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Readings on Chinese Religion
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December 12, 2010

Chinese Buddhist "Sacrality"[1] of Space

Any discussion of Chinese Buddhist sacrality of space must account for a number conceptual complexities and the intersection of category-defying phenomena. Simply stated, the reconstruction of Chinese Buddhist sacrality involves a negotiation of three artificially designated spheres: Chinese, Buddhist, and human. The first relates to the typically monolithicized—though necessarily porous and dynamic—entity of Chinese culture with its supposedly coherent and continuous worldview. Questions arising from looking through the Chinese lens relate to the 'autochthonous' constructions of Chinese sacrality: what do distinctly Chinese actors of different periods consider to be a sacred space, how is it established, and how does Chinese sacred space transform and interact with other "outside" factors?[2] The Chinese sphere is usually placed in juxtaposition to the foreign-derived Buddhist influence, which is variously framed as having to overcome the Chinese established worldview, to rid itself of barbarian foreignness, and to accommodate itself—or be accommodated—to fit in the Chinese cultural landscape. As Buddhism moved into China, Buddhist ideas of sacrality in their obvious form—relics and stupas, the presence of buddhas and bodhisattvas—came with it. Questions coming from this sphere take a similar form: what do Buddhists consider to be sacred space, how is it established, and how does Buddhist sacred space transform and interact with "Chinese" factors? Less apparent considerations relate to Chinese attitudes—both Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike—toward the original homeland of Buddhism,

[1] I will use the words "sacred/numinous" and "sacrality/numinosity" interchangeably in this paper for lack of better terms that encapsulate a confluence of power, renown, and "specialness" at a particular place or region.
[2] Within the Chinese sphere are typically thrown factors relating to Daoism, Confucianism, Chinese concepts such as *qi* (气), *yin-yang* (陰陽), and *fengshui* (風水), and the somewhat misleading concept of China as a homogenous and well-defined political, cultural, and social entity. It is not possible within the space of this paper to address all of these assumptions critically, but it is important to be aware of them and confront them when possible. The sensitivity to non-homogenous cultures, particularly with respect to geography and place were inspired by Feld and Basso's introduction in *Senses of Place*, 1993. (pp. 5-7).

India. Whether or not India's presence or distance was a factor in forming Chinese Buddhist sacrality must always be kept in mind. The third sphere, still somewhat neglected or overlooked in scholarship, is the human sphere; that is, the host of factors typically set aside in the secular realm: economic, political, and social. When the human sphere is addressed, it is usually to the exclusion of more religiously flavored factors.[3] Here theories and models of power movement and power relations, economic viability, and regional influence are applied to analyze the more "concrete" and somewhat universal ways in which sacred space and sacrality are established, maintained, and perpetuated in order to meet secular ends of institutional preservation, influence, and economic gain.[4]

Of course, a more accurate—or at the very least, constructive—picture is gained by merging the three spheres as they certainly were in history.[5] Yet this merging is complicated and restricted by the sources we are given: the emic narratives written for places, temples, mountains or regions found in gazetteers, the biographies and hagiographies of masters, and the landscapes themselves, built as they are with accrued structures and accrued histories.[6] Therefore, as we proceed to discuss the sacrality of a Chinese Buddhist site, it will be helpful at times to single out one of the three spheres for clarity, and helpful at times to fuse them together for a richer though elusive whole.[7] As we do this, recent work by space theorists as well as examples from Japan will help broaden our considerations and enrich our understandings.

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[3] I am thinking in particular Walsh's *Sacred Economies*, 2010. Though Walsh insists that religious and so-called secular activities were mixed and that both were essential to a monastery's functioning, he largely neglects the religious component, or more importantly, how the two mix and interact more closely. His comments on this can be found on p. 14.

