbols of authority — and take them to the capital for a symbolic transfer of legitimacy.[1747]

During the Song dynasties, the focus of local government had been directed from the higher level prefectures towards the counties. In the Ming dynasty, there was another shift two levels down the administrative ladder that directed the focus on the townships *du* 都. The Ming dynasty developed two main systems of local administration: one was the field administration and the other the *lijia* 里甲 system of rural self-administration, which was enhanced by the integration of the priorly existing system of communal self-defense *baojia* 保甲[1748] and "community compacts" *xiangyue* 鄉約.[1749] Brook elaborates how

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1745 Cf. Brook 2010, p. 39.

1746 Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 220.

1747 Cf. ibid., pp. 15–16.

1748 Brook 1985, p. 5.

1749 These were public contracts on social conduct and mutual control and support between members of village communities. They had the aim to care for the appropriate behavior of each community member and thus supplanted legal institutions on the level below the district administration. These contracts were "a kind of constitution for local self-govern-

country magistrates centered their fiscal administration around the townships that slowly spread across central and southern China. This affected the efficiency of the empire's centralization efforts: Although the county magistrates were centrally appointed officials, the administration of the townships depended on the activities of local elites. These were mostly represented by the gentry, which consisted at this point out of localized Han Chinese and migrated merchants with long-term trade interests. These local elites were interested in investing resources and energy into local benefits and not in supporting some far-off center. The increased importance of townships enabled the local elites to acquire advanced administration skills and to display their importance for local society, which facilitated the growing dominance of the local gentry from the Ming dynasty onwards.

At the beginning of the dynasty, every community had been obliged to erect altars to the deities and ancestors propagated by the state cult. This was how the Ming intended to raise the visibility of the central state in every settlement. According to Timothy Brook, this inhibited any resistance to central authority and since they realized that they could no longer oppose the central state, social fringe groups and millenarian religious movements fled to the borderlands. While this was happening, issues like granary storage and irrigation projects urged the township inhabitants to form communal groups that soon merged projects of welfare, agriculture and religion. These communal groups and their projects were important resources for the legitimation of local elite leaders. They also prepared structures that could be quickly activated for joined protest efforts in times of political and economic dissatisfaction. Once again, the central government incorporated the local indigenous elites into the official and semi-official administrative system even though they only nominally recognized the Ming dynasty. Although the government deemed this sufficient for the transfer of state ideology, the reality differed vastly: [1750]

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ment. In case of famine or other hardship, community members had the duty to support each other." Cf. "Xiangyue," ChinaKnowledge, Ulrich Theobald, March 18 2016, http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/xiangyue.html.

1750   Cf. Brook 1985, pp. 2 (local gentry), 13–22 (townships), 46–49.

Thus, although local communities were not autonomous, they did have sufficient internal cohesion to prevent them from being completely subject to government authority. As long as the minimum requirements imposed by the state were met and the forms of the administrative systems implemented, local communities were free to organize themselves as they or their immediate elite chose.[1751]

At the end of the Ming dynasty, there loomed an economic recession that led into an era of disasters. Sichuan had no resources to counter the continuous weather catastrophes between 1626—1640. The 'little ice age' erupted and especially affected the subtropical crops of Sichuan, which made it hard to preserve the livelihood and caused civil unrests to flare up again. Extreme droughts were followed by heavy floods[1752] which were only able to wreak havoc because the hydraulic works meant to control them had not been repaired for decades. All of this caused famines; the starvation caused low immune systems and these accelerated the spread of plague, smallpox and other epidemics. Up to forty percent of the just recently recovered population of Sichuan was lost.

The downfall of the Ming state was owed to its reliance on self-sustaining local administrations, a military to self-sustain with self-sufficient hereditary garrisons and labor services provided by corvée, and permanently registered hereditary occupational groups, none of which was feasible without a functional and effective central management that the Ming did not possess. The emperors steadily lost power to the expensive but ineffective eunuch elite whose mismanagement weakened political dominance in the peripheries.[1753] The entire idea of the central state was almost forgotten: Quality was not controlled, efficiency was not checked, so there was rampant corruption and embezzlement. Registrations were not updated and large numbers of people were not tax registered at all. All of this led, according to Wakeman Jr., to a complete

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1751 Brook 1985, p. 48.

1752 Hou Huhu and Wang Tianqiang 2009, p. 51.

1753 Cf. Wakeman Jr. 1986, pp. 2, 5–8, 12.

system breakdown followed by revolutions[1754] that could only have been averted by costly interventions, but there were no more funds left for these. Even in the central provinces, formerly imperially managed tasks had to be taken up by private organizations[1755] that stepped in for firefighting, irrigation, law and welfare. Instead of bringing the empire to Sichuan, Sichuan's magnate-gentry system had been unintentionally exported across the empire.

Religious Developments during the Ming Dynasty

The Ming dynasty had very active relationships with all major religions of China. Right at the beginning of his reign, Ming Hongwu declared Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism all as legitimate.[1756] Most famously, the collected Neo-Confucian teachings of Zhu Xi, the *Daoxue* 道學, was chosen as the state orthodoxy. The Neo-Confucian scholars in service of the government had a keen interest to transform society by increasing wealth because they planned to expand their own education system with the conviction that this would strengthen the state.

Ming Hongwu saw himself as a sage-king and to stress his right to rule as a most moral and politically valiant sovereign, he had to support the scholars who weaved such narratives.[1757] But Daoism also held a high position in the early Ming dynasty. This had been achieved by stopping a drought with thunder rituals and rain prayers during the very first years of the dynasty. The Confucian officials immediately reacted to this possible competition for the government's favor and condemned these practices as heterodox. Subsequently, they claimed all valid imperial rituals for themselves.[1758]

At the same time, the Ming sought out a close relationship with Buddhism. Foremostly to control it, but also to use it to the empire's advantage since they

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1754 Among the most famous were leaders of revolts were Li Zicheng 李自成, Gao Yingxiang 高迎祥 and Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠 at the end of the dynasty. Cf. Parsons 1970, p. 8–38, 43–82, 120–38.

1755 Cf. Wakeman Jr. 1986, pp. 13–14.

1756 Cf. Brooks 2010, p. 170.

1757 Cf. Lagerwey 2016, pp. 123–25.

1758 Cf. Lagerwey 2016, pp. 116–18.

had realized its catalyzing efficiency in the claim of religiously nonconfirmative territories. However, the Buddhists paid for the lavish government patronage by having every aspect of the monastic communities controlled.[1759] This was limited to economic and political centers, though, and difficult to uphold in the periphery. Since all three transregional religions were important to the empire, the Three Teachings (*sanjiao* 三教)[1760] received more attention in religious discourse. The harmony of the Three Teachings was a superficial one, restricted to elite discourse. On the gentry level, supporters of Confucianism and Buddhism competed for financial resources and spaces for their building projects, which fostered their enmity. The gentry of the south was a little more inclined towards Buddhism.[1761]

However, inter-religious perspectives were limited to these famous traditions. The local religions were not even recognized by the Ming government but this also meant that it was also not administratively controlled.[1762] While the big religions were preoccupied with questions of orthodoxy, state representation and patronage, the nature deities, territorial deities and the ever more (pseudo-)historical deities were more relevant to the everyday religions of the common people. Local gazetteers were full of the official's lamentations about shamans and mediums with their 'demon gods' and possible human sacrifices[1763] receiving more ritual and monetary attention than state-sanctioned gods. This was usually framed in the worry about epidemics and the possible

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1759 One of the at the time most extensive and still reliable studies focused on Ming Buddhism is found in: Yü Chün-fang, Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote. *The Cambridge History of China.* Vol. 8. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. pp. 893–952.

1760 This refers to an intellectual perspective that sees Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism as supplementing each other and tries to harmonize them. However, depending on the individual scholar's background, one of them was still commonly implied to be superior to others. Although this way of thinking was initiated during the fourth century CE, it enjoyed different waves of popularity across the centuries. See: Gentz, Joachim. "Die drei Lehren (sanjiao) Chinas in Konflikt und Harmonie: Figuren und Strategien einer Debatte". In *Religionen Nebeneinander: Modelle religiöser Vielfalt in Ost- und Südostasien*, edited by Edith Franke and Michael Pye, 17–40. Münster: Lit Verlag, 2006.

1761 Cf. Brooks 2010, pp. 172–73.

1762 Cf. Meulenbeld 2012, p. 125, 134, 136–38 and Brooks 2010, pp. 162–64.

1763 *"sharen yi jigui* 殺人以祭鬼*"*. *Songshi* Ch. 489, biography no. 248, p. 14078; or cf. Song Huiyao Jigao, Criminal Law Ch. 2:3.

eschewing of non-magical medicine.[1764] The previous governments had never succeeded in exterminating shamanism and mediumship in Sichuan, nor would the Ming ever be able to do so.

To gain territory, they needed to initiate a large-scale campaign to make the empire tangible in remote areas. Emperors throughout the world used architecture to assert their political authority and to connect themselves to the divine. Due to his background as a usurper, the Yongle Emperor felt the greatest need to do so. While he was busy persecuting his competition, the imperial palace in Nanjing was burned to the ground. To counter this burden, he created a new numinous imperial city[1765] in Beijing and intensively sponsored the building of Daoist and Buddhist temples throughout the empire. Religious specialists were tasked to perform rituals there for the safety and longevity of the emperor.

The sites he had built also served the purpose to connect the emperor with the distant regions of the empire and to make the vastness of the territory more perceivable. As Aurelia Campbell states: paintings and descriptions in other media were unilateral, but Yongle's building activity was bilateral in the sense that it brought the distant regions to him, while it also brought the empire — the central authority — into the distant regions. By making the empire physically visible, he was able to claim those regions and to imperialize them. Even if the newly established temples were not regularly cared for, their crumbling presence marked the extent of Ming might.

Yongle employed the Ming characteristics that had developed during the prior reigns to create a unique Ming architectural style.[1766] This was used for all kinds of palaces and temples he built and thus created a kind of imperial brand which could be immediately recognized. Yongle sent officials to different regions of the empire to collect timber for his sacred building projects. The official tasked to scout Sichuan interacted with local officials but also with the tribal people and was very successful with that tactic. He protruded into a region mostly untouched by Han Chinese activity, where the presence of the

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1766 Cf. Meulenbeld 2012, pp. 128–29, 131–32.

1767 Treated in detail in: Chan, Hok-Lam. *Legends of the Building of Old Peking*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2008.

1768 Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 167–68, 170.

empire rose and fell with the timber industry. That way, a place called Mahu, deep in the Yi territory, became an island of imperial activity in Sichuan's southernmost periphery [S.3.3.1.].

The bad shape that Sichuan was in during the Ming dynasty had already caused some blindness in documents. The province that had once been a nexus of religious development was now in a weak social and financial position and no longer relevant for Ming dynastic advancements nor for its record keeping. Sichuan slowly rose from devastation during the second half of the Ming dynasty only to be destroyed again when the Manchu conquered China 1644—1646. The people still alive afterwards hardly bothered to preserve their experiences in writing, which makes local gazetteers for Ming dynasty Sichuan scarce. Although a few still exist and some writings on the Ming dynastic areas of Sichuan have survived in Qing gazetteers, the dearth of textual information about Sichuan during this era proves to be a great hindrance to the study of this province's history. Thus, it is even more important that we can rely on material evidence. The remnants of industrial and architectural endeavors in Sichuan prove that it was not an entirely forgotten area under the Ming dynasty.

It is important to remember that a lack of sources does not imply that the Ming dynasty was uneventful in Sichuan. Just in Mianzhou there are *numerous* temples that were 'founded' during the Ming dynasty. I have found multiple hints for an ongoing Buddhist occupation of sacred water sites that likely would not have been able to happen to that extent without governmental support. This should not imply that all these activities were direct central government projects, they were rather a result from a general supportive attitude. Names were changed and architecture was subjected to spatial reconfiguration to make it look more Buddhist — examples for that are the Shengshui-si 聖水寺 in Mianyang or the Qinquan-si 琴泉寺 in Santai, which are treated in the following pages.

The spirits did not disappear. Hunger and despair were sufficient support for the indigenous deities who were closer to the local people and possibly deemed more responsive. The lack of imperial administration left heterodox, wild, local spirits to reign free. Thus, we can expect that the religious culture of the Song dynasty, which Kang Wenji has thoroughly analyzed, not only continued to exist throughout the Ming dynasty but may have even made somewhat

of a comeback. This resurgence could be attributed to the fact that all efforts to eradicate shamanism and local deities had been interrupted for a long time. Moreover, times of despair often led people to seek solace in religious communities and the communal support that they provided. This may also explain why Sichuanese Buddhism experienced a revitalization during this period.

S.2. The Buddhist Occupation of Hydrolatric Sites in Sichuan

The "Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan" Project led by the researchers Elena Valussi and Stefania Travagnin[1767] emphasizes Sichuan's role as a node of religious networks that developed or originated there, extended beyond it and influenced the Chinese religious geography. Sichuan thus represents its own center of religious knowledge production and therefore does not (aside from its geographic location) deserve to be treated as peripheral to the study of Chinese religions because it is genuinely central to it. The following pages treat Sichuan's role for the development of Chinese Buddhism and the impact of Buddhism on the religious water culture of Sichuan, demonstrating the imprints that social dynamics leave on material sites. The analysis of these sites can thus provide information about local developments that official documents have concealed or left out.

In the archaeological and textual record, East Asian regions with early Buddhist activity include the imperial capital Chang'an, northern Jiangsu, and northern Vietnam. References to sacrifices to the Buddha in Sichuan date as far back as 65 CE, and two Buddhist temples are known to have existed during the Han dynasty in this region. However, it is unclear how Buddhist such practices really were because Buddhist lore was framed in Daoist language, which played an important role both for the translation of Buddhist concepts into the Chinese culture and for its distribution. Many foreign communities of Central Asian origin existed in Sichuan during the first century. The fact that

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1767 Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan. "Project Description" https://sichuanreligions.com/project-description/ (Accessed 25 May 2021).

Sichuan received Buddhism so early, rather than in the fifth century as formerly assumed, raises the question of whether Buddhism was transmitted there by the same people and along the same routes as in the Chinese Central Plains.[1768]

The early Sichuanese form of Buddhism originated in the territories between Chengdu and Mianyang. Due to the province's isolation, its development differed from the Central Plains Buddhism.[1769] For example, Sichuanese Buddhism had a unique ensemble style in which bodhisattvas could be placed into the center of compositions and were flanked by Buddhas.[1770] Even entire temples 'without Buddhas' were possible.

Early Chinese Buddhism was mostly a mix of ideas, motifs and practices that spread, transformed and localized while, e.g., the monastic rules took a few centuries longer to arrive. When that happened during the fourth and fifth centuries of the Common Era, Buddhist concepts became more noticeable and less dependent on the Daoist vehicle. However, the Sichuanese practice of Buddhism kept on deviating from orthodoxy. Compared to the capital cities, Buddhism and local traditions received less pressure from state ideology (which often supported Buddhism at the time) and were able to interact and adjust more freely to each other.[1771] In general, the social thought in Sichuan still differed significantly from the Central Plains and the people were more welcoming to the foreigners who carried Buddhism.

The pluralistic socio-religious climate of the fifth to sixth centuries allowed a variety of Buddhist schools to coexist and compete. In this era, Pure Land Buddhist imagery became prevalent throughout Sichuan and the clergy of Sichuanese and Tibetan areas engaged in educative exchange. The sixth century *Gaoseng Zhuan* 高僧傳 ['Biographies of Eminent Monks'] asserts the presence of Chan Buddhist study groups. Actually, the earliest use of the term *chan* 禪 was found in a Buddhist context among the writings of a Chengdu monk named Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709—788 CE), who continued the work of the sixth

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1768 Cf. Delgado Creamer 2016, pp. 28–29, 78–79, 101, 215.

1769 Mianyang being one of the earliest settled sites of Sichuan. Cf. Flad and Chen 2013, p. 79, 95, 98, 109, 152.

1770 Cf. Sørens en 1995, p. 286.

1771 Cf. Wong 1999, p. 56.

Chan patriarch Huineng 惠能 (638—713 CE). Chan Buddhism spread quickly through the province and soon turned into the dominating school of thought in Sichuanese Buddhism. Most modern Mahāyāna monasteries belong to it.[1772]

Sichuan quickly turned into a Buddhist center for transcultural and internal mission. The missionaries simultaneously created relations to members of the central state and to the local elite. They also scouted Daoist places to contest, incorporate or annex later.[1773] The local development of Buddhism was accelerated by the arrival of the Tang emperors, who sought refuge in Sichuan during the An Lushan Rebellion (755—763 CE) and were accompanied by educated monks, scribes and painters.[1774] Chengdu alone came to hold 96 temples at the time, the largest among them was the Shengdaci-si 聖大慈寺 ['Temple of the Sacred Great Mercy']. There were high investments into art, scriptures, teaching and also into printing.[1775] Buddhist lore was treated more flexibly, some of the traditions deviating from the scriptures can now only be discerned from images, e.g., when bodhisattvas like Guanyin and Dizang 地藏 (Kṣitigarbha) were paired up although they normally do not belong together.[1776] During the Tang dynasty, Sichuan had become famous for its cliff sculptures[1777] and some were already old enough to be forgotten again. By the early eight century, this kind of art had died out in the rest of China but in the southern-central and eastern parts of Sichuan, it continued for much longer.[1778] New waves of teaching monks contributed to the flourishing of the Buddhist center of Sichuan until the Song dynasty.[1779]

Whenever Buddhism was persecuted in the Central Plains, Sichuan served as a refuge to the Buddhist clergy just like it did for imperial ideas before.[1780]

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1772 Xiang Shishan 1999, pp. 38–39, 42.

1773 Among those places were famous mountains, related to the focus on mountains as abodes of Buddhist entities in "Landscape Buddhism". Cf. Wong 1991, pp. 69–70.

1774 Cf. Long Yibo and Zheng Jiwen 2009, p. 112.

1775 Cf. Xiang Shishan 1999, pp. 39–40.

1776 Cf. Yü Chün-fang and Yao Chongxin 2016, pp. 759–60, 764.

1777 Cf. Sørensen 1995, p. 281.

1778 Cf. Yü Chün-fang and Yao Chongxin 2016, p. 760.

1779 Cf. Long Yibo and Zheng Jiewen 2009, p. 113.

1780 Cf. Xiang Shishan 1999, p. 39.

This regularly rejuvenated Sichuanese practice and art and prevented that the Buddhisms of China developed into too different directions. The military efforts of the separatist emperor Wang Jian kept the area stable and saved local Buddhism from the ongoing wars between the Tang and Song dynasties. The wealth and stability of Sichuan attracted the migration of people from other areas of China.[1781]

During the Song dynasty, many emperors were fond of Buddhism and it was also widespread among the officials. However, according to Sørensen, the local gentry was likely still the main force for the spread and popularization of Buddhism in eastern Sichuan.[1782] Laypeople held a lot of influence in Sichuanese Buddhist communities. Buddhism hence adapted local ideas and motifs and local religions correspondingly adopted Buddhist ideas and entities. Local narratives may therefore mention characters that carry famous Buddhist names but behave like traditional spirits.[1783] Completely new non-scriptural compositions occurred in Buddhist art.[1784] Sichuan also produced a multitude of famous monks, some of the new Buddhist traditions that they founded remained limited to Sichuan[1785] or the practices they encouraged, like self-immolation, were seen as ambiguous elsewhere.[1786]

Yang Xiaodong researched one such very limited tradition, the devotional cult of Liu Benzun 柳本尊 (855—907/942) which was initiated by Zhao Zhifeng 趙智鳳 (1160—?). While it visually distanced itself clearly from other Buddhist groups, it was somewhat fundamentalist in its defense of a Mahāyāna orthodoxy and the urge to 'return' to a 'pure' canonical form of Buddhism.[1787] It remains puzzling why a layman engaging in religious self-mutilation like Liu Benzun became the core of a new religious movement, but gigantic cliff carv-

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1781 Cf. Long Yibo and Zheng Jiewen 2009, p. 114.

1782 Cf. Sørensen 1995, p. 283.

1783 Cf. Hansen 1990. pp. 36–37.

1784 Cf. Sørensen 1995, p. 288.

1785 Cf. Xiang Shishan 1999. p. 42.

1786 Although self-immolation also occurred in other regions it was not commonly accepted., For its practice in Sichuan see: James A. Benn. "Written in Flames: Self-Immolation in Sixth-Century Sichuan." *T'oung Pao* 92, no. 4/5 (2006): 410–465.

1787 Cf. Yang Xiaodong 2019, pp. 260–62.

ings were created in his honor. Zhao and his disciples portrayed Liu Benzun as a diligent missionary to Chengdu who, when seeing the misery of people, sacrificed body parts to alleviate the suffering. After the rise of Wang Jian, he traveled to Chengdu to exorcise malevolent spirits. The first of which was one of the most important local water deities, the Spirit of Rivers and Ditches (*jiangdushen* 江瀆神).[1788] This demonstrates the high grade of competition between Buddhism and local water spirits even in extremely constructed narratives. Around 904 CE, Liu Benzun allegedly turned Chengdu into a Buddhist landscape and gathered preferably wealthy women among his many disciples. Although the ruler had not been interested in being taught in the Buddhist ways when he invited Liu, the latter was still able to gain the emperor's favor by performing magical tricks. During the Song dynasty, Zhao's disciples believed that Liu Benzun was really an obscure reincarnated bodhisattva, or the reincarnation of the Buddha Vairocana. The 'Liuists' thus erected an astounding number of sites and cliffs carvings in a very short matter of time, so that they became very noticeable during the early thirteenth century. After the Liuists disbanded, their sites were reoccupied by other Buddhist schools which restored the temples but none of the art that referred to Liu. Only half a century past its prime, the Liu Benzun cult was gone.[1789]

The Liu Benzun's cult is a very relevant example for Sichuan's capability of producing effective and rapidly growing and endemic traditions of popularized Buddhism that did not fit into any sectarian mold. It demonstrates the reduction of Buddhism to its magical functions, especially from the side of elites and rulers, and furthermore the occupation and reoccupation of sacred sites in the competition over numinous water.

Between the Tang and Song dynasties, Buddhism had occupied various sites relevant to local religion. Hydrolatric sites were still the first choice among those because they were relevant for all social strata. Like in the story of Liu Benzun, water- and dragon deities were either adapted, adopted or exterminated.[1790] Even though Buddhism had been in the business of occupying sites

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1788 Cf. Yang Xiaodong 2019, pp. 2–3, 8, 12–14.

1789 Cf. Yang Xiaodong 2019, pp. 30–33, 50–51.

1790 Cf. Faure 2007, pp. 297–307.

of other religions for a long time, it remained porous. As it continuously interacted with Daoist and Confucian concepts, several "syncretistic" movements developed during the Northern Song dynasty.[1791] However, just like Confucian authors preferred Confucian superiority in their discourses on the Three Teachings *sanjiao* 三教, the Buddhist version of the Three Teachings also kept Buddha literally in the center.[1792]

The Song dynasties offered new trends in art: certain spirits, like the dragon king, became preferred as guardians for Buddhist sites. Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Chin. *dashizhi* 大勢至) had become the most popular bodhisattvas — so popular that they left the need for a main Buddha behind.[1793] Noticeably, both Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara were commonly depicted with feminine features or completely female. There are many theories about the feminization of both, especially of Avalokiteśvara regarding the Miaoshan legend that developed in eleventh-century central China.[1794] There are likely many different factors that led to this development but I think it is worth considering that the progression of these feminizations accelerated in a similar time frame to the increasing tactical occupation of hydrolatric sites by Buddhist temples.

Beyond religious representation, Sichuanese Buddhism also had a very different way of interacting with space. In the Chengdu Plain, there existed extremely large *changzhutian* 常住田 ['permanent sustenance fields'], land that the court and other donors had given to Buddhist monasteries. It was supposed to feed all the monks but usually belonged to the temple's master. These lands had become so large that wide areas of them remained undeveloped. In the Song dynasties, squatters took the opportunity to occupy those lands with the result that the monasteries now had tenants. However, in contrast to the concurrent situation in Vietnam, there existed no bondage relationship, enslavement or

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1791 Cf. Sørensen 1995, p. 284.

1792 Extensive research on the Three Teaching representations in the public art of Sichuan has been done in: Zhou Zhao. "The Unified Three Teachings in the Rock Carvings of the Song Dynasty in Chongqing and Sichuan". Dissertation. Heidelberg University, 2010.

1793 Cf. Sørensen 1995, pp. 299–301.

1794 Although female Guanyin occasionally occurred in the Tang dynasty and became more prevalent along the coasts — as the White Robed Guanyin — as well. Cf. Dudbridge 1978.

obligation. Nor did the monks manage or organize the fields, they just collected rent on them. All infrastructural measures were taken care of by the tenants. Therefore, the power exercised by the Buddhists over their own lands was very limited. These fields provided the option for formerly landless commoners to turn into a wealthy, landowning elite that started to compete with the aristocracy during the eleventh century. Together with elders, the families of officials and commune chiefs they became part of the "influential households", the *xingshihu* 形勢戶. These would become mainly responsible for the majority of irrigation projects along the Yangzi. They supported advancements in irrigation technology but they also organized the labor provided by smaller landowners.[1795] Community efforts like these strengthened the communal identity. These landowning elite commoners were of special importance because they did not align to a certain religion. They did not represent a ruling house like aristocracy did. They did not need to report back to a central government, like the officials had to; nor were they dependent on trade and certain industries like the magnates, although there was some overlap with the latter. As such, that wealthy commoner elite who ripped the land from monastic possession was truly free in supporting local interests and needs and had the highest interest in preserving local identity.

Yet, Buddhism was not without challenges in Sichuan. Daoists and Buddhists competed for sites, patrons and even the alignment of certain gods. Gao Pian, viewed as an exemplary governor in both Jiaozhou and the southeastern tribal territories of Sichuan, behaved infamously cruelly in the more Sinicized areas of the province. In Zizhong 資中, where the Kaiyuan-fosi 開元佛寺 was located opposite to the prefectural seat, he had all the monks apprehended and whipped because they recited sutras at night. The reason he gave was that while praying may not be a crime, they needed to be oppressed, otherwise there would be uprisings. Broy concludes that Gao Pian's behavior likely related to social experiences that had been made previously.[1796] Which implies that Buddhists were no uncommon sight in the very common social

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1795 Cf. von Glahn 1987, p. 167–171.
1796 Cf. Broy 2006, p. 42.

unrests of Sichuan, or that rebels were often disguised as Buddhist monks, just like it happened in Zizhong a decade later.

Halperin also reports about Daoist-inclined private authors of the tenth century who did not oppose Buddhism for the usual reasons — that it was a foreign religion and potentially corrupting Chinese morality — but for 'dishonesty'. They did not criticize that Buddhist monks claimed to make rain, but that they failed at doing so. They condemned the use of mirrors for visual effects to make icons and images appear more magical. That chants and artifacts were useless and fake — as opposed to 'real' magic — sold just to make the clergy rich. The accusation of greed is an old one used by religious and administrative persons alike for all other kinds of religious and administrative persons. Daoists, Buddhists, local religious specialists but also the more Confucian local officials all competed for a limited number of sponsors to support their political and architectural projects. Although it was not always clear if officials were affiliated to Confucianism or Daoism, could exert state-funded force on Buddhists whenever they felt like it, even if there was no offense aside from the Buddhists acting in public[1797] — because public visibility was another thing they competed for.

From the end of the Song dynasties to the beginning of the Ming dynasty, the area of Sichuan was forefront to the war. The invasion of the Mongols left no safe space in Sichuan and strongly damaged the Buddhist culture. The economy was broken, the educational institutions interrupted and teachers had fled elsewhere — people were hardly able to survive. The locals had neither funds nor great interest in supporting Buddhism, nor was Buddhism able to offer them anything but hope. Hence, Sichuan only produced three Buddhist masters during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. However, towards the end of the Ming dynasty, the situation seemed to become better and Sichuanese monks began to raise the province's reputation.[1798] All this progress was destroyed by the events of the Ming-Qing transition and Sichuan's total devastation which

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1797 Cf. Halperin 2009, pp. 426–428. Halperin also mentions here that entering and exiting the Buddhist clergy could terminate any chances for office even if the person had previously excelled in the examination.

1798 Cf. Long Yibo and Zheng Jiewen 2009, pp. 113–14.

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cost it a large number of its native population of both the indigenous people of Shu descendance and the nativized Han Chinese, who had already been living there for centuries and identified as Sichuanese.

In the Qing dynasty, Sichuan underwent many transformations and was generously expanded towards the west, far into Tibetan territory. The Tibetan Buddhism of western Sichuan had a stronger monastic system, was economically more active and also more successful than its Mahāyāna counterparts in the east. Monasteries controlled their own administrative units with their own military, courts and prisons. Comparatively, the Chan monasteries of the original Sichuan area were mostly educational and ritual centers.[1799]

For the Qing dynasty, local Buddhism had mostly lost its political relevance. By occasionally harboring subversive movements, it forfeited any favor that may have been left for it in the central government. Together with the westward expansion, this led to a new initiative of the government to gain visibility for the imperial ideology and to establish a more reliable control over the resources Sichuan was able to provide. This will be treated in the last case study of this appendix. The next one treats the localization of Buddhism in relation to Sichuan's numinous springs. The gazetteers which are used for the following case studies of central, eastern and southern Sichuan refer to sites where Buddhism had been present since the Tang dynasty and which show the presence of dragons and other water deities either by their toponyms or regularly occurring rain prayers.

S.2.1.   Numinous Springs:
Case Studies of the Northern Central Area

In the water cultures of Vietnam and Sichuan, precise control over rainfall was paramount. Otherwise, heavy rain could end a drought but also cause rivers to swell, posing a danger to travelers who depended on safe waterways. Although these needs did not differ much in both regions, the handling of terrestrial water differed significantly. In Vietnam, springs were not very important, except for hot or exceptionally mineral ones, due to the abundance of rivers penetrating the landscape. Conversely, in Sichuan, the landscape presented a

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1799 Cf. Xiang Shishan 1999, p. 38.

choice between very large and rapid streams or rather dry plains, which made irrigation a dire problem and springs very important.

Many springs were located on or close to mountains and inhibited a spot between the heavenly and terrestrial waters. They were used to call for rain, to receive healing and to control the rivers. In the case of grotto springs, the factor of mysticism cannot be underestimated. The darkness, the narrow surroundings, the temperature differences and the weird sounds of dripping mineral water with possible echoes — all of that in an atmosphere of rising mist and fog through unusually colored stones and stalactites — enhanced their numinosity. People were drawn to this kind of place since the earliest times and once a numen had been established, other inexplicable natural occurrences were integrated into the narrative of the place. In sum, springs were of very numinous appearance and high social relevance. They were ideal places to enhance visibility and mark a territory, to make community connections, and to establish power by limiting the access to the site.

Of course, this made them strongly contested by everyone who had an interest in local power and visibility. What once started as communal religious water control with the basic aims to ensure local livelihood soon turned into greater ownership disputes between different transregional religious authorities and their relations to political authorities. Daoism, Buddhism and later even Confucianism began to occupy these sites that held so much — mostly practical and functional — meaning for the people who lived in their vicinity. From this, newly developing religious geographies created new layers of meaning for such sites, but they were commonly not very relevant for the people living there. In this way, sites first became polysemous. When different religions brought in their deities and architectural structures, a site could become multilocal. To give an example pertaining to my definition of these terms: if one and the same grotto is used by popular religion and Buddhism to venerate a dragon — the locals see him as a primal water deity while Buddhists see him as a protector of their monastery — that is polysemous. If locals use the same grotto to venerate a dragon while the Buddhists primarily venerate a bodhisattva there, and traveling literati may see it as the famous studying place of a former sage, that is multilocal. The pattern developed in Sichuan regarding

the treatment of numinous springs (and wells) by Buddhists is the object of investigation on the following pages.

S.2.1.1. The Qinquan-si 琴泉寺 of Santai 三台

Modern Santai belongs to the territory of Mianyang 綿陽, but in imperial times it was its own county. Formerly called Qi 郪, named for the river Qijiang 郪江, it was the capital of a small state during the Spring and Autumn Period 春秋 (722—481 BCE). Later, it was an important part of Zizhou 梓州 and controlled the main route to Tongchuan 潼川. After Santai was established in its roughly modern borders in 1734, it was attributed to Tongchuan. The site of Qinquan-si was a known mark of Santai for almost 1500 years and famously connected to the 'thatched hut' of the poet Du Fu directly south of it.

Qinquan-si, Santai City, Beiquan-lu 北泉路, Changping Mountain 長平山.
Date of visit: 19 Nov 2018.

The contemporary Temple of the Zither Spring measures 6000 m², this is an average size although only a small amount of the two-level compound is covered with buildings. Due to its structure, it appears smaller from afar and seems dominated by its vast frontal courtyard of the lower level. Supposedly, the temple was built in accordance to astrological ideas. The entrance faces southeast, the backside is directed northwest. Most of the current buildings date to the Qing dynasty and some to Republican times. From the street, stairs lead up the mountain to a mountain gate which was rebuilt in 1873. The central ridge shows a pagoda ridge rider, both edges show fishes. Behind it lies the frontal courtyard from which one can overlook the entire city and the Fujiang. The courtyard holds the bell and drum towers built in the late Qing dynasty. Their square base and robust built make them look like pagodas, therefore they are respectively called Northern Pagoda and Eastern Pagoda. In accordance with geomancy, the temple rests on the eastern slope of the mountain. The city aligns to the longer side of the mountain, whose top is nowadays flat and only a few meters above the Qinquan-si. To the right of the frontal courtyard, there is a cliff with ancient Buddhist carvings called *qianfoyan* 千佛巖 ['Thousand Buddha

Cliff'], it contains a grotto where hermits lived during the Tang dynasty.[1800] On this side is also a small stele pavilion that contains a historical stele about a grant of land from the Song dynasty. Left of the courtyard is an elongated paved structure with a single building likely not of religious relevance.
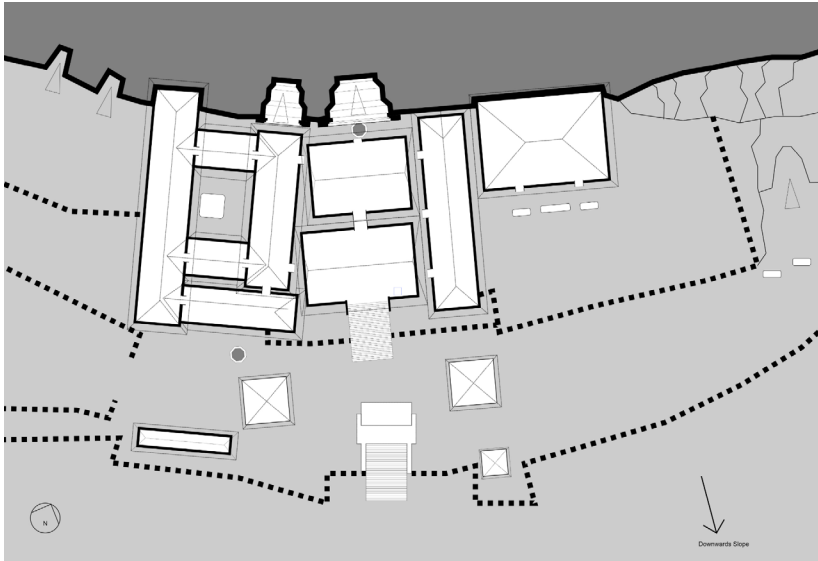
[Img. 16] Layout of the Qinquan-si in 2018. Triangles mark the grottoes

Originally, the temple site was a horizontally doubled courtyard and the western part of it — which is possibly a little younger — serves as a mostly residential area[1801] while the religious buildings are located in the central courtyard. The third courtyard to the east was added more recently and is, in contrast to the older courtyards, not surrounded by a wall of buildings. The courtyard contains the relocated and rebuilt *Dabei Ge* 大悲閣, which was reconstructed during the Qing dynasty. The contemporary pagoda looks less like a pagoda and more like an ordinary tall hall with a clerestory, although it was supposedly built on the old pagoda's groundwork. There is also the recently established

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1800   Visiting these generally requires a special permission.

1801   This temple served to host events and guests for many centuries.

Coiled Dragon Garden *Panlong Yuan* 蟠龍園 in front of it, which collects several old stone relics from the entire Santai area, beginning with a very eroded statue of a temple lion.

The center piece of the garden is a refurbished stone pillar base with carved dragons, the Coiled Dragon. Its historical predecessor marked one of the seven scenic spots of Ming dynastic Zizhou. According to the sign board beside it, the stone pillar once belonged to the government office of Santai but was used to cover a dried-out well because, at an undisclosed time, the well started smoking in strange colors and the locals wanted to lock in the water monsters (*shuiguailei* 水怪類) supposedly dwelling in there. The garden contains two steles, one is titled *Ganlu Zishu Bei* 干祿字書碑,[1802] the other is *Zizhou Momiao Ting* 梓州墨妙亭 ['Zizhou's Momiao Pavilion'] and refers to the poem *Momiao Tingji* 墨妙亭記 by the famous poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037—1101). Both were placed here in the 1990s. Thus, this garden shows tendencies towards musealization and decontextualization.

The lower front courtyard leads via a free-standing staircase to the central courtyard of the temple's main level. The stairs end directly in a gallery hall that simultaneously serves as a ceremony gate and as the front hall. It has a single eaves roof and over its entrance is a large plaque, installed in 1997 with the help of donations, titled *Qinquan Shenyun* 琴泉神韵 ['Inspirited Rhymes of the Zither Spring']. This is a reference to the many famous poets who interacted with the site in past centuries.

Before the exit of this hall looms a free-standing thin wall with the shrine of a fat Maitreya.[1803] There is no altar, but a knee pillow, and some sacrifices on the edge of the shrine. The western wing of the building contains the Fulushou Sanxing 福祿壽三星, three ancient star deities that are nowadays known as "lucky gods" because they represent luck, good fortune and longevity. As such, they are relevant to the daily life of the common people and do not belong to the standard ensemble of Buddhist temples. The opposite side shows three

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1802 According to a plaque at the stele's pavilion, it refers to the Tang dynastic (774) dictionary of the same name. The original stele from Zhejiang had been lost and two of three copies were made in Sichuan. However, this one is a Song dynastic edition that was more common.

