NEWAR ARTIST'S BUDDHIST MONUMENT FOR THE MONGOL RULERS IN BEIJING

ISABELLE CHARLEUX

Fig. 1 The White Stupa; Monastery of Miraculous Retribution, popularly known as White Pagoda Monastery; Beijing, China; Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), 1279; masonry; height 167 ft. (51 m); photograph attributed to Felice Beato (1825–1908), 1860; Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Feldman (M.83.302.33); photograph © Museum Associates/LACMA, www.lacma.org

WHITE STUPA, ATTRIBUTED TO NEPALESE ARTIST ANIGE
Beijing, China
1279

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SUMMARY

Historian of Mongolia Isabelle Charleux introduces the great stupa of Beijing, built in the age of Qubilai Khan and attributed to the Nepalese artisan Anige. Surrounded by an imperial monastery and enclosing a relic chamber, the stupa represents a tantric mandala. Anige's personal role is hard to gauge, but his artistic legacy was influential at the time of construction. The stupa became the model for other stupas built over the city gates and at sacred sites like Mount Wutai, and it was repaired and altered many times in later centuries.

The White Stupa, located less than two miles (three kilometers) to the west of the imperial city of Beijing (Daidu),[1] is one of the few architectural structures remaining in Mongol Daidu, capital of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368).[2] For many centuries, this monument was probably the capital's most visually outstanding building.

THE MONGOLS AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

The Mongols encountered Tibetan Buddhism among the Tangut (Xixia state, 1038–1227), whose kingdom Chinggis Khan destroyed in 1227, and in their campaign in Tibet. In 1260, Qubilai Khan (r. 1260–1294) proclaimed Tibetan Buddhism the official religion of the empire. Tangut Buddhism became the model for Qubilai's religio-political rulership. Qubilai designated Pakpa Lama (1235–1280), nephew of Sakya Pandita (1182–1251), a highly influential Buddhist scholar, as imperial preceptor and established a "priest-patron" (*choyon*) relationship with him.

In 1261, Pakpa invited Anige (or Araniko, 1244–1306), a young Newar artist, to the Yuan court, along with a group of twenty-four other Himalayan artisans. Anige spent almost all his life at the Yuan court as "director of all artisan classes." He was accorded high honors and embraced Chinese literati culture. His epitaph summed up his prolific career as artist, architect, and administrator at Qubilai Khan's court.[3]

THE WHITE STUPA OF DAIDU

In In 1271, Qubilai heard that relics of Shakyamuni from the ruined pagoda of a Jin dynasty Buddhist monastery emitted miraculous lights by night. He gave orders to excavate the relics and erect on the ruins the White Stupa.

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Qubilai's decision to construct a Tibetan-style stupa (the first in the region) instead of a Chinese-style multistory pagoda in his main capital,[4] directly to the west of his palace, reflects the imperial support of Tibetan Buddhism. He acted as a universal Buddhist ruler (chakravartin) on the model of Indian emperor Ashoka (r. 273–232 bce), who was said to have built eighty-four thousand stupas for Shakyamuni's relics throughout his empire. Previously, in 1267, Pakpa had advised Qubilai to erect a pillar crowned with a golden wheel, a symbol of the chakravartin, in front of the Imperial Palace.

Between 1270 and 1279, Anige and Rinchen Gyeltsen (1238–1282), Pakpa's brother, who succeeded him as imperial preceptor, were in charge of designing and supervising the construction of the stupa (fig. 2). Rinchen Gyeltsen consecrated the monument in 1279 (fig. 3).[5]

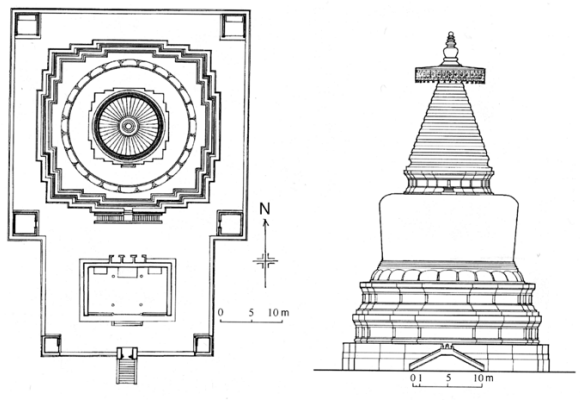

Fig. 2 Ground plan and elevation of the White Stupa; Monastery of Miraculous Retribution, Beijing, China; image after Pan Guxi 潘谷西, ed. 2002. *Zhongguo gudai jianzhu shi: Yuan, Ming jianzhu 中國古代建築史: 元明建築* [History of ancient Chinese architecture: Architecture of the Yuan and Ming]. New Haven: Yale University Press, 357

