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Posthumous Release for Lay Women in Tang China: Two Cases from the Longmen Grottoes

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Abstract: Famous for its cliff-carved Buddhist cave-shrines, Longmen was also a burial ground that attracted a few women from the seventh and the eighth centuries. This paper examines the burial caves of two lay women, Lady Lou (d. 661) and Lady Zhang (c. 658–c. 718), in relation to the newly excavated archaeological material and epigraphic evidence. Lady Lou compared her cave burial to the Indian ascetic practice in the forest of Śītavana but did not enact the compassionate offering of flesh. Lady Zhang was later removed from her burial cave by her sons so that she could be interred in a joint tomb with her husband. Through these two cases, I investigate the motivations behind the adoption of cave burials in medieval China. Canonical Buddhist scriptures taught these women that their social gender presented an obstacle to the final release. Dedicatory inscriptions at women's burials and two tales of miraculous events at Longmen further suggest that family ties, an important constituent of women's social gender, were believed to persist posthumously. Married women were expected to maintain their spousal and parental relations in the afterlife, and unmarried girls were imagined as turning into seductive spirits because of their lack of spousal union in their lifetime. I argue that cave burials at Longmen were not a compromise of the Indian ascetic practice but rather presented these lay women with a socially acceptable way to break free from their familial attachments after death.

Keywords: Longmen Grottoes; Śītavana; gender; burial; Tang; Luoyang

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1. Introduction

Located in the modern city of Luoyang, the Longmen Grottoes consists of 2345 cave-shrines carved into the limestone cliffs on both sides of the River Yi (*Yihe* 伊河) from the fifth to the tenth centuries. Although most of the caves enshrine statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, forty-five stone chambers for the disposal of corpses and ninety-four cineraria niches for cremated remains have been identified (Wang 1955; Zhang 1991; Li 1994; Li and Yang 1995; Lü and Yang 1999; Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan et al. 2018; Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan 2021; Li 2019). All these burial structures are from the Tang Dynasty (618–907), but only five stone chambers still retain their inscriptions in situ.[1] Of these five, the burial caves of two Buddhist lay women, Lady Lou 婁 (d. 661) and Lady Zhang 張 (c. 658–c. 718), carry inscriptions that relate their choices to other well-known burial practices in Tang China, namely the Indian ascetic practice of disposing remains to feed animals in Śītavana and underground tomb burials. My study of these two cases contributes to the existing scholarship by foregrounding the importance of gender in the adaptation of foreign religious practices in medieval China. I argue that these cave burials at Longmen did not enact the gesture of compassionate offering as described in textual sources but presented lay women with a socially acceptable way to break free from their familial attachments after death.

Previous scholarship on cave burials has focused on identifying the mortuary chambers and comparing the varied methods of interment at important Buddhist cave-shrines in China, including Mogao Grottoes, Maijishan Grottoes, Baoshan, Tianlongshan Grottoes, Xiangtangshan Grottoes, and Leshan (Adamek 2016; Su 2015; Lingley 2006, 2019; Ni 2006;

Sharf 2013; Zheng 2020). These burial caves originate from a diverse array of cultural milieux, including the Central-North Plains, the Southwest, and Central Asia. In terms of chronology, the pre-Buddhist burial caves in Leshan are the earliest, dating to the second and the third centuries CE, and those in Dunhuang were excavated between the seventh and the eleventh centuries (Lee 2019; Meinert 2022). Such is the regional, chronological, and religious diversity of burial caves across China that I contend they need to be examined individually within the context of each site. Therefore, my paper turns to the case studies of Longmen and aims to contextualize them with in situ inscriptions, material evidence, and the popular religious environment of the site.

In recent years, scholars have come to recognize the significance of female devotees in building cave burials at Longmen. Yucheng Wen (1993, pp. 18–19), from the Longmen Research Institute, identified that two of the five burial caves with extant inscriptions belonged to nuns who had close associations with Empress Wu Zhao 武曌 (624–705), including Lingjue 靈覺 (c. 687–738) who was a niece of Wu, and Huideng 惠燈 (650–731) who won high approval from the Empress. In addition, both Shufen Liu (2008, pp. 279–85; 2000, pp. 3, 15) and Kate Lingley (2019, pp. 8–9) observed the discrepancy between hagiographical accounts and the inscriptional evidence at the burial caves. While the former source tells that both monks and nuns employed cave burials, most burial caves with identifiable inscriptions belonged to female devotees. In this paper, I focus on the burial of lay women at Longmen. I argue that it was the perceived problems of social gender that motivated these women in medieval China to adopt a cave burial.

In what follows, I show that Lady Lou and Lady Zhang made an unconventional choice of designating stone chambers at Longmen as their burial places when the most typical practice in the Tang was to bury married women together with their husbands in underground tombs. I propose that Lou and Zhang made such an unusual decision for two main reasons. One was their knowledge of the canonical accounts, which project a daunting prospect of women's awakening. This decision also resulted from the need to secure a release from their familial responsibilities after death. Two contemporaneous miraculous tales, both taking place at Longmen, delineated a common dilemma faced by Buddhist lay women in the early Tang: whereas young girls were imagined turning into seductive spirits, married women were expected to maintain their spousal and parental ties even in the afterlife. In my reading, these miraculous tales suggest that family attachments bound women not only in life but also, as was perceived in the early Tang, after death. I argue that the perceived constraints of posthumous family obligations created an urgency for women in the Tang to look for agreeable alternatives, e.g., the burial at the Longmen Grottoes, to a conventional joint burial with their husbands.

2. Burial Cave of Lady Lou: The "Rule of Śītavana" without Flesh Offering

The burial inscription of Lady Lou, together with the structural designs of other anonymous burial chambers at Longmen, leads me to believe that ordinary lay people in Tang China understood their cave burial as a faithful enactment of the practice of Śītavana, even though they did not embrace the gesture of compassionate offering. Located on the doorway of Cave 440, Lou's extensive yet partially eroded inscription is best documented by Zhang Naizhu from the Longmen Research Institute in 1991 (pp. 160–61). In Zhang's transcription, it is specified that Lou's remains were transported to and interred on the cliff of Longmen. An ink rubbing of the original stone inscription was later reproduced in 1998 by Liu and Li (v. 1, p. 114), in which the lines that convey the method of interment were no longer legible. For this reason, such information is missing in the text transcribed by Liu and Li (1998, v. 1, p. 114). Below is my edited transcription. When different characters appear in the two previous versions, I rely on the ink rubbing to select the most accurate ones; when the rubbing is illegible, I add the variant characters from the 1998 version in parentheses. The inscription reads:

> In the first year of Longshuo reign of the Great Tang, on the twenty-third day of the eleventh month (December 19, 661), Gentleman-litterateur Shen Li (or Shen

Pou), for his late wife née Lou, respectfully dedicated a shrine of King Udayana image. I (Shen) document this event with words and have them inscribed as follows.

