CHAPTER FOUR

IN PRAISE OF SPIRITUAL ANCESTORS

Continuing the theme of traditional Chinese concerns being represented at Great Buddha Bend, the last two tableaux portray alternative paths not only for self-salvation, but also for aiding one's ancestors. In the first of the two works to be encountered moving away from the hell scenes and further along within the grotto, the worshipper is faced with a work in which the emphasis is clearly on how a layperson can reach enlightenment. Similar to the earlier, widely popularized story of the Indian householder Vimalakirti, the lifestory of reverend Master Liu was well known within Sichuan. Performing ten austerities in his search for the truth while selflessly aiding others, Liu's life highlighted one path to enlightenment (fig. 117). In Liu's personal saga, it becomes apparent that an individual could remain true to raising a family and being a productive member of society while still being a good Buddhist.

Located across the grotto from the Asceticism of Master Liu tableau, the last narrative, the Taming of the Wild Buffalo, points to self-enlightenment while salvation for all beings is implied but not overtly stated (fig. 118). This work is unique among similar series of the ox-herding theme in its inclusion of an additional scene in which a monk in meditation is depicted. The monk ideal is stressed, the monk ideal as specifically

represented by the grotto's conceptual creator, Zhao Zhifeng (fig. 119).[1] The positioning of Zhao's image within the grotto directly across from that of Master Liu serves to further reaffirm the contention that traditional concerns are being addressed throughout the narrative works at Great Buddha Bend, and it is for this reason that I have titled this chapter "In Praise of Spiritual Ancestors". In these last two tableaux these concerns are manifested in two fashions: one, as issues of lineage - Zhao was touted as Liu's spiritual heir; and two, as issues of variant acceptable modes to enlightenment – both the layman and the monk are depicted as fully enlightened beings capable of bringing others to enlightenment.

The Asceticism of Layman Liu

Tableau twenty-one, sometimes referred to as the "Asceticism of Master Liu", sometimes as the "Transformation of Master Liu", is the last large-scale work on the north side of Great Buddha Bend before one heads down to the river below or across the bridge to the Cave of Complete Enlightenment and the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau. Like the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau and the hell scenes, this work, which covers an area of approximately 15 by 25 meters, has a central iconic figure as its focal point. Unlike these earlier works, however,

[1]Henrik Sørensen. "A Study of the 'Ox-Herding Theme' as Sculptures at Mt. Baoding in Dazu County, Sichuan", Artibus Asiae no. 2 (1991): 227. Sørensen sees the

the central figure is neither a buddha nor a bodhisattva, but the figure of a layman, Master Liu, transformed into the cosmic Buddha, Vairocana. Liu is a historically documented figure, his life spanning the latter part of the Tang Dynasty from 843-907 CE.[2] A native of Sichuan Province, Liu evolved into a local subject of veneration, eventually being ascribed the title of "Superintendent of the Yogacara Sect of the Tang Dynasty".[3] It is Liu's lineage that Zhao Zhifeng purported to lay claim to, even though historical reality did not allow for a direct transmission of the Yogacara mantle.[4]

Aside from the central iconic figure of Liu, it is easy to draw parallels with other tableaux at Great Buddha Bend. Across the top of the work stretches a band of moon-shaped niches, nine total, composed of four bodhisattvas and five buddhas (fig. 120). These are the five dhyani Buddhas who accompany Vairocana, seen manifested in the figure of Liu at the center of the tableau as well as in the central Buddha figure in the moon niche above

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sculptures of Zhao occurring in at least five groupings at Baodingshan. See also DZSKYJ 470, 472, 490, and 500, and Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 114-116.

[2]Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 25. See also *Dazu xian zhi*, fascicle 1, 48-51. DZSKYJ, 294-298 presents a transcription of Liu's memorial stele as found in Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan.

[3] A monk named Zu Jue from Zhongyan Temple in Qingshenxian, Meizhou, compiled the information found on the stele. The text states that he was a practitioner of Huayan Buddhism and also of Chan. See DZSKMWL, 209. Sichuan appears to have been a stronghold for the Chan and Huayan schools, even after the Tang persecutions. See Gregory, 295. Liu may have been granted this title in 906 CE after performing rituals for the King of Shu. For more on Liu's practice of Yogacara, a branch of Esoteric Buddhism, see Wang Jiashi's article "*Liu Benzun yu mi jiao*" in DZSKYJ, 169-174.

[4]Images of Zhao Zhifeng and Liu Benzun co-exist on what is sometimes referred to as "The Founder's Pagoda" in Little Buddha Bend, a stone pagoda carved on all four sides with images and sutra titles as well as the ubiquitous verse regarding "a red-hot iron wheel" seen elsewhere at Baodingshan. See DZSKYJ, 8.

him.[5] Two bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara and Manjusri, flank the pentad to the west, with two more, Samantabhadra and Mahastamaprapta, to the east. Although the contents vary, these moon niches echo those seen above the neighboring hell scenes, with both in turn restating the much smaller moon niches patterning the background of the images of the Three Huayan Saints in tableau five (fig. 121). This imagery reappears throughout the Baodingshan complex, perhaps meant to formulate a visual chant for the viewer.[6]

Similar to the episodes in the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, the vignettes narrating the ten austerities of Liu are numbered, following a largely chronological order. Also similar is the symmetrical placement of the episodes, with the eye of the worshipper being forced to go back and forth across the tableau. However, whereas in the Kindness of Parents tableau the narratives fanned out and away from the central image, the vignettes begin on the outside in the Liu transformation tableau forcing the viewer's eye inward until it rests upon the central icon of Liu. The depiction of Liu throughout the tableau is that of a sagacious layman, dressed in scholarly rather than religious attire, sporting a scholar's cap and a long,

[5]Soothill 306b and 120a-b. The five Dhyani-buddhas generally accepted as standard include Vairocana, Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, and Amoghasiddhi. The five Dhyani-Bodhisattvas are Samantabhadra, Vajrapani, Ratnapani, Avalokitesvara, and Visvapani, although there are variations on this grouping. Here it would appear the bodhisattvas Mahastamaprapta and Manjusri are substituting for two of the standard five, and only four of the five are shown. Each Buddha manifests itself in both a wrathful and benevolent form, which is perhaps one explanation for the Radiant Kings depicted below the narrative portion of this tableau.

[6]For more on the issue of imagery and it's function with regard to chanting, see France Pepper, "The Thousand Buddha Motif: A Visual Chant in Cave-Temples Along the Silk Road" in Oriental Art (Winter 1999): 39-45.

pointed beard (fig. 122).[7] Depicting twenty years of intermittent activity, the narrative episodes encompass the self-sacrificing austerities of layman Liu, ending with his ultimate 'transformation', mirroring the Buddha's own Parinirvana carved at the opposite end of the grotto.[8]

The tableau can then be read in a funnel-like manner, the central conduit being the large figure of Liu as he transforms into the Buddha Vairocana. Like the image of Dizang Bodhisattva in the neighboring hell scenes tableau, the iconic representation of Liu as Vairocana reaches across time and place, up to the heavens of the Buddhas as well as down through his own worldly existence, and lastly further down toward that of his followers and converts. Not perhaps coincidentally, the Parinirvana scene carved at the

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[7]This differs from the rendition of Liu's ten austerities found in neighboring Anyue County at Pilu Cave, where Liu in his transformed state of Vairocana is represented as a Buddha-like figure wearing an elaborate openwork crown (fig. 123). See Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 208-209. Sørensen notes that the Pilu Cave figure successfully unifies attributes of the *dharmakaya* ("essential bodhi; purity", Soothill, 63b) and *nirmanakaya* ("practical bodhi; transformations", Soothill, 63b) of Vairocana. See Sørensen, A Survey of the Religious Sculptures of Anyue (Copenhagen: East Asian Institute, University of Copenhagen, 1989). For a more in-depth definition of the *trikaya*, or threefold body of a Buddha, see Soothill's lengthy explanation, 77b and 78a.

The Anyue County Pilu Cave work dates to the Northern Song dynasty (ca. 936-944 CE), and the quality of the carvings is considerably higher than those found at Baodingshan. Unlike the tableau at Great Buddha Bend, the carvings at Pilu Cave were commissioned by Liu's descendants according to an inscription found at the site. See Hu, "*Anyue, Dazu 'Liu Benzun shi lian tu' ti ke he Song li <Tang Liu ju shi chuan> bei de yan jiu*" ("Research into the Carved Inscriptions of the Liu Benzun 10 Austerities Tableaux in Anyue and Dazu and the Song Stele <The Legend of the Tang Layman Liu>"), *Sichuan wen wu* no. 3 (1991): 42-47.

