



Connotation and qualities of the Buddhist culture of Grand Canal



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The Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal arises from the interaction and dynamic interplay between Grand Canal culture and Buddhist culture. This cultural phenomenon is not merely a simple superimposition of two elements; rather, it represents a unique cultural form that has evolved historically through the intersection of temporal and spatial dimensions. Its connotations can be understood from multiple perspectives, including the ephemerality of time, the dispersion of space, the plurality of types and the intermingling of subject and object. The Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal developed along both sides of the canal and has been historically deposited, embodying an amalgamation of reality and history. Therefore, the study of this culture should not be confined to specific temporal or spatial contexts but should encompass a multidimensional and expansive cultural exploration centred on the Grand Canal. By examining the connection between human excellence and the flow of water within this context, the cultural characteristics of the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal extend into the cultural flow between the north and south. Here, Buddhist culture serves as the connecting thread, linking, communicating and integrating the spiritual worlds of people across different regions. The scope of research primarily encompasses diverse fields such as Buddhist history, Buddhist thought, cultural relics, social folklore, literature and art.

Contribution: This paper emphasises that an in-depth understanding of the connotations and qualities of the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is one of the most important ways to correctly understand the culture of the Grand Canal, especially the cross-culture of the Grand Canal and Buddhism, and points out the way in which and the scope of the research should be carried out.

Keywords: culture of the Grand Canal; the Buddhist culture of Grand Canal; connotation; temporal and spatial; diversity; integration; traits; subjectivity; cultural communication; international exchange.

Introduction

In ancient society, people used carriages on roads, boats on water, leather-covered sleds in mud and built bridges in mountains. Waterways were a low-cost and convenient mode of transportation; therefore the Chinese dug ditches to facilitate navigation in early eras. Qian Sima [司馬遷] points out that Xingyang [滎陽] leads southeast of the river to the gulf, connecting the states of Song [宋], Zheng [鄭], Chen [陳], Cai [蔡], Cao [曹] and Wei [魏] and merging with the Ji [濟], Ru [汝], Huai [淮] and Si [泗會] river systems. In the State of Chu [楚], the west canals were built and connected between the Han River [漢水] and Yun-meng Lakes [雲夢], and the east was connected by ditches between the Yangtze River [長江] and Huai River [淮河]. In the State of Wu [吳], canals were dug between three rivers and five lakes. In the State of Qi [齊], canals were dug between the Zi River [淄水] and Ji Shui [濟水]. In the State of Shu [蜀], the prefecture Bing Li [李冰] chiselled away the Li Dui [離碓] to avoid the flood caused by Mo Shui [沫水], and two river tributaries were dug in the Chengdu [成都]. These canals can all be used for boats, and the surplus was used for irrigation, benefiting the people greatly (Sima 1959:1407). During the Spring and Autumn-Warring States period [春秋時期], there were records of river excavations in the states of Chu, Wei and Qi, among others, such as during the period of King Zhuang of Chu (613-591 BC), Sun Shuao [孫叔敖] once led the Ju Shui [沮水] to form Yun-meng Lakes [雲夢澤], dredging the waterways near the Yangtze River, which can be said to be the earliest canal dug in China (Shi 2022:10). In 486 BC, Fu Chai [夫差], King of Wu, dug an artificial river connecting the Yangtze River and Huai River, known as the Han Canal [邗溝]. In 360 BC, King Hui of Wei moved his capital to Daliang [大梁] and began to dig canals centred around Daliang to connect the gap between the Yellow River [黃河] and Ying River [潁水]. The excavation of these early canals formed the prototype of today's Grand Canal. During the period of Emperor Yang of the Sui [隋煬帝], it was the peak period of canal construction, with the Tongji Canal [通濟渠], Yongji Canal [永濟渠], Han Canal [邗溝] and Jiangnan Canal

Note: Hangzhou City University Section: Cross-cultural Religious Studies, sub-edited by Chen Yuehua and Ishraq Ali (Hangzhou City University, China).

