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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bifurcated Memory: A Cultural Biography of the Porcelain Pagoda of Nanjing

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The ways in which disparate meanings can be assigned to a place in different times is precisely illustrated in writings and drawings about the pagoda at the Da Bao'ensi (Great Monastery of Repaying Parental Kindness) in Nanjing (Jinling). Completed in 1428, the pagoda was once the tallest building in the city until it was destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864). The goal of this article is not to reconstruct the material details of the pagoda in history, but to inquire how it was remembered and imagined in various cultural contexts in the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) periods. This article will first examine how the cultural meanings of the pagoda were created in four contexts: imperial edicts implying the political agenda for its construction; monastery gazetteers presenting it as monastic property; works of literati featuring it as a landmark in the cityscape; and European travelogues and encyclopedias recontextualising it as an exotic spectacle in the conceptualised landscape. While the pagoda was referred to as the *Liuli ta* (glazed pottery pagoda) in late imperial China, it was commonly known as the "Porcelain Pagoda" in post-seventeenth century Europe. The last part of the article examines the differing cultural logic behind the naming in the early modern global context. Through the study of the multiple trajectories of images of the pagoda, this article explores how religious, political, cultural, and social discourses were embedded in the complex processes of place-making. Writings about and images of the pagoda contribute to making the pagoda into a place resembling a literary trope, a pictorial metaphor of power and belief, and a cultural icon; they also enrich our understanding of how a religious place was woven into the urban fabric and contributed to cultural exchange in late imperial China and beyond.

一個地方可以被賦予各種不同的意義，建於明代南京的大報恩寺琉璃塔就是最好的例證。這座佛塔於 1428 年完工，曾是城市最高的建築，後於太平天國運動中被毀壞。本文宗旨並不在於重現報恩寺塔的準確歷史，而是探討它在明清時期的各種文化背景中如何被記憶和想像的。本文首先通過四種不同的文本討論這座佛塔的文化含義，即隱含政治目的的詔書、作爲宗教建築及寺產的佛寺志、被標示為城市坐標的文人游記、將其作爲概念化景觀中奇異景象的歐人遊記及百科全書。明清時期，報恩寺塔被稱作“琉璃塔”；在十七世紀之後的歐洲，它卻常被稱作“瓷塔”。對早期全球現代化背景下這種一物多名的文化邏輯，文章最後部分將進行解讀。透過考察對報恩寺塔多重意象的生成，本文從多種視角度探討宗教、政治、文化和社會話語與地方建構交織在一起的複雜過程，並闡述有關報恩寺塔的文字和圖像如何豐富我們對宗教場所融入城市肌理以及明清時期起中國對外文化交流的理解。

Keywords: Da Bao'ensi, *Jinling fancha zhi*, *Liuli ta*, Porcelain Pagoda, Johan Nieuhof

關鍵詞： 大報恩寺，金陵梵剎志，琉璃塔，南京，瓷塔，約翰·紐霍夫

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Like a person or a thing, a place can have a life and afterlives shaped by the collective yet somewhat nebulous intentions of the people who create, visit, or live in it. The ways in which disparate meanings can be assigned to a place in different times is precisely illustrated in the writings and drawings about the pagoda at the Da Bao'ensi 大報恩寺 (Great Monastery of Repaying Parental Kindness, hereafter Bao'en Monastery) in Nanjing 南京 (Jinling 金陵). During the past five decades, research on urban space in late imperial Jiangnan has gained tremendous momentum, but scholars have mainly approached the topic from the macro perspective of a whole city.[1] This article delves into the conceptual and visual transformation of one single site. It defines the pagoda at the monastery as a place instead of a stand-alone architectural structure, and situates the pagoda in layers of lived contexts. The discussion below will especially revolve around how the pagoda was represented in images and texts as a place in the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) periods.

Completed in 1428, the pagoda was once the tallest building in the city until it was destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864). Before and even after its destruction, its appearance was prominently recorded and marvelled at in memoirs, essays, travelogues, and encyclopedias, although the material aspects of the pagoda were never accurately documented. Therefore, existing research and archaeological excavations during the past decade have striven to uncover the material existence and historical facts about the pagoda (Eng 2016; Qi and Gong 2008; Qi and Zhou 2016; Smentek, 2019). However, it still remains unclear what roles the visual representations of the pagoda played in the imagination of it in the Ming-Qing periods. The aim of this article is not to reconstruct the material details of the pagoda in history, but to inquire how it was remembered and imagined in different contexts. It will first examine the meanings of the pagoda created in four contexts: imperial edicts implying the political agenda for its construction; monastery gazetteers treating it as a religious monument and a monastic property; literati travelogues featuring it as a cultural landmark in the cityscape; and European travelogues and encyclopedias recontextualising it as an exotic spectacle in the invented geography. While the pagoda was referred to as the *Liuli ta* 琉璃塔 (glazed pottery pagoda) in late imperial China, it was commonly known as the "Porcelain Pagoda" in post-seventeenth century Europe. The difference in naming was indicative of the trajectories of the bifurcated memory of the pagoda and its creative refashioning in both the Chinese and European representations. The last part of the article explores the different cultural logic behind the naming in the early modern global context. While the grandeur of the pagoda serves as the departure point of the complex story of the pagoda, the story is not complete without an understanding of how the religious, cultural, political, and social discourses were embedded in the complex processes of place-making. I consider both writings and images as texts in the sense that their narrative follows certain epistemological and institutional patterns. They contribute to making the pagoda into a place resembling a literary trope, a pictorial metaphor of power and belief, and a cultural icon; they also enrich our understanding of how a religious place was woven into the urban fabric and contributed to cultural exchange in late imperial China and beyond.

[1] For a schematic overview of the main trends in urban development in late imperial China, see Rowe 2013. For research on Ming-Qing Nanjing, especially from the perspective of urban-rural continuum, see Mote 1977 and Fei 2010a. For research on other cities in the Jiangnan region, see Mote 1973 on Suzhou; the five case studies of Jiangnan cities by Michael Marmé, Susumu Fuma, Paolo Santangelo, Antonia Finnane, and Linda Cooke Johnson in Johnson 1993; Goodman 1995 on Shanghai; Meyer-Fong 2003 on Yangzhou.

A Political Legacy: Making the Pagoda to Repay Parental Kindness

In 1412, eleven years after ascending the throne, Emperor Yongle 永樂 (Zhu Di 朱棣, r. 1402–1424) issued an edict to rebuild a pagoda at the Bao'en Monastery. The pagoda is tied to the earliest textual reference to a stupa in Chinese history.[2] It allegedly housed the relics of the Buddha, which Kang Senghui 康僧會 (d. 280) brought to the Wu Kingdom (222–280) (*Jinling fancha zhi* 3a). By Yongle's time, the pagoda had been repaired and rebuilt numerous times, the most recent being a major renovation ordered by Yongle's father, Emperor Hongwu 洪武 (Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋, r. 1368–1398), the founder of the Ming dynasty. Although rulers were inclined to claim that they followed King Aśoka (r. 268-232 BCE) in commissioning Buddhist stupas for the purpose of generating merit for the state, this meritorious project served a particular agenda. Yongle's edict does not even mention the relics of the Buddha but accentuates the bond between him and his late parents. The monastery was thus renamed Bao'en 報恩 (Repaying Parental Kindness), a term specific to the indigenous Buddhist tradition in China (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.7b-8a). It reflects a value that was not only long rooted in Chinese Buddhism, but also central to Confucianism.[3] Promising to transform his deepest gratitude into the material form of a grand pagoda, Yongle ordered, "Rebuild the pagoda. Its height, strength, grandeur, and beauty should all surpass previous dynasties" (重造浮圖，高堅壯麗，度越前代) (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.8b). In doing this, the emperor vowed, "I carry on the sacred aspiration of my honourable father and mother, and express my filial piety and sincerity" (用仰承我皇考、妣之聖志，而表朕之孝誠) (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.8b-9a). Yongle's claim to be a filial son can be interpreted as a two-fold message to counterbalance his infamous seizing of the throne from his nephew, Emperor Jianwen 建文 (Zhu Yunwen 朱允炆, r. 1398–1402), and to put an end to rumours about his humble origin on his mother's side (Chan 1988, 193-202). Significantly, shortly before his death in 1424, a second edict, inscribed on a four-metre-high stele, made it clear that his "honourable father" was Emperor Hongwu, and his mother was Empress Ma 馬皇后 (1332–1382) and not the long-suspected low-status concubine (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.8a). The construction lasted seventeen years before completion in 1428, the fourth year of the reign of his grandson, Emperor Xuande 宣德 (Zhu Zhanji 朱瞻基, r. 1425–1435).[4] On its completion, the pagoda was the tallest building in the city. Together with other ambitious projects orchestrated by Yongle, it embodied the official discourse about his genealogy and physically planted his authority into the new urban landscape of Nanjing, the

