Approaches to Disruptions and Interactions in Archaeology

Proceedings of the Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Annual Conferences in 2017-2019

Edited by
Penny Coombe and Ying Tung Fung

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Introduction

Penny Coombe and Ying Tung Fung

This volume is a collection of some of the papers presented at the Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Conferences over the years 2017, 2018, and 2019. The GAO conference has become an annual fixture in the calendar of graduate study in the School of Archaeology in Oxford, typically held in the spring each year and organised by graduate students from the School. The aims of the conferences have been primarily to provide a platform for graduate students and early career researchers to share their work, and to encourage discussions and connections amongst scholars from different fields within archaeology. Researchers in Oxford, but also from around the world, have come together to share ideas and their ongoing work under a chosen theme. Time has also been spent in visiting the University Museums, such as the Ashmolean Museum, and sharing ideas during break-out sessions. It has generated vibrant discussions, developed important networks and contacts, and raised the profile of archaeology around Oxford and more widely. In total, around 150 delegates participated, approximately 80 papers were presented, and 20 posters were displayed in the three conferences represented in this volume. We are grateful to all attendees for their fantastic contributions during the conference and published here. The book represents just a small part of the wider benefits and results of the GAO conferences over the three years.

Putting on a conference of this scale and so being able to realise these benefits represents a great team effort, and the present editors would like to express considerable thanks and recognise the work of a number of people. First, the conference organisers who made each event happen. The organisers in 2017 were Kira Hopkins, Hannah Ringheim and Mariana Castro, with support from Rebecca O'Sullivan (GAO President) and the 2016-17 GAO Committee; the organisers in 2018 were Penny Coombe and Rebecca Smith, with support from Siobhan Shinn (President) and the 2017-18 GAO Committee; in 2019, the organisers were Ying Tung Fung with support from Emanuele Prezioso, Shengyu Wang, along with Gian Piero Milani (President) and the 2018-19 GAO Committee. We have been most grateful for practical and financial assistance from the School of Archaeology, the Faculty of Classics, the Meyerstein Fund, and the Craven Committee all at the University of Oxford, which ensured that costs for participants could be kept low or free. We received great support from senior faculty members in Archaeology and Classics, especially the Directors of Graduate Studies, who kindly sponsored applications for funding, and senior professors who came to the events to meet students. Many thanks too to colleagues in the Ashmolean Museum for offering great tours to conference delegates. The keynote speakers at each conference offered great food for thought, and we thank them for their generous participation, sharing their knowledge and advice for the future: Prof Martin Carver in 2017: Prof Naomi Sykes and Dr Lisa Lodwick in 2018; and Dr Amy Richardson and Dr Susanne Hakenbeck in 2019.

In preparing this volume, we have been particularly grateful for the generous assistance of the peer-reviewers, who have offered valuable advice and support to develop the work of contributors as well as ensuring quality. The efforts to produce this volume have undergone a couple of iterations, and tremendous early work in preparing this volume by Rebecca Smith, Kira Hopkins, Hannah Ringheim, and Mariana Castro, as well as Penny Coombe, who continued as editor, is gratefully acknowledged here.

One of the tasks for the organisers of the annual conference is to select a theme for that year which will appeal to students across all parts of the archaeological spectrum: from folks working to analyse volcanic tephra to those looking at Roman sculpture, from graduate scholars working on palaeolithic flint scatters to colleagues understanding the petrography of ceramics from China. We have been conscious that the archaeological community, at Oxford at least, is spread across different buildings and is engaged in an amazing range of aspects of archaeology, but that sometimes this can feel rather disparate. Programmes of study include, for instance, archaeology, classical archaeology, archaeological and earth sciences, oriental studies and history, bridging the humanities and social sciences. It was important to us that *all* researchers felt welcome and inspired to contribute their work to the conference programmes, and that the themes could be explored from a range of methodological or theoretical positions. Indeed, one of the key achievements of the GAO conferences has been to develop understanding of the richness and broad scope of archaeology, to appreciate what we have in common as well as where our research differs, and to build supportive connections.

The current volume is, therefore, by its nature an amalgam of several themes chosen for the three conferences it represents and is wide ranging in its subject matter. It is striking, however, that there is such overlap between the concepts and themes selected. These included movement, conflict, organisation, chaos, interactions through trade, human-environment relationships, and emergence of cultural identities. The emphasis is on fault lines and connections, on where groups of people or kinds of objects can be said to begin or end, change or continue, implying that there are ways to categorise and sort out one from another - but also significant occasions and processes when these arrangements are disrupted or transcended. This speaks to a dual preoccupation within archaeology of being able to apply methods and to construct organisation, at the same time as identifying and understanding the circumstances in which deviations and evolutions occur.

Interaction, or complex connectivity and globalisation, discussed in this volume refers to a process that shows how everything could be connected over space and through time. Such connections need not always be global or long distance, but can be multi-scaler, from local and regional to global levels. This connection can apply to various objects not limited to people and societies, but also artefacts, materials, construction, environment, landscape and ecosystem. The volume covers the topics of materiality and agency, which emphasise the active role of humans, and how they may have interacted with materials and artefacts in the past, along with the more conventional topics of population movement, human communication and contact, trading, and idea and knowledge transmission. All these topics are useful in understanding spatial and temporal changes, as well as meanings and functions of objects in different scopes. Specifically, the topics discussed in this volume ranging from coins in Roman Britain, sites in Portugal, to the Silk Road(s), Japanese fans and Chinese construction. This way of examining interaction allows us a more neutral and open discussion than using approaches such as world system theory or core-periphery models, which inherently assume that a hierarchical structure was involved between societies. The newer concepts of human-object interaction, materiality and agency, which have become popular in the past twenty years, also allow us to explore interaction between human and non-living entities, offering a different angle to study interaction and understand the human past to a fuller extent.

The papers presented here draw out various facets of these main themes. Gomes discusses migration and intercultural contact at the time of Phoenician colonisation in the Sado river valley in Portugal. His careful analysis of changing landscape and site patterns, as well as developments in material culture highlight the difficulty of finding evidence for movement of people within the archaeological record, tapping into long-held questions of how site formation or material culture map onto changing human groups. Gomes seeks to go further than traditional binary groupings of 'indigenous' or 'native' vs 'coloniser', recognising that neither category is monolithic nor clear-cut. His conclusion emphasises the nuance of different scales of interaction (local, regional, trans-regional), as well as the use of certain aspects (which might be called technologies) to understand consistency and change apparent in the archaeological record.

Wang continues the theme of movement, emphasising the realities of traversing Eurasia along the so-called 'Silk Road(s)' in the mid-1st millennium AD, with archaeology and material culture brought to the fore. Emphasis is placed upon the various polities involved in constructing routes and contacts in the region in a variety of ways, and on the harshness of the environment which was traversed by travellers to reach different places. The city of Turfan serves as an excellent case study for understanding the practicalities of trade here, the role of smaller networks in facilitating longer-range routes, as well as the opportunity for mercantile contacts to bring not only goods but ideas and cultural exchange. Indeed, there is the suggestion that trade routes might be by-products of interaction in other ways or the result of other needs.

The 'east' and the 'west' form the basis for an archaeological comparison of Japanese fans in current museum collections by Hitchcock. The range of forms and uses of the fan is striking, and the author emphasises the variety of contexts and ways in which they operated in the east. In the west, the fashions of the 19th century saw Japanese object and design in high demand, alongside critiques of this 'Orientalism' and reductive study of their typology and display in private collections. Museums offer the potential to set the multiplicity of forms and uses of fans into their nuanced artistic and anthropological contexts. Ultimately, however, the Hitchcock's conception of the 'fan' as an assemblage rather than a single kind of object offers the significant potential both to understand their role in constructions of 'east' and 'west' and to examine and engage with them more fully as archaeological artefacts on their own terms.

From considerations of the movements and changing perspectives over time and space of the first three papers, Gautam takes us in a new direction: chaos in urban archaeology of the city of Allahabad in India. Threats to heritage and archaeological sites in the city are chaotic and manifold, but urban development and all that goes with it is perhaps pre-eminent. However, the author proposes tourism and education about the rich archaeological resources of the city as potential salves to these issues. Fundamental steps such as mapping sites and training of archaeological staff are required, but would reap great opportunities for management of the cultural heritage of this incredible city.

Broadening this theme of chaos, Frampton focuses in her paper on the presentation of order as well as chaos within classical theatrical productions and at museum late opening or live events. Ancient concepts of order and chaos are given a contemporary twist and analysis, through discussion of space, their setting, and the relationships and emphasis thereby constructed or brought to bear. Examples range from translating the fictional to real-life in Oxford's Alice Day, to a retelling of Euripedes' *Hecuba* with the impact of migration in the eastern Mediterranean brought centre-stage, literally, through the location of the production on the Greek island of Delos.

Wu focuses on exploring 'east' and 'west' interaction, through examining the architectural structure of the iron-and-glass pavilion of Lingzhao Xuan 靈沼軒 in the Forbidden City in China. She emphasises that this structure represents a trans-mundane space, which followed the tradition of Chinese imperial garden aesthetics. The embodiment of such a cosmological trans-mundane space is characterised by the architectonic idea of 'Immortal Mountain rising from Numinous Pond' and the auspicious meaning hidden behind the construction of the underground ‘Water Palace’, along with the introduction of European building materials and engineering technologies.

In contrast, Yang’s paper adopts a relatively new approach to consider the formation of the site structure of the Buddhist grottoes constructed in the early seventh century in Northern Sichuan. She argues that the Sui-dynasty Daoist sites in this region pioneered the use of the niche-based site structure, and local agency was important for the innovation of niche form and rock-carving practices. Her research provides an alternative approach, aside from interaction and transmission from different regions, allowing us to understand the arrival, adoption, and adaptation of religious rock-carving practices from a new perspective.

Crump provides a different way to explore interaction. He applies a bottom-up approach in this paper, which focuses on how people interacted with, used, and understood coins. His research considers the concepts of literary theory, linguistics, and philosophy, and integrates context, identity, engagement, agency, and interpretation to examine coins and coin data. By using the case study of Roman coins in Britain, this approach has given us a new insight that the meaning and function of coins can be flexible and varied.

We may conclude that, often, definitions and distinctions can be a mirage, and it is interaction and mobility that characterises much of the past. By looking across perceived boundaries, we may understand them better; and by interacting in a conference setting, we may break down or remove the barriers within the scholarship and within the discipline of archaeology to focus on what connects us as a group of students and Early Career Scholars engaging with aspects of the material culture of the past. We are conscious that many of our contributors are at an early stage in their careers and we are delighted to be able to present their work. We hope the volume will be of interest to a range of readers and that it will be read with an eye to the future potential of the ideas, interpretations, and the emerging scholars showcased here.

Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Annual Conference 2017:
Movement and Conflict in Archaeological Research

Change and permanence in a landscape of cultural interaction: The Early Iron Age in the Lower Sado valley (Portugal) as a case study

Francisco B. Gomes

Abstract

The first contacts between the local communities of the Lower Sado valley and the Phoenician colonists settled in southern Iberia produced significant transformation in the local settlement network, material culture and socio-political structure. However, the understanding of this transformation has in some instances been hindered by strict, normative views of cultural identity and by a limited interpretive framework based on the binary opposition between the local and the foreign. This contribution presents a different approach, based on a global and contextual analysis of the archaeological record which stresses complexity and diversity over linearity and regularity. It is proposed that the Phoenicians acted as connectors in a large and complex network, providing a common language for the construction of local representation discourses aimed both at the Phoenicians and at other indigenous actors within that network.

The Phoenician presence and the Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age transition in southern Portugal: a brief historical overview

In 2017, the organizers of the annual Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Conference proposed the issues of migration and conflict in archaeology as the subject for a collective debate. In that context, I considered it useful to discuss the treatment of some questions regarding human mobility and intercultural contact in the framework of the Phoenician colonisation.

In this contribution, I will attempt to revisit these reflections through the lens of a specific case study: that of the Lower Sado valley (Portugal) and its Early Iron Age communities. In order to frame this case study, however, a brief overview of the origins and early development of the Early Iron Age in Southern Portugal is in order.

In this area, the end of the Late Bronze Age (12th to 9th/8th centuries BC) and the transition to the Early Iron Age (9th/8th to 6th/5th centuries BC) are closely tied to the first evidence of a Phoenician presence. The earliest of these manifestations, dating back to the second half of the 8th century BC,[1] have been documented both in the Lower Tagus valley (Arruda 2005) and in the inner Alentejo region (Berrocal-Rangel and Silva 2010). It can be argued that these early contacts

[1] In traditional chronology. It should be kept in mind that for the earliest phases of the regional Early Iron Age there is a significant discrepancy between traditional, typology-based chronologies, and absolute, radiocarbon-based dates. For an in-depth discussion of the chronological framework of the Southern Portuguese Iron Age and its problems, see Arruda 2005; Soares and Arruda 2017.

upset the equilibrium of the Late Bronze Age regional network, based on an unstable and competitive balance between closely interconnected but autonomous polities structured around large, fortified settlements (Gomes 2015; Mataloto 2013; Soares 2013).

The differential access to the Phoenician colonial and commercial interface, which acted as a link between the regional socio-political and economic network and other, transregional networks on a much larger scale, seems to have tipped off that unstable balance. Coastal areas seem to have been benefited by this new situation (Arruda 1999-2000) in detriment of the inner regions, where the Late Bronze Age socio-political structures seem to have collapsed in a short period of time (Gomes 2015: 308-311). Some evidence suggests that this process was punctuated by upheaval and episodes of violence, as attested in the site of Castro dos Ratinhos (Moura) (Berrocal-Rangel and Silva 2010: 181).

In the coastal areas the response to this new geo-political situation was quite different, and throughout the first half of the 7th century the Phoenician influence seems to have spread. Towards the middle of that century this spread culminated in the emergence of a fully structured network of sites comprising both settlements with Late Bronze Age roots whose material record shows the adoption of oriental-like traits and others that appear to have been founded *ex novo* and which could be considered colonial in origin (Arruda 1999-2000).

Figure 1. Late Bronze Age/ Early Iron Age sites in the Lower Sado valley mentioned in the text: 1 – Castelejos (Alcácer do Sal); 2 – Alcácer do Sal; 3 – Setúbal; 4 – Abul A (Alcácer do Sal); 5 – Olival do Senhor dos Mártires (Alcácer do Sal).

This process was essentially confined to the estuaries of the main southern Portuguese rivers, among which the river Sado, the subject of this contribution. In fact, despite a lack of systematic survey works, this area has yielded significant evidence regarding the transition between the Late Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age, and the subsequent consolidation of the Iron Age social formation (Arruda 1999-2000 63-100; Gomes 2016; Silva 2005; Figure 1).

It has also yielded key evidence pertaining to the role of the Phoenician colonial and commercial interface in this process, so much so that the Lower Sado valley has been considered 'a Phoenician colonial space *par excellence*' (Arruda 1999-2000: 97, my translation). In the context of this case study, it is worth reviewing the evidence behind this assertion.

The Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages in the Lower Sado valley: archaeological data and historical interpretation(s)

Not much is known regarding the occupation of the Lower Sado valley during the Late Bronze Age. The currently identified settlement network comprises only two sites: Castelejos (Alcácer do Sal; Vasconcelos 1895: 89-92; Figure 1, n. 1) and Alcácer do Sal (Silva *et al*. 1980-1981: 170-171; Figure 1, n. 2). Unfortunately, very little is known about the occupation of these sites during this period, although based on their topographical position, both could have played a central role in the territorial structuration of this area during the final stages of the Bronze Age.

It is tempting to suggest that the settlement of Castelejos, located further inland, was originally the central place of the regional settlement network, and that Alcácer do Sal represented a later foundation dating to the final stages of the Bronze Age, possibly resulting from the transference of Castelejos' population to a site which could exert a more direct control over the river course. The data regarding the nature and chronology of each site's occupation is however too scarce to support this hypothesis with any degree of confidence.

In any case, it is likely that the inhabitants of Alcácer do Sal were the main interlocutors of the earliest Phoenicians to arrive in this area sometime in the first half of the 7th century BC (Arruda 1999—2000: 97—100; Silva 2005). What is more significant, though, is that these early contacts seem to have triggered a response from the local community, with a renewed interest in controlling the surrounding territory and particularly the access to the natural port formed by the Sado estuary.

The available evidence seems to confirm that the settlement underneath the city of Setúbal (Figure 1, n. 3) was founded in this particular historical context. The material culture from this settlement's earliest horizons indicates that the small hill overlooking the entrance to the Bay of Setúbal was first occupied in a moment that can best be characterized as a transition period (Soares and Silva 1986).

In the sequence documented in Setúbal's Travessa dos Apóstolos, the pottery assemblage from the foundational Phase I is in fact largely dominated by material pertaining to the local repertoire, while the first wheel-made pottery – a key marker of the regional Iron Age – makes its first, limited appearance as a clear minority group (Soares and Silva 1986: 97). It can therefore be suggested that the community of Alcácer do Sal, or rather the local elite, was intent on controlling access to the Sado estuary through the foundation of a dependant settlement, thus asserting its territorial predominance in the face of a new context characterized by incipient cultural contacts.

This exploratory transition period, which can be understood as a period of negotiations in which the benefits offered by this new, exogenous interlocutor were still being socially and culturally evaluated, seems to have lasted until the mid-7th century BC. At that point, however, an overall balance seems to have been achieved, coinciding with what has been deemed the "consolidation of the Iron Age social formations" (Silva 2005: 755-763, my translation).

Around that time the settlement network was enlarged with the foundation of a small complex in the area of Abul, roughly halfway between Alcácer do Sal and Setúbal (Figure 1, n. 4). This building, designated as Abul A, is of particular significance for this discussion as both its architectural plan, features and construction techniques and its material culture seem to identify it as an exogenous, Phoenician establishment (Mayet and Silva 2000; Figure 2).

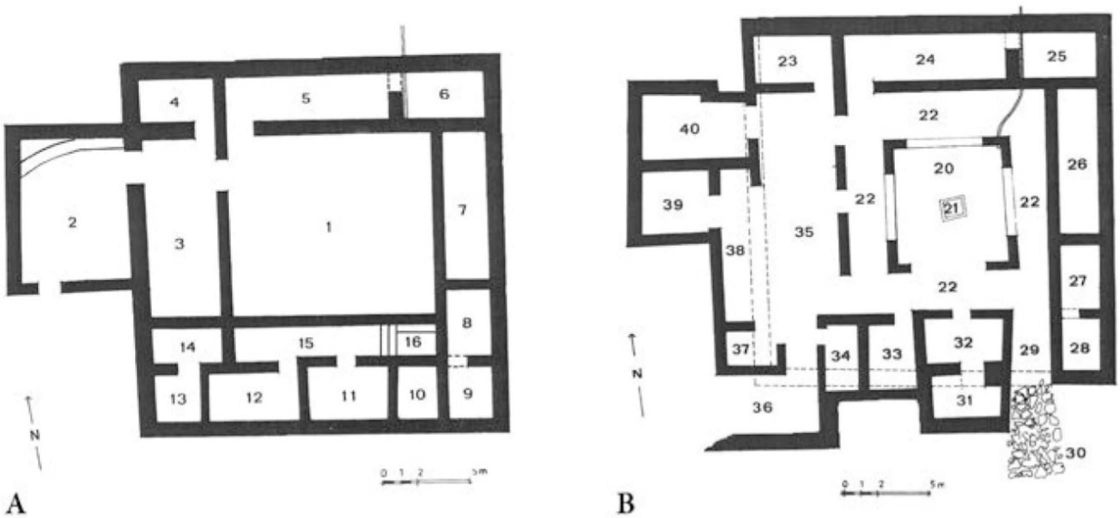

Figure 2. Plant of the Abul A complex: A – Phase I (3rd quarter of the 7th century BC); B – Phase II (last quarter of the 7th – 1st quarter of the 6th century BC) (after Mayet and Silva 2000).

As such, this complex could be seen as the result of the crystallization of the relations between the local community and the expanding Phoenician network. Furthermore, the religious overtones of this building (Gomes 2012: 39—47; Mayet and Silva 2000: 167—168) seem to fit a general behaviour pattern of the Phoenician colonial groups, who frequently used sanctuaries as pivots in the commercial, social and political relations with local groups (Belén 2000; Gomes 2012).

Nonetheless, the small size of this complex and its particular territorial position seem to preclude an interpretation of Abul A as the sole responsible for the strong Phoenician imprint detectable in this early stage of the regional Iron Age; its foundation should therefore be interpreted as a result rather than the cause of the well-established oriental presence in the Lower Sado valley. In fact, this site seems to be fully integrated in the sphere of influence of Alcácer do Sal, and that settlement was very likely the key hub of the oriental presence, closely tied with the local community and especially with its elites (Arruda 1999-2000: 97—100; Gomes 2016).

In fact, from the mid-7th century BC on, the material assemblages from Alcácer do Sal (Silva *et al.* 1980—1981:171—188; Figure 3) and Setúbal (Silva *et al.* 2014; Silva 2018: 65—79; Soares and Silva 1986: 95—99) suffered a significant transformation. The percentages of hand-made pottery dropped sharply, as new types of wares made their appearance, such as Phoenician and Phoenician-type red slip wares and amphorae or the so-called "orientalising" grey wares, alongside common and painted wheel-made wares (Arruda 2011; Paixão 2001; Silva *et al.* 1980—1981: Figs. 13-15; Silva *et al.* 2014; Silva 2018: Figs. 3—6; Soares and Silva 1986: Fig. 7). The first examples of orthogonal architecture are also documented in Alcácer do Sal during this phase (Paixão 2001; Silva *et al.* 1980—1981: Fig. 5).

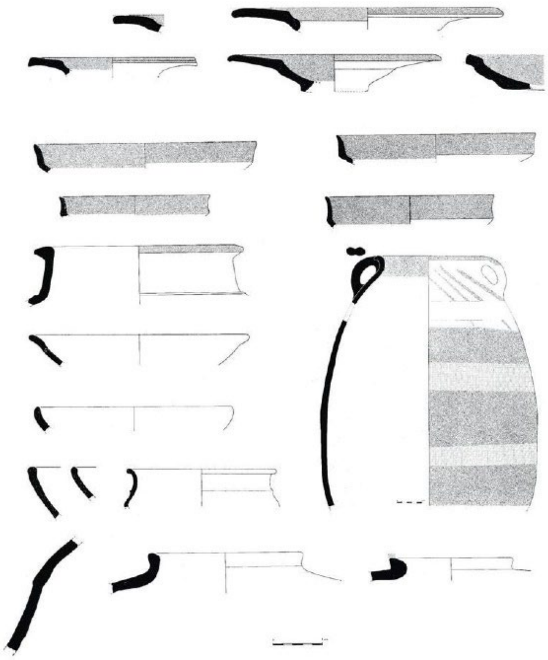

Figure 3. Selected material from the Early Iron Age levels of Alcácer do Sal (after Silva 2005).

Disentangling identities in the Early Iron Age of the Lower Sado valley: insights from the necropolis of Alcácer do Sal

Another very significant development dating back to the mid-7th century BC is the appearance of a formal burial area in Alcácer do Sal: the necropolis of Olival do Senhor dos Mártires (Gomes 2016) (Figure 1, n. 5).

The Late Bronze Age funerary practices in the Lower Sado region left no recognizable archaeological signature, much in keeping with the general panorama for that period in the Western Iberian Peninsula in which the presence of formal burials is an exception rather than the rule (Vilaça 2014). The emergence of a fixed, organized funerary area composed of structured tombs is therefore an innovation which seems to point to a transformation in local social structures, probably evidencing a growing interest in the negotiation and projection of identity, power and status at an intra-group level.

Given the dynamic context of intercultural contact in which this necropolis arose, it is interesting to note that the key feature of its earlier phases was the heterogeneity of funerary practices. The available evidence seems to indicate that at least two forms of funerary treatment and three types of tombs coexisted during the second half of the 7th and the early 6th century BC (Correia 1928; Gomes 2015; 2016; Paixão 1983; 2014).

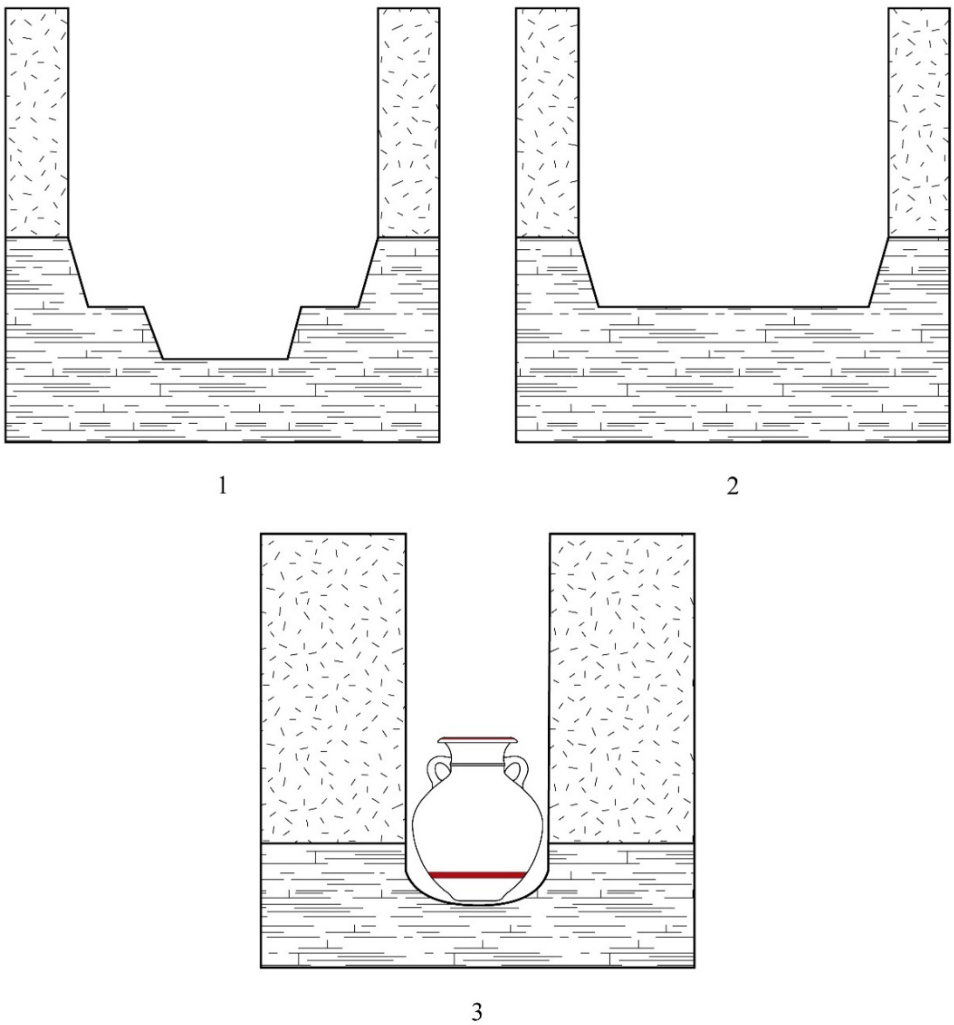

Figure 4. Schematic representation of the burial solutions documented in the early phases of the Olival do Senhor dos Mártires necropolis: 1- In situ cremations in rock-cut double ditches; 2 – In situ cremations in rock-cut busta; 3 – Cremations in "Cruz del Negro" type urns.

On the one hand, the presence of in situ incinerations is well attested, both in double ditches and in simple busta excavated in the bedrock (Correia 1928: 175—178; Paixão 1983; 2014), but they appear to have co-existed with secondary depositions in cinerary urns of the "Cruz del Negro" type (Correia 1928: 175; Gomes 2016: 345—346; Figure 4).

Unfortunately, since the field documentation of most of these tombs has been lost, it is impossible to determine if these different rituals and funerary architectures were contiguous or if they occupied segregated areas of the necropolis. Nonetheless, the fact that urn burials were documented in the campaigns which took place in the 1920s (Correia 1928) but completely absent in the areas excavated in the 1960s—1980s (Paixão 1983; 2014) seems to lend credence to the latter scenario.

In any case, given the overall context in which the necropolis was founded, this heterogeneity came to be interpreted – at least as a hypothesis – in terms of differentiated cultural traditions (Arruda 1999—2000: 80). For instances, it was suggested that the double ditch tombs, a characteristically Phoenician type of funerary structure well attested in necropoleis of the Central and Western Mediterranean (Bartoloni 2000; Fernández Gómez and Costa Mas 2004; Guirguis 2010) and in Cádiz (Perdigones *et al.* 1990), could belong to a Phoenician community settled in Alcácer do Sal, while the depositions in "Cruz del Negro" type urns, with particularly good parallels in "orientalising" contexts of the Southwestern Iberian Peninsula (Torres Ortiz 2008), could belong to the local population (Arruda 1999—2000: 80).

Alternatively, certain lines of research that tend to minimize the role of the Phoenicians in the spread of Mediterranean-type cultural traits and to emphasize the role of some indigenous groups over others have read the funerary record of this necropolis as evidence of colonisation by "orientalised" indigenous groups originating in Western Andalusia (Almagro-Gorbea 2008; Almagro-Gorbea and Torres Ortiz 2009; Torres Ortiz 2005).

However, a global and critical assessment of the funerary record of the necropolis of Alcácer do Sal seems to suggest that more nuanced readings are in order (Gomes 2016). In fact, it seems quite clear that a great deal of the discussion regarding the cultural identity of this and other contemporaneous sites stems both from a reluctance to shed the monadic, normative conceptions of culture inherited from long-standing historiographical traditions and from an associated tendency to read phenomena of intercultural contact in terms of more or less overt binary approaches – the opposition of Phoenician and Indigenous being a good example of this.

The first of these issues can be illustrated through a reconsideration of the ethnic interpretation of the tombs of Alcácer do Sal. The case of the double ditch tombs and their funerary assemblages is particularly illuminating: their architecture is typically Phoenician in origin, and even the cremation ritual has a likely oriental origin; many of the offerings that are deposited with the dead can also be seen as evidence of an oriental influence (Gomes, 2016). Nonetheless, when we address these elements not just as cultural or ethnic markers, but rather as pieces of an articulated discourse moulded by social and cultural practices, the image we get is quite different.

In fact, even a quick comparison between the funerary panoply of these tombs (Gomes 2016) and the apparatus of status and power represented in the Late Bronze Age warrior stelae of the Southwestern Iberian Peninsula (Celestino Pérez 2001) makes it clear that no matter how outwardly oriental, the offerings deposited in these tombs expressed a local discourse of power and status deeply rooted in the Late Bronze Age socio-political formulae.

On the other hand, the burials in "Cruz del Negro" urns, which were at one point considered as the probable tombs of local people (Arruda 1999-2000: 80), have been shown in more recent studies to be quantitatively residual in the necropolis. This suggests they belonged to a minority group within the site, whether ethnic, social or demographic (Gomes 2016: 336—337).

As for the second issue, that of binary oppositions, an integrated analysis of the necropolis of Alcácer do Sal also offers some critical insights, illustrating how a strict identification of cultural traits as local or foreign can be misleading if the ways in which such traits interact in the context of specific social practices and discourses are not taken into consideration (Gomes 2016: 493—499).

