

## Article

# The Establishment of Religious Landscapes and Local Social Life in Nanshan and Beishan, Dazu District, in the Song Dynasty

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**Abstract:** As an exemplary and quintessential representation of China's late-stage religious stone-carving art, previous research on the Dazu Rock Carvings has primarily concentrated on the typical cave remains in core areas like Baoding and Beishan. These investigations have been highly adept at archeological typology and iconographic analysis. This study, based on 134 extant inscriptions, reassesses the Beishan and Nanshan stone-carving complexes from the perspective of cultural heritage integrity. Through long-term landscape analysis, we uncovered their distinctive value in the construction of religious spaces during the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties. During the Song Dynasty (Zhao Song Dynasty), Buddhism held sway in Beishan, while Nanshan developed a comprehensive Taoist pantheon system encompassing the Three Pure Ones (Sanqing) and the Six Imperial Divinities (Liuyu). Together, they formed a religious spatial pattern of "Sakyamuni in Beishan and Taoist deities in Nanshan". Furthermore, since the Shaoxing era (1131–1162), inscriptions left by Confucian scholars and officials during their visits to these two mountains have been frequently encountered. This spatial overlap phenomenon mirrors the profound integration of religious practices and secular power in the Bashu region during the Song Dynasty. This research breaks through the traditional case-study paradigm. By systematically examining the spatio-temporal evolution of the stone-carving complexes and the network of inscriptions, it reveals that the religious landscape of Dazu is, in essence, the outcome of the cumulative layering of political power, economic resources, and cultural aspirations across diverse historical periods. In particular, the transformation of Beishan and Nanshan from the merit caves of military generals in the late Tang Dynasty to the cultural spaces of the gentry class in the Song Dynasty vividly demonstrates the local practice model in the secularization process of Chinese religious art from the 10th to the 13th century.



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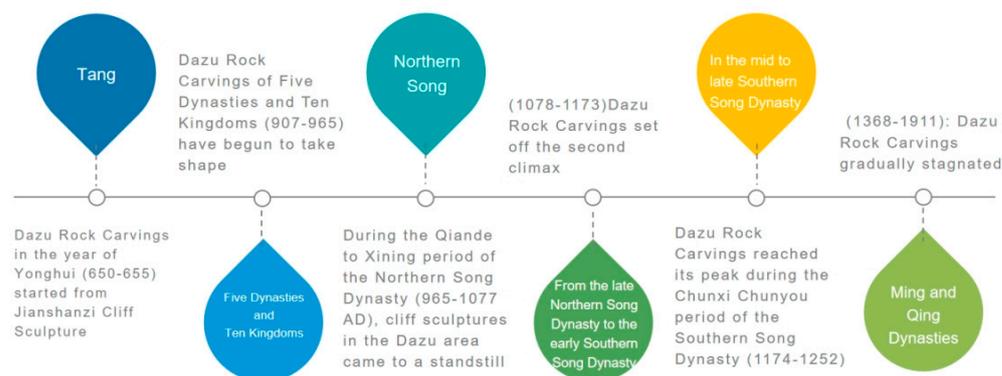
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**Keywords:** Dazu Rock Carvings; cliff statues; Nanshan; Beishan; local society

## 1. Introduction

After its introduction to China in 3rd century AD, cave art reached its zenith twice in northern China, around 5th and 7th centuries AD. However, this art form began its decline by the mid-8th century AD, following the Tianbao Era of the Tang Dynasty. At the same time, in the Yangtze River basin, the cliff carvings in Dazu County emerged as a significant new development. The Dazu Rock Carvings, constructed from the end of the 9th century to the mid-13th century, marked another peak in the history of Chinese grotto art, extending the history of Chinese grotto art for more than 400 years (Figure 1). The

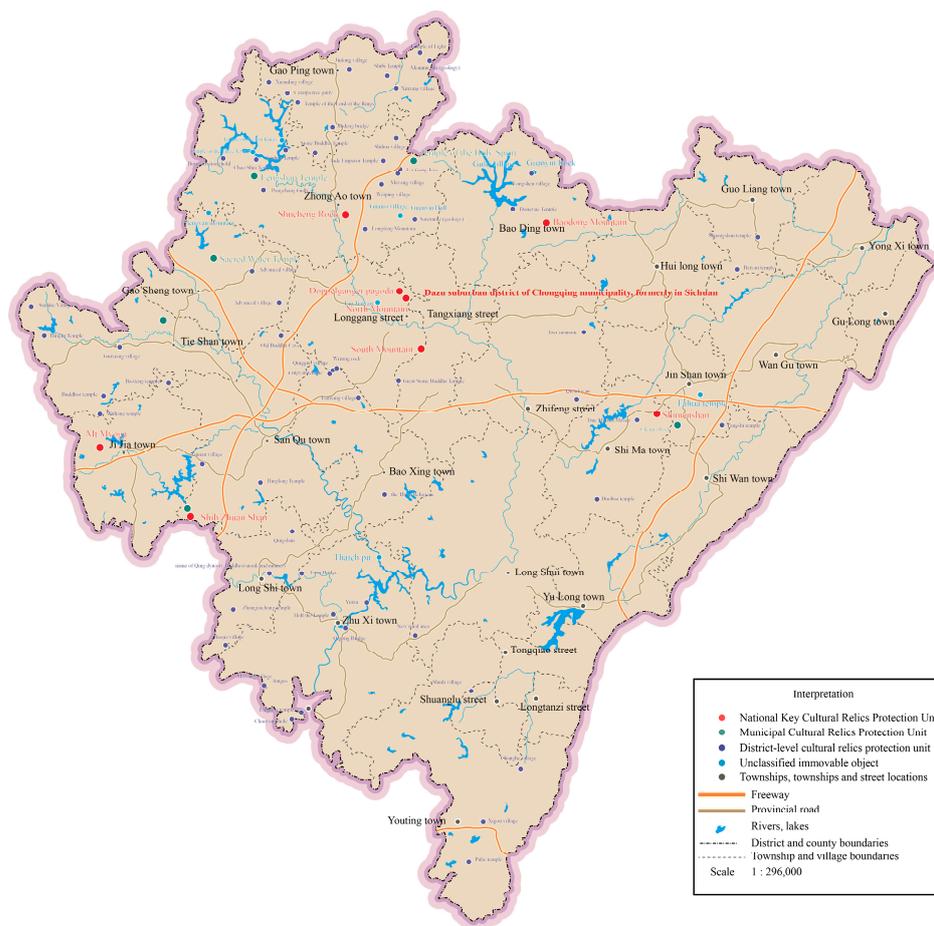
Dazu Rock Carvings also stand as the last significant monument in the history of Chinese grotto art creation.



**Figure 1.** The main historical stages of the Dazu Rock Carvings.

The Dazu Rock Carvings, located in Dazu District, Chongqing, China, collectively comprise 141 cliff statues in the area (Figure 2). Dazu District in Chongqing is situated at the watershed of the Fulu 涪江 and Tuo rivers 沱江, the neighboring Anyue 安嶽 and Rongchang 榮昌, and the distant Yizhou 益州 and Chongqing. It was stated that “The necessities for clothing and food, essential for living, are not as good as in other counties. Although there are no oars and boats on the Fulu and Tuo rivers, there is an abundance of mulberry, hemp, and millet”<sup>1</sup> (Zhu 2003). Changzhou 昌州 is surrounded by mountains, with Yulong Mountain 玉龙山 to the east, which runs north–south and is a significant natural barrier dividing the boundaries of Yuzhou 渝州 and Changzhou. Its geography naturally lends itself to being a defensible city that is hard to attack. Cliff statues are an important medium for the establishment of Dazu’s material cultural heritage and religious space, which are particularly represented by the five mountains of Dazu, i.e., Baodingshan 寶頂山, Beishan 北山, Nanshan 南山, Shimenshan 石門山, and Shizhuanshan 石篆山. These mountains also host over 100 other smaller statues, with more than 50,000 individual carvings. The carvings predominantly feature Buddhist themes, with Taoism as a secondary element. In addition to the physical statues, a vast array of inscriptions on tablets and stones have been preserved.

Previous studies primarily concentrated on establishing the chronology of the Dazu Rock Carvings, identifying their distinctive styles, uncovering the excavation background of representative sites such as Beishan or Baodingshan, and examining the personal experiences of figures such as Zhao Zhifeng 趙智鳳. How to explore the relationship between the Taoist cliff statues in Dazu and the establishment of regional sacred space within an overall theoretical framework is a research topic that awaits further breakthroughs. This study regards the sacred space created by the grotto statues in Dazu as a unified entity and analyzes the establishment and transformation of religious space from a diachronic perspective. It holds that the sacred space of Dazu is not fixed; rather, it is shaped by the successive influences of various belief systems from different dynasties. Specifically, during the late Tang and Five Dynasties, the Southern Song Dynasty, Shaoxing Chunxi, and the late Southern Song Dynasty, there were different carriers of belief, such as the integration of military garrisons and Buddhist beliefs, local scenic Taoist spots that represent prayer, and the arrival of Buddhism, which, together, built the sacred space of Dazu.



**Figure 2.** The distribution of the Dazhu Rock Carvings. The figure was redrawn by the authors based on the Chinese version of the map provided by the Dazhu Shike Yishu Yanjiusuo.

## 2. Beishan Fowan 北山佛灣: A Unique Fusion of Military Garrisons and Religious Space

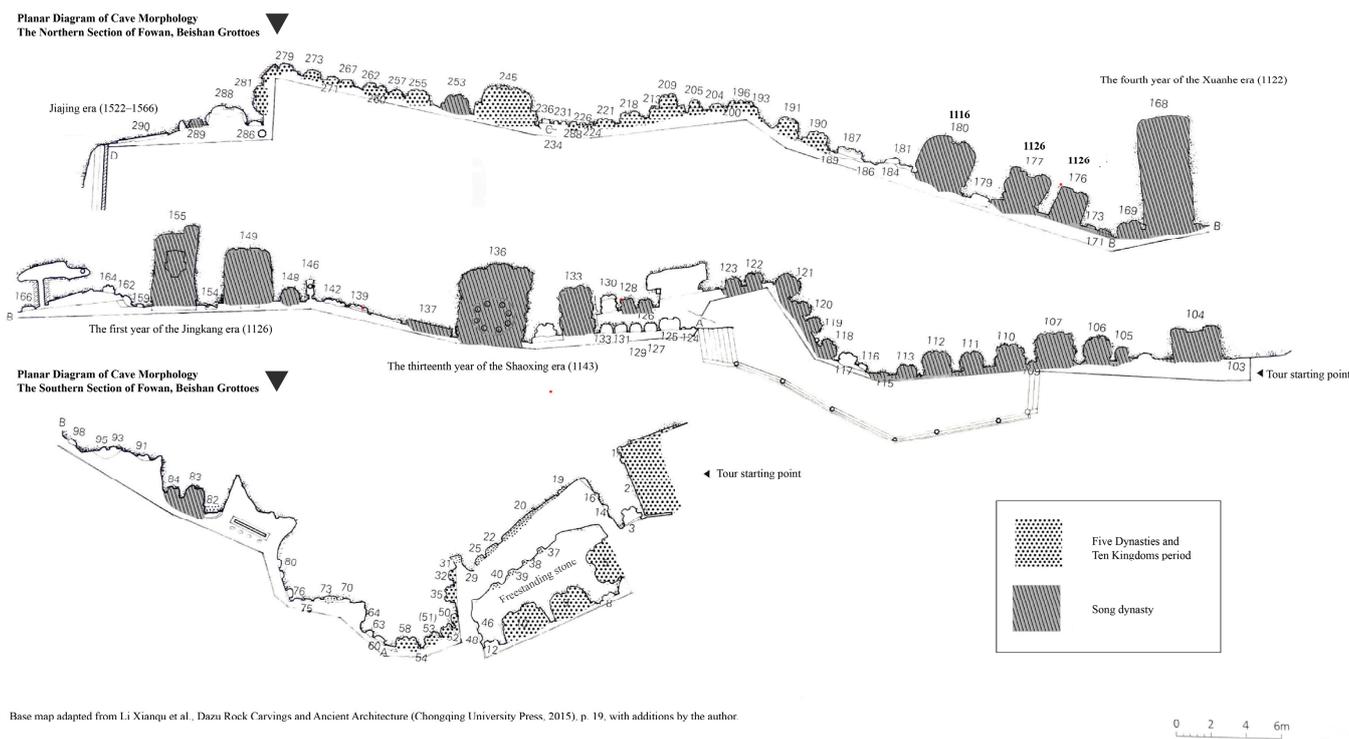
Located in Dazhu County, the Jianshanzi 尖山子 site boasts the earliest dated carvings in the Dazhu area. These carvings, found in Cave 7 and featuring a dedication to the teachings of Maitreya with an inscription from the era of Emperor Gaozong of Tang (650–655), stand as the sole relics from the early Tang Dynasty in Dazhu. This region also served as the seat of state administration for Changzhou during the Tang’s Guangqi years. A century later, evidence of late Tang carvings re-emerged at the Shengshui Temple 聖水寺 in Gao-heng Township 高升鄉, at the junction of Dazhu and AnYue’s Zhongyi Township 忠義鄉 (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 9). Both of these early carving sites are geographically located in the northwestern part of Dazhu, near the border with AnYue (Chen and Deng 1994, pp. 30–37). However, due to their smaller scale and the lack of evidence of ongoing carving, the emergence of these two cliff carvings may well have been influenced by carving activities and artistic styles imported from Sichuan to the north and west, indicating that a sustained carving tradition and a substantial religious space had not yet truly taken shape here.

