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BUDDHIST ELEMENTS IN EARLY CHINESE ART
(2nd and 3rd Centuries A.D.)

For several decades scholars of Chinese art history have been probing into the beginnings of Chinese Buddhist art by searching for its early examples. In 1933 Professors Mizuno Seichi and Nagahiro Toshio claimed that "the earliest representations of Buddhist images now to be seen are on the ornamented backs of Han type bronze mirrors." In the following year Professor Richard Edwards published a report on a Han tomb cliff-side at Mahao, Sichuan province, and adjudged a stone relief image in its first chamber to be an image of the Buddha. From then on more examples, such as a clay stand from Pengshan, Sichuan, a fragment of a tombstone from Tengxian, Henan, a portion of a wall painting in the Helingeer tomb in Inner Mongolia, have been identified as works of early Chinese Buddhist art. Most of this material is mentioned in Professor Yu Weichao's recent article, the title of which clearly points to his conclusion: "Eastern Han Buddhist Images."

Running counter to this main trend of opinion, however, is another, somewhat neglected, idea. Scholars such as Drs. Mizuno and Nagahiro in Japan and Zeng Zhaoyue in Beijing, noting that these images diverged from Indian Buddhist works, have suggested that they could be "Buddha-like Chinese deities," rather than the "real" Buddha.

A recent finding may well revive this ongoing debate. In 1980, a Chinese historian, Shi Shuqing visited Kongwang Shan, a small Han site, located in northern Jiangsu province. He identified many of the stone carvings at this site as among the earliest works of Buddhist art in China. This find came to the attention of many Chinese scholars. In April of 1981 a conference on the Kongwang Shan stone carvings was held in Beijing. A number of scholars published research papers on this subject. After identifying the Buddhist motifs worked into the Kongwang Shan carvings, including the Buddha, the five monks,

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2 (B10), pp. 101–125.
3 (B98), pp. 8–15.
4 (B101), pp. 65–67; (B120), pp. 80–81.
5 (B64); (B65), p. 1.
6 To my knowledge, articles on the Kongwang Shan carvings published from 1981 on include (B65), (B19), (B91), (B94), (B99), (B10), (B62).
the donors, a jātaka tale and a parinirvāna theme, most scholars were convinced that the carvings were Buddhist works. To these conclusions, Yu Weichao added a seemingly strange, but relevant note: the Buddhist carvings at Kongwang Shan had originally belonged to a Taoist sanctuary.

The above studies have provided this paper with valuable materials and thought-provoking ideas. However, all of them, whether they take the images to be Buddhist works or not, leave an important question unanswered: when we refer to something as a “Buddhist art work”, is there an unambiguous implication behind this term? One point of view is that any work with definite Buddhist motifs, or with the morphological characteristics of definite Buddhist art works, is a work of Buddhist art. The identification of some of the Kongwang Shan stone carvings as works of Buddhist art is, for the most part, based on this premise. I would argue, however, that only those works which propagate Buddhist ideas or serve in Buddhist ritual or institutional practices can be considered Buddhist art. One should not expect to determine the content of such art works by their forms only, nor by their limited similarities to comparable objects; one must also pay attention both to the function of the works, and to the cultural tradition and the social context in which they were created.

Furthermore, the authors of the studies have been mainly preoccupied with identifying the features which these works share with standard Indian Buddhist images. It may be more important, however, to pay attention to the mixed or divergent features of these works. These, on the one hand, may possibly indicate a relationship between Buddhism and Chinese traditional ideas; on the other, they may reveal the understanding of Buddhism on the part of the ordinary people during the Han period.

These two propositions are related to another, more important, problem: as Buddhist art entered Han China, where the cultural tradition, the religious system, and the social organization were completely different from those of India, how did it establish a foothold and gain the possibility for further development? Han art works which embody Buddhist elements may well offer fruitful materials for studying this problem.

I. Buddhist Elements in Han Art

Early Chinese interest in Buddhism seems to have been largely inspired by the appeal of Buddha as a foreign deity. Examining fragmentary descriptions of the Buddha recorded in early texts, we see that people had a rather uniform understanding of the formal characteristics of the Buddha.

The sending of an envoy by the Han Emperor Ming to seek Buddhism in the years of yong-ping (58–75 A.D.) is generally accepted by the Chinese Buddhist tradition as marking the beginning of the introduction of Buddhism to China. Although the reliability of this is debatable, the story provides a description of the Buddha. The Sutra in Forty-two

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7 (B90), p. 20.
8 (B99), pp. 13–15.
Sections states: one night in a dream Emperor Ming saw a deity flying in front of his palace, which had a golden body and which emanated sunlight from the neck. The next day he asked his ministers to explain the identity of this deity. One of them, Fu Yi, replied that he had heard of a sage in India called “the Buddha,” who had attained salvation, who was able to fly and whose body was of a golden hue. He went on to say that the deity seen in the dream was this Buddha. Similar descriptions are also found in Mu Zi’s Li Huo Lun, in the slightly later Taoist work Laozi Hua Hu Jing, and in other texts.10

According to the Hou Han Ji, “The Buddha is sixteen feet in height, golden in color, and wears light from the sun and moon on his neck. He can assume countless forms and enter anything at will. Thus, he is able to communicate with a myriad of things and help people.”11 The description in Mu Zi’s Li Huo Lun is even more detailed: “Buddha’ is a posthumous title, in the same way that ‘Shen’ is the title of the Three Emperors (San-huang), and that ‘Sheng’ is the title of the Five Emperors (Wu-di). The Buddha is the first ancestor of morality and divinity. His words are illuminating. The shape of the Buddha is unpredictable. He can distribute himself limitlessly. He can either exist or vanish, be large or small, be round or square, be old or young, emerge or disappear. He is unharmed when walking through fire, and uninjured when standing on a blade. In mud he cannot be tainted. His well-being is never spoiled, or damaged by disaster. When he wishes to move he flies, and when he sits he emanates brilliant light. That is why he is called the Buddha.”12

The texts cited above show that in the time around the third century Buddha was generally believed to be an Indian god, who has an imposing physique, is golden in color, and has light emanating from his neck. Furthermore, he is believed to be capable of flight and transmutation, and therefore capable of helping people as had the ancient Chinese sages. This concept combines ideas of the Shenxian Jia, the School of Immortality, and Confucianism, both of which were popular during the Han dynasty.13 The immortals and perfect men of the School of Immortality can live forever, and are capable of flying and transmutation, while the sages of Confucianism help the world and the people. The “Buddha”, in turn, is a combination of the two. The Sutra in Forty-two Sections also states

9 Seng You, Chu Sang Zang Ji, in (B127), vol. 2145, pp. 42–43. The date of the Sutra in Forty-two Sections is still an open question. Some scholars, such as Fang Yongtong and Zürcher, believe that it was probably written during the end of the Han (cf. B81, pp. 31–46; B27, p. 10); while others have dated it later than 506 A.D. (cf. B70, pp. 276–282). Nevertheless, it represents an early understanding by the Chinese of Buddhism and of the Buddha during the later second and the third century A.D; cf. A.C. Soper’s discussion in (B23) p. 1.

10 See Laozi Hua Xihu Pin, in (B84), vol. 9, pp. 14–15. The Laozi Hua Hu Jing was written by the Taoist Wang Fu of the Jin dynasty (cf. B27, pp. 293–294; B107; B121). There are many conflicting opinions concerning the authenticity of the Li Huo Lun. Some leading scholars have considered this treatise as a spurious work, e.g. Hu Yulin, Liang Qichao, Tokiwa Daiso, and Lu Zheng. Others, more numerous, regard it as an invaluable source of information on the earliest history of Chinese Buddhism, e.g. Sun Yinang, Yu Jiaxi, Hu Shi, Tang Yongtong, Henri Maspero, and Pelliot. Most of these opinions have been re-examined by Fukui Kojun in his extensive study on this work. He came to the conclusion that the treatise was written around the middle of the third century. (B107), pp. 332–436, cf. (B27), pp. 13–14.

11 (B100), vol. 10, p. 122.

12 Cf. (B81), pp. 1–4.

13 The teaching of the School of Immortality mainly concerns magic practices by which people could achieve immortality. It is, therefore, different from philosophical Taoism and later religious Taoism. Regarding the popularization of this school during the Han dynasty, see the discussion in (B105).

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that those who obtained the way of Buddhism became arhats, who could fly and transmute themselves, could live forever, and could influence heaven and earth. Such a concept is almost identical with the Taoist ideal of practicing to become an immortal, and of ascending to heaven in broad daylight.

The formation of this particular concept of the Buddha is related both to the popular thought of the Han dynasty, and to the time of the introduction of Buddhism into China. When Śākyamuni announced the four holy truths, he emphasized non-self and the impermanency of things. The basic thought of early Buddhism is clearly opposite to the idea of immortality. But as Buddhism developed through the Mahāsāṃghika School to Mahāyānism, the Buddha gradually became a transcendental being with the power of saving all creatures, and his image was represented in human form for worship. It was at this stage of development, during the first century A.D., that Buddhism reached China. Therefore, it was easy for the Buddha to be connected with figures of supernatural powers in the Chinese tradition. It is also understandable that the Buddhist images even sometimes replaced representations of traditional Chinese gods.

In 1949 and 1950, Richard Edwards investigated an Eastern Han cave-tomb at Mahao, Sichuan province. There, he found an isolated figure carved in high relief against the plain background of the stone lintel (Fig. 1). The figure is seated, with the left hand holding a portion of the gown. The right hand is raised in the gesture known as the abhaya mudrā. In silhouette, the head shows an extra protuberance or uṣṇīṣa, and this in turn is ringed by a halo (Fig. 2). All of these features led Edwards to conclude, without hesitation, that “It is the figure of the Buddha.” According to Wen Yu and Yu Weichao, similar images has been found in another Han tomb at Shiziwan, Sichuan. That both Buddha images appeared in the area during the same time period suggests that the use of the Buddha’s image in tomb decoration might have been a widespread custom on the Sichuan plain, during the Eastern Han.

As demonstrated by Edwards and other scholars, the Buddha image in the Mahao tomb has the basic iconographic marks — the uṣṇīṣa, a halo, the abhaya mudrā, and a left hand grasping the end of the gown — as do the Buddha images at the famous Indian

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14 (B127), vol. 2145, p. 41.
15 There have been several stories regarding the introduction of Buddhism in China, e.g. the arrival of a group of Buddhist priests at the capital of Qin Shi Huang (221–208 B.C.); the introducing of Buddhism by the famous explorer Zhang Qian shortly after 118 B.C.; the inquiries of the Emperor of the Han to Buddhist monks in the second half of the second century B.C.; the capturing of a Buddhist image (Golden Man), of the king of Xiu-tu, by Han general Huo Qubing; the story about Emperor Ming’s dream, and so on. However, lacking other solid support, these stories can only be regarded as legends. Some of them perhaps had a propagandistic function rather than containing historical truth. Here, I accept the documents about the worship of the Buddha by the Chu Prince Ying in 65 A.D., recorded in the official history of the Later Han, as the earliest evidence of the introduction of Buddhism in China. cf. (B27), pp. 19–24, pp. 26–67.

16 (B10), p. 121.
17 (B91), interpretation of Plate 59; (B98), p. 71. In a private discussion with Professor Yu Weichao, I was told that two identical images of the Buddha have been found in a Han tomb in Shiziwan. They make the same gesture as the Mahao Buddha. They also appear on the wall above the doorway which links the antechamber and the rear chamber. According to Yu Weichao, these two tombs at Mahao and Shiziwan belong to the second half of the second century A.D., in the reigns of Emperors Huan and Ling.
18 The Buddha image in the Mahao tomb has been discussed in (B10), (B18), (B98), (B95), (B96), (B117), etc.
Buddhist centers – Gandhāra, Mathurā and Amarāvatī (Figs. 3,4). This clearly reflects the transmission of Buddhism and Buddhist art from India to China during the second half of the Eastern Han. However, the question arises: why did this holy image, when it was first introduced to China, leave the sanctuaries where it was worshipped by the people, and appear in secular tombs where it was buried with the deceased? To answer this question, one must observe the arrangements of the pictorial scenes in the Mahao tomb, as well as in other Eastern Han tombs or shrines.

On the walls of the Mahao tomb stone chamber are carved what resemble wooden structures in imitation of the dead person’s living room. The figures and scenes in relief are arranged into two registers, upper and lower, on the lintels and walls respectively. In the lower register between the imitation posts, there are carvings picturing Jing Ke’s attempted assassination of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of the Qin dynasty, Qin Shi Huang searching for the royal tripod, the Heavenly horse, a gateman, and so on. In the upper register on the lintel are a dragon’s head and the Buddha. This arrangement may be compared with that in the famous Wu Liang shrine, where ancient emperors, sages and filial sons, and historical stories, including Jing Ke’s assassination, are carved in orderly fashion on the walls, and where images of the immortals, Dong Wanggong (the Eastern King Father) and Xi Wangmu (the Western Queen Mother) with accompanying mythical animals, birds and spirits, decorate the gables above the historical scenes (Fig. 5).

Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu were extremely popular deities, and were frequently represented in Han art. They were believed to inhabit a magic realm in the west in the Kunlun Mountain, and to control the elixir of immortality. Their images became the very symbols of immortality on which people placed their hopes of achieving eternal life. Thus, the arrangement of the pictorial representations in the Wu Liang shrine clearly denotes that the scenes on the walls were to remind people of the ancient sages, who embodied the highest level of Confucian morality, the basic code of conduct in the time of the Han; the images of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu on the gables embodied people’s dreams of eternal life or immortality. The mixing of these two ideals – the worldly and the beyond, the Confucianist and the Immortalist – is typically reflected in the pictorial stone carvings of the Wu Liang shrine. It is also expressed in the Mahao tomb. The only difference is that the images of the immortals on the gables of the Wu Liang shrine are replaced by the image of the Buddha on the lintel of the Mahao tomb. Earlier discussions concerning the Han people’s understanding of the Buddha provide the reason for this replacement – the Buddha, as a “foreign deity” who belonged to the Western Realm and who could also help people achieve immortality, was naturally linked with the images of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu in the minds of the Han people. This idea brings about an important change in the function of the Buddha’s image. In the Mahao tomb, this holy image is no longer an object of worship on public occasions, but is a symbol of the

19 cf. (B125), pp.147–152.
20 For example, (B38), p.2920: “Anxi (Persia) Kingdom is near the residence of Xi Wangmu.”
deceased individual who had hoped to attain immortality after his death. This change may explain why, during the Eastern Han, the Buddha’s images and other Buddhist scenes often decorated tombs.

