

---

---

# The ‘*Língjiù Temple Stele*’

*An Annotated Translation of the 1491 CE 《灵鷲寺碑》*

---

---

LUDWIG M BRINCKMANN 路德

2025

---

## The Yúnnán Papers

---

This text is part of a series of translations of historical Chinese texts concerning Yúnnán.

This series does not aim to present any new research but to allow an English-speaking audience to better understand Yúnnán’s history and culture through original texts. The texts are heavily annotated, giving geographical, historical and cultural background information and references to contemporary academic discussions.

The texts in this series are currently in draft and undergoing revision. Those translations that have reached a certain state of maturity can be found on my website at

<https://www.yunnanexplorer.com/translations/>

This document was compiled on 16th May 2025.

The latest version of this document is available at

<https://yunnanexplorer.com/download/nanzhao/lingjiusibei.pdf>

© 2021–2025 Ludwig M Brinckmann  
All rights reserved.

This work is licensed under a Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) and may be only be distributed in unmodified form and with this copyright notice included, see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



This document is work in progress, this copy was compiled on 16th May 2025.

The latest version of this document is available at  
<https://yunnanexplorer.com/download/nanzhao/lingjiusibei.pdf>

Because of the many links provided, this document works best as an electronic copy.

To contact the copyright holder for any queries or comments, please write to:  
[ludwigbrinckmann@gmail.com](mailto:ludwigbrinckmann@gmail.com) or 微信 at ID: yunnanexplorer.

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>About this Translation</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Annotated Translation</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	The Stele Head . . . . .	5
3.2	The Obverse Text . . . . .	5
	Introductory Matter . . . . .	5
	The Dharma . . . . .	6
	Temple History . . . . .	7
	The Yǒnglè Restoration, Land Endowment, and Decline . . . . .	7
	The Chénghuà Restoration . . . . .	8
	Philosophical Reflections . . . . .	8
	Perpetual Covenant . . . . .	8
	Colophon . . . . .	9
<b>4</b>	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>12</b>

## Illustrations

1	The ‘ <i>Língjiù Temple Stele</i> ’ 《灵鷲寺碑》 . . . . .	6
---	--	---



---

## 1 Introduction

The ‘*Língjiù Temple Stele*’ 《灵鷲寺碑》, erected in 1491 CE, stand in Qífèng 起凤 Village in Fèngyǔ 凤羽 *xiāng*, Ēryuán 洱源 county, Yúnnán. Local tradition attributes the temple’s founding to the Nánzhào 南诏 period (737–902 CE), though no extant structures predate the Míng dynasty. The stele records multiple reconstructions, reflecting Yúnnán’s 15th century Buddhist renewal.

## 2 About this Translation

This translation follows Yáng Kūnfēng 杨鲲峰 (2023), pp. 96–97 transcription, which also includes a photograph of the stele’s obverse. I cross-checked it against the transcription in Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017), pp. 16–17.<sup>(1)</sup>

## 3 Annotated Translation

### 3.1 The Stele Head

The rounded stele head features a central two-column inscription flanked by interlaced dragons and cloud-scroll motifs, typical of mid-Míng Buddhist stelae.

灵鷲寺记

| Língjiù Temple Record

### 3.2 The Obverse Text

#### Introductory Matter

On the very left of the stele are two columns of text giving its title and benefactors.

灵鷲寺碑记

聪邑张志材书撰

木匠张山杨资

| ‘*Língjiù Temple Stele*’ Record

Calligraphed and Composed by Zhāng Zhìcái from Cōngyì

Carpenters Zhāng Shān, Yáng Zī

---

/1: 灵鷲寺碑记 ] this text separately at the top of the first, right-most, column.

/2: 聪邑张志材书撰 ] this text separately in the bottom of the first column.

/3: 木匠张山杨资 ] this text separately in the bottom of the second column.

---

<sup>(1)</sup> The image and text of Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017), pp. 16–17 is also available, with some minor differences, online at <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E7%81%B5%E9%B9%AB%E5%AF%BA/65366257>. The differences between the transcriptions are pointed out in the annotations.



Illustration 1:  
The 'Língjiù Temple Stele' 《灵鷲寺碑》  
Source: Yáng Kūnfēng 杨鲲峰 (2023), p. 96.

## The Dharma

The main text then begins with references to the *dharma* 佛法 and its transmission, as well as some Buddhist reflections.

盖闻

佛法出于西天，宗指示于东土。

若言其有，而相不可寻；若言其无，  
而化之者众。

灵鷲寺碑<sup>5</sup>

We have heard it said

The *dharma* originated in the Western Heaven, its essential teachings were revealed in the Eastern Lands.

