

The Statues and Monks of Shengshan Monastery: Money and Maitreyan Buddhism in Tang China

The ten-year period from 704 to 713 was perhaps one of the bloodiest, most volatile and eventful decades in the history of imperial China. There were at least five major court coups that produced jarring results. First was the abdication in 705 of empress Wu (r. 690–705; Wu Zhao 武曩 [623/625–705]) in favor of her son Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684, 705–710). Empress Wu's clan remained influential, however, because of an alliance that her nephew Wu Sansi 武三思 (?–707) had shrewdly fostered with Zhongzong's empress *née* Wei 韋后 (?–710), one that included marriage ties between Sansi's son and empress Wei's daughter, the princess Anle 安樂 (?–707). Such webs created long-lasting feuds and animosities that ensnared Wu's family, the Tang royal Li family, and the families of court favorites and in-laws. For example, the empress's two favorites, the brothers Zhang Yizhi 張易之 (676?–705) and Zhang Changzong 張昌宗 (676?–705) were executed in 705; and in 707 the heir-apparent of Zhongzong had the empress's nephew Wu Sansi killed. A daughter of empress Wu, princess Taiping 太平 (?–713), supported by the subsequent heir-apparent Li Longji 李隆基 (685–762), the future Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756), had empress Wei killed in 710. Eventually, in 713, Taiping herself fell to a violent end at the hands of Longji.

Scholars have exerted much energy in reconstructing the complicated political infighting during this ten-year period and in interpreting the far-reaching implications. Their diligent work has shed a great deal of light. However, one fairly well-documented aspect has been left relatively unexplored – the roles played by Buddhist monks in court politics. This article looks at several associated with the Luoyang monastery named Shengshansi 聖善寺, a site housing a statue (and other objects) that were linked with political and religious events. By looking at the nature and timing of the construction of this and related statues, and at the lives and opinions of both these famous monks and Tang-era literati who were familiar with them, we can improve our understanding of Tang dynastic struggles as well as programs instituted by the state.

Among those deeply involved in such matters was a Buddhist monk of Indian or Central Asian origin named Huifan 慧範 (惠範, ?–713). It will help to introduce him here, rather than later, when statue construction and court Buddhism are the main topics. He provides an example of the tightly wound, intimate links between Buddhist (and other) clerics and the agitated goings-on of the Wu and Li families. He was deeply trusted by empress Wu, Zhongzong, and the latter's brother Ruizong 睿宗 (r. 684–690, 710–712), as well as by the powerful Zhang brothers, empress Wei, and princess Taiping. He was eventually executed in 713 by Xuanzong for his close relationship as strategist for Taiping and, allegedly, as her lover.

Besides the limited information in Buddhist sources, secular sources unanimously condemn Huifan as an “evil monk.” These writers, whether official historians or private authors, describe in detail how he violated the norms of a Buddhist monk, especially the monastic imperative to remain aloof from secular entanglements. He demonstrated an almost insatiable greed for wealth. Defying the regulations on chastity, not only did he maintain an illicit relationship with Taiping, but he was also accused of ensnaring a married woman.

We can trace Huifan's life from a starting point in 700, when he was probably affiliated with Tianzhongsi 天中寺, a monastery in Luoyang. He was perhaps the “barbarian monk” (*huseng* 胡僧) who invited empress Wu to attend a relic-burying ceremony (*zang sheli* 葬舍利) on Songshan 嵩山 in that year.¹ Later, Huifan seems to have played some role in the 705 coup.² Shortly afterward, sometime in the fourth month of Shenlong 1 (April 28, 705–May 26, 705), a major figure of the 705 court, Huan Yanfan 桓彥範 (653–706), accused Huifan of intervening in court affairs by means of sorcery. Zhongzong, however, chose to overlook these accusations.³ His trust of Huifan continued, to the extent that on April 9, 706, along with eight other Buddhist monks, including the Avatamsaka master Fazang 法藏 (643–712), Huifan was awarded a fifth-rank title and enfeoffed as subprefectural duke (*xian-gong* 縣公). Also rewarded on the occasion were three Daoist priests, including Shi Chongxuan 史崇玄 (?–713), who also received a fifth-rank

¹ On this relic-worshipping, see Chen, “Śarīra and Scepter: Empress Wu's Political Use of Buddhist Relics,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25.1–2 (2002), pp. 80–92.

² Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976; hereafter *ZZTJ*) 208, p. 6585.

³ *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975; hereafter *JTS*) 91, pp. 292–93; *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975; hereafter *XTS*) 120, p. 4311. *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1935; hereafter *THY*) 61, p. 1070.

title, and Ye Jingneng 葉靜能 (?–710), who was granted a third-rank one. Huifan himself was later granted an even more prestigious title (third rank), and took up the abbacy at Shengshansi in Luoyang, with another monk Wansui 萬歲 (?–707+) as administrator (*duweina* 都維那). He and his colleagues were rewarded because of their merits in constructing Shengshansi, building and enshrining a Great Statue of the Buddha within the monastery.⁴

Probably either in late 706 or early 707, Zhongzong ordered Huifan, who was then acting as the concurrent abbot of three major monasteries, Ximingsi 西明寺, Zhongtiansi 中天寺 (probably an error for Tianzhongsi), in addition to Shengshansi, to supervise the construction of a Buddha-statue at Changle 長樂 Slope, close to Chang'an. On December 7, 706, at the order of Zhongzong, the Changle project was aborted owing to its drain on labor.⁵ On October 12, 707, the censor (*yushi daifu* 御史大夫) Wei Chuangong 魏傳弓 (?–707+) accused Huifan of embezzling public funds (some parts of which were earmarked for the Changle project) and urged his execution. As a compromise, Zhongzong, who did not wish to punish him, stripped him of his official title and put him under house arrest.⁶

Sometime between February 25 and March 23, 711, another court official, Liu Ze 柳澤 (?–714?), launched yet another attack on Huifan for his inappropriate involvement in government appointments.⁷ Sometime between the fifth and seventh lunar month in Jingyun 2 (May 22, 711–September 16, 711), two more censors, Xue Deng 薛登 (647–719) and Murong Xun 慕容詢 (669–736), filed a joint case against Huifan, charging him with infringing upon people's properties, and having a clandestine affair with Taiping.⁸ It was probably also at this time that

⁴ *Da Song sengshi lue* 大宋僧史略, as printed in *Taishō shinshū daiōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932; hereafter *T*), no. 2126, vol. 54, j. 3, p. 250B. Cf. *JTS* 7, p. 141; 183, p. 4739; *ZZTJ* 208, p. 6598.

⁵ *ZZTJ* 208, pp. 6616–17. Zhongzong's edict ordering the termination of the Changle project is recorded in *Cefu yangui* 冊府元龜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960; hereafter *CFYG*) 51, pp. 19a (and discussed below, under "The Changle Project").

⁶ *XTS* 83, p. 3651, *ZZTJ* 208, pp. 6616–17, *THY* 61, p. 1260. Cf. *Shangshu gushi* 尚書故實 (Yingyin Wenyuange SKQS edn.; Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983–1986), vol. 862, j. 1, p. 470a.

⁷ *JTS* 77, pp. 2683–84; cf. *XTS* 112, p. 4174, *ZZTJ* 210, p. 6664. The whole of the memorial is included in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Taipei: Hualian chubanshe, 1965; hereafter *QTW*) 277, pp. 9a–11a.

⁸ "Tang Zhongshan daifu shou Mishujian zhishi Shangzhuguo Murong gong muzhi ming" 唐中散大夫守秘書監致仕上柱國慕容公墓誌銘, rubbing copy presented in Chen Chang'an 陳長安, comp., *Sui Tang wudai muzhi huibian* (*Luoyang juan*) 隋唐墓誌匯編 (洛陽卷) (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1991) 10, p. 126; also transcribed in Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良 et al., comp., *Tangdai muzhi huibian xuji* 唐代墓誌匯編續集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe,

he was impeached by the court official Cui Yinfu 崔隱甫 (?–739).⁹ In 712, Huifan and others began conspiring with Taiping to depose Xuanzong.¹⁰ On July 29, 713, Huifan was executed along with other conspirators when their plot was foiled.¹¹

After such disgrace, Huifan must have become an embarrassment to Buddhist monks of all traditions. This fact probably accounts for the paucity of neutral, objective accounts of his actions and influence. It has become difficult to create a clear picture of almost any of his activities and their complicated social and political background and implications. To help rectify that, the current study examines one of Huifan's major legacies, the cosmopolitan Shengshansi of which he was the first abbot, and a series of political and religious projects related to it. As a result, links to turbulent court politics, court finance, and society at large are exposed.

Shengshansi and the Buddha-statue enshrined there in a pavilion (actually a pagoda) will not be unfamiliar to scholars of Tang Buddhism. In fact, the monastery is best known for a tragedy associated with it – a massacre committed towards the end of 762 by Uighur soldiers that claimed the lives of over ten thousand innocent civilians. But more important for our study, it was here that Xuanzong first lodged Esoteric Master Shanwuwei 善無畏 (Śubhākarasiṃha, 637–735) when the latter followed him to Luoyang in 722.¹² The monastery was also home to an important vinaya master Huaiyuan 懷遠 (fl. 710s), and two Chan masters, Hongzheng 宏正 (var. 弘政, ?–755+) and Huijian 慧堅 (719–792), who were the major representatives, respectively, of the Northern and Southern Chan schools.¹³ (They are discussed more fully, below.) The monastery is also known for the numerous pictorial and calligraphic masterpieces left there by Tang artists and for its close relationship with

2001), p. 556. Cf. *Da Tang xinyu* 大唐新語 (SKQS edn.), vol. 1035, j. 4, pp. 307b–11a; Xuanzong, “Shou Murong Xun Shiyushi zhi” 授慕容珣侍御史制, *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Taipei: Huawen, 1965, hereafter *WYH*) 394, p. 4b.

⁹ *XTS* 130, p. 4497.

¹⁰ *JTS* 7, pp. 161–62, *ZZIJ* 210, p. 6681. Cf. *CFYG* 84, pp. 26b–27a, *QJW* 19, pp. 10b–11a.

¹¹ *JTS* 183, p. 4740, *ZZIJ* 210, p. 6684. Cf. *CFYG* 84, pp. 26b–27a, *QJW* 19, pp. 10b–11a.

¹² “Da Tang Dongdu Da Shengshansi gu Zhong Tianzhu guo Shanwuwei Sanzang Heshang beiming bing xu” 大唐東都大聖善寺故中天竺國善無畏三藏和尚碑銘並序, *T* no. 2055, vol. 50, p. 291A.

¹³ Huaiyuan is mentioned in *Song Gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, biog. of Yuanhui 圓暉 (*T* no. 2061, vol. 50, 5, p. 734A). This biography is based on Jia Zeng's 賈曾 (d. after 712) preface “Apidamo jushe lun lueshi ji” 阿毘達磨俱舍論略釋記 (*T* no. 1823, vol. 41, p. 813A) and the first part of Yuanhui's commentary (*Jushelun song lueshu ben* 俱舍論頌疏論本, *T* no. 1823, vol. 41, j. 1, p. 813B).

Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846), who was said to have stored one of the four copies of his own collection at the monastery.

The statue itself was not only entangled with empress Wu's effort to build and rebuild the splendid politico-religious architectural institution generally known as "Luminous Hall" (*mingtang* 明堂), it was also closely related to the so-called bronze statue of the Buddha that was purportedly set up on a slope close to Luoyang; this statue has generally been taken as a (if not the) main source of inspiration for the bronze statue of the Buddha Vairocana (16.98 meters high, cast between 747–749) that was enshrined in Tōdaiji 東大寺 in Nara.

We need to look closely at the history of Shengshansi in order to resolve mysteries surrounding its founding and the casting and enshrinement of the statue. Partly we will be discussing the confusions that source remarks engendered in modern scholarship. This is followed by an investigation of related issues, primarily the identity of the statue and how the monastery fared in the nearly two centuries after Huifan's death until the fall of Tang in 907. Last, we bring to light several aspects of the intellectual and sociopolitical background against which Shengshansi and its statue must be seen.

CONFLICTING OPINIONS IN MODERN RESEARCH

The name "Shengshan 聖善" was taken from a line of a poem in the *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), "Mothers are wise and gentle" (*mushi shengshan* 母氏聖善),¹⁴ which offers a nearly self-evident motive for the monastery's dedication – that of a son to his mother. As mentioned, above, on April 9, 706, Zhongzong rewarded nine monks for their efforts in the construction of Shengshansi. The date suggests that it was built for the posthumous welfare of empress Wu, a point confirmed by the Song historical compendium, *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (*Compendium of Tang-related Documents*).¹⁵ Another earlier (although unofficial) source, *Sui Tang jiahua* 隋唐嘉話, further clarifies that a pavilion at the monastery called Baocige 報慈閣 (Pavilion of Repaying Motherly Love) housed a large Buddha-statue (*daxiang* 大像) related to empress Wu's *mingtang*.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Shijing*, in Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), annot. and comp., *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), p. 301; Bernard Karlgren, trans., *The Book of Odes* (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950), p. 35.

¹⁵ *THY* 48, p. 848; see below, under "The Shengshansi and Related Projects, 695–707."

¹⁶ *Sui Tang jiahua*, in *Sui Tang jiahua Chaoye qianzai* 隋唐嘉話朝野僉載, coll. and annot. Cheng Yizhong 程毅中 and Zhao Shouyan 趙守儼 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979) 3, pp. 37–38; see below, under "Interrelations among the Five Statue Projects."

One might conclude the following about the origin of Shengshansi: it was “founded” (a hazy matter that is clarified, below) in 706 by Zhongzong for the posthumous welfare of his mother who died several months earlier, and it also contained a pavilion that housed a Great Buddha-statue related somehow to her *mingtang*. However, a closer look into the sources shows that we are faced with varying and sometimes conflicting details. First, although *Tang huiyao* tells us that Shengshansi was located in Zhangshan 章善 Ward, it does not specify in which capital – in the east at Luoyang, or the west at Chang’an. By locating the ward in Chang’an, Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1302), the Song-era historian who wrote a commentary on *Zizhi tongjian*, assumed the coexistence of two Shengshansi in order to explain the existence of a monastery with the same name in Luoyang that was mentioned in *Zizhi tongjian*. This seems plausible given that it was by no means a rare practice in the Sui and Tang that a group of dynastic monasteries, located in different cities, should bear the same name.¹⁷ Shengshansi in Luoyang was indeed one of the “great 大” monasteries, a phrase usually indicating dynastically sponsored monasteries during the Sui-Tang period. With the help of the late Antonino Forte’s works, we answer this, below. Furthermore, even though we can safely assume that the monastery was “founded” in 706, can we also date the completion of the Baoci Pavilion and the installation of the statue to the same year?

Uncertainties about Shengshansi have stymied scholars, and the two most important of them – Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎 (1869–1944) and Antonino Forte (1940–2006) – maintain conflicting opinions. They were drawn to these questions for different reasons – empress Wu’s Baisima 白司馬 statue (for Matsumoto) and her *mingtang* project (for Forte).¹⁸

Matsumoto has followed Hu Sanxing in locating Zhangshan Ward, and thus Shengshansi, in Chang’an. But he does not accept the existence of two homonymous temples in the two capitals.¹⁹ The statue

¹⁷ Two monasteries named Baimasi 白馬寺 in Chang’an and Luoyang already existed as early as the third century; see Anotonello Palumbo, “Dharmarakṣa and Kaṇṭhaka: White Horse Monasteries in Early Medieval China,” in Giovanni Verardi and Silvio Vita, eds., *Buddhist Asia 1: Papers from the First Conference of Buddhist Studies in Naples in May 2001* (Kyoto: Italian School of Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 167–216.

¹⁸ Matsumoto Bunzaburō, *Bukkyōshi zakkō* 佛教史雜考 (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1944), pp. 351–87 (orig. pub. as “Sokuten Bukō no Haku shiba han daizō ni tsuite” 則天武后白司馬坂大像に就いて, *THGH* 東方學報 5 [1934], pp. 13–49); Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, Series Orientale Roma 59; and Paris: École Française D’extrême-Orient, Publications de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient 145, 1988), esp. pp. 91–92, 219–29.

¹⁹ Matsumoto interpreted a statement in *ZZTJ* (“making Shengshansi in Dongdu [i.e., Luo-

itself Matsumoto believes to have been built especially for the monastery by Zhongzong, since the statue in the *mingtang* built in 688 had been reduced to ashes along with the *mingtang* and *tiantang*.²⁰ Not only was the Shengshansi statue different from that in the *tiantang*, but also, according to Matsumoto, it had nothing to do with the statues on the Baisima and Changle slopes. He believes that the Baisima project was suspended following the death of the Zhang brothers at the beginning of 705 and that the project was restarted and moved to Changle Slope in Chang'an at the order of Zhongzong shortly after his reenthronement in 705. Furthermore, Matsumoto is the scholar who noted that the project was abandoned (a topic dealt with later). Thus, according to him, Zhongzong's Baisima project came to naught.

