

## The Prehistory of Ximingsi: Anecdotes and Imaginaire of Chang'an Buddhism\*

Wang Xiang

### Abstract

Presented in the cultural context of medieval Chang'an city and the broader network of Sino-Japanese Buddhism, the article provides, for the first time, a study on the prehistory of the celebrated Ximingsi Temple from the decline of the Sui Dynasty to the rise of the Tang Empire. During this transitional period, the founding myth of the monastery was connected to an imposing residence predating Ximingsi. Through the lens of historical sources, Buddhist corpus and imaginative literature, this essay examines the accounts of the three noble householders, general Yang Su, princess Wanchun and prince Li Tai. Their stories and the anecdotal history were told and retold by fiction writers, medieval bards and commoners of the metropolis, opening a window into the public memory of Ximingsi across Asia. This is particularly evident in the case of Yang Su, whose obnoxious image was recreated and sugared by the Ximingsi abbot Daoxuan and other Buddhist saints in their writings centering on the early Buddhō-Daoist debates. The tale of the “broken mirror,” which was the most famous anecdote associated with Yang Su and his residence, eventually took on a life of its own. Mentioned in the

---

**Wang Xiang** is an Assistant Professor at Beijing Normal University—Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC).

\* The article is completed with the help of the research fund provided by UIC on the project of Ximing Monastery (R201433).

corpus of Zen canon and Japanese literature, the story preserves traces of reality regarding Ximingsi, even if distorted through transmission throughout the ages.

**Keywords:** Chang'an, Li Tai, Ximingsi, Yang Su, yōkyoku

## The City of Chang'an and Ximing Monastery

For the first millennium of the Common Era, the Han-Dynasty capital Chang'an 長安 was the gateway to the northwestern Silk Road and the very symbol of ancient China, the land known as *Cīna-sthāna* (Ch. *zhendan* 震旦 or *zhina* 支那) in Buddhist literature. Since the transmission of Buddhism to China, the Buddhist representatives from Serindia, seeking to spread their religion in the “central kingdom,” had come to the city with the mission to impress the ruling class.<sup>1</sup> When the firm edifice of Tang China (618–907) rose over East Asia, the capital of the empire, historically known as Daxingcheng 大興城 and the subsequent Sui-Tang Chang'an, emerged as perhaps the greatest city in the world from the seventh to the tenth century.<sup>2</sup> By the seventh century,

---

1 Chinese Buddhism was from the outset a distinctly urban phenomenon because Buddhism was brought to China with the merchants who traveled along the urban centers of the Silk Road in northwestern China. See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (1959; repr., Leiden: Brill, 2007), 59. For other studies of this phenomenon, see, e.g., James Heitzman, “Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire,” in *Studies in the Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, ed. Kenneth Kennedy and Gregory Possehl (New Delhi: Oxford & IBH: American Inst. of Indian Studies, 1984), 121–137; Kathleen Morrison, “Trade, Urbanism, and Agricultural Expansion: Buddhist Monastic Institutions and the State in the Early Historic Western Deccan,” *World Archaeology* 27, no. 2 (1995): 203–221.

2 The city of Tang Chang'an inherited its name from its monumental predecessor flourishing in the earlier Han Empire. In 202 B.C., to the south of the old Qin capital Xianyang 咸陽, Liu Bang 劉邦 (256–195 B.C., r. 202–195 B.C.), the first emperor of the Han Dynasty, established the city of Han Chang'an 漢長安. Rhapsodic descriptions of the capital are available in some Chinese classics such as *Wenxuan* 文選 (Literary Selections) and *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖 (Description of the Three Capital Districts). For the establishment of Han Chang'an, see Wu Hung 巫鴻, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 143–188; Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2000), 7–14; Mark Lewis,

through an arduous course against opposition, Buddhism had proved itself to be a persuasive religion compatible with Chinese tradition. Meanwhile, as seen in monks' travel diaries, Persian missionaries' steles, and diplomats' epitaphs, the city of Tang Chang'an, originally constructed as the Sui-dynasty city of Daxingcheng in 613 (Daye 大業 9), rose to become a prominent hub of religion and cultural splendor after the founding of the Tang Dynasty in 618. It was truly a monumental metropolis, filled with theatres, temples, stūpas, gardens, and grand residences.

In the long history of China, Chang'an was the first city to gather hundreds of Buddhist monasteries in a single urban area. The subject of this article, Ximingsi 西明寺 (Western Brightness) Monastery (hereafter referred to as Ximingsi), while perhaps typical of the Chang'an Buddhist institutions, provides one window into the little-known world of the medieval metropolitan monasteries in China. This magnificent religious institution was a premier center of Buddhism and pivot point of international cultural exchange during the Tang dynasty. Among the more than one hundred Buddhist monasteries in Chang'an during its heyday in the Tang period, Ximingsi was exceptional in many ways.<sup>3</sup> Its

---

*The Early Chinese Empires Qin and Han* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 19. For detailed studies of Sui-Tang Chang'an, see Song Suyi 宋肅懿, *Tangdai Chang'an zhi yanjiu* 唐代長安之研究 (Taipei: Dali chubanshe, 1983); Thomas Thilo, *Chang'an: Metropole Ostasiens und Weltstadt des Mittelalters 583–904* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997); Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an*; Thomas Thilo, *Chang'an 2, Gesellschaft und Kultur* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006).

- 3 For studies on the number of Buddhist monasteries in Chang'an, see Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an*, 303–320 (Appendix 3: "Buddhist Institutions"); Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年, *Chūgoku Zui Tō Chōan jūin shiryō shūsei: shiryōhen* 中國隋唐長安寺院史料集成: 史料篇 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 453–470 (hereafter abbreviated as "Ono, *Shiryōhen*"). Ximingsi also reminds us of the Ximingge 西明閣 (Ximing Pavilion) of the early Chang'an in the Later Qin (384–417) period. It was the monastery where Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413) and his translation team of 800 monks rendered the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* into Chinese (*Mohe bore boluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, T223), see *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀 (Record of Three Treasures of Different

great prestige not only attracted gifted young men to forsake worldly pomp for the life of a monk, but also collected a galaxy of preeminent scholars contributing to Ximingsi's reputation as a nexus of Buddhist learning in Asian history. For instance, the well-known debate between the Korean prince-monk Wōn Chūk 圓測 (Ch. Yuance, 613–696) and the Chinese master Kuiji 窺基 (632–682) catalyzed the Korean Yogācāra Sect, a school holding that all is mind in its ultimate nature. The Gandhāran monk Buddhapāla (Ch. Fotuoboli 佛陀波利, 7<sup>th</sup> c.), who aimed to “sacrifice his life to benefit sentient beings,” rendered the tantric text *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* into Chinese with the Ximingsi scholar Shunzhen 順貞.<sup>4</sup> The Japanese Shingon patriarch Kūkai 空海 (774–835), during his early days in Chang'an, was acquainted with a generation of vinaya masters and Indian translators at Ximingsi.<sup>5</sup>

In the long river of Tang China, the monastery is inevitably a world combining fact and fiction. By the high point of the Tang period in the eighth century, urban authors and mendicant minstrels had created an anecdotal Chang'an that incorporated the street tales and popular stories of the citizens. Under such circumstances, the story of Ximingsi that comes down to us across the centuries is an ongoing dialogue between literature and history.<sup>6</sup> There is little doubt that for over a millennium,

---

Dynasties), T49, no. 2034, p. 79, a9–13.

4 Buddhapāla's biography is documented in *Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (hereafter abbreviated as *SGSZ*), T50, no. 2061, p. 717, c15–p. 718, b7. On the cultural history of the *dhāraṇī* that Buddhapāla translated at Ximingsi, see Liu Shufen 劉淑芬, *Miezui yu duwang: Foding zunsheng tuoluoni jingzhuang zhi yajiu* 滅罪與度亡：佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經幢之研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).