Among the local religious landmarks, none stand out more than the contributions of Wei Junjing 韋君靖, the county magistrate of Changzhou and the military governor of Jingnan 靖南軍, who popularized the practice that resulted in the massive Dazhu Rock Carvings at Beishan. Historically known as Longgang Mountain 龍崗山, the site’s cliff carvings were commissioned by the magistrate of Changzhou County and the Commander of the Four States of Chang, Pu 普, Yu 渝, and He 合 in the first year of Jingfu (892 AD) during

the late Tang Dynasty. This endeavor continued through the Five Dynasties period until the Shaoxing era of the Southern Song Dynasty, a span of over 250 years. The carvings at Beishan, centered around the Fowan area 佛湾, extend to locations such as Guanyin Slope 观音坡, Fo'er Rock 佛耳岩, and Yingpan Slope 营盘坡, making it one of the seminal works of late Chinese cave art.

The Beishan cliff carvings boast nearly ten thousand statues, which were predominantly funded by secular patrons for their prayers to Buddha. The subjects of these carvings encompass 51 varieties, with Tantric Buddhism forming the majority, accounting for over half of the total. Other significant sects include the Three-Stage School of Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. These subjects were extremely popular among the common people at the time, which was a product of the secularization of Buddhism, making them distinct from earlier Chinese cave temples. Renowned for their exquisite craftsmanship, artistic refinement, and esthetic elegance, the Beishan carvings illustrate the evolution and transformation of Chinese folk Buddhist beliefs and cave art styles from the late 9th century to the mid-12th century (the late Tang, the Five Dynasties, and the Song periods).

Among the Beishan cliff carvings, there are currently seven extant steles, seventeen inscribed poems and texts, and seventy-seven carved inscriptions (Table 1), all of which hold significant value for the study of historical geography, religious beliefs, cave chronology, and historical figures (Figure 3). The “Wei Junjing Stele”, inscribed by the military judge 军事判官将仕郎 and former sheriff of Jingnan County, Hu Mi 胡密, and carved in the second year of the Qianning Era of Emperor Zhaozong of Tang (895 AD), reveals that the carvings at Beishan began in the first year of the Jingfu Era of the late Tang (892 AD) and were completed by the sixteenth year of the Shaoxing Era (1146 AD), spanning over 250 years. The “Wei Junjing Stele” is included in both “Essentials of Historical Geography” 读史方輿纪要 (Gu and Shi 2005, pp. 3278–79) and “Complete Literature Works of the Tang Dynasty” 全唐文 (Chen 2005, pp. 1096–97) from the Qing Dynasty. The creation of these cliff carvings was closely related to the rise in the military governors during the late Tang period and the deep development of local armed forces. During the Qianfu Era, the Huang Chao 黄巢 rebellion occurred, and Emperor Xizong of Tang fled to Chengdu. In the Shuzhong 蜀中 region, various military governors fought for power, with many regional warlords and former military governors establishing their own territories through continuous warfare. Wei Junjing, the county governor of Changzhou and the temporary commander of four states (Dazu, Anyue, Chongqing, and Hechuan), as well as the supervisor/military governor of Jingnan, held his position in Changzhou. In seeking divine protection, he initiated the carvings at Beishan. The “Wei Junjing Stele” mainly records the construction of Yongchang Fortress 永昌寨 and the storage of grain in Dazu, as well as the carving of the Beishan Fowan in search of protection. It also mentions significant battles and the titles of military officers during the late Tang Dynasty. Scholars from Japan, due to their focus on the transformation from the Tang to the Song dynasty, explored the local society in the late Tang dynasty from the perspectives of official positions, military governors, and local militias. Scholars such as Yasuhiko Satake 佐竹靖彦, Masao Kurihara 栗原益男, and Kaisaburo Tano 日野開三郎 are representative figures in this research (Satake 1990, pp. 391–39; Kurihara 1960, pp. 1–14; Tano 1980, pp. 518–28). Thomas Suchan not only points out the neglect of past research on Wei Junjing’s support for Buddhism but also emphasizes that Dazu became the center of local administration and society after the Tang Dynasty, influencing the creation of cave carvings at Beishan (Suchan 2003, pp. 311–17). Suchan and Bei Jinyi 北進一 (Bei 1997, pp. 311–17) share similar views, suggesting that, in Sichuan, hills with carved grottoes were often used by local residents as natural military strongholds, indicating a close relationship between the grottoes and the regional society.<sup>2</sup>



Base map adapted from Li Xianqiu et al., Dazui Rock Carvings and Ancient Architecture (Chongqing University Press, 2015), p. 19, with additions by the author

**Figure 3.** Layout of the Fowan in the Beishan Grottoes. The base picture was taken from Dazui Rock Carvings and Ancient Buildings, edited by Li Xiankui 李先逵 et al. (Li and Guo 2015, p. 19), Chongqing University Press.

**Table 1.** Chronological information of statues in the Beishan Fowan during the Tang Dynasty.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 9	Avalokitesvara-sahasrabhuja-lo-cana Sahasrabhuja Sahasranetra Avalokitesvara	892	Minister and Commander in Chief 校司空使節度都督
Niche. 26	The Goddess of Mercy	895	Respecting the deceased son to create merit
Niche. 58	Avalokiteshvar Kṣitigarbha	896	Chief Inspector 检校司空守 and feudal provincial governor 刺史 of Changzhou Wangzongjing 王宗靖
		896	Zhaoshike 赵师恪, the governor 节度左押衙检校左散骑常侍 and imperial censor 御史大夫, and Senior Grand Tutor 上柱国
Niche. 240	Mercy Buddha Halla	896	The construction of Bhiksuni Huizhi 惠志 is ascribed to the ten benefactors, with respect and progress from the young master
Niche. 50	Cintamicakra Avalokitesvara	897	Monk Mingwu 明悟 of the Dudian Seat 都典座 is revered as a benefactor from the Ten Directions, with a broad range of Buddhist teachings and a broad range of teachings
Niche. 52	Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva \ The Goddess of Mercy	897	Female disciple Mrs. Li made offerings for the Imperial Censor of Changzhou, her deceased husband Liu.

Table 1. Cont.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 51	Buddhist Trinity	899	The Left Governor of the military was appointed as the commander of the Four Prefectures 四州都指挥. The military of Changzhou was led by the Silver, Green, and Glorious Grand Princes 银青光禄大夫, who were appointed as the Senior Grand Tutor, Wang Zongjing
Niche. 243	Sahasrabhuja Sahasranetra Avalokitesvara	901	Right Disciple Military Escort 右弟子军事押衙, Jian Zhijin 蹇知进
Niche. 245	Painting of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Sutra	Before the third year of Qianning	The preacher 化首 Liu Jingxi 刘净喜, disciples Li and Wen
Niche. 18		Before the second year of Guanghua	Jingnan Army

Note: This table is mainly based on the [Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu \(1999\)](#) and the collation of on-site surveys.

### 2.1. Construction on Beishan During the Tang and Five Dynasties Periods

Among the 20 statues recorded in the Shu Dynasty's chronological records, there are two instances where the donors held specific official positions (Niche. 53 and Niche. 281), identified as the Third Commander of the Right Army 右衙第三軍散副將 and the Head of the Right Cavalry Unit in charge of official affairs 右廂都押衙知衙務, respectively. These account for 10% of the recorded donors with inscriptions. The remainder, approximately 90%, consists of individuals without official titles and general members of the public involved in the creation and dedication of the statues (Table 2). This represents a significant increase in the proportion of non-military and political officials, as well as the general public, compared with the Tang Dynasty.

Compared to the Tang Dynasty, the proportion of local officials contributing to the creation of niches in the Fowan Grottoes diminished during the Five Dynasties period. Conversely, the participation of individuals without official titles and female donors saw a notable increase. During the Five Dynasties period, Changzhou was not peaceful, experiencing numerous rebellions and conflicts. In the 53rd niche of Beishan, it is recorded that in the fifth year of Yongping (915), Xi Yan, the son of the scattered deputy general Zhong Shenneng, was killed by rebels. This illustrates the tense relationship between rebels and the local military and political authorities. The activity of creating statues was closely associated with Buddhist fasting ceremonies, as seen in Niches 39 (the Blazing Glory Buddha) and 37. During this period, representations of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha and Avalokitesvara became prominent themes in the Buddhist statues of the main deities. The Dharani Sutra, possessing the ability to “benefit the living” and “transport the deceased”, was frequently depicted along with incantations and pillar images in the Beishan grottoes of the Later Shu. This indicates that the Dharani Sutra was a significant component of Buddhist faith during the Five Dynasties period.

During the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, specifically during the reign of Emperor Taizong (990–994), the Dazu region experienced a civilian uprising. Longgang Mountain, which is located to the north, served to house the official military garrison of Changzhou prefecture. As recorded in “Geography Records of the Song Dynasty” ([Tuotuo 1971](#), p. 2218), Changzhou was designated as a strategic military region.<sup>3</sup> The towering mountains within Changzhou acted as natural barriers and vantage points for the city. During the era of Emperor Taizong, the official Lu Bin 盧斌 was assigned to quell the rebellion in Shu, and the rebels led by You Ren 任誘 had stationed their troops on this mountain. Locals mentioned that if there was a disturbance in other counties, signal fires would be

lit there<sup>4</sup> (Zhu 2003, p. 1122). Local rebels were stationed within the Changzhou jurisdiction. Moreover, the earliest dated carvings from the Song Dynasty at the Beishan Fowan site are believed to be from the third year of the Daguan Era (1110)—specifically, Carving No. 286, which depicts the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. In the third year of the Qiande Era (965), Emperor Taizong centralized the elite troops from various regions in the imperial capital, forming the Imperial Guard 禁軍, while the soldiers remaining in their localities were referred to as “Barrack Troops 廂軍”. After the Xining 熙寧 Era (1068–1077), there are records of 45 counties in Sichuan organizing their own Barrack Troops, which were also known as Ke’ning Troops (Tuotuo 1971, pp. 4645, 4690, 4695). The recently discovered Cave 168 on Beishan features a statue of Arhats donated by the Commanding General and his wife, Wen Zhi, from the Ke’ning Army, dated to the fourth year of the Jianyan Era (1130). There is an inscription reading “Changzhou Ke’ning” found below the statues of the second row of Arhats on the left side of the left wall. Furthermore, the 137th niche was explicitly carved by ten Ke’ning Army generals, with the inscription positioned in the upper left corner of the wall.

