

# The Evolution and Development of Xixia Temple

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**ABSTRACT.** *Xixia is a very buddhist country in the history of China. Since the founding of the 1038, Buddhism has been established as the state religion. By the time of Renxiao, Buddhism in Xixia began to evolve from Han Buddhism to Tibetan Buddhism. In the early period, there were courtyard-style temples, pagoda-style brick towers and close-eave brick towers, and after the middle period, grotto temples and stupas began to spread widely in Xixia. This change also had an important influence on the development of Han Buddhism.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Xixia, Buddhism, Monasteries, Pagodas*

## 1. Introduction

As early as the Deming period, people in Xixia had a strong belief in Buddhism. Since Yuanhao established the national worship of Buddha, The Xixia people built a large number of monasteries in their territory. In this period, the pagoda of Xixia was deeply influenced by the Buddhism in Central Plain. The pagoda system was still made of brick towers, and the monasteries were mostly courtyard-style, such as Chongtian Pagoda and Anqing Pagoda, which were rebuilt in the Ming and Qing dynasties but retained the original system of Xixia. With the rise of Tibetan Buddhism in the Xixia, the status of the monks in Uyghur Khaganate was increasing. During the Renxiao period, Tibetan Buddhism was promoted to a high position. The pagodas also add some changes to the original pavilions, the Tibetan stupas have begun to rise in the Xixia region, and the pagodas have also begun to appear the cruciform Girdle, which flourished in Tibetan Buddhism. Such as the One Hundred and Eight Stupas, Baisikou Twin Towers north tower group, as well as Hongfo Pagoda.

## 2. In the Early Stage of Xixia Dynasty, Most of the Monasteries Were Courtyard-Style, and Most of the Stupas Were Helouge-Style and Miyan-Style

The early Xixia period can be from the time when Xixia people occupied the Yin,Xia area until the Qanshun period. At this stage, the Xixia Buddhism was mainly influenced by the Han Buddhism in Central Plain, and the Ruling class also asked the Central Plain dynasty to grant Chinese Buddhist Sutras.

Most of the Tang dynasty monasteries to pavilions-based, sit north to the south, the entrance is built The front gate, there are walls or corridors, the temple has a brick tower. According to the *Records of the Pagoda* in the Tang dynasty, the main entrance of the temple was built with a pavilion-style “Sanmen”, means the front gate, and the Front Gate were set up as the most peripheral gate. At present, the front gate can be found in the West Pagoda courtyard of Qinglong Temple in the excavation of Tang dynasty temple ruins. Dunhuang murals can also be seen in a large number of the Tang dynasty style of the front gate architecture. At present, there are Chengtian Temple and Anqing temple in early Xixia. The front gate type of architecture can be seen in Anqing temple, above the title has “Anqing Temple” three Chinese characters. Although the Anqing temple was restored in 1985, it still retains its original appearance as much as possible in imitation of the Tang dynasty. The Chengtian Temple in Yinchuan also has the front gate, although it was destroyed in the earthquake and war in the late Yuan dynasty and early Ming dynasty, and the earthquake in the Qianlong period of the Qing dynasty brought down the temple again, but the style of reconstruction still retains the shape of the early Xixia temple.

Cloisters arose in palaces and common people's houses, and later in temple buildings. In the Tang dynasty, the monastery buildings were surrounded by the courtyard walls. The biography of *Xu Eminent Monk Records* says that the Huichang Temple in the Tang dynasty was characterized by its “magnificent image, magnificent hall, four pillars of the surrounding corridors and heavy cover of the hall”. In the Xixia period, the Chengtian Temple and Anqing temple also had cloister structures. The cloisters now seen were rebuilt in the Ming and Qing dynasties. The early Xixia cloisters may have been built with clay plates, just like the Sui and Tang dynasties, the outer layer is laid with bricks for reinforcement. This cloister serves both as the inner courtyard wall of the temple and as a partition between different functional areas, connecting the courtyard buildings. The walls also provide a platform for artists to paint murals and copy calligraphy to promote Buddhism.

Chinese pagodas have a long history. In ancient times, they were also called “Fu Tu”. The plane structure is mostly octagonal and square, and the number of layers is odd. As a symbol of the Buddhist circle, the pagoda is decorated with numerous Buddhist motifs and is venerated by believers. Early Pagodas were used to store Sariputta in India, and the practice spread to the mainland, where it evolved into covering pagodas and erasing pagodas in the Tibetan Buddhism region, and into pagodas of various shapes in the Central Plain region. There are few Buddhist pagodas in Sui and Tang dynasties. There are four kinds of pagodas: Wooden Pagodas, pavilion-style brick pagodas, close-eave-style brick pagodas and pavilion-style stone pagodas. There were many wooden pagodas in early China, such as the Yongning Pagoda and the Pagoda of Fogong Temple. During the Tang dynasty, due to fire prevention and other reasons, wood was replaced by materials such as brick and stone. Wooden pagodas built in the Xixia dynasty were relatively rare. In the murals in the third cave of the Yulin Grottoes in Anxi, painted with three wooden pagodas. A small wooden pagoda has been unearthed in the tomb of the Liu family in Wuwei. The pavilion-style brick Pagoda of the Tang dynasty is exemplified by the Cien pagoda of the Tang dynasty. Each floor of the pavilion-style

