

THE BUDDHIST CAVES AT QIXIASHAN, CHINA  
(SOUTHERN DYNASTIES, 420-589 CE)

DISSERTATION

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By

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\* \* \* \* \*

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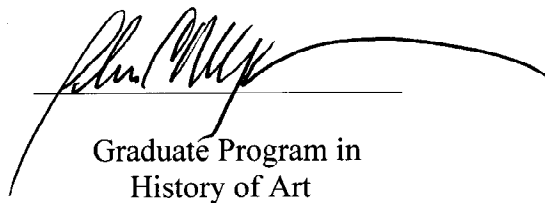
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the Southern Dynasties (420-589 CE) Buddhist caves at Qixiashan, located in the Nanjing region of Jiangsu province in China. This group of carvings, which includes eighteen major caves and two small niches, are by far the earliest and, despite their poor condition, the better preserved examples of the few rock-cut remains in the south during the Six Dynasties period (220-589 CE). In addition, this imperially sponsored cave site is located at the ancient capital of the Southern Dynasties; thus, the Buddhist monuments at Qixia provide important physical evidence of the mainstream southern Buddhist art of that time. However, due to an unfortunate cement coating of images during an ill-advised 1925 “restoration,” it has been very difficult to conduct scholarly research on this site until the late 1990s, when the cement was removed by my work on Buddhist cave temples.

My principal research data are based on field research, particularly the detailed photographic documentation of these newly-restored caves and drawings collected in my original fieldwork. In addition to the visual material, my research method also includes translating a large body of primary literature related to the caves and their excavation. Within this comparative framework, I have provided a detailed and systematic analysis of the architectural layout, iconographic themes, and stylistic characteristics of images.

This study provides the first thorough visual documentation and art historical analysis of the Qixia caves. The chronological analysis based on textual and artistic evidence proposes three stages of artistic development at Qixia: the first period dated approximately after 484 CE during the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty; the second period dated to the first quarter of the sixth century, somewhere between 511 or 513 and 530 CE, of the early Southern Liang dynasty; the third period dated around the second quarter of the sixth century during the later part of the Southern Liang dynasty. A closer examination of the site's iconography within the historical context further reveals the popularity of the Amitayus and Maitreya Pure Lands as well as the *Lotus Sutra* during the Southern Dynasties period.

A contextual study of the Qixia caves informs us that, while borrowing northern conventions, Qixia has developed a unique southern style in cave art and architecture throughout the Southern Qi and Liang dynasties. This new southern tradition immediately provided models for the late Northern Wei caves during the end of the fifth and early sixth century. My findings also suggest that this south to north influence continues throughout the later part of the Northern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang period. Given the fact that late fifth and sixth century witnessed the domestication of Buddhism in China, this study further signifies the role and contribution of southern China in the internalization of Buddhism and Buddhist art during this period, and highlights the significance of the Southern Dynasties in the history of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art.



Dedicated to my parents

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My study of the Qixia caves first started from 1994-1996 when I was working in the Nanjing Municipal Museum. I am most deeply grateful to Professor Su Bai, my former graduate advisor in Peking University, for guiding me throughout the original field research conducted during that time. This preliminary field research at Qixia naturally led to my interest in using the site as the basis for my dissertation study. I also owe special thanks to his invaluable guidance and steadfast support as an inspiring mentor all these years.

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3. Wei Lin, "New Discoveries at Cave 13 (currently Cave 18) on the Thousand-Buddha-Cliff at Qixiashan," *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1996): 32-36, 84.

## FIELDS OF STUDY

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

T      *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 (Tripitaka Chinese version)

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The rock-cut cave temple is one of the major architectural forms developed by early Buddhist practitioners. Cave temples were intended for many of the same functions as free-standing structure, including meditation and initiation, along with the display of images for veneration. Buddhist cave sites are often located in remote mountainous regions, offering practitioners a peaceful environment suitable for spiritual endeavor. At the same time, such caves were also generally accessible to major trade routes, thus fostering access and patronage. Throughout history, these caves have served as focal points of Buddhist pilgrimage and have stood as vivid testimony to the flourishing of Dharma.

In China, the Buddhist rock-cut architectural tradition appeared and subsequently enjoyed great popularity during the Six Dynasties period (220-589 CE). This was an age of political turmoil between the fall of the Eastern Han 漢 (8-220 CE) and the reunification of China under the Sui 隋 dynasty (581-618 CE) in 589 CE. Historians also designate this long period of division in Chinese history as the Era of Sanguo Liangjin Nanbeichao 三國兩晉南北朝, that is, the Era of Three Kingdoms (220-280 CE), Western and Eastern Jin 晉 (265-420 CE), Southern and Northern Dynasties (386-589 CE). The

term “Six Dynasties” generally refers to the six contending regimes established in southern China, namely the Wu 吳 kingdom (222-280 CE), Eastern Jin 晉 (317-420 CE), Song 宋 (420-479 CE), Qi 齊 (479-502 CE), Liang 梁 (502-557 CE), and Chen 陳 (557-589 CE) dynasties. The latter four are also known as the Southern Dynasties (420-589 CE) (Figure 1.1).

San Guo 三國, Three Kingdoms		Wei 魏	220-265 CE
		Shu 蜀 or Shu Han 蜀漢	221-263 CE
		Wu 吳	222-280 CE
Liang Jin 兩晉, Two Jin Dynasties		Xi Jin 西晉, Western Jin	265-316 CE
		Dong Jin 東晉, Eastern Jin	317-420 CE
Nan Bei Chao 南北朝, Southern and Northern Dynasties	Nan Chao 南朝, Southern Dynasties	Song 宋, or Liu 劉 Song	420-479 CE
		Qi 齊, or Southern Qi	479-502 CE
		Liang 梁, or Southern Liang	502-557 CE
		Cheng 陳, or Southern Chen	557-589 CE
	Bei Chao 北朝, Northern Dynasties	Bei Wei 北魏, Northern Wei	386-534 CE
		Dong Wei 東魏, Eastern Wei	534-550 CE
		Bei Qi 北齊, Northern Qi	550-577 CE
		Xi Wei 西魏, Western Wei	535-557 CE
		Bei Zhou 北周, Northern Zhou	557-581 CE

Table 1.1: Brief chronology of Six Dynasties history (220-589 CE)

Despite the political disunity, artistic and literary evidence demonstrate that the Six Dynasties period witnessed a great flourishing of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art in its early stage of Chinese development. Numerous Chinese Buddhist rock-cut caves were excavated during this period, and many of them have survived to the present day. However, the Southern Dynasties Buddhist caves at Qixiashan 棲霞山 “Qixia Mountains,” the subject of my study, are by far the earliest and, despite their poor

condition, the better preserved examples of the few rock-cut remains in the south. The Qixiashan caves, also known as the Qianfoya 千佛崖, or “Thousand-Buddha-Cliff” caves, are located 22 kilometers northeast of modern Nanjing 南京, in Jiangsu 江蘇 province. The city lies on the lower reach of the Yangzi River and serves as the capital for Jiangsu province (Figure 1.2).

### **A Note on Geography**

The Chinese have historically divided their region into the southern and northern areas, who developed very distinctive cultures from each other. Generally speaking, the southern region refers to lands to the south of the Yangzi River. This is the geographic area that I will focus on in my study. Also noteworthy is that the Nanjing city, where the Qixia cave site is located, served as the capital city successively for the Wu Kingdom, the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties during the Six Dynasties period.<sup>1</sup> The city is on the eastern part of the southern China, immediately to the south of the Yangzi River.

### **Introduction to the Site**

Qixiashan consists of three major mountain peaks which, from the west to the east, are Hushan 虎山 “Mount Tiger,” Sanmaofeng 三茅峰 “Sanmao Peak,”<sup>2</sup> and Longshan 龍山 “Mount Dragon.” In the early times, Qixiashan is also known as

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<sup>1</sup> It was known as Jianye 建鄴 in the Wu Kingdom, and changed its name into Jiankang 建康 during the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties period.

<sup>2</sup> Sanmaofeng 三茅峰 is named after the Taoist Sanmaogong 三茅宮 or “Sanmao Shrine,” located on the top of the peak. Also known as Fengxiangfeng 鳳翔峰, “Phoenix-flying Peak”, it is the central and the highest hill at Qixia.

Sheshan 攝山 “She Mountains,” or Sanshan 繖山 “Umbrella Mountains.”<sup>3</sup> The term Qixia, “Perching Rosy Clouds,” likely derives from the name of the Qixia temple, originally built at the site in the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty.<sup>4</sup> The caves, located behind the Qixia temple and Pagoda<sup>5</sup> (Figures 1.3-4), are carved out of the sandstone cliffs right to the southeast of Sanmaofeng. What we find here are mostly medium-sized caves no more than three meters in depth and smaller caves around one meter in depth (that only allow a tiny person to enter). In addition, there are still smaller niches carved on the empty wall surface of the cliffs. As presently known, there are around two hundred and fifty caves and niches that house about three hundred and fifty Buddhist figures.

The caves and niches are scattered among separate cliffs of Qixiashan, and can be generally divided into three groups: Lower Cliff, Upper Smaller Cliff, and Upper Larger Cliff (Figure 1.5). The Lower Cliff, known as the Qianfoyan 千佛巖, or Thousand-Buddha-cliff, is located on the foot of the mountains, with the carvings on the south and west walls (Figures 1.6-9).<sup>6</sup> The two upper cliffs, next to each other, are located a little

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<sup>3</sup> These two names commonly appear in early writings. See the discussion in Chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> The literary analysis in Chapter 2 reveals that the Qixia temple was founded by Ming Sengshao 明僧紹 in the Southern Qi dynasty. Unfortunately, the original structures of the temple were destroyed in later times. The present-day buildings at the site are reconstructions dated to the early twentieth century. During the Cultural Revolution period (1966-1967), the temple suffered another series of destruction. It was not until 1979 that the Qixia temple was renovated and reopened to the public.

<sup>5</sup> The stone Pagoda belongs to the Qixia temple complex (Figure 1.4). It was originally erected in 601 CE of the Sui dynasty, renovated in the tenth century of the Southern Tang period (937-975 CE).

<sup>6</sup> On the northern end of the west wall of the Lower Cliff, right next to Cave 1, is an inscription written by You Jiuyan 游九言 in the third year of the Qingyuan 慶元 reign (1197 CE) of the Southern Song 宋 dynasty (1127-1279 CE). The inscription contains six huge characters arranged in two lines, read from top to bottom, left to right. They read: Qixiashan 棲霞山 Qianfoyan 千佛巖, literally translated as “Qixia Mountain Thousand-Buddha-Cliff” (Figures 1. 8-10). The term Qianfoyan, therefore, is also used to name

higher on the slopes of the mountains (Figures 1. 11-12). The larger of the two upper cliffs, also known as the Qianfoling 千佛嶺, or Thousand-Buddha-Ridge, bears carvings that are mainly on the south wall of the cliff, with very few on the west wall (Figures 1.13-14). The smaller one is a free-standing cliff located to the west end, with the carvings on all of the four faces (Figures 1.11-12). Shaped like a black gauze cap worn by Chinese officials in the early times, the Upper Smaller Cliff is commonly called as Shamaofeng 紗帽峰, or Gauze-Cap-Peak. As I will discuss later, the excavation at Qixia began from the south face of the Lower Cliff in the late fifth century during the Southern Dynasties period, and moved to the west face of the same cliff as well as to the Upper Larger Cliff in the Tang 唐 dynasty (618-907 CE). The carvings on the Upper Smaller Cliff and the numerous small niches at the site are probably even later, produced after the Tang.<sup>7</sup>

For centuries, the Qixia site has experienced natural erosion, as well as a series of human destructions and reconstructions. According to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 CE) scholar Sheng Shitai 盛時泰, there was evidence of the restoration at the site from the Baoyuan 寶元 to the Chunxi 淳熙 reigns (1038-1189 CE) during the Northern (960-1127 CE) and Southern Song 宋 (1127-1279 CE) dynasties.<sup>8</sup> Further, a number of the Ming

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the Lower Cliff. It should be pointed out that Chinese character “ya 崖” and “yan 巖” both refer to “cliff.” As a result, Qianfoya (the name for the site) and Qianfoyan (the name for the Lower Cliff) are both translated as Thousand-Buddha-Cliff in this dissertation.

<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to provide more accurate dating of these carvings due to the cement coating of the images. In addition, they are either niches or small-sized caves, whose architectural layout does not provide enough evidence to the dating either.

<sup>8</sup> See Sheng Shitai’s 盛時泰 *Qixia xiaozhi* 棲霞小志 (Qixia Gazetteer). Sheng’s short volume records the major scenic spots at Qixia, as well as the inscriptions and other writings related to Qixia. The information

dynasty inscriptions found at Qixia refer to the renovation of the caves and images, thus informing us of a series of intensive reconstruction projects from the sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries. As presently known, there are around sixteen Ming inscriptions discovered in the caves, and fifteen of which relate to the repairs and refurbishments.<sup>9</sup> In addition, two memorial steles standing in front of cave 19 on the south face of the Lower Cliff also provide invaluable information on the reconstruction history during the Ming dynasty (Figure 1.15).<sup>10</sup> The extant stone structures, currently part of cave 19 and some other caves on the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.6-7), are actually important physical evidence of the Ming renovation.<sup>11</sup> Most noteworthy, in 1925, the

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mentioned here is found in Sheng's discussion on Zhao Bosheng's 趙伯晟 poem of Qixia. The Jiaqing 嘉慶 (1819 CE) edition of the *Qixia xiaozhi* is included in *Ouxiang lingshi* 藕香零拾, vol 2., compiled and collated by Miao Qunsun 繆荃孫 (Guangxu 光緒 edition, 1896 CE; reprint, Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1968).

<sup>9</sup> According to the inscriptions, the Ming renovation, which began as early as the eleventh year of the Jiajing 嘉靖 reign (1532 CE), were mainly concentrated during the Wanli 萬曆 reign (1573-1620 CE). For a complete record of these inscriptions, see Xiang Da 向達 "Sheshan fojiao shike xiaoji 攝山佛教石刻小紀" (A Record of Buddhist Stone Carvings at the She Mountains), and "Sheshan fojiao shike buji 攝山佛教石刻補紀" (An Additional Record of Buddhist Stone Carvings at the She Mountains). They are both included in a collection of Xiang Da's works, *Tangdai Chang'an yu Xiyu wenming* 唐代長安與西域文明 (Tang [Capital] Chang'an and Central Asian Civilization) (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1957), 443-494.

<sup>10</sup> The stele in front of Cave 19, to its proper right, bears an inscription entitled "Chongxiu Qixiasi ji 重修棲霞寺記" (Record of Reconstructing the Qixia Temple), composed by Zhu Shilu 祝世祿; the one to the proper left is inscribed with "Qixiasi xiuzao ji 棲霞寺修造記" (Record of Refurbishing the Qixia Temple), composed by Jiao Hong 焦竑. The two inscriptions, both dated the thirty-fourth year of the Wanli 萬曆 reign (1606 CE), record in detail the renovation of the temple structures as well as the caves. Zhu's inscription further informs us that all the caves were repaired and adorned from 1600-1606 CE.

<sup>11</sup> In his essay "Zaiyou Sheshan jilue 再遊攝山記略" (Record of the Second Trip to the She Mountains), the Ming dynasty official Feng Shike 馮時可 describes Cave 19 and says: "往即石為龕，今更以石砌為殿。" The translation of this passage reads: [the cave] was carved out of stone in the past, and today stone was further used to build the hall. This indicates that the stone structure of Cave 19, as we see today, is of Ming reconstruction. Likewise, other similar structures on the Lower Cliff, including those belonging to Caves 18, 20, 22-24, 26 and 27, are most probably part of the same renovation project dated the Ming dynasty. Feng's essay is collected in Ge Yinliang 葛寅亮's *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志 (Record of Buddhist Temples at Jinling [present-day Nanjing]), (Wanli edition, 1607 CE; first reprint, Jinshan: Jiangtian Temple, 1936; second reprint, Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1976), juan 4, 495.

monks at the Qixia temple carried out a large scale “restoration” project in an effort to gain religious merit. During that time, all the images were covered by cement, thus completely concealing their original appearance. It was not until the late 1990s that the decision was made to remove the cement covering of the images from all the major caves at Qixia,<sup>12</sup> thus opening a new door for scholarly research.

This dissertation, as a start to my study of the site, examines the caves on the south face of the Lower Cliff. The majority of these caves, as will be discussed later, were excavated in the late fifth and sixth century in the Southern Dynasties, except for Caves 6-8, 14, as well as other aforementioned unnumbered small niches, most probably dated to the Tang dynasty and even later periods.<sup>13</sup> The present study specifically focuses on the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia, namely the earliest eighteen caves numbered from 5, 9, 10-13, 15-24, 26, 28 (Figures 1.6-7).<sup>14</sup> Broadly speaking, I have identified three categories into which these eighteen caves fall: Category I includes Caves 18-24, and 26; Category II includes Caves 5, 10, 12-13, 15; Category III includes Caves 9,

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<sup>12</sup> Buddhist monks of the Qixia temple made the first attempt to remove the cement covering in order to refurbish the images with a new coating of cement in Cave 18. I was fortunate to be at the site and witness the original appearance of Southern Dynasties sculptures when the old covering was removed and before the new layer was applied. My paper, which records this exciting discovery, introduces the original sculptures of Cave 18 to the scholarly community. See Lin Wei, “Qixiashan Qianfoya di 13 ku de xinfaxian 棲霞山千佛崖第 13 窟的新發現” (New Discoveries at Cave 13 [currently Cave 18] on the Thousand-Buddha-Cliff at Qixiashan), *Wenwu*, no. 4 (1996): 32-36, 84.

<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to provide precise dates of these caves and niches, as their architectural layout does not provide enough evidence for the dating. In addition, their images are currently under cement covering, except for cave 14, which, according to my early work of this dissertation research, is dated around the Tang (618-907 CE) and the Five Dynasties period (907-960 CE). See Lin Wei, “Qixiashan Qianfoya qu Nanchao shiku de fenqi yanjiu” 棲霞山千佛巖區南朝石窟的分期研究 (Periodization and Chronology of the Southern Dynasties Buddhist Caves at Qixiashan), *Yanjing xuebao*, new number 19 (2005): 275-308.

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise specified, “Qixia caves” will be used in this thesis to refer to the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia. The cave numbering system employed in this thesis was established in 1994, when I and my colleagues from the Nanjing Municipal Museum first researched the site. According to this system, the sequence goes from the west face to the south face of the Lower Cliff.



11, 16, 17, 28. The caves from each category are generally located near each other. They also possess common features, not included in the other categories, in architectural layout, sculptural programs and/or stylistic characteristics of the imagery.<sup>15</sup> Since architectural layout is one of my major concerns, Cave 25 and Cave 27 (Figures 1.6, 16-17), which are only simple niches, are not included in the three categories. However, as these two caves also belong to the Southern Dynasties carvings at Qixia,<sup>16</sup> they will thus be taken into consideration as well in this study.

As one of the very few early surviving examples of their kind, the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia, offer us one of the most significant visual documentation of the early Buddhist rock-cut tradition in southern China. During the Six Dynasties period, Buddhist practice in the south appeared to be more interested in building wooden temples.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, cave carving activities flourished from the fourth to the sixth centuries in the north. During a long period of more than two hundred and seventy years, from the Eastern Jin to the Southern Dynasties, we have only two major Buddhist rock-cut remains in the south. One is at Qixia, and the other refers to the Baoxiang 寶相 temple at Shicheng 石城 Mountain in Xinchang 新昌, Zhejiang 浙江 province. The Baoxiang temple bears a colossal Maitreya image carved out of cliffside (Figure 1.18-19),

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<sup>15</sup> For the detailed groupings of the caves, see Lin Wei (2005): 275-308.

<sup>16</sup> In terms of their locations, the two niches are carved together with the other caves belonging to Category I (Figure 1.6). As I mentioned in Footnote 11, the rectangular niche of Cave 27 was most probably of the Ming dynasty renovation. The guardian figure currently in the niche, however, may have been part of the original design of Cave 26 (Figures 1.6-7, 17). For the further discussions, see Chapter 3.

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, none of these temples have survived to the present day. However, they have been well documented in the literature throughout the history. Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, in his research, has calculated the number of temples and Buddhist monks from the Eastern Jin to the Southern Liang Dynasty. See his work, *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), 136.

accompanied by two other caves that house Buddhist figures. The Maitreya Buddha, about thirteen meters in height, dates to 516 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty. Unfortunately, it is currently covered by plaster with gold leaf applied to the surface, thus concealing its original appearance.<sup>18</sup>

Compared with the carvings at Shicheng site, the Qixia caves are definitely of greater significance due to the larger scale of construction. They are also in a better state of condition. The current condition indicates that the caves' architectural layout remains intact. The sculptural programs of the images are mostly identifiable, despite the fact that some of the figural representations are weathered and damaged, and some are still under cement covering. Further, the images uncovered during the recent cleaning process are mostly in good condition, with the garments and postures of the figures clearly visible, and revealing the original appearance of Southern Dynasties sculptures. Therefore, as the earliest and the better preserved rock-cut examples in the south, the art and architecture at Qixia provide an important primary resource for understanding the early Buddhist rock-cut practice in southern China.

More importantly, the Southern Dynasties caves and their images at Qixia present a substantial body of visual material of Buddhist art in the south during the Six Dynasties period. Partly due to the lack of surviving remains in the south, past scholarship on Chinese Buddhist art during that time has primarily focused on artistic evidence preserved in the northern region. Buddhist art in the Southern Dynasties has for decades

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<sup>18</sup> As a result of later restorations, the Maitreya Buddha who was originally seated with two legs pendent currently sits with two legs crossed in meditative posture. In addition, the five-storied wooden building in front is a modern reconstruction dated 1917 CE. For the detailed study of the Shicheng site, see Su Bai 宿白, "Nanchao kanxiang yiji chutan 南朝龕像遺跡初探" (A Preliminary Study of Buddhist Caves and Statues of the Southern Dynasties), *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 4 (1989): 393-398.

received little focused study until the 1990s, when a number of images were discovered and published. The majority of these visual materials were found at the Chengdu 成都 region of the Sichuan 四川 province in southwest China (Figure 1.1). As will be discussed later in this chapter, scholarly research has revealed that the source of the Chengdu style and iconography came from the ancient Jiankang 建康 region (present-day Nanjing), the capital of the Southern Dynasties.

The earliest eighteen caves and their images at Qixia are the only surviving physical evidence of Buddhist art from the Jiankang region, which served not only as the political center, but also as the nucleus for religious and artistic activities of the Southern Dynasties. In addition, literary accounts, which I will analyze in Chapter 2, also inform us that the excavation at Qixia was under the sponsorship of the southern courts, with a number of royal princes and aristocrats as patrons of the cave carvings. As a result, a complete study of these monuments with a detailed stylistic and iconographic analysis is unquestionably critical to understanding mainstream Buddhism, its practice and religious expression in art, in the Southern Dynasties.

Further, it is generally accepted that Chinese pictorial art in the northern region underwent two dramatic stylistic changes in the later part of the Northern Dynasties from the late fifth to the sixth centuries. These two changes, especially evident in the representation of human figures in both secular and religious art, occurred in the late fifth century under Northern Wei, and around the mid- and late sixth century under Northern Qi respectively. As will be discussed later, these stylistic revolutions in northern Buddhist art served as vivid testimony to the absorption and internalization of Buddhism in China during that time. Past studies have pointed out that these two changes, which

were a result of the *Hanhua* 漢化, or Sinicization effort of the northern regimes, have their direct sources from southern China. These studies further argue that the art of the southern courts centered in the Jiankang region was the dominant factor in the development of Buddhist art in the Six Dynasties.<sup>19</sup> Hence, a study of the court-sponsored Qixia site, and a contextualization of the Qixia caves within the broader sphere of Chinese Buddhist art traditions in the Six Dynasties period, is essential to understand the significant role of the Southern Dynasties in the history of Chinese Buddhist art, and Chinese art in general.

### **Objectives and Layout of the Study**

This study has four principal objectives: 1. to review the primary literature related to the excavation of the earliest eighteen caves on the south face of the Lower Cliff, 2. to conduct a descriptive analysis and chronological study of these caves, 3. to examine these caves' major iconographic themes, 4. to contextualize the Qixia caves within the history of Chinese Buddhist rock-cut art and architecture.

In Chapter 2, I assemble and analyze textual information associated with the cave carving activities at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties period. This rich body of literary sources provides primary references recording the foundation and early history of the site. A review of the literature, therefore, is essential to examine these earliest

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<sup>19</sup> Alexander C. Soper, "South Chinese Influence on the Buddhist Art of the Six Dynasties," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 32 (1960): 47-112; also see Su Bai 宿白, "Beichao zaoxing zhong renwu xingxiang de bianhua 北朝造型藝術中人物形象的變化" (Changes of Human Forms in the Plastic Arts of the Northern Dynasties), in the collection of his works, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* 中国石窟寺研究 (Studies on Chinese Buddhist Cave Temples) (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996), 349-354.

eighteen caves, their founders and patrons, dating and iconography, and to shed light on Buddhist practices, especially court practices, in the south of that time. In addition, this literary investigation is also invaluable for further chronological study and iconographic analysis of these monuments.

Chapters 3 to 5, the focus of this dissertation, discuss the three categories of the caves, respectively, with an emphasis on their content, dating, and iconography. In each chapter, I first conduct a descriptive analysis of the caves and their imagery, with an emphasis on architectural layout, sculptural programs, and stylistic characteristics of images. The purpose of this relatively lengthy analysis is to provide a clearer picture of the original design and content of these caves, which are largely unknown to the scholarly community. The second part of each chapter is devoted to the dating of the caves. The establishment of the caves' chronology is critical to understanding the different stages of artistic development at the Qixia site, and to exploring iconographic themes as well as other important religious issues within the historical context. My early work pertaining to the dissertation research, with an emphasis on the periodization and the dating of these caves, serves as the basis for this part of discussion.<sup>20</sup>

Finally, in each of these three chapters, I conduct an iconographic analysis of the imagery in the caves. A closer examination of the monuments' major iconographic elements is helpful to understand the Buddhist practices and religious beliefs during the Southern Dynasties period. Here, I focus primarily on the popular movements of the Amitayus and Maitreya Pure Land methodologies during that time. A corpus of related literary and visual references will also be taken into consideration in this discussion.

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<sup>20</sup> Lin Wei (2005): 275-308.

Chapter 6 observes art and architecture at Qixia within the larger framework of the Buddhist rock-cut cave temple tradition throughout China. Here, I concentrate on the relationship between the Qixia caves and other major artistic traditions in northern China during late fifth to sixth centuries. A contextualization of the site within the historical context may shed light on historical and religious settings that resulted in the excavation at Qixia. In addition, a comparative analysis of the Qixia caves with other artistic remains is also critical to our understanding of the source and influence of the Qixia cave style, as well as the intercultural exchanges between the northern and southern regions during the later part of the Six Dynasties period from the late fifth to the sixth centuries.

### **State of Scholarship**

#### *Scholarship on the Qixia Site*

The early twentieth century Japanese scholar Sekino Tadashi 関野貞 first brought the Qixia site to scholarly attention by providing brief general descriptions of the Pagoda and the Southern Dynasties Buddhist caves at Qixia.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after, in the 1920s, Sekino and Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定 published six volumes of *Shina Bukkyō shiseki* 支那佛教史蹟 (Buddhist Monuments of China), as a result of their years of archaeological field work in China.<sup>22</sup> This book bears brief discussion of the Qixia temple and the caves, as well as analysis of the Pagoda. Specifically, it also provides other important information related

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<sup>21</sup> The two essays, part of his traveling notes during his trip to China in 1919, are included in a collection of Sekino Tadashi's 関野貞 works, *Shina no kenchiku to geijutsu* 支那の建築と藝術 (Chinese Art and Architecture) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1938), 678-684.

<sup>22</sup> Sekino Tadashi and Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, *Shina Bukkyō shiseki* 支那佛教史蹟, 6 vols. (Tokyo: Bukkyō Shiseki Kenkyūkai, 1924-1931).

to the caves, including the two tablets, which I will discuss in Chapter 2, and several valuable photographs of the site.<sup>23</sup>

Around the same time, Chinese historian and archaeologist Xiang Da 向達 conducted original field research at the site during his three visits in the 1920s. Xiang's two articles provide detailed analysis of the Pagoda, its architectural form and iconography, as well as a complete record of the Ming dynasty inscriptions found in the caves.<sup>24</sup> The inscriptions are especially useful in reconstructing the history of the site through the centuries, as the inscriptional evidence reveals in detail a series of restoration projects implemented during the Ming dynasty.<sup>25</sup> However, no further research was conducted on the site for decades. American scholar Alexander C. Soper mentioned in his 1960 article that the site was "too damaged and too clumsily restored to reveal anything of its original style."<sup>26</sup> Apparently, the caves' condition, especially the cement covering of the images, is a major reason that deterred the continuous study of the site.

Scholarly research resumed in the 1980s. Chinese scholar Yan Wenru 閻文儒, in his *Zhongguo shiku yishu zonglun* 中國石窟藝術總論 (General View of Chinese Buddhist Cave Art), provides brief but helpful suggestions concerning patronage activities at the site.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, Professor Su Bai 宿白 published his work

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<sup>23</sup> Sekino Tadashi and Tokiwa Daijō (1924-1931), vol 4, 1-24.

<sup>24</sup> Xiang Da (1957), 443-494.

<sup>25</sup> Xiang Da (1957), 443-494; also see footnote 9.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960): 50.

<sup>27</sup> Yan Wenru 閻文儒, *Zhongguo shiku yishu zonglun* 中國石窟藝術總論 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1987), 49-51.

investigating the Southern Dynasties Buddhist caves and statues in 1989.<sup>28</sup> Su's article observes the two major rock-cut remains of that period, with an emphasis on Cave 18 and the Amitayus cave (Cave 19) at Qixia (Figure 1.6-7), and the Maitreya image at Shicheng (Figure 1.19). Through a careful analysis of extensive textual evidence, he not only examines the dating of these caves, but further explores important issues of Maitreya and Amitayus beliefs in the south. This work offers the first detailed scholarly research of the Qixia site, as well as a more complete study of the Maitreya image at Shicheng.<sup>29</sup> It also provides a framework for further study on Buddhism and Buddhist art in the Southern Dynasties, and, therefore, is of particular relevance to my present study. Specifically, Su's brief discussion of the mutual relationship between the northern and southern rock-cut architecture traditions helps contextualize the Qixia site within the history of Chinese Buddhist art.

In recent years, scholars like Huang Zheng 黃徵 and Xie Chengshui 謝成水 conducted a series of studies,<sup>30</sup> discussing the newly discovered mural painting of a pair of *feitian* 飛天, or flying *apsaras* at the Qixia site.<sup>31</sup> These works primarily focus on the

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<sup>28</sup> Su Bai (1989): 389-414.

<sup>29</sup> The Japanese scholar Ono Katsutoshi 小野勝年 has also researched the Shicheng site. See "Shinshō, Sekijōji to sono Mirokuzō 新昌・石城寺とその彌勒像" (Shichengsi at Xinchang and Maitreya Statue of the Temple), *Ars Buddhica*, no. 163 (1985): 11-28.

<sup>30</sup> Huang Zheng 黃徵, "Nanjing Qixiasi *feitian* de kaocha 南京棲霞寺飛天的考察" (The Examination of the Flying *apsaras* at Qixia Temple in Nanjing), *Dunhuang yanjiu*, no. 1 (2001): 23-27; also see Xie Chengshui 謝成水, "Cong Qixia shiku kan nanfang wenhua dui Dunhuang yishu de yingxiang 從棲霞石窟看南方文化對敦煌藝術的影響" (The Qixia Caves and the Impact of the Southern Culture on the Dunhuang Art), *Dunhuang yanjiu*, no 5 (2002): 37-45.

<sup>31</sup> The mural painting of a pair of *feitian* 飛天 was found on the ceiling at a small-sized cave, located to the proper left side of Cave 1 on the west face of the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.8-9, 20). These images were first introduced to the public by a local newspaper *Yangzi wanbao* 揚子晚報 (Yangzi Evening News) in 2000.



discussion of the Qixia *feitian*, their date and sources, and the relevance of Qixia and the southern culture to the Dunhuang 敦煌 Buddhist caves.<sup>32</sup> This reflects a new approach in the study of the Qixia site. By addressing the Qixia and Dunhuang art in a comparative manner, these studies also show maximum scholarly recognition of the significant historical role and research value of the Qixia site. However, none of these scholars has conducted their research within the chronological context of the site, thus resulting in some misinterpretations, which would otherwise be avoidable.<sup>33</sup> Hence, there is a need for a more overall consideration and a return to the study of the caves themselves before we can examine a single visual motif, and move forward with further analysis of cultural and religious issues related to the site.

Other than the works by the aforementioned scholars, there has been virtually no other scholarship on this site, and nothing has been published in a western language.<sup>34</sup> In particular, what has been lacking in past scholarship is a comprehensive investigation of the caves and their images. With the exception of the brief analysis of Caves 18 and 19

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On March 2001, an international conference of “Qixia Cave Art and Dunhuang Studies” was held in the Nanjing Normal University, primarily focusing on the Qixia *feitian* and its relationship with Dunhuang art.

<sup>32</sup> These works are included in *Nanjing Qixiashan shiku yishu yu Dunhuangxue* 南京棲霞山石窟藝術與敦煌學 (Qixia Cave Art in Nanjing and Dunhuang Studies), ed. Huang Zheng (Hangzhou 杭州: China Academy of Art Publisher, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> For example, according to the stylistic analysis of the flying *apsaras*, these scholars came to different conclusions of their dating, ranging from the late Southern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang Dynasties (618-907 CE). However, given its situation and scale, the cave with the painted *feitian* looks more like a subsidiary cave to Cave 1, which, as discussed in my early work, dates to the Tang period in terms of its structural layout and figure styles. As a result, the pre-Tang dating of this cave and its *feitian* figures is very unlikely. For the dating of Cave 1, see Lin Wei (2005): 297-301. A series of studies with a focus on the dating of the *feitian* images are included in *Nanjing Qixiashan shiku yishu yu Dunhuangxue* (2002).

<sup>34</sup> Some western studies that briefly discuss the Qixia site are mainly according to the previous Chinese scholarship, especially the work by Su Bai. For example, Hyun-sook Lee, *The Longmen Guyang Cave: Sculpture and Calligraphy of the Northern Wei (386-534)* (Ph.D. Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 2005): 45-50.

by Su Bai, as well as recent scholarly discussions on the newly-discovered *feitian* figures, Qixia cave art and architecture are almost unknown to the academic world.

In addition to the limited scholarship on the Qixia site, past studies on other artistic traditions in the south, which have revealed the many facets of Buddhism and Buddhist art in the Southern Dynasties, are also invaluable sources for the present study. Further, extensive publications on northern Buddhist art, especially rock-cut cave temple traditions in the Six Dynasties period, have also greatly contributed to the understanding of the Qixia site within the broader sphere of the history of Chinese Buddhist art. Hence, an overview of these scholarly studies is necessary. In the following sections, I will outline the other major scholarship that is of particular importance to my research.

### *Scholarship on Buddhist Art of the Southern Dynasties*

Scholarly investigation on Chinese Buddhist art began at the turn of the twentieth century. However, due to the rarity of artistic evidence, less attention had been devoted to Southern Dynasties Buddhist art before 1950s. Both the Japanese scholar Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖 and Swedish art historian Osvald Sirén discovered very few pieces of early Buddhist images in the south in their wider research of Chinese sculptures as a whole.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, their books are among the earliest publications recording Buddhist art works in the Southern Dynasties. Specifically, Ōmura's detailed analysis of

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<sup>35</sup> Ōmura records six pieces of Southern Dynasties images in his two volumes, while Sirén documents three images in his work. See Ōmura Seigai 大村西崖, *Chūgoku bijutsushi chōso hen* 中國美術史彫塑篇 (History of Chinese Sculpture), 2 vols. (Taishō 6 [1917] edition published under the title: *Shina bijutsushi chōso hen* 支那美術史彫塑篇; reprint, Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1980); also see Osvald Sirén, *Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, 4 vols. (London: E. Benn, limited, 1925).

textual evidence for Buddhist sculpture has informed us of a good deal about early Buddhist art in the south, thus laying the important groundwork for the field.

The mid-twentieth century saw the first publication dedicated to southern Buddhist art. It is an illustrated catalogue of selected Chengdu stone carvings, co-edited by Liu Zhiyuan 劉志遠 and Liu Tingbi 劉廷璧.<sup>36</sup> This Liu and Liu's volume bears fine illustrations of forty-eight Buddhist sculptures chosen from more than two hundred pieces discovered in the ruins of the Wanfosi 萬佛寺, or "Ten-Thousand Buddha Temple," in the Chengdu region of the Sichuan province (Figure 1.21).<sup>37</sup> Among these sculptures, whose dates range from the Six Dynasties to the Tang period, six images bear Southern Dynasties inscriptions.<sup>38</sup> Although the published materials were limited, this work, for the first time, reveals the flourishing of Buddhist art during the Southern Dynasties through physical evidence. As a result, it naturally became the basis upon which early scholarly research in this field, like those by Alexander C. Soper, was published.<sup>39</sup> Soper's article argues about the southern influence on Buddhist art in the

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<sup>36</sup> Liu Zhiyuan 劉志遠 and Liu Tingbi 劉廷璧, *Chengdu Wanfosi shike yishu* 成都萬佛寺石刻藝術 (Stone Carvings of the Ten-Thousand Buddha Temple at Chengdu) (Beijing: zhongguo gudian yishu chubanshe, 1958).

<sup>37</sup> The Wanfosi 萬佛寺, located outside the western gate of the Chengdu city, was originally built in the Eastern Han dynasty around the mid second century. The temple had served as a major center for Buddhist worship in the southwest region throughout history. Unfortunately, it did not survive to the present day due to a series of human destructions. Buddhist sculptures were first discovered at the old site of the temple in 1882 CE, during which time over one hundred pieces were excavated. Discoveries continued thereafter, and until the 1950s, around two hundred sculptures had been found at the site. See Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958), 1-4.

<sup>38</sup> Five of the images are dated the Southern Liang dynasty, and one is dated the Liu Song period. In addition, the authors also include in this work a Southern Qi stele dated 483 CE. This image was discovered at Maoxian 茂縣 in the Chengdu region in the 1920s. See Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958), figs. 1-2, 4-6, 8, 10, 31, 33; appendix figs. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960): 47-112.

Six Dynasties through the analysis of literary and artistic references. This offered a new perspective in the study of the field during that time, when the dominant role of the northern Buddhist art was emphasized by western scholars. It also anticipates one of the central interests in later scholarship on Chinese Buddhist art, and constitutes the basis for my discussion in Chapter Six.

Soper was particularly thorough in compiling and analyzing textual evidence for the study of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art. In another of his early works, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist Art in China*, he has translated the aforementioned Ōmura's collection of literary sources on early Buddhist sculpture in China from the Han to the Six Dynasties.<sup>40</sup> Correlating textual information with visual materials, Soper further examines major Buddhist iconographic themes of that time, with an emphasis on their sources, development and other related issues. This work provides the most detailed literary accounts of early Buddhist art in the south, and, therefore, is an invaluable research tool for my present study.

With no additional artistic evidence available, serious scholarship on Buddhist art of the Southern Dynasties was meager from 1960s to 1980s. It should be recognized, however, that Japanese scholars, like Nagahiro Toshio 長広敏雄 and Yoshimura Rei 吉村怜, showed considerable interest in iconographic study of the Chengdu images during that period.<sup>41</sup> Through a close reading of Buddhist texts and imagery, their works provide

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<sup>40</sup> Alexander C. Soper, *Literary Evidence for Early Buddhist art in China* (Ascona: Artibus Asiae supplementum 19, 1959).

<sup>41</sup> Nagahiro Toshio 長広敏雄, *Rikuchō jidai bijutsu no kenkyū* 六朝時代美術の研究 (The Representational Art of the Six Dynasties Period) (Tokyo: Bijutsu Shuppansha, 1969), 55-66; also see Yoshimura Rei 吉村怜, "Nanchō no Hokkekyō Fumonbon hensō 南朝の法華經普門品変相" (Painting of

a careful iconographic interpretation of a famous Wanfosi relief carving, dated the second year of the Yuanjia 元嘉 reign (425 CE) during the Liu Song period (Figure 1.22).<sup>42</sup> They further identify a similar theme on the reverse side of another important stele, datable to the first half of the sixth century in the Southern Liang dynasty (Figure 1.23). These researches, which seek to interpret the imagery using Buddhist scripture, reflect a new approach in the study of the field.

In these recent years, a number of Southern Dynasties Buddhist sculptures have been excavated from the Chengdu region, the same area where the aforementioned Wangfosi Buddhist carvings were found. Archaeological reports on these new discoveries provide detailed records of photographs, drawings and inscriptions, in addition to descriptive analyses of the sculptures.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, Yuan Shuguang 袁

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the “Universal Gateway” Chapter of the Lotus Sutra in the Southern Dynasties), *Ars Buddhica*, no. 162 (1985): 11-27.

<sup>42</sup> The relief carving, originally on the back of a fragmented stele discovered from the Wanfosi site, now exists only in an ink rubbing. In Liu and Liu’s work, this relief is recognized as a depiction of a Pure Land scene. Soper, in his brief discussion, suggests its relation with the *Lotus Sutra*. Nagahiro, however, identifies the life of Buddha, *jataka* stories and other related themes, through a close reading of *Liudu ji jing* 六度集經 (Collection of Stories of the Six Paramitas), and *Pusa benyuan jing* 菩薩本緣經 (Stories of Bodhisattvas’ Vows [purvapranidhana]). Yoshimura’s interpretation concurs with Soper’s opinion, and he further identifies detailed scenes associated with the Avalokitesvara chapter from the *Lotus Sutra*. See Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958): 4; Alexander C. Soper (1960): 107; Yoshimura Rei (1985): 11-27; Nagahiro Toshio (1969), 55-66. Also see *Liudu ji jing*, 8 juans, trans. Kang Senghui 康僧會 in the Wu Kingdom, T3, no 152: 1-52; *Pusa benyuan jing*, 3 juans, trans. Zhiqian 支謙 in the Wu Kingdom, T3, no. 153: 52-70.

<sup>43</sup> In 1990, a group of nine Southern Dynasties Buddhist sculptures were unearthed from a site on the market in the Chengdu city, of which two bear inscriptions dated 495 CE of the Southern Qi and 511CE of the Southern Liang respectively. In May of 1995, another eight pieces were discovered in the Xi’an 西安 Middle Road of the city, including five inscribed images. One is dated 490 CE of the Southern Qi Dynasty, and the other four are dated 504, 530, 545 and 551 CE of the Southern Liang Dynasty. For the detailed reports, see Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui 成都市文物考古工作隊 (Archaeological Team of Chengdu Municipality) and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 成都市文物考古研究所 (Institute of Archaeology of Chengdu), eds., “Chengdu shi Xi’an lu Nanchao shike zaoxiang qingli jianbao 成都市西安路南朝石刻造像清理報告 (Report on the Southern Dynasties Stone Carvings from the Xi’an Road in the Chengdu City),” *Wenwu*, no. 11 (1998): 4-20; also see Zhang Xiaoma 張肖馬 and Lei Yuhua 雷玉華,

曙光 reorganized the Wanfosi sculptures and steles currently in the Sichuan Provincial Museum collection, and offered a more complete account of these important findings discovered in the past years.<sup>44</sup> Huo Wei's 霍巍 work further reveals two additional inscribed Southern Dynasties images from the same Chengdu region.<sup>45</sup> These recent publications have greatly contributed to a renewed scholarly attention devoted to the study of Buddhist art in the Southern Dynasties, with a special focus on the southwest Chengdu region. At this new stage of scholarship in the field, the works I will discuss below are of particular relevance to my present study.

In his research, Li Yuqun 李裕群, after a close reading of stylistic features, sculptural programs and iconographic themes of the Chengdu images, proposes three stages of artistic development at this region, the first two of which are dated the Southern Dynasties.<sup>46</sup> Li's chronological analysis undoubtedly provides clues about the dating of

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“Chengdu shi Shangyejie Nanchao shike zaoxiang 成都市商業街南朝石刻造像” (The Southern Dynasties Stone Carvings Unearthed from the Shangye Street in the Chengdu City), *Wenwu*, no. 10 (2001): 4-18.

<sup>44</sup> Yuan Shuguang 袁曙光 reexamined sixty-three stone carvings currently in the museum collection. Among the eleven dated images, seven of which bear the Southern Liang dates (523, 525, 529, 532, 533, 537, 548 CE). For the detailed information, see Yuan Shuguang, “Sichuan sheng Bowuguan cang Wanfosi shike zaoxiang zhengli baogao 四川省博物館藏萬佛寺石刻造像整理報告” (Reorganizing the Wanfosi Buddhist Stone Carvings in the Sichuan Provincial Museum Collection), *Wenwu*, no. 10 (2001): 19-38.

<sup>45</sup> These two works, currently in the Sichuan University Museum collection, are dated to the Southern Liang dynasty in 532 and 549 CE respectively. See Huo Wei 霍巍, “Sichuan daxue Bowuguan shoucang de liangzun Nanchao shike zaoxiang 四川大學博物館收藏的兩尊南朝石刻造像 (The Two Southern Dynasties Buddhist Stone Carvings in the Sichuan University Museum Collection),” *Wenwu*, no. 10 (2001): 39-44.

<sup>46</sup> Li's three stages of artistic development include: a) period between the first year of the Yongming 永明 reign (483 CE) of the Southern Qi Dynasty and the Putong 普通 reign (520-526 CE) of the Southern Liang dynasty; b) period between the Putong reign and the year of 553 CE, when the Sichuan region was occupied by the Western Wei; c) period between the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou dynasties from 553 to 581 CE. See Li Yuqun 李裕群, “Shilun Chengdu diqu chutu de Nanchao fojiao shi zaoxiang 試論成都地區出土的南朝佛教石造像” (A Preliminary Study of the Southern Dynasties Buddhist Statues Unearthed in the Chengdu Region), *Wenwu*, no.2 (2000): 64 -76.

the Qixia caves in my study. Another work by Luo Shiping 羅世平 examines Buddhist practice in this region, through a brief review of the images' major iconographic themes, including Amitayus, Maitreya, Avalokitesvara, and Vimalakirti.<sup>47</sup> Of particular importance to my research are Luo's detailed documentation of Southern Dynasties Amitayus and Maitreya images, and his further investigation of the popular movement of Pure Land Buddhism in the south during that period. Specifically, both Li Yuqun and Luo Shiping explore the relationship between Chengdu and Jiankang areas, and argue that the source of the Chengdu style and iconography came from ancient Jiankang, the capital region of the Southern Dynasties. However, Buddhist monuments from the Jiankang region of that time are largely unexamined by the scholarly community. My present study, therefore, attempts to fill this lacuna in the scholarship of this field.

Since the mid 1990s, another group of scholars, like Dorothy Wong, Zhao Shengliang 趙聲良 and Eugene Wang, have continued Nagahiro and Yoshimura's effort on iconographic interpretation of the Chengdu relief carvings using Buddhist literature. Zhao and Wang, in their respective works, provide a complete analysis of the illustrated Avalokitesvara chapter from the *Lotus Sutra* on the two relief carvings discussed by Yoshimura.<sup>48</sup> In addition, research by Wong and Zhao further identifies scenes depicting

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<sup>47</sup> Luo Shiping 羅世平, "Sichuan Nanchao fojiao zaoxiang de chubu yanjiu 四川南朝佛教造像的初步研究" (A Preliminary Study of Buddhist Statues of the Southern Dynasties Found in Sichuan), in *Between Han and Tang: Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period*, ed. Wu Hung (Beijing: Cultural Relic Publishing House, 2000), 397-428.

<sup>48</sup> Zhao Shengliang 趙聲良, "Chengdu Nanchao fudiao Mile jingbian yu Fahua jingbian kaolun 成都南朝浮雕彌勒經變與法華經變考論" (Study of the Southern Dynasties Relief Carving Illustrating the Maitreya Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, from Chengdu), *Dunhuang yanjiu*, no.1 (2001): 34-42; also see Eugene Y. Wang, *Shaping the Lotus Sutra: Buddhist Visual Culture in Medieval China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 219-228.

Maitreya's Tusita and Ketumati paradises on another Southern Liang stele (Figure 1.24), which was not mentioned by the Japanese works.<sup>49</sup> Of special relevance to my study is their discussion about the popularity of the *Lotus Sutra* and Pure Land beliefs in the Southern Dynasties.<sup>50</sup> Noteworthy too is Dorothy Wong's dissertation work, which is particularly helpful for my research since it provides a comprehensive survey of the Sichuan school of Buddhism and Buddhist art during the fifth century.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from scholarly research on the Chengdu carvings, Sun Hua 孫華 has conducted a detailed analysis of a pair of *que* 闕 tower-gates in the Mianyang 綿陽 region of the Sichuan province.<sup>52</sup> The *que* tower-gates, originally built around the third century, bear a group of Buddhist niches that house images in the Southern Dynasties style.<sup>53</sup> His work, therefore, provides an additional corpus of visual imagery to our collection of Southern Dynasties Buddhist art.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Zhao Shengliang (2001), 34-42; also see Dorothy C. Wong, *The Beginnings of the Buddhist Stele Tradition in China* (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1995), 59-152, 344-357, and "Four Sichuan Buddhist Steles and the Beginning of Pure Land Imagery in China," *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. LI (1998-1999): 56-79.

<sup>50</sup> For the discussion of Pure Land scene, also see Wu Hung and Ning Qiang's "Paradise images in early Chinese art," in *The flowering of a foreign faith: new studies in Chinese Buddhist art*, ed. Janet Baker (New Delhi: Marg Publication, 1998), 54-67; and Marilyn Martin Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia, Volume Two: The Eastern Chin and Sixteen Kingdoms Period in China and Tumshuk, Kucha and Karashahr in Central Asia-Text* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 206-213.

<sup>51</sup> Dorothy C. Wong (1995), 59-152.

<sup>52</sup> Sun Hua 孫華, "Sichuan Mianyang Pingyang Fujun que quesheng zaoxiang 四川綿陽平楊府君闕闕身造像" (A Study of Buddhist and Taoist Images on the Pingyang Fujun Que-Towers in Sichuan), in *Between Han and Tang: Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period* (2000), 89-137.

<sup>53</sup> Two inscriptions were found on the *que* 闕 tower-gates, dated 529 and 531 CE respectively of the Southern Liang Dynasty. See Sun Hua (2000), 89-137.

<sup>54</sup> In 1994, a few other pieces of Southern Dynasties sculptures were discovered at the Longxing 龍興 temple in Pengzhou 彭州, Sichuan province. One of them bears inscription, dated 533 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty. See Pengzhou shi bowuguan 彭州市博物館 (Pengzhou Municipal Museum) and Chengdu



*Scholarship on Buddhist Rock-cut Art of the Six Dynasties Period*

Extensive scholarly research of artistic traditions in northern China has dominated scholarship in Chinese Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties period since the early twentieth century. This is not surprising, given the rich body of artistic evidence found in the North. As a complete review of past studies as a whole is an enormous project, and requires additional research outside the scope of this study, here I will only briefly discuss scholarship on Buddhist rock-cut cave art, with an emphasis on works particularly relevant to my research. These works can be broadly divided into three categories.

The first category includes archaeological reports and other relevant works, which provide primary resources for studying Buddhist cave temples of the Six Dynasties period. The earlier publications of this type were mainly prepared by foreign scholars, who conducted intensive original field research in China during the first half of the twentieth century. Of particular importance to my study is a detailed report of an archaeological survey of the Yungang 雲岡 caves by two prominent Japanese scholars: Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio (1952-1956).<sup>55</sup> The sixteen folio-sized double (text and plate) volumes contain a comprehensive documentation of drawings, photographs, and rubbings, in addition to iconographic and stylistic analyses by the two

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shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 成都市文物考古研究所 (Institute of Archaeology of Chengdu), eds., “Sichuan Pengzhou Longxingsi chutu shi zaoxiang 四川彭州龍興寺出土石造像” (Stone Carvings Unearthed from the Longxing Temple at Pengzhou), *Wenwu*, no. 9 (2003): 74-86.

<sup>55</sup> An archaeological team lead by Mizuno and Nagahiro conducted intensive original field research at Yungang from 1938-1944. See Mizuno Seiichi 水野清一 and Nagahiro Toshio, *Unkō sekkutsu: seireki goseiki ni okeru Chūgoku hokubu Bukkyō kutsuin no kōkogakuteki chōsa hōkoku* 雲岡石窟: 西曆五世紀における中國北部佛教窟院の考古學的調査報告 (Yun-Kang: An Archaeological Report on the Fifth Century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temples in the North), 16 vols. (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyujo, 1952-1956).

scholars. This is by far the most thorough survey of Chinese Buddhist cave temples, and continues to serve as an important tool and guide for the study of Chinese Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties.

In addition, two sets of illustrated catalogues, published during the 1980s and the 1990s, also offer invaluable visual materials for my study. The first is the *Zhongguo shiku* 中國石窟 (Chinese Caves) series, which provides high quality color photographs of major Chinese Buddhist caves, including the Yungang and Longmen 龍門 caves that are of particular relevance to my research.<sup>56</sup> Each volume of this series not only contains detailed descriptions of the caves, but also includes major scholarly researches of the site. The other work is the one hundred volumes of *Zhongguo Meishu quanji* 中國美術全集 (A Complete Collection of Chinese Fine Arts), which presents a detailed catalogue of the best art works throughout Chinese history, including Buddhist cave art. Specifically, it contains visual resources not included in the *Zhongguo shiku* series, such as the Tianlongshan 天龍山 and Xiangtangshan 響堂山 caves,<sup>57</sup> which are also of significance to the present research.

The second category of scholarship is the chronological studies; those that analyze different stages of artistic development of caves and their imagery in the historical context. These works began in the 1970s, and Chinese scholars have greatly

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<sup>56</sup> *Yungang shiku* 雲岡石窟 (Yungang Caves), 2 vols., in *Zhongguo Shiku* 中國石窟 series (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991, 1994); also see *Longmen shiku* 龍門石窟 (Longmen Caves), 2 vols., in the *Zhongguo Shiku* series (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991).

<sup>57</sup> *Gongxian, Tianlongshan, Xiangtangshan and Anyang shiku diaoke* 鞏縣天龍山響堂山安陽石窟雕刻 (Sculpture from Gongxian, Tianlongshan, Xiangtangshan, and Anyang Cave Temples). Edited by Chen Mingda 陳明達, et al., in *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol. 13* 中國美術全集 . 雕塑編 13 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1989).

contributed to this field of research. Amongst them, Professor Su Bai from Beijing University is the most noteworthy. His major contribution was to help establish a set of archaeological research systems for studying Chinese caves. This includes, for example, using the archaeological method of typological analysis to serve as the basis for periodization and dating of caves. In addition, a number of his works, to which modern scholarship of this field largely owns its foundation, cover major Buddhist cave sites in China, including Kizil 克孜爾, Dunhuang, Yungang and Longmen caves. They are now included in a volume of his collected works, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* 中国石窟寺研究 (Studies on Chinese Buddhist Cave Temples).<sup>58</sup> Of particular importance to my study is his research regarding the dating and related issues of the Yungang and Longmen caves.<sup>59</sup> Further, other works by Su's students, such as Wen Yucheng 溫玉成, Ding Mingyi 丁明夷 and Li Yuqun,<sup>60</sup> are also of relevance to my research. These chronological analyses help contextualize the Qixia site in the history of Chinese Buddhist cave temples. Most noteworthy, the present study is especially indebted to the works of Su Bai in regards to his concern for the relationship between the northern and southern artistic traditions during the late fifth and early sixth centuries.

The last category of published resources relating to my research is the monographic studies of a specific site, a single cave, or a particular theme. Of importance to my study in this category is a series of recent works conducted in the West

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<sup>58</sup> Su Bai, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* 中国石窟寺研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1996).

<sup>59</sup> Su Bai (1996), 52-175.

<sup>60</sup> Refer to the Bibliography Section for WenYucheng 溫玉成 and Ding Mingyi's 丁明夷 dating of the Longmen caves and images, as well as Li Yuqun's work on the Tianlongshan 天龍山 caves.

including, for example, those by Katherine R. Tsiang, Hsiang-ling Hsu, Hyun-sook Lee and Kate A. Lingley. Tsiang and Hsu, respectively, provide a thorough analysis of the Xiaonanhai 小南海 and Xiangtangshan caves, both dated the Northern Qi dynasty (550-577 CE).<sup>61</sup> Lee's work, however, specifically focuses on the study of the Guyang 古陽 cave at Longmen.<sup>62</sup> In addition, Lingley conducts a comprehensive survey of worshipping figures depicted in the fifth to sixth centuries Buddhist caves, including the Longmen, Shuiyusi 水浴寺 and Gaomiaoshan 高廟山 caves.<sup>63</sup> Apart from dating and stylistic analysis, which has been largely emphasized by previous Chinese scholarship, these studies also offer deep insights concerning iconographic themes, devotional practices and other relevant religious issues. More importantly, the caves temples discussed by these scholars are either contemporary with or relatively later than the Qixia site. These monographs, therefore, provide invaluable clues concerning historical backgrounds, sculptural styles and iconographic themes for my present study.

Apart from the above three categories, a few other scholarly works are also of importance to my study. They include, for example, iconographic studies of the imagery by Lee Yu-min 李玉珉 and He Shizhe 賀世哲,<sup>64</sup> as well as scholarly researches

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<sup>61</sup> Katherine R. Tsiang, *Bodies of Buddhas and Princes at the Xiangtangshan Caves: Image, Text, and Stupa in Buddhist Art of the Northern Qi Dynasty (550-577)* (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Chicago, 1996); Hsiang-ling Hsu, *The Xiaonanhai Cave-Chapel: Images of Needs and Aspirations* (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1999).

<sup>62</sup> Hyun-sook Lee, *The Longmen Guyang Cave: Sculpture and Calligraphy of the Northern Wei (386-534)* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> Kate A. Lingley, *Widows, Monks, Magistrates, and Concubines: Social Dimensions of Sixth-Century Buddhist Art Patronage* (Ph.D. Diss., The University of Chicago, 2004).

<sup>64</sup> See Bibliography for their works. For example, see Lee Yu-min 李玉珉, *Maitreya Cult and Its Art in Early China* (Ph. D. Diss., The Ohio State University, 1983).

concerning recent discoveries of the Northern Qi sculptures at the Qingzhou 青州 region of the Shandong 山東 province.<sup>65</sup> These works are particularly helpful to iconographic and stylistic analyses of the Qixia caves and their images.

The review of scholarship in the above sections indicates that Buddhist art of the Six Dynasties period is a rich area, which has already generated excellent studies to date. It is my hope that the present study, which has built upon the previous scholarship, will add to the corpus of our knowledge about Buddhism and Buddhist art of that time.

### **Research Methodology and Approach**

My primary method of research is to use caves and their imagery as well as the known literature as attested evidence of Buddhism during the Six Dynasties period. My methodological approach, inherently interdisciplinary in nature, combines archaeological field research techniques with art historical methods of interpretation and analysis, including buddhological iconographic and stylistic investigation. A major portion of my study involved conducting original field research at the cave site. Further, I have read extensively primary sources only available in classical Chinese and have translated those essential to this project. My previous training in archaeology, art history and Buddhism has also facilitated my study.

I began my research on the Qixia caves in the 1990s, when the Nanjing Municipal Museum, together with the Cultural Relics Publishing House, started a long-term publishing project on a detailed and complete archaeological report of the site. As part of

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<sup>65</sup> See *Shandong Qingzhou Longxingsi chutu fojiao shike zaixiang jingpin* 山東青州龍興寺出土佛教石刻造像精品 (Masterpieces of Buddhist Statuary from Qingzhou City) (Beijing: Beijing Chinasight Fine Arts Co., Ltd., 1999).

this project, I led an archaeological research team working on the site for two years, from 1994 to 1996. With the assistance of my colleagues from the museum, I conducted a complete documentation of all the caves and their images by photographing them, making measurements and drawings, making rubbings of the inscriptions, and recording the current condition of the caves. I also had full responsibility for organizing and analyzing the original field research data,<sup>66</sup> which naturally led to my interest in using the site as the basis for my dissertation study. My field data recorded the unfortunate coating of cement, which deterred further studies of these caves until the late 1990s when the cement was removed. In May 2002, I revisited the Qixia site and conducted a new and thorough photo-documentation of every single image that had been uncovered during the recent cleaning process. This research data, specifically the detailed photographic documentation of these newly-restored images as well as drawings collected in my original fieldwork, provide the primary resources for the chronological study of the Qixia caves. Most importantly, this rich body of field data is also invaluable for the further analysis of iconographic themes and stylistic developments at the site.