In the Eastern Han tomb paintings from Helingeer, Inner Mongolia, the east wall of the antechamber depicts Dong Wanggong; the west wall, Xi Wangmu; the south wall, a figure riding a white elephant which has been suggested to be a scene of the “conception” story in Buddhist legends (Fig. 6); and the north wall, the ball-shaped objects on a plate identified by an inscription “she-li” as relics of the Buddha. The juxtaposition of Dong Wanggong, Xi Wangmu, and the Buddhist symbols suggests that their meanings may have been comparable in the minds of the Han Chinese.

A further example was found in the tomb at Yinan, Shandong province. On four main sides of an octagonal pillar in the back chamber, there are carvings of Dong Wanggong, Xi Wangmu and two standing figures with halos (Fig. 7). Dong Wanggong wears a flat-topped cap, and Xi Wangmu, an elaborate flower hat. Their hands are concealed inside long, wide sleeves, and both are holding flat ceremonial objects in their arms. They are seated under a canopy on the magic mountain Kunlun which, in the illustrations, has three peaks held up by a huge turtle. The two standing figures with halos are in positions matching those of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu. They are dressed alike in a narrow-sleeved top and a short skirt with tassels, and wear the same ornaments. There are differences between the two figures. For instance, one holds a bird on his arm and stands on a mythical animal, the dragon; the other holds nothing, and stands on a divine plant, the glossy ganoderma. Therefore, their divine characteristics are indicated by sacred marks from different religious traditions: the halo is the symbol of the Buddha, while the dragon and ganoderma are traditionally connected with Chinese immortals. These mixed features are shared by another figure on the south side of the same pillar (Fig. 7). He is winged, like Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu, and is held up by an immortal. His right hand is raised in a distinct abhaya mudrā gesture, like that of the Buddha in the Mahao tomb. A protuberance on his head suggests an attempted usnīsa, but on top of it there is a small cap or a ribbon. Owing to these mixed or non-standard iconographic features, it is difficult to identify these three figures definitely as Buddha. What we can say is that they combine artistic representations both from the Buddha’s image and from the Chinese immortals. Together with Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu, they were carved in the tomb to symbolize the wonderland to which it was hoped the deceased would go.

The “interchangeability” between the image of the Buddha and those of Xi Wangmu and Dong Wanggong indicates furthermore that during the third century the Buddha not only occupied a place among the Taoist gods and the Confucian sages, but that he was

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21 The investigation report of Li Zuozi is quoted by Yu Weichao in (B98), pp.68–69.
22 There are two different opinions concerning the date of the Yinan tomb. Zeng Zhaoyue and Yu Weichao have dated this tomb as late Han (cf. B98 and B101), while An Zhimin, Li Wenxin and Shih Hsiao-yen have suggested a later date, probably the Jin period (cf. B28, B61 and B24).
also incorporated into indigenous cults. We can observe this kind of incorporation in an example dated in the second century A.D. It is a clay stand, excavated 40 years ago in an Eastern Han tomb in Pengshan, Sichuan province and, now in the collection of the Nanjing Museum (Fig. 8). It is composed of a circular base, on top of which stands a cylindrical shape resembling a tree-stump. On the profile of the base, a group of reliefs of two dragons facing a ritual bi-disk, is represented.

In front of the tree-stump is the Buddha’s image in high relief, flanked by two standing figures, considered by Yu Weichao to be Bodhisattvas. The Buddha’s face is too chipped and worn to give us any information. The other characteristics – the high, protruding usṇiṣa, the hand-posture in the abhaya munḍa, the left hand grasping the end of the gown, and the heavily folded robe – are clear iconographic marks, and resemble the image in the Mahao tomb.

Another similar clay stand was found in the same province (Fig. 9). In the upper register of the decoration on its base, instead of the Buddha, is Xi Wangmu, who is seated on the dragon-tiger throne, flanked by two immortals. In the lower register appear the carvings of mahouts driving three elephants, a motif also derived from Indian Buddhist art, which will be discussed later.

Yu Weichao studied the function of this type of clay stand and pointed out its relationship to land-god worship popular in Southwestern China during Han times. It served as a base for a bronze “Money Tree”, a symbol of the land-god. According to Yu Haoliang, the Eastern Han “Money Tree” bases excavated so far are usually decorated with images of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu. The Buddha appearing on a “Money Tree” base once again indicates that he was taken as a deity similar to Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu, and became associated with land-god worship, which stood for good harvests, thriving livestock, and family prosperity.

Since the Buddha was taken as a deity or shenxian, capable of flying and transmutation, in the Chinese mind it became easily associated with the dragon, which possessed the same capabilities. Beneath the Buddha figure on the clay pedestal mentioned above, there are two dragons facing a bi. On the lintel of the Mahao tomb side by side with the Buddha image is a dragon’s head. Also, on a later example, the He Shi mirror, the Buddha’s relics, which appear as balls on a plate, and a dragon are composed as counterparts (Fig. 10).

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23 (B98), p. 75.
24 (B80), p. 393.
25 (B98), p. 75.
26 (B97), p. 45.
27 To depict the Buddha’s relics in the form of balls on a plate may have been a popular representation during the period from the second to the fifth century A.D. According to Li Zuozhi, the excavator of the Helingeer tomb, on the eastern wall of the ante-chamber there is a picture which shows a plate containing four ball-shaped objects, identified by an inscription as “she-li”, or Buddha’s relics. cf. (B98), p.69. The “She-li Pian, Ganying Lu”, in the Fa Yuan Zhu Lin, records a legend: At the time of Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty a foreign monk who lived in a temple at the capital Luoyang performed a miracle. As the emperor intended to destroy the she-li, the monk put it on a golden plate which contained water. Then and only then did the relics radiate a myriad of rays in five colors, and the bright flame surrounding it jumped ceaselessly... cf. (B98), p.71.
Even more revealing is a pu-shou, or animal mask, dated to the fourth century A.D. 28 (Fig. 11). In the upper part of this work, a deity who has a high protrusion or a chignon on top of his head, and who is dressed like a Bodhisattva, holds dragons’ harnesses in each hand. This composition combines the Bodhisattva image with that of Huan Long Shi, the dragon-tamer, a famous character in a traditional Chinese legend, whose image can be found on a similar pu-shou 29 (Fig. 12).

The relationship between the Buddha and the dragon shown in these objects is also connected with xiangrui (good omen) thinking, a popular concept of the Han dynasty. 30 Its theoretical basis is quite simple. Briefly, all natural phenomena express the will of Heaven, and certain strange phenomena are especially suited to show either Heaven’s warning about, or commending of human conduct. The implications of xiangrui, however, are extremely numerous and jumbled. All kinds of novel things and events were taken to be those “strange phenomena” which embodied the Mandate of Heaven. We can say that one pole of xiangrui thinking is Dong Zhongshu’s (179–93 B.C.) Confucianism. According to his theory, the ruling power of an emperor, who was believed to be the Son of Heaven, comes from Heaven. That which transmits the Mandate of Heaven is xiangrui, referred to as “Shouming Fu”, Mandate-bearing Tablet. 31 The other pole of xiangrui thinking consists of a variety of popular beliefs. The people of Han times were fanatically obsessed with xiangrui. Especially as chaos encompassed the Eastern Han, the concept of xiangrui became all-pervasive. It extended the boundaries of natural phenomena to include earth omens, heaven omens, plant omens, animal omens, mineral omens, artifact omens, and immortal omens. 32 In this context, Buddhist symbols imported from foreign lands were readily taken as xiangrui.

On the Eastern Han carvings of the Wu Liang shrine, images of xiangrui are accompanied by inscriptions stating their functions; for example, “The Biyi bird, which will appear when the ruler’s virtue extends far and wide,” and “The Jade horse which will appear when the ruler respects virtuous men.” 33 It is worth noting that one of these xiangrui images is a huge lotus worshipped by two immortals (Fig. 13). The theme of the lotus had appeared in decorations of bronzes before the Han dynasty, but it had never been an object of

28 Similar animal masks can be found in the collections of the British Museum and the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. In 1983, two other examples were excavated from a Northern Wei tomb at Guyuan, Ningxia province. Representing the same iconographic and stylistic features, they provide a possible date for such objects, and demonstrate their function as decorations applied to coffins, see Han Kongle and Luo Feng, “Guyuan Beiwelmu Qiguan de Faxian” Meisha Yuanji, 1984(2), pp. 1–11.

29 Huan Long Shi is a legendary figure who raised dragons for Emperor Shun. His story is recorded in the Zuo Zhuan, the 29th year of Zhao Gong, cf. (B14), PL. 96.c.

30 I have discussed the xiangrui thinking and the xiangrui design of the Western Han period in my paper “A Sanpan Shan chariot ornament and the xiangrui design in Western Han art”, Archives of Asian Art, vol. 37, 1984, pp. 38–39. Regarding the xiangrui motif in Eastern Han pictorial art, see (B110).

31 “Fu Rui”, in (B36), vol. 6, p.3.
32 (B76), p. 25.
33 See (B4), PL.XLVIII.
worship. This concept undoubtedly derives from Indian Buddhist art (Fig. 14). When it first entered Chinese art works, it ceased to be a Buddhist symbol, and became instead a xiangrui.

In the Wu Liang shrine, there is another remarkable scene: two winged figures are worshipping a building which looks like a broadbased wine bottle (Fig. 15). It seems that the two vertical sunken lines on it are intended to portray a shaft erected from the center of the base. A flying immortal and a bird hover over the building. Next to this scene are two others, depicting immortals worshipping auspicious plants and clouds, both of which were frequently mentioned in Han texts concerning xiangrui. From this we may infer that the first scene also represents xiangrui worship. But what about its source? It may have come from the scenes of stupa-worship in Indian Buddhist art. A comparison between this scene and those of stupa-worship in Sānchī and Bhārhat reveals many similarities in composition, in the basic shape of the stupa, and in the flanked worshippers and celestial beings (Fig 16, 17). This scene, however, is much simpler. Furthermore, the lay worshippers in the Indian works were transformed, in the Wu Liang shrine scene, into winged immortals which were popular in Han xiangrui art.

Yu Weichao believes that the images of the white elephant and she li, or the Buddha's relics, in the Helingeer Han tomb reflect Buddhist beliefs infused with early Taoist ideas. Although it is obvious that these two motifs came from Indian Buddhist art, it is by no means certain that they embody the intrinsic meanings of the Buddhist religion. The scene of an immortal riding a white elephant is juxtaposed with a phoenix on one side of the wall, and the she-li with a qi-lin, or a unicorn, on the opposite side. The phoenix and unicorn are the most popular themes of Han xiangrui art. Considering the relationship between the above pairs, we could infer that the white elephant and the relics of the Buddha also embody the meaning of xiangrui. In the same tomb, a white elephant also appears in a series of xiangrui images, each one identified by an inscription, lending further credence to this suggestion.

The elephant is well-known to Shang and Zhou art. How then can we argue that the white elephant motif in Han art came mainly from Indian Buddhist art? Yu Weichao has suggested that the origin of the scene of an immortal riding an elephant is the story of “conception” in Buddhist legend. According to the legend, Maya, the mother of the Buddha, dreamt that a white elephant entered her womb. As a result of the dream, she conceived. We find further evidence in Zhang Heng's (78–139 A.D.) Xijing Fu. Among all his descriptions of the fantastic xiangrui world is a line, “The white elephant brings about conception.” This idea was not a part of traditional Chinese thought. In the same poem, Zhang Heng expresses his admiration of the court ladies, saying that even Chinese sage Zhan Ji, and a Buddhist Sramana, would not be safe from their captivating manners.

34 (B98), pp. 71–72.
36 (B98), pp. 69–72.
37 (B102), p. 43.
38 (B102), p. 45; cf. (B27), p. 29, (B120), p. 77.
this indicates that he must have been familiar with some Buddhist figures and legends, and that the idea he expresses about "the white elephant bringing about conception" must have originated in Buddhist legends.

The white elephant as a xiangru from the West was already a popular concept among the Chinese of the second century B.C. Emperor Wu wrote in a famous poem:

"The elephant, white as jade
    Came here from the West.
    It eats the morning dew
    From Heaven
    And drinks the luminescent spring water.
    ...
    This elephant reveals God's will.
    Bringing happiness to human beings.
    ...
"

Elephants in Han time were obtained as tribute brought by foreign people. Therefore in many Han xiangru pictures, the elephant is shown being driven by foreign tribute-payers. For example, on an inlaid bronze chariot ornament excavated in Sanpan Shan, Dingxian, Hebei province, the decoration is divided evenly into four registers. In the first register, a yellow dragon, the symbol of the Han emperor, is followed by a white elephant. On its back sit three naked drivers, with snail-shaped hairdos (Fig. 18). Similar scenes appear on the clay stand from Santai, Sichuan (Fig. 9), on the pictorial stone carvings from Xiaotang Shan (Fig. 19) and so on.

Comparing these scenes with those of "elephant-tending" in earlier or contemporary Indian art (Fig. 20–21), we find many similar elements of artistic representation. Especially in the scenes on the silver disks, originally part of the Oxus Treasure acquired at Rawalpindi, Pakistan, we find almost identical poses of the elephants, and the same number (three) of mahouts driving the beasts with an elephant hook. There are a number of likenesses between the Chinese and Indian works. A fragment from an Eastern Han tomb stone excavated in Tengxian, Shandong, provides the additional evidence needed to clinch the argument. On the upper register of this work, an elephant driven by three men has six tusks, and is following a qi-lin or a dragon (Fig. 22). The six-tusked elephant, which in Indian Buddhism stood for one of the Buddha's former incarnations, is depicted here

39 "Li Yue Zhi, Jiao Si Ge, Xiang Zai Yu 18", in (B59), vol.12, p.1069.
40 Cf. "Wu Di Ji", in (B39), vol.6, p.176: "In the second year of the Yuan-shou era (121 B.C.), during the reign of Emperor Wu, Vietnam gave in tribute a tame elephant."
41 Other Han art works with elephant-motifs include pictorial stone carvings on the Shaoshii Que and the Qimu Que, those from the tomb of Fengjian Ruren, from Maocun, Xuzhou district, from Honglou, Tongshan district, and from Nanyang, and pottery figures from tombs in Luoyang and Gulugou at Xin'an cf. (B51), pp.53–60.
driven as an object of tribute, a xiängrui, which represented Heaven's approval of the Chinese emperor's rule.

From the above discussion of Buddhist elements in Han art we can draw the following conclusions:

(1) During Han times, in the minds of ordinary Chinese, the Buddha was a foreign god who had attained immortality, was capable of flying and transmutation, and helped people.

(2) Because he was understood to have such attributes, the Buddha was put on the same footing as the Chinese immortals, such as Xi Wangmu, and was incorporated into the ideas of immortality popular during Han times, as well as absorbed into Chinese traditional funerary rituals.