The image of Liu as Vairocana found in Little Buddha Bend at Baodingshan can perhaps be best understood as an interim stage between the Anyue works and the Liu figure carved in Great Buddha Bend (fig. 124). In this image, Vairocana still wears a crown, as was the case in the earlier Anyue work, but the crown now bears a small image of Liu in his layman's attire. A similar composition is also seen in the half-figure of Vairocana placed near the west end of the grotto, directly opposite from the Liu tableau (fig. 125).

[8]Similar extreme ascetic acts are outlined in another apocryphal text, the Book of Brahma's Net, *Fanwang jing*, composed in China during the latter half of the fifth century CE (Buswell, 19). In this text, ascetic acts including self-immolation were extolled at the same time that certain bad behaviors such as the sale or consumption of alcohol were condemned.

far end of the grotto also incorporates these three cosmic levels of existence. Below these three levels in the Ten Austerities tableau, the viewer encounters the Ten Radiant Kings, messengers of Vairocana, manifestations of his wrath against evil spirits (fig. 126).[9] Given their possible connection to Vairocana, these ferocious deities must be considered as integral to the Liu tableau, not separate from it as the archaeological numbering system in place at Great Buddha Bend would seem to imply.[10]

The narrative scenes of the Liu tableau are also presented in this funnel-like fashion, thereby differentiating this tableau in format from the other narrative tableaux seen at Great Buddha Bend.[11] In the earlier discussed tableaux, the vignettes were presented as snapshot groupings, for the most part relatively easy to be "read" individually by the viewer. The Ten Austerities tableau presents the events of Liu's life in an orderly fashion, but the participants in these events are not grouped per se, but rather hierarchically lined-up, the witnesses physically placed above or behind Liu as he performs his fiery deeds, while those on whose behalf he is doing so stand below (fig. 128). Since most of the witnesses are enlightened beings, their appearance in the heavens above is represented differently from those of

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See J.J. M. deGroot's study, Le Code du Mahayana en Chine. Reprint. (New York and London: Garland Publishing Co., 1980): 67-69 and commentary on pages 213-244.

[9]Soothill, 263a. Stevenson, 02/01/02, notes that the *Vidyaraja* or Radiant Kings can also be seen as protectors of *dharani*, in which case the connection to Vairocana would not be so obvious.

[10]Only eight of the ten Radiant Kings are carved in the representation of Liu's ten austerities found within Baodingshan's Little Buddha Bend (fig. 127), and are not included at all in the nearby Pilu Cave carved version of the same theme which dates to the Northern Song dynasty. See Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 118 and 208-213.

the this-world individuals on whose behalf Liu is performing his acts. As previously seen with regard to the bodhisattva figure in the tigress jataka vignette within the Repayment of Kindness tableau, the witnesses to Liu's ten deeds are considerably smaller in size than the figure of Liu, which helps to create the illusion of distance. Yet not all of the involved parties are depicted, nor are they captioned in any fashion as has been seen elsewhere at Great Buddha Bend.[12]

Presented as they have been, these narratives necessitate explanation, and probably did so even to the literate twelfth-century worshipper. Beginning furthest to the left with 'Number One - Refining a Finger by Fire' and then proceeding to the vignette furthest to the right, 'Number Two - Staying in Snow', the viewer's eye continues inward back and forth to end up at numbers nine and ten which flank the central image of Liu as Vairocana. The austerities performed by Liu can be seen as examples of what James Benn terms "apocryphal practice", indigenous (non-Buddhist) practices which come

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[11]To a certain degree, one could argue that at least a portion of the hell tableau is set up in a 'funnel-like' fashion, but this organization breaks down within the lowest realms of hell.

[12]This differs from both the Little Buddha Bend and Pilu Cave renditions of the same theme. Carved on the inside of the stone *daochang* at Little Buddha Bend (an overall area of 2.9 x 1.6 meters versus 14.6 x 24.8 meters for the Great Buddha Bend tableau), space restrictions were perhaps responsible for the change in arrangement seen in Little Buddha Bend. In the *daochang* carvings, Liu's ten austerities are split five to each side on the two walls flanking the central Vairocana image on the back wall of the small stone structure (fig. 137). The arrangement is pyramidal, two austerities above and three below on each side. The heavenly witnesses, like the images of Liu, are depicted in circular moon-niches, with those of the witnesses being smaller than those of Liu. In the Pilu Cave tableau, the images are similarly arranged, but the groupings are not as easy to read due to a change in the overall format of the work – a grouping of five austerities on each side set up in a three-two, two-tiered, inverted pyramid fashion. The overall area of this work is 6.6 x 14 meters, considerably smaller than the Great Buddha Bend rendition of the same theme. Hu, SCDJFJSK, 330, notes that the inscriptions are the same at both the Anyue County and

to be codified in apocryphal texts such as the *Fan wang jing* (Book of Brahma's Net) and the *Shou leng'yan jing* (Book of the Heroic-march Absorption).[13]

The first austerity, dated to the second year of the *guang qi* reign era of Tang Xizong – 886 CE, is quite literally depicted, with Liu in the layman's attire he is shown wearing in most of the vignettes, seated in meditation, and holding up the second finger of his left hand from which a gilded flame arises (fig. 129). To Liu's right on the rock face which frames the left edge of the tableau stands the "Virtuous Sage" Shakyamuni, who, the inscription states, "was moved by this, and assisted Liu in transmitting the Way."[14] Between the two figures stands a bodhisattva not identified in the inscription, yet undoubtedly an attendant to the Buddha and another witness to Liu's act. Below Liu are three figures, again not specifically named in the inscription, but men of varying age and discipline. These are perhaps representatives of the "many people sick with an epidemic" that Liu "accidentally happened across", and for whom Liu burnt himself in an attempt to aid their cause.[15]

On the far right side of the tableau is a seated Buddha-like figure. This image represents the second act performed by layman Liu, that of staying in the snow (fig. 130). The inscription is extremely specific with regard to the time and place of this event: it occurred in the eleventh moon of 886 CE on Emeishan, where Liu and his followers had gone in order to "honor the

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Baodingshan sites. The Little Buddha Bend work does not include carved text next to the images per se, but it can be found incorporated into Liu's life story on a stele nearby.

[13]James A. Benn, "Where Text meets Flesh: Burning the Body as an Apocryphal Practice in Chinese Buddhism" in History of Religions vol. 37 no. 4 (May 1998): 295-297.

[14]DZSKYJ, 490. For complete translations of the inscribed texts see Appendix B.

[15]Ibid.

image of Samantabhadra".[16] They encounter a blizzard en route, which leaves the mountains "white-white". Liu forces himself to the summit, where for two weeks the layman "sat upright in meditation...following the example of Shakyamuni who for six years performed Buddhist acts on a snowy mountain in order to achieve the Way."[17] In order to further the association between Liu and the historical Buddha, Liu is not depicted in his scholar's hat, but rather with the short-cropped hair of the historical Buddha. In acknowledgement of Liu's deed, Samantabhadra manifests himself, and is to be seen carved directly above the inscription, which is not on the face of the large rock tableau, but actually carved on the flanking edge.

Returning again to the left side of the tableau, "Refining an Ankle by Fire" is the third austerity performed by Liu sixteen years later in "the first moon of 902 CE", and carved immediately adjacent to the image of him burning his finger (fig. 131). Done on behalf of the suffering masses, perhaps represented by the two female images carved below, Liu is shown once again in meditation with two gilt flames arising from his ankles, even though the inscription specifically states that he had in fact only burned the ankle of his left leg in order to make his offering to all the Buddhas.[18] To Liu's right are two unidentified figures, possibly representing the messenger and edict bearer of the king, who, it is noted, certified Liu's actions after four days.

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[16]Ibid., 491.
[17]Ibid.
[18]Ibid.

Austerity number four involves a bit of treachery, which Liu with his enlightened mind foresaw, using the event to convert one Lord Zhou. According to the accompanying inscribed text, in 904 CE Lord Zhou sent a messenger to Liu asking for one of his eyes under the guise that it was necessary for a medicinal cure. Liu immediately recognized that this was simply a ploy to see if Liu was truly sincere in his Buddhist belief; he therefore grabbed a knife, gouged out his eye, and handed it over to the reluctant messenger. The messenger then took the eye to Lord Zhou, who confessed his sin and converted to Buddhism.[19]

The artist has chosen to depict the very moment after Liu has gouged out his eye. Knife still in hand as it lies across his chest, Liu's right eye appears puffy and closed. From his outstretched left hand rolls the white ball of his eye downward into a tray being held up by a crouching servant figure (fig. 132). Below these two figures is the figure of Lord Zhou's messenger, reaching up as if to take the eye. He stands frontally with his head turned sideways and up as if to regard Liu and his extreme act of piety. Clad in non-Han attire, the messenger clutches a box into which he presumably will place his precious cargo.[20] Off Liu's left shoulder is the bodhisattva Vajragarbha, who, the inscription notes, has manifested himself in order to witness Liu's sacrifice. To the right of the messenger figure stands another unidentified man dressed in scholarly attire. He may portray the converted Lord Zhou,

[19]Ibid.

but more likely than not he is connected to the second austerity carved immediately to the right of austerity number four, and represents one of the multitude that traveled to Emeishan with Liu in order to make offerings to the image of Samantabhadra.