But what is perhaps more significant for the analysis of this case study is that neither the local nor the foreign are monolithic and clear-cut categories. In fact, it is necessary to take into consideration the internal complexity of specific interacting groups, something that recent discussions in the Social Sciences in general and in Archaeology in particular have come to emphasise quite pressingly (Sweeney 2009).

But the specific case study we have been discussing also puts in evidence a different aspect of this problem, namely the fact that the historical context in which the Iron Age communities of the Lower Sado valley emerged and became consolidated cannot be reduced to an interaction between indigenous groups and Phoenician merchants and colonists. All evidence suggests that the situation is much more complex.

As I have stated above, local communities were organized in a complex, multi-polar network during the Late Bronze Age (Gomes 2015), and one of the more overarching effects of the Phoenician presence was to tip off the delicate balance of that network, by connecting it – or at least parts of it – to other regional networks thus creating a larger, intricate network in which the Phoenician settlements and trade routes acted as a connecting interface.

The reconfigured social discourses of the different communities involved in this process did not develop exclusively as a way to project the group identity in the face of Phoenician presence, but also to project said identity in the overall framework of a complex network of which other "non-Phoenician" communities were an integral and active part. This could help explain the generic resemblance of the so-called "orientalising" communities of the Southwestern Iberian Peninsula but most importantly the local specificities of these communities which make the generic models of acculturation and diffusion so incongruent at times.

The hypothesis that oriental-type cultural traits present in the Westernmost Iberian Peninsula are the result of the expansion of highly "orientalised" groups hailing from Western Andalusia (Almagro-Gorbea 2008; Almagro-Gorbea and Torres Ortiz 2009; Torres Ortiz 2005) is a good example of this issue.

This hypothesis was built on the basis of certain specific markers that point towards commonalities in the material culture of a large sector of the Southwestern Iberian Peninsula. A closer inspection of such elements shows that many of them – such as dress elements, weapons, or ritual and prestige goods, all of which show oriental influences – can be interpreted as fulfilling very specific social functions. Why then should the aforementioned commonalities be interpreted in ethnic terms and not in terms of shared (elite) social discourses? It is in fact my contention that many of these commonalities are the result of a process of reconstruction of social, political and identity discourses operating on several different levels – from the local, intra-group scale to the largest transregional scale of the Mediterranean.

In this context, the Phoenician interface, apart from acting as a linchpin and a transmission chain within the newly established network, also provided a common language that facilitated the interaction between the different regional agents it came to connect. This common language was actively appropriated and developed in the context of ongoing socio-political interaction by those agents, especially in those contexts where the competitive, agonistic formulas of acquiring and representing power and status inherited from the Late Bronze Age were still quite alive.

Such an approach, I think, has the benefit of addressing both the regularities of the archaeological record and its undeniable diversity, resulting both from different local and regional contexts and from different representation strategies, which can in turn be analysed with regard to each group's specific position in the overall socio-politic network.

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About the author

Francisco B. Gomes (franciscojbgomes@gmail.com) is a Junior Researcher at UNIARQ – Centre for Archaeology of the University of Lisbon. He completed his PhD on the Early Iron Age funerary practices of southern Portugal in 2016 at the School of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. He is currently conducting a research project on the consumption of Mediterranean imports in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages of southwestern Iberia and its impact on local identities and political economies.

The Japanese fan in the east and west: an archaeological perspective

Matthew Hitchcock

Abstract

This paper provides a short archaeological history of the Japanese fan, building on previous Western historical works with an approach grounded in archaeological and anthropological theory. It will then go on to examine its introduction to the West from the nineteenth century onwards, with an overview of Western publications on Japanese fans and a short critical evaluation of selected museum displays. This will build toward the central argument that the Japanese fan has been marginalised in Western museum institutions and academia in favour of other kinds of Japanese material culture such as samurai swords and armour, ceramics, lacquerware and textiles; partly due to its Western introduction as a fashionable and collectible novelty item. Demonstrating the cultural salience and ubiquity of the fan, the paper will demonstrate some of the ways in which archaeology, anthropology and material culture studies can illuminate the study of the fan's importance and meaning, and highlights the potential for further study.

Introduction

The principal English definition for a portable 'fan' is '*an instrument for agitating the air, to cool the face etc., with an artificial breeze*' (*OED* 2019). However, the fan in Japan has come to encompass far more than this simple, utilitarian purpose – both in terms of function and its cultural significance. Since its first prehistoric iterations, the Japanese fan has been adapted for an extremely diverse range of uses, some of which have left behind their capacity for cooling altogether. It is also a commonly-employed motif in many different contexts, from decorative lacquerware and textiles to roof tiles, and fan painting has been an established genre of Japanese art for centuries. As Julia Hutt and Hélène Alexander's (1992) most comprehensive Western work on Japanese fans published in recent years illustrates, their decorative and portable nature meant that the fan's popularity also extended to collectors in Europe and the United States in the second half of the 19th century. Appealing to fashionable circles and high-class connoisseurs of Eastern art and ethnography, the Japanese fan followed similarly popular and collectible Chinese objects in quickly becoming a desirable item of Oriental *objets d'art*. However, as is argued here, the initial Western reception of the fan as a curiosity or novelty item reserved primarily for the leisured classes has proven difficult to shake. Despite its cultural salience in Japan, it has been treated with less importance and primacy in the West than other Japanese objects like samurai swords, armour, lacquerware and ceramics – both in terms of academic research and institutional collecting and display practices.

This paper is the outcome of a survey of Japanese fans conducted at several museums in the UK. A sample of ten fans of both folding and rigid types were consulted at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and Durham Oriental Museum, together with an iron war fan '*gunbai uchiwa*' from Manchester Museum. This research was also supported by a visit to the collections at the Fan Museum, Greenwich, historic Miyawaki Baisen-an fan-makers shop in central Kyoto, Japan and a fan exhibition at Tokyo National Museum. It is divided into two sections. The first provides a short archaeological history of the fan's development in Japan since its prehistoric introduction from mainland China. Building on Hutt and Alexander's (1992) history of the Japanese fan with an approach grounded in archaeological and anthropological theory, it will introduce some of the fans diverse styles and uses, focusing on the relationship between form and function. The second section will detail the Japanese fans introduction into Western culture, providing an overview of Western publications of Japanese fans and critically examining some examples of fan displays in UK museums. All of this will feed into the central argument that the Japanese fan is an extremely diverse and culturally important object that is often marginalised in favour of more famous objects of Japanese material culture - often displayed as a fine art object rather than an anthropological or archaeological one. It will provide a narrative of how and why this came to be the case, and highlight some ways in which a richer, more nuanced story of the fan might be told.

The Japanese fan in the east

The Japanese fan can be divided broadly into two types – the rigid type (*uchiwa*), which was introduced from China in the 6th century AD; and the folding type (*ōgi*), which appears to have developed two or three centuries later. The earliest archaeological evidence for the fan in Japan comes from a sixth century wall painting from the Takewara Tomb, Fukuoka and is of the former *uchiwa* type. A scene painted in black and red ochre on the end wall of the 'tumulus' tomb depicts a boat on crashing waves, a pair of horses and a human figure, flanked by two pole-mounted fans on either side. The nodules on the poles suggest bamboo, and the fans themselves are oval-shaped, with lines radiating outwards from the bottom. Their oversized nature and prominence in the composition suggest a ceremonial function, and contemporary Chinese examples were elaborately decorated with pheasant and peacock feathers and were carried by the attendants of high officials (Hutt 1992: 13). Comprising mounds of earth and stones covering a grave, these tumuli or '*kofun*' characterise the eponymous Japanese Kofun period (c. 300-550 AD). Material culture and traditions from this period were heavily influenced by those of China, which filtered into Japan via Korea, and included the introduction of Buddhism (Earle 1978: 37). A late-7th or early-8th century painting from the Takamatsuka burial mound, a similar tumulus outside Nara, provides further evidence of early fan use. The image features three female courtiers, one bearing a fan similar in shape to the Takewara fans, but in a much smaller and more portable form. The fan appears to be of a kind typically made from silk stretched over a circular frame, attached to a central stick (Hutt 1992: 13). Although having had a much longer history of development in China, these two examples of Japanese *uchiwa* reflect that since its very introduction, the fan was not simply a utilitarian object. Both the large, pole-mounted and smaller hand-held varieties appear to have been high-status items that constituted an outward display of power and were bound up in the construction of identity.

The earliest known surviving Japanese fan or fan-like object is housed in the Shōsōin imperial repository, a storehouse attached to the great Tōdaiji Temple, Nara. The repository was constructed to house the extensive collections that were gathered together in the mid-eighth century and include things like weapons, instruments, documents, costumes and Buddhist ritual objects. As Nakamura and Naruse (2016: 355) point out, in addition to being an invaluable source of knowledge about the Japanese Nara period (*c*. 710-794 AD), the collections also hold a rich international character, as eighth-century Japanese culture was heavily influenced by that of the Chinese Tang Dynasty. Among these objects is one known as a '*shubi*' ('deer's tail'), that comprises two vertical pieces of wood attached to a lacquered bamboo handle, which would once have had a large amount of deer tail hair fixed between them, trimmed into a semi-circular 'fan' shape. An almost contemporary example held at Tokyo National Museum, also now without its hair, is described as having been used as a substitute for the tail of the deer itself. Replicating the instinctive tail movements of the leader of a herd of deer that indicate direction, the monk would use the *shubi* to guide audiences through the recitation of Sutras (Tokyo National Museum 2019). Like the *uchiwa*, the *shubi* demonstrates that the fan's early iterations were linked to religious as well as secular authority, and possessed the power to transform the body through their performative deployment (Mitchell 2013).

The origins of the folding fan are much more widely debated, and there are various and often quite fanciful origin stories. One popular account that has numerous different versions and dates to around the 7th century, tells of a man named Toyomaru living in the city of Tamba near Kyoto. The man studies the wings of a bat after it becomes injured by a flame during an attempt to rid it from his house, and he becomes inspired to construct a fan that could fold and be concealed in a similar way when not in use (Armstrong 1974: 12). Despite a lack of conclusive evidence, the number and diversity of Japanese myths involving the origin of the folding fan have led most scholars to accept it as a Japanese invention (e.g. Armstrong 1974: 12, Earle 1978: 37, Hutt 1992: 14). Becoming extremely popular even among the lower classes of society from at least the twelfth century, the paper folding fan became almost ubiquitous, adapted for a whole series of uses that incorporated both practicality and ritual. Archaeological evidence for early folding fans is sparse due to their perishable materials, but one rare example described and photographed by fan artist and historian Nakamura Kiyoe (Nakamura 1946: 123), discovered amongst some 12th-century Buddhist scriptures retains some fragments of its paper leaf. The fan is decorated with silver paint and the image of what was perhaps once a willow tree. This single paper leaf, attached to a series of uniformly thin sticks was a precursor to the establishment of the painting of fan leaves as a long-established genre of Japanese art which became a recognised tradition with specialised artists from the Muromachi Period (*c.* 1333-1568) onwards (Hutt 1992: 17). This establishment of the fan as an art-form, I argue, was of great significance to its developing cultural salience – its inexpensive materials and portability meant that the folding fan became be a medium though which to express and transmit ideas, influences and concepts about the wider world.

Despite the paper folding fan becoming more widespread from the 12th century, another early folding example, the 'hiōgi' ('cypress fan'), was used almost exclusively in court as part of regulated court dress. Referred to in the West as 'brisé' ('broken'), this kind of fan consisted of a series of tapered wooden slats which slide over one another and are riveted at one end, and held together at the other with string or a ribbon. Nakamura Kiyoe (Nakamura 1969: 9—12) proposes that the origins of this type of fan may lie with an object known as '*mokkan*'. These flat lengths of wood were covered with writing and used as commercial and administrative tallies by court officials during the Nara period (Piggott 1990). Nakamura goes on to suggest that the next logical step would be to string these together at one end (1969: 9—12). An object that reflected courtly status and identity, the *hiōgi* is one of the most elaborate and exuberant fans – carefully crafted

Figure 1. E.4677-1886. Utagawa Kuniyoshi. 'Legendary Court Lady', woodblock print. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

and vibrantly painted, often with clusters of artificial flowers attached to the guards and pairs of long, flowing tassels. Remaining a key element of official courtly paraphernalia up until the 19th century, the splendour of a *hiōgi* is captured in Utagawa Kuniyoshi's portrait of a 'Legendary Court Lady' (Figure 1, *c*.1846). The fan design and the colours of the tassels encoded regulated information about the status of the bearer, and the materials themselves were also important, with younger members of nobility bearing *hiōgi* made from sugi ('cedar') rather than cypress (Hutt 1992: 15). As Kuniyoshi's court lady and the pair of respectfully gesticulating retainers illustrate, the *hiōgi's* vibrant colours and elaborate decoration represented a powerful kind of art that, together with the other elements of courtly costume, possessed the agency to illicit responses from the viewer through the real sensory effects that they produced (Gell 1998).

Perhaps the most divorced from more traditional forms and contexts, the fan also came to be used on the battlefield, and was carried as part of samurai military uniform. The '*gunsen*', a folding fan made from a double-leaf of thick paper with iron outer guards that contained the leaf when closed was used by generals to send signals to troops. Bearing a circular sun motif on each side, it could be reversed and manipulated to perform a series of pre-determined actions. The metal guards could, if necessary, also serve to defend against blows or even be used as an improvised weapon, and stories of samurai warriors besting better-armed opponents with their fans became popular folk tales. A mid-nineteenth century woodblock print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi in the British Museum collection illustrates one such tale of a heroic twelfth-century samurai Yoshitsune disarming a much larger Benkei by striking him on the wrist with his *gunsen*. In this particular version, he is also aided by supernatural beings known as '*Tengu*'. Held by the British Museum, the triptych represents the view of the folding fan as an object that could demonstrate the martial discipline of the bearer if skilfully deployed in combat.

Another iteration of the war fan, the *'gunbai uchiwa'*, was capable of enacting more serious violence. Shaped like an *uchiwa* in form, but transformed in function by being made completely of iron, the *gunbai uchiwa* could be used to signal troops in a similar way to the *gunsen*, but also seems to have been more explicitly designed for use as a weapon. The 18th-century example in the collections at Manchester Museum (Figure 2) consists of an iron plate attached to a brass handle. Translated into English, its inscriptions read 'made one lucky day in August 1713' and 'made of five-fold forged iron by Miochen Munemasa' (trans. J.B. Charlesworth). There is no indication that this 18th-century example ever saw actual use in battle, but would nonetheless have formed an important element of its owner's military regalia. Another similar 19th-century *gunbai uchiwa in* the collections of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (accession no. O.24-1985) bears the sun and moon on one side and the Polaris constellation on the other, reflecting the incorporation of cosmology into samurai costume. One might at first see the *gunbai uchiwa* as essentially skeuomorphic – based on paper rigid *uchiwa* used for cooling, but forged in iron, making the 'leaf' largely redundant in this regard. However, this object is probably more closely linked to the fan-like *shubi*, the symbol of leadership and spiritual power - sharing a common precursor but developing tangentially to other kinds of fan. From a museological perspective, these iron 'fans' are more robust and substantial, and do not get caught up in the divide between art and ethnography in the same way that painted paper fans often do. However, the pictured Manchester Museum example occupied a slightly awkward spot in its former display case in the 'Living Cultures' gallery - located behind one of a pair of samurai armour sets, and only visible if the viewer moved to the side of the case, whilst several samurai swords and *'tsuba'* (sword hilt guards) commanded a much more central position. With the gallery now closed for renovation, and expected to reopen in 2021, there is an opportunity to tell a more nuanced story about this *gunbai uchiwa*, its function, and how it relates to other common elements of samurai dress.

Figure 2. 0.9689 iron 'gunbai uchiwa'. Made 1713. Photographed by the author, courtesy of the Manchester Museum

Although just an overview, the examples that have been explored here illustrate the diversity of form and function that the Japanese fan encompasses. It is an object that could be subtle and concealed in some circumstances, but conspicuous and captivating in others. It has the power to transform the body, communicating religious ideas, emotions, and mediating the bearer's relationship with others and their surroundings. From the temple to the kitchen; the theatre stage to the battlefield, the fan disseminated into almost every aspect of life in Japan. It has, perhaps more so than any other country, become associated with Japan as national symbol. As Koji Mizoguchi (2006: 103—104) points out, the reproduction of Japanese national identity after the catastrophic losses of the Second World War was led by the archaeological and historical pursuit of continuity. The fan, with its longevity of use, ubiquity, and history of deployment as a decorative motif and '*mon*' (family crest), served as an ideal choice. However, as we shall see in the following section, Japan's post-war national identity also became heavily influenced by its negotiation with the West (Mizoguchi 2006: 56), and the fan came to symbolise Japan through its situation in a very different set of socio-cultural frameworks.

The Japanese fan in the west

The Japanese Edo Period (c. 1600–1868) is one characterised as being insular or closed to the outside world, and when trade with foreign nationals was strictly controlled. One such agreement saw a group of predominantly Dutch merchants be permitted to reside on the artificially-created Deshima island at the port of Nagasaki (see Forrer and Kobayashi-Sato 2014). Interestingly, Deshima island itself was constructed in the shape of fan, reflecting that the trading privileges, like the fan itself, could be snapped shut at any time at the will of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Through outlets such as this, Japanese objects began to filter into Western art markets, and became popularised by events such as the 'Great Exhibition' of 1851 at Crystal Palace. Whilst Japanese fans quickly became popular, they were not considered to be of sufficient prestige for inclusion in these kinds of exhibitions until the Centennial exhibition, Philadelphia in 1876 where rigid and folding fans were sold in a separate Japanese bazaar (Hutt 1992: 29). In Britain, Arthur Lasenby Liberty was influential in proliferating the taste for Japanese fine art objects, opening the East India House in 1875 during the height of the 'Japan Craze.' Importing masses of fans produced for the Western market both for sale and the support of theatrical productions such as Gilbert and Sullivan's 'The Mikado' in 1885, East India House later became the famous Liberty's department store on Regent Street (Adburgham 1991).

The Japanese fan also became incorporated into high fashion in France in the late-19th century where Japanese forms and decoration were emulated and incorporated by French fan craftsmen. Imported Chinese fans had already been popular since the 18th century, and when official Japanese trade relations opened up in full force after the Meiji restoration of 1868, the opportunity arose to draw on the new forms and styles available. The late nineteenth-century Parisian desire for all things Japanese is epitomised by Claude Monet's 1876 satirical painting 'La Japonaise,' (Figure 3) in which Monet's wife Camille poses in a Japanese Kimono. Clutching an open folding fan, Camille is surrounded by an assortment of decorated rigid *uchiwa* fans and wears a blonde wig to emphasise her European identity (Hutt 1992: 33). The painting reflects a period of time when Japan was being perceived through a particularly romanticised Western lens, as an exotic land that produced unfamiliar but appealing objects and images. Without pre-existing colonial relationships, the popular consumption of Japanese art objects contributed to Japan becoming, like its other East Asian neighbours, situated in the Orientalist frameworks famously described by Edward Said (2003). As he describes, Orientalism was a way of dealing with the Orient – a Western means for dominating, restructuring, and possessing authority over Oriental nations (Said 2003: 3). On display at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, La Japonaise was the focus of recent controversy, when the museum launched a series of 'kimono Wednesays'. Inviting visitors to pose for photographs next to the painting wearing a traditional Japanese kimono, the museum was accused of cultural appropriation (The Economist 2015) and criticised for proliferating the same Western Orientalist views that Monet had intended to critique.

Figure 3. 56.147. Claude Monet. 'La Japonaise' © Boston Museum of Fine Art.

Shortly after *La Japonaise* was painted, the first Western literature on the Japanese fan begins to emerge. Charlotte Salwey's 'Fans of Japan' (1894) was the first English attempt at establishing a chronology and typology of the fan, with discussions focusing mainly on paper folding and rigid *uchiwa* fans. Despite engaging with only limited portions of the subject, Salwey's book represented an important starting point for the more academic study of Japanese fans. Of particularly value is her detailed recording of the extent of the fan export trade. Salwey (1894: 133) notes that by 1891, the number of fans exported from Japan was in excess of fifteen million. However, another early English work on Japanese fans, M. A Flory's '*a Book about Fans and Fan Painting*', reminds us of the audience that Western books and exhibitions of Japanese fine arts targeted. One passage from the book in particular, reflects the reductive Western view of the fan even by those studying and writing about them:

> 'The subject, though it may seem frivolous, aptly repays careful study and will not fail to interest the reader, provided the demands on both his patience and time are not too great. Few persons have leisure to peruse an exhaustive volume about these dainty feminine weapons...our manifold duties and pleasures scarcely permit us more time for attention to the fan than to the beautiful butterfly which for a moment delights us by the graceful fluttering of its painted wings' (Flory 1895: 3)

This image of the fan as an object of interest only to the leisured classes is further emphasised in an article published in the *Decorator and Furnisher* in 1893 (Figure 4). An American publication concerned with the nuances of interior design, an article on 'Japanese Fans' (Hart 1893) discusses best practices for collecting them and the most fashionable and effective ways of displaying them in the home. A striking accompanying illustration by artist Lucien Besche, more well-known for portraiture, features a selection of Japanese folding fans arranged in accordance with Western aesthetics. It is, nevertheless, useful in illustrating some of the fan's different forms. Some of the fan designs in the image are attributed to famous woodblock print maker Katsushika Hokusai, and an example of a *gunsen* war fan can be seen in the upper right corner of the arrangement. This *gunsen* features a long cord with a tassel, a vestige of the tassels of the court *hiōgi* fans described in the previous section which, despite being presumably impractical on the battlefield, are associated with rank and power.

The mid-20th century saw a number of influential anthropological studies of Japan contribute to the advancement of Western understanding of its culture and history, one of the most well-known being Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), which also detailed its post-war relationship with the United States. Emerging from these, U. A. Casal's often overlooked, *The Lore of the Japanese Fan* (1960) offers an extensive account of the fan's technological advancement over time. Casal (1960: 64) suggests that the Japanese term for the rigid fan, *uchiwa*, was probably derived from '*utsu ha*', meaning 'swatting leaf', and so lend further credence to the notion that its origins lie not with cooling but for driving away pests or for the warding off of evil spirits by early Japanese practitioners of Buddhism. The article is, however, also coloured by problematic portrayals of cultures which use the leaf fans that Casal posits as a potential precursor to the uchiwa, referring to them as 'primitive' and 'savages' (Casal 1960: 54). A revolution for fan studies came in 1975 when the Fan Circle International was established to promote interest in and understanding of all kinds of fan, and one of its British patrons, Madame Hélène Alexander was instrumental in the foundation of the first Western Museum dedicated solely to fans.

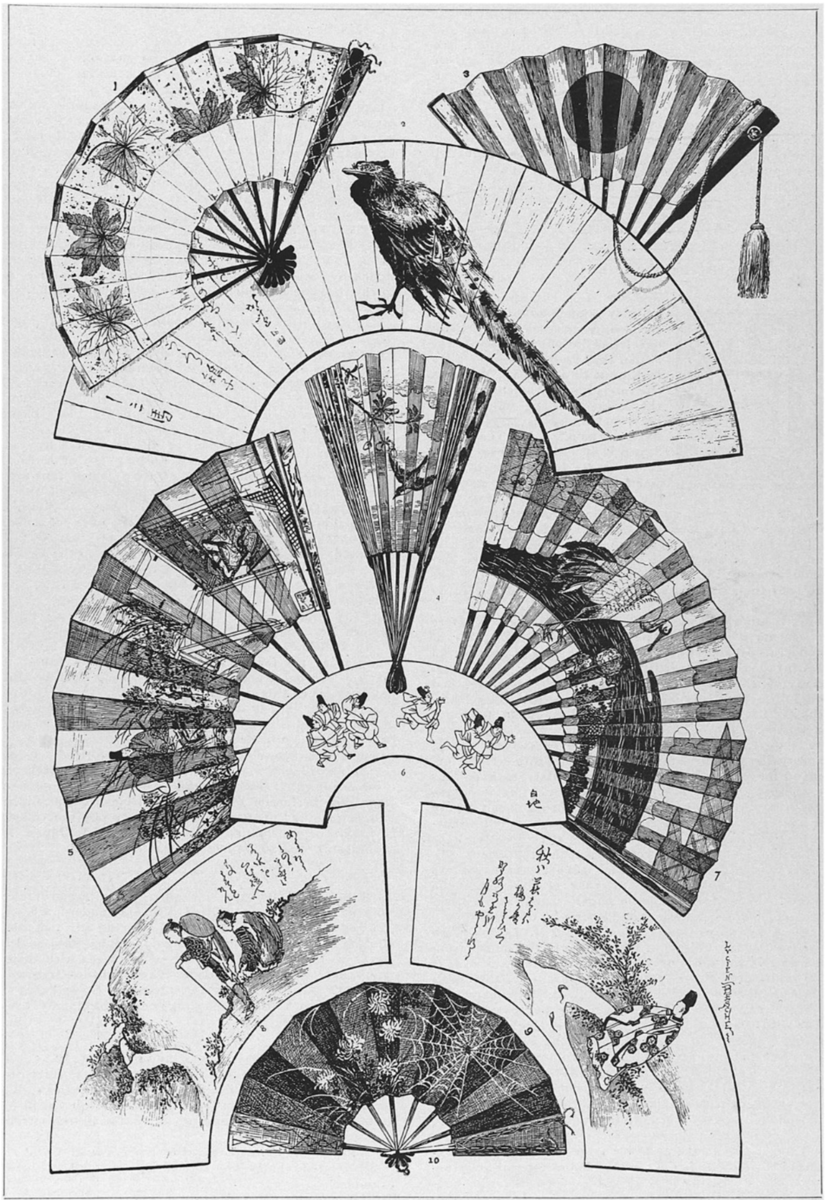

Figure 4. An arrangement of Japanese fans illustrated by Lucien Besche, originally published in the Decorator and Furnisher (Hart 1893).

The Fan Museum in Greenwich, UK now houses over 2000 fans of both Eastern and Western origin. Facilitating their conservation and academic study, the museum produces regular research bulletins about its collections and hosts regular lectures and talks. The volume on Japanese fan history produced by museum co-founder Madame Hélène Alexander, co-written and edited by Victoria and Albert Museum East Asian collections curator Julia Hutt, *Ōgi: A History of the Japanese Fan* (Hutt and Alexander 1992), remains the most detailed and anthropologically nuanced Western work on Japanese fans. However, in Alexander's own words, the Fan Museum is a place where 'beauty and culture combine with elegant comfort and period charm' (Alexander 1992: 37). Visitors are also invited to enjoy afternoon tea in the museum's orangery, which is described by the museum's website as being 'beautifully muraled', exuding an 'enchanting atmosphere', and overlooking a 'secret garden' arranged in the Japanese style (The Fan Museum 2019). Of course, a private museum must make its money somehow, but for all of its academic advancements of the work on fans, it is difficult not to feel that the Fan Museum is targeting and catering primarily for an older, wealthier audience. Despite being an excellent institution that continues to contribute much to the topic, the Fan Museum also reflects the extent to which the Japanese Fan is still associated with being an object of dilettantism primarily for wealthier demographics, often reduced to being solely appreciated through a lens of Western fine art aesthetic.

Museums whose collections comprise both fine art, and archaeological and anthropological material such as the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford possess a unique opportunity to tell a much richer story about the Japanese fan. The fan leaf in Figure 5, from the collections at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, is an example of a fan that has had a varied history and is representative of many of the fan leaves in the museum's collection. The painted paper leaf is now displayed in two-dimensions, much like a traditional painting, but the darker creases visible in its silver paint reveals that it was once mounted on sticks. As was often the case with particularly treasured fans, the leaves could be detached and stored in albums after a season or two of use and were thus transformed into a different kind of object – one to do with the curation of memory. The fan should perhaps not be seen, then, as a single object, but rather multiple – one that embodies different sets of ontological complexities through adaptations in form and means of deployment, but one that could also become renegotiated as it moved through a series of material changes (Jones et al. 2016, Joyce and Gillespie 2015). I argue that, whilst the leaf is a work of art in its own right and this aspect of its character is an important one, it would greatly enrich the object's story to acknowledge that it is a fragment, separated from older components that allowed it to move in three dimensions and mediate social relationships in ways that are now much less apparent.

Figure 5. EAX.5432 Sakai Hōitsu and Rimpa School, 'Maple branch in spring'. Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Conclusion

The fan, ever since its initial introduction into Japan, has encompassed far more than a simple instrument for cooling. It has been adapted to for a multitude of different secular and religious uses, from the mundane to the extraordinary. This diversity in form and function is reflected in the many different Japanese terms that exist, some of the more common of which have been introduced in this paper, and this also highlights the limitations of the English word 'fan' and its definition. It is perhaps more appropriate to conceptualise the various types of Japanese fan as an assemblage of related objects, rather than a single type – diverse but nonetheless related to each other in various ways that make one single term inadequate. Its suitability for exuberant decoration and embellishment saw it become an emblem of religious and secular power, but its conceptual simplicity and ubiquity meant that it also became a national symbol and cultural icon. Its introduction to the West, inspiring a vast swathe of collectors of Oriental ethnography, was as a decorative object, collected and displayed for aesthetic appreciation – and this reductive image is one that has lingered to the present day. Fan Circle chairperson Madeleine Ginsburg resolved in 1976 to rescue Japanese fans from the 'backwater of dilettante chit-chat and nudge them toward the mainstream of art and historical studies' (Ginsburg 1976), and, over 40 years later, there is still a way to go. The Japanese fan represents a unique opportunity within archaeology, anthropology and material culture studies to explore a category of object both so culturally important and diverse in form and function, and one that has been particularly overlooked. Whilst rarely seen as an archaeological object, I argue that further research from within our discipline is warranted and will prove illuminating.

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About the author

Matthew Hitchcock (MWHitchcock@BritishMuseum.org) recently completed a PhD at the University of Manchester focusing on shields from the British Iron Age. Having completed an undergraduate degree in archaeology at the University of Manchester and a Masters degree in archaeology at the University of Oxford, he is currently working as a Project Curator in archaeological assemblages at the British Museum. His research interests include later European prehistory, archaeological archives, and the anthropology of art.

Communities in Between: the Silk Road network in the context of trans-Eurasian politics from the 6th to the 8th centuries

Shengyu Wang

Abstract

The 'Silk Road' was once considered as a single route along which Chinese silk moved from the Han Empire (206 BC-AD 220) to the west end of the Roman Empire (27 BC-AD 1453). However, during the recent two decades, a scholarship of broad and multiple-dimensional interpretations has proved that it was a network of routes that connected China with western Asia, the Eurasian Steppe, the Mediterranean, and the Indian subcontinent, along which travelled traders, emissaries, pilgrims, etc.. These agents brought luxuries, technologies, religions and ideas to many different communities and empires in Eurasia. The period of the 6th to the 8th centuries has been regarded as the apex of different communications of the Silk Road. It was when military conflicts and economic interactions between Central Asia, the oasis kingdoms and empires were many. China, the Tibetans, Turkic people, Byzantines and the Islamic caliphates were all competing powers in diplomatic, military and political engagement. By studying against a broad historical background, the question of how the conflicting great powers could be related to the Silk Road trade and to its apex as generally believed will be examined. This paper will also explore some of the possible impetuses that caused the development of the Silk Road trade, and to see how peoples from communities in between big powers such as those who lived in Turfan in nowadays Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China and the Sogdians, made a living within Eurasia from the 6th to the 8th centuries.