**Table 2.** Chronological information of statues in the Beishan Fowan during the former and later Shu Dynasties.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 32	Surya-prabha candra-prabha	913	Mrs. Zhou enshrined and worshiped surya-prabha and candra-prabha for her deceased mother
Niche. 53	Amitabha Avalokiteshvara Kṣitigarbha	915	The Deputy General of the Third Army of the Right Yamen, Zhong Shenneng 種審能, for deceased son Xi Yan 希言 who was wounded by a thief
Niche. 39	Prajvalosnisah	922	Disciples Wen Mengda 溫孟达, Yu Yanzhang 于彦章, Liang Gui 梁覓, Chen Ji 陈季, Deng Zhijin 邓知进, Yang Zonghou 杨宗厚, Cheng Yanhui 程彦晖, Wang Mengyan 王孟言, Wang Dequan 王德全, and Chen Jing donated 陈敬造.
Niche. 27	Avalokiteshvara	938	
Niche. 37	Kṣitigarbha	940	Right disciples Yu Yanzhang and Deng Zhijin
Niche. 35	Sakyamuni	941	
Niche. 244	Kṣitigarbha	945	
Niche. 281	Bhaisajya Guru usnisa-vijaya-dharani Dhvaja	954	Liu Gong 刘恭, Right Disciple, and his family in the Right Chamber of the Imperial Magistracy Liu Gong
Niche. 260	usnisa vijaya dharani	955	Anonymous
Niche. 279	Bhaisajya guru vaidūrya prabhārāja	955	Wang Chengxiu 王承秀, the head of the Tongyin official line 通引官, and his female disciples.

Note: This table is mainly based on the [Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu \(1999\)](#).

On the initial carving day, commanders of the Changzhou Ke’ning Army, led by Wen Zhi, jointly donated three thousand large coins for the rendering of this tablet, so that it may stand firm and not be lost. On the double ninth day of the Jiaoyin year of the Song Dynasty, this was respectfully inscribed. The inscription is dedicated to the memory of Mother Xue, family Ren, and male Jinshi (Huang and Liu 2016).

Niche no. 149 niche houses a statue of Avalokitesvara sponsored by Ren Zongyi 任宗易 during the Second Year of Jianyan (1128). The purpose of constructing the image was to forever be a sight for the people to venerate and pray for an end to war. In the twelfth year of Shaoxing (1142), the military and state affairs of Changzhou requested the prosper-

ity of the nation and the well-being of the entire family. In the thirteenth year of Shaoxing (1143), Zhao Pengnian 趙彭年, who held the positions of deputy magistrate 錄事參軍 and justice 司戶司法 in Changzhou, included wishes for the stability of the barbarians and the Han, as well as the health and harmony of his family, when he initiated the carving of a statue. Analyzing the themes of the Beishan Grottoes and their donors, it becomes evident that, throughout the late Northern Song Dynasty, especially during the reign of Emperor Shenzong, the defensive military nature of the Changzhou region was paramount (Fang 2013). It was not until the sixteenth year of Shaoxing (1146), when the Beishan Grottoes were gradually completed, that this became an important religious landmark in the local area. The influence of this religious site extended beyond the Dazu region, including areas such as Puzhou and Yuzhou, with its primary radiation being centered on the Zizhou 梓州 and Tongchuanfu Roads 潼川府.

## 2.2. Construction on Beishan in the Song Dynasty

During the Northern Song Dynasty, the construction activities on Beishan were less documented with inscribed dedicatory tablets. At this time, the religious landscape encompassed not only Beishan but also a cluster of temples and monasteries in the northern part of the city and its surrounding areas. Dozens of portable rock carvings and sculptures were discovered, which suggests that these sculptures were largely supported by temples. Sites from the Song Dynasty, such as the Dazhong Temple 大鐘寺, Shibi Temple 石壁寺, and Yan'en Temple 延恩寺, have been identified. The Mongol–Song Wars resulted in the partial or complete destruction of many temples and religious sites in various mountains and cities.

During the Southern Song Dynasty, local officials personally participated in sculpting activities and became the primary sponsors of representative niches and cave complexes. For instance, the Zhuanlunzang Cave on Beishan is renowned as one of the most exquisite and well-designed large cave complexes created during the Shaoxing years. Its sponsors were typically high-ranking, directly governed local officials. In the twelfth year of Shaoxing (1142), Zhang Xinmin, the military governor of Changzhou, along with the deputy magistrate of Changzhou, led their followers and provided funding for the creation of the same niches (Table 3). By the Shaoxing Era of the Southern Song Dynasty, the construction of Beishan Fowan had been completed; it had become a popular local tourist attraction and continued to be until the Qiandao Era. In the tenth year of Shaoxing (1140), Beishan had already become a famous landmark in the Changzhou area and its surrounding regions. On the right side of niche no. 137, which depicts the figure of Vimalakirti 維摩詰, there is an inscription by a person from Pu Prefecture visiting the site: “Pu Ci 普慈, Zhao Zicong 趙子充, together with his younger brother Rouwen 柔文 and his nephew Tingyan 廷彥, on the 23rd day of the fourth month of the Genshen year (1140), visited the site accompanied by the gentleman Nandeyan 男德言”. At this time, Lv Yuanxi 呂元錫, in the fourth year of the Southern Song Dynasty’s Chunxi Era (1177), came to Beishan for a summer retreat with his brothers Lv Yuanmu 呂元牧 and Lv Yuanbing 呂元丙. They cooked tea, played chess, composed poems, and left an inscription on the outside of the left wall of niche no. 288. This sacred religious site, from the era of the Southern Song Dynasty’s Shaoxing years to that of Emperor Xiaozong, served not only as a gathering place for literary figures but also as a military encampment and religious site. The religious attribute overlapped with the attribute of a local landmark, with the former appearing to gradually weaken in prominence.

**Table 3.** Chronological information of statues in the Beishan Fowan during the Song Dynasty.

Niche.	Main Statues	Era	Donors and Inscriptions
Niche. 286	Avalokiteshvara	1110	
Niche. 180	Avalokiteshvara	1116	Deng Weiming 邓惟明, the younger brother of the gentleman in front of the county gate 县门前仕人.
		1120	Anonymous
		1122	Disciples who believe in Buddha in Dangju City, etc.
Niche. 168	Arhat	1121	Mr. and Mrs. Li Shiming 李世明, a kind family living in Changzhou City.
		1122	He Yixing 何仪兴 and his family, residents in the eastern suburbs of Yuan Township 袁乡, Dazu County, Changzhou.
			Mr. and Mrs. Miao Yi 苗以, a kind family living outside of Changzhou.
Niche. 155	Mahamayuri	1126	Fu Yuanjun 伏元俊 and son Fu Shineng 伏世能
Niche. 176	Maitreya	1126	Fu Yuanjun, a craftsman living in Honshu 本州 Era, was able to carve Maitreya and the Great Sage of Sizhou 泗州
Niche. 177	Sizhou great sage	1126	Fu Yuanjun (craftsman)
Niche. 149	Cintamanicakra Avalokitesvara	1128	Grand Official 奉直大夫 Renzongyi and his wife Woman Du
	Portrait of sponsor Ren Zongyi in left Corner of the Main Wall		Ren Zongyi 任宗易 praised himself... He painted the feet of a snake and created this stone house
Niche. 137		1134	Wen Zhi 文志 donated three strings of money
			Li Dalang's 李大郎 redecoration, Luo Fuming 罗复明, resident rock monk Zhicheng 志诚
Niche. 136	Revolving Archives Avalokiteshvara	1142	The Left Dynasty's scattered officials sent 左朝散大夫, the military governor of Changzhou Zhang Xinmin 张莘民, to dispatch him
	Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra	1143	Zhao Pengnian 赵彭年, Left engaged in Langchangzhou recruitment, military counselor, and chief justice
	Mahās-thāmaprāpta	1143	Disciple Chen and his wife Wang who live outside the city and worship kindness
	Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra	1143	Zhao Pengnian, Left engaged in Langchangzhou recruitment, military counselor, and chief justice
	Avalokiteśvara	1146	Wang Sheng 王升 and wife He, who are disciples worshiping Buddha in the city
Niche. 110	Bhaisajya Guru		Changzhou resides in Zhengdong Street, where the disciples of Buddha Zhang Hui 张辉, Liu Shi 刘氏, and their entire family reside

Note: This table is mainly based on the [Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu \(1999\)](#) and the collation of on-site surveys.

Information from the 42 niches with inscriptions in the Beishan Fowan indicates that the main period of statue creation was concentrated in the late Northern Song Dynasty under Emperor Huizong, in the early Southern Song Dynasty under Emperor Gaozong, and in the period of Emperor Xiaozong and most of the providers were local officials. This was also the time when the cliff carvings on Nanshan were constructed and completed. Past studies have not discussed the relationship between Nanshan and Beishan within the overall construction process of the regional religious landscape. In fact, the construction of Nanshan and the complete establishment of the religious landscape on Beishan belong to the same period, with both being completed during the Shaoxing years.

### 3. Nanshan: A New Local Sacred Space in the Shaoxing Period

Yu Di Ji Sheng 輿地紀勝 compiled by Wang Xiangzhi during the Southern Song Dynasty, stands as a pivotal geographical compendium. It meticulously chronicles the hierarchical administrative divisions of the sixteen southeastern provinces, prefectures, military commands, and surveillance areas following the southward shift in the Song Dynasty, boasting an extensive and rich content. In the compilation process, Wang Xiangzhi conducted meticulous scrutiny and incorporation of geographical features such as mountains, rivers, scenic spots, inscriptions, as well as poems and chants documented in diverse local chronicles and illustrated classics. Notably, he placed particular emphasis on humanistic elements, endowing this work with substantial historical value. Wang Xiangzhi of the Song Dynasty described Nanshan concisely: Nanshan is located five miles south of Dazu County. On the mountain, there are the Dragon Cave, a sacrificial altar, and a prayer hall. In the second year of Chunhua (1099), the Imperial Attendant 供奉官, Lu Bin, suppressed the remnants of the rebellion in Shu led by Ren You and others. Bin led his troops to stay at Changzhou's Nandou Mountain 南斗山, where Nanshan is the highest and the view is broad and distant. The locals said, "If there is an emergency in other counties, a signal fire is lit here" (Wang 2005, p. 4880).

In the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty, Nanshan was a location that was closely associated with local civil and military activities. Lu Bin was responsible for the pacification of the Shu thieves led by Ren Yui, who were active in the area of Dazu East Longshui Town at that time. By the mid-12th century, Nanshan and Beishan had become the most representative scenic landmarks in Chongzhou county. From the perspective of Feng Shui, the geographical location of Nanshan and Beishan was crucial for the city of Dazu. The cliff carvings on Nanshan, located at the highest point of the Nandou Mountain range in Dazu, accompanied an important passage to the south of Dazu, integrating military defense, religion, and social organizational functions. The religious beliefs of the people of Dazu were brought together in this sacred space; the North Mountain was dedicated to Buddha, and the South Mountain was dedicated to Taoism, so one was dedicated to each. Previous studies concentrated on discussions of the Dazu Rock Carvings on Beishan or Baodingshan, but in the Song Dynasty, Nanshan also played a crucial role in the local society of Dazu. Additionally, Nanshan was considered a blessed place for protecting Chongzhou due to its efficacy in prayers for rain during consecutive years of droughts, attracting many famous scholars and literati to imitate the ancients, explore, and leave statues. This new sacred local space for Dazu, constructed from multiple visual landscapes of sculptures, miraculous legends, scenic mountains, and inscriptions by literati, reached its peak during the Song Dynasty's Shaoxing and Chunxi years.

#### 3.1. *The Local Elite and the Rise in the Temple Niche*

During the late Northern Song Dynasty and the early Southern Song Dynasty, particularly between the Yuanfeng Era of the Northern Song Dynasty and the Shaoxing and Qian dao Eras of the Southern Song Dynasty, was a significant period of growth and prosperity for the Dazu Rock Carvings. It should be emphasized here that, according to statistics from investigations, in this period, more than twenty cliff statues remained in the territory of Dazu (confirmed). Unlike the statues of the northern royal family or military leaders, the small cliff statues in Dazu during the Song Dynasty were mostly funded by the local gentry and their families, especially during the period from the middle of the Northern Song Dynasty to the Chunxi period of the Southern Song Dynasty, and they featured a variety of themes and the coexistence of deities from multiple religions. With the exception of Shizhuanshan, which was excavated in the first year of the Yuanfeng Era (1078), and Shimenshan, which appeared in the first year of the Shaoxing Era (1094), the rest of

the statues are dated to the Shaoxing and Qiantao Eras (1131–1173) of the Southern Song Dynasty. A prominent characteristic of this period was the emergence of cliff-side statues sponsored by individuals, families, and villages. Distinct from the attributes of the military-garrison-related significance in the rock carvings of Beishan and with officials as sponsors, the Dazu Rock Carvings in the Southern Song Dynasty exhibited a more pronounced nature of spontaneous folk associations. Moreover, they became more intimately associated with the supplications for disaster avoidance in the agricultural-based society.

