

A Brief Overview of Buddhist Literary Research on the Leizhou Peninsula

Zhanpeng Yang

School of Literature and Media, Lingnan Normal University, Zhanjiang City, Guangdong Province, 524048, China

Abstract: The Leizhou Peninsula, whose main area corresponds was the current administrative boundaries of Zhanjiang, was historically known as Haikang and later renamed Leizhou during the Tang Dynasty, with the alternative name Leiyang. The scope of Buddhist literary research on the Leizhou Peninsula encompasses various aspects such as Buddhist temples, stele inscriptions, literary works, monks, and writings across the five counties and four districts of the Zhanjiang region. While significant achievements have been made in the study of Buddhist texts on the peninsula within historical and religious studies circles, there remains considerable room for further research. The significance of studying Buddhist texts on the peninsula lies in promoting the development of Buddhism in border regions, fostering the construction of the Chinese national community, and advancing the development of Buddhism in Lingnan.

Keywords: Leizhou Peninsula; Buddhist Texts; Research Review.

1. Introduce

Leizhou Peninsula is one of the "three major peninsulas in China". The peninsula mainly includes two counties and four cities in terms of geography, which evolved from the development of five counties in history. These five counties are Shicheng County(石城县) (now Lianjiang廉江), Suixi County (遂溪县) (including now Zhanjiang City), Wuchuan County (吴川县) (now Wuchuan City), Haikang County (海康县) (now Leizhou City), and Xuwen County (徐闻县) (now Xuwen County). The compilation of Ming and Qing local chronicles was based on these five counties as the geographical scope. The main local chronicles involved in Buddhist literature on the Leizhou Peninsula are: three types of "Leizhou Prefecture Annals"(雷州府志), three types of "Haikang County Annals" (海康县志), and six types of "Wuchuan County Annals"(吴川县志) (Because the two revised versions of the "Meilu Annals"(梅菪志) are unclear and have similar content to the other "Wuchuan County Annals", they were not separately included), and six types of "Shicheng County Annals" (石城县志), and two types of "Suixi County Annals"(遂溪县志), and two types of "Xuwen County Annals" (吴川县志), and nine types of "Guangdong General Annals" (广东通志).

At present, there are few inquiries about the compilation of Buddhist literature in primitive local chronicles. As for related research, it is mostly conducted from the dimensions of history and religion, especially the "Zhanjiang Cultural and Historical Series" (10 volumes in total) and the "Leizhou Historical and Cultural Series" (13 volumes in total), which have conducted in-depth discussions on related issues. However, unfortunately, previous studies did not place enough emphasis on relevant historical materials, leaving ample room for further exploration. On the basis of defining the historical materials of Buddhist literature in Leizhou Peninsula, this article sorts out the Buddhist historical materials and related research seen in local chronicles, reveals the research value, and hopes to attract the attention of the academic community.

2. Definition of Buddhist Texts on the Leizhou Peninsula

The earliest name for Leizhou was Haikang, meaning "a blessed land by the sea that brings good fortune". Regarding this point, the preface to Volume 8 of *the Revised History of Haikang County* (重修海康县志) by Liu Bangbing (刘邦柄) states:

Hai Kang County was the site of Nanhe Prefecture in ancient times, located at the southernmost tip of mainland China. It spans approximately 300 to 400 li from north to south. When viewing the Beidou Star from this location, it appears very low in the sky, forming an angle of approximately 20 degrees with the horizon. This area is a prominent peninsula, surrounded by the sea on three sides, resembling a tongue extending into the water. The tides rise and fall, the sun rises and sets, and the land is blessed with natural beauty and abundant resources, making it the crown jewel of coastal regions. Among the four counties in the eastern Guangdong region named after the sea, only Haikang County is named with the character "Kang". "Kang" means "peace and prosperity," signifying that this coastal area brings good fortune and well-being to its inhabitants. (Liu Bangbing & Chen Changqi.2007)

