



The Three Pagodas at Dali.

A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT CULTURAL RELICS OF THE NANZHAO-DALI KINGDOM

CHEN LUFAN

INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES, KUNMING

The racial attribution of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom as well as the origin of the Thai people is an important historical problem of great concern for every individual in the cultural circles and learned society of Thailand. For nearly a century scholars at home and abroad have published a series of theses and monographs on this problem.¹ At present there are two categorically different views, one maintaining that Nanzhao-Dali was a state established by the Thai people, while the other asserts that it was a regime set up by the ancestors of the Yi and Bai peoples. This paper, proceeding from the angle of the important cultural relics of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom, sets forth some humble opinions on the racial attribution of this kingdom. The author hopes that instructive comments might be drawn from the academic circles of Thailand.

I. The Cultural Relics

The Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom left the following existent important cultural relics: the Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet, the Three Pagodas of Dali and other recently discovered relics, the Mihu Iron Pillar, the Jianchuan Grottoes, the Illustrated Nanzhao History, the Vimālakīrti-Nirdeśa Sutra and transcribed Buddhist sutras left by the Dali Kingdom, the Kunming Stone Bell, the bronze statue of the Goddess of Mercy with Duan's inscription, and the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen of the Dali Kingdom. We shall introduce them one by one, from the world-famous Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet to that world masterpiece, the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen

The Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet

The Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet is preserved in Taiho Village, 15 li south of Dali City. This tablet, 3.02m high, 2.27m wide and 0.58m thick, is an important object for the study

of Nanzhao history. Its obverse side is carved with the memorial text, about 3500 words, while the reverse side bears the names and the titles of the dedicators in about 1000 words, making a total of some 5000 words, all in Chinese. As a result of the weathering process over a period of over 1200 years, only less than 800 words remain legible.

This tablet was dedicated in AD 766 (the first year of the Dali Reign of the Tang Dynasty)² by Guoketeng of Nanzhao at Taiho town (now Taiho village near Dali city). The memorial text was supposedly written by Zhenghui,³ a high official of Nanzhao, and inscribed by Du Guangting, a high-ranking Tang censor living in exile in Nanzhao. The inscription on the tablet deals with the history of Nanzhao uniting the Six Zhao with Tang support as well as its rebellion against Tang and its submission to Tibet and finally its uniting the whole of Yunnan. This provides first-hand source material for research on Nanzhao's politics, economics and geographical division, and on its relationship with Tibet as well as on the communications between Yunnan and Southeast Asia.

The Three Pagodas at Dali and the Cultural Relics Discovered There in 1978

The Three Pagodas of Dali, situated at the foot of Mt. Cangshan, northwest of Dali City, are Yunnan's most famous Buddhist pagodas. The main one, as high as 69.13m, located in the middle, is called Qianxun Pagoda (Qianxun signifying 'a thousand fathoms'). It is a 16-storeyed, close-eaved quadrangular hollow brick structure, modelled like Sian's lesser Yan Pagoda, and is typical of Tang architecture. Built in the first year of the Kaichen Reign of the Tang Dynasty (AD 836),⁴ it can boast a history of over 1100 years.

The Qianxun Pagoda is flanked at the north and south by two lesser ones, each 42.19m in height. They are ten-storeyed

close-eaved octagonal brick structures, built somewhat later than the main one. The three pagodas standing in a triangle, looking grand and sublime, represent a splendid architectural achievement of the Yunnan people in ancient times.

In 1978, when the three pagodas were under repair, 567 and 104 cultural relics were discovered respectively at the top and the base of the Qianxun Pagoda, making a total of 671-odd articles.⁵ These are so far the most abundant archaeological finds in connection with the period of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom.

Discovered at the top of the pagoda were 133 statuettes, among which 43 are Buddha images, 60 are images of the Goddess of Mercy, 5 of Manjushi and Samantabhadra, 9 of Narayana and other statues. In addition, there were 6 carved articles (three cut with Han characters, three cut with pictures), 8 pagoda models, 15 bronze mirrors, and signets, seals, and coins, altogether 11 articles. Furthermore, there were 213 diamond pestles, 4 bronze bells, 57 bronze bracelets, 2 skeleton-bone beads, 7 bronze clips, over 1,000 rosary beads and 22 gold and silver ornaments. Though medicaments were not found in



The Qianxun Pagoda, where numerous relics of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom were found in 1987.

great amounts, they were remarkable in variety, including cinnabar, vermilion, sandal, musk, coral, gold foil, mica, rosin, aromatic balm, etc. with rosin in the greatest quantities.

At the top of the pagoda was also discovered a gilded copper case containing three scrolls of transcribed sutras. One is the Stainless and Bright Great Dharani Sutra, 120cm wide, 195 cm long, with an inscription of 6,000 words; the other is the Dharani Mantra, 99 articles, with an inscription of 14,000 words; the third is a Mandala, 125cm long, 122cm wide.

Inside the base of the pagoda there are still some other remnant sutra scrolls, most of which are Sanskrit dharani mantra written in red. One, however is interlined with the Chinese inscription of the Buddhavatamsaka Mahavaipulya Sutra, and still another carries the full text of the Vajra Prajnaparamita Sutra in the second half.