5 [*Go*]shōrai mukuroku [禦]請來目錄 (Catalogue Submitted by Imperial Request), T55, no. 2161, p. 1060, b17–20, see Mochizuki Shinkō 望月信亨, *Bukkyo daijiten* 佛教大辭典 (Kyoto: Sekai seiten kankō kyōkai, 1954–1971), 2804. The first six volumes of the *Bukkyo daijiten* are hereafter abbreviated as *Mochizuki*.

6 For some examples of “imaginaire” in cultural history, see Christian Emden, Catherine Keen, and David R. Midgley, *Imagining the City*, 2 vols., Cultural history and literary imagination, (Oxford ; New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill:

the boundaries between the real and the imagined monastery in many parts of East Asia are shifting and slippery. This is particularly perplexing given that historical facts are often overshadowed by anecdotal literature and the literary imagination associated with the monastery or its prominent residents. For instance, Robert Borgen, in his attempted reconstruction of the history of the ancient Dōmyōji 道明寺 in Osaka, poses an issue that we will encounter in our interpretation:

The history of Dōmyōji, noteworthy though it may be, demonstrates a fundamental difficulty faced when trying to understand events from the ancient past. The data needed to answer all the questions one might like to pose are often missing. The clear focus and rigorous argumentation typical of modern scholarly writing may well veil the murky uncertainty that is the true picture left by the sources.<sup>7</sup>

We have the same problem here. Obviously, to elucidate the rich history and tales of Ximingsi is a much larger project. As the first step to piece together scraps of ancient texts in an effort to reconstruct a comprehensive picture of Ximingsi, this essay will focus on the prehistory the monastery by placing Ximingsi in the context of anecdotal stories, official histories, religious texts and the social world of Sui-Tang Chang'an.

---

University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Alain Godard and Marie-Françoise Piéjus, *Espaces, histoire et imaginaire dans la culture Italienne de la Renaissance* (Paris: Université Paris III Sorbonne nouvelle, Centre Censier, 2006); Jacques Le Goff and Michel Cazenave, *Histoire et imaginaire* (Paris, Poiesis: Diffusion Payot, 1986); Michel Morin and Claude Bertrand, *Le territoire imaginaire de la culture* (Montréal: Hurtubise HMH, 1979).

7 Robert Borgen, "A History of Dōmyōji to 1572 (or Maybe 1575): An Attempted Reconstruction," *Monumenta Nipponica* 62, no. 1 (2007): 3–4.

## The Birth of Tragedy: From General Yang Su to Prince Li Tai

The major part of the Tang-period Ximingsi, we know, was constructed on the site of an abandoned residence of the early Sui-Tang nobility. Like many other imperial temples in Chang'an, it thus preserved the features of traditional Chinese noble residence, built around the architectural unit “*yuan* 院” (cloister), only in a larger scale unseen in any small city.<sup>8</sup> Blinded, perhaps, by the later splendor of the great Ximingsi, scholars have hitherto ignored the monastery's long prehistory connected with the moguls and the royalty. Yet this prehistory is not without its interest; for even a preliminary perusal of scattered Sui-Tang sources—official annals, urban tales, anecdotes, hagiographies and literary accounts—reveals a story that shaped the cultural image of Ximingsi in China and beyond. Hence, we will contemplate here its murky prehistory, embellished by imaginaries and tragedies long forgotten. We shall begin with the story of a Sui Dynasty general and conclude with a Tang Dynasty prince, although I do not always strictly follow the historical sequence.

In the Sui and first years of the Tang, Ximingsi was preceded by a magnificent residence huge in scale. Over three brief decades in the transitional sixth to seventh century, the house became the property of dignitaries and members of the imperial family. In the present essay, the story begins with the ascendancy of Yang Su 楊素 (d. 606), Director of the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu ling* 尚書令) in the short-lived Sui Dynasty. His lengthy biography in the *Suishu* 隋書 (Book of Sui) testifies to his significance in both domestic politics and military history in the sixth century.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after 584 (Kaihuang 開皇 4), the

---

8 In Buddhist literature, *yuan* 院 (Skt. *ārāma* or *paryāna*, Jap. *in*) refers to a cloister or a grove, *Mochizuki*, 172–173. For a brief introduction to the definition of Buddhist monastery (*si* 寺) in Chinese Buddhism, see Pichard and Lagirarde, *The Buddhist Monastery* (Paris: École française d'extrême-orient, 2003), 309–310.

9 For the Biography of Yang Su, see *Suishu* 隋書 (Book of Sui), 48.1281–1292. For an

Sui sovereignty was afflicted by the calamities of war. Yang Su was summoned by the first Sui emperor Yang Jian 楊堅 (r. 581–604, a.k.a. the Wendi of Sui 隋文帝) to crush the rebellion led by Wang Guoqing 王國慶, a viceroy stationed in the Southern port of Quanzhou 泉州 (today's Fujian province). Being a magnate from a small county by the name of Nan'an 南安, Wang plotted the assassination of the local governor and turned himself into a ringleader. After the surrender of Wang Guoqing, Yang Su returned to Chang'an in victory, he was greatly rewarded by the emperor:

Once he arrived in the capital, visitors called on him in succession. His son Yang Xuanjiang was promoted to the position of Yitong general. The emperor bestowed upon him 40 *jin* of gold; a silver jar filled with coins, 3,000 bolts of thin silk; 200 horses; 2,000 sheep; 100 hectares of public paddy and a district [to build his residence].

比到京師，問者日至。拜素子玄獎為儀同，賜黃金四十斤，加銀瓶，實以金錢，縑三千段，馬二百匹，羊二千口，公田百頃，宅一區。<sup>10</sup>

In this account, the last sentence deserves our attention; for, while the Chinese term “*yiqu* 一區” means “a district” or “a section,” it may refer here to “a plot of ground” or even “a residence” in the Sui capital

---

explanation of the title *Shangshu ling* 尚書令, see Charles Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 412. For a general introduction to Yang Su, see Xu Song 徐松 and Li Jianchao 李健超, *Zengding Tang liangjing chengfang kao* 增訂唐兩京城坊考 (Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2006), 207; Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 609; see also Gang Deng, *Maritime Sector, Institutions, and Sea Power of Premodern China* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), 10. The newly excavated epitaph of Yang Su also sheds light on his life; see Liang Jianbang 梁建邦, “Yang Su muzhi de faxian yu jiazhi 楊素墓誌的發現與價值,” *Weinan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 渭南師範學院學報 1 (1990): 94–98.

10 *Suishu* 48.1285; Liang Jianbang, “Yang Su muzhi de faxian yu jiazhi,” 97.



of Daxingcheng.<sup>11</sup> It is known to us that the city was built by the architect Yuwen Kai 宇文愷 (555–612), the vice director-general of the project, under the sponsorship of the Wendi of Sui in 583. In the subsequent years Daxingcheng soon grew into power and opulence in Sui-Tang China, although much of the city remained unpopulated after 583.<sup>12</sup> It is assumed that the terrain of Chang'an was divided into six ridge areas running from northeast to southwest. Yuwen Kai then matched the ridges with the diagram *qian* 乾, the only hexagram composed of six solid lines in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). It is believed that no other hexagram is as fraught with royal symbolism of the entrepreneurial spirit as *qian*, the quintessential graph of Heaven. Due to its celestial signification, this diagram came to be closely identified with the court and its sovereign, and also with the “superior man” or *junzi* 君子, a figure held up as the paragon of virtue. The residence bestowed upon Yang Su, contextualized in Yankang Ward 延康坊 (Ward of Prolonging Health), was positioned between the third and the fourth ridges, a place explained by the *Book of Changes* and its commentary as nonroyal yet containing favorable locations for living quarters and markets.<sup>13</sup> It is hardly surprising that the land given to Yang Su was immediately used to build a magnificent residence, which can be

---

11 In some cases, *yiqu* 一區 also means “one residence”; see *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1986–1993), s.v. *yiqu*. In Japanese kanji, *ikku* 一區 refers to “a region”, “a segment” or “an area”; see *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大詞典 (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2006), s.v. *ikku*. The dictionary is hereafter abbreviated as *Nihon kokugo daijiten*.