This leads to another question: why is this place called the "Southern Frontier"? It is because, from a geographical perspective, it is located between the constellations of Bingwu(丙午), which corresponds to the Shihua hexagram (噬嗑卦), with Zhen (震卦) below and Li (离卦) above, symbolizing governance through criminal law, as well as the gathering of goods from all over the world for trade. Additionally, since Zhen below and Li above form the image of thunder and fire, it was once called Donghe Prefecture (东合州) and Leizhou. According to the same book:

Haitang is the southernmost point of the eastern

Guangdong region, located between Bingwu. In terms of the hexagram, it corresponds to the Shike hexagram, which represents harmony and unity. The hexagram consists of Zhen below and Li above. The upper trigram represents thunder; and when thunder combines with fire, it brings abundance; when fire combines with thunder, it brings destruction. The greater the destruction, the greater the gain.” (Liu Bangbing & Chen Changqi.2007)

This serves as evidence.

The name Donghe Prefecture (东合州) was only used for seven years before it was changed by the prefect of the prefecture, Chen Wenyu (陈文玉). In the eighth year of the Zhenguan era (637), Chen submitted a memorial to the court requesting that Donghe Prefecture be renamed Leizhou. From then on, the name “Leizhou” was adopted by subsequent dynasties without change. After Donghe Prefecture was renamed Leizhou, from the eighth year of the Zhenguan era (634) to the second year of the Republic of China (1913), spanning 1,279 years, through the Tang (唐), Five Dynasties (五代), Song (宋), Yuan (元), Ming (明), and Qing (清) dynasties, the prefecture was established and administered. Except for the first year of the Ganxing (干亨) era(917) of the Southern Han Dynasty (南汉), when it was renamed “Guhe Prefecture (古合州)”, it has consistently been known as “Leizhou”. During the Tang Dynasty, it was known as “Leizhou”; during the Song Dynasty, it was established as “Leizhou Jun” (雷州郡); during the Yuan Dynasty, it was renamed “Leizhou Lu” (雷州路); during the Ming Dynasty, it was known as “Leizhou Fu” (雷州府); and from the Qing Dynasty to the second year (1913) of the Republic of China (民国), it continued to be called “Leizhou Fu” following the Ming Dynasty's system.

Leiyang (雷阳) is an alternative name for the Leizhou Peninsula. As far as is currently known, the earliest appearance of “Leiyang” in local annals is in Li Xian(李贤)'s *Da Ming Yitong Zhi* (大明一统志), Volume 82, “Guangdong Provincial Administration” (广东布政司) which states, “The prefecture is located on the north bank of the Lei River (雷水), hence the name.” (Li Xian of Ming dynasties.1990)Subsequently, both outsiders and locals referred to the Lei Zhou Prefecture as Lei Yang in their poetry and prose. (Liu Gucheng.2012).Therefore, the Lei Zhou Peninsula was formerly known as Hai Kang, and after the Tang Dynasty, it was called Lei Zhou, with Lei Yang being an alternative name for Lei Zhou. As for Dong He Zhou, it existed for such a short time that it can almost be ignored.

The current Leizhou Peninsula corresponds geographically to the area administered by Zhanjiang (湛江), encompassing five counties and four districts. The scope of Buddhist textual materials from the Leizhou Peninsula should include all Buddhist-related documents from the five counties and four districts, such as monks, temples, steles inscription, and literary works.

3. Overview of Buddhist Historical Materials in Local Chronicles

The primary sources of Buddhist literature from the Leizhou Peninsula are primarily found in various local chronicles, which can be divided into two major time periods:

the ancient period and the modern period. We will first discuss the ancient period. The local gazetteers containing Buddhist historical materials from the ancient period of the Leizhou Peninsula are primarily distributed in the following works: Volume 11 “Rituals and Sacrifices”, and Volume 20 “Literary Works”, and Volume 21 “Ancient Sites”, and Volume 22 “External Records” in Leizhou Prefecture Gazetteer ([Ming Dynasty] Ou Yang Bao.1614); Volume 5 “Rituals and Sacrifices Gazetteer”, and Volume 10 “Literary Works Gazetteer”, “Ancient Sites Gazetteer” and “External Gazetteer” in Leizhou Prefecture Gazetteer ([Ming Dynasty]Wu Shengzao & Hong Panshu: 1672); Volume 4“Construction Gazetteer”, and Volume 8“Altar and Temple Gazetteer”, and Volume 18“Literary Works Gazetteer”, and Volume 19“Ancient Sites Gazetteer”, and Volume 20“Immortals Gazetteer” in “Leizhou Prefecture Gazetteer”. ([Qing Dynasty] Lei Xuehai & Chen Changqi: 1811). Volume 1, “Administrative Division Gazetteer”, Volume 2, “Sacrificial Rites Gazetteer”, Volume 3, “Literary Works Gazetteer” in Haikang County Gazetteer. ([Qing Dynasty] Zheng Junxiu & Song Shaochi: 1687). Volume 2, “Administrative Division Annals” and “Ancient Sites Annals,” and Volume 8, “Literary Works Annals” in “Haikang County Annals”. ([Qing Dynasty] Liu Bangbing & Chen Changqi: 1812). Volume 6 “Biographies of the Departed”, and Volume 21“Biographies of the Departed”, and Volumes 25–38 “Literary Works”in“Hai Kang County Continuation Annals”. ([Republic of China] Liang Chengjiu & Chen Jingfen : 1938). Volume 1“Wangzhi Zhi”, Volume 2 “Wenjiao Zhi”, Volume 4“Yiwenzhi” in “Wuchuan County Gazetteer”. ([Qing Dynasty] Huang Ruoxiang & Wu Shiwang: 1669, 1672). Volume 1 “Wangzhi Zhi”, and Volume 2“Wenjiao Zhi”, and Volume 4 “Yiwenzhi” in “Wuchuan County Annals”. ([Qing Dynasty] Li Qiusui:1687). Volume 4“Temple Annals”, and Volume 10 “Literary Works” in “Wu Chuan County Annals”. [[Qing] Sheng Xizuo & Zhang Guolu comp: 1731). Volume 4“Temple Annals”, and Volume 10“Literary Works Annals” in “Wuchuan County Annals”. ([Qing Dynasty] Shen Jun: 1785). Volume 4“Temples and Shrines”and Volume 10“Literature and Arts”in“Wu County Gazetteer”. [[Qing Dynasty] Li Gao Kui & Ye Zai Wen: 1825). Volume 2“Annals of Establishment”, and Volume 6“Annals of Records”in “Wuchuan County Annals”.([Qing Dynasty] Mao Changshan &Chen Lanbin:1888). lower volume “Literary Garden”, and “Miscellaneous Records” in “The Gazetteer of Shicheng County” [[Qing Dynasty] Liang Zhidong & Li Min Duo: 1672].lower volume, “Literary Garden” and “Miscellaneous Records”in“Shi Cheng County Annals” [[Qing Dynasty] Zhou Zongchen & Han Luo :1686) .Volume 2“Temples and Monasteries”, and Volume 3“Immortals”, and Volume 4“Poetry”, and Volume 5“Stele Inscriptions”, etc. of the “Shi Cheng County Annals” [[Qing Dynasty] Sun Shengzu: 1712).Volume 3 “Administrative Division Annals”, and Volume 7“Immortality”, and Volume 8“Literary Arts Annals” etc. of the “Shi Cheng County Annals”. ([Qing Dynasty] Zhang Daikai: 1820). Volume 3“Temples and Shrines”, and Volume 7“Biographies”, and Volume 8“Literature and Arts”,etc.of the Shicheng County Annals. ([Qing Dynasty] Jiang Tinggui & Chen Lanbin: 1892). Volume 3“Administrative Division Annals”, and Volume 7 “Biographical Annals”, and Volume 8 “Literary Works Annals” etc. in“Shi Cheng County Annals”.([Republic of

China] Zhong Xizhuo & Jiang Xun: 1931). Volume 2“Rituals and Sacrifices Annals”, and Volume 4“Arts and Literature Annals”etc. In “Sui Xi County Annals”([Qing Dynasty] Song Guoyong & Hong Panshu: 1687).Volume 4“Temples and Shrines”, and Volume 12“Literature and Art”In“Suixi County Annals”([Qing Dynasty] Yu Bingrong & Zhu Dehua: 1849, 1895). In “Xuwen County Annals (unbound)”.([Qing Dynasty] Yan Rui & Wu Ping: 1687). Qing Dynasty Sun Yi's “Xuwen County Annals”. ([Qing Dynasty] Sun Yi: 1698). Volume 6 “Rituals and Sacrifices”, and Volume 13 “Biographies”, and Volume 15 “Literature and Arts”, etc. In “Xuwen County Annals”([Qing Dynasty] Wang Fuzhi & Luo Kelang: 1911).