The two inscribed copper plates and the one inscribed iron plate discovered at the top of the pagoda and dated respectively from AD 1000, 1142 and 1154, all testify to the fact that this group of cultural relics was stowed at the top of the pagoda in the period of the Dali Kingdom.

The cultural relics discovered at the base of the pagoda include 15 terra-cotta Buddha statuettes, 69 terra-cotta moulds of the Vajra Pagoda and 22 Sanskrit mantras.

The Stone Grottoes at Jianchuan

The Jianchuan Stone Grottoes are located in the Shizhong Mountains—a branch of the Shibao Mountain ridges—25km to the southwest of Jianchuan County, hence the name Shizhong Mountain Grottoes. So far 16 grottoes have been discovered in three regions, with eight at Shizhong Temple, three at Shizhiguan, and five at Shadeng village.

The statues in the grottoes are for the most part Buddha images such as of the Tathagata, and of Kasyapa, Ananda, the Eight Bodhisattvas, and the Slender Waisted Goddess of Mercy, etc. Apart from the Buddhist statues, in two of the grottoes were found statues of royal dignitaries of the Nanzhao Kingdom. In one of these is a carved picture of Ge Loufeng's Council in which 16 political figures are represented, giving us some idea of the garments and appearance of the Nanzhao rulers as well as the manners and institutions of that time. Other statues are of foreigners with deep-set eyes and high bridged noses—a reflection of the friendly intercourse of the Nanzhao Kingdom with Persia and India. Another grotto is carved with a picture of a female genital organ, called "nangubi" by the local people, having a definite significance for the study of ancient social life in the Dali region.

Three inscriptions in the grottoes play a decisive role in establishing the date of their opening. The first grotto at Shadeng Village bears this text on its rock wall: "Chang Banlong of Shandan Village, Shatufoshang County, together with his wife

Shengmenghu and his sons Longqing, Longjun, Longxing, Longan and Longqian, etc., being graced with heavenly favours due to good deeds, dedicate in all deference this statue of Amitabha. The 25th of the Seventh Moon of the Eleventh Year of the King's Tienqi Reign."

"*Tienqi*" is the reign name of the Nanzhao King Fengyou. The Eleventh Year of the Tienqi Reign corresponds to the First Year of the Huichang Reign of the Tang Emperor Wuzhong, or the year AD 841.

At the left side of the central chamber of the second grotto at Shadeng Village are 22 characters in two lines written in ink.

Above the mouth of the central cave of the eighth grotto at the Shizhong Temple is an inscription in ink whose last line reads as follows:

"Constructed in the Fourth Year of the Shengde Reign, dedicated on the 3rd of the Eighth Moon of Yihai Year."

"*Shengde*" is the reign name of the Dali King Duan Zhuxin. The Fourth Year of the Shengde Reign (Yihai Year) would correspond to the 16th Year of the Chisi Reign of the Southern Song Dynasty, or AD 1179.

It can be seen from the above three inscriptions that the grottoes at Jinchuan were dug out gradually in Nanzhao over a period of several hundred years. These grottoes are characterized by vivid character portrayal. In addition to the influence of the grottoes of North China, they are also marked with a very distinctive local flavour and national colour.

The Iron Pillar at Midu

The Iron Pillar is preserved in a temple some half a dozen km to the south of Midu County. It is 3.3m high and 1.05m in girth. It is erected on a pedestal more than 1m high and is inscribed with 22 Chinese characters: "Erected on the 14th (Kuichu) of the Fourth Moon (Gienzhizhou) of the Renshen Year—the 13th Year of the Jianji Reign." The 13th Year of the Jianji Reign would correspond to the 13th year of the Xiantong Reign of the Tang Emperor Yizhong, or AD 872.

The date of the dedication of this iron pillar is very clear and legible, having a definite significance for the study of the calendar and the chronology of memorial inscriptions in the Nanzhao period.

Not a few minority peoples in Yunnan in ancient times had the custom of pillar worship. This iron pillar was used in sacrificial rituals in the Nanzhao period. The Illustrated Nanzhao History gives a description of the scenes of such a ritual service. Guo Songnian of the Yuan Dynasty tells in his *Tripto Dali*: how the Iron Pillar at Midu "is gilded by the natives every year and respected as the Pillar of Heavenly Dignity. It is worshiped by people all the year round, as it grants every pious prayer." Since the iron pillar was respected as the "Pillar of Heavenly Dignity," it became the symbol deifying the rule of the Nanzhao Kingdom.

The Illustrated Nanzhao History

The Illustrated Nanzhao History, otherwise called the "Pictorial Scroll of the Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign" or "the Pictorial Scroll of Nanzhao History," is now preserved in the Yuhu Museum in Kyoto, Japan.