Translated with [DeepL.com](https://www.deepL.com) (free version), in 1082, during the Northern Song's Yuanfeng Era, Yan Xun 嚴遜, an immigrant from elsewhere, provided land for the carving of Shizhuanshan, which took several decades to complete and included fourteen niches featuring subjects from Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Chu 2014). Afterward, there were frequent instances of cliff carvings within the county, predominantly featuring Buddhist and Taoist subjects, as well as local themes such as the Holy Mother and Chuanzhu 川主 (local deities). The Shaoxing era was a particularly active time for the creation of Dazu statues, especially those related to Taoism and other religions. In 1136, during the Shaoxing Era, Fengshan Temple 峰山寺 focused on Buddhism but also included subjects such as the Three Officials and the Holy Mother. Between 1143 and 1153 (the 13th to 23rd year of the Shaoxing Era), there was activity at Shucheng Rock 舒成岩, and in 1159, Sifo Temple 石佛寺 was carved. Unlike Beishan and Baodingshan, which were organized and planned, the rest were small in scale and mainly funded by individuals. More than 40 other small- and medium-sized cliffs created during the Song Dynasty have been found in the Dazu area, of which 14 appear to have Taoist themes, namely, Nanshan, Shucheng Rock, Shizhuanshan, Miaogao Mountain 妙高山, Shimenshan, Yuhuang Temple, Fo'an Bridge 佛安橋, Fo'er Rock, Shibi Temple, Guihua Temple 桂花廟, Fengshan Temple 峰山寺, Bانبian Temple 半邊廟, Laojun Temple 老君廟, and Sifo Temple.

It should be noted that, during the Shaoxing Era, an individual named He Zhengyan 何正言 dedicated land for the carving of Taoist statues on Nanshan. Among the Dazu Rock Carvings, statues with Taoist themes are the largest, most beautifully crafted, and best preserved overall. According to inscriptions, the majority of the carvings on Nanshan were completed during the Southern Song Dynasty's Shaoxing Era. Carving activities continued into the Ming Dynasty, with many additional inscriptions being added during the Qing Dynasty and throughout the Republic of China Era (Figure 4). The main cave complexes include "Three Purities 三清古洞", "Three Holy Mothers Cave 三聖母洞", and "Dragon Cave 龍洞". During the Ming Dynasty's Zhende Era, the "Zhenwu Ancestor Cave 真武祖師洞" was also carved. "Three Purities" is a representative of the Nanshan cliff carvings. The fronts of the square columns in the cave are equipped with niches that house carvings of the deities Yu Qing 玉清, Tai Qing 太清, and Shang Qing 上清. On either side of the niches are carved statues of Liu Daojun 六道君. The cave walls are adorned with 220 floating carvings of Tianzun 天尊, totaling around 500 statues (Figure 5). In front of the area containing the Nanshan cliff carvings stands Yuhuang Temple 玉皇觀, which currently includes preserved ancient architectural structures, such as the front hall, Three Qing Hall, and Tai Qing Pavilion (Figure 6). Before the Qing Dynasty, the Nanshan stone carvings were under the jurisdiction of Yuhuang Temple (Figure 7). The Nanshan cliff carvings, which are rich in content, vividly reflect the pantheon of Taoist deities during the Song Dynasty and serve as tangible historical materials for the study of Taoist history.

The layout of Three Purities on Nanshan is characterized by the following features: firstly, in terms of the niche formats, unlike the small- and medium-sized shallow niches that dominated Taoist cliff statues during the Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties periods, those of Three Purities are rectangular in plan and have a wide depth. There are passageways connecting the left and right sides of the cave to the back wall, offering ample space for

the movement of devotees and ritual participants. Secondly, there is a central pillar in the cave on which the main deities are arranged, and the layout of multiple deities in a single area, which was the main feature in the Sui, Tang, and Five Dynasties, was a new style that had not appeared in Taoist statues from the previous generations. Thirdly, there is a large and orderly sequence of heavenly deities surrounding the main deity, and there are 195 sensory heavenly deities on the east, west, and north walls. Fourth, it is not only the east and west walls that are filled with statues; twelve palace statues also appear on the left and right sides of the main wall. After the Yuan Dynasty, this survived in Yongle Palace in Shanxi as a representative of mural paintings similar to those on the left and right sides of the main wall. The layout features a blue dragon and white tiger symbolizing directions, along with an orderly arrangement of figures in procession. Therefore, the ancient cave of Three Purities has a strong hall-style deity layout that gives it a characteristic image arrangement distinct from Taoist cliff statues or the single statues that emerged in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

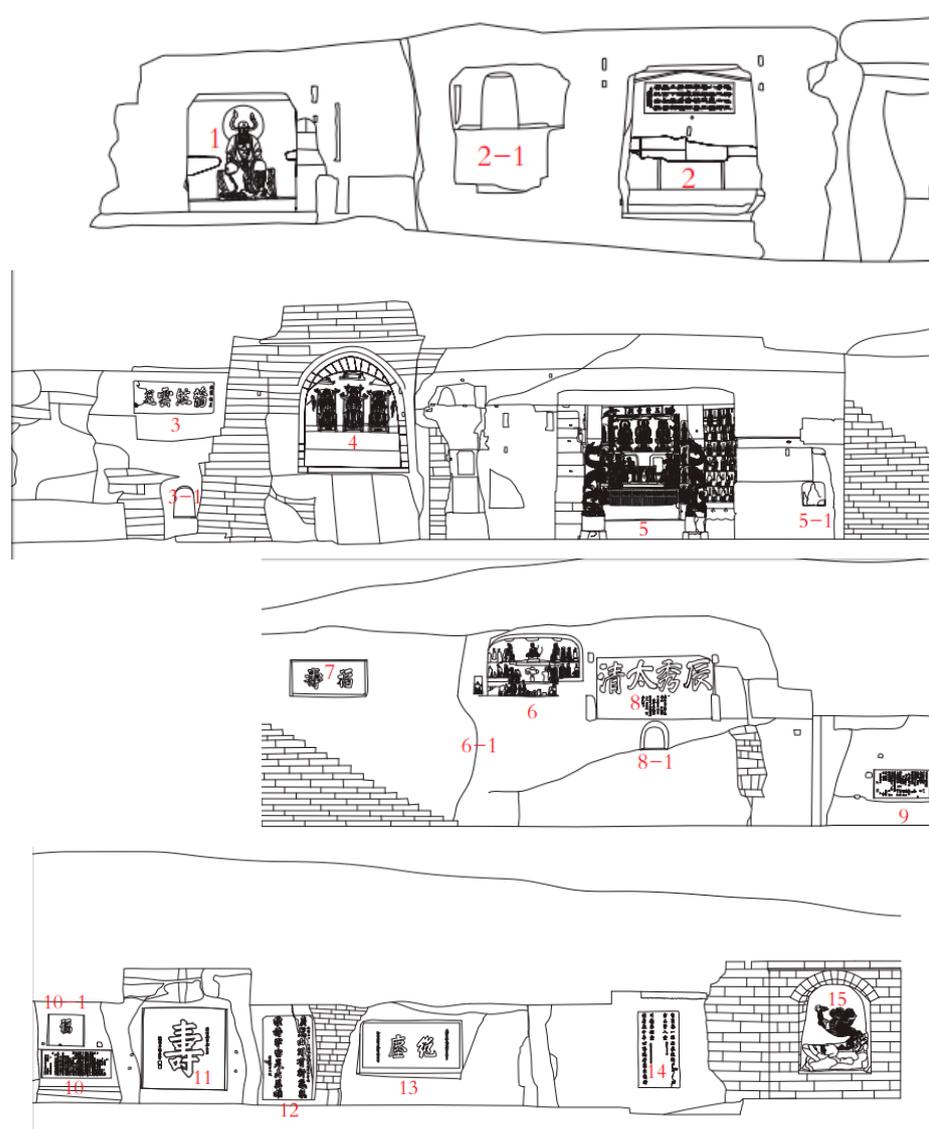
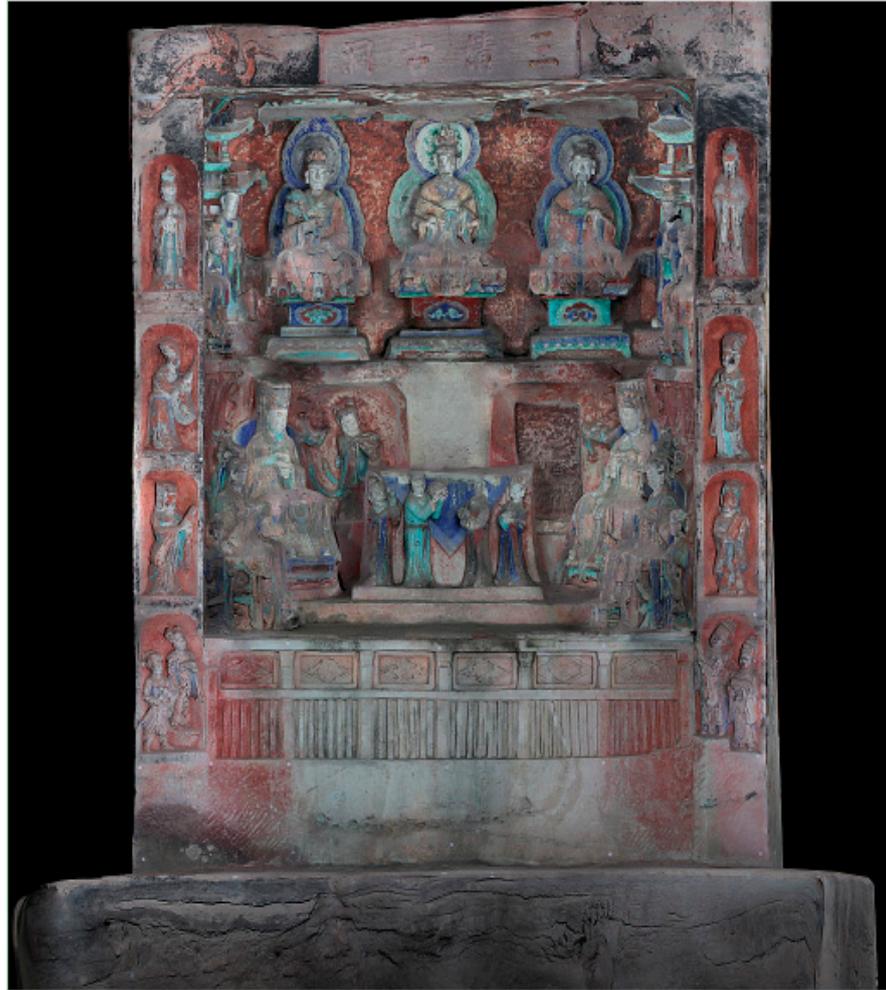
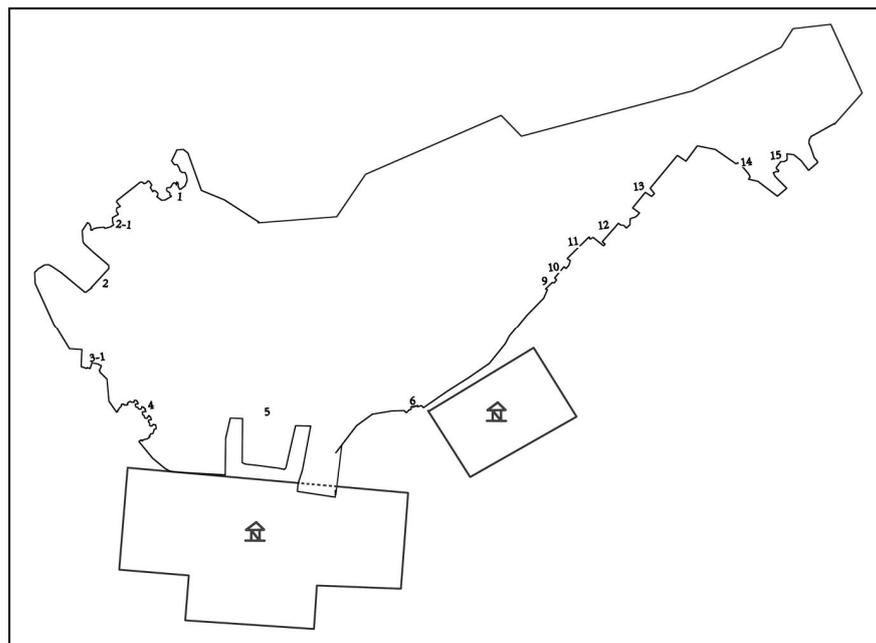


Figure 4. Elevation of the Nanshan cliff statues provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.