12 For a brief introduction of the two cities of Chang'an, see Xiong, *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*, 78–79; see also Okazaki Takashi 岡崎敬, “Zui · Daikō = Tō · Chōanjō to Zuitō · tōto Rakuyōjō—kinnen no chōsa kekka o chūshin toshite 隋 · 大興 = 唐 · 長安城と隋唐 · 東都洛陽城 —— 近年の調査結果を中心として,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 仏教芸術 51 (1963): 86–108.

13 See Xiong, *Sui-Tang Chang'an*, 45–46; Thomas Thilo, *Chang'an: Teil 1*, 23–40; For an explanation of the eight trigrams (*bagua* 八卦) used in Taoist cosmology, see Daeyeol Kim, “Bagua,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 201–203.

dated approximately between 584 and 599. According to the *Book of Sui*, Yang Su again acquired another residence in the Eastern Capital of Luoyang in the first year of Daye 大業 (605) from the Sui government as a reward from his loyalty and service to the second monarch, the notorious Suiyangdi 隋煬帝 (Emperor Yang of the Sui, 569–618, r. 604–618).<sup>14</sup> It appears evident that the extravagant building complex located in the western capital of Chang'an must have lasted into the seventh century when it was finally passed on to the hands of a Tang prince. It is believed that a part of the layout of this splendid residence must have been preserved when it was renovated as the Ximingsi several decades later, in the seventh century.

Thanks to the military exploits of Yang Su, his son Yang Xuangan 楊玄感 (d. 618) was promoted to the senior position of Pillar of State (*zhuguo* 柱國) and Xuangan's brothers also acquired the position of Prefectural Governor (*cishi* 刺史).<sup>15</sup> Parvenu though it was, the Yang clan rose to become a power capable of monopolizing high government positions. As indicated in the Biography of Yang Su:

(They possessed) thousands of lackeys. Within the confines of their inner chambers stood thousands of maidservants garbed in fine clothes. Their house was extravagant, comparable to the Sui imperial palace. Among the servants we will find a man of letter by the name of Baoheng and a Yinzhou who was well versed in the cursive and seal style of calligraphy. They were both literati from the Jiangnan district (the region south of the middle to lower portions of the Yangtze river) and were both reduced to slavery because of (their involvement in the rebellion of ) Gao Zhihui. The relatives of Yang Su and his former subordinates filled the distinguished positions of the government offices.

---

14 *Suishu* 48, 1292–1293.

15 In 590, Yang Su crushed another revolt in the former Chen territory, a petty state founded on the fertile southern land of the empire. In the subsequent years of Renshou 仁壽 (601–604), Yang Su next subdued the Turkic army and forced them to retreat to the northern steppe.

The privilege and celebrity of Yang Su was indeed unheard of in the near ancient times.

家僮數千，後庭妓妾曳綺羅者以千數。第宅華侈，制擬宮禁。有鮑亨者，善屬文，殷胄者，工草隸，並江南士人，因高智慧沒為家奴。親戚故吏，布列清顯，素之貴盛，近古未聞。<sup>16</sup>

However, shortly after Yang Su passed away, Yang Xuangan and his brothers broke their oath of loyalty to the throne and masterminded a rebellion in 613 (Daye 9) against the Emperor Yang of the Sui, the infamous monarch of the short-lived dynasty. Unfortunately their mutiny failed as a result of the questionable strategy of besieging the eastern capital Luoyang. Xuangan, his brother Yang Jishan 楊積善 (d.613), and the rebel force were practically destroyed in Shangluo 上洛 (Shang County, Shanxi province). The end of the Yang family was tragic, as Victor Cunrui Xiong says:

At his own request, Xuangan was hacked to death by Jishan, who then stabbed himself. While the head of Xuangan was delivered to the emperor, his corpse was hauled to a marketplace in Luoyang, where it was quartered and, after being exposed in public for three days, ground up and burned. With Yangdi's permission, General Yuwen Shu had the wounded Jishan tied to a wooden shaft, enclosing his neck with a chariot wheel. Officials shot at him until his body was covered with arrows like a hedgehog. He was then dismembered. Xuangan's other brothers either died during the rebellion or were hunted down and killed by the Sui army. The lineage of the powerful Yang clan was exterminated.<sup>17</sup>

The other five sons of Yang Su, like their brothers Xuangan and

---

<sup>16</sup> *Suishu*, 48.1289.

<sup>17</sup> Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty: His Life, Times, and Legacy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 60.

Jishan, were either decapitated for their treason or killed in the battle of Luoyang. As a result of this incident, the extravagant Chang'an residence of the Yang clan was confiscated by the Sui government. Yet we do not know either the fate of the house seized by the government or the destiny of its residents, the kinsfolk of the Yang clan, during the decade after the death of Yang Xuangan, that is, the first ten years (618–628) of the newly founded Tang Dynasty. From the point of view of Chinese popular religion, an abandoned residence like this is surely ridden with “contaminated elements” transferable unto the next householder. People of the time must have believed that in the wake of the calamity befallen to the Yang clan the house was filled with ominous airs (*yingqi* 陰氣) and ghosts that should be expelled through apotropaic rituals. This might be another reason that a monastery was later planned to be erected on the site for the purpose of exorcism.

Shortly after the founding of the Tang Dynasty, in the middle of the reign of Wude 武德 (618–626), the forsaken residence was renovated and registered under the name of Princess Wanchun (Wanchun gongzhu 萬春公主), one of the nineteen daughters of Emperor Gaozu 高祖 (Liyuan 李淵, 566–635, r. 618–626) of the Tang.<sup>18</sup> The fate of princess Wanchun is oddly unrecorded in history, but she probably lived in the house for a decade (c. 618–628)—a period sufficient to overhaul and upgrade the residence to a level commensurate with the Tang imperial standard. It is believed that princess Wanchun lived in the mansion during the notorious “Incident of Xuanwu Gate” (*Xuanwumen zhibian* 玄武門之變), a fratricide took place in 626 through which Wanchun’s brother, the ambitious prince Li Shimin 李世民 (599–649, a.k.a. Tangtaizong 唐太宗, r. 626–649), had his brothers killed to seize the throne. From 626 to 636, we are not clear whether princess Wanchun passed away or left the residence. The uncertainty of date leaves a blank space of ten years in the prehistory of Ximingsi. We believe that after becoming the ironhanded

---

18 “Ono, *Shiryōhen*”, 227; Xu Song and Li Jianchao, *Zengding Tang liangjing chengfang kao*, 208.

