

## CHAPTER II

### BAODINGSHAN

In order to gain a better understanding of the work done at Baodingshan, a brief historical overview of the area as a whole is necessary. Rock carvings are scattered in over forty different groupings within Dazu county, mostly dating from the late Tang to the Southern Song periods, with a few additional works being sculpted in the Ming and the Qing dynasties.<sup>1</sup> How could the administrators and artisans of Dazu, so far removed from the more cosmopolitan regions of China, have been so successful at uniting inspiration and effort to create such an incredibly vast array of artistic works? A look at one of the other major Buddhist cave sites within Dazu county will help to denote some of the differences between Baodingshan and its nearby predecessors, differences which will be analyzed in greater depth in chapter IV.

I will begin with a discussion of the historical context surrounding hell within China, and how notions of the underworld came to be associated specifically with Sichuan province. This will serve to clarify issues surrounding not only the Chinese nature of the hell scenes depicted at Baodingshan, but also possible reasons for their inclusion within the grotto site.

#### Sichuan: Home to the Dark Regions

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<sup>1</sup>Zhang, 7.

Hell tableaux of Baodingshan's magnitude are rare in present-day China, and the prevalence of such large-scale works will forever be open to conjecture.<sup>2</sup> Despite numerous well-preserved cavesites within China, no analogous sculpted hell scenes of Baodingshan's size and importance within the grotto site would appear to exist. Other grottoes had painted hell scenes; work done at Dunhuang, for example, has found representations of the ten kings included in at least eleven different caves.<sup>3</sup> However, this number is still not significant when given the fact that the Dunhuang site encompasses 492 extant caves.<sup>4</sup> At other major sites where more specific documentation is lacking, it is difficult to determine exactly how prevalent depictions of hell were, but sculpted hell scenes do not appear to have been common.

Baodingshan's hell scenes were well-known. A common saying was "One goes up to Mount Emei, down to Baoding,"<sup>5</sup> a reference to the Bodhisattva

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<sup>2</sup>Although numerous painted works with hell motifs are mentioned in texts such as Acker's Some T'ang and pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting, when viewed within the context of artistic production as a whole, such works are comparatively few in number. Sculpted large-scale representations are also seldom mentioned. Teiser's account of a man named Duliang in 910 CE commissioning images of the Ten Kings to be carved in a grotto in Sichuan, and more contemporary works seen in Beijing and discussed by Anne Swann Goodrich, are among the rare few. The works created for Duliang may still have been in existence prior to the construction of Baodingshan. See Teiser's The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 39, and Goodrich's Chinese Hells: The Peking Temple of Eighteen Hells and Chinese Conceptions of Hell (St. Augustine: Monumenta Serica, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Teiser, Scripture on the Ten Kings, 40, n. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Pingting Shi and Xue Shu, "About the Mogao Grottoes," in Art Treasures of Dunhuang, ed. Ho Kai (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1981), 4.

<sup>5</sup>Zhang, 7. This saying could possibly refer to geographic position, although not using "up" in its modern usage equated with "north." Mt. Emei is approximately due west of Baodingshan, not north of it.

Samantabhadra as leading the worshipper into heaven on Emeishan (also in Sichuan) while Baodingshan was where one encountered the more unpleasant of reincarnation possibilities.

The contrast between these two mountains mirrors that of Sichuan proper, an area of fertile river valleys and plains surrounded by unpassable mountains and virtually unnavigable rivers. In the latter years of the Tang, Chengdu was considered to rank second only to Hangzhou as a cosmopolitan center; Chongqing, on the other hand, bore the onus of being far less-densely populated, situated in the “eastern wilderness,” at the joining of the Yangzi River and several lesser tributaries.<sup>6</sup> In traditional Buddhist cosmology, those in hell are separated from those on earth by insurmountable mountains, with paradise to be found at the top.<sup>7</sup> Coincidentally, Emeishan and the heaven it promises perches at 4000 feet atop a mountain south of Chengdu, while the hell scenes at Baodingshan are carved under a rocky overhang in a grotto closer to Chongqing. Yet both were considered sacred, and both were sites of active pilgrimage [fig. 2].<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Winston W. Lo, Szechwan in Sung China: A Case Study in the Political Integration of the Chinese Empire (Taipei: University of Chinese Culture Press, 1982), 13 and 20.