Look, [to enter] the Ultimate Way, there is no [set] path; know that the Way is unpredictable. [To express] the Ultimate Word, there is no words; such is the mysterious tenet of subtle words. Words rely on the Way to express, and the Way rises from words. The Way gains its name from words, and words depend on the Way to manifest virtues. Thus [one] knows that [to distinguish between] the Dharma and unrighteous practices, śarīra performs the origin of the inexhaustible; [to show] small and large forms, Guanyin manifests his divine power.

Lou had planted her roots of virtue and kindled her pure mind from early on. [Realizing] the illusion of perception was truly illusional was her pivotal [breakthrough]. [Knowing] that the external body was not [the true] body was her beginning [on the path to enlightenment]. [She] valued the One Dharma more than the weight of mountains and disregarded a thousand gold as if [they were] goose feathers. [She] disliked the contemporaneous custom of funerary, which fills underground tombs with delicate carvings. Admiring the inclinations of the wise men of old, [she would] quietly allow her remains to return to the elements in the wilderness. In the twelfth month of the fifth year (661) of Xianqing reign, when [Lou] fell ill in her home in Sigong [Ward in Luoyang], she mumbled to [Shen] Li that "when I came of age, [I] pledged to grow old together [with you]. [Yet who] could have expected that [my fate] was not blessed, and that I would be succumbed to chronic illness? After I die, I ask that you follow my will".

On the twenty-eighth day of the same month, [Lou] passed away at home. Then [Shen Li] called forth monks and invited the Buddha [image], established a dharma platform to release the soul of the deceased. Offerings were set up and incense was presented. [The service] lasted without interruption for the forty-nine-day period. The date and time [of the burial] were decided via divination and auspicious signs were received. A fragrant chariot with jeweled banners sent [Lou's remains] to the side of River Yi. [Her body] was placed on the secluded cliff, and [her] soul was stored in desolate rocks. This was called the rule of Śītavana. This is in accordance with the Rites. Crows cawed by the river, [as if] grieving for [the loss of] the sorrowful children. A migrating goose honked alone, adding to the inexpressible despair of a widower.

Mourning [in front of the] blue limestone, [Shen Li] reverently dedicated a shrine of King Udayana's [image of Śākyamuni]. The ūrṇā in between the eyebrows was more dazzling than the sun. The jeweled necklace beneath the face outshines all stars. The dignity of the image would last for eternity, and the radiance would always be complete. [Shen Li transferred the merit] first to the emperor. May his sagely influence [filled] the heaven and the earth. Then [Shen Li transferred the merit] to all sentient beings in the Dharma realm . . . as long-lasting as the sun and the moon . . . [All] attain true enlightenment.[2]

大唐龍朔元年十一月廿三日洛陽縣文林郎沈裹(裒) 為亡妻婁氏敬造優填王像一龕，以言記事，勒之于后。 觀夫至道無（善）道， 知此（妙）道之難測； 至言無言，寔微言之秘旨。言以道著，道自言生。道因言以賦名，言據道而彰德。故知是法非法，舍利演無窮之端；小形大形，觀音現神通之力。然婁宿殖德本，早瑩禪心，識幻真幻之機，表身非身之始。重一法于山嶽，輕千金若鴻毛。鄙時俗之送（逸）終，精（枕）寶（衣）綉于泉壤。慕先哲之歸向，寂分軀于草莽。顯慶五年十二月寢疾於思恭之第而譫裹[3] 曰：" 笄冠之初，契期偕老。豈意非福，痼瘵纏躬。不諱之後，願從所志。" 其月廿八日薨於私（内）第（室）。遂延僧請佛，度（庭）建法壇。設供陳香，累七不絕。 筮箴（辰）卜日，休兆葉從。 寶幢（幡）香車，送歸伊濱（嶺）。尸陳戢唐（崖），魂藏孤岩，寔曰屍陀法， 禮也。 寒鴉岸叫，痛悲稚之斷腸；旅雁孤鳴，助鰥夫之鬱鯁。悼□ 青岩，敬造優填王一龕。其像思

（眉）間毫相，共慧日而爭輝（暉）；頤下珠瓔，與衆星之競耀。 威嚴自（永）在，光相具足。上爲 皇帝陛下，聖化與天地同界；下為法界蒼生，□□ 共日月等歲，□□□□ ，俱登正覺。

Lou's inscription states that her husband followed her will to bury her remains in a stone chamber at Longmen. The text referred to this burial as "the rule of Śītavana". In her extensive research, Shufen Liu (2008, pp. 275–76) used Lou's case, among other examples, to support her argument that Buddhist cave burials in China were a variant of the practice of offering one's corpse to feed wild animals in the forest of Śītavana. She referred to two Chinese apocryphal texts, *Foshuo yaoxing sheshen jing* 佛說要行捨身經 (T 2895, Sutra on Practicing Body Offering as Expounded by the Buddha) and the lost *Shiluolin jing* 屍陀林經 (Sutra on Śītavana) that cited the jātaka stories of Śākyamuni (Liu 2008, pp. 187–88, 214–19). While both texts advocate for offering ones' dead body to feed animals, Liu observed a degree of reluctance against adopting Śītavana burials from other textual sources, such as *Fo benxing jijing* 佛本行集經 (Sutra of the Collection of the Past Deeds of the Buddha), tomb epitaphs, and hagiographies such as *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (the *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*) (Liu 2008, pp. 188, 259). Based on her reading of these texts, Liu argued that cave burial was a Chinese compromise for exposing corpses in the wilderness because the latter seemed too cruel for the decedents and disciples of the deceased (Liu 2008, pp. 246, 258–60).

In contrast, in the words of Lou and her husband, the burial in the stone chamber of Longmen was not a compromise but rather a faithful performance of the "rule of Śītavana". The "rule of Śītavana", as Lou's inscription construes, only refers to the practice of interring the remains inside a stone cave. The purpose was to place the body "on the secluded cliff" and to "store" the soul "in desolate rocks". Admittedly, no other burial caves at Longmen contain a reference to Śītavana, and it is unknown if others shared this understanding of Lou's. However, the absence of a flesh offering is a common feature that can be observed among other burial caves.

Several structural designs were installed to prevent potential disturbances from the outside. At least one burial chamber, Wanfogou Cave 1, has a pseudo-gate that was intended to seal the space (Figure 1). In addition, Wanfogou Cave 10 (originally Cave 2157, Figure 2), Wangfogou Cave 14 (originally Cave 2161, Figure 3), and Yidaoqiaogou Cave 1 show mortises on the doorways. All these structural designs indicate that the burial chambers were meant to be sealed.

(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 1. (**a**) Wanfogou Cave 1 (left) with its attached niche (right); (**b**) the restored "stone gate" that had fallen in front of Wanfogou Cave 1. Photos by Li Lan, 2014–2016.