As southern China has an especially rich literary tradition during the early period, textual information and analysis are also critical to this study. For my dissertation, I examined and analyzed primary literature directly pertaining to the Qixia caves and their excavation, including inscriptional records, Buddhist texts, and other relevant accounts. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, they provide the crucial background information for my project.

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<sup>66</sup> My research work, including the detailed descriptions of each cave and their imagery, provides the basis for the continuous research on the Qixia cave site. The archaeological report of the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia is forthcoming.

A close reading of the official Southern Dynasties histories, such as *Nan shi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (History of the Southern Qi) and *Liang shu* 梁書 (History of the Southern Liang), is also essential to understand historical and religious settings that resulted in extensive production at Qixia. In addition, the histories of the Northern Dynasties including, for example, *Wei shu* 魏書 (History of the Northern Wei) and *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 (History of the Northern Qi), help investigate the Qixia caves in the broader sphere of Chinese history of that time.<sup>67</sup>

#### *Methodological Approach for Dating the Caves*

The literary survey conducted in Chapter 2 provides significant evidence concerning the excavation and sculpting of the Qixia caves during the Southern Qi and Liang dynasties from the late fifth-sixth centuries. However, of the eighteen Southern Dynasties caves examined in this study, there are only two, namely Cave 19 and Cave 28, whose dates are known through the written records. For a further examination of the chronology of the caves, I applied the archaeological methods of typological analysis and organized the eighteen caves into three categories, based on typological features, such as architectural layout, sculptural programs, and stylistic characteristics of images. These three categories, discussed in Chapters 3-5, naturally suggest the three phases of artistic development occurred at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties period. In my chronological analysis, Caves 19 and 28 undoubtedly provide important evidence for the dating of the other caves belonging to the same categories, namely Categories I and III

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<sup>67</sup> See *Nan shi* 南史, *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書, *Liang shu* 梁書, *Wei shu* 魏書 and *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 in Bibliography Section.

respectively. The fact that Cave 19 is earlier in date than Cave 28 further reveals chronological sequence of these two categories. In addition, the caves from Category II show similarities with those in both Categories I and III, thus indicating that they exemplify the transitional stage between Categories I and III, namely the early and later phases of carvings at Qixia.

While a precise dating may not be possible due to the lack of written evidence, more detailed information regarding the periodization and dating will be provided through stylistic comparisons with other dated Southern Dynasties images. These include, as previously mentioned, materials largely unearthed from southwest China in the Sichuan region. Given the close connection between the Jiankang area, where the Qixia caves are located, and the southwest region, which have been well discussed in the past studies,<sup>68</sup> it is not surprising that works from these two areas have shared a parallel sequence of artistic development. This comparative, stylistic analysis, therefore, is of particular importance to the chronological study of the Qixia caves.

Additionally, the above approach to dating will be augmented with important primary sources relevant to the development of Chinese pictorial art from fifth-sixth centuries. For this study, I have read the important primary sources on Chinese art, such as *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記 (Record of Famous Paintings of the Successive Dynasties) and *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志 (Record of Paintings Viewed and Heard).<sup>69</sup> They provide information concerning major artistic trends in Chinese pictorial

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<sup>68</sup> The Scholars like Li Yuqun, Luo Shiping and Sun Hua have all addressed this issue in their works. See the discussion of the State of Scholarship in Chapter 1.

<sup>69</sup> Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠 (9<sup>th</sup> cent. CE), *Lidai minghua ji* 歷代名畫記, annotated by Yu Jianhua 俞劍華 (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1963); partially translated into English and annotated by William R.



art from fifth-sixth centuries, and, therefore, help in the interpretation of different stages of stylistic development at Qixia during that time.

### *Methodological Approach for Iconographical Analysis*

My iconographic analysis includes iconographic interpretation of each cave's main icon and the examination of its general sculptural program as well. Textual evidence discussed in Chapter 2 provides very little information regarding the caves' iconography, except for the three colossal images of Cave 19, identified as Amitayus with Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta. For this research, I have thus greatly relied upon buddhological iconographic investigation. The caves and their images provide the primary sources for the iconographic study. The sites' major iconographic themes will be revealed through comparison with other related Buddhist monuments; especially inscribed southern Buddhist sculptures as well as images dated to the Six Dynasties period. In addition, a corpus of early Buddhist writings compiled in the south also provides evidence about religious practice and belief in the Southern Dynasties. For example, *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳 (Biographies of Famous Monks) is pivotal for the examination of Maitreya worship during that time.<sup>70</sup> More specifically, important

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B. Acker, *Some T'ang and Pre-T'ang Texts on Chinese Painting* (Leiden: E. J Brill, 1954), 59-383. Also see Guo Ruoxu 郭若虛 (act. 11<sup>th</sup> cent. CE), *Tuhua jianwen zhi* 圖畫見聞志, annotated by Yu Jianhua (Shanghai: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1964); translated into English and annotated by Alexander C Soper, *Experiences in Painting* (Washington: American Council of Learned Societies, 1951). For the translations, also see Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, *Early Chinese Texts on Painting* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

<sup>70</sup> *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳, compiled by the Southern Liang monk Baochang 寶唱, has long been lost. Passages especially related to Maitreya belief was recorded by the Japanese monk Sōshō 宗性 in 1253 CE at Tōdaiji in Nara. See *Meisō denshō*, *Mingseng zhuan* 名僧傳抄 (Extracts from *Mingseng zhuan*) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng Chuban Gongsi, 1975).

religious texts, such as the *Lotus Sutra* and other major literature on Amitayus and Maitreya's Pure Land, constitute a doctrinal basis for the buddhological understanding of major iconographic themes at the site.<sup>71</sup>

### **Expected Contributions of the Present Study**

As the first thorough visual documentation and art historical analysis of the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia, this study is expected to fill a major lacuna in the scholarship of Buddhist art during the Six Dynasties period. The cave site is located at the ancient capital Jiankang—the nucleus for religious and artistic activities—of the Southern Dynasties, who were recognized by Chinese historians as the legitimate inheritors of the traditional Chinese culture during fifth-sixth centuries. Thus, the Buddhist monuments at Qixia, as the important physical evidence of mainstream southern Buddhist art, were greatly influential as a source for the artistic traditions of the south and other regions of China during that time. My research therefore is not only applicable to the Qixia caves and their imagery, but will help analyze the other traditions of Buddhist art in China as well. By using an inter-textual and visual framework—specifically correlating the extensive literary accounts concerning the excavation at Qixia with the iconographic imagery of the caves—this study will serve to reveal important facets of southern Buddhist art during the late fifth to sixth centuries, and hence to highlight the

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<sup>71</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮花經 (*Saddharmapundarika-sutra*), 7 juans, trans. Kumarajiva (Ch: 鳩摩羅什) in the early fifth century, T9, no. 262: 1-62; translated into English by Burton Watson, *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). Also refer to the Bibliography Section for the major texts regarding Amitayus and Maitreya Pure Lands. For example, *Foshuo guan Wuliangshoufo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經 (*Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*), 1 juan, trans. Kalayasas (Ch. 晁良耶舍) in the Liu Song dynasty, T12, no. 365: 340-346; and *Foshuo Mile xiasheng chengfo jing* 佛說彌勒下生成佛經 (*Sutra of Maitreya Descending to Become Buddha*), 1 juan, trans. Kumarajiva in the early fifth century, T14, no. 454: 423-425.

significance of the Southern Dynasties in the history of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art.

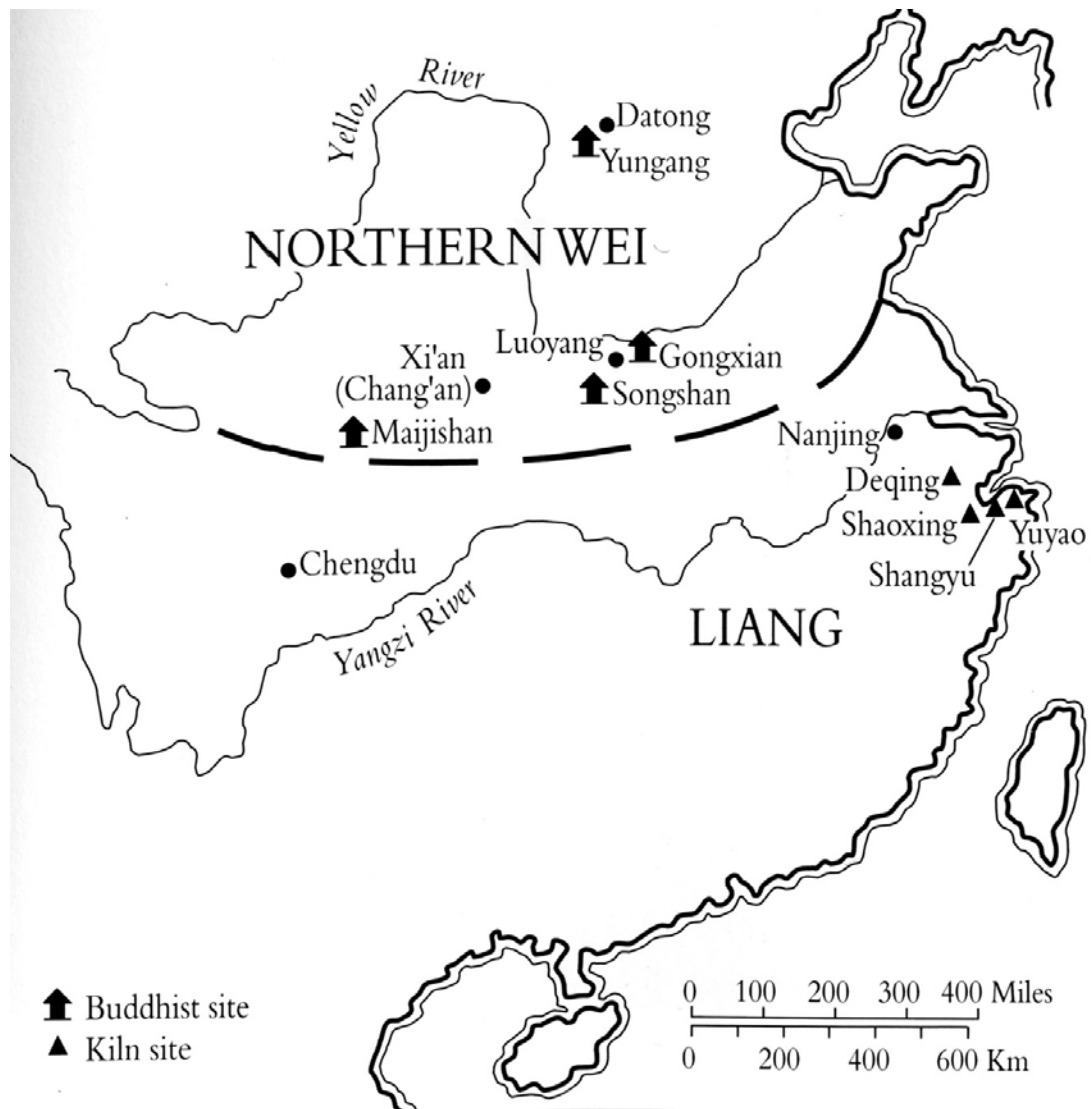


Figure 1.1: Map showing China in the Six Dynasties (220-589 CE)



Figure 1.2: Map of Jiangsu Province, showing Qixia site, Nanjing City, and Yangzi River.



Figure 1.3: Aerial view of the Qixia temple and Pagoda, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.4: View of the Qixia temple, Pagoda, and caves, looking from east, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.5: Drawing of the Qixia Mountains, showing Qixia temple and caves, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.6: Views of south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

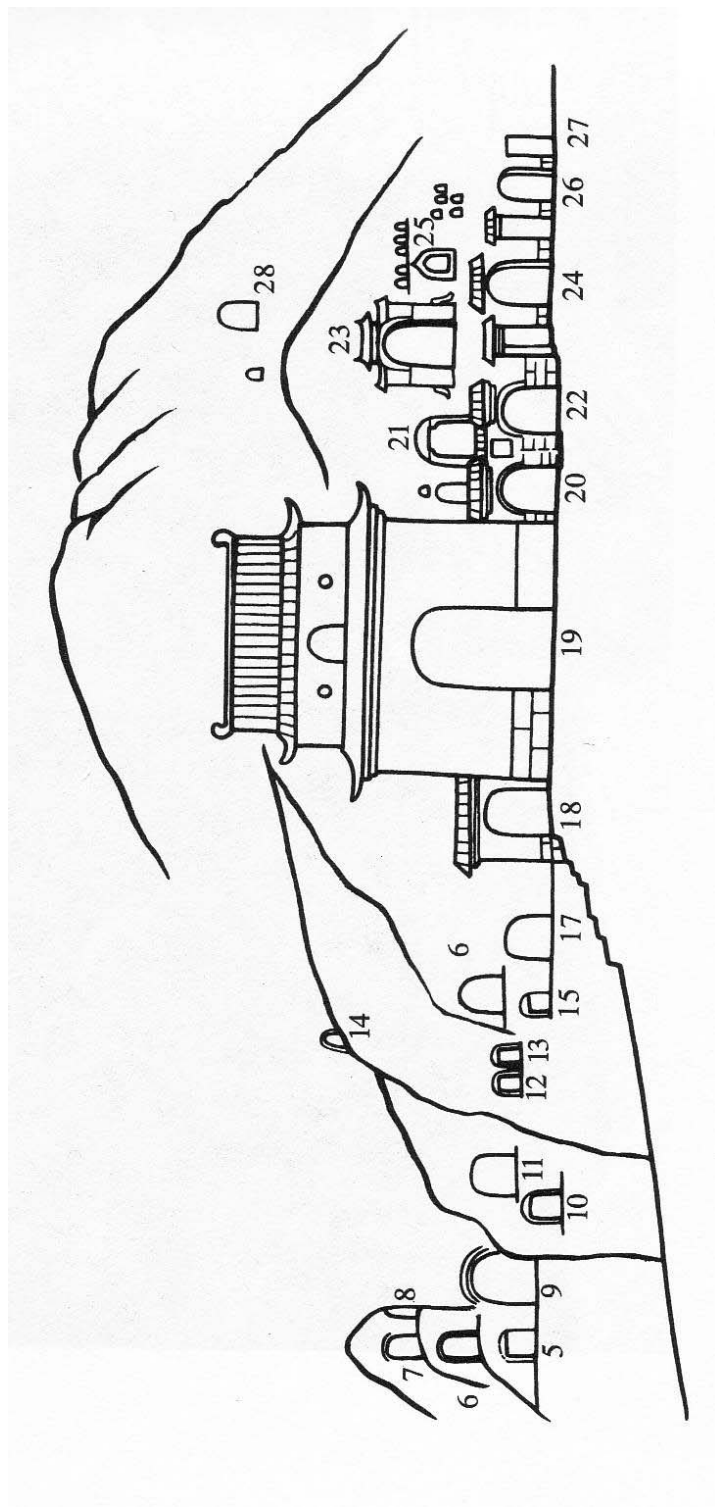


Figure 1.7: Sketch drawing showing caves on the south wall of the Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.8: View of west wall, Lower Cliff, looking from north, Qixiashan, Nanjing

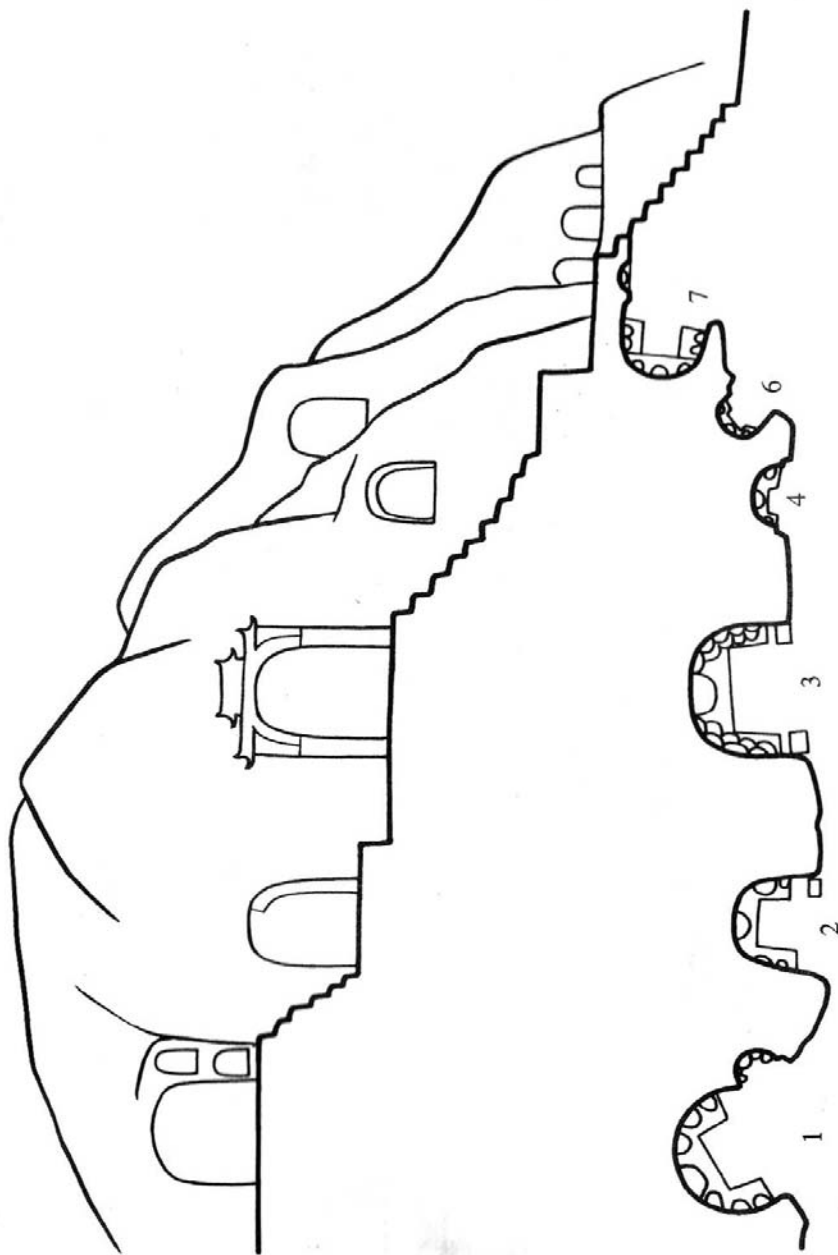


Figure 1.9: Sketch drawing showing caves on the west wall of the Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.10: Inscription of “*Qixiashan Qianfoyan*,” next to Cave 1, northern end of west wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.11: View of two upper cliffs (left: Upper Smaller Cliff, right: Upper Larger Cliff), Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.12: View of two upper cliffs (left: Upper Smaller Cliff, right: Upper Larger Cliff), Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.13: View of eastern part of south wall, Upper Larger Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



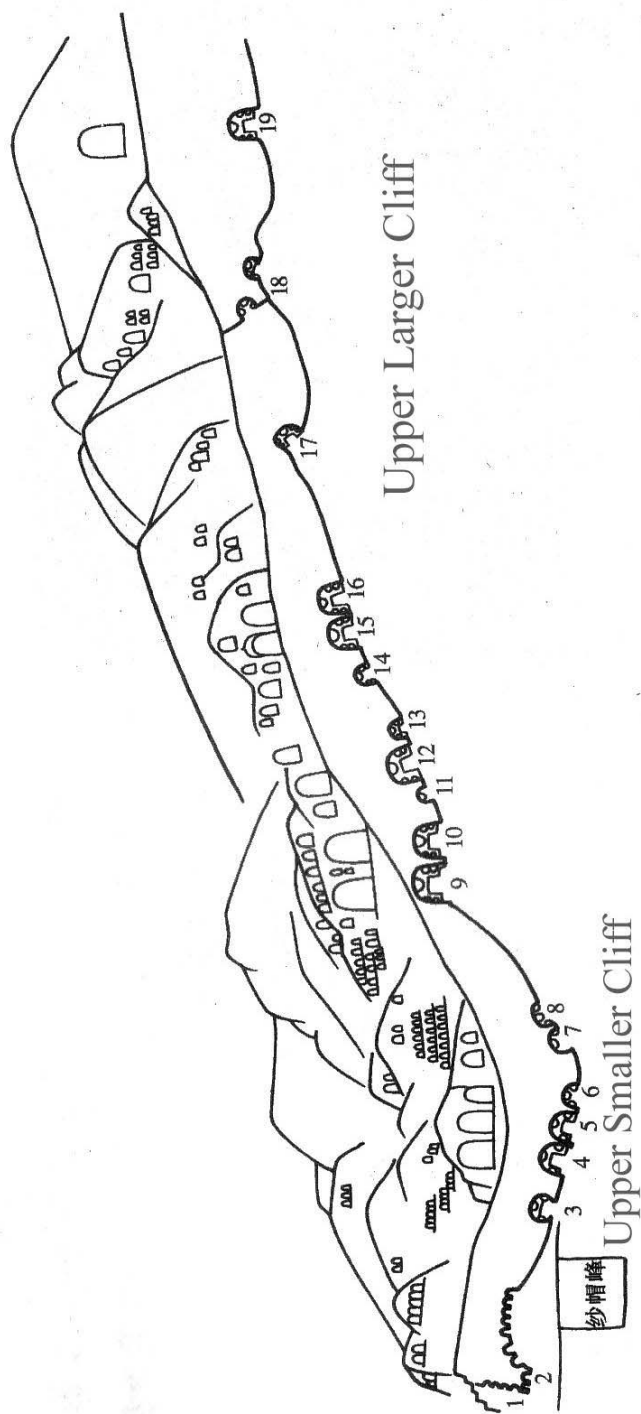


Figure 1.14: Sketch drawing showing caves on the south wall of the Upper Larger Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.15: View of two Ming Steles in front of cave 19 (left: composed by Jiao Hong; right: by Zhu Shilu), erected in 1606 CE, Ming dynasty, Qixiashan, Nanjing

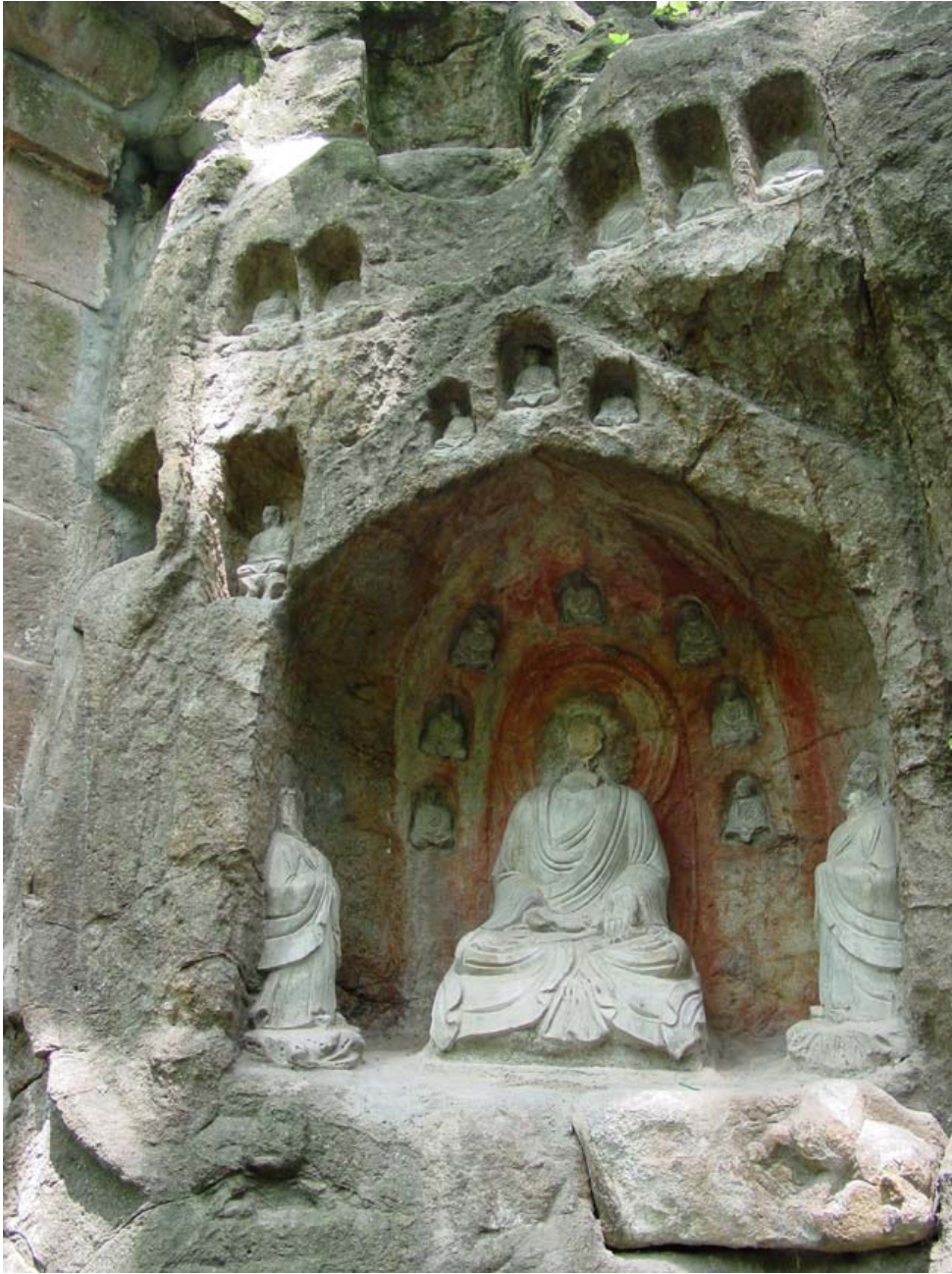


Figure 1.16: View of Cave 25, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.17: View of Cave 27, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 1.18: Aerial view of the Baoxiang temple, Shicheng Mountain, Xinchang, Zhejiang





Figure 1.19: View of Maitreya Buddha, Baoxiang temple, Shicheng Mountain, Xinchang, Zhejiang



Figure 1.20: View of mural painting of a pair of *feitian*, or flying *apsaras*, ceiling, an unnumbered cave next to Cave 1, west wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 1.21: Map of Sichuan





Figure 1.22: Rubbing from a stone relief with scenes of the *Lotus Sutra*, from Wanfosi, Chengdu, Sichuan, dated 425 CE, Liu Song dynasty



Figure 1.23: Rubbing from a stone relief with scenes of the *Lotus Sutra*, from Wanfosi, Chengdu, Sichuan, ca. first half of the sixth century Southern Liang dynasty



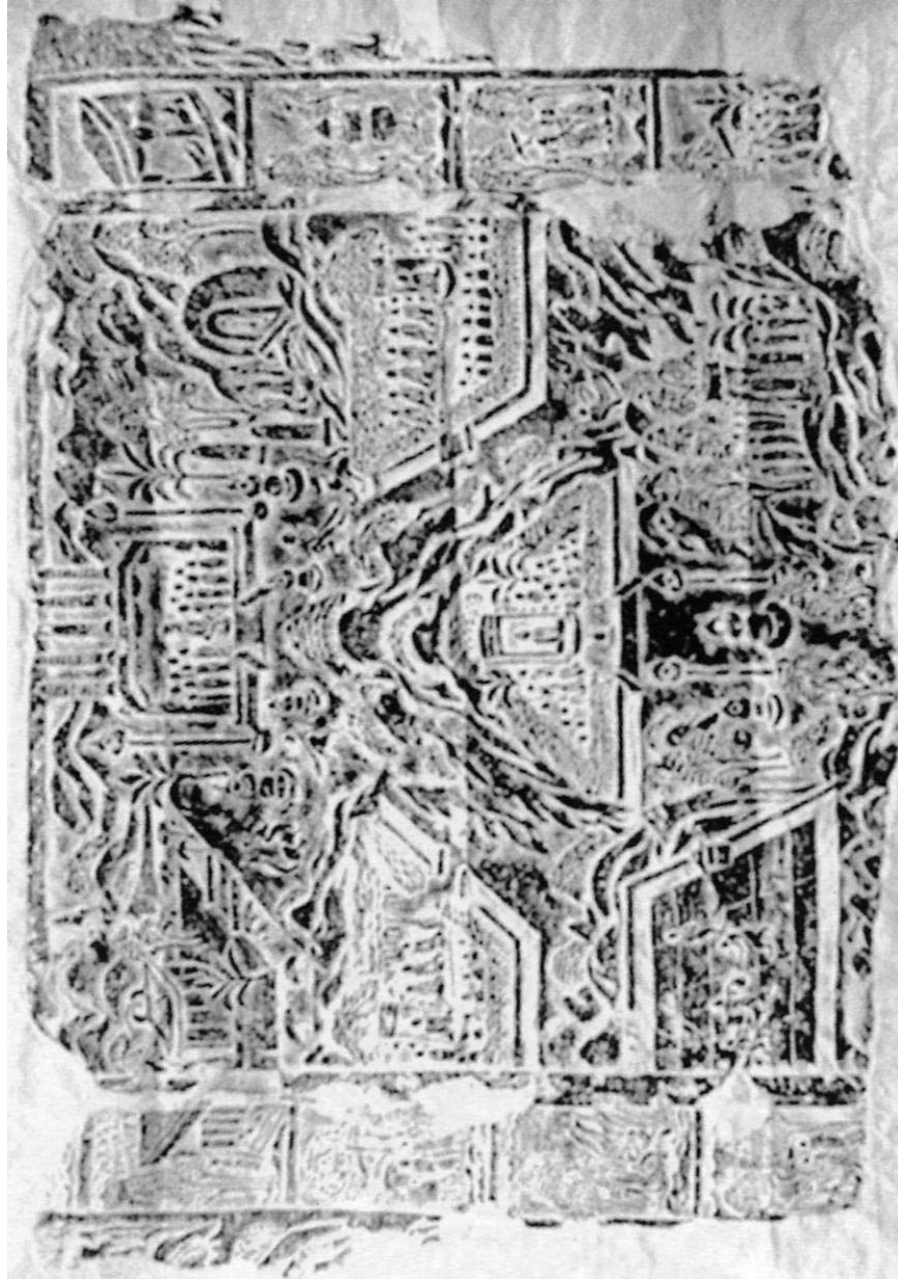


Figure 1.24: Rubbing from a stone relief with scenes of Maitreya's Tusita and Ketumati paradises, from Wanfosi, Chengdu, Sichuan, ca. first half of the sixth century, Southern Liang dynasty

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERARY SURVEY:

#### QIXIA DURING THE LATE FIFTH-SIXTH CENTURIES

##### **Introduction**

A rich body of literary sources informs us of the foundation and early history of the Qixia caves during the Southern Dynasties from the late fifth to the sixth centuries. As discussed earlier, Professor Su Bai has documented and analyzed the majority of these materials in his early research.<sup>1</sup> The literary survey in this chapter has relied greatly upon Su's work. Aside from the primary literature mentioned by him, I will also incorporate in my analysis other important source materials, such as local gazetteers. My intention here is to provide a closer reading and a more in-depth examination of these writings, with hopes to obtain important facts concerning the Qixia site in its early stage of excavation, and hence to lay the groundwork for further chronological and iconographic study of the caves and their images. Broadly speaking, this corpus of textual resources can be divided into three types.

The first is inscriptional evidence: 1. *Jinling Sheshan Qixiasi bei* 金陵攝山棲霞寺碑 (A Memorial Tablet for the Qixia Temple at the She Mountains in Jinjing [present-

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<sup>1</sup> Su Bai (1989): 390-393.

day Nanjing]), erected by the Southern Chen official Jiang Zong 江總 in the late sixth century; 2. *Sheshan Qixiasi Mingzhengjun bei* 攝山棲霞寺明徵君碑 (A Memorial Tablet for Ming Zhengjun [Ming Sengshao] of the Qixia Temple at the She Mountains), erected by the Tang Emperor Gaozong 高宗 in 676 CE; 3. an inscription found at the site, dated 530 CE of the Southern Liang Dynasty.

The second type pertains to passages from early Buddhist literatures compiled in the south: 1. *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Biographies of Eminent Monks), compiled by the Southern Liang monk Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554 CE) in ca. 530 CE;<sup>2</sup> 2. *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳 (Biographies of Nuns), compiled by the Southern Liang monk Baochang 寶唱 in the early sixth century;<sup>3</sup> 3. *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (Collection of Notes Concerning the Translation of the Tripitaka), compiled by the Southern Liang monk Sengyou 僧祐 (d. 518 CE) in the early sixth century;<sup>4</sup> 4. *Liang jing si ji* 梁京寺記 (Record of Buddhist Temples in the Southern Liang Capital), approximately dated the late sixth century of the Southern Chen period.<sup>5</sup>

The third type is textual evidence provided by a series of local chronicles. Of particular relevance to my research are the two works: 1. *Jingding jian kangzhi* 景定建康

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<sup>2</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳, 14 juans, see T50, no. 2059: 322-423.

<sup>3</sup> *Biqiuni zhuan* 比丘尼傳, 4 juans, see T50, no. 2063: 934-948; translated into English by Katherine Ann Tsai, *Lives of the Nuns* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集, 15 juans, see T55, no. 2145: 1-113.

<sup>5</sup> This *Liang jing si ji* is not extant. A passage from this pre-Tang text, which is of relevance to this study, is recorded in the *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 (Forest of Gems in the Garden of Law), compiled by early Tang monk Daoshi 道世 in 668 CE, juan 36, T53, no. 2122, 572.

志 (Jiankang [present-day Nanjing] Gazetteer [compiled] in the Jingding Reign [1260-1264 CE]), by Zhou Yinghe 周應合 (1213-1280 CE) in 1261 CE of the Southern Song dynasty;<sup>6</sup> 2. the aforementioned *Jinling fancha zhi* 金陵梵剎志 (Record of Buddhist Temples at Jinling), written by Ge Yinliang in 1607 CE of the Ming dynasty.<sup>7</sup>

The two tablets (inscriptional evidence), known as the *Chen Tablet* and the *Tang Tablet* hereafter, provide the most detailed accounts of cave activities at Qixia during the late fifth-sixth centuries. Unfortunately, the original *Chen Tablet* was destroyed in the ninth century, and its later replica has also long been lost. Today the inscription survives in the *Jinling fancha zhi*, as well as the *Jiangning jinshi ji* 江寧金石記 (A Catalogue of Inscriptions on Ancient Bronzes and Stone Tablets from the Jiangning Region [present-day Nanjing region]).<sup>8</sup> The *Tang Tablet* currently stands in front of the Qixia Temple (Figure 2.1), and the rubbing of the inscription has been published by the Nanjing Municipal Museum.<sup>9</sup> These two inscriptional records are the central focus of my discussion in this chapter.

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<sup>6</sup> Zhou Yinghe 周應合, *Jingding jiankangzhi* 景定建康志, 50 juans (Jiaqing edition [1802 CE]; reprinted in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu*, Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> Ge Yinliang, *Jinling fancha zhi*, 52 juans.

<sup>8</sup> According to both Ge Yinliang and Yan Guan 嚴觀, the original tablet did not survive from an empire-wide prohibition of Buddhism during the Huichang 會昌 reign (841-846 CE) of the Tang dynasty. The one rebuilt right after was also damaged in the Northern Song period (960-1127 CE). Ge and Yan's record of the inscription was based upon another stele, which, erected in 1040 CE, replicated the rebuilt one. See *Jinling fancha zhi*, juan 4: 416-423; also See Yan Guan, *Jiangning jinshi ji* 江寧金石記 (Jiaqing [1796-1820 CE] edition), juan 1: 13-17. It should be noted that a fragmented *Chen Tablet* was unearthed in recent archaeological excavation at the site. Unfortunately, this newly-discovered tablet is currently not accessible. It will be included in the aforementioned book of archaeological report, which is forthcoming. In this research, I have relied on Ge and Yan's work for the inscriptional record of the *Chen Tablet*.

<sup>9</sup> Nanjing Municipal Museum, *Tang Ming Zhengjun bei* 唐明徵君碑 (A Tablet for Ming Zhengjun [erected] in the Tang Dynasty), rubbings (Beijing: Cultural Relic Publishing House, 1980).

## Two Tablets and Other Relevant Writings

The first half of the *Chen Tablet* records in detail the founding of the Qixia temple as well as cave carving activity at Qixia. This is followed by accounts related to Monks' activities and auspicious signs at Qixia. The inscription ends with a short passage of a eulogy. Here I will focus on the first part of the text, which is essential to this project. In my reading and translation, I have selected those passages of particular relevance to my work, and have further divided them into eight sections to facilitate our understanding. My translation generally follows three principles: 1. date information is added in parentheses; 2. extra information is added in brackets for clarification; 3. annotations are provided by footnotes for a better understanding. The following is a transcription of the selected passages,<sup>10</sup> accompanied by the translation.<sup>11</sup>

1. 南徐州瑯琊 (瑯) 郡江乘縣界有攝山者, 其狀似繖, 亦名繖山。尹先生記曰: 山多草藥, 可以攝養, 故以攝為名焉。

There is a certain She Mountains located at the border of the Jiangsheng district of the Langye Prefecture in the Southern Xuzhou region. Shaped like an umbrella, [it] is also known as Umbrella Mountains. Mr. Yin records: Around the mountainous area grows many medicinal herbs that can be used for preserving one's health, therefore it is named *She* [meaning to preserve one's health].

2. 齊居士平原明僧紹空解淵深, 至理高妙, 遺榮軒冕, 遁跡巖穴。宋泰始中, 嘗遊此山, 仍有終焉之志.....乃刊木駕峰, 薙草 (艸) 開徑, 披拂榛梗, 結構茅 (茆) 茨。廿許年不事人世.....有法度禪師, 家本黃龍.....與僧紹冥契甚善, 嘗于山舍講無量壽經, 中夜忽見金光照室, 光中如有臺館形象.....居士遂捨本宅, 欲成此寺, 即齊永明七年正月三日度上人之所構也。

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<sup>10</sup> The inscription recorded by Yan Guan and Ge Yinliang is almost identical, with an exception that Yan and Ge use a few different, but interchangeable, characters. My transcription here follows Ge Yinliang's version. Characters in parentheses have been added as an indication of differences in Yan's work.

<sup>11</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all the translations in this chapter were done by the author.

A layman Ming Sengshao of Southern Qi from the Pingyuan region had profound interpretation of the ultimate reality and had mastered the ultimate principle. He renounced the glory of his official position and emolument and wandered among cliffs and caves. He visited the She Mountains in the Taishi reign (465-472 CE) of the [Liu] Song dynasty, and since then he made his decision to stay there the rest of his life. He then cut down trees [and use tree trunks] to bridge mountain peaks and cleared weeds to open up paths; he [also] removed brambles and built a thatched cottage. For more than twenty years he had not engaged in mundane affairs...A Buddhist monk Fadu, who was native of Huanglong... and Sengshao were very much alike in temperament. [Fadu] had taught the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra* in the mountain cottage, and at midnight [he] suddenly saw golden lights shining in the room, within which there seemed to have images in the buildings...The layman [Sengshao] thereupon renounced his house in the desire to build this [Qixia] temple, which was designed by Monk Fadu on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the 1<sup>st</sup> month in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the Yongming reign (489 CE) in the Southern Qi dynasty.

3. 居士嘗夢此巖有如來光彩，又因閑居依稀目見，昔寶海梵志睡睹花臺，智猛比丘（邱）行逢影窟，故知神應非遠，靈相斯在。居士有懷創造，俄而物故。

The layman [Sengshao] once had a dream of the shining Tathagata on the cliff, and since he also vaguely saw it [had a vision of the image of Tathagata] while he was at leisure here. In early times, Brahmacerin Baohai saw lotus platforms in his dream;<sup>12</sup> while Bhiksu Zhimeng encountered a cave of the mystic appearance [or “shadow image” of Buddha Sakyamuni] along his journey.<sup>13</sup> [Sengshao] hence realized that the response of spiritual beings was not far away and their appearance was right here. The layman [Sengshao] had thought about carving [images], but he passed away soon after.

4. 其第二子仲璋為臨沂令，克荷先業，莊嚴龕像，首于西峰石壁與度禪師鑄造無量壽佛，坐身三丈一尺五寸，通座四丈，並二菩薩倚高三丈三寸。

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<sup>12</sup> For the story of Brahmacerin Baohai 寶海, see *Beihua jing* 悲華經, 10 juans, translated by Indian monk Dharmakṣema (Ch. Tanwuchen 曇無讖; 385-433 CE) in the Northern Liang 凉 Dynasty (397-439 CE), see T3, no. 157: 167-233.

<sup>13</sup> In search of Buddhist doctrine, Monk Zhimeng 智猛 made a long journey to the western regions during the early fifth century. For his biography, see *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 3, T50, no. 2059: 343.



His second son [Ming] Zhongzhang, who was magistrate of the Linyi district,<sup>14</sup> was able to carry on his father's cause and embellish [or carve] niches and images. He and monk Fadu first had Buddha Amitayus and two bodhisattvas carved on the cliff surface of the west peak. The seated image of Amitayus was three *zhangs* one *chi* and five *cuns* in height [ca.7.7-7.8 m], and the overall height including the throne was four *zhangs* [ca.9.8-9.9 m]; the two bodhisattvas were both three *zhangs* three *cuns* [ca. 7.4-7.5 m] in height.<sup>15</sup>

5. 大同二年，龕頂放光，色身相晃，若炎山林間，樹下燄若火殿。禪師自識終期，欣瞻瑞應，以建武四年于此寺順寂。

In the second year of the Datong reign (536 CE) [of the Southern Liang dynasty],<sup>16</sup> there were lights [seen] shining from the top of the cave. The colors [of the lights] and images were dazzling against each other as if there was a mountain on fire amidst the forest. Under each tree [was seen] the crimson color [of the lights] as if there was a hall on fire. The *dhyana* master [Fadu] realized that his day was coming, and he looked at the auspicious responses [or signs] with pleasure and reverence, and in the fourth year of the Jianwu reign (497 CE) [of the Southern Qi dynasty], he attained *nirvana* in peace at this temple [Qixia Temple].

6. 齊文惠太子、豫章文獻王、竟陵文宣、始安王等慧心開發，信力明悟，各捨泉貝，共成福業。

The [Southern] Qi Crown Prince Wenhui, Prince Wenxian of Yuzhang, Prince Wenxuan of Jingling, Prince Shi'an and others, with their wisdom open up [or developed] and their faith clear and awakened, each donated money and altogether they accomplished the *karma* of blessedness [a happy *karma*].

7. 宋太宰江夏王霍姬蕃閨內德、齊雍州刺史田奐方牧貴臣，深曉正見，妙識來果，並（竝）于此巖阿廣抽財施，琢磨巨石，影擬法身。

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<sup>14</sup> For the translation of early Chinese official titles in this dissertation, please refer to Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (California: Stanford University Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> *Chi* 尺, a unit of length in the Southern Dynasties, equals to 24.5-24.7 centimeters in the modern measure system. See Guo Zhengzhong 郭正中, *San zhi shisi shiji Zhongguo de quanheng duliang* 三至十四世紀中國的權衡度量 (Chinese Measure System from the Third to the Fourteenth Centuries) (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1993), 227-234.

<sup>16</sup> The Southern Liang date here is probably in error, since the inscription later in this passage records that monk Fadu passed away in the Southern Qi dynasty.

Lady Huo, [a concubine of] the [Liu] Song Great Steward and Prince of Jiangxia, had abundant female virtues; and Tian Huan, the [Southern] Qi Regional Chief of the Yongzhou area, was an honorable statesman in the nation. [They] had profound understanding of the Samyag-drsti,<sup>17</sup> as well as a wonderful knowledge of the fruit [or condition] of the next rebirth. [Together] on this cliff [they] widely spent money and had images carved out of huge rocks imitating Dharma body [Dharmakaya].

7. 梁太尉臨川靖慧王……見此山制置疎濶 (闊), 功用稀少,<sup>18</sup> 以天監十年八月爰撒帑藏, 復加瑩飾。續以丹青, 鏤之銑鑿, 五分照發, 千輪啟煥。

The [Southern] Liang Defender-in-chief, Prince Jinghui of Linchuan...saw that there were less careful arrangement and design [of the carvings] in this mountain, and there were very few labors [on carvings at the site]. Hence, in the eighth month of the tenth year of the [Southern Liang] Tianjian reign (511 CE), [he] poured out his personal wealth to have [the Amitayus cave] re-embellished. He used mineral pigments for painting, and gold and shining metals for carving. The Five Attributes of the Dharmakaya [Panca-dharmakaya] were shining, and the thousand wheels of [Buddhist teaching] began to move.

The content of the above passages may be summarized as follows:

1. introduction to the site, the She Mountains (present-day Qixia Mountains)
2. origin of the Qixia temple, its founders layman Ming Sengshao and monk Fadu, and the date of its construction in 489 CE of the Southern Qi dynasty
3. origin of the Qixia caves, Ming Sengshao's dream and his desire of carving images
4. carving of Amitayus and two attendant bodhisattvas (present-day Cave 19), by Ming Sengshao's second son Ming Zhongzhang and Monk Fadu

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<sup>17</sup> The Sanskrit term for “*zhengjian* 正見” is Samyag-drsti, which refers to “correct views in regard to the Four Axioms (Four Noble Truths), and freedom from the common delusion.” This is the first of the Aryamarga, or the “Eightfold Noble Path.” See *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhism*, compiled by William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & co., Ltd., 1937; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), 37, 193.

<sup>18</sup> “Gongyong 功用,” meaning “function and donation,” used in both Ge and Yan's text, probably also refers to “gongyong 工用,” meaning “labor or work.”

5. death of monk Fadu
6. involvement of a group of Southern Qi royal princes in the carving of the Amitayus cave
7. other cave carving activities at Qixia, sponsored by an aristocratic lady and a high ranking official in the Southern Qi dynasty
8. refurbishment of the Amitayus cave, sponsored by a Southern Liang royal prince in 511 CE

The above information is further attested and supplemented by the *Tang Tablet*, erected by Emperor Gaozong. This tablet was erected in memory of Ming Sengshao, the founder of the Qixia temple, who was also the sixth generation ancestor of the emperor's favorite court official Ming Chongyan 明崇儼. The emperor himself composed the text, and the inscription was written by a famous early Tang calligrapher Gao Zhengchen 高正臣. In addition to detailed accounts of the Qixia temple and the caves, the inscription also provides invaluable resources concerning the Southern Liang Emperor Wu's 武帝 propagation of Buddhism during the first half of the sixth century. Of particular importance to my study are the following four passages from the inscription. A transcription of each passage is accompanied by the translation.

1. 徵君積緣登妙，至感入微，嘗夢法身冠於層巘，又覩其顏於岩之首，於是拜受嘉徵，願言經始，將於岩壁造大尊儀，乃眷為山，未遑初簣……永明二年奄遷丹壑。

[Ming] Zhengjun [or Ming Sengshao] accumulated his good *karma* to a great degree, and [could] experience the response [of spiritual beings] in every possible and thorough way. [He] once had a dream that layers of mountain peaks were crowned with the Dharma body, and he also had a vision of its appearance on the top of the cliffs. He then humbly received

this auspicious sign, willingly discussed arrangement and design [of the carvings], and [he] was planning to carve gigantic icons on the cliff surface. [He] thus prepared the mountain [for the carvings]. [However he] did not have a chance [to see] what came out... in the second year of the Yongming reign (484 CE), [he] passed away.

- 2 第二子臨沂公仲璋，顧慕層巒既崩，心於岵望，徘徊曩構，更泣血於楹書，遂琢彼翠屏，爰開蓮座，捨茲碧題，式建花宮。上憲優填之區，仰鑲能仁之像，揆美何充之宅，遽興崇德之闡。逖彼蕭宗，大弘釋典。

His second son Zhongzhang, who was magistrate of the Linyi district, perceived that the rocks had been already split apart, while he was gazing upon the wooded mountain. [He] pondered about [his father's] original design [of the carving], and wept before the writings [regarding his father's plan], shedding tears and blood. Hence, [he] carved out of that green cliff surface [prepared by his father], and made the lotus pedestals. [He further] left this cliff and established [other] Buddhist buildings. [Zhongzhang on this green cliff] followed the example of King Udayana's Buddha figure,<sup>19</sup> and respectfully had the image of Sakyamuni Buddha carved. [He also] imitated He Chong's temple architecture,<sup>20</sup> and hastily developed Buddhist constructions. [Zhongzhang's accomplishment could] be compared with that of the Southern Qi and Liang courts in widely spreading Buddhist teaching.

3. 文惠太子及竟陵王.....咸捨淨財，光隆慧業。

[The southern Qi] Crown Prince Wenhui, Prince of Jingling...both donated pure property [clean money], and [therefore they] developed and enhanced inherent karma-cause resulting from wisdom.

4. 時有沙門法度，為智殿之棟梁，即此舊基，更興新制，又造尊像十有餘龕。

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<sup>19</sup> Udayana refers to King of Kausambi, who lived during the life time of Buddha Sakyamuni. He is said to have made the first image of Buddha Sakyamuni. See John C. Huntington, "The Origin of the Buddha Image," in *Studies in Buddhist Art of South Asia*, ed. A.K. Narain (New Delhi: Kanak Publications, 1985), 31-36.

<sup>20</sup> Layman He Chong 何充 (292-346 CE) served as the prime minister in the Eastern Jin dynasty. He was a pious Buddhist practitioner, who built many Buddhist temples during his life time. For his biography, see *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of the Jin), comp. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579-648 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), juan 47: 2028-2031.

At that time there was a certain monk Fadu, who was a key figure in Buddhist temples. [Fadu], right at this old foundation [for Zhongzhang's carvings], further built new structures, and had more than ten niches with icons carved.<sup>21</sup>

The content of the above passages and its relevance to the first tablet may be summarized as follows:

1. origin of the Qixia caves, Ming Sengshao's dream, and his plan and desire of carving the gigantic icon [refer to Section 3 of the first tablet]
2. carving of gigantic icon by Ming Zhongzhang, and mentions that the image is Sakyamuni [three colossal images of Amitayus and two attendant bodhisattvas recorded in the first tablet, refer to Section 4]
3. involvement of two Southern Qi royal princes in the carving [four names recorded in the first tablet, refer to Section 6 ]
4. additional carving activities, sponsored by monk Fudu [not included in the first tablet]

The *Chen Tablet* and the *Tang Tablet*, although slightly different in narration, complement each other and help elucidate a number of important components regarding the history of the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia. These components, as will be discussed later in this chapter, include founders, patrons and dating of the caves, as well as iconography of the imagery. The two inscriptional records, therefore, provide crucial background information for a further study of caves and images at the site. In addition to the two tablets, an inscription was found outside cave 28, on the upper right cliff surface above the doorway (Figures 2.2-3). Cave 28 is located on the upper part of the east side cliff on the south face of the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.6-7). The inscription reads:

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<sup>21</sup> Chinese word “*kan* 龕” used here could either refer to small niches or big caves. Fadu's carvings most likely refer to niches.

中大通二年□□八月廿三日作

[The cave was] made [or carved] on the twenty third day of the eighth month, in the second year of the [Southern Liang] Zhongdatong reign (530 CE).

Apart from the three inscriptional evidences, other relevant accounts are recorded in important local histories as well as early Buddhist writings compiled in the Southern Dynasties. These references, although mostly brief passages, provide additional valuable source materials for this study. The following is a transcription of them, accompanied by their translations.

1. A passage from the record of the Qixia temple in *Jinding Jiankang zhi* reads:<sup>22</sup>

棲霞詩註云：明隱君與度法師講無量壽經，西峰石壁中夜發光，光中現無量壽佛。自爾捨家財鑿巖造大像，坐高五丈，觀音勢智立像高三丈五寸。

The annotation to a poem on Qixia says: While Ming Yinjun (Sengshao) and Dharma master Fadu were preaching the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*, at midnight, lights were shining on the cliff of the west peak, and within the lights was the presence of Amitayus Buddha. Since then [Sengshao] thus gave up his family property, and had the cliff carved to make a seated colossal image [of Amitayus], five *zhangs* in height; and two standing images of Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta bodhisattvas, both of which were three *zhangs* and five *cuns* in height.

This passage is followed by another account:<sup>23</sup>

宋齊七帝造石像千尊，所謂千佛嶺。

Seven emperors from the Liu Song and the Southern Qi dynasties had thousands of stone images carved [at the site]. Thus [the site] is called the Qianfoling [or Thousand-Buddha-ridge, present-day Qixia site].

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<sup>22</sup> *Jinling fancha zhi*, Juan 46: 1439.

<sup>23</sup> *Jinling fancha zhi*, Juan 46: 1439.

2. A passage from the record of the Qixia temple in *Jinling fancha zhi* reads:<sup>24</sup>

大石佛, 明僧紹子臨沂令仲璋琢, 高四丈, 左右琢觀音勢至, 各高三丈。

Ming Sengshao's son Zhongzhang had the colossal stone Buddha [Amitayus]<sup>25</sup> carved; [it] was four *zhangs* in height. [He then] had Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta bodhisattvas carved, to the left and right [of the Buddha], each of which was three *zhangs* in height.

3. A passage from *Liang jing si ji*, currently recorded in *Fayuan zhulin* reads:<sup>26</sup>

時有法度法師, 於山舍講無量壽經。中夜忽有金光照寺, 於其光中如有臺館形像弘宣。

At that time there was a Dharma master Fadu, who was preaching the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra* in the mountain cottage [at Qixia]. And at midnight suddenly there were golden lights shining on the [Qixia] temple, within the lights there seemed to be images in the buildings preaching [Buddhist Doctrine].

4. A record from an index of miscellaneous images in *Chu sanzang ji ji* reads:<sup>27</sup>

太尉臨川王成就攝山龕大石像記

[The Southern Liang] Grand Marshal, Prince of Linchuan, completed the cave with stone colossal images at the She Mountains.

5. A passage from the biography of Sengyou in *Gaoseng zhuan* reads:<sup>28</sup>

祐為性巧思能目准心計, 及匠人依標尺寸無爽, 故光宅、攝山大像、剡縣石佛等, 並請祐經始准畫儀則。

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<sup>24</sup> *Jinling fancha zhi*, juan 4: 413.

<sup>25</sup> *Jinling fancha zhi*, juan 4: 413. Ge Yinliang does not specify which Buddha this colossal image refers to. However, he later mentions that the Pagoda is located to the right of Amitayus Buddha, thus giving the identity of this image.

<sup>26</sup> *Fayuan zhulin*, juan 36, T53, no. 2122: 572.

<sup>27</sup> *Chu sanzang ji ji*, juan 12, T55, no. 2145: 92.

<sup>28</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 11, T50, no. 2059: 402. Here I have followed Soper's translation with slight modifications. See Alexander C. Soper (1960), 67-68.

[Seng]you was naturally inventive, and was able to estimate by eye what he planned. And common artisans must have rules and dimensions to avoid mistakes. Hence, [when the time came to fashion] the colossi of the Guangzhai [temple] and the She Mountains, as well as the stone Buddha of Yanxian,<sup>29</sup> [Seng]you was asked to make the plans and to provide drawn cartoons for them to follow.”

6. A passage from the biography of Zhisheng 智勝 in *Biqiuni zhuan* reads:<sup>30</sup>

永明中……勝捨衣鉢為宋齊七帝造攝山寺石像。

During the Yongming reign (483-493 CE)... [Zhi]sheng gave up her religious robes and alms bowl [donated her wealth], and had stone images at the Sheshan temple [Qixia temple] carved for the sake of the seven emperors of the Liu Song and Southern Qi dynasties.

To summarize the content of the above passages, the first three supplement the two tablets, in a slightly different way, with information concerning the carving of the colossal images and monk Fadu's activity at Qixia. The next two passages, as will be discussed later in this chapter, are most probably related to the Southern Liang imperial prince, Prince of Linchuan and his labor in redecorating the colossal Buddha, recorded in section 7 of the *Chen Tablet*. Zhisheng's images mentioned in the last passage are not documented in the *Chen Tablet*, thus adding to our collection additional carving evidence at the site. In the following section, through an analysis of the two tablets and other relevant writings, I will conduct a thorough examination of cave carving activities at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties period.

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<sup>29</sup> The colossal image of the Guangzhai 光宅 temple did not survive to the present day. It is recorded as a colossal Amitayus under an index of miscellaneous images in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*. The *Fayuan zhulin*, however, provides a more detailed story of this image. It mentions that, during his Tianjian reign (505-519 CE), the Southern Liang Emperor Wu converted his mansion to build the Guangzhai temple, and he further commissioned to make a colossal image in gilt bronze dedicated to this temple. See *Chu sanzang ji ji*, juan 12, T55, no. 2145: 92; and *Fayuan zhulin*, juan 14, T53, no. 2122: 389. In addition, the stone Buddha at Yanxian 剡縣 refers to the aforementioned colossal Maitreya image at Shicheng in the Zhejiang province.

<sup>30</sup> *Biqiuni zhuan*, juan 3, T50, no. 2063: 943. My translation refers to Soper and Tsai's works with some adjustments. See Alexander C. Soper (1960), 63; Katherine Ann Tsai (1994), 75.



## Qixia during the Late Fifth and Sixth Centuries

### *Qixia in the Southern Qi Dynasty*

Both the *Chen Tablet* and the *Tang Tablet* reveal that the excavation project at Qixia was initiated by Ming Sengshao, a scholar recluse held in high esteem by the Liu Song and Southern Qi courts during the second half of the fifth century.<sup>31</sup> The *Chen Tablet* records that Ming Sengshao “had thought about carving [images],” and the *Tang Tablet* further mentions that he made the original plan and began to prepare the cliff to carve gigantic icons. Unfortunately, Sengshao “did not have a chance [to see] what came out” and passed away soon after before the project was begun. His work was immediately carried on and finally completed by his second son Ming Zhongzhang and his monk friend Fadu. Further, a number of royal princes in the Southern Qi court “each donated money and altogether they accomplished the karma of blessedness.” This was certainly a grand occasion of Southern Qi Buddhism during that time.

According to the *Chen Tablet*, Zhongzhang and Fadu together had three colossal images of Buddha Amitayus (Ch. Wuliangshoufo 無量壽佛) and two attendant bodhisattvas carved. However, the *Tang Tablet* bears little evidence of these three images and tells a slightly different story as well. It simply mentions that Zhongzhang followed the example of King Udayana, and “respectfully had the image of Sakyamuni Buddha carved.” Soper, in his early work, has briefly suggested that “presumably the

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<sup>31</sup> For the biography of Ming Sengshao, see *Nan Qi shu* 南齐书 (History of the Southern Qi), comp. Xiao Zixuan 萧子显 (ca. 489-537 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), juan 54: 927-928; *Nan shi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), comp. Li Yanshou 李延寿 (7<sup>th</sup> century CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), juan 50: 1241-1242. In addition, the aforementioned two tablets also bear detailed accounts of Ming Sengshao's life.

statement [of Sakyamuni] is [an] error.”<sup>32</sup> In my analysis, I found that the other relevant writings seem to have followed the more detailed account in the *Chen Tablet*, thus leaving us with no trace of the Sakyamuni image mentioned in the *Tang Tablet*. For example, *Jingding Jiankang zhi* and *Jinling fancha zhi*, two important local histories discussed earlier in this chapter, both identify this colossal image as Buddha Amitayus. They further state that the two Bodhisattvas are the representation of Avalokitesvara (Ch. Guanyin 觀音) and Mahastamaprapta (Ch. Dashizhi 大勢至), who commonly attend Buddha Amitayus in his Western Paradise of Sukhavati.<sup>33</sup>

More specifically, a number of references, as recorded in the literature, speak of monk Fadu’s devotion to Buddha Amitayus. Both the *Chen Tablet* and *Liang jing si ji* record that Fadu taught the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra* in the mountain cottage at Qixia. In addition, Fadu’s biography in *Gaoseng zhuan*, although it offers no information about his part in carving caves and images, provides firm evidence concerning his faith in Buddha Amitayus. A passage from this text reads:<sup>34</sup>

度常願生安養, 故偏講無量壽經, 積有遍數。

[Fa]du frequently desired to be born in [the Pure Land of] Tranquil Nourishment [Western Paradise of Amitayus/Amitabha]. He thus favored preaching the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*, and did that many times.

Another reference from *Jingding Jiankang zhi* further mentions Ming Sengshao’s participation in preaching the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*, and says that when he and Fadu

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960), 63.

<sup>33</sup> *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshoufo jing* (*Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*), T12, no. 365: 342.