pagoda is a separate floor. The pagoda gradually shrinks from the bottom to the top floor, with staircases leading to the top floor, where Buddhist scriptures are stored. The pavilion-style brick pagoda also influenced the construction of early Xixia Pagodas. The brick pagoda of the Chengtian Temple, built in the first year of the reign of Emperor Liangzuo Tianyou, is a representative of this style of pagodas. The brick pagoda of the Chengtian temple is an octagonal pavilion-style brick pagoda with an ancient simplicity and elegance, as the Royal Temple Pagoda, built from the incense is very strong. During the restoration of the Ming and Qing dynasties, the original still remained as one of the “eight sights” in Yinchuan. In addition, the 11-story octagonal pavilion-style hollow brick pagoda, the Yongshou Pagoda, located in Anqing Temple, Mingsha Township, Zhongning County, was also built during the reign of Liangzuo. After restoration in the Ming dynasty, part of the Ming pagoda style was retained, but also retains a strong Xixia style inherited from the early Xixia style. Located in Helan County, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Hongfo pagoda is a composite structure with octagonal pavilion-style brick pagoda on the lower three floors. In the aftermath of the earthquake, as Xixia's faith was converted to Tibetan Buddhism, the top of the pagoda was also restored to a Tibetan style stupa.

The brick pagoda with close eaves first appeared in the Northern Wei dynasty. According to Gong Guoqiang's research on *Buddhist Temples in Chang 'an City of Sui and Tang dynasties*, pagoda with close eaves was introduced into China from India, and was similar to pagodas which was popular in Hinduism from the 6th to 8th centuries. The earliest known pagoda of the Northern Wei dynasty is the Songyue Pagoda in Mount Song, Henan Province. By the time of emperor Gaozong of Tang dynasty, such pagodas had become popular in India, thanks to an increase in the number of monks who travelled to India to learn buddhism. This kind of pagoda is characterized by the height from bottom to top is gradually reduced, the lower layer is very tall, the overall tower body was shuttle-shaped. The typical brick pagoda with close eaves in the Tang dynasty is the Jianfu Temple Pagoda in Xi'an. The Jianfu temple pagoda is a thirteen-level square pagoda. In addition to Xi'an, Shaanxi Xiangji Temple Pagoda, Fawang Temple Pagoda... a batch of Tang dynasty pagodas. In the Xixia period, the brick pagoda with dense eaves began to be widely built. At present, the earliest brick pagoda with dense eaves in the Xixia period is the Square pagoda of Baisigou Temple. The pagoda is a four-cornered and thirteen-level solid brick pagoda, built in the second year of Da'an (1075) in the Xixia Huizong period, the monastery is either the Cien temple or the Great Longevity Temple. Part of the temple destroyed during the Mongol invasion, the Square pagoda of Baisigou Templepagoda was blown up in 1990 after it withstood several large earthquakes for Millennia due to its crisscrossing masonry. The Baisikou twin towers built in the middle of the Xixia period are also of the style of dense eaves, all of them are thirteen-story brick towers with eight corners and dense eaves, which were completed in or later than Renxiao period. Located in Tongxin County, Ningxia, the Kangji Temple Pagoda is an octagonal, close-eaved, hollow brick pagoda built in the Xixia period. Only the first nine storeys of the pagoda are the original ones of the Xixia period. The upper part was restored after the Ming and Qing dynasties earthquakes. These close-eaved brick towers built by the Xixia dynasty covered the

whole Xixia period and are still in use today. The style of the pagoda is very popular in the Xixia dynasty. The style of the pagoda is very high in standard.

### **3. In the Middle and Late Xixia Period, Tibetan-Style Pagodas Dominated**

From the reign of Renxiao to the surrender of 1227 to Mongolia, The Xixia Pagoda still follows the pattern of the Central Plain, with the construction of large, closely canopied pagodas, including the Baisikou pagodas, while the Tibetan Buddhism was revered as the national religion. Under its influence, the Xixia Pagodas began to appear in the style of the cross-angled girdle-waist tower and the bowl-covered tower. The background can be seen in the relationship between the Xixia and Tibet. When Ali Gu came to power in Tibet, he wanted to marry his daughter to Yimai Liang so that he could improve relations with Xixia. At the beginning of the 1102, Qianshun, the emperor of Xixia married the royal daughter to De Huai in Tibet. The growing relationship between Tibet and the Xixia played an important role in the spread of Tibetan Buddhism. During the period of Renxiao, many monks of the Tibetan Buddhism, including the Kagyu sect and the Sakya sect, travelled to the Xixia to practice Buddhism and other Buddhist activities. During this period, the Xixia established the state religion status of the Tibetan Buddhism in its territory, a large number of monks from Tibet, including Polo hsien-sheng, were granted the status of Master, which was higher than Xixia and Han monks. Because of the religious-political nature of Tibet, these Tibet monks can be used not only to deal with the domestic rebellion, such as Ren Dejing, to strengthen the imperial power, to gain support for themselves, but also to strengthen the religious belief of the local people, easy to rule. This series of measures has enabled the Tibetan Buddhism to integrate more deeply into people's lives.

