

The End of the Dharma in Medieval Chinese Buddhism: On the “Image of the Extinction of the Dharma” at the Dazhusheng Cave of Baoshan (Henan) 寶山大住聖窟的「法滅之相」

Buddhist Studies
Workshop with
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Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2019,
4:30 pm,
1879 Hall, Room 137



The Dazhushengku 大住聖窟 (Cave of the Great Abiding Holy Ones) of Lingquan Monastery 靈泉寺 at Baoshan 寶山 (Henan Province), constructed under the supervision of the eminent monk Lingyu 靈裕 (518-605) of the Northern Qi Dynasty, has been studied since Tokiwa Daijō's 常盤大定 (1870-1945) investigation in the 1920s. Much discussion surrounds the relationship between the Sanjiejiao 三階教 (the Three Levels Movement) and the stone-carved scriptures and stupa inscriptions inside and around the cave. Lingyu's biography in the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (*Extended Biographies of Eminent Monks*) states that he “had specially engraved the image of the extinction of the Dharma at front of the cave” when he founded the cave. The previous understanding of this record was that Lingyu carved scriptures related to the subject of the extinction of the Dharma, such as the *Daji jing* 大集經 (*Great Collection Sutra*) and *Mohemoye jing* 摩訶摩耶經 (*Mahāmāyā-sūtra*), which, together with the two statues of dharma-protecting deities at the entrance of the cave, constitutes the so-called “image of the extinction of the Dharma” (*famie zhi xiang* 法滅之相). Based on my fieldwork, however, I believe that the “image of the extinction of the Dharma” refers to the two deity statues plus a set of three statues, comprising one Buddha and two bodhisattvas, on the cliff at the eastern side of the cave entrance. The carved texts relevant to the Three Levels Movement, such as the *Foming jing* 佛名經 (*Sutra on the Names of the Buddhas*) and *Lichan wen* 禮懺文 (*Text of Repentance Rite*), at the western side of the cave entrance, which have been amply discussed by scholars, might have been engraved after Lingyu's period. If my hypothesis about the “image of the extinction of the Dharma” at the cave can be verified, it would be the earliest Buddhist work of art yet discovered taking “the extinction of the Dharma” as its theme.

由北齊高僧靈裕主持開鑿的寶山靈泉寺大住聖窟，自 1920 年代初常盤大定考察以後，逐漸被學界重視。近百年來，學界主要的研究，圍繞靈泉寺現存的洞窟、建築、刻經等文物展開，特別對大住聖窟內外所見的刻經、塔銘與三階教的關係，討論尤多。《續高僧傳·靈裕傳》記載靈裕開窟時曾在「窟面別鑄法滅之相」。以往大家對此的理解，是認為靈裕在窟內外鑄刻《大集經》《摩訶摩耶經》等含有「法滅」內容的經文，以及窟門口兩位護法神王像，這些就構成所謂的「法滅之相」。但經過實地調查，我認為所謂「法滅之像」是指兩神王與窟門東側崖壁上一組長期被忽視的一佛二菩薩像。而窟門西側被大家討論很多的幾種佛名經、禮懺文等與三階教有關的經文，有可能是靈裕時代之後才刻上的。如果大住聖窟的「法滅之相」能夠被確認，將是美術史上首次發現以「法滅」為主題的佛教藝術。