Austerity number five represents the only chronological disparity seen within the Liu tableau. Whereas the fourth austerity ostensibly took place in the seventh lunar month of 904 CE, the fifth is dated to the second lunar month of the same year, and as such, the positioning of these two vignettes should have been reversed. One possible explanation for the reversal may be orthographic error; another may be a simple lack of concern, as both events took place within the same year.[21] Both are plausible, although it is important to note that throughout the rest of the carvings within the tableau, including the three which all occurred within the year 905 CE, chronological order is the norm.

What is depicted in austerity number five is Liu cutting off his left ear (fig. 133). Liu is shown clutching a knife in his right hand, which he holds up to his left ear. His left hand holds the ear in place for the cut. Again seated in meditation, the inscription states that Liu's act "to convert people and to relieve sickness" was witnessed by "great worthies" who manifested themselves on a floating hill. These worthies are represented by the three figures carved off Liu's right shoulder, blue clouds curling under their feet.

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[20]Representing the messenger in more Central Asian attire may have been done by the artisan in an effort to evoke images of the Tang era during which Liu had lived and performed his austerities.

Below Liu are again the two female converts, representing here those that Liu has swayed with his "golden wisdom" (fig. 134).[22] Austerities four and five are two of only three in which there is the cutting of a body part, versus burning which is seen in the other six. The second austerity is the only act of the ten austerities performed by Liu in which no apparent self-inflicted physical violence was performed on his body.

The vignette depicting austerity number six is one of two images of Liu prone, lying propped up against a bolster. Head to the east, feet pointing inward toward the central Liu/Vairocana icon, the master lays bare-chested, right leg bent, a gilt flame rising from the center of his torso as he proceeds to burn the area over his heart (fig. 135). Above him hovers *Dalun mingwang*, the Great Wheel Radiant King, Destroyer of Delusion,[23] who has manifested himself in order to witness Liu's act. Dated specifically to the third day of the seventh moon of 905 CE, Liu's austerity was undertaken on behalf of all the myriad creatures, so that they might "forever cease in their worries".[24] They are represented as the two Buddhist nuns below, one carrying a lotus, the other a stylized mountain, images evoking the Buddhist law.

According to the inscription, austerity number seven, "Refining the Crown of the Head by Fire" took place on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon of 905 CE, hence only 12 days after Liu's previous sacrifice of

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[21]DZSKYJ, 491.
[22]Ibid.
[23]Soothill, 96a.
[24]DZSKYJ, 491.

immolating the area over his heart.[25] Here again the worshipper is told that Liu "followed the example of Shakyamuni Buddha who allowed a magpie to nest on top of his head".[26] Liu is once again depicted by the artist in Shakyamuni-fashion, seated in a meditation pose with palms joined in reverence; on top of Liu's close-cropped hair a gilt flame burns prominently (fig. 136). Standing just off his left shoulder is the bodhisattva Manjusri, who has appeared as Liu's witness.

The inscription reads that "the Great Light Radiant King gave up his hair and gave alms."[27] This is perhaps the scene that is depicted below vignette number seven, a series of three figures moving from right to left. The first figure is a ferocious commander - the Radiant King - with his sword drawn and his face glowering in a fearsome growl. To his right, stands another man, clad in simple clothes, his left hand clutching his hat to his head while in his right he balances a sword on his shoulder - readying to cut his hair off. On this figure's right stands a young man in short pigtails - the Radiant King now depicted as a young novice - hands clasped and head

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[25]This is also the first day of the Ghost Festival, and the day in which the monks break from their summer meditation retreat. On this day, offerings were made not only at Buddhist and Daoist shrines, but also 'national offerings' (*guo jia gong yang*) were made, with the merit accrued benefiting everyone's ancestors. See Stephen Teiser, "The Ritual Behind the Opera: A Fragmentary Ethnography of the Ghost Festival, A.D. 400-1900" in Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion, David Johnson, ed., 191-223. Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project no. 3. (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Publications, 1995): 196.

[26]DZSKYJ, 491. The burning of various areas of the head is an offering still practiced by Buddhist devotees. See Miriam Levering's description of this practice as carried out in a Taiwanese temple in "Scripture and Its Reception: A Buddhist Case" in Rethinking Scripture, 99. Miriam Levering, ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989). Benn also notes that as late as 1983 this practice was frowned upon by Chinese authorities, who used it's non –Buddhist origins as a rationale for abolishing it. Benn, 295, footnote 1.

[27]Ibid.

bowed in prayer. Similar depictions of a repeated protagonist occur in the vignettes of the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau.

Austerity number eight is listed as having occurred in 905 CE, with no specific date given. Seated next to the reclining figure of Liu burning his chest, this image of Liu once again wields a sword in his right hand, held up over his shoulder as he readies himself for another cut, eventually totaling 48 in all (fig. 137). The inscription informs us that with each cut Liu "utters an oath to aid the masses, thereby echoing Amitabha Buddha's 48 vows".[28] Amitabha Buddha appears off Liu's left shoulder, and to his left can be seen the drums and cymbals used by the clerk Xie Gong to "memorialize the event by performing music for all to hear".[29]

Below is another military figure, perhaps Wang Jian, the commander who greatly admired and respected Liu, and within whose *daochang*[30] Liu performed this austerity (fig. 138).[31] This figure parallels the military figure seen on the other side of the Liu icon, and from here inward to the central

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[28]DZSKYJ, 491.

[29]Ibid.

[30]*Daochang* is the Chinese term for *bodhimanda*, "a place or method for attaining to Buddha-truth…A place for teaching, learning, or practicing religion." Soothill, 416a.

[31]DZSKYJ, 364. Wang Jian was active in Sichuan during the Tang dynasty, with his adversary, Wei Junjing, being responsible for the building of the Beishan Buddhist complex originally as a fortress to defend against Wang Jian. Wei is described as "an untitled but influential landowner in the sparsely settled hills between the Tuo and Fu river valley", who organized local notables in opposition to an attempted local uprising and was rewarded with various prefectural assignments in the region. See 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): 42-43. It is interesting to note the similarities between the imagery found within the Anyue Master Liu tableau and Wang Jian's tomb. Both contain carved half-images of strong men. In Anyue, they carry the lotus pedestal upon which Liu transformed into Vairocana sits; in Chengdu, they carry Wang Jian's sarcophagus. This may indicate a sharing of artisans within the workshops of Anyue County

image, the figures are mirrored on both sides: military commander, official, woman bearing Liu's offerings. The overall impression of the Liu tableau is one of symmetry, which leads one to understand why all of the participants could not be shown since such a balanced final product would have been much harder to achieve if more figures had been added.

Liu's sacrifice performed in austerity number nine is one that surely shocked the twelfth-century worshipper, forcing him or her to realize the depth of Liu's Buddhist belief. The inscriptions states that on the fifteenth day of the intercalary twelfth moon of 905 CE, Liu "used a candle and some cloth to bind his penis. Throughout one day and night it burnt, thereupon cutting off Liu's desire."[32] Clearly a difficult scene to portray even in today's liberal climate, the artist has effectively given the viewer a sense of the action while refraining from being explicit. Mirroring the image of Liu refining his heart, Liu here is represented right leg up to shield his private parts, fully clothed as he reclines backward against a bolster (fig. 139). A gilt flame arising from behind his upraised knee is the only indication of his extreme act. Stretching outward above this figure of Liu are the precious canopies which the heavens showered down upon him in admiration.

Liu would only have undertaken such an extraordinary act in response to equally extreme circumstances. The inscription reveals to the worshipper the rationale behind Liu's deed. Liu performed this austerity in order to

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and Chengdu, which may explain to some degree the higher quality workmanship seen at the Anyue site as compared to the carvings found at Baodingshan.

[32]Ibid.

resurrect a certain "Qiu Shao of Horse Head Lane", who had already been dead three days when his family came to beseech Liu. The entire family pledged to enter into service to Liu (and by extension into the service of the Buddhist faith) if Qiu Shao could once again be granted life. Liu successfully revives him by "sprinkling fragrant water" upon his corpse. In thanks, Qiu, his wife, and two household women all come to fulfill their obligation to Liu and the Buddha. Liu then proceeds to emasculate himself in thanks to all the Buddhas, taking his own ability to give life as payment for restoring life to Qiu Shao.