ruler Taizong, Li Shimin bequeathed the house to his beloved fourth son Prince Li Tai 李泰 (618–652) around 636 (Zhenguan 貞觀 10), when the adult Prince was granted the noble title “King of Wei” (*weiwang* 魏王). Well versed in literature, Li Tai was known for patronizing talented scholars and men of letters. Attracted to his literary enterprise, scholars gathered in the Wenxue guan 文學館 (Mansion of Literature) established within his new residence.<sup>19</sup> I suspect that much of his private library and manuscripts preserved in this institution ended up in the famed collection of Ximingsi. As we will know, firstly, the Ximingsi library also contained a substantial collection of secular texts and literary writings, and secondly, one source informs us that certain architecture of Yang Su’s old house survived in the Tang-period Ximingsi as subject of talk among the clergymen in residence. Like what happened to the two previous householders, Prince Li Tai was also haunted by the witchery of the mansion. It is clear that the prince’s ambition for power unfortunately outweighed his literary taste. After an internecine struggle with his brother Li Chengqian 李承乾 (619–645), Li Tai was demoted and exiled to the distant Junzhou 均州, south of the Yangtze River. After he passed away in 652 (Yonghui 永輝 3), the Tang government, as suggested ambiguously in some source, eventually bought back his residence.<sup>20</sup>

---

19 Li Tai is also remembered as one of the noted geographers in the Tang period. Following the tradition of expounding one’s ideas in writing, he and his guest writers spent five years editing the *Kuodizhi* 括地志 (Gazetteer of the Earth, 641), a geographical tome testifying to his talents in prose and vision. For Li Tai’s biographies, see *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (The Old Book of Tang) 76. 2653–2656; *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (The New Book of Tang) 80. 3563. For the aristocratic residences of the Tang Dynasty princes, see Nunome Chōfū 布目潮風, “Tōdai Choan ni okeru ōfu · ōtaku ni tsuite 唐代長安における王府·王宅について,” In *Chūgoku shūrakushi no kenkyū* 中国聚落史の研究, ed. Tōdaishi kenkyūkai 唐代史研究会 (Tokyo: Tōsui shobō, 1980), 115–124. Sun Yinggang 孫英剛, “Sui-Tang Chang’an de wangfu yu wangzhai 隋唐長安的王府與王宅,” *Tang Yanjiu* 9 (2003): 185–214.

20 Ono, *Shiryōhen*, 227. Some scholars argue that, immediately upon Li Tai’s death in

## Anecdotal Accounts of Yang Su and its Connection with Ximingsi

The brief survey of the accounts of the three householders might, in a certain way, remind anyone familiar with English literature of the nineteenth century British epistolary novel *The Moonstone* (1868). It tells a riveting story of a magic yellow diamond stolen from the forehead of the Indian Moon Goddess. From its loss to recovery, the gem claimed many lives among those who tried to take possession of it.<sup>21</sup> Like the ominous moonstone, the residence of the Sui general Yang Su bears a resemblance to a haunted mansion which brought misfortune to its owners. Tales of the residence, most of which center on Yang Su, were known to the founders of the future Ximingsi, including Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) and Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667), who might very well have thought that it was not an ideal site on which to construct a monastery. However, it seems that the monastic community of Ximingsi and some eminent monks of the time apparently appreciated such a merciless general, whose biography, edited in the Tang dynasty, is testament to his ironhandedness and power.<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, discredited in Chinese history, he survived as a charismatic figure in both popular literature and Buddhist annals. In the apologetic writings of Buddho-Taoist debates, Yang Su was repeatedly cited as a pro-Buddhist official. The early

---

652, the Tang Dynasty government already established an unnamed monastery on the site of his residence, see Shi Hongshuai 史紅帥, “‘Tang Liangjing Chengfang Kao’ ‘Ximingsi’ Jiaowu 《唐兩京城坊考》‘西明寺’校誤,” *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢 1 (1999): 184; Xu Song and Li Jianchao, *Zengding Tang Liangjin Chengfang kao*, 210.

21 The novel was written by the British author Wilkie Collins (1824–1889), see Wilkie Collins and John Sutherland, *The Moonstone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

22 As demonstrated in his biography, Yang Su forced hundreds of soldiers to launch the first “suicidal” attack and ordered the execution of anyone who dared to return without defeating the enemies. See *Suishu*, 48.1281–1296.

Tang Buddhist scholar Falin 法琳 (572–640), in his anti-Daoist treatise *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (Discerning the Correct, T2110), declares that Yang Su admired Buddhist dharma and spent a large amount of his remuneration to support the deeds leading to good karma. He even constructed Buddhist stūpa, bell tower and a Guangming Monastery (Guangmingsi 光明寺, Brightness Monastery) to accumulate merit.<sup>23</sup> The name of Guangmingsi certainly reminds us of the literal meaning of “Ximing” (Western Brightness). We cannot rule out the possibility that he might have built Buddhist temples in his expansive Chang’an residence.

Another story, in Daoxuan’s *Ji gujin fodao lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 (Collection of Critical Evaluations of Buddhism and Daoism from the Past and Present, T2104), tells of the encounter of Yang Su with local Daoists residing at Louguan tai 樓觀台 (Platform of the Tiered Abbey), a celebrated Daoist Monastery at the foot of Mount Zhongnan in the southern suburbs of Chang’an. It seems Daoxuan himself had investigated the case of the conversion of the barbarians by Laozi (*laozi huahu* 老子化胡) through a visit to the Platform of the Tiered Abbey. As we know, the debate was on the theory that Laozi had left China for India to become the Buddha in order to convert the Barbarians. By the end of his account, Daoxuan connected Yang Su with the conversion debate:

Yang Su, the former head of the Department of State Affairs, the Duke of the State of Cu, had once passed the Platform of the Tiered Abbey. He saw the story of Yin Xi’s conversion of the barbarians was painted on the wall. Yang Su told the Daoist monks: “I have heard that Laozi had once tried to convert the barbarians (the Hu people) but failed, he

---

<sup>23</sup> *Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (Discerning the Correct), T52, no. 2110, p. 519, c11–13; see also *Minggong faxi zhi* 名公法喜志 (Gazetteer of the Bliss of the Dharma as Experienced by Celebrities), edited by Xia Shufang 夏樹芳, *Xuzang jing* 續藏經 150, p.79, a17–18. *Bianzheng lun* is a critique of Daoism, made in response to anti-Buddhist polemic in the early Tang.

then asked Yin Xi to transform himself into the Buddha. This time he (Yin Xi) was accepted by the Hu people. The story tells us that the Buddha is quite able to convert the barbarians and won their respect, while Daoism is incapable of doing as such. Then why do people talk about Laozi's conversion of the barbarians?

故隋尚書令楚國公楊素，行經樓觀，見壁畫尹喜化胡之像。素告諸道士曰：「承聞老君化胡，胡人不受，令喜變身作佛，胡人方受。是知佛能化胡，胡人奉佛，道不能化，云何言老子化胡？」<sup>24</sup>

In the story, Yang Su was engaged in a debate on why Yin Xi 尹喜, who purportedly received the 5,000-word teaching from Laozi during the Warring States period (403–221 BC). Not surprisingly, Yin Xi was depicted in the Daoist monastic fresco as a central figure converting barbarians from Central Asia.<sup>25</sup> But the scene, as reinterpreted by Yang Su, contains allusion to the Buddhist refutation of Laozi's conversion of the barbarians, a topic provoking disparaging comments by Buddhists in medieval China. In Daoxuan's treatise, Yang Su told the local clergy that the metamorphosis of Yin Xi into the Śākyamuni Buddha proves that the Buddhist way is superior to the Daoist path. This alternative portraiture of Yang Su is passed down to us because both Daoxuan and Falin, in their canonical writings dated during the early Tang, cite the case of Yang Su as supporting evidence of his preference for Buddhism, probably used in court debate to gain imperial favor for the

24 *Ji gujin fodao lunheng* 集古今佛道論衡 (Collection of Critical Evaluations of Buddhism and Daoism from the Past and Present), T52, no. 2104, 378, c25–379, a1.