Should one claim it exists, no form can be found. Should one claim it does not exist, multitudes are transformed by it.

<sup>1</sup>: 盖闻 ] this text separately in the top of the second column.

<sup>r1</sup>: We have heard it said ] A standard phrase to introduce Buddhist narratives, signaling authoritative transmission.

<sup>r2</sup>: Western Heaven ] i.e. India.

<sup>r3</sup>: Eastern Lands ] i.e. China.

自汉唐宋暨我乾，隆盛崇重，天下  
应响，云南远迩莫不顶戴者焉。

From **the Hàn**, through Táng and Sòng up to our dynasty, it has  
flourished in reverence, everything under the heavens responded,  
across Yúnnán, near and far, none fail to honour it with bowed  
heads.

## Temple History

盖灵鹫寺者在凤羽华聪之山麓，历  
代古刹也。  
克复之初，兵寇废坠，已有年矣。

Língjiù Temple is at the foot of Fèngyǔ Huácōng Mountain, a sac-  
red site across dynasties.  
Though once restored, it fell to ruin by soldiers and bandits, this  
has endured for years.

## The Yǒnglè Restoration, Land Endowment, and Decline

During the reign of Emperor Yǒnglè 永乐, ruled 1402–1424 CE, the temple was completely restored  
benefitting from new land purchases that ensured a perennial supply for the resident monks.

永乐壬子年，有故父祖张观宗，李  
山宝，杨寺，杨惠，杨光山，杨药师  
成，李应，王赐，段成，创建殿庑，  
造三世佛像、文殊、普贤、土主迦罗，  
绘画诸佛图形。

In Yǒnglè's *rénzǐ* year, the elders Zhāng Guānzōng, Lǐ Shān-  
bǎo, Yáng Sì, Yáng Huì, Yáng Guāngshān, Yáng Yàoshī Chéng,  
Lǐ Yìng, Wáng Cì, and Duàn Chéng, raised the central hall and  
side chambers, cast statues of the Three Buddhas, of Mañjuśrī,  
Samantabhadra, and the **Earth God Jiāluō** and [commissioned]

灵鹫寺碑 5

有庞主善净，置买田地，俱有丘段，  
助给苾芻之饭粥，以为祝釐之无疆  
矣。

There was the pure Páng Zhǔshàn, who purchased land and fields,  
**with marked boundaries**, providing the monks with rice and gruel,  
for boundless prayers and merit.

今立之已久，椽廼朽腐，风雨飘落，  
寺宇倾颓，致度佛像。

Now, having stood for many year, rafters and **tiles** are rotten  
through, battered by wind and rain batter, the temples lie in ruin,  
exposing the Buddhist images.

灵鹫寺碑 10

[8: 助给苾芻之饭粥] Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017), p. 16 marks two characters here as difficult to read, 「助给苾口之口粥」.  
[10: 廼] Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017), p. 16 marks this as difficult to read, Yáng Kūnfēng 杨鲲峰 (2023), p. 96 reads it as wǎ 瓦,  
i.e. 'tiles', but given the context it could be fǎn 廼, meaning 'broken tiles'.

r6: the Hàn] as Buddhism only arrived in the region during the Táng dynasty, this merely is a rhetorical expression.

r1: In Yǒnglè's *rénzǐ* year] Míng 明 emperor Yǒnglè, ruled 1402–1424 CE ttx = Míng emperor, ruling 1402–1424, however  
the *rénzǐ* year was 1432 CE, long after his death.

r5: Earth God Jiāluō] likely a reference to Mahakala 摩诃迦罗, a locally revered deity.

r8: with marked boundaries] The 'Statues of the Great Míng' 《大明律》 lists a crime of tax evasion by 「田地移坵换段」,  
i.e. 'changing land markers', so I think this term refers to the correctly registered land, ensuring the temple's perpetuity.

r10: tiles] The Chinese character here is difficult to read.

## The Chénghuà Restoration

In 1485 CE, local benefactors resolved to restore the temple, which seems to have been completed six years later.

成化乙巳年，比丘普曇同众信檀那，  
 犹虑先之古刹不可不修。

奋心协力，起盖门殿，塑四天王，修  
 备丹漆，焕然一新。

灵鹫寺碑 5

In the *yǐsì* of Chénghuà, the monk Pǔtán together with devoted benefactors expressed their concern that the ancient temple must not be left unrestored.

They gathered resolve and joined their efforts to built this temple gate, [commissioned] sculptures of the *Four Heavenly Kings* and restored the **vermilion lacquer**, so that looked entirely new.

## Philosophical Reflections

Before the colophon, the text concludes with some philosophical reflections.

