



# **THE EVOLUTION OF EARLY CHINESE BUDDHA FIGURES**

**CHANG YUAN ZANG**

**(VEN. ZI HUI)**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Buddhist Studies)

Graduate School  
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University  
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand  
C.E. 2018



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The Graduate School, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, has approved this Dissertation of “The Evolution of Early Chinese Buddha Figures” in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Buddhist Studies.

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**Date of Completion** : October 25, 2018

### **Abstract**

This dissertation is concerned with the study of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures that were produced over the period of Eastern Han dynasty (25 BC-220 AD) through to the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The objectives of the research are: (1) to study the introduction of Buddha figures into China; (2) to study the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures; and (3) to study the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

The main aim of this research is to do crucial link period in which foreign Buddha figure evolved a distinctly Chinese style. To find out how did the Buddha figures that had been introduced into China and what were the characteristics and form of early Chinese Buddha figures during its evolution. Importantly, what factors influenced the transformation of Buddha figures that



from foreign looking into figures of unique Chinese style. From the study, it has been find that:

There were two major routes of Buddha figures were introduced into China from India, one was the Silk Road and other was the Maritime Silk Road. Along with the Silk Road, when Buddha figures first occurred in Western and Eastern Central Asia were mainly influenced by Ganghara art. From the site of Kashgar in Eastern Central Asia, Buddha figures moved further east to Chang An.

Researcher also found that the official record of a Buddha figure being bought for the first time into ancient China was probably in Gandhara style, the further study of historical remains certainly proved the earliest Buddha figures was of Gandhara form in the Eastern Han period, and Buddha figure also already started evolved with Chinese culture and made by Chinese artisans. Further research found that Buddha figures evolved in different characteristics of robe style, facial features, hair style. And the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures has divided into three main periods: 1) The evolutionary period for foreign style. 2) The evolutionary period for mixed style. And 3) the evolutionary period for Chinese style.

The attitude of emperors, local aesthetics, styles of Chinese clothing and the techniques from outside of Buddhist sphere as the external factor, and the development of the Buddhist teaching, changes in the faith expressed towards different Buddhas and the *tricivara* in Mahayana Vinaya from inside of Buddhist world considered as the internal factors, both of the causes been the major factors that directly or indirectly to influence on the changes of appearance and style of early Chinese Buddha figures.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my great indebtedness to Mahachulaongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand, which provided me with such a good opportunity to complete my Ph.D. degree in Buddhist Studies. Further, my deepest appreciation goes out to the Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Brahmapundit, the rector of MCU, who has the profound knowledge to guide his students skillfully, and to my master the Most Ven. Shi Ming Yi, who guided and supported me to study in MCU. The Most Ven. Phra Sophonvachirabhorn (Sawai Chotiko), the Vice Rector for Foreign Affairs MCU, gave me a large amount of assistances during my study in Thailand. I would like to thanks all the directors, teachers, and staff at the university, who always helped me.

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to my supervisory chairman, Ven. Dr. Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani, and adviser Ven. Dr. Phramaha Somboon Vuḍḍhikaro, their insightful comments and knowledge were always useful and helped me in doing this work. Without the assistance and guidance of them, my dissertation could not have completed. My gratitude would also go to the chairman and members of the exam committee, whose comments, suggestions and questions really improved the quality of my research work.

I also would like to express my special thanks to Mrs. Zhang Shaoying, who supported and encouraged me over years. Further thanks go out to the people who provided me with a lot of help and assistance. Without their help, I would never have finished my studies successfully.

Last but not least, I would like to offer my profoundest gratitude to my family: my father Mr. Zang Lianzhong, my mother Mrs. Zhao Yuxia, and my sisters Mrs. Zang Li, and Ms. Zang Jinjin. They always cared about what I was doing, and they offered me their unconditional support. My family kept me going.

Chang Yuan Zang (Ven. Zi Hui)

October 25, 2018

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### List of Abbreviations

TT	Tahisho Tripitaka
PTS	The Pali Text Society
DFBS	Dictionary for Buddhist Studies
EBETA	Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association

### Other Abbreviations

P. (PP.)	Page (pages)
Pic.	Picture
No.	Number
AD	Anno Domini
BC	Before the Christian Era
CE	Christian Era
BE	Buddhist Era
Ibid.	Ibidem / in the same book
Etc.	Et cetera / and so on
Tr.	Translator / Translated by
Vol. (s)	Volume (s)
Ed.	Edited

by





# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Significance of the Problem

This research work is a study of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures. Buddha figures, image or statues are important and meaningful representations of the Lord Buddha, and such representations are respected by Buddhists all over the world. The three major types of Buddhist schools, which are the Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana schools, all pay honour and tribute to the Triple Gem, or Three Refuges, which consists in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha is clearly the central element of the Triple Gem, so Buddha figures have always been a vital part of the tradition and are still very meaningful as representations of the Buddha long after his *mahāparinirvāṇa*.

Buddhism was brought to China about two thousand years ago, and there are official records that date to the Years of Yong Ping (58-75 AD) in the East Han dynasty (25 BC-220 AD) that mention the arrival of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Indian missionaries and pilgrims brought not only Buddhist scriptures, but Buddhist art canons and icons as well.<sup>3</sup> After Buddhism was introduced into the land of ancient China, it began to grow and was adapted to local Chinese culture in the domains of teachings and Buddhist art. However, before Buddha figures had been introduced into China, they had already been formed into their own styles in different periods in India. Examples include figures that were produced in the Mathura and Gandhara schools of Buddhist art in Kushan Empire (30-375 AD), and figures that originated in the Sarnath or Gupta schools of Buddhist art in Gupta Dynasty (320-550 AD).

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by Monique Skidmore, **Burma at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**, University of Hawai'i Press Honolulu, 2005, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher, May 2001, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Fong Chow, **The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin: Chinese Buddhist Sculpture**, Associate Curator of Far Eastern Art, p. 302.

Moreover, Buddha figures did not only come from the central area of India. Foreign monks hailed mainly from the western parts of Central Asia, in particular from the Kushana and Parthian empires.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore likely that they brought Buddha figures from Central Asia as well. In addition to the figures that were introduced into China during this period, other new styles of Buddha statues that were described in Buddhist texts were created locally.<sup>5</sup>

However, after Buddha figures were first brought into ancient China, it took a long time for them to be accepted and adapted into Chinese culture. This would require the further developments of the Mahayana teachings, which led to the production of various kinds of Buddhas images including those of Sakyamuni Buddha, Vairocana Buddha, Amitābha Buddha, the Medicine Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva.

Across the different Chinese dynasties, the Buddha figures had different appearances, facial features, clothing decorations, and postures. This research work focuses on the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, figures that appeared from the time of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 BC-220 AD) through to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD). This was an important time as it saw considerable development and transformation of Buddha figures taking place. Furthermore, the transformation of the figures that occurred at this time were to provide the basis of further developments that happened after Tang dynasty, including the evolution of Buddha figures in Japan and Korea.

Then, in what ways did the early Chinese Buddha figures evolve? What were the characteristics and forms of early Chinese Buddha figures in each period? Importantly, what factors influenced the transformation of Buddha figures that were decidedly foreign-looking into figures of unique Chinese style? How did the

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26. 4 Marilyn Martin Rhie, **Early Buddhist Art of China & Central Asia**, Leiden Boston, 2007, p.

5 Zhang Tongbiao, **On Three Remarkable Waves of the Ancient Indian's Influence on Chinese Buddhist Statue** (《论古印度佛像影响中国的三次浪潮》). A Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor, Shanghai University, December 2011, PP. I-II. (pp. 1-2).

Buddha figures that had been introduced into China evolve and how did they evolve within the pre-existing and evolving Chinese culture? Finally, in what ways was the early evolution of Buddha figures affected by both Chinese culture and developments within Buddhism itself.

As a researcher, I wondered if could find clear clues from the study of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures that would offer new and significant ways to understand Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. With these interesting issues in mind, the researcher first studied *The Journey to the West* by Xuan Zang, which provided some information about Buddha figures in Central Asia and India, but less information about the characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures. The researcher also read *A Study of Early Buddha Statues*<sup>6</sup>, which described various early prototypes of Buddha figures from the Han and Jin dynasties from an archaeological perspective but did not provide much on the style of Chinese Buddha figures from the period covering the Sixteen Kingdoms through to and including the Tang dynasty. The books *A study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century*<sup>7</sup> and *The Buddhist Image in the Northern Wei Period*<sup>8</sup> explained the characteristics of Buddha figures in the Northern Wei Dynasty, but did not cover the evolution of the Buddha figures. Thus, some references provided parts of the information required for a study of Buddha figures in early period, however, there was a gap in the research concerned with early Chinese Buddha figures. More information was needed on this crucial link period in which foreign Buddha figures evolved a distinctly Chinese style.

Therefore, the researcher tried to uncover and describe a more complete illustration of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, and analyze the characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures in each period of evolution and the

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<sup>6</sup> He Zhiguo, *A Study of Early Buddha Statues* (《早期佛像研究》), Huadong Normal University Press, 1 November 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Chen Yuexin (陈悦新), *A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century*. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Hinako Ishimatsu (石松日奈子), *Buddhist Image in the Northern Wei Period* (《北魏佛教造像史研究》). Culture Relics Press, 1 September 2012.

main factors that influenced that gradual change. It is hoped that the research provides the data and interpretations required to understand the form and characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures, the connection between early Chinese Buddha figures and the present Buddha figures of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, and the relationship between the styles of Buddha figures that come from China, India and Central Asia.

## **1.2 Objectives of the Research**

- 1.2.1 To study the introduction of Buddha figures into China
- 1.2.2 To study the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures
- 1.2.3 To study the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures

## **1.3 Statement of the Problems Desired to Know**

- 1.3.1 How were Buddha figures introduced into China?
- 1.3.2 How did early Chinese Buddha figures evolve?
- 1.3.3 What were the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures?

## **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The scope of the research is divided into three dimensions as follows:

### **1.4.1 Scope of Sources**

The process of data collection for this research work will rely on textual sources, and various approaches will be used to collect data.

First, the researcher will collect data from various primary sources that feature Chinese Mahayana Buddha figures, including ancient Buddhist scriptures. Additionally, the researcher will utilize secondary sources such as books and articles published by modern day scholars and will interview ten of experts in the field.

Second, the researcher will visit and make observations at significant Buddhist heritage sites such as temples and museums that have relevant Chinese Buddha figures in their collections.

#### 1.4.2 Scope of content

The scope of study will be focused around the three study objectives:

The primary point of focus will be on the origin of Chinese Buddha figures, and the routes by which Buddha figures from Indian or Central Asian were introduced to ancient central China.

The second point of focus will be on the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures from the time Buddhism was introduced into China until and including the Tang Dynasty. This involves a detailed study of the changes that occurred in the characteristic, shape, dress, decoration, and posture of Buddha figures.

The third point of focus will be on the main factors (both external and internal) that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures since the time of their introduction into China.

#### 1.4.3 Scope of Population

The population that constitutes a significant part of this research consists of ten people who take part in in-depth interviews. They are mostly professionals in the area of Buddhist art. The population includes monks and laypeople who come from various temples, universities and museums.

#### 1.4.4 Scope of timing

The timing of the interview has been made in total 12 monthes, which starting September 2016 to September 2017.

## **1.5 Definitions of the Terms Used in the Research**

1.5.1 Buddhist Art: The term ‘Buddhist art’ refers to a wide range of Buddhist concepts including Buddhist architecture, painting, historical figures, music and literature. In this dissertation, the term ‘Buddhist art’ refers to Buddha figures, statues or images.

1.5.2 Buddhist Sculpture: Buddhist sculpture refers to objects made by carving, casting, or other shaping techniques with different materials such as stone, wood, clay, iron, or bronze. Examples include sculpture figures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, apsaras, and guardians. This research work mainly deals with sculptures of the Buddha.

1.5.3 Buddha Figures: The term Buddha figure in this research in its narrowest sense refers to statues and other images of various Buddhas, and examples include figures of Shakyamuni Buddha, Amitābha Buddha, etc. However, the term is also sometimes used in a broader sense, in which case it can also refer to images and statues of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Maitreya Bodhisattva and Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva.

1.5.4 Evolution of Buddha Figures: refers to the process of development or gradual change of Buddha figures. This research work focuses on the evolution of Buddha figures from foreign style to Chinese style, with an emphasis on the characteristics of shape, dress, facial features and other decorative factors.

1.5.5 Early Period for Chinese Buddha Figures: The early period in this dissertation refers to a period that starts in the Eastern Han Dynasty (25 BC-220 AD), stretches through the Three Kingdoms (220-280 AD), the Jin Dynasty (265-420AD), the Sixteen Kingdoms Period (304-349 AD), the Southern Dynasty (420-589), the Northern Dynasty (386-581), and the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD) and finishes with the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD).

1.5.6 Main Factors: the term of main factors in this research work defined as the factors that influenced on the early of Chinese Buddha figures. For example, the factors of attitude of emperors, the local aesthetic, the Chinese local dressing, and the skills of creating Buddha figures categorized as the external factors that come from outside of Buddhism. And the factors of development of Buddhist teaching in China, the different Buddhist faiths and the tradition of *trīvara* or *ticivara* in Chinese Mahayan Buddhism as the internal factors that come from inside of Buddhism. The both external and internal factors that caused Buddha figures to change its appearance, looking or style.

## **1.6 Review of Related Literature and Research Work**

1.6.1 Denise Patry Leidy, Donna K. Strahan, Lawrence Becker, *Wisdom Embodied: Chinese Buddhist and Taoist Sculpture in the Metropolitan*.

The earliest Chinese images of the Buddha date to the second half of the second century C.E., soon after the development of such icons in South Asia, and there was no period in China in which Shakyamuni was represented primarily through symbols. Both historical records and visual evidence attest to Chinese knowledge of Buddhism in the first and second centuries C.E., during the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 C.E.), a time when China rivaled Rome in size, population, wealth, and influence. By the mid-second century, an important Buddhist center had been founded in the dynasty's capital city, Luoyang, in Henan Province. The center attracted foreign monks and supportive laypeople, who were both foreign and Han Chinese.<sup>9</sup>

1.6.2 Gray Williams, Jr. Anne Preuss & Katharine H.B. Stoddert, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Volume XXIII, Number 9*.

Although it is difficult to determine the exact date when Buddhism

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<sup>9</sup> Denise Patry Leidy, Donna K. Strahan, Lawrence Becker, *Wisdom Embodied: Chinese Buddhist and Taoist Sculpture in the Metropolitan*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York Yale University Press, New Haven and London, p. 6.

reached to China, we know from the Hou Han Shu, or “History of Later Han”, that the prince of Ch’u was a patron of the Buddhist colony in Kiangsu in AD. 65, and that a provincial magistrate named Chai Jun erected a shrine with a gilt-bronze Buddha in about 190 AD. The religion came to China from its native India partly through the ancient Central Asian trade routes, which had their western terminus outside northwest India near Bamiyan, and their Chinese terminus at Tun-huang in northwest China; partly through the Burma jungle and into Yunnan and Szechwan provinces: and partly by sea to Nan-hai, the site of present day Canton, and to the southeastern regions.

There is much literary evidence that describes early Buddhist images made of gold, silver, and bronze as well as wood. Unfortunately, few of them have survived. Many images of precious metal were melted down during periods of persecution, and countless wood, lacquer, clay, and stone statues were also destroyed. Modern Chinese and Japanese Scholars seem to agree that the earliest Buddha figures that survived can be dated to the second and third centuries AD. These include a stone relief of a seated Buddha at Loshan and a standing Buddha image of stucco at Peng-shan, both in Szechwan province.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1.6.3 Marilyn M. Rhie, Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume 3.**

Ms Rhie suggests that the early Buddhist art of China has potentially crucial materials for understanding and possibly revealing, in a “reverse” role, many of the developments and evolution of art and ideas taking place in India, Gandhara, Afghanistan and Central Asia.<sup>11</sup>

#### **1.6.4 Zhang Zong, The Buddhist Art of China. China**

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<sup>10</sup> Gray Williams, Jr. Anne Preuss & Katharine H.B. Stoddert, **The Metropolitan Museum of Art Volume XXIII, Number 9. The Metropolitan Museum of Art**, May 1965, pp. 302-303.

<sup>11</sup> Marilyn M. Rhie, **Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume 3**, Brill Academic Publishers, Inc 2002-1, p. 4.



**Intercontinental Press, 2011.**

The author observes that from the time of its introduction to China 2,000 years ago, Buddhism irrevocably influenced traditional Chinese culture. This book gives a basic overview of the Buddhist arts in China, including art found in temples, paintings, and stone caves. The Buddhist Art of China can help readers to understand the modern-day context of Buddhism in China, and to appreciate the various manifestations of Buddhism and its artwork in China.<sup>12</sup>

**1.6.5 John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*.**

The prevalence of Buddhist images in clay, stone, wood, bronze, and gold exerted a profound influence on the development of Chinese sculpture, painting, and aesthetics in general, and continues to influence Chinese artists today. Chinese Buddhist images including monumental sculptures, cave reliefs, murals and metal statuary had great influence in China. Yet at the same time, Buddhist art was approached differently by the experts of the literati. These critics sometimes on Buddhist art, but when they did, they did so as outsiders unfamiliar with Buddhist doctrine and composition. In fact, Buddhist Sources seldom apply aesthetic criteria to Buddhist images, and when they do they use vague terms such as splendor, magnificence, and beauty.<sup>13</sup>

**1.6.6 Li Ruizhe (李瑞哲), *Kucha Cave temples (龟兹石窟寺)*. China Social Sciences Press, 2015.**

This book introduces early Buddha figures found painted on the walls of caves in the Kucha region, which was an ancient Buddhist center. The book shows examples from the Kizil and Kumtura caves and analyses the excavation periods, styles of Buddha figures, and stories related to the wall art. Furthermore,

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<sup>12</sup> Zhang Zong, *The Buddhist Art of China*. China Intercontinental Press, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> John Kieschnick, *The Impact of Buddhism on Chinese Material Culture*, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 56.

the author connects India Buddhist art and Chinese art to the evolution of Kucha Buddhist art.<sup>14</sup>

1.6.7 Chen Yuexin (陈悦新), **A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century**. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014.

Chen Yuexin comprehensively and systematically analyzes the diversified changes of eight types of clothing found on Chinese Buddhist figures from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Centuries and states that his work offers an effective way to understand the diffusion of Buddhist culture and the development of Chinese social history.<sup>15</sup> The Buddhist figures studied include statues of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, monks, and deva-kings. Many of these figures are commonly depicted objects in Buddhist art. In the historical literature, the clothing styles of the Buddha and monks were clearly prescribed. Amongst the extant remains and relics, the most complete figures are those of the Buddhas, which also indicate the long period over which ‘Three garments’ (Skt. *tricivarani*) have been worn. Such figures can be classified according to the robe wrapping methods used and eight types present: the covering mode; the open mode; the right shoulder covered but the chest uncovered mode; the assembly robe hanging from the elbows mode; the double-folded assembly robe mode and outer garment hanging from the elbows mode.

1.6.8 Denise Patry Leidy, **The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to Its History & Meaning**. Shambhala Boston & London, 2008.

This book introduces early Buddhist sculpture in India, China, Korea and Japan. In the part of the book about China, it describes Buddhist statues of Xi Yu region and covers the period up to and including the Tang dynasty (10<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Li Ruizhe (李瑞哲), **Kucha Cave Temples (龟兹石窟寺)**. China Social Sciences Press, 2015, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Chen Yuexin (陈悦新), **A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century**. Social Sciences Academic Press, 2014, p. 3.

century). Figures studied include stone sculptures, bronze statues, and images found in cave temples.

## **1.7 Research Methodology**

In this research methodology, there were three different approaches to collecting data used. The tools used to obtain data were as follows:

### **1.7.1 Data Collection**

1.7.1.1 Primary data was collected from primary sources such as original Buddhist texts, and secondary data was collected from other sources concerned with early Chinese Buddha figures, such as academic journals, books, newspapers, CDs, electronic databases and the Internet.

1.7.1.2 The collected data was analyzed in order to give a clear picture of the development of early Chinese Buddha figures.

1.7.2 Further datas were obtained by visiting and making observations at Buddhist heritage sites, temple, museums and grottoes which are well known for their early Chinese Buddha figures.

### **The visited major temples:**

- 1) Shao Lin monastery, Dengfeng district, Henan province, China.
- 2) Qi Xia Shan monastery, Qi Xia district, Nan Jing, Jiangsu, China.
- 3) Jiu Hua Mountain, Chi Zhou, An Hui province, China.
- 4) Bodh Gaya Buddhist heritage site, India.
- 5) Nalanda Buddhist heritage site, India.

### **The visited major Buddhist Grottoes:**

- 1) Longmeng Grottoes, Longmen district, Henan province, China.
- 2) Yungang Grottoes, Da Tong city, Shan Xi province, China.
- 3) Qi Xia Shan Grottoes, Qi Xia district, Nan Jing, Jiangsu, China.
- 4) Buddhist Grottoes at LingYin monastery, Hang Zhou, Zhe Jiang, China.

### **The visited major museums:**

- 1) An Hui Museum, He Fei city, An Hui province, China.
- 2) He Nan Museum, Zheng Zhou city, He Nan province, China.
- 3) Pu Tuo Shan Buddhist Museum, Zhou Shan city, Zhe Jiang province, China
- 4) Jiu Hua Mountain Buddhist Museum, Jiu Hua city, An Hui province, China.
- 5) Shen Zhen Museum, Shen Zhen, Guang Dong province, China.
- 6) Mekong Heritage, Kun Ming, Yunnan, China.
- 7) National Palace Museum, Tai Bei, Tai Wan, China.
- 8) Thailand National Museum, Bangkok, Thailand.
- 9) National Museum, New Delhi, India

### **The visited major online museums:**

- 1) National Museum of China. 2) The Palace Museum, Beijing. 3) Dunhuang Museum, China. 4) Gansu Museum, China. 5) Aurora Museum Shang Hai. 6) Qing Zhou Museum. 7) British Museum. 8) Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA. 9) Kyoto National Museum, Japan. 10) National Museum of Korea.

The other data collected from part in in-depth interviews, there were total ten people, they are both monks and laypeople who are mostly professionals in the area of Buddhist art, from various temples, universities and museums.

People who has been interviewed are as follows:

Specialists from Venerable:

- 1) Most Ven. Chun Fa, the Abbot of Yuan Tong Monastery, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China.
- 2) Most Ven. Xin Ming, the Abbot of Hua Ting Monastery, Ken Ming, Yunnan province, China.
- 3) Ven. Yan Wu, the Abbot of Feng Shan Temple, Teng Cong, Yunnan province, China.

4) Ven. Zhen Yu, the Deputy Director of Buddhist College of Fujian, Fujian province, China.

5) Bhikkhuni Ven. He Xin, a staff member at the Pu Tuo Shan Buddhist Museum, Zhe Jiang Province, China.

specialists from laity:

6) Mr. Vijit Yang, the Director of Mekong Heritage, Kun Ming, Yunnan, China.

7) Mrs. Li Dong Fang, a specialist in repairing antiques for the Palace Museum, Beijing, China.

8) Ms. Jin Yuan, a distinguished international archaeological auctioneer.

9) Mr. Xue Jian, the Director of Beijing Culture Exchange Museum, Zhi Hua temple, Beijing, China.

10) Ms Shi Yue Jie, a Master's Degree student in the area of Buddhist Art in China.

The detail of interview records attached in the appendix of this research work.

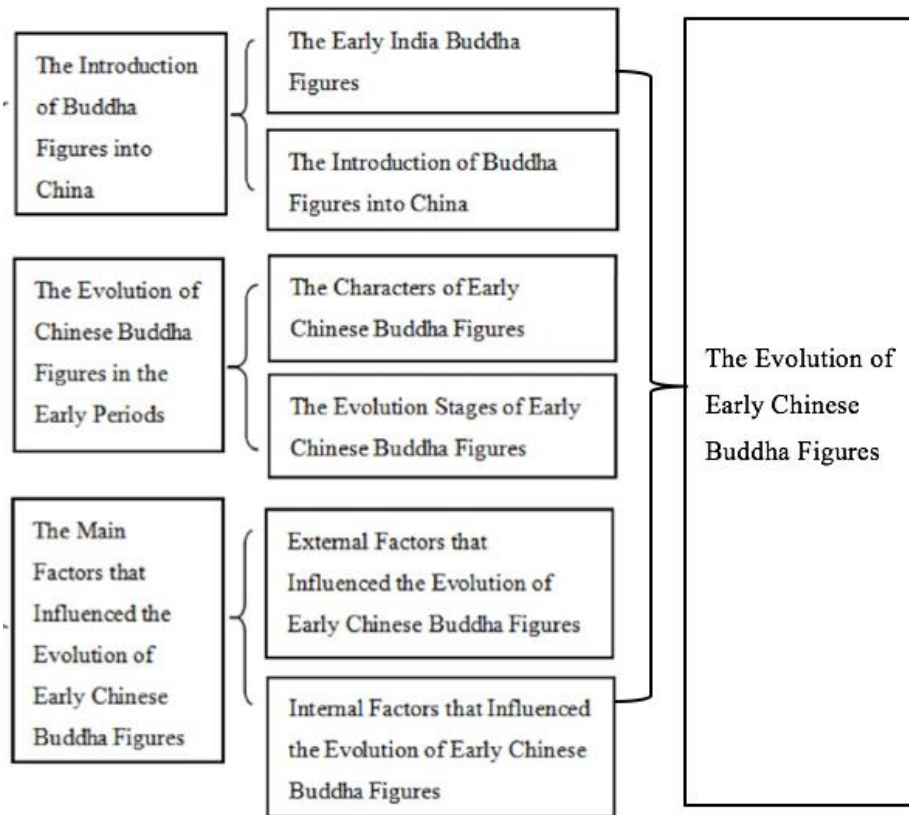
#### 1.7.3 Analysis and Synthesis

Analysis and synthesis of the collected data was performed in order to provide a clear picture of the development of Chinese Buddha figures.

#### 1.7.4 Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Conclusions that were based on objectives and research findings were presented, and suggestions for further research were offered.

## 1.8 Conceptual Framework



## 1.9 Expected Benefits of the Research

1.9.1 A better knowledge of the introduction of Buddha figures into China.

1.9.2 A deep appreciation of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

1.9.3 An understanding of the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

## **Chapter II**

### **An Overview of the Origin of Early Buddha Figures**

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the origin of early Buddha figures. There are three main points addresses this chapter. The first point gives a brief overview of the Buddha figures in India and the characteristics of different schools of Indian Buddhist art, which help better understand the relationship between Indian Buddha figures and Chinese Buddha figures. The second point is concerned with the main routes by which Buddha figures were introduced into China, how figures were introduced into China, and a study of the remnants of Buddhist culture along the routes. The third point gives a brief introduction to the characteristics of Buddha figures in Xi Yu region, and the mutual influences of cultures exerted by the Indian, Chinese and the local Xi Yu cultures.

#### **2.1 An Introduction of Buddha Figures in the Indian Subcontinent**

Buddhist art in a broad sense can be traced back to around the 3<sup>rd</sup> BC in ancient India, and it was from the Indian Subcontinent that it later spread throughout Asian countries evolving into different forms as it did so.

Before Indian Buddhist art had spread to other regions and was influenced by various factors outside of the Indian Subcontinent, it had already formed into a number of different schools of Buddhist art and had flourished in India and central Asia. Therefore, Indian Buddhist art can be considered as the original form of Buddhist art. For this reason, in order to give a comprehensive picture of the evolution of Chinese Buddhist figures, it necessary to give a brief introduction to Indian Buddhist art. According to region and period, Indian Buddhist art can be divided into a number of schools: the pre-Gandhara, Gandhara, Mathura and Gupta schools.

### 2.1.1 The Buddhist Art of the Pre-Gandhara Period

As already mentioned, it is quite difficult to find evidence to show when the first Buddha figure existed in India. However, according to the Ekottaragama-sūtra, the first Buddha figure was created when the Buddha was still alive. The text goes as follows:

During the Buddha's period, King Udayana of Vatsa and King Prasenajit of Kausala in the Central part of ancient India had not met the Lord Buddha for a long time and missed him, and this was when the Buddha was preaching Dhamma to his mother Maya in the heaven of the thirty-three. The Kings Udayana and King Prasenajit ordered the making of Buddha figures in sandalwood and purple gold so they could have a replacement of him near them<sup>1</sup>.

So, this text points to the existence of early prototypes of Buddha figures in Buddhist tradition.

Gandhara Buddhist art, which is perhaps the most well-known school of Buddhist art in the world and was a powerful influence on other Buddhist arts, was not the earliest. In any case, judging by its famous name and degree to which it flourished, it embodies a remarkable period in Indian Buddhist art. The period before the Gandhara one is considered as pre-Gandhara in this research work. As we have already observed, the earliest phase of Buddhist art was aniconic in that

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<sup>1</sup> Taisho Tripitaka.Vol. 2, No. 125. 36, **Listening of Dharma (Ting Fa Pin) Ekottaragama-sūtra** Vol. 28, CBETA V1.53, Normalized Version ,T02n0125 p0706a02.(大正新脩大藏經 第二冊 No. 125 《增壹阿含經》CBETA 電子佛典 V1.63 普及版.增壹阿含經卷第二十八,聽法品第三十六,東晉罽賓三藏瞿曇僧伽提婆譯:是時。波斯匿王。優填王至阿難所。問阿難曰。如來今日竟為所在。阿難報曰。大王。我亦不知如來所在。是時。二王思睹如來。遂得苦患。爾時。群臣至優填王所。白優填王曰。今為所患。時王報曰。我今以愁憂成患。群臣白王。云何以愁憂成患。其王報曰。由不見如來故也。設我不見如來者。便當命終。是時。群臣便作是念。當以何方便。使優填王不令命終。我等宜作如來形像。是時。群臣白王言。我等欲作形像。亦可恭敬承事作禮。時。王聞此語已。歡喜踊躍。不能自勝。告群臣曰。善哉。卿等所說至妙。群臣白王。當以何寶作如來形像。是時。王即敕國界之內諸奇巧師匠。而告之曰。我今欲作形像。巧匠對曰。如是。大王。是時。優填王即以牛頭栴檀作如來形像高五尺。是時。波斯匿王聞優填王作如來形像高五尺而供養。是時。波斯匿王復召國中巧匠。而告之曰。我今欲造如來形像。汝等當時辦之。時。波斯匿王而生此念。當用何寶。作如來形像耶。斯須復作是念。如來形體。黃如天金。今當以金作如來形像。是時。波斯匿王純以紫磨金作如來像高五尺。爾時。閻浮里內始有此二如來形像。)



there were no statues or human figures of the Buddha. His presence and character were represented by symbols, such as Bodhi trees, empty seats, footprints, Dharma wheels and stupas. Such symbolic representations of the Buddha date to the Mauryan period and are considered to be the earliest examples of Buddhist art in India.

During the Mauryan empire, Buddhism was supported by Ashoka (269-232 BC), the third powerful ruler of the Mauryan Dynasty (323-185 BC). Buddhist art was influenced by Ashoka's adoption of Buddhism to help him govern his empire and he was impressed by and adopted the Buddhist principles of virtue, generosity, and patience. He saw the principles as a way of improving the lives of his subjects.

The most famous and representative of his contributions to Buddhist arts are the Ashokan Pillars. During his time, many columns were built throughout his region and placed at Buddhist sites, but only a few complete pillars have been preserved. Most of the columns were stone pillars with animal capitals and inscriptions. A number of the sandstone pillars were quarried in Chunar, near the capital of Pataliptura,<sup>2</sup> and they had inscriptions of edicts and Dharma in the Brahmi script. Officials were instructed to read the edicts and Dharma during festivals. Some inscriptions mentioned the Buddha's teaching, and some were erected to commemorate visits by Ashoka. Many of the inscriptions on the columns record Ashoka's use of Buddhism to legitimize his rule and unify his realm<sup>3</sup>.

According to Buddhist legend, it was during the Ashoka period a few hundred years later after the *mahāparinirvāna* of Shakyamuni Buddha that King Ashoka had eighty-four thousand stupas built and sent Shakyamuni Buddha's relics to different directions and regions. Among these stupas were the Bharhut

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<sup>2</sup> Denise Patry Leidy, *The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to Its History and Meaning*, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2008, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

stupa and the Sanchi stupa, which are considered to be the earliest stupas which were built during the Ashoka and Sunga periods.

Stupas were not originally of the Buddhist tradition and in fact were derived from earlier traditions. They were used to bury the bodies or remains of great leaders or teachers. The Bharhut stupa was built from brick and was circular in shape. It was sixty-six feet in height and located in Madhya Pradesh in northern India. The stupa is now largely destroyed, but some of the railing parts have been preserved. The stupa was undecorated, but some of the tales of Shakyamuni's previous births - the Jatakas - were carved and decorated on the gateways and railings. Figures of *yakshas* and *yakshis* (feminine), which were nature spirits or the caretakers of natural treasures hidden in the earth and in tree roots, are carved on the railings of Bharhut stupa. Some of the images of the last life of Siddhartha are found on the railing parts, and the carved figures illustrate the story of Prince Siddhartha leaving the palace. The prince's exit is represented by small footprints and a riderless horse led by the groom Chandaka.

The Sanchi stupa or Great stupa at Madhya Pradesh India, which probably built during the first century BC. to first century AD of the Shunga period, is similar in structure to the stupa found at Bharhut. The Sanchi stupa has been better preserved than the Bharhut stupa. It is built of brick and is hemispherical in covered with stone and is surrounded by a railing and four decorated stone gateways. The stupa has a diameter of 120 feet, with three umbrellas at the top and one of Ashoka's columns in front of it. The three umbrellas are sometimes said to symbols of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the three jewels of Buddhism.

As at the Bharhut stupa, Jataka stories of depicting Shakyamuni's previous lives and last life were depicted in relief on the railings and four stone gateways around the brick hemispherical central structure. For example, the elephant king Chaddanta Jataka is found on three of the four gateways, as are depictions of Prince Siddhartha leaving the palace and Siddhartha's defeat of

Mara's army before he attained full enlightenment.

Shakyamuni Buddha is not shown in human form in any of the reliefs preserved from the stupa at Bharhut or from the slightly later monument at Sanchi. Instead, he is symbolized by such objects as a throne, a tree, a wheel or a footprint<sup>4</sup>. In contrast is the Amarāvātī Stupa found at Andhra Pradesh, India, which was probably built in phases between the third century BCE and about 250 CE. The Amarāvātī Stupa has a number of decorative images in which the Buddha was depicted as a human being and these have been dated to the later period of construction.<sup>5</sup> One stupa casing found in at Amarāvātī shows scenes from Shakyamuni Buddha's life in relief. These used to be part of decorations on the top of the stupa. Human beings stand beneath the stupa and semi-divinities fly above it and in the middle is the Buddha in human form.

### **2.1.2 Gandhara and Mathura Buddhist Arts**

Buddha statues or images are found in both Gandhara and Mathura Buddhist art in India, and the art of these schools is categorized as some of the earliest art that depicted images of the Buddha. Just which of the two schools was the earliest is not relevant to this discussion. What is clear and generally accepted in academic circle is that the art styles of these schools appeared during the mid to later first century AD.

The Gandhara and Mathura Buddhist arts schools were important during the Kushan Empire (early 1st to 3rd centuries AD), and the two schools were located at centers that were the capital cities of Kushan Empire. In geographical terms, Gandhara was located in the northwest of India, and was an ancient kingdom in the Swat valley. It was ruled by the Kushan kings during the first to third centuries AD, at what is present Peshawar, Pakistan. Mathura was located in Uttar Pradesh, which was in the north of India and was controlled by the

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<sup>4</sup> Denise Patry Leidy, **The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to Its History and Meaning**, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2008, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

Mauryan empire (4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC), the Shunga dynasty (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), and later by the Kushan empire between 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.

Mathura Buddhist art was a local style of Indian art which is considered to have derived earlier art that often depicted *yakshas* and *yakshis*. It later reached its peak in the Gupta empire around the fifth century AD. Mathura was a city at the center of the Mathura school of Buddhist art that produced a variety of Buddhist figures made from the red sandstone that was available in the local Mathura region and then sent to other regions.

The Buddha statue's appearance in human form may have been influenced by Greek culture and the growing philosophy of Mahayana schools in ancient India. Buddhist schools, or *nikaya*, had already divided into two main schools after the *mahāparinirvāna* of Shakyamuni Buddha; one was Theravada and one other was Mahayana, and the Mahayana had also subsequently divided into many sub-schools.

The Theravada school considered that they were stricter in keeping to the original tradition as taught by the Buddha. However, the Mahayana school considered that they possessed a more developed form Buddhist philosophy that was based on Buddha's teaching, and it included more emphasis on the Bodhisattva concept and path. It was this emphasis on philosophy and the Bodhisattva way that probably provided the momentum for the Mahayana school to adopt the use of the human figure of Shakyamuni Buddha. Statues and images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva in human form offered the people a representation of the story of the Buddha's enlightenment and his lives prior to enlightenment and gave them a way to worship the historical Buddha, an act that was significant as it generated merit.

### **2.1.2.1 The Mathura Buddhist Art**

The Mathura school of Buddhist art produced figures of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Bodhisattva (Maitreya) in standing and seated postures. Two of

most famous Buddha figures that are often used as examples of the Mathura style of Buddha figures were donated by the monk Bala and the nun Amoha-asi in the second century, and both had informative inscriptions.

The Amoha-asi Buddha figure (pic.2.1.1) is a popular example of Mathura Buddhist art from the Mathura region. It dates from the second century in Kushan period. The Buddha statue is named Amoha-asi because it has an inscription that states that it was donated by the nun Amoha-asi. The figure is considered to be an image of Shakyamuni Buddha and Bodhisattva and is made from the local mottled-red sandstone. The central figure has a round, youthful face, white *urna* (Sk. *ūrṇā*) forming a spiral or circular shape between the eyebrows, elongated earlobes, and is sitting in cross-legged (*pallaṅka*) meditative posture on a throne with two lotus and wheel marks on the sole of each foot. The figure wears a thin robe that covers the left shoulder and leaves the right bare, and the figure has a kapardin-seashell hair style. The Buddha's right hand, which is held aloft has lotus and wheel mark on the open and outward-facing palm, and the left hand is on the knee. The figure is making the posture of fearlessness (*abhaya mudra*), which symbolizes protection, peace, and the dispelling of fear.

Pic. 2.1.1: The Amoha-asi Buddha figure Mathura, Uttar pradesh, India. Kushan



period (2<sup>nd</sup> A.D).

An inscription that calls for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings is carved in three lines in front of the throne. Two attendants stand behind the Buddha figure and wear triangulate and round-shaped jewelry necklaces and decorative turbans. A large halo that emits light like the sun is presented in relief behind the Buddha's head, and a bodhi tree with heart shape leaves forms a decorative background. Furthermore, there are two Apsaras flying above the halo.

The Amoha-asi Buddha figure depicts the prince Siddhartha, who practiced as a Bodhisattva in his final life and achieved enlightenment as Shakyamuni Buddha, preaching a sermon under the Bodhi tree. The Buddha and Bodhisattva figures are commonly found in the Mathura style with kapardin-seashell hair styles; the hair is smooth like a cap, and there is a twisted bun or topknot of hair forming a cranial bump (*ushnisha* or *uṣṇīṣa*). According to the Mahayana tradition, the *ushnisha* is said to be the 31<sup>st</sup> of the 32 special physical characteristics of a Buddha. It symbolizes his attainment of reliance in the spiritual guide.

An attribute of the Mathura Buddha images that sets them apart from other styles is in the high relief sculptural style of the Buddha robes. The robe is typically draped over part of the Buddha's chest, left shoulder and arm but passes under the right arm and leaves the right shoulder bare. The carving of the robe is done in very simple lines and the robe is thin and diaphanous. This characteristic of the Mathura style is in clear distinction to the styles of the Gupta Buddhist art.

#### **2.1.2.2 The Gandhara Buddhist Art**

The Gandhara School of Buddhist art is well-known throughout the world, and Gandhara art that is dated in the period covering the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD is particularly famous. Gandhara was an ancient kingdom located in the Kabul river valley, which is in present day northern Pakistan and northeastern Afghanistan, an area which includes the present-day city of Peshawar and was comprised of parts of Swat, Taxila, Gardez and Jalalabad.

Gandhara was an important center connecting ancient Greece, Iran, South Asia and central Asia to ancient China. Alexander the Great conquered the region in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, but Gandhara was later taken over by Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Mauryan empire. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, Gandhara was ruled under the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom for periods of time. From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, the area became part of the Kushan empire, and this included being ruled by Kanishka (128-151 AD), the third king of the Kushans, who founded the capital city of the Kushan empire in Gandhara (present-day Peshawar). The city then became a political, economic and religious center.

The art of Gandhara developed in a way that was much influenced by Greek culture, especially the Greco-Bactrian kingdom (ca.3<sup>rd</sup> -2nd centuries BC) that had earlier become independent of the Seleucid kingdom, was founded by Greeks in Asia, and later became an Indo-Greek kingdom (2nd-1st BC). The interaction and intermingling of Greek and Indian culture produced a unique Greek-Indo culture, and the Greek artists influenced the creation of Buddha figures in Buddhist culture. The interaction led to the specific style of Buddhist art that is called Gandhara Buddhist art, which was later to have a very important influence on the development of Chinese Buddha figures.

Pic.2.1.2 right: The Kanishka gold coin, Kushan period, around 78 A.D, preserved



in British Museum.<sup>6</sup>

The Kushans, one of the five tribes of the Rouzhi (月支), may well

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<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanishka> 1 March 2017

have already had contact with the Hellenistic Indo-Greek kingdom and Greek culture before the establishment of the Kushan empire. The Kushans adopted the Greek alphabet to create their own language, and this can be seen on the coin of Kanishka I (pic.2.1.2 right). On the face of the coin is a likeness of King Kanishka and the inscription “Raonanorao Kanirki Korno” in the Greek alphabet, representing words in the northwest dialect of Sanskrit that meant “King of Kings, Kanishka, of Kushana.”<sup>7</sup> On the reverse side of the coin, there is a standing Buddha of Hellenistic form, with back halo and left hand holding the pleat of his robe. His right hand makes the gesture of *abhaya mudra* (no fear), and the term “Boddo” is written in Greek on the left side of Buddha.

Another early Gandhara Buddhist piece is the Kanishka casket (pic.2.1.3) that dates to 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and was discovered in the Kanishka stupa. According to the *Journey to the West*, some of the Buddha’s holy relics were enshrined on the top of Kanishka’s stupa. Further on the top were raised twenty-five layers of gilded disks and one *hu* (ancient Chinese measuring vessel) that contained Buddha relics which were for the celebration of Buddhist ceremonies<sup>8</sup>. The casket was found in 908-1909 near Peshawar, in Pakistan. The casket is now preserved in the Peshawar Museum, and the Buddha relics are kept in Mandalay, Myanmar.

