

## Introduction

This book is a study of Buddhist State Monasteries (國家大寺) in medieval East Asia. It is based on archaeological evidence and focuses on how monastery layout developed with the evolution of Buddhist thought and practice.<sup>1</sup>

Up to a few decades ago, physical evidence of early medieval Buddhist monasteries in China was very scarce, while much more evidence was available for monasteries in the Korean Peninsula and Japanese Archipelago, where the remains of a large number of early medieval Buddhist monasteries are well preserved. It is only in the last few decades that Chinese archaeologists have excavated a number of Buddhist monasteries dating back to the fifth to seventh centuries. These findings supply us with important physical evidence to discuss the layout of monasteries in China and their impact on those in Korea and Japan, which derived from Chinese ones.

I began my professional career by working on Buddhist caves in Kucha. Over the past decade, I was involved in the excavation of *Zhaopengcheng Monastery*, an early Buddhist monastery in Yecheng, the capital of the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi Dynasties, and therefore shifted my research focus from Buddhist caves to above-ground monasteries. Benefiting from cooperation with the Korean National Institute of Cultural Heritage and Nara National Institute for Cultural Properties of Japan, I had the opportunity to visit many monastery sites in Korea and Japan. This book relies heavily on these first-hand experiences, in addition to learning from previous research results.

### Defining Buddhist Monasteries

‘Buddhist Monastery’ is a general term referring to a place where Buddhist monks and believers engage in religious activities. The concept was introduced to China from India when Buddhism came to China around the first century AD. In Sanskrit a variety of terms can be used to convey the same meaning, some of which designate the entire monastery, while others, technically speaking, refer to or emphasize one function or one part of the monastery. The following are some of the most common Sanskrit terms that have been translated into Chinese.

1. *Buddha-stūpa* (*futu* 浮圖), originally indicating the Indian *stūpa*; however, in the early days of Buddhism in Central China, it became an alternate appellation for

a monastery, especially for a monastery centered on a pagoda.

2. *Samghārāma* (*qielan* 伽藍), referring to a garden for community living and practice; it became a popular synonym of ‘monastery’ in China after the fifth century.
3. *Bodhi-maṇḍa* (*daochang* 道場), initially referring to the location in *Buddhagaya* where Sakyamuni achieved his full enlightenment under the bodhi-tree. Later, it referred to any place where Buddhist practice was carried out, and was therefore used as a synonym for ‘monastery’.
4. *Caitya* (*zhiti* 支提), referring to a *stūpa* without relics.
5. *Vihāra* (*pikeluo* 毗珂羅), meaning a residence for religious practitioners.
6. *Aranya* (*alanruo* 阿蘭若), referring to a secluded place suitable for monks to practice Buddhism and as a residence.
7. *Cāturdiśa* (*zhaoti* 招提), meaning a guest room for wandering monks.

Broadly speaking, the first three terms, used in different periods, refer to a complete Buddhist monastery. The last four do not mean a monastery in the full sense of the term, although they were used as synonyms for ‘monastery’ under certain conditions and in some historical periods.<sup>2</sup>

In Chinese, the term for ‘monastery’, *siyuan* 寺院, consists of two characters. From the Han Dynasty onward the character *Si* 寺 specifically referred to a government office.<sup>3</sup> In Buddhist literature, it is recorded that the earliest monks arriving in China from India, or Central Asia, were accommodated in the *HongluSi* 鴻臚寺, a government office in charge of foreign affairs. Later, when freestanding Buddhist monasteries were established, the term *Si* was retained and used as a general term for a Buddhist monastery.<sup>4</sup> In the beginning, the character *Yuan* 院 referred to a traditional Chinese courtyard surrounded by a wall or a portico. In the mid-seventh century, Emperor Gaozong of Tang issued an edict ordering the construction of the *Daci’ensi Monastery* 大慈恩寺, within which there

<sup>2</sup> Lan Jifu 1994, 2076, 2414, 4888, 1331, 3337, 3155, 2843.