Introduction

The term 'Silk Road' was coined by the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905) in 1877 in his historical geographical work *China*, which he referred to a road, or roads, along which silk moved from the Han Empire (206 BC-AD 220) of ancient China to Central Asia (Richthofen 1877, 458; Hansen 2012, 7). Since then, the Silk Road has often been romanticized as an east-west trading route along which silk was transported as the main commodity; whereas the harsh realities of travel across Central Asia that involved negotiating the region's major powers, such as the empires of Tang China, the Turks, and the Byzantines, are broadly glossed over by scholarship (Huyghe 1993; Lin 2006). This paper, therefore, attempts to show the complexity and diversity of the trade by studying the material culture of the peoples that settled in between major powers like China and the Turkic empire during the 6th to the 8th centuries. This period has been regarded as the apex of different kinds of communications of the Silk Road (Vaissière 2014, 104), but it was also when many military and economic interactions between Central Asia, the oasis kingdoms and empires were going on (Skaff 2012, 4; Cunliffe 2015, 379—381; Twitchett 2015, 32). The community in Turfan (now in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China, Figure 1) located at the frontier of the great powers will be examined as a case study to investigate how ordinary people along the Silk Road made a living within a complicated Eurasian environment. The archaeological remains from Turfan may help us to better understand the significant role played by smaller groups of people of different origins and ethnic backgrounds geographically in between major states in making the trade of objects, religions, cultures and art possible (Petech 1990, 3; Skaff 2004).[1]

Figure 1. The location of Turfan. After Millward 2013, 8.

A brief literature review

Since the beginning of the 21st century, more scholars started to realise the misleading nature of the 'silk' and 'road' in the traditional understanding of 'Silk Road' (Millward 2013, 7). That the Silk Road was not only a system of exchanging goods, technologies and ideas between agrarian regions, but also of trans-ecological exchanging between the mobile pastoralists and agrarian worlds was acknowledged (Christian 2000, 1—26; Juliano and Lerner 2002, 4—5). The importance of the Eurasian steppe and the Silk Road as a 'network' of routes seemed to be fully realised. By mainly focusing on the life of merchants between China in the east and Constantinople in the west, some scholars proposed that the Silk Road was a brand name which inspires thoughts of luxury, beauty, strength and so on (Lin 2006; Whitfield and Sims-Williams 2014, 13). Attention has also been paid to different local groups in Central Asia who conducted small scale trade as well as cultural, religious and technological transmissions (Golden 2011, 38; Hansen 2012, 237). The subject of Silk Road becomes increasingly well-studied when more scholars take the

[1] For more on how people trade, contact, spread and mix local and exotic cultures etc., and that the spread of material culture does not necessarily come along with the spread of original related ideas, see Rawson 1984; Monaghan and Just 2000; Mair 2006.

complexity of states' relations into consideration whilst examining long-distance movement of goods and ideas (Skaff 2012; Millard 2013; Cunliffe 2015).

As more objects discovered across Eurasia have been identified to be related to the trade along the Silk Road, the interpretations on the subject are far more than those listed above. Yet this glance at the scholarly outlines provides us with a rather comprehensive perspective that the 'Silk Road' was a network of routes that connected major powers of Eurasia and communities in between, and it was neither a road nor did it only export silk.

There are, however, still some points which do not get enough scholarly attention. 'Silk Road' is such a well-known term that people sometimes take it for granted to use it to describe almost all kinds of communication in the past (Millard 2013, 3 and 20; Wu Bing 2018). But ancient people did not necessarily realise that they were trading or travelling on the 'Silk Road' which is a modern concept developed in the late-nineteenth century. To explore why there were trade and different kinds of interaction at all, and how the Silk Road was perceived and engaged by different peoples, I will now turn to the political situation and diplomatic relationships between the trading people, various communities and states in Eurasia.

Historical background and communities in between

The relations of the Chinese with surrounding areas and non-Chinese peoples have been coloured by the concept of Sinocentrism ('Chinese worldview') and Chinese superiority by some Chinese scholars (Fairbank 1968, 1—19). 'Silk Road' is itself a Sinocentric term, as it implies that China is transmitting silk to other parts of the world without receiving anything in return, in accordance with the idea that Chinese civilisation radiated outwards (Zhang Liangren 2013).

Nonetheless, China was never the continuous central power state in Eurasia or enlightening all it touched. Rather, it was in an international status of almost perpetual conflict (Golden 2011, 295). As the largest of the continents, the history of Eurasia was broad and sophisticated. This paper outlines a brief history of part of the eastern and Central Eurasia during the 6th and the 8th centuries, where the east end of the Silk Road was recognized as Chang'an 長安 (now Xi'an 西安, Shaanxi Province, China) and diverse land trade and interactions took place.[2] On this basis, it is argued here that all the political powers battled and entangled, and could be altogether considered as running a mechanism driven by the motivation of getting more interests for themselves, including political and military influence, territory, economy and the occupation of more resources. War and peace alternated, military and tributary exchanges co-existed, and within such a context, trade and contact were not killed.

The major powers in Eurasia included the Tibetan empire (AD 618-842), Turkic empire (Eastern Turkic khaganate AD 552-630 and AD 682-742), Arab empire (AD 632-1258) and China which was experiencing tumultuous era of the Six Dynasties (AD 222-589) before the re-unification of the Sui (AD 581—618) and Tang dynasties (AD 618-907). One of its most powerful neighbours was the Turks. They were great threat for other states such as the Sassanian Empire (AD 224-651) too, and the oasis towns in Central Asia were also disturbed in 565 when the Turks went into the

[2] The eastern end of the Silk Road is also frequently referred to as the Korean Peninsula and Japan, which are not currently taken into consideration in this paper. Lin 2006; Hansen 2012; Millard 2013.

Tarim Basin (Petech 1990, 6). The Turks had controlled almost the whole Eurasian steppe zone by the mid-6th century until eclipsed by the Uyghurs in 744 (Watt 2004, 36). But in 631, the Eastern Turks surrendered to the Tang, and Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. AD 627-649) of the Tang expanded into Central Asia and established garrisons at major oasis towns around the Tarim Basin in the mid-7th century (Rong 2000, 138). In addition, the armed confrontation between China and the mobile pastoral steppe people happened frequently, especially during early Tang when the steppe allies prevented the expansion of Chinese power (Graff and Higham 2002, 1—6). Another power which had bothered China for long was one at further eastern Asia – Goguryeo Kingdom (37 BC-AD 668) in modern North Korea and Northeast China. It was in good relationship with China at the beginning of the Tang dynasty. But from the 630s, it refused to pay tribute and was continuously resisting against China because China was the biggest threat to its extension in the Korean Peninsula. The war was not ended until 668 when Goguryeo was conquered during the reign of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 of the Tang (r. AD 649-83) (Zhang Tun 2008, 53—54; Twitchett 2015, 32—33) (Figure 2).

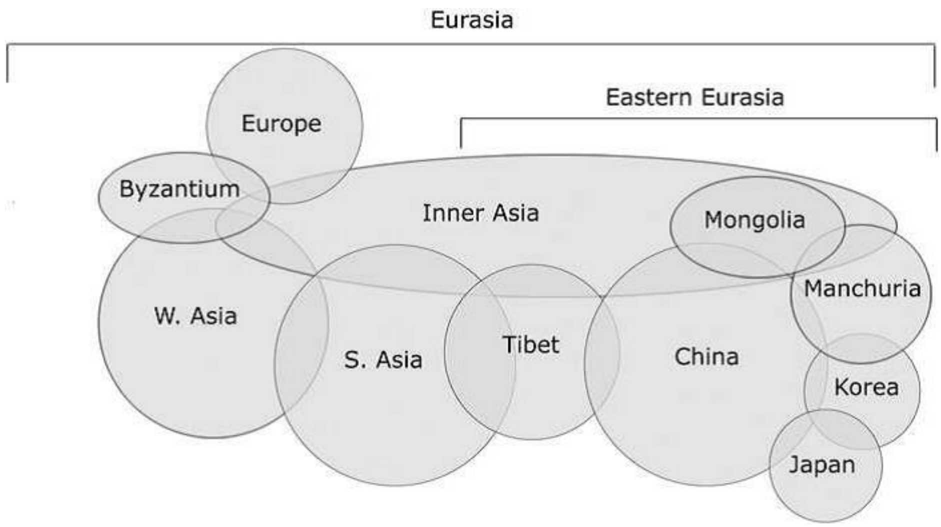

Figure 2. Schematic diagram of Eurasian powers and cultural zones during the 6th and 8th centuries. Image from: Skaff 2012, 7.

It is obvious that in this broader context of history there was no single continuous dominant power. Although wars and conflicts typically kill people and thus perhaps culture, the material demand for the maintenance of military consumptions usually came along with them, which was one of the possible reasons for the continuous trade such as the exchange of horses (Golden 2011, 296; Skaff 2012, 7—8). Resources were unevenly distributed, so people had always had a desire to get access to raw materials, military supplies and products that they could not get on their own lands (Braudel 2001, 58—59). In this sense, the consuming major powers and their political needs encouraged productivity and trade to some extent.

Yet the interactions among major powers including the tribute trade, gift exchange and military agreement were not what the Silk Road was all about, and there was no single power telling everyone else what to do while trade kept going on. Also, the travelling was never easy, with major routes through different natural zones of Eurasia, such as the Taklamakan Desert which divides the many oasis towns of the Tarim Basin, the valleys of the Pamir Mountains, and the broad steppe land of Central Asia (Taaffe 1990, 39—40). There were north-south communication routes from the Altai to the steppes of Kazakhstan and west Siberia, where fewer natural obstacles were encountered (Cunliffe 2015, 8—9). However, the mountain ranges of Eurasia could still be huge barriers to the movement of peoples, and archaeological investigations have not yet discovered any clearly marked routes but only some drifting trails and unmarked footpaths (Cunliffe 2015, 10—11). Few individuals have been found to have travelled all the way from Central Asia to Chang'an (Juliano and Lerner 2001, 28). The breadth and complexity of this network of routes and the vast differences in environment raise the questions: who was conducting trade in this harsh environment, and what motivated them?

It is believed that most of the contact was generated by different groups of people who lived in between big empires, close to the desert, basin and mountains and had smaller populations, conducting trade within regional reach (Millward 2013, 16). Local town markets and markets around big commercial cities such as Guangzhou 廣州 and Bianzhou 汴州 (now Kaifeng) in China, satisfied both the demand for daily-life objects and desire for exotic rarities (Twitchett 2015, 29). In a way, the creation of the Silk Road trade could be traced back to Han dynasty people's attempts to establish alliance with the nomadic peoples in Central Asia, when loads of presents including silk rolls were sent to Central Asia, creating a want of more regular contact with China apart from political events in Central and Western Asia (Vaissière 2014, 102). Through trading, these communities had been in contact with each other and helped the major powers to be in contact over centuries and sharing material and artistic practices (Rawson 1984, 38). Sites around the frontier of the borderland of Sui-Tang China like Kucha and Turfan acted as the intermediary shaping the patters of interactions between China and neighbouring powers like the Turk and Tibet (Skaff 2012, 15). These communities usually had dry climate and extreme temperature, which helps preserve much material evidence of the trade. They had a cosmopolitan nature as well, due to the rather high mobility of populations among whom many were traders, envoys, monks and even refugees (Hansen 2012, 21). These communities, therefore, were very different from the sedentary states of China, Persia, India or the raiding steppe nomadic powers who deliberately tried to interact (Cunliffe 2015, 323). The intermediate city state along the Taklamakan Desert of Turfan was a typical instance, both supervising and serving exchanges and expenditures (*ibid.*). It was also on the transmission routes of Buddhism, with Chinese monks going to India and Central Asians to China with Buddhist scriptures and holy relics (Abramson 2008, 54). The development of early Buddhism paralleled the introduction of Buddhist art in China, and monks – some travelling with merchants – transmitted cultures, both to the court and to ordinary people (Zürcher 1972, 2).

These communities migrated when wars and political changes took place. The Sogdians, originated from Samarkand in modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan migrated north-west, and some went to Northwest China after Samarkand fell to Muslim forces in 712 (Sims-Williams 1996, 56; Chen 2012, 102). They were particularly closely involved with trade across vast distances – they set up a Sogdian trading network all the way from Crimea to Manchuria, and their traces have been found in as far as Belgium and Japan (Golden 2011, 50). Not only did they trade a wide variety of goods, but interpreters, entertainers, horse breeders etc. also travelled with Sogdian caravans along major routes frequented by Sogdian traders (Hansen 2012, 4—5). Although the related trade cannot be oversimply explained by the Sogdian artefacts found in certain places including Central China, and a detailed study is not conducted here due to word limit,[3] their traces of interactions with Turfan, China and other peoples within Eurasia cannot be overlooked as reflected in the discussion below.

Making a living in the Oasis of Turfan

One of the settlements that participated actively in the exchange of goods, people and ideas within the Silk Road network was Turfan, which is examined here in greater detail to demonstrate the array of factors, including the actions of empires and independent agents, that facilitated trans-continental interaction in the 6th to 8th centuries.

Turfan was once the principal city in the oasis state of Gaochang 高昌 Kingdom (Karakhoja) of the eastern Central Asia ruled by the Qu 麴 family (AD 500-640) (Wu Zhen 1981, 38—40; Abramson 2008, 119). As one of the trading cities in between the Iranian and Chinese worlds, silverware, coins and other goods, such as spice, passed through the city. The influence of Turfan came into China with the help of Central Asians from the 4th to the 6th centuries, among whom the Sogdians helped the most (*Kaogu* 2006, 47—72). Turfan was probably the largest oasis along the Silk Road with a population of 40,000 (Hansen 2005a, 43). It was named one of the 300 prefectures of China during the first half of the Tang dynasty (AD 640-755) (Hansen 2012, 91). Within this period, there were frequent cultural exchanges between Turfan and the Tang capital Chang'an, which had a far-reaching effect on material objects, arts and even daily fashion of Tang China (Watt 2004, 37). Most of the materials we shall look at come from the Astana cemetery, for almost all the documents found at Turfan are from there. The Astana cemetery, some ten miles east of Turfan, just outside the walls of the city of Gaochang, runs 2.4 km east to west and up to 1.2 km north to south and contains more than 3000 tombs from the 3rd to the 8th centuries (*Wenwu* 2006, 3).

Turfan people had a unique practice of burying the dead in recycled paper (Zhang and Rong 1998, 13—36). These materials are of historical value because they are local records, and most were recycled wastepaper documents, on which the original contents represented random samples of both the official and private writings regarding people's life (Skaff 2003, 447). The extremely dry climate helps the preservation of over 2000 documents telling trade details, contracts and governmental orders etc., which are the main source of knowledge on the trade and life in Turfan. For instance, a merchant called Shi Randian, whose household was registered in Turfan, is recorded to have travelled with two servants, one slave and ten horses on his first trip to Kucha in 732; and when he went back there were an additional horse and a mule that he purchased in his caravan (Arakawa 2001, 1—21). Such record seems to be trivial, but it is important in showing the scale of the trade – usually small – conducted by common people.

There were also local officials at the check points who regulated the trade and oversaw a legal system protecting the interests of traders (Hansen 2012, 294). Many non-Chinese adult males served as part-time guardsmen (*weishi* 衛士) in the Tang military system of *fubing* 府兵 in

[3] For a complete and detailed history of the Sogdians, see Wertmann 2015.

contemporary settlements such as Turfan and Dunhuang throughout the empire[4] (Ikeda 1965, 49—92). They were exempted from tax on account of their service, meaning that the finances of many local families depended on the Chinese government (Skaff 2003, 499). During the 630s, the

Figure 3. *Baitiwu* 白蹄烏 of the 'six steeds of Zhao mausoleum', Xi'an Beilin Museum. After: *Tianmu shuzi lishi bowuguan* 天木數字歷史博物館 (Tian Digital History Museum), viewed 19 February 2019, <http://www.tianmuseum.com/article.asp?id=498>.

Tang was conducting campaigns against the Western Turks. In order to increase the military support, the Tang administration '... increased the military expenditure and shipped more silk...' by sending bolts of silk from Central China to the frontier including Turfan (Liu Xu 1975, 5221—5223). The stationed Tang troops spent more silk to exchange for grain, uniforms and more importantly, horses for warfare, which drove the development in local economies of oases like Turfan (Hansen 2002, 106-107; 2012, 52). Apart from getting horses after winning battles, the Tang government bought horses from the border markets which existed long before Turfan became one of the garrisons in 640, as well as received horses from the tribute from Central Asian communities such as Samarkand (Wen 1983, 2—18; Cai 1988, 100). In an attempt to show the influence and the cosmopolitanism of China, Taizong was said to have ordered the depiction of his six battle horses from different origins in his mausoleum, known as the 'six steeds of Zhao

[4] *Fubing* 府兵 was a local military system in China from the 6th to the 8th centuries. Men were mobilized when war occurred, and they farmed their land when off-duty. For details see Peers 2006.

mausoleum' (Zhaoling liujun 昭陵六駿) (Xiang 1957, 44). One of the depicted horses called Baitiwu 白蹄烏 probably originated from Turfan as similar horse statues have been found in Astana (Esin 1965, 3—4) (Figure 3). The Tang dynasty had a well-developed horse administration (mazheng 馬政) including both big purchase and strict selection of tribute horses from the steppe and Central Asia (Zhang Zhongge 1996 vol. 2, 791). However, when rebellion threatened the Tang summoned the military forces back to Central China after 755, the purchases fell off compared with the ones made at the local market by the Chinese troops when they stationed in Turfan (Hansen 2012, 9). The trade can thus be regarded as a 'by-product of Chinese government' (ibid., 111), and of the diplomatic relationships between different forces in Eurasia.

'Turfan' means 'Chinatown' in Sogdian (Gershevitch 1954, 158). When the Qu family established the Gaochang Kingdom around 500, Han Chinese were already the most numerous among different ethnic groups of people in Turfan, and the contact with Chang'an increased when the Tang conquered Turfan in 640 (Wei 1974, 2244). In 1973, Chinese archaeologists excavated the tomb of a local official Zhang Xiong 張雄 (AD 583-633) and his wife Lady Qu (d. AD 715). Clay figurines which were likely to be originated from Central China were found, as before the Tang conquest, tomb figurines in Turfan were mostly only made from wood (Lin 2000, 83-84). A painted female figure wearing a dress made from fine silk was skillfully incorporated the Iranian pearl roundel motif; and she wore the 'new moon eyebrow' (*queyuemei* 卻月眉) on her face which was the fashionable eyebrow make-up for women in Central China (Tian 2003, 108) (Figure 4). A painted screen from the tomb of Lady Qu depicted grooms with horses, one of the favourite subjects for Chinese painters in the Tang dynasty. This had probably to do with Tang's extension and border secure in the west in the first half of the dynasty, when breeding horses became a status symbol (Wu Hung 1997, 78—79). Each of the eight screen panels is similarly composited with a groom, his horse, a tree and some grass and flowers including the traditional Han Chinese auspicious motif of fungus (*lingzhi* 靈芝) (Watt 2004, 286). Other auspicious motifs and even Chinese characters on silk pieces and wall paintings in tombs in Astana were popular in interior ornamentation and tomb decorations until late Tang China (Pan 2011). All these indicate that art, entertainment, and lifestyle came along with the trade between Turfan and China (Beckwith 2011, 79). Such trade, however, had started long before the interference of Tang China (Hansen 2005a, 44). If there was an apogee of the trade, which was believed to be happening during the Tang conquest (Zhang and Rong 1998; Hansen 2005b, 283), for the local people in Turfan, it may be seen as their reaction to improve their life when chances were available. When China lost control of the routes through the Gansu Corridor and the Tarim Basin in the late 8th century, the routes to the west ended and a further northern route through Uyghur started to be frequently used (Cunliffe 2015, 354 and 365). Yet the trade in Turfan did not end completely, as the tradition of the people making a living on local economies there went on (Skaff 2003, 295; Hansen 2005b, 304).

Figure 4. Female figurine, Tomb of Zhang Xiong and his wife, Astana, Turfan, Xinjinag Uygur Autonomous Region Museum. Image from: Watt 2004, 289.

Conclusion

The Silk Road was a network of communication in which people of different communities in Eurasia interacted through trade, tribute, migration and religious journeys. Major powers ran an international mechanism of continuous diplomatic interactions, conflicts, as well as economic and cultural transmissions. The investigation on a more general picture around the 6th to the 8th centuries makes us rethink all these transmissions against the historical background, and see how the related people in between lived in the international situation. The Silk Road trade can be regarded as the by-product of this mechanism, and diplomacy was exchanged in the sphere of imperial China, the steppe, and Central Asia. For the Tang dynasty of China which was the major metropolitan comparison against the communities in between in this paper, it used trade to broker peace with the Turkic Empire when it failed to resolve their issues using military force. After the Tang set up military colonies in the northwest, mostly in today's Xinjiang, trade developed such as the exchange of horses for silk in between Central China and its prefectures like Turfan. However, China also tried to peace down some conflicts and obtain certain political profits whilst facing pressures from different peoples (Golden 2011, 42; Skaff 2012, 247—248) – it had to deal with Tibet when the Turks intended to get more revenue to solve domestic political problems, and thus the Tang ran a Tang-Turk tribute in the first half of the 8th century to achieve temporary peace, saving energy for fighting the Tibetan Empire. This kind of political need was an important driver for trade and the moving of goods (Hansen 2012, 5—8).

Nonetheless, even if diplomatic and political engagements were essential stimuli for interactions, no single directive created the trade. It was due to the communities in between, such as the examined one of Turfan, that all the mobility and communications became possible. Regional small-distance trade had always existed there; and when the major powers required horses or locally-produced artefacts, possibilities were that all these things were transported through border stations and passed several markets before reaching the final destinations (Juliano and Lerner 2001, 224). The intermediate peoples were as important as, if not more important than, the major powers in the entangled Eurasia of conflicts and communication, and in the network of the Silk Road.

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About the author

Shengyu Wang (violincarol@icloud.com) is a DPhil graduate of the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford. She studies auspicious ornament in early imperial China. Her research interest also extends to the Silk Road and international exchange of scholarship of Chinese Archaeology. She majored in Museology and Chinese Language and Literature during her undergraduate study in Peking University and joined an archaeological team excavating a Han dynasty architecture site in East China. She has been doing curatorial, publishing, and educational work for museums in Oxford and China, as well as constantly exploring and teaching Chinese Art and Calligraphy.

Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Annual Conference 2018: Order and Chaos

Exploring ideas about order, chaos and Classical Archaeology through theatre

Claire Frampton

Abstract

In Greek mythology, chaos was the source from which everything was created. This paper is about ways in which themes of order, chaos and classical archaeology have been explored through theatre. It presents case studies of presentations in a museum, and on the archaeological site of an ancient theatre in Greece. It will examine the ways in which theatre can facilitate engagement both with material culture from the ancient world, and with current affairs, and can showcase the contemporary creative scenes. The case studies are examples of recent theatre, demonstrating the types of projects using themes from the ancient world, and generating new interpretations.

Main text

In Greek mythology chaos was what existed before the creation of the world, and the gods. Zeus the king of the gods came to preside over the universal order. Kershaw cites an epic poem, 'the *Theogony* ('The Origin [and Descent] Of the Gods')' in the writings of Hesiod (c.700 BC) as a source of information about the creation myths from antiquity (Kershaw 2007: 28). This paper will discuss ways in which ideas about order, chaos and classical archaeology have been explored through theatre with examples of presentations in a museum setting and the archaeological site of an ancient theatre, exploring the relationship of theatre to the material culture of the ancient world. Museums and heritage sites both provide valuable contexts within which to examine and understand performance. Performances in locations which relate to classical archaeology evoke the original context of ancient culture. For both types of performance location, there is a physical element of the liminal, the unusual, and the culturally relevant that shapes how we see these performances of ancient drama. This paper is about observations and analysis of theatre presented in these environs and offers an academic study of theatre in heritage engagement and education, a topic and suite of case studies which are currently underexplored.

The methodological approach involved research; attendance of events at the Ashmolean; and reading academic writing about related topics, popular culture and news items to explore what has been happening recently. Research included consideration of less academic sources, since the performances (and related ideas) engaged not only academic audiences but the wider public. A piece of qualitative research, a transcribed interview with an Education Officer has been included. This research was analysed to answer research questions; what have been the most exciting, engaging recent projects relating to order, chaos and classical archaeology? What were the unique ways the performances engaged audiences, involving consideration of the performance context? How have performances demonstrated development of classical themes in a modern context? How were performances received? How has performance developed intellectual knowledge and public understanding of classical archaeology? This research was undertaken after the events.

Scholarly writing relating to the themes of this paper in terms of relationship of theatre and interpretation of archaeological artefacts includes *Theatrocracy: Greek Drama,Cognition and the Imperative for Theatre* (Meineck 2017), which explores the 'multisensory experience of theatre', and the development of our understanding of the effect of ancient theatre on its audience (Meineck 2017: 5). It also explores the relationship between the study of human engagement with objects, and of the study of ancient theatre to ancient artefacts, in terms of cognitive connections (Meineck 2017: 6–7).

Shanks and Pearson's *Theatre / Archaeology* (2001) is about the development of a project which merged archaeology and theatre (Shanks and Pearson 2001: xi), originating at the University of Wales, Lampeter. This culminated in the 'joint elaboration of a **blurred genre**, a mixture of narration and scientific practices, an integrated approach to recording, writing and illustrating the material past' (Shanks and Pearson 2001: xi). There is an element of classics running through the book, the first example of a theatre project is a photograph from a presentation of Homers' *Odyssey* the experience described by a student at the Department of Archaeology, University College, Cardiff (Shanks and Pearson 2001: 2).

In terms of theatre in museums, Susan Bennett's *Theatre and Museums* (2012) is an example of recent academia, 'engaging with key debates in performance studies' showing how 'theatre and museums both resist and complement one another' (back cover). It is about a developing area of research in the context of a recent history of museums and places itself within recent academia on the subject.

This paper can therefore be seen as a development of academia in this area, with study of recent theatre presentations.

Two case studies in this paper took place in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, a museum with obvious influences from classical archaeology in the design of the building which is in neoclassical style, and which houses large collections of Greek and Roman antiquities discovered during archaeological excavations. The original, neoclassical front of the building was designed by C.R. Cockrill in 1845 (Mara 2009). It includes a grand entrance with imposing columns in ancient Greek style, and interior friezes based on ancient designs. A recent redesign behind this façade, by Rick Mather architects, was opened in 2009 with objects arranged under the curatorial concept of 'Crossing Cultures, Crossing Time'. The principles include the architects' intention of great visibility between galleries encouraging visitors to make connections between cultures. The main atrium is 'a dramatic central space' (ATRIUM, n.d.), with visitors seeing on entering the museum a large plaster cast of Apollo, the god of arts, a decorative element of architecture from the temple of Olympia (Eckart 2012). Apollo is a god who is perceived as representing order in opposition to chaos. In *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche wrote about the Apollonian and Dionysian as opposing central themes, forces of nature, a theory he used to analyse Greek culture. The Apollonian is derived from the god Apollo who represents order, Dionysian derives from Dionysus, the god of festivals who in contrast represents disorder and chaos (Kuiper, n.d.). In its original context, the cast of the statue of Apollo at the Ashmolean was in a scene where the figure of Apollo stabilised a fight at a wedding (Ashmole and Yalouris

1967: 17): an example of order and chaos from the visual culture of the classical world. In the Ashmolean the figure of Apollo overlooks the artistic activities in the classically inspired building, with events including weddings (Ashmolean Museum, Atrium, n.d.), and, as discussed in this paper, it is a performative space, too. The design of the building combines ancient and modern, with classical influences in a modern context, and could be judged as blurring the lines between past and present.

In terms of display of objects, in the Greece gallery, there are displays of 'the Museum's collection of Greek painted pottery… grouped in displays with themes such as 'myths, sport and theatre, hunting and warfare…' (Ashmolean Museum, Greece, n.d.). Ideas about the creation of perfection, technique and order were part of the ethos of artists in antiquity (Devambez 1967, entry on 'Art'). In *The Classical Archaeology of Greece: Experiences of the Discipline*, Michael Shanks relates the notion of order and chaos to the practice of classical archaeology. He explains why pots or fine wares are 'ideal tools for bringing to order the chaos of debris from the past' since they 'turn up in extraordinary quantities on Classical sites', and 'their styles are often so recognisable' (Shanks 1996: 21). There are plenty of carefully accessioned pots on display at the Ashmolean and in the online collections (Ashmolean Collections Online, 2017), demonstrating the organisation of the way items and information about them is kept at the museum. In the Conservation Gallery, an Ancient Greek vase is displayed, a 'partly assembled mixing vessel', with fragments of the vase displayed blown out, demonstrating the work of conservators (Ashmolean Museum accession number AN 1954.230, on display in Conservation Gallery). Theatrical presentations in this environment facilitate multiple framings, perspectives and interpretations. For instance, the vase display relates to the original culture and context of classical stories and culture; it is a genuine item, and the way it is displayed recognises the history of the object.

'While it would not have been wise to topple the statue of Apollo at the centre of the atrium, the swirling dancers could not have caused much more damage than the strangely advertised Fight With the Gods theatrical tour in the Cast Gallery' (Ching 2013). This quote from an article in the student publication *Cherwell,* describes one experience of the first case study in this paper, an evening of entertainment at the Ashmolean Museum's An Evening With the Gods, one of the LiveFriday event series, organised to mark the 330th anniversary of the Ashmolean. The quote gives a sense of chaos or losing balance during an evening which had relationship to classical architecture and museum displays relating to classical archaeology.

This evening was part of a series of late-opening events at the Ashmolean, well-organised though the crowds could be perceived as giving a sense of chaos, facilitating an atmosphere in which attendees make individual decisions within the event. This is because there were different acts, performances and activities going on in different places around the building, and visitors were free to decide what to do; unlike theatre in an auditorium where a seated audience sit and watch one uninterrupted performance. There was a lot to sample in what can be viewed as a showcase of arts with a particular theme for each LiveFriday, and crowds might sit and watch a performance or glimpse fragments of performances.

An Evening With the Gods was organised with Oxford University Classics Society, with performances from the society and other student groups. There was criticism in anticipation of the event, with students suggesting that the aim to interest a wider audience than students might 'produce unrealistic representation of the classical era… and dressing people as Hollywood gladiator' (Williams 2013). This predicted that a fun atmosphere might encourage 'dumbing down' of ideas and inaccuracy in interpretation, in an event designed to develop engagement. An article in *Cherwell* stated that 'actors in classical costumes [gave] tours of the museum's collections and visitors [were] encouraged to interact with performers' (Williams 2013).