Pic.2.1.3: Kanishka casket, Kushan period (2<sup>nd</sup> A.D), collecting in Peshawar Museum.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History*, Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 51, No. 2087 *Journey to the West* 《大唐西域記》, CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka V1.29, Normalized Version, T51n2087\_p0880a02(12)(Chinese:復於其上更起二十五層金銅相輪，即以如來舍利一斛而置其中，式修供養。)

<sup>9</sup> <http://stein.mtak.hu/en/large/168.htm> 2 March 2017



The casket was made in Greek style, and this is evidenced by the inscription on the casket signed by the maker, a Greek artist named Agesilars, who oversaw work at Kanishka's stupas (*caitya*). This confirmed the significant involvement of Greeks in Buddhist artwork. The inscription reads in part, "the servant Agisalaos, the superintendent of works at the vihara of Kanishka..."<sup>10</sup>. The casket is cylinder shaped and made of bronze. It is about five inches in diameter and four inches high<sup>11</sup>. Shakyamuni Buddha is shown sitting on cover of casket. The Buddha wears long and heavy draped robes that cover both shoulders, and he is sitting cross-legged in meditative posture and making the mudra of fearlessness. The Buddha has long curly hair, tied at the top of his head, and a halo behind his head. The two figures flanking the Buddha are thought to be Indra and Brahma, and they are draped in long sarong-like garments that cover their left shoulders, and both figures have their palms together in worship of the Buddha.

Gandhara Buddhist art features many kinds of relief sculpture work that illuminates the life stories of Shakyamuni Buddha and included are reliefs of the birth of Siddhartha, and the *mahāparinirvāna* of Shakyamuni Buddha. Furthermore, the images in relief of the Buddha preaching the First Sermon at Sarnath under the bodhi tree after his enlightenment can often be found in Gandhara sculptured stone art.

One image of the Shakyamuni Buddha, sculptured in relief, depicts him teaching the First Sermon in the deer park at Sarnath (pic.2.1.4). The Buddha is sitting in meditative posture, and wears a long and wavy robe, which is rectangular and cover both shoulders. His left hand is resting in his left lap and his right hand is holding a wheel that is the symbol of the turning of the wheel of law, or in other words, the *dharmachakra*. The Buddha has long curly Hellenistic-style hair, and a

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<sup>10</sup> Hamid Wahed Alikuzai, **A Concise History of Afghanistan in 25 Volumes: Volume 1**. Trafford Publishing (October 10, 2013), p. 849.

<sup>11</sup> **The Art Bulletin**. Vol.48. No. 3/4, Published by College Art Association of America, Sep-De., 1966, p. 396.

halo in back of his head. Two deer are nestled in front of the base of the Buddha's seat and look back to each other. Five shaven-headed monks that represent Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji are seated around Buddha, and they wear long draped robes. Four of the monks have both shoulders covered by their robes, but one monk who is on the Buddha's left has his left shoulder only covered. One figure standing on right hand side of Buddha has long and wavy hair. His upper body is naked and he wears a skirt tied at the waist.



Pic.2.1.4: Gandhara Buddha, 2<sup>nd</sup> A.D, collecting in the Metropolitan museum of Art, New York, USA.<sup>12</sup>

The figure of Maitreya Bodhisattva did not appear for the first time appeared in the Gandhara art. As already noted, it was also featured in Mathura art. Gandhara figures of Maitreya were to have an important influence on the faith of Maitreya Bodhisattva in China during the period of the Northern Wei dynasty to the Tang dynasty (4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries). The figure of Maitreya Buddha in Gandhara style depicted in both standing and seated postures is a very traditional Hellenistic style of art. As the picture illustrates (pic.2.1.5), the standing Maitreya Bodhisattva in human form wears long draped robe covering the right shoulder and leaving the left shoulder bared. The lower part of the robe is secured at the waist.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38118> 10 March 2017

The figure of Bodhisattva, as depicted in Gandhara style is often decorated with several pieces of jewelry and necklace. He holds his right hand up, and wears an armlet on the arm, and he wears two bracelets on his left arm and holds a sacred water flask in his left hand. This figure also has a mustache. Mustaches have been found commonly on Gandhara figures of Maitreya Bodhisattva. The figure has an *urna* in between the eyes, and long curly hair tied on the top of the head. He wears a pair of shoes in the robe knitted style. Finally, the stone base of the figure is decorated with flowers.

Buddhist sculptures in Gandhara art style often present with characteristically Greek facial features and have long curly hair. Heavy draped robes cover both shoulders, with some figures having uncovered left shoulders. Bodhisattva figures are commonly decorated with jewelry with the whole figure being like that of a young prince. The seashell-like hairstyle in Mathura Buddhists art figures became a knotted hair style in Gandhara art. The syncretization of Greek art and Indian culture produced figures that were more visually expressive of some aspects of Buddhism and more realistic.



Pic.2.1.5: Standing Gandhara Maitreya Buddha, Ca.3rd A.D, the Metropolitan Museum.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38788> 10 March 2017

Pic.2.1.6: Sarnath seated Shakyamuni Buddha, ca. 5<sup>th</sup> A.D, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh, India.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1.3 The Gupta Buddhist Art

After the dissolution of the Kushan Empire, the Gupta dynasty arose. It was under the Gupta dynasty (4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries) that a large area of India was united, albeit for a relatively short period. With the prosperity afforded by the expansion and consolidation of the dynasty, Buddhism flourished and this period saw some significant developments in Buddhist art. Buddhist art in Gupta period was strongly influenced by the art of the Mathura and Gandhara periods; Mathura and Gandhara Buddhist art reached a new standard in what we know as the Gupta Buddhist art style.

Some of the figures found in Gupta Buddhist art had very similar characteristics to those of Mathura period figures. Mathura art developed in the North Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, an area famous for the red sand stone sculpture, whereas Gupta art was mainly centered at Sarnath, and the figures were done in stucco. Sarnath was the location of the famous Deer Park at which Shakyamuni Buddha taught the first sermon. Gupta art from the Sarnath area became popularly known as Sarnath Buddhist art, and for various reasons it was to influence the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures in the Xi Liang style (西凉模式) and the Northern Qi style (北齐).

Sarnath Buddhist art features very native Indian styles that were adopted from Mathura art. Sarnath Buddha figures, like their Mathura counterparts, have round faces, transparent and diaphanous robes, partially closed eye and simple but with elaborate decoration. The picture (pic.2.1.6) shows a Sarnath Shakyamuni seated in preaching gesture, with the central finger of the left hand touching the joined thumb and forefinger of the right, a gesture that represents the Buddha giving the First Sermon, and which is in a later period identified as one of

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.sarnathmuseumasi.org/#prettyPhoto/1/> 10 March 2017

the postures of Vairocana Buddha. The Buddha wears a diaphanous robe, and the sculptured folds of the neckline and cuff show that the Buddha is indeed wearing a robe. The dense and snail-shell curls of hair and the *ushnisha* are indicators of the figure's Buddhahood. Surprisingly, this Buddha figure has no *urna* between the eyebrows, which is unusual for Sarnath Buddha figures. The throne and halo are of exquisite design, decorated with the mystical animal figures, the sardulas (rampant leonine creatures) and the makaras (crocodile-like beasts).

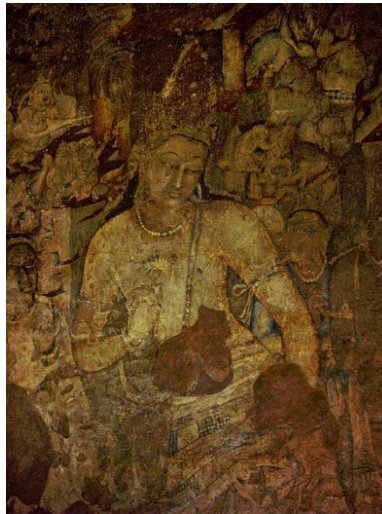
#### **2.1.4 The Ajanta Buddhist Caves**

The terms Buddhist cave, cave temple, and Buddhist grotto refer to a type of chamber usually found on a mountain or in a cliff face that contains sculptured, carved or painted images that are related to Buddhism. Buddhist caves range from a simple single cave through to enormous and complex chambers that include rooms for worship, living, teaching and meditation. Some caves in the past served as regional centers of Buddhist activities. The gorgeous and finely decorated paintings and sculptures based on Buddhist stories made caves into focal points of Buddhist art, and it was from such points of excellence that Buddhist practices and arts spread to other nations and spread along the Silk Road through Central Asian to ancient China. Many famous Buddhist caves can be found along the Silk Road in India, China or Central Asia regions even at the present time and examples include the Ajanta caves in India, the Bamiyan Buddhist caves in Afghanistan, and the Kizil and Dunhuang Grottoes in China, all of which continue to provide information valuable to the study of Buddhist art.

Many ancient caves can be found. The Ajanta caves are the some of the earliest and important Buddhist caves. They are located in the Aurangabad district of western Maharashtra, on the western Ghat mountains along the Waghora River in western Indian. The Ajanta carves were named after Ajintha and re-discovered two hundred years ago by an English soldier John Smith in 1819.

The Ajanta caves were constructed in two periods; the earlier period can

be traced back to the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD (Satavahana dynasty), and the latter and most significant in terms of volume of work done period can be dated to 5th century AD during the Vakatak dynasty, which ran from approximately 250 AD to 500 AD. This second phase of construction was strongly supported by Harishena, the ruler of Vatsagulma, a branch of Vakatak dynasty. Among the Ajanta caves, the early phase of construction, as already mentioned, took place during the kingdoms of the powerful Satavahana rulers, so the early group of caves, that is caves 9, 10, 12, 13, 15A, shall in this work be called the Satavahana period caves. The latter group of caves were excavated when the region was being governed by



the powerful Vakataka dynasty with maximum territorial control during late fifth century.<sup>15</sup>

Pic.2.1.7: Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in form of Padmapani, on the back wall, cave 1, Ajanta cave, India.<sup>16</sup>

The Ajanta rock-cut cave system has about 29 caves in total, and includes a worship hall, Chaitya (relic hall) and dwelling cave. Every cave has amazing Buddhist decorations and paintings of Buddha and Bodhisattva figures

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<sup>15</sup> Rajesh Singh, **An Introduction to the Ajanta Caves with Examples of Six Caves**, Hari Sena Private Limited, Vadodara India.26 Nov. 2012, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodhisattva\\_Padmapani,\\_Ajanta,cave\\_1,\\_India.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bodhisattva_Padmapani,_Ajanta,cave_1,_India.jpg) 12 March 2017

and many decorative themes are those of Jataka tales. The Ajanta caves may have at one point been a Theravada Buddhist center, but from the sculptures of Shakyamuni Buddha and innumerable otherer Buddhas of other worlds and from the large number of Bodhisattva paintings, the caves had obviously been strongly impacted upon by the Mahayana tradition. In particular, the most famous Bodhisattva of all, Avalokiteshvara, appears in the form of Padmapani in a painting in cave 1 (pic.2.1.7). Avalokiteshvara here wears a royal crown and jewel necklace of the Tribhanga shape and holds a lotus in the right hand. This form of the Bodhisattva of compassion is based on a chapter in the Lotus Sūtra (Saddharmapundarika-sūtra), one of the most influential texts in the Mahayana tradition.<sup>17</sup> The style of Ajanta Buddhist art, which was much influenced by Gupta Buddhist art, features highly decorated figures wearing diaphanous robes that indicate the figures wear undergarments.

As we have seen, Buddhism and Buddhist art first appeared in India, and in its early period, the art featured no human-like Buddha figures; the Buddha was represented by symbols such as an empty seat, a footprint, a Dharma wheel, a stupa or a Bodhi tree. This early form of endeavor is sometimes called pre-Buddhist art. Later we see a development of Buddhist art, from the early Mathura art style which was quite local Indian in flavor, through to the finely produces Indo-Greek Gandhara art and on to the more mature Sarnath Buddhist art in Gupta period. As we shall see, these schools were to have a great significance for the creation and development of later Buddhist figures in the regions of the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia and ancient China.

In India, the influence of this earlier Buddhist art is obvious in that of the Pala Buddhist Kingdom art that dates from the period between the 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in some of the art of the Himalayan Kingdoms that was produced in the period from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Some of this art was taken across the

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<sup>17</sup> Denise Patry Leidy, **The Art of Buddhism: An Introduction to Its History and Meaning**, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2008, p. 62.

Himalayan mountains and had an effect on Tibetan Buddhist art as well. Beyond the Indian subcontinent, the art of the early schools influenced the creation of Buddhist art in Central Asia countries, such as in the region of ancient Afghanistan including that of Bamiyan. These influences were carried to China along the Silk Road and the Maritime Silk Road, and eventually the teachings and art were introduced into China, and henceforth began the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures. The southeast Asian countries were also to be affected by an influx of Buddhist art, and this occurred on the Malaya peninsula in the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and into Myanmar, Thailand and Cambodia from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **2.2 An Introduction of the Routes by which Buddha Figures were introduced into China**

This section is concerned with the origins of Chinese Buddha figures, and it deals with the issues of when Buddha figures were introduced into China, by what routes they introduced, and how they were introduced into China.

As we have seen, Buddhism was not directly transmitted into China from India, and neither was Buddha art that featured figures of the Buddha. To understand how Buddha figures were introduced into China, we first have to know when and how Buddhism was introduced into China. The Chinese records contain many references that concern the introduction of Buddhism into China, but it is generally considered by scholars that this happened during the Han dynasty (202 BC-220 AD). One of the references dates to the period of Emperor Ai (2<sup>nd</sup> BC) of Western Han dynasty and is in the *Book of Wei Lue Xi Rong* 《魏略·西戎》.<sup>18</sup> Another reference that discusses Buddhism appearance in China dates to the Year of Yong Ping of Emperor Ming in the Eastern Han dynasty (永平年间58-75 AD).

The literature mentions that the Emperor Ming dreamed of a golden

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<sup>18</sup> Fāng Lì tiān and Hà Fān tián, **The Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (Chinese: 《中国佛教简史》, Pin Yin: Zhōng Guó Fó Jiào Jiǎn Shǐ), Religion and Culture Publisher, 2001, p. 6.



man flying above his palace. He was told by a wise official that the golden man might be the Buddha from the west. Then, a team of envoys led by Can An was dispatched to Xi Yu (西域, or Central Asia), which corresponded to the western regions of China, in search of the golden man. Three years later, the team brought back a Buddha figure and the Sūtra of Forty-Two Chapters among many sūtras and these were carried back by a white horse from Xi Yu, together with Kasyapa-matanga and Dharma-ratna<sup>19</sup>. It may not have been the first time Buddhism had been introduced to China, but the description of this story is considered as the earliest written evidence that mentions a Buddhist sūtra and a Buddha figure being brought into China.

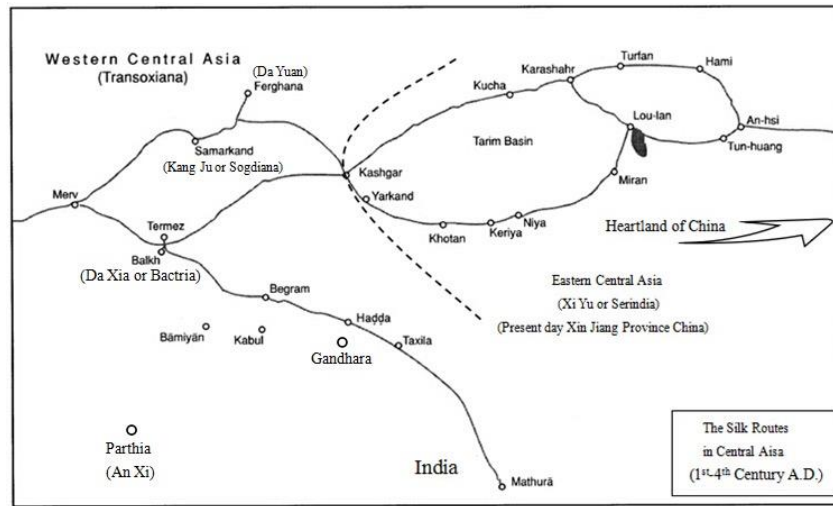
There were two main ways by which Buddhism was brought to China: one was along the Silk Road and the other was via the Maritime Silk Road. However, this work is mainly focused on the way of transmission along the Silk Road. Around two thousand years ago, the Silk Road ran from Chang An through Xi Yu (western regions of China) to Central Asia. It was not only an important trading route and communication channel linking Chang An to Central Asia, Europe and Africa. It was also a medium for cultural exchange. Therefore, in those early times, many merchants and Buddhist missionaries journeyed to Chang An by the Silk Road way.

Xi Yu was a region of great importance in the history of Chinese Buddhism because it was situated in between India to China. Xi Yu was not the name of one kingdom; the term in fact referred to a number of kingdoms in the western region of China during the Han dynasty.

In a narrow sense, the region known as Xi Yu corresponded to a large area of modern-day Xin Jiang province of China, which can be said to include the region from Jade Gate (Yu Men Guan 玉门关) to Pamirs Plateau or Cong Ling (葱岭), and south to the south of Xin Jiang province.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 7.



Map of Western and Eastern Central Asia

However, in a broader sense, Xi Yu not only included present-day Xin Jiang province, but also contained a large swathe of the areas of Western Central Asia that include modern day Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. This broad region was also referred to as Transoxiana.

### 2.2.1. The Western Central Asia

Before Buddhism spread to China from India along the Silk Road, it first flourished in Western Central Asia, also known as Transoxiana, which was comprised of present-day Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and southern Kazakhstan, a region found between the Oxus River (Amu Darya) and the Jaxartes River (Syr Darya).

In ancient times this area encompassed the three main regions of northern Bactria (Ta Hsia 大夏) in the south, Sogdiana (Kang-chu 康居 or Samarkand) in the center, and Khorezm in the delta region of the north.<sup>20</sup> The Kingdom of Ferghana (大宛), the Kingdom of Parthia (安息), the Kushan Empire

<sup>20</sup> Marilyn Martin Rhie, **The Early Buddhist Art of China & Central Asia**, Leiden Boston, 2007, p. 162.

(or Da Yue Zhi大月氏) and Kopen (罽宾) were also included. The regions of Bactria, Sogdiana and Ferghana in Western Central Asia were invaded and dominated by Alexander's army and Greek rulers, who established a branch of the Hellenistic world, the so-called Greco-Bactrian Kingdom during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. It was centered at Bactria. In the 180 BC, the Greek army further invaded into northern India and formed an Indo-Greek Kingdom that lasted until AD 10. The kingdom ruled the region of northwest India, including present day parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and was centered around the Gandhara and Taxila regions. The kingdom formally combined the Hellenistic and Indian cultures into a hybrid Indo-Greek culture that included strong Buddhist elements.

Here then was the route by which Buddhism spread through the ancient kingdoms along the Silk Road from India to China in the Western part of Central Asia.

Buddhism's introduction into the Gandhara region can traced back to the Buddha's period. Buddhist texts record that the Lord Buddha traveled to Udyana (乌仗那国or烏菴國, Uddiyana, in present day Swat Valley, Pakistan and converted a *naga* called Apalala (阿波逻罗龙)<sup>21</sup>.

When Fa Xian (法显334-422 AD) visited Udyana, he found a flourishing Theravada Buddhist tradition there, but this had transformed into a Mahayana tradition by the time of Xuan Zang's visit (602-664 AD).<sup>22</sup> The book *Journey to the West* noted that Udyana at one stage had 1400 monasteries, but some already been abandoned before Xuan Zang's visit. About 18,000 Mahayana monks lived in Udyana and these monks were of five Buddhist schools: the Dharmaguptaka, Mahisaska, Kasyapuya, Sarvāstivāda and Mahasamghika<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 51, No. 2087 **The Journey to West** 《大唐西域記卷第三(八國)烏仗那國》, CBETA Chinese Electronic Tripitaka V1.29, Normalized Version T51n2087\_p0882c07(01).

<sup>22</sup> Xuan Zang, Bian Ji (Original Author), Commentary by Ji Xianlin etc. **Commentary of Journey to West** (《大唐西域記校注》, DATANG Xi YuJI JIAOZHU) Zhong Hua Book company, 1985, p. 86.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., T51n2087\_p0882b21(02).

schools.

A bilingual inscribed pillar was found at Kandahar, Afghanistan. The existence of bilingual inscriptions (including those which had combinations of Greek, Aramaic, and Prakrit) had erected nearby by the Mauryan king Asoka (ca. 268-234 BC) and was especially important because they confirmed the presence there of educated Greeks willing to cooperate with Asoka's move to control the area and to promote Buddhism throughout his empire.<sup>24</sup>

Another Buddhist reference also mentions the presence of Buddhism in the region. King Milinda (165/155-130 BC) was a Greek Buddhist, and one of the kings of the Indo-Greek kingdom in the capital of Sagala, which corresponds to modern day Punjab, Pakistan. The Buddhist text the Milinda Panha or the Questions of Milinda (弥兰王问经 or 那先比丘经) concerns conversations held between Milinda and Nagasena, and is featured in both Theravada Pali Canon and Mahayana Tripitaka.

By the time the Kushan empire had conquered areas in Western Central Asia and replaced the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Buddhism had expanded further into the northern part of Western Central Asia. In fact, the Kushan's territory went as far as north as Ferghana (大宛) and Sogdiana (康居 or Samarkand) and had even extended to Kashgar in the period of the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Buddhism flourished in a number of the regions of Western Central Asia, especially in those areas supported by the King Kanishka. Many early Buddhist monks arrived in Chang An and Luo Yang from the Kingdom of Parthia (安息) and from the Kushan Empire (or Da Yue Zhi 大月氏). Examples of those early monks include An Shi Gao or Lokottara (安世高), who was a prince of ancient Parthia, who arrived in Luo Yang at 148 AD, and Zhi Luo Jia Cheng or Lokaksema (支娄迦讖) from Da Yue Zhi, who arrived in Luo Yang before 147 AD.

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<sup>24</sup> Frank L. Holt, **Alexander The Great and Bactria**, The Formation of a Greek Frontier in Central Asia. Leiden New York 1989, p. 102.

Buddhism in the ancient kingdoms along the Silk Road in the Western Central Asia regions is described in the *Journey to the West*:

The Ancient city of Thokaroi/Tuhkhara Kingdom (吐火罗国故地, found today in the north part of Afghanistan, upstream of Amu Darya or Oxus), was a place where Buddhist monks begin Vassa on 16<sup>th</sup> December and end it on 15<sup>th</sup> March.<sup>25</sup>

The Tirmidh Kingdom (忸蜜国, located near the present-day regions of influx of the Surkhan river and Amu darya), had around 10 Buddhist temples, thousands of monks, stupas and Buddha statues.<sup>26</sup> Over the period of 1964-1966, archaeologists proved that Tirmidh had already had a Greek fort in 2BC and had a Buddhist temple and stupa over the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, which was during the Kushan empire. Buddhist caves, wall paintings, clay sculptures, relief sculptures, and pottery have been found in an area north-west of Kara-Tepe.<sup>27</sup>

Kharun (忽露磨国, which corresponds to present day Dushanbe, the capital city of Tajikistan), had two Buddhist temples and hundreds of Buddhist monks.<sup>28</sup>

Shuman (愉漫国, which was built near present day Dushanbe, Tajikistan) had two Buddhist temples and few monks.<sup>29</sup>

Kuvayana (鞠和衍那国, which was located near the present day Surkhan river and Amu darya and was downstream on the Kafirnihan river), had three Buddhist temples and hundreds of monks.<sup>30</sup>

Khulm (忽憐国, which was in areas north of present day Tash-Qurghan,

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<sup>25</sup> Xuan Zang, Bian Ji (Original Author), Commentary by Ji Xianlin etc. **Commentary of Journey to West** (《大唐西域记校注》, DATANG Xi YuJI JIAOZHU) Zhong Hua Book company, 1985, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

Afghanistan), had around ten Buddhist temples and five hundred monks.<sup>31</sup>

Bactria (缚喝国, the ancient city, which corresponds to present day Balkh, in the northern part of Afghanistan) had hundreds of Buddhist temples and around three thousand monks. It was also popular with Hinayanists.<sup>32</sup> There was a temple in the south-west of city called Nava and enshrined in a building on the south side of the temple were found a Buddha's shower jar and tooth relic. These were about 1 Cun (寸, about 3.3 cm) long and 0.8-9 Cun (about 3 cm) wide respectively.<sup>33</sup> A Buddha's broom, made in Kasa (迦奢草), was also found there.<sup>34</sup> A stupa in north of the temple, measured about two hundred Chi (Chinese measurement).<sup>35</sup>

Gachi or Gaz (揭职国, which may have corresponded to the present-day city of Darrah Gaz, Afghanistan), had around ten Buddhist temples, three hundred monks and was a flourishing Sarvāstivāda center.<sup>36</sup>

From above sources, it can be concluded that when Xuan Zang visited Western Central Asia, he saw a rich and vibrant Buddhist culture in a number of regions and furthermore he noted the numbers of Buddhist temples and monks, the sizes of the stupas, and the presence of Buddha figures. He faithfully recorded all of this in the book, *Journey to the West*.

Although Xuan Zang did leave behind a wonderful picture of the Buddhist culture at key centers, he did not describe details such as the characteristics and style of the Buddha figures he saw. For example, when he visited the Bamiyan region, Bamiyan (梵衍那国, modern day Baghlan, Afghanistan) had about ten temples, thousands of monks and was a flourishing

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

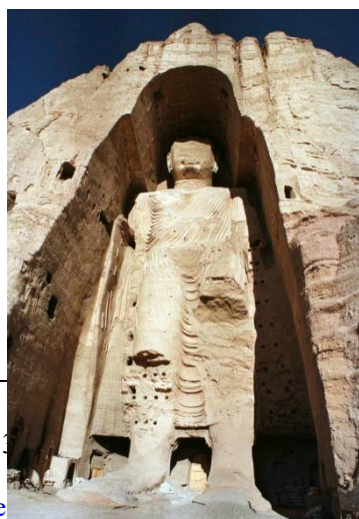
<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

Lokottaravādinah (说出世部) school center.<sup>37</sup> A standing Buddha that had been constructed on a mountain north-east of the city was over one hundred and forty chi (尺) in height (around 55 meters) and was of golden color. A temple in east had been constructed by a previous king. Another standing Buddha on east side of this temple had a height of hundred Chi (around 38 meters) and was made of the material chalcopyrite. It had been cast in two parts and the parts had then been joined together.<sup>38</sup> Moving from the city to the east a distance of two to three li (about 1 to 1.5 km), there was a Mahāparinirvāna Buddha (Reclining Buddha) of length around thousand Chi (ca.333 meters) in a temple.<sup>39</sup>

Incredibly, archaeologists found the two large standing Buddhas made out of the cliff face in the Bamiyan valley that were described by Xuan Zang in his book of *Journey to the West*, but the large Buddha statue in Mahāparinirvāna form has not been found yet. The ancient Bamiyan region was located in the present day Hazarejat region, 230 km north-west of Kabul in Afghanistan. The Bamiyan valley was an important Buddhist center in ancient times, and about 3000 Buddhist caves were excavated on the cliffs that housed the two large Buddha figures. The larger Buddha with height of 55 meters in its niche and a smaller one with a height of 33 meters are, or were, of size similar to that noted in the *Journey to the West*.

Pic.2.2.1: Buddha of Bamiyan, dating to ca. Fifth century, Kabul, Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup>



<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.thebuddhas-taliban-afghanistan.com/0/rebuild-bamiyan-buddhas-taliban-afghanistan> 13 March 2017

The larger one was constructed around the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (pic.2.2.1), and the main parts of its body were carved from the cliffs. The Buddha's robe was decorated and modeled in clay mixed with straw, and coated with stucco, and the lower arms supported by wooden framework. The biggest Buddha of Bamiyan had been damaged or defaced many times in history, but at least some idea of its original majesty can be appreciated from the pictures and documents that date to March 2001. The head and face were probably missing from ancient times, but two elongated earlobes were still visible in 2001, and from the broken remains of the two missing arms it is likely that the Buddha's left hand made the *varada* mudra (与愿印) whilst the right hand formed the *abhaya* mudra. The Buddha was originally in carmine red and wore a thin and full folded *saṅghāṭi* that covered both shoulders and went down to his ankles. The dense folds of the *saṅghāṭi* were depicted with thin lines. This style of robe was produced in a lot of Gupta Buddhist art, and was usually reserved for statues of Shakyamuni Buddha. Unfortunately, the large Buddha of Bamiyan, which was of 55 meters in height, was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001 under orders from Mullah Mohammed Omar. Even up to the present, all that can be seen of the larger Buddha at Bamiyan is a trefoil niche on the cliff face.

According to Xuan Zang's description in the *Journey to the West*, Kapisa was an important center on the Silk Road, and various goods that were traded on Silk Road from different kingdoms could be found in Kapisa.<sup>41</sup> Kapisa or Kapisi (迦毕试国, which corresponds to modern day Begram, 62 kilometers north of Kabul, Afghanistan) had hundreds of monasteries, and as many as six thousand monks from Mahayana Buddhism schools studied and lived there.<sup>42</sup> Kapisa was a palace of Kanishka in Kushan period, and in *The Comments on The Journey to the West*, Ji Xianlin notes that the Gandhara style of Buddhist arts had been found in the Shotorak monastery, in Kapisa.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 140.



The place called Mes Aynak, which is located 40 kilometers southeast of Kabul in Logar province, Afghanistan, and is around 90 kilometers south of Begram or ancient Kapisa is believed to have been part of Kapisa in ancient times. The discovery of Mes Aynak monastery complex can traced back to 1973, when a large number of early Buddha figures and stupas were found there. Mes Aynak was a huge Buddhist monastery in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>44</sup> Buddha figures found in the Mes Aynak temple complex have been dated to Kushan period or later, and most are of Gandhara Buddhist art style.

The stone relief sculpture of a standing Dipankar Buddha (pic.2.2.2) found at Mes Aynak presents the Buddha wearing the folds of a *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders, with the right hand in gesture of reassurance (*abhaya mudra*), whilst the left hand is holding his robe, The Buddha's hair is of the Kapardin style. A figure on the upper right of the Buddha kneels down, whilst another figure on the Buddha's right holds a flower. Yet another figure put his long hair under Buddha's right foot, and four other smaller figures adorn the front of the base. The Buddha was originally gilded and painted. This sculpture of Dipankara Buddha shows many of the characteristics of typical Gandhara Buddhist art. The style of the Mes Aynak statues is similar to the ancient artifacts that were found in the vicinity of Kabul that date to 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>45</sup>

Ancient Sogdiana was a state situated to the north of Tokharestan, with its center at Samarkand,<sup>46</sup> and was a site which corresponds to the present-day city of Smarqand in Uzbekistan. It was known as Kang Ju (康居) in the Han dynasty, and Kang Guo (康国) in the Tang period, and Sa Mo Jian Guo (飒秣建国) notes Xuan Zang in the *Journey to the West*. During the period of the 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, an important Chinese gate could be found 3.5 km to the north of Smarqand.<sup>47</sup> This

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<sup>44</sup> Hamid Naweed, *The Art Through the Ages in Afghanistan*, Author House, 16 Dec. 2014, p. 176.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>46</sup> B.N. Puri, *Buddhism in Central Asia*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1993, p. 13.

<sup>47</sup> Xuan Zang, Bian Ji (Original Author), Commentary by Ji Xianlin etc. *The Commentary of*

gate indicated the closeness of the relationship between the Sogdiana civilization and ancient China. Xuan Zang did not make reference to Buddhist culture in this kingdom when he visited, but around during the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, many Buddhist monks travelled from this region into China, and later many Sogdians migrated to



various territories of ancient China, including Dun Huang and Chang An.

Pic.2.2.2: Gandhara style of Dipankara Buddha from ancient Mes Aynak monastery site, dating to 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Logar, Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup>

Pic.2.2.3: Gandhara style of Buddha from Fayaz Tepa monastery site, Termize, Uzbekistan. Dating to first to second century A.D. Collecting in Tashkent national museum, Uzbekistan.<sup>49</sup>

It seems likely that Buddhism was introduced into Sogdiana when Kanishka conquered it. Some academics suggest that Buddhism had reached Sogdiana at an even earlier time, and it had then flourished along with the Mazdean religion.<sup>50</sup> In any case, after the introduction of Buddhism into Sogdiana,

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**Journey to West** (大唐西域记校注, DATANG Xi YuJI JIAOZHU) Zhong Hua Book company, 1985, p. 88.

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/50665564529056502/> 15 March 2017

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.livius.org/museum/tashkent-national-museum-of-uzbek-history/>

15 March 2017

<sup>50</sup> Moti Chandra, **Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India**, Abhinav Publications E-37 Huaz

the regions art was greatly influenced by Indian traditions. Excavations at Termiz and elsewhere by the Russians archeologists have yielded the remains of many Buddhist Viharas and on some of the sculptures obtained the influence of the art of Mathura is evident.<sup>51</sup> Many Buddhist sites were found in the southern part of old Termiz, in Uzbekistan. The Fayaz-Tepa monastery is one among many Buddhist sites discovered. The site was a small Buddhist temple located near the old city of Termiz, in the south east of Uzbekistan. The complex, which measures 34 by 117 meters and dates to the first century BC, consists of a stupa (a dome-shaped religious shrine) and a monastery.<sup>52</sup> A stone carved seated Shakyamuni Buddha figure (pic.2.2.3) has been excavated from the Fayaz-Tepa monastery site and it has been dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. The figure is of typical Gandhara style and is now part of a collection in the Tashkent National Museum in Uzbekistan.

Merchants and missionaries gathered in the region of Sogdiana. Many traders had gone to different part of Central Asia and established colonies, and they were in contact with Buddhism and its culture in other parts of Central Asia. Sogdiana monks also played their part in the transmission of Buddhist culture to China.<sup>53</sup> Among the early Sogdiana monks who came directly from Sogdiana and eventually settled in China were Kang Ju 康巨 (187-199 AD), Kang Meng-hsiang 康孟详 (190-220 AD) and Kang Seng Kai 康僧铠 (Samghavarman; arrived at Lo-yang in 252 AD). Many of these monks were famous early Buddhist translators in China.

Ferghana, which in Chinese is *Dawan* or *Dayuan* (大宛), was an ancient kingdom on the Silk Road in Western Central Asian that was located near present day eastern Uzbekistan. The kingdom frequently appeared in Chinese chronicles. The connection between China and Ferghana can traced back to

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Khas New Delhi, 1977, p. 97.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

<sup>52</sup> Edited by Neville Agnew, **Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road**, The Getty Conservation Institute, 2009, p. 59.

<sup>53</sup> B.N. Puri, **Buddhism in Central Asia**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1993, p. 13.

Western Han dynasty. The region was visited by Zhang Qian ca. 127/126 BCE., who was the official ambassador from China, and this is noted in the *Shi Ji* (《史记》) Chap. 123:

Dayuan lies southwest of the territory of the Xiongnu, some 10,000 Li [4,158 km] directly west of China. The people are also settled on the land, plowing the fields and growing rice and wheat. They also make wine out of grapes. The region has many fine horses which sweat blood; [apparently due to skin parasites which caused sores] their forebears are supposed to have been foaled from heavenly horses. The people live in houses in fortified cities, there being some seventy or more cities of various sizes in the region. The population numbers several hundred thousand. The people fight with bows and spears and can shoot from horseback. Dayuan is bordered on the north neighboring Kangju, on the west neighboring the kingdom of the Great Yuezhi, on the southwest neighboring Daxia (Bactria), on the northeast neighboring the land of the Wusun, and on the east neighboring Yumi (Keriya) and Yutian (Khotan).<sup>54</sup>

It is believed that the links between Ferghana and China contributed to the boosting of communications, commercial trading, and cultural exchange with regions further west. Buddhism took hold in the fertile Ferghana valley, located in the most prosperous parts of present-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and in the middle and lower reaches of the Amu-darya. Over this whole area, Soviet archaeologists found the remains of Buddhist monasteries that housed Buddhist art,

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<sup>54</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fergana>

大宛在匈奴西南，在汉正西，去汉可万里。其俗土著，耕田，田稻麦。有蒲陶酒。多善马，马汗血，其先天马子也。有城郭屋室。其属邑大小七十馀城，众可数十万。其兵弓矛骑射。其北则康居，西则大月氏，西南则大夏，东北则乌孙，东则扞鞬、于窴。于窴之西，则水皆西流，注西海；其东水东流，注盐泽。盐泽潜行地下，其南则河源出焉。多玉石，河注中国。而楼兰、姑师邑有城郭，临盐泽。盐泽去长安可五千里。匈奴右方居盐泽以东，至陇西长城，南接羌，鬲汉道焉。卷一百二十三 大宛列传第六十三 《史记》

and the earliest art dates to the beginning of the second century.<sup>55</sup>

From the research of Buddhism in Western Central Asia, we can observe that Buddhism that reached the lands of the Transoxiana region can dated back to the Ashoka period. The Ashoka Pillar and edicts in Kandahar, Afghanistan provide useful data that supports this idea. The Kandahar edicts in both Greek and Aramaic indicated that King Ashoka had promoted Buddhism in this region in the 3rd BC, and the Buddhist text the Milinda Panha or the Questions of Milinda proved that the Greeks followed Buddhism around 150-130 BC in the area that is now in Pakistan. Finally, under the control of Kushan empire in the Western Central Asia, Buddhism reached the regions of Sogdiana and Ferghana during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Archaeologists discovered a huge stupa and Buddhist fine artwork that including stone carved Buddha figures and clay Buddha figures at the Mes Aynak temple complex in Logar province, Kabul, Afghanistan. The discovered Buddha figures were of a style similar to that of Gandhara art during the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Furthermore, other Buddhist sculptures found in Termez were clearly influenced by Gandhara art. Buddhist monasteries and Buddhist art discovered in Ferghana, which corresponds to present day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan can be dated back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. The evidence shows that Buddhism and Buddha figures had been introduced into the Transoxiana region (Western Central Asia) by the Kushan period or earlier, and that moreover Buddhism was flourishing there by then. We can now link all the ancient kingdoms together, and this enables us to strongly suggest the route along which Buddhism and Buddha figures moved along the Silk Road from ancient India through the Western Central Asia regions and ultimately into China.

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<sup>55</sup> Edited by Jonathan A. Silk, **Buddhism in China Collected Papers of Erik Zurcher**, Leiden Boston 2013, p. 366.

### 2.2.2 The Eastern Central Asia

This part will mainly be concerned with the routes along which Buddhism and Buddha figures first moved into Eastern Central Asia, or Xi Yu (西域), when used in its narrow sense. In this section, I will use the word 'Xi Yu' instead of Eastern Central Asia.

The book *Biography of Western Region (Xi Yu)* or (《汉书西域传》 Han Shu Xi Yu Zhuan) mentions that Xi Yu region had 36 kingdoms at the time of Zhang Qian (张骞), who led envoys to Central Asia (ca.138 BC). He eventually reached the kingdom of Bactria (大夏), which was his final destination. When he passed through the Xi Yu region, many famous ancient kingdoms existed, such as the Kingdom of Wu-Sun (乌孙国), the Kingdom of Khotan (于阗国), the Kingdom of Kucha or Kuche (龟兹国), the Kingdom of Kroraina or Loulan (楼兰国) and later named Shan-shan, the Kingdom of Yarkand (莎车国), the Kingdom of Karashahr (阿耆尼), the Kingdom of Kashgar (疏勒国 or 喀什) and the Kingdom of Niya (尼雅古国).

Furthermore, there exists a lot of other evidence that shows the connections between the Western Han dynasty and Xi Yu during 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. In 108 BC, the emperor Han Wu Di (汉武帝) ordered the princess Liu Xijun (刘细君) daughter of Liu Jian, the state king of Jiang Du (江都王刘建) to marry the king of Wu Sun in order to strengthen the relationship between their states. The Han dynasty established military headquarters (西域都护府) in Wulei (乌垒 west of Karashahr) to control the kingdoms in Xi Yu and even govern the kingdoms in Western Central Asia, such as the Ferghana (大宛) during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. The emperor Han Wu Di (汉武帝) ordered General Li Liguang (李利广) to go to Ferghana to obtain horses in 104 BC. Therefore, we can conclude from the above information that although the Han dynasty had official connections with Xi Yu during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, unofficial cultural exchange or trading had probably existed at an earlier time.

Kashgar, the present-day city of Ka Shi (喀什) city in Xin Jiang province, also referred to as Shu Le in Western Han dynasty, was one kingdom in Xi Yu. Kashgar was one of the three major feudatories of the Han empire and had been conquered by Kanishka early in second century BC. The other two states were Yarkhand and Khotan.<sup>56</sup> Kashgar, located on the Silk Road, was a gate connecting Xi Yu and Western Central Asia. From Kashgar, the road headed west to Fergana before it went through Sogdiana and on to Bactria or the Central part of Western Central Asia.

Buddhism introduced to Kashgar can be traced back to Kanishka period according to the record by Xuan Zang about princely hostages from Sha-la or Kashgar residing in a Buddhist convent as result of Kanishka's conquest of that region.<sup>57</sup> The original words are recorded in the *Journey to the West*.<sup>58</sup> This message shows that the prince already knew about Buddhism and that when he went back to Kashgar to succeed to the throne, he probably became a supporter of the propagation of Buddhism in Kashgar. Many Buddhist sites have been discovered in Kashgar region, and one example is the Topa Tim stupa found 30 km east of Kashgar. It was 100 m round at the base and may date to as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which makes it contemporary with and similar in form to the great Dharmajika stupa at Taxila.<sup>59</sup> Kurghan Tim was built on a square base like many large structures and small reliquary stupas found in in Gandhara.<sup>60</sup> Another Buddhist cave that has been discovered lay about 20 km west of Kashgar. It was

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<sup>56</sup> Rafi-us Samad, **The Grandeur of Gandhara, the Ancient Buddhist Civilization of the Swat, Pershawar, Kabul and Indus Valleys**, Algora Publishing New York, 2011, p. 237.

<sup>57</sup> B.N. Puri, **Buddhism in Central Asia**, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi. 1993, p. 324.

<sup>58</sup> (闻诸先志曰：昔健驮罗国迦腻色迦王威被邻国，化洽远方，治兵广地，至葱岭东，河西蕃维，畏威送质。迦腻色加王既得质子，特加礼命，寒暑改馆，冬居度度诸国，夏还迦毕试国，春秋止健陀罗国。故质子三时住处各建伽蓝。今此迦蓝即夏居之所建也。故诸屋壁图画质子，容貌服饰颇同中夏。其后得还本国，心存故居，虽阻山川，不替供养。) Xuan Zang, *Bian Ji* (Original Author), Commentary by Ji Xianlin etc. **The Commentary of Journey to West** (《大唐西域记校注》, DATANG Xi YuJI JIAOZHU) Zhong Hua Book company, 1985, pp. 138-139.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Tucker, **The Silk Road: China and the Karakorum Highway-A Travel Companion**, I.B. Tauris London- New York, 2015, p. 156.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

named Sanxiandong (三仙洞) or Three Immortals Caves, and the construction at the site belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. A damaged seated Buddha statue and colored Buddhist painting were found in a cave that is regarded as part of earliest Buddhist sites in Xi Yu.

After Kashgar, the route separated into two ways east towards Dunhuang, the southern and northern routes:

**The Southern Route:** From Kashgar, Buddhism along the southern route moved through Yarkand, Khotan, Niya, Miran, Lou-lan and thence to Dunhuang. Yarkand was an important center on the Silk Road, and the early period of Buddhism introduced into this region can traced back to the Kushan empire when the Kanishka conquered Kashgar and Yarkand. Khotan was an ancient Buddhist kingdom that had been established in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The introduce of Buddhism into Khotan took place during the region of king Vijaya Sambhava, who was the third king of Khotan. He reined in about the 76 BC.

In 260 AD, the first Chinese monk Zhu Shixing (朱士行) travelled from Chang An to Khotan and obtained a Sanskrit text, later translated into Chinese as the *Pancavimsatisahasrika-Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* 《放光般若经》. After Khotan, the route onward east passed through Niya, Miran, Lou-lan and several important places before reaching Dun Huang.