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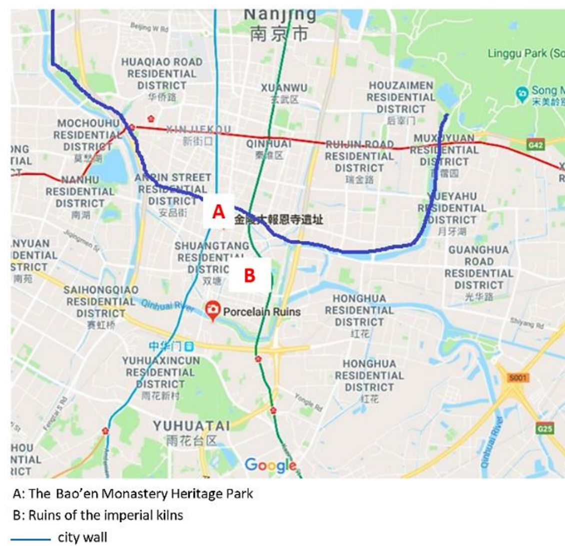
[2] The transformation from a mound-like stupa into a timber-frame pagoda occurred in the 6th century (Steinhardt 2019, 97-100).

[3] About early debates on Buddhism and filial piety, see Zürcher 2007, 281 and Schopen 1984. *Da fangbian fo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經 (The great skilful means sutra on the Buddha's repayment of kindness) and *Fumu enzhong jing* 父母恩重經 (Sutra on deep indebtedness to one's father and mother) were widely circulated from the Tang dynasty onwards.

[4] The last stage of the project was connected to one of the most prominent figures in early Ming history, Zheng He 鄭和 (1371–1433). The short-lived Emperor Hongxi (r. 1424–25) was disenchanted with the six ocean voyages between 1405 and 1422. After he had ascended the throne, he appointed Zheng He as defender of Nanjing, which now became the empire's southern capital. Zheng made use of the leftover funds from the six voyages, took charge of the construction of the Bao'en pagoda, and completed it in 1428 (Chan 1988, 232-236).

southern capital. Located just outside the inner city, the pagoda was made a visual proof of filial piety and an affirmation of Yongle's status as successor to the throne (Map 1).



Map 1: Map of Nanjing. Source: Google Maps. Accessed on 8 September 2022. Symbols by author.

After the capital had been moved to Beijing in 1421, the centre of political gravity also shifted to the North. The suspicious circumstances of Yongle's ascension were no longer a matter of stigma for the imperial family but only juicy gossip in popular novels and dramas. The pagoda then became a place associated with the imperial power and authority. In a depiction of Xu Xianqing 徐顯卿 (1537-1602), who obtained the degree of provincial graduate (*juren* 舉人) in Nanjing when he was 31 years old, the pagoda on the other side of the Chang'an 長干 River and the Ming palace looming in the background suggest the recognition of the court and his promising career (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Xu Xianqing 徐顯卿, Yu Ren 余壬, and Wu Yue 吳鉞, "Luming chege" 鹿鳴徹歌 (Song on conclusion of the Deer-Call banquet), in *Xu Xianqing huanji tu* 徐顯卿宦跡圖 (Illustrations of Xu Xianqing's official career). 1588. Album leaf, ink and colour on silk. 62 cm x 58.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

After the Qing conquest of the Ming, the pagoda became a site recalling past glory. In his nostalgic reminiscences, the loyalist of the previous Ming dynasty, Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1684), describes the pagoda as a "grand antique object of the central kingdom and a magnificent work from the Yongle kilns" (中國之大古董，永樂之大窰器) (*Taoan mengyi*, 2; Kafalas 2007, 27). It became a place to commemorate the best days of the Ming:

> If it were not for Emperor Chengzu's spirit, resources and capability, and achievement and resolution to found the dynasty, if it were not that his courage, wisdom, talent, and strategy were up to swallowing up and spitting out this pagoda, then it could not have been completed (ibid.).
>
> 非成祖開國之精神，開國之物力，開國之功令，其膽智才略足以吞吐此塔者，不能成焉。

Figure 2: Wang Hui 王翬. Detail of *Kangxi nanxun tu* 康熙南巡圖 (The Kangxi Emperor's southern inspection tour), scroll 11. 1698. Handscroll, ink and colour on silk. 67.8 x 2313.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing.

Zhang Dai also reminded his readers how the magnificence of the pagoda impressed foreigners. After seeing it, they would without fail bow and sigh in praise: "In all the four continents such a thing was not to be found" (謂四大部洲所無也) (ibid.). Its grandeur in the past turned the monastery into a place where other Ming loyalists such as Shitao 石濤 (1642–1707) and Kuncan 髡殘 (1612–1674) gathered in the early decades of the Qing conquest (Hay 1999, 44; Hay 2001, 126-127, 160). Paradoxically, because of its association with this loyalist sentiment, the site came to be one of the places where the Qing (1644–1911) authority called for reconciliation with southern literati. In order to pacify these "leftover subjects" (*yimin* 遺民) of the Ming, the Kangxi Emperor 康熙 (r. 1661–1722) and his son the Qianlong Emperor 乾隆 (r. 1735–1796) visited the monastery many times during their southern inspection tours (Qi and Gong 2008, 54-58). Upon his first visit in 1684, Emperor Kangxi also paid visits to the remains of the Ming palace and the tomb of Hongwu. At the Bao'en Monastery, he ascended the pagoda, inscribed a signboard for each of the nine floors, and donated a statue and a set of the Diamond Sutra (*Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi*, 127; Zhang 2007, 75-85). The pagoda is the visible departure point in the eleventh volume of *Kangxi nanxun tu* 康熙南巡圖 (The Kangxi Emperor's southern inspection tour) (Figure 2). The strategic tour of Kangxi

was to some extent successful. Shitao himself was among the monks and other *yimin* literati to greet the emperor (Hay 2001, 88-89). Thus, the monastery and the pagoda provided a site for the malleable transformation of political legacies and reconciliation of political agendas.

A Religious Icon and a Monastic Property

The director of the Bureau of Sacrifices in the Ministry of Rites (*libu cijisi* 禮部祠祭司) in Nanjing, Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 (1570–1646), compiled the *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志 (Gazetteer of Jinling Buddhist monasteries) and had it printed at the Buddhist Registry (*senglu si* 僧錄司) in 1607.[5] At his post in Nanjing, Ge witnessed the dwindling of Buddhism with the move of the court to Beijing, lamenting that monasteries in Nanjing had to struggle to keep their landed property from being encroached upon by local gentry. Sympathetic to the monastics and possibly a Buddhist convert himself, Ge initiated a series of reformative measures to secure temple properties, verify monks' ordination certificates, reestablish sangha regulations, restore dilapidated buildings, and establish Buddhist schools. In doing so, Ge's main goal in compiling the gazetteer was to "provide evidence for the future" (以徵信將來) (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 1. Xu.2a).