Fig. 3 Modern view of the White Stupa; Monastery of Miraculous Retribution; Beijing; China; 1279 (Yuan dynasty); masonry; height 167 ft. (51 m); photograph by Karl Debreczeny

The White Stupa has been repeatedly restored and was seriously damaged by the 1976 earthquake of Tangshan. It is a massive hollow structure that rises to a height of 167 feet (51 meters) and has a diameter of 98 1/2 feet (more than 30 meters) at its base. With the stupas of Boudhanath and Swayambhu in Nepal, both about 131 feet (40 meters) in height, it is one of the biggest stupas in Asia. The White Stupa apparently follows the Indian Pala model known as "Kadampa stupa," recognizable by its bell-like shape, common at that time in Tibet (fig. 4).

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Fig. 4 Kadampa-style reliquary stupa; Tibet; 13th or 14th century; copper alloy; 13 7/8 × 6 1/4 × 6 1/4 in. (35.2 × 15.9 × 15.9 cm); Rubin Museum of Art; C2003.21.1 (HAR 65233);https://rubinmuseum.org/collection/artwork/stupa

The White Stupa rests on a multifaceted (*ratha*) two-tiered base. Its domed body (*anda*) is made of rings of bricks piled one atop the other, marked by thirteen circular bands, on a base of lotus petals. Its surface is entirely covered by white lime. On its top is a stylized square fence (*harmika*) modulated by a series of cornices with a broken profile that reproduces the facets of the base, a conical spire of thirteen stacked disks, a wooden umbrella covered with copper adorned with thirty-six bronze bells hanging from its rim, and a stupa-shaped bronze finial filled with relics.[6] The umbrella and the bronze finial were made in 1753 under the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735–1796), to replace earlier ones.

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The White Stupa was meant to be a three-dimensional mandala of the Five Tathagatas (or Five Cosmic Buddhas). According to a stele, the exterior of the "vase" (the *anda*?) was originally carved with the attributes of four of the Five Tathagatas (with the implicit presence of those of Vairochana at the center).

Although designed by Anige, it differs considerably from Nepalese models. Its sources of inspiration may have been stupas built in the Tangut realm: its shape and proportions resemble those of the 108 stupas of Qingtongxia (fig. 5).[7] It served as a model for later stupas of the Yuan.

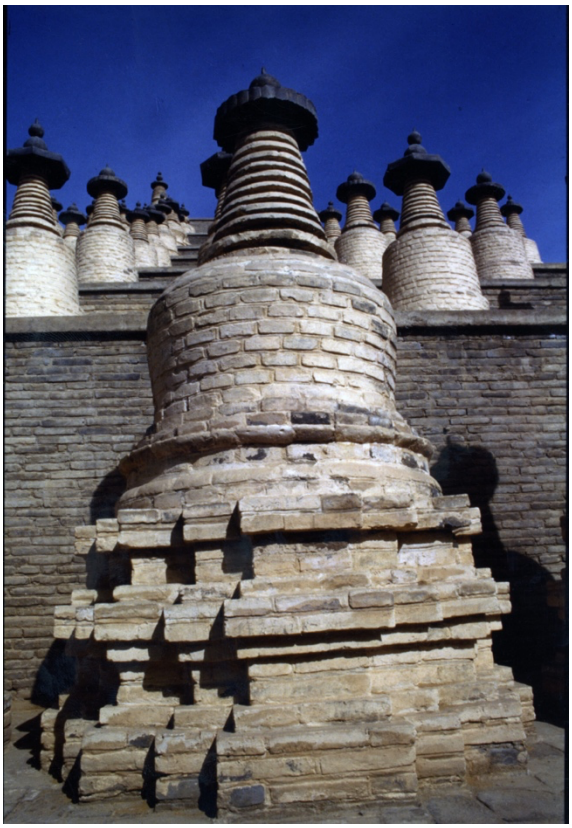

Fig. 5 One Hundred and Eight Stupas arranged in a triangular shape on the hill; Xiakoushan, Qingtongxia, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China; Tangut (Xixia) period (1038–1227); masonry; photograph by R. Linrothe, 1998