**The Northern Route:** On the northern route, Buddhism spread along on the sites of Kucha or Kuche, Karashahr, Turfan and then along the north-east sections of the Silk Road until reaching Dun Huang.

Kucha, was one of the most ancient and largest kingdoms among the many in Xi Yu. It was established in the 3<sup>rd</sup> BC and lasted as a Buddhist center until the 14th century. It was located in what is now present-day Aksu prefecture in Xin Jiang province, China. The ancient kingdom had closes connections with ancient India and China. Buddhism was introduced into Kucha at a very early time. The famous Kizil Buddhist caves were located in the Kucha region, and it is



believed these caves were excavated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Buddhism in Kucha was originally of the Sarvāstivāda and Hinanaya schools, but later shifted into Mahayana Buddhism.

One of most important Chinese Buddhist translators, Kumārajīva, was born in Kucha in 344 AD; his father was from present-day Kashmir and mother from Kucha. He took ordination as a sramanera at 7 years of age and was brought to Kashmir at the age of 9 with his mother. In Kashmir, he studied Sarvāstivādan Buddhism but on the way back to Kucha in the kingdom of Kashgar, he learned about the Mahayana teachings and in the latter half of his life, he devoted himself to teaching Mahayana Buddhism in the kingdom of Kucha and central region of ancient China. His translation of Buddhist texts has a very important place in Chinese Buddhism.

Karashahr was an ancient kingdom in Yanqi. It was located east of Kucha and was also known as the Agni kingdom (阿耆尼国) according to the *Journey to the West*. The name Yanqi is still used today. Karashahr was in the Tokharian region, which had been occupied by Indo-European people who believed in Buddhism. As opposed to Khotan, Kucha and Karashahr were centers of Hinayana Buddhism as represented by the Sarvāstivāda school.<sup>61</sup> Shorchuk, about 65 kilometers away from Karashahr, was an important Buddhist area. Large numbers of Buddhist artifacts were found at the Ming-oi (明屋) site in Shorchuk. Among the artifacts found there by A. Von le Coq was a statue of a standing Buddha executed in the Gandhara style.<sup>62</sup>

After the region of Turfan came Dunhuang, a major hub on the ancient Silk Road. Dunhuang was the meeting point of the southern and northern routes of the Silk Road, and from it the road continued east to Chang An.

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<sup>61</sup> Editors: C.E. Bosworth and the late M.S. Asimov, **History of Civilizations of Central Asia-Volume IV: The Age of Achievement: AD. 750 to the end of the fifteenth century, Part Two the Achievements**, UNESCO Publishing, 2000, p. 78.

<sup>62</sup> Rafi-us Samad, **The Grandeur of Gandhara: The Ancient Buddhist Civilization of the Swat, Peshawar, Kabul and Indus Valleys**, Algora Publishing New York, 2011, p. 240.

Dunhuang was located west of the Hexi corridor and was the administrative center for the Han dynasty government to monitor the kingdoms in Xi Yu. The Han central government sent soldiers from the central region of China to Dunhuang to guard the safety of travelers along the Silk road. Its unique location made Dunhuang an international and multicultural region, where not only the Hans but also the Sogdian, Xiongnu, Da Yue Zhi, Persian, Turkic, Tocharian, Indo-European and Mongolian people lived. When the people from Western Central Asia and Xi Yu immigrated into the region, they brought cultures with them and all those cultures merged and coalesced with the Chinese culture in Dunhuang.

Dunhuang was an important Buddhist center not only because the Dunhuang grottoes were located there, but also because the Chinese culture, Central Asian cultures and even the Indian culture were merged there. The Dunhuang grottoes, or Mogao caves of a thousand Buddhas grottoes were called the Mogao Ku Qian Fo Dong (莫高窟千佛洞) in Chinese. These caves are one of the great treasures of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist arts and provide much evidence of the cultures from the east and west that became merged there. The early excavations of the Mogao grottoes are commonly dated to around 366 AD and were done under the direction of the monk Yue Zun. Buddhist literature records the variety of languages found in the Mogao grottoes, and included are Chinese, Khotanese, Parthian, Bactrian, Sanskrit, middle-permian, Sogdian, Tocharian and Uighur writings. Chinese, Central Asia, and Gandhara style Buddhist sculptures and wall paintings were found preserved in the caves.

As noted, scholars generally date the excavation of the Mogao grottoes to the 4th century, but some believe Buddhism first arrived at Dunhuang earlier than the 4th century. Many Buddhist monks from Central Asia and the Xi Yu kingdoms had passed through the Dunhuang region on their way to Chang An or to central China. For example, An Shi Gao, who was a Parthian monk and a traveler along the Silk Road, passed through the Xi Yu kingdoms and arrived at Luo Yang

in 147 AD. He translated many sūtras from the Sarvāstivāda school. The Lokaksema or Zhi Lou Jia Chen (支婁迦讖), who hailed from Yue Zhi (月氏), arrived at Luo Yang in about 167 AD and translated many Mahayana sūtras. They were the earliest foreign translators who came along the Silk Road to the central regions of China.

From the study in this section, we can see how Buddhism and Buddha figures travelled along the routes of the Silk Road and came to China. First, the early Buddhism that was introduced into Western Central Asia was of the Asoka period. Remnants of Buddhist culture were discovered in the regions of Gandara and in parts of what is present-day Afghanistan. Later, Buddhism spread from Western Central Asia to Bactria, Sogdiana, Ferghana in the northern part of Western Central Asia, and then even further to Kashgar, Yarkand in Eastern Central Asia or present-day Xin Jiang province. This occurred as the Kunshan's territory expanded. After Buddhism arrived at Kashgar, it travelled along the two ways that the Silk Road split; along the Southern and Northern branches at Xin Jiang. The roads along which the early Buddhists travelled met again at Dunhuang, and the path of Buddhism then continued on into the central regions of China.

In conclusion, Buddhism was introduced into China from India in three main ways. First, it was introduced by Buddhist missionaries who had been sent by the sangha or kings for the purposes of propagating and teaching Buddhism. Second, it entered China by the way of immigration of people from Western Central Asia to China. It was people from places such as Ferghana, Sogdiana or Parthian who brought the culture of Buddhism to China. Third, traders and merchants brought Buddhism into China along with their goods and wares. Traders are of course notoriously clever border crossers, and the traders along the Silk road brought a whole range of foreign culture with them into China. It seems likely that Buddhist monks too travelled along with the traders on their caravans in those ancient times.

Ji Xianlin notes that:

“Buddhism was introduced into China from the west of India to Bactria (大夏) then east to Kashar (疏勒), then east to Kucha (龟兹) and Karashahr (焉耆)..... From a translation perspective, the Kucha and Karashahr languages influenced the vocabulary of Buddhist texts, but not the Khotan language. So, I have more confidence that Buddhism spread to the east along the northern branch of the Silk Road”.<sup>63</sup>

Based on vocabulary research, Ji Xianlin formulated two ways by which Buddhism spread to China.<sup>64</sup>

- 1) India → Bactria (Da Rouzhi) → China  
Buddha → bodo, boddo, boudo → Fu Tu (浮屠)
- 2) India → Small kingdoms in Central Asia → China  
Buddha → but etc. → Fo (佛)

Anyway, archaeological evidence suggests that many of the Buddha figures found along the route of Buddhism into China were of Gandhara style. For example, the Buddha figures discovered in the Mes Aynak temple in Afghanistan were typically Gandhara style as were figures found in the Fayauz-Tepa monastery in Uzbekistan which date to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century. In Karashahr, large numbers of Buddha figures were discovered in Ming-oi (明屋), Shorchuk and many of them were of Gandhara style. Some evidence also shows that other Buddha figures from Termed, Afghanistan were influenced by Mathura Buddhist art.

### 2.3 The Buddha Figures in Xi Yu Regions

Xi Yu (西域) had connections and was much influenced by Central Asia and Indian cultures from early times. Buddhism arrived in the Xi Yu region first, then moved east into the central regions of China. The Buddha figures in Xi Yu were prototypes that had Central Asian and Indian characteristics. These

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<sup>63</sup> Ji Xianlin, edited by Wang Yuechuang, *The Selected of Articles of Ji Xianlin* 《季羨林学术精粹》, Shan Dong Youyi publisher, pp. 204-205.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

figures then underwent modification as Buddhism encountered local and Chinese cultural factors. In this part of the study, we will examine the characteristics of early Xi Yu Buddha figures and also pay attention to their development. This will involve looking at the factors that influenced their development. As we shall see, Buddhism and its art were involved in a complex interaction with local Chinese culture that was itself on its own path of growth and change.

### **2.3.1 The Early Characteristics of Buddha Figures in Xi Yu**

There is considerable evidence that suggests that Buddhism was introduced into Xi Yu region as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and probably earlier. Buddhist archeological remains and other data such as the San Xian Dong (三仙洞) or Three Immortals Caves in Kashgar and the Kurghan Tim stupa or Topa Tim stupa which traced back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD support this hypothesis. The styles of Buddha figures in Xi Yu can be classified into five types: The Gandhara Style, the Indian style, the Central Asian style, the Xi Yu style and the Chinese style, but it appears that the Gandhara style appeared in Xi Yu at an earlier date than the others. Along the Silk Road in the Xi Yu region, the Gandhara style of Buddha figures have been found in many regions such as Kashgar, Khotan, and Miran on the southern route and Kucha, Shorchuk, and Karashahr on the northern route.

In ancient times, Xin Yu regions flourished as Buddhist center, and large numbers of Buddhist temples and caves were constructed in different regions. The Kizil Caves (克孜尔石窟) was one of the most important and earliest Buddhist cave complexes to have been preserved. They were located 7 km south-east of present-day county Bai cheng (拜城县) in Xin Jiang province, on the northern route of Silk Road and were in the ancient Kingdom of Kucha. The Kizil Caves were also named the Qian Fo Dong or Qian Fo Caves (千佛洞). The caves were in fact several sets of grottoes that had been excavated from rock faces. The caves contained a large number of Buddha figures including the Buddha figures, and relief sculptures. However, most of the Buddhist art was preserved in the form

of paintings.

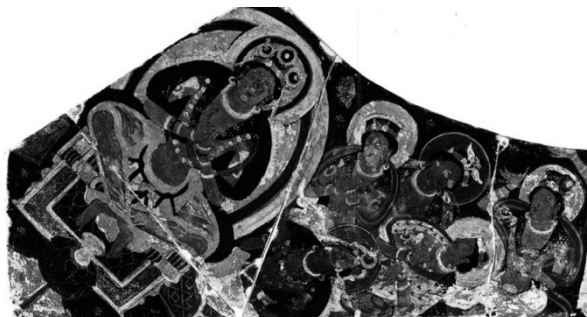
The Kizil Caves were excavated in different periods, and the characteristics and themes of the Buddha figures and painting seems to correspond thematically to the four periods of history of Kucha Buddhism. The early excavation period was from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the center cave has still not been constructed at that time. Next came the period from the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century to the end the 5<sup>th</sup> century and during this time caves 13, 32, 38, 171 and 172 were constructed. A period of flourish on the part of the artisans and their benefactors was from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries when caves 7, 8, 13, 69, 80, 186, 100, 101, 104, 196, 219, 205, and 207 were produced. Finally, the period from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries was a period of decline, and caves 107, 180, 197, and 227 were made then.<sup>65</sup>

From study of Kizil Caves, I found that the Buddha figures from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries had characteristics much influenced by the Gandhara style. Many figures from that period at Kizil had a high nose bridge, curly hair, clarity of muscle, Greek-type face, long and waved robe, robes covering both shoulders - typical characteristics of Gandhara style. An interesting example is the painting of Maitreya Bodhisattva preaching Dharma located on the roof top of cave no. 76 of the Kizil Caves (pic.2.3.1). His hands make the turning of the wheel of the law gesture, and he is seated with his ankles crossed in a typical Maitreya posture. There are jewelry decorations on the long and curly hair and his face is of a Greek type. He wears two rounded ear rings and necklaces, and several large pieces of jewelry decorate his upper body. There are five followers of similar appearance located to the left of Maitreya Bodhisattva. These characteristics of Gandhara style are commonly found in the early paintings at the Kizil Caves.

Pic.2.3.1 Painting of Maitreya Bodhisattva from top roof of cave no.76 of Kizil Cave, Xin Jiang Province, China. Dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, A.D.

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<sup>65</sup> Li Rui  
December 2015, pp. 81

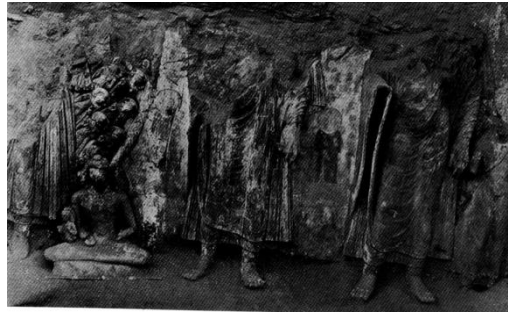
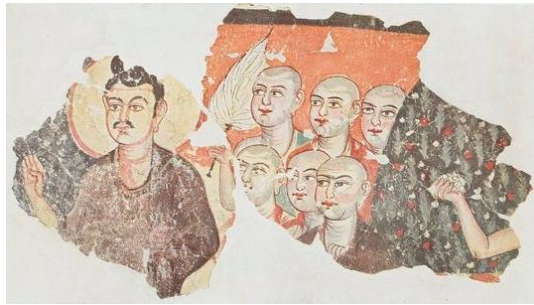


The creation of Buddha figures in the Kizil Caves was not only influenced by Gandhara style, but also effected by Indian art styles such as the art of Mathura. In the Kizil art from caves constructed around the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, the influence of Gupta art is clearly observable. The Buddha figures and illustrated content of the Jataka stories in the early period of Kizil Caves was for the most part of the Sarvāstivāda school type, which was always refers to as Hinayana (小乘) in traditional Chinese Buddhism. The school flourished throughout north and northwest of India in regions that correspond to present-day Pakistan, Kashmir and parts of Afghanistan. These regions at the time were under the control of King Kanishka. Sarvāstivāda practitioners and artists and their faith spread along the Silk Road into Xi Yu kingdoms, and regions like Kucha developed as centers of Sarvāstivāda. The school had been creating Buddha figures for centuries, long before the rise of Mahayana Buddhism in the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

A wall painting of Shakyamuni Buddha figure done in Gandhara style was found in a ruined Buddhist shrine in the ancient kingdom of Miran on the Southern route of Silk Road. This was excavated by Sir Aural Stein in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Buddha figure is now in a collection in the national museum in New Delhi, India (pic.2.3.2). The Shakyamuni Buddha is in standing position and dressed in a red-brown robe. There is no urna between the eyes, and the long and curly hair is tied on the top of head in typical Gandhara style. The face is Hellenistic, with moustache and open eyes that look to the front. The Buddha raises his right hand in gesture of fearlessness (*abhaya mudra*), and six disciples with shaved heads are behind him. All the details in the painting are derived from Hellenistic models. An important point here is that the Buddha and disciples have large straight eyes that are different to the elongated slanting eyes that appear on all figures painted later in Central Asia and the Far East.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> M.A. Stein, **On Ancient Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and North-West China Volumes 1**, England/Longdon, 1933, pp. 120-212.



Pic.2.3.2: Wall painting of Gandhara style of Shakyamuni Buddha and six monks from ancient Kingdom of Miran, excavated by Aurel Stein in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, collecting in national museum New Dhelhi, India. Dating to 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> century.

Pic.2.3.3: Gandhara style of damaged Buddha figure from Rawak Vihara Khotan Region, Xin Jiang province, China. Dating to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>67</sup>

Much like the shrines in Kucha, a large Buddhist shrine was found in the ancient Khotan region on the southern route of the Silk Road. This was the Rawak Vihara, which was one of most ancient Buddhist sites in Khotan region. The exploration team of M.A. Stein discovered large numbers of Buddha figures in the Rawak Vihara that show the details of style of Greco-Buddhist sculptures of Gandhara that belonged to 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, many of the Buddha figures had damaged upper body but better preserved lower parts of the body. This was connected to the materials used in the making of the figures. They were made from plaster and stucco, and the original statues may have been colored. One of the key figures is in standing position wearing folding robes. The robes cover both shoulders and go right down to the ankles. The left hand is holding the robe and the right hand is missing. The right hand was probably making *abhaya mudra*. Some of the figures that are missing their upper body parts can be safely classified as Gandhara models of Gautama Buddha (pic.2.3.3). These fine figures of Gandhara Buddha style tell us a lot about the faith of Khotan Buddhists.

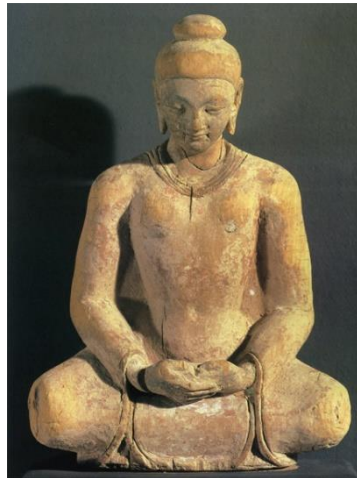
Buddha figures from the 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> centuries in the Xi Yu region were also

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<sup>67</sup> <http://www.xenophon-mil.org/china/centralasia/ancientkhotan062s.htm>  
20 March 2017



influenced by Indian style (pic.2.3.4). An example is a wooden carved seated Buddha statue found in Tumshuk, which is located between the Kashgar and Kucha regions and is dated to 5<sup>th</sup> century. The Buddha is sitting in meditation posture, and he has a round and youthful face and long earlobes but is without *ūrṇā* and *ushnisha*. The body beneath the diaphanous robe is indicated by carved fold lines at the neckline and cuffs and suggests that the Buddha is wearing a *saṅghāṭi*. This type of smooth, unwrinkled robe is reminiscent of robes present in some of the masterly sculptures of the Indian Gupta dynasty found at Sarnath.<sup>68</sup>



Pic.2.3.4: Wooden seated Buddha from Tumshuk, Kucha regions, Xin Jiang province, China. Dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup>

Most of the early Buddha figures preserved in Xi Yu are derived from the Gandara style. But the materials used to make them are different from those used in the Gandhara region. As already discussed, Buddha figures made in Gandhara were usually sculptured out of stone, but the Buddha figures of the Xi Yu region that have been found are mostly wall paintings and sculptures made from plaster or stucco. Even so, the Gandhara artists' work was still influencing the

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<sup>68</sup> John P. O'Neill. Editor in chief, M. E. D. Laing, editor, Peter Oldenburg, **Designer, Along the Ancient Silk Routes Central Asian Art: From the West Berlin State Museums**. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1982, p. 114.

<sup>69</sup> <https://venetianred.wordpress.com/tag/tumshuk/> 25 March 2017

Buddhist art of the Xi Yu region lasting as late as the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

### **2.3.2 The Merge of Xi Yu Style Buddha Figures**

In our study in the previous section, we saw that the early Buddha figures in Xi Yu were strongly influenced by Gandhara styles. But it is important to note that the Buddha figures in Xi Yu were also influenced by the Mathura, Sarnath, and Gupta styles, and the classic example of this is the Buddha figures discovered in the Rawak shrine, Khotan, which have been dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The important regions in Xi Yu included the Kashgar, Khotan, Kucha and Loulan civilizations that had been ruled from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD by Indo-European people or Tokharoi (吐火罗人) who spoke the Tocharian language, which was an Indo-European language. This region of Xi Yu had a wide variety of people living there, including Tokharois, Hans, Persians, and Sogdians. Some of these folks were nomadic tribes and traders and thus Xi Yu became multicultural in a very early period. It became a melting pot of cultures as the various groups interacted and learned from each other.

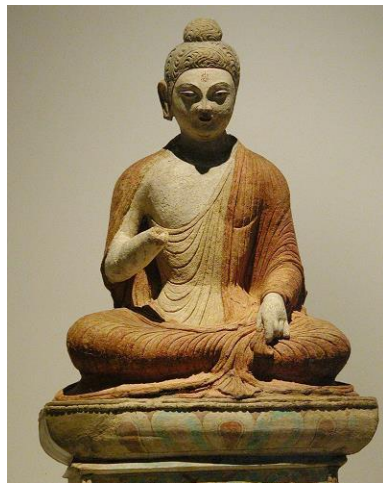
Evidence shows that the Buddha figures, paintings, and reliefs were not made by the Xi Yu local people or monks; they were usually created by experts who had been hired from other regions. For example, many paintings were done by professional painters from Western Central Asia, who signed their signature in a corner of the painting after completing the work. On one painting, no. 207 from Kizil Caves, the painter not only signed his name, he also painted pictures of himself and with signed the work with the name Dudukasya. The artist wore a kind of wig in the Egyptian style, and his facial features suggested he may have been a Syrian or a Persian. In cave no. 212, a Syrian painter named Rumakama signed his name on the painting.<sup>70</sup> When Buddhism was strongly practiced in the society, the

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<sup>70</sup> Li Ruizhe, *Cave Temple in Kucha* (《龟兹石窟寺》), China Social Sciences Press, December 2015, p. 11.

Buddha figures created often reflected local cultural and aesthetic conceptions. By the 5th-7th centuries, Xi Yu Buddha figures had evolved that were neither distinctly Gandhara nor Indian style. They often contained elements from a number of traditions. The Xi Yu local style Buddha figures from 5th century generally wear robes with light folds and have curly hair in a top knot, typical of the Gandhara style, but they also have round shaped faces like those of the Tokharoi people rather than Hellenistic facial features.

One Buddha statue (pic.2.3.5) was made from clay and stucco was colored. The figure sits cross legged in *padmasana* (meditation) posture, with left hand holding the robe, palm facing downwards near the left knee and missing right hand probably making the gesture of fearlessness. This Buddha figure displays significant differences to the traditional Gandhara style. First, the figure has a typical Chinese flame *ūrṇā* placed on the forehead in the middle of eyes; an influence of ancient Chinese art. Gandharan figures typically had circular dot *ūrṇā* marks.



Pic.2.3.5: Clay and stucco seated Buddha statue dating to 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. from Shorchuk, Xin Jiang province, China.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_First\\_Sermon\\_at\\_Sarnath,\\_Shorchuk,\\_Kirin\\_Cave,\\_probably\\_8th\\_century\\_AD,\\_painted\\_clay\\_-\\_Ethnological\\_Museum,\\_Berlin\\_-\\_DSC01774.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_First_Sermon_at_Sarnath,_Shorchuk,_Kirin_Cave,_probably_8th_century_AD,_painted_clay_-_Ethnological_Museum,_Berlin_-_DSC01774.JPG) 28 March 2017

Second, the Buddha is dressed in a *cīvara* or *kāṣāya*, which as two layers, an inner layer or *uttarāsaṅga* (郁多罗僧) that is wrapped around the entire left shoulder leaving the right shoulder bared, and an outer robe or *saṅghāṭi* (僧伽梨) that covers both shoulders and is wrapped around the left arm but leaves open the right chest down to the abdomen and left arm, so that the inner layer of *uttarāsaṅga* can be seen. The *saṅghāṭi* covers the figure from the shoulders down to the crossed-legged knees and falls onto the lotus shaped seat. The *antaravāsaka* (安陀会), one type of *cīvara*, is not included in the dress of this figure, although it is common in the standing Buddha figures from Gandhara style.

Another example of evolution of Xi Yu Buddha figure is the halo which is found behind the figure of a Buddha. One figure, a Buddha figure painted on wood from the Kizil caves, belongs to the 7<sup>th</sup> century (pic.2.3.6 Left). The Buddha stands on a lotus shaped base and has a rounded face and long earlobes. The hair and the *ushnisha* are smooth; no hair is actually depicted. A *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder and the right shoulder is bare. The *saṅghāṭi* reaches down to the ankles, and part of it is wrapped on left arm, which holds a bowl. The right hand is raised in the teaching gesture. The different colors and layers at the ankle indicate the *antaravāsaka*, and the drapery folds of the *saṅghāṭi* are marked by double lines. This style was much influenced by Gupta art.

Pic.2.3.6 Left: Standing Buddha painted on wood, from Kizil cave, Xi Jiang



province, China. Dating to 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

Pic.2.3.7 Right: The painting of thousands of Buddha figures from top of cave no.8, Kizil cave, Kucha, Xi Jiang province, China. Dating to 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup>

Importantly, behind the Buddha can be seen a largish halo, which is described by a nimbus and a large mandorla. The round nimbus surrounds the head of Buddha, and large mandorla in oval shape runs from top of the body down to the ankles. The nimbus and mandorla were very commonly found in the Xi Yu Buddha figure wall paintings and statues. This figure is of great importance because the painting has an inscription at the top of the panel that is written in the Tocharian language. It reads according to W. Siegl: “This Buddha was painted by the hand of Sanketava.”<sup>73</sup> This inscription helps to confirm that although the Buddha figure was painted by a Tocharian, a number of the decorative elements of the painting were clearly influenced by Xi Yu local culture.

In another way, Buddha figures also evolved under the influence of Mahayana Buddhist culture that had been introduced into Xi Yu. As mentioned previously, Buddhism had been introduced to Xi Yu in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC or AD, and the Sarvāstivāda school had been developing there for some time. The forms of the Buddhas and Bodhisattva figures had been mainly concerned with the Jātaka tales of Shakyamuni Buddha and Maitreya Bodhisattva during the flowering of the Sarvāstivāda school. However, as Mahayana developed and became stronger, new types of Buddha figures emerged.

Although Mahayana Buddha figures that predate the 4<sup>th</sup> century, have not been found in Yi Yu, Mahayana was most certainly taught and practiced there before the 4<sup>th</sup> century. According to the sūtra record, An Shi Gao or Lokottara (安世高), who was a prince of ancient Parthia, arrived in Luo Yang at 148 AD, and

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.chinesetimeschool.com/en-us/articles/kizil-thousand-buddha-caves/> 28 March 2017

<sup>73</sup> John P. O'Neill. Editor in chief, M. E. D. Laing, editor, Peter Oldenburg, **Designer, Along the Ancient Silk Routes Central Asian Art: From the West Berlin State Museums**, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1982, p. 107.

among his translations are the *Fo Shuo Da Cheng Fang Deng Yao Hui Jing* 《佛说大乘方等要慧经》, which is a Mahayana sūtra. In addition, Zhi Lou Jia Cheng or Lokaksema (支娄迦讖), a translator from Bactria (Yue Zhi月支 or 大夏), arrived in Luo Yang before 147 AD. They hailed from the Western Central Asia regions and had traveled along the Silk Road passing through the Xi Yu regions and arriving in Luo Yang. The records suggest that Mahayana teachings probably already existed in the Xi Yu regions from around 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries but they may still not have been that popular.

In any case, by the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, art that represented the concepts of Mahayana started to appear in Xi Yu. Numbers 47 and 48 from the Kizil caves in Kucha are large Buddha statues that were constructed in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century that display strong elements of Mahayana Buddhism. The construction of the caves took place at the time when Kumārajīva was promoting the Mahayana teachings in Kucha. The appearance of the large Buddha figures in the caves was directly connected to Kumārajīva's promotional activities of Mahayana in Kucha, and the number 47 and 48 figures in particular were closely connected<sup>74</sup>. As well as the large Buddha figures, thousands of Buddhas that were related to Mahayana teachings and practices also appeared in the caves. Thousands of Buddhas were painted on the walls and roofs of the caves (pic.2.3.7 right), and many of these were images of the Buddha realms of the past, present and future worlds in the ten directions. Vairocana Buddha, Amitābha Buddha from the Pure Land realm, the Medicine Buddha or Bhaiṣajyaguru, and the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Mahāsthāmaprāpta figures were all found in the Xi Yu caves from about the 7<sup>th</sup> century. This proliferation of Mahayana art indicated that Mahayana Buddhism was flourishing in Xi Yu regions.

The Chinese or Han culture was also influential along the Silk Road in the Xi Yu regions. It was another main factor that impacted on the evolution of the

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<sup>74</sup> Li Ruizhe, *Cave Temple in Kucha* (《龟兹石窟寺》), China Social Sciences Press, December 2015, p. 69.

Xi Yu Buddha figures. Much evidence suggests that the influence of Chinese culture on the form and development Xi Yu Buddha figures may have begun at an earlier time. In any case, the merging of the styles of Chinese Buddha figures with developments in Mahayana Buddhism in Xi Yu occurred mainly in the 6<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. The form of the Chinese style of Buddha figures had a special historical background. The central government defeated the western Turkish forces in 657 AD, and the An Xi Military Headquarters (安西都护府) were moved from Turpan to Kucha. This transfer of power had many effects, and it seems that it stimulated the production of more Chinese style Buddhist figures in the caves at Xi Yu. The establishment of the An Xi Military Headquarter, meant that large numbers of soldiers were then stationed at the garrison, and many Han people and monks emigrated there from central region of China.<sup>75</sup>

As a result of the immigration, Kucha became a center for the Han people, and they brought Han culture and demands for religion. As a result, a Buddhist site named Kumtura Thousand Buddha Caves (库木土喇千佛洞) was constructed 30 kilometers northwest of Kucha city. It was built from the 5<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> centuries and the construction and decoration of the complex was influenced by three cultures; the Kucha, Han and Uighur. However, the Han influence proved to be the strongest and most enduring. Large numbers of Buddhist wall paintings were found in the Kumtura caves and most of these were of Mahayana style and had Chinese inscriptions. The form of the Han style of Buddha figures was strongly affected by the concepts described in Mahayana sūtras from the central region of China. The illustration of the sūtras (经变图) was typical of Chinese Mahayana form. The illustration captured the main content of the sūtra in one picture, usually with the main Buddha from the sūtra and his followers included. These illustrations based on sūtras were found in the Kumtura caves and the Dunhuang caves and commonly illustrated ones were illustrations of the Sūtra of the Medicine Buddha 《药师经变图》, and illustrations of the Contemplation

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<sup>75</sup> Li Ruizhe, **Cave Temple in Kucha** (《龟兹石窟寺》), China Social Sciences Press, December 2015, p. 200.

Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra 《观无量寿经变图》.

The Sutra on the Contemplation of Buddha Amitāyus is one of major sūtras of Pure Land school, and the illustration describes the Pure Land world with Amitābha Buddha in the center, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva to his right, and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva on his left. Large numbers of followers who were raised in the Pure Land world are also depicted, and the buildings, flowers, birds are as described in detail in the texts of the Sūtra on Contemplation of Amitāyus.

The concept of illustrating sūtras certainly comes from Chinese Mahayana Buddhism that was popular around the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The use of art in this way made it easy for Buddhist followers to understanding the contents and meaning of the sūtras. In later periods, the concept of illustrating sūtras using paintings and sculptured figures was further developed.

From the study of ancient Buddhist sites or caves in Kashagr, Kucha, Khotan, Kizil, Kumtura and from the Rawak Vihara, we can see the influence on Buddhist art of the multiple cultures that lived in the region. The residents from Tocharoi, Bactria, Persian, and Sogdiana and of course the Han Chinese all had a hand in the way that Chinese Buddha figures were developing. The study shows that whether the ancient Buddhist sites were on the Northern route or the Southern routes of the Silk Road in the Xi Yu regions, the Buddha figures of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> centuries had facial features, robe decorations, and hairstyles that were primarily influenced by the Gandhara school.

In later periods, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Buddha figures produced showed more influence from local cultures. The figures had Tocharoi facial features instead of Hellenistic faces of Buddha. The faces were rounded in shape, but the robe details and hair styles has not changed that much. Some of the Buddha figures showed that there had been a merging of the older Gandharan features and new features that were local and others that were foreign. The example from cave no. 209 at Kizil illustrates the fact that many of the artists from



places such as Egypt, Persian and Syria. And as we have seen, some of the painters signed their work and even drew self-portraits on the walls alongside or on the pictures of the Buddhist figures.

As Mahayana Buddhism developed in Xi Yu, so too the Buddhism portrayed in the artwork transformed from what was originally a focus on Shakyamuni Buddha, the Jātaka tales and Maitreya Bodhisattva to a focus on the Mahayana. Chinese culture too was a major influence on the evolution of the Xi Yu Buddha figures, and this was magnified due to the establishment of An Xi Military Headquarter (安西都护府) in Kucha in about the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of the base brought with it a flood of Chinese immigrants and monks into Xi Yu, and this influx of people changed the Xi Yu region in various ways.

Xi Yu was an important Buddhist center on the route along which Buddhism and Buddha figures spread from India to the central regions of China. The development of Buddhism and evolution of Buddha figures took place over a period of centuries and this gradual process involved the cultures of Indian, Central Asia, China and various local cultures around the Xi Yu area. The Buddhist art such as Buddha figures that were sculptured and painted in Xi Yu reflected the Buddhist faith and practices of the people at the time. Ultimately, we can see the art and its development in the Xi Yu area as a byproduct of the growing exchange between India and China.

## **Chapter III**

### **The Evolution of Early Chinese Buddha Figures**

In the previous chapter we studied the origins of Buddha figures and discussed the main routes along which Buddha figures came to China. We also examined the critical issue of the Xi Yu Buddha figures and how the Buddhist teachings and cultures that had arisen along the routes leading to the central regions of China influenced the development of Buddha figures.

In this chapter, we will mainly focus on the second research objective of this dissertation which is the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures. The focus will be on the characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures in each period and their evolutionary stages.

#### **3.1 The Characteristics of Early Chinese Buddha Figures**

China has had a long history and has always been a large country. However, the extent of its territories has varied with the dynasty. Many scholars consider that Buddhism was introduced into the central regions of China in around the Year of Yong Ping, which was in the time of the Eastern Han dynasty. It is also thought that this was the earliest time that Buddha figures were brought to China. The periods of the dynasties that we are concerned with in this study as we trace the development of Buddhist figures are: The Eastern Han dynasty (25 BC-220 AD); the Three Kingdoms (220-280 AD); the Jin Dynasties (265-420 AD); The Sixteen Kingdoms (304-349 AD); the Southern Dynasty (420-589 AD); the Northern Dynasty (386-581 AD); the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD); and finally the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). In this work, the term ‘central region of China’ generally means the hinterland of China.

### **3.1.1 Evidence of the Early Buddha Figures in Central Region of China**

Evidence concerning early Buddha figures in the central region of China can be divided into two parts: documentary studies and the study of the historical remains of Buddha figures. The earliest documentary evidence that relates to Buddha figures and their remains dates to the Eastern Han dynasty (25 BC-220 AD), Three Kingdoms period (220-280 AD), and the Jin Dynasties (265-420 AD).

#### **3.1.1.1 Documentary Evidence of Early Buddha Figures in the Central Region of China**

Many references show that Buddhism arrived in the central regions of China during the later Western Han period and spread in the high classes of society. However, due to the thousands of years of time that has passed and many other causes, it is difficult to say just what the earliest Buddha figure in China were like. Therefore, for the purposes of this part of the study, we have to first find documentary clues, records and other forms of evidence that shed light on the nature of the earliest Chinese Buddha figures.

The question of when a Buddha figure first appeared in China is an interesting one that many people have tried to answer. In any case, the research has not, to date, been able to find the exact date at which China produced its first Buddha figure, nor has it been able to describe the characteristics of that first or earlier figure. To answer these questions, we have examined a number of key documents that relate to early Chinese Buddha figures.

The Book *History Chronicles for Buddha* (《佛祖统纪》) records that:

Cai An and a mission group was officially sent to the west to obtain knowledge of Buddhism's theory and practice. They met Kāśyapamātanga (迦摄摩腾) and Dharmaratna (竺法兰) in Da Yue Zhi (大月氏), in the Tenth Year of Yong Ping (67AD), during the Eastern Han dynasty. They had obtained a standing

Buddha figure and Sanskrit sūtras with sixty thousand verses that were carried on a white horse and together with Kāśyapamātanga and Dharmaratna they returned to Luo Yang. After their return, the monks paid a formal visit to the Royal palace.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhism may have already existed in China before the arrival of Kāśyapamātanga and Dharmaratna. However, this textual record is generally accepted to be the earliest evidence of Buddhism and Buddha figures being brought to China. Although the chronicle does mention that the Buddha figure was in standing posture, it does not provide any other details about the Buddha figure.

However, we can deduce some information about the style of Buddha figure from the above information. The evidence shows that Cai An and the official mission group was sent to the west looking for ‘Buddhism’ by the emperor Ming (28-75 AD) and they subsequently met the foreign monks Kāśyapamātanga and Dharmaratna in Da Yue Zhi (大月氏), in the Tenth Year of Yong Ping (67AD). So, from the time of this meeting, ‘Tenth Year of Yong Ping (67 AD)’ and from the location, ‘Da Yue Zhi’, we can obtain some information. We know that in 67 AD, ancient India and Central Asia or Bactria were under the rule of the powerful Kushan empire (贵霜王朝), which had been established by the Da Yue Zhi or Kushans (贵霜) during the first BC and AD. Since the Kushans had conquered Bactria and adopted elements of the Greek culture in their life and religion, they further developed Buddhist art by fusing it with the Hellenistic. Therefore, the standing Buddha statue that had been acquired in Da Yue Zhi and carried to China was probably of Gandhara style.

According to the book *History Chronicles for Buddha: Kāśyapamātanga and Dharmaratna translated the Sūtra of Forty-Two Chapters*. The Sanskrit version, stored in the palace, referred to a Buddha figure painted on

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<sup>1</sup> Zhi Pan, *History Chronicles for Buddha*, Vol.35, 2035. 49. P0129, Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese: 宋咸淳四明东湖沙门志磐撰,《佛祖统纪》卷第三十五, 2035. 49. P0129, 大正藏): 永平十年。蔡愔等于中天竺大月氏。遇迦叶摩腾竺法兰。得佛倚像梵本经六十万言(倚即立也)载以白马。达洛阳腾兰以沙门服谒见。

the gates of Xi Yang Cheng and Xian Jie Ling.<sup>2</sup>

In another reference, the *Edited of Fo Fa Jin Tang* (《佛法金汤编》) mentioned that:

In the twelfth Year of Yong Ping (69AD), was ordered [by Emperor Ming] to place the Shakyamuni Buddha at the Xian Jie Ling and Qing Liang Tai (Pavilion) for worship.<sup>3</sup>

The two references above that deal with the Emperor Ming (东汉明帝), a Buddha figure and the monks Kāśyapamātanga and Dharmaratna raises a number of questions. It appears that the similar records describe a different Buddha figure. The *History Chronicles for Buddha* described the painting of Buddha figure but has no mention what Buddha was painted. The second reference provided the name of Buddha figure, which was Shakyamuni. In any case, the first reference would seem to be more reliable because the Chinese did not use the name ‘Shakyamuni’ during that period. At the time, the Chinese only referred to the name of Buddha or Buddhism as Fu To (浮图).

Another piece of evidence that indirectly related with Buddha figures was to do with Liu Ying (刘英, who died in 71 AD), the state king of Chu in the Eastern Han Dynasty. He was the first official or member of the higher classes of society referred to in *The Book of Late Han Dynasty* (《后汉书》 or Hou Hanshu) who believed in Buddhism in China. The record was part of an imperial edict that was issued to Liu Ying by the emperor Ming (汉明帝) in 65 AD:

“The state king of Chu (Liu Ying), always recited the words of Lao Zi, and worshipped at the Fu To (浮图 or Buddha) shrine. Who taking

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<sup>2</sup> Zhi Pan, *History Chronicles for Buddha*, Vol.35, 2035. 49. P0129, Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese : 宋咸淳四明东湖沙门志磐撰,《佛祖统纪》卷第三十五, 2035. 49. P0129, 大正藏): “摩腾始译四十二章经。藏梵本于兰台石室。图佛像于西阳城门及显节陵上。”

<sup>3</sup> Edited Xin Tai & Zhen Qing, 0374c11, No. 1628, Vol. 1 *Edited of Fo Fa Jin Tang*, Vol.87 Xu Zang CBETA. (Chinese: 沙门心泰编, 沙门真清阅, 0374c11, No. 1628, 《佛法金汤编》卷一, 卅續藏卷87, CBETA): “十二年。诏以释迦佛像奉安显节陵, 清凉台供养。”

retreat for three months, and taking vows to god, he should be no suspicion, why he should be penanced? Then, should returned his [Liu Ying] textile and silk that for redeem, and should offer to upāsaka and samaṇa”<sup>4</sup>.

This message does not directly mention Buddha figures, but it tells us that Liu Ying personally worshipped at a Buddha shrine and we can assume therefore that the Buddha shrine must have had a Buddha figure to be worshiped. Second, the message proves that Emperor Ming knew that Liu Ying believed in Buddhism and that Buddhism had already arrived to the state of Chu (楚国), which corresponds to present-day Xu Zhou, in Jiang Su province. Third, it also provides us with evidence that there were larger scale organized Buddhist activities taking place in the area at the time.

There are also two different resources in the later Eastern Han that mention Emperor Huan (东汉桓帝132-167 AD) and Buddha figures.

The book *the Edited Fo Fa Jin Tang* notes that:

The second Year of Yong Xing (154 AD), the emperor [Emperor Huan, Liu Zhi] ordered the casting of figures of Fu To [Buddha or 浮图 in Chinese term] and Lao Zi in gold, and they were to be decorated with jewelry and canopies for worship by Emperor Huan himself<sup>5</sup>.

However, the book *History Chronicles for Buddha* mentions a different year: The Ninth Year of Yan Xi (延熹9年, 166 AD). This was significant although emperors had been interested in Buddha figures from the Year of Yong Ping (58-75 AD).

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<sup>4</sup> Vol. 32, **Biography of Ten State Kings of Emperor Guang**, Vol. 42 Hou Han Shu (Chinese: 《光武十王列传》第三十二, 《后汉书》卷四十二): ‘诏报曰: “楚王诵黄老之微言, 尚浮屠之仁祠, 洁斋三月, 与神为誓, 何嫌何疑, 当有悔吝? 其还赎, 以助伊蒲塞桑门之盛饌’。

<sup>5</sup> Edited Xin Tai & Zhen Qing, 0375a21, No. 1628, Vol. 1 **Edited of Fo Fa Jin Tang**, Vol.87 Xu Zang CBETA. (Chinese: 沙门心泰编, 沙门真清阅, 0374c11, No. 1628, 《佛法金汤编》卷一, 卅續藏卷87, CBETA) : ‘永興二年 (154) 。帝於宮中铸黄金浮图老子像。覆以百宝华盖。身奉祀之。’

As noted, the first emperor who had been interested in Buddhism was the Emperor Huan, who had ordered his people to cast figures of Buddha and Lao Zi in gold and place the figures in Zhuo Long Hall (濯龙宫) in the palace.<sup>6</sup> Even the referred years are different from above two references, they both mentioned Emperor Huan had ordered the making of a Fu To [Buddha] figure and a Lao Zi figure for worship in the palace. The two references indicate to us three important bits of information: (1) The documentary records may be the earliest records of the making of Buddha figures by Chinese people; (2) Chinese people were making Buddha statues that were made from or gilded with gold; and (3) At this early time, the Chinese may have regarded the Buddhism as religion like Taoism, and the Buddha was to be worshipped together with Taoist gods.

By the later Eastern Han dynasty, Buddhism had become more popular, and the Chinese started to construct temples and Buddha figures. Some documents show that about 100 hundred years after Liu Ying (dead in 71 AD), large numbers of Chinese believed in Buddhism in the regions of Guang Ling and Peng Cheng (present-day Xu Zhou, Jiang Su Province and the southern part of A Hui province) in the state kingdom of Chu.