1803 The monk-posture version made from bronze that I witnessed in 2018 has been replaced by a more joyful, colorful lacquered one in 2020.

statues that are not easy to identify. The statue accompanied by a tiger on the right, which has a crown, a sword, and a bowl, is likely a Heavenly King. The crowned statue on the left holds a scroll but has no defining attributes. The one in the center reminds of a Daoist immortal, it holds a scroll about luck for the region and is accompanied by a tame deer.[1804]

The central courtyard behind that hall connects to the western part of the temple by a row of wing rooms. There are also wing rooms and a library to the east, all rooms are empty but for the temple office. There is no structural damage that would explain why they are empty in consequence of the earthquake ten years ago.[1805] The entire center of the central courtyard is lowered by one step, just to have the main hall rise on a five-step-high platform. The grey-blue mountain roof of the hall is decorated with fish. It is a Guanyin Hall (*Guanyin Dian* 觀音殿) with an internal separation. It is three jian wide and three jian deep, with half a jian added to its depth on both sides. The couplet on the pillars that frame the entrance reads: The efficaciousness of Paradise has come from the Southern Sea, wisely merging the Three Realms, the water of the silver bottle is poured into the northern spring, a pool for all directions.[1806] This is a reference to Guanyin's journey over the Southern Sea on a lotus leaf and the bottle or vase she commonly carries, but is also connected to the local spring.

Inside, two of the roof beams carry noticeably long inscriptions from 1721 and 1819. The center of the front part is occupied by a large shrine entirely closed behind glass. A hieratic Guanyin without further attributes is dressed in gold and performs the teaching mudra. Her face is that of an elderly woman, in contrast to the youthful or ladylike faces she is usually depicted with. To Guanyin's sides are two attendants, the dragon girl on the left and the golden boy *jintong* 金僮 to the right. To the left of the main shrine is also the cherished bronze bell of 1460 that also contains an inscription. To the back of the hall's front part, there is a small shrine that looks similar to a sedan shrine used for

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1804 While deer appear in Buddhism, usually as a pair, with symbolic meaning, those look different. Therefore, this ensemble remains unidentified.

1805 The Wenchuan Earthquake 汶川大地震 on the 12th May of 2008 caused widespread damage in Sichuan.

1806 金相之靈来自南海慧蝸三界 銀瓶之水注以北泉泽被四方.

processions, but it has been closed in glass. Inside is a seated, iron cast icon of Guanyin that was made during the Qing dynasty as a copy of a Tang dynastic statue which has been lost. The little shrine is titled "Guanyin Pagoda" (*Guanyin Ge* 觀音閣), so maybe it once belonged to the temple's original pagoda. This hall is very peculiar due to the sheer amount of the Guanyin statues contained within. Both sides show unusually many Guanyin icons, all individual and with different tasks. People who interacted with the hall placed additional small votive pagodas and Guanyin ceramics between them. To the left we find:

A standing *Baozhu Guanyin* 寶主觀音 who carries the wish granting jewel; a Green necked *Qingjing Guanyin* 青頸觀音 in rājalīlāsana pose; *Hezhang Guanyin* 合掌觀音 who is a Guanyin praying with clasped hands; a very regal scepter wielding *Ruyi Guanyin* 如意觀音, and a *Yulan Guanyin* 魚籃觀音 "Fish Basket Guanyin",[1807] On the right side, there is a Sutra Guanyin *Jingshu Guanyin* 經書觀音; a solemnly standing Lotus Guanyin *Hehua Guanyin* 荷花觀音; a Water Moon Guanyin *Shuiyue Guanyin* 水月觀音 in latisana-pose, a Prayer Beads Guanyin *Nianzhu Guanyin* 念珠觀音 accompanied by a much smaller, child-sized Incense and Alms Guanyin *Xiangbo Guanyin* 香钵觀音[1808] and a son-giving Guanyin *Songzi Guanyin* 送子觀音 with a child on her arm and two attendants. In the back corners there are further a Jade Seal Guanyin *Yuyin Guanyin* 玉印觀音 — carrying such an object — and a simple Guanyin Bodhisattva, seated with a bigger round object in her hands. All these additional Guanyin icons are made from stone, but they were more recently painted in beaming colors. The name tablets are also very recent, so the mismatches between name and iconography may be misunderstandings. The back part of the hall then shows an enormous Thousand-Armed Guanyin of recent date. All in all, the main hall of the Qin-quan-si contains sixteen Guanyin icons — without counting the votive ones.

The Qinquan-si rests on a mountain cliff called *dishuiyan* 滴水巖 ['Dripping Water Cliff'], the name refers to the phenomenon common in this area that flat springs on top or in-between the cliffs run their water down the flat rock surface. When leaving the main hall, one stands directly in front of the cliff

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1807 It does not, however, look like the traditional fish basket iconography. Instead, it is a seated Guanyin performing the teaching mudra.

1808 This is not a known iconography of the bodhisattva.

that contains the Sweet Dew Cave *ganludong* 甘露洞 with the Zither Spring inside. The plaque *Ganlu Quan* 甘露泉 ['Sweet Dew Spring'] at the side of the cave entrance was installed during the Republican era. Above the entrance is a painted title *Ganlu Miaoyin* 甘露妙音 ['Wonderful Sound of the Sweet Dew'], it is a reference to the extermination of sorrows (the sound of existence). However, the modern cave entrance was walled up except for one broad window of which only a tiny brick space remains open.

Due to this wall, the sound of the Zither Spring which for centuries brought fame to this site can no longer be heard. The water now runs from a small pipe into an artificial pond covered by an acrylic glass surface. On top sits a blindingly white, very recent Guanyin statue. Using a flashlight, it is possible to peek through the almost blind glass of the windows to see the very clear water of the Zither Spring and the ceramic Guanyin figurine behind its surface.

Old documents mention a Guanyin icon in the cave,[1809] but this one is in too good condition to be old. The only way out of this enclosed area leads back through the Guanyin Hall.

Left to the Guanyin Hall is a narrow passage leading along the western wing building (which is titled Yaowangdian 藥王殿, although it is empty). The passage leads to a small staircase overgrown with moss. Since this part of the temple was dug out and retiled after the earthquake, the condition of the ground implies some disuse. To the right of the staircase are a few historical steles and a sign informs that they have been collected here due to the earthquake. One of them carries an old name of the temple, but most of the text is gone. Another, the *Wo Ai Qi Qing* 我愛其清 stele, dates to 1846 and expresses the author's fondness of the temple. The third readable one is the *Baohu Wen Yang Zaofu Houdai* 保護文揚造福後代 ['Protecting Culture for the Benefit of Later Generations'], dating to the Republican era and expressing a quite high interest of local officials in this site. Yet, most of the steles are not in a good condition, or sit too tightly beside each other to be read.

The staircase leads to the front of a hall in mixed condition: its color is damaged, windows and roof tiles are broken and decorations have paled, but the name plaque and the beam above the entrance look recent. Like all other

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1809 Cf. STX 1814, p. 2:40b.

religious buildings of the temple, this front is painted red with bright blue decorations. The roof is a hip roof decorated with fish, dragon and phoenix. This is not a building. The front conceals another cave of the Dripping Water Cliff. This is the *Ciyundong* 慈雲洞 ['Merciful Clouds Grotto']. Although the building is locked, there is a boulder with incense and another additional incense bowl sits on a near balustrade. Because of the broken lattice windows, it is possible to peek inside: there is a cave of four to five meters depth. Pillars and beams support a ceiling. The walls of the cave are natural, they show numerous niches — like of old Buddhist grotto art — but no sceneries or figures are left. In the center, there sits a stone altar with a glass shrine on top. The glass shrine contains painted stone sculptures of a teaching, seated Guanyin. She is holding a bottle in her hand. Guanyin is accompanied by Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Samantabhadra to her sides. All three bodhisattva are depicted with feminine features and there are also two female attendants. There is a table in front of the shrine with a bowl-shaped gong, a sacrificial plate of fruits and what seems to be nuts, as well as water. In sum, this brings the number of enshrined Guanyin icons in the entire temple up to nineteen. Behind the stele, an inscription is partially visible — it must have been there before the shrine was erected here. Visible are the characters *fu* 府 "government seat, residence, mansion" and *jiao* 湫 "marsh". Outside, a bit off from the grotto is a modern stele that turned out to be very important for this site (see below). It is titled *Ciyundong Jianxiubei* 慈雲洞檢修碑 ['Stele of Fixing the Merciful Clouds Grotto'] and contains some information about the grotto as well as a list of donors. As it turns out, the only thing fixed was the name plaque and the three icons.

To the left of the hall, there are the famous cliff tombs from the Han dynasty. Between the Qing dynasty and the Republican era, the path towards them was walled up with red brick. Left of the wall are two incense bowls that stand on a small altar-like step just in front of the plain mossy cliff. Even further to the west is another big cave with a man-made door frame in bright blue, a staircase leads up to it and incense is present. I can only see that from afar, because the narrow path between the Merciful Clouds Grotto and these structures is closed by a gate.[1810] Later, in a conversation with an elderly visitor, I learn that this is

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1810 This part of the temple is only opened for guided tours of 'relevant' groups.

an 'Arhat cave', although he then corrects my usage of 'cave' (*dong* 洞) to 'hall' (*dian* 殿) because it contains "the Buddhas" and *yaowang* 藥王 ['the Medicine King'] (i.e., Bhaiṣajyaguru or *yaoshifo* 藥師佛). Although not visible from my position, there are allegedly some more niches in the cliff.

Although this temple is presented as a Buddhist site, its original setup excludes a Daxiongbao Hall and the contents of the grotto at its end are not consistently known — if anything, they are not at the center of the site. The central axis leads to that one grotto that is occupied by Guanyin, who takes on a universalistic character inside the Guanyin Hall in front of it — one bodhisattva for all problems. Yet, the famous spring has been walled up, robbed of its most meaningful characteristic, and another grotto has also been closed up with a faux hall front although the icons inside receive fresh sacrifices. Among the multiple disharmonies in this site, these obstructions are the strongest ones.

S.2.1.1.1. Monks in Rags and Imperial Feasts

There were once many steles to inform us about the name, name changes, famous visitors of and poems about the Qinquan-si, but most of them have been lost. However, thanks to elite interest, many of them were transcribed or summarized in gazetteers.

Allegedly, the history of the temple begins during the Northern Zhou 北周 dynasty (557—581 CE). If true, this means that the site of the Qinquan-si is one of the oldest continuously occupied Buddhist settlements in Sichuan, although there is no continuous temple history. The temple's origin lies so far in the past that it is no longer known if there was a prior non-Buddhist site or to what religious group it might have belonged. However, the history of the temple mentions ancient sites that supposedly originated in the Shu era.[1811] These were later rediscovered during the Jin and Tang dynasties as ancient, forgotten places that astonished people by showing traces of Chinese writing hidden under overgrown cliff carvings and grottoes.[1812] This site was allegedly one of them, but the temple of the Jin and Tang dynasties did not prevail for long.

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1811 Cf. STX 1814, 4:39–40a.
1812 Cf. STX 1814, 2:41a.

The oldest known name of the site is Anchang-si 安昌寺, a name both connected to a local river[1813] and to a prince of the Tuoba-Wei 拓跋魏 (386—535). However, it is said that there was another temple at the very top of the mountain which predated the Anchang-si. It was simply called "Mountain Temple" (*Shansi* 山寺).

After the Anchang-si was rediscovered, it was rebuilt in an unknown year[1814] and renamed Huiyi-si 慧義寺 ['Temple of the Righteous Truth [of the Dharma]'].[1815] At that time, the site was already known under the alternative name "Zither Spring" (*qinquan* 琴泉).[1816] The Southern Song dynasty programmatically called it the "Temple of Protecting the Sacred" (Husheng-si 護聖寺) and the current name was established during the Ming dynasty.[1817]

The historical records of the temple are a bit lackluster and especially missing for the Song dynasties. Shen Zhaoxing 沈昭興, the compiler of the *Santai Xianzhi* 三台縣志 (1814), exhaustingly reports in his foreword about the disastrous state of documentation for this area: records showed severe mistakes, there were decade long gaps without any records, and some of the existing records were false. Shen supplemented from other records — likely the regional and provincial gazetteers — and interviewed the elderly to create a comprehensive history. As such, the *Santai Xianzhi* strongly focuses on the geography, history, poetry and old sights.

The possibly oldest text about the Qinquan-si contained within the *Santai Xianzhi* is Yang Jiong's 楊炯 (650~693 CE)[1818] "The Meaningful Pagoda[1819] of Zizhou's Huiyi Temple" (*Zizhou Huiyi-si Chonggege* 梓州惠義寺重閣銘).[1820] It re-

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1813 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 36a.

1814 Cf. STX 1814, 4:40b.

1815 Cf. STX 1814, 2:40a.

1816 Cf. STX 1814, 4:39–40a.

1817 Cf. STX 1814, 4:36b.

1818 A very famous poet, one of the Four Paragons of the Early Tang (*chutangs sijie* 初唐四傑).

1819 In context with other texts, the term *ge* 閣 refers here rather to a pagoda than to a pavilion.

1820 Cf. STX 1814, 4:37a–38b. The last character is likely not read right, the last part of it may be *jie* 卩.

fers to the time when the area was still named Qi County 郪縣.[1821] A virtuously ruling county magistrate named Dou Jing 竇兢[1822] engaged in a time of fasting and retreat before joining the monk Zhihai 智海 for an inspection of the ongoing construction of cliff carvings and temple buildings at Changpingshan. The text reports about the praise for the mountain's appearance and the constant sound of dripping water. It also explains that a cave was created to serve as a jade hall (*yutangshishi* 玉堂石室) and describes extensively the temple's splendor with a Dharma Teaching Hall full of gold. Calling it "the residence of a cakravartin" — the Buddhist Sage King — was an appeal for imperial support, the temple is thus likened to the "Palace of Indra" (*shidi zhi gong* 釋帝之宮). Jiong also describes that the names of donors were inscribed in gold into sturdy walls of bluestone, which implies that the temple received local patronage. The temple allegedly contained seven sutra buildings which would suggests that it was a very big site. Dou Jing was reportedly satisfied about the fact that the common people learned where the 'site of treasure' was. The poem at the end of the text commemorates the construction of the Meaningful Pagoda, which, by touching the sky, visibly conveyed Buddhist values to the people.

This text shows that there was once strong — though maybe individual — support for a rather big and lavish Buddhist temple, but we do not learn much about its contents or which Buddhas and bodhisattvas were preferred. Since Guanyin rose to fame a few centuries later, this temple may have had a rather typical Buddhist layout adjusted for the landscape. We do know, however, that the temple initially gained great fame and was treated as a Buddhist center that was especially important to Southern Chinese Chan Buddhism. It even produced some eminent monks who, however, often only spent a few years there.

During the Tang dynasty, the famous poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712—770 CE) stayed at the temple site multiple times and spent a few years living not far from there. Du Fu had just acquired a high office when the An Lushan Rebellion erupted. During this period, he was punished for criticizing the emperor and

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1821 Qi county existed between the Han dynasty and the Western Jin 西晉 dynasty (265—420 CE) although it cannot be conclusively ascertained that Yang Jiong refers to this era.

1822 The dates of his life are unknown, but he is mentioned in the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 Ch. 109, biography number 34, so he must have been a contemporary of Yang Jiong, who praised him in a poem.

thus decided to leave that life behind. Traveling west, he reached Chengdu in 759 CE, although the imperial court soon followed. In his gloomy poems, Du Fu highlighted the alien nature of the ancient Shu region by portraying it like an unfamiliar and strange land. He avoided the court in Chengdu by spending at least two years between 760—764 CE in Mianyang. Afterwards, he stayed with his nephew in Kuizhou until 768 CE. After he realized that he would never return to the court, he moved along the waterways to Guangdong until he died in 770 CE.[1823] Thus, his poems are a valuable source for the history and perception of this temple and Tang dynastic Sichuan in general.

Judging by Du Fu's poems, the previously described splendor of the temple did not last long. The poems "Seeing Off Magistrate Wang Leaving for Chengdu at Huiyi Temple" (*Huiyi-si Song Wang Shaoyin Fu Chengdu* 惠義寺送王少尹赴成都)[1824] as well as the "Seeing Off Supernumerary Xin" (*Huiyi-si Yuan Song Xin Yuanwai* 惠義寺園送辛員外)[1825] describe the temple as a lonely area with nice wildlife and multiple levels of destitute halls and towers lodged on the mountain's summit. Du Fu uses the metaphor "cloud gate" *yunmen* 雲門 for the site. There are also two poems of Du Fu titled *Shansi* 山寺, using the name of the Huiyi-si's predecessor.

> [*Braided*][1826] *temple, rooted on a stone cliff,*
> *many niches cover the looming slopes.*
> *You can no longer distinguish the former Buddhas,*
> *a hundred bodies, all covered in moss.*
> *Although there is an ancient hall still standing,*
> *the Revered One is in grime and dust.* […]
> *Mountain monks clothed in tattered rags*
> *complained how beams and timbers were collapsing.*

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1823 When the Tang court returned to the capital and a new emperor reigned, Du Fu advertised himself by comparing his loyalty to that Zhuge Liang, but to no avail. Cf. Tillman "Du Fu" 2002, pp. 299–300, 302–303. 310.

1824 Cf. Owen 2016, p. 222, no. 12.24.

1825 Cf. Owen 2016, p. 222, no. 12.25. Also, see p. 214, no. 12.17 for another example.

1826 Adjusted for clarification, Owen translates this as "Wilderness Temple", however, the context shows that this is not supposed to be a name, but a description of the temple's condition.

Because of this, His Lordship [the prefect] *looked around at his entourage,*
with a pained sigh, began a donation.
I know that the fan-palm tree will rest again by his platform of lotus.
All the devas will surely rejoice, and spirit beings will have no complaints.
By this deed he soothes the troops, who says he is not a perfect talent?
The poor man loses this place of purity,
the lofty man worries about the womb of disaster.
The year is late, the wind tears the flesh,
to the wild forests the cold may return.
When I consider the sufferings of becoming a monk,
I mock myself, as being like a child.[1827]

This poem indicates that there must have been a Shakyamuni Buddha icon present ("the Revered One"), but like the rest of the temple and the cliff carvings, it was in bad condition. It seems that Dou Jing's efforts during the heyday of early Buddhism in Sichuan were a one-of-a-kind event from an especially Buddhism inclined official. His emphasis on visibility and what the local people would think hinted on an attempt to use the site to create legitimacy in social circumstances that remain unknown to us. But during Du Fu's visit, the temple had not been cared for in a long time and the monks were poor. Du Fu underscores this harsh reality in another poem and laments that only "few monks remain" in the braided temple, while wild animals graze between the halls and birds eat the garden's harvest.[1828] This temple was at the brink of abandonment!

Superficially read, the prefect's "pained sigh" could be misunderstood as being sad about this condition, thus taking initiative. However, the prefect could have done something about the collapsing temple and the monks wearing rags for a long time before, yet chose not to. This stresses the "pained sigh" as a reaction to public pressure. When the pitiable monks openly approached him, he had to intervene to avoid damaging his reputation in front of his men. The elite's ambiguous relationship to the temple is stressed in the line

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1827   Translated by Owen 2016, Vol.3, pp. 292–95, no. 12.83. Corresponds to STX 1814, 4:38b–39a. Brackets are mine.

1828   Cf. Owen 2016, Vol.2, pp. 164–65, no. 7.62, corresponds to STX 1814, 4:39a.

"The lofty man worries about the womb of disaster": while the commoners (or maybe in this case, the monks) are attached to the site for spiritual reasons, the prefect rather worries what may happen if the site is not cared for — mutiny? A natural disaster? It was better to not take a risk, a sentiment that continues to the contemporary temple setting (see below). The former poems and the "Accompanying Deputy Zhang Holding a Parting Banquet in Huiyi Temple for Commander Cui of Jiazhou as He Sets Out for His Prefecture" (*Pei Zhang Liuhou Huiyi-si Jian Jiazhou Cui Dudu Fu Zhou* 陪章留後惠義寺餞嘉州崔都督赴州)[1829] — all relate elite events for civil officials. These are basically having parties at the temple, including the usage of alcohol,[1830] something not officially allowed in Buddhist temples. This supports the notion that the Huiyi-si and later Qinquan-si were used as a guest house and it is left unclear what stance the monks had towards such visits. In consideration of the temple's constitution, if the monks were involved in hosting these events at all, they may have been happy to earn some income even if some rules of sanctity had to be broken. But if not, then the banquets represented an intrusion by the local government that had superscribing character and was a pronounced challenge to the Buddhist's claim of the site.

The Qinquan-si during the Ming Dynasty

In the Ming dynasty, people no longer knew when the temple was founded, but the special sound of the Zither Spring and its solemn surroundings continued to inspire many new poems and thus, the temple received a new name. What was implied before now became pronounced: officials had a keen interest in the temple and that was not due to any Buddhist qualities. Wan Guyang 萬谷暘, a not further known county magistrate of Zizhou, noted that the temple was still poor. He mentioned a monk who raised money, but the entire area was very poor, so it was hard to sustain the temple, even though those who had little were blessed the most for giving what little they had. He wrote two poems about the site; one was the "To Sing About the Zither Spring" (*Yong Qinquan* 咏琴泉 "To Sing About the Zither Spring") and the other remains untitled. Both

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1829 Cf. Owen 2016, Vol. 3, p. 249, no. 12.48.
1830 Cf. STX 1814, 4:42a.

are heavy in aquatic imagery. The untitled one describes the renowned spring as contained within a deep grotto, which opens into a "dragon marsh" (*longjiao* 龍湫). The water drips, drop by drop, onto dense moss, while the grotto walls' echoes emulate the sound of a zither.[1831]

The politician Wang Yingzhao 王應詔 (1409—?) composed a longer poetic text called "Visiting the Mountain Temple of the Zither Spring with a Friend" (*Xieyou You Qinquan Shansi* 偕友遊琴泉山寺).[1832] This title suggests that the spring and the temple had not yet merged their identities.[1833] Wang describes the temple's buildings as hanging suspended from the precipice under the forest covered summit. For contrast, he describes the "Huiyi-si" as "ephemeral" (*shunxi* 瞬息), pointing to its short-lived reinvigoration, and stresses that the clear water of the Zither Spring had been there for millennia. Wang also mentions a small stream flowing east from the Zither Cave and how people would inundate flowers there after visiting. This reads like a kind of ritual, especially since Wang connects this sight with the lingering presence of his late master. He further mentions an Emerging Spring Pavilion (*Chuquan Ting* 出泉亭), erected to honor the former worthies. However, his former master was also inclined to Buddhism and stated that the pavilions second aim was to use the spring for the propagation of Buddhism and to bring more novices to the temple. The commentary to this text explains that the pavilion was built to revitalize the Thousand Buddha Cliff with its cliff inscriptions. However, when Wang ends his texts, he frames the Qinquan-si rather as a site for leisure than for religious practice.

Shen Qingren 沈清任, who became a *jinshi* 进士[1834] in 1752, was a historian who visited the former site of the Qinquan-si and collected different texts from there. One is the "The Record of the Emerging Spring Pavilion" (*Chuquan Ting*

1831 He is only included, and attributed to the Ming dynasty, in the Republic era version of the gazetteer: Zhang Shuxun 張樹勳, Gan Tiyun 甘梯雲 and Lin Zhimao 林志茂 (Compiler). *Santai Xianzhi* 三台縣誌. Tongchuan Xinmin Printing Company 潼川新民印刷公司出版地, 1931. 2:42.

1832 Cf. STX 1814, 2:41b–42a.

1833 For comparison, the map presented in STX 1814, 1:13 still marks the site of the Zither Spring just as 琴泉 but not as Qinquan-si 琴泉寺.

1834 A graduate of the highest imperial examination.

Ji 出泉亭記).[1835] The text of unknown authorship has a Buddhist introduction that states: The heart of the people cannot be without a place to attach to,[1836] and they often attach to mountains and rivers. After referring to a recently deceased official, the Qinquan-si is described as full of weeds and covered in gloom. When there were plans to enlarge the monk's residence, the soil was not good and unsuited to build groundworks, so beams were used to support the stamped earth and steps were cut from the mountain. This collected text must date to a time after Wang Yingzhao, when the temple was entering another period of flourishing. Since the text's author was interrupted by a call to meditation, there apparently was religious activity at the site as well.

This text goes on to describe the building of the pavilion on top of the reinforced structure, located east to the place where the Zither Spring emerged from the rock, its water flowing in a ring around the pavilion. Next to the pavilion was a very clear pool. The unknown author describes his astonishment over the presence of Chinese characters on the cliffs, as those had been forgotten, although he is aware of Du Fu's melancholic poems: he claims that Du Fu's descriptions were due to the political circumstances of the time and that the prefect's actions show how the government was still attached to the site. Later texts repeat similar sentiments, stating that the Huiyi-Zither Spring may not be left to the vegetation and that it truly depended on the patronage of the senior officials.[1837]

The temple's bell, donated in 1460 and still exhibited in the contemporary main hall, also ascertains another time of blooming for the temple and gives some insight into the reasons why people invested into the site: The first sentence of the inscription praises the favorable weather, the peaceful realm and the strong emperor. The bell was made by craftsmen from eastern Sichuan and presented as a donation by multiple persons, like the doctors (*daifu* 大夫) trained in Tongchuan and the senior provincial government officials; like generals, Confucian instructors, one relay station deputy, medical instructors, monks, one Daoist abbot, and the by far largest group: historians. This was an

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1835 Cf. STX 1814, 4:40a7–41a.

1836 人之心不無所寄也. Cf. ibid., 40a7.

1837 Cf. STX 1814, 4:42a.

amazing range of interest groups who invested into this temple's bell. The main text of the inscription taken together with the unusually strong representation of historians suggest the motif of creating legitimation.

Various texts about the Qinquan-si mention and evaluate the dripping water and the spring water. According to the *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目 of Li Shizhen (1518—1593), the water of cliff springs was especially good for health: "Spring water is good that comes from a distant origin and that is clear and cold, and also that [water is good that originates] from mountains with jade minerals and beautiful herbs and trees".[1838] The historical visitors of Qinquan-si often emphasized how the spring's water was "cold and clear" or of "clear cold" nature and especially well-suited for tea.[1839] Hong Chengding 洪成鼎, originally from Hubei, was a magistrate of Anyue 安岳 County[1840] and described how the bridge in front of the spring was destroyed. He praised the spring for being calming, suitable for tea, and for bringing aid during droughts.[1841]

During the Ming dynasty, the Qinquan-si enjoyed renewed elite interest. Yet, its fame predominantly stemmed from its miraculous spring and not from its significance within the Buddhist realm. Numerous texts emphasize the spring's role in conjuring "favorable weather" and alleviating droughts, which suggests that the elite patrons sought out the temple *primarily* as the site of a legendary spring rather than for its Buddhist nature.

The Qinquan-si in the Qing Dynasty

The earliest Qing dynastic mention of the Qinquan-si is made by the prefect of Tongchuan Zhili Prefecture 潼川直隸州, Wu Shuchen 吳樹臣 (active ~1692), who was an active poet. The *Santai Xianzhi* contains some of his poems, two treat the Zither Spring: *Zither Spring* 琴泉 and "Visiting the Zither Spring Anew" (*Chongguo Qinquan* 重過琴泉). None of them mention that the spring is located inside a Buddhist temple, but they describe the winterly landscape and that the

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1838 Li Shizhen, translated by Paul U. Unschuld, 2021. pp. 90–91.

1839 Cf. STX 1814, Ch.2:41a;

1840 This is an area south of Suining in eastern Sichuan.

1841 Cf. STX 1814, 2:41a.

Fujiang (River) created a saline marsh nearby.[1842] The early Qing dynasty was an unfortunate era for the Qinquan-si. The "Thousand Buddha Grottoes Stele Inscription" (*Qianfodong Beiji* 千佛洞碑記) collected by Shen Qingren relates that although there were still numerous cliff carvings and inscriptions from the Tang dynastic Huiyi-si, the site was destroyed by an "immersion" (*jinmo pohuai* 浸没破壞) an unknown time ago.[1843] Since the temple is located on a mountain, such an "immersion", which left dirt between bamboo staffs, likely refers to a landslide. The author was looking for traces of the 'sutra site' to find that half of the temple was still 'immersed'. The remaining sections had not been rebuilt, or only meagerly so, and were in the process of being reclaimed by nature. An original layout was no longer discernible, but the Thousand Buddha Grotto was still "receiving people into the Pure Land" (*jieyin* 接引). The people venerated ancient relics assembled in front of it. The locals were unable to return the site to its former appearance while they slowly rebuilt the temple from these relics, although the intention was to reignite the wisdom lamp (*zhideng* 智燈) of the Buddha's teachings.[1844] When the temple was finally rebuilt after a long time, the local commoners had to conduct this reconstruction with their limited funds and strength. This demonstrates the lack of elite support for Buddhism in this area. However, when the temple rose again, Shen Qingren commented joyfully that "there was now a continuation". If Wu Shuchen visited the site after the temple's destruction and before its reconstruction, that would explain why he did not lose one word about it.

The Qinquan-si is an example for a quite unfortunate Buddhist site. The first temple fell into ruin and was forgotten. The rebuilt temple of the Tang dynasty initially flourished but was at some point also left in disrepair and the monks suffered. The site's history during the Song dynasties is obscure, but by the Ming dynasty, it was still in need of repair and according to the authors represented in the *Santai Xianzhi*, the focus shifted towards the spring. Then, the

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1842 Cf. STX 1814, p. 2:40b.

1843 Wu Shuchen does not refer to the temple, but also not to a major destruction. Therefore, the catastrophe may have occurred in the years between 1692—1720 (since Shen is aware of an already reactivated temple). It speaks for itself that the year of the destruction is not known— nobody was sufficiently interested in the temple to record its destruction.

1844 Cf. STX 1814, 4:39b.

temple was completely destroyed and only slowly rebuilt in a smaller format by non-elite local groups. Therefore, the Qinquan-si's status is ambiguous: it was not supported well enough to bloom and gain translocal influence, yet it was repeatedly rebuilt. It shows a certain level of negligence that a natural disaster which destroyed the site was hardly noticed. This supports Shen Zhaoxin's later accusation of bad record keeping.

When Shen Tanyuan 沈澹園 (active ~1764) took up his governorship (*jun-shou* 郡守) post south to the Qinquan-si, he sponsored a "Spring Pavilion" (*quanting* 泉亭) for studying. In one of his poems, he wonders why the grotto is not visited by more people and how the locals interact with the icon within it.[1845] At this point, the site may have become fully multilocal, resembling a Buddhist site for monks and commoners, but the site of a numinous spring for officials and other members of local elites. It was likely one of the latter who initiated the older of the two beam inscriptions within the main hall. Created during the Kangxi reign in 1721, it wishes a long life to the emperor, promotions to the officials, favorable weather and a peaceful realm. This shows that weather was a constant topic since the Ming dynasty. There is the tale that azure steam, clouds and fragrant mist once came from the well and only ceased after two days of engulfing both the spring and the pagoda in a six-mile radius.[1846]

In the spring of 1750, the Qinquan-si's pagoda was destroyed by a fire caused by lightning and turned into smoke.[1847] That the texts now start to refer to the spring as a "well" suggests the creation of some structural damming up of the spring, but it was still emphasized that this well was never dry during droughts. Since the pagoda's ashes damaged the cliff carvings — which could be checked with the sutras — the probable cause of the lack of growth in the number of [Buddhist] disciples in Qinquan-si can be explained by the neglected stone inscriptions and the gradual walling in of the spring.[1848]

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1845   Cf. STX 1814, 2:40b.

1846   Cf. STX 1814, 8:49b.

1847   Cf. STX 1814, 8:49b.

1848   Cf. STX 1814, 4:42b.

[Img. 17] The Qinquan-si before 1814.[1849] The main entrance was located to the west of the temple, the western residential part had not been built yet

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1849   Cf. STX 1814, 1:28a–29b.

Shen Qingren also collected multiple texts that were occupied with a criminal case ensuing after the pagoda burned down: The locals had examined the ashes and seemed to find thousands of moth-eaten sutra pages on the ground and in the water, although many of them got lost. Then, a man named Wu Shuzi 吳庶子 took a look at them and exclaimed that those were pages from a *Lotus Sutra* copy by Wang Shanxiang 王鱓祥.[1850] This event was recorded by the local scribe.[1851] The Ministry of Works became involved in the site and created the Pagoda Bridge (*ta yi* 塔圯) where the sutra pages had been found, an act that was greeted with good omens.[1852] The remaining pages had been distributed among worthy recipients, which was also received with good omens. However, it turned out that many of the ornate and high-priced sutra pages circulating in the area were forgeries[1853] and some officials had been involved in the scheme.[1854] The high value achieved by the forged sutra pages indicates a high demand which — apart from antique enthusiasts — could only have been created by wealthier members of a local Buddhist community.

The gazetteer's author Shen Zhaoxing himself describes a detailed course of events regarding the Northern Pagoda and the sutra in the "Record of the Rebuilding of the Northern Pagoda" (*Chongjian Beita Ji* 重建北塔記).[1855] Once again, the temple setting is described as overgrown and dirty, but the original Buddhist stupa (*futu* 浮屠) is said to have been gigantic, dangerously high, and a major feat by the state's heroes. After it burned down together with the scriptures, a hut was built from the remains. When Shen Zhaoxing began to govern Santai City in 1807, he searched for the authentic relics of the pagoda. He found the *Daniepan Sutra* 大涅槃經[1856] or *Daiyinpan Amituofo Sutra* 大淫盤阿彌陀經 and the *Amituo Gaowang Guanyin Sutra* 阿彌陀 高王觀音經 ['The Avalokitêśvara

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1850 This is Wang Kai 王鍇. In 900 CE, he served the Former Shu and became prime minister. Afterwards, he served the Southern Tang as a provincial governor.

1851 Cf. STX 1814, 4:41b.

1852 Cf. STX 1814, 4:43b.

1853 Cf. STX 1814, 8:50a.

1854 This was found out by Shen Wugang 沈梧岡, the new governor of Tongchuan, in 1806. Cf. STX 1814, 4:43a.

1855 Cf. STX 1814, 8:77b–79a.

1856 This is the "Nirvana Sutra" *Daban Niepanjing* 大般涅槃經.

Sutra of King Gao'].[1857] The latter was an indigenous Chinese sutra associated with the making of Guanyin images, sutra- and spell chanting.[1858]

Images and rituals from sutras like that had caused the extreme popularity of Guanyin and were thus very important for the development of Guanyin worship. Shen Zhaoxing further noted a donation fund for the renowned construction project of the Baowangjia Bridge 寶王家橋. The local craftsmen and villagers were involved but unable to complete the temple's full repair over an extended period. Shen notes his surprise about the unexpected construction of a new pagoda after numerous worthy persons returned from retirement. He emphasized that he had never witnessed such meticulous adherence to geomantic standards in its creation, nor had he imagined that Buddhists could assist Confucians [in such a manner], and that this matter was discussed on the provincial level as well.[1859]

Shortly before the *Santai Xianzhi* was published, a report refers to the city's scholar Li Tingtou 李廷投 and others who created a platform behind the Qinquan-si's pagoda to hold occasional imperial examinations. After requesting funding and a geomantic survey, the platform was moved to Baowangjia Bridge at two miles distance from its original place.[1860]

In the first sentence of his Northern Pagoda text, Shen Zhaoxing explains the mutually rising and falling general enmity between Buddhism and Confucianism and how they suppressed each other. The reason he brings this up in the context of the Qinquan-si is likely the one elaborated in this subchapter — that Qinquan-si turned into a multilocal site and very different groups of people of either Buddhist or more Confucian alignment supported it. That support, however, was unclear or contested and prone to cancel each other out, leading to long periods without support that saw the temple fall into ruins.

Yet, by the end of the Qing dynasty, some kind of synergy started to develop between Buddhist and Confucian patrons of the site: The second inscription

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1857 Cf. STX 1814, 4:44a–b.

1858 Cf. McBride, pp. 63–64.

1859 Cf. STX 1814, 8:78b–79a. From the context, these events must have taken place around ~1806.

1860 Cf. STX 1814, 94b7–95a.

on the beams of the contemporary main hall dates to the twenty-fourth year of Jiaqing [1819]. It states that when the building (the Guanyin Hall) was re-established, the office of Tongchuan Prefecture's Santai County arranged that Yunlian County 筠連縣 in Yibin (actually a prosperous temple from there) made a huge donation for the main hall (*zhengtang* 正堂), i.e., the Guanyin Hall. Also, the administration office of Lezhi County 樂至縣 (in Ziyang 資陽, close to Suining) arranged that Anyue County 安岳縣 (also in Ziyang) would make such a donation for the main hall's enclosure. It was further arranged by Pengxi County 蓬溪縣 in Suining that the provincial military services supported the effort and raised a very high donation. This reveals the far-reaching network of the temple, especially into the eastern and southern direction, as well as the civil and military involvement in its restoration. For some reason, there was a renewed governmental interest for the temple in the late Qing dynasty.

The Contemporary Temple

In the contemporary temple, there is one relevant stele of recent origin that deals with the Merciful Clouds Grotto and finally solves some of its mystery. Aside from a list of donations for the new plaque, the stele contains the following information:

慈雲洞建修碑
甘露洞左, 有石窟 古称靈湫秘府. 丁丑歲, 于内彩塑三大士聖像

The Merciful Clouds Grotto Reconstruction Stele
To the left of the Ganlu Cave, there is a grotto that was called in ancient [times] The Secret Palace[1861] of the Efficacious Marsh.
In the year 1997,[1862] three painted clay Mahāsattva icons were [placed] inside.

1861 *mifu* 秘府 refers to the place where forbidden books were stored in secret; it was also the institution that controlled all books on a provincial level.

1862 The Chinese style date could refer to either 1937 or 1997. The 1930s were an era in which the site was patronized and of high interest to individual politicians. But because the plaque was installed in 1997, I chose to go with the later date, although this is for now only a supposition.

With these few sentences, many peculiarities of the Qinquan-si's history become clear. The Fujiang did create marshes in the area. The adjective *ling* 靈 specifies the marsh as being of a numinous, supernatural kind. If we connect that with the mentions of good weather, the efficacy of the spring during droughts, and the description that the grotto originally opened towards a dragon marsh, then we can assume in the context of Chinese hydrolatry that a water spirit was thought to be present here. The uncommon sound that one of the local springs used to make only added to the numinosity of the place. The springs, the dripping cliff, and the marsh created a numinous landscape that was attractive to the arriving Buddhists and enticed them to occupy the site and build their own temple.

