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Rural Villages and Buddhist Monasteries: Contrasting Spatial Orientations in China

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Summary

This article is an examination of two distinct but interrelated aspects of the planning of the Chinese Buddhist monastery compound, "place" refering to the specificity of elements in the monastic structure, "space" to symbolic elements which express the universality of Buddhist ideology. In one sense, the tension between these two elements is a replication of the tension and interaction between a culture-transcending, universal Buddhism, and indigenous Chinese factors which Buddhism had to confront as a foreign importation into a xenophobic culture.

Résumé

L'article examine deux aspects distincts, mais interdépendants, de la manière dont les monastères bouddhiques chinois sont aménagés, le terme "lieu" se référant à la spécificité des éléments de la structure monastique et celui d'"espace" aux éléments symboliques exprimant l'universalité de l'idéologie bouddhique. En un sens, la tension entre ces deux éléments reproduit la tension et l'interaction entre un bouddhisme universel, non relié à une culture spécifique, et des facteurs indigènes chinois auxquels le bouddhisme a dû s'affronter à titre "d'importation étrangère" dans une culture xénophobe.

1. Introduction

> "The depth of this immense sea of individuals has kept the form of a family, in an unbroken line from the earliest days. Every man here feels that he is both son and father, among thousands and tens of thousands, and is aware of being held fast by the people around him and the dead below him and the people to come, like a brick in a wall. He holds. Every man knows that he is nothing apart from this composite earth, and outside the miraculous structure of his ancestors." (Valéry, 1962, 374)

Valéry went off to Asia as a young man, without much knowledge of Chinese history and culture, but quickly identified the essence of it all. Rootedness on the land and a sense of family solidarity are requisites in rural China, the very definition of what it means to be a person in that patriarchal culture.[1] People and land are the two

[1] The view I will be presenting is that of the Chinese male and Buddhist monk. I think that the analysis of domestic and monastic space from a female perspective would yield some remarkable differences.

pillars of Chinese rural society (Yang, 1945, 46). With the coming of Buddhism this sense of orientation was challenged, as young men and women were invited to *chujia* ("go forth from home and family"), abandoning their domestic identity and seeking to centre themselves in a new "family," the monastic community.

They left a sense of centeredness and belonging, and if they were male, the going was as serious a loss to the family as the removal of a brick was a threat to the stability of a wall. The ancestral line must be maintained from the ancient past into the unforeseeable future. This agnatic line gave structure to the family and an identity to the individual. Each Chinese was connected by surname to his own lineage and through it to the great surnames of history.

Geographically, each Chinese man was identified by province, county and city or town where he was born and where the graves of the ancestors were located. Even though he might leave this place (reluctantly) for reasons of business, education, the upheavals of war, his hope would be to return at the end of his life to the sacred soil where his ancestors lay buried. His wife, having left her natal family, would already have joined his own family and was supposed to find her new identity with them and on their piece of earth.

It is clear, then, that in challenging the novice to *chujia,* Buddhism was striking at the very heart of what it meant to be Chinese, and it is no wonder that it aroused strong and often bitter opposition. Even today, nearly two thousand years after its introduction, one hears Chinese speak of Buddhism as a "foreign" religion! It is likewise no wonder that, in order to succeed in China, Buddhism had to make some concessions to Chinese familial sensibilities, such as its sponsoring of rituals for the dead, and its prayers for the release of ancestral souls from the torments of the underworld. It also developed a monastic "family" to substitute for the one which the monk or nun had abandoned when they joined the order. Yet despite these concessions, monastic institutions deliberately changed the orientation of those who chose to enter them. The old sense of space had to be destroyed and a new one created. The nature of the original orientation and how monastic architecture and planning facilitated the formation of a new one will be the subject of this essay.

2. Spiritual Geography of the Rural Village

I choose the rural village as counterpoint to the Buddhist monastery for a number of reasons. First, China has always been fundamentally rural (Fei, 1992), and even today, with many large and densely populated urban centres, approximately 80% of the people live in the countryside. But in focusing on the village, I do not deny that many men and women left urban families to join Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. I am only suggesting that the transition most often made was between rural village and monastery. Furthermore, the Chinese city was not a city in the European sense, where urban development led to some degree of economic and political autonomy, but was a node in the network of imperial bureaucratic control. Therefore even the Chinese city can be seen from one perspective as a collection of rural villages.