[江南運河] being excavated. Among them, the Tongji Canal connected with the Han Canal, and the Jiangnan Canal connected to the south of the Han Canal, forming a waterway from Luoyang to the east and south. The Yongji Canal went north to Zhuojun [涿郡]. After the Yuan Dynasty, the original canals were modified and the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal [京杭大運河] was established, running from Beijing in the north to Hangzhou in the south. In addition to the Grand Canal of Sui and Tang Dynasties [隋唐大運河], there is also the East Zhejiang Canal [浙東運河] on the south bank of the Qiantang River [錢塘江], which runs from Xixing [西興] to Ningbo, with a total length of about 250 kilometres. Its length is roughly equivalent to today's Xiaoshan Guanhe [蕭山官河] and Chenghe [城河], through the Yaqian Town [衙前鎮] to Shaoxing, and then eastward to Ningbo.

The Grand Canal has nurtured a rich history and culture. The slow flow of the canal's water has allowed the lives and beliefs of countless generations to accumulate and converge, forming the Grand Canal culture, where history and reality intertwine. Additionally, Buddhist culture is a significant component of the Grand Canal culture.

Based on existing research findings, studies on the culture of the Grand Canal have primarily focussed on areas such as history, archaeology, ethnicity and art, with insufficient attention given to Buddhism. In terms of research scope, many studies take an isolated regional approach, focussing on specific areas through which the Grand Canal passes. When viewed from a broader perspective, discussions tend to centre around cultural heritage in general, overlooking the significant role of religion, particularly Buddhism, in the cultural fabric of the Grand Canal. Therefore, this paper holds important academic value in addressing this gap in the research.

Connotation of Buddhist culture of Grand Canal

Regarding the culture of the Grand Canal, we can analyse it from two aspects: material and spiritual. Firstly, the Grand Canal is a humanised natural landscape formed by manually digging ditches and transforming nature. It is an artificial water system similar to a natural river but created by humans. It represents a culture in which human beings utilise and transform nature's material form. Over time, this landscape has become part of the natural water system and integrated into nature. Additionally, the smooth flow of the Grand Canal from north to south requires continuous human transformation and maintenance. It is a natural and cultural landscape that has persisted from ancient times to the present.

Secondly, the Grand Canal is the crystallisation of human wisdom, a cultural heritage and a spiritual culture. This culture originated when humans dug the canals and has developed and expanded with the changing times. As a form of spiritual culture, it not only underpins human efforts to transform nature but also represents a way for humans to utilise nature. From this, various aspects of culture related to

the canal, such as water transportation culture, political culture, economic culture, social culture, folk culture and religious culture, have emerged (Jiang 2019:02).

Based on the concept of the Grand Canal culture, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal pertains to the Buddhist elements related to canal culture within the broader context of the overall Grand Canal culture. The Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal can be summarised from several perspectives: temporal, spatial, typological, subjective and objective.

From a temporal perspective, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal includes the Buddhist traditions that began with the introduction of Buddhism to China and subsequently accumulated in various locations along the Grand Canal. It represents the historical development of Buddhism in China along the canal and the temporal dimension of the deposition of Buddhist culture in various northern and southern regions.

From this perspective, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is a culture that arose and developed over time, and it is an important component of the ideology and social space of the people of the era in which it evolved. Regarding its contemporaneity, the preservation, inheritance and innovation of the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal are likewise perpetuated through an ongoing process.

From a spatial point of view, the space we understand is neither spatial absolutism, which understands space as a container for objects and exists independently and prior to everything, nor spatial relativism, which replaces the idea of 'things' with the idea of 'fields', and stipulates space as a place of relations (Xie 2023:09). The space encompassed by the space of Buddhist Culture of Grand Canal is more of a social space. In social space, the human subject, everyday life and spatial production constitute an interconnected triple relationship. Buddhist Culture of Grand Canal, as a mobile spatial culture, has been constructed in different spaces in the north and south through the practice of Buddhist beliefs, ranging from Buddhist communities to Buddhist architecture, Buddhist behaviours and folk customs and interacting with local cultures. In space, Buddhist culture can be a 'close-up' form, that is, the intersection of canal and Buddhist culture located or distributed around the Grand Canal (in close proximity), covering a variety of scenarios, including sites, landscapes, beliefs and livelihoods. It can also be a 'distant' form, that is, a spatial formation of wide-area Buddhist Culture of Grand Canal, which spreads and radiates to the surrounding area with the canal as the centre.