We can read in *The Biography of Liu Yao from The History of Three Kingdoms* (《三国志·刘繇传》):

Ze Rong (笮融), from Dan Yang …… He had constructed a large Fu Tu (Buddha) temple. The body of Buddha statue made from bronze and coated gold on full body, the robe embroidered pattern, the nine layers of umbrella-like copper on top of roof, stories of building and hall at lower part. The temple which can accommodate for three thousand people doing Buddhist chanting. Gathering civics who are interesting Buddhism from the city and neighbor city. … On the occasion of every Buddha's birthday, the temple offers foods to people. About ten thousand

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<sup>6</sup> Zhi Pan, *History Chronicles for Buddha*, Vol.35, 2035. 49. P0129, Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese: 宋咸淳四明东湖沙门志磐撰,《佛祖统纪》卷第三十五, 2035. 49. P0129, 大正藏): ‘九年。自永平以来臣民虽有习浮图者。天子未之好。至帝始笃好之。于禁中铸黄金浮图老子像(佛像与老子像)亲于濯龙宫设华盖之座。’

civics come for visit and having food, the tables stand long for ten miles.<sup>7</sup>

Ze Rong, who lived in the later Eastern Han and died in 195 AD, believed in and worked in the area of Buddhism. He gathered people together in large numbers for Buddhist activities according to the records. He donated funds for the building of a large temple that he then had constructed in Xi Pi (present-day Sui Ning, Xu Zhou city, Jiang Su Province) and this indicates us how prevalent Buddhism was at the time. Ze Rong's activities in the records provides us with the knowledge that large Buddha figures were already been constructed by the Chinese and they were made from copper. We also know the figures were well decorated. However, the source does not provide any information about the style of Buddha figure.

Due to the limited documentary records of the Eastern Han dynasty, we are unable to find out more detail concerning the characteristics of the Buddha figures of the time. However, the documents do enable us to show conclusively that Buddha figures had appeared and were being made and worshipped in China as early as the Eastern Han dynasty.

### **3.1.1.2 The Discovery of the Ancient Remains of Early Buddha Figures in China**

Having now examined documentary records that mention Buddha figures in early Chinese history, we now examine archaeological discoveries that offer us clues concerning the features of Buddha figures the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms and Jin Dynasty periods.

#### **1) Buddha Figures in the Eastern Han Dynasty**

About two thousand years has passed from the time of the Eastern Han

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<sup>7</sup> The Biography of Liu Yao, Vol. 49 **The History of Three Kingdoms** (《三国志》卷四十九: 吴书四刘繇太史慈士燮传): 笮融者, 丹杨人……乃大起浮图祠, 以铜为人, 黄金涂身, 衣以锦采, 垂铜槃九重, 下为重楼阁道, 可容三千余人, 悉课读佛经, 令界内及旁郡人有好佛者听受道, ……每浴佛, 多设酒饭, 布席於路, 经数十里, 民人来观及就食且万人。



dynasty until today. We can confidently say, based on documentary records, that Buddhism was practiced and Buddha figures could be found in the areas under the control of the Eastern Han dynasty. However, as we have seen, those sources offer us little information about the characteristics such as style and facial features of the figures.

In this section, we will try to piece together more information concerning the style and characteristics of the Buddha figures of the time based on the limited historical remains of Buddha figures that date to the Eastern Han dynasty. There were not many Buddhist temples built at the time, and most of what was built has been destroyed by time. Therefore, it is not really possible to obtain Buddha figures from ancient Buddhist sites of the time. However, we still can find some clues concerning the figures from related archaeological discoveries.

The Cliff Carvings at Kong Wang Mountain (孔望山摩崖石刻) in Lian Yun Gang city (Northeast of Jiang Su province, China) are considered to be some of the earliest Buddhist cliff carvings. Scholars have expressed quite varying opinions concerning the origins of the cliff carvings. The three major explanations are as follows: (1) the carvings were done during the reigns of the Emperors Huan and Ling in the Eastern Han dynasty (147-188 AD); (2) the earliest period of the carvings was perhaps after the time of Cao Wei (213-266 AD), but it was not possibly in the Eastern Han dynasty, or before the time of Yuan Wei (265-554 AD); and (3) the carving period may have been during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) and not in the Han dynasty.<sup>8</sup> However, scholars Yu Weichao and Xin Lixiang in their paper *Investigation Creation Period of Cliff Carvings of Kong Wang Mountain*<sup>9</sup> concluded that site was of the Eastern Han dynasty because of the carving techniques used.

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<sup>8</sup> Cai Quanfa, **The Issues for Creation Period of Buddhist Figures on the Cliffside Carvings of Kong Wang Mount** (《孔望山佛教造像时代及其相关问题》), No. 2, 1995, *Hua Xia Archaeology*, p. 92.

<sup>9</sup> Yu Weichao and Xin Lixiang, **Investigation Creation Period of Cliffside Carvings of Kong Wang Mountain** (《孔望山摩崖造像的年代考察》, 《文物》1981年第7期). No. 7, 1981 *The Antique*.

The Cliff Carvings of Kong Wang Mountain feature 105 carved figures on the cliff faces, and the figures are of Buddhist and Taoist types. One standing Buddha figure is perhaps the most representative (pic.3.1.1) of the many Buddhist figures depicted. The Buddha figure is carved in a rather unclear fashion; however, we can observe that the figure's robes cover both shoulders from the neck down to the ankles and are without any carved folded lines. The right hand makes the *abhaya mudra* and the left hand is holding the robe in front of the chest. The face is round and youthful, with both eyes closed, and a conspicuous *ushnisha* decorates the top of the head. The simple carving technique used makes it difficult to recognize what style of Buddha the figure is, but from the posture and dress we can confidently speculate that the figure is representation of Shakyamuni.

Pic.3.1.1 Standing Buddha from the Cliff side carving of Kong Wang Mount. Lian



Yun Gang, China. Dating to Eastern Han dynasty.

On the other hand, archaeologists also found Buddha figures from Money Trees in the tombs from different provinces in China which belong to the

Eastern Han dynasty. The Money Tree (摇钱树) definitely is a Chinese local folk belief from Taoism, in Chinese myth which can bring money and fortune to people, the Money Tree buried in tomb which people hope that can bring the fortune to people who passed away and to be rich in the afterlife. It's seems very interesting why ancient people make Buddha figures which a religion from foreign together with Money Trees put in tombs, but which not main work to find out the reason in this research, instead we will aim on their characteristics. However, it indicates us the Buddhism had already melted with Chinese culture in the Eastern Han dynasty.

In 1989, a bronze Money Tree was discovered from Mian Yang He Jia Shan Tomb No.1 which belongs to the Eastern Han dynasty. 5 small Buddha figures about 6.5 CM height, leg crossed in meditation posture seated on the tree trunk, robe covered both shoulders, left hand holding his robe and right in protection posture, and hair curled, halo in the back of the head.<sup>10</sup>

In 1942, archaeologists found a pottery Buddha figure which formed part of the base of money tree. It was discovered in the Pen Shan tomb that can be dated to the Eastern Han dynasty (pic.3.1.2 left). The pottery base is 21 cm height and displays three figures. Two attendants stand one either side of a seated Buddha. The Buddha robe has U shaped fold lines that run from the shoulders down to lower parts of the figure and cover both knees and feet. The right hand is raised up, and the left holds the robe. A large *ushnisha* sits atop the head, and the hair is indicated by a number of lines. The figure is clearly of Gandhara style.

The most important evidence that concerns the characteristics of early Buddha figures in the Eastern Han dynasty was found in the Cao Fang Gou tomb (槽房沟墓地). It is a damaged bronze Buddha figure with inscriptions and it formed part of the base of a money tree. In 2002, archaeologists discovered the figure (pic.3.1.3 right). Only the upper part of the body has survived, and this

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<sup>10</sup> He Zhiguo, **Report for Clean of Mian Yang He Jia Shan Tomb No.1 of Eastern Han Dynasty in Si Chuan Province and Report for Clean of Mian Yang He Jia Shan Tomb No.2 of Eastern Han Dynasty in Si Chuan Province**, No. 3, 1991, The Antique.

figure belonged to main trunk of the money tree. The inscription on the base of the figure says the tree was made on the Tenth of May (Chinese Lunar Calendar) in the Fourth Year of Yan Guang (延光四年, 125 AD). The Yan Guang years occurred in the reign of Emperor An (汉安帝刘祜) of the Eastern Han dynasty, and the figure is almost certainly made 125 AD.

Pic. 3.1.2 Left: Pottery Buddha figure from base of Money Tree, from Peng Shan tomb Si Chuan Province, China. Dated to the Eastern Han dynasty.<sup>11</sup>

Pic.3.1.3 Right: A damaged bronze Buddha figure with period mark of Forth Year of Yan Guang on Money Tree, from Cao fang Gou tomb, Cong Qing, China. Dating to 125 A.D.<sup>12</sup>



The Buddha figure found in the Cao Fang Gou tomb is very similar in features to the Buddha found forming the base of the money tree from the Pen Shan tomb. The figure has a *ushnisha* on the top of head, folding lines on robes that cover both shoulders, a left hand that probably held the robe and a right hand in the *abhaya mudra*, and all these characteristics were obviously of Gandhara

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<sup>11</sup> [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_622125b30102vgsg.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_622125b30102vgsg.html) 3 April 2017

<sup>12</sup> <https://baike.baidu.com/item/延光四年摇钱树佛像/144278?fr=aladdin>

influence. The inscribed date on the base of Money Tree indicates the exact date that Buddha figure was produced, and it may be the earliest bronze Buddha figure found with an inscription so far in China.<sup>13</sup>

There are also other Buddha figures that are dated to the Eastern Han dynasty that were found by archaeologists in other regions. From the previously example, we can see the common characteristic of early forms of Buddha figures during Eastern Han dynasty. In general, the Buddha figures (1) were discovered in tombs; (2) were on or related to money trees; (3) were made from bronze or were pottery; (4) were small in size; (5) were of simple theme, with the Buddha figure making the *abhaya mudra* with his right hand and with the left hand holding the robe; and (6), had a *ushnisha* on top of the head and a robe that covered both shoulders; in seated or standing positions following the Gandhara style. From above information, the archaeological discoveries of Buddha figures from tombs which provided further evidence that the characteristics of Eastern Han Buddha figures were of Gandhara style.

## **2) Buddha Figures in the Three Kingdoms Period**

The Three Kingdoms period (220-280 AD) was a chaotic period in Chinese history. Many wars occurred at this time, and the trouble split the Eastern Han dynasty up into the three kingdoms: The Wei (220-265 AD), Shu (221-263 AD), and Wu (222-280 AD) kingdoms. Towards the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, many Buddhist monks and translators from Xi Yu or India and Western Central Asia such as Dharmakā (昙柯迦罗), Kang Seng Hui (康僧会), Samghavarman (康僧铠), Zhi Qian(支谦) arrived in places such as Chang An and Luo Yang. Large numbers of Buddhist sūtras and doctrines were translated into Chinese at this time, and these translations were important parts of the foundation for the development of Buddhism in the Three kingdoms. Buddhism became more

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<sup>13</sup> Liu Bin, **The Completed Task of Shaanxi Archaeological Team for the Discovery History Site in Shan Xia, Second Edition**, 22 March, 2002, Journal of China Antique (《陕西宝鸡考古队完成三峡文物发掘任务》,《中国文物报》2002年3月22日第2版).

popular and attracted many Chinese followers. Before this period, there had only been a few foreign monks in China, but the Chinese started to undergo ordinations as monks from this period. The Vinaya was also translated for the first time into Chinese by Dharmakā, and the first Chinese monk. Zhu Shi Xing (朱士行), traveled to Xi Yu to study Buddhism in 260 AD.

Buddhism started to become popular in society, and regional rulers gave more support to the building of Buddhist temple. However, due to the fact that Three kingdoms period was a short one, Buddhist culture and tradition had little time to evolve and remained very similar to those of Eastern Han dynasty. Many of the Buddha figures that were produced in the period of the Three Kingdoms were found in tombs and were parts of money trees.

In 1939, A Buddha figure was found in the Mahao tomb No.1 at Le Shan, in Si Chuan Province. This piece was considered to be of the Three Kingdoms period (pic.3.1.4 left). The Buddha figure was 37 cm in height and carved in relief on the stone entrance door. The figure is seated with crossed legs, with left hand holding the robe and right in *abhaya mudra*. The robe has U fold lines in front of the chest, a round fire-like halo behind the head, and an *ushnisha* on top of the head. The outer form indicates the Buddha figure to be of Gandhara style.

The Hunping vessel (魂瓶), which is sometimes called a soul jar vase or soul jar, another kind of funerary object from Chinese culture, which is a kind of ceramic container for grains or food that is placed in a tomb to provide nutrition for the deceased into the afterlife. Hunping vessels were often found in tombs of the Han and Jin dynasties. The vessels were always decorated with sculptures of men, flowers, birds, animals, gods, and sometime Buddha figures.





Pic.3.1.4 Left: Stone carved Buddha figure from Mahao Tomb No.1 in Le Shan, Si Chuan Province, China. Dated to Three Kingdoms period.<sup>14</sup>

Pic.3.1.5 Right: Hunping vessel with Buddha figure, from Nanjing, China. Dated to the Wu Kingdoms (229-280 A.D).<sup>15</sup>

In 1983, archaeologists found a Hunping vessel in a tomb dated to the Wu kingdom. The piece was found in Chang Gang village (长岗村), in the Yu Hua Tai district of Nanjing, and it is now in a collection at the Nanjing Liu Chao museum (pic.3.1.5 Right). On the Hunping vessel, besides the decorative figures of birds, flowers, and a Taoist bird-man, there are also two Buddha figures that are located on the shoulders of the vessel. The Buddha figures are seated in the lotus posture and have robes covering both shoulders, curly hair, and rounded halos behind the heads. These characteristics are of course strongly suggestive of Gandhara style. The Nan Jing region was the capital city of the Wu kingdom, and the findings of these Hunping vessel in the Nan Jing region shows that people in the Wu kingdom were already applying Buddhism in their daily lives.

A further example of Buddhist art from the Three Kingdoms follows. Archaeologists found a Buddha figure on a piece of gilt bronze that had a height of 4.9 cm and width of 3.1. It was discovered in the tomb of a senior soldier, General

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<sup>14</sup> [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_55e1711d0102w2s1.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_55e1711d0102w2s1.html) 5 April 2017

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.douban.com/note/239110015/> 5 April 2017

Peng Lu (彭卢) in the Lian Xi temple, Wu Chang, in Hubei province (pic.3.1.6). Also found at the tomb were the name, age, position and date of death of the tomb's occupant. The general passed away in Fifth year of Yong An (永安5年, 262 AD), and thus we can conclude that the Buddha figure must have been made before 262 AD. Scholars have different views on whether the figure is a Buddha or a Bodhisattva, but Zhang Tongbiao (张同标) observed that according to the Pratiharya-sūtra or the Miracles at Sravasti text (舍卫城大神变), the figure from Xi Lian temple was a Buddha and not a Bodhisattva.<sup>16</sup> The Buddha figure is done in line carving on gilt bronze and is standing on a lotus base. There are three



smaller lotuses on two sides of the figure and an *ushnisha* is clearly visible on top of head. A prominent halo also decorates the figure.

Pic.3.1.6: Buddha figure on gilt bronze from Lian Xi temple, Wu Han, China. Dated to the Fifth Year of Yong An (262 A.D).<sup>17</sup>

The figure is quite different to other early Buddha figures that have been found in the Si Chuan region and other northern parts of China that were

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<sup>16</sup> Zhang Tongbiao, **Discussion on the Origin of Lotus Base of Buddha Figure of Fifth Year of Yong An in Wu Kingdom from Lian Xi Temple, Wu Cang** (论武昌莲溪寺东吴永安五年佛像的莲花座渊源), No.1, 2012, Journal of East China Normal University (Philosophy and Social Sciences).

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.douban.com/note/239110015/> 8 April 2017



influenced by the Gandhara or Matura styles. This may be because Buddhism arrived in China along different routes bringing with it various styles of Buddha figures from India. In ancient times, there were two important routes along which Buddhism travelled to China; one was the overland Silk Road, and the other was the Maritime Silk Road. One famous traveler along the Maritime Silk Road was the famous monk Kang Seng Hui (康僧会), who journeyed along the Maritime Silk Road to Jiao Zhi (交趾) and arrived in the Wu kingdom in 248 AD.

The development of Buddhism in Three Kingdoms period was promoted by the arrival of many foreign monks and translators. The different styles of Buddha figures found in the Three Kingdoms sites indicated that Buddhism arrived not only by the Silk Road to the northern region of China, but also by the Maritime Silk Road to southern regions of China. Examples of those were the figures found at Nan Jing and Wu Chang, which were quite different. Gandhara Buddhist art influenced the making of figures in the northern regions of China, such as those made in Si Chuan. On the other hand, in Buddha figures made in the southern regions, the figures always included lotus seats, which were not seen on northern Buddha figures. However, figures from all regions during the period of the Three Kingdoms had many features in common, and the common traits were similar to figures of the Eastern Han dynasty.

### **3) Buddha Figures of the Jin Dynasties**

The Jin dynasty can be divided into 2 periods, the Western Jin and Eastern Jin dynasties. The Western Jin dynasty (266-316 AD) ruled the north parts of China, but it was later overthrown by non-Han Chinese and gradually replaced by the Sixteen kingdoms. The Eastern Jin dynasty (317- 420 AD), which had a capital in what is modern day Nan Jiang, ruled areas in the southern parts of China.

Buddha figures in the Jin dynasties underwent much development. Zhi Pan informs us that Xun Xu (荀勖) ordered the making of 12 Buddha and Bodhisattva figures in Luo Yang city in the second year of the Tai Shi, and people

gathered to pray from around the city.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, there were some famous Chinese Buddhist painters during Jin dynasties, such as Wei Xie (卫协), who specialized in Buddhist painting and one of his famous works was the ‘Picture of Seven Buddhas’. Another artist was Zhang Mo (张墨), a student of Wei Xie, who painted the ‘Picture of Vimalakīrti sūtra’ in the Western Jin period. In addition, Ku Kaizhi (顾凯之 348-409 AD), the most famous Buddhist painter of the Eastern Jin dynasty painted the ‘Picture of Vimalakīrti’ on the walls of the Wa Guan temple (瓦官寺), in Nan Jing. Both Dai Kui (戴逵 326-396 AD), who was a famous sculptor and exporter of Buddhist figures and his son, Dai Yong (戴颙), made five Buddha figures and a golden Buddha figure of 3.85 meters in height, cast out of copper material (one zhang six chi 一丈六尺), which were placed in the Wa Guan temple (瓦官寺), in Nan Jing, during the middle period of the Eastern Jin dynasty (372 - 420 AD).<sup>19</sup>

Some other documentary records were concerned with the features of Buddha figures in the Eastern Jin dynasty. One such record records: “When craftsmen were casting a Buddha figure, the face looked quite long and narrow in the beginning stages. So, they consulted with Yong [Dai Yong]. Yong said: It’s not long and narrow in the face, but too broad in the shoulders. Then, after that, they fixed the shoulders and the Buddha looked to be of full facial features”.<sup>20</sup> From the above information, we can conclude that the Buddha figures in Eastern Jin period probably had long and narrow facial features.

The *Biography of Eminent Monks from Liang* (《梁高僧传》) also mentions that Shi Seng Hong (释僧洪) make copper Buddha figures of 3.85 meters

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<sup>18</sup> Zhi Pan, *History Chronicles for Buddha*, Vol.36, 2035. 49. P0129, Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese: 宋咸淳四明东湖沙门志磐撰,《佛祖统纪》卷第三十六, 2035. 49. P0129, 大正藏): 泰始二年。侍中荀勗于洛阳造金像佛菩萨十二身放大光明。都人竞集瞻礼。

<sup>19</sup> Hui Jiao, *Biography of Eminent Monks*, Vol.13, 2059.50. P0322, Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese: 释慧皎,《梁高僧传》卷第十三, 2059. 50. P0322, 大正藏): “有戴安道所制五像及戴颙所治丈六金像。昔铸像初成。而面首殊瘦。诸工无如之何。乃迎颙看之。颙曰。非面瘦也。乃臂胛肥耳。既鑪减臂胛而面相自满。诸工无不叹息。”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 2059.50. p. 0322.

in height (Yi Zhang Liu Chi 一丈六尺) and placed them in the Wa Guan temple (瓦官寺).<sup>21</sup>

Another piece of archeological evidence is a Chinese bronze mirror that is now kept in the Kyoto National Museum. The piece has been dated to the Jin dynasty (4th century) and was found in the Kongorin-ji temple in Osaka, Japan (pic.3.1.7). The diameter of bronze mirror is 24.1 cm, and cloud and bird designs are found around the border. There are four groups of figures located in the center of the mirror. Two groups are of attendants with a seated Buddha, and other two are centered on standing Buddhas. The two standing are on lotus bases and they have long robes that angle down from the shoulders and have haloes behind the heads. The other Buddhas are in meditation posture and are seated on lotuses. They



also have fiery haloes.

Pic.3.1.7 Right: Chinese bronze mirror, dated to the Jin dynasty. Now in a collection at the Kyoto National Museum, Japan.<sup>22</sup>

The ceramic Hunping vessel or funerary urn with Buddha figures was

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.,2059.50. p. 0322.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.douban.com/note/239110015/> 9 April 2017

commonly found in Jin dynasty sites. A special Hunping vessel from the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 AD) is now housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession number 1992.165.21, pic.3.1.8 left). It is 45.4 cm in height and is finished with olive green glaze. A pavilion sits at the center of top level and this palatial courtyard has four gates. The lower level of the yard features figures of



birds, elephants and deer. The heavenly palatial structure appears to be a model of a Taoist eternal dwelling place for the afterlife. The lower part of the piece is ringed with a series of Buddhas that are seated in meditation on lion thrones with lotus petals. The Buddha figures are all in the same position, with hands in meditation posture and have closed eyes. Each figure has a v-shaped robe that cover both shoulders, an *ushnisha* on top of the head and halo. As noted, such characteristics indicate Gandhara style.

Pic.3.1.8 Left: Ceramic Hunping with Buddha figures, dated to the Western Jin dynasty (265-316 A.D), now in a collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA<sup>23</sup>.

Pic.3.1.9 Right: Bronze incense burner with Buddha figures, Western Jin dynasty. Collecting in Zhen Jiang museum, Jiang Su, China.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/44733> 11 April 2017

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.zj-museum.com.cn/zjbwg/zjbwg/zs/jpww/fjww/index.html>

Another example of a Buddha figure from the Western Jin dynasty is a bronze incense burner with four Buddha and bird figures which is now kept in the Zhen Jiang museum, Jiang Su province, China (pic.3.1.9 right). Four birds decorate the fine cover of the incense burner, and four small Buddha figures in seated position can be seen on each side, hands in meditation gesture. Each figure has an *ushnisha* but is without halo. The examples above show that Buddhism had already been assimilated into Chinese culture – Buddhism and its figures had started to appear in the daily lives of the people.

Even though Buddhism had only arrived in China in the Han dynasty, it was already something familiar to the Chinese people by the time of the Jin dynasties. Compared to the Eastern Han and Three kingdoms periods, Buddhism became more popular and grew in the Jin dynasties. According to the *Preface of Record of Monastery in Luo Yang* (《洛阳伽蓝记-序》), there were 42 monasteries in Luo Yang at the end of the Western Jin dynasty (307-312). Other information tells us that 12 Buddhist monks and laypeople translated 600 volumes of sutras and built 180 temples, and that 3700 monks took ordination.<sup>25</sup> Large numbers of Mahayana sūtras were translated into Chinese. The Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra, the Lotus sūtra and other sūtras that were concerned with the Pure Land were translated by Dharmarakṣa (竺法护 231-308 AD) in the early western Jin dynasty. Fo Tusheng (佛图澄 232-348 AD) arrived in Luo Yang in 310 AD, and Chinese monks Dao An (道安 312-385), Hui Yuan (慧远 334-416 AD), and Fa Xian (法显 334-420 AD) worked hard to propagate Buddhism during the Eastern Jin dynasty. Pure Land thought and Mahāparinirvāṇa thought had started to take form.

The literature mentioned that large Buddha figures were made in the Jin dynasties, and they had long and narrow faces. These figures undoubtedly

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<sup>25</sup> Fāng Lì tiān and Hà Fān tián. **The Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (Chinese: 《中国佛教简史》, Pin Yin: Zhōng Guó Fó Jiào Jiǎn Shǐ). (China) Religion and Culture Publisher, 2001, p. 50.

influenced the creation of Buddha figures in later periods, especially the style of the Southern dynasties and Northern Wei dynasty. However, for many reasons, we are unable to see those large size Buddhas of the Jin dynasty, today. The preserved Buddha figures that have been found from Jin dynasties are smaller ones from tombs or ones that formed parts of items used on a daily basis by the people. In fact, the figures we can observe from the Jin dynasties are similar to those found from the Three kingdoms period and Eastern Han dynasty. For that reason, in this study, we group Buddha figures in Jin dynasties with those found from the earlier periods of the Han dynasty and Three Kingdoms.

### **3.1.2 The Characteristics of Buddha Figures in Early Development**

In this section, the study will focus on the early development of Buddha figures from Sixteen Kingdoms (304-349 AD) through to the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). During this period, many rulers and emperors ruled over China. The land was divided into many kingdoms, and of note were the Sixteen kingdoms, Northern and Southern dynasties, Sui dynasty and Tang dynasty. In each period, Buddha figures were made in various styles, and each dynasty lent its own characteristics to the figures. The effect that each dynasty had on the Buddha figures depended on factors like culture, thought and aesthetic standard.

Therefore, in this section I try to exam the different styles of Buddha figures in each dynasty and some of the characteristics used for comparison include body shape, hair style, shape of face, robe, and decoration factors on the Buddha figures.

#### **3.1.2.1 Buddha Figures in the Sixteen Kingdoms Period**

The Sixteen Kingdoms period was a period of Chinese history (五胡十六国) that ran from 304 to 439 AD. During this period, there were sixteen short-lived kingdoms which were mainly founded by the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Di, Jie and Qiang (匈奴、鲜卑、氐、羯、羌) minority groups northern China. These groups

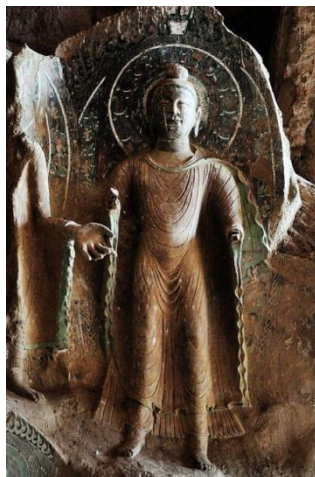
and the kingdoms they founded replaced the Western Jin dynasty.

The one-hundred and thirty-five years of Sixteen kingdoms period was marked by quickly shifting politics. This dynamic produced a lot of cultural exchange between the various states that formed what is now a large swathe of China. These interactions had an effect on the development of Buddhism and the Buddha figures. Furthermore, many of the rulers of the states, whose peoples came from a range of ethnicities, were devout Buddhists and strong supporters of Buddhism. Two informative examples of the support that state leaders gave to Buddhism follow. The famous Buddhist translator Kumārajīva was invited to Chang A by Fu Jian (苻坚), an ex-ruler of Former Qin kingdom (前秦 350-394 AD) and was later supported by Yao Xing (姚兴) the ruler of Later Qin kingdom (后秦 384-417 AD). Another foreign monk, Fo Tu Cheng (佛图澄), was supported by Shi Le (石勒) and Shi Hu (石虎), the rulers of the Later Zhao kingdom (319-351 AD). It was against this background that many famous Buddhist caves systems were created, and one such cave system was the Dun Huang grottoes, which can have traced back to 366 AD, during the Former Qin kingdom (前秦350-394 AD), one of the Sixteen kingdoms. Other Buddhist caves that were developed at this time were the Tianti Mountain (天梯山), Wen Shu Mountain (文殊山) and Bing Ling cave temples (炳灵寺). In fact, the period of the Sixteen kingdoms was a productive time for Buddhist artists, and we can find more Buddha figures from this period that we can from the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms and Jin dynasties periods.

The Bing Ling cave temple (炳灵寺窟) is located in Yongjing County, Gansu province (甘肃永靖县) in the northwest of China. The initial excavation and development of the Bing Ling cave temple can be traced back to the Western Jin period, but some inscriptions found in cave no.169 have been traced to the First Year of Jian Hong (建弘元年), which corresponded to 420 AD, during the Xiqin Kingdom (西秦385-431AD). This proves the cave was already constructed by the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Most Buddha figures in the cave were made of clay and painted.

The figures in cave no.169 were done in a Gupta Buddhist art style, which was quite popular in the Xi Yu region. Later this kind of style was referred to as the Xi Yu style or Xi Liang style (西凉式). For example, a standing Buddha on the front of the north wall (pic.3.2.1 Left) wears a large and thin *saṅghāṭi* that covers both shoulders and body beneath the robe. U shaped curve lines like water ripples flow down to the ankles, with two layers of curves that distinguish the different layers of the antaravāsaka and *saṅghāṭi*. The opened robe at the wrists (the hands are missing) suggest the *saṅghāṭi* draped onto the forearm, a feature typical of Gupta art. The figure's long slender-shaped eyes and round face is decidedly oriental. The figure has elongated earlobes, an *ushnisha* that is smooth, and is without any hair depiction. A large circular flaming mandorla painted in colour decorates the back of Buddha, and it runs from the top to the ankles, a characteristic that is not of traditional Gupta style.

Another early Buddha figure dating to the Sixteen Kingdoms period (pic.3.2.2 middle) is a perfectly gilded seated Buddha with an inscription on the back of the throne that suggests it was made in the Fourth Year of Jian Wu. The Buddha is now kept in the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA. It is 39.7 cm in height and fully gilded. There is a protrusion with a round hole on the back of the head that was probably for attaching a radiating halo and mandorla. Three holes on the front of the throne were probably used to attach a pair of (now missing)





lions.

Pic.3.2.1 Left: A standing Buddha from the Bingling cave temple, Gansu province, China. Dated to 420 A.D, during the Xiqin Kingdom of the Sixteen Kingdoms.<sup>26</sup>

Pic.3.2.2 Middle: Gilded seated Buddha figure with inscription that reads ‘the Fourth Year of Jian Wu’ (338A.D). Currently in a collection in the Asian Art Museum, USA.<sup>27</sup>

Pic.3.2.3 Right: Gilded seated Buddha figure with an inscription that reads ‘Second Year of Sheng Guang’. Kept at the Osaka Museum of History, Japan.<sup>28</sup>

As noted, the Buddha figure provides helpful information on the back of throne with the inscription that reads: Fourth Year of Jian Wu (建武四年岁在戊戌八月卅日, 比丘竺…慕道德…及…三…生…), which corresponds to 338 AD in the Later Zhao kingdom (后赵319-350), the capital of present-day Lin Zhang county, Hebei province (河北临漳). Therefore, we can conclude that the Buddha figure was made in 338 AD, and it was from the northern part of China.

From the characteristics of the Buddha what we can see that it possesses both Gandhara characteristics and Chinese local factors, but the facial features have become more Chinese looking and are quite different from traditional Gandhara style features. The Buddha is in meditative posture, with the two hands joined together and the right hand covering the left. The palms face towards the abdomen in *dhyanana mudra*. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders, and the U-shaped drapes of the *saṅghāṭi* fall in front of the chest, indicating several layers, a style which is typically Gandhara. The lines at the Buddha’s neck suggest that the *saṅghāṭi* covers shoulders from right to left and is draped over the back of left shoulder.

The figure has some interesting details. The *saṅghāṭi* falling on both forearms is indicated by the layers’ folds, and this style has never been seen in

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<sup>26</sup> [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_48da23d20102vqga.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_48da23d20102vqga.html) 15 April 2017

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.asianart.org/collections/seated-buddha> 15 April 2017

<sup>28</sup> <http://baohuasi.org/gnews/2015514/2015514323019.html> 15 April 2017

Gandhara style. The Buddha has long and opened eyes, a broad forehead without an *urna*, and the *ushnisha* hair style is neither of the seashell nor curly hair variety. In fact, the hair presents in straight lines and is parted to the left and right along the middle of the forehead. The edge of the throne is decorated with carved patterns which are characteristically Chinese, and have never been found in Gandhara or Mathura art.

Similar collections of Buddha figures from the Sixteen Kingdoms have been found in other places. For example, a Buddha figure with an inscription that read ‘Second Year of Sheng Guang’ and wish words (胜光二年己巳春正月朔日中书舍人施文为合家平安造像一区) is now in a collection at the Osaka Museum of History, Japan (pic.3.2.3 Right). The Second Year of Sheng Guang corresponded to 429 AD, which dates the figure to the Da Xia Kingdom (大夏407-431AD), one of the sixteen kingdoms in the northern part of China. The capital of this area is present-day Bai Cheng Zi (白城子), in Inner Mongolia. The Buddha is 19 cm in height and completely gilded and is quite similar in style to the Buddha inscribed with the Fourth Year of Jian Wu (338 AD). The *ushnisha* hair is done in a seashell like pattern, and the hair is suggested by straight lines that separate to the left and right from middle of the forehead. The Buddha’s *saṅghāṭi* is suggested with U shaped patterns and the gesture of *dhayana mudra* separates the figure into upper and lower parts. A pair of lion sit in front of the seat of the Buddha, who is seated on square seat with four legs that form a single piece with the body of the Buddha. The inscription words are written on the four legs of the table. It must be pointed out that this kind of four legged-square seat is a typical Chinese chair and thus Chinese cultural factors were now influencing the ways that Buddha figures were decorated.

The gilded Buddha figures that have been preserved from the Sixteen Kingdoms period are few in number and most of them are damaged or incomplete. A few whole pieces however are still in existence. One excellent example is the complete Buddha figure that was excavated in 1955s in the Song Cun village, in

the northern part Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. The Buddha has consisted of four parts that can be separated: the body of Buddha, a radiating halo and mandorla, a round umbrella and seat with four legs (pic.3.2.4 left). The bronze Buddha in fully



gilded and is 19 cm in height. Including the umbrella, the piece is 21.4 cm in height. This figure has unique features that are not found in other Buddha figures of the same period. Examples of the differences are: (1) The *ushnisha* and hair are not suggested by or patterns; (2) The U-shaped pattern on the *saṅghāṭi* that is in front of the Buddha's chest is more squared, as in the '□' shape; (3) The Buddha has a large radiating combined halo and mandorla that run from over the head down to the throne and two young Chinese attendants in traditional dress at the both sides of the Buddha decorating the lower part of the halo, two flying apsaras at both sides of the Buddha's head, and one small Buddha figure above the Buddha's head; (4) The round umbrella over the Buddha's head rests on the halo; and (5) there are carved flower patterns on the front side of the four legged seat.

Pic.3.2.4 Left: Gilded bronze Buddha excavated in 1955s from Song Cun village, northern Shijiazhuang, Hebei province. Dated to the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304-439A.D).

Pic.3.2.5 Middle: Gilded bronze Buddha excavated in 1975 at the Yu Du village, Jing Xian county, Gansu province. The piece has been dated to the Sixteen Kingdoms period (304-439A.D).

Pic.3.2.6 Right: Gilded bronze Buddha inscribed with Second Year of Zheng Guang

(521A.D), Now in a collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA.<sup>29</sup>

Another example of a completely gilded Buddha was excavated in 1975 from Yu Du village, in the Jing Xian county of Gansu province (pic.3.2.5 middle.). This Buddha figure is very similar to the Buddha excavated at Hebei in 1955. The figure consists of four parts: the body of Buddha, the radiating halo and mandorla, a round umbrella and a seat with four legs. One difference is that the Yu Du figure has a smaller halo that is situated behind head and another larger halo, and both halos are decorated with lotus petal patterns and are without attendants and flying apsaras.

Thus far, we have not mentioned which Buddha is captured in these Buddha figures from the Sixteen Kingdoms Period. A number of people have speculated that they are Shakyamuni Buddha figures. However, researcher found a similar Buddha figure with inscription at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (THE MET), and the Buddha was of the same style and size as Buddha figures found from the Sixteen Kingdoms period. On this Buddha figure was inscribed ‘the Second Year of Zheng Guang’ and words of dedication of merit (正光二年四月朔日福为父母敬造弥勒像一区虔心供养). The inscription can be translated as follows: “On the first day of April (Chinese calendar) of the Second Year of Zheng Guang, made a Maitreya Buddha figure to make merit for parents”. The inscription clearly indicates that Buddha figure is Maitreya and the time is in the Second Year of Zheng Guang, which corresponds to 521 AD in the Northern Wei dynasty (pic.3.2.6 right). This suggests that other similar Buddha figures from Sixteen kingdoms period are probably images of Maitreya, and it is also possible that the people of Northern Wei made Maitreya figures that had the features of Shakyamuni.

From the study of the above examples, it can be seen that the Buddha figures in Sixteen Kingdoms period had evolved more than those of the previous

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org> 18 April 2017

periods. Scholar Mr. Jin Shen mentions in his book that the Sixteen Kingdoms period Chinese Buddha figures had Gandhara characteristics.<sup>30</sup> But in my view, although the Buddha figures of the Sixteen Kingdom period had still not evolved a clearly unique Chinese style, the figures had evolved somewhat away from the Gandhara style and displayed both foreign and Chinese characteristics. The foreign style did however still tend to be dominant.

### **3.1.2.2 Buddha Figures in the Southern and Northern Dynasties**

The Southern and Northern Dynasties were the two main political regions that China was divided into over the period of 420-589 AD. Buddha figures had evolved with the flourishing of Buddhism, and the figures were in the form of stone carvings, Buddhist cave contents and bronze casts. Many Buddhist grottoes were excavated or further developed during this period. Examples include the Mogao grottoes, the Maiji Shan grottoes and the Bing Ling cave temple in the western regions, the Yungang grottoes in the northern region, the Longmen grottoes in the central part, the Xiangtangshan grottoes in the east, and the Qixia grottoes in the southern region.

It was over the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties that Buddha figures started to be developed into real Chinese forms. This evolution was heavily influenced by aspects of Chinese culture such as Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. The forms of the Buddha's robes, facial features and hair became more typically Chinese. In particular, the Buddha's robe changed, and it evolved from older foreign styles into a Chinese style.<sup>31</sup>

#### **1) Buddha Figures in the Northern Dynasty**

The Northern Dynasty consisted of the Northern Wei, Eastern Wei,

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<sup>30</sup> Jin Shen, **Jin Shen Talks on Ancient Buddha Figures** (《金申趣谈古代佛像》), Forbidden City publisher, Jan, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Chen Yuexin, **A study to the regulation of dressing for Chinese Buddhist statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8th century**, Social sciences academic press (China), p. 5.

Western Wei, Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties, which were all found in the northern region of China from 386 to 581 AD. The main political power was the Northern Wei dynasty, which was formed and ruled by the Tuoba clan of the Xianbei tribe. The Northern Wei dynasty made many contributions to the development of Buddhism and the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures. The creation and development of the Yungang grottoes and the Longmen grottoes, which were two of the most important grottoes in the history of Chinese Buddhist art, was much supported by the Northern Wei emperors and their royal clans, and during this time real Chinese-style Buddha figures were produced. In this section, researcher will describe the characteristics of Buddha figures in the Northern Wei dynastic period.

### **A) Buddha Figures in the Northern Wei Dynasty**

The Northern Wei was an important period in the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures; it was a period in which the Buddha figures made reflected rich Chinese culture and expressed Chinese style. Buddha figures from Northern Wei are often said to have been dressed in a loose gown that were tied with a wide girdle (褒衣博帶). Furthermore, the bottom of the robe draped down covering the front of the throne (裳懸座) in the case of seated figures and the general look was graceful and Taoist sage-like (仙風道骨).

Furthermore, the style of Buddha figures was much influenced by the Emperor Xiaowen's series of policies concerned with Hanization. It was in the features of the wrappings of the robe, facial features, hair styles and flaming mandorlas that the evolution of Buddha figures of Northern Wei became significant.

**Robe style:** the way that a Buddha figure is robed - the features of the robe and the way the robe is wrapped around the Buddha - is one of the major factors that identify the style of the Buddha figure and the period of its creation. In Buddhist terms, the robe is often called a *tricīvara*, which consists in a *saṅghāṭi*

(僧伽梨), an *uttarāsaṅga* (郁多罗僧), and an *antaravāsaka* (安陀会). Another garment, the *samkaksika* (僧祇支), is an additional robe. Depending on how the *tricīvara* is wrapped or covering the body of the image in the depiction, the different styles of Indian and Chinese Buddha's robes can be categorized into two main styles. In the first style, the *saṅghāṭi* covers the other garments (上衣外覆 hereafter referred to as A style), whereas in the second style (中衣外露 hereafter referred to as B style), the *uttarāsaṅga* (and perhaps other garments) is (are) visible.<sup>32</sup>

Looking at the ways of the wrapping the robes in more details, A style robe configuration can be subdivided into five types<sup>33</sup> (pic.3.2.7 A1-A5):

1. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders (通肩式 hereafter referred to as A1).
2. The *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder but the right shoulder is bare (袒右肩式 hereafter referred to as A2).
3. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders, but most of the right chest is a bare. The right top corner of the robe falls under the right arm then crosses over the left shoulder (覆肩袒右式 hereafter referred to as A3).
4. The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders but leaves bare a large portion of the right chest. The top right corner of the robe passes under the right arm and falls over left forearm (搭肘式 hereafter referred to as A4).
5. The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders and the right corner of robe passes across abdomen and then falls over the left shoulder, leaving bare half of the chest (露胸通肩式或半披式 hereafter referred to as A5).

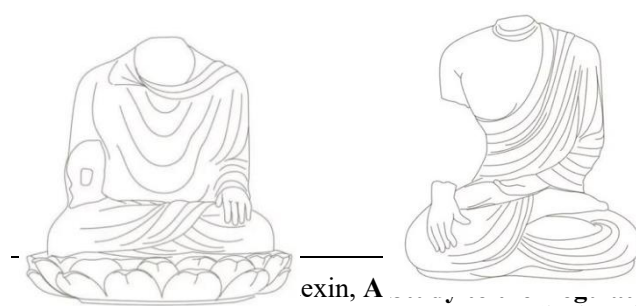


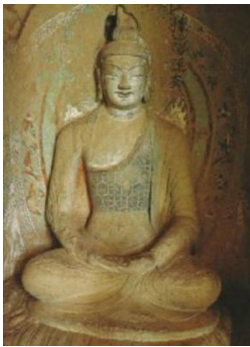
Figure 3.2.7 A1-A5: Five types of robe configuration in the A style. Source: *Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century* (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》). Social sciences academic press (China), p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

A 1 style                      A 2 style                      A 3 style, Yungang cave no.20  
A 4 style, Bing Ling cave temple                      A 5 style  
Cave No.169, First year of Jianhong, 420 A.D

The B style of robe wrapping, also known as the *uttarāsaṅga* style in which the depiction of the *uttarāsaṅga* layer is visible, can be subdivided into four types (pic. 3.2.8 B1-B3):

1. The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders and the right corner of robe moves over the abdomen and falls over the left arm.



The *uttarāsaṅga* is clearly visible and covers both shoulders or most of the places the *saṅghāṭi* covers. (上衣搭肘式 hereafter referred to as B1).

2. The *uttarāsaṅga* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of the robe moves across the abdomen and falls over the left arm. The *saṅghāṭi* covers the *uttarāsaṅga* on both shoulders and the right leg, leaving bare the right chest. (上衣重层式 hereafter referred to as B2).