The King of Shu "exclaimed his admiration", issuing an edict to honor Liu. It is unclear if the unidentified scholar official depicted below austerity number nine is meant to represent Qiu Shao or the king's memorial bearer (fig. 140). Most scholars agree, however, that the two women flanking the central Liu icon bearing Liu's bodily offerings are meant to be images of the two female Qiu household members who exchanged their householder status to serve Liu and the Buddha so that Qiu might be resurrected.[33] The female figure to the left holds the ear removed by Liu in austerity number five (fig. 141). On the right, the female servant bears the hand cut off by Liu in austerity number eight (fig. 142). A cloud bearing a small seated Buddha figure emanates from each of their foreheads, signifying that through their commitment to Liu they have achieved the bodhi mind.[34]

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[33]Hu, SCDJFJSKYS, 332.

[34]It is easier to see these offerings in the Anyue tableau, since the female acolytes are on ground level, and Liu's offerings are rendered quite explicitly.

Liu dies in 907 CE. The last of Liu's ten austerities takes place a year earlier in the first moon of 906 CE, and is performed by Liu in order to relieve the suffering of the multitudes, and in response to questions of faith raised by the King of Shu.[35] In this final episode Liu is once again shown in seated meditation, his right hand held up (fig. 143). On his two knees the worshipper can clearly see the gilt flames rising as Liu immolates his two knees. Off of his left shoulder stands an unidentified Buddha figure as witness; below him stands another official clutching a tablet to his chest. Also unidentified, this may be the official who delivered the King of Shu's imperial missive to Liu as is indicated in the inscription.

Layman Liu's passing did not signify the end of his story. Liu was in essence kept alive through the carvings representing his legendary acts located at various places within Sichuan province. Clearly the magnitude of his sacrifice had lost little of its luster even 250 years after his death, thereby explaining the decision reached by Zhao Zhifeng to make Liu his spiritual mentor. An exemplar of virtuous enlightenment, Liu continued to be revered within the region, and his legacy carried with it considerable clout for the man who claimed to have received his mantle.[36]

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[35] DZSKYJ, 492.

[36] Liu was not the first to utilize self-immolation as a means to "seal a vow". Benn, 308-309, notes Buddhist clergymen, including Zhide (1235-1322) and Zunshi (964-1032), also burned body parts as a means of achieving a specific religious end.

Taming the Wild Buffalo and the Monk Ideal

The Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is the last of the narrative tableaux found at Great Buddha Bend, and is the only work that sublimates the text to the image (fig. 144). This tableau also can be said to be more outwardly "narrative" in its perspective, the story of a herdsman trying to bring his wayward water buffalo under control. The work is not depicting a "pastoral" scene as is so often the glossy picture book description, but rather a fierce struggle between man and the elusive concept of Buddha-nature.[37] As such, I have chosen to refer to this grouping as incorporating wild buffalo rather than oxen, in the hopes of highlighting this struggle and setting this type of imagery apart from other Song dynasty works which truly utilize oxen, not water buffalo.[38]

In his work on the relationship between the ox-herding sequence at Great Buddha Bend and extant printed versions of the same topic, Henrik Sørensen outlines the probable sources employed by the artistic directors at

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[37]The "glossy picture books" are not alone in describing the works in this tableau as pastoral. Ann Paludan, "Enlightenment in stone: The buffalo carvings of Baodingshan" in Apollo (February 1994): 11, describes the images as "recreat(ing) scenes of rural life in eleventh-century China" and being unusual in that "the entire subject matter is drawn from local country life." Paludan goes on to say that because the sculptors were themselves peasants, they drew upon their fellow men as prototypes for the works. No information is available on the sculptors at Baodingshan, but nearby Beishan records indicate an active carving guild of professional carvers, not peasants. See Hu, *Anyue Dazu Fo diao*, 39-43.

[38]In her article on the ox as a motif in Song period painting, Scarlett Jang states, "When the ox is presented in Ch'an paintings, it is usually a water buffalo, rather than another kind of ox such as the yellow ox (Bos Taurus), i.e., domestic cattle." See Scarlett Ju-yu Jang, "Oxherding Painting in the Sung Dynasty", Artibus Asiae vol. 52 no.1/2 (1992): 70. According to Richard Von Glahn, oxen were also enshrined throughout Sichuan province in connection with sacrifices to both Li Bing, a famous 3rd c. BCE tamer of floods, and the mythic tamer of floods, the Great Yu. See Von Glahn, 14.

Baodingshan in the creation of the tableau.[39] Sørensen notes that the origins of the ox-herding theme as a metaphor for spiritual training can be traced back to Indic roots, with the earliest references found within the Pali canon circa 3rd century BCE.[40] The use of this theme within China is equally long-standing, attributed to scriptures first translated by Kumarajiva in the 4th century CE.[41] Yet it was not until the mid-eleventh century that the "circle-symbols", which comprise the last vignette within the narrative sequence at Great Buddha Bend, appear.[42] Sørensen also points out that the Buddhist school most involved in the use of the circle-symbol imagery is the Chan or Meditation school.[43]

The presence of Chan imagery within such close proximity to works such as the Pure Land tableau and the hell scenes that adjoin them should not be considered idiosyncratic. By the Song dynasty, several schools including Chan and Tiantai had begun to assimilate Pure Land beliefs and practices, leading to a syncretic popular Buddhism that differs greatly from twentieth-

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[39]Sørensen, 211-230. The extant printed works to which Sørensen compares the Baodingshan tableau date from the Japanese Muromachi period (1338-1573), but are said to be based on earlier Chinese prototypes. Sørensen, 211-230. It is interesting to note that the printed Puming version of the series includes the phrase "The Chan master Puming speaks in praise" at the beginning of each of the ten textual sections. This is very similar to what is seen carved within the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau, but is not included in the texts accompanying the Taming of the Wild Buffalo work.

[40]Ibid., 210.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Brinker, Zen in the Art of Painting, trans. George Campbell (London and New York: Rutledge, 1987): 104. Brinker notes that the Chinese Chan master Kuoan Zhiyuan circa 1150 CE first promulgated a series of "Oxherding Pictures" which included accompanying text. A recension of this text may have served as the source for the Baodingshan tableau.

[43]Ibid., 211.

century notions of Chan or Pure Land.[44] According to Heng-ching Shih, "The Chan – Pure Land syncretism provided an egalitarian salvation for the religious populace regardless of their spiritual capabilities."[45] Since few art historians have addressed more than one or two of the Great Buddha Bend tableaux at a time, the issue of syncretism within the images found at the site has not been adequately addressed. One plausible explanation for the potpourri of imagery carved at Baodingshan is that because of the increasing syncretism of Buddhism, the public expected a diverse spectrum of Buddhist activities to be accommodated. Another would be that the Buddhist monastic community desired to represent a broad range of imagery for reasons of either pedagogy or posterity or both, an issue to be discussed in chapter five. Any rationale offered would be in keeping with the Buddhist theorem that the various schools simply represent differing approaches to an ultimate singular truth. Such an unconditional vision allowed for greater artistic expression while at the same time requiring a certain amount of foresight on the part of the monastic community.

Unlike the tableaux encountered earlier within Great Buddha Bend, in order to "read" the Taming of the Wild Buffalo narrative in its proper sequence, the worshipper would have needed to approach it from the opposite direction, i.e., keeping the work off of one's left shoulder, not the

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[44]Stevenson, 366. According to Peter Gregory, the Chan tradition as practiced in Sichuan in the Tang dynasty was especially important since it developed and spread as the orthodox Chan tradition of the Song dynasty. See Gregory, Tsung-mi and the Sinification of Buddhism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[45]Shih, 6.

right as was the case in the previous five tableaux discussed. This fact alone helps to support a different vision of the Great Buddha Bend as it functioned in Song dynasty times. From the layout of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau as it stretches at only 4.5 meters in height for a distance of 27 meters, it becomes apparent that no connecting bridge existed between the two ends of the grotto in the twelfth-century. Had that been the case, the tableau would have been carved inversely to its present configuration. As the story now unfolds, a bridge would not have been desirable because it places the worshipper at the end, rather than the beginning, of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo story. Furthermore, since there is no indication that circumambulation was being performed at the grotto, such a bridge would not have been ritually necessitated.

From the placement of the tableau, it also becomes apparent that the Taming of the Wild Buffalo work was designed with the monastic community in mind. Evidence for this lies in the positioning of the tableau directly adjacent to the entrance to the grotto from the Buddhist center above. Monks entering the grotto would have immediately encountered this work, proceeding from this narrative dedicated to personal enlightenment to the Cave of Complete Enlightenment, in which a bodhisattva demonstrates how even enlightened beings reverence and learn from the Buddha.[46] Further supporting the theory that this particular work was directed at the monastic

[46]Both works can also be seen to reflect the "perfect or integrated" path to enlightenment, the Cave of Complete Enlightenment including in its imagery small vignettes of the pilgrimage of Sudhana on his quest for the truth.

community more than the laity is the placement of the first inscription immediately to the left side of the entrance from the temple complex above (fig. 145).[47]

The Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is composed of eleven rather than the standard ten vignettes, and curves around the southwest end of the grotto. The carvings were produced from the living rock with separate cut-rock pieces being attached in an additive process utilizing pegs which fit into holes cut into the portion of the figure carved into the cliff-face (fig. 146). This allows the figures to project out from the rock, affording them a more three-dimensional quality than is seen elsewhere at Great Buddha Bend.[48] Stretching for 27 meters, all of the eleven scenes are a combination of text and image as is the case within the earlier five narrative tableaux; however, the text is not as overtly placed within the work, but integrated in such a fashion as to allow the images to dominate the viewer's attention.[49]

The first vignette entails the story of the herdsman attempting to rein in his disobedient water buffalo (fig. 147). Standing with legs splayed to the right of the recalcitrant beast, the herdsman tugs mightily on his tether, an act that causes the buffalo to barely acknowledge his presence! The accompanying text reads as follows:

> Broken out of his cowpen, there is nothing you can
> do! If (the ox) is not tied with a rope, he does as he

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[47]Sørensen, 214.