Forté's view of the origins of the Shengshansi statue turns out to be far more sophisticated and is based on a detailed investigation of the origin, history, and functions of the extremely complicated politico-religious institution generally known as "*mingtang*" under the reign of empress Wu. The following paragraphs, until the end of this section, summarize his findings.

Empress Wu made three attempts to build and rebuild the *mingtang* complex, although in different forms and for different purposes. These spanned the years from 684, when she took up the regency after deposing her son Zhongzong, to February 21, 705, when she was forced to abdicate. The first *mingtang* complex was finished on January 23, 689, with the completion of the *tiantang*. Inside the *tiantang* was a huge dry-lacquer statue of the Buddha. The *dayi* 大儀 (Great Regulator) was connected to the *tiantang*. The *tiantang-dayi* integrated structure was intended as a *lingtai* 靈臺 (literally, a "Numinous Terrace"), the notion of a sacred tower that is celebrated in the *Book of Poetry*. The *tiantang-dayi* was named Wanxiang shengong 萬象神宮 (Divine Palace of the Myriad Images) because of its astronomic equipment, including images or representations (*xiang* 象) of heavenly bodies. The name was used to refer to the whole of the tripartite *mingtang* – 1. the *mingtang* proper (intended as the government hall, where empress Wu had audience with her officials, and located south of the *tiantang*), 2. the *biyong* 辟庸 (a hall

yang] 於東都作聖善寺") in this way: *dongdu* was mistakenly written for *xidu*, western capital, and in this context means "to the east of the capital," which meant that Zhangshan Ward and Shengshansi as well were located east of Chang'an. See Matsumoto, *Bukkyōshi*, pp. 378–79. But in Tang literature, when Chang'an and Luoyang were denoted by using "*xi* 西 (western)" and "*dong* 東 (eastern)," the word Chang'an received "*jing*" and Luoyang "*du*." It is rare that during the Tang and Zhou periods Chang'an was called *xidu* 西都 and Luoyang *dongjing* 東京.

²⁰ Matsumoto, *Bukkyōshi*, pp. 353–55.

with a circular moat, north of the *tiantang*), and 3. the *lingtai* (*tiantang* plus *dayi*, the latter of which was probably situated on the eastern side of the *tiantang*). This complex was destroyed by a windstorm sometime between October 16, 690, and April 3, 691.

On the night of December 8, 694 (between nine and eleven o'clock), a fire, apparently set off by a brazier within the *tiantang*, which was then still under reconstruction due to the windstorm, destroyed the *tiantang* and the southern building (the *mingtang* proper). Although the *tiantang* was not yet half finished, the *mingtang* proper had then probably already been completed, judging by the fact that a grand *pañcavārsika* (*wuzhe fahui* 無遮法會) festival was held there the night before. On December 9, 694, empress Wu decided to reconstruct the whole *mingtang* complex to replicate exactly its form in 689.

The decision was not formally enforced until four months later, in the third month of Zhengsheng 1 (April 19–May 18, 695), when an order to build a smaller-scale *mingtang* was given. The reconstruction of the *tiantang* was abandoned and it was replaced by Foguangsi 佛光寺, which was situated outside the *mingtang* area. On April 22, 696, the *mingtang* was completed and given the name Tongtian gong 通天宮 (Palace to Communicate with Heaven). It was surrounded by a circular moat (*biyong*) and supported three stories, the third being a Buddhist pagoda with a central pillar. On top was an iron phoenix plated with gold, two-*zhang* (about six meters) high.

All of this brought into doubt Matsumoto's assumption that a complete *tiantang* statue was destroyed by the 694 fire, and instead emphasized that both the statue and its *tiantang* housing were far from complete when the conflagration erupted. Forte thus could raise the possibility that the unfinished statue might not yet have been installed in the *tiantang*, and was saved. Forte has suggested that even though we might assume that "the statue and the *tiantang* were growing in height at the same rate and that the statue was burnt along with the *tiantang*, nothing would have prevented it from being rebuilt later," given that in fact "there was a third attempt to reconstruct the *tiantang* and also a further attempt to cast the *dayi* bell." He concludes that the statue was completed by 705, and that it was the lacquer statue already intended for installing in the *tiantang*.²¹

²¹ Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 93.

THE SHENGSHANSI AND RELATED PROJECTS, 695-707

Forte should be credited with correcting the error made by Matsumoto. The monastery was, in fact, located in Luoyang. Forte also points it out that Shengshansi was not actually a monastery newly built in 706, but rather an old monastery that received a new name in that year, a point which is made very clear in the *Tang huiyao* passage that both Matsumoto and Forte quote:

Shengshansi: in Zhangshan Ward. In the second month of Shenlong 1 (February 28, 705–March 28, 705), it was established as Zhongxingsi. In the second year [of the Shenlong era] (January 19, 706–February 6, 707), Zhongzong, in hope of accumulating merit for the posthumous welfare of empress Wu, had the name of the monastery changed to “Shengshansi.” Within the monastery was the Baocige, which Zhongzong built for empress Wu. 聖善寺, 章善坊. 神龍元年二月, 立爲中興. 二年, 中宗爲武太后追福, 改爲聖善寺. 寺內報慈閣, 中宗爲武后所立.²²

The decree issued on March 25, 705 (Shenlong 1.2.26 [*bingzi*]) ordered that a Buddhist monastery and a Daoist abbey be set up and named “Zhongxing” in each of the two capitals and all the prefectures throughout the empire in order to celebrate the restoration of the Great Tang on March 3, 705.²³ The monastery’s name was changed to Shengshansi for the posthumous welfare of empress Wu, who had died late in the previous year.

Because Shengshansi was a renamed monastery, it would not have taken too much trouble and time to “found.” Can we assume therefore that the “completion” of Shengshansi mentioned in *Jiu Tang shu* and in the tenth-century *Da Song sengshi lue* 大宋僧史略 actually means not only the renaming of the monastery, but also the completion of the pavilion and the installation of the statue? Probably not: I believe that the project for constructing the pavilion and installing the statue was completed not too long afterwards. Given the exceptionally complicated history leading to the eventual completion of the statue-building project at Shengshansi, we need to trace its possible connections with the statue that empress Wu planned to install in her second *mingtang* complex (which was foiled by the 694 fire), with a statue (complete or unfinished) derived from her Baisima project, or with two statue-building projects under Zhongzong, one at the same Baisima Slope and the other at Changle Slope.

²² *THY* 48, p. 848.

²³ *JTS* 7, p. 137.

The Baisima Projects under Empress Wu and Zhongzong

Forte was the one to deduce correctly that after the second *tian-tang* complex was destroyed, empress Wu strived to have another statue built. The problem is when, where, and how. The first known documentation is datable to August 2, 700 (or September 1, 700),²⁴ when she decreed a levy of a single cash per day from every Buddhist monk and nun in the empire in order to defray the cost, which was estimated to take one million workdays. This act provoked such a strong protest from her trusted minister Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (607–700) that she had to suspend the project.²⁵ Di Renjie died on September 12, 700,²⁶ however; some time after his death, the empress restarted a fund-raising program, judging by two facts: a Buddhist monk affiliated with [Central] Dayunsi [中]大雲寺 aired monks' and nuns' complaints to the throne about the statue project (discussed below), and the government succeeded some time in the Chang'an era (November 5, 701–January 29, 705) in collecting a sufficient amount of money for the statue.²⁷ Empress Wu disregarded a proposal of Li Jiao 李嶠 (644–713) to use the funds for charitable purposes.²⁸

The funding and proposal must have happened some time before Chang'an 4.4 (May 9, 704–June 6, 704), when the empress ordered the statue to be constructed at Baisima Slope, putting it under the supervision of one of her nephews, Wu Youning 武攸寧 (?–704+).²⁹ Only

²⁴ *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6549, dating as Jiushi 1.7 (*run*).*gengshen* 庚申. The intercalary 7th mo. of Jiushi 1 did not have a *gengshen* day, which did exist in the adjacent two months. It is probably because of this that Wang Pu 王溥 (922–82), the compiler of *THY*, dated the edict September 23, 700 (Jiushi 1.8.15 [*gengshen*]) (*THY* 49, p. 1003). This date was, however, impossible: Di Renjie, who protested the edict, died eleven days earlier. Thus, it is either August 2, 700 (Jiushi 1.7.13 [*genshen*]), or September 1, 700 (Jiushi 1.7 [*run*]).¹⁴ [*gengyin* 庚寅] – assuming that due to the similarity in form between *yin* 寅 and *shen* 申, *gengyin* 庚寅 was miswritten as *gengshen* 庚申.

²⁵ On Di, see David McMullen, “The Real Judge Dee: Ti Jen-chieh and the T'ang Restoration of 705,” *AM* 3d ser. 6.1 (1993), pp. 1–81, esp. p. 22. Di Renjie's biogs. in the Tang histories (*JTS* 89, p. 2893; *XTS* 115, p. 4213) only mention that he made this protest sometime after a banquet was held at the Hanshu 含樞 Hall. According to Hu Sanxing, the hall was probably located in Sanyang Palace (*ZZTJ* 207, p. 6548), 7th mo. of Jiushi 1, to celebrate the suppression of the Khitan rebellion. None of these sources specifies the site where the statue was built. The whole of the memorial is in *QIW* 169, pp. 6b–7b. It was quoted by Li Wei 李蔚 (d. 877), in persuading Xizong (873–888) to restrain his enthusiasm for Buddhism (*JTS* 178, p. 4625).

²⁶ While *JTS* (6, p. 129) states merely the 9th mo., *XTS* (4, p. 101) and *ZZTJ* (207, p. 6551) both specify the day of death: September 12, 700 (Jiushi 1.7 [*run*]).²⁵ [*xinchou*].

²⁷ The monk's memorial is discussed, below. See also Li Jiao's 李嶠 (644–713) biogs.: *JTS* 94, pp. 2994–95, and *XTS* 123, pp. 4368–69. As suggested in Li's memorial, one string contained one thousand cash; thus the total here is 170 billion.

²⁸ See Li's memorial in *QIW* 247, p. 3a. *THY* (49, pp. 657–58) dates it to Dazhu 1.*zheng*, unlikely given that the fund-raising edict was issued only several months earlier. It would have been nearly impossible to gather a huge amount in a short time.

²⁹ *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6571.

a few months later, this project was under fire from a court official, Zhang Tinggui 張廷珪 (664?-734). His criticism was appreciated by the empress, who gave him an audience at Longevity Hall (Changsheng dian 長生殿), where she was then recuperating from illness.³⁰ She was also said to have had the project halted. Su Gui's 蘇瑰 (639-710) memorial of remonstrance, which the empress allegedly also honored, was probably also presented at this time.³¹ All this might give one the impression that the empress canceled the project only a few months after it was started.

Much of this is contradicted in five Buddhist sources that mentioned empress Wu's Baisima project:

1. *Longxing [Fojiao] biannian tonglun* 隆興[佛教]編年通論 (*A [Buddhist] Chronicle, with General Discussions, [Compiled] during the Longxing reign-era* [1163-64]), completed in 1164 by Zuxiu 祖琇 (?-1164+);
2. *Shishi tongjian* 釋氏通鑒 (*A General Mirror for Buddhists*), compiled by Benjue 本覺 (fl. ca. 1270) between 1084 and 1270;
3. *Fozu tongji* 佛祖統紀 (*General Record of the Buddha and Other Patriarchs*), compiled between 1258-1269 by Zhipan 志磐 (?-1269+);
4. *Lichao Shishi zijian* 歷朝釋氏資鑒 (better known as *Shishi zijian* 釋氏資鑒) (*Aid and Mirror to the Śākya Family*), completed in 1336 by Xizhong 熙仲 (?-1336+);
5. *Fozu lidai tongzai* 佛祖歷代通載 (*A Comprehensive Account of Buddhist Patriarchs through the Ages*), completed in 1344 by Nianchang 念常 (1282-1344+).³²

With the exception of number 4, all claim that she succeeded in bringing the great statue to completion.

The exception, *Shishi zijian*, is noteworthy for other reasons. First, on the basis of *Zizhi tongjian* and *Tangce* 唐策,³³ it dates to Shengli 1 (December 20, 697–December 7, 698) the empress's fund-raising campaign

³⁰ Wang Pu (*THY* 49, p. 1004) dates the edict of ordering the Baisima project to November 10, 704 (Chang'an 4.10.9), quoting Zhang Tinggui's memorial. This, however, is not supported in *ZZT*, which dates as Chang'an 4.4 (after the *renxu* day). *CFYG* 544, p. 12b, in reporting Zhang Tinggui's protest, also dates the opening of the Baisima project to Chang'an 4.4. It is more likely that Wang Pu meant the submittal of Zhang Tinggui's memorial, not the opening of the Baisima project.

³¹ *JTS* 100, p. 3115; *XIS* 128, p. 4457, indicating that 100,000,000 strings were (or were to be) expended on the Baisima project. Su Gui warned the empress of the unavoidable setbacks that the project would cause to agriculture.

³² Most accounts of empress Wu's Baisima project contained in these Buddhist sources are also reviewed in Matsumoto, *Bukkyōshi*, pp. 358-59, 365-68, although he believes that *Fozu tongji* does not mention the completion of the Baisima statue, which is not correct.

³³ Probably referring to the *Zengzhu Tangce* 增注唐策, 10 *juan*, anon. (Song era). It appears to be a selection of political essays and memorials presented to the court during Tang.

Second, on the basis of *Tang shi* 唐史 (probably *Jiu Tang shu*, or – more likely – a history compiled by Liu Fang 柳芳 [?-759+] with the same name) and *Zizhi tongjian*, it puts the following three events together under an entry for the fourth month of Chang’an 1 (May 13, 701–June 10, 701)³⁴: 1. in order to ask monks and nuns in the whole country to make a great statue at the Baisima slope, empress Wu ordered Wu Youning to “superintend” (*jianjiao* 檢校) the project, which it claims was to cost (or had cost) 100 million cash; 2. Li Jiao’s memorial, and 3. Zhang Tinggui’s memorial.³⁵

Numbers 1, 2, and 5 relate the Baisima project in a similar way and must have come from an identical source, with the oldest, number 1, probably acting as the source.³⁶ The account in 3 seems to be independent.³⁷ Here we might review the account of *Longxing biannian tonglun*, or source number 1.³⁸

It contains three parts. First, during Jiushi 1 (May 27, 700–February 14, 701), empress Wu’s decree for the one cash per-day campaign provoked a protest from Di Renjie, which was to no avail. Second, in Chang’an 1 (November 26, 701–February 1, 702; or more generally, January 14, 701–February 1, 702,³⁹ when empress Wu was about to build the great statue, Zhang Tinggui remonstrated, leading to the empress’s public recognition of his courage and loyalty in the form of an audience, and bestowal of gold and silks. Finally, in Chang’an 3 (January 22, 703–February 9, 704), when the empress was close to

³⁴ Actually Dazu 1.4, because the reign-name was not changed from Dazu to Chang’an until November 26, 701 (Dazu 1.10.22 [*xinyou*]). However, when a lunar year had two or more reign-eras, it was generally indicated by the last installed reign-name.

³⁵ *Shishi zijian*, in *Wanzi xuzang jing* 卍續藏經 (Taipei: Xin wenfeng chuban gongsi, 1968–1970), vol. 132, j. 6, pp. 114b–16b.

³⁶ No exact date is known for the completion of *Shishi tongjian*, although we know that it could not have appeared before its apparent model, *ZZTJ*, which was presented December, 1084. We cannot exclude the possibility that *Shishi tongjian* could have been completed earlier than the *Longxing biannian tonglun* (1164). However, as the earliest known preface to the *Shishi tongjian* is dated 1270, I assume that the work itself might not have appeared by the end of the 12th c. If true, then *Longxing biannian tonglun* was the earliest of the five chronicles.

³⁷ *Fozu tongji* mentions the project twice: in an entry for Jiushi 1.4, about the one-cash campaign (*T*no. 2035, vol. 49, j. 39, p. 370c), and a mention of the Baisima statue along with other statues constructed by other Chinese sovereigns (j. 53, p. 463b). Given that all the other statues mentioned there were supposed to have existed, it seems that Zhipan did believe that empress Wu succeeded in building the Baisima Slope statue.

³⁸ *Longxing biannian tonglun* (in *Wanzi xuzang jing* 130, 14, pp. 560b–61a, 561a–62a, 562a–b), *Shishi tongjian* (in *ibid.* 131, j. 8, pp. 924a–25a), *Fozu lidai tongzai* (*T*no. 2036, vol. 49, 12, pp. 584c–85c).

³⁹ The reign-name Chang’an was adopted Dazu 1.10.1 (November 5, 701). Thus, given the general practice of referring to a lunar year with multiple reign-names by the last reign-name, Chang’an 1 might have been used to indicate the whole year ranging from January 14, 701–February 1, 702, which covered both Dazu 1 and Chang’an 1.

pulling together the funds for “casting the statue” (*zhuxiang* 鑄像), Li Jiao protested in a memorial, which was ignored. When the statue was constructed that winter, empress Wu led all the officials there to make ritual offerings.