**Figure 5.** Deities on the center pillar of the Three Purities provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.



**Figure 6.** Drawing of the schematic plan of the Nanshan cliff statues in Dazu. The base picture was taken from [Chongqing Publishing House and Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute \(2019\)](#). *Dazu Shike Quanji* 大足石刻全集 (Vol. V, Part 1, p. 287, Figure 201). Chongqing: Chongqing Chuban She.



**Figure 7.** The panoramic view of the appearance of Jade Emperor Temple 玉皇觀 on Nanshan as depicted in the text and illustrations of the *Dazu County Annals* in the Qing Dynasty, Volume 1, pp. 12–13.

Due to the large differences from the Buddhist Center Pillar Cave in terms of time and space, the author believes that the rectangular layout of the Three Purities, the vast depth (5.58 m) of the niche, and the completion of the main body during the Song Dynasty make this cave similar to the third phase of cliff statues on Beishan. In Dazu, Beishan was divided into the southern and northern sections of the cliff, totaling 290 niches. The construction on Beishan can be divided into three phases (Li and Wang 1988, pp. 31–45; Song 1996, pp. 64–76) that involve the southern section of the earlier excavation, in addition to the 5th cave, the 9th cave, the 10th cave niche, and the rest of the shallow niches. Since the southern section of the 83rd grotto began to appear during the Song Dynasty, the Song Dynasty statues continue into the northern section. Although the Beishan statues began to be built in the late Tang Dynasty, they demonstrate the prosperity and overall appearance of the Song Dynasty. Compared with the Late Tang Dynasty, during the Song Dynasty, more large and medium-sized grottoes appeared on Beishan, represented by the 104th grotto, the 206th–112th grottoes, and the larger-scale niches; these were more concentrated in the Southern Song Dynasty—for example, the 133rd cave, the 136th cave, the 149th cave, the 155th cave, the 168th cave, the 180th cave, the 245th cave, and the 288th cave. At this time, the most exquisite carving technology appeared; this was the most representative of the period of the “full bloom” of the Beishan cliff statues. For example, in the 138th cave of the Wheel of the Universe 轉輪經藏窟, the plan was rectangular, and the cave was 4.05 m high, 4.1 m wide, 6.79 m deep, and 1.18 m deep to provide a setting for the Wheel of the Universe; there was a central pillar to support the roof of the cave. The Wheel measured about 2.61 m in diameter, and there were eight small columns around it.

In the first year of Jingkang (1126), the 155th cave (Large Buddha Mother Peacock King Cave) was opened. It had a flat roof and rectangular plan. The cave was 3.47 m high, 3.22 m wide, and 6.07 m deep. From the mouth of the cave, there was a depth of 3.28 m

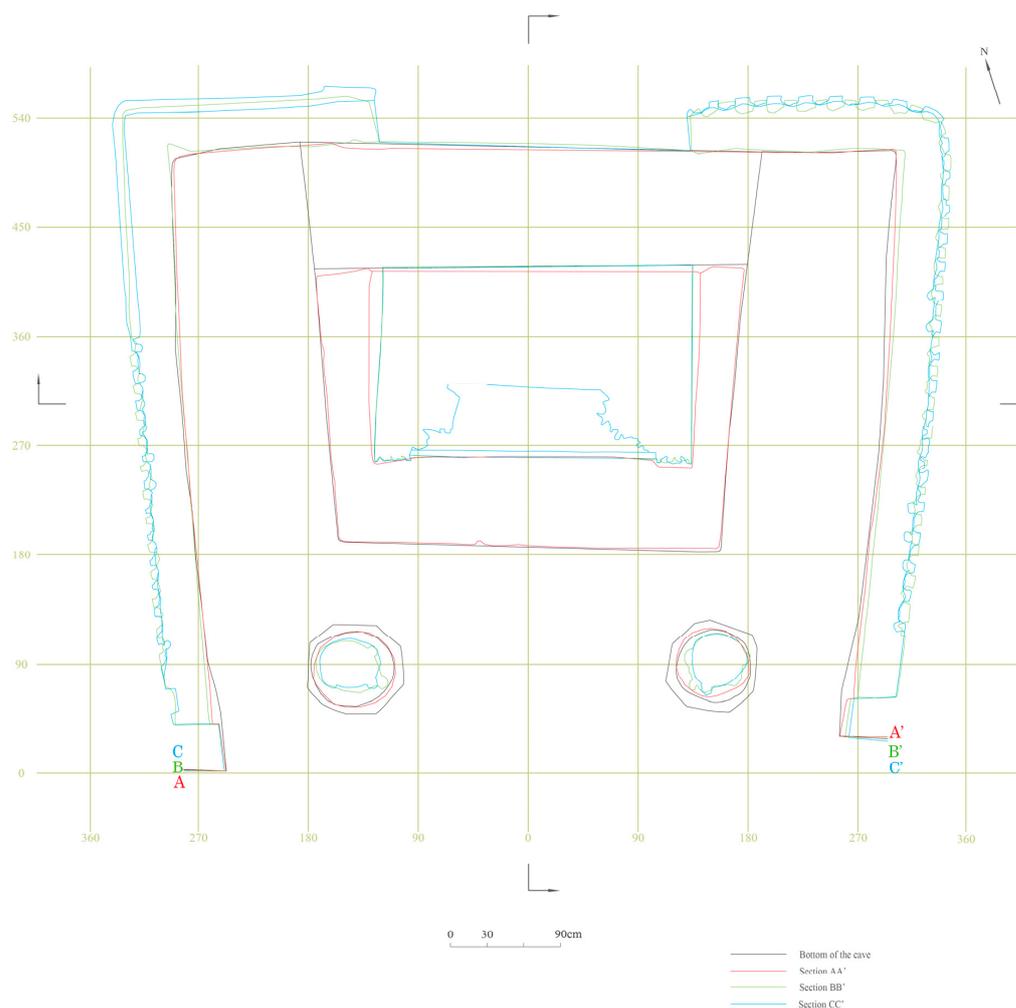
to the central column, and the column sections were fan-shaped. The main statue of the Peacock King depicted him sitting cross-legged. In the second year of Jianyan (1128), the 149th cave (Avalokiteśvara Cintamani-cakra) was constructed. It had a flat roof, and the plan was square. The cave was 3.43 m high, 3.22 m wide, and 3.26 m deep. The main statue was of Avalokiteśvara Cintamani-cakra. The left and right walls were used for the Relief of Heavenly Deities, depicted as standing on top of clouds, and each wall had a three-layer arrangement.

In the Song Dynasty, the 168th cave containing the entirety of the Beishan cliff statues was constructed. It was one of the caves with the largest size and volume. It had a flat roof and a rectangular plan. The cave was 3.3 m high, 3.14 m wide, and 7.1 m deep. The middle of an octagonal platform for the “Stupa of Western Chan Master 西域禪師坐化塔” was 4.52 m from the mouth of the cave. According to the inscription, it can be seen that there was additional repair in the seventh year of the Chongzhen Era of the Ming Dynasty (1631). There was a niche on the main wall that contained the main Buddha and two Bodhisattvas, all sitting cross-legged on a lotus platform. The main wall and the left and right walls were divided into six upper and lower layers and engraved with “Five hundred Rohan 五百羅漢”. Each layer was about 0.4 m high. The left wall depicted the following statue inscription: “Lu Cuntong, with sincere devotion, painted these sixteen arhats facing each other under multicolored clouds, in the fourth year of Xuanhe (1122)”. The following cave inscription was on the right wall: “Yang Yanxiang from Guolue and Lu Yuangeng from Shenguo came here from Dezang to seek coolness on 16 June, Chunxi Wuxu (1188)”. In addition to Beishan, similarly large niches have also been found in Shimenshan Ten-Avalokitesvara 十聖觀音窟, 8th Peacock Cave, and 10th Sanhuang Cave 三皇窟 in Dazu.

The excavation of large-scale niches continued until the Shaoxing period of the Southern Song Dynasty. In the previous section, through the analysis of the sizes and shapes of niches, it was found that, from the late Tang Dynasty, Beishan was used as a military base, and mostly individuals or small family units sponsored the construction of these niches. The scale of the niches was small, with many of the statues featuring inscriptions with prayers for peace, well-being, and aspirations. With the gradual stabilization of the local community after the Northern Song Dynasty, many niches were reimagined, and associations were formed to co-fund the excavation of engravings by local officials together with the local elite. Common donations were used to create niches of exquisite and large scales, so after the Northern Song Dynasty, large niches prefigured the emergence of the possibility of grottoes.

The layout of Three Purities is similar to that of the central stupa of early Buddhist caves (Figure 8, also known as Chaitya 支提窟). This style was traced back to the early Indian monastery stupa 窣堵波, which appeared as early as the 2nd century BC in the Ajanta Caves 阿旃陀石窟. The central pillar of these caves was important in the niches. With the spread of Buddhist statues and construction techniques to the East, the Qiuci 龜茲 region in the central pillar style appeared, although there were changes in the form of the central pillar as the core of the grottoes to provide space for the activities of believers around it to obtain blessings. Therefore, these spaces had the same function as that of the pagoda (Li 2003; Miyaji and Li 2009, p. 348; Li 2006, pp. 19–24). After entering China, such niche systems were mainly found along the northern Silk Road, from Qiuci and Dunhuang to the Hexi Corridor, and they are mostly dated between the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Sui Dynasty. From Central Asia to Xinjiang, in the first station of the Kizil Grottoes, caves with a central pillar were built for the three phases of the Subai (Su 1989, pp. 10–22). These can be divided into several important types depending on the statue. In the Hexi Corridor 河西走廊, caves with a central pillar were also abundant; they were concentrated in the east grotto of Jinta Temple 金塔寺, Thousand Buddha Cave 千佛洞 south of the second

grotto, in the area of the eighth grotto of Mati Temple 馬蹄寺, in the eighth grotto of North Temple, Thousand Buddha Cave in Wenshu Shan, and the second and fourth Changma grottoes 昌馬石窟. Most of these caves were excavated in the Five Nomadic Tribes and Sixteen States (301–439) period, and the northern Liang was the most prosperous. They also still appeared in the Yungang Grottoes, but to the east of Chang’an, Luoyang, and Handan, as well as north and south of the Central Plains—represented by the Xiangtangshan Grottoes 響堂山—such caves with a central pillar were not seen. It can also be assumed that these central-pillar caves were mainly popular in the west of the region during the Sui dynasty before the Hexi. After the Northern Zhou Dynasty, they did not appear in the south and east of the Pingcheng region. In Sichuan, only Huangze Temple 皇澤寺 in Guangyuan, which was in the style of the Song Dynasty, survived, and it showed traces of restoration during the reign of Emperor Shenzong of the Northern Song Dynasty.



**Figure 8.** Layout of Nanshan’s Three Purities Ancient Cave. The base picture was taken from [Chongqing Publishing House and Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute \(2019\)](#). *Dazu Shike Quanji* 大足石刻全集 (Vol. V, Part 1, Figure 223, p. 313), Chongqing: Chongqing Chuban She.

### 3.2. Hall-Style Niches, Grottoes, and Visual Features of the Three Purities

Whether it was the Northern and Southern Dynasties’ statue monuments and miniature shallow niches or the qualities of the Sui and Tang Dynasties’ equipoise statues, groups of gods and goddesses, and Buddhist and Taoist seating, they all belonged to the stage of visual reproduction of “idolatry” in the history of Taoist statues, and they belonged to the sculpture family in the category of spatial art. Among the materials that have been seen

so far, Nanshan's Three Purities was the first example of the dual attributes of sculpture and architecture. The emergence of such an architectural space was most likely influenced by the wall paintings of temples and monasteries that flourished in the Western Sichuan region since the Tang and Fifth Dynasties. The most famous temple, Da Ci Temple in Chengdu, was not only a religious temple but also a stage for famous masters to show off their skills and for competitions, in addition to being a popular tourist attraction and a place for revelry during the four seasons of the year. Religious buildings such as Da Ci Temple provided the necessary physical space for worshippers, spectators, and ritualists, making it possible for spectators to walk around and view them. According to the characteristics of the spatial design of Sanqing Cave, it can be assumed that the guided viewing was predetermined by the cave statues through the spatial design and craftsmanship. On the one hand, this reflects the self-regulation of Taoist statues in terms of form and space in the Song Dynasty; on the other hand, it was also related to the flourishing of Taoist activities in this place in the Song Dynasty, as well as the important role played by the highly accomplished ceremonial personnel for Taoist activities in communicating between the heavenly and human beings and the holy and secular worlds. The Song Dynasty cliff statues show that Taoist sculptures were not only a medium for idolatrous worship, suspended high above the boulder cliffs to be looked at or worshiped from afar, as they were also not limited to providing Taoist insiders with statues of heavenly deities, but they also provided a friendly space for the general public to have a close-up experience and look at them. Due to the placement of the Three Purities in the center of vision, by analyzing the gaze of the deities, it was found that the central deity of the Three Purities was located in the focal point of the perspective and line of sight, and the prominence and emphasis placed on the Three Purities was in a style not seen in Taoist statues of the previous generation. When the gaze was extended, it was found that the whole cave had a high degree of design, and the visual center of the Three Purities was located on the central deity. The surrounding gods and goddesses of enlightenment all showed a closed space and visual composition (Figure 5).