Although Ge claimed that the compilation of his gazetteer was inspired by the sixth-century account of Buddhist temples, *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 (Record of the Monasteries of Luoyang), the structure of the *Jinling fancha zhi* shows a clear purpose of political administration. Ge's compilation starts with edicts of the Ming emperors; its main body consists of the accounts of 330 individual monasteries. The gazetteer arranges monasteries into four tiers: great monastery (*dacha* 大剎), secondary monastery (*cidacha* 次大剎), medium-sized monastery (*zhongcha* 中剎), and small-scale monastery (*xiaocha* 小剎). The Bao'en, Linggu 靈谷, and Tianjie 天界 monasteries are the only three 'great monasteries' in Nanjing. While they are under the direct control of the Buddhist Registry, each of them also oversees a certain number of monasteries in the three lower tiers. The Bao'en monastery, therefore, is in charge of two secondary, fourteen medium-sized, and over forty small-scale monasteries (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 1.Fanli.1a–4b).

The account of Bao'en Monastery, like all other great and secondary monasteries, is accompanied by a topographic map by artisans of local repute, painter Ling Dade 凌大德 and woodblock carver Zhang Chengzu 張承祖, both active in the early seventeenth century (Figure 3).[6] The city of Nanjing at this time was already established as a centre for print culture, and thus attracted the most skilled painters and carvers (Fei 2010b, 226–248). Four times wider than a regular page, the map combines the styles of topographic map and landscape painting. Although it follows mapmaking conventions by indicating the names of all major locations and buildings, it does not provide cardinal directions but only notes "left" (*zuo* 左) and

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[5] Ge Yinliang was appointed as the director of the Bureau of Sacrifices, a position overseeing various rituals and affairs related to astronomy, geography, medicine, divination, music, and Buddhist monks and Daoist priests (*Ming shi*, 72.1748). For detailed introduction to Ge Yinliang and *Jinling fancha zhi*, see He 2011, 61-92.

[6] The fact that both Ling and Zhang left their names on the map suggests that they might have been locally reputed artisans. Ling's name also appears in maps in the *Jinling Daoist Temple Gazetteer* (*Jinling xuanguan zhi* 金陵玄觀志), which was also compiled by Ge Yinliang.

"right" (*you* 右) on each side, suggesting that the map should be read like a handscroll painting. Therefore, the reader would begin with the Yuhua Terrace (Yuhua tai 雨花臺), a scenic hill to the south of the monastery. Along the lower register, the boundary of the monastery is clearly demarcated by its front gate, trees, and railings and by the clearly outlined walls. At the lower left corner, we see the Southern Gate of the inner city, indicating the monastery's proximity to the city.

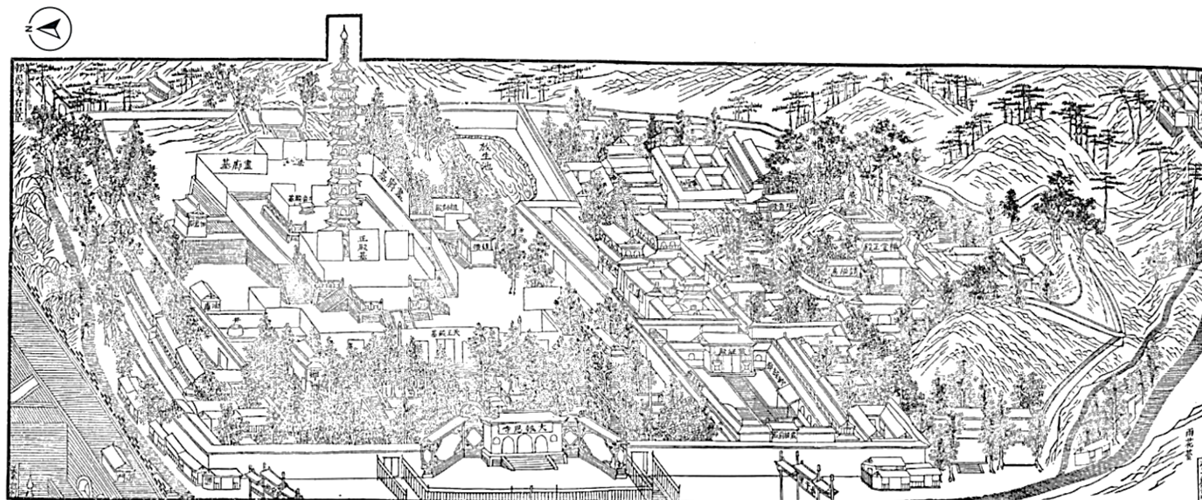

Figure 3: Ling Dade 凌大德 and Zhang Chengzu 張承祖, Illustration of the Bao'en Monastery, in Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮 ed., *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志. Woodblock print. 1607, reprinted Zhenjiang, 1936. Harvard-Yenching Library/Harvard Library, Cambridge, MA.

Visual vocabulary from multiple mapmaking and painting traditions contributes to a geomantically desirable view of the monastery. The map adopts a quasi-bird's-eye view. Yuhuatai Terrace, depicted as a cluster of hills just across the mountain road on the map, is in reality located much farther from the monastery and its altitude is lower (Map 1). Together with the clear boundary, the hills surrounding the monastery walls at the top and right sides of the page place the monastery in physical and figurative protection. When the map is fully unfolded, the viewer can finally see the monastery in its entirety: the living compound in the south (right) and the pagoda compound in the north (left). The southern compound is dedicated to monastic daily life and practice; it includes the Meditation Hall, the residence of the monks, a pagoda dedicated to the reliquary of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664),[7] and a library that houses the woodblocks of the Hongwu edition of the Tripitaka. The northern compound on the left page features the Bao'en Pagoda in the centre, the foundation of the main hall in the foreground, and the Painted Gallery (*hualang* 畫廊) in their surroundings.[8] With its finial protruding beyond the top frame of the page, the pagoda is the most prominent building on the map. Breaking through the image frame is an innovative way to highlight the visible presence of the pagoda on one hand and to maintain its place as an integral part of the monastery on the other. This pictorial strategy is in line with the textual narrative. As mentioned

[7] *Jinling fancha zhi*, 31/3a (1073). For an overview of the discovery of the relic of Xuanzang, see Brose 2016, 143–176. For the controversy about the burial of Xuanzang, see Liu 2009, 2–97.

[8] A huge fire destroyed the Main Hall in 1566; its reconstruction was completed only in 1690 (Zhang 2007, 121–122).

above, Ge Yinliang's gazetteer was aimed at keeping track of the monastery's landed properties, so it inventories the size of every building in the monastery as well as the area of the landed properties in the suburbs of the city. The pagoda does not receive much extra attention in the text. As a part of the monastery, it is only listed as "the treasure pagoda made of *liuli* ceramic [bricks], nine storeys" (琉璃寶塔九級) (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.2a–2b).