(3) For the same reason, the Buddha was incorporated into various local cults, and appears on their objects of worship.

(4) Also for the same reason, the Buddha's legends and Buddhist symbols were taken as immortal omens and as animal omens. By being incorporated into the then popular xiängrui thinking, they became part of Dong Zhongshu's theory of the Mandate of Heaven.

(5) Because of the unsystematic nature of these indigenous cults, the themes of Buddhist art were absorbed and used in a piecemeal manner, becoming isolated icons and symbols. These include:

a. The Buddha image: its distinguishing characteristics are mainly the halo, the uṣṇīṣa, and the mudrā. The robe, which covers both shoulders, has folds represented by parallel lines falling across the upper part of the Buddha's body. The position of the right hand is always in the abhaya mudrā, and the left hand is either placed in front of the chest or holds a corner of the robe.

b. The Buddha's legends, including the Buddha's conception and parinirvāṇa (stupa-worship).

c. Buddhist symbols, including the lotus, the Buddha's relics, and the white elephant.

Although these elements came from Indian Buddhist art, in none of the examples discussed above do these elements have either an inherently Buddhist content, or a Buddhist religious function. Rather, as novel forms, they served to enrich the representations of Chinese indigenous cults and traditional ideas. It would be misleading to identify these works as early Chinese Buddhist art and take them as the true embodiment of the original Buddhist meaning. In fact, these works cannot even be seen as reflecting a fusion of Buddhism and the Chinese tradition. They only reflect a random borrowing of Buddhist elements by Han popular art. In my opinion, this was the dominant situation when Buddhist art was first introduced into China. In this tenuous way, nevertheless, Buddhist art gradually gained a foothold in a vast and unfamiliar land.

II. The Buddha's Image in the Wu Kingdom and the Western Jin

The works of art discussed in the preceding section demonstrate that elements of Buddhist art had been thoroughly absorbed into Chinese traditional thought during the Later Han.
Historical records show that the orthodox Buddhist communities established their center in the capital of Luoyang at around the same time. The arrival at Luoyang in 148 A.D. of a Parthian missionary, An Shigao, marked the beginning of a strong and expanding Buddhist community. Following him, a number of foreign monks came to Luoyang during the second half of the second century. They formed a heterogeneous group; their religion, as Zürcher observes, was largely “a religion of foreigners” – either recent immigrants, or persons of foreign extraction – among whom Indian or Central Asian copies of Buddhist scriptures circulated.

This situation changed greatly during the next half century. After the fall of the Han, some of the Buddhist leaders fled from Luoyang to Wucheng and Jianyie, the two capitals of the southern Wu Kingdom located in the middle and lower Yangzi River region respectively. There, with their colleagues who came by sea, they established new Buddhist centers.

Several characteristics distinguish the Buddhism of the Wu from that of Luoyang. At Luoyang, culturally isolated āryaś found themselves trying to expound the principles of a “barbarian” creed in a world of strangers. In contrast, at Wucheng and Jianyie there were monks like Zhi Qian, “who had completely mastered the Buddhist and secular teaching,” and like Kang Senghui, who was “widely read in the six Confucian Classics, and well-versed in astronomy, diagrams, and apocrypha.” Unlike the monks at Luoyang, who had concentrated on the translation of scriptures, the Buddhist masters of the Wu were consciously concerned with the secular world of Chinese society. They attached themselves to the court as “Buddhist magicians,” producing concrete evidence for the truth and potency of the new religion. In fact, the Buddhist monks engaged in such activities worked on a level with their Taoist counterparts. The magical performance of Kang Senghui, by which he produced miracles of the Buddha’s relics, so strongly impressed the first ruler of the Wu, Sun Quan, that the king built the famous Jianchu Monastery for the monk. Around the same time, he also summoned the Taoist “divine man” Wang Biao to the court, and had a house built for him as well. When the next ruler, Sun Lin, began to attack “heterodox” cults, he equated Buddhist temples with the Wu Xixu miao, the shrine of a historical hero who had become a local god of the Wu. The distinct feature of Buddhism in the Wu area also finds support in the existence of a type of “popular Buddhism.” The Jianchu Monastery, the center of orthodox Buddhism in the Wu Kingdom, seems not to have been touched during Sun Lin’s persecution. This leads scholars to believe that the Buddhist temples against which Sun Lin directed his attacks belonged to the popular Buddhist cult of the people. It is my belief that the flourishing of Buddhism in the Wu area, the intermingling of Buddhism and Chinese traditions, as well as the existence of

43 Cf. (B27), pp. 23–24, pp. 30–36; (B128), pp. 84–100; (B79), pp. 141–151.
44 (B27), p. 47.
45 (B30), vol. 1, p. 9; cf. (B27), p. 47.
46 (B30), vol. 1, p. 9; cf. (B27), p. 12.
47 Cf. (B27), p. 52.
“popular Buddhism” provide us with a background with which to understand the popularity of the Buddha’s image as a decorative motif on works of art which were directly related to people’s lives.

So far, at least forty-two such examples have been reported.\(^48\) All of them were excavated from, or are believed to have been produced in the middle or lower Yangzi River region. One large group among these examples, which has attracted scholars’ attention for the past 35 years, consists of bronze mirrors decorated with images of the Buddha.\(^49\)

Prof. Mizuno Seiichi has classified these mirrors into three types, according to the general pattern of their decoration: (Type A) the shen-shou-jing (or mirror with a design of deities and mythical animals) with a triangular rim; (Type B) the shen-shou-jing with a flat rim; and (Type C) the kui-feng-jing, or mirror with a design of phoénixes.\(^50\)

Seven Type A mirrors are thought by various scholars to be decorated with images of the Buddha.\(^51\) However, the iconographical standard of the Buddha’s image has yet to be clearly stated, and many similarities between these “Buddha” figures and images of Chinese traditional deities decorating mirrors still create confusion.

In my opinion, a more precise classification consists not of merely two polar types—the image of Chinese deities, as opposed to that of the Buddha; rather, it consists of a series of variations linking these two poles. Images of Chinese traditional deities such as Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu, which were cast on numerous mirrors, have certain common features: the crown (often with three points on the top); the long, wide sleeves concealing the hands inside; the attendant winged immortals and mythical animals; and the fact that their lower bodies are often not shown clearly (fig. i.–a.). The first and closest variation of such an image, exemplified by the mirrors excavated in Terado-chō, Mukō-shi, Kyōto-fu (Fig. 24), Ichinomiya, Okayama-shi (Fig. 24) and in the Akagi-zuka tomb, Gumma-ken (Fig. 25), shares many characteristics with those images of traditional deities, such as wings and the three-pointed crown. However, some new iconographical features clearly appear: a close-fitting costume replaces the loose garment; hands are no longer concealed in the

\(^{48}\) These examples include 20 mirrors and 20 ceramic wares and shards discussed in this paper (Fig. 23–41, 43–48); the mirror of 291 A.D. (Fig. 42); and the bronze belt-hook from Lianxisi, Wuchang (Fig. 19b). Prof. Yu Weichao has told me that a mirror in the Cultural House of Yunmeng County is also decorated with four Buddha images and that it could be dated to the fourth century A.D. Still, there are a number of ceramic figures possessing certain iconographic features of the Buddha (e.g. Fig. 19b); but their other characteristics, such as caps and costumes, suggest other possible identifications.

\(^{49}\) Among 20 mirrors decorated with Buddhist motifs which have been found, only 3 examples were excavated in China, and as many as 10 examples were discovered in Japan. Japanese scholars have thought that these mirrors, as well as all shen-shou mirrors with triangular rims found in Japan, were actually imported from the Wei Kingdom in North China. (B126), p. 307. A record in the Woren Zhuan, which says that in 240 A.D. the king of the Wei presented one hundred mirrors as gifts to the Xie-ma-tai kingdom in Japan, seems to strongly support this conclusion. (B31), p. 857. Wang Zhongshu, however, has argued that these shen-shou mirrors were cast by craftsmen who had emigrated to Japan from the Wu region, and that the kui-feng mirrors were indeed produced in the middle or lower Yangzi region. I would like to accept Wang’s opinion in this paper, as it has been supported by new archaeological finds. For more detailed discussion, see pp. 281–283 in this paper.

\(^{50}\) (B116), pp. 47–72; (B120), pp. 80–83.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., also (B87), pp. 650–659.

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wide sleeves, but join in front of the body (fig. i–b). This hand-gesture, together with the
cross-legged sitting position, so closely resembles the dhyāna mudrā in Indian Buddhist art
that it has led a number of scholars to identify this type of figure as the Buddha.

Divine figures belonging to the second variety appear on the mirrors excavated in
Yamashiro-machi, Sōraku-gun, Kyōto-fu (Fig. 26), and in Kyōto City (Fig. 27). They
exhibit two major morphological changes: the three-pointed crown becomes three small
protruding haircoils, and a halo consisting of small dots appears behind the head of each
divine figure (fig. i–c). However, their gowns, which are in traditional fashion, and their
attendants who have the typical features of the immortals, still link them closely with the
images of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu.

The last variation of this series, the standard Buddha’s image, has been found only on
one mirror excavated in the Shiyama tomb, Kita Katsuragi-gun, Nara-ken (Fig. 28,
fig. i–d).52 On the mirror, six nipples divide the inner band into six sections containing
three seated divine figures alternating with three mythical animals. All three divine figures
are shown seated cross-legged on lotus thrones depicted by thin lines, and all wear robes
with folds indicated by parallel lines. Among them, however, only one is shown with usnīsa
and a halo. On either side of him is a lotus flower. The other two figures, instead of the
usnīsa and lotus, wear crowns with three points and have wings above their shoulders.
These two figures, therefore, definitely belong to the first variation in my classification.

This series may lead readers to assume the existence of a chronological sequence. Yet,
so far there is no evidence to support such a hypothesis. All examples belonging to the
three variations have been dated by Mizuno Seiichi to the period of the Three Kingdoms
(222–265 A.D.), on the basis of other triangular-rimmed mirrors found in Japan, which
have been dated.53 In my opinion, however, these variations reflect, instead, a conceptual
confusion about the gods in the minds of contemporary people, and the random borrow-
ing of divine features from different sources both traditional and foreign. Based on mixed
iconographical features of the first two varieties, it is perhaps impossible to identify these
images with certain deities. I strongly suspect, however, that the halo and the three-pointed
crown functioned as the most important marks of the Buddha and Dong Wanggong or
Xi Wangmu respectively. As with the pictorial arrangement on the stone pillar in the
Yinan tomb, where the Buddha-like figures and Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu are
carved in juxtaposition, this pattern is also demonstrated by the seven mirrors illustrated
in plates 25, 26, 27, 28, 35, 42, and 10. (In the last example the Buddha is represented by
his holy relics, sbe-li.) In all cases, there is a figure with a halo behind his head, while his
counterpart (or counterparts) wears a three-pointed crown. If this observation is to be
believed, then we can only identify the second and the third variations in my classification
as the Buddha. The first variety, although it absorbs certain iconographical characteristics

52 This mirror has been discussed by many scholars. see (B120), p. 80; (B121), p. 28; (B116), pp. 47–49; (B112), etc.
53 (B116), p. 48; (B120), p. 80: “Many mirrors of the shen-shou-ching (jing) type have been discovered in Japan but only
two specimens are dated A.D. 240. Compared with the dated examples, the specimen shown is obviously of the same
period. It almost certainly belongs to the period of the Three Kingdoms though there is a lesser possibility of it
belonging to Western Chin (Jin) period.”

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fig.1 (a1), after (B112), Fig.201; (a2), after (B110), Pl.34(14); (b), after (B112), Fig.267; (c), after (B112), Fig.227; (d), after (B112), Fig.245;
from the Buddha’s image, still belongs to the category of Chinese traditional deities such as Dong Wanggong, Xi Wangmu, or others.

In contrast to flexible variations of divine images on the triangular rimmed shen-shou mirror, the representation of the Buddha’s image on the Type B mirrors, or shen-shou mirrors with flat rims, follows a strict decorative formula. Five such mirrors, illustrated in plates 29–33, are almost identical to each other, with the arrangement of various decorative motifs, and even with details of individual figures. On these mirrors, four nipples divide the inner band into four sections. Two contain two figures respectively; the other two sections each contains a group of three figures. In one of the sections containing two figures, the Buddha, with an usnīṣa and a halo, sits on a lotus throne. The standing figure at his side with a high chignon might be a Bodhisattva. The opposite section, also containing two figures, is arranged in a similar fashion. However, instead of sitting on a lotus throne, the Buddha sits on two lions’ heads in frontal view. A double knob appears on this “Buddha’s” head, which reminds us of the hair-style of three knobs of the Buddha-like deities on the Ichinomiya mirror (Fig. 24). This, in turn, suggests a strong relationship with the three-pointed crown of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu. In the other two sections, all three figures have the same “double” usnīṣa, with a standing figure in the center holding a lotus stem and flanked by two seated figures.

Until 1981, all reported examples of Type B mirror decorated with images of the Buddha had been found in Japan. After comparing these with other dated shen-shou mirrors, Prof. Mizuno suggested that these so called fo-shou mirrors, or mirrors with a design of the Buddha and mythical animals, were probably produced around 300 A.D. Prof. Takayasu Higuchi further suggested that they might be dated to the fourth century, due to the distinct shape of the nipples on these mirrors. In 1982, Prof. Wang Zhongshu published an important article “On the Fo-shou Mirrors with Triangular Rim Found in Japan”, in which, for the first time, he reported a similar example excavated in China. Based on a possible date set in the mid-third century, Prof. Wang argued that all flat rimmed shen-shou mirrors with images of the Buddha found in Japan had been cast in China at about the same time and then exported.