Second, rural life in China has always been focused on the village. Farmers do not ordinarily live in isolated houses in the midst of large tracts of land as do their counterparts in Europe and North America. They live in village clusters from which they go out to work their relatively small tracts of land in the countryside (Knapp,

1992, 1-2). There is an obvious relationship here between the Euro-American individualism and the Chinese communalism.

The description which follows is generalized and over simplified. There are in fact a great many patterns of spatial/social organization in rural China, sometimes even in one small area (Harrell, 1987). But despite the variation in detail there is a consistent body of principles, of conceptual congruencies which can be discerned. My intent in giving this general description is simply to suggest how radical was the transition from ordinary rural life to monastic life through a contrast of the fundamentally different architecture and spatial concepts expressed in each.

The village spatial sense includes two intersecting systems. The first is the visible landscape, which I will call planar or horizontal. The second includes the invisible upper and lower worlds, which together with the first make up the tri-storied universe. The vertical and horizontal worlds intersect at many places in the landscape, and these intersections mark the power points which define the "sacred geography" of the rural Chinese person (fig. 1). Besides these, there is a third system, geomancy *(fengshui)*, which also describes "power centres" in the landscape (Fan, 1992). To consider the complexity of geomantic concepts, however, would take us far beyond the scope of this essay.

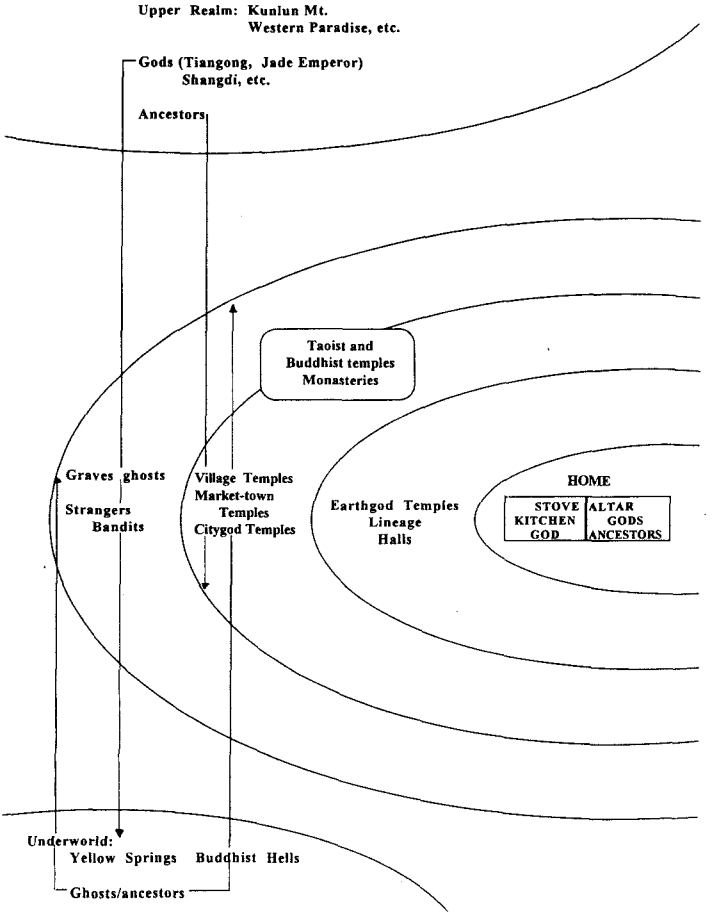

Fig. 1 World View of Rural China
La vue du monde caractéristique de la Chine rurale

We may therefore begin in the nuclear centre, which is the family household, either small (conjugal), stem (at least three generations in the agnatic line), or large (joint) family, which may include aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. (Eastman, 1988, 16). This last is the "extended" family so extolled in Chinese tradition. There were two centres of family life, the stove and the altar. The first was the domain of the kitchen god, *Caojun*. Although his worship has died out in most of China and even parts of Taiwan, the family entity he symbolizes has remained crucial (Jordan, 1972, 89; Ahern 1973, 95). Even today, when a joint family decides to split up, a new stove is also established. This may be done in the original house, even before the actual split is consummated, signifying that the group is no longer a single family unit. With *Caojun* we are introduced to the Chinese bureaucratic metaphor (and reality), for the kitchen god is a low-level functionary, in charge of a family and its affairs which he reports to the God of Heaven (Tiangong or the Jade Emperor) each year as part of the rite of New Year. His realm is confined to a family and their home, and he functions as their tutelary deity.