(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 2. (**a**) Wanfogou Cave 10; (**b**) the doorway of Wanfogou Cave 10, showing square mortises on the ground. Photos by Li Lan, 2014–2016.

(**a**) (**b**)

Figure 3. (**a**) Wanfogou Cave 14; (**b**) the doorway of Wanfogou Cave 14, showing two square mortises at the top. Photos by Li Lan, 2014–2016.

Similar to Lou's cave, two more burial inscriptions at Longmen convey the need to store and preserve the spirit or soul after death. In the burial chamber for nun Huideng (Cave 1336), the dedicatory inscription ends with a wish that the chamber would "serve as a repository of the soul for eternity (藏) 魂千秋萬(古)" (Liu and Li 1998, v. 2, pp. 384–86). In the burial inscription of Lady Zhang 張, as will be discussed later, it is wished that "[her] afterlife visage would remain for eternity without decay 庶使幽容，長垂不朽" (Zhang 1991,

p. 161). Since such expressions were a common literary trope in tomb epitaphs of the Tang period, they likened these stone chambers to an underground burial. In other words, in the minds of Tang Buddhists, burial caves likely served a similar purpose as underground tombs, albeit using different methods of internment.

Rather than offering her flesh to animals, Lou understood the "rule of Śītavana" as an austere mortuary aesthetic and a way to place her remains in a secluded place away from the bustle of earthly life. Denouncing "the contemporaneous custom of funerary, which fills underground tombs with delicate carvings", Lou's inscription accredits cave burial as a choice of "the wise men of old". The contrast suggests that the perceived difference between cave and underground burials lies more in their aesthetics than function. More importantly, the passage adopts the time-honored criticism of richly furnished tombs to justify Lou's burial cave.

The juxtaposition of current, lavish burial and the ancient burial in the wilderness alludes to the contemporaneous discussion on the history of funerary customs in China. For example, the famous monk Daoxuan (645, 道宣 596–667) compared the Buddhist practice of flesh offering to the indigenous burial in ancient China. In this comparison, he abhorred the sight of exposed corpses and questioned the merit of such a practice. He wrote:

> . . . disposing the dead in a grove slightly reduces the petty and stringent heart. Animals feed on it and beings from the dark realm thrive from its vapor. What can be gained [by those who offered their bodies] rarely makes up for what is lost. When insects and maggots gush out of the flesh, birds follow to peck and swallow in disorder. To leave flesh on the open field is to aggrieve the compassionate.[4]
>
> . . . 陳屍林薄。少祛鄙悋之心。飛走以之充飢。幽明以於熏勃。得夫(失) 相補勘能兼濟。遂有蟲蛆涌於肉外。烏隨啄吞狼籍。膏於原野傷於慈惻。 (Daoxuan, *Xu gaosengzhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, 0685a27–0685b01)

Following these sentences of disgust, Daoxuan offered an extended commentary on four burial practices from the Western Regions and creatively correlated two of them with the ancient funerary practices found in classical Chinese texts. The four foreign practices include disposing of the dead in groves, in the earth, in rivers, and by cremation. He wrote,

> Transmitted to East Xia (China) were only [the burials in] groves and in the earth. Burials in rivers and by cremation were hardly found. In the past, pottery was used as the coffins of the people of Yu (Youyu 有虞, descendants of the legendary Emperor Shun 舜). [Such] was the beginning of abandoning [the practice of covering the dead] with wood and [leaving it] in a grove. [The people of] Xiahou used baked bricks to line [the walls around the coffin], [continuing] the use of pottery coffins. The people of Yin (Shang dynasty, c. 1600–1045 BCE) used wood to make coffins and bound them with rattan.
>
> In the Middle Antiquity, the study of texts flourished and [the sages] cultivated [people] with *ren*, leading to an orderly governing. [The sage rulers] understood that few entombed the dead, and thus covered the decayed remains and buried them. In the Upper Antiquity, [people] entombed [the dead] but did not erect any signs for the tomb. [This practice was] not circulated among all beings. After Hexu and [Zun]lu [from the Upper Antiquity used] burial mounds, now [people] established burial mounds on hills. In the Lower Antiquity, burial in the earth was continued, in various forms that were difficult to record.
>
> 東夏所傳惟聞林土。水火兩設世罕其蹤。故瓦掩虞棺。廢林薪之始也。 夏后聖(堲) 周。行瓦棺之事也。殷人以木槨櫝。藤緘之也。中古文昌仁育成治。 雖明窆葬行者猶希。故掩骼埋胔堋而瘞也。上古墓而不墳。 未通庶類。 赫胥盧陵之后。現即因山爲陵。下古相沿同行土葬。 紜紜難紀。 (Daoxuan, *Xu gaosengzhuan*, T vol. 50, no. 2060, 0685b04–0685b11)

In this passage, Daoxuan asserted that only the burial in groves, which he referred to as *lin* 林, and the burial in the earth, referred to as *tu* 土, were transmitted from India to China.

The same terms were immediately applied to the ancient burial practices from the Chinese past. The comparison suggests to me that Daoxuan considered the Indian grove burial as the same as the Chinese practice of leaving the dead in a grove, which was abandoned by the ancient people of Youyu. Similarly, the Indian earth burial, according to Daoxuan, was comparable to the various methods of entombment that were employed by the people of Xiahou and Yin, and during the time of *xiagu* or "Lower Antiquity".

While Daoxuan boldly equated the two foreign burials to the recorded practices in ancient China, his account of the Chinese funeral customs was based upon an established narrative found in such classical texts as *Zhouyi* 周易 (Changes of the Zhou) and *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites). For example, the passage from *Zhouyi* reads:

> [As for] the burials in ancient times, [the deceased] were thickly enshrouded with firewood, and buried amidst wildness. There was no *feng* nor *shu* . . . . . the sages from later periods replaced it with inner and outer coffins.
>
> 古之葬者，厚衣之以薪，葬之中野，不封不樹..... 後世聖人，易之以棺椁。

To the line "there was no *feng* nor *shu*", an annotation was added by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), a contemporary of Daoxuan and Lady Lou:

> "There was no *feng*" means not piling up the earth to make a tomb. "There was no *shu*" means not planting trees to mark its location.
>
> 不積土為墳是不封也，不種樹以標其處是不樹也。 (Ruan 1815a, vol. 8, pp. 168-1–168-2)

Altogether, these cross-referencing texts established a time-honored discourse on the progression of Chinese burial practices. In this narrative, the act of abandoning the body in the wildness was replaced with other methods, ones that involved *feng*, the piling of the earth, and *shu*, the marking of a tomb location. Prior to the Tang period, intellectuals such as Zhao Zi 趙咨 (fl. 158 CE) had already referred to this chronology as a useful rhetoric to defend austere burials as the preferred mode of funerary rituals (Poo 1990, pp. 55–56, citing Hou Hanzhu 後漢書, v. 39).