This long scroll contains in its first part pictures representing a series of stories with Buddhist legends as their themes. It is painted in color, 19.15 chi (Japanese chi—about 1/3 meter) long and 1.04 chi high. The second part contains an inscription describing in detail the stories in the scroll, and attached to it is an edict issued by Shun Huazhen, the last king of the Nanzhao Kingdom. The scroll was finished under the supervision of Wang Fengzhong and Changshun in the Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign of Nanzhao (AD 898), yet the authorship is unknown. Judging from the legend of the scroll, it can be divided into three parts: the first is called "The Kingdom's taking its rise in the Weishan Mountains," i.e., the tale of the Buddhist priest begging for alms. The second part is the so-called "History of the Iron Pillar," i.e., the story of worshipping the Iron Pillar, telling how "propitious omens" came from heaven, and Zhang Yuejin of the White Crag sought the post of the Chief Buddhist Monk from Meng Gon. The third part is called "The History of the Western Er River," describing how Shun Huazhen "sacrificed cattle to consecrate the Western Er River (Erhai Lake)" to lay down the foundations of his supreme rule.

The Nanzhao Pictorial Scroll gives a delicate and vivid portrayal of the historical figures as well as a rather true reflection of the actual life of that period. Therefore this scroll is of important value for the study of the social and economic life as well as material and cultural civilization of the Nanzhao Kingdom.

The Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra and the Transcribed Buddhist Sutras

The Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra of the Dali Kingdom is at present preserved in the Oriental Department of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was acquired by the museum in 1947. The sutra scrolls are 31 inches high and 25 feet long, of purple silk, with a gilt inscription. The extant sutra is incomplete. At the conclusion there is the dedication, which reads as follows:

"The Prime Minister of the Dali Kingdom Gao Taiming presents with all devotion this Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra to the Ambassadors of the Great Song Empire Zhong Lian and Huan Lian, wishing that, upon recall to the Court, they will be infinitely blessed, and feel no care and alarm when climbing

mountains and risking dangers. Graced by the Emperor's favours, we pray that the remote Chinese Empire enjoy interminable millennia of happy life.

Dedicated on New Year's Day in the winter of Wuxu Year, the Ninth Year of the Wenzhi Reign.

Under the supervision of Yun Yuafu, the Chief Monk of the Fuding Temple.

The Anecdotes of the Nanzhao Kingdom states in the passage about Duan Heyu: "In the sixth year of the Zhenghe Reign, two envoys, Zhong Zheng and Huan Jian, were sent by the Court to reward the Prime Minister Gao Taiming for his loyalty and consistency, conferring on him the title of Lord Pinguo." It is evident from this passage that since the Song Court did send Zhong Zheng and Huan Jian as envoys to the Dali Kingdom, the three blanks left at the end of this sutra might be filled in with the three characters "Zhong," "Huan" and "Jian," thus restoring the original text. This sutra was prepared by Gao Taiming as a gift to the envoys from the Song Court. The ninth year of Wengzhi, which was the epithet of the reign of the Dali King Duan Zhenyang, corresponds to AD 1118. Therefore the time this sutra was prepared would be in the twenties of the twelfth century.

The calligraphy of the scroll is virile and bold. The Buddhist pictures in the first part of the sutra, painted in color, ornamented with lines of gold and silver, are splendid and magnificent, attaining a high degree of artistic perfection.

In August of 1956 two shelves of ancient sutra scrolls were discovered in the Dong Family's "Golden Temple" at Tang Tien Township to the north of Fengyi County of Dali Prefecture. The scrolls, numbering some 3,000 volumes, are for the most part woodcut Buddhist sutras. Among others, there are 20-odd transcribed sutra scrolls of the late period of the Nanzhao Kingdom and the period of the Dali Kingdom and about ten volumes of sutra scrolls of Acarya of the Nanzhao and Dali period. This is the site of an archaeological excavation in Yunnan where the largest amount of ancient Buddhist Sutras was found, which provide important substantial source material for the study of Buddhism, especially Acarya in the Nanzhao-Dali period.

Of the five volumes of Fuguoshi's Southern Transcribed Sutras of the late Nanzhao Period, only the greater part of the corrigenda attached to volume I remains. The date is mentioned in one place of the sutra as "The third Moon of the Summer of the Year Jia Yin—the Sixth Year of the Kingdom's Shengzhi Reign." As identified by the scholars, it is a transcribed copy dated from the period of the Longshun Reign of the Nanzhao Kingdom (AD 894).

The dedication of the Commendatory Memoir of the Seven Progenitors bears this inscription: "A volume of the Commendatory Memoir of the Seven Progenitors, dedicated by the Buddha's disciple Biqiu Shicaochang, in the Eighth Year of the Baoan Reign." Baoan is the name of the first reign of the Dali King Duan Shunian, and the Eighth Year of the Baoan Reign cor-

responds to 1051. This is the earliest extant religious scroll of the Dali Kingdom.

Another volume bears these words: "Dedicated in the Fifteenth of the ninth Moon of the Year Binshen—the Eighth Year of the Bao Tien Reign." Bao Tien is the epithet of the reign of the Dali King Duan Zhengyan and the Eighth Year of Bao Tien Reign corresponds to AD 1136.

Although there are still some 20-odd volumes which bear no date, they can, however, be identified as transcribed Buddhist sutras of the Dali Kingdom, judging from their dedications, calligraphy, paper quality and binding.

