

# Three Tianzhu Monasteries 三天竺寺

also known as “The Middle Tianzhu Monastery 中天竺寺”, “The Lower Tianzhu Monastery 下天竺寺”, “The Upper Tianzhu Monastery 上天竺寺”

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Entry tags: Yellow and Yangzi Rivers Region, Religious Place, Scholastic Buddhism, Buddhist Traditions, Tiantai school (tiantai zong 天台宗), Chinese Buddhism, China, Religious Group, Chan Buddhism (chan zong 禪宗), Chinese Buddhist Traditions, West Lake 西湖, Zhejiang, Hangzhou

Three Tianzhu Monasteries 三天竺寺 represents three prominent Buddhist monasteries—the Upper Tianzhu Monastery 上天竺寺, Middle Tianzhu Monastery 中天竺寺, and Lower Tianzhu Monastery 下天竺寺—in southwest Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. In 595, the Southern Tianzhu Monastery 南天竺寺, the predecessor of the Upper and Lower Tianzhu monasteries, was built by the monk Zhenguan 真觀 (538-611). During the Wuyue 吳越 period (907-978), it was named as the Five-Hundred Arhats Cloister 五百羅漢院. Under the imperial edict, it was officially retitled as the Tianzhu Monastery 天竺寺 in 1020, and the Tianzhu Monastery was divided into the Upper and Lower Tianzhu Monasteries in 1023. Together, these two monasteries were the center of Tiantai Buddhism in the Song time (960-1279). Famous Tiantai reformers, such as Ciyun Zunshi 慈雲遵式 (964-1032) and Nanping Fanzhen 南屏梵臻 (d.u.), had served as their abbots. Being the home of the sandal white-robed Guanyin icon, since the middle of the 11th century, the Upper Tianzhu Monastery was widely believed as a domicile of Guanyin and became a famous pilgrimage site of Guanyin. In 1065, the title “Efficacious Guanyin” 靈感觀音 was conferred to the monastery by the Emperor Renzong of Song 宋仁宗 (r. 1022-1063). The marvelous efficacy of its Guanyin icon, in the names of the “White-robed Mahāsattva” 白衣大士 was further popularized through the poems of SU SHI 蘇軾 (1037-1101), an intimate friend of the monastery’s abbot Biancai Yuanjing 辯才元淨 (1011-1091). The Middle Tianzhu Monastery was first built as a meditation courtyard 道場 by the legendary Indian monk Baozhang 寶掌 (?-657) in 597 and reconstructed as the Chongshou Cloister 崇壽院 by Qian Chu 錢俶 (929-988), the last emperor of the Wuyue Kingdom. In the Southern Song period (1127-1279), the monastery was renowned for its efficacious icon of the Bodhisattva Mārīcī 摩利支菩薩. Since the Song dynasty, the monastery is best known for its affiliation with the Chan tradition. Zongle 宗泐 (1318-1390), a close friend of Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398) and a successful politician-monk, was trained and tonsured in the monastery and served as its abbot from 1368 to 1371. At a similar time, the name Middle Tianzhu Monastery was officially granted to the monastery. Three monasteries all hosted the Southern Tours 南巡 of the Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (r. 1736-1795), who also changed the names of the monasteries to Faxi Monastery 法喜寺 (Upper), Fajing 法淨寺 (Middle), and Fajing Monastery 法鏡寺 (Lower). Nowadays, the Upper Tianzhu Monastery has become a popular tourist site, the Middle Tianzhu Monastery is associated with the Hangzhou Buddhist Academy 杭州佛學院, and the Lower Tianzhu Monastery is a functioning nunnery.



Date Range: 595 CE - 2022 CE

Region: Three Tianzhu Monasteries

Region tags: China, Zhejiang, Hangzhou

The regions represent the current location and the size of the Three Tianzhu Monasteries. The Upper Tianzhu Monastery is in the south, the Middle Tianzhu Monastery is at the center of the map, and the Lower Tianzhu Monastery is in the north. Three monasteries were named based on their geographical location in Tianzhu Mountain 天竺山.