The format of Ge's gazetteer formed the basis for *Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi* 敕建報恩寺梵刹志 (Gazetteer of the imperially commissioned Buddhist Monastery of Repaying Parental Kindness). This monastery gazetteer was compiled by Monk Wuming 悟明 (fl. 18th century–19th century) of the Bao'en Monastery in 1807, about one-and-a-half centuries after the end of the Ming. Following *Jinling fancha zhi*, Wuming placed the aforementioned map at the beginning of his text, and continued to record all properties of the monastery at an extremely detailed level. It documents the sizes of all buildings, regulations and compacts, titles of sutras in the library, and area of landed properties that are currently owned or were once owned in the previous dynasty (*Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi*). The chapter on the pagoda starts with its height in precise measurement: from the ground to the top of the finial, it is 78.75 metres tall (通高地面至寶珠頂二十四丈陸尺一寸九分) (*Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi*, 74). Each of the nine sections in this chapter is devoted to the structure, decoration, and property on each floor: the sign boards inscribed by Kangxi and Qianlong, the height of the floor, the area of the interior and exterior space, the number of the statues, the sizes of gates and windows, the material of the balustrades, the number of the stairs, and other belongings such as incense and sutras. Like other chapters, this chapter gives a precise calculation of the cost for lamps and candles:

> Each floor has 16 lamps, and each needs 4 *liang* [1 *liang* = 37.3 gm] of oil. Therefore, each floor needs 4 *jin* (1 *jin* = 596.8 gm) of oil per night, and eight floors 32 *jin*. Eight glass lamps on the ground floor, each in need of 2 *jin*, need 16 *jin* per night. Four glass lamps in the centre of the pagoda, each in need of 2 *jin*, need 8 *jin* per night. During a long month, 1,680 *jin* of oil is needed; during a short month, 1,626 *jin*. Candles in plain red colour: eight, i.e. four pairs, each weighing 1 *jin*; 44, i.e. 22 pairs, each weighing 4 *liang*. Lamp wick: 1 *jin* and 5 *liang* (*Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi*, 86-87).
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> 每一層十六盞，每一盞該油四兩，每一層見一夜該油四斤，八層該油三十二斤。塔下琉璃燈八盞，每一盞該油二斤，見一夜該油一十六斤。塔心琉璃燈四盞，每一盞該油二斤，見一夜該油八斤。月大該油一千六百八十斤，月小該油一千六百二十六斤。紅素燭，一斤重八枝，計四對。四兩重四十四枝，計二十二對。燈草一斤五兩。

Wuming, a monk in the monastery, was fully aware of the religious function of the pagoda to house the relics of the Buddha, the political agenda of Yongle, and the praise of its impressive appearance expressed by educated visitors. However, throughout the whole book, his description of the monastery and the pagoda remains focused on the value of the property and daily cost of living. His account of the pagoda is so pragmatic that it was almost irrelevant to the "height, strength, grandeur, and beauty" promised by Yongle; rather, the compelling appearance of the pagoda in political and literary rhetoric is translated into concrete and accurate terms for resources and property.

A Landmark and Spectacle within the City

Given that the Bao'en Pagoda was the building in the southern capital and had a special connection with the emperor, it was most likely not open to the public in its earliest decades. A century after the court was moved to the North, when Nanjing had become a vibrant urban centre, the pagoda began to appear as a landmark in the cityscape in various genres of literary and pictorial media. After returning to his home in Nanjing, retired official Chen Yi 陳沂 (1469–1532) composed a text entitled *Liuli ta ji* 琉璃塔記 (*Record of the Liuli-Ceramic Pagoda*) in 1531 (Fan 2009, 398-404). Unlike the temple gazetteers by Ge Yinliang and Wuming, this essay by Chen hardly mentions the monastery, but highlights instead its extravagance, its building cost, and the spectacle that the pagoda creates. It zooms in to look enthusiastically at every single detail of its intricate design on each floor: eight *liuli* ceramic doors facing outward, four functional and four decorative; sixteen windows embellished with Udumbara flower motifs; four splendid guardian kings carved on the walls; elaborate interlocking brackets and pillars supported by auspicious animals such as lions and elephants; and various elegant flora and fauna patterns filling empty space. The structure was even more prominent during the night, when 144 lamps, 16 on each floor, were lit. The lamps, according to Chen, "look like fire dragons descending from the sky, and their light can be seen from miles away" (如火龍自天而降,騰焰數十里). Not simply a pleasure to the eyes, it also dazzled the sense of hearing with its 144 gilded windchimes on the eaves. It is said that "the wind chimes can be heard from a few *li* [1 *li* = 500 meters] away and are especially clear during rainy nights" (風鐸相聞數里,響振雨夜) (*Jinling fancha zhi*, 31.15b–16b). Chen's description offers a local view of the pagoda, which dominated the urban horizon day and night, rain or shine. Standing at the top of the pagoda, one would have been offered a vantage point overlooking the capital. On the top floor, for the first time, Chen saw familiar places and scenes in the southern capital from an unprecedented angle. From this bird's-eye view, places associated with different social categories and hierarchies seemed flattened onto the same surface: the old palace, government offices, streets and canals, houses, alleys and markets, and people walking around in the near distance, as well as the Yangtze River, mountain ranges, and passes and roads farther away (ibid.). In this text, the pagoda is interwoven with the urban landscape but detached from the monastery.

Chen's positioning of the pagoda as a landmark is echoed in poems, essays, and travel books. In the late Ming, the original purpose and the political significance of the pagoda as well as its connection with the monastery had faded in the writings of educated men. Visitors often presented the pagoda as a geographical reference in Nanjing and a cultural marker of the lively city. In 1609, *Xinjuan hainei qiguan* 新鐫海內奇觀 (The newly engraved marvellous views within the seas) lists the pagoda among forty popular attractions in the illustration of Jinling (Figure 4). The illustration juxtaposes the icon of the pagoda with those of other indexical locations such as scenic sites, historic buildings, government complexes, and leisure attractions. The building complex of the prefectural government, Yingtian fu 應天府, which would have been the usual focus of an official gazetteer map, recedes into the background in this illustration, and its icon is even smaller than the pagoda and the Taibo Wine Shop (Taibai jiulou 太白酒樓). Most notably, the accompanying text lists the pagoda, not the monastery, in the itinerary, and gives weight to its height and craftsmanship. In the new urban scene, the pagoda was another exciting place where the lettered man could visit and temporarily stay.