<sup>34</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 8, T50, no. 2059: 380.

taught the sutra, “lights were shining on the cliff of the west peak, and within the lights was the presence of Buddha Amitayus.” It seems that Fadu’s faith in Amitayus had an impact on Sengshao’s Buddhist practice. This is not surprising given the fact that Sengshao respected Fadu not only as his friend but as his mentor.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the colossal Buddha, sponsored by Zhongzhang and Fadu according to Sengshao’s original design, is mostly likely a representation of Buddha Amitayus, and it serves as a testimony to Sengshao and Fadu’s personal belief and practice. This evidence, as will be discussed later, also reflects the popularity of Amitayus Pure Land in the Southern Dynasties period. Accordingly the Sakyamuni recorded in the *Tang Tablet* is questionable. I thus suggest that the statement, rather than speaking of iconography, is likely to have served as a eulogy for praising Zhongzhang’s accomplishment in widely spreading Buddhist teaching. In addition, the term “Nengren 能仁,” meaning “powerful and charitable,” which usually represent Buddha Sakyamuni, may have been used here to refer to all the Buddhas in general, including Amitayus.

Amitayus and two bodhisattvas, which I will discuss later in Chapter 3, refer to the three colossal images in cave 19, located in the center of the south surface of the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.6-7). These three images are by far the earliest known Buddhist images of such grand scale found in the south. Literary evidence indicates that the carving of the three colossal images at Cave 19 also marks the beginning of the cave activities at Qixia. According to the *Chen Tablet*, Ming Sengshao, who was the original designer of cave 19, did not start the carving and he passed away in the second year of

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<sup>35</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 8, T50, no. 2059: 380.

the Yongming reign (484 CE).<sup>36</sup> The opening date of this cave, therefore, should be no earlier than 484 CE. Little is known about Ming Zhongzhang's biography. However, the *Tang Tablet* records that monk Fadu, the other participator in the carving activity, passed away in 497 CE. The biography of Fadu in *Gaoseng zhuan*, which tells a somewhat different story, mentions that Fadu died in the second year of the Yongyuan reign (500 CE).<sup>37</sup> This evidence further suggests that the completion date of cave 19 should be no later than 497 or 500 CE. As a result, the excavation activities of the three colossal images in cave 19 were concentrated in the late fifth century, sometime after 484 CE but before 497 or 500 CE, of the Southern Qi dynasty.

The dating above is further confirmed by the fact that the royal princes, who sponsored the excavation of cave 19, all died in the last decade of the late fifth century. The full names and death year of these royal princes cited in *Nan Qi shu* are as follows (Table 2.1):<sup>38</sup>

Princes	Name	Death Year
齊文惠太子 Crown Prince Wenhui	蕭長懋 Xiao Changmao	493 CE
豫章文獻王 Prince Wenxian of Yuzhang	蕭嶷 Xiao Yi	492 CE
竟陵文宣王 Prince Wenxuan of Jingling	蕭子良 Xiao Ziliang	494 CE
始安王 Prince Shi'an	蕭遙光 Xiao Yaoguang	499 CE

Table 2.1: Names and death years of the Southern Qi royal patrons for Cave 19.

<sup>36</sup> His biography in both *Nan Qi shu* and *Nan shi* record that he died during the Yongming reign (483-493 CE), but neither of them specifies an exact date. See *Nan shi*, juan 50: 1241-1242; see also *Nan Qi shu*, juan 54: 927-928.

<sup>37</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 8, T50, no. 2059: 380.

<sup>38</sup> For the biographies of these royal princes, see *Nan Qi shu*, juan 21: 397-404; juan 22: 405-424; juan 40: 691-701; juan 45: 788-791.

To facilitate this study, I have also provided the names of the Southern Qi emperors, their reigning titles and years in the following table (Table 2.2).<sup>39</sup>

Emperors	Titles of Reigns	Reigning Years
高帝 Emperor Gao, 蕭道成 Xiao Daocheng	建元 Jianyuan reign	479-482 CE
武帝 Emperor Wu, 蕭賾 Xiao Ze	永明 Yongming reign	483-493 CE
郁林王 King of Yulin, 蕭昭業 Xiao Zhaoye	隆昌 Longchang reign	494 CE
恭帝 Emperor Gong, 蕭昭文 Xiao Zhaowen	延興 Yanxing reign	494 CE
明帝 Emperor Ming, 蕭鸞 Xiao Luan	建武 Jianwu reign	494-498 CE
	永泰 Yongtai reign	498 CE
東昏侯 Duke of Donghun, 蕭寶卷 Xiao Baojuan	永元 Yongyuan reign	499-501 CE
和帝 Emperor He, 蕭寶融 Xiao Baorong	中興 Zhongxing reign	501-502 CE

Table 2.2: Emperors and their reigns during the Southern Qi dynasty (479-502 CE)

Aside from the Amitayus cave, other Southern Qi excavation projects at Qixia are further recorded by three aforementioned references. First, according to the *Chen Tablet*, Lady Huo, a concubine of the Prince of Jiangxia, together with Tian Huan who was the Regional Chief of Yongzhou, “widely spent money and had images carved out of huge rocks imitating Dharma body.” Second, the *Biqiuni zhuan* mentions that Zhisheng, during the Yongming reign (483-493 CE), “had stone images at the Sheshan temple carved for the sake of the seven emperors of the Liu Song and the Southern Qi dynasties.” The last refers to monk Fadu’s “more than ten niches with icons” at the site,

<sup>39</sup> For the biographies of the Southern Qi emperors, see *Nan Qi shu*, juan 1-8: 1-116.

recorded by the *Tang Tablet*. Monk Fadu, as discussed earlier, died in 497 or 500 CE. Fadu's niches and images, therefore, are datable to the late fifth century before his death. Although no additional evidence is available for the identification of the seven emperors, Zhisheng's images, dated to the Yongming reign, were most probably completed earlier than the works by Fadu. In addition, her biography records that Zhisheng died in the tenth year of the Yongming reign (492 CE).<sup>40</sup> This suggests that her project should be finished no later than 492 CE.

In my research, I have not found additional information about Lady Huo and Tian Huan. The *Chen Tablet* reveals that Lady Huo was a concubine of the Prince of Jiangxia during the Liu Song period.<sup>41</sup> If this is the case, her presence in the Qi carving activity is very surprising and remains a question. The *Nan Qi shu*, however, records that Xiao Baoxuan 蕭寶玄, a son of the Southern Qi Emperor Ming, was granted the title of the Prince of Jiangxia in the first year of the Jianwu era (494 CE).<sup>42</sup> Here, I would agree with the argument made by Yan Wenru, who identifies the Prince of Jiangxia in the *Chen Tablet* as this Southern Qi royal prince.<sup>43</sup> According to his biography, Xiao Baoxuan died in the second year of the Yongyuan reign (500 CE).<sup>44</sup> Lady Huo's images, therefore,

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<sup>40</sup> *Biqiuni zhuan*, juan 3, T50, no. 2063: 942-943.

<sup>41</sup> The Prince Wenxian of Jiangxia, Liu Yigong 劉義恭, was a son of Emperor Wu (r. 420-424 CE) of the Liu Song period. According to his biography, he died in the first year of the Yongguang 永光 reign (465 CE), about twenty years before the cave carving activity at Qixia began. Therefore, it is almost impossible for his concubine to sponsor the excavation project. For his biography, see *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Liu Song), comp. Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), juan 61: 1640-1653.

<sup>42</sup> *Nan Qi shu*, juan 50: 863-864.

<sup>43</sup> Yan Wenru (1987), 50.

<sup>44</sup> *Nan Qi shu*, juan 50: 863-864.

were presumably carved sometime after 494 CE during the late fifth century. Nevertheless, the identity of Tian Huan remains a puzzle. As “an honorable statesman in the nation,” it is almost impossible for him to be left out of the official history of the Southern Qi dynasty. Yan Wenru thus suggests that the inscription might have mistaken Tian Huan for Wang Huan 王奐, a Southern Qi high ranking official, who was appointed as the Regional Chief of the Yongzhou area in the sixth year of the Yongming era (488 CE).<sup>45</sup> If this is the case, his work should begin no earlier than 488 CE and was very possibly completed in the 490s. Further, given their joint effort on the excavation project, this Tian Huan or Wang Huan and Lady Huo might have carved the same group of images at Qixia.

The discussion above reveals extensive excavation activities at Qixia during the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty. Caves and images carved at that time, as recorded by textual information, mainly include cave 19 with Amitayus and two attendant bodhisattvas, as well as other works by Fadu, Zhisheng, Lady Huo and Tian Huan/Wang Huan. Noteworthy in my compilation of the literature is a passage from *Jingding Jiankang zhi* which records: “Seven emperors from the Liu Song and Southern Qi dynasties had thousands of stone images carved.” None of the other references, however, leaves us with any trace of the Liu Song period activity at the site, and the involvement of these emperors in the Qixia carvings. Hence, this statement is presumably in error. I would assume that it probably has been mixed up with Zhisheng’s stone images, which were made “for the sake of the seven emperors of the Liu Song and

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<sup>45</sup> Yan Wenru (1987), 50. For the biography of Wang Huan, see *Nan Qi shu*, juan 49: 847-851.

Southern Qi dynasties.” Regardless, this account too would serve as additional evidence of large scale excavation project at Qixia in the Southern Qi dynasty.

*Qixia in the Southern Liang Dynasty*

In contrast, the textual sources I have assembled provide less information concerning the Southern Liang activity at Qixia. According to the *Tang Tablet*, Prince of Linchuan Xiao Hong 蕭宏 saw that “there were very few labors [on carving at the site],” and he thus “poured out his personal wealth to re-embellish [the Amitayus cave].” This occurred in the tenth year of the Tianjian reign (511 CE) of the Southern Liang dynasty. We know from this evidence that, during the first decade of the Liang regime before 511 CE, there was little or no carving activity at Qixia. The *Tang Tablet* offers no clue regarding which cave or image Xiao Hong refurbished. The *Chu sanzang ji ji*, however, mentions that this Prince of Linchuan “completed the cave with stone colossal images at the She Mountains.” As there is no trace of a second cave with colossal images, the cave in this record undoubtedly refers to the Amitayus cave at the site. Xiao Hong’s effort, therefore, has nothing to do with new carvings. This reference, as suggested by Professor Su Bai, provides an explanation of what is recorded in the *Tang Tablet* and reveals that Xiao Hong’s work in 511 CE was to add embellishment to the three colossal images in the Amitayus cave.<sup>46</sup> Su Bai and Yan Wenru further mention that another reference from *Gaoseng zhuan*, which records monk Sengyou’s plans and drawings for the colossi of the She Mountains, offers additional evidence of Xiao Hong’s redecoration work.<sup>47</sup> Aside from the above three accounts regarding the renovation project by the Prince of Linchuan,

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<sup>46</sup> Su Bai (1989): 392.

<sup>47</sup> Su Bai (1989): 392; Yan Wenru (1987), 50.



an inscription was found outside cave 28, dated the second year of the Liang Zhongdatong reign (530 CE). This is by far the only known evidence of the Southern Liang cave carving activities at Qixia.

According to the *Tang Tablet*, the Prince of Linchuan also had an image of Amitayus Buddha carved for the Qixia temple in the fifteenth year of the Tianjian reign (516 CE).<sup>48</sup> Su Bai suggests that a stone Buddha head in the temple collection (Figure 2.4), given its distinctive Liang features, might be the remains of the 516 CE Buddha.<sup>49</sup> Although this evidence does not pertain to the carving of caves and images, it informs us of the importance and popularity of Qixia as a religious center during that time. In addition, it should be recognized that all these Liang activities at Qixia occurred during the long reign of Emperor Wu, founder of the dynasty, who ruled from 502-548 CE (Table 2.3).<sup>50</sup>

Title of Reigns		Reigning Years
天監	Tianjian reign	502-519 CE
普通	Putong reign	520-527 CE
大通	Datong reign	527-529 CE
中大通	Zhongdatong reign	529-534 CE
大同	Datong reign	535-546 CE
中大同	Zhongdatong reign	546-547 CE
太清	Taiqing reign	547-548 CE

Table 2.3: Reigning years of Emperor Wu 武 (蕭衍 Xiao Yan, r. 502-548 CE) of the Southern Liang dynasty (502-557 CE)

<sup>48</sup> *Tang Ming Zhengjun bei*.

<sup>49</sup> This head of Buddha has long been in the collection of the Qixia temple. The newly restored image, whose body is a modern reconstruction, is currently in the main hall of the temple. See Su Bai (1989): 411-412.

<sup>50</sup> *Liang shu* 梁书 (History of the Southern Liang), comp. Yao Cha 姚察 (d. 606 CE) and his son Yao Silian 姚思廉 (557-637 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), juan 1-3: 1-102.

Both *Nan shi* and *Liang shu* record that Emperor Wu was a pious devotee who, with great enthusiasm for Buddhist teachings, dedicated his life to constructing Buddhist temples and expounding religious doctrines.<sup>51</sup> Owing to his sincere devotion and unremitting promotion, Southern Dynasties Buddhism underwent a stage of substantial development under his regime. The strong support of the ruler would, unquestionably, have greatly fostered patronage in Buddhist art, including carving at Qixia during that time. As a result, it is most natural to assume that the Qixia caves, which flourished in the late fifth century of the Southern Qi, welcomed its second phase of full flower in the Southern Liang dynasty since 511 CE (Table 2.4).

Periods	Excavation and Renovation Projects	Donors and Patrons	Approximate Dates
Qi	Amitayus cave with three colossal images	Layman Ming Sengshao Official Ming Zhongzhang Monk Fadu Royal princes: Crowned Prince Wenhui Prince Wenxian of Yuzhang Prince Wenxuan of Jingling Prince Shian	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> century, ca. 484 ~ 497 or 500 CE
	More than ten niches with images	Monk Fadu	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> century, before 497 or 500CE
	Carving images	Aristocratic woman: Lady Huo Official Tian /Wang Huan	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> century, ca. 494~500 CE
	Carving images	Nun Zhisheng	Late 5 <sup>th</sup> century, before 492 CE
Liang	Amitayus cave (add to embellishment)	Prince of Linchuan	511 CE
	Cave 28	Unknown	530 CE

Table 2.4: Literary evidence concerning excavation and renovation projects at Qixia in the Southern Dynasties from the late fifth to the sixth centuries

<sup>51</sup> *Liang shu*, juan 1-3: 1-102; and *Nan shi*, juan 6-7: 167-228. For the detailed discussion of Emperor Wu's devotion to Buddhism, also see Kenneth K. S. Ch'en (1964), 124-128; and Tang Yongtong 湯用彤. *Hanwei Liangjin Nanbeichao fojiaoshi* 漢魏兩晉南北朝佛教史 (History of Buddhism in the Han, Wei, Western and Eastern Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties) (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963; reprint, Beijing: Beijing daxue, 1997), 337-341.

### *Patrons and Patronage Activities*

More significantly, the literature informs us that the carving of caves and images at Qixia during the late 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries received support from the Qi and Liang ruling houses (Table 2.4). According to the *Chen Tablet*, the Qi royal princes, including the Crown Prince Wenhui, Prince Wenxian of Yuzhang, Prince Wenxuan of Jingling, Prince Shi'an, "each donated money and altogether they accomplished the *karma* of blessedness." In addition, the Liang Prince of Linchuan, as discussed earlier, was also responsible for reviving activity at Qixia in 511 CE. This indicates that the Southern Qi and Liang courts greatly contributed to the flourishing of cave carving activity at the site in the Southern Dynasties. It should be noted that Buddhism, during that time, gained a wide following among members of the imperial courts, including emperors, empresses, palace ladies and royal princes. Tang Yongtong 汤用彤, in his early work, offers a detailed analysis concerning Buddhism and Buddhist practices of the southern courts.<sup>52</sup> He further provides a complete list of imperial princes who, as recorded in the literature, were known followers of the Dharma.<sup>53</sup> Not surprisingly, all those participating in patronage activities at Qixia are included in this list. The Prince of Jingling, in particular, was one of the strongest supporters, who were credited to have widely spread the religion to the Southern Qi court.<sup>54</sup> Hence, the direct involvement of a number of royal princes at

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<sup>52</sup> Tang Yongtong (1997), 312-324.

<sup>53</sup> He also briefly mentions the related textual evidence in his list. See Tang Yongtong (1997), 322.

<sup>54</sup> *Nan Qi shu*, juan 40: 692-701. For the detailed discussion of his devotion to Buddhism, also see Tang Yongtong (1997), 324-327; and Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, 123-124.

Qixia is not a surprise, and it serves as a testimony to the flourishing of Buddhism and Buddhist art under the support of the southern courts.

Further, it should be recognized that all the other patrons, who came from different strata of society, were more or less associated with the imperial court. As previously discussed, the scholar recluse Ming Sengshao, founder of the cave site, was highly regarded in the Qi court. Likewise, Lady Huo, an aristocratic woman, came from the house of the Qi Prince of Jiangxia. Given her collaborative effort with the high government official Tian Huan/Wang Huan in their carving project, the latter's close connection with the court is evident, although his identity still remains a puzzle. Monk Fadu and Nun Zhisheng are two other important patrons for the Qixia caves. According to the biography of Fadu in *Gaoseng zhuan*, Prince of Jingling and Shi'an both treated Fadu as their Buddhist master with great respect.<sup>55</sup> In addition, a passage from *Biqiuni zhuan* also speaks of Zhisheng's close ties with the imperial court:<sup>56</sup>

齊文惠帝聞風雅相接召,每延入宮講說眾經。司徒竟陵文宣王倍崇敬焉。

The Crowned Prince Wenhui of Qi, hearing of her [Zhisheng's] reputation, often summoned her to his presence. She was frequently invited to the imperial palace to give lectures on various sutras. The minister of education, Prince Wenxuan of Jingling treated her with exceeding respect.

Fadu and Zhisheng, apparently, won high esteem among the royal princes of the Qi court. Interestingly, the princes as mentioned in their biographies, like Crowned Prince Wenhui, Prince of Jingling and Shi'an, all sponsored the Amitayus cave, which was founded by Fadu and Zhongzhang. Here, I would further suggest a possible involvement of these

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<sup>55</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 8, T50, no. 2059: 380.

<sup>56</sup> *Biqiuni zhuan*, juan 3, T50, no. 2063: 943. My translation refers to Tsai's work with adjustments. See Tsai (1994), 75.

princes in Fadu and Zhisheng's individual excavation projects, as recorded by the *Tang Tablet* and *Biqiuni zhuan*. In other words, Qi royal patronage at Qixia may have spread beyond the Amitayus cave. As a result, the other patrons and their intimate ties with the court, as discussed in this section, further underscores the importance of Qixia as an imperial-sponsored site. The above analysis also suggests that this site may have been a religious center for Buddhist worship by the court and elite families during that time.

Of note too is the fact that we found two women, including a lay worshiper and a nun, who participated in patronage activities at Qixia. As previously mentioned, nothing is known about Lady Huo's personal life, except that she was an imperial concubine. Regardless, her presence in the patron group testifies to the significant role played by aristocratic women in sponsoring the Buddhist art of the Southern Dynasties. This also corresponds with the historical fact that, during that time, there was a tradition of imperial ladies supporting Buddhism in the south.<sup>57</sup> The other female patron, Zhisheng, according to her biography, was a well educated and renowned female Buddhist teacher, who was influential at the Qi court of her time.<sup>58</sup> Zhisheng was one of numerous exemplary nuns of high social status at that time recorded in *Biqiuni zhuan*. In her discussion concerning the role of women as supporters and benefactresses of Buddhism from fifth-sixth centuries, Dorothy Wong mentions the importance of Buddhist nuns and the flourishing of their communities in the south. She further points out that these southern nuns' "relative freedom and high status" should be considered "as an anomalous phenomenon

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<sup>57</sup> Tang Yongtong (1997), 321.

<sup>58</sup> *Biqiuni zhuan*, juan 3, T50, no. 2063: 942-943.

rather than norm.”<sup>59</sup> Zhisheng’s activity at Qixia, therefore, may reflect this particular phenomenon in southern Buddhism. The fact that she was able to participate in the state-sponsored site and dedicate her images to the Song and Qi emperors further testifies the active roles of Buddhist nuns in the religious life of the south during that period.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In summary, according to the literature, there were two important phases of activity at the Qixia cave site during the Southern Dynasties. The first dates to a period from around 484 to 500 CE in the Southern Qi dynasty. The second phase, which follows a period of about ten years when there was little or no activity at Qixia, dates to the first half of the sixth century during the Southern Liang dynasty. In addition, the examination of patron groups also reveals the significance of Qixia as an imperially sponsored site during the late fifth and sixth centuries.

The textual analysis in this chapter has raised several questions. First, aside from the Qi Amitayus cave and the Liang Cave 28, how many other caves belong to the first phase, and the second phase? And what are the distinctive characteristics of each phase? In addition, is there any further artistic development among the Qi and Liang caves? Lastly, are there any Chen caves and images? Apart from the *Chen Tablet* erected by the official Jiang Zong, little is known about Qixia in the Chen dynasty. The *Chen shu* records that Jiang Zong, who converted to Buddhism in his young age, was a close friend

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<sup>59</sup> Dorothy C. Wong, “Women as Buddhist Art Patrons during the Northern and Southern Dynasties,” in *Between Han and Tang: Religious Art and Archaeology in a Transformative Period* (2000), 535-566.

of Buddhist master Bu 布 at the Qixia temple.<sup>60</sup> In his later years, Jiang Zong and the last Chen emperor Houzhu 後主 (r. 583-589 CE) made many journeys to the temple, and they both left poems recording their trips.<sup>61</sup> This indicates that Qixia continued to enjoy popularity in the later part of the Southern Dynasties. Nevertheless, no physical evidence has been found concerning the Chen cave building activity at the site.

The following three chapters, Chapters 3-5, are devoted to the study of the earliest eighteen caves at Qixia, with an emphasis on their content, dating and iconography. Each of the chapters will discuss one of the three typological categories. As previously mentioned, the caves belonging to each category are located near one another, and they also share common typological features, such as architectural layout, sculptural programs and figural styles. We hope to answer all the above questions through a detailed study of the caves and their images in these three chapters.

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<sup>60</sup> *Chen shu* 陈书 (History of the Southern Chen), comp. Yao Cha 姚察 (d. 606) and Yao Silian 姚思廉 (557- 637 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), juan 27: 343-347.

<sup>61</sup> Jiang Zong visited the Qixia temple many times in the year of 582, 583, 584, 585, 587 CE. The Chen emperor Houzhu 後主 joined some of his trips. See *Guan hongming ji* 廣弘明集 (Second Collection of Documents for Propagating Buddhism), comp. Daoxuan 道宣 in 664 CE, juan 30, T 52, no. 2103: 356-357.



Figure 2.1: Views of the *Tang Tablet*, erected by Emperor Gaozong in 676 CE, Tang Dynasty, Qixia temple, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 2.2: View of Cave 28, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 2.3: Inscription dated 530 CE, Southern Liang dynasty, Cave 28, south wall,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 2.4: Buddha head, Southern Liang dynasty, main hall, Qixia temple, Qixiashan  
Nanjing

## CHAPTER 3

### CATEGORY I: DESCRIPTION, DATING, AND ICONOGRAPHY

In Category I, I have grouped together eight caves, numbered from 18-24 and 26 (Figures 3.1-79). These caves occupy the middle and eastern part of the south face of the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.6-7). Based on the aforementioned textual information as well as the form and iconography of these caves, I will suggest that the approximate date for this group is around the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty. These eight caves, together with two small niches (Caves 25 and 27) that I will discuss later, exemplify the earliest stage of carvings at Qixia.

Like the majority of caves at Qixia, none of these eight caves bears a front wall, and the original open entrance of each cave is in the form of a rounded arch. The façades of these caves, as discussed earlier, are currently hidden from the view by stone roofs and doorways dating from the Ming dynasty (Figure 3.1).<sup>1</sup> Among all of my typological features, the architectural layout is the most important factor for the grouping of the caves in this category. Caves 19, 20-23, and 26 each consists of a single chamber that is relatively shallow, elliptical in shape, and with a domed ceiling (Figures 3.4, 25, 33, 57,

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<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out that the stone structure of Cave 21, which is also of a later period reconstruction, differentiates itself from that of the other caves in material and architectural form (Figure 3.63). This suggests that it is probably not a part of the previously mentioned Ming reconstruction project. Unfortunately, no evidence concerning its date has thus far found.

64, 72). This type of floor plan is not seen in the caves of the other two categories, although the domed ceiling is characteristic of almost all of the caves at the Qixia site.<sup>2</sup> Caves 18 and 24 reveal differences in floor plan in that Cave 18's elliptical is relatively deep in form (Figure 3.13), while Cave 24 has a rectangular plan with three large niches, one on each of the three walls (Figure 3.48). It should be recognized, however, that the two caves are clustered together with the other caves belonging to Category I. These two caves, as will be discussed later, further present some other typological features only characteristic of the caves from this group. Hence, Caves 18 and 24 are also considered part of the earliest carvings at Qixia, and have been included in Category I in this study.

In addition to the shallow elliptical floor plan, this group of caves possesses another distinctive architectural feature in the lack, or undeveloped form, of the *Sanbi huantan* 三壁環壇, or “three walls surrounded by platforms” structure. A cave with this structure generally contains one or two layers of platforms along the back and the two side walls, on which images are set. It is notable that this *Sanbi huantan* arrangement is quite prevalent in the other two categories and appears frequently in the major caves excavated at the Qixia site.<sup>3</sup> In this category, however, a similar structure only appears in Caves 18, 21, 22 and 23 (Figures 3.13-14, 33-34, 64, 72).<sup>4</sup> It should be further recognized that, in contrast to the high platform on the back wall, the side wall platforms in Cave 18 are too low to be noticeable. Likewise, the platforms surrounding the three

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<sup>2</sup> The domed ceiling I mentioned in this paper generally refers to a half dome instead of a complete one. This is due to the fact that the caves at Qixia generally have an open entrance with no front wall.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5 for the discussion of Categories II and III; also see Lin Wei (2005): 297-301.

<sup>4</sup> Caves 19 and 20, both of which have a high platform on the back wall, may previously have had low platforms on the side walls, like the depiction in Cave 18. Unfortunately, the original floor of each cave is currently covered by blocks of stones, thus leaving no trace of its original design (Figures 3.4, 9, 25).



walls in Caves 21, 22 and 23 are all interrupted by a large throne, which nearly occupies the entire back wall of the cave. Apparently, the depictions of the *Sanbi huantan* structure here displays somewhat immature characteristics, thus revealing the differences from more standardized representations in Categories II and III, as discussed in the two succeeding chapters. This typical feature further suggests the earlier date of the eight caves of this group.

The majority of the caves in Category I contain a Buddha on the back wall serving as a major icon, surrounded by other attendant figures (Figures 3.4-5, 24-25, 32-33, 57-58, 64, 66, 69, 72). This is known as the *Sanbi yifo* 三壁一佛, or “one Buddha on the three walls” figural composition. Caves 18 and 24 are the exceptions in that the former has two main Buddhas on the back wall (Figures 3.13, 15), while the latter has three principal Buddhas, one on each of the three walls (Figures 3.48-50). This *Sanbi yifo* composition also dominates the caves of Category II and appears in Caves 9 and 28 of Category III.<sup>5</sup> Iconographic schemes of these eight caves, however, show a great deal of variations in contrast to more consistent depictions in the other two categories. Generally speaking, the layout of the major group of sculpted figures in this category includes three, four, five, and seven image configurations on the three walls within the cave. Due to the inconsistency of the sculptural programs, I have not relied upon this typological feature as the decisive factor for my grouping of these caves. It should be noted, however, that some iconographic themes that are commonly depicted in these caves are absent from those of Category II and III. These themes include, for example, miniature representations of Buddhas in Caves 18, 20-23 (Figures 3.23, 31, 35, 66, 76-

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<sup>5</sup> See Chapters 4 and 5.

77).<sup>6</sup> The presence of guardian figures outside the entrance of Cave 24 (Figure 3. 47) also reveals the major difference in sculptural arrangement from the depictions in the other two group caves, which normally house guardian figures in the interior.<sup>7</sup>

The sculptures of these caves, which were largely uncovered during the recent cleaning process, are generally in a good state of condition (Figures 3.5-9, 15-22, 27-30, 37-42, 51-56, 58-61). Unfortunately, the figural representations in the other two categories are badly weathered and damaged, and most of them are still under cement covering. While this makes close stylistic comparison difficult, a more careful reading of slightly better preserved examples still reveals the major differences between the images from Categories I and III.<sup>8</sup> The figures in this category show full-bodied forms with relatively slender proportion and somewhat sloping shoulders. An emphasis on garment depiction with the use of elaborate drapery folds, which prevails in the art of this group, is absent from the works in Category III.<sup>9</sup> The human bodies here are concealed underneath the draperies, thus showing less sense of musculature and physicality. Other details including, for example, circular head halos for Buddhas and attendant bodhisattvas 3.15, 19, 27-28, 37, 39-40, 52-53, 59, 66), as well as high lotus pedestals

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<sup>6</sup> The images in Cave 23 are now missing, only leaving us with traces of halos and pedestals (Figures 3.76-77).

<sup>7</sup> As will be discussed below, Caves 21 and 23 most probably have once contained the guardian figures outside the cave, flanking the entrance (Figures 3.63, 71). In addition, the image in Cave 27 may have previously served as guardian figure for Cave 26 (Figures 1.17, 3.57). For the detailed discussion of the caves in the other two categories, see Chapters 4 and 5.

<sup>8</sup> The images from Category II, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, are all under cement covering, thus leaving no evidence of its original appearance.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 5 for the discussion of the images from Category III.

decorated with more ornamented petals (Figures 3.9, 20-21, 34, 42, 55, 60-61, 68) also help define distinctive characteristics of these eight caves.

A more in-depth analysis of the imagery suggests that these eight caves can be further divided into two subgroups. The first includes Caves 18-20 and 22; and the second consists of Caves 21, 23, 24 and 26. It is evident that the Buddha figures in Caves 24 and 26 have relatively shorter upper bodies, and thus revealing somewhat ill-proportioned yet robust forms. Their draperies are also depicted in more elaborate manner with densely packed fold patterns. Other characteristic features of the second subgroup include the presence of guardian figures in sculptural programs, as previously mentioned, as well as the Mount Meru thrones (Figures 3.52, 55-56, 58, 67, 73).

In the following section, I will provide a detailed descriptive analysis of these eight caves and their images. Given the inconsistency of the sculptural programs as well as the intricacy of the imagery, each cave will be presented separately so as to facilitate our understanding. My discussion will begin with Cave 19, the earliest excavation at Qixia, and then move from the lower level caves to the upper level ones on the cliff surface according to the sequence of their numbers. Caves 25 and 27, the two small niches mentioned in Chapter 1, also belong to this category and thus will be included in my analysis.

## **Content and Description**

### *Cave 19*

Cave 19 is the largest of all the Qixia caves and it dominates the entire center sector of the south face of the Lower Cliff (Figure 3.2). It is commonly known as the



Wuliangdian 無量殿, or “Amitayus Hall.” An inscription right above the entrance door of the Ming façade provides another popular name for the cave: Sanshengdian 三聖殿, or “Hall of the Three Saints.” Above the entrance there are also a large window and two circular holes that provide light into the interior. In addition, the cliff surface beside and above the cave has been drilled and prepared, thus indicating that wooden architectures were once constructed adjoining the front of the cave (Figure 3.3).<sup>10</sup>

This cave contains a large chamber that has a shallow elliptical floor plan (Figure 3.4).<sup>11</sup> A high platform is carved against the rear or the north wall. The original ground, however, is currently covered with stones and has been raised to a higher level, thus leaving no trace for the possible existing platforms on the side walls. The front part of the domed ceiling was damaged and has been repaired with bricks. All the three walls and the ceiling have been brightly painted in red, which, as a sign of past restoration, appears in all the major caves at Qixia.

The sculpture program of the cave includes three colossal figures, consisting of a seated representation of a Buddha on the rear wall (Figure 3.5-8), flanked by two standing bodhisattvas on the side walls (Figure 3.9). These three images, which occupy the interior space of the cave, refer to Buddha Amitayus and two attendant bodhisattvas recorded in the aforementioned *Chen Tablet*. It should be noted that two standing

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<sup>10</sup> Excavations conducted at the site during these recent years have unearthed a number of architectural remains. A corpus of material, dated the Southern Dynasties and the Tang dynasty, was discovered right in front of Cave 19. They have not yet been published. When I visited Nanjing in 2002, I was fortunate to have an opportunity to see photos of some of these finds.

<sup>11</sup> The measurements of the Qixia caves, as recorded in this dissertation, are based on the data collected in the field work during 1994-1996. However, due to its large scale, we would not be able to measure Cave 19 at that time. In these recent years, a more scientific method has been applied to re-measure the Qixia caves. This information will be included in the aforementioned forthcoming archaeological report.

Buddha figures, currently flanked the doorway of Cave 19, do not belong to the original program (Figure 3.10).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, seven tiny niches, which are later additions, are carved on the outer part of the side walls (Figure 3.11). Some of them are empty and some have images under cement coverings.

Buddha Amitayus is seated with both legs crossed on the platform in *vajraparyankasana*, “Vajra-throne sitting,” a posture of meditation also known as *padmasana*, or “Lotus-seat” (Figures 3.5-6).<sup>13</sup> His two hands are placed in the lap with palms upward, displaying the *dhyana mudra*, a gesture of meditation. A huge pointed, leaf-shaped halo or aura of light, which is generally known as *prabhamadala*, “circle of light,” radiates from his entire body and reaches to the top of the ceiling. Within this aureole are depicted two smaller halos, the outer of which is in a shape of a pointed peach emerging from his shoulders, and the inner one being a rounded halo behind his head containing a lotus blossom.<sup>14</sup> While part of this image is currently covered with a thin layer of cement, much of its original appearance may still be determined. Noteworthy is that the head of the Buddha has been uncovered during recent cleaning process (Figure 3.7). The rather large head is long and somewhat rectangular in shape, with an *urna* in the center of the forehead and a double layer of flat *usnisa* on the top. Other facial features include gently smiling expression, full and softly modeled cheeks, a sharply

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<sup>12</sup> According to Ge Yinliang, these two figures were originally standing before the tenth century Pagoda of the Qixia Temple. Ge further mentions that they were made in the Sui dynasty. See *Jingling fancha zhi*, juan 4.

<sup>13</sup> Susan L. Huntington, with contributions by John C. Huntington, *The Art of Ancient India* (New York: Weatherhill, 1985), 723-724, 729. It should be noted that in Chinese Buddhist art, the left foot is commonly covered by the drapery.

<sup>14</sup> A halo behind the head is frequently called as *sirascakra*, or *sirasprabhacakra* (head-light-wheel). For the information of halo and related terms, see Susan L. Huntington (1985), 114, 724, 727.

carved nose, a small mouth with thin lips, as well as enormous ears with long ear lobes almost touching the shoulders. At the Qixia site, this Buddha figure is the only one that still has its original head intact.

Amitayus wears monastic garb, consisting of a loosely draped robe that covers both shoulders and falls nearly to the bottom of the platform-seat. The upper hem of the robe drops almost to the waist level, forming a deep “U” shape in the front revealing another garment beneath it. This manner of dress is known as *Chuilong dayi* 垂領大衣, or “Collar-Drooping Robe” in Chinese.<sup>15</sup> The overhang of the cloth is depicted in a series of symmetrically arranged parallel fold patterns, with vertical creases on both sides and small arcs in the middle. It is certain that there are two layers of garments falling down to the platform, as suggested by the two hemlines. The figure is full in form, and has long body proportion with relatively sloping shoulders.

The two attendant bodhisattvas, one on each of the side walls, are currently covered with cement, underneath which we can still trace its original round head halo and long-floating draperies as well. Each figure stands on an engaged circular pedestal, decorated with a row of elaborate down-turned lotus petals (Figure 3.9). The bi-lobed petals are depicted in high relief, each of which is somewhat rounded in shape, with a raised rim and a single vertical line in the center. Although part of the pedestals is

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<sup>15</sup> Alexander B. Griswold has argued that this manner of dress is a Chinese variation of the traditional *covering mode*. A garment worn in the manner of the *covering mode*, as will be discussed later, normally covers both shoulders, with a backthrow falling over the left shoulder. In Chinese practice, however, the robe is sometimes loosely draped with “the loosening neckline,” thus revealing the undergarment. See Alexander B. Griswold, “Prolegomena to the Study of the Buddha’s Dress in Chinese Sculptures,” *Artibus Asiae* 26, no 2 (1963): 85-131. In this paper, I will use the term *Cuilong dayi* to refer to this Sinicized version of the *covering mode*, so as to differentiate it from the more traditional-looking *covering mode*.

currently hidden under the stone floor, the image on the right (Figure 3.9) reveals evident trace of another layer of the lotus petals.

### *Cave 18*

Cave 18 immediately joins Cave 19 on its west side (Figure 3.12). Like Cave 19, it contains an elliptical floor plan, which, however, is relatively long in depth, thus forming a roughly semicircular layout (Figure 3.13). Its maximum dimensions are 3.56 meters in width, 3.30 meters in depth, and 3.24 meters in height. In the interior there are platforms carved against the three walls. The platform on the rear or the north wall, 62 cm. in height, is much higher than the ones on the side walls, which are around 10 cm. high (Figure 3.14). The front part of the domed ceiling was damaged and has been repaired with bricks and cement.

The cave houses twelve figures, with a major group of four figures consisting of a seated representation of two Buddhas on the rear wall (Figures 3.15-18), flanked by two standing bodhisattvas, one on each side walls (Figures 3.19-22).<sup>16</sup> Along the upper part of the side walls are miniature depictions of eight seated Buddhas, four on each side (Figure 3.23). The two Buddhas sit side by side in *padmasana*, with legs folded on the platform against the back wall. As will be discussed later in my iconographic analysis, they are most likely a representation of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and Prabhutaratna, the Buddha of remote past.

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<sup>16</sup> As previously discussed, these four images have been restored in recent years, see Chapter 1, note 12. My description here is based upon the original appearance of these sculptures, that is, those when the old cement covering was removed and before the new layer was applied in 1995.

Each Buddha has a large leaf-shaped nimbus surrounding his body, within which is a small round halo behind his head containing an open lotus blossom (Figure 3.15). The original heads of the Buddhas are missing and have been recently restored in 1995. The hands are also broken off, but the fractures show that, presumably, the Buddha on the proper left side once displayed the *dhyana mudra* with his both hands, and the one on the right made the *abhaya mudra*, a gesture of protection with his right hand. It is notable that the new restoration apparently conforms to their original hand gestures.

The two Buddhas are dressed in *Tongjian dayi* 通肩大衣, or “Shoulder-Surrounding Robe,” which is wrapped across the front of the body and around the back, covering both shoulders (Figures 3.16-18). An abbreviated name for this manner of dress is the above mentioned *covering mode*.<sup>17</sup> The neckline of each Buddha’s robe still drops but now only down to the chest in a shallow “U” shape in front, exposing the diagonal hem of the undergarment of the proper right figure.<sup>18</sup> The garment of the Buddha on the proper right side is tied in front of the chest, with a sash hanging down onto his lap. A curving line is faintly visible on the right shoulder of both figures, thus suggesting that there is an additional piece of clothing covering the right shoulder (Figure 3.18).<sup>19</sup> While it has been heavily eroded, it is recognizable that the fall of the cloth over the altar has two hemlines, and is depicted in regularly arranged folds with semicircular arcs in the middle. This bears similarity with that of Amitayus (Figure 3.5), although the fold patterns seem to be more loosely arranged here. The relatively long body proportion is

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<sup>17</sup> Alexander B. Griswold (1963), 89-91; also refer to note 15 in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> This one-sided undershirt leaving the right shoulder bare is known as *amsavattaka*, or *sankaksika*, see Alexander B. Griswold (1963), 91. This undergarment is also called *sengzhizhi* 僧祇支 in Chinese.

<sup>19</sup> It is generally known as *pianshan* 偏衫, or one-sided upper garment in Chinese.

also reminiscent of Amitayus. Nevertheless, the two figures here are slightly fuller, with somewhat round shoulders.

On the inner part of each side wall (east and west) is a bodhisattva figure that wears a round halo behind his head, and stands on a circular high pedestal, decorated with two rows of inverted lotus petals (Figures 3.19-22). Each double-lobed petal, with a raised rim and a vertical groove in the center, resembles the depictions in Cave 19 (Figure 3.9). Like the Buddha figures, these two bodhisattva images have suffered serious abrasion and erosion, and their original heads, forearms and hands are missing and have now been restored. However, much of its surface decoration as well as details of drapery patterns is still discernable. They are both dressed in standard bodhisattva garb, with a long skirt over the lower body. The upper body of each figure is bare except for two strands of jewelry and a shawl or scarf crossing symmetrically in front of the body. This string of ornament is generally called *mutahara* or *hara*, meaning “garlands of pearls”, which is also known as *yingluo* 瓔絡 in Chinese.<sup>20</sup> The scarf covers both shoulders and the fall of the cloth overlaps with the *yingluo* ornaments, both of which crisscrossing at a disk-shaped ring just below waist high, thus forming an “X” pattern in front of the body. The scarf further moves upwards along the thighs, crossing over the bent forearms and hanging down to the pedestal. It is notable that three beltlike lengths of cloth are depicted hanging down from each shoulder, merging with scarf and skirt and flaring to the sides, with pointed ends. The bodhisattva figures are relatively elongated and slender

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<sup>20</sup> *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典 (The Foguang Dictionary), ed. Ciyi 慈怡 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), vol. 5, 4238.

with broad shoulders and chests. Another stylistic characteristic is marked by linear depictions of long flowing drapery.

The eight tiny Buddhas, seated in *padmasana*, are currently under cement covering (Figure 3.23). A figure on the east wall, the third one numbered from the south side, is partly uncovered, thus revealing the original appearance of a pointed leaf-shaped body halo, as well as a lotus pedestal with upturning petals faintly visible. It is clear that the later restoration has conformed to its original appearance in terms of halo and pedestal.

#### *Cave 20*

Other six caves in this category are divided into two levels on the cliff surface to the east side of Cave 19 (Figures 3.1). Cave 20 is on the lower level and adjacent to Cave 19, with a shallow elliptical floor plan (Figures 3.24-25). Its maximum dimensions are approximately 2.56 meters in width, 1.96 meters in depth, and 3.38 meters in height. In the interior on the rear or the north wall there is a platform around 64 cm. high. It is notable that the center of the platform is projecting slightly upward about one or two centimeters, thus forming a false rectangular throne for the main figure. The platform is now badly damaged and has undergone major repairs. The front part of the domed ceiling is damaged, and is now partially covered by the doorway of the Ming reconstruction. The inscription on a stone slab, which has been inserted into the cliff surface on the proper right wall, further records that this cave and its images were refurbished during the Ming dynasty at the end of the sixteenth century (Figure 3.26).

The sculptural program contains thirteen images, with a major group of three figures consisting of a seated representation of a Buddha on the rear wall (Figure 3.27), accompanied by two standing bodhisattvas, one on each of the side walls (Figures 3.28-30). Along the upper part of the side walls, right above the attendant bodhisattvas, there are miniature depictions of seated Buddhas, five on each side arranged in two registers (Figure 3.31). All the figures in this cave have either been heavily damaged or repaired with cement.

The principal Buddha is seated in *padmasana* upon the platform-seat, with a large leaf-shaped halo surrounding his body (Figure 3. 27), like that of Caves 18 and 19 (Figure 3.19). Nevertheless, the interior arrangement within this body halo becomes slightly complicated and contains a halo of elliptical shape behind his back, as well as two round halos around his head. The head halo on the outer side overlaps with the upper part of the elliptical halo, while the inner one, presumably once decorated with lotus petals, is currently repaired with cement. The forearms and hands of the Buddha are missing, and the head is of later replacement. Due to serious erosion and abrasion, little is known about the original surface details. A closer reading of the drapery, however, reveals that the Buddha appears to be dressed in the *covering mode*, the same manner as that of Cave 18 (Figures 3.16-18). The overhang of the robe, vaguely visible, shows a difference from that of Caves 18 and 19 in that semicircular lines in the middle now disappear. Stylistically, the figure is quite similar to the depictions in Cave 18 with regard to relatively long proportion and broad shoulders.

Each bodhisattva figure wears a round halo behind his head, and stands on a round pedestal, the bottom of which is hidden under the stone-covered ground (Figures



3.28-30). Both pedestals are decorated with a row of overturned thin and flat lotus petals. Each petal is depicted in low relief with pointed form, showing less elaborate ornamentation than the renditions in Caves 18 and 19 (Figures 3.9, 20-21). Bodhisattva figures are both badly damaged, and their heads are of later reconstructions. The one to the Buddha's left has somewhat better preserved upper body, with his left hand up against the chest, presumably grasping something, and his right hand down resting on the thigh. The surface decoration and the treatment of the drapery are in much the same manner as the depictions in Cave 18 (Figures 3.20-22), with a piece of scarf and two strings of jewels crisscrossing a ring, forming an "X" pattern in front. While the hands of the proper right bodhisattva are broken, it is evident that they are joined with palms together near his chest, displaying the *anjali mudra*, a gesture of respect and devotion. A detailed examination of the broken body surfaces also reveals an X-crossed scarf and the long flowing drapery, like that of cave 18. Other similar stylistic feature is relatively elongated body proportion.

The ten Buddhas carved along the side walls are currently under cement covering, leaving us with only vague trace of the original round halos (Figure 3.31). It is also discernable that the original pedestals for the Buddhas on each register were jointed together.

## Cave 22

Cave 22 directly adjoins Cave 20 on its east side (Figures 3.1, 32). The cave is shallow elliptical in shape, and its maximum dimensions are 2.71 meters in width, 1.98 meters in depth, and 3.48 meters in height (Figure 3.33). The front part of the ceiling is

slightly damaged. In the interior on the rear or the north wall there is a rectangular throne 60 cm. high, extending from either side of which on the same wall are two layers of platforms, with the lower one continuing to the inner part of the side walls (Figure 3.34). Like Caves 19 and 20, the original ground has been raised to a higher level by blocks of stones.

The iconographic scheme includes thirty-one figures (Figures 3.35-36). A major group of seven figures contains a seated Buddha flanked by two standing disciples on the rear wall (Figures 3.37-40), as well as four standing bodhisattvas, two on each of the side walls (Figures 3.39-42). On the rear wall within the body halo of the Buddha are also carved fourteen small niches, each of which houses a seated representation of a Buddha figure (Figures 3.37, 43-44). Along the upper part of the side walls there are ten miniature depictions of seated Buddhas, five on each side arranged in two registers (Figure 45).

The principal Buddha is seated in *padmasana* with legs crossed on the throne (Figure 3.37-38). A series of halos are arranged in the same complicated manner as that of Cave 20 (Figure 3.27). Nevertheless, a lotus blossom contained in the inner head halo is intact here. The head and the hands are missing, and the current head is of later restoration. Like the main icons in Cave 18 (Figures 3.16-18), the Buddha is dressed in the *covering mode*, with the upper hem of the robe drops down in a shallow “U” shape in front, revealing an undergarment draping diagonally crossing the chest. The fold patterns, however, appears to be more elaborate and densely packed. The garment is depicted in a series of closely arranged regular pleats, which fall from the shoulders and arms down across the torso in a parallel manner with the neckline, thus forming a wide “U” shape. Its overhang, with two hemlines, also shows more densely distributed fold designs. Like

the Buddha in Cave 20, no arcs or semicircular lines appear in the center of the fall of the cloth. Although the figure is somewhat fuller and heavier in form, the slightly long body proportion is still reminiscent of the main Buddhas in Caves 18-20.

Flanking the Buddha on the back wall are the two disciples, each standing on the upper platform (Figures 3.39-40). Like other disciple figures at the site, they do not wear any halo. The heads are missing or restored, and the hands are also broken off. It is recognizable, however, that both figures are clasping their hands in the *anjali mudra*. Each of them is dressed in monastic garb that covers both shoulder and hangs evenly from the forearms. Unfortunately it is now difficult to discern the details of surface treatment. Above the disciple figure on the Buddha's proper right is a flower motif decorated with four petals and leaves, carved in low relief on the wall surface (Figures 3.39, 46). A similar pattern, once carved above the other disciple, is now missing.

Each of the four bodhisattvas on the side walls wears a large round halo behind the head and stands on a round pedestal, decorated with a row of down-turned lotus petals (Figures 3.39-42), in the same elaborate manner as the renditions in Caves 18 and 19 (Figures 3.9, 20-21). The rather high pedestals of the two inner attendants are placed atop the lower platform extending from the back wall, while the lotus plinths for the outer images are now partly hidden under the current stone-covered ground. Most of the hands of these figures are missing, and their heads are either missing or replaced. The outer bodhisattva on the west wall, or to the right of Buddha, is the most heavily damaged in this cave, with only few fold patterns along the lower body revealing the appearance of the original sculpture (Figure 3.39). Other three figures, especially the two on the east wall, or to the left of Buddha, are slightly better preserved (Figures 3.41-42). While the

hands of the outer bodhisattva on the east wall are a little broken, it is discernable that his left hand is raised against the chest, and the right hand placed on the abdomen and perhaps originally holding something. All the three better preserved images are dressed in the manner of the aforementioned bodhisattva figures, each of which has a long skirt over the lower body, and a bare torso except for strings of jewelry and a scarf draped crossing the front in "X" pattern. A major difference, however, is that the strings of jewelry, or the *yingluo* ornaments, do not seem to overlap with the scarves, and disk-like buckle, or a ring, also disappears here. Another important feature is that the X-crossing point appears to move slightly down towards the knees. Few U-shaped fold lines are depicted over the upper legs. The figure styles, however, are still reminiscent of those in Caves 18 and 20.

Within the halos of the Buddha there are fourteen small niches, each of which is in the form of a rounded arch (Figures 3.37, 43-44). These niches are slightly raised above the wall surface, thus indicating that they are part of the original design, rather than of later time additions. The Buddha figures contained in the niches are all seated on a rectangular throne. Few relatively better preserved examples reveal the garment worn in the *covering mode*. The overhang of the drapery is depicted in three pieces of cloth with pointed ends, flaring to the sides of the throne.

Each of the ten Buddha figures along the upper part of the side walls has a round halo behind his head, now missing (Figure 3.45). The figures on each register are seated with legs folded on a same rectangular pedestal. Due to serious damage, little is known about the details of the surface treatment and the drapery except for faintly visible *covering mode* garment with the overhang, depicted in much the same manner as that of niche figures in this cave.

#### *Cave 24*

Cave 24 immediately adjoins both Cave 22 and Cave 26, with the former one on its west side and the latter one on its east (Figures 3.1, 47). On either side of the entrance is a standing guardian figure, carved on the cliff surface and contained in a rectangular niche of Ming reconstruction. The images are completely under cement covering, with only halos and pedestals revealing their original appearance. Each guardian wears a circular head halo and stands on a round pedestal. The rather high pedestals are both decorated with a row of inverted lotus petals. The elaborate rendering of the petals resembles to the depictions in Caves 18, 19, and 22 (Figures 3.9, 20-21, 39, 41-42).

The cave is roughly shallow rectangular in shape, with a floor plan of approximately 2.49 x 2.04 meters and a maximum height of around 3.68 meters (Figure 3.48). The domed ceiling is seriously damaged, and part of it has been repaired with stone. There are still some extant crevices that frequently cause leaking problems during rainy days. No platforms are found at this cave. In the interior, each of the three walls is entirely occupied by a large niche in a form of a rounded arch, and this is commonly known as the *Sanbi sankan* 三壁三龕 or “three niches on three walls” structure.

Aside from the two guardians on the facade, the iconographic scheme of the cave includes nine figures contained within the three niches (Figures 3.49-50). Each niche houses a major group of three figures, consisting of a seated representation of a Buddha accompanied by two bodhisattvas (Figures 3.51-56). The three principal Buddhas, as will be discussed below, may be interpreted as the *sanshi fo* 三世佛, Buddhas of the Three Ages: past, present and future.

Each Buddha is seated in *padmasana* with legs folded on a high rectangular throne. The throne on the rear or the north wall is 86 cm. high, and the ones on the west and east walls are, respectively, 77 cm. and 75 cm high. Each of the thrones rests on a three- stepped platform, with each higher level leaning inward, and there is another level of step protruding outward along its top (Figures 3.52, 55-56). This presumably has intended to represent the Mount Meru throne. Each figure wears a series of halos arranged in the same manner as that of Caves 20 and 22 (Figures 3.27, 37), with a large leaf-shaped aureole surrounding the body, an elliptical halo behind the back, as well as two round halos around the head. A lotus blossom contained in the inner most halo is clearly visible. The heads of the Buddhas are either missing or restored, and the hands of the central figure are broken off. Two other figures on the side walls both display the *dhyana mudra*.

The three Buddhas are dressed nearly identically in the manner of the *covering mode*. The outer garb of each figure covers both shoulders and falls open in front, revealing an undergarment rendered crossing the chest diagonally. A curving line is clearly visible on the right shoulder of the central figure, thus suggesting an additional piece of clothing, draped presumably in the same manner as the Buddhas in Cave 18 (Figure 3.18). Like the Buddha in Cave 22 (Figure 3.37), the garments are depicted in a series of U-shaped parallel fold patterns across the upper body. The elaborate treatment of the overhangs with more closely packed pleats, however, reveals the slight difference. Noteworthy are three visible hemlines which indicate that there are at least three layers of garments falling down to the throne. Stylistically, each figure is relatively heavier in form, with shorter proportion of the upper body.

The six bodhisattva attendants are badly damaged; not one figure has its original heads and hands, and some heads have been restored. A closer reading, however, reveals that these figures resemble to one another in body type and other visible surface details (Figures 3.53-56). Each bodhisattva wears a large round halo behind his head, and stands on a high pedestal, ornamented with two rows of down-turned elaborate lotus petals, reminiscent of the depiction in Caves 18, 19, and 22. Like bodhisattvas in Cave 22 (Figures 3.41-42), the scarves and jewelry are draped X-crossing in front at separate positions of the body. The strings of jewelry, which may or may not be clasped by a ring disk, cross above the waist high. The scarves, however, are generally depicted falling further down the lower body crisscrossing just above the knee high. Similar to the three principal Buddhas in the cave, the bodhisattva figures are also heavier in form with broad shoulders and shorter body proportions.

Along the walls there are six small rectangular niches, one carved above each attendant figure (Figures 3.49-50). Two others are carved on the corners of the back and the side walls. These niches have broken the upper part of the halos of bodhisattvas, thus suggesting that they are of past periods construction. Presumably they have been used to contain the lamps so as to light the interior.

#### *Cave 26 (and Cave 27)*

Cave 26, immediately adjoining Cave 24 on its east side, is situated on the eastern end of the south face of the Lower Cliff (Figures 3.1, 47). It has a shallow elliptical chamber whose maximum dimensions are 2.10 meters in width 1.55 meters in depth, and 3.08 meters in height (Figure 3.57). The front part of the domed ceiling is partly

damaged. The interior is simple in design, with no evidence of platforms for images to set on. A rectangular throne 68 cm. high, however, occupies the rear or the north wall.

The sculptural program contains three figures, including a seated Buddha on the rear wall (Figures 3.58-59), flanked by two standing bodhisattvas, one on each of the side walls (Figures 3.60-61). The forearms and the hands of the principal Buddha are missing, and his head has been restored. He wears elaborate halos, like those in Caves 20, 22 and 24, and sits in *padmasana* with two legs folded upon the throne. Three horizontal steps along the bottom of the throne also remind us of the depictions in Cave 24, but they are here attached to its front rather than carved underneath. The robe is tightly draped in the *covering mode*, with its upper hem directly across the neck, and concealing the undergarment (Figure 3.59). The folds of the garment are densely packed and arranged in parallel curving lines over the upper body in “U” shape. It is notable that the main figure in this cave closely resembles the depictions in Cave 24 (Figures 3.52, 55-56) in terms of heavier body form as well as three layers of overhang.

The bodhisattvas are seriously damaged, with missing hands and forearms, missing or restored heads, as well as broken bodies (Figures 3.60-61). The large head halos and the high pedestals adorned with elaborate lotus petals show strong similarities with the depictions in Cave 24 (Figures 3.53-54). It is discernable that the figure on the east wall, or to the left side of the Buddha, is displaying the *anjali mudra*. The details of the draperies and the surface treatment are now difficult to determine. Stylistically, the heaviness of the body form with shorter proportion, as well as the faintly visible flaring draperies, strongly relates to the depictions of the attendant figures in Cave 24.



On the east side, or the proper left side, of the entrance to Cave 26 there is a guardian figure carved on the cliff surface (Figures 1.17, 3.47). The image is now contained in a small rectangular niche of Ming reconstruction, currently numbered 27. An inscription under the stone roof provides a popular name for this niche: Shijiangdian 石匠殿, or “Hall of the Craftsman.” The related legend reports that a craftsman who, in order to make up the number of one thousand Buddhas, miraculously transformed himself to become an image on the cliff surface. However, given its current location, it seems that this image probably has been part of the original design of Cave 26. As guardian figures usually appear in pair, it is likely that the proper left guardian of Cave 24 (Figure 3.47) has also served as the proper right guardian of Cave 26.<sup>21</sup>

The guardian figure has a round halo behind his head, now missing (Figure 1. 17). His right hand is lifted up clenching his fist, and his left hand holds a *vajra*-like instrument in front of the chest. The figure is dressed in non-Chinese manner. His upper garment has broad sleeves and is tied with a belt around the waist. The trousers and boots further suggest its foreign convention. A piece of cloth, probably a scarf usually draped by guardian figures, is clearly visible hanging down from both forearms. Each foot stands atop a little demon-like figure, presumably a representation of the defeated foe. The one under the left foot is badly damaged, while the other one is depicted lying on his back facing upward; both of which are covered by the present earth ground.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> It should be recognized, however, the proper left guardian of Cave 24 is very different from the one in Cave 27 in terms of scale, dress and outward appearance. Another major difference between the two figures is that the former one stands on a rather high lotus pedestal, while the latter one stands on two dwarfs. The pairing of these two together, therefore, still remains a question.

<sup>22</sup> My description is based on Professor Su Bai’s drawing, which he showed me when I visited him in Beijing in 2002.

### *Cave 21*

Caves 21 and 22, next to each other, are located on the upper level of the cliff surface (Figure 3.1). Cave 21, adjoining Cave 23 on its west side, is situated immediately above Caves 20 and 22 (Figure 3.62-63). The original façade of the cave is hidden from the view by a stone entrance way of later reconstruction. The two guardian figures are also part of later additions. It is notable that this stone doorway is set back further into the interior, and, therefore, has covered part of the original interior design.

This is a small sized cave that contains an extremely shallow elliptical chamber, whose maximum dimensions are about 2.21 meters in width, 0.87 meters in depth, and 1.67 meters in height (Figure 3.64). A rectangular throne on the rear or the north wall, approximately 82 cm. high and 65 cm. deep, nearly occupies the entire interior space. A platform is depicted extending from either side of the throne and continues to the side walls, reminiscent of the structure of Cave 22 (Figure 3.34). Part of the original ground is covered with stones and raised to a higher level. On either side of the front part of the domed ceiling there are two flower motifs, carved in relief (Figure 3.65). The outer one is a lotus blossom, partly concealed by the stone entrance, and the inner one is a flower pattern adorned with four petals, identical to the depiction in Cave 22 (Figure 3.46).

The cave houses seven figures. A major group of five figures consists of a seated Buddha on the rear wall (Figures 3.66-67), accompanied by four standing attendants, two on each of the side walls (Figure 3.68). Along the upper part of the back wall are the miniature depictions of two Buddhas, one on each side of the principal icon (Figure 3.66). All the images are covered with cement, and, therefore, it is impossible to discern the details of the garments and the surface treatment.

The Buddha is seated in *padmasana* on a rectangular throne that contains three-stepped platforms along the bottom, reminiscent of the Mount Meru thrones depicted in Cave 24 (Figures 3.52, 55-56). The fracture of the broken right hand reveals that it was once raised with palm upward making the *abhaya mudra*. A large aureole and other smaller halos behind the Buddha are arranged in nearly identical manner with the renderings in Caves 20, 22, 24, 26. Along the edges of the large aureole on each side is a small Buddha figure around the head seated upon a pedestal in a posture of meditation. Only the round halos still retain their original appearance.

Each of the inner attendants on the side walls wears a round halo behind the head, now missing, and stands on a round lotus pedestal atop the platform (Figure 3.68). The treatment of the halos and pedestals strongly relates to that of the bodhisattvas in the other caves of this group, thus suggesting the identity of these two images. Little is known about the original appearance of the two other attendant figures. The one on the east wall is missing, leaving only traces of the original carving on the wall surface, currently concealed by the stone entrance way. Neither of them has a halo, which indicate that they are unlikely the representations of bodhisattvas or guardians who, at the Qixia caves, generally wear halos. Given their positions in the cave, the identity of disciple is not convincing either, as the disciple figures usually take over the closest spots to the main icon. One possibility is that they might have intended to represent some sort of worshippers. A small rectangular niche carved above each of them is reminiscent of the depictions in Cave 24, and probably bears the same function to hold the lamp and light the interior.