The other and more important power centre in the house is the family altar (Feuchtwang, 1974, 106) which is set up in the main room along the rear (ideally north) wall, facing the main door. The ancestral tablets were usually placed on the left end (west) of it, while the gods worshipped by the family will be placed on the right (east). In Chinese spatial logic, the east (left hand of the sovereign, whether Jade Emperor or earthly sovereign) is the place of honour, indicating that the gods take precedence over the ancestors. Here the family made contact with the upper realm of Chinese cosmology, the place where gods and ancestors dwell. Offerings were made at the family altar to honour the ancestors on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month, on the birthdays of gods, and on various other feasts, the precise times depending on local custom. Domestic offerings to ancestors were often made by household women. No offerings to ghosts were made within the confines of the house (Eastman, 1988, 49; Weller, 1987, 72).

Beyond the family compound lie the other homes of the village, and in some cases a small village may consist solely of families belonging to a single surname. Or, in larger villages, the surnames may cluster together in "cantons," and have a lineage hall where the more remote ancestors of a certain clan are worshipped (by males). The equivalent to the kitchen god, in this wider spatial unit, is the earth god, *Tudigong*. This god is another functionary near the bottom of the bureaucratic ladder, and has been compared to a local magistrate, or even a policeman on a beat. He receives his commission from more powerful spirits in the hierarchy. His territory is limited and does not overlap with that of other Earth gods. His shrines or temples were usually quite small, and only those who lived within his territory worshipped him (Knapp, 1992, 10). Shrines to *Tudigong* are found throughout Taiwan. They are still quite prevalent in south China, and have been rebuilt in many places where they had been destroyed during the chaotic days of the Cultural Revolution (Hammond, 1992, 104).

The next social or political unit in the ascending hierarchy varies, depending on the particular circumstance, but whatever the nature of the territorial unit, it was traditionally defined by its relationship to a local temple and its cult. It might be a neighbourhood or village temple, or the large temple of a market town whose protector god's influence reached down to the surrounding towns through a network of filial temples. During important festivals, the procession of the main god "beats the

bounds," that is to say, marks the geographical boundaries of the geographical unit, as the god "tours his realm" (Ahern, 1973, 63; Feuchtwang, 1992, 97).

Were I to continue this analysis to the next geographical unit in the hierarchy, the city, the temple would be that of *Chenghuang* or city god. All these tutelary deities, however, have limited realms and circumscribed influence (Fig. 2). But beyond the villages and cities, other, more powerful spirits ruled, the gods of earth (mountains, rivers and lakes) and the gods of heaven (wind, clouds, thunder, rain, sun, moon and stars), and their power was not so closely tied to specific places. The power of Taishan, god of the famous mountain in Shandong, ranged far beyond the mountain itself. Finally there were the more universal deities, such as Guangong, Xiwangmu, Guanyin and the Jade Emperor (Tiangong, or in imperial worship, Shangdi), the last, the supreme ruler of both upper and lower worlds. As has often been pointed out, the spirit world and the earthly realm, with their graded hierarchy and bureaucratic structure, were mirror images of each other, though the former was more powerful.