Additionally, Buddhist texts from the Leizhou Peninsula are also distributed throughout the various editions of the“Guangdong Provincial Gazetteer”(广东通志). According to the“Joint Catalog of Chinese Local Gazetteers” (the Beijing Astronomical Observatory of the Chinese Academy of Sciences: 1985) stated: the Guangdong General Gazetteer was revised nine times, such as the Guangdong General Gazetteer Draft compiled by Dai Jing and Zhang Yue of the Ming Dynasty [[Ming Dynasty] Dai Jing & Zhang Yue: 1535), “the Guangdong Tongzhi”compiled by Huang Zuo of the Ming Dynasty ([Ming] Huang Zuo: 1612), “the Guangdong Tongzhi” compiled by Guo Fei of the Ming Dynasty [[Ming] Guo Fei: 1602), “the Yue Da Ji” [[Ming Dynasty] Guo Fei: 1573–1620), The Guangdong General Gazetteer ([Qing Dynasty] Quan Guangzu : 1697), “The Guangdong Tongzhi” [Hao Yulin and Lu Zengyu: 1731), “The Guangdong General Gazetteer”(Zou Lu & Wen Tingjing: 1935), the Continuation of the Guangdong General Gazetteer (Zhu Qinglan & Liang Jingfen: 1916), the Guangdong General Gazetteer Draft ([Qing Dynasty] Ruan Yuan & Chen Changqi: 1822).

Furthermore, in its volumes (Persons), and volumes (Poetry, Prose, and Inscriptions), and volumes (Temples and Monasteries) from Compilation of Buddhist and Taoist Documents of the recently published Chinese Local Gazetteers includes Buddhist documents from the Leizhou Peninsula (He Jianming: 2012). However, upon examining the various local chronicle editions cited by the author, it is evident that they are based on local chronicles from the Leizhou Peninsula, and the collected materials are not particularly comprehensive. Finally, since the Leizhou Peninsula was once part of Hepu(合浦) and Wuchuan (吴川) was once part of the Gaozhou Prefecture (高州府), the author also reviewed the various editions of the Hepu County Chronicle and the Gaozhou Prefecture Chronicle. The Buddhist-related materials in these documents include monks, poetry and prose, stele inscriptions, and temples and monasteries. Overall, the Buddhist-related materials in these local gazetteers are scattered and disorganized, and have not been systematically compiled or studied.

4. Related Research and Existing Issues

Modern people have compiled many local chronicles, which also discuss Buddhism. The Zhanjiang Local Chronicle Compilation Committee published *Zhanjiang Chronicle*, which mainly discusses the introduction and development of Buddhism in Zhanjiang and its counties and cities, as well as temples, institutions, rituals, festivals, social activities, and Buddhist associations in the city and its counties. (Zhanjiang