### *Cave 23*

Cave 23, immediately above Cave 24, is adjacent to Cave 21 on its east side (Figure 3.1, 69). The cliff surface above the Ming façade has been drilled and carefully carved, leaving remains of square holes and other decorations, indicating that a roof structure was presumably once constructed (Figure 3.70). It is notable that on each side of the entrance there are traces of drapery, probable part of long flying scarf, carved in high relief on the cliff surface (Figure 3.71). This suggests that the original iconographic program included a pair of figures, most likely the representations of guardians, depicted flanking the entrance to the cave. The present doorway has protruded further inward, and covering the front part of the domed ceiling as well as the outer part of each side wall.

In Category I, Cave 23 is the second largest one next to Cave 19. The cave is shallow elliptical in shape, and its maximum dimensions are 3.84 meters in width 2.39 meters in depth, and 4.05 meters in height (Figure 3.72). A rectangular throne on the rear wall, around 76 cm. high, rests on a very low platform surrounding the three walls. Extending from either side of the throne on the back wall is carved another layer of platform, which further continues to the inner part of the side walls, with diminishing size of the height (Figure 3.73). The platforms are badly damaged, leaving us with no trace of the images that were once placed on them.

Most of the images in the interior are missing, except for two figures on the rear wall, including the principal icon and an attendant figure on his proper right, both of which are under cement covering (Figures 3.73-74). The remains of the halos on the wall surface, however, reveal that the sculptural program once contained thirteen figures. A major group of seven figures consisting of a seated representation of the main icon

accompanied by two attendants on the rear wall, and four other attendants, two on either of the side walls (Figures 3.74, 76-77). No further evidence is available for the identification of these attendant figures. Along the upper part of the side walls, above the attendant figures, there were once six miniature depictions of presumably Buddha figures. Like the depictions in Caves 20 and 22 (Figures 3.31, 45), the three figures on each side wall once shared a long pedestal, now missing (Figures 3.76-77). It should be noted that six small empty niches, three on each of the side walls, are of later time excavation. Another later addition is an inscription containing a huge character of *fo* 佛, the Chinese term for Buddha, on the west wall between the two attendant figures (Figure 3.77).

The two extant figures have been greatly repaired and are currently under cement covering. Therefore an examination of the original costumes and other surface treatment is not possible. The principal figure, now wearing a crown in a manner of a bodhisattva, was presumably once the representation of a seated Buddha (Figures 3.74-75). The Buddha sits in front of a huge leaf-shaped aureole with legs folded on the throne in *padmasana*. The treatment of the halos strongly resembles the depictions of the other caves in this category, including Caves 20-22, 24 and 26. Nevertheless, the decoration of the flame patterns, now faintly visible, on the larger nimbus shows the major difference. While the throne is badly damaged, we can discern from the sides that it rests on a two-stepped platform, with an inverted two-stepped platform along the top. This is also reminiscent of the Mount Meru thrones depicted in the other caves.

### *Cave 25*

Cave 25 is a small niche in the form of a pointed arch, directly adjoining Cave 23 on its east side (Figures 1.16, 3.78). Its upper right side has been slightly broken by a tiny rectangular niche, which is evidently of later period excavation. Cave 25 is shallow elliptical in shape, measuring 106 cm wide, 43 cm deep and 106 cm high. The upper part of the cave is raised above the cliff surface, and forming a broad band, on which there are three small niches, each being in the form of a rounded arch and containing a seated Buddha currently under cement covering.

In the interior there are a major group of three figures, including a seated Buddha on the rear wall flanked by two standing attendants, one on each side wall. The heads of these figures are missing, and their bodies are under cement covering. The Buddha sits in front of a large leaf-shaped halo in *padmasana* on a rectangular throne. While the identity of the two attendants is not certain, the three image configuration is with no doubt relatable with the sculptural programs of the caves in Category I. The treatment of the body halo and other smaller halos behind his back and head also closely resembles the depictions in the other caves of this group, including Caves 20-24, and 26. It is notable that on the outer band of the body halo are depicted seven small Buddha figures, each seated in a niche in the form of a rounded arch. These figures, also under cement covering, may represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past, as will be discussed below. The miniature representations of Buddhas, however, reveal another similar feature between this niche and other caves in this group.

Right below the niche are two lions, one on each side, carved in relief on the cliff surface (Figure 3.79). A pair of lions, absent in any cave of this category, appear

frequently in the caves of Categories II and III, as will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. However, each lion here is depicted with one foreleg raised, unlike the renderings in the other caves. The similar posture, however, is frequently present in the stone carvings found in the Chengdu region, dated the Southern Qi dynasty (Figures 3.80-81).<sup>23</sup> This suggests that the niche is datable to around the late fifth century, the same time when Cave 19 was excavated. Therefore, we have another firm evidence to include this niche in Category I.

It should be noted that on the cliff surface right above Cave 25 there are a group of regularly arranged smaller niches, each of which houses a seated Buddha under cement covering. They seem to have previously been intended to represent seven niches, but with only five completed. Given their situation, these niches are most likely part of the original design of Cave 25.

### **Dating of the Caves**

Textual evidence has informed us that cave carving activity at Qixia began with the excavation of Cave 19 and its three colossal images, Buddha Amitayus and the two attendant bodhisattvas. Literary survey conducted in Chapter 2 further reveals two phases of activity at this cave site during the Southern Dynasties: the first dated around 484 to 500 CE in the Southern Qi dynasty; and the second, the first half of the sixth century of the Southern Liang period. In addition to Cave 19, the first phase works also consist of excavation projects sponsored by monk Fadu, nun Zhisheng, as well as aristocratic women, Lady Huo, and high government official Tian/Wang Huan (Table

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<sup>23</sup> Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chngdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998): 6, 9, figs. 4, 7 (left), plates 1 and 2; Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (2001): 7, 12, figs. 7, 16.

2.4). These works were excavated under the sponsorship of the southern courts, with a number of royal princes and aristocrats involved in patronage activities. With the inclusion of Cave 19 in this group, the caves of Category I should be earlier in date than those of the other two categories, and they undoubtedly exemplify the first stage carving at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the caves belonging to this category possess common typological features not found in the other two categories. In terms of architectural layout, these eight caves generally have shallow elliptical floor plan, with lack of, or undeveloped form of *Sanbi huantan*, or three-walled platform structure. Although iconographic schemes of these caves show a great deal of variations, sculptural representations exhibit similar stylistic characteristics, most noteworthy of which is the emphasis of garment depiction, as well as the elaborate treatment of drapery patterns, haloes and lotus pedestals. The typological study and detailed descriptive analysis of the caves and their images imply that these eight caves were approximately excavated around the same time period. It is thus also natural to suggest that the other seven caves are close in date to Cave 19, and were excavated during the late fifth century, somewhere after 484 CE, of the Southern Qi dynasty. Chronologically, they correspond with the first phase works as revealed by the literature in Chapter 2.

This category caves, as previously mentioned, can be further divided into two subgroups on stylistic and iconographic grounds: the first includes Caves 18-20 and 22; the second includes Caves 21, 23, 24 and 26. Caves 27 and 25 are located next to Caves 26 and 23 respectively (Figures 1.7). Cave 27, as previously mentioned, has presumably been part of the original design of Cave 26 (Figures 1.17, 3.47); while Cave 25 is nearly



identical to Caves 21, 23, 24 and 26 in the treatment of haloes for main Buddhas (Figures 3.52, 58, 66, 74, 78). These two small niches, therefore, are also included into the second subgroup for discussion.

In the first subgroup caves, Buddhas generally wear a relatively loosely draped robe, with the overhang of the cloth depicted in regularly arranged folds, showing two hemlines (Figures 3.5, 16-18, 27, 37). Stylistically speaking, the figures are full in form, with relatively long body proportion. The main icons depicted in Caves 24 and 26 (Figures 3.52, 55-56, 58), however, reveal differences in terms of slightly heavier body form with shorter proportion, as well as more elaborate treatment of garment showing densely packed fold patterns and three hemlines. Like Buddha images, bodhisattvas in the second group also exhibit somewhat heavier body form with broad shoulders. These attendant figures in Category I are all dressed in similar fashion; each has a long skirt over the lower body, with a scarf and/or a string of jewelry falling down from the shoulders, crossing symmetrically in front of the body in “X” pattern. A slight distinction is that the X-crossing point, depicted just below waist high in Caves 18, 20 and 22 (Figures 3.20-22, 28-30, 41-42),<sup>24</sup> appears to move somewhat down towards the knees in Caves 24 and 26 (Figures 3.53-54). Other noteworthy difference between the two groups includes the presence of guardian figures (Figures 1,17, 3. 47, 63, 71) and Mount Meru thrones in Caves 21, 23-24, 26 (Figures 3.52, 55-56, 58, 67, 73).

The juxtaposition of slightly different styles and iconography in Category I suggests two artistic trends that occurred at Qixia during the Southern Qi dynasty. More

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<sup>24</sup> It should be recognized, however, that this change begins from Cave 22 in the depiction of outer attendant bodhisattva, to the proper left of main Buddha (Figures 3.41-42). It is evident that Cave 22 shows transitional features between the two sub-divided groups.

specifically, the second group caves contain some iconographic themes that also appear in Category II and III caves, which, as I will analyze in Chapters 4-5, exemplify later artistic development at Qixia. Aside from guardian deities and Mount Meru thrones, these themes include three principal Buddhas in Cave 24 (Figures 3.52, 55-56) and a pair of lion figures in Cave 25 (Figures 3.78-79). This indicates that the two subgroups may reflect a chronological sequence of the carving, with the second group relatively later than the first one.

However, a more precise date of each subgroup is not allowed, partially due to the fact that the caves in Category I were excavated within a rather short period of time around the late fifth century. Another problem for further study of the dating is that there appears to be also similarities between the two sets of caves, as previously mentioned. Some caves, such as Cave 22,<sup>25</sup> even share similar features with the works from both groups. Further noteworthy is the presence of some seemingly later period features in the first rather than second subgroup works. For example, the depiction of semicircular lines on the overhang of Buddha's garment, which, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, is prevalent in the Southern Liang images of Category 3 caves, appears in Caves 18 and 19 (Figures 3.5, 16-18). The abovementioned chronological sequence, therefore, may not necessarily be able to apply to all the caves in this category. In other words, there remains a possibility that some caves, although belonging to the different subgroups in my categorization, might be actually excavated during the same time.

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, the main Buddha in Cave 22 (Figure 3. 37) has relatively long body proportion, reminiscent of the renderings in the first subgroup. At the same time, this figure resembles more closely the depictions in the other group in the use of slightly elaborated drapery with densely packed fold patterns. Also see note 24 of this chapter.

It is also notable that the stylistic differences in figural representation, which betray two artistic trends in Category I caves at Qixia, seem to find no parallels in contemporaneous Buddhist art traditions of the Southern Qi dynasty in the south.<sup>26</sup> A more careful comparative analysis of artistic evidence of that time further reveals distinctive characteristics of garment depiction of the Qixia images. The foreign convention of depicting Buddha's robe in the *covering mode*, prevalent in Category I caves, almost disappear in the Sichuan area and are replaced by Chinese style garment of *Baoyi bodai* 褒衣博帶, "Broad robe with wide belt" (Figures 3.80-81).<sup>27</sup> In addition, the overhang of the garment at the site is generally depicted in a series of symmetrically arranged parallel fold patterns with wavy-like hems. This also exhibits difference from the works in the Chengdu region, where the bottom hem of Buddha's outer garment is commonly divided into three pieces of cloths (Figures 3.80-81).<sup>28</sup>

While these distinguishing features may have suggested slightly different regional development of Buddhist art during the Southern Qi dynasty, one should also recognize important stylistic affinities between Qixia and other regions in the south, and thereby expanding our understanding of the major artistic traits characteristic of that time period. It is evident that Buddha images from Category I caves at Qixia resembles the Southern

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<sup>26</sup> As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, Southern Qi Buddhist art in the other regions mainly include those discovered in the Chengdu region of the Sichuan province. For the detailed information, see Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958); Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998): 4-20; and Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (2001): 4-18. Yuan Shuguang (2001): 19-38.

<sup>27</sup> The *Baoyi bodai* 褒衣博帶 convention of Buddha's robe, which frequently appears in Buddhist art during the Six Dynasties from the late fifth to six centuries, marks one of the major characteristics of the Sinicization of Buddhist art in China during that time.

<sup>28</sup> In his chronological study of Southern Dynasties Buddhist sculptures found at the Chengdu region, Li Yuqun further argues that this form of Chengdu style drapery had impact on Buddhist art of the Northern Dynasties. See Li Yuqun (2002):64-76.

Qi sculptures from the Sichuan region, particularly in the manner of elaborate treatment of drapery. Su Bai further mentions that the Southern Liang sculptures, in contrast to their Qi predecessors, are characterized by the simplification of drapery patterns.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the present study also shows that, among varied iconographic schemes in Category I, the most common theme includes a group of three images, consisting of a seated Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas (Caves 19-20, 26). This representation of three image composition is also characterized by the iconographic development of the Southern Qi sculptures in the Chengdu traditions.<sup>30</sup> The above comparative analysis betrays stylistic and iconographic features characteristic of the Southern Qi Buddhist sculptures. At the same time, it further confirms that these groups of images were carved around the Southern Qi dynasty, and thereby providing additional evidence regarding the late fifth century date of Category I caves at Qixia.

On the basis of this chronological study, the construction of the eight caves in Category I can be broadly dated to somewhere after 484 CE during the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty. Noteworthy is that these monuments exemplify the first stage of artistic development at the Qixia cave site, the earliest Buddhist rock-cut cave architecture in the south. Apparently, this is the time when Southern artisans and Buddhist practitioners were experimenting new artistic and religious practice. This may help explain slight inconsistency in architectural layout and sculptural style, as well as a great deal of variations in iconographic themes of Category I caves. It is also reasonable

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<sup>29</sup> Su Bai (1996), 349-354. Based on the analysis of the Chengdu findings, it seems that the change of the drapery from complexity towards simplicity began as early as the Southern Qi during the last decade of the fifth century. See Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (2001): figs. 3, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (2001): 17; Li Yuqun (2002): 66.

to assume that some stylistic and iconographic variations may be understood as the result of individual artists or patrons' personal preferences.

No further evidence, however, seems available to directly relate a specific cave or image to a certain patron. In his 1989 article, Su Bai also argues that Caves 18 and 19 are close in date since the two caves, located next to each other, show similarity in both architectural feature and sculptural style.<sup>31</sup> He further suggests that Cave 18 might belong to monk Fadu's additional project of "more than ten niches with icons" recorded by the *Tang Tablet*, aside from Fadu's effort on Cave 19 at the site. With the majority of visual material unavailable to Su during that time, his suggestion was more of a speculation due to the lack of supporting evidence. Nevertheless, my detailed analysis of the recently uncovered images indicates that Caves 18 and 19 share common features in sculptural representation, which are not found in the other caves of this category. This implies a closer tie between the two caves, and, therefore, may provide additional support for Su's attribution.

The three principal Buddhas from these two caves all sit in front of a large leaf-shaped halo, within which behind the head is a small circular halo containing an open lotus blossom (Figure 3.15). Amitayus also wears an additional small leaf-shaped halo emerging from his shoulders, which is not found in the depictions of Cave 18 and other caves in this group. However, the less elaborate treatment of haloes in Caves 18 and 19 shows difference from slightly complicated arrangement in Caves 20-24 and 26. It is evident that in the latter six caves is seen increasing numbers of small haloes within the leaf-shaped body nimbus for each main Buddha (Figures 3.27, 37, 52, 58, 66, 74).

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<sup>31</sup> Su Bai (1989): 389-414.

Another distinctive feature of these two caves is that the overhang of the garment for each Buddha is depicted with semicircular lines in the middle (Figures 3.5, 16-18). Further noteworthy is the use of double rows of inverted lotus petals to decorate the pedestals for bodhisattva attendants (Figures 3.9, 20-21), which reveals additional typical characteristic of Caves 18 and 19. Given the close date of the excavation projects in Category I, it is not surprising that the differences between these two caves and the other six are somewhat insignificant. However, the closer relationship between Caves 18 and 19 makes Su's suggestion more persuasive. In other words, it is most likely that monk Fadu, who, together with Ming Zhongzhang, sponsored the carvings in Amitayus cave, also contributed to the excavation at Cave 18. Further, given stylistic affinities in Caves 18-20, and 22, it is likely that monk Fadu may have also been involved in the excavation projects of the other two caves, namely Caves 20 and 22, belonging to the first subgroup.

### **Iconography**

The Southern Qi caves at Qixia show a great deal of variations in iconography (Table 3.1). It should be noted, however, that the most commonly depicted iconographic scheme is *Sanbi yifo* sculptural composition, with a main Buddha on the back wall accompanied by attendant figures on the side walls (Caves 19-26). Two Buddhas or three Buddhas also appear to serve as principal icons in Caves 18 and 24 respectively. Generally speaking, the principal icon(s) is/are largely attended by two bodhisattvas (Caves 18-20, 24-26). In addition, the layout of the major group of sculpted figures also includes five image configurations, containing a Buddha with two bodhisattvas and two

unidentified figures as seen in Cave 21. Both Caves 22 and 23 house a major group of seven images. While clear identification of the figures in Cave 23 is not offered as they are now either missing or restored, Cave 22 consists of a Buddha accompanied by two disciples and four bodhisattvas.

Aside from the major group of images, there also appears to be miniature representations of Buddhas in the interiors of Caves 18, 20 and 21-23. Further, guardian deities, flanking the entrance to Cave 24, were presumably once included in Caves 21, 23 and 26, as previously mentioned. It is also notable that Cave 25 is the only example in this category that has a pair of lion figures carved on the base of this small niche.

	Cave 18	Cave 19	Cave 20	Cave 21	Cave 22	Cave 23	Cave 24	Cave 25	Caves	
									26	27
Buddha	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	
Disciple	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Bodhisattva	2	2	2	2	4	?	6	2	2	
Unidentified Attendant	0	0	0	2	0	6	0	0		
Miniature Buddhas	8	0	10	2	24	Δ (6)	0	7	0	
Guardian	0	0	0	Δ	0	Δ	2	0		1
Lion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	

Table 3.1: Iconographic themes in Category I Caves

Note: “Δ” means: while the identity is clear, the images are now missing  
“?” means: while the identity is uncertain, there remains a possibility

Among varied subjects, Buddha and bodhisattva are the two recurring themes depicted in these caves. However, given their generalized representations with little variation in poses and gestures, the Buddha figures reveal virtually no identifying

characteristics. It is also difficult to make specific interpretations of bodhisattvas since they bear no specific attributes, or no attributes are now discernable due to bad damage. There are only three images that can be clearly identified based on textual evidence, and they are Amitayus and his two attendant bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta in Cave 19. An important part of this chronological study, therefore, will discuss Amitayus iconography, with emphasis on the popular movement of the Amitayus Pure Land during the Southern Dynasties. In addition, I will also try to argue that the two Buddhas in Cave 18 are mostly likely a representation of Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and Prabhutaratna, the Buddha of remote past, while the three Buddhas in Cave 24 may be interpreted as Buddhas of the Three Ages: past, present and future.

Further, other common themes in this group cave, namely miniature representations of Buddhas, will be taken into consideration as well. It is noted that the iconography of these small Buddhas is not fully understood due to the lack of literary documents as well as a poor state of their current condition. Through my analysis, I will try to interpret that the seven Buddha that appears in the halo of the main icon in Cave 25 is presumably intended to represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past.

#### *Amitayus and his Pure Land (Cave 19)*

In Cave 19, Buddha Amitayus is depicted seated in *padmasana* with his two hands displaying the *dhyana mudra*. The Buddha is attended by bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta, both of which are currently covered with cement, thus concealing their original appearance. Amitayus, also known as Amitabha, or Buddha



of infinite light, is one of the most prominent themes in Chinese Buddhist art. As described in Buddhist literature, he is the Buddha who presides over the Western Paradise of Sukhavati, the Land of Bliss.<sup>32</sup> Avalokitesvara and Mahastamaprapta, according to the *Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*, are the two great bodhisattvas accompanying Buddha Amitayus in his paradise.<sup>33</sup> In its final section, this text further records:<sup>34</sup>

此經名觀極樂國土，無量壽佛，觀世音菩薩，大勢至菩薩。

This *sutra* is (thus) called the meditation on the Land of Sukhavati, on Buddha Amitayus, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, and Bodhisattva Mahastamaprapta.

The iconographic program in this cave, therefore, is most likely a representation of Amitayus and his two great bodhisattvas in the Western Paradise of Sukhavati. In his chronological study of Caves 16-20 at Yungang, John Huntington discusses the nine-fold gesture of Amitayus in relation to the nine levels of rebirth in Sukhavati.<sup>35</sup> He mentions that the *dhyana mudra* as seen in Cave 20 is used by the Buddha “in the meditations for the upper birth in each rank.”<sup>36</sup> Additionally, literary survey conducted in Chapter 2 has informed us of monk Fadu’s faith in Buddha Amitayus as well as his devotion to the

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<sup>32</sup> Three major *sutras* concerning Amiatyus/Amitabha’s Western Paradise were translated into Chinese during the third to early fifth century. Aside from the aforementioned *Amitayur-dhyana-sutra*, the other two include *Foshuo wuliangshou jing* 佛說無量壽經 (*Larger Sukhavati-vyuha sutra*) and *Foshuo Amituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經 (*Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha sutra*). The *Larger Sukhavati-vyuha sutra* was translated by Sanghavarman (Ch: Kang Seng Kai 康僧鎧) in 252 CE; while the *Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha sutra* was by Kumarajiva in 402 CE. See T12, no. 360: 265-279, no. 366: 346-348. All the three texts have been translated into English by J. Takakusu’s and are included in *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, ed. E. B. Cowell, et al. (New York: Dover Publication, 1969), Part II.

<sup>33</sup> *Foshuo guan Wuliangshoufo jing* (*Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*), T12, no. 365: 340-346.

<sup>34</sup> *Foshuo guan Wuliangshoufo jing* (*Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*), T12, no. 365: 346. My translation follows J. Takakusu’s version with slight modifications, see *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, Part II, 200.

<sup>35</sup> John C. Huntington, “The Iconography and Iconology of the Tan Yao caves at Yungang,” *Oriental Art* 32, no.2 (1986): 150-153.

<sup>36</sup> John C. Huntington (1986): 152.

*Amitayus-dhyana-sutra*. Further noteworthy is an account in *Chu sanzang ji ji* concerning Southern Qi Prince of Jingling's effort in the propagation of the Amitayus scripture.<sup>37</sup> As previously mentioned, Fadu is one of the founders of Cave 19, while the Prince Wenxuan of Jingling also participated in patronage activity during the time of its excavation. It is thus almost certain that Cave 19's iconographic theme is an indication of these patrons' personal belief and their desires of being reborn in Sukhavati.

On the basis of the above iconographic interpretation, Cave 19 and its three images are typical examples of Pure Land Buddhist art during the Southern Qi dynasty. The word Pure Land, known as *Jing Tu* 淨土, literally refers to the idea of paradise or heavenly world.<sup>38</sup> In Pure Land Buddhism, the primary religious goal of every practitioner is to be born into one of Buddha's paradises, where he will listen to the Dharma until his final rebirth that lets him attain *nirvana*. While it had its foreign origin in India,<sup>39</sup> Pure Land Buddhism developed as a separate sectarian movement in China and became extremely popular in both northern and southern regions from fifth century onwards. Amitayus Pure Land, as depicted in Cave 19, was known as one of the most

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<sup>37</sup> According to this text, the prince and his son both copied *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (*Amitayus sutra*). See *Chu sanzang ji ji*, juan 12, T55, no. 2145: 85-87.

<sup>38</sup> This word was first used in China around the sixth century. The term came from Tanlun's 曇倫 (476-554 CE) idea of the *Qingjing* 清淨, or "purity" of Sukhavati. See Roger J. Corless, "Tan Lun: The First Systematizer of Pure Land Buddhism," in *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development*, eds. James Foard, Michael Solomon and Richard K. Payne, Berkeley Buddhist studies series, no. 3 (Berkeley: Regents of the University of California, 1996), 117.

<sup>39</sup> According to Susan Huntington, the vision of heavenly worlds as well as the belief in paradises already occurred in India as early as the Vedic and Upanisadic period (ca. 1500-450 BCE). In early Buddhism, Indra's Trayastrimsa and Brahma's Brahmaloka were known as important places for laymen and monks respectively to be reborn into. A typical example of early artistic evidence is a Gandharan stele with the depiction of Amitabha preaching in his Western Paradise of Sukhavati. This huge vision of paradise, with a vast Buddha in the center surrounded by multiple beings residing there, is the standard iconographic theme that commonly appears in later Buddhist art. See Susan L. Huntington (1985), 145-146, fig. 8.24; 632, Chap. 8, note 18.

popular forms of Pure Land Buddhism practiced in China. More importantly, it must be noted that the Qixia cave site was located in the ancient capital city of the Southern Dynasties and the excavation project of Cave 19 was under royal patronage during that time. The above analysis of Cave 19's iconography, therefore, further demonstrates the great popularity of Amitayus Pure Land in the south at that time.

This is not a coincidence given sincere devotion to Amitayus and his paradise in southern religious practices since very early times. Su Bai, based on his thorough literary analysis, argues that it is no later than the second half of the fourth century during the Eastern Jin period that Amitayus belief was widespread in the south.<sup>40</sup> One of the earliest accounts is recorded in the Tang Buddhist anthology *Guang Hongming Ji* (Second Collection of Documents for Propagating Buddhism). According to this text, in the year of 368 CE, monk Zhidun 支遁 wrote *Amituofo zan xu* 阿彌陀佛讚序 (An Eulogy on An Image of Amitabha Buddha), in which he describes the beautiful land of the Western Paradise and expresses his reverence to the image of Buddha Amitabha.<sup>41</sup>

The Amitayus cult continued to flourish during the Liu Song and Southern Qi periods, as recorded in the literature, which bears detailed accounts concerning translating and preaching paradise texts, as well as making and worshipping Amitayus images.<sup>42</sup> It is notable that the earliest surviving examples of this iconographic representation in the south are also dated to that time period. According to Ōmura, an early example of inscribed Amitayus in the south was once in the Duan Fang 端方

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<sup>40</sup> For his detailed literary analysis, see Su Bai (1989): 398-400.

<sup>41</sup> *Guang hongming ji*, juan 15, T 52, no. 2103: 196.

<sup>42</sup> For the analysis of literary documents, see Su Bai (1989): 398-400.

collection during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911 CE).<sup>43</sup> This stone image is dated to the 25<sup>th</sup> year of the Yuanjia reign (448 CE); its inscription shows the desire for rebirth in the land of the Buddha of Infinite Life. In addition, while many scholars agree with its textual base of the *Lotus Sutra*,<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Wong has argued that the aforementioned 425 CE stele from Wanfosi is the illustration of the Pure Land of Amitabha (Figure 1.22).<sup>45</sup>

Most noteworthy is that, among those recent findings in the southwest region, we have found three inscribed Amitayus images, one of which is dated 483 CE of the Southern Qi dynasty (Figure 3.82), and the other two dated 504 and 529 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty.<sup>46</sup> The Southern Qi stele, which is close in date to Cave 19 at Qixia, provides an important comparandum for this study. It bears a standing Amitayus on one side and a seated Maitreya Buddha on the other. The inscription reads:<sup>47</sup>

齊永明元年歲次癸亥七月十五日，西涼曹比丘釋玄嵩，爲帝主臣王累世師長父母兄弟六親眷屬及一切眾生，敬造無量壽，當來彌勒成佛二世尊像。願一切群生發弘曠心，明信三寶，瞿修十善，遭遇慈氏龍華三會，聶豫其昌，永去塵結，法身滿足，廣度一切，共成佛道。比丘釋僧成操□□□共成此〔功〕。

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<sup>43</sup> Ōmura Seigai (1917), 143. In his 1959 article, Soper mentioned that the image was at that time in the Freer Gallery collection. See Alexander C. Soper (1959), 124.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960): 107; Yoshimura Rei (1985): 11-27; Eugene Y. Wang (2005), 219-228.

<sup>45</sup> Dorothy C. Wong (1995), 108-127.

<sup>46</sup> Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998), figs. 17, 19, plate 2; Sun Hua (2002), figs. 10.3, 11. Noteworthy is the other two other images, dated 533 and 549 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty. Although they are inscribed as Sakyamuni images, both inscriptions show the desire for rebirth in the western paradise. See Yuan Shuguang (2001), figs. 14, 21; Huo Wei (2001), figs. 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> For the Chinese transcript, see Yuan Shuguang, “Sichuan Maowen Nanqi Yongming zaoxiangbei ji youguan wenti 四川茂汶南齊永明造像碑及有關問題” (The Buddhist Stele Dated to the Yongming Reign of the Southern Qi Dynasty and the Related Issues, [unearthed] from Maowen, Sichuan),” *Wenwu*, no. 2 (1992): 67-71. My translation follows Dorothy Wong with slight modifications. See Dorothy C. Wong (1995), 346. Both Yuan and Wong’s works bear detailed discussion of this stele.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, in the kuihai year, the first year of the Yongming reign [483 CE] of [Southern] Qi, monk Xuansong, an administrator of Western Liang, reverently dedicates the images of Amitayus and the Future Buddha Maitreya for the emperor, his ministers, teachers of many generations, his parents, brothers, relatives, and all sentient beings. May all beings open up their hearts, believe in the three jewels, and practice the ten good virtues. May all have the good fortune to encounter Buddha Maitreya, attend the Future Buddha's three assemblies under Nagapuspa, and be released from the chain of existence. [Maitreya's] full Dharma Body will ferry every being [across to the other shore] to achieve full enlightenment. Monk Sengcheng...together accomplished this [project].

The worship of dual icons of Amitayus and Maitreya was a common phenomenon during the Southern Dynasties period.<sup>48</sup> It is not surprising, given the fact that Maitreya cult, as I will discuss in the following two chapters, was another popular form of Pure Land Buddhism practiced in the south of that time. Amitayus and Maitreya are the two Buddhas particularly mentioned in the *Panzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經 (*Pratyutpanna-samadhi-sutra*).<sup>49</sup> Therefore, it is possible that this text was also known in the south during the time of Qixia's production.

Noteworthy is that, unlike the work in Cave 19, Buddha Amitayus and Maitreya here are both depicted making the *abhaya mudra*, or fear-not gesture with the right hand and the *varada mudra*, or gift-bestowing gesture with the left. In Buddhist iconography, the combination of these two gestures is known as the *laiying* 來迎 or welcoming gesture, signifying that Buddha is greeting those to be reborn in his paradise.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly,

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<sup>48</sup> Su Bai (1989): 398-400.

<sup>49</sup> Two versions of the text survive to the present day, both of which were translated by an Indo-Scythian Lokaksema (Ch: Zhilou jiachen 支婁迦讖) in the Eastern Han dynasty. See T13, no. 417: 897-902; no. 418: 902-919. For the discussion of the text, see Yu-min Lee (1983), 19-20, 29, 32-34.

<sup>50</sup> Although there is no canonical source for this *mudra*, the gesture, best known as *raigo*, was very commonly used in China and Japan. *Raigo* is the Japanese reading of the Chinese characters for *laiying* 來迎, which was first used by Amitabha to welcome the deceased to his Western Paradise of Sukhavati.

Buddha Amitayus and Maitreya are depicted here welcoming the deceased to be reborn in their paradises. However, it must be noted that the majority of the Sichuan images, whether inscribed or not, are all portrayed with this *laiying* gesture. This iconographic correspondence in southwest region, therefore, may have also been understood as a result of regional development of that area.

The analysis of textual and artistic evidence above reveals that Amitayus Pure Land cult gained a wide following in the south from the late fourth century onwards. This religious environment unquestionably fostered artistic production at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties period. In other words, the appearance of the Amitayus image at Cave 19 is a reflection of southern Buddhist practice during the time of its excavation.

#### *Buddha Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna (Cave 18)*

Cave 18 contains two principal Buddhas seated side by side in *padmasana*, with legs folded on the platform against the back wall. The Buddha on the proper left side once displayed the *dhyana mudra*, while the one on the right made the *abhaya mudra*. In Chinese Buddhist art, the twin Buddhas depicted like this is generally interpreted as Sakyamuni, the historical Buddha, and Prabhutaratna, the Buddha of remote past.

This iconographic motif has been well recognized as the illustration of the eleventh chapter of the *Miaofa lianhua jing* (*Saddharmapundarika-sutra*), commonly known as the *Lotus Sutra*. The depiction of Buddha Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna,

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Professor John Huntington thus argues that the *mudra* tradition may have been part of the oral tradition, or at least of non-canonical tradition. See John C Huntington, "The Iconography and Iconology of Maitreya Images in Gandhara." *Journal of Central Asia*, Vol. VII:1 (1984): 140, 161, note 14. Also see Yu-min Lee (1983), 266.

therefore, is also generally accepted as a testimony to the popularity of this literature.<sup>51</sup>

Entitled “Xian baota ping 見寶塔品” (Apparition of the Jeweled Stupa), the eleventh chapter of the text reads:<sup>52</sup>

爾時佛前有七寶塔，……從地踊出，住在空中，……爾時寶塔中出大音聲歎言：善哉，善哉！釋迦牟尼世尊！能以平等大慧，教菩薩法，佛所護念，妙法華經，為大眾說。……爾時佛告大樂說菩薩：此寶塔中有如來全身，乃往過去東方無量千萬億阿僧祇世界，國名寶淨，彼中有佛，號曰多寶。其佛行菩薩道時，作大誓願：『若我成佛、滅度之後，於十方國土有說法華經處，我之塔廟，為聽是經故，踊現其前，為作證明，讚言善哉。』……爾時多寶佛，於寶塔中分半座與釋迦牟尼佛，……即時釋迦牟尼佛入其塔中，坐其半座，結加趺坐。爾時，大眾見二如來在七寶塔中師子座上、結加趺坐

At that time in the Buddha's presence there was a *stupa* adorned with the seven treasures...which rose up out of the earth and stood suspended in the air...At that time a loud voice issued from the jeweled *stupa*, speaking words of praise: “Excellent, excellent! Sakyamuni, World-Jornored One, that you can take the great wisdom of equality, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas, the *Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law*, and preach it for the sake of great assembly!”...At that time Buddha spoke to bodhisattva Great Joy of Preaching: “In this jeweled *stupa* is the complete body of a Thus Come One. Long ago...there was a Buddha named Prabhutaratna (Many Treasures). When this Buddha was originally carrying out the bodhisattva way, he made a great vow, saying: “If, after I have become a Buddha and entered *nirvana*, in the lands of the ten directions there is any place where the *Lotus Sutra* is preached, then my funerary *stupa*, in order that I may listen to the sutra, will come forth and appear in that spot to testify the *stutra* and praise its excellence.”...At that time Prabhutaratna offered half of his seat in the jeweled *stupa* to Sakyamuni Buddha... Sakyamuni Buddha at once entered the *stupa* and took half of the seat, sitting in cross-legged position. At that time the members of the great assembly, seeing the two Thus Come Ones seated cross-legged on the lion seat in the *stupa* of seven treasures.

It must be noted that, while the *sutra* was translated from Sanskrit texts, this subject, unknown in Indian Buddhist art, is purely a Chinese convention.<sup>53</sup> In my

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<sup>51</sup> For the detailed discussion of the *Lotus Sutra* and its representation in art, see J. Leroy Davidson, *The Lotus Sutra in Chinese Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954).

<sup>52</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing*, juan 4, T9, no. 262: 32-34. I have followed Burton Watson's translation with slight modifications. See Burton Watson (1993), 170-181.

research, I have found only one example with this iconographic representation from the south. It appears on a stone stele, which, dated 545 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty (Figure 3.83), was unearthed from the Chengdu city.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, a number of inscribed images of this type have been found in northern China during the late fifth to sixth century. The earliest known work is a gilt bronze image, dated 472 CE of the Northern Wei dynasty.<sup>55</sup> In his early study of Chinese Buddhist sculptures, Japanese scholar Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎 records ten inscribed Northern Wei works, the majority of which bears clear identification of Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna.<sup>56</sup> The recent research by He Shizhe, however, includes a total of twenty one images in this collection.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, it must be pointed out that similar representations are also found in major Northern cave temples of that time. For example, at the Yungang

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<sup>53</sup> Dorothy Wong argues that early Chinese Taoist images “may have provided a direct visual source for this motif.” See Dorothy C. Wong (1995), 98-99.

<sup>54</sup> According to inscription, the two Buddhas are clearly identified as Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna. See Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998): 8-9, figs. 10, 13, plates 1.3.

<sup>55</sup> Satō Chisui 佐藤智水, “Hokuchō zōzō meikō 北朝造像銘考” (Inscriptions on Buddhist Statues in the Period of the Northern Dynasties), *Shigaku Zasshi*, no. 10 (1977): 16. Also see Matsubara Saburō 松原三郎, “Kondō nibutsu byōzazō kō—toku ni Hokugidai o shu to shite 金銅二仏並坐像考 -特に北魏代を主として-” (A study of Bronze Images of Two Sitting Buddhas-Mainly during the Northern Wei dynasty), fig. 62, in *Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkokushi kenkyū* 中国仏教彫刻史研究 (Chinese Buddhist Sculpture - A study based on bronze and stone statues other than works from cave temples) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1966), 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Matsubara Saburō, *Chūgoku Bukkyō chōkokushi kenkyū* (1966), 67-91; 235-236, 239, 248, 250, plates. 36 (a-b), 41-42, 43(a-c), 62 (a-c), 90 (a-b), 91 (a-b), 103 (a).

<sup>57</sup> He Shizhe 賀世哲, “Guanyu Beichao shiku qianfo tuxiang zhu wenti 關於北朝石窟千佛圖像諸問題” (Iconography of the Thousand Buddhas from the Buddhist Caves of the Northern Dynasties), part II, *Dunhuang Research*, no.4 (1989): 47.



caves, these two Buddhas are commonly depicted seated side by side.<sup>58</sup> One of the earliest inscribed examples at this site is the representation of two Buddhas in Cave 11, dated to the thirteenth year of the Taihe 太和 reign (489 CE).

Like the works in Cave 18, the two Buddhas in the abovementioned sculptures are generally depicted in identical posture without or with slight variation in gesture. In addition, all these inscribed images date from the late fifth century to the first quarter of the sixth century of the Northern Wei dynasty. This time period, as I will analyze in Chapter 6, witnessed extensive cultural exchanges between northern and southern China. Therefore, it is almost certain to propose that the two Buddhas in Cave 18, like their counterparts in the northern region, are the representation of the *Lotus Sutra*. The presence of twin Buddhas at Qixia further testifies to the popularity of this literature in the south during that time.

Arranged along the upper part of the side walls of Cave 18 are miniature depictions of eight seated Buddhas, four on each side. The images, seated in *padmasana*, are currently under cement covering. Similar to the works in Cave 25, as will be discussed later, this group of eight images may also represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past plus Maitreya Buddha; and these eight images form a typical type of *sanshi fo* iconography. Most noteworthy is that the iconographic representation of the Buddhas of the Three Ages, which I will analyze later in this chapter, has its doctrinal base on the

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<sup>58</sup> Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio, *Unkō sekkutsu* (1952-1954); also see Su Bai, “Yungang shiku fenqi shilun 云岡石窟分期試論” (Chronological Study of the Yungang Caves). Su’s article was first published in *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 1 (1978); it is later included in the volume of his collected works, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* (1996): 76-88.

*Lotus Sutra*. We may thus suggest that the iconographic scheme of Cave 18 is mainly based on this Buddhist literature.

*Buddhas of the Three Ages (Cave 24)*

Cave 24 contains three main Buddhas, one on each of the three walls. These Buddhas all sit in an identical pose in *padmasana*. While the hands of the central figure are broken off, two other figures both display the *dhyana mudra*. They are represented in a generalized way, with little variation in poses, gestures, or other identifying characteristics. Each Buddha is attended by two bodhisattvas. The three principal Buddhas in this cave may be interpreted as the *sanshi fo*, the Buddhas of the Three Ages: past, present and future.

In her iconographic analysis, Yu-min Lee points out that this iconographic theme was not widespread in the western region, and only few examples have been found in Gandhara.<sup>59</sup> She further proposes that the notion of *sanshi fo* was introduced to China and reflected in early Chinese Buddhist art. One early example of this iconographic type, as also mentioned by Lee, is a gilt bronze image from southern China, dated 451 CE of the Liu Song period (Figure 3.84). The main Buddha is identified through inscription as Maitreya. Within the aureole, however, is depicted a group of three small Buddhas. In addition, artistic evidence reveals that this iconographic motif frequently appears in Northern Wei Buddhist art dated from the mid-fifth to sixth century.<sup>60</sup> These three Buddhas are generally recognized as the depictions of the Buddhas of the Three Ages.

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<sup>59</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 284-286.

<sup>60</sup> Su Bai (1996): 76-88.

There appears to be a variety of iconographic interpretation of these three images.<sup>61</sup> Generally speaking, Sakyamuni, Vairocana or Sakyamuni/Vairocana is normally depicted in the center, representing the Buddha of the Present. Dipamkara, Kasyapa or Amitabha represents the Buddha of Past, while either Maitreya or Bhaisajyaguru represents the Buddha of Future.<sup>62</sup> Further identification of the three Buddha in Cave 24 is not allowed due to the lack of additional evidence.

In her research concerning the *sanshi fo* from the Northern Wei cave temples, Liu Huida 劉慧達 points out that the important textual base for this iconographic theme is the *Lotus Sutra*.<sup>63</sup> A passage from the second chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* reads:<sup>64</sup>

如三世諸佛，說法之儀式，我今亦如是，說無分別法。……聞法歡喜讚，乃至發一言，則為已供養，一切三世佛

Following the same fashion that the Buddha of the Three Ages employ in preaching the Law, I now will do likewise, preaching a Law without distinctions...If a person hears this Law, delights and praises it, even if he utters just one word, then he has made offerings to all the Buddhas of the Three Ages.

Another passage from the twenty first chapter of the same text reads:<sup>65</sup>

十方現在佛，并過去未來，亦見亦供養，亦令得歡喜。

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<sup>61</sup> For the detailed analysis, see He Shizhe 賀世哲, "Guanyu Shiliuguo Beichao shiqi de sanshifo yu sanfo zaixiang de zhu wenti 關於十六國北朝時期的三世佛與三佛造像的諸問題" (On the Figures of Buddha of Past, Present and Future during 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries), part I, *Dunhuang Research*, no. 4 (1992): 1-20; part II, *Dunhuang Research*, no.1 (1993): 1-10.

<sup>62</sup> John C. Huntington (1986): 155.

<sup>63</sup> Liu Huida 劉慧達, "Beiwei shiku zhong de 'sanfo' 北魏石窟中的 '三佛'" (*Sanshi fo* in the Northern Wei Cave Temples), *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 4 (1958): 91-101.

<sup>64</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing*, juan 1, T9, no. 262: 10. I have followed Burton Watson's translation with slight modification. See Burton Watson (1993), 45.

<sup>65</sup> *Miaofa lianhua jing*, juan 6, T9, no. 262: 52. I have followed Burton Watson's translation with slight modification. See Burton Watson (1993), 116.

The Buddhas of present in the ten directions and those of past and future ages, he will see them too, offer alms to them and cause them to be filled with joy.

Given numerous mentions of *sanshi fo* in the text, it is likely that the three Buddhas are visual expression of the belief in and the worship of the *Lotus Sutra* during the time of their artistic production. It should be recognized, however, that *sanshi fo* is also a recurring theme in many major Buddhist literature from fifth-sixth century. He Shizhe, in his iconographic study, emphasizes on other important *sutras* that have provided doctrinal bases for the *sanshi fo* iconography during the fourth to the sixth century.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, based on the iconographic analysis of the two Buddhas from Cave 18, it is reasonable to assume that the iconographic motif in Cave 24 may have also been intended to represent the themes from the *Lotus Sutra*. Given the fact that this motif frequently appears in imperial temples of the Northern Dynasties, Lee suggests that it may have been associated with the notion of the divine kinship, according to which the successive emperors identified themselves with the Buddha of the past, present and future.<sup>67</sup> Since Qixia was also an imperially sponsored cave site, it seems that this belief was popular in the south as well during that time.

#### *The Seven Buddhas of the Past (Cave 25)*

In Cave 25, within the body halo of the main Buddha is depicted seven small niches, each containing a Buddha seated in *padmasana*. It is difficult for a close iconographic analysis of this cave due to the fact that all the images are currently under

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<sup>66</sup> He Shizhe (1992): 1-20; He Shizhe (1993): 1-10.

<sup>67</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 285-286.

cement covering. However, a group of seven Buddha compositions presumably have been intended to represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past.

This iconographic representation is generally based on the belief that there have been six Buddhas before Sakyamuni.<sup>68</sup> The group of seven Buddhas, therefore, would normally include Sakyamuni and the other six *manusi* Buddhas of the Past. According to the Buddhist literature, the six Buddhas can be further identified as Vipasyin, Silkhin Visvabhu, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni and Kasyapa.<sup>69</sup> However, a standard depiction of this motif, as discussed by Yu-min Lee, is the grouping of eight images, including seven *manusi* Buddhas and Maitreya bodhisattva.<sup>70</sup> Lee further suggests that Maitreya appears to receive more attention in Chinese Buddhist art, where he is sometimes shown as a Buddha that serves as main icon of the group. A typical example is a votive stele dated 495 CE of the Northern Wei dynasty. It exhibits a standing Maitreya Buddha in front with seven Buddhas of the past depicted in the halo.<sup>71</sup>

Interestingly, a similar iconographic representation is found on the aforementioned 490 CE Buddhist stele (Figures 3.80-81), unearthed from the Chengdu region in the south. The main Buddha, seated in *padmasana*, is identified through inscription as Maitreya Buddha. Within his body halo is depicted a group of seven Buddhas (four of which are now missing), representing the Seven Buddhas of the Past. Noteworthy is that this stele closely resembles Cave 25 at Qixia in iconographic scheme.

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<sup>68</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960), 198-199.

<sup>69</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 169.

<sup>70</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 169-170.

<sup>71</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 276-279, fig. 100.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the main icon in Cave 25 is most likely the depiction of Maitreya Buddha, while a group of seven figures that appear in his halo represent the Seven Buddhas of the Past. He Shizhe further suggests that this is one of the typical iconographic types of the Buddhas of Three Ages, with Sakyamuni as the Buddha of Present, Maitreya as the Buddha of Future, and the six *manusi* Buddhas as the Buddha of Past.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> He Shizhe (1992): 3-5.

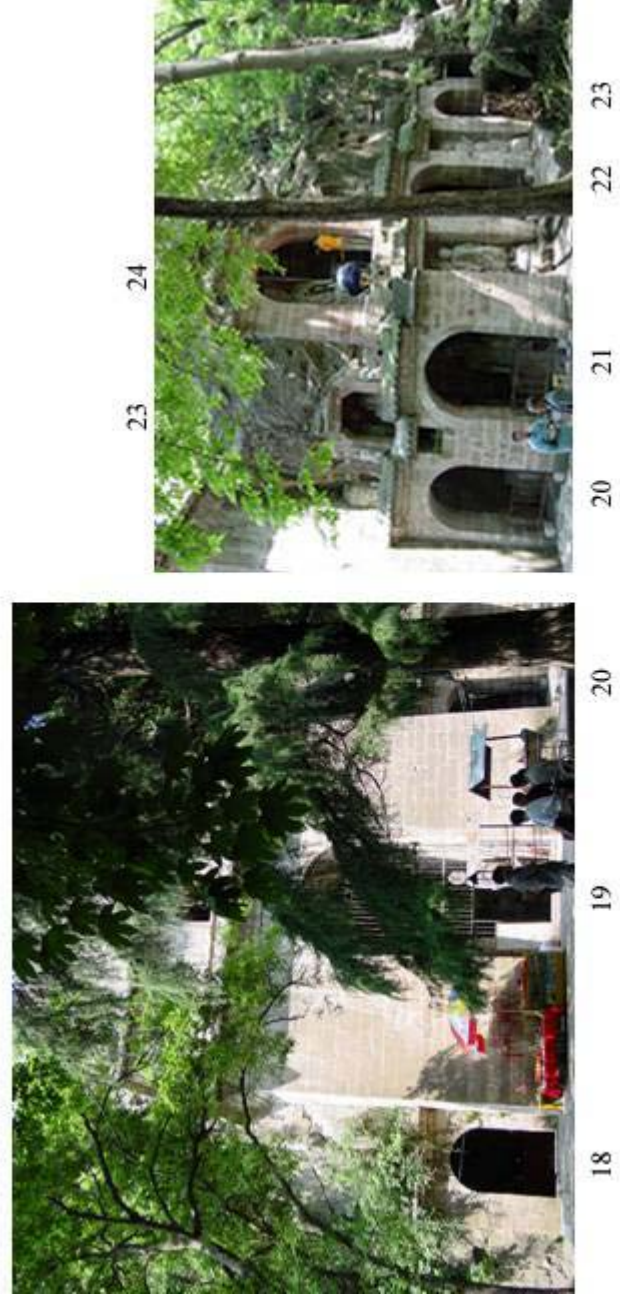


Figure 3.1: Views of Category I caves, center and eastern part of south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

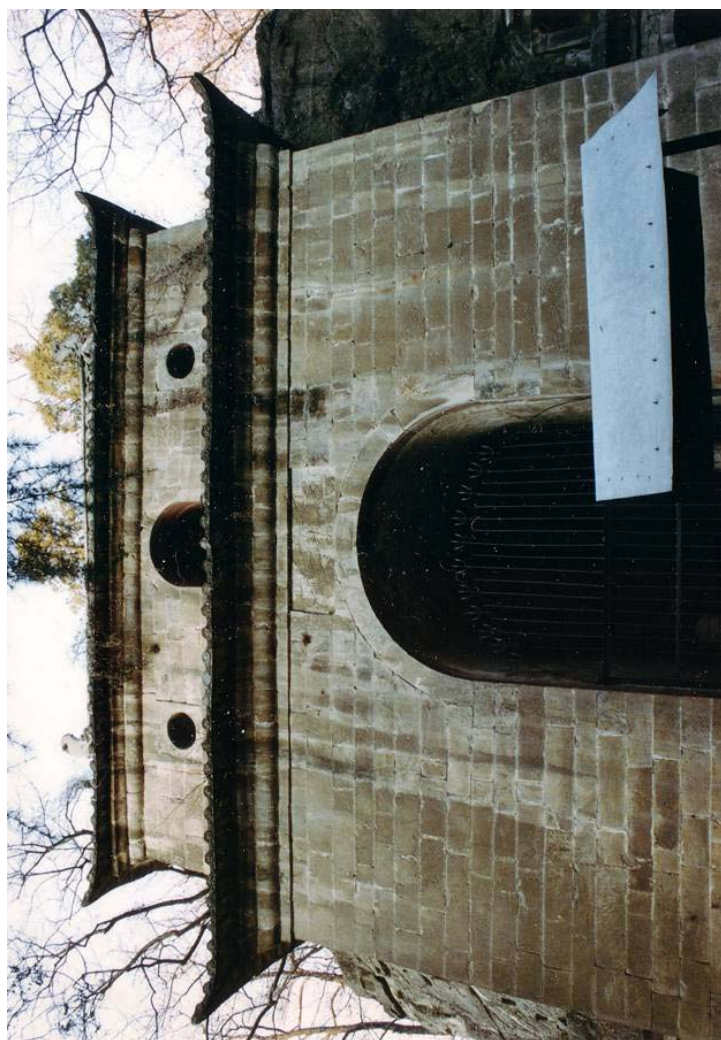


Figure 3.2: View of Cave 19, center section of south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



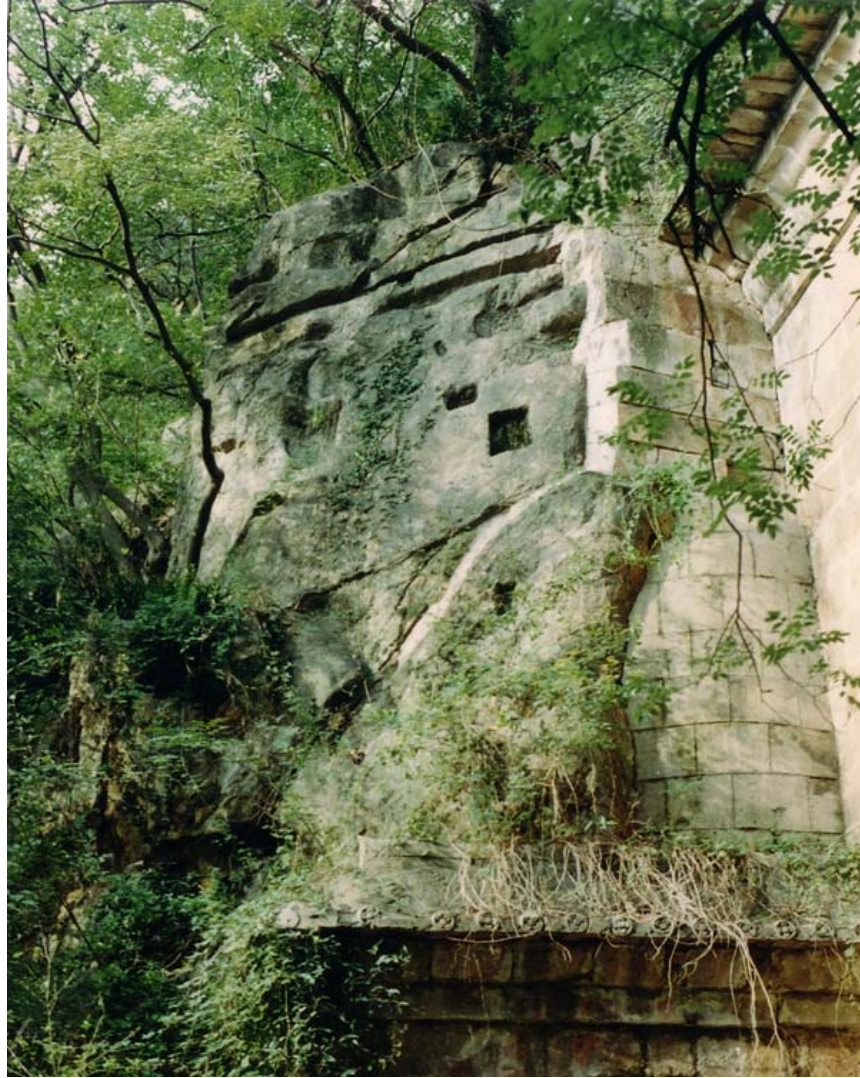


Figure 3.3: View of cliff surface beside Cave 19 on the west, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

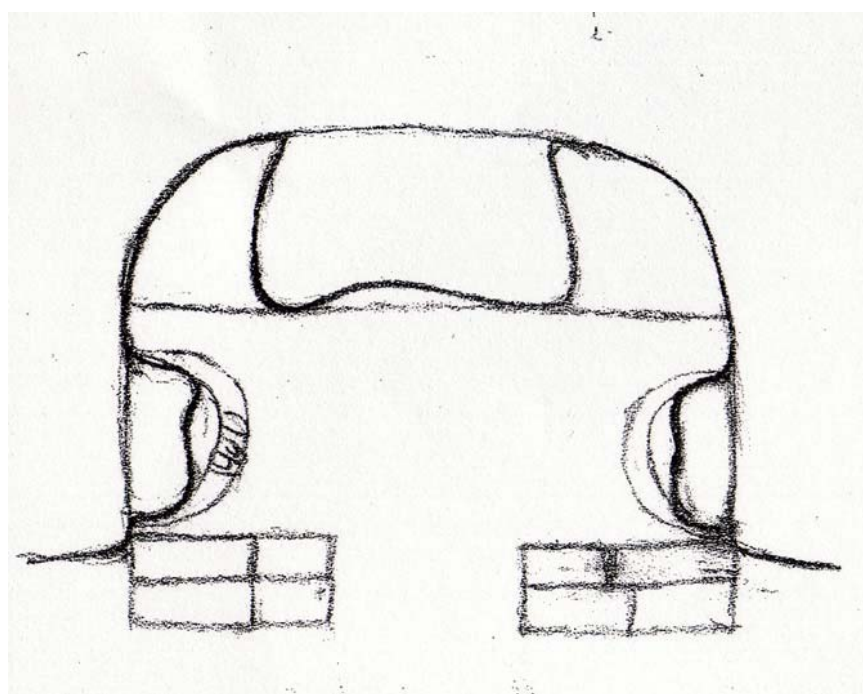


Figure 3.4: Plan of Cave 19 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.5: Buddha Amitayus, north wall of Cave 19,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.6: Buddha Amitayus, north wall of Cave 19, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.7: Details of the head of Buddha Amitayus, north wall of Cave 19,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.8: Details of drapery, Buddha Amitayus, north wall of Cave 19, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

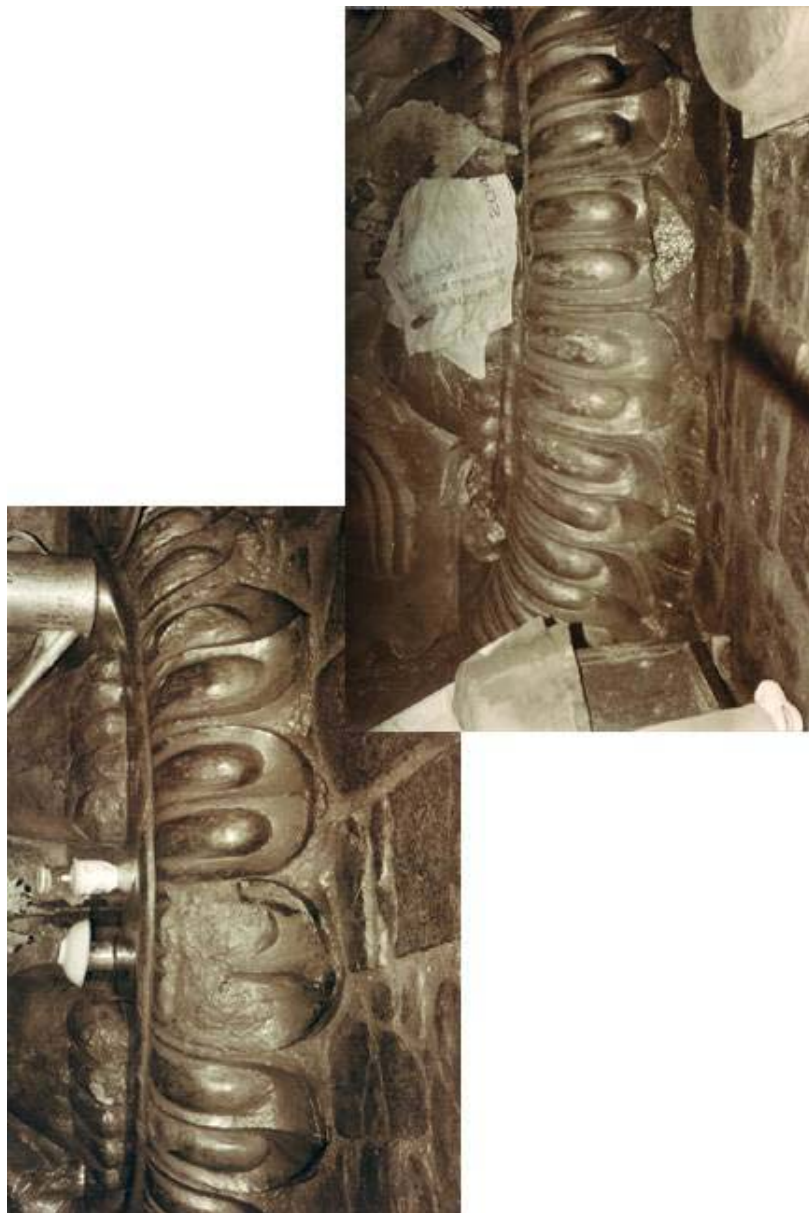


Figure 3.9: Details of the lotus pedestals for attendant bodhisattvas, west and east walls of Cave 19, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.10: Two standing Buddhas, doorway of Cave 19, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.11: Small niches on outer part of east wall, Cave 19, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