Alluding to these classical Chinese texts, Lou's inscription justifies her choice of cave burial by casting it as an expression of austere burial. Whereas Lou and her husband assigned the Sanskrit name of Śītavana to the practice, their understanding of the term was built on references to funerary practices in early China. Such a rhetorical conflation of Chinese and Indian practices was not unique to Lou's inscription, as Daoxuan also did it in *Xu gaosengzhuan*. In this regard, it is not surprising that neither Lou nor any other occupants of the burial caves at Longmen intended to enact the ideal of flesh offering.

The rhetorical strategies in Lou's inscription also indicate that implementing a cave burial required additional justification since the latter did not follow "the contemporaneous custom of funerary". If the purpose was not to enact a compassionate offering, then why did Lou choose it at all? To this question, I believe the case of Lady Zhang offers a plausible interpretation.

3. Burial Cave of Lady Zhang: Family Ties after Death

The case of Lady Zhang, which tells of a failed attempt to break away from one's husband in the afterlife, suggests that it was the problem of social gender that led to the adoption of the cave burial. Zhang's body was once interred in the empty Cave 1850 of Longmen (labeled as Cave 1852 in Liu and Li 1998, pp. 591–92). Located on the southern end of the western cliff, the cave measures 175 cm in height, 239 cm in width, and 233 cm in depth. Since the four edges of its opening are designed to imitate the jambs, head, and threshold of a door frame, the space was probably designed to be closed (Figure 4). Inside is a stone dais that occupies the entire length of the cave, possibly for the placement of the corpse (Liu 2008, p. 276; Lingley 2019, p. 7). Other than the incised palmette and floral patterns on the vertical side of the dais, no other image exists inside the cave. Outside, to either side of the opening, there is a seated animal and a standing figure dressed in a wide-sleeved robe and a cap, holding something in hand. Since the figures do not show the

typical muscular and wrathful bodies of *dvārapālas*, they likely represent civil officials that were part of the so-named "honor guards" in an underground tomb, usually placed behind the guardians. Above the opening is an empty arched niche with a square indent inside, which, as Zhang (1991, p. 245) argues, seems to be a common feature shared by burial caves of the time. Next to the southern official is a relief of stele, but no text survives.

Figure 4. Cave 1850 of Lady Zhang, with the burial inscription marked in red. Image by the author, 2019.

Located above the entrance, the heavily eroded burial inscription is inscribed in a plane rectangle of 30 cm tall and 16 cm wide, occupying only half of the width of the entrance. The placement leads me to believe that Zhang probably repurposed a pre-existing cave for her burial. Such a practice would not be uncommon. For example, in a stone inscription from 843 discovered in Luoyang, a certain Neng Chanshi (Chan master Neng 能禪師) demanded that his cave, which he took for Chan practice, should not be used to bury deceased monks (Zhang 2011, p. 339; Wu 1852–1874, v. 9, p. 13a). Based on this inscription, Shufen Liu suggests that caves designed for meditative practices were often repurposed for burial use in the Tang period (2008, p. 258).

Only in 1981 was Lady Zhang's inconspicuous inscription discovered by Zhang Naizhu, who then published his transcription in 1991 (p. 161). To my knowledge, no epigraphic catalogues from the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries included the inscription (e.g., Wu 1852–1874; Sun and Xing [1802] 1891; Zhao 1864; Yang 1867; Yao 1883; Lu [1887 and 1898] 2006; Guan [1935] 1980). By 1998, the engraving had become largely illegible, as suggested by the incomplete transcription produced by Liu and Li (1998, v. 2, pp. 591–92). Since Zhang's transcription from 1991 contains much more information than the 1998 version, it is widely referenced in subsequent publications (Liu 2008, p. 276; Liu 2012, pp. 64–65). The inscription reads:

> Lady Zhang, wife to the late Xiao Yuanli (c. 647–c. 697) who received the posthumous titles of Commissioner with Extraordinary Powers and the Prefect of Xiangzhou. [She] returned to Buddhist (teaching) since young. Engaged with *tathatā* frequently, she knew that various Dharmas are conditioned . . . [Her body]

> was carried in this efficacious shrine. It is hoped that [her] afterlife visage would remain for eternity. An inscription was composed:
>
> Immense is the Ultimate Venerable (Śākyamuni) who established the teaching without recompense. Now that [Zhang knew about] the emptiness of form, how could [she] hold on to this body? . . .
>
> 故贈使持節相州刺史蕭元禮夫人張氏，少歸佛□，頻涉真如， 知諸法之有為，不□有□□□ 晤金□□□□ 無□□ 無禮之源。似存□□，為□若喪，自因□□，載此靈龕，庶使幽容，長垂不朽。乃為銘曰：
>
> 大哉至尊，立教無報，既空彼相，焉有此身，扶□□ 累，長為其□ 。 (Zhang 1991, p. 161)

The inscription elaborates on Zhang's understanding of Buddhist teaching and states that she was buried at Longmen, presumably alone. Little about her family background is included, except the name of her late husband, Xiao Yuanli.

In 2002, Xiao Yuanli's tomb epitaph was discovered in nearby Zhanggoucun 張溝村, also on the western side of the River Yi; the tomb epitaph was reproduced in 2007 (Zhao and Zhao 2007, p. 227). In 2010, Zhang Naizhu transcribed the entire inscription (pp. 507–8) and republished its ink rubbing in 2011 (p. 132). The epitaph celebrates Xiao's failed yet heroic defense of Dingzhou against invaders and his death as a loyal military commander. Then it informs that Xiao was survived by his wife Lady Zhang, who passed away at the age of sixty-one at home in Zeshanli 擇善里, Luoyang. Afterward, she was buried on the twenty-second day of the tenth month in 718 (November 16, 718), together with her husband, on the western plateau to the south of Longmen (Zhang 2010, pp. 507–8; Zhang 2011, p. 132). The contrasting information from the epitaph and the Longmen inscription suggests that Lady Zhang's sons conducted a second burial for her, moving her remains to a joint underground tomb with her husband (Zhang 2010, p. 507; Liu 2012).

Except for a brief study (Liu 2012), scholars mainly used the epitaph and Lady Zhang's Longmen inscription to reconstruct the life of Xiao Yuanli and his family lineage, which traces back to the imperial Xiao family of the Liang (502–557) court (Mao 2016; Wang 2018). As to why the sons moved her mother's body from Cave 1850 and whether or not it was legitimate to do so against her will, no detailed analysis has been offered so far.