City Local Chronicles Compilation Committee (ed.): 2004) , an appendix titled “List of Temples Opened to the Public in 1990” is also included. The Buddhist section of *The Zhanjiang City Annals (1979-2000)* compiled by the Zhanjiang City Annals Compilation Committee only includes Buddhist organizations and Buddhist activities, participation in public welfare undertakings, and foreign exchange activities, with an appendix titled “List of Buddhist Temples in Zhanjiang City in 2000”. (Zhanjiang City Local Chronicles Compilation Committee: 2013) .Due to the specific timeframe of the Buddhist research, the amount of material is very limited. As for *Zhanjiang Two Thousand Years* (the Zhanjiang City Annals Editorial Office: 1991) and *Overview of Zhanjiang*(the Zhanjiang Local Chronicles Office: 1991), and other works contain almost no records of Buddhism in Zhanjiang. Among the numerous local chronicles of the Leizhou Peninsula, *The Chronicles of Haikang County* compiled by the Leizhou City Local Chronicles Compilation Committee is one of the more substantial works. In terms of content, the chronicle covers the period from 1912 to 1994, when Haikang County was abolished and Leizhou City was established. The section on Buddhism focuses on the spread of Buddhism, major temples, and Buddhist activities, with an appendix titled “1994 Haikang County Temple List”. (the Leizhou City Local Chronicles Compilation Committee: 2005). Additionally, *Lianjiang County Chronicles* (the Lianjiang City Local Chronicles Compilation Committee: 1995)and *The Gazetteer of Wuchuan County (1979-2000)*(the Wuchuan City Local Gazetteer Compilation Committee: 2014), and *The Gazetteer of Wuchuan County* (the Wuchuan City Local Gazetteer Compilation Committee: 2001), and *Suixi County Annals (1989–2005)*(the Suixi County Local Annals Compilation Committee: 2013), and *Suixi County Annals* (the Suixi County Local Annals Compilation Committee: 2003). *Xuwen County Annals* (the Xuwen County Local Annals Compilation Committee: 2000). all provide introductions to the introduction and development of Buddhism in each county, major temples, and Buddhist activities. Characteristics of modern local chronicles in their accounts of Buddhism: (1)They emphasize macro-level research, focusing on broad overviews rather than historical details. (2) In terms of source materials, they select a specific time period and primarily rely on existing modern documents, or even field interviews, with little reference to other sources, making it difficult for subsequent researchers to trace the origins. (3)in terms of content, they primarily focus on contemporary Buddhist conditions, including temples, associations, and activities. It can be said that contemporary people are writing about contemporary matters.

Related in-depth research primarily includes the *Zhanjiang History and Culture Series* (10 volumes) edited by Deng Biquan, which includes“Religious Culture”. This book has four chapters, with the first chapter discussing Buddhist culture, demonstrating the importance of Buddhist culture in the book. Since the book is titled “Buddhist Culture”, its scope is quite broad, encompassing all aspects of Buddhism in Zhanjiang. When discussing the development and history of Buddhism in Zhanjiang, the author argues that Buddhism first entered Zhanjiang during the Sui and Tang Dynasties (隋唐) and that the Kaiyuan Temple (开元寺) was the earliest monastery on the Leizhou Peninsula. The most distinctive feature of the book when discussing Buddhist

culture is its exploration of Buddhism's influence on Zhanjiang's traditional culture and folk customs, such as the unique Leizhou Buddhist music, Buddhism's impact on opera culture, the distinctive temple couplets and Buddhist architectural art, Buddhism's influence on folk customs—particularly funeral rituals—and the interactions and influences between Leizhou monks and local literati as well as exiled literati. The book also introduces Buddhist temple legends and anecdotes, contemporary renowned monks and nuns, and famous Buddhist sites and temples in Zhanjiang. (Deng Biquan & Ke Jianxiang: 2013. Note: The *Zhanjiang Cultural History Series* includes ten volumes: *Leizhou Culture, Folklore Culture, Artist Culture, Local Sage Culture, Architectural Culture, Expatriate Culture, Official Culture, Religious Culture, Imperial Examination Culture, and Place Name Culture*.)

Overall, this book is primarily introductory and promotional in nature, focusing more on broad-based research than on specific points or lines of inquiry. Additionally, *The Leizhou History and Culture Series* (13 volumes in total) includes a volume titled *Leizhou History Talks*, which dedicates Chapter 7 to a detailed discussion of the history of Buddhism on the Leizhou Peninsula (its origins, rise, prosperity, peak, and decline), the characteristics of Buddhism in Leizhou, and the contributions of Buddhism to the development of Leizhou. It particularly discusses the influence of Fujian Buddhism on Leizhou Buddhism and the penetration of the “Two Su” (二苏) literary Zen into the region, offering fresh insights. (Leizhou History and Culture Series Editorial Committee: 2013. Note: The *Leizhou History and Culture Series* includes *Leizhou Folk Songs, Leizhou Folk Customs, Leizhou Stone Dogs, Leizhou Eminent Persons, Leizhou History Talks, Leizhou Arts, Leizhou Scenic Spots, Leizhou Anecdotes, Leizhou Stele Inscriptions, Leizhou People and Leizhou Gods, Leizhou Ink Art, Lei Zhou Couplets, and Lei Zhou Dialect*, totaling 13 volumes). From a broader perspective, these discussions outline the general contours of Buddhism in Lei Zhou, but many lack in-depth analysis and documentary evidence. Additionally, *The General History of Guangdong* and *A Brief History of Religion in Guangdong* also cover little about Buddhism on the Lei Zhou Peninsula. As far as I can see, these two series are the most comprehensive on the cultural history of the Lei Zhou Peninsula.