This mirror was excavated in the Hanxi Road at Echeng, Hubei province (Fig. 35). Fifteen cm. in diameter, its rim consists of two belts: the outer one contains a fluid cloud pattern; and the inner one is decorated with animals and immortals that are all part of a fast-moving procession. Divinities and mythical animals form the nucleus of the decoration in the central band. They are surrounded by a ring containing semi-circular lobes and rectangular seal-panels arranged alternately. According to Wang, four groups of divinities, placed between mythical animals, consist of Dong Wanggong, Xi Wangmu, a group of

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54 Prof. Takayasu Higuchi further classified these mirrors into two sub-types: the first includes mirrors illustrated in Fig. 29 and 41 in this paper; the second type, Fig. 30, 32, and an unpublished mirror excavated in Nagoya. However, as remarked by Higuchi, these two subtypes only show slight differences. (B112), pp. 216–237.
55 (B116), pp. 49–51.
56 (B112), vol. 1, p. 238.
57 (B87), p. 634.
two unidentified gods, and the Buddha with an attendant. Although the upper part of the image of the Buddha was unfortunately damaged, it can be identified by its dhyāna gesture and the lotus throne.\textsuperscript{58}

The classification by Wang Zhongshu, according to which this mirror and other fo-shou mirrors excavated in Japan belong to the same category, seems to be based mainly on the shape of the rim and on the decorative belt containing semi-circular lobes and rectangular seal-panels. The representation of the deities and mythical animals decorating the main band of this mirror, however, shows several marked distinctions from that of mirrors found in Japan. First, on the Echeng mirror, four mythical animals placed in between four groups of deities exhibit relatively more realistic features, such as their lion-like heads, the proportion of their bodies, and their brawny legs. In fact, their shape is so close to that of a lion that we can refer to this kind of animal design as a “lion-like, mythical-animal motif". In contrast, animals decorating the same position on the fo-shou mirrors from Japan have extremely long necks which, connected with a short body, form a curved line surrounding a knob. These animals have bird legs and fish tails. One of the four such animals on each fo-shou mirror has a head in profile, which demonstrates clearly that these animals are no longer lions, but are now dragons (Fig. 29). Figure ii shows an evolutionary process from the lion-like, mythical-animal motif to the dragon motif. The animal figures on the mirror dated in 216 A.D. are very similar to those on the Echeng mirror. They all have sturdy and proportioned bodies, with heads turned towards the onlooker. It seems that only the wings make clear their character as heavenly beings (fig. ii–a). On the mirror cast in 238 A.D., the clearly elongated neck connects with the winding body, forming a fluid, S-shaped line. The flapping beard seems to enforce the linear characteristic of its expression (fig. ii–b). The further development of the lion-like, mythical-animal motif is reflected by two major changes: the beard is exaggerated, and is connected with the tail of a bird which originally flanked Xi Wangmu or Dong Wanggong; the lion-body separates into several disconnected parts. The mirror dated 267 exhibits most clearly these two changes (fig. ii–c). It also represents the prototype closest to the dragon motif decorating the fo-shou mirrors found in Japan. On the latter, disunited individual parts reunite in a new pattern: the exaggerated beard, together with the tail of the bird, forms the long, curved neck of a dragon; the rear half of the lion body disappears, and the breast becomes the body proper of the dragon (fig. ii–d). So far, a comparable dated piece of this type of shen-shou mirror has not been found. But a mirror bearing the date of the fifth year of the jian-wu era (339 A.D.) demonstrates the further elaboration of the dragon motif (fig. ii–e). The popularity of the specific representation of the dragon motif shown on the fo-shou mirrors excavated in Japan, therefore, may be dated around 300 A.D. or even later.

Second, the images of Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu on the Echeng mirror are all framed by two pairs of ribbon-like, gently outward-curving wings attached to their shoulders (fig.i,al). This kind of wing appears only on the shen-shou mirrors having

\textsuperscript{58} Ib id., p. 634.
fig. ii (a), after (B112), fig. 201; (b), after (B130), Pl. 34(13); (c), after (B130), Pl. 31(14); (d), after (B112), Fig. 216; (e), after (B130), Pl. 67(23).
comparatively early dates. Examining sixty-nine dated examples of the *shen-shou* mirrors produced from 216 to 366 A.D.,* we see that all five mirrors cast in 216 and in 219 are decorated with divine images with ribbon-like wings; after 219, almost all mirrors exhibit divinities with a pair of “bird-wings”, represented by raised parallel lines (fig.1,a2). (The only exception is the mirror cast in 253, on which the divine figures have ribbon-like wings.) This kind of bird-wing also appears on most triangular rimmed *shen-shou* mirrors with the Buddha’s image discussed above (fig.1,c–d). On the *fo-shou* mirrors with a flat rim excavated in Japan, however, even the bird-wing disappears, and is replaced by more sophisticated Buddhist symbols, such as the halo and lotus.

Third, in the inner band of the Echeng mirror, Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu are arranged in juxtaposition, while the other two opposite sections contain two figures respectively. This arrangement, as well as the presentation of Dong Wanggong, Xi Wangmu, the mythical animals, and the decorative belts, is amazingly similar to a mirror dated in 216 A.D.* (Fig. 36). The only difference between them is that the image of the Buddha of the Echeng mirror replaces a kneeling figure on the latter. In contrast, on all the *fo-shou* mirrors found in Japan, the Chinese traditional deities disappear, and the Buddhist images occupy all four sections in a more complicated composition.

Based on the above evidence, I would conclude that, although the Echeng mirror and other *fo-shou* mirrors from Japan share several features such as the shape of their rims, the motifs of the decorative belts, and so on, nevertheless they belong without question to different developmental stages of the *shen-shou* mirror. The Echeng mirror, due to its great similarity to mirrors cast in 216 and 219 A.D. (Fig. 36), could be dated to the end of the Eastern Han or the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period. The *fo-shou* mirrors discovered in Japan, as Prof. Mizuno and Prof. Higuchi have demonstrated through different studies, could be dated to the time around 300 A.D. or even later.

The last type of mirror decorated with Buddhist images is the *kui-feng* mirror, the mirror with a design of phoenixes, which has been classified as Type C. The design of the *kui-feng* mirror is not executed in high relief, as are the designs of the *shen-shou* mirrors belonging to Types A and B. Rather, it is done in a low, flat relief, which gives the impression of a silhouette. So far, five *kui-feng* mirrors with Buddhist images have been reported (Fig. 37–41). All of them have a common decorative pattern: surrounding the central knob is a quatrefoil, often called *si-ba* or *ling-hua* – that is, “four plantain leaves” or “water-chestnut flower” patterns. A continuing, wide line outlines four leaves in relief, leaving the empty centers as spaces to be filled with various images of deities. Near the rim is a decorative belt. It consists of twelve or sixteen semi-circles also outlined by a line in relief, and contains divine or animal designs. The space between these two separate zones is always decorated with phoenixes, which lend their name to this kind of mirror.

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59 These dated mirrors are listed in (B112), vol.1, pp.249–242. The illustrations of most of them can be found in (B112), vol.2 and in (B131).

60 This mirror is inscribed with “Jian-an er-shi-yi nian” (216 A.D.), now in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. (B112), vol.1, p.229.
On all five examples, the Buddhist images fill the quatrefoil or the semi-circles. Lacking any detailed description, these figures can be identified only by the halo, the usñīṣa, and the lotus throne. Until 1982, no example belonging to this type had been found through archaeological excavation. Only through comparisons with the dated shou-shou mirrors (those with animal-head designs), having a similar decorative style, could scholars estimate that these mirrors were probably cast during the Western Jin dynasty (265–316 A.D.). A recent excavation, however, not only determines their origin, but suggests an earlier date.

According to Wang Zhongshou, during recent years a number of kui-feng mirrors have been discovered in Echeng. Among them, “not a few” are decorated with images of the Buddha. “Based on the study of a host of archaeological data we can certify that these mirrors belonged to the Wu but not to the Jin. Their manifestation should be in the middle of the third century.”61 On one of these kui-feng mirrors, illustrated in plate 41, Buddhist images fill all of the four leaves of the quatrefoil: three leaves contain identical Buddhist images (Bodhisattva?) seated on thrones formed by lotus-bases and dragon-shaped “arms” in the dhyāna munāra; the other leaf contains three figures: the central one wears a halo, is seated on a lotus throne in meditation, and is flanked by two attendants, one kneeling, the other standing.

An ongoing argument among archaeologists and art historians concerns the origin of mirrors belonging to these three types. Most scholars agree that Type B and Type C mirrors were produced in China. The finding in Echeng, where the Wu kingdom established its first capital, further demonstrates that they were produced in the middle and lower Yangzi region. Some Japanese scholars insist that Type A, the shen-shou mirror with triangular rim, was made in northern China during the Wei period (220–265 A.D.).62 Wang Zhongshu, however, has raised a different opinion, arguing that mirrors belonging to this type were cast by craftsmen who had emigrated to Japan from the Wu region. The evidence from which Wang draws his conclusion includes three major points. First, none of the examples belonging to Type A has been discovered in China, though a great number of bronze mirrors have been excavated. Second, the decorative styles of mirrors of the Wei and Wu (or, the decorations of mirrors found in north China and in south China) show definite differences. The Wei mirrors are often decorated with flat geometric designs, while the Wu mirrors bear mainly the pictorial (hua-xiang) or mythical animal (shen-shou) designs in high relief, which exhibit a close relationship with the decoration of the Type A mirrors found in Japan. Third, a number of mirrors with pictorial designs excavated in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, have triangular rims. Therefore, Type A mirrors can be considered to combine characteristics from two sources – the flat rimmed shen-shou mirror and the triangular rimmed hua-xiang mirror – both of which enjoyed popularity in the Wu region. Finally, historical texts contain messages recording the commercial exchanges between the Wu people and the people of a Japanese island, Tanzhou.63 Also, the era-names of the Wu

61 (B87), p. 631. However, the author has been told by Yu Weichao that so far only one kui-feng mirror with a design of Buddha images has been excavated in Echeng (Fig. 41 in this paper).
63 (B51), vol. 47, p. 1136; cf. (B109), p. 234.
kingdom were inscribed on mirrors belonging to Type A. In my opinion, Wang Zhongshu’s conclusion is convincing. His analysis proves that during the third century, Buddhist images were used as decorative designs almost exclusively in the territory of the Wu, where Buddhism not only enjoyed support from emperors and high level officials, but was also diffused among ordinary people.

Another important problem concerns the religious significance of these Buddhist images used to decorate mirrors. Bronze mirrors were objects of daily use. Their decoration often directly reflects the dominant trends of thought of the time. During the last years of the Western Han, the worship of Xi Wangmu became more and more popular, both in the imperial court and among the people. At about the same time, images of Xi Wangmu also appeared in the decorations of bronze mirrors. Towards the end of the Eastern Han, the images of Xi Wangmu and Dong Wanggong gradually absorbed iconographical features of the Buddha. As mentioned above, many mirrors, cast from this time until the Jin dynasty, are decorated with divinities with mixed divine marks taken both from Xi Wangmu and from the Buddha. Many mirrors show Buddha-like figures in juxtaposition with Dong Wanggong and Xi Wangmu. Even the later shen-shou mirrors, on which Buddhist images occupy the dominant positions, still bear inscriptions, such as those which state that the maker or owner commissioned the mirror in order to achieve immortality and become a xian, or which state the owner’s hope for promotion in the official ranks and for the well-being of the Emperor. It is certain that the meaning ascribed to these divine figures is no different from that expressed by images of the immortals and sages used to decorate mirrors in the Chinese traditional fashion.

The second category of artifacts decorated with Buddha-images, also produced in the lower Yangzi region during the third century, consists of ceramic wares, and can be classified into two major types: the huping jar and the yu jar.

Strictly speaking, huping is not really designed to be used as a container. Although its lower part resembles a hu or guan jar in the traditional fashion, two small holes often appear opposite each other on the middle of the body, while the round mouth is closed and covered with a complex of additional decorations. In the center of this three-dimensional, decorative variety there is usually a two or three-story tower-pavilion, its stepped, cylindrical, central sanctuary topped by a quadrangular roof. Around the pavilion crowd various birds, dogs, monkeys, lions, phoehixes, musicians, singers, dancers, and so on figures both animal and human, both real and mythical. Similar images, organized in one or more rings, also appear in relief around the shoulder of the lower body. To date, many such jars have been found in a limited area of the present southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang. Among them, at least eleven examples bear Buddha-images. Although no

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64 Twelve of the 18 era-names of the Wu Kingdom are inscribed on shen-shou mirrors between 222 and 277, cf. (B112), vol. 1, pp. 229-232; (B86), p. 350.
65 (B50), vol. 1, pp. 12-13; cf. (B128), pp. 156-162.
66 see (B29), p. 342; cf. (B125), pp. 147-152.
67 The earliest example decorated with an image of Xi Wangmu is the mirror dated in 10 A.D. by its inscription. see (B125), pp. 147-152.
68 cf. (B124), PL. 57,176; p. 292, p. 298.
absolute date is inscribed on these examples, archaeological evidence from excavations present valuable assistance in dating:

No. 1 found in Shaoxing (Fig. 43). According to Chen Wanli, coins of the Wu Kingdom with the inscription of da-quan-tong-bao were unearthed at the same tomb.69

No. 2 excavated from a tomb at Zhenjiang in 1972 (Fig. 44). A nearby tomb, from which another bunjing decorated without Buddha-images was found, is dated to 276 A.D. by the inscription on the tomb bricks.70

No. 3 excavated from a tomb at Xigang in 1974 (Fig. 45). Based on evidence concerning the structure of the tomb, as well as the shape and decoration of funerary vessels, the excavators dated this tomb to a period between 265 and 280 A.D.71

No. 4 excavated from the Tomb No. 2 at Yixing (Fig. 46). According to Luo Zongzhen, the deceased was a son of a famous general of the Wu Kingdom, Zhou Chu, who died in 276 A.D., and was buried at the same cemetery.72

No. 5 excavated from the Tomb No. 7 at Zhaoshigang, Nanjing, in 1955 (Fig. 47). A lead tablet, inscribed with “the second year of the feng-huang era” (273 A.D.), was also found in the tomb, giving us an approximate date for the jar.73

No. 6 found in a tomb at Dongshan, Jiangning, in 1957 (Fig. 48).74

No. 7 found in a tomb at Xiaoshan (Fig. 49).75

No. 8 excavated from the Tomb No. 1 at Shizishan, Wuxian, in 1973 (Fig. 50). The absolute date of “the eighteenth of the seventh month, the fifth year of the yuan-kang era” (295 A.D.) was inscribed on the bricks of the tomb.76

No. 9 in the collection of the Gotō Art Museum (Fig. 51).77

No. 10 excavated from a tomb at Zhuyuan, Wuyi, in 1979 (Fig. 52). According to the structure of the tomb and the decoration of the tomb-bricks, as well as to characteristics of other ceramic vessels found in the tomb, the excavators dated this tomb to the end of the Three Kingdom period.78

No. 11 excavated from Tomb No.1 at Gaochang (Fig. 53).79

69 (B66), interpretations p. 1; cf. (B12).
70 (B65), pp. 62–63.
71 (B72), pp. 53–60.
72 (B68), pp. 84–106; cf. (B74), pp. 115–122. It is noteworthy that the figure on this jar, as well as those on the jar excavated from Gaochang (Fig. 53 in this paper), is represented with hands clasped in worship. This hand-gesture does not belong to the Buddha, but is a characteristic of images of followers of the Buddha. The special representation of these figures on bunjing jars may reflect an insufficient understanding of Buddha’s iconographic features by the people of the Wu during the third century.
73 (B85), pp. 8–14.
74 (B73); (B131), PL. 50.
75 (B82), PL. 116.
76 (B104), pp. 110–138; (B105), pp. 81–86.
77 (B124), PL. 1.
78 (B17), pp. 376–379.
79 (B35), pp. 303–307. see above note 65.
It is evident that hunping jars decorated with Buddha-images became popular during the second half of the third century. This date is further confirmed by inscriptions on other hunping not decorated with the Buddha's image. The earliest and latest dates inscribed on two such examples are 260 and 302 A.D. respectively, showing a similar time span.80

Unlike the hunping jar, yu-type wares have large, open mouths. The body, with widely rounded sides, tapers towards the foot. The shoulder, decorated with a band of impressed lattice patterns edged with incised lines and a band of rings above and below, is straddled by a pair of small handles and divided by two small figures of the Buddha. Two such jars of the same size and decorative pattern have been collected by the Sir Percival David Foundation (Fig. 54) and by Edward T. Chow (Fig. 55). The third, having a taller neck, is preserved in the K.M. Semon Collection.81 Yet another example may be roughly classified into the same category. Formerly in the collection of Mr. Chu of Hangzhou, this is a shallow bowl with a high round foot (Fig. 56). On this piece, animal masks, winged lions, and two small figures of the Buddha appear in a band of diamond patterns between rosette borders. Furthermore, six ceramic sherds impressed with almost identical images of the Buddha have also been found. Three of them were brought from Shaoxing by Brankson in 1937 (Fig. 57). The other three were excavated from Tomb No. 7 at Zhao-shigang, which has been dated to 273 A.D. as mentioned above (Fig. 58).