The sutras of the Nanzhao-Dali Period were transcribed on high-quality paper, well bound in pasteboard and written in ink. Some are even written on green paper, alternating with golden and silver characters, thus becoming a work of art or a gift for tribute.

The Stone Bell at Kunming

The Stone Bell was originally a sutra bell installed in the Dizang Temple, and is at present preserved in the Kunming Gutong Park.

This sutra bell is octagonal in shape; it is made entirely of stone and is 8m in height. The bell is divided into seven storeys, carved with over 200 pictures of the Buddha and other deities. The upper five storeys are carved with the pictures of the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Arhats as well as of palaces and pavilions. The sixth storey is carved with the pictures of the Four Great Narayana in standing posture, holding battle-axes, clad with cuirasses and crowned with helmets. On their right and left side are engraved the Sanskrit dharami mantra. The seventh storey is divided into eight facets, engraved with the Kausika Pradnaparamita and the History of Making the Bell. Underneath is a throne for the Buddha, carved with eight Heavenly Dragons. The carvings on the bell are vivid and exquisite, having rather high artistic value and representing important substantial source material for the study of the sculptural art of the Dali Kingdom.

The first four lines of the History of Making the Bell read as follows:

"The Buddha's disciple Buxue Yuan Douguang of the Dali Kingdom has made this inestimable bell in honour of the supreme Buddha" and "Text of dedication by Duan Jinchuan, the all-knowing and all-penetrating Buddhist Master Monk of the Supreme Buddha Temple of the Imperial Capital."

This Stone Bell was made by Buxue Yuan Douguang for the purpose of perpetuating the memory of his meritorious deeds in supporting the young king. Since The History of Making the Bell bears no date and no account is given as regards the beginning and end of the fabrication process, the specific time that the bell was made remains unknown. Judging from the

historical figures and events mentioned in *The History of Making the Bell* it may be inferred that the bell was made in the twelfth century.

The Copper Statue of the Goddess of Mercy with Duan's Inscription

This copper statue of the Goddess of Mercy made in the Dali Kingdom is now preserved in the San Diego Museum in California, U.S. It came into its possession in 1941.

It is a copper statue painted red and illuminated with gold, about 1.5 chi high. The embossed inscription on the lower part of the back covers a space about 0.4 chi in width and is composed of 43 characters arranged as follows:

Emperor (Piao Xing) Duan Zhengxing finances the sculpture of these Buddha Statues for the welfare of his Princes Duan Yichangsheng and Duan Yichangxing, and hereby presents the dedication. He hopes that because of this deed of virtue the genealogical tree of the Duan Family will bear fruits of blessings as innumerable as sands, ensuring them everlasting peace and prosperity, that the offspring, of the family will also enjoy the protection of Heaven and Earth, and last to eternity with an unbroken line of succession.

The inscription shows that the owner of this copper statue was the Dali King Duan Zhengxing and the purpose in casting it was to give blessings to Princes Duan Yichangsheng and Duan Yichangxing. Duan Zhengxing was none other than the Duan Zhengxing whose reign lasted from 1147 to 1172. Therefore this statue must have been cast in that period of the twelfth century extending from the forties to the seventies.

The statue of the Goddess of Mercy in a standing posture, her left hand drooping, her right hand lifted, with bare breast, slender waist and a rather broad-bridged nose and thick lips, has a staid and kind mien. The conception of the image and the modelling of the statue are splendid and exquisite, making it a standard form of the Goddess of Mercy in Yunnan Province.

The Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen of Dali

The formal title of this long scroll is *Buddhas' Pictures Painted in the Song Dynasty by the Artificer Zhang Shengwen of Dali* for short. At present it is preserved in the Taipei Forbidden Palace Museum. The scroll is 30.4cm high, 1,636.5cm long, divided into 134 sections, painted with 626 pictures. The whole scroll consists of three parts, the first including sections 1-6, 72.2cm long, composed of pictures of the king's retinue, etc. The

second part, consisting of sections 7-130, 1,515.2cm long, contains pictures of the Bodhisattvas, Heavenly Dragons, Buddhist festivals etc. The third part, consisting of sections 131-134, 49.1cm long, contains pictures of the Sixteen Indian Kings.

The various sections of this long scroll have, for the most part, their own captions. The one at the beginning of the scroll is "Portrait of Lixiong Emperor Piao Xing," followed by another, "Portrait Painted at the Command of Emperor Piao Xing." At the end of the section is the epilog written by Monk Miaoguang: "Zhang Shengwen, painter of the Dali Kingdom, having portrayed His Majesty's noble features for the benefit of the common people, requests me to write this epilog...with all deference by Monk Miaoguang on the eleventh of the First Moon of the Year Gengzhi, in the fifth year of the Reign of Shengde." Emperor Lixiong was none other than the Dali King Duan Zhengxing. These two inscriptions all indicate that *The Pictorial Scroll* by Zhang Shengwen was a work of the period of King Duan Zhengxing. Duan Zhengxing changed the name of his reign into "Lixiong" in the ninth year of the Qian Dao Reign of the Southern Song Dynasty (AD 1173). That was in turn changed into "Shengde" in the third year of the Chunxi Reign (AD 1176). So this great work of art must have been completed in the four years of 1173-1176. After its completion, Monk Miaoguang wrote the epilog in 1180.¹¹

The preface written by His Majesty Emperor Qian Long of the Qing Dynasty says: "This scroll of the Dali Kingdom is not to be found elsewhere in the world. Scarcely any other pictorials of the successive historical periods can bear comparison to it." Emperor Qian Long took great delight in this long scroll and instructed Ding Guangpeng to make a copy of it under the guidance of the Royal Lamas' Master Zhang Jia,¹² with a rearrangement of the pictures of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arhats and Dragon Kings. The new one is entitled *The Scroll of the Source and the Evolution of the Dharmadhātu*. The other parts related to the Dali Emperor were reproduced as *The Pictorial Scroll of the Savage King Worshipping the Buddha*.