Fig. 2 Earthgod and Citygod are shown as genial bureaucrats
Les Dieu-terre et Dieu-ville sont représentés comme des bureaucrates aimables

From the point of view of the rural Chinese, the individual, as Valéry pointed out, was like a brick mortared into a wall from which he could not escape without destroying himself and weakening the wall. Most important in his daily life were the power centres related to his ancestors, the earth god, the protector god of the village or town, and the ghosts which must be propitiated. He could leave the worship of the greater gods to priests and officials in the political hierarchy. Their duties were somewhat peripheral to his more immediate concerns. The old civil-imperial religion no

longer exists to worship the god of heaven, but the worship of greater spirits is still taken care of by Taoist and Buddhist priests. However, these functionaries are "outside the village," and are related to village religion only in being outside specialists called to perform needed rituals, particularly funerals and temple festivals (Jordan, 1972, 30; Knapp, 1992, 10).

It has become accepted that the three categories of spirits traditionally respected by rural Chinese are gods, ghosts and ancestors (Freedman, 1958; Jordan, 1972; Ahern, 1973; Eastman, 1988). Yet these are not hard and fast distinctions. Gods can be ancestors and vice versa, ghosts are "someone else's ancestors," or "untended ancestors," and thus malign (Weller, 1987, 65; Eastman, 1988, 43). We have seen the power centres where the gods and ancestors of the vertical realms impinge upon the geography of the horizontal realm: the kitchen stove, the family altar, the lineage hall, the shrine of the earth god, and the temple of the village or market town. There remain the ghosts, who can appear anywhere, and whose presence is most feared. They are handled in two ways: with compassion, on the one hand by being fed, especially during the seventh lunar month when they were believed to have the freedom to leave their underworld prisons and roam about the earth. On the other hand, they were bribed with "spirit money," bought off and hopefully expelled from home and village. When offerings of food and money were made, it was always done outside the home and in the larger rites of the seventh month, outside the temple or village (Weller, 1987, 72).

Thus the outermost realm of the country folk's immediate experience was "outside the bamboo walls" which circled each community. It was dangerous because it was inhabited by human strangers, bandits, beggars, and their invisible counterparts, the ghosts (Wolf, 1974, 175; Jordan, 1972, 51-53). The graves of ancestors were placed in this region, and although they were tended once a year at the Qingming spring festival, they were otherwise avoided because ghosts hover about the graves. Ideally the graves were placed north of the village according to the best geomantic *(fengshui)* principles, both for the comfort of the ancestors buried there and the good fortune of the living family.

Figure 1 is meant to summarize the spatial orientation of a "typical" rural Chinese, his/her locus in the spiritual geography of the horizontal and vertical worlds, together with the power centres: family altar, earth god shrine, village temple or its equivalent, and finally the graves of ancestors. As human, the individual is confined to the horizontal world, except when, through the help of a spirit medium, the human can travel to the heavens or to the underworld to contact a god or ancestor. Of course the human being also feels the power of the other realms because the gods, ghosts, and ancestors all have access to the earthly realm and can affect the human's life. (The gods' power is felt in all three realms, the ancestors can be conceived to be present either in the upper or underworld, but have access to the earth as well; the ghosts live in the underworld, have access to the earth but not the upper realm.)

The experience described is hierarchical, one of embeddedness in overlapping realms of power. Thus the villager's spiritual experience perfectly mirrors his political and social experience, both of which are also of fixity in overlapping fields of power and influence. The villager is most "at home" in the domestic centre of the concentric fields. As he moves out from his centre, his sense of security "thins," since he is more dependent on the power and control of beings, both human and spiritual, over which he has less and less influence. If his major desires are food, money and offspring, it is because these give him greater security at his centre, the home, and greater

influence as he moves out toward the periphery. He has security only as a component of the whole network of power, human and spiritual, "like a brick in the wall."

3. The Spatial Orientation of the Buddhist Monastery

When a new candidate enters the monastery, the Buddhist Order takes steps to reorient him to a new understanding of reality. The ritual initiation of the novice indicates this, as he is stripped of his secular clothes and vested in a distinctive robe, his head is shaved, his skull marked with the scars of burning incense, and he is given a new name. He has clearly committed himself to *chujia,* leave home and family. He now takes refuge, not in the security of his family, living and dead, but in "Buddha, Dharma (Buddhist teaching) and Sangha (Buddhist community)." The abandonment of natal family is confirmed when he gives up his family name and takes the surname *Shi,* a practice which goes back to the first centuries of Buddhism's introduction into China. As Dao An (313-85 C.E.) said, "When the four rivers enter the sea, their names can no longer be found. When the four surnames leave their families *(chujia),* they are called *Shi*" (Huang, 1990, 25).