[48]Paludan, 12.

[49]Only seven of the remaining eleven texts accompanying the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau are legible. The incorporated segments of translations were done by Henrik Sørensen, and are duly footnoted.

> pleases. (Although) you pull with the utmost of your efforts, you cannot make him turn his head. What else can you do but go along with him?[50]

This grouping is significant for setting up the theme of humans coming to terms with the elusive nature of enlightenment. The herdsman here represents humankind, a grouping of individuals largely unable to comprehend the Buddhist teachings. The buffalo (or ox as he is sometimes referred to) stands for the intangible Buddha-nature. The metaphor is straightforward – it is only through a long and on-going struggle that humans gradually come to enlightenment. Rein in your animal, and you will at last come to a full realization of the Buddha's word.

The second vignette shows some progress being made by the herdsman as he tries to bring his water buffalo to heel. Clearly unable to use brute force, he entices the animal with grass, a symbol of the Buddhist's teachings.[51] The man's success can be gauged by the animal's response – head bent backwards across his body, he gratefully munches on the proffered greens from the herdsman, now depicted wearing a broad-brimmed hat which hangs down across his back (fig. 148). The text highlights the on-going struggle of the man to control the beast:

> As the fragrant grass is endless, you must have faith in yourself. If you do not drag him (away), he simply will not turn his head. Although the ox is aware of the man's intentions, if you let him go, he will run here and there, and will not easily be brought under control.[52]

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[50]Sørensen, 224. The transcription of the original text can be found in DZSKYJ, 499.
[51]Ibid.
[52]Ibid., 225. DZSKYJ, 499.

The inscriptions for the third, fourth and fifth vignettes are no longer legible, but the images themselves allow for an analysis of how the story continues to unfold. Taking another tack, the herdsman in the third scene employs the "big stick" approach, having failed to get the buffalo to obey him with his green grass delights (fig. 149). Arm raised above him, he wields a whip in his left hand as he continues to tug at the buffalo with his right. The buffalo appears to be turning towards him, although the herdsman's success is difficult to gauge due to the loss of the attached head and upper body portion of the buffalo figure. Immediately adjacent to the damaged buffalo image is the fourth vignette in which the buffalo has at long last been brought under control by the herdsman (fig. 150). Once again wearing his broad-brimmed hat, the herdsman now leads the buffalo towards him, as a monkey playfully looks on from above.

The fifth vignette portrays not one herdsman and his buffalo but two, who share a laugh now that they have successfully tamed their respective animal charges (fig. 151). This is the most often reproduced image from the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau. Lounging back, arms wrapped around each other's shoulders, the herdsman look relaxed and happy, content in their achievement. The camaraderie of the two men perhaps meant to signify the joys of a Buddhist brotherhood in which desire has been vanquished.

The sixth vignette demonstrates how far the herdsman and his buffalo have come since their contentious beginnings. The herdsman stands with the tether rope at his side, the buffalo standing above him as he leans down to

drink from the stream also seen in the previous vignette (fig. 152). Like the third buffalo depicted, this image is also missing the added on portions of his head and upper body. The accompanying inscription notes that the buffalo can now be counted on to follow his master, without any form of coercion being required:

> Having harnessed the ox by the nose, it will obey (even if) the nose has no cord. … He will follow you on his own account. At the stream below the mountain's shade, there is no need to keep him restrained. Morning or evening he does not escape,….[53]

As seen previously within the hell tableau, the herdsman in this vignette stands pointing at the inscribed textual portion of the work, as if to guide the viewer's attention to the importance of this statement. He once again has changed attire, this time depicted as a younger, heavier man with short hair worn in two topknots.

Vignette number seven in the Great Buddha Bend's eleven-part series continues the story of the herdsman and the buffalo, but the focus has now shifted from their mutual antagonism to their peaceful coexistence. As Sørensen notes, this is the scene "where the herdsman, i.e., the Chan adept, no longer cares about cultivation or non-cultivation. He is allowing things to follow their natural course."[54]

> The myriad shapes are forgotten, with nothing from which they can be born the body of the ox is completely white…appearing and disappearing.[55]

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[53]Ibid. See Li Fangyin, *Dazu shi ku yi shu*, 51, for the original transcription.
[54]Ibid., 226.
[55]Ibid. See Li, 52, for the original transcription.

The buffalo is carved head down as he grazes, his back to the herdsman, his legs used as a framing device for the carved inscription (fig. 153). The herdsman stares out at the worshipper, kneeling as he leans against a rock with a complacent smile on his face. Given that the figures were undoubtedly originally brightly painted as evidenced by the paint remaining on statues in other areas within the grotto, one could conjecture that the buffalo imagery would have been painted white from this vignette onward, rather than their more natural black, the white signifying the Chan practitioner nearing an understanding of his own Buddha-nature.

The eighth scene is also lacking in a legible inscription.[56] Both the eighth and ninth vignettes within the tableau illustrate the bliss that awaits the herdsman who has successfully brought his wild buffalo under control. In the first of the two, the herdsman is shown playing his flute, dressed in a raincoat with his hair once again in a topknot (fig. 154). Due to the crane depicted at the herdsman's side and his coat of leaves, Sørensen interprets this as the Chan adept à la Daoist immortal, which is certainly one possible reading of the iconography.[57] Yet it is also possible given the variety of body types and attires in the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau that it is simply meant to represent another variation on time, the herdsman during the rainy season. This reading of the imagery is supported by an inscription from the

[56]Sørensen has attempted a reconstruction of what remains of the inscription accompanying the eighth vignette, but I do not include it here as it does not illuminate a reading of the sculptural grouping. Sørensen, 226.

[57]Ibid., 226.

thirteenth century which accompanies a similar two-dimensional image, and reads as follows, "The herd boy wears a hemp-fiber cape and a bamboo-leaf hat; he shows his dignity to whomever he meets. Leading an ox, he plays the flute; after ploughing, he rests beside the field."[58] More importantly, it represents the power of the mind over matter: oblivious to the rain, the herdsman sits and plays a tune while his buffalo wanders off. Indeed, within the tableau the buffalo is quite removed from his keeper; placed several meters away off of the figure's left, the beast nonchalantly raises his head up as he tugs at a tasty morsel. What remains of the square surface of the carved inscription is balanced above the low-slung back of the buffalo.

The ninth vignette also shows the pleasures of controlling one's animal – here the herdsman lies in perfect abandonment, his bare stomach and chest revealed as he lounges with his hands behind his head (fig. 155). Even the impish monkey whose attempts to provoke him appear to be unsuccessful in disturbing his bliss. His water buffalo charge has wandered some distance, and like his master lies resting on his bent knees, his head up, eyes staring out as he perhaps reminiscences about his last tasty meal. Sørensen has conjectured that the recumbent beast is perhaps staring at the moon, representative of pure enlightenment, which figures prominently in the final vignette carved around the corner from him.[59] The vignette's accompanying inscription is located directly above the lounging herdsman's upraised knee,

[58]Ibid., 241.
[59]Ibid.

and the viewer's eye is thus drawn to it in a fashion similar to the pointing hand seen earlier on within the tableau.[60]

The tenth vignette is integral to an understanding of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau within the greater context of the Great Buddha Bend, the sheer simplicity of it's construction belying its importance. Composed of a monk seated in meditation on a short rocky dais, this figure seems out of place within the Wild Buffalo sequence because it includes no buffalo or herdsman, the protagonists of the earlier vignettes (fig. 156). Carved above the monk in meditation is the following verse:

> The ox has disappeared, and the man is at ease by himself, (with) nothing to dwell upon, and nothing to depend upon. His nature is spontaneously vast, and it is clear that he is an adept. In the cold mountains, he gathers bamboo (for fuel), and spring water.[61]

Sørensen surmises that this verse was part of an original eleven-part text used at Baodingshan for the construction of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, rather than the now-extant ten-part printed and painted texts.[62] It is a version unique to Baodingshan in having an eleventh component. Sørensen's research into later versions of the ox-herding theme also found no similar monk image, and he concludes that the entire construct was most likely inserted into the ten-part sequence by members of the

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[60]Little remains of this inscription. Sørensen, 227.
[61]Ibid. DZSKYJ, 500.
[62]Ibid., 228.