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## General Variables

### Sources and Excavations

#### Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Huang, Shih-Shan Susan. "Tianzhu Lingqian: Divination Prints from a Buddhist Temple in Song Hangzhou." *Artibus Asiae* 67, no. 2 (2007): 243–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/25261881>.
- Source 2: Walsh, Michael J. "Efficacious Surroundings: Temple Space and Buddhist Well-Being." *Journal of Religion and Health* 46, no. 4 (2007): 471–79. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27513037>.
- Source 1: Shi Guangbin 釋廣賓. *The Gazetteer of the Upper Tianzhu Teaching Monastery in Hangzhou 杭州上天竺講詩志*. Hangzhou: Hangzhou chuban she, 2007.
- Source 2: Hsü Yi-zhi 徐一智. "Mingdai Shang Tianzhu Jiangsi Guanyin Xinyang Zhi Yanjiu 明代上天竺講寺觀音信仰之研究." *Faguang Xuetan 法光學壇* 7 (2003): 77–118.
- Source 3: Guanxiong Qi. "The 'Late-Ming Beats' and the Reformation of Buddhist Monasticism in the Early 17th Century Hangzhou." Florida State University, 2022.

Notes: Naquin, Susan, and Chün-Fang Yü, eds. *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. Broeskamp, Bernadette. "The Construction and Dissemination of a New Visual Idiom - The White-Robed Guanyin (白衣觀音) and the Upper Tianzhu Monastery (上天竺寺) in Hangzhou." In *Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation: Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space*, edited by Christoph Cüppers and Max Deeg, 2014.

Reference: Kenneth K. Tanaka, Kenneth Kenichi Tanaka. *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine*. SUNY Press. isbn: 9780791402979.

Reference: Mark L. Blum. *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism*. Oxford University Press. isbn: 9780198028987.

Reference: Charles B. Jones. *Chinese Pure Land Buddhism*. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824879716.

- Source 1: Sharf, Robert H. "On Pure Land Buddhism and Ch'an/Pure Land Syncretism in Medieval China." *T'oung Pao*, vol. 88, no. 4/5, Brill, 2002, pp. 282–331, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4528903>.
- Source 2: Steveson, Daniel B. "Stevenson Halls of the Sixteen Contemplations," in *Buddhism in Global Perspective*, edited by Kalpakam Sankaranarayan and Ravindra Panth, and Ichigo Ogawa. Mumbai: Somaiya Publications, Ltd., 2003, pp. 147–204.

#### Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <http://buddhistinformatics.dila.edu.tw/fosizhi/ui.html?book=g024>
- Source 1 Description: The Upper Tianzhu Monastery Gazetteer from the Digital Archive of Chinese Buddhist Temple Gazetteers.

- Source 2 URL: <http://buddhistinformatics.dila.edu.tw/fosizhi/ui.html?book=g007>
- Source 2 Description: The Hangzhou Buddhist Gazetteer from the Digital Archive of Chinese Buddhist Temple Gazetteers.
- Source 1 URL: <http://www.guiyifo.com/zongzhuyexingwen/shantianzhufaxishi.htm>
- Source 1 Description: Information about the Upper Tianzhu Monastery from Guiyifo.com
- Source 2 URL: [http://mzj.hangzhou.gov.cn/art/2019/2/1/art\\_1632095\\_35072083.html](http://mzj.hangzhou.gov.cn/art/2019/2/1/art_1632095_35072083.html)
- Source 2 Description: The information about the Upper Tianzhu Monastery from the Hangzhou Religious and Cultural Affairs
- Source 3 URL: [http://mzj.hangzhou.gov.cn/art/2019/2/1/art\\_1632095\\_35072081.html](http://mzj.hangzhou.gov.cn/art/2019/2/1/art_1632095_35072081.html)
- Source 3 Description: The information about the Middle Tianzhu Monastery from the Hangzhou Religious and Cultural Affairs

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

– No

## Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

– Elevation

Notes: The Three Tianzhu Monasteries are famous and named for their location on the Tianzhu Mountain. The Tianzhu Mountain was an informal name to a hill to the southwest of West Lake, Hangzhou. The term Tianzhu was ancient Chinese name for India, which also signified the presence and promulgation of Buddhism.