3. The *uttarāsaṅga* covers both shoulders and the right corner of the robe falls on the right forearm. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders or leaves the right bare. The right corner of the robe falls on the left shoulder or forearm. (中衣搭肘式 hereafter referred to as B3)

4. The *saṅghāṭi* cover the left shoulder and the right shoulder is bare. The right corner of the robe crosses under the right arm and falls over the left shoulder. The *samkaksika* is also visible. (中衣直裰式 hereafter referred to as B4)





3 style



Longmen Caves



B 1 style

B 2 Style, Bin Yang Cave

B

Based on these nine variants of robe wrapping, we will now further examine the characteristics of Buddha figures from the Northern Wei period.

Many Buddhist caves or grottoes were created during the Northern Wei dynasty and some continued to be used for purposes of worship into the Eastern Wei and Western Wei period, and even into the Tang dynasty. Buddhist sculptural art had reached to was enjoying a period of great flourish and went on to influence the art in the Yungang grottoes in Shanxi province, the Longmen grottoes in Henan province, the Dunhuang grottoes, the Maiji Shan grottoes and the Bing Ling temple grottoes in Gansu province. It is in these Buddhist grottoes that we have found large numbers of Northern Wei Buddha figures many of which are well preserved. The Yungang grottoes offer us some valuable clues that we can use to better understand the development of Buddha figures in Northern Wei dynasty. The early Tanyao five caves (the No.16, No.17, No.18, No.19 and No.20), which were created over the period 460-465 AD by the monk Tanyao contain art that was somehow influenced by the Gupta and Gandhara Buddhist arts and Xi Yu Buddhist art.

For instance, the main seated Buddha figure from cave No.20 of the Yungang grottoes (pic.327. A3) has a pattern of robe that is typical of Gupta

Buddhist art. The attendant standing Buddha on the left-hand side of the main Buddha (pic.3.2.9 left) wears a *saṅghāṭi* that covers both shoulders (A1 style) down to the ankle and has U-shaped patterns in front of the Buddha's chest. This robe is commonly seen in Gupta Buddha art and similar to the Bamiyan Buddha in Afghanistan.

By the later period of the Northern Wei dynasty, the styles of dress



evident in the Buddha figures had changed. By then, a common style of dress indicated by the

sculptors was a loose gown tied with a wide girdle. The bottom of the robe draped onto and covered the front of the throne and this style can be considered as a unique style of robe and robe wrapping. This style appeared in the second excavation period of the Yungang grottoes and was prominent in the art of the Taihe years (477- 499AD). Over the Taihe years, a variety of Buddha figures and arts were created, and this was an important period of evolution for both the Yungang grottoes and Chinese Buddha figures.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Li Zhengxiao, **The Changing and Evolution of Buddha Figures During the Daihe Years: Based on the Buddha Figure with Inscription of 13<sup>th</sup> Year of Taihe** (太和年间造像的变化与演进-以太和十三年（498）铭造像为中心), 6 April 2017.

Pic.3.2.9 Left: The attendant Buddha from cave no.20 Yungang grottoes, Northern Wei dynasty.

Pic. 3.2.10 Right: The Standing Buddha from cave no.6 Yungang Grottoes, Northern Wei dynasty.

Buddha figures dressed in loose gowns that were tied at the waist with wide girdles and which had long robes that draped down and covered the front of the Buddha throne were found in the Yungang grottoes, which were created in about the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Taihe (489). Such figures were found in caves no. 5, no.6, no.7, no.8, no.9, and no.10, which were excavated from the 8<sup>th</sup> year of Taihe (484



AD) to the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Taihe (489 AD). For example, the standing Buddha in cave no.6, of the B 1

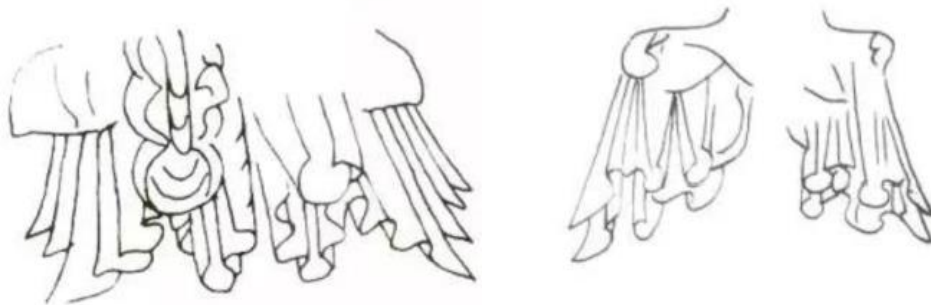
style (pic.3.2.10 right), has a *saṅghāṭi* that cover both shoulders and the right corner of robe moves across the abdomen and falls over the left arm. The depiction also indicates a *samkaksika* (僧祇支) and girdle that hangs outside of the *saṅghāṭi*. The depicted folds of the *saṅghāṭi* fall in sweeping arcs across the torso and split into stiff edges at either side in a pattern that resembles a fish tail. The different layers at the robe's bottom show the *uttarāsaṅga*. Two similar examples are the two standing Buddha figures on the upper side of the eastern wall of cave no.6 (pic.3.2.11).

Pic.3.2.11 Standing Buddha on the upper level of east wall in cave no.6, Yungang grottoes, Northern Wei dynasty.

The style in which the bottom of the robe drapes down and covers the

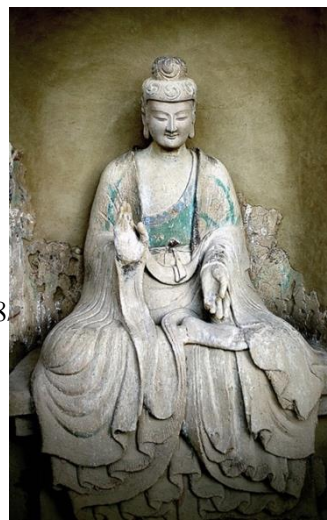


front of the throne (裳悬座 pic.3.2.12) is seen in Buddha figure that are in sitting posture. Such figures were found in the Yungang grottoes, Longmen, Maiji Shan and even in the Dunhuang grottoes. A good example comes from cave No. 30 of the Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.13 left). The Buddha is in sitting posture and the *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders, with the right corner of robe lying across the abdomen and falling over the left arm. A *samkaksika* can be seen and a girdle with



long tails is tied around the mid-section. The hands form the *abhaya* mudra. The depiction of the folds of the *saṅghāṭi* fall on the body and robe's bottom, which is draped and covers the throne, splits into stiff edges at either side in a fish tail pattern. The right foot is uncovered. Another example of this style is the Buddha from the Binyang central cave of the Longmen grottoes (pic.3.2.8 B2). In this case, the depiction of the *saṅghāṭi* appears to be like a collar and cuffs. The same style of Buddha figures was made in the Western Wei dynasty (536-556 AD) and were found in cave No. 44 of the Maijishan grottoes. The draped robe in front of the throne has many layers (pic.3.2.14 right).

Pic. 3.2.12 The Style of the robe's bottom draping down and covering the front of the throne.<sup>35</sup>



om/content/16/0818

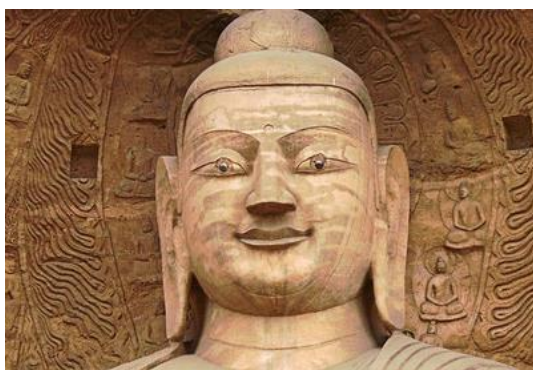
tml

Pic.3.2.13 Left: Seated Buddha from cave no. 30 of Yungang grottoes, Northern Wei dynasty

Pic.3.2.14 Right: Seated Buddha from cave no.44 Maijin Mt. grottoes, Western Wei dynasty

The unique characteristics of the Buddhas figures we have seen from the Northern Dynasty can be summarized. The characteristics are: (1) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and the right corner of robe across abdomen fall over left arm; (2) a *samkaksik* is worn and tied with a girdle that has long tails; (3) the bottom of the robe splits into stiff edges at either side making a pattern like a fish tail; (4) whether standing or seated, all Buddha figures wear a *saṅghāṭi* that looks like a traditional Chinese *Hanfu* with collar and cuffs; (5) for sitting figures - draped robes that fall in front of throne and leave the right foot uncovered; (6) the figure usually makes the *abhaya mudra* (gesture of fearlessness). These characteristics are important parts of a unique style that featured in Buddha figures and Buddhist art from the Yungang grottoes, the Longmen grottoes, the Maiji Shan grottoes, and the Dunhuang grottoes in the later period of the Northern Wei dynasty and Western Wei dynasty, and Eastern Wei dynasty.

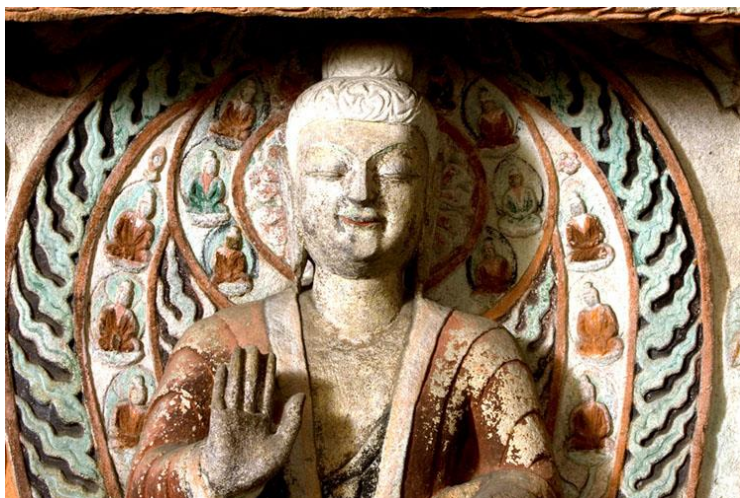
**Facial features:** We now turn to study the facial features of Buddha figures in the Northern Wei dynasty. Facial features can reveal a lot about the changing styles of Buddha figures. One distinctive facial look of the Buddhas in this period is a graceful facial appearance that is influenced by the faces of Taoist sages. There are two different kinds of facial features of Buddha figures in the Northern Wei that appeared in the period of Taihe years (太和年间477-499 AD), which were during the time of Emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝).



Pic. 3.2.15 Left: Buddha figure from cave no.20 Yungang Grottoes, early Northern Wei dynasty.

Pic. 3.2.16 Right: Buddha figure from cave no.6 Yungang Grottoes, early Northern Wei dynasty.

The first kind of Buddha facial feature can be seen in figures from the early Yungang grottoes, which were created before Taihe years. Examples can be found in five caves: the no.16, no.17, no.18, no.19 and no.20 caves. The Buddha figures display a rotund figure with a round face that is sometimes called a ‘full moon,’ and this can be seen in the figures from cave no.20 and cave no.6 at the Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.15 left, pic.3.2.16 right, and pic.3.2.9). The Buddha is smiling and has open eyes that stare straight ahead, and elongated earlobes that almost touch both shoulders. The Buddha in cave no.20 has an *ushnisha* that is smooth (磨光肉髻) without any hair depiction, and the creator of this depiction was probably influenced by Buddhist art from the Xi Yu region. Another variant on this first kind of Buddha facial features that appeared in the early Taihe years is a round face and high nose bridge, and this variant is a remnant of the Gandhara style. For instance, the Buddha figure on the east wall and upper level on the east wall of cave no. 6 of the Yungang grottoes has this Gandhara look (pic. 3.2.17, pic.3.2.11).



Pic.3.2.17 Buddha figure from the east wall of cave no.6 Yungang Grottoes, early

Northern Wei dynasty.

The second kind of Buddha facial features that were popular from the middle of the Taihe years to the later Northern Wei also influenced the creators of Buddha figures in the Western Wei and Eastern Wei dynasties and particularly affected the artisans that worked in the Yungang, Longmen, Bing Ling, and Dunhuang grottoes. The characteristics of this Buddha face that presented were a long, thin, narrow shaped face with angular features. The smile, nose and lips were more natural and life-like than the cylindrical face and simple geometric facial features seen on the Buddha in the Binyang central cave (pic.3.2.8 B2).<sup>36</sup> The opened eyes in the shape of almond or leaf of willow tree stared straight ahead and there was a slight sense of the underling bone structure of the face around the eyes (pic.3.2.18). The large and thin lips with the oral commissures turned up presented



a Buddha that was smiling, and the strong lines of upper vermilion borders and lines of philtrum suggested a more realistic mouth (pic.3.2.19).

Pic. 3.2.18 The eyes shape of Buddha figures from Northern Wei dynasty.

Pic. 3.2.19 The lips shape of Buddha figures from Northern Wei dynasty.





**Hair style:** Hair style is another important characteristic used to study, identify and classify artistic depictions of Buddhas. There have been many different types of hair styles used on depictions of the Buddha, and the Buddha figures of the Northern Wei dynasty also presented in a range of styles, which included hair in a smooth round shape (磨光肉髻), wavy hair, dense snail curl hair style, and spiral patterned hair (pic.3.2.20).



Pic.3.2.20: 1. The hair in smooth round shape as a pear; 2. Wavy hair style;  
3. Dense snail curl hair style; 4. Spiral patterns on hair.

The smooth round-shape hair pattern (磨光肉髻) does not show any details of the hair. It is a special hair style found neither in the Indian tradition art nor in Gandhara art. Early occurrences of this hair style were depicted in Buddhist caves painting in Xi Yu and Central Asia. Examples include the Buddha paintings in cave no.17 and no.123 in the Kizil complex that were created from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>37</sup> works in the Kumtura caves, figures found in cave no.165 of the

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<sup>37</sup> Li Ruizhe, **Cave Temple in Kucha** (《龟兹石窟寺》), China Social Sciences Press, December 2015, p. 43.

Bamiyan caves in Afghanistan, works in the Dunhuang grottoes, many of which later influenced the artisans who created the wall paintings in the Yungang grottoes.

It was originally used to capture the hair of Buddha on Buddhist wall paintings, but later similar representations of the Buddha's hair in this smooth round shape were done in clay and wood on sculptures and statues. An example is the wooden seated Buddha (pic.2.3.4) from Tumshuk, Xinjiang province, which dates to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This hair style from the Xin Yu region via Dunhuang influenced the creation of Buddha figures in the central regions of China, mostly in the Sixteen kingdoms period. For instance, large numbers of clay Buddha figures with hair in the smooth round pattern were found in the cave no.169 of Bing Ling cave temple. And in later periods, this kind of hair style was often adopted on Buddha figures in the Northern Wei dynasty, and in the Northern Qi and early Tang dynasties.<sup>38</sup> The smooth style that has no hair depiction appeared on Buddha figures in the Northern Wei dynasty in the Yungang grottoes in caves no.16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 (pic.3.2.7 A3 and pic.3.2.9).

The wavy hair style was frequently seen in Gandhara Buddhist art and the wavy hair and almost always appeared with a *ushnisha*. This style was originally an influence of Greek art in the northern part of ancient India (present-day Pakistan and part of Afghanistan) during the Kushan period. The style in these regions then in turn affected Buddhist art in Central Asia and the Xi Yu region. There are many examples of the wavy hair style for the Buddha in the Kizil caves, the Kumtura caves, and in the Dunhuang grottoes. Buddha figures that featured this style appeared in the Yungang grottoes in the middle period of their creation. Fine examples are in cave no.6 (pic.3.2.11), which contains large numbers of Buddha figures with wavy hair styles and the gilded Maitreya Buddha (pic.3.2.20

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<sup>38</sup> Jin Shen, **Jin Shen Talks on Ancient Buddha Figures** 《金申趣谈古代佛像》, Forbidden City publisher, Jan, 2009, p. 21.

no.2), with an inscription indicating the Buddha was made in the Fifth Year of Zheng Guang (正光五年, 524 AD) in the Northern Wei dynasty.

The dense snail curl hair style features hair that is thick and formed into small and shell-like curls. This style originated in the Indian art of the Mathura and Gupta Buddhist arts. In the later period of Northern Wei dynasty, the creators of Buddha figures also adopted this style. For example, the Buddha figure from Qingzhou region (pic.3.2.20 no.3), now in present-day Shandong province has the snail curl hair style. Later, the style became popular in the Eastern Wei dynasty and Northern Qi kingdom period. Interestingly, the style has been a long-lived one, and it continues to be seen in present day Buddhist art.

The spiral patterned hairstyle is similar to the wavy hair style and is often used with it. Most Buddha figures with the wavy hair have one or more spiral patterns or winding wheel-like pattern in the front of the hair and on the *ushnisha* (pic.3.3.20 no.4). This style was probably an effect of Gandhara art, which appeared in the later Northern Wei dynasty, especially in the Longmen grottoes, such as the Buddha figure in the central Binyang cave (pic.3.2.8 B2) and the Vairocana Buddha in the Fengxian temple at Longmen grottoes. It became one of the stylized styles in the Tang dynasty.

**Flaming mandorla:** Flaming mandorlas and haloes are other distinctive symbol of Buddha figures in the Northern Wei dynasty. Buddha figures often have flaming mandorlas and these are often present in large and with richly decorated haloes. Two kinds of flaming mandorlas are commonly found in Buddha figures of the Northern Wei dynasty. One type is found with standing Buddha figures and the other type is found with seated Buddha figures. The two types of flaming mandorlas are similar in that they are both large oval-shaped.

A good example is the main standing Buddha in cave no.6 at the Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.10). There is a small flaming halo just behind the head of the Buddha, and the inner side is decorating with many small Buddha figures in

meditation posture, encircled by the dense lines of flaming fire. The small flaming halo and large flaming mandorla combine together and the external large flaming mandorla provides a backdrop to the whole Buddha body from the ankle up to and overhead. It is decorated with flying apsaras and full dense lines of flaming fire. There are also many other examples of Buddhas with flaming mandorlas in which a smaller small halo and large mandorla decorated small seated Buddha figures, such as those that appear in cave no.20 (pic.3.2.7 A3,) and on the east wall of cave no.6 of Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.17). Others can be found in the central cave at the Binyang cave, which is part of the Longmen grottoes (pic.3.2.8 B2). In this figure, the small halo features a lotus motif.

Summing up, the Buddha figures of the Northern Wei dynasty had a number of characteristics that set them apart from other periods and included were the depictions of robe, facial features, hair styles and mandorlas and haloes. The Northern Wei Buddha figures were part of a transition from Indian and Gandhara styles into styles more closely linked to Chinese art and culture, and the Northern Wei figures influenced the development of Buddha figures in later periods. The Buddha figures of the in Western Wei and Eastern Wei dynasties has directly followed earlier forms, but as we shall see, Buddha figures were to undergo further evolution in the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou dynasties.

### **B) Buddha Figures in the Northern Qi Dynasty**

The depiction of the Buddha in Northern Qi dynasty or Bei Qi dynasty (550-577 AD) was quite different to his depiction in the Northern Wei. No longer were seen the loose gowns tied with wide girdles, and also missing were the graceful Taoist sage-like faces. The faces were no longer long and narrow with angular features, and the hair styles became simple. Gone were the elaborate large mandorlas. The robes and the way they were depicted on the Buddha figures were now mainly influenced by Sarnath art.

Scholarly focus on study of Buddha figures in the Northern Qi dynasty

was mainly based on archaeological evidence. Large numbers of fine Buddha figure were discovered at the site of Longxing temple in Qingzhou, Shandong province, China in 1996. Archaeologists there found more than 200 torsos, 144 Buddha heads and nearly 50 heads of saintly attendant Bodhisattvas.<sup>39</sup> The figures were mostly made from limestone and have been dated to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, most figures had been damaged. Since the discoveries, Buddha figures from the Longxing temple, Qingzhou region have been considered as prime examples of style of Buddhist art from the Northern Qi dynasty.

The creators of Buddha figures in the Qingzhou region adopted various aspects of Sarnath art but also included some Chinese factors into their works to cater for Chinese esthetics. The Chinese influence is clear in the elements of type



and fitting of robe, facial features, and hair styles.

Pic. 3.2.21 Buddha figures from Longxing temple, Qingzhou, Qingzhou Museum,

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<sup>39</sup> **Heavenly Bodies**, 8 Art & Entertainment, August 30-31,2008

[http://journeysonthesilkroad.com/content/Heavenly\\_bodies.pdf](http://journeysonthesilkroad.com/content/Heavenly_bodies.pdf)

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Shandong province. Bei Qi dynasty (550-577 A.D).<sup>40</sup>

Buddha figures in Northern Qi were generally slim and slight of build. The loose gown tied with wide girdle, characteristic of the Northern Wei dynasty, was no longer present. The existence of a diaphanous robe was suggested by water drop patterns; a few raised thin lines that were interspersed with flat areas of drapery enunciated the folds of a *saṅghāṭi*. This subtle work was typical of Sarnath art characteristics. The *saṅghāṭi*, which was thin and looked as soft as gauze, revealed much of the garments and body beneath itself. (pic.3.2.21). This style was similar to the Cao style (曹家样、曹衣出水) of the artist Cao Zhongda (曹仲达), a Buddhist painter in Northern Qi dynasty who was originally from Central Asia.

The part of Buddha figures of the Northern Qi that was not of Sarnath art influence was the facial features. In the Northern Qi figures, the Buddha has a round and full face and eyes that are nearly closed or squinting in a sense of introspection and serenity. The natural full lips are always smiling, and most figures are without an *ūrṇā* (pic.3.2.22). The hair style is usually one of dense small shell-like curls, an influence of Amarāvātī art,<sup>41</sup> but the *ushnisha* is low and short, unlike the high *ushnishas* common on Northern Wei dynasty figures.



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Pic.3.2.22 Buddha heads from the Bei Qi dynasty, now kept in the Qingzhou museum.<sup>42</sup>

The monarchs in the Northern Qi dynasty supported the Xianbei culture and believed in Buddhism. Buddhism and Buddhist art that had travelled via the Maritime Silk Road from India to the coastal state Qingzhou. All the influences together which produced the fine and stylized Buddha figures of Northern Qi that different from the style of Northern Wei dynasty.

### **C) Buddha Figures in the Northern Zhou Dynasty**

The Northern Zhou or Bei Zhou Dynasty (557-581 AD) existed in the same period as the Northern Qi dynasty, and it fought with and conquered the Northern Qi in 577 AD. After this victory, the Northern Zhou rulers controlled the northern part of China. Buddhism at this time in this area was in a state of great flourish, and there were over a million monks and nuns who lived in ten thousand temples.<sup>43</sup> During this period, many Buddhist activities were organized by the temples and their supporters, and it was common for people to make offerings or donations of Buddhist sculptures in order to make merit for their immediate families and relatives. For these reasons, large numbers of Buddha figures were created. However, during the second persecution of Buddhists in Chinese Buddhist history under the Emperor Wudi (北周武帝) in 574 AD, many of Buddha figures were destroyed.

Fortunately, enough figures remain intact to enable us to study the key characteristics of the Buddha figures of the Northern Zhou dynasty. Five carved stone Buddha figures that were found in Wanzi village, Baqiao district, Xi'an, Shanxi province in May 2004, have been particularly helpful. The figures were found in almost perfect condition and are now in a collection in Forest of Stone Steles Museum, Xi'an. The similar style of five Buddha figures placed them in the

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<sup>42</sup> [http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_62c07af80102vmem.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_62c07af80102vmem.html) 27 July 2017

<sup>43</sup> Cui Feng, **Analysis the Buddhist Folk Organization in Bei Zhou Period and Its Sculptures** (崔峰, 论北周时期的民间佛教组织及其造像, 世界宗教研究) Studies in World Religions. (2) 2011, p. 1.



same historical period, and this was confirmed to be in the later Northern Zhou dynasty by the discovery of an inscription on the base of one of them which suggested the piece was made on the 21<sup>st</sup> of Second Year of Da Xiang, 580 AD (大象二年七月廿一日).

The Buddha figures in Northern Zhou dynasty were neither slim like the Northern Qi figures, nor did they have the characteristics of Northern Wei figures. The Northern Zhou, which had their own style, were generally tall with strong bodies and square faces. A good example is a Buddha figure now in the museum of Chung Tai Chan monastery (中台山博物馆), Taiwan. It has an inscription that suggests the Buddha was made in the second year of Baoding (北周保定二年), 562 AD (pic.3.2.23 A), which was before the persecution of Buddhists in Northern Zhou dynasty. The Buddha has a strong body and broad shoulders. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and right corner of the robe falls over on left shoulder. The chest is bare and we can see the tied girdle used to secure the *samkaksika* (僧祇支). The *saṅghāṭi* naturally drapes down from the shoulders to the ankles and is shorter than the *antaravāsaka* (安陀会). A few thin and simple carved lines suggest the folds of *saṅghāṭi* and the cuffs. The square face includes squinting eyes and the Buddha smiles and radiates loving kindness. The figure lacks an *ūrṇā*, the hair presents in thick and small shell curls with an *ushnisha*.



A



B



Pic.3.2.23 Left A: Buddha figure made in the second year of Baoding (562 A.D), Bei Zhou dynasty.<sup>44</sup>

Right B: Buddha figure made on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the second year of Daxiang (580 A.D) Bei Zhou dynasty.<sup>45</sup>

Another example is one of five stone carved Buddha figures found in the city of Xi'an. The figure has an inscription that indicates it was made in 580 AD (pic.3.2.23 B). The Buddha is in standing position and has some damage to the nose and hands. The *saṅghāṭi* drapes down to the ankles and reveals an *antaravāsaka* (安陀会). The folds of the robe with a U shape fall in water ripple patterns that are indicated by simple carved lines. The left hand holds the robe and the missing right hand probably makes the *abhaya mudra*. The figure's face is round and like a full moon with nearly closed eyes and long thin eyebrows. All of this presents the Buddha in a happy and smiling fashion. Dense and small shell-like curls constitute the hair and the *ushnisha* is a low and flat one. The lotus base of the sculpture is decorated with two lions and is inscribed in Chinese. The inscription carries the following information: (1) the reasons for using Buddha figures to symbolize Buddha's teaching; (2) records of details of the persecution of Buddhists in Northern Zhou; (3) the reason why donors need Buddha's teachings; (4) the details of the merit wishes of the donors; (5) pray wordings; and (6) the date the Buddha figure was made.<sup>46</sup>

In conclusion, from the study of characteristics of the Northern Zhou figures, we can easily identify the influences of Northern Wei and Northern Qi Buddha styles (which were heavily influenced by the Sarnath style) on the Northern Zhou's style. The *samkaksika* (僧祇支) tied with a girdle to secure the inner robe was a clear influence of the Northern Wei style, and the thin and simple

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.ctworld.org.tw/buddaart/24-gb.htm> 9 May 2017

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.360doc.com/content/12/0808/22/8413713\\_229111519](http://www.360doc.com/content/12/0808/22/8413713_229111519) 9 May 2017

<sup>46</sup> Liu Shimin, **Discussion on the Issues of Standing Buddha Figure Donated by Zhang Zikai in Bei Zhou Dynasty from Xian Region** (西安北周张子开造立佛像相关问题探讨). Magazine World of Antiquity, Jan. 2016, p. 21.

carved lines used to depict the folds of the *saṅghāṭi* and the thick and small shell curled hair was from Sarnath Buddhas figures. The Buddha figures of Northern Zhou dynasty now indeed had their own style, and the new style was more Chinese looking. It was to further influence the evolution of later Buddha figures, such as those of the Sui and Tang dynasties.

## 2) Buddha Figures in the Southern Dynasty

The Southern dynasty (420-589 AD) replaced the Eastern Jin (东晋317-420 AD) dynasty and ruled the southern part of China in the same period as the Northern dynasty did in the north. The dynasty consisted of the Song (宋420-479 AD), Qi (齐479-502 AD), and Liang (梁502-557 AD), Chen (陈557-589 AD) dynasties that came one after another, and the capital was at Jian Kang (present-day Nanjing). Jian Kang was the political, economic, and cultural center of the series of dynasties and also had formerly been the capital of the Wu Kingdom (吴222-280 AD) and Eastern Jin dynasty. Buddhism in the Southern dynasty enjoyed a period of flourish. The teachings thrived, many Buddhist sūtras were translated, and monastery construction boomed. There were 36,000 monks and nuns, and 1,930 monasteries in the Song dynasty; 32,500 monks and nuns, and 2,050 monasteries in the Qi dynasty; 82,700 monks and nuns, and 2,846 monasteries during Liang dynasty; 3,200 monks and nuns, and 108 monasteries in later Liang dynasty; and 32,000 monks and nuns, and 1,232 monasteries during the Chen dynasty.<sup>47</sup> The famous India monk Gunabhadra (求那跋陀罗394-468 AD) arrived in Jian Kang during the Song dynasty period, and Bodhidharma (菩提达摩?-536) and Zhen Di (Paramartha真谛 499-569 AD) arrived during the Liang period.

Emperors during the Song, Qi, Liang and Chen four dynasties were mostly Buddhists. An important Buddhist emperor was Xiao Yan of the Liang dynasty, (梁武帝464-549 AD) who three times ordained as a monk. He ordained in

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<sup>47</sup> Huang Chanhua, **History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教史》), Beijing Lianhe publisher, Jan. 2014, p. 140.

527 AD, 529 AD and 547 AD.<sup>48</sup> He ordered the construction of the Da Ai Jing monastery, the Kai San monastery and the Tong Tai monastery and donated money and lands to monasteries. Furthermore, he the ordered the making of gold and silver Buddha figures in the Tong Tai monastery including a large Amitābha Buddha figure, and other standing or seated Buddha figures in the Guang Zai monastery.<sup>49</sup> Then, in this great period of flourish for Buddhism that occurred in the Southern dynasty, just how did the Buddha figures look?

Unfortunately, not that many figures have survived to the present day. However, there are a number of documents and archeological discoveries that provide very valuable information for the study of Buddha figures in the Southern dynasty.

The Song dynasty was the first dynasty of the Southern dynasty after the Eastern Jin. Consequently, the creation of Buddha figures in Southern dynasty was influenced by the Eastern Jin figures, which had long and narrow faces and facial features. The Qixiashan Buddhist grottoes (栖霞山石窟) were excavated at about the end of the 5th century. They were located near the Jian Kang region (present-day Nan Jing). Buddha figures from there that have survived are mostly damaged, but we are still able to see the style of Buddha's robe, which was a loose gown tied with a wide girdle. The creators were clearly affected by Chinese philosophy and Chinese traditional dress. Even the style of having the robe bottom draping down and covering the front of the throne was present. In fact, there are four main different ways of the *saṅghāṭi* being worn found on the figures from the Qiaxia grottoes.<sup>50</sup>

(1) *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders (通肩式)

(2) *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders, right corner of the robe falling

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>50</sup> Chen Yuexin, **A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century**, Social sciences academic press (China), p. 40.

over on left shoulder, bared chest and U-shaped neckline (露胸通肩式)

(3) *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders, right corner of the robe moving across the abdomen and falling over left arm, visible *uttarāsaṅga* covering both shoulders or in the same place as the *saṅghāṭi*. (上衣搭肘式)

(4) *uttarāsaṅga* covering both shoulders, the right corner of robe on right forearm, *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders or a bare right shoulder, the right corner of robe falling on the left shoulder or forearm (中衣搭肘式)

Archeologists have discovered some Buddha figures that belonged to different periods of the Southern dynasty in Shu state (蜀present-day Si Chuan province). These discoveries provided precious examples of Buddha figures in Southern dynasty. The discovered Buddha figures not only showed features influenced by Eastern Jin, but also revealed elements of Indian factors.



Pic.3.2.24 A: Stone Buddha figure discovered at the Wan Fo monastery site of Cheng Du (成都万佛寺遗址) inscribed with the third year of Da Tong, Liang kingdom (梁大同三年537 A.D), collected in Si Chuan Museum.<sup>51</sup>

B: Stone Buddha figure discovery from Mao Xian (茂县) Si Chuan inscribed with the First year of Yong Ming of Qi kingdom (南朝齐永明元年483 A.D), collected in the Si Chuan Museum.

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.scmuseum.cn/list-1687.html> 14 May 2017

C: Stone Buddha figure discovery from Wan Fo monastery site, Cheng Du, inscribed with first year of Zhong Datong, Liang kingdom (梁中大通元年529 A.D), Si Chuan Museum.

The classic example is the carved of a seated Buddha in stone found in Mao Xian (茂县), Si Chuan province, which dates to the First Year of Yong Ming of the Qi dynasty (南朝齐永明元年483 AD, pic.3.2.24 B). The Buddha's no hair is nondescript but round in shape (磨光肉髻), and the figure has a tall *ushnisha*. The square face looks quite thin, with opened eyes and a smile. The hands make the *abhaya mudra*, and the lines carved suggest that the figure is dressed in loose gown tied with wide girdle. The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of the robe crosses the abdomen and falls over the left arm (上衣搭肘式). The



figure's chest is bare, and a girdle with long tails is tied to the secure the *samkaksika*. The bottom of the robe drapes and covers the front of the throne, and it splits into stiff edges at either side in a pattern that resembles a fish tail.

Pic.3.2.25 A: Standing stone Buddha figure discovery from Wan Fo monastery, Cheng Du, inscribed with the fourth year of Putong, Liang kingdom (梁普通四年523 A.D) collected in Si Chuan Museum.

B: Seated stone Buddha figure donated by Shi Huiying (释慧影造释迦牟尼佛漆金石像) inscribed with the First year of Zhong Datong, Liang Kingdom (梁中大同元年546 AD),

now collected in the Shanghai Museum.<sup>52</sup>

C: Stone Buddha head discovery from Si Chuan province which has been dated to the Southern dynasty (420-589 A.D), collected in the Si Chuan Museum.

Another wonderful specimen is a damaged Buddha figure found in the Wan Fo monastery site at Cheng Du (成都万佛寺遗址), which dates to the Third Year of Da Tong, Liang dynasty (梁大同三年537 AD, pic.3.2.24 A). The stone carved Buddha figure is really only a torso with legs; it is missing the head, hands and feet. The Buddha is dressed in a loose gown tied with a wide girdle, and the *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders. The right corner of the robe crossed the abdomen and falls over the left arm, and a girdle secures the *samkaksika*. And similar style of figure is the carved stone standing Buddha figure inscribed with the Fourth Year of Putong, Liang dynasty (梁普通四年523 AD, pic.3.2.3.25 A), from the Wan Fo monastery, Cheng Du. Yet another is a stone Buddha in sitting posture donated by Shi Huiying (释慧影造释迦牟尼佛漆金石像), which is inscribed with the First Year of Zhong Datong, Liang dynasty (梁中大同元年546 AD, pic.2.3.25 B). These figures are dressed in loose gowns tied with wide girdles, have the *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders, and have the right corner of robe crossing the abdomen and falling over the left arm. The same style of Buddha figures was commonly found in the Northern Wei dynasty, and the dynasties influenced each other, although it is clear that the Buddha figures in both were derived from the Jin dynasties.

From Si Chuang province was also discovered another style of Buddha figure which belonged to the period of Southern dynasty. A head of Buddha figure discovered in Cheng Du (pic.3.2.3.25 C). The head had thick and small shell like curled hair and an *ushnisha* which was probably influenced by Mathura Buddhist art, but the face was square shaped and full in the cheeks. The figure's opened eyes

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52 [http://www.shanghaimuseum.net/cn/dc/jx/ds\\_view.jsp?id=850&lb=0&sd=](http://www.shanghaimuseum.net/cn/dc/jx/ds_view.jsp?id=850&lb=0&sd=0&isjp=1)

that were shaped like a leaf of a willow tree stared straight ahead, and the nose and lips were lifelike. The head also had two elongated earlobes. Another preserved Buddha figure from the Wan Fo monastery site, Cheng Du had a missing head. The figure was inscribed with the First Year of Zhong Datong, Liang dynasty (梁中大通元年529 AD, pic.3.2.3.24 C). Dense lines depict the folds of a *saṅghāṭi*, and the robe covers both shoulders. Cuffs are indicated by the layers of the *saṅghāṭi*, and the style would seem to that of Gupta Buddhist art. The influence of India Buddhist art in the Si Chuan region may have been because the emperor Liang Wudi was personally interested in Indian Buddha figures and searched for Indian Buddha figures.<sup>53</sup>

The Shu state (蜀) was under the rule of the Southern dynasty, and its culture and Buddhist art style were directly affected by the culture of the capital city, Jian Kang. Furthermore, the Indian style of Buddha figures found in Shu state can probably be explained because the influence from first brought from India to Jian Kang and then to Shu. History tells us that the emperor Liang Wudi several times assigned royal members to govern the Shu state.<sup>54</sup> Buddhist monks followed royal member Xiao Yuanzao (萧渊藻) to Shu state and promoted Buddhism.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the royal member Xiao Hui (萧恢) offered to construct the Xiao Ai temple to make merit for his deceased mother in Cheng Du.<sup>56</sup>

It was due to the influence of Eastern Jin art that Buddha figures still kept the long, narrow facial features during the Song and Qi kingdom periods.<sup>57</sup> But in the Liang dynasty, the facial features of the figures transformed, and the figures now had square full cheeks and were sometimes of round facial shape.<sup>58</sup> For example, the stone carved seated Buddha figure donated by Shi Huiying in 546

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<sup>53</sup> Chen Yuexin, *A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century*, Social sciences academic press (China), p. 68.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

AD had facial features that were quite round in shape.

### **3.1.2.3 Buddha Figures in the Sui Dynasty**

The short-lived Sui dynasty (581-618 AD) was an important period because it was a time of political reunification and recovery for Buddhism, its art and artists. It was in the Sui dynasty that the country, which had been split for several hundred years, was reunified. This unification promoted communication and cultural exchange, and ultimately led to changes on the way Buddha figures were created. It was a time of flourish for Buddhism, and many figures in a variety of forms were created in stone carving and reliefs, wood, bronze, and ivory. The artisans created depictions of both Buddhas and or Bodhisattvas

The development of Buddha figures in Sui dynasty proceeded in two ways. First, it proceeded as Buddhism and its artists were released from the persecution of emperor Zhou Wudi (北周武帝) in Northern Zhou dynasty and related wars. Second, key powerful individuals actively promoted Buddhism and encouraged the creation of Buddha figures. All the work could not have happened without the support of two emperors of the Sui dynasty, the devout Buddhist emperor Wendi Yang Jian (文帝杨坚 541-604 AD) and emperor Yangdi Yang Guang (炀帝杨广 569-618 AD). They made huge contributions to the development of the Buddhist teachings, the construction of new monasteries, and to the repair and rebuilding of damaged monasteries and broken Buddha figures. They also promoted the ordination of monks and nuns. In particular, the emperor Wendi Yang Jian organized the raising up of a bhikkhuni monastery. How important it was that the throne was occupied by a patron of Buddhism. From the early Kai Huang years (开皇581-600 AD) to the end of Ren Shou year (仁寿年501-604 AD), emperor Wendi Yang Jian's donations included the making of 106,580 new Buddha figures (large and small) and the repair of 150, 800 damaged Buddha figures.<sup>59</sup> Emperor Yangdi Yang Guang donated 3,850 new Buddha figures and supported the repair of

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<sup>59</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism**, Religion Publisher (《中国佛教简史》), May 2001, p. 126.



101,000 damaged Buddha figures.<sup>60</sup> In addition, they supported the continuing excavation of Buddhist grottoes such as the Mogao, Longmen Xiangtang Shan, Maiji Shan , and Tianlong Shan grottoes.

Due to the unification of the country, which had brought together various cultures, the ongoing propagation of Buddhism throughout the nation was accelerated. Under this pressure to recover and develop, artists made Buddha figures in various forms, some of which kept the older styles, and others of which displayed new inclinations.

In the early days of the Sui dynasty, Buddha figures generally continued to display two main streams of styles. The first kept a similar style to that of the northeast and east regions in the former Northern Qi dynasty, which included such as present-day Hebei and Shandong provinces. For example, a large marble sculpture of Amitābha Buddha figure (pic.3.2.26 A) was 5.8 meters high, weighed 2 tons, and was inscribed with the Fifth Year of Kaihuang (开皇5年), which was 585 AD, in the Sui days. The original Buddha figure came from Cong Guang monastery (崇光寺), Hebei province, and is now kept in the British museum.

Pic.3.2.26 A: Marble Amithaba Buddha, 5.8 meters high, 2 tons and inscribed with



A



B



C

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

the Fifth year of Kaihuang (585 A.D. 开皇5年, 崇光寺), early Sui dynasty, original from the Cong Guang monastery Hebei province, British Museum.<sup>61</sup>

B: Marble Amithaba Buddha donated by Zhang Maore (张茂仁, 开皇十一年) in the eleventh year of Kaihuang, Sui dynasty, the Palace Museum, China.<sup>62</sup>

C: Marble Maitreya Buddha donated by Zhang Bo (张波, 开皇五年) in the fifth year of Kaihuang, Sui dynasty, the Palace Museum, China.

The Buddha figure presented with simple carved lines that suggested the folds of a thin *saṅghāṭi* that covered both shoulders and was tied with a girdle with an attached pendant to secure the *samkaksika*. Another carved marble Amitābha Buddha figure was donated by Zhang Maore (张茂仁, 开皇十一年, pic.3.2.26 B) in the Eleventh Year of Kaihuang. Yet another marble figure of Maitreya Buddha was donated by Zhang Bo (张波, 开皇五年, pic.3.2.26 C) in the Fifth Year of Kaihuang. It was probably from the same region of Hebei



province. All these figures retained the same style of thin robe and slim body shape that originated in the Northern Qi dynasty, but their facial features were round shaped, which fitted the Han people's aesthetic standards.

Pic.3.2.27 A: Stone Buddha inscribed with second year of Kaihuang (开皇二年582 A.D), Sui dynasty, Freer Gallery of Art, USA.

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.britishmuseum.org> 16 May 2017

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/sculpture/234685.html> 16 May 2017

B: Stone Buddha figure of the Sui dynasty, Forest of Stone Steles Museum, Xian, China.

C: The stone Shakyamuni Buddha donated by Xun Guochou (荀国丑开皇二年) in second year of Kaihuang, 582 A.D of Sui dynasty, Henan Museum, China.<sup>63</sup>

The second style was of figures that remained similar to the forms from the northwest and west regions of the former Northern Zhou dynasty, such as present-day Shaanxi, Gansu, Henan, and Shanxi provinces. For instance, a stone Buddha figure is inscribed with Second Year of Kaihuang (开皇二年582 AD, pic.3.2.27 A), which was also the second year of Sui dynasty. The Buddha is in a seated position and has a strong body shape. The light robe is suggested by simple carved lines. The face is round, and there is no real no hair description. Another stone Buddha figure of the Sui dynasty (pic.3.2.27 B) which is now in the Forest of Stone Steles Museum is in a seated position and has a strong body shape. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulder, but a bare chest is revealed by the large U shaped top of the robe that also reveals a *samkaksika* without a securing girdle. The robe's bottom drapes down and covers the front of the throne, and all of the above-mentioned elements are of the style of the Northern Wei. The double layered halo behind the head has an inner circle decorated with lotuses and an external circle adorned with flowers, which was a decorative style often used for Northern Zhou and Sui dynasty Buddha's haloes (see the pictures 3.2.27 B and C). The round facial features and similar strong body shapes of the two Buddha figures indicates they probably came from the same region, which was in the Northern part of the Sui area, a region that was formerly under control of the Northern Zhou.