S.2.1.1.2. The Reconfigurative Analysis of the Qinquan-si

Since the earliest times of Buddhism in Sichuan, Buddhists used cliff carvings to inscribe their presence into the landscape and so they also marked their territory with the Qinquan-si. During the ups and downs of its history, the Qinquan-si changed its appearance multiple times. Many of its structures were lost due to abandonment and at least one massive landslide that cost the temple site a significant portion of its original extent. Thus, the temples prior to the Qing dynasty may have been bigger than the two levels that are currently visible, where buildings sit sharply on the cliff's edges. Although the temple could not be restored to former glory, half of it is still dedicated to residential and recreational areas. And even as the temple is located on a mountain slope, its layout fits with the central axis orientation and courtyard house style of most important religious buildings in China. However, large sections of the contemporary temple are empty and the ensemble is comparatively small — even if complemented by the insertion of star deities and possibly Daoist associated characters. The core of the temple merely contains the Buddhist entities Maitreya, a Heavenly King, since recently also Skanda, and the ubiquitous variants of the Bodhisattva Guanyin.

No space was reserved for a Daxiongbao Hall that would house a Buddha triad, on the contrary, even very late imperial inscriptions explicitly identify the Guanyin Hall as a *zhengtang* 正堂, the main hall of a Buddhist temple. This implies that a Daxiongbao Hall was never meant to exist here. To the west of the

temple is an artificial cave where the Buddhas do appear, but they were placed there only by the twentieth century. Historical descriptions show that during the Tang dynasty, Shakyamuni Buddha existed at least among the caves of the temple's territory, so maybe a separate hall was not needed. But afterwards, there are no more mentions of Buddhas.

The tenth to twelfth centuries were the era when Guanyin transformed into a female, universal entity beyond the scope of an ordinary bodhisattva. During the Song dynasty, there were many attempts to obscure foreign deities and make them appear more Chinese and the Bodhisattva Guanyin was no exception to that.[1863] The Miaoshan[1864] legend was meant to give her a Chinese heritage and a place in the Chinese pantheon, as well as a new function in supporting filial piety.[1865] Only after the popularization of that legend did female depictions of Guanyin become prevalent and led to the situation that elites outside Buddhism considered Guanyin exceptionally female.[1866] It is likely that Guanyin's later association with water spirits only started from there, in contrast to Vietnam, where Avalokiteśvara had been associated with water even when shown as a male — due to his connection to the seafaring people. Unfortunately, the sources on this temple during the Song dynasties are scarce, therefore we cannot estimate how the temple was transformed then.

Still, the emphasis on Guanyin and the reduction of more traditional Buddhist content likely only occurred after the twelfth century and thus initiated a new era for the site. During the Song dynasties, the temple was renamed Husheng-si 護聖寺, a slightly propagandistic name that implied the need for such protection and thus some kind of tension, either a problem for the local Buddhists or the entire province, or a matter of competition. The sources from the Tang dynasty already relate how civil officials used the temple site for celebrations. They developed a continued interest in the site which may have clashed with Buddhist ideals. The multiplication of Guanyin rather points to inner-religious tensions. It is meant to convey the many incarnations and func-

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1863 Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 295.

1864 A mix of the AT.923 and AT.510A types.

1865 Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, pp. 467–71.

1866 Zhou Qiuliang 2009, p. 118.

tions of Guanyin, who represents a universal main deity at Qinquan-si. Such universal qualities go back to the *Guanshiyinjing* 觀世音經, encompassing the *Pumenpinjing* 菩門品經,[1867] that describes Guanyin as being able to take on all possible shapes, forms and identities. That made Guanyin a perfect container for local deities. The strong relationship between Guanyin and local deities can be found everywhere in China. Often, she would completely absorb them but at other times she would become part of a <u>decorative</u> situation. The latter is how she appears in only one case at Qinquan-si.

Using the Google search engine with the keywords "琴泉寺" and "慈雲洞" in both traditional and simplified characters revealed multiple photo blogs, culture boards and other website categories that contained elaborate descriptions of the Qinquan-si. The search results were collated and reviewed for textual descriptions, photographs and photography captions. In sum, most of them mention the Merciful Clouds Grotto and — more rarely — the stele nearby, but never the grotto's contents. This indicates that the grotto has been locked for a long time prior to and after my survey. It can be determined that this was not a temporary measure for renovations. But then what is the function of the Guanyin Shrine in this place? Although the grotto appears chaotic, the temple has plenty of free space to store the shrine if it was a matter of storage. But it is likely not, because the base of the shrine is carved from stone and thus belongs to the grotto. The top is of manageable size, though, and could be removed if the need was felt. Does this mean the shrine was abandoned?

The ritual objects and the fresh fruit in front of it prove the opposite — in the local hot and humid climate, the fruit will quickly go to waste. Instead, both objects demonstrate a continued interaction with the shrine. The situation is resolved by combining the partly obscured inscription inside the grotto with the young stele outside: Under close examination, the inscription in the grotto does indeed spell *lingjiao mifu* 靈湫祕府 ['The Secret Palace of the Efficacious Marsh']. This means the efficacious or numinous entity of the marsh should reside in this grotto. Yet, the shrine is tactically placed to <u>conceal</u> the inscription and to <u>divert</u> from it, in a hall that is locked and therefore <u>obstructed</u> from making

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1867 Found in the Lotus Sutra of Dharmarakṣa in Ch. 23, of Kumārajīva Ch. 25, of Jñānagupta in Ch. 24.

contact with the public. Furthermore, the temple's traffic paths are arranged in a way that neglect the grotto so that an average consumer does not feel the need to go there. Absolutely everything they would need should be covered by the multiple Guanyins, so why seek out something else? There is one Guanyin for every wish one could possibly have and if that is not enough, there is yet another one on top of a fake-spring made from acrylic glass to <u>divert</u> from the true numinous spring, which was walled up and muted. What kind of power requires such effort to be contained?

The deity attributed to the Efficacious Marsh was likely one related or identical to the god of the mountain, a powerful entity with control over rain and the spring alike — a spring that brought fame to the site for centuries.[1868] Since the temple is built on the mountain's eastern slope and experiences occasional landslides,[1869] it was important to keep good relations with such deities — or to be afraid of them. If the god of the marsh, relating to springs and mountain, was indeed a part of the temple site, it would have been almost impossible to subject it to <u>elision</u> without the fear of severe consequences. In the context of Chinese belief systems, one rule is: better safe than sorry. So, the deity was kept in the temple to be appeased, but hidden out of sight and locked away. At the same time, the aquatic presence was <u>amalgamated</u> with Guanyin, leading to a successful <u>superscription</u> that made the employment of <u>diversion</u> even more effective. Modern bias may lead one to believe that perhaps no one cares enough about the water deity to search for it anymore, but *The Merciful Clouds Grotto Reconstruction Stele* indicates an actual interest in the Merciful Cloud Grotto, as opposed to the local clergy's neglect of the grotto.

The Coiled Dragon Garden is an example of <u>musealization</u> — several objects that are not originally related to the temple were decontextualized and accumulated there to enhance its recreation area. They are not intended to be used in their original function but to create a mutual enhancement of the cultural objects' meaning. One exception may be the name-giving Coiled Drag-

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1868 This raises the question if the walling up of the spring was an attempt to limit its influence, but to what purpose?

1869 Cf. STX 1814, 4:39b. Another landslide was likely what had led to the loss of the original mountain gate.

on pillar. Not only was the pillar associated with a narrative of waterlocking monsters, it was also originally located at a very different type of place — a governmental office. We learn from the sources that offices and examination centers were occasionally located at Qinquan-si, but the association with aquatic numinosity between the site and the pillar may be another reason for the transposition. Yet, it remains unclear if the pillar was relocated in association with the marsh deity, or to be used as a numinous object to waterlock the marsh deity as well, or as a cursed object stored for safety because local Buddhism had also previously 'defeated' another water entity.

Over the Ming and Qing dynasties, the Zither Spring became much more famous and more sought out than the Buddhist temple itself — although there were phases of rebuilding and patronage. Different kinds of the local elite scouted the grounds in competition with the Buddhists. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this was once again the case but this time met with resistance: non-Buddhist reasons to visit the site (the Zither Spring but also the Han cliff tombs) were obstructed and new, more orthodox representations of Buddhism inserted into a newly created cave. Although the way to access that cave was closed when I visited the site, several photographs of the cave and the shrines contained within it[1870] among the available online descriptions of the site show that it is not always obstructed. Indeed, it may be especially relevant to emphasize the Buddhist nature of the site which had been occasionally cast into doubt throughout its history.

S.2.1.1.3. The Historical Context: Resisting the Sweet Spring Palace

The areas around Qinquan-si are rich in aquatic toponyms. In its direct vicinity, there still exist the *shuijingwan* 水井彎 ['water well turn'], the *longzegou* 龍澤沟 ['dragon pool ditch'] and its *longzecun* 龍澤村 ['dragon pool village']. There was no lack of water in this area, but water could become dangerous by flooding or by containing too much salt — which was bad for the soil. Therefore, aquatic deities like the dragon still found their use in this environment. At

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1870 Which do show Shakyamuni Buddha along with the Medicine King, although the set-up does not fit a traditional Daxiongbao Hall.

Changpingshan, different types of water and its associated deities condensed — river, mountain, rain, springs, unsettling mists and mysterious marshes. Local traditions of ritual water control likely tempted Buddhists to create a temple there to annex the power of water control, raise their status among the locals, and enable them to gain patronage. But to achieve that, the local water deities associated with the site had to be contained and brought under Buddhist control. Such processes were not rare, as shown by the Huiyi-si's "contagiousness". Chapter Eight of the *Santai Xianzhi* tells of a monk from that temple who preferred to live as a recluse. But when he was invited to another temple, it was emphasized that the temple had no spring[1871] and how hard it was for the monks to fetch water from the mountain stream. The recluse performed a ritual in nature and dreamed of a "Jade Maiden" who told him to cut across the northwestern mountain.[1872] He ordered the monks of the temple to dig where the maiden had pointed and they found a sweet spring (*ganquan* 甘泉) that never dried up,[1873] just like at the Huiyi-si.

As it turns out, "sweet spring" (*ganquan* 甘泉) was not just one of the spiritual markers that Buddhist monks looked for when they sought to expand their realm of influence.[1874] It was a combat term that belonged to the Buddhist repertoire of subjugating local spirits. It can be traced back to the *Han Wudi Gushi* 漢武帝故事 — a miscellaneous collection of Buddhist-Chinese stories written down after the sixth century. The story describes how the king of Vaiśālī killed another king (or kings) who still engaged in butchering. Butchering

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1871 This was apparently a common motif. Robson 2012, p. 97 also cites a story of an old hydrolatric site associated with Da Yu where a monk had to go look for a spring and found it with the magical use of a sprig. It was emphasized that it was sweet and well-suited for tea, exactly like in the case of the Qinquan-si.

1872 In another version, he dreams of *three* Jade Maidens and they refer to the northern pavilion for digging. That version is found in the Song dynastic *Gaosengzhuan* 高僧傳 ['Biographies of Eminent Monks'], scroll 30, Ch. 25, recitation sheet 82, biography no. 21. pp. 867a–b. "*Tang Zizhou Huiyi-si Qing Xu Zhuan* 唐梓州慧義寺清虛傳." Accessed via Academia Sinica http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/

1873 Cf. STX 1814, 8:83.

1874 Cf. Robson 2012, p. 93. Moreover, there was a Ganquan Temple 甘泉寺 in the area which came to be inundated by a large pond — likely due to the building of the Huize Weir 惠澤堰. Cf. STX 1814, 8:29.

violated Buddhist ideals, but the killing of the king(s) was not questioned, though. Therefore, the king of Vaiśālī took the massive golden statues of the opposing kings' gods and placed them into the *ganquan gong* 甘泉宮 ['Sweet-spring Palace'], a nondescript but apparently worldly place where the formerly blood-hungry gods no longer required animal sacrifices and were instead satisfied by being worshiped with incense.[1875] The need to stop blood-hungry gods was so great that Buddhists occasionally attacked the temples of local cults to destroy the icons of non-vegetarian deities.[1876] The term "sweet spring" is, therefore, from its very origin connected to the fight against and the reframing of local deities. The story of the Huiyi-si recluse also implies it was unusual in this region to see a Buddhist temple without its own spring, conversely, it must have been common for Buddhist temples to specifically seek out the sites of springs.

The term *ganlu* 甘露, as found at the Qinquan-si, is functionally related to *ganquan*. This term was typically used for places with an abundance of water, i.e., hydrolatric sites, although it was originally a translation for the nectar that Guanyin uses to relieve the spirits kept in hell in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sutra*.[1877] In relation to *ganquan*, *ganlu* commonly appears in toponyms as a temporal name of 'new' Buddhist temples that later receive a more individual name. The temporary use of *ganlu* only emphasizes the term's role in 'taming' the local site's original supernatural inhabitants. This was further facilitated by the feminization of Guanyin, who was effectively invited into such renamed sites.[1878] The occupied sites only received a 'true' Buddhist name when their claim had become sufficiently stable. We can thus assume that occupying the sites of springs was part of the protocol for establishing Buddhism in Santai and other areas of China for both legitimizing and practical reasons.

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1875 Cf. Soothill 2004, p. 200.

1876 Cf. Halperin 2005, p. 428. Daoism had also led similar campaigns against blood rituals in Sichuan for many centuries. Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 224.

1877 Chin. *Foshuo Dacheng Zhuangyan Baowangjing* 佛說大乘莊嚴寶王經 (5th c.), cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, pp. 323–28. The term needs to be differentiated from the Daoist and Confucian literati term *ganlu* 甘露, which describes a plant-based dew. Cf. Li Shizhen 2021, pp. 55–56.

1878 However, there is not yet sufficient data to assert if *ganlu* sites would always become Guan-yin-centric sites.

If we connect the term and this protocol of occupation, then it becomes clear that the Buddhists in Sichuan were in an ongoing contest with the local water deities and their establishment of *ganlu-* and similar named springs and sites served the spiritual subjugation of the local spirits. In an intriguing way, the Merciful Clouds Grotto combines this with the transformation of Guanyin:

The female Guanyin, Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Samantabhadra presented in the grotto are not actually themselves! While the Guanyin in and behind the main hall is the Chinese Buddhist version meant to divert from this shrine, these three bodhisattvas are really the Buddhified representations of the aquatic deity or deities once present here. This situation cannot be called decoration because it is not meant for the public eye. Therefore, I would categorize it as obstruction combined with physical concealment. These three bodhisattvas took the place of one or multiple water deities who — as implied by the earlier story of Jade Maidens seen by the Huiyi-si recluse — were likely female, hence all icons appear female. This may be the result of an attempted superscription, because the bodhisattvas intercept and receive the sacrifices instead of any local deity while partially obscuring the original inscription. If that superscription did not work out as intended, that would argue for the persuasive power of the water deity who made the obstruction necessary in the first place. A total destruction was out of the question because the deity could bring doom to the temple that had already lost large parts of its extent to landslides. Again, using Guanyin as such a stand-in was not a local peculiarity because Guanyin-centric triads were also rooted in the Miaoshan legend. This legend is a narrative of filial piety in which Miaoshan, despite all the cruelty of her father, still sacrifices her hands and eyes to make medicine for him.[1879] Afterwards, she is revealed as the Bodhisattva Guanyin. In this legend, she is contrasted with her two older sisters who are depicted as selfish, greedy or just attached. Later versions turned them, too, into supernatural beings, until they were identified with

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1879 The story is also an etiology for the Thousand-armed Guanyin iconography. The practice is called *gegu* 割股 and comes from Confucianism. Although generally opposed to bodily mutilation, it was a way for the child to pay back the love of its parents. The practice is explained in detail in Jimmy Yu. *Sanctity and Self-Inflicted Violence in Chinese Religions, 1500—1700.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra.[1880] Another trend was to relocate the events of the entire legend (originally set in Henan) to Sichuan (see below) and this led to the development that all three bodhisattvas, in their female incarnations, were associated with controlling certain springs, rivers or bodies of water.[1881]

The history of the Qinquan-si shows that it was not the typical popular and flourishing Buddhist center that it was often advertised to be. Instead, this site was constantly challenged to find willing sponsors, its Buddhist identity was not deemed very important to consumers and authors alike. Leaving a temple to rot was a very strong statement in Chinese culture: A temple was the house of a deity — and Buddhist entities were often perceived as deities by the laypeople — if it was full of dust, broken and dilapidated, this weakened the deity. It would no longer be able to perform miracles efficiently and its veneration would decrease more and more, but restorations could revitalize it. In that sense, deity narratives reflected some awareness about social dynamics. For example, popular deities could object to their integration into the city god temple and its closed main hall because such temples restricted the access to them.[1882] In the case of the Qinquan-si, the competing groups were attracted by its numinous spring and moist environment. Apparently, the Buddhists were unable to present their site to the elite and local population as anything more than a fanciful resting place to hold banquets and celebrations. They were left to starve, the temple dilapidated, and elite support came rarely from Buddhist groups but rather from civil and military officials. Under these conditions, it was difficult to keep the Buddhist identity of the temple afloat, which is still expressed in the contemporary temple's layout. Thus, the late imperial emphasis on the temple's spring is not surprising. Although some adoration for ancient Buddhism was shown by the treatment of the ancient sutra, the destruction of half the site was only (officially) noticed when it was already partially overgrown. Whatever relevance the site had was not for its fickle Buddhist identity.

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1880 This idea was spread by the *Xiangshan Baojuan* 香山寶卷, a text based on the thirteenth century *Shiyin Pusa Benxingjing* 世音菩薩本行經, reproduced in 1773. And analysis of its contents is found in Yü Chün-fang 2001. pp. 442–46.

1881 Cf. Xing Li "Guanyin Belief in Suining." *Minsu Yanjiu* No 2, 2010. pp. 179–80.

1882 Cf. Hansen 1990, pp. 52–53, 57.

The Buddhists may have occupied the site a very long time ago, but they were unable to *finalize* their claim to it and did not achieve cultural dominance.

The Qinquan-si is an example for a hydrolatric site that was claimed by Buddhism in an early era, but the Merciful Clouds Grotto proves the persistence of hydrolatry and demonstrates how the idea of a local water spirit survived from the creation of the earliest cliff carvings over 1500 years to this very day. Because the Buddhists were incapable of monopolizing their claim to the site, it became a nexus between Buddhist, Confucian and local culture. The competitive situation between different groups of interests was not to Buddhism's advantage. While Buddhist presence and artwork was somewhat appreciated, the site remained multilocal until, quite recently, the source of the multilocality had to be aggressively muted by multiple obstructions. The Qinquan-si hence strikingly demonstrates the aggressive potential of this reconfiguration tactic. What makes the Qinquan-si especially relevant for the subject of this book is the very old though dubious Buddhist claim to it, especially regarding the advent of the Sinicized and feminized Bodhisattva Guanyin who turned out to be a great container for local water deities.

S.2.1.2. Other Northern and Central Numinous Spring Temples

The following section treats two temples similar to the Qinquan-si in the same wider area. They are both located roughly ninety minutes northwest of the Qinquan-si but at opposite ends of the Youxian area 遊仙區 in the Zitong district 梓潼縣 of Mianyang. The Bishui-si is located in the far west of Youxian, bordering the Fucheng area 涪城区, right at the shore of the Fujiang though in a very urbanized environment. The Shengshui-si is located in the east of the Youxian district, to the right of the Fujiang at the lush slope of the Tazishan 塔子山 in a forest heavy environment that feels like a bigger village.

I. The Bishui-si 碧水寺

The Bishui-si is another site with a long-established Buddhist claim, cliff carvings, and a numinous waterscape. The site has a broken layout structure to fit along the cliffs of the Fujiang's shore, covering three levels. Urbanization has obscured the original Guishan 龜山 "Turtle Mountain" that these cliffs belong to. Among these, there once existed the "Efficacious Turtle Grotto" (*lingguidong*

靈龜洞) separately from the Buddhist grottoes. Its contemporary location is uncertain — some relate that it was among the scenic sights of the northern garden area while a contemporary information sign claims it is located under the recently built three-story-high tea house that connects all levels of the temple. The current main entrance from the street sits between a row of shops. The prominent gate directly leads to a path to the right that follows along another dripping cliff, where three sets of lions in different stages of erosion mark the way. Five roof charms express the medium rank of the temple's buildings. All halls face the shore, but the Heavenly Kings Hall's (*tianwangdian* 天王殿) backside that one sees first also has a small shrine for a white Guanyin statue, protected by another set of stone lions. To imitate Tang dynastic sculpture, she has no Asian features and her dress looks similar to Virgin Mary depictions.[1883] The usually upside carried flask is inattentively poured over the back of her hand. This iconography is a rarer iconography, showing her pouring out compassion. However, especially Sichuanese images and sculptures developed this iconography to make Guanyin pour out entire rivers.[1884] This was a helpful way of depicting Guanyin when the bodhisattva was identified with local water deities and took their place.

The Heavenly Kings Hall does not contain any Heavenly Kings, just a Maitreya statue in its center and ten paintings of female Guanyins in aquatic context. There follows, on an intermediate level, a hall for the Caishen 財神殿, the god of wealth, follows. The Sanshengdian 三聖殿 ['Hall of the Three Sages'], which is located on the lowest level parallel to it, contains several gilded Mahāsthāmaprāpta stone statues along the cave-like walls, in-between coiled dragon pillars. In the center of the hall is the bronze statue of a male Guanyin of Southeast Asian style. From here, the path to the north leads to a recreational

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1883 During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the centralization of statue production, e.g., in Fujian, caused Guanyin, Mazu and Madonna statues to be produced in the same sites, so they started to resemble each other. Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 262–63.

1884 This is especially clear in the wooden main icon of the Gulong-si 古龍寺 in Huanglongxi 黃龍溪鎮. This temple was also originally erected over a grotto. The contemporary main hall is a Daxiongbaodian, that contains a Guanyin shrine in every corner. The monk supervising the hall told me that the Daxiongbaodian was originally a Yellow Dragon Hall 黃龍殿 until 1984, when the Bureau of Religious Affairs changed it during a temple expansion. The main Guanyin icon rides on a dragon in the middle of waves and pours out the raging river.

area that was cherished by the nobility and officials for centuries. Locals created their own icons and incense holders below another dripping cliff with a small rivulet at the junction between the temple and the recreational area.

The path to the south leads along the Fujiang's shore to a large plaza which is used to burn offerings in open ovens. The wall towards the river has an open top to receive incense and votive statues to Guanyin and the Caishen. Towards the cliffs, there is an open gallery with donor steles and some murals taken from another cliff that was demolished in favor of a street. There is a long stretch with only one building of uncertain function. According to promotional posters, this space will soon hold three monumental statues of Guanyin and her companions. Near the tea house is the Guanyin Hall that serves as the temple's main hall — there is no Daxiongbao Hall.

Two Ming dynastic dharmapālas guard the entrance of the Guanyin Hall and right behind it, it becomes apparent that this is actually — similar to the Merciful Clouds Grotto — only half of a hall that was built to protect the cliff carvings that were created between 621—741 CE. Only eighteen of the once hundreds of niches remained after 1940.[1885] The niches protrude into the center of the hall; one side of the cliff's protrusion carries a three-meter-long *Diamond Sutra* (Chin. *Jingangjing* 金剛經). In the right half of the hall is a shrine with coiling dragons, the Dragon Girl and the Golden Boy. It was built around a five-meter-tall Guanyin statue that belongs to the original cliff carvings, although it was later painted in bronze except for the feet. Due to the statue's age, Guanyin is dressed royally and presents as male. Holding up a flask, the statue indicates the presence of the spring right behind it, whose water runs down from the cliffs and is carefully caught up. On the left side, there is a second spring which drips from the cliff, but accumulates in a pool. The blindingly white icons of Guanyin and a dragon are of recent age, similar to the Qinquan-si's acrylic glass "spring". This part of the hall is called Shuipin Palace 水品宮. Between this spring and the cliff are the remains of ancient stairs. Just outside the Guanyin Hall, there is a third spring with a pool that was not included in the hall some reason. Anyways, the dragon head used as a water

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1885 Personal communication with the temple warden at Guanyin Hall, on site, 17th September 2016.

sprout receives its own incense. The temple warden calls the dragon a Bixi 贔屭[1886] although it shows no turtle traits. He assured me that this third spring was also a gift from Guanyin.

Most halls in this temple date to the twentieth century; they are closed and used to exhibit art pieces. The main hall and the groundworks of the Northern Pavilions are the oldest remaining structures. The entire site was strongly <u>musealized</u> — there are no Buddhist monks involved but the government funded the greater restoration of the temple because it was deemed a relevant cultural site.

Yet, the locals interact with the large sacrificial area, the main hall and with all the springs and dripping waters they can find at the site — be they official or not. The temple warden explains that the main hall was created a long time after the sutra had been inscribed into the cliff as a measure to protect the carvings. This explains the exclusion of the third spring behind which there are none. But why were the carvings placed?

For structural reasons, at least one of the two springs must have existed before the carvings were made. The old stairs gave direct access to the spring water, which was a major advantage for people settling in the area. However, the *Diamond Sutra* proves this was about more than just practicality. It was intentionally placed right above the spring for propagandistic reasons: the Buddhist monks already knew the contents of the sutra and the average local person could not read; this means that the sole purpose of the sutra was to mark the place as Buddhist. The necessity of placing the sutra to establish the Buddhist site suggests the previous existence of a local cult's competitive claim. During the Tang dynasty, there was the widespread belief that the *Diamond Sutra* was potent in times of need,[1887] it was thus able to supplant a local numinous power.

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1886 One of the nine dragon sons of Chinese mythology. Most of them refer to art historical types. Bixi is a dragon-turtle hybrid that normally carries heavy objects like steles, arches and bridges, Cf. Welch 2008, pp. 122–23. In the way that the dragon head is arranged here, it could be implied that it carries the whole cliff.

1887 Cf. Halperin 2005, p. 428.
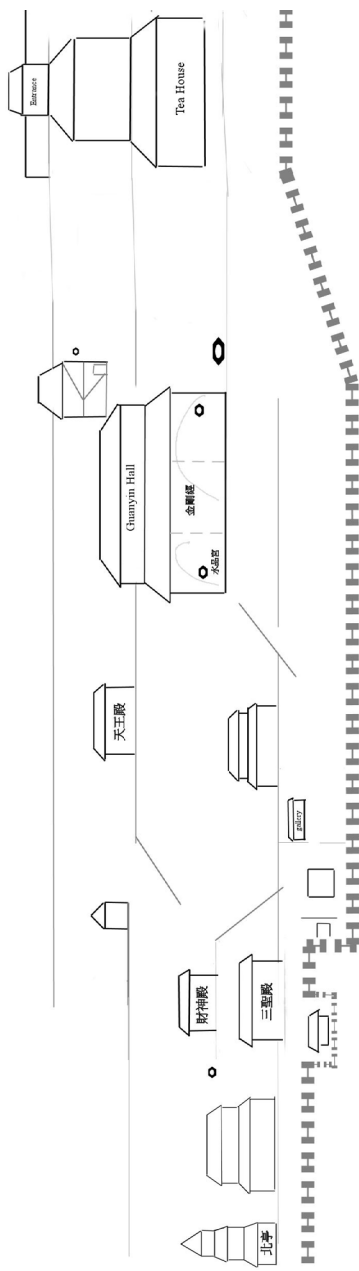
[Img. 18] Side elevation of the Bishui-si, Mianyang, Sichuan, as of 2016. Depicted is only the original temple site, the compound stretches to the north beyond the Northern Pavilion (*beiting* 北亭)

After the Buddhist claim was established, the rather small site became known as *Shuigeyuan* 水閣院 ['Water Pavilion Monastery']. The northern area of the contemporary temple was not only not yet part of the site, but much more famous in its own right. It used to be a row of scenic buildings of which the Yuewang Platform 越王台[1888] and the Northern Pavilion *beiting* 北亭 — used by traveling officials — were most popular. Beside the Northern Pavilion was another Buddhist temple called Kaiyuan-si 開元寺,[1889] which had good relations to the Qinquan-si. Towards the eastern cliff was a Dragon Marsh Spring (*longjiaoquan* 龍湫泉) that was clear, cold, and marked with its name.[1890] Over time, the Kaiyuan-si, the Northern Pavilion and the Water Pavilion Monastery merged into one site. The structural predecessor of the Bishui-si appears after the Bishui Cliff 碧水崖 was named, signified by the *Diamond Sutra* and the spring below the cliff which was called Jade Spring (*biquan* 碧泉). At that time, though, the spring used to gush out in front of a tall stone Buddha,[1891] but the contemporary springs erupt behind it or to its side. Because of the merge it is now difficult to estimate the original location of the Dragon Marsh Spring.

In the Song dynasty, this merged site was extended and the Water Pavilion Monastery was renamed Dishui-si 滴水寺 ['Dripping Water Temple'][1892] in reference to the water that dripped down the cliffs all year long. Afterwards follows a gap of information until the late Ming dynasty when the name of the temple became corrupted. The *Zhili Mianzhouzhi* 直隸綿州志 records for that time that there was an "Arhat Monastery" (*zhenren yuan* 真人院) called Dimi-si 滴米寺 ['Dropping Rice Temple'], which was "according to custom" also called Fozu-si 佛祖寺 ['Buddha Ancestor Temple'].[1893] This may have caused the development of a legend called *Dimishi* 滴米石 ['Dropping Rice Rock'] that explained the name: According to the ZLMZZ, there was room sized square rock behind

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1888 Created by Li Zhen 李貞 (627—688), the Prince of Yue. Cf. *Yuewanglou Ge* 越王樓歌, in Owen 2016, pp. 136–37.

1889 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:26a.

1890 Cf. ibid., 6:28b.

1891 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:26a.

1892 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:22b, 6:28b.

1893 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:21b.

the Fozu-si's main hall with the characters *mishi* 米石 ['Rice Stone'] inscribed on its top. The legend relates that the monk Yuan Hai 圓海 once nursed a sick bird that rewarded him with a grass sprout. The monk left it on the rock, where it vanished and caused the rock to drip enough rice kernels to feed one person a day. In the desire for more rice, the monk's disciples chiseled a greater hole, but this caused the rice to stop dripping from it. This story was officially deemed to be false during the Kangxi era. Although the temple is located in Sichuan's northern center, this is actually a common southern Sichuanese fairy tale type.[1894]

At the end of the Ming dynasty, the Kaiyuan-si and Dishui-si were both destroyed by the military. Much later, the local villagers rebuilt the Bishui-si by using the Kaiyuan-si's groundworks, supervised by the monk Zhong Xinshi 眾信士 (active ~1716). The project was completed in 1735 and the site was named Bishui-si.[1895] However, by 1807, the temple already had to be reconstructed. It was a meaningful enough event, though, that urged a prefectural envoy to write a poem about it.[1896] By that point, the temple was famous for its age and had gained some regional recognition. The Bishui-si is another example for a long-lasting and more successful Buddhist claim of a site with a continuous tradition of hydrolatry that is still upheld in contemporary times. The Buddhist claim seems to have been made with more mediative measures to create a better relationship between the locals and the Buddhist clergy, who repeatedly worked together to reconstruct the site. Local traditions and Buddhism were both practiced at Bishui-si and as it merged with an imperially significant location, it became a cherished and relevant cultural site that received regional recognition. Noticeably, this secured continued sponsorship, since the spring's site was favored over the Kaiyuan-si. The Bishui-si is an example for a successful superscription that ultimately led to the loss of the original local narrative and all knowledge about whatever cult was originally attached to the spring.

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1894 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 13:18a and Eberhard 1937, p. 106.

1895 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:29a–b.

1896 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:26b.

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II. The Shengshui-si 聖水寺

The Shengshui-si is a spacious Chan temple that covers five levels of the southwestern side of Tazishan. It is not nearly as constricted as the Bishui-si. With a size of 14,745 m², the temple belongs to the eight great Buddhist temples of modern Sichuan,[1897] it is nowadays rather wealthy and well-known. Its presence is marked by a large gate in the middle of a plaza. Two very long staircases and a bridge leads to the actual temple at the mountain's slope. The straight staircase leads to the Shengshui-si's third level where it is conjoined with the Luohansi 罗汉寺, its twin temple that was established in the 1980s. The bridged staircase leads to the first former entrance of the original temple on the first level. Once again, a gate is merged with the first hall and contains the gilded icons of a less Sinicized Maitreya and Skanda. There are four Heavenly Kings and four dharmapālas in each corner. The curved staircase in the small courtyard behind it leads to the second level. Its wall has two indentions for viewing pavilions and many incense holders that are intensely used. There are two side courtyards, separated from the main courtyard by a set of downward stairs. One is dedicated to the Medicine King, although the icon of the center shrine does not fit any iconography of the Medicine King:[1898] the bearded man sits on a tiger, with a dragon in his back, flanked by female attendants. In the other courtyard is the Jialan[1899] Hall 伽藍殿 that was rededicated as a Caishen Hall. The Caishen was renamed Caishen Bodhisattva here and is accompanied by a Jialan Bodhisattva and Guan Yu. This courtyard gives way to a large curved staircase leading up to the third and fourth level. It was created along a modern wall with detailed reddish-brown reliefs of Buddhist and Hindu lore that attempt to emulate cliff

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1897 After its desacralization in 1949, it had been used as a school until a monk named Guoren applied for funding with the Bureau of Religious Affairs in the 1980s. After thirty years of construction the temple more or less resembled its former self and since 2013 it has become the headquarters of the Mianyang Haideng Culture Research Association (*Mianyang Haideng Wenhua Yanjiuhui* 綿陽海灯文化研究會). The monk Haideng 海灯 (1902—1989), a leading representative of Humanist Buddhism (*renmin fojiao* 人民佛教) known for his comments on the sutras, was the patron of the temple's reconstruction.

1898 Cf. Frédéric 2003, pp. 107–14.

1899 This is a group of 18–21 bodhisattvas with a protective function. In the course of time, later Buddhist sages and Chinese deities were added to their ranks. They are usually depicted by one representative.

carvings. However, only the first two levels and parts of the third belonged to the original temple. All other levels were occupied only by the twentieth century.[1900] The core of the main courtyard is the seven jian wide Guanyin Hall 觀音殿, heightened by a clerestory and positioned on a four-steps-high platform. The roof is decorated with a cintamani jewel, fishes and five roof charms. All pillars have couplets that use water metaphors for the Buddhist teachings. Inside, waves and coiling dragons decorate every pillar, with the walls painted with aquatic scenes depicting dragons and Guanyin. The gigantic main shrine, dominated by blue hues and water symbolism, houses a 6–7 meters high seated Guanyin of androgynous appearance. Flanking this central figure are three other Guanyin to the right, all clearly female: the Child Giving Guanyin, Shuiyue Guanyin, and Dragon Riding Guanyin (*chenglong Guanyin* 乘龍觀音). The latter pours out her bottle and is accompanied by the Dragon Girl. To the left of the massive Guanyin shrine, there is a small Mañjuśrī shrine positioned toward the back. Within the hall's left section, another Guanshiyin Pusa 觀世音菩薩 shrine is framed by large dragons. It shows a plump and solemn female Guanyin statue flanked by two female attendants, with a smaller Samantabhadra situated in its left corner. All in all, this hall contains five Guanyins. Adding the seated statue in the Guanyin Pagoda (which holds a flask) and the Dabei Guanyin, there are seven in the entire temple. Between the Guanyin Hall and an incense booth, there are a few more steps that lead into a chaos of cleaning tools and wild-running chickens whose function is not initially visible.

The Dabei Hall 大悲殿 on the third level is five jian wide. It also has a clerestory and yellow ('imperial') roof tiles. There is only one icon in its center, a very tall statue which has merged the iconographies of the Thousand-Armed Guanyin and Ekādaśamukha Guanyin (*Shiyimian Guanyin* 十一面觀音, with eleven heads) into three identical bodies that stand to each other's backs. The

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1900 Interview with a novice of the temple who served in the Dabei Hall. 04 September 2016, on-site. The two more recent levels are occupied by a Daxiongbaodian (under construction in 2016, central axis), a Kṣitigarbha Hall 地藏殿, a Jade Buddha Hall 玉佛殿 with three such Buddha statues donated by a monastery from Myanmar, a Skanda Hall 韋陀殿, the restaurant, guest study hall and the guest house, and a Wulu Caishen Hall 五路財神殿 the Sutra Hall (central axis), the Elder's Hall 師祖殿, a Guanyin Pavilion and a small Guanyin Pagoda 觀音閣 (locally called "Mother Buddha Chamber") on each side of the axis as well as a Water Pavilion. There is a sacrificial area on the higher ground behind the Sutra Hall.

novice who serves in this hall took an entire hour of his time to answer my questions about the temple and its relation to Buddhism in Sichuan, as well as about his views, for which I am very grateful. When I asked him about the Dragon Marsh and the sacred spring that was said to have existed here, he allowed me to follow him to the spring which is not normally open to visitors. He led me to the aforementioned chaotic alley on the second level which leads to the back of the Guanyin Hall. The cliff behind the Guanyin Hall is the oldest part of the site. It has a natural cave where water drips and trickles down from the left side of the back wall to form a crystal clear pool. However, much of the cave's entrance has been walled in with large bricks, leaving only the back portion in its original state. The pool's front is also man-made, evident from its construction. Traces of wax line the layered sides of the pool. On the right side, there is a slim masoned altar with different votive figurines, most depict Guanyin. Among them, however, is a peculiar stone figurine with a martial appearance that is locally rumored to be a "Tang dynastic Guanyin".

While its true identity remains uncertain, that is certainly not what it is.[1901] There is also a stone tablet dated to the seventh year of Jiaqing 嘉慶 [~1803], but there is no light inside the cave, so I was unable to read it. The novice related that twice a week, at 6 am, the monks conduct a Water Drawing ceremony (*qushui* 取水) during which they burn incense at the altar and fetch water from the spring. This water is then presented through the entire temple and carried to the upper levels, where "patients" (*huanzhe* 患者) await, as the spring water is believed to possess healing properties. The designated waiting area on the upper level borders the Luohan-si.[1902]

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1901 Dr. Henrik Sørensen suggested, regarding the headdress, that the statue may be an unusual depiction of Guan Yu, possibly from the Republican Era. Personal communication, 15 May 2019, Center for Religious Studies (CERES), Bochum.