Since *The Scroll of the Source and Evolution of the Dharmadhātu* was completed, it had been preserved in the Forbidden Palace, until it was brought by Fuyi to Changchun when he left the Palace. In 1945, the scroll came into the hands of a commoner. At present it is...at the Jilin Provincial Museum.¹³ The scroll is 33 cm high, 2,014 cm long—not only higher and larger than the original but also longer by a quarter of its length.

The Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen is extremely rich and multifarious in its content. In addition to a large number of pictures of the deities of the Shingon Sect, there is also a picture of the Six Patriarchs of the Chan Sect as well as pictures about the legends and fairy tales popular in that region. This is characteristic evidence of the rather prominent position of religion in the Nanzhao-Dali period.

Noteworthy is the nature of this scroll as a credible reflection of certain aspects of the social life of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom, since it gives a true picture of the garments, official system, flags and weapons carried by a guard of honour of the



Section from the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen of Dali.

time, and provides important source material for research into the Nanzhao-Dali Period.

The life of Zhang Shengwen is not ascertainable. Nevertheless, this "painting tracer" was in fact a great artist worthy of the name. This long scroll completed by him is indeed a rare work of art in the world's heritage of Buddhist painting.

II. Attribution of the Relics

Now that we have given a brief description of the important cultural relics of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom, the reader may ask: what are the characteristics of these valuable things existing betwixt the Changshan Mountain and Erhai Lake that were finally brought to light? Do they belong to the Thai people, Yi People or Bai People?

Let us then answer the question with an "object demonstration."

Language

A common language is one of the most important characteristics of a nationality. The large number of words carried in the inscriptions or dedications of the Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet, the Janchuan Grottoes, the Iron Pillar at Mida, the Transcribed Buddhist Sutras of the Dali Kingdom, the Copper Statue of the Goddess of Mercy as well as the Nanzhao Pictorial Scroll and Shengwen's Pictorial Scroll, are all Chinese, not Siamese. From the Tang and Song Dynasties up to the present time, the Bai and Yi People and their ancestors have all along used the Chinese language for communication.

The language of a people usually undergoes a period of several hundred years before it gradually comes into shape. The most archaic Siamese is seen on the memorial tablet set up in 1292 by King Rama Khambeng of Thailand's Sukhothai Dynasty.¹¹ Therefore, it is evident that the Siamese language came into being as early as before the 13th Century. If the Dynasty was actually established as a result of the mass migration of the Thai people caused by Kublai Khan's conquest of the Dali Kingdom in the middle of the 13th Century, why was Siamese commonly used instead of Chinese in the reign of that Dynasty?

Religion

Zhang Shengwen's Pictorial Scroll, very rich and multi-farious in its content, is the most important treasure of historical source material for the study of Buddhism in the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom. The scroll contains several hundred pictures, such as of the Vajra, the Dragon King, Bodhisattvas, the great Black Deva,¹⁴ the Two Great Disciples, the Sixteen Yakshas, the Six Patriarchs of the Chan Sect,¹⁵ and local eminent monks and celebrities not mentioned in the Buddhist classics.¹⁶ The graceful variations of the image of Goddess of Mercy are also quite distinguished. The Shingon Sect from Tibet, the Chan Sect from Central China and the native figures of the Dali region make up a fine mixture and a grand display of the complexity of the Buddhist religion.

The carved images of the Rajas and Narayanas found at the Jianchuan Grottoes and those of Bodhisattvas and Devas found on the Kunming Stone Bell are for the most part divine images of the Shingon Sect. The same is true of the large quantity of statuette newly unearthed from the Qiansun Pagoda.

The transcribed Buddhist sutras of the Nanzhao-Dali Period, such as the Vimalakirti-Nirdesa Sutra, Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, Vajra Tchichhedika Pradnaparamita, Buddhayamsaka Mahavajraputra Sutra etc. are for the most part sutras of the Shingon Sect.

Among the relics newly unearthed at the Qiansun Pagoda are 22 Sanskrit mantras and 213 vajras. In addition, there exist in the Dali Region dozens of engraved Sanskrit tablets, some of which belong to the Buddhist legacy of the Dali Kingdom. These are for the most part cultural relics left behind by the Shingon Sect.