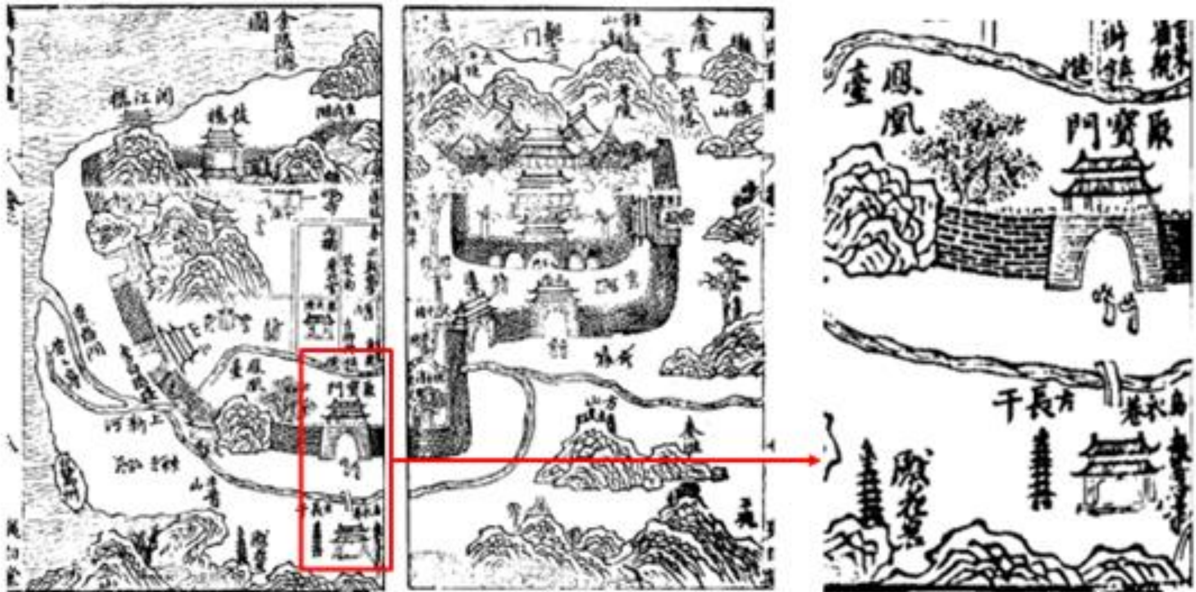
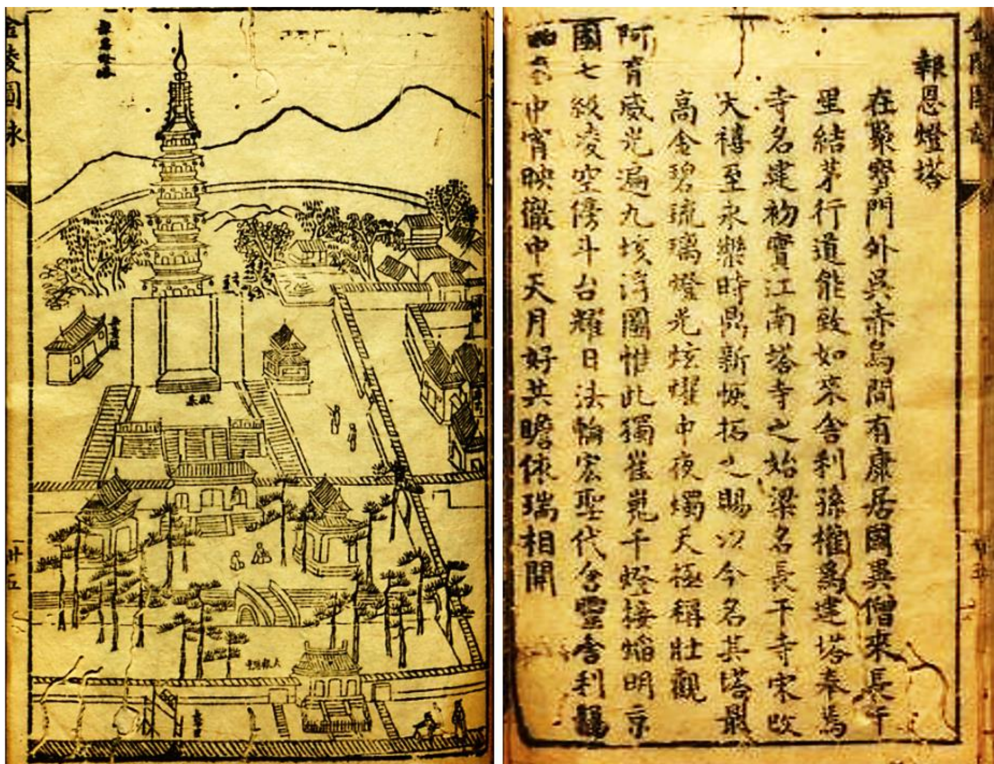


Figure 4: Yang Erzeng 楊爾曾, Map of Jinling, in *Xinjuan hainei qiguan*, 2.7b-8a. Woodblock print. 1609, Yibai tang edition. Harvard-Yenching Library/Harvard Library, Cambridge, MA.

Zhu Zhifan 朱之蕃 (1558–1626), previously a successful politician, returned to Nanjing in retirement. In 1624, he composed the *Jinling tuyong* 金陵圖詠. His book also lists the Bao'en Pagoda instead of the monastery among the forty famous sites of Jinling (Figure 5).



報恩燈塔
在聚寶門外吳赤烏間有康居國異僧來長干
里結茅行道能致如來舍利孫權為建塔奉焉
寺名建初實江南塔寺之始梁名長干寺宋改
天禧至永樂時與新恢拓之賜以今名其塔最
高金碧琉璃燈光炫耀中夜燭天極稱壯觀
阿育威光遍九垓浮圖惟此獨崔嵬千燈接焰明京
國七級凌空傍斗台耀日法輪宏聖代含靈舍利藹
中宵映徹中天月好共瞻依瑞相開

Figure 5: Zhu Zhifan 朱之蕃, "The Bao'en Monastery Pagoda," in *Jinling tuyong*, 35a. Woodblock print. 1624, Nanjing edition. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Famous sites did not become famous naturally. Numbered lists of the scenic sites in a city, commonly with an even number of eight or more, first became popular in Yangzhou in the early seventeenth century and quickly spread to the Jiangnan area (Wang 2005, 1–52). The illustration by Zhu clearly makes use of the composition of the pagoda in Ge Yinliang's *Jinling fancha zhi*, but it leaves out other major monastic buildings to highlight the pagoda. In order to draw viewers' attention to the pagoda, the thick foliage behind the entrance in the gazetteer map is replaced by sparse pine trees. The illustration also adds more figures in the courtyard. Two monks in the foreground and two scholar-like visitors in the middle ground suggest the identity of potential visitors. One scholar is pointing at the pagoda, a visual device that underlines the pagoda's central place within the image. The accompanying text includes a brief history of the pagoda and a poem by Zhu Zhifan praising its height, the dazzling *liuli* glaze, and the lamps. The pictorial and verbal representations by scholars turn the pagoda into a more inviting space. They decontextualise the pagoda from the monastery, place it in the urban landscape, and make it speak directly to the city dwellers and travellers.

a

b

Figure 6: *Jiangnan Bao'ensi liuli baota quantu* 江南報恩寺琉璃寶塔全圖 (Complete image of the Liuli-Ceramic Treasure Pagoda of the Monastery of Repaying Parental Kindness in Jiangnan). (a) Pingjiang zhuren 平江主人 1802, in Boerschmann 1931, Plate 1. Leiden: Leiden University Libraries. (b) Anonymous 1808, in Wellcome Collection, London.

While the pagoda was a meaningful presence to the urbanite, its restoration could also become a public event. Partially damaged by lightning strikes, the pagoda was repaired in 1802 and 1808. The fact that it survived these natural calamities was taken as a miracle: "The divine power is magnificent, and the Buddha dharma is boundless, so the pagoda cannot be completely destroyed" 神力威嚴，佛法無邊，故不能通身損壞 (Figure 6a-6b). Copies of its image were made into talismans to protect commoners' houses. The inscription "protecting houses to ensure peace" (*zhenzhai ping'an* 鎮宅平安) on the image linked the wellbeing of urban families with the presence of the pagoda (Figure 6b).

An Exotic Spectacle in European Travelogues

While the early Qing (1644–ca. 1680s) government still held on to the tribute model that once served both the need for trade with a limited number of neighbouring countries and the self-esteem of the central kingdom, the visit of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) opened a new chapter for the so-called "encounter of East and West", and gave the image of the pagoda a new life in Europe. In 1655, in the same year when Zhang Dai lamented through the pagoda the loss of his own identity, the VOC sent a group of envoys to the Qing empire, aiming to expand their South- and Southeast-Asian trading networks towards the North (Blussé 2013, 15). While the VOC's proposal failed to win the favour of the Qing court, Johan Nieuhof (1618-1672), as an agent of the VOC, managed to make detailed accounts and richly illustrated images during his two-year visit to China. After his return to Amsterdam, Nieuhof left his manuscript with his brother Hendrik. Together with the Amsterdam-based publisher Jacob Van Meurs (c. 1619–c.1680), Hendrik Nieuhof edited the text, added more illustrations, and published the travelogue in 1665. Subsequently, the book was translated into French (1665), German (1666), and English (1669).[9]

Nieuhof was immensely impressed by the "beauty, art, and cost" of the pagoda and the intricate details in its design, and he believed that the craftsmanship of the pagoda surpassed all other architectural monuments in China. Thus, he wrote:

> This tower has nine rounds, and a hundred eighty-four steps to the top; each round is adorned with a gallery full of images and pictures, with very handsome lights: The out-side is all glazed over and painted with several colours, as green, red, and yellow. The whole fabric consists of several pieces, which are so artificially cemented, as if the work were all one piece. Round about all the corners of the galleries hang little bells, which make a very pretty noise when the wind jangles them: The top of the tower was crowned with a pineapple, which (as they say) was made of massy gold. From the upper gallery you may see not only over the whole city, but also over the adjacent countries to the other side of the River Kiang [Yangtze], which is a most delightful prospect, especially if you observe the vast circumference of the city, reaching with her suburb to the river side (Nieuhof 1669, 84–85).

