

## Xuran Lama Temple and Library

Ganzi, China 2012 - 2017

The site for Lama Temple lies in idyllic Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan. Echoing picturesque mountains of its surroundings, the concept captures sacred spirit of its location to create a solemn abode articulated around a principle of light. The site comprises an existing monastery in the north; the new temple is proposed in the west, overlooking eastern Jinsha River. A paved walkway from the east gate of the site delineates an axis towards Lama Temple and Library establishing a visual sequence. The first impression of the building is that of having no defined boundaries. Embedded in the ground and surrounded by a placid water pool, a meditation platform appears floating, creating a sense of lightness.

A rammed earth finished mass of the building is elevated and supported on eight columns along sides, delivering the platform from borders. The modest open entrance signifies the liberty of choosing this religion. An overhang suppresses the visual axis while a domed ceiling draws spatial force towards the core. The distinct edge condition of the low overhang complemented by peripheral ground datum creates a visual threshold that transfers a person to reticent interiors. Organized with staggering levels around a continuous void, the interiors is conceived with central focus. Natural light from the roof permeates the void unifying all levels. Stone staircases, passing through sky-lit cavities between thick walls, accentuate the subliminal experience of transition. Supported on shear walls, the upper levels are column-free. The second floor houses a bright central library organized around the central void and dim peripheral rooms. Two wooden staircases camouflaged with bookshelves of the library lead to the upper level. On the third floor, the double layered exterior wall is punctured to create deep openings with seating alcoves for meditation. The recessed openings refract in mellow light that reinforces the cave-like discreet experience of cells for contemplation. The last floor is an open library on the terrace, protected by a glazed peripheral wall that inundates the space with natural light. The roof comprises a tensigrity structure of wood ribs with tensile bracing. Clad with translucent membrane, the internal structure is faintly visible, adding a candid appeal. Extending down to the first level and navigating up to become the pinnacle, the roof formally embodies the expression of central force.

Local availability and craftsmanship as well as tactile experience govern the material concept. Natural light quality of each zone is crafted to be distinct yet elegantly fluid. The continuous transition of light removes imposition of change and roughness of sensation; instead it enhances the psychological progression of an individual from outer commune life to an introspective space. Lama Temple negotiates between nature, individual and space around central premise of light, asserting the radial balance predominant in Buddhist representation of universe.

**Floor area:** 2 500 sqm.  
**Type:** Culture  
**Client:** Xuran Lama Temple  
**Status:** Under construction