25 Yin Xi, also known as Wenshi zhenren 文始真人 in Daoist religion, was the gatekeeper of Hangu Guan 函谷關. His biography appears in a Taoist hagiography titled *Lishi zhenxian tidao tongjian* 歷世真仙體道通鑒 (or *Xianjian* 仙鑒), written by the Yuan Dynasty Daoist master Zhao Daoyi 趙道一. The story of Yin Xi's reception of the *Daodejing* is also recorded in the biography of Laozi (*Laizi Hanfeizi liezhuan* 老子韓非子列傳) in the *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記); see Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 1959), 2139–2146.



Buddhist religion.<sup>26</sup>

It is possible that the image of Yang Su in Buddhist literature was very much circulated with Daoxuan's apologetic treatises *Ji gujin fodao lunheng*, in which the author mentions the former a dozen times and praises him as a devout Buddhist. This is not a coincidence, considering the unique position of Ximingsi in the Buddho-Daoist debate in the early Tang. For instance, it happened that the inauguration day of Ximingsi was also the Tang emperor Gaozong 高宗 (628–683, r. 649–683)'s birthday. At the behest of the emperor, a Buddho-Daoist court debate was held in the magnificent Baifu Hall (Baifudian 百福殿), a place referred to as *Yulunchang* 禦論場 (royal field of debate) by Daoxuan.<sup>27</sup> The custom of such debate started before the founding of the Tang dynasty, when the imperial court functioned as a forum where religious adherents could exchange views or debate about sensitive issues that affected society. Needless to say, court debate was a central arena for political interplay and competition between the religious communities. Two teams, of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, were summoned to undertake inter-religious debate to celebrate the occasion.

## The Cultural History of the Broken Mirror

Another reason for the popularity of the story of Yang Su, I suspect, lies in his fickle image as notably portrayed by popular literature and urban tales of Chang'an. Whether Yang Su was a true Buddhist is

---

26 *Bianzheng lun*, T52, no. 2110, p. 522, b22–c12; *Ji gujin fodao lunheng*, T 52, no. 2104, p. 378, c25–p. 379, a1. For a stimulating study of the text and the Buddo-Daoist court debate in early Tang, see Friederike Assandri, “Die Debatten zwischen Daoisten und Buddhisten in der frühen Tang-Zeit und die Chongxuan-Lehre des Daoismus” (PhD Dissertation, Heidelberg, 2002).

27 *Ji gujin fodao lunheng*, T52, no. 2104, p. 388, c21–23. For the culture of *lunchang* 論場 (field of debate) in the Tang dynasty, see *Da Tang xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 (Record of Travels to Western Lands), T51, no. 2087, p. 914, a18–25; *SGSZ*, T50, no. 2061, p. 734, c10–14..

unknown to us, but the catastrophe of the Yang clan was well-known among the inhabitants of Chang'an, let alone the monastic community of Ximingsi. We should hereby consider the cultural history of a household story related to Yang Su, for it later became an idiomatic expression circulating within the cultural sphere of both China and Japan.

It is known that the old houses scattered throughout Chang'an, like the ruins of antiquity, provided subject matter for both wandering minstrels and official writers of the time. Among a cluster of medieval works capturing memories of Chang'an, a manuscript *Liangjing xinji* 兩京新記 (New Record of the Two Capitals), preserves anecdotes and founding legends of residences that circulated in Chang'an during the eighth century. Collected and written by the Tang historian Wei Shu 韋述 (8<sup>th</sup> c.) in the tenth year of Kaiyuan 開元 (722), only a part of the third fascicle of *Liangjing xinji* survives today, as a manuscript preserved in the Kanazawa Bunko 金沢文庫 (The Library of Kanazawa) in Yokohama.<sup>28</sup> In his account of Ximingsi in the book, Wei Shu presents a household tale concerning Yang Su and his residence, an urban romance by the name of a "broken mirror" (*pojing* 破鏡), a metaphor referring to the reunion of a couple parted in a chaotic time. In many extant texts, this anecdote becomes a famed motif representing people's imagination of Ximingsi and its prehistory from the transitional seventh and eighth century Chang'an.

According to *Liangjing xinji*, the last emperor of the Chen Dynasty

---

28 This fragmentary manuscript, probably copied by Japanese monks in the early Kamakura period (1185–1333), is preserved in the library of the Maeda clan (*maedashi* 前田氏) in the fief of Kaga (Kagahan 加賀藩). Titled "*Sonkeikaku zō Kanazawa Bunko bon* 尊經閣藏金澤文庫本," the manuscript was transmitted to Japan by the end of the Tang Dynasty. For an introduction of the text and its author, see Seo Tatsuhiko 妹尾達彦, "Wei Shu de 'Liangjing xinji yu bashiji qianye de Chang'an' 韋述的《兩京新記》與八世紀前葉的長安," *Tang yanjiu* 9 (2003): 9–52; Rong Xinjiang, "Wei Shu jiqi 'Liangjing xingji' 韋述及其《兩京新記》," In *Sui Tang Chang'an: xingbie, jiyi ji qita* 隋唐長安：性別、記憶及其他 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 122–139.

(557–589) Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (553–604) had a beautiful sister known as Princess Lechang (Lechang gongzhu 樂昌公主), who was originally married to Xu Deyan 徐德言, the retainer to the heir apparent of Chen. Just before the Chen Dynasty was crushed by Yang Su and his army, Xu Deyan realized that in this time of tumult his wife would fall into the hands of the upper-class conquerors. He told his wife in weeping:

Since our country is defeated and home lost, we may not survive the disaster. Owing to your gift and beauty, there is no doubt you will be captured and sent to the royal palace or houses of the nobility. If I died, I hope you will not forget me. If I survived, I am afraid that we may not be able to see each other again. Nonetheless, I hope we can keep a promise. The couple broke a glass in half and each of them took a piece as a token. Deyan further said: “If you end up in the rich and powerful family, I hope you can sell your half of the mirror on the market in the fifteenth day of the first month. If I can find the mirror, then fortuitously it will herald your whereabouts.”

今國破家亡，必不相保。以子才色，必入帝王貴人家，我若死，幸無相忘。若生，亦不可復相見矣。雖然共為一信，乃擊破一鏡，各收其半，德言曰：「子若入貴人家，幸將此鏡合於正月望日，市中貨之。若存，當冀志之，知生死耳。」

As the story goes, the couple was forced to endure a long separation, during which Princess Lechang, now known as Lady Chen, was indeed captured by the Sui army and bestowed to Yang Su as a gift from Emperor Wendi. She soon gained the favor of Yang Su and became one of his beloved concubines. In the magnificent house a separate cloister was built for her in particular. After the State of Chen was annexed by the Sui Empire, in the hope of finding his wife, Xu Deyan travelled to the far north and arrived in Daxingcheng. Lady Chen, who lived inside the city, asked a castrated slave to sell the broken mirror in the nearby western market. As hoped, one day Xu Deyan found the other half of the

mirror, peddled by an old servant at a high price. Without hesitation he bought the broken mirror and invited the servant back to his place. The mirror, of course, was made whole again and his story was told to the servant. On inquiring about Chen's whereabouts and hearing of her marriage to Yang Su, he composed a poem on the surface of the mirror and send it back:

鏡與人俱去	The mirror and person both departed,
鏡歸人不歸	The mirror returns but not the person.
無復姮娥影	Heng'e's image is no more;
空餘明月輝	Empty but for the moonlight. <sup>29</sup>

Touched by the love story of Lady Chen, Yang Su granted her freedom and reunited the couple. The biography of Yang Su testifies to the truth of certain part of the story as it indicates that, in the wake of the promotion of Yang Su's sons, the clan again acquired a great deal of grains and treasure, along with "the sister of the lord of Chen (Chenzhu mei 陳主妹)" and forty other singing-girls.<sup>30</sup> Fanciful though a part of this imagined history may be, the tale took on a life of its own and came into common usage in modern Chinese language as a popular idiom called "*pojing chongyuan* 破鏡重圓 (a broken mirror made whole again)."<sup>31</sup>

---

29 Ono, *Shiryōhen*, 227–228; the story is also preserved in the Song Dynasty anecdotal anthology *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Era of Great Peace), see *Taiping guangji* 166. 1212–1213. Heng'e 姮娥, popularly known as Chang'e 嫦娥, is the Chinese moon goddess, whose story is available in the philosophical classic *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (Prince of Huainan). For a short English translation of the story of Xu Deyan, cf. Kang-i Sun Chang, Haun Saussy, and Charles Yim-tze Kwong, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 133–134.