Type of elevation

– Hill

Notes: The elevation of the mountain is about 410 meters. See <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%A4%A9%E7%AB%BA%E5%B1%B1/16704044>.

– Tree, grove, or forest

Notes: The area is renowned for being surrounded by forests. The monastic also planted trees for decorating the monasteries.

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

– Yes



Type of feature

- Leveling of ground
- Clearing
- Trackway or road-surface
- Plantings

Notes: The monastics and their hired laborers paved the road to the monasteries. There are also efforts in gardening and planting trees. In the late imperial time, people made artificial ponds for releasing animals.

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

– No

Notes: In pre-modern times, the locations of three monasteries were remote. The monasteries were about 15 to 20 kilometers from the urban area. People need to travel far to visit the monasteries. However, because of urbanization, these three monasteries are not remote from the city anymore and one can travel to these monasteries easily.

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– Yes



Are there settlements in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

Notes: In history, the closest (secular) human settlements was the Bayberry Ridge Village (yangmeiling 杨梅岭村), with a few hundreds of population and about 5 kilometers away from the monasteries. For more information, see <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/杨梅岭村>; [https://cn.tripadvisor.com/Attraction\\_Review-g298559-d4810378-Reviews-Yangmeiling\\_Scenic\\_Spot-Hangzhou\\_Zhejiang.html](https://cn.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g298559-d4810378-Reviews-Yangmeiling_Scenic_Spot-Hangzhou_Zhejiang.html)



Are there routes of travel in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– No

Notes: Since the region was mountainous and in the rural area, only a few small villages existed nearby. The closest village to the monasteries is the Red Bayberry Ridge 杨梅岭, with a few hundred population. There was also the Dragon Well Village 龙井村, where is famous for its production of the Dragon Well Tea 龙井茶.

## Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– No

### Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:

– Yes



Dedicated to a supernatural being:

– Yes [specify]: Since the middle of the 11th century, the Upper Tianzhu was widely believed as a domicile of Guanyin. The Middle Tianzhu was renowned for its efficacious icon of the Bodhisattva Mārīcī 摩利支菩薩. Since then, there were specific rituals dedicated for the worship of the deities and special buildings for housing their icons.

Notes: For the information about Guanyin, see <http://buddhisticinformatics.dila.edu.tw/fosizhi/ui.html?book=g024>; for the Middle Tianzhu Monastery's association with the Bodhisattva Mārīcī, see <http://buddhisticinformatics.dila.edu.tw/fosizhi/ui.html?book=y089&facs=4B068P012.jpg&pageNumber=p.0008&keyword=摩利支菩薩&viewMode=search>



Dedicated to more than one supernatural being:

– Yes [specify]: There are Buddha halls and other buildings dedicated to various devas, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas.

Notes: Because of the historical links between Tianzhu/Pure Land Buddhism and Tianzhu Monasteries, the Amitabha Buddha and Guanyin Bodhisattva are widely worshipped by the three monastics and lay patrons of the three monasteries.

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:

– No

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:

– No

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:

A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.

– Yes



Specify

– King or emperor

– Other [specify]: In 1065, the title “Efficacious Guanyin” 靈感觀音 was conferred to the Upper Tianzhu by the Emperor Renzong of Song 宋仁宗 (r. 1022-1063). The Middle Tianzhu Monastery

was one of the political center of Buddhism in the Ming times. All three monasteries were recognized as parts of the “Five Mountains and Ten Monasteries” (wushan shicha 五山十刹) in the Southern Song dynasty.

Notes: In the Qing times, all three monasteries received substantial patronage from Qianlong Emperor and changed their names under Qianlong's will.

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

– Yes



Groups:

– Priests

Notes: The Southern Tianzhu Monastery 南天竺寺, the predecessor of the monasteries, was built by the monk Zhenguan 真觀 (538-611) in 595. Later, the monasteries had been the meditation courtyard. These were the places that built by early Indian missionaries for promulgating Buddhism.

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

– No

Notes: Initially, the monastery was built as a meditation courtyard, which has little to do with divine intervention.