盖天下之物，成毁有数，兴废有时，  
 皆不离于人乎。

前之所创者从于父老；今之所成者  
 游于众人。

山川钟秀得其地；佛法完成得其人。

岂非人人而相参成之者哉！

灵鹫寺碑 5

For all things under heaven, completion and decay have their order, rise and fall have their time, but they cannot evade the actions of man.

What was first conceived followed the elders; what is now completed flows from the people.

Mountains and rivers adorn its land, the *dharma* completes the virtue of its people.

How could this have been achieved without out everyone's contribution?

## Perpetual Covenant

惟愿所有常住田地坵段，镌勒于背。

舍之者子孙孙子相承繁盛，夺之者  
 祖代代嗣绝先祖祀。以为不朽之记。

We thus engrave on the back [of this stele] the eternal field markers of its land.

Benefactors' offspring will flourish in unbroken lines, usurpers will see their lines severed from their ancestors. May this serve as an eternal warning.

*l*1: 比丘 ] It is interesting to note, that for the same term totally different characters are used on this stele, above the characters *bìchú* 苾芻 are used.

*l*4: 嗣 ] marked as unreadable in Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017), p. 16.

*r*1: In the *yǐsì* of Chénghuà ] Míng emperor Chénghuà, i.e. 1485 CE.

*r*6: vermilion lacquer ] a hallmark of Míng temple architecture.



## Colophon

The colophone gives the precise date of the stele and the temple's restoration, i.e. 1491 CE.

峇大明弘治辛亥春三月上瀚日

火头杨禄等仝众信立

匠人杨甫刊

Dated **In spring, in the first third of the 3rd month of the *xīnhài* year of the Míng Hóngzhì period.**

Erected by the *Fire Master* Yáng Lù together with fellow devotees.

Craftsman Yáng Fǔkān

---

*r*<sub>1</sub>–2: In spring, in the first third of the 3rd month of the *xīnhài* year of the Míng Hóngzhì period ] i.e. Míng emperor Hóngzhì, 1491 CE.

## 4 Glossary

- Bǐqiū** 比丘: monk, Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit भिक्षु, meaning monk, – see page 8, 10
- bìchú** 苾芻: monk, Buddhist monk, from the Sanskrit term, – see pages 7, 8, 10, *see also* 比丘
- Chénghuà** 成化: , – see page 8
- Dàhēitiān** 大黑天: partly evil deity, originated from the Indian god Shiva, –
- Dà míng** 大明: reign period of Liú Sòng 劉宋 emperor Xiàowǔ, 457–464, – see page 9
- Dà míng Lǜ** 《大明律》: ‘*Statutes of the Great Ming*’, Míng 明 legal text, – see page 7, 10
- Ērhǎi** 洱海: Lake Ērhǎi, highland lake in western Yúnnán with the center of Nánzhào on its western side. It was also called Xīěr 西洱, Xiě Hé, – see page 10
- Ēryuán** 洱源: present-day county north of Ērhǎi, formerly known as 浪穹, – see page 5
- Fǎ** 法: *dharma*, the Buddhist teachings, – see pages 6, 8, 10
- Fèngyǔ** 凤羽: township in present-day Ēryuán, – see page 5, 7
- Hàn Cháo** 汉朝: Hàn dynasty, Chinese dynasty, 202 BCE–220, – see page 10
- Hàn** 汉: Hàn, main ethnic group of China, also name of early dynasty, – see page 7, 10
- Huácōng Shān** 华聪山: Huácōng Mountain, mountain near Língjiù Sì 灵鷲寺, – see page 7, 10
- Huǒtóu** 火头: *Fire Master*, Buddhist title, unclear, – see page 9, 10
- Kāngxī** 康熙: second emperor of the Qīng, 1661–1722, ruled 1662–1722 CE – see page 10
- Kāngxīcídiǎn** 《康熙字典》: ‘*Kāngxī Dictionary*’, dictionary compiled during the rule of Kāngxī 康熙, – see page 10
- Làngkōng** 浪穹: one of the five Zhào, later a county, now Ēryuán, –
- Língjiù Sì** 灵鷲寺: Língjiù Temple, temple near Fèngyǔ 凤羽, – see pages 5, 7, 10
- Língjiùsìbēi** 《灵鷲寺碑》: ‘*Língjiù Temple Stele*’, temple stele, – see page 5, 10
- Liú Sòng** 劉宋: Liú Sòng dynasty, one of the southern dynasties, 420–479, 429–479 CE – see page 10
- Liúsòng Xiàowǔ** 劉宋孝武: Liú Sòng 劉宋 emperor Xiàowǔ, Liú Sòng 劉宋 emperor Xiàowǔ, – see page 10
- Míng Cháo** 明朝: Míng dynasty, Chinese dynasty, 1368–1644, – see page 5, 10
- Míng** 明: Míng, usually referring to the Míng 明, – see pages 5, 8, 10
- Chénghuà** 明成化: Míng emperor Chénghuà, Míng emperor, ruled 1464–1487 CE, ruled 1464–1487 CE – see page 8, 10
- Míng Hóngzhì** 明弘治: Míng emperor Hóngzhì, Míng emperor Hóngzhì, ruled 1488–1505 CE – see page 9, 10
- Móhéjiālō** 摩诃迦罗: Mahakala, a partly evil spirit, also called Dàhēitiān 大黑天, modeled on the Indian god Shiva, – see page 7, 10