30 *Suishu*, 48.1284.

31 Another idiom related to the story is called "*Lechang fenjing* 樂昌分鏡 (separation of the mirror by Lechang)", see *Hanyu da cidian*, s.v. *Lechang fenjing*.

With the provenance shrouded in mystery, the story circulated widely in Chinese and Japanese literature and left an indelible imprint in the succeeding dynasties. It is impossible to picture how the monks of Ximingsi retold the story in their casual talk, but the metaphor of the broken mirror formulated in the Tang dynasty as the story took shape is found in the Chan talks in the succeeding Five Dynasties (907–960). *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of the Transmission of the Lamp Published in the Jingde Era [1004–1007], T2067), a representative collection of biographies of prominent Chan monks edited in 1004, documents a conversation between a Chan master Xiuqing 休靜 and Zhuangzong 莊宗 (r. 923–926), the first emperor of the Later Tang Dynasty (923–936). A disciple of the eminent Chan master Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良價 (807–869), Xiuqing 休靜 was tasked with the mission of spreading Chan teaching in Southern China and later moved to the North and officiated as the spiritual teacher of Emperor Zhuangzong. Once in a dharma talk the emperor posed the question why the enlightened one (*Dawuderen* 大悟底人) has the possibility of backsliding into ignorance, Xiuqing responded with a typical Chan rejoinder “a broken mirror doesn’t reflect, as fallen blossom doesn’t return to the branch.”<sup>32</sup> Although the broken mirror, used in Zenist conversation, refers to a cracked or shattered mirror in which the image is poorly reflected, the word “*pojing*” is understood as coming from the story of Yang Su.<sup>33</sup> The biography of Xiuqing reveals that he was a monk registered at Huayan Monastery (Huayansi 華嚴寺) situated in the southern suburbs of Chang’an. We can infer that he was familiar with the story of Xu Deyan since short novels and poetic renditions of the

32 The original text reads “破鏡不重照，落華難上枝，” see *Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄 (Record of the Transmission of the Lamp Published in the Jingde Era [1004–1007]), T51, no. 2076, p. 338, a4–26.

33 *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, s.v. *Hakyō futatabi tarasazu* はきょう再び照らさず; *Kōjien* 広辞苑, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2008), s.v. *hakyō* 破鏡 (especially the example of *Hakyō futatabi tarasazu* 破鏡再び照らさず). The sixth edition of *Kōjien* is hereafter abbreviated as *Kōjien*.

tale already spread widely in the capital after the eighth century.

At least after the transmission of *Liangjin Xinji* and *Jingde chuangeng lu* to Japan, the story of the broken mirror, known in Japanese as “*hakyō* 破鏡,” which was associated with the prehistory of Ximingsi, found many derivatives in Japanese language as “*Hakyō no nageki* 破鏡の嘆き” (the sigh for the broken mirror), or as “*Hakyō futatabi tarasazu* 破鏡再び照らさず” (a broken mirror does not reflect), which is the direct translation of the Chan phrase in *Jingde chuangeng lu*. Even Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), the great patriarch of Japanese Zen, further explained the Zennist connotation of “*hakyō*” in his magnum opus *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 (Treasury of the True Eye of the Dharma).<sup>34</sup> Evidence of the Japanese usage of the word “*hakyō*” could also be found in the local ballad called “Noh song” (*yōkyoku* 謡曲), a literary genre retelling Buddhist stories and classical drama in the Edo period (1603–1868). In a noh chant titled *Yashima* 八島 (Eight Islands), for instance, the author Zeami Motokiyo 世阿弥元清 (1363–1443) humorously rephrased the literary quotation as a wordplay.<sup>35</sup>

It is apparent that the broken mirror is one of the starting points associating Yang Su with Ximingsi in the seventh century. However, when the mansion was finally reconstructed as the newly-established Ximingsi, the vestige of Yang Su’s residence, some of which was still preserved, must have reminded the monastics of the decline of the Yang Clan. Wei Shu had this to say regarding an old well left in the Cloister of Monk’s Kitchen (*sengchuyuan* 僧廚院) at Ximingsi:

There was an old well inside the monastery which once belonged to [the residence of] Yang Su. After Yang Xuangan was killed, his family [was

---

34 For some examples, see, *Kōjien*, s. v. *hakyō* 破鏡 and *rakka* 落花; See also *Zengaku daijiten* 禅学大辞典 (Tokyo: Taishūkan shoten, 1978), s.v. *Hakyō kasanete utsusazu* 破鏡不重照.

35 For the case of *Yashima*, see Kira Sueo 雲英末雄. *Shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 72. *Kinsei haiku haibunshū* 近世俳句俳文集. (Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 2001), 23.

forced to] cast gold into the well. Although residents of later time caught a glimpse of the gold in the water, they never succeeded in acquiring the gold. At that time the monks (of Ximing) called it a “mysterious well.”

內有楊素舊井，玄感被誅，家人以金投井，後人雖能夠窺見，但鈎汲無所獲，當時寺眾稱此為靈井。<sup>36</sup>

The mysterious well, committed to literary writing by the seventh- and eighth-century authors of Chang’an, is one of the few solid textual evidences connecting Yang Su’s residence with the future architecture of Ximingsi. The residents who inhabited the monastery after the tragedy of the Yang clan and the monks of Ximingsi must have believed the magical power of the well. For people of traditional China, the very fact of living in Chang’an meant living in a surrealistic world full of supernatural beings, some of which even became the objects of worship or the subjects of literary creation. As demonstrated by the Chinese historian Yu Xin 余欣, in his research on what he called the “livelihood religions” (*Minsheng zongjiao* 民生宗教, or the religion of daily life) in Dunhuang, medieval citizens believed that an ominous mansion, like the residence of Yang Su, was besieged by homicidal demons and monsters of every conceivable variety. The long list of bogeys and specters that he enumerates explains why house-guarding rituals are so prevalent in Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the case of the mysterious well of Ximingsi also reflects the fact that, as pointed out by the Japanese scholar Seo Tatsuhiko 妹尾達彦, by the eighth century, Chang’an had become the stage of innumerable poems, novels, gothic tales and anecdotes, through which a common memory of the city was

---

36 Ono, *Shiryōhen*, 227.

37 Yu Xin 余欣, *Shendao renxin: Tang Song zhiji dunhuang minsheng zongjiao shehuishi yanjiu* 神道人心：唐宋之際敦煌民生宗教社會史研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 196–239. The English title that Xu Xin used for his book is *Way of Gods, Life of Humans: Social History of the Livelihood Religions in Dunhuang during the Tang and Song Dynasties*.

shared among its citizens.<sup>38</sup> In the case of the prehistory or even the history of Ximingsi, there is little doubt that for over a millennium, the boundaries between the real and the imagined monastery are shifting and slippery. This is particularly perplexing given that historical facts of either the former residence or the later Ximingsi are often overshadowed by anecdotal literature and the literary imagination associated with the monastery. This is particular difficulty faced when trying to understand events relevant to Ximingsi from the ancient past.