We can see clearly how this account differs from the secular sources. First, while all Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, except for *Shishi zijian*, agree in dating the cash campaign to Jiushi 1 (701 or early 702), they differ as to empress Wu’s response to Di Renjie: she accepts his rebuke according to the secular source, but not so in the Buddhist ones. Second, the Buddhist sources have us believe that empress Wu was about to initiate the new project in Chang’an 1 (not Chang’an 4.4) and that it was Zhang Tinggui, rather than Li Jiao, who stepped in, attempting to change her mind (the fact that she publicly rewarded him suggests that she may actually have canceled it per his advice). Third, Buddhist sources identify Li Jiao as the one who attempted in vain to suspend the project after it was started. Finally, the three Buddhist chronicles unambiguously claim success for the project. In addition, we note that the particular expression *zhuxiang*, which never appears in the secular sources, conveys the clear idea that the Baisima statue was metal.

How may we understand these discrepancies? Which parts of the secular or Buddhist account should we accept or reject? The discrepancies appear so fundamental and irreconcilable that we seem to be trapped. Important clues are fortunately provided by the same Zhang Tinggui, from another memorial that he submitted to the empress’s successor Zhongzong. This brings us to Zhongzong’s effort to restart the statue project at Baisima Slope that was originally set in motion by his mother.

Xin Tangshu tells us:

At the beginning of the Shenlong era (January 30, 705–September 30, 707), [the emperor] ordered the recommencement of the construction of the Buddha’s shrine at Baisima Slope. At that moment, Zhang Tinggui was on an imperially ordered mission to the Hebei area and happened to pass through the [construction] location. Seeing the extreme hardship caused by the construction work, he could not contain his feelings and submitted a memorial to remonstrate sincerely [with the emperor about this]. 神龍初，詔白司馬坂復營佛祠，廷珪方奉詔抵河北，道出其所，見營築勞亟，懷不能已，上書切爭。⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *XTS* 118, p. 4262.

In the memorial to Zhongzong, Zhang Tinggui reviews the previous statue project that was carried out on the slope under the reign of empress Wu.⁴¹ He mentions the two Zhangs, one of their other brothers, and a Buddhist monk as the masterminds, suggesting that the project did not come to an end until the Zhang clique was removed (February 20, 705) and the Tang restored eleven days later.⁴² This memorial was intended to persuade Zhongzong to cancel the Baisima project, but Zhang makes no mention of his own earlier memorial to empress Wu, nor the empress's alleged decision to halt the project. Had the project ever been halted by the empress at Zhang Tinggui's suggestion, he would not have failed to mention it given that this would have certainly strengthened his case.⁴³ Thus, Zhang Tinggui's silence on this point strongly suggests that empress Wu, though she did in all likelihood accord Zhang Tinggui public praise, probably did not follow his advice and have the project canceled. Not only was the project implemented and carried on up to the very moment when its planners and overseers were suddenly eliminated, the disappearance of these persons and Zhongzong's wish (and also actions) to have it restarted and brought to completion also suggest that the project was very likely left unfinished. Thus, quite different from what is either explicitly claimed (empress Wu's Baisima project successfully resulted in a great statue) or implicitly suggested (the project was started but apparently suspended after opposition) by Buddhist or secular sources, the project was carried on until the beginning of 705, although it did not end up with a completed statue.

There are also discrepancies surrounding Di Renjie's remonstrance and the date empress Wu officially implemented the project. It is not easy to give a decisive answer for the first issue (although the unusual esteem that the empress held for Di allows us to believe that his protest was actually approved).⁴⁴ The second question can be solved thanks to Zhang's observation that ten years had elapsed since the second *mingtang* project was burned until the empress's Baisima project was started. This means that the project began in 704, a date that is supported by the secular, but not the Buddhist, accounts. At any rate, both this memorial by Zhang Tinggui and the record in his biographies

⁴¹ The whole text of it is preserved in *WYH* 621, pp. 2b–3b, and *QIW* 269, pp. 8b–9b.

⁴² See *WYH* 621, p. 3a; *QIW* 269, p. 9a.

⁴³ Consider that Zhongzong – as we soon see – restarted the project as a token of filial piety for his newly deceased mother. So, had the empress ever suspended the project, Zhang Tinggui would certainly have had the shrewdness to suggest to him that he could not have violated the law of filial piety by doing something that his mother had previously stopped.

⁴⁴ In any event, the empress's attitude toward Di's remonstrance did not make a great difference: he died soon after and the empress did go ahead with the fund-raising campaign.

prove that Zhongzong ordered the recommencement of the Baisima project at the beginning of the Shenlong era.

Let us take up the matter of when Baisima was reactivated by Zhongzong. At the very beginning of the memorial, Zhang describes how he came to find out accidentally that the project was being reinitiated at Zhongzong's orders:

In observance of the edict of spreading [Your Majesty's] comforting [messages] to the [people in] Hebei Circuit, your subject set off from the capital today. At the Baisima Slope, [your subject] encountered the workmen who were conscripted to transport wood [from the slope]. Upon inquiring of Feng Dao, who was the superintending official [of this project] and the *jiانشi* (office attendant) of the Zuoang (Left Storehouse), your subject received the report that in observance of the edict of the eighth day of this month, [they] engaged in repair and construction work at the slope. 臣奉敕河北道宣勞，今發都下，從白司馬坂所，遇見轉運材木，顧役人夫。臣勘問檢官左藏置⁴⁵監事馮道，得狀奉今月八日敕，於坂所修營。⁴⁶

Despite saying eighth day of "this month," we know that it was in the second month from the fact that toward the end of the memorial Zhang Tinggui says that it was then in the *zhongchun* season, which in classical Chinese denoted the second month of the lunar year. Further, Zhang's *Xin Tang shu* biography tells us that he submitted this memorial at the beginning of the Shenlong era. This must then have been either the first or the second year of the era given that the reign period only lasted for two years and nine months (January 30, 705–October 4, 707). Finally, he mentions the demotion of Yang Wulian 楊務廉 (?–705+) in the memorial.⁴⁷ Although we are not certain about when Yang was exiled, we know that this happened shortly before April 7, 705 (Shenlong 1.3.10 [*yichou*]).⁴⁸ This makes it highly unlikely that the memorial was presented in the second month of Shenlong 1, by which time Yang Wuliang had probably not been demoted. Thus, we can conclude that it

⁴⁵ This character 置 seems redundant.

⁴⁶ Judging by Forte's speculations on the position of this Feng Dao and his relationship with Zhang Tinggui, he seems to have understood this part of the memorial differently. He says, "Prior to this it is a matter of a 'memorial to the emperor' (*zhuang* 狀) by a certain Feng Dao. The memorial was probably handed to Zhang Tinggui to be delivered to the emperor. Perhaps the 'considerations' are those of Feng Dao and were adopted by Zhang Tinggui, or Zhang Tinggui drafted the text at the request of Feng Dao" (Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 70, n. 64).

⁴⁷ See *WYH* 621, p. 3a; *QTW* 269, p. 9a. Yang Wulian is mentioned in *Chaoye qianzai* 朝野僉載, in Cheng and Zhao, *Sui Tang jiahua* 2, p. 36; 6, p. 142; also Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the Tang*, 2d edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1970), p. 86.

⁴⁸ We know this since Yang's demotion was proposed by Yuan Shuji 袁恕己 (?–706), who was "shortly afterward 俄" promoted 擢拜 to be the director of the Secretariat (*zhongshu ling*

was on Shenlong 2.2.8 (March 26, 706) that Zhongzong issued the edict to reactivate the statue-constructing project at the Baisima Slope.

The Changle Project

We do not know when this new project was started, but we do know that it was stopped on October 12, 707:

On August 3, 707 (Shenlong 3.7.2 [*dingyou*]), in view of the fact that increasing labor work necessitated by the Great Statue on the Slope of Changle caused people to complain angrily, an edict was promulgated to terminate the project. [神龍]三年七月丁酉, 以所造長樂坡大像工役稍廣, 百姓多怨嗟, 制罷之。⁴⁹

Zhongzong had relocated the capital to Chang'an on December 7, 706 (Shenlong 2.10.28 [*wuxu*]), barely eight months before abandoning the Changle project, thus it seems that he may have planned the project after he decided to shift capitals. If so, then the project must have been started sometime in late 706, or early 707.

In sum, the years from 694 to 707 witnessed five statue projects:

1. *tiantang* statue: attempts between 691 and the end of 694 to make a great statue and install it in the rebuilt *tiantang* failed due to the disastrous fire, December 8, 694;
2. Empress Wu's Baisima statue: preparatory funding began August 2 (or September 1), 700, and formally commenced at Baisima Slope sometime between May 9, 704, and June 6, 704 (Chang'an 4.4) (terminated on February 20, 705, when the coup broke out);
3. Zhongzong's Baisima statue: reinitiated per Zhongzong's edict issued March 26, 706;
4. Shengshansi statue: project (starting at an unknown date) to install a statue at Baocige pavilion; and
5. Changle statue: probably started sometime around December 7, 706, but was cancelled August 3, 707.

INTERRELATIONS AMONG THE FIVE STATUE PROJECTS

We move to an investigation of various evidences that indicate how the statues may or may not have been linked or mutually derived. Liu Su 劉夔 (active in the eighth century) gives key facts about this in

中書令), which happened on April 7, 705 (Shenlong 1.3.10 [*yichou*]); see *JTS* 7, p. 138; *XTS* 4, p. 107; *ZZTJ* 208, p. 6589. See Yuan's two official biogs. (*JTS* 91, pp. 2942-43; *XTS* 120, p. 4324) for his demand for the exile of Yang.

⁴⁹ *CFYG* 51, pp. 19a.

a passage that has been analyzed and translated by Antonino Forte.⁵⁰ Liu informs us that after the fire, and damage to the bell, the empress ordered a new *tiantang* that would house a Buddha and a Great Regulator (*dayi*). Later, Zhongzong wished to fulfill the empress's wishes and had "the statue cut and shortened, and had the pavilion at Shengshansi built to house it."⁵¹

The Shengshansi statue, then, was either the cut-down *tiantang* statue or the one half-finished at Baisima Slope. But Forte believed that the Baisima statue was of bronze and could not consider the possibility that the Shengshansi statue, which was not metal,⁵² could have been derived from the Baisima statue. As did numerous modern scholars, he has followed Song and Yuan Buddhist chronicles. It turns out, though, that the Baisima statue was not metallic, but, like the *tiantang* statue, it was intended to be lacquered. A problem presents itself, if we consider a comment in Zhang Tinggui's memorial to empress Wu, which, as far as I know, is the only place that characterizes the Baisima statue as bronze:

Exhausting the woods on the mountains in order to make this pagoda, putting to extreme [the use of] metals yielded through smelting in order to make this statue. 窮山之木以爲塔，極冶之金以爲像。⁵³

⁵⁰ *Sui Tang jiahua* 3, pp. 37–38. Forte (*Mingtang*, pp. 87–88) pointed out confusion and ambiguity in this passage. The first *tiantang* complex (completed January 23, 689 and blown down by the wind sometime between October 16, 690 and April 6, 691), was confused with the second, which was destroyed by the fire. Next, Liu Su's comments jump to the second *dayi* (corresponding to the second *tiantang*), telling us that its bell was rendered unserviceable by the fire, but he neglects to say what happened to the first *dayi*. Liu also is obscure about empress Wu's relationship with the statue that Zhongzong shortened and housed at Shengshansi. Was it the statue for the first, or second *tiantang*, or it was, instead, a third statue that she ordered built?

⁵¹ It is possible that the *tiantang* statue, left unfinished, was later moved to the Baisima Slope for further construction. In that case, the Baisima statue may be considered as derived from the *tiantang* one. But the *tiantang* statue – even though it did survive the fire – might have been considered too inauspicious and politically inexpedient because of its connections with Huaiyi (who had then already become an embarrassment to Empress Wu) and the natural disaster, which had destroyed much of the religious and political assets that the empress and her supporters had been building up for a long time.

Matsumoto, *Bukkyōshi*, pp. 376–77, did not take the expression *zhuo* 斲 literally. He probably believed that the ratio between different parts of a statue (like the ratio between head, body, and legs) should have been so strictly dictated by aesthetic principles that it would be unimaginable to "cut down" one part of the statue without "cutting" the other two parts. Therefore, he argues that *zhuo* here can only be understood metaphorically; that is, it did not denote the "cutting" of a physical statue, but reducing the size of the plans for the statue. This is reasonable, but we note that empress Wu's Baisima project was unfinished, which means that the statue, also unfinished, could have been merely analytically cut down. Even if finished, a statue can be cut without negating entirely its aesthetics (e.g., the legs of a standing statue can be cut, and it becomes a seated image).

⁵² Although Forte never specified the reason for his assumption, I believe he thought that a metal statue could not have been so easily cut given the technological limits.

⁵³ *WYH* 621, p. 1b; *QIW* 269, p. 7a. *Fozu lidai tongzai* (12, p. 585a) quotes these as: 窮

I believe, however, that this is a generic (and rhetorical) comment probably to indicate no more than that some element of the Baisima statue was metal, as in the case of the Shengshansi statue, which, being lacquered overall, had a silver-cast pearl on its forehead (*ūrṇā*).⁵⁴

Forte brought up two possibilities regarding the Shengshansi statue's relationship with the *tiantang* statue. First, the *tiantang* statue, although in an unfinished form, survived the fire and then was later brought to completion. Second, although the *tiantang* statue was destroyed by the fire, a new statue could have been built afterwards and then shortened and installed at Shengshansi.

For the first one, we have already pointed out that empress Wu might have been reluctant to promote a project so closely related to the 694 fire, thus also highly unlikely that she could have asked her people to continue to work. Further, more importantly, the enormous amount of effort that she had made to gather funds for a new statue and the similarly huge amount of monies that she eventually did secure suggest that what she intended to build was a new statue, rather than the easier and less expensive repair and/or completion of an older one.

Concerning the second possibility, an important point is the enormous size of the statue and the political and religious crises caused by the 694 conflagration. These made it quite unlikely that empress Wu could have built more than one statue at the same time. Thus, the fact that empress Wu officially announced her plan in August or September 700 to collect funds means that since the 694 fire, down to that time, a new "great statue" had not been built and that the Baisima project represented her first opportunity since to establish a new statue-building project. These points are supported by the following two passages from Zhang Tinggui's memorial to Zhongzong:

During the government of Tianhou, the monk Huaiyi (var. Xue Huaiyi 薛懷義, d. 695) made the "great statue" and built the *tiantang* to house it. Wang Hongyi (?-694?) and Li Zhaode (?-697) were ordered to take different routes to find and cut down large trees, to make use of their power ruthlessly and lash the functionaries, to excavate the mountains and fill in streams. There are no words to describe how many workmen, day after day, were injured

山之木以爲塔寺，極冶之金以爲尊像。The statue could have been made of wood and gilded, which requires the smelting of gold.

⁵⁴ See the composition of Zheng Qian 鄭虔 (var. Zheng Guangwen 鄭廣文, 685-764), written for Baoci Pavilion. Only three sentences survive, as quoted in *Shangshu gushi*. They are quoted and discussed in Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 89.

and killed. The amount of money wasted each time amounted to a hundred million [cash]. At the time the “hundred families” were sad and dismayed, [and everyone within] the “four seas” was in a state of alarm. August Heaven, being very clear-sighted, actually then issued a warning: all the structures built by him (i.e., Huaiyi) were destroyed in a disastrous fire. One after the other, the followers of Huaiyi submitted to the law and died. Since then it ceased for ten years. Recently, the slippery villains Zhang Yizhi, [and his brothers Zhang] Changzong, [Zhang] Changyi (?–705) and others, in their secret plot to rebel, [deliberately] stirred up their subordinates’ hatred against the state. Further, they also wanted to sell privately-owned timber [to the government] in order to appropriate the [finances belonging to the] public interest. Therefore, along with the monk Wanshou⁵⁵ and others, they contrived to have the statue-constructing project moved to this slope. Now that the rebellious villains have been removed and the royal fortune has been recovered... . 臣竊以天后朝僧懷義，營剏大像，並造天堂安置。令王弘義，李昭德等，分道採斫大木。虐用威勢，鞭捶官寮。鑿山填溪，以夕繼晷。傷殺丁匠，不可勝言；費散錢數，動以億計。其時百姓愁苦，四海騷然。皇天孔明，實茲降鑒。凡所營構，並為災火所焚。懷義之徒，相繼伏法而死。自此之後，停寢十年。近者狡豎張易之，昌宗，昌儀等，將欲潛圖大逆，為國結怨下人。兼售私木，以規官利。遂又與僧萬壽等，設計移此坂營建。今既逆豎夷滅，皇運中興...⁵⁶

In Zhang’s view, the Baisima project was a continuation of the *tiantang* project that was stopped by the fire. He has also highlighted the central role that the Zhang brothers played in the Baisima project. He strategically makes use of this when he vehemently objects to reinitiating the project on the grounds that this would be read as the emperor’s slackening in his determination to get rid of the Zhangs’ “deleterious effects”:

If this statue and pavilion are to be repaired and built again, it will go against the intents of the [previous] decree of Your Majesty, and leave intact the “deleterious effects” of the two rebels. 此像關重複修營，則與制書義殊，尙令二逆遺惡未除。⁵⁷

Zhang Tinggui has thus unambiguously correlated three successive projects: the *tiantang* statue superintended by Huaiyi, empress Wu’s Baisima project masterminded by the Zhang brothers and the monk

⁵⁵ Obviously, he was Wansui 萬歲, the monk who, as noted above, was appointed administrator of Shengshansi when Huifan was appointed abbot.