From a typological perspective, because of the multifaceted nature of Buddhist culture itself, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal also encompasses the primary elements of Buddhist texts, Buddhist philosophy, Buddhist art, Buddhist relics, Buddhist intangible heritage and Buddhist history. The contents of these Buddhist cultures are not exclusive but rather universal and broadly expansive.

From a subject-object perspective, firstly, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is a cultural form related to religious beliefs, originating from human beings. It is the spiritual culture of humanity that arises within the space of the Grand Canal basin, representing the condensation, sublimation and circulation of human thoughts and beliefs, with very apparent characteristics of subjectivity. Secondly, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal also possesses objectified objectivity. As a culture of faith dispersed throughout the flowing waters, it includes objects created by humans but objectified to be examined by the human spiritual subject, thus exhibiting characteristics of objectivity. In the fusion of subject and object, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal has become a cultural gene inherited from people's spiritual world and a cultural heritage distributed around the canal.

Qualities of Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal

Water flows from south to north, while the Buddha enlightens sentient beings. In the formation of the Grand Canal's Buddhist culture, humans and space together constitute a unique characteristic of this cultural heritage. They are Buddhists, include monks and non-monks, but practice at home. They can also be non-Buddhists but present with Buddhism culture at the same time. All these great humans together shape the Grand Canal Buddhism culture in different viewpoint like integration, interaction or conflict. Another element is water stream, which also means a flowing water spatial place created by manpower. Without humans, Grand Canal cannot exist. Without culture, Grand Canal is lacklustre. Meanwhile, without Grand Canal, humans are short sighted and faith's spread is limited. Therefore, Grand Canal cultures are culture landscapes formed by humans and human-made natural objects, and Buddhism culture landscape shines really bright among these all cultures. Landscape is a natural scene with culture as the medium. In the narrative logic of landscape, it (landscape) is both a reappearance and a space of presentation, both a signifier and a reference, both a frame and a content, both a real place and a simulated scene, both a package and a packaged commodity (Mitchell 2014:5). As a waterborne highway, when canal becomes scenery, it is not just a simple tool but contains human subjective meanings. These subjective meanings include metaphysical aspect like philosophy, religion and so on. Therefore, the most important characteristic in Grand Canal Buddhism culture is treating Buddhism culture as a clue in north-south cultural flow to link, to communicate and to integrate people's spiritual world of different territory.

Culture is dynamic, and its transmission depends on the movement of people as carriers of cultural exchange. This is especially true for religious culture, which places particular emphasis on the dissemination of cultural ideas through individuals. In a certain sense, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal records and reveals the traces left by Buddhist monks along its banks, reflecting overlaps with the development of Chinese Buddhism culture. This is

by no means a historical coincidence. At the same time, these traces have gradually interacted with and influenced local cultures and have been preserved to this day, becoming an inseparable part of the Grand Canal's cultural heritage.

To illustrate this characteristic more vividly, we reference a historical event. During Jianzhen's several failed attempts to cross to the East, he was also engaged in preaching and spreading Buddhist teachings along the route. He attracted monks and laypeople from surrounding areas who came to hear his teachings and offer him support. The Great Master travelled north from Ningbo to Shaoxing, Hangzhou and Huzhou, giving sermons, performing ordinations and constructing pagodas and temples. He then travelled south again, returning to the Ashoka Temple, thereby establishing a clear path for the transmission of the Dharma, which corresponds to the eastern section of the Grand Canal.