In terms of the atmosphere of the event, another *Cherwell* article stated that, inside, the museum 'was a hive of activity, and the crowds were the densest crowds I have ever seen at a museum'. Later in the article, the author states that 'visitors who grew tired of the crowds on the evening took time to appreciate the displays', relating their experience to the museum artefacts and ancient poetry; 'where better to mingle or rest your (as Homer says) "weakened knees" than beside 3,000 year old pottery?' (Lee 2013). A short video documenting An Evening With the Gods gave a taste of the variety of activities and performances and the movement of people within the event (Ashmolean Museum, Ashmolean Live Friday – An Evening With the Gods video). One of the performances was Temple Theatres' theatrical *Fight With the Gods* tour of the Cast Gallery; a collection of casts of Greek and Roman statues, originally formed for teaching classical archaeology (Ashmolean Museum, Cast Gallery). The 'interesting and unusual tours of the casts' (Ashmolean Museum, Ashmolean Live Friday – An Evening With the Gods video) are mentioned in the quote at the beginning of this case study, the name of the performance suggesting a chaotic element. A quote in the video from the cast gallery about this performance states that it was 'Really important to breathe life into these sculptures, each one has its own story, and we can look at them and they've got amazing blood and guts'. One actor described their experience of working in a museum full of people; 'I thought this was going to be a breeze.... we were mobbed!', another comment on the video that, 'it's not exclusive to the university, there are families, there are elderly people, it's like the whole town has turned up' (Ashmolean Museum, Ashmolean Live Friday – An Evening With the Gods video). The comments from the *Cherwell* article, and Ashmolean video give a sense of visitors' experiences in the museum connecting to and facilitating interpretation of displays relating to classical archaeology. This is only possible in a space like the Ashmolean, which integrates windows of visibility between different layers of time, and between those layers and the present; a place full of the objects of the past, which briefly and gloriously made host to this event – and which chaotically brought the objects and their culture back to life for one night.

In 2016 performances of scenes from *Alice in Wonderland the Opera* by Roderick Williams (1992) with Oxford Girls' Choir took place in the Ashmolean Atrium. This used the same main performance space as A Night With the Gods but had different inspiration material; a chaotic story written in the Victorian period. This was part of Alice's Day, an annual event in Oxford organised by The Story Museum (Alice's Day 2019), a day of mostly free, accessible events, taking place in museums and open spaces, all over Oxford, inspired by the Lewis Carrol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), which was written in Oxford. The story was originally told by Carrol to a real-life girl, Alice Liddell and her two sisters, daughters of the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford on a picnic in 1862 and, later on, was written down, revised and published (Bauer and Lowne 2018).

In the chaotic story, Alice 'falls down a rabbit hole and into a fantasy world full of weird, wonderful people and animals', including the Cheshire Cat, Mad Hatter, and Caterpillar (Pansybee 2014). To describe some bizarre scenes; Alice meets the Mock Turtle 'who describes his education in Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision', later on Alice is called as a 'witness in the trial of the Knave of Hearts who stole the Queen's tarts'. The queen orders Alice to be beheaded, then Alice ´realises the characters are only a pack of cards and awakens from her dream` (Bauer and Lowne 2018).

Alice's Day is unique, it could only happen in Oxford, because of Carroll and Alice's inherent links to the location. This facilitates enthusiastic participation, with the public often dressing as characters from the book. The Story Museum website states that 'Alice's Day commemorates an important moment for children's literature and for Oxford. Alice became one of the most popular... children's book ever written... Oxford became a world centre of children's stories and inspirational home to many authors and illustrators' (*Alice's Day* 2019). This quote marks Oxford as the geographical home of the story with direct links to locations and stories, bibliography of the author and Oxford as a cultural centre. The Ashmolean is one of Oxford's iconic buildings. These elements are part of the heritage and culture of Oxford, Alice's Day bringing them together. The Ashmolean Museum Strategic Plan 2014-2019 document stated that the museum aimed 'to attract more visitors', 'to ensure the collections are accessible to all', and to ensure 'the Museum provides a major public resource for learning and enjoyment' (Ashmolean Museum 2014: 2), and that 'the Ashmolean contributes effectively to the cultural, social, and economic life of the city of Oxford and the surrounding areas' (Ashmolean Museum 2014: 6); Alice's Day fits with these aims.

The performance of scenes from *Alice in Wonderland the Opera* in the Ashmolean was popular, and the public crowded around. As a spectacle, the interesting costumes of the characters, lined up in anticipation of the performance, worked well in relationship to the white walls of the museum and objects on display, for instance sculptures in an adjacent gallery which contributed atmospheric context to the crazy storyline. In a 2012 interview, Williams stated that he wrote the opera for Oxford Girls' Choir after discussion with their musical director about "a project that would make the most of the Oxford connection, a story based on a girl rather than a boy". The opera was first performed in 1992, "in two acts, with the first concerning Alice's fall down the hole, and her attempt to get in the garden, and with the second act describing her adventures when she finds her way in". The whole and parts of the opera have been performed in many venues around Oxford including The Story Museum for Alice's Day 2012 (Rubin 2012).

In an interview, Education Officer at the Ashmolean Jane Cockcroft said about the *Alice* performance, that it didn't really relate to the objects, but it was part of Alice's Day. She said that 'the lovely thing about Alice is that it's a dream world where anything can happen. There's a lot of random things popping up all over the place kind of disconnected aspects it doesn't seem to matter so much with that particular story'. When events happen for Alice's Day there are no objects that physically connect to the heritage of the story 'other than the fact that Alice Liddell lived in Oxford, she probably came to the Ashmolean with Dodgson' (Carrol's real name). Alice's Day at the Ashmolean is 'about making creative, imaginative connections with the collections it's not about literally making connections with actual things' (Frampton 2016). The *Alice* performance in the Ashmolean blended elements from the cultural history of Oxford, though the performance itself wasn't about interpretation of ancient culture. It was an opportunity for people to enjoy the space and collections, to make connections about aspects of the cultural heritage of Oxford, as an academic and cultural centre.

The last case study, *Hecuba: A Refugee* was performed in 2016 on the Greek island of Delos, a UNESO World Heritage Centre, the first play to be performed on the island in 2,100 years. The performance on an archaeological site engaged with the refugee crisis situation in the

Mediterranean, which has been described as chaos. This was on an original site of ancient culture, in a geographic area affected by migration, presenting an ancient story integrating contemporary migration issues. Different from a museum, where archaeological artefacts have been removed from their original context. News stories from the Mediterranean describe the migration situation as chaotic; a 2015 Al Jazeera news story ´Chaos in Kos: Greece on the frontline of migrant crisis` described a situation where the Greek islands were struggling to cope with the large numbers of migrants (Chaos in Kos 2015).

Hecuba: A Refugee was based on Euripides' play *Hecuba*, a tragedy written c.424 BC. ´The story takes place just after the Trojan War as the Greeks are heading home and depicts the grief of Hecuba, queen of the fallen city of Troy, over the sacrifice of her daughter` and the loss of her son, the subject matter bleak. Hecuba evokes 'a sense of utter desolation in the audience there is almost no let-up in the mood of suffering and anguish', culminating in ´unmitigated hopelessness for all the principal characters` (Ancient Greece – Euripedes – Hecuba n.d.). The story draws parallels with contemporary issues.

The performance on Delos was organised by the Cyclades Antiquities Ephorate and the Municipality of Mykonos, contributing to 'people's awareness of the refugee tragedy, that the humankind experiences and takes place in the Aegean' (Harris 2016). The play 'opened with an actress reading the words of an Austria- based Syrian woman who wrote a poignant letter to the United Nations describing the plight of people fleeing war', the actress 'remained close to the stage during the performance, watching the drama unfold' (Kermeliotis 2016). This played on the framings of meanings within the performance.

The performance of *Hecuba* was on the site of the ancient theatre of Delos, which 'was built in the 3rd century and held the largest feasts and events as well as the independent feasts of Delos'. For *Hecuba*, a small audience was invited, and the performance took place in the daytime, since, though restored, the theatre 'cannot host a large number of people and lacks ordinary amenities' (Harris 2016). The island of Delos had religious importance in Ancient Greece as it was thought to be the birthplace of the god Apollo, according to ancient mythology (Devambez 1967, 'Apollo' entry). Currently, Delos 'is an archaeological site; no settlements have been built over the marble ruins, which attract more than 100,000 visitors each year' (Kermeliotis 2016).

In 2012 the General Archaeological Council of the Greek ministry for culture and tourism approved refurbishment of the theatre; this was ´an initiative of the 'Diazoma' organisation (Greece: Ancient theatre of Delos to be restored 2012). The Diazoma organisation protects and promotes Greek cultural heritage (Diazoma 2016*).* Plans included restoring order to the site which had been in a disorganised, chaotic state; 'moving and labelling the architectonic pieces in the area, protection of the rock surfaces to make it easier for rainwater to flow away, and the protection of containment walls' and was projected to cost 1.5 million Euros (Greece: Ancient theatre of Delos to be restored 2012). The restoration can be seen to have made order of the site and fragments found in the area, making performance possible.

Meineck writes that theatre in Ancient Greece 'became such a social, cultural and political force, inspiring and being influenced by revolutionary developments in political engagement and citizen discourse' (Meineck 2018: Preface). *Hecuba* demonstrated that performance inspired by ancient theatre still has the power to engage audiences in current political issues. Another recent example of ancient drama which has engaged with the profoundly traumatic chaos of displacement, *Queens of Syria*, after Euripides' *Trojan Women,* was first staged in 2013 and performed by female Syrian refugees. *Trojan Women* is set after the city Troy has been defeated, a 2016 *Guardian* article stated that it moved, from ancient to modern, from choral lament to personal testimony'. It quotes one performer as explaining why she felt affinity with former queen Hecuba (also a character in *Trojan Women*) 'I was a queen in my home' (Clapp 2016). The Syrian women found some degree of order through solidarity with the *Trojan Women.* Not the only case where Ancient Greek drama has been used as a way to engage with the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, location was a unique aspect of *Hecuba*. It used the past to hold up a mirror to the present; like the LiveFriday at the Ashmolean it used ancient material settings to heighten the power of performance, though the two events did this in very different ways.

Delos has hosted only one other performance since its restoration. The second, in 2018, was *Hera Descends on Delos*. This was a one-act opera where the storyline is set on Delos, 'with music by Theo Abazis and a libretto by Elsa Andrianou' (Ancient theatre of Delos 2018). The storyline focussed on the 'eternal battle between life and death and present[ed] the discussion of a mortal with two Ancient Greek goddesses'. The event aimed to connect the ancient world and modern creativity 'through the modern lyrical work', presented in the environment with remains from ancient civilisation. To protect the theatre, *Hera* was performed in a nearby location on Delos, the Italian Agora, next to the avenue of the Naxian Lions (World Premier of Lyric Opera 2018). The Naxian Lions are dated 600 BC, the originals are now in the Archaeological Museum of Delos and have been replaced by replicas (Delos n.d.) This performance demonstrated further engagement with the archaeological site through theatre with classical themes.

Conclusion

The case studies in this paper are unique examples of recent theatre which engage with the themes of order and chaos in classical archaeology. They are performances which have been designed for specific venues, connecting genres which are separate in normal experience. One would make separate visits to a museum, or go on holiday and look around the archaeological sites of the Mediterranean. In Oxford there is a lively scene of student theatre where fresh interpretations and performances of ancient stories happen every term (´Stage and Screen` 2019). The Ashmolean Museum LateNight was a showcase organised by students, and the other case studies in this paper describe one—off special events, which have integrated genres relating to culture of the ancient world. This paper has analysed the contribution these performances have made to contemporary public and intellectual understanding of ancient culture, through study of a creative medium. The performances be seen as a unique contribution to the continual reinterpretation of classical stories, and in the case of *Alice*, a Victorian story, which didn't happen as part of the usual production cycle.

Alice's day happens every year with activities and people dressed in costumes entering the museum and interacting with the displays. The performance of scenes from Williams' *Alice* opera was a one-off performance, but not the only interface between classical archaeology and creative interpretation of the chaotic Alice story in the Ashmolean. In 2019, ´Ashventure` activities at the Ashmolean included a hunt in the galleries, stories and games. Performances around Oxford included *Bouncing White Rabbits* with Grand Theatre of Lemmings, and *The Dodo Rider* with the Queen of Hearts at the Museum of Natural History (Alice's Day 2019).

More recent performance at the Ashmolean has engaged with the history of migration. In 2019, this was explored on Windrush Day, commemorating the arrival of the ship Empire Windrush and migrants from the Caribbean in 1949, and the enrichment to culture in the UK. The day included a carnival workshop in the Museum's large atrium, and pop up monologues around the museum (Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Windrush Day 2019). The day demonstrated the continuous use of the spaces in the Ashmolean for engagement with aspects of cultural heritage through creative projects. In terms of the future of this area of theatre, enthusiastic actors and producers are bound to be inspired by the success and unique nature of the case studies in this paper.

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About the author

Claire Frampton (claire.frampton@ashmus.ox.ac.uk) is enrolled on professional development certificate Associateship of the Museums Association, through this she has developed a research portfolio about performance in heritage education. She has worked as a gallery attendant at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, since 2011, and in 2013 She completed a part time MA in Arts Policy and Management at Birkbeck College, University of London, taking modules specialising in heritage management. In 2007 She gained MA Fashion Curation from London College of Fashion, after achieving BA Art History/ History at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

Before the COVID lockdown She played double bass in Oxford University music groups such as OU Philharmonia, and OU String Ensemble, and played in the Sheldonian Theatre, as well as the Oxford colleges. She has also integrated playing into her heritage studies. She enjoys sewing and recently She has enjoyed working towards City and Guilds Hand Embroidery qualifications.

Chaos in Urban Archaeology: The Ancient City of Allahabad, India

Shriya Gautam

Abstract

The city of Allahabad (now also known as Prayagraj), in southern Uttar Pradesh, India, epitomises the troubles and the untapped potential of archaeological activities in the country. Despite its rich archaeological heritage, the city is largely unaware of its historical significance and archaeological scope. Rather, many of the archaeologically relevant sites and historical buildings in the city are presently at risk because of the rapid urban development, involving but not limited to, construction of houses, malls, expressways and roads. Adding to the threat is the fact that Allahabad is one of the largest centres of urban agglomeration in India (Census, 2011), thus limiting the extent and scope of archaeological or restoration activities.

This paper attempts to study the chaotic state of urban archaeology in Allahabad as well as examine the various destructive agents that are causing an irrevocable loss to human history. It also attempts to provide suggestions on how its impact could possibly be lessened if not completely remedied. For the purpose of this paper, several sites within the metropolis were surveyed and analysed for primary data collection; case studies were collected and duly compared with the existing archaeological reports and secondary data on Allahabad. Wherever possible, people, employed as caretakers by the Archaeological Survey of India, were interviewed in order to understand whether or not the observations made in the case studies were correct. It may be noted, however, that the number of archaeologically relevant sites in Allahabad exceed than the ones that were considered for this paper and several of them may already be irrevocably lost.

History of Allahabad

The metropolis of Allahabad is located at 25°27′N 81°51′E, in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, roughly 436 miles to the south-east of Delhi. Archaeological evidence proves that it is the second oldest city in India, with significant deposits of Epi-Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages (Ansari, 2005, 328) as well as Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW), dating to 700-600 BC (Marshall, 1915). It was a dominant settlement in ancient times, throughout the Medieval period, and also in the colonial days of the British Raj.

Allahabad is located in the Southern part of the state of Uttar Pradesh in India, on the confluence of Rivers Ganga and Yamuna. In the Indian subcontinent, a tract of land between two rivers is geographically known as a *Doab* and since the Indo-Gangetic plain that runs through Uttar Pradesh has many such tracts, Allahabad falls into the triangular lower Ganga-Yamuna *Doab*, mostly amidst deposits of old alluvium (Sinha *et al.* 2005).

Allahabad was originally known as Prayag, the earliest reference to this name supposedly being in the *Rig Veda, circa* 1700-1100 BC [Verses I.8.9, X.89.7, XII.3.23]. Other texts that mention Allahabad and its nearby areas include the Buddhist text *Anguttara Nikaya* (refers to the area of *Vamsa* or *Vatsa*, modern day Kosam near Allahabad, as one of the sixteen original *Mahajanapadas* or major kingdoms in the sixth century BCE), and the great Indian Epic Mahabharata [Verse 3.83.75] that calls it the most superior pilgrimage place. Archaeological excavations so far have yielded significant deposits of Epi-Palaeolithic and Mesolithic assemblages and NPBW dating from 700 BCE right up to the Gupta Period in the 3rd century AD, as already discussed above while other important studies conducted in the area also show that Allahabad lay on an important major route that linked the north to the Deccan (Chakrabarti *et al.*, 1999), representing activities of the inhabitants of the city from the prehistoric times.

Epigraphical evidence of the city's importance meanwhile is reflected through the Allahabad Inscription of Ashoka, dated 3rd century BC, now conserved in the local Army Cantonment and the Reh Inscription of Menander, dating to 2nd century BC, showing that the city was both an important part of the Mauryan Empire and the Indo-Greek Empire shortly after (Sharma, 1980b).

In the medieval times, the city became an important strategic stronghold under the Delhi Sultanate and still has a significant number of Mughal monuments, including the Allahabad Fort, the Mughal tombs of Khusro Bagh. Medieval and British Indian townhouses (*havelis*), arches and gates are also common. There are also two Maratha temples in Allahabad, which were constructed during the brief Maratha occupation before the city was colonised.

Among the British Indian and modern monuments, All Saints Cathedral and the Alfred Park or Company Gardens are of significant historic importance. Thus, Allahabad shows a unique continuity of human occupation and activity from the Epi Palaeolithic times to the present day, making it one of the most archaeologically significant places in India. However, the continued occupation, combined with the rapid urbanisation and the geology of the area pose many threats to the archaeology, which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Chaos in the urban archaeology and major threats

This section has been subdivided into two major parts in order to understand the range of relevant archaeological sites in Allahabad and the major threats before them. The first part will, therefore, tabulate some of the sites that were analysed for this study and highlight the threats before them, whilst the second part will expound on these threats in detail.

Archaeological sites of Allahabad

The subsection discusses the threats before the archaeological sites of Allahabad in the form of a table, which includes the information retrieved during the survey of these sites. It analyses threats such as proximity to river, extent of vandalism, proximity to urban settlements or infrastructural development projects with respect to each site and classifies these as severe, significant or negligible. The table also analyses whether there is a scope for future excavations on each site in question.

Site	Period	Extent of Vandalism	Proximity to the river confluence	Proximity to urban settlements and infrastructure projects	Scope for future excavations
Akshayavat Temple	Possibly Late Ancient- Early Medieval but rebuilt around 1765	Negligible	Close proximity with no bearing on the site	Negligible because enclosed within Allahabad fort	None
Allahabad Fort	Medieval (*circa* 1583 CE)	Significant. Outer walls had pamphlets and posters pasted or painted in several parts	Close proximity; risk of flooding or damage to outer walls by flash floods.	Close proximity to the site posing damage because of pollution, vehicular emissions and human factor.	None
All Saints' Cathedral	British Indian (1871 CE)	Significant. Broken glass windows. Threat from human and animal factors as well as environmental damage	Negligible	Close proximity to apartments, modern housing colonies and the main road, posing damage because of pollution, vehicular emissions and human factor.	None
Alfred Park	British Indian (1870 CE)	Significant. The marble is cracked and under disrepair. The surfaces have been vandalised with graffiti	Negligible	Close proximity to apartments, modern housing colonies and the main road, posing damage because of pollution, vehicular emissions and human factor.	N/A
Ashokan Inscription Pillar	Ancient (*circa* 3rd century BCE)	Negligible	Close proximity with no bearing on the site	Negligible because enclosed within Allahabad fort	None

Jhunsi Mound and Ulta Qila	Neolithic to Early Medieval Occupation (*circa* 7100 BCE-1329 CE)	Significant since the sites and the structures are exposed and have no protection.	Significant and poses threat of flooding or damage due to flash floods	Significant and poses damage to several structures including the Ulta Qila	Significant but still unexplore d at present.
Tombs of Khusro Bagh	Medieval (*circa* 1601-1625 CE)	Severe. Tomb walls for all three structures are vandalised despite Protected Monument Status by ASI	Negligible	Close proximity to the site posing damage because of pollution, vehicular emissions and human factor.	Little scope within the tomb complex.
Saint Joseph's Cathedral	British Indian (1879 CE)	Negligible. The site is well preserved and repaired.	Negligible	Negligible despite close proximity to urban settlement.	N/A

Table 1. Major archaeological sites within Allahabad city.

Although the above table takes into consideration all major sites within and close to the city, several significant structures such as medieval city gates, town houses and places of public convenience, which include the High Court, the Allahabad University among others have not been included. The next section, however, will delve into details of the general threats before all sites of archaeological importance within Allahabad and will take into consideration human and natural factors that may pose serious damage.

Major threats to archaeological sites

One of the biggest concerns in archaeology worldwide has been the tussle between developmental construction and the need to conserve potential sites for archaeological conservation. In countries like India, this conflict is very pronounced. According to the Census of India, 2011, nearly 31.16% of the Indian population resides in urban cities, with Allahabad being one of the largest urban agglomeration in the country (Census, 2011). The rate of urban expansion (2.07%) has been fairly steady in the years leading up to the next census, and, combined with new infrastructural developments and laying of new expressways, flyovers and railway tracks, poses a serious threat to heretofore undiscovered or unexcavated sites.

Adding to the threat is the geological location of Allahabad. As mentioned earlier, Allahabad lies on the confluence of two major rivers its river terrace composed mostly of thick pile of quaternary Varanasi Old Alluvium at the north of Yamuna and the Terrace Alluvium in Ganga and Yamuna, its chief components being sand, gravel and clay with occasional presence of thin to thick *kankar* intercalation (Singh and Srivastava, 2011). Rapid construction in the area, which mostly overlooks the geological scenario, is increasing the risk of flash floods, particularly along the river terrace, causing probable loss of stone tools, fossil and seed evidence, which is crucial to our understanding of the past. Since hydrological changes affect the river stratigraphy and the whirlwind construction reduces opportunities to study the changes which may have occurred in the past, particularly along the river.

The third glaring threat is the demolition of existing structures and old buildings in the town. The process of demolition of old buildings is alarming in Allahabad. The fact that none of these are properly documented or studied is yet another irretrievable loss to the architectural history of the place. In India, old buildings can often provide a deep insight into the past societies. The concept and basic structure of *havelis*, for example, has been consistent since the time of the Indus Valley Civilisation and can still be seen as a continuation of the same. However, incorporation of newer trends, like the *jallis* and *jharokas* from the Medieval times or the gothic facades of the colonial period, bring out vital aspects of architectural heritage of the country. Domestic architecture in India was largely affected by the trends brought in by the various rulers and this stands particularly true in case of Allahabad, which has always been a centre of human occupation. Despite this, the lack of study of domestic architecture and the neglect and undocumented destruction of these buildings is disappointing.

The fourth and perhaps the most chaotic threat before urban archaeology in Allahabad is the level of pollution in the city, which includes but is not limited to hazardous emissions. A fleeting look at the Mughal monuments of Khusro Bagh show the irreparable damage to the artwork on the walls of the four tombs in the complex. What the emissions fail to damage is taken care of by the rampant vandalism. This is also true of many temples in the city where late ancient or early medieval sculptures are damaged irrevocably by offerings and religious paraphernalia like flowers, vermillion smears and sometimes even food.

A cursory analysis of the situation, thus, helps to conclude that the threats before urban archaeology are manifold and almost chaotic in Allahabad, with sites being simultaneously destroyed, vandalised and rendered vulnerable on account of neglect of environmental factors. Many artefacts have probably been lost and even more are being lost every day. Although little can be done to control this blatant destruction, the next section will offer some possible remedies, which may help in preserving a little of what is already fast disappearing.

Possible remedies

Although the archaeological significance of Allahabad has been touched upon very briefly in this paper, it is evident that its historical significance is immense and if sufficient awareness about this is created in the city, its benefits to the tourism industry (in terms of archaeotourism as well as otherwise) and archaeological research will be manifold. Of course, it is agreed that progress and development cannot be prohibited in a country where the basic needs of many people remain unfulfilled. However, the loss of heritage is just as potent a threat as underdeveloped resources.

Cultural heritage of a country or a group is largely responsible in defining the identity of a person or community. Thomas–Hoffman (n.d.) identifies cultural identity as essential for the peaceful cooperation of civilisations. She is of the opinion that if people have a strong sense of self-identity through culture, they are more likely to interact peacefully with other cultures. In the Indian context, primarily, it is imperative to understand that cultural heritage is an inheritance shared and equally owned by all who identify themselves as Indians. Awareness programmes, study groups highlighting history, heritage walk tours, field schools and object analysis workshops, therefore, can give an impetus to thus far inadequate archaeological research in the country. Allahabad's chaotic development situation, its diverse historical importance and its unique geological situation are highly operable areas of research, which can easily be used to generate employment opportunities as well as sensitise people towards archaeology (Gautam, 2019).

The hitherto unexplored potential of archaeotourism can be one step in the direction of solving this problem. Archaeology is an interdisciplinary subject, that does not limit itself to the rigid definitions of science, or the vast purview of humanities. Archaeological activities, therefore, also fall under a broad range of sub-disciplines, which require an amalgamation of scientific expertise, theoretical knowhow as well as manuscriptology and linguistics. In order to successfully interpret archaeological information or document an existing site, technical expertise in photography, illustrations, geophysical survey and GIS techniques and assistance from the local populace, regarding myths, traditional techniques and vernacular architecture, are needed at all times. While some of it can be readily available locally, technical skill can be employed internationally also, provided the site is properly advertised and highlighted both locally and globally. In countries like, Egypt, Italy and Greece, it is already being done on a large scale, especially to conserve sites of historic importance. Majority of this is being done through the endeavours of the tourism industry as opposed to efforts of archaeologists alone. This helps meet the dearth of well-trained archaeologists and archaeological researchers with the help of foreign archaeological programmes and field schools.

In India, the potential and the scope of channelling Foreign Direct Investment in development and conservation of heritage sites, especially those that are in advanced state of decay, is higher than in most other countries. In a touristically relevant place, such as Allahabad, where the pilgrimage to the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna already churns a large number of tourists on an annual basis, archaeological field schools, directed at employing both domestic and foreign skill in fields like restoration, conservation, renovating existing sites using experimental archaeology and vernacular methods of architecture as well as conducting scientific site surveys and excavations can be done very easily, provided such initiatives are taken with the joint aid of Ministry of Tourism and the local people. This will not only aid in heritage preservation and management but will also boost the economy of the state by generating more employment in the existing tourism industry and thereby increasing the GDP earned from tourism as well as raising the standard of living of the people.

An important contribution of the foreign involvement would be the facilitation in proper mapping and documentation of sites, so that, even if rapid urbanisation or natural disasters lead to destruction of the site in subsequent years, a fairly decent archaeological record will still be available for future research and analysis (Gautam and Chandel, 2017). This will be particularly useful for most of the epigraphical and petroglyphic information that is being rapidly lost in the state due to infrastructural development schemes such as road building and expressway constructions, which are somewhat necessary in the present times. It would also solve the adaptive reuse *versus* preservation paradox that many late Medieval and early modern manor houses, palaces and *havelis* face in Himachal Pradesh at present.

Secondly, it will also address the problem of scarcity of fund allocation and trained staff that the Archaeological Survey of India currently suffers from in all states in general. Potentially more important, in this, is the Government's attitude to commercial archaeology, which is unheard of in India. Since no commercial archaeology ventures exist in the country, the burden of all archaeological activity is on the Archaeological Survey of India, which often suffers from lack of sufficient fund allocation and scarcity of staff. However, if the doors of archaeology are thrown wide open in the country, it will help the case of cities like Allahabad in two crucial ways: one, it will facilitate in proper mapping and documentation of sites, so that, even if rapid urbanisation or natural disasters lead to destruction of the site in subsequent years, a fairly decent archaeological record will still be available; two, it will generate more revenue for India and enable inflow of educational tourism, which at the moment is limited to a few places in specific fields only (Gautam, 2017). Chaos in Urban Archaeology of Allahabad is, therefore, not totally unmanageable. What is needed is a paradigm shift in the Indian approach towards archaeology and heritage preservation.

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Appendix 1a

Location of Allahabad in relation to other cities in India © Shriya Gautam.

Appendix 1b

Location of Allahabad © Shriya Gautam.

About the author

Shriya Gautam (shriya.gautam@arch.oxfordalumni.org) is the Founder and Director of Speaking Archaeologically, an archaeological education group, based in India, which focuses on Object Analysis, documentation of neglected and forgotten archaeological sites and rescue archaeology. She holds a Masters Degree in Archaeology from the University of Oxford. Her research interests include visual cultures, artefact analysis and rescue archaeology. She has presented and published several papers internationally and has organised various artefact handling and site recording workshops in North and East India. She has also excavated various Romano-British sites in England.

Graduate Archaeology at Oxford Annual Conference 2019:

Cause, Process and Impact of Interaction in Ancient Cultures

Interacting with coins in Roman Britain: The flexibility of meaning and use

Barry Crump

Abstract

Within Archaeology, coins are often marginalised, underused, and misunderstood. Some Numismatists have stressed the need for coins to be reintegrated into a wider multidisciplinary discourse (Lockyear 2007; Kemmers and Myrburg 2011; et al). This paper utilises multidisciplinary concepts to consider the underlying systems and structures that shape and facilitate coin-use, and the conscious experience and materiality of coins. Whilst numismatics traditionally takes a top-down approach, focused on production and supply, a bottom-up perspective can explore how people understood and interacted with coins. By applying new perspectives alongside existing methods we can gain a wider understanding, highlighting the exciting flexibility, variation, and complexity of coin-use. This case study demonstrates that the meaning and function of coins in Roman Britain was shaped by the identity of the user and the context of use. Numismatic data can also show that the experience of coins may have varied between regions, potentially forming part of local communal identities.

Introduction

Numismatics (the study of coins) traditionally takes a top-down approach focussed primarily on coin production and supply. My interest in the coins of Roman Britain is from the opposite perspective; a bottom-up approach, focussing on how people interacted with, used, and understood coins, as I feel that production and supply are only a part of the picture. Some numismatists (e.g. Lockyear 2007; Kemmers and Myrburg 2011) have stressed the need for the study of coins to be reintegrated into a wider discourse, both within archaeology and utilising multi-disciplinary methods. My approach utilises a range of ideas, new and old, including concepts from literary theory, linguistics, and philosophy. By considering context, identity, engagement, agency, and interpretation, there are alternative ways to start to understand coins and coin data. These perspectives highlight an exciting flexibility, variation and complexity in how coins were used, experienced and understood in Roman Britain.

Coins in Roman Britain

In many ways, Roman coins can be seen as relatively simple. Compared to many other objects from the Roman period, they are a common find, they are easy to identify, they are easy to quantify, and they are very well researched and understood. Roman coins have established chronologies of coins issued, by emperor and design, which naturally form an ideal starting point to understanding, even for new approaches. However, rather than seeing the coins as issued by ruler, or by detailed issue sequences (e.g. Reece 2002; Moorhead 2019) a simpler approach is more appropriate if starting to examine use and meaning from a user perspective, instead of a production oriented framework. The ideal simplified system is perhaps Richard Reece's older four-period classification of Roman Coins in Britain (Reece 1972).

