The Last Remains of Manichaeism in Villages of Jinjiang County, China*

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In terms of archaeological findings relating to Manichaeism in China, Western academic literature has focused primarily on the sites of Turfan and Dunhung in northwestern China. Those materials documented, however, only original Manichaeism introduced by foreign Manichaean priests before the Persecution on Buddhism in 843. However, the popular version of Manichaeism in China was actually a sinicized Manichaeism, as argued by E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot. Sinicized Manichaeism gained popularity in the name of “Mingjiao” 明教 for worshipping the Sun and the Moon in southeast China during the Song-Yuan periods (960–1368). The most famous existing site is the Cao’an Temple 草庵 in present-day Jinjiang county of Quanzhou (Fig. 21.1), which was built around the 5th year of Zhiyuan Era (1339). We know the sinicized image of Mani from the stone statue preserved in Cao’an (Fig. 21.2) and the sixteen-character inscription “清淨光明 大力智慧 無上至真 摩尼光佛” (Purity, Light, Great Power, Wisdom, Supreme Perfect Truth, the Light Buddha of Mani), can still be seen on a rock near the temple (Fig. 21.3). Scholars have regarded the Cao’an Temple as the last sinicized Manichaean remains since its discovery.

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2 The first report on Cao’an temple was Zhuang Weiji’s 莊為璣’s 考古通訊 No. 3, 1956, pp. 43–48. For detailed studies, please refer to Wu Wenliang’s 吳文良, Religious Inscriptions of Quanzhou 泉州宗教石刻, Beijing, 2005, pp. 441–448. The first report on Cao’an published in the western academia was L. Carrington Goodrich’s “Recent Discoveries at Zayton”, JAOS 77, 1957, pp. 161–165. Prof. Peter Bryder of Lund University is the first foreign scholar who visited Cao’an in 1986. P. Bryder, “... Where the faint traces of Manichaeism Disappear”, AoF 15, 1988, pp. 201–208. He introduced the visit and photos of Cao’an taken by himself on the first International Conference of Manichaean Studies held in August 1987, which marked the formal debut of Cao’an temple into the
Mr. Nian Liangtu’s recent study reveals that Qian Geng, the Magistrate of Jinjiang County between 1529 to 1531, integrated the Cao’an Temple into Longquan Shuyuan [the Academy of Dragon Spring], which was later destroyed in wars during the mid-17th Century. In the early 20th Century, Buddhist monks renovated the Cao’an Temple and regarded the statue of Mani as that of Sakya. The famous Buddhist Master Hongyi 弘一法師 (1880–1942) once stayed in the temple in the 1930s. The monastic history of the temple demonstrates that since the mid-17th Century, the Cao’an Temple has no longer been a religious institution for local Manichaens. No further historical sources about Manichaeism in Jinjiang since then are available. Mr. Nian Liangtu has furthered his field research in the villages adjacent to Cao’an in recent years, and it is encouraging that some more recent remains of Manichaeism have been found. Yet, thanks to Nian Liangtu’s recent exciting finding of some Manichaean remains in a few villages near the Temple, our exploration of the final form of Manichaeism now becomes possible.

1 The Manichaean Remains of Jingzhu Gong 境主宮 in Sunei Village

The most important site discovered by Nian is a village shrine of Sunei 蘇內村 called “Jingzhu Gong 境主宮 [Temple of the Protection god of the village]”. The shrine dedicated to several Manichaean deities was rebuilt in the 1930s. It was made up of stone and wood in a measurement of 560 × 650 cm. There are two stone pillars, with 133 cm in height and 40 cm in diameter, originally moved from the Cao’an Temple nearby. The most interesting is the wall-painting of five deities (Fig. 21.4); with Mani in the center and four other deities on his left and right. These four deities are named as Dutian Lingxian 都天靈相 [Spiritual sign in the Heaven], Lord Jingzhu 境主公 [The Protection god of the village], Qinjiao

world. In the beginning of 21st Century, the history department of Zhongshan University and Quanzhou Maritime Museum had planned to hold in Quanzhou an International Conference themed on Manichaeism and Ancient China but unfortunately, it was forced to cancel for non-academic reasons.

3 Nian Liangtu, A Study on Cao’an of Jinjiang 晉江草庵研究, Xiamen University Press, 2008, pp. 64–73, 78–80.