⁵⁶ *WYTH* 621, p. 2b; *QIW* 269, pp. 8b–9a.

⁵⁷ *WYTH* 621, p. 3a; *QIW* 269, p. 9a.

Wanshou, and finally the reactivated Baisima project that was under way at the moment.

We ought to consider in addition the following evidence from Zhang Zhuo 張鷟 (660–733), consisting of a memorial that the monk Tanchang 曇暢 (?–700+), who belonged to the Central Dayun[jing]si,⁵⁸ presented to the throne on behalf of Buddhist monks and nuns who complained of the annoyances and burden that the levy had inflicted upon them. Zhang’s summary preamble states:

Monk Tanchang of the Dayun[jing]si memorialized [Her Majesty]: Buddhist monks and nuns were ordered to contribute monies for making a great statue with a height of one thousand *chi* in order to increase blessings to the state. Monks and nuns from various prefectures complained, “The scale of a statue does not matter. It is important that one [worship the statue with] the utmost sincerity. As money is now being extracted from poverty-stricken monks, most of them have harbored sadness and grudges. As this practice goes against the teachings of the Buddha, we plead for [the throne] to make a decision.” 大雲寺僧曇暢奏：率僧尼錢，造大像高千尺，助國爲福。諸州僧尼訴云，“像無大小，惟在至誠。聚斂貧僧，人多嗟怨。既違佛教，請爲處分。”⁵⁹

Clearly, these complaints were lodged against the edict of 700. It is important to note that it was also a statue as high as 1,000 *chi* that empress Wu intended to build. This immediately reminds us of the *tiantang* statue, which was almost the same height.⁶⁰ I am inclined to believe that empress Wu was then actually attempting to replicate the

⁵⁸ On December 5, 690 (Tianshou 1.10.29 [*renshen*]) empress Wu decreed the establishment of one Dayunsi in each of the two capitals and storage of copies of *Dayun jing* in every prefecture. See ZZTJ 204, p. 6469; Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century: Inquiry into the Nature, Author, and Function of the Tunhuang Document S. 6502. Followed by an Annotated Translation* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, 1976), pp. 6–7 (1st edn.), p. 10 (2d edn.). Dayunsi in Luoyang was particularly designated as Central Dayunsi 中大雲寺, which acted as the administrative center for the network of monasteries, and even for the whole of the national monastic community (ibid., p. 109 [1st edn.], p. 144–45 [2d edn.]). Although Zhang Zhuo just gives the name as Dayunsi, without the qualifier 中, I assume that it is Central Dayun(jing)si that is concerned here. This is because the title of Tanchang’s document claims that monks and nuns from all prefectures complained to him. This suggests that he was a leader of Dayunsi and that this Dayunsi must have been Central Dayunsi in Luoyang and an administrative hub.

⁵⁹ Zhang Zhuo, *Longjin fengsui pan* 龍筋鳳髓判, in Tian Tao 田濤 and Guo Chengwei 郭成偉, coll. and annot., *Longjin fengsui pan jiaozhu* 龍筋鳳髓判校註 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe, 1996) 2, p. 57; see also *QJW* 172, p. 16a.

⁶⁰ The Tang *chi* was about 30 centimeters, thus 1,000 *chi* was about 300 meters. Forte seems to have taken this literally, claiming that the *tiantang* was that high and its statue 900 *chi*; See Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 75 ff. In my opinion, however, Zhang Zhuo used “1,000” figuratively, which does not preclude his believing the statue to have been the same height as the *tiantang* statue.

tiantang statue. The implications are that like the *tiantang* statue, the Baisima statue was also intended to be of lacquer, not metal (the latter being almost self-evident by the height, which could not have referred to a bronze statue at the time). Second, the Baisima project was envisioned to be a continuation of the project to make a “great” statue and install it in the *tiantang*.

It took empress Wu a couple of years to collect enough money to implement the plan, which did not happen until sometime between May 9, 704, and June 6, 704. Although the project was terminated at the beginning of 705, it apparently yielded an unfinished statue. But, on the other hand, the Shengshansi statue may have come from the statue that resulted from empress Wu’s Baisima project. In order to establish this link, we have to ascertain the connection (should there be any) between Zhongzong’s two projects, one at Baisima Slope, which was intended to carry on empress Wu’s project at the same location, and the other at Shengshansi, which was to install a statue left over by her.

The Baisima statue was the only great statue ever known to have been built by the empress from 694 until her abdication at the beginning of 705, and seems like the one from which the Shengshansi statue derived. This conclusion can be supported by the timing of Zhongzong’s plan to restart the Baisima project, on the one hand and his decision, on the other, to rebuild a major monastery in the Eastern Capital, after being renamed “Shengshansi,” to promote his mother’s posthumous welfare. We already know that while the edict ordering the restarting of the Baisima project was issued on March 26, 706, Shengshansi was “founded” only two weeks later, on April 9, 706. The temporal proximity suggests connections – Zhongzong must have restarted the Baisima project with an eye to completing the statue and having it installed in a pavilion (actually a pagoda) at Shengshansi. In other words, it is very likely that the Shengshansi statue originated from the statue that was left half-finished on the Baisima Slope by empress Wu, rather than from the *tiantang* statue (unless we assume that the *tiantang* statue was brought to the Baisima Slope for reconstruction, a possibility which we have previously investigated and dismissed).

Let us summarize the relationships between five statue-projects from 695 to 707. Whereas we doubt that the unfinished *tiantang* statue was later brought to completion (supposing that it did survive the 694 fire as suggested by Forte) or that any great statue was ever built from 695 to 700, we do believe that the *tiantang* statue project was related to empress Wu’s Baisima project in that the latter was envisioned as its

replica and replacement. Although left incomplete due to the political turmoil at the turn of 705, this project was picked up one year later by Zhongzong, who, however, relocated and modified it by first cutting down the half-finished statue and enshrining it within a pavilion (called “Baocige”) at Shengshansi, rather than on the Baisima Slope. We have thus established the link between empress Wu’s Baisima project, Zhongzong’s projects on the same slope, and Shengshansi. As the latter two were actually two phases in an integral process, we now can say with some certainty that the Shengshansi project was also started sometime around March 26, 706. Moreover, the link between Zhongzong’s Baisima project and Shengshansi has automatically led to the separation of Zhongzong’s projects at the two slopes, Baisima and Changle. It turns out that this is an illusionary link that Matsumoto has wrongly read into them due to his misunderstanding of Zhang Tinggui’s memorial to Zhongzong.⁶¹

In summary, my construction of the *tiantang*-Shengshansi story varies from both Matsumoto’s and Forte’s. Forte gives a quite literary interpretation of what Liu Su says about the *tiantang* statue and the Shengshansi statue. He assumed that the latter was a cut-down version of the former, without considering the Shengshansi statue’s relationship with empress Wu’s and Zhongzong’s Baisima projects. Moreover, he does not consider the possible relationship between the Shengshansi and Baisima statues because he assumed that the Baisima statue was bronze and could not have been cut down. Regarding the Baisima statue, I stress, first, that it could not have been metal; second, there never existed a so-called Baisima statue independent of the Shengshansi statue – the Baisima statue was exactly the Shengshansi statue. Under the reigns of empress Wu and her successors from Zhongzong to Xuanzong, there was never enshrined a full statue – bronze or not – on Baisima Slope, which was the site of merely an uncompleted statue. Even if there was a completed one, it must have been the one rebuilt by order of Zhongzong and transferred to Shengshansi for enshrinement almost immediately after the rebuilding was finished. That there existed a bronze statue on Baisima Slope was a misunderstanding fostered by the Buddhist sources and partly facilitated by Zhang Tinggui’s comment containing the misleading expression *zhuxiang* (“casting statues”).

⁶¹ In the memorial Zhang states that recently the Zhang brothers and Wanshou set up tricks so that the statue-constructing project was moved to this slope 設計移此坂營建. Matsumoto, *Bukkyōshi*, p. 367, has understood “this slope 此坂” as Changle Slope, rather than Baisima. This is wrong, because the name of Changle Slope never appeared in the memorial; on the contrary, several lines before this, Zhang Tinggui refers to Baisima Slope.

As for Matsumoto, although he already arrived at the conclusion that the Baisima statue never existed, he did so by two wrong suppositions, first being that empress Wu's Baisima project was later moved by Zhongzong to Changle Slope; and second, because of this and the fact that the Changle project was canceled on January 27, 708, that both Baisima projects became fruitless.

THE SHENGSHANSI STATUE: ITS DATE AND IDENTITY

If we can date the completion of the Baoci Pavilion and the installation of the statue to sometime after March 26, 706, can we decide when the project of the Shengshansi statue was completed? Fortunately, we have information in two memorials submitted to Zhongzong by two court officials. Both laud Zhongzong's filial piety, which in their opinion was so amply demonstrated in the naming of the monastery and the pavilion housing the statue, the Baocige. Zhang Jingyuan 張景源 (?-710+)⁶² makes this point in direct terms:

Now, the expressions Shengshan and Baoci have been selected as the names for the monastery and pavilion. This demonstrates Your Majesty's virtue of profound benevolence and ultimate filial piety, which has never been heard in the generations of the ancient emperors. 今聖善報慈，題之爲寺閣者，是陛下深仁至孝之德。古先帝代，未之前聞。⁶³

In contrast, Quan Ruone 權若訥 (ca. 660 – ca. 725) expressed the same meaning in a more rhetorical and “educated” way:⁶⁴

With the Baocige at Shengshansi built, [Your Majesty's will to fulfill the principle of] duties [to his parents] reaches to the very point where the heavens end; in preserving the names of Hegong and Yongchang, the respect [that Your Majesty has demonstrated] is even more profound than [what is required on the occasion

⁶² Only one of his poems, titled “Fenghe jiuyue jiuri deng Ciensi futu yongzhi” 奉和九月九日登慈恩寺浮圖應制, is preserved in *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 105, p. 1102. More on him is found in *Tang shi jishi* 唐詩紀事; see Wang Zhongyong 王仲鏞, coll. and annot., *Tang shi jishi jiaojian* 唐詩紀事校箋 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1989) 12, p. 327.

⁶³ “Qing gai Zhongxingsi wei Longxing shu” 請改中興寺爲龍興疏, *QJW* 270, p. 10b.

⁶⁴ About Quan Ruone little is known. See sources in Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, comp., *Tang Wudai zhuanji ziliao zonghe suoyin* 唐五代人物傳記資料綜合索引 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), p. 540. Thanks to one of his great grand-nephews, Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818) (a great-grandson of Quan Ruone's older brother Quan Wudai 權無待, who was a prime minister under Xianzong (r. 605–20), the Quan family is listed in *XYS*'s “Zaixiang shixi” 宰相世系 (75B.3393), where Ruone is identified as governor of Guizhou 桂州, Xizhou 歙州, and Zhizhou. See Chen, “Family Ties and Buddhist Nuns in Tang China: Two Studies,” *AM* 3d ser. 15.2 (2002), pp. 70–71.

of making offering to gods – that is,] “acting as though the gods were present.” 置聖善報慈之閣，義貫于終天；存合宮永昌之號，敬深于如在。⁶⁵

Both memorials reveal that by this time Baocige had already been erected. But the sources carrying the memorials do not date either of them. We can only narrow down as much as possible the timeframe.

Xin Tang shu carries a shorter version of the memorials and provides additional context:

Wu Sansi proposed [to Zhongzong], “The Great Emperor (Gaozong) performed the *feng* ceremony on Taishan, while Empress Zetian built the *mingtang* and performed the *feng* ceremony on Songshan. The brilliant accomplishments of these Two Sages should not be abandoned.” Approving of this proposal, Zhongzong ordered the restoration of the names of five sub-prefectures introduced by empress Wu – Qianfeng, Hegong, Yongchang, Dengfeng and Gaocheng. In the spring of the following year, a severe drought occurred. The emperor sent [Wu] Sansi and [Wu] Youji (?–713, a husband of Prince Taiping) to pray for rains in the Qian Mausoleum of empress Wu, and it worked to the pleasure of the emperor. [Wu] Sansi therefore took this chance to ap-

⁶⁵ “Qing fu Tianhou suozaozhuji shu” 請復天后所造諸字疏, *QITW* 268, pp. 15b–16a. Probably encouraged by *THY* 70, p. 1477, which quotes Quan Ruone’s memorial right after it mentions renaming Hunan prefecture as Hegong, Forte believed that Quan Ruone’s memorial was presented after Zhongzong ordered to un-rename Henan. He reads the memorial as a “protest” of Zhongzong’s order and translated this way: “found the Pavilion of the Reward for [Maternal] Benevolence of Shengshan [si], which penetrates where the sky ends, and to keep the name Hegong of the Yongchang [era] which, in all respect (*sic*), plunges us into the ‘as-if-it-existed’” (Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 223). The contents, though, show clearly that its intent was an appeal to continue using some of empress Wu’s special characters (“Zetian wenzi” 則天文字). Then Quan Ruone gives thirteen of the “Zetian Characters,” which had been ordered switched back to their original forms. He complained that the orthographic reversion was instigated by “conspirators” (*zeichen* 賊臣) Jing Hui 敬暉 (?–706) and others out of hatred of the empress. This shows that the memorial was sent after July 20, 706 (Shenlong 2.6.6 [*xuyin*]), the day when the five major plotters of the 705 coup (Jing Hui, Huan Yanfang, Yuan Shuji, Cui Xuanwei 崔玄暉 [638–706] and Zhang Jianzhi 張柬之 [625–706]) were demoted. Then Quan strongly states the merits of keeping the special characters: “Now, to remove [the characters] will do no good to the pure transformation, whereas to preserve them will glorify the principle of filial piety” (*QITW* 268, p. 16a: 今削之無益於淳化, 存之有光於孝理). It ends urging Zhongzong to continue the empress’s legacy, rather than following the far-off “old affairs of the Zhenguan era 貞觀故事.” Obviously, the theme was to preserve the new orthography and a legacy in general. Renaming Henan was not an issue for Quan. Sima Guang (*ZZTJ* 208, p. 660g) made a prudent choice by correlating the memorial with the order that substituted Zhongxing with Longxing (as monastery names). Obviously, Quan was encouraged by this decree and his proposal was made with an eye to courting imperial favor.

Thus, contrary to Forte’s understanding, the memorial proves Quan to have been a zealous defender of empress Wu’s legacies. Forte’s long discussion of Quan and his contemporaries’ ideas of the *mingtang* (Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 222–25) must be reconsidered in light of all this.

peal [to Zhongzong] to restore the Chongen Shrine. To the two mausoleums of Hao and Shun attendants (i.e., caretakers) were assigned. [Wu] Sansi's partisan Zheng Yin (?-710) submitted the "Shenggan song" (Songs on the Saintly Stimuli), and the emperor ordered the text to be scribed on a stele. Buque (rectifier of omissions) Zhang Jingyuan proposed, "Since the [same] cause has been transmitted from mother to son, there is no sense in speaking of 'restoration,' which would be better removed from all the imperial edicts." Therefore, the monasteries and abbasies with the names of Zhongxing were renamed "Tangxing" ("Rising of the Tang") or "Longxing" ("Dragon-rising"). Buque Quan Ruone made another proposal, "Your Majesty's edicts have been modeled on the old fashion set up during the Zhenguan era (627-649). However, the lessons left by the empress must be counted as the motherly examples. The old institutions of Taizong belonged to the ancestral virtues. The tradition must be started from what was close [to the present]." The Emperor replied praising [them]. 三思建言: "大帝封泰山, 則天皇后建明堂, 封高山, 二聖之美不可廢." 帝聽其言, 遂更名五縣曰"乾封", "合宮", "永昌", "登封", "告成"云. 明年春, 大旱, 帝遣三思, 攸暨禱乾陵而雨, 帝悅. 三思因主請復崇恩廟, 昊, 順二陵, 皆置令丞. 其黨鄭愷上"聖感頌," 帝爲刻石. 補闕張景源建言: "母子承業, 不可言中興, 所下制書皆除之." 於是天下名祠改"唐興", "龍興"云. 補闕權若訥又言: "制詔如貞觀故事. 且太后遺訓, 母儀也; 太宗舊章, 祖德也. 沿襲當自近者始." 帝褒答.⁶⁶

Here, the *Xin Tang shu* compilers have narrated a series of related events, each leading sequentially to the next. Their dates can be derived from Zhongzong's "Basic Annals" (*benji* 本紀) in the two Tang histories and the relevant records in *Zizhi tongjian*:

1. restoring the names of the five subprefectures, December 14, 706 (Shenlong 2.11.5 [*yisi*]);
2. the rain-prayer ceremony at the Qian Mausoleums, March 8, 707 (Shenlong 3.1.30 [*jisil*]);
3. the restoring of the Chongen Shrine, and the glorification of Mausoleums Hao and Shun, March 10, 707 (Shenlong 3.2.2 [*xinwei*]);
4. Zhang Jingyuan's memorial, date unknown;
5. the replacing of Zhongxing with Longxing, March 29, 707 (Shenlong 3.2.21 [*gengyin*]);
6. Quan Ruone's memorial, unknown date.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *XTS* 206, p. 5841.