Reece Period A is the time of the 'stable denarius', starting with the Claudian conquest of Britain in AD 41 and ending in c. AD 260. This first broad period of Roman coin use has clearly defined and understood denominations (including the Aureus, Denarius, Dupondius and Sestertius) although the lowest denominations of the time (including the Semis and Quadrans) do not seem to have been widely used in Britain. Reece (1991, 2002) noted that the coins of this period are mostly found in excavations of towns and at military sites. Without the coins needed for low value exchange, and with limited distribution outside urban and military centres, it seems that coins were used by a relatively small section of society, not by the majority (similar to the earlier non-widespread coin-use of the Iron Age, Hodder 1979).

Reece Period B is the time of the 'Radiate', distinctive coins with emperors depicted wearing the radiate crown resembling the sun's rays. Although these coins are distinctive, when the stable denarius period ended, the coinage became more confused with fluctuating coin sizes, weights, and metal content. More significantly, Roman coins appear to become more widely used in Britain from c. AD 260 onwards. In this period, there were large numbers of low denomination coins, and coins of this period are found in large quantities outside towns and military sites, allowing coins to be used by a larger section of society, and for a wider range of transactions and lower value exchanges.

Reece Periods C and D are similar, and can be considered together, with the coins again changing in style from the time of the Radiate. Reece Periods C and D also see continued widespread coin use, with large numbers of low denomination coins, and large quantities of coins found in excavations outside of towns and cities. Reece Period C starts with Diocletian's reform in c. AD 294, changing the style of the coinage, followed by a process of decline and variation in coin sized weights. This period again has confused, unclear denominations, with mostly copper and silvered-copper coins, with actual silver coins being rare. Reece Period D starts in *c.* AD 356/357 and is marked by silvered copper coins ceasing to be produced, replaced by both actual silver coins and un-silvered copper coins, albeit still with unclear denominations of copper coins with varying sizes and weights. This period ends in *c.* AD 411 as the last copper coins find their way into Britain *c.* AD 400, and the last silver around *c.* AD 411. Gold coins continued to arrive in Britain after *c.* AD 411, but these were probably moving as gold bullion rather than to be used as money. Whilst there is a potential for a degree of continued coin use without official coin supply, the break from Rome and the absence of significant numbers of new coins in Britain after *c.* AD 411 effectively marks the end of Roman monetary coin use in Britain (Evans, 2000).

Roman Coin Designs

Another way to understand Roman Coins is to split them into an even simpler division of two broad categories: early coins (Reece Phases A and B, AD 41 to *c.* AD 294) and late coins (Reece Phases C and D, *c.* AD 294 to *c.* AD 411). Roman coins of this broad early period, AD 41 to *c.* AD 294 can typically be identified and defined by the obverse (heads) side, connected to the physical appearance of the emperor and his family, depicting his achievements, and potentially to an extent his personality, likes and dislikes. Emperors are clearly distinguishable from each other on these coins, not only from the text inscriptions but also from their portrait, which for some emperors is distinctive enough to identify relatively worn coins. The coins of this broad late period, *c.* AD 294 to *c.* AD 411, are instead most readily identified and defined by the reverse (tails) side. On these later coins, portraits do not usually depict the emperor as a real individual, but as a relatively stylised depiction of an emperor, with emperors often indistinguishable other than by their text inscription. The reverse designs change periodically, dominated by state messages.

People using coins can interact with them as pieces of art. Roman coins are a medium for portraiture, fashion (especially hairstyles), and state messages or propaganda (comparable to contemporary artworks such as sculpture, mosaics, and paintings). When describing the images and messages depicted on a coin, however, we cannot make the assumption that all who interacted with the coin would have shared the same interpretation. It is clear that levels of understanding are required to understand the messages and information on the coins, a kind of literacy needed to decode and interpret the images, text and symbolism. Coin use and meaning becomes complex, varying significantly dependant on the user of the coin and the context in which the coin was experienced.

Figure 1. VRBS ROMA 'Wolf and Twins' issue c. AD 330-340.

The VRBS ROMA issue of *c.* AD 330 (Figure 1) was widely distributed and copied. It depicts Roma in place of an imperial portrait, with a reverse design celebrating the mythical origins of Rome. Issued following the move of the Roman capital to Constantinople, its message fits within the popular late Roman theme of 'Renovatio', a renewal or restoration of the empire (also depicted in the 'Fel Temp Reparatio' issues illustrated in Figures 3 and 4). A modern day observer of this coin with little knowledge of Roman mythology might struggle to understand the relevance of the wolf and twins. Others examining the coin today might instantly recognise Romulus and Remus, founders of Rome, being suckled by the she-wolf, but not identify the significance of the two stars, which typically refer to the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux). This flexibility, with different levels of understanding, could also have been the case in Roman Britain, especially outside of towns, the army, and the elites.

Whilst we can interpret coins in relation to contemporary events and art, it would be unreasonable to presume that all levels and components of society would have had the same cultural literacy and understanding of mythological, divine, and political symbols and messages. It might seem safe to assume that most Romans would have recognised quintessential Roman iconography, but wide distribution of a coin does not necessarily equate with a wide understanding of its message. Even more complex is the potential that our modern understanding of the messages and information on this coin might be incorrect, or we may miss some significance in the design, as we have no definitive explanation from the coin designer or even the original users of the coin when issued. What is clear, is that a coin does not simply have a single fixed message and information. Instead we have the potential for different people having different understandings of the same design, both through different levels of understanding and through differing interpretations.

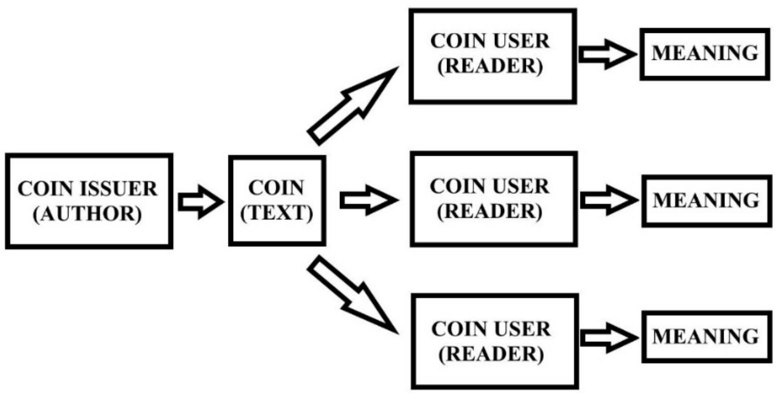

Figure 2. Interpreting or Reading Coins: different meanings for different users.

Within numismatics, there is traditionally a focus on production, similar to focusing on the intention of the author when studying a literary text. When considering function and experience from a user perspective, however, we also need to consider how the objects were understood and used, similar to considering the reader when studying a literary text. Starting with Wimsatt and Beardsley (1954) and Barthes (1967), literary theorists have focused on reader interpretation being key to meaning, rather than just the author's intention. The meaning of a coin (either the message depicted on the coin, or the coin itself) is subject to a similar reading or interpretation process as a literary text, such as a book or poem (Figure 2). There are clearly differences between the interpretation of a coin, and the interpretation of a poem, yet the parallels are potentially useful. The issuer of the coin loses control of how it is understood and used, just as an author or artist loses control of how their work is understood and used. It could be argued that the Roman state issued coins to pay the army, to allow taxes to be collected, and to facilitate the buying and selling of goods (e.g. Evans, 2000). It is very unlikely that the Roman state intended coins to be used as grave goods, buried as hoards, ritually deposited at sites such as the sacred springs at Bath (Walker 1988), or turned into jewellery.

Developing a Theoretical Approach

Considering how coins can be interpreted in different ways by different people is, at its core, rooted in the Cartesian or Kantian duality of objects and ideas. This is an issue that is at the heart of interaction between people and things, and forms the fundamental starting point for my approach to understanding Roman coins in Britain. However, the duality of object and idea is not necessarily a problem. We only truly encounter problems if we over simplify our approach and view objects as if ideas or meaning are part of the object, as if it can 'speak for itself' (Bloor 1976) rather than part of the experience of the object, or the role the object held within a wider context. Such an approach would risk confusing interpretation for fact, and would neglect the flexibility and choice in how an object was understood and used. The fact that the coins themselves cannot inform us of their meaning or function directly is not negative, it is the reason that there is potential for flexibility and for different experiences and understanding (just as the literary text might not inform us directly of its meaning, allowing different reader's to have different interpretations). Any meaningful understanding of the past, and objects from the past, will ideally take an approach that not merely negate or bypass the duality of object and meaning, but will actually embrace the duality, as this is what creates the potential for flexibility and complexity. Such approaches can be based on interpretation or translation, they can be based on a consideration of structures and systems, context and relations, and they can be based on a consideration of experience, identity, engagement and agency (Shanks 2007).

For coins, the duality of object and idea perhaps becomes most apparent in duality of coins and money, which is not easily ignored or avoided. This duality is clear; coins are not synonymous with money. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that there is money that is not coins, with banknotes, cheques, IOUs and similar. More significantly, we have coins that are not money. Roman coins are not money today, although they were originally money when they were issued. Our understanding of coins needs to consider the ability for change in the meaning and use.

A coin can move geographically, crossing borders, and cease to be money. This could also be seen as the coin moving outside of its 'usage spheres' (after Casey's 'spheres of influence', 1986: 19). This was true in the Roman period, just as it is true today, with a potential degree of complexity and flexibility that is not as simple as definite borders of monetary systems. The coin does not change at all as a physical object, none of its inherent material properties change, but its meaning and function are different. Similarly a coin can move forwards in time and eventually it will stop being money. As new coinage is issued, old coins and denominations can be de-monetised. Coins of rebels and usurpers can be demonetised once they are deposed and central control is restored. Again, the coin does not change at all as a physical object, none of its inherent material properties change, but again its meaning and function are different. If the full object biography of a Roman coin is considered, only a relatively short part of its life has been as money or legal tender; a Roman coin has been 'not money' for far longer than it was money. Coins are objects that may have been produced with the intention that they would be used as money, but their function and meaning as money is not a property of the coin but a product of context. The importance of context is key for the understanding of meaning and use.

In a very different process, legal tender can be de-monetised by being defaced, or repurposed into a new form, such as jewellery. If the coin was used in a non-monetary role, the timeframe in which a coin was legal tender becomes less important. There were a wide range of potential non-monetary uses of Roman coins, such as being pierced and worn as an amulet or talisman, repurposed into jewellery, or even a more practical use such as a weight or shim. The act of repurposing the coin would be a very different act depending on the context or the identity of the user. A Roman coin could be reused in a powerful act of cultural bricolage rendering a coin un-spendable, or the process could simply be a pragmatic use of an old coin that was no longer useable. The pierced coin illustrated (Figure 3), featuring the emperor with a Chi Rho standard, may have been a current coin re-purposed to be worn as a talisman, or an old de-monetised coin drilled to make a crude weight.

Figure 3. Pierced 'Fel Temp Reparatio' Issue of AD348-350, Emperor in Galley with Christian Chi Rho Standard (Constans or Constantius).

A collection of excavated coins that might appear to be an archetypical coin hoard (money hidden and intended to be collected at a later date) could actually be a form of non-monetary coin use; such as old unusable coins pragmatically buried or set aside (Reece 2002), or a ritual deposition not intended to be recovered. Hoards feature their own complex interactions with coins, such as the processes of hoarding, selecting coins for retention, and coins issued by rebels and usurpers.

When dealing with material culture, structuralist approaches can be used to understand an object by considering the systems and structures to which an object belonged. The systems and structures relating to Roman coins included economic systems, trade and transport networks, settlement patterns, taxation and the army. These approaches can be applied to the whole system, or to an individual, region or group within a system. Through semiotics and semiology we also have the powerful parallel of the structure of language. In semiotics, the underlying systems and structures of language are what give a word its meaning and facilitate its use. In a broadly similar way the underlying systems and structures of coin use are what give a coin its meaning and facilitate its use as money. Unlike traditional semiotics (after Sassure 1915), we do not need to focus on a static single system to understand language, instead it is key to allow for change, flexibility, and complex interactions. Expanding the parallel with language, a word can have different meanings in different languages, despite looking and sounding the same, and a word can change its meaning over time. In a similar way a coin can have different meanings in different contexts, changing as it moves temporally and geographically. An individual can experience and understand a coin differently to other individuals. An individual can have different degrees of fluency within a language. An individual can speak more than one language, choosing the appropriate language, vocabulary, dialect and grammar based on context. Several languages can be merged to create a new language through creolisation, potentially allowing a word to be repurposed with new meanings and uses.

The analysis of style is an established archaeological method used to study underlying systems and structures. From Wobst (1977), the style and design of objects can be seen as an active function, transmitting messages of cultural identity and affiliation, such as Roman coins potentially communicating state messages and ideology. From Weissner (1983) style can be assertive, conveying personal identity, or emblematic, conveying communal identity. However, the most enlightening model of style for considering coin use and meaning is potentially Sackett's (1985) isochrestic concept of style. As opposed to iconological style, used to actively transmit messages of social identity, isochrestic style is used unconsciously, with messages of social identity purely passive and resulting from repeating traditions. This would allow objects such as coins to not be produced to intentionally or consciously communicate cultural identity, with the symbols and images chosen purely a consequence of tradition. Many Roman coins, including the VRBS ROMA issue discussed above (Figure 1) do appear to feature a deliberate attempt to transmit state ideologies (after Althusser 1969). There is a potential that other coins, especially those featuring common designs with deities and personifications, might have actually been designed from habit or tradition. However, whilst this could mean that the design of some Roman coins might not be deliberate propaganda, their messages and designs could still potentially have reinforced communal identity through interaction with them nevertheless.

Where Sackett's isochrestic style allows for a non-deliberate element to the production process, it is vital that we also allow for a passive or disengaged element to the use and interaction with the coins, in the act of coin use. Literary Theorist Viktor Shklovsky's (1917) concept of defamiliarisation highlights that, to ensure that literature is experienced by the reader, it has to be kept unfamiliar. Once something becomes too familiar we do not truly experience it, so to guarantee full engagement with a literary text the author needs to increase the difficulty and unfamiliarity. In a user orientated approach, there is not just an agency in the act of making or doing, but also in the process of interaction and experience. Therefore, we not only have the potential for passive production of objects, we also have a level of symmetry in the potential for object use without fully perceiving or interpreting. However, passivity does not necessarily make these interactions any less important. Something we do routinely can become so familiar that we do not experience it fully. We might lock a house door but need to return to check it was done; we did not remember locking the door as we did not truly experience the action.

It may be that common coins, for someone familiar with them, were experienced more passively than unusual coins with more unfamiliar or difficult designs and messages. Shklovsky's ideas foreshadowed concepts developed within neurology and cognitive psychology in understanding perception and conscious experience, which can also help us understand past experience via phenomenological approaches to archaeology.

Within a user orientated approach, understanding can be developed through exploring the conscious experience of using and interacting with objects. Phenomenological approaches can consider the elements that comprise identity and how they shape experience (strength, dexterity, eyesight, social role, age, gender), as well as the context of object use and how it shapes experience (the environment, light levels, and circumstances). The prior experience of the user also shapes new interactions (Merleau-Ponty 1964), therefore previous experience will shape how coins are understood, used and interpreted. On a deeper level, shared experiences can contribute towards communal identities (Husserl's 'Lebenswelt' or lifeworld, 1936) with similar coin experiences within a group potentially contributing towards a shared communal identity, based on factors such as region, social rank, urban or rural, military or civilian. The conscious experience of coins and coin use has been somewhat neglected within traditional numismatics, and simple information that is useful to this approach (such as coin size or weight) is often omitted from data sets. Other information that could be useful to a user oriented approach is never collected in mainstream datasets, such as how a coin smells when handled.

Applying a Multidisciplinary Approach

This paper has highlighted just a small selection of the theoretical and multidisciplinary concepts key to understanding the meaning and use of Roman coins in Britain. There are a wide range of applications for these theories, and many ways to reassess coins and coin data. One case study that can highlight the potential of novel approaches developed from these new perspectives is the phenomenon of coin copying in late Roman Britain. Richard Reece (2002) highlighted the key distinction between 'the Coinage of Roman Britain' and 'Roman Coinage in Britain'. This is because many of the coins in use in Britain seem to have been locally produced, rather than officially minted by state mints. These copies are not forgeries, designed to deceive to profit (although Roman forgeries do exist, typically of higher denomination coins). Instead it is likely that these late Roman copies were produced through necessity, due to poor supply (Brickstock 2000).

There are many parallels for the pragmatic use of non-legal tender at times of low denomination coin shortage - from copies of Claudian coins used by the Roman army in Britain following the invasion of AD 41, through to more recent examples such as Georgian trade tokens, and the use of French coins of Napoleon III in Britain in the 1850s. The most notable coin copying in Roman Britain occurred after the spread of widespread coin use from around AD 260, when coins start to be used much more frequently outside of towns and cities, and with more low denomination coins being used for low value exchange (Brickstock 2000). When coins were abundant there was no need to copy. However, for some periods the quantity of copies excavated in Britain far outnumbers the quantity of corresponding official issues found. These copies were kept 'current', minted with most recent designs (Brickstock 1987). However, whilst some copies are visually indistinguishable from official coins, others are small with designs distorted or potentially exhibiting elements of an insular style (Figure 4). It can sometimes be difficult to work out what these coins show (and it is debatable how much of the original message and information is retained on such examples). The user experience of these small and crude copies could be very different to the experience of official state issues. A site report or coin dataset might record a coin as a contemporary copy of a FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'Fallen Barbarian Horseman' issue of *c.* AD 348-361, but this does not allow for the coin experience to be fully understood.

Figure 4. FEL TEMP REPARATIO 'Fallen Barbarian Horseman' issue, c. AD 348-361, and some contemporary copies.

A contemporary copy is a coin not produced by an official state mint. This gives a binary relationship: official issue or contemporary copy. However, we cannot always easily detect whether a coin was produced by an official state mint. In fact, whether a coin was actually an official issue or a copy is perhaps not particularly important within a user-orientated approach focused on experience. When considering the coin user's interpretation and interaction with the coin, instead it could be that we are really looking at two looser categories: 'coins that would pass as official' and 'coins that would not pass as official'. This has as much to do with the identity of the user and context of use as it does the coin itself. This might seem counterintuitive for numismatists familiar with a production oriented approach (a coin was either produced by an official mint, or it was not). However, in numismatic site reports and coin datasets we know that designation of official or copy may be due as much to the person and context of identifying and recording the coins as the coins themselves. It is also worth considering that even today most people will accept coins that they think are genuine, although we know some might not be; like Schroedinger's cat, we collapse the waveform when we try to use the coin in a vending machine or parking meter.

Assessing Portable Antiquities Scheme data of Roman coins found in Britain (with a sample of 4326 coins from Recce Periods 13, 17 and 18) I observed that what defined a copy was not static or uniform. There are three simple methods to detect or observe that a Roman coin is a copy, rather than an official issue. The first method to detect a contemporary copy is through its size, if it is noticeably under the tolerances for an official coin; my methodology here is derived from Reece, with an additional 2mm margin of error applied (2000: 46-49). The second method to detect a contemporary copy is that the design on the coin does not look like an official coin, to a modern numismatist (in this case, myself making the judgement, although this process is somewhat subjective), which can include blundered or illiterate text or debased and crude images. The third method to detect a copy is that it is both smaller than it should be, and the design does not look as it should. Applying these means to define an obvious or detectable copy, and targeting three of the major copying 'epidemics' in late Roman Britain, shows an interesting inconsistency (Figure 5). Reece Period 13 (AD 260-275) had copies that were a combination of small size and poor style, with a tendency to be undersized. Reece Period 14 (AD 275-196) had copies that were of a good size, but poor in style. Reece Period 17 (AD 330-348) had copies that were good in style but were smaller than official issues.

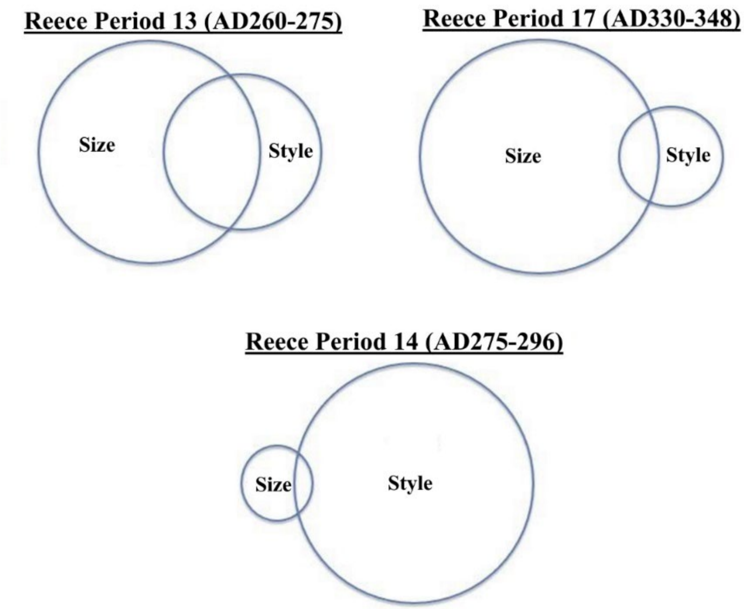

Figure 5. What Constitutes a Detectable Copy? Reece Periods 13, 14 and 17.

With this methodology for exploring the experience of using coins, a Roman copy can be roughly described as a coin that is too small, has a design that looks wrong, or is both too small and also has a design that looks wrong. However, what would be considered to be too small, or to look wrong, would obviously vary from person to person, depending on their identity, prior experience, and context. The process of copying the coin, and choices made in the size of the coin and accuracy of design, mean that the experience of using copies could be very different, even if the coins fit the same numismatic typologies. Using this user-focused definition of a contemporary copy, coupled with a similar user-focused definition of reverse types (merging very similar subtypes into broader categories) produces a potential for meaningful regional variations (Figure 6).

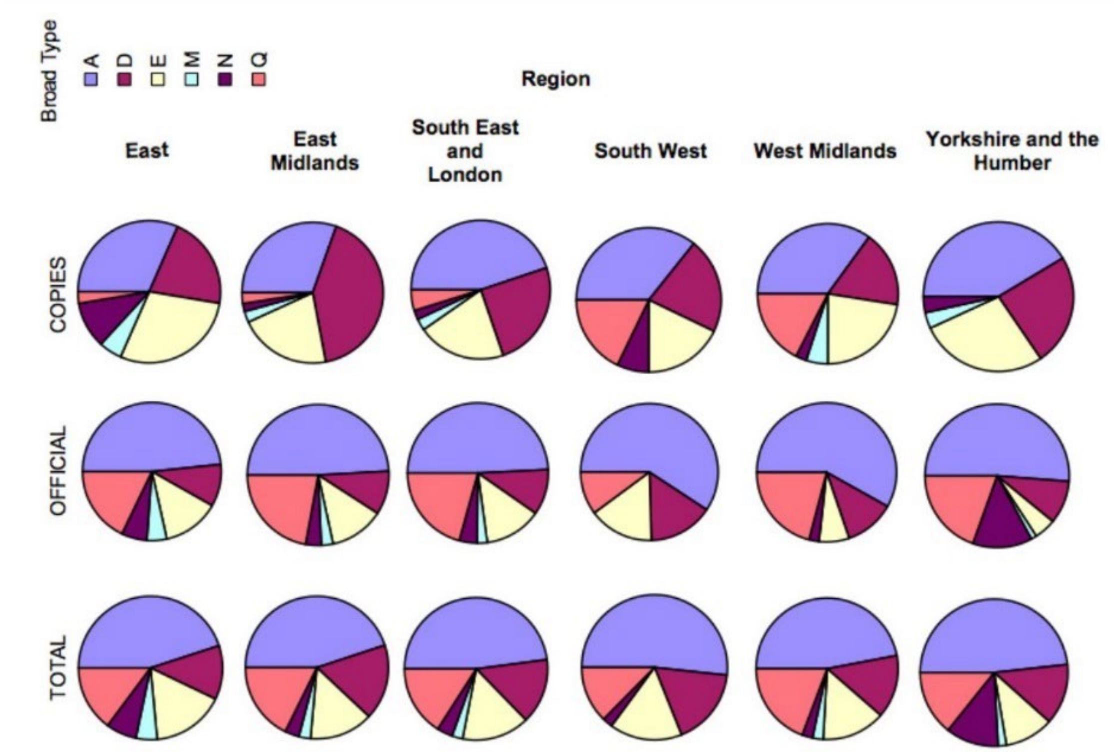

Figure 6. Reece Period 17, Regional Variation by Broad Reverse Types (A='Soldiers with Standard(s)', D='Wolf and Twins', E='Victory on Prow', M='Pax', N='Pietas', Q='Two Victories').

With a dataset of 1684 coins of Reece Period 17, any observations from this case study are limited by the data and biases in the dataset. However, copies produced may have varied between regions, and the copies produced do not necessarily reflect the locally available official coin supply. There appear to be distinct local reactions to each national coin shortage, with regions producing copies that are fundamentally different to those of other regions, and these reactions to coin shortages are not consistent over time. Moreover, a form of regionality, through the notion of a differential experience of coins, is evident. By adjusting the way data is categorised to specifically suit a user-orientated approach, rather than using a mismatched production-focused categorisation inherent in a traditional numismatic dataset, we find very different (and statistically relevant) patterns despite using the same underlying information.

Conclusion

By applying new and novel perspectives alongside existing methods and interpretations, we can gain a wider understanding. However, there is a problem resulting from the tendency to focus on certain types of questions when utilising numismatic data: the data can be recorded to facilitate these questions, rather than allowing for novel questions based on interaction, interpretation and use. In excavation reports coins are primarily used as dating evidence, often simplified and under recorded. In numismatic datasets there can be a tendency to focus on typologies based on production. Approaches exploring materiality and conscious experience can be limited if coin weights, diameters, or images are not recorded. If coins are not fully cleaned (with an assumption that ruler, reverse type, and date are the paramount data required) we may lack detailed information about interaction and experience required for alternative approaches.

The approach used in this case study has illustrated that the meaning and function of coins are not static or fixed, and are not simply determined by the coin or the issuer. There is an inherent flexibility in the meaning and use of objects, even an object as seemingly simple as a coin. The meaning and use of a coin in Roman Britain was ultimately determined by the identity of the user, and the context of use, not just by the coin itself. Analysis of the numismatic data suggests that the experience of coin use can also be seen to have varied between regions, when considering user interaction with coins. Shared experiences of locally available coinage would potentially have formed part of a communal identity and regionality.

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About the author

Barry Crump (barry.crump@york.ac.uk) (The University of York) has an eclectic mix of interests and experience, having completed degrees in English Literature and Philosophy before studying Archaeology. Following a Research Masters focused on the relationship between coinage and identity in Roman Britain, Barry now uses multidisciplinary approaches to consider context, experience, and flexibility in the meaning and use of objects (looking at everything from coins and pots to medieval administrative records and city walls).

The Lingzhao Pavilion 靈沼軒 as "Crystal Palace": A Trans-mundane Space in iron and glass at the Qing Court[1]

Tao Wu

Abstract

The Lingzhao Pavilion (Lingzhao Xuan 靈沼軒, 1909-1911), an iron-and-glass construction within the Forbidden City (Zijin Cheng 紫禁城) in Beijing, is known as the Chinese "Crystal Palace" (a reference to the British structure built in 1851) and celebrated as a "Western Building (*Xiyang lou* 西洋樓)". This paper aims at reflecting on the less-scrutinized Chinese heritage at the architectural site that boasted cutting-edge building materials and engineering technologies from the "West." At its core, the Lingzhao Pavilion represents the ideal of a trans-mundane space that is aligned with the tradition of Chinese imperial garden aesthetics. The manifestation of a cosmological trans-mundane space is evoked not only by the motif "Immortal Mountain rising from Numinous Pond (*xianshan lingchi* 仙山靈池)" but also by the basement aquarium that contributes to transform the whole site into an auspicious "Water Palace (*shuidian* 水殿)". Reading the design of the Lingzhao Pavilion in the light of Chinese aesthetics and concepts, a delicate arrangement of a Chinese trans-mundane space comes into full understanding. I argue that the idea of a trans-mundane space in line with Chinese traditions was artfully employed to make the introduction of European building materials and engineering technologies into the Lingzhao Pavilion more palatable to its imperial patrons.

Introduction

Noteworthy for being the only existing iron-and-glass structure[2] in the Forbidden City architectural complex (currently the Palace Museum in Beijing), the unfinished Lingzhao Pavilion (also popularly known as the "Crystal Palace (Shuijing Gong 水晶宮)" or "Western Building (Xiyang lou 西洋樓)") is located in Prolonging Happiness Palace (Yanxi Gong 延禧宮,

[1] This contribution is a revised and expanded version of a presentation I gave at the GAO conference, on 12 March 2019, in Oxford.

[2] For more details on its metal structure, see Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt et al., "Peking, Volksrepublik China. Der sog. Crystal Palace in der Verbotenen Stadt. Bericht über die Summer School 2016." *E-Forschungsbericht des Deutschen Archäologischen Institut*, no. 2 (December 2017): 59-68, accessed December 08, 2021, https://publications.dainst.org/journals/efb/1989. Zhang Jianwei 張劍葳, *Zhongguo gudai jinshu jianzhu yanjiu 中國古代金屬建築研究* [Studies on Metal Construction in Ancient China] (Nanjing: Dongnan University Press, 2015). Also see Chun Qing 淳慶, et al. "Gugong Lingzhao Xuan cansun fenxi ji jiegou xingneng yanjiu 故宮靈沼軒殘損分析及結構性能研究" [Research on damage to and structural performance of Lingzhao Xuan in the Forbidden City], in *Wenwu baohu yu kexue kaogu 文物保護與科學考古* [Sciences of Conservation and Archaeology] 1 (2018), 40-46.

Figure 1).[3] Contemporary official documents on the building have yet to be found despite the efforts of researchers from disciplines ranging from archaeology to architecture, engineering, history and others, while apocryphal tales and satire portray the whole project as frivolous self-indulgence on the part of the Empress Dowager Longyu's (隆裕太后, 1868-1913).[4] The last Imperial Eunuch (Taijian zongguan 太監總管) Zhang Lande (張蘭德, 1876-1957) is believed to have come up with the idea of renovating the Prolonging Happiness Palace by integrating a "Western building" into it. No name or evidence of the architect or designer has been found to date, though by all accounts Zhang was the supervisor of the construction process, from which he embezzled money.[5] A disproportionate focus on the Lingzhao Pavilion's European heritage – its iron and glass structure and engineering technologies that applied to the site[6] – results in a less comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the indigenous influences that aligned with the aesthetics of Chinese imperial garden. Hence, in this paper, I aim to shed some light on its Chinese heritage in order to gain a full appreciation and understanding of the Lingzhao Pavilion.

