

*Der Goldschatz der drei Pagoden: Buddhistische Kunst des Nanzhao- und Dali Königreiches in Yunnan, China.* Edited by A. Lutz and Judith Rickenbach. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1991. pp. 260, with numerous plates and illustrations. SFr38.

Albert Lutz, *Der Tempel der drei Pagoden von Dali: Zur buddhistischen Kunst des Nanzhao- und Dali Königreiches in Yunnan, China.* Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1991. pp. 171, with numerous plates and illustrations. SFr55.

Recently the Rietberg Museum in Zurich held a unique exhibition of recent finds of Buddhist art from the Yunnanese dynasties of Nan Zhao (653–902) and Dali (937–1253). While the majority of the exhibited objects stem from a recent find of Buddhist votive and ceremonial art found in a “treasure shaft” under the roof of the Qianxun Pagoda in the Chongsheng Temple in Dali, the organizers also included related objects from European, American and Japanese public and private collections. Albert Lutz, who was the main organizer of the exhibition, is known from his previous work on the art and culture of Dian, a state located in Yunnan and largely contemporaneous with the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220).<sup>1</sup>

The book, *Der Tempel der drei Pagoden von Dali: Zur buddhistischen Kunst des Nanzhao- und Dali Königreiches in Yunnan, China*, is a revised version

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<sup>1</sup> *Dian: Ein versunkenes Königreich in China*, Exhibition Catalogue (Zürich, Vienna, Cologne, Berlin, and Stuttgart, 1986–7), Zurich: Rietberg Museum, 1986.

of Lutz' doctoral thesis from the late 1980s and is based on field-work in Dali, Yunnan, in connection with the preparation for the exhibition of the treasures from the Chongsheng Temple. As the two publications under review overlap and treat largely the same material, although with different emphasis and scope, it seems most logical to treat them under one heading.

The catalogue is divided into eight annotated essays in addition to the catalogue of the exhibits, and also features a foreword, an introduction by the main editor, Albert Lutz, as well as a historical table, a comprehensive bibliography, and a list of characters. In the introduction Lutz first acquaints the reader with the geographical and cultural background of Nanzhao and Dali, before going on to discuss the collections that house the known art objects from Dali, and the scope of the previous research. Towards the end of his introduction he makes a short preview of the other essays in the catalogues.

The first essay is Qiu Xuanchong's "Bemerkungen zur Geschichte und Kultur von Nanzhao und Dali". This is a brief survey of our current knowledge of the history of the two successive states with special emphasis on Buddhism and related cultural objects. The essay ends with a discussion of the recent development in the field of archeology. Following this brief presentation is Yü Chün-fang's essay, "Guanyin-Kult in Yunnan", in which he discusses the peculiar image of Avalokiteśvara, Acuoye Guanyin [The All-Vanquishing Avalokiteśvara], first introduced to the scholarly world by Helen Chapin in the 1930s. In his presentation Yü puts special emphasis on the textual and pictorial sources for this cult. He ends his essay by describing the various cult places connected with Acuoye Guanyin in and around Dali as they stand today.

The third essay is the lengthy, "Buddhistische Monumente des Nanzhao- und des Dali-Königreiches in Yunnan", by Angela Falco Howard. It focusses on the stone sculptures foun in the cave-shrines on Mt. Shizhong in Jianchuan to the north of Dali, but also mentions the carvings at Shizi-guan, Shadenqing, and a few other minor locations. While mainly descriptive in nature, Howard's essay also seeks to provide a historical chronology for the sculptures. Although this essay treats most of the major carvings in Jianchuan, the author has somehow forgotten to mention one of the most intriguing of the carvings, namely the *yoni* (representation of the female sexual organ) found on the wall of Cave No. 8 in Shizong Temple. It is understandable that she chose to ignore this problematic relief, since it poses obvious problems. However, in the esoteric Tantric Buddhist milieu in which the Jianchuan sculptures were made, I believe that it lends itself to a ready explanation, although it is probably unique and may not have a corresponding example anywhere else in China. In my opinion the carving of the *yoni* represents the *śakti*, i.e. the female energy, which is generally worshipped in Tantric Buddhism. Lastly, Howard should have mentioned the extensive reliefs found at Boshi wahu in present day southern Sichuan. These carvings are clear-cut examples of Nanzhao/Dali Buddhist art, and a study of