The passage of culture spread

As the primary artery of north-south traffic, the Grand Canal connects several cultural and religious centres, providing favourable conditions for the translation, dissemination and communication of Buddhist texts. Yijing [義淨], a monk from the Tang Dynasty, began his journey from Chang'an to Guangzhou via the canal and then proceeded to India on a Buddhist pilgrimage by sea. Along his journey, he studied and collected numerous Buddhist scriptures. Upon his return, he engaged in translation work in cities such as Luoyang. This facilitated the widespread dissemination of important Buddhist texts like the Tripitaka throughout the country, influencing hundreds of thousands of monks and Buddhist adherents (Zanning 2022a, T50, p. 710b).

Although Fuzhou is not located along the Grand Canal, it utilised the canal's shipping network to distribute the Fuzhou Collection to various inland regions. The Grand Canal also transported many eminent monks who propagated Buddhist theories and culture, enhancing Buddhist communication between the north and south. For instance, Shenhui [神會], the founder of the Heze Sect [荷澤宗], strongly advocated the teachings of Huineng [惠能], the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism [禪宗], in Luoyang. This established Huineng's and Southern Zen Buddhism's significant status in Chinese Buddhist history (Shenhui 2022, T49, p. 828a). Additionally, the famous debate between the Shanjia [山家] and Shanwai [山外] factions of the Tiantai Sect [天台宗] took place at both ends of the eastern Zhejiang Canal, showcasing a vibrant cultural exchange (Zhili 2022, X77, p. 373c).

In ancient times, the speed of information transmission largely depended on the mobility of people. The Grand Canal greatly improved the speed and volume of message exchange, fostering a more vibrant cultural ecosystem. Humans create waterways, and waterways facilitate human interaction. Thus, the Grand Canal Buddhist culture zone is characterised by the interplay between people and waterways, with culture and spirit at its core.

The hub of art blending

Wherever the water stream flows, towns that were once prosperous in Buddhist culture become hubs of cultural blending. From the perspective of temple architecture, the Grand Canal carries the flowing spiritual wealth and enriches the culture along its route, bringing diverse stylistic influences to temple architecture in both the north and south. For example, Daming Temple in Yangzhou combines the elegant garden characteristics of southern temples with the grand regularity of northern temples. The glazed pagoda [樓靈塔] within the temple has a classical northern style, while the overall temple layout reflects southern garden art.

Temples that blend styles document the cultural exchanges between northern and southern Buddhist cultures, serving as witnesses to historical development and enriching the diversity of Buddhist culture. In calligraphic art, the renowned cursive script master Huaisu [懷素] travelled extensively along the Grand Canal. In 772 AD, he visited Yan Zhenqing [顏真卿] in Luoyang, where they discussed various calligraphic styles. Yan Zhenqing even composed a preface for one of Huaisu's works, praising his cursive script. This story has become a celebrated tale in Chinese calligraphy history (Zanning 2022b, T50, p. 792b).

In poetry, the monk-poet Huihong [慧洪], who resided at Qingliang Temple, frequently travelled between Hangzhou and Yangzhou via the Grand Canal, making friends with other monks. In his later years, he authored the influential work 'Lengzhai Yehua' [冷齋夜話], which preserved valuable historical materials and enjoyed widespread popularity. Zhiyuan [智圓], a monk of the Tiantai Sect who lived on Solitary Hill [孤山], also made significant contributions to poetry. He travelled around eastern Zhejiang, mainly Hangzhou, composing various types of poems, including scenic, relational, object-inspired and antiquity-reflective poems (Institute of Ancient Chinese Literature at Peking University 1998:126). The Grand Canal not only attracted businessmen from around the world but also had a magnetic effect on calligraphy and painting celebrities. The interaction between eminent monks and famous scholars made the Grand Canal Buddhist culture exceptionally splendid and charming.

The integration of custom and culture

The Grand Canal facilitated economic development along its route, leading to the increased secularisation of Grand Canal Buddhist culture after the Song Dynasty. Temples became not only centres of religious activities but also venues for local cultural and commercial events. Activities such as temple fairs and Buddhist festivals attracted many believers and tourists, integrating Buddhist culture with local secular life. The Baiyun Temple Fair, a grand annual event and one of Xuzhou's three famous temple fairs, adds a unique local flavour to Grand Canal Buddhist culture.

