

EAST ASIA

LOTHAR LEDDEROSE (series editor):

Buddhist Stone Sutras in China. Sichuan Province, vol. 3 (edited by Claudia Wenzel and Sun Hua).

xi, 488 pp. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag; Hangzhou: China Academy of Art Press, 2016. ISBN 978 3 447 10588 0.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X17001252

All volumes in this impressive series provide bilingual text, magnificent illustrations and diagrams, and crisp photographs of carved stone and rubbings, with transcriptions. The fifth volume in the “Buddhist Stone Sutras in China” series, this third volume on Sichuan carries forward the project of detailed documentation of inscriptions from the famous site known as Wofoyuan (Grove of the Reclining Buddha). As can be viewed in the annotated aerial photograph in the frontispiece, the caves of Section G on the northern side of the valley site were covered in vol. 1, and caves in Sections A and B on the southern side of the valley were the focus of vol. 2. This volume continues the exploration in a westerly direction, documenting caves 46, 51 and 58 in Section C.

The first part of the volume consists of chapters highlighting particular features of Cave 46 within broader contexts. In the introductory chapter, series editor Lothar Ledderose provides an overview of the main caves and texts in Section C, comparing them with other material at the site. The second chapter by Martin Bemann is a detailed consideration of the carved banner on a wall of Cave 46. Comparing it with other textual and visual references featuring this distinctive motif, Bemann shows that it has the form of a life-prolonging banner connected with the Medicine Buddha ritual. Next is Stefano Zacchetti’s chapter on a partial carving of the *Zongjing mulu* (Catalogue of All Canonical Scriptures, T. 2148, 45) in Cave 46. Although this seems an odd choice at a site where sūtra carvings predominate, through detailed analysis of the catalogue’s history and counterparts, Zacchetti suggests that the carving may have been intended as a “symbolic, but ritually and religiously effective evocation of the entire canon” (p. 93).

This is followed by Chan Frederick Shih-Chung’s chapter on the *Sutra on the Wisdom Stored in the Ocean of Buddha-Nature* (abbreviated reference to the *Foxinghai zang zhihui jietuo po xinxiang jing*, T. 2885, 85). Chen summarizes the contents of this intriguing apocryphon and shows it to be a kind of condensed *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* with a focus on buddha-nature, enhanced by episodes from the popular *Lotus Sūtra*. Next, Manuel Sassmann and Tsai Suey-Ling discuss two versions of the *Foding zunsheng tuolouni zhou* (*Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī*, Sūtra of the Glorious Buddha Crown Dhāraṇī) found in Cave 46. The versions differ and neither corresponds to T. 967, 19. In a colophon for the version on Wall H dedicated in 733, the monk Ruyi claims that this version is more authentic. After a summary of the text and the apotropaic efficacy attributed to it, the authors suggest that the monk’s concern about the correct form of the *dhāraṇī* indicates that this was an important issue for monastics, as Cave 46 was not an imperially sponsored cave like other sites where the ritual text was inscribed.

This is followed by Ryan Richard Overbey’s chapter on the *Foshuo xiuduohuo bore boluomi jing* (Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha on the Perfection of Wisdom in the Sūtras); though not included in the canon, quotations are found among Dunhuang manuscripts. The Cave 46 carving is the only known complete exemplar;

Overbey includes a translation of this unique text with line-by-line transliteration and notes.

Claudia Wenzel's chapter focuses on Cave 46's version of the well-known *Fo shuo Amituo jing* (Amitābha Sutra Spoken by the Buddha, popularly known as the "Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha", cf. *T.* 366, 12: 346b24–348b18). Wenzel summarizes the text in the context of East Asian Pure Land devotional practice. Cave 46's version is slightly different from the canonical one, and differences correspond partly with the remnants of a version formerly carved on a stele in Xiangyang. The divergent wording had important implications for believers, as it promised manifold good roots attendant on recitation of the name of Amitābha. Based on a colophon dated 723 on Wall F of the cave, this would be the earliest surviving witness of this version. Tsai and Wenzel then devote a chapter to the related *Amituo foshuo zhou* (Spell Spoken by the Buddha Amitābha, cf. *T.* 369, 12: 352a22–b3) on Wall H, dedicated c. 730–741. It consists of strings of Chinese characters representing transliteration of a Sanskrit spell to make connection with Amitābha. It was incorporated into various Tang compilations, notably Zhisheng's *Ji zhujing lichan yi* (Assembled Rites for Veneration and Confession Based on the Sūtras, *T.* 1982, 47). The spell appears as an addendum to the above *Amitābha Sūtra* in this and other contexts. It further reinforces the overall design of Cave 46, which assembles popular motifs associated with prolonging life and rebirth in the Pure Land.

The second part of the volume is a descriptive wall-by-wall catalogue of each feature of Cave 46. This includes sūtra titles and colophons, as well as architectural features and descriptions of the format and style of the carvings. One is thus able to get a sense of the complete design of this intricate cave. The third major part of the volume is its centerpiece: 146 pages of superb photographs of the inscriptions of Cave 46 paired with photos of their rubbings. The fourth part provides annotated transcriptions of these texts. The next six parts provide the same coverage for Caves 51 and 58: detailed descriptions, photographs, and transcriptions. These caves have less textual material than Cave 46 but are integral parts of a rare tripartite grouping.

In his introduction, Ledderose characterizes the trio of caves as "central to the entire precinct" (p. 20). Linked by a covered passageway, these are the largest caves at the site, and they are prominently placed to face the reclining Buddha across the valley that lends the site its name. At the end of the volume there is a summary of discussions of these key caves in scholarly literature and archaeological reports, followed by thumbnail photos of variant characters and a compact bibliography.

The series is widely known to be the most ambitious and comprehensive attempt of its kind. Each volume is eagerly awaited by scholars in the fields of Buddhist studies, Chinese art and archaeology, and medieval Chinese history. This latest production maintains the high standards of the project, providing state-of-the-art documentation of the caves. Moreover, inclusion of more analytic chapters in this volume provides welcome contextualization. An important point that emerges from these studies is that cave inscriptions were used to assert slightly different versions of much-used texts. This sheds additional light on engraved text sponsorship, showing that it was not only a merit-making or text-preservation endeavour, but a means to stake claims about textual accuracy and efficacy.

Wendi L. Adamek
University of Calgary