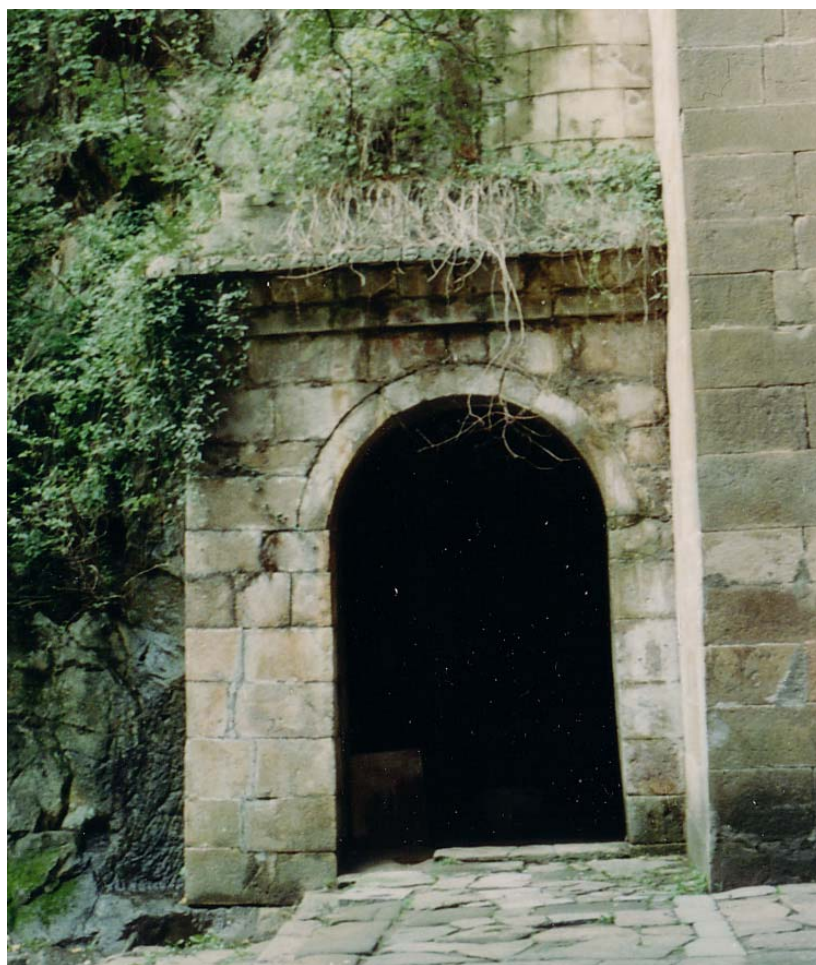


Figure 3.12: View of Cave 18, adjacent to cave 19 on its west, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

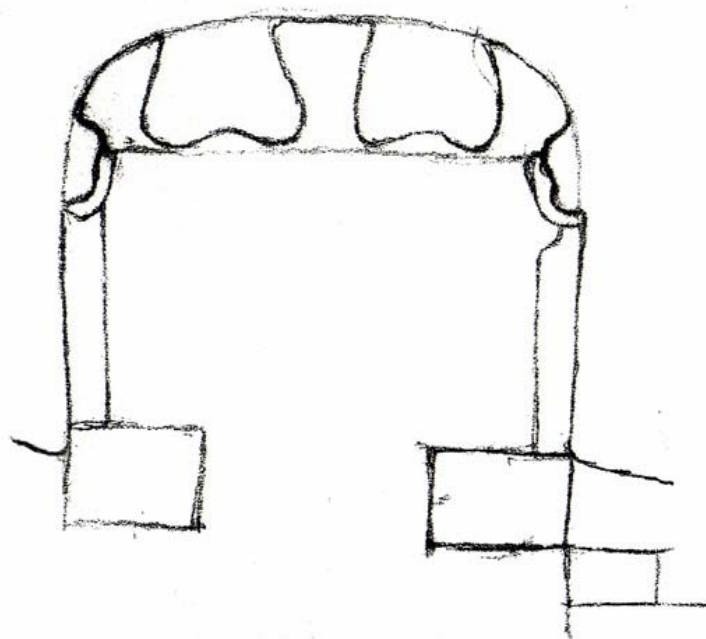


Figure 3.13: Plan of Cave 18 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.14: Interior view, north and east walls of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



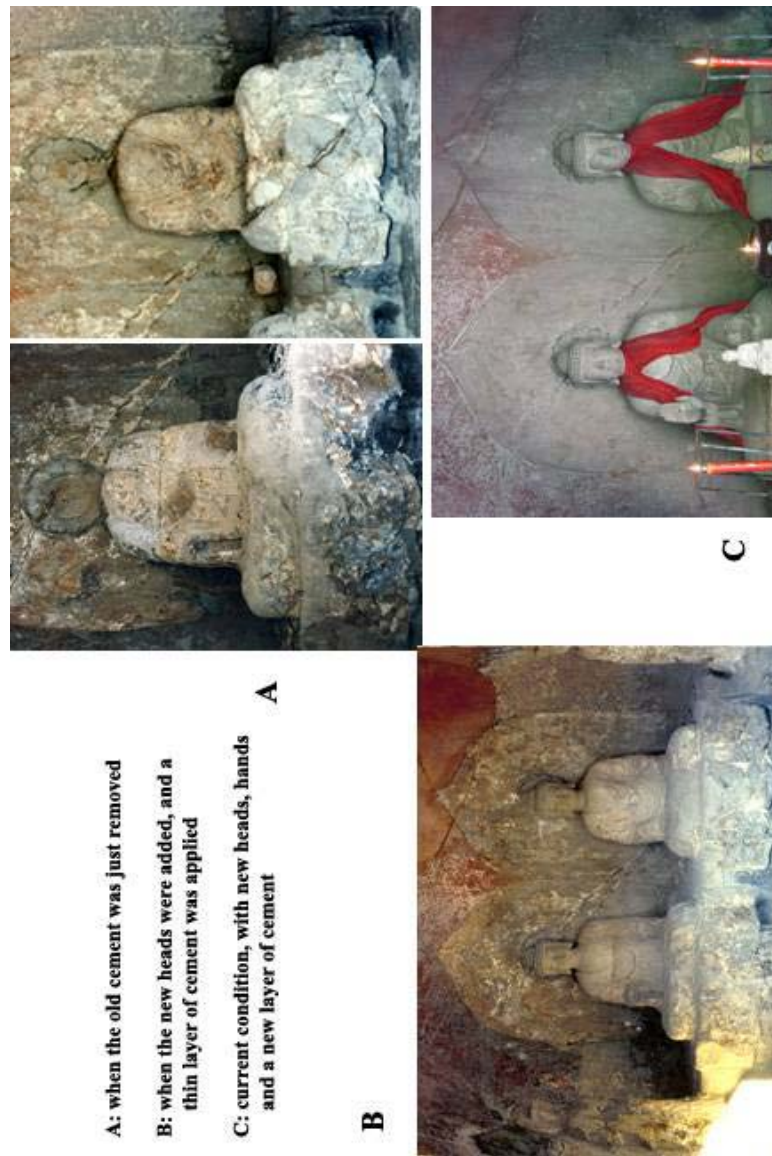


Figure 3.15: Photographs showing the “restoration” of the two Buddhas in 1995, north wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.16: Proper left Buddha (before new “restoration”),  
north wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.17: Proper right Buddha (before new “restoration”), north wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

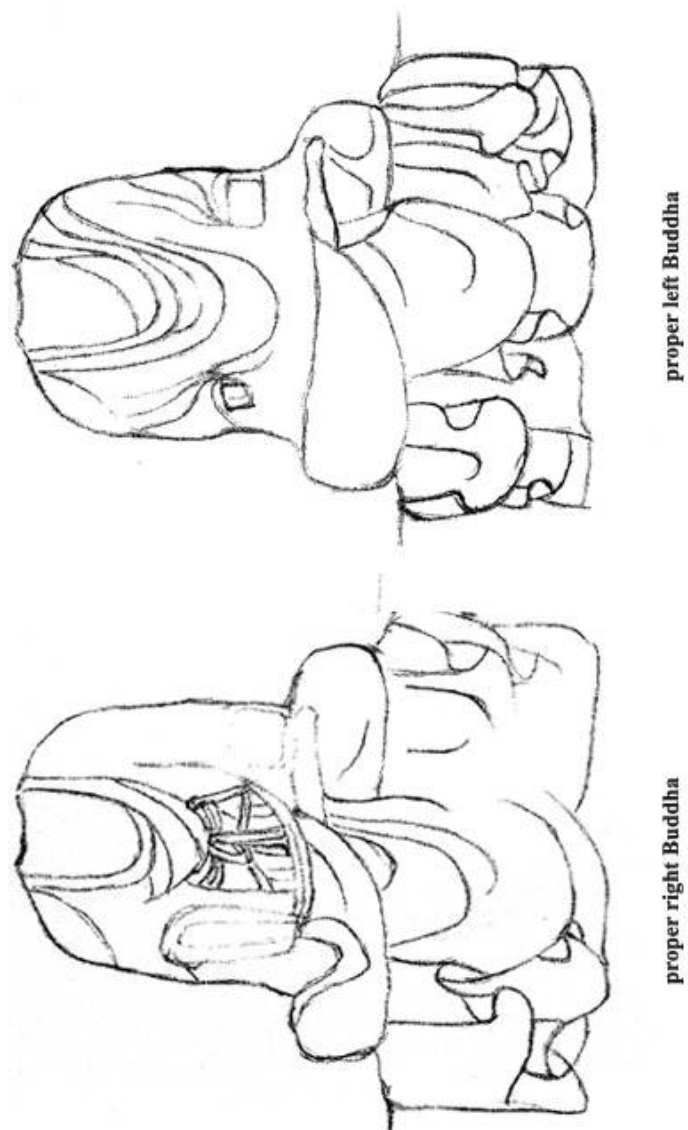


Figure 3.18: Sketches of two Buddhas (before new “restoration”),  
north wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





**A**

**A: when the old cement was removed**

**B**

**B: current condition, covered with a new layer of cement**

Figure 3.19: Photographs showing the “restoration” of the two bodhisattvas in 1995, west and east walls of Cave 18, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.20: Proper left bodhisattva (before new “restoration”), east wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.21: Proper right bodhisattva (before new “restoration”),  
east wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing

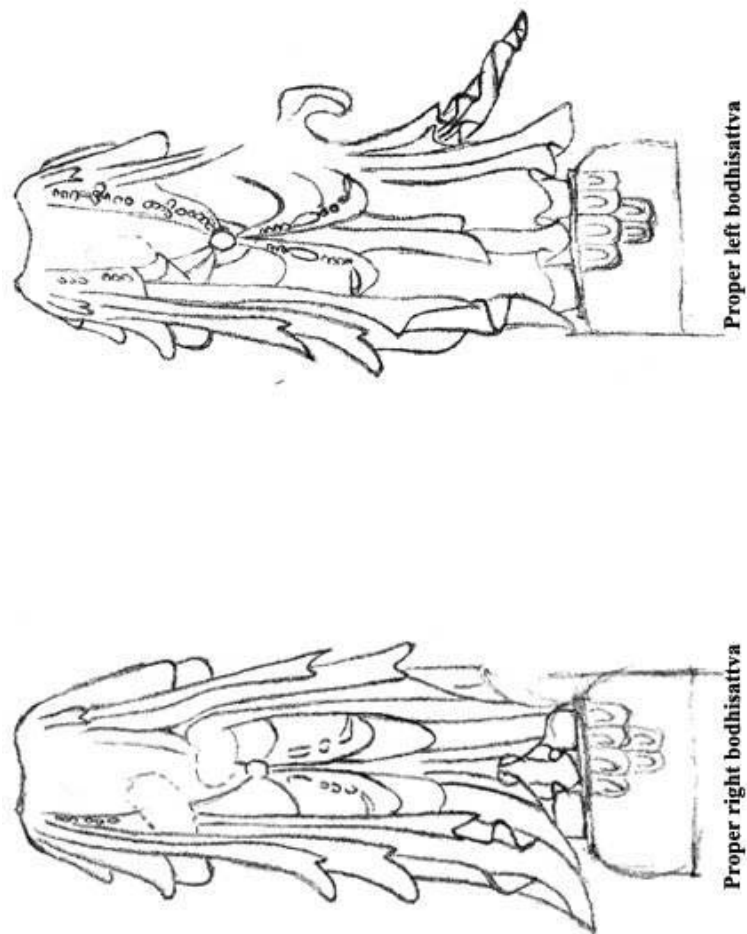


Figure 3.22: Sketches of two bodhisattvas (before new “restoration”), east wall of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



**East Wall**



**West Wall**

Figure 3.23: Eight seated Buddhas, east and west walls of Cave 18, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.24: View of Cave 20, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

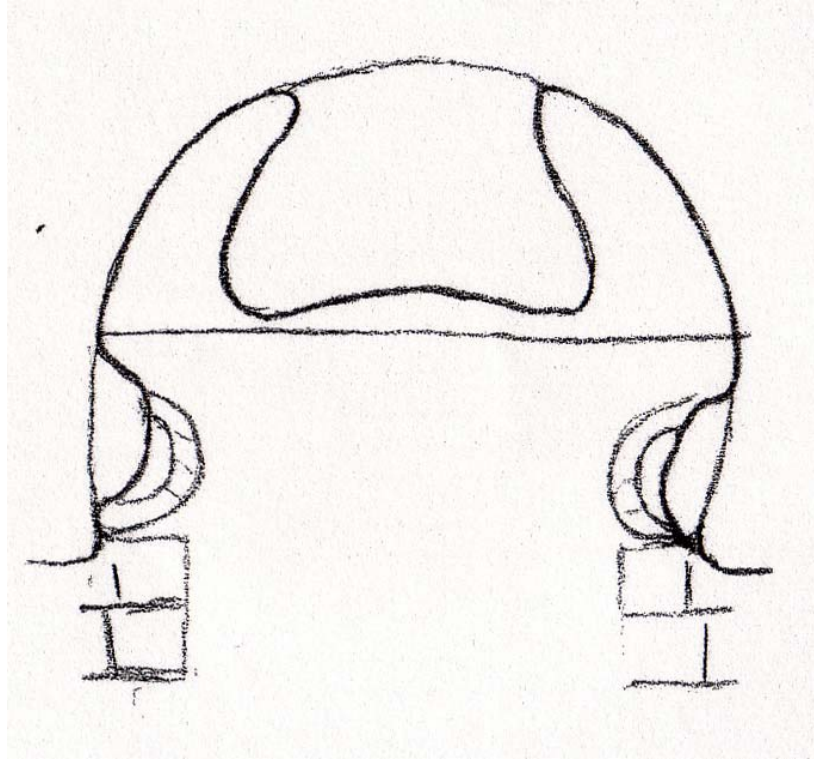


Figure 3.25: Plan of Cave 20 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.26: A stone slab with an inscription dated 1600 CE, Ming dynasty, west wall of Cave 20, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.27: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 20, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



proper right bodhisattva



proper left bodhisattva

Figure 3.28: Bodhisattva attendants, west and east walls of Cave 20, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.29: Details of proper left bodhisattva, east wall of Cave 20,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

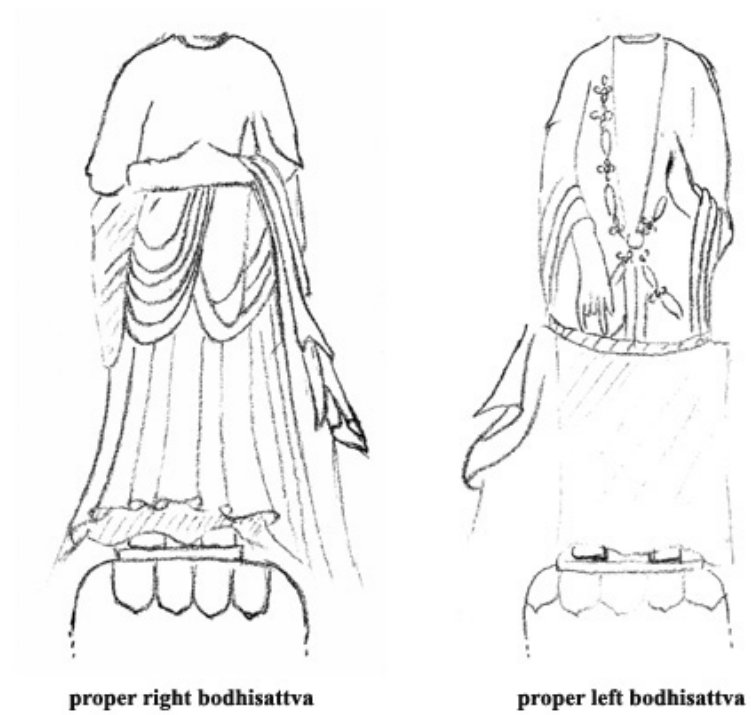


Figure 3.30: Sketches of two bodhisattvas,  
west and east walls of Cave 20, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.31: Ten seated miniature Buddhas, east and west walls of Cave 20, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.32: View of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

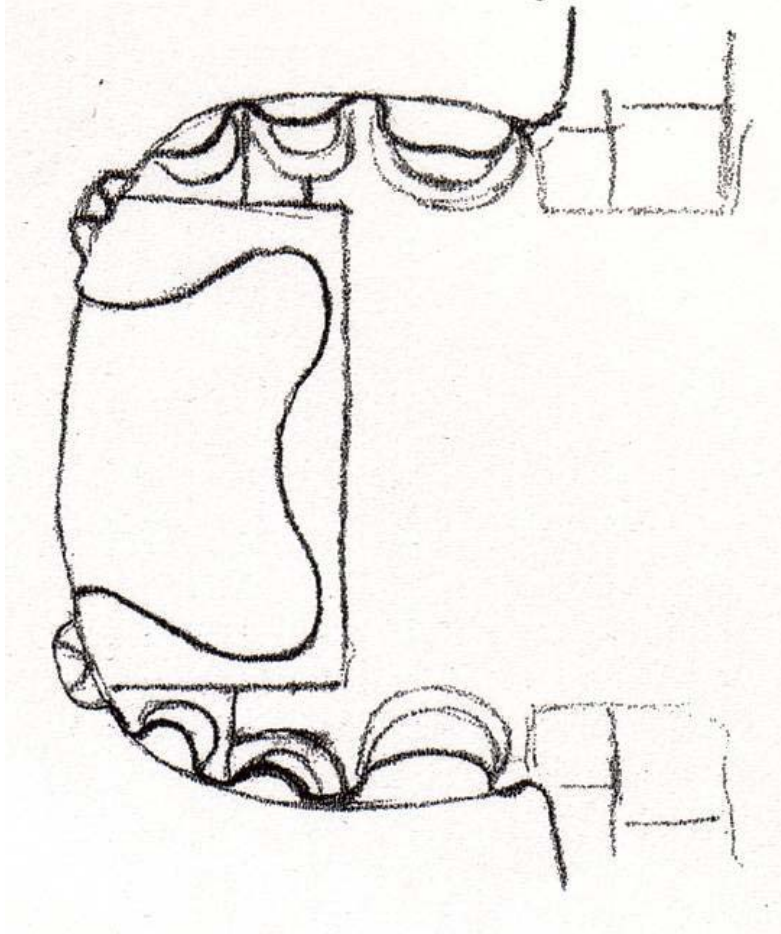


Figure 3.33: Plan of Cave 22 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.34: Interior view of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



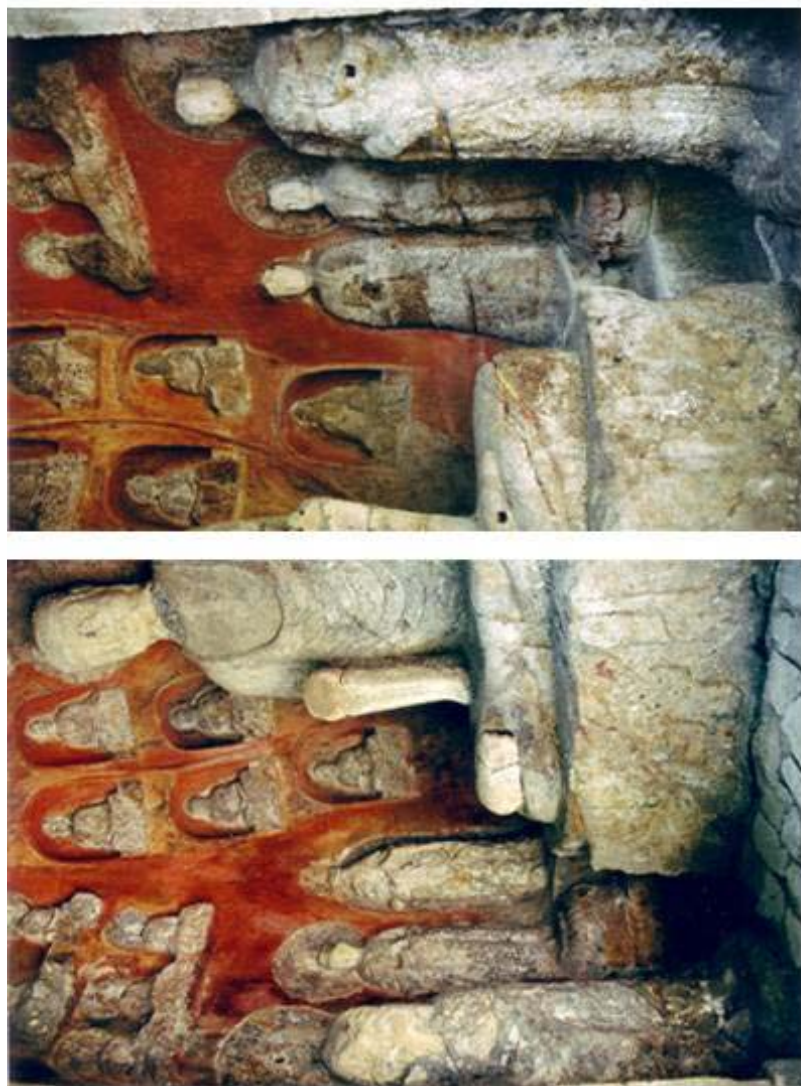


Figure 3.35: Interior views of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.36: Interior view of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.37: View of north wall, Cave 22, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.38: Details of the main Buddha, north wall of Cave 22, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.39: Proper right disciple and bodhisattvas, north and west walls of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.40: Proper left disciple and inner bodhisattva attendant,  
north and east walls of Cave 22, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.41: Proper left bodhisattva attendants, east wall of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

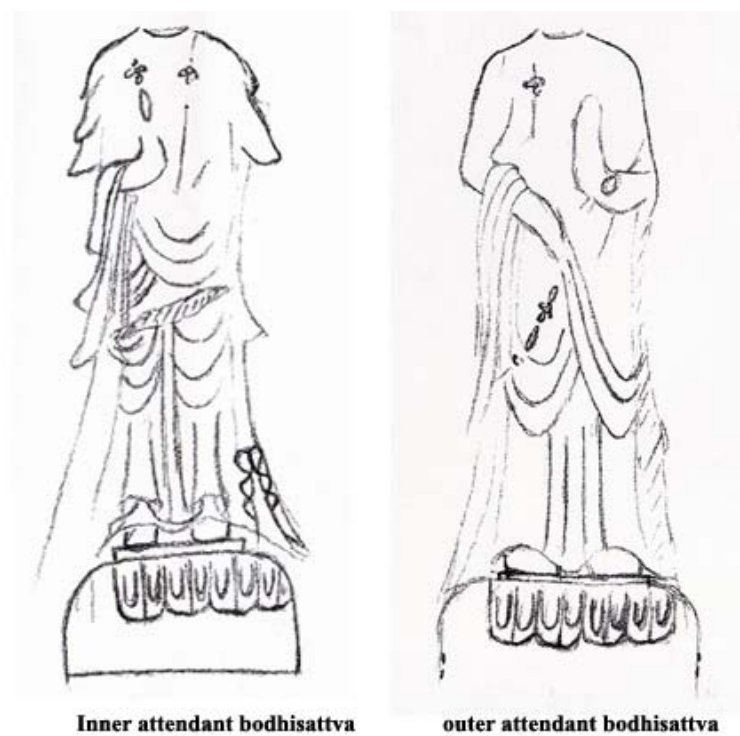


Figure 3.42: Sketches of proper left bodhisattva attendants, east wall of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.43: Detail of niche figures, north wall of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.44: Detail of niche figures, north wall of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

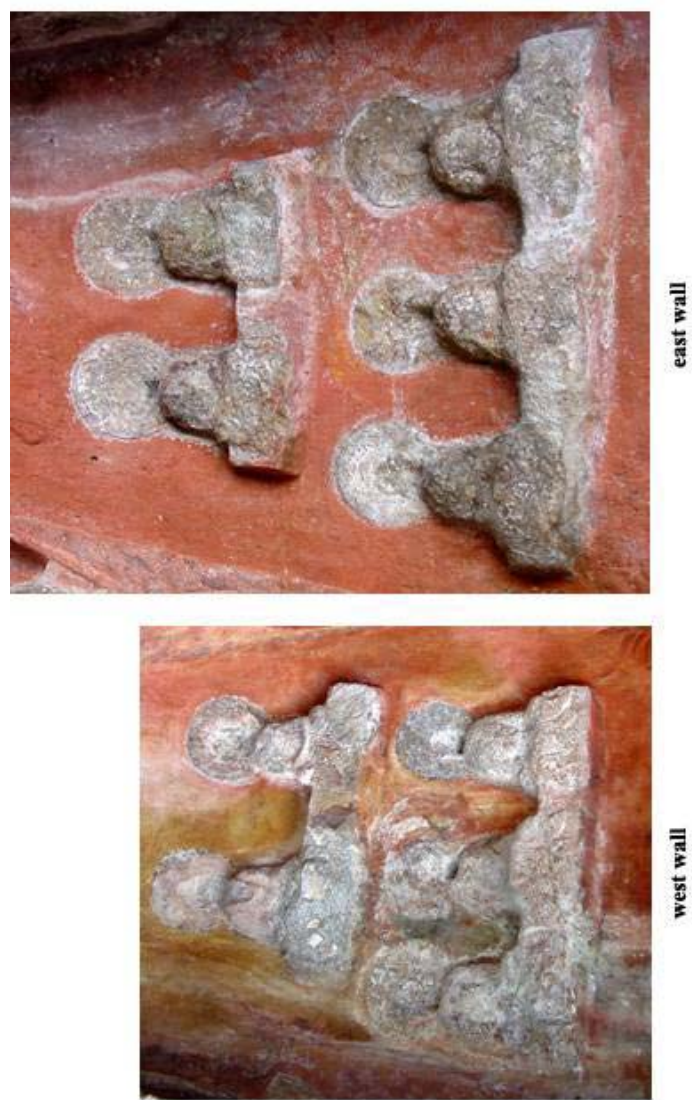


Figure 3.45: Ten seated miniature Buddhas, east and west walls of Cave 22, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.46: Flower motif, above the proper right disciple, north wall of Cave 22,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.47: View of Caves 24, 26-27, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

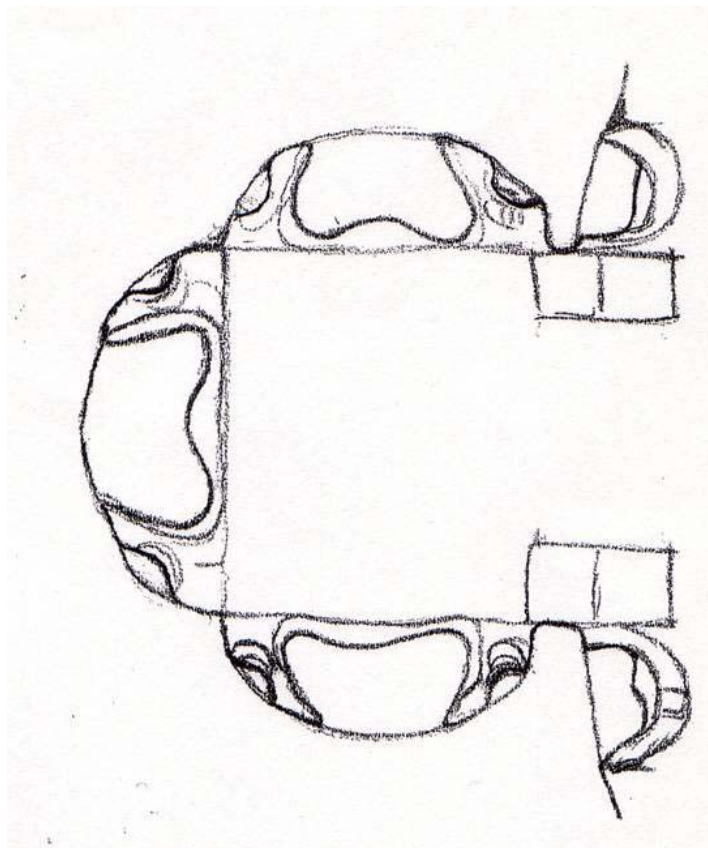


Figure 3.48: Plan of Cave 24 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



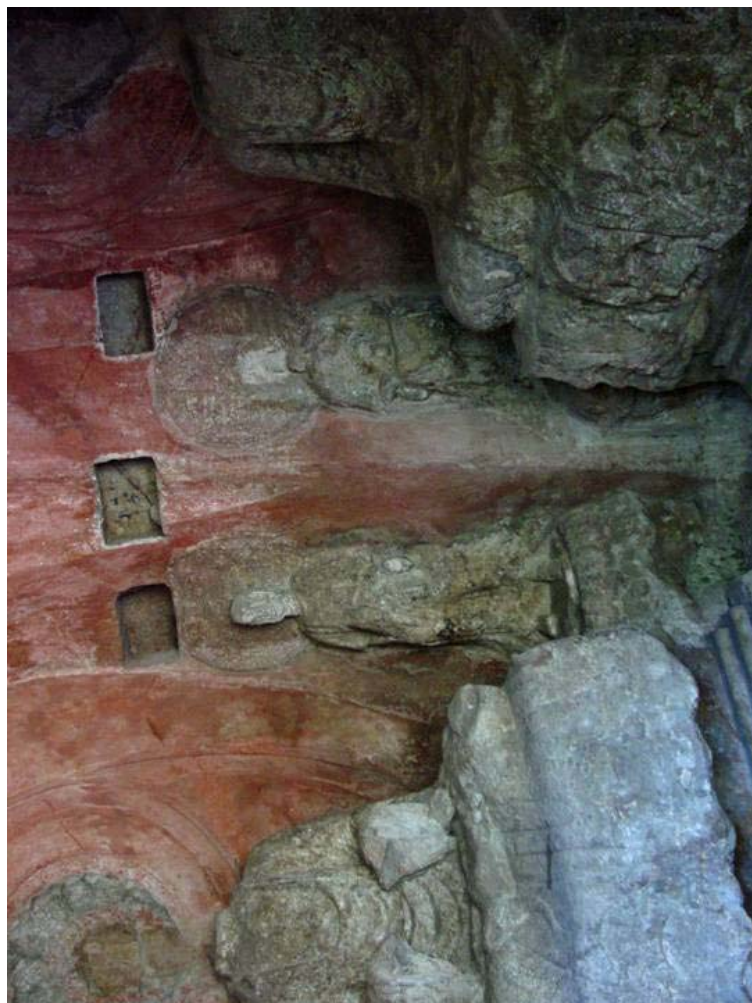


Figure 3.49: Interior view, north and east walls of Cave 24, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.50: Interior view, north and west walls of Cave 24, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



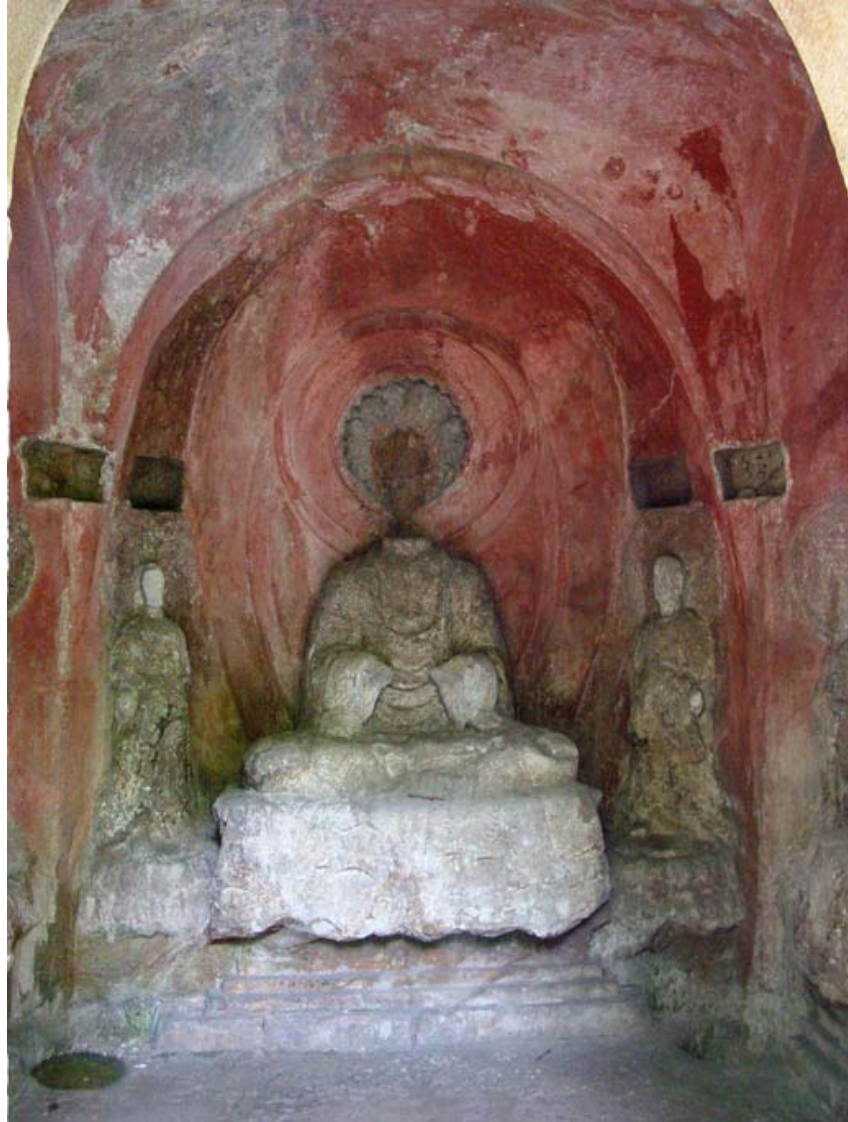


Figure 3.51: View of north wall, Cave 24, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

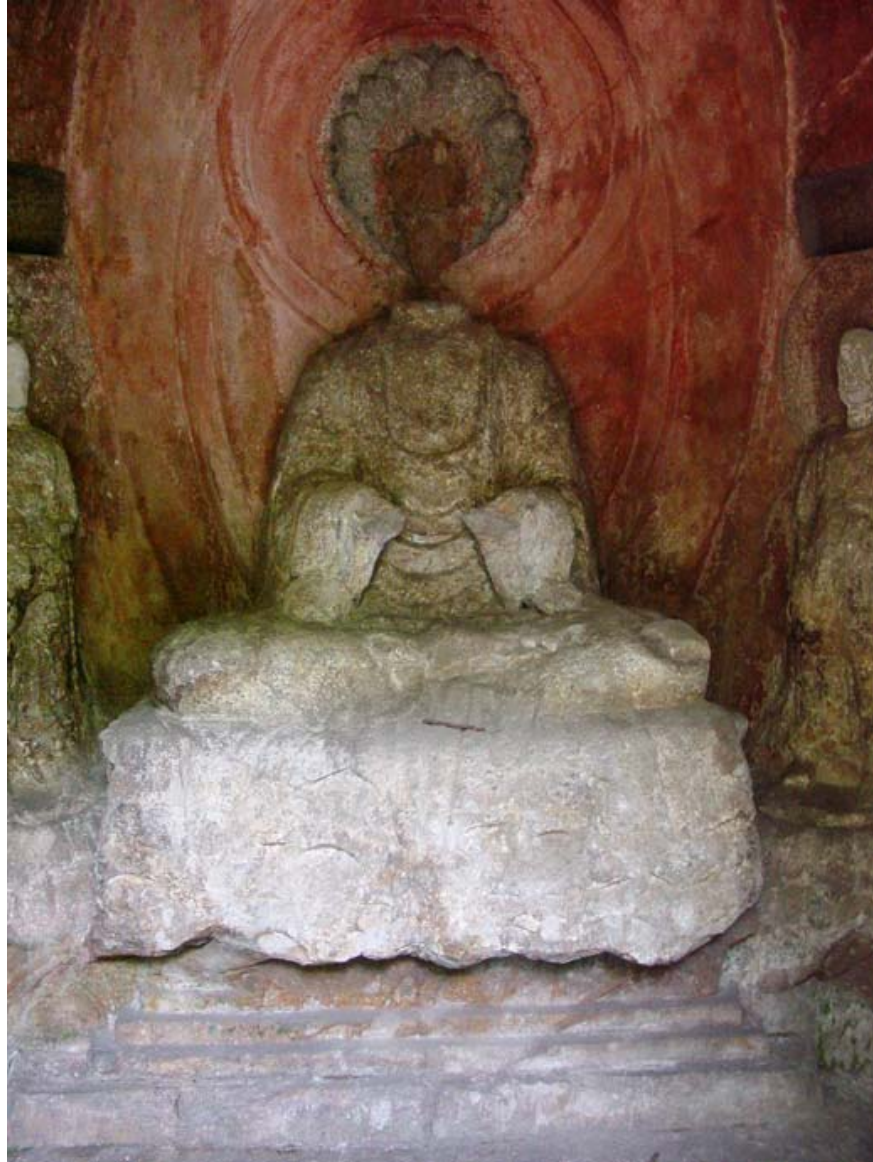


Figure 3.52: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 24, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.53: Two bodhisattva attendants, north wall niche, Cave 24, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.54: Close views of bodhisattva attendants, north wall of Cave 24,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixia caves, Nanjing



Figure 3.55: Buddha with two bodhisattvas, east wall of Cave 24,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixia caves, Nanjing



Figure 3.56: Buddha with two bodhisattvas, west wall of Cave 24, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixia caves, Nanjing

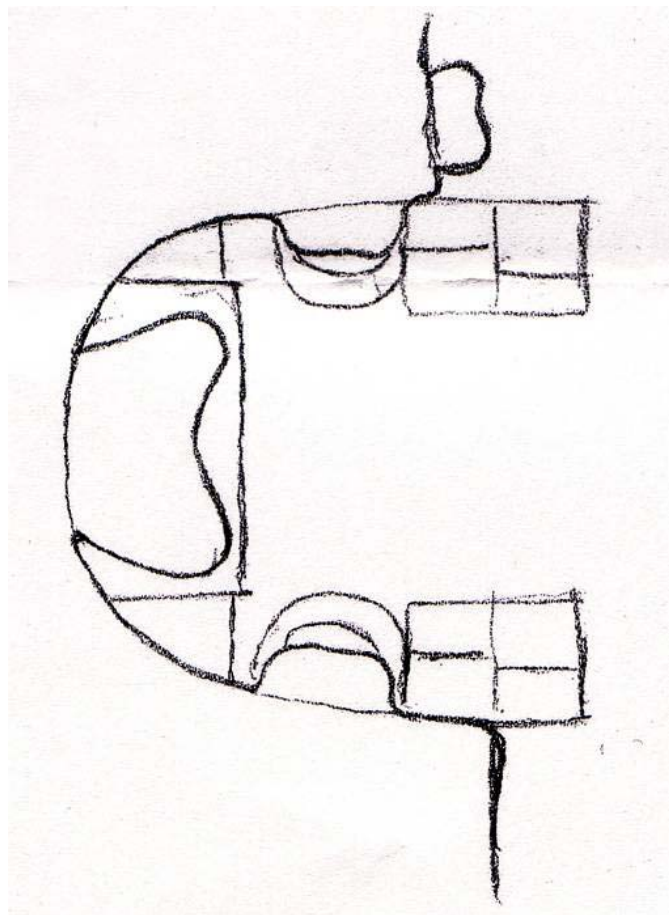


Figure 3.57: Plan of Caves 26 and 27 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixia caves, Nanjing





Figure 3.58: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 26,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixia caves, Nanjing



Figure 3.59: Details of main Buddha, north wall of Cave 26, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.60: Proper left bodhisattva, Cave 26, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.61: Proper right bodhisattva, Cave 26, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.62: View of Caves 21-23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.63: View of Cave 21, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

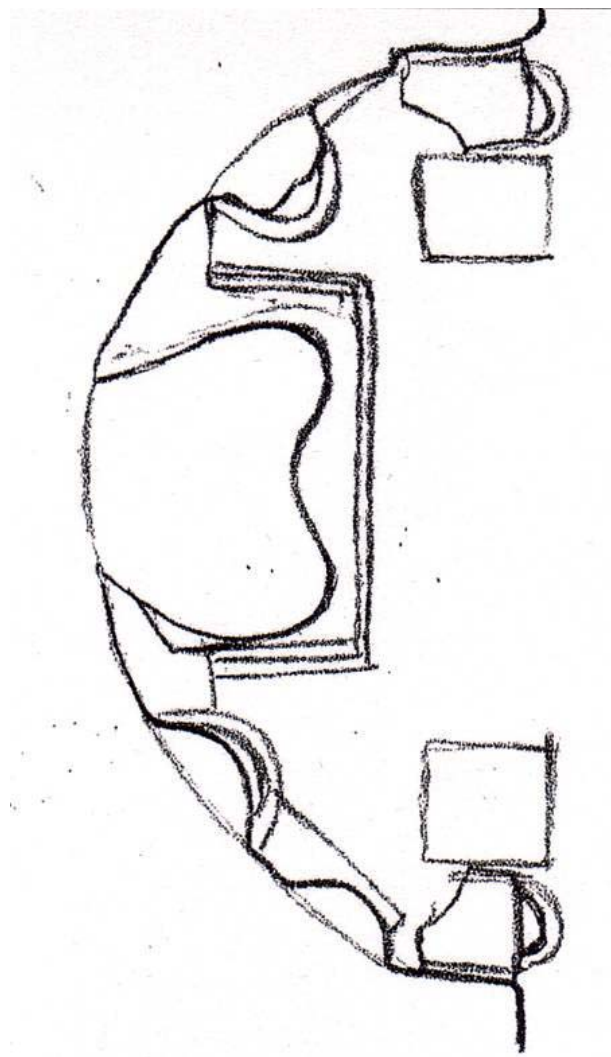


Figure 3.64: Plan of Cave 21 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



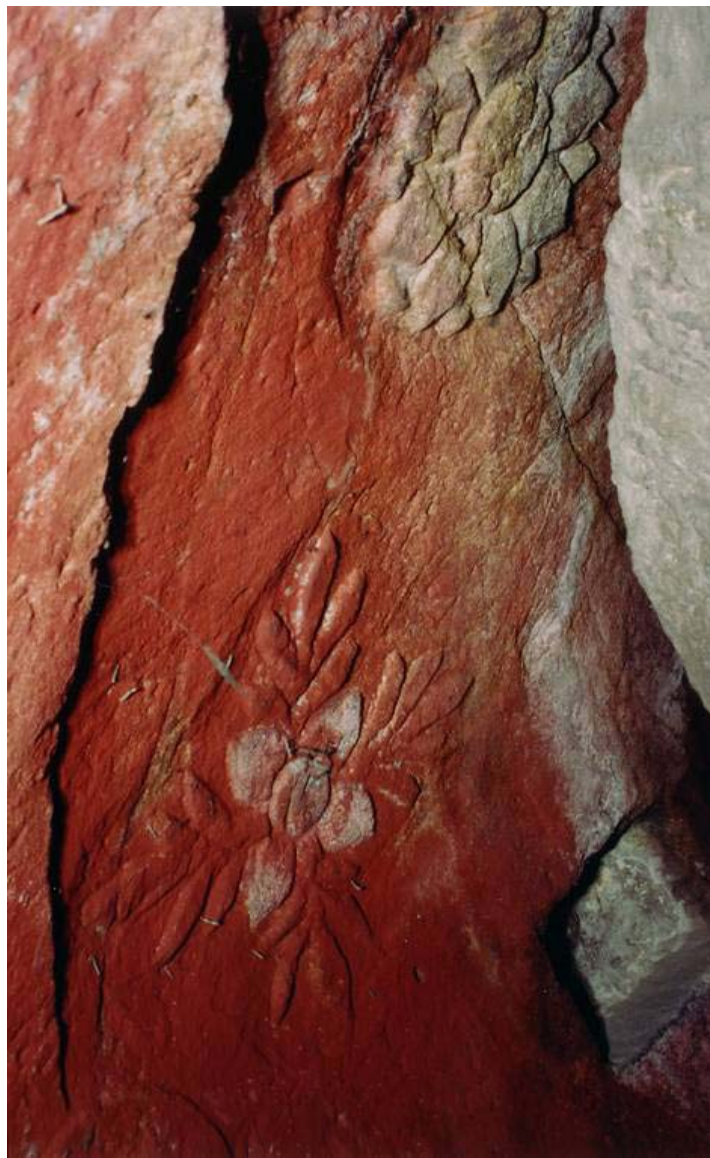


Figure 3.65: View of ceiling, Cave 21, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.66: View of north wall, Cave 21, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.67: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 21,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



west wall



east wall

Figure 3.68: View of side walls, Cave 21, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.69: View of Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.70: View of cliff surface above Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.71: Close view of façade showing traces of draperies, Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



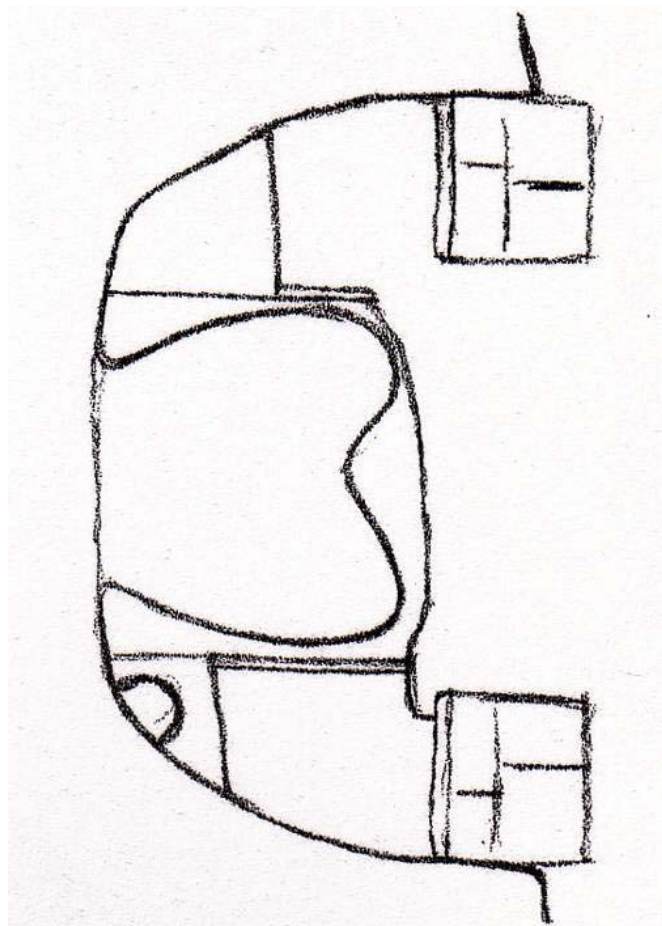


Figure 3.72: Plan of Cave 23 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.73: Interior view showing the throne and platforms,  
Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.74: Main icon, north wall of Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.75: Close view of the halo of main icon, north wall of Cave 23,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.76: Views of east wall showing remains of halos, Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.77: View of west wall showing remains of halos,  
Cave 23, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.78: View of Cave 25, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 3.79: Two lions, Cave 25, south wall, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 3.80: Maitreya Buddha with attendants, unearthed from Xi'an Road of Chengdu city, Sichuan Province 490 CE, Southern Qi dynasty,

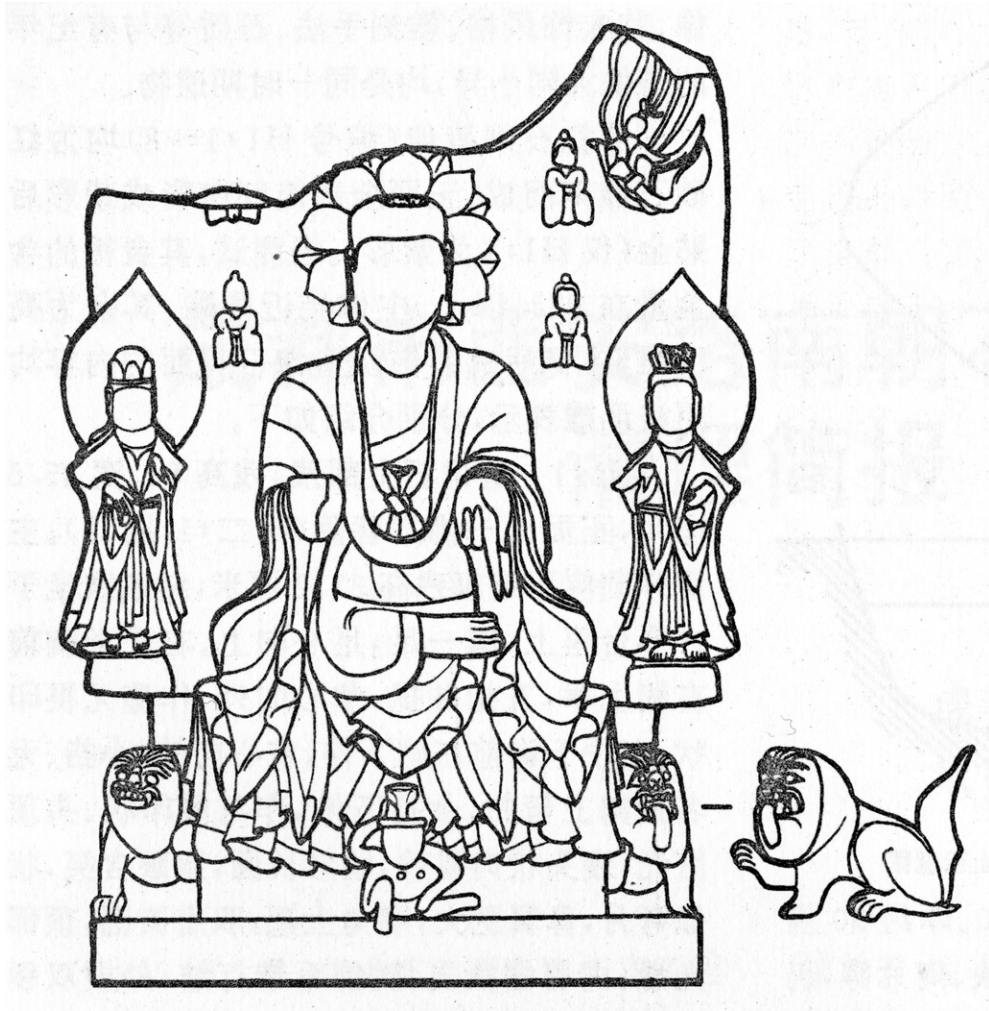


Figure 3.81: Maitreya Buddha with attendants (drawing),  
from Xi'an Road of Chengdu city, Sichuan Province  
490 CE, Southern Qi dynasty,



Figure 3.82: Stone stele depicting seated Maitreya in the front and standing Amitayus on reverse side, from Maowen, Sichuan Province 483 CE of the Southern Qi dynasty





Figure 3.83: Buddha Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna,  
from Xi'an Road of Chengdu city, Sichuan Province  
545 CE, Southern Liang dynasty,



Figure 3.84: Maitreya Buddha, gilt bronze  
451 CE, Liu Song period  
Freer Gallery of Art

## CHAPTER 4

### CATEGORY II: DESCRIPTION, DATING, AND ICONOGRAPHY

In Category II, I have grouped together five caves, namely Caves 5, 10, 12-13 and 15 (Figures 4.1-23). These caves are located on the western part of the south face of the Lower Cliff, more or less higher above the ground level (Figures 1.6-7). No textual evidence is available for the dating of these caves. A close examination of their form and iconography in the relations of the depictions of the other two categories, however, will help suggest that the date for this group is around the first quarter of the sixth century during early Liang dynasty. These five caves are earlier in date than the carvings in Category III, but later than those in Category I.

Unlike that of the other categories, the façade of each cave is carefully carved, and its arched opening is recessed forming a rectangular frame, serving as the actual door to the cave (Figure 4.1).<sup>1</sup> All are of almost the same size and are small in scale. In addition, the five caves are virtually identical in both architectural layout and sculptural programs. As a result, these caves most probably have formed a unified scheme and bear the same date.

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<sup>1</sup> It is notable that Cave 28 of Cave III also has a rectangular door modeled after wooden architectures. See Chapter 5 for further discussion.



Each cave has a single chamber, which is square in shape with relatively rounded corners, preceded by a tiny court (Figures 4.3, 7, 12, 21). This type of floor plan is not found in the other two categories, and the front court only appears in Cave 28 of Category III.<sup>2</sup> Further, the *Sanbi huantan* structure becomes standardized, with the double platforms extending directly from the back wall to the side walls (Figures 4.2-3, 6-7, 12-13, 16, 20-21). On the back wall of each cave is further depicted a third layer of platform. The complicated representation of platforms like this displays another unique feature of the caves in this group.

In the case of sculptural programs, the *Sanbi yifo* composition appears in all the five caves (Figures 4.2, 8, 13, 16, 20), and this shows similarity with that of Category I and III. However, what is characteristic of this group is that the principle Buddha of each cave sits with legs pendant in *bhadrasana*, or *pralambapadasana*,<sup>3</sup> rather than in *padmasana*, commonly seen in the other two categories. Another notable feature is that the iconographic scheme of each cave contains a group of seven images, with a Buddha attended by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardian figures.<sup>4</sup> In Categories I and III, we have only found the same theme in Cave 9 and a relatively similar one in Cave 22.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, each of these five caves has a pair of lion figures flanking the

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapters 3 and 5 for the discussion of Category I and III, respectively.

<sup>3</sup> The main Buddha of Cave 12 (Figure 4.13), as discussed later in this Chapter, was originally seated with legs pendant.

<sup>4</sup> These figures are currently all under cement covering. However, as discussed later in this chapter, they are still recognizable as a Buddha attended by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardian figures.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 5 for the discussion of Cave 9. As previously mentioned, in the group of seven figures in Cave 22, the two guardian figures are replaced by two additional bodhisattvas.

main Buddha (Figures 4.4, 9, 12, 17, 20), and the same depiction only appears in Cave 11 of Category III.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunate cement coatings leave us with virtually no traces of figural styles and drapery patterns of the original sculptures. Other details such as halos and pedestals, however, reveal some important stylistic features. A major distinction is that the *prabhamadala*, rather than radiating from the body, is here reduced to a small halo that emerges from the shoulders of each Buddha (Figures 4.2, 9, 13, 16, 23). Another important characteristic is the use of elliptical halos for guardian figures (Figures 4.10, 15, 18, 22-23). Unlike the depictions in Category I, bodhisattva attendants in this group wear pointed leaf-shaped halos and have low or no pedestals (Figures 4.10, 15, 18, 22-23), a feature shared by the works in Category III.

Since these five caves strongly relate with one another, in the following section, I will discuss their detailed content together in order to avoid unnecessary redundancy. As the images are badly damaged and covered by cement, special attention will be given to the architectural layout and sculptural programs.

### **Content and Description**

Cave 5, adjoining Cave 9 on its west side, is situated at the westernmost end of the south face of the Lower Cliff (Figures 1.7, 4.1). There is a stone staircase that leads to both Caves 5 and 9. The cave has an open entrance in the form of a rounded arch, within which is a recessed rectangular door 8 cm. above the ground level (Figure 4.2). Both sides of the arched opening lean inward at a slightly angle, and the recessed area in

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Cave 28 of Category III also contains a pair of lion figures which, however, appear in the front court rather than the interior of the cave. See Chapter 5 for the discussion of Caves 11 and 28.

front of the door naturally forms a tiny court, which, measuring 122 x 55 cm., apparently serves no practical structural function (Figure 4.3). At the front court beside the door are two shallow square grooves carved around 1 cm. down to the ground. Relatively identical in scale, they are symmetrically arranged, with one on either side of the entrance. It is notable that they appear in all the five caves in this group. Their actual purpose, however, is not certain.

The cave is roughly square in shape with rounded corners, and its approximate dimensions are 1.14 meters in width and 0.90 meters in depth, with a maximum height of 1.17 meters (Figure 4.3). In the interior there are two levels of platforms, with one atop the other carved along the three walls, and the lower one of which is longer and continues to join the bottom edge of the rectangular door (Figure 4.2). On the back wall atop the two platforms is another layer of higher platform, which serves as the seat for the main image. A rectangular slab of stone has been placed in the center of the interior in later times to place a ceramic incense burner.

The sculptural program includes a group of seven figures, consisting of a seated Buddha accompanied by six standing attendants, two on the rear wall and two on each side wall (Figure 4.2). The heads of the images are missing or restored, and their bodies are covered by cement, which makes it impossible to discern details of garments and surface treatment. It is recognizable, however, that the Buddha is seated in *bhadrāsana* or *pralambapadasana*, also known as “European pose” characterized by the pendant legs, with his feet resting on a low rectangular plinth atop the second level platform.<sup>7</sup> As will

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<sup>7</sup> On this rectangular plinth there seems to be another layer of low plinth, which is currently covered by cement.

be discussed below, the figure is most probably the representation of Maitreya, the great future Buddha, who is normally depicted in this posture when serving as a principal icon.<sup>8</sup> The Buddha has no body halo, but wears a pointed, leaf-shaped halo emerging from his shoulders, on the inner part of which there is a circular head halo. At the feet of the Buddha is a pair of reclining lions on the lower level platform. The presence of the lion figures in front of the platform-seat of the Buddha suggests that the Buddha may sit on a variant of *simhasana*, “Lion seat or throne.”<sup>9</sup> The lions, now badly damaged, are seen from the side, and their heads seem to turn to face outward. In-between the two lions there was once a three-legged incense burner, which was still extant when I researched the site during 1994-1996 (Figure 4.4).

Each of the two attendants on the rear wall stands on the highest platform upon which the Buddha also sits, with one on each side flanking the main figure (Figure 4.2). The lack of halos suggests that they are unlikely the representations of bodhisattvas or guardian figures, who generally wear head halos. Given their position, they presumably represent disciple figures that are normally depicted as the closest attendants to the principal icon. All the other four attendant figures stand on the upper level platform along the side walls. The one on the inner part of each side wall has a pointed, leaf-shaped head halo, and stands on a low plinth which in turn rests upon the platform. Each of the other two images wears an elliptical halo. They both stand with their feet widely apart, indicating a sense of body movement, reminiscent of the depictions of guardian figures. It is therefore natural to suggest that the two inner attendants are bodhisattva

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<sup>8</sup> Susan L. Huntington (1985), 248.

<sup>9</sup> In the standard iconography of *simhasana*, lions are usually depicted on the base of the throne. See Susan L. Huntington (1985), 152-153, 727.

figures, and the iconographic scheme of the cave, therefore, contains a Buddha with two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardians.

The other four caves in this category follow the same pattern, with somewhat variations, in the treatment of façade, as well as in architectural layout and sculptural programs. Cave 10 is located to the east of Cave 9 and immediately beneath Cave 11 (Figures 1.7, 4.5-6). It is notable that the upper right part of its arched opening seems to be nearly broken by Cave 11, which was apparently constructed later than the former one. The fact that the floor of Cave 11 is somewhat higher on its proper right side than that on the other side further suggests that the craftsmen who carved this cave has intentionally raised the ground level to avoid breaking Cave 5 underneath. The façade, now partly damaged, has a recessed rectangular door 12 cm. above the ground level. The tiny court in front measures 122 x 80 cm., at which there are also two shallow grooves, rectangular in shape. Above the façade on the cliff surface is an early twentieth century inscription, now faintly visible due to bad erosion.

The roughly square chamber measures approximately 1.18 wide and 0.87 meters deep, with a maximum height of 1.20 meters (Figure 4.7). It is notable that the central part of the highest platform at the rear wall is now depicted protruding forward around 3 cm to the front, thus forming a false rectangular throne for the main icon (Figure 4.9). Like Cave 5, Cave 10 contains seven figures, including a Buddha seated in *bhadrasana*, accompanied by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardians (Figures 4.9-10). It is notable that cement covering over the lower body of the main Buddha has partly peeled off, and revealing original rounded legs. His inner head halo is depicted in the shape of a pointed leaf, showing the difference from the circular halo rendered in Cave 5 (Figure

4.2). Another minor distinction is that the pendant legs of the Buddha now rest upon two separate circular pedestals, which are in turn placed on a rectangular plinth. Further, in contrast to the rather low plinth carved on the second level platform in Cave 5 (Figure 4.2), this plinth stands on the bottom level platform, and is nearly as high as the second level platform (Figure 4.9). A three-legged incense burner, flanked by two seated lions, here rests on a low square plinth atop the lower level platform. The heads of the lions are missing or broken. They are depicted facing each other, with their long raised tails clearly visible.