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

– No

Was the place created as the result of an event:

– Yes



Specify

– Other [specify]: All three monasteries are associated to the missionary activities carried out by Indian monks. The monasteries had served the meditation courtyard and sutra translation center.

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

– No

Notes: The monasteries were built, based on extant sources, by the monks themselves. Certainly, we cannot exclude the opportunity that they were built under external financial assistance. However, we do not know exactly. All sites received significant financial supports after the construction throughout history.

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

– Other [specify]: As the notes above tell, they were built by Indian missionaries as a process of converting the region into Buddhism.

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

– Yes

↳ What type of scriptures/sacred texts [specify]:

– Type: Certain Pure Land scriptures are particularly extolled and venerated, such as the uch as the Amitâbha Sūtra, the Larger Sukhāvātīyūha, the Shorter Sukhāvātīyūha.

Notes: The Upper Tianzhu was believed as the home of the White-robed Guanyin Bodhisattva, who was one of the West Pure Land trinity. The Middle Tianzhu was renowned for its efficacious icon of the Bodhisattva Māricī. Many Buddhist scriptures offer detailed rituals programs for venerating these bodhisattvas. These scriptures are generally available in the Bodhisattva Hall. See Broeskamp, Bernadette. "The Construction and Dissemination of a New Visual Idiom - The White-Robed Guanyin (白衣觀音) and the Upper Tianzhu Monastery (上天竺寺) in Hangzhou." In *Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation: Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space*, edited by Christoph Cüppers and Max Deeg, 2014. Hsü Yi-zhi 徐一智. "Mingdai Shang Tianzhu Jiangsi Guanyin Xinyang Zhi Yanjiu明代上天竺講寺觀音信仰之研究." *Faguang Xuetan 法光學壇* 7 (2003): 77-118.

↳ Were the scriptures/sacred texts located in a specific room within the main structure:

– No

↳ Where are the scriptures/sacred texts located in secondary building:

– Yes

↳ Built specifically for the purpose:

– Yes

Notes: All Chinese Buddhist monasteries have a Tripitaka library which is the depository of Buddhist texts.

↳ Repurposed:

– No

↳ Are the scriptures actively used at the place:

– Yes

Reference: Charles B. Jones. *Chinese Pure Land Buddhism*. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824879716.

Reference: Kenneth K. Tanaka, Kenneth Kenichi Tanaka. *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land*

Buddhist Doctrine. SUNY Press. isbn: 9780791402979.

Reference: Julian F. Pas, Professor of Religious Studies Julian F Pas, Shan-Tao-Ta-Shih. Visions of Sukhavati. SUNY Press. isbn: 9780791425190.

↳ Are they read aloud:

– Yes

↳ To a human audience

– No

Notes: Various Pure Land sutras, such as the Amitâbha Sūtra, the Larger Sukhāvātīyūha, the Shorter Sukhāvātīyūha, were recited in the Buddha Hall and other places for the ensure of a Pure Land rebirth. They are not intended to be heard by humans but by the bodhisattvas. After hearing the call (as one follows the recital procedures given by the scriptures), the bodhisattva can help the reciter to liberate from samsara.

↳ Are they studied:

– Yes

Notes: The monasteries often host sutra studies groups. There would be a highly venerated monastic who professed all the knowledge to answer the questions raised by the lay practitioners.

↳ Are they recopied:

– Yes

Notes: Copying of the sutra was always a virtuous act that was encouraged in the community and by the sutras themselves.

↳ Used for divination:

– No

↳ Other:

– Other [specify]: Rituals associated to the Buddhist scriptures, such as the making of Dharma wheel and ritual readings

Notes: There are other functions and rituals associated to the Buddhist scriptures. See Wu, Jiang, and Lucille Chia. Spreading Buddha's Word in East Asia: The Formation and Transformation of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. Print.

Reference: Jiang Wu, Lucille Chia. Spreading Buddha's Word in East Asia. Columbia University Press. isbn: 9780231540193.

Reference: Jiang Wu, Greg Wilkinson. Reinventing the Tripitaka. Lexington Books. isbn: 9781498547581.



# Design and Material Remains

## Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

– Yes

Reference: James A. Benn, Lori Meeks, Associate Professor of Chinese Religion James Robson, James Robson. *Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia*. Routledge. isbn: 9781134009916.

