

# HOUSED IN TRADITION: Living Heritage at Shanghai's Jade Buddha Temple

*In this episode of "Housed in Tradition," Zen Master Miaoci discusses the temple's ongoing renovations and its role in both spiritual practice and tourism.*

SHANGHAI, CHINA, December 5, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Jade Buddha Temple](#) is not only a revered Buddhist site but also a cultural treasure that seamlessly blends history with modern-day needs. Established in 1882, the temple is home to two precious Jade Buddhas, including the iconic Sitting Jade Buddha that has become a symbol of the temple's enduring heritage.

While the temple has long attracted visitors, it also serves as an active monastery, where monks live, study, and conduct religious ceremonies. Zen Master Miaoci was sent to the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 2014, which made him highly proficient at playing traditional percussion instruments. But he is not the only monk to have been granted the opportunity to study outside the monastery.

Back in 1882, Master Huigen from Mount Putuo, one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Buddhism in China, made a pilgrimage to an area that is now located inside Myanmar. From his journey to the West, the master brought back five jade Buddhas. On the way to Mount Putuo, Master Huigen passed through Shanghai. He left two of them there – one is a sitting Buddha and the other a reclining Buddha - and had a temple built with donated funds.

In 1918, the Jade Buddhas were moved to their present location.

Miaoci said, "We humans experience birth, aging, sickness and death. In fact, the same applies to buildings. These are the laws of nature. It's Providence. As a popular attraction, many tourists and worshippers come and visit the temple every day, and you see the crowds today. So for the temple, safety is the most important issue."

To protect the century-old [complex](#) and enable the main square to accommodate the growing number of visitors, the temple launched its biggest renovation in history in 2014. And the most breathtaking relocation of this 2,000-ton temple started on September 2nd, 2017. They managed to cover three centimeters each minute using special rails. It took daring and professional engineers 15 days to complete the painstaking journey of just over 30 meters northwards.

The Heavenly King Hall today, the statues inside and the dignity of the Buddhas are kept exactly

the same as they were a hundred years ago. The relocation was extremely difficult.

“Later, some said the difficulty level was akin to having a very precious and age-old table, full of treasures on top. And then you have to push this table 30 meters backwards,” Miaoci said.

The temple has been adhering to the Humanistic Buddhism advanced by the late Master Taixu in the 1930s. The purpose is to bring Buddhism back into the human world. Or in other words, remind people that humanity and opportunity matter.

“In fact, Buddhism is profound on many levels. But ordinary people don’t necessarily need Dharma to deal with their pains or troubles. Perhaps it’s all about timing. That’s why Master Taixu advocated the spirit of Humanistic Buddhism,” Miaoci said. “Buddhism is about serving people, so it should be people-oriented.”

Though it's the rainy season in Shanghai, downpours like this are rare. I take a walk inside the complex, built in the style of the Song Dynasty. And I think about how humans build houses to shelter themselves. [Architecture](#) only reflects its value when housing people. Without such a connection, it may be little more than a pile of building materials.

The Vibe

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