<sup>3</sup> Zuo Zhuan 左傳, 107, noted by Kong Yingda in Tang Dynasty: ‘Since the Han Dynasty, the offices of Three Councillors of State have been known as Fu, and the offices of Nine Ministers have been known as Si’ (自漢以來，三公所居謂之府，九卿所居謂之寺); Han Shu 漢書, 282, ‘Sites of government offices and the court are all known as Si’ (凡府廷所在，皆謂之寺).

<sup>4</sup> *Da Song Sengshi Lue* 大宋僧史略, 236, ‘The monastery, interpreted as Si. [...] It was originally the name of a government office. The first western monks that came to China dwelt temporarily in government offices and later moved to other residences. In order not to forget their origin, they still marked the Buddhist monastery with Si. This is the source of Buddhist monastery’ (寺者，釋名曰寺，……本是司名。西僧乍來，權止公署。移入別居，不忘其本，還標寺號。僧寺之名始於此也).

<sup>1</sup> This book is based on my PhD dissertation, ‘Buddhist State Monasteries in Early Medieval China and their Impact on East Asia’, completed at Heidelberg University, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Lothar Ledderose and Prof. Dr. Sarah E. Fraser.

was an enclosed compound called *Fanjing Yuan* 翻經院, a courtyard for master *Xuanzang* 玄奘 to translate sutras. From then on, the character *Yuan* began to be used as a general synonym for ‘monastery’ as well.

The concept of the monastery was understood differently in different periods. Before the seventh century, the term *Si* loosely referred to nearly all types of Buddhist architecture. This is the reason why tens of thousands of monasteries (*Si*) are mentioned in documents of every dynasty, in spite of the fact that the government regularly issued restrictions on monastery construction.<sup>5</sup> Strictly speaking, not all Buddhist architecture can be called monasteries, since a complete Buddhist monastery should fulfill at least the following three requirements: there should be a fixed space of worship; a place that can host a substantial number of resident monks or nuns; and also a place where rituals are regularly performed. From this point of view, the most representative Buddhist monasteries in China were those sponsored by the emperor, called State Monasteries 國家大寺. Next were the Official Monasteries built by local governors, sometimes in compliance with imperial edicts or central government decrees. The construction of Official Monasteries could be financed by eminent Buddhist masters or by donations from prominent officials, aristocrats and magnates. Conversely, folk Buddhist architecture lacked a building code and building standards. In this case, it was the common people who undertook the construction, with those with money giving their money and those with strength giving their strength. This folk religious architecture corresponds to the Sanskrit *aranya*, *cāturdīśa*, *caitya*, *vihāra* or, in Chinese traditional locution, *Fotang* 佛堂. Although often referred to as monasteries, these were not Buddhist monasteries in the full sense of the term. A clear distinction between various types of Buddhist architecture is clearly implied in Tang Dynasty official records, while an even more explicit distinction emerged from Song Dynasty official documents. In the latter case, only the State Monasteries built following imperial edicts and Official Monasteries were bestowed with the title of monasteries, while those constructed by citizens were called *cāturdīśa* or *aranya*.<sup>6</sup> My book acknowledges this conceptual distinction and will focus primarily on the study of Buddhist State Monasteries.

### Defining Spatial and Temporal Boundaries

Early medieval China witnessed the golden age of Buddhism. After several hundred years, under the auspices of the upper classes and the advocacy of prominent Buddhist monks, Buddhism reached its apex between the fifth and seventh centuries, a period of intense construction of Buddhist monasteries throughout the country. However, as time went on, almost all the monasteries of this period were destroyed and buried underground.