1902 The Luohan-si has a more standardized arrangement of halls and contents with no ubiquity of Guanyin or wealth deities, in contrast, it is very purist.
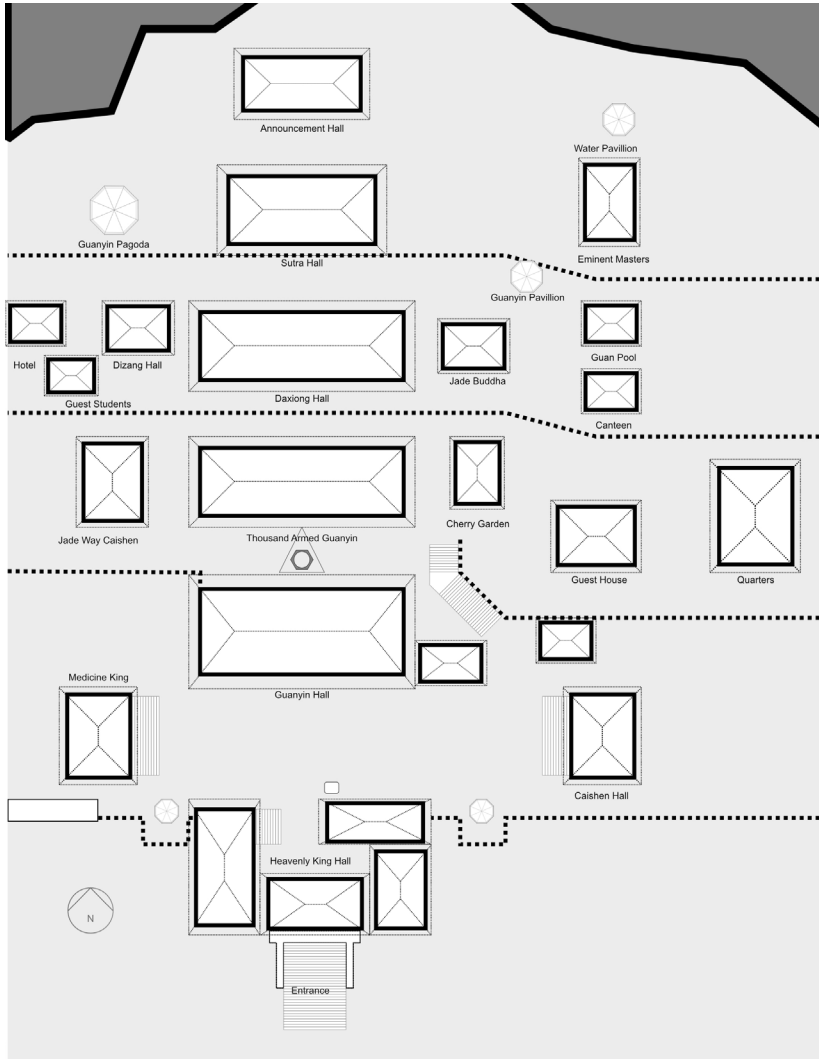
[Img. 19] Layout of the Shengshui-si, Mianyang, Sichuan, as of 2016

Not only is the Shengshui-si located in a village of the same name, the entire Tazishan was once called Shengshuishan 聖水山 ['Holy Water Mountain']. It had a temple that remains unnamed because the presence of a spring was deemed to be more relevant: "[…] half up the mountain behind the temple exists a dragon marsh, prayers for rain will be immediately granted. The locals call it Holy Spring."[1903] In the modern and historical sources, there is some confusion about the age of the Shengshui-si. Some claim it dates to two different eras of the Tang dynasty (650 or 880 respectively) — that old age is of course encouraged by the contemporary clergy — and some claim that 1436 was the year of establishment. The reason for the confusion is likely this entry about the Holy Spring in the *Zhili Mianzhouzhi*.

聖泉 ― 治北七十里. 聖水寺後石壁刻記云名:山院西巖壁下有龍湫焉. 祈雨輒應. 唐永徽中名甘泉, 元曰阜民泉, 明曰聖水, 正統元年建寺因以名之. 在魏城北六里. (舊志)在治北六里者誤.

Holy Spring. Seventy li north from the government seat. Behind the Sheng-shui-si is a stone wall with an inscription that explains its name: 'West of the mountain monastery, below the cliff, there is a dragon marsh. When imploring for rain, it will be granted at once. During the Tang [era] Yon-ghui [650—655 CE] it was called Ganquan [Sweet Spring], during the Yuan it was called Fuminquan [Abundant Population Spring], during the Ming it was called Shengshui; in the first year of Zhengtong [1436], a [Buddhist] temple was established and named after it. It is located six li north of Weicheng. [The information of the] (Old Gazetteer): 'it is located six miles north to the government seat' is an error.[1904]

There are no cliff carvings at the Shengshui-si of Tazishan. Therefore, the middle sentence must be a confusion with the Shengshui-si of Weicheng Town 魏城鎮 that is located just half an hour (by car) to the southwest of Tazishan. The Tazishan's Buddhist temple was merely erected during the phase of heightened

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1903 […] 山半寺後有龍湫禱雨立應里人號曰聖泉. Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:20b.

1904 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:29a.

temple building activity and Buddhist patronage during the early Ming dynasty. The mixed up passage reads a differently in the entry for the Shengshui-si itself:

> (舊志)治北七十里以寺後石壁下有龍湫,禱雨輒應得名. 明正統元年建, 乾隆中僧曉徹補修.
> *(Old Gazetteer): located 70 li north of the government seat. Behind the temple is a stone wall, below it there is a Dragon Marsh, prayers for rain are answered at once, that is where [the temple's] name comes from. It was established in the first year of Zhengtong [1436], the monk Xiao Che repaired it during the Qianlong [era]. […].*[1905]

This shows clearly that the Tazishan's temple, where there is a stone wall behind the temple ('s main hall,) had no inscriptions. Instead, we have clear evidence that the spring inside the cave was associated with dragons and used for rain rituals.

Although the first gazetteer entry may have confused the two sites completely and the described content of the inscription may refer entirely to Weicheng-Shengshui-si, the Weicheng temple was not reestablished in 1436. The more likely event is that by referring to 'ganquan' without a temple category suffix, it was wrongly assumed to be identical with the Ganquan-si 甘泉寺, which is an old name of the Weicheng-Shengshui-si. However, Ganquan was actually just the name of a spring at Tazishan. The situation that there was no temple, only a spring, explains why the Yuan era name also only refers to a spring — Fumin-quan — without attributing a temple category.

When the well-known dragon marsh became a Buddhist monastery in 1436, this was not a sudden change but the result of the prolonged engagement of the Buddhist clergy with the site. The name 'ganquan' indicates that Buddhists had already begun to reframe the environment of the spring and the name 'fumin-quan' suggests propagandistic aspects in its administration. Over time, the Buddhists were able to finalize their claim and to establish their own site over the famous spring, which transferred the spring's relevance and healing efficacy to them. Claiming a healing spring was likely a factor that contributed to the prolonged wealth of the local Buddhist community.

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1905 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:28b–29a.

There is a third candidate for the confusion between the many sites called Shengshui-si. This temple is located in the north of Neijiang 內江, a city two hours by car southeast of Chengdu and thus in a completely different region. The *Zhili Mianzhouzhi* contains an entry which claims that a Shengshui-si was founded during the early Ming dynasty, that it had a bridge behind it, and that it was reconstructed in the Yongzheng era (1722—1735).[1906] However, none of Mianyang's Shengshui-si fit the latter two characteristics — but the comparatively famous Shengshui-si of Neijiang does. It was originally erected in the Song dynasty and reconstructed under the reign of Ming Wanli 萬曆 (1572—1620), then "clumsily" expanded during the Kangxi era.[1907] The Neijiang Shengshui-si was also erected over an efficacious spring and a Thousand-Armed Guanyin Pagoda was one of the first buildings established there.[1908] The "Record of the Shengshui-si's Mysteries" (*Shengshui-si Lingyi Ji* 聖水寺靈異記), a stele text of 1588, written by the politician Hu Yaochen 胡堯臣 (1507—1579)[1909] provides extensive information about Neijiang's Shengshui-si:

East to the Tuojiang, there was a deep pool which became shallow in the winter. Fishermen saw a palace on the ground of it, and because there was a mountain nearby, the site was called Temple of the Dragon Woman (*longnü-miao* 龍女廟) for as long as anyone can remember. The Shengshui-si is located on the northern shore, where local steles said it was once the Palace of the Dragon of the Western Sea (*Xihai Long-gong* 西海龍宮). After a fire during the Song dynasty, the emperor made a decree to honor the local deity who had created rain for the Chongqing circuit. That deity was Dragon King Ao Guang Immortal Mei Zhenshu (*longwang Ao Guang Xian Mei Zhenshu* 龍王敖廣仙妹珍淑).[1910]

Although Ao Guang was indeed the most powerful of the dragon lords and later dragon kings, Mei Zhenshu is undeniably a female name — fitting the

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1906 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:17b.

1907 Cf. Neijian Xianzhi 1871, 1:26b.

1908 Cf. ibid., 1:39a–b.

1909 He was a native of Anju 安居 and governor of Zhejiang and Henan. The described temple is located to the north of Anju.

1910 Cf. Hu Yaochen 1997, p. 254.

Temple of the Dragon Woman. The local female dragon's gender was thus hidden by <u>renaming</u> the deity. The emperor's reward was a gold medal which was thrown into the river as a sacrifice. The goddess was appointed as Primal Lord Dragon Woman Who Attained Compassion and Filial Piety of Huai Grotto (*Huaidong Dacixiao Longnü Yuanjun* 淮洞達慈孝龍女元君), and from then on received regular sacrifices. Hu Yaochen comments that either a "dressing up stone" (*shuzhuangshi* 梳妝石) or the underwater temple were the origin of sacrifices to this deity and he condemns the practice because it is not mentioned in the classics.

In the Ming Hongwu era (1386—1398), only one collapsed ancient hall remained of the Dragon Woman's site. However, when there was a dire drought, the people returned to the efficacious shrine to pray for holy water. Their prayers brought storms with endless rain, which prompted even the state treasury to contribute to the site's restoration. Additionally, Buddhist monks were invited to live at the site although the dragon deity had a Daoist name (which is, after all, why this stele text was collected in a book about Daoist sites). A hundred years later, their disciples expanded the site to include a Dharma Hall, a Heavenly King Hall and only much later did they add a Daxiongbao Hall. However, an icon of the Dragon Woman was placed into the left part of the Daxiongbao Hall, holding a removable bottle and looking towards her former temple. The local people were no longer afraid of droughts because whenever there was one, the Dragon Woman would empty out her porcelain bottle over them. For that ritual, the bottle was brought to the river and inundated on a rope — and when it was taken out again, it would rain.[1911] Between the Song dynasty and the Ming dynasty, the Daoist framed Dragon Woman had apparently been equipped with traits that refer to Guanyin: compassion, filial piety and the pouring out of a bottle (to bring rain). Buddhist concepts had thus permeated the local religious landscape and had already been incorporated with important water deities before Buddhists had even arrived at the site.

Hu Yaochen also describes peculiar events at the site. One involved one unfortunate Daoist and a more fortunate magistrate named Hong Yiguan 洪一貫. When the latter performed the bottle ritual, the bottle came up empty, but a

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1911 Cf. Hu Yaochen 1997, p. 254.

miraculous sound brought "sweet rain". In 1573, there was a severe drought and the rain prayers of the same magistrate's subordinates remained futile. The magistrate showed reluctance to visit the Buddhist temple, although he knew about the efficacious icon and had previously successfully performed the ritual. Instead, he prayed at the Temple of the City God[1912] first, then burned clothing outside the city walls, before finally sending someone to perform the bottle ritual at the site of the old Dragon Woman Temple in the middle of the pool. This was all without avail. Hong Yiguan remembered then that he had not yet ordered the Buddhists to pray at the Dragon Woman's statue. After doing that, he took a boat to perform the bottle ritual himself. After doing so twice, the bottle was suddenly filled with water. He did the ritual a few more times to make up for the drought and ignored the warnings of the locals. As a result, the initial drizzling rain turned into perilous downpours. When the magistrate opened the previously sealed bottle to find out how this worked, he just found an oily, jade-colored liquid inside whose origin he could not explain.

Hu Yaochen concludes that no matter if these stories were true or not, the Buddhist temple had found a system to make itself flourish. This means that Hu was aware of the economic advantages that the possession of such miraculous options on-site provided. He wrote that although the area had changed so much, the Dragon Woman Temple named Shengshui continued to exist independently, and he wondered how it had come about.

Hu saw the dragon pool as responsible for the site's success, its fame surpassed the local mountain and so the Buddhist temple was named after it. Since this text is supposed to be from a Daoist stele, Hu Yaocheng also ponders if the earlier, unfortunate Daoist who died during a ritual had become a local spirit of mountain and rivers instead and continued to bring merit to the area. The officials, who engaged with rituals in the mountains and the dragon pool, were only a recent matter to him.[1913] The stele content shows that the attempts to establish a Daoist claim at this hydrolatric site close to the Tuojiang were

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1912   The spirits of mountains and streams resided beside him, Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 17:4a–b.

1913   Cf. Hu Yaochen 1997, p. 255.

unsuccessful.[1914] Buddhist concepts were mixed with local lore and found imperial recognition, which led to the fame of the local dragon deity. After the Buddhist monks were invited, they claimed the site and entered a tradition of cohabitation. This continued the Buddhist tradition of replacing Daoist claims.[1915] However, both the Buddhists and the magistrates did not treat the local, female dragon deity as their first choice. The monks did not engage with the statue unless forced to do so and at no point performed the bottle ritual.[1916] The magistrates did successfully perform the ritual, but only as a last resort, adhering to local ideas while skeptically questioning them.

Most importantly, the stele text proves that Shengshui-si was not only a very common name for hydrolatric Buddhist temples in Sichuan, but rather close to being *its own type of temple*. In the context of the Sichuanese Shengshui-si, there is the repetition of certain tropes that are used to establish Buddhist sites and to particularly superscribe the sites of marsh-associated female dragon spirits. This supports the likelihood that the deity at Qinquan-si and Zitong's Shengshui-si were also female and likely dragons. Although the Buddhist superscription of female water spirits was often very successful in the sense that their name and lore were forgotten, their cult practice could decouple from the lore and continue to exist in increasingly Buddhist contexts.

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1914 A similar case is known from Taitongshan 太通山, where a Guanyin icon was placed inside the deep grotto but the one who received sacrifices was a Daoist version of Wenchang. Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:9b. Similarly, at the Thousand Buddha Cliff 千佛巖, there were numerous Buddhist icons to choose from but sacrifices were brought to the Wenchang shrine. Cf. ibid., 6:48b. Locally, Wenchang's serpentine origin was still known, yet he had become just as legitimate (as evidenced by his temple category changing from *miao* to *ci*) as Guanyin, so in the eyes of the locals, he may have trumped her in regards of bringing rain.

1915 Cf. Robson 2012, p. 100.

1916 ZLMZZ 1813 27:36a shows a more amiable example for the relationship between Daoists and Buddhists in regard to dragons: the sacred temple had a dragon well, so the Dragon Protected Pagoda (*longhu-ta* 龍護塔) was added, which led to the establishment of the sacred temple. The dragon had been there since the monk Bao Yue made contact with the Laojun Monastery (a Daoist site), since there was a dragon marsh that always responded to prayers for rain.

For southern Mianzhou, at Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山, there was a site where a former Daoist temple had transformed into a Buddhist monastery. The building erected over the spring also had a Buddha image directly above the spring, but the second level was created as a Daoist grotto heaven. Cf. ibid., 6:14a–b.

III. The Chaoyin-si 潮音寺 of Huanglongxi 黃龍溪

The aforementioned modus was not restricted to the Mianyang area but can be found throughout Sichuan. One example for the contrast between practice and representation is the Chaoyin-si 潮音寺 ['Sound of the Tide Temple']. It is located in the ~1700 years old town Huanglongxi 黃龍溪, ca. forty minutes southwest from Chengdu. It is nowhere close to the sea but located in a river curve that once flooded a much wider area. Since the old town rests on an island in the middle of the river, water control was extremely important to this place. A map shows that to its east gate, there were once six religious palaces. Three of them were dedicated to Da Yu, one to the Medicine King in a non-Buddhist incarnation (*yaowang-miao* 藥王廟), one to the Chuanzhu Li Bing (*chuanzhu-miao* 川主廟 'River Masters Temple', see [S.3.2.]) and one to Tianhou 天后.[1917] In front of the north gate was a Dragon King Temple and along the road to the city a Court of Righteous River-Crossing (*yiji-yuan* 義濟院). Inside the town and not far from the northern gate inside the town, was a flood office (*fanshu* 汎署), while in the southwest of the town a dragon pavilion (*longting* 龍亭) was situated right next to the Confucius Temple (*wenmiao* 文廟). In front of the western gate was a Baiyi-an 白衣庵 for the White-Robed Guanyin.[1918]

The Chaoyin Temple to the northwest of the island was founded in 1404 as the Nanhai-si 南海寺 ['Temple of the Southern Sea'], a Guanyin-centric nunnery, it never contained a Daxiongbao Hall. Nowadays, the site is guarded by the protective bodhisattvas Jialanshen 伽藍神 and a dragon god who simultaneously[1919] serves as a god of the earth, wealth, and fortune. The entrance also serves as the first hall, it contains the icons of Maitreya and Skanda. In the small courtyard, there are two niches to venerate Kṣitigarbha and the "Avoid Calamities Life Extending Medicine Buddha" (Xiazai Yanshou Yaoshifo 消災延寿藥師佛). The main hall shows a female Guanyin icon, which is flanked by two female attendants and female Samantabhadra and Mahāsthāmaprāpta.

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1917 Cf. Shuangliu Xianzhi 1878, 1:43a–b.

1918 Cf. Shuangliu Xianzhi 1878, 1:4b–5a and 1:12b.

1919 The elderly lady informed me that before the renovation, there were separate statues for dragons and wealth deities.

According to both the local information sign and the elder lady who takes care of the plants inside the compound, the temple's primary function was once to pray for good weather and good crops. The modern name of the temple is derived from the idea of Guanyin as the Mother Buddha *fomu* 佛母, who descends with the sound of the tide to the people.[1920] The elderly lady informs me that the Mother Buddha is an old lady who would save people from water disasters and bring good crops. The river sailors worshiped this Guanyin by sacrificing seafood and fish to her. This points clearly towards a former water goddess. Due to the vegetarian turn of East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism,[1921] any form of sacrificial offering involving substances derived from the slaughter of living beings was out of the question. Although it is possible under certain circumstances for laypeople to sacrifice animals killed for food, the legitimate offering of seafood is impossible because it is unavoidably killed specifically for the sacrifice. Offering seafood to Buddhist entities is thus very offensive and would have had severe consequences if this was indeed a Buddhist temple.[1922] However, there were no consequences here because sacrificing seafood to a water goddess in Guanyin-disguise was not a problem at all. The situation of this site implies that there once was a decoration, however, after the river sailors disappeared from the area — except for tourism — they stopped visiting this site and the lore of the former water goddess was lost. Today, the Buddhist identity of the contemporary temple with a small number of nuns isnot questioned anymore. Guanyin is perceived as a Buddhist bodhisattva even though the goals of ritual practice are still mostly focused on the worldly daily life issues of the laypeople. However, this surely helped to keep the temple sponsored by the locals and enabled the nuns to further the Buddhist claim

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1920 Information sign on site. This concept has nothing to do with the Mother Buddha of Tibetan Buddhism.

1921 For more information, see Kieschnick, John. "Buddhist Vegetarianism in China." In *Of Tripod and Palate*, edited by Roel Sterckx, 186–212. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

1922 For example, John Blofeld (1913—1987), who lived in China between 1932—49, collected an oral narrative about a Sichuanese family who moved west and did not recognize an Ekādaśamukha-Guanyin. Thus, they brought wine and poultry into the temple as an offering. Their new neighbors took revenge by burning down their home. Cf. Blofeld 1988, pp. 48–43.

of the site. Although there has been a thorough <u>amalgamation</u> of Guanyin, the Chaoyin-si constitutes a partial <u>superscription</u> because the original lore was lost and the site is now perceived as Buddhist, but the ritual practice still favors the original deity.

S.2.2. Making a Buddha Land in Sichuan: Case Studies from the Eastern Area

Just like Hu Yaocheng correctly concluded about Neijiang's Shengshui-si, sites with special powers generate interest, sponsorship and wealth. Healing was continually employed by Buddhist missionaries to spread their faith and it was an ideal opportunity for them if they came upon a spring that was said to have curative properties. They knew that occupying such a site would bring not only a practical and relevant place under their control, it could also ensure a wealthy monastery and religious community. The spring of Zitong's Shengshui-si was said to heal undefined ailments. A namesake in Deyang 德陽 located in western Mianzhou, was built over a spring called "Cleaning Eyes Spring" (*xiyan quan* 洗眼泉) because it was said to heal illnesses of the eyes and blindness.[1923] The same claim was made for one of the opposed sister temples of Suining. Suining 遂寧 is located in the former Ba territory of eastern Sichuan at the very border to the Chongqing area. Two of its most famous temples are the Guangde-si 廣德寺 ['Temple of Spreading Virtue] and the Lingquan-si 靈泉寺 ['Temple of the Numinous Spring']. Both were established in the Tang era and became especially popular during the Ming-Qing period. They were extremely important for the localization of Guanyin in Sichuan and as their names imply, numinous springs were a relevant factor in that process. Their history has been described by Xing Li 邢莉.

The Guangde-si is located within a forest area at the former Wolongshan 臥龍山[1924] (today another Guishan 龜山), a bit more than two kilometers to the west of Suining City. With a size of 25,726 m², the temple is one of the biggest in Sichuan and according to archaeological studies, it is the third-oldest still existing building ensemble of the province. Although the temple was destroyed

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1923 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 27:36a.
1924 Cf. Suining Xianzhi 1787, 9:44b.

during the Cultural Revolution, the Song dynasty groundwork of the pagoda, many steles and twenty-one buildings from the Ming and Qing dynasties have survived.[1925] To this day, the temple contains a Holy Water Well (*shengshuijing* 聖水井) that is deeply embedded in dragon symbolism. The well is found in the Wolongdong 臥龍洞, which was once one of those sites associated with Zhuge Liang when his veneration began to take on traits of water control. The Guangde-si is famously called the "first temple that came from the west" and associated with the monk Keyou 克幽 (727—787), who was a skilled rainmaker and allegedly able to call forth springs from rocks wherever he pointed.[1926] The local sign next to the Holy Water Well relates a legend about a great drought in Suizhou 遂州 (Suining's former name), when Keyou pointed with a staff into a corner of the dry cliff and a clear spring sprang forth. The legend also implies that he saved monks who allegedly belonged to an already existing monastery.

A predecessor of the temple, the Shifo-si 石佛寺 ['Stone Buddha Temple'] had been established at the beginning of the Tang dynasty and was renamed into Baotang-si 保唐寺 in 767 CE. The Guanyin statue on its cliffs is said to have had a female appearance.[1927] After Keyou's arrival, the temple was moved by a kilometer and on imperial order <u>renamed</u> to Chanlin-si 禪林寺 in 778 CE. Keyou's water magic must have left a strong impression because shortly after, the temple was — according to the Southern Song geography *Yudiji Sheng* 輿地紀勝 — again renamed into "Temple of Good River Crossing" (Shanji-si 善濟寺), which refers to one of Sichuan's typical water deity types. The temple started out rather small and included a main hall, a Guanyin Hall, a Kṣitigarbha Hall and a pagoda.[1928]

During the persecution of Buddhists around 845 CE, the pagoda was 'drowned' in the local lake. But soon, long after Keyou's death, two golden collarbones of his skeleton were allegedly found in said lake by no other than the Sichuanese Emperor Wang Jian.[1929] This story emulates the legend of Ma-

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1925 Cf. Wang Hong Bo 2009, p. 28.

1926 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 173.

1927 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 179.

1928 Cf. Wang Hong Bo 2009, p. 28.

1929 Cf. ibid.

langfu-Guanyin 馬郎婦觀音. It likely evoked the next name of the temple: "Newly Flourishing Meditation Grove" (*Zaixing Chanlinsi* 再興禪林寺), which was used since 903 CE.[1930]

Local Guanyin centralism was introduced after these events. It had been decided that Keyou must have been the incarnation of Guanyin, and so Guanyin was always depicted as male in Guangde-si. The temple became one of Guanyin's most prominent localizations in Sichuan. It was propagated as Guanyin's *bodhimanda* (*puti daochang* 菩提道場) — the place where someone becomes a bodhisattva. Furthermore, the whole mountain area was turned into a sacred landscape by renaming it Old Xiangshan 老香山.[1931] These events greatly enhanced Guanyin's ability to further consolidate local religions in Sichuan.

Due to its growing cultural value, the state was interested in using the Guangde-si's symbolic space to reproduce its own ideology that connected certain geographical features to the production of scholars and emperors.[1932] It did not take long until the Guangde-si became the "Imperial Bodhimanda", a place where aristocratic sons became "bodhisattvas". The temple attracted thousands of monks from the entire southwest and indeed, many of the Sui, Tang and Song princes who were sent there to study later became emperors.[1933]

In the Song dynasty, the site was renamed Guangli-si 廣利寺 ['Numerous Benefits Temple'] and received many titles and imperial gifts — even a memorial arch in 1174. These gifts were not only meant to honor the temple, the Song actively used title- and gift granting to maintain tight control over a site. This means that the control over the Guangde-si was of unusually high value. The latest name change to Guangde-si during the Ming dynasty reflects this state connection of the site to scholars and emperors. Afterwards, the temple was greatly expanded with thirteen more halls as described by Wang Hong Bo.

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1930 Cf. Xing Li 2010, pp. 174–175.

1931 This was the location where the Miaoshan legend takes place, originally in Henan. Cf. Dudbridge 1978, p. 15.

1932 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 176 and Paton 2013, p. 204.

1933 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 175.

The Lingquan-si

The Lingquan-si is located on the opposite side of the mountain and its role can be called both supportive and oppositional to that of the Guangde-si. If the Guangde-si was the imperial bodhimanda, then the Lingquan-si served as the bodhimanda of the people.[1934] The Guanyin housed here was always female.

For the Song dynasty, it is reported that during the Sui dynasty (ca. 581—600 CE), this temple came into being by a miracle. There was a thick fog and after it dissolved, either a Shakyamuni statue[1935] or a "seated Putuo"[1936] remained at the spot of the later site. Less miraculously, the *Suining Xianzhi* of the Qianlong era reports that the temple was once established as Cangshan-si 藏山寺 ['Hidden Mountain Temple'] within a dense forest. During the Song dynasty, it was renamed to Zisheng-chanyuan 資聖禪院 ['Provide Sacredness Buddhist Hall'] in 1008 and the temple received a meditation hall for Guanyin (*guanyin chantang* 觀音禪堂) as soon as it became known that the mountain top possessed sacred water. Su Dongpo[1937] praised the site in a poem, describing: "The golden hooks [Keyou's bones] fished out the extension of the old Dragon".[1938] It was destroyed during the Yuan dynasty and during the Ming, a small Shengshui-an 聖水庵 was erected at the top of the mountain to especially venerate Guanyin Bodhisattva. In 1490, the small temple containing a throne for Guanyin, as well as some wells, received its current name.[1939] Due to its remoteness, the Lingquan-si did not experience great destruction.[1940]

The contemporary Lingquan-si is itself a duplicated temple. There is a lower Lingquan-si which sits at the foot of the mountain while the upper (and older) Lingquan-si is located at the summit. In sum, both occupy 7919 m², however,

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1934 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 176.

1935 Cf. ibid.

1936 Cf. Suining Xianzhi 1787, 9:62b. This implies a Guanyin statue because Putuo is the island associated with Guanyin.

1937 This is the famous poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037—1101).

1938 [...] 金鉤釣出老龍延. Cf. Poster of Suining City Lingquan Temple Management Committee, on site. February 22, 2012.

1939 Cf. Poster of Suining City Lingquan Temple Management Committee, on site. February 22, 2012.

1940 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 176.

the entire mountain path between the temples belongs to one religious landscape. The lower Lingquan-si has a regular Buddhist layout with a Heavenly King Hall in the front, a Daxiongbao Hall in its center, a Thousand-Armed Guanyin Hall to the east, a Jade Guanyin Hall to the west and a Medicine Master Hall in the back. This "lower temple" (*xiamiao* 下廟) dates back to at least the Ming dynasty and was greatly expanded during the Qianlong era. On the lake opposite to it, there is a contemporary monumental statue of a triple Guanyin that depicts her and her two sisters.

In the middle section of the mountain, there is a terrace like cliff with a small temple for Guan Yu and a hall for exemplary filial people. Beside the Guanyin cypresses, there are the "Three Eyes Wells" (*sanyanjing* 三眼井) and a hall of the same name. Although that hall is used for advertising the site as the "Native Place of Guanyin in China", it is locked.

The elderly caretaker who accompanied me to this place explained that the hall is only opened when she cleans it. She tells me that, there once were more buildings on this level, but only this hall and an old pavilion (now newly rebuilt) have remained. She also relates that the hall contains three images, that of Guanyin and her sisters. However, as the windows are blackened, there is thus no way to peek inside. Behind the hall are the three ancient wells, each of them five to ten meters deep and differently shaped — round, square and hexagonal. They are different in water level, but allegedly hold their levels independently from drought.On top of the mountain is the upper temple, this is the original Lingquan-si which in recent years has received an impressive nine level high pagoda that harbors a six-meter-tall statue of a willow twig carrying Guanyin. The first gate still carries a name plaque reading "Chan Temple in the Middle of the Stream" (*chuanzhong chanlin* 川中禪林). The upper temple shows a lot of space. There are very few buildings on a very large paved surface and two levels — this suggests that some structures were lost in the past. Otherwise, the contemporary temple is in excellent condition and the multi-story residential building has been lavishly decorated due to the reconstruction in 2010. Among the current ensemble are only two religious halls. These have five roof charms (and one of them has a roof with yellow tiles, just like the gallery at the brink of the mountain top), while the buildings of the lower temple only have three roof charms. The first edifice of the lower level on the left side is called Five

Fortunes Hall (Wufu-dian 五福殿), where there is a Caishen shrine including two medium sized statues of male multi-armed Guanyin. The plaque over the middle of the same building reads Dizang Hall and indeed, in the building's center is a big shrine for Kṣitigarbha, but to his side is also another Guanyin who stands upon a coiling dragon. The right side of the hall is stuffed with various votive Guanyin figurines, all but one holding or pouring the bottle, one of them is male. A tiny postcard of Shakyamuni flanked by two bodhisattvas has been haphazardly positioned in-between to 'intercept' the offerings.

On the upper level is the Guanyin Hall which also serves as the Main Hall of the upper temple, it does not have a Daxiongbao Hall. The main shrine depicts a seated Guanyin on a lotus throne in the midst of aquatic symbolism. The Guanyin Hall is likely identical to the Shengshui-an mentioned in the sources, since it was said to have been built over a grotto with a spring. Indeed, the contemporary hall contains a spring that has been turned into a stone well which is shaped like a dragon. It is situated between the altar and the main shrine.

According to the main hall's warden, the stone well is mostly used for ritual occasions and the water that the believers put into their bottles is taken from faucets directly attached to the shrine. The sacred water is supposedly able to heal eye diseases, but the number of people who can receive it is limited.[1941] In sum, the Lingquan-si visually presents Guanyin as female and in a water context. Its strategical but remote position, where the Guangde-si can be viewed in its directly opposite position, let people during the Tang dynasty already to consider it to be a scenic spot,[1942] which gave a significance and radiance to the location.

Zu Xiu 祖琇 wrote the *Longxing Fojiao Biannian Tonglun* 隆興佛教編年通論 in 1164, which contains one of the oldest known variants of the Miaoshan legend. The author depicted the story as taking place in Suining instead of in Henan. He justified this by referring to the Baiquesi 百雀寺,[1943] the monastery that Miaoshan supposedly joined before her father burned it down, because

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1941 This did not stop the temple warden from offering a bowl of it to me. Unfortunately, I still need my glasses…

1942 Cf. Suining Xianzhi 1787, 9:62a–b.

1943 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 178 and Zhou Qiuliang 2009, p. 120.

a site of that name did indeed exist in half the distance between Guangde-si and Lingquan-si. Miaoshan's father himself was another factor of localization. He was said to be an unknown king named Zhuang 莊 who was occasionally associated with southern realms like Chu. Indeed, Zhuang was a common name for the rulers among the southwestern ethnicities.[1944] Because the legend of Miaoshan turns Guanyin into one of three sisters, it fitted well into the religious landscape of Suining and into the agenda to negotiate local hydrolatry with Buddhism.

The people of Suining originally venerated three mountain springs that were later turned into the aforementioned wells. They may appear rather unimportant today and have been recontextualized during the restoration process[1945] but they constantly reappear in narratives about drought and it is also constantly emphasized — in the contemporary temple as well — that the wells always remain full. For this reason, Xing Li expects that there was an old hydrolatric tradition present at the mountain and that it was connected to these former springs.[1946] The association with three spring- or well deities also influenced the legend of Miaoshan beyond the borders of Sichuan by significantly raising the position of Miaoshan's sisters. In the contemporary Lingquan-si, it is claimed that the oldest sister studied at Lingquan-si, the second sister at Guangde-si, but the youngest sister was far away in Putuoshan.[1947] This relates to an older belief of Suining that the oldest sister raises the water of the Yangzi, the second sister raises the water of the Huanghe, and Miaoshan raises the water of the Southern Sea whenever there is a drought.[1948] There are more legends about Guanyin that are independent of her sisters but still related to water control. Once, she ordered an azure dragon to drill a path for the overabundant flood

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1944 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 178.

1945 Several bronze sculptures of babies have been placed between the wells to invoke an association with fertility.

1946 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 179.

1947 Cf. Poster of Suining City Lingquan Temple Management Committee, on site. February 22, 2012.

1948 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 179.

water;[1949] at other times she cured people with sweet dew. A more historical legend describes the battle between Möngke Khan (1209—1259) and the Song army at Lingquanshan in a situation where there was no food or water left. The Song army dug without success for water until the general had the vision of a woman in white who carried a bottle and a willow twig — both attributes of Guanyin. When they dug where she had pointed to, they found a spring and were able to beat the Mongolian troops who remained thirsty. Although the battle was real, its historical result was much different — the Song army was bitterly beaten and the Mongolians devastated the area.[1950] This difference shows how important religious narratives were for the self-perception of the Suining population.

Contextualization of Guangde-si and Lingquan-si

The case of Guangde-si and Lingquan-si shows two sites which are curiously placed with very similar intentions — both offered narratives to localize Guanyin in Sichuan but with very different approaches. The Guangde-si is presented as the more 'authentic' Chinese Buddhist temple which entertained imperial patronage, while the Lingquan-si represented the more popular perspective on the Suining religious landscape. Yet, the history of these two temples has been continuously entwined, doubling and contesting each other mutually. Both sites emphasized their connection to water control. At Guangde-si, Keyou's rainmaking abilities were used to raise interest in the temple and to prove its regional worth to woo patrons. Keyou showed supernatural abilities that were only meant to stress Buddhism's superiority. The narratives attached to the site make use of older concepts like Malangfu, but use them in a scenery of more traditional hagiographies.

At Lingquan-si, Guanyin was opened up to absorb the local water spirits, which causes her to appear more than six times in the two Lingquan-si. The middle and upper section of the mountain is full of sights with dragon toponyms. Her identity was enriched by local hydrolatric narratives until she

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1949 This kind of technical water control was usually associated with male supernatural agents, like Da Yu.

1950 Cf. Xing Li 2010, pp. 182–83.

and her 'sisters' rather represented local water deities than bodhisattvas. This affected the modern treatment of the Sanyanjing Hall, which is obstructed and whose level has not been included in the rebuilding efforts of the past years. This once again implies: the Guanyin venerated in this hall is not the same as those venerated in the lower and upper temple. This one may be even more strongly associated with the indigenous water deity, due to the vicinity of the wells. We also already know that spring and well deities were both ancient and important for the Sichuanese religious landscape and that wells with octagonal or hexagonal shape were commonly associated with dragons that controlled rain and storms.[1951] Xing Li suggests that the female Guanyin at Lingquan-si may be one of those few occurrences before the general feminization of Guanyin during the Song dynasty and that would only support the premise of a likely absorption of a water goddess.[1952]

Rain cults were indeed just as prevalent in Suining as in the Chengdu Plain. Franciscus Verellen quotes a legend from the *Luyiji* 錄異記 ['Record of Marvels'] by Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850—933),[1953] which describes the appearance of a local water goddess with several tropes common for water deities in Sichuan. The goddess wears all white, it supposes that she already had a former site, her icon is magically traveling upstream and she becomes responsible for both drought and overabundant rainfall. Verellen notes that the association with the water cult in fighting these weather phenomena was omitted in the version collected in the *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記. The reason for that may be that these tropes had also become associated with the White Robed Guanyin, one of the iconographies that became common with the feminization of the bodhisattva. By now it can no longer be ascertained whether the amalgamated female depictions or the localized-feminized narratives of Guanyin were the first to develop during the Song dynasty, but they were soon influencing each other and also how believers would expect Guanyin to be.[1954] In this context, it is still noticeable that the Song dynasty saw a rise in aquatic Guanyin iconographies like the

1951 Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 6:3a–b; 6:6b; 27:23b (Daoist site); 27:36a and more.
1952 Cf. Xing Li 2010, p. 174–175.
1953 Cf. Verellen 1998, p. 226.
1954 Cf. Yü Chün-fang 2001, p. 184, 198.

White-Robed Guanyin, Shuiyue-Guanyin and Putuoshan/Nanhai Guanyin.[1955] However, the Miaoshan legend is — aside from the mention of Putuoshan — devoid of any meaningful connection to water. Yet, at Lingquan-si, the three princesses who were thought to be incarnations of Guanyin, Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra were assorted to the three wells, to three (locally) most important sites and also to the three most important waters that the people of Suining could imagine. This being the case, the Miaoshan legend of Suining served less as a negotiation of Buddhist and Confucian principles and rather as a justification for the aquatic aspects that were already present in the local Guanyin cult.