[3] No imperial edits mention the project; any official documentation is yet to be found. "Crystal Palace (*Shuijing Gong* 水晶宫)" "Western Building (*Xiyang lou* 西洋樓)" "Water Palace (shui dian 水殿)" and also variations as "Crystal Palace (*Shuijing Gongdian* 水晶宫殿)" and "Western Iron Building (*Xishi tielou* 西式鉄樓)" that refer to the Lingzhao Pavilion appear both in several Chinese "Palace Poem" (*Gong Ci* 宮詞, meaning "verse on life within the Palace") and English report upon the building at its constructing stage. These various of names often emphasize the outstanding appropriation of European building materials and engineering technics. The archaic connotation of its Chinese name, *Lingzhao* (靈沼, "Auspicious Pond"), which originates from the Confucian concept of "benevolent governance (*renzheng* 仁政)" is beyond the focus of this paper due to limitations on space.

[4] More information on the constructing history, see sources mentioned in note 2.

[5] In a short bibliography of Zhang Yuanfu in the *Manqing Baishi 滿清稗史*, his notorious act and his agenda of exploiting the construction of the Lingzhao Pavilion for his own interests was addressed: "Zhang Yuanfu, the last eunuch who rose to prominence in the Manchu-Qing court. [...] [They] started the project of renovating the Yan Palace (author's note: the Yanxi Palace, here the character Yan was ignored), namely the building of the Western-style iron construction. Although the construction was in name decreed by Empress Dowager Longyü, in reality, Yuanfu himself was the main driving force [behind the project]. [...] Although [Zhang] wanted to unravel his schemes to fill his coffers [with ill-gotten gains], [he was] vexed that there were barely any loopholes to make use of. Therefore [he initiated] the campaign of renovating the Yanxi Palace [and] brought in the Empress Dowager Longyu. Once the Empress Dowager Longyu gave her approval, Yuanfu had attained his goal. The project had no completion date, nor was there a fixed budget. [Zhang] was given free rein with the palace and to spend the public funds as he pleased. Over time [he] spent the savings of the former Express Dowager Cixi; the ingots had no wings, but [all] flew into [his] private purse. 張元福者。滿清宮中發生最後之閹宦也。[...] 興修延宮。西式鉄樓。雖隆裕有懿旨宣布於外。而實出於元福一人之主謀。[...] 雖欲肆其侵蝕手段。而苦於無隙可乘。乃以新修延熙宮之役。[...]工無竣期。欵無定額。宮廷任其折毀。帑項恣其浪。用久之而孝欽顯皇后之積蓄。金不翼而飛入於私囊内。" See Lu Baoxuan 陸保璿, *Manqing Baishi 滿清稗史* [Unofficial History of Manchurian Qing] (Beijing: Xinzhonghua shuju, 1913), vol. 22, 347-348. Translated by author.

[6] On the building materials of the Lingzhao Pavilion, four stand out: masonry, metal (wrought iron, cast iron and steel), glass, and ceramic tiles. For further studies on building materials and engineering techniques of the Lingzhao Pavilion, see note 2. This study has benefited a great deal from prior studies from different disciplines concentrating on the Lingzhao Pavilion's European heritage, especially on its iron-and-glass structure.

Figure 1. Frontal view of the Lingzhao Pavilion. Part of the marble base that is above the ground can be seen. The central octagonal pavilion and the hexagonal towers to the southeast and southwest are clearly visible. Photograph taken by Xiao Litong in May 2020.

First, I provide another reading of the architectural structure of the Lingzhao Pavilion, which demonstrates that the core architectonics of the building presents the ideal of an "immortal mountain rising from the sea (xianshan lingchi 仙山靈池)" and is aligned with the tradition of "Earthly Paradise" in Chinese imperial garden design, which manifests a trans-mundane space at the site. Second, the integral part – the basement aquarium – that applied European building materials and engineering techniques contributes further to the manifestation of an auspicious "Water Palace (shuidian 水殿)" with the aim of "suppressing fires (zhenhuo 鎮火)" and "preventing fires (fanghuo 防火)". To the end, the ideal of "Earthly Paradise,"[7] along with the "underwater fairyland" co-create the fundamental architectonic of the Lingzhao Pavilion, which transforms the site into a trans-mundane space to please its Chinese imperial patrons.

[7] The idea of the "Early Paradise" in Chinese imperial garden is set forward by Lothar Ledderose in his article "The earthly paradise: religious elements in Chinese landscape art," in Susan Bush and Christian Murck eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 165-181.

"Immortal Mountain rising from Numinous Pond 仙山靈池"

In this section, I examine the Lingzhao Pavilion's structural features to buttress my argument that it was meant as a trans-mundane space. Indeed, its newfangled architectural style may have been regarded with suspicion by its conservative Chinese imperial patrons – the structure's many physical contradictions to the Chinese conventional imperial garden are obvious. Nonetheless, the Lingzhao Pavilion beckons its patrons to enter by integrating ideas derived from Chinese traditions: the creation of a sacred space stylised as an "immortal mountain rising from an auspicious pond (*xianshan lingchi* 仙山靈池)."[8] Legitimated by elements marking the space as auspicious, the European building materials and engineering technology could then be integrated into the construction and placed in a more familiar and more easily palatable setting.

Despite seeming compositionally European when seen from the front, as Zhang Jianwei suggests in his *Metal Architecture in Ancient China,* and containing iron and glass that borrows from European engineering of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[9] the Lingzhao Pavilion was intended to embody the imagery of an "immortal mountain rising from the sea,": its *Xumi* base 須彌座 is indicative of the sacred mountain Sumeru in Buddhist mythology and the pond surrounding it, containing the underground floor of the Lingzhao Pavilion, is undoubtedly an organic part of the construction (Figure 2, 3, and 4) .

[8] The Daoist concept of "Nature and Man harmonious in One (*tianren heyi* 天人合一)" that is mostly implicated by the asymmetrical composition and spontaneous arrangement of the masonry, which is beyond the focus of this paper due to the space limitation.

[9] Zhang Jianwei reads the composition of the Lingzhao Pavilion from the European architectural perspective without considering the basement. The Sumeru base to that basement is crucial for my interpretation. For an interpretation of the Lingzhao Pavilion as a European building based on its three-part composition, see Zhang Jianwei, *Zhongguo gudai jinshu jianzhu yanjiu 中國古代金屬建築研究* [Studies on Metal Construction in Ancient China] (Nanjing: Dongnan University Press, 2015), 221. The iron structure is present at the current stage, while no trace of glass has been found. Glass was indeed purchased and meant to be applied to the construction. However, these plans failed due to several reasons. A newspaper on 23 April 1910 confirms the planned application of glass to the Lingzhao Pavilion as well: "[Chinese News translated from the Chinese Press] The Longyü Empress Dowager has issued Tls. 1000, 000 from the Privy Purse for the purchase of glass to turn the Changshou Palace into a Crystal Palace. 隆裕太后已從其私用金中發放 1,000,000 銀兩，這是爲了購買玻璃，使長壽宮變成水晶宮。" In *The North-China Daily News (1864-1951)* (23 April, 1910), 7 [Chinese News translated from the Chinese Press]. For details on glass panels meant for Lingzhao Xuan, see Shan Jiayun 單嘉筠, "Zhu Qiqian de qinbixin tanji Qinggong shuijinggong 朱啟鈐的親筆信談及清宮水晶宮," [Handwritten letter from Zhu Qiqian (to Shan Shiyuan) upon the "Crystal Palace" at the Qing court], in Cui Yong and Yang Yongsheng, eds., *Yingzao lun: Ji Zhu Qiqian jinian wenxuan 營造論: 暨朱啟鈐紀念文選* [Theories on Construction: Selected Papers Serving Commemorating Zhu Qiqian] (Tianjin: Tianjin University Press, 2009), 244-245.

Figure 2. The octagonal tower with iron structure in the northwest of the Lingzhao Pavilion. Photograph taken by Xiao Litong in May 2020.

Figure 3. Frontal elevation of the Lingzhao Pavilion with indications of the Sumeru-base and the tri-part composition, rendered after a drawing in Fang Liyu, "The interdisciplinary research of virtual recovery and simulation of heritage buildings. Take Lingzhao Xuan in the Palace Museum as an example," in

Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage vol. 2, (December 2014), 195. Drawing by Wang Fengyu in May 2019.

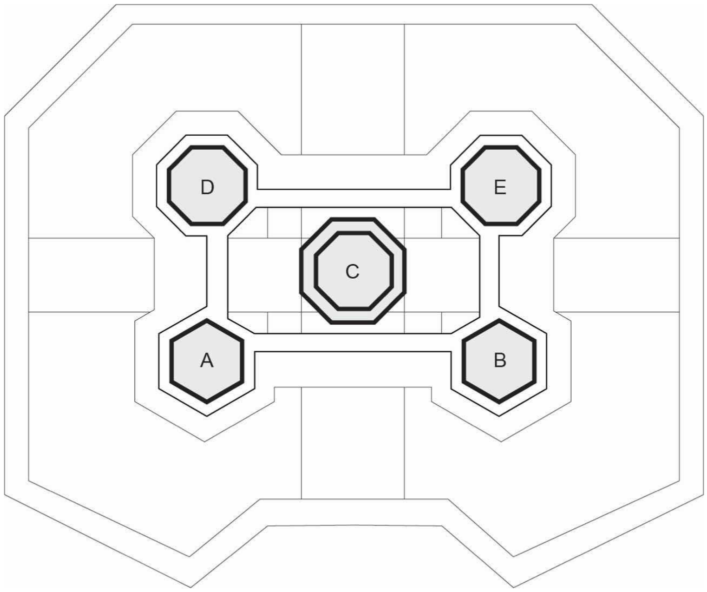

Figure 4. Ground plan of the Lingzhao Pavilion. A and B indicate the southeastern and southwestern hexagonal pavilions; D and E indicate the northeastern and northwestern octagonal pavilions; and C indicates the central octagonal pavilion. Rendered after a drawing in Zhang Jianwei, Zhongguo gudai jinshu jianzhu 中国古代金属建筑研究 [Studies on Metal Construction in Ancient China] (Nanjing: Dongnan University Press, 2015), 221. Drawing by Wang Fengyu, September 2018.

In order to explore this idea further, I divide the Lingzhao Pavilion into three parts, (A, B, C in Figure 5):[10]

Base: from the line of the ground floor to the base line of the pond (A)

Main structure: from the ground to the joint of the bricks and the iron structures (B)

Roof: the cast iron tiers with five pavilions (C)

[10] The essential difference between my interpretation and Zhang's lies in our views of the basement, which I refer to as the "base". In the Chinese architectural tradition, buildings, mostly constructed of wood, mostly comprise three parts as well, namely: the base, main structure and roof. A polymath and statesman of the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) named Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031-1095) mentions in his *Mengxi Bitan 夢溪筆談* [Brush Talks from Dream Brook] (1088) the first manuscript on wooden construction in Chinese history complied by Yu Hao 喻皓 (fl. 970). There, Yu Hao proposes: "Every building has three parts: upwards from the beam is the upper part; above the ground is the middle part; the steps (the base) is the base (bottom). 凡屋有三分，自梁以上為上分；地以上為中分，階為下分." (*Mu jing 木經* [Timberwork Manual]); On structural composition in the Chinese architectural tradition, also see the seminal studies on Chinese architecture by Liang Sicheng.

Figure 5. Frontal elevation of the Lingzhao Pavilion with indications of the tri-part composition with A, B, and C, and the water level in the pond in purple, rendered after a drawing in Fang Liyu, "The interdisciplinary research of virtual recovery and simulation of heritage buildings. Take Lingzhao Xuan in the Palace Museum as an example," in Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage vol. 2, (December 2014), 195. Drawing by Wang Fengyu, May 2019.

The marble basement is mostly hidden in the pond, with only the upper part of the base visible aboveground from afar (Figure 5). As we can see from the front view, the base is fundamentally tri-sectional: containing the bottom, the middle and the top. The middle is slightly constricted, while the top has the same width as the bottom. Viewed from a two-dimensional perspective, this represents the silhouette of the base of Mount Sumeru.[11] The Lingzhao Pavilion's underground base gives it an hourglass-shaped silhouette, which is oftentimes said to be like an Asian hand drum (*gu* 鼓) (Figure 6).[12] In summary, from a two-dimensional perspective, the main structure and the top pavilions sit on a Sumeru (*Xumi*) base.[13] Mount Sumeru (Xumi shan 須彌山) is a term originating from Buddhism in which Mount Sumeru towers in the centre of the Buddhist view of the universe. A vast number of two-dimensional presentations of Mount

[11] According to the iconographic research on the Buddhist universe of Ataru Sotomura, there are at least four types of cross-sectional shapes of Mount Sumeru. Sotomura's studies exclude the discussion of a three-dimensional Sumeru base, however, I refer to the two-dimensional form, namely the silhouette of the base of Lingzhao Xuan. For more information on Mount Sumeru, see Ataru Sotomura, "Mt. Sumeru 須彌山: Source Manual for Iconographic Research on the Buddhist Universe," Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre, Working Paper no. 6, 2, accessed January 27, 2022, http://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/nsc_working_paper_series_6.pdf.

[12] Here I thank Manuel Sassmann for his technical support for further edition of Figure 5 and 6 in November 2021.

[13] History of Sumeru base developed as Xumi base in the Chinese architecture, see below, also see Liang Sicheng, *Liang Sicheng Quanji 梁思成全集* [Complete Works of Liang Sicheng] vol. 6 (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2001), 239. Yang Xinping 楊新平, "Qiantan Xumuzuo 淺談須彌座" [Studies on Sumeru Throne], in *Nanfang Wenwu 南方文物* [Relics from South], vol. 1 (1993), 78-81.

Sumeru in various materials were rendered in a Buddhist context and over time in three-dimensional form as well. For example, many famous Buddhist, but also Jain and Hindu temples have been built as symbolic representations of Mount Sumeru. In traditional Chinese architectural history, "Sumeru Throne (*Xumi zuo* 須彌座)" enters China with the spread of Buddhism from India, and over time becomes a common feature as a base of Buddhist sculpture and a basis of religious or imperial architecture. The "Sumeru Throne" confers a sense of greatness and solemnness to the architecture atop it.[14] According to Liang Sicheng, the Chinese term *xumi 須彌* appears in Buddhist scripture, originally as a name of a mountain, also translated in Chinese as *mixiulou 迷修樓*, which is the ancient pronunciation of the Himalayas.[15]

Figure 6. Frontal elevation of Lingzhao Xuan Pavilion with indications of the Sumeru-base in blue, rendered after a drawing in Fang Liyu, "The interdisciplinary research of virtual recovery and simulation of heritage buildings. Take Lingzhao Xuan in the Palace Museum as an example," in Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage vol. 2, (December 2014), 195. Drawing by Wang Fengyu, May 2019.

[14] Yang Xinping 楊新平, "Qiantan Xumuzuo 淺談須彌座" [Studies on Sumeru Throne], in *Nanfang Wenwu 南方文物* [Relics from South], vol. 1 (1993), 78-81.
[15] Liang Sicheng, *Liang Sicheng Quanji 梁思成全集* [Complete Works of Liang Sicheng] vol. 6 (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2001), 238.

In the context of Chinese ancient architecture, the earliest *Xumi* base in China appears in the Yungang Caves (Yungang Shiku 雲崗石窟) in Datong 大同, Shanxi Province, which was built by Emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝, r. 471-499) in Northern Wei dynasty (北魏, 386-534). The architectural *Xumi* base in this period is simplified and has been notably impacted by Buddhist art.[16] With the development of Buddhist architecture, the *Xumi* base was slowly adopted by superior architecture. When the Sumeru base first arrived in China, it was promptly applied to Buddhist statuary but only later adopted into the Chinese architectural tradition.[17] By the Tang dynasty (618-906), *Xumi* bases were commonly seen. The widespread use of the *Xumi* base in Chinese religious architecture during the Tang era is evident both in the literature and mural paintings.[18] Tang murals tell us that the *Xumi* base was widely applied throughout architecture, not only to Buddhist statues as a base. According to Mo Wei's studies, at least from the Tang onwards, the *Xumi* base was accepted in Chinese architecture context as a superior form of base for architecture of religious or imperial importance.[19] By the Song dynasty, the development of the *Xumi* base in "dignified" architecture reaches its peak and is gradually formalised, a trend precisely documented in the Song official construction manuscript, the *Treatise on Architectural Methods or State Building Standards* (Yingzao fashi 營造法式).[20] From the Song dynasty onwards, the *Xumi* base in architecture came to be seen as identical to later traditions of *Xumi* bases in architecture.[21] From the Yuan dynasty onwards, the process of simplifying continued until the Ming and Qing dynasties, when the Forbidden City was built. The official *Xumi* base was further simplified, as documented in the Qing official construction manuscript.[22]

[16] See Zhao Peng 趙鵬, Guo Hong 郭鴻 and Zhang Jie 張傑, "Gugong jianzhu xumizuo de chidu goucheng yu zhuangshi wenyang 故宮建築須彌座的尺度構成與裝飾紋樣" [Dimensions of and decorative patterns on the Sumeru bases of buildings of the Palace Museum], in *Gujian yuanlin jishu 古建園林技術* [Traditional Chinese Architecture and Gardens], vol. 4 (2011), 34.

[17] Liang suggests that even the Sumeru base, like many other forms of Buddhist art, has its origins in the Greek tradition. In classical Europe, bases played an important role in architecture. However, from the start of the Common Era, bases became thinner and waned in significance. Up until the Renaissance, the so-called high base was distinct from a base. Bases were only used in sculpture or stelae, i.e. as pedestals. For further details see Liang Sicheng, *Liang Sicheng Quanji 梁思成全集* [Complete Works of Liang Sicheng] vol. 6 (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2001), 239.

[18] Ibid., 238-239.

[19] Mo Wei 莫畏, "Xumi zuo tanyuan 須彌座探源" [Probing into the Origin of Sumeru], in *Jilin jianzhu gongcheng xueyuan xue bao 吉林建築工程學院學報* [Journal of Jilin Architectural and Civil Engineering Institute] no 3 (September 1999), 22-26.

[20] This is a technical treatise on Chinese traditional architecture and craftsmanship written by Li Jie (李誡, 1065-1110), the Directorate of Buildings and Construction during the mid-Song Dynasty of China. Liang Sicheng translates this manuscript into modern Chinese and English in the purpose of researching and preserving the theories and techniques in Chinese ancient architecture, and also to dedicate respect to the ancient Chinse craftsmen who were considered less artists and architects than working forces, see Liang Sicheng.

[21] See Mo Wei, 1999. On the difference between *Xumi* base in the Song and the Qing versions of the State Building Standards (*Song Yingzao fashi 宋營造法式* and *Qing Yingzao fashi 清營造法式*), see Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture. A Pictorial History: A Study of the Development of Its Structural System and the Evolution of Its Types 圖像中國建築史* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2015).

[22] Surveys on the *Xumi* base have been carried out by the Palace Museum, which has catalogued 75 Sumeru bases within the architectural complex of the Forbidden City and also ten representative sites outside the complex. In Fig 1 of the essay, in which the proportions of some *Xumi* bases are listed, the Lingzhao Xuan was missed. I am currently unable to access the list of all 75 sites and am uncertain as to whether the

Figure 7. Indication of outward protruding tiers of the xumi base of Lingzhao Xuan, rendered after a drawing in Fang Liyu, "The interdisciplinary research of virtual recovery and simulation of heritage buildings. Take Lingzhao Xuan in the Palace Museum as an example," in Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage vol. 2, (December 2014), 195. Drawing by Wang Fengyu, May 2019.

The "*Xumi* base", as I will dub the Sumeru base from this period, features several horizontal mouldings that expand outwards in tiers (Figure 7).[23] The *Xumi* base of the Lingzhao Pavilion might fall out of the conventional construction of *xumi* bases in the architectural complex of the Forbidden City, yet the form and proportions of the tiers indicates a *Xumi* base in its own right and style. The application of a *Xumi* base in the Lingzhao Pavilion indicates its alignment with solemn architecture which contains either religious or imperial connotations. In short, the Lingzhao Pavilion was designed to create an atmosphere of importance or holiness, further affirming the idea that it sought to manifest a trans-mundane space. This intention was demonstrated in the arrangement of digging a hole and building an isle at the center to evoke an immortal mountain rising from the sea.[24] From the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) onwards, the belief that gods and immortals dwelled on mountains is integrated into Chinese architecture. In Chinese imperial parks, high towers are erected for these heavenly beings.[25] Sitting on a *Xumi*

survey considered the base of Lingzhao Xuan as a *Xumi* base. See Zhao Peng, Guo Hong and Zhang Jie, 2011. In the Forbidden City complex, there are mainly four types of *Xumi* base: the first without balustrades or hornless dragon heads; the second with balustrades; the third with both balustrades and hornless dragon heads; and the fourth a multi-storage base. The *Xumi* base of the Lingzhao Xuan can be arguably included in the third type because of its mysterious animal heads carved on the cornice of the base. The pattern of waves and fish are carved on the upper cornice as well, which was uncommon in the imperial architectural complex.

[23] Liang Sicheng, *Liang Sicheng Quanji 梁思成全集* [Complete Works of Liang Sicheng] vol. 6 (Beijing: China Architecture and Building Press, 2001), 238.

[24] See Lothal Ledderose, "The earthly paradise: religious elements in Chinese landscape art," in Susan Bush and Christian Murck eds., *Theories of the Arts in China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 165-181.

[25] Liang Sicheng, *Chinese Architecture: Art and Artifacts 為什麼研究中國建築* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2001), 18.

base while the reversed eaves on the top pavilions reach out to the sky as a gesture of prayer for harmonious alignment with the universe, the structure of the Lingzhao Pavilion symbolises an earthly paradise on the traditional Chinese landscape, which facilitates the image of an "Immortal Mountain rising from Numinous Pond."

Traces of External Shelters "Water Palace (*shuidian* 水殿)" that "Supress Fire (*zhenhuo* 鎮火)"

An integral part of the "auspicious mountain raising from a numinous sea," the aquarium gallery in the basement further contributes to transforming the site into a trans-mundane world.[26] the Lingzhao Pavilion is referred to on several occasions as the "Water Palace (*shuidian* 水殿),"[27] not only because the main building sits in a tank and is surrounded by a water body, but also due to the design of its "basement aquarium." Several attempts have been made by researchers from other fields to explain the arrangement of the aquarium on the basement by mostly comparing it to the nineteenth-century European Grotto-aquarium.[28] The basement is set in a tank as pointed out in the first section, its windows fitted with waterproof glass; the tank was to be filled with water and fish,[29] upon which an underwater gallery would greet visitors entering the basement by the stairs from the ground floor. They would be amazed at the scene of an underwater wonderland through the glass, as if contemplating a moving painting. In addition to the Grotto-aquarium, I argue that the Lingzhao Pavilion's aquarium shows striking similarities to the Winterthur aquarium (Figure 8) from late nineteenth-century America.[30] Purchased by H. F. du Pont from George McKearin in 1948 and "one-of-a-kind"[31] by researchers, this metal and glass aquarium is set in an octagonal tank. Though a thorough study and conservation have failed

[26] For details on the engineering design of the aquarium at the site of Lingzhao Xuan, see sources in note 2.
[27] For instance, in *Qing Gong Ci 清宮詞* [Poetry of Qing Court] of 1912, composed and edited by Wu Shijian 吴士鑑 (1868-1934), an epigraphist in Qing dynasty (1644-1912): "To the east of the inner court of imperial gardens, there was an area with a patch of earthen mounds, it has been said unsuitable for construction all this while to heed the advice of geomancers. In the year of Jiyou in the regime of Xuantong, a water palace was constructed, surrounds by ponds on [all] four sides, irrigates with water from Mount Jade Spring that encircles the palace. The windows, the ceilings, and doors, none does not have glass installed in it. Empress Dowager Longyu herself adorned the entrance plaque with her calligraphy, naming [the structure] Lingzhao Xuan, which was popularly called Crystal Palace. In the winter of the year of Xinhai, the construction had yet to be completed. 大内御花園之東，有土阜一區，向以日者之言，不宜建築。宣统己酉，興修水殿，四圍浚池，引玉泉山水環繞之。殿上窗櫺、承塵、金舖，無不嵌以玻璃。隆裕太后自題扁额曰"靈沼軒"，俗呼為"水晶宫"。辛亥之冬尚未畢工。" In *Qing Gong Ci 清宮詞* [Poetry of Qing Court] (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1986), 17.
[28] Ulrike Wulf-Rheidt et al., 2017.
[29] Details on history of glass panels for building the Lingzhao Pavilion, also see Shan Jiayun, 2009.
[30] Duffy dates the object from 1870 to 1910, probably from New Jersey or New York, a time frame which is rather close to the building of Lingzhao Xuan. See Rebecca Duffy, "The age of aquaria: the aquarium pursuit and personal fish-keeping, 1850-1920," Master thesis, Winterthur: University of Delaware, 2018, accessed January 3, 2022, http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/23740.
[31] Hadden Dine, "A 19th century aquarium: How collaboration informed the technical study and treatment," paper presented at the annual student conference hosted by Queen's University, April 5-7, 2018, accessed January 3, 2022, http://29aqcgc1xnh17fykn459grmc-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/anagpic-student-papers/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2019/04/Dine-ANAGPIC-2018.pdf.

to determine whether this object was used as an aquarium or only for decorative purposes,[32] it involved submerging part of a building under water to create a gallery with viewers within, hence bearing an uncanny resemblance to the Lingzhao Pavilion. Although a connection between the two has yet to be proven, this Western analogue to the Lingzhao Pavilion reminds us how much of the latter's mixed architectural heritage has yet to be traced back to plausible aesthetic prototypes.

Figure 8. Parlor Aquarium in Winterthur Museum, 1870-1910, 60.3 cm in height, 56.2 cm in diameter. Place of Origin: Europe or North America, possibly New Jersey or New York. Tinned sheet iron, pewter, glass, iron, paint, silk, paper, iron wire, bronze powders, and plastic. Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont, Winterthur Museum, 1965.2192 A, B. Image Courtesy of Winterthur Museum.

So, a further question awaits answering: why an aquarium at this site? The aquarium was built to contribute further to the idea of a "Water Palace", as suggested by its configuration as a building in the middle of a pond. It should be stated that the Yanxi Palace, in whose courtyard the construction of the Lingzhao Pavilion stands, represents the "fire element" because at least two conflagrations had taken place in this architectural compound during the Qing dynasty: one

[32] Ibid.

is recorded in the twenty-fifth year (1845) of the Daoguang era 道光 (1820-1850) [33] era and another one was in the fifth year (1855) of the Xianfeng era 咸豐 (1850-1861), which inflicted serious damage to the architectural complex.[34] The former had seen significant damage to the main hall, the rear hall and the side halls on the West and the East. In essence, all twenty-five rooms had been destroyed at one point or another. This led to the abandonment of the complex for decades in accordance with the suggestions of the geomancers (*fengshui* practitioners).[35] It is said that another attempt to rebuild the Palace in the eleventh year of Tongzhi (1872) was discussed but never materialised.[36] Due to unfavourable *fengshui* readings, the edict reported that the project could start with prospecting the site, but construction should be delayed.[37] In 1909, under the pretext of having an auspicious "Water Palace" representing the "water element" balanced with the "fire element" in the architectural context of the Yanxi Palace, the construction of the Lingzhao Pavilion had begun. It has been suggested that the Lingzhao Pavilion, the "Crystal Palace", was intended to "suppress the fire (*zhenhuo* 鎮火)",[38] which

[33] Zhu Qingzheng suggests a record which explain the event in details: "In the 25th year of the Daoguang era, on the 22nd day of the fifth lunar month, at the beginning of the Hai 亥 hour, Yanxi Palace caught fire due to negligence. The fire started from the Eastern pendant hall, razed to the ground five rooms in the main wing, six rooms in the Western and Eastern wings, five rooms in the rear wing, three rooms in the Eastern water storage building, totalling twenty-five rooms. 道光二十五年五月二十二日，亥初，延禧宮不戒於火，由東配殿（該檔載：明廚房就在宮門內東配殿三間內，連二灶爐子在南間靠山牆，起火即在南間）起火，延燒正殿五間，東西配殿六間，後殿五間，東西配殿六間，東水房三間，共燒房二十五間。" See Zhu Qingzheng 朱慶徵, "Fangcun zhijian de gongting jianzhu 方寸之間的宮廷建築" [Palace Architecture that compacted (by the Architecture Models) in Miniature], in *Zi Jin Cheng 紫禁城* [Forbidden City], vol. 7 (2006), 89-90.

[34] Ibid.

[35] For the tradition of "fengshui (literally wind and water)" practice in Chinese architecture, see Derek Walters, *Chinese Geomancy* (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1989). For "fengshui" practice and other concepts of the ancient architecture in the Forbidden City, see Zhou Qian 周乾, ***Zijincheng gujianzhu yingjian sixiang yanjiu 紫禁城古建築營建思想研究*** [Research on Construction Concepts of the Ancient Architecture in the Forbidden City] (Beijing: Palace Museum, 2019).

[36] Gu Bian 顧邊, "Women zhidao de zijincheng yanxigong 我們知道的紫禁城延禧宮" [What we know about the Yanxi Palace in the Forbidden City]. In Zi Jin Cheng 紫禁城 [Forbidden City] vol. 7 (2006), 91.

[37] In the eleventh month of the eleventh year of Tongzhi 同治 era (1872), a proposal of reconstruction was put forward by Eunuch Zhang Ling 張伶喜: "'The construction project in Yanxi Palace should abide by the regular standards,' according to the Imperial Household Department, the geomancy [*fengshui*] in the next year was not favourable, whence they suggest to commence surveys and taking measurements first, and only start on the construction if the geomancy issues resolved in the year after that 延禧宮工程，普照式修建。'經總管內務府奏，明年方向有礙，拟先勘估，如後年方向相宜，即行修建." In *Neiwufu zouxiao dang* 內務府奏銷檔 [Archives of the Imperial Household Department of the Qing court], see Zhu Qingzheng, 2006.

[38] In the eleventh year of Tongzhi 同治 era (1872), a proposal of reconstruction has been put forward but never carried out. In his essay Gu Bian addresses *What we know about Yanxi Palace* with the history of the construction and mentioned that, after the death of Empress Dowager Cixi (慈禧太后, 1835-1908) and Guangxu Emperor (光緒皇帝, 1871-1908), Empress Dowager Longyu seized power, however her intelligence and actions failed her ambitions to be a real leader like her aunt. She was bored with life at court, which caused her great grief. The Eunuch Zhang Lande came out inform the Dowager that due to the several fire incidences in the Yanxi Palace, a building should be built to suppress the fire. According to five elements tradition, there should be plenty ways of suppressing the fire, but Longyu favoured Zhang's suggestion. See Gu Bian, 2006.

departed from beliefs of geomancy or, to "prevent the fire (*fanghuo* 防火)"[39] as Shan Jiayun mentioned, as the construction physically contains a pond which could have also served as a reservoir. Both statements demonstrate a close link to the image of water, or to the realisation of a "Water Palace."[40]

The Lingzhao Pavilion was commissioned by the Empress Dowager Longyu (1868-1913) as a recreational venue for the young Emperor Xuantong (宣統皇帝, r. 1908-1912). Despite the notoriety of the project and how apocrypha relate massive corruption, a foreign English-medium newspaper published in China reports positively about the construction process in 1911, probably shortly before the project was abandoned:

The building of the above palace by order of the Empress Dowager Lung Yu has been progressing rapidly toward completion. The details of the building have appeared in the Press now and then. The Empress Dowager recently sent an edict to [...] hasten the completion of the Crystal Palace within this Chinese month in order to afford the Emperor a place of recreation where his Majesty may enjoy the fresh air, a bright outlook and pleasant scenes after school-time or during intervals of studying his lessons, which thus will not make him feel weary. Her Majesty's consideration as regards the Emperor's education is, indeed, much to be admired.