them is certain to throw additional light on the iconographical issues. Towards the end of the article Howard makes an important contribution to our knowledge of Dali scriptures by firmly identifying a bronze image of a wrathful deity from the collection of the British Museum (OA 1972.3–1.1) as being from the Dali Kingdom. Unfortunately, basing herself on the work of Matsumoto, she further identifies it as a “Garuḍa King”. This is not at all obvious, neither from the point of view of iconography nor from textual evidence. The idea that the birds’ heads, which appear in the flaming halo surrounding the protector, should be indicators that the image is a *garuḍa*, is not very convincing, since the same iconographical feature can be found in other protectors in the “Long Scroll”.<sup>2</sup> I am inclined to consider the image under discussion a local variant of Mahākālā on account of its attributes, which include a poisonous drum and the double set of tridents/lances and a human corpse (held in the upper right hand). However, this is no more than a suggestion. There is a slightly later example of the same protector, probably of Tibetan provenance, in Getty’s work.<sup>3</sup>

Following this presentation is Paul Jen’s study. Entitled, “Technologische Studie zu den vergoldeten Guanyin-Figuren aus Dali-Königreich”, it consists of a technical analysis of the metal, gilding, casting, etc. Most important is his dating of the images, which are placed within the time-spans of AD 650–1052 and AD 850–1135. Also more scientific in nature is the contribution, “Bergbau auf Gold, Silber und Zinn in Yunnan bis zum Ende der Mongolenzeit”, by Hans Ulrich Vogel. This short essay discusses the areas in Yunnan from which the precious and other metals for the casting of Buddhist images were mined.

Matsumoto Moritaka, the Japanese expert on Chinese Buddhist painting, has contributed the next essay, “Zur buddhistischen Malerei und Schrift-kunst des Dali-Königreichs”, which treats Buddhist painting, calligraphy, and prints. Matsumoto wrote his thesis on the “Long Scroll of Yunnan”, the celebrated handscroll by Zhang Shengwen (c. 1172–1200), presently kept in the National Palace Museum in Taipei. This article deals with various other Buddhist paintings from Yunnan, including frontispieces of illuminated *sūtras*, and re-claims several frontispieces for Dali that have hitherto been classified as Song.

The presentation of the exhibits, including the recovered treasures from the Qianxun Pagoda, takes up the final third of the catalogue and consists of colour plates for most of the objects together with a lengthy and detailed description. This part of the catalogue is largely identical with the catalogue section in Albert Lutz’s work, *Die drei Pagoden von Dali*, and I shall refrain from commenting further on it here.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Nos. 2 and 19 (Chapin and Soper). See also the painted image of Ucchuṣma from Cave 17 in Dunhuang (OA 1919.1–1.040).

<sup>3</sup> Alice Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, Oxford, 1914, pi. LXIX.

Although the catalogue presents itself as a homogeneous whole, with its material structured and well balanced, there are a few points which the present reviewer would like to raise. First of all, I feel that the editors and authors of the essays give too little attention to the actual nature of Nanzhao/Dali Buddhism. We are repeatedly told that Mizong (Esoteric Buddhism) constituted mainstream Buddhism in the two succeeding kingdoms, and that later Chan and Huayan Buddhism were introduced from Sichuan or China proper. This is all very well, but it does raise some problems which are not properly answered in the essays. When using as ambiguous a term as *mizong* one would at the very least expect some kind of definition of what the term actually covers. Are we dealing with Zhenyan Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism, or Vajrayāna? If *mizong* is only meant to indicate miscellaneous esotericism, then the authors should tell us so. On the other hand, if “*mizong*” indicates the presence of Tantrayana, whether imported from Tibet or Burma, it is not clearly stated. In any case, I miss a proper definition of what kind of religious reality *mizong* in Nanzhao/Dali covered. Furthermore, I believe that a proper understanding of Buddhism as it flourished in the kingdom should partly be understood in relation to the development of Esoteric Buddhism in Sichuan, and partly in relation to Esoteric Buddhism in Pagan.