[4] The establishment, maintenance, and perpetuation of monastic space is discussed in Walsh, *Sacred Economies*, 2010 (p. 10)

[5] As noted by numerous scholars of Chinese religion, including Susan Naquin and Yu Chunfang in their introduction to "Pilgrimage in China" (p. 9).

[6] Robson, "Changing Place" (p. 173, 193); Also, Leoshko, "On the Construction of a Buddhist Pilgrimage Site," 1996 (p. 593).

[7] I am not completely satisfied with this approach, but saw the triple-sphere categorization implicitly underlying previous scholarship and wanted to see if bringing it forward would be beneficial or a hindrance.

What are the ways in which a particular site in China—be it a mountain or a temple[8]—is imbued with sacrality or numinosity? One way, which seems pervasive throughout many periods and places in China, is ascribing the natural features of a landscape—the trees, water, rock formations—with a particular sense of potency or efficacy.[9] In what manner they are efficacious varies. One sense is that engaging in practices of cultivation around such features will act as a catalyst to the ends of that practice.[10] For a Daoist adept working towards the refinement of the bodily energies or seeking longevity, being around a landscape that is imbued with power aids those efforts or makes them possible at all.[11] A Buddhist practitioner would avail himself to similar benefits, only the framing of the goal would instead be in line with Buddhist soteriological goals of enlightenment.[12] Even further, there is a sense that imbibing the elements of the landscape such as herbs or water would bestow powers of longevity or lucidity.[13] It seems that even merely residing in a numinous place without any emphasis on any particular practice would be sufficient to benefit from the place's powers by contact. Indeed, the location of a monastery or temple would ideally be situated in such a sacred realm, ensuring that both the monks and the monastery would prosper.[14] Geomancy (*fengshui*) and celestial correspondences were utilized to read an area's terrain and heavenly positioning to find the most suitable location where

[8] While I am sensitive to the differences in built and natural environments with respect to sacrality, I will be discussing them simultaneously throughout the paper for the sake of clarity.
[9] Robson, "Monastic Spaces and Sacred Traces" (p. 51); Shinohara, "The Record of Mt. Lu" (pp. 943-945, 949).
[10] This attitude toward natural or built areas is curiously similar to that held by practitioners of the amorphous Japanese tradition, Shugendō, which places a great deal of emphasis on the power one can gain from simply passing through the mountains. See the brief discussion of the Japanese context below.
[11] I am referring to idea of practicing or residing near or within a Daoist *fudi* (福地) or "Blessed Terrain" and the *dongtian* (洞天) or "Grotto Heavens"—the mysterious network of caves or underground passages. Robson, "Changing Places" (pp. 180-186); See also Pregadio's work on Daoist alchemists and the careful placement and arrangement of their kitchens in *Great Clarity: Daoism and Alchemy in Early Medieval China*, 2006. (pp. 95-99).
[12] However, this is more speculation than a supported claim, for even Buddhists were shown to have aims typically seen as exclusive to Daoists such as concocting elixirs for longevity. I am referring to the case of Huisi: Robson "Monastic Spaces," 2009 (pp. 55-56). Furthermore, with the development of Chan Buddhism, the importance of cultivation and goals of enlightenment were de-emphasized—at least within Chan's recorded discourse and rhetoric—in favor of immediate Buddhahood which could arguably be realized in any place. See the brief discussion of Chan below.
[13] Robson "Monastic Spaces," 2009 (p. 51); Robson, "Changing Places" (p. 175).
[14] Robson "Monastic Spaces," 2009 (p. 49).

a monastery or temple could best take advantage of the flows of energy along the terrain below, and from the stars above. [15] Sacrality was therefore in one sense sought in the natural landscape and the founding of a monastery was a process of building—or moving into—where sacrality or numinosity already existed.[16]