None of these yu jars has been found through archaeological excavation, and none of them is inscribed with a date. Nevertheless, for two reasons they certainly belong to the same period as the hunping jars of the first category. First, a large number of ceramic jars of the same shape and color have been discovered from tombs of the Wu and Western Jin periods.82 Secondly, the figures of the Buddha on these jars are completely identical with those on most hunping jars.

The closest parallel to the Buddha-images decorating these ceramic vessels seems to be the bronze images of the Buddha on the reliquary of King Kanishka (Fig. 60). This, in turn, finds its prototype in Gandhāra sculpture, such as the Buddha on the stupa from Gandhāra (Fig. 61).83 All images of the Buddha, whether applied on the hunping jars, yu jars, or impressed on the sherds, represent the Buddha seated in the dhyanā posture, with a round halo and a flat ushāja. The drapery is indicated by raised, parallel lines. Two leaping animals on either side strongly suggest a lion-throne, while the hanging petals in front of the Buddha indicate a lotus flower. However, none of the analogies between these figures and Indian examples is precise; the ceramic Buddhas are far more squat, and more crudely executed.

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80 These are the hunping dated in the third year of the yong-an era (260 A.D.), now in the collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing, and the one dated in the second year of the yong-ning, 302 A.D. cf. (B65), p.63. Also, Wei Zhenggian and Yi Jiasheng have periodized all ceramic wares excavated in the Nanjing area into four stages. According to their conclusion, hunping jars only appear in tombs belonging to the first stage, ca. 254-316 A.D. (B89), pp.147-353.
81 This ware is illustrated in (By), Fig. 231.
82 cf. (B85), (B114).
83 cf. (B13), pp.180-181, pp.30-31; (B21), Appendix II, pp.156-159.
Technically speaking, these figures of the Buddha were made from molds and then attached to the various wares. Most of them are in relief, on the shoulder of the lower body, together with other human and animals figures (Fig. 43-49). The other four jars (Fig. 50-53), their lower parts often undecorated, have groups of three-dimensional figures of the Buddha in the same dhvāna posture circumscribing the central pavilions. An examination of the hunping dates indicated above demonstrates that the jars with the Buddha-images in relief are slightly earlier than those with three-dimensional figures. Most of the former type have been dated before 280 A.D., while the only dated example belonging to the latter type was produced around 295. This chronological relationship reflects a development of images of the Buddha from being secondary to dominant elements in decoration. The apex of this development is marked by the four hunping, illustrated in plates 50-53. On the last example, altogether eleven figures of the Buddha, each with a flat halo and with clasped hands, become the exclusive decorative motif of the vessel. They not only surround the central pavilion on two levels, but occupy the divine building itself.

The question that logically arises is why these figures of the Buddha were used to decorate ceramic vessels? In the other words, which particular sense concerning the function of the hunping and the religious significance of the image of the Buddha led people of the Wu to associate these two objects?

Different names, each related to a particular function, have been attributed to pavilion-topped wares. While Japanese scholars often call them shenting (divine pavilion) without further interpretation, most Chinese scholars prefer the term guang (granary). However, the latter name seems to have been based on a mistaken interpretation of inscriptions.84 In this paper I would like to accept the third term hunping (the urn of soul), suggested by Prof. Wai-kam Ho,85 not as the original name used by the people of the Wu, but as a term most precisely representing the function of these vessels.

These pavilion-shaped ceramic wares themselves clearly state their proper usage in their inscriptions. Strangely enough, this information has been neglected or ignored by most of the scholars creating names for them. On the hunping jar formerly in the Luo Zhenyu Collection, there appear two small tablets carried by turtles – a common memorial for the deceased in China.86 The same words are repeatedly inscribed on the tablets: "(The ware is made in) Shining, Kuaiji, and is to be used for funerary purposes. It will bring good fortune to the descendants (of the departed) – help them to win promotion to high official

84 An interpretation is given by the staff of the Shanghai Museum: "Recently we found the inscription 'zao-zi-lin', ('making this lin granary') on a jar excavated from Wuxian County, Jiangsu province. This demonstrates that this type of ceramic jar was used in funerary ceremonies to symbolize granaries of the former landlords." Shanghai Museum, Shanghai Bowuguan Cangce Xuanyi, Beijing, 1979, p.10. However, instead of lin, the "self-name" appearing on a hunping jar excavated in the same county is ling, which was a term referring to a type of pottery vessel in ancient times. (B101), p.116. Since the two characters, lin and ling, have a similar pronunciation, the former should be considered as a substitute for the latter, and expresses the same meaning.

85 (B12), pp.26-34.

86 According to the staff of the Nanjing Museum, a stone turtle carrying a tablet, the memorial for the deceased, has been discovered from a tomb in Nanjing. (B73), pp.328-333.
ranks – and will benefit people infinitely.” (Fig. 43b) This inscription demonstrates three important points: (1) this vessel originated in the locality, (2) it was made especially for funerary purposes, and (3) it carried the wishes of the living that the family of the deceased might flourish.

The function of pavilion-shaped wares as funerary equipment has also been proved by ethnological evidence. Zhang Bikang, a member of the former Zhejiang Provincial Library, investigated a group of “jiu-yan” ceramics discovered in the vicinity of Shaoxing (the modern name of Kuaiji) in 1936. In the report, he states that: “There is another type (of the five-spouted vase), which is surmounted by gateways, stele-pavilion, figures, birds and animals; all these are molded freely by hand. They are a metamorphosis of the shenting type. The applied decorations signify prosperity for the descendants and the fecundity of the domestic animals. They are intended to put the soul of the departed at peace, and to express the cherished wishes of the living. In present days, a type of vessel called buning is still in use in the Chuchow area in Zhejiang province.”

Further evidence has been discovered by Wai-kam Ho from numerous volumes of the Quan Shangu Sandai Qin Han Sanyu Linchao Wen (Complete Collection of the Literary Works of the Antiquity, Qin, Han, the Three Kingdoms and the Six Dynasties). Eight documents written around 300 A.D. reveal a debate concerning funerary rites and provide fascinating materials for studying the buning ware. The background of this debate was introduced clearly by Prof. Ho: after the fall of Luoyang to the invading Xiongnu armies in 311, “among the numerous northern gentry who tried to seek refuge in the lower Yangzi valley, many were never able to make the trip, and many died before or during the great exodus. Their bodies were left behind, and their unsettled spirits haunted their families ever after with a painful choice: burial without the body (thus defying the socially all-powerful Confucian code of rites), or no burial (thus inviting the resounding name of unfilial, ungrateful inhumanity). To many new settlers in the Wu-Yue area, a probably long-established, local custom must have sounded so much more reasonable, and so much more promising than to live with their guilt feelings. This was the zhaobunyang, or ‘burial of the summoned soul’, which, being completely unorthodox, was soon to become the subject of a heated debate among the intelligentsia in the early years of the Eastern Jin period.”

As shown by arguments from both sides, the debate seems to have been sustained on uneven levels. Those Confucianists who were rigidly orthodox insisted that the rightful place for commemorating the departed was not the tomb but the ancestral temple, which bonded the dead and the living, and in which an individual was integrated into the whole network of the family. Their opponents, on the other hand, without disagreeing over this point, simply hoped to find a solution to the puzzling situation as to how people who had lost their parents’ bodies could practice filiality. They borrowed the idea of “burial of the

87 For Zhang Bikang’s report, see quotations in (B114), pp. 30–31.
88 (B172), pp. 32–33. (B92), vols. 127, 128.
89 Ibid. p. 32.
summoned soul” from sources other than Confucianism. Disappointed by the court, they were soon considered unorthodox, and the practice of zhaohunzang was prohibited in 318 A.D.90

In studying the function of the hunping jars, these documents not only provide a social and intellectual background; they also describe in detail the use of the objects in the funerary ritual. In the documents, these burial vessels are called lingzuo (the seat of the soul) or hunting (the hall of the soul).91 According to these statements, three days after interment, such vessels would be placed inside the tomb, together with arm- rests, banqueting tables, and food and drink.92 The function of hunping as dwelling place for the soul of the dead is clearly proved by such statements as “(hunping) are provided in the grave not because they are used to receive the body, but because they are necessary for appeasing the soul,”93 and by such taunts as “just imagine (one) trying to ‘urn’ the soul in a coffin!”94

The central point of the debate was not the basic moral code of Confucianism, the question of filiality. Rather, it was the problem of whether or not to borrow the rite of soul-recalling. Therefore, from my point of view, the debate is important because it brings to light the existence of such beliefs in the society, and provides a clue to trace sources of this belief both in Chinese traditional thought, and in the newly arriving Buddhism.

Beliefs of “summoning the soul” can be traced in literature as early as the third century B.C. We find the practice of calling the soul of a newly-deceased person to return to its original home in the body. The Yi Li records that during this ritual a shaman would ascend to the roof of the deceased’s house, carrying his robes; facing north, he would call upon the soul three times to return.95 More vivid descriptions appear in the Chu Ci. They are the Zhao Hun and Da Zhao, actual invocations of shamans in the “summoning-the-soul” ritual. These two prayer-songs were created in the Chu area in the middle Yangzi region. Four banners, which functioned as part of the equipment of the “soul recalling” ceremony, have been found in the same region.96 Of almost equal interest, we find that the coffin of Marquis Yi of the Zeng state, excavated at Suixian, Hubei province, in 1979, was painted with windows on each side.97 Originating in the Chu culture, in which the belief of “summoning the soul” enjoyed popularity, these windows symbolized the doorway through which the soul of Marquis Yi would return to its body. In the Wu-Yue area, adjacent to the ancient Chu region, the practice of the zhaohunzang (burial of the summoned soul) of the third century undoubtedly continued this old southern tradition. Demonstrated by the hunping itself, two small holes drilled on either side of the vessel are clearly

90 Cf. (Br12), p. 32.
91 (Br92), vol. 128, p. 2195; vol. 127, p. 2190.
92 Ibid., vol. 128, p. 2195; vol. 124, p. 2172.
93 Ibid., vol. 127, p. 2190.
94 Ibid., vol. 127, p. 2190.
96 They are banners excavated in Zhangjia Dashan, Zidanju, and from Mawangdui tombs No. 1 and No. 3 (for illustrations, see Br131, vol. 2); all these sites are located in the Changsha district, Hunan province. The first two banners belonged to the Warring States period, and the other two to the Western Han dynasty.
97 (B48), Pl. 4.
analogous to the windows on Marquis Yi’s coffin. As the bunping jar was referred to as “the hall of the soul” by the people of the time, the two small holes symbolized the entrances of the returning spirit. On some bunping, a snake is depicted in relief as crawling into one hole and out of another.89 This image relates the lower body of a bunping to the traditional idea of the huangquan, or the Yellow Spring, an underground place where the po-souls of the dead go.90 With a feeling of complete contrast, the elaborate pavilion on the top of a bunping, together with the circumscribing divine beings, orchestras, dancers, gatemen, and so on, create a wonderland which synthesizes all the symbols of luxury and safety which the early Chinese could imagine.100 This is the paradise of the soul, the greatest end to which a life could be transformed.

This brings us to the principal question: why were images of the Buddha used to decorate bunping jars, which were believed to be the dwelling hall of the soul? Indian Buddhism rejects the idea of a transmigrating soul. Nirātman-vāda, or soul-denial, is almost synonymous with the teaching of Śākyamuni. Life runs without interruption through these periods which the Chinese called death. Actions supposedly bear fruit earlier or later in one’s life form, according to karma, an assemblage of cause and conditions. Yet for any one unacquainted with these theories, it is self-evident that for transmigration to occur, there must also be something – or some one – that transmigrates. It was especially easy, for the Chinese who lived in the early centuries, to identify the state after death with the concept of the soul. This concept had been discussed for a long time, and had been a central theme of many theories produced by different schools. Therefore, in Mu Zi’s Li Huo Lun we read that “The soul certainly does not perish; only the body decays…When one has reached the Tao, the body disappears (and only the soul remains)” and that “Those who have attained the Tao die, but their soul enters paradise. When bad people die, their soul is exposed to suffering.”101 To us, as later readers, it is hard to believe that this work was announcing Buddhism, and not repeating sentences quoted from Taoist texts. However, some crucial change did come about. Mu Zi’s “paradise” was no longer a Taoist paradise, the Kunlun Mountain, or the Three Immortal Islands. It was the paradise of the Buddha, where souls of Buddhist devotees would be reborn. Likewise, the bunping jars, placed side by side next to the coffins in the tombs, indicate an important change in the thinking of the people of the Wu region: the happy home of a soul was no longer conceived of as the body of the dead person, but was instead a Buddha’s paradise, symbolized by bunping; the aim of the ritual of “summoning the soul” was no longer to lead a wandering soul back to its home body, but to an untainted land of the Buddha; the soul was now guided not by shamans but by the Buddha. On many earlier bunping, there were groups of figures wearing traditional Chinese caps and gowns, engaged in singing, dancing, and meditation.