Such a great variety of divine images, ritual vessels and sutras of the Shingon Sect indicates that it was the Shingon Sect of the Mahayana that was rife in the later Nanzhao Period and during the whole of the Dali Period. Nevertheless, the Six Patriarchs of the Chan Sect represented in the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen also demonstrate that although during the Dali Period the Shingon Sect was dominant, the Chan Sect of Mahayana was already gaining popularity. The Thai people in Thailand of course, adhere to the Hinayana, in contradistinction to the Mahayana which held sway in the Dali Region.

Garments

The Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen carries the portraits of 13 Nanzhao Kings¹⁷ and the Dali King Duan Zhixing. Apart from Xi Lulou, their garments are the same as those of Ge Loufeng and Yi Muxun: they wear high cone-shaped crowns with flowing ties at both sides and loose-sleeved T-shaped robes, while Xunmijou, the wife of Xi Lulou, and Mengwei, the wife of Lou Sheng, all have their hair combed into chignons and wear robes with right gussets.

The progenitor of the Nanzhao Kingdom, Xi Lulou, is bare-footed and crowned with a high chignon.

Let us now look at the picture of Emperor Lizheng's Buddha Worship, a sexto at the head of the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen. The Dali King Duan Zhixing wears a high crown of red sateen and a loose-sleeved ceremonial robe pleated like a surplice. He is holding a rosary and a small incense-burner as he goes to worship the Buddha. The robe is decorated with designs of battle-axes and flames as well as patterns of the sun and moon on the shoulders.

The high crown is none other than the so-called "hood" which is one of the most distinctive articles of clothing of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom.

The eighth item of the "Customs of Savages" in the Book of Savage Tribes, by Fanzhou of the Tang Dynasty gives the following description:

"The rest of the clothing is somewhat similar to that of the Han people; only the hood worn by the natives is most peculiar. In Nanzhao, the main part of it is made of red sateen, while the lower part is made of a sort of raw silk fabric. The making of a hood is like this: Take a piece of sateen, sew the hems into corners. The hair is combed at the back of the head into a chignon which is covered with the tied hood."

Even to this day the Yi People wear chignons honoured as relating to the "Heavenly Bodhisattva" and nobody may touch them without giving offence. The high crown-shaped hood is probably made to protect the "Heavenly Bodhisattva."¹⁸

The Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen carries in its fourth section the picture of a warrior wearing a helmet and a tiger-skin, also called "Bolou Skin." The most meritorious warriors wear a whole suit of tiger skin, while the less meritorious ones "can only wear it over breast and back" or "merely over the breast."¹⁹ Yet the Thai people revere the elephant and have never had the custom of adorning themselves with tiger skins.

The scroll carries in its second section a picture of a barefoot warrior holding a long shield carved with dragon designs and wearing a felt cloak, with his hair combed into a chignon. The Book of Savage Tribes says at the beginning of its eighth volume, when relating the customs of the Nanzhao Kingdom: "The males of the savage tribes all wear felt cloaks." Even today the males of the Yi People are still barefooted and wear felt cloaks.

Such peculiar headgear and garments as high crowns, loose robes, tiger skins and felt cloaks are not to be found among the Thai people or in the Tai Region.²⁰

Two Buffalos Under Yoke

The Pictorial History of the Nanzhao Kingdom carries a picture of Xi Lulou tilling the land with his son, vividly and



Two buffalos under yoke. This ploughing method and the basket carried by the child in the rear are described as not characteristic of the Tai people

graphically presenting the scene of "ploughing with two yoked buffalos." Xi Lulou and his son Lousheng are in loose T-shaped robes, bare-footed and crowned with chignons. Behind them is a triangular plough to which is attached a horizontal yoke. Before this yoke two buffalos are lying side by side to enjoy a rest. *The Book of Savage Tribes* says in its "Products of Yunnan," item 7: "The tilling is done with a three-chi plough. The yoke is some ten chi long, and the two buffalos are separated by a distance of seven or eight chi."

Up to modern times, "ploughing with two yoked buffalos" remained the custom in the regions inhabited by the Yi and Bai Peoples.²¹

Beside the two buffalos under yoke is a child carrying a long basket on his back. Interesting is the fact that that sort of long basket which was used more than a thousand years ago is entirely identical to the sort used today in the hamlets inhabited by the Yi people of Yunnan. Such a scene as a person carrying a long basket on his back and such a ploughing method as "using two yoked buffalos" are not to be found even in Xishuangbanna among the Tai people.

Architecture

The Qianxun Pagoda—one of the Three Dali Pagodas—is characterized by its close cornices and eaves and small spaces between the different storeys, its conformation being similar to the Dayan Pagoda in Sian built in the Tang Dynasty.

The two lesser pagodas north and south of it are octagonal in shape, their conformation being somewhat similar to the pagoda of the Yunyan Temple in Suzhou built in AD 959.

The pagoda of the Hongsheng Temple in Dali²² and the pagodas of the Eastern and Western Temples in Kunming²³ are similar to the Qianxun Pagoda in their conformation.

The conformation of these pagodas is entirely different from that of the Buddhist pagodas in Thailand.

Fine Arts

The Illustrated Nanzhao History and The Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen, in particular, both point to an admirable new height attained by the fine arts of the Nanzhao Kingdom.