The Tibetan style stupa is unique. This type of Stupa has a particular meaning in the Tibetan Buddhism. At first, the multi-step base of the covered bowl-shaped Pagoda was called "Leo" . Over the Leo Constellation, there were vaults, shrines and the spire symbolizing the thirteen-layer umbrella wheels. Early in the death of Gautama Buddha, believers built the "eight sacred sites of the Tathagata" to record the eight events of Gautama Buddha's life, and the "eight great monuments of Tower City" to store Gautama Buddha's relics. In the process of spreading Buddhism, these eight stupas have developed into different forms with the passing of time and place.

Buddhist pagodas from India are widely popular in Tibet and have evolved in various styles as the Tibetan Buddhism has developed. These pagodas can be seen in Lhasa, Sannan, Samzhubzê District and Ali. For example, the pagodas in Ganden Monastery, one of the four great monasteries of the Gelug sect of Tibetan Buddhism, The apothecary Silver Towers in the Tsochin Hall in Drepung Monastery, the bronze pagoda in the Netang Domu Hall and the white, red, black and green pagodas in Samye, four of the pagodas have influenced many of the Xixia Pagodas, including the One Hundred and Eight Stupas, in Ejin Banner's Heishui City. When Tibetan Buddhism spread, it also introduced this style of pagodas to the Xixia, which was widely distributed in Helan Mountains and the capital city of Xixia, Heishui City, Ejin Banner and other places. In the Gunzhongkou of Helan Mountains, there is a

covered pagoda of the Xixia period, which is known locally as the “little white pagoda” . The remaining 62 small stupas in the North Tower Group of the twin pagodas of Baisigou and the Hongfo stupas of Helan County are also covered stupas of more than three storeys, which should be added after the 1142 earthquake. The One Hundred and Eight Stupas of the Lotus collection of the Huayan emperor are of four types: covered bowl, Gourd, covered bell and folded belly. In the West, south and north-west of the Heishui City in Ejin Banner, there are also remains of stupas, which include both bell-shaped and round-shaped.

After the reign of Renxiao, the monks of the Tibetan Buddhism had a prominent position in the Xixia. When the 1227 conquered Xixia, they consulted the Guru of the Xixia, the Kagyu Monk Tongguwa Wangqiuzhaxi, for Buddhist teachings. This shows the influence of the Tibetan Buddhism in the late Xixia period and later generations, spreading not only ritual norms, but also the religious construction of Tibetan Buddhism, which spread from the Xixia to the interior.

#### 4. The Distribution of Xixia Monastery

Because of the number and distribution of Xixia, there are no records in the literature. J.B.Shi, shows his opinion in *Brief History of Buddhism in Xixia* (Ningxia People's Publishing House, 1988) , based on archaeological excavations, *Xixia Shu Shi, maps of Xixia Records* and Local Chronicles, 26 Buddhism temples in Xixia have been examined, and according to the location of these temples made a preliminary analysis. Mr. Shi later divided Xixia Buddhism temple into four centers in the *Society of the Xixia* (Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2007): one is Xingqing - Helan Mountains Center. There have the Jietan Temple, the exact location and time of its construction are unknown; Gaotai Temple, which was built in 1047; Chentian Temple, which was built in 1055; Haibao Temple, also known as the Pagoda, the Black Pagoda, commonly known as the north tower, was built in the previous generation; Dadumin Temple: The time and address of its construction are unknown; Baoqing Temple, which appears in the first Sutra of the Xixia Sutras *the Sutra of the Buddha on the Treasure Rain* and *the Sutra of the Buddha on the Chang A-han*, and its relationship with the Heishui City Temple is questionable; Zhoujia Temple, located in the middle of Helan Mountains; Wutaishan Temple, located in the middle of Helan Mountains, appears in the topography of Xixia, which is a part of the Qingliang Temple, mentioned in the *maps of Xixia Records*, in *Sheng Li Yi Hai* , there is a place named Wu Tai Jing Gong; the Cien Monastery, which is located in the Shitaiyanyun Valley, Helan Mountains, the time and exact location of which are unknown; the square pagoda of the Temple of worship, which is located in Helan Mountains; the Pagoda Temple of Tian (Ding) Zhou, which is located in the Pingluo County of Ningxia, but no longer exists; the Kangji Temple, which is located in the Tongxin County of Ningxia, was rebuilt nine storeys below, is still exist; Dafo Temple, which was built in the Yuanhao period; the Anqing Temple, which was built in the Liangzuo period; and the 108 Pagoda Temple, etc.

## 5. Conclusion

During the 190 years of the founding of the state of Xixia, the Buddhism in Xixia developed from Han Buddhism to Tibetan Buddhism, which was closely related to the political relationship between Xixia and Tibet in the period of Renxiao. With the capture of the Xixia, the Tibetan Buddhism also had a far-reaching impact on Mongolia, and further affected the Central Plain region, playing a very important role in the development of Han Buddhism.

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