Each of the two attendant bodhisattvas on the inner parts of the side walls stand on a low circular pedestal atop the second level platform (Figure 4.10). The guardian figures, however, stand directly upon the platforms. The halos of the four attendants are identical with those in Cave 5. Noteworthy, the cement of the inner image on the west wall is partly uncovered, thus revealing the posture of the original sculpture, which closely resembles the depiction of a bodhisattva figure.

Caves 12 and 13, next to each other, are situated in the middle section of the west side of the south face cliff, just a few meters above the ground (Figure 4.1, 11). The two caves evidently form a pair as they share a tiny front court, measuring 239 cm. in width and 141 cm. in depth (Figure 4.12). At the court there are now three shallow square grooves carved on the ground, with one in the middle and one on each side. The façade is partly damaged, and the upper part of Cave 13 has been broken by a rectangular stone slab inserted into the cliff surface, which bears an early twentieth century inscription. The rectangular door of Caves 12 and 13 is, respectively, 10 cm. and 12 cm. above the ground level.

Cave 12, with rather curved side walls, is nearly round in shape. Its maximum dimensions are approximately 1.14 meter wide, 0.86 meters deep and 1.22 meters high (Figure 4.12). Like that of Cave 10 (Figure 4.9), the central part of the highest platform at the rear wall is protruding forward around 3 cm. to the front and upward 5 cm. to the top, thus forming a false rectangular throne for the principal figure (Figure 4.13). The cave also has seven image configurations (Figures 4.13, 15). It should be noted that the main icon, now seated in *padmasana*, is of later time restoration, and the original figure was depicted sitting in *bhadrasana*. An important evidence of this iconographic identification is the presence of the two connected circular pedestals upon which the feet of the pendant legs once rested (Figure 4.13). Again, the connected pedestals are in turn placed on a plinth, depicted as a two-stepped rectangular base atop the bottom level platform. A three-legged incense burner and the two lions are slightly better preserved (Figure 4.14). Unlike the depictions in Caves 5 and 10, the Buddha does not have an inner head halo, and there is no low circular pedestal for bodhisattva attendants either. All the six attendants stand directly on the upper level platforms along the side walls (Figure 4.15).

Cave 13 measures around 1.19 x 0.92 meters with a maximum height of 1.28 meters (Figure 4.12). It is virtually identical to Cave 12 in interior arrangement, treatment of halos, sculptural layout and other surface details (Figures 16-18). The central part of the highest platform on the back wall is depicted protruding forward 3 cm. to the front to represent a throne, like that of Cave 10 (Figure 4.9), but slightly different from that of Cave 12 (Figure 4.13). The incense burner and lions are badly damaged. However, the cement along the upper torso of the main Buddha has partially peeled off,



thus revealing the original body underneath. It is discernable that the figure is heavier and rounded in form, with short proportion and swelling chest (Figure 4.16).

Cave 15, immediately beneath Cave 16, joins Cave 17 on its west side (Figures 1.7, 4.19-20). Within the arched opening, now partly damaged, is a recessed rectangular door 21 cm above the ground. Its tiny court, measuring 110 cm wide, and 20-35 cm. deep also contains two shallow rectangular grooves.

Like Cave 12, Cave 15 has slightly curved side walls and is roughly rounded square in shape, with a floor plan of approximately 1.17 x 0.90 meters and a maximum height of 1.14 meters (Figure 4.21). The central part of the highest platform on the back wall is depicted protruding much further forward around 6 cm. to the front and upward 8 cm. to the top, forming a rectangular throne for the main Buddha (Figure 4.20). Cave 15 also houses seven figures, all covered by cement (Figures 4.22-23). The treatment of halos closely resembles that of Caves 12 and 13. The circular pedestals underneath the feet of the main figure, as well as the lions and the incense burner are now damaged. A notable feature of this cave is that each guardian figure stands on a carefully carved mountain-shaped pedestal, which in turn rests on the lower level platform. This type of pedestal, not seen in the other caves, is normally associated with the guardian deities in Chinese Buddhist art.

### **Dating of the Caves**

The descriptive analysis conducted in this chapter reveals that the five caves in Category II are same size and small in scale. They also share similar exterior arrangements, with a rectangular door leading to the interior. Each cave, preceded by a

tiny court, is roughly square in shape with rounded corners. In the interior is depicted intricate *Sanbi huantan* structure, which contains double platforms surrounding the three walls. On the back wall there appears to be another higher layer of platform, which serves as the seat for the main icon. A pair of lion figures is present in front of Buddha, suggesting the use of lion seat or throne. The five caves also agree with one another in sculptural program, consisting of a group of seven images, with a Buddha attended by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardian figures. Given their strong architectural and iconographic affinities, it is reasonable to suggest that Category II caves, which presumably have been designed as a unified scheme, were constructed around the same time period.

Nevertheless, no literary documentation concerning the excavation of these five caves is available for the study of dating. Another problem of this regard is the unfortunate cement coverings of images, which make the comparative, stylistic analysis difficult. While a more precise dating is precluded, these caves' relative chronology may be suggested through the examination of their form and iconography in comparison with the works in Categories I and III at the site.

It is evident that none of the abovementioned major characteristics, shared by this category caves, corresponds with the works in Category I. In addition, the treatment of surface details betrays further differences of these two category caves. The main Buddhas in this group generally wear a pointed, leaf-shaped halo emerging from the shoulders, within which is depicted a small halo behind the head. This slightly simple arrangement is in strong contrast with more elaborate rendition in Category I, characterized by increasing numbers of halos. Another distinction is that bodhisattvas in

this group are depicted wearing a pointed leaf-shaped head halo, with a low or without lotus pedestal, while these attendant figures normally have a circular halo with a relatively high pedestal in Category I caves.

As analyzed in the previous chapter, the caves of Category I, dated the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty, exemplify the earliest stage of carving activity at the Qixia site. The five caves in this group, therefore, should be no earlier in date than the works in Category I. The above comparative analysis further indicates that Category II caves exhibit striking differences from the Southern Qi works in Category I. As a result, there remains nearly no possibility of the late fifth century date of this group of caves.

In contrast, the five caves in this group bear somewhat similarities in form and iconography with Category III caves, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. The standardized representation of the *Sanbi huantan*, or “three walls surrounded by platforms” structure also appears in Category III (Caves 9, 11, 16-17), although less complicated in construction. Other analogous features include the simplified treatment of halos for the main Buddhas, as well as the use of leaf-shaped halos and low or no lotus pedestals for bodhisattvas. Most noteworthy is that important iconographic characteristics of Category II caves, such as Buddha in *bhadrasana* posture, a group of seven image configurations and lion seat, also find their correspondences in Category III.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the presence of front court and rectangular door in Cave 28, dated 530 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty, is also reminiscent of the depictions in Category II.

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<sup>10</sup> Cave 17 contains two Buddhas in *bhadrasana* posture, one on each side wall, while Cave 9 shares a similar group of seven image configurations. The lion seat appears in Cave 11. For the detailed discussion, see Chapter 5.

As a result of this analysis, it is reasonable to suggest that the five caves in this group are relatively closer in date to the works of Category III than those in Category I. Category III caves, as I will propose in the following chapter, are dated around second quarter of the sixth century during the later part of the Southern Liang dynasty. Accordingly, the Southern Liang date of the five caves in this category appears to be more persuasive.

Further, as previously mentioned in this chapter, Cave 10 of Category II appears to be earlier in date than Cave 11 of Category III, given the fact that the latter nearly breaks the former one situated immediately underneath (Figures 1.7, 4.5-6). It should be also pointed out that Cave 10 is located higher above the ground level, leaving a large empty space available on cliff surface under its current position. This makes a comparatively earlier date of Cave 11 virtually impossible, for if Cave 10 was carved later, artisans would have a better choice of choosing a lower spot on the cliff so as to avoid breaking Cave 11 above. The fact that Cave 10 predates Cave 11 further helps to clarify the chronological sequence of the works of Categories II and III, with the former group earlier in date than the latter one. Another evidence concerning this chronological arrangement is that the caves in Category III, as will be analyzed in Chapter 5, share some common features with the later works at the site dated to the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE).

The above discussion suggests that the five caves of Category II are dated around the early sixth century, somewhere before 530 CE (when Cave 28 of Category III was excavated), of the Southern Liang dynasty. They represent the second stage of artistic development at the Qixia cave site during the Southern Dynasties. The analysis of literary

evidence in Chapter 2 has further informed us that there was little or no carving activity at the site before 511 CE during the Liang dynasty. It is thus reasonable to assume that this second stage works most likely began sometime around or after 511 CE.

In addition, a distinctive feature of Category II caves, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, is that a Buddha seated in *bhḍrasana* serves as the principal icon for each of the five caves. The image in this pose, as will be further discussed below, normally is the representation of Maitreya Buddha. These caves, therefore, correspond in iconography with the aforementioned colossal Maitrey Buddha from the Shicheng site (Figures 1.18-19).<sup>11</sup> According to inscriptional evidence, this Maitreya image was carved during 513 to 516 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty, under the patronage of monk Sengyou 僧祐 and Southern Liang Prince of Jian'an 建安. It should be recognized that Shicheng at that time was the gathering center for the gentry families moving from the north. Like the capital city of Jiankang, where the Qixia cave site was located, the Shicheng region also served as the nucleus for political and cultural activities of the Southern Dynasties. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that the large scale excavation project at the Shicheng site had impact on the Qixia carvings during that time. There also remains a possibility that the five caves of this category, each with Maitrey Buddha as its main icon, may have actually been excavated under the direct influence of the Shicheng image. If this is the case, the approximate date for the opening of these caves should be somewhere around or after 513 CE, when activity at Shicheng started.

According to this analysis, the caves in Category II can be roughly dated around the first quarter of the sixth century, somewhere between 511 or 513 to 530 CE, during

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<sup>11</sup> For the discussion of the Shicheng site, see Su Bai (1989): 393-398. Also see Chapter 1, 8-9.

the early Liang period. Chronologically, they belong to the second phase works, as classified by the literary analysis in Chapter 2. Aside from the Liang Prince of Linchuan's renovation of Cave 19 at 511 CE, these caves provide additional evidence of the Southern Liang activity at Qixia, under the effort of unknown patrons during that time.

### Iconography

These five early Liang caves are identical in iconographic scheme (Table 4.1). Each includes a major group of seven figures, consisting of a Buddha attended by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardian deities. The seat of each Buddha is flanked by a pair of lions, suggesting the presence of *simhasana*, "Lion seat or throne." While the specific identity of the six attendants is uncertain due to cement covering, the principal icons, all sitting with legs pendant in *bhadrāsana*, are generally recognized as Maitreya, the great future Buddha. My analysis, therefore, will primarily focus on the iconography of these Maitreya Buddhas, with hopes to understand popular movement of the Maitreya Pure Land during the time of their production.

	Cave 5	Cave 10	Cave 12	Cave 13	Cave 15
Buddha	1	1	1	1	1
Disciple	2	2	2	2	2
Bodhisattva	2	2	2	2	2
Guardian	2	2	2	2	2
Lion (Lion Seat)	2	2	2	2	2

Table 4.1: Iconographic themes in Category II caves

*Maitreya Buddha and Maitreya Pure Land*

Maitreya, known as *Mile* 彌勒 in China, is one of the most recurring themes in Chinese Buddhist art. Yu-min Lee, in her comprehensive analysis of Maitreya iconography, clearly relates *bhadrasana* Buddha with Maitreya image. She further proposes that this iconographic theme, commonly depicted in early Buddhist art of India, Gandhara and Chinese Central Asia, provided a prototype for its Chinese convention.<sup>12</sup> According to my research, Maitreya Buddha in *bhadrasana* appears to be a common motif since early times in Chinese south. Artistic evidence reveals that the earliest example of inscribed Maitreya of this type can be dated to 423 CE of the Liu Song period during the Southern Dynasties (Figure 4.24). Buddha Maitreya is depicted seated in *bhadrasana*, with his right hand displaying the *abhaya mudra*. The inscription reads:<sup>13</sup>

景平元年正月十四日，佛弟子王世成敬造彌勒像一軀，為亡過父母，現存夫妻，為四恩六道，法界眾生，但升妙果。

On the fourteenth day of the first month, in the first year of the Jingping reign [423 CE], Buddhist disciple Wang Shicheng respectfully had a Maitreya image carved on behalf of deceased father and mother, living husband and wife, and for the Four Kindnesses and the Six Paths, for all living beings in the Dharma World, [hoping that] they attain the wonderful fruit [attain Buddhahood]

This bronze image was found from the Yulin 榆林 city of the Shanxi province in northern China. Given the presence of Liu Song emperor's reigning title in the inscription, scholars like Chang Qing 常青 and Marilyn Rhie suggest that it was

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<sup>12</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), Part II and III, 139-345.

<sup>13</sup> For the transcription, see Chang Qing 常青, "Ji Yulin faxian de Liusong jintong foxiang 記榆林發現的劉宋金銅佛像" (Gilt Bronze Buddhist Image Discovered at Yulin), *Wenwu*, no. 1 (1995): 89, 92-95. I have followed Marilyn Martin Rhie's translation with modifications. See Marilyn Martin Rhie (2002), 456.



originally made in the south and then transported to the north in later time.<sup>14</sup> The work is among very rare dated examples of early Buddhist art in China. More importantly, as also mentioned by Marilyn Rhie, it provides us with clear evidence “for the pendent legged Buddha as an iconographic type for Maitreya in the early fifth century.”<sup>15</sup>

Noteworthy is another evidence recorded in *Mingseng zhuan*, early Buddhist literature composed in the south. The text reads: <sup>16</sup>

宋龍華寺道矯..... 元嘉十六年 .....健康民朱舛孫, 共起佛殿三間并諸花幡, 造夾苧彌勒佛倚像一軀, 高一丈六尺.

In the sixteenth year of the Yuanjia reign (439 CE), the [Liu] Song monk Daojiao from the Longhua temple... together with a layman Zhu Chuansun from the Jiankang region, raised a three-bay Buddha hall, providing it with various ornamental banners; and had a sixteen foot lacquer image of Maitreya made, seated with pendant legs.

It is evident that, as early as the Liu Song period, there was a tradition of making *bhadrasana* Maitreya in the south. This tradition apparently continued to be practiced during the Southern Dynasties. An important example, close in date to the works of my study, is the aforementioned Liang colossal Maitreya at the Shicheng site (Figure 1.19). In addition, another work dated 525 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty is included in Omura’s collection (Figure 4.25).<sup>17</sup> The inscription reads:

普通六年, 清信佛弟子公孫伯成夫妻造倚像一區, 敬造彌勒像一區, 上為國家  
四方安靜, 一切含生之類, 普同其愿.

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<sup>14</sup> Chang Qing (1995): 89, 92-95; Marilyn Martin Rhie (2002), 455-459.

<sup>15</sup> Marilyn Martin Rhie (2002), 456.

<sup>16</sup> *Meisō denshō*, tiao 27: 13. My translation follows Soper’s with slight modifications. See Alexander C. Soper (1959), 44.

<sup>17</sup> Ōmura Seigai (1917), vol. 1, 163; vol.2, 155, fig. 433.

In the sixth year of the Putong reign (525 CE), Gongsun Bocheng and his wife respectfully had an image of Maitreya Buddha carved, seated with pendant legs, for the peacefulness in the land of the state, and for all the living beings they have the same wish.

On the basis of the above literary and material evidence, it is almost certain that the *bhadrasana* Buddhas in these five caves are the representations of future Buddha Maitreya. A memorial stele for the Shicheng Maitreya, erected by Liang Prince of Jian'an, provides information for further interpretation of this iconographic motif.<sup>18</sup> This *Stele*, composed by Liu Xie 劉勰 of the Southern Liang dynasty (known as the *Liu Xie Stele* hereafter), provides inscriptional record of the excavation of the Maitreya Buddha at the Shicheng site. More importantly, it also mentions the Three Teaching Assemblies of Maitreya under Nagapuspa (Ch. Longhuashu 龍華樹), the dragon-flower tree under which Maitreya attains enlightenment in his earthly paradise of Ketumati (Ch. Jitoumo 雞頭摩). The Shicheng image, undoubtedly, is an indication of popular belief in Ketumati Maitreya and sincere desire to be reborn in his earthly paradise. It is natural to propose that this is also the case with the *bhadrasana* Buddhas of the five early Liang caves at the Qixia cave site. The presence of this iconographic theme at Qixia, therefore, demonstrates the popularity of Maitreya Pure Land in the south during that time.

As in the case of Amitayus belief, the Maitreya cult was widespread in the south since the late fourth century and continued to flourish during the Southern Dynasties.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The stele is known as *Liang Jian'an wang zao Yanshan Shichengsi shixiang bei* 梁建安王造剎山石城寺石像碑 (A Memorial Stele for the Shicheng Temple at Shanshan [Mount Shicheng]). For the detailed discussion of the stele and its inscription, see Su Bai (1989): 394-395.

<sup>19</sup>*Mingseng zhuan* bears detailed accounts concerning Maitreya belief and worship during that time, see Meisō denshō (1975). For the detailed literary analysis, see Yu-min Lee (1983), 12-71; Su Bai (1989): 400-402.

In addition to the abovementioned *bhadrasana* Maitreya, there are three other surviving examples of inscribed Maitreya images found in the south, dated 451 (Figure 3.84), 483 (Figure 3.82), 490 (Figure 3.80-81), and 538 CE,<sup>20</sup> respectively. Noteworthy are the two other works, one dated 495 CE, and the other 549 CE. While these two images are both inscribed as Avalokitesvara, the inscriptions clearly show belief in Maitreya's Ketumati and Tusita (Ch. Doushuaitian 兜率天) Paradise, respectively.<sup>21</sup>

The worship of Tusita Maitreya exemplifies another aspect of the faith in Maitreya Pure Land. According to Yu-min Lee, there was a close connection between the two aspects of Maitreya belief in early China, since the final goal of both teachings is to attain enlightenment in Ketumati.<sup>22</sup> While Tusita Maitreya is not found at the Qixia site, it is notable that the dual cult of Maitreya, namely ascending and descending cult, was very popular in the south since the early times. As early as the late fourth century, Eastern Jin monk Zhidun wrote *Mile Zan* 彌勒贊 (An Eulogy on Maitreya) in which he shows belief in both Tusita and Ketumati Maitreya.<sup>23</sup> Another typical evidence in this regard is the previously mentioned 490 CE work (Figures 3.80-81). The inscription of this stone stele reads:<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ōmura Seigai (1917), vol.1, 164.

<sup>21</sup> It is also noted that the main icon for 495 CE stele is the depiction of a Buddha figure. For the discussion of these two works, see Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (1998):4-18, figs. 7, 16; Yuan Shuguan (2001): 19-38, fig. 12, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Yu-min Lee (1983), 333-341; also see Yu-min Lee, "Ketumati Maitreya and Tusita Maitreya in Early China," *National Palace Museum Bulletin*, no. 4 (1984): 1-13; no. 5 (1984):1-13.

<sup>23</sup> *Guang hongming ji*, juan 15, T 52, no. 2103: 196.

<sup>24</sup> For the inscription, see Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998): 6. The translation was done by the author.

齊永明八年庚午歲十二月十九日,比丘釋法海與母,為亡父造彌勒成佛石像一軀,願現在眷屬,七世父母,龍華三會口登初首,一切眾生普同斯願。

On the nineteenth day of the twelve month, in the eighth year of the Yongming reign (490), the year of Gengwu, monk Fahai together with his mother dedicates a stone image of Maitreya becoming Buddha for his deceased father. [They] wish that all the current family members and the ancestors of the past seven generations will attend the first of the Three Teaching Assemblies [of Maitreya] under Nagapuspa, and for all of the living beings they have the same wish.

Maitreya Buddha is seated in *padmasana*, with his hands displaying the *laiying* or welcoming gesture, a common iconographic motif in Buddhist art of southwest region. Most noteworthy is that on the reverse side is a representation of a bodhisattva sitting in cross-ankled position (Figure 4.26). Apparently, this image is intended to portray Maitreya in his Tusita Paradise where he resides as the ruling bodhisattva, awaiting the time of Ketumati, his earthly paradise, where he dwells as a fully enlightened Buddha. The *Foshou guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaitian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經 (Sutra of Maitreya Bodhisattva Ascending to Tusita Paradise) records:<sup>25</sup>

如是等眾生若淨諸業行六事法,必定無疑當得生於兜率天上,值遇彌勒,亦隨彌勒下閻浮提,第一聞法於未來世。

In this way, if all living beings have purified their *karmas* and practiced the teachings of six *paramitas*, undoubtedly they will be reborn in Tusita and meet Maitreya [bodhisattva]. They will then also accompany Maitreya to descend to Jambudvīpa, and become the first who are able to listen to the preaching [of Maitreya Buddha] during the Future Age.

The above passage clearly reveals that the final religious goal for the rebirth in Tusita is to join Maitreya Buddha in Ketumati during the Future Age. It is also necessary to mention that the *sutra* was translated by Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲 in the south during the

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<sup>25</sup> *Foshou guan Mile pusa shangsheng Doushuaitian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經, 1 juan, trans. Juqu Jingsheng 沮渠京聲 in the Liu Song dynasty around mid-fifth century. See T14, no 452: 420. I have followed Yu-min Lee's translation with slight modifications. See Yu-min Lee (1983), 69.

Liu Song period around mid-fifth century. This literary evidence, therefore, further testifies to a close association between Tusita and Ketumati belief as well as the worship of dual cults of Maitreya in early south.



Figure 4.1: View showing Category II caves, western part of south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

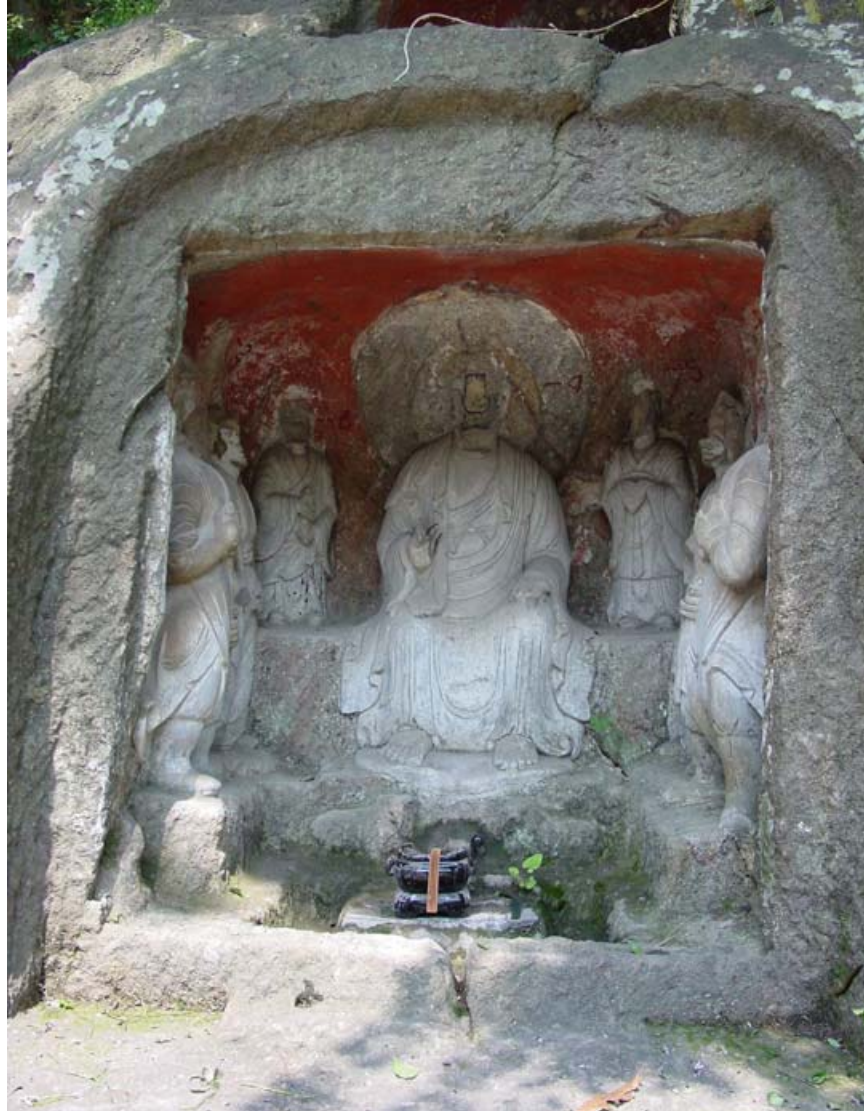


Figure 4.2: View of Cave 5, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan, Nanjing



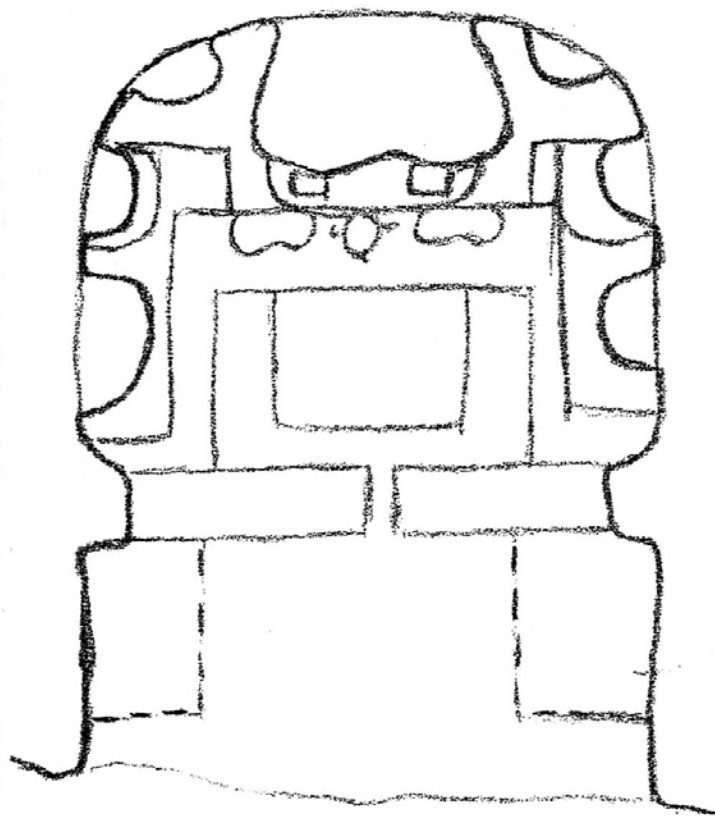


Figure 4.3: Plan of Cave 5 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.4: Interior view showing a three-legged incense burner flanked by two lions, Cave 5, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.5: View of Caves 10 and 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.6: View of Cave 10, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



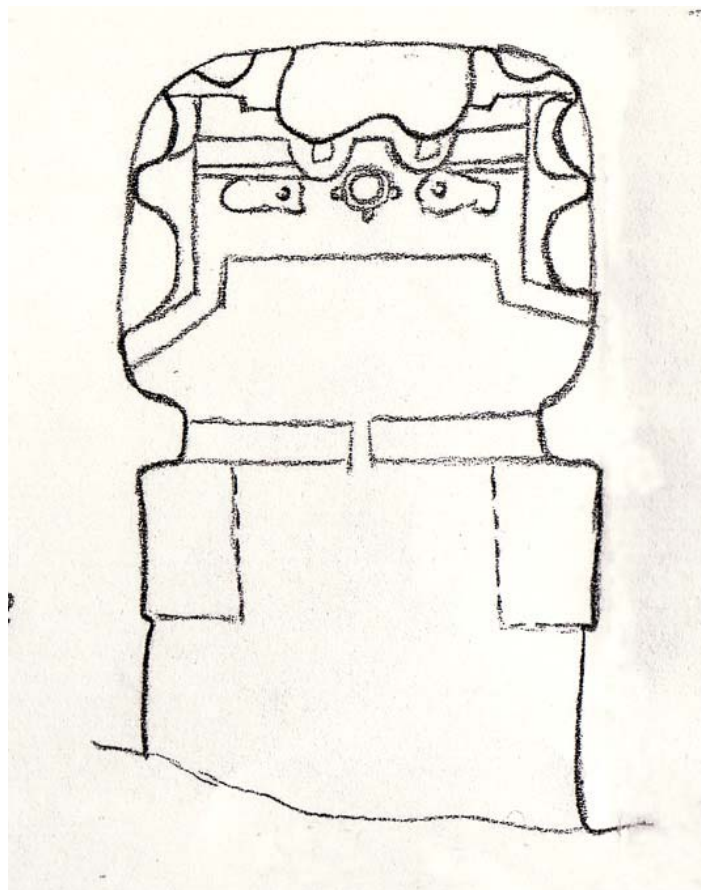


Figure 4.7: Plan of Cave 10 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.8: Interior view of Cave 10, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.9: View of north wall, Cave 10, south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.10: Views of side walls, Cave 10, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.11: View of Caves 12 and 13, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

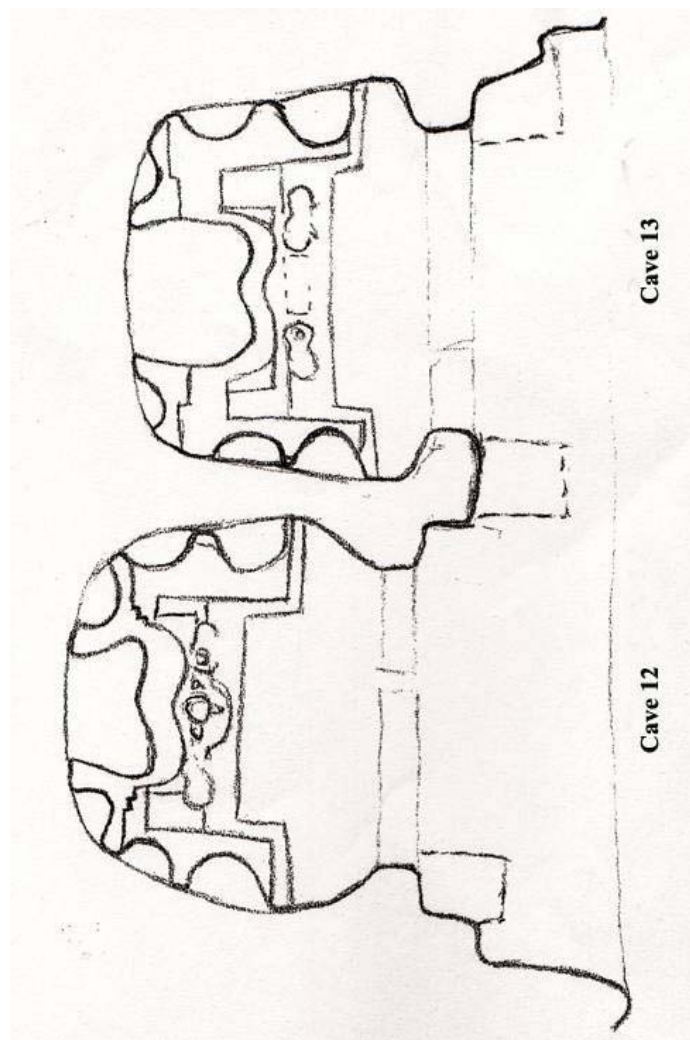


Figure 4.12: Plan of Caves 12 and 13 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.13: Interior view of Cave 12, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.14: Interior view showing a three-legged incense burner flanked by two lions, Cave 12, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.15: Views of side walls, Cave 12, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.16: Interior view of Cave 13, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.17: Interior view showing a three-legged incense burner flanked by two lions,  
Cave 13, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.18: Views of side walls, Cave 13, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.19: View of Caves 15, 16 and 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 4.20: View of Cave 15, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

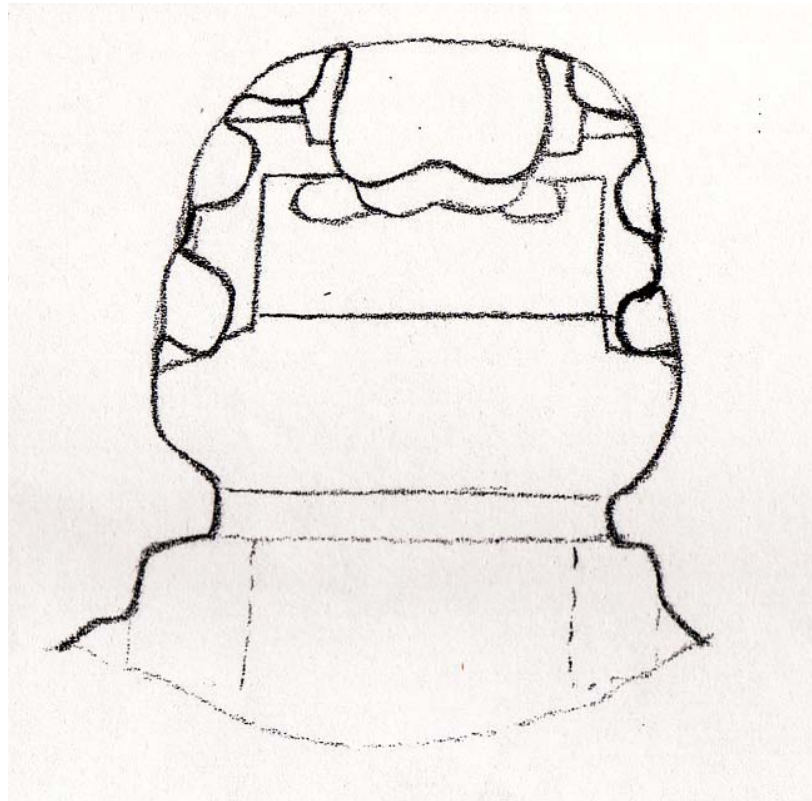


Figure 4.21: Plan of Cave 15 (Sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.22: Interior view of Cave 15, south face, Lower Cliff,  
Qixiashan Nanjing



Figure 4.23: Interior view of Cave 15, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 4.24: Maitreya Buddha, gilt bronze  
from Yulin, Shanxi  
423 CE, Liu Song period,

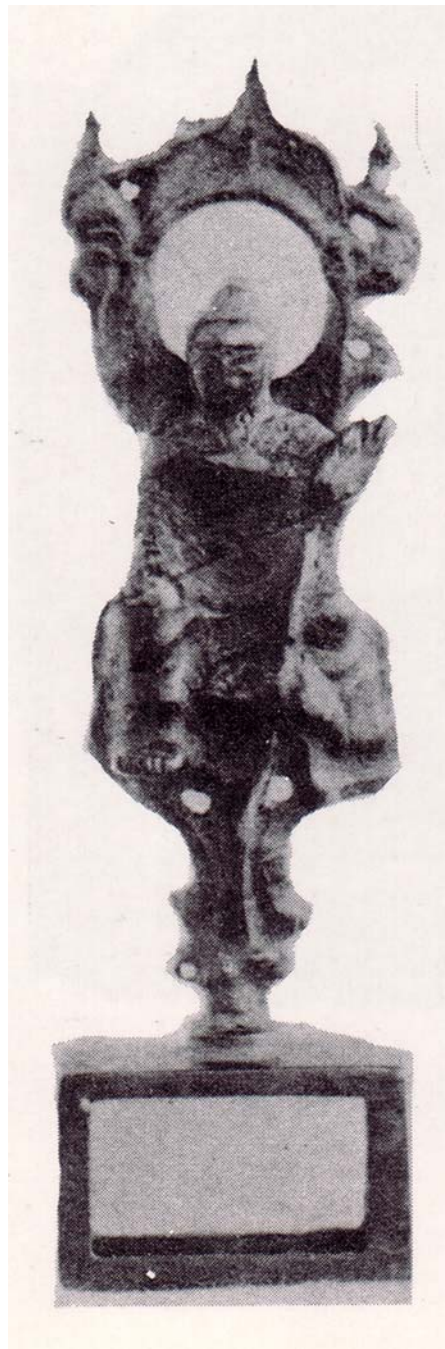


Figure 4.25: Maitreya Buddha,  
gilt bronze, 525 CE,  
Southern Liang

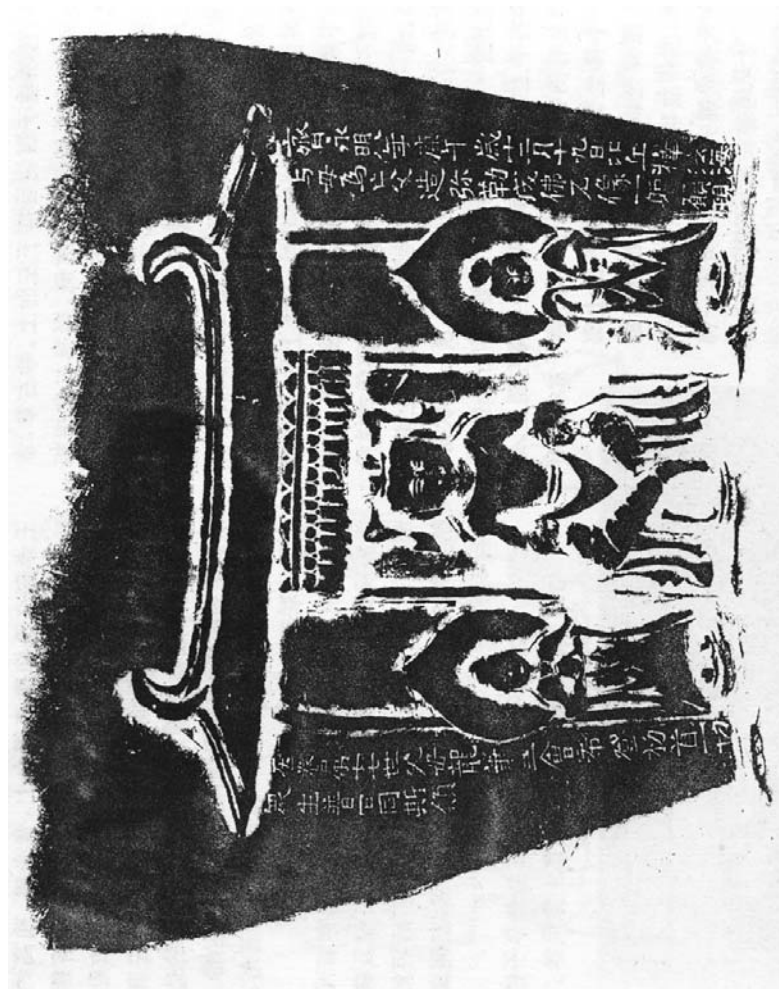


Figure 4.26: Maitreya bodhisattva with attendants (rubbing of the reverse side of the stone stele), from Xi'an Road of Chengdu city, Sichuan Province, 490 CE, Southern Qi dynasty,

## CHAPTER 5

### CATEGORY III: DESCRIPTION, DATING, AND ICONOGRAPHY

In Category III, I have grouped together five caves, including Caves 9, 11, 16-17 and 28 (Figure 5.1-37). These caves are generally located to the right of Cave 19 on the west part of the south face of the Lower Cliff, either on the same level with or on the higher level above the caves in Category II (Figures 1.6-7, 5.1). Cave 28, as the only exception, is carved higher up on the cliff surface on the east part of the south face. According to the aforementioned textual information, as well as the form and iconography of these caves, I suggest that these caves are dated approximately around the second quarter of the sixth century during the Late Liang dynasty. They represent the last stage of Southern Dynasties carvings at Qixia.

This category differentiates itself from the other two in that each cave has a single chamber, which is generally deep elliptical in shape (Figures 5.5, 11, 17, 22). The standard *Sanbi huantan* structure depicted here is much less complicated than that in Category II. Double platforms, the common feature of Category II caves, are reduced to one in Caves 9, 11 and 16 (Figures 5.6, 12, 19-20), or only exist on the side walls in Cave 17 (Figures 5.24-25) in this group.<sup>1</sup> Most specifically, the platforms are generally

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Caves 11 and 16 have another layer of altar underneath, but too low to be noticeable.

carefully carved and largely decorated with pointed arch pattern, known as *kunmen* 壺門, literally meaning “small door” (Figures 5.6, 14-15, 19-20, 24-25). More elaborate *kunmen* pattern appears on the throne for the main Buddha in Cave 28 (Figures 5.33, 36). This *kunmen* design is not found in the other two categories.

In this category, Caves 11, 16 and 17 show strong similarities with each other. In addition to architectural layout, they are nearly identical in sculptural programs. Each of the three caves has the *Sanbi sanfo* 三壁三佛, or “three Buddhas on three walls” sculptural composition, which consists of three principal Buddhas accompanied by other attendant figures (Figures 5.11-15, 17-20, 22-25). A similar representation only appears in Cave 24 of Category I as discussed in Chapter 1 (Figures 3.48-50). The major distinction, however, is that the iconographic scheme here includes a group of five figures with the three Buddhas sharing the same two bodhisattva attendants, thus revealing less elaborate figural composition than the depictions in Cave 24. Cave 17 reveals another typical iconographic feature, with the inclusion of two of the three main Buddhas sitting in *bhadrasana* (Figures 5. 24-25).

It is notable that Caves 9 and 28, however, show some distinctive characteristics. Cave 9 contains a group of seven figure composition (Figures 5.5-6), similar to the depictions in Category II (Figures 4.2-3, 7-8, 12-13, 16, 20-21). Cave 28 is probably the most unusual example from this category. The deep elliptical floor is somewhat flat on the end, and thus forming a roughly square ground plan (Figure 5.32). The presence of front court and rectangular door (Figures 5.28, 32), not seen in the other four caves, is reminiscent of the depictions in Category II in slightly elaborate fashion (Figures 4.1, 3, 7, 12, 21). Additionally, this cave is more closely related to those in Category I in terms of

the lack of the platforms around three walls, as well as the three image configuration, with a Buddha accompanied by two attendants (Figures 5.32-33).

Though differing considerably from the other caves, the fact that Cave 28 possesses the *kunmen* design, which only appears in Category III, is one of the major reasons to include it in this group. More significantly, the general consistency in style among the sculptures is the crucial factor for the grouping of these five caves together. Although the majority of images in this category are still covered by cement, the main Buddha figures mostly uncovered during the recent cleaning process reveal similar stylistic characteristics (Figures 5.7-8, 13, 23, 26, 34, 36). A notable feature is the distinctive simplification of drapery patterns, as well as a growing inclination towards a concern for the human form. The figures are heavier and rounder in form than the depictions in Category I, and have shorter proportions and broad torsos with more muscular appearance.

The descriptive analysis of these caves and their images is presented in the following section. Each cave will be discussed separately according to the numbering sequence.

## **Content and Description**

### *Cave 9*

Cave 9 is situated near the western end of the south face cliff, adjacent to Cave 5 on its east side (Figures 1.7, 5.1-2). Within the arched opening, now partly damaged, is a recessed arched frame visible along the upper part. The proper left side wall of the cave extends further forward outside the cave about 3.14 meters, on which are carved three



niches. Each niche is in a form of a rounded arch and contains a seated Buddha figure covered by cement. These niches and their images are most probably of later constructions and do not belong to the original design. On the same cliff surface are also found a few inscriptions left by later time visitors, such as Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (917-992 CE) and Xu Kai 徐鉉 (920-974 CE) of the Southern Tang period (Figures 5.3-4).<sup>2</sup>

The cave has a relatively deep elliptical chamber, and its maximum measurements are approximately 2.22 meters wide, 2.52 meters deep and 2.30 meters high (Figure 5.5). In the interior on the rear wall is carved a platform 62 cm high, the center of which is arranged protruding forward 25 cm, forming a rectangular throne with somewhat rounded corners in front (Figure 5.6). The platform on each side wall, slightly lower in height than the one on the back, is decorated with the *kunmen* design in the form of pointed arches, two on the side and one in front. All the platforms stand atop a two stepped plinth surrounding the three walls; and the ones on the side walls are further topped by an inverted step.

The program of sculpted figures includes seven figures, consisting of a seated Buddha accompanied by two attendants on the rear wall and four other attendants, two on each side wall (Figures 5.6-9). Except for the principal Buddha, the rest of the images are either missing or covered by cement. The original head and right hand of the Buddha are missing and restored, and his left hand is also broken. He sits in front of a large leaf-shaped aureole in *padmasana* upon both the rectangular throne projecting from the

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<sup>2</sup> The two Xu 徐 brothers were well known scholar officials and famous calligraphers during the Southern Tang period. Their inscriptions, which only contain Xu Xuan 徐鉉 and Xu Kai's 徐鉉 names written in seal script, serve as the earliest visitors' record at Qixia. It is notable that Xu Xuan once composed a long essay and carved it on stone to commemorate a new road constructed at the Qixia region. The stone inscription has long been lost, but the writing is recorded in the *Jinling fancha zhi*. See Ge Yinliang, juan 4.

platform, with his right hand once displayed the *abhaya mudra* (Figures 5.7-8). While the image is badly eroded, the drapery and some surface details are still discernable. The garment covering both shoulders falls wide open in front, exposing an undergarment draped diagonally across the chest. This manner of the dress is similar to the depiction of *Cuiling dayi* in cave 19 (Figure 3.5). Nevertheless, it seems that the robe does not fall over the left shoulder; rather, it drops freely down both sides of the body.<sup>3</sup> The fall of the cloth over the throne is depicted with semicircular lines in the middle. This also reveals the similarity with the depictions in Cave 18 and 19 of Category I (Figure 3.5, 18). The folds of drapery, however, are rather loosely and simply arranged. Stylistically, the figures are much fuller and more robust in form, with rounded shoulders and broad torso.

The two attendants on the back wall flanked the main Buddha are now missing, leaving only very bottom part of the bodies standing upon low pedestals (Figure 5.7). Neither of them has a halo. As previously discussed, these two figures are most likely the representations of disciples, who usually take the closest spots to the main icon, and do not wear haloes. All the four attendants stand on side wall platforms (Figure 5.9). Each of the inner figures wears a leaf-shaped halo behind the head, now missing; and the two outer attendants both wear a round halo around the head, missing or restored. The body posture of the two figures on the proper right side of the Buddha betrays their identity and indicates that the inner one is the representation of bodhisattva, while the outer one guardian deity.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Griswold, this is another variation of the *covering mode* dress. He mentions that the backthrow in the *covering mode* has been allowed to slide off the left shoulder, either coming to rest over the left forearm, or falling loose down the right side. See Alexander B. Griswold (1963), 89-91.

### *Cave 11*

Cave 11 is situated immediately above Cave 10, and, as mentioned earlier, its right side nearly breaks the cave underneath (Figure 4.5, 5.10). The roughly deep elliptical chamber is 1.84 meters wide and 1.97 meters deep, with a maximum height of 1.90 meters (Figure 5.11). Its domed ceiling is now badly damaged, leaving many crevices on the surface. The arrangement of the platforms and the decoration of the *kunmen* motifs are much in the same manner as that of Cave 9 (Figures 5.6, 12). A rectangular throne 50 cm high is depicted projecting forward 7 cm. from the center of the platform on the back wall, and this too is reminiscent of the rendering in Cave 9.

The cave houses a group of five images containing three Buddhas along the three walls, accompanied by two attendant figures, one on each side wall (Figure 5.12). The Buddhas on the back wall sits in front of a leaf-shaped halo in *padmasana* with legs folded upon the platform and the throne (Figure 5.13). The head and the left hand of the Buddha are restored and the right hand, probably once raised in the *abhaya mudra*, is now missing. An inverted, two-stepped platform along the upper part of the throne suggest that it may have been intended to represent the Mount Meru throne, like the depictions in the caves of Category I. At the bottom of the throne on the lower platform are two reclining lions, now headless, depicted facing each other. This indicates that the Buddha may also sit on a variant of *simhasana*, like that in the caves of Category II. The figure is mostly covered by cement except for the upper torso, and the robe can be seen worn in the same manner of the *Cuiling dayi* in cave 9 (Figure 5.8). While the image is poorly preserved, the figural style appears to be similar to that of the Buddha in Cave 9, though somewhat less heavier in form.

The other four images on the side walls are still under cement covering, and their heads and hands are either missing or reconstructed (Figures 5.14-15). The two Buddha figures, now restored with bodhisattva heads, are depicted on the inner parts of the side walls. Each Buddha wears a leaf-shaped halo behind the head, and is seated in *padmasana* on a rectangular throne 31 cm high atop the platform. Along the bottom of the throne is a three-stepped platform, reminiscent of the depictions of the Mount Meru throne. The two attendant figures to the outside of the Buddhas are most likely the representations of bodhisattvas. Each has a leaf-shaped halo behind the head and stands on a rather low circular pedestal, decorated with a row of inverted two-lobed lotus petals.

#### *Cave 16*

Cave 16 is located immediately above Cave 15 (Figures 4.19, 5.16). A stone frame in the form of a rounded arch, now partly damaged, has been attached to the original arched opening in later times. The maximum dimensions of its deep elliptical chamber are 1.80 meters in width, 2.10 meters in depth and 1.82 meters in height (Figure 5.17). This cave is nearly identical to Cave 11 in both architectural layout and sculptural programs. Similar features include the arrangement of the interior platforms, the depiction of the throne for the main Buddha (Figure 5.18), as well as the decoration of the *kunmen* motif. Likewise, the iconographic scheme contains three principal Buddha figures accompanied by two attendants, presumably the representations of bodhisattvas (Figures 5.19-20). While these images are under cement covering, it is discernable that they closely resemble the depictions in Cave 11 in terms of their postures and halos.

A pair of lions flanked the throne of Buddha in Cave 11 (Figure 5.12), however, does not appear here. Another major distinction is that the Buddhas on each side wall, rather than sitting on a rectangular throne as seen in Cave 11, is now seated on a round pedestal (Figures 5.19-20). Each pedestal is in the shape of a lotus flower containing two-tiered upturning petals, with its stem emerging from a low square plinth placed atop the platform. The lotus petals are thin and smooth with pointed ends. Unlike the lotus ornamentation in Cave 11 (Figure 5.14), the low pedestals for the attendant figures appear to be undecorated.

On the interior walls of the cave there are some inscriptions left by visitors in later times. The inscriptions, either carved or ink written on the cliff surface, are mostly dated around the early twentieth century.

### *Cave 17*

Cave 17 joins Cave 15 on its east side and connects Cave 18 on its west (Figures 1.7, 4.19, 5.21). Its arched opening is now badly damaged. The cave is deep elliptical in shape, measuring 1.83 meters wide and 2.60 meters deep, with a maximum height of 1.92 meters (Figure 5.22). Both architectural design and sculptural layout are reminiscent of the depictions in Caves 11 and 16, but with some variations. On the back wall there is a platform 60 cm., and its extension on each side wall is here further divided into two levels sitting atop a low base (Figures 5.23-25). The side wall platforms are decorated with *kunmen* design, containing not only pointed arch patterns, as seen in the abovementioned three caves, but also their more elaborate variants (Figure 5.24), similar

to the renderings in Cave 28 (Figures 5.33, 36). A stone incense burner and its base placed in the center of the interior are of later period additions.

Like Caves 11 and 16, Cave 17 contains five figures, consisting of seated representations of three Buddhas accompanied by two standing bodhisattvas (Figures 5.23-26). As I will discuss below, this ensemble may have been intended to represent the Three Teaching Assemblies of Maitreya Buddha in his earthly paradise of Ketumati. The heads of the images are missing and their hands are mostly broken. All the figures are covered with a thin layer of yellowish material, a sign of later time refurbishment. Inscriptional evidence concerning later restoration is also found along the corner between the back wall and the left wall in the cave (Figures 5.24, 27). The inscription, inscribed on a stone slab inserted into the cliff surface, records that a eunuch named Pan Chaoyong 潘朝用 refurbished this cave in the twenty seventh year of the Wanli reign of the Ming dynasty (1599 CE). Pan's work was apparently part of the large scale restoration project during the Ming dynasty, discussed previously. According to Buddhist monks from the Qixia temple, in the early 1990s the cave underwent a cleaning process to remove the old cement and repair the images. The yellowish covering we see today is most likely the result of this recent renovation. Fortunately, much of the original appearance of the sculptures can still be determined.

The main Buddha on the rear wall sits in front of a leaf-shaped halo in *padmasana* on the platform, with his right hand once raised in the *abhaya mudra* (Figures 5.23, 26). His robe is loosely draped in the manner of *Cuiling dayi*, and its upper hem falls nearly to the waist level, forming a deep "U" shape in front. While the surface is abraded, it is recognizable that the folds are loosely arranged, with the curving lines depicted in the



middle part of the overhang faintly visible. The other two Buddhas on the side walls both have a leaf-shaped halo behind their heads (Figures 5.24-26). Unlike the depictions in Caves 11 and 16, each of these two figures is seated with legs pendant in *bhadrasana* on a rectangular throne atop the upper level platform. The two low circular plinths on which the feet of the Buddha rest are further placed on a low platform in rectangular shape. They are both dressed in the manner of the *open mode*,<sup>4</sup> known as *Tanyou dayi* 袒右大衣 in Chinese, with the garment only covering the left shoulder, and leaving the right shoulder bare. The lower body garment between and over the two pendant legs is depicted with a serial of parallel curving folds. Stylistically, the three Buddhas are full and rounded in form, with broad torsos, reminiscent of the depictions in Caves 9 and 11.

Each bodhisattva on the side walls wears a leaf-shaped halo behind the head, and stands on a round pedestal atop the lower level platform (Figures 5.24-26). The rather low pedestals are both decorated with a row of inverted, thin and flat lotus petals. In Category III, these are the only two attendant figures that retain their original appearance. Both images are dressed in standard bodhisattva garb with scarves, skirts and other surface ornaments, now faintly visible. Like the Buddha figures, they are rather full and heavy in form, and there is a swelling to the abdomen and upper chest. It is notable that their clear identity may further confirm our assumption that the corresponding attendant figures in CaveS 11 and 16 are the representations of bodhisattvas.

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander B. Griswold (1963): 89-91.

## Cave 28

Cave 28 is a separate cave located much higher on the east side of the south face cliff (Figures 1.6-7, 5.28). The cave dates to 530 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty according to the previously mentioned inscription found right above the entrance on its upper left side (Figures 2.2-3). Another related inscription carved on left wall of the interior records that Ren Nai 任翥 from the Municipal Government office came to visit the site and see this Liang inscription in 1928 (Figure 5.29).

After climbing a steep stone stairway, one first enters an open forecourt that is rectangular in shape, measuring 148 x 100 cm. At the front court flanking the entrance are two lions, one on each side sitting on a two-stepped rectangular plinth. The heads of the lions are missing, but the rest parts of the bodies are well preserved, with their manes, claws and long tails clearly visible (Figure 5.30). Within the arched opening is a carefully installed stone door 70 cm. above the forecourt. The doorway, now partly damaged, is modeled after wooden architecture, containing a pair of jambs supporting a semicircular lintel. On the lintel is further carved a *Renzi chashou* 人字叉手, in imitation of a type of wooden bracketing system, which, consisting of two arms that support a block of wood, is roughly in the shape of the Chinese character *ren* 人 “human” (Figure 5.31). This structure is also described as an inverted V-shaped strut. The *Renzi chashou* here apparently serves no practical purpose, and is more of decorative function. It is notable, however, that similar stone doors with the same bracketing decorations frequently appear in the tombs dated to the Southern Dynasties. More specifically, the slightly curved,

rather than straight, bracket arms as shown here strongly relate to the depictions in the Southern Liang tombs.<sup>5</sup> The entrance decoration here apparently has its local origin.

The cave is roughly square in shape with rounded ends on the back, measuring approximately 1.52 x 1.46 meters, with a maximum height of 2.01 meters (Figure 5.32). In the interior on the rear wall is a large rectangular throne 44 cm. high, whose base is occupied by a pair of *kunmen* motifs, reminiscent of the elaborate depictions in Cave 17 (Figure 5.24, 33, 36). The front part of the ceiling falls down to the door height, thus forming a complete dome, unlike the half-domed ceilings depicted in the majority of the other caves.

The layout of the sculpted figures contains three images including a Buddha on the rear wall accompanied by two attendants, one on each side wall (Figures 5.33-37). The head and hands of the Buddha are missing. He is seated in *padmasana* with legs folded on the throne, with his two broken hands once displaying the *dhyana mudra*. Two round halos are depicted behind his head, and the inner of which is in the shape of a lotus blossom, containing flat and rounded petals. Like the depictions in the other caves in this category, the Buddha is dressed in the manner of *Cuiling dayi*, with the loosely draped robe falling from both shoulders and forming a deep “U” in front. It is vaguely visible that the garment is tied in front, similar to the rendering in cave 18 of Category I. The

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<sup>5</sup> Nanjing Bowuyuan 南京博物院 (Nanjing Museum), “Nanjing Yaohuamen Nanchao Liang mu fajue jianbao 南京堯化門南朝梁墓發掘簡報” (A Brief Report on the Excavation of the Southern Liang Tomb at the Yaohua Gate of the Nanjing City), *Wenwu*, no. 12 (1981), 14-23, fig. 5; Nanjing Bowuyuan, “Liangchao Guiyangwang Xiao Xiang mu 梁朝桂陽王蕭象墓” (Tomb of Xiao Xiang, Prince of Guiyang in the Southern Liang Dynasty), *Wenwu*, no. 8 (1990): 33-40, fig. 4; Wei Zheng 韋正, “Nanjing Xishangqiao Gongshan ‘zhulin qixian’ bihua mu de niandai 南京西善橋宮山“竹林七賢”壁畫墓的年代” (Dating of a Tomb with a Brick Relief Depicting Seven Sages in Bamboo Groves, from Gongshan of Xishanqiao, Nanjing), *Wenwu*, no. 4 (2005): 75-87, figs. 1-2.

full and rounded figure form with short body proportion also resembles the other Buddha images in this group.

Each of the attendant figures stands on a rectangular pedestal, which, currently detached from the ground and the wall, is evidently of the later restoration. Both figures, now headless, are covered by cement, and neither of them wears a halo. This implies that they cannot be portrayals of bodhisattvas or guardian figures, who are always depicted wearing halos at the Qixia site. The real identity still remains a puzzle. One suggestion is that they may have been representations of disciples or worshippers.

### **Dating for the Caves**

On the basis of the chronological analysis conducted in the previous two chapters, Category II caves represent another stage of artistic production at the Qixia cave site, immediately following the works of Category I, dated to the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty, as well as those of Category II, dated to the early sixth century of the Southern Liang period. Cave 28 of this group, as previously mentioned, bears an inscription that dates this cave to the year of 530 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty. It is thus natural to suggest that the other four caves of this category most likely were excavated around the same time period. A close study of their form and structure also reveals that, while they represent new artistic development during the time of their production, these five caves also demonstrate the continuation of earlier artistic traditions at the site. This analysis further helps clarify the chronological arrangement of these three category works, as well as locate relatively precise position of Category III in this chronological sequence.

The caves in this group are generally deep elliptical in shape, with the exception of Cave 28, which has a relatively square floor plan preceded by a forecourt. The presence of the front court and rectangular door in Cave 28 is reminiscent of the works of Category II, with somewhat elaborate modification. Each cave contains a standard *Sanbi huantan* structure, an important architectural feature in Category II. Nevertheless, complicated double platforms, a common interior arrangement of Category II caves, are reduced to one (Caves 9, 11, 16) or only exist on the side walls (Cave 17) in this group. A group of seven figure composition in Cave 9 and lion seat in Cave 11 further exhibits similarity with the depictions in Category II. In addition, these caves also correspond with the works in Category I in *Sanbi sanfo*, or “three Buddhas on three walls” sculptural composition (Caves 11, 16-17), a group of three image configuration (Cave 28), as well as Mount Meru throne (Caves 11, 16-17).

As shown by the above analysis, these five caves share many common features with the Southern Liang caves in Category II. The close connection between the works in the two categories provides us with additional evidence for the Southern Liang dating of Category III caves. Most noteworthy is that the works of this group also exhibit distinctive features, which, not seen in the caves of Category I and II, undoubtedly marked the new artistic trend during the time of their production. These characteristics include, for example, the abovementioned deep elliptical floor plan (Caves 9, 11, 16-17), the inclusion of two Buddhas sitting in *bhadrasana* in the *Sanbi sanfo* sculptural composition (Cave 17), as well as *kunmen* design (Caves 9, 11, 16-17, 28). It is notable that these new features are also present in the Tang dynasties caves at the site (Figures

1.14, 5.38-39),<sup>6</sup> thus demonstrating the continuation of this artistic tradition in later period production at the site.

