



JIANAMANI VISITOR CENTER: VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN TRADITIONAL STONE MASONRY STYLE

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Jianamani Visitor Center: Vernacular Architecture in Traditional
Stone Masonry Style

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Jianamani Visitor Center is a public visitor and community centre on historical Tibetan Buddhist religious site, which includes a local post office, clinic, public toilets, and research archive. The building, with a simple geometry and vernacular architecture in traditional stone masonry style, presents a roof terrace and observation decks made of wood and recycled earthquake debris.



Site view including Jianamani and Jianamani Visitor Center.

Yushu is a highly regarded religious center to Tibetans. Its significance comes mainly from Jiana Mani, the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist stone pile. With a history of over three centuries, Jiana Mani currently bears more than 250 million pieces of Mani stone, and continues to grow with new

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pieces added daily by pilgrims. To the Yushu community, no site compares to Jiana Mani. After the 2010 earthquake, Yushu-ers immediately set off to repair Jiana Mani, long before they started repairing their own houses.

The Jianamani Visitor Center is connected with the local Tibetan history through both time and space, by creating explicit links to the historic site. Following local construction techniques, the stonemasonry was done by indigenous masons, using the same kind of rocks from which Mani stones are carved. In Yushu, more than 40 per cent of the population lives from the carving of Mani stones.



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The Jianamani Visitor Center consists of a square building with a courtyard in the center, and 11 observation decks surrounding it. The central square unit features the typical Tibetan layout. The railings around the roof terrace and the observation decks are made of wood, with some elements recycled from earthquake debris. The Center serves both visitors and the local community. To visitors, it provides information about Jiana Mani and its history, complemented by viewing the surrounding historical sites. To Yushuers, it provides a post office, a clinic, public toilets, and a small research archive.

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November religious celebration.

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Local pilgrims walking around the building.

In addition to the typical programmes of a modern visitor center, this project features spaces that encourage exchange and interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds: shops are operated by local Tibetans and outside investors; storytelling inside the visitor center which allow the native historians to tell the story of Jiana Mani; the corridor around the perimeter of the building forms a perfect circulation space for the Tibetans for their daily walk-round and prayers; the central courtyard offers an intimate backdrop for community activities; and above all, there is a 24-hour roof terrace enables the Tibetans to mingle with visitors of diverse backgrounds.

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Building's roof observation deck.

By blurring the edge between building and landscape facility, the building blends with the surrounding environment. The simple geometry of the building is contemporary, while its materiality is vernacular: the traditional stonemasonry and heating and ventilation strategies adopt proven local technologies.

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Meeting room, winter.

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Local monks servicing during the November religious celebration.

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