In addition, the White Stupa offers a unique case study of relics installed during the consecration ceremony; these were recorded in detail in a stele, and others were revealed after the stupa's opening following the earthquake. The items placed in 1279 in a crypt include relics of the Buddha, many images of deities and Buddhist texts, and miniature stupas made with earth taken

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from the sacred Buddhist sites of Bodhgaya in India and Mount Wutai ("Five Peak Mountain") in China. Additional items were inserted in the new bronze finial on Qianlong emperor's order in 1753 (fig. 6).

Fig. 6 Reconstruction showing the placement of relics, books, and objects inside the finial of the White Stupa; Monastery of Miraculous Retribution; Museum of the White Stupa, Beijing; photograph by Isabelle Charleux, 2006

THE GREAT MONASTERY OF EMINENT LONGEVITY AND MYRIAD PEACE

Qubilai Khan had the Great Monastery of Eminent Longevity and Myriad Peace (Dashangshouwan'ansi) dedicated to Manjushri built around the stupa, with sumptuous Chinese-style temples modeled on halls of the Imperial Palace. Completed in 1288, it was the main imperial monastery of Daidu and served as a private temple for the imperial family.

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In 1289, the Sandalwood or Uddiyana Buddha, the most precious Buddhist image of Chinese dynasties, revered by Tibetans and Mongolians alike, was installed in the rear hall.[8] Octagonal pavilions were built in 1313 to worship Mahakala, main protector of the Yuan state. The monastery became a center for Buddhist translations from Tibetan into Mongolian and Uyghur.

The monastery also had two Halls of Imperial Portraiture for deceased ancestors: for Qubilai (fig. 7) and his empress Chabui (or Chabi, 1225–1281) (fig. 8) to the west; and for their son and late heir apparent Jingim (1243–1285) and his empress, to the east. They enshrined their portraits in silk tapestry (kesi) together with, probably, a silk tapestry depicting a giant mandala.

Fig. 7 Qubilai; leaf from *Album of the Bust Portraits of Yuan Emperors* (*Yuandai di banshen xiang ce* 元代帝半身像冊); probably Daidu (Beijing), China; Yuan dynasty (1271–1368); ink and color on silk; 23 3/8 × 18 1/2 in. (59.4 × 47 cm); National Palace Museum, Taipei

Fig. 8 Chabui (r); album leaf from *Album of the Bust Portraits of Yuan Empresses* (*Yuandai hou banshen xiang shou ce* 元代后半身像手冊); probably Daidu (Beijing), China; Yuan dynasty (1279–1368); ink and color on silk; 24 1/4 × 18 7/8 in. (61.5 × 48 cm); National Palace Museum, Taipei; image from Araniko, public domain, via Wikimedia Com

The monastery was damaged by a fire in 1368 and rebuilt in the fifteenth century. In 1457 it was renamed Monastery of Miraculous Retribution (Miaoyingsi). It was restored in the Qing period and, thanks to the 1753 guidebook written by Changkya Khutugtu Rolpai Dorje, became a pilgrimage site for Mongols.

OTHER STUPAS OF THE YUAN PERIOD

Qubilai also ordered the construction of Tibetan-style stupas in the capital atop Chinese-style city gates. His descendant Toghan Temür (r. 1333–1367), the last emperor, erected two road-spanning stupas north and southwest of Daidu. Unlike the White Stupa, these were public

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monuments; located at strategic junctures, they symbolically protected the capital and its inhabitants.[9]

Twenty-two years after the consecration of Daidu's White Stupa, Emperor Temür (1295–1307) had its replica erected on Mount Wutai, the most important site of Tibetan Buddhist activity outside the Mongol capitals. Anige and Dampa (1230–1303), Qubilai's tantric ritual specialist, constructed the gigantic stupa on a ruined Tang-period octagonal pagoda that enshrined a relic of Shakyamuni allegedly brought there by Ashoka. It became the iconic monument of Mount Wutai. In 1407, at the request of the Fifth Karmapa (1384–1415), Ming emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424) ordered that the stupa be restored and heightened (fig. 9 and 10).