<sup>7</sup>Anna K. Seidel in “Mountains and Hells: Religious Geography in Japanese Mandara Paintings,” Studies in Central and East Asian Religions (1992-3): 5-6, notes the prevalence within Japanese Buddhist cosmology of “the perception of mountains as the realm of death with the paradises at the summits.”

<sup>8</sup>Susan Naquin and Junfang Yu, eds., map in Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China, np. The change in destination from India to China for pilgrimages is worthy of note. As Gregory and Ebrey, 20, point out, by the Song period, “China came to displace India as the center of the Buddhist world.” Several reasons may have accounted for this, not the least of which was probably the Islamic takeover of the route to India.

The presence of the hell scenes at Baodingshan (and their relative absence at other large sites) can best be understood within the larger context of Sichuan Province. Angela Howard notes that the cult of Dizang,<sup>9</sup> often termed the “Bodhisattva of Hell,” may have developed in Sichuan prior to the Tang dynasty. Evidence for this is seen in a description of a sixth-century wall-painting of Dizang given in the Buddhist encyclopedia Fayuan zhulin.<sup>10</sup> In another very important way Sichuan can be regarded as the birthplace of the “modern” Chinese conception of hell for it was in Sichuan, at Da Shengci Monastery in Chengdu Prefecture, that the apocryphal Scripture on the Ten Kings is conjectured to have been written.<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, it is vital to note the non-Indic origin of the Scripture on the Ten Kings. Loosely based upon portions of earlier Pali texts,<sup>12</sup> this scripture manifests overtly Chinese qualities

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<sup>9</sup>Known in Sanskrit as Ksitigarbha. Dizang will be discussed at length in chapter III within the context of his central location in Baodingshan’s hell tableau.

<sup>10</sup>Howard, “Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten,” 64, n. 61. A later copy of this painting was considered to possess miraculous qualities.

<sup>11</sup>Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 69-70. See also Marinus Willem de Visser, The Bodhisattva Ti-tsang (Jizo) in China and Japan (Berlin: Oesterheld and Co., 1914), 25-6. Da Shengci Monastery had its start under the auspices of Emperor Xuanzong, while he was in residence in Chengdu in 756-757 CE, and hell scenes were already known to exist there by the time of the next court exodus to Chengdu. Regarding the term “apocrypha,” and the problems inherent in its use, see Robert E. Buswell’s work “Prolegomenon to the Study of Buddhist Apocryphal Scriptures” in Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 1-30.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Teiser, ““Having Once Died and Returned to Life”: Representations of Hell in Medieval China,” 435. Teiser notes the prevalence of hell descriptions in the Pali Nikayas, Jatakas, and Vinaya, but points to an overall lack of systemization regarding the hells, hell as a mental construct remaining as the central focus.

in its use of the ten kings, an idea considered to have been borrowed from the Daoist religion,<sup>13</sup> as well as in its overtly Confucian emphasis on filial piety and corporal punishment. Such indigenous works were not unusual in Buddhist teachings, being seen as a means of attracting non-believers as well as an effective method for reaching a lay audience.<sup>14</sup>

The Scripture on the Ten Kings<sup>15</sup> was most likely produced in China in the ninth century, although mention of the ten kings does occur as early on as the seventh century CE.<sup>16</sup> The earliest extant work dates from 908 and was found at Dunhuang.<sup>17</sup> Teiser and others have traced the authorship of this scripture to one monk by the name of Zangchuan, of whom little is known other than his

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<sup>13</sup>Henri Maspero, "The Mythology of Modern China," in Asiatic Mythology, ed. J. Hackin (New York: Thomas J. Crowell, 1932), 364, and DeVisser, 26.

<sup>14</sup>Kyoko Tokuno, "The Evaluation of Indigenous Scriptures in Chinese Buddhist Bibliographical Catalogues," in Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha, ed. Robert E. Buswell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 49. Tokuno paraphrases the cataloguer Daoxuan's opinion of the purpose of indigenous scriptures as "to convert the common people to Buddhism, and . . . to adapt their presentation of doctrine to the people's limited ability to understand."