[9] The original manuscript of Nieuhof's travelogue was rediscovered in 1984 (Blussé and Falkenburg 1987, 15–16).

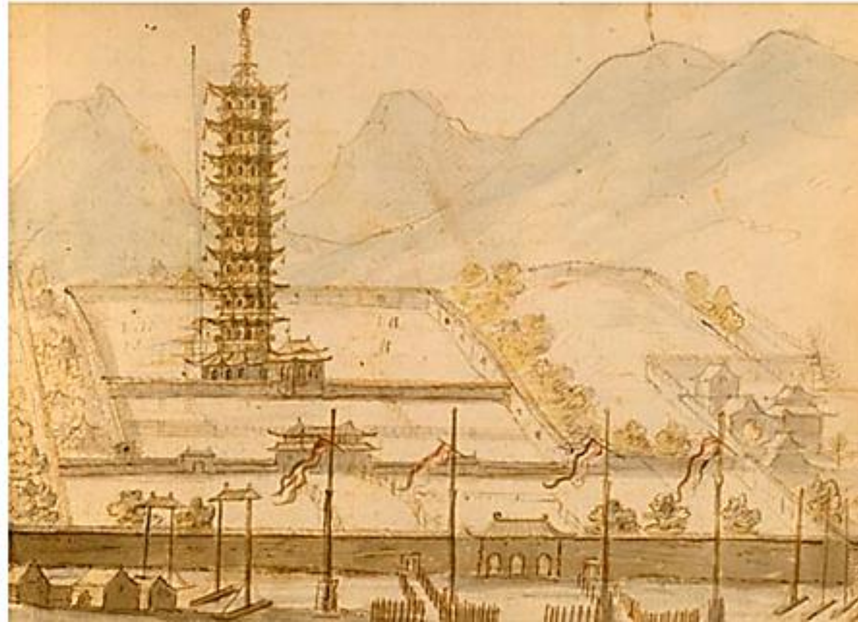


Figure 7: Johan Nieuhof, The Bao'ensi Pagoda. Drawing. 1657-1665. Watercolor and ink on paper, 24 x 17 cm. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Reproduced in Leonard Blussé and R. Falkenburg, *Johan Nieuhofs beelden van een Chinareis, 1655–1657* (Middelburg: Stichting VOC publicaties, 1987), Plate 95.

Like most Europeans of the time, Nieuhof had very limited knowledge of Buddhism. The Bao'en Monastery is only mentioned in passing as an "idol temple" (ibid.) As John Finlay correctly points out, there was a clear disdain for Buddhism or other religions at the time, and Europeans' only interest in pagodas was their physical resemblance to pyramids, the symbol of antiquity for Europeans (Finlay 2020, 79). In Nieuhof's travelogue, the pagoda stands out as an architectural marvel and an exotic spectacle that is isolated from the monastery and even from the city. A comparison between the sketch in the manuscript and the etchings in the printed version shows that the publisher strategised to further foreground the pagoda as an iconic structure. In Nieuhof's manuscript, pagodas appear in twenty-two out of eighty sketches, but in the printed edition, at least ten more pagodas were added to the illustrations (Nieuhof 1669). It is evident that they were added in the process of editing and publishing to appeal to the market. The manuscript contains only one sketch of the Bao'en Pagoda (Figure 7), but it was made into two etchings in the printed version, with one representing the pagoda compound and the other its close-up (Figure 8a-b). The etchings were rendered as mirror images of the sketch, but the reversed directions would not make a difference to its readers, who had never been to the city. As the only building that is illustrated twice, the pagoda occupies a unique place in the book. The etchings stage the pagoda in a setting that appears more dramatic and more "Chinese" to European eyes: The buildings dedicated to monastic daily life in the southern compound are largely omitted, and the empty space in the foreground is filled with figures who are clad in European-style attire. They are performing greeting rituals and carrying parasols, two indexical features of Chinese cultural tradition in the eyes of Europeans. The background is decorated with exotic trees including palms that could be found only in the Dutch settlements in Southeast Asia but never grew in Nanjing. Although both the sketch and Nieuhof's text portray a nine-storey pagoda, the building in one of the etchings has ten storeys (Figure 8b). According to Chinese architectural conventions, pagodas usually have seven, nine, or, at any rate, an odd number of storeys, but just as with

the reversal of the image, a ten-storey pagoda would not be a concern to either the publisher or the readers of this book.

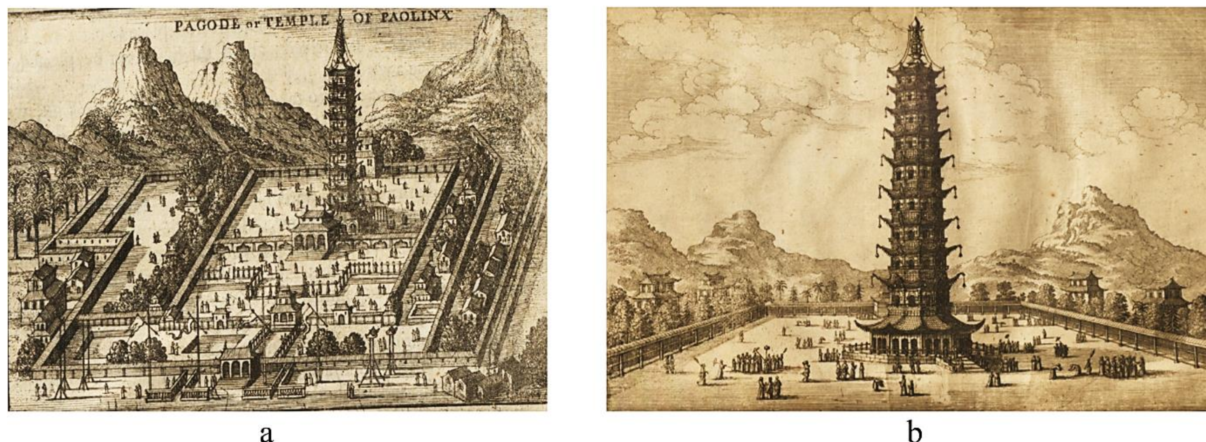


Figure 8 a-b: Johan Nieuhof, "Pagode of Temple of Paolinx." Print. 1665, reprinted in *An Embassy from the East-India Company of the United Provinces, to the Grand Tartar Cham, Emperour of China* (London: Printed by John Macock for the author, 1669), 84. McGill University Library, Montreal.

In parallel to Nieuhof's trip to China, the Jesuits were also impressed by the pagoda. Among them was Louis-Daniel Le Comte (1655–1728), who provides the most authoritative written source about the pagoda in 1696 (Le Comte 1697–98, 135). Based on the accounts of Le Comte and Nieuhof, the renowned encyclopedist Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674–1743) presented the Bao'en Pagoda to the larger European public in 1735. In addition to its octagonal structure, its nine storeys, and its green glazed roof tiles, du Halde's entry also notes that the height of the tower is 200 feet (60.96 metres) and the length of each side 14 feet (4.27 metres) (Du Halde 1735, I.129). Various historical and archaeological sources show that the pagoda was about 78 metres high, and a recent excavation shows that each side of the pagoda was about 3.7 metres long (*Chijian Bao'ensi fancha zhi*, 74. Qi and Zhou 2016, 127–128). Although the information provided by du Halde is not accurate, the genre of encyclopedia would leave the impression among its readers that the presentation of the pagoda was based on rational and scientific knowledge.