The Chinese Buddhist monasteries discussed in this book were discovered and excavated by Chinese archaeological institutions in recent decades. Almost all of them were located in cities which had been the capitals of successive dynasties in North China between the fifth and seventh centuries, i.e. Pingcheng 平城, Luoyang 洛陽, Yecheng 鄴城 and Chang’an 長安. On the basis of archaeological surveys and excavations carried out over the last half century, the following eight monasteries will be analyzed and studied in depth:

1. The *Yungang Monastery* 雲岡佛寺, located on the top of the massif into which the *Yungang Grottoes* of Pingcheng, the early capital of Northern Wei, were carved.
2. The *Siyuan Monastery* 思遠佛寺, also located in Pingcheng, built by Dowager Feng in 479 AD.
3. The *Siyuan Monastery* 思燕浮圖, also built by Dowager Feng in the late fifth century; it was located in Feng’s hometown, Longcheng 龍城.
4. The *Yongningsi Monastery* 永寧寺, located in Luoyang, the later capital of Northern Wei, built by Dowager Hu in 516 AD.
5. The *Zhaopengcheng Monastery* 趙彭城佛寺, located in South Yecheng,<sup>7</sup> the capital of Eastern Wei and Northern Qi.
6. The *Linggansi Monastery* 靈感寺, located in Daxing 大興, the capital of Sui, built by Emperor Wen of Sui in 582 or 583 AD.
7. The *Qinglongsi Monastery* 青龍寺, built on top of the aforementioned *Linggansi Monastery* in the mid-seventh century by Princess *Xincheng*; it was one of most important Tantric monasteries in Chang’an.
8. The *Ximingsi Monastery* 西明寺, also located in Chang’an, built in 658 AD in compliance with Tang Gaozong’s imperial edict.

All these Buddhist monasteries had imperial backing and belonged to State Monasteries recorded in ancient texts:<sup>8</sup> they each not only represented a classic monastery type in their respective periods, but also had a profound influence on neighboring regions.

By and large this book relies on analyses of archaeological remains of the above-mentioned State Monasteries of North China, since not even one Buddhist monastery of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties has yet been excavated in South China, where Buddhism was extremely popular and exerted a strong influence on North China, the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. Because of the lack of archaeological evidence from South China, it has been deemed inappropriate to dedicate a full section to its monasteries. Instead, the large corpus of textual sources regarding South China’s Buddhism have been analyzed

<sup>5</sup> *Bian Zheng Lun* 辯正論, 502–09.

<sup>6</sup> *Zi Zhi Tong Jian* 資治通鑑, 3000. ‘Officially recognized monasteries were granted the title *Si*, private ones were called *cāturdīśa* or *aranya*’ (蓋官賜額者為寺，私造者為招提、蘭若).

<sup>7</sup> The site of Yecheng consisted of two adjacent parts. North Yecheng was the capital of the Cao Wei (220–265 AD), Later Zhao (335–350 AD), Ran Wei (350–352 AD) and Former Yan (357–370 AD) kingdoms, and South Yecheng was the capital of the Eastern Wei (534–550 AD) and Northern Qi Dynasties (550–577 AD).

<sup>8</sup> *Bian Zheng Lun* 辯正論, 507–08.

and compared with physical evidence collected in North China to trace the origins and development of monastery layout in South China.<sup>9</sup>

### Previous Research

The Buddhist monastery, one of the most important elements of ancient Chinese architecture, has repeatedly been an object of research for historians of art and architecture. Before the 1980s, due to a lack of unearthed evidence, researchers exploring early Chinese monasteries paid more attention to certain specific buildings, predominantly the pagoda. Related studies depended mainly on monastery remains in Japan and Korea. As early as 1942, while discussing the Buddhist architecture of Japan, Soper became conscious of the tremendous difference in architectural form between the Indian stone *stūpa* and the Chinese multi-story timber pagoda.<sup>10</sup> In horizontal comparison, i.e. from a cross-cultural perspective, Seckel deemed the evolution from *stūpa* to pagoda to be the ‘translation’ of a foreign concept into Chinese architectural language.<sup>11</sup> Instead, in vertical comparison, i.e. from the perspective of the architectural tradition, Ledderose advanced the viewpoint that the prototype of the Chinese pagoda derived not only from the multi-story tower in its architectural form, but also from the *Mingtang* 明堂, a building used for state ritual in ancient China religiously and symbolically. At the same time, Ledderose emphasized the strong influence of secular architecture, in particular the Palace City, on the monastery layout.<sup>12</sup> His viewpoints have been corroborated by successive excavations.

