



Ritual and Representation in Chinese Buddhism: Visualizing Enlightenment at Baodingshan from the 12th to 21st Centuries

Karil J. Kucera

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Includes 159 color images. Baodingshan consists of a monastic complex and two rock-carved areas, Little Buddha Bend and Great Buddha Bend, located in Dazu in western China and dates from the Southern Song period. The complex is fundamentally different from earlier Buddhist rock-carved sites in China in its construction and layout. Foregoing traditional niche-based iconography for large, deeply cut reliefs reaching dimensions as great as eight meters high by twenty meters wide, within Baodingshan's Great Buddha Bend, the carved works flow from one tableau into another. The site contains both texts and images related to the main schools of Buddhist thought. This book presents an integrated analysis of all of the components of Great Buddha Bend within the greater Baodingshan site, something that was lacking in earlier studies. Written to provide guidance to the site for a wide spectrum of readers-specialists and non-specialists alike-it provides a clear explanation of the major iconographic features of the imagery as well as translations of the numerous accompanying carved Buddhist texts. It also presents the basic tenets of Pure Land, Chan [Zen], Huayan and Esoteric Buddhism in order to explain the features of these sects as seen represented in visual as well as textual form at the site. Lastly, with its focus on ritual use and audience reception from the 12th to the 21st century, this study provides a new model for the discussion and evaluation of other religious sites as entities that organically evolve over time. This study also includes new translations of both the inscribed Buddhist texts and secular inscriptions carved at the site dating from the twelfth through the twenty-first centuries-inscriptions left by educated elite, soldiers, and government officials, highlighting regional issues related to continuity and change made visible at Baodingshan.

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