As Taoist statues in architectural space, the statue motifs that appeared in the Three Purities were by far the earliest and most complete examples of the visual expression of the Taoist cosmic space. This was not only centered on the Six Gods and Three Purities but also incorporated the paid homage model, which had been popular since the Tang Dynasty, to construct a complete pilgrimage system for hundreds of heavenly deities. The composition of the Confucian Zhao–Mu System 昭穆之制 was rearranged in the Song Dynasty, and the Zodiac 黃道十二宮 was incorporated into the Taoist image system as a cosmic time sequence. This resulted in a new and fixed style of combining images of praying to the supreme heavenly deities of the Taoist religion in the Song Dynasty. The three Purities were the expression of Taoism in the Song Dynasty through the formation of the image of the universe; this can be seen in later generations of land and water paintings, as well as temple murals with the image of the “Farina” as one of the sources. Therefore, in a large number of Taoist temple murals surviving in Shanxi after the Jin and Yuan Dynasties, the continuation of the ancient cave of Sanqing can still be seen.

### 3.3. A Scenic Site Renowned for the Prompt Efficacy of Prayers

The earliest record of Nanshan comes from Wang Xiangzhi of the Song Dynasty, who described it concisely as follows: Nanshan is located five miles south of Dazu County. On the mountain, there are the Dragon Cave, a sacrificial altar, and a prayer hall. In the 2nd year of Chunhua (1099), the Imperial Attendant 供奉官, Lu Bin, suppressed the remnants of the rebellion in Shu led by Ren You and others. Bin led his troops to stay at Changzhou's Nandou Mountain 南斗山, where Nanshan is the highest and the view is broad and distant.

The locals said, “If there is an emergency in other counties, a signal fire is lit here<sup>5</sup>” (Wang 2005, p. 4880). Unlike the general notion of public merit statues, this is a cliffside statue complex that was explicitly used for rain-invoking rituals. During the Song Dynasty, the Sichuan region faced frequent droughts and floods, with a recorded 38 instances, which were particularly concentrated during the Shaoxing and Qiandao Eras.

There were five documented disasters on Tongchuanfu Road, Kuizhou Road (夔州路), and Zizhou Road, where Dazu was situated, making these areas the most frequently impacted. Droughts and floods resulted in starvation, rebellion, and the displacement of refugees. The Song Dynasty frequently intervened politically through official inspections, organized rain prayers, rent forgiveness, disaster relief, and tax reductions (Zhou 2017, pp. 39–49). By sorting through Table 4, one can find that, during the period of 1132–1136, there were consecutive severe droughts in Kui Zhou and Tongchuanfu Road. During the drought-prone period of the Southern Song Dynasty, people would pray against drought by opening caves and making statues. Thus, statues became the material medium for the prayers of civil society.

**Table 4.** Record of drought and flood disasters in Sichuan during the Song Dynasty.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
970	Shanxi, Bin Zhou 邠州	Summer drought	
966	Yi Zhou	It had not rained since May, and all the trees would dry up in September	
993	Liangchuan 两川	Severe drought in eastern and western Sichuan. Hungry people rioted everywhere	
995	Various roads in Sichuan and Shaanxi	Drought	The prime minister ordered subjects to pray for rain The various states in Sichuan and Shaanxi were allowed to bury the exposed corpses
1020	Li Zhou 利州 Road	Drought	
1030	Yi Zhou	There was a severe drought that year	Authorities were prepared to give people many times more millet than before
1033	Zi Zhou Road	Droughts brought disease	
1039	Liangchuan	It did not rain and the people were very hungry	
1058	Kui Zhou Road	Drought, hunger	
1060	Zi Zhou Road	No rain in the summer and autumn	
1068	Kui Zhou	Drought	Prayers for rain in the temple in the year of Renchen 壬辰
1086	All roads	Provinces, drought in spring	
1074	Yi Zhou	Qiongshu with little rain and snow	
1091	Fuling 涪陵	The winter snow was not enough, spring rain was fleeting, and in the first month of summer, drought was like burning fire	
1132	Kui Zhou Road	Severe drought in Yuzhou	

Table 4. Cont.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
1133	Tongchuan Road	No rain for a long time, all of the stars in April were red in color	
1135	Sichuan County	Severe drought	
1136	Kui, Tong, Chengdu counties and Hengzhou 衡州, Hunan	Severe drought	
1157	Sichuan	Drought damage	An Imperial Decree to inspect the drought-stricken states and counties, donate their taxes, and provide relief to the starving people.
1164–1165	Sichuan	Drought in the counties As of July in the fall, famine in the following year	
1167	Sichuan	County drought, until July and in the fall. Mainly Jianzhou, Hanzhou, and the Shiquan army were particularly badly affected.	The Department of Control was given four hundred dollars to prepare for relief.
1168	Yi Zhou	Drought	The emperor withdrew the cover of the prayer in Taiyi Palace 太乙宫 for rain. In August, there was an imperial decree promulgated by the emperor to bless the ritual dragon law in counties.
1172	Kuizhou Road, Fuzhou, Jiangnan	Water and drought followed each other	Most of the victims flowed into the north of the river in search of food
1174	Kuizhou Road. Fu 涪, Zhong 忠, Wan 萬, and other prefectures	Severe drought	
1179	Zi Zhou Road	Drought	
1181	Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Lianghuai 两淮, Jingxi 京西, Hubei, Tongchuan, Kuizhou Road	Floods and droughts one after another	Government grants to remit rents were issued, an envoy was sent to press, and people flowed into the northern part of the river, where relief was provided.
1182	Shu, Tong 潼, Li 利, Kui 夔 three roads (He 合, Chang 昌, Zi 资, Qu 渠, Li, Lang 阆, Zhong, Fu, Wanzhou	There was no rain, there was drought and hunger, and thousands of people were displaced and forced to migrate.	
1182	He Zhou, Chang Zhou	Drought	
1183	He, Chang, Fu, Lu zhou 泸	Famine, refugees, and more than 3000 deaths.	
1190	Rong 榮 County, Chongqing Prefecture	Severe drought	
1191	Yuzhou, Fuzhou, Jianzhou 簡, Zi, Rongzhou	Severe drought	Renyin 壬寅 year, Zizhou, Jianzhou, Puzhou, Rongzhou, and Fushun were all supervised due to drought.

Table 4. Cont.

Year	Location	Disaster Situation	Measures
1192	Tongchuan Road Jian, Zi, Pu, Rong, Xu 叙, Long 隆, and Fushun supervisors 富順監	Long drought; the sun, moon, and stars were gas. There was no rain on Tongchuan Road, especially in Rongzhou.	
1193	Mianzhou 绵州, Jian, Zi, Pu, Qu, Hezhou, Guang'an 广安	Severe drought, death of wheat. The army was affected by drought.	
1194	Hezhou, Mianzhou, Jianzhou, Zizhou, Puzhou, Quzhou, Hezhou, Guang'an Counties	Drought	
1195	Drought in 15 counties of Tongchuan, Lizhou, and Kui zhou	Drought	Prayers to heaven and earth, the temple, and the gods. In September, due to the drought in Sichuan, there was an edict to remit people's taxes
1198		Drought	Prayers at the outskirts of the hill and the clan communities.
1201	Fifteen Shu Counties, Lizhou Road	Drought	Prayers were offered at suburban mounds and ancestral shrines. Wuchen 戊辰, the summer sacrifice, was made at the Temple of Heaven. Relief was given to the people, and their taxes were still remitted.
1202	Sichuan, Guang'an, Huai'anjun 怀安军, Tongchuanfu, Zizhou Road	Wheat shriveled and died; drought and famine	
1211	Zizhou, Puzhou, Changzhou, He Zhou	Drought	
1205	Zhongzhou, Fu Zhou, Kui Zhou	Drought	
1208	Zi, Pu, Chang, He Zhou	Drought	
1211	Drought in Zizhou, Puzhou, Changzhou, and He Zhou	starvation and death of more than 10,000 people in the Shu Shiquan army. Drought in Zizhou, Pu, Chang, and Hezhou.	
1219	Tongchuan Prefecture	Famine	
1226	Rong County	Drought	
1227	Tongchuan Road	No rain, especially in Rongzhou	
1229	Cheng du	Drought of the year	System division and supervisory division to urgently revitalize compassion while still inspecting the county by ordering diligence.
1274	Lu Zhou 庐州	Drought in Changle 长乐 and Fuqing 福清 counties	

Note: This table is mainly based on the "History of Song" and the "Continuation of Zizhi Tongjian Changbian 續資治通鑑長編".

Dazu Shimen Mountain's 石門山 Ten Saint Bodhisattvas Grotto 十聖觀音窟, which was excavated around the same time as Nanshan, has an inscription and a physical object related to the people's association for statue-making in 1134. The inscription reads: "Seeing

that the sky was extremely dry and there was insufficient rain, the people, in their hardship, collected donations to initiate a pious undertaking. With the trust of people near and far, a large grotto of Bodhisattvas was built on Shimen Mountain. The Amitābha Buddha and the Ten Saint Bodhisattvas were enshrined, praying for timely rain, favorable winds, and good harvests of the five grains. The construction started in the Bing Chen year and was completed at the end of the Geng Shen year. It was hoped that the imperial territory would be eternal and the glory of the Buddha would increase”.

Whether it is Nanshan or Shimen Mountain’s Ten Saint Bodhisattvas Grotto, the statue-making activities in the Dazu region of the Southern Song Dynasty were closely related to the prayer activities in the agricultural society. Further analysis could explore how these religious practices interacted with other aspects of social and economic life in the region during that time. Among the 12 inscriptions from the Song Dynasty found in Nanshan, several officials’ poems and verses that were written in response provide significant information about Song era Nanshan, with the works of Zhang Zongyan 張宗彥 and He Gefei 何格非 being the most detailed. Zhang’s poem is fully contained in a frame measuring approximately 77 cm in height and 53 cm in width, with floral and grass patterns adorning the surrounding edges. Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 included this poem in his “Supplementary Records of Song Poems 宋詩紀事補遺”, volume fifty-seven, adding the title “Yucheng mountain Jiaotan 玉城山醮壇” and attributing it to Zhang during the Chunxi Era (1174–1189) (Lu 1997, p. 214). The full text of the inscribed poem is as follows (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, pp. 298–99):

The inscription is attributed to Zhang Zongyan<sup>6</sup>, a Left Palace Chancellor and the Administrator of Jianzhou State. It describes a circular altar that looms high against the boundless sky, with mountains visible in all directions, each peak esteemed as a majestic sentinel. To the east, the sound of a growling tiger can be heard from a cave, while from below, the clouds and mists obscure a mystical dragon. The stone steps are winding and intricate, etched with the marks of ancient hooves, and the cliffs are adorned with moss that streams down like liquid locks. After a long journey, the horses require three stops to catch their breath, yet the coaches carrying a thousand riders proceed with ease and grace. In times of drought or rain, fervent prayers are offered for a bountiful year.....<sup>7</sup>

On the right side of this stele, there is a poem by He Gefei (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 298) in response:<sup>8</sup> He Gefei, Left Palace Chancellor and Governor of Chongzhou, responds:

Three-tiered desolate altars reach up to the vast sky, Perilously towering, they overshadow all the peaks. Praying for a bountiful year, rituals are extended to welcome the divine chariot, In years of drought, magical tablets are sent to awaken the dormant dragon.