Buddhist community at Baodingshan. He goes on to assert that the image itself is a portrait of Zhao Zhifeng, Baodingshan's conceptual director.[63]

Sørensen's assertion regarding such a specific identification of the monk as Zhao is based on the similarity between this image and several others found carved among the various other tableau at Great Buddha Bend, and is supported by the majority of researchers who have worked extensively on Baodingshan (figs. 157a-d).[64] The major detractor regarding the Zhao identification is Li Zhengxin, who argues that the "curly-haired" individual is in fact none other than the Buddha Shakyamuni himself, the curly quality of his hair being a stylized version of the close-cropped snail-shell hairstyle he is usually depicted wearing.[65]

Although this is outwardly a plausible argument, it becomes untenable when one looks closely at the numerous representations of Shakyamuni found elsewhere at Baodingshan. Why differentiate the Buddha in only a handful of carvings?[66] In the majority of imagery at the site, Shakyamuni is

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[63]Ibid.

[64]Some authors claim more than 40 images of Zhao Zhifeng can be found at Baodingshan (Wu Xianqi, "*Dazu shi ke kao cha tuan ri ji*" ("Notes on the Group Investigation of the Rock Carvings at Dazu") np. Deng Zhijin ("*Dazu Baodingshan Da fo wan liu hao tu kan diao cha*", 28-30) includes Wu's analysis of the 'curly-haired man' figure at Baodingshan in his overview study of this image at the site. In his survey of 13 different authors working on Baodingshan, Deng notes that only three do not recognize this figure as Zhao: one recognizing the work as a generic 'monk', one as an alternate representation of Liu Benzun, and the last seeing the work as an alternate representation of the Buddha. Deng himself argues for 53 curly-haired figures – 14 within Great Buddha Bend, and 39 within Little Buddha Bend, the majority of which are found within the 1000 Buddha motif.

[65]Li Zhengxin, "*Baodingshan you Zhao Zhifeng zi zao xiang ma*?" ("Did Zhao Zhifeng Create Portraits of Himself at Baodingshan?"), Chongqing she hui ke xue no. 2 (1988): 98-100.

[66]Li contends that there are images within Great Buddha Bend at only seven places which really constitute the 'curly haired' man, and uses Wu's extreme example of 40 such images to discredit the possibility of any of the works representing Zhao Zhifeng. Li's seven places include: the three sages in the pagoda above the Baodingshan inscription by the Song

depicted sporting a tight snailshell curl hairstyle (figs. 158a and b). For pedagogical purposes, consistency in representing an image as important as the Buddha would seem to be logical. This image of the curly-haired monk, along with the various other similar images found scattered throughout the carvings at Baodingshan, is quite different in appearance from the Buddha imagery, and clearly is meant to reference a specific individual. The only two other prominent individuals mentioned at the Baodingshan site are the revered Master Liu, and the Chan master Cijue, whose presence at the site is seen in the inscriptions accompanying the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents.

If these images are not of Zhao Zhifeng, they are also unquestionably not representations of Master Liu. The various images of Liu found at Baodingshan as well as in neighboring Anyue County uniformly depict the layman in scholarly attire with a short pointed beard, not as a curly-haired monk. The Chan master Cijue remains another possibility as a source for the image, but other Chan masters are mentioned as well, i.e. the teachings of Shan Hui seen in the Six Vices tableau, and Cijue's role at Baodingshan is unclear and undocumented. In contrast, Zhao Zhifeng is clearly linked to the creation of the site, and Zhao's devotion to the development of Buddhism in the area clearly embodies the monk ideal. It is therefore more likely that he would be used as the "face" of monastic enlightenment at Great Buddha

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literatus Du Xiaoyan; the monk central to the Wheel of Transmigration; the man attending the Parinirvana; the monk image in the vignette on the 32 Minor Marks of Filial Conduct in the Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness; the central monk image in

Bend, and one can safely assume that it is indeed Zhao's portrait interpolated into the tenth vignette.[67]

More interesting with regard to the Great Buddha Bend as a whole is the short inscription found to the left of the seated monk figure:

> Even if a red-hot iron wheel rotated on the top of my head, I will not, because of this suffering, give up the mind of enlightenment.[68]

This inscription echoes the inscribed verse seen elsewhere at the site, and can be seen as a conscious effort made on the part of the site's conceptual director to link the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau with various other works within the site. Sørensen postulates that this is Zhao's "spiritual signature", meant to demonstrate his dedication to the Buddhist faith.[69] If that is indeed the case, then Zhao is not only present in physical form at respective points throughout the site vis-à-vis his image being used, but also in spiritual form. This "spiritual signature" first appears textually in the tableau relating the extreme filial piety of the Buddha in his past and previous incarnations, The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness; therefore, the purpose of the quote's placement here is to affiliate Zhao with the Buddha in

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the Six Vices tableau; the monk in the hell scenes, and the monk in the Taming the Wild Buffalo narrative.

[67]Immortalizing monks in stone appears to have been common in China during the Song dynasty, and as such, Zhao's portrait appearing at Baodingshan would not have been surprising to the worshipper. See Zhen Zhangan, "*Luoyang chu tu Sizhou da sheng shi diao xiang*" ("Excavation at Luoyang of a Carved Stone Statue of the Great Sage of Sizhou") *Zhongyuan wen wu* no. 2 (1997): 93-95, wherein he cites at least five examples of carved images of a Tang dynasty Buddhist master being found throughout the greater Shanghai region.

[68]Ibid., 227. DZSKYJ, 500.

[69]Ibid., 227. Sørensen is not the first to make a connection between Zhao and this phrase as being a type of 'spiritual signature'. See also Yang Jialuo, *Baoding meng you* (Taibei: np, 1966): 6.

his efforts to not only reach enlightenment, as would seem to be indicated by the content of the quote itself, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to be regarded as a filial son, a message framed within the context of the repeated use of this quote within the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau.

The last image of the tableau, vignette number eleven, is composed mainly of a textual inscription rising out of an open lotus form, above which hovers a full moon (fig. 159). The inscription reads:

> Everything is accomplished, yet nothing is (really) accomplished! What mind can there be? With an accomplished mind, and the mind accomplished, there is nothing to dwell upon. The perfect lamp has no partiality, it illumines both old and new. The man and the ox are no longer seen, they are gone without a trace. The bright moon shines cold on the ten thousand empty shapes. If you ask me the meaning of this then behold the wild flowers, and the fragrant plants that naturally grow together.[70]

This verse is considerably longer than the others inscribed within the tableau. Evoking the moon which hangs above it in the Great Buddha Bend depiction, this text concludes the Taming of the Wild Buffalo narrative, and is similar in this respect to two-dimensional versions of the ox-herding theme analyzed by Sørensen and Jang. The length of the inscription is noteworthy, however, in that it does not correspond to other editions of this theme, and one can only conclude that the changes must have been made by someone at Baodingshan. Sørensen postulates that this inscription and the tenth vignette

[70]Ibid., 228. DZSKYJ, 500.

depicting Zhao are local additions, with the theme of the work based upon a two-dimensional earlier version.[71]

An inscription at the very beginning of the tableau cites the source of the carvings as being a production composed by Yang Jie, an eleventh-century Buddhist layman and well known court official. The complete inscription reads "The Ox-herding Pictures of Attaining the Way by the Court Official, the Magistrate of Runzhou, the Gentleman Yang, Bearer of the Goldfish Purse".[72] Since the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau is carved well after Yang's death, although the two-dimensional work served as the tableau's source, it would not have been difficult for those involved with the construction of the Baodingshan work to have incorporated certain characteristics related to Zhao Zhifeng, thereby altering the work in order to suit their own religious needs.

In Praise of Spiritual Ancestors: A Conceptual Approach

The positioning of the image of Zhao Zhifeng within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau directly across from the Master Liu tableau reaffirms the assertion that traditional Chinese concerns underlie all of the narrative works at Great Buddha Bend. Two fundamental issues need to be examined. One

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[71]Ibid., 229.

[72]Ibid., 214. Sørensen cites various historical sources for Yang including the *Song shi* and the *Ju shi chuan*. Yang Jie was also responsible for a preface written to the *Yangqi Fanghui he shang yu lu* (Recorded sayings of monk Yangqi Fanghui), T. 1995, vol. 47, 646, which was published in 1088, and presents the sayings of an eminent Chan master. See Judith A.

issue expressed is that of lineage - Zhao was touted as Liu's spiritual heir. The other implied issue is that of variant acceptable modes to enlightenment – both layman and monk ideals are achieved within the confines of Chinese family and society. I will first consider the two paths to enlightenment, and the benefits to be accrued by both lay and monastic means.