Reference: Johannes Prip-Møller. *Chinese Buddhist Monasteries*. isbn: 9789622090675.

Reference: Karma Yonten Gyatso. *Understanding the Chinese Buddhist Temple*. isbn: 9781896559063.

↳ Are any of the structures attached to or associated with a landscape feature:

– Yes

Notes: Three Tianzhu are renowned for their location on the ridge of the Tianzhu Mountain.

↳ Are any of the structures attached to other structures:

– Yes

Notes: Chinese Buddhist monasteries are building complexes that are consisted of multiple buildings for different usages and purposes. See the attached files for the common monastic layout.

↳ Is there a hierarchy among the structures:

– Yes

Notes: Usually, the structures of Chinese Monasteries are hierarchical. As the visitor step into the monastery, one gradually walks to the center, where is also the most important place of the monastery. The Buddha Hall and Meditation Hall are usually the most important. The halls closed to the entrance are less important. The monastic quarters are located on the sides and the abbot's house is usually hidden in the end of the monastic compound.

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– No

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes

↳ Earth  
– No

↳ Sand  
– No

↳ Clay  
– No

↳ Plaster  
– No

↳ Wood  
– Yes

Notes: Most of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries are wooden constructions.

↳ Is this material sourced locally:  
– Yes

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:  
– No

↳ Grass  
– No

↳ Stone  
– No

↳ Other  
–Other [specify]: No others.

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

Notes: Not as I am aware of. The buildings of the Chinese Buddhist monasteries are usually purely wooden, and there are abundant trees in the region.

## Decoration

Is decoration present:

– No

Notes: No specific decoration beyond the common monastic setting.

## Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

– Yes

Notes: The Upper Tianzhu Monastery gave birth to the image of the White-robed Guanyin Bodhisattva, which was allegedly developed from craved Guanyin statue made of a piece of miraculous sandel wood. The iconography features a distinct style that the feminine Guanyin, dressed in white robes, holds a willow branch in the left hand and an ambrosia bottle in the right hand. Usually appearing in paintings, the white-robed Guanyin is one of the most classical Guanyin iconography in China.

↳ Eyes (stylized or not)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)

– Yes

Notes: The statues of Guanyin and Mārīcī are venerated on the sites.

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)

– No

↳ Portrayals of afterlife

– No

Notes: Not as I am aware of. There would be portrayal of Pure Land, in the forms of mural or scroll paintings, in some monasteries. But there is no specific records about them in the Tianzhu Monasteries.

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)

– No

↳ Humans

– No

↳ Supernatural narratives

– No

↳ Human narratives

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: No others.

## Beliefs and Practices

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### Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– No

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– No

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– Yes

Notes: It is a very unique phenomenon in the Chinese Buddhist tradition called the "human-fresh bodhisattva," which is the mummification of the Buddhist masters. Otherwise (for not renowned monastics), their bodies will be cremated in the monastery. For reference, see Sharf, Robert H. "The Idolization of Enlightenment: On the Mummification of Ch'an Masters in Medieval China." *History of Religions* 32, no. 1 (1992): 1-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062719>. Ritzinger, Justin R. and Marcus Bingenheimer. "Whole-body relics in Chinese Buddhism - Previous Research and Historical Overview." (2006). GILDOW, DOUGLAS, and MARCUS BINGENHEIMER. "Buddhist Mummification in Taiwan: Two Case Studies." *Asia Major* 15, no. 2 (2002): 87-127. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41649866>.

↳ Cremation:

– Yes

Reference: James A. Benn. *Burning for the Buddha*. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824829926.

↳ Mummification:

– Yes

↳ Interment:

– No

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

↳ Exposure to the elements:

– No

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

↳ Secondary burial:

– Yes

Notes: Sometimes during the mummification, one will be bury for a second time to check the corpse does not decay.

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– No

↳ Other intensive (time/resources expended) treatment [Specify]:

–Other [specify]: No others

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Notes: There is no burial for the common Buddhists who are usually got cremated and ashes will be discarded.