Another source connecting Yang Su's residence with Ximingsi is also provided by the eighth century Tang epigraphy. A stone inscription composed by the famous literati Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–727) in 716 (Kaiyuan 4) to commemorate the establishment of a stūpa at Ximingsi, is titled *Tang Chang'an Ximingsi tabei* 唐長安西明寺塔碑 (The Stūpa Tablet of Ximingsi in Tang Chang'an). According to the inscription, we may venture to say that the dark prehistory of Ximingsi was equally an edifying lesson to the monastic community of Ximingsi—as is well summarized by its vinaya master Chongye 崇業, who probably made the following comment in the early eighth century:

The body [of the unenlightened worldling] is dependent on material things, but whatever is phenomenal is impermanent. I cannot forget that time is passing by and there is no bubble that will not break in the end. If anyone wants to edify people by writing down the moral on the wall, please allow me to tell you a lesson based on what happened in the monastery. [Today] we can still find vestige of the old masters who had lived here. First we have Yang Su, the Duke of Yue and Director of the Department of State Affairs of the Sui Dynasty, and then he was followed by Li Tai, the Prince of Pu of our imperial dynasty. Then we know that if one's richness is not properly gained, his fortune will dry up. If one does not follow the virtue of thrift, what he acquires will be lost. [Therefore] not carrying something through to the end is different

---

38 Seo Tatsuhiko, "Wei Shu de 'Liangjing xinji'yu bashiji qianye de Chang'an," 23–24.



from the principle of cautious consideration at the beginning and complacency is not a means to maintain the achievements of one's predecessors.

此身有待，諸行無常。<sup>39</sup> 欽不居之歲月，無不滅之泡影。樂化成而記壁者，請因寺而言之。<sup>40</sup> 是則有隋尚書令越國公楊素，泊我濮王泰宅之舊區。豐不當必藪，儉不師且奪。終異謀始之則，滿非守成之具。<sup>41</sup>

The original speech or prose by Chongye is unknown to us. His words, written probably for the ceremonial occasion of the new stūpa of Ximingsi, somehow survived in Su Ting's inscription. Chongye was a distinguished scholar of the monastery, who studied Buddhist precepts under the guidance of Wengang 文綱 (636–727), the disciple of the founding abbot of Ximingsi Daoxuan.<sup>42</sup> In the second half of the seventh century, Chongye was quite active in the reign of the Tang Emperor Ruizong 睿宗 (Lidan 李旦 662–716, r. 684–690 & 710–712) to whom he subsequently gave the bodhisattva precepts (Ch. *pusajie* 菩薩戒). It's clear from the inscription that Chongye considers the cases from General Yang Su to Prince Li Tai, treating them as an integral part of the history

---

39 *You dai* 有待 (relies on the power of another) is a special term used in the chapter of *Qiwulun* 齊物論 (Discussion of the Equality of All Things) in *Zhuangzi* 莊子. It also appears in the Daoist scripture *Zhen'gao* 真誥 (Declarations of the Perfected). In Buddhist parlance, it means that human body, which is dependent on material things, will decay. See *Mohe ziguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Teaching of Cessation and Observation), T46, no. 1911, p. 36, a1–3.

40 The term *huacheng* 化成 (to receive virtuous influence and become a good person) is originally from the commentary on section 32 of *Yijing* (Book of Changes): “聖人久於其道，而天下化成 (The Sage stays forever within the course of the Dao and so brings about the perfection of the entire world).”

41 *Ximingsi tabei* 西明寺塔碑 (The Stūpa Tablet of Ximingsi), see *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (The Complete Tang Texts) 257. 2597–2598.

42 *SGSZ*, T50, no. 2061, p. 795, a15–25. For the dharma lineage transferred by Daoxuan, see *Mochizuki*, 3999.

of Ximingsi, a lesson that should be remembered by the monastic community. As a monk well versed in Buddhist doctrine, he realized that the monastery's past teaches us the moral of impermanence (Skt. *anitya*, Ch. *wuchang* 無常), reminding the clergy that the monastery was erected on the ruins of a once bustling residence.<sup>43</sup> What Chongye refers to here is the Buddhist maxim of “whatever is phenomenal is impermanent” (Ch. *zhuxing wuchang* 諸行無常, Skt: *sarva-saṃskārā anityāh*). As pervasively pointed out in all the major Buddhist canons, this aphorism best describes the turmoil in the prehistory of Ximingsi. In this way, the story of Yang Su, the fate of the Tang imperial kinsmen, and the tales of their residence were carried forward and remembered as the history of Ximingsi unfolded itself.

## Concluding Remarks

Through the lens of historical sources, Buddhist corpus and imaginative literature, this essay examines the events preceding the founding of Ximingsi, outlining the prehistory of this great monastery, which was renowned throughout Tang dynasty for its fame as a center of Buddhist learning and Sino-Japanese cultural exchange. The imposing residence that comprised the later Ximingsi was constructed somewhere between 584 and 599, shortly before the establishment of the Tang empire. From general Yang Su to Prince Li Tai, the mansion was occupied and subsequently abandoned by some celebrated owners, who belonged to different generations but experienced the same vicissitudes

---

43 In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, Ch. *Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T374), the Buddha further elaborates the superior truth in the famous gāthā that “All things Change, and this is the law of birth and death. When the birth and death is done away with, quietude is the bliss.” See Kosho Yamamoto, *The Mahayana Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra; A Complete Translation from the Classical Chinese Language in 3 volumes* (Ube: Karinbunko, 1973), 352–356. For the Chinese original (諸行無常, 是生滅法; 生滅滅已, 寂滅為樂), see *Da banniepan jing* (Sūtra of the Great Decease), T12, no. 374, p. 450, a16–p. 451, b5.

that life had to offer. Their stories, especially those concerning Yang Su in particular, were told and retold by fiction writers, medieval bards and commoners of the metropolis. From the middle of the seventh century, for urban citizens of Chang'an, the newly constructed Ximingsi became not only a temple of Buddhist culture, but also a numinous site alive with imagination and anecdotal history. The legends circulating on the streets of Chang'an open a window into the prehistory of Ximingsi. Hereby we consider the historical significance of the stories found in Buddhist literature, and writings such as *Liangjin Xinji*. This is particularly evident in the case of Yang Su, whose obnoxious image was recreated and sugared by the Ximingsi abbot Daoxuan and other Buddhist saints in their writings centering on the early Buddho-Daoist debates. Inspired by urban tales and founding myth concerning the mansions and temples of Chang'an, by the early eighth century, Wei Shu and other Tang writers were entrusted with the duty of recording a city full of anecdotes, unquiet ghosts and spiritual agencies.

Many localized stories, associated with celebrated residences and ranking temples, gave to Chang'an a sacred status unique among the cities of China. It is obvious that Ximingsi, situated near the bustling Western Market, was portrayed to the life by stories as such. The tale of the "broken mirror," which was the most famous anecdote associated with Yang Su and his residence, eventually took on a life of its own. Mentioned in the corpus of Zen canon and Japanese literature, the story preserves traces of reality regarding Ximingsi, even if distorted through transmission throughout the ages. It not only further became an exemplar of the public memory of Ximingsi in ancient Chang'an, but also found its derivatives in modern Chinese and Japanese languages. Other anecdotes of Yang Su, such as the eccentric story of the old well, were also well known among the monks of Ximingsi. Later on, on the occasion of the establishment of the monastic stūpa at the beginning of the eighth century, the historic journey of the monastery was properly summarized by the Ximingsi master Chongye as a lesson of worldly impermanence. For a millennium, these tales were seen as an integral part of the legacy of Ximingsi in both China and Japan, imbuing it with

a religious meaning that cannot be overlooked in any serious investigation of the monastery. I believe it is only with such historical fragments and literary imagination that we can begin to attempt a complete history of Ximingsi.