⁶⁷ *JTS* 7, pp. 143-44.

Although we do not know the length of interval between Zhongzong's order to replace Zhongxing with Longxing and Quan Ruone's memorial, it cannot have been too long given their relevance to each other (both were intended to preserve and glorify empress Wu's legacies). Zhang Jingyuan's memorial was submitted between two clearly dated events, so we can date its submission to sometime between March 10, 707 and March 29, 707. Since the replacement edict was a response to Zhang Jingyuan's memorial, we know, then, that the latter must have been submitted before the edict's date (March 29, 707). Thus, the Baoci Pavilion must have been completed by March 29, 707, as well.

We can now conclude that while Zhongxingsi in Luoyang was renamed Shengshansi on April 9, 706, the completion of the Baoci Pavilion at the monastery and the successful installation of the great statue in the pavilion were completed sometime between April 9, 706 and March 29, 707.⁶⁸

If the completion of the Baoci Pavilion can be traced to either late 706 or early 707, then when were Huifan and Wansui appointed as its abbot and administrator? As we noted before, Zanning 贊寧 (919?–1001?) has limited himself to a general remark that this happened shortly after the successful construction of the statue (we now know that it was the statue at Shengshansi). We should note that when Wansui was appointed, he was acting in the capacity of the abbot of Anlesi, which was built, according to another source, by Zhongzong and empress Wei's daughter princess Anle during the Jinglong era (707–710).⁶⁹ Moreover, according to Zanning, Huifan and Wansui were appointed to Shengshansi leadership “shortly” (*xuan* 旋) after the statue was successfully installed at Shengshansi, which we now know could not have been done after March 29, 707, the appointment was very likely made in the first year of the Jinglong era (October 5, 707–January 27, 708). This also means that Anlesi was built in that year, given that it was in the capacity of the Anlesi abbot that Wansui was appointed as the Shengshansi administrator. It seems that Wansui became the Shengshansi administrator shortly after – if not at the same time – he became the Anlesi abbot. Whether he quit his position at Anlesi because of his

⁶⁸ This fits with other evidence, namely that the renowned writer Xu Jingxian 許景先 (?–725?) went to the capital to present a composition on the Great Statue at the Baoci Pavilion; see *JTS* 190B, p. 5031, *XTS* 128, p. 4464; Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 222.

⁶⁹ *Chaoye qianzai* 1, p. 10, records that during the Jinglong era (October 30, 707–July 4, 710), princess Anle spent several millions to build Anlesi in Daoguang 道光 Ward in Luoyang. Cf. *JTS* 183, p. 4734, which, though not telling us when the temple was built, notes that the monastery was designed to emulate the brilliance of a palace and resulted in superior magnificence and wondrousness 擬於宮掖, 巧妙過之.

new appointment at Shengshansi we do not know for certain, although the fact that his colleague Huifan acted as concurrent abbot for three monasteries means that in principle he was not obliged to make a choice between the two positions.

Finally, “Which Buddha did the statue depict?” We already noted that Zhongzong’s Baisima-Shengshansi statue was actually a continuation and recasting of empress Wu’s Baisima statue, which, in turn, was intended to reproduce the great statue originally built for the *tiantang*, destroyed by fire when it actually was not yet finished being rebuilt from the effects of an even earlier windstorm. On the basis of two important facts – Huaiyi was both a devotee of Maitreya and chief architect of the *tiantang* statue – Antonino Forte speculated reasonably enough that the *tiantang* statue was of the Buddha Maitreya.⁷⁰ If this were true, it would be natural to assume that Zhongzong’s Baisima-Shengshansi statue depicted the same Buddha. Further, the “*ci*” in Baoci 報慈 usually denoted Maitreya (that is, Cishi 慈氏).

The statue’s identity can also be inferred from the fact that in 706, the same year Zhongzong ordered the reconstruction of the Baisima statue into the Shengshansi statue, the monk Huiyun 慧雲 (655–713+) had cast a metal statue of Maitreya eighteen *chi* (ca. 5.8 meters) in height in Bianzhou 汴州 (present-day Kaifeng 開封), not too far from Luoyang. This Maitreya engendered a famous process that five years later saw an obscure local temple (Jianguosi 建國寺) transformed into a cosmopolitan monastery of extreme importance under the Tang and Song dynasties – Great Xiangguosi 大相國寺. In addition to Huiyun, another monk and a layman were important in the transformation. The layman, Wei Sili 韋嗣立 (660–719), was a powerful court official closely related to empress Wu, Zhongzong, and his empress née Wei; the monk was a high-ranking one from a Luoyang monastery that was closely tied to empress Wu – Foshoujisi 佛授記寺. In the latter, the Maitreya cult dominated. The role of this Foshoujisi monk strongly suggests that Xiangguosi must also have been imbued with Maitreyan elements that accorded with the religious sentiments displayed by the local Buddhist community concerning specifically the miracles related to the metal Maitreya statue. Thus, all the well-known stories surrounding the casting and enshrining of the Jianguosi/Xiangguosi metal statue of Maitreya not only lend further support to our assumption about the identity of the Shengshansi statue, but they also reveal that the latter was closely related to the birth of a cosmopolitan imperial monastery

⁷⁰ Forte, *Mingtang*, pp. 230–31.

as a direct by-product of Zhongzong's decision in 706 to start the Baisima-Shengshansi project, and indirectly, empress Wu's one-cash-per-day campaign that started in 700.⁷¹

SHENGSHANSI AFTER HUIFAN:
HONGZHENG AND OTHER MONKS

Given Huifan's inextricable ties with Shengshansi and the statue, we must wonder what happened to the monastery during the rest of the Tang dynasty. We have figured that Shengshansi in Luoyang was completely rebuilt on the foundations of Zhongxing monastery likely toward the end of 706, or the very beginning of 707. On February 23, 709 (Jinglong 3.1.9 [*dingmao*]), Zhongzong decreed that Shengshansi in the Eastern Capital be expanded. Several tens of families lost their houses to make way for the expansion, which aroused a strong protest from a court official named Song Wuguang 宋務光 (ca. 669–ca. 710).⁷²

Either in 710 or 711, a third monk, Linghui 靈慧 (668–716), was also enrolled at the monastery as a monk of "Great Virtue." Linghui was a close disciple (actually an attendant) of Degan 德感 (ca. 640–703+), an extraordinarily influential monk under the reign of empress Wu and one of the ten monks of "Great Virtue" responsible for compiling the commentary on *Dayun jing* that was fundamental for empress Wu's dynastic propaganda.⁷³ Linghui only stayed at Shengshansi for a relatively short period of time (two to three years).

After the three monks Huifan, Wansui/Wanshou, and Linghui, another to be associated with Shengshansi was Hongzheng. He is completely ignored in later Chan sources, but some contemporaries regarded him as the eighth patriarch of the Northern Chan school. This status is confirmed by two renowned Tang authors, Li Hua 李華 (717?–774?) and Dugu Ji 獨孤及 (725–777). In his famous epitaph for the Tiantai master Xuanlang 玄朗 (Master Zuoxi 左溪; 673–754), which was probably drafted shortly after Xuanlang died in 754, Li Hua names Hongzheng, whom he refers to as "Meditation Master Hongzheng of Shengshansi in the Eastern capital 東京聖善寺宏正禪師," as the eighth

⁷¹ The historical and ideological factors leading to the emergence of Great Xiangguosi are discussed in Chen, "Images, Legends, Politics and the Origin of the Great Xiangguo Monastery in Kaifeng: A Case-study of the Formation and Transformation of Buddhist Sacred Sites in Medieval China," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125.3 (2005), pp. 11–36.

⁷² *ZZTJ* 209, p. 6631. Song Wuguang's remonstrating memorial is still extant. See "Jian Kaituo Shengshansi biao," *QTW* 268, pp. 17b–18a.

⁷³ For this monk, see Forte, *Political Propaganda*, esp. pp. 100–8 (1st edn.), pp. 129–43 (2d edn).

generation representative of the Bodhidharma lineage.⁷⁴ In an epitaph written February 22, 764 (Guangde 2.1.6), for a disciple of Hongzheng, Changchao 常超 (705–763), Li Hua specifies that the seventh Chan patriarch Puji personally sanctioned Hongzheng as his successor.⁷⁵ Moreover, Dugu Ji referred to Hongzheng as the only one out of over ten thousand disciples (sixty-three celebrated as most advanced) of Puji 普寂 (whom Dugu Ji also identifies as the seventh Chan patriarch after Sengcan 僧璨, Daoxin 道信 [580–651], Hongren 弘忍 [600–674], and Shenxiu 神秀 [606?–706]) who ever achieved “self-existent wisdom 自在慧.” This opinion came in an inscription of sometime between January 17, 774, and February 14, 774 (Dali 8.12), a text celebrating the erection at Wangongshan 皖公山 (present-day Qianshan 潛山, Anhui) shortly after May 28, 771 (Dali 7.4.22), of a pagoda in honor of the “third Chan patriarch” Sengcan.

Dugu Ji also reports in the same inscription that the number of Hongzheng’s disciples was double that of Puji and that they spread to various parts of the country to promulgate their master’s teachings.⁷⁶ Several monks that Dugu Ji mentions in the epitaph as collaborators in the campaign to promote Sengcan’s reputation as the third Chan Patriarch – Huirong 惠融 (?–771+) of Songshan, Kaiwu 開悟 (?–771+) of Shengyesi 勝業寺 and Zhanran 湛然 (?–796) of the Shangusi 山谷寺 – were probably also Hongzheng’s disciples, although such a relationship is not explicitly indicated by Dugu Ji.⁷⁷ Nothing else is known about Huirong and Kaiwu. The other monk, Zhanran seems to have been a very important Northern Chan leader at the time. He was actually the representative of the Northern Chan school at the famous debate in 796 which was convened by the government at the palace chapel Shenlongsi 神龍寺 in Chang’an in order to decide the collateral (*bang* 傍) and direct (*zheng* 正) of the Chan lineage. The debate ended up with his humiliating defeat, partly caused by the intervention of the then current crown prince (the future Shunzong 順宗, r. 805). He died only several ten days later.⁷⁸

In addition to these three inscriptions, Hongzheng is also mentioned in three more sources devoted to three of his disciples – first,

⁷⁴ “Zuoxi dashi bei” 左溪大師碑, *QIW* 320, p. 1a.

⁷⁵ “Gu Zhongyue Yue chanshi taji” 故中岳越禪師塔記, *QIW* 316, p. 18a.

⁷⁶ “Shuzhou Shangusi Juejita Sui gu Jingzhi chanshi beiming” 舒州山谷寺覺寂塔隋故鏡智禪師碑銘, *QIW* 390, pp. 23a–b.

⁷⁷ Chen, “One Name, Three Monks: Two Northern Chan Masters Emerge from the Shadow of Their Contemporary, the Tiantai Master Zhanran 湛然 (711–782),” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 22.1 (1999), pp. 17–22.

⁷⁸ Chen, “One Name, Three Monks,” pp. 29–38.

the preface that Li Hua wrote in 766 for the collection of his late friend Yang Ji 楊極 (698?-755?);⁷⁹ a funeral epitaph that Liang Su 梁肅 (753-793) wrote in 777 for *née* Yuan 源 (?-776);⁸⁰ and the pagoda inscription that Quan Deyu wrote for his great-aunt Qiwei 契微 (720-781), a Buddhist nun.⁸¹ We should also note two more disciples of Hongzheng: one called Tiwu 體無, who had been in Shu 蜀 to debate with Wuzhu 無住 (714-774), a representative of the Baotang-Jingzhong 保唐淨眾 tradition of Chan Buddhism;⁸² and the other, unnamed, active in Dunhuang.⁸³

The above references to Hongzheng show him to have been influential, but they are highly rhetorical and sketchy. Fortunately Li Hua provides a solid glimpse into one small area of his life:

The seventh generation [lineage] fell to the Great Master Dazhao. One of his disciples to whom he entrusted [the lineage] was Venerable Shengshan, into whom the source and flow [of Dazhao's teachings] were poured and who therefore fully possessed all the brilliance and bliss. [Dazhao] thus had the himself consecrated (*abhiṣeka*). He later attracted to him forests of "Dragons and Elephants" (i.e., leading monks). When the deranged barbarian rebelled against Heaven, the two capitals fell and were plunged into darkness. Many of the elderly monks, holding the seals of

⁷⁹ Yang Ji was a descendant of the Sui princess Guande 觀德 (i.e., Yang Xiong 楊雄, 542-612), who was related to Sui Wendi (r. 581-604) and empress Wu; see Chen, *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics* (Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2002), pp. 111-12, n. 6.

⁸⁰ "Zhengzhou Yuanwu xiancheng Cuijun furen Yuanshi muzhiming" 鄭州員武縣丞崔君夫人源氏墓志銘, *QITW* 521, p. 13a. Liang Su was a student of Dugu Ji and a close friend and lay disciple of the Tiantai master Zhanran 湛然 (711-782). *Née* Yuan started to study with Hongzheng after her husband, a member of the Boling Cui 博陵崔 clan, passed away. In the inscription, Liang Su identifies Yuan's father as Yuan Guangshi 源光時, a son of Yuan Xiuye 源脩業 (?-694+), who had been prefect of Jingzhou 涇州 when a relic- veneration was carried out in 694. This act is discussed in Chen, "Sārīra and Scepter," pp. 71-78, esp. 72, although he does not mention Yuan Xiuye's family background and its Buddhist ties. A meticulous study of the Yuan clan is that of Guo Feng 郭鋒, "Beichao Sui Tang Yuanshi jiazhu yanjiu, Yige shaoshu zu hanhua shizu jiazhu mendu de lishi rongshuai" 北朝隋唐源氏家族研究, 一個少數族漢化土族家族門第的歷史榮衰, *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi yanjiu* 中國社會經濟史研究 3 (2002), pp. 1-12.

⁸¹ "Tang gu Dongjing Anguosi Qiwei heshang taming bing xu" 唐故東京安國寺契微和尚塔銘並序, *QITW* 501, pp. 13a-15a. For Qiwei, see Chen, "Buddhist Nuns," pp. 51-85, esp. 65-85; relationship with Hongzheng, p. 75.

⁸² *Lidai fabao ji* 歷代法寶記 (*T*no. 2075, vol. 51) 1, p. 190B-C.

⁸³ See Dunhuang Stein ms. 2515, studied in Tanaka Ryōshō 田中良昭, *Tonkō zhenshū bunken no kenkyū* 敦煌禪宗文獻の研究 (Tokyo: Daitō shuppan, 1983), p. 555; Jiang Boqin 姜伯勤, "Puji yu beizong chanfeng xixuan" 普寂與北宗禪風西旋, in *Fojiao yu Zhongguo chuantong wenhua* 佛教與中國傳統文化 (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe, 1997), pp. 475-76; Xu Wenming 徐文明, "Chanzong dibadai beizong Hongzheng dashi" 禪宗第八代北宗弘正大師, *Dunhuangxue jikan* 敦煌學輯刊2 (1992), pp. 32-39.

the mind[-to-mind transmission], were scattered in different directions. [Only our master remained in Luoyang,] supplying refuge and protection to people suffering from enormous horror. 七葉至大照大師，門人承囑累者，曰聖善和上。環注源流，含靈福備。乃灌其頂，龍像如林。及狂虜逆天，兩京淪翳。諸長老奉持心印，散在群方。大怖之中，人獲依怙。⁸⁴

We know from this that Hongzheng was still alive when the An Lushan Rebellion broke out in 755. We know that of the two capitals Chang'an fell later, namely 760–762, thus an implication of the epitaph is that he lived beyond 762.

Counter-evidence of that would be the fact that between May 13, 758, and March 18, 759,⁸⁵ a monk of a rival Chan tradition was settled at the same monastery, which suggests that such an arrangement was not likely (although not impossible) in Hongzheng's lifetime. The monk in question was Huijian 慧堅 (719–792), a chief disciple of Shenhui 神會 (686–760), who was a staunch critic of the Northern Chan school represented by Hongzheng's teacher Puji and grand-teacher Shenxiu. Considering that Li Ju 李巨 (707?–761) can be considered a nephew of Zhongzong's empress Wei (Li Ju's stepmother was a younger sister of the empress),⁸⁶ we probably should not have his decision to assign Huijian to Shengshansi easily passed over as pure coincidence. However, it turned out that Huijian stayed at Shengshansi for only four to five years.