Are formal burials present:

– No

## Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– Yes

↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

– Yes

Notes: It is believed that the two monasteries (Upper and Lower) are the homes of the Guanyin and Māricī bodhisattvas. Both bodhisattvas are anthropomorphic. Broeskamp, Bernadette. "The Construction and Dissemination of a New Visual Idiom - The White-Robed Guanyin (白衣觀音) and the Upper Tianzhu Monastery (上天竺寺) in Hangzhou." In *Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation: Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space*, edited by Christoph Cüppers and Max Deeg, 2014.

↳ Are they sky deity:

– No

↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

– No

↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

– No

↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ Are they kin relation to elites:

– No

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:

– No

↳ Are they unquestionably good:

– Yes

Notes: Yes. Doctrinally speaking, bodhisattvas are the most compassionate beings who sacrificed themselves to stay in samsara to save sentient beings. They can perform miracles and are undoubtedly virtuous. The bodhisattvas can do no wrong.

↳ Are they other:

– Other [specify]: It is hard to call bodhisattvas "gods." In essence, they are only the awakened beings who treat to help every sentient beings.

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

– Yes

Reference: Robert Ford Campany. *The Chinese Dreamscape, 300 BCE-800 CE*. Harvard-Yenching Institute Monograph Series. isbn: 9780674247802.

↳ In waking, everyday life:

– No

↳ In dreams:

– Yes

Notes: When one's call is received by the bodhisattva, the bodhisattva may appear in one's dream to answer the questions or perform the miracle.

↳ In trance possession:

– No

↳ Through divination practices:

– No

↳ Only through religious specialists:

– No

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

↳ Other

– Other [specify]: There are many unique Pure Land/Tantric practices that one can call helps for the bodhisattvas. The recitation of Buddha's name (念佛) is the most common one. There are many other practices, such as the uphold of the scriptures and reciting the dharani. These techniques are practices are available for every common Buddhist practitioner and there is no need of assistance from a specialist.

Reference: Marcus Bingenheimer. *Island of Guanyin*. Oxford University Press. isbn: 9780190456191.

Reference: Yuhang Li. *Becoming Guanyin*. Columbia University Press. isbn: 9780231548731.

Reference: Amitabha. Amitabha's Forty-Eight Vows. isbn: 9781986575003.

Reference: Horn Nils. Modern Amitabha Buddhism. BookRix. isbn: 9783736862579.

Reference: Charles B. Jones. Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824879716.

Are previously human spirits present:

– No

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

– No

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

– No

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

– No

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

– Yes



Is the cult statue visible:

– Yes

Notes: The Upper and Lower Tianzhu Monasteries were renowned for centuries for their bodhisattva statues. There is a sandalwood Guanyin statue which is particularly efficacious in the Upper Tianzhu Monastery.



Is the cult statue hidden:

– No

## Supernatural Interactions



Is supernatural monitoring present:

– No

Notes: Despite many bodhisattvas and Buddhas in the Chinese Buddhist tradition have the supernormal abilities to observe human behaviors, in the most cases, these transcended figures would not monitor sentient beings actively. Instead, they will answer to people's prayers and calls. For the idea of social norms and precepts, it is commonly believed that bodhisattvas and Buddhas cannot intervene the natural laws, such as karma. Thus, all rewards and punishments one get are related to one's own actions and past deeds.

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

– Yes

↳ Do visitors communicate with gods:

– Yes

Notes: You would offer incense, kneel in front of the bodhisattva's statues, and make a wish. Also, you can always meditate upon the image of the Buddha or call the name of the Buddha/bodhisattva.

↳ Do visitors communicate with other supernatural beings:

– No

## Ritual and Performance

### Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

– No

Notes: There is no "sacrifice" in the traditional sense that one wishes to receive returns from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Are there self-sacrifices present:

– No

Are material offerings present:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings mandatory:

– No

Notes: One is encouraged to donate some make or essential items to the sangha and offer incense to the Buddha. However, there is no mandatory requirement.

↳ Are material offerings composed of valuable objects:

– Yes

↳ Are material offerings composed of daily-life objects:

– No

↳ Are material offerings interred at this place (in caches):

– No

↳ Other

– Other [specify]: The most often offering to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is incenses. One burns three sticks of incenses, bowls to all directions, and place the incenses in the burner.