In order to effect this radical transformation in the monk, the monastic structure reoriented the novice both spatially and temporally. Something of the temporal restructuring is described in an essay by Miller (1979). The scope of my article will allow only a brief summary of the spatial restructuring, as it is suggested by the planning and layout of the temple compound. For a more detailed account of how the monastic structure recapitulates the total cosmology, I refer the reader to my earlier article (Meyer, 1992). Here I will focus only on those features which contrast with the village world view described above.

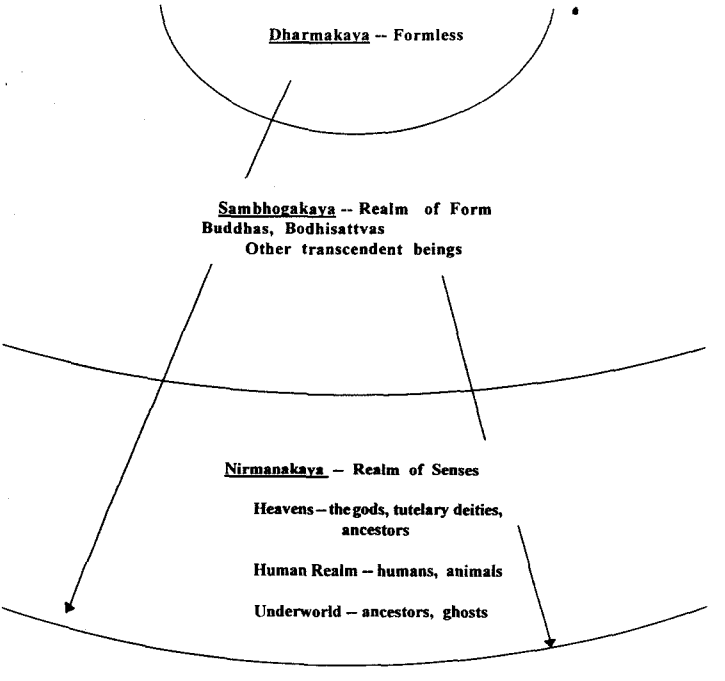

Fig. 3 Levels of Reality in Mahayana Buddhism
Les niveaux de la réalité dans le Bouddhisme Mahayana

The chart above is offered as a graphic representation of reality as conceptualized by Mahayana Buddhism (fig. 3). It is clearly just a conception, no more, for true reality in Buddhism is beyond words and concepts. It would be more accurate to depict it as concentric spheres rather than planar circles, but even that improvement is trivial, for Buddhist cosmology is infinite in space and time: worlds without number, time without end. But it may help to visualize it in this way in order to see how accurately these Buddhist concepts of reality are reflected in the structure of the monastic temple.

Humans exist within *samsara,* the realm of impermanence, suffering and rebirth. This is the least real of all the realms of being in Buddhist cosmology, and it contains not only humans and animals, but all the gods, ghosts and ancestors of the rural Chinese worldview described above. This realm is called *nirmanakaya* (transformation) by Buddhism. Although they begin there, conscious human beings have the best chance of escaping from this realm. Not as self-satisfied and egotistical as the gods, not witless like animals, they can make the choice to follow the Dharma which means moving toward the greater reality at the centre. Those who succeed in reaching Nirvana, will exist in the second realm of *sambhogakaya* (bliss) where they may remain in that timeless realm of glory/happiness, or, through the Bodhisattva vow of compassion, may decide to stay connected to the world of *nirmanakaya* so that they can work for the liberation of all sentient beings. Present in *sambhogakaya* are the great Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekas and Sravakas (the latter two terms refer to enlightened beings who have severed their connection to the world of suffering). This realm is often described in the great Mahayana sutras, which provide grand *tableaux* of all these great spirits who have left the realm of time and change.