When the barbarians rebelled, the Yichuan area was occupied by them, who assaulted and insulted our King's city, wrecked and

⁸⁴ "Gu Zhongyue Yue chanshi taji," *QTW* 316, p. 18a.

⁸⁵ Huijian's epitaph says that he was accommodated at Shengshansi thanks to a recommendation of prince Shiguo, that is, Li Ju, while the latter was in charge of protecting Luoyang (lit. 保釐成周). This must have referred to Li Ju's serving as viceroy (*liushou* 留守) of Luoyang. *JTS* states that it was on May 13, 758 (Qianyuan 1.4.2 [*kuimao*]) that Li Ju was appointed viceroy of the Eastern Capital (i.e., Luoyang), the governor (*yin* 尹) of Henan 河南, and concurrently investigation and supervisory commissioner (*caifang chuzhi shi* 採訪處置使) of the Jingji 京畿 Circuit (*JTS* 10, p. 252). However, on March 18, 759 (Qianyuan 2.2.15 [*renzhi*]), he was demoted to governor of Suizhou 遂州 because of his "tough governance" (*kezheng* 苛政) (*JTS* 10, p. 254). For this reason, we know that Huijian must have been settled at Shengshansi some time between these two dates. Jan Yun-hua 冉雲華 has misdated Huijian's arrival at Shengshansi. See Jan, "Tang gu Zhaoshengsi dade Huijian chanshi bei kao" 唐故招聖寺大德慧堅禪師碑考, *Zhonghua Foxue xuebao* 中華佛學學報 7 (1994), pp. 104–5; corrected by Yang Zengwen 楊曾文, "Guanyu Tang gu Zhaoshengsi dade Huijian chanshi bei de buchong shuoming" 關於唐故招聖寺大德慧堅禪師碑考的補充說明, *Zhongguo shehui kexueyan yanjiushengyuan xuebao* 中國社會科學院研究生院學報 4 (1995), pp. 37–43.

⁸⁶ Li's father Li Yong 李邕 (?–727) married empress Wei's seventh younger sister, Qiye 七姨, after her first husband Feng Taihe 馮太和 (?–ca. 705) died shortly after Shenlong 1 (705). Immediately after empress Wei was killed (710), Li Yong cut off his wife's head and presented it to the court. Li Ju's mother was surnamed Fuyu 扶餘 (Li's biog. at *JTS* 112, p. 3346), thus Qiye was not Li Ju's biological mother but his stepmother.

burnt down our Buddha's monasteries. The high pavilions disappeared in the smoke and blazes, while the long corridors were suddenly turned into ashes. It was only our meditation master's room that majestically survived [from the ravages of war]. This is just like the red lotus flower [which lives] in fire and should not come as a surprise. At that time, the barbarian invaders were everywhere, making it impossible [for the government] to conduct the *jiao* ceremonies. In view of the [Buddha's] admonishment that [sometime] a bodhisattva should distance himself from disasters and the fact that the sages preserved the principles of traveling widely, he acted and reacted in accordance with the natural conditions, and took a western sojourn to the capital (Chang'an), where he resided at two monasteries, Huadu and Huiji. 屬幽陵肇亂，伊川爲戎。憑陵我王城，蕩蕪我佛刹。高閣隨於煙燄，修廊倏爲煨燼。⁸⁷ 唯禪師之室，薺然獨存，則火中之蓮，非足異也。時虜寇方壯，東郊不開。禪師以菩薩有違難之戒，聖人存游方之旨，乃隨緣應感，西止⁸⁸京師，止化度，慧日二寺。⁸⁹

As far as I know, scholars commenting on this passage have tended to relate the disastrous fire to the An Lushan Rebellion in general.⁹⁰ However, I believe that the expression of “burning down high pavilion(s)” has a more specific reference, most likely to the two pagodas at Baimasi and Shengshansi. The latter stands out, since Huijian was affiliated with it then. The two Tang histories both state:

When the Uighurs first arrived at the Eastern Capital, because of [their roles in] suppressing the rebels, they performed cruelties without restraint. Both men and women feared them and all went up into the two pavilions of the Shengshan and Baima monasteries in order to escape from them. The Uighurs set fire to the two pavilions and burned them down: the injured and dead numbered ten thousand; the fire burned for several weeks. 初，迴紇至東京，以

⁸⁷ By punctuating these sentences as “屬幽陵肇亂，伊川爲戎。憑陵我王城，蕩蕪我佛刹。高閣隨於煙燄，修廊倏爲煨燼，” both Jan Yunhua and Yang Zengwen have broken two pairs of parallel (*pianwen* 駢文) sentences: 憑陵我王城，蕩蕪我佛刹 and 高閣隨於煙燄，修廊倏爲煨燼. Jan leaves the character between 戎 and 陵 empty, while Yang identifies it as 凭. See Jan, “Tang gu Zhaoshengsi,” p. 104; Yang, “Guanyu Tang gu Zhaoshengsi,” p. 37.

⁸⁸ Emending *zhi* 止 to *qu* 去. This is probably a wrong transcription: the same character recurred two characters later. Except for some special occasions, classical Chinese prose avoids this kind of rhetorical infelicity.

⁸⁹ “Tang gu Zhaoshengsi dade Huijian chanshi bei” 唐故招聖寺大德慧堅禪師碑, in Yang Zengwen, “Shenhui taming he Huijian beiming de zhushi” 神會塔銘和慧堅碑銘的註釋, *Foxue yanjiu* 佛學研究 7 (1998), p. 32.

⁹⁰ E.g., Jan, “Tang gu Zhaoshengsi,” p. 104; Yang, “Guanyu Tang gu Zhaoshengsi,” p. 36, n. 45.

賊平，恣行殘忍，士女懼之，皆登聖善寺及白馬寺二閣以避之。迴紇縱火焚二閣，傷死者萬計，累旬火焰不止。⁹¹

Since Luoyang was recaptured by the Tang army on November 20, 762, with the decisive help of the Uighurs, this tragedy must have happened slightly afterwards.⁹² Forte suggests that the people who ran to the two pagodas for refuge were probably devotees of Maitreya and that the Tang government might have tolerated the burning down of the two pagodas.⁹³

The two Tang histories do not tell us whether or not the whole Shengshansi was destroyed as well. But we know that it was, since almost a decade later the viceroy of Luoyang had to have it rebuilt. Efforts to rebuild it were not made until sometime between February 8, 770 and July 4, 771, when the viceroy Zhang Yanshang invited a Songshan Chan master Chengzhao 澄沼 (?–771+), who was recognized as the “Tenth Patriarch of the *Dongshan [famen]*” 東山[法門], to rebuild the monastery.⁹⁴ We do not know if Zhang Yanshang here was just enacting a government policy. The special appreciation that empress Wu showed toward his father Zhang Jiazhen 張嘉貞 (666–729), when the latter was still suffering from an embarrassing political mistake, suggests that Zhang Yanshang did this service to the empress’s spirit at least partly out of personal gratitude.⁹⁵

It is reasonable to speculate that after the rebuilding Chengzhao stayed on as abbot (perhaps Zhang Yanshang and he had made a plan to this effect when Chengzhao was invited to supervise the work). No other traces are left of Chengzhao, although his status as the “Tenth

⁹¹ *JTS* 195, p. 5204. Translation by Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 226, with slight modifications. Forte’s translation is based on Colin Mackerras, *The Uighur Empire According to the Tang Dynastic Histories: A Study in Sino-Uighur Relations*, (Canberra: Australian National University, 1972), pp. 74, 76; cf. *XYS* 217A.6119 (Mackerras, *Uighur Empire*, pp. 75, 77). See also Saguchi Tōru 佐口透, trans., “Kaikotsu den (Kyū Tōjo, Shin Tōjo)” 回鶻傳 (舊唐書, 新唐書), in Saguchi Tōru, Yamada Nobuo 山田信夫, and Mori Maso 護雅夫, *Kiba minzoku shi* 騎馬民族史 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972; rpt. 1982) 2, p. 388.

⁹² Baoying 1.10.30 (*yihai*); see *ZZTJ* 222, pp. 7134–35. ⁹³ Forte, *Mingtang*, p. 229.

⁹⁴ Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (fl. 850s), great-grandson of Zhang Yanshang, writes in an epitaph that Yanshang attempted this in the early-Dali era, when he was viceroy of Luoyang. *JTS* records these changes in Zhang Yanshang’s career between the second and sixth year of the Dali era: 1. July 30, 767 (Dali 2.7.1 [*xushen*]), appointed governor of Henan (*JTS* 11, p. 287); 2. February 8, 770 (Dali 5.1.8 [*renshen*]), viceroy, concurrently censor (*JTS* 11, p. 294); 3. July 4, 771 (Dali 6.5.18 [*kuimao*]), censor, which might mean that from then on he was no longer viceroy and concurrent censor, but became a “full-time” censor serving in the court (*JTS* 11, p. 298); 4. September 29, 771 (Dali 6.8.17 [*genwu*]), *zhangshi* 長史 (executive governor) of the Great Commandery of Yangzhou 揚州, *jiedushi* 節度使 (military commissioner) of Huainan Circuit 淮南[道] (*JTS* 11, p. 298). We can assume that the restoration occurred sometime between February 8, 770, and July 4, 771, when he was viceroy.

⁹⁵ *JTS* 99, p. 3090; cf. *XYS* 127, p. 4441.

Patriarch of the Dongshan Tradition” and the fact that he was honored by the government with a posthumous honorific title unambiguously attest to his prominence.⁹⁶

After Chengzhao, three more Northern Chan monks (one the master of the other two) were affiliated with Shengshansi as the successive heads of one cloister at the monastery, alternately called Botayuan 砵塔院, Huayan yuan 花嚴院 (probably a mistake for Fayan yuan 法嚴院, which was in turn a shorthand for Fabao yanchi yuan 法寶嚴持院).⁹⁷ They are the master Faning 法凝 (?–803), and his disciples Ruxin 如信 (750–824) and Zhiru 智如 (750–835); all were close friends of Bai Juyi, who treated them as mentors.

That Bai Juyi maintained a long-lasting friendship with a Shengshansi monk and two of his disciples of course demonstrates his genuine interest in Buddhism. It also highlights his fondness for the monastery. It is therefore entirely understandable that he chose it as one of the four monasteries to which he sent a copy of his collection, to be circulated in the same way that Buddhist scriptures and miscellaneous accounts (*zazhuan* 雜傳) were.⁹⁸ Bai Juyi was not the only Tang literatus who was fascinated with Shengshansi, and particularly its pavilion and statue. The collection *Quan Tang shi* alone preserves four such poems by four different poets: Li Qi 李頎 (690–751), Chu Chaoyang 褚朝陽 (fl. 742–756), Cheng E 成嶠 (dates unknown), Li Shen 李紳 (772–846), all but one of them specifically dedicated to the Shengshansi pavilion.⁹⁹

Another Tang literatus closely associated with Shengshansi was Zheng Qian, who was highly regarded by his contemporaries for excellence in three art forms (*sanjue* 三絕): calligraphy, painting and poetry. Not only did he contribute a composition on the great statue at the Shengshansi pavilion, which was unfortunately lost, he also made *shanshui* 山水 (landscape) style paintings at the pagoda.¹⁰⁰ Other paint-

⁹⁶ According to Zhang Yanyuan, Chengzhao, “acting as a principal master of meditation, was recognized as the teacher of the emperor(s) because of his virtue. After entering *nirvāna*, the court bestowed on him a posthumous title ‘Dabian.’ He was the tenth patriarch of the Dongshan tradition” 行爲禪宗，德爲帝師。化滅詔諡大辯，即東山第十祖也；“Sanzu Dashi beiyin ji” 三祖大師碑陰記，*QJW* 790, p. 22b.

⁹⁷ For their statuses as heads of Botayuan, see Jian Zongxiu 簡宗修, “Bai Juyi ji zhong de Beizong wenxian yu Beizong chanshi” 白居易集中的北宗文獻與北宗禪師, *Foxue yanjiu zhongxin xuebao* 佛學研究中心學報 6 (2001), pp. 215–17.

⁹⁸ Bai Juyi’s biog. is at *JTS* 166, p. 4358. The other monasteries were Donglinsi 東林寺 and Xilinsi 西林寺 in Jiangzhou 江州 (present-day Jiuzhou 九江, Jiangxi), and Xiangshansi 香山寺 in Luoyang.

⁹⁹ *Quan Tang shi* 134, p. 1364; 254, p. 2861; 780, p. 8821; 483, p. 5495.

¹⁰⁰ See Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 (?–1074+), *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞誌 (SKQS edn.), vol. 812, j. 5, p. 556.

ers left their works at the monastery, turning it into one of the two most celebrated art centers in Luoyang, which abounded in “ancient paintings,” as is attested by the *Lushi zazhi* 盧氏雜誌.¹⁰¹

Shengshansi and its pavilion were particularly attractive to Tang literati for their architectural brilliance. Gao Yanxiu 高彥休 (854–?), for one, claims in a writing titled *Tang qeshi* 唐闕史 (*Tang Historical Facts Missing [from Official Histories]*) that in structural magnificence Shengshansi had no match in the world.¹⁰² Under the entry “Dongdu fensi” 東都焚寺 (“The Incinerated Monastery at the Eastern Capital”), he also informs us that when Huang Chao’s 黃巢 (?–884) rebels occupied Luoyang in 880, the monastery was burned down.¹⁰³ Surprisingly, the monastery was quickly rebuilt because in 884 a Tang general made his headquarters there.¹⁰⁴ The latest report of the monastery that I have been able to trace was made by a Song-era author, Zhang Shinan 張世南 (fl. 1194–1224), who tells us that up until his day a poem believed to be from the hand of Yang Ningshi 楊凝式 (873–954) was still preserved on the eastern wall of a cloister at Shengshansi called Shengguo Cloister 勝果院.¹⁰⁵ The monastery had managed to remain intact in the course of the social and political of the transition from the Tang to Later Liang dynasties (907–912).

Lack of sources makes it impossible to give a complete and complex history of the post-Huifan Shengshansi from Huifan’s execution in 713 to the overthrow of Tang in 907. However, the above preliminary research reveals noteworthy aspects. The extant sources show that the Chan, especially Northern Chan, tradition seems to have been a dominant force at Shengshansi. This is actually in line with the enthusiasm that empress Wu showered on the Northern Chan in the last years of her life. After the An Lushan Rebellion, the Southern Chan tradition steadily emerged as the chief representative of the Chan tradition, especially in the areas far from the major metropolises.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961) 212, pp. 1623–24; another such center was Great Jing’aisi. See Eugene Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 132–39.

¹⁰² *Tang qeshi* (SKQS edn.; vol. 1042) 2, p. 822a: 東都聖善寺, 締構甲於天下。

¹⁰³ *Tang qeshi* 2, p. 822b. Shengshansi had already been affected by a fire sometime between November 9–December 8, 877 (Qianfu 4.10; *XTS* 34, p. 887). If we can accept Gao Yanxiu’s account, there was still a sound Shengshansi in 879, barely one year after the fire reported by *XTS* toward the end of 877. Social instability would have made it almost impossible to rebuild a monastery of Shengshansi’s size within such a short period of time, thus the main body of the monastery must have survived the 877 conflagration.

¹⁰⁴ *Liang shu* 梁書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973) 15, p. 206.

¹⁰⁵ Zhang Maopeng 張茂鵬, coll., *Yohuan jiwén* 遊宦紀聞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 10, p. 86.

After Huifan and his colleagues were removed from the political and religious arena set up at Shengshansi, Hongzheng, a major disciple of Puji, seems to have distinguished himself as the most influential monk at the monastery. Although Shengshansi was also once home to the Esoteric master Śubhākarasiṃha and his extraordinarily talented disciple Yixing, we do not know how long they stayed there, making it difficult to make an accurate appraisal of any impact. The relationship of the latter two with Shengshansi is sketchy, but Hongzheng's residence seems to have been regular and long-term, and his influence there enduring and penetrating. Not only can this be corroborated by the way he was known generally among his disciples and followers – consider the expression “Shengshansi Chanshi 聖善寺禪師” – but it is also shown by the fact that most of his known disciples studied with him there. Although one of Shenhui's disciples (Huijian) was also affiliated with Shengshansi for a few years, almost all of the meditation masters who are now known to have stayed there can be grouped as the followers of the Northern Chan tradition. This once again proves that in spite of the increasingly expanding power of Southern Chan, its rival managed to maintain influence (especially in the urban areas) much longer than has been recognized by those modern scholars who uncritically accept the Southern Chan ideology and propaganda created from late-Tang to Song. Of course, another possible reading of the brief co-residence of two Northern and Southern Chan advocates under the same roof of such a major monastery is that at the time the rivalry between these two traditions might not have been so bitter and irreconcilable as we might assume.