Some related articles discuss the origins and resources of Buddhism on the Leizhou Peninsula, such as Wu Jianhua's *A Brief Account of Buddhism on the Leizhou Peninsula* which primarily analyzes the earliest time of Buddhism's introduction to the Leizhou Peninsula and the underlying reasons for its prevalence there from a historical perspective. (Wu Jianhua: 2003). Yu Weiqing's *Buddhist Cultural Resources in Zhanjiang* first outlines the history of the spread of Buddhism in Zhanjiang before focusing on the Buddhist cultural resources of Zhanjiang, arguing that Zhanjiang's Buddhist culture integrates natural resources, humanistic resources, and patriotic resources. (Yu Weiqing: 2015). Hu Qiaoli's *A Brief Account of Deqing Lei Zhou's Achievements* describes Deqing (德清) Lei Zhou's friendships, preaching, and writings. (Hu Qiaoli: 2003). Li Linyou's *Hai Rui and Tianning Ancient Temple* primarily narrates the connection between Hai Rui (海瑞) and Tianning Temple (天宁寺). (Li Linyou: 2015). Lu Mingjia's *A Study of Li Gang's Poems Written in Leizhou* (Lu Mingjia: 2018) provides an analysis of

the poems written by Li Gang during his time in Leizhou.

5. Research Value and Significance

The characteristics of Buddhist literature on the Leizhou Peninsula are specifically manifested in: (1) Unique temple architecture. For example, the Great Hall of the Buddha at Lengyan Temple is particularly remarkable, as it is the only Great Hall of the Buddha in the world built within natural volcanic rock. (2) Rich cultural resources. The calligraphy relics of Leizhou's cultural luminaries preserved at Tianning Temple serve as an important research base for the study of Leizhou Peninsula's cultural heritage. (3) Educational functions. The Leizhou Peninsula was developed relatively late and lagged behind culturally, so temples became important bases for Confucian education and cultural dissemination. (4) Leizhou Buddhist music is nearly extinct, and preserving this intangible cultural heritage is a pressing issue. Therefore, researching, protecting, and transmitting Leizhou Buddhist music is an urgent matter that requires attention.

The aforementioned research findings are undoubtedly pioneering, yet they fall short in the following aspects: (1) Insufficient utilization of ancient local annals and extant literary sources. (2) Lack of systematic and specialized argumentative research. (3) Limited diversity in research methods, with room for further expansion in both breadth and depth. Additionally, no specialized research has been conducted to meticulously categorize the basic types of Buddhist literary sources on the peninsula. Therefore, Organizing Buddhist literature on the peninsula has become a necessity for research. Its value and significance lie in:

5.1. Promoting the development of Buddhism in Guangdong's Nanhai region and border areas. The Leizhou Peninsula, surrounded by sea on three sides, serves as a strategic gateway controlling the Qiongzhou Strait (琼州海峡) and has historically been a vital transportation hub, played a pivotal role in the political, economic, and cultural spheres of successive dynasties. Additionally, the region is located at the southernmost tip of the Chinese mainland, and served as an important center for Buddhist development. It borders Jiaozhi (交趾) (where Yinglou (赢楼) was once one of China's three major Buddhist centers) and Houpu (合浦), and maintains frequent interactions with Guangzhou (广州) and Hong Kong/Macao (香港) to the east. Based on this, the examination of Buddhist texts from the Leizhou Peninsula not only allows for further investigation into the spatial and temporal distribution and patterns of Buddhist texts along the South China Sea coast but also provides insights into the dissemination of Buddhism among different social strata in the local society and its underlying causes, thereby offers a glimpse into how Buddhism gradually spread into China through the maritime Silk Road.