Finally, there is the ultimate reality of *dharmakaya* (Truth), which cannot be described. This reality is called by different names in the tradition, such as *bodhi* (enlightenment), *shunyata* (emptiness), *tathata* (suchness), the Void, or more positively, "Buddha-nature." It is the absolutely transcendent, beyond even such formulations as "the realm of nothing whatsoever," or "realm of neither notions or non-notions" (Corless, 1989, 56). However inadequately described, it is the highest reality and most inward goal of the Buddhist seeker.

Looking at the structure of a particular Buddhist monastery may help to demonstrate how accurately it reflects the principles of Buddhist cosmology. The following is a diagram (not to precise scale) of Po-lin (Precious Lotus) Monastery on Lantau Island near Hong Kong (fig. 4, see next page). For approximately 40 years the Po-lin monastery was a very simple hermit's retreat, then in the 1960s a large sum of money was raised and the monastery was transformed into the classical form of a large, complete Chinese Buddhist monastic compound. (The most dramatic feature of the area, the gigantic Buddha statue, is outside the compound and not part of the essential structure.) Buildings were added and an overall plan deliberately developed to include all the major components found in the great monasteries of the past. The builders were successful in this, for the plan of Po-lin shows all the essential features of the famous Mainland China monasteries documented in Prip-Moeller's (1937) classic work on the subject.

One clear contrast between rural village and monastic space is the direction of the journey from unreality to reality. As we have seen, in the rural village, the individual must move *outward* to reach ever more powerful gods, while becoming increasingly more dependent on functionaries, priests and bureaucrats to mediate for him with these formidable powers. The monastery, in contrast, holds the highest reality at the centre,