<sup>15</sup>The Scripture on the Ten Kings [Shiwang jing] is actually the shortened form of The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha to the Four Orders on the Prophecy Given to King Yama Concerning the Sevens of Life to be Cultivated in Preparation for Rebirth in the Pure Land [Foshuo yanlo wang shouji sizhong yu xiu shengqi wangsheng jingtu jing]. For a complete study of this scripture, see Stephen Teiser's work, The Scripture on the Ten Kings .

<sup>16</sup>Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 48, points to An Essay on the True Karma of the Ten Kings [Shiwang zhengye lun] written in Chang'an in the seventh century.

<sup>17</sup>Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 7.

residence at Da Shengci Monastery.<sup>18</sup> Twenty-two copies of the Scripture on the Ten Kings bearing the same inscription regarding production in Sichuan by Zangchuan were recovered from the cache at Dunhuang.<sup>19</sup> The scripture's central theme of filial piety probably did much to save it from total proscription; other apocryphal works which were perceived as a threat to the nation-state were routinely banned and burned.<sup>20</sup>

By the thirteenth century, the Scripture on the Ten Kings was a popularly circulated non-canonical work.<sup>21</sup> Other connections to Sichuan appear in the form of bound books of this scripture also found at Dunhuang. These works are prefaced with the notation of having been copied from originals brought to Dunhuang by a family of Sichuanese origin during the Tang dynasty. Sichuan's large woodblock printing industry has been credited with aiding in this type of dissemination of the scripture.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Evidence for Zangchuan's authorship of the scripture lies mainly in colophons attached to scriptures produced at Dunhuang, in which both the monk and the temple are mentioned by name as sources for the scripture. See Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 65.

<sup>19</sup>Waikam Ho, Eight Dynasties of Chinese Painting: The Collections of the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, and the Cleveland Museum of Art (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art in cooperation with Indiana University Press, 1980), xxxiii.

<sup>20</sup>Tokuno, 50 and 52.

<sup>21</sup>Teiser, The Scripture on the Ten Kings, 25 and 79. Teiser notes that, although authorship may be traced to Sichuan, differing versions of the text probably were originating in other parts of China, but no longer remain extant.

<sup>22</sup>Ho, xxxiii, notes that printing houses in Sichuan were entrusted with the first official edition of the Northern Song Buddhist canon, produced in Chengdu between 971 and 983 CE.

Sichuan also claims unique status in the Daoist religion. Although of uncertain date, the “Court of the Labyrinth of Springs” in Fengdu, Sichuan,<sup>23</sup> [fig. 3] would seem to hark back to earlier Daoist notions of the afterlife. Originally, Daoist cosmology placed the afterlife in a variety of places,<sup>24</sup> becoming standardized into one location - Mt. Tai in Shensi Province - in 110 BCE.<sup>25</sup> Exactly when hell was moved from under Mt. Tai to Fengdu is open to debate. First mention of Fengdu as home to the underworld was during the southern Song era [1127-1279] by Fan Chengda, an official travelling through Sichuan.<sup>26</sup> According to Werner, the first emperor of Fengdu was a rebel during the Qin dynasty who, upon his death, was made overlord of hell.<sup>27</sup> This story bears a striking resemblance to that of King Yama, nominal head of the Buddhist underworld.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>John Lagerwey, Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History, 204. E.T.C. Werner notes that the Indian hell was too far removed from China, so Sichuan was chosen as its new location. E.T.C. Werner, A Dictionary of Chinese Mythology (Boston: Longwood Press, 1977), 449.

<sup>24</sup>Daoist conceptions of the afterlife could be categorized as falling into three areas - the land of eternal bliss, the Yellow Springs, or residence in the tomb itself. Henri Maspero, Taoism and Chinese Religion, trans. Frank A. Kierman Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 27.

<sup>25</sup>Yingshi Yu, ““O Soul, Come Back!” A Study in the Changing Conceptions of the Soul and the Afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 47.2 (December 1987): 388. Mt. Tai, and more specifically, the Lord of Mt. Tai, will be discussed at greater length later on within the context of the hell imagery found at Baodingshan.

<sup>26</sup>Licheng Guo, Shi Tian yanwang (Taipei: Zhonghua minguo guoli lishi bowuguan, 1984), 25.

<sup>27</sup>Werner, 449. Unfortunately, Werner does not give a source for this statement.