5.2. It is an important historical source for studying regional folk beliefs since the Song Dynasty. Through investigation and research, the creators of Buddhist texts on the Leizhou Peninsula primarily included four groups: exiled literati, relocated officials, local scholars, and monks. Taking the creation of literary texts as an example, the Song Dynasty was a period of unprecedented cultural prosperity in Chinese history, with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism intertwining, and literati embracing Buddhism becoming a social trend. A group of literati who had migrated south, such

as Su Shi (苏轼), Su Zhe (苏辙), and Kou Zhun (寇准), used Buddhist literary works to either describe local customs, express their insights into Buddhist teachings, or vent the immense loneliness caused by being far from the imperial court. More often, these works reflected a sense of contemplation and detachment toward life and existence. Therefore, studying Buddhist literary works from the peninsula is an important historical source for understanding the mindset of literati in the region at the time. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the construction of pagodas became a widespread trend, with enthusiastic participation from all social classes, leading to the proliferation of pagoda inscriptions. These inscriptions clearly reveal the spiritual beliefs of officials, literati, and the general public during this period, particularly their emphasis on pagoda construction and their various aspirations regarding local culture, the imperial examination system, politics, and education. These records serve as valuable resources for examining the social customs of the time. As for the interactions and exchanges between monks and laypeople during that period, they can also be glimpsed through the literary and artistic documents of the time. The strong momentum of Buddhism in local society during the Ming and Qing dynasties represents a case study and microcosm of the development of Buddhist history, as well as the result of cultural exchange and mutual learning. Since the Song Dynasty, local scholars and monks have also preserved varying amounts of Buddhist literary works in their collections or local annals. These documents serve as important historical sources for interpreting the regionalization process of Buddhism and the faith of both the literati and the common people.

5.3. Promoting cultural and social development along the coastal economic belt and enhancing cultural integration with Fujian (福建), Chaozhou (潮州), and Hainan (海南). Since the Qin and Han Dynasties (秦汉), the Leizhou Peninsula in Guangdong has been an important port for north-south trade, holding significant strategic importance. Today, Zhanjiang has become a core city in the coastal economic belt and a sub-provincial center city in Guangdong Province. Studying local Buddhist texts can promote the dissemination of local history and culture, empower Zhanjiang's tourism development, and enhance the city's cultural depth and brand competitiveness. Additionally, due to factors such as war, immigration, exile, and the spread of Buddhism—particularly the influence of Putian, Fujian, on the cultures of Chaozhou and the Leizhou Peninsula, as well as the cultural connections between the Leizhou Peninsula and Hainan Island—studying Buddhist texts from the Leizhou Peninsula has become an important method for exploring historical cultural exchanges and integration between regional cultures.

6. Conclusion

New materials can significantly advance academic progress. Currently, ancient local annals are an important source of documents in the study of Buddhist texts on the Leizhou Peninsula, possessing high historical value. Utilizing ancient local annals can elevate local Buddhist studies to a higher level. However, in the process of utilizing local historical materials, issues such as contradictions, ambiguities, lack of sources, and subjective speculation may arise. Therefore, it is necessary to cross-reference and verify with other materials, and employ scientific research methods to

promote the healthy development of Buddhist studies on the peninsula.

The most significant issue in current research on Buddhism on the peninsula is the core question of “how to build a Chinese national community”. This core question can be explored through three sub-questions: (1) How did Buddhism interact and exchange with local beliefs such as the worship of the Thunder God (雷神), feng shui (风水) beliefs, the worship of Linghui Hou (灵惠侯), and the worship of the Dragon God (龙). (2) How did Buddhism integrate and develop with Confucianism and Daoism? (3) How Buddhism penetrated different social strata, such as the bureaucratic class, the migrant class, the gentry class, and the general populace. This demonstrates Buddhism's value in cultural integration, social stratum integration, ethnic integration, and internal-external exchange, as well as its unique value and significance in building the Chinese national community.

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