At virtually any and all points within Chinese history, one of the preferable modes to enlightenment was that achieved by the learned layperson, depicted at Great Buddha Bend in the Austerities of Master Liu tableau. As previously mentioned, the story of the sagacious Indian layman Vimalakirti was taken up very early on after Buddhism's arrival in China by the Chinese literati as an example to be emulated.[73] As a householder, Vimalakirti fit well within the Chinese desire to maintain the family structure. Monks who left the home did not perpetuate the family line, thus creating a possible rupture within the ancestor worship framework.[74] With no heirs to appease their post-mortem demands, the ancestors would eventually be bereft in the afterlife. This was a situation most often deemed intolerable, and

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Berling, "Bringing the Buddha Down to Earth: Notes on the Emergence of *Yu-lu* as a Buddhist Genre", History of Religions (1987): 79.

[73]For a recent iconographic study of Vimalakirti imagery, see Laura Gardner Heyrman's 1994 dissertation entitled, "The Meeting of Vimalakirti and Manjusri: Chinese Innovation in Buddhist Iconography" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1994). There are various good translations of the sutra available in English, see Robert A. F. Thurman, Vimalakirti: A Mahayana Scripture (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976) and Charles Luk, The Vimalakirtinirdesa Sutra (Berkeley: Shambala Press, 1972).

[74]The term most often used as a euphemism for 'becoming a monk', i.e., *chu jia*, literally translates as "to leave the family".

sons were therefore not generally encouraged to pursue a monastic vocation.[75]

To non-believers, the monk lifestyle epitomized the most non-Chinese quality of the Buddhist faith. To the faithful, the monk ideal was rather the penultimate display of the Chinese virtue of filial piety, as the monk or nun sacrifices his life and loves in order to achieve enlightenment not only for himself, but also for his parents and deceased ancestors as well.[76] Chun-fang Yu succinctly synthesizes the thirteenth-century Chan Master Zhongfeng Mingben's rationale for the filial aspects of a son taking up the monastic path as follows:

> Mingben at first plays on the homophones of *xiao*, which can mean either filiality or imitation. Filiality is essentially imitation. Since our parents nurture and love us, we in turn should nurture and love them. But to nurture one's parents' physical body and to practice "love with form" is the filiality appropriate for a householder, while a monk shows his filial piety by nurturing the parents' *dharma*-nature and by practice of "formless love". The former, mundane type of filiality has a time limit, for we can love and serve our parents this way only when they are alive, whereas by leading a pure and disciplined life, by serious and sustained effort at meditation, and

[75]Although the focus at Great Buddha Bend would appear to be directed toward monks, it is important to note that since Buddhism's very earliest presence in China nuns were also considering the sisterhood as an alternative form of filial piety. Arthur F. Wright translates the story of one early female convert to Buddhism, and her master's plea to her parents as to why she should be allowed to enter the order, in "Biography of the Nun An-ling-shou" from the Lives of Nuns (*Bi qiu ni*) in Studies in Chinese Buddhism ed. Robert M. Somers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983): 69-72. The master Fotudeng (d. 349 CE) counters An-ling-shou's parents reluctance to allow her to pursue her calling with the following statement, "If you consent to her plan, she will raise her relatives to glory and bring you wealth and honor. As to the great sea of suffering of births and deaths, she will direct you toward attaining its farther shore."

[76]Shih, 13, quotes a common Chinese proverb, "When one son from a family becomes a monk, nine generations of his ancestors will be born in heaven."

> finally by achieving enlightenment, a monk can fulfill the requirements of filiality on the basis of the Buddhist principle of the "transference of merit," by which a son applies the merits of a sanctified life to benefit his parents spiritually, whether they are alive or dead.[77]

Here the power of the monk to augment the benefits received by his deceased ancestors derives largely from the energy created through his ascetic activities. Coincidentally, this energy was at its greatest at exactly the same time that the major religious festival related to ancestral fate was commencing.[78] Monks were returning from their three month meditation retreat at the same time that the Ghost Festival was getting underway, and they would then turn their attentions to aiding the laity in the salvation of their loved ones from the various undesirable stages of rebirth. Having a monk as a son to serve as an intermediary for the entire family during this time was undoubtedly desirable.

In the stories of the filial bodhisattva Mulian, Mulian is reminded by the Buddha that "freedom from suffering can only be attained by relying on the power of the Sangha," with the Buddha assuring Mulian that those filial sons who make offerings to the monastic community at this time will have the merit they accrue transferred to their deceased relatives.[79] Mulian is the

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[77]Chun-fang Yu, "Zhongfeng Mingben: Admonition on Filiality" in Sources of Chinese Tradition, 529-531, Wm. Theodore DeBary and Irene Bloom, eds., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999): 529-530.

[78]Teiser, "The Ritual Behind the Opera", 192.

[79]Ibid.

filial son par excellence, a son who will literally go to any lengths (and depths!) to aid his deceased and unworthy mother.[80]

At Great Buddha Bend the ideology of monks as perfect sons is represented not only in the image of Shakyamuni himself, and the possible reference to Mulian seen in the hell tableau, but also in the site's creator, Zhao Zhifeng, a man whose entire life was devoted to the monk ideal. Purportedly sent away in early childhood to a Buddhist monastery in hopes of aiding his ill mother, Zhao returned to establish not only Baodingshan, but also various other religious complexes around Dazu County.[81] Fact or fiction, this version of Zhao's lifestory appeared in local gazetteers within 150 years of his death, and the legend soon became reality. Baodingshan continued to be a religious site up until the early twentieth century, and one could therefore argue that both the legend and the site apparently served its edifying purpose.[82]

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[80]Mulian's search for his mother in hell, after he discovered that his father alone went to heaven, became the stuff of theater and oral legend in China. For translations of various stories found within the Dunhuang cache of texts, see Arthur Waley, Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1960). For a discussion of this as a popular theater production see also Berthold Laufer, Oriental Theatricals (Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History, 1923), and more recently David Johnson, "Mu-lien in Pao-chüan: The Performance Context and Religious Meaning of the Yu-ming Pao-ch'uan" in Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion, David Johnson, ed., 55-103. Publications of the Chinese Popular Culture Project no. 3 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies Publications, 1995).

[81]DZSKYJ, 261. A stele carved during the Ming era and placed within Little Buddha Bend gives the lifestory/legend of Zhao Zhifeng's upbringing, stating that Zhao was sent away to a Buddhist monastery when his mother became ill, with some accounts saying Zhao was sent to Hangzhou to study, while others pointing to the possibility that he was sent somewhere much closer to home within Sichuan province. *Dazu xian zhi*, 498-499, details Zhao's return to Dazu and his establishment of Baodingshan while also working on 13 other sites within the region. The gazetteer also notes that Zhao's work was predicated on an oath that he took to disperse the Buddhist Law to all and to protect the region from calamity.

[82]For inscriptional evidence related to Baodingshan's continued use, see DZSKMWL, 205-206, 211-230, 235-270.

Filial activities with regard to the practice of Buddhist monks and nuns were certainly not unique to Baodingshan; the majority of the inscriptions found at other Chinese Buddhist cavesites involve dedications of merit on behalf of deceased parents or ancestors, and many of these were produced on behalf of members of the monastic community. Nor is such filiality unique to Chinese practice. Gregory Schopen has effectively shown that even within the earliest recorded Indian Buddhist donor inscriptions concern for deceased ancestors was the focal point of Buddhist artistic production.[83] At places such as the second-century BCE stupa complex of Bharhut, almost half of the inscriptions record donations that were made by a monk or nun on behalf of loved ones.[84] Schopen notes that given the preponderance of inscriptions created for the parents of monks and nuns that "not only was the concern for one's parents – both living and dead - a major preoccupation among our monk-donors, *but it was perhaps a special concern of this group*…(italics Schopen)".[85]

Buddhist "family trees" were by the late twelfth century common within both the Chan and Pure Land Buddhist schools, two philosophies with an overt presence at Great Buddha Bend, and lineage is the second issue related to traditional Chinese concerns represented within the last two

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[83]Gregory Schopen, "Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism" Toung Pao LXX (1984): 110-126.

[84]Ibid., 119.