The wonderful brush of Zhang Shengwen, this great master of art, brought forth in his long scroll more than six hundred lifelike figures, each with distinctive air and mien. The animals such as lions, dogs, elephants and horses, are drawn with graceful lines and are marvellously true to life. The famous 'jade ribbon cloud' girdling the middle of Mt. Cangshan is depicted as curling and winding, clearly visible to one's mind's eye. The pictures of this master are richly redolent of the Tang style, and in many respects strike one as remarkably resembling the works of the great Tang artist Wu Daozhi.

The Grotooes at Jianchuan and the Stone Bell at Kunming are carved with the images of several hundred individuals—some kind and dignified, some majestic and dreadful, some calm and serene, some melancholy and even grieved and afflicted while others are expansive and ungleeful mood. The two Narayanas are represented as having bulging muscles indicative of masculine virility and strength. The several stone warriors of sturdy build with big noses, thick lips and ringed ears strike one as being as vigorous as tigers. These works are reminiscent of the sculptural style in the heyday of the Tang Dynasty and bear the marks of the profound influence of the sculpture of Central China, especially Sichuan Province. On the other hand, they are also rich in a distinct local-national color.

III. Conclusion

The important cultural relics of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom, like a mirror, gave a more or less true picture of certain aspects of Yunnan's politics, economics, nationalities, religion, culture and arts in the period extending from the eighth to the thirteenth century. It is evident that Central China exerted a profound influence upon Yunnan in various respects.

Guo Songnian, a scholar living at the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, made a trip to Dali some twenty years after the conquest of the Dali Kingdom by Kublai Khan and wrote about his personal experiences in his *Trip to Dali*. He observed that the Erhai region at his time was not widely different from Central China either in 'palaces, pavilions, language and bibliography, or in garments, wedding and funeral ceremonies as well as military affairs and customs.'¹⁰ He concluded that 'Even viewed from today, things here are still reminiscent of China in the past!'

On the other hand, it can be seen that the important cultural relics of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom are rich in a distinct local-national color, some reflecting the characteristics of the culture of the Yi People, others reflecting those of the Bai people.

The Thai people have a long history and the archaeological excavations in Thailand are providing us with convincing evidence that they have in the long historical period created their brilliant ancient culture with its own distinct national traits, entirely different from those of the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom.

ENDNOTES

1. Terrien de Lacouperie, Professor at London University, in his article "The Cradle of the Shan Race" published in 1885, first put forth the view that "Nanzhao was a Thai Kingdom." In the following decades, a large group of western scholars, intelligence officers, priests and diplomats published books echoing this view of Nanzhao's being a state founded by the Thai people. Of this number the following have exerted a weighty influence upon the writing of the ancient history of Thailand:
 - H. R. Davies: *Yunnan, the Link between India and the Yangtze*, Cambridge, 1909.
 - W. C. Dodd: *The Tai Race—Elder Brother of the Chinese*, Iowa, U.S.A., 1923.
 - W. A. R. Wood: *A History of Siam*, London, 1926.

The first scholars who opposed this view of Nanzhao's being a state founded by the Thai people were Professor Fang Guoyui of Yunnan University and Mr. Xu Yunqiao of the Southeast Asia Society. In the period of the 1930s to 1940s both of them wrote theses refuting this view. In the following decades, other Chinese scholars also published books and articles for the same purpose. Most of them held that the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom was established by the ancestors of the Yi and Bai peoples.
2. The existent inscription bears no date of the establishment of the tablet. "Trip to Dali," written by Guo Songnian in the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty, states that the Tablet was established in the First Year of the Dali Reign of the Tang Emperor Dai Zhong (AD 766). Since the narration of events on the Tablet ends at AD 765, Guo's statement proves reliable.
3. The author of the inscription of the Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet, according to the study of Wang Shuwu, is considered to be Wang Mansheng rather than Zheng Mali (Zheng Hui). v. *Kunming's Ideological Front*, issue 2, 1978: "The Identification of the Author of the Nanzhao Civilization Memorial Tablet."
4. Regarding the date of the construction of the Qianxun Pagoda, historical literature carries three different versions, one dates it from the Sixth Year of the Zhengguan Reign of the Tang Emperor Taizhong, the second dates it from the First Year of the Kaiyuan Reign of the Tang Emperor Xuanzhong, and the third from the First Year of the Kaicheng Reign of the Tang Emperor Wenzhong. Fang Guoyi, in his article "Research on the Chongsheng Temple Pagoda at Dali," made a collation of these three versions and considered the third to be the most probable.
5. v. "The Survey and Clearance of the Main Pagoda of the Chongsheng Temple at Dali" by the Yunnan Cultural Relics Brigade, *Archaeology Journal*, issue 2, 1981. This stock-taking report is written by Qiu Xunchun.
6. The Pictorial Scroll bears this inscription: "His Majesty's Minister and the Magistrate of Weishan, Wang Fengzhong and others make this dedication. In conformity with the legends of the Kingdom's rise at Weishan, of the Iron Pillar and of the Western Er River as well as the history of the Sacred Religion's being first introduced into the Kingdom, the Picture is hereby presented, registering the related traditions on its left. The fourteenth of the third moon of the Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign. With all due submission by His Majesty's Minister Zhang Shun and the Magistrate of Weishan, His Majesty's Minister Wang Fengzhong and others." This is an important inscription, since it definitely dates this Pictorial Scroll from the Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign. Zhongxing is the reign name of the Nanzhao King Xun Huazheng. The Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign corresponds to the Fifth Year of the Qianning Reign of the Tang Emperor Zhao Zhong, or AD 898.
7. v. the text of *The Illustrated Nanzhao History*.
8. The Pictorial Scroll dating from the Second Year of the Zhongxing Reign is an artistic work of the late Nanzhao Period. This is a view unanimously accepted by Chinese scholars. But till now there remain some divergences as to whether the Pictorial Scroll preserved at Kyoto is the original or an imitation. Professor Fang Guoyui of Kunming regarded it as the original, yet Professor Xiang Da of Beijing observed that "the dedication of the Scroll bears not even the slightest traces of the Tang Style of writing. It is at most a picture of the Dali Period, not to be regarded as belonging to a much earlier period." Mr. Li Lingchan of Taipei considers the Scroll to be an imitation wrought in the reign of the Dali King Duan Siyong (AD 945).
9. v. history by Guihai Yuheng: *Book of Savage Tribes*.