It was Nieuhof's illustrations that became most quickly popularised and adopted into European works about China. The genre of travelogue engendered an impression of eyewitness and accuracy, and such knowledge was often generated and accepted in the predominant orientalist atmosphere. Along the same lines, the architect William Chambers (1723–1796), who visited Canton twice, in 1743–4 and in 1748–9, as an agent of the Swedish East India Company, looked at Chinese architecture, even with first-hand experience, as odd, simple, and neat "toys" (Chambers 1757, ii). Based on his own experience and the narrative promoted by Nieuhof and du Halde, Chambers believed that pagodas were simply a common form of architecture in cities as well as in rural areas, but ignored their religious function (Chambers 1757, 5–6; Chambers 1773, 62). Chambers materialised his idea of the Chinese pagoda in the Great Pagoda of Kew Gardens for his patron Augusta, Princess Dowager of Wales (1719–1772) in 1762 (Chambers 1763, 5). Chambers' design was meant to be a translation rather than a faithful replication (Porter 2010, 44). Although bearing a resemblance to a Chinese pagoda with its octagonal shape and decorative bells, the Great Pagoda was built after Nieuhof's drawing and even perpetuated his mistake by building the pagoda with ten storeys. This is not a surprise, as Chambers stated that Chinese pagodas usually consist of "seven, eight, and sometimes ten stories," although as mentioned above, pagodas with even-numbered storeys

were rarely seen in China (Chambers 1757, 5). Chambers' design fulfilled the popular imagination of and taste for Chinese buildings as "light, frivolous, immediately pretty and gaily coloured" decoration in the royal garden (Impey 1977, 146). Alongside other exotic plants, trees, and architecture, it constituted part of an ambitious project of collecting the world. It was the underlying logic of Nieuhof's depiction of the pagoda that led to its exoticisation in early modern Europe. As Benjamin Schmidt argues, it was the "self-conscious strategy of exoticism" that marketed the idea of the exotic outside world and gave its form to the prints appealing to readers, viewers, and consumers across Europe (Schmidt 2015, 83–161). After the Great Pagoda of Kew Gardens, the concept of the pagoda was materialised in other major European palaces, especially the pagoda at the Chateau de Chanteloup (Qi and Gong 2008, 124-127). The design of the pagoda at Chanteloup was inspired by Chambers, but the two characters, "acknowledging gratitude" (zhi'en 知恩), inscribed on its ground floor show its direct connection with the Bao'en Pagoda.[10] One century after Nieuhof's visit to China, pagodas had been completely stripped of their religious or cultural connotations and coated with a veneer of the Orient.

Cultural Preference: *Liuli ta* vs Porcelain Pagoda

While the pagoda was recorded as the *Liuli ta* in late imperial China, it was commonly dubbed the "Porcelain Pagoda" in post-seventeenth-century Europe. The terms *liuli* 琉璃 (glazed ceramic) and porcelain expressed not just technological means but, more significantly, cultural implications. From the modern perspective of ceramic production, *liuli* is usually fired at a temperature of 800°C to 1000°C, whereas porcelain is fired at a much higher temperature of 1200°C to 1400°C. A higher temperature demands technological advancement, and thus porcelain, in comparison with pottery, implies higher quality. However, in the historical context, the epithets convey cultural implications and social status. In medieval China, *liuli* referred to glass or colored gemstones. Both were precious materials imported from Central Asia and commonly used in Buddhist ritual offerings (Yu 2018, 237–238). During the Ming period, *liuli* referred to glazed ceramic, which was made for palaces, government buildings, and state-sanctioned temples (Hsu 2012–13, 38–39). Therefore, the term *Liuli ta* signifies the prestige of the pagoda and its relationship with the imperial family. At the same time, it is not a surprise that Nieuhof and the Europeans who wrote after him chose to use the phrase "porcelain pagoda" (Figure 8a). By the time of Nieuhof's visit, porcelainware had already captured European interest as a valued commodity, and the word "porcelain" in seventeenth-century Europe would have been understood as the blue-and-white type (Impey 1977, 92–94). Therefore, it might not be a coincidence that in the decades after the publication of Nieuhof's travelogue, Europe witnessed the appearance of miniature pagodas made of blue and white porcelain in the grand residences of the social elite, such as the one in the collection of Theodore Royer (1737-1807) (van Campen, 17-27) (Figure 9).

[10] Zhi'en and Bao'en are often used together in classical Chinese as an idiom, meaning to acknowledge the kindness and thus to repay the kindness. For the design and history of the pagoda, see Smentek 2019, 161–175.

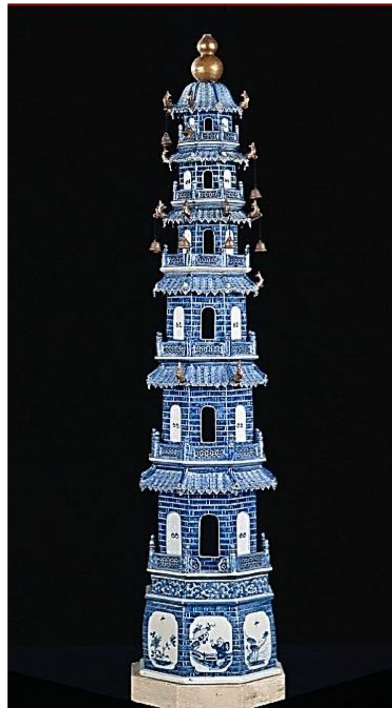


Figure 9: A porcelain pagoda from the collection of Theodore Royer (1737-1807). Porcelain and wood. 119 x 25 cm. Volkenkunde Museum, Leiden.

The Bao'en Pagoda was unfortunately destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion in 1856. Due to its height, the remarkably ambitious leader Wei Changhui 韋昌輝 (1823–1856) bombarded the pagoda while the city was besieged by the troops of an opposing leader, Shi Dakai 石達開 (1831–1863).[11] Various visual and textual sources in China and Europe failed to provide consistent, complete accounts of its building materials. Therefore, its material composition and its exact appearance have remained "a persisting enigma" (Eng 2016, 178–188). Archaeological findings suggest that both porcelain and *liuli* were used in the construction of the pagoda. The clay that was used to make the *liuli* tiles was transported from Dangtu county (in Anhui province), about 70 kilometres upstream on the Yangtze River, but the *liuli* building parts were fired locally: more than seventy official kilns have been found in the neighboring villages near Jubao Mountain (Map 1). [12] Two *liuli* arches were reconstructed with components unearthed from the ruins of the pagoda and the nearby kiln sites (Figure 10).[13] Zhang Dai, the above-mentioned Ming loyalist, recorded that three identical sets of each building part were made—one used for the actual building and the other two numbered and buried beneath the pagoda. Therefore, if a tile or brick was damaged, the Board of Works could dig out the identical piece according to the reported number (*Taoan mengyi*, 2. Kafalas 2007, 27). Inscriptions have been found on *liuli* pieces showing such a numbering system, possibly used to number the replacement pieces as Zhang Dai suggested (Eng 2016, 180–181; Qi Haining 2018, 81).

[11] Zhang 2007. For the conflict between Wei and Shi 1980, see Kuhn 1978, 295.

[12] An immense number of *liuli* tiles and bricks were not only made for the construction of the pagoda, but also for that of the imperial palace and other state-related projects (Eng 2016, 181–182; Leng 2016, 56–57).

[13] These two arches are housed in the Nanjing Museum and the Nanjing Municipal Museum. Although the excavated parts seem to fit the reconstructed arches, this does not necessarily mean that they originally belonged to the pagoda. Some parts might have belonged to the monastery or the imperial palace.