In the mid-twentieth century, Liang Sicheng 梁思成, the founder of the modern study of ancient Chinese architecture, touched upon the architectural layout of Buddhist monasteries in his works.<sup>13</sup> Archaeological material relating to monasteries before the seventh century was very scant at that time, and so it is understandable that he focused on the study of cave-temples and pagodas to analyze Buddhist architecture and monastery layouts. Liu Dunzhen 劉敦楨 continued the same approach, and although he devoted a full chapter to the study of monasteries, pagodas and cave-temples, his discussion of early monasteries still concentrated on cave-temples and individual pagodas, whereas descriptions of the overall structure and layout of the monasteries was limited to the extant monasteries built mainly after the

tenth century.<sup>14</sup> Due to their different perspectives, their works paid attention mostly to the concrete analysis of building structures and components, rather than discussing the religious implications of Buddhist architecture. Nevertheless, the relevance of their research rests on the fact that they set up a model for the investigation of the architectural layout of early Buddhist monasteries.

In the 1970s, Fu Xinian 傅熹年, a disciple and long-term assistant of Liang Sicheng and Liu Dunzhen, wrote a series of articles about Buddhist monasteries in medieval China. By comparing the cave-temples of China to Buddhist monasteries of the Asuka and Nara periods in Japan, he suggested that the architectural layout of Chinese monasteries underwent an evolution, with a shift of focus from the pagoda to the Buddha Hall, an imitation of the imperial palace and government offices, which reflected the adaptation process of Buddhist architecture.<sup>15</sup> In a later article, Fu Xinian carefully analyzed the construction techniques, materials and building code of Buddhist architecture in the Asuka and Nara periods; he discussed how ancient Japanese architecture reflected that of China between the Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Tang Dynasty. At the same time, he emphasized the irreplaceable reference value of Japanese architecture for the recovery of information about Chinese Buddhist monasteries buried for over a thousand years.<sup>16</sup>

A valuable approach was promoted by Xiao Mo 蕭默, who specialized in the study of ancient architecture as displayed in the Dunhuang 敦煌 wall paintings. Because of the abovementioned lack of archaeological material, he speculated that the architectural drawings in Dunhuang provided precious information about ancient architecture after the Sui Dynasty. The first chapter of his book discusses the typology and the layout of Buddhist monasteries in the Sui and Tang Dynasties on the basis of analyses of a large number of wall paintings depicting monasteries. In a word, he classified the layouts of the Sui and Tang monasteries into three types: the ‘one hall and two pavilions’ layout (*yita erlou shi* 一塔二樓式), the ‘U-shaped’ layout (*aozi xing* 凹字形) and the ‘courtyard-style’ layout (*yuanluo shi* 院落式). The last could be further subdivided into the ‘sole-court’ (*danyuan shi* 單院式), ‘double-court’ (*shuangyuan shi* 雙院式) and ‘triple-court’ (*sanyuan shi* 三院式) layouts. Moreover, he believed that the monastery layouts in the wall paintings not only described Buddhist monasteries in the Dunhuang area, but also contemporary monasteries in two capitals, Chang’an and Luoyang, as well as other monasteries throughout the country.<sup>17</sup> The author also cautioned us to keep in mind that the drawings often show only part of the scene, rather than the complete panorama of the monastery. Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that fictitious elements may have been inserted by designers or painters in order to better represent the theme or the

<sup>9</sup> Since 2019, the Nanjing Institute of Archaeology has discovered a Buddhist monastery of the Southern Dynasties in Xiying Village, Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province (江蘇省南京市西營村). The base of the square wooden pagoda, the Buddha Hall, the cloister and the remains of buried *śarīra* have been excavated successively. This is the first large-scale excavation of a Buddhist monastery in the Southern Dynasties, and relevant information has not yet been officially published. Thanks to the invitation of the Nanjing Institute of Archaeology, I have had the honor of visiting the excavation site in 2020 and attended the demonstration meeting of the excavation results in 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Soper 1978, 89–93.