- Nánzhào** 南诏: southern *zhào*, regional power with its center on Ērhǎi during the 8th and 9th centuries, – see page 5, 11
- Púsà** 菩萨: bodhisattva, Chinese term for bodhisattvas, – see page 11
- Pǔxián** 普贤: Samantabhadra, Púsà 菩萨, – see page 7, 11
- Qǐfèng** 《起凤》: Qǐfèng 起凤, village near Fèngyǔ 凤羽, – see page 5, 11
- Sì Tiān Wáng** 四天王: *Four Heavenly Kings*, , – see page 8, 11
- Sòng** 宋: Sòng, Chinese dynasty, – see page 7, 11
- Táng Cháo** 唐朝: Táng dynasty, Chinese dynasty, 618–907, – see page 7, 11
- Táng** 唐: Táng, Chinese dynasty contemporary with Nánzhào, 618–907, – see page 7, 11
- Tǔzhǔ** 土主: Earth God, , – see page 11
- Tǔzhǔ Jiāluō** 土主迦罗: Earth God Jiāluō, likely a reference to Móhējīaluō 摩诃迦罗, – see page 7, 11
- Wénshū** 文殊: Mañjuśrī, oldest and most significant bodhisattva, representing wisdom, – see page 7, 11
- Xīěr** 西洱: shorter form of Xīěr Hé, a reference to Ērhǎi, –
- Xīěr Hé** 西洱河: Xīěr River, historic name for Ērhǎi, now in use for the river that flows out of the lake, – see page 11
- Xiàn** 县: county, administrative unit, – see page 5, 11
- xiāng** 乡: *xiāng*, low-level administrative region, usually for rural areas, – see page 5, 11
- Yǒnglè** 永乐: Míng 明 emperor, ruling 1402–1424, ruled 1402–1424 CE – see page 7, 11
- Yúnnán** 云南: at the time of the Táng dynasty the name for the geographic region south of its Jiannan district, – see page 5, 7
- zhào** 诏: *zhào*, term for a local ruler or his realm, – see page 11

## 5 References

Yáng Kūnfēng 杨鲲峰 (2023). 《文化凤羽: 多彩非遗》. Kunming: 云南人民出版社 (cit. on pp. 5–7).  
Zhào Mǐn 赵敏 (2017). 《大理洱源县碑刻辑录》. 昆明: 云南大学出版社 (cit. on pp. 5, 7, 8).

## Index

429–479 年, 10

737–902 年, 5

1432 年, 7-1*n*

1485 年, 8, 8-1*n*

1491 年, 5, 9, 9-1–9-2*n*

Bìchú 苾芻, 7-8R, 8-1*n*

Bǐqiū 比丘, 8-1R

Chénghuà 成化, 8-1R

Dà míng 大明, 9-2R

Dà míng Lǜ 大明律, 7-8*n*

Ěryuán 洱源, 5

Fǎ 法, 6, 6-2R, 8-6R

Fèngyǔ 凤羽, 5, 7-1R

Hàn 汉, 7-6R

Huácōng Shān 华聪山, 7-1R

Huǒtóu 火头, 9-3R

Língjiù Sì 灵鹫寺, 5-1R, 7-1R

Língjiùsìbēi 灵鹫寺碑, 5, 5-1R

Míng 明, 5, 8-6*n*

Míng Cháo 明朝, 5

Míng Chénghuà 明成化, 8-1*n*

Míng Hóngzhì 明弘治, 9-2R, 9-1–9-2*n*

Móhējīaluō 摩诃迦罗, 7-5*n*

Pǔxián 普贤, 7-5R

Qǐfèng 起凤, 5

Sì Tiān Wáng 四天王, 8-5R

Sòng 宋, 7-6R

Táng 唐, 7-6R

Táng Cháo 唐朝, 7-6*n*

Tǔzhǔ Jiāluō 土主迦罗, 7-5R

Wénshū 文殊, 7-4R

Xiāng 乡, 5

Yǒnglè 永乐, 7, 7-1R

Yúnnán 云南, 5, 7-8R