That sacred Buddhist sites were located on already existing sacred sites of other, non-Buddhist renown raises an interesting question: how did the site so easily become Buddhist? Was it a simple matter of erecting a Buddhist monastery or temple (or moving into a pre-existing structure) that gave a site its sacrality? Or does a Buddhist sacred site become Buddhist due to specific factors? The previous, non-Buddhist history of a site is openly acknowledged in place biographies,[17] but a site seems to gain its Buddhist connection through the arrival of Buddhist objects or agents, or both. Thus a second way in which a site was considered sacred or became sacred was through the arrival of sacred elements, religiously powerful people, or the occurrence of a miraculous event under the auspices of Buddhist influence.[18] Perhaps the most common factor was the arrival of a relic of the Buddha or a well-known master, which was seen as emitting a certain kind of power. Relics were ideal in their capacity of bestowing numinosity because they were portable, could be produced from recently deceased masters, and could be divided up into tiny fragments allowing for a potentially widespread distribution.[19] Interestingly, a text could serve in a similar way as a "locus of sanctity."[20] A text could be enshrined much like a relic would be placed in a stupa, and likewise give off a certain power. The movement of

[15] Robson "Monastic Spaces," 2009 (p. 48); There is also the possibility that places, particularly mountains, were chosen because they were ideally situated within the "four-element" scheme (wind/air, water, fire, and earth) coming out of India. Suggested by Johnston, 1976 (p. 144).
[16] Especially in the case where the area was already well known for its numinosity and had religious establishments like Daoist abbeys which had already taken advantage of a site's power. Robson, "Changing Places." (pp. 179, 191-194). It seems that determining the actual beginnings or origins of a place's reputation for holding power would be rather difficult, if possible at all.
[17] Again, it seems that this is to a religious site's advantage. Robson, "Changing Places". (p. 179)
[18] Shinohara, "The Record of Mt. Lu" (p. 945).
[19] Relics gain even more power when they were connected to the relic distribution campaign of the Indian Buddhist King Aśoka, whose erected stupas were thought to even be in China. Robson, "Changing Places." (p. 174).
[20] T.H. Barrett, "On the Road to China" (published yet?) (p. 107, 121).

relics and texts is a difficult process to account for, especially when considering how a site became sacred and whether or not a relic or text can grant a whole place its sacrality. It seems likely that a relic or text may contribute rather than completely bestow sacrality, and that instead more miraculous presences are operative in making a site sacred and famous.

Mountains are typical locales for both Buddhist temples and Daoist abbeys alike, which may stem from several factors beyond their association with numinous powers.[21] The gazetteers for temples of monasteries situated on or near mountains often open with a narrative of the temple's establishment on the mountain. One common narrative is of some well-known monk arriving at a mountain, subduing a dragon or snake-like creature, tiger, or local deity, and perhaps even striking his staff into the ground so that a source of water could be available for the future temple or monastery.[22] Here it is the presence and abilities of a wandering monk or master that subdues a mountain's powers and "opens it up" as a place for Buddhism.[23] Why a famous master would choose a particular place is not always clear, but sometimes the inspiration comes from "extraordinary visions" or "dream divination," in which some sign directs the monk or master to a particular mountain.[24] Even more impressive is the association of a place or mountain with a bodhisattva or even the Buddha himself. Eventually several mountains in China—and later Japan—became associated with the popular bodhisattvas of Mahāyāna Buddhism, such as Mañjuśrī with Mt. Wutai, Guanyin with Mt. Putuo, Dizang with Mt. Jiuhua, etc.[25] Clearly, the movement of bodhisattvas to mountains in China was a powerful way to imbue China with Buddhist sacrality, and it seems likely that the tradition and history of local deities residing on mountains in China

[21] These might include: that mountains were lofty places free from the dust of the world (Johnston), that mountain property was cheap and unwanted (Walsh), that mountain sites offered a safe haven during times of political instability, or that the heights of mountains brought them closest to divine realms and powers (Eliade).
[22] I am referring to the tales of An Shigao and Huiyuan coming to Mt. Lu: Shinohara, "The Record of Mt. Lu" (pp. 943-944).
[23] A similar manner of "opening up" mountains is found in Japan as well, with the tale of En-no-Ozunu or En-no-Gyōja, the supposed founder of Shugendō, opening up Mt. Fuji as a prominent example. See Keenan's "En the Ascetic" in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, 1999 (pp. 343-353).
[24] I am referring to the tale of Fazhao and his dream of Mt. Wutai. Robson, "Monastic Spaces." (pp. 57-58)
[25] Robson "Buddhist Sacred Geography." (p. 1353).