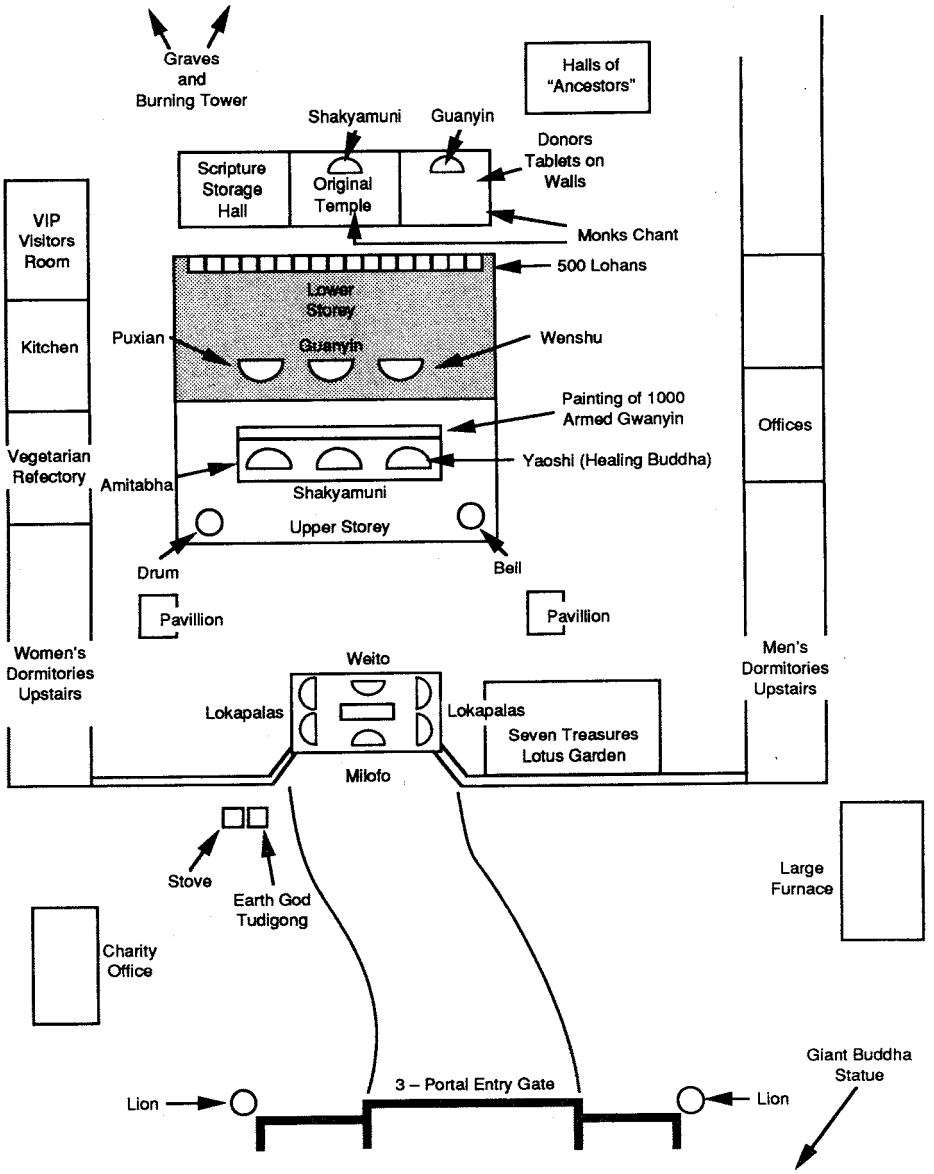

Fig. 4 Po Lin Monastery, Lantau Island, Hong Kong
Le monastère de Po Lin, Ile de Lantau, Hong Kong

and the individual must journey *inward* to find it. He needs no mediators. On the periphery or outside the walls are ranged the lesser powers of the samsaric world.

A *pailou* (three part ceremonial arch) marks the entry to the monastic grounds. The path from there to the main gate is slightly eccentric, to discourage ghosts whom the Chinese believed moved in straight lines. The tiny shrine to Tudigong, the earth god, is outside the gate to the left as you enter. Although Po-lin does not have them, some monasteries have built ponds for releasing life and/or barns for animals purchased from the market place so that their lives would be spared. These too would be outside the walls of the compound. Finally, graves, in this case those of monastic forebears, would be found outside and ideally to the north of the monastery. Po-lin has clusters of graves above and behind the main compound, and a "burning tower" where the cremations are done to prepare the ashes for burial. Thus ranged all around the perimeter of the temple compound are the beings of samsaric existence: gods, ancestors, ghosts, animals, and worldly human beings.

The main entrance to the compound leads one through the Hall of Heavenly Kings, which is clearly a place of transition. The first statue is that of Milofo, the Fat Buddha. Originally identified as Maitreya, the Buddha who waits in Tushita (one of the highest samsaric heavens), became identified with Budai during the medieval period in China. Budai was a popular figure whose sagacity was hidden under a ludicrous fat exterior and Chinese often see him as a bringer of worldly blessings. Milofo as Budai is part of the samsaric and visible world, *nirmanakaya*. Housed in the same building with him are the *locapalas,* for whom the hall is named. They are the kings of the four cardinal directions, still part of the world of transformation, but of a higher order. They show that Buddhism's influence reaches to every part of the visible cosmos. Back to back with Milofo and behind a screen is Weito, the guardian of the Dharma, who is described in one of the sutras as always "facing the Buddha," so he is always placed facing inward (Prip-Moeller, 1982, 30). He is a general in the army of the southern king.

After crossing the courtyard, one comes to the main building, usually called the *daxiongbaodian,* or Precious Hall of the Great Hero. At Po-lin this is a two storey building, and both levels embody the higher reality of *samghogakaya*. In the lower story, the major altar is dedicated to the Bodhisattva Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy), who, as is usual in China, is shown in female form. Flanking her on either side are two other important bodhisattvas, Wenshu and Puxian. Along the back wall are the 500 lohans, enlightened monks.

Upstairs is the real focus and centre of the temple complex, the altar upon which is placed the stature of Shakyamuni Buddha accompanied by Omitofo (Amitabha, Buddha of the Pure Land) and Yaoshi, always popular in China as the Healing Buddha. This altar symbolizes the culmination of monastic experience, for the central statue of the temple recapitulates the entire inward journey from the samsaric world of *nirmanakaya* to the ultimate reality of the *dharmakaya*. Identified as Shakyamuni, the central image can be understood as the historical Buddha who lived in samsara during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. Yet he is shown in a glorious and blissful form *(sambhogakaya)* as a divine god-like Buddha, surrounded by bodhisattvas, arhats, lohans, devas, angelic and mythical beings, just as he is described in the most popular Mahayana sutras. And finally, for those who by meditation can penetrate appearances, the image also points to that which cannot be told in worldly terms or shown in physical form, the ultimate reality, *dharmakaya*. As every educated Buddhist knows,

this ultimate reality is not an external reality, but resides in every person's *xin* (heart/mind). Though expressed externally in architecture and iconography, the actual journey is inward. As the Zen saying goes, *jian xing, cheng fo,* "Look at your inner nature and become Buddha."