Alongside the Grand Canal, many temples actively participated in charitable activities such as offering medical

services, disaster and poverty relief, hospice care and advocating kindness. For instance, during the Laba Festival [臘八節], temples in Hangzhou share Laba porridge [臘八粥] with the community, embodying the spirit of Buddha. These charitable activities not only promote the compassionate spirit of Buddhism but also strengthen the connection between Buddhist temples and local society, making Buddhist culture more secular.

Many Buddhist temples were also responsible for education and academic research. Institutions like scripture libraries and Buddhist colleges became important centres for Buddhist education. Temple education gained popularity during the Tang Dynasty. Initially, it involved scholars studying and communicating together in temples spontaneously. However, it soon evolved into larger academic gatherings with the increasing number of books, the innovation of the imperial examination system and the congregation of writers and poets. In cities along the Grand Canal, such as Luoyang, Yangzhou and Hangzhou, scholars and monks freely communicated and associated with each other. The peaceful temple environment and strong academic atmosphere coexisted harmoniously, enhancing each other. Later, many eminent monks expounded and publicised Buddhist teachings in the famous temples along the Grand Canal, cultivating numerous talented Buddhist scholars.

The bridge of international communication

The Grand Canal was not only the main economic artery between the north and south but also a bridge for international communication because of its connection with sea routes. Under the exchange of eminent monks and classical scriptures, Grand Canal Buddhist culture exhibited a great international perspective. In the early Tang Dynasty, envoys from Siam entered Tang territory through the main traffic line. They travelled south from Shandong and Jiangsu by sea, entering inland China from the mouth of the Yangtze River. They then either proceeded north to cities like Chang'an and Luoyang or travelled south to cities such as Yangzhou, Suzhou and Hangzhou. Thus, Chuzhou (Huai'an) naturally became the Grand Canal's intersection, connecting the north and south.

Japan sent envoys 19 times to visit China, often choosing routes that included the Grand Canal (Yuankai 2022, T51 p. 988a). The ancient Grand Canal also witnessed Monk Jianzhen [鑑真]'s three sea voyages to Japan. With the aspiration to spread Buddhist teachings worldwide, Jianzhen's efforts significantly deepened the cultural communication between China and Japan (Zanning 2022c, T50, p. 797a). Another key point on the Maritime Silk Road [海上絲綢之路] was Guangzhou, which opened its port early on. With the Grand Canal's opening, Guangzhou became a distribution centre for international trade with Asian countries and even regions like North Africa and Europe. Foreign goods were transported to northern cities such as Luoyang and Chang'an or resold to Siam and Japan (Yuanren 2019:123). Similarly, Chinese silk and porcelain were continuously shipped overseas through this route.

With the Grand Canal and merchant ships' assistance, many eminent monks spread Buddhist teachings and sought scriptures more conveniently, accelerating Buddhist cultural communication between China and other countries. During the Tang Dynasty, three masters of the Kaiyuan period, Vajrabodhi [金剛智] and Amoghavajra [不空] entered central mainland China via this route, travelling north to Luoyang and Chang'an, where they established Chinese Esoteric Buddhism [密宗] (Bukong 2022, T49, p. 593a).

In summary, the Grand Canal Buddhist culture, supported by human effort and the waterway, enriched the spiritual world along its route, creating tight connections between the north and south. It displayed diversity, integration, secularisation and internationalisation, playing a crucial role in document propagation, education and charity. This unique culture not only enhanced Chinese Buddhism but also significantly contributed to the development of society and culture along the Grand Canal.

Scope of the research

Given that the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is inseparable from the dynamic interplay between people and water, we propose a research framework that follows a progression from individual figures to collective imagery and from local specifics to the overall context. This approach outlines a clear scope for studying the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal, offering constructive directions for future research. The Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is both rich and varied, encompassing numerous fields such as Buddhist history, thought, culture, folklore, literature and art. These studies elucidate the diverse manifestations of canal culture and deepen our understanding of the cultural heritage associated with the Grand Canal.