In contrast to Lady Zhang's burial inscription at Longmen, the tomb epitaph of Xiao Yuanli portrays Zhang as an educated daughter from an elite family and a virtuous wife who dutifully served her husband and parents-in-law. The epitaph informs that Zhang was from Dunhuang, her grandfather was Zhang Shifang 張師昉, who was the commander-in-chief 都督 in Shanzhou 鄯州 (present-day Qinghai), and her father was Zhang Bin 張斌 who served as an administrator in Langzhou 閬州 (present-day Sichuan) (Zhao and Zhao 2007, p. 227; Zhang 2010, pp. 507–8). Mentioning nothing about her Buddhist devotion, the epitaph cites from the *Neize* 內則 chapter ("The Pattern of Family") in *Liji*, praising her early education, including studying weaving from a female teacher and learning about ancestral rituals.[5] She "composed prose at the Pan Garden (where parents resided) and served [guests] at banquets. Saddened by [her husband's death], she did not sleep and respectfully observed the *he* and *fu* burials (joint burial with her husband) 潘園作賦，始奉長筵。杜寢興哀，敬遵合祔" (Zhang 2010, pp. 507–8). Toward the end of the epitaph, she was compared with Jing Jiang 敬姜, the woman from *Liji* who "at the mourning for Mubo (her husband) . . . wailed for him in the daytime, and at that for Wenbo (her son) . . . wailed for him both in the daytime and the night 穆伯之喪，敬姜晝哭。文伯之喪，晝夜哭". This earned Jing Jiang the praise from Confucius (551 BCE–479 BCE) that "she knows the rules of propriety 知禮也"[6] (Ruan 1815b, vol. 9, p. 174-2; Legge 1885, p. 176). To this rather confusing line, Kong Yingda explained that "this paragraph means that at the mourning for her husband, [one] should not wail at night 此一節論喪夫不夜哭" (Ruan 1815b, vol. 9, p. 175-1).

In the Tang period, no enforceable burial norm seemed to have been established for Buddhist lay women. On the one hand, statistics from recent archaeological research show

that the most typical practice in the Tang was to bury married women together with their husbands, either in the same coffin or in different coffins inside the same tomb (Yao 2002, p. 213). On the other hand, it was not rare either for widowed women who became Buddhist or Daoist renunciants to choose to be buried alone (Choo 2022, pp. 111–18; Yang 2019, p. 50).

In the case of Lady Zhang, a joint burial seemed to have allowed her sons to commemorate not only their father as a loyal commander but also their mother as an ideal woman in the mould of Jing Jiang. As Jessey Choo shows, Tang commentaries on classical texts traced the origin of joint burials only to the time of Confucius and the Duke of Zhou (d. 1033 BCE) and asserted that "joint burials were not [a practice] from antiquity 合葬非古" (2022, p. 73). In other words, joint burial was considered a relatively new custom in comparison to ancient burials from the time of Shun, Xia, and Shang periods. However, this phrase was frequently repurposed in later texts and tomb epitaphs in order to both refute joint burials of married couples and to legitimize it. For example, when it came to the question of whether Empress Wu Zhao should be buried in the tomb of her husband Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649–683), the phrase was used to challenge the legitimacy of joint burial. Yet with various justifications, the same phrase also appears in the epitaphs of joint tombs (Choo 2022, pp. 101–3; Yang 2019, pp. 47–48). Although Lady Zhang's sons did not use the exact phrase, they cited *Liji* to evoke the Confucian ideal, thereby justifying relocating their mother's remains to the joint spousal tomb.

The cases of Lady Lou and Lady Zhang, as I have argued so far, speak to a spectrum of contentions that one had to endure in choosing a burial on the cliff of Longmen, ranging from a need for justification in the case of Lou to an outright rejection of Zhang's decision. Then why did these women still want to be interred at Longmen? I propose that gender played a crucial role in this choice among lay women. From canonical accounts, they perceived a daunting prospect of their own awakening as women. Beyond this, some had the more immediate need to disassociate themselves from their husband's family in the afterlife. Both caused these women to choose cave burials over more conventional burial practices.

4. The Problem of Social Gender

Before the eighth century, women were the dominant group in the burial space of Longmen. While only four of the burial chambers contain identification information of their original occupants, they were all women. In addition, among the numerous tomb epitaphs that continue to be discovered within the loosely outlined vicinity of Longmen up until today (Zhang 2011), I count ten, before the 760s, that belonged to lay women but only four for lay men.

In the cases of these four men, women in their families likely had an influence on their choice. One was An Pu(sa) 安菩(薩) (601–664) who was moved to the tomb of his wife, Lady He 何 (622–704), to the east of Jingshan Monastery in 705 (Zhao and Wen 1986, pp. 19–21). Another was the tomb of Li Duozuo 李多祚 (654–707), the general who was executed in the revolt against Empress Wei 韋 (d. 710). In this case, it was Li's sister and daughter who decided to move his tomb, originally located elsewhere, to Longmen in 713 (Zhang and Zhang 1999, pp. 77–79).

Female devotees at Longmen were well versed in the rhetoric that female form presented a problem to attaining Buddhahood in this life. As shown by Stephanie Balkwill (2016), Mahayana texts insist that a woman had to change into a man in order to attain Buddhahood. She focuses on the example of a sixth-century text, titled the *Sutra on Transforming the Female Form* (*Zhuan nüshen jing* 轉女身經, T 564), which was likely written in China in the sixth century but was included in the Sui-dynasty (581–618) *Catalogue of Scriptures* 衆經目錄 as a genuine translation. In *Zhenyuan Revised List of Canonical Buddhist Texts* 貞元新定釋教目錄 (Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu, T 2157), a catalogue compiled in 800, even though this sutra was listed as apocryphal, its title was included in the *Sutra of the Buddha's Name* 佛名經 (T 441). Since several excerpts from the *Sutra of the Buddha's Name*

appeared in the dedicatory inscriptions at Longmen, Buddhist devotees in the region might also be familiar with the *Sutra on Transforming the Female Form*.

One lay woman, née Xue 薛, whose pagoda was recorded to be at Longmen (Zhou and Zhao 1992, v. 2, p. 1479), explicitly addressed how a female should transform into a male to attain Buddhahood in the next life. Since the pagoda was established for her, Xue was probably cremated. The text tells that she died in the year 738 at the age of twenty-two. By that time, she had already lost a son but seemed unmoved by the death because, as the text explains, she started studying Buddhist sutras at the age of nine, learned with the famous monk Yifu 義福 (658–736), and understood "the causes for a long and a short life 以短長有源". Before she died, she hired a ritual specialist in secrets to look for an auspicious burial place that was also close to her teacher's resting place, in the hope that she could look over to his remains in the afterlife. Since Yifu's pagoda was established at the Great Fengxian Monastery on the western ridge of Longmen, the site of her burial should also be nearby (Wen 1986, pp. 27–29).