It is reported that the Crystal Palace will con'sin[41] three storeys, all to be lifted up with electric light, even within the glass walls, the glass floors and the glass pillars. So at night-time, when the electric lights are turned on, all the apartments would look like a veritable fairyland or some place of enchantment.[42]

As mentioned, with its "glass walls," "glass floors" and "glass pillars", all lit by electric lights at night, the structure and its aquarium, once finished, would have truly been transformed into a "fairyland". That further supports the argument that the initial design aimed to create a trans-mundane space, where the imperial patrons could relax, escape from the everyday, and indulge themselves in the fantasy world that the Lingzhao Pavilion had to offer: the sacred mountain and the auspicious water, an island for the immortals. Taking its tank, which would have been filled with water and fish, its Sumeru base, and the structure on the ground as a whole, we may say that the design of the Lingzhao Pavilion embodies the concept of an immortal dwelling. With a sacred "mountain" in the "divine ponds and numinous pools", where auspicious animals and plants were brought together, the Lingzhao Pavilion becomes a microcosm of heavenly space. All these allusions to Chinese and Buddhist mythology would have provided imperial patrons a suite of familiar references, easing their entry into the rather unconventional physical structure built with materials and techniques imported from Europe and North America, and simultaneously stimulating their desire to explore and be impressed.

[39] Shan Jiayun, 2009.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Typo in the original, probably "contain".
[42] "Notes on Native Affairs: A Crystal Palace," *The North-China Daily News*, August 22, 1911, 7.

Conclusion and reflection

With its significant iron and glass structure, the Lingzhao Pavilion has frequently been studied in terms of the building materials and engineering techniques it appropriated from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe and North America. Studying the building as an organic whole, however, reveals that the trans-mundane space the Lingzhao Pavilion was meant to encapsulate was completely in line with traditional Chinese imperial garden aesthetics. First, its structural arrangement represents the ideal of "sacred mountain rising from the sea," which was often adopted in Chinese imperial garden since the Qin dynasty. Second, the intent to build a "Water Palace" to prevent the fire gives the site auspicious connotations, in which case foreign technologies contributed by making possible an underwater gallery, and a trans-mundane space compatible with Chinese tradition more generally. This space would have been appreciated by the imperial patrons, coaxing them into accepting the European materials and technologies used to build this Chinese "Crystal Palace". Given how first-hand sources contain so many conflicting versions of events in that period surrounding the Lingzhao Pavilion's construction, reconsidering its label as a "Western Building" promises to open up a broader discussion for multi-cultural influences that will at some point contribute to shedding more light on its aesthetic origins.

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About the author

Wu Tao, PhD candidate in East Asian Art History at Heidelberg University, Germany (tao.wu@stud.uni-heidelberg.de) is a holder of the China Scholarship Council (CSC) grant from 2017, currently works as an Academic Assistant in the project "Buddhist Stone Inscriptions in Northern China" at the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Site and Structure：A Spatial Analysis of Buddhist Rock Carvings in Northern Sichuan in the Early Seventh Century

Xiao Yang

Abstract

Distinguished from the monumental sites in the north and northwest of China, such as Mogao and Yungang Grottoes, the Buddhist grottoes in Sichuan are usually composed of niches and lack of large caves with interior space to permit entry or ritual activity within. Scholars have noticed the structural divergence of Sichuan grottoes and their "prototype" in northern and northwestern China there has yet to be a profound discussion. This article examines a group of the early niche-based Buddhist grottoes which were intensively constructed in northern Sichuan in the early seventh century. It argues that the basic structure of the "Sichuan style" grottoes can be traced back to the tradition of non-imperial grottoes in northern China in the sixth century. Local innovations in the reception of northern and northwestern grottoes, in addition to the presence of wooden structures outside the grottoes are also discussed.

Introduction

In 1988 Howard referred to Buddhist rock carvings in the Sichuan area 四川地區 of southwestern China as unknown and forgotten, however two decades into the twenty-first century this is no longer the case (Figure 1).[1] This area has been the focus of significant academic attention in the recent years, which have served to gradually clarify the Buddhist material culture flourished in this region from the sixth to thirteenth centuries.[2] Scholars have previously highlighted the "variation" in the Buddhists sites in Sichuan, which are usually composed of niches dedicated to displaying sculptures.[3] This contrasts with the archetypal form of the well-known Buddhist cave

[1] Angela Falco Howard, "Tang Buddhist Sculpture of Sichuan: Unknown and Forgotten," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiguities* 60 (1988): 1–164.

[2] For a comprehensive review see Lei Yuhua 雷玉華, Luo Chunxiao 羅春曉 and Wang Jianping 王劍平, *Chuanbei fojiao shiku he moya zaoxiang yanjiu* 川北佛教石窟和摩崖造像研究 [Buddhist Caves and Cliff Sculptures in Northern Sichuan] (Lanzhou: Gansu jiaoyu chubanshe, 2017).

[3] This is the reason why most scholars have argued that "Moya zaoxiang 摩崖造像 (Cliff sculptures)" is a better term than "cave temples" to describe the Buddhist sites in the Sichuan area. For a related discussion, see Lei, Luo and Wang, "Chuanbei shiku de gainian 川北石窟的概念 [The Concept of Grottoes in Northern Sichuan]," in *Chuanbei fojiao shiku he moya zaoxiang yanjiu*, 3-5. Hida Romi 肥田路美, "Joron: Bukkyō bijutsu kara mita Shisen chiiki 序論:仏教美術からみた四川地域 [Preface: Looking at Sichuan Area through Buddhist Art]," in *Bukkyō bijutsu kara mita Shisen chiiki* 仏教美術からみた四川地域 [Looking at Sichuan Area through Buddhist Art], ed. Nara bijutsu kenkyūjo 奈良美術研究所 [Research Institute of Nara Bujutsu] (Tōkyō: Yuzankaku, 2007), 14.

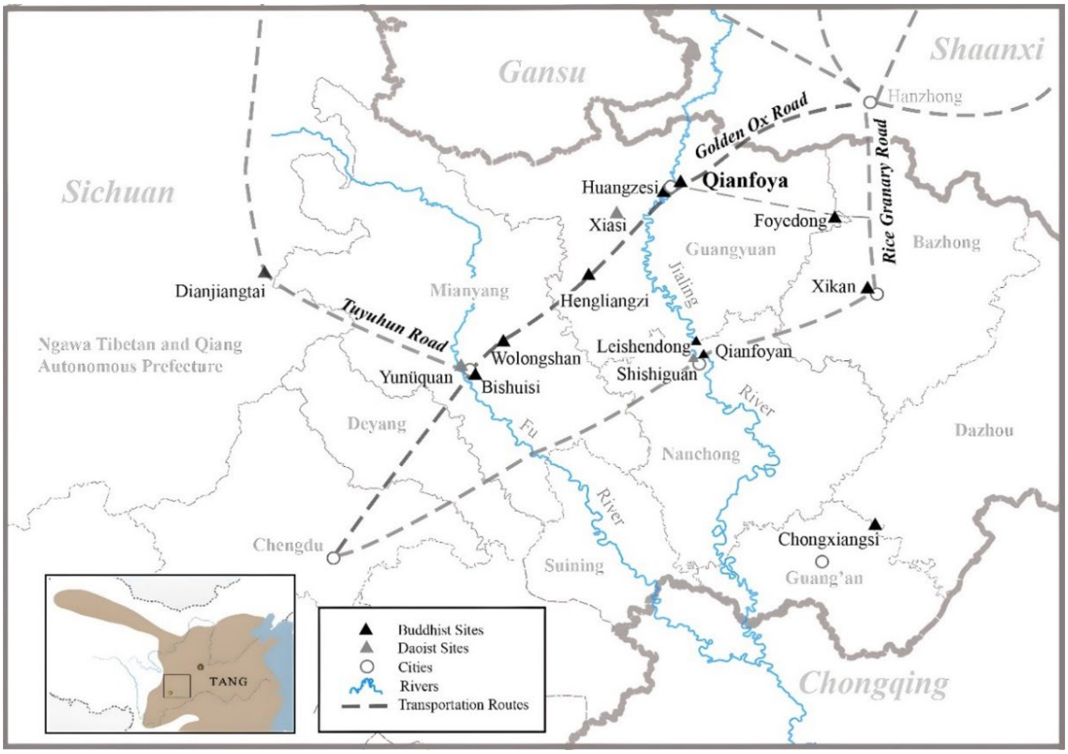

Figure 1. Locations of the early-seventh-century Buddhist sites in Northern Sichuan. Made by the author.

temples in northern and northwestern China, like Mogao Grottoes 莫高窟 in Dunhuang 敦煌 or Yungang Grottoes 雲岡石窟 in Datong 大同, which consist of large caves which contain internal spaces intended to permit devotees to enter, worship, and, in some cases, congregate within the caves. However, to date scholarship has generally treated the structural "variation" of these rock carving sites in Sichuan as being part of a reductive and passive reception of northern cave-based grottoes and has not sought to interrogate the reasons for this transition in form.

This article aims to focus our understanding of Buddhist rock carvings in Sichuan by tracing the arrival of Buddhist grottoes as a regional form of religious landscape from northern and northwestern.[4] It centers on ten Buddhist rock carving sites in northern Sichuan, which are set across Guangyuan 廣元, Mianyang 綿陽, Bazhong 巴中, Nanchong 南充, Guang'an 廣安, and the Ngawa Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture 阿壩藏族羌族自治州. The rock carvings in

[4] For previous discussions on the change of the geographical center of Buddhist art from the northern and northwestern China to Sichuan see Rösch and Yen. Petra Hildegard Rösch, "'Golden Age' and 'Decline' in Art-Historical Writing on Chinese Buddhist Sculpture: Describing a Shifting Discourse," in *In the Shadow of the Golden Age: Art and Identity in Asia from Gandhara to the Modern Age*, ed. Julia A.B. Hegewald (Berlin: EB-Verl, 2014), 171-195. Yen Chuan-ying 顏娟英, "Shengtang Xuanzong chao fojiao yishu de zhuanbian 盛唐玄宗朝佛教藝術的轉變 [Changes in Buddhist Art during the reign of Tang Xuanzong]," in *Jinhua Shuiyue: Zhongguo gudai meishu kaogu yu fojiaoyishu de taolun* 鏡花水月: 中國古代美術考古與佛教藝術的探討 [Visualizing the Miraculous World: Reflections on the Buddhist Art in Medieval China] (Taipei: Rock Publishing Intl., 2016), 127-206.

these sites date to the Zhenguan 貞觀 reign (627-649 CE) and mark the earliest traces of the carving of Buddhist icons into natural rock faces on a large scale in the Sichuan area.[5] It is herein argued that the niche-based forms of these Sichuan sites reflect a fragmentary and poly-dynamic transition of knowledge of the structures and forms of Buddhist rock-cut sites from northern and northwestern China. The prototype of the niche-based structures can be traced back to small grassroots Buddhist sites in northern China but can also be seen in the Daoist rock carving sites in northern Sichuan which appear to slightly pre-date the Buddhist rock carving sites. However, there is also evidence of innovation in the form of these sites. The clearest example of this is the double-layered niches, which appears to be an innovative use of a niche form that had previously only been used to form main niches within the caves in Buddhist grottoes in the northern China. In the Sichuan context, this form is often found directly carved on the surfaces of cliffs or boulders. In addition, not all Buddhist rock carvings in Sichuan are directly exposed to the outdoors. A discussion of the external shelters connecting to the rock-cut sites to protect the statues and create interior space is also included in this article, since they are indispensable to understanding the historical appearance of the Sichuan niche-based sites.

Buddhist Sites in Northern Sichuan

Northern Sichuan is herein identified as the transitional zone between the north and northwest of China and the Sichuan Plain around the Chengdu 成都. The northern part of this region is mountainous, formed of the Ba mountains 巴山 and Micang mountains 米倉山. As part of the Qin Range 秦嶺 which divides Northern and Southern China, the Ba and Micang mountains form the geographical barrier between the north and northwest of China to the north and the Sichuan area to the south. Historically two main trade routes passed through the mountains of the northern Sichuan, the Golden Ox Road 金牛道 and the Rice Granary Road 米倉道.[6] A third road, the Henan Road 河南道 or Tuyuhun Road 吐谷渾道, ran west from Mianyang to the Tibetan Plateau.[7]

Although there are some caves and niches in northern Sichuan which predate the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), the first phase of prolific carving of Buddhist statues into the surface of cliffs and boulders occurred during the early seventh century. Four of these sites are located along the Golden Ox Road: Huangzesi 皇澤寺 in Guangyuan, Hengliangzi 橫樑子 in Jian'ge 劍閣, Wolongshan Qianfoya 臥龍山千佛崖 (shortened to Wolongshan) in Zitong 梓潼, and Bishuisi 碧

[5] For a comprehensive study see Wang Jianping 王劍平 and Lei Yuhua 雷玉華, "6 shiji mo zhi 7 shiji chu de sichuan zaoxiang 6 世紀末至 7 世紀初的四川造像 [Sichuan Sculptures during the Late sixth and Early seventh Centuries]," in *Chengdu kaogu yanjiu* 成都考古研究（二）[Chengdu Archeological Study II], ed. Chengdu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 成都文物考古研究所 [Chengdu Municipal Cultural Relics and Archeology Research Institute] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2013), 357-371.
[6] Yen Keng-wang 嚴耕望, *Tangdai jiaotong tu kao: Shan, Jian, Dian, Qian qu* 唐代交通圖考:山劍滇黔區 [Studies on the Trade Routes of the Tang Dynasty: Shan, Jian, Dian, Qian Areas] (Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, 1985), 863-906 and 1007-1028.
[7] Ibid, 925-1006.

水寺 in Mianyang.[8] There are a further five sites along the Rice Granary Road and its surrounding areas, including Foyedong 佛爺洞 in Wangcang 旺蒼, Xikan 西龕 in Bazhong, the Leishendong 雷神洞 and Qianfoyan 千佛岩 in Langzhong 阆中, and Chongxiangsi 沖相寺 in Guang'an.[9] The final early seventh Century site in this region is Dianjiangtai 點將台, near Maoxian 茂县 along the Tuyuhun Road.[10] Four of these sites contain dated devotional inscriptions; they are Dianjiangtai (631 CE), Wolongshan (634 CE), Qianfoyan (635 CE), and Hengliangzi (647 CE). The other sites have been dated to the same period based on the presence of specific sculptural forms

[8] Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Guangyuan shi wenwu guanlisuo 廣元市文物管理所 [Guangyuan Municipal Cultural Heritage Administration], and Beijing daxue kaogu wenbo xueyuan 北京大學考古文博學院 [School of Archaeology and Museology of Peking University], "Guangyuan Huangzesi shiku diaocha baogao 廣元皇澤寺石窟調查報告 [Survey Report for the Huangzesi Grottoes in Guangyuan]," *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物 [Sichuan Cultural Relics], no.1 (2004): 75-84. Sichuan sheng wenwu guanliju 四川省文物管理局 [Sichuan Cultural Heritage Administration] et al., *Guangyuan shiku neirong zonglu: Huangzesi juan* 廣元石窟內容總錄:皇澤寺卷 [Catalogue of the Contents of Guangyuan Grottoes: Huangzesi] (Chengdu: Bashu shuju, 2008). Yao Chongxin 姚崇新, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu: yi chuanbei diqu wei zhongxin* 巴蜀佛教石窟造像初步研究: 以川北地區為中心 [A Preliminary Study of Buddhist Grottoes and Sculptures in the Sichuan Area: Focusing on Northern Sichuan] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), 57-133. Guangyuan Huangzesi bowuguan 廣元皇澤寺博物館 [Guangyuan Huangzesi Museum] and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 成都市文物考古研究所 [Chengdu Municipal Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology], "Guangyuan Jian'ge Hengliangzi moya shike zaoxiang diaocha jianbao 廣元劍閣橫樑子摩崖石刻造像調查簡報 [A Brief Survey of Hengliangzi Cliff Sculpture in Jian'ge, Guangyuan]," in *Chengdu kaogu faxian* 成都考古發現 [Archaeological Discoveries in Chengdu] 2001, ed. Chengdu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2003), 484–493. Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 四川省文物考古研究院 [Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology] and Mianyang shi wenwuju 綿陽市文物局 [Mianyang Cultural Heritage Administration], "Mianyang Bishuisi moya zaoxiang 綿陽碧水寺摩崖造像 [Bishuisi Cliff Sculptures in Mianyang]," and "Zitong Wolongshan Qianfoya moya zaoxiang 梓潼臥龍山千佛崖摩崖造像 [Qianfoya Cliff Sculpture in Wolongshan, Zitong]," in *Mianyang kanku: Sichuan Mianyang gudai zaoxiang diaocha yanjiu baogao ji* 綿陽龕窟:四川綿陽古代造像調查研究報告集 [Niches of Mianyang: Reports on the Ancient Sculptures in Mianyang, Sichuan] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2010), 1-30 and 115-156.

[9] Lei Yuhua 雷玉華, *Bazhong shiku yanjiu* 巴中石窟研究 [A Study of Bazhong Grottoes] (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 2011), 16-66. Guangyuan Huangzesi bowuguan and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Puji zhen foyedong moya shike zaoxiang diaocha jianbao 普濟鎮佛爺洞摩崖石刻造像調查簡報 [A Brief Survey of Foyedong Cliff Sculpture in the Puji Town]," *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物[Sichuan Cultural Relics], no.1 (2004): 72–74. Jiang Xiaochun 蔣曉春 et al., "Sichuan Guang'an Chongxiangsi shiku 四川廣安沖相寺石窟 [Chongxiangsi Grottoes in Guang'an, Sichuan]," "Sichuan Langzhong Qianfoyan shiku 四川閬中千佛岩石窟 [Qianfoyan Grottoes in Langzhong, Sichuan]," and "Sichuan Langzhong Leishendong shiku 四川閬中雷神洞石窟 [Leishendong Grottoes in Langzhong, Sichuan]," in *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi diaocha ji yanjiu* 嘉陵江流域石窟寺調查及研究 [An Survey Report and Study of Caves Temples along the Jialing River] (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 2018), 7-95, 261-270 and 271-278.

[10] Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 四川省文物考古研究院 [Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage and Archaeology] and Sichuan sheng Maoxian bowuguan 四川省茂縣博物館 [Maoxian Museum in Sichuan], "Sichuan Maoxian Dianjiangtai Tangdai fojiao moya zaoxiang diaocha jianbao 四川茂縣點將台唐代佛教摩崖造像調查簡報 [A Brief Survey of Dianjiangtai Cliff Sculpture in Maoxian, Sichuan]," *Wenwu* 文物 [Cultural Relics], no.2 (2006): 40-53.

and styles in all four of these sites, although the dating of some specific niches is still somewhat controversial.[11]

It should be noted that, although these sites were carved in a restricted geographical region and over a relatively short period, there are significant variations in their site forms. Through examining the forms of the sites, it has been possible to divide these ten sites into three types. The first type is defined by having been carved into a steep cliff, usually a vertical or nearly vertical rock exposure with a relatively large surface area available for the excavation of niches and caves. This type of site is eminently suitable for monumental projects. Examples of such sites include Chongxiangsi (Figure 2) and Huangzesi (Figure 3), both of which started to be carved before the Tang and where the bulk of carving activity occurred in this period.[12] The most impressive project is Niche 28 in Huangzesi. This niche is 6.86 meters tall, 5.55 meters wide, and 3.60 meters deep. It occupies the main part of the cliff surface, forming an extremely striking feature within the landscape.

[11] Most scholars agree with dating Huangzesi Niche 28 to the first half of the seventh century but have different opinions about the specific date. Yao, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu*, 114. Guangyuan Huangzesi bowuguan, "Guangyuan Huangzesi 28 hao ku shidai kaozheng 廣元皇澤寺 28 號窟時代考證 [The Date of Niche 28 in Huangzesi, Guangyuan]," *Sichuan wenwu* 四川文物 [Sichuan Culture Relics] 113, no. 1 (2004): 64-67. Kim Euna 金銀児, "Shisen shō Hiromoto kōtakuji dai 28 kutsu ni tsuite 四川省広元皇沢寺第二八窟につい [About Huangzhe si Cave 28, in Guangyuan, Sichuan Province]," *Bijutsu-shi* 美術史 [Journal of the Japan Art History Society] 60, no. 1 (2010): 89-105. Yagi Haruo 八木春生, "廣元皇澤寺初唐造像考 [About Early Tang Dynasty Statues in Huangzesi, Guangyuan]," tran. Li Mei 李梅, *Zhongguo guojia meishu* 中國國家美術 [National Art of China] 17, (2013): 148-157. Lei Yuhua argues that Xikan Niche 19 and 21 in Bazhong were works from the Sui dynasty, while Yagi Haruo considers Xikan Niche 21 to the 715-725 CE due to its similarity to Niche 14 in Beikan 北龕, another site in Bazhong. In terms of sculptural style, I think Xikan Niches 18 and 21 should be the works of the early Tang dynasty, the mid-seventh century to the early eighth century. Lei, *Bazhong shiku yanjiu*, 177-180. Yagi Haruo 八木春生, "Bazhong diqu fojiao zaoxiang kan zhi yanjiu: yi chutangshiqi dao kaiyuan chuqi wei zhongxin 巴中地區佛教造像龕之研究: 以初唐時期到開元初期為中心 [Niches of Buddha Carvings in the Bazhong Area from Early Tang to Early Kaiyuan Period]," trans. Wang Yiwen 王怡文 and 陳珀愉 Chen Po-yu, *Guoli Taiwan daxue meishushi yanjiu jikan* 國立臺灣大學美術史研究集刊 [Taida Journal of Art History] 45, (2018):1-49.

[12] Jiang et al., "Sichuan Guang'an Chongxiangsi shiku," in *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi*, 37-95. Yao, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu*, 21-56.

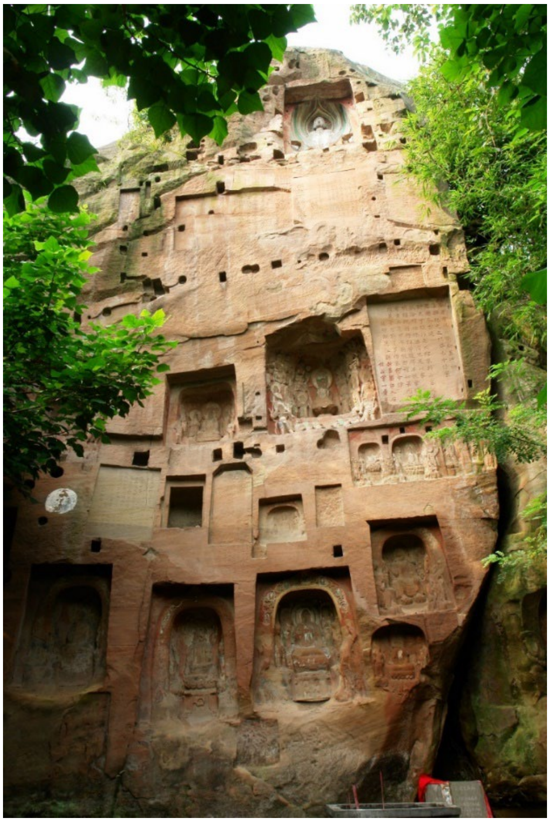

Figure 2. Chongxiangsi, Guang'an, Sichuan, late sixth and early seventh centuries. Photography by the author.

Figure 3. Niche 28, Huangzesi, Guangyuan, Sichuan. H. 686 cm, W. 555, D. 360 cm, early seventh century. Photography by the author.

The second type, the most common form of Buddhist sites in northern Sichuan, were carved into rocky outcrops, either where the bedrock of mountains is exposed on slopes, or along riverbanks. Examples include Foyedong in Wangcang, Xikan in Bazhong, and Leishendong in Langzhong.[13] Two other sites were set into similar environments but made use of the natural scenery: Qianfoyan in Lanzhong was carved within a natural cave, and Bishuisi in Mianyang (Figure 4) was built into an overhang of bedrock that runs parallel to the river.[14] The scale of these sites which are carved into outcrops is not large. However, the Xikan in Bazhong (Figure 5) also shows such sites have the potential to develop into medium or even large sites. After the earliest construction during the early Tang (c. 618-649 CE), artisans continued to carve statues along the rock surface in the eighth century in the Xikan. As niches were carved at eye level along the cliff, niche by niche, they transformed the space into a long gallery of carvings.

Figure 4. Bishuisi, Mianyang, Sichuan, middle of the seventh century. Photography by the author.

[13] Guangyuan Huangzesi bowuguan, "Foyedong moya shike zaoxiang," in *Chengdu kaogu faxian* 2001, 494-497. Lei, *Bazhong shiku yanjiu*, 177-180. Jiang et al., "Sichuan Langzhong Leishendong shiku," in *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi*, 271-278.

[14] Jiang et al., "Sichuan Langzhong Qianfoya shiku," in *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi*, 261-270. Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan and Mianyang shi wenwuju, "Mianyang Bishuisi moya zaoxiang," in *Mianyang kanku*, 1-30.

Figure 5. Niche 18, Xikan, Bazhong, Sichuan. H. 190 cm, W. 150 cm, D. 120 cm, seventh century. Photography by the author.

Boulders comprise the third site type. Three sites were carved into boulders of various sizes and shapes: the largest, Dianjiangtai in Maoxian (Figure 6) is an oval monolith around 7 meters high with a circumference of 40 meters.[15] Hengliangzi in Jian'ge is carved on a boulder 6.6 meters high and 4.4 meters wide.[16] The third example at Wolongshan (Figure 7) is set on a cuboid boulder that measures 5.5 meters by 5.2 meters and is approximately 3.2 meters tall.[17] Although all the niches in Hengliangzi were carved on its southern side, the niches at the other two sites carved were on different faces of the boulder, from the earliest phase of construction.[18] The presence of carvings on multiple sides leads to various viewpoints and appears to have been intended to guide the viewers to look around the boulder. This would appear to indicate that these two boulder sites were intended for circumambulation.

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[15] Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan and Sichuan sheng Maoxian bowuguan, "Dianjiangtai moya zaoxiang", 40-53.

[16] Guangyuan Huangzesi bowuguan and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Hengliangzi zaoxiang," 484-493.

[17] Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan and Mianyang shi wenwuju, "Zitong Wolongshan Qianfoya moya zaoxiang," in *Mianyang kanku*, 115-156.

[18] Dianjiangtai started from two niches sponsored by the same group of people that were carved into two different sides of the boulder. In Wolongshan, three identical-sized niches were carved in three sides of the boulder with the final side completely occupied by a relief of a thousand Buddhas.

Figure 6. Dianjiangtai, Maoxian, Sichuan, 631 CE. Photography by the author.

Figure 7. Wolongshan, Mianyang, Sichuan, 634 CE. Photography by the author.

The three types of sites outlined above are defined by the natural topography of the sites themselves rather than by the man-made features at the site.[19] Since the Buddhist rock carving sites in Sichuan are almost entirely made up of niches rather than caves, there is significantly more freedom in the selection of the site location, as the excavation of medium or small niches does not require tall and relatively vertical cliffs. Meantime, the nice-based structure means there is no need to modify the cliff surface on a large scale, so the natural appearances of the sites were usually preserved in the final construction.[20]

The Origin of the Niche-based Structure

As previously mentioned, there were some Buddhist rock carving sites in northern Sichuan prior to the early seventh century. There are two sites in Guangyuan the northernmost city in Sichuan in which the earliest niches date to the Northern Wei occupation of northern Sichuan during the period 550-535 CE. These are Qianfoya 千佛崖 (Caves 726 and 226) and Huangzesi 皇澤寺 (Cave 45). The sculptures in these caves have the same plain and stiff formal style as contemporaneous statues in northern China.[21] Several Daoist rock carving sites were also constructed in this region during the fifth and sixth centuries. Xiasi 下寺 in Jian'ge contains niches which have also been attributed to the Northern Wei.[22] In addition, further carving activity dating to the Sui Dynasty can also be seen in Yunüquan 玉女泉 (Figure 8) in Mianyang and Shishiguan 石室觀 in Langzhong. In both cases, these sites consist of niches rather than caves.[23]

[19] For an analysis of the site selection of Buddhist rock carvings in Sichuan, see Francesca Monteith 鳳飛, "Chuannan Tang Song moya zaoxiang xuanzhi de jingguan kaogu yanjiu 川南唐宋摩崖造像選址的景觀考古研究 [Analyzing Rock Carvings of Tang and Song Dynasties in Southern Sichuan Using Landscape Archaeology]," *Nanfang minzu kaogu* 南方民族考古 [Southern Ethnology and Archaeology] 17, (2019): 188-208.

[20] For a more discussion of the shaping of the cliff faces in Yungang Grottoes see Peng Minghao 彭明浩, *Yungang shiku de yingjian gongcheng* 雲岡石窟的營造工程[Construction of Yungang Grottoes] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2017), 47-54.

[21] Yao, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu*, 35-39.

[22] There is no independent report of Xiasi, but a brief introduction and two photographs were published in Lei, Luo and Wang, *Chuanbei fojiao shiku he moya zaoxiang yanjiu*, 256-257.

[23] Lin Sheng-chih 林聖智, "Daojiao zaoxiang yu diyu shehui: Sichuan Mianyang Yunüquan Sui zhi chu Tang daojiao moya zaoxiang 道教造像與地域社會:四川綿陽玉女泉隋至初唐道教摩崖造像 [Daoist Sculptures and Regional Society: A Study of the Yunü quan Cliff Sculptures in Mianyang in the Sui and Early Tang Dynasties]," in *Zhonggu Zhongguo yanjiu* 中古中國研究 1 [Medieval China] 1, ed. Yu Xin 余欣 (Shanghai: Zhongxi shuju, 2017), 151-190.

Figure 8. Yunüquan, Mianyang, Sichuan, late sixth and early seventh century. Photography by the author.

Although we need to take the natural and social environment in the Sichuan area into the consideration, the fact that these sixth-century rock-cut monuments contain both caves and niches shows that both the carving of caves and the niches are objectively feasible in northern Sichuan.[24] With this in mind the question then becomes, why the early-seventh-century Buddhist sites were carved with niches rather than caves while both the caves and niches can be carved in this area? It is herein argued that the niche-based structure in the early-seventh-century Buddhist sites in northern Sichuan is part of an overall pattern of reduction in the internal space and the architectural functionality of Buddhist grottoes in the sixth and seventh centuries. The Sui-dynasty Daoist sites as a pioneer in the use of the niche-based structure in the area played a certain intermediary role in the employ of such a structure in these Buddhist sites.