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

– No

Is maintenance of the place performed:

– Yes

Reference: Kenneth Kuan Sheng Ch'en. Chinese Transformation of Buddhism. Princeton University Press. isbn: 9781400872084.

Reference: James A. Benn, Lori Meeks, Associate Professor of Chinese Religion James Robson, James Robson. Buddhist Monasticism in East Asia. Routledge. isbn: 9781134009916.

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Reference: Professor Yifa. The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China. University of Hawaii Press. isbn: 9780824863807.

↳ Is it required:

– Yes

Notes: Among the sangha, there are janitors and other specific roles in charge of cleaning the monastery and maintaining everything in order.

↳ Is there cleansing (for the maintenance):

– Yes

↳ Are there periodic repairs/reconstructions:

– Yes

Notes: It is solely depended on the financial well-being or the amount of received patronage of the monastery. A patron may donate money and material (and labor) for the construction of a new building, repairing the buildings destroyed by fire, flood or any other natural cause, or renovating certain monastic quarters.



Is the maintenance performed by permanent staff:

– Yes

Notes: Yes, most of the maintenance is done by the monastics within the monastery.



Other

– Other [specify]: In modern era, the monasteries have lay volunteers for cleaning and maintaining the sites.

## Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes

Notes: As the home of White-robed Guanyin, the perceived religious efficacies of this Guanyin icon include averting natural disasters and protecting the nation. Since the Song dynasties, the Upper Tianzhu Monastery was a regional pilgrimage center. Commoners would come and pray for their families' well-being. The pilgrimage season centers around Guanyin's birthday—the 19th day of the second month—and typically lasts from the early second month to the early fifth month. The annual pilgrimage to the monastery facilitated the formation of the incense market.

Reference: Emerita Professor of Religion and Ealac Chun-Fang Yu. *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Univ of California Press. isbn: 9780520075672.

Reference: Judith A. Berling. *A Pilgrim in Chinese Culture*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. isbn: 9781597522359.



How strict is pilgrimage:

– optional (common)

– obligatory for some



Are pilgrimages the main reason for construction/establishment of the place:

– No

Notes: No, it was a later development.



Are pilgrimages to this place associated with significant life events:

– No

↳ Does pilgrimage to this place involve following established routes (roads):

– Yes

↳ Are these routes maintained together with the place:

– No

Notes: The prominence of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery continuously attracted pilgrims from Jiangsu 江蘇, Shandong 山東, and other parts of Zhejiang 浙江. In order to get to the monastery, most pilgrims follow the canals. See Zhang Weiran 张伟然. "Mingqing Jiangnan Guanyin Xiangxun de Diyu Xitong 明清江南观音香汛的地域系统." *Dili Yanjiu 地理研究* 38, no. 6 (2019): 1299-1310.

Is this place a venue for feasting:

– No

Are festivals present:

– Yes

↳ Frequency of festivals

– specify: A Buddhist monastery usually celebrate the birthday, the day of leaving household, and the death day of the Buddha and the birthdays of Guanyin bodhisattva. These events are all annual. In totally, a monastery may celebrate more than five festivale annually. Among these, the most important one is the birth of Guanyin, the 19th day of the second month.

↳ Do all members of the society participate in the festival(s):

– All members

Notes: The festivals are usually open to everyone. Regardless of one's social class and religious affiliation, one can surely come to the monasteries and enjoy the day with others.

↳ Are festivals a defining element in the construction/decoration of the place:

– No

↳ On average, how many participants gather at this place:

– number: In the Ming times and during the birthday of Guanyin, records show there were dozes of thousands.

↳ Is feasting part of the festival(s):

– No

## Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

– No

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

– No

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

– Yes

↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:

– Yes

Notes: There are many daily rituals that the monastery performs together, such as the morning and evening recitals.

↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:

– Yes

Notes: Pure Land related rituals are mostly private and individualistic. One may contemplate the image of the Buddha, recite the Buddha's name, and recite the dharani/mantra.