Xue's inscription made a vow that she would "surely attain the enlightenment and display the miracle of presenting a jewel to the Buddha. If [she] did not transform from her female body, [she] would become a disciple who scatters flowers 必後成正覺，當示獻珠之奇，如未轉女身，且為散花之侶" (Zhou and Zhao 1992, v. 2, p. 1479). The line refers to the famous episode of the Dragon King's daughter from the *Lotus Sutra*. Accordingly, in response to Sariputra's disbelief of her capacity to attain Buddhahood, the Dragon King's daughter offered a precious jewel to the Buddha, immediately transformed into a man, accomplished the bodhisattva path, ascended a Buddha land, and attained Buddhahood (T vol. 9, no. 262, 09.0035c06-c26). Building upon a close reading of the story and connecting it with the *Sutra on Transforming the Female Form*, Balkwill (2018, pp. 3–4) argues that the perceived problem of the female form lies more in its social gender than the physical sex, because a woman "necessarily belongs to another person. Throughout her life, she is like a maidservant who must serve and follow a great family, also like a disciple who must venerate and serve his master".

Female donors at Longmen also perceived their social gender, its destructive power in particular, as an obstacle to their release from suffering. One piece of evidence is found in the inscribed scripture in Cave 1892. Excavated in 694, the grotto contains a carved sutra titled *Pusa hese yufa jing* 菩薩訶色欲法經 (*The Sutra on Bodhisattva's Denunciation of Desires of Form*, T 615), which Tang canons believed to be a translation by Kumārajīva (344–413) (Liu and Li 1998, v. 2, pp. 594–96; Chen 2014, v. 1, p. 116). The short text expounds that the form of women is the cangue, the deadly disease, and the evil dragon in this world. As a result, women were held accountable for family conflicts and the collapse of a clan. Their detrimental power was compared to a tall net that traps flocks of birds or fishes and a dark pit that traps the blinded. Therefore, it is instructed that the wise should stay away from such defilement (T vol. 15, no. 615, pp. 0286a17–0286b09). The scripture warns of the evils that women could inflict on others: families, clans, and those who were trapped by their "net" and "pit". These defilements of the female form arise when women are situated in social connections. Among its donors, at least thirty lay women were listed, in addition to monks and lay men. The presence of these female donors suggests to me that they too internalized the perceived defilements of the female gender.

5. Posthumous Family Connections for Lay Women

Two miraculous legends, both set in the space of Longmen, give vivid accounts of how the earthly attachment from a woman's lifetime, which constitutes an important part of the female social gender, continued in the imagination of her afterlife. As analyzed by Robert Campany (2018), the literary genre of miracle tales offers testimonies to how medieval Chinese audiences received the authority of Buddhist scriptures and teachings. While these stories of Buddhist karmic retributions may appear fictional to modern eyes, they held power and credibility in the minds of their contemporaneous readers. The two miraculous tales below, as I argue, portray a popular perception that lay women would

either maintain their familial ties in the afterlife or endure the karmic consequence of the lack of such social belongings in their lifetime. In my interpretation, such a perception was a driving cause that led to these lay women's choice to be buried alone at Longmen.

One tale, found in *Mingbao ji* 冥報記 (*Records of Retribution from the Unseen Realm)*, shows that married women were expected to repay any possible debts to their children in the afterlife. *Mingbao ji* contains a series of contemporaneous and earlier tales that were compiled around the 650s by Tang Lin 唐臨 (600–659), a high-level government official who also dedicated a shrine (Cave 291) in 657 at Longmen. In this compilation, one of the tales took place at Longmen during the Daye reign (605–18) of the Sui Dynasty. It tells a miraculous story heard from a certain Mr. Wang in Luoyang. Because Wang observed five Buddhist precepts for lay practitioners, he was also known by the title Wujie 五戒 (Five Precepts) and he could sometimes foresee future events. One morning he proclaimed that someone would send him a donkey. This prediction was fulfilled that very noon when a man brought to him a donkey and claimed it to be a reincarnation of his late mother. This man's story reads:

> [since the] father died when he was young, the mother remained a widow while raising a son and a daughter. After the daughter was married, the mother passed away. It had been over ten years since then. On the day of the Cold Food Festival, the younger sister returned home. It was the custom of Luoyang that on the day, [descendants] should offer alcohol and food to the tombs [of ancestors]. Riding the donkey, the son went. The tomb [of their parents] were to the east of the River Yi. As [the son] was about to across the river, the donkey refused to proceed. [The son] whipped its head to bleed. Having arrived at the tomb, [he] let loose of the donkey in order to present the offerings. Soon the donkey disappeared and returned to its original location [later].
>
> On the same day, the younger sister was at the brother's home alone. Suddenly [she] saw her mother entered. Bleeding in the head and mutilated in face, [the mother] wailed and told the daughter, 'When I was alive, I sent you five *sheng* of rice behind your brother's back. For this act, I was punished with sinful karma and reborn in the body of a donkey. [As a donkey] I have repaid your elder brother for five years. Today [he] wanted to cross the River Yi. Since the water is so deep, [I] was afraid of [crossing]. Your elder brother beat me with his whip, wounding my head and face. If [I] returned home, [I am] afraid that he would beat me again. [Thus] I ran to tell you: now I have paid back all my debts, why [would we still] inflict so much unreasonable suffering on each other?' Having finished her words, [the donkey] walked out and cannot be found again. [But] the daughter took note of her wounds.
>
> Soon the brother came back. The daughter went to observe the bleeding wounds on the donkey and realized that they were the same as her mother's. Holding the donkey in arms, she cried. The brother was surprised, asking her about the matter. The daughter told him about the situation. The brother confirmed that earlier, [the donkey] refused to cross the river, and that it returned after disappearing; the circumstance was the same [as what the daughter described]. Then the siblings held one another and cried with grief. Although the donkey also wept, it still refused to drink water or eat grass. The siblings kneeled to plead, 'If you are indeed our mother, please eat the grass". The donkey immediately ate some but stopped shortly again. Not knowing what to do, the siblings prepared millet and beans, and send [them with the donkey] to the place of Wujie (Mr. Wang). Only after that did [the donkey] eat and drink again. Later, when the donkey died, the sister collected [its remains] and buried it.
>
> 早喪父，其母寡，養一男一女；女嫁而母亡。亦十許年矣。寒食日， 妹來歸家，家有驢數年。洛下俗，以寒食日，持酒食祭墓。此人乘驢而往，墓在伊水東，欲

> 度伊水，驢不肯度，鞭其頭面，被傷流血。既至墓所，放驢而祭。俄失其驢。還在本處。
>
> 是日，妹獨在兄家，忽見母入來，頭面血流，形容毀瘁，號泣告女曰：“ 我生時，避汝兄送米五升與汝，坐此得罪報，受驢身。償汝兄五年矣。今日欲度伊水，水深畏之，汝兄以鞭捶我，頭面盡破，仍許還家，更苦打我。我走來告汝，吾今償債垂畢，何太非理相苦也。” 言訖，走出，尋之不見。女記其傷狀處。
>
> 既而兄還，女先觀驢頭面傷破流血，如見其母傷狀，女抱以號泣。兄怪問之，女以狀告，兄亦言初不肯度，及既失還得之狀同。於是兄妹抱持慟哭，驢亦涕淚交流， 不食水草。兄妹跪請：“若是母者， 願為食草。” 驢即為食草， 既而復止。兄妹莫如之何，遂備粟豆，送五戒處。乃復飲食。後驢死，妹收葬焉。 (Tang n.d., T 2082, vol. 51, 798b14-798c03)

This story at Longmen conveys the perceived continuity of karmic debts between a deceased woman and her descendants. Because she had sent rice to her daughter in secrets, the mother was reborn as a donkey and labored for five years to repay the debt to her son. After the debt from the previous rebirth was finally cleared, the donkey refused to eat at her son's place until she was sent to a respected lay Buddhist who had no discernable connection with the family. Both acts might ensure her a release from further attachments to her son after this death.