Suining and the Guanyin Culture

The locals of Suining are quite proud of their own approach towards Guanyin. The term "Guanyin Culture" is used like a trademark. Although it has also popped up in media referring to Putuoshan, Suining actively advertises a religious current rooted in their own local Guanyin bodhimanda which is widely believed to differ from anywhere else. Since April 2008, the "Hometown of Guanyin Culture" (*Zhongguo Guanyin Wenhua zhi Xiang* 中国观音文化之乡) has become a protected cultural advertising term for Suining.[1956] The basis for this juridical decision was a long history of Guanyin interaction, the presence of numerous sites related to the Goddess and several toponyms relevant to her. That title has since been used by the local government not only to raise the religious prestige of Suining but also to increase tourism and industrial development.[1957] Religious sites and activities in connection to tourism are Suining's most important economic factor and therefore "Guanyin Culture" is propagated alongside a policy of creating "self-supporting, independent"

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1955 Cf. Eichenbaum Karetzky 2004, p. 23, 33.

1956 Xinhua News Agency. "'Zhongguo Guanyin Wenhua zhi Xiang Luohu Sichuan Suining' 中国观音文化之乡"落户四川遂宁." 02 April 2008 http://www.gov.cn/govweb/fwxx/wy/2008-04/02/content_934806.htm. Only four years later, Pingdingshan 平頂山 of Henan also received this title.

1957 The long-term perspective was to create the first Chinese tourism route specialized on Buddhism between Suining, Chengdu, Leshan, Dazu and more. So far, the project has not yet been completed.

religious communities. The communities behind many sacred sites have invested into outstanding characteristics like special qualities of their environment (e.g., very sunny), magical qualities of the water from their springs or special restaurant recipes.[1958] The local government of Suining has become actively involved in religious culture and heavily sponsors research into temple history, local religious history as well as self-supporting and capital raising schemes and restorations.[1959] Due to this, self-reliant religious communities have become wealthy enough to engage in social welfare, which the local government sees as a success. Even if we assume that this kind of support serves a similar goal as the title granting by the Song dynasty — control — it is still significant that the religious overtones of the sponsored sites are much more emphasized than elsewhere in China, where religious sites are usually recreated as musealized places of cultural memory. Suining is, in many regards, quite unique — but its Guanyin Culture is not. Indeed, Guanyin Culture is something that can be found all over Sichuan and in other areas of China. Therefore, I cautiously define Guanyin Culture as a popular religious category.

S.3. The Imperialization of Hydrolatry in Late Imperial Sichuan

Sichuan had been a part of the Chinese Empire for roughly a thousand years when the Song made serious attempts to acculturate its territory beyond the urban centers and to bring the wealthy cities of Sichuan under central control. This had not been as successful as intended because the idea of political independence was still well and alive in the province and the Song government had not gained a high reputation for good administration.

Sichuan's position in the empire took a big hit after the devastation caused by the Mongolians. The central administration of the Ming was too weak to be

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1958 Cf. Li Yanguang 2008, p. 35.

1959 Cf. Li Yanguang 2008, p. 36. Li Yanguang includes some severe criticism that other cadres are focusing their religious administration too much on policy alignment and do not coordinate enough with the local people due to being afraid of independent religious "workers", something he calls outdated.

effective, so the rebuilding process had to be organized and sourced from within the province. During the later Ming dynasty, Sichuan was again on its own during the phase of continuous natural disasters and its inhabitants developed multiple alternatives of local relief administration. These would prove to become a roadblock for any further outward attempts to imperialize the province.

During the transition to the Qing dynasty, Sichuan was devastated anew and with dire consequences that caused the replacement of large parts of the Sichuanese population by migrants from various southern Chinese provinces. The Qing only turned their attention back to Sichuan when they sought to expand westward, investing substantial sums into rebuilding the region at that time. This expanded the territory under imperial control and increased the spread of imperial ideology, which encouraged new waves of acculturation. However, by the time the interest in the original territories of Sichuan waned again, new administrative tactics had been developed that were used both in favor of the empire or in defense against it.

The Qing knew that they needed to develop new ways of handling the southern ethnic groups. To achieve at least superficial stability for the empire, they reached out by construction-industrial activities and propagated a common heritage aimed at creating one united Chinese people. However, this idea of unity usually disregarded the cultural identities of the southern ethnic groups, which prompted them to look for new ways to preserve these. This problem continued well into the twentieth century and is still topical. This appendix hence treats the last attempt to separate Sichuan as its own imperial polity; the Qing tactics of empire building as applied to Sichuan via the imperialization of the Chuanzhu tradition, and the last case study which evaluates the role of spatial reconfigurations regarding Han-Yi interactions.

Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠 (1606—1647)

In 1644, the rebel Zhang Xianzhong 张献忠 conquered Sichuan. He was originally a bandit leader without a large army or significant political ambitions. Previously, he had plundered without conquering and toyed with the forces of the weak Ming government. But in the year before, he declared himself king and made multiple attempts to establish governments. Parsons sees the reason for this political turn in Zhang's growing military options. He also muses about

the unknown reason why Zhang chose Sichuan for conquest: Sichuan was at this point an underdeveloped and not very important region compared to the eastern provinces.[1960] But the isolation of Sichuan inhibited fast and direct dynastic actions and thus provided a safe sandbox to establish a new dynasty, grow in power, and then decide to possibly attack other regions afterwards.

When Zhang Xianzhong attacked Chongqing from the southeast he was hardly met with any resistance. Over the years, the bandit had become a warlord with good experience in handling sieges. He played out the local population against the officials, which enabled him to establish his reign with the smallest amount of bloodshed and also quickly gained him popular support. After conquering Chengdu, Zhang neglected the underdeveloped west and extended his territory towards the east, which was of higher economic relevance. He had others fight his battles and remained in Chengdu to further establish an independent government with a state name, a reign name, and a renamed capital. He replicated the classical Chinese imperial administration setup and staffed it mostly with natives of Sichuan. Examinations were held, money coined, ranks conferred, and the army reorganized to recruit more locals. However, the true political power was concentrated in his peers from Shaanxi.[1961]

At that time, Zhang Xianzhong did indeed plan to conquer all of China to reunite and expand it. In reaction to the alliance between resistance groups and Ming loyalists in the area of Chongqing, he went on a rampage and led several massacres until by 1646, the majority of his administration had been executed.[1962] He abandoned Sichuan to return to Shaanxi and was soon defeated by the Qing army. Aside from the political opposition, his main problem seemed to be that he was unable to provide a point of identification that united his followers with the population of Sichuan. Leaders like Wang Jian had adapted to local culture to gain the loyalty of the Sichuanese natives. Zhang Xianzhong and his elite supporters (who were from different origins) remained foreign rulers and in his insecurity, he used terror methods to subjugate his Sichuanese recruits.

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1960 Cf. Parsons 1957, pp. 388–89.

1961 Cf. Parsons 1957, pp. 390–92.

1962 Cf. ibid., p. 398.

The Sichuanese hence perceived him as an oppressor. Furthermore, Wang Jian had purposely recruited the intelligentsia of the Tang Empire and thus staffed his administration with the best minds and wisest advisers. Zhang Xianzhong mainly listened to one adviser whom he had captured decades ago. Unfortunately, that adviser was neither wise nor unbiased and only encouraged the extreme measures that a larger group of consultants might have discouraged. Zhang failed to localize, his short reign was a foreign element that could never find hold, and he also lacked the patience to establish local connections and sympathies — this was a likely reason why he abandoned Sichuan.[1963]

Zhang Xianzhong is famously attributed with the depopulation of the province, exacerbated by natural disasters, famines, and epidemics. Gruesome tales of mutilation, mass killings, and the collection of body parts are among the most terrifying accounts associated with him. Likewise, the Sichuanese folk tales about him depict Zhang as a monster. However, most of these descriptions date to a century later and should therefore be handled with care.[1964] It is much more likely that the indeed enormous loss of population in Sichuan was caused by the aforementioned disasters which occurred after Zhang's death. Dai Yingcong even suggests that while the reason for the population loss may have been famine and plague, it was most likely the Qing army that caused the heartland dwellers to flee to the peripheries of Sichuan. The Qing needed almost two decades to gain control over the southwestern provinces. It had not been a matter of importance because Sichuan was no longer relevant for central legitimacy. Those occasionally tasked with clearing Sichuan did not possess enough troops to control this dangerous area. When Qing troops finally conquered Chengdu, they realized that there was hardly any food available in the province. It was now them who preyed on the surviving population — literally, as they resorted to cannibalism when they reached the structurally neglected south of Sichuan.[1965] In the haste to leave this area again, officials were appointed hastily and without regard for competence. When the troops returned and verified the refugee's tales about the conditions in Sichuan, the

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1963 Cf. Parsons 1957, pp. 387, 390, 394–95.
1964 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 68.
1965 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 18–22.

new Qing government could rest assured that Sichuan was not important and delayed its further conquest for decades.

Nothing of this provides a reason Zhang Xianzhong should have been held in high regard by Chinese central authorities or been described positively in the documents they left. Yet, it is said that when he stayed in Zitong in 1644, he encountered the deity of a magnificent temple that had the same last name as him. He took Zhang E'zi (see Chapter V) as his ancestor and sponsored the temple. It was a good choice, because Zhang E'zi, the Lord of Zitong, was foremostly a defender of the region before he was a protector of the realm. Thus, Zhang was able to employ that god's image in his fight against central political forces, which appeased the locals.[1966] One hundred years later, a prefectural official noticed that there was a statue of Zhang Xianzhong in the temple which was worshiped as an incarnation of the god — a practice that had been tolerated by local officials. Kleeman notes how this differed strongly from the by then national cult of Wenchang, whom he identifies with Zhang E'zi, since Wenchang was the epitome of imperial legitimacy and education, unable to condone violence and rebellion.[1967] Zhang Xianzhong also appears in another relevant legend about the time when he left Chengdu. With the Qing army on his heels, he encountered the Stone Sentinel Maze (Chin. *bazhentu* 八陣圖) that Zhuge Liang had supposedly built. An old man guided him through the maze and out of it. The Qing army pursuing him got lost in the maze and stayed there all night, until at dawn, they realized they had been fighting heaps of dirt.[1968] It is not possible to determine if this legend was of Qing dynastic origin or developed later, but the later it developed, the more curious it would be. The old man was either the spirit of Zhuge Liang, his father-in-law, or just a savvy

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1966 Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994, p. 39.

1967 Cf. Kleeman 1998, pp. 349–50.

1968 Cf. Wang Zhigang 2006, p. 37. The story is said to be mentioned in the *Nian'ershi Huilüe* 廿二史諱略 "Outline of Taboo Names in Twenty-Two Standard Histories" by Zhou Ju 周榘 (1712—1779), but the book was not available to me. The whole event refers to a trap that Zhuge Liang had once created for the advancing enemy troops of the enemy general Lu Xun 陸遜 (183—245). Cf. Sanguozhi Ch. 58. The fake bushes and hills that confused the troops were embellished to a maze-like formation in the *Sanguo Yanyi*. In the novel, it is Zhuge Liang's father-in-law who helps Lu Xun get out again.

local, in any case — a local (spiritual force) would have helped Zhang Xianzhong flee from the Qing imperial army. This can be interpreted as a symbol of an independent local identity that did not subject itself to imperial demands. Since Zhang was neither a representative of the Ming nor the Qing, it is not too surprising that a local force would favor a rebel leader with imperial aspirations (especially one who shared his last name with a regional deity) over the foreign rulers who were in the process of establishing the Qing dynasty. If this story indeed dates to the Qing dynasty, it would be a strong argument against the depiction of Zhang Xianzhong as a complete monster that exterminated the local population. Such a monster would not have been framed with two positive supernatural encounters.

Zhang was another separatist who made use of the nonconforming nature of Sichuanese local religions to establish his reign and demonstrated his sovereignty by initially acting in a benevolent manner. It is important to keep in mind that Zhang Xianzhong died only two years after visiting the temple, one year after leaving the province and after massacring at least some parts of its population. There was absolutely no obvious for him to receive a statue or to be venerated as another incarnation of the serpent god considering all the evil acts attributed to him. Yet, the separation of Sichuanese local religions from Central Plain cultural values was still strong enough that even such a controversial and hated figure like Zhang Xianzhong — in something that possibly could constitute an <u>elevation</u> — retained a continuous cult for the better of a century. More so, the temple-building activity in Zitong County during the Qing dynasty would continue to be antithetical to imperial building activities, which implies some level of subversiveness.

S.3.1.   The Southwestern Policies of the Qing Dynasty

The dawn of the Qing dynasty led to a change in the scholarly elite. After the Ming government's breakdown, many formerly blocked ideas and reforms to recentralize the state were finally implemented. There were new efforts to regulate tax collection and administrative communication with more effective local control mechanisms and the result was a newly emerged, more stable central state. The rising political stability helped the economy to recover and population numbers increased again. This level of success secured the Manchu's rule

over China. For almost two centuries they had no serious competition inside or outside the empire and this helped to accelerate the speed of expansion to an unprecedented level.[1969]

In the late Ming dynasty (1578), the population of Sichuan was noted with about three million people (these historical census numbers are quite fickle). However, only 17,000 adult men were registered for the province during the early years of the Qing dynasty. More or less realistic expectations blamed Zhang Xianzhong for death tolls between one and thirty million people. Regardless of how scary the aftermath of Zhang Xianzhong's brief reign must have looked for the officials who had to handle it, Sichuan was likely not entirely depopulated.[1970] The Qing officials were likely appalled by the lack of people in the administrative centers they knew because approximately one to two thirds of the population had fled to the peripheral areas outside of their consideration. The Qing introduced resettlement politics but it still took roughly seventy years for Sichuan to reach its former population size, which was now predominantly non-native. It is unclear how many descendants of the original 'Shu' people remained and how they treated the remnants of their culture.

However, Zhang Xianzhong had been only one of many rebels that wreaked havoc during the Ming-Qing transition. These numerous rebellions had been one of many reasons for Sichuan's fall from grace. Not only Sichuan's prosperity, but also its status as a reservoir for imperial thinking and reunification had decreased. Now that the capital was located far in the east, Sichuanese scholars had even less chances to attain high offices — and if they received such an opportunity, they had little reason to return home for their retirement. Thus, Sichuan was an utterly unimportant harbor of dissent and economic problems at the beginning of the Qing dynasty. The Qing did not bother with any follow-up interventions after the defeat of Zhang Xianzhong. This neglect led to the rise of warlords whose power was merely limited by the Qing presence in the northern areas and some Ming loyalists in the southern area.

In 1662, the Qing eventually established themselves in Sichuan, but their interest in the province remained low. They had no desire to invest into the

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1969 Wakeman Jr. 1986, pp. 17–20.

1970 Cf. Parsons 1957, pp. 395–397. Parsons also explains this on the basis of linguistic evidence.

area and without funding, it was hard to find good officials who were willing to serve there. Consequently, the offices were once again filled with poorly trained and uneducated personnel. This situation was not enhanced by the fact that warlords supplemented their ranks, but it was a premonition about the role that the military would play in the coming two centuries. While the Qing army may have initially plundered the province and exacerbated internal migration, during the westward expansion, the military emerged as one of the most important economic factors in Sichuan.

The locally sourced and dubiously organized first resettlement campaign during the 1670s brought millions of people from Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Guangdong and Fujian to Sichuan. Among them were refugees from Sichuan, but the majority were voluntary or coerced migrants who carried their cultures with them. At times, rebels disrupted these campaigns, this prompted the Qing to keep Sichuanese offices under strict direct control which made serving there even less attractive. Most importantly, the Qing forbade the local governors from violently molesting the indigenous ethnic groups in the west of the province.

Although the general population was growing again, there remained the problem that Sichuan was bleeding out gentry to other provinces and this lowered the general level of education.[1971] Fewer examination candidates from Sichuan meant also less representation at the imperial court, so there was no lobby for Sichuan.

The Qing were busy with securing the realm's northwestern border when they realized by the 1690s that Sichuan could be the key to controlling the Tibetan-Buddhist establishment, which would keep the Mongols and Zungars at bay. Suddenly, Sichuan regained some of its recognition when it became a jumping off point for the military expansions into the unfamiliar Tibetan territories. To acquire the desired western territories, the Qing had to reevaluate Sichuan as what Dai Yingcong calls a "key strategic area"; this led to major transformations within the province. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Sichuan was reestablished as its own region and received its own banner

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1971 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 8, 22–33.

garrison and governor-general *zongdu* 總督 in Chengdu.[1972] This was the highest local official who reported directly to the state council and emperor. The governor-generals were able to act with the utmost autonomy and could even control territories outside their original jurisdiction. The status of Sichuan was repeatedly revoked and reinstalled because the Qing emperors showed great fickleness in their politics and seldom found common ground between their idealistic positions and necessary actions.

The Qing government generally focused on the frontier disputes and failed to pay enough attention to its own central territories. There was a "calculated balance between knowledge and ignorance — between direct state control and diffuse power that required local authority to maintain day-to-day control".[1973] According to Javers, the Qing state did not offer a solid enough central "Han Core" to get through to the locals. Instead, countless spaces with limited state presence created internal peripheries throughout the empire. The limited state presence resulted from the strategic ignorance shown by the Kangxi Emperor 康熙 (r. 1621—1722) and the later Qianlong reign in Sichuan: the mostly powerless civil officials often reported the 'illicit conduct' of the military only to realize that the central state completely ignored the events.[1974] The emperors preferred to apply their energy elsewhere, any state intervention had to be carried out by local forces.[1975] One of the effects of this behavior was that the southwest was mapped much later than the rest of the realm and primarily to create a kind of ethnology of the non-Han people.[1976] Dai and Javers agree that the consequence of this was the Qing's very limited grasp on crucial local information until and throughout the nineteenth century. They completely lost the overview over local land ownership, number of households and processes of commerce. This situation had impact on the imperial politics as well, because

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1972 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 3–8, 40–53. Dai Yingcong defined the aforementioned key strategic areas as militarily relevant regions that received better staff and more resources to quickly react to political emergencies while enjoying lower taxes (pp. 7–8).

1973 Cf. Javers 2019, Ch. 5. [Kindle Edition].

1974 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 153–58.

1975 Cf. Javers 2019, Ch. 5.

1976 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 227.

all of the Kangxi Emperor's interventions failed when the Zungars took the strategically important territory around the city — Dartsedo (Chin. Dajianlu 打箭炉) in 1701. The reason for this failure was a lack of local geographical knowledge and could have been completely avoided. In the period that followed, Sichuan was thoroughly militarized in order to expel the Zungars again; half of the troops were Sichuan locals. After the successful isolation of Tibet, Sichuan's borders were vastly expanded to the west in 1725 and achieved their modern extent — although some territories were lost to Yunnan and Guizhou.[1977]

The Second Settlement Wave

Both military and civil officials used the difficult land route via the Baoye Pass to reach Sichuan. They left the waterways entirely in the hands of the private trade sector that had used them since the Qin dynasty. Thus, private trade soon constantly outpaced official actions.[1978] It profited from the fact that Sichuan had rapidly returned to its old economic strength but was taxwise still treated like its underdeveloped southwestern neighbors.[1979] Of course, this appealed to many people who had been unable to find their fortune in other regions of the realm. Just like during the March to the South in Vietnam, it was the promise of low taxes and land for the landless, the poor and outcasts, that attracted new arrivals. The regained government interest in Sichuan thus led to a second resettlement wave. In contrast to the first settlement wave, the second migration was mostly uncontrolled and caused a just as uncontrolled rise in population.[1980] The provincial administrations were not used to such high geographic mobility across multiple provinces and within Sichuan itself. They were also not able to keep up with the differences in movement modes between natives and migrants.

Without a strong local gentry, the new arrivals indeed found their desired options for social mobility. Eventually, this led to the replacement of the local scholarly gentry with an economic gentry of small landowners. These resisted

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1977 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 56, 79, 82–85, 92, 96–97, 104–5.

1978 Cf. ibid., pp. 73, 147–52.

1979 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 34–35.

1980 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 197.

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any government plans to raise taxes or to carry out land surveys to protect their growing wealth. For the sake of stability, the Kangxi Emperor ultimately discouraged any more restrictive measures against them.

The central government openly looking the other way encouraged the widespread robbery of land from the non-Han indigenous populations and such robbery was deemed necessary due to the pressuring demands of corrupt officials. Nian Gengyao 年羹堯 (1679—1726) was sent to Sichuan to oversee these issues. His solutions for better political control included the avoidance of corruption, land registration, social granaries, the minting of coins and legalized mining, all of that would have prevented local officials from exploiting the farmers. However, Nian was too good as a governor-general and too successful as a military leader. He became an autonomous force that the Yongzheng Emperor 雍正 (r. 1723—1735) could no longer tolerate.[1981] Although Yongzheng initially revoked many of his father's lenient policies and outlawed locals from taking office in Sichuan, he did not account for the massive nonregistered landownership of the lower military ranks. Challenged with the pacification and administration of the new western territories, Yongzheng had to redefine his idea of central power and eventually supported the military even more than his father had done when he encouraged its involvement in commercial activities with state sponsored starting capital.

Dai Yingcong describes the unequal development and treatment of the civil and military officials during the military's dominance in Sichuan like this: while the scholarly gentry tried to get out, the military elite brought their families in. The civil officials were often punished for perceived misconduct while they were imperially ordered to ignore the military's illicit side businesses. Those surely boosted the salt industry and border trade but also expanded the amount of unregistered land.

The Qianlong Emperor 乾隆 (r. 1735—1799) repeatedly reduced and increased the military presence in Sichuan for decades, depending on the political situation in the Tibetan west. For decades, the state had strongly invested into a tight infrastructure of relay horse stations and roads to keep everyone fed, satisfied and nonrebellious. The military presence in Sichuan had acceler-

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1981 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 70, 103, 147, 194.

ated the promotion of local products and the constantly shifting troops helped to establish interregional trade networks. Since Sichuan prospered again and had a significant grain market, the Qing state utilized the province's active private trade sector for social aid through extensive grain supply projects for the rest of the empire.[1982] Yet, the danger of strong generals attempting to separate Sichuan from the Chinese Empire never quite went away and when Qianlong feared such an event could occur by the hands of a famous general's influential family, he began to exclusively appoint Manchus as governors-generals or in other high positions. Although the general had imitated Zhang Xianzhong's action of repairing the temple of a famous namesake (Yue Fei 岳飛, 1103—1142) to establish a base of legitimacy, it was unclear after he died whether he had really been a separatist.[1983]

The Qianlong Emperor, however, had decided that the military of Sichuan was growing too powerful. In 1792, he revoked the province's political status and shattered the militarized social structure of Sichuan with a disarmament that led the province into a massive economic crisis.[1984] However, civil officials had expected such a development and thus tried to reverse the urban-rural migration that was taking place to make the province more attractive to civil citizens again. The era of an almost omnipresent military thus ended with severe consequences for Sichuan's society while civil officials only regained the upper hand after the military presence in Sichuan had waned.

Demographic Change and Stability

The social situation of Sichuan increasingly resembled the former Cham territories in central and southern Vietnam. Since the majority of the population were immigrants, lineage and clan structures were not present enough to provide social order and village identity no longer meant much in such an environment. While the Việt settlers in the former Cham areas created new spiritual ties with artificial lineages linked to heterodox 'ancestors', the immigrants in Sichuan organized themselves into Assembly Halls (*huiguan* 會館) for mutual

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1982 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 165–66, 174–85, 205–12.

1983 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 159, 164.

1984 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 120–24, 138, 146.

aid and some degree of self-governance. The term is also often translated as "guild hall" because the majority of *huiguan* were the headquarters of guilds. However, in contrast to the European concept of guilds, these late imperial social associations provided specific business opportunities and market access instead of just gatekeeping certain crafts or being "responsible for coordinating the merchants' and artisans' obligations to the government".[1985] The *huiguan* were also less exclusively economic than European guilds.[1986] Originally meeting- and resting sites, they had developed into places of business, social welfare, migrant identity building and worship.[1987] *Huiguan* members associated without formal membership by occupation or geographic origin. In Sichuan, these were mainly the *huguang* 湖廣, i.e., associations of immigrants from Hunan and Hubei. *Huiguan* could also take on administrative tasks like repairing infrastructure or sponsoring the police, so some *huiguan* and their internal networks were able to take over the functions of the municipal government.[1988]

After the second resettlement wave, it was money, not education, which brought social prestige in Sichuan. Wealthy merchants sponsored the *huiguan*, they donated to the granaries, they coordinated public projects, they also supplied the military and occasionally the local administration. However, the rising overpopulation put a stop to wealth for everyone, many migrants remained job- and landless and this led to social tensions. From the outside, Sichuan still seemed abundant and rich but it actually had to stop providing rice for other provinces.

When there was increased migration from the Jiangnan region, the scholarly elite eventually rebounded and soon the area of Chengdu belonged to the scholar-officials again.[1989] This meant that both factors of wealth — commerce and education — were now firmly controlled by outsiders and recent migrants.

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1985 Cf. Moll-Murata 2018. p. 322.

1986 Cf. Moll-Murata 2018, pp. 323–24.

1987 Many *huiguan* would include small temples or even housed a full temple at their core. The deities did not necessarily align to the craft represented by the guild, often they were deities brought from their member's original province or locally adapted deities that were similar to them.

1988 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 327, 330.

1989 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009. pp. 8–10, 188, 213, 226–31.

They brought new worldviews into the province and the *huiguan* became places of transposition. Some of the transposed deities were easier to negotiate with the new lands, like Da Yu, who was just as popular in Huguang as he was in Sichuan. Due to imperial sponsorship, he easily entered the Chuanzhu worship system that will be discussed below. Since the Huguang area was dominated by Chan Buddhism and Daoism it was not too different from Sichuan to begin with, so the ideological exchanges between recent migrants and locals generally centered around individual figures and practices.

Losses on Both Sides

The strong military presence had had many positive effects on Sichuan but it had less advantageous consequences for the central state. While the central government was preoccupied with the western border, well-connected new crime structures developed (e.g., illegal minting, human trafficking) in Sichuan which ultimately could no longer be combated without an imperial military presence. When the military elite left the area during the disarmament and the disgruntled lower ranks remained, the dismissed military members joined the bandits and passed on their skills, which made them even more dangerous.

The civil officials also had been inspired in the worst way by the behavior of their military peers. They commonly stayed in Sichuan well beyond their terms to build their own estates as well. Some of them even neglected the local administration while they were still in office to negotiate for their own interests in the borderlands. This problem was intensified by the exceptional powers of jurisdiction that these Sichuanese officials possessed.[1990] They felt free to prey on the indigenous population and thus incited several rebellions in the 1790s.

This was the same era during which the spiritually syncretistic and socially idealist White Lotus Movement[1991] had created strong centers with wealthy teachers and high social influence. The White Lotus had long been overlooked by the government, but its growing political influence eventually triggered a

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1990 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 217–21, 224.

1991 All necessary information can be found in Barend ter Haar. *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.

rash and poorly executed response from the Qing authorities. The expected consequence were even more rebellions between 1796 to 1804.

However, the White Lotus Movement did not come from Sichuan, nor was it created by Sichuanese or people identifying as such. Its leaders thus had neither the intention nor capability to separate the province from the Chinese Empire. Once again, a potential leadership group forfeited its ideological potential to unite the locals as a resource of human strength. The White Lotus instead began to exploit the locals and thus forfeited its chance to prevail in Sichuan. The Qing had targeted a province that was already hardly under their control: they had neither reliable personnel in Sichuan nor did they possess sufficient data on settlements and topography. Thus, the rebels were easily able to hide in the peripheries and rarely effectively hunted down, which prolonged the conflict. In this time of instability, the government had completely forgotten about the common people of Sichuan, who returned to forming their own private militias to protect themselves from both factions.

The Qing government had proven that it was either not willing or not able to provide protection. It consequently lost prestige and the people's trust. After this, any attempt at upholding central authority only became harder. In the following years, the gap between the wealthy and the poor, the protected and the defenseless widened enormously, Dai Yingcong therefore concludes that the Qing imperial strategy in the west was built at the expense of Sichuan's social stability.[1992]

Only after the Qing lost the entire Jiangnan area to rebels did they realize, way too late, how important Sichuan had been to keep the empire together. In their despair, they put Sichuan back under the tight control of well-chosen governors who did actually manage to keep Sichuan's economy safe during the social unrests of the 1860s. However, the Qing government also used the upheaval throughout the empire to impose immense taxes and levies on Sichuan. This was not the best idea after all the destabilization that had occurred in the province, nor was it beneficial to refuse any tax alleviation after the unrests had died down, or to punish any local opposition to this taxation with deadly

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1992 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 222–25.

violence.[1993] The separatist sentiments within the antagonized population of Sichuan were now interwoven with anti-Manchu ideas. After another wave of bad officials with insufficient skills destabilized the social and economic situation of Sichuan even more, the locals joined millenarian and criminal societies in massive numbers and to such an extent that the imperial government actively feared the rise of a second Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace.[1994] Ultimately, these popular uprisings merged with the 1911 revolution.[1995]

It turned out that neither the religious nor the criminal groups formed actual political movements. These uprisings were motivated by economic crisis and aimed at keeping wealth in the province. They had no political ambition because they neither had a common point of identification nor a clear idea of Sichuanese identity. The anti-Manchu sentiments merely referred to reestablishing a Chinese Empire under Han Chinese rule, but there was nobody left who could have desired a separate realm of Sichuan. At the end of the late imperial era, Sichuan had no more strong military leaders who would have had a chance to prevail against the Qing by bonding with the native Sichuanese. And where would they have found those natives in a landscape filled with people of all kinds of different origins?

The strong localisms of late imperial Sichuan remained as such because the localized notions surrounding city or regional identities lacked the necessary network or ambition to evolve into regionalisms. Consequently, they were unable to coalesce into a unified force and becoming a separate political entity was certainly out of the question. Even though the pluralistic population of Sichuan

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1993 Cf. Zhou 1993, p. 429. Some tax protests were misrepresented as rebellions and the subsequent reaction of the governor was too harsh. It led to a protracted circle of violence that he also chose to threaten even higher taxes. Cf. ibid., pp. 438–441.

1994 Cf. Zhou 1993, pp. 452–53. The Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace Movement (Taiping Tianguo Yundong 太平天國運動) was an extremist millenarian revolt inspired by Christianity which successfully established its own realm for a short time but ultimately led to civil war. Although the kingdom fell in 1864, it was active between 1850–1871 and ultimately caused the death of 5–10 % of the Chinese population at the time (according to estimations). See: Spence, Jonathan D. *God's Chinese Son: The Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*. New York: WW Norton & Company, 1996 for an analysis and Platt, Stephen R. *Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom: China, the West, and the Epic Story of the Taiping Civil War*. New York: Knopf, 2012 for numbers.

1995 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, pp. 227, 232–35, 237.

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was connected by a mutual enemy — like the Manchu Qing government — there was not enough coherence between the population groups within the province. After the proud descendants of Shu had finally disappeared there was no more discourse about a "Sichuanese" identity and without that, any new attempts at a separation from the empire became unrealistic.

S.3.2. The Imperial Transformation of Chuanzhu 川主 Worship

The expansion politics of the early Qing dynasty introduced a tighter net of administration to Sichuan. It was staffed with more officials but those were not better controlled than before, so they could easily follow their own localized interests in Sichuan. While the officials had received a lot of independent power from the imperial government — wealthy locals simply took it. The new immigrants brought to Sichuan during the resettlement campaigns contributed to an intensified inter-provincial trade. This not only contributed to an increase of the trade-associated deities known in Sichuan,[1996] the wealthy merchants and landowners also contributed to the establishment of new temples, to the renovation of old temples (for identity preservation) or into the reconfiguration of temples (to initiate an identity change for a desired site). In this way, the economic gentry quickly gained control over Sichuan's religious geography. This situation posed entirely new challenges to the empire's central government if it wanted to control Sichuan's valuable resources.

The groundwork for this development had already formed during the Ming dynasty, which had struggled to keep Sichuan in its grasp. The Ming had attempted to streamline Sichuan's pluralistic religious landscape to create a cleaned up pantheon filled with approved deities that should locally reproduce imperial ideology. How could this be done without causing new rebellions and risking the fragile stability of the region?

The Ming administrators concluded that the best solution was to build imperially controlled temples dedicated to deities already popular with the population of Sichuan, located at strategic points for trade and defense. Unfortunately, popular and Buddhist sites usually already occupied such locations. This necessitated the development of an effective superscription system in favor

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1996 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 13.

of imperial interests. Although the goal of control and stability was ultimately not reached, it is still worthwhile to examine how an indigenous religious tradition was broken up into two classes, like it happened during the introduction of the imperial Chuanzhu worship system.

In Vietnam, Confucianism had failed to appropriate the spaces of water deities, which gave other translocal and transregional movements the opportunity to integrate them by offering some protection to local traditions. In contrast, Confucianism in Sichuan had largely proven to be noneffective for the Chinese government's purposes. Over centuries, it had not gained any superscriptive power in the province. Consequently, even the imperial authorities of the Song dynasty had already recognized the need to appropriate a completely different system for the transfer of imperial ideology to a populace that had repeatedly resisted to the assimilation into the Chinese Empire. This was the Chuanzhu 川主 ['River Masters'] system. The Chuanzhu were the endemic[1997] male equivalent to the established female deities in charge of spiritual water control. The conditions for Chuanzhu worship had developed naturally, but the late imperial intervention into the tradition caused a schism between the popular Chuanzhu worship (which the government was skeptical of) and the imperial Chuanzhu worship that the government strongly propagated. The imperial Chuanzhu worship was a set of governmentally approved deities who were able to control the rivers, floods, safe fords and to some extent, also rain. The imperial Chuanzhu were presented as historical persons to avoid any identification of them with animalistic or female predecessors. Without overtly utilizing Confucianism, the imperial Chuanzhu enabled state agents to claim relevant hydrolatric sites of various affiliations with a religious system that mostly resembled their imperial values. Thus, they were even able to integrate sites that had only recently been converted to Buddhism into an imperial trade and transport network.

The late imperial Chuanzhu were specifically meant to superscribe various sites, therefore, they were not aligned to any specific temple category suffix. Aside from Chuanzhu-miao, there were also -gong 宫, -ci 祠, -dian 殿 and

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1997 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 1.

-si 寺.[1998] However, the temples differed according to purpose. The Chuanzhu temples located alongside rivers or at bridges, weirs, and shores, were used for river control and trade and were mostly under imperial control.[1999] The Chuanzhu temples positioned on mountains were primarily used for rainmaking and although they were often built as <u>duplications</u> with imperial sponsorship to offer the local population an alternative to their own cult variants, their lore typically remained closer to popular tradition.

S.3.2.1.   The Early History of Chuanzhu Worship

When Kang Wenji summarized his list of temples and their affiliations, he concluded that from the Song until the Qing dynasties, there was an era of universal indigenous hydrolatry in Sichuan.[2000] Compared to the female water deities, who we know have been around for a long time, the Chuanzhu were only officially noticed shortly before the beginning of this era. Although the concept of Chuanzhu may be older, the systematic worship of male river masters appeared comparatively recently in Sichuan's religious history. It was first attested during the tenth century. However, since the Chuanzhu were specific for this hardly controlled area, the Han Chinese were initially unsure about who or what was exactly venerated as a Chuanzhu.[2001] Most likely, the term *chuanzhu* originated from the religious title for a certain deity type, like the Shuimu, the *niangniang* or the *wangye* 王爺.[2002] In the official context, the Chuanzhu tradition was traced back to Li Bing, but he actually just filled the role of an imperial negotiator. The cult attributed to him had already been following a different deity who was later reinterpreted as his son: Erlangshen 二郎神.

The most ancient version of Erlangshen was already known during the Shu era,[2003] but his Song dynasty version was most likely constructed from

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1998 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 6.

1999 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 26.

2000 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 11–12.

2001 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 24.

2002 When used for humans, this term is an aristocratic title but for deities, it typically refers to translocal male deities who are imagined as paternal or elder men.

2003 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 14.

multiple predecessors. Yet, even during the Song dynasty, there existed two different versions of him simultaneously, one was Langjunshen 郎君神 and the other Guankou Erlangshen 灌口二郎神.[2004] The latter refers to his earliest known temple in Guan County 灌縣 (modern Dujiangyan), where he had originally simply been called Guankoushen 灌口神 ['The God Who Irrigates']. Erlang means "The Second Son" and *guankou* means "The One Who Irrigates", it is thus likely that this name was attributed to him after first mythological connections to Li Bing had been built.

When Erlangshen's cult became translocal and then transregional, his impersonal name allowed him to absorb multiple local water deities along the way, but tales of heroes and warriors were also incorporated into his lore. This led to some confusion among those who tried to find his true identity. Erlangshen famously absorbed the warrior Zhao Yu 趙昱,[2005] who had become a Dragonslayer With a Dog[2006] who rode a white horse and was able to control floods.[2007] Afterwards, Erlangshen switched from the side of the water deities to that of the dragonslayers. He became responsible for stopping the human sacrifices to river dragons, allegedly just like Li Bing. Soon, Erlangshen's cult came close to reaching the imperial level by sheer popularity when he was attributed to Li Bing as a son. This interpretation was later emphasized by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130—1200), who claimed that all miracles performed after Li Bing's lifetime were actually caused by his "second son".[2008]

In the stories of Erlangshen's dragonslaying, he usually did not fight a generic dragon but a "weird" (*guai* 怪) or "evil" (*nie* 孽) one. This specification was meant to express that it was inappropriate for dragons to cause floods

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2004 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 94. The term *lang* was generally used for young and handsome male deities in southern China.

2005 Cf. Hinton 2001, pp. 3–4, 6–10.

2006 AT300 describes an exceptionally gifted young man who may or may not have a magical sword (here: a double-edged sword), who may or may not be already on a quest (Erlangshen is), meeting a weeping woman or princess (here: an old lady) who will be offered as a sacrifice to the dragon (here: it is the woman's grandson), often, the head of the dragon regrows after cutting it multiple times (here: the dragon escapes multiple times) demonstrating the tediousness of the task.

2007 Cf. Cheng Manchao 1995, p. 170 (floods) and He Sanqian and Qu Qiao 2006, p. 96 (horse).

2008 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 11.