↳ On average how many participants are present in large-scale rituals:

–specify: It depends on the size of the monastery, which varies throughout the time. In the heydays of the Upper Tianzhu Monastery, there was hundreds of monks. The Middle and Lower Tianzhu are smaller and only had dozens of monastics in maximum.

↳ How often do these rituals take place:

–specify: The large-scale rituals are mostly daily. Smaller, private rituals can be taken countless time each day. One may recite the Buddha's name 10000 times per day.

↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:

– No

↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:

– No

↳ Are there synchronic practices:

– No

|

↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:

– No

Notes: Buddhism prohibits the consumption of alcohol.

## Institutions and Scriptures

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### Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

– Yes

↳ Present full time

– Yes

Notes: Buddhist monastics typically live in the monastery and are abided by the precepts.

↳ Present part time

– No

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific sex/gender:

– Yes

Notes: In history, all three monasteries are monasteries. Nowadays, the Upper and Middle Tianzhu Monasteries are monasteries (only male religious specialists) and the Lower Tianzhu is a nunnery (only female religious specialists).

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific ethnicity:

– No

↳ Are the religious specialists of specific class/cast:

– No

↳ Are religious specialists dedicated to the place for life:

– No

Notes: Monastics in pre-modern (as well as contemporary) China usually move between monasteries.

↳ Are the religious specialists stratified in a hierarchical system:

– Yes

Notes: Buddhist monasteries are very hierarchical. There is a range of administrative and common posts prescribed in the monastic codes and each body has a specific role. Many areas are restricted to certain groups of monastics. For example, only abbots and his attendants can freely enter the Abbot Hall. Also, only a small number of monastics are granted admission to the Meditation Hall.

Reference: Jonathan A. Silk. *Managing Monks*. Oxford University Press. isbn: 9780198043812.

Reference: Huaiyu Chen. *The Revival of Buddhist Monasticism in Medieval China*. Peter Lang. isbn: 9780820486246.

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Is access within the space segregated by this hierarchy:

– Yes

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

– Yes

Notes: All monastics shall live in the monastery. There are different monastic quarters for each group of monastics. Most would live in dorms and the high-ranked administrator may have their own room/hall. There are also places for visiting and itinerant monks.

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

– Yes

Notes: Most of the monastics are ordained and trained in the monasteries.

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

– No

Notes: There was no such formal institution in history. However, in the modern time, three monasteries are fully commercialized and the local government takes part of the job of maintenance.

## Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

– Yes

Notes: Sangha is a hierarchial system. And there are administrative posts that are responsible for overseeing the monastery's properties and belongings.

↳ Is a bureaucracy present permanently:

– Yes

↳ Is a bureaucracy present on a temporary or seasonal basis:

– No

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

– Yes

Notes: All three monasteries own their own lands as the source of income (and food). In medieval time, one of the monastic practices of Chinese Buddhism was farming. These lands are usually received donations from local patrons or grants given by the monarchy. Also, many monasteries own mill and other tools of production.

↳ Is this control the primary supporting income of this place:

– Yes

↳ Does this place lease out land:

– No

↳ Does this place lease out tools:

– No

## Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

– No

Notes: The Three Tianzhu are mostly reserved for the monastics. They did and do little help to the local community.

## Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

– No



Are there scriptures associated with this place:

– Yes

↳ Are they written:

– Yes

↳ Are they written at this place:

– Yes

Notes: During the Song dynasties, the abbots of the monasteries, such as Siming Zhili, Ciyun Zunshi, Nanping Fanzhen and Biancai Yuanjing, wrote many treatises and ritual manuals in the monasteries, such as the Repentance Rites for the Rebirth in the Pure Land (Wangsheng jingtu chanyuanyi 往生淨土懺願儀), the Book of Ten Tenets (Shi yishu 十義書). They all commented on various essential Buddhist sutras, such as Lotus Sutra 法華經, Vimalakīrti-sūtra 維摩經, Nirvana Sutra 涅槃經, Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sūtra 金光明經.

↳ Are they oral:

– No

↳ Is there a story associated with the origin and/or construction of this place:

– No

↳ Are there religious specialists in charge of interpreting the scriptures:

– No

↳ Are the scriptures part of the building/place:

– No

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