Posthumous family tie was not only a serious concern for the married, but unmarried women also had to consider how, in death, they would be treated by their living families and those who knew them in life. The perception of deceased, unmarried women at Longmen is conveyed through "Daodeli shusheng 道德里書生 (A Scholar from the Ward of Morality)". The tale was recorded to come from *Jiwen* 紀聞 (Records of Hearsay) by Niu Su 牛肅 (fl. late seventh–early eighth centuries), and only preserved in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive Records of the Taipingxingguo Era), an encyclopedic collection of stories that was completed at the request of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–998) of the Song (960–1279) and first published by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996) in 978 (Ditter et al. 2017).[7] Like other tales documented in this anthology, "Daodeli shusheng" is likely drawn from hearsay (Ditter et al. 2017, p. 15), but it brings to light a common belief in the afterlife among the lay people of Lady Zhang and Lady Lou's time.

The tale recounts a night excursion from the city of Luoyang to Xiangshan Monastery. Archaeological excavations have found the ruins of the monastery on the eastern side of Longmen (Guglielminotti Trivel 2006; Luoyang Shi Longmen Wenwu Baoguansuo 1986). The story goes,

> In the eastern capital (Luoyang) of the Tang dynasty, in Daode Ward, there was a scholar. One evening, when walking to the Middle Bridge, he stumbled upon an aristocratic entourage, accompanied by luxurious carts and horses. Seeing the scholar, [the aristocrats] talked to him and asked him to follow the entourage. [Inside the team] there was a princess, about twenty years old, whose beauty was unparalleled in the world. [As she] continued to converse with the scholar, the group left the Changxia Gate in the south [of the city], arriving at Longmen where they entered a splendid mansion filled with orchid fragrance. [The princess] summoned the scholar, bestowed him fine cuisines, and slept with him. In midnight, the scholar was awakened and saw where he was sleeping was a stone cave. In the front was a dead woman whose corpse had become swollen. In moonlight, it was unbearable to smell the stink of the corpse. The scholar then climbed on the stone, barely finding his way out. At dawn [he] arrived at Xiangshan Monastery and told what happened to the monk there. The monk sent him back home. Several days later, he died. [The story is] from *Jiwen*.
>
> [唐東] 都道德里有一書生。日晚行至中橋。遇貴人部從。車馬甚盛。見書生。呼與語。令從後。有貴主。年二十餘。丰姿絕世。與書生語不輟。因而南去長夏門。遂至龍門。入一甲第。華堂蘭室。召書生賜珍饌。因與寢。夜過半。書生覺。見所臥處。乃石窟。前有一死婦人。身王洪漲。月光照之。穢不可聞。書生乃履危

攀石。僅能出焉。曉至香山寺。為僧說之。僧送還家。數日而死。出紀聞。
(Li [978] 1566, vol. 331, p. 4a)

The anecdote supplies detailed geographic information to help its readers imagine the story in their familiar space (Figure 5). Following the footstep of the young scholar, a reader starts from Daode Ward, making a short trip to the Middle Bridge, following the entourage south to the Changxia Gate (Long Summer Gate, the eastern gate on the southern city wall of Luoyang), and finally exiting the city to Longmen and Xiangshan Monastery (Xu [1809] 1985, front matter; Lai 2021). It is probable that the legend was believed to have taken place in one of the many burial chambers that are still extant in the Eastern Hills of Longmen, not far away from the ruins of Xiangshan Monastery.