[85]Ibid., 123.

narrative tableaux.[86] The clearest statement to this effect is the conscious connection made between the site's conceptual director, Zhao Zhifeng, and his spiritual mentor, Master Liu. Hundreds of years apart in time, these two have been drawn together at Baodingshan for the express purpose of continuing an illustrious lineage.[87] Zhao inherits from Liu the Yogacara line, a story found carved in stone within the Little Buddha Bend. Images of both are thought to be included on the Sutra List Pagoda also located in Little Buddha Bend, and sometimes referred to as the "Founder's Pagoda".[88]

The connection between Liu and Zhao is further reinforced by the two images carved facing each other within Great Buddha Bend. The image of Liu in his transformation as Vairocana central to the Asceticism of Master Liu tableau gazes across a ravine, which at one time was certain to have been less over-grown, toward his protégé, Zhao Zhifeng. Zhao, at the end of the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau, represents another being in a transformed state. Time and space have been compressed as Zhao Zhifeng,

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[86]There are a variety of sources one can go to related to Chan and Pure Land lineage issues. Specifically dealing with the Song dynasty, see for example T. Griffith. Foulk, "Sung Controversies Concerning the "Separate Transmission" of Ch'an" in Buddhism in the Sung, Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., 220-294, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), as well as Daniel A. Getz, Jr., "T'ien-t'ai Pure Land Societies and the Creation of the Pure Land Patriarchate" also in Buddhism in the Sung, Peter N. Gregory and Daniel A. Getz, Jr., eds., 477-523, Studies in East Asian Buddhism 13 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

[87]Shih, 143, points out that such indirect lineage relationships were also found within the Pure Land patriarchy, with almost 200 years separating the first patriarch, Huiyuan, and the second patriarch, Shandao, with no direct master-disciple relationships found between any of the other patriarchs in the Pure Land patriarchal lineage either.

[88]DZSKYJ, 8. Similar identifications of Liu and Zhao have been made with regard to images elsewhere in Little Buddha Bend as well as within Great Buddha Bend. I hesitate to go so far here due to two factors: one, extensive restoration has been done on one of the major identified pairings at Great Buddha Bend, that of Liu and Zhao at the Buddha's Parinirvana; and two, limited access to the images at Little Buddha Bend has afforded no real opportunity to study the purported Liu and Zhao imagery.

in the figure of a meditating monk, stares across the emptiness central to the grotto back toward his spiritual mentor Master Liu. Although their paths of existence did not cross within the worldly realm, the two men now share a common ground, immortalized for eternity in stone at Great Buddha Bend. Since Liu in his transformed state in effect mirrors the historical Buddha Shakyamuni entering nirvana at the far end of the grotto, the three men now share common ground, an enlightened state arrived at via three different avenues. The imagery in this case functions much like the repeated inscribed chant, as a visual repetition of the various paths to enlightenment.

Lineage is also hinted at through various scattered references within Great Buddha Bend. One example is seen in the depictions of the Buddhas of the Seven Periods, carved on the uppermost tier of the Scripture on the Kindness of Parents tableau.[89] Here the lineage is celestial, not mundane – with the historical Buddha Shakyamuni being linked to his illustrious forebears. Another example can be found in the inscription occurring on the inscription carved on the front of the main Buddha icon in The Buddha Preaches the Mahayana Scripture on the Skillful Means for Repaying Kindness.

This inscription comprises three tributes to the Buddhist faith, ostensibly copied from a stele text originally found at Mt. Lu's Qianming

[89]Hu Liangxue, "*Dazu Baoding Da fo wan xi fang jing tu bian xiang*" ("The Western Paradise Transformation Tableau at Great Buddha Bend, Baoding, Dazu"), *Dunhuang yan jiu* no. 2 (1997): 31-32, repeats the lifestory of Zhao Zhifeng, and notes that Zhao's creation of the Western Paradise relief at Baodingshan can therefore be seen as a filial act.

Temple.[90] Each tribute follows one of three lengthy statements extolling the virtues of first Emperor Song Taizong (976-997 CE), then Song Zhenzong (998-1022 CE), and lastly Song Renzong (1023-1063).[91] Although this ends the lineage sequence 100 years earlier than construction at Great Buddha Bend, some Chinese authors contend that Shengshou Temple, which sits above the site, was originally constructed during the Xining era under the auspices of Emperor Shenzong (1068-1077 CE).[92] If indeed that is the case, Zhao Zhifeng may have been trying to create a lineage for the site itself, reminding the worshipper of Baodingshan's earlier imperially-sanctioned origins.

A third less subtle reference to lineage can be found in the tableau joining the heavens of the Pure Land with the horrors of hell – i.e., within the ritually based Six Vices relief. It is here necessary to discuss not the content of the work or how it functions within the grotto as a whole, but rather the authorship of the inscribed text and its relationship to the central figure of the tableau. The source for the work can be found in texts written by the fifth-century meditation master Shan Hui (497-569 CE).[93] Shan Hui is also known by the name Fu Xi, hence the large inscription "Made by Great Master Fu" that headlines the tableau. Since his life clearly did not coincide with the construction of any aspect of the Baodingshan site, Shan Hui himself did not

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[90]DZSKYJ, 275. All three of the texts associated with the emperors extol the virtues of Shakyamuni Buddha.

[91]Ibid., 274-275. Only Emperor Yingzong (r. 1064-1068 CE), whose reign was extremely short-lived, separates Shenzong from the earlier list of three.

[92]Li Chuanshou and Tong Dengjin, eds., *Ming ren yu Dazu shi ke* Chengdu: Sichuan mei shu chu ban she, 1999): 174. The authors do not give a source for this statement, and I have as yet to find supporting evidence for the Xining construction date.

[93]Deng Zhijin, 26-27.

have any part in inscribing the "Six Vices" texts. Although some of the textual passages carved at Great Buddha Bend are similar to those found in Shan Hui's essay entitled *Xin wang ming* (Inscription on the Realm of the Mind), they are not identical.[94] Both works, however, focus on the importance of gaining control over the sensual aspects of the mind.

The creators of Great Buddha Bend thus consciously chose to create an association between Shan Hui and the site. Deng Zhijin argues for an even greater connection, maintaining that Zhao Zhifeng is the source for the image of the carved seated monk figure central to the Six Vices tableau. This follows a line of reasoning pursued by others with regard to similar imagery at Baodingshan – that the "curly-haired person" is a portrait of the site's founder, Zhao Zhifeng. As mentioned earlier, most scholars are willing to view the enlightened "monk ideal" within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau as being based on an image of Zhao. According to Deng, this type of "curly-haired" individual occurs fifty-three times within the larger context of the grotto; others have argued for far fewer such figures.[95] With an overview of numerous scholars to back him up in this identification, Deng pushes for Zhao as the mystery "curly-haired monk".[96] As noted earlier within this chapter, the "curly-haired monk" does not coincide with known images of

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[94]Ibid. For the original Shan Hui texts, see *Liu zu fa bao tan jing*, fascicle 3, "*Shan Hui da shi lu*" (Gaoxiong: Fo guang chu ban she, 1994): 146-149.

[95]A curly-haired individual appears in the Sutra List Pagoda in Little Buddha Bend, and can be seen in various tableaux throughout Great Buddha Bend, for our purposes, notably in The Buddha Preaches the Scripture on the Repayment of Kindness tableau, where such an image is used to represent the Buddha in a previous life, as well as within the hell tableau, among the 16 Visualizations of the Pure Land work, and as the second to last figure within the Taming of the Wild Buffalo tableau.

either Liu or the historical Buddha at Great Buddha Bend, leading one to conclude that Zhao may indeed have been the source for this unique carved image.

If one accepts this argument, then the implication is that Zhao Zhifeng not only is placed central to the composition, but he is also linked to yet another great master, Shan Hui, in what could be viewed as yet another attempt to create a solid lineage for the site's founder.[97] If that is the case, one must ask why Zhao would choose to do so. Zhao was already making a very overt connection between himself and the Yogacara master Liu, a layman who was respected and revered throughout most of Sichuan. Why at the same time choose to affiliate with a master from a different school, long since passed off the mortal coil? Two rationales present themselves. First, Liu's lineage was in fact geographically limited. Liu was known in Sichuan, but nowhere else in China were his self-sacrificing deeds touted. For worshippers coming to Baodingshan from outside the province, Liu was an unknown, and his lineage therefore carried little weight.

Shan Hui, on the other hand, came from the more metropolitan areas of China, wrote extensively and his reputation was well established. A connection to Shan Hui would definitely bring legitimacy to Zhao Zhifeng, in addition to allowing Zhao to plug into yet another separate philosophical

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[96]Deng, 29-31.

[97]For the ritual purposes of the tableau, Zhao would be seen as the gatekeeper, providing passage between heaven and hell. Given the historic function of the Buddhist establishment as mediators between the living and the dead, between this incarnation and the next, such a strategic placement is quite appropriate, and, from the viewpoint of the worshipper, desirable.

Buddhist family, i.e., the meditative Chan school versus the esoteric Yogacara promoted by Liu. Lastly, not only does Zhao strengthen himself geographically by embracing Shan Hui as a spiritual mentor, but he also reinforces himself historically by pushing his pedigree further back in time. Whereas Liu is a Tang dynasty product, Shan Hui lived and wrote during the even earlier Sui dynasty (581-601 CE). Thus by incorporating Zhao visually into this work written by Shan Hui, the architects of Great Buddha Bend clearly broadened Zhao Zhifeng's audience appeal.