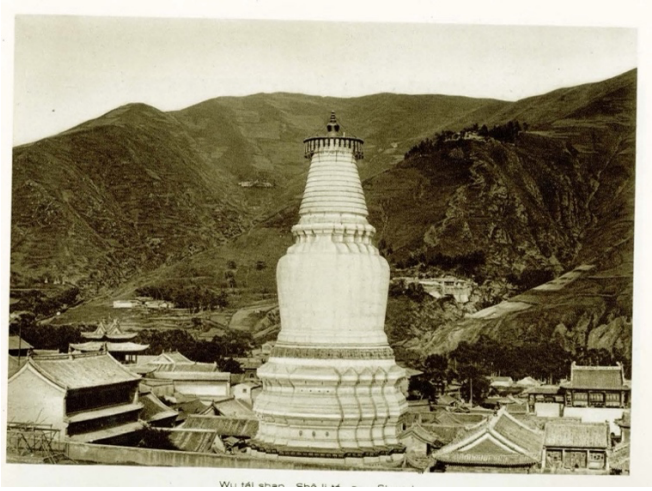

Fig. 9 White Stupa, known as Precious Stupa of Great Compassion and Longevity and its surroundings, photographed between 1906 and 1909; Great Precious Stupa Cloister Monastery; Mount Wutai, Shanxi Province, China; 1301, renovated in 1407; height after the 1407 restoration 185 ft. (56.4 m); image after Boerschmann, Ernst. 1923. *Picturesque China: Architecture and Landscape: A Journey through Twelve Provinces*. New York: Brentano's

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Fig. 10 Modern view of the White Stupa, known as Precious Stupa of Great Compassion and Longevity, and its surroundings; Great Precious Stupa Cloister Monastery, Mount Wutai, Shanxi Province, China; 1301, renovated in 1407; 184.7 ft. (56.4 m) after the 1407 restoration; photograph by Isabelle Charleux

The Great White Stupa at Mount Wutai stands on an octagonal platform with tiled eaves protecting prayer wheels. It was heightened to 185 feet (56.4 meters) during the 1407 restoration. Its dissimilarities with the Beijing White Stupa, such as the octagonal base and *harmika* and the slender shape of the *anda*, might date to the 1407 restoration.[10]

Following their predecessors, the Yuan emperors also sponsored Chinese Buddhist monasteries on Mount Wutai. One of these, attributed to Anige, the Myriad Saints Safeguarding the State Monastery (Wansheng Youguosi), built from 1295 to 1297, was the most extravagant construction of the Yuan period.

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OTHER WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO ANIGE

Anige's epitaph mentions "[the] construction of three stupas, nine great Buddhist temples, two Confucian shrines, one Daoist temple, and countless images and objects made for the emperor, his imperial family, the court, and private persons."[11] He directed tens of thousands of artisans (including Chinese) who produced luxury goods for the imperial household. Because he is the best-documented Himalayan artist of the time, a number of artworks are attributed to him, such as a dry lacquer bodhisattva that bears a distinct Nepalese style, a figure of Manjushri in the Palace Museum, a painting of Green Tara (fig. 12), and bust portraits of Qubilai and Chabui.[12] Even if he may have supervised these artworks, to this day, none of them can be securely attributed to his hand.

Fig. 12 Green Tara; central Tibet; ca. 1260s; gum tempera, ink, pigments, gold on sized cotton; 20 5/8 × 17 in. (52.4 × 43.2 cm). Cleveland Museum of Art; Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund by exchange; 1970.156; CC0 – Creative Commons (CC0 1.0)

Whatever the real role of Anige in integrating Tangut, Nepalese, and Chinese artistic conventions and aesthetics, Yuan patronage introduced a series of artistic and technical

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innovations that lasted long after the collapse of their dynasty, in painting, imperial portraiture, sculpture, and architecture. More research is needed on Yuan Buddhist artistic production that is often simply labeled with the umbrella terms of "Sino-Tibetan" or "Tibeto-Chinese," which mask its broad diversity.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] Not to be confused with the White Stupa, built in 1651 northwest of the Forbidden City.

[2] Daidu (modern pronunciation: Dadu) or Khanbaliq was on the site of modern Beijing.