–and likewise in Japan—aided with those movements or allowed them to happen at all. The presence of the Buddha in China was certainly a remarkable feat, and it's interesting to note that this was not only accomplished through the arrival of his relics, but through evidence left by his "traces": footprints, handprints, or even shadows left by the Buddha in former lives or during cosmic travels while he was still living.[26] We can thus see how—beyond natural features and objects—deities and powerful people were fundamental to making a particular place sacred, and how this latter strategy allowed for the movement of "genuine Buddhism" from India to China.

It is commonly assumed that as Buddhism moved into China, Chinese Buddhists had to deal with a jarring reality: the original land of the Buddha, and the "center" of the Buddhist world, India, was far away beyond an impenetrable wall of high mountains. While texts could be imported and translated, relics distributed, there still remained a lack in China due to the overwhelming distance from India, what Tansen Sen quotes Antonio Forte as calling a "borderland complex."[27] This sentiment was exacerbated by the "decline of the dharma" (*mofa* 末法) mentality and the general feeling that the Buddhism in China—particularly the following of the Vinaya—was somehow corrupted.[28] How pervasive this feeling was in China is difficult to gauge concretely, but perceivable strategies of sacralizing China suggest that indeed Chinese Buddhist actors were eager to bring Buddhist sacrality from India into China, and were able to do so in imaginative and convincing ways. Some of these strategies have already been mentioned—the importation and distribution of relics, the crediting of a given site with traces of the Buddha or the presence of a bodhisattva—and can in various ways be seen as attempts to draw a line from India to China. However, other strategies were more subtle and prompt us to reexamine the claim that China had to always compare itself with the greater and more legitimate Buddhist India.

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[26] Shinohara "The Story of the Buddha's Begging Bowl" (pp. 90-93); Robson, "Changing Places" (p. 175).
[27] Sen, *Buddhism Diplomacy, and Trade*. (p. 11). Sen discusses how this attitude was not only directed toward the historically demarcated territory of India, but more significantly toward the Buddhist cosmological land of Jambudvīpa, where India is clearly situated but where China is pushed to the periphery. Ibid. (p. 10).
[28] Barrett "On the Road to China" (p. 110)

While they cannot be fully explored and related to the Chinese context here, it will first be helpful to consider general theories which attempt to account for the establishment and movement of sacred space. First of all, the idea that Chinese Buddhists were looking longingly at a distant Buddhist holy land in India assumes that India was viewed as a "holy land" and potentially *the* center for Buddhism. This is in a sense the picture proposed by Mircea Eliade in his theorizing about how the realms of the "sacred and the profane" are differentiated, and how the "hierophanies" which create sacred space open up an "axis mundi" or center for an adherent's orientation and worship.[29] For any adherent of any religion, the holy land or sacred center—the Jerusalem or Mecca—is the source and mainstay of sacrality; the most powerful node for accessing the sacred. Sentiments in this vein are somewhat voiced by Chinese Buddhist travellers or pilgrims who successfully made the trip to India and went about visiting the supposed sacred sites of Buddhism.[30] Later efforts by the Chinese imperium to sacralize China as a Buddhist realm, or better yet *the* Buddhist realm, also suggests that there was a lack felt by Chinese Buddhists due to being at some remove from India. However, would it be going too far to presume that this feeling of longing for India and disappointment at being far removed in time and place from the Buddhist holy land and its golden era was widespread geographically in China or beyond the first couple hundred years when Buddhism first arrived in China? Later developments in China suggest that this feeling did not last long, or at the very least that the centrality of India was adjusted or replaced by the Buddhist sacralization of China.[31] In Eliade's theorizing, he allows for the possibility of

[29] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 1957 (pp. 21-24).