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and eat humans. The story of Erlangshen versus a dragon at a Jiangshen-miao 江神廟 ['Temple of the River Deity'],[2009] is a narrative of inter-religious contest. Erlangshen already started to show traits of imperialism by his association with Li Bing and thus had to confront the local nature worship directed at a river deity who was shown to be either powerless or unwilling to control the dragon that 'plundered' its sacrifices (although it is likely that the dragon actually was the manifestation of the unnamed river deity). In later variant of the story, Erlangshen no longer kills the dragon but turns it into a waterlocked deity by — anachronistically — fastening it with iron chains under the pond at Fulong-guan 伏龍觀,[2010] the Daoist temple at Dujiangyan that was dedicated to Li Bing. Dragonslayer tales are by nature about overcoming The Other, about subjugating it or absorbing its power and sometimes about taking its place. Thus, Erlangshen already offered all traits needed to be used as a consolidating deity in Sichuan.

During the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907—979 CE), Erlangshen was recognized as a protector of the realm,[2011] however, this realm was perceived by some to exclusively refer to Sichuan. The separatist emperor Wang Jian had been very interested in this protector of local origin, so the Song removed Erlangshen's imperial counterpart Langjunshen out of Guan County's sacrificial registers and gave Li Bing a new and better title instead.[2012] The peasant rebellion leaders Wang Xiaobo 王小波 and Li Shun 李順, who also held separatist ambitions and proclaimed the Great Shu 大蜀 (993—995 CE),[2013] sacrificed to Erlangshen at Guankou before the Song army invaded. In 1028, there was another 'warlock' in Chengdu who claimed to be Erlangshen himself.[2014]

This demonstrates that Erlangshen remained a vital support for the resistance of local authorities, but for the Song government he was an evil deity

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2009 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006. p. 95.

2010 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 14.

2011 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 16. This was possibly based on the confusion with another Erlangshen, who was a military deity of Gansu and controlled rats to sabotage the enemy during the Tang dynasty. Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 96.

2012 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 13.

2013 Nowadays, they have their own small museum at Dujiangyan.

2014 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 16.

behind whom the rebellious population rallied. The government hence persecuted Guankou Erlangshen's cult repeatedly but, as contemporary authors notice, his cult was too extensive and too popular to ever be fully exterminated.[2015] What followed was a change of policy. In 1063, Erlangshen was imperially recognized as Li Bing's son with the specific task to control water. In order to appease the problematic god, he received the title Efficacious Merciful Marquis (*Linghui-hou*靈惠侯).[2016] Emperor Song Renzong 宋仁宗 (r. 1022—1063) granted him the title "King of Protecting the Realm and Efficacious Response" (*Huguo Lingying-wang* 護國靈應王) to raise the protective aspect of Erlangshen to the imperial level. Over the course of a century, many more titles followed until the Daoist emperor Song Huizong 宋徽宗 (1100—1126) incorporated Erlangshen as a Daoist sage named "True Master of the Pure Source" (*Qingyuan zhenjun* 清源真君),[2017] followed by a campaign of suffix reattribution for his temples. He did so under certain preconditions: Erlangshen was meant to destroy two indigenous peoples of Sichuan who the government considered 'demons' so, as a dragonslayer and demon queller, they fell into his responsibility.[2018] Now listed in the state sacrificial register, together with Zhenwu he became one of the most important warrior deities of the Song dynasty.[2019]

This was an attempt to use Daoism as an institutionalized and imperial religion to consolidate the western regions. However, even though Daoism was widespread in Sichuan, this change was not acceptable to the locals. Members of the local nobility reported that the deity had appeared in their dreams and told them that the icons in the Daoist temples were false. By 1131, Huizong's successor changed Erlangshen's title again and reversed the suffixes of his temples from -*guan* back to -*miao*.[2020] Although this attempt at taming the deity

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2015 Cf. Hinton 2001, pp. 12, 17–21 and He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 96.

2016 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 17.

2017 However, previous versions of that title were closer to Zhao Yu whose original narrative already showed some Daoist traits. Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 8.

2018 Cf. Hinton 2001, pp. 27–28.

2019 Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, p. 96 and Kang Wenji 2009, p. 17.

2020 Perhaps it was this failure of an imperial campaign that made Erlangshen a ruthless rebel and the unloving brother of Chenxiang Jiumu 沉香救母 in Daoism. Cf. He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006, pp. 94, 97–98.

did not work out it was certainly not the last. By the end of the Southern Song dynasty, Erlangshen had not only received many more titles but also a wife and a child and this made the government feel safe enough to occasionally extent patronage towards him.[2021]

In comparison to Zhenwu, who became an important imperial deity during the Ming Yongle era, Erlangshen's status decreased again and his power to ward off evil was transferred to Guan Yu 關羽.[2022] He was thus left with his original role as a water deity. In his temples all over Sichuan he was sometimes found in a version amalgamated with Buddhist ideas. These versions sported a third eye and were identified with the Heavenly King Vaiśravaṇa. For some reason, this Buddhisized variant was found particularly often in early Chuanzhu temples.[2023] By late imperial era, Erlangshen had long been transformed into a polysemous deity. In most areas of China, he was restricted to popular religion, but novels of the Ming dynasty made him a relative of the Jade Emperor and emphasized his martial nature to raise his imperial relevance.[2024] During the Qing dynasty, Erlangshen was one of the imperial Chuanzhu in Sichuan and turned into the main carrier of Li Bing's Chuanzhu cult, since the latter's original followership had remained comparatively small and more localized than Erlangshen's.[2025] In the central areas, Erlangshen was the main Chuanzhu used to superscribe local sites of hydrolatry until an edict of the Yongzheng Emperor in 1727 initiated a reversed policy that preferred to replace him with Li Bing and other water affiliated deities of imperial origin, such as Da Yu.[2026]

The example of Erlangshen demonstrates how the Chuanzhu worship between the Song and the Qing dynasties reached the elite level. Officials, eunuchs and the gentry became more involved in it than before. However, although Erlangshen had been intensively used as an imperial consolidation tool, he was still viewed with skepticism due to his strong local ties and the imminent

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2021 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 17 and Hinton 2001, pp. 28–29.

2022 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 32.

2023 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 23.

2024 Cf. Hinton 2001, pp. 4–5.

2025 Cf. Hinton 2001, p. 12 and He Sanqian and Wu Qiao 2006. pp. 95–96.

2026 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 6.

potential to remain a container deity within a <u>decorative situation</u>. Due to this, the government preferred to use the spirit of a capable state official like Li Bing.

Changes in Chuanzhu Worship in Late Imperial China

The question of the Chuanzhu worship's origin had quickly gained a lot of attention, but the late imperial development of it was understudied until authors like John Flower, Pam Leonard and Fu Yuqiang expanded on it. Yet, aside from some very current traditions, there is still not a lot of detailed material available that could give us more insight into the lore, pantheon, and rituals, aside from the way that the government used this faith.[2027]

According to Fu Yuqiang, there were about forty Chuanzhu temples known in Sichuan during the Ming dynasty and the majority of them had been established during the middle and later period of the dynasty. Chuanzhu temple building peaked during the Wanli reign (1563—1620) and Fu calculates that afterwards, about 38.5 % of Sichuanese territory lay within the realm of a Chuanzhu temple, especially in the regions of Chengdu, Xuzhou 敘州, Jiading 嘉定 and Chongqing. Other core areas were Tongchuan, Long'an 龍安 and Luzhou 瀘州.[2028] In the Ming dynasty, there had been multiple flood events[2029] that had raised the importance of the veneration of river deities again. The intensified temple building of the local Ming government initiated a multi-tiered process to superscribe Buddhist temples that were often themselves superscriptions of sacred springs, lakes or mountain tops.

Although Erlangshen had previously occupied numerous Chuanzhu temples of Sichuan, by the Ming dynasty, these primarily housed the Jiangdu 江瀆 deities.[2030] The Chuanzhu temples built during the late imperial era were strategically positioned near river mouths, bridges and settlements close to water because it was the Chuanzhu's job to ward off aquatic monsters. While

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2027 The "Mapping Religious Diversity in Modern Sichuan" Project has a subproject dedicated to modern Chuanzhu worship, showing that the tradition is still very well alive in Sichuan. Cf. "Chuanzhu's 川主 Worship" https://sichuanreligions.com/chuanzhus-worship/ (Accessed 25 May 2021).

2028 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, pp. 15–16.

2029 Cf. Hou Huhu and Wang Tianqiang 2009, p. 51.

2030 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 3, 16.

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previously occupied mostly by Erlangshen, by the Ming dynasty, they primarily housed the Jiangdu 江瀆 deities. On the one hand, imperial officials aimed to integrate local deities into the organized and controllable Chuanzhu system. This involved adopting various hydrolatry customs, including boat racing, but the integrated deities would still be stripped of their identities to turn them into replicators of imperial ideology. On the other hand, the officials left the Chuanzhu temples under Buddhist or Daoist jurisdiction, which potentially even strengthened the Buddhist occupation of sacred water spaces.[2031] The motive for this course of action is apparent. Although the final goal was always to ultimately install a Chuanzhu as the representative of the imperial government, the deities who were treated in this manner had possibly not yet been tamed enough to be immediately transformed into a Chuanzhu. Thus, Buddhism served as a catalyst for those local deities[2032] which the elitist official cults could not incorporate directly.

By the Qing dynasty, the Chuanzhu had spread all over the province — especially along the trade heavy waterways but also through the unruly non-Han territories of the south. At the beginning of the Qing dynasty, the Chuanzhu temples had become especially common in the lesser developed regions of the south and northwest of Sichuan. According to Fu Yuqiang, the total number of Chuanzhu temples in Sichuan during this era was 505 and between 104 to 127 of these had been established during the Qing dynasty. Of all the newly founded Chuanzhu temples, 70 % were located in Chengdu, Xuzhou and Jiading. Greater rituals and events were now organized by the newly formed Chuanzhu Associations (*chuanzhuhui* 川主會) and boat racing became connected to the ritual exorcising of epidemics — which was originally tied to a different boat rite of southern China, likely introduced by the Huguang migrants. The majority of Qing dynastic Chuanzhu were variants of Li Bing, Erlangshen, Da Yu and Zhuge Liang, but there were also Chuanzhu bodhisattva.[2033] The imperial Chuanzhu worship was also propagated by the various water conservancy

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2031 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 7.

2032 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, pp. 75–78.

2033 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, pp. 40–43. The gap in numbers between the Ming and Qing dynasty likely relies on a lack of documentation.

projects that the Qing had invested into to rebuild Sichuan for the sake of the westward expansion. Consequently, the majority of Qing dynastic Chuanzhu temples was built under Kangxi and Qianlong. Increased Chuanzhu temple building took place to stabilize the province in times of war and to ensure that it could agriculturally provide for the military, but also during periods of natural disasters and a high number of floods, especially in densely populated areas.[2034]

In market cities, many Chuanzhu temples assumed a similar function like the *huiguan*.[2035] This resembled the incorporation of local river deities by the merchant deity "Fourth Son Golden Dragon Great King" (*Jinsilongdawang* 金四龍大王) during the Ming dynasty,[2036] but in this case, government representatives administrated the effort. The rise and fall of Chuanzhu worship were directly related to the civil officials' sponsorship and the titles granted by Qing emperors. Yet, time and time again, some Chuanzhu sites would enter into the list of lewd cults — especially those that depicted Erlangshen with three eyes.

S.3.2.2. Using Chuanzhu Worship to Integrate the Non-Han

The distribution of Chuanzhu temples during the Ming and Qing dynasties shows the relationship between the social milieu and the environment. The belief and culture of an area was in a functional relationship to the environment and its changes, this produced different forms of indigenous water deities. The success of establishing Chuanzhu worship was dependent on the previous distribution of imperially acceptable water controlling deities like Li Bing, Erlangshen, Zhao Yu, or Da Yu, and whether they had any common ground with the indigenous water deities. Another factor was the amount of support invested by the local civil officials and the number of indigenous populations left in the area. The local government intensified the suppression of 'erratic' sacrifices by the indigenous non-Han ethnic groups, taking away their religious agency. By the latter half of the Qing dynasty, these groups were turned into local minorities.

2034 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, pp. 19, 24, 61–63.

2035 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 9.

2036 Cf. Dodgen 1999, pp. 815–16, 832–834.

The Chuanzhu temple building in densely populated centers outpaced that in indigenous areas by far and the Chuanzhu Associations did not even develop in the south. Because of that, Fu Yuqiang sees the late imperial Chuanzhu worship as a phenomenon related to urbanization.[2037] The areas south of the Chengdu Plain were still barely controlled and full of subversiveness. The southern Sichuanese still continued to develop their own cultural traits with eclectic localizations of the transregional ideas that had reached them and the Chuanzhu were likewise subjected to a certain level of ideology reassignment.

When the number of Huguang migrants in Sichuan vastly surpassed the indigenous population, the latter reassigned the Chuanzhu worship to themselves in order to create a point of identification *against* the migrants and the government officials who had advocated for them. The southern indigenous groups even dug up old icons and stones as objects of veneration to prove that their variant of Chuanzhu worship was older and more cherished. This was the completely opposite development of what the government had hoped for. In reaction, it invested even more energy into the promotion of the Li Bing Chuanzhu worship. The original intention behind this was to distract the migrants coming from Hunan and Hubei from the indigenous customs and to offer them alternative options to get supernatural aid or to avoid calamity. However, the peripheral Li Bing Chuanzhu temples turned out to be excellent spaces to negotiate the indigenous and migrant religious identities.[2038] The Chuanzhu temples appealed to the migrants' sentiments based on the religious landscape they were familiar with. This broke the barriers of provincial citizenship and created a new sense of identity in the convergence of hydrolatric belief. The southern Chuanzhu temples thus simultaneously served cultural integration and helped to preserve the remnants of Sichuanese indigenous tradition, e.g., by reinvigorating the worship of Da Yu. Although it did not turn out at all as the government had planned, the Chuanzhu temples spread across southern Sichuan.

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2037 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, pp. 60–61.

2038 Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, 61–64.

However, they were not without competition. The "Lord of the Lieu" (*tu-zhu* 土主),[2039] who was later also identified as historical persons, likely evolved from a custom of the Yi people to worship potent water deities (mostly simultaneously mountain deities). Even in times and areas of strong imperialization, the Tuzhu represented the potency of the locals and an older layer of local religion.[2040] His tradition, entangled with Buddhist and Daoist ideas, was continued concurrently to the Chuanzhu worship, so most of the time it was an individual's personal decision to visit the one site or the other. The *Zhili Mianzhouzhi* reports about a Tuzhu temple in the southern areas of Mianzhou where people prayed for rain. The new governor sent there during the Song Dynasty was still indignant about the shamans and "demon worship" he found there, but during a drought he gave in to the local rituals and declared: "I guard this place, whatever I can give as relief to disaster and to ward off misfortune, it is my duty [to give]." This led to an exchange between the deities of the indigenous people and the Han migrants and turned the governor into the new Tuzhu of the place, who was still venerated in late imperial times.[2041] Another report about the "Prayer Against Calamity" (*qirang* 祈禳) in Mianzhou shows the strong traces of indigenous tradition that remained in Tuzhu worship. The official *qirang* occurred in spring and during droughts, it had long been mixed with the sacrificial traditions of local dragon worship, Buddhist and Daoist rituals. However, at the turn of winter and before the slaughter of livestock, there was still the La 蠟 sacrifice. To prevent calamity and disease, shamans came to each village, hitting drums and playing instruments, decorating the area with horns — while "catamites" pretended to be women and did swirling dances, and shamanesses sang all night outside the homes of sick persons. This event was scary in the eyes of the Han Chinese and the officials saw it as odd and immoral, so they tried to prohibit the ritual and to nudge the population towards the official *qirang*, but it is noted that these attempts were not success-

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2039 On the Yi worship of Tuzhu, see: Yang Fuwang 杨甫旺. *Yizu Tuzhu Chongbai Yanjiu* 彝族土主崇拜研究. *Journal of Yunnan Normal University* 1 (2007): 55–61.

2040 Cf. Kang Wenji 2009, p. 19.

2041 吾守斯土凡卹災捍患吾之責也. Cf. ZLMZZ 1813 27:16a.

ful.[2042] This is a good example for the strong differences in religious behavior between the Han and the indigenous population. A similar difference existed between the cult of imperial Chuanzhu and local Tuzhu. Although Tuzhu were occasionally integrated into the imperial network as Chuanzhu,[2043] these were likely only superficial integrations via renaming or transposition.

The Chuanzhu worship spread from its origin in the central areas of Sichuan deep down to the south and to the borders of Yunnan. Although the amount of Chuanzhu in the south was lower than in the urban central and northern regions, their function varied greatly between being local-popular markers of identity and central power markers of imperial ideology. The imperial transformation of Chuanzhu worship proves the intensified interest in the replacement of local water deities by more or less localized imperial representatives which correlates in time with the revitalized political significance of Sichuan for the conquest of Tibetan territories. After the conquest was concluded, Chuanzhu were continuously, but less numerously, spread through the south to divert migrants from local customs. Although that was of doubtful success, this usage of Chuanzhu emphasized the heightened importance of inter-ethnic identity negotiation during the Qing dynasty and until today. When the intensified attention for the question of Chineseness led to the creation of new narratives to integrate the (now) local 'minorities' into it, sacred sites were again of relevance — but this time, as sites of shared heritage. This will be investigated in the case study on the Hailong-si of Mahu.

S.3.3.   Serpents and Dragons: Southern Sichuan and the Mahu Area

The area of Mahu 馬湖 is very remote, located at the southernmost border of Sichuan to Yunnan. Before multiple tunnels of the highway pierced the mountains, it was a four-to-five-days walk to reach Mahu from the closest city. The composition of the population in this area was culturally different from the

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2042   La, like in the hero Laqu, apparently refers to a religious concept in connection to the Tuzhu that was continued among the Yi, but it is no longer known what it once exactly referred to. Cf. ZLMZZ 1813, 18:9a–b.

2043   Cf. Fu Yuqiang 2011, p. 6.

Han Chinese, and dominated by the Yi. Mahu and the surrounding areas of Pingshan 屏山 and Yibin 宜宾 belonged to the sphere of bronze drums, temples for those (*tonggu-miao* 銅鼓廟) existed until the twentieth century and place names still reflect their cultural importance.

The focus of this case study is the Golden Horse Lake *Jinmahu* 金馬湖. To the lake's west is a small peninsula with a stone that shows some human treatment. This "seahorse" (*haima* 海馬) is said to mark the spot where the dragon horses that gave this area and the lake its name jumped into the water. Colloquially called Mahu Lake, this body of water is surrounded by dense forests and valleys full of caves once used by bandits and rebels. This contributed to the fact that Mahu was one of the regions over which the late Chinese empire had little information, let alone control.[2044] Even today, it is not too easy to reach Mahu and Jinma Lake, it takes between three to four hours by a bus that delivers the mail, medicine and agricultural produce at the same time, winding up rough and unsecured roads. The stop for Jinma Lake is at its very narrow northern shore. The northern shore is also the place for the local market and on the other side of the street is a stone hill with a small, at the time not active museum and the local administrative office on top.

The Jinma Lake covers 7.32 square kilometers[2045] stretching from the north to the south. It is one of the highest mountain lakes of China and with 134 meters the third deepest of them. Today, it is advertised as a scenic spot for leisure and health. However, at the time of visit, Mahu had experienced a severe flood in the previous year with the markings still visible on the buildings alongside the eastern shore, so there were hardly any external visitors in 2016. The following survey already suggests that many parts of the temple do not fit together well. Some parts of it belong to an artificial narrative constructed from the *Sanguo Yanyi*. And yet, the content of the site does not seem to fulfil local spiritual needs, as implied by various votive figurines placed throughout the site. Especially Guanyin figurines are placed on the shrines of other entities as if to subdue their power and redirect the belief.

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2044 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 34.
2045 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 45.

Mahu, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture 凉山彝族自治州***, Leibo County*** 雷波县 ***between Huanglang Town*** 黄琅镇 ***and Mahu Township*** 马湖乡***. Date of visit: 15 September 2016.***

The wooden path along the eastern shore of Jinma Lake was recently refurbished by the local government, which also added large signposts referencing the local temple. There are countless large dragonflies along the path (maybe *Matrona nigripectus* or *Matrona basilaris*), called *majie* 蟆姐 "sister dragonfly" by the locals. They are associated with storms and thought of as the daughters of the dragon[2046] who used to live in the eastern mountains' cave. Dragonflies are important symbolical animals to the area and related to the ancient name for it. The dragon cave, however, was damaged by a landslide a few years ago and is no longer accessible. Very close to it at the foot of the mountains along the northern third of the lake is a Han Chinese village called Dahaicun 大海村. The Hailong-si 海龍寺 is located on the Golden Tortoise Island *jinguidao* 金龜島 (of about 7855 m²) opposite to it.

According to the current narrative, the Hailong-si is the only temple dedicated to a Man-Yi chief in all of southwestern China.[2047] Supposedly, it was built to honor Meng Huo because he is nowadays considered a kind of national hero of the Yi.[2048] More accurately, it is the only dedicated Meng Huo temple in Sichuan (in others, he may exist as a secondary entity) and the only one currently evaluated as a provincial protected cultural relict of the Yi. The island can only be reached by ferry which, depending on the weather, starts out twice or thrice a week. It is indeed shaped like a tortoise and almost completely occupied by the temple, surrounded by some trees and a tea plantation. To the northwest of the island, there are the residential buildings adjoining the temple wall and the docks leading around it towards the southern side. Some trees are decorated with hanging metal stripes which supposedly represent Yi swords.

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2046 Brooks offers another example where dragonflies and dragons were related with each other. Cf. Brooks 2010, p. 50.

2047 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 149.

2048 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 35.
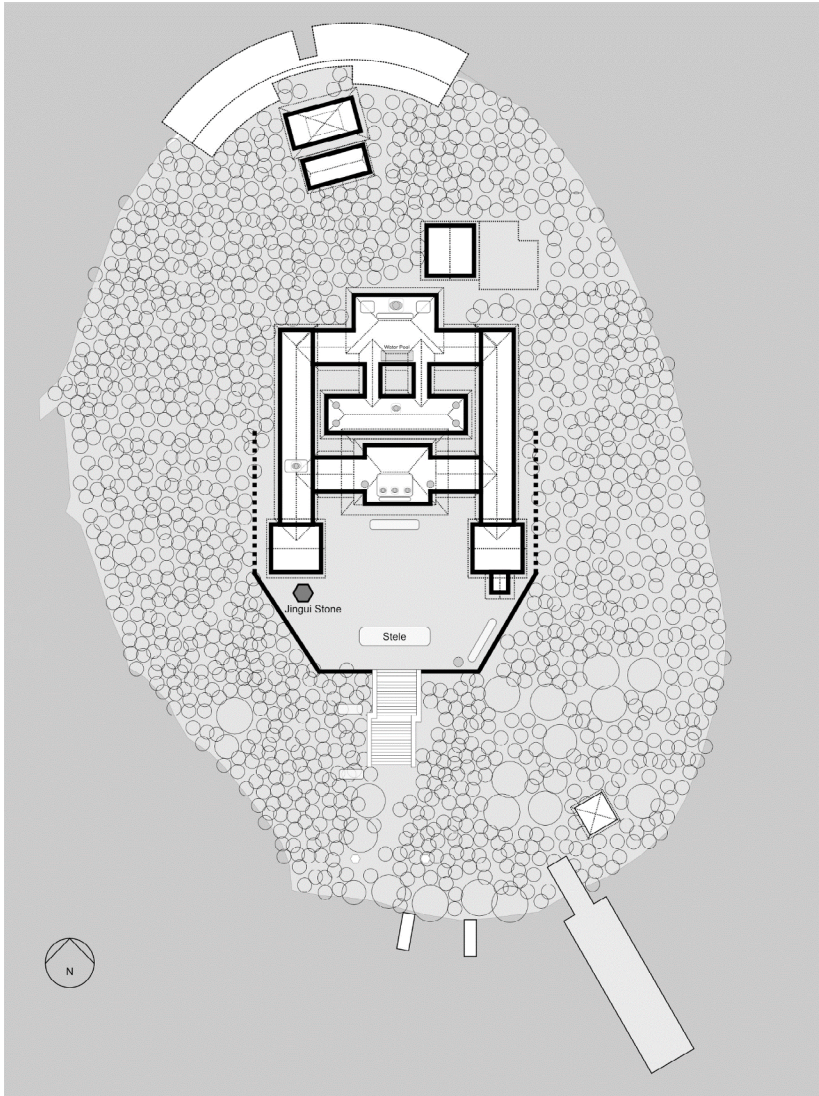
[Img. 20] Layout of The Hailong-si 海龍寺 of Mahu, 2016

Between the docks sits a double-storied gate with a bell at its top. The stairs behind it lead approximately three stories high up to the top of the island's hill. The path along the stairs has been decorated with arches that are shaped like bull horns. Their pillars are decorated with carvings of Yi symbols and their center depicts replicas of Nuosu-Yi mouth organs. However, this is not the way the Yi would actually use them.[2049] There is a donor stele for the 1990s restoration of the temple along the way which contains names of Han and Yi origin and another holds information about rebuilding the local Guanyin Hall.

The entire temple is directed to the south. The first object in front of the forecourt is a massive stele-pavilion hybrid that at once serves as a name plaque and a spirit shield for the temple.

The forecourt is surrounded by trees full of red wishing bands, those bands are also attached to some statues of Yi warriors. To the left, there is a water basin filled with a large turtle shaped stone that, according to local narrative, a Buddhist monk found at another location of Mahu and sent here. It is supposed to represent the golden tortoise this island was named after but is actually rather used as a wishing well. To the right of the forecourt, there is a gallery building with a two-storied viewing pavilion. It leads to a set of vitrines with musealized Yi objects, the back part of the temple is closed off. To the left side of the temple is the temple's office. This temple houses one Buddhist monk with one novice and two assistants, one janitor and of three temple attendants one is present each day.

The forecourt connects to the first hall is three jian wide and one jian deep, the shrine occupies the central jian. This is the Meng Huo Hall *Meng Huo-dian* 孟獲殿, which was rebuilt in 2007 — the original icon was destroyed in the 1950s. Most buildings of the contemporary temple are not original although they are supposedly arranged according to the former layout. In front of the hall are incense holders full of unused incense. The altar is filled with durable sacrifices. The hall itself opens to all sides and has a clerestory roof design. The new statue of Meng Huo, surrounded by yellow decoration, depicts him as an Yi leader in yellow clothing. He is flanked by two smaller but lifelike statues supposed to be members of his family as depicted in the *Sanguo Yanyi,* one

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2049 Personal communication with Olivia Kraef-Leicht, Berlin, 31 January 2020.

is depicted as an Yi warrior — that is his younger brother Meng You 孟優; the other like a Bimo 毕摩,[2050] that is his supposed adviser Mo Tie 摩鐵. The trio is arranged sitting around a shared table, as if they had a third century dinner together to make plans for their conquests. In front of that fictive arrangement, there are three very small stone tablets, the consecration tablets for both Meng Huo and Guanyin. Also, a high quality votive Guanyin has been placed between the Meng Huo ensemble and the sacrificial altar. The backside of the first hall shows a large wooden eagle — a totem of the Yi — and some Yi weapons. Here, the complex pillar structure of the temple is shown, which connects all central axis halls under one roof. In the small gap between the first and the second hall, there is a small rectangular water basin with its own bowl of used incense. Judging by its erosion it may be a historical part of the former temple.

The second hall is more like a roofed court, on each side there are two Yi warriors. The much smaller central shrine in front of a colorful tapestry with a slightly Buddhist style shows a woman in Yi clothing who carries a torch and a sword. This is Zhurong Furen 祝融婦人, Meng Huo's wife from the *Sanguo Yanyi* novel. She is not a historical or pseudo-historical person but a fictive character supposedly descended from an ancient mythological fire deity, the dragon-riding Zhurong 祝融. Since this deity is not very well known anymore, a sign to the side of the altar explains in Chinese and Yi script who Zhurong and Lady Zhurong are supposed to be. However, the sign claims she was a historical contemporary of Meng Huo. Handmade clay figurines have been placed at her feet, of which at least one resembles a female earth god, while the other is too eroded to be interpreted. To both sides of that shrine's pedestal are small bronzes of Guanyin.

The Zhurong Furen Hall serves simultaneously as the front for the last hall; both are directly joined by a door passage, so there are no plaques that would give it a name. The front part of the last hall, only three jian wide and two jian deep, is simultaneously the back of the Zhurong Furen shrine. It holds a large water basin ca. three meters wide and 1.5 meters deep. The wall shows the character *chan* 禪 "meditation", but the rhymes to both sides refer to the

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2050 Bimo are the shaman-priests of later Yi history who, over time, supplanted female shamans. Cf. Personal communication with Olivia Kraef-Leicht, Berlin, 31 January 2020.

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abundance of rain, the growth of plants and coming of spring. Although the basin is in a disastrous condition, the water is clear. There are strong signs of interactions: it is used like a wishing well and the massive incense block in front of it has piles of incense ash. Small dragon statuettes have been placed around the basin, but also three-legged toads. There are three plates in the front of the basin with the characters *you* 有 "to have", *qiu* 求 "to seek" and *wang* 望 "to look forward to". To the side, here are remains of old character plates that spell *shoutang* 壽堂 "Longevity Hall". This would usually be a hall for the deceased, which would fit with Guanyin but not the basin. The other half of the last hall is occupied by a massive Guanyin shrine. Both walls to its sides are stuffed with countless shelves full of identical Guanyin votive statuettes because this hall also serves as a shop — theoretically that is, because the shop is never attended to.[2051] The gilded, hieratic Guanyin of the main shrine is of matronly appearance and exercises a teaching mudra, but has no further attributes. The statue is roughly two meters high and a roughly 30 cm high Buddha bronze was placed on the altar in front of her. It is accompanied by five small wooden tablets of the Chinese elements, as well as a ritual bell. Incense has been burned here and there is also a wooden fish drum for ritual uses, but there are no fresh sacrifices. While the pillars around the shrine have couplets that refer to the purifying Buddha Gate, the shrine's front has a plaque that reads *Pingjing Guanyin* 平井觀音 "The Guanyin Who Balances the Well". To the left side there is a prominently placed information plaque titled "The Five Elements Transit the Buddha Lamp" (*Wuxing Zhuanyun Fodeng* 五行转运佛灯). To each side between the main shrine and the shop's walls, almost unnoticeable, there are very small altars with diminutive (~30 cm) bronzes of Guanyin that wear their own red shawls. They are arranged like flanking shrines for Guanyin's usual companions. The left one has neither incense nor sacrifices but in front of the right one, there are incense and bowls with fresh food offerings.

Outside of the last hall, on the left side of the temple's axis, there is a closed part of the temple called the "Folk Cultural Heritage Showroom" (*minsu wen-*

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2051 The resident monk assured me that he would sell a statuette if I really wanted one and reacted evasively to my question if there were many visitors who would buy something from the total of three shops throughout the rather small temple.

hua yichan chenlieshi 民俗文化遗产陈列室). Although it was at the time only a storage room, it was supposed to be used to perform Yi dances and rituals for educative purposes although such occasions are apparently very rare.

The open side hall between that and the temple's office contains a large stone vessel that imitates an ancient bronze incense holder. There is an enormous bronze bowl for sacrificial money and it is filled to the brim. The southern wall is designed like a giant abacus, in its center are two wooden 'steles', one contains an encyclopedic entry on the mythological role of the Qilin 麒麟 and the other about the same role of dragons and turtles. On the opposite side there are two more about the three-legged toad and the Pixiu 貔貅. The long wall is full of red wishing bands, and the northern wall shows the shrine of the entity honored here: framed between wooden demon masks and a suspended abacus hanging from the ceiling sits a large bronze statue of Zhuge Liang. He is holding a writing tablet and a bowl in front of yellow drapes. However, the condition of the shrine does not honor an ancient statesman — all his lamps, all the incense vessels, the balustrade to the shrine, even the statue of Zhuge Liang himself are full of wishing bands and padlocks, somewhat more than two hundred of those. These are symbols of love and can also be found in the Confucius Temple of Qufu, for example. There is also a small table with ritual devices that are accurately laid out, but there is no incense and the sacrificial plates are empty.

S.3.3.1. Claiming the Mountain of Inspirited Trees: Written Sources for Old Mahu

Due to the remote location of Mahu, it is not too easy to find historical sources for it. Most sources mentioning the term refer to the governmental seat some 70–100 miles east, or are preoccupied with the Han-indigenous relations. There are only few entries that actually refer to the lake and township and hardly any mention the island in the lake or a temple that was built on it. Entries in the more general chronicles are focused on business products and make no reference to local culture. Apparently, once there was a very good temple archive at Hailong-si, but the documents were collected by the local government in Leibo and are no longer accessible for foreigners. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the religious connotations of the general Mahu Lake area, some

local environmental features and the oral narratives attached to them before returning to the Hailong-si.

The first settlement in Mahu known to the Chinese dates to ~130 BCE. These were two garrisons (*zhen* 鎮) that together held five hundred households. Important products for trade were bamboo, water amaranth and tea. The site was originally named Tanglang 螳螂 "mantis", but this name was not well received among the Han Chinese and they created some variants until they came to call the settlement Huanglang 黃螂 ['Yellow Dragonfly'], derived from a local river (Huanglanghe 黃瑯河).[2052] This was then abstracted to Huanglang Haizi 黃瑯海子 ['Yellow Jade Wetlands'], which became the main tea production area and a local village north of the lake still carries this name. Mahu County (*Mahu xian* 馬湖縣) was established during the Shu-Han period of the Three Kingdoms.[2053] During the Tang dynasty, the area was called Mahubu 馬湖部 and its lake was called Tianchi 天池 ['Heavenly Lake']. By the Song dynasty it was renamed as Wenchi 文池 "Cultural Lake" and the Yuan called it Longhu 龍湖 "Dragon Lake"[2054], because there was an efficacious marsh.

The Ming started to simply call this area Mahu. The gazetteer of Mahufu 馬湖府 was published in 1555 under the Ming emperor Jiajing 嘉靖 (r. 1521—1567).[2055] It informs us that this greater area of southernmost Sichuan comprised the four non-Han departments Nixi 泥溪, Pingyi 平夷, Manyi 蠻夷 and Muchuan 沐川 (Leshan).[2056] These were collectively called "Mahujiang 馬湖江" according to the section of the Jinshajiang that they occupied. Every non-Han department had its own prefectural magistrate. Mahu Lake was situated in

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2052 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 2:1a–b, 34:3a.

2053 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:1b4.

2054 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 1:6a and Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 6:8–10b.

2055 Unfortunately, the *Mahufuzhi* 馬湖府志 was heavily edited. The author of this gazetteer, Yu Chengxun 余承勛 (1493 − 1573), proudly recounts how much he has shortened the entries that were according to his opinion too detailed, extravagant and wasteful. Therefore, the Mahufuzhi is only seven chapters long and many of them merely contain lists of names with little information, if there is any at all. Although it provides good maps, many of the places shown are not mentioned in the text. The original that he based his work on was likely intentionally lost to history because it had been written by the An 安 clan — a non-Han clan that challenged the empire's authority.

2056 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, Pt. 2, 1:4b–5a.

the Manyi department, so the superior prefectural government seat for all of Mahufu was located quite far away — differently described as in a distance of 70–100 miles east — and closer to Pingshan (which is now in Yibin) than to Mahu. The map from the *Mahufuzhi*[2057] shows Leibo to the farthest western edge of its rim, close to two large bodies of water, of which the closest one was likely identical to Jinma Lake, but simply called Shuihai 水海 ['Watery Sea'] at the time. The *Pingshan Xianzhi* of 1778 widened the map's scope to the north but cut out Leibo.[2058] However, it depicts a large lake with an island north of Huanglang 黃螂. By the 1812 *Yibin Xianzhi*,[2059] both Leibo and the lake are shown larger and with some fortifications.

In connection to the Mahujiang that is centered in all those maps, the *Mahufuzhi* describes the Longhu (Jinma Lake) poetically. The river water coils like a snail, for two miles the Great River and the Yangzi River ebb and rise together, day and night do they work the tide, and as it was passed on from the past: "Once, there were dragon horses, they were seen entering the lake. So came the lake to its name".[2060]

The *Leibotingzhi* finally gives a good view of Mahu Lake and a smaller secondary lake. It clearly identifies the island — although without name — and depicts the lake with two arms extending to the south.[2061] There is a separate map for Huanglang which shows a Wu-miao 武廟, Wenchang-miao and a city god temple inside the settlement's walls while a Chuanzhu temple and a fire god temple are located outside the walls at the shore of the lake.[2062]

The first longer entry found for the area is that of "Mountain of Inspirited Trees" (*Shenmushan* 神木山),[2063] a name only given to the area due to the events detailed in the entry. Shenmushan refers to the mountain ridge surrounding

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2057 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, unpaged, between the introduction and the content overview.

2058 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:8b.

2059 Cf. Yibin Xianzhi 1812, 2:5a.

2060 曾有龍馬見於湖湖郡名. Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 3:6a3–4. The Leibotingzhi 1893, 35:1b also mentions that dragon horses were seen at the lake again in 1372.

2061 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, *tukao* 7a–b.

2062 Cf. ibid., *tukao* 11a–b.

2063 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 3:4a3–5b14.

the Jinma Lake. It is written that under the Yongle Emperor, conscripted laborers had to get timber from the southwest and this caused prosperous times — the timber trade would have brought infrastructure and wealth to this neglected area. In Yongle's fourth year (1407), the emperor planned his imperial city in Beijing but was worried if the people (in this area) would support him. He listened to his advisers and prohibited the private collection of timber with horses, as the Yi did it. Instead, the government offered to hire those willing to provide their physical strength for collecting timber. This was (allegedly) well received by the people.