[3] Anige's funerary stele is reproduced in Cheng Jufu 程鉅夫 (1249-1318), "Liangguo Minhui Gong Shendao Bei 涼國敏慧公神道碑 [The Spirit-Way Stele for Minhui, Duke of the State of Liang, 1316]," in *Cheng Xuelou Wenji 程雪樓文集 /The Collective Works of Cheng Jufu, ed. Cheng Jufu* (Taipei: Zhongyang cushu guan, 1970), 1:313–20; Anige's official biography is in Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381), *Yuanshi 元史* [The History of the Yuan, 1370] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976) (see Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court," *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1/2 (1994): 40–86.). For Tibetan sources, see Tsangwang Gendun Tenpa, "Tibetan Buddhism and Art in the Mongol Empire According to Tibetan Sources," in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl Debreczeny, trans. Eveline Washul, Exhibition catalog (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), http://issuu.com/rmanyc/docs/faith_and_empire, 123n26.

[4] Chinese-style pagodas were familiar to the Mongols. Their first capital, Qara-Qorum, had a five-story pagoda 295 feet (90 meters) high. Up to eighty pagodas from the Khitan-Liao dynasty (907–1125) have survived in Inner Mongolia and northern China, and many Liao and Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) pagodas were built around Daidu.

[5] The stupa's history is told in a stele by Xiangmai, translated by Herbert Franke, "Consecration of the 'White Stupa' in 1279," *Asia Major third* ser., 7, no. 1 (1994): 15–183, in imperial records, gazetteers of Beijing, and Changkya Khutugtu Rolpai Dorje (Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje), "Rgyal Khab Chen Po'i Mchod Rten Dkar Po'i Dkar Chag Dad Pa Rgyas Byed Ces Bya Ba Bzhugs so [Catalog of the White Stupa at the Western Gate of the Great Kingdom, Prosperous Faith]," Beijing Xylograph 1753. See Herbert Franke, "Consecration of the 'White Stupa' in 1279," *Asia Major* third ser., 7, no. 1 (1994): 15–183; Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court," *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1/2

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(1994): 50–52; Aurelia Campbell, "Consecrating the Imperial City: Tibetan Stupas in Yuan Dadu," *Journal of Song and Yüan Studies* 51 (2022): 207–43.

[6] The White Stupa does not have the pair of rings encircling the anda and the lotus bud–form pinnacle of the Kadampa stupa, and its harmika is different (Robert T. Hatt, "A Thirteenth Century Tibetan Reliquary," *Artibus Asiae* 42, no. 2–3 (1980): 175–220).

[7] Yury Khokhlov, "The Xi Xia Legacy in Sino-Tibetan Art of the Yuan Dynasty," Asianart.com, September 15, 2016, https://www.asianart.com/articles/xi-xia/.

[8] The statue was moved to the Monastery of Vast Humaneness (Hongrensi) in the seventeenth century and disappeared in 1900 (Martha L. Carter, *The Mystery of the Udayana Buddha* (Naples: Istituto universitario orientale, 1990)).

[9] Aurelia Campbell, "Consecrating the Imperial City: Tibetan Stupas in Yuan Dadu," *Journal of Song and Yüan Studies* 51 (2022): 207–43.

[10] Ernst Boerschmann, "Die grosse Gebetmühle im Kloster Ta Yüan Sï auf dem Wu Tai Schan," *Sinica-Sonderausgabe*, 1937, 35–43; Isabelle Charleux, *Nomads on Pilgrimage. Mongols on Wutaishan (China)*, 1800-1940, Brill's Inner Asian Libraru 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

[11] Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court," *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1/2 (1994): 66.

[12] Anning Jing, "The Portraits of Khubilai Khan and Chabi by Anige (1245–1306), a Nepali Artist at the Yuan Court," *Artibus Asiae* 54, no. 1/2 (1994): 40–86; Shane McCausland, *The Mongol Century: Visual Cultures of Yuan China* (1271–1368) (London: Reaktion, 2014).

FURTHER READING

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Khokhlov, Yury. 2016. "The Xi Xia Legacy in Sino-Tibetan Art of the Yuan Dynasty." Asianart.com. Published September 15, 2016. https://www.asianart.com/articles/xi-xia/.

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