A stone carved Shakyamuni Buddha figure donated by Xun Guochou (荀国丑开皇二年, pic.3.2.27 C) in the Second Year of Kaihuang (the 582 AD), Sui dynasty, provides us with a picture of the characteristics of Buddha figures from a different region in the early period of the Sui. The Buddha has round facial features and strong body shape like the Buddha figures from Northern Zhou. The hair style

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<sup>63</sup> [http://www.chnmus.net/dcjp/node\\_16053.htm](http://www.chnmus.net/dcjp/node_16053.htm) 18 May 2017

in smooth (磨光肉髻), and simple carved simple lines suggest the folds of a thin robe that was commonly used on Buddha figures in the Northern Qi. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders, and the right corner of robe falls across the abdomen and hangs over the left arm (上衣搭肘式). A girdle is used to secure the *samkaksika* and the robe's bottom drapes over the front of the throne in Northern Wei style. Two flanking attendants and seven small seated Buddha figures surround the Buddha. The seven are the Buddhas of the past and another small Maitreya Buddha is also present. The whole figure illustrates the past, present and future Buddhas.

In the middle and later periods of the Sui dynasty, Buddha figures evolved via a merging of the styles of the Northern Zhou and Northern Qi dynasties, but the predominant form remained that of the Northern Zhou. One of the reasons for this was that emperor Wendi Yang Jian, who was a former minister in of the Northern Zhou dynasty, attacked and defeated the forces of Northern Qi and Chen dynasties in the southern regions, and legitimized his authority by enabling the recovery of Buddhism and encouraging the making of figures in the Northern Zhou style.

Buddha figures in the Sui dynasty evolved in ways based on the Northern Zhou and Northern Qi styles. There were differences in the way the figures were robed, but facial features of figures from the two sources of influence were similar as were the shapes of the faces and the body shapes. Significantly, the characteristics that evolved over the short period of the Sui dynasty paved the way for further evolution in the succeeding era of the Tang dynasty.

#### **3.1.2.4 Buddha Figures in the Tang Dynasty**

During the Tang dynasty (617-906 AD), Buddha figures became more delicate and graceful, and this was a stage of evolution that had its roots in the Jin dynasty, the Sixteen kingdoms through to the Southern dynasty, the Northern dynast, and finally the Sui dynasty. The completed transformation of Chinese Buddhism was expressed in the ways of sūtra translation and establishment of

several new Buddhist schools. The Buddhist schools as they developed promoted different Buddhist concepts and philosophies and their artists developed new styles of figures that expressed the underlying concepts and philosophies. Included here were the figures of Amitābha Buddha of the Pure land school, Vairocana Buddha of the Avatamsaka and Mantra schools, and various other kinds of visual representations, such as paintings, illustration of the sūtras (经变图), of the key points and stories that emerged from the sūtras .

The development of Buddha figures and Buddhist art reached its peak in the golden period of the Tang dynasty. The extensive creation of Buddhist grottoes all over the nation produced huge numbers of Buddhist sculptures and paintings. For example, there were 482 caves in the Mogao grotto, about 238 caves contained more than 600 sculptures that were produced in the Tang period.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, 18 caves of the many caves in the Tianlong Shan grottoes that were created in the Tang period contained many pieces of Buddhist art, especially caves nos.4, 14, 17, 18, 21, and 5.<sup>65</sup>

The characteristics of Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty were mainly derived from those of the Sui, Northern Zhou, and Northern Qi periods, but the artists also then combined those earlier characteristics with new ones that satisfied the Tang Chinese aesthetic and social sense. Many Tang dynasty Buddhist figures have survived to the present day, and they come in the forms of stone, clay, wood, painting, gilded bronze and in a range of sizes. However, Buddha figures from Buddhist grottoes capture the main stream of the Buddha style at the time. Therefore, Buddha figures from Tianlongshan grottoes, Longmen grottoes and Mogao grottoes in the central, northern and western regions will be selected for the study of the main characteristics of Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty.

**Robe style:** Information about robe style is mainly expressed in terms

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<sup>64</sup> Zhang Mengmeng, **The Characteristics of Buddhist Sculpture in Middle Tang from the Mogao Grottoes** (《敦煌莫高窟中唐代佛教塑像内容及其艺术特征》), No.14, 2009, The Silk Road.

<sup>65</sup> Cui Wenkui, **Tianlong Shan Buddhist Art** (《天龙山佛教雕塑艺术》), 1998 Buddhist Studies, pp. 212-218.

of the way of wearing of the *saṅghāṭi*, and its folds and drapery. The way of wearing a *saṅghāṭi* originated in India, but after centuries of evolution and cultural influence in China, the depictions of the robes and the way they ‘worn’ on the figure changed and became more of an artistic display. Several styles of *saṅghāṭi* wearing formed during the evolution and some of them were never found in Indian or Gandhara style. One style was that in which a loose gown was tied with a wide girdle, a style which as we have seen was popular in the Northern Wei period. Up until the Tang dynasty, the Buddha’s robes had conformed to styles that had evolved in a meaningful way from earlier forms. The types of Buddhas robes we see in figures from the Yungang, Longmen, Gongxian and Xiangtangshan grottoes captured the change from a foreign style of robe and robe wearing to a more uniquely Chinese style, and this occurred over the 5th-8th centuries. This process was basically completed by developments in the Tang dynasty.<sup>66</sup> This last stage of evolution is revealed by four styles that predominated over the Tang period: (1) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders (通肩式); (2) the *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder and the right shoulder is bare (袒右肩式); (3) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and right corner of robe falls across the abdomen and moves over the left shoulder, whilst the right half of the chest and arm are bare (半披式) and ; (4) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and the chest is bare (露胸通肩式). These four types became the main forms that influenced the later development of Buddha figures.

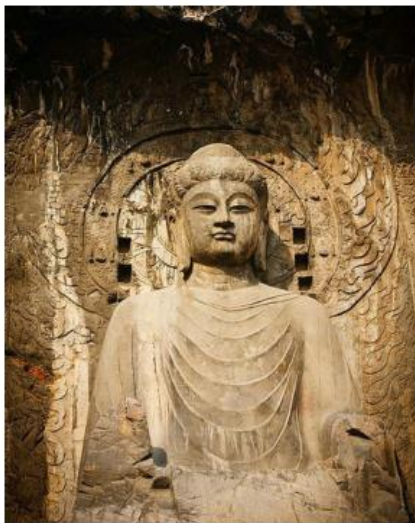
The style of the *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders (通肩式) is a traditional style of wearing the Buddha’s robes and had been depicted on Buddha figures since the earliest time of Indian and Gandhara Buddhist art. It was also found on figures produced from the Eastern Han until the Tang dynasty, but there were variations on the theme that we can see along its path of evolution. The city of Chang A had been the nation’s capital city for many dynasties and this made it an area that contained important Buddhist sites. However, from the time of the early Tang dynasty, the eastern capital of Luoyang was re-established, and at this

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<sup>66</sup> Chen Yuexin, *A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8th Century* (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》), Social sciences academic press (China), p. 327.

time many new caves were dug out in the Longmen grottoes. The Vairocana Buddha of the Feng Xian temple (奉先寺) in the Longmen grottoes is largest Buddha statue there and is representative of the style with *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders.

This impressive statue of Vairocana Buddha (pic.3.2.28 A) was built under the sponsorship of the emperor Gaozong Lizhi (628-683 AD) and the empress Wu Zetian. The Buddha, which is with 17 meters high and in a seated posture, wears a thin *saṅghāṭi* that covers both shoulders. The corner of the robe crosses over the torso and falls over on left shoulder, and the draped carved lines around the neck suggest the collar of robe that is influenced by Gandhara style. The lines in the front of chest are U-shaped to depict folds. The characteristics of this robe are show a variety of influences and show evidence of evolution from those older forms. The thin style of the robe is characteristic of Buddha robe depictions from Northern Qi figures, whereas the lines depicting the folds of the *saṅghāṭi* are more simple and thinner than those seen on Gandhara statues. Also, the space between the carved lines is broader than on Gupta style figures. From the inscription on the Vairocana Buddha in the Feng Xian temple, the monks and



A



B

people who were in charge of the project were brought from the western capital of [Chang An]. Accordingly, the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders (通肩式) just like on figures in the Longmen grottoes and the influences from the Chang An region are clear.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Chen Yuexin, *A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century* (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》), Social sciences academic press (China), p. 324.



Pic.3.2.28 A: Vairocana Buddha from the Fengxin temple at the Longmen grottoes, Tang dynasty, Henan province, China.

B: The Buddha done in dry lacquer with traces of gilt, Tang dynasty, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.<sup>68</sup>

The next style we deal with is the style in which the *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder and, but the right shoulder is bare (袒右肩式). This was another traditional robe wearing style depicted in Buddha figures, but it was not quite as popular as other styles in the Tang dynasty. The Tang period saw a lot of refined culture developed, and such standards needed to be reflected in the way the Buddha figures were dressed. A bared whole shoulder may have been seen as shocking or at least inappropriate in those days when people dressed in refined and formal ways. However, there are a number of extant examples of figures that have the *saṅghāṭi* covering the left shoulder but with a bare right shoulder from the Tang dynasty. A fine example is a Buddha figure made from hollow dry lacquer with traces of gilt and polychrome pigment (pic.3.2.28 B) now kept at the Metropolitan Museum. Another is a seated bronze Amitābha Buddha figure of 37 cm in height now in the Shanghai museum. Other examples can be found in the Udayana cave (优填王洞) and in the cave of Gaoping Junwang (高平郡王洞), part of the Longmen grottoes.

The style of *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders with the right corner of the robe crossing the abdomen and falling over the left shoulder, with bare right chest and arm (半披式) can be seen on figures from Yungang cave no.20 (pic.3.2.7 A3) of Northern Wei dynasty and cave no. 169 from the Bing Ling cave temple (pic.3.2.7 A4), which date back to the First Year of Jian hong (420 AD), in the Xi Liang kingdom. From the Tianlongshan grottoes, caves that were dug out Tang period, come large numbers of Buddha figures that had a *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders, the right corner of robe crossing the abdomen and falling over the left shoulder, and a bare right half of the chest and arm (半披式). From the Buddha

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<sup>68</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/42163> 19 May 2017

figure (pic.3.2.29 A) that is now collected in the Harvard Art Museum, and originally comes from cave no.21 at the Tianlongshan grottoes, we can find many differences between the style from Yungang cave no.20 and cave no.169 of the Bing Ling cave temple. The Buddha's thin robe is different to the thick robe of the figure from cave no.20 in the Yungang grottoes. The Buddha wears a *samkaksika* without the securing girdle, and the uncovered right chest in the figure from cave no.21 of Tianlongshan grottoes reveals a soft plump body beneath the *saṅghāṭi*. In addition, all this is suggested by the realistic folds.

The style in which the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and the chest is bare (露胸通肩式) was quite popular during the Tang dynasty, and an excellent example is the main Buddha figure from cave no. 328 of Mogao grottoes (pic.3.2.29 B). The Buddha wears both *saṅghāṭi* and *uttarāsaṅga* that cover both shoulders, and the right corner of *uttarāsaṅga* falls on the left shoulder of the *saṅghāṭi*. Because the chest is bare, we are able to see the *samkaksika*, and the robe drapery falls on the throne in a style not seen in earlier forms. This style was also found in many of the Longmen grottoes, and an example is the main Buddha in the north Binyang cave.



A



B

Pic. 3.2.29 A. Carved gray sandstone Buddha, Tang dynasty, collected in Harvard Art

Museum, originally from cave 21 of Tianlongshan grottoes, Shanxi province, China.<sup>69</sup>

B. Buddha sculpture from cave no 328 of Mogao grottoes, Tang dynasty, China.

The significant style of figure in which the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders but the chest is bare (露胸通肩式) seen in Tang period Buddha figures was to affect the evolution of Buddha figures in periods subsequent to the Tang period. Indeed, that style has continued to influence the artists depict the Buddha even up to the modern age.

**Facial features:** In general, the facial features of Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty were full and fleshy. The faces were round and plump like a full moon, and the Buddha bodies tended to be on the plump side. Notably, Buddha figures from the Tianlongshan grottoes that were created during Tang period looked plumper than those from other regions. For example, a Buddha figure of the early Tang period (pic.3.2.29 A, 618-907 AD) had a round shaped face with full cheeks, and three carved lines on the neck suggested fleshiness under the chin, which was a particular characteristic of Buddha figures of the Tang dynasty. The plump face makes the mouth seem quite small, and the half-closed eyes with the high carved arc-shaped eyebrows give the impression of a broad space of the eyelid. The figures from the Tianlongshan grottoes are strikingly plump; they are plumper than the figures of any other period of Buddha figures in Chinese Buddhist art. By the mid Tang period, the Buddha's facial features were still plumpish, but not as full and fleshy as those found in the Tianlongshan grottoes.

**Hair style:** The hair styles of Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty can be divided into two main forms: the style of snail-like curl hair and the wavy hair style, and the smooth hair style without any depiction (磨光肉髻) that was often adopted in previous periods and only a few examples of which have been found in the Tang dynasty.

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<sup>69</sup> <https://tls.uchicago.edu/single-sculpture/170> 20 May 2017

Among the two main styles, the wavy hair style was adopting more widely than the snail like curl hair. Based on the original wavy-haired Gandhara style, the wavy hair style evolved into various types that could be found in the Longmen grottoes, the Tianlongshan grottoes, and the Mogao grottoes. The style of wavy hair can be seen on the statue of Vairocana Buddha from Longmen grottoes (pic.3.2.30 A), and other types of wavy hair have one or several spiral patterns on the front of hair. For example, the Buddha head from the Tianlongshan grottoes (pic.3.2.30 B) has two spiral patterns, one on the *ushnisha* and the other on the front of the hair. The rest of the hair is wavy. Some Buddha figures had more spiral patterns, one on the *ushnisha* and two on the front of the hair (pic.3.2.30 C), or two on *ushnisha* and another two on the front of the hair (pic.3.2.30 D). However, there are also some particular patterns like layers of oval shapes on the hair (pic.3.2.30 E). In the later Tang period, the symbol of the light of wisdom jewel (pic.3.2.30 F, 髻珠) appeared on the front hair of the Buddha figure, and it had not been seen in previous periods. Imagery of this jewel continued to be included in Buddha figures after the Tang period.



Pic.3.2.30

Hair style A, Tang dynasty. Hair style B, Tang dynasty. Hair style C, Tang dynasty.

Hair style D, Tang dynasty. Hair style E, Tang dynasty. Hair style F, Tang dynasty.

Summing up, early Chinese Buddha figures completed their evolutionary process in the Tang dynasty. Since their introduction into China, they had changed and gradually assumed characteristics that were of a Chinese type. Buddha figures had also evolved into a typical Chinese style in the Northern Wei dynasty, but the work of the artists of the northern Wei dynasty did not continue to have an effect on the development of Buddha figures of the time. What is clear is that Buddha figures of the Tang dynasty had rich local characteristics that included plump bodies and facial shapes, special hair styles, and particular ways of *saṅghāṭi* wearing. It was then during the Tang dynasty that Buddha figures evolved into very life forms and forms that were much more Chinese than some of their predecessors. Importantly, the evolved of major Buddha features and characteristics in Tang period are still continue to influence on present Buddha art.

### **3.2 The Evolutionary Stages of Early Chinese Buddha Figures**

The study of the characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures from Eastern Han to the Tang dynasty suggests that this process can be divided into three main periods. The development of Buddha figures in the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms and the Jin dynasties can be considered as the evolutionary period for foreign style. The Sixteen kingdoms period can be seen as the evolutionary period for mixed style, and the period from the Northern Wei to the Tang dynasties as the evolutionary period for Chinese style.

#### **3.2.1 The Evolutionary Period for Foreign Style**

In this dissertation, I define the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms and Jin dynasties as the period for foreign style of early Buddha figures because according to the documentary and archeological findings, the majority of Buddha figures that presented in this time were foreign looking, most of them in the Gandhara style.

Documentary study indicates that the earliest official records of Buddha figures in China were for figures in Gandhara style, and these were brought by the foreign monks Kāśyapamātanga, Dharmaratna and a Chinese mission group from Da Yue Zhi (Kushan) during the Eastern Han period. The discovered Buddha figures from tombs in the Eastern Han, Three Kingdoms period and Western Jin dynasty were largely of Gandhara style. Examples included the pottery Buddha figure from the base of Money Tree from the Peng Shan tomb, the damaged bronze Buddha from the Cao Fang Gou tomb which was inscribed with the Fourth Year of Yan Guang of the Eastern Han dynasty, and the Buddha figures found on the Hunping from the Three Kingdoms period and Western Jin dynasty, which all in Gandhara style.

From the study we can see that Buddhism had already started its association with Chinese local culture over the period from Eastern Han dynasty to Western Jin dynasty, and the Buddha figures on the Money Tree and on Hunping vessels that also had Chinese Taoist Gods were evidence of this. Although such

figures were definitely made by Chinese people, the figures remained basically foreign in style. On the other hand, as Buddhism spread, more foreign Buddha figures were brought to China by foreign monks in the Three Kingdoms period and in Western Jin dynasty and the monks brought them along both the Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road. For this reason, various kinds of foreign Buddha figures arrived in China during these periods.

It was in the Eastern Jin Dynasty that the making of Buddha figures by Chinese artists proved more popular than it had during previous periods. Artists such as Wei Xie, Ku Kaizhi, and Dai Kui painted or made Buddha figures in the Wa Guan temple. In addition, from the documentary studies we know that Buddhas with long and narrow facial features had already been made in the Eastern Jin period, but because they were few in number and not popular, it cannot be said that they had formed a unique local style at that time.

However, according to the common characteristics of Buddha figures which have been discovered from the period covering the Eastern Han to Jin dynasties, we can say that: (1) most Buddha figures discovered came from tombs; (2) Buddha figures had a common role and this was related to Money Trees or Hunping vessels; (3) the gesture most commonly made by the Buddha figure was the *abhaya mudra*; and (4) the Buddha figures were mainly influenced by the Gandhara style. Thus, we can conclude that although Buddha figures from Eastern Han to Jin dynasties were evolving, they were still at this stage mainly of foreign style.

### **3.2.2 The Evolutionary Period for Mixed Style**

The style of Buddha figures further evolved into a new stage which was based on developments within Buddhism and culture exchange, and this occurred during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. In this period, we can see a mix of different styles and characteristics including facial features, dress styles, hair style and other decorative elements on the same Buddha figure. Nevertheless, Buddha figures in

this period still mainly presented in foreign styles.

The characteristics of Buddha figure from the Sixteen Kingdoms period were a mix of Gandhara, Indian and Chinese elements. The style in which the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and has U shaped patterns is a Gandhara characteristic. Having the *saṅghāṭi* draped on both forearms is a feature derived from Sarnath figures. But there are some other fine details that have emerged as new elements of the figures. For instance, the *ushnisha* are different, and the Buddha's hair is different, too. It is now styled in straight lines that separate to left and right from the middle of forehead, and this style has replaced the Gandhara style and the seashell-like Sarnath style. The *ushnisha* is now round (磨光肉髻) and without hair depiction, an element never seen in Gandhara or traditional Indian Buddhist, but an element that does feature in Xi Yu art.

In more detail, the U-shaped pattern on the *saṅghāṭi* has become more squared and is now '┐' shaped or even some 'V' shaped in front of Buddha's chest. Furthermore, the *saṅghāṭi* being draped on both of the Buddha's forearms is indicated by layer folds that makes the *saṅghāṭi* look more like a Chinese traditional *Hanfu*. The '┐' shaped of the U- patterns shows that there has been a movement away from Gandhara style and that the figure has been made by a Chinese artisan. The long and opened eyes and broad forehead have replaced the Roman nose of Hellenic and India features, and the faces now look more like local people. Finally, the four-legged squared seat decorated with flowers or clouds is a typical Chinese piece of furniture.

In conclusion, the evolutionary period for mixed style for Buddha figures with Gandhara, India and Chinese styles evident in the figures is the result of an association of foreign Buddhist art and Chinese local art and aesthetic. The Chinese elements are there, but still immature. However, this is the first step by which Buddha figures have involved into a Chinese style and is the turning point on the path from foreign style to Chinese style.



### **3.2.3 The Evolutionary Period for Chinese Style**

The period of mixed style Buddha figures formed the basis of what was to come, which was a time in which Buddha figures were to be further infused with elements that reflected Chinese culture, aesthetics, and philosophy and this period ran from the Southern and Northern dynasties and into the Tang dynasty. It was during this time that Buddha figures evolved into forms that were very Chinese in style. This period of development is generally divided into two periods, the period of early Chinese style and the period of mature Chinese style.

#### **The Period of Early Chinese Style:**

The period of early Chinese style refers to the earlier times in which Buddha figures evolved a uniquely Chinese style. During this period, the figures are mainly Chinese in form, but not completely so. We still can see some foreign characteristics on the Buddha figures.

From the study of Buddha figure in Southern and Northern dynasties through to the Tang dynasty, the early Chinese style period was early in the Northern Wei dynasty, especially the period before the Taihe Years (477-499 AD) or in the early Taihe Years. During this period, the Buddha figure facial features and robe styles had already basically evolved into Chinese styles, but some detailed characteristics still remained in foreign styles. For example, Buddha figures in the caves no. 16, no.17, no.18, no.19 and no.20 from the Yungang grottoes which were created over the period 460-465 AD, had facial features with oriental characteristics, but robes that were still heavily influenced by foreign styles.

Other instances can be seen in cave no. 5, no.6, no. 7 no. 8, no.9 and no. 10 of the Yungang grottoes, which were dug out from the 8<sup>th</sup> Year of Taihe (484 AD) to 13<sup>th</sup> Year of Taihe (489 AD). A notable example are the two standing Buddha figures on the upper eastern wall of cave no. 6 (pic. 3.2.11). The robe of Buddha had totally evolved into the Chinese style of a loose gown, and the

*samkaksika* is tied with a girdle with long tails. In addition, the bottom part of the robe splits into stiff edges at either side in a pattern that resembles a fish tail, a design which is decidedly like a Chinese *Hanfu*. On the other hand, the Buddha's hair and facial features and the high nose bridge are of Gandhara style.

Therefore, it is in this early period of Chinese style that we can see the combined characteristics of Chinese and foreign elements. The figures of this period were different from those of the mixed style period as they had undergone considerable change in the direction of mature Chinese forms.

### **The Period of Mature Chinese Style:**

In the later Taihe years, the emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝) issued a series of policies to further sinicize Han culture. His promotional activities enhanced the evolution of Chinese style Buddha figures. The Buddhist artisans then incorporated more Chinese elements into their work and the result was what is referred to as the period of mature Chinese style. The maturity of the Chinese figures is evident in the aspects of facial features, robe style, and several hair styles that originated in the Northern Wei dynasty.

The new characteristics that dominated in the mature style included the loose gown style of robe that was tied with a wide girdle and the feature of the robe bottom being draped and covered in front of the throne. Other features were that the *samkaksika* was tied with girdle that had long tails, and the robe bottom was split into stiff edges at either side like fish tail pattern, which as we have noted was like a Chinese traditional *Hanfu*. But the robe had now become completely Chinese looking and was a unique style of the Northern Wei dynasty. There were several ways that of the *saṅghāṭi* and *uttarāsaṅga* were worn on the figures. In general, the robe is a loose gown tied with wide girdle and the figure has a long, narrow face and is thin and elegant in manner (秀骨清像). The full figures are graceful in the image of Taoist sages and all of these points define the nature of the mature of Chinese style, which was widely influenced by the Buddha figures in the Yungang

grottoes, Longmen grottoes, Dunhuang grottoes and Maji Shan grottoes of the Northern Wei dynasty, and Western Wei, and Eastern Wei dynasties.

The Buddha figures of the Tang period were heavily influenced by the social aesthetics and the concept of plumpness, which was regarded as a kind of standard of beauty. Buddha figures were therefore created in a plumb full-bodied style, with faces round like the full moon, quite different to the thin and elegant figures of the Northern Wei period. The two styles of mature Chinese Buddha figures which were influenced by different periods of aesthetic standards in society were on display, and Buddha figures had by then completely transformed from foreign styles to Chinese styles.

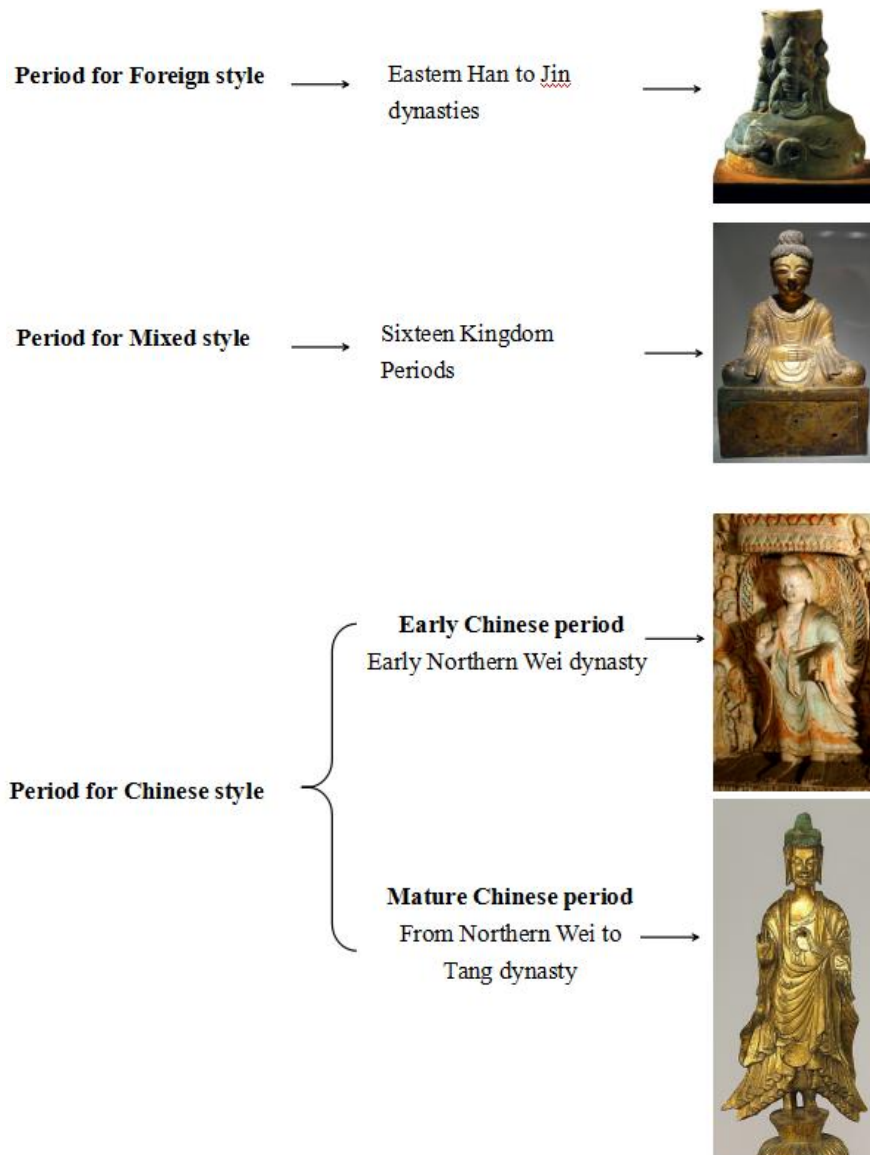


Figure Showing the Evolutionary Stages of Early Chinese Buddha Figures

From the three periods of evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, we can see the gradual growth and change of Buddha figures from foreign-looking to completely Chinese in appearance. In the next chapter, we will look in more detail at what factors influences the hanization of the Buddha figures in China at the time. As we shall see, scholars have debate for some time on this question, and

there are various explanations as to how Buddha figures in China evolved and came to acquire their strong Chinese identity.

## **Chapter IV**

### **The Main Factors Influenced the Evolution of Early Chinese Buddha Figures**

From the study in Chapter III, we now have a schema for connecting the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures and their changing characteristics with respect to robe style, facial features, hair styles as well as other elements such as the halo or flaming mandorla. Buddha figures with foreign appearance were from an early time introduced into the land of China, and they then gradually became associated with local factors that made them evolve into Chinese forms, which meant they could match local aesthetic considerations.

During this long term of evolution, the creators of Buddha figures faced many factors and influences which made it necessary or unnecessary for them to change and adjust their work to local conditions and for the figures to survive in the land of China which had other strong cultural forces such as Taoism and Confucianism. During the evolutionary process, the factors and influences on the process can be categorized into two aspects: external and internal factors. In this chapter, I will focus on the study of the external and internal aspects in order to clarify what were the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

#### **4.1 External Factors Influenced the Evolution of Buddha Figures**

The term ‘external factors’ here refers to factors that came from outside of Buddhism that caused Buddha figures to change in appearance or style. The factors include elements like the local culture, aesthetics, way of dressing, policies, and the attitudes of emperors, and art techniques.

##### **4.1.1 The Attitude of Emperors on the Creation of Buddha Figures**

Since Buddhism was first introduced into China, it always had a close connection with Chinese emperors. An early record of emperor Ming (东汉明帝)

had him dreaming of a flying golden man that came to be considered as the Buddha. The emperor assigned envoys to seek for the Buddha in Xi Yu in the eastern Han dynasty.<sup>1</sup> Emperor Huan (汉桓帝) believed in Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Shi Le and Shi Hu (石勒、石虎), rulers of the Later Zhao kingdom (319-351 AD), supported the foreign monk Fo Tucheng (佛图澄) in order to promote Buddhism, and allowed people to choose to believe in Buddhism and to become monks in his kingdom. It was the first time that a national policy that allowed the Han people to ordain as monks had been issued by a ruler in Chinese Buddhist history.<sup>3</sup> The rulers of Former Qin kingdom (350-394 AD) and Later Qin kingdom (384-417 AD) supported Dao An and Kumārajīva, and they did so especially in the aspect of sutra translation. This was a real milestone in the development of Chinese Buddhism. The devout emperor Xiao Yan (萧衍) and emperor Yang Jian (杨坚) promoted Buddhism as the national religion in the Liang and Sui dynasties.

Whether Buddhism flourished or not had a very closely relation with the attitude of Chinese emperors, and their support sometimes made great contributions to Buddhist development. Various emperors allowed Chinese people to become monks, supported sūtra translation, established monasteries, donated Buddha statue, and supported the digging out of grottoes. On the other hand, other emperors created obstacles for on the development of Buddhism. The four periods of persecution of Buddhists were caused by four emperors. Buddhism was very nearly wiped out a number of times when emperors ordered the burning of Buddhist scriptures and the forced disrobing or deaths of monks. They also ordered the shutting down or destruction of monasteries and the desecration of Buddha statues.

Therefore, the attitude of emperors had a lot to do with the propagation and development of Buddhism and its teachings and traditions. And in many ways

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<sup>1</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher May 2001, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

their attitudes also had an effect on Buddhist art and the creation of Buddha figures. Emperors and Buddhists sometimes took advantage of each other and sometimes supported each other, so they could better rule the nation or propagate the Buddha's teaching. Some argue that in Chinese Buddhist history, the Buddhists tried to get close to the emperors or take advantage of them. This sometimes involved the apotheosis of the emperor. The book *Buddhism and Taoism from Book of Wei* records the statement of monk in the Northern Wei period:

“The monk Fa Guo states that emperor Dao Wudi (Taizu太祖道武帝拓拔珪) who interesting in Buddhism, he is the Tathāgata, and the Samana should be knelt to him.”<sup>4</sup> This later developed into the idea that the emperor is incarnation of a Tathāgata.

Tai Wudi was the third emperor of the Northern Wei dynasty. He however disagreed with the idea that an emperor was an incarnation of Tathāgata and subsequently issued laws that called for the persecution of Buddhists. After the reign of Tai Wudi, the idea that an emperor was an incarnation of a Tathāgata gained further expression through the creation of Buddha figures.<sup>5</sup>

The fifth emperor Wen Cheng (文成帝) in particular made a great contribution to the recovery Buddhism from persecution in the Northern Wei. “Emperor [Wen Cheng] has appointed Shi Xian (师贤) to be the head monk of the nation [道人统] and ordered the making of stone Buddha figures that looked the same as the emperor [Wen Cheng]. After the work was finished, two black stones appeared on the face and foot of the Buddha just as there were black moles on the body of emperor..... In the First Year of Xing Guang (兴光元年454 AD),

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<sup>4</sup> Wei Shou, *The Book of Wei Vol.114: on Buddhism and Taoism No.20* (《魏书卷114, 释老志十第二十》)“法果每言, 太祖明睿好道, 即是当今如来, 沙门宜应尽礼, 遂常致拜”.

<sup>5</sup> Yan Shangwen, *The Background for Form the Idea of Emperor Bodhisattva of Liang Wudi* (梁武帝“皇帝菩萨”理念形成的时代背景), From the Papers for Chinese Buddhist Scholar: Medieval Chinese Buddhist History Papers 《中国佛教学者文集:中国中古佛教史论》, Religion and Culture publisher.1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2010, p. 146.



[emperor Wen Cheng] ordered the casting of five gilded Shakyamuni Buddha statues for his five ancestors who had come after the emperor Dao Wudi (Taizu太祖道武帝拓拔珪)”.<sup>6</sup>

The monk Tan Yao (昙曜) was Shi Xian's replacement and was given the job of digging out Buddhist caves on the Wei Zhou mountain, west of the city.<sup>7</sup> The caves corresponded to present-day cave no.16, no.17, no.18, no.19 and no.20, which are considered to be the earliest five caves in the Yungang grottoes. There is legend that the five Buddha figures in each cave represented the earlier five emperors of the Northern Wei dynasty. But scholars have different views on the correspondence between the five Buddha figures and the five emperors. According to *Buddhism and Taoism from Book of Wei*: the representatives of the five ancestors who came after the emperor Dao Wudi are the Shakyamuni Buddha in the cave no. 16 that represented emperor Wen Cheng (文成帝); the seated Maitreya Bodhisattva with legs crossed at the ankles in the cave no.17 that represented Jing Mudi (景穆帝), who never really took on the royal throne; and figures in cave no. 18, 19, and 20 represent the emperors Tai Wudi (太武帝), Ming Yuandi (明元帝) and Dao Wudi (道武帝).<sup>8</sup> In any case, the adaption of Buddha figures to represent the emperors was a way of strengthening the position of members of the theocracy. It is clear that idea of emperor being an incarnation of the Tathāgata affected the way that Buddha figures were created and looked. The emperors' support for the digging out of the Yungang grottoes promoted the development of Buddhist art.

Another important factor that affected the change of Buddha figures was the series of policies of hanization enacted by emperor Xiaowen (孝文帝汉化

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<sup>6</sup> Wei Shou, *The Book of Wei Vol.114: on Buddhism and Taoism No.20* (《魏书卷114, 释老志十第二十》). “诏有司为石像, 令如帝身。既成, 颜上足下, 各有黑石, 冥同帝体上下黑子。论者以为纯诚所感。兴光元年秋, 敕有司于五绶大寺内, 为太祖已下五帝, 铸释迦立像五, 各长一丈六尺, 都用赤金二万五千斤”。

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., “昙曜白帝, 于京城西武州塞, 凿山石壁, 开窟五所, 镌建佛像各一。”

<sup>8</sup> Lu Yifeng, *The New Perspective on the Emperor and Tanyao Five Caves of Yungang grottoes* (《云冈“昙曜五窟”帝王新说》), Papers from Yungang International Seminar, 2005 《2005年云冈国际学术研讨会论文集/研究卷》, Cultural Relics Press, Aug. 2006, p. 345.

政策). This influenced the way that Buddha figures were dressed, and it especially affected the style of the robe, girdling and draping.

In order to make the multi-ethnic state easier to govern and to centralize imperial power, Emperor Xiaowen adopted policies of hanization in the areas of the economy, politics, culture and tradition, and he moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 493 AD. Among his policies of hanization, the adoption of Han culture and tradition had critical influence on Buddha figures. He forced Xianbei people to take Han surnames, changed his own family name from Tuoba to Yuan, encouraged intermarriage between Xianbei and Han people, and forced the population to speak Han language and wear Han people clothes. His efforts changed the social customs and culture, and the fact that dressing in the Han style became widespread had expression in the creation of Buddha figures in Yungang and Longmen grottoes. As the result of the emperor Xiaowen's hanization of dressing, the Buddha's robe in cave no.6 of Yungang grottoes is similar to an item of the emperor's clothing called the Mianfu (冕服 which is a kind of *Hanfu* or formal dress worn by emperors).<sup>9</sup>

The style of the robe on Buddha figures is then different after emperor Xiaowen's hanization policies. Before the sinization (486-493 AD), there were two styles of *saṅghāṭi* being worn. In one style, the *saṅghāṭi* covered both shoulders (pic.3.2.7 A1) and in the other it covered the left shoulder but the right shoulder remained bare (pic.3.2.7 A2). These were the main ways the robes were depicted on figures in the Yungang grottoes. After sinization (486-496 AD), the style of the figure being dressed in a loose gown tied with wide girdle appeared in Yungang grottoes. At the same time as he implemented the policies of hanization, he also supported the digging out and construction of the Longmen grottoes, which began in the period when he moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang.<sup>10</sup> At

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<sup>9</sup> Chen Yuexin, **A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5th to the 8th Century** (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》). Social sciences academic press (China), p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Huadong Guo, **Atlas of Remote Sensing for World Heritage: China**. Science Press Beijing, 2012. p. 185

that time, the style of *saṅghāṭi* was such that it covered both shoulders, and the right corner of robe crossed abdomen and fell over the left arm, displaying the *uttarāsaṅga* that covered both shoulders or covered the same area as the *saṅghāṭi* and this style was to become the common style of Buddha figure robe in the Longmen grottoes during the Xiaowen and Xuanwu periods (495-515 AD). Examples include figures from the Guyang cave and the Lotus cave from the Longmen grottoes.<sup>11</sup>

The following emperors and royal clans after emperor Xiaowen were devout Buddhists who supported the creation of Buddhist temples in the Longmen grottoes. The style of Buddha figure dressed in loose gown tied with wide girdle was a result of Xiaowen's policies of hanization which continued to influence the style of the creation of Buddha figures in Longmen grottoes.

In the following dynasties, the positive attitudes and support of emperors towards the evolution of Buddha figures and Buddhist art was significant. The emperors promoted the digging out of Buddhist caves, the establishment of monasteries and the merging of Buddhism with Chinese local culture. An example is the excavation of the Tianlongshan grottoes in Eastern Wei period by the minister Gao Huan, who was founder of Northern Qi dynasty. The excavation of the Xiangtangshan grottoes in Northern Qi period was supported by the emperor Gao Yang (高洋). Furthermore, in each dynasty, many emperors and royal clans supported the digging out of the various grottoes such as the Mogao grottoes and the Maijishan grottoes. The emperor Xiao Yan (萧衍) after taking the Bodhisattva vows consider himself as the emperor Bodhisattva.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the emperor Yang Jian (杨坚) strongly support the recovery of Buddhism, donated

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<sup>11</sup> Chen Yuexin, **A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5th to the 8th Century** (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》), Social sciences academic press (China), p. 121.

<sup>12</sup> Yan Shangwen, **The Background for Form the Idea of Emperor Bodhisattva of Liang Wudi** (梁武帝“皇帝菩萨”理念形成的时代背景), From the Papers for Chinese Buddhist Scholar: Medieval Chinese Buddhist History Papers (《中国佛教学者文集:中国中古佛教史论》), Religion and Culture publisher. 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 2010.

106,580 new Buddha figures (large and small), supported the repair of 1,508,000 damaged Buddha figures.<sup>13</sup>

Emperors had very close relations with Buddhism, and their beliefs, attitudes, decisions and personal interests influenced Buddhism and the development of Chinese Buddhist art, as well as the evolution of Buddha's figures.

#### **4.1.2 Local Aesthetic Influences on the Evolution of Buddha Figures in Different Periods**

Buddhist art is a way of expression of faith for Buddhists and is also a conceptualization in a physical way of people's lives. It is closely related to their way of living in society. Fashion, or special styles that originate in people's aesthetic sense may become factors that influence society's religious art and in particular religious art. During the process of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, local aesthetics were another major factor that impacted on the evolution of the characteristics of Buddha figures. The figures were mainly thin and elegant (秀骨清像) in the Jin dynasties and in the Southern and Northern periods and later on became plump and full-bodied artistic forms in the Tang period.

##### **a. The Thin and Elegant Buddha Figures of the Southern and Northern Periods**

The popularity of the thin and elegant Buddha figures of the Southern and Northern dynasties was an influence of the metaphysics of the Taoist philosophy and Confucianism. The metaphysics insisted on the theory of nature as the ultimate value. This involved the seeking of a free life style and a perfect personality. These goals affected social aesthetics, and also formed the basis of the graceful Taoist sage-like character (仙风道骨).

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<sup>13</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism**, Religion Publisher (中国佛教简史), May 2001, p. 126.

Aesthetics from profound Chinese philosophy deeply influenced the works of artists, such as the famous painters Gu Kaizhi (顾凯之) in the Eastern Jin dynasty, and Lu Tanwei (陆探微) in the Song kingdom of the Southern dynasty. They were not only professional painters, but also had many works that related to Buddhism. Gu Kaizhi painted the Buddha figures and Vimalakīrti painting in the Wa Guan temple.<sup>14</sup> Zhang Huaijin (张怀谨), when commenting on the painting style of Lu Tanwei in the *Book of Precious Paintings Through the Ages*, volume 6 (《历代名画记》卷六), described Lu Tanwei's depiction of the ideal of the thin and elegant (秀骨清像).<sup>15</sup> Zhang Huaijin goes on to say that the painter depicts Buddha figures with the characteristics of being thin, less fleshy, free lifestyle living, elegant in manner, and dressed with loose gowns tied with wide girdles. The painting style used facial skeletons to express the aesthetic of thinness and the elegant temperament of the sage, and all of his work reflected the characteristics of the Taoist sage-like that came from metaphysics.

When Buddhism became popular in society and had adapted to local conditions in China, it also became involved with the metaphysics of the Taoist philosophy and Confucianism, and such involvements further impacted on Buddhist thought. As we have seen, the Chinese traditional art of aesthetic that also was a metaphysical consideration gradually influenced Buddhist art, Buddhist painting, the Buddhist grottoes and creation of Buddha figures. The Buddha figures in both the Southern and Northern dynasties then were made with long, narrow faces with angular features and were of thin and elegantly slender manner. During the communication and exchange of cultures between the Southern and Northern dynasties, the aesthetic of 'the thin' and art further boosted the formation of Buddha art. The style of Buddha figure with a long, narrow face and with an elegantly slender manner appeared in the Yungang grottoes in the early reign of

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<sup>14</sup> Edited Xin Tai & Zhen Qing, No. 1628, Vol. 1 **Edited of Fo Fa Jin Tang**, Vol.87 Xu Zang CBETA. (Chinese: 沙门心泰编, 沙门真清阅, No. 1628, 《佛法金汤编》卷一, 卅續藏卷87, CBETA).