<sup>28</sup>Yama, as King of Vaisali, swore while dying in battle to be reborn as king in hell so as to avenge himself against his earthly opponents.

Both DeVisser and Maspero link the latter evolution of the ten kings to earlier Daoist notions of nine layers of darkness.<sup>29</sup>

By the Tang dynasty, Fengdu had come to be clearly associated with the realm of hell in the minds of the populace. Wu Daozi, a Tang artist renowned for the life-like qualities of his hell scenes, was purported to have painted depictions of hell at a Fengdu temple.<sup>30</sup> Fengdu is also mentioned by name in the popular Ming dynasty classic, Journey to the West (Xi you ji), “My name is Cui Jue. I have now been given office in the underworld as the judge in charge of cases at Fengdu.”<sup>31</sup> This tale is considered to have been based on earlier oral legends, evidence for which exists in the discovery of the Record of Emperor Taizong’s Journey to Hades among the transformation texts found at Dunhuang.<sup>32</sup> Located on the route of the Yangzi River tourboat trade, Fengdu remains a popular destination for the average Chinese citizen, still equated in their minds with visions of the underworld.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Maspero, 364, and DeVisser, 26. DeVisser further substantiates his argument with remarks upon the appearance of the terms hun and po, two words used to describe two of the three possible states of the soul’s existence within the Daoist theology, within the sutra itself. Later chapters will contain more on Daoist cosmology and how it relates to the Ten Kings of hell.

<sup>30</sup>Eberhard, Guilt and Sin in Traditional China (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 46, n. 39, citing the Yijianzhi, 48, 1b.

<sup>31</sup>Wu Zhengen, Journey to the West, translated by W.J.F. Jenner, vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986), 194.

<sup>32</sup>Tang Taizong rumingji as noted by Guo, 25. Transformation texts will be discussed at greater length in chapter four in regard to the site layout at Baodingshan.

<sup>33</sup>Having had the opportunity to visit Fengdu in the summer of 1994, I can honestly say that the mountain itself is still a very active “pilgrimage” spot, although, unfortunately, heavy on the kitsch. (Most of the pilgrims seemed more intent on riding the ski-lift than in burning any incense or paper money!) A few

Other factors linked hell to Sichuan, and, consequently, reinforced its presence at Baodingshan. One of these was the timeless perception that Sichuan lay beyond the limits of comfortable Chinese control. As a peripheral area, the image of Sichuan perceived by the Han Chinese was of a wild place, a frontier country :

The capricious and intractable wilderness readily inspired notions of supernatural powers impervious to human control. As a result the Han inhabitants of the upper and middle Yangzi valley accumulated a rich store of beliefs and rituals focused on comprehending and controlling the frontier landscape and its eerie denizens.<sup>34</sup>

Lawlessness would also appear to have been a problem associated with Sichuan. Mountainous and peripheral areas were considered to be particularly conducive to organized crime, making eastern Sichuan an ideal spot for marauding bandits.<sup>35</sup> Following the Northern Song conquest of the Sichuan region, uprisings occurred frequently, with no fewer than eleven within a fifty year span.<sup>36</sup>

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remnants of past eras remain, mainly a small ornamental bridge located near the top of the mountain, and old steles of which the still legible ones appeared to date back to the Ming dynasty. The Chinese are actively pursuing refurbishing the site, and were kind enough to allow me access to the on-site workshops where most of the “Tang dynasty” statuary was being produced.

<sup>34</sup>Richard Von Glahn, The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times, Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 123 (Cambridge and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1987), 12.

<sup>35</sup>Brian E. McKnight, Law and Order in Sung China (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 109.

<sup>36</sup>Von Glahn, 24.

Sichuan was a place of numerous non-Han tribes as well, a place where, to this day, the tribesmen are thought to worship demons.<sup>37</sup> The Han Chinese spared few words when describing the various ethnic groups of Sichuan, using words such as “raw” versus “cooked” to describe the tribes’ civility when dealing with the Han.<sup>38</sup> Playing with the homophonous nature of the Chinese language, a Ming author went so far as to transform the ethnic tribes of Sichuan into hungry-ghost-type specters, who haunted cemeteries and devoured passers-by.<sup>39</sup>

The common perception of Sichuan would then appear to be that of a remote place overrun not only with rebellious, uncooperative individuals, but also with savages, people scarcely perceived of as human in the eyes of the Han Chinese. It is with this perspective in mind that I now turn to a discussion of the site itself.