*Der Tempel der drei Pagoden von Dali: Zur buddhistischen Kunst des Nanzhao- und Dali Königreiches in Yunnan, China* is divided into two main parts: the first is devoted to a discussion of the history of the Chongsheng Temple and the second deals with the temple in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with special focus on the Qianxun Pagoda and its treasures. The first part is again subdivided into five chapters as follows: Chapter 1 deals with the political and cultural background for the three pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple in Dali, the theme of the book. At the end the author attempts to give a survey of Buddhism in Yunnan. Chapter 2 is devoted to a discussion of the occurrences surrounding the founding of the Chongsheng Temple. Chapter 3 gives a detailed description of the treasures of the temple with special focus on their history. In Chapter 4 the main structure of the temple, the Qianxun Pagoda, is discussed with special reference to its architecture, the material with which it was built, its symbolism, etc. Chapter 5 treats the “golden age” of the Nanzhao Kingdom in the 9th century and includes a discussion of the three great kings and their policy of expansion, a survey of Buddhism in Nanzhao during this time, and a survey of the most important art and cultural objects from this period, with special emphasis on architectural monuments and inscriptions.

The second part of the book, which is entirely devoted to the Chongsheng Temple and the treasures from the Qianxun Pagoda, contains four chapters, including Chapter 1, which gives a brief survey of the history of the Dali Kingdom, and the position of the Qianxun Pagoda in the architectural history of the Chinese Buddhist pagodas. Chapter 2 deals with the two sec-

ondary pagodas of the Chongsheng Temple, Chapter 3 introduces the “treasure chamber” found under the roof of the Qianxun Pagoda and provides a discussion of it in relation to pagoda treasures found elsewhere in China. The important find in the foundations of the pagoda in the Famen Temple, Shanxi Province, is used as material for comparison. Following this comes the final chapter, Chapter 4, which is a highly detailed catalogue of the treasures from the Qianxun Pagoda. This catalogue part is much more than a normal exhibition catalogue and provides a close and comprehensive discussion of all the presented objects together with related examples. This part is essentially the “core” of the work and reveals the author as a conscientious and serious scholar with a good sense of balance and precision.

It must be said at the outset that Lutz has approached his subject with care, and has obviously taken great pains in compiling whatever primary and secondary material he could come by. For this he is to be commended. However, many of the esoteric images remain unidentified and one is somehow left with the same impression of “unknown territory” as regards many of the figures in the “Long Scroll” discussed by Chapin and Soper in their classic study. In some of the cases, such as Pl. 84–90, 95, 98, etc., the editor’s attempts at identification seem plausible enough; however, in other cases (pl. 81, 92, 94, 128, 135, 137, 143) it appears that he has not even exhausted the standard reference material, such as the *Mikkyō-daijiten*, the *Iconographical Supplement (Zuzō-bu)* of the *Taishō-shinshū-daizōkyō*, etc. It is true that the esoteric iconography of Nanzhao/Dali Buddhism differs on various points from that known from contemporary China and Tibet. However, I believe that more thorough research could solve many of the remaining iconographical puzzles.

One of the significant points which the author overlooks with regard to the iconography of the Buddhist images from the Qianxun Pagoda pertains to the way many of them sit. Contrary to what the author states (pp. 102, pl. 92, 94, 105–6, etc.), the images do not sit in the lotus posture. They sit in the half-lotus or “Burmese posture”, a very rare iconographical trait for Mahāyāna or esoteric images in China (and Tibet), but something which of course is commonly found in Buddhist statues in Southeast Asia. Hence I believe that one is quite justified in arguing that many of the Dali bronze images reflect a strong iconographical and stylistic influence from Burma (contemporary Pagan, which we know was a centre of Esoteric Buddhism). Lutz seems to ignore this fact altogether and thereby misses a highly important aspect of these rare images.