10. Li Lingchan: *Comprehensive Study of the New Sources on the Nanzhao-Dali Kingdom*, p.26, published at Taipei, 1967.
11. Ding Guanpeng was a Qing artist who excelled in portraiture. Zhangjia was the Fourth Great Laying Buddha of Yellow-sect Lamaism, well versed in Buddhism.
12. *Extracts of Arts*, p. 48, issue 6, 1979.
13. This tablet was discovered in the ruins of the Sukhothai Temple in 1833. See Volume 1 of *Collection of Tablet Inscriptions* published in the *Examination and Publication of Historical Literature Attached to the Chancellery of Thailand*, the second edition, 1978.
14. The Black Great Deva is the Guardian of the Law in the Indian Shingon Sect.
15. Sections 44-49 of the scroll carry the portraits of the great Buddhist Masters such as Damou, Huike, Zhengchan, Daoxing, Hongren and Huirong, who are the six Patriarchs of the Chan Sect of Interior China.
16. Sections 51-57 of the scroll carry the portraits of monks such as Zhuzong, the Sage Mai □ cou, Chuntiao, Faguan, Mokoloniao, Zhangtuo □ duo, and Shameng □ □ who were high monks and celebrities in the Dali Region.
17. v. Section 103 of the Pictorial Scroll by Zhang Shengwen, Avalokitecvāra-Ekadācamukhah. The picture shows how the Nanzhao Kings of thirteen generations were worshipping Avalokitecvāra-Ekadācamukhah. Hence it is evident that this Bodhisattva enjoyed great adoration at the time.
18. *Comprehensive Study of the New Sources on the Nanzhao Dali Kingdom*, p. 25, published at Taipei, 1967.
19. *The Book of Savage Tribes* says in the eighth item on the savage customs: "The purple and the red colors are greatly esteemed. Persons who won great merits, after obtaining the purple, are permitted to wear brocade, while those who are exceptionally meritorious are permitted to wear Bolou skin all over the body. The less meritorious ones are permitted to wear the skin over the breast and the back, without covering the arms. Those who are still less meritorious are only permitted to wear the skin over the breast, without covering the back. Bolou skin is nothing other than tiger skin."
20. *The Book of Savage Tribes* carries an authentic description of the garments of the ancestors of Yunnan's Tai people during the Tang Dynasty. Volume 4 of the book gives this account. "They wear trousers of black cloth, carrying a slanting black-cloth band across the shoulder" ... "Wearing a red-cloth dress, adorned with black." "Allwearing black trousers, their waists entwined with rattan and their chignons wrapped in red cloth, the rest of which hangs down as a decoration. The women are clothed in rainbow-colored gossamer. Peacocks nest in the trees by the people's homes. Elephants are as big as water-buffaloes. It is the local custom to keep elephants for ploughing the land, and to burn their droppings as fuel."
21. *The History of Shiqing Prefecture During Emperor Qian-long's Reign* (Qing Dynasty) states that "the inhabitants of Shiqing are mostly Lo Yi people, who till the land with two oxen pulled in the front, pressed at the middle and driven in the rear."
22. The Hongsheng Temple Pagoda in Dali, otherwise called the First Pagoda, 43.8m in height, quadrangular in shape, 16-storeyed, is similar to the Qiansun Pagoda in conformation. Several years ago a group of important cultural relics was discovered at that pagoda.
23. The East Temple Pagoda, 40.53m in height, and the West Temple Pagoda, 35.55m in height, both in Kunming, are 15-storeyed quadrangular brick structures.
24. *Trip to Dali* by Guo Songnian states that in the Erhai Lake region the palaces, pavilions, language and biblioteca, the wedding, funeral and sacrificial rituals, as well as the military strategy and tactics, though not altogether perfect, are all more or less conformable to those of the Han people, so far as the proportions, the color and style of the garments, and the motions are concerned. Even viewed from today, the things here are still reminiscent of China in the past!