Finally, faithful to its status as a monastery that had been originally dedicated to an important woman, most of the men and women, no matter lay or religious, who contributed to the maintenance and renovation were tied to empress Wu in one way or another. The exceptionally close relationship that Hongzheng's teacher and grand-teacher (Puji and Shenxiu) maintained and developed with the empress is well known. Such ties also existed for the Shengshansi rebuilding supervisor Zhang Yanshang, and three certain disciples of Hongzheng – Yang Ji, who was a descendant of empress Wu's great-uncle; née Yuan, whose grandfather served under empress Wu and was instrumental in relic-worshipping activity that supported the unprecedented female rule; and Qiwei, a niece of Quan Ruone, who was a staunch defender of empress Wu (even after her death). Although we are still far from exhausting all of Hongzheng's disciples, the high ratio of followers surrounding

Hongzheng – even judging from such an incomplete pool – should not be treated as a mere coincidence. I, for one, am inclined to read it as a meaningful indication of empress Wu’s enduring influence among Buddhist believers, especially Northern Chan practitioners.

THE INTELLECTUAL AND POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF MAITREYANISM

The statue projects expressed specific religious symbolisms. Above, we deduced that the Baisima-Shengshansi statue likely depicted the Buddha Maitreya, marking a revival of the type of Maitreyanism of which another extraordinary monk Huaiyi, as discussed earlier, had made great use a decade or so before. Empress Wu abandoned Maitreyanism for a while after the extremist acts of Huaiyi caused political embarrassment and especially after the 694 fire, which went ominously against her religious and political values. However, she actually started to consider – although probably not without a degree of apprehension – the Maitreya revival, since she initiated a campaign to rebuild the Buddha-statue. One of Zhang Tinggui’s memorials revealed that a strong impetus came from the two Zhang brothers, whose enthusiasm for the program turned out to be – unfortunately for the Maitreyanists at the time – the kiss of death, as they fell victim to the political reshuffling in early 705. A crucial question to emerge from all this is “After this round of setbacks for the Maitreyan movement, who was so eager to stir up another wave of Maitreyanism, and for what purposes?”

The prime suspect is, without doubt, empress Wei, who made no secret of emulating her mother-in-law by becoming another female ruler. She would not have failed to be impressed by the success that a certain Buddhist ideology, including Maitreyanism, had afforded empress Wu. It is understandable that she would have chosen to replay the strategy and to embrace Maitreyanism and Huifan, the man who had rescued it from the ideological debris left over by empress Wu.

After empress Wu’s regime, socio-political and cultural barriers against female rulers rebounded in 705 in the form of a strict hierarchy constituted by various ranks of noblemen (with the emperor sitting at its top), and the exclusion of female participation in rule. Thus, for a woman in imperial China with ambitions to supreme power, it would be useful to resort to the support of the masses. For example, in 705, when her husband Zhongzong was reinstated as emperor, she asked him to change the criteria for defining male adulthood and seniority, in

order to “ingratiate” (*qiumei* 求媚) herself with all the people.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, people at the grass-roots level could be effectively drawn together through Buddhist teachings – for example, universal and indiscriminate love, unconditioned equality of beings through their original possession of Buddha-nature. These became emphatic when instigated via a messianic vision like Maitreyanism. Empress Wu had shrewdly capitalized on this and was able to neutralize – though only temporarily – the above-mentioned barriers. Such tactics would have seemed close and attainable to empress Wei, and in addition, her alignment with Huifan paralleled Wu’s association with the Maitreya master Huaiyi.

The deep interest that empress Wei and other contemporary female political players in this period showed towards the Maitreya cult should be correlated to their “proto-feminist” consciousness. Compared with the rather harsh attitude that Confucian orthodoxy held towards women, Buddhism presented a female-friendly soteriology, not only in its general teaching on the Buddha-nature, but also more specifically articulated in the account of the dragon-king’s daughter in the *Lotus sutra*: she was said to have achieved Buddhahood.¹⁰⁷ Huaiyi deliberately “feminized” the word *ci* 慈; here he states specifically:

Let it reverently be noted: Maitreya is no other than the Shenhuaung [Wu Zhao]. Maitreya is a Sanskrit term. Here (in China) it is translated as Cishi (Person of Love). Note: *Vimalakīrtinīrdeśa sūtra* says, “The Mind of love and compassion is a daughter.” That the Shenhuaung accords with this meaning is fulfilled.” 謹按：彌勒者即神皇應也。彌勒者梵語也此翻云慈氏。按維摩經云慈悲心爲女。神皇當應其義，合矣。¹⁰⁸

Such an interpretation was continued by Huifan. For example, the Shengshan pagoda that Huifan constructed for the statue of Buddha-Maitreya was called Baocige, “the Pavilion of Repaying the Motherly Love.” This name had several implications. It of course indicated Zhongzong’s gratitude for empress Wu’s motherly love (*ci*). However, in addition the title registered rich messianic and proto-feminist symbolism – it was a piece of religious architecture dedicated to the Buddha who was female and whose advent in this world was imminent.

¹⁰⁶ *JTS* 48, p. 2089; cf. *JTS* 85B, p. 4819; *XTS* 130, p. 4495. Originally, the limits were set at the ages of 21 and 60. Adulthood and seniority were the markers for starting and stopping the obligation to pay taxes and provide conscript labor.

¹⁰⁷ *Miaofa lianhua jing*, T no. 261, vol. 9, j. 4, p. 35c.

¹⁰⁸ This statement is in the commentary that Huaiyi and several other monks compiled on the eve of empress Wu’s dynastic founding; see Stein ms. 6502; Forte, *Political Propaganda* (1st edn.), p. 188; 2d edn., p. 272; Forte’s translation and interpretation differ from mine.

Another sort of symbolism may be found in the timing of the series of construction projects under Huifan's supervision. We have noted that the Baisima-Shengshansi and Changle statues were begun in 706 and 707, respectively, which means that the first project had to have been planned beginning at least late in 705. Curiously enough, throughout Zhongzong's six-year reign, the first two years witnessed severe natural disasters and insufficiencies in government relief, which created many refugees. Song Wuguang, as noted above, strongly protested Zhongzong's decision to expand Shengshansi in early 709. On August 20, 705 (Shenlong 1.7.27), the River Luo flooded, inundating over 2,000 houses. Considering the widespread panic, Zhongzong ordered officials to speak out both on how the series of disasters came about and how it should be stemmed. In a response written between August 24 and September 22, 705,¹⁰⁹ Song Wuguang, in the capacity of the head of the Mounted Section (Qicao 騎曹) of the Right Guard (Youwei 右衛), deplors the dire living conditions of commoners:

Over the past several years, both public and private resources have been depleted, to the detriment of households. Ordinary families do not have savings for the coming year, while the government does not have provisions for famine. Your Majesty, not going out of the capital city and only seeing the nearby marketplaces, believes that all the people all over the country are prosperous and rich. If [Your Majesty has the opportunity to] walk through the valleys and zig-zagging paths separating farms, to watch [people living in] the villages, [Your Majesty will find] commoners are wearing clothes [so tattered as though they were for] cows and horses, eating food fit only for dogs and pigs, with nine of ten rooms being left empty – since the young men were all sent to the borders [and died there], with their orphans and widows struggling in the gutters. The despotic power of the ferocious officials is extremely cruel, and the

¹⁰⁹ Shenlong 1.8. We know this rough date since in the memorial Song Wuguang refers to the flood as the “27th of the last month 去月二十七日,” which means that it was then the 8th mo. of Shenlong, given that the flood occurred on August 20, 705 (Shenlong 1.7.27). This date is provided by the Basic Annals of *XTS* 4, p. 107, but not those in *JTS* (7, p. 140), which give it as Shenlong 7.6.22 (*wuxu*) (July 15, 705) (also in *ZZTJ* 208, p. 6594). Elsewhere, *JTS* (37, p. 1353) concurs with *XTS* and *ZZTJ*, whose datings therefore are preferred.

Cf. “Luoshui zhang yingzhao shang zhiyan shu” 洛水漲應詔上直言疏, *JTS* 37, pp. 1353–56. It is also in *QIW* 268, pp. 18b–22b. A comparison of the two versions indicates that the *QIW* compilers seem to have merely taken the text directly and wholesale from *JTS*, without a corroborating base-text. The title of this memorial as presented in *QIW* seems based on the sentences with which the *JTS* authors introduced the memorial: 神龍元年七月二十七日, 洛水漲, 壞百姓廬舍二千餘家. 詔九品已上直言極諫, 右衛騎曹宋務光上疏曰... Some parts are quoted in *THY* 43, pp. 913–14, where August 24, 705 (Shenlong 1.8.1) is given as the day Zhongzong issued the decree asking for comments on the flood.

emergency policies of brutal taxation destroy people's property. A horse will fall when it is worn out, and people will become deceitful when they are poverty-stricken. Some of them have risen to become thieves and bandits, while some are flocking to be refugees. The government takes advantage of this and penalizes them – how deplorable it is! 自數年已來，公私俱竭，戶口減耗。家無接新之儲。國無候荒之蓄。陛下不出都邑，近觀朝市，則以為率土之人，既康且富。及至踐閭陌，視鄉亭，百姓衣牛馬之衣，食犬彘之食，十室而九空，丁壯盡於邊塞，孤孀轉於溝壑，猛吏淫威奮其毒，暴徵急政破其資。馬困斯跌，人窮乃詐，或起為姦盜，或競為流亡，從而刑之，良可悲也！¹¹⁰

With such pressures on the imperial treasury, would Zhongzong have launched projects that potentially could drain the treasury further? In his memorial, Song Wuguang, who must have acted as a representative of the current court Confucians, interpreted the flood as an omen that spoke toward the fact of female intervention in court affairs, obviously on the basis of traditional theories of “correspondences and interactions between humans and heaven 天人感應.” Believing that the latest natural disasters demanded moral reform or political adjustment, he made four proposals to Zhongzong. First, following a conventional practice for coping with flood, all the ward gates should be shut down to pray for the removal of influence of evil spirits; second, the vacant heir-apparency needed to be filled quickly; third, imperial relatives like Wu Sansi, who were becoming too powerful, ought to be stripped of power and compensated with liberal salaries; and finally, men of techniques (*fangshi* 方士) like Zheng Pusi 鄭普思 (?–ca. 706) and Ye Jingneng, who occupied eminent positions by virtue of their skills, should be expelled. To the dismay of such officials, Zhongzong did not adopt Song's proposal.¹¹¹ Instead, the emperor announced several months later the restarting of the Baisima project, which we have reason to believe was instigated by his leading Buddhist advisor Huifan. The timing suggests that Zhongzong might have done this in response to the natural disasters. If this is true, we can then say that Zhongzong had passed over the program proposed by his Confucian counselors for another suggested by his Buddhist (and maybe also Daoist) advisors.

We do not know exactly how much official and private funding was poured into the Shengshansi and Changle projects. Judging by the size of the Shengshansi statue and the amount of money that Huifan was accused of having embezzled in the course of casting it, they must have

¹¹⁰ “Luoshui zhang yingzhao shang zhiyan shu,” *JTS* 37, p. 1355; cf. *QTW* 268, p. 20b.

¹¹¹ Song Wuguang's proposals are summarized in *ZZTJ* 208, p. 6594.

been extremely costly. Thus, returning to our question about financial appropriateness, we might consider that his affection for his deceased mother and his personal religious faith trumped such concerns.

A stereotypical, and indeed much-abused, explanation for this kind of pious act is, of course, that their agents seek divine favor and relief from the Buddha. In various contexts that has much truth, however, it would – I fear – leave out something important. I suspect that Zhongzong's expensive projects must have had realistic and material considerations. In view of the extraordinary social conditions caused by the natural disasters, and given that such gigantic construction projects required enormous resources and placed a large number of refugees in employment, it is not without merit to speculate that Zhongzong was instituting a special type of relief program for refugees. Not coincidentally, the same Song Wuguang, the frustrated proponent of the Confucian-minded measures, strongly protested the expansion of Shengshansi a couple of years later. This points to a possible connection between the flood-caused sociopolitical crisis and the Baisima-Shengshansi project.

MONEY, MINISTRATION TO THE POOR, AND MARKETPLACES

A construction project could easily take in donations from the pious. It might not only relieve the refugees' immediate material needs, but also provide them psychological comfort by bringing them close to the sacred acts and religious ideals. If well organized, such a construction project would actually have the potential to be more effective than regular, official relief processes. More important for rulers, detaining refugees in construction sites until a natural disaster abated, thus making a smooth step to repatriation or relocation, could be effective agricultural and financial policy. Zhongzong and others certainly understood that if left unchecked refugees could turn into mobs or bandit groups, who would then jeopardize social stability. Given that a charismatic religious leader would be far more efficient than even one of the most capable bureaucrats in organizing an enormous workforce for an avowedly religious project, it seems that Zhongzong relied heavily on Huifan, and could not agree to dismiss him, as requested by one of his censors, who made a compelling case.

That the Baisima-Shengshansi project and the related construction activities might not have been purely designed (and carried out) as a series of religious acts, but may also have functioned as a kind of social relief institution, is further corroborated by economic and com-

mercial factors. As discussed, above, the second memorial of Zhang Tinggui stated that the two Zhangs and their circle profiting by selling timber to the government, whipping up many people's hatred of the state in the process. There may have been a bit of exaggeration about the corruption of the Zhangs in this project, but we can accept Zhang's testimony to the presence of intensive commercial activities, of which speculation in construction materials like timber might have been only a part. The working and personal relationship that the two Zhang brothers kept with some merchants is verified elsewhere:

Once empress Wu bestowed on [her court officials the pleasure of attending] a banquet in an inner hall. Zhang Yizhi took with him a Sichuanese merchant Song Bazi 宋霸子 (otherwise unknown) and several others, with whom [he] gambled in front [of the empress and her court officials]. Kneeling down [before the empress], Wei Anshi 韋安石 (651-714) memorialized [Her Majesty], "People belonging to a humble class (*jianlei* 賤類) like these Sichuanese merchants are not fit to attend this banquet." He thus looked around to [the attendants awaiting on] the right and the left, ordering them to oust [Song Bazi and his associates]. Those who sat there were all [frightened and shocked so much that] the colors of their complexions changed. Because Wei Anshi's words were upright, [Wu] Zetian deeply comforted and encouraged him [for doing this]. 嘗於內殿賜宴，易之引蜀商宋霸子等數人於前博戲，安石跪奏曰：“蜀商等賤類，不合預登此筵。”因顧左右令逐出之，座者皆為失色，則天安石辭直，深慰勉之。¹¹²

It is hard to imagine that without getting empress Wu's permission in advance, Zhang Yizhi would have had the nerve to bring Song Bazi into the imperial presence, and more startlingly, to gamble for money with them in front of her and her officials. It is also noteworthy that this episode happened in the same year that empress Wu decreed the one-cash-per-person program for the Baisima project.¹¹³ It is tempting to assume that Song Bazi and his merchant-friends were actually invited to the royal banquet simply to raise more funds, and that Zhang Yizhi was simply a middle-man.¹¹⁴

¹¹² *JTS* 92, p. 2956; cf. *XTS* 122, p. 4349; *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6553. It is only *ZZTJ* which clearly dates this episode to Jiushi 1 (700). This episode is discussed in Im Dae-heui 任大熙, "Bukō seiken to Sanna-Kennan – Sokuten Bukō no sōryo shōhei to no kanren de" 武后政權と山南劍南 – 則天武后の僧侶招聘との関連で, *Shin-han Hakko* 新韓學報 22 (1986), pp. 72-73.

¹¹³ *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6553, does not provide a specific date for the banquet; it puts the event under the year 700.

¹¹⁴ It is difficult to know how Zhang Yizhi became related with the Sichuanese merchants. It is interesting to note that sometime between July 24 and August 21, 697 (Wansuitongtian

Although we have no direct evidence linking Huifan to Song Bazi, it is important, however, to note that the monk Wansui, whom Zhang Tinggui accused of collaborating with the Zhang brothers in empress Wu's Baisima project, was the administrator of Shengshansi and there must have been a very close friend of its abbot Huifan. Moreover, Huifan was alleged to have extended his commercial reach to the areas of Changjiang and Jian'ge 劍殖貨流於[長]江劍閣, the latter of which was, significantly, a part of present-day Sichuan (Shu 蜀), Song Bazi's region.¹¹⁵ Sichuanese merchants' activities in the capital were famous, but specifically, those merchants played a large role – at least since the time of the great Han adventurer Zhang Qian 張騫 (?–114 BC) – in promoting China's cross-border commerce with India, and through India, with some central Asian states like Bactria (Daxia 大夏).¹¹⁶ We ought to consider that Huifan was actually closely associated with Sichuanese merchants, and that this kind of business relationship had something to do with his status as the superintendent of the Baisima-Shengshansi and Changle projects, which were, at the time, probably among the most resource-consuming projects in China, if not in the whole of the world.