### War’s Vicissitudes

Dazu county is an area of Sichuan province located northwest of Chongqing on the road to Chengdu [fig. 4]. The main center of Dazu county is the city of Dazu, a bustling market town which is quickly losing its rural air under the onslaught of tourism and investment in the region. It is not necessary to travel far outside the city to reach remnants of Dazu’s past glories; the city is virtually ringed by Buddhist cave sites, with construction dates ranging from 892

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

to 1249 CE [fig. 5]. Two pagodas flank the city of Dazu, one to the north, the other to the south, aptly named Beishan ta (North Mountain Pagoda) and Nanshan ta (South Mountain Pagoda).

Along with the rock carvings at Beishan, the pagoda found there is the oldest relic in the area. It was at Beishan<sup>40</sup> that General Wei Junjing, influential military leader and civil administrator in Dazu county during the Tang dynasty, fortified himself against the Tang general Wang Jian<sup>41</sup>, who had taken refuge in Chengdu following Emperor Xizong's flight to Sichuan from the capital.<sup>42</sup> Historical record states that Wei Junjing built twenty castles and one hundred look-out towers on the hills surrounding Dazu, and stockpiled rations for his over ten thousand troops stationed nearby.<sup>43</sup>

In 892 CE, Wei Junjing also undertook the implementation of a large-scale image-carving campaign. Over 6,000 figures were eventually carved, all done in the hope that such work would prove meritorious for the general, and that the region as a whole would be placed under the Buddha's blessed protection.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately for Wei Junjing, his devotional act succeeded only in forestalling

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<sup>40</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 1. North Mountain is actually composed of several areas often referred to by their more specific names. For simplicity's sake, I here refer to the whole complex as "Beishan."

<sup>41</sup>Wang Jian went on to found the kingdom of the Former Shu. Lo, 21-2.

<sup>42</sup>Emperor Xizong [r. 874-888 CE] fled to Sichuan following the approach of the hordes of Huang Chao. Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Zhang, 7.

<sup>44</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 1.

the inevitable; five years after its inception, Wei Junjing's stronghold-temple fell to General Wang Jian.<sup>45</sup>

Wei Junjing's sacrifice was not in vain, however. The carvings at Beishan served as inspiration for the construction of Buddhist art works at various sites around Dazu county. Many of these were sponsored by the same contributors toward later works done at Beishan.<sup>46</sup> Aside from the military presence at Dazu, evidence for a landed gentry presence is seen at Beishan, in the form of inscriptions that detail various offerings made for devotional purposes.<sup>47</sup> The court that had followed Emperor Xizong to Sichuan had also brought money and talent with them.<sup>48</sup> Painters in attendance at the court were recorded as settling down in Chengdu, resulting in a profusion of styles being made available to local artists and artisans.<sup>49</sup> Although the majority of both most likely remained in Chengdu, it cannot be ruled out that some members of the aristocracy did not move further south into Dazu county. It is probable that such a movement into

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<sup>45</sup>Zhang, 10.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>48</sup>Patricia Berger, "Preserving the Nation: The Political Uses of Tantric Art in China," in The Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism 850-1850, ed. Marsha Weidner (University of Kansas: Spencer Museum of Art, 1994), 96-97. See also Angela Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten," n. 12, in which Howard quotes Wen Tong's chapter "Penzhou Zhangshi huaji" in the Ming dynasty work by Yang Shen, Chuan Shu yiwenzhi. On page eight of her introduction, Howard further notes the presence of a well-established indigenous artistic tradition in Sichuan at the time of the court's first arrival, as well as possible iconographic links to Sichuan's Buddhist neighbors, the Kingdoms of Nanzhao and Tibet. Zhang, 9, points to Sichuan as home to China's greatest density of ancient rock-carvings.

<sup>49</sup>Ho, xxxi.

the area would have taken place following Wang Jian's victory. During the Song dynasty, the Chengdu Plain, which includes roughly the area from Chongqing to Chengdu, was seen as one of the wealthiest regions in all of China.<sup>50</sup>

Artistic production during the Five Dynasties period continued steadily under the relative peace found in Sichuan. One-third of the artistic work done at the North Mountain grotto dates from the Five Dynasties,<sup>51</sup> an impressive number of stone sculptures when compared to works of like-medium of this time found in other parts of China. However, it is during the Song dynasty that the highest proportion of artwork was created. Song artisans are credited with not only a core group of carvings at Beishan, but the entire complex of sculptures found at Baodingshan as well.