Although they are relatively understudied, most of the non-Imperial Buddhist sites that date to Northern Dynasties are formed of niches carved into natural caverns or directly onto cliff faces. This can be clearly seen by examining the Buddhist rock-cut monuments in the Central Plain 中原地區 during Northern Dynasties. Zhen Yan has discussed the term "Shiku 石窟[stone caves]," which has been used to describe monumental cave temples such as Yungang Grottoes, also appears in the devotional inscriptions in some local sites, for example, the Huangshiya 黃石崖 in Shandong 山東, to describe shallow niches in natural openings or on cliff surfaces.[25] According to an investigation undertaken by Yang Eungyeng, with the exception of Tianlongshan 天龍山

[24] Jiang et al., *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi diaocha ji yanjiu*, 358-360. Hida notices the niche-based structure can be associated to the spread of Buddhism in the grassroots society, and also considers that the humid climate is one of the main reasons for the use of the niches-based structure in the Sichuan grottoes. Hida, "Joron: Bukkyō bijutsu kara mita Shisen chiiki," 14.

[25] Zhen Yan, "Yellow Stone Cliff: Buddhist Cave Temples in Shandong," in *Buddhist Stone Sutras in China: Shandong Province III* 中國佛教石經:山東省(第三卷), eds. Wang Yongbo 王永波 and Tsai Suey-Ling 蔡穗玲 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag; Hangzhou: China Academy of Art, 2017), 19-26.

Cave 8 in Taiyuan 太原, Shanxi 山西, none of the currently extant caves from the Sui dynasty in the Central Plain have an internal floor area of more than 1 square meter, which would have made it hard, if not impossible for devotees to enter.[26] In addition, such niche-based structures also occurred in Buddhist sites dating to the early Tang outside the Sichuan area including Qinglianshansi 青蓮山寺 in Linyou 麟游, Shaanxi 陝西, and Qianfoyan 千佛岩 in Shentongsi 神通寺 in Ji'nan 濟南, Shandong 山東.[27] Therefore, it is unsurprising that most Buddhist sites carved in the early Tang also took on a niche-based structure.

Figure 9. Between Caves 2 and 3, Gongyi Grottoes, Gongyi, Henan, Northern Qi. Photography by the author.

[26] Yang Eungyeng 梁銀景, *Liangdai fojiao kukan yanjiu* 隋代佛教窟龕研究 [A Study of Buddhist Caves and Niches in the Sui dynasty] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2004), 82.

[27] Jing Sanling 荊三林 and Zhang Heyun 張鶴雲, "Shengtongsi shiji chubu diaocha jilue 神通寺史蹟初步調查記略 [Notes of Investigating the Historical Remains in Shentong Monastery]," *Wenwu cankao ziliao* 文物參考資料 [Cultural Relics Reference Materials] 74, no. 10 (1956): 30. Chang Qing 常青, "Shanxi Linyou Qinlianshan moya zaoxiang diaocha 陝西麟游青蓮山寺摩崖造像調查 [An Investigation of the Cliff Sculptures in Qinglianshan Monastery in Linyou country, Shaanxi Province]," *Wenbo* 文博 [Relics and Museology], no.3 (2015): 19-27.

Figure 10. Niches 2 and 3, Shishiguan, Langzhong, Sichuan, right: H. 112 cm, W. 112 cm, 594 CE; left: H. 93 cm, W. 93 cm, 595 CE. Photography by the author.

In northern Sichuan, carving activity in Yunüquan in Mianyang and Shishiguan in Langzhong during the Sui dynasty ushered in a wave of niche-based construction.[28] The niches at both Sui sites are characterized by a Mandorla-shaped frame into the semicircular inner niches are set. This type of niche is similar to the shallow niches carved in the mid-sixth century in the Gongyi Grottoes in Gongyi, Henan (Figure 9).[29] The two Sui-dynasty Daoist sites whose niche-based structure borrowed from Buddhist cave temples in the northern China demonstrates the increase in communication between northern Sichuan and the Central Plains which occurred during the Sui dynasty.[30] Moreover, the Sui-dynasty Daoist sites may provide a model for the construction of Buddhist sites of the early Tang in this area. The most convincing evidence comes from Langzhong. There are two rock carvings sites dating to the early seventh century in the area, the Shishiguan, a Daoist site and Qianfoyan, a Buddhist site. Both two sites took advantage of the natural caves, which integrated with rather than reshaped the surrounding environment.[31] Although the semi-circular niche with the Mandorla-shaped frame can be traced back to northern China, the identical structure of pairing two niches within an outer frame in

[28] Lin, "Daojiao zaoxiang yu diyu shehui," in *Zhonggu Zhongguo yanjiu* 1, 151-190.

[29] In particular, the intrusive niches on the surface of the outside wall between Caves 2 and 3 which were completed during the Western Wei and the Northern Qi. Henan sheng wenwu yanjiusuo 河南省文物研究所 [Henan Provincial Institute of Cultural Heritage], *Zhongguo shiku: Gongxian shikusi* 中國石窟:鞏縣石窟寺 [Chinese Grottoes: Gongxian Grottoes] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989), pl. 216-218.

[30] The increase in transregional communications during the Sui dynasty has also been discussed in Wang and Lei, "6 shiji mo zhi 7 shiji chu de Sichuan zaoxiang," 366-367.

[31] More discussion see " Dixing yu xinyang 地形與信仰 [Geography and Sacred Geography]" in Francesca Monteith 鳳飛, "Quwei, xuanzhi he jiegou: Sichuan nanbu Tang Song moya zaoxiang de yizhi fenxi 區位、選址和結構:四川南部唐宋摩崖造像的遺址分析[Location, Setting and Structure: Contextualizing Tang and Song Dynasty Religious Rock Carvings in Southern Sichuan]," (Ph.D., Peking University, 2021), 58-62.

Shishiguan (Figure 10) and Qianfoyan suggests that the Buddhist site might have borrowed this niche form directly from the Daoist site in the same area, especially since the two sites are within 20 kilometers of each other.[32]

The structure is related to function, and the shifting of the basic units in Buddhist grottoes from the caves to niches reflects that the function of grottoes had, by this point, changed from providing residential or ritual space for people to housing sacred images. The archaeological excavation of the free-standing temples at the top of the cliff where Yungang Grottoes are served to illustrate that the decline of the residential function of Buddhist grottoes in the northern China had started even during the Northern Wei.[33] Meanwhile, the niches-based format of the sites means the craftsmen did not undertake the first two steps required for the excavation of monumental caves: "zhanshan 斬山 [modifying cliff]" and "kaiku 開窟 [excavating cave]", and focused more on the last stage, "zaoxiang 造像 [making image]". This fit the changes of the patrons with the reducing economic abilities and social sources when the Buddhist grottoes as material culture spread from the upper class to the lower class, from the metropolitan city to the countryside.[34] In addition, the carvings of Buddhist statues to natural rock faces to shape the natural landscape into a sacredscape can be seen throughout Asia during this period. For instance, rock carvings in Swat in the seventh and eighth centuries are limited in size, yet this does not affect their roles in shaping their surroundings as sacred places.[35] The same strategy was adapted by Hinduism and Jainism in Southern India between the eighth and twelfth centuries.[36] Owen argues that instead of creating an internal sacred space, sacred images carved on the surface of cliffs were able to project outwards and upwards, broadcasting the power of religious art and devotional practice beyond the immediate vicinity.[37] Therefore, the enhancement of the landscape function of Buddhist grottoes is also an important perspective through which to understand the niche-based structure of the sites.

In all, it is emphasized here that the niche-based structure in Buddhist grottoes in northern Sichuan did not result from a "localization" of the cave-based structure grottoes in northern China. Instead, it is a reflection of the pan-Asian undercurrent of the marginalization of the

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[32] Niches 3 and 2 in Cave 10, Qianfoyan, Langzhong see Jiang et al., *Jialing Jiang liuyu shikusi diaocha ji yanjiu* , pl. 7-50.

[33] Yungang shiku yanjiuyuan 雲岡石窟研究院[Yungang Grottoes Research Institute], Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 山西省考古研究所[Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology] and Datong shi kaogu yanjiusuo 大同市考古研究所[Datong Municipal Institute of Archaeology], "Yungang shiku kuding xiqu Beiwei fojiao siyuan yizhi 雲岡石窟窟頂西區北魏佛教寺院遺址 [The Remains of the Buddhist Monastery of the Northern Wei Dynasty in the Western Zone of the Top of the Yungang Grottoes]," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 [Acta Archaeologica Sinica], no.4 (2016), 533-562. Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Yungang shiku yanjiuyuan and Datong shi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Yungang shiku kuding erqu Beiwei Liao Jin fojiao siyuan yizhi 雲岡石窟窟頂二區北魏遼金佛教寺院遺址 [The Buddhist Monastery Site of the Northern Wei, Liao and JIn Dynasties in Zone II on the top of the Yungang Grottoes]," *Kaogu xuebao* 考古學報 [Acta Archaeologica Sinica], no.1 (2019): 109-142.

[34] Zhen Yan, "Yellow Stone Cliff: Buddhist Cave Temples in Shandong," 22.

[35] Anna Filigenzi, *Art and Landscape: Buddhist Rock Sculptures of Late Antique Swat/Uḍḍiyāna* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2015).

[36] Kristina Ann Youso, "Power in Stone: Rock-Cut Architecture and the Stone Medium in Tamil Nadu," (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley, 2000).

[37] Owen Lisa N, "Demarcating Sacred Space: The Jina Images at Kalugumalai," *International Journal of Jaina Studies* 6, no.4 (2010): 1-28.

architectural function in Buddhist grottoes in which the Sui-dynasty Daoist sites played a pioneering role in the local community in northern Sichuan.

Appropriation of Double-framed Niches

The niche-based structure in Buddhist rock carving sites in northern Sichuan which dates to the early Tang was not necessary to be imitations of previous niche-based Buddhist projects in northern China. A form of the medium-sized niche which prevalent in these early-seventh-century Buddhist sites in northern Sichuan indicates a considerable creative re-design of the original elements in the Buddhist grottoes in northern China.[38] This kind of niche (Figure 11) has a double-layered structure, an arched inner niche carved within a rectangular recess. The statues within these niches are approximately the same height as an average person. Jiang argues that it might have been inspired by the double-frames of the Han dynasty cliff tombs indigenous to the area.[39] However, this hypothesis ignores the difference in the spatial design: the chambers in the cliff tombs have internal space and flat ceilings, while the double-layered niches take the form of an arched dome.

Figure 11. Niche 1, Qianfoya, Wolongshan, Mianyang, H.262 cm, W.240 cm, D. 46.2cm, 634 CE. Photography by the author.

A more likely prototype is the double-layered central niches on the back wall of some caves in the north and northwest of China which date to the Northern Dynasties and the Sui dynasty. For example, the west niche in Cave 420, Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang share the same double-

[38] For example, Wolongshan Niches 1, 2, and 3 in Mianyang, Huangzesi Niches 12 and 13 in Guangyuang, Foyedong Niche 1 in Wangcang, and Leishendong Niches 1 and 2 in Langzhong.

[39] Jiang et al., *Jialing jiang liuyu shikusi*, 210.

layered form as the niches in Sichuan.[40] They are the similar shape and size, even the form and format of their decoration are alike. Both have flame-shaped lintels which extend to the ceiling of the outer frame, creating an interesting interaction between the inner and outer parts of the double-framed niches. It seems that the craftsmen in northern Sichuan adopted a niche form that had previously only been used as the central niche in caves and carved it directly onto boulders and cliffs.

The role of the double-layered niches in Wolongshan in its context is relatively consistent with their northern prototype. After his field investigation at Wolongshan in 1939, the architectural historian Liang Sicheng recorded that:

There is a stone square pillar at the entrance. It has been carved with Buddha statues on all four sides, it is similar to the *caitya* in the Yungang Grottoes. It is suitable for circumambulation and the chanting of sutras. 入門有方石柱四面鐫佛像若雲岡之支提柱可繞行誦經。[41]

His observations are illuminating to our understanding of the site. The boulder of Wolongshan has a square form, three sides of which have one medium-sized niche carved into them.[42] This form is very similar to the central part of Cave 1 in Xiangtangshan Southern Grottoes 響堂山南石窟.[43] The west and north rock faces at Wolongshan are set at a right angle to each other and parallel to the carved rock faces, this indicates that the creation of a path for circumambulation was part of the initial design.[44]

However, the prototype for the Wolongshan site is not limited to the central-pillar cave. Its structure is also similar to two single-story pagodas in northern China, constructed in the Sui

[40] West Niche in Cave 420, Mogao Grottoes see Dunhuang yanjiuyuan 敦煌研究院 [Dunhuang Research Academy], *Dunhuang shiku yishu: 420/419 ku* 敦煌石窟藝術:420/419窟 [Art of Dunhuang Grottoes: Caves 420/419] (Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 1994), pl. 4.

[41] Liang Sicheng 梁思成. *Liang Sicheng xinan jianzhu tushuo (shougao ben)* 梁思成西南建築圖說:手稿本 [Liang Sicheng's Pictorial History for Architecture in Southwestern China: Manuscript], ed. Lin Zhu 林洙 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2014), 129.

[42] Layout of Wolongshan, Zitong, Sichuan see "Zitong Wolongshan Qianfoya moya zaoxiang," in *Mianyang kanku*, fig. 2.

[43] Mizuno Seiiki 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshino 長廣敏雄, *Kyōdōsan sekkutsu: Kahoku Kanan shō sakai ni okeru Hokusei jidai no sekkutsu jiin* 響堂山石窟:河北河南省境における北齊時代の石窟寺院 [The Buddhist Cave-temples of Xiangtangshan on the Frontier of Henan and Hebei] (Kyōto: Kyoto Research Center of Academy of Oriental Culture, 1937), fig. 7.

[44] There is also a central-pillar cave in Jinpingshan 锦屏山, a Daoist site in Jian'ge, Guangyuan. Cave 1 has an interior space 5.20 meters wide, 2.20 meters high and 3.11 meters deep. The front and center of this space is occupied by a central pillar. Although there are no extant inscriptions at this site, it has been attributed to the Sui dynasty or to the early Tang dynasty on stylistic grounds. This provides circumstantial evidence that the structure of the central-pillared cave was introduced into northern Sichuan. Sichuan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan, Xibei daxue wenhua yichan xueyuan 西北大學文化遺產學院 [School of Cultural Heritage, Northwestern University], and Guangyuan shi wenwuju 廣元市文物局 [Cultural Heritage Administration of Guangyuan], "Jingpingshan moya zaoxiang 錦屏山摩崖造像 [Jinpingshan Cliff Sculptures]," *Sichuan sanjian kanku: Guangyuan juan* 四川散見唐宋佛道龕窟總錄·廣元卷 [Buddhist and Daoist Shrines and Grottoes from the Tang and Song Dynasties in Sichuan Province: Guangyuan] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2018), 92-94.

dynasty. Bahuisi 八會寺 in Quyang 曲陽 in Hebei 河北 was built between 583 and 604 CE.[45] A carved boulder with an irregular parallelogram layout, measuring 3.75-4.04 meters north-south, 3.33-3.5 meters east-west and is 2-2.4 meters tall, occupies the center of this site. Its four sides are fully carved with engraved sutras and relief sculptures. A second example is the Simenta 四門塔 attributed to 611 CE in the Shentongsi in Shandong.[46] This site is smaller, similarly centered on a boulder whose sides are *circa* 2.3 meters long. A Buddha is installed on each side of the boulder, forming the sacred foci of the pagoda. Both central pillar caves and single-story pagodas are constructed with the intention of creating a focus for circumambulation. They have a similar layout, although their external structure is different. Therefore, it is also possible that Wolongshan was initially designed as a single-story, central-pillar pagoda.

Traces of External Shelters

The form and even presence of wooden structures protecting the rock-carved sites is a matter of contentious academic debate.[47] The following discussion concentrates on the reconstruction of the wooden shelters know to have been present in Huangzesi during their initial construction. Since no archaeological excavations have been undertaken in front of the sites, and in most cases due to modern constructions will not be possible in the future, this discussion is limited to the installation marks on the cliffs and sporadic records in historical texts.

There are traces of a wooden shelter in Huangzesi in Guangyuan which may date to the early Tang.[48] The giant niche and its surroundings are now protected by a modern pavilion. Although there was no wooden structure in front of the site in photographs of the site by Liang Sicheng from the early twentieth century, the post holes cut into the cliff are clearly visible.[49] The historical presence of a wooden shelter can be stated with certainty, however, the date at which this structure was initially constructed is more difficult to ascertain. A group of small niches is arranged on a horizontal line that parallels the groove which marks the lowest extent of Niche 28, none of these niches extends past this groove in the rock.[50] This indicates that they were carved after the construction of the wooden structure. These small niches can be attributed to

[45] Zhao Zhou 趙州, "Hebei sheng Quyang xian Bahuisi shijing kan 河北省曲陽縣八會寺石經龕 [Stone Scripture Niches in Bahui Temple in Quyang, Hebei Province]," *Shikusi yanjiu* 石窟寺研究 [Studies of Cave Temples] 1, (2010): 12-35.

[46] An inscribed brick found in its pavilion-shaped roof dates the site to 611 CE. More discussion to this site see Eugene Y. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle, Wash Chesham: University of Washington Press, 2007), 324-325. Wei-Cheng Lin, *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China's Mount Wutai* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, 2014), 73.

[47] For a review, see Peng Minghao 彭明浩, "Zhongguo shikusi kuqian jianzhu de faxian yu yanjiu 中國石窟寺窟前建築的發現與研究 [The Discovery and Study of the Architecture In Front the Caves in Chinese Cave Temples]," *Zhongguo wenhua yichan* 中國文化遺產 [Chinese Cultural Heritage], no.5 (2018), 4-13.

[48] Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al., "Guangyuan Huangzesi shiku diaocha baogao," 75-84 and 99-97.

[49] The photos of Huangzesi by Liang Sicheng see Lin Zhu 林洙 ed., *Foxiang de lishi* 佛像的歷史 [History of Buddhist Statues] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2010), 123-124.

[50] Lin Zhu 林洙 ed., Foxiang de lishi佛像的歷史 [History of Buddhist Statues] (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 2010), 124.

the early Tang based on their sculptural styles and the accompany tourist's inscription dated to the second year of Linde 麟德 reign (665 CE) [51], which therefore can be used to assume that there was already a wooden shelter as early as the mid-seventh century.

The assembly of large niches and external structures reminds us of the colossal Buddhas at Qixiashan 栖霞山 in Nanjing 南京, Jiangsu 江蘇 and Shichengshan 石城山 in Xinchang 新昌, Zhejiang 浙江, both of which are set within shallow recesses carved into the rock faces.[52] Based on the presence of grooves and holes surrounding the niches, Su Bai and Li Chongfeng argue that these Buddhas would originally have had wooden structures to shelter them. Su Bai further believed that this method of using external structures to protect monumental Buddhas was then transmitted to Northern Dynasties. For example, Tongzisi 童子寺 in Taiyuan 太原 may also have originally been constructed with a similar structure.[53] Carved on a cliff that occupies the entire mountainside, the exterior sections were completed using mudbrick and wood structures instead of being carved into the cliffs.[54] As the above discussion, there is strong evidence that Huangzesi Niche 28 was protected with a wooden building no later than the mid-seventh century. However, due to the fact that similar practices can be found both in the south of China and the north of China during the sixth century, it is difficult to certain whether its source came from the north or the south.

[51] Yao, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu*, 109.

[52] Su Bai 宿白, "Nanchao kanxiang yiji chutan 南朝龕像遺跡初探 [A Initial Study of Statues in Niches in Southern Dynasties]," in *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* 中國石窟寺研究 [A Study of Cave Temples in China] (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 176-178. Li Chongfeng 李崇峰, "Yinyan jiegou yu linyan gouyu: Zhong Yin shikusi waiguan chutan 因岩結構與鄰岩構宇:中印石窟寺外觀初探 [Evolution of the External Appearance of the Buddhist Cave Temples]," *Shikusi yanjiu* 石窟寺研究 [The Study of Cave Temples] 8, (2019): 1-52.

[53] Li Yuqun 李裕群 and Yan Yuejin 閻躍進, "Taiyuan shi Longshan Tongzisi yizhi fajue jianbao 太原市龍山童子寺遺址發掘簡報 [A Brief Report of Tongzisi Site in Taiyuan City]," *Kaogu* 考古 [Archaeology], no.7 (2010): 43-56.

[54] Ibid.

Figure 12. Niche 13 and 12, Huangzesi, Guangyuan, Sichuan, right: H. 226 cm, W. 231 cm, D. 182 cm; left: H. 220 cm, W. 224cm, D. 180 cm, early seventh century. Photography by the author.

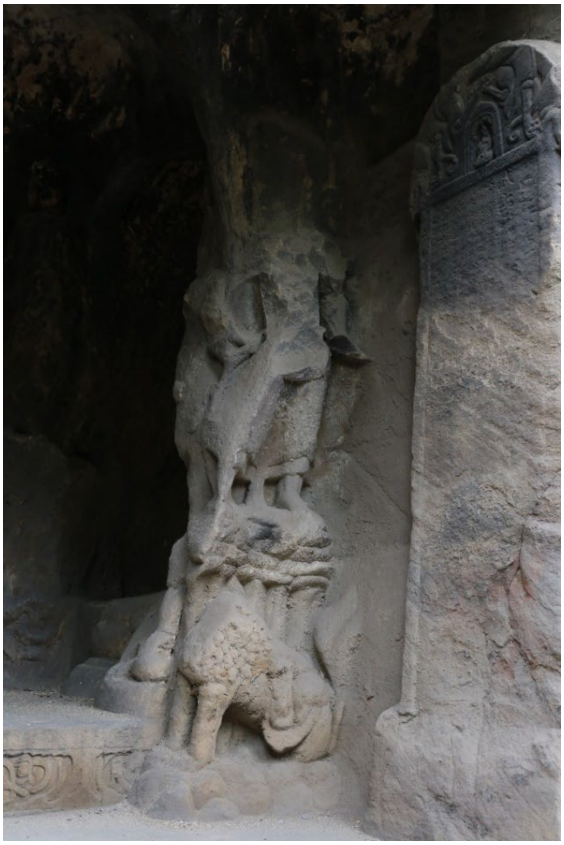

Figure 13. Stele, left wall, Niche 13, Huangzesi, Guangyuan, Sichuan, H. 146 cm, W. 42.5 cm, D. 6 cm. Photography by the author.

A commemorative inscription titled "Bing xiu Xikan foge ji 並修西龕佛閣記 [A Record of Repairing Buddhist Pavilion of West Niches]" on a stele in Niche 13, in the "Writing the *Heart Sutra* Cave 寫心經洞" (Figures 12 and 13) which is in the form set on a boulder which rests below the cliff containing Niche 28, also may testify to the presence of a wooden structure.[55] It was written by a mayor of Lizhou 利州 (the name for Guangyuan during this period) who had the surname Cui 崔 to commemorate his sponsorship of the restoration of a wooden pavilion in the second year of the Baoli 寶歷 reign (826 CE).[56] This inscription mentions that the original Buddhist pavilion was first completed with the support of the local military governor and his wife, Wu Shiyue 武士䕬 (577-635 CE) and Lady Yang 楊夫人 (579-670 CE), in the second year of the Zhenguan reign (628 CE). Wu Shiyue and Lady Yang were the parents of Empress Wu Zhao 武曌 (a.k.a. Wu Zetian 武則天, 624-705 CE), who went on to become the first and only female monarch in the history of China.

It is said that the wooden pavilion sponsored by this couple was intended to protect a niche on the boulder which contains a carving of Śākyamuni Buddha and other saints from weathering by rain and wind. Yao believes that the Buddhist pavilion in the text was intended to protect the "Writing the *Heart Sutra* Cave" since this is where the inscription was found. He further speculated that Niches 12 and 13 may have been sponsored by Wu Shiyue and Lady Yang.[57] Regardless of the patronage of Niches 12 and 13, the biggest challenge to this interpretation is

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[55] 西龕佛閣……益昌郡城江岸之[..]十里有鑿石古龕，龕有釋迦如來像設並諸聖賢，為侍御之儀[........]則[..]。聖唐貞觀二載，郡[.]武都督楊夫[.]靈異如響，建其[.......]居諸而[...]兆聖儀容[..]為風雨所侵。我太守北平公崔[.]於[.............]捨淨緡[......]勝因，遂令良工[.......]水[.....]一方[.....]榮[.]。大唐寶歷二年歲次[......]日[.]。The text has been recorded by Liu Xihai, see Liu Xihai 劉喜海, *Jinshi Yuan* 金石苑[Epigraphy Collection] printed by Laifengtang 來鳳堂 in 1848 CE which is collected in Tsinghua University Library, Beijing.

[56] Mayor Cui, who wrote the inscription, was probably Cui Pu 崔朴, who also appeared in an anecdote of He Yiyu 何易於 recorded by Sun Qiao 孙樵 (fl. 867 CE). Yu Xianhao considered Cui Pu's tenure the Huichang reign (841-846 CE), yet his opinion is challenged by two points. First, Sun Qiao recorded He Yiyu was transferred to the magistrate of Luojiang 羅江 county in Mianzhou 綿州 after his three years in Yichang county, when Pei Xiu 裴休 (791-864 CE) served as the prefectural governor. According to Ran Yunhua's study, Pei Xiu had close contacts with Monk Zongmi 宗密 (780-841 CE) during his stay in Mianzhou. In a prayer by Zongmi, he left a postscript, "The prefectural governor of Mianzhou, Pei Xiu, records in the third year of Kaicheng reign (838 CE) 開成三年六月綿州刺史裴休記". Therefore, the story of He and Cui must have happened several years earlier than 838 CE, and Cui's term of office in Lizhou might have overlapped with the inscription of 826 CE in Huangzesi. In addition, the *Taiping Guangji* 太平廣記 records Cui Pu titled with the "Beijiepan 北節判", which may be the source of the title of Mayor Cui the "Duke of Beiping 北平公" in the stele. Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi kao quanbian* 唐刺史考全編 [A Complete Study of the Tang Prefects] (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 2829. Ran Yunhua 冉雲華, "Pei Xiu fojiao shenghuo de yanjiu 裴休佛教生活的研究 [A Study of Pei Xiu's Buddhist Life]," in *Guogu xinzhi: Zhongguo chuantong wenhua de zai quanshi* 國故新知:中國傳統文化的再詮釋 [New Knowledge of National Heritage: A Reinterpretation of Chinese Traditional Culture], ed. Tang Yijie 湯一介 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1993), 299-312. Li Fang 李昉, *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 [Extensive Records of the Taiping Reign] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 1097-1098.

[57] Yao, *Bashu fojiao shiku zaoxiang chubu yanjiu*, 111.

that the term "foge 佛閣 [Buddhist pavilions]" in the title of the inscription is usually used to refer to colossal constructions.[58] This makes it more likely that the building built by the Wu couple was a multi-layered structure constructed against the cliff to protect Niche 28. [59] As discussed in the previous paragraph, this external structure already existed before the middle of the seventh century, which matches the record that the Wu couple sponsored the "foge" in the year of 628 CE.

Conclusion

When the similarity in the materiality and practice of the Sichuan cliff sculptures and the northern grottoes is considered, it is perhaps inevitable that scholars continue to approach the study of the Sichuan grottoes using the conventions developed in the study of Buddhist grottoes in Northern China. However, this just serves to highlight the differences in site structures between the "Sichuan style" grottoes and well-known Northern Imperial sites. Instead of an abstract transregional comparison, this study chose to concentrate on the formation of the site structure of Buddhist grottoes constructed in the early seventh century in northern Sichuan. It is herein argued that the niche-based structure presented an undercurrent of the site forms of the small and medium-sized grottoes in the northern China in the sixth century. The Sui-dynasty

[58] One of the examples comes from the "月燈閣避暑 [Seeking Cool in the Yudeng Pavillion]" written by Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846 CE) in 807 CE, in which the Buddhist Pavillion was clearly described as a high-rise construction, "行行都門外，佛閣正岩嶤。" Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi shiji jiaozhu* 白居易詩集校注 [The Annotated Anthology of Bai Juyi's Poetry], ed. Xie Siwei 謝思煒 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 33-34.

[59] This is further supported by the fact that most scholars have identified the standing Buddha in Niche 28 as the Śākyamuni, which also matches the description in the text. A comprehensive discussion on the identification of the standing Buddha in Huangzesi Niche 28 can be found in Kim Euna's essay. As the Buddha in Niche 28 wears a pair of flowery earrings in his ears and holds a cintāmaṇi in his left palm, typical features for the Śākyamuni Buddha based on known statues from the sixth century, she argues that the giant standing Buddha should be identified as the Śākyamuni Buddha. However, the two bodhisattvas in Niche 28 are Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, which seems to indicate that the center figure is the Amitābha Buddha, forming an Amitābha triad. Therefore, Kim Euna argues that the giant Buddha in Niche 28 might possess a double identification, as for the reception of "Two aspects of original and derivative 本跡二門" thought developed around the *Lotus Sutra* in the sixth century. However, this interpretation is largely challenged by an inscription of 719 CE preserved in Niche 35, in Qianfoya 千佛崖 in Tongjiang 通江, that shows the donors intended to carve a Śākyamuni Buddha flanked by Bodhisattvas *Avalokiteśvara* and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Therefore, I prefer to just consider the giant Buddha as the Śākyamuni Buddha. Kim, "Shisen shō Kōgen Kōtakuji dainijūhachikutsu ni tsuite," 89-105. The inscription of 719 CE see Hu Wenhe 胡文和, *Sichuan daojiao fojiao shiku yishu* 四川道教佛教石窟藝術 [Daoist and Buddhist Grottoes in Sichuan] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1994), 111. More discussions on the issue of the Amitābha flanked by *Avalokiteśvara* and Mahāsthāmaprāpta see Huang Xia 黄夏, "Hashoku chiiki ni okeru Amidabutsu Gojūnibosatsu zō: chiriteki bunpu·kōsei mochīfu no hensen o chūshin 巴蜀地区における阿弥陀仏五十二菩薩像: 地理的分布·構成モチーフの変遷を中心 [The Amitābha and Fifty-two Bodhisattvas Image in the Sichuan area: Focusing on the Geographical Distribution and the Development of the Motif Construction]," in *Bijutsu shiryō toshite yomu Shūjinshūsanbōkantsūroku—shakudoku to kenkyū* 美術史料として読む『集神州三宝感通録』—釈読と研究 [Reading the Collected Records of the Mysterious Stimuli and Responses Related to the Three Jewels in China as the Material of Art History: Interpretation and Research] vol. 10, ed. Hida Romi (Tōkyō: Sumassyu, 2017), 111-159: 115.

Daoist sites in this area pioneered the niche-based site structure in northern Sichuan. The innovation of the double-layered medium-sized niche form, which was originally used in caves, being carved on the surface of the rock in these early-seventh-century Buddhist sites shows that there was a degree of local agency within the adoption of the practice. By undertaking a spatial analysis of these sites this article provides an integrated and nuanced understanding of the arrival, adoption, and adaptation of religious rock-carving practices within its new territory.

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About the author

Xiao Yang (yangxiao@cass.org.cn) is an assistant research fellow of the Institute of Archeology, Chinese Academy of Social Science, Beijing. Her main research interests are Chinese cave temples, Buddhist iconography, and the historiography of Chinese architecture. She completed her Ph.D. in East Asian Art History at Heidelberg University in 2021 with her doctoral dissertation titled "Local Monuments, Local Narratives: The Emergence and Development of Buddhist Rock Carvings in Northern Sichuan, 618-907 CE".