The Minister of Public Works Song Li 宋禮 (?~1422) was ordered to get especially big tree trunks of good quality from the woods of Shu. A general was ordered to clear the path for him because his destination was so deep in the indigenous' territory. When the minister and his entourage spent a night at the road where there were very large boulders and a cliff, they were awakened by the sound of thunder: the timber had cut itself. This was deemed a miraculous event caused by a local deity and the miracle was attributed to the emperor's superior honor. However, the emperor declined such attribution, convinced that the timber was a gift from the Spirits of Mountains and Streams, so he ordered sacrifices to be set up for those. However, before the sacrifice could happen, the sacrificial bean plates laid out along the mountain pass had been washed clean by rain and the sudden retreat of the black clouds was interpreted as the contentment of the spirits. Right after that, there was an ear-shattering shout coming from the mountains and something that would be interpreted as an earthquake today. Since the deity had showed their efficacy, the mountain ridge was renamed Shenmushan. An imperial order demanded the construction of a shrine, the initiation of annual sacrifices and that all these events were written down.

The official Guang Panshou 廣頪首 stated that the emperor's virtue had urged the supernatural beings to obey him — referring to the reconfiguration tactic of superimposing which put this peripheral area now even more tightly under the emperor's hand. Guang Panshou's texts clearly refer to nature deities whose duties he lists as: making the river flow, the clouds travel, the days clear, the rain moistening, bringing wind with thunder, changing between cold and heat, alternating between yin and yang. "The traces of the spirits are the rising sun, the making of rain, and the bright stars that shine from between the

clouds."[2064] There was no doubt that the cut timber was a gift of the gods, but he criticized the locals for not interacting with the gods properly. Therefore, the fact that this special timber desired by the emperor grew in this "region of clouds and rain" was seen as the natural expansion of the emperor's power and the Han culture's influence into the region. The following page stresses how much the empire's rule over the Man-Yi was strengthened thanks to the continued timber industry. This is followed by another passage, which may be an unmarked quote, that once again recounts the miraculous event with some different details: the timber was not only magically cut, it also fell into the river and awakened the workers at night by the trunks hitting into each other, thereby establishing the practice of transporting the trunks[2065] of this low infrastructure area via rivers. A quote from the provincial sacrificial register then reports about the construction of what may have been a predecessor of the Hailong-si or another temple at the lake (since the exact location is not mentioned). A *miao* was erected for annual sacrifices of sweet wine, pure sacrificial animals, pig fat, fruit baskets and beans, a stinking kind of herb, and bismuth. The spring sacrifice demanded the use of mugwort and the autumn sacrifice that of chrysanthemums. Special behavioral rules towards the spirited horses (*jun* 駿) are mentioned but not quoted, but it is demanded to act with sincerity towards them. Groups of people had to walk as if they were lame in order to cause the spirit's mercy and to make it bring fortune and harness the wind. The deity of the mountain and streams was then made 'drunk' and (an actor dressed as) the spirit would appear in the temple. If it rained by then, this was a good omen for the realm and would change the miasmas to the better which would enable the timber workers to continue their labor.

This account clearly indicates a tradition of rainmaking merged with the more practical spiritual demands of those in service of the imperial timber industry. A local spirit was reinterpreted through imperial eyes as a God of Mountains and Streams, but the cult practice shows some deviations from the

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2064 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 3:4b.

2065 After felling, the timber was brought to the waterways and transported as floats via the river, controlled by a system of dams. Human transport like that could take months compared to the supernatural intervention. Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 57–58.

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standard. Moreover, the sacrifice of animal products shows that this spirit, in that era, was not of Buddhist nature. Instead, the text states for this period that the custom of the area was to venerate devils, that there were shamans, and that 'illicit' sacrifices occurred.[2066] There also was a dragon cave and when rain was made there, then there would be clouds at the mountain.[2067]

On the other hand, the sacrificial register of Mahu also shows a large number of Confucian temples. There was an altar for the Spirits of Wind, Clouds, Thunder, Rain, Mountains and Streams (*Fengyun Leiyu Shanchuantai* 風雲雷雨山川壇) of which the Yi had their own one, established separately but in duplication.[2068] High numbers of Daoists who healed diseases and called for rain are mentioned as well.[2069] A Tuzhu-miao existed since the beginning of the Ming dynasty, but who the Tuzhu was is not stated.[2070] It is very likely that it was someone of the An Clan 安氏, since members of it were also later venerated in the city god temple.

The onsite poster of the Hailong-si cites (though without reference) a passage likely taken from a gazetteer or history that is full of praise for the old Meng Huo site.[2071] It claims that the site was erected on a Sea Stronghold *haibao* 海堡, where the Golden Tortoise Island is today, in the seventeenth year of Wanli (1589). The text describes the 'seat of honor' for Meng Huo, Meng You and Mo Tie with 103 bodhisattvas in the first hall. Among them in the center are the eye-catching "Three Senior Man King Bodhisattva" (*sanzun manwang pusa* 三尊蛮王菩萨) with Meng Huo in the center, who carries a "Heavenly Bodhisat-

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2066 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 5:6a.

2067 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 3:64a–b.

2068 Cf. Mahufuzhi 1555, 5:1b–2a.

2069 Cf. ibid., 5:4b.

2070 Cf. ibid., 5:4a.

2071 I found neither a description nor even a mention of such a Meng Huo Hall in the local gazetteers available to me. In the context of the entire site, it may very well be that the quote is constructed, but the way it is worded does not align to the propagandistic tone of the other poster texts and the term *haibao* is a homonym to the vernacular name of the island as mentioned in the *Leibotingzhi* of 1893. It may be that this passage was taken from temple archive materials or from a gazetteer that was not available to me.

tva" (*tianpusa* 天菩萨).[2072] The body of the former icon was allegedly clothed in crimson felt and wore a bow and an arrow at the girdle. All three icons wore Yi clothing and were barefoot. In contrast, the contemporary icons are fully clothed with boots and Meng Huo is depicted in a more regal way with a sword and a kind of turban-like headscarf. The text adds that the site was repaired under Qianlong between the years 1759—1763.

For the imperial publications, the *Pingshan Xianzhi* of 1778 is the first to mention the island in the Jinma Lake at all. It is simply called an "earth mound" but said to be capable of housing four hundred people.[2073] It lists the newly defined scenic spots of Mahu, most of them concern sites around the lake.[2074] The text provides more information about the lake area, like another entry for the Shenmushan-ci 神木山祠. It is not only attested as being much older than Yongle — the site allegedly originally dates to the "Shu era" which here likely refers to the Shu-Han era — and is openly connected to rain-calling and dragon rising.[2075] Therefore, we can at this point be quite sure that the area of Jinma Lake was a site of rainmaking connected to dragons. Aside from the Shenmushan-ci, there are also the first mentions of Chan Buddhist sites to the western area of Mahu, one of them is called Ciyun-si 慈雲寺 ['Temple of the Merciful Clouds'],[2076] so very likely, this was a site with strong Guanyin presence and possible connections to rainmaking. A stele of the Tianning-si (*Qingjingshan Tianningsi Beiji* 清涼山天寧寺碑記) mentions that the site was erected on a mountain mostly relevant to the southern Yi.[2077] There is the first mention of a city god temple of Mahu (the city) which venerates a spirit from the An Clan, a non-Han group who ruled this area between the Tang and Song dynasties.[2078]

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2072 This is a hairstyle among Yi men, a kind of wrapped up 'horn' at the apex made from hair and meant to ward off evil influences. In contrast to the new Meng Huo image, the Yi warrior statues of the contemporary site still show this.

2073 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:12a.

2074 Cf. ibid., 1:14a–b; 7:16.

2075 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 6:1.

2076 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 6:18.

2077 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 6:4–5.

2078 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 6:7.

In the two hundred years between the *Mahufuzhi* and the *Pingshan Xianzhi*, platforms for the Gods of Mountains and Streams and the Chuanzhu-miao had become more elaborate.[2079] There are multiple mentions of praying for rain, more dragon toponyms, efficacious marshes and one new Efficacious Tortoise Mountain *lingguishan* 靈龜山.[2080] The temple section of the gazetteer shows an abundance of Daoist sites but only a few imperial and even less Buddhist sites. Among the latter, toponyms with Guanyin are the most common and dragon temples or dragon lakes are identified as places of the Yi.[2081]

By the nineteenth century, Daoist rainmaking had remained consistent for three hundred years but came to take place in Chuanzhu temples.[2082] Animalistic deities, like dragons, were now viewed with more skepticism and there were discussions if, for example, a pool with an efficacious dragon contained either an evil spirit or a good one that brought rain.[2083] Yet, the Chuanzhu-miao of western Mahujiang was located behind a Stone Dragon Hut (*shilong-an* 石龍庵)[2084] and thus apparently made use of the dragon's presence, if it was not identical with it anyway. However — or maybe due to that — it seems that the rain deities of the Yi were more efficacious. A Rain Prayer Sacrificial Text (*Qiyu Jiwen* 祈雨祭文) by the prefecture governor Zhang Rizheng 張日晸[2085] states about an unnamed deity: The deity's merit is to part the pool and clouds. Traveling the four seas, it has the authority to moisten the region. Its palace is in a deep pool between two rivers (this implies a dragon lord). If it has not rained for a long time, then the terraced fields of the Yi in the mountains will still be 'leaking clear water'. In such cases, an official has to go, with utmost sincerity and reverence, to implore for efficacy, to bestow aid, asking for help by fast and abundant pouring so that 28 villages may experience the moisture. The text

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2079 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, map section, pp. 13–14a.

2080 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:7a–8a; 6:8–10b.

2081 Cf. ibid., 8:18–19.

2082 Cf. Yibin Xianzhi 1812, 6:17a–b.

2083 Cf. ibid., 16:53.

2084 Cf. Yibin Xianzhi 1812, 27:13a.

2085 There is one official of this name known who was also from Guizhou and lived from 1792 to 1850. However, his imperial examination was in 1817, so if this was the same person, he would have been very young when he wrote the text.

claims that thirteen of these villages formed a sacrificial community.[2086] This is followed by another sacrificial text for the river deity which is unfortunately damaged. But the same author also collected a "Considering on Behalf of the Bo Creek's Dragon Altar Rain Prayer Sacrificial Text" (Si Boxi Longtan Qiyu Jiwen Dai 思波溪龍壇祈雨祭文代) that describes a more chthonic deity. Towards the wilderness at the famous stream, there was a very efficacious dragon. Whenever it rained, the people hastily moved to a lofty space and sacrificed at the (dragon) altar or dispatched a commissioner (zhuanyuan 專員) to do so and meet the deity. The arrival of the deity is described as a person with a cloud chariot drawn by wind horses — who is enticed by sweet liquid (wine) on a whetstone, then travels north, carrying on his back the concentrated moisture to supply the entire region with rain.[2087]

The *Leibotingzhi*, which is most detailed in its Mountains and Streams chapter, still refers several dragon grottoes and dragon springs, but most importantly it also refers to Guanyin sites that contain such dragon springs.[2088] Here, the Chuanzhu temple at Huanglang is identified as being dedicated to Li Bing, but this one was built as recently as 1842 and thus belongs to the secondary Chuanzhu Li Bing propagation campaign in the south of Sichuan. Accordingly, it was actually a <u>duplication</u> right next to a temple to Guankou Erlangshen that had already been built by 1830.[2089] It shared its rites and sacrificial texts with a neighboring dragon god shrine. In contrast to the Chuanzhu entry, it is explicitly explained that this dragon god is venerated because it keeps the water balanced, controls the rivers, and sends rain.[2090]

This gazetteer, written at the turn to the twentieth century, finally contains some information about the temple on the island. It states[2091] that the 'earth mound' looked like a spiral snail which was commonly called "ocean bundle" (*haibao* 海包) and could house up to four hundred people. The people were the

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2086 Cf. Yibin Xianzhi 1812, 16:56.

2087 Cf. Yibin Xianzhi 1812, 16:58b.

2088 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 5:4.

2089 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 19:5a–6b.

2090 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 18:24b–25a

2091 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 34:2a–b.

ones who built the Hailong-si on it and there were ten households of fishermen in its vicinity. To one side of the earth mound, there was the seahorse stone, five *zhang* 丈 tall, which was placed there because, according to tradition, there were spirit horses (*shenma* 神馬) in the area. Since this entry is titled "Dragon Lake", this would mean that the Hailong-si was likely established by the Yuan dynasty.

It is then related from a chapter of the *Huayang Guozhi* that the county was once called Zhuti 朱提 and that it had a Thousand Hectares Lake close to Huanglang, where many poisonous herbs grew — when birds flew over there in midsummer, they could no longer leave. A similar passage occurs in the *Houhanshu* biography of Ma Yuan and others can be found in reference to Yunnan.[2092] These are references to the miasmas which were believed to exist in southern regions — poisonous weather, air or herbs (and their scent) were believed to make people sick with malaria and other tropical fevers. This description is thus an example of othering the exotic site from a Han Chinese perspective, which fits the age of the source. The next excerpt from a poetic collection describes the Dragon Pond (*longchi* 龍池) in the south of Zhuti as ten miles long and with a circumference of 47 miles. The one after that describes "Mahufu" as a border area between the Han territory and one of its commanderies, where there was a Dragon Horse Lake that gave Mahufu its name. It mentions that between all the surrounding cliffs and mountains, there was one 'pile' that looked like a spiral snail, and that was where the dragon horses appeared at the confluence of two rivers. A quote from the *Mabiantingzhi* 馬邊廳志 of 1764 states that the former locals connected spirit horses with the lake because there was once a dragon coming from the lake's shore which would again and again give birth to unusual horses and during the Ming dynasty, these horses came to receive 'gifts' (i.e., offerings). This quote establishes the dragon's gender and that the ritual described for the Yongle reign's Shenmushan-ci was an interaction with the 'dragon horses.' Since its exact location is not described, it is not completely sure but certainly possible that the Shenmushan-ci was perhaps a predecessor to the Hailong-si.

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2092   See several mentions in: Benedict, Carol: *The Bubonic Plague in Nineteenth-Century China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

For the first time, the *Leibotingzhi* shows a map solely of the lake. It shows the late nineteenth century's eastern shore where the island is simply marked "island". But there is very clearly a temple of a specific type on the island: A large front hall close to the docks is followed by a smaller hall, with two elongated side halls to the right and one broader building — likely residential — to the left, which has a pavilion at its back. The center of the temple is occupied by a pagoda and behind it, at the end of the central axis, is a large hall with a clere-story and a resting hill roof (*xieshanding* 歇山頂) with high eaves.[2093] The front hall is titled as *Xiao Zhulai* 小蓬莱 — the characters refer to different weed plants known to carry round berries, and as Yang Qingzhen described,[2094] there are "special plants" famously growing on the island that produce juicy red berries (perhaps *Phytolacca acinosa*).

Originally, most Buddhist temples were built with pagodas in their center but this changed during the Song dynasty, when pagodas were more often placed outside the temple core area.[2095] So, on the one hand, possibly the site known as Hailong-si was built before the end of the Song dynasty, on the other hand, this arrangement may also have been chosen due to the limited space of the small island. After all of that, the same map of Mahu Lake also shows the small peninsular at the western shore that nowadays holds the "seahorse" stone. But on the map, there is no such object since the description has already placed this stone on the Golden Tortoise Island. Instead, there is a temple like compound behind the peninsula, close to a watchtower at the lower mountain. This implies that the spot marked as the site of the dragon horses was likely on the island and that the seahorse stone was likely transported to the peninsular at a later point – maybe to mark whatever the depicted compound there was.

All of this firmly establishes the island as a site for water control. Connected to fishers and the lake's general environment, to snakes, dragon horses and dragon deities, the temple on it must once have been a truly aquatic site. It is

2093 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, *tukao* 21.

2094 Cf. Yang Qingzhen 杨庆珍. "Mahushanxiang: Xiao Liangshan Shenchu de 'Yishi Taoyuan'". Sichuan Economic Daily. 10 September 2018. https://www.scjjrb.com/2018/09/10/99125425. html.

2095 Cf. Fu Xinian and Nancy Steinhardt 2002, pp. 44, 83, 118.

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not clear when Buddhism came to the island, but the temple depicted in the nineteenth century map looks like a Buddhist one. Considering the Guanyin occupation of dragon springs all around the lake area, and the Guanyin Culture of Sichuan in general, it is highly probable that some kind of Pingjing Guanyin was not only already present at the time but also occupying the large hall depicted at the end of the axis. This would be, according to the inner hierarchies, the most high-ranking hall next to the pagoda and evidence for a superscription process. Therefore, water and Guanyin aspects of the contemporary site are historically accounted for.

Meng Huo, on the other hand, is never mentioned in context to the temple, island or lake. In the *Leibotingzhi* there is only one mention regarding a military tactic in reference to a Guan Yu temple. No sacrifices, customs or sites of him are mentioned at all. Based on the local gazetteer material, I cannot ascertain a Meng Huo Hall as described on the contemporary poster. However, considering the context of the late imperial ethnopolitics which I will describe next, there is no reason to doubt that such a hall could have existed in some shape. While the figure of Meng Huo had no connection to the island, he had a very strong one with the Mahu Lake area in general. Due to the scarce information situation especially regarding the island's temple, it is even more important to look at the meaning ascribed to the Mahu area historically and just the same, it is salutary to critically view its modern framing.

S.3.3.2. The Historical Context:
The Chinese Empire Reaches Mahu

In local epitaphs, the people who lived in ancient Pingshan 屏山 and Leibo 雷波 considered themselves to be Shu people. According to local epigraphy, the first inhabitants were supposedly the Yi 夷氏 and An Clans 安氏 who claimed to be related to the mythical Shu king Yufu 魚鳬 ['fish mallard']. Over the course of the Qin to the Song dynasties, they "turned into the Mahu region's ancient aboriginal Bo 僰 people".[2096] Such a narrative heavily implies a demand to identify the southern indigenous groups, which were seen as inferior, with the Shu who still enjoyed a high standing in nostalgia. The original Bo people

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2096 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 45.

lived along the Jinshajiang valley, while the Shu settled between Pingshan and Muchuan 沐川. In the Han dynasty, the Wei'an clan 尉安氏 of the Bo people moved into Pingshan. Due to their strong warriors and the advantages of the environment, they were able to control the territory for a long time. In the Eastern Jin dynasty, the An Clan joined forces with the indigenous Yi and ruled the territory between Yibin, Leibo, Muchuan and Pingshan while holding a tribute relationship to the Jin dynasty. An and Yi merged into the *wuman* 烏蠻 which were historically known as Luoluo or Lolo people, a term translating to tiger or dragon. These are nowadays the Nuosu Yi people.

By the era of the Three Kingdoms, the area of modern Liangshan was a commandery (*jun* 郡) named Yuexi 越巂郡, which was controlled by the Shu-Han dynasty. Under the Shu-Han, the (Wu-) Man became responsible for controlling the Jinshajiang. The area between Bin 賓 (modern Yibin) and Jinyang 金陽 county (modern Leibo) was called Mahujiang 馬湖江. Mahu Lake was located twenty miles north from the Mahujiang. Many sites of Mahujiang came to be associated with the battles of Zhuge Liang against the local chieftains and especially many toponyms and legends derive from his archenemy Meng Huo.[2097] The earliest sacrifices to Meng Huo are known from his home region in Yunnan and reported about from the Tang and Song dynasties. The condition that the area was also called Mahu in this era although the name of the lake itself was changed to Heavenly Lake/Cultural Lake, means that the legend of the dragon horses must have been quite older. Mahu was thought of as relevant during the Tang dynasty because it was associated with Gao Pian, who had prepared for an important battle here.[2098]

After the Tang had installed their Mahu Jimi Prefecture 馬湖羈縻州, categorized as Rongzhou 戎州, the vast territory between Yibin and Leibo was ruled by the An Clan 安氏. Many of the area's demon masters (guizhu) belonged to this clan and were seen as especially loyal. The Nanzhao often attacked the southern tribes for serving as outposts between the Tang and Nanzhao realms. As soon as Gao Pian had defeated Nanzhao's army, he established the garrison city Mahu with a Ping Yi army (*pingyijun* 平夷军). Han markets were opened

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2097 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, pp. 45–46.

2098 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:1b7–9.

to the Mahu Man and it was noted that except for being wrapped in pelts and their hair buns, they dined and farmed like the Han people, so they had already received a lot of Sinitic influence. Despite their use and loyalty, there were several conflicts between the indigenous Mahu and the Han Chinese, especially when the government passed the order to kill the "Mahu Yi bandits".[2099]

By the Northern Song dynasty, Mahu was categorized to Xuzhou 敍州 and was established as the Mahu Region 馬湖部. However, it was mostly limited to the territory surrounding Mahu Lake.[2100] The markets of Rongzhou and a special market in Xuzhou were opened to the indigenous people during the 970s, so that they could trade in timber, horses and other goods. By 1114, seven administrative villages had been erected in the area of the Mahu Man and their representatives were always Yi people from the An clan. Yet, the conflicts with the Song government continued. Since the Han Chinese were unable to beat the Man in their own territory, they used economic warfare: the local government would force the Man to sell their products at very low prices and whenever they resisted against that, the prefects would close the markets to them completely. As the conflicts grew more dire, new borders had to be enforced.[2101] To bring the southern prefectures back under control, the Southern Song integrated them into the Zizhou Circuit.[2102]

By 1258, Mahu was the scene of a great water battle between the armies of the Mongols and the Southern Song. When the latter were defeated, the Mongols were able to follow the Yangzi southwards to overthrow them.[2103] There was still no strong identification between the Mahu Man and the Han Chinese when the Mongols invaded, but the Mahu Man fought to resist, even though they could not stop their renewed annexation. The Yuan were the first to create a Mahu Circuit,[2104] this included moving the office of the local governor responsible for the 'barbarians' to the south of the Mahu Lake as a 'gate' to enter Sich-

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2099 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 46.

2100 Cf. Chi Shisong 1986, p. 80.

2101 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, pp. 46–47.

2102 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:2a.

2103 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 35.

2104 Cf. Chen Shisong 1986, p. 79.

uan.[2105] A few years later, the other traditional towns of the Mahufu area were reintroduced into Mahu jurisdiction. In consequence, the circuit government moved to western Pingshan. At that point, the terms Mahu and Mahujiang referred to a vast territory between Xuzhou and Fuzhou 涪州. This large scope was needed to recruit enough 'barbarians' to control the different rebellions in the southwest. Due to the belief that "Luo did not dissent", they were considered reliable enough to join forces with imperial troops. Afterwards, the Mahu jurisdiction was downsized again,[2106] but the Mahu government — in shape of the newly established Mahu Circuit General Administration Office (*mahulu zongguanfu* 馬湖路總管府) — promoted the economic and infrastructural change needed to make the area more accessible.

Initially, there had been no counties, towns or garrison towns in the area, the social landscape was dominated by villages.[2107] Although the locals 'believed in ghosts' and in their shamans, Daoism began to spread in Mahu during this same time. The priests offered their skills for all practical things — disease, disaster, rain, water, fire, thieves — they claimed to be able to repel all that. The Yuan had carefully analyzed the makeup of local power dynamics and then decided to start a Confucianization program in the Mahu Circuit by building several Wuhou-miao 武侯廟 — temples to Zhuge Liang — including the one on Golden Tortoise Island.[2108] Many more Confucian schools and small temples were established as well as sites for group learnings and sanctioned spirits. Formerly unmentioned places for the ancestors were repaired. According to Deng Pei, this was a meaningful transformation for the further development of the Mahu area. It was also a meaningful transformation of the Dragon Lake's (Mahu Lake) sacred landscape. If there was any trace of a Meng Huo Hall on the island before 1589, then it surely came together with such a Zhuge Liang-centric site. The Yuan dynasty is therefore the latest possible era for the begin of the contestation of the island temple. We do not know if Buddhism had already arrived there, or if Daoism had been there in the meantime. It also

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2105 Cf. Pingshan Xianzhi 1778, 1:2a.

2106 Cf. Chen Shisong 1986, pp. 79–81.

2107 Cf. Chen Shisong 1986, p. 82.

2108 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 47.

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cannot be excluded that such a Wuhou site could be operated by Daoists while being officially categorized as a -miao — but in any case, local religion was now challenged by an imperial marker. This would not have opposed any presence of Daoism or Buddhism either, since *miao* can be very small. If needed, they can be fitted into a side hall of a larger temple to keep up appearances in what would constitute cohabitation. However, the presence of the Wuhou-miao was only mentioned in the provincial gazetteer which means it was only relevant on a provincial level, otherwise the specialized local gazetteers would have written more about it. Such a neglect may point to a failed imperial claim to the site.

In the aftermath of the Confucianization program, there were reports about the Mahu inhabitants taking up crop farming and their results were not bad. They were hence able to give 'annual contributions' which helped to keep friendly relations to the central government. The agricultural wealth was also demonstrated by the rising number of households registered in that area.[2109]

S.3.3.3. An Economic Integration Strategy for Late Imperial Mahu

In 1371, the Mahu Circuit was changed into Mahufu 馬湖府 and greatly expanded.[2110] It had become a strategically very important area, but the local chiefs all hailed from the ancient hereditary families. When nearby Leibo was turned into a county in 1390, somehow all indigenous prefectural magistrates were executed for some crime or another. In the aftermath, the 'barbarian' departments were changed into circuit departments.[2111] This demonstrates how the Ming government started a strong push for acculturation. Although schools were built for the indigenous children of Sichuan and Yunnan and Yi people from Mahu were already working at the Imperial Academy, only by the Wanli era were there any conscriptions that mentioned both Han Chinese officials and native officials in Mahufu.[2112]

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2109 Cf. Chen Shisong 1986, p. 82.

2110 The Pingshan Xianzhi, 1778 1:2a dates this name change to 1390.

2111 Cf. ibid., 1:2b.

2112 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 47.

The tree trunks the Yongle Emperor had desired to build Beijing in the *Shengmushan* story were *nanmu* 楠木, a special kind of old, robust and especially gigantic tree that was common in the southwest. It was the emperor's favorite building material. The rise in nanmu popularity was connected to the territorial subjection of this region. One of the richest sources of nanmu was the area between Mahu and Pingshan and since nanmu trees prefer to grow along the waterways, harvesting them was a good method to scout the territory and observe local trade. The aforementioned timber miracle occurred during Yongle's excessive building campaign that brought the greater nanmu trees to the brink of extinction. The claim that the territorial nature spirits of this peripheral area (to which the emperor did not even have the remotest contact) still allegedly sanctioned Yongle's legitimate reign by virtue[2113] was used to increase the exploitation of natural resources even more. He had factories established for axmen, stone masons, bamboo workers, haulers, etc. who were all well organized and overseen by officials. Routes and waterways had to be expanded to transport the material throughout the empire. That engineering task was an expression of technical water control and thus again painted as proof for the emperor's legitimacy as he was able to subject nature.[2114] When the nanmu trunks were collected, connected into rafts and then transported via river to Beijing, entire villages developed on top of these rafts. Their passing every few years became a huge event and created high visibility for the empire along the waterways.

The timber collection itself with its building of roads, bridges and other forms of infrastructure intervened strongly into the environment and left visible traces of imperial engagement long after the timber collectors retired from the area. However, this was not only true for the southwest, as the timber collecting in the southwest had only grown from prior massive environmental exploitation in the east of the empire. It was just very noticeable how the biggest and most magnificent trees of the southwest were now missing and the shores of the rivers blank. The exploitation was so great it could not even

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2113 Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 55–56.
2114 Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 168–69.

be traced in numbers.[2115] However, timber collection would have been much harder without the locals to count on for labor and specialized knowledge. While the timber industry promised wealth and development, it was also very dangerous. Collectors were smothered, fell from hastily constructed bridges, were taken with the trunks into the waters, became ill of the 'miasmas' of the southwest or were killed by snakes and tigers. They often hungered because their payment was very low compared to that of Han Chinese workers. With that in mind, Yongle's successor Hongxi 洪熙, who only reigned for one year from 1424—1425, cited pity as the reason why he sent all timber workers and traders home.[2116]

Since nanmu was the essential imperial building material and the 'spirits' of Mahu had shown themselves as a resource for legitimation, Mahu had suddenly been bestowed with imperial relevance. This may have been the key factor for the development of the island's temple and why an elaborate Meng Huo Hall with three central icons could have come into existence during the latter half of the dynasty. While the infrastructural and economic expansion of the empire proceeded, the indigenous population needed to be incorporated on the spiritual level as well. Only the transfer of ideology could ensure that they would go along with further interventions from the center. Citing Zhuge Liang and Meng Huo as an ideal of Han-Yi collaboration benefited the Ming political goals. While the *Sanguo Yanyi* was only published in 1522, it was based on lore collections from the fourteenth century, which were again based on orally transmitted hero cycles from the Song dynasties. With so much flexibility in a literary environment of established lore, it is quite possible that the marriage between Zhurong Furen and Meng Huo within the novel reflected the background of such transferal and mediative border politics.

As pointed out before, the historical documents paid little attention to local religious culture aside from criticizing devils and shamans. A lot has to be deducted from toponyms and outsider perspectives. There is especially little mention of transregional religions like Buddhism and Daoism up to the year 1495. In that year, a fifth generation Mahufu prefect named An Ao 安鰲 was

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2115 Cf. Brook 2010, p. 130.

2116 Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 58, 64–66.

executed for cruelty, corruption, and employing the magical powers of the evil Buddhist monk Baizu 百足 to kill people.[2117] This was not a small occurrence: It is not mentioned who supported him, but his sentence lists 24 different executions and archaeological excavations found 188 tombs and the burned-down remains of 348 houses. This massacre caused the An Clan to flee to Liangshan.[2118] Evidently, Buddhism existed but was not noteworthy for Han Chinese officials. It may also already have been hybridized so strongly with local religion that it became somewhat unrecognizable to them.

Although the power of the An clan had been in decline, new conflicts erupted when the first Han Chinese official arrived to administrate the entirety of Mahufu, which tipped the legal balance into the Han Chinese's favor. In 1517, a migrant Han Chinese named Su Heng 蘇衡 enticed the Han Chinese population to murder hundreds of Yi people. This caused the Yi to join up with a related Yi tribe of Yunnan and afterwards 48 Yi villages rebelled. A significant part of the army opposing the Sichuan provincial army was led by An Ao's son An Yu 安宇. To appease him, he was offered his father's former office. Since 1518, he took great care to inspect the Yi villages and kept the Mahufu area stable, playing a major role in the development of local culture and economy.[2119] Unrests of other Yi groups continued and were again supported by Buddhist monks, among them one who transferred martial arts skills from Shaolin (Henan) to Emeishan 峨嵋山 and who used his skills to support the Miao and Yi against the central government.[2120] A generation later, An Ao's grandson An Xing 安興 wanted revenge for his grandfather and to restore his family's honor. In 1587, he founded the "Three Heroes of Liangshan" (Liangshan Sanxiong 涼山三雄) on the basis of local Yi bandits, leading them to Mahujiang to loot the imperial nanmu timber, killing soldiers and civilians alike. Other Yi groups were very worried about these anti-Ming sentiments because they knew it could cause violent repercussions from the central government. The governor of Sichuan assembled the forces of chieftains from Yunnan and Guizhou to fight the Mahu

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2117 Cf. Broy 2006, 46.
2118 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 47.
2119 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 47.
2120 Cf. Broy 2006, p. 100.

Man of Liangshan, reversing their former role. 1588, An Xing was attacked in his old bastion in the Huanglang marshes. The Liangshan Sanxiong were annihilated and the hereditary office of the An Clan was abolished, Mahufu was reformed based on the jurisdiction of Han Chinese officials. With that, Han Chinese culture became culturally dominant and was adopted by the Yi, who also adjusted their family names. Especially among the Yi elite, Han Chinese marriage customs and Confucian education became prestigious.[2121] During the Wanli reign, there was a new wave of nanmu timber procurement, but the resources had been depleted — the task was much harder than before. Local chieftains of Huguang, Sichuan and the farther southwest were involved again — this time as *tusi* 土司 — and alleviated the burden of imperial timber troops. In exchange for that, they evoked an imperial overlooking in regard for their own matters. However, very quickly the government started to demand timber tribute in unrealistic amounts which caused new social unrest.[2122]

The Hailong-si was established in 1589 — as we now know, certainly not as an original site but as a new claim to an older one. It benefited local demands of fishers, tea and brassica farmers; it was likely home to a Daoist or Buddhist community by that point and it held at least some halls, if not entire buildings, for Zhuge Liang and Meng Huo. The description of the three impressive icons of Meng Huo, Meng You and Mo Tie, reveal a somewhat Buddhist context of the Meng Huo Hall by mentioning a high number of bodhisattvas. "From the beginning, the Qing dynasty had favored appeasement over high handedness in pacifying and ruling the non-Han peoples in the southwest".[2123] Thus, it had been understood that destructions, obliterations and other aggressive acts mostly caused more unrest that would lead to the loss of human life and economic gains. By reframing local heroes and ancestors to promote some of their goals, the early Qing moved on to appeasement politics. By 1727, the government of Mahufu was completely reformed and the territory downsized. At this point, the Yi of Mahu had supposedly been sufficiently assimilated into the Han Chinese culture. This was emphasized by the restoration of the

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2121 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 48.

2122 Cf. Campbell 2020, pp. 68–69.

2123 Cf. Dai Yingcong 2009, p. 28.

Meng Huo Hall in 1783. But at the end of the Qing dynasty, the line of local chieftains ended for a lack of heirs and their names disappeared.[2124] Although Chinese maps are very unreliable, the depiction of the Hailong-si in the *Leibotingzhi* map showed a vast temple in good condition at some point around 1893. However, after the Qing dynasty, the temple was left unattended and fell into disrepair until the present era.

S.3.3.4. The Modern Framing of the Hailong-si

It is time to look at the contemporary framing of the Hailong-si in religious and political terms. The texts of the signboards along the eastern shore of Mahu Lake are in Chinese, English and Korean, which emphasizes the implied international relevance of the place although its infrastructure is still very much off the grid. The first signboard "Turtle Playing with Water" describes the island and the legend of the tortoise stone that was sent to the island by a monk. Curiously, it describes the Menghuo Hall as the main hall of the temple and that Guanyin was located in a 'back hall'. This fits the local frame of emphasizing Meng Huo but contradicts the typical inner hierarchies of Chinese temple layouts. The second one, "Meng Huo Bridge", relates not entirely accurate information about Meng Huo. For example, it claims that Meng Huo's old name was *jumurefu* 居木惹夫, a term that actually refers to the Yi's six ancestor tribes traced back to one mythical ancestor who was *not* Meng Huo. The signboard also references the legend of capturing and releasing Meng Huo seven times and how Zhuge Liang 'forced' the Shu-Han emperor to appoint Meng Huo as a minister. Interestingly, the last passage is praise claiming that Meng Huo "… promote[d] harmony and intermarriage between Yi and Han." This is followed by a signboard called "Zhu Rong Bridge" that describes the purely fictious character Zhurong Furen how she appeared in the *Sanguo Yanyi* without referring to the novel at all. Quite to the contrary, she is historicized and described as the daughter of a Han official and thus with Meng Huo the "earliest example of Yi-Han inter-marriage [sic]."

The first stele in front of the Hailong-si is the "Stele Inscription of 'The Guanyin Icon' of the Guanyin Hall" (*Guanyindian Guanyin Foxiang Beiji* 觀音殿

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2124 Cf. Deng Pei 2004, p. 48.

觀音佛像 碑記). Created to look like a historical stele text, it begins with praises of Buddhism. The modern religious text identifies a Mr. Yang Laha 杨拉哈 — chairman of the Leibo Hydropower Development Co. Ltd. 德雷波縣水電开发有限公司 — and his wife Yang Jingui 杨金贵, together with the anonymous author, as the main donors for the new Guanyin icon. The official motivation was to spread the word of the Buddha so that "our Buddha may bathe all ten directions in sunshine and moisten everything with sweet dew". The new Guanyin icon was consecrated in October 2013 with "a large number" of revelers. This tells us quite a few things.

First, there was interest in reinvigorating the Buddhist aspect of the site. However, the island is very difficult to reach and not a main site of religious practice for most of the people living around Jinma Lake. Second, someone comparatively powerful invested into the site. From an economic perspective Mr. and Mrs. Yang hold a social position that is comparable to the gentry of late imperial times. Furthermore, the Yang surname was a lineage of local *tusi*,[2125] therefore it is possible that Mr. and Mrs. Yang are of Yi heritage, although this could not be verified with the available data. Third, although the framing is Buddhist, the formulated goal is Buddhist, and a Buddha is mentioned as well, the core change was the new Guanyin icon. There was not done more to raise the Buddhist identity of the temple or to create a more Buddhist setting. Fourth, it is highly interesting that, of all possible business magnates, it was the chairman of a hydropower development company that started two high prestige projects in the previous year,[2126] who invested into a Guanyin known to "balance the well".

There is another poster about Buddhism in the forecourt of the Hailong-si which is mostly an apologetic text. It stresses the positive traits of studying Buddhism and openly calls out the misconception and persecution of Buddhism as "a religious superstition and passive escape", because such could only rely on a lack of knowledge about the role of Buddhism in Chinese Culture.

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2125 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 22:4b.

2126 "Project 7514: Leibo County Mala Hydropower Station Project" https://cdm.unfccc.int/Projects/DB/TUEV-RHEIN1348821230.81/view and "Project 7144 : Leibo County Changhe Hydropower Station Project" https://cdm.unfccc.int/Projects/DB/TUEV-RHEIN1346383651.48/view both running from 2012—2019.

It then describes how Buddhism will help to construct a socialist civilization, solve the problems of human self-construction and promote the "glorious re-appearance of the Eastern civilization". China already was the "best culture" when Buddhism mixed into everything. Due to the persecution as a superstition, the 'celebrities' studying Buddhism were supposedly hidden away and the poster also criticizes that modern Buddhism uses too traditional methods of self-propaganda and does not adapt enough to modern society.

We read here a similar line of thought to Suining where religion is not condemned, but both the government and the Buddhist communities are somewhat criticized. In this site, though, religion serves mostly as a promotional tool. So, there are people interested in promoting Buddhism and in advancing at least Guanyin-based Buddhism. Yet, the Guanyin Hall does not make the impression of being ready for any ritual performances of Buddhist nature.

What about the little tablets with the Five Elements? The poster titled "The Five Elements Transit the Buddha Lamp" to the side of the Guanyin shrine gives insight into their presence: Although the title references a term of Chan Buddhism, the text itself does not have much to do with it. It explains how the Five Elements are an ancient doctrine of China used for divination and that their imbalances can cause great personal misfortune. So, the "great deeds" are invited into the temple to transfer the Buddha lamps, which are used here as some kind of blessing. If an imbalance of elements is fixed then there will be safety, prosperity, harmony, good health and piety. In the last sentence, Amitabha is praised. This text entwines some divinatory, Daoist and Buddhist elements. Such reference to modern practices may just reflect the affiliation of this temple, which seems to be firmly hybridized even if the participants are not a hundred percent sure about the ramifications of this either.