<sup>11</sup> Seckel 1980, 249–56.

<sup>12</sup> Ledderose 1980, 238–48.

<sup>13</sup> Liang Sicheng 2011, 80–92.

<sup>14</sup> Liu Dunzhen 1984, 87–101, 128–55, 202–14.

<sup>15</sup> Fu Xinian 1998.

<sup>16</sup> Fu Xinian 1992.

<sup>17</sup> Xiao Mo 2003, 35–81.

background in the light of the text of the Buddhist Sutras. At any rate, his work provides us with abundant visual evidence that remains an important reference for the study of the Buddhist monastery in the Sui and Tang periods.

One popular book is *Lectures on Chinese Buddhist Monastery Architecture* by Zhang Yuhuan 張馭寰. Based on decades of experience, the author offers a comprehensive introduction to the development of Chinese monastery, including the history of Buddhist monasteries, monastery layout, the structure of the main and auxiliary buildings, and some representative monasteries around the country.<sup>18</sup> Though some important conclusions and controversial issues lack supporting data and annotation, it can be considered a work for the general public that may help us understand the history and status quo of Chinese Buddhist architecture.

The most recent book on the study of ancient Chinese Buddhist monasteries from the perspective of architectural history is *The History of Chinese Buddhist Architecture*, edited by Wang Guixiang 王貴祥 of Tsinghua University. This book collects a large number of historical documents related to the Buddhist monasteries of ancient China, and makes a comprehensive analysis and speculative restoration of the construction and distribution of Buddhist monasteries, as well as the development of monastery layout and architectural types over the past 2,000 years.<sup>19</sup>

In recent decades, several medieval Buddhist monasteries have been discovered and excavated, providing new material for research in this field. From the 1980s onward, Chinese archaeologists, benefiting from the excavation of various sites, began to study the layout of early Buddhist monasteries. Su Bai 宿白, a prominent archaeologist of Peking University, issued two seminal papers in relation to the layout of medieval monasteries by linking textual records to archaeological discoveries, which remain essential and enlightening. In the first paper, Su Bai divided the evolution of the monastery layout from the Eastern Han to the Northern and Southern Dynasties into two periods.<sup>20</sup> The first period (25–280 AD) includes the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms; on the basis of textual sources, he presumed that the main monastery features derived from Indian sources, and that the *stūpa* occupied the center of the Buddhist monastery, although the *stūpa* had already evolved into a multi-layer square wooden structure, also known as a Chinese-style pagoda. At the center of the *stūpa* was a large gilded bronze statue of the Buddha, with a passage allowing devotees to carry out ritual circumambulation. The second phase (307–589 AD) corresponds to the period of the Eastern Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasties, as proved by archaeological remains of the *Siyuan Monastery* and the *Yongningsi Monastery*, which were surveyed and excavated between the 1970s and the 1980s. Su Bai demonstrated that though the pagoda was still located at the center of

the monastery, another religious building began to gain prominence after the fourth century: a Chinese-style hall, which could either be a Buddha Hall or a Lecture Hall. In the meantime, other auxiliary buildings, such as Meditation Halls and Monks' Quarters, were also mentioned in the documents. The typical monastery layout of the second phase consists of buildings aligned along the central axis, with the Pagoda set at the center of the monastery and the Buddha Hall behind it. This is the so-called 'Central Pagoda and One Hall in the Rear' layout.