Organising Literature on the Buddhist Culture of the Grand Canal

There are numerous historical documents on the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal in Chinese history, including more than 10 travel records alone: Li Ao [李翱]'s Records of Visiting the South [lai nan lu 來南錄], Ouyang Xiu [歐陽修]'s Yuyi Records [yu yi lu 於役錄], Zhang shunmin [張舜民]'s Chenzhou Travel Record [chen xing lu 郴行錄], Xie zhaozhi [謝肇制]'s Record of the Northern River (bei he ji 北河紀), Another Record of the Northern River (bei he ji yu 北河紀余), Li Zhongzha [李仲昭]'s Northern Journey Diary of the Year Xin Wèi [xin wei bei you ri ji 辛未北游日記], Northern Journey Diary of the Jiǎxū Year [jia xu bei you ri ji 甲戌北游日記], Tan Qian [談遷]'s Northern Travel Record [bei you lu 北游錄], Bao shiche [包世臣]'s Zhahe Diary (zha he ri ji 閩河日記), Li Jun [李鈞]'s Diary of the Grain Transport [zhuan cao ri ji 轉漕日記], Lu longqi [陸瓏其]'s Diary of the Three Fish Hall [san yu tang ri ji 三魚堂日記], Tan Xian [譚獻]'s Diary of Futang [fu tang ri ji 復堂日記], Sun shuwen [孫毓汶]'s Diary of a Mission to Min [shi min ri ji 使閩日記], Fan daosheng [範道生]'s Diary of the Zhandai Pavilion [zhan dai xuan ri ji 瞻岱軒日記], Sun

yiyan [孫衣言]'s Guiyǒu Year Diary of Zhan Tian [gui you zhan tian ri ji 癸酉瞻天日記], Yuan Ren [圓仁]'s Record of the Pilgrimage to the Tang Dynasty for the Purpose of Seeking the Dharma [ru tang qiu fa xun li xing ji 入唐求法巡禮行記], Cheng Xun [成尋]'s Record of Mount Tiantai and Mount Wutai [can tuan tai wu tai shan ji 參天台五台山記], Ceyan Zhouliang [策彥周良]'s Ceyan's Record of Entering the Ming Dynasty [ce yan ru ming ji 策彥入明記], Xiaoyun Ruixin [笑雲瑞欣]'s Xiaoyun's Record of Entering the Ming Dynasty (xiao yun ru ming ji [笑雲入明記]), among others. Furthermore, several additional sources merit consideration, including temple records, local records, stone inscriptions, collections of writings, maps and other documents related to the canal.

Research on figures related to the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal

The flourishing of Buddhist culture along the Grand Canal is inextricably linked to the numerous historical figures. Among them were both high-ranking Buddhist monks and scholars. For example, the poets Gu Kuang [顧況], Wei Yingwu [韋應物], Zhang Hu [張祜], Wu Yun [吳筠], Qin Guan [秦觀], Su Shi [蘇軾], Huang Jianting [黃庭堅], Yang Wanli [楊萬里], Fan Chengda [範成大], Zhang Yu [張昱], Huang Geng [黃庚], Wu Jingkui [吳景奎], Sa Duci [薩都刺], Ding Yanghao [丁養浩] and Shen Qian [沈謙], who were laymen, were associated with the Buddhist culture of the canal. And high-ranking Buddhist monks are also innumerable, such as Jiao Ran [皎然], Dao Qian [道潛], Yongming Yanshou [永明延壽], Jinshui Jingyuan [晉水淨源], Zhangshui Zixuan [長水子璇], Dahui Zonggao [大慧宗杲], Mingjiao Qisong [明教契嵩], Yunqi Zhuhong [雲棲袞宏], Zibo Zhenke [紫柏真可], Hanshan Deqing [憨山德清], Ouyi Zhixu [藕益智旭], Zhongfeng Mingben [中峰明本], Sanfeng Fazang [三峰法藏], Guanding Xufa [灌頂續法], Datian Tongli [達天通理] and Yekai Qingrong [冶開清鎔].

