

Historical Inscriptions at Cloud Dwelling Monastery:

Preparations for a CD-ROM

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In more than five centuries the Cloud Dwelling Monastery (Yunjusi 雲居寺) at Fangshan 房山 produced about fifteen thousand stelae on which texts from the Buddhist canon were engraved. To commemorate special events a number of historical inscriptions were written. Twenty-eight of these, dating from 616 to 1999, have been analyzed, transcribed, and translated.

To provide easier access to the material, the texts shall be presented on a CD-ROM. This will pose a number of problems for both conception and design. Three of the most important are:

First, the texts have to appear in different forms, i.e. the user should be able to read the modern Chinese transcription parallel to the rubbing, and the annotated Chinese text parallel to the English translation. One will need to zoom into larger inscriptions or zoom out for a full view. Texts in the parallel windows optionally should be able to follow this movement or zoom.

Second, a lot of scholarship has already been done on these texts. As some of the stelae only exist in fragments or have suffered by erosion, different readings and interpretations exist. The CD-ROM therefore has to provide the means to indicate these variants.

Third, the inscriptions reveal a lot of information about the huge project of cutting the sutras into stone. Many names of persons, for instance, are mentioned in no other known source. The CD-ROM should therefore not only provide full-text search, but also special indices and background information.

My paper will introduce the user interface and discuss solutions for the three problems mentioned above. It will also present the current state of CD-ROM development and provide a first insight into this on-going project.