89 (B1o1), pp.132-133.
100 Regarding the motifs of monkey and dog in Han art and their symbolic meaning, see (B12), pp.29-31.
101 (B7t), p.5. It is interesting to notice that Mu Zi also talks about the “soul-recalling” to demonstrate his theory concerning the soul in the same chapter.
around central pavilions. They remind us of the shamans described in the Yi Li and in the Chu Ci. As time passed, these figures were replaced by Buddhas, who then went on to occupy the pavilions, and to become the masters of this imaginary, divine world. This shift of thought, which happened around 300 A.D., suggests a possible influence from the doctrine of the Buddha’s Pure Land, described in the Aparimitāyur Sūtra as rich, fertile, comfortable, and filled with gods and men, but with none of the evils of existence. This paradise is created out of Buddha’s boundless love, and is where faithful followers of the Buddha will be reborn after death. From historical texts we learn that this sūtra had been translated into Chinese by Zhi Qian in the third century A.D. in the Wu Kingdom. We also learn that in 402 A.D. Hui Yuan, a leader of the Buddhist community of the south, assembled a group of one hundred and twenty-three people—mainly recluses and hermits—at Lu Mountain of the lower Yangzi region. There, they made a collective vow to be reborn in the Western Paradise, the Pure Land. Hunping, as material remains, suggest that between these two events certain beliefs concerning the Buddha’s paradise had spread into this region, and had combined with Chinese traditional religious ideas about the soul. As a Mahāyāna doctrine, the teaching of Pure Land Buddhism emphasizes boundless love and universal salvation. The inscription of a hunping seems to express the same idea by stating that “it would benefit all beings infinitely.” Similar words are to be found in writings of Kang Senghui, who lived in the Wu Kingdom from 247 to 280 A.D.: “the beneficial influence of enlightened minds encompasses all beings.”

One thought-provoking question is why the people of the Wu selected ceramic jars to symbolize the paradise of departed souls. This idea seemed strange, even to contemporaries. Gan Bao, the famous author of the supernatural tales Sou Shen Ji, himself was stunned: “Just imagine (one) trying to ‘urn’ the soul in a coffin!” As many scholars have reasonably demonstrated, a prototype of the hunping is the wuhuping, or five-spouted vase, which had been used in the Wu-Yue area during the Later Han and the early Three Kingdoms period. I strongly suspect that another prototype of this vase is the reliquary used in the Indian world. The famous example of the reliquary of King Kanishka, probably made in the second century A.D., represents a possible mode of the hunping. It is a cylindrical container. On the lid is a seated Buddha flanked by two standing gods, all in three dimensions; on the wall there are animal and human figures in relief. The basic arrangement of the decoration is very similar to that of the hunping. The principal evidence, however, comes from a comparison of images of the

102 See p.286 in this paper.
103 The other two versions of the Aparimitāyur-sūtra were translated by Seng Kai of the Wei, and by Zhu Fahu of the Western Jin. cf. (B78), p.145.
104 Cf. (B5), pp.106–108.
105 This passage is quoted from Kang Senghui’s preface to the translation of the Ugradatta paripričchā, in Seng You, Chu San Zang Ji, (B127), vol.2145, translated by Zürcher, (B27), p.283.
106 See above note 87.
107 Cf. (B81), (B144).
108 There are many different opinions concerning the exact date of the reliquary. For detailed discussion, see (B21), Appendix II, pp.239–262; (B13), pp.29–50.
Buddha: on the main band of the reliquary, three Buddhas sit in meditation with their hands in the dhyāna mudrā, their garments neatly and symmetrically folding over their torsos. One can explore all aspects of this representation in the figures of the Buddha on the bunping jars. The only difference is that the latter are far more crudely executed. From other sources, we know that the concept of relics as a Buddhist holy symbol must have been familiar to the people of the Wu; the most convincing evidence of Buddhist truth given to them by Kang Senghui was the miracle of the Buddha’s relics, which he performed at the court in 247 A.D.109

Existing in a dual or triple system, the bunping became an amazing document of cultural synthesis. In its inscription, ideas of Confucian filial piety and Mahāyāna universal salvation were expressed together. In its decoration, Chinese ceremonial buildings (the ancestral temple or the Bright Hall?110), shamans, as well as various symbols of luxury and safety, were displayed together with images of the Buddha. It manifested ideas of the transformation of life from three different ideological perspectives: Confucianism, southern shamanism, and Buddhism. In so doing, it harmonized the alternatives open to the wandering soul.

As Prof. Ho has noted, among many excavated tombs belonging to the Wu and Western Jin period in the lower Yangzi region, only a limited number of tombs have yielded bunping. Ho suggests that, “This would be inconceivable, were it not for the hypothesis that bunping was used particularly in certain kinds of ‘interment’, and that it would turn up only in certain types of tombs. Could that be possible? And if so, what could that be?” Based on documents of the debate concerning the zhaohunzang, he argues that these tombs probably belonged to those who died in the north during the exodus, and were most likely built by their descendants, who believed in the idea of the zhaohunzang (burial of the summoned soul).111 The problem with this argument, however, is that the remains of the bodies of the deceased, such as bones, hair, and teeth, have been excavated in these tombs.112 Turning to another solution, I would suggest, without ruling out the possibility given by Prof. Ho, that most tombs yielding bunping belonged to the people who followed certain types of Buddhism. Scholars of Buddhist history, basing their ideas on fragmentary information from texts, have demonstrated that there were many people of different social levels or classes who believed in Buddhism during the Wu period.113 They also indicate that, in addition to orthodox Buddhism, there existed a kind of “popular Buddhism.”114 Bunping, for the first time, exhibit ways in which this “popular Buddhism” was conceived.

110 A possible relationship between the design of pavilions on bunping jars and the concept of the Ming-Tang (Bright Hall) has been discussed by Wai-kam Ho. see (B12), pp. 28–29.
111 Ibid., pp. 32–33.
112 Cf. (B68).
114 See above note (44).
III. The Kongwang Shan Stone Carvings

Kongwang Shan is a small mountain which is located in China’s east province of Jiangsu, near Lianyun Harbor on the Yellow Sea. At present, it is about 30 li from the coast. Yet three hundred years ago, before alluviation connected this area with Yuzhou Island, Kongwang Shan stood close to the seashore. A total of 105 figures are carved into a cliff 8 meters high and 17 meters long on the side of the mountain (Fig. 62). The characteristics of the stone carvings can be appraised from several different angles.

First, we find that three different techniques were employed in the carving of these figures. The first was to chisel away the background to render an outline of the figure, then to fill in the details with sunken lines (e.g. Fig 82). Another was first to prepare a square, flat surface, then carve the figure onto it with fine sunken lines (e.g. Fig. 76). Over 80% of the images were produced in these two ways. The third technique was used only in figure x21 (Fig. 67) and in two animal figures which are separate from the cliff (Fig. 78, 80). They are high relief or free-standing figures, created by slightly modifying the natural shape of the rock. The details, as in the others, are rendered in sunken lines. Thus linear representation is the most prominent feature of the Kongwang Shan stone carvings. This technique was derived directly from Han funerary stone carvings which were used to decorate tombs, offering shrines, and gue-towers. At Kongwang Shan, although the craftsmen were dealing with a “mountain,” they tried to convert the bulging rock formations into flat surfaces, in order to utilize the funerary stone carving technique with which they were familiar.

We can also examine these carvings from the point of view of their position and grouping, as did the Lianyun Gang Museum. The 18 groups classified by them, however, do not evidence any conscious planning on the part of the carvers. Most of the images were carved at random over the surface of the rocks. Except for a few groups that show some sense of composition, the images within a “group” do not seem to relate to one another.

Finally, we can examine the carvings in regard to their formal characteristics (clothing, posture, gestures, objects held, etc.). Since these features often have specific religious significance, an examination of them is critical to the purposes of this paper.

Categorization on such a basis yields roughly three types of figures. The figures of the first type, particularly x2, x71, x61 and x76 (Fig. 63, 64, 65, 66), show similarities to Indian Buddha images. Although one of them is seated and others are standing, they all have the

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115 (B61), p. 1.
116 (B99), p. 6.
117 In addition to these three carvings, the figures in Group 10 have also been considered carvings in high relief, and have been identified with a scene of the Buddhist Jataka tale of “the Bodhisattva sacrificing himself to hungry tigers”. (B93), p. 17; (B99), p. 8. This carving, however, is so severely damaged that it is difficult to make any reliable identification. According to the Lianyun Gang Museum’s classification: x-figure, G-group. See (B 22).
118 (B61), pp. 1-3.
119 For example, G2, G1, and four “niches” (G15, G16, G17, and G18).
usñña-like protrusion on their heads, the right hand is in what appears to be the abhaya mudrā, and the left hand holds a corner of the gown. A comparison between these and the Gandhāra or Mathurā Buddha images (Fig. 3, 4) suggests that these figures could be derived from Indian Buddha images. Several other images, all of which belong to the G2 (Fig. 67) according to the Lianyun Gang Museum classification, also appear to be closely related to Buddhist art. The group centers around figure 1.21 which, according to the investigation report, wears a robe with a round neckline, has an usñña on the top of the head, and is lying on its side. The 36 surrounding figures are assembled in several lines. It seems very likely that this group depicts a Parinirvāṇa scene. It is worth noting, however, that in comparison to its possible prototype, the Parinirvāṇa sculpture in the Gandhāran region (Fig. 83), G2 lacks the latter’s close correspondence to the descriptions cited in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra.122 Also lacking are the standardized forms of composition, images and emotional expression.123 Actually, aside from certain simple conceptual similarities, it is difficult to detect any specific connection between the Kongwang Shan Nirvāṇa scene, and that of Gandhāra. It is unlikely that the Kongwang Shan scene is even a rough “copy” of the Gandhāran scene.

There are some other figures which can also be placed in the above category. Although they manifest certain characteristics of Indian images of the Buddha, they are decidedly not such images of that figure. For example, a considerable number of the Kongwang Shan figures possess an usñña-like protrusion, such as some of the surrounding figures in the Nirvāṇa scene (Fig. 67). The posture of figure 1.23 (Fig. 70) resembles that of dancing acrobats in Han art. But this figure is in an Indian-type clinging robe and has an “usñña”.

The figure in group G18 (Fig. 76), as classified by the Lianyun Gang Museum, also displays these features. The figure to the left of the table wears a traditional Chinese jinxiān cap and a Han style robe. The two attendants positioned behind him also wear Han style attire. The main figure, on the other side of the table, is similar to the “Buddha” figure of 1.24 (Fig. 63), with his left hand in a abhaya mudrā-like gesture, and his right hand holding an object in front of his chest. He too has an usñña-like protrusion, but in addition two “wings” extend to either side from behind his head. Some scholars believe that this scene represents “Vimalakīrti’s debate.”124 If so, the scene suggests that either the carvers did not understand the function of the usñña to be an exclusive mark of the Buddha, or that they simply were not clear about who was involved in the debate, since in the Vimalakīrti Sūtra the lay-Buddhist’s opponent was the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and not the Buddha.

120 (B61), p. 1.
121 (B111) collects the data of 12 examples of Parinirvāṇa sculpture belonging to the 1st–3rd centuries. Among them 25 examples came from Gandhāra, 6 from Swat, and 1 from Mathurā. In South India the school of Amarāvati remained obstinately faithful to the ancient device of the stupa.
122 (B111), pp. 4–6.
123 The usual formula of the Gandhāra Parinirvāṇa sculpture includes the reclining Buddha under two sala trees, the despair of Vajrapāni, the grief of the Mallas and the Gods, the conversion of Subhadra, and the Buddha’s great disciple Mahākāśyapa.
124 (B92), p. 20.
The second type in my classification includes \( x_3, x_{65}, x_{72}, x_{75}, x_{77}, x_{78}, \) and \( x_{79} \) (Fig. 68–71). Here, the most prominently shared features are their heads which are rendered in profile, and their cone-shaped caps which have a pendant in the back. Some scholars believe that they are foreign donors, but many of these figures stand in isolation, their scale and position comparable to those of the “Buddha” images mentioned above. In some of these figures, only the head is represented. Thus, they are likely to be objects of worship rather than donors. Some of these images also display Buddhist features. For example, figure \( x_3 \) (Fig. 68) is seated with his legs folded, and his right hand is in what appears to be the abhaya mudrā. Figure \( x_{65} \) (Fig. 69) carries a lotus. Such characteristics may indicate that these figures are somehow related to the concept of the Bodhisattva. The distinct shape of their caps and their narrow-sleeved costumes, however, reminds us of the figures who sit around the divine pavilion on many \textit{hunping} jars, who have been thought to be shamans.

The third type in my classification is comprised of figures \( x_1, x_{66}, x_{68}, x_{93}, x_{94}, x_{95}, \) etc. (Fig. 72–76), characterized by typical Chinese traits. All wear Han-style robes and flat-topped caps, and their hands are concealed within long, wide sleeves. \( x_1 \), a typical example of this type, is seated holding a flat ritual object in his arms. The figure is similar to the deities depicted on the tombstone in Dengxian county, Henan province (Fig. 84), and also reminds us of the Dong Wanggong image in the Yinan tomb (Fig. 7). These figures, the largest of the Kongwang Shan carvings, occupy the most prominent position on the rocks (Fig. 62). They may be the deities of an indigenous religious tradition. Among this type there are also some other figures which were popular in Han art. For example, \( x_{85} \) (Fig. 77) is similar to the \textit{lishi} figures in the Mawangdui silk paintings and many Han stone carvings which decidedly belong to the Chinese cultural tradition.

The two free-standing animal sculptures at the foot of the mountain can be placed in a category all their own. One is a stone elephant (Fig. 78), 260 cm. in height and 480 cm. in length. According to the investigation report, a lotus flower is incised on each foot, and an elephant caretaker is engraved on its flank (Fig. 79). All these reflect Indian influence. The other animal is a frog (Fig. 80), 110 cm. in height and 240 cm. in length. This is a favorite subject in many works of art of the Han dynasty, such as the Mawangdui silk paintings, the stone carvings from the Wu family shrine, and so on.

The technical similarity of the Kongwang Shan stone carvings to other works definitively dated to the Han dynasty, has led most scholars to date them into the Later Han period. In my opinion, however, the dating of the Kongwang Shan carvings cannot be exclusively based on their technical feature, since, from a stylistic assessment, it is obvious that these carvings were not created by skillful artists. In comparison with the famous Han stone carvings of the Wu family shrines and the Yinan tomb, the techniques employed

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125 (B61), p. 6.
126 See the Mawangdui banner in (B131), vol. 2; (B13), PL. 46, no. 58.
127 (B61), p. 5. However, Li Hongfu suggests that lines incised on the feet of the elephant do not represent the lotus, but instead the toes of the animal. (B60).
128 Cf. (B13), pp. 53–56.
129 (B63), pp. 6–7; (B99), pp. 8–15; (B93), p. 19.
in the Kongwang Shan carvings show more primitive features: despite the few groups organized in simple composition, most carvings are individual and are scattered on the cliff; the figures, carved either by chiseling the background and by engraving sunken lines, or by slightly modifying the natural shape of the rock, are stereotyped in an over-simplified formula. It is almost certain that these carvings were the work of local craftsmen, even amateurs. What their “primitive” feature can perhaps demonstrate, therefore, is not their earlier date, but their local origin.