While the majority of images of Category III are in a poor state of condition, the main Buddhas, which were mostly uncovered during the recent cleaning process, reveals distinguishing figural style characteristic of this group works. Like the principal icon in Cave 28 (Figures 3.34, 36), these Buddha figures are normally fuller and heavier in form, with broad shoulders and upper torsos (Figures 5.7-8, 13, 23-26). They are commonly dressed in *Cuiling dayi* mode,<sup>7</sup> reminiscent of Amitayus in Cave 19 (Figure 3.5). The simple drapery with rather loosely packed fold patters, however, betrays major difference from the works in Category I. Given stylistic consistency in sculptural representations, it is certain that these caves, including the Southern Liang Cave 28, are close in date.

It should be noted that this type of figural representation is closely related to the figural style of Zhang Sengyou 張僧繇, a celebrated painter active in the late fifth-mid sixth century of the Southern Liang dynasty. According to *Lidai minghua ji*, a ninth century painting catalogue composed by Zhang Yanyuan 張彥遠, the works by three artists, namely Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 (ca. 344-406 CE), Lu Tanwei 陸探微 (active under the Liu Song) and Zhang Sengyou, exemplify the southern pictorial traditions from the fourth

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<sup>6</sup> No dedicatory inscriptions concerning the Tang excavations are available. The aforementioned *Tang Tablet* also bears no relevant evidence. A close examination of caves and their images, however, suggests that Tang dynasty is another important stage in the history of Qixia site. My early research reveals that the major caves at the site, aside from the works dated to the Southern Dynasties, were all excavated around the seventh to ninth century of the Tang dynasty. These caves are normally located on the west wall of the Lower Cliff and the south face of the Upper Larger Cliff (Figures 1.9, 14). For the detailed discussion, see Lin Wei (2005): 297-301.

<sup>7</sup> The only exception is that the Buddha figures on the side wall of Cave 17 wear the *open mode* of *Tanyou dayi*, covering only the left shoulder (Figures 5. 24-27).

to sixth century during the Six Dynasties period.<sup>8</sup> While the works by these artists have not survived to the present day, the *Lidai minghua ji* bears detailed discussion of their painting styles. Zhang further quotes the eighth century art historian Zhang Quanguan's 張懷瓘 comments on these three painters:<sup>9</sup>

象人之妙，張得其肉，陸得其骨，顧得其神。

In portraying the beauty of human figures, Zhang (Sengyou) captured their flesh, Lu (Tanwei) captured their bones and Gu (Kaizhi) captured their spirit.

Gu and Lu's figural convention, with an emphasis on "bones" and "spirit," are generally characterized by slender, elongated body form with somewhat sloping shoulders. Artistic evidence demonstrates that this stylistic trend prevailed in both religious and secular art worlds during the Eastern Jin, Liu Song and Southern Qi period.<sup>10</sup> However, with the predominance of Zhang Sengyou's pictorial tradition at the Liang court, sculptural representations underwent a dramatic stylistic reform around the first half of the sixth century of the Southern Dynasties. In order to capture Zhang's "flesh," there appeared to be a growing inclination towards a concern for the human form, as seen in the depiction of full-bodied form with muscular torso and broad shoulders.

In Buddhist art, Zhang's figural tradition also provided a new model for artistic production during that time. Archaeological evidence indicates that this stylistic transition, which began roughly in the late fifth century of the Southern Qi period,

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<sup>8</sup> For the discussion of these artists, see *Lidai minghua ji* (annotated by Yu Jianhua), chap.5: 97-121; chap 6: 126-128; chap 7: 150-153.

<sup>9</sup> *Lidai minghua ji*, chap.7: 152. For the translation, see Hsiang-ling Hsu (1999), 179.

<sup>10</sup> According to Su Bai, this type of figure form was still seen in the middle reach of the Yangzi River during the Southern Liang dynasty. See Su Bai (1996), 349-354.



completed in the middle of the Liang dynasty. Su Bai has suggested that the aforementioned 483 CE Buddhist stone carving from the Maowen region already betrays a stylistic tendency towards the depiction of fuller body form (Figure 3.82).<sup>11</sup> Li Yuqun, in his chronological study of the Chengdu findings, further argues that it is not until the Putong reign (520-526 CE) of Southern Liang Emperor Wudi that a mature and well developed new style appeared in Buddhist artworks.<sup>12</sup> It is evident that a stone carving from the Wanfosi, dated to the fourth year of the Southern Liang Putong reign (523 CE), still retains a transitional characteristic, as seen in the full yet less muscular form (Figure 5.40). The images dated after the Putong region, however, all exhibit relatively mature style of Zhang Sengyou's figural form.<sup>13</sup>

At the Qixia cave site, the Southern Qi works, namely the eight caves in Category I discussed in Chapter 3, also reveal the abovementioned transitional feature, as seen in the depiction of a relatively full body form. Likewise, stylistic variations in figural representations of this category, which show long body proportions in the first subgroup of works (Caves 18-20, 22) in contrast to the somewhat shorter yet fuller form in the depictions of the second subgroup (Caves 24, 26), may further suggest the process of this stylistic transition. However, the images in Category III, as previously mentioned in this

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<sup>11</sup> Su Bai (1996), 351.

<sup>12</sup> Li Yuqun (2000): 64 -76.

<sup>13</sup> These works include: four images unearthed at Wanfosi, dated to 529, 533, 537 and 548 CE respectively; one image in the collection of Sichuan University Museum, dated to 532 CE; one image in the Shanghai Museum collection, dated to 546 CE. For the detailed information of these works, see Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958), figs. 1, 4, 6, 8, 10; Yuan Shuguang (2001): 19-38, figs. 4, 5, 10, 12, 14; Huo Wei (2001): 39-44, figs. 10; Ji Congjian 季崇建, “*Shanghai Bowuguan cang jinian foxiang zaoliang kaozheng* 上海博物館藏紀念佛像造像考證” (A Study of the Dated Buddhist Images in the Shanghai Museum Collection), *Shanghai Bowuguan jikan*, no 8 (2000): 217-243, fig. 31.

chapter, display major differences from their Southern Qi predecessors in portraying much fuller and rounded figural forms with muscular appearance. It is natural to suggest that this stylistic change has been understood as having resulted from the Zhang Sengyou figural tradition, predominant in the Southern Liang court of that time. This suggestion appears more persuasive, given the imperial sponsorship of the Qixia site during that period.

Based on the above discussion, the excavation projects in Category III most likely began somewhere after the Putong reign (520-526 CE) but before or around 530 CE. The five caves of this category can be broadly dated to the later part of the Southern Liang dynasty. Chronologically, these caves exemplify the third stage of cave activity at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties. Like the works in Category II, they also belong to the second phase works, as revealed by the literary analysis in Chapter 2.

### **Iconography**

There appears to be some inconsistency in the sculpted layout of these late Liang caves. The most common iconographic scheme is the *Sanbi sanfo* composition, consisting of the three principal Buddhas accompanied by two bodhisattvas (Caves 11, 16-17). Cave 9 closely resembles the early Liang works in that it bears a group of seven figures, containing a seated Buddha attended by two disciples, two bodhisattvas and two guardians. Given the fact that these attendant figures are either missing or under cement coatings, further identification is not allowed. A group of three image configuration in Cave 28, however, is reminiscent of the depictions in the Southern Qi works (Caves 19-20, 26). Similarly, the identity of the two attendants of the main Buddha in this cave is

uncertain due to a poor state of image condition. As previously suggested, they may have been representations of disciples or worshippers. A pair of lions, a common iconographic theme in the early Liang caves, also appears in Caves 11 and 28. While the latter contains the lions in the front court, the former has them in the same position as that of early Liang caves, thus representing the lion throne.

No additional evidence is available for the identification of the main Buddhas in Caves 9 and 11. Like the Southern Qi Cave 24, Caves 11 and 16 house the three principal Buddhas that are all seated in *padmasana*. Accordingly, they may also be interpreted as the Buddhas of the Three Ages: past, present and future, as discussed in Chapter 3. Noteworthy is that two Buddhas on the side walls of Cave 17 sit with legs pendant in *bhadrāsana*. The Buddha ensemble at Cave 17, as I will argue in the following, may have been intended to represent the Three Teaching Assemblies of Maitreya Buddha in his earthly paradise of Ketumati.

	Cave 9	Cave 11	Cave 16	Cave 17	Cave 28
Buddha	1	3	3	3	1
Disciple	Δ	0	0	0	?
Bodhisattva	2	2	2	2	0
Unidentified Attendant	0	0	0	0	2
Guardian	2	0	0	0	0
Lion (Lion Seat)	0	2	0	0	0
Lion	0	0	0	0	2

Table 5.1: Iconographic Themes in Category III Caves

Note: “Δ” means: while the identity is clear, the images are now missing  
“?” means: while the identity is uncertain, there remains a possibility

*Maitreya Buddha and The Three Teaching Assemblies in Ketumati (Cave 17)*

On the basis of the iconographic analysis in the previous chapter, the *bhadrasana* posture is characteristic of Maitreya, the great future Buddha. Therefore, the two Buddhas on the side walls of this cave can be clearly identified as Buddha Maitreya. In other words, there remains nearly no possibility to interpret these three Buddhas as the *sanshi fo*, the Buddhas of Three Ages.

A similar type of iconographic theme is found in Cave 19 at the Yungang site. This cave, dated around the mid-fifth century of the Northern Wei Dynasty,<sup>14</sup> consists of three units, with a larger cave in the center containing a Buddha in *padmasana*. Each of the two much smaller caves houses a Buddha in *bhadrasana*. While no textual evidence is available for their identity, John Huntington argues that since the two side Buddhas represents Ketumati Maitreya given the pendant legged position, it is naturally to propose that the central figure bears the same identity. All together they represent the Three Teaching Assemblies of Maitreya in Ketumati.<sup>15</sup>

The *Foshuo Mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒下生經 (Sutra of Descending Maitreya), one of the earliest texts concerning Maitreya Buddha and his Ketumati Paradise, bears detailed accounts of the Three Teaching Assemblies held by Maitreya after his enlightenment under Nagapuspa.<sup>16</sup> This *sutra* was probably translated by Dharmaraksa (Ch. Zhu Fahu 竺法護, an Indo-Scythian monk during the Western Jin period; 265-317

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<sup>14</sup> Su Bai (2005): 76-88.

<sup>15</sup> John C. Huntington, (1986): 142-160, figs. 7-10.

<sup>16</sup> *Foshuo Mile xiasheng jing* 佛說彌勒下生經, 1 juan, see T14, no. 453: 421-423. For the discussion of this text, also see Yu-min Lee (1983), 21-24.

CE). Other known *sutras* in this regard are the translations by Kumarajiva around the beginning of the fifth century.<sup>17</sup> In the south, an earlier literature of Ketumati Maitreya, known as *Foshuo Milefo laishi jing* 佛說彌勒來時經 (Sutra of Coming Maitreya),<sup>18</sup> was translated by an unknown individual in the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420 CE). Of note is that this southern version, while abbreviated, corresponds with Dharmaraksa and Kumarajiva's texts, as seen in the description of the Three Teachings of Maitreya. It states:<sup>19</sup>

彌勒得道為佛時，於龍華樹下坐。……彌勒佛初一會說經時，有九十六億人，皆得阿羅漢道。第二會說經時，有九十四億比丘，皆得阿羅漢。第三會說經，九十二億沙門，皆得阿羅漢。

When Maitreya attained enlightenment and became Buddha, he sat under Nagapuspa... When Maitreya Buddha held the first assembly and preached *sutras*, there were ninety six billions of people [who attended and they] all attained Arhathood. When [he] held the second assembly and preached *sutras*, there were ninety four billions of Bhiksus [who attended and they] all attained Arhathood. When [he] held the third assembly and preached *sutras*, there were ninety two billions of Sramanas [who attended and they] all attained Arhathood.

This makes it almost certain, therefore, that the belief in Ketumati Maitreya and his Three Teaching Assemblies were popular in the south since very early times. The Maitreya cult, as has been discussed, was widespread during the Southern Dynasties period. Inscriptional evidence of that time also reveals sincere desire to be reborn in Ketumati and to attend the Three Teaching Assemblies of Buddha Maitreya. This

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<sup>17</sup> *Foshuo Mile xiasheng chengfo jing*, 1 juan, T14, no. 454: 423-425; *Foshuo Mile dachengfo jing* 佛說彌勒大成佛經 (Sutra of Maitreya Becoming Buddha), 1 juan, see T14, no. 456:428-434.

<sup>18</sup> *Foshuo Milefo laishi jing* 佛說彌勒來時經, 1 juan, see T14, no. 457: 434-435. Yu-min Lee identifies it as the shortest version among the Maitreya *sutras* that have survived to present day. See Yu-min Lee (1983), 43-44.

<sup>19</sup> *Foshuo Milefo laishi jing*, juan 1, T14, no. 457: 434-435.

includes inscriptions found on the previously mentioned Qi carvings dated 483 CE (Figure 3.82) and 490 CE (Figures 3.80-81, 4.26), as well as on the *Liu Xie Stele*, a memorial stele for the Liang colossal Maitreya at Shicheng.<sup>20</sup>

Another notable example is a Southern Liang stele (Figure 1.24), which, dated to the first half of the sixth century, was unearthed from Wanfosi in the Chengdu region. In their research, Zhao Shengliang and Dorothy Wong both identify scenes depicting Maitreya's Tusita and Ketumati paradises on the reverse side of this stele.<sup>21</sup> On the top is a representation of Maitreya bodhisattva in cross-ankled posture, preaching in his Tusita Paradise. Nearly two thirds of the stele is occupied by a detailed illustration of Ketumati Paradise, including scenes of the Three Teaching Assemblies held by Maitreya Buddha in his earthly paradise. Using Buddhist literature, Zhao provides an in-depth iconographic interpretation of Ketumati, and he further points out that this is by far the earliest known example that bears a pictorial illustration of Maitreya's earthly paradise.<sup>22</sup> Given the fact that this stele is close in date to Cave 17 at Qixia, it provides a firm evidence for the iconographic interpretation of the Buddha ensemble in this Cave.

Based on the above discussion, the three Buddhas in Cave 17 are most likely the representation of the Three Teaching Assemblies of Ketumati Maitreya. This iconographic motif, together with the representation of *bhadrāsana* Maitreya in early Liang works, clearly indicates that Maitreya worship continued to enjoy popularity during the first half of the fifth century in the south.

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to the iconography section in Chapter 4 for detailed discussions.

<sup>21</sup> Zhao Shengliang (2001): 34-42; see Dorothy C. Wong (1998-1999): 56-79.

<sup>22</sup> According to Zhao, it is not until the Sui and Tang dynasty when similar iconographic motif appears in northern Buddhist art. See Zhao Shengliang (2001): 35-36.



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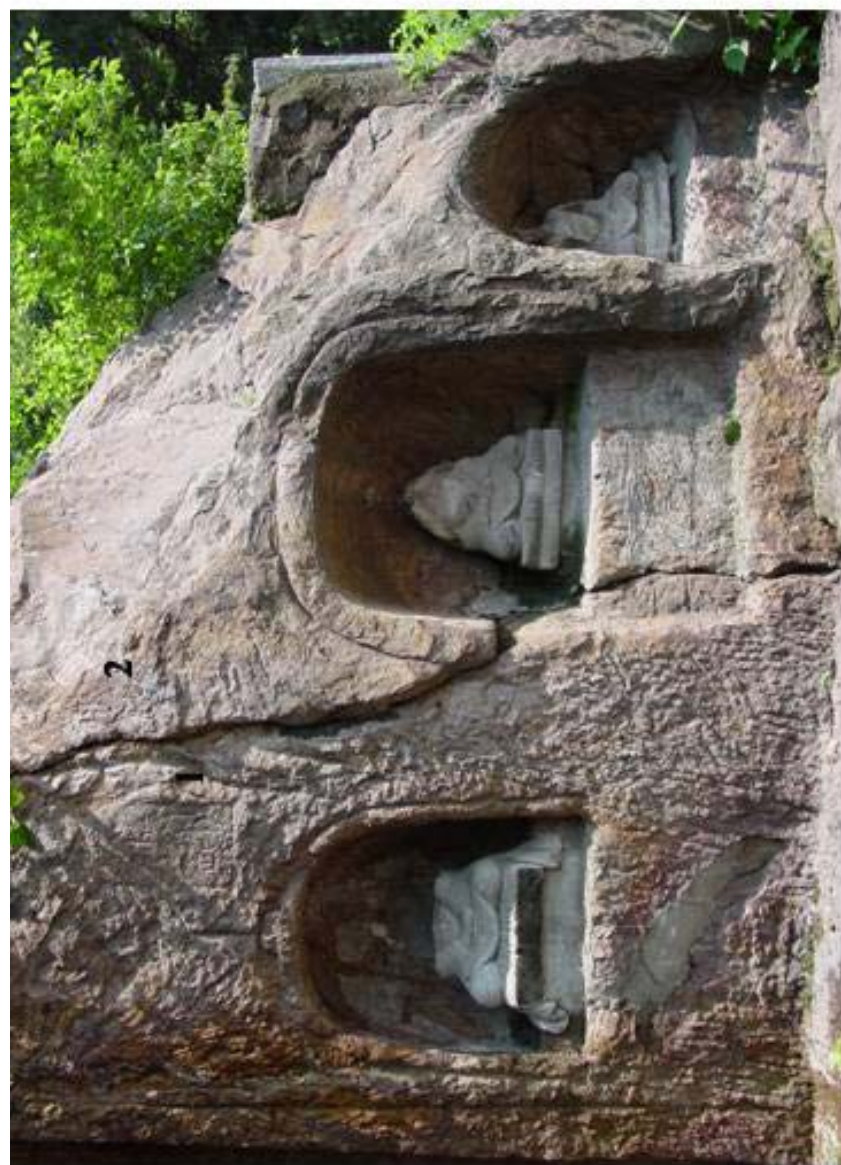


Figure 5.1: View showing Category III caves, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.2: View of Cave 9, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



**1: Inscription by Xu Kai      2: Inscription by Xu Xuan**

Figure 5.3: Exterior view of Cave 9 showing inscriptions by Xu Kai and Xu Xuan brothers, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





**Inscription by Xu Kai**



**Inscription by Xu Xuan**

Figure 5.4: Close views of inscriptions by Xu Kai and Xu Xuan brothers,  
Cave 9, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

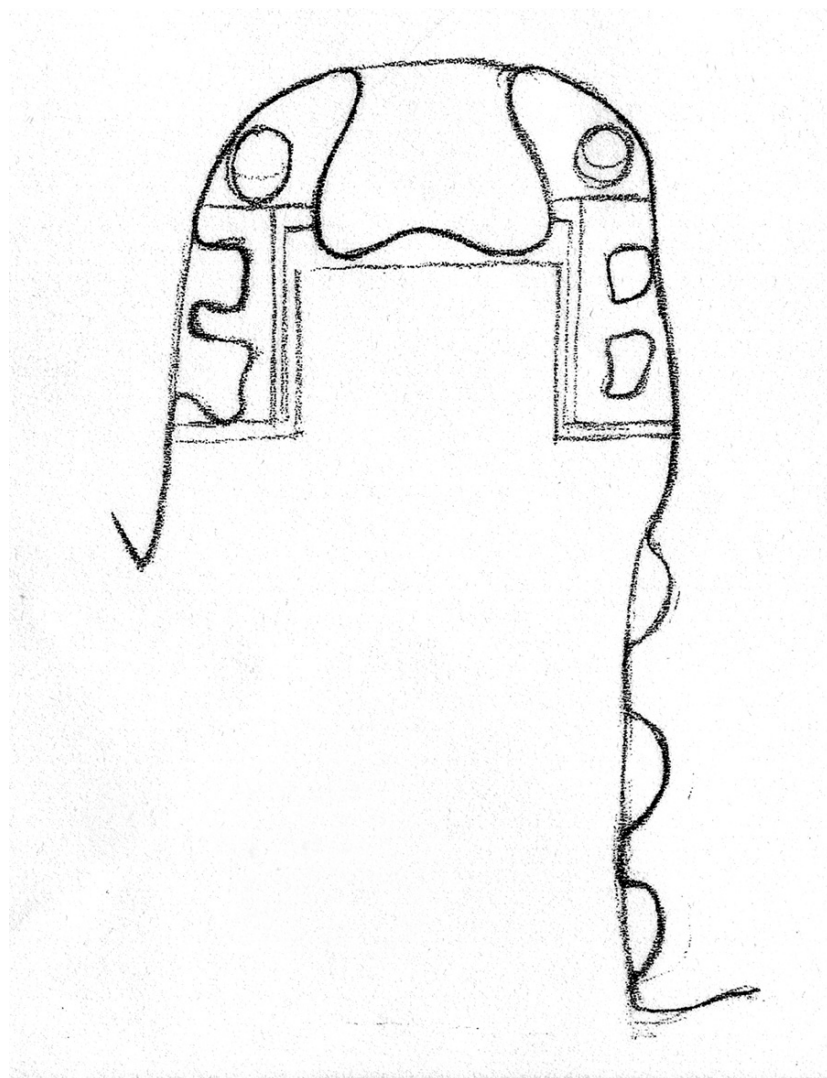


Figure 5.5: Plan of Cave 9 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.6: Interior view of Cave 9, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.7: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 9,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.8: Sketch of main Buddha, north wall of Cave 9,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.9: Side walls of Cave 9, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.10: View of Cave 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

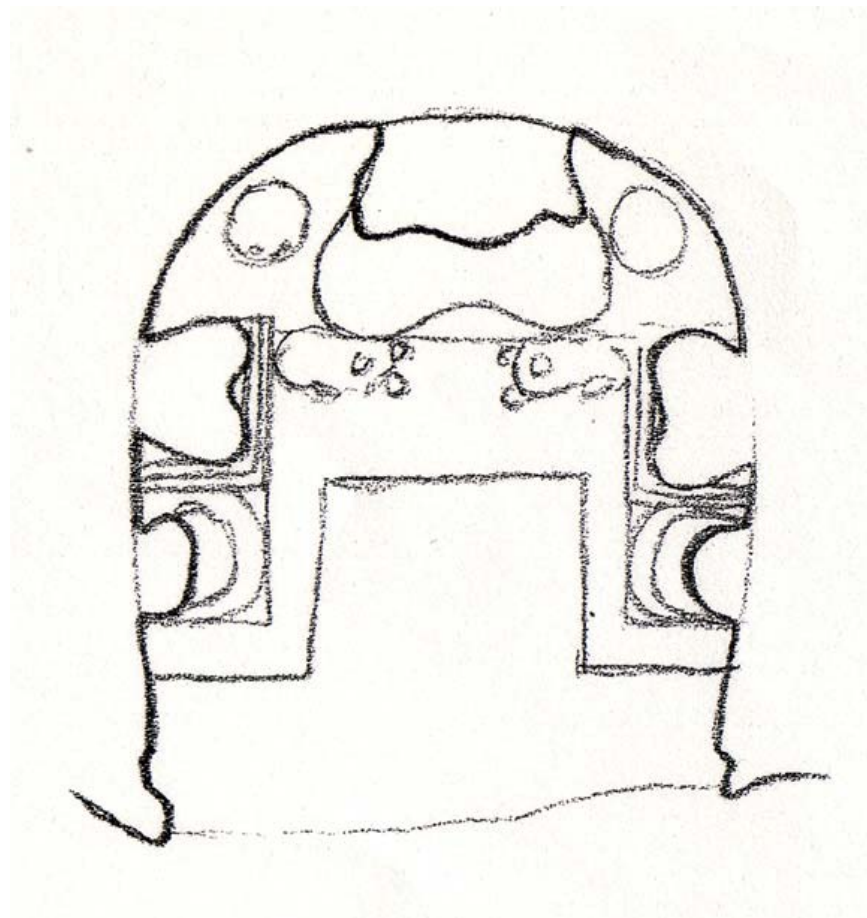


Figure 5.11: Plan of Cave 11 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.12: Interior view of Cave 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.13: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.14: Views of east wall, Cave 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.15: Views of west wall, Cave 11, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.16: View of Cave 16, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

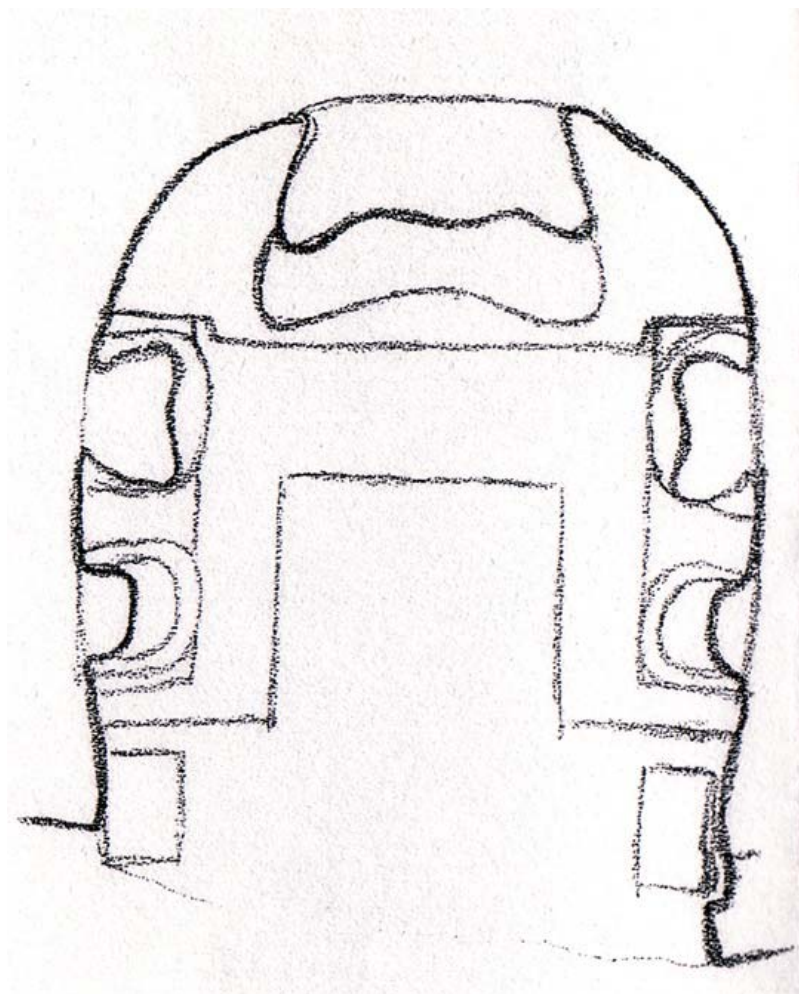


Figure 5.17: Plan of Cave 16 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.18: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 16, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.19: View of east wall, Cave 16, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.20: View of west wall, Cave 16, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.21: View of Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



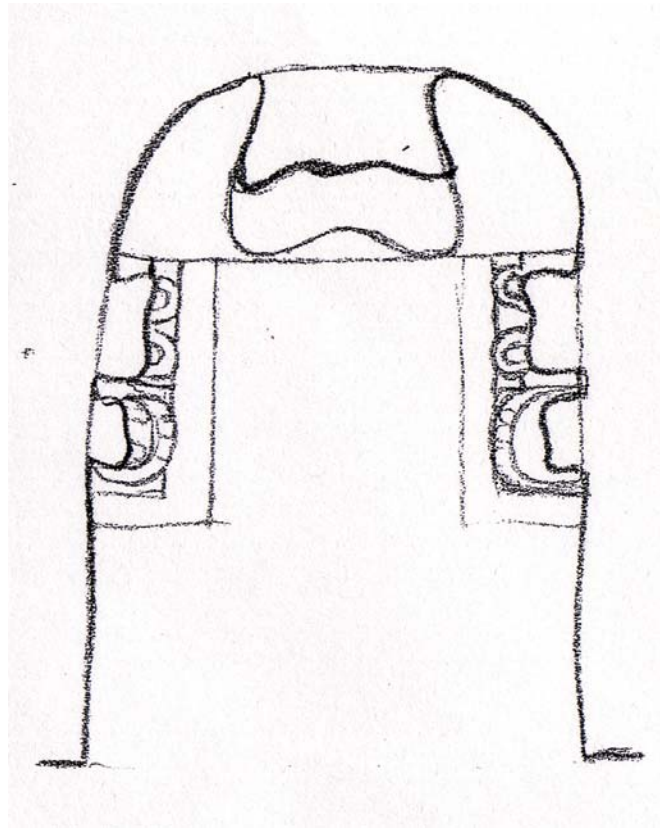


Figure 5.22: Plan of Cave 17 (sketch), south face,  
Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.23: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.24: View of east wall, Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.25: View of west wall, Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

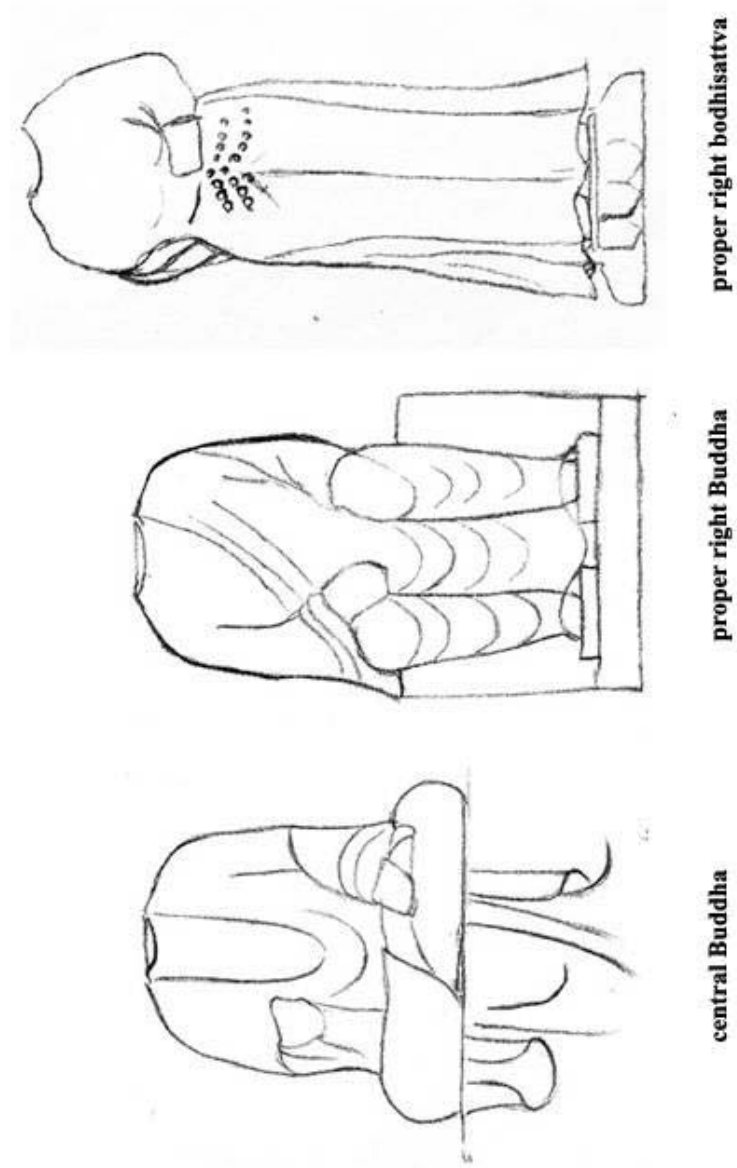


Figure 5.26: Sketches of main Buddha, proper right Buddha and proper right bodhisattva, Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.27: Inscription dated 1599 CE, Ming dynasty, between the north and east wall, Cave 17, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.28: View of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

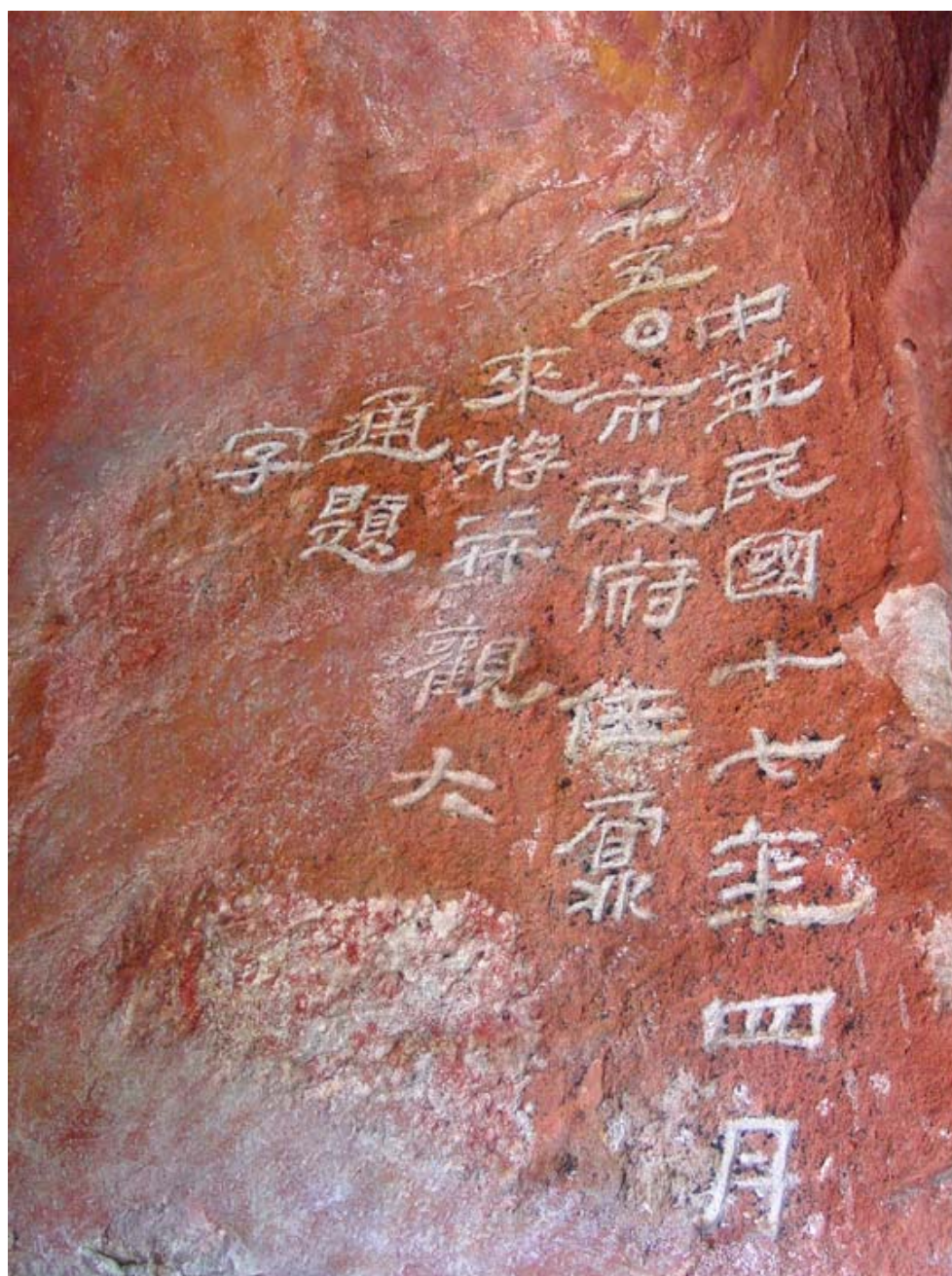


Figure 5.29: Inscription dated 1928, Republican period, east wall of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.30: Lions, front court of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

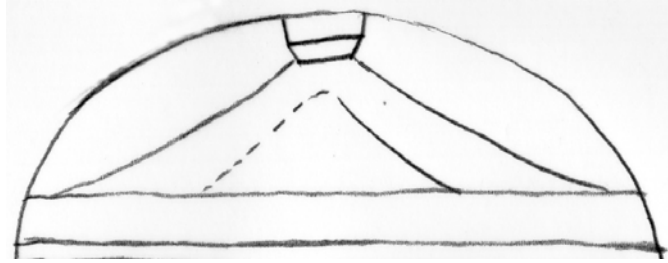


Figure 5.31: Exterior view and sketch drawing showing *Renzi chashou* carved on the lintel, Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

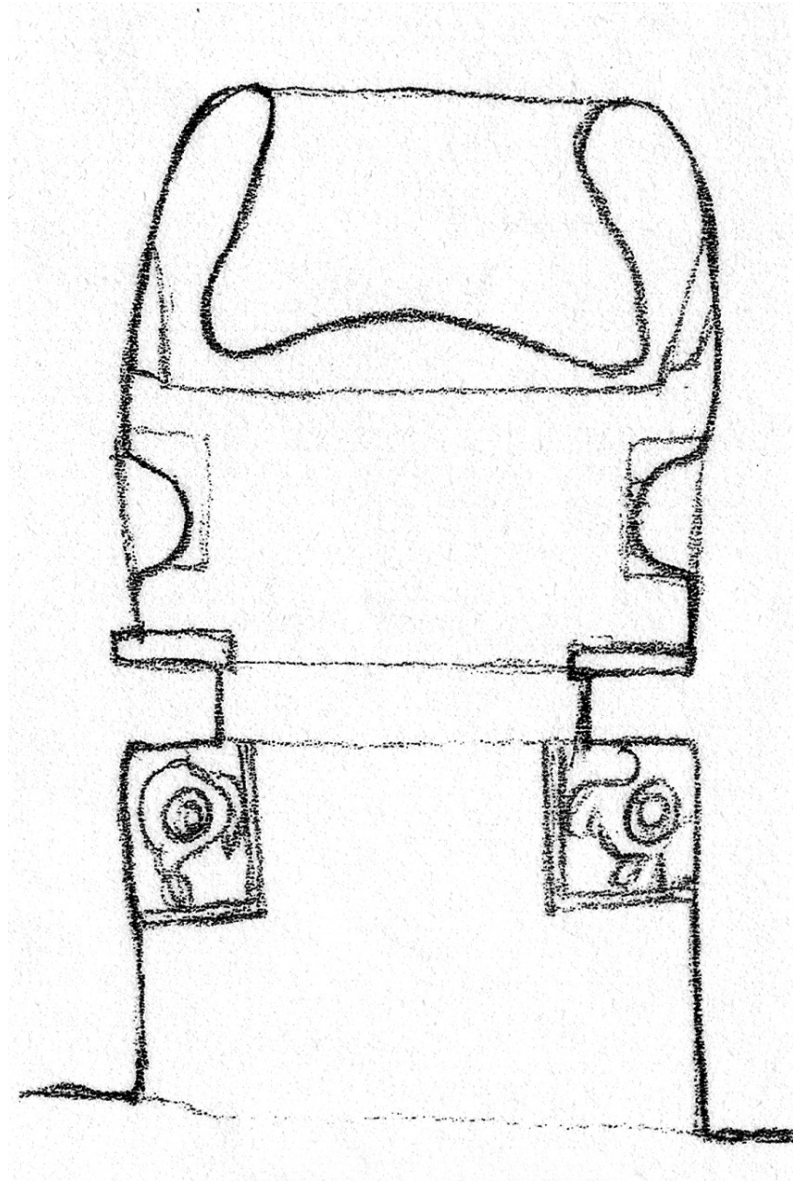


Figure 5.32: Plan of Cave 28 (sketch), south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.33: Interior of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.34: Main Buddha, north wall of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.35: Halos of main Buddha, north wall of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

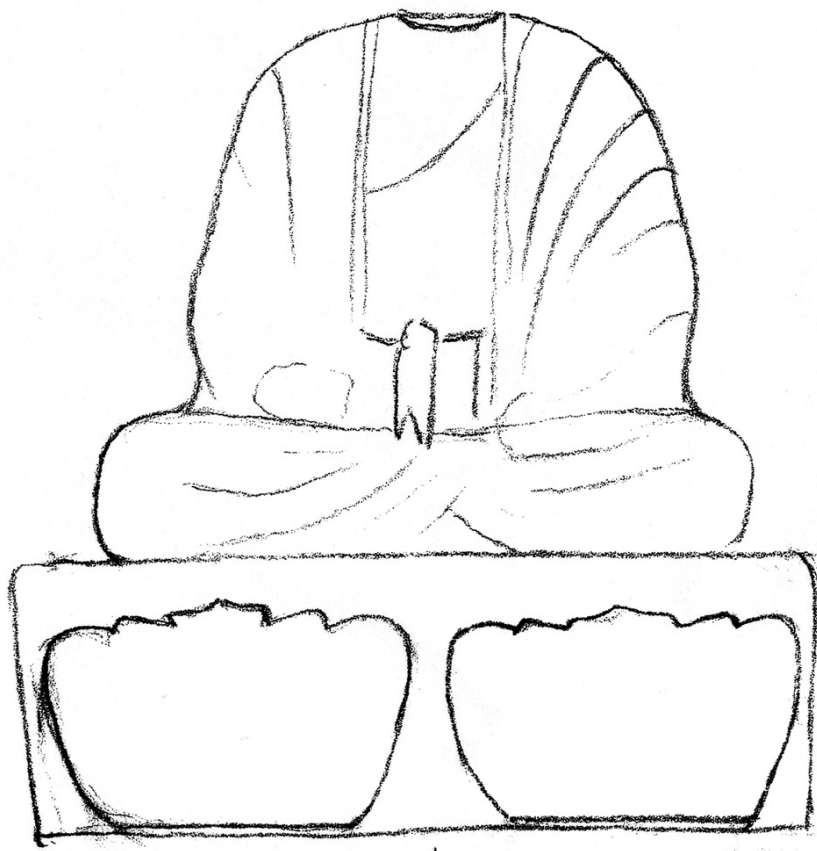


Figure 5.36: Sketch of main Buddha, north wall of Cave 28,  
south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



Figure 5.37: Two attendants, side walls of Cave 28, south face, Lower Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing





Figure 5.38: View of Caves 9 and 10, south face, Upper Larger Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing

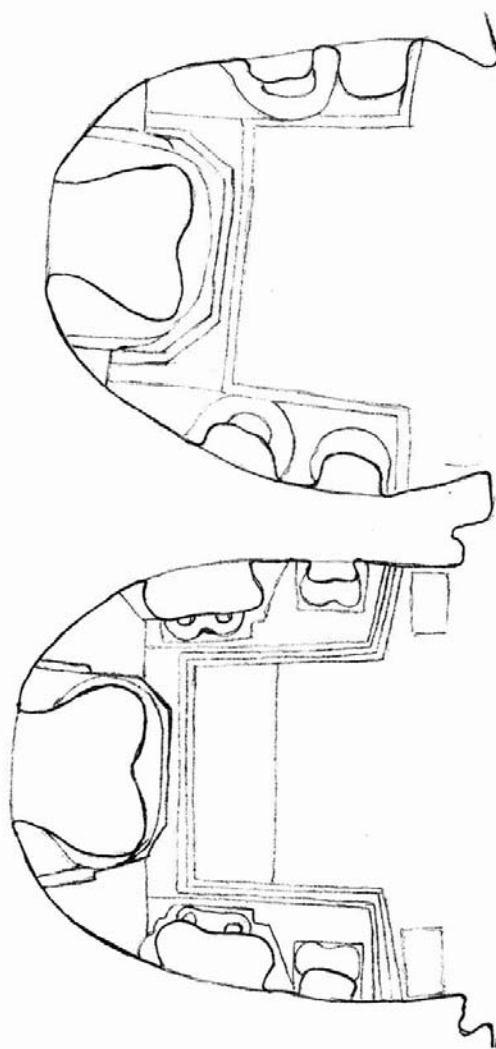


Figure 5.39: Plan of Caves 9 and 10 (Sketch), south face, Upper Larger Cliff, Qixiashan, Nanjing



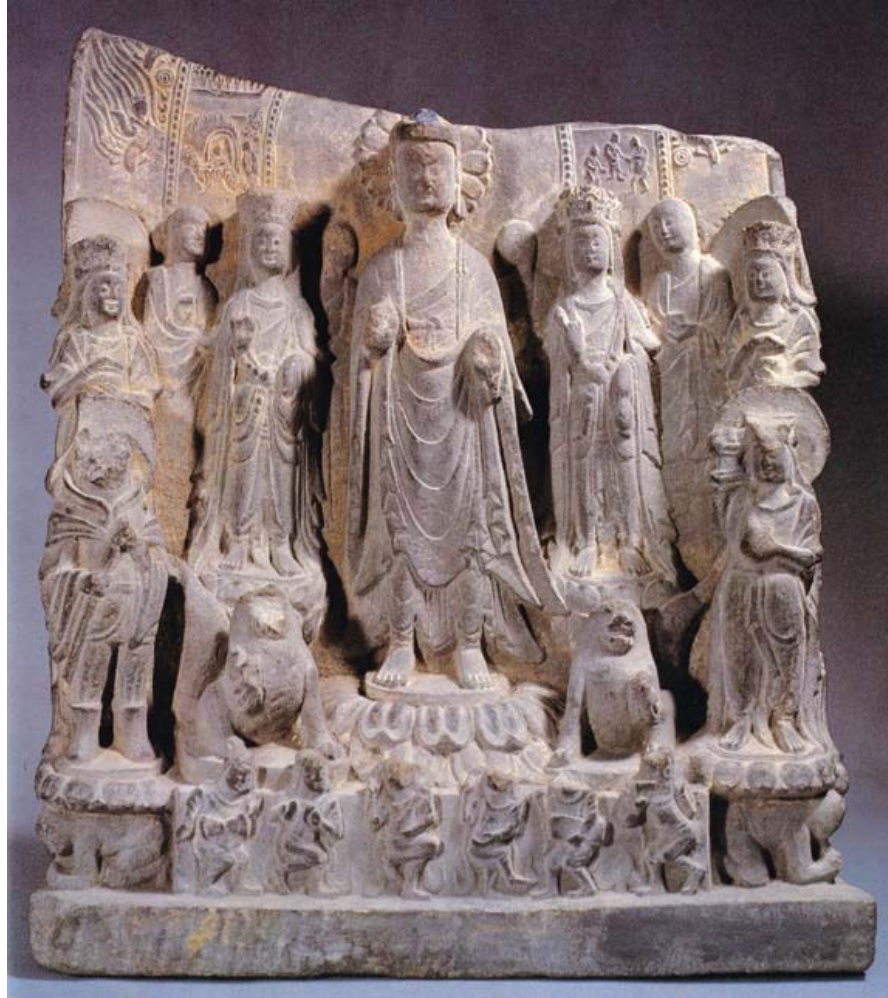


Figure 5.40: Sakyamuni Buddha with attendants,  
from Wanfosi, Chengdu, Sichuan Province  
523 CE, Southern Liang dynasty,

## CHAPTER 6

### QIXIA CAVES AND FIFTH-SIXTH CENTURY BUDDHIST ROCK-CUT ART

#### Introduction

The Buddhist rock-cut caves at Qixia, an imperially-sponsored site of the Southern Dynasties, reflect a new experiment in religious and artistic practice in the south during the time of their creation. Beginning in the late fifth century around twenty years after the earliest excavation of Yungang, namely the Five Caves of Tanyao 曇曜 (Caves 16-20), dated around the 460s,<sup>1</sup> the question of the relationship between the Yungang caves and those of the south arises. Logically, the renowned Yungang caves in the north, most likely won themselves a high degree of esteem in the south, including the time of artistic production at Qixia. In his early research, Soper has suggested that the southern cave temples at both Qixia and Shicheng, while badly damaged, “are likely to have been directly inspired by the Northern Wei feats at Yun-kang [Yungang].”<sup>2</sup> Su Bai, on the basis of historical and artistic evidence, not only argues the possibility of Yungang

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<sup>1</sup> For chronological analysis of the Yungang caves, see Su Bai (1996): 76-88; also see his other work, “Pingcheng shili de jiju he ‘Yungang Moshi’ de xingcheng yu fazhan 平城實力的集聚和“云岡模式”的形成與發展” (Gathering of Manpower and Material Resources at Pingcheng and the Creation and Development of the “Yungang Style”). The article was first published in *Yungang shiku* of the *Zhongguo Shiku* series; later it is included in the volume of his collected works, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu*. See *Yungang shiku*, vol. 1 (1991); see Su Bai (1996), 114-144.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960): 50.

impact on excavations at Qixia, but also mentions the reversal influence that Qixia has exerted on rock-cut cave traditions in the north during the second half of the sixth century of the Northern Qi dynasty.<sup>3</sup> These past studies, especially their literary analysis, have offered important guidelines for my research in this chapter. In addition, the availability of visual resources, namely the Qixia caves and their newly-restored images, further provides an opportunity for a more comprehensive investigation of this cave site in relationship to other major cave temple traditions in the north. I hope this will help arrive at a better understanding of the formation and development of Qixia cave style within the history of Chinese Buddhist rock-cut art and architecture.

Through my examination, I will propose that the Qixia caves, while excavated under the influence of Yungang works, developed a distinctive southern style in Buddhist rock-cut cave art and architecture. This southern cave tradition, however, immediately made its appearance in the Northern Wei caves at Longmen, which, right after Qixia, began to be excavated during the end of the fifth and early sixth century.<sup>4</sup> Also noteworthy is my suggestion that this south to north influence continues throughout the later part of the Northern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang period.

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<sup>3</sup> Su Bai (1989): 406-410.

<sup>4</sup> For chronological analysis of the Northern Dynasties caves at Longmen, see Su Bai, “Luoyang diqu Beichao shiku de chubu kaocha 洛陽地區北朝石窟的初步考察” (A Preliminary Investigation of the Northern Dynasties’ Cave Temples at the Luoyang Region). Also see Wen Yucheng 溫玉成, “Longmen Beichao xiaokan de leixing, fengqi yu dongku painian 龍門北朝小龕的類型, 分期與洞窟排年” (Typology and Periodization of Northern Dynasties Small Niches and Dating of Northern Dynasties Caves at Longmen). Both articles are included in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1 (1991), 170-224, 225-239. Su’s work is also included in the volume of his collected works, *Zhongguo shiku si yanjiu*, with slight modifications, see Su Bai (1996), 153-175.

## The Yungang Influence

Located in the early Northern Wei capital at Pingcheng 平城 (present day Datong 大同 of the Shanxi 山西 province) (Figure 1.1), the Buddhist rock-cut caves at Yungang were constructed under the royal patronage of that time. The Northern Wei dynasty, ruled by the Tuoba 拓跋 clan of the Xianbei 鮮卑 tribe, was a very important period in the history of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art. While politically separated from the south, historical records demonstrate that this Tuoba state was culturally connected with the southern courts established in the Jiankang region.

According to *Wei shu*, diplomatic contacts between the northern and southern courts began as early as the 425-426 CE of the Liu Song period.<sup>5</sup> During the Taihe 太和 reign (477-499 CE) of Emperor Xiaowen 孝文, before the removal of the capital to Luoyang in the second month of 494 CE, there appeared to have been twenty five visits of diplomatic envoys, twelve of which were sent from the south to the north, while the remaining thirteen were from the north to the south (Table 6.1).<sup>6</sup> Most noteworthy is that twenty two of these twenty five visits occurred from the seventh year to eighteenth year of the Taihe reign (483-494 CE) during the Northern Wei dynasty. Chronologically, this corresponds with the first year of the Yongming reign to the first year of the Jianwu reign of the Southern Qi dynasty (Table 2.2). This is also the time period when the construction of Qixia had just begun, while the Yungang caves had already enjoyed great

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<sup>5</sup> It is recorded in the biography section of Emperor Taiwu 太武. See *Wei shu* (History of Wei), comp. Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572 CE) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), juan 4: 70-71.

<sup>6</sup> The detailed accounts are found in the biography section of Emperor Xiaowen 孝文. See *Wei shu*, juan 7: 145-146, 151, 153-156, 161, 164-172, 174.

popularity in the north. Given extensive diplomatic interactions between the two courts, the cave activity at Yungang unquestionably was famous in the south as well. As a result, there remains a strong possibility for the influence of Yungang on the Qixia carvings of that time.

Year	From the North to the South	From the South to the North
Second year of the Taihe reign (478 CE)	1	1
Fifth year of the Taihe reign (481 CE)		1
Seventh year of the Taihe reign (483 CE)	1	1
Eighth year of the Taihe reign (484 CE)	2	1
Ninth year of the Taihe reign (485 CE)	1	1
Tenth year of the Taihe reign (486 CE)		1
Thirteenth year of the Taihe reign (489 CE)	1	1
Fourteenth year of the Taihe reign (490 CE)	1	1
Fifteenth year of the Taihe reign (491 CE)	2	2
Sixteenth year of the Taihe reign (492 CE)	1	2
Seventeenth year of the Taihe reign (493 CE)	2	
Eighteenth year of the Taihe reign (494 CE)		1

Table 6.1: Visits of diplomatic envoys between the Northern Wei and Southern Qi courts (during the Taihe 太和 reign of Emperor Xiaowen 孝文, before the removal of the capital to Luoyang in the second month of 494 CE)

In addition, the Jiankang region, the capital of the Southern Dynasties, had served as the gathering center for elite families coming from the north since the early fourth century of the Eastern Jin period. Northern cultural traditions, therefore, were not unfamiliar to southern Chinese living around the capital area. Noteworthy is that, as a result of frequent strife and warfare between the northern and southern regions during the first three quarters of the fifth century, there appeared to be a large influx of important

northern refugees in the south of that time.<sup>7</sup> These immigrants, as mentioned by Su Bai, most likely were responsible for cultural transmissions by introducing Northern Wei customs, including religious and artistic practices, to the south during that period.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that Yungang was able to gain renown in southern China, and, likely, had influence on the Qixia site.

Also notable, based on Su's analysis, is the activity of two brothers, Liu Fafeng 劉法鳳 and Liu Fawu 劉法武 at Pingcheng before they fled to the south in the year of 486 CE.<sup>9</sup> While they did not directly participate in excavation projects at Yungang, the Liu brothers, as revealed by literature, both participated in Buddhist activity at Pingcheng. In particular, Liu Fawu joined *sutra* translation projects led by Tanyao at Yungang in the year of 472 CE.<sup>10</sup> Given their sincere devotion to Buddhism, it is almost certain that they greatly contributed to publicizing Yungang in the south upon their return. Further noteworthy is that 486 CE, the date of their arrival, is the time when carving activity at Qixia had just begun. Although there is no textual evidence concerning the Liu brothers' effort at Qixia, it may be suggested that they possibly directly introduced the Yungang art and architecture to those who participated in excavation projects at the Qixia cave site.

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<sup>7</sup> Wang Zhongluo 王仲犛, *Weijin Nanbeichao Sui ChuTang shi* 魏晉南北朝隋初唐史 (History of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern Dynasties, and Sui and Early Tang Dynasties) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin chubanshe, 1961), vol. 1, 221-223.

<sup>8</sup> Su Bai (1989): 407.

<sup>9</sup> Su Bai (1989): 407-409. Liu Fawu 劉法武 is also known as Liu Xiaobiao 劉孝標. Upon their return to the south, Liu Fawu and Liu Fafeng changed their names to Liu Jun 劉峻 and Liu Xiaoqing 劉孝慶, respectively. For their biography, see *Wei shu*, juan 34: 969; *Nan shi*, juan 49: 1218-1220; *Liang shu*, juan 50: 701-706.

<sup>10</sup> *Chu sanzang ji ji*, T55, no. 2145, juan 2: 13. For the discussion of the Liu brothers' activity at Pingcheng, see Su Bai (1989): 407-409; also see Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio's work, *Unkō sekkutsu*, vols.13-14, text (1954): 10-11.



Lastly, it must be also recognized that Ming Sengshao and monk Fadu, the founders of Cave 19 and the Qixia site, both had close connections with Chinese north. According to the aforementioned *Chen Tablet*, Ming Sengshao came from the Pingyuan region, located in modern Shandong 山東.<sup>11</sup> It is further recorded in *Nan Qi shu* that he moved to the south in the 460s, when his homestead was taken over by the northern troops.<sup>12</sup> Monk Fadu, as revealed by both the *Chen Tablet* and *Gaoseng zhuan*,<sup>13</sup> came from the Huanglong region<sup>14</sup> and traveled around northern China in his early years. We may thus suggest that, even before their move to the south, they had presumably heard about activity at Pingcheng, this grand occasion of Northern Wei Buddhism during that time. Given their cultural heritage, they may have had interest in following the Yungang cave style, which already gained great popularity in the south of that time. Thus, the works at Yungang may have had impact on the excavations at Qixia based on historical information. This is further confirmed by artistic evidence, which I will discuss in the following section.

The past scholarship has revealed three stages of artistic development at Yungang: the first period contains the Five Caves of Tanyao (Caves 16-20), dated around 460-465 CE; the second period includes the four groups of twin caves, namely Caves 7-8, 9-10, 5-6, 1-2, and Caves 11-13, dated to the last quarter of the fifth century; the third period

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<sup>11</sup> *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集 (*The Historical Atlas of China*), vol. IV: The Eastern Jin, Sixteen Kingdoms, and Southern and Northern Dynasties, ed. Tan Qixiang 譚其驤 (Beijing: Cartographic Publishing House, 1982): 25-26; also see *Zhongguo gujin dimin dacidian* 中國古今地名大辭典 (*A Comprehensive Chinese Gazetteer*), eds. Zang Lihe 臧勵禾 and Fu Yunsen 傅運森, et al. (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, Ltd., 1931), 212.

<sup>12</sup> *Nan Qi shu*, juan 54: 927-928.

<sup>13</sup> *Gaoseng zhuan*, juan 8, T50, no. 2059: 380.

<sup>14</sup> The location of Huanglong region still remains a puzzle due to the lack of evidence.

contains middle and small-sized caves, which, largely located to the west of Cave 20, are dated somewhere after 494 CE to the first quarter of the sixth century.<sup>15</sup> During the late fifth century, when excavation projects at Qixia just began, the Five Caves of Tanyao and part of the second-period carvings at Yungang, namely Caves 7 and 8, were already completed. In addition, other second-period works, including Caves 9-11, also started at the Yungang site.<sup>16</sup> It is evident that the Southern Qi caves at Qixia, as discussed in Chapter 3, share common features with the above early works at Yungang in both form and iconography. These similar characteristics are as followings.

1. The Southern Qi caves at Qixia generally have shallow elliptical floor plan with domed ceiling, an important architectural feature of Caves 16-20 at Yungang (Figure 6.1). Noteworthy is that these early works at Qixia, such as Caves 19 and 22-23, generally contain a main icon that nearly occupies the interior space of the cave. This interior arrangement also closely resembles the works of the Five Caves of Tanyao.

2. The identified major iconographic themes from the Qi caves at Qixia include Amitayus (Cave 19), Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna (Cave 18), the Buddhas of Three Ages (Cave 24), and the Seven Buddhas of the Past (Caves 18 and 25). While there is no inscriptional evidence, based on buddhological iconographic analysis, John Huntington has argued that the main icons of Caves 16 and 20 at Yungang represent *Laiying* and Sukhavati Amitabha/Amitayus, respectively (Figures 6.2-3).<sup>17</sup> It must also be noted that

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<sup>15</sup> For the dating study, see Su Bai (1996): 76-88, 114-144. For the detailed archaeological report of the site, see Mizuno Seiichi and Nagahiro Toshio's work, *Unkō sekkutsu* (1952-1956). Unless otherwise specified, these works serve as major references for my discussion of the Yungang caves in this chapter.

<sup>16</sup> Su Bai (1996), 76-88, 114-144.

<sup>17</sup> John C. Huntington (1986): 142-160.

the depiction of colossal Amitayus at Qixia shows strong similarities with the works from the Tanyao caves. It is generally accepted that the portrayal of Buddha figure in such a grand scale demonstrates importance and universality of Buddha nature. While the notion and practice of making colossal Buddhas has its foreign origin in India,<sup>18</sup> the five colossi at Yungang are by far the earliest surviving examples of this kind in China. It is thus reasonable to propose that this practice at Qixia came right out of the Yungang convention.

In addition, *Sanshi fo*, the Buddhas of Three Ages, is the predominant iconographic motif in the first and second-period works of Yungang. The representation of Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna, which first appears in Cave 7, prevails in the second-period art at Yungang (Figure 6.4). Likewise, the Seven Buddhas of the Past, depicted at Caves 11 and 13 (Figures 6. 5-6), also reflects another new iconographic theme in the second-period works from Yungang. Further notable similar feature includes the miniature representation of Buddhas at the both sites.