### One Man's Devotion

Situated at an altitude of approximately 500 meters, the monastic complex on Baodingshan sits aloof from the hubbub of daily activity that ensues in Dazu city, fifteen kilometers to the south. The grotto site and the original temple complex were the product of seventy-one years of one man's religious devotion. Zhao Zhifeng, a monk trained in the teachings of the Esoteric Yogacara school of

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<sup>50</sup>Lo, 11. Dazu county would be at the eastern edge of the Chengdu Plain.

<sup>51</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 2. It is perhaps thanks to its peripheral location that Sichuan escaped much of the turbulence of this period.

Buddhism,<sup>52</sup> supervised not only the carving of the grotto, but the construction of the monastic complex, both meant to create a center for esotericism at Baodingshan.

Information available on Zhao Zhifeng is scant. It is known that he was born in Dazu county in the twenty-ninth year of the Shaoxing reign of Emperor Gaozong [1160 CE].<sup>53</sup> At five years of age, he was sent to reside in a monastery, consequently becoming a Buddhist novice. One commentary states that Zhao was sent away as his mother was ill; this would not seem improbable for the times, given that such an act would guarantee Zhao's education as well as gain merit for the family.<sup>54</sup> Accounts as to where Zhao was sent are conflicting. One source places Zhao in Hangzhou while another says Zhao studied at the school of a famous Sichuan Yogacara master named Liu.<sup>55</sup> The latter seems more probable in light of the fact that Esoteric practices were still prevalent in Sichuan

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<sup>52</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 5. For a discussion of Esotericism's development in China, particularly the events surrounding the monks Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra, see Zhou Yiliang's article "Tantrism in China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, vol. 8, no.1 (March 1944): 241-332.

<sup>53</sup> Dazu xianzhi: Sichuan sheng (Taipei: Chengwen chuban she, 1976), 498.

<sup>54</sup>Liu, 261.

<sup>55</sup>Ann Paludan in her article "Enlightenment in stone: The buffalo carvings of Baodingshan," 11-14, states that Zhao returned to Dazu after "studying esoteric Buddhism at Hangzhou". Paludan does not cite a source for this particular statement, and nothing has been found to support this claim. Zhang Jiaqi's version of Zhao studying in Sichuan makes sense in light of the fact that Liu was supposedly placed in high regard by Wang Jian, the general in control of Dazu county. Given the fact that Liu was born in 855 CE, Zhao could not have received direct instruction from Master Liu, but rather was most likely affiliated with his branch of the Chengdu Yogacara sect. Further evidence of Zhao's admiration for Liu may be found at Baodingshan itself, in the form of relief number twenty-one, depicting the asceticism of Master Liu.

in the Song dynasty, holdovers from earlier Tang practices no longer popular in the heart of the empire.<sup>56</sup>

After sixteen years of study, Zhao went “west,” wandering and preaching for three years.<sup>57</sup> In 1179, he returned to Baodingshan to lead in the establishment of Longevity Temple [Shengshou si], becoming its first monk.<sup>58</sup> The area was named “Baodingshan” (Precious Crown Mountain), due to its expansive rise, and there Zhao Zhifeng took an oath to disperse the Buddhist Law to all, to keep the surrounding countryside free from evil calamities, such as flooding, and to bring harmony to the region.<sup>59</sup>

For seventy years, Zhao dedicated himself to his vision of Baodingshan, gaining for the region untold merit and for himself the title of “Master of the Sixth Generation of the Esoteric Sect in China.”<sup>60</sup> Zhao was also responsible for

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<sup>56</sup>Berger, 96-7. Berger, on page 90, also notes that Esotericism had been a force within China since as early as the second century CE, with texts of tantric magical incantations or dharani known and translated into Chinese.