Emily Ahern (1973, 179) describes a funeral procession in Taiwan, in which the tablet of the deceased is carried to the grave in a wooden bushel, which also contains five or more kinds of grains or seeds, several Taiwanese coins and a number of nails. These three things represent the ordinary longings of the Chinese people: a good harvest and sufficient food, wealth and financial success, and children (the word for nails, *ding,* and for male children are homophones), "the most fundamental and axiomatic goals of Taiwanese life." These three desires make clear just how radical a reorientation Buddhism proposes to accomplish. The monks fast, indicating their mastery of the craving for food. They undertake a life of poverty and celibacy, showing their contempt for wealth, sex and family. The direction of the journey toward Reality has been reversed, interiorized, and a radical reorientation has (ideally) taken place. As Yang (1969, 14) describes it: "each monastery or nunnery represented a miniature sacred order of life different from the secular social order, presumed to be perfect, capable of correcting all the imperfections of the material world and designed for saving men from everlasting suffering."

Weller (1987, 113-114) summarizes some of the major differences between Buddhist and popular traditions. The monks have turned their back on the omnipresent hierarchy of secular bureaucracy. Their pursuit of the ultimate reality is not only inward, but egalitarian. Whether wealthy or poor, educated or illiterate, mandarin or farmer, male or female, what mattered was spiritual achievement. Their gods are not anthropomorphic like those of conventional worship, but have "transcended the physical and emotional limits of humanity." This can be seen in the ritual offerings (meats and alcohol, common offerings in the village rites, are not offered to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas), as well as in the architecture of their temples and in the iconography of the images. Finally, I would add another difference: the idea that nature is reality in traditional Chinese cosmology, while in Buddhism nature is illusion. To reach the ultimately real, one must transcend it.

Just as the structure of a home expressed the place of a person in space and time, so the Buddhist monastery, by means of its orientation and structure, located a person in the vast stretches of Buddhist times and among the countless universes of Buddhist space. It also paradoxically centred him. As the devotee moved from the secular world outside the monastic compound, he crossed a threshold at the outer gate which began a spiritual journey or pilgrimage to a definite centre. This centre was located at and symbolized by the large Buddha image in the centre of the Precious Hall of the Great Hero. Behind this, the main hall of the complex, were buildings of progressively less importance. While the ancestral altar was the centre of the home, the ancestors of the monks, the abbots and saints of the past, were placed to the rear of the compound, and in the case of Po-lin, off the central axis. The structure indicated by the monastic plan, therefore, is the circle or sphere, with the centre the place of greatest power, sacrality and permanence, and the periphery the place of secularity, commonness, animality, demons and ghosts.

Although the ordinary worshipper who visited the monastery to *jin xiang* (present incense) would have experienced to some degree this new sense of space and time, the more powerful experience was reserved for those who entered the monastic

complex to stay. They gave up secular life, family, birthplace and entered a new realm as novices. The entering of sacred space was reinforced by the ritual changes which were physical, psychic and spiritual. It is not too dramatic to say that old patterns were shattered, and the novices were thrust into a powerful period of "disorientation," which changed the way they experienced their own presence in time and space.

Today in the therapeutic age we tend to think of behavioural change as preceded by right thinking. If the dysfunctional person can be helped to be consciousness of their own plight, if their thinking can change, then they can learn to behave more functionally. The Buddhist approach was the opposite. First, the environment and rhythms of life were changed by the induction into the monastic community, then behaviour would change, and finally, the inner world would change. After being disoriented, the monk or nun eventually achieved a new orientation, no longer trapped, like a brick in the old wall of family, hierarchy, and bureaucracy. Such at least was the ideal, the intentionality of the monastic plan.

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