In his second paper, Su Bai focused on the layout of monasteries of the Sui Dynasty. Su Bai affirmed that the 'Central Pagoda and One Hall in the Rear' layout was still dominant at this stage, while at the same time he analyzed the beginning of a new type of Buddhist monastery layout, the 'Central Hall and Twin Pagodas', with two pagodas in front of the Buddha Hall.<sup>21</sup>

Li Yuqun 李裕群 supported Su Bai's analysis and research method. He published an article discussing the characteristic monastery layout before the Sui and Tang Dynasties. He particularly emphasized the emergence of large-scale Buddhist monasteries which may have intentionally replicated the imperial palace between the late fifth and the early sixth century, as well as the impact of Southern Chinese cultural elements in the North in the late Northern Dynasty period.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the sixth century, the capital of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Chang'an, had once more become the national Buddhist center. On the basis of textual sources and new material evidence emerging from the excavation of the *Qinglongsi Monastery* and the *Ximingsi Monastery*, as well as reports on surveys of other Buddhist sites in Xi'an, Gong Guoqiang 龔國強 published his *Studies in Chang'an Buddhist Monasteries of the Sui and Tang Dynasties*.<sup>23</sup> He took up and studied three issues in depth: first, the regular distribution of Buddhist monasteries and their relationship with the grid plan of Chang'an; second, different monastery layouts and their periodization; third, the source of the Chang'an monasteries and their contact with those of East Asia.

By carefully analyzing several Buddhist monasteries excavated in recent decades, I have discussed the evolution of Chinese monastery layout from the fifth to the seventh century in several articles. Focusing on the relationship between Pagoda, Buddha Hall and Compound, I have confirmed that the developmental process of monastery layout changed from a single compound centering on a pagoda to multiple compounds and halls. At the same time, I have proposed that the change in monastery layout during this period might be closely linked with changes occurring within the Buddhist doctrine.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Zhang Yuhuan 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Wang Guixiang 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Su Bai 1997 a.

<sup>21</sup> Su Bai 1997 b.

<sup>22</sup> Li Yuqun 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Gong Guoqiang 2006.

<sup>24</sup> He Liqun 2010; 2011.

## The Significance of the Topic

The significance of the topic can be briefly laid out. By the early Middle Ages, Buddhism had already become a highly developed religion and culture throughout the Asian continent. The Buddhist monastery, as a vehicle of Buddhist thought and practice, carries profound and complex implications. In other words, in the Buddhist monastery, various traditional elements of Chinese civilization come together, a fact calling for interdisciplinary investigation in archaeology, history, art history, architecture, theology and philosophy. Buddhist State Monasteries, which replicate the layout of the imperial palace, represent the highest architectural standard; at the same time, the evolution of monastery layout also reflects changes occurring in the sphere of religious creed. Therefore, State Monasteries are the main object of my research, a special angle from which to explore early Buddhist thought and architecture.

For various reasons, none of the early Buddhist monasteries before the seventh century in China have been preserved to date. In the past, research on ancient monasteries was carried out on copious written records, at times giving rise to controversies born out of different interpretations of the same records. Under these circumstances, new archaeological evidence is invaluable for our research.

In the early medieval period, the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago were undergoing a phase of social reforms and transitions, and increasingly absorbed the more mature laws and institutions of China. Buddhism, as part of the Chinese civilization and religious belief system, was introduced first to Korea and then to Japan, and was increasingly appreciated by the royals of both states. Thereafter, numerous Buddhist monasteries sponsored by royals and dignitaries were built according to the contemporary Chinese style. Many of these monasteries have survived to the present and are well preserved, or have been excavated in recent decades. They offer exceptional material for the investigation of the origins and the diffusion of the Chinese monastery.

The archaeological and art historical research on Chinese medieval monasteries has just begun. Although some records in China suggested a probable link with the monasteries in Korea and Japan, the lack of suitable comparative data hindered the possibility of pinpointing when, how, in which aspects and in what ways the Chinese monastery impacted on its neighbors.