Zhang Zongyan held the position of civil official of the fifth rank and served as the military and administrative governor of a state. During the Qing Dynasty, Lu Xinyuan recorded Zhang Zongyan’s inscription on Nanshan and referred to him as “the Left Palace Chancellor during the Chunxi Era, who governed Jianzhou”. Lu also added a poem titled “Yucheng Mountain Altar”, which was not originally the poem’s title (Lu 1997, p. 214). Zhang Zongyan’s political career was primarily during the years of Emperor Song Gaozong’s reign. His achievements were notable, including serving as the Governor of Pingyang 平陽尹 and participating in the “Heshangyuan Battle 和尚原之戰” led by Wu Bi 吳玠 in Shaanxi Fengxiang 鳳翔 in the first year of Gaozong’s reign (1131), which resulted in a significant victory at Sanguan Pass. This battle reversed the stalemate after the defeat at Fuping 富平 in 1128. For his contributions to the campaign against Li Cheng 李成

by assisting Yang Yizhong 楊沂中 (1102–1166), Zhang was awarded a golden belt in the third year of Gaozong's reign (1133). When Zhang Zongyan wrote his poem in Nanshan, he governed the area around today's Guangyuan Jiange 劍閣 in northern Sichuan, which was part of Lizhou Road. This region was a strategic point at the junction of Sichuan and Shaanxi provinces.

Unlike Zhang Zongyan, He Gefei was a genuine local official whose life and career were centered around the Bashu region (Li 2016, p. 60). His ancestral roots, birth, political posts, and social circles were all closely tied to this area, and related records about him often appear in county annals and other local documents. He Gefei was from Yingshan 營山, Sichuan, and he passed the imperial examination during the Yuanfu 元符 Era. In the sixth year of Emperor Xiaozong's Chunxi Era (1179), he served as the governor of Changzhou, which, at that time, included the four counties of Dazu, Yongchuan 永川, Changyuan (now Rongchang), and Jingnan. His family had migrated from Chengdu to Pengshan 蓬山. Pengshan is a historic site that has been fought over by various warring factions throughout history, and it is described in ancient texts as a place where "The peaks hang for a hundred yards, and even with wings, monkeys find it difficult to fly; the narrow path extends for a thousand stretches, and without wind, the roc also rests". It is also known for its traditional cave carvings, including Qianfo Rock 千佛岩, with its esoteric Buddhist images from the Tang Dynasty, and Transparent Rock 透明岩, which features carvings and inscriptions from the Tang to the Song periods. He Zhengyan himself was an official with a strong influence from Taoism, though he remained a Confucian at heart. He had close connections with local hermits and Taoist priests, and he even wrote biographies and prefaces for the "Twelve Immortals" of Pengshan. Among these Twelve, the most famous was the Taoist priest Jia Shanxiang 賈善翔 from Shu, who edited several important Taoist texts under the title "Deputy Supervisor 左衛都監同棄書教門公事 and Abbot of the Zhongde Wuzhen Temple 崇德悟真大師" during the late Northern Song Dynasty. These texts include "The Direct Sound Edition of the Nanhua Zhenjing 南華真經直音", "The Biographies of Taoist Priests 太上出家傳度儀", and "The YouLong Chronicles 猶龍傳", all of which were included in the Taoist Canon 道藏. Jia Shanxiang also gave lectures on the "Classic of Salvation 度人經" at Taqing Palace. The "Song Shu·Yiwen Zhi 宋書·藝文志", "Su Chu Tang Book List 遂初堂書目", and "Taoist Canon's Index of Missing Scriptures 道藏闕經目錄" all contain Jia Shanxiang's "Biographies of High Taoists 高道傳", a ten-volume work.

He Gefei and Zhang Zongyan composed songs of contentment about Nanshan, with Zhang writing, "The triple-tiered barren altar reaches the sky, towering precipitously over all the peaks. Prayer offerings extend to invite the true ride, and in years of drought, the flying tablet awakens the dormant dragon". Zhang Zongyan also described the altar as "a circular terrace towering against the vast sky (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, pp. 298–99)". The poems reflect a strong Taoist influence, allowing us to deduce the material characteristics that the "Taoist altar 道壇" on Nanshan should have had for rain-prayer rituals: it was divided into three levels, with a huge volume and a round altar. The texts frequently mention terms such as "altar 醮壇", "prayer offerings 設醮", and "prayer", indicating that Nanshan served as an important site for rain prayers during the dry years in Changzhou. It was common for officials to use religious sites, mountains, or natural landmarks for rain prayers. Cliff carvings were often located in secluded forest and wilderness areas, accompanying natural caves or sources of water, and their natural attributes were often ascribed supernatural qualities. Local officials, represented by Zhang Zongyan and He Gefei, respected the local community's prayer traditions and actively collaborated with the wealthy or local elites to maintain stability in the local society<sup>9</sup>. The local elite, represented by He Zhengyan, participated in the agricultural society's prayers or sponsorship activities through the donation of land for carvings. Local officials commemorated the effi-

cacy of prayers by erecting stone tablets and composing songs of contentment, enhancing the influence of Nanshan and the He family. This also served as a record of their achievements during their tenure, with both parties benefiting from their cooperative maintenance of the local social order during special periods. This privately constructed Taoist cliff carving space, which was closely involved in local social activities and strategically located as a key point in the city, stood out among many private temples and became an important site for faith and religion in the county. It was particularly revered and praised by local officials, reflecting the interactive and mutually beneficial relationship between the wealthy class and the local officials in rural society during the Song Dynasty.

#### 4. Nanshan and Beishan and the Religious Landscape of Dazu in the Mid-12th Century

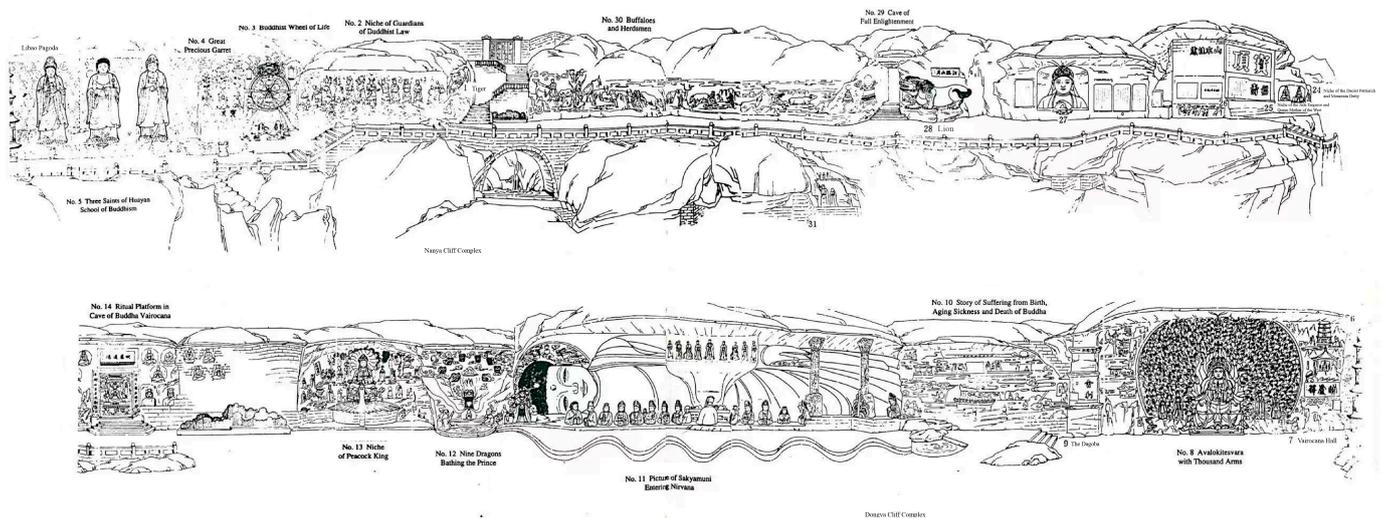
Through a meticulous analysis of the timing and content of the Nanshan inscriptions, it can be ascertained that the patron, He Zhengyan, was last documented in the inscription of the Three Purities in 1154. Specifically, over a decade later, Chen Bojiang, who was then serving as the governor of Changzhou (referred to as Dazu during that period), orchestrated a sacrificial ceremony at this site and engraved a stone inscription to commemorate the occasion. On the day of the winter solstice in 1169, in his role as the top administrator of Changzhou, Chen Bojiang opted to conduct a family memorial service at Nanshan. As documented in the Song Dynasty geographical treatise *Yu Di Ji Sheng*, Nanshan in Changzhou was a religious landscape of considerable significance in Dazu, Changzhou, and thus could not be overlooked. This was further corroborated by Deng Zao's account in the inscription of a monument in 1211. In the fourth year of the Jiajing Era (1211), Deng Zao, after reading the poetry and epigraphs of Zhang and He, left an inscription on the left outer wall of the ancient Three Purities on Nanshan: "The craftsman said: The children of the South and North Mountains are quite lacking in elegance; however, with tall bamboo and lush forests, their presence becomes even more pronounced. The abbot Wang Daqiong personally planted the altar for the Taoist ritual, which now stands densely (Table 5). After reading the poetry of Zhang and He from the Xinyou year, I have engraved this onto the cliff to show those who appreciate such matters. Initial winter of Xinwei, Deng Zao, with Zhang Da Cheng inscribing the text<sup>10</sup>". Here, it is explicitly stated that Nanshan and Beishan were placed side by side. From this inscription, feng shui experts believed that both Nanshan and Beishan once lacked spiritual aura and that they would gain more prominence if extensively vegetated. Wang Daoqiong, the proprietor of the nunnery adjacent to Nanshan, personally planted trees around the altar in the Three Purities area to enhance the vitality and spiritual essence of Nanshan. Thus, it is reasonable to surmise that the transformation of Nanshan from private property to a local landmark was a process involving continuous optimization and construction, frequent visits by local officials, and eventually its inclusion in county annals and historical records. In the tenth year of the Chunyou Era of the Southern Song Dynasty (1250), the "Record of He Guangzhen's Farewell Banquet for the Prefect Wang Mengying 何光震錢郡守王夢應記" on Nanshan also notes: "Cultures flourish, stabilizing what is seen and heard for a long time. The character of the people includes the purity of Yang Xianliang and Wang Wenzheng, the pavilions and gardens possess the charm of Xiangfei and Jianhu, the traces of immortals feature the uniqueness of Dong and Ge, the mountains and forests exhibit the elegance of the South and North, and the produce is abundant in salt and rice<sup>11</sup>". Here, it is explicitly stated that Beishan and Nanshan are the representative natural mountains and forests within the Dazu area.

**Table 5.** Chronological list of the inscriptions in Nanshan from the Song Dynasty.

Era	The Main Content and Activities in Inscriptions
1154	He Zhengyan donated his land and initiated the mountain-opening project for the construction of the No. 5 Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1154	He Zhengyan, along with his son He Hao and his wife, had the niche dedicated to the Holy Mother of the Earth (後土聖母龕, No. 4 niche) engraved.
1169	Chen Bojiang (陳伯疆) inscribed the “Record of the Scholarship Examination on the Winter Solstice Day (冬至日饗生考題記)” on the inner side of the right-hand door pillar of the Sanqing Cave.
1178	The family of Lv Yuanxi (呂元錫) engaged in the pursuit of immortality and tranquility at this location. The inscriptions related to them are found on the central part of the left-hand door pillar of the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1178	Lv Yuanxi composed a poem during his visit to Nanshan (South Mountain), which is inscribed on the left-hand side of the stone wall outside the niche of the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1178	There is an inscription of unknown authorship titled “Poem in Response to Lv Yuanxi (和呂元錫詩)”, located on the left-hand exterior stone wall of the Sanqing Cave.
1188	Liang Dangzhi and others engraved the “Inscription on Summer Retreat in Nanshan (避暑南山題記)”, which is positioned above the right-hand niche of the Sanqing Gudong.
1200	The inscription by Cao Weiqing (曹偉卿) reads: “The public paid a visit to Nanshan three days after the snowfall”, and it is located on the right-hand side of the pillar in the Sanqing Ancient Cave.
1211	Deng Zao (鄧早) read the poems of Mr. Zhang and Mr. He, with the record stating “Witchcraft practitioners claim: North Mountain and South Mountain are of the same nature (術者雲：南北山同)”.
1229	This inscription makes reference to the grave of Chen Jizhi (陳及之) in the province.
1235	Fan Yunji (樊允季) inscribed on the stone wall outside the right-hand side of the Sanqing Ancient Cave: “Inscription on Guiding a Guest to Escape the Summer Heat for the Entire Day (領客避暑終日題記)”
1247	He Guangzhen and others inscribed the “Tablet in Memory of Magistrate Wang Mengying”, which is located on the stone wall outside the right-hand side of the Sanqing Cave.