3. *Tongjian dayi*, depicted covering both shoulders, is the major fashion of Buddhas' garment as seen in the Southern Qi art at Qixia. This *covering mode* robe is prevalent at the Tanyao caves and frequently depicted in Caves 7-8, 9-10, and Cave 1 at Yungang. Noteworthy is that this foreign convention garment appears to prevail in the earliest dated examples of Buddhist images from the south (Figures 3.84, 6.7). It should be recognized, however, that during the Southern Qi dynasty, *Tongjian dayi* was gradually abandoned in favor of *Baoyi bodai* robe in Buddhist art. Normally depicted as

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<sup>18</sup> Alexander C. Soper (1960), 56. Susan Huntington mentions that the creation of colossal images is associated with the cult of Vairocana Buddha. See Susan L. Huntington (1985), 206.

a type of broad robe with broad sleeves and a wide belt tied in front, this new manner of Buddhas' attire closely resembles the traditional Chinese official garment during the Eastern Jin dynasty.<sup>19</sup> A typical example of this type of robe in secular art is found in a brick relief from a Southern Dynasties tomb unearthed near Nanjing (Figure 6.8).<sup>20</sup> According to artistic evidence, *Baoyi bodai* dress, which first occurs in the previously mentioned 483 stele (Figure 3.82), prevails in the Southern Qi and Liang Buddhist art (Figure 3.80-81).<sup>21</sup> At the Qixia site, the stylistic traits of *Baoyi bodai* are also evident, as seen in the depiction of elaborate drapery folds and long overhangs. The presence of belt tied in front of the proper right Buddha at Cave 18 (Figures 3.17-18) exhibits another distinctive feature of this type robe. It must be noted, however, that the Buddha's garment as seen in the Southern Qi caves at Qixia is the synthesis of old *Tongjian dayi* and new *Baoyi bodai* robe. Reasonably, this unusual phenomenon should be understood as a result of the outside influence, particularly the Yungang influence in this case.

On the basis of textual and artistic analysis, it is evident that the excavations at Yungang, especially the Five Caves of Tanyao and early carvings of Yungang's second-period works (Caves 7-11), played an important role in the formation of the Qixia cave style during the Southern Qi dynasty. A closer analysis of material sources further

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<sup>19</sup> Yang Hong 楊泓, "Shilun Nanbeichao qianqi foxiang fushi de bianhua 試論南北朝前期佛像服飾的主要變化" (A Preliminary Study of Major Changes in the Garments of Buddhist Images during the Early Period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties), *Kaogu*, no. 6 (1963):330-336.

<sup>20</sup> For the detailed analysis of the brick relief, see Audrey G. Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients: aesthetic and social issues in early Chinese portraiture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Ellen Johnston Laing, "Neo-Taoism and the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" in Chinese painting," *Artibus Asiae* 36, no. 1/2 (1974): 5-54.

<sup>21</sup> For the detailed information, see Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (1958); Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdu shi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (1998): 4-20; Zhang Xiaoma and Lei Yuhua (2001): 4-18; and Yuan Shuguang (2001): 19-38.

reveals that, while borrowing the northern conventions, Qixia has also developed a unique southern style in cave art and architecture throughout the Southern Qi and Liang dynasties. Some of its distinctive features, including, for example, the aforementioned *Baoyi bodai* garment, evidently derive from indigenous cultural traditions. Noteworthy is that this southern tradition began to serve as the model for northern caves, either contemporary with or relatively later than the production at Qixia. In the following section, I will try to provide an in-depth analysis of distinguishing characteristics of Qixia cave style, with an emphasis on the southern influence as seen in the northern cave temples around the sixth century during the later part of the Six Dynasties.

### **Continuation of the Qixia Cave Style in the North**

#### *Architectural Layout*

While following the Yungang convention of shallow elliptical floor plan and domed ceiling, the *Sanbi huantan*, or “three walls surrounded by platforms” structure appears to be a new development in architecture layout by southern artisans. This interior arrangement, which first occurs in the Southern Qi caves with somewhat immature characteristics, becomes standardized and prevails in Southern Liang art at Qixia. Nevertheless, similar structure has not been found in earlier and contemporaneous northern caves. At Yungang, it does not come into sight until its third stage of artistic development, dated somewhere after 494 CE and the first quarter of the sixth century.<sup>22</sup> It is also notable that the presence of *Sanbi huantan* design at the Longmen cave site is an even later phenomenon. This form, which first appears in Cixiang Dong 慈香洞 dated

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<sup>22</sup> Su Bai (1996), 114-144.

520 CE (Figure 6.9), is prevalent in the late Northern Dynasties works at Longmen, such as Tangzi Dong 唐字洞, Liushi Dong 六獅洞 and Bianzhou Dong 汴州洞.<sup>23</sup> Aside from the Yungang caves, Longmen, situated at the new capital city of Luoyang 洛陽, is another important cave site sponsored by Northern Wei imperial family. While there is no evidence concerning the origin of *Sanbi huantan* structure at Qixia, it seems certain that this new southern style had impact on the formation of late Northern Wei works at both Yungang and Longmen, two major cave temples in the north during the time of Qixia's excavation.

In addition, Cave 24 contains *Sanbi sankan* structure, consisting of three niches, one on each wall (Figure 3.48). This is a unique example at the Qixia site. The form of *Sanbi sankan* first appears and becomes prevalent in the late Northern Wei works dated the end of fifth century and the first three decades of the sixth century. Aside from the third-period works of Yungang (Figure 6.10), typical examples also include major caves at the Luoyang region, such as Longmen (Figure 6.11-13), Gongxian 鞏縣 and Hongqingsi 鴻慶寺 at Mianchi 澠池 (Figure 6.14).<sup>24</sup> In her research, Lü Caizhi 呂采芷 proposes that the *Sanbi sankan* design at the Luoyang area should be understood as the continuation and development of the Yungang tradition.<sup>25</sup> It must be noted, however,

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<sup>23</sup> Su Bai (1996), 153-175; also see Wen Yucheng's work in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1 (1991), 170-224,

<sup>24</sup> This structure is found in nearly half of the third period works at Yungang. At the Luoyang region, it is prevalent during the reign of Emperor Xiaoming 孝明 (516-528 CE), as seen in Putai Dong 普泰洞, Weizi Dong 魏字洞 and Huangpugong Ku 皇甫公窟 at Longmen, Cave 5 at Gongxian 鞏縣, as well as Caves 2 and 4 from Hongqingsi 鴻慶寺. See Su Bai (1996), 114-144, 153-175.

<sup>25</sup> Lü Caizhi 呂采芷, "Beiwei houqi de sanbi sankan shi ku 北魏後期的三壁三龕式窟" (Caves with Three Niches on the Three Walls during the Late Northern Wei Dynasty). This article is included in *Yungang shiku*, vol. II (1994), 213-218.



that all the three principle Buddhas in Cave 24 are depicted in *padmasana*. Similar representation is not seen in the Yungang works. Rather, it appears in Putai Dong 普泰洞 at Longmen and Cave 2 from the Hongqingsi at Mianchi.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore reasonable to assume that *Sanbi sankan* structure at the Luoyang area probably has its origin in the south.

Further noteworthy is that in Cave 24 each of the three walls is entirely occupied by a large niche in the form of a rounded arch. Given its clarity and regularity in overall arrangement as well as its consistency in niche structure and iconographic themes, *Sanbi sankan* design at Qixia reveals strong differences from the above mentioned northern works. At the Yungang site, a cave with this structure normally contains three small and shallow niches, each of which, frequently varied in form, is arranged in the center of the wall along with the depictions of other motifs (Figure 6.10). While the works at Longmen exhibit somewhat mature characteristic with more focus on three niches, their side wall niches, much smaller in scale, appear to be less emphasized in overall design (Figures 6.11-13). At Cave 2 from Hongqingsi, we start to see relatively equal attention given to individual niche (Figure 6.14). However, the depiction of each niche in such a large scale, occupying virtually entire wall as seen in Cave 24, does not appear in the north until the second half of the sixth century. Typical examples are found in the Northern Qi caves at Xiangtangshan 響堂山 (Figures 6.15-16).<sup>27</sup> Given stylistic affinities in the works from

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<sup>26</sup> Su Bai (1996), 153-175. Also see Li Wensheng 李文生, “Mianchi Hongqingsi shiku 澠池鴻慶寺石窟” (Hongqingsi Cave Temple at Mianchi). Li’s article is included in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1(1991), 254-264.

<sup>27</sup> It is seen in Cave 2 from the northern group and Cave 5 from the southern group at Xiangtangshan 響堂山. See *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol 13* (1989), plates 110-114. For the detailed discussion, see Katherine R. Tsiang (1996), 36-41, 63, 65-68, figs. 1.3, 7.

the Qixia and Xiangtangshan sites, there remains almost no doubt that the Qixia cave style continues to influence artistic remains in the north during the later part of Northern Dynasties.

Another distinctive architectural feature at Qixia is seen in the decoration of doorway at Cave 28, dated 530 CE of the Southern Liang dynasty. The stone entrance contains a pair of jambs supporting a semicircular lintel, on which is depicted a *Renzi chashou* in the form of an inverted V-shaped strut (Figure 5.31). As previously mentioned in Chapter 5, as a copy of wooden architecture in stone, this type of doorway prevails in tomb art of the Southern Dynasties (Figure 6.17). It is notable that the practice of imitating wooden construction is also prevalent in the northern rock-cut cave temples (Figure 6.18).<sup>28</sup> However, this specific type of entranceway at Qixia, which does not have known parallels in the north, is purely of indigenous convention in the south, particularly around the capital region.

### *Iconographic themes*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the major iconographic themes from the Southern Qi caves at Qixia show strong influences from early works at Yungang. However, the sculpted layout in Cave 22, which contains a Buddha accompanied by two disciples and four bodhisattvas (Figure 3.35), is a new development in iconographic scheme at the Qixia cave site. Similar representations do not appear in other southern works from southwest China until the first quarter of the sixth century of the Southern

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<sup>28</sup> We have found this convention in major Northern Dynasties caves, including, for example, Yungang, Longmen, Tianlongshan and Xiangtangshan. See Su Bai (1996), 114-144; *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol 13* (1989), plates 87-88, 99-100, 156-159.

Liang dynasty.<sup>29</sup> This sculptural program is rarely seen in the major Northern Wei cave temples. It is not present in the Yungang caves, and at Longmen, the group only occurs in the main niche at Huangpugong Ku (Figure 6.13).<sup>30</sup> Noteworthy is that the two outer bodhisattva attendants, as seen in the Longmen work, are both portrayed in a pensive manner, thus revealing a major difference from the standing posture as depicted in Cave 22. An identical theme appears in a small niche from Guyang Dong 古陽洞 at Longmen, dated 518 CE of the Northern Wei dynasty.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, as a major sculptural program depicted in a cave, this seven-image composition does not make its appearance in the north until the Northern Qi dynasty. An example is found at Cave 2 from the northern group at the Xiangtangshan cave site.<sup>32</sup> Again, this reveals the Qixia origin in the rock-cut cave art during the later part of the Northern Dynasties.

Guardian figures are commonly depicted in the Southern Qi and Liang caves at Qixia. However, these images, either missing or covered by cement, are mostly not clearly identified. The guardian deities from the Liang caves, which are normally identified as generic depictions of a *lishi* 力士 type of guardian based upon their postures, may have been intended to represent benevolent kings who are defenders and protectors

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<sup>29</sup> See Li Yuqun (2000): 66-67. It is most likely that the iconographic source for the Sichuan images was from the Jiankang region.

<sup>30</sup> *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1(1991), plate 186.

<sup>31</sup> According to inscription, the main image is Sakyamuni Buddha. See Wen Yucheng's article, in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1(1991), 196-197.

<sup>32</sup> It is depicted in the niche on the main wall. See *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol 13* (1989), plate 110. For the detailed discussion, see Katherine R. Tsiang (1996), 36-41.

of Buddhist Dharma.<sup>33</sup> In Buddhist art, these benevolent kings always appear as a pair, known as Akara and Ungkara, respectively; they are personifications of *mantras* that bodhisattvas use to protect the state. Little is known about the Southern Qi works. A guardian deity contained in a small niche of Cave 27 is the only Qi example that still reveals its original appearance (Figure 1.17). Given a *vajra*-like instrument held in his right hand, he may have been intended to represent a certain type of *vajra* deity. His identity, however, still remains a puzzle. Draped in a slightly short upper garment with trousers and boots, this foreign convention attire appears to have no parallels from the other regions. In addition, the depiction of demon-like foes (now covered under the ground) under the feet of guardian figures does not appear in Buddhist art during the Southern and Northern Dynasties. Nevertheless, it is normally depicted in Tang dynasty Buddhist art in the north, as a distinctive characteristic of a *tianwang* 天王 “heavenly king” type of guardian, generally dressed in full armor.<sup>34</sup> Hence, there remains a possibility that the Tang works in the north may have looked towards southern China for iconographic inspiration.

Most noteworthy is that the Southern Liang caves at Qixia all contain these benevolent king type deities in the interior. This sculptural arrangement, which continues

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<sup>33</sup> *Foshuo renwang panruo boluomi jing* 佛說仁王般若波羅蜜經 (*Prajnaparamita-sutra* on Benevolent Kings), trans. Kumarajiva (Ch. 鳩摩羅什; Yao Qin period, 384-417 CE), 2 juans, T8, no. 245: 825-834.

<sup>34</sup> Wen Yucheng 溫玉成, “Longmen Tangku painian 龍門唐窟排年” (Dating of the Tang Caves at Longmen). The article is included in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 2 (1992), 172-216. Although the demon-like foes are not present in Buddhist art of the Northern Dynasties, it should be recognized that the *tianwang* 天王 type of guardian first appears in Buddhist pantheon during the Northern Qi dynasty, as seen in the Tianlongshan Caves. See Li Yuqun 李裕群, “Tianlongshan shiku fenqi yanjiu 天龍山石窟分期研究 (Periodization of the Tianlongshan Caves), *Kaogu xuebao*, no. 1 (1992): 35-62.

to appear in the Tang dynasty caves at Qixia,<sup>35</sup> reveals a major difference from the art at Longmen, where these figures have been normally placed on either side of the entrance from the Northern Dynasties onwards.<sup>36</sup> It should be recognized, however, that a similar interior design is found from other Tang works in the north, for example, Xumishan 須彌山 caves at the Guyuan 固原 region in northwest China.<sup>37</sup> Given the fact that there appears to be no predecessors of similar depiction in the north, it is possible that the southern influence also extended to the other areas, in addition to the Zhongyuan 中原, or central plain region, where the Longmen site is located.

Further, the *kunmen* motif, as a decoration for platform-seat or throne, commonly occurs in the Late Liang caves at Qixia. It is largely depicted in the form of a pointed arch (Figures 5.6, 14-15, 19-20, 24-25), with the exception of more elaborate representation as seen in Cave 28 (Figure 5.33, 36). In the north, this design pattern first appears in the Northern Qi works, as exemplified by Cave 2 from the southern group of Xiangtangshan.<sup>38</sup> During the Tang dynasty, it is prevalent in major northern cave temples, such as Longmen, Dunhuang and Xumishan.<sup>39</sup> However, while the work at

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<sup>35</sup> Lin Wei (2005): 297-301.

<sup>36</sup> In the Tang works at Longmen, these guardian deities also appear in some caves and niches. See Wen Yucheng's article in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 2 (1992), 172-216. The *Longmen shiku* also provides fine color illustrations for our reference.

<sup>37</sup> Lin Wei, "Xumishan Tangdai dongku de leixing he fengqi 須彌山唐代洞窟的類型和分期" (Typology and Periodization of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhist Caves at Xumishan), in *Kaoguxue yanjiu* (A Collection of Studies on Archaeology), no. 3 (Beijing: Science Press, 1997):116-137.

<sup>38</sup> *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol. 13* (1989), plate 162.

<sup>39</sup> Lin Wei (1997): 116-137; also see Wen Yucheng's article in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 2 (1992), 172-216. Noteworthy is that *Longmen shiku* also provides fine color illustrations for this analysis. For the study of Dunhuang works, I have mainly based on the research data collected during my field trip to the cave site in 1993.

Xiangtangshan is relatively simplified in design, the Tang examples become more standardized and reveal both types of *kunmen* found at Qixia, with a growing inclination towards ornamentation. It is evident, therefore, that the formation and development of *kunmen* motif in the north may also have its origin in the Southern Liang art at Qixia.

### *Sculptural Representations*

Although many images at Qixia are either badly damaged or still covered by cement, the Southern Qi sculptures are largely in a good state of condition. In addition, some slightly better preserved works have also been found in the Liang caves at this site. As previously analyzed in Chapter 5,<sup>40</sup> southern pictorial traditions, exemplified by the works of Gu Kaizhi, Lu Tanwei and Zhang Sengyou, greatly contributed to the development of figural representations in both religious and secular art from the fourth to sixth century in the south. The Southern Qi works at Qixia, according to my investigation, reflect transitional style from Gu and Lu's slender and elongated form, with an emphasis on "bones" and "spirit," towards Zhang's fuller and muscular body, which shows more concern for "flesh" and human form. In contrast, the Liang sculptures exhibit typical stylistic traits of Zhang's figural convention, as seen in the depiction of heavier and rounder body form with simple drapery patterns.

While no distinctive evidence of Gu and Lu's figural style found at Qixia, this type of figural representation in Buddhist art presumably began in the south as early as the lifetime of Gu Kaizhi during the late fourth century of the Eastern Jin dynasty.<sup>41</sup> This

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<sup>40</sup> Please refer to my chronological analysis of the Southern Liang caves in Chapter 5.

<sup>41</sup> A celebrated painter and sculptor Dai Kui 戴逵 (d.396 CE), a contemporary of Gu, is said to be responsible for the creation of this new style in Buddhist art. As recorded in the aforementioned painting



convention in human form, with the depiction of slender body and somewhat slopping shoulders, prevails in early Buddhist art from the south, as seen in the previously mentioned 425 CE stone stele and two other bronze images, dated 437 and 451 CE, respectively (Figures 1.22, 3.84, 4.24, 6.7). During the Southern Qi dynasty, Buddhist sculptures, including the works at Qixia, start to exhibit a growing tendency towards the depiction of fuller body form (Figures 3.80-82). Eventually, the mature style of Zhang's figural tradition, exemplified by the Late Liang images at Qixia, became the predominant trend in southern Buddhist art during the second quarter of the sixth century.

On the basis of textual and artistic evidence, Gu's and Zhang's pictorial traditions both appear in northern Buddhist art during the later part of the Six Dynasties around the sixth century. Gu Kaizhi's figural style prevails in the third-period works at Yungang and earliest carvings at Longmen.<sup>42</sup> Based on Su's analysis, Zhang's convention began to appear in the Luoyang region around 520s-530s CE of the Late Northern Wei period, as seen in the Gongxian caves. He also proposes that a more mature style of Zhang's figural form is prevalent in Buddhist art throughout the northern China during the second half of the sixth century.<sup>43</sup>

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history *Lidai minghua ji*, in Dai's opinion, the images made in antique quality was rude and simple, and thus lacking the power to stimulate worshippers. He therefore produced his image in a new manner more suitable for Chinese audience. This new fashion, based on previous studies, mostly likely reflected Gu Kaizhi's figure style. See *Lidai minghua ji* (1973), juan 5:123; see Chang Qing (1995): 89, 92-95; Alexander C. Soper (1960), 58; Jin Weinuo 金維諾 and Luo Shiping 羅世平, *Zhongguo zongjiao meishu shi* 中國宗教美術史(China's Religious Fine Arts History) (Nanchang: Jiangxi meishu chubanshe, 1995), 63-66.

<sup>42</sup> Su Bai (1996), 114-144, 153-175.

<sup>43</sup> Su Bai (1996), 349-354.

Given the fact that southern influence remains a common phenomenon in northern figural representations during the time of Qixia's construction, it seems difficult to specify Qixia's contribution and role in the process of this cultural transmission. It should be recognized, however, that this imperially sponsored site was located in the capital region of the time. When considering its seemingly importance and popularity, there remains a possibility that some northern traditions, especially rock-cut cave traditions, may have directly followed the Qixia sculptural style for their production. A more careful analysis of the imagery may help confirm this possibility.

*Pianshan*, a one-sided upper garment, appears in Cave 18 at Qixia. It is revealed by a curving line, now faintly visible, on the right shoulder of the two Buddhas (Figure 3.18). This type of dress, while not found in the Yungang caves, prevails in the Late Northern Wei works at Longmen.<sup>44</sup> This fashion of wearing *pianshan* continues to be present in Buddhist caves dated the second half of the sixth century during the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi dynasties.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the decoration of small arcs in the middle of long overhang of Buddha's garment, which first appears in the Southern Qi works from Caves 19 and 18 (Figures 3.5, 18), also occurs in the Late Liang caves at the Qixia site (Figures 5.8, 26). This convention of drapery, which is not found in the Northern Dynasties art, prevails in the rock-cut caves during the Sui and Tang dynasty.<sup>46</sup> The above analysis suggests that Qixia's influence should not be overlooked in the

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<sup>44</sup> Su Bai (1996), 153-175, note 24.

<sup>45</sup> Su Bai (1996), 153-175, note 24.

<sup>46</sup> See illustrations in *Longmen shiku*, vol. 2 (1992); see *Zhongguo Meishu quanji: Diaosu bian vol 13* (1989), plate 211.

understanding of the formation of the northern sculptural style from the later part of the Northern Dynasties to the Sui and Tang period.

Another distinctive feature concerning Qixia's influence in the figural tradition of northern Buddhist art is seen in the representations of bodhisattva figures. These attendant figures, in the Southern Qi caves at Qixia, are generally depicted wearing a long skirt over the lower body, with a scarf and/or a string of jewelry covering the bared torso. The scarf and/or the string of jewelry, which falls down from the shoulders, are seen crossing symmetrically, or sometime crisscrossing at a disk-shaped ring, in front of the body in "X" pattern (Figures 3.20-22). It is generally accepted that this type of drapery has its origin in the south. Similar convention does not appear in the northern cave art until the third-period of Yungang and the early stage of carvings at Longmen (Figure 6.19).<sup>47</sup> One may thus suggest that this new fashion of bodhisattva's drapery may also have its direct origin from Qixia.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In summary, the formation of Qixia cave art and architecture should be first understood as a continuation of early Buddhist rock-cut practice in the Yungang region. Nevertheless, with the synthesis of new conventions, which largely derives from the local cultural traditions, a distinctive southern rock-cut cave style gradually developed at the Qixia site. Most importantly, this unique southern style in turn provided models for artistic production in the northern cave temples. On the basis of my comparative analysis, the Qixia influence first occurs in the Late Northern Wei works dated from the end of the

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<sup>47</sup> *Yungang shiku*, vol. 1 (1991) and vol. 2 (1994); *Longmen shiku*, vol. 1 (1991).

fifth century, somewhere after 494 CE, to early sixth century. In addition, Northern Qi and Tang dynasty are the two other important periods that witnessed this southern influence in the northern rock-cut cave traditions.

According to historical accounts, during the Six Dynasties period, Northern China was for the most part in the hands of nomadic tribes from the Asian steppes, while Southern China was under the control of ethnic Chinese. Literary documents also indicates that some Northern emperors, with hopes to consolidate their regimes, began to follow Chinese cultural traditions, largely preserved and practiced in the south of that time. During the Taihe reign (477-499 CE) of the Northern Wei dynasty, Emperor Xiaowen first initiated a program of cultural reforms. These historically known “Taihe Reforms” are characterized by the adoption of Chinese language, surname, costume, and political institutions.<sup>48</sup> Aside from the “Taihe Reforms,” textual evidence further reveals that Northern Qi is another important period that witnessed enthusiastic practice of traditional Chinese culture in the court.<sup>49</sup> Unquestionably, the continuous presence of Qixia style in Northern Wei and Qi works is not a coincidence. Rather, it should be understood as a result of the *Hanhua* or Sinicization effort of these two northern regimes during that time.

Further, this process of Sinicization contributed greatly to a cultural amalgamation around the late fifth and sixth century in China. Buddhism, originally imported from India, also underwent a process of domestication in China during this time. In Buddhist art, there was a dramatic stylistic shift from Indian and Central Asian derived

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<sup>48</sup> *Wei shu*, juan 7: 135-190. 398-404

<sup>49</sup> Su Bai (1996), 349-354.

tradition to what became Chinese convention. As seen in the representation of human figures, this Chinese convention reflects the dominance of figural styles, like those of Gu Kaizhi and Zhang Sengyou in the art during Late Northern Wei and Northern Qi, respectively. Given its court connection and its situation in the capital region, the center of traditional Chinese culture of the time, Qixia's role during this process of Sinicization is significant. Specifically, the distinctive southern cave style at Qixia provides important sources for the formation and development of rock-cut cave art and architecture during the sixth century.

During the Sui and Tang dynasties, while the political and cultural center was shifted back to the northern region, literary and artistic evidence both reveals that Qixia continues to enjoy great popularity during that time. This is evidently revealed by the *Tang Tablet* and can be further testified by large scale Tang excavation projects at the site. Hence, it is also reasonable that the Qixia cave style would continue serve as models for some northern artistic traditions during that time.

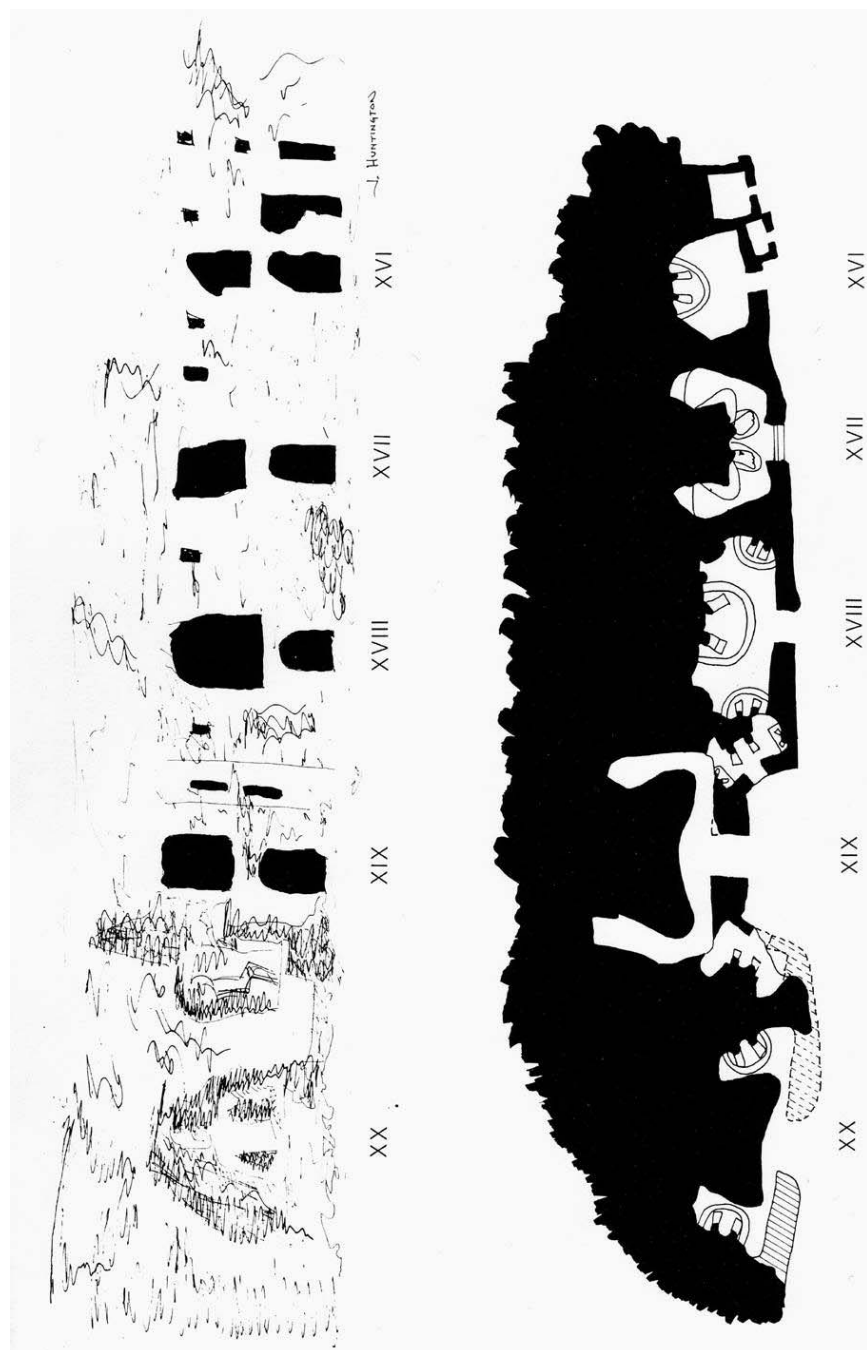


Figure 6.1: Plan and elevation of the Five Caves of Tanyao (Caves 16-20), Yungang, Datong, ca. 460s CE, Northern Wei



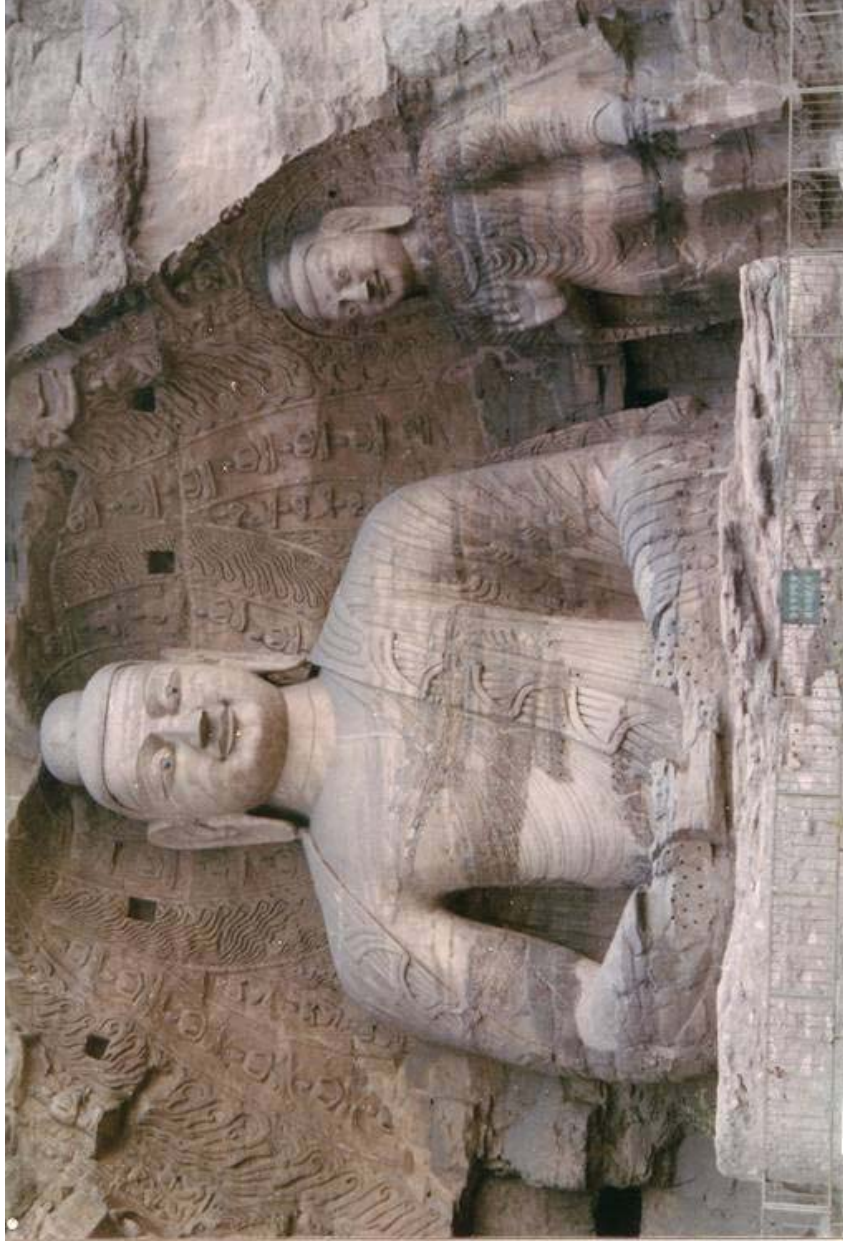


Figure 6.2: Main Buddha and attendant Buddha, sandstone, north and east walls of Cave 20, Yungang, Datong, ca. 460s CE, Northern Wei



Figure 6.3: Main Buddha, sandstone, north wall of Cave 16,  
Yungang, Datong, ca. 460s CE, Northern Wei





Figure 6.4: Sakyamuni and Prabutaratna, sandstone, north wall of antechamber, Cave 9, Yungang, Datong, ca. last quarter of the fifth century, Northern Wei



Figure 6.5: Seven Buddhas of the Past, sandstone, west wall of Cave 11, Yungang, Datong, ca. last quarter of the fifth century, Northern Wei





Figure 6.6: Seven Buddhas of the Past, sandstone, south wall of Cave 13, Yungang, Datong, ca. last quarter of the fifth century, Northern Wei



Figure 6.7: Seated Buddha, gilt bronze, 437 CE, Liu Song period  
Eisei Bunko collection at Tokyo





Figure 6.8: The Seven Sages of Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi (showing *Baoyi bodai* garment), drawing of brick relief, from the wall of a tomb at Xishanqiao, near Nanjing, Jiangsu, 5th Century CE, Southern Dynasties

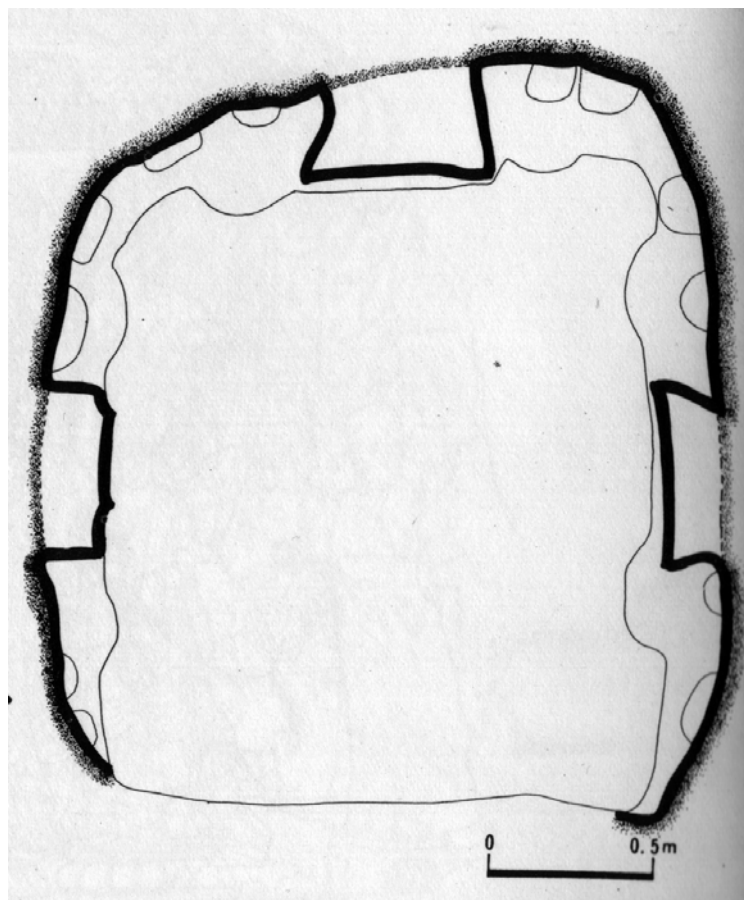


Figure 6.9: Plan of Cixiang Dong (drawing on scale),  
Longmen, Luoyang, 520 CE, Northern Wei



Figure 6.10: Interior view, sandstone, north and east walls of Cave 40, Yungang, Datong, ca. first quarter of the sixth century, Northern Wei

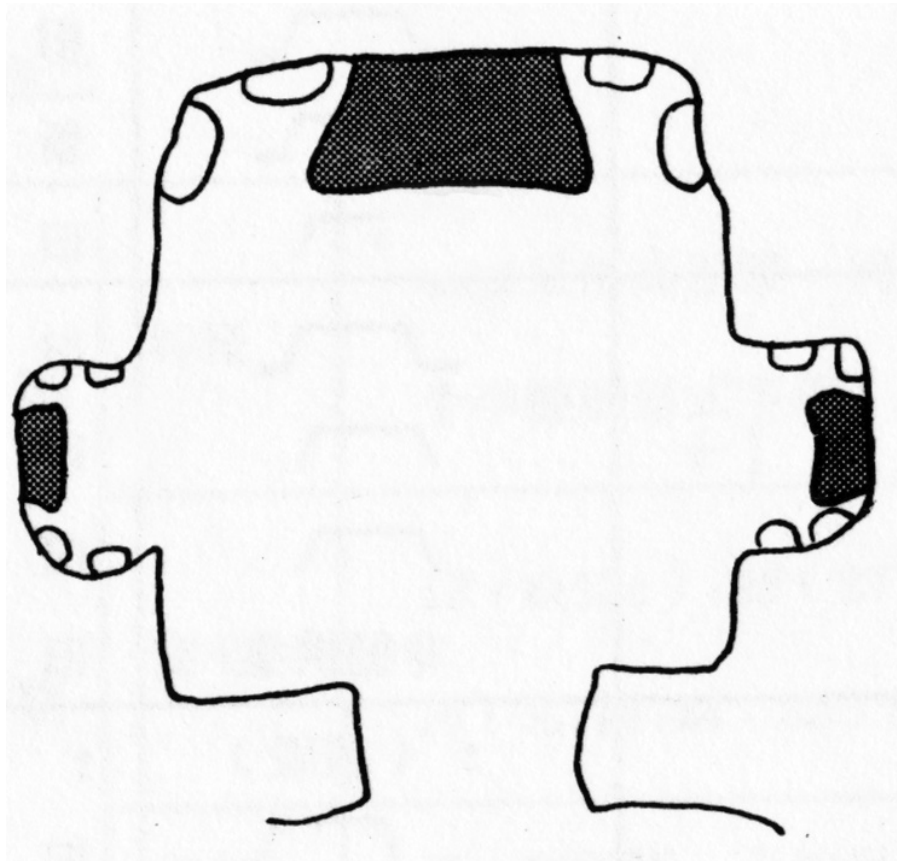


Figure 6.11: Plan of Putai Gong (sketch), Longmen, Luoyang, ca. 520s CE, Northern Wei

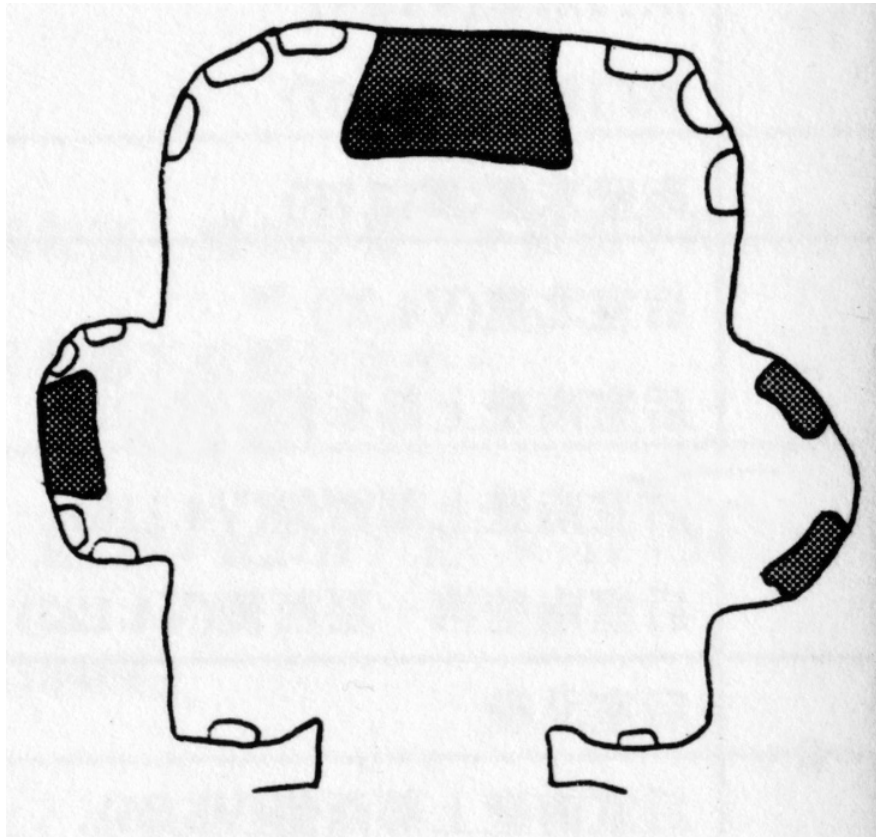


Figure 6.12: Plan of Huangpugong Ku (sketch), Longmen, Luoyang, ca. 527 CE, Northern Wei





Figure 6.13: Niche containing Buddha with two disciples and four bodhisattvas, limestone, west wall, Huangpugong Ku, Longmen, Luoyang, ca. 527 CE, Northern Wei



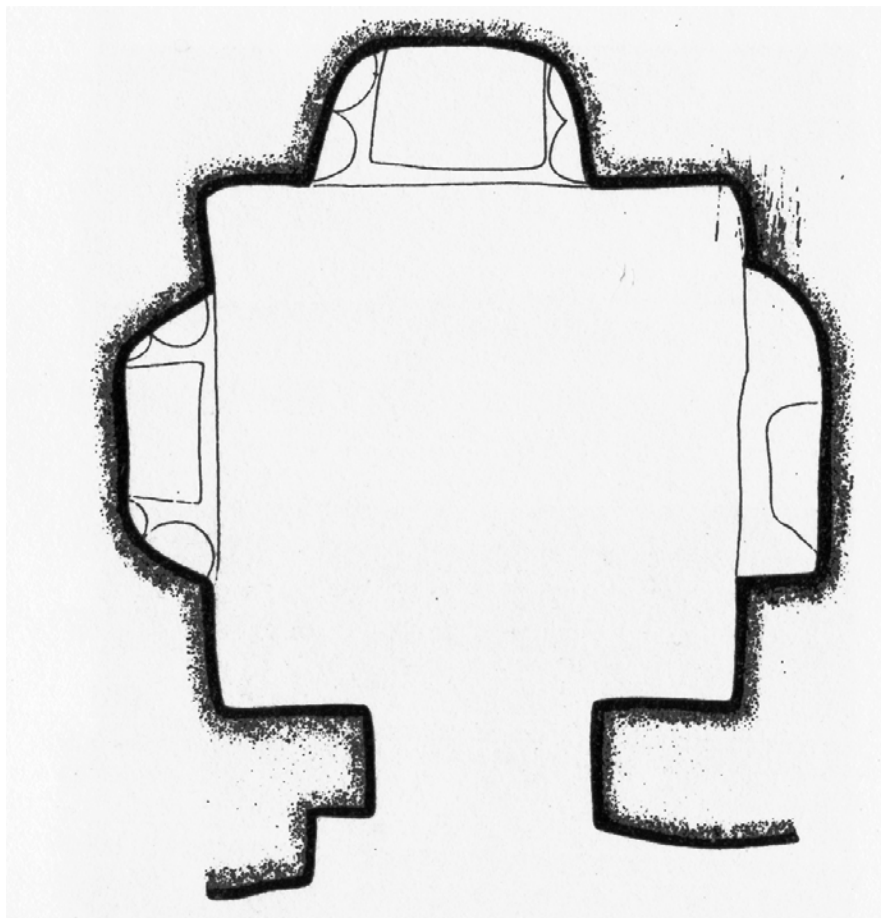


Figure 6.14: Plan of Cave 2 (sketch), Hongqingsi, Mianchi, Luoyang, ca. 528 CE, Northern Wei

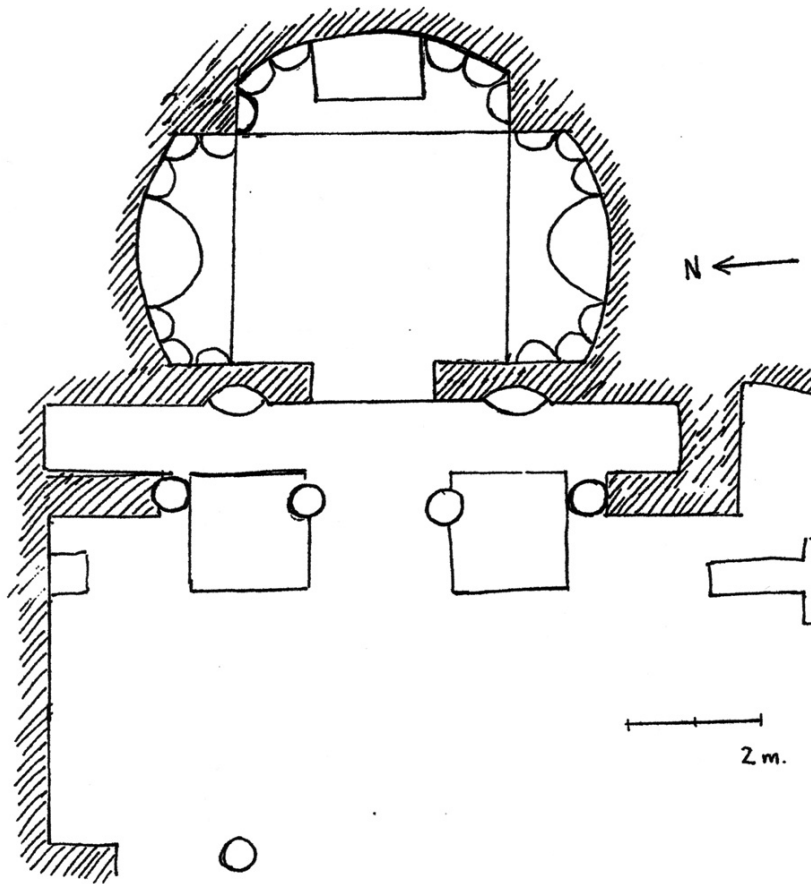


Figure 6.15: Plan of Cave 2 (drawing on scale), Northern Group, Xiangtangshan, Handan, third quarter of the sixth century, Northern Qi

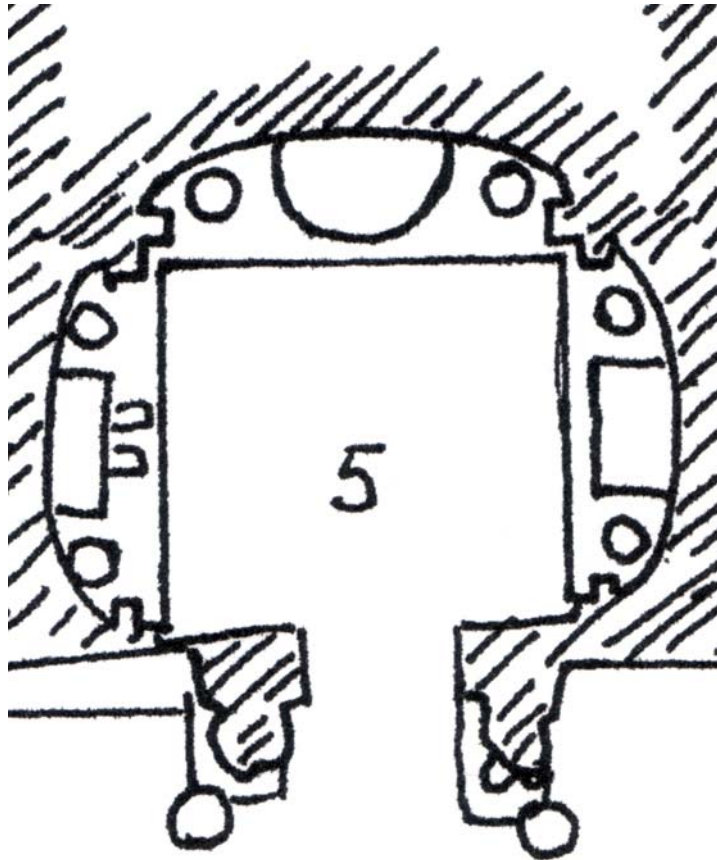


Figure 6.16: Plan of Cave 5 (sketch), Southern Group, Xiangtangshan, Handan, third quarter of the sixth century, Northern Qi

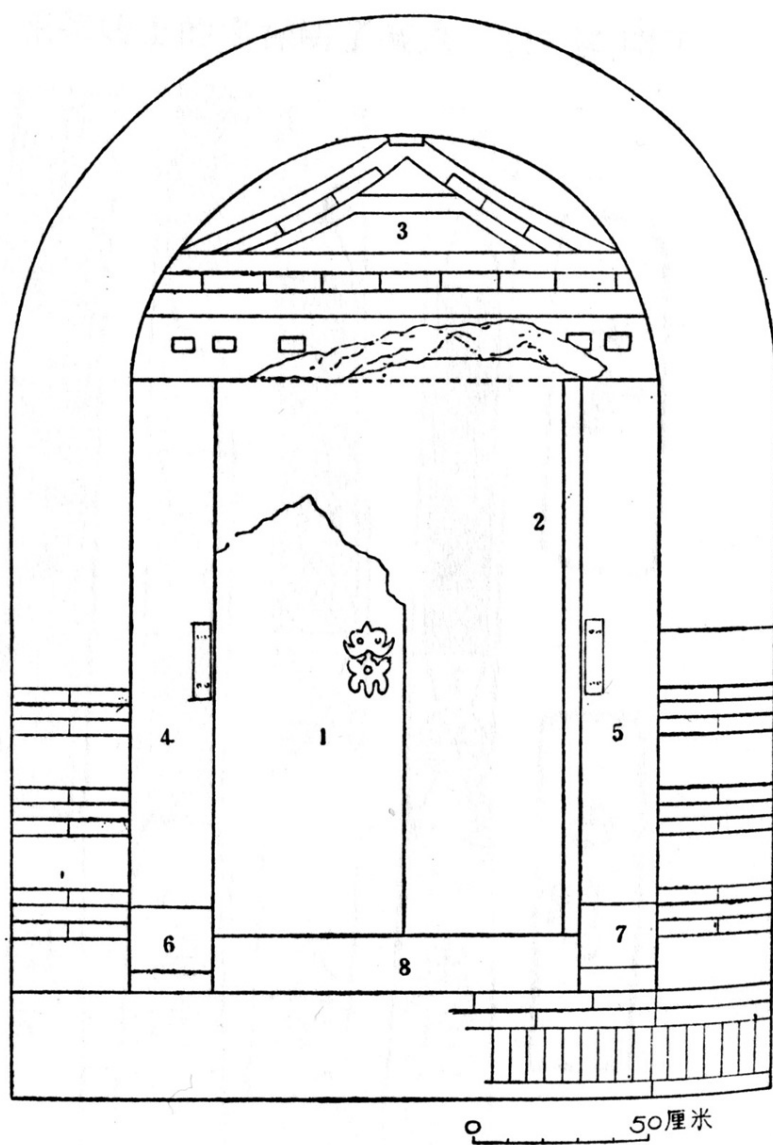


Figure 6.17: Tomb entrance showing *Renzi chashou* carved on the lintel (drawing on sale), Yaohua men, Nanjing, Southern Liang dynasty



Figure 6.18: Niche in a form of wooden architecture, sandstone, west wall, antechamber, Cave 9, Yungang, Datong, ca. last quarter of the fifth century, Northern Wei



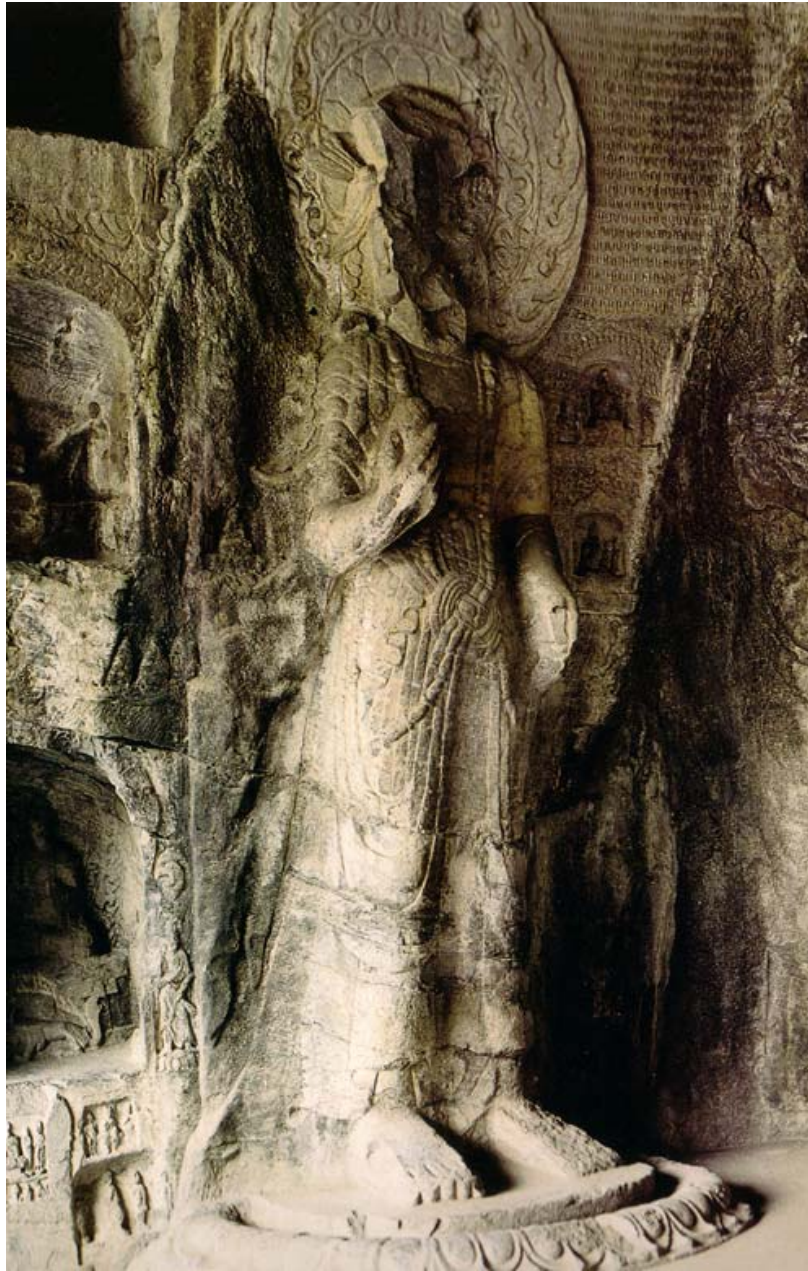


Figure 6.19: Proper right bodhisattvas attendant, limestone, south wall of Lianhua Dong (Cave), Longmen, Luoyang, ca. 510s CE, Northern Wei



## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

My study examined the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixiashan, the earliest and the better preserved examples of the few Buddhist rock-cut remains in southern China. This group of carvings includes eighteen major caves (Caves 5, 9-13, 15-24, 26, 28) and two small niches (Caves 25, 27), which are located on the south face of the Lower Cliff at the site. The objectives of this study were to review the primary literature related to the excavation of these earliest caves at Qixia, to conduct a descriptive analysis and chronological study of these caves, to examine these caves' major iconographic themes, and to contextualize the Qixia caves within the history of Chinese Buddhist rock-cut cave art and architecture

A rich body of primary literature directly pertaining to the Qixia caves and their excavations mainly includes inscriptional evidence, early Buddhist literatures compiled in the south, and a series of local chronicles. Closer study of this corpus of literary documents reveals two phases of cave carving activity at Qixia during the Southern Dynasties: a period from around 484 to 500 CE of the Southern Qi dynasty; and a period during the first half of the sixth century of the Southern Liang dynasty. Textual analysis further suggests the popularity of Amitayus Pure Land in the South during the time of

Southern Qi production at Qixia. This literary survey, therefore, has provided invaluable information for further chronological and iconographic study of these monuments. Most importantly, the literature also informs us about enthusiastic patronage activity at this cave site. The involvement of royal princes and aristocrats not only underscores the significant role of the site, but it also testifies to the flourishing of Buddhism and Buddhist art under the support of the southern courts. In addition, the presence of female patrons implies an active role of women in southern Buddhism during that time.

The chronological analysis, on the basis of textual and artistic evidence, proposes three stages of artistic development at Qixia: the first period contains Caves 18-24 and 26, dated somewhere after 484 CE during the late fifth century of the Southern Qi dynasty; the second period includes Caves 5, 10, 12-13 and 15, dated to the first quarter of the sixth century, somewhere between 511 or 513 and 530 CE, of Early Southern Liang dynasty; the third period contains Caves 9, 11, 16-17 and 28, dated around second quarter of the sixth century during the later part of the Southern Liang dynasty. In addition, a closer reading of the imagery further suggests two artistic trends that occurred at Qixia during the Southern Qi dynasty

Detailed examination of the cave content and the iconography of the imagery reveal the major characteristics of each stage of carving at the site. In terms of architectural layout, the Southern Dynasties caves at Qixia share common features in the use of domed ceiling and open entrance. The Southern Qi caves generally have shallow elliptical floor plan, with lack or undeveloped form of *Sanbi huantan*, a three-walled platform structure. As an unusual example, a rectangular floor plan with *Sabi sankan* design, which contains three niches on three walls, also appears in this group works. In

contrast, the early Liang works, small in scale, are roughly square in shape with rounded corners; each is preceded by a tiny court. These five caves also share a similar exterior arrangement, with a rectangular door leading to the interior. Another notable characteristic is that *Sanbi huantan* structure becomes more standardized and complicated, as seen in the presence of double platforms. The deep elliptical floor plan, a common architectural feature in the later Liang caves, is apparently a continuation, while with new development, of the elliptical shape prevalent in the Qi works. In addition, these third-period caves also exhibit close ties with the second-period works, as seen in the depiction of standard *Sanbi huantan* structure, as well as the use of roughly square ground plan, front court and rectangular doorway. However, the later Liang carvings exhibit more simplified *Sanbi huantan* interior design and slightly elaborate forecourt and entranceway, an indication of another new development of that time.

While the early Liang images are either badly damaged or still covered by cement, the majority of the Southern Qi sculptures and part of later Liang works are in a good state of condition. The *covering mode* is the main fashion of Buddha's garment in the Qi period; the Liang Buddhas are generally draped in *Cuiling dayi*, or "Collar-Drooping Robe" which only occurs in the Amitayus cave of the Qi period. In addition, the *open mode* garment, only covering the left shoulder, is an unusual but also a unique Liang case. Stylistically, in contrast to the rounded and muscular form as seen in the Liang images, the Qi works show a slightly full body with somewhat long proportion and sloping shoulders. Further, elaborate drapery patterns as depicted in the Qi works reveals another major difference from their Liang counterparts, which exhibit more simplified representation. It is also notable that the sculptural representations revealed by the Qi

and Liang works reflect two major southern pictorial traditions of that time, namely those of Gu Kaizhi and Zhang Sengyou's figural styles, respectively.

The iconographic analysis reveals that the Southern Qi caves generally contain a main Buddha that serves as a major icon, although the representation of two Buddhas and three Buddhas also appear in a single cave. A major group of three images, consisting of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas, is the most commonly depicted iconographic scheme. In addition, the sculpted layout also contains five and seven image configurations. While the early Liang caves are identical in using seven figural configurations, the later Liang caves include three, five and seven image composition. Again, this suggests that the third-period works reflect the continuation and development of the early carvings at the Qixia cave site.

Most noteworthy is that the Qi works betrays a great deal of variations in iconographic theme, which, as I have suggested, should be understood as a typical characteristic of earliest stage carving. The identified major iconographic motifs include Amitayus, Sakyamuni and Prabhutaratna, the Buddhas of Three Ages, and the Seven Buddhas of the Past. It is evident that Maitreya Buddha serves as the major icon for worship at the Qixia cave site during the Liang dynasty. Additionally, this iconographic analysis further reveals the popularity of Amitayus and Maitreya Pure Lands as well as the *Lotus Sutra* during the Southern Dynasties period. The study also suggests that *Pratyutpanna-samadhi-sutra* was possibly known in the south at that time.

A contextual study of the Qixia caves informs us of the Yungang influence in the earliest stage carving at the site. The creation of Qixia cave style, however, is better understood as a synthesis of the early Yungang tradition with distinctive southern

features. Most significantly, this new cave style developed in the south immediately provided models for the Northern Wei caves during the end of the fifth and the first quarter of the sixth century. In addition, this southern influence in cave art and architecture is also evident in northern cave temple traditions, specifically the Northern Qi art remains, during the later part of the Northern Dynasties. This corresponds with historical evidence and testifies to the important role of Qixia during the process of Sinicization, an effort of the northern regimes to consolidate their rule during that time. Given the fact that this is also an important period for the domestication of Buddhism in China, my findings further signify the role and contribution of southern china in the internalization of Buddhism and Buddhist art during this period. Finally, this contextual analysis also indicates that the Qixia cave site continue to enjoy great popularity in the Tang dynasty.

It is notable that this study focused primarily on the southern and northern relationship for the discussion of fifth-sixth century Buddhist rock-cut art. Special attention was given to the major political and cultural centers of that time, namely Jiankang in the south and Pingcheng and Luoyang in the north. A more in-depth study of other artistic traditions will, undoubtedly, help further understand the formation and development of Chinese cave temples during the Six Dynasties period. In particular, further examination of the external sources for Chinese Buddhism may add to our understanding of the evolution of Chinese Buddhism and Buddhist art both in the north and the south.

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