<sup>15</sup> Pei Yueqiang, **Analysis the painting feature in thin and elegantly slender manner for figures in Wei and Jin periods** (裴月强, 浅谈魏晋时期人物画之秀骨清像). The Arts Circle, No.5 2015, p. 94. “陆公参灵酌妙, 动与神会, 笔迹劲利, 如锥刀矣。秀骨清像, 似觉生动……”。

emperor Xiaowen, that is in the period before he moved the capital to Luoyang in Northern Wei dynasty. The Longmen grottoes were excavated after he moved the capital to Luoyang in 493 AD, and the figures of Buddha, Bodhisattva and Buddhist attendants from Yungang grottoes which had been of Gandhara style and Liangzhou (凉州) styles were now superseded by styles characterized by the thin and elegant. Furthermore, the new figures of the Longmen grottoes were dressed in loose gowns tied with wide girdles.<sup>16</sup>

The new style was the result of great change during the evolution of Chinese Buddha figure in the Northern Wei dynasty. The artisans had merged much of Chinese local culture, philosophy and aesthetics into their work, forming a unique style that featured Buddha figures of solemn and tranquil beauty. The figures were thin and elegant, and dressed with loose gowns tied with wide girdles, and such figures became the predominant style of figure in the Northern Wei, Eastern Wei and Western Wei periods.

### **b. The Beauty of Plumpness in the Tang Period**

The other major aesthetic standard that had great influence on the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures was the beauty of plumpness in the Tang dynasty, which replaced the aesthetic of slimness that had been popular in the Southern and Northern periods. Tang was a golden period in the economic, political, cultural and artistic domains. The carefree and luxurious life that flourished in the background of society changed the people's aesthetic standards. In the society, it was fatness that suggested the wealth of life, and plumpness gradually replaced slimness as a symbol of beauty and fashion.

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<sup>16</sup> Li Zhen, Yuan Jixi, **The Fusion of the Northern and Southern Aesthetic Cultures in Longmen Grottoes Arts in the North Wei Dynasty** (黎臻,袁济喜:《从北魏龙门石窟艺术透视南北审美文化的交融》). *Journal of Renmin University of China*, No.5 2011, p. 129.

This aesthetic was especially reflected in a plump body. Yang Guifei (杨贵妃/杨玉环), a favored concubine of emperor Xuanzong (唐玄宗), was a plump beauty who could be seen in many Chinese paintings.<sup>17</sup> But plump did not simply refer to fat. It was more of a reference to fleshy, full and of curvaceous beauty. Plenty of examples of art from the Tang era have survived until the present. Large numbers of pottery court lady figures (pic.4.1.1) from the tombs of Tang dynasty exist, and the figures have the common features of a full round face and a plump curvy body. The men depicted too had fleshy shapes, which suggests that a curvaceous body was an important fashion trend in the society.



Pic. 4.1.1 The pottery male and court ladies figures from tomb, Tang dynasty.

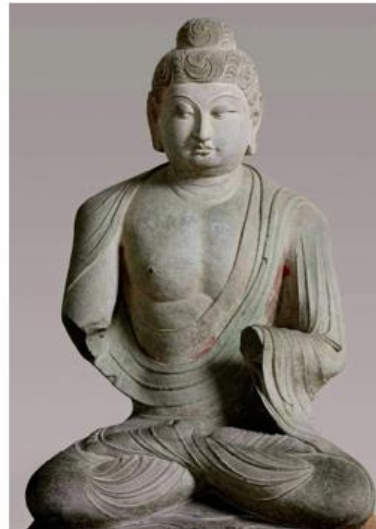
These life style and fashion factors began to impact the aesthetics of art, and influential painters who incorporated them into their work were Wu Daozi (吴道子), Zhou Fang (周昉), and Zhang Xuan (张萱). Among them, the paintings produced by Zhou Fang which were influenced by the style of Gu Kaizhi (顾凯之)

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<sup>17</sup> Sonia J. Song, Donkey Baby: **From Beijing to Berkely and Beyond**, First published by AuthorHouse, 17 June 2008, p. 57.

were important. Zhou's paintings of court ladies always portrayed them as full-bodied and with round faces, and his work continued to define the aesthetic standards of the period. He was also a well-known Buddhist painter, and the most famous painting he created was a Buddhist image called "Water Moon Goddess of Mercy" (水月观音), which has become a long-standing popular standard.<sup>18</sup>

The aesthetic standard of plumpness as beauty and its portrayal in the art of society influenced people's spiritual life. Buddhist art and Buddhist sculpture art in particular incorporated the typical style of plump and full bodied artistic forms for its Buddha, Bodhisattva, Buddhist attendant figures in the Tang period. Moreover, it was to become the major style of Buddhist art that was popular in Buddhist caves that dug out and developed in the Tang dynasty; Buddhist art that featured plump figures was well represented in the Longmen, Maijishan, Mogao, and Tianlongshan grottoes.



Pic.4.1.2 Left: The pottery court ladies figure from tomb, Tang dynasty.

Right: The carved of stone seated Buddha from Tianlongshan grottoes, Tang dynasty.

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<sup>18</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou\\_Fang\\_\(Tang\\_dynasty\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhou_Fang_(Tang_dynasty)) /27 July/2017



Buddha figures created in Tang period that have been found in the Longmen grottoes were influenced by the people's beliefs that plumpness indicated health and wealth, and the characteristics of full facial features, plumpness of body, health and beauty had close relations with fashion.<sup>19</sup> Buddha figures that were plump from Tang dynasty, and in particular those from the Tianlongshan grottoes, exemplified the concept that plumper was more beautiful. Examples include the pottery court lady figures and the carved stone seated Buddha from Tianlongshan grottoes (pic.4.1.2 Right). Based on external shapes, both have the features of being full bodied and fleshy looking. In more detail, we focus on the facial characteristics (see pic.4.1.3). The figures A, B, C are Buddha heads from Tianlongshan grotto, and the figures D, E, F, figures are the pottery court lady figures found from tombs. Comparing the faces of the Buddhas and pottery court ladies, both groups have rounded and plump faces, fully fleshed cheeks that make the mouths look quite small, and all figures have three carved lines on their necks that emphasize the fleshiness and thus the closeness to the 'real' of these figures.

Pic. 4.1.3 Picture A.B.C, figures of Buddha head from Tang dynasty.<sup>20</sup>  
Picture D.E.F, figures of pottery court lady from Tang dynasty.



<sup>19</sup> Cui Yan, *Analysis of the Orientation of Aesthetics of the Tang Dynasty Through the Buddhist Figures in the Longmen Grottoes* (通过龙门石窟造像浅谈唐代审美取向). <http://www.xzbu.com/1/view-5317097.htm> /20/August/2017

<sup>20</sup> <https://tls.uchicago.edu/single-sculpture/170> 21 August 2017

The plump style of Buddha figures in Tang dynasty was very different to the Buddha figures that were thin and elegant and wore loose gowns tied with wide girdles, such as the Taoist sage-like figures from the Southern and Northern dynasties. The two styles were influenced by different periods of aesthetic standards from society. Then we have also seen that the evolution of figures was the result of the localization of Buddha figures in China, and Buddhism's merge with Chinese local cultures and philosophy was reflected in Buddhist art.

#### 4.1.3 Chinese Local Dressing Influences on the Evolution of Buddha Figures

Moving on from the factors above which influenced the evolution of Buddha figures, we now consider a further factor that also affected Buddhist artisans and the work they produced. Changes in the dressing style and decorative factors on the depictions of the Buddha's robe were also influenced by the way that Chinese people themselves dressed. In some ways, the idea of having a Buddha figure dressed in a loose gown that was tied with wide girdle was mirroring the traditional dressing styles of the Southern and Northern dynasties, and this mirroring even extended eventually to decorative patterns on the collars and cuffs. The Buddha's robe was of course not an ordinary piece of clothing. A traditional Buddhist robe usually consists of a *saṅghāṭi* (僧伽梨), an *uttarāsaṅga* (郁多罗僧), an *antaravāsaka* (安陀会) and sometimes a *samkaksika* (僧祇支), which is an additional robe. A traditional robe has no collar and cuffs. So, how did Chinese local dressing impact on changes to the Buddha's robe?

Chinese people traditionally dressed in a loose gown tied with wide girdle.<sup>21</sup> They often wore a *hanfu* or a *mianfu* during the Southern and Northern dynasties. To know the local Chinese dressing influence on the way the Buddha

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<sup>21</sup> Wang Chenlin, **Analysis the Aesthetic Characteristics of Buddha's Robe in Longmen Grottoes from Tang Dynasty** (《论龙门石窟佛像服饰的审美特征》). *Journal of Beauty & Time* (美与时代), No.10, 2014.

robe changed, we first have to know the style or characteristics of *Hanfu* dress. *Hanfu* is ancient Chinese traditional dress form from the Han dynasty. The normal *Hanfu* (pic.4.1.4 A 汉服) always has a set of three layers, the overcoat, an inner upper garment, and a lower garment. The overcoat is a kind of loose gown with decorative patterns on the hem and large open sleeves. The inner garment has lapels and a collar, decorative patterns on the hem, and is tied with a girdle at the



waist.

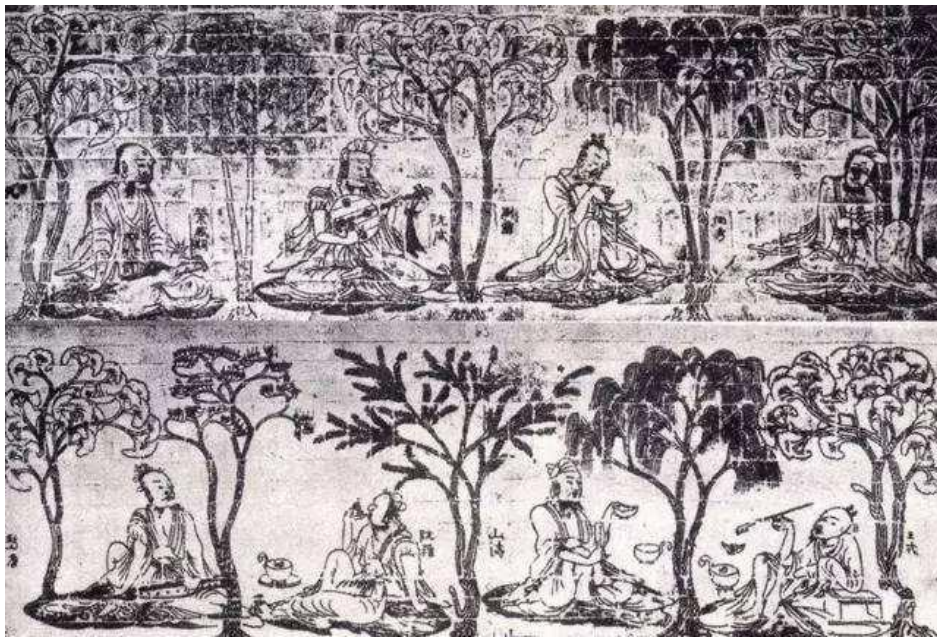
Pic.4.1.4 Style A is traditional normal Hanfu (汉服) or ancient Chinese dress, style B is the Mianfu (冕服).<sup>22</sup>

The mianfu (pic.4.1.4 B 冕服) is a kind type of *hanfu* which is worn specially by an emperor or higher official. It is black in color and its design is based on the design of a *hanfu*. The mianfu has more symbolic decorative patterns, such as animals, flowers, or natural scenes. The mianfu too, based on the *Hanfu*, developed as a loose gown which was tied with wide girdle in the Southern and Northern dynasties. The copied picture from the brick painting of the ‘Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi’ (竹林七贤与荣启期砖画 pic.4.1.5) shows a real example of a loose gown tied with a wide girdle. The picture was discovered in a tomb in the Nanjing region, which has been dated to the Song dynasty (420-

<sup>22</sup> <https://baike.baidu.com/item/冕服/5482805?fr=aladdin> 29 August 2017

479 AD) of the Southern period.

As we noted in Chapter 3, the Buddha robe as depicted in art did not immediately change when it was introduced into ancient China. Evidence from archaeological discoveries suggests the robes were still used on depictions in the traditional style of the *tricīvara* until as late as the Eastern Han dynasty and the Three Kingdom periods. Robes at that time were still of Gandhara style, and some figures were still dressed in the traditional way in the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties and in Sixteen kingdoms period. At the same time, the Gupta style of Buddha's robe appeared in the Bing Ling cave temple, which has been dated to 420 AD during the Xiqin (西秦) kingdom (pic.3.2.1 A and pic.3.2.7 A4). The same style also was visible in the figures of the early Yungang grottoes in Northern Wei dynasty. An example is the Buddha's robe style in early five caves of Tan Yao (pic.3.2.9). We can therefore conclude that the style and decorative patterns on the of Buddha's robes still followed the Indian or Gandhara style before the Southern and Northern dynasty (or before the fifth century), and the style had not been much influenced by Chinese local dress at the time.



Pic.4.1.5 The brick painting of seven sages of the bamboo grove and Rong Qiqi (竹)

林七贤与荣启期砖画) discovered from tomb near present Nanjing region which belongs to the Song dynasty (420-479 A.D) of Southern Period.<sup>23</sup>

However, by the middle of fifth century, Buddhism was increasingly under the patronage of emperors and had to meet the demands that society placed on philosophies and ways of life such as Buddhism. Buddhism then strongly interacted with Chinese culture, philosophy and art. The robes on the figures began to more strongly reflect Chinese local dress, and the robes evolved into loose gowns tied with wide girdles. This style, which was not seen in the Northern Wei dynasty figures became much more prominent after Xiaowen implemented his hanization policies.

The characteristics of the Buddha's robe was influenced by the *hanfu* style in three main ways: (1) the robe's style; (2) the wrapping style; and (3) the decorative patterns. First, the robe's style came to be an adaptation of the *hanfu* overcoat style, which consisted in a loose gown, two large open sleeves, and a tying girdle. As we have seen, the term *hanfu* originally referred to a loose gown that was tied with a wide girdle. However, some modern-day scholars now use the term to describe the Buddha robe used on figures in the Southern and Northern dynasties.

Second, during the emperor Xiaowen's hanization, the wearing style changed from the traditional foreign styles of wearing a *saṅghāṭi* - styles including the *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders (通肩式); the *saṅghāṭi* covering the left shoulder and with right shoulder bare (袒右肩式); the *saṅghāṭi* covering both shoulders with a bare right chest, and the right corner of robe crossing under the right arm and falling over the left shoulder (覆肩袒右式) - to various new ways of wearing the robe that had never been found Indian or Gandhara style.

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.360doc.com/content/16/0218/16/19519242\\_535521140.shtml](http://www.360doc.com/content/16/0218/16/19519242_535521140.shtml)

The new ways included styles in which:

(1) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and right corner of the robe crosses under the right arm and falls over the left forearm (搭肘式).

(2) the *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and right corner of the robe crosses the abdomen and falls over the left shoulder, with a bare half of the chest (露胸通肩式或半披式).

(3) the *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of the robe crosses the abdomen then falls over the left arm, and a visible *uttarāsaṅga* covers both shoulders or in the same area as the *saṅghāṭi* (上衣搭肘式).

(4) The *uttarāsaṅga* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of the robe crosses the abdomen and falls over the left arm. The *saṅghāṭi* covers the *uttarāsaṅga* on both shoulders. (上衣重层式).

(5) the *uttarāsaṅga* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of robe falls on right forearm. The *saṅghāṭi* covers the *uttarāsaṅga*, and the right corner of the robe falls on left shoulder or forearm (中衣搭肘式).

(6) the *saṅghāṭi* cover the left shoulder and the right is bare, whilst the right corner of the robe crosses from under the right arm then falls over the left shoulder, with a *samkaksika* inside (中衣直裰式). These new forms of robe rapping styles were to become the main stream method of depicting robes on Buddha figures in the Southern and Northern dynasties.

Third, the design of decorative patterns and factors on the Buddha figure robes changed, and the collars, hems, necklines and *samkaksika* changed under the influence of the *hanfu*. The *saṅghāṭi* that covered both shoulders was always designed with a lapel or collar, and was decorated with folds, flower patterns, or was plain and smooth. For example, the Buddha figure from cave no.20 of the Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.7 A3) has lapel on the *Saṅghāṭi* designed with folds. In addition, the Buddha figures from cave no.6 (pic.3.2.11) and cave no.30 (pic.3.2.13) of the Yungang grottoes have smooth collar lapels. These last two figures date to the Northern Wei period.

Buddha figures dressed in the new style wore *samkaksika* (僧祇支) that were tied with girdles. This style was another unique type of Chinese Buddha figure dress, which was not found on either Indian nor Gandhara Buddha figures. It is similar to a Chinese *hanfu* tied with a belt to secure the loose garment. Various figures like this with a *samkaksika* and lapel collar have been found. One was found in the First Year of Jianhong (420 AD) in cave no. 169 of the Bing Ling cave temple (pic.3.2.7 A4). Another was a Buddha figure in Binyang cave of Longmen grottoes (pic.3.2.8 B2) of Northern Wei period, and also relevant was a seated Buddha in cave no. 44 of Maiji mountain grottoes (pic.3.2.14) of the Western Wei dynasty. We found that the early lapels of the *samkaksika* were without any decorative pattern. However, later figures in the Tang dynasty had more decorative lapels. Examples include the Buddha figures from cave no 328 of the Mogao grottoes (pic.3.29 B) and a Buddha of dry lacquer (pic.3.28 B) with rich flower patterns on the lapel.

Many people think when they look at the Chinese Buddhas, especially Buddha figures from Southern and Northern periods, that they are looking at Chinese traditional clothing, but in fact they misunderstand. From the study of this section we have a clear understanding that the way Chinese Buddha figures are dressed is consistent with the Buddhist tradition. They wear the *tricīvara: saṅghāṭi, uttarāsaṅga, antaravāsaka* and often the *samkaksika* as well. In fact, the elements that have changed in Chinese figures are just the style of the robe, the way of wrapping the robe and the decoration patterns on the collar, hem, and neckline, all elements that were influenced by Chinese traditional dressing styles. The process of influence from Chinese clothing styles was a large part of the evolution from Indian and Gandhara styles transformed to Chinese style.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jiang Wen, **The Dressing Culture in the Merged Culture of Northern Wei Period** (北魏时期文化融合之服饰文化) *Journal of Masterpieces Review* (名作欣赏) No.29 2014.



#### **4.1.4 The Skills and Techniques of Creating Buddha Figures**

As we have seen, a number of factors contributed to the evolution towards a unique Chinese form of Buddha figures in China. Another important factor was the Chinese local skills and techniques used to create the Buddha figures. The older Buddha figures discovered in India or Central Asia majorly were mostly made using the skills and techniques of stone carving, metal casting, clay sculpture, wooden carving and painting. After Buddhism arrived in the land of ancient China, Chinese adapted their own local skills and techniques to copy and make their own style of Buddha figures, and their actions further influenced the evolution.

The early techniques used to make Buddha figures in China were stone carving, wooden carving, metal casting, clay sculpturing and painting. However, the use of ceramics and dry lacquer were Chinese local techniques that had never been used in India or in the Central Asia regions. In the previous chapter, we studied about the Buddhist grottoes in China, where the well-established techniques of stone carving were used to create fine and rare Buddha figures in the Yungang, Longmen and Tianlong Shan grottoes. Furthermore, wonderful painting techniques were used to create the Buddhist wall paintings in Dunhuang grottoes, and clay workers created masterpieces in the Bing Ling temple caves. However, in this section, we will examine the techniques of metal casting and dry lacquering used to make Buddha figures.

Metal casting was one of the common ways to make Buddha figures in the ancient period. One advantage of metal casting was that it could be used to make Buddha figures that were long-lasting. To date, the earliest Buddha figure that was found in China was a damaged bronze Buddha on a Money Tree (pic.3.1.3), dated to 125 AD in the Eastern Han dynasty. It was made using a metal casting technique. There are two traditional metal casting processes, sand mold casting and lost wax casting.



**Sand mold casting technique:** The sand mold casting technique was a well-practiced one by the time of the Shang dynasty (1600-1046 BC). In this technique, sand is used to mold the pattern, and molten metal is used to fill in the mold. This process consists of six major stages: mold-making, clamping, pouring, cooling, removal and trimming. In the early period, Buddha figures and in particular large figures were produced via sand mold casting.

Apart from the bronze Buddha figures on money trees, Ze Rong (桀融) made Buddhas with copper and gold gilding during the Three Kingdoms period.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Buddha figures found from the Sixteen Kingdoms period were also produced by sand mold casting. Instances include the gilded seated Buddha inscribed with the Fourth Year of Jian Wu (338 AD, pic3.22), as well as the large and complex copper Buddha figures of the Northern Wei dynasty. Furthermore, early small Buddha figures were usually cast in one piece, whereas later ones were cast in separate pieces that were then connected to form large and complex Buddha figures.

**Lost wax casting:** The second technique of casting was lost wax casting. In lost wax casting, the melted metal is poured into a wax model, and once the wax model is melted and drained away, the item is finished. The major steps for lost wax casting technique are the sculpting, mold making, wax, removal of wax, chasing, spruing, slurry, burnout, testing, pouring, release and metal chasing. The technique was used to make Buddha figure in the period from the Sixteen Kingdoms period to the early Northern Wei dynasty, but it probably did not originate in China.<sup>26</sup> But by the end of Northern Wei dynasty, the mature skill of creating Buddha figures by the lost wax casting was being used in Chang An.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism. Religion Publisher** (《中国佛教简史》), May 2001, p. 19. (以铜为人, 黄金涂身)

<sup>26</sup> Yu Chun, **The Feature and Casting Technique Characteristics of Metal Buddha Figure in Chang An Region from Northern Period** (长安地区北朝金铜佛像形制与铸造技术特征), Relics and Museology 《文博》 No.3, 2016, p. 40.

This method was often used to cast small metal Buddha figures.

Gilding techniques have been used for a very long time in the creation of metal Buddha figures. Gilding is concerned with applying gold powder or gold leaf to the surface of a metal Buddha figure in order to give it a thin coating of gold and a golden color. Later, the gilding technique was also used to apply gold to a wooden or stone Buddha figure.

**Dry lacquer technique:** The dry lacquer technique (干漆夹纻工艺) is a Chinese local skill used to make Buddha figures. The process first requires the creation of a model out of clay or wood. The model is then covered with linen, and the linen is then covered by layers of lacquer. Once the layers of lacquer are set, the clay core can be removed for further detail painting. The earliest dry lacquer works found are from the period of Warring States, and the technique was adopted to make Buddha figure by the Dai Kui (戴逵) in the Eastern Jin dynasty. He applied the dry lacquer skill to make Chinese style Buddha figures at the Wa Guan temple, Nanjing.<sup>28</sup> The technique was gradually adopted in the Southern and Northern periods and became popular in Sui dynasty, reaching its top place in the Tang period. A good example is the Buddha made of dry lacquer with traces of gilt (pic.3.2.28 B) which is now in a collecting in the Metropolitan museum of Art. The flourishing of the dry lacquer technique was an important step in the evolution of Chinese Buddha figure.<sup>29</sup> In addition, it was under the influence of Tang dynasty that the Chinese style of Buddha figure and the dry lacquer technique was brought to Japan and Korea.

## 4.2 Internal Factors Influenced Evolution of Chinese Buddha Figures

The term ‘internal factors’ refers to factors from inside the Buddhist

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Zhang Hanbing, **Study the style and Technique of Dried Lacquer Buddha Figure** (夹纻胎造像的造型及工艺研究). Thesis for the master degree, Nanjing University of Arts, May, 2013, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

world that influenced the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures. These ‘Buddhist’ elements had direct or indirect effect on the changes of appearance and style of Chinese Buddha figure. Examples include developments of the Buddhist teachings, and changes in the faith expressed towards different Buddhas and the *tricitvara* in Mahayana Vinaya.

#### **4.2.1 The Development of Buddhist Teachings Influenced the Evolution of Buddha Figures**

In general, the evolution of Buddha figures is one of the factors in the development of Buddhism. The development of Buddhism itself also in turn affected the evolution of Buddha figures, and in particular the development of the Buddhist teachings was a crucial element. According to the focus on the different teachings and sūtras, Chinese Buddhism formed several thoughts and schools, and each school worshipped different Buddhas. This led to the creation of different forms of the Buddha.

##### **a. Buddhist Teaching in the Eastern Han and Three Kingdoms Periods**

The Eastern Han and the Three Kingdom periods were considered to be the earliest periods during which Buddhism arrived in ancient China. Due to a lack of knowledge about the Buddhist teachings, people frequently misunderstood Buddhism. The Buddha was considered as one of the gods who save and help people even after they pass away. Such misunderstanding persisted even after the foreign monks An Shigao (安世高) and Lokaksema (支娄迦讖) brought the Sarvastivadan and Mahayana sūtras in the period of emperor Huan (汉桓帝) and translated into them Chinese. People still mixed up the Buddha and with the local culture and gods.

Therefore, the earliest Buddha figures that have been found are mostly from tombs and are of simple form. The Buddha figure is somewhat undefined and is referred to by the name of Fu Tu (浮图). Examples include the damaged bronze

Buddha figure and the base inscribed with the Fourth Year of Yan Guang (延光四年, 125 AD, pic.3.13) on a money tree, and the pottery Buddha figure from the base of a money tree (pic.3.1.2) that has been dated to the Eastern Han period. As noted earlier in this work, the money tree was a kind of funerary object placed in the tomb and buried with people who passed away. It was intended for use by them in the afterlife.

During the Three Kingdoms period, foreign monks continued to bring sūtras into Northern and Southern China and translated them into Chinese. The monks Dharmakā (昙柯迦罗), Samghavarman (康僧铠) and Dharmasatya (昙帝) translated and propagated sūtras in Luoyan after the Jiaping Year of Wei (魏嘉平 249-254 AD).<sup>30</sup> The doctrines which were concerned with the Vinaya and the Amitāyus sūtra were also translated into Chinese, and the Chinese monk Zhu Shixing (朱士行) also traveled west to further study Buddhism. He sent the *Pancavimsatisahasrika-Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* 《放光般若经》 back to Chang An, which further developed the teaching of Buddhism in Three Kingdoms period.

However, knowledge of the Buddhist teachings was not yet popular in the society, and the Buddha was still considered to be a god in the religion of the Three Kingdoms periods. This was supported by the discovered Hunping vessel with Buddha figure (pic.3.1.5) from the Nanjing region, probably influenced by the translation and teaching of the Smaller (shorter) Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra or the Amitābha sūtra by lay Buddhist translator Zhi Qian (支谦) from the Wu kingdom. The sūtra gives instructions about the afterlife.

## **b. The Jin Dynasties and Sixteen Kingdoms Periods**

It was in the Western Jin and Eastern Jin dynasties, and in Sixteen Kingdoms period that the famous Buddhist translator Kumārajīva and other translators arrived in Chang An and Luo Yang, as well in the Jian Kang regions. At

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<sup>30</sup> Fang Latina, Hua Fantan, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism. Religion Publisher** (《中国佛教简史》), May 2001, p. 22.

this time, a large number of Buddhist texts was translated into Chinese, and the majority of these were concerned with the Mahayana teachings. Examples included the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, the Lotus sūtra, and the Śūraṅgama-sūtra. It was especially the different version of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras that led to the study of Prajñā thought and laid the foundation for further development of the Mahayana teachings.

On the other hand, there were the contributions of the Chinese monks such as Dao An (道安) and Hui Yuan (慧远), who had studied Buddhist teaching and worked in Buddhist education. The Buddhist teachings had gradually spread in the major society and this had further promoted the development of the Mahayana teachings. The master Dao An not only preached the Prajñāpāramitā sutras, but also offered commentaries on sutras. He also supported the translation of Buddhist texts. Dao Sheng (道生) was popular for his propagation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra, and Hui Yuan focused on the Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra. He was later considered as the founder of the Pure Land school, a school which greatly influenced the later creation of Amitābha Buddha figures.

Thus, through developments in the Buddhist teachings, Buddhist thoughts had impact on the creation of Buddha figures, and unlike the figures of the Eastern Han and Three kingdoms period, the size of Buddha figures become larger and were used as objects of devotion and objects to pray to make merit. They were no longer decorations on a Hunping vessel or buried in a tomb. Buddha figures were made in various forms and were depictions of different Buddhas according to the teachings followed. For instance, Dao An caste a gilded Shakyamuni Buddha figure in Tanxi temple.<sup>31</sup> Hui Yuan and his partners made vows for rebirth in the Pure Land in front of an Amitābha Buddha.<sup>32</sup> Dai Kui (戴逵) carved a wooden Amitāyus Buddha in Baoling temple.<sup>33</sup> He also made five

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<sup>31</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher, May 2001, p. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.p. 72.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.p. 77.

Buddhas in the Waguan temple and five Buddhas in the Bao Ling temple using the dry lacquer technique.

Due to the influence of the *Ānāpānasmṛti sūtra* and meditation teaching, Shakyamuni Buddha was well represented in the figures of the time. A large Shakyamuni Buddha in meditation posture was created in the Sixteen kingdoms period. Furthermore, an early gilded seated Buddha figure which was inscribed with Fourth Year of Jianwu (建武四年, 338 AD, pic.3.2.2), a gilded seated Buddha figure inscribed with Second Year of Sheng Guang (429 AD, pic.3.2.3) and the gilded Buddha figure discovered from Shjiazhuang, Hebei province, China (pic.3.2.4) were all considered to be seated depictions of Shakyamuni.

### **c. The Southern and Northern Periods**

The translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese was the first step in the localization of the Buddhist teachings. Next came developments in the Eastern Jin dynasty and Sixteen Kingdom period, during which the Buddhist teachings gradually came into contact and syncretized with existing local Chinese culture and religions. This collision furthered the localization process. It was in the Southern and Northern periods that new more specialized forms of Buddhism emerged, and practitioners focused on the study of one sūtra or sastra, such as Satyasiddhi-sastra (成实论), the Abhidharma (毗昙/俱舍), and the Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra (涅槃经). The localization of Buddhist teachings became widespread in society and obtained support from the emperors and people. At this time, large numbers of Buddhist temples and caves were built.

The digging out the Yungang, Dunhuang, and Longmen grottoes influenced the development and localization of the Buddhist teachings and thus influenced the evolution of Buddhist art. By this influence, the wall paintings of Dunhuang grottoes were created and a range of figures including Chinese Taoist and traditional gods, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, Maha-vairocana Buddha, and Bodhisattvas were depicted on the walls. Thousands of Buddha caves

were full of images that expressed Chinese Mahayana thought and the Mahayana Buddha system. From the Buddhist arts of the grottoes presented a merging of the cultures of east and west, as well as a merging of the doctrines and policies of Chinese Buddhism and India Buddhism. This all occurred in Southern and Northern period, and this fusion was to become even newer and more unique forms of Chinese Buddhism.<sup>34</sup>

#### **d. The Sui and Tang Periods**

During the Sui and Tang period, Buddhism reached the top of its development. The eight major schools (Tiantai, Three Sanstra, Vinaya, Pure Land, Chan, Avatamska, Yogacara, Mantra) had formed, and each school had set their selected sūtra as the base of their primary doctrine. This confirmed the framework of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and increased the demand for Buddha figures. In the Sui and Tang periods, large numbers of Buddha figure were made by official and unofficial artisans.

During the Sui dynasty, from the early Kai Huang Years (开皇581-600 AD) to the end of the Ren Shou Years (仁寿年501-604 AD), only the emperor Wendi Yang Jian donated 106,580 new Buddha figures (large and small), and supported the repair of 1,508,000 damaged Buddha figures.<sup>35</sup> And the emperor Yangdi Yang Guang donated 3,850 new Buddha figures and supported the to repair of 101,000 damaged Buddha figures.<sup>36</sup> During the Tang dynasty, of the total 482 caves of the Mogao grottoes, 238 caves contained more than 600 sculptures.<sup>37</sup>

The localization of Chinese Buddhist teachings promoted the evolution of Buddha figures and the formation of different styles of Buddha figures resulted

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<sup>34</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher, May 2001, p. 113.

<sup>35</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher, May 2001, p. 126.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>37</sup> Zhang Mengmeng, **The Characteristicsistics of Buddhist Sculpture in Middle Tang from Mogao Grottoes** (《敦煌莫高窟中唐代佛教塑像内容及其艺术特征》), No.14, 2009, The Silk Road.

from the adaptation of various primary sūtras by the different schools. Included here were the Amitābha Buddha of the Pure land school, the concept of the Trikaya (the Dhammakāya Maha-vairocana Buddha, Sambhogakāya Buddha, and Nirāmaṇakāya Shakyamuni Buddha), the Bhaishajyaguru Buddha based on the Medicine sūtra, as well as Prabhūtaratna and Shakyamuni Buddha sharing one seat from the Lotus sūtra. Furthermore, many illustrations of the Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra, the Medicine sūtra and the Lotus sūtra were painted in the grottoes.

#### **4.2.2 Buddhist Faiths Influenced the Evolution of Buddha Figures**

As we noted, a large number of sūtras were translated into Chinese and this promoted the development of different Buddhist thoughts and schools. Buddhism produced further faiths that evolved according to the specific sūtras and these sub-faiths then required the relevant Buddha figures for pray and merit making. People made merit for their living relatives to help them avoid dangers and for their deceased parents or relatives to assist them to obtain rebirth in a better life, and they did this by donating or making Buddha figures. The factor of faith in different Buddhas increased the demand for the making of Buddha figures and influenced the evolution of Buddha figures. From Eastern Han to the Tang dynasties, the main faiths of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism were concerned with Maitreya Buddha, Amitābha Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha the Medicine Buddha, and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

##### **a. Belief in Shakyamuni Buddha**

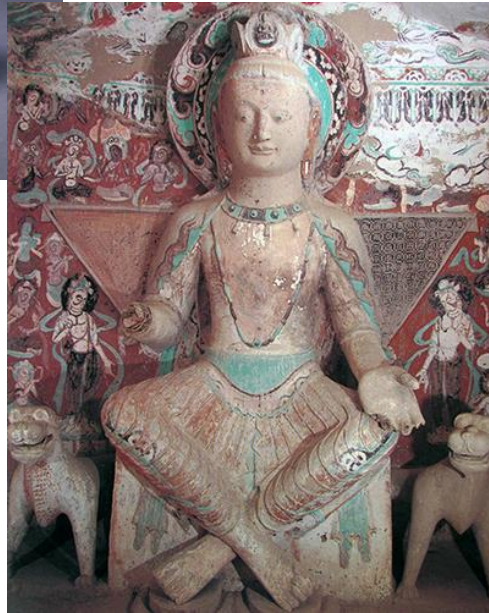
Shakyamuni Buddha is the present Buddha and founder of Buddhism. The scripture of the Jataka stories that was concerned with Shakyamuni Buddha and his past lives was translated into Chinese as the *Liu Du Ji Jing* (六度集经) or *Scripture on the Collection of the Six Perfections* by Kang Senghui during the Wu kingdom (222-280 AD), which was one of the Three Kingdoms. Thus, the earliest Buddha figure who was a single object for pray was Shakyamuni Buddha.



However, figures of Shakyamuni Buddha in early Chinese Buddhism were usually not inscripted. Scholars usually identified figures of him from some of his typical gestures. He had a number of common positions and gestures, such as the sitting meditation posture in which one hand is laid upon the other hand. His preaching gesture is also in a seated position and the right hand is raised in a gesture of reassurance and the left hand is resting on his lap. The teaching gesture is characterized by having the central finger of the left hand touching the joined thumb and forefinger of the right hand. His Bhumisparsha gesture is characterized by the right hand touching the earth and left resting on the crossed legs. He also makes his gesture of fearlessness or *abhaya mudra*.

Even though Shakyamuni Buddha was the founder of Buddhism, Buddha figures created for merit making for him during the periods of Southern and Northern dynasties were not as popular as those made for Maitreya and Amitābha. However, a number of key examples of Shakyamuni Buddha have been found in the earlier period. Instances probably include the pottery Buddha figure from the base of a money tree in the Peng Shan tomb which has been dated to the Eastern Han dynasty (pic.3.1.2 left), and the damaged bronze Buddha figure with an inscription reading the Fourth Year of Yan Guang (125 AD), which was on a money tree. These figures are generally taken to be figures of Shakyamuni Buddha because of the meditation postures and preaching gestures of the figures. Furthermore, the gilded Buddha figure made in the Northern Wei that makes a gesture of fearlessness, has a large flaming mandorla, and is inscribed with the date of Seventeenth Year of Taihe (北魏太和十七年, 493 AD, pic.4.1.6 left), and the words plus a merit wish: “Buddhist/ Zi X/ Chun Wei Nan/ donated Shakyamuni Buddha figure (太和十七/年六月/十日, /佛弟/子X/春为难/年等造/释迦/牟尼/像一躯)” is almost certainly a depiction of Shakyamuni.

The Shakyamuni Buddha figures with inscriptions found in the early Chinese Buddhist history are far fewer in number than the Maitreya Buddha and Amitābha Buddha figures found. However, the later creations of Maitreya Buddha



and Amitābha Buddha figures are all based on the postures of Shakyamuni Buddha. The Shakyamuni Buddha figure was an important influencing factor on the development of other Buddha figures.

Pic.4.1.6 Left: The gilded Shakyamuni Buddha with inscription of Seventeenth Year of Taihe, Northern Wei dynasty, collecting in National Museum of China.

Right: The Maitreya Bodhisattva from cave no.275 of Mogao grottoes, Northern Liang period.

## **b. Faith in Maitreya Buddha**

Maitreya is actually a Bodhisattva, but according to the sūtras he will be a Buddha in the future, and in fact he is the successor to Shakyamuni Buddha. He therefore is traditionally referred to as Maitreya Buddha and many people developed faith in Maitreya and created Maitreya figures. The original Maitreya came from Indian Buddhism, and Indian and Gandhara style of Maitreya figure as a Bodhisattva later spread into Central Asia and XiYu.

Faith in Maitreya Buddha was introduced into China by the translation of sūtras which were concerned with Maitreya such as *The Enlightenment of Maitreya sūtra* (*Mile Cheng Fo Jing* 《弥勒成佛经》) by Dharmarakṣa in the Western Jin period. Various versions of the translation exist. Other translation was *The Maitreya Descending from Tushita Heaven sūtra* (《弥勒下生经》) by Kumārajīva, the *Maitreya Ascending to the Tushita Heaven sūtra* (《弥勒上生经》) by Ju Qu Jing Sheng (沮渠京声), and the *Dao Xing Parinirvāṇa sūtra* (《道行般若经》) translated in the Eastern Han period. The *Pancavimsatisahasrika-prajñāpāramitā sūtra* (《放光般若经》), the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra* were translated during the Southern and Northern periods and are all to do with the story of Maitreya.

The core thought of faith in Maitreya is that he now resides in Tushita heaven, but he is waiting to descend to the human realm to preach Dhamma to his followers via three Turnings of the Dhamma Wheel and he will, after obtaining enlightenment, become the fifth Buddha in the bhadra-kalpa (贤劫). Therefore, his followers make vows and make merit to be born in Tushita heaven or get rebirth at the time when Maitreya descends from Tushita heaven to the human realm.

The faith of Maitreya Buddha caters to the wishes of people who want to pursue a better future life, so it was quickly accepted by Chinese Buddhists.

Faith in Maitreya was promoted by Masters such as Dao An and Xuan Zang. The faith was also used at the time for political purposes. In 690 AD, Wu Zetian, proclaimed herself as the incarnation of the future Buddha (Maitreya).<sup>38</sup> The faith of Maitreya adapted to the Chinese society and people, and the creation of Buddha figures was stimulated to meet the demands of people who had faith in Maitreya Buddha. Furthermore, the swelling interest in Maitreya had effects on the evolution of the figure.

The earliest Maitreya figure, from Xi Yu Buddhist caves, was depicted in Bodhisattva form in a seated position with his ankles crossed (pic.2.3.1). We can see the influenced of Maitreya Bodhisattva on the Xi Yu Buddha figure characteristics on the western wall of cave no. 275, of the Maogao grottoes, which were dug out in the Xiliang period (西凉时期, pic.4.1.6 right), and in the large Maitreya Bodhisattva figure in cave no.13 and no.17 of Yungang grottoes. Both are in Bodhisattva form and are seated with ankles crossed. When the faith of Maitreya was introduced into the central regions of China, the style had developed into a Buddha form, and the Buddha was usually standing or sitting, and making the gesture of fearlessness.

The Northern Wei dynasty (386-534 AD) was a time of flourish for the Maitreya faith, and large numbers of Maitreya Buddha figures have been discovered from the period. Many figures have inscriptions that state that the supporters wish to gain rebirth in the pure land of Maitreya. According to

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<sup>38</sup> <https://en.>



incomplete statistics of the period from the Northern Wei to the Southern dynasties, the numbers of different Buddha figures made in the Yungang grottoes and Longmen grottoes were 112 pieces for Shakyamuni Buddha figure, 115 pieces for Maitreya Buddha figure, 29 pieces for Amitābha figure, and 82 pieces for Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva figure.<sup>39</sup>

Pic. 4.1.7 Gilded Maitreya Buddha made in Fifth Year of Zheng Guang (北魏正光5年), Northern Wei dynasty, collecting in Metropolitan Museum of Arts.<sup>40</sup>

We can see how the faith factor affected the evolution of Buddha figures in other ways as well. The example here is gilded Maitreya Buddha made in Fifth Year of Zheng Guang (北魏正光五年, 524 AD, pic.4.1.7) during the Northern Wei dynasty, which consisted in a figure of Maitreya dressed in a loose gown tied with wide girdle. Furthermore, there are various illustrations of the Maitreya sūtra that are preserved in Buddhist caves that were painted in later periods. Large Maitreya Buddha figures were also made, such as the two seated Maitreya Buddha figures from the Mogao grottoes. The one in cave no.96 is 35.5 meters in height and was made in early the Tang dynasty, and the other in cave no. 130 is 27 meters high and was made in the middle Tang period. However, the largest seated Maitreya Buddha is in Le Shan, Si Chuan province. It is a staggering 71 meters in height and was made from 713 to 803 AD in Tang.

From the size and numbers Buddha figures that were created in the Tang period, we can appreciate the strength of faith in Maitreya Buddha at the time. We can also see how such intense faith affected the evolution of Buddha figures.

### c. The Faith in Amitābha

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<sup>39</sup> Yang Huinan, *The Faith of Maitreya in Chinese Buddhist Texts Translation* (《汉译佛经中的弥勒信仰:以弥勒上、下经为主的研究》), the Humanitas Taiwanica, No. 35 (Dec.1987), College of Liberal Arts publication, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/42162> 6 September 2017

Faith in Amitābha Buddha, also called Pure Land Buddhism, was another important Buddhist faith in the early period. Belief in Amitābha reached its peak during the Sui and Tang periods and surpassed the strength of belief in Maitreya Buddha.

Faith in Amitābha not only influenced the evolution of Buddha figures. It was destined to become one of the major movements of Mahayana Buddhism, and it remains enormously popular right up to the present. The earliest sūtras to do with Amitābha were the *Bo Zhou San Mei Jing* (《般舟三昧经》), which were translated into Chinese by Lokaksema (支娄迦讖) and Zhu Foshuo (竺佛朔) at the end of Eastern Han dynasty. Another was the *Longer Sukhāvātīvyūha sūtra* (《佛说无量寿经》), translation by Samghavarman in the Wei kingdom, one of Three kingdoms. In addition, the *Sukhāvātīvyūha sūtra* was translated by lay Buddhist translator Zhi Qian (支谦) who came from the Wu kingdom, and finally the *Amitābha sūtra* (《佛说阿弥陀经》), which was translated by Kumārajīva in the Sixteen kingdoms period.

The Amitābha concept may well have had connections with Buddha figure placed in the tombs over the period of the Eastern Han to the Western Jin periods, but there is no evidence to support this conjecture yet. In any case, the translation of Pure land sūtras and the easy practice technique involved boosted the spread of faith in Amitābha. The followers just needed to recite the name of Amitābha and take 48 vows to get rebirth in the Pure land, the beautiful land of Amitābha which was without any suffering.