Research on the cultural relics related to the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal

The canal route encompasses a multitude of temples and relics. Along the Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal, from north to south, important temples include Yousheng Temple and Randeng Pagoda in Beijing, Dabei Zen Temple and Zhenhai building in Tianjin, Shuiyue Temple in Cangzhou, Tiefu Temple in Dongguang, Cishi Temple in Dezhou, Yongqing Temple, Sheli Pagoda in Linqing, Longxing Temple in Liaocheng, Dongda Temple in Jining, Ciyun Zen Temple in Huaian, Gaomin Temple and Wenfeng Pagoda in Yangzhou, Zhenguo Pagoda in Gaoyou, Jinshan Temple in Zhenjiang, Hanshan Temple in Suzhou, Liji Zen Temple in Huzhou, Three Pagodas in Jiaxing, Anyin Temple in Hangzhou, Xiangji Temple in Hangzhou, Yunmen Temple in Shaoxing, Qita Temple in Ningbo and others. Along the Sui-Tang Grand Canal, there are also many significant temples such as Baima Temple in Luoyang, Shaolin Temple in Dengfeng and Daxiangguo Temple in Kaifeng.

Research on the aural and visual landscapes related to the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal

On the one hand, there are a large number of aural landscapes associated with Buddhist music in the temples along the canal. For example, Music of Beijing Zhihua Temple, which was added to the national intangible cultural heritage list in 2006, is a blend of Buddhist music, court music and folk music. It is closely related to the WuShengFo, XiWenJing, HuaYanHui and TongFaJie, which are all kinds of Buddhist music rhythm. The musical traditions of Daxiangguo Temple in Kaifeng and Tianning Temple in Changzhou, along with the ceremonial music of Jinshan Temple in Zhenjiang, have had a significant and enduring impact on contemporary Buddhist music. On the other hand, the influence of canal culture on Buddhist painting is mainly reflected in monk paintings, temple murals and folk paintings with Buddhist themes.

Research on the folklore related to the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal

A considerable number of religious and folkloric practices have their roots in the Grand Canal, such as Prayer Dharma Function [祈福法會], Sutra preaching Ceremony [講經法會], Ullambana [盂蘭盆會], Seven days of Buddha [佛七], Bathing the Buddha [浴佛], Auspicious Day of Buddha [佛吉祥日], The Laba Rice Porridge Festival [法寶節], Ghost Festival [中元節], Canal Temple Fair [運河廟會] and so on.

Conclusion

In ancient society, people used carriages on roads, boats on water, leather-covered sleds in mud and built bridges in mountains. The excavation of canals has become a model for people to transform nature and use their wisdom to serve people, and the excavation of canals has already been recorded in the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. The Sui Dynasty was the peak of canal excavation, and the Grand Canal was born at this time. The birth of the Grand Canal was not only a material product but also nurtured a profound history and culture, and the accumulated culture of the Grand Canal, together with Buddhist culture, constituted the distinctive Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal.

The Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is not only simply understood as the simple superposition of the two elements of the Grand Canal and Buddhism at the cultural level but also not only the intersection of space, but also the accumulation of culture in time; not only the presentation of material but also the inheritance of spirit. Therefore, if we want to deeply understand the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal, we must clarify the connotation of it. Generally speaking, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal can be understood from several perspectives, such as the ephemeral nature of time, the dispersion of space, the plurality of types and the intermingling of subject and object.

The connotation of Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal inevitably leads to two elements of its speciality, namely, people and water. The Grand Canal is a static space, but the people it carries run along with the current on both sides of the river and the culture carried by the people travels through the long river of history, which is everlasting. Through the intervention of human subjectivity, the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal is rich in philosophical, religious and other cultural heights, and the Buddhist culture is the clue that connects the spiritual worlds of people in different regions. As a result, the characteristics of the Buddhist culture of the Grand Canal are expanded into four dimensions: a channel for cultural dissemination, a hub for artistic fusion, a fusion of customs and cultures and a bridge for international exchanges.

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