## Bibliography

### I. Primary Sources

- Bianzheng lun* 辯正論 (Discerning the Correct). By Falin 法琳 (572–640). T52, no. 2110.
- Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*). T12, no. 374.
- Dai Nihon bukkyō zensho* 大日本佛教全書. 100 vols. Edited by Suzuki gakujutsu zaidan 鈴木學術財. Tokyo: Hatsubai kōdansha (1970–1973).
- Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄. By Daoyuan 道原. T51, no. 2076.
- Liangjing xinji* 兩京新記. By Wei Shu 韋述 (d.757). Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963.
- Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Mohe bore boluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經), T08, no. 223.
- Mohe ziguan* 摩訶止觀 (The Great Teaching of Cessation and Observation), T46, no. 1911.
- Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩. Compiled by Peng Dingqiu 彭定求 (1645–1719). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960.
- Quan Tang wen* 全唐文. Compiled by Dong Hao 董浩 (1740–1818). Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965.
- Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集. Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1994.
- Song gaoseng zhuan* 宋高僧傳. Compiled by Zanning 贊寧. T50, no. 2061.
- Sui shu* 隋書. By Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) and others. Beijing: zhonghua shuju, 1973.
- Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. Compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925–996). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961.
- Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. Edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順

- 次郎 (1866–1945) and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭 (1872–1933). Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1924–1932.
- Ximingsi tabei* 西明寺塔碑 . By Su Ting 蘇頌 (670–727).
- Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 . By Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and others. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975.

## II. Secondary Sources

- Borgen, Robert. “A History of Dōmyōji to 1572 (or Maybe 1575): An Attempted Reconstruction.” *Monumenta Nipponica* 62, no. 1 (2007): 1–55.
- Chōfū Nunome 布目潮瀨 . “Tōdai Chōan niokeru ōfu -ōtaku nitsuite 唐代長安における王府・住宅について,” In *Chūgoku shūrakushi no kenkyū* 中国聚落史の研究 , ed. Tōdaishi kenkyūkai 唐代史研究会 . Tokyo: Tōsui shobō, 1980, 115–24.
- Deng Gang. *Maritime Sector, Institutions, and Sea Power of Premodern China*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Emden Christian, Catherine Keen, and David R. Midgley, *Imagining the City*, 2 vols. Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2006.
- Hucker, Charles. *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Kira Sueo 雲英末雄 . *Shinpen nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集 72. *Kinsei haiku haibunshū* 近世俳句俳文集 . Tōkyō: Shōgakkan, 2001.
- Kosho Yamamoto. *The Mahayana Mahāparinirvanasūtra; a Complete Translation from the Classical Chinese Language in 3 volumes*. Ube: Karinbunko, 1973.
- Liang Jianbang 梁建邦. “Yang Su muzhi de faxian yu jiazhi 楊素墓誌的發現與價值 .” *Weinan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 渭南師範學院學報 1 (1990): 94–98.
- Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, et al. *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 . Shanghai: Cishu chubanshe, 1986–1993.
- Mochizuki Shinko 望月信亨, Tsukamoto Zenryū 塚本善隆, and Sekai Seitāen kanko kyokai 世界聖典刊行協會, eds. *Bukkyō daijiten* 佛教大辭典 . 10 vols.

- Kyoto: sekai seiten kanko kyokai, 1954–1971.
- Nakamura Hajime 中村元, ed. *Iwanami bukkyō jiten* 岩波仏教辭典, 2nd ed. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2002.
- Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年. *Chūgoku Zui Tō Chōan jīn shiryō shūsei* 中國隋唐長安寺院史料集成 (*Shiryō hen* 史料篇 and *Kaisetsu hen* 解説篇). Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989.
- Rong Xinjiang 榮新江. ed. *Sui Tang Chang'an: xingbie, jiyi ji qita* 隋唐長安：性別、記憶及其他. Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2010.
- Schmidt-Glinterz, Helwig. “Buddhism in the Tang Period.” *Buddhist Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (1999): 189–206.
- Seo Tatsuhiko 妹尾達彦. “Wei Shu de ‘Liangjing xinji’yu bashiji qianye de Chang’an 韋述的《兩京新記》與八世紀前葉的長安.” *Tang yanjiu* 唐研究 9 (2003): 9–52.
- Shi Hongshuai 史紅帥. “‘Tang liangjing chengfang kao’ ‘Ximingsi’ jiaowu 《唐兩京城坊考》‘西明寺’校誤.” *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢 1 (1999): 184.
- Shōgakkan kokugo jiten henshūbu 小學館国語辭典編集部, ed. *Nihonkokugo daijiten* 日本國語大辭典. Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 2006.
- Song Suyi 宋肅懿, *Tangdai Chang’an zhi yanjiu* 唐代長安之研究. Taopei: Dali chubanshe, 1983.
- Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman. *Chinese Imperial City Planning*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.
- Sun Yinggang 孫英剛, “Sui-Tang Chang’an de wangfu yu wangzhai 隋唐長安的王府與王宅,” *Tang Yanjiu* 唐研究 9 (2003): 185–214.
- Takashi Okazaki 岡崎敬, “Zui · Daikō=Tō · Chōanjō to Zuitō · tōto Rakuyōjō —kinnen no chōsa kekka o chūshin toshite 隋 · 大興 = 唐 · 長安城と隋唐 · 東都洛陽城 —— 近年の調査結果を中心として,” *Bukkyō geijutsu* 仏教芸術 51 (1963): 86–108.
- Thilo, Thomas. *Klassische Chinesische Baukunst: Strukturprinzipien U. Soziale Funktion*. Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1977.
- Wu Hung. *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995.

- Xiong, Victor Cunrui (Xiong Cunrui 熊存瑞). *Sui-Tang Chang'an: A Study in the Urban History Medieval China*. Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2000.
- . *Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty: His Life, Times, and Legacy*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- . *Historical Dictionary of Medieval China*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009.
- Xu Deyan, cf. Kang-i Sun Chang, Haun Saussy, and Charles Yim-tze Kwong, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: an Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Xu Song 徐松, and Li Jianchao 李健超, *Zengding Tang liangjing chengfang kao* 增訂唐兩京城坊考. Xi'an: Sanqin chubanshe, 2006.
- Yu Xin 余欣. *Shendao renxin: Tang Song zhiji Dunhuang minsheng zongjiao shehuishi yanjiu* 神道人心：唐宋之際敦煌民生宗教社會史研究. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006.
- Zhao, Xiaohuan. *Classical Chinese Supernatural Fiction: A Morphological History*. Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2005.

## 西明寺前史：長安佛教的軼聞與想像

王翔

### 摘要

中古中國隋唐長安城的眾多佛寺中，西明寺是首屈一指的國家大寺和國際佛學中心。作為西明寺研究的一部分，本文的切入點是被學者所忽視的西明寺前史，也就是寺院的前身從隋末到唐初的曲折變遷。在這一轉型時期，與後來崛起的西明寺有關的緣起和傳說都指向了隋朝權臣楊素的官邸。本文梳理了和這所幾經興廢的宅邸相關的歷史記載和佛教文獻，通過楊素、萬春公主和魏王李泰的人生起落，追溯了這所宅院三易其手的過程。同時，這幾位權貴的舊聞也逐漸演變為長安的井市傳說，成為有關西明寺的文化想像的組成部分。和楊素有關的軼聞，比如「破鏡重圓」的故事，也終於自成一體，不僅在漢語文獻中廣為流傳，也進入了禪宗的語錄和日本的文化圈。因此，有關西明寺前史的探討，不光揭示了古典時代中日文化的交融，同時也為西明寺研究的深入展開奠定了基礎。

關鍵詞：長安、李泰、西明寺、楊素、謠曲