There are four techniques of practice of Amitābha Buddhism: (1) Reciting the name of Amitābha; (2) Contemplation on the figure of Amitābha; (3) Observing the beauty of Amitābha; and (4) Contemplation of the Dhammakaya of Buddha in Samadhi.<sup>41</sup> People who believe in Amitābha usually donate Buddha figures to make merits for people who have passed away. It is clear from the main

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<sup>41</sup> Fang Litian, Hua Fangtian, **Brief History of Chinese Buddhism** (《中国佛教简史》), Religion Publisher, May 2001, p. 221.

practices of the Pure land school that the Buddha figure is a powerful part of the faith.

Early figures of Amitābha were developed based on the postures of Shakyamuni Buddha. An example is the Buddha on the north wall of cave no.169 from the Bing Ling cave temple, which was made in First Year of Jianhong in Xi qin kingdom (西秦建弘元年, 420 AD, pic.3.2.7 A4). The Buddha is in meditation position and is flanked by two Bodhisattvas. The figure is inscribed with the name of Amitāyus, and is considered as the earliest Amitāyus figure that is inscribed with date in China.<sup>42</sup> According to incomplete statistics from the Northern Wei to Southern dynasty, the numbers of Buddha figures made in the Yungang grottoes and Longmen grottoes mainly were 112 pieces for Shakyamuni Buddha figure, 115 pieces for Maitreya Buddha figure, 29 pieces for Amitābha figure, and 82 pieces for Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva figure.<sup>43</sup> These numbers for the Sui dynasty were as follows: 3 pieces for Shakyamuni Buddha figure, 9 pieces for Maitreya Buddha figure, 13 pieces for Amitābha figure, and 9 pieces for Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva figure.<sup>44</sup> And in the Tang dynasty, the numbers of new figures created were 40 pieces for Shakyamuni Buddha figure, 60 pieces for Maitreya Buddha figure, 280 pieces for Amitābha figure, and 9 pieces for Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva figure.<sup>45</sup> From the numbers, we can see the increasing numbers of Amitābha figure created, and surmise that this meant an increase in the belief in Amitābha Buddha moving from the earlier dynasties to the Tang period.

From the study above, we can understand that the Amitābha Buddha figures were closely related with the teaching of the Pure land school. The change

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<sup>42</sup> Jin Jianrong, **The Flaming Mandorla and Meditation of the Buddha in Cave no.169 Bing Ling temple Cave, Gansu province** (甘肃炳灵寺169窟第6龕造像背光图像与禅观). No.201503, *Studies in World Religions*, p. 160.

<sup>43</sup> Yang Huinan, **The Faith of Maitreya in Chinese Buddhist Texts Translation** (《汉译佛经中的弥勒信仰:以弥勒上、下经为主的研究》), the Humanitas Taiwanica, No. 35 (Dec.1987), College of Liberal Arts publication, p. 120.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

in the numbers of Buddha figures reflected the development of Buddhism and showed how faith influenced the evolution of Buddha figures.

Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Buddha and Amitābha were key Buddha figures that were depicted in the Buddhist art of early Chinese Buddhism. Other figures such as the Medicine Buddha and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva were important, too. All of these faiths encouraged their followers to make Buddha figures for purposes of making merit and devotion. Furthermore, the figures and other forms of Buddhist art such as illustrations were ways of embodying the content and stories of the sutras (经变图). The different faiths of Buddhism that developed were reflected in a helpful way by the evolution of the characteristics of Buddha figures.

#### **4.2.3 The Tricīvara in Mahayana and its Influence on Buddha Figures**

The *tricīvara* or *ticivara*, sometimes referred to as the *Kāṣāya*, is the monastic robe worn daily and is usually composed of three different parts, the *saṅghāṭi*, the *uttarāsaṅga* and the *antaravasaka*. The *tricīvara* robe was written about in the Vinaya Pitaka, but its form varies in different Buddhist traditions. Today, Buddhist monks of the Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana traditions wear different robes, and these differences were reflected in the Buddha figures that were made historically. Then, what is the *tricīvara* in Mahayana Buddhism and how did it influence the evolution of Buddha figures? These issues will be study in the next section.

##### **a. The Tricīvara in Mahayana Vinaya**

The *tricīvara* was described in four pieces of Vinaya literature in the Chinese Mahayana Pitaka, which had been translated into Chinese over the period of the Eastern Jin to the Southern and Northern dynasties. The four pieces of the Vinaya were the *Dharmagupta-vinaya* (《四分律》) translated by Punyatara (弗若多罗) and Kumārajīva in the Hou Qin period; The *Sarvāstivāda-vinaya* (《十诵



律》) translated by Buddhayaśas (佛陀耶舍) and Zhu Fonian (竺佛念) in the Hou Qin period; the Mahasangha-vinaya (《摩诃僧祇律》) translated by Buddhabhadra (佛陀跋陀罗) and Faxian in Eastern Jin; and the Mahāśāsakavinaya (《弥沙塞部和酰五分律》) translated by Buddhajiva (佛陀什) and Zhu Daosheng in the Song kingdom of the Southern dynasty.

The *tricīvara* was not made from a single piece of cloth, but from several pieces of cloth. The Sarvāstivāda-vinaya described that the *saṅghāṭi* is made from 9 pieces of cloth, the *uttarāsaṅga* from 7 pieces of cloth and the *antaravasaka* from 5 pieces of cloth.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the Dharmagupta-vinaya described that the *saṅghāṭi* can be made from 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23 or 25 pieces of cloth.<sup>47</sup> The sequence of wearing the *tricīvara* is important. It starts with the *antaravāsaka* first, which is the inner robe that covers the lower body. Next comes the *uttarāsaṅga*, which covers the left shoulder and leaves bare the right. Last is the *saṅghāṭi*, which is put on over the *uttarāsaṅga* and the *antaravasaka*.

The Buddha robes on figures underwent significant change and formed into unique styles in the Northern Wei period. According to the style of wrapping the *tricīvara*, the evolution of robe for Chinese Buddha figure can be categorized into two types: the *saṅghāṭi* covering type (上衣外覆), in which the *saṅghāṭi* covers the undergarments, and another type in which parts of the *uttarāsaṅga* (and perhaps other inner garments) are revealed (中衣外露).<sup>48</sup>

**Saṅghāṭi covering (上衣外覆):** According to the different ways of wrapping, there are five major styles of the *saṅghāṭi* covering (A style): 1, The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders (通肩式A1). 2, The *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder and the right is bare (袒右肩式A2). 3, The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders

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<sup>46</sup> Taisho Tripitaka (Chinese: 大正新修大藏经, Pin Yin: Dà Zhèng Xīn Xiū Dà Zàng Jīng), Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association.vol.23, pp. 30-31.

<sup>47</sup> Chen Yuexin, A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》), Social sciences academic press (China), p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> Chen Yuexin, A Study to the Regulation of Dressing for Chinese Buddhist Statues from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century (《5-8世纪汉地佛像着衣法式》), Social sciences academic press (China), p. 25.

but the right chest is bare, and the right corner of the robe crosses under the right arm then falls over left shoulder (覆肩袒右式A3). 4, The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders and right corner of robe crosses under the right arm falls over left forearm (搭肘式A4). 5, The *saṅghāṭi* cover both shoulders and the right corner of robe crosses the abdomen then falls over the left shoulder, leaving bare half of the chest (露胸通肩式或半披式A5).

**Displaying the *uttarāsaṅga* covering (中衣外露):** The style of displaying the *uttarāsaṅga* covering (B style) has four different ways of wrapping. 1, The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders, and the right corner of robe crosses the abdomen then falls over the left arm, revealing the *uttarāsaṅga* that covers both shoulders or occupies the same space as the *saṅghāṭi*. (上衣搭肘式B1). 2, The external *saṅghāṭi* covers the *uttarāsaṅga* on both shoulders and fall over the left forearm. (上衣重层式B2). 3, The *uttarāsaṅga* cover both shoulders, and the right corner of the robe falls on the right forearm. The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders or leaves the right bare, and the right corner of the robe falls on left shoulder or forearm. (中衣搭肘式B3). 4, The *saṅghāṭi* cover the left shoulder and leaves the right bare, and the right corner of the robe crosses under the right arm then falls over the left shoulder, showing the *samkaksika* inside. (中衣直裰式 B4). From the above study, there were 9 ways of wearing the *saṅghāṭi*, and these formed unique styles, which had significant influence on the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures in the Southern and Northern dynasties.

## **b. The Samkaksika**

Apart from the *tricīvara*, the Mahasangha-vinaya also described another additional robe for the bhikkhus which was the *samkaksika* (僧祇支).<sup>49</sup> The *samkaksika* is using for covering the upper body and is worn inside of the *uttarāsaṅga*. The Vinaya says that bhikkhus can have more additional robes, and the *samkaksika* is one of the many. However, the *samkaksika* was not often seen on

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<sup>49</sup> **Taisho Tripitaka** (Chinese:大正新修大藏经, Pin Yin: Dà Zhèng Xīn Xiū Dà Zàng Jīng), Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association.vol.22, p. 521.

Indian Buddha figures. In contrast, it was used on Chinese Buddha figures and became one of the factors that identified Chinese Buddha figures.

The *samkaksika* is usually barely visible beneath the *saṅghāṭi* or the *uttarāsaṅga*, and there are a number of ways it can be worn. Type 1) The garment is usually wrapped around the entire left shoulder and the right shoulder is bare. It is tied with a girdle. This type was often found on Buddha figures from the Southern and Northern periods and was especially common on figures that had the loose gown tied with wide girdle that were created in the Northern Wei dynasty. Examples include the standing Buddha from cave no.6 (pic.3.2.10) and the standing Buddha on the upper level of the east wall in cave no.6 (pic.3.2.11) of the Yungang grottoes, and the stone Buddha figure discovered in the Wan Fo monastery site in Cheng Du that was inscribed with the Third Year of Da Tong, Liang kingdom (pic.3.2.24 A, 梁大同三年537 AD).

In type 2), the *samkaksika* is worn as a shirt, with the left shoulder covered and the right shoulder bare. Examples of this type are the seated Amitābha on the north wall of cave no.169 of the Bing Ling temple cave that was made in the First Year of Jianhong in Xiqin kingdom (西秦建弘元年,420 AD, pic.3.2.7 A4), and the large seated Buddha from cave no.20 of Yungang grottoes, which has most of the *samkaksika* visible.

In Type 3), the *samkaksika* has a crossed collar. This feature is not mainstream, but it can sometimes be found on Chinese Buddha figures.<sup>50</sup> An example is the seated Buddha from cave no. 30 of the Yungang grottoes (pic.3.2.13).

These three ways of wearing the *samkaksika* were major styles seen on Buddha figures from the Southern and Northern dynasties through to the Tang dynasty, which was a productive period in the evolution of Chinese Buddha

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<sup>50</sup> Fei Yong, **The Samakaksika and Half Shirt in the Dressing of Buddha Figures** (佛像服饰中的“僧祇支”与“偏衫”问题) No.01,2008. The Journal of Dunhuang Studies, p. 119.

figures. In particular, Buddha figures from the Northern Wei dynasty that were dressed in the loose gown had the securing girdle tied on the *samksika* and the girdle had a long tail.

There were other additional robes for the Buddha and the Sangha described in the Mahayana Vinaya, but those robes were not reflected in the creation of Buddha figures. However, the study of *tricīvara* and *samkasika* in the Mahayana Vinaya and the ways of wearing the robe offer us clues as to how the different ways of wearing the *tricīvara* and the *samksika* were reflected in the creation of Buddha figures and how they influenced the evolution of the figures. The 9 ways of wearing the *saṅghāṭi*, and the *uttarāsāṅga* and the 3 ways of wearing the *samksika* formed the unique styles seen on the Chinese Buddha figures.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

The main contribution of this dissertation to Buddhist academia is to provide a systematic analysis of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures over the period from the Eastern Han Dynasty through to and including the Tang dynasty. It was over this period that Chinese Buddhism slowly but surely evolved into its own uniquely Chinese ‘local’ forms, and this process of transformation took place in various domains such as the teachings, sūtra translation, and in the crucial area of Buddhist arts. This research work offers a whole picture that illustrates the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures and analyzes the evolution of the characteristics of early Chinese Buddha figures in each period. Furthermore, the research analyses the main factors that influenced the gradual change of the Buddha figures. Such an analysis is necessary if we are to understand how and why the Buddha figures changed their form from foreign styles to ‘local’ Chinese styles. The research is also of use because it suggests the connections between early Chinese Buddha figures and the present-day Buddha figures in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism and it of course also looks deeply at the relationship between the styles of Buddha figures from China, India and Central Asia.

The first chapter of this dissertation introduced the background and the objectives of the research. The objectives of the research were:

1. To study the introduction of Buddha figures into China.
2. To study the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.
3. To study the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

The research also examines the relationship between Chinese Buddha figures and Indian Buddha figures, and it looks at clues that can help us understand

the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures and the factors that influenced the evolution. The researcher began by studying many texts that were concerned with early Chinese Buddha figures. However, a whole picture of the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures was still needed in order to figure out how Buddha figures were introduced into China, how they evolved in its early periods and what the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese figures were. A complete picture was also needed to better understand the factors that affected the process of the Buddha figures changing from foreign looking figures into real Chinese forms.

To study the introduction of Buddha figures into China, researcher continuing the survey into the second chapter, it began with gave an overview of the origin of the early Buddha figures. Firstly, in order to better understand the influences and differences between Chinese Buddha figures and Indian Buddha figures, researcher briefly reviewed the origins and characteristics of the different schools of Indian Buddhist art, which were the pre-Gandhara art, local Mathura art, and the Greek Gandhara art that was earlier than the Gupta and Sarnath arts in India. Researcher then introduced the routes by which Buddha figures were introduced into China. Researcher found that there were two major routes; one was the Silk Road and the other was the Maritime Silk Road. However, researcher mainly focus on the Silk Road route in this research work.

Before Buddha figures were introduced into China, they were first spread around the Central Asia regions, regions which the Chinese traditionally refer to as Xi Yu (西域). In order to more easily understand the geographical positions referred to in this work, researcher divided the Central Asian region into two parts, the first being in a narrow sense and the second being in a broad sense that contrasts Western Central Asia and Eastern Central Asia (Xi Yu). researcher found that Buddhism and Buddha figures first occurred in Western Central Asia, in the kingdoms of Bactria, Sodgiana (康居), Parthia, Ferghana (大宛), and Kopen, which correspond to present-day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

In Western Central Asia were found examples of Buddhist art that was mainly influenced by Gandhara art. One reason for this was because the regions had been ruled by Greco-Bactria kingdoms and Kushan empire. Interestingly, Chinese had already officially reached the regions in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC via Zhang Qian, and official records show that foreign monks from Parthia and Sogdiana in Western Central Asia arrived in Chang An during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD.

The Han dynasties established military headquarters in Xi Yu or Eastern Central Asia to monitor the kingdoms under their control and they also moved into the areas of Western Central Asia to consolidate their power. This movement of people created the conditions for a lot of cultural exchange and it promoted the spread of Buddhism. Beyond the site of Kashgar, Buddhism and Buddha figures moved further to the east from India and Western Central Asia along route that separated into two routes that met in the east at Dun Huang. The southern route went from Kashgar to Yarkand, Khotan, Niya, Miran to Lou Lan. The northern route started in Kashgar, passed Kucha and went on to Karashahr and Turfan. The two routes joined together at Dunhuang, and the Silk Road continued on east to Chang An.

It was along this ancient road that the Buddha figures were first introduced to Chang An as Buddhism spread. It first grew in the Xi Yu regions. The study of many Buddhist ancient sites in Xi Yu (present Xinjiang province, China) produced finds of Buddha figures and paintings. They were found in the Kizil caves, Kumtura caves, Shorchuk and other places. These finds indicated that the Buddha figures in Xi Yu region as were mostly of the Gandhara style but were also influenced by Mathura Buddhist art styles. Furthermore, by around 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, the figures showed signs of being affected by Gupta art and also local culture and Chinese culture.

The third chapter of the work was mainly focused on the second research objective that was to study the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures in the different periods of Chinese history. The study period was from the Eastern

Han (25 BC-220 AD) dynasty to the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). There were two approaches used to study the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures. The first was to critically search for clues and evidence from documentary and archeological sources – and this study approach was used to learn about Buddha figures in the period of the Eastern Han to the Jin dynasties. The other way was to observe in detail the different characteristics and the transformation of those characteristics of Buddha figures from Sixteen kingdoms period through to and including the Tang dynasty.

From the documentary study, researcher found that the official record of a Buddha figure being brought for the first time into ancient China was concerned with Kāśyapamātanga (迦摄摩腾) and Dharmaratna (竺法兰), who had been invited by an official mission group during the Year of Yong Ping in the Eastern Han dynasty. The Buddha figures they brought to China were probably in Gandhara style. Further study was done of historical remains, which were mainly from tombs. One of the damaged bronze Buddha figures from a money tree was inscribed with the Fourth Year of Yang Guang (延光四年, 125 AD) of the Eastern Han dynasty, and was the earliest Buddha figure that has been found with date that certainly proved it was of Gandhara form.

In addition, more evidence concerning figures in the Three Kingdoms period was examined, and much of it originated in tombs. In the Jin dynasties, researcher found that large Buddha figures had already been made by Chinese artisans such as Dai Yong and Gu Kaizhi. Unfortunately, those figures were not preserved.

The study of the characteristics of Buddha figures from the Sixteen kingdoms period through to the Tang dynasty yielded interesting results. In fact, it provided evidence of different forms of Buddha figures in each period. In the Sixteen Kingdoms period, many Buddhist grottoes were dug out, and a good example was the Bing Ling cave temple and Dun Huang grottoes. The creation of these sites strongly enhanced the development of Buddhist art in China. The gilded



Buddha figure inscribed with the Fourth Year of Jian Wu (建武四年, 338 AD) and the Buddha figures from cave no. 169 inscribed with the Year of Jian Hong (420 AD) proved that early Buddha figures in this period were influenced by Gandhara and Indian arts, and by Chinese culture.

Next came the Buddha figures of the Northern Wei dynasty which had really started to involve into Chinese styles. The figures showed a wealth of Chinese cultures and factors. The Yungang grottoes and the Longmen grottoes revealed Buddha figures that had been clearly influenced by emperor Xiaowen's series of policies on hanization. The robes on the figures were now wrapped differently, and the new predominant form was loose gown tied with wide girdle. Furthermore, the bottom of the robe draped down and covered the front of the throne. The facial features of the figures were long, thin, narrow and angular, and the overall appearance was like a graceful Taoist sage. The figures had various types of hair styles, including the smooth style, the wavy hair style, the dense snail curl hair style, and the spiral pattern style. The Buddha figures of the Northern Wei period always had large flaming mandorlas often combined with haloes that were richly decorated. In the same period, the dynasties of the Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen, who ruled in the southern region of China also had similar style of Buddha figures that derived from the Jin dynasties.

The style of the Buddha figures from the Northern Qi period has shifted away from the forms of the Northern Wei, and this was especially true of Buddha figures from the Qingzhou region, which were mainly influenced by Sarnath art and had diaphanous robes. These robes revealed much of the undergarments and the body beneath. The figures had also acquired many more Chinese features. They had round faces, eyes that were nearly closed or squinting in the sense of introspection and serene manners. However, the body shapes of the figures had become stronger than those of the Northern Zhou period.

Compare to earlier developments, the Buddha figures of the Tang period were delicate and graceful. It was in the Tang period that the transformation

process to real and pure Chinese forms was completed, and the Tang forms still have significant influence on present-day Buddha figures. The four types of robe wrapping were: (1) The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders (通肩式); (2) The *saṅghāṭi* covers the left shoulder and the right is bare (袒右肩式); (3) The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and the right corner of the robe crosses the abdomen and falls over the left shoulder, whilst the right half of the chest and arm are bare (半披式); and (4) The *saṅghāṭi* covers both shoulders and the chest is bare (露胸通肩式). The four styles became the major styles, and these styles influenced the later development of Buddha figures. The fleshy and full moon facial features and the plump body shapes were the particular characteristics of Buddha figures during the Tang dynasty. The Tang dynasty figures are really best represented by the Buddha figures from the Tianlongshan grottoes that highlighted the Tang concept of 'Plump is Beautiful'. Meaningfully, the major characteristics of Tang Buddha figures has still continued to influence the artists depict the Buddha event up to the modern age.

In the third chapter, researcher divided the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures into three stages, the period from the Eastern Han to Jin dynasties, which was the evolutionary period for foreign style, the Sixteen Kingdoms period, which was the evolutionary period for mixed style, and the period from Northern Wei to Tang dynasty, which was the evolutionary period for Chinese style.

From the study of the evolution of early Buddha figures in the different periods, we have a link with evolution and localization. Over their long-term evolution, Buddha figures and their creators faced many changing factors and influences that made it necessary or sometimes unnecessary for them to adjust to local conditions and to survive. Therefore, the fourth chapter deals with the main factors that influenced the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, and the factors are divided up into external and internal aspects.

First, the external factors which are influences that come from outside of the Buddhist sphere. Researcher found that the main external causes were the

attitude of emperors, local aesthetics, styles of Chinese clothing and the skills and techniques which were used to make Buddha figures.

Since Buddhism was first introduced into China, it had a very close relationship with emperors and tended to thrive when it had the support of emperors. Some of the Emperors were devout Buddhists, and examples include the emperors Huan (汉桓帝), Shi Le and Shi Hu (石勒、石虎), Wen Cheng (文成帝), Xiaowen (孝文帝), Gao Yang (高洋), Xiao Yan (萧衍) and Yang Jian (杨坚) etc. Their personal interests and decisions affected Buddhism and indirectly influenced the making of Buddha figures. For example, in the first Year of Xing Guang (兴光元年454 AD), the emperor [Wen Cheng] ordered the casting of five Shakyamuni Buddha statues for his five ancestors. In addition, in the Yungang grottoes, the Shakyamuni Buddha in the cave no. 16 is a representation of the emperor Wen Cheng (文成帝); the Maitreya Bodhisattva in the cave no.17 represents Jing Mudi (景穆帝); and in the caves no. 18, 19, 20 are representations of the emperors Tai Wudi (太武帝), Ming Yuandi (明元帝) and Dao Wudi (道武帝).

The emperor Xiaowen's series of policies of hanization heavily influenced the evolution of the way that robes were dressed on the Buddhas. The wrapping styles of the loose gown tied with wide girdle was adapted from the Chinese local dress of *Hanfu* or *Mianfu*. Furthermore, local special fashions or styles, and the aesthetic of society were reflected in the features of the figures. For example, Buddha figures were thin and elegantly slender (秀骨清像) in the Southern and Northern periods, but were plump or full-bodied in the Tang period, a period in which plumpness was considered beautiful.

Second, the development of the Buddhist teachings, the developing faith in different Buddhas and the *tricāvara* of Mahayana were internal factors that directly or indirectly affected the gradual transformation of the Chinese Buddha figures' forms and styles. As the faith developed in China, new different teachings and sutras were produced. Chinese Buddhism formed a number of new philosophies and schools, and new Buddha figures were needed for the people to

pray to and make merit. As the new schools produced sutras of their own, artisans and artists attempted to capture the ideas and stories of the sutras in their Buddha figures and painting.

From the study researcher found that there were several important sub-faiths of Buddhism in the early period in China, such faith in Maitreya Buddha, faith in Amitābha and faith in the Medicine Buddha. The *Enlightenment of Maitreya sūtra*, the *Maitreya Descending from Tushita Heaven sūtra*, and *Maitreya Ascending to the Tushita Heaven sutra*, which were concerned with faith in Maitreya Buddha, became popular during the Southern and Northern periods, and prompted many to pray to him and make merit by donating statues of Maitreya Buddha.

Faith in Amitābha was another strong sub-faith, and it was stimulated but the appearance of the *Bo Zhou San Mei Jing*, the *Longer Sukhāvātīvyūha sūtra*, and the *Amitābha sutra*. Faith in Amitābha flourished in the Sui and Tang periods. There were four techniques of practice in the Pure land school, which were: (1) reciting the name of Amitābha. (2) contemplation of the figure of Amitābha. (3) observing the beauty of Amitābha; and (4) contemplation of the Dhammakaya of the Buddha in Samadhi. We know that the practice in the Pure land school had a very close relationship with Buddha figures and their manufacture. Later, faith in the Medicine Buddha and Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva became important, and enthusiastic monks, nuns and lay people produced large numbers of illustration of the sūtras (经变图). This was done to better describe the content and stories of the sūtras to the followers. In this way, the localization of different faiths in the Buddha was positively reflected in the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures.

In the end of fourth chapter, researcher discussed the *tricīvara* in the Mahayana Vinaya Pitaka. A number of ways of wrapping the *tricīvara* on the Buddha figure emerged in the Southern and Northern periods, and the three most important ways of wrapping the *samkaksika* around the image were to be contributions to the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures.

## 5.2 Suggestion for Further Research

This research concerns the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures, and offers clues about the development of early Chinese Buddha figures from time they were introduced into China. It follows the gradual changes in the characteristics of Buddha figures in the different periods and the main factors that influenced this evolution. The research work provides valuable information for others who are interested in Chinese Buddha figures and Chinese Buddhist art. However, due to the researcher's limitations, there is further researches that should be done on this topic.

1. This research only studies the evolution of Chinese Buddha figures in early period which was from the Eastern Han to the Tang dynasties, but actually there are more relevant periods that should be studied. One topic of interest would be to compare the characteristics of Buddha figures from the early periods and the periods after the Tang dynasty, in order to find out further difference and influences. Another might be to look at the influence of early Chinese Buddha figures on the creation of Buddha figures at present.

2. More research on the Buddhist grottoes in the different regions and periods is very necessary. In particular, not enough is known about the Yungang, Longmen and the Dunhuang grottoes, which were mostly dug out from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. They can reveal a lot of information about early Chinese Buddhist art. Therefore, a detailed study of the Chinese Buddhist grottoes would help us to better understand the development of Buddha figures in early period. Yet another challenge would be to do more work on various aspects of the Bodhisattvas, which are very significant in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, and Kṣitigarbha are all well known to the Chinese, and more research needs to be focused on them. More work done on them can help us more deeply understand Chinese Buddhism and the development of a range of figures.

3. This research work is mainly concerned with the historical evolution of Chinese Buddha figures, and the factors that influenced the evolution. There are many controversial issues in this area, and work is needed to find out the key reasons that Buddhism flourished in some periods of Chinese. A knowledge of this might help Buddhists today to better run, develop and promote the faith and Buddhist art.

A lot of research has been done in the area of Buddhist art and in particular Buddha figures. However, many gaps in the knowledge of Chinese Buddhist art still exist. This research was aimed at trying to give a different angle of approach to the study of Chinese Buddha figures and thus fill in some of the information gaps. However, because of some of the limitations that the researcher faced, more work is needed to advance knowledge in the area of China's Buddha figures. Researcher hope this research work can provide some valued information to all those who are interested in Chinese Buddha figures, Buddhist art or Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhist art is a very precious thing, and it has developed along with the faith for a long time. Devout artisans have left us this wonderful legacy, a legacy that can surely encourage more people to study about Chinese Buddhist figures and to practice and study the Buddhist teachings.

## **Appendix for Interview:**

**Question 1) When and How were Buddha figures Introduced into China?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Bhikkhuni Ven. He Xin

Gender: Female

Information: Staff member at the Pu Tuo Shan Buddhist Museum, Zhe Jiang Province, China.

After Buddha passed away about 600 years, there were no Buddha statues for Buddhist art. So, this period can be considered as the no Buddha statue period. By the time of the Kushan empire (30-375 AD), Buddha figures had appeared. The Kushan empire was established by the Da Yue Zhi, and it was the destination of the official visiting of place of Zhang Qian in the Western Han dynasty. The third emperor Kanishka (78-102 AD) was a great patron of Buddhism, and during his period, large numbers of Buddha figures were created.

One of early Buddha figures that was found in China had a specific inscription with the date on it. It was on a bronze tree with Buddha figures made in 126 AD (with Chinese inscription: Tenth of May (Chinese lunar), Fourth Year of Yan Guang). The Buddha was clearly influenced by Gandhara art. It proved that Buddha figures introduced into China could be traced back to emperor Shun Di Liu Bao in Eastern Han dynasty (顺帝 114-144 AD).

The Kushan empire had controlled the middle part of Silk Road and had as close relationship with the Eastern Han dynasty. They helped the Han empire to take over Yarkand. In the same year (87 AD), the general Ban Chao controlled the Yarkand region. Kanishka had sent the envoys to the military headquarter of General Ban Chao, sent tributes (money and lions) to the Han empire, and asked for marriage with a princess of the Han empire, but this was refused by General Ban Chao.

In 90 AD, during the period of Kanishka, the Han army fought with a powerful Kushan army in Central Asia, and this is recorded in the Book Hou Han Shu. Anyway, it's possible that Buddha figures were introduced to China in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD by exchange and communication between the two powerful empires.

## **Question 2) What are the Main External Factors that Influenced the Evolution of Chinese Buddha Figures.**

**Answer by:**

Name: Ms Shi Yue Jie

Gender: Female

Information: Studying on the topic of Buddhist Art at the Master's Degree level.

I think the localization of Buddha figures can help to promote Buddhism. The main external factors should be as follows:

- 1, The traditional art techniques and workers' skills.
- 2, The influenced of local religions (Taoism and other folk religions).
- 3, The influenced of the local clothing.

- 4, The characteristics of the people (in some region), such as face shape.
- 5, The scale and regulation of monasteries.
- 6, The attitude of rulers and their policy on Buddhism.
- 7, The economy of the local region (some regions) and family incomes.
- 8, Changes of dynasties, wars, disease.

### **3) What are the Main Internal Factors that Influenced the Evolution of Unique Chinese Buddha Figures?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Most Ven. Chun Fa

Gender: Male

Information: The abbot of Yuan Tong Monastery, Kunming, Yunnan Province, China.

The main factors for the evolution of early Chinese Buddha figures in my views are as the follows:

1, Buddhism had to survive in the Land of China when it was introduced into China as a foreign religion at first.

2, The different descriptions and records of the *saṅghāṭi*, *uttarāsaṅga* and *antaravāsaka* in the different vinaya. The structures, sizes, colors are different depending on the Vinaya.

3, Changes to the way of life of monks. After Buddhism arrived in China, the monks' lives changed to correspond to local life styles. For example, monks do not go to alms-rounds (Pindapata) any more in China. They need to work for food by themselves. Such changes also influenced the way figures were attired.

4, The development of Buddhist teachings. As Buddhism grew rapidly in China, the teachings developed with the various schools, such as the Pure Land school and the Chan school. Each school had its own ideas on how Buddha figures should look.

### **4) What Influences did the Indian Style of Buddha Figures Have on the Development of Chinese Buddha Figures?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Ven. Yan Wu

Gender: Male

Information: The abbot of Feng Shan temple, Teng Cong city, Yunnan China.

India is considered as the home land of Buddhism, and it was founded by Shakyamuni Buddha, who was the Siddhartha Gautama. He became enlightened under the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya around the 6th century BC. Buddha figures had already existed before the



religion spread to other regions. During the Ashoka period (269-232 BCE), there were no Buddha figures, but Buddhist arts already started. Examples were the lotus, Buddha footprint, Dhamma wheel, empty seat and stupa.

The early style of India Buddha figures mainly can be classified as the Mathura and Gandhara styles. These two schools of Buddhist art both belonged to ancient India. Mathura art's origin was in traditional India art, but Gandhara art was influenced by Hellenic art. Anyway, they are both considered as prototypes of Buddha figures.

They both had a direct influence on the development of Chinese Buddha figures, especially on the early development. From the present discoveries of Buddha figures, we can see that Gandhara Buddhist art mainly influenced the Bronze Buddha figures of the Eastern Han dynasty, Sixteen kingdoms period, Northern and Southern dynasties and even the Tang dynasty. As for Mathura art, its technique of creation of the Buddha figures directly influenced the development of early Chinese Buddha figures.

The development of Chinese Buddha figures could not have proceeded without the influence of Indian Buddha figures. But Buddha figures gradually involved into Chinese style.

### **5) How did the Xi Yu (present Xin Jiang province) Buddha Figures Influenced the Development of Early Chinese Buddha Figures?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Ven. Zhen Yu

Gender: Male

Information: The Deputy Director of the Buddhist College of Fujian, Fujian province, China

Xi Yu in Chinese defines two areas, Western Central Asia and Eastern Central Asia. Eastern Central Asia refers to the western regions of China, which is present-day Xin Jiang province. Western Central Asia includes the Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tadjikistan in the area of Transoxiana. Today, we may not be able to see the Buddhism anymore, but the regions were Buddhist centers in the ancient periods from first century AD or maybe even earlier – areas such as the Kucha, Yarkand, Khotan, Kashgar and Karashahr in Eastern Central Asia. And Samarkand, Bactria, Parthia in the Western Central Asia.

Whether they were in Western or Eastern Central Asia, they were all located on the middle part of Silk Road. But here we mainly discuss the Eastern Central Asia (Xi Yu or present Xin Jiang province). So, Xi Yu was the transit center when Buddhism and Buddha figures were introduced into central land of China. Buddhism and Buddha figures appeared first in the Xi Yu regions, then later reached to central land of China.

Buddhism formed its own style in the regions of Xi Yu, and it was involved in mutual influential dealings with both eastern and western cultures. It was affected by Chinese in the east, and by India, Greece, and Arabia from the west. But the early Xi Yu Buddha figures were basically copies from Gandhara Buddha art, and also some Arab artisans joined in with the

painting, or creation of Buddha figures and temples.

Xi Xu was an important gate for Buddhism entering into China, and the Buddha figures also influenced the development of Chinese Buddha figures. The influences went like this. 1, Xi Xu people introduced Buddha figures into the central land of China. 2, Buddhist artisans came from Xi Yu and painted or created Buddha figures in the central parts of China. The artists came from Xi Yu to Chang An – such as the famous artist Wei Chi Yi Seng (尉迟乙僧) in Tang dynasty who was from Khotan. He was expert in painting the Buddha figures and figure of foreign people. His many works were kept in Da Ci En temple, An Guo temple, and the Xing Tang temple in Chang An. He made contributions to Tang art in general and to the creation of Buddha figures.

### **6) What are the Characteristics of Buddha Figures in Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD)?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Mr. Vijit Yang

Gender: Male

Information: Director of Mekong Heritage, Kun Ming, Yunnan, China.

Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD) are different from those of the Sui, Southern, and Northern dynasties. In this period, the creation of Buddha figures has reached its top level. It had integrated with Chinese culture and art and formed its own style.

The early style of Buddha figures only copied Gandhara style. But after rapid growth, Buddhism met its first development peak in Southern and Northern dynasties. Buddha figures started to get popular and widespread - from the royal family to the ordinary people.

Again, back to Tang dynasty, Buddha figures evolved in a new style which was based on the type from Southern and Northern dynasties. Buddha figures were integrated with Chinese local culture, but also kept on some elements like Roman art. The Tang dynasty was an open empire, and especially with the opening of the Silk Road, many cultures and religions were introduced into the Tang dynasty. Even foreign people took on official positions in the central government administration. This was uncommon in other periods.

So, Buddha figures in Tang dynasty reached their highest level. On the one hand, they kept some of the styles of Indian and Asian style Buddha figures. On the other, they incorporated elements of Chinese local culture, even the Roman art factors. The “S” shape of Guan Yin was influenced by India style. So, I think creation of Buddha figures in the Tang dynasty was much richer than in other dynasties.

### **7) What are the Characteristics of Buddha Figures in Southern and Northern Dynasties?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Ms. Jin Yuan

Gender: Female

Information: Master archaeology major international auctioneer.

The Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589 AD) consisted of several kingdoms that were ruled by nomads and Han people. The Southern kingdoms included the Song kingdom, the Qi kingdom, the Liang kingdom, the Chen kingdom, which was ruled by Chinese Han people. And the Northern kingdoms included the Northern Wei dynasty, Western Wei dynasty, Eastern Wei dynasty, Northern Zhou dynasty, Bei Qi dynasty that were ruled mostly by the Xianbei people (nomads), but who accepted that the Bei Qi kingdom was ruled by Han people. So, during what was almost 170 years, all of the Chinese cultures experienced big changes at the hands of the nomads who took over most of northern China. Buddha figures were also influenced.

From the time that Buddhism was introduced into China in the Eastern Han dynasty to Southern and Northern dynasties around 400 or 500 years, it was a foreign religion and did not have strong roots in China yet. In the Northern Kingdoms and especially in the Northern Wei dynasty, Buddha figures were created in a very unique style as they became Chinese in character. Buddha figures in the Northern kingdoms were mainly of the Mathura, Sarnath and Gupta Buddhist styles, but they were also Han decorative factors, and the robes were influenced by Han clothing styles. The faces of the Buddha images were thin and long.

Anyway, whether the Buddha figures were of the Southern or Northern dynasties, they were on the first step of evolution in becoming Chinese Buddha figures. The evolution adopted the Indian Buddha style, but it also took on Chinese factors and formed the unique characteristics of Chinese Buddha figures. If we look back to the later development of Chinese Buddha figures, we can see that the Southern and Northern dynasties periods were the first stage in the development of Chinese Buddha figures.

## **8) What were the Characteristics of Chinese Buddha figures in the Sui Dynasty?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Mrs. Li Dong Fang

Gender: Female

Information: Specialist Repairer of Antiques for the Palace Museum, Beijing, China

The Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD) was a short one, but Buddhism in this time flourishing through the support of the emperor Yang Jian (541-604 AD). He had become a monk a few times. In the time of the flourishing of Buddhism, Buddha figures also became popular.

The characteristics of Buddha figures in Sui Buddhism reflected a continuous localization of Chinese Buddha figures from the Sixteen kingdoms and Southern and Northern dynasties. Although, Buddha figures from the Sixteen kingdoms and Southern and Northern dynasties had already started to be made in local forms, it was in the Sui dynasty that the Buddha figures acquired special characteristics that had not been seen in previous evolution.

Buddha figures in Sui Dynasty were fundamental for the developments in Tang

Dynasty. For example, the face shapes of Buddha figures in the Sui were already a little bit round shaped face and were of strong body, but they had still not got the Tang shape.

### **9) What were the Characteristics of the Early (Before Tang dynasty) Chinese Buddha figures?**

**Answer by:**

Name: Mr. Xue Jian

Gender: Male

Information: Director of Beijing Culture Exchange Museum, Zhi Hua temple, Beijing, China.

We know that Buddhism was introduced into China in the period of the Eastern Han (25-220 AD) through to the Tang dynasty (618-907AD), which is over a period of almost 900 years. Buddhism was localized from a foreign culture and integrated with Chinese local culture so it could survive in China. It finally formed a local brand of Chinese Buddhism which was suited to and interesting for the Chinese people. During the long period, Buddhism not only developed its teachings and philosophies, but also its outer forms, including the Buddhist monk clothing, the structure of the temples, the life styles of the monks, as well as the Buddha figures.

Not many Buddha figures have survived from the Eastern Han dynasty, Three Kingdoms period, and Two Jin dynasties. Too much time has passed, and some of them may have been destroyed in wars.

Anyway, from the few discovered examples of Buddha figures from the Eastern Han to the Jin dynasty, we know that the Buddha figures were mainly influenced by the Gandhara style. In this period, Buddha figures were completely copied from Indian style.

In the Southern and Northern dynasties, Buddhism went through its first periods of evolution. The Buddha figures developed external forms that were suitable for Chinese aesthetics. The decoration factors and shapes of the faces were more like those of Chinese people. Buddha figures met the demands of worshippers more than before, and that was why many Buddha figures were created and preserved. Grottos like the Yun Gang grottoes, the Long Men grottoes had the stone sculptures, and bronze statues that we can use to study the characteristics of the Southern and Northern Buddha figures.

In the Sui dynasty, Buddha figures changed along with the politic shifts. But they continued to evolve based on the style of Southern and Northern dynasties and formed a new look that was different from the former styles.

In the Tang dynasty, the figures, based on the Sui style Buddha figures, developed into another new stage. In this period, they completed the process of localization. The development of Buddha figures reached its top level in the Tang. Examples include the Buddhist temples in Mo Gao Caves, or the thousands of Buddha caves built in the Tang dynasty. This process had been influenced from way back in the Xi Yu regions (present Xin Jiang province) where it came from. And in another way, the Buddha figures of the Tang dynasty also influenced

the development in other foreign countries such as Japan and Korea.

So, in the end we can conclude that the early Chinese Buddha figures underwent a process of localization from foreign looking to Chinese looking, and this occurred as they survived and grew in China.

### **10) Please Briefly Introduce the Development of Chinese Buddha Figures.**

**Answer by:**

Name: Most Ven. Xin Ming

Gender: Male

Information: The Abbot of Hua Ting Monastery, Kun Ming, Yunnan province, China.

In China, Buddhist art reached its peak during the Ming and Qing dynasties. So, if we move the time back to Northern Wei period (386-557 AD), which was the most influence period for the Chinese Buddha figures, then we still can move the time back to the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220 AD). The scale of Buddhism in Han dynasty when compared with the Tang (618-907 AD) and Song (960-1279 AD) dynasties was much smaller, but don't forget that Buddhism in Han dynasty was the basis for further development of creation of Buddha figures during Northern Wei dynasty (386-557 AD) and Western Jin dynasty (266-316 AD), and this included the creation of Buddha figures and art.

The earlier Buddha figures that have been traced back to the Buddha figures were created by King Udayana in ancient India during the Buddha's time, and later to the Gandhara style of Buddha figure. Gandhara was an ancient kingdom on the boarder of Afghanistan and Pakistan. I remembered the record in the Book of Journey to the West by Xuan Zang which mentioned that "Xuan Zang left the Gao Cang Kingdom to Afghanistan. He noticed a large Buddha statue located on the red sandstone mountain with golden color under the sunshine". From his record I think that this time of the excavation of the Bamiyan Buddha was not too early from Xuan Zang's visiting. Why? Because the characteristics of red sandstone under the sunshine naturally had the reflection of light, if the Bamiyan Buddha had been excavated in very old period, it should not have the blink light. So, I personally consider the Buddha may have been excavated around 100 years before Xuan Zang's visit. Unfortunately, the Bamiyan Buddha was destroyed by the Taliban.

In China, Buddha figures were popular in the Han Dynasty, and the reason may have been because foreign cultures were not yet completely accepted by the Chinese people. By the Northern Wei dynasty, it was ruled by nomads, and they learned and adopted other cultures, especially the Han culture. They had sued the Han culture, words, currency and clothing. Regarding the creation of Buddha figures, the most important were the Buddha figures found from Qing Zhou – these were treasures for Chinese Buddha figures and Buddhist art. The finest of Buddha figures was carved with amazing technique - the skin, shape of face, clothing and thinness of the garment all expressed in stone. These could not have been created had the nation not been developed; the culture, the art and techniques were at a top level. The characteristics of the Buddha figures were fineness, beauty, and simplicity. But for the further development of

creation and decoration on Buddha figures, more details were gradually added in the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Although the Buddha figures had more detail, we may not say that equaled more beauty. It was a way to present the characteristics of particular period. Art presents beauty, and characteristics of beauty are different in each dynasty. The beauty in Northern Wei had the characteristics of the Xian Bei nomads. The beauty in Tang and Song dynasties had the characteristics from the Han Chinese people. The beauty in Yuan dynasty had the characteristics of the Monggu people. I think the Buddhist art in the Ming dynasty was more soft and peaceful, and beauty in the Qing dynasty was integrated with eastern and western aesthetics.

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