In his discussion of the talismans the author overlooks an important point. Talismans in the forms employed by Chinese Buddhist, such as the examples known from Dunhuang (P. 2153, 2197, S. 2498, 2708, etc.) and the example given by Lutz (pp. 97–9, pl. 76) were clearly made under influence from Daoism. What is interesting in the Dali example is its combination of Chinese talismanic writing and Siddham script. To my knowledge the Dunhuang ex-

amples all give their *dhāraṇīs* in Chinese transcription. Lutz's example has nothing to do with those employed in Tibetan Buddhism (p. 97).

Another flaw in this work is its weakness with regard to its treatment of Buddhism in Nanzhao and Dali. While it cannot be denied that part of this problem is caused by the dearth of reliable historical sources, I feel that Lutz does not draw sufficient information out of the quite impressive material he is actually dealing with. In other words, many of the objects he treats provide quite an amount of information about Buddhism in the region from the late ninth to the twelfth century, and he ought to have used this material better. For instance, if we take the many wrathful protectors, the mere fact that they exist signals a highly developed esoteric tradition in Dali, and an attempt at linking them with the extant esoteric and tantric ritual material is certain to have yielded interesting results. In this regard the author would have served his readers better had he gone into some detail with the stone sculptures of Jianchuan, which he only mentions in passing. They represent highly interesting and important material, especially in regard to esoteric iconography, and I believe that a detailed comparison with these sculptures could have brought further significant results. Somehow I also feel that Lutz relies overly much on the iconographical material provided by Zhang Sheng-wen's "Long Scroll", which belongs to the very end of the Nanzhao Dynasty. It is of course tempting, since many of those iconographic problems have already been solved. On the other hand, three-dimensional material such as the Jinchuan carvings do provide a better basis for comparison.

On p. 60 Lutz makes a good observation and is right, I believe, in his criticism of Matsumoto's identification. However, his identification of Li Xian Maishun as a monk (Pl. 48, Chapin/Soper, No. 52) is less obvious. First of all, the figure seated on the chair wears a layman's garb and is clearly not a monk. Secondly, he is quite obviously an important religious person who gives instruction in Buddhism. Could this not be one to the *azheli*, the *ācāryās*, the carriers of the esoteric lore who were allowed to marry? In view of the information which Lutz himself provides, this would seem a logical deduction.

The Chinese texts provided in Part 2, Chapter 1 (pp. 67–70) are a welcome epigraphical contribution to our understanding of the circumstances of the construction of the pagodas. However, for some unknown reason the author does not provide a translation. Instead he gives a rather weak interpretation of their contents, which thereby lose some of their value.

Despite the few problematic points which a perusal of the catalogue raises, I want to stress that the overall scope and presentation of the work is of a very high quality. In fact, the catalogue is closer in style and contents to a collection of scholarly articles than to what one usually expects from an exhibition catalogue. It is evident that the editors have worked closely with the material in question, and that they have endeavoured to utilize all the available sources, both primary and secondary, that they could gain access

to. The extensive treatment of the Nanzhao/Dali culture is also evident in the broad, interdisciplinary character of the essays. The high scholarly level of the text, as well as the beautiful layout and high-quality photographs, make the present catalogue a must for anybody interested in Chinese Buddhist art in general and that of Dali in particular. The catalogue and Lutz' book should be seen as complementary, and although they overlap they both yield much information on the subject. In fact these two publications form the most comprehensive and substantial material on the Nanzhao/Dali culture ever published in a European language. Their price and quality taken into account, this makes them a must for any serious student of Chinese Buddhist art and culture.

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