In my view, in order to date these art works, we might also attend to the time of appearance and popularization of the Buddha-like images in the eastern coast region. In other words, the appearance of such images at Kongwang Shan is not an isolated phenomenon, but a component part of the whole diffusion of Buddhism and Buddhist art in China.

According to historical documents, the Buddha image appeared as an object of worship at the end of the Later Han dynasty in the area between the present Shandong and Jiangsu provinces where the Kongwang Shan site is located. The *Wu Zhi · Liu You Zhuan* records that in 193—194 A.D., Zuo Rong, the governor of Guangling, Xiapi and Pencheng (all very near the Kongwang Shan site), “erected a Buddha shrine, making a human figure of bronze whose body he coated with gold and clad in brocades. He hung up nine tiers of bronze plates over a multi-storied pavilion; his covered galleries could contain three thousand men or more.”130 This is the earliest record of the construction of Buddhist icons in China. It is apparent that Buddhist religious ceremonies had already become quite elaborate in this area towards the end of the second century. On the other hand, from material evidence, we see that all tombs and artifacts containing Buddha images discussed in the preceding sections are distributed naturally in two regions, the Sichuan basin and the eastern coast. Furthermore, all three images of the Buddha found in Sichuan belong to the Later Han, while the other thirty-two examples found in the middle and lower Yangzi region date from the Three Kingdoms period to the Western Jin.131 This evidence leads me to hypothesize that the popularization of the image of the Buddha in the eastern coastal area may have happened from the end of the second century to the third century. Based on these two factors, (1) the continuation of certain artistic style and technique of Han stone carvings in the Kongwang Shan carving, and (2) the context of the popularization of the image of the Buddha in the east, I would date the Kongwang Shan carving into a wider time span – the late second century to the third century – instead of the later Han or the period between 155 and 184 A.D. as Yu Weichao has dated.132

In spite of their lower artistic quality, the Kongwang Shan stone carvings do have significance for understanding the religious content and the social function of “Buddha” images during this special period. From the foregoing description and classification of

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131 Regarding the date of the Yinan tomb, see above note (22).
formal characteristics of the Kongwang Shan carvings, we can discover several important similarities of artistic expression between them and other works of art containing Buddhist elements discussed in the preceding chapters:

First, at Kongwang Shan one sees the same kind of Buddhist elements which have already been discussed in connection with Han art in general. The isolated “Buddha” images, the distinguishing marks such as the abhaya mudrā and the usnīsa; the Buddhist legends such as parinirvāṇa; and the Buddhist symbols such as the lotus and the white elephant, are all subjects of the Kongwang Shan carvings.

Second, though these elements are taken from Indian Buddhist art, the Kongwang Shan stone carvings also reveal an extremely superficial understanding of these Buddhist forms on the part of their creators. Sometimes the original intent was even completely misconstrued. For example the “usnīsa” appears not only on the Buddha’s head but also on the heads of the disciples in the Nirvāṇa scene. In group 8 (Fig. 70), a “Buddha” with a “usnīsa” on his head, and wearing a clinging, Indian style robe is shown dancing with a lotus-bearing “Bodhisattva” (or a donor as some Chinese scholars have suggested). Many signs indicate that the carvers did not understand the function of the usnīsa, and it seems that they have taken it to be some sort of strange-looking head-dress, or hairdo. Figure x71 (Fig. 66), for example, appears to be a rather standard Buddha image as indicated by its halo and its costume. The usnīsa, however, has a square shape, like a cap. Another example, found in group 18 (Fig. 76), is a figure who holds his hand in what appears to be the abhaya mudrā, and who has a round, usnīsa-like protrusion, but behind this protrusion, two wings extend to either side. We can find similar expressions on the pictorial carving stones from the Yinan tomb, where a “Buddha’s” usnīsa is also described as a cap (Fig. 7).

Third, as in other works of art belonging to the Han and the Wu periods, the Buddha images and the images of traditional Chinese gods appear side by side at the Kongwang Shan site. The types of figures in Kongwang Shan are markedly distinguished. Yet they are also closely related. The carving technique and the intermingling, random positions indicate that they were made at approximately the same time. Indentations for offering oil lamps or for incense have been carved in front of these different types of figures (x21, x68, and x93–95), and indicate that they were all meant to be worshipped. In group 1 (Fig. 82), a large indigenous deity wearing a jinxian cap and holding a “shield,” a “Buddha” figure with a usnīsa whose hands are in the abhaya mudrā, and a “Bodhisattva(?)” figure who wears a cone-shaped cap and whose hands are also placed in the abhaya mudrā, appear side by side, as if meant to form a combination of deities. At the same time, not only do foreign images appear in traditional Chinese scenes, but certain Chinese deities also take on Buddhist traits. Figure x66, for example, wears a Chinese style cap and robe, but stands on a lotus.133

Finally, we may also suggest that certain “Buddhist” forms at Kongwang Shan have the same meaning as those found in secular art of the Han dynasty. At this site only two

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133 (B63), p. 3.
free-standing animal sculptures, an elephant and a frog, were found. In Han times, people took the frog as the moon spirit, and a good omen from heaven. When the frog appeared, war could be avoided, evil spirits suppressed, and one would be successful. The elephant, on the other hand, was an important xiangru motif repeatedly described in art works of the Han, as mentioned in the first section of this paper. It is by no means a coincidence that these two animals are together at the Kongwang Shan site.

These similarities, especially the second, third, and the fourth, indicate that the Kongwang Shan stone carvings do not represent concepts found in the orthodox Buddhist tradition. Rather, these similarities resulted from a certain degree of absorption of some fragmentary Buddhist elements in the Chinese cultural tradition. The appearance of these carvings was not divorced from the general prevailing situation in Chinese Buddhist art when it had just sprung up during the second and third centuries. A further question, however, is what were the Chinese cultural traditions behind these carvings that absorbed Buddhist elements.

Historical documents and artifacts enable us to look into three ways in which Buddhism was transmitted in the second and third centuries:

(1) Buddhist elements were incorporated into various trends of secular thought and regional folk cults. This point has already been dealt with in the two preceding sections.

(2) Through the efforts of monks and lay believers, Buddhism gradually developed within the Chinese cultural environment as a religion in its own right, as demonstrated by the monasteries at Pengcheng and Jiankang.

(3) Buddhist elements were absorbed and utilized by religious Taoism, then became part of this religion. Few works have been published on the process and the characteristics of this cultural interaction. However, as suggested by Prof. Yu Weichao, a proper understanding of the interrelationship between Buddhism and Taoism during the Eastern Han is decisive for resolving the problem of the content of the Kongwang Shan carvings.

During the one hundred years between Prince Ying of the Chu kingdom (65 B.C.E.) and Emperor Huan of the Han (147–167 C.E.), the Yellow Emperor, Laozi and the Buddha were always invoked together, and were offered sacrifices for the sake of peace and prosperity (see p. 300). However, after Emperor Huan the situation changed. This seems to have occurred in two ways. On the one hand, Buddhism as a religion became increasingly popular among the common people. On the other hand, icon worship and propaganda, strictly Buddhist in nature, appeared along with works attacking religious Taoism, while large-scale Taoist movements also emerged, along with works attacking Buddhism. We have mentioned the Buddhist monastery of an impressive scale managed by Zuo Rong at the end of the second century. Mu Zi’s Li Huo Lun was written after this time. Mu Zi attacked all the Hundred Schools of thought, as well as the necromancers,

134 Cf. (B94), p. 114; (B99), p. 11.
135 “Xi Yu Zhuan” in (B8): “During the reign of Emperor Huan, only a few people believed in Buddhism, their worship then became popular after Emperor Huan’s time.” (B8), p. 2922.
136 See above note (10).
and advocated the exclusive worship of the Buddha. As for Taoism, the Heavenly Master Sect of early religious Taoism became a powerful religious force exerting enormous influence among the populace.\textsuperscript{137} The religious doctrine of this sect, the \textit{Tai Ping Jing}, contains many attacks on Buddhism (see p. 299–300). At the same time, a work asserting the superiority of Taoism over Buddhism, the \textit{Laozi Hua Hu Jing} also appeared (see p. 301). Thus since Emperor Huan’s time the earlier intermingling of the two religions gave way to a state of antagonism. It was during this stage that the Kongwang Shan carvings were made.

The locality and the cultural tradition of the Kongwang Shan carvings also deserve some further consideration. On the sea coast at the border of the present Shandong and Jiangsu provinces, the area where Kongwang Shan is located, was the place where the necromancers and the School of Immortality, as well as religious Taoism, originated and flourished.\textsuperscript{138} Surprisingly, Buddhism also found one of its earliest footholds in this region. Two important events in the early history of the Chinese Buddhism both occurred in Pengcheng, a cultural center of this region. The first was the worship of the Buddha by Chu Prince Ying; the second, the building of the Buddhist temple by Zuo Rong. The coexistence and mutual influence of Buddhism and Taoism are demonstrated vividly in the memorial which Xiang Kai submitted to the throne in 166 A.D. As a native Shiycin of southern Shandong, Xiang Kai was especially well-versed in astrological and cosmological speculations.\textsuperscript{139} Although in his memorial he mentioned the \textit{Yu Ji Shen Shu}, the divine book transmitted by the Taoist magician Yu Ji to his disciples in southern Shandong, he also quoted the Buddhist work \textit{Sutra in Forty-two Sections} to explore the great \textit{Tao}.\textsuperscript{140}

From historical documents we find, however, that around the end of the Han dynasty and the Three Kingdoms period, Heavenly Master Taoism had dominated this area. According to Chen Yinge, over 90% of the followers of this sect were either natives of the coastal area, or came from families living there.\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Sui Shu · Jing Ji Zhi} also states: “Followers of the Heavenly Master Tao are increasingly numerous as one reaches the Three-Wu and coastal areas.”\textsuperscript{142} The Donghai district, where Kongwang Shan is located, was especially dominated by Taoism. Ge Hong, the most important Taoist personality of that time, was born in this region.\textsuperscript{143} Yu Ji, the first transmitter (and possibly the very author) of the \textit{Tai Ping Jing}, was also a native of Donghai. Additionally, the important clans of Heavenly Master Tao during the Wei and Jin periods, such as the Bao clan of Donghai, the Xu and the Tao clans of Danyang, and the Shen clan of Wuxing, were all from this area.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{137} (B33), pp. 271–272.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., pp. 271–298; (B8), pp. 121–160.
\textsuperscript{139} (B38), p. 1075.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid., p. 1082.
\textsuperscript{141} (B33), p. 279.
\textsuperscript{142} (B88), “Dao Jing Bu”, p. 1093.
\textsuperscript{143} (B33), pp. 273–281.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., pp. 281–294.

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The most convincing evidence relating the Kongwang Shan carvings to Taoism is the findings of the Donghai Shenjun Miao, the Temple of the Divine Master of the East Sea, whose name has been frequently mentioned in important Taoist works such as the Tai Ping Jing, and Tao Hongjing’s Deng Zhen Yin Jue and Zhen Gao.\(^\text{145}\) At the foot of the Kongwang Shan mountain lie the remains of a huge stone platform (called the Bread-shaped Stone by the native people), which contains the base of a stele. Although the stele is now lost, according to Ding Yizhen’s research it is the “Stele of the East Sea Temple” recorded in the Jin Shi Lu and the Li Shi (Fig.85).\(^\text{146}\) The text states that Huan, the Eastern Han magistrate of Donghai, began construction of the building in the first year of yong-shou (155 A.D.). Then Man, a later magistrate of Donghai, had a stele carved in the first year of xi-ping (172 A.D.) to eulogize the event. This shows that the construction of the East Sea Temple at the site of Kongwang Shan is roughly contemporaneous to, or slightly earlier than, the stone carvings. This fact led Yu Weichao to believe that the carvings on the rocky cliffs of Kongwang Shan, and the stone elephant and frog at the foot of the mountain were part of the East Sea Temple during the reign of Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling.\(^\text{147}\) Since no trace of the temple range has been found, and since documentation is lacking, it is difficult to verify that the carvings actually belonged to the temple. But Yu Weichao’s suggestion is still very important, because it points out the possible relationship between these carvings and the Taoist temple.

In my opinion, whether the carvings constituted a part of the East Sea Temple or not, if they were indeed contemporaneous with the temple, and were produced under the influence of religious Taoism to which the East Sea Temple belonged, then it is unlikely that they were meant for the propagation of Buddhism. This is not only because of the general antagonism between Buddhism and Taoism of the time, but also because the doctrines of the Heavenly Master Tao took a clear stand against Buddhism. The Tai Ping Jing accuses the Buddhists of abandoning the family and avoiding their duty of carrying on the ancestral line, of eating feces and drinking urine, and of roaming around begging.\(^\text{148}\) These practices, as expounded in the Tai Ping Jing, are four despicable evils which grossly insult the divine will. The perpetrators are not only unfit to teach others, but are detested by Heaven.\(^\text{149}\) Lü Simian also pointed out the exclusionist tendencies which religious Taoism developed towards the end of the Han dynasty.\(^\text{150}\) The persecution of Buddhists that took place during the Wei and Jin period was also closely connected to the powers of the Heavenly Master Sect of religious Taoism.\(^\text{151}\) Given these conditions, I think it is


\(^{146}\) (B99), p. 14. But there is no detailed discussion in that paper. (B46), vol.2, p.10: “The Eastern Sea Temple is located at Xu Mountain”. From (B14) we know that the old names of Kongwang Shan were Longxing Shan, Gucheng Shan, and Xunwang Shan. This small hill, perhaps, was sometimes considered a part of the Xu Mountain range. During the Eastern Han, Kongwang Shan faced the Eastern Sea, an appropriate location for the Eastern Sea Temple.

\(^{147}\) (B99), p. 14.

\(^{148-149}\) (B99), vol. 117, pp.641–667.

\(^{150}\) (B69), p. 812.

\(^{151}\) (B33), pp.179–281.
inappropriate to interpret the Kongwang Shan stone carvings as Buddhist works, or as a fusion of Buddhism and Taoism.

