

TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTION BUILDING AND TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES IN EAST ASIA

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“EAST ASIAN LANDSCAPES AND LEGITIMATION: LOCALIZATION TACTICS OF POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES IN CHINA AND ADJOINING EMPIRES”

Objective of Research

... is to show which consequences the reconfiguration of religious space has for the processes of transcultural ideology transfer and ideology reassignment. Both are important factors for successful political dominance by an political entity. Since water control is an important means of legitimation, especially in East Asia, reconfigurations from Sichuanese and Vietnamese water-related temples serve as case studies in comparison to known patterns from the Chinese Empire. Both areas tried to separate and establish their own empires, however, Vietnam's own brand of reconfigurational conventions seems to have factored in its sole success in empire building.

Methods

Part of the thesis is to create a functional method called Experiential Architecture Analysis (EAA). The EAA is practiced by surveying the structural arrangement of a complex in context with archaeological evidence (if present) as well as the content of buildings. Together with classical source study, the EAA reveals reconfigurations in the material that give insight into socio-political local developments. The local results will be contextualized with results from the analysis of greater trends in religious-geographic representation in China and Vietnam which will illuminate questions of transcultural ideology transfer in East Asia.

Hypothesis

Evidence from more than 40 surveyed temples illustrates how political power reassigned space and superscribed extant beliefs with more streamlined Buddhist practices which – in later centuries – were themselves superscribed by Neo-Confucian state systems. This process supported the stability of imperial reign by those who implemented consolidating control. It seems that integrative reconfiguration tactics are a necessary precondition to secure stabilized, long-term political dominance, but not sufficient for thorough ideological transfer. Aggressive reconfigurations may successfully lead to political dominance and complete ideological transfer, but they also pose a great risk, as they easily provoke revolutions.

Aim

In a narrow sense, the aim is to show factors for why the Vietnamese empire building was successful but the Sichuanese one was not. Another aim is to give the voice to the locals which is hard to find in normative texts. Since material evidence is often all that is left of those people silenced in official sources, applying the EAA to the sociology of spaces creates a set of reconfiguration modes that can be used interdisciplinary to analyze the process and success of ideology transfer. This helps to create more accurate views on local historical developments and transcultural interaction.



The (female) Buddha of Rain at Dâu Pagoda (originally built 226 AD) in Bắc Ninh.



Ruins of Lý Thường Kiệt Ancestor temple. He spread Buddhism to enhance imperial rule in Thanh Hóa



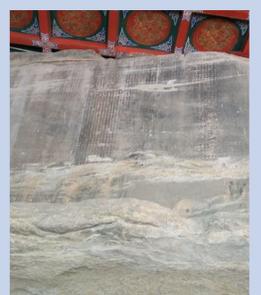
Altar to the local river in a Đạo Mẫu temple, Thanh Hóa.



Surface archaeological remains show size reconfiguration at Thiên Mụ Pagoda, Hue.



Holy Water Spring of Buddhist Guangdesi 廣德寺, Sichuan. (Source: Guo Guanghui 郭廣輝, 2016)



This Diamond Sutra at Bis-huisi 碧水寺 claims the sacred spring of a dragon and turned the place into a Buddhist site.

Subtheme: Transcultural Identities and Institutions: the Universal and the Local