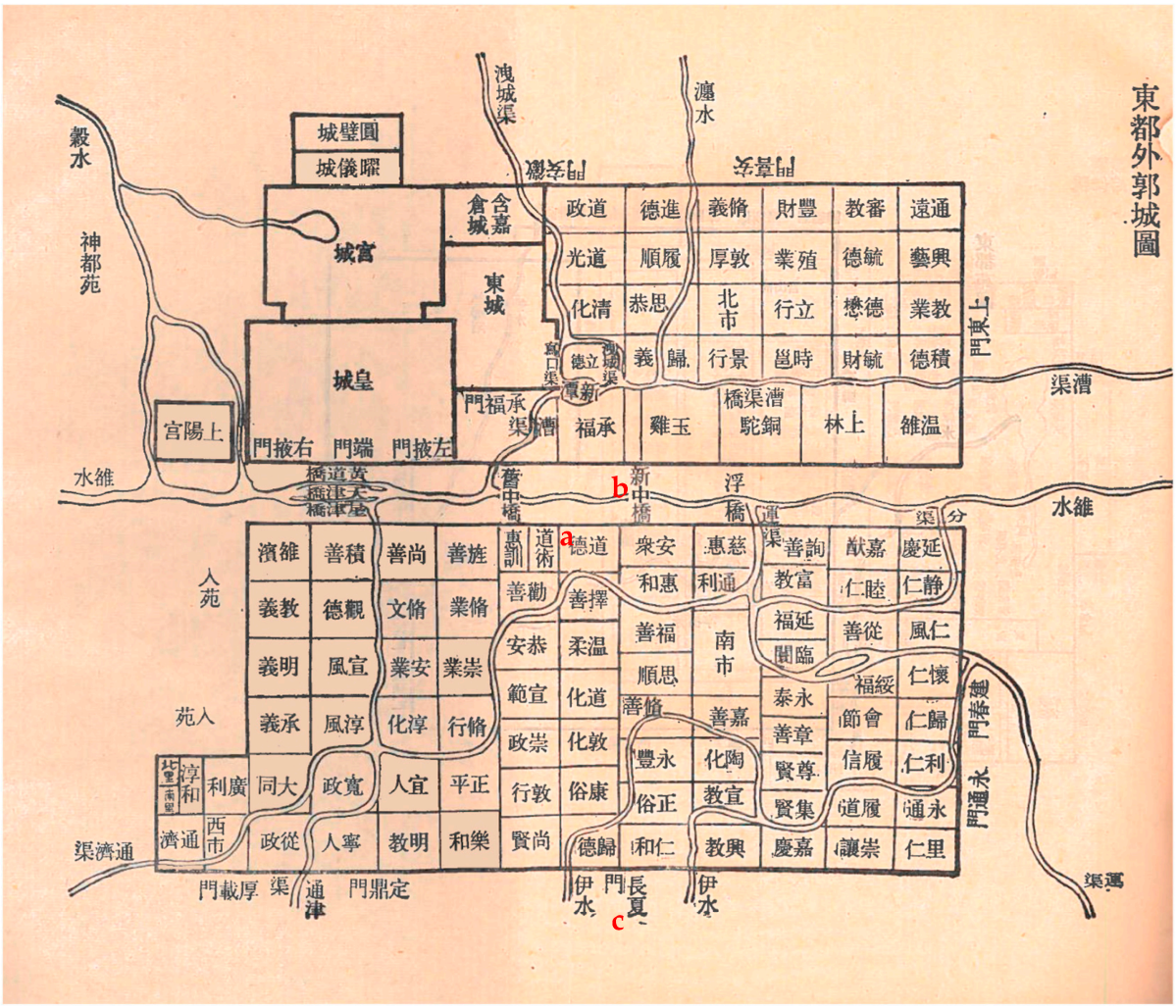

Figure 5. Historical map of the outer city of Luoyang, with red marks of (**a**) Daode (Morality) Ward, (**b**) New Middle Bridge, and (**c**) Changxia (Long Summer) Gate. Image adapted from Xu Song, Tang Liangjing chengfang kao (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), front matter. Public domain.

Despite its spatial details, the story does not explain why the scholar died at all. I interpret the absence of textual explanation as an indication that the contemporaneous audience would understand the cause immediately. Several stories in *Taiping guangji* include a similar plot of a man's sexual encounter with a deceased woman. For example, in one story attributed to the Tianbao reign (742–755), a certain Mr. Yang 楊 disappeared and was later discovered alive from the tomb of a young woman. Subsequently, the spirit of this lady informed her uncle, in his dream, of an upcoming betrothal from the Yang family. Yet on the scheduled day of the wedding, the man died for no reason. Afterward, the two

families held an afterlife wedding ceremony and buried them in a joint tomb. According to Ping Yao (2002, pp. 208–9), such vernacular romance emerged as a genre because of the popularity of afterlife marriage in the Tang. While such practice probably became common as early as the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1050–235 BCE), its surge in the Tang was confirmed by six tomb epitaphs and three biographies in dynastic histories, the latest of which was dated to 768. When the miraculous story of Longmen is interpreted in this context, the death of the young scholar implies that he was trapped in a netherworld union with the female spirit in the cave.

While the tale most explicitly cautioned men, women were not excluded from the audience. The message of this tale to an unmarried young woman is a dire one: if she was not married by the time of her death, then she had to endure either the popular imagination that she might turn into a seductive spirit or the possibility that her family would arrange a postmortem marriage on her behalf.

In the context outlined by the two miraculous stories, if a lay woman in the early Tang aspired to a release from earthly ties after death, she had to seek an alternative that would sever her matrimonial connection in the afterlife. It seems that Buddhist devotions offered a suitable cause, and the site of Longmen, filled with statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, provided a desirable resting place.

One woman at Longmen, Lady Pei 裴 (667–725), explicitly wished to be separated from her husband's family at death. Lady Pei's burial location and arrangement were documented in the ink rubbing of her tomb epitaph (Zhou and Zhao 1992, v. 2, p. 1313). Accordingly, after her husband died at a young age, Pei left the will that "[she] should not be buried in the tomb of Zhichang (her husband), because she had taken the precepts [for a lay person] 不許從於直長之塋，以其受誡律也". Then on the twenty-third day of the second month of 726 (March 31, 726), "she was buried on the rear mountain of Puti Monastery of Longmen Hills in Henan. [Such choice] revealed [her determination] to leave the dusty [world] 葬於河南龍門山菩提寺之後崗，明去塵也" (Zhou and Zhao 1992, v. 2, p. 1313).

From the will of Lady Pei and the two miraculous tales, I believe that some women in the early Tang, Lady Lou and Lady Zhang included, regarded their posthumous familial bonds as a serious matter. Beyond Longmen, Shufen Liu and Jessey Choo have also given abundant examples in which women from the Tang hoped to be buried separately so that they could be dissociated from their husbands after death (Liu 2008, pp. 280–84; Choo 2022, pp. 111–17). Choo (2022, p. 72) has also argued that on the rhetorical level, in the minds of the living, the joint burial of a wife and a husband reaffirmed the marital bonds at death, whereas a separate burial symbolized the end of the union. The case of Lady Pei and the two miraculous tales further indicate that for the moribund, marital ties in the afterlife were more than rhetorical. As their final moments approached, lay women were pressed to make burial arrangements to ensure their own release. Likely for this consideration, Lady Lou and Lady Zhang resorted to the stone chambers at Longmen.

6. Conclusions

In-between the formulaic lines of cave inscriptions are the various contentions faced by Lady Lou and Lady Zhang as they chose Longmen as their burial place. Lou and her husband did not enact the practice of flesh offering, even though they called her cave burial a practice that followed "the rule of Śītavana". The sons of Zhang could not allow their mother's body to disintegrate alone because she still had another role to fulfill in her husband's tomb, as a model Confucian wife to a courageous official. Despite all these foreseeable difficulties, these women insisted on having their remains sealed in the caves of Longmen. It is my argument that this choice was motivated by the perceived burdens of their social gender, which came from both scriptural sources and the popular imagination of the afterlives of women, either as mothers and wives who were still trapped in the web of family responsibilities or as beguiling spirits with destructive power. To find a way out of this conundrum, Lady Lou and Lady Zhang chose to literally inter their bodies into

the same earth occupied by the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of Longmen in an attempt to prepare for their own release in the afterlife.

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Notes

[1] The five burial caves with inscriptions include the ones of Ladies Lou and Zhang, which are the focus of this paper, and the ones of nun Lingjue 靈覺 (c. 687–738) and nun Huideng 惠燈 (650–731), which are briefly introduced in the later part of this paper. The fifth one is known as Wanfogou Cave 1, published in 2021. The fragmented inscription does not include the name of the cave occupant but mentions the second son of a certain Zhang Sijing 張思敬 (Longmen shiku yanjiu yuan 2021, vol. 1, pp. 24–25). I also learned about this burial cave from Lan Li (2022), who participated in the excavation of Wanfogou in 2015.

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are by the author.

[3] The character is neither transcribed in the 1998 version nor legible from the ink rubbing. Thus, it is uncertain if the husband's name was Shen Li or Shen Pou.

[4] I translate this passage differently from Shufen Liu (2000, p. 8). Liu interprets these words as conveying Daoxuan's "admiration of the ideals" and "sense of revulsion at its actual undertaking".

[5] The translation of the title *Neize* comes from Legge (1885, p. 449).

[6] This translation is from Legge (1885, p. 176). For names, the old transliterations are adapted with *pinyin* romanization.

[7] *Taiping guangji* was not reprinted until the sixteenth century (Ditter et al. 2017, p. 19).

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