<sup>57</sup>Dazu xianzhi, 498. It is not clear whether Zhou’s point of departure was from somewhere within Dazu county, or from Chengdu. West from Dazu would put him on a course for Mount Emei and Chengdu; west from Chengdu would place him en route to Tibet.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Shengshou si was repaired in 1684, and has been completely renovated since 1949. Other buildings at the site include Longevity Tower, built in 1419 in honor of a visit by the imperial Prince of Shu (Shu being the former name for Sichuan), 11th son of the founder of the Ming dynasty. Dazu Grottoes, 5.

<sup>59</sup>Dazu xianzhi, 498-9.

<sup>60</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 5. Zhao Zhifeng’s position in the established hierarchy of the Esoteric school remains to be confirmed. I have as yet to find evidence of his being granted this title in any information outside of the site itself. Charles Orzech also makes a clear case for the disappearance of these lineages after the Huichang persecution of 845 CE. See “Esoteric Buddhism and the Shishi in China,” in The Esoteric Buddhist Tradition, Seminar for Buddhist Studies

work carried out at thirteen other sites, as well as for the construction of six monastic complexes, all within Dazu county.<sup>61</sup> He is immortalized in stone at Baodingshan. The carvings that immediately follow the depiction of the King of the Revolving Wheel are said to represent the pious monk at three different stages in his life, the Buddhas carved above serving to indicate that Zhao had achieved enlightenment [fig. 6].<sup>62</sup>

The construction of the Baodingshan complex appears to have been systematic. Zhao and his workers actually began the stone carving in an area which today is known as Little Buddha Bend [Xiaofowan], a rocky outcropping that lay directly above the main stone face used later for Great Buddha Bend [Dafowan] :

The area is not large; in fact, it is rather like a courtyard. According to historical records, there were at one time tens of thousands of small Buddhist figures on the back wall alone. Unfortunately, only about 2,000 remain today in the whole of the Bend.<sup>63</sup>

The Little Buddha Bend was badly damaged by fire sometime over the next century, yet Zhao Zhifeng's work in Great Buddha Bend remained intact.<sup>64</sup>

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Monograph series, no.2, ed. Henrik H. Sorensen (Copenhagen: Aarhus, 1994), 56.

<sup>61</sup>Zhang, 14.

<sup>62</sup>Dazu Grottoes, 7. Zhao Zhifeng is also purportedly the monk seen preaching in the lowest levels of the hell tableau. Chapters three and four contain further discussion of the significance of Zhao's placement there.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>There is, however, evidence that some shifting of the substratum at Baodingshan has occurred over the centuries, possibly due to earthquakes. It is particularly obvious in the relief of the hell scenes, in which part of the relief has

The sandstone substratum proved ideal for the undertaking, and by 1249 CE the rockface had been worked into over 1,500 individual carved figures, spanning an area 500 meters in length and between fifteen to thirty meters in height [fig. 7 and Appendix B]. According to Ann Paludan, a combination of naturalistic and geometric carving styles can be seen at Baodingshan, an unusual occurrence for an officially-sanctioned sculptural work, most of which tended toward the geometric style.<sup>65</sup>

This blending is subtly used to further stratify the types of subject matter at Baodingshan.<sup>66</sup> In the hell tableau, this change can be seen as one's eye travels down the cliff-face, from more frontal geometric carvings at the top to almost free-standing forms at the viewer's level. A direct link can then be made between the prescribed traditions involved in depictions of religious icons such as the Buddhas of the Ten Directions [fig. 8], and the latitude afforded the artisan when working on secular subject matter, as is seen in the drunkard not recognizing his own son in the Admonition Against Alcohol portion of the work [fig. 9].

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collapsed and a jagged slash can be seen cutting diagonally through the work [fig. 80].

<sup>65</sup>Paludan, 12. I here use "naturalistic" versus "geometric" as defined by Paludan's article. Paludan views the changes in sculptural approach to have been consciously made by either Zhao Zhifeng or the artisans. Although this theory is plausible, she does not theorize as to what motivated such an action. Her argument is weakened by a statement to the effect that the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, and its naturalistic style, is "a prelude to the story at the western end of the south side [of the grotto]" while the Brilliant Kings [Vidyarajas], carved in the geometric style, "close the narration on the north side." This statement implies that the twelfth-century pilgrim entered the grotto at Baodingshan in the same fashion as tourists do today. This does not appear to have been the case, an issue I will discuss in chapter four.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 14.