Since the 1960s, and especially in recent years, several ancient monastic sites have been discovered and partially excavated by Chinese archaeologists. Although most of them were not completely excavated, in most cases the main buildings, such as the Pagoda, the Buddha Hall and the Compound have been unearthed; it has become possible to weigh historical sources against archaeological material. Today we are not only in a position to carry out research on the evolution of monastery layout between the fifth and seventh centuries, but also to discuss the early Buddhist

contacts between China, Korea and Japan by comparing the architectural layout of medieval monasteries.

## Research Methods

A few words will adequately indicate the research method here applied to the abovementioned material. Data from different fields have been interrelated, for example through the combination of textual evidence and archaeological discoveries. It is well known that China has a long tradition of recording its history, going back several thousand years. Chinese history relies on a vast corpus of textual sources. Generally speaking, Chinese ancient literature consists of texts written on paper and epigraphic sources. Official histories were normally written by scholars of a later period, so that they may contain events and explanations from a later period, inserted for various reasons. For example, many Buddhist documents describing the exact date of the introduction of Buddhism into China are quite unlikely, but they can be used once they have been analyzed and purified of questionable elements. On the other hand, epigraphic sources and manuscripts were often material contemporaneous with the events described and therefore disclose more reliable data. However, by their nature, the information they disclose is usually disorganized or incomplete, and therefore in need of being identified and interpreted carefully as well.

Traditional historiography has been widely utilized to restore the original appearance of ancient society by Chinese scholars. Moreover, from the Song Dynasty onward, the development of epigraphy (*jinshixue* 金石學) could make up for the shortage of historical documents to a certain extent. Nevertheless, how to understand and interpret ambiguous, even contradictory records is still a vexing problem. As mentioned above, many controversies were born out of different interpretations of a single document, an issue which has led to a debate concerning the reliability of ancient Chinese documentation lasting for several decades.

The emergence and development of modern archaeology provided a new approach for historical research. In the early twentieth century, Wang Guowei 王國維, a prominent master of Chinese learning in the twentieth century, put forward his famous 'method of dual attestation' (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法). In his works and lectures, Wang Guowei repeatedly emphasized that the progress of sinological research often profited from the discovery of new materials. The core of his thought was that texts and excavated material could mutually authenticate each other. The texts that can be verified by archaeological material are to be considered undoubtedly reliable and as reflecting the historical facts. At the same time, we cannot thoughtlessly deny those records that have not been verified thus far.<sup>25</sup> After nearly a hundred years, this theory has been widely accepted in academic circles, and proved to be an effective research method for Chinese history.

<sup>25</sup> Wang Guowei 1994, 2-3.

In recent decades, a lot of buried material has been discovered and unearthed. There is abundant information to supplement textual sources that can be used to reconstruct historical events. This book rests on archaeological materials, and all typical monastery layouts taken into consideration were based on excavated physical evidence. It should be mentioned that for most of them, especially the State Monasteries, there is a more or less detailed written record. Using the method of dual attestation, i.e. connecting written records with archaeological discoveries, many important issues about these monasteries, such as the date of their construction, the historical background, the religious belief system, the monastery system, the architectural scale and style, the origin and evolution of architectural layout, will be discussed in detail.

A second methodological tool used throughout the book is typological comparison. Typology is a classification method based on types or categories and is widely used in archaeology, architecture, anthropology, linguistics and other fields. Because of their different research objects and purposes, various disciplines have different ways of defining typology. In nature, they all derive from the taxonomy of biology, and the basic principle is similar. For example, archaeological typology is a method of classifying artifacts according to their characteristics.<sup>26</sup> Architectural typology is the taxonomic classification of (usually physical) characteristics commonly found in buildings and urban places. Stylistic analysis, one of the basic research methods in art history, in which artifacts need to be classified and compared prior to further analysis, should also be mentioned. Undoubtedly, typology can be applied to the classification of Buddhist monasteries in the light of their architectural forms. However, though typology enables us to determine a chronological sequence, its authority rests on the classification of materials obtained from stratigraphic sequences.