By the mid-12th century, Nanshan and Beishan had become the most representative scenic landmarks in Chongzhou county. From the perspective of Feng Shui, the geographical location of Nanshan and Beishan was crucial for the city of Dazu. The cliff carvings on Nanshan, located at the highest point of the Nandou Mountain Range in Dazu, marked an important passageway toward the south of Dazu, integrating military defense, religion, and social organizational functions with the remotely located North Mountain, which was dedicated to Buddhism, while Nanshan was dedicated to Taoism. These two mountains, each with their own religion, together constructed a sacred space for the religious beliefs of the people in the Dazu area. Additionally, Nanshan was considered a blessed place for protecting Chongzhou due to its efficacy in prayers for rain during consecutive years of floods and droughts (Figure 9). Local officials, such as the Southern Song Dynasty’s He Gefei, who left an inscription and held a literary gathering there, celebrated Nanshan and their own achievements with poetry and wine. Officials chose to leave poems on the relatively small Nanshan, attracting many famous scholars and literati to imitate the ancients, explore, and leave statues. This sacred local space, constructed from multiple visual landscapes of sculptures, miraculous legends, scenic mountains, and inscriptions by literati, reached its peak during the Song Dynasty’s Shaoxing and Chunxi years, drawing many literati and scholars from within and outside the county to seek refreshment and exploration at Nanshan. However, this dominant position was not maintained for long. The excavation and construction of Bao Ding Mountain were actually a contest for space for religious stone carvings and belief groups in the Dazu area. Zhao Zhifeng gathered the entire strength of Changzhou to carve Bao Ding Mountain, becoming renowned for promoting

filial piety and a large number of secularized religious images that were easily accepted by the masses. Liu Tianren 劉天人 mentioned the background of the carving in a stele inscription from the first year of Hongxi (1425): “To fulfill the great vow of wide spreading water rituals, to protect against disasters and calamities. The virtue spreads far and wide, with everyone seeking refuge. Every cave and cliff in the mountains, adorned with Buddha images, has built immeasurable merit and good fortune.”<sup>12</sup> (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999, p. 211).



**Figure 9.** Sketch of the carvings at Baodingshan’s Dafowan provided by the Dazu Stone Carving Research Institute.

## 5. Conclusions

When placed within the context of the establishment and formation of religious spaces in the Dazu area during the Tang and Song dynasties, Bao Ding Mountain, which was only completed in the late Southern Song Era, did not gain significant attention as a local religious landmark until the 13th century. At the end of the 13th century, Wang Xiangzhi, in his records of Changzhou’s Bao Ding Mountain, merely mentioned in passing that “there is a cave and rock where the Taoist Zhao Zhifeng practices” located thirty miles east of Dazu County. He did not speak of the carvings that now make it a magnificent site.

Prior to the completion of Bao Ding in the late 13th century, the most significant religious sites in the Dazu area were represented by the Buddhist Beishan carvings and the Taoist Nanshan carvings. The remaining small cliff-face statues were primarily funded by families, villages, or individuals.

In the late Southern Song period, due to the conflict between the Song and Yuan dynasties, Changzhou, adjacent to the front lines of war, saw its inhabitants scattered for refuge. Activities, including statue carving, came to a halt. It was not until the first year of the Hongxi reign in the Ming dynasty that the religious sites in the Dazu area, including historical records, were revitalized. Bao Ding Mountain was reopened and subsequently became the largest and most influential religious space in the surrounding areas of Dazu and Anyue, emerging as a significant religious assembly and place of faith, placing it alongside Western Sichuan’s Emei Mountain in the north and Bao Ding Mountain in the south as a major religious destination.

As an exemplary model of China’s late-stage grotto art, the research paradigm of the Dazu Rock Carvings has witnessed a transition from traditional viewpoints to spatial-cultural elucidations. At present, the research on the Dazu Rock Carvings has been growing profound and extensive. It is no longer restricted to the purview of grotto archeol-

ogy. An increasing number of scholars are commencing to carry out comprehensive explorations from the vantage point of cultural construction.

Since the rediscovery of the Dazu Rock Carvings by the academic community in the 1940s, scholars such as Yang Jialuo (Yang 1946, pp. 21–22), Wu Xianqi (Wu 1945, pp. 123–28), Li Sisheng (Li 2004, pp. 14–21), Guo Xiangying (Guo 2005, pp. 233–43), and Chen Mingguang (Chen 2001, pp. 8–14) have continuously debated the nature of Dafowan, generally considering it a site of Tantric Buddhism. In the 1980s, differing opinions began to emerge. For instance, Hu Wenhe (Hu 1991, pp. 42–47), through his classification of Liu Benzun statues, argued that Baoding shan was not a Tantric Buddhist site. Hou Chong (Hou 2008, pp. 66–69) straightforwardly stated that Buddhism is not simply dichotomized into Sutra and Tantra, and the relevant discussions have persisted.

Western scholars have also engaged in substantial discussions on these issues. Howard (2001) suggested that Baodingshan is a Tantric mandala dojo that incorporates both local Sichuan traditions and external influences, and its use of mandala sculptures is similar to practices that spread in the Indian–Himalayan region from the eighth century onwards. Kucera (2002, 2016), in his doctoral dissertation, also offered a highly innovative perspective on Baodingshan. He focused on the relationship between the images and scriptures of Baodingshan, reassessing the carvings through the dimensions of narrative and symbolism. In a horizontal comparison, he concluded that this construction style was influenced by the development patterns of Song Dynasty Buddhist monasteries. The religious stone carvings at this site encompass a wide range of religious elements. They include representations of the Yogacara school, symbolized by the “Ten Severe Penances 十煉” in esoteric Buddhism. There are also the largest local images of a Thousand-Armed Avalokitesvara, colossal representations of the Huayan Trinity, a pastoral scene with a strong Zen influence, and an image and inscription from the pseudo-scripture “Great Convenience Sutra”, which promotes filial piety and respect for elders with Confucian overtones. Stephen F. Teiser suggests that the construction of Bao Ding Mountain exhibits a strong sense of localism, especially in the inclusion of the image of the preacher Zhao Zhifeng within the “Six Paths of Reincarnation”. The secular scenes filled with admonitions and the imagery of filial piety, along with the concise gathas, all reflect the regional characteristics of religious iconography (Teiser 2006).

From the aspects of historical origin-tracing and spatial genesis, the Dazu Rock Carvings, as a heritage system, had its inception in the construction project of Beishan during the late Tang Dynasty to the Five Dynasties period. Intrinsicly, it represents a historical outcome characterized by the dual attributes of military garrison and religious domain. This paper posits that from the Shaoxing to Chunxi years of the Southern Song Dynasty (ranging from 1131 to 1189 AD), the creative activities of the Dazu Rock Carvings reached a zenith, giving rise to spatial configuration with Nanshan and Beishan as the two pivotal cores. In this regard, Nanshan, capitalizing on its strategic locational advantages, evolved into a politico-religious center, while Beishan perpetuated its sacred nature. Collectively, they constituted the geographical demarcation of the spheres of influence exerted by Buddhism and Taoism.

From the perspectives of belief mechanisms and social interactions, within the context of agricultural civilization, the efficacy of prayers emerged as the core determinant in the formation of the religious landscape. The supplicants’ quests for worldly merits exerted a direct impact on the spatial arrangement of sacred sites and their selection of religious beliefs. This mechanism not only accounts for the conspicuous status of Nanshan in historical narratives but also uncovers the profound interactive nexus between religious practices and secular exigencies.

From the perspectives of religious space and elite discourses, spanning from the Shaoxing years to the reign of Emperor Xiaozong of the Southern Song Dynasty (1163–1189 AD), the traditional pilgrimage space underwent a functional transformation and gradually metamorphosed into an assembly venue for literati. This transformation lucidly reveals the ascendance of the local elite stratum since the Song Dynasty, as well as the process of the symbolic conversion of religious space into a cultural realm, manifesting the dynamic accommodation between the belief system and the literati-official culture.

Consequently, this paper endeavored to transcend the limitations of analyzing individual statues and instead accentuated the phased contributions of Nanshan and Beishan to the formation of the religious space in Dazu prior to the flourishing of Baodingshan.

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**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 1121), (Zhu 2003). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘凡衣食物資以養生者, 不及它郡。雖無舟楫江、沱之利, 而有桑麻稔稌之饒’.
- <sup>2</sup> Kitashinichi’s view that the position of Vishvamiteno had a strong guardianship function to prevent enemy invasion, as well as a strong guardianship function for the builders and organizers of the cottage, was highly influential.
- <sup>3</sup> Tuotuo 宋史 (Song Shi, vol. 89, Geography 5, 2218), (Tuotuo 1971). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘昌元郡, 軍事’.
- <sup>4</sup> Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 1122), (Zhu 2003). The corresponding historic Chinese literature in Song Shi: ‘淳化間供奉官盧斌平蜀, 賊任誘等嘗駐兵此山。土人雲: 他郡有警, 則置烽火於此’.
- <sup>5</sup> Wang, Xianhi & Li, Yongxian, 輿地紀勝 (The Record of Scenic Spots Across the Country), (vol. 161, 4880), (Wang 2005). Zhu, Mu. 方輿勝覽 (Fangyu Shenglan, vol. 64, 548), (Zhu 1991). Li, Xiaoqiang. 大足道教石刻論稿 (Dazu Daojiao Shike Lungao, p. 60), (Li 2016). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘南山, 在大足縣南五裡, 上有龍洞、醮壇, 旱禱輒應。淳化二年, 供奉官盧斌平蜀餘賊任誘等, 斌率兵駐昌州男門山, 南山最高, 望眼闊遠。土人雲: 他郡有警, 則置烽火於此’.
- <sup>6</sup> The text in Chinese for the History of 宋詩紀事補遺 (Emended Text of the Record of Events on Poetry of the Song Dynasty, vol. 57, 214).
- <sup>7</sup> The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘左朝請大夫知劍州軍州事張宗彥題: 圓壇高峙對蒼穹, 四望群山萬尊峰。東直洞天聞嘯虎, 下窺雲霧隱神龍。縈紆石磴蹄涔在, 幽邃岩扃薜溜封。夙駕三休猶喘息, 高軒千騎更從容。雨暘豐歲嚴祈禱……’.
- <sup>8</sup> Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu, (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999). 大足石刻銘文錄 [Carved Inscriptions from Dazu]. This poem is believed to have been engraved during the Jia Tai 嘉泰 reign of Emperor Ningzong of the Song Dynasty (1201). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘左朝請大夫知昌州軍州事何格非和。三級荒壇接昊穹, 岌然高峙壓諸峰。祈年設醮延真馭, 早歲飛符起蟄龍’.
- <sup>9</sup> Other studies have argued that the increasing centralization of finance in the late Northern Song Dynasty led to the inability of local governments to engage in public welfare affairs, which allowed local forces to develop and rise, a phenomenon that did not impede but rather facilitated official rule at the local level.
- <sup>10</sup> Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu, 299–300, (Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu 1999). The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘術者雲: 南北山童, 殊乏秀氣, 有修竹茂林, 聞人益顯。庵主王道瓊手植醮壇今已森然。因閱辛酉歲張何二公詩, 磨崖以示好事者。辛未初冬鄧早跋, 張大成書丹’.
- <sup>11</sup> The corresponding historic Chinese text in an edited record of He Guangzhen’s Farewell Banquet for the Prefect Wang Mengying by Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu in 1999. The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘文物彬彬, 久穩聞見。人品有楊賢良、王文正之清, 亭沼有香霏、鑿湖之勝, 仙跡有董、葛之異, 山林有南、北之秀, 物產有鹽米之饒’.
- <sup>12</sup> Recorded and edited by Dazu Shike Mingwen Lu in 1999. The corresponding Chinese text is: ‘發弘誓願普施水法, 禦災捍患。德洽遠近, 莫不皈依。凡山之前岩後洞, 琢諸佛像, 建無量功德’.

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