Figure 10: Arch-surround of the Bao'en Pagoda, reconstructed with pieces excavated from the site of the Bao'en Monastery and the ruins of the imperial kiln. Nanjing Museum (9 September 2022, photo by Xing Yue).

In addition, white porcelain bricks have been discovered on the ruined site of the pagoda since the Republican Era (1911–1949). These bricks, typical of the 'sweet white' (*tianbai* 甜白) wares of the Yongle period, have a pure, lustrous white glaze, without any decoration. Their production site has been traced to the Zhushan official kiln in Jingdezhen.[14] The pieces excavated under the pagoda and in Zhushan have various sizes and shapes (Figure 11). As scholars shrewdly point out, these porcelain slabs were mostly used to line the interior and exterior faces (Eng 2016, 182; Zhang 2018, 91–93). Therefore, although both *liuli* ceramic and porcelain were used in its construction, *liuli* was most likely the predominant material for the pagoda.

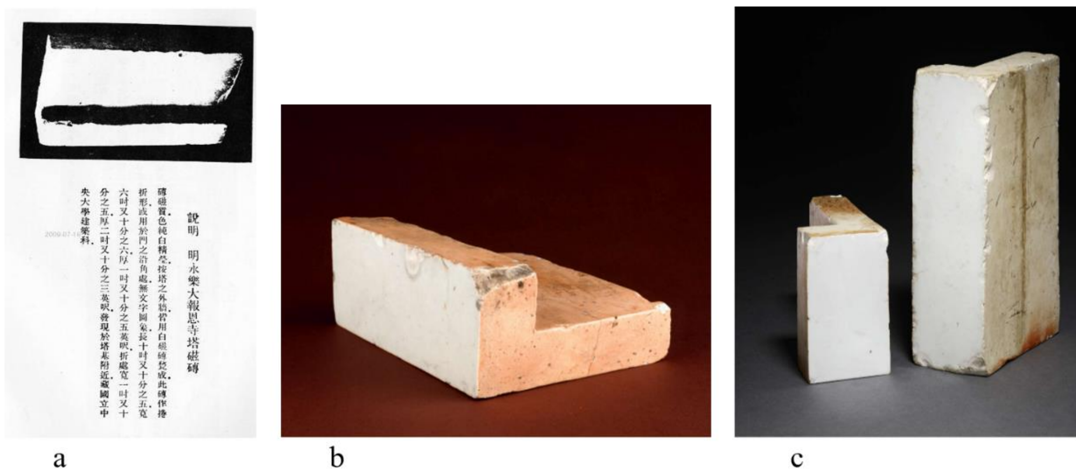


Figure 11: Porcelain tiles from the Bao'en Pagoda: (a) H. 3.8 cm, w. 26.67 cm, d. 16.8 cm. Photo by Zhang Huiyi 張惠衣, in *Jinling Dabaoensi ta zhi* 金陵大報恩寺塔志 (Treatise on the Great Monastery of Repaying Parental Kindness and its pagoda in Jinling) (Beijing: Shangwu chubanshe, 1937), Plate 9. Harvard-Yenching Library/Harvard Library, Cambridge. MA, (b) H. 3.7 cm, w. 18.8 cm, d. 14.9 cm. British Museum, London. (c) H. 13-37 cm. British Museum, London.

[14] An exhibition on Ming imperial kilns at Shandong Provincial Museum in 2017 provides solid evidence about the usage and function of these white porcelain cladding pieces (Zhang 2018, 91–93).

Existing images of the pagoda should not be taken as objective representations. Chinese and European paintings favored different colour schemes. In Xu Xianqing's painting (Figure 1), *Kangxi nanxun tu* (Figure 2), and images of the pagoda made by Buddhist converts in the early nineteenth century (Figure 6a), the façade of the Bao'en Pagoda is predominantly covered in red, green, and yellow, colours which were not only common for glazed *liuli* ceramic but also more auspicious than white. By contrast, English architect and artist Thomas Allom (1804–1872) and Irish writer George Newenham Wright (c. 1794–1877) illustrated the walls of the pagoda as predominantly white in colour, suggesting porcelain as the main building material and *liuli* ceramic as decoration (Figure 12). Like Nieuhof, they listed it as an architectural marvel in their account. Under the title of "The Porcelain Tower, Nanking," is written:

> The inner part, or body of the walls, is brick, but the inside lining and the facing without, of beautiful white glazed porcelain slabs, fixed in the masonry by means of deep keys, cut like a half T in the brick. The projecting roof of each story consists of green and yellow porcelain tiles in alternate perpendicular rows, and running up each angle is a moulding of larger tiles, glazed and coloured red and green alternately (Allom 1858–9, 162).

Today, this passage is often taken as evidence to verify excavated building parts, but there is no proof that Allom or Wright ever visited China. Their knowledge most likely was drawn from various first-hand and second-hand accounts, as after the First Opium War (1840–1842), writings about and images of Nanjing by missionaries, soldiers, and merchants were widely available in Britain. Allom's illustration situates the pagoda in a reconstructed context: the pagoda is made the focus of the composition, but the walls of the monastery are conveniently omitted. What is placed in the foreground is a funeral procession, composed of a mixture of sedan chairs, labourers with shoulder poles, and funeral banners. Such a spatial configuration situates the pagoda in a curious ethnographic setting, a collage of visual vocabulary that was exotic yet comprehensible to European viewers. The choice of the word "porcelain" in both the caption and the text reflects the pervasive European enchantment with the material from the eighteenth century onward.

Figure 12: Thomas Allom, "The Porcelain Tower, Nanking," in Allom and George Newenham Wright, The Chinese Empire Illustrated: Being a Series of Views from Original Sketches, Displaying the Scenery, Architecture, Social Habits etc., of that Ancient and Exclusive Nation, London: The London Printing and Publishing Company (Limited), 1858-1859, Volume 2, Division 6, 10. Harvard-Yenching Library/Harvard Library, Cambridge, MA.

Conclusion

A doctrinal interpretation of the purpose of constructing a pagoda would immediately point to the central role of relics. However, this was often not the case in reality. As John Kieschnick points out, stupas or pagodas after the sixth century were often more than a repository of sacred objects: they were remembered as monumental architecture or helped prominent officials and members of the imperial family to secure prestige (Kieschnick 2003, 56). This is clearly testified in the case of the Bao'en Pagoda. As the archaeological discovery in the 2010s showed, the relics were already interred under the pagoda during the Song dynasty, but their existence was never mentioned in any of the above texts. During the two centuries after its construction, the Bao'en Pagoda was assigned different meanings that were not necessarily associated with relics. The textual sources and visual representations referring to the pagoda were not static but became active agents redefining its cultural underpinnings and stimulating new forms of narrative and visual representation. In the Yongle imperial edict, its construction is part of a political strategy; in the monastery gazetteer, it is documented to consolidate the monastery's property; in Ming and Qing literary works, it is a landmark rising on the horizon of the cityscape; in Nieuhof's travelogue, its prominent place sparked the fascination with the Chinese landscape in the European imagination.

The Bao'en Pagoda was not only an urban spectacle; its height also made it a strategic military vantage point. It was for this reason that it was destroyed during the Taiping Rebellion. Afterwards, the pagoda fell into ruin and the site never resumed activity as a monastery until it was reconstructed in 2015. Despite its destruction, the pagoda never ceased to exist in the imagination and continued to generate images commemorating it. While it remained as the *Liuli ta* in the Chinese memory, it gained more malleable forms as the "Porcelain Pagoda" in the refashioning of European living style. In so doing, the complex process of place-making of the pagoda was not limited to the construction of its physical structure; more importantly, it was texts and images that contributed to the creation of its meanings and multiple faces.

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