So how should we interpret the “Buddha” images, and the numerous traces of Buddhism in the Kongwang Shan stone carvings? The analyses in the previous sections of this paper have shown that in almost all examples of Han and Three Kingdoms art which carry Buddhist elements, images of the Buddha and Buddhist symbols no longer have strict Buddhist meaning. The Buddha was either regarded as immortal, his image juxtaposed with Xi Wangmu and Dong Wanggong, or was incorporated into earth god worship or funerary rites. Buddhist symbols were regarded as xiangrui, signals sent down by Heaven. It is safe to say that to extract the Buddha from his own religious canon and to place him into various indigenous religions was a general tendency during this period, and not a sporadic practice. The borrowing from Buddhism by religious Taoism also displayed the same tendency, as shown by the following examples:

(1) As noted by many modern scholars, during the period between Prince Ying and Emperor Huan, the Han upper classes often invoked the Yellow Emperor, Laozi, and the Buddha together and sacrificed to them.\(^{152}\) A more careful examination of the historical documentation of this practice, however, reveals that the worship of the Buddha was actually a part of Taoist worship. That Prince Ying worshipped the Buddha is recorded in the edict of the eighth year of yong-ping (65 A.D.). In this edict Emperor Ming said that Ying esteemed highly the profound sayings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, and performed the gentle sacrifice (仁祠) to the Buddha.\(^{153}\) Tang Yongtong has pointed out that the use of the ci in this account shows that Buddhism was followed as merely one kind of Taoist practice.\(^{154}\) He also pointed out that Ying knew many necromancers, made verifications and prophecies, and that his sacrifice to the Buddha was only one form of necromancy.\(^{155}\)

The account of Emperor Huan erecting a canopy to honor Laozi and the Buddha is recorded in the “Huan Di Ben Ji”, “Xi Yu Zhan”, and “Xiang Kai Zhan”; all are sections of the Hou Han Shu.\(^{156}\) The accounts of the same event in the Xu Han Zhi, Dong Guan Han Ji, and another passage of the “Huan Di Ben Ji”, however, mention only that “Emperor Huan personally sacrificed to Laozi at the Dilong palace in order to secure prosperity and good fortune.”\(^{157}\) The “Huan Di Ben Ji” chapter of the Hou Han Shu contains many accounts of the Emperor dreaming about Laozi and offering sacrifices to him, and the “Xun Li Zhan” chapter of the same book states that the Emperor prohibited all other religions.\(^{158}\) Thus, the accounts of Emperor Huan worshipping the Buddha

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\(^{152}\) (B77), (B81), (B1), etc.

\(^{153}\) (B18), vol. 72, “Chu Wang Ying Zhuan”, p. 1428.

\(^{154}\) (B18, p. 54.


\(^{156}\) For more detailed discussion and further reference, see (B1), p. 16.

\(^{157}\) “Xun Li Zhan”, in (B18), p. 2470. also, p. 313, 316, 317.
should, perhaps, be taken not as evidence of an independent creed outside of Taoism, but rather as the inclusion of the Buddha, as a deity, into the Emperor’s Taoist worship.\(^{159}\)

(2) As mentioned earlier in this section, *Tai Ping Jing*, the religious canon of the Heavenly Master Tao, demonstrates an overt anti-Buddhist attitude. But at the same time, this canon also borrows from Buddhism to enrich itself. Particularly noteworthy is the *Tai Ping Jing*’s co-opting of Buddhist legends. The story of the miraculous birth of Laozi, for example, is an outright copy of that of the Buddha.\(^{160}\) The two accounts of Heaven sending evil gods and Jade Beauties to test the believers’ determination are also obviously derived from the temptation of the Buddha by Māra and his daughters.

Related to this is the *Laozi Hua Hu* (Laozi converting the barbarians) story, fabricated to demonstrate the superiority of Taoism over Buddhism. The extant *Laozi hua hu Jing* was written in the Western Jin dynasty by Wang Fu.\(^{161}\) The ideas in it, however, had already appeared during the reign of Emperor Huan. The memorial of Xiang Kai states: “It is said that Laozi went to barbarian lands and became the Buddha.”\(^{162}\) It then went on to tell the story of the Buddha refusing temptation and achieving the great Tao. In a similar manner, Yu Huan (3rd century) in the “Xi Rong Zhuan” of the *Wei Lue* and Huangfu Mi (215–282 A.D.) in the *Gao Shi Zhuan* stated that Laozi went out to India where he instructed the barbarian king and became Buddha.\(^{163}\) It seems quite certain that during the second and third centuries some believed that the Buddha was none other than Laozi himself or his manifestation.\(^{164}\) Thus it is not surprising that experiences of the Buddha were attached to the legendary founder of the religious Taoism. Another slightly different passage comes from the *Wei Lue*: “In this country (of Lumbini) there was a divine man named Sha-lü. By his advanced age and white hairs he resembled Laozi. He always instructed people to become Buddhists. In recent times the Yellow Turbans, seeing that his hairs were white, changed that Sha-lü into this (our) Laozi; thus by perverted ways they were able quietly to deceive the world...”.\(^{165}\) Here, for the first time, we find the resemblance concerning facial features between Laozi and the Buddhist sage in the mind of Taoist followers.

(3) Since the Buddha was taken as a deity in the Taoist pantheon or even as either the founder of the creed or his incarnation, it is highly probable that the image of the Buddha became an icon which was directly worshipped in the early stages of religious Taoism. An early Tang dynasty mural in Dunhuang Cave 323 is interesting in this regard (Fig. 86).\(^{166}\)

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\(^{159}\) The same opinion has been suggested by Maspero, Zürcher, Tang Yongtong, Ren Jiyu, and other scholars. Cf. (B18), pp. 258–259; (B27), p. 37; (B81), the first chapter; (B79), pp. 93–94. p. 105.

\(^{160}\) “Tai Ping Bu, Tai Ping Jing, Jing Chao Jia Bu” in (B51).

\(^{161}\) See above note (10).

\(^{162}\) (B38), vol. 10, p. 1082.

\(^{163}\) The *Wei Lue* was compiled around the middle of the third century. A passage about the *Laozi Hua Hu* story is quoted in Pei Songzhi’s commentary in (B31), pp. 819–960. A similar passage given by Huangfu Mi in his *Gao Shi Zhuan* is quoted in Fa-lin’s “Bian Zheng Lun”, in (B127), vol. 2110.


\(^{165}\) Quoted from Chen Ziliang’s commentary to Fa-lin’s “Bian Zheng Lun”, in (B127), vol. 2110. This passage has been discussed by S. Lévi, P. Pelliot, Zürcher, and other scholars. For further reference, see (B27), pp. 292, notes 21–23.

\(^{166}\) The murals in Dunhuang Cave 323 have been discussed by Jin Weimo in (B16), pp. 344–354.
The mural shows two Buddhist figures standing above the water. On the shore, beside praying Buddhist monks, are Taoists raising their fan-banners and holding a ceremony to show their reverence. Details of this story are recorded in the Ji Shenzhou Sanbao Ganying Lu: In the first year of jian-xing (313 A.D.) under the reign of Emperor Min, fishermen of Wuxian County saw two figures standing above the water far out on the sea. Taking them to be sea gods, the fishermen asked shamans to offer a sacrifice in welcome. But the wind grew stronger, the waves rose higher, and frightened the people away. Then some followers of the Wu-dou-mi Sect of Taoism, who were disciples of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi, said: “They are Heavenly Masters,” and went to welcome the gods. But the wind and the waves would not subside. Finally Zhu Ying, a lay Buddhist, asked some monks and other believers of Buddhism to pray on the beach. Only then did the sea calm down. The two figures came in with the tide. From the inscription on them, the people learned that they were stone images belonging to Buddhism.167

The incident, as depicted and recorded, is of course no more than a legend. Yet it reveals, indirectly, certain very important historical facts. In the story, the people identified the Buddhist icons as gods of some sort. The shamans sacrificed to them. The followers of religious Taoism took them to be manifestations of the Heavenly Master. The author of the story, obviously taking a Buddhist standpoint, condemned the absurdity of the “heretics”. The story can, however, be taken as a perfect condensation of the three most important forms which Buddhism took when it was first introduced to China. I have pointed out that images of the Buddha, which appear in many art works of the Han and Three Kingdoms periods, were worshipped as the deity of various popular cults. I have also discussed the plagiarization and utilization of Buddhism by early religious Taoism. A further insight provided by this story is that the Buddhist images had once been worshipped by the Taoists as their Heavenly Master. This certainly reminds us of the East Sea Master, who was worshipped in the temple at the Kongwang Shan site. It is also significant to notice that this story was referred to as occurring in the eastern coastal area, where the Kongwang Shan stone carvings were created. During the Three Kingdoms and Western Jin periods, religious Taoism faced the task of creating its own deities and canons. In so doing, its followers picked out well-known legendary philosophers, popular gods and spirits, as well as foreign deities at random, dressed them in Taoist gowns, and proclaimed them to be gods of their own creed. This practice can be clearly seen in the Tai Ping Jing’s description of itself: It brings together the teachings of all the sages since the beginning of the world, the records of the verifications and prophecies of the Han, and the utterances of commoners, slaves and foreigners, to explain the Way of Heaven.168

In light of the five issues briefly discussed above, namely, the utilization of Buddhism by religious Taoism, the parting of the two religions from the end of the Eastern Han, the domination of Taoism in the eastern coastal region, the possible relationship between

167 Cf. ibid., pp. 347-350; also (B25), pp. 9-10.
168 (B83), vol. 91, p. 348.
the Kongwang Shan carvings and the Taoist East Sea Temple, and, perhaps most convincing of all, the larger size and main position of traditional Chinese figures in the Kongwang Shan carvings, we can derive the probable conclusion that the Kongwang Shan carvings are Taoist in content. Although many of their features emanate from Buddhism, they neither follow the strict formal and iconographical conventions of Buddhist art, nor propagate the Buddhist canon. The images of the Buddha and of other deities taken from traditional Chinese art at the site could well be part of the burgeoning Taoist pantheon. Instead of proclaiming these carvings to be the earliest Buddhist art in China, therefore, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that they are the earliest examples of Taoist art.

Even so, the Kongwang Shan stone carvings are of great significance in the study of the development of Chinese Buddhist art. Different from the incorporation of Indian Buddhist elements in secular art and in various popular religious art forms, the Kongwang Shan carvings reveal another way through which the Chinese received Buddhism — the incorporation of Buddhist elements by Taoist art. Orthodox Buddhist art of the Han, the Three Kingdoms, and of the Western Jin, known to us only through historical records, is yet to be discovered.

The three forms which Buddhist art took as it found its way into the Chinese tradition, namely, that of secular art, of Taoist art, and of "Chinese Buddhist" art, existed throughout the development of Buddhist art in China. The interaction between these three forms plays an important role in the development of a Buddhist art that is uniquely Chinese. The discovery and study of the Kongwang Shan stone carvings, and other works of art containing Buddhist elements, give us a more vivid picture of what happened to Buddhist art when it first reached China. E. Zürcher wrote twenty years ago:

"It is a discouraging fact that hardly anything is known about other, equally important, manifestations of Buddhism on Chinese soil during the period in question. The earliest development of popular Buddhism in the various regions of the empire, the growth of locally differentiated popular beliefs and cults, the ways in which the doctrine was preached among the illiterate population, the status of the individual priest, the social and economic functions of the Church in rural communities and so many other subjects of vital importance for the study of early Chinese Buddhism are hardly ever mentioned." 169

Through the works of art discussed in this paper we are getting a glimpse of the way in which Buddhism began to strike roots in China, although a more extensive reversal of the discouraging state of affairs lamented by Zürcher still awaits further efforts.

169 (B27), pp. 2-3.
CHINESE NAMES AND TERMS

Akagi-zuka
An Shigao
Bao
Bao Qian
Bi
Biyi
Chen Ziliang
Chiba-ken
Chu Ci
Chu Wang Ying Zhi
Ci
Da Zhao
Danyang
da-quan-tong-bao
Deng Zhen Yin Jue
Dengxian
ding
Ding Yizhen
Dingxian
Dong Guan Han Ji
Dong Wanggong
Donghai
Donghai Shenjun Miao
Dongshan
Echeng
fan
feng-huang
Fengjun Ruren
Fu Rui
Fu Yi
fo-shou
Gaochang
Gao Shi Zhuan
Gion
guan
Quangling
gucang
Gucheng Shan
Gulugou
Gurma-ken
Guyuan
Hanxi
He Shi
Honglou
hu
Hu Shi
hao-xiang
Hu Yinlin
Huan
Huan Di Ben Ji

幡
鳳凰
馮君孺人
符瑞
傅毅
佛獸
高坿
高士傳
祗園
罐
廣陵
穀倉
古城山
古路溝
群馬縣
國原
寒溪
孟氏
洪樓
壺
胡適
畫像
胡隆麟
桓
桓帝本記
Huan Long Shi  
Huangfu Mi 
Huangguan 
Hui-yuan 
Hungping 
Huntang 
Huo Qubing 
Ichinomia 
Iida-shi 
Ji Shenzhou Sanbao Ganying Lu 
Jian-chu 
Jiangning 
Jian-wu 
Jian-xing 
Jianye 
Jintan 
Jing Ke 
Jinxian 
Jiu-yan 
Kamikawa-ji 
Kang Senghui 
Kisarazu-shi 
Lita Katsuragi-gun 
Kongwang Shan 
Kuaiji 
kui-feng-jing 

Laozi Hua Hu Jing 
Laozi Hua Xihu Pin 
Lianxisi 
Lianyun Gang 
lin 
Ling 
ling 
ling-hua 
lingzuo 
lishi 
Longxing Shan 
Lu 
Mahao 
Man 
Maocun 
Min 
Ming 
Mu Zi 
Mukô-shi 
Nagano-ken 
Okayama-shi 
Pengcheng 
Pengshan 
po 
pu-shou 
qi-lin 
Qimu Que
Xi Jing Fu
Xi Wangmu
Xi Yu Zhan
Xiang Kai
Xiang Kai Zhan
xiangrui
Xiap
Xiaoshan
Xiaotang Shan
Xie-ma-tai
Xigang
Xin’an
Xiongnu
xi-ping
Xiu-tu
Xu
Xu
Xu Han Zhi
Xun Li Zhan
Xun Wang Shan
Yamashiro-machi
Yi
Yi Li
Yinan
Ying
Yixing
yong-ping
yu
Yu Huan
Yu Ji
Yu Ji Shen Shu
Yu Jiaxi
yuan-kang
yuan-shou
Yunmeng
Yuzhou
Zao-ci-lin
Zeng
Zhan Ji
Zhang Bikang
Zhang Qian
Zhangjia Dashan
Zhao Hun
zhaohunzang
Zhaoshigang
Zhen Gao
Zhenjiang
Zhi Qian
Zidanku
宜興
永平
孟
魚泰
于吉
于吉神書
余嘉錫
元康
元狩
雲夢
鬱州
造此廬
曾
展季
張壁元
張騫
張家大山
招魂
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