[30] For example, the well-known travellers, Faxian and later Xuanzang. T.H. Barrett discusses the impressions and reactions these pilgrims had toward the India they visited as being characterized by despair and loss. Regardless of whether these sites were established and considered a collective set, or if they are modern assumptions projected onto the past, it is at least possible to assume from the textual accounts that India was indeed valued as a kind of sacred realm where Buddhism emerged. See Barrett, "Observations on Weeping Pilgrims" (p. 99).

[31] I am referring to the efforts of Empress Wu and her distribution of icons, as well as the image of China as the "lively" center of new Buddhism. Barrett "On the Road to China" (pp. 110-111). As Barrett notes, these efforts may have originally been motivated by a felt lack, but possibly evolved to give more weight to a Buddhist China. Tansen Sen echoes a similar change in attitude by the end of the Tang, where Buddhist sacrality was firmly established in China and there was no longer a need or desire to look to India as the Buddhist holy land. Sen, *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade* (p. 12).

multiple centers,[32] but the active *human* involvement in the sacralization of China such as the Empress Wu and her effort to color China as Buddhist holy land, tend to make his conceptions that hierophanic sacred space is revealed rather than constructed, inappropriate for the Chinese context.[33]

To help us further understand the importance and possible attitudes towards India in the Buddhist sacralization of China, we can here consider the sacred space theorizing of J.Z. Smith, particularly the concept of "transposition." Smith argues that, given that a religious population must deal with the problem of being at a distance from a holy land or sacred center, certain strategies are employed to make a holy land or sacred center present and immediately accessible to that population. These strategies, whereby parts of the holy land ("metonymical transposition") or representations of the holy land ("metaphorical transposition," which takes many forms) become the means of sacralizing a space, can arguably be seen operating in the Chinese Buddhist context.[34] The power that a Sanskrit Buddhist text or the relics of the Buddha held for Chinese Buddhists was partly derived from these objects having come from Buddhist India. As Koichi Shinohara demonstrates in his "The Story of the Buddha's Begging Bowl," connecting a relic of the Buddha—his begging bowl—to a place at some remove from his known historical haunts, places that new territory firmly along the course of the transmission of the Dharma.[35] Here, the strategy of transposition at play was having a piece of Buddhist history—which expanded to cosmic proportions in China—connected directly to the Chinese landscape. While J.Z. Smith's discussion focuses more on the movement of pieces of places, the notion of contact with an object or authority can in effect be seen as a form of metonymical transposition. Furthermore,

[32] Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (p. 57).
[33] Though I would acknowledge that the "discovery" of the Buddha's traces and lost relics does smack of a certain revelatory and irruptive flavor, I would still refrain from using Eliade's terms, *hierophany* and *axis mundi*, since they lean too heavily on the importance of the irruption of an "other world" into an ordinary world. While there may be something akin to an "other," heavenly realm in Chinese religiosity, it is by no means a distinct dichotomy that remains stable and consistent throughout Chinese history and shifting Chinese mentalities and geographies.
[34] J.Z. Smith, "Constructing a Small Place" (pp. 18-20).
[35] Shinohara here is actually relating how the begging bowl reached Gandhāra, as revealed to the well-known Chinese Buddhist figure, Daoxuan. Just the same, this revelation becomes enough to then directly connect Daoxuan to Buddhist India through the cosmic plane. Shinohara, "The Story of the Buddha's Begging Bowl" (pp. 90-93).

the credibility of a monastery for having a monk or master who came from India or traveled there and made contact with Buddhist India suggests that experience in India and physical contact were indeed accorded a high value.[36] Finally, there do not appear to be any clear examples of Chinese Buddhist temples or monasteries built in the likeness of supposed Buddhist sacred sites in India, or as representations of those sites (both forms of metaphorical transposition raised by Smith).[37] Instead, there does appear a movement in Chinese Buddhism where any representations or miniaturizations are rendered unnecessary, and the importance of proximity is de-emphasized.