It is probably only in such a context that we properly interpret an anecdote that has been celebrated among historians as a prime example of the stupidity and absurdity of Zhongzong and his wife:

On the *yichou* (second) day of the second month [of Jinglong 3] (March 17, 709) ... His Majesty further commissioned palace maidens to open a market, in which they sold a variety of commodities. [The emperor then] ordered his prime ministers and other high ministers of ranks to act as merchants who bargained with [the maidens]. In this way, arguments between them arose, and their words became vulgar and indecent. The emperor and empress watched it, and took it as entertainment. [景龍三年]二月己丑... 上又遣宮女為市肆，鬻賣眾物，令宰臣及公卿為商賈，與之交易，因為忿爭，言辭猥褻。上與后觀之，以為笑樂。¹¹⁷

2.7), one of his brothers, Zhang Changqi, then director of the Ministry of Personnel (*tianguan langzhong* 天冠郎中), was commissioned by empress Wu to go to Dechunsi 德純寺 in Zizhou 資州 (present-day Zizhong 資中, Sichuan) to entreat the Chan master Zhishen 智諶 (609–702) to come to the capital. Zhishen accepted the invitation; see *Lidai fabao ji* 1, p. 184b.

¹¹⁵ *JTS* 183, p. 4739.

¹¹⁶ In an audience with emperor Wu of Han, Zhang recalled that when he was in Da Xia he saw merchandise from Sichuan, e.g. bamboo staffs from Qiong 邛 and cloth from Shu. After inquiring of the locals, he learned that these items were imported from India (Shendu 身毒) by way of Sichuan; *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 61, pp. 2689–90.

¹¹⁷ *JTS* 7, p. 147.

Whether or not the royal couple's fondness for marketplace haggling resulted from their association with Huifan we cannot say. They might have acquired this interest in the course of their almost two decades of exile, which probably brought them into relatively close contact with commoners' lives. At any rate, this story reveals much about the ties that Zhongzong and empress Wei had maintained with Huifan. Although both traditional historiography and modern scholarship have depicted Zhongzong as an almost idiotic monarch, someone who, like Ruizong, was merely an impediment in the path of those who either held or snatched the reins of power at court. As with other biased portraits of capable and complex men,¹¹⁸ court historiographers were wont to depict Zhongzong as a weak puppet at the mercy of his empress, who was described as a licentious and ambitious woman. Yet, his systematic use of Buddhism and his interest in fostering commercial activities within his empire and beyond suggest that he was actually a far more sophisticated man, and deserves a serious reappraisal.¹¹⁹

Because comments about Huifan's business and financial dealings, namely his commercial influence in the the Changjiang and Jian'ge areas, are given in the *Jiu Tang shu* biography of princess Taiping, then we ought to underscore the link between them. What was, in fact, the relationship between the monk and a princess who became vilified in traditional historiography? There is no doubt but that the princess was determined not to have her mother's rule be unique in imperial China. In this regard, not unlike her sister-in-law empress Wei, she might have been attracted to this charismatic man, Huifan, for ideological justification and support from the masses who responded to him as to a messiah in a mass cult. Her political ambition drove her into intense conflicts with her similarly ambitious nephew, eventually costing her life. However, in addition to inheriting her mother's hunger for power, Taiping seemed enthralled with exuberant wealth. It is reported that after her forced suicide in 713 it took over "several years" to draw up an inven-

¹¹⁸ I am thinking of the way Taizong's historiographers treated Gaozu (r. 618–26), Li Jiancheng 李建成 (589–626) and Li Yuanji 李元吉 (603–626).

¹¹⁹ About Zhongzong's relationship with Buddhism, the following two recent studies are noteworthy. Ku Cheng-mei (Gu Zhengmei) 古正美 has discussed Zhongzong's obsession with the *cakravartin* ideal in her article, "Longmen leigutai sandong de kaizao xingzhi yu dingnian" 龍門擂鼓臺三洞的開鑿形制與定年, in *Longmen shiku yiqianwubai zhounian guoji xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 龍門石窟一千五百週年國際學術討論會論文集, ed. Longmen shiku yanjiusuo 龍門石窟研究所 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), pp. 175–76. Sun Yinggang 孫英剛 recently made a careful investigation of the roles Buddhism played in the court of Zhongzong; see Sun, "Chang'an yu Jingzhou zhijian: Tang Zhongzong yu fojiao" 長安與荊州之間: 唐中宗與佛教, in *Tangdai Zongjiao xinyang yu shehui* 唐代宗教信仰與社會, ed. Rong Xinjiang 榮新江 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), pp. 125–50.

tory of her possessions in “livestock, horses and sheep, in fields, in gardens, and in [treasures stored in] the pawn stores [run by her].”¹²⁰ In spite of her enthusiasm for Buddhism, she did not hesitate to fight with monks over the ownership of a milling house (*nianwei* 碾磑).¹²¹ She is also alleged to have engaged in purchasing and exchanging (that is, selling) merchandise sent in from all over, including locales in Wu 吳, Shu 蜀, and Lingnan 嶺南.¹²² Combining such allegations with *Jiu Tang shu*'s claim, we get the impression that Huifan acted as a (if not the) main business agent for the princess. It is not so hard to imagine that he could have used the construction projects under his charge to secure for the princess both public and private funds, and when necessary, helped her to launder illegal income.

However, the princess was definitely more than a greedy hoarder, as depicted in Confucian historiography. The latter writers tried hard to have literati believe that underlying Huifan and Taiping's efforts to appoint the “*xiefeng* 斜封” officials was an enormous greed, since “irregular” appointments were traded for money from the appointees – mainly merchants. I believe, however, that Huifan and his patroness here might have aimed at political purposes as well; that is, they recruited merchants to the power center as allies in their pursuit for a larger share of central power.

The following outstanding example also reveals what a brilliant strategist Taiping was and how well she managed to create economic situations that became leverages to secure political and military advantage. In the second month of Jingyun 2 (February 22–March 23, 711), as a result of the setback that she suffered in combating Li Longji, Taiping was ordered (nominally by Ruizong, but obviously made through Li Longji's coercion) into a partial exile. She chose to go to Puzhou 蒲州, which was then governed by one of her allies Pei Tan 裴談 (?–713+), and which also happened to be the main source for the salt consumed by the capital area. Shortly after arriving there, she provided Pei, who because of his capacity as the Puzhou governor was already automatically acting as its salt marsh commissioner, with concurrent appointment as the same for the capital area (Guannei 關內). This extraordinary arrangement was obviously made with the endorsement

¹²⁰ *JTS* 183, p. 4740; cf. *XTS* 83, p. 3651, which says that it took over three years to make the inventory. See also Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York: Columbia U.P., 1995), p. 290.

¹²¹ *JTS* 98, p. 3073.

¹²² *JTS* 183, p. 4739: 而市易造作器物, 吳, 蜀, 嶺南供送, 相屬於路. Cf. *JTS* 83, p. 4739.

and collaboration of Ruizong, who was then siding with the princess, out of an increasing sense of insecurity in the light of an aggressive heir-apparent. The new appointment for Pei earned Taiping and her group a monopoly over salt supplies for the capital area. Through it, she managed to curb the army in charge of defending the northern border (and so also, indirectly, the capital area). She was able to reverse the power balance at a crucial point when it was starting to turn against her. This rapid economic, political, and military change caused such pressure on Longji that he had to give in; he “begged” Ruizong to bring the princess back to the court. Subsequently, only three months after her humiliating self-exile, the princess returned to the capital in triumph.¹²³ Thus, it might be closer to the truth if we see the relationship between Huifan and Taiping as informed in a far more complex way than historiographers would have us believe. In addition to being a possible lover of the princess, Huifan also was a political strategist, ideologue, and business agent.

Given Huifan’s relationships with the most influential people of his day, we can say that such relationships were quite multifaceted – personal, religious, ideological, and financial. Therefore they are more complicated than usually characterized (and oversimplified) in traditional historiography. We see that the construction projects provided a perfect arena for uniting the parties concerned. For Zhongzong, he must have felt satisfied by the steady mitigation of the migrant problem that the projects supplied as indirect relief institutions. On another front, the revitalization of Maitreyan ideology appealed to empress Wei, who was then eager to emulate her formidable mother-in-law. This ideological attraction can also be said to have applied to Taiping’s intimate relationship with Huifan, which involved not just an interest in female rulership, but also the amassing of wealth.

¹²³ *JTS* (48, p. 2110), *THY* (88, p. 1608), and *CFYG* (483, p. 7b) state: “the governor of Puzhou was [concurrently] appointed as the Salt Marsh Commissioner of the Guannei area in the third month of Jingyun 2” (景雲二年三月, 蒲州刺史充關內鹽使). Both *JTS* and *THY* date this to Jingyun 4.3, which *CFYG* has as Jingyun 2.3. Since Jinyun only lasted for two years, the *CFYG*’s reading is to be adopted. The Puzhou governor was likely Pei Tan, who was demoted to that position on September 12, 710 (Jingyun 1.8.15 [*kuisi*]), and who was a follower of princess Taiping, judging from his demotion’s being caused by relentless criticisms from the most important confidant of Li Longji, Yao Chong 姚崇 (650–721). That the imperial army defending the capital area (Shuofang bian bing 朔方邊兵) was forced to succumb to Taiping is shown by the fact that its general Tang Xiujing 唐休璟 (627–712), a loyalist of Li Longji, who just replaced Taiping’s supporter Chang Yuankai 常元楷 (?–713) as commander-in-chief in Jingyun 1, had to resign in Jingyun 2 (Tang’s biog. at *JTS* 93, pp. 2979–80). These wrangles between Taiping and Li Longji centering around the appointment of salt commissioner of Guannei have been retrieved by Li Jinxiu 李錦繡, “Puzhou cishi chong Guannei Yanchi-shi yu Jingyun zhengzhi” 蒲州刺史充關內鹽使與景雲政治, *Xueshu jilin* 學術集林 10 (1997), pp. 282–97.

Similarly, some other classes were also attracted to the series of projects. A considerable number of the participants of the construction projects, either directly (as workers) or indirectly (as donors) were Buddhist believers regardless of their classes, genders or races. However, we should also note two kinds of participants – merchants and refugees, both of whom may or may not have been lay believers. We estimate that quite a number of them got involved in these projects for some more economic considerations – some merchants were in pursuit of profits, while some refugees made their living (although maybe only temporarily) through these projects. In spite of the variances in their motives, their support for the projects and the mastermind behind them must have been genuine and fervent.

Thus, we see that the eminent position of Huifan did not come by chance. His success consisted in his skill in keeping himself in the center of a series of politico-religious activities that appealed to many people, from the most powerful to the humblest. His status constituted his irreplaceable role in the eyes of people who had a strong interest in him.

Huifan would have known that he was by no means entirely welcomed by a broad spectrum of society. The continuous barrage of memorials that put him under fire must have reminded him of his enemies. One set of enemies was landowners and their representatives – that is, the Confucian bureaucrat-scholars (*shidaiifu* 士大夫). Their hatred of Huifan was no doubt due to ideological reasons. For example, we have their general uneasiness towards Buddhism that resulted in a panic over Zhongzong's preference for a Buddhist-inspired social relief system instead of their own measures. The deeper basis of their hostility rested, however, on their alarm over the eroding effects that such construction projects had upon the economic base that was essential to the social hierarchy and to their privileges within it. Song Wuguang, for example, blames people's pursuit of luxury for driving more and more peasants to abandon agriculture for commerce.¹²⁴ Likewise, both Zhang Tinggui's and Di Renjie's memorials expressed concerns, using the point that the construction projects would take more and more farmers away from farmland. Such a tendency, therefore, would diminish the profits yielded from the leasing of farmland, which constituted an important aspect of their incomes. They certainly would do everything possible to prevent the disintegration and breakdown of a privileged

¹²⁴ "Luoshui zhang yingzhao shang zhiyan shu," *JTS* 37, p. 1355: 樂多繁淫, 器尚浮巧. 稼穡之人少, 商旅之人多 (cf. *QJW* 268, p. 21a).

hierarchy, along with its economic system, which could be roughly termed agriculturalism, in contrast to a primitive type of mercantilism that was zealously practiced by Huifan and the numerous merchants (presumably both Chinese and non-Chinese) around him. In this regard, we need to pay particular attention to Huifan's non-Chinese (likely Sogdian) origin, and at least two Buddhist monks beside him, the famous Fazang and the obscure Wansui, who like Fazang was probably also Sogdian.¹²⁵ Given the extent to which the Sogdian people as a whole had been involved in the international commercial activities and the huge number of Sogdian immigrants in north China at the time, there must have been powerful Sogdian merchant communities active in China's metropolises, especially the two capitals, which happened to be the center of Huifan's activities.

Thus, surrounding these seemingly entirely religious projects, we now see a series of religious, political and cultural conflicts: Buddhist egalitarianism *vis-à-vis* Confucian elitism, mercantilism *vis-à-vis* agriculturalism, and eventually Confucian moralism *vis-à-vis* Buddhist messianism (Maitreyanism). Such conflicts of course did not start from or end with Huifan; rather, they can be traced to the time of empress Wu's ascendancy to supreme power, all the way to the collapse of her sociopolitical and cultural revolution. If we say that Buddhism enjoyed a considerably lengthy time of victory under the reign of empress Wu, the triumph that Huifan and his associates managed to achieve was short-lived and their failure was as humiliating as their predecessor Huaiyi. However, this should not prevent us from recognizing and properly assessing their legacies. Those include the Shengshansi in Luoyang, which remained a cultural (both Buddhist and non-Buddhist) center in East Asia for a long time, and Great Xiangguosi in Kaifeng, which seemed to have played an even greater role in Buddhism after Huifan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Huifan in fact was a political loser who, after he was executed by Xuanzong, became anathema in both official and private contexts (at least during the Tang dynasty). This contributed to the bias expressed by all pre-modern narrators of his life; their accounts cannot be taken without reservation. Scholars have reminded us of how later court historians vilified both empress Wu and her political and religious col-

¹²⁵ I discussed Wansui's ethnic background in Chen Jinhua 陳金華, "Shengshansi kaolun" 聖善寺攷論, Li Silong et al., eds., *Zhexue, Zongjiao yu renwen* 哲學宗教與人文 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004), pp. 508–10.

laborators, to the extent that virtually nothing concerning her reign was written without serious distortion.¹²⁶ A striking example is the demonization of Huaiyi. Confucian historiographers, from prejudice and hostility, depicted Huaiyi as a fake monk, a simpleton, lunatic, or simply a sexual functionary of the empress. They have failed to convince us, however, how someone so irreligious could have been accepted as the abbot of a cosmopolitan monastery like the Great Baimasi, even if he had been backed by the empress. Neither is it imaginable that a man who had designed and supervised the construction of such large buildings as the *mingtang* and *tiantang* could have been an utter idiot capable of nothing more than courting the aged empress through sexual prowess. We should not forget that the *mingtang* and *tiantang* were arguably two of the most impressive and sophisticated architectural complexes on the surface of earth at the time. It is also completely against the character of such a calculating and highly political woman as empress Wu to appoint a lunatic as a general who would be commissioned with important national military tasks.

In the same vein, the position that Huifan obtained and kept in the contemporary religious world (his status as the concurrent abbot of three major monasteries) and his outstanding clout as a power-broker show that he must have been a man of exceptional talent and should not be dismissed lightly. More than that, he gained trust from many of the most powerful men and women at the time – from empress Wu, the two Zhang brothers, Zhongzong and empress Wei, Ruizong, and princess Taiping. How was that done? The sources try, once more, resort to discussion of “seductive charms,” expertise in sorcery, or an intimate relationship with Taiping. These pertain to portions of the whole picture, but they are definitely not the whole story. Rather than focusing on some more or less personal elements, I suggest that a more convincing explanation could – and should – be found in the broader context of the contemporary political, economic and religious dynamism.

We need to exercise care when we attempt to understand and interpret religious enterprises in medieval China, enterprises like this series of construction projects in connection with a sacred site. In addition to religious motives and functions, the political and economic purposes that the projects might have served merit attention. Given their exceptional sizes, Buddhist constructions like the Baisima-Sheng-

¹²⁶ R[ichard] W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-T'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China*, Program in East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, Occasional Papers 11 (Bellingham, Wash. : Western Washington U., 1978).

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shansi projects required imaginative assignments of labor and financial resources. Most of them significantly affected the economy at the local, national, and even international levels.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CFYG</i>	<i>Cefu yuangui</i> 冊府元龜
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Jiu Tang shu</i> 舊唐書
<i>QTW</i>	<i>Quan Tang wen</i> 全唐文
<i>T</i>	<i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> 大正新修大藏經
<i>THY</i>	<i>Tang huiyao</i> 唐會要
<i>WYYH</i>	<i>Wenyuan yinghua</i> 文苑英華
<i>XTS</i>	<i>Xin Tang shu</i> 新唐書
<i>ZZTJ</i>	<i>Zizhi tongjian</i> 資治通鑒