And yet, the patronage of the site has only grown since 2016. The entrance to the temple was rearranged so that the docks could hold larger boats with more people. Festivals according to the Yi calendar were initiated to make use of the cultural hall that was still being constructed in 2016. According to the "Synopsis" stele in the front courtyard of the Hailong-si, the temple had been made a provincial level scenic spot (again) by 1993. It then became a Provincial Cultural Relics Protection Unit 省级文物保护单位 of Sichuan in 1996, so in 1997 the Leibo County People's Government allocated funds for repairs. In

2007, four million Yuan were paid out to fund a comprehensive renovation and remodeling of the three icons of Meng and "other deities". The Meng Huo signboard in the temple's front courtyard emphasizes that the Meng Huo Hall (in contrast to the entire temple) is the only remaining one to commemorate a hero of Yi ethnicity. It states that it is a symbol of the unity, reconciliation and harmony of the Yi and Han people. The praise continues in the more general poster on Mahu in the front courtyard which claims that Meng Huo is internationally well-known and specifies various countries where authors wrote about him. However, we do not even know if a historical person Meng Huo ever existed, so there is little historical information about him. The introductory poster therefore mixes up some local lore, ideas taken from the novel *Sanguo Yanyi,* and a study likely done by the local government before it invested funds into the site. The poster describes Meng Huo as the son of a bamboo artisan named Meng Du 孟都 and the middle child between Meng Jie and Meng You. His mother was allegedly of the Wu 巫 family or — more likely — of *a* wu (i.e., shaman) family. During Meng Huo's alleged lifetime, the Yi shamans were still often female and a leader like Meng Huo would have needed more legitimacy than a mere bamboo artisan could have provided.

The poster declares that certain places in Yunnan, like the site where Meng Huo may have crossed the Jinshajiang into Mahu — Yongshan 永善 — venerate all three Meng brothers of whom the oldest became a merchant, Meng Huo became a warrior and his younger brother "followed him". From a narrative constructing perspective, three is a pleasant number and ensembles of three appear in various religious contexts,[2127] like in this case of a constructed group of siblings with high meaning related to of non-Han identity. Another motif borrowed from the *Sanguo Yanyi* is that Meng Huo lived in a dark and nefarious part of the forest where he called himself the Yi Emperor and had control over three Grotto Marshals (*sandong yuanshi* 三洞元帥), which only occur in

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2127 Examples are, of course, the Buddhist triads, the Daoist Three Pure Ones (*sanqing* 三清), the popular Fu Lu Shou luck deities, or the three female deities of springs, but also the Matrae which refer to the common depiction of a triad of matrons in Roman, Germanic and Celtic religions. For example, the Matronae Aufaniae attested for numerous German cities but also to Lyon (Franche) and Carmona (Spain). Many of them were also related to water, like the Matronae Ahinehiae, Matronae Ahueccaniae or Matronae Vacallinehae.

the novel. It is further stated that while his father came from Guizhou, Meng Huo was born in Yunnan's Qujing 曲靖. This cannot be ascertained as true or false and may be taken from a local tale[2128] because Qujing is one of Meng Huo's cult sites.

Since the worship of Meng Huo had spread through the southwest by the late imperial period, it was only appropriate to appeal to all provinces involved in his worship if this site was to be promoted as one of its centers. However, because he was not only celebrated as an Yi hero, the majority of his thirteen known main places of worship (one in Guizhou, nine in Yunnan, four in Sichuan) are in Yunnan. His descendants allegedly fled there and spread out especially among the minorities of the Yi, the Dai, the Miao and the Zhuang. Of the Sichuanese places of worship, three are located in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, one in Yibin. The different titles used in the veneration of Meng Huo were also researched (likely by the local government) between 1992—2004 in fifteen cities and 22 counties of Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan. They are, in descending popularity: Great King of Pan 潘大王 (an ancient state conquered by Chu), Great King of the Yi, Black Great King 黑大王, Indigenous Iron King 本主铁王, the Yi's first hero 彝族先雄 (this is likely a very recent epithet), and Emperor of the Southwest 西南皇帝 (this one also comes from the *Sanguo Yanyi*). The rest of the poster emphasizes Meng Huo's tactical skills, describing an event that Zhuge Liang supposedly later copied from him; it also mentions how Meng Huo reapplied Zhuge Liang's psychological warfare to capture competing chieftains and to integrate them into his army. This is an anachronistic description that takes up the later narrative of Zhuge Liang as a great tactician.

S.3.3.5. The Reconfigurative Analysis of the Hailong-si: Pingjing Guanyin and the Invisible Other

The multi-layered and complex history of the island temple of Mahu demonstrates how the application of Experiential Architecture Analysis can help us understand local historical developments better if textual resources are scarce or unavailable. The thorough analysis of the site exposed the

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2128 The section is introduced by *xixi yiyi* 昔昔一一, similar to "once upon a time".

following hints. There was competition between Buddhist and Daoist ideas. Buddhism influenced earlier construction phases of the Hailong-si but not in a way that resembled historical or contemporary variants of orthodox Chinese Buddhism. The Guanyin icon in the last hall is connected to hydrolatry; just like the entire site of the Hailong-si inhabits a spot that is typical for hydrolatry, in an environment associated with dragon lore. The temple may be presented as an Yi site, but there are discrepancies that distance it from Yi culture. The authenticity of Meng Huo's presence is therefore doubtful. During the last days of writing up this chapter in 2021, I was finally able to access an edition of the *Leibotingzhi* which verified the majority of these hypotheses developed from the collected data. This verified that the EAA delivers accurate results.

In regard to the reconfigurative history of the Hailong-si, we cannot be entirely sure when the earliest sacred site in its spot was established because the early history of the Golden Tortoise Island remains obscure due to a lack of sources. In the context of the area's religious history, Daoists were perhaps the first who encountered an indigenous hydrolatric site there, at some point followed by Buddhists. In the Yuan dynasty, the Confucianization process initiated in the southwest led to the placement of Wuhou-ci which were also used to claim existing sacred sites. A direct predecessor of the contemporary Hailong-si may have been built during that era although the placement of the temple's pagoda in the map of 1893 suggests that the temple could have been established even earlier. To place a Wuhou-ci directly into the center of an area where Zhuge Liang allegedly captured the indigenous leader Meng Huo was a localization measure of the Chinese Empire meant to reinterpret the religious landscape of the island in its favor. However, the name Hailong-si neither implies Zhuge Liang's presence nor does its suffix suggest a fitting category. The imperial narrative about a placed -ci is thus contrasted by the local narrative about the establishment of a -si. The authors of local gazetteers did not deem the presence of Zhuge Liang or Meng Huo worthy of attention, this suggests that the government indeed failed to claim the site. Even if Zhuge Liang had been — in the shape of a spirit tablet or icon — <u>inserted</u> into the site, it apparently did not cause significant ideology transfer.

The establishment of the Shengmushan-ci — also a possible direct predecessor — was a second attempt to mark the area for the empire. A specific

legend was tailored to the Mahu area to ensure that the imperial claim would stick this time. The <u>superimposing</u> tactic served as an excuse to forbid local timber collection practices while simultaneously increasing the exploitation of timber resources for Beijing because the emperor had been 'invited' by the local spirits. This led to the <u>renaming</u> of an entire mountain and its sacred site, including a new <u>suffix attribution</u>. The area was <u>mapped</u> and multiple places around the lake <u>ranked</u> into the Mahu scenic spots which would be continuously regrouped and republished during the coming dynasties. All of this was part of an intricate acculturation process that also encompassed the repeated execution of indigenous officials (*tusi*) and their replacement by Han Chinese officials — first in greater cities like Leibo, and roughly a century later in the entirety of Mahufu. Interestingly, this exemplary instance of an imperializing expansion was accompanied by a low amount of <u>concealment</u>. The local population was still considered noncompliant, so Yongle had to avoid any doubt about his right to rule the area. It was necessary to legitimize his claim by employing local resources of legitimacy. Because the local population depended on the lake, the spirits of Mountains and Streams were used as container deities for indigenous water deities to translate their functions into the imperial terms of rainmaking and earthshaking. In this manner, local water deities served as legitimation for the imperial authority. However, the narratives of the Yi fields being more blessed with water than the Han Chinese fields remained. Han Chinese officials were obliged to visit Yi shrines to successfully implore for rain. This demonstrated that the Ming claim was not unchallenged because these narratives expressed that the *local nature itself* favored the Yi.

Two hundred years later, these narrative strands united. The Wanli Emperor planned to control the area to gather the last high quality nanmu timber but he was dependent on the collaboration of local chieftains. This was why Chuanzhu temple building reached its zenith under Wanli, these temples localized imperial ideology by providing a highly reputable option of water control in the shape of Li Bing. Their spread tightened the net of imperial control over the troublesome southwest. Even though the Yi had become the indigenous group most similar to the Han Chinese, they used this occasion to reclaim some options of self-governance. However, the recalibration of the timber procurement arrangements as a quasi-tribute also put intense pressure

on the indigenous peoples which caused them to rebel. The rebel's spearhead organization Liangshan Sanxiong of An Xing was taken down in 1588 and followed by the aforementioned replacement of Mahufu officials by Han Chinese. The first documented Meng Huo Hall was built only one year later. The insertion of Meng Huo likely expressed sentiments similar to the Chuanzhu: an imperially placed symbol in a desired locality that represented the desired behavior (subjugation, collaboration, pacifying the 'other' indigenous groups) but which the locals used to solve more mundane problems — mostly of agriculture. This created the polysemy of the site if it did not exist beforehand, and would support a situation as assumed in one of the contemporary posters.

The map found in the *Leibotingzhi* proves that the Hailong-si had turned into a Buddhist temple by the year 1893 TAQ, but the rebuilding of the modern Meng Huo Hall effaced the countless bodhisattvas which supposedly once surrounded the three main icons and likely other Buddhist traces as well. Meng Huo's brother and adviser were instead positioned in a way that reflected the typical Han Chinese shrine arrangement with a main deity that was flanked by a warrior and a 'scholar'. The Yi characteristics of their clothing were reduced as well and the entire shrine wrapped in yellow drapes — the imperial color. For these reasons, the Meng Huo shrine actually 'speaks' Han Chinese. Meng Huo's imperial task has been transferred to a modern question of national identity, but his position also has become contested by a reinvigorated variant of hybridized Buddhism that installs small diversions. For example, there is the placement of a small Guanyin icon between the sacrificial altar and the Meng Huo icon, or the small figurines that have been added to the Zhurong Furen shrine which may imply that the local spiritual needs are not met by a character from a novel. Possibly, the 2013 insertion of Pingjing Guanyin was the first Buddhist main icon in the site during the twenty-first century. This and the modern steles may suggest a revitalization of Buddhist power, although the hall of Pingjing Guanyin only appears to be marginally Buddhist. Half of the hall is occupied by a water basin and another large part by commercial ventures while typical features of a Buddhist context are missing. Guanyin may be framed as a reproducer of Buddhist ideology, but there is little religious interaction with the shrine. We may assume that a Buddhist superscription was attempted and followed by a history of high degree hybridity. This is substantiated by the

additional plaques of the Chinese five elements which relate to the "The Five Elements Transit the Buddha Lamp" signboard right next to it. It warns visitors that they should either balance their five elements or expect awful consequences, this suggests a more Daoist than Buddhist tradition.

In general, the restored Hailong-si of 2016 conveyed a rather nonactive and musealized impression, although there are isolated spots of private religious activity. The attention is centered on Meng Huo. Historically inclined touristic visitors occasionally honor him as an ancestor, view him as a former worthy, a military hero, an ethnic hero or proto-diplomat. The religiously active parts of the temple are found in the last hall with the smaller Guanyin statue to the right of the center icon, which indeed receives sacrifices and — judging from the ritual objects around — performative interaction. The modern steles attest to local interest for the Buddhism of Hailong-si even from the Yi's side. The hall of Zhuge Liang is also active — but merely as a lucky token for the more mundane wishes of visitors, not as an imperial or hydrolatric symbol. In sum, the Meng Huo in the front hall may express various ideas about ethno-identity, but Guanyin and Zhuge Liang receive more interaction because they fulfill the local religious desires. Meng Huo hence merely serves as decoration to calm governmental desires. The low activity despite previously extensive, governmentally sponsored advertisement campaigns may be caused by the mixed messages reproduced due to the identity issues of the temple. By taking a step back and considering the direct vicinity of the island, it becomes apparent that there were continual clashes of religious sentiments. But the temple's modern framing also shows a refreshing support for religious reinvigoration and promotes a very localized Buddhism as a modern consolidation tool. By advertising to fulfill governmental goals more successfully than the problematic anti-superstition suppression, Buddhism once again tries to attract — at least — local governmental patronage.

S.3.3.6. Questions of Identity

I. Meng Huo and Zhuge Liang

Meng Huo was the leader of the Man in third century southern Sichuan.[2129] The original Zhuge Liang biography in the *Sanguozhi* states very briefly that Zhuge Liang went on punitive expeditions during the spring and the autumn but does not mention Meng Huo's name at all. However, a commentary refers to the *Han Jin Chunqiu* 漢晉春秋 ['Spring and Autumn Between the Han and Jin [Dynasties]'], a history written at the end of the fourth century by Xi Zaochi 習鑿齒 (?—384 CE). Here, Meng Huo unified the Yi but refused to subject to the Shu-Han prime minister Zhuge Liang. Because this detail was added later, there were many doubts whether Meng Huo was a historical person or not.[2130] Such doubts confuse the very likely existence of a leader who may or may not have had the name Meng Huo with the probably fabricated and exaggerated tales of his battles with Zhuge Liang. Although later texts depict Meng Huo as an enemy, he is described as a good and benevolent leader who, from the Chinese perspective, showed many positive traits of a ruler: he cultivated good land and built water channels.[2131] The tricks Zhuge Liang supposedly played on Meng Huo and his sanctimonious benevolence belong to a narrative created many centuries after the fact with the aim to depict Zhuge Liang as a Confucian sage who was allegedly logically superior to the indigenous people southwest of Shu, but who met them with goodwill.[2132] When Meng Huo was ultimately defeated, he pledged that the 'Southerners will never revolt again'.[2133] This sentence made his story highly valuable to late imperial China. The *Qizong Qiqin* 七縱七禽 ['Seven Times Released, Seven Times Captured'] legend is based on Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372—451 CE) commentary on the *Sanguozhi* and Zhuge Liang's biography in Chapter 35, thereof — but it is handled in just two sentences. In the eleventh century, Sima Guang greatly embellished the narrative

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2129 Cf. Tillman 2007, p. 54.

2130 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 146, 150 and Li Guiping 2016, p. 35.

2131 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 35.

2132 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 142.

2133 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 145.

to demonstrate Zhuge Liang's great skill and achievement in pacifying the 'barbarians'.[2134] The *Sanguo Yanyi* blows this up to four chapters that detail the multiple strategies applied in the long campaign against Meng Huo.

According to this legend, Meng Huo was captured but unwilling to subject himself, so Zhuge Liang released him multiple times to undermine his legitimacy and to destroy his reputation. The strategy was successful because Meng Huo's own commanders started to turn him in and his final capture supposedly happened in Mahu.[2135] By showing mercy and pardoning him, Zhuge Liang riled Meng Huo up against the tribes who had united under him and who had become traitors to him. In the 1990s, the Russian Sinologist Boris Riftin (1932—2012) met a Sichuanese Yi woman while collecting folklore on Zhuge Liang. She stated that her people had always hated Zhuge Liang, because she traced her ancestry back to Meng Huo. She told him the same story that Shop Keeper[2136] told me during my visit in 2016 and which I had been unable to locate in Chinese historical documents: that Meng Huo, a hero to the Yi people, also captured Zhuge Liang five times in return.[2137] The implication here is that when the Song attempted to gain more control over southern Sichuan, they raised Zhuge Liang's position as a pacifier of the 'barbarians' but this inadvertently also raised the position of Meng Huo. While Meng Huo was supposed to take the role of the noble savage who ultimately subjects himself to the 'superior' culture,[2138] this also provided the Yi with a symbol of cultural identity which has helped to maintain Yi identity to this day.

Another discussion was the ethnic heritage of Meng Huo. Meng Huo was certainly not the original name of the person who may have united 'the' southwestern tribes. Huo is likened to a title or function, equivalent to a command-

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2134 Cf. Tillman 2007, p. 56.

2135 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 35.

2136 Interview with a local shopkeeper, who is of Han and Yi heritage, at the Mahu Hotel at the northeastern shore of Jinma Lake (Dahai Village 大海村), September 14, 2016.

2137 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 144.

2138 This is the nineteenth century interpretation of the trope. For its differentiation from its classical roots, see: Ellingson, Terry Jay. *The Myth of the Noble Savage.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

er,[2139] and even if Meng was a true personal name, we do not know if it was a Han or a rendered Yi term or a transmitted name. In accordance with Peng's informants, Meng Huo's name would translate to "army commander".[2140] It was thus a job description which detached the historical person — who may or may not have existed as Meng Huo — from the meaning that the image of Meng Huo held in later centuries. For this reason, it cannot be ascertained if Meng Huo was of Yi or Han heritage, but it also does not matter. The Yi adopted Meng Huo as a representative of Yi identity, so his personal ancestry from centuries ago lost its political relevance. Meng Huo became more than a person, he turned into a symbol and that made him very relevant for late imperial Han Chinese authors and administrators.

Not much is known about the circumstances of Meng Huo's icon on the island in 1589, but Shop Keeper firmly believes in what she has been told since she was a child. In that year of Emperor Wanli, the local magistrate had a dream of Zhuge Liang. This statesman from many centuries ago earnestly demanded that a temple should be built right there in Mahu. Not only for him, but also for Meng Huo, the hero of the Yi, and the temple should be a symbol for the union between Han and Yi, as this was the site "where Han and Yi became one". The way she narrated this story sounded like it may have had a literary source, but the gazetteers available to me did not include such a story, nor did I find a trace of it elsewhere. Since Shop Keeper was very enthusiastic about local culture and in general trustworthy, there is no reason to doubt that this story belongs to an oral tradition which may have been locally accepted as reality. This narrative fits the paradigm of many other imperializing temple foundation stories where local deities meet with the imperial representatives in their dreams and make their demands. It is curious that a site so far in the south saw Zhuge Liang as a 'local' or rather translocal deity who additionally made a demand for Meng Huo (assuming the role of a territorial deity). This narrative was with great certainty created by the Han Chinese side — Zhuge Liang has all the spiritual agency while Meng Huo cannot speak for himself. Zhuge Liang's

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2139 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 150.

2140 Cf. ibid., p. 151, informants told Peng that Meng could also be a rendering of another Yi term for "army, troops".

demand is further not meant to serve local defense or elevation — 'uniting Han and Yi as one' was a very imperial narrative. It is a fitting continuation of Yongle's legendary acts of <u>superimposing</u> in Mahu: If the Han and Yi are one, then the Yi have no territorial rights of their own, they are merely regular Chinese subjects of the emperor — the true lord of their territory and all its transcendental inhabitants. If a similar legend was indeed around in the late Ming dynasty, then it was a testament to the government's plan to acculturate the territory once and for all.

Since the unity of Yi and Han as demonstrated by Meng Huo and Zhuge Liang is a Han narrative, how did the locals perceive Meng Huo and who interacted with him in the Hailong-si? The introductory front court poster is one of the few publications relating to what Meng Huo meant for non-imperialists. In a quote likely taken from an unreferenced archive text, it relates something about on-site veneration, the temple itself and adds about Meng Huo: "… the people even think that he diminishes calamities." This is another instance which treats Meng Huo as a tutelary deity of Mahu, although he was not a native of the area. This matter is investigated in the next section.

II. The Water Deity of the Hailong-si

Mahu Lake is located at a height of 1100 meters. Its water has no obvious sources, any excess flows in an impressive manner down the cliffs into the Jinshajiang. Although the lake is used to irrigate the fields in the vicinity, it never dries out.[2141] All of this by itself would have sufficed in a historical context to attribute some numinosity to the site. Since antiquity, one of Mahu Lake's main export products has been a kind of water amaranth (*Brasenia schreberi*) which is dependent on good water quality and its price has doubled since both the lake and product became protected in 2014,[2142] this may be the reason for the mixed messages about the lake's environmental status. The locals are mostly aware of the previous pollution and Shop Keeper demonstrates the water's ef-

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2141 Cf. Li Guiping 2016, p. 34.

2142 "[…] and the price has increased from 35 yuan/kg before the protection to 60 yuan/kg, and the output value has increased by 41.6%." Cf. Chihuo Club 吃货俱乐部 "Mahu Chuncai 马湖莼菜" 26 November 2020. https://www.chihuoclub.com/techan/mahuchuncai.html

fects to me — although as something positive: "When you put your hands into the lake and wring them, it makes them feel soapy and they will be all clean." The livelihoods of the Mahu population rely on this lake for irrigation, for their animals, to grow certain crops, and in previous centuries also for its fishes. It is not surprising that dragons, dragon horses and other aquatic spirits mentioned in the historical documents were associated with this waterscape. Like the literature and historical overview showed, the Hailong-si's identity of the past was as obscured as it is now because very different groups contested it. To identify the different aspects of its identity, it is wise to start with the name that the temple has carried since at least the nineteenth century. The locals explain the name of the temple with the 'fact' that Mahu used to have dragons. Shop Keeper knows some more about the local legend: Once, there was an indigo snake (*lanshe* 藍蛇) and a golden tortoise. Both lived in the gloomy marshes before Mahu was Mahu. The indigo snake said: I can invite the Dragon King of the East (*donglongwang* 東龍王) to turn this area into an ocean, and then I myself will become a dragon and take care of the fertility here. The tortoise fought her, because it had compassion for the humans who would be affected by the flood. The Pig Mother Immortal *Muzhu-xian* 母豬仙[2143] intervened and sided with the snake, so the golden tortoise defiantly said: "When you call the dragon, I will become an island." The next day, when the snake had called in the dragon king, it rained so much that Mahu Lake was created. The snake turned into a dragon and the tortoise turned into an island; the Hailong-si was built on top of it to show the tortoises' support for the local dragon.

Shop Keeper was affirmative of the Pig Mother Immortal and wrote the term Muzhu-xian down for me while pointing to the cave in the mountains to our back. However, the old boatman who took me to the island explained that the huge, but broken cave in the mountains behind the village at the eastern shore belonged to a dragon, although he did not know if it was male or female. He described a cave with many stalactites and many visitors but because of a

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[2143] The Pig Mother Immortal is a translocal deity whose name implies a Daoist immortal although she is not one. She may have originated in the Shizhushan 石猪山 area of Guizhou, where there is a legend about her. It is not clear how she came to Mahu, but she also appears as a toponym in Pingshan — once close to the Jinsha River, twice in Yibin — both times next to a dragon lake — and once close to Leibo.

landslide many years ago, it had become too dangerous and nobody could go in very deep anymore. A sign board mentions the karst cave, it verifies the stalactites but does not mention a dragon. It does, however, state that the cave was formerly big enough to have housed "thousands" of people. So, it was likely large enough for possible communal religious rituals like the rain rituals occurring in similar places elsewhere in Sichuan.

Another visitor[2144] heard a different version from a local boatman, called "Golden Tortoise Carries the Sea Dragon" (*Jingui Tuo Hailong* 金龟驮海龙). In this variant, a cave dwelling snake is the kindhearted one who desired to free the inhabitants of the swamp from their hardship and the lack of clean water. However, the tortoise mocks it. Moved by the snake's sincerity, the dragon king sends rain to fill up a clean lake. This causes the snake to turn into a sea dragon and the tortoise was magically transformed into an island. This legend ends with the explanation that the people built the Hailong-si out of gratitude to the *dragon*. It is especially interesting that the snake belonged to a cave which, given the tortoise's transformation, may have been in vicinity of the island. In context with this etiology of the temple's establishment, it may be suggested that a sacred site was transferred from the cave to island temple. This would fit with the information that the cave on the east shore was previously associated with a dragon and used for assemblies and rituals.

The "Indigo Snake and Golden Tortoise Legend" (*Lanshe Lian Jingui Chuanshuo* 藍蛇連金龜傳說) is a variant of an ancient lore known throughout the province but usually attributed to the deity Wenchang. However, it had likely once originated in the southern regions close to modern Xichang 西昌,[2145] which would make it plausible that the Yi knew such lore and that it was successively adopted by the Han Chinese settlers. It tells of a serpent which is adopted by a childless woman. It grows into an uncontrollable beast which eats the horse of a magistrate, who then executes the old woman. In retaliation, the snake causes incessant rain and floods the city. Similar tales, without snakes,

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2144 Cf. Yang Qingzhen 杨庆珍. "Mahushanxiang: Xiao Liangshan Shenchu de 'Yishi Taoyuan'". Sichuan Economic Daily. 10 September 2018. https://www.scjjrb.com/2018/09/10/99125425.html.

2147 Cf. Kleeman "A God's Own Tale" 1994, p. 36.

of retaliating or accidental floods that took out entire cities are also known from the lore of Shuimu and Shuimu Niangniang (see Chapter V), which is also known throughout Sichuan and in the Central Plains. Be that as it may, the local gazetteers are entirely silent about any legends about a snake and a tortoise. But even though this specific legend cannot be found, there is still plenty of evidence for the existence of a snake connected storm cult existing in the Mahu Lake area.

All gazetteers mention thunder caves, thunder grottoes and thunder shrines. At the first sight one could assume that they refer to the thunder rites[2146] performed by Daoists or to the Thunder God (*leishen* 雷神) who is indeed connected to some sites. But other thunder sites turn out to have been formerly occupied by giant snakes. Snakes belonged to the indigenous southern mythology, where there was no schism that would have transferred the good serpentine traits to dragons exclusively. The Han Chinese associated the conjuring of storms with dragons; it was also a trait of the Indian naga which influenced the Buddhist dragons of China. It is sensible to assume that such a storm calling giant snake was the prototype for the later indigo snake who turned into a sea dragon. And indeed, among the miscellanea of the 1893 *Leibotingzhi* there is a story which was either the prototype of the *Indigo Snake and Golden Tortoise Legend* or a variant rooted in the same regional mythology. The entry called *Thunder God Grotto* 雷神洞 reports:

雷神洞有大蛇如甕 常出飲池水. 山僧輩皆見之故司馬張擴亭. 詩曰:	"*In the Thunder God Grotto, there is a giant snake as thick as a wine vessel. It commonly emerged to drink pond water.* *The mountain monks all saw this happening, so Sima Zhang enlarged the pavilion. A poem says:*

昨有大蛇出	*'Yesterday, the giant snake emerged to join us*
聯睛露光怪,	*with its eyes showing a strange radiance.*
得母神龍	*It called for its mother, the Holy Dragon,*
子要與風雲	*The child requested her to accumulate wind*
會蓋實事也.	*and clouds to conceal the matter.'*

後有人於崖隙塑一龍首. *After this, there were people who put the clay mod-*
此後蛇不再出知何故. *el of a dragon head into a crack of the cliffs. After-*
  ward the snake somehow no longer emerged."[2147]

This poem has the motif of a snake connected to humid weather. The snake is depicted as an inferior being who needs the help of a dragon. In this case, the dragon is the snake's mother, which implies that the snake has the potential to become a dragon as well. Curiously enough, the monks do not seem to be afraid of the snake. While there are many Chan Buddhist stories about the attacks on such supernatural beings or an attempt to convert them into protectors of Buddhism,[2148] the monks in this story even built a bigger pavilion to accommodate it. Further, the apotropaic placement of the dragonhead and how it would banish the snake was not understood as such, or at least not the reason for it. Another section adds that this Thunder God Grotto was on a dripping cliff and the pond had been created by its water. Up the mountain, there was a Laojun Grotto 老君洞 — a grotto dedicated to Laozi — where the Daoists venerated Zhenwu.[2149] Since we know that Zhenwu was connected to water deities in the south, the term *seng* 僧 "monk" may here not refer to Buddhists but to Daoists.[2150] Although the Thunder God Grotto of Mahu is not located on the island, the narratives are so similar to each other that a developmental relationship has to be expected. After reviewing the historical documents, history

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2149 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 36:2b–3a. Interpunctuation my own.

2148 The most famous fictionalized example may be the „Tale of the White Snake" *Baishezhuan* 白蛇傳, also called "The Maiden Eternally Subdued Under Leifeng Pagoda" *Bainiangzi Yong-zhen Leifengta* 白娘子永鎮雷峰塔, collected in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 *Jingshi Tongyan* 警世通言 of 1624.

2149 Cf. Leibotingzhi 1893, 34:7b–8a.

2150 Daoists indeed weaponized snake veneration in their contest for monastic property with Buddhists. Cf. Chen Huaiyu 2019, p. 12, also see Chapter V.

and the surviving local lore, the identity of the original water deity who was once venerated at the site of the Hailong-si can no longer be determined. In all likelihood, it was a dragon and a snake before that, it was likely female and its job was to provide rain, keep the water balance, and ensure the fertility of fish and plants. This function prevailed beyond the original cult and was adopted by the transregional religions that migrated into the area. In this regard, just a few hundred meters south of the island, there is indeed a cave of the Pig Mother Immortal known as *muzhuwoyan* 母豬臥岩 ['Cliff of the Resting Sow']. It is one of Mahu's modern scenic spots created to attract tourists. At the conjunction of the Dahai Village and the Cliff of the Resting Sow, to the east there is an area nowadays still called Wumasi 五馬寺, named for the "Five Horses Temple" that had once been built there. This name referred to the legend of the lake's dragon horses, but not enough is known about it to assume the temple's affiliation. The suffix would indicate a Buddhist site while the vicinity of the Pig Mother Immortal cave could imply a Daoist presence. Daoists marks dominated the religious landscape of Mahu, but between 1589 and 1893, possibly even since before the eleventh century, Buddhism must have been present in some shape. The contemporary Hailong-si contains influences of both religious traditions, this makes it likely that Daoism and Buddhism both occupied the spot of an older hydrolatric site on the island and entered into active competition at some point. With the available data, though, it cannot be determined which religion was first introduced or in what era which religion held the dominant claim to the site.

Other variants of the *Indigo Snake and Golden Tortoise Legend* created a connection to Meng Huo. Some suggest the story is an analogy for the relation between Meng Huo and Zhuge Liang, with the honorable tortoise symbolizing Meng Huo who enabled Zhuge Liang — and the Chinese Empire — to rise like a dragon. Others inserted him actively into the narrative but the variant on the general poster of the Hailong-si's front courtyard[2151] goes even a step further. According to that version, Meng Huo was on patrol between his former residence in Yunnan and Mahu and came upon the battling tortoise and

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2151 The indigo snake is called an orchid snake (*lanshe* 蘭蛇) here, the homophone makes it likely that this version was once collected as an oral narrative.

orchid snake. When the snake told him about its intention to call the dragon king and turn Mahu into a fertile region, he agreed with it, but the tortoise mistrusted the snake's 'malicious talk', which made the snake angry. Meng Huo negotiated an armistice and urged the orchid snake to formally request help from the Eastern Sea Dragon Lord, who submerged Mahu in crystal clear water. Ashamed for its false judgment, the golden tortoise then turned into an island to carry the orchid snake. Meng Huo was thus not only a good military leader but also a talented diplomat. In the aftermath, the people of Mahu were very grateful to Meng Huo for bringing fish to their area. This last sentence is very important because it transfers the grand feat of providing Mahu with fish from the dragon (the water deity) to Meng Huo (the imperially inserted tutelary deity). This turns him into an even older type of territorial deity which was sourced from nature spirits [V.5.].

With that, we can conclude that Meng Huo of Mahu is a polysemous entity in a multilocal site: he was relevant for imperial ethnopolitics and is still relevant for national ones, but for the locals he had a practical role regarding the protection of their livelihoods. It was the role of an ancestor who protected not in a militaristic sense — since he could not prevent the arrival of the Han Chinese — but against natural calamities. This enabled him to adopt some aquatic responsibilities from a local deity who had lost most of its lore.

[Tab. 4] A Comparison of the Indigo Snake Narrative Variants

Detail/Source	#1 Local informant of Han-Yi heritage	#2 *Sichuan Economic Daily* 四川经济日报 (governmental)	#3 Poster exhibited at site (local government)
Situation	Gloomy marshes	Barren swamp	Meng Huo on patrol
Snake	Indigo *lan* 藍	Indigo *lan* 藍	Orchid *lan* 蘭
Snake's Motivation	Ambition (fertility)	To save lives (fertility)	Turn the region fertile
Snake's Character	Selfish	Kindhearted, sincere	Benevolent
Tortoise's Motivation	Save humans	Arrogance	Distrust
Tortoise's Character	Compassionate	Mocking, challenging	Antipathetic
Relation to cave	None	Snake lived there	None
Third Party	Pig Mother Immortal	Dragon King	Meng Huo
Transformation	Due to promise	Punishing the tortoise	Admission of defeat
Temple dedication	Tortoise	Dragon	Meng Huo
Cause for Temple	Honoring the tortoise	Gratefulness	Gratefulness (fish)
Analogy	Buddhism (tortoise) vs. Han Chinese (selfish snake)	Locals (tortoise) vs. Buddhist/ imperialist outsiders (snake)	Meng Huo helps the imperialists (snake) against the locals (tortoise)

III. The Hailong-si and the Yi

Since the era of the Three Kingdoms, Mahu has become a borderland where Han culture was defended. Both in culture and political alliances, the Yi were closer to the Han than other indigenous groups. The modern intermarriage narrative recognized and expanded and visually rebuilt this with Meng Huo and Zhurong Furen. If there is the southern ancestor Meng Huo, there also has to be Zhuge Liang as his imperial counterpart. According to Peng Wenbin, who also did research on the lore of the Yi people of Liangshan 凉山, the Autonomous Prefecture of the Yi is today populated almost half to half by Yi and Han Chinese. Peng further reports a ritualized brotherhood relationship between the Yi and Han Chinese during the Long March *changzheng* 長征 (1934—1935).[2152] Just like in the late imperial era, there is the question: who wanted this 'brotherhood'? Who profited from it? Who was the 'bigger' brother?

Peng writes: "[…] in the melodrama of ethnic unity after 1949, Zhuge Liang has been championed as a benevolent figure whose ethnic policy successfully transformed the historically volatile southwestern minority regions and brought them into the fold of the Chinese nation".[2153] This statement is very accurate, but for the important fact that this usage of Zhuge Liang is not a trait of modernity, but a standard in late imperial propagandistic proceedings. The presence of Zhuge Liang in the Hailong-si is clearly based on the superiority trope of the novel's fictional Zhuge Liang. It is a continuation of his great relevance for the dynamics between the Chinese central power and the southwestern areas initiated under the Yuan and intensively utilized during the Ming and Qing dynasties.

Therefore, we can say that the desire to unite probably always came from the Han Chinese side, for which it was a synonym for "subjugate". Even in the 1950s,[2154] this area was still known as hard to penetrate and the 'brotherhood' does not seem to have created an amiable atmosphere. So, how reliable are the signboards, posters and plaques that celebrate Yi culture and promote the Hailong-si?

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2152 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, pp. 149–50.

2153 Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 141.

2154 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 149.

The relationship between the Han and Yi is still tense. The situation in Mahu as of 2016 was that the Han on the eastern shore of the lake and the Yi on the western shore of the lake avoided contact with each other. They did not talk well of each other and there was noticeable oppugnancy. Although a flood in the previous year had caused some damage and ruined the season, the tourism oriented eastern shore continued to keep luxurious hotels and shops open although there were no visitors. Many structures had been recently built, the various signboards were also recently placed and in superb condition. In vast contrast, the western shore's appearance exhibits a lower economic standard with less investment and many older, run-down buildings.[2155] Due to her mixed ancestry, Shop Keeper provided me with valuable[2156] perspectives from both sides and she hesitatingly expressed that she was sometimes uncomfortable in her role as a liaison between the managers of the local tourist industry and those lowly paid Yi who have decided to work with them (e.g., the boatsmen).[2157] It was obvious that the Yi were not very invested into the island's temple at all. The site was not important to them, and they only served handyman roles in the presentation of the site until recent years saw the creation of Yi cultural shows with predominantly economic goals. All information and focus on Meng Huo originate from the Han side of Mahu, as it has been the Han Chinese who were invested in creating a site of "Yi and Han unity" for the past four hundred years. This is the reason for the accentuation of Zhuge Liang in the temple itself as well as the temple's founding narrative, although his status among the Yi is much less positive[2158] than among the Han Chinese. And yet, although in the minority, the front stele on the island shows that there were some donors of Yi heritage for the temple and the donors for the Guanyin icon were also likely Yi. This localized Buddhism may therefore serve the role as a demarcation against government intervention. No matter

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2155 Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 150 also refers to the generally unequal power relations and a gap in economic development between Yi and Han Chinese in general.

2156 In contrast to Leibo, it was not easy to convince people from the Yi mountain villages to talk to a recently arrived foreigner like me, nor to find willing translators.

2157 Interview with a local shopkeeper of Han and Yi heritage at the Mahu Hotel at the northeastern shore of Jinma Lake (Dahai Village 大海村), 14 September 2016.

2158 Cf. Peng Wenbin 2011, p. 151.

how much the site is sponsored by the regional government or local agents, or how carefully the image of the site was crafted, it cannot yet overcome the gap between transregional ideology and local religious practices that have already existed since imperial times.

The Hailong-si of Mahu distinctly demonstrates the effects of manipulations on the SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE as they evolve from spatial reconfigurations in the PLACED MATERIAL that are continuously reinforced by the normative narratives which constitute the specific RNIS and differ depending on their proximity to the center. Both the third-party representation as well as the local framing of the site was — and still is — meant to direct the social experience of the consumer towards a redefined perception of Yi identity as an equal part of Chineseness, although the Yi are still very much aware of the differences that are made between them and the Han Chinese. For this reason, the case of Mahu hence also demonstrates the limits of manipulations in the SOCIAL-EXPERIENTIAL SPHERE. The modern framing of the Hailong-si evolved directly from Qing ethnopolitics, following similar aims with similar methods even if based upon a different political system. However, it fails in just the same way in not taking effect as long as the strong differences in the treatment of Han and Yi by the central government and its local representatives remain.