Archaeological excavation and typological research have led the famous Chinese archaeologist Su Bingqi 蘇秉琦 to bring forward a new theory called 'Regional Divisions, Cultural Series and Types in Archaeological Culture' (*kaoguxue wenhua de quxi leixing* 考古學文化的區系類型). The leitmotiv of this theory is that some typical sites are selected, through scientific excavation, to obtain representative analysis materials. On the basis of the exact division of cultural types, some cultural series are summarized in a larger area according to similarities and differences in their cultural connotations.<sup>27</sup> Although this theory was originally used for the analysis of prehistoric cultures, it can be equally applied to the study of late ruins and relics.

The Chinese, Korean and Japanese Buddhist monasteries selected in this book are representatives of the highest-ranking monasteries in early medieval East Asia. Almost all of them were built under the auspices of the royal

family or dignitaries, and pertinent records providing essential information about them have been preserved. After long-term archaeological survey and excavation, the architectural style and layout of these monasteries have gradually emerged. In accordance with the different arrangement of the main buildings in the monasteries, different types of monastery layout will be classified according to typological principles. Then the cultural series (monastery layouts) will be summed up according to their similarities and differences, thus disclosing the architectural form and distinctive features of Buddhist monasteries in different areas and periods. Finally, I will discuss the evolution of the architectural layout of Buddhist monasteries in early medieval China and contact with contemporaneous monasteries in Korea and Japan through typological comparison and stylistic analysis.

On a more theoretical level, the interaction of space and function will allow for a deeper insight into the issue under investigation. Space, understood as a limited coverage of one, two or three dimensions, in my book corresponds to Buddhist architecture. It can refer to a single building, such as a Pagoda, a Buddha Hall or a Lecture Hall, but can also refer to a building space or a group of buildings, such as a courtyard or an entire monastery. Function in my book corresponds to the purpose of a single piece of Buddhist architecture or a group of buildings.

In this book, the interaction of space and function is the most relevant method for exploring the deeper reasons that brought about the evolution of monastery layout in early medieval China. Despite the fact that a significant part of the book discusses Buddhist architecture, it should be emphasized that I am particularly interested in the evolution of religious thought, rather than the simple evolution of architectural forms. In my opinion, space and function, as defined above, are so intertwined that they cannot be divided. Function determines space, while space serves as a locale for the fulfillment of a function, and confines the performance of a function under certain conditions. Doubtless, cultural connotations cannot be conceived or detected if the interaction of space and function is neglected. In the specific case of a Buddhist monastery, the interaction of space and function is traceable in the combination of various buildings, in which every main building or building group has a distinct and specific purpose. The evolution of the monastery layout thus reflects changes in religious thought and practice.

It should also be noted that the interaction between space and function is a crucial method for researching the intrinsic reasons for and laws of the development and evolution of medieval Chinese monasteries spanning the centuries. This method must be applied with caution when analyzing the early monastery layouts in Korea and Japan. This is because the method is only effective as applied to an original culture noumenon, rather than a derivative one. As far as the architectural layout of the Buddhist monastery is concerned, Chinese monasteries appeared around the first century AD, following the introduction of Buddhism,

<sup>26</sup> Dunnell 1986, Pp.35 - 99 ◦ pppp149-51.

<sup>27</sup> Su Bingqi and Yin Weizhang 1981.

and gradually shaped their own architectural tradition and style in the centuries following. Different buildings and groups of buildings had different religious meanings, and an inherent logical relation existed between space and function. Nevertheless, early Buddhist monasteries in Korea and Japan were quite dissimilar to Chinese ones. By imitating, they could replicate the architectural forms of contemporaneous Chinese monasteries, but this does not mean that the religious connotation contained in the architectural form was understood or accepted. In other words, similarity in architectural form and spatial arrangement does not correspond to uniformity in function, especially when these elements are newly introduced into a different cultural milieu.