The cosmic vision granted by the forms of Mahāyāna Buddhism which moved into and developed in China allows for a truly universal reach for Buddhism, drawing a cosmic blanket over India, China, and beyond. In such a development—where buddhas and bodhisattvas could fly and descend at any point and where buddhas from ages past have walked all over India and China—did Chinese Buddhist sacrality any longer need moorings? Would the sacrality of a particular space be necessary at all? Or, if we consider, for instance, the case of Chan Buddhism with its emphasis on the immediacy of enlightenment and the pervasiveness of the dharma, does one need to be in a numinous space or near a numinous presence? Would an emphasis on the power of a place distract from what should be innate and immediate? Rather than eliminating the need for grounded sacrality, it seems that the cosmic picture of Mahāyāna Buddhism expanded its potential, and the movement of space, sacred objects, deities, and persons became more possible, perhaps serving as a catalyst for the widespread growth in

[36] As in the case of later Buddhist traditions' written genealogies and hagiographies which insist upon tracing back their lineage of masters or teachers back to India, particularly the case of Bodhidharma and Chan Buddhist lineages. Though in this case, it can arguably be the importance of transmitting the pure Dharma rather than the land of India which is motivating the drawing of this connection. Or, from another point of view, it is an *imagined* or abstract India rather than an actual India that is important. A similar process is claimed by Toni Huber with respect to the Tibetan Buddhist context, where Tibetan Buddhists' "re-invention" of the Indian holy land is more important than any actual Indian territory. Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn* (p. 4).

[37] This is certainly not the case with Japan, however, where Pure Lands, mandalas, and famous Buddhist mountains are situated along the landscape. See discussion of Japan below.

importance of Buddhism over China.[38] The discourse of the Chan tradition and its attitude towards sacred space, such as the abode of Mañjuśrī on Mt. Wutai, has been discussed by T.H. Barrett in "On the Road to China," where he speculates that such a discourse may or may not have been at odds with other notions of efficacious Buddhist sacred space.[39] While the abode of Mañjuśrī is in one instance rejected as illusory, it seems that those who had a vested interested in the framing of China as a Buddhist sacred realm (that is, the imperium) appealed to Chan rhetoric only when it worked to their advantage.[40] The more dominant trend was the continued relocation of bodhisattvas, traces, and relics to places in China, to the point where even Indian and Japanese monks were making pilgrimages to Chinese Buddhist sacred sites.[41]

Thus far, we have been focusing on only two of the spheres introduced above—the Chinese and the Buddhist. As these two were most certainly closely intertwined, so was the human element—the composite of social, economic, and political factors—inseparable from the establishment and formation of sacred sites in Buddhist China. The human element is not always easy to tease out of the records and accounts left by those who constructed, founded, or designated a particular sacred place. The biographies of monks or the gazetteers of temples and monasteries may be primarily concerned with the miraculous events at, and ideal natural features of, a particular site rather than the practical measures taken to found a temple or the political factors that went into settling on a particular mountainside. One can well imagine that, though the numinous natural features and revealed Buddhist traces were certainly important for establishing a sacred site, the necessary land, resources, and access

[38] This is speculation, but it would be interesting to see if the movement and expansion of Buddhist sacrality corresponded with the rise or decline of Buddhism's popularity at different periods of time.
[39] Barrett, "On the Road to China" (pp. 116-120).
[40] Ibid. (p. 118). There is also the counter-intuitive—or counter-discourse—history of Chan Buddhist monks placing a great value on the mummified and numinous remains of past masters such as the legendary Huineng. Such an example should make us critically reconsider any rhetoric about the unimportance of numinous material objects or places.
[41] Shinohara, "The Story of the Buddha's Begging Bowl" (pp. 95-96)

to provisions were of great if not equal importance.[42] In order to reconstruct the life history of a sacred place in China, scholars have begun to make use of a variety of sources—gazetteers, epigraphy, biographies, archeological remains, imperial decrees—gleaning out clues to the practical factors which were involved in choosing and maintaining a given site. Michael Walsh's *Sacred Economies* gives near exclusive attention to the logistics of running a Chinese Buddhist monastery, including the purchase and accumulation of landholdings, the production of capital through agriculture and light industry, and even the commodification of merit exchange.[43] He demonstrates that a monastery was thoroughly a social institution which held considerable regional influence and potentially had close ties with the imperium. From an even broader perspective, one can consider the positioning and role of the so-called Five Sacred Peaks of China and their role in simultaneously delimiting territorial boundaries and the limits of religious influence and power.[44] Monasteries could serve a similar purpose, as with the case of the famous Shaolin Monastery and its military support along a key road to the capital for the future Tang emperor.[45] What emerges is the inescapable fact that any sacred Buddhist space in China was simultaneously a political space; one governed by the social factors of the time and the complex weaving of religious institutions present at that space.

Finally, a brief look at the Japanese context will aid in seeing how a Buddhist site became sacred, and how that sacrality was imbedded in greater, complex cultural definitions of sacrality. One prime example is the regard for and worship of mountains in Japan. As Ichiro Hori and others have noted,

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[42] Not to mention the other human elements which may be impossible to recover from any record, such as the "physical," "social," and "mental" fields of social space production formulated by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (p. 11). How did the social meaning and perceived political power of a site fluctuate with time? Can records such as travel accounts reveal this imbedded social perception, or is it too distant and vague to recover? How do the aesthetics of a site or region work on the perception of sacrality? Possibilities in this regard are hinted at in Pei-yi Wu's "An Ambivalent Pilgrim," where a wealthy traveler/pilgrim records his impressions of Mt. Tai and other pilgrims on the trail. Pei-yi Wu, "An Ambivalent Pilgrim" (pp. 77-81). One can also consider the political discourse operative in the layout and architecture of a sacred site, particularly as it was received by different social strata, as was claimed by James Duncan in *The City as Text*, and to a lesser extent in Sarah Thal's first chapter of *Rearranging the Landscape of the Gods* (pp. 25, 36-37).

[43] Walsh, *Sacred Economies*, 2010.

[44] Robson, *Power of Place*, 2009. (p. 42)

[45] Meir Shahar, *The Shaolin Monastery*, 2008.

mountains in Japan have had a strong though ambivalent influence on the Japanese imagination. It is commonly believed that sacred space in Japan had its early roots in the attitude of simultaneous awe and fear of mountains.[46] Mountains were viewed as sources of power, as the other world, the home of the kami, or land of the dead, and as sources of fertility and renewal. Whether or not mountains were the original building blocks for sacred space in Japan, what is interesting for our purposes is that the attitudes towards and evolving relationship with mountains in Japan closely parallels that of China. As with China, mountains in Japan were originally feared, dangerous realms where few dared or were permitted to enter them. Demons and powerful spirits resided on mountains, and as such, mountains were closed off to humans. Though there does not seem to be any study which has comparatively dealt with the issue, the arrival of Buddhism in both China and Japan appears to have changed each country's respective attitudes towards mountains. We can recall, for instance, those narratives in Chinese temple gazetteers which introduce its founding—a well-known monk appears on the scene, subdues or converts a local spirit or beast, and effectively "opens" the mountain to Buddhist occupation. This taming, converting, or opening up is strongly paralleled in the hagiography of the supposed founder of the Japanese mountain-ascetic tradition Shugendō, En-no-Ozunu, who likewise opened various mountains in Japan; rendering them safe for practitioners to enter and acquire power.[47] While Shugendō is not exclusively Buddhist, it eventually developed to incorporate a great deal of Buddhist doctrine and practice, suggesting at the very least that Buddhism may have served as a catalyst to the expansion of what was considered accessible sacred space.[48]

Beyond the role of mountains, the Japanese context offers fascinating applications of Buddhist thought and projections of Buddhist elements directly onto the landscape. The work of Allan Grapard

[46] Ichiro Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan* (p. 141)
[47] See footnote 22.
[48] See Allan Grapard's "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness," where he argues that Buddhism—particularly Tantric and Zen Buddhism—contributed to the gradual expansion of Japanese sacred space or territory, to the point where it eventually extended to include the entirety of Japan. (p. 221).

reveals a great deal of the impressive lengths to which Japanese Buddhists went to transpose Buddhist sacrality into Japan. One can consider, for instance, the case of Mt. Ōmine, which at one point was claimed to actually be the original Vulture Peak of Indian Buddhist fame after it had flown from India to China, and then Japan.[49] There is also the example of when the contents and structure of the Lotus Sutra were directly projected on to the landscape of the Kunisaki Peninsula, so that a pilgrim/traveler could literally move through the different chapters of the Lotus Sutra.[50] The Japanese context is particularly poignant for considering how sacred space blends with that of mental space, so that an act like pilgrimage through a sacred area is a simultaneous pilgrimage or exploration through one's mental landscape.[51] When considering the Chinese establishment and development of Buddhist sacred space, the Japanese Buddhist arena offers a promising parallel for examining how Buddhism affected, was affected, and blended with autochthonous religious beliefs and systems to lead to an expanded sense of what space was considered sacred and how a space could be become sacred.

As a concluding note, it is important to remember that the negotiation and production of sacred space in China and elsewhere is always mediated by a host of religious, political, economic, cultural, and social factors. These spheres necessarily blend and crossover when meaning and value are ascribed to a given space. The challenge for scholarship is how to convey what was certainly a complexly multifaceted affair; and one quite different from our own. If we heed the words of Henri Lefebvre, then we would do well to acknowledge that each space is socially produced, and that that production is always particular to the occasion. As such, any study of Chinese sacred space must attempt to enter and reconstruct that world, keeping at all times a sensitivity towards the specific context in question—the

[49] Ibid. (p. 218-219).
[50] Grapard, "The Textualized Mountain." Grapard's note on the intertextuality of that experience is particularly fascinating when considering how a person's perceptually engages simultaneously with space and text. (p. 173).
[51] I am referring to the triple categorization of "geosophia," "geognosis," and "geopiety" put forward by Grapard in *Sacred Space*, 1998, as well as the reference to Edward Casey's assertion that "place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience—the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time," in Feld and Basso's Introduction to *Senses of Place* (p. 9).

territory, the era, the people involved, the local and national political environment, and even the movement of the stars. It is no surprise then that recent scholarship has moved toward greater specificity—micro-history, local studies, ethnographic studies, non-official histories—in an effort to reconstruct what most certainly was a complex situation at any given point in time and at any given place. Particularly in the Chinese context, generalities not only distort but fundamentally ill-suited for the study of something which is arguably dynamic even down to each perceiving individual. To isolate only the Buddhist, Chinese, and human factors of any particular site's sacrality must always be done with caution and restraint, acknowledging the multitude of unmentioned variables. What is perhaps the most striking characteristic of Chinese Buddhist sacrality of space is that it shifts locations, accrues layers, and is indeed perpetually moving.[52] Future studies must by necessity acknowledge this dynamism, and strive at the very least to shed light on individual moments in time along the spectrum of movement.

[52] I am